

The history of the Brigg family

The family of John Brigg, members of which lived as the tenants of Kildwick Hall from the 1880s to 1946, played a major part in the life of the village throughout that period.

Information about the history of this family prior to their arrival in the village is sparse, but a brief summary is available in the pages of "Textile Manufacture, and Other Industries, in Keighley" by John Hodgson, first published in 1879.

The rest of this piece shows the pages of Hodgson's book that deal with the Brigg family.

TEXTILE MANUFACTURE,

AND

OTHER INDUSTRIES,

IN KEIGHLEY.

BY JOHN HODGSON.

KEIGHLEY :
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12, HIGH STREET,
AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS,
1879.

condensers are very massive, and in every respect in proportion with the size of the condensing cylinder. The buckets and delivering valves have brass rings, facings and lids, the packing stages or floors extend round all the cylinders and round two side walls, and are reached as we have said, from the cylinder floor by an ornamental flight of cast iron stairs, with a similar flight from the packing floor to the beam floor, all the stairs and floors are guarded by pallsading formed of fluted pillars and round polished rods. The whole of the floors are intended to be covered with iron plates. These two splendid engines have been constructed for Messrs. Craven at a cost of over £12,000, by Mr. William Bracewell, engineer, Burnley, the designs being those of his manager, Mr. Pickup, under whose supervision the engines have been made and erected.

JOHN BRIGG & Co.

THE family of the Briggs, like the Cravens already referred to, were yeomen or gentlemen farmers residing at Laycock and Guard House; a great intimacy seems to have subsisted between the two families who were in partnership as spinners and manufacturers for about 40 years, and this has been strengthened and cemented by marriage on three different occasions, first in 1674, when the widow of Robert Craven of Brow End, near Laycock, married a Mr. Brigg of Guard House; again in 1764, after the death of Thomas Brigg of Guard House, John Craven of Laycock married the widow of the above Thomas Brigg; again in 1859, John Craven of

Steeeton Hall married the daughter of the late John Brigg of Guard House. The Brigg family were formerly connected with the people called 'Quakers or Friends,' having joined them when George Fox came into Yorkshire, and as such had to endure great persecutions for conscience's sake from the minions of the state church. We have seen an account in a manuscript history of those persecutions in the possession of Mr. John Brigg, where it is stated how one member of the Brigg family, for his conscientious objections to attend the service of the established church, was incarcerated in prison at York Castle for four weary months. The Briggs are now connected with the Independent or Congregational Churches of Keighley and Utley. The earliest record we have seen of the Briggs being engaged in the worsted trade is contained in a copy of a partnership deed, and other papers belonging to Mr. Abraham Shackleton of Braithwaite, where Thomas Brigg is spoken of as a piece maker. This partnership deed states that on the 19th of November, 1783, John Craven of Guard House, gentleman, Thomas Brigg of Guard House, piece maker, and Abraham Shackleton, piece maker, of Braithwaite, entered into a partnership to spin cotton at Walk Mill in two cottages and a chamber over Joseph Hartley's, at a rent to the firm of £12 a year. Amongst other papers in the possession of Mr. Shackleton is a copy of agreement between the firm of Craven, Brigg & Shackleton, and Joseph Tempest, wherein Tempest binds himself to serve the firm as millwright for sixteen shillings per week, or ten shillings and his meat and drink, Tempest to forfeit £100 if he betray the secrets respecting the construction or movements of any of the machines or works. An agreement between the firm of the one part, and Thomas Robinson of Hill Top of the other part, we give at full length.

“Articles of agreement made, concluded, and fully agreed upon, and between John Craven of Guard House, in the Township of Keighley in the county of York, gentleman, and Thomas Brigg of Guard House aforesaid, piece maker, and Abraham Shackleton of Braithwaite in the parish of Keighley aforesaid, piece maker, of the one part, and Thomas Robinson of Hill Top, in the parish of Keighley aforesaid, joiner, of the other part, as follows, that is to say, that the said Thomas Robinson for the consideration hereinafter mentioned, doth covenant and agree, and with the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg, and Abraham Shackleton, their executors, administrators, and assigns by these presents. That the said Thomas Robinson shall and will for and during the term of four years, to begin and be accounted from the first day of December next ensuing, serve, abill, and continue with the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg, and Abraham Shackleton, when required as their covenant servant, and shall and will during the term diligently and faithfully according to the best and utmost of his power, skill, knowledge and judgment, exercise and employ himself in, and do, and perform such business, work and labour in and about the works now being carried on, or hereafter to be carried on in and about their cotton mill, that may be erected by the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, whether at Keighley aforesaid or elsewhere, at any time during the said term as they the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, shall from time to time order, direct and appoint to do so, and for the most profit, benefit and advantage of them, the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, and that he the said Thomas Robinson shall and will from time to time during the said term keep the secrets of the said John Cra-

