

Bremner, James (1784-1856)

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...engineer and ship-raiser , was born at Keiss, parish of Wick, county of Caithness, on 25 Sept. 1784, being the son of a soldier. He received such education at Keiss as his mother's means could afford until 1798, when he was apprenticed to **Robert Steele & Sons**, shipbuilders of Greenock, whose establishment afforded every opportunity for both theoretical and practical instruction. He remained at **Messrs. Steele's** for about six years.. At the age of twenty-five, after having made two voyages to North America, he settled at Pulteney Town in his native parish, where he eventually occupied the shipbuilding yard for nearly half a century.. During that time he built fifty-six vessels, from a ship of 510 tons to a small sloop of 45 tons. He was also engaged in designing and constructing harbours and piers on the northern coast of Scotland. His works of this kind included the reconstruction of the old harbour of Pulteney Town, the construction of Keiss harbour (1818), the reconstruction of Sarclet harbour near the bay of Wick (1835-6), the construction of Lossiemouth harbour, and the harbour of Pitullie near Fraserburgh, beside surveying and preparing working plans for many other ports in Scotland.

Bremner evinced great ingenuity in the raising and recovering of wrecked vessels; and in the wide circuit between Aberdeenshire and the isle of Skye, comprehending the islands of Orkney, Shetland, and Lewis, and the critical navigation of the Pentland Firth, he raised no less than 236 vessels. With one of his sons he was employed in assisting to take the Great Britain off the strand at Dundrum Bay in August and September 1847.

Bremner was elected a corresponding member of the Institution of Civil Engineers on 12 Feb. 1833, and received a Telford medal in 1844 for his papers on '*Pulteney Town Harbour*', '*Sarclet Harbour*', '*A New Piling Engine*', and '*An Apparatus for Floating Large Stones for Harbour Works*'. For the last twelve years of his life, he acted as agent at Wick for the *Aberdeen, Leith and Clyde Shipping Company*. He died suddenly at Harbour Place, Pulteney Town, on 20 Aug. 1856.

Bremner was the author of a tract entitled '*Treatise on the Planning and Construction of Harbours in Deep Water, on Submarine Pile Driving, the Preservation of Ships Stranded and Raising of those Sunk at Sea, on Principles of lately patented Inventions*', 1845, 8vo.

Of his numerous family the sons were all brought up as engineers; one of them, **David Bremner**, engineer for the Clyde trustees, died in 1852.

[Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers (1857), xvi. 113-20]
[From *The Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by Leslie Stanton; Vol VI; Smith Elder & Co., London 1886]

Additional Notes:

David was the son of soldier **James Bremner** and **Janet Bremner**. He is commemorated in Wick with a large gravestone in the old cemetery, as well as a memorial overlooking the harbour.

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