



## Norman Frank Martin

7914479 Sergeant, D Squadron 1<sup>st</sup> Derbyshire Yeomanry, Royal Armoured Corps

Norman was killed in action on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1943 in North Africa, aged 28

He is buried in Sfax War Cemetery in Tunisia

### WEDDING

The wedding took place at the Parish Church on Thursday week of Miss Hilda Daphne Riches, fourth daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Riches, of Old Chapel Yard, Harleston, and Sergt. Norman Frank Martin, of the Derbyshire Yeomanry, son of Mrs. G. D. Martin, of 10, Cranbury Place, Southampton. Before the war the bridegroom was head of the passenger department of a large Shipping Company in Southampton, and a member of the Southampton Conservative Club. The ceremony was performed by the Rector (the Rev. B. M. Pickering). The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a blue silk embroidered dress with hat and veil to match and carried a bouquet of white chrysanthemums and fern. Her sister (Mrs. Eglinton) was the matron of honour, and Mr. H. L. Hilman, of the Derbyshire Yeomanry, was best man. A reception was afterwards held at the home of the bride's parents.

In January 1942, a thoroughly modern wedding took place in St Marys between Hilda Daphne Riches and Sgt Norman Frank Martin of the Derbyshire Yeomanry. Being a girl of her times, Norman's new wife preferred the more glamorous 'Daphne' to the rather dated 'Hilda' and this is how we shall refer to her from now. At the outbreak of war, Daphne was living with her parents and 4 siblings in the Old Chapel Yard behind Denny's and was described as a 'Tapper – Aero accessories' – essentially a person threading drilled holes so they could have bolts wound into them but doing this in the cutting-edge aircraft production that was so important to the war effort. Her father and brothers, true to their

ancestry, were all labourers of various sorts.

Norman Martin was not a local man by birth or breeding although he was not, as you might expect judging by his Regiment, from the East Midlands either! He was actually Southampton born and bred but when he married our local lass, Daphne Riches in early 1942, barely a year or so before he died out in North Africa he did so at Redenhall. Whilst it is possible that the young couple met in Harleston, or in some other part of the country entirely, it may also be that Daphne's skills in airplane production led her to being posted down to one of the several aircraft factories that existed in and around Norman's hometown but they still followed the custom of marrying in the bride's home parish,

Daphne certainly had deep local(ish) roots; there have been Riches in and around Harleston for centuries, but her family actually originated from a few miles north, Saxlingham.

Way back in early 1841, a century before the war time marriage, Agricultural Labourer William Riches and first wife Harriet (both in their 40's) were living childless in the cluster of cottages by Foxhole Farm a mile or two from the centre of the village. Within 5 to 8 months, Harriet was dead and widower William (very) promptly married Clara Gage, two decades or more his junior. This marriage prove fruitful, by 1851 they had four children, two more had been added by the 1861 census. Interestingly, all the census entries (bar one) give Tasburgh born William's date of birth as around 1795, whilst his second wife's age, varied quite widely, between 1819 and 1827. Not that unusual in days of poor literacy to not know one's age, but still quite a span. William and Clara stayed in the little cluster of houses at Foxhole until their respective deaths, at least one of their daughters, Emily, married into another Foxhole family, the Curtises, and having produced at least 7 children over a 10-year span had farmed the oldest one out to Grandma Clara by 1881.

William and Clara's youngest son was a George Riches; born in 1858, he carried on the tradition of working on the land and staying close to Saxlingham. He married Jane Redgrave Baker in 1877, he was illiterate but his wife, albeit with a shaky hand could write her name!

1877 Marriage solemnized at St. Peter's Church in the Parish of Saxlingham in the County of Worfolk

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
64	Nov 8	George Riches Jane Redgrave Baker	20 17	Bachelor Spinster	Labourer Labourer	Saxlingham Saxlingham	William Riches Stephen Baker	Labourer Labourer

Married in the \_\_\_\_\_ according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the \_\_\_\_\_ by me, Geo King

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Riches and Jane Redgrave Baker in the Presence of us, Catherine Everett

Mind you, this might have been due to a Workhouse education; Jane appeared in 1861 as the youngest of 5 (from at least 7) children appearing with widowed Laundress Anne Baker as pauper inmates in the Wangford infirmary. Even 10 years earlier, Anne's husband had been a pauper receiving parish relief; this family would have had at least a decade of hard times, By the next census, the family had escaped the union and, aged only 11, young Jane was working as a silk weaver in Bungay.

How she met George is a mystery but most likely she was working as a farm servant, not only did they marry on George's home patch but that is where they set up home and by 1881, appeared with two children, Diane aged 2 and their as yet unnamed first son Russell. They went on to produce 10 children, 3 of whom had died by 1911 when they were in their 34<sup>th</sup> year of marriage.

For some reason, in the early 1890s, George left Saxlingham and moved onto Redenhall, remaining there for some three or four years before winding up in Weybread at the Old Farm in about 1899 as a Horse-drawn Ploughman; tractors were a few decades away yet. Working alongside him in 1901 was 20 years old Russel, a yard man specialising in Cattle.

In the summer following on the heels of the 1901 census, Russel married Edith Victoria Woodrow; I was intrigued to find in the 1911 census, when the family were living in Green's Yard, London Road, that Edith had come from Hackney! A little intrigued how a Weybread Cowman managed to snag himself a London Lass, I investigated and found that Edith had indeed been born in Hackney, registered there in late summer 1879. However, in 1881, Edith Woodrow was living up in Jay's Green in a household consisting of her elderly grandparents, their 25 years old, unmarried daughter, Annie (or Hannah) Woodrow, parlour maid, and little Edith Victoria. Not really a lot of call for parlour maids in Harleston at the time, I think we can assume that Edith was Annie's illegitimate daughter, born in London and returned to Harleston.

