

= Sir John Brunner , 1st Baronet =

Sir John Tomlinson Brunner , 1st Baronet , PC DL ( 8 February 1842 ? 1 July 1919 ) was a British chemical industrialist and Liberal Party politician . At Hutchinson 's alkali works in Widnes he rose to the position of general manager . There he met Ludwig Mond , whom he later formed a partnership with to create the chemical company Brunner Mond & Co . , initially making alkali by the Solvay process . As a Member of Parliament he represented Northwich , Cheshire , in 1885 ? 1886 and then from 1887 ? 1910 . He was a paternalistic employer and as a politician supported Irish Home Rule , trade unions , free trade , welfare reforms and , leading up to the First World War , a more sympathetic stance towards Germany . Brunner was a prominent Freemason , and a generous benefactor to the towns in his constituency and to the University of Liverpool . He is the great grandfather of the Duchess of Kent .

= = Early life and career = =

John Tomlinson Brunner was born in Everton , Liverpool , the fourth child and second son of John Brunner ( b . 20 June 1800 ) , a Swiss Unitarian and schoolmaster , and Margaret Catherine Curphey ( d . 8 September 1847 ) , who originated from the Isle of Man , daughter of Thomas Curphey and wife Margaret Leece . His father established a school in Netherfield Road , Everton , known as St George 's House , to teach children along the lines advocated by Pestalozzi . Brunner 's mother died in 1847 , when he was aged five ; his father married Nancy Inman in 1851 . She had a shrewd business sense and Brunner gave credit to her for teaching him skills in practical matters . Brunner was educated at his father 's school and then , at the age of 15 , he decided to follow a career in commerce . He spent four years in a shipping house in Liverpool , but found it neither exciting nor lucrative , and so decided on a change of career . In 1861 , Brunner took a clerical post at Hutchinson 's alkali works in Widnes , where his older brother Henry was already working as technical manager . There , he rose to the position of general manager . Shortly after starting work at Hutchinson 's , Brunner met the German @-@ born chemist Ludwig Mond .

= = Brunner Mond and Company = =

In 1873 Brunner formed a partnership with Mond and together they founded Brunner Mond & Company . Their initial capital was less than £ 20 @,@ 000 ( £ 1 @.@ 6 million in 2016 ) , most of which was borrowed . In April 1872 Mond had been to Belgium to meet Ernest Solvay to negotiate terms to manufacture alkali by the process Solvay had developed . The Solvay process produced soda ash more cheaply than the established Leblanc process , from raw materials which were more easily obtainable , and produced fewer waste products . Mond made a gentlemen 's agreement with Solvay to apportion the global markets , with Mond 's company having exclusive rights to the United States and to the British Isles .

Brunner and Mond decided to build their factory at Winnington , near Northwich , Cheshire on land owned by Lord Stanley of Alderley . This was sited on the River Weaver which allowed for the transport of the raw materials and finished products to and from the works . Lord Stanley insisted on selling the house , Winnington Hall , as well as the surrounding land , as part of the deal . The purchase was completed in 1873 , and for a time both Mond and Brunner lived separately in the wings of the hall . The early years were extremely difficult , initially in getting the plant to work efficiently and then in selling the soda ash . It was not until 1878 that success was achieved when they outsold their competitors and were producing their products more cheaply . In 1881 , the partnership was converted into a limited company with capital assets listed at £ 600 @,@ 000 ( £ 5 @.@ 5 million in 2016 ) and the founders became managing directors for life . In 1891 , Brunner became the chairman and retained that position until April 1918 , 14 months before his death . However , by then his duties were being increasingly performed by his son , Roscoe .

After its slow start , Brunner Mond & Company became the wealthiest British chemical company of the late 19th century . On its merger with three other British chemical companies to form Imperial

Chemical Industries ( ICI ) in 1926 , it had a market capitalization of over £ 18 million ( £ 940 million in 2016 ) . Brunner 's sobriquet , " Chemical Croesus " , was given to him by The Times . He was a paternalistic employer and went to great lengths to improve the situation of his employees . Measures introduced by Brunner and Mond were shorter working hours , sickness and injury insurance , and holidays with pay .

= = Politics = =

During the years he was working at Hutchinson 's in Widnes , Brunner was developing his political interests . He joined the Widnes chapter of the National Education League and became its secretary in 1872 . This gave him the opportunity to come into contact with Liberals from Liverpool and other parts of the country . Soon after moving to Northwich Brunner became more practically involved with education locally , in particular with the British School in the town . He later served on its board of governors and also on the local sanitary authority . As a result of the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 the parliamentary constituency of Northwich was created and Brunner offered himself as a candidate for the Liberal Party . In his speech for the position he expressed support for the disestablishment of the Church of England , for reform of property laws , for Irish Home Rule and for compensation for those whose properties had been damaged by the pumping of brine from the salt mines in the area . During the campaign he was heckled because he had a foreign @-@ sounding name . He responded " My father was a Swiss , my mother was a Manx woman , I was born in Liverpool , my nurse was Welsh : is that Cheshire enough for you ? " At the general election on 1 December 1885 Brunner beat William Henry Verdin , his Conservative rival , with a majority of 1 @, @ 028 .

