

## The Harris Family - Interesting Facts



The family name Harris dates back to the beginnings of the Norman culture in Britain - the Norman Conquest of 1066. Originally, Harris was a name given to a person who was *the son of the ruler of the property upon which he lived*. Initially, *le Herisse*, the name came to England with the Norman Conquest, and is of Old French derivation. Another derivation, which is probably more common shows that the name is a version of the Old English given name *Harry*. Although both derivations are valid time has confused them and historians now disagree on which is appropriate in a given situation.

The surname Harris was first found in Normandy, where Hericius and his brothers were in 1022 prohibited by King Robert of France from making inroads of on the estates of a neighbouring abbey. "Henricus was father of Ancelin de Beaumont who in 1086 held a barony in Nottinghamshire. Ivo Fitz-Herice or De Heriz, his son was Viscount of Nottinghamshire before 1130."

His sons quickly spread through Britain as seen by Robert Fitz-Herice who was mentioned in a charter of Barberie Abbey, executed by Henry II; Josceline Fitz-Herice mentioned in Huntingdonshire in 1156; and William who held two fees in Nottinghamshire and four in Lincolnshire in 1165. Humphrey Hairez was listed in Berkshire in 1158.

William Herez held an estate in Wiltshire in the 13th century and later one of his descendants' held estates in Salisbury in 1469 and was ancestor of the Earls of Malmsbury who also have three herrisons on their arms.

"Harris and Heris are armorially identified, each bearing three herissons (hedgehogs) in allusion to the name."

"Wootton Hall [in Wooton, Northamptonshire], the seat of W. Harris, Esq., stands elevated, and commands extensive prospects: the grounds are surrounded with thriving plantations."

"Radford, in Plymstock, [Devon] has been a seat of the Harris family for nearly 500 years. Here Raleigh is said to have been kept in ward on his return in 1618, and here at times Drake stored much of his treasure. "

Before the last few hundred years the English language had no fixed system of spelling rules. For that reason, spelling variations occurred commonly in Anglo Norman surnames. Over the years, many variations of the name Harris were recorded, including Harris, Harries, Harrys, Harryss, Haries, Haris, Hairis and many more.

**Motto:** Ubique patriam reminisce

**Motto Translation:** Everywhere to remember one's country.

The maiden names of both my mum (Eileen Clare Page, 1927 – 2007) and aunt (Hannah Renee Joseph, 1933) was Harris, my aunt is in her nineties and she told me a family story that the family name was originally Henriques. She has asked me, as I am the Family Historian, to see if I could find

out if this story was true and if it was true to discover when, where and why our name was changed. She also told me that their father, Simon Harris (1897 – 1937), had a cousin called Sir Basil Henriques.

I have no idea how to research this so I will ask the experts at the 'Who Do You Think You Are' magazine. It is possible that the change was made centuries ago to hide the fact that we were Jewish (when the Expulsion Edicts were in force, 1290 - 1656) or had Spanish ancestors (during the Anglo-Spanish War, 1585 – 1604). Or it may have happened much more recently to anglicise the name, for some other reason.

In the 1841 census, Alexander Harris (1819 – 1874) was in The Clerkenwell House of Correction but according to various web sites that wasn't built until 1847. It would be interesting to find out for what crime Alexander was put in prison.

In the 1881 census Naphtali Harris (1826 – 1903) was not living with his wife, Rebecca Harris (nee Keysor, 1830 – 1895), and their family as he seems to have been in Manchester, presumably for some reason to do with his work as an engraver.

In 1887 Lewis Harris (1854 – N/K) married Sarah Abrahams (1859 – N/K) and in 1902 Barnet Harris (1857 – N/K) married Phoebe Abrahams (1860 – 1936). What was the relationship between Sarah and Phoebe, if any? Barnet, Phoebe and family emigrated to Canada in 1907.

Barnet Harris' first wife, Isabella Harris (nee Yoell, 1857 – 1902) died in the 1st quarter of 1902 and then he married his second wife in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1902. He didn't hang about!!

Two of the children of Lewis Harris (1854 – N/K) and his wife, Sarah Lewis (nee Abrahams, 1859 – N/K), both died in 1893. These were Rebecca Harris (1889 – 1893) and Caroline Harris (1890 – 1893). As the page nos. on their death record entries are quite close together, they probably died within a few days of each other (see the record entries below). I got copies of their death certificates and although they didn't die of the same thing, they did die from throat problems. One had Diphtheria and the other had tonsillitis and an abscess which burst. How terrible it must have been for Lewis & Sarah to have 2 young children die with a fortnight of each other.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 1893 District Poplar Vol. 1c Page 456**

Rebecca Harris died (aged 4)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 1893 District Poplar Vol. 1c Page 463**

Caroline Harris died (aged 2)

Baron Barnet Harris (1896 – 1982) married Kit Kopkin (1897 – 1993) in 1920 and in 1956 Baron's niece Sylvia Harris (1933) married Cyril Kopkin (1930 – 2010). What was the relationship between Kit and Cyril?

In 1832 David Harris (1909 – 1994) married Rachel Benjamin (1911 – 2000). Rachel is related to us through the Benjamin family as well as the Harris family. Before this, in 1916 Elias/Edward Harris (1896 – 1970) married Sarah Benjamin (1896 – N/K). Is Sarah related to us through the Benjamins as well?

In my opinion Baron Barnet Harris (1896 – 1982) was the spitting image of the actor Terry Thomas. Look at the 2 pictures below, do you agree.



**Baron B Harris (1896 – 1982)**



**Terry Thomas (1911 – 1990)**