

INCIDENTS OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. THOMAS KNIGHT OF FORD
WRITTEN BY
HIS GRANDSON, CHARLES EDWARD KNIGHT GREGSON OF LOWLYNN

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Thomas Knight was the eldest of three brothers, one sister Alice, my Great Aunt, who I remember very well. She was married to a Captain Bolton R.N. both passed away and were buried at the Parish Church Yard, Berwick on Tweed.

The Knights came from the South of England. Thomas was educated at Cambridge for the Church was curate at St. Pauls Cathedral London for a time.

He was vicar of Berwick on Tweed, held that position a few years, was then promoted to the Rectorship of Ford, Northumberland, Ford living being in the Gift of his Aunt Lady Susanna Delaval.

He held the Living of Ford until the day of his death, passing away at the ripe age of 78 years on Good Friday about 5.50 p.m. and was buried in Ford Church Yard alongside of his sons and late curate (Delaval).

Delaval was my Uncle and God father. On Easter Monday, Thomas Knight was buried, it rained in torrents the whole of the day.

I was on my way home from San Francisco and was forewarned something had happened at Home.

I was then 1st Mate of the Preston built Barque Naravilla. Capt. and Mrs. Baired.

Incident in Thomas Knights life at the age of 68 while driving a very fast and spirited horse home to Ford from Lowlynn where he had been staying a few days with his son and in passing over Ford Common a donkey was laying on his back rolling about with feet in the air on a bright summer afternoon.

The horse in gig took fright and was driven by the sole occupant of the gig and with the bit between his teeth raced home to Ford never slackening his speed even at top Ford a very steep gradient about 35°. Everything seemed to go well till my Grand Father was guiding him down Ford Hill when in turning to the right to pass into Ford Village through a gateway with heavy stone pillars the left wheel cam in contact with the stone pillar. Threw the old man out on his head and he was picked up and was carried on a first aid stretcher (a door from one of the cottages) down to the Rectory a very serious accident; he lay unconscious for three days,

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and was struck deaf dumb and blind by concussion of the brain. The gig was I believe completely smashed beyond all repair, the horse running on with the shafts only.

After about three months he began to improve, hearing was first restored to him then his speech and eventually his sight.

Well do I remember coming home to Liverpool and receiving the news by letter and took the first opportunity to go north to see him.

I landed at Lowlynn "all's well" my poor father was much cut up though thankful it had not been worse.

In a few days I went up with my father to see him and I simply could not in those days understand it - to see a man looking at you, talking, quite rational but still could not see. Blind – yes "too true".

My father said to him "do you know who has come to see you" whereupon he got hold of my hand, felt both hands, he then felt all over my face and head. "No" I don't know who it is". He at once said, "speak and I will know you" I could only say "Grandad how are you?"

He at once said "Oh it is Charlie my boy. I am doing very nicely, and am quite happy; having had a very narrow and meraculous escape and I am thankful to God it was no worse."

As time went on he gradually improved and overcoming all his ailment lived and preached and administered to the wants of the Parish rich and poor alike. Till he arrived at the age 78 years simply coming down to Lowlynn for a few weeks change and rest and pass away as peaceful a death as any man could wish for.

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"HIS LAST DAY"

He had been apparently keeping fairly well and no one for a moment thought his end was so near. These were my fathers words.

Till in the evening about 5 p.m. he went to bed and everyone in the house was summoned to his bed side.

My father told me he knelt up in bed and prayed very earnestly kissed each one individually round the bedside and said "God Bless you all. I am very tired and I am going to sleep". Yes, his last sleep passing away about 6 p.m. without even a sigh.

My sister Mary was so moved in her mind that she knelt at his bedside all night and it was with difficulty my father, mother and other friends were compelled to remove her as quietly as possible as I understand she could not realise that he had taken his last sleep.

Peace Perfect Peace
Our Great Loss
His Gain

My father arranged to lay him to rest on Easter Sunday and had Ford Church draped in Purple but he was overruled and he was buried on Easter Monday afternoon - alongside of his son Delaval who was his curate. Such a day. The very clouds seemed to have burst and the whole afternoon the rain came down in torrents and I have heard said there was not any persons head that was seen to be covered during the ceremony.

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HOW OUR FAMILY TO THE NAME OF GREGSON

When my father was a boy of 12 years of age, Lowlynn belonged to a man named Antony Gregson a Widower who had eight sons. The sons were not living with him after their mother died. A man very fond of sport, he kept a pack of Harriers and hunted them himself on his own property. Strange each one of these sons as they came of age left home and were cut off by their father.

On an Autumn afternoon while out hunting he fell from his horse in an epileptic seizure, was brought home to Lowlynn, operated on by Doctors, was bled and died that night. He being a very heavy full blooded man eighteen stone in weight. The property was then in his own right of disposal.

