

## WILLIAM FORBES NORRIS

**Born:** 13<sup>th</sup> April 1894 - Hampstead registration district (London)<sup>1</sup>

**Enlisted:** 16<sup>th</sup> August 1914 - Lieutenant, 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment;<sup>2</sup> attached to the 54<sup>th</sup> East Anglian Divisional Cyclist Company.<sup>3</sup>



**Died:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 1915 - killed in action at Suvla Bay (Gallipoli)<sup>4</sup>

**Age:** 21

**Memorial:** Helles Memorial (Panel 42A), Gallipoli Peninsula<sup>5</sup>

**Medals:** 1914-1915 Star      British War Medal      Victory Medal      (see Figure 2)<sup>6</sup>



**Residence:** the 1911 Census for Wood Norton records the family as living in a private house with 12 rooms (Cromes Farm)<sup>7</sup>

William Forbes Norris was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1894, the only son of William Edward and Annie Norris. He was baptised on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1894 at St Mary, Kilburn (Middlesex), by his uncle, Edward Forbes, curate of St Andrew, Peckham (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** From the Baptisms Register, St Mary, Kilburn, 1894

| BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <u>St Mary, Kilburn</u> in the County of <u>Middlesex</u> in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and <u>nineteen</u> |                                         |                                         |               |                                                               |                                |                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When Baptized.                                                                                                                                            | Child's Christian Name.                 | Parents' Names.                         |               | Abode.                                                        | Quality, Trade, or Profession. | By whom the Ceremony was performed.                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                         | Christian.                              | Surname.      |                                                               |                                |                                                                                    |
| <u>1894.</u><br><u>April 13.</u><br><u>1894.</u><br>No. 118                                                                                               | <u>May 13.</u><br><u>William Forbes</u> | <u>William Edward</u><br><u>+ Annie</u> | <u>Norris</u> | <u>Wood Norton,</u><br><u>East Dereham,</u><br><u>Norfolk</u> | <u>Yeoman</u>                  | <u>Edward Forbes,</u><br><u>curate of</u><br><u>St. Andrew,</u><br><u>Peckham.</u> |

<sup>1</sup> Baptism Register, St. Mary, Kilburn; 1911 Census for Wood Norton (Schedule 153) ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>2</sup> *The London Gazette*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1914, p7405

<sup>3</sup> War Diary, 54<sup>th</sup> East Anglian Divisional Cyclist Company, August 1915 ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>4</sup> See the Brass Memorial in All Saints Church, Wood Norton, Norfolk

<sup>5</sup> CWGC commemoration ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org))

<sup>6</sup> British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920 ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>7</sup> 1911 census, Wood Norton (Schedule 153) ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

**Figure 2: British Army WW1  
Medal Roll Index Card  
for William Forbes Norris**

|                                                                                         |                      |                                  |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| Campaign: <b>1914-15 Star.</b>                                                          |                      | (A) Where decoration was earned. |          |
| (B) Present situation.                                                                  |                      |                                  |          |
| Name                                                                                    | Corps                | Rank                             | Reg. No. |
| (A) <b>NORRIS.</b>                                                                      | <b>W.F. R. Lieut</b> |                                  |          |
| (B) <b>W.F.</b>                                                                         | <b>1st Lieut R.</b>  |                                  |          |
| Action taken                                                                            |                      | Medal Roll                       |          |
| <b>William Forbes Norris.</b>                                                           |                      | <b>OFF/1423 59</b>               |          |
| <b>1915 Star.</b>                                                                       |                      | <b>BRITISH</b>                   |          |
| <b>3rd/1st Lieut</b>                                                                    |                      | <b>10</b>                        |          |
| <b>1st/3961 at 22/7/21 - EF/7/118.</b>                                                  |                      | <b>10</b>                        |          |
| <b>Theatre of War</b>                                                                   |                      | <b>Gallipoli 1915.</b>           |          |
| <b>Qualifying date.</b>                                                                 |                      | <b>EF/7/118</b>                  |          |
| (6 34 46) W3138—RP433 50,000 12/17 HWV(P798) K603                                       |                      |                                  |          |
| 1264—RP2020 60,000 5/18                                                                 |                      |                                  |          |
| <b>Correspondence.</b>                                                                  |                      |                                  |          |
| application from W.F. Norris in respect of his son. The late Lieut W.F. Norris 27.12.18 |                      |                                  |          |
| Address. Wood Norton                                                                    |                      | Wood Norton                      |          |
| Dereham                                                                                 |                      | Quist S.O.                       |          |
| Norfolk.                                                                                |                      | Norfolk.                         |          |

