

# Preston Blue Plaque Trail



Start point: The Ferret, Fylde Road, PR2 2NH.

**John Horrocks, a cotton manufacturer and Member of Parliament for Preston, built the city's first steam-powered cotton mill on this site in 1796.**

**Impressed with the cotton industry's possibilities, John devoted himself to cotton-spinning and began selling his yarn through the Lancashire manufacturing districts. His well-earned reputation for quality resulted in him moving from Edgworth to Preston in 1791 and manufacturing cotton shirtings and long-cloths, in addition to spinning cotton yarn.**

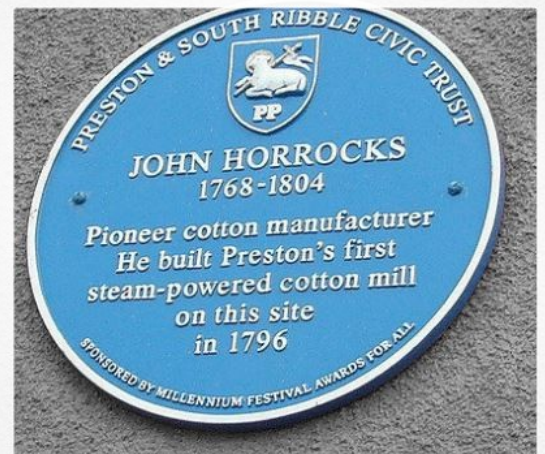
Within a year of arriving in Preston, John built his first large mill on Dale Street, with the help of his business partner Richard Newsham. With demand increasing, he soon obtained monopoly over the manufacture of cottons and muslins for the Indian market from the British East India Company.

As the business continued to grow, more mills were built and John made his brother a partner within the firm and invited his uncle to join the business. John Whitehead and Thomas Miller were also made partners in 1801, resulting in the business becoming Horrockses, Miller, & Co.

Even after the death of John Horrocks in 1804, the business continued to move through the ages. In 1887 the company merged with Crewdson, Crosses and Co. to become Horrockses, Crewdson & Co. The 1940s saw the company launching Horrockses Fashions. Their off the peg dresses proved very popular and were famously worn by the Queen on her first Commonwealth Tour.

After the brand was shelved in the 1980s, it has since been revived and released a line of clothing through the popular online clothing company ASOS. The fashion line is inspired by the original patterns from the brand's peak years, 1946-1964, continuing a long heritage of quality and memorable patterns that all began here in Preston at one of Horrocks' mills.

John Horrocks plaque





### Follow the trail for Joseph Dunn's plaque

With the Ferret pub on your right, continue along Fylde Road, passing Stocks Street and Maudland Road on your right. Continue straight to Corporation Street and pass Kendal Street, Edward Street and Marsh Lane on your right. When you come to the Ring Way, cross over the road towards the Premier Inn. With Premier Inn on your right, continue straight and up Fox Street, also on your right. You will come to the Old Catholic School on your right.



Old Catholic School, Fox Street, PR1 2AB.

This blue plaque remembers Joseph Dunn and one of his many successes and positives he brought to Preston. It can be seen on the old Catholic School building, to the side of the doorway. This building was once St. Wilfrid's Catholic School and it was the first building in Preston to be lit by piped gas in 1816.

Noted for starting the Preston Gaslight Company, Reverend Joseph "Daddy" Dunn formulated a better gas lighting technique for longer power and brightness. He distributed gas around Preston and changed the whole of Lancashire by transporting cool-gas lighting in the area. Dunn's efforts meant that Preston was the first town outside of London to be lit by gas.

Dunn also led the Catholic Mission for 51 years and was actively involved in charity work. He was a founder member of Preston Library & Philosophical Society and taught Philosophy at the Little College.



