

Obituary of Andrew Bremner, Keiss, CAI

John O'Groats Journal, 19th October 1923

With photographs and comments by John Bremner.

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Mr. Andrew Bremner of Keiss

Mr. Andrew Bremner of Keiss died at Keiss Castle early on Monday morning, and in his passing Wick to-day mourns the loss of one of the most successful business gentlemen in the community, whilst the tenantry of Keiss estate deeply regret the loss of a most considerate landlord. To his more intimate friends the announcement of **Mr. Bremner's** death could hardly have come in the nature of a surprise, for the once alert and active figure of late showed signs of the burden of three-score years and ten, and the step that was firm began to fail. So, too, the strong constitution proved more vulnerable to the ills which years bring in their train; and **Mr. Bremner's** health slowly became indifferent. Yet the end came suddenly, for until the day of his death, he was privileged to attend to business, and had visited his native town a few days before his demise.

Mr. Bremner had an eventful and notable career. The only son of the late **Mr. James Bremner**, fishcurer and rope manufacturer, Kirkhill, Wick (where he was born), **Mr. Bremner** early in life, and after serving his apprenticeship as a cooper, entered the business along with his father when the fishcuring yard was on the site now occupied by the dry dock. On the death of his father he took over the business, removing to more commodious premises at Harbour Quay, Pulteneytown, which he had purchased from the late **Mr. James Methuen**. Here he built up a very extensive and successful fishcuring business, and the initials or trade mark of his firm (J.B.K.) became noted the world over for excellence and reliability of cure, and his products met a ready and lucrative market in America, as well as on the Continent, which he visited periodically in pursuance of his business. He conducted the well-known and extensive ropemaking establishment in South Road.



Herring Fishery at Pulteneytown c 1880

After a number of years of successful enterprise **Mr. Bremner** retired and sold the business to the Mac Fisheries Ltd. (**Lord Leverhulme's** combination). Nevertheless **Mr. Bremner** continued to take a deep interest in the welfare of the industry and never failed, when in town, to visit the scenes of his former activities and to converse with the trade.

In the shipping of the port **Mr. Bremner** was also interested and was owner of the *s.d. Sunbeam* and the *m.b. Marconi*. At one time he had the *Jane* and the *Victory*, as well as shares in other craft.

Ten years ago (*c 1913*) the estate of Keiss, along with the Castle, came into the market, and here **Mr. Bremner** elected to spend the evening of his days when he purchased the estate from the representatives of the late **Sir F.T. Barry, Bart.** A few years later he took over the management of the home farm, and successfully devoted his time to agricultural pursuits. **Mr. Bremner** proved himself a kind and generous landlord, and a gloom has been cast over the estate through his passing.



Keiss Castle, May 2007

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Since he went to reside at Keiss Castle **Mr. Bremner** took no active part in the affairs of the town of Wick, but at one period he was a popular and whole-hearted member of the Town Council, in which he faithfully and assiduously attended to the interests of the ratepayers. At the time of his death, **Mr. Bremner** was a member of the Commissioners of Supply for the county and of the Caithness Standing Joint Committee. Since 1912 he had been a Justice of the Peace for the county. He was a Unionist in politics.

In his younger days **Mr. Bremner** took an active interest in boxing (*line missing*) ... my small place of business, and I on several occasions experienced the hospitality of himself and his good lady at Keiss Castle. He was a many sided man, and I can vouch for his generosity and kindness to many a stricken home during the last few years of unemployment and destitution. While making no open profession of religion on the orthodox lines, there was a deep spiritual side to his nature, too sacred to speak about. Although **Mr. Bremner's** nature, work and studies were entirely different from my own, I always looked upon him as a splendid specimen of the British businessman, who through sheer force of character, probity and integrity had raised himself to the highest position in his chosen line of life.

Andrew Bremner was the son of **James Bremner** and **Marjory Mackay**. Born in 1852, he married **Jane Sutherland Macadie** in 1893.

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