

Sidney Biggs (1896 – 1970)

Sydney Biggs moved, with his family, from Keighley to Farnhill – where his father served as a parish councillor.

On his 18th birthday Sidney joined the Navy, signing on for a period of 12 years. He served on three different vessels during the war before paying for an early discharge, in 1921.

After working in the family's shop in Keighley, Sidney took over the business and described himself as a sweetshop owner and shipping agent.

After living in Crosshills and, for a short time, at Kildwick Hall, he moved to a flat in Bingley. Sidney never married and died in 1970.

No Photo Available

Pre-war life

Sidney Biggs was born on 12th September 1896, in Keighley, and was baptised six weeks later in Holy Trinity Church, Lawkholme, Keighley. He was the third child of William Edward and Mary Ann (nee Halliday); a son, William Lawrence (who died in infancy) had been born in 1891, and a daughter, Amy, had been born in 1893.

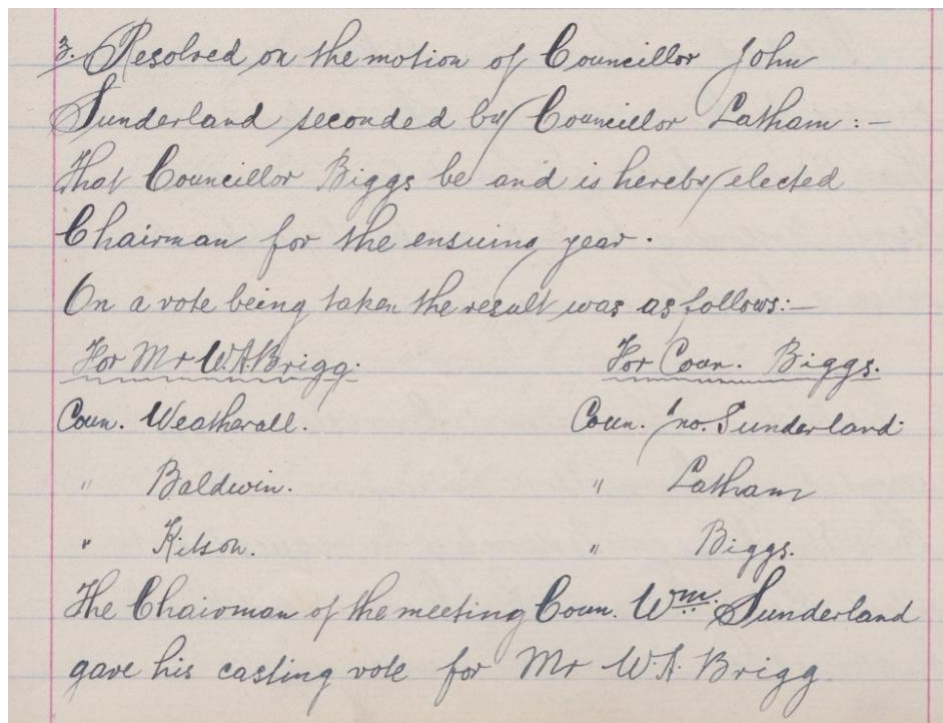
The 1901 census recorded the family living at 3 Carter Road, Keighley. William was a bill poster and an employer.

It is not until the 1911 census, when Sidney was 14, that the family appeared in Farnhill, living in Middleton House on Main Street. At this time the household consisted of: William, who was a bill-posting contractor, the children Sidney and Amy, their mother's sister Elizabeth, and her brother Wilfred. However Sidney and Amy's mother, Mary Ann, was not present and it is unclear where she was on the date the census was taken.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.							
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.							
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions than the preparation of Statistical Tables.							
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE			PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.	BIRTHPLACE of every person.
1 William Edward Biggs	Head	44	Married	20		Billposting Contracting	Derby Derbyshire
2 Amy Biggs	Daughter	14	Single			School	Keighley Yorks
3 Sidney Biggs	Son	14				School	Keighley Yorks
4 Elizabeth Halliday	Wife	36	Single			House Keeper	Stamford Lincoln
5							
6 Wilfred Halliday	Wife's Brother	23	Single			Electrical Engineer	Keighley Yorks
7							

Extract from the 1911 census return for Middleton House, Farnhill
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Almost as soon as the family arrived in the village, William Biggs became a member of Farnhill Parish Council and he served as a councillor for a number of years. At the annual meeting held on 17th April 1913, he was very nearly elected Chairman of the council. He stood in opposition to William Anderton Brigg of Kildwick Hall.