Joseph Dunn plaque



### Follow the trail for Benjamin Franklin's plaque

Turn back the way you came down Fox Street and turn right when you reach the end. Cross the road towards the Corn Exchange/1842 on your left on Lune Street. Follow the path opposite the entrance to the Corn Exchange towards Friargate. At the end of the path turn right towards Caffè Nero. Once at Caffè Nero, look up and see Benjamin Franklin's plaque.



Caffè Nero, Orchard Street, PR1 2EN.

One of the founding fathers of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin, resided in this building (now Caffè Nero) whilst visiting his son-in-law Richard Bache. It was Franklin's first meeting with the Baches after Richard married his daughter Sarah.

Benjamin Franklin was a renowned polymath and leading author, printer, political theorist, politician, Freemason, postmaster, scientist, inventor, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat.



Benjamin Franklin plaque



### Follow the trail for Joseph Livesey's plaque

With Caffè Nero on your left, continue along Friargate until you come to Preston Flag Market/Market Square. Head across the Flag Market, towards the right of the Harris Museum, onto Jacson Street. Turn right on Jacson Street and left when you come to the end, onto Church Street. Continue on Church Street until you see Preston Minster on your right. Cross over the road towards the Minster and follow the footpath that leads down the side of it (between Hogarth's bar and the Minster). Continue down this path until you see "The Old Cockpit" plaque on a gate on the right of the path.



Stoneygate, PR1 3XU.

Joseph Livesey was a temperance campaigner, social reformer, local politician, writer, publisher, newspaper proprietor and philanthropist.

Livesey engaged in local politics, filled many public posts, and was a leader in every kind of philanthropic effort. He published "The Moral Reformer", aimed at providing cheap and elevated reading, which then became the "Preston Temperance Advocate". This was the first temperance publication to be produced in England. Livesey ran the publication for four years and then transferred it to the British Temperance Association, where it became the "British Temperance Advocate". Livesey followed this with many other publications, memoirs, and authored numerous tracts and lectures.



It was in this building that Joseph Livesey drew up the first public pledge of total abstinence in 1832. This was signed by the "Seven Men of Preston" at the gathering here on 1 September. These men were John Gratix, Edward Dickinson, John Broadbelt, John Smith, Joseph Livesey, David Anderton, and John King. This was the birth of the teetotalism movement and soon thousands more followed suit, including 4,000 pledgers in Preston alone by 1834. In fact, it is said that, as a temperance advocate, Joseph Livesey recorded the Preston Temperance Society meeting in 1833 in which the word 'teetotal' is said to have been born. During a speech made by Richard Turner, who had a speech impediment, he remarked that partial abstinence from intoxicating liquors would not do; they must insist upon tee-tee-tee total abstinence.



### Follow the trail for Sir Richard Arkwright's plaque

With Joseph Livesey's plaque on your right, continue down the path until you see the white house on your left. This is the Arkwright House where Richard Arkwright's plaque can be found.





Arkwright House, Stoneygate, PR1 3XU.

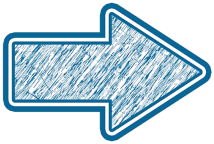
Richard Arkwright was known as "The Father of the Industrial Revolution".

Born in Preston, he lived in this house whilst developing his cotton spinning machine. He is credited for inventing the water frame and a rotary carding engine that transformed raw cotton into cotton lap.

Sir Richard Arkwright's work led to a reduction in labour needs and improved efficiency in cotton production, leading to him being knighted in 1786.



Sir Richard Arkwright plaque



Follow the trail for Isaac and Stephen Simpson's plaque

Turn right at the end of Stoneygate onto Syke Hill. Continue down Syke Hill and turn right onto Avenham Lane. Follow Avenham Lane, pass Glover Street and turn right onto Avenham Road. Continue down Avenham Road until you come to the Gold Thread Works on your left.



Gold Thread Works, Avenham Road, PR1 3TH.

