

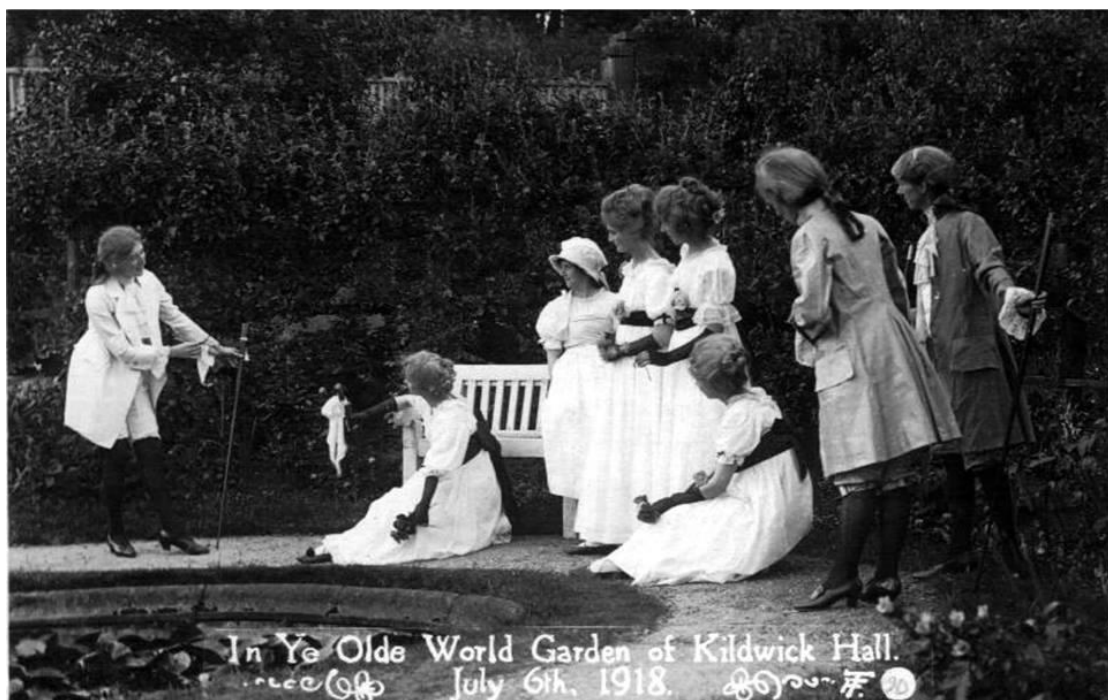
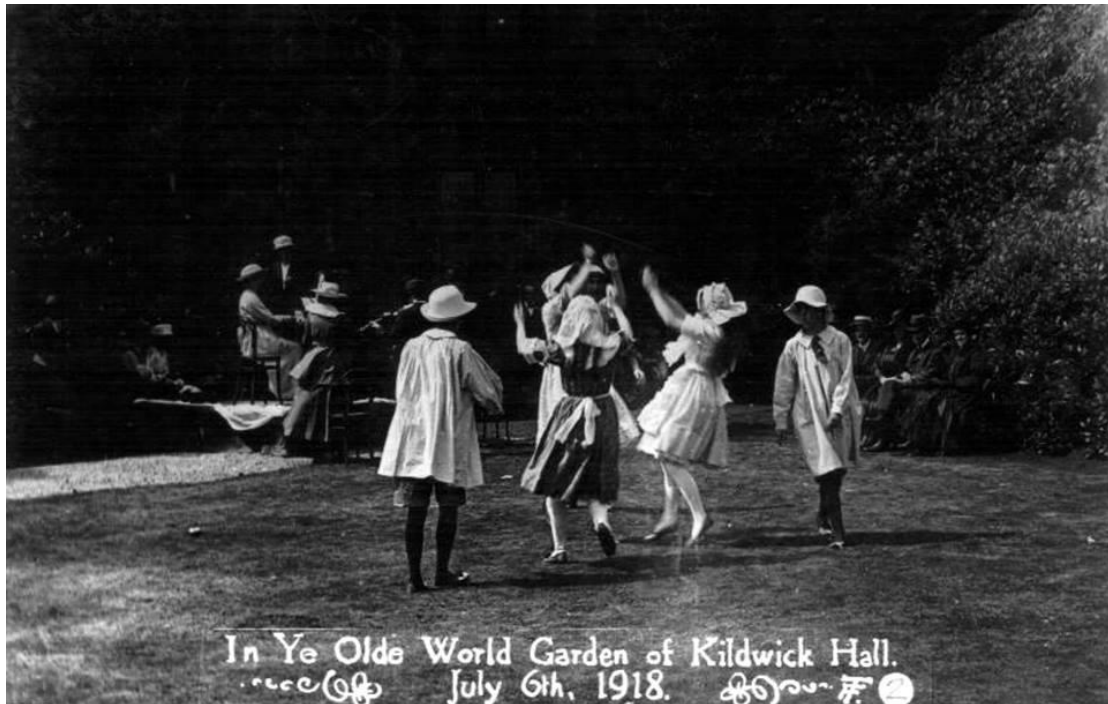
## Archive photographs in their context

