

## A Brightonian Head

Miss Annie Margaret North 1867 - 1958

Head mistress of York Place Higher Grade Girls' School 1894 - 1901

Annie North was the first head born in Brighton. She had gone one step further in her training than Miss Brion, having taken a 2 year course as well as passing the Board of Education's certificate examination, so was a Trained Certificated Teacher. It is possible she attended Ditchling Road Training College.

Her father, Joseph Sharp North, came from Yorkshire. In 1861 he was already a widower and was operating as an Agent (the census does not tell us for what) in Wolverhampton. He soon married again - to Margaret Allsop, a dressmaker from Birmingham. The family moved around the country quite a bit before settling in Brighton. Their three children were born in Islington (James Thomas Sharp), Southampton (Dinah Rosetta Sarah - she preferred 'Rosetta') and Brighton (Annie Margaret).

Margaret was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1867. The following year, she was christened, along with her two siblings. Doing this, as a job lot, so to speak, was quite common at this time! By 1871, the family lived at 26 Albion Hill. This was quite a poor area of town. Joseph was now a Bookseller. All three children were 'Scholars' - even 4 year old Annie.

Sadly for the family, Joseph died the following year, aged only 44. Frustratingly, they appear to have been missed off the 1881 census, so we've no further information until 1891. James was now married and working as a Bookbinder (his son followed in his footsteps and had a shop at 44 Market Street). His mother and sisters had moved to 9 Park Crescent Terrace. Margaret and Rosetta were dressmakers, like their mother, whilst Annie was a School mistress. They also took in a boarder, Herbert Rawlings, a piano tuner. Three years later, he and Rosetta were married! That same year, Annie was promoted to be Head at York Place.

The 1901 census recorded Margaret and Annie at 46 Waldegrave Road, possibly a more affluent area than Albion Hill, though there could have been moves in between.

Later that year, Annie married Charles Tyson, a teacher from the Boys' School. Both schools collected for a wedding present! Needless to say, she had to resign her post.

I know these articles are about the head teachers. However, Charles Tyson was one of the iconic figures of the Boys' School, working there for 34 years, 25 of those as Deputy Head, so it is worth reviewing his career.

Charles originated from Ulverston in Lancashire, where his mother ran a grocery shop as well as bringing up four children (with a servant to help). She had been widowed when Charles was 5. Two of her children had joined the business by 1891, but Charles was a "Student at a Training College". He must have moved to Brighton soon after finishing training. (I wonder what brought him so far south?) "Onwards and Upwards" tells us he joined the Staff in 1897. He found a flat close

by at 7, Pelham Square and, in 1901, was described as 'Teacher - School of Science'. He seems to have taught several subjects - "Onwards" mentions Latin, Maths, English and French. Indeed there were references to his "extraordinary stock of learning" He rose quickly to be Second Master, unofficially from 1906 and officially from 1911 until his retirement in 1931. Apparently, his nickname amongst the boys was 'Weights'. No one quite knows why! One commented:

"He inspired his classes chiefly through intellectual channels and by his somewhat alarming efficiency, his keen sense of justice and his conscientious, wholehearted efforts on their behalf".

Charles and Annie were living at 22 Cissbury Road, Hove by 1911. He was an "Assistant Schoolmaster in Municipal Secondary School" working for the "Board of Brighton Education Committee". Annie had no occupation. There were three daughters and a son...and no servants. Annie must have done a lot herself, possibly with daily help.

In 1930, Charles became ill and had to take 6 months off, which meant he missed the move to Varndean. Having retired in 1931, he died the following Easter, aged 60.

Annie outlived him by 26 years, dying, aged 90, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1958. One of the last contacts with Varndean was on the occasion of the Old Girl's Association Golden Jubilee (1954), when she sent a message of congratulations, whilst 'flowers and greetings' were sent to her.

*"Onwards and Upwards" by Tony Allt and Brian Robson is acknowledged as the source for the information and quotations about Charles Tyson.*