**Isaac and Stephen Simpson plaques**



The Gold Thread Works was home to Stephen Simpson Ltd. – a company which advanced the science of gold thread manufacture and ran in this building 1839 – 1991. They produced gold and silver wire embroidery for the military, royalty, cruise ships, and Freemasons. They also produced other important pieces for uniforms of the staff on the Titanic and German Military badges for English Spies in WWII.

The company was established by Isaac Simpson and was continued by his son Stephen Simpson. A monument to the firm, of a giant thread and needle, can be found at the end of Avenham Road, where this building resides.



Follow the trail for Thomas Miller's plaque

With the Gold Thread Works on your left, continue on Avenham Road and turn left onto Cross Street. Follow Cross Street and turn right onto Winckley Square. Follow the pavement until you come to the corner of Winckley Square where you will find the plaque on a building.



Winckley Square, PR1 2AF.

Thomas Miller was the son of the Thomas Miller cotton manufacturer who was partnered with John Horrocks.

Miller was the sole proprietor of Horrocks, Miller and Co. He was also very influential within the borough of Preston. He became a council member and was known as a very generous man. He married the niece of John and Samuel Horrocks in 1841 and had five children.

Miller built this house in 1845. He was one of the largest landowners in Fylde and is known for donating the land that is Miller Park, not far from this blue plaque.

Thomas Miller plaque



Follow the trail for the Preston Catholic College plaque

With the Thomas Miller plaque on your right, and the park on your left, follow the road to the end and cross over the pavement. Turn left down Winckley Square, keeping the park on your left still. You will soon come to Akinika, 33-34, Winckley Square where you will find the Preston Catholic College plaque.



33-34 Winckley Square, PR1 3EL.



Preston Catholic College plaque

This building was the site of the Preston Catholic College, a Jesuit grammar school for boys. The college opened in 1865 and closed in 1978. Its closure was due to the merging of the college with other sixth forms, ultimately creating Newman College.

The building occupied the whole of the west side of Winckley Square and included classrooms, science laboratories and a swimming pool.



Follow the trail for Edith Rigby's plaque

Continue a little further down Winckley Square to number 28 to see Edith Rigby's plaque.



28 Winckley Square, PR1 3JJ.

**This building was once the home of Preston's most famous suffragette Edith Rigby. She lived here with her husband Charles Rigby.**

**Edith was born as Edith Rayner in 1872, the second of seven children to surgeon Alexander Rayner. Many of her father's patients were from Preston's working classes, sparking Edith's early awareness of social and economic inequalities.**

**She married Doctor Charles Rigby just before her 21st birthday, choosing 28 Winckley Square as their family home. However, she was determined to become involved in working for social reform and she initially began her work improving the lives of women and girls in local mills.**

**During her time living in Winckley Square, Edith became critical of how her neighbours treated their servants. Though the Rigbys had servants themselves, they allowed them to eat in the dining room and they were not required to wear a uniform. This became a passionate issue for Edith and saw her going to London and disguising herself as a servant to find out how they were treated. She did this for two weeks before her husband and a private investigator tracked her down and brought her home.**

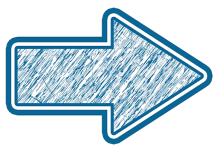
**In 1899 Edith founded St Peter's School, allowing girls to meet and continue education beyond the age of 11. In 1905 she joined the Independent Labour Party, forming a branch of the Women's Labour League in Preston a year later.**

**Edith made many headlines: joining the Pankhurst sisters' hunger strikes and window breaking campaigns, protesting at a 1909 Preston meeting addressed by Winston Churchill, throwing a black pudding at an MP, and setting fire to soap powder magnate at Lord Leverhulme's holiday home.**

**Due to her radical views and actions Edith wasn't approved of in her own time, however, many people today have now come to respect her passion and contributions to her cause.**



**Edith Rigby plaque**



Follow the trail for Edmund Robert Harris' plaque  
Continue down Winckley Square, passing East Cliff on your right and towards the entrance to Avenham Park on Ribblesdale Place. Next to the park entrance is number 13 Ribblesdale Place, where you will find Edmund Robert Harris' plaque.





