



## **Tom Tolson**

### **1876 – 1917**

Tom was born in Mirfield on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1876 and was baptised at St. Matthew's Church, Westtown, Dewsbury on 3<sup>rd</sup> December that same year. His father was Mark Tolson, a swimming baths manager born in Dewsbury in 1848 and died in 1904. His mother was Ann York, (nee Holt) born in Mirfield in 1847 and died in 1895. They were married on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1874.

They had another son, William, born in 1875.

Tom was married to Martha Ann Leather (born in 1877 and died in 1904) on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1899 at All Saints Church, Dewsbury. He was remarried to Florrie Greenwood (born in 1880 and died in 1939) on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1905 at All Saints Church. There were no children from either marriage. He was the Manager of Dewsbury Municipal Swimming Baths in Old Westgate, Dewsbury. According to his obituary in the *Dewsbury Reporter* and the *Dewsbury District News* on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1917, he had been connected with swimming and the swimming baths since the age of 14. His father had been the manager of the 'old' baths in Bath Street, Dewsbury and the Dewsbury Corporation offered Tom the position of Manager after his father's death. He was also a member of the Independent Order of Foresters Lodge, Church Street, Dewsbury. At the time of Tom's death, his wife Florrie was living at 3, Cemetery Road, Dewsbury.

He was called up by the War Office in September 1916 to take charge of water filtering apparatus, similar to that used in Dewsbury Baths. He served as Sapper 200716 in the Royal Engineers Inland Waterways and Docks Section. The Baths Committee of the Dewsbury Corporation minuted their appreciation of his service over 12 years and that they would keep his post open for him on his return home. He embarked for Mesopotamia on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1917 and then had to wait for the arrival of the filtration units. In his last letter to his wife, he stated that was in the "*best of health and bearing the heat immensely well.*" Sadly, Tom died from a cerebral haemorrhage in Basra, Mesopotamia (now Iraq) on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917. He is commemorated on the Basra Memorial, Iraq. Tom was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Basra Memorial commemorates more than 40,500 members of the Commonwealth forces who died in the operations in Mesopotamia from the Autumn of 1914 to the end of August 1921 and whose graves are not known. The memorial was designed by Edward Warren and unveiled by Sir Gilbert Clayton on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1929. Until 1997 the Basra Memorial was located on the main quay of the naval dockyard at Maqil, on the west bank of the Shatt-al-Arab, about 8 kilometres north of Basra. Because of the sensitivity of the site, the Memorial was moved by presidential decree. The move, carried out by the authorities in Iraq, involved a considerable amount of manpower, transport costs and sheer engineering on their part, and the Memorial has been re-erected in its entirety. The Basra Memorial is now located 32 kilometres along the road to Nasiriyah, in the middle of what was a major battleground during the first Gulf War.

Tom is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the War Memorial in the porch of the now closed St. Matthew's Church, Westtown.

In Memory of

Sapper

**Tom Tolson**

200716, Inland Waterways and Docks Sect., Royal Engineers who died on 17 July 1917 Age 40

Son of Mark and Ann York Tolson, of Dewsbury; husband of Florrie Tolson, of 3, Cemetery Rd., Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

**Basra Memorial**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Photograph by courtesy of Robert Pike.