The chairman's casting vote denies William Biggs the chairmanship of Farnhill Parish Council
(Reproduced by kind permission of Farnhill Parish Council)

Sidney's mother, Mary Ann, died in April 1914 and was buried in Kildwick churchyard.

Note: Sidney's father, William, married again, in 1917. His second wife was Alice Maud Christie of Hartlepool; known as Maud.

WW1 service

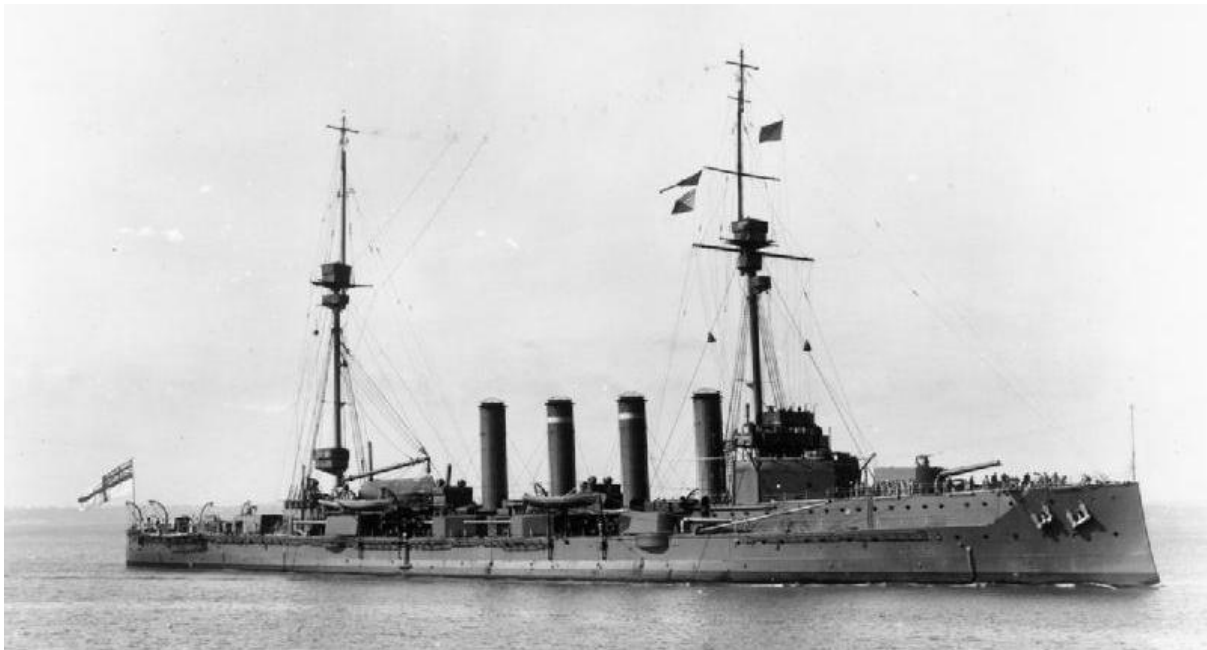
On his 18th birthday, 12th September 1914, just over a month after the start of the war, Sidney Biggs joined the navy, signing on for a period of 12 years.

Until January 1916 he was attached to HMS Fisgard, an engineering training establishment based at Gosport, Hampshire.

He subsequently served on three more vessels as an Engine Room Artificer (ERA). These were HMS Cochrane, HMS Monarch and HMS Renown.