13 Ribblesdale Place, PR1 3NA.

Reverend Robert Harris, Vicar of St George's Parish Church and headmaster of Preston Grammar School, lived in this house with his sons Edmund and Thomas. Robert was involved in a long campaign for the creation of a free public library and museum in Preston.

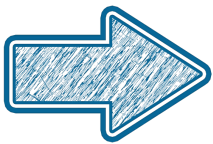
After Robert Harris and Thomas Harris passed away, Edmund inherited the family's entire wealth. Edmund was a wealthy lawyer and also had no heirs when he passed away. He left £300,000 in his will to create a trust that would support several new institutions in Preston. These were all dedicated in memory of his family.

Harris' Bequest created the Harris Museum, which still exists today. It also created the Harris Institute and Harris Technical School which became the University of Central Lancashire. The University still has the Harris technical school building on Corporation Street as part of its campus. The Grade II\* listed Harris Institute building on Avenham Lane and the Grade II listed Harris Orphanage buildings on Garstang Road are both now in private ownership.

Overall, Edmund's will helped improve education, churches, chapels, care for the blind, and established the Harris Free Library and Museum.



Robert Harris and Edmund Robert Harris plaque



Follow the trail for Thomas Leach's plaque

Cross over the road and make a left turn into Camden Place.

Follow the street until the last building on the left, on the corner of Camden Place and Winckley Square, and find Thomas Leach's plaque on the wall of 5 Camden Place.



5 Camden Place, PR1 3NA.

Born in 1782, Thomas Leach began his career on Fishergate as a merchant selling draperies, hosiery, and haberdashery before becoming a prominent local investor. His trade cards and biographical data are featured within the British Museum's archive of well-known national merchants.

In 1834, at the age of 52, Thomas built an impressive family home at 5 Camden Place, Winckley Square where he lived for over 20 years until his death in 1856.

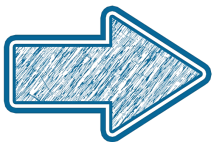


Childhood Home of Samuel Leach, Samuel, one of Thomas's four children who grew up at 5 Camden Place, penned an autobiography titled "Old Age Reminiscences" in 1916.

Lancashire Archives still holds a manuscript copy of this work. In the autobiography Samuel describes his life before getting married in 1923.

This is a valuable primary source that helped inform much of what we now know about family life in one home on Winckley Square. Samuel wrote fondly about his earliest recollections, which include accounts of the night watchmen rapping on windows to wake residents and the maids rising at 2:30am to wash and dry clothes in the gardens throughout the night so that no laundry would be visible to neighbours when the workday began.

At the time, the Gardens' original design consisted of ten distinct private gardens that belonged to the homes across the street.



[Follow the trail for Beatrice Todd's plaque](#)

While facing Winckley Square, turn right and follow the road until a right turn onto Starkie Street.

Follow Starkie Street on the right hand side to find the Beatrice Todd plaque outside the entrance to number 13 Starkie Street.





Finish point: 13 Starkie Street, PR1 3NA.

Beatrice Todd was the prime mover in establishing the Sailors and Soldiers Buffet on Preston Railway Station, which welcomed more than 3.5 million servicemen and women between 1915-1919 as they passed through the town.

She was leader and chair of the executive committee that set up the free service, funded entirely by donations and staffed by more than 400 volunteers working 12-hour shifts in teams.

As well as having an impact on those who passed through Preston on their way to and from the battlefields of the Great War, she played an important role in improving the lives of local people.

She concerned herself particularly with women and children's social, educational and welfare issues. A suffragist, she established mother and baby care in Preston and Leyland.

