

## Thomas Dixon 1859-1939

Three undated newspaper cuttings in Miss Whinfrey's album (mentioned in the Summer Newsletter) refer to Thomas Dixon: the farewell presentation made by pupils, a description of the public ceremony to honour his and his wife's retirement and his obituary. By checking data on St Mary's churchyard we can find the inscription on his grave to



pinpoint dates: Thomas's wife Eliza Annie died on 9 July 1939 aged 82 and Thomas died on 24 December 1939 aged 80.

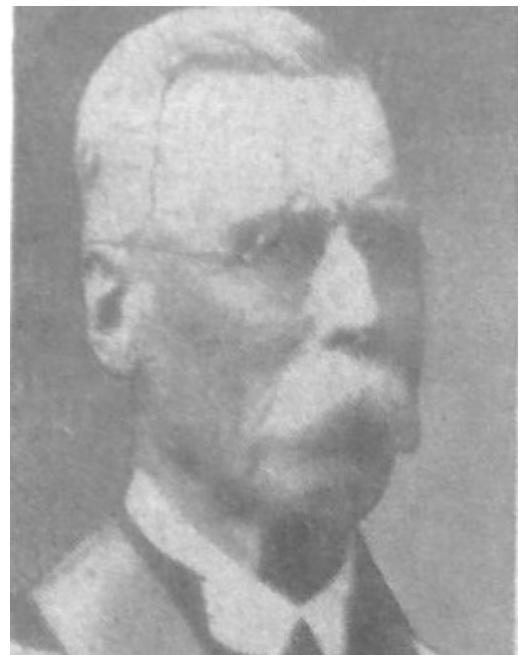
Thomas began teaching in Tickhill aged 20 in 1879 and gave 42 years of dedicated service. On the last day of his headship of the National Schools in 1921, the scholars and teachers presented him with a leather suitcase which all hoped would accompany him on many holiday journeys in the years of his well-earned leisure. Mrs Dixon received a crocodile leather handbag at the same time. Recognising his contribution to life in Tickhill, apart from his school work, mention was made of the following activities in which Thomas was involved: honorary secretary of the Clothing Club, the Primrose League, the War Savings Association and the War Memorial Committee. Mr Greenhough, a scholar then a teacher at the school, said Mr Dixon had taught about 2,242 boys and girls, more than the then population of Tickhill. After thanks from Mr Dixon 'a very subdued school then received their dismissal from the veteran master'.

Under the subheading 'Recognition of life's teaching work' there is a description in one article of a packed meeting held in Tickhill Library's Public Hall to celebrate Thomas's and Eliza's retirement. The Vicar, the Revd H E Booty, presided. He began his speech by reading a telegram from Mr Atkinson-Clark of Tickhill Castle expressing regret that he and his wife were unavoidably absent that evening. The Vicar continued, saying that those present had never seen the like before and never would again. Mr Dixon was not afraid of hard work and this was not confined to the hours he was in school...in his study he dealt with

correspondence, registers and lesson preparation. Whatever he did, he did thoroughly. The Vicar's concluding wish was that the best of the past would be the worst of the future. Mr Clarkson then spoke about Mr Dixon's prowess in football in the days when Tickhill beat Doncaster Rovers to a frazzle, and celebrated his organising abilities on such occasions as the 1897 Jubilee and Mafeking Day, and his work with the choir, concerts and Tickhill Show.

Mrs Todd Naylor spoke, as an old resident, of the good work done by Mr and Mrs Dixon in the parish for the last 42 years. Her husband had been a [school] manager for years and she herself was one now so she knew the excellent reports that had been won and the exceptional attendance secured by the hard work of the teachers. In the schools during the Great War she had seen many fine parcels packed for the lads out in France and elsewhere. All knew how the Show had grown from a small country affair to a great fixture drawing regularly its thousands and how it had meant the sacrificing of the summer holiday....She begged to present Mrs Dixon with a gold bracelet in token of their great esteem. Mr W M Jarvis, making the presentation to Mr Dixon, said as an old scholar and lifelong resident he was proud of the honour of presenting his old master with a token of respect and gratitude. Before doing so, he recalled how Mr Dixon had played cricket as thoroughly as he did everything else and had been invaluable as a stumper, for no man put his foot one inch above the crease and got it back again.... He asked Mr Dixon to accept the study chair and purse of over £73 together with a 5 dollar greenback from the land of the same... Mr Dixon gave a lengthy speech of thanks and the evening ended with singing the National Anthem.

Thomas's obituary shows that he had a very busy retirement serving on Tickhill Urban District Council for 15 years and during that time being a governor of Maltby Grammar School. He was a secretary of Tickhill Horticultural Society for many years and, as a member of Tickhill Parish Church, he was a licensed lay reader, choir master and superintendent of the Sunday School. During his final two years he was not so active on account of illness and his wife's death was a severe blow. She had been his assistant in the local school for 30 years; they had been married for 57 years. They left one daughter and five sons, all of whom, except one son, lived abroad.



These brief glimpses of Thomas Dixon's hard-working life in Tickhill do not tell the whole story. He and his wife also housed boarders in their home, Dormer House, Sunderland Street, in addition to all their other responsibilities. The young boarders attended the National Schools. On 4 May 1899 this led to a question in the House of Commons when Mr Ellis Griffith MP asked the Vice-President of the Committee of the Council on Education if he was aware the Master

of the National Schools in Tickhill received fees from a number of children who attended the schools and if this was a breach of Article 81 of the Code. Sir John Eldon Gorst MP explained that no fees were charged in the schools and there was no breach of the Code - the Master had boarders in his house (implying payments were for bed and board).

[See: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1899/may/04/tickhill>]