

George St Vincent Harris

(1889–1984)

5th Baron Harris



Painting by Richard von Marientreu

Date painted: 1963

Collection: Mark Masons' Hall



- ♦ George Harris, 1st Baron Harris (1746–1829)
- ♦ William George Harris, 2nd Baron Harris (1782–1845)
- ♦ George Francis Robert Harris, 3rd Baron Harris (1810–1872)
- ♦ Robert George Canning Harris, 4th Baron Harris (1851–1932)
- ♦ George St Vincent Harris, 5th Baron Harris (1889–1984)
- ♦ George Robert John Harris, 6th Baron Harris (1920–1995)
- ♦ Derek Marshall Harris, 7th Baron Harris (1916–1996)
- ♦ Anthony Harris, 8th Baron Harris (b. 1942)

The heir presumptive is the present holder's kinsman Rear-Admiral Michael George Temple Harris (b. 1941). He is a great-great-grandson of the second Baron.

The family seat is Belmont House near Faversham in Kent (Belmont House, Belmont Park, Throwley, nr Faversham, Kent ME13 0HH).

The barony of Harris, Seringapatam, and Mysore was created in 1815 for the military commander General Sir George Harris. He gained fame as Commander-in-Chief at the siege and capture of Seringapatam and the conquest of Mysore in India in 1799. He was also injured at the Battle of Bunker Hill in the American Revolutionary War.

He was succeeded by his eldest son, the second Baron. He was a Lieutenant-General in the Army.

His son, the third Baron, served as Governor of Madras and also held minor office in the second Liberal administration of Lord Palmerston.

His son, the fourth Baron, was a Conservative politician and served as Under-Secretary of State for India, Under-Secretary of State for War and Governor of Bombay. Lord Harris was also a successful cricketer.

On the death of his grandson, the sixth Baron, in 1995, the line of the eldest son of the first Baron failed. The late Baron was succeeded by his fourth cousin, the seventh Baron. He was the great-great-grandson of the Hon. Michael Thomas Harris, second son of the first Baron. As of 2010 the title is held by his son, the eighth Baron, who succeeded in 1996. George St Vincent, fifth Baron Harris of Seringapatam and Mysore and Belmont, was born on 3rd September 1889, the son of George Robert Canning Harris, fourth Baron Harris, Governor of Bombay, and the Hon. Lucy Ada Jervis.

George was educated at Eton College, Berkshire and Christ Church, Oxford, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1914.

During the First World War, he served as Captain in the Royal East Kent Yeomanry and he was awarded a Military Cross.

He married Dorothy Mary, fifth daughter of the Reverend John William Crookes, on 27 July 1918 and they raised one son.

He became a Justice of the Peace for Kent in 1919 and succeeded to his title as fifth Baron Harris of Seringapatam and Mysore and Belmont on the death of his father, the fourth Baron, in 1932.

In 1936 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant for Kent, and served as Vice-Lord-Lieutenant for Hampshire from 1948 to 1984.

He served as Chairman of the Kent Police Authority from 1945 to 1964 and Commissioner of the St John's Ambulance Brigade from 1940 to 1945.

He was an assiduous collector of clocks, with a collection of over three hundred pieces and he became Master of the Clockmakers' Company in 1960 and the first President of the Antiquarian Horological Society. Many examples of his horological collection are on display at Belmont House.

In 1968 he was awarded a Master of Arts Degree by Christ Church College, Oxford.



CRAFT

He was initiated in Apollo University Lodge, No. 357, Oxford on 14 February 1911, where he was passed on 14 March and raised on 9 May the same year, resigning in 1942.

He became a joining member of the following Lodges:

The Lodge of Harmony, No. 133, Faversham, Kent on 28 October 1913, where he served as Junior Warden in 1915; Senior Warden in 1917 and 1918, and Worshipful Master in 1919.

