

By Tony Wainwright

# LEST WE FORGET - THE LIFE OF TOM GRACIE

Among the names of the 'Fallen of Everton Football Club' featured on the panels by the Dixie Dean statue is Tom Gracie. Born in Glasgow in 1889, he was a qualified bookkeeper but pursued a career in football, beginning with Shawfield Juniors before moving to Strathclyde, Airdrieonians, Hamilton and Morton.

Whilst still with Morton, Tom travelled with the Scotland team to play against England in the Home International Championship at Goodison Park in April 1911, where over 50,000 fans witnessed a 1-1 draw. Although not selected to play, the prolific forward signed for Everton immediately after the game. He made his debut in a 1-0 win at Blackburn five days later and scored on his home debut in a 2-1 win against Nottingham Forest on 14 April. Tom made a total of 13 appearances for the Blues, scoring that one goal, before moving to Liverpool in February 1912 for a fee of £150. He returned to Scotland in 1914 to sign for Heart of Midlothian.

When war was declared on 4 August 1914, both the cricket and rugby authorities made the decision to cease their competitions. The Football Association, however, chose to continue. Discontent began to simmer regarding this decision, especially as reports filtered home of men being killed at the Front in their thousands, and on 25 November 1914, Tom was one of 11 Hearts players who enlisted in the 16th Battalion of the Royal Scots.

Tom served as corporal 19024, combining military training while still turning out for Hearts. He lost a brother, John, in the great advance at Loos.



Hearts fulfilled their fixtures for the rest of the season and Tom finished as the league's joint top scorer with 29 goals. This achievement is all the more remarkable when you consider that he was diagnosed with leukaemia in March 1915 but continued to train with his battalion and play for the rest of the season.

Tom did not have a chance to serve overseas, as he passed away from the disease at Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow, on 23 October 1915. He was just 26 years old. On learning of Tom's death, the Merseyside sports journalist Ernest Edwards wrote: 'Gracie was

one of nature's gentlemen, and his sudden demise causes me to lose a true friend.'

Tom is recognised as a casualty of the Great War by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

- The Fallen of Everton FC booklet is available for download on the Everton FC Heritage Society Website (efcheritagesociety.com).

- The Society, with support from the Club, organises a Remembrance Day event which is held close to the Dixie Dean statue. Follow our social media accounts for details.