



**PRESTON
REMEMBERS
CITY TOURS**

**JOSEPH
GARSTANG**



**PART
TWO
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:

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

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

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

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.



Joseph Garstang. Courtesy of Ann Berry.



Start Point

Make your way to the town centre and the covered market at the top of Orchard Street.

Covered Market, Earl Street



(1875 Grade II listed)

A Close Knit Family

Joseph was born to Elisha and Jane in October 1888 at 15 Blake Hall Street, just off New Hall Lane, in the shadow of many cotton mills. Elisha and Jane had married in 1885 at Preston Registry Office as Elisha was an atheist. They went on to have three sons – Joseph (the eldest), David and James and a daughter, Mary. They were a close knit, affectionate, fiercely independent family with a great sense of humour who enjoyed the outdoor life. Elisha enjoyed reciting poetry and would perform to any interested party. He was a vegetarian and would only eat brown flour; his wife would get family members to smuggle in white bread for her.

Elisha worked as a ‘self-acting minder’ operating a cotton spinning machine at one of the local mills. He was an early member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a

socialist political party in Britain established in 1893. By 1901 the family had moved to the east end of New Hall Lane to Manning Road, with Elisha’s father Richard just around the corner on Church Avenue.

At some point before 1911 the family moved to Chain House Farm in Ashton. Joseph, David and James all worked as market gardeners, probably selling their produce here on Preston Market. This was a part-time pursuit for Elisha who was still working in the mills.



*The Covered Market, c.1900.
Courtesy of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.*

Follow the trail to find out how Joseph followed in his father’s footsteps and developed strong political views ... and possibly a romance!

Turn right into Birley Street and walk back to the Flag Market. Bear slightly left into Harris Street and then right into the inner courtyard area of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.



Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Market Square



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

A Committed Socialist

As well as working as a market gardener Joseph was a fitness instructor. He was strong, extremely fit and muscular, posing for photographs where he was lifting three men at a time. Like his father he was an atheist and also joined the ILP. A committed socialist, he took part in cultural as well as political activities which aimed to establish a society founded on justice and comradeship. An article about his father in the Lancashire Daily Post said 'To know him you must realise that he has great independence of spirit. Elisha Garstang would break rather than bend.' Joseph was cut from the same cloth and when war came his spirit would be tested.

It is probably through these activities that he met local artist Patti Mayor and her sister. Patti's work is internationally known and there are a number of her paintings in the Harris's collection. Her home was reputed to be an oasis of good talk and cultured entertainment and it was

said that she and Joseph were sweethearts. Patti painted Joseph at least twice, as well as his brother and sister. Patti had been involved with the suffrage movement and had attended rallies in London, taking one of her paintings mounted on a stick with the slogan 'Preston Lasses Mun Hev the Vote.' Preston's Victorian Town Hall was on



*Portrait of Joseph Garstang by Patti Mayor, 1910s.
Courtesy of Ann Berry.*



Follow the trail to find out what happened to Joseph during the war.

Leave the inner courtyard area at the opposite side to where you entered and turn right. Walk onto the Flag Market and stand near the Obelisk, facing Crystal House, (Turtle Bay Restaurant is on the ground floor).



Crystal House, Market Square



The Victorian Town Hall, Preston.

this site from 1866 to 1947, when it was damaged by a catastrophic fire and eventually demolished.

Conscription & the Conscientious Objector

At the start of the war Britain experienced the largest rush of military volunteers in its history. However by spring 1915 it was clear that voluntary recruitment wasn't going to provide the numbers of men required. During that year a number of national schemes were put in place to

stimulate recruitment, but the results were disappointing. By January 1916 the Military Service Act stopped voluntary enlistment and unmarried/widowed British males aged 18 - 41 were now required to enlist – they were conscripted.

Joseph was against the war and saw it as leading to the killing of his fellow workers. Family legend has it that he said of the young men he trained as a fitness instructor, 'I'm not training these lads up to be cannon fodder.' By the time he was called up in 1916 he'd joined the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF). This anti-war, pacifist organisation was founded in November 1914 when it was evident that the war wouldn't be over by Christmas. There were 300 original members and by the war's end this had grown to 12,000.

A system of local appeal tribunals was established to hear the cases of men who believed they were disqualified from conscription on the grounds of ill-health, occupation or conscientious objection. Exemption was initially asked under religious or political grounds, then conscientious objectors fell into 3 categories:

- ❖ Absolutists: opposed to military service and anything which helped the war effort.
- ❖ Alternativists: prepared to undertake alternative civilian work without military control.
- ❖ Non-Combatants: prepared to enter the military in a non-combatant role.

The Preston Tribunal first sat in January 1916 at this location, in the old Town Hall. Most tribunal records were destroyed in 1921 but there are some personal accounts of what happened. The Preston Tribunal Chair, Mayor Harry Cartmell wrote about the tribunals in his 1919 memoirs *For Remembrance*. On 16 March 1916 the public viewing area was full as the Preston Tribunal was judging men who wanted exemption on conscientious grounds. Joseph was an absolutist and will have refused to respond to his call-up. He probably appeared at the tribunal on this day. Cartmell's memoirs say that one "appellant was from the Independent Labour Party ... the board deemed his objection political and not founded on real conscientious conviction (and) disallowed the claim."



