



**PRESTON
REMEMBERS
CITY TOURS**

**BEATRICE
BLACKHURST**



**PART
ONE
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:

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.

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.



*Beatrice Blackhurst, 1913 (on the right).
Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives,
Bow Lane, Preston.*



Start Point

Avenham Park Entrance, Ribblesdale Place PR1 3NA.
With your back to the Park head right along Ribblesdale Place and stop
on the pavement outside No. 29.

No. 29 Ribblesdale Place



A Farmer's Daughter

In 1869 Beatrice was born in Goosnargh, the first child of George and Elizabeth Boyce. George was a farmer and originally came from Surrey but by 1871 he was farming in Ribbleton. Ten years later, Beatrice had three sisters and one brother and her father was a publican, running the Railway Hotel on Gammull Lane. He died a year later when Beatrice was aged just 13. At 22 Beatrice was still at the Railway Hotel, working as a domestic servant, which was now run by her cousin.

In 1895 Beatrice married Alfred Blackhurst at St Michael's church, Grimsargh, and later lived in Garstang. The marriage banns show that Beatrice was a spinster with no profession. It was an unusual match as Alfred was a solicitor from a very respectable family that had practised law in Preston since the 18th century.

Alfred's father was the solicitor for the Preston District Licensed Victualler's Association, overseeing pub licensing and with Beatrice working in the pub this might be how they met?

By 1911 the couple had moved here to 29 Ribblesdale Place, Preston. This was an affluent area of the town with expensive housing. Beatrice was very socially active, enjoying civic events with her husband. She was particularly passionate about volunteering her time on committees that supported welfare issues, especially those concerning women and children.



*Avenham Park, showing the back of Ribblesdale Place, 1860s.
Courtesy of the Harris Museum.*



Follow the trail to find out more detail about one of Beatrice's interests.

Cross the road then turn left and first right into Camden Place. Walk up to Winckley Square, cross and enter the Gardens via the gate over to the right. Walk along the path then turn left to exit the Park opposite Garden Street. Turn right and walk up the hill until you see No. 28 on the opposite side of the road.



No. 28 Winckley Square



PR1 3JJ



“To tell all England why women want the vote...”

Beatrice was involved in the Preston’s women’s suffrage movement, not as the more commonly known suffragette, but as a suffragist.

Suffragettes

The Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded by the Pankhurst family in 1903. Members were called Suffragettes. It was the leading militant organisation campaigning for women’s suffrage (the vote) in Great Britain. Edith Rigby was a prominent suffragette and formed the WSPU Preston branch in 1907. This is where she lived, just round the corner from Beatrice. Edith was arrested seven times and served time in prison for arson where she went on hunger strike and suffered force-feeding.

Suffragists

The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies was an organisation of suffragists, not suffragettes. They were non-militant and law abiding. In 1913 Beatrice took part in a walk, from Carlisle to London, known as the Watling Street Route. She wanted “to tell all England why women want the vote”, and to show parliament how many women wanted the vote. Both men and women took part. The Times newspaper

estimated that 50,000 people attended the peaceful final demonstration in Hyde Park in July 1913 and the march was hailed as a success. Beatrice kept her raffia badge in a scrapbook as a memento.

Beatrice was secretary of the Preston branch of The Conservative and Unionist Women’s Franchise Association, a NUWSS organisation.

The suffrage movement resulted in legislation being passed in 1918 which meant that women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification were allowed to vote. Although this included 8.5 million women it was still only 40% of the female population. The 1928 Equal Franchise Act gave women over 21 the vote - the same right as men.



The 1913 Suffragist march from Carlisle to London, showing Beatrice on the far right. Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, Preston.

Follow the trail to see where her daughter went to school.

Continue up the hill, turn right at the end of the gardens and walk to the far corner of Winckley Square. Cross over and stand in front of no. 5.



No. 5 Winckley Square



PR1 3JU



Preston High School for Girls

Beatrice and Alfred's only daughter, Maude Mary, attended Preston High School for Girls in this building. Beatrice saved a prospectus from the school in a scrapbook which she used to document many aspects of her life. It is now in Lancashire Archives.