William attended Shrewsbury School between 1907 and 1912. The School notes on its *Old Salopians in WW1* website that William was in Chance's House (now Severn Hill House), 1<sup>st</sup> House Rowing and Editor of the *Salopian* (the School's magazine); his editorial successor commented that he was "a boy of decided literary tastes, and had a charming disposition which won him many friends here".<sup>8</sup> Shrewsbury School's project, commemorating all former boys and masters who gave their lives in WW1, has linked with St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, to commemorate the centenary of their deaths in the Church's weekly remembrance service, and the remembrance service for Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015 included William Forbes Norris among those commemorated. After leaving Shrewsbury School in 1912, William attended Trinity College, Cambridge, being admitted as a pensioner<sup>9</sup> on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1912 and achieving a BA in 1915. He appears on the Trinity College Chapel Roll of Honour (1914-1918), where the names of the 618 men who died (fellows, students and staff) are engraved on oak panels at the east end of the Chapel.<sup>10</sup>

The WW1 service records for officers are held by The National Archives, and the papers for William Forbes Norris note that he was aged 20 years and 4 months at enlistment, 5' 11" tall, chest 37". His application for a *Candidate for a Commission in Territorial Force* records his wish to join the Infantry and that he was an undergraduate of Trinity College Cambridge. He

<sup>8</sup> Shrewsbury School, The News 100 years ago – Old Salopians in WW1 ([www.shrewsbury.org.uk/osww1](http://www.shrewsbury.org.uk/osww1))

<sup>9</sup> A 'pensioner' is someone who pays out of his or her own income for commons, chambers, etc. at Cambridge University (Chambers Dictionary 2014)

<sup>10</sup> Trinity College Chapel Roll of Honour 1914-1918 (<http://trinitycollegechapel.com/about/memorials/war-memorials/>)

gives his previous military experience as three years' service in the Officer Training Corps. The question 'whether he is in all respects suitable to hold His Majesty's Commission in the Territorial Force' was signed in the affirmative by William's father, William Edward Norris, as JP (Justice of the Peace) and noted that he was also the father of the applicant.<sup>11</sup>

William's service record also notes that he was a Private in the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the London Regiment (formerly the Artists Rifles) prior to being commissioned in the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment in August 1914. The Artists Rifles was one of twenty-eight volunteer battalions in the London and Middlesex areas that combined to form the new London Regiment and became the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the London Regiment on 1 April 1908. It particularly attracted recruits from public schools and universities, and following the outbreak of WW1 a number of enlisted members of the Artists Rifles were selected to be officers in other units.<sup>12</sup>

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force War Diary of the 54<sup>th</sup> East Anglian Divisional Cyclist Company<sup>13</sup> records that the Company left St Albans for foreign service on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1915, arriving at Keyham Docks, Davenport. Officers of the Cyclist Company on the *Royal George* are listed in the diary, including Lt. W.F. Norris. They sailed on HMT *Royal George* on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1915, and arrived (via Malta, Alexandria and Lemnos) in Suvla Bay on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1915. At 0630 hours No. 1 Platoon, under Lieut Norris, unloaded the lighters, and at 2100 hours the camp moved to point (approx) 116.J.5 Anafarta Saghir (see Figure 3). The entry in the War Diary for the 17<sup>th</sup> August to 27<sup>th</sup> August (Suvla), records:

