

OBITUARY

ALFRED BROWN ERNEST BLACKBURN, C.B.E., B.Sc., who died on the 22nd September, 1953, was born at Walsall, Staffordshire, on the 8th January, 1876. He was educated at Solihull Grammar School, Warwickshire, and at Mason University College, Birmingham.

In 1895 he entered upon a 3 years' pupillage with Mr A. Ashton Hill, M.I.C.E., and on its completion he became a Junior Engineer with the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company.

In 1901 he joined the staff of the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company as Engineer and General Manager, and later was made a Director. He retired in 1949, but retained his seat on the Board.

Mr Blackburn served on several advisory committees, both on water engineering and mining subsidence. These included the Water Power Resources Committee (1919-1921) and the Ministry of Health Advisory Committee on Water (1922-1937). In 1924 he gave evidence on behalf of the British Waterworks Association and the Water Companies Association before the Royal Commission on Mining Subsidence, and later prepared evidence for Birmingham Corporation in connexion with the Elan Valley works.

In recognition of these services he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Mr Blackburn was elected an Associate Member of the Institution in 1901, and was transferred to the class of Member in 1920. He was also a Past-President and Member of Council of the Institution of Water Engineers, a Past-President of the British Waterworks Association, and Chairman of the Northern J.I.C. Water Industry.

As a Student he was awarded a Miller Prize for his Paper on "Engineering Education from a Student's Standpoint," and subsequently wrote several Papers on water engineering.

He leaves three sons, a daughter, and two step-daughters.

JAMES WILLIAMSON, C.B.E., who died on the 18th August, 1953, was born at Holytown, Lanarkshire, on the 5th April, 1881. He was educated at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, and at Glasgow University, and served a 4-year apprenticeship with the Engineer to the Middle Ward of the County of Lanark.

His first post was that of Assistant Engineer with the firm of Formans and McCall, which he took up in 1903; he became a Chief Assistant in 1907. His early work was connected mainly with railway construction, but from 1908 to 1912 he was in charge of varied works, including a drainage system for Neilston, Renfrewshire; extensions to Ardrossan Harbour and graving dock; structural designs for office buildings in Glasgow, and

extensions to the Savoy Theatre, Glasgow, and to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, London.

In 1912 and 1913, after a short period as assistant to Baker and Hurtzig, Consulting Engineers, of Westminster, Mr Williamson gained further experience in structural design and manufacture as assistant to the Chief Engineer of the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Co., Darlington. The work included the design of large material-handling travelling gantries for the erection yard, deep pier foundations, large-span railway bridges, and an early arch-bridge proposal for Sydney Harbour.

He returned to Formans and McCall as Chief Assistant from 1913 to 1915, and was responsible for the design of structural work for a new passenger station at Aberdeen, and other large buildings. At the beginning of World War I, he carried out extensive tachometric surveys for Nobel's cordite factory at Ardeer, Scotland, and designed an 80-mile railway system for H.M. explosives factory at Gretna. He was also employed at the head office of the Explosives Department, Westminster, on the preparation of lay-out plans for the Gretna factory. In 1915, he was transferred to the staff of S. Pearson & Son, Ltd, and was made head of the Civil Engineering Department for the acids and guncotton section of the Gretna factory.

He later occupied, for a short while, a similar position at the Henbury Explosives Factory, near Bristol, but in 1917 he joined the Royal Engineers as a lieutenant, and was engaged at the War Office in design work for Channel train ferries, elevated concrete water-tanks, and other reinforced-concrete structures. In 1918, he was seconded to John Vermehr for work on reinforced-concrete craft. He later became Chief Designer, and then Chief Engineer, with this firm.

Following 2 years in private practice, he joined Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, Westminster, as Chief Engineer, and remained with this firm until 1936. Major works for which he was responsible during this period included Barking Power Station—the largest steam power station in Britain; the Gander Valley Water Power and Paper Scheme, Newfoundland, and the Uhl River Water Power Scheme, Mandi State, India, for which he prepared reports; the Salt River Steam Power Station, Cape Town, for which he prepared designs and specifications; the new Strand Market Wharf and Transit Sheds, Rangoon, and reconstruction of the Sule Pagoda Wharf; and the Galloway Water Power Scheme, with which he was connected from its very beginnings.

After a further short period in private practice (1937–38), Mr Williamson became Director and Chief Engineer of the firm of Sir William Arrol & Co. Ltd. Again he was responsible for much varied work, including the design and construction of bridges, factory buildings, and shipyard installations.

In 1942, he was appointed a member of the Cooper Committee, established to report on hydro-electric development in Scotland, and in 1943 he joined the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board. He resigned his post

with Sir William Arrol & Co. Ltd. in 1944 to undertake further hydro-electric work as a private consultant in Glasgow. The firm of James Williamson and Partners was constituted in 1947.

He was largely responsible for the design and construction of the Loch Sloy, Tummel-Garry, and Shira power schemes, and it was for this work that he received the C.B.E. in the 1953 New Year Honours List.

Mr Williamson was elected an Associate Member of the Institution in 1907, and transferred to the class of Member in 1923. He was the Author of several technical books and Papers, including those presented to the Institution on "Jetty and Pump-House Works at Barking Power-Station,"¹ and on "Considerations of Flow in Large Pipes, Conduits, Tunnels, Bends, and Siphons,"² for which he was awarded a Telford Premium and a Crampton Prize, respectively, by the Council of the Institution.

He is survived by his wife and four daughters.

SIR JOHNSTONE WRIGHT, who died on the 19th July, 1953, was born at Dunning, Perthshire, on the 22nd January, 1883. He received his early education at private school, and later studied at Perth Academy and at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow. He served a 5-year apprenticeship under D. Stewart & Co., Engineers, of Glasgow.

He was mainly concerned throughout his career with the construction, maintenance, and operation of power plant and mains, and in later years with the management of electricity undertakings.

His first appointment was that of Assistant Testing Engineer with the British Electric Plant Co., in 1903. From 1906 to 1919, he was employed by the North East Coast Power Companies, as Construction and Mechanical Engineer, and later as Power Station Operation Engineer.

He was Deputy City Electrical Engineer of Bradford from then until 1922, when he became Chief Electrical Engineer and General Manager of Belfast Corporation Electricity Undertaking.

In 1927, he was appointed Deputy Chief Engineer, and in 1932, Chief Engineer, of the Central Electricity Board. From 1944 until his retirement in 1947, he was General Manager to the Board.

Sir Johnstone, who was knighted in 1943, was elected a full Member of the Institution in 1934. He was President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers for the 1939-40 Session, and in 1944 was nominated to serve on the Engineering Joint Council as representative of that Institution. He was the Author of several Papers on electrical engineering.

He is survived by Lady Wright and his two daughters.

¹ J. Instn Civ. Engrs, vol 11, p. 451 (Apr. 1939).

² Min. Proc. Instn Civ. Engrs, vol. 226, p. 135 (1927-28, Pt 2).