This was a Church of England school but no pupil was refused admission on the grounds of religious denomination, and parents could choose to have their children exempted from religious instruction.

It reputedly had a traditional approach to female education with emphasis on skills such as needlework. However, other subjects available included divinity, mathematics, composition and literature, ancient and modern history, geography, French, German, Latin, natural science, political economy, drawing, class-singing and gymnastics.

In 1907 the High School was replaced by the Park School for Girls, which educated younger girls in Winckley Square and older girls on Moor Park Avenue.



*Beatrice's daughter, Maude Mary, at her brother's wedding, 1924.
Courtesy of the Blackhurst family.*

one hundred years on, the Blackhurst family that Beatrice married into are still practicing law. Follow the trail to their current offices.

Retrace your steps along the top of the Square, cross Winckley Street, turn right along Chapel Street. Stop when you can see BSG Solicitors across the road.



No. 10 Chapel Street



(Blackhurst Swainson Goodier LLP)

A Family Business

Beatrice and Alfred's two other children were sons, William and Alfred Bernard, who both followed in their father's footsteps and became solicitors. The family name and profession continue to this day at this firm of solicitors.

Records show that in 1918 their eldest son, William, was serving in the RAF. Family legend has it that he lied about his age and signed up at the age of 17. He joined the Royal Flying Corps as a Balloon Officer, where he later told his family he "was dangled on the end of a piece of string from a spotting balloon". He was spotting through field glasses, watching where shells were falling. He said of the experience "You get terribly sea sick."

Both sons also served in the Second World War. William was a Major with the 62nd Searchlight Regiment and Alfred was a Captain and later a Major in the same regiment. William went on to be appointed Judge Advocate General for Field Marshall Montgomery and went with him through the desert in Africa and Italy.

Beatrice's grandson, Robin, remembers the Christmas dinner of 1938:

"My grandparents sat at each end of a long table, my grandfather with a roasted goose in front of him, and my grandmother with a roasted turkey. These were followed by all sorts of fruit jellies, trifles and blancmanges, with mince pies and Christmas cake to follow. It must have looked like a scene from Dickens. Little did we imagine that less than a year later, both my father and uncle would have joined the army and would not be seen for the next five years."



*Beatrice's son, William, in his RAF uniform, 1918.
Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives,
Bow Lane, Preston.*



Follow the trail to find out which causes Beatrice supported during the First World War.

Cross over Chapel Street then turn right and walk to the end. Turn left onto Fishergate and walk down across Mount Street and Theatre Street. Stop when you can see the Baptist Church across the road.



Fishergate Baptist Church



Beatrice's Causes

This Baptist Chapel dates from the mid-1800s. Many of the buildings on Fishergate date to the early 1900s or before so you can imagine the street as Beatrice and her family would have known it, a familiar but also very different society from the one we know today.



View of Fishergate with the clock tower of the Baptist Church showing on the left, 1913. Courtesy of the Harris Museum.

When war broke out, the Executive of the NUWSS suffragist organisation recommended that political propaganda should cease for the moment. Instead they sought to offer relief from the distress the war was causing for many women and children. The Preston branch drew up a scheme of infant and maternity welfare work and the Preston Local Government Board agreed to pay half the cost.

By 1915 there were 258 members working to support mothers, offering baby clinics and providing assistance to Preston's Belgian refugees from the war.

The President of the NUWSS, Lady Selborne, said: "To women war brings nothing but sorrow, to some men it also brings glory, so that they do not always fairly weigh the evil side of it." Beatrice was Honorary Secretary of the Preston Women Citizens' Association. They met at the YWCA on this street, Fishergate, until 1928 (when the building was demolished for the Marks and Spencer store).



A local baby clinic, showing Beatrice on the far left hand side, 1910s.



Follow the trail to find out what help Preston provided for women during the war.

