

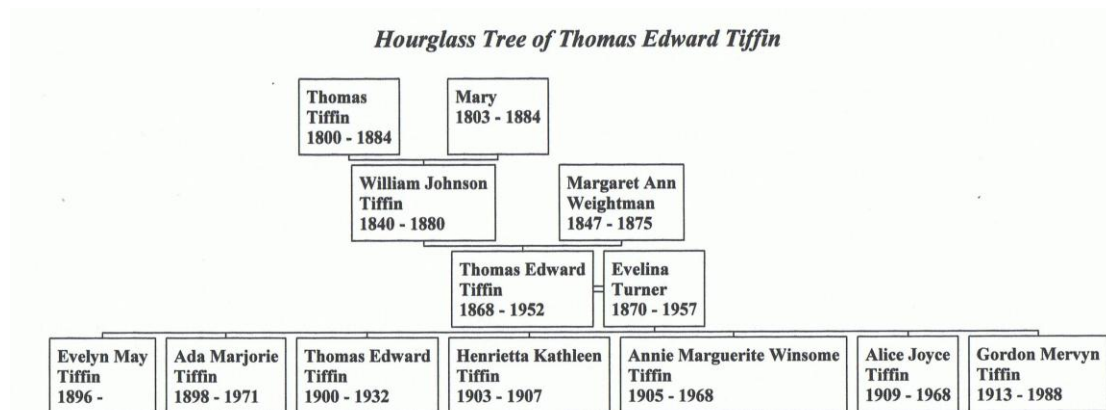
## Thomas Edward Tiffin (1868-1952): Architect of Dartford Library

Thomas Edward Tiffin was Dartford Town Surveyor for 31 years. During this time he was responsible for several important building projects, including Dartford Library, which he designed.

He was born during 1868 in Sunderland, the second of five children (four boys and one girl) born to William Johnson and Margaret Ann Tiffin. The 1871 census shows William (aged 31, an accountant), Margaret (24), William (3), Thomas (2) and Arthur (9 months) Tiffin plus a servant living at 18 Shakespeare Terrace, Bishop Wearmouth, Sunderland.

Sadly, Thomas's mother died aged 28 in 1875 (when he was 6) and his father died aged 40 in 1880. In the 1881 census, Thomas is listed as a boarder, aged 12, at North Side School, Staindrop, Teesdale, County Durham. Thomas's siblings Arthur (10), John (9) and Ada (7) are shown living with their grandparents Thomas (80, a ship owner) and Mary (77) Tiffin, their unmarried aunt Sarah Tiffin (47) and a servant at 7 Park Place West, Sunderland. Both grandparents died in 1884.

Thomas became a civil engineer. This was his occupation listed in the 1891 census. By then he was a lodger, aged 22, at 9 Foyle St, Sunderland. He married Evelina Turner in 1894 in Sunderland. Thomas was 25 and she was 23. They went on to have seven children, namely Evelyn May (b 1896), Ada Marjorie (b1898), Thomas Edward (b1900), Henrietta Kathleen (b1903), Annie Marguerite Winsome (b1905), Alice Joyce (b1909) and Gordon Mervyn (b1913).



(a more detailed family tree may be found in the “tiffin42” database on RootsWeb’s WorldConnect Project website)

The family moved to West Hartlepool around 1897, where they were living in York Road South in 1901. The census that year shows their household as Thomas (32, a civil engineer and surveyor), Evelina (30), Evelyn (4), Ada (2), Thomas (10 months), a nurse and a general servant.

In 1903, Thomas was appointed Surveyor and Engineer to the Dartford Urban District Council<sup>1</sup>. Apparently his previous employer asked him to return to his old post soon after his arrival in Dartford. He considered doing so, but was persuaded to stay by an increase in his salary.<sup>2</sup>

Henrietta, Thomas's fourth child, died in 1907 aged 4 years 10 months and was buried in East Hill Cemetery. The cemetery records show the address of the family as 27 Summerhill Road, Dartford. Thomas continued to live here until he died, although the houses were renumbered c 1937 and the address became 20 Summerhill Road. The house still exists, it is a modest semi-detached property.

Thomas was responsible for public building works in the town. For example, Bank House (now empty and next to the Iceland shop) in Dartford High Street was acquired by the Council in 1909. He was responsible for adapting the building for use as Council Offices and (in 1910) adding a room that was used as the Council Chamber.

The 1911 census shows Thomas (42), Eveline (14), Ada (12), Thomas (10), Annie (5) and Alice (1) plus a domestic servant living at 27 Summerhill Road (which had eight rooms).



Thomas Edward Tiffin.

ASSOC. MEM. INST. CIVIL ENGINEERS.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE SURVEYOR'S INSTITUTION.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY ENGINEERS.

(from Dartford Library Local Studies Collection)

Thomas was the architect of the Dartford Library building that was constructed with the aid of a grant from the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. It was built during the early part of the First World War, when manpower and materials were hard to obtain, and opened in 1916. An extension was added in 1937. The building is grade II listed and is an attractive feature of the town. After the First World War, Thomas was responsible for creating local housing schemes. He also supervised the construction of Market Street (in 1926) and various road improvement schemes.

Thomas and Evelina's daughter Ada married Richard Rowbotham in 1920. The eldest son of Thomas and Evelina, namely Thomas, was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the RAF in 1917. After the war, he worked in East Africa from 1919 to 1928 and in Sierra Leone from 1929 to 1932 as a railway engineer. He returned to Dartford in November 1932, went to visit some friends in

Sunderland where he became ill and died of pneumonia in December 1932, aged 32 (unmarried)<sup>3</sup>.



Dartford Library (2011)

The Mayor of Dartford (Alderman Alfred J Penney) held a dinner at the Royal Victoria and Bull Hotel in 1934 to mark the retirement of Thomas Tiffin (aged 65) after 31 year's service. Most of Dartford Council attended, together with friends and colleagues. He was presented with a clock from Dartford Council and cigarette case from his colleagues. Alderman Wooler said that he "never dealt with a more conscientious, upright man" than Thomas.<sup>2</sup>

Annie Tiffin married Frank Byerley in 1937. Frank was a flying officer in the Royal Air Service Volunteer Reserve. He died in 1940 aged 39, failing to return from a flying mission during the Second World War. Alice Tiffin married Claude Penny in 1938 and Gordon Tiffin married Margaret Mugeridge in 1940.

Thomas continued to live in Dartford until his death in 1952 aged 83. His wife died five years later in 1957 aged 87. They were buried in East Hill Cemetery. The gravestones are inscribed as follows :

*Kerbstones*

In loving memory of / HENRIETTA KATHLEEN dearly beloved daughter of EVELINA & THOMAS EDWARD TIFFIN / who died 27<sup>th</sup> Sep 1907 aged 4 years 10 months / THOMAS EDWARD TIFFIN, died Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 1932, aged 32 years

*Headstone (fallen)*

T.E.TIFFIN A.M.I.C.E. / 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1952 / EVELINE TIFFIN / 10<sup>th</sup> December 1957.

(A.M.I.C.E. stands for Associate Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers.)

Probate on Thomas's estate of £993 (equivalent to about £65,000 now<sup>4</sup>) was granted to his widow Eveline.

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1. Dartford Further Historical Notes by S K Keyes (1938), p801.
2. *Retirement of Mr Tiffin*, Kentish Times 11 May 1934
3. *Death of Mr T E Tiffin, Junior*, Kentish Times 9 Dec 1932
4. Calculated with respect to average earnings using the website "Measuring Worth"  
[www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/](http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/)