

Life and Times of John Baird

The life and times of John Baird. The Baird Institute is named after John Baird (1813 - 1888). He was a draper, architect and a benefactor. He was born in 1813 at Lugar Street, Cumnock, where his father, David, and mother, Jean, ran the Tup Inn. Previously, David Baird had tenanted the farm at Longmore on Logan Estate.

John was the only son and as he grew up he became interested in science, art, photography etc. Then, Baird took a trade and became a joiner who drew concepts for many buildings around Cumnock.

After his father sadly passed away, he transformed some cottages into brand new buildings for his business spaces, including his own drapery shop, which sold clothes and fabrics.

He wanted to make his own garden and it became known as Baird's Place or Baird Corner which is found next to what is now known as the Baird Institute.

As an active Cumnock local, John Baird left money for a public building in Cumnock this building was going to have a museum, billiards room, reading room, cloakroom, toilet, and a keepers house in the basement. It was to be maintained by the Trustee's appointed in John Baird will.

The building still stands today as a museum called the Baird Institute. This building was designed by Mr Robert Ingram, he was the son of one of Baird's early engineering instructors.

John Baird sadly passed away on the 27th July 1888, which was 3 years before the museum opened and he was 76 years old at the time.

In March 1891, Mrs. Brakenridge, wife of the Town Clerk, opened the Baird Institute. When first opened, the rooms were illuminated with gas lighting and the billiard room featured fancy black and gold Italian marble fireplaces.

The building itself was constructed in the Scottish baronial architectural style using pink sandstone from the local village of Mauchline.

In the museum, there are remaining artefacts that represent the life of John Baird. For example, the original notice for the Baird rooms, museum and billiards hangs in the Baird Institute to this day.

The notice states that one game of billiards was threepence which was the same as 1.25p today. Getting up on the table or jumping on the table was strictly prohibited. Accidentally cutting the cloth would incur a fine of 10 shillings which would be 80p today. Patrons could be strictly expelled from the Baird rooms for unruly conduct, unseemly language or being obnoxious to others. Games may not take or exceed 30 minutes per 50 points if there are others waiting.