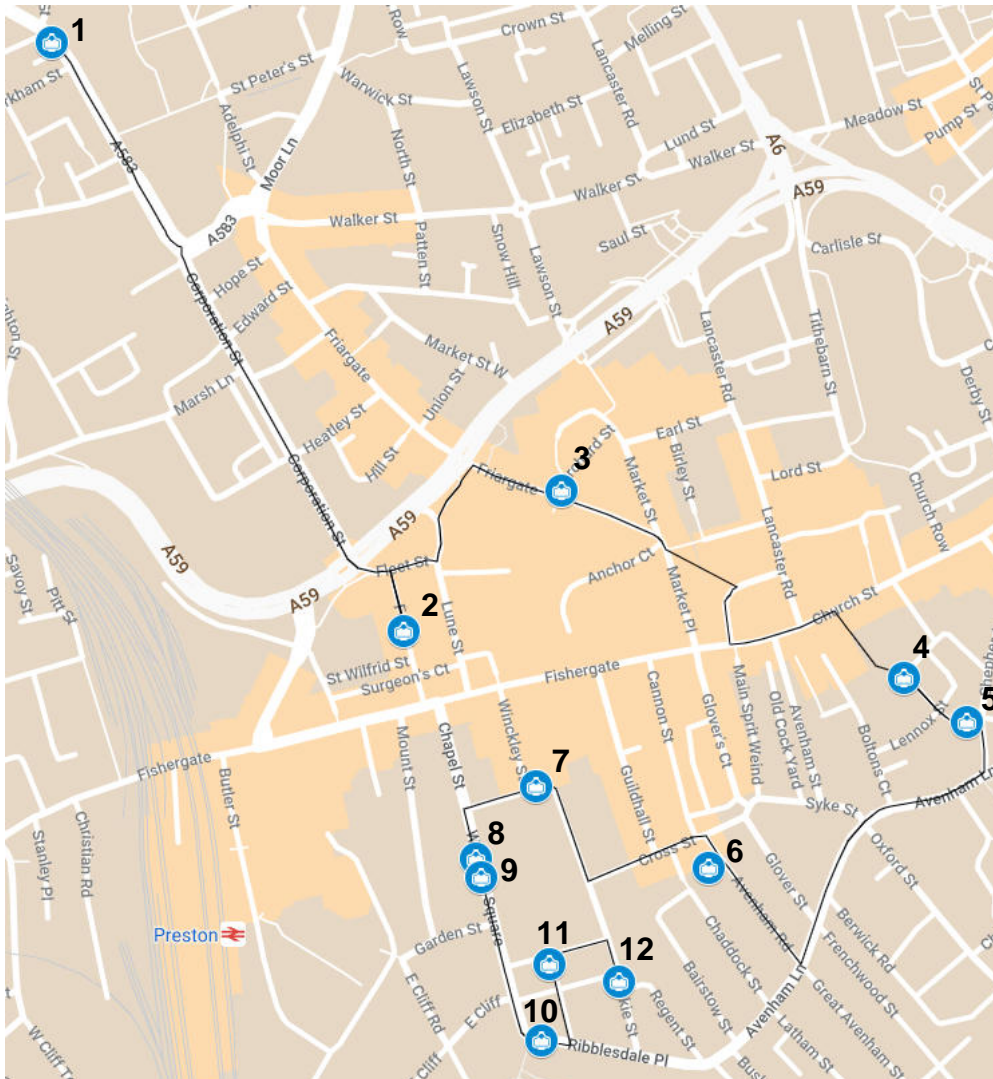
Beatrice led the committee to establish the Preston Infant Welfare Voluntary Women's Association, two years before corporations were required to set them up by the government.

Beatrice, who was born in 1876 in Essex and died in 1958, was also very active in the Leyland area when living at Farington Lodge, helping establish the Leyland Day Nursery.



Beatrice Todd plaque

## Preston Blue Plaque Trail map



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8. Preston Catholic College
9. Edith Rigby
10. Edmund Robert Harris
11. Thomas Leach
12. Beatrice Todd