

WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION, LANCASHIRE NORTH BRANCH

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A Worthy Monument



The Story of Preston's War Memorial 1917 to 1927

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Alderman (later Sir) Harry Cartmell (1857-1923), Mayor of Preston from 1914 to 1919, spoke at St Andrew's Church of England Church on 28 November 1918 on the occasion of the dedication of the parish's completed war memorial. This had been donated by Alderman Simpson in memory of his wife, Mary, who had died in May 1917. With names still to be recorded on it, this war memorial provided a backdrop for the hope, which Alderman Cartmell expressed that evening, that Preston "... would erect a memorial... expressing gratitude for its soldiers' sacrifice." The town did, after a drawn-out and tortuous process which lasted ten years. Unfortunately, Sir Harry never saw it or the Roll of Honour, which would have been a fitting end to his wartime work.

Many places of work, education and worship had also begun to commemorate their dead at this time, while others had already made a start. In March 1917, over a year before, people in Penwortham had already decided on a site and design for their memorial by the roadside on Penwortham Hill. A few weeks later, Kirkham residents were raising money for a permanent monument. In Preston, St Ignatius's parish had erected a temporary Roll of Honour and a list of those serving in the armed forces by 1915. Both hung at the back of the church. The full realisation of the casualties at the Battle of the Somme and its related battles must have had a terrible effect on the town as more memorials were proposed. St Ignatius's began their Penny Fund and the Catholic College promised its community and parents a permanent memorial: both of these were announced in February 1917. Eighteen bleak months were to follow where casualty numbers would almost double before Peace came in November 1918.

As early as 1916 Preston Council had started collecting names, but had made a decision only three weeks before the St Andrew's dedication to make a start on a temporary but public memorial to the dead and missing. A Roll of Honour was set up in October 1917 round the Siena Font, an exhibit which used to occupy the central position of the Harris Museum and Art Gallery's ground floor, immediately below the centre of the Rotunda. Panels were put round the Font's base and above the panels, the legend "True Till Death" was put,



facing towards the Museum's entrance. At the side were garlands and the Lancashire Rose. Above the inscribed names the words "In token of the most grateful recognition" were put. Through this temporary tribute the officials of the Borough were looking forward to a permanent with one very important stipulation:

“ In order that no name be forgotten and that entries be kept up to date, forms have been printed which may be had at the Harris Free Library and it is hoped that relatives make application for them and fill them up.” (Preston Guardian)

This simple procedure was carried on over the next ten years, and proved to be a thorn in the side of the future War Memorial Committee because of the slow and sometime reluctant response from some families. The main object in 1917 was to collect names and a more permanent record would follow later; much later as it turned out. Mr Barton, the Art Gallery's Director, was put in charge of the project.

At the time of Armistice in November 1918, the Town Council set up a Committee to oversee and arrange the peace celebrations. From this a sub-committee was formed to devote its energy to the subject of a War Memorial, "...worthy of the town and of the great victory which has been gained". In the next eight years this sub-committee, which became part of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, was mentioned only three times in the Council minutes. It was agreed that the style and form of any monument should be left to the townspeople and a public meeting would be held in due course. It was actually held on Monday 10 March 1919. At this meeting some favoured a memorial to be set in the centre of the Flag Market, which the Preston Guardian thought was one of the best sites in the country. Others wanted a more pragmatic memorial such as a children's hospital. Some even suggested both. Finally the responsibility was laid on the shoulders of the War Memorial Committee on the understanding that they would propose a scheme of an ornamental nature in the first place. The public would play their part by financial contributions to the scheme, "...one that ought to make an appeal to all classes in the community."

On 15 March the Preston Guardian editorial expressed view on a monument for this one and only time; all other editorials up to 1926 were concerned mostly with national and international affairs. The editor commented that a suitable memorial should be made and that "...this is one of the things that are best done quickly, before the lapse of time has dulled the edge of remembrance". This advice was quietly ignored. The above meeting was mentioned and the many different ideas expressed there would eventually play their part in delaying the scheme's implementation. Before ending the article, the Editor did point out that children needed welfare and adequate training for the future. In the coming years Preston followed this and other similar paths. Great quantities of money were spent on former soldiers' rehabilitation schemes, retraining disabled ex-servicemen for employment, helping widows and children, and an extensive programme of house building. The Memorial would have to wait.