*The Company, being unable owing to the nature of the Country to carry out its usual functions, finds fatigues; principally consisting of making roads, the principal one being over and along north side of Karakel Dagh also assis[ting] the R.A. in moving guns (twice). During this period Lieut. W.F. Norris was killed by shrapnel (25<sup>th</sup> August 1915, 0630 o'clock).*

The eight month campaign in Gallipoli was fought by Commonwealth and French forces, allied forces having landed on the peninsula in April 1915 (the 29th Division at Cape Helles in the south and the Australian and New Zealand Corps north of Gaba Tepe on the west coast). Further landings were made at Suvla, just north of Anzac Cove, in early August, with the climax of the campaign seeing simultaneous assaults launched on all three fronts. However, the difficult terrain and stiff Turkish resistance soon led to the stalemate of trench warfare. From the end of August, no further serious action was fought and the lines remained unchanged. The peninsula was successfully evacuated in December 1915 and early January 1916.<sup>14</sup>

William's service record notes that he made a will, dated 20<sup>th</sup> July 1915 (just prior to the Regiment embarking for Gallipoli), naming his father, William Edward, as sole executor. Forming part of the Probate (and recorded in the Record of Officer's Effects, 1916) is an

---

<sup>11</sup> The National Archives, WO 374 – War Office: Officers' Services, First World War; WO 374/50857 – Norris, 2/Lieut. W F

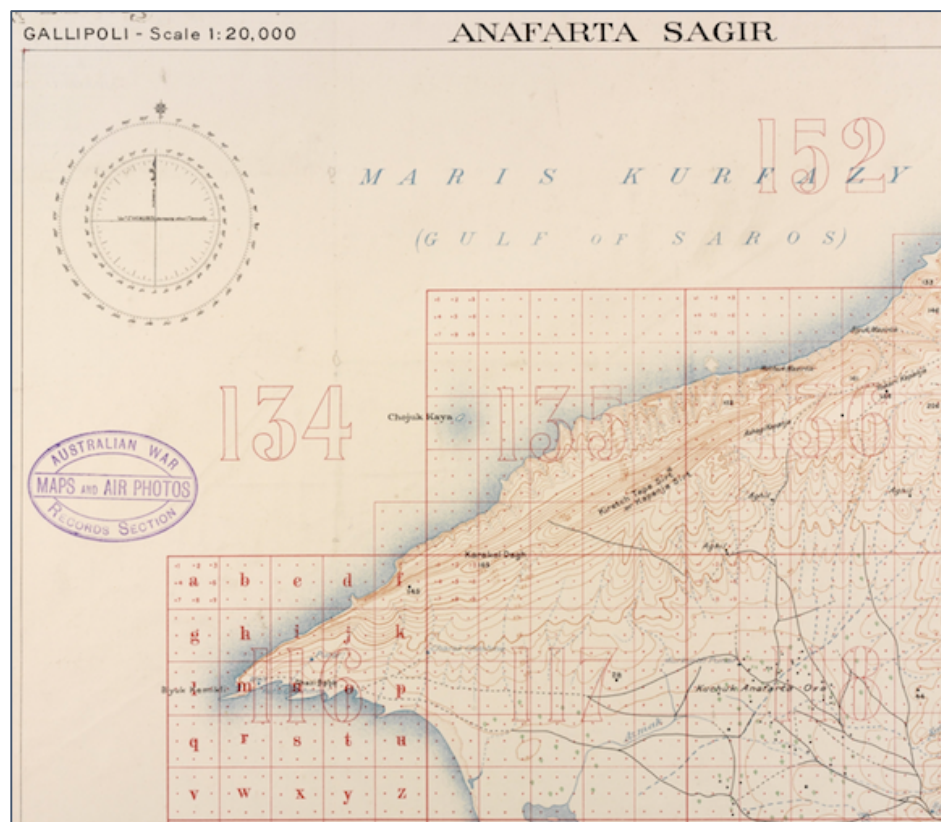
<sup>12</sup> Forces War Records ([www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/4375/21-artist-rifles](http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/4375/21-artist-rifles))

<sup>13</sup> War Diary ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>14</sup> CWGC information for Helles Memorial ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org))