*Harry Cartmell, Mayor of Preston, by Sir William Llewellyn, 1920.
Courtesy of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.*



*The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment outside the Town Hall, 1914.
Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, Preston.*



Follow the trail to find out if Joseph followed the ruling of the tribunal and reported for duty.

Turn around and walk across the Flag Market, keeping the Harris Museum & Art Gallery on your right. Turn right just past the Museum into Harris Street and stop opposite the main doors and tower of Sessions House.



Sessions House



(1903 Grade II listed.
Architect Henry Littler.)*

Hard Labour

As an absolutist Joseph, committed to his principles, refused to take part in any war-related activity and experienced a repeated cycle of imprisonment and release. In April 1916 he was arrested and then tried here at the Sessions House courthouse for being AWOL (absent without leave). He was fined 40 shillings, handed over to the Army and sent to join the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Joseph refused to obey orders and was court martialled in May 1916. He was sentenced to 2 years, commuted to 6 months.

Joseph wasn't the only one. By May 1916 thousands of conscientious objectors had been arrested. Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, recommended the government should establish a civilian organisation to employ them "under conditions as severe as those of soldiers at the front".

Imprisoned COs were offered release from prison and the army on condition that they entered this scheme. A series of work centres and camps were opened where they lived communally and did arduous work. Joseph was seen by the Central Tribunal at Wandsworth Prison,

London in August 1916 and was now classed as a genuine conscientious objector, but also as available for non-combatant military service. He seems to have refused this offer of non-combatant military service as in December 1916 he was court martialled again and received 2 years hard labour (the most severe prison sentence at the time), again commuted to 6 months. This would have meant 1 month in solitary confinement on bread and water, followed by jobs such as stone-breaking, hand-sewing mailbags and picking oakum. In January 1917 he went on a 3-week hunger strike.



Postcard, 1916, ridiculing conscientious objectors.

Follow the trail to find out how Joseph was treated during his hunger strike, and after.

Retrace your steps to the Flag Market, bear slightly right and stop in front of the Cenotaph.



War Memorial Cenotaph



PRI 2PP



*(1926 Grade II listed.
Architect Giles Gilbert Scott.)*

Hunger Strikes

Joseph was force-fed 38 times. He was probably put in a straight jacket before a nasal or stomach tube was painfully inserted into his body, through which he would be fed against his will.

In April 1917 Joseph's force-feeding was even raised in the House of Commons. A member of Parliament asked whether his 'health is suffering from this treatment and why this conscientious objector is denied the protection of the Military Service Act?'

Joseph wasn't released until June 1917 when he'd served his sentence. He was then court martialled yet again and received another 2 years hard labour. During 1918 political pressure mounted to release the absolutist conscientious objectors as punishment was not working. The Government came up with a scheme to move the absolutists to a special centre where they could do prison work under conditions of relative freedom, while still being prisoners. Prisoners could wear their own clothes, have keys to their cells, work 8 am until 5 pm and actually leave the prison

until 9.30 pm during the week and most of the weekend. Joseph was transferred to the Wakefield Work Centre in September 1918 and found no arrangements had been made for the conscientious objectors. Amongst themselves they set up a committee, organised food and cleaning rotas and when a work programme was finally arranged they refused to comply. They produced their own manifesto which was circulated widely by the No Conscription Fellowship. The Wakefield Experiment was a dismal failure and all the men, including Joseph, were returned to prison.

By January 1919 Joseph had served three sentences and spent more than two years in prison.



The 'Wakefield Manifesto' 1918.

After the War

The war ended in November 1918 but most conscientious objectors were not released for at least six months, so serving men had a head-start when job hunting. They were also stripped of the right to vote until 1926. There were 16,300 conscientious objectors. Over 6,000 were arrested and 95% of these were court-martialled. Ten died in prison while 73 died as a direct result of the treatment they received, a further 31 “lost their reason”.

When Joseph was released in January 1919 he returned to a very different world from the one in which he had grown up. He was lucky that he could be with his parents and enjoy the companionship of his now married siblings. His parents were farming near Blackburn and his father successfully bred poultry, but Joseph’s health was broken so the family moved to Rufford for an easier way of life.

Joseph died aged 39 on 22 August 1928 in the Royal Preston Hospital of septicaemia due to pyorrhoea, which is an infection of the gums. We don’t know whether this was connected to the fact he was force fed, but can assume that his ‘broken health’ contributed in some way to his early death. Patti Mayor never married and lived with her sister until her death in 1962.

The stories of soldiers killed in the trenches is a history everyone is familiar with and should never be forgotten. Many people have connections with their own family members who were lost. What is less well

known is the untold effect it had on all corners of society from people like Joseph who suffered horrendously for his beliefs, to families left behind, refugees forced to flee their countries and those soldiers who came back but were for ever changed by their experiences. It is important to remember the far reaching effects of the First World War and how it changed our society forever.



