

Richard Henry Brunton F.R.G.S ..(26th December 1841 to 24th of April 1901) was born in the Coastguard house Muchalls Kincardineshire "" now 11 Marine Terrace "" to Richard Brunton a semi retired ? lieutenant in the Royal Navy and Margaret Telford. By the time the young boy was 9 years old the family had moved to Burghead in Morayshire and his father had been retained in the Royal Navy on Half Pay .

Young Richard received private schooling in Scotland and afterwards joined the Aberdeen engineering company of John Willett who were involved in the construction of bridges and railways in Scotland . The Caledonian railway had only reached Muchalls and then Aberdeen in the late 1850"s

So it is probable that Richard would have been involved in the expansion of the railway from Aberdeen north and east to Inverness and Fraserburgh .

After his training as a Railway Engineer he joined the David and Thomas Stevenson brothers who were employed by the British Government in building Lighthouses around the coast of the U.K.

During this time Trade between Europe and Japan was rapidly expanding , and the Japanese government was under an obligation to ensure the waters and harbours around it"s coast were safe for incoming and exporting large ships .

This project had already begun under the direction of the French Foreign Advisor Leonce Verney , but was not proceeding fast enough according to the British government .

Sir Harry Parkes a British minister persuaded the Tokugawa shogunate to hire D. @ T Stevenson to complete the charting and building of lighthouses in Japan and , to that end in 1868, Richard Brunton civil engineer born in Muchalls Kincardineshire and his Wife Elizabeth Nee Wauchope “born 12 . 12 . 1843, sister in law? And two assistants sailed for Japan . During the voyage they were to hear word that the Tokugawa shogunate had been replaced by the Meiji government who were to become the driving force behind Japan”s emergence as a powerful force in the Far East..

The lighthouse department to which he was assigned was based in Yokohama with workshops and store rooms put up in a four acre compound , here , he established a system for lighthouse keepers modelled on the Northern Lighthouse Board of Scotland . When Richard Brunton left Japan in 1876?

He had overseen the construction of 26 lighthouses , established 2 lightships 13buoys and 3 beacons . “”We should remember that Brunton had to adapt his building techniques In a country where earthquakes were prevalent .

Aside from his work on lighthouses Brunton also surveyed and drew the first detailed maps of Yokohama , planned it”s sewage system , street paving and Gas lights ? , established a

telegraph system , and designed and built the settlement”s first Iron bridge . He also helped found Japan”s first school of Civil Engineering , and in recognition of his efforts was received by Emperor Meiji in an audience in 1871 .

During their stay in Yokohama Mr and Mrs Brunton were delighted to announce the birth of daughters Mary and Harriet .

It is interesting to observe that Brunton expressed alarm at the British admiration of the Japanese people ,as his personal view of men applying for a Lighthouse keepers job was of “drunkenness , sleeping on watch ,telling lies ,threatening Europeans with swords etc , lazy , and indisciplined ? (Well it did not take them long as a nation to change that scenario)

After disagreeing with Japanese officials (his work always had to be approved by them) he left Japan in March 1876

Although afterwards he was to receive a prize for his paper“Japan Lights “..

During a leave of absence in1872 Brunton returned to London and was enlisted to assist the Iwakura Mission during it”s visit to Britain . In September , Brunton took Ito Hirobumi and a group of his assistants to visit 28 factories around London , Birmingham , Manchester , Liverpool , before rejoining the main group in Edinburgh . Mr Brunton was consulted on other engineering and railway projects and significantly contributed to the Waterworks and Harbour

design of Yokohama where he is remembered by a commemorative statue ..

In his memoirs Brunton describes in detail the burial of Frank Tovey Lake a Mid shipman who was sailing with him on H.M.C. Manilla when he was making his first survey for locations for lighthouses . His high regard for the care that the islanders gave to the grave was , as he himself admitted “In contrast to his general impression of the Japanese “” .

I cannot “pass” on this opportunity to add the following ..

A Hebridean , Colin McVean was employed by the Japanese Imperial Government to carry out surveys .He had married Mary Cowan daughter of Penicuik papermaker Alexander Cowan in 1868 , trained by MacCullam and Dundas civil engineers of Edinburgh , McVean spent some years on the Admiralty Survey of the Hebrides , giving his name to McVean Rock of Eriskay , he also gained engineering experience in the Ottoman Empire in the Black Sea port of Varna . Invited to Japan by the Meiji government , his surveying expertise was required to assist in the lighthouse-building activities of Brunton .

The McVean link with Japan continued when his eldest daughter married John Gubbins of the British legation in Tokyo and their children were brought up in Japan , subsequently one of the boys Colin Gubbins became Director of S.O.E. Special Operations in Europe 1940 .

By the time of his return to Britain , Brunton had been made a Fellow of the Geological Society . He worked for Youngs Paraffin company for three years Tell story ?? and then as an architect in London for 15 years before his death in 1901 .

Celebrations in Yokohama in 1991 marking the 150th anniversary of Brunton”s birth and his contribution to modern Engineering in Japan attracted attention to his career Which had been forgotten in Britain .

He is buried in West Norwood Cemetery where the Yokohama Chamber of Commerce restored his Marble statue in 1991.

Please also look up Thomas Blake Glover Japan ..