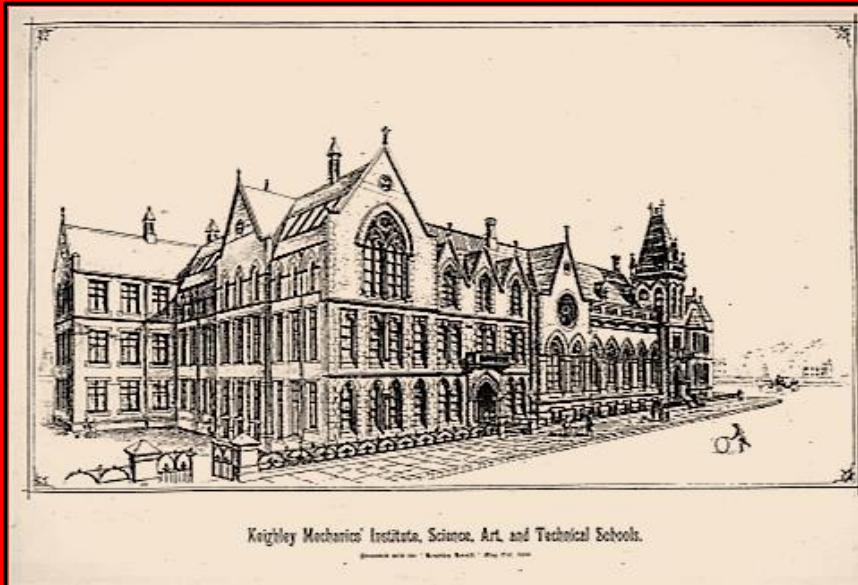


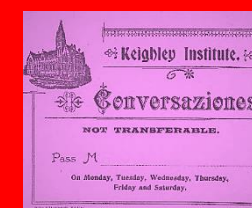
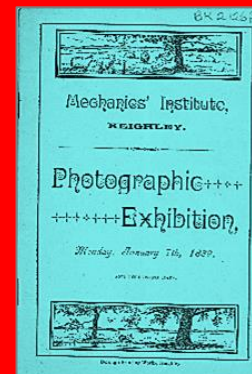
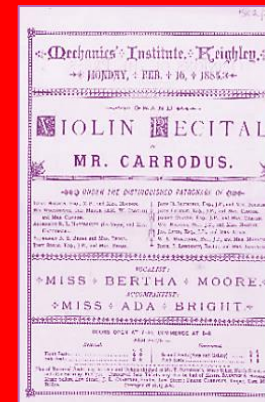
## Keighley Mechanics' Institute: a brief history.



### Keighley Mechanics' Institute: a brief history in significant years.

Keighley's Mechanics' Institute was founded formally at a public meeting on **14 February 1825** when the Official Rules were adopted. It was primarily established by 4 working men for the benefit of working people (*Keighley Past and Present*). It was one of the very earliest in Britain.

- **1834** It moved from a borrowed room at the Free Grammar School in Cook Lane to a **new building in 1834 in North Street** at the corner of Bow Street. There it had a library, reading room and held concerts and lectures that all the Brontës attended (see the Keighley Brontë Footsteps Trail).
- **1836** There were classes for arithmetic, algebra, drawing, geometry, and room for concerts and lectures.
- **1848** Female Improvement classes were introduced, 140 women joined.
- **1854** Evening classes were properly organised.
- **On 30 September 1870**, a larger Institute building, designed by Bradford architects, Messrs. Lockwood & Mawson, was opened in North Street on the current green space. This much larger building included classrooms, studios, library, exhibition gallery and a public hall with a capacity of 1,200.



