



**PRESTON
REMEMBERS
CITY TOURS**

**JOHN
GREGSON**



**PART
THREE
OF
THREE**



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Preston Remembers' First World War trails. This trail is one of a set that explores the lives of three very different Preston residents and the impact the war had on their lives.

The First World War changed society in ways we could never have predicted. Ordinary Preston residents did extraordinary things, fought for their beliefs and showed immense courage in the face of unimaginably difficult situations.

The trails follow the lives of:

John Gregson – Plasterer's son, brother, cotton mill worker, soldier in India, husband, father, tram driver, reservist, corporal, sergeant.

Beatrice Blackhurst née Boyce – Farmer's daughter, domestic servant, solicitor's wife, mother, suffragist and founder of the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet.

Joseph Garstang – Son of a weaver and atheist, market gardener, fitness instructor, member of the Independent Labour Party, conscientious objector, absolutist, prisoner.

The three trails cover different parts of Preston and have different starting points. The start point on the next page tells you the address that this story begins. Please refer to the map at the back of this leaflet to see the location of this address.



*John Gregson, a still from the Will Onda Roll of Honour film, 1915.
Courtesy of BFI.*



Start Point

Ephraim Street, Frenchwood. Make your way out of the city centre to Ephraim Street off London Road.

No. 5 Ephraim Street



John's Early Life

John Gregson's parents David and Margaret were living in Walton-le-Dale when they met and married in the mid 1860s. David was a plasterer and by 1870 they'd moved across the River Ribble to Preston. After 15 years of marriage, John was born in May 1882 on this street. He was baptised at St Mary's Church, which you will see later. He was their second youngest child with two brothers and one sister. The family moved a number of times to houses in neighbouring streets, which seems to be typical at this time. For example they lived at three different addresses on the other side of London Road (the houses no longer exist).

These are typical terraced houses, seen all across the region in industrial towns. It's difficult to work out exactly where number 4 was. It seems most likely that the houses were renumbered and it is now actually number 5.



London Road, showing the Greyhound Inn, c.1905.



Follow the trail to see another house he lived in, just around the corner.

Continue to the top of Ephraim Street, turn left along Brockholes View then first left into Alexandra Street. Clara Street is on the right and no. 16 is the last house on the far left.



No. 16 Clara Street



An Orphan

Aged 26 John married Catherine Kiernan in October 1908, and they lived together here. Catherine's family had briefly been in the workhouse, presumably due to lack of income, after the disappearance of her father.

John's father died in 1888 when he was only 6. His mother then sadly died in 1894 when he was just 12. It's not clear what happened to him when he was orphaned, but it appears he worked as a cotton mill worker, probably living with his older brother Henry.

This area was crammed full of these terraced houses, many built next to the Fishwick cotton mills, mill lodges (water-filled) and the dye works.



Follow the trail to see a surviving local cotton mill, just around the corner.

Turn left down Clitheroe Street. At the junction with London Road turn right, cross over Montjoly Street and Salmon Street. Turn right up Primrose Hill and stop opposite Primrose Mill at the top.



Primrose Mill



(c. 1861)

A Mill Working Family

The 1891 census shows John's mother, his brother Henry and Henry's wife all working in the cotton mills, an industry that employed many Preston people.



*Staff leaving one of the local mills, c.1900.
Courtesy of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.*

We don't know at exactly which cotton mill John and his family worked. They may have worked in a number of them as there were many in this area. This is an example of one of the smaller mills that, being so close to his home, is a very likely mill for one of the family members to work in.

Preston man, Richard Arkwright, had been one of the pioneers in the development of mechanised spinning and by 1842 there were 32 spinning mills in Preston. Spinning was the first process to be mechanised, followed later by weaving. A great burst of industrial expansion took place in the 1840s. Seventeen new mills were built prompting a leading citizen to remark: "the town was increasing at a very rapid rate, tall chimneys and loom-sheds were rising as if by magic." After the 1840s most weavers in Preston worked at power-looms. The Mill is now an Art, Craft & Design centre known as Big Mill.

Centenary Mill



PR1 5JQ

(1895 Grade II listed.)

John's family also might have worked in this huge mill, built by Horrockses – the self proclaimed 'Greatest Name in Cotton'. Its opening celebrated 100 years of successful trading. The Horrockses brothers were the first and most successful of the men to make Preston a cotton town. It began when they built a development of handloom weavers cottages in Preston. These cottages no longer exist but were on the site where Centenary Mill now stands.



*One of the Horrockses trademarks.
Courtesy of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.*

Follow the trail to see another much larger mill, operated by a famous local cotton manufacturer

Continue along Primrose Hill, turn second right into Cranborne Street and follow it until you reach the T-Junction with Mercer Street. Turn left and walk to New Hall Lane. Turn left and stop.



Follow the trail to see where John went to school, just around the corner.

Continue along New Hall Lane, cross over at the pedestrian island, turn left and walk to the end of the shops, then next right into St Mary's Street. Cross over then walk to where you can see the Church's war memorial cross, by the gate.



