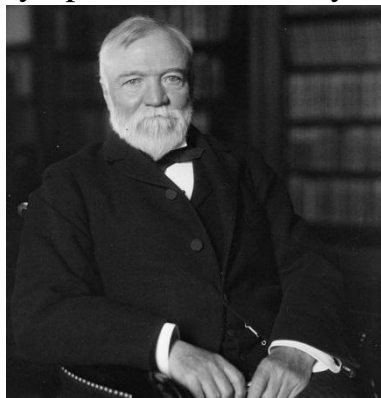


**Keighley Library opened in 1904 as the first Carnegie library in England.**



The library was paid for by a gift of £10,000 by **Andrew Carnegie, a Scotsman** who made his fortune in steel production in America.

Born into a poor weaving family in 1835 in Dunfermline, **Andrew Carnegie** was influenced by the family's Non Conformist (Swedenborgian) and Chartist sympathies. His family moved to Pittsburgh in 1848 and Andrew began work,



aged 13, as a bobbin-boy in a cotton factory. From there, he constantly challenged his abilities, advancing his roles through different jobs and connections. He went on to make a vast fortune through investments in railroads, later in the iron and steel industries. Though not a stranger to ruthlessness and controversy as an employer, when he retired, he became a leading benefactor and gave billions away to fund libraries, support teachers and

education and establish trusts. He also did much work to promote peace in the world. He died in 1919.

See [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk)

Also **Bradford Libraries' services online:** *Dictionary of National Biography* at [www.bradford.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/libraries)

He was influenced to choose Keighley by his friend **Sir Swire Smith**. Smith had his own wool spinning company in Keighley (Fleece Mills, then Springfield Mills) but was very much involved in the improvement of elementary and



SIR SWIRE SMITH, KT., J.P.

technical education in the town and the self-improving influence of Keighley's Mechanics' Institute. It was this fine example of education for every man which acted as the inspiration behind Carnegie's generous gift of a library to Keighley in particular. Keighley Library was one of the first of 660 libraries financed by Andrew Carnegie in Britain and Ireland. There is another former Carnegie library building in Carr Lane, Shipley.

### **Library Murals**

The Library's murals were painted by **Keighley craftsman, Alex Smith** in 1929 and 1948, as gifts to the people of the town. **The subject matters are:**

**Ground floor:**                      **Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855)**  
   **Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)**

**First floor:**                        ***The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (translation published in England in 1859)**

These pictures were painted on canvas which was stretched across a framework that was designed to fit in with the curved lines of the building. During the 2006/7 major refurbishment of the Library, the council called in its own **art conservation expert Ian Barrant**, to examine the paintings, clean and restore them. Working in a 'studio', created at the top of a scaffolding tower, Ian managed to clean away 100 years of grime and return any damaged paintwork to its original condition.

### **Alex F. Smith (1852-1953)**

Alex Smith lived and worked in Keighley. He was a sculptor, architectural carver, modeller and designer. He worked in stone (Cliffe Castle Conservatory carving), bronze, marble and wood, dealing with portrait busts, and statuary, mural decorations (Keighley Library), memorials (War Memorial in East Morton cemetery), and chimney pieces. There are carvings on the Library entrance, Arcade Chambers, Victoria Hotel and Town Hall. He was a member of Keighley Arts Club and at one time sketched musicians in the Keighley Musical Club concerts. He also did oil paintings of the Keighley and District Orchestral Society. Local exhibitions of his work showed that he was also adept in the use of watercolour, pastel, pencil, charcoal and etching.

After getting in touch with **T. C. Butterfield**, principal of the Keighley School of Arts and Crafts, (connected to the Mechanics' Institute) Alex began to teach art and later went into business in the town as a sculptor (**Smith and Boothman**). At the grand age of 84, he returned to the Art School as a pupil, studying for 20 hours a week: life painting, carving and modelling. For many years Alex Smith was a regular exhibitor to the Spring Exhibition at Cartwright Hall, Bradford. He is buried in Utleigh Cemetery.