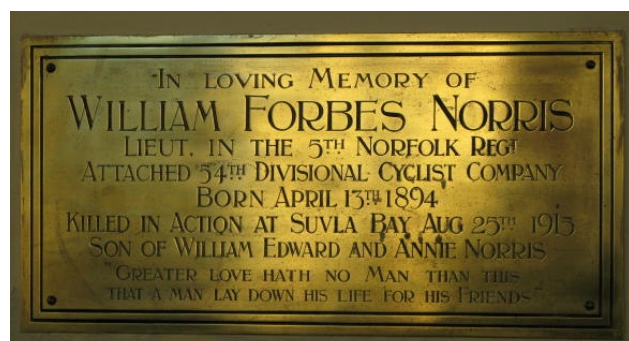
amount of £77 12s 6d, in respect of outstanding pay and war gratuity.<sup>15</sup> Probate on William's estate was granted at Norwich on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1916 in the amount of £24,173 5s 11d.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 3: Extract, map of Anafarta Sagir (Australia War Memorial)**



William is commemorated by a brass plaque (see Figure 4) in All Saints Church, Wood Norton, where it is recorded that he was a Lieutenant in the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment and attached to the 54<sup>th</sup> Division Cyclists Company (cyclists were used for reconnaissance or as messengers). His plaque is located beneath memorial tablets to his father and mother, who are buried in the Wood Norton churchyard. His death was reported in the *Dereham and Fakenham Times* on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1915 (see Figure 5).<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 4: Brass memorial to William Forbes Norris, All Saints, Wood Norton**

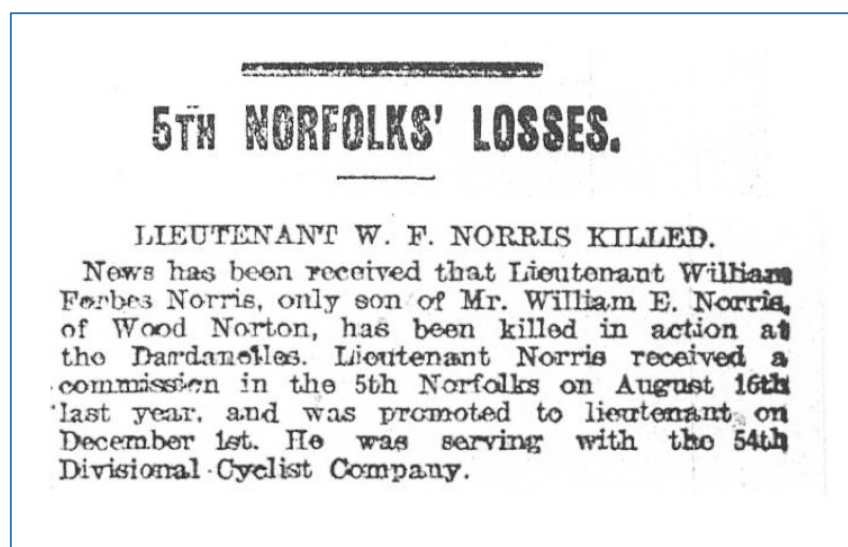


<sup>15</sup> See WO 374/50857 – Norris, 2/Lieut. W F; Record of Soldier's Effects ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>16</sup> National Probate Calendar, *Index of Wills and Administrations*, 1916

<sup>17</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, *Dereham and Fakenham Times* 1915

Figure 5: Extract, the  
Dereham and Fakenham  
Times, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>  
September, 1915



Further research into William's family reveals that William's father, William Edward Norris, was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1866 in Wood Dalling, Norfolk, the eldest son of the Reverend George and Diana Jane Norris. The 1871 Census for Wood Dalling records that George Norris was the curate, living with his family in the vicarage. William Edward Norris attended Shrewsbury School and was an alumnus of Pembroke College, Cambridge, achieving a BA in 1889. He was Captain in the Shropshire Light Infantry and succeeded his great uncle, William Norris, at Wood Norton Hall in 1875<sup>18</sup> (and it is to this William Norris that the East window in All Saints Church, Wood Norton, is dedicated). William Edward was a landowner, Justice of the Peace, and for 45 years a Churchwarden of All Saints. He had been a member of the Wood Norton Parish Council since its inception in 1895, and was elected Chairman to the Parish Council in 1911, a post which he held until his death on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1934, at Wood Norton Hall.<sup>19</sup> The Norris family did not always reside at the Hall – Kelly's *Directory of Norfolk* records that it was rented out for some time up to the 1920s.<sup>20</sup>

