

Norton District in the Mashona Rebellion

by Colonel A. S. Hickman, M.B.E.

There was of course no Norton District until recently and in the days of the Mashona Rebellion there was no settled farm except that of Joseph Norton Norton. The scope of my research has extended south and east to Hartley Hill on the Umfuli River and to Matshayangombi's country, which lay to the east of it. I must go back to the year 1896 when the Matabele Rebellion broke out in March. The European residents of Mashonaland had so little fear that the craven Mashona would rise that the Rhodesia Horse, 200 of them, volunteered in a body, and no less than 150 were allowed to go to the relief of Matabeleland under the command of Lt.-Col. Robert Beal, formerly of the Pioneer Corps. Cecil Rhodes went with them and they left Salisbury on the 6th of April, less than two weeks after they had received the call for help. During May, however, the witchdoctors and agents of the Matabele rebels had been stirring up trouble, and had persuaded many of the chiefs to take up arms against the Europeans. They spread the rumour that they had wiped out Beal's Column, and that all Europeans in Bulawayo had been massacred. Their strongest supporters were Chief Makoni of the Rusapi area and Chief Matshayangombi, whose main kraal was near the left bank of the Umfuli River, about 36 miles south-west of Norton. Matshayangombi was closely associated with a powerful witchdoctor, Kagubi, known as the Mondoro or "lion-god", who lived in his area. There was also a notorious witch named Nyanda, who lived in the hills near what is now Concession in the Mazoe district. The first murders were committed at Matshayangombi's kraal on the 15th of June. The Native Commissioner of the Hartley District, David Enraght Moony, had heard that three natives who were trading at this kraal, had been killed the day before, and went to make enquiries accompanied by an African detective called January. When he saw the hostile attitude on his arrival he decided to clear for his life, but unfortunately delayed to feed his horse, and whilst he was saddling up was attacked, and after a stiff resistance, killed. January escaped and fled to a cave. From this hiding place he saw Messrs. John Stunt and A. Shell, who were prospectors, arrive at the kraal the same afternoon. They were well received, but when least expecting it, were seized by the rebels, bound hand and foot, and whether alive or dead, were thrown into the Umfuli River. Certainly their bodies were never recovered. The following day, the 16th, more murders were committed, notably at the Beatrice Mine and on the Hartley road. 14 In those days Hartley was sited in the vicinity of Hartley Hill, about 20 miles to the east of the present Hartley. It was linked to Salisbury by a very rough wagon track which ran south-west through Van Rooyen's Poort, and crossed the Hunyani River near what is now the dam wall of Lake Mellwaine, but was then part of Norton's farm, Porta. Traces of it still remain running through the Norton area, and I made an appeal to those through whose land it lies to do their best to preserve it. The people of Hartley, being the nearest outpost to Matabeleland, had already taken precautions and had established a laager on Hartley Hill, which they occupied as early as April the 24th, when they heard of the murder of a prospector not far from the Matabele border. They were therefore not caught by surprise when the rebellion began, but on the contrary had already assured Judge Vintcent, the senior Company official in Salisbury, that they would maintain their position in spite of his advice to them to retire; but he sent them 12 Lee-Metford rifles and several thousand rounds of ammunition to supplement their private supplies. You will hear more about these Hartley people later in this narrative. Next in sequence of events was the murder of the Norton family, and it is very fitting that the township and district surrounding it should be named in their memory. Joseph Norton Norton was a Yorkshire landowner, who came from Pledwick Hall near Wakefield. He was born about 1867, had been a student at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester and had been to America. By his own account he had visited Mashonaland on behalf of the