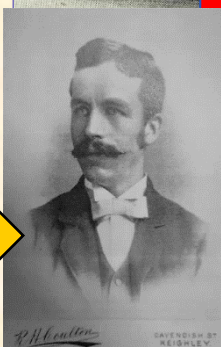
- **1871** The institute had adopted the Drake & Tonson Trust (Free Grammar School) and was running a day **Trade & Grammar School (later Keighley Boys' Grammar)**, **schools of Science and Art**; a textile school, manual instruction department, evening classes in science for boys, domestic science and economy for girls. Events included: balls, concerts, lectures operettas. It had 1,334 members plus 1,317 students attending various classes.
- **1875** The annual *Conversaziones* were first held in 1875 to mark the freeing of the Institute from debt and the Institute's Jubilee year. They became a regular event and so popular that the *Pall Mall Gazette* sent down a reporter to tell London of its success. Over the years, there were all kinds of activities including a children's festival, concerts, comedy acts, theatrical performances, film shows and dances.
- **1887** By 1887 there was a **skating rink, gymnasium**, movable orchestra and scenery and a class theatre.
- **1896** The Institute hosted one of the **first film shows in Keighley**. It was already home to the **Keighley & District Photographic Association** to which it offered a laboratory and dark room.
- **1904** The Institute was transferred to the **Borough Corporation of Keighley** and part of its library was passed to the Keighley Carnegie Public Library, opened in the same year.
- **1962** Sadly, the building caught fire with much of the building left an empty shell. The remaining parts of the building were demolished in **2016**.



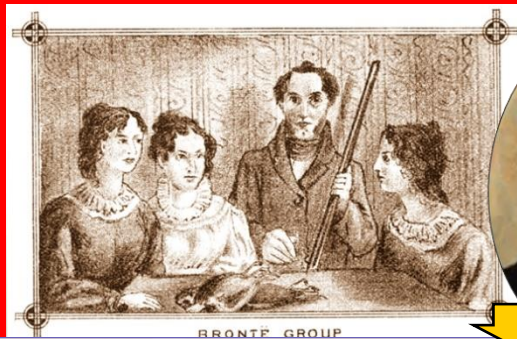
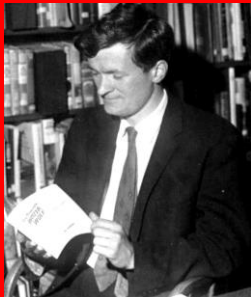
120 years  
since  
assigned to  
Keighley  
Borough  
Corporation



**Alex Keighley** attended the Trade & Grammar School. He was a founding member of the Keighley & District Photographic Association at the Institute. He became internationally famous for pioneering pictorial photography, gave lectures, organised trips and displays of students' prints at the School of Art.

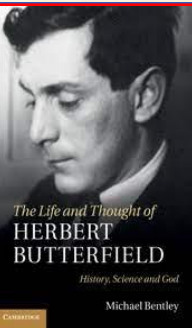


**Andrew Carnegie** (above left) was so impressed with the Institute's schools and their students' successes that he went on to offer £10,000 for Keighley's Public Library. **Dr Ian Dewhirst MBE** grew up in Keighley and eventually became custodian of its archive and library. He promoted local history to the nation through books, articles, talks, television and radio appearances.



**The Brontës** went to lectures and concerts, Patrick was a Committee member and borrowed books from the library.

**Sir Herbert Butterfield** went to the Trade & Grammar School and became one of England's greatest historians. He influenced Asa Briggs who followed him to Cambridge.



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**Lord Asa Briggs** went to the Trade & Grammar School founded at the Institute, regularly used the Keighley Carnegie Library and became England's first great social historian.



**Sir Augustus Spencer** was trained at the Institute's School of Art, won national prizes and eventually became Principal of the Royal College of Art in London.



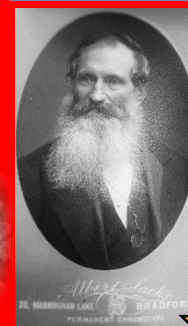
**Frances Mary Richardson Currer**, a member, donated her fossil collection to start the Institute's museum. She was the first national major female book collector. *Painting: John James Masquerier, 1807.*



**John Tiplady Carrodus** was a Keighley violin prodigy, he played at the Institute from the age of 9 and went on to great fame, becoming leader of the Philharmonic Orchestra and principal violinist of the Royal Italian Opera at Covent Garden.



**Molly Sugden**, actress, an early performer for the Institute's *Conversaciones* and with the Good Companions above far right. (*Keighley News* 9.7.2009)



**Sir Isaac Holden (left) and Sir Swire Smith** were both famous in textile manufacturing. Both served on Institute committees. Sir Swire Smith lectured on Institute education all over the world and advised government.