By 1891, the Woodrow household had moved down to Ellis' Yard – probably the modern-day Malthouse Court and consisted only of Edith and her grandparents. In 1901, the year of Edith & Russel's marriage, there was only Edith and her grandfather, the grandmother had died some years previously. Old John Woodrow, for many years a local chimney sweep, himself died in 1901, thus freeing Edith to marry and the young couple with a readymade tenancy to take over.

Certainly, all four of Russel and Edith's children appearing in the 1911 census, Russel John (9), Winifred Mabel (4), Edith Victoria (2) and Annie Sophie (9mos) had been born in Harleston, whilst Russel continued his employment as a Cowman. Little Gladys Annie, born between Russel Jnr and Winifred died in 1905, only a year old. More children were to follow: Gilford C 1913, Albert G 1915, our Hilda Daphne in 1918 and Eric W. in 1921.

This was a largish, not terribly well-off family with both parents coming from working class stock with a bit of a history of particularly hard times on the female sides; Daphne seems to have done well in hooking a young man who both had a successful career already underway, was nestled into the Southampton Conservative Club and, once the war was over, would no doubt be going places.

However Norman's family back ground, whilst Urban rather than Rural, was much on a par with the Riches and also featured illegitimacy. The marriage report describes him as being the head of the Passenger Dept of a large Shipping Company - quite a step up from his father's trade. This worthy gentleman, William Martin, had basically spent his married life as a porter for a stationer, and was the son of a labourer at the oilmills. Sadly, William's wife Maria, died in 1904, aged just 39. In the manner of the time, William with at least 5 children left to raise, promptly remarried to a new wife, Gertrude Dasiy Over. I can't actually find any previous records of this lady, other than her 1882 baptism matching her 1911 census, claiming birth in Minstead in the New Forest. Her mother was most likely the 20 year old unmarried Fanny Louisa Over (actually Oliver but she was miles from her Southampton home and the Minstead Vicar would have baptised her child as he heard) working as a servant at the Sir John Barley Corn Inn, in the Hamlet of Cadnam, Minstead. Young Gertrude may have been farmed out to family or placed in an institution; by 1881 when her mother was a live in Cook, there was no sign of Gertrude.

By the time of the 1911 census two more children had been added to the family with a third on the way, Norman Frank Martin came along in 1914 to complete the family. Like Daphne, Norman was one of the youngest of a family of 7 to 8 children.

**KILLED IN ACTION**  
News has just been received by Mrs. N. F. Martin, of Old Chapel Yard, Harleston, that her husband Sergt. Norman Frank Martin, of the Derbyshire Yeomanry, has been killed in action in the Middle East. Mr. and Mrs. Martin were married at Redenhall Church in January, 1942.

On the outbreak of the first world war, with a young family to support, Norman's father, William Henry Martin, promptly enlisted in the Territorials, the Royal Garrison Artillery. Hardly a military type, aged 48, grey haired, slightly portly and with a background working as a stationer's porter, within 4 ½ months

he was discharged on medical rounds due to joints swollen with rheumatoid arthritis. The old fella carried on working though – the 1921 census reveals that his employer was Cox and Sharland, a well established Southampton Printer still in operation untill at least the 60's.

This census also reveals that our hero, Norman Martin's older brother was working as a stoker for Cunard, the glamorous company sailing out of Southampton. Norman, however, the youngest of the family got himself educated and found himself employment as a shipping clerk, escaping the hard labouring work of his ancestors. He was obviously intelligent, hard working, ambitious and personable having, by the out break of war, become the Head of the Passenger Dept and joining the local Conservative Club.

Norman's father died on the eve of the second world war, leaving Gertrude to worry about her sons and stepsons scattered across Europe, although Southampton, with its extensive dock was a dangerous place in itself being a major target for the Luftwaffe. Frank Norman's family were unable to attend the wedding, his side being represented by a fellow from his regiment acting as a best man.

1942. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church of Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell in the Parish \_\_\_\_\_ in the County of Norfolk

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
72	January first 1942	Norman Frank Martin	27	Bachelor	Sergeant Derbyshire Yeomanry	Harleston	William Henry Martin (deceased)	Wholesale Stationer
		Hilda Daphne Riches	24	Spinster		Harleston	Russell Riches	Roadman

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church after best by me,  
 This Marriage was solemnized between us, Norman Frank Martin in the Presence of us, Russell Riches  
Hilda Daphne Riches Elizabeth Howard B. M. Peckham  
Worship

Whilst Daphne happily gave her father's trade as 'Roadman', miles from home Norman rather elevated his father's profession describing him not as the labourer he really was but as a rather

grander 'Wholesale Stationer'! This also casts a little further doubt on the importance of Norman's role within Cunard, when the 1939 register was taken and Norman was living with his widowed mother, his brother and his sister in law, he only claimed to be a Shipping Passenger Clerk – looks as if he might have promoted himself as well as his father! I wonder if the young couple let on to each other that they both had illegitimate mothers?

To the best of my knowledge, there were no children from this relationship but Daphne had a very touching and fond epitaph inscribed upon her husband's tombstone, markedly different from one typical of the previous war when the norm referred to sacrifice or religion.

Sweetest of Memories

A Loving Husband

Just in all his ways

Wife Daphne

So this is where the story of our 'adopted by marriage' Harleston Hero ends.

R/1135/1/T/9 6.I  
 7914479 Serjeant  
 N.F.Martin  
 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry  
 Royal Armoured Corps  
 9th February 1943 Age 28  
 (Cross)  
 Sweetest of memories.  
 A loving husband  
 Just in all his ways.  
 Wife Daphne