Continue along this side of Fishergate then just past the mini-roundabout cross over, to the Old Vic pub. Turn left, walk along the railway bridge and stop when it ends, at the top of Pitt Street.

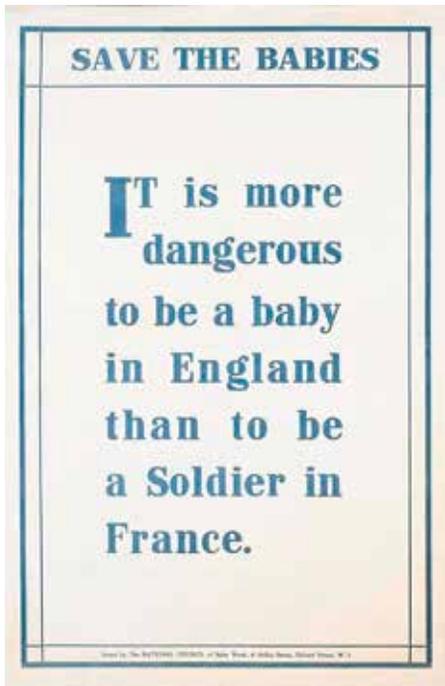


Pitt Street



The Infant Welfare Association

The Lancashire County Hall building at the top of Pitt Street was completed in 1882 and so would also have been familiar to the family. The area behind it was covered in rows of terraced housing.



Poster produced as part of National Baby Week, 1910s.

In November 1914 the Suffrage Society proposed that a baby clinic and maternity centre should be opened in Preston. Beatrice helped set up the Infant Welfare Association in 1915 and clinics opened in various locations, including Fylde Road and Manchester Road, as well as Savoy Street in the terraced housing just beyond County Hall. In 1916 national legislation was passed for the compulsory provision of health visitors, but Preston was already leading the way with five successful welfare centres.

The Association helped hundreds of mothers and children in Preston in partnership with the Maternity and Infant Welfare committee. They provided free meals to expectant and new mothers as well as massage treatment and dental clinics for mothers and children. A rest home was set up in Lytham to give expectant mothers a rest “from the worry and anxiety of constant meal preparing”.

Funds were raised in many ways, including the successful 1917 Preston Baby Week when fund raising activities were organised alongside special sermons preached in churches, special lessons taught in schools, films shown at the cinema, mothers’ reunions and a baby parade.



Follow the trail to find out how Beatrice was involved with a group of women who famously helped the troops.

Cross over Fishergate, turn left and walk along the railway bridge and stop at the top of Station Approach.



Preston Railway Station



(1880 Grade II listed)

Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet

This 1880 building replaced the first station that was here from 1838. In the war it became an important hub for the region, a place where many soldiers and sailors would have passed through on their way to training and deployment to the front line.

Beatrice was a founding member of the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet Association.



The committee of the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet, showing Beatrice on the far left, 1916.

Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, Preston.

The organisation aimed 'to provide and supply light refreshments to all members of His Majesty's Naval and Military Forces passing through Preston Station who are genuine travelers.' There was a governing body of members who formed a committee that regularly met to discuss the running of the buffet. As food prices rose, there was a call for 'strict economy in dispensing food'.

Alongside other fundraising activities the committee opened a 'Buffet Gift House' at 8 Fishergate where they sold donated items for the charity.

The buffet ran from August 1915 to 11 November 1919 and was kept open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until 31 May 1919, and 14 hours a day from then until 11 November 1919. It has been assumed that its opening may have been as a direct result of the Battle of Festubert in May 1915, one of the first battles where there were a significant amount of Preston men killed. This may have motivated Preston women to find a way to help the troops coming through their town.



Follow the trail to visit the room where the Buffet was housed.

Walk down Station Approach into the building, then down the slope and bear right past the central buildings. Stop outside the old Station Buffet.



Preston Railway Station Buffet



(now the Waiting Room on platform 3&4)

“I will not forget to tell all our boys in the trenches of the hearty welcome which awaits them at the Preston Buffet.”