The Royal Alpha Lodge, No. 16, London on 4 June 1928, where he served as Junior Warden in 1931; Senior Warden in 1932 and Worshipful Master in 1933.

The East Kent Masters' Lodge, No. 3931, at Canterbury, Kent on 19 January 1934, where he served as Worshipful Master in 1953.

He was a Petitioner and Founder of the following Lodges:

The Athelstan Lodge, No. 4024, Faversham, Kent, which was consecrated on 26 January 1920, where he resigned in 1921.

The Old Etonian Lodge, No. 4500, London which was consecrated on 3 July 1923, where he resigned in 1931, rejoined in 1935, resigning again in 1938.

Sydenham Wells Lodge, No. 5033, London which was consecrated on 5 July 1928, where he served as first Worshipful Master, resigning in 1967 when he was elected an honorary member.

He served as Provincial Grand Standard Bearer of Oxford in 1912 and Provincial Grand Senior Steward of Kent in 1920.

He was appointed Junior Grand Warden by the United Grand Lodge of England in 1927.

In 1968 he was invested with the Order of Service to Masonry by the Pro Grand Master Lord Scarborough.



ROYAL ARCH

In Royal Arch he was exalted in Apollo University Chapter, No. 357, Oxford in 1912. He was appointed Grand Scribe N by the Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of England in 1927.



KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

In Knight Templar he was installed in Cœur de Lion Preceptory, No. 29, Oxford in 1912. He became a joining member of Black Prince Preceptory, No. 146, Canterbury, where he served as Eminent Preceptor and Roffa's Camp Preceptory, No. 224, Rochester, Kent.

He was a Founder of Kyngstun Preceptory, No. 225, Surbiton, Surrey in 1923.

He was appointed First Great Constable of The Great Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta of England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas in 1919 and he was promoted to Great Seneschal in 1932, serving until 1947 when he was installed as Grand Master, resigning in 1973.

He was installed as Knight Commander of the Order of the Temple in 1924 and Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Temple in 1930.



ROSE CROIX

In Ancient and Accepted Rite he was perfected in Oxford University Chapter, No. 40, Oxford. He was awarded 33° in 1949.

He was a Past Inspector General of Kent and he was appointed a Sovereign Grand Inspector in 1956.

MARK MASTER
MASONS & ROYAL ARK
MARINERS

Lord Harris was advanced in the University Lodge of Mark Master Masons' No. 55 in Oxford, and was their Senior Warden in 1916. Because of the 1914-18 war he never went in to the chair.

Having become a joining member, he was Installed as Worshipful Master of St Martins Lodge of Mark Master Masons' No. 262 at Canterbury on 28th January 1921.

He was made Provincial Grand Senior Warden in 1922, although he had already been invested as Grand Senior Warden in 1916.

He served as Provincial Grand Master of Surrey from 1928 to 1934, but as he was a 'Man of Kent', was considered to be 'on loan'.

He served as Provincial Grand Master of Kent from 1936 to 1956.

The Installation as Provincial Grand Master was at Canterbury on 6th November 1936. (RW. Bro. Roland Wade gives an excellent description of the event in his first book)

On 24th June 1944 he consecrated the Kent Installed Mark Masters' Lodge No. 999, in Room No. 10, Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, the first Installed Masters' Lodge in the Constitution.

Also in 1944 he presided over the Mark Benevolent Fund Festival, which raised £27,285, of which Kent raised £13,084, breaking all previous records, although this record was broken twelve months later. It is believed that Lodge 999 was formed through the enthusiasm generated by the success of the Festival, even though in the height of the 1939-45 war.

He was appointed Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas in 1952

and Grand Master in 1954, serving until 1973. He was the second Kent Mark Master Mason to hold this most senior office, following Lord Amherst ninety-one years earlier (1863).



