



On February 7<sup>th</sup> 1891 The *Otago Daily Times* reported the unexpected death, which had occurred the previous evening at St Clair, of James Clark Brown, formerly the Member of Parliament for the Tuapeka district. Brown was born in 1830, at Macclesfield, Cheshire. In 1853, he set off intending to join the Victorian gold rush, but instead ended up running a steamship between Sydney and Hobart. In 1861 he travelled to Otago, and set up as a storekeeper and businessman in Lawrence. Over the years he was involved in various business ventures in the district, including mining and milling, as well as a brief partnership in the Tuapeka Times, but none proved very successful for him and he “eventually found his position in life as Member of the House of Representatives for Tuapeka.”

Brown was a member of the Tuapeka County Council, and of various local boards. He was also a J.P. He entered the Otago Provincial Council in 1865, and was first elected to Parliament in 1869. He held his seat for more than twenty years, and was returned “without opposition for Bruce, and uninterruptedly as member for that constituency and for Tuapeka,” until the General Election of 1890, when he was defeated by H.S. Valentine.

The parliamentary career of James Clark Brown was rather low-key, and he did not make any major speeches in the House. However, according to the *Otago Daily Times*, he “generally succeeded in getting the wants of his constituency satisfied.” One example of this was his successful advocacy, despite opposition, for a railway branch line to Lawrence to be constructed from the projected Southern Trunk Railway from Dunedin to Balclutha. Thanks to his persistence, the line was authorised in 1873, and completed on April 2, 1877, when even carriages drawn by two engines “steamed into Lawrence”, and J.C. Brown formally declared the line open.

In 1887 he travelled to London, and succeeded in persuading English investors to purchase a consolidation of the competing mining claims at Blue Spur, creating the Blue Spur Consolidated Gold-mining Company. He became the local director of the enterprise. However, when the London Company realised that the potential profits had been over-represented, a dispute arose over management matters in which they demanded that Brown be removed from his position and their own expert appointed.

This situation, along with some banking difficulties is likely to be one of the ‘various ways’ in which, the *Times* reported, he was “much worried at the commencement of the election campaign” of 1890, in which he lost his Parliamentary seat. He became very ill, and in January 1891 he and his wife came to St Clair in the hope that the sea air might improve his health. Unfortunately, it did not, and he died on February 6, 1891, aged 61. His distinctive grave in the Northern Cemetery is carved in the likeness of a stone cairn, on which are fixed a diagonally-placed bronze anchor and scroll, which records his name and accomplishments. – Helen Gilmore

Prepared for the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand  
([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) by Helen Gilmore.

Sources: Issues of *Otago Witness and Tuapeka Times* [www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz](http://www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz);

*Tuapeka the Land and its People*, by W.R.Mayhew

*A Circling of Gold*, by J.S. Murray

“Biographical Details” [www.northerncemetery.org.nz](http://www.northerncemetery.org.nz)