To the astonishment of all none more to than my Grandfather (Thomas Knight) and his near friends. The whole of the property was left to my father (Henry Knight) then only a boy of 12 years of age.

A special clause in the will stating that Henry Knight was to take name of Gregson instead of Knight and the property was made into an entail property about 3,200 acres composed of 997 acres of grass Park Land of the finest clover. The best farming land and plantations shooting and fishing from small Bince Low by name. There was also an addition belonging to the estate called 'Toni' Near Newcastle on Tyne which was sold in the year 1867 for £32,500

I being at home from Sea at the time was sent down to the station (Beal) to get the telegram what it had been sold for.

It was put up for public auction at Newcastle, and sold to the highest bidder; principally mining and shooting property, very boggy land. The property now belonged to my father who took the name of Gregson as the will of Antony Gregson wished him to be and make it entail property. The executors had charge of the property, looked after it, received rents all money being banked for my father till he was 21 years of age.

He went to Oxford and was educated at Balliol College and after coming of age took charge of the property himself and married my mother a Eliza Selby of Cheswick House 3 miles from Lowlynn on the Berwick Road.

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A FEW INSTANCES OF HIS LIFE

His Jubilee Year

After 50 years Rector of Ford Parish Church many people from far and near anxious to show their appreciation of his service, after so long a time of usefulness in the Parish and good towards every one especially the poor. The matter was so talked about but never mentioned to him. Till a committee of gentlemen met on behalf of all classes.

They called upon him to ascertain his wishes with regards of holding a jubilee day in the village also making him a present.

He was very much moved on receiving them at the Rectory wondering why they came and what was up and when they told him what these wishes were which were the wishes of whole of the Parishioners. His answer was:

“What would please me most would be something the Parishioners can participate in” and knowing he had himself been thinking of an Organ for the Church.

An organ was presented to the Church costing £800 and the old and young folk were feasted at their homes and in the village school room everyone rich and poor helped to pay for it with their pounds and pennies.

And for himself he was presented with a handsome silver inkstand with suitable inscription engraved in centre between inkstand.

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'A FEW INSTANCES OF HIS LIFE

Thomas Knight

HIS GREAT AIM AND FOND AMUSEMENT FISHING

The only exercising pleasure he took while I know him was fishing.

First of all he was a grand fisher of men women boys and girls souls and again a grand one the stream or still water few could beat although he never competed for any prizes in my life time one or two instances of his persistency of purpose was one which I so well remember told me by himself and I had had a day fishing with him.

Land which the paper called Land and Water had an article in print about the exploits of a Young Man of the Name of Knight.

He went to Coldstream for a days fishing for trout and went out in a boat, the Boatman rowing him about the stream. Trout were not talking well and just about noon the sun broke shining very brightly; nearly everyone had given up fishing and he thought he would put on a suitable fly for a Bull Trout or Grilse.

A number of people who had been fishing and had given up when the sun had at noon come out so brightly went on shore to sit down and no doubt to eat their luncheon. But the gaily man Thomas Knight persistently fished away. He had not long to wait.

A clear run salmon from the sea was tempted by a fly made and dressed by his son Valentine. The fish made a swoop for the fly and got hooked. By experience the fisher knew it was only slightly hooked and he run that fish for 1 hour and 15 minutes or thereabouts; the boatman pulling the boat as required. Till Mr. Fish turned over on his side coming up to the surface for a change of air. The net was soon under him and into the boat. A very fine specimen of a clear run salmon from sea 18lbs weight hooked by the Dorsel Fin having the full power of his head and tail during the time he was held under control. Everyone on the Bank were surprised and this young man named Knight was then 68 years of age full 6 feet or more in height hair as white as snow and I was very amused when he told me the story himself when I came home from sea and showed me the cutting out of the paper.

Land & Water

Headed

The exploits of a Young Man of the Name of KNIGHT

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My Last Days Fishing

In the Till with Thomas Knight Grandfather & Grandson

I had come home to Lowlynn and of course I had to spend a week or 10 days with my old friend at Ford.

I went out fishing every day and, although I had material of my own, I had not the right kinds of flies, worms or salted minnows always thoroughly enjoying myself especially when I came home to his house and I gave him a record of what I had done during the day. He knew the river so well himself and always gave me full instructions what to do and where to go to find the big ones and with my own knowledge and keenness I used to do fairly well.

At last I had to get back home to pack up to go off to sea again and on my last day I simply went round to say farewell to all my old friends in the village.

In the afternoon I went to have one farewell cast in the Till and being a fresh breeze in the partly cloudy sky he said to me you take my 15 foot rod and I will give some suitable flies. So far so good. So after dinner, sharp 1 o'clock I started off as time was short. He was to come to meet me at 2 p.m. and see me catch something decent before I went home that evening.