The above picture is reproduced by kind permission of the trustees of the Harris (Belmont) charity. Belmont House is open to the public. For visiting arrangements please visit the Belmont House website here. The inscription on the above clock reads:

PRESENTED TO
R.W.BRO. THE Rt. HON. THE LORD HARRIS
M.C.V.L. BY THE
MARK MASTER MASONS OF THE
PROVINCE OF KENT
17TH SEPTEMBER 1949

The bi-metal clock was presented to Lord Harris at the 77th Annual Provincial Mark Meeting on Saturday 17th September 1949. The presentation, by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, RW. Bro. F. W.

F. Arnaud, Past Grand Warden, was to commemorate the Provincial Grand Masters' 60th Birthday. The meeting, held at The Winter Garden, Cliftonville, Margate, was under the Banner of the Margate Lodge No. 1073.

Extract from the minutes of the meeting: 'The Deputy Provincial Grand Master spoke in affectionate terms to the sixtieth birthday of our beloved Provincial Grand Master. He referred to the fact that the Provincial Grand Master's hobby had for many years been the collection of watches and clocks. He asked his Lordship to accept as from every member of the Province a unique clock which had been purchased to commemorate the happy occasion.'

The clock, one of 340, can be seen at Belmont House, Faversham, Kent, and is well worth a visit.

In 1935 the St Vincent Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners No. 262, was founded, with Lord Harris as the first Commander. Although not credited at the time, later research shows that the Lodge was named after George St Vincent. Lord Harris inherited the name St Vincent through his mother's lineage.

Having finished his year in office, Lord Harris, then Provincial Grand Master, never attended the Lodge again.

Other than 262, Lord Harris Lodge No. 1494 is the only other Lodge to have taken the 5th Baron's name.

During 1936 and 1956, whilst Lord Harris was Provincial Grand Master, ten Mark Master Mason and eight Royal Ark Mariner Lodges were founded and consecrated. (Details of each Lodge, and the circumstances surrounding their foundation, can be found in RW. Bro. Roland's books, and makes for excellent reading)

He supported the Masonic Charities and served for thirty-eight years on the House Committee and General Committee of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls from 1932, and acted as Chairman from 1954, resigning in 1970.

During his term of office he escorted five Royal visitors to the school. He became a Life Governor of all three Masonic Institutions and of the Mark Benevolent Fund.

In 1973 Lord Harris gave up all his active offices. He died on 16 October 1984 at the age of ninety-five.

The Lord Harris Lodge of Mark Master Masons' No. 1494, having received permission from the Harris family to use the name, was consecrated on 21st January 1978.

The Lord Harris Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners No. 1494 was consecrated on 28th February 1981.



The above article was submitted by WBro Steve Dunsdon, PAGSwdB, PPrGMO, who makes the following observations:

My efforts here have come about from a chance visit to Belmont House by W. Bro. Bob Leonard, who saw the clock on a visit to Belmont House.

Having made enquiries it was apparent that the clock had disappeared from Masonic memory.

My research made me realise, that although George St Vincent, the Lord Harris, 5th Baron, was well documented, his Masonic bibliography was fragmented.

I felt that to explain The Clock, I had to build up a picture of the Mason first.



WITH THANKS TO



The Library and Museum of Freemasonry (Great Queen Street)
The Trustees of the Harris (Belmont) Charity
'A Brief History of the Mark Province of Kent'
Author: RW. Bro. Roland John Wade, PPGM
'A Continuation of a Brief History of the Mark Province of Kent'
Author: RW. Bro. Roland John Wade, PPGM
VW. Bro. Bill Balderston, PGJO, ProvGSec
With contributions from:
Lord Harris Lodge Website
(W. Bro. Ian Gallehawk, PPrGSwdB, ProvGChSwd)
RW. Bro. Archibald I. Torrance, PGM
W. Bro. Bob Leonard
The Masonic Library and Museum (Canterbury)
Wikipedia



W. Bro. Stephen Dunsdon, PAGSwdB, PPrGMO
Secretary
Lord Harris Lodge of Mark Master Masons No. 1494
Scribe
Lord Harris Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners No. 1494