St Mary's Church



*(1838 Grade II listed.
Architect John Latham.)*

Before the Education Act of 1870 churches were one of the few providers of education for working people. The first schools at St Mary's began in 1837 and by 1860 the number of scholars had increased to such an extent that it became necessary to enlarge the schools. On the 1891 census John is described as a scholar, probably attending lessons in the buildings just across the road that housed the school. Churches were an important influence in Victorian England when there was a revival in religious interest. In Preston this was marked by the building of churches and chapels. With their own schools, welfare organisations, societies and social events these became important community centres.

In 2006 St Mary's was converted into a conservation centre for the Museum of Lancashire. The War Memorial that you can see in the grounds says 'In Grateful Memory of Men of this parish who fell in the service of their country in the Great War 1914-1918.' John was one of them and his name is on a roll of honour tablet, which was inside the church and is now housed in the conservation studio.



St Mary's Church, taken from the History of the Borough of Preston and Its Environs in the County of Lancaster, By Charles Hardwick 1857.



Follow the trail to explore John's working life before the war.

Turn around and walk to the end of the church railings, then turn right. Cut across the car park to Stanley Street, turn right, then right to the Museum car park.





*(1825 Grade II listed.
Architect Thomas Rickman.)*

The Museum is housed in the former Quarter Sessions House (courthouse), one of Preston's oldest buildings. It was used 1911 - 1958 as a drill hall for the Territorial Army.

The Museum of Lancashire has a permanent display about the First World War in Preston, including a reconstructed trench and the medals of a Preston VC winner, Private Young. The exhibition is a good place to find out more about the experience of war in the trenches.



John Gregson, 1900s. Courtesy of the Gregson family.

Off To See The World

Around 1900, maybe as a result of his mother dying or a desire to see the world, John joined the army. Details of his first spell of military service are uncertain. We do know he was in India. The photo opposite shows John as a young man in uniform posing in a photographic studio in Poona, India, where he served.

An Attestation Form, which is the form that is completed when a soldier enlists, exists for a John Gregson from Preston dated 16 October 1901. It says he was a member of the local militia and in the 4th Royal Lancashire Regiment. We cannot say this is definitely our John but there is strong circumstantial evidence. For example a comparison of signatures on the form with those on the 1911 census seem to indicate that it is the same person. The application is for 5 years short service which, if begun in 1901, would have ended in 1906.



Follow the trail to find out what happened to John when he came out of the Army.

Back on Stanley Street go right then turn left to cross London Road using the pelican crossings. Stay on the right side of Church Street, cross Cotton Court and stop in front of the Livery Building and the attached Ye Olde Blue Bell Pub.



Preston Livery & Carriage Co.



(Church Street, Preston, PR1 3BS)

Working On The Trams

This mid-1800s building was the headquarters of a company that ran public horse-drawn carriage 'buses' until 1879, after which it was used as Mounted Constabulary stables.

In 1879 a horse-drawn tramway 2½ miles long was opened by the Preston Tramways Company under the sanction of Preston Corporation. The network was extended three years later, with routes starting in Guild Week 1882 between Fishergate Hill and the Pleasure Gardens in New Hall Lane and from the Town Hall to Ashton. Electrification resulted in the first modernised route opening on 7 June 1904 from a purpose-built depot in Deepdale. The final tram departed for Fulwood on 15 December 1935. During their operation Preston's trams ran over 32 million miles.

When John returned to Preston from service with the Army around 1907 he served as an army reservist, called in for refresher training each year.

He married Catherine, as we discovered earlier, in 1908 and by 1909 he was working as a conductor on the newly electrified trams and quickly moved on to being a driver. He also played in the Preston Tramways Band.



*A local tram dressed to recruit soldiers for the war effort, 1915.
Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives,
Bow Lane, Preston.*



**Follow the trail to find out how, at the outbreak of war,
John quickly returned to the Army.**

Continue up Church Street and cross over just after Manchester Road, at the zebra crossing. After you pass the Parish Church on your left, turn right into Lancaster Road, then first left along Jacson Street passing the Miller Arcade. Stop by the Obelisk in the Market Square.



Market Square



From the echo of rousing recruitment speeches to the footsteps of soldiers marching off to war, Preston's Flag Market was a significant place in the war.

At the outbreak of the war John, as a reservist, would have been one of the first to be called up. The order for the mobilisation of the Colchester-based 1st Battalion East Lancashire Regiment (John's regiment) was received on the 4 August 1914. They spent early August carrying out field training and route marching and on 18 August moved to Harrow where they camped on school playing fields. At dawn on 22 August they boarded the vessel "Braemar Castle" at Southampton for the voyage to France and arrived at Le Havre later that day. They travelled by train and then marched to Solesmes, where they took up defensive positions. Just four days after leaving England, John's battalion were about to fight their first battle.