### #5 – Dancers at Kildwick Hall

#### Introduction

Our archive contains three photographs of an event held at Kildwick Hall during WWI.

These two were donated by the Kildwick and District Archive in 2015.



This one was given to us by Paul Beswick in 2022.



Text on the rear of this one reads:

*"At Kildwick. The Bradford ladies who performed the dances."*

But what is going on here ? In July 1918 war was still raging in Europe, and young men from the local area were fighting and dying. Did the rich people at Kildwick Hall not care about that ?

As always, the full story is much more complicated.

## **The Brigg family during WW1**

True enough the Brigg family, who lived at Kildwick Hall from around 1890 until 1946, were well off. But they were also Liberals and staunch Methodists.

They hadn't been ignoring the war; in fact they had certainly been doing their bit.

Between 1912 and 1916, William Anderton Brigg and his sister, Mary Sharpe, had been a popular mayor and mayoress of Keighley. At the start of the war, in August 1914, William personally helped to bring to an end a spate of anti-German riots in the town that had seen a number of businesses run by families of German descent vandalised; some of which were even set on fire.

William was also chairman of Farnhill Parish Council and supported local war-time activities; including a suggestion, in March 1918, that a communal kitchen might be set up in the village – a plan voted down by other members of the Council.

Mary joined the Red Cross.



Throughout the war, and afterwards, she also arranged fund-raising events in aid of "St. Dunstan's Home for Wounded and Blinded Soldiers".



## War-time events at Kildwick Hall

The July 1918 event was by no means the only one held at Kildwick Hall during the war. All were to raised funds for war charities (such as St. Dunstan's) or local good causes.

A small number of examples, chosen from local news-paper reports, provide illustrations:

**June 1916** – “As part of his continuing effort to provide support for Belgian refugees in the area, W.A. Brigg hosted a musical afternoon at Kildwick Hall. Performances were given by a number of famous Belgian artistes - including members of the Belgian Royal Opera and the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp. The audience included a large number of refugees from Keighley, Sutton and Crosshills.”

**June 1917** – “A highly successful Garden Party, which included a performance of the operetta "Zurika, the Gypsy Maid", was held in the grounds of Kildwick Hall, which were opened for the purpose by the Brigg family. Amongst the very large audience were two groups of injured soldiers: a party from Skipton Auxiliary Hospital and another group, who arrived by motor launch on the canal, from the Keighley War Hospital.”

**August 1917** – “Mary Sharpe and the Brigg brothers entertained a group of 30 wounded men from Morton Banks Hospital to tea at Kildwick Hall.”

In addition, the Brigg family continued to provide Whit Sunday tea and sports at Kildwick Hall for children attending the Methodist Chapel Sunday School.

## The July 1918 event

So if the Brigg family supported charities and good causes throughout the war, what were the dancers doing at Kildwick Hall in July 1918 ?

The full story needs us to rewind a few years.

At the start of the 20th century Aked's Mill, in Farnhill Main Street, ceased to operate. The mill building was converted to houses (now #31 to #37 Main Street) and the warehouse opposite was bought by the Brigg family.

Quite what the family originally had in mind for the building is unclear. However, late in 1910 word started to spread that the Wilson family, who were the hereditary Lords of the Manor of Kildwick and owned most of the village, were planning to use some of the undeveloped land to build a Conservative Club.