Chartered Company before the Pioneer expedition of 1890, had come up by wagon from the south, and left the country by the east coast route, travelling by sea from Beira to Cape Town. Apparently he had then followed the Pioneer Column, and on account of these trips had been granted 6,000 acres of land for each of them, and then bought another 5,000 acres. The total of 17,000 acres comprised the Porta Estate. He began to farm this land at the end of 1890. It is not clear when he met his future wife, but they did meet during a sea voyage, and were married at Pretoria. Mrs. Norton's maiden name was Carol Driffield, and she also hailed from Yorkshire, from the small town of Huntington, near York. It is thought that she had come to South Africa as a governess. She preceded her husband to England, where their daughter, Dorothy, was born in 1895. She had three sisters who were alive in 1950, and a brother Lt. William Driffield, R.N., who was drowned about 1896, when rescuing an M.P. (why we do not know!). Norton himself returned to England late in 1895. Here he engaged Harry Gravenor as a farm assistant; this man had been a cowboy in Texas, but was also highly skilled as a bee-keeper, and it was Norton's intention to develop apiaries. He also got in touch with George Reginald Talbot, aged 22, who was then a student at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, and who agreed to come out with Norton as a pupil, with a view to subsequent partnership. He also belonged to Yorkshire, from Leeds, and it was Norton's land agent, McCracken, who had recommended him from the Agricultural College. 15 A nurse-companion was engaged. She was Miss L. M. Fairweather, from the York Nurses' Home, who has been described as a comfortable middle-aged body. Norton, his wife and child, and their retainers, left England early in February, 1896, and voyaged to Beira. They travelled up the Pungwe River by shallow-draught steamer to Fontesvilla, then over the railway construction line to Chimoio, where they bought a wagon and span of oxen, by which they completed their journey to Salisbury. They took on two Mozambique natives as servants; one was cook and one was voorlooper. They were accompanied by three magnificent Irish Wolfhounds (two bitches and a dog), and had left in Beira furniture and ready-made bee-hives to be sent on later. On arrival in Salisbury, Norton engaged another European farm assistant, James M. Alexander, particularly to construct fencing in an attempt to keep out the rinderpest which was then killing nearly all the cattle in the country; he had about 1,000 head of scrub cattle. The Nortons bought some provisions and went out to Porta, where they set up their establishment at a beautiful place just north of the Hunyani Poort. The homestead was in a fenced enclosure; the main building had a dining room, the Norton's bedroom was adjacent, and there was a double row of rondavels for the rest of the staff. There was no suspicion of any danger. In fact the Nortons had invited Hugh Marshall Hole, then an official of the Chartered Company, and his family, to spend the week-end beginning on 13th June at their farm for some bird shooting. Norton, even in those days protected his game, and in fact F. C. Selous of Pioneer fame, had suggested to him that the area should be developed as a Game Sanctuary. Hole, who afterwards wrote "The Making of Rhodesia" and other books about the early days, was unable to drive out as one of his horses was sick, and so sent a note by native runner that he would come the following week. On the 16th June, after the evening meal, the cook-boy came in to say that all the labourers had gone away. Norton checked on this report, but was not alarmed, as in his experience they had cleared off previously in a body to beer drinks. But he instructed Talbot to cycle to Salisbury the following day, 20-21 miles, see the Native Commissioner, and ask for a native policeman to be sent to get the labourers back on the fencing. He decided himself to go and see the local headman. So next morning, the 17th, Talbot set out for Salisbury on his cycle; he had also been commissioned by Mrs. Norton to buy her some stamps; he carried his revolver, because the road was only a lonely wagon track. There was one horse on the farm, and this Norton himself rode to the neighbouring kraals of Nyamwenda, the chief, where most of his labourers had been engaged. He was never again seen alive.

At the time of his death Norton was 29 years of age, a most popular and respected member of the European community. Though he was a man of wealth, he was a hard-working farmer, and most efficient. He never spared himself, and expected the same quality of work from his subordinates. For this reason the Mashona may have looked on him as a hard task master, though in fact he was fair and just. It is said that in ghastly revenge they cut off his hands, before or after he was killed, but I can find no confirmation of this. His body was thrust down an ant-bear hole, but was brought to the surface by wild animals, and was found some months later by C. H. Howell, who had been charged by the Chartered Company in 1897 with the task of settling the Mashona in open country, and preventing them from re-occupying their kopje strongholds. In fact when patrolling around deserted kraals he found some tobacco seedlings and planted them on about an acre of Norton's cleared land. He had a Shangaan native who knew how to cure the crop, and made pipe tobacco and some crude cigars. He was visited by Earl Grey, the Administrator, who took the cigars and arranged for the tobacco to be sent to Salisbury for the troops. Howell claims that he grew the first tobacco in Mashonaland, but quotes Earl Grey as saying "Howell, your tobacco proved a bit too strong for the white troops, but it was issued to the Native Contingent who appreciated it. The cigars I tried out on some of my friends and I hope you never meet any of them!"

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Check out our mashona rebellion selection for the very best in unique or custom, handmade pieces from our shops. Did you scroll all this way to get facts about mashona rebellion? Well you're in luck, because here they come. There are 1 mashona rebellion for sale on Etsy, and they cost \$19.95 on average. The rising of the Ndebele and southwestern and central Shona people against colonial rule in the 1890s has become one of the classic cases of such resistance. Yet, since the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, very little fresh research has been carried out on the subject. This paper re-examines the role of Shona religious authorities in the rising, especially that of the medium of the Nehanda spirit of the Mazowe valley in the central Shona area. In just over a century, the figure of Mbuya Nehanda has become the best-known popular symbol of resistance to colonial rule in modern Zimbabwe. The rebellion of 1896 had a great effect on the progress of Rhodesia, and many references in the following list reflects how women were involved - living in protective laagers with their families. At the first outbreak of the rebellion around Enkeldoorn, a Mr. van der Merwe was badly wounded. With great presence of mind, his wife seized his rifle and opened fire on the attackers. Home > Mashonaland East > Mashona Rebellion / First Chimurenga 1896-7 graves at Old Marandellas (Ruzawi Cemetery). Mashona Rebellion / First Chimurenga 1896-7 graves at Old Marandellas (Ruzawi Cemetery). Why Visit? Wednesday 15th June 1896 the killings began at Mashingombi's kraal on the Mupfure River west of Beatrice when Native Commissioner Moony and two prospectors, Stunt and Shell were killed, then the Norton family on Wednesday 17th June and then to Marandellas with the slaying of Bernard Mizeki at his home the same evening by Mchemwa and Gatsi, the sons of. No Europeans now remained in the district, and it was not until the 29th July that Major Watts arrived at Old Marandellas from Charter having buried Capt. Harry Bremner on the way.