John was made a Corporal, then Acting Sergeant during November 1914. Five months later, just before Easter 1915, he was promoted to full Sergeant and granted a month's furlough (leave) for gallantry in action and the capture of a machine gun. The photograph of John with his wife and three children, John, David and Prudence, was taken when he was home on this leave. Just two months after the family photo was taken John was killed in action, probably by shellfire or trench mortars.

The War Diary, which is a document that records the movements of the British Army when overseas, states on the 26 June 1915 that:

"A hard day in the trenches, the enemy shelling our lines very heavily, with the result that 11 men were killed and 9 wounded."

He is buried in a military Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium, with over 500 other casualties. Many of those buried in Plot 2 with him are from the East Lancashire Regiment, mostly having died in the fighting of June and July 1915.



*John Gregson with his family, 1915.
Courtesy of the Gregson family.*



Follow the trail to find out how those who died in the war like John were honoured in Preston.

Head right and go into the Harris Museum. Stop in the inner courtyard area. Finish the tour at the Roll of Honour on the stairwell. John's name is listed on the left hand side in the framed list underneath.



Harris Museum & Art Gallery



PR1 2PP



*(1893 Grade I listed.
Architect James Hibbert.)*

Remembering Those Who Didn't Come Back

The Cenotaph and accompanying Roll of Honour were paid for by voluntary public donations. Volunteer collectors went around all the wards of the town. Each collector and the 14,344 subscribers had their names recorded in a Memorial Book, now housed in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery.

The Memorial was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, a prominent architect who designed the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, Battersea Power Station and the red telephone box. It took nine long years for the Cenotaph to be funded, designed and built, and it was finally unveiled in June 1926.

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott also designed the Roll of Honour, which is situated in the main stairwell of the Harris. From 1916 to the unveiling of the Roll of Honour in 1927, families could complete a form if they wanted the name of their loved ones to be included.



*The memorial of St. Mary's Church, now in the
Lancashire Conservation Studios.*

The list of names does not include everyone. Some people decided to remember their family members in other ways, such as church or work place memorials.

John was not originally listed on the Harris Roll of Honour. We don't know the reason for this. As he is listed on the St Mary's Roll of Honour, it may be that his family at the time felt that this was the most appropriate place. His grandson Cliff Gregson, lobbied Preston Council for John's name to be added and this led to additional names being added in a frame in January 1998, unveiled by the Mayor of Preston.



The trail ends here.

Please pick up our other trails to find out more about the lives of people in Preston during the First World War.

The Route



1. Start Point, No. 4 Ephraim Street (PR1 4BJ)

Continue to the top of Ephraim Street, turn left along Brockholes View then first left into Alexandra Street. Clara Street is on the right and no. 16 is the last house on the far left.

2. No. 16 Clara Street (PR1 4BN)

Turn left down Clitheroe Street. At the junction with London Road turn right, cross over Montjoly Street and Salmon Street. Turn right up Primrose Hill and stop opposite Primrose Mill at the top.

3. Primrose Mill (Primrose Hill PR1 4BX)

Continue along Primrose Hill, turn second right into Cranborne Street and follow it until you reach the T-Junction with Mercer Street. Turn left and walk to New Hall Lane. Turn left and stop.

4. Centenary Mill (New Hall Lane PR1 5JQ)

Continue along New Hall Lane, cross over at the pedestrian island, turn left and walk to the end of the shops, then next right into St Mary's Street. Cross over then walk to where you can see the Church's war memorial cross, by the gate.

5. St Mary's Church (St Mary's Street PR1 5LN)

Turn around and walk to the end of the church railings, then turn right. Cut across the car park to Stanley Street, turn right, then right to the Museum car park.

6. Museum of Lancashire (Stanley Street PR1 4YP)

Back on Stanley Street go right then turn left to cross London Road using the pelican crossings. Stay on the right side of Church Street, cross Cotton Court and stop in front of the Livery building and the attached Ye Olde Blue Bell pub.

7. Preston Livery and Carriage Company (Church Street PR1 3BS)

Continue up Church Street and cross over just after Manchester Road, at the zebra crossing. After you pass the Parish Church on your left, turn right into Lancaster Road, then first left along Jacson Street passing the Miller Arcade. Stop by the Obelisk in the Flag Market.

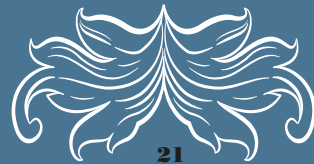
8. Flag Market (PR1 2PP)

Head right and go into the Harris Museum. Stop in the inner courtyard area. Finish the tour at the Roll of Honour on the stairwell. John's name is listed on the left hand side in the framed list underneath.

9. Finish Point Harris Museum & Art Gallery (Market Square, Preston, PR1 2PP)



THE MAP





Preston Remembers is a partnership project working with local communities to commemorate the First World War in Preston.

This leaflet is one of a series of three trails which tell the story of three remarkable Preston citizens.

To find out more about the project please visit www.prestonremembers.org.uk

**PRESTON
REMEMBERS
1914 – 1918**