Although the Wilson and Brigg families were well known to each other (the Wilsons owned Kildwick Hall and were the Briggs' landlords) there was no love lost between them – particularly politically, where they came from opposite ends of the spectrum – and it might have been this that made the Brigg family offer the mill warehouse for use as a Village Institute, in direct competition to the proposed Conservative Club.

As the conversion of the warehouse into what would become the Kildwick and Farnhill Village Institute proceeded, the costs began to escalate alarmingly. The original plan, that W.A. Brigg would simply hand over the building to a board of trustees became untenable, as the village could not afford the £600 cost of the conversion.

In the end it was decided that the Brigg family would pay for the cost of conversion and would retain ownership of the building until such time as the Institute proved itself to be a going concern. In the meantime the Institute would be run by a committee chaired by Mr. Brigg.

The Institute got off to a very good start. In the first few years the number of subscribers (all men and mostly young to middle-aged) rose steadily, and the fund-raising events that were held there were well attended.

This all changed with the onset of war.

Membership fell as the young men of the village went off to war, and the events – which previously had gone towards Institute funds – were directed to other causes. Throughout the war years the Brigg family increasingly used their own funds to keep the Institute afloat.

One reliable source of income was an annual Garden Party held in the grounds of Kildwick Hall. Each year people would pay a small entrance fee and be entertained by local groups of singers or watch plays put on by the children of Kildwick school.

The Garden Party of 1918 was the biggest of these, as reported in the local press:

**Keighley News – 13/7/1918 (extract)**

*An “Olde Tyme Fayre” was held in the grounds of Kildwick Hall on Saturday afternoon by permission of Messrs. Brigg. In the afternoon and evening children from the Kildwick National School, in fancy costume, gave concerts and dances under the direction of Mr. Tom Appleby.*

*A party of Bradford ladies gave displays of Old English and national dances, and at the evening performance they were encored for every item.*

*Side shows in the grounds and the hall armoury proved great attractions, and upwards of 700 people were present.*

**West Yorkshire Pioneer – 12/7/1918 (extract)**

*Over 500 people assembled on Saturday last in the beautiful old-world garden of Kildwick Hall (lent by Messrs. Brigg) at an old-time fayre on behalf of the funds of the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute.*

*The principal features of entertainment were two displays of Old English and National dances by a party of Bradford ladies. The ladies were attired in charming old-time costumes, and in the evening gave a most graceful display of the dances.*

*Various side shows – “Old Aunt Sally”, “The frog”, etc. – were patronised, and tea was sold during the interval.*

*The visitors were also allowed to look around the lower rooms of the charming old hall, and Mr. W.A. Brigg described the chief objects of interest.*

*After paying expenses there will be a substantial balance for the funds of the Village Institute.*

**Craven Herald – 12/7/1918 (extract)**

*The annual garden party in connection with Kildwick and Farnhill Institute was held in the old world gardens of Kildwick Hall on Saturday.*

*It was entitled "An Olde Tyme Fayre". The concert, consisting of dances and songs, was given by a party of ladies from Bradford in costume, assisted by scholars of Kildwick School and others.*

*The dancing on the lawn by the ladies in the costumes of early Victorian days was both graceful and interesting. The items by the school children were well rendered and reflected great credit on their teachers.*

*There were various attractions in other parts of the grounds, such as Aunt Sally, fortune telling, etc.*

*There was a large number of visitors, who heartily enjoyed the entertainment. The weather was very favourable and the gardens showed to great advantage in the sunshine.*

The event raised about £20, which was sufficient to keep the books in the black, and the Institute survived.

The war ended in November 1918 and over the next year or so men returned to the village and subscriptions to the Institute picked up.

By 1920 it was clear that Kildwick and Farnhill Institute was on a steady footing and, in a legal Deed of Gift, dated 1st November 1920, the members of the Brigg family formally handed over the Institute building to the Trustees (led by Rev. Hodge, the vicar of St. Andrew's).

*The Kildwick and  
Farnhill Institute.*



*Deed of Gift.*

Dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920.

William Anderton Brigg Esq.  
and Others.

to

The Rev<sup>d</sup> Christopher Edward V. Hodge  
and Others.

Deed of Gift.

OF

The Kildwick and Farnhill  
Institute