Following the war, William Edward Norris provided a piece of land in the village on which a village hall could be built, in memory of all those men who lost their lives in the conflict. An army billet (hut Number 101) was purchased in May 1920 from the former army camp at Weybourne, and converted for use as a Parish Room.<sup>21</sup> The former army billet served as the village hall for the following 78 years, being replaced by a new village hall on a different site in 1998.

William's mother, Annie Forbes, the daughter of Thomas Lawrence and Charlotte Ann Forbes, was born in Hampstead and baptised on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1872 in St Paul's, Hampstead.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Forbes' occupation is given on the Baptism Register as an insurance broker and in the 1881 Census for Hampstead as a marine broker with Lloyds. Annie Forbes married William Edward Norris on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1893 in St Mary's Church Kilburn (see Figure 6).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cambridge University Alumni, 1261-1900 ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>19</sup> Cambridge University Alumni, 1261-1900 ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>20</sup> Entries in Kelly's *Directory of Norfolk* for Wood Norton 1908, 1916 and 1933

<sup>21</sup> The Hut, Wood Norton – A Brief History (The Millennium Working Group)

<sup>22</sup> Baptism Register, St Paul's, Hampstead ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>23</sup> Marriage Register, St Mary, Kilburn ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

Figure 6: Extract from the Marriage Register for 1893, St. Mary, Kilburn

| 1893. Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Mary's Church</u> in the parish of <u>St. Mary, Kilburn</u> in the County of <u>Middlesex</u> |                            |                       |      |            |                     |                                    |                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| No.                                                                                                                               | When Married.              | Name and Surname.     | Age. | Condition. | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the time of Marriage. | Father's Name and Surname. |
| 28                                                                                                                                | June 15 <sup>th</sup> 1893 | William Edward Norris | 27   | Bachelor   | Engineer            | Wood Norton, East Dereham, Norfolk | George Norris              |
|                                                                                                                                   |                            | Annie Forbes          | 21   | Spinster   | —                   | 46 Priory Road, St. Pancras, N.W.  | Thomas Lawrence Forbes     |

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by after Banns by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William E. Norris and Annie Forbes in the presence of us, J. J. Forbes, Charlotte Ann Taylor, Edward Forbes, Geo. Norris, Annie Harriett Norris, William J. Norris, and James Forbes

Annie died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1966, aged 94, in Canterbury, Kent. Probate was granted to her two daughters, Marjorie France (widow) and Marion Joyce Norris (spinster) on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1967, in the amount of £13,326.<sup>24</sup> Following Annie's death, the Norris Memorial Trust was established to perpetuate the memory of her husband and only son, 'for the benefit of this church'.<sup>25</sup>

William had two sisters, born in Hampstead and baptised by Edward Forbes at St Mary, Kilburn - Marjorie (born on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1895) and Marion Joyce (born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1898, baptised on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1898).<sup>26</sup> Marjorie died on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1972, in Canterbury, Kent, aged 77. Marion spent many years abroad from the 1930s to 1950s, as a nurse, midwife and missionary in Uganda and Nigeria. She died on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1977 aged 79, in Canterbury, Kent, and her ashes were interred at All Saints Church Wood, Norton, on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Probate Records 1967 (Find a will - <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills>)

<sup>25</sup> Memorial to William Edward Norris in All Saints Church, Wood Norton, Norfolk

<sup>26</sup> Baptism Register, St. Mary, Kilburn for 1895 and 1898 ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)); see also FreeBMD for the birth of Marion Joyce Norris ([www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk) : Quarter to March 1898, Hampstead Vol 1a, p595)