The Liberal Party won more seats than any other party in the election , but insufficient to form a majority government , leaving the Irish Parliamentary Party holding the balance of power . It proved impossible to form a stable government , and so another general election was called in June 1886 . In the meantime , the Liberal Party had split , and the Liberal Unionist Party had been formed . Brunner 's opponent at the 1886 election was William Henry Verdin 's brother , Robert , standing as a Liberal Unionist . The election was held on 13 July 1886 , and Brunner was defeated by 458 votes . In November 1886 , Brunner embarked on a world tour , accompanied by his wife and his son Stephen . His return to Northwich on 2 July 1887 was greeted with great celebration , as he was extremely popular in the town , regarded as a kind and sympathetic employer and a generous benefactor . Within three weeks of Brunner 's return , Robert Verdin died and a by @-@ election was called . Brunner 's opponent was Lord Henry Grosvenor , who was standing as a Liberal Unionist . This time , at the election on 13 August , Brunner won with a majority of 1 @, @ 129 . At the 1892 general election , Brunner 's opponent was not a Liberal Unionist , but a Conservative , George Whiteley , who was a cotton manufacturer from Blackburn . Brunner was returned with an increased majority of 1 @, @ 255 . In the 1895 election he beat Thomas Ward , another Conservative , by 1 @, @ 638 votes . The 1900 general election was held during the Boer War , to which Brunner was opposed . He retained his seat , but with a reduced majority of 699 . In the 1906 general election , Brunner 's opponent was the Conservative Colonel B.N. North who had fought in the Boer War . Brunner increased his majority to 1 @, @ 792 . He continued to be the Member of Parliament for Northwich until the general election in January 1910 , when he decided not to stand again , partly because of his own health and also because of concern for his wife 's health . Subsequently he moved to Surrey , but continued to play a part in politics when he was elected to the Chertsey division of Surrey County Council .

As a Liberal MP he supported Irish Home Rule , trade unions , free trade and welfare reforms . Leading up to the First World War he argued that Britain should adopt a more sympathetic approach towards Germany , including naval disarmament . When war did break out , Brunner was resolute in the opinion that it should be fought and won . In addition to the production of alkali , his factories were making other chemicals for use as explosives . He also built a new factory to purify trinitrotoluene .

## = = Benefactions = =

Brunner was a generous benefactor whose gifts included the provision of schools , guildhalls and social clubs . In Northwich he provided a free library and re @-@ endowed Sir John Deane 's Grammar School . In Runcorn he purchased a disused chapel and presented it to the town to be used by the trades unions and the Friendly Societies , and in nearby Weston village he bought a disused school and gave it to the local community to serve as its village hall . He also endowed the chairs of economics , physical chemistry and Egyptology at the University of Liverpool .

Abroad he gave gifts to the Landesmuseum in Zürich and provided a hospital , also in Switzerland . In 1885 he became a Freemason and in 1900 founded the John Brunner Lodge at Over Winsford . The following year he was honoured with the brevet rank of Past Grand Deacon of England .

In 1899 Brunner ( who had by then been created a baronet ) became chairman of the Runcorn and Widnes Transporter Bridge Company . He subscribed £ 25 @,@ 000 ( £ 2 @.@ 5 million in 2016 ) towards its construction plus a loan of £ 12 @,@ 000 ( £ 1 @.@ 2 million in 2016 ) together with a personal guarantee on a bank loan of £ 31 @,@ 000 ( £ 3 @.@ 1 million in 2016 ) . When the building of the bridge was complete in 1905 it was due to be opened by Edward VII , but the king was unable to attend , and so Brunner performed the ceremony himself . By 1911 it had become apparent that the bridge would always operate at a loss , and Brunner assigned his interest in it to Widnes Corporation . The Times stated that this action amounted to a " virtual gift of £ 68 @,@ 000 " ( £ 6 @.@ 2 million in 2016 ) .

## = = Personal life = =

On 14 June 1864 Brunner married Salome Davies , the daughter of a Liverpool merchant with whom he had six children . Salome died on 29 January 1874 and the following year he married Jane Wyman , the daughter of a Kettering physician and the governess to his children . From this marriage three more children , all daughters , were born . In 1891 the Brunners moved from Winnington Hall to Wavertree , a suburb of Liverpool .

Amongst other offices held , he was Vice @-@ President of the British Science Guild , Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Lancashire ( from 1904 ) and Pro @-@ Chancellor of the University of Liverpool . In 1909 the University of Liverpool awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws . In 1895 he was made the Baronet of Druids Cross in the County of Lancashire and in 1906 he became a member of the privy council , but he declined offers of a peerage . He died in 1919 at his home in Chertsey , Surrey . His estate amounted to over £ 906 @,@ 000 ( £ 38 million in 2016 ) . In addition , he had given generously to his five married daughters , and had transferred investments to his sons .

The baronetcy passed to his eldest son , John Fowler Leece Brunner . His descendants include , through his elder son 's daughter ( Joyce Brunner Worsley ) , Katharine , Duchess of Kent ( born 1933 ) , married since 1961 to a grandson of Britain 's King George V , and Shelagh Brunner ( 1902 @-@ 1983 ) , daughter of his younger son ( Harold Roscoe Brunner ) , who morganatically married Prince Ferdinand of Liechtenstein ( 1901 @-@ 1981 ) in 1925 , a member of that principality 's still reigning dynasty .