The dogcart which he drove me home in had been ordered for 4.30 p.m. At about 2.15 he met me a little above Ford Bridge. I had only managed 6 fairly good trout. "Well Charles my boy I think I'll change your tail fly and see if you cannot manage to get something decent to get before we go home to Lowlynn tonight". So I shortened in my line as required and went and sat down on the grass and put on the very fly which killed the 18 lb Salmon when he was a young man of 66 years of age. He was now 73 (almost).

"Now Charlie be very careful, wet your line with short casts so that it will not snap with sudden plunges of a big one. Do face, see that bush on the other side as we are walking close to the bank and very slowly"

"Yes Grandad".

"Cast your fly just under that bush and if he is at home you'll get him as I have done before as it seems the resting place as well as a feeding place for these deep sea fish before they take a run up the rapid a few hundred yards further up."

So I made 3 casts of my line as he directed me, lengthening my line each casts. The third time I just managed to gauge the distance. When the old man exclaimed "well done Charlie now look out."

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He hardly got the words out when a fish made a swoop and I hooked him. Oh! the intense excitement I got him. But the old man steadied me up. I then wanted him to land the beautiful whiting which was springing out of the water every few moments. "No my boy you hooked, you must land him. I will give you my advice what to do" and what with running up the bank paying out line, tripping over stones, but never falling in, about 20 minutes I had the pleasure of seeing him twist on his side and come to the surface. My grandfather said I was going well. "Trail him gently down to the sandy beach and we will go down and land him for you" so I obeyed my instructors orders and another three minutes the old man had his large blue silk handkerchief over him and with his large powerful hands lifted him up and threw him on the dry grass in safe quarters. He gave one or two flaps with his tail and threw up the sponge. It was not long before he was out. My own scales 3¾lbs. Clever me Whiting had just arrived for the occasion.

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His Jubilee Twice Every Year at Ford Rectory

For the Choir weather permitting organised by himself and his curate (his organist and schoolmaster Mr. Todd) and the choir generally. He paying all expenses.

The choir more under the special training of Mr. Todd the village schoolmaster assisted by his daughters when they were with him and his son Delaval his curate and his other curate. The choir being composed of boys and girls, sons and daughters of the poor folk in the village. The boys wore white surplices and the girls white dresses, which the Rector paid for himself also for the washing of same, and it was very pleasing and interesting to see and hear them perform. About 6 or 8 male and female voices assisted and to lead them. Once or twice in the year they were examined and trained by a "Mr. Holmore" the once great composer of church music. The Rector payed him his fees twice a year.

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The Dog, The Shepherd and the Harrier

A shepherd on the Waterford Estate when I was staying with my Grandfather was coming home about 6 o'clock, just outside Ford Village, when a hare bolted across the road just in front of the shepherd and his dog. The dog went for the hare, caught it and killed it. The shepherd put the hare in his pocket. The whole scene was observed by the village policeman. The shepherd and Robert were not very good friends and the policeman charged shepherd with being in possession of the hare not being his property which could not be denied. Policeman summoned the shepherd to appear before the Magistrate, My Grandfather, was then Chairman of the Bench and sat and tried that case. Condemned the shepherd and fined him in court for breaking the law and not preventing his dog from killing the hare. I think in all about £1.00 including costs. A few days after, he met the shepherd and my Grandfather spoke to him about this and pointed out where he went wrong and told him what he should have done, was to call his dog off. "if you had done your best to do that I would not have fined you". Gave him the money to pay back.

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Treats for his Choir and other Parishioners

A special picnic was organised by himself and curate for choir and their friends, curate and his friends, himself and his friends.

Different places were chosen every year. I have been at them at times as a child, and once when a man and I never spent a more enjoyable day; all went in pony carts about 6 or 8, other carts for cold eatables waste and all gipsy fireplace coal etc. etc.

Starting at 6 a.m. arriving home at 9 or 10 p.m.

Musical instruments used for dancing on the green grass. Fishing, gathering wild flowers, ferns, birdnesting and dancing and then pack up and come home singing in chorus all the way home back to Ford and my old grandfather Thomas Knight and I bringing up the rear and he paid for everything himself.

An incident which was kept a secret by my father all his life and which my mother did not know of because she told me when I went to see her and my sisters, after the death of my father.

Soon after my father came into the property as a minor, my Grandfather and Lord Waterford had some misunderstanding because his Lordship would not pay any tithes to the Church. My Grandfather took it to the Law Courts and the case was tried and put off and so it lasted 10 years, and a very expensive trial it was. To carry on this trial in those days was no joke. He had not sufficient salary himself, so the executors of Antony's will mortgaged Lowlynn Estate to carry on the trial.

My Grandfather was one of the executors and all my dear fathers life time my mother told me he had been paying off this debt at the rate of £2,000.00 per annum, besides keeping up his position in the North and also keeping up a large home and a very expensive lot of sons and never made a murmur.

This is a true and faithful story told me by my mother when last I saw her in Goule. Mr. Bolan our Land Agent and my Father kept the secret well.