When not at sea, Sidney was attached to the shore station, Victory II.

HMS Cochrane (6/2/1916 to 18/2/1917)



HMS Cochrane

Photograph ref. Q 21094 from the Imperial War Museum (collection no. 2107-01). Public domain.

HMS Cochrane was present at the Battle of Jutland, which took place on 31st May / 1st June 1916, as part of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron. However her position was always on the other side of the British fleet to that from which the Germans were positioned. Consequently she was just one of two British vessels involved in the battle which did not fire a shot.

HMS Monarch (23/11/1917 to 4/3/1920)



HMS Monarch at anchor in Scapa Flow, June 1917

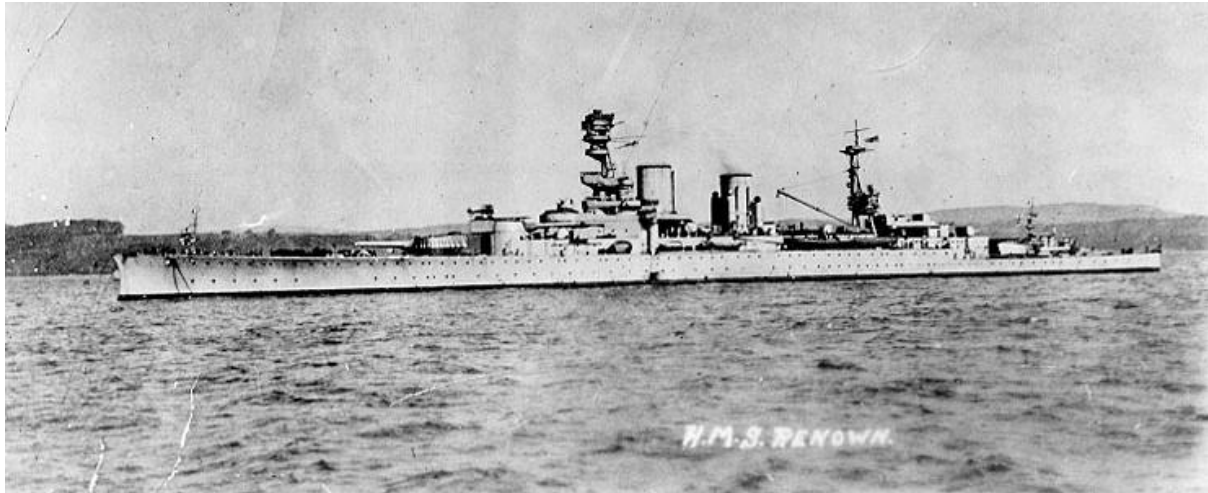
Photograph ref. Q 74177 from the Imperial War Museum collection. Public domain.

HMS Monarch was a member of the British Grand Fleet, based at Scapa Flow, Orkney. However during the period in which Sidney Biggs was part of her compliment, Monarch's activities generally consisted of routine patrols in the North Sea.

At the end of the war HMS Monarch was present at Rosyth, Scotland, when the German High Seas Fleet surrendered there on 21st November 1918.

In March 1920 HMS Monarch was transferred back to Portsmouth.

HMS Renown (9/3/1920 to 1/11/1920)



HMS Renown c.1918

Official U.S. Navy photo NH 57076 from the U.S. Navy Naval History and Heritage Command. Public domain.

When the British Grand Fleet was disbanded in April 1919, the battle cruiser HMS Renown was given a refit, in preparation for a tour of Canada and the USA by the Prince of Wales. From January to March 1920, Renown was given a more extensive refit for service as a "royal yacht". The port side housed a squash court, and the starboard side a cinema.

In March 1920 the ship sailed for Australia and New Zealand with the Prince of Wales and his entourage aboard. She returned to Portsmouth in October and was retired to the Reserve Fleet in November.

Post-war life

In January 1921, after serving six and a half years of his 12 year term of service, Sidney Biggs paid a £50 discharge fee and left the navy.

