

Colonel Tottie of Coniston Hall, an unlucky residence?

Susannah Bolland, of the family who resided at Townhead in Settle, had married Reverend William Clayton. Their daughter, another Susannah, married *Dr James Edgar* and they lived at Townhead at the end of the 19th century. Unfortunately James died, on Christmas Day in 1909, after an accident in the snow – their story is for another day.

Reverend William Clayton's father and grandfathers, both called William ran the Langcliffe cotton mills from 1784, residing at Langcliffe Place. The Claytons originated from Keighley and were immensely successful. Unsurprisingly they have a huge stone over the family tomb in Giggleswick graveyard. The Claytons didn't mechanise the Langcliffe mills and so avoided damage from the Luddite riots in the early 19th century, however this made them less competitive. The Claytons went bankrupt in 1849 and transferred their business to Accrington. Hundreds of Settle workers relocated to Lancashire to find work in the huge mills there. In 1861 Hector Christie bought out the Langcliffe Mills and made a success of them again, importing workers from East Anglia as there were few left here.



The most senior William Clayton had a daughter Frances Catherine, who married John Braithwaite Garforth, a JP and magistrate. This would have been regarded as a good match. The Garforth family had built the Bell Busk cotton and silk mill [ph1] in 1794 and by 1851 were employing 25 men, 6 women, 20 boys and 21 girls. They had also made good returns from investments in the Leeds to Liverpool Canal. With the proceeds of all this, John had Coniston Hall built in 1851, together with St Peter's Church and a school at Bell Busk. The family lived at Stackhouse near Settle while it was being built [ph3]. However, in March 1852 John died after a fall from a staircase at Coniston Hall while visiting to check the building work. Wife Frances had died in 1823 at the birth of daughter Frances Catherine who married John William Tottie, the son of a JP and magistrate in Leeds. They inherited Coniston Hall but sold the mill – the mill continued to trade until 1901.



John William and Frances' son James Braithwaite Garforth Tottie was born in 1861. In 1886 he married Mabel Hall from a very wealthy family near Scarborough, Beverley. John was presented with an incredibly handsome clock 'from the tenantry of Coniston Hall Estate on the occasion of his marriage' [ph5]. Mabel descended from the Watt family and her brother Ernest Watt later changed his surname from Hall to Hall-Watt in order to inherit the Bishop Burton estate in 1886 [1].



Mr Ernest Richard Bradley Hall, son of the late Mr John Hall, of Walkington; and grandson of the late Mr James Hall, of Scorboro, attained his majority on Tuesday last, and succeeded to the Bishop Burton estate formerly belonging to the Watt family.

Ernest was a motor racing enthusiast and was caught speeding on a couple of occasions (for going over 30mph!)

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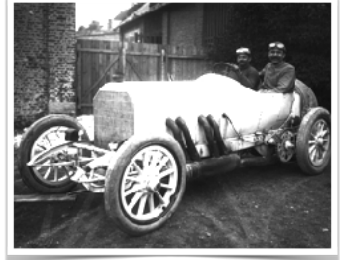
TRAGIC DEATH OF MR HALL WATT

Mr E. R. B. Hall Watt was terribly injured on Friday morning in a motor accident on the Dieppe-Rouen road, France, and died on Saturday without having recovered consciousness.

Mr Hall Watt was well known in the East Riding. He was an enthusiastic motorist, and at his home in Bishop Burton he kept six cars. His estate is extensive, affording employment for sixty servants. On Tuesday Mr Hall Watt suddenly made up his mind to leave Bishop Burton for the Continent, and at three o'clock in the morning he started in his motor-car for Dover. After crossing the Channel, he was on his way between Dieppe and Rouen, when the accident took place. The news was telegraphed to Bishop Burton, and as a consequence Mrs Hall Watt at once left for the scene of the mishap. Travelling all night, she reached Dover early on Saturday morning, but could not cross the channel until ten o'clock. By that time Mr Watt was dead, but the news did not arrive before Mrs Watt left.

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Ernest met his tragic end in 1908 in a high speed (60 - 70mph) crash in France [2]. He left the equivalent of £31 million in today's value – a wealthy man. He had married and their only son was killed in the war in 1917. Mabel's father died when she was just 4. Her mother married again, this time to John Coulthurst, a wealthy landowner who lived in Gargrave House, Gargrave, but also had property in Beverley and Devon.



