

## Death of James Bremner, C.E.

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### DEATH OF JAMES BREMNER, ESQ., C.E.

**Mr. Bremner**, shipbuilder and civil engineer, died suddenly at his house at Harbour Place, Pulteneytown, on Tuesday evening. Though for some time **Mr. Bremner** had been failing in physical strength, as was naturally to be expected at his advanced age, and after the amount of exposure he had undergone during his arduous life, he had shown no signs of such a speedy dissolution; and the news of his death, soon widespread by the ships in port displaying their colours half-mast high, though it took no one by surprise, did not fail, from its suddenness, to increase the regret felt at the loss of one whose name has been so long and honourably associated with that of the town and his native county.

In the demise of **Mr. Bremner** every one must feel that one of the ablest men in our town or county has gone from among us. Possessed of no ordinary amount of genius, combined with a remarkable degree of physical strength and a daring intrepidity, he achieved for himself a reputation which many members of his profession more favoured in their position in life and early education have failed to attain; and by these raw combinations of the qualities of an engineer, he was able to render an amount of service, not only to the north of Scotland, but to the commercial and maritime interests generally which it would be difficult to over-estimate.

**Mr. Bremner** was a native of Keiss, in this neighbourhood, where he spent a few years of his early youth, but his father being connected with the army, the future engineer had occasion to reside for some time at Fort George, and it was at the military barracks there that he received his initiation in bravery and engineering skill, which grew with him as he grew in years. As soon as he was physically fit for so laborious a calling, he was apprenticed to **Mr. Steele**, ship-carpenter in Greenock, the father of present shipbuilders there, and in that place he continued until the expiry of the term of his apprenticeship, and for some time after. He then went to sea, but shortly after his return from a voyage to America he paid a visit to his native county, and after being engaged on some ship repairs at Castlehill, where he was employed by the late **Mr. Traill**<sup>1</sup>, who to the last took a warm interest in his prosperity, he commenced shipbuilding at Pulteneytown. That business he carried on, on a more or less extensive scale, for nearly thirty years, during which he turned out a number of fine vessels of from 50 up to 500 tons. Latterly, however, owing to his numerous other engagements, he forsook the shipbuilding for more arduous and extensive undertakings in harbour-building. Among other productions of his skill and enterprise in that department of engineering we may enumerate the harbours of Keiss, Sarclet, Lossiemouth, and the New Harbour of Pulteneytown, but there were besides these others which we fail to remember. Several years ago, **Mr. Bremner** spent not a little time and money in patenting an invention for harbour building by means of caissons, but he never had an opportunity of putting the merits of his invention practically to the test. Had his age been thirty-five, instead of seventy-five, we have no doubt the British Society would have again availed themselves of his services, when such opportunity would have been afforded him, and the invention would have been turned to some account. In the management of floating apparatus and other appliances in the raising of sunken vessels he was particularly successful, and earned a name for himself in all parts of the kingdom. With the noble achievement of removing from the strand on the coast of Ireland the leviathan steamer "*Great Britain*," his name will be long and honourably associated, though, as he often said himself, that was not his greatest enterprise. The recovery of a coal-laden ship which was sunk in the West Highlands he considered a much greater feat. But to enumerate even a tithe of the many hundreds of vessels and lives which he succeeded in saving by his skill and enterprise would occupy more space than we are this week in a position to afford.

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<sup>1</sup> James Traill (1758-1843) was a pioneer in the agricultural improvement of Caithness and a founder of the commercial flagstone industry. Castletown, one of James Bremner's harbours, was the shipping point for those flagstones around Britain.

For the past twelve years, and till within the past three or four months, **Mr. Bremner** acted as an agent at Wick for the Aberdeen, Leith, and Clyde Shipping Company, and in conducting the business of that agency in our exposed bay, he was frequently placed in positions of danger from which he narrowly escaped with his life. Indeed, few men have undergone more constant or more severe exposure than did **Mr. Bremner** in the fulfilment of the duties of that agency, and in his labours about the sea and shipping in one capacity or another.

**Mr. Bremner** only survived his wife three months. Of his three daughters, only one – the youngest – is at present at home. His eldest son, **Alexander**, is in Australia, engaged in harbour engineering there. His second son, **David**, who was chief engineer for the Clyde Trustees at Glasgow, died a few years ago; and his third son, **James**, who lately returned from Australia, is now in Glasgow, and is expected here this week.