

## Man Burned to Death

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A serious fire took place early on Sunday morning on the farm of Broomhillock, Keith-hall, occupied by **George Brebner, sen.**, which has been attended with very distressing and fatal results. About twelve o'clock on Saturday night, after the family had retired to rest, **Mr. Brebner** was awakened by a smell of fire in his bedroom, and he immediately rose to see what was the matter. On getting outside he found that the whole place was enveloped in smoke, and that the threshing-mill barn, which is situated some distance from the farm house, and is detached from the other houses, was in flames. **Mr. Brebner** then aroused his family, and went along with one of his sons to the barn, where they found that the whole of the inside of the building was blazing fiercely. When near the door of the building Mr. Brebner stumbled over a boot, which he picked up and recognised as belonging to his son, **George**, who had left the farm in the course of the evening, for the purpose of going to a shoemaker's shop about a half mile distant from Broomhillock. Becoming considerably alarmed, the farmer went up to the door of the burning building, and found that the key (which he had hung up about 6 o'clock in the evening on a nail, after locking the door) was in the lock and the door unlocked. At once the terrible thought passed through his mind that his son was inside the barn --- which by this time was one mass of flame -- and that he was either being burned to death or suffocated. The flames had now got such a hold of the woodwork in the inside that, although repeated efforts were made to get into the barn, it was found to be utterly impossible. The neighbours were alarmed, and in a short time a number of people had arrived, who, in conjunction with the people on the farm, did everything in their power to subdue the flames. Although there was a plentiful supply of water in the mill dam near at hand, still very little -- owing to the scarcity of proper utensils -- could be thrown at once upon the fire and it was impossible to keep it under or save anything inside the building. In the course of about an hour the roof fell in; the barn was completely gutted, and everything destroyed except the stone walls. The barn contained at the time of the fire a threshing machine, a winnowing machine, about 17 quarters of corn, a large quantity of grass and clover seeds, some straw and unthreshed corn, and the usual barn furnishings, all of which, of course, were destroyed. The damage unfortunately was not confined to the inside of the building. A considerable quantity of straw which was standing close became ignited and before the stacks could be removed out of danger, they were burned to the ground.

Shortly after the roof fell in several persons entered the building, and having searched for some time among the debris, the body of **George Brebner jun.**, was at last found lying face downward on the floor terribly charred and burned. One of the arms was burned from the body. It is supposed that the deceased had been returning home when he had observed the fire ventured into the building, was overpowered by the smoke, had fallen down, and been suffocated. Deceased, who was 30 years of age was much respected in the district.

It is believed that the fire originated through the overheating of the drum axle of the threshing machine, which had been working all day up to the evening. The damage is estimated at about £250, and is insured in the offices of the Northern Assurance Company and the Scottish Provincial Company.

(**George Brebner, jun.** was the second son of **George Brebner** and **Isabel Wilson**.)

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