The accident occurred on the Rouen road three kilometres from Tôtes. Mr Hall Watt had gone for an early morning spin on the car which ran second last year in the Grand Prix of the French Automobile Club, and for which Mr Hall Watt had given 50,000 francs. Accompanying Mr Hall Watt was Mr Kennedy, works manager of the Weigel Factory. The car is stated to have been running at between 60 and 70 miles an hour when a cart suddenly emerged from a cross-road. In order to avoid a collision Mr Hall Watt applied the brakes with great force. The back tyre burst, and as there was no compensating gear control was lost. The car dashed into several trees, and then turning round, went into the road again. Mr Hall Watt and Mr Kennedy were hurled violently into a cornfield 30ft. away, and were there found by the Italian racer, Lazarro, who was trying a car in the neighbourhood.

Mr Hall Watt had a very unfortunate experience as a motorist, as about eighteen months ago he sustained a fractured skull as the result of an accident to his car.

In addition to Bishop Burton Hall, Beverley, he had a residence at Carhead, Crosshills, Yorks, and at Parkhill, Torquay, and was a member of the Junior Carlton and Wollington Clubs.

Mr Hall Watt had in recent years been much devoted to motoring, and had sustained several accidents and had had many narrow escapes. He was proceeded against in one or two instances for exceeding the legal speed limit in different parts of the country. He was visiting Dieppe in order to be present at the meetings of the Automobile Club of France.



So this was Mabel's family background. James Braithwaite Garforth Tottie [ph2] was a military man who had been in charge of the 4th West Yorkshire Regiment and saw active service in the Boer Wars. Amongst several other responsibilities he became a magistrate for West Yorkshire. Mabel gave him children at an impressive rate having seven daughters and two sons within the space of 13 years, the last in 1899. Only one son, Gerard William, died an infant. At the times of both the 1891 and 1901 censuses the children were living at Coniston Hall with a variety of servants. In 1891, James and Mabel were living near Doncaster and were not to be found in 1901.

Perhaps they were abroad? Mabel had a reputation as a breeder of prize winning Basset-hounds [ph3].

The fame of Mrs. Tottie's Basset-hounds is widely spread, and not confined to two, or even to three, continents; her lovely little bitch Saraweesa has just gone to swell the glories of the Sandringham kennels, having been purchased by the Prince of Wales. Saraweesa



Descendants of the family report that James mistreated Mabel who then left him for another man. This is borne out by a 1906 application for divorce which was later withdrawn. In the end James and Mabel agreed on a deed of separation rather than going through the mud slinging of a divorce, but it still made the papers [3,4].

COLONEL AND HIS WIFE.
YORKSHIRE PARTIES IN THE
DIVORCE COURT.
HUSBAND WITHDRAWS CHARGE.
PARTIES AGREE TO A DEED OF SEPARATION.

Sir Edward Carson, K.C., Mr. Bernard, K.C., and Mr. Dayford (instructed by Messrs. Ford and Warren, solicitors, Leeds), appeared for Mr. Tottie; Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., W. J. Waugh, K.C., and Mr. Gordon Hill (instructed by Messrs. Brown, Charlesworth, and Wood, solicitors, Skipton), for Mrs. Tottie; and Mr. Duke, K.C., Mr. Shearman, K.C., and Mr. Le Bas (instructed by Messrs. Ratcliffe, Durranco, and Greenwood, solicitors, Bradford), appeared for Mr. Plummer.

PETITION BY COLONEL TOTTIE WITHDRAWN.

The cases of Tottie v. Tottie and Plummer and Tottie v. Tottie were called. The first was a petition for a divorce presented by the husband, Colonel James Braithwaite Garforth Tottie, the other suit being by the wife, Mrs. Mabel Tottie, for restitution of conjugal rights. The co-respondent named was Mr. W. Edgar Plummer.

Counsel had a consultation, with the result, it was stated by Sir Edward Carson, that the parties had come to terms, the husband and wife agreeing to a deed of separation, all charges against the wife and the co-respondent, Mr. Plummer, being unconditionally withdrawn. Colonel and Mrs. Tottie had nine children, and counsel thought a very proper decision had been arrived at.

Sir Edward Clarke, for the wife, said he was anxious to make it clear that on the main issue of the case there had been no compromise of any kind. The lady filed her petition for restitution of conjugal rights, and then a petition was launched against her charging her with misconduct with the co-respondent. Now the husband had withdrawn all the charges, and the petition would be dismissed. There were other unfortunate differences between Colonel and Mrs. Tottie, and therefore it was thought wisest that a deed of separation should be drawn up.

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The divorce court was an expensive luxury for the upper classes but was still such an inconvenient dent in one's social standing. Mabel was represented by a representative of 'Brown Charlesworth and Wood' with one of their partners being *Charles Percy Charlesworth* of Settle.