If Discharged, Whither and for what cause.	Remarks.
Shore By Purchase	N/8569/20 approves discharge by purchase. Had Victory II VR C January 1921 - £50 paid for discharge

Extract from Sidney Biggs' naval service record – discharged on payment of £50
Used under licence from the National Archive

Sidney appeared as an absent voter on the Farnhill electoral roll between 1918 and 1920, and returned to live with his father and step-mother, at Middleton House, in 1921.

The 1921 census records Sidney as being employed by a company in London, acting as their local agent. (The nature of the company's business is not recorded.)

He left the village in 1923 and lived for a couple of years in Drake Street, Keighley, with members of the Bracken family (who would subsequently move to Farnhill).

In 1925, Sidney's father and stepmother moved from Middleton House to The Cottage, Park Road, Crosshills. Sidney left Keighley and moved in with them.

Throughout the 1920s, Sidney's parents ran a shop – probably a sweet shop (see later) – in Keighley. They may have employed Sidney in the family business, as a few years after his father's death, in 1930, Sidney appeared on the electoral register for Keighley as a business owner.

The 1939 Register, compiled in September of that year to enable the issuing of WW2 ration cards, recorded Sidney and Maud living at The Cottage, Park Road, Crosshills. Sidney gave his employment as sweet shop owner and shipping agent.

Maud, Sidney's stepmother, died in 1948, by which time Sidney was no longer living in Crosshills.

It has not been possible to determine where Sidney was living or what he was doing between 1947 and 1956, with the exception of 1949. In that year he was recorded on the electoral roll as living – rather surprisingly – at Kildwick Hall.

In 1956 Sidney moved into a flat in St. Ives Mansions, Bingley. It would be his home for the rest of his life.

In April 1957 Sidney's name appeared on the passenger manifest of the ship Reina Del Pacifico arriving in Liverpool from South America. No details of his outbound journey or the purpose of the voyage are known.

On the manifest Sidney gave his occupation as tobacconist and said he was married. The latter is likely to have been an error as there is no evidence of him ever having been married and the only women he ever shared a house with were his mother and stepmother.

Sidney Biggs died, in Bingley, on 12th February 1970 and was buried in Kildwick churchyard, in the same plot as his mother. He was 73 years of age.



The grave of Sidney Biggs and his mother, Mary, in Kildwick churchyard. Only the plinth remains

Postscript

Sidney Biggs did not marry. His sister Amy married in 1921; and his half-brother, William Christie married in 1945. Whether they had children is not known.

It is not known if there are any living descendants.

Sidney Biggs – a life in summary

Born: 12/9/1896, Keighley
Baptised: 21/10/1896, Holy Trinity, Lawkholme, Keighley
Died: 12/2/1970 **Aged:** 73
Home address: Flat 19 St Ives Mansions, Bingley

Parents

Father: William Edward; b. 7/9/1866, Derby; d. 18/12/1930, Crosshills
Mother: Mary Ann (nee Halliday); bapt. 27/1/1864, Stanhope (Co. Durham); d. 27/4/1914, Farnhill
Married: 1890, Keighley (Registration district)

Father remarried 1917. Alice Maud (nee Christie); d. 7/12/1948, Crosshills

Siblings

William Lawrence; b. 29/10/1891, Keighley; d. 1892, Keighley
Amy; b. 1893, Keighley; bapt. 21/12/1893, Lawkholme, Keighley;
 m. Harold Mills, 29/3/1921, Kildwick
William Christie (half-brother); b. Q3-1918, Skipton (Reg.); m. Doris Ward, Q2-1945, Skipton (Reg.)
 d. 18/8/1979, Bradford

WW1 service

Service period: 12/9/1914 to 24/1/1920
Service details: Royal Navy; ERA, no. M3800
Vessel: HMS Cochrane (6/2/1916 to 18/2/1917)
 HMS Monarch (23/11/1917 to 4/3/1920)
 HMS Renown (9/3/1920 to 1/11/1920)
Medals: British War Medal, Victory Medal
Home address: Middleton House, Main Street, Farnhill