Three months later, on 28 June 1919, the Preston Guardian published an extensive article entitled, "War Memorials: What Towns and Villages Are

Doing." In it, the schemes for war monuments in Lancashire towns and villages were reported on and described. St Annes were contemplating a new Flower House in Ashton Gardens; Longton were proposing a Recreation Ground; Nelson's proposals included a new YMCA and new hospital scheme, while Accrington were planning a memorial in Oak Hill Park. Preston's proposals were portrayed as falling between a children's hospital and a monument. The final decision would be made firstly on the design of a new children's wing to the Royal Infirmary and a War Memorial on the Market Square to be designed by Mr Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of Liverpool Cathedral, and to cost about £5000. This proved to be the lowest ever estimate. A vague comment was also made about a "permanent record".

Six months later, in January 1920, the War Memorial Committee, with the aid of a forty foot high temporary structure, of unspecified design, placed on the Flag Market, tried to gauge public opinion and their own perspectives of style, taste and suitability. It was supposed to help them to come to a decision on the whole scheme. Two alternative designs were put before them but they could not come to an agreement. What was certain, however, was that the cost of either would be between £45,000 and £50,000. Again, the idea of a children's hospital wing was strongly proposed.

A little more than a year passed and nothing was done towards building a monument. The pressing needs of the town's needy and underprivileged rightly took much of the Council's resources. There was also a desperate need for a continuous road across the north of the town to keep the growing Blackpool traffic out of the town centre. Hence the prosaically named "Arterial Road" (now known as Blackpool Road), linking the New Hall Lane area to Ashton, built across green land, joining Addison Road to Long Lane and crossing over new bridges, was strongly promoted and seen through in the next two years.

Lack of finance was therefore seen as the main obstacle to the Memorial, but in February 1921 there was a meeting of employers and operatives of the main industries in the town. Here it was proposed that every employee should donate a day's pay to the scheme with employers matching that amount. Professional, commercial and trading concerns should also make similar arrangements. An unnamed sub-committee was set up of Sir Frank Hollins Bt. (Director of Horrockses, Crewdson Ltd), Mr Alex Foster J.P., and W.E. Morris (Labour Party agent) to draw up a circular on this matter. The proposal was discussed a week later at a conference of cotton operatives to raise money for a "children's hospital" and a memorial "to be placed in some suitable and convenient place in the town". The plan was that each worker in Preston should give a day's wages spread over a period of six weeks. The employers would match this sum, thereby doubling the amount. If every working person in the town contributed, then £25,000 to £30,000 of the £50,000 needed would be raised. Unfortunately this

scheme came to nothing and was never publicly aired again. The reason for this is probably that the period up to 1923 constituted the post-war slump and the second greatest depression ever to affect this country.

Time moved on, two years and nine months to be exact, before a war memorial was mentioned again by the Lancashire Daily Post or the Preston Guardian. At this time both newspapers gave little space for comment from members of the public, printing only a handful of letters a week. Their national, international and editorial sections were dominated by fighting, then civil war in Ireland, fascist movements in Germany and Italy, and the French invasion of the Ruhr, interspersed with strikes and employment troubles in Britain.

The very successful and much enjoyed Preston Guild celebrations of 1922 came and went, and in November of that year a small article in the Preston Guardian announced a special Remembrance Day service to be held on Saturday 11 November on the vacant land between the Sessions House and the Police Station (where the Town Hall was built in 1933), popularly known as the Cinder Pad. This service began at 10-40am, conducted by Canon Morris and Rev. W. Platt, with music by the Band and Trumpeters of the Royal Field Artillery. On the day, a temporary wooden cross was used as a focal point for wreathes. Poppies were sold in great numbers. Maroons were fired at eleven o'clock and at two minutes past. During those minutes everyone on the Flag, Covered and Fish Markets and in Fishergate and Friargate stood in complete silence. All forms of transport came to a standstill. All that could be heard were the birdsong and the breeze in the trees round the South African War Memorial in front of the Post Office. The Preston Guardian called it "The Great Silence". Its success, the fact that four years had passed since the end of the War and that Preston was still using a temporary wooden cross caused unease in the minds of many townspeople.

In the almost complete absence of any correspondence in any Preston journal, only the Preston Guardian's "Local News" corner had any record of public feeling. Two days before Christmas 1922 and probably because of the Remembrance Service six weeks earlier, the comment was made,

"Fresh attention has been and is called to the town's dereliction in the matter of a war memorial"

The unnamed commentator went on to say that the trade depression was a factor, but the town had not lived up to "...its civic spirit, pride or gratitude." The Market Place was suggested as a suitable site. With Christmas over, an unsourced statement appeared in the Preston Guardian on 20 January 1923, stating that the movement for a memorial would be restarted when local industries recovered, when there would be an appeal for public and private donations. The only decision which had been made was that the monument would contain the names of the dead. The final site was uncertain but it should

be a prominent one. Meanwhile other Lancashire towns and villages continued to build and unveil their memorials in a steady stream.

