

# Colonel Sir Andrew St George Martin, K.C.V.O., O.B.E., LL.D., J.P.

*We are privileged to publish (by kind permission of Lady Martin) the address given by the Rt Rev. Michael Mann at the memorial service to Sir Andrew held in Leicester Cathedral on Saturday 23 April 1994.* 1914

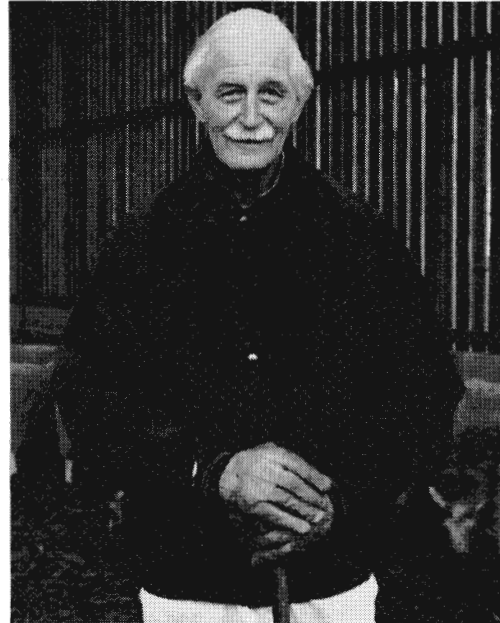
Robert Andrew St George Martin was a lovely man. We gather on this St George's Day, on what would have been his 80th birthday, to celebrate and to give thanks for the life and example of a man of Leicestershire, a countryman born and bred. The Martins have owned land in Leicestershire for the past 900 years. You have only to walk around the Brand at Woodhouse Eaves to realise just how much Andy was of this soil. The pictures, medals and honours of his forbears stare at you from every side. He came from a family which has provided generations of soldiers. His father was killed at Ypres, serving with the Leicestershire Yeomanry, when Andy was still a baby only a year old.

After Eton and Sandhurst, he was commissioned in 1934 into that most famous of Regiments, The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. The wife of one of his fellow Officers has written,

Andy was quiet, charming, helpful, and unlike some, neither a flirt nor a particularly good dancer, and although an excellent athlete, totally without conceit. I think he was my idea of an officer and a gentleman; straight, reliable, self-disciplined, not upset by teasing, of which he had a good deal, and which he accepted with admirable niceness. It was these qualities that made him so respected.

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He soon gained the nickname of 'Speedy' Martin, some say because he was an excellent cricketer, and an outstanding athlete, and others because he was said to be invariably late on parade and for appointments! A posting as A.D.C. to the Governor General of South Africa in 1938 meant that he did not rejoin his regiment until after Dunkirk. For a two-year period he served with the Warwicks, and then went to the 5th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, then engaged in the Normandy fighting, as Second in Command. He made his mark, and was mentioned in despatches for his leadership during the dash to relieve the beleaguered Airborne troops at Arnhem. During the bitter fighting of that terrible winter of 1944-45 the infantry were exhausted, and were being bled white by the scale of their casualties; by that time of the war reinforcements were scarce and no longer always of the quality to sustain such punishment. The Regimental History of the D.C.L.I. records, 'Major Martin enabled the newcomers to steady down and adapt to the battle conditions'. He was a steady influence all his life.

After the war in the midst of a succession of Staff jobs, he entered into that wonderful partnership with Peggy, which was to be his mainstay for the rest of his life. Perhaps their happiest Staff appointment was as Military Secretary to Lord Slim, when he was Governor General of Australia. On one occasion Slim and Andy were dressed up in all their finery, uniform, medals and lots of gold braid, on their way to a ceremony, when Andy said 'We shall be too early'. Slim replied, 'We'll stop at the next pub'. As they walked in, two old Diggers at the bar, nudged each other at the



1. Sir Andrew shortly after his appointment as Lord Lieutenant at work in his study, April 1965. The portrait over the fireplace is of his uncle, Sir Robert Martin, by Sir Oswald Birley, and was presented to Sir Robert by the County Council to mark his 25th year as Chairman of the Council.
2. A walking stick presented to Sir Andrew by the Leicestershire and Rutland Committee of the Army Benevolent Fund for his presidency. The handle carved in the likeness of the head of his hunter, December 1988
3. Sir Andrew Martin in February 1991

*[Photographs courtesy of the Leicester Mercury]*

apparition, and one said 'Jesus Christ!' Bill Slim said 'No - Bill Slim's the name, have a drink'. Andy and Slim formed a lasting friendship. In 1955 Andy returned to take command of his old Regiment, then fighting in Cyprus against the EOKA terrorists. That was the period when the first of the dreaded regimental amalgamations took place, and three of the Army's most distinguished Regiments, the 43rd and 52nd, the 60th Rifles, and the Rifle Brigade, were joined to form the new Royal Green Jackets, and Andy was chosen to be the first Commanding Officer of their 1st Battalion. His military service earned him first an M.B.E. later raised to an O.B.E.

In all the years that I knew Andy it was that charming twinkle and quizzical smile that always captivated me, as when on coming to stay, he would disappear into the back of his car, and out would come the most wonderful tray of new laid eggs or some other garden delicacy. For he was a countryman, born and bred. It was his uncle's death in 1965, and with it responsibility for the estate, that levered him out of the Army, just as he was being offered the one job he had always wanted as Director of Army Physical Training. But he was not allowed to remain out of the public eye for long, for Her Majesty appointed him to be Her Lord Lieutenant in his native County, a post which he held with the greatest distinction and humility for 24 years, only retiring at the statutory retirement age of 75. For this service Her Majesty conferred on him the honour of a Knighthood in Her personal gift of the Royal Victorian Order.