Joseph Garstang, 1920s. Courtesy of Ann Berry.



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 Covered Market

(Earl Street, Preston PR1 2JA)

Turn right into Birley Street and walk back to the Flag Market. Bear slightly left into Harris Street and then right into the inner courtyard area of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery.

2. Harris Museum & Art Gallery

(Market Square, Preston, Lancashire PR1 2PP)

Leave the inner courtyard area at the opposite side to where you entered and turn right. Walk onto the Flag Market and stand near the Obelisk, facing Crystal House, Turtle Bay Restaurant is on the ground floor).

3. Crystal House

(Market Square, Preston, PR1 2AQ)

Turn around and walk across the Flag Market, keeping the Harris Museum & Art Gallery on your right. Turn right just past the Museum into Harris Street and stop opposite the main doors and tower of Sessions House.

4. Sessions House

(Harris Street, Preston PR1 2PD)

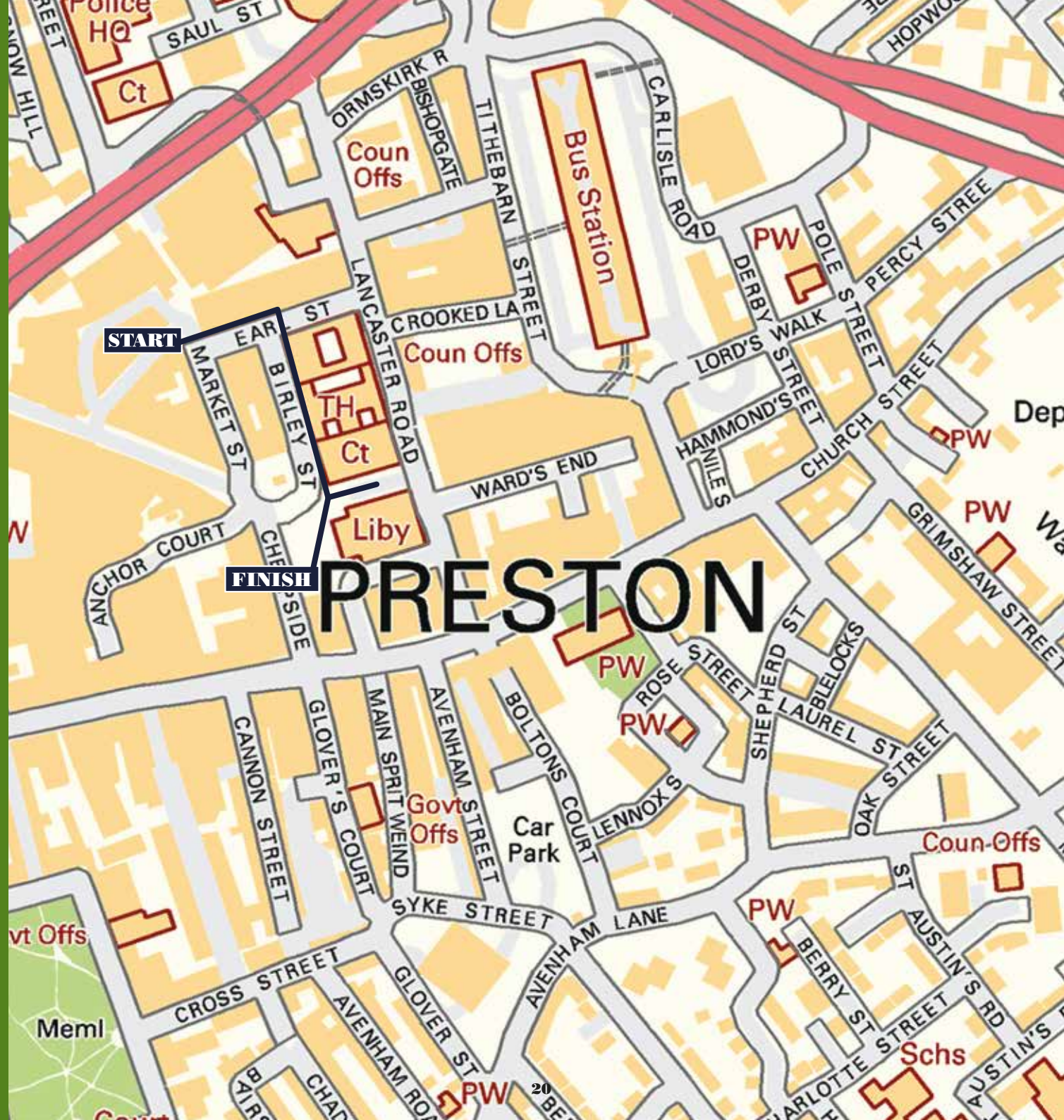
Retrace your steps to the Flag Market, bear slightly right and stop in front of the Cenotaph.

5. Finish Point War Memorial Cenotaph

(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**