Understandably, some people were becoming impatient. In March 1923 there was talk of the Corporation needing to be more energetic in some areas, one of which was the memorial. "This subject has been on the shelf long enough," thundered the Preston Guardian. "Even though the fortunes of the cotton industry had not improved, other towns had long done their duty." The twenty first of March had been the fifth anniversary of the Great German Offensive and many Preston men had died in the ensuing British retreat. It passed largely unnoticed. In view of this alone, the Preston Guardian declared that a permanent memorial was "...not a sop to sentiment but a public duty".

Spring brought some movement, but also more uncertainty and vagueness. Another sub-committee, only mentioned three times in the Council Minute Books, was set up to consider the matter. Where would the monument stand? The most favoured place would be on or near the Market Place. What would it look like? Expert help was being consulted about the design. Where would the names be recorded? The "thousand odd" (actually 2000) names would be inscribed on the monument. Who would pay for it? Here there was a radical change of approach; public subscriptions only would raise the money needed. It would therefore be a truly public memorial.

A gush of further suggestions followed this tentative initiative, some better than others. In April two suggestions were made about where the names of the dead should be inscribed. Some councillors wanted them to be put on the outer wall of the Harris Museum, overlooking the Flag Market. It has to be remembered that this would face the prevailing weather in all seasons. Another suggestion, made in the Lancashire Daily Post, was to have the names recorded on a wall at the end of Church Street opposite the Prison, fronted by a lawn, thus brightening up "... a rather unprepossessing spot". The form of the monument would need more discussion but the site was still being debated. The least sensible was one made by the Preston Guardian who thought Harris Street would be a good site, even though a monument of any size would be lost between the Sessions House and the Harris Museum. Added to this, the Ashton tram terminus would have to be moved to Jacson Street and all the tram tracks in the immediate area would have to be rerouted across the front of the Museum. Someone suggested a simple but imposing memorial like Edwin Lutyens' Cenotaph in London. How imposing would that have appeared in Harris Street?

Nothing was said, officially, about the scheme but on the 9 September a councillor did make a statement, however spontaneous is open to debate. On that day the massive War Memorial in St Walburge's Catholic Church was opened and Lieutenant - Colonel Harold Parker DSO of the Loyal North



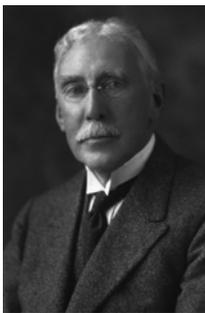
Lancashire Regiment, a guest at the ceremony, made an embarrassing point to the representatives of the Council who were also present. At the end of his speech, Colonel Parker expressed regret that Preston had no Memorial where people could gather and put flowers on Armistice Day. He said he hoped that Preston would not be the last town to erect one. In reply, Alderman Astley-Bell, the 1922 Guild Mayor, dropped a bombshell. He declared that the whole scheme had been postponed owing to the unfortunate differences of opinion over the form it should take. He added that at one time a promise of £10,000 had been made. He ended by assuring the audience that he would do his best to ensure a “worthy memorial” would be built.

November was reached with no sign of progress and the Preston Guardian fulminated at the prospect of another Armistice Day in Preston in front of a temporary wooden cross. It deplored the fact that a proud town like Preston should be in this position and the Council came in for heavy criticism over the delays in choosing the monument’s appearance. It hoped that the coming ceremony would push the authorities;

“...to get to grips with the subject without delay. Other towns have memorials despite bad trade and Preston ought not to have shelved the matter because of unemployment.” (10 November 1923)

The wooden cross was brought out again and this time was set up on the Flag Market. With Remembrance Day falling on a Sunday that year the service was a shorter one, although over 10,000 people attended. An impressive photograph was taken from the Harris Museum balcony. What must have most galling for many Prestonians was that in the coming week both Southport and Blackpool unveiled their memorials.