ven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton respecting the works in the said mill, and be just, true and faithful to them the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton in all matters and things, and noways wrongfully detain, embezzle, purloin, or waste any monies, goods or other things whatsoever belonging to them the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, as shall be committed to his care, management or disposal, and make and give up a true, just and fair account of all actings and doings in his said employment without fraud or delay when and so often as he shall be thereunto required by the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, and that the said Thomas Robinson shall and will at all times during the said term, find and provide for himself meat, drink, washing, lodgings and apparel of all sorts at his own expense. And in consideration of the promises and the performance of the work and labour by the said Thomas Robinson as aforesaid, they the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, doth hereby for themselves, their executors and administrators, covenant, promise and agree to and with the said Thomas Robinson, that they the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, their executors or administrators shall and will, well and truly pay or cause to be paid unto the said Thomas Robinson, the sum of thirteen shillings of lawful money of Great Britain weekly, and every week when he is required during the said term of four years in case he shall so long live, and be capable of doing and performing his said work and service as aforesaid. And it is further agreed to and between the said parties to these presents, that in case the said Thomas Robinson shall or do at any time or times during the said term, reveal or make known any secret respecting the construction or movement of any

of the machines or works, now or hereafter to be carried on or set up in the said cotton mill, or any other mill erected by the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, or any person or persons whomsoever to the prejudice or injury of the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, that then and in such case he the said Thomas Robinson shall forfeit and pay, or cause to be paid unto the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton, their executors or administrators, the sum of one hundred pounds provided always, and these presents are nevertheless upon this condition, that if the said cotton mill or any other cotton mill hereafter to be erected by the said John Craven, Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton shall, before the expiration of the said term happen to be destroyed, demolished or thrown down, or the utensils therein discontinued, then and in that case these presents and every article, clause, and thing herein contained shall from thenceforth determine and be utterly void, and to all intents and purposes whatsoever anything herein before contained to the contrary thereof, in any wise, notwithstanding, in witness whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto put their hands and seal, the seventeenth day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty three, sealed and delivered, being first duly stamped in our presence

ISAAC ABBOTT.

HER

MARY \times ROBINSON.

MARK.

JOHN CRAVEN.

THOMAS BRIGG.

ABRAHAM SHACKLETON.

HIS

THOMAS \times ROBINSON.

MARK.

Another paper in the possession of Abraham Shackleton, relates to the building of a new mill to spin cotton at Brow End on the estate of Thomas Brigg, and also a new mill for the same purpose at Stell's Mill, upon the property of John Craven, dated February 1st, 1791. On the 27th of April, 1805, a dissolution of partnership took place between the executors of Abraham Shackleton and his son William, both of whom had died, and John Craven, Thomas Brigg and John Craven, junior, he having been admitted a partner in the undivided third share of his father. The description of piece makers as applied to Thomas Brigg and Abraham Shackleton in these documents plainly denote that they were both in business as manufacturers of stuff pieces at the time the partnership here spoken of commenced, namely, in the year 1783. How long Mr. Brigg had been in business as a manufacturer before the above partnership commenced we have no means of knowing. It is probable, as pointed out in "James's History of the Worsted Trade," that the goods made by the manufacturers in this district in the latter half of the eighteenth century, consisted of shalloons, says, tamees and drawboys; patterns of drawboys and pattern papers are in the possession of Abraham Shackleton, which he believes to have been kept along with the other documents here mentioned, since the time when Abraham Shackleton's partnership was dissolved. Similar classes of goods have been made and still are made by the firm of John Brigg & Co., some of the qualities and marks being, it is believed, the same to-day as they were at the beginning of the century. We have stated in a former article that the firm gave up cotton spinning shortly after the decease of Abraham Shackleton, but we find that it was common for the cotton manufacturers at the same to carry on the old trade of making stuff pieces,

keeping both combers and weavers, having their yarn spun by hand a single thread at a time, hence we find that William and John Haggas, in the early part of this century, were engaged in making both worsted and cotton pieces at Higher Providence Mill; and about the same time Lodge Calvert was making both cotton and stuff pieces at Ingrow; when the firm gave up cotton about 1808, the partnership was continued by their carrying on the worsted trade, either using yarn spun by hand or getting it spun by commission. It appears that Messrs. Rouses, of Bradford, were spinning worsted at the Brow End Mill from 1810 to 1814. We recollect seeing eight spinning frames painted yellow about sixty years ago, which had been brought from the Brow End mill when the Rouses gave up its occupation in 1814. John Craven senior died, and about the year 1812 or 1813, John Craven the younger and Thomas Brigg began to spin their own yarn at Walk Mill, and in 1814 at Brow End. On the 23rd of January 1817, Thomas Brigg died, and at his decease his two sons Thomas and John Brigg were introduced into the firm when they were very young; it is probable that they took the place of their father under executors. On the 1st of January, 1822, a dissolution of partnership took place between the Cravens and the Briggs, when Thomas and John Brigg commenced business on their own account, in less than six weeks after, viz., on the 9th of February; in the same year Thomas Brigg died, leaving his brother John sole proprietor of the concern. The responsibility entailed upon him by the death of his father and elder brother at the commencement of a new business, with the inconvenience of a limited capital, principally consisting of old machinery; these difficulties would have crushed and paralyzed the spirits of many a young man of less energy and nerve, but