This is the room where the Free Buffet was located. By 1919 3 ¼ million soldiers and sailors had been guests of the buffet – men from all over the Empire. War worn and hungry, they arrived at the station and were supplied with refreshments day and night. Soldiers were offered blankets and pillows so they could sleep on wooden benches where a label was attached to them to alert the ladies of the time they needed to be woken.



The interior of the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet, 1916.

Women worked in pairs to run the buffet for 12-hour shifts. A team of 400 volunteers were needed to keep the buffet operational. On its opening day it served 386 men. By January 1917 the average number of men served in 24 hours was 3250.

The men wrote letters of thanks for the kindly welcome, the substantial comforts, the cheering cups of tea, the buns and biscuits, the cosy shelter and the rousing 'send-off', excerpts of which you can now see on the waiting room walls.

The Buffet's reputation was discussed as far away as France, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Buffet mugs ended up across the UK and were even found in the trenches. You can see a buffet mug on display at the Harris Museum.

The Buffet also operated during the Second World War and 15 million cups of tea were given to troops who passed through Preston train station during both wars.



A pin sold to raise money for the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet.

A Passionate Life

Beatrice died in 1955 aged 86.

It was said in the local paper that

“She was prominent in the Women Suffrage movement, though not militantly. Preston Conservatism, the municipal clinics, the sailors’ and soldiers’ buffet on the railway station in the Great War, the NSPCC and the Cancer Campaign provided outlets for the energy with which Mrs Blackhurst undertakes all to which she sets her hand.”

[Lancashire Evening Post 1939]



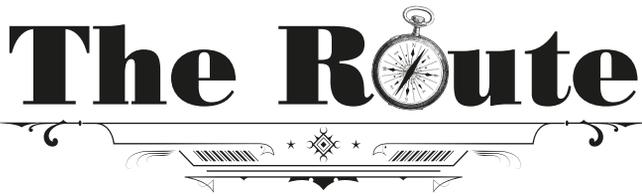
The trail ends here.

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



*Beatrice Blackhurst, c.1920.
Reproduced from documents held at Lancashire Archives,
Bow Lane, Preston.*

The Route



1. Start Point Avenham Park Entrance Ribblesdale Place (PR1 3NA)

With your back to the Park head right along Ribblesdale Place and stop on the pavement on the opposite side of the road to number 29.

2. No. 29 Ribblesdale Place (PR1 3NA)

Cross the road then turn left and first right into Camden Place. Walk up to Winckley Square, cross and enter the Gardens via the gate over to the right. Walk along the path then turn left to exit the Park opposite Garden Street. Turn right and walk up the hill until you see no. 28 on the opposite side of the road.

3. No. 28 Winckley Square (PR1 3JJ)

Continue up the hill, turn right at the end of the Gardens and walk to the far corner of Winckley Square. Cross over and stand in front of no. 5.

4. No. 5 Winckley Square

(‘The Apartments at Winckley Square’ PR1 3JU)

Retrace your steps along the top of the Square (but you’re on the opposite pavement), cross Winckley Street, turn right along Chapel Street. Stop when you can see BSG Solicitors across the road.

5. No. 10 Chapel Street (BSG Solicitors PR1 8AY)

Cross over Chapel Street then turn right and walk to the end. Turn left onto Fishergate and walk down passing across Mount Street and Theatre Street. Stop when you can see the Baptist Church across the road.

6. Fishergate Baptist Church (Fishergate, PR1 2UR)

Continue along this side of Fishergate then just past the mini-roundabout cross over, to the Old Vic pub. Turn left, walk along the railway bridge and stop when it ends, at the top of Pitt Street.

7. Pitt Street (PR1 8XB)

Cross over Fishergate, turn left and walk along the railway bridge and stop at the top of Station Approach.

8. Railway Station Approach (PR1 8AP)

Walk down Station Approach into the building, then down the slope and bear right past the central buildings. Stop outside the old Station Buffet.

9. Finish Point

Preston Railway Station Buffet (PR1 8AP)



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**