“Cometh the hour, cometh the man” the saying goes, and the man for this hour was the Mayor, Councillor Frederick Matthew. Councillor Matthew (1860-1943)



was born in Berkshire and came to Preston in 1900 when he set up his drapery, upholstery and millinery business in Fishergate. He had been elected to the Council in 1912 to represent Christ Church ward, and by now had a strong desire that Preston should have a worthy memorial built during his year of office and he was utterly determined to see it through. He said that everyone should realise that the financial



hardship would slow down the subscription progress and that many able and disabled ex-servicemen were still out of work and therefore needed help.

However, there were slow signs of improvement and all ex-servicemen were anxious to see a memorial completed. About this time a new site was suggested - the one occupied by the South African War Memorial, standing on an island, flanked by trees, in front of the Post Office.

This memorial commemorated the men of Preston who had been killed in the Boer War 1899-1901 in South Africa. It had been unveiled on 6 October 1906 in the presence of a large crowd, standing in the pouring rain. Its red granite obelisk, stone plinth and pedestal was designed and executed by the Preston sculptor, Thomas Hodgkinson and paid for by the serving officers, NCOs and men of the Lancashire regiments who had been affected. Set into the plinth are plaques which contain the one hundred and twenty four names of Preston men, mostly from the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, many of whom had died at Kimberley, repelling Boer attacks for four months in 1899-1900. Others died at Spion Kop, Ladysmith and Mafeking. The trees had been planted as saplings and had grown to a mature state by 1923.



At the Mayor's insistence from his position as Chairman of the War Memorial sub-committee, the memorial was discussed at the first Council meeting of 1924, on 18 January, when the sub-committee gave its recommendations. Three fairly vague points seem to have been decided on beforehand. Firstly, that it should be monumental in nature; secondly that it should be more than just ornamental; thirdly that the idea of an extension to the Infirmary had to be dropped because of the slump in trade. After four months, in April, disagreement was reported about the type of monument and the site it should occupy. The Preston Guardian, in desperation, recommended that the Council adopt a similar procedure that the city of Paris had one followed. In order to find the perfect place for a certain statue, a life-size plaster cast of it was moved around the streets to find the best position for it. How feasible it would have been to move around a fifty foot model round the streets of Preston is anyone's guess. Needless to say, it never happened.

By February 1924, collections had started in all the wards in the town by an army of volunteer collectors, working mostly in the evenings. Each subscriber and each collector would eventually have his or her name recorded in a special memorial book, now kept safe in the possession of the Council. There were 14,344 subscribers, and it is worth recording which wards these people lived in:

St Peter's 1471	Fishwick 1425	Ashton 1411	St John's 1350
Maudlands 1238	Deepdale 1238	Deepdale 1142	Moorbrook 1127
Avenham 997	Christ Church 986	Ribbleton 973	Trinity 599
Others 387			

It should be remembered that St Peter's, Maudlands, St John's, Trinity and Moorbrook had some of the poorest streets in the town. The idea was to enable as many people as possible to be part, however small, of the memorial scheme and no pressure was put on anyone to pay at any stage.

On Thursday 29 May, the Mayor, Councillor Matthew, had hoped to announce that the scheme was in full swing, but he was thwarted by indecision and was forced to admit that the plans were "...not advanced enough" to give full details. He did say, however, that he was fully determined that Preston should have a memorial "...in keeping with the part it played in the war and that those killed will have their names permanently recorded."

The Council meeting in July provided the breakthrough that former Mayor now, after the death of Alderman Ord, Alderman Matthew had been hoping for. The design by Mr Giles Gilbert Scott R.A., architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and grandson of Sir George Gilbert Scott R.A., who designed Preston Town Hall in 1862, was accepted and it was decided to place it on the site of the South African War Memorial. The architect's drawing, published in the Lancashire Daily Post and the Preston Guardian, shows a monument (not a cenotaph) of Portland stone, sixty five feet high, on an island thirty two feet deep and fifty feet wide. At the base of the memorial, facing the Flag Market is a figure under a canopy supported by columns. The Preston Guardian thought it "... a War Memorial worth waiting for..." and "...its adoption sets upon a proud past the seal of future pride." It continued in florid style, "No town in the land will be able to claim a finer setting for its share in the silent pageant." In consultation with Lancashire regimental authorities, The Council approved the removal of the South African War Memorial to Avenham Park, a site chosen by the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

So, Alderman Matthew's dogged persistence had paid off. In November 1924 the tender of Messrs George Longden and Sons of Sheffield was accepted. The cost of construction would be £10,199. The sub-committee decided further that the Roll of Honour, the names of the War Dead, should be shown on the walls of the lower staircase in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery. Mr Scott designed this also and advised that the names should be cut into white marble panels; the committee approved this also. On 3 November, the Lancashire Daily Post reported that Alderman Matthew was appealing again for names for the Roll of

Honour, with sixteen hundred already collected. Six thousand subscribers had given a further £2,000 and £2,000 was still needed for this purpose.