It seems that Mabel initiated the process to insist on a 'restitution of conjugal rights'. Divorce courts could be used to divorce, obviously, but also to enforce a restitution of conjugal rights. You might have thought Mabel had had enough after nine children, so why had James gone off the idea? In the vast majority of occasions this was initiated by the husband although there are two other examples of upper class women initiating this in the Graveyard Project. In retaliation, James cited a 'criminal conversation' between Mabel and **William Edgar Plummer**. William was an exceptionally wealthy (married) American who ran the US Metallic Packing Company for the whole of the US and UK. It had provided metallic packing for most of the British Navy steam ships. His application to the Society of Mechanical Engineers summarises his expertise. William lived in Bradford from 1899 - 1914.

Subsequent Career :—

3 years; from about 1873 and for some three years was marine engineer: First-class certificate.

8 years; then went into business for himself. Later was commercial traveller.

20 years; has been about twenty years or more with United States Metallic Packing Co., for the last several years as Managing Director. (J.D., F.L.C., E.H.)

At present date is holding above last position over both English and foreign companies. (J.D., A.D.E., F.L.C., E.H.)

years. TOTAL.

Membership in other Societies. Marine Engrs.; Loco. Engrs.; Brotherhood Engrs. (U.S.A.); Institution Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland, &c.

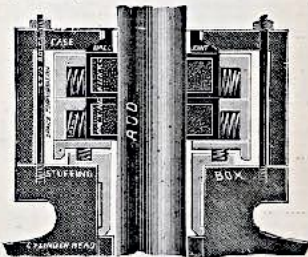
**THE UNITED STATES
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SAVES TIME AND TROUBLE. SAVES POWER AND FUEL.
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Applied on Approval. All Packings Guaranteed.

SOHO ENGINEERING WORKS,
THORNTON ROAD,
BRADFORD, YORKS.

W. E. PLUMMER, General Manager. W. M. KERMODE, Secretary.

There are no more records for Mabel in this country until her death in Lincoln in 1922 so she may have run off with Mr Plummer as family rumours suggest. Both Mr Plummer and his actual wife went back to the States within a month of each other in 1914.

This left the sisters, **Mabel Rosamund**, **Helen Margaret** [ph2], **Frances Mary**, **Monica Katherine**, **Sylvia Braithwaite**, **Ursula** and **Jennifer Julia** with their father Colonel James Braithwaite Garforth Tottie at Coniston Hall [3]. Descendants say '*Colonel Tottie then took a venomous revenge for his wife's desertion on his luckless daughters. He had all of them educated at home and when they reached marriageable age made it his business to drive away from his estate any young man who dared to enter it with even the most tentative of matrimonial intentions. Whether he deployed steel mantraps and goon squads of keepers, or merely brandished a stout stick while foaming at the mouth I could not say. But his tactics were totally successful; none of them ever married. One entered a closed religious order of nuns*' [A]

By the time of the 1911 census James had employed a Scottish governess, **Agnes Burn McGillivray**, to bring up and educate the daughters. A year after Mabel's death in 1922, married Agnes the governess. No wonder he had an interest in home education. At the time of marriage, Agnes gave her address as Coniston Hall. The youngest daughter was 24 by then so didn't really need a governess. The Colonel died on 27th December

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1931, aged 71 [4]. He was buried at St Peter's Church in Bell Busk with second wife Agnes with a surprisingly understated gravestone surrounded by those of his ancestors and first wife's Garforth family.

COL. J. B. G. TOTTIE

Lieut.-Colonel James Braithwaite Garforth Tottie, whose death has occurred at his residence, Coniston Cold, Bell Busk, near Skipton, was the head of a family which for several generations has figured prominently in the agricultural and administrative life of the Craven district.

Aged 71 years, Colonel Tottie was formerly in command of the 4th West Yorkshire Regiment. He saw service in the South African War, and held an appointment at Falmouth during the Great War. In 1887 he was appointed a county magistrate, and for many years was chairman of the Skipton Bench. He was also for a long period a member of the Skipton Rural District Council and the Board of Guardians, and was Lord of the Manor and chief landowner in the village of Coniston Cold. He was president of the Craven Museum and took a great interest in it.

His grandfather built the hall at Coniston Cold, also St. Peter's Church and schools. Colonel Tottie was patron of the living, and for many years people's warden. At one time he was keenly interested in the breeding of West Highland cattle, and his herd at Coniston Cold was only dispersed about three years ago, when he relinquished his active interest in farming.

He married in 1886 the only daughter of the late Mr. John Hall, of Walkington Lodge, near Beverley, a famous master of hounds in Holderness. His second wife was Miss McGillivray, a member of an old Scottish family. He is survived by his second wife, one son and seven daughters. The funeral will take place at Coniston Cold on Thursday afternoon.