You in this Cathedral Church today will know better than I his manifold services to his County. His utter dedication to his duty took him to every nook and cranny of the County, and to every possible occasion, so that he denied himself time for those country pursuits in which he would dearly have liked to have indulged. He always had an especial place in his heart and concern for the welfare of the young. Both Leicester and Loughborough Universities recognised his devoted service by conferring upon him an Honorary Degree. But as Lord Lieutenant he also retained his lifelong devotion to the Army as President of the East Midlands Territorial Association, and all Service Charities were close to his heart. Living in Leicestershire enabled Andy and Peggy to play their full part in the life of the local Church. For Andy was a staunch churchman, a Lay Canon of this Cathedral since 1967, a member of the Diocesan Synod not merely in name but in most faithful attendance; Chairman of those Christian lay people in the 'Far and Near Club', and a devoted member of his Parish Church at Woodhouse Eaves, where he was privileged to administer the Holy Communion. The shaggy Highland cattle browsing in the pastures of the Brand were his and Peggy's especial love. There wasn't a day in the summer when he failed to put in an hour with his garden. He rode every day, and hunted with the Quorn three times a fortnight. The Prince of Wales first rode with the Quorn, when staying as a guest at the Brand. Andy was a Trustee of the Hunt, President of the Quorn Pony Club, and associated with innumerable Leicestershire rural interests. He was an excellent shot, and it was a chill caught out shooting one particularly bitter Saturday afternoon, which led to his death 48 hours later. But he would have thought that was a good way to go to His Maker.

No one who knew this charming, humble, devoted and lovely man could fail to have drawn encouragement and pleasure from their acquaintance. But he had another almost rare quality, for in being with him your spirits were lifted, and you just felt better for having met him. We are the poorer for no longer having him in our midst, but we are immeasurably richer for the joy of having known him, and for that we give thanks to God. To Peggy and to his son Robert, who has maintained the family tradition, following his father into his old Regiment, and just about to command its

5th Battalion, and in whom Andy took such pride, we offer our heartfelt sympathy. But they, like us, will go forward inspired by the example which he set of quiet Christian service, devotion to his duty and to his Sovereign, his love of his family and his faith in Our God.

Chaucer sums up Sir Andrew Martin for me:-

He loverd chivalrye,  
 Trouthe and honour, freedom and curteisye,  
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight

Rt Rev. Michael Ashley Mann, K.C.V.O.,  
 Dean of Windsor, 1976-89

*The tribute to Sir Andrew published in the Spring Newsletter by the Secretary, Alan McWhirr, is published here as the Society's more personal appreciation.*

It was with great sadness that the Society learnt of the death of its President, Colonel Sir Andrew Martin on 13th December 1993. Only two weeks or so before he had taken the chair at our AGM held in the County Record Office and on that occasion he was in particular good form exchanging remarks with Duncan Lucas, Chairman of the County Council, and promising to obtain more donations from various people in the county for the Society's Index Appeal. He was the first person to make a donation when the appeal was launched, and immediately after the AGM sent another donation making his name the first and last on the list at the time of writing. It would seem appropriate to dedicate the index when published to Sir Andrew in recognition of his generosity and efforts in raising money on behalf of the appeal, something the Committee will consider in the future. He and I spent one morning last February at our breakfast-room table selecting people to target for the Index Appeal, topping and tailing letters, addressing envelopes and making plans for the future. It turned out to be a very successful morning's work. Only 3 days after the AGM I had a postcard from Sir Andrew asking for a list of donors so that he could chase up others he knew who had not contributed!

Before settling down in Leicestershire, Sir Andrew had a distinguished military career and after retiring from the army regularly attended reunions at home and overseas. I vividly remember two to three years ago travelling back on the train from London with him after such a reunion in Normandy I believe. He was full of fascinating stories about people he had met and before I knew it, we were back in Leicester. His father was killed at Ypres in 1915 when Sir Andrew was only a year old and so he was brought up by his uncle, Sir Robert Martin, who taught him much about the Leicestershire countryside including his passion for local history. Sir Robert was an active member of this Society for many years and was chairman of its Committee from 1933 to 1953, before becoming President in 1953, a post he held until his death in 1961 aged 86. Sir Andrew was particularly delighted to be asked to become President of the Society in 1977 following in the footsteps of his uncle, a post which he held until his death. Between them they held the office of President for 36 years.

In 1987 I interviewed Sir Andrew in his home, The Brand, Woodhouse Eaves, on behalf of BBC Radio Leicester for their half-hour programme called Profile. I could have talked for hours about his family's history and its involvement with Leicestershire. He could trace his family back to the twelfth century, to a John Martyn

who lived in Anstey, but he was also proud of his city connections and of being a Hereditary Freeman of the City of Leicester. He was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire in 1965 and held the post for 25 years before retiring at the age of 75. A service of evensong was held at St James the Greater, Leicester, to mark Sir Andrew's retirement and as a mark of the respect in which everybody held Sir Andrew the service was broadcast by BBC Radio Leicester. Those of us who met Sir Andrew regularly will remember his warm friendly personality. He always had time for the work of the Society and he will be sorely missed.

Dr Alan McWhirr,  
Hon. Secretary