The 1924 Remembrance Day ceremony was conducted around the temporary cross on the Flag Market, again in an impressive fashion. When Alderman Matthew had left office he regretted that the memorial had not even been started. However, the Preston Guardian rightly declared that he had done the preparatory work and the town owed him a great deal. A thousand pounds was still outstanding and he blamed the General Election for taking away the public's attention. Still, many Prestonians looked forward to the Remembrance Day of 1925 in front of the new monument. Unfortunately, they were to be sadly disappointed.

At that recent ceremony, some people had expressed regrets that the South African Memorial had to be moved at all. There were grumblings and mutterings



in some areas for a number of reasons. Firstly, on sentimental grounds; people had become attached to it. Secondly, that the tableau, with the obelisk at its centre, had become an attractive, sylvan oasis in a busy town centre. People had become accustomed to sheltering under its maturing trees from rain and shading themselves from the sun.

Photographs of the period do show this to be a pleasant garden. Thirdly, that the arrangement was financially based, as there would be a loss of revenue from lost market stall space if the new memorial were built in front of the Harris Museum. This was denied.

In a speech at the end of November, Alderman Matthew stated that all the plans were firmly in place and that the recently knighted Sir Giles Scott had assured him that the work would be finished by September 1925. He added that money was coming in "splendidly" for the Roll of Honour. That morning he had received a cheque for a hundred guineas (£105, worth about £5,250 in 2006) and he was confident that Preston people would make sure the rest came in. This confirms that at no time was any family asked to pay for having the name of dead relative put on the Roll of Honour.

During the same week, the trees around the South African War Memorial were removed. The Preston Guardian described the area as "amazingly bare and desolate" as the trees had become "an integral part of the scheme" and they would be missed by many". The trees were replanted in an unspecified place.

Trees were planted about this time in the four corners of the Flag Market which, at first, bore a resemblance to ones from the Memorial garden. Therefore it may not be too fanciful to propose that they are the same ones.

The dismantling of the Memorial itself began in January 1925 and during this process people crowded round the wooden hoardings to peer through the cracks and knot holes in the wood, so great was the interest. By April the South African War Memorial had been rebuilt in its present site in Avenham Park. Pleasure was expressed at the "...commanding position...surrounded by artistically shaped flower beds" by the Preston

Guardian. The railings which had been put around it in the town centre, around 1910, to keep the public off the garden were not replaced here to give people greater access. A religious and military ceremony commissioned the Monument on 30 April 1925 and the relatives of the one hundred and twenty four men



commemorated were invited to attend. On 7 May it was rededicated, this time in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman and Mrs J. Hodgson, Alderman Matthew, the officers and men of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the Royal Naval Reserve and the Territorials. General Sir James Wilcocks, Colonel of the Regiment, had chosen the site and he formally handed the Memorial to the care of Preston Council. After the passage of time, this is still an attractive, pleasant location but, it must be said, it is now rather out of the way and the Memorial tends to be forgotten.

Three weeks later on 25 May, Preston's third War Memorial at the Cemetery,



namely the Sword of Sacrifice, was dedicated. The image of this symbol is mounted in high relief on a cross of Portland stone, fourteen feet in height. This came as a surprise for most people as this event was overshadowed by activities surrounding the other monuments. Three hundred and twenty four servicemen from World War One who had died in Preston are buried in the Cemetery and each has a Portland stone headstone, exactly the same as all those buried abroad. At the time, all these headstones were made in Preston itself. Relatives and friends who attended the ceremony found it "memorable and satisfactory".

Meanwhile, back in the town centre, work was proceeding behind larger wooden hoardings on the new Memorial. The Preston Guardian now set itself to debating what words may be inscribed on the monument. The popular sentiment "Their Names Liveth For Evermore" from the Book of Ecclesiastes in the King James Version of the Bible was never mentioned. Instead, words from a Francis Thompson poem were strongly recommended, as he had been born in Preston in 1859. His family moved away when he was seven. The poem in question was "From the Night of the Foreboding" written for Easter, which is steeped in religious imagery of the most dramatic kind. It is one of his most inaccessible works, especially to modern sensibility. To illustrate this it is worth quoting the lines which the Preston Guardian suggested, either:

"We pass, we pass, we pass; this does not pass away
But holds the furrowing earth still harnessed to its yoke.
The stars still write their golden purposes
On heaven's high palimpsest."

or;

"O prophecy
Of things that are, and are not and shall be!
The great-vanned Angel March
Hath trumpeted
His clangorous, "Sleep no more," to all the dead -
Beat his strong vans o'er the earth, and air, and sea
And they have heard. "

The newspaper further commented that few towns have a poet whose lines could be included on a memorial. It is probably for the best that no-one took up these suggestions and settled for simpler expressions of dedication.

