

## William Ellis Married Martha Bird

On the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1882 William Ellis, a railwayman married Martha Bird in St Andrew's Church. Martha was the daughter of Eliza and William Bird; her father was a yard man at Cotterstock Hall.

Martha and William were married for eleven years until Martha sadly committed suicide when they were visiting her parents at their cottage in the grounds of Cotterstock Hall.



Martha had a history of being mentally unstable and on a previous occasion she had tried to drown herself in the grounds of the hall!

An extract from the Stamford Mercury of 1893 gives all the gory details of what happened on that fateful night.

**FATAL TERMINATION TO THE LAMP INCIDENT.**—We regret to say that the unfortunate woman, Mrs. Elliss, who threw a paraffin lamp against the ceiling and was severely burned in consequence, as reported in last week's *Mercury*, died from the injuries she received on Saturday night. An inquest was held before Mr. Coroner Gaches on Monday afternoon. Eliza Bird, wife of Wm. Bird, yardman, Cotterstock Hall, Oundle, identified the body as that of her daughter. She was 34 years old last birthday. Deceased had been staying with her at Cotterstock, where she tried to drown herself. On Sunday night her daughter had gone to bed with her husband, and witness was downstairs. The deceased came down the stairs very softly and entered the room where witness was sitting. Deceased snatched hold of the lamp and sprinkled the oil over herself, and in a moment she was a mass of flames. She had only her nightdress on at the time. The husband came down stairs and helped to put the flames out. Dr. Kirkwood was called in.—The husband, William Ellis, railway foreman, said on hearing Mrs. Bird call he ran downstairs and found his wife holding

the bottom of the lamp over her head, and her hair appeared to have just caught fire. Witness snatched the remains of the lamp away, and succeeded in putting out the flames. He considered that when at Cotterstock deceased was partly not accountable for what she did. He had looked after her very tightly, and at the time she went downstairs he had not been asleep two minutes at the most. While she was at Cotterstock he sent to the relieving officer at Oundle, who replied that he would come over with a fly early in the morning, and said it would be double the expense if deceased went to Berrywood than if she went to the Three Counties Asylum. Witness considered the case over and thought he could not stand the expense, and so brought her home.—Dr. Kirkwood having given evidence as to the serious nature of the injuries, the jury returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased died from the effects of burns which were inflicted as the result of her own act, she being temporarily insane at the time. They added to their verdict a rider to the effect, that they considered the relieving officer at Oundle should have placed her under restraint whilst at Cotterstock.