they were manfully faced, and doubtless moulded his mind and character to the habit of self-dependence, which, assisted by a shrewd judgment and extensive observation, made up a man who was able to meet the vicissitudes of business with calmness, and to deal with them successfully. Mr. Brigg spun his yarns at the Brow End Mill which was without steam power, being propelled by water, and was not capable of holding more than 20 spinning frames besides preparing. But it ought to be borne in mind that manufacturers did not require such extensive mill premises, as woolcombing and weaving were done by hand, generally in the cottages of the workpeople; besides, manufacturers were in the habit of getting a considerable quantity of their yarn spun by commission. The class of goods made at Brow End consisted of tammies, dobbys and plainbacks, and in 1833, he commenced making 6qrs. merinos. He began to use power-looms in 1834, and built the new mill at Calversyke Hill in 1836. In 1842 Thomas Brigg Laycock became a partner in the firm, which then took the name of John Brigg & Co. Mr. Laycock continued in partnership till 1858, when he removed to Bingley and carried on business at that place for several years. In the year 1845 the firm introduced the screw gill, one of the greatest improvements in connection with worsted spinning that has been brought out during the last 50 years. About the same time they began to weave figured goods in Jacquard looms. They began to use cotton warps about 1850, and in 1853 they built the weaving shed, and in the same year they introduced combing machines; but they kept a few hand combers, principally old men who had been in their service for a considerable number of years; and it is only very recently that they have ceased to employ this class of workpeople. The

class of goods made by the firm since the new mill was built comprises a considerable variety, such as says, shalloons, lastings, buntings, veilings or seive cloth, delains, camlets, wildbores, serges, bombazets, cubicas, the bets durants, sat-teens, orleans, cobourgs, and goods made from coloured yarn, besides tammies, wildbores, dobbys and merinos.

The late Mr. John Brigg was a christian gentleman of sterling integrity and uprightness; there was nothing of ostentation in his piety, but in a quiet and unassuming way he tried to lessen and mitigate the ills and sufferings to which our common humanity is heir: We recollect meeting an aged person many years ago, who was almost overcome with joy in consequence of his having been visited by Mr. Brigg in his affliction; this old man exclaimed "what a thing it is that a magistrate should visit such a poor old body as me, and talk with me about my soul and pray with me." The late Mr. Brigg was no stranger to the luxury of doing good, thus carrying out the injunction of an inspired apostle where he says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Mr. Brigg was a Non-conformist in religion, belonging to the Independent body in Keighley, of which church he was a deacon. A few years ago a new Independent Chapel and minister's house was built in Devonshire Street, in which scheme Mr. Brigg was one of the principal contributors, and we are glad to learn that his family are following their father's example, and trying to walk in his steps, as we believe that it is to a considerable extent, through their influence that the beautiful Congregational Chapel at Utley has been built, and the ministry supported. They have also assisted in repairing the old chapel in High-street,

which has recently been fitted up as a mission chapel and Sunday School.

The late Mr. Brigg wisely took three of his sons into the firm, as they grew up to manhood; the eldest son, however, retired from business before the death of his father. Two of the sons are in business at Bradford. Mr. Brigg died December 1867, leaving four sons and one daughter. The business of the firm is now carried on by the second and youngest sons, viz., John and Benjamin Septimus Brigg. These two gentlemen have taken a very active part in promoting the building of the new Mechanics' Institution, and the establishment of the Trade School in connection with it, thus placing Keighley in a position far superior to any town in Yorkshire of the same size for educational advantages. This firm is held in great estimation by a numerous class of workpeople, amongst whom we have known several who have been in their employment for nearly half a century.

JAMES HAGGAS & SONS.

THE two firms, that of James Haggas & Sons, and that of William Haggas & Son, date back to the early part of the eighteenth century, from which time the Haggas' family have been continuously engaged in business as manufacturers of stuff pieces, down to the present time. Mr. William Haggas, of Cross Roads Mill, has in his possession the following indenture, made between Jonas Haggas and John Jackson, both of Halifax, bearing date 1715.

“This indenture, made the 1st day of March in the first