The only surviving son, Richard Tottie, born in 1888, had a military career serving in the Royal Horse Guards of the Household Cavalry. He resigned in 1921 and inherited Coniston Hall upon his father's death in 1931. Richard married divorcee Catherine Elise Hopkins in 1928 when they were both in their 40s. They had much in common. She had married a military man George Frederick Walker who became a violent alcoholic with a bayonet and they divorced in 1914.

Coniston Hall stayed in the Tottie family until Richard [ph3] died in 1968. Catherine had died in 1957. Richard followed his father's interest in wildlife and had given the entire estate over to a wild bird reserve and had a huge collection of stuffed birds and cabinets containing thousands of eggs. Towards the end of his life Richard lived entirely in the kitchen as the rest of the building had succumbed to weathering. The surviving sisters were living in the south of England by then. Richard took after his uncle with a passion for cars, being one of the first owners of the new Vauxhall Cadet which had been introduced at the 1930 motor show [ph4].

4. That the said George Frederick Walker is a man of intemperate and dissipated habits and of violent and unmanageable temper and that he has habitually sworn at and used coarse and abusive and threatening language to your petitioner and on numerous occasions he has assaulted her and kicked her.

5. That on the 22nd. day of February 1914 at 15 Sheen Gate Gardens aforesaid, the said George Frederick Walker threatened to murder your petitioner with a bayonet and asked the cook for a steel and commenced to sharpen the bayonet and shouted at your petitioner and said he hoped she would have a happy death.

6. That the said George Frederick Walker was continually under the influence of drink and at times almost raving mad and on several occasions has had attacks of Delerium Tremens and in consequence of the excessive drinking he became bestial and filthy in his habits; his bed and sleeping garments, also the underclothing worn by him during the day time were soiled to such an extent that they had to be destroyed.



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Richard is buried close to his father at St Peter's Church in Bell Busk, of course. Richard's infant brother Gerard William and the two youngest sisters Ursula and Jennie are also buried nearby.



Upon Richard's death Coniston Hall, a 'beautifully sited Stone Mansion of Georgian character in small park with entrance lodge overlooking 24 acre lake' and estate of 1148 acres was sold for £200,000 and the auction lasted just three minutes [ph4]. It was sold to Michael Bannister who came from a Lancashire mill owning family and set up the Boundary Mill retail empire. Michael was a second cousin to Roger Bannister who set the record for the four minute mile. The hall was so dilapidated that Michael was forced to knock it down and rebuild it using some of the old stone.



By direction of the Executor of Richard Tottie deceased.

YORKSHIRE—WEST RIDING

Craven District between Skipton 7 miles and Settle 9 miles.

THE CONISTON HALL ESTATE, CONISTON COLD, NR. SKIPTON, 1,448 ACRES

Beautifully sited Stone Mansion of Georgian character in small park with entrance lodge and overlooking 24 acre lake. Over 1½ miles of trout fishing in the river Aire and shooting in hand over the whole estate. Woodlands of 137 acres and Pot Haw Farm of 116 acres.

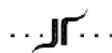
IN ALL 296 ACRES WITH VACANT OR EARLY POSSESSION
Also 7 excellent grassland farms from 31 acres to 320 acres; Accommodation Land; 28 Cottages and Houses comprising Two Villages.

Allotments and Ground Rents. Potential Development Sites.
ALTOGETHER ABOUT 1,151 ACRES
Let and producing from mainly war-time rents.
PER £2,107 ANNUM.
(Notices of increase from February, 1970 already served on Agricultural Tenants.)

FREEHOLD FOR SALE BY AUCTION AS A WHOLE OR IN 57 LOTS
(unless sold privately)

at the Black Horse Hotel, Skipton, Yorks on Wednesday, 30th July, 1969.
Land Agents: INGHAM & YORKE, Littlemoor, Clitheroe (Tel. : 3635)
Solicitors: Trower, Still & Kwoeling, 4 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, W.C.2. (01-465 3613).

The Bannister family have had a number of unlucky incidents since being at the hall, including injuries from dry rot damage, family illness and fatal road accidents.



This account has been compiled as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. Life

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Settle Graveyard Project

stories can be found on dalescommunityarchives.org.uk, 'settle graveyard project'. The 'Old Settle' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.

Newspaper cutting with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Beverley Echo, 2 – Beverley and East Riding Recorder, 3 – Pall Mall Gazette, 4 – Yorkshire Post

LSA - Lambert's Settle Almanac, with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust

ph1 – credited to kirkbymalham.info, ph2 – with the kind permission of relation Robert Munday, ph3 – credited to the Back in Settle facebook site, posted by Ben Mackenzie, ph4 – credited to www.bloodysunday.co.uk, ph5 – kindly provided by Roger Thurman

A – with the kind permission relation Robert Munday