By the end of June 1925 there was some grumbling about the slow rate of progress behind the hoardings and the builders had to issue a statement explaining that the intricacy of the operations demanded a great deal of skill from the master masons. As a result, the memorial would not be ready for the Service of Remembrance in November, but, surprisingly there seems to have been little complaint. The importance of the delay is thrown into sharp relief when it was revealed that in October 1341 food tickets were issued to, and £500 (about £25,000 in 2006) from the Earl Haig Fund spent on, Preston ex-servicemen and their families.

On Saturday 14 November the Preston Guardian described what it called "a fitting and dignified" Service of Remembrance which had taken place the previous Wednesday in front of the temporary wooden cross. In the same edition

it revealed drawings of the central figure which was to be included on the monument. Three weeks later it published photographs of this emblematic group, namely the figure of Sorrowing Victory (erroneously called “Spirit of Empire” by the Preston Guardian) surrounded by naked figures in high relief representing the dead asking for their sacrifice to be accepted. Preston Council had commissioned Mr H. Pegram R.A. to sculpt the piece. Born in 1862, Pegram had studied at the Royal Academy, becoming an Associate in 1904 and was elected to the Academy in 1922. Among the sculptures he had created were the Cunard War Memorial in Liverpool and the Edith Cavell Monument in Norwich. Later, he sculpted the Statue of Winged Victory at the Welsh National War Memorial in Cardiff 1926-8 and a bust of Earl Jellicoe in 1928.

By the end of January 1926 the War Memorial was all but finished. It is a memorial monument in the form of a monolith, or tower of Portland stone, seventy feet high. It stands on a wide island seventy feet by forty feet, spreading east and west and the Memorial is approached by the north and south by steps. It was never designed or referred to as a cenotaph. The central figure stands on the representation of a closed stone tomb or “sarcophagus”, which symbolises the tomb of the dead, on the front of which is a bronze cross and wreath which was created by Messrs J.W. Singer and Sons Ltd., of Frome, Somerset, as was all the bronze work.

Above the central figures, appropriately, is the badge of Preston, the lamb, which is the Christian symbol of the risen Christ. Above this the Memorial is plain to the top, which is slightly tapered, where there is a frieze of floral



swags and a cherub in each corner. The Memorial seems solid enough, so it may be surprising to know that it is hollow. Inside it is brick built with a thin layer of rubble fill, faced with Portland stone, all held together with ties at three landings. It also has its own internal drainage system.



At this time, draft arrangements for the unveiling were being made, though vital, unspecified elements were still eluding the War Memorial Committee. The main problem was a dignitary, not yet named, who had said that he needed two months’ notice. The Committee were prepared to wait, even though their plans were being held up yet again. At the end of April, this dignitary was revealed as Earl Jellicoe, Admiral of the Fleet, who would



unveil the Memorial on Sunday 9 May. Earl Sir John Jellicoe (1859 - 1935) had been in command of the British Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916. This action prevented the German Navy from escaping from the Channel ports to wreak havoc on convoys in the Atlantic, but only after it had inflicted heavy damage on the British Fleet. At least seven Preston men are known to have perished at Jutland; Thomas Stanton and Amos Atherton Proctor on HMS Black Prince; James Gahagan, Andrew Lindrum and Thomas Pye on HMS Indefatigable; William Mather and Thomas Quigley (not named on the Roll of Honour) on HMS Queen Mary. Later in the afternoon of 31 May, Admiral Jellicoe brought in the last two named battlecruisers, but when they appeared, the



German gunners sighted them early and scored direct hits on both. Though both returned fire, causing extensive damage, they were quickly destroyed. HMS Indefatigable exploded, turned over and sank with only two survivors; HMS Queen Mary (left) was hit in the magazine and

exploded like HMS Hood did in 1941, leaving nine survivors.

The arrangements for the unveiling were published in April 1926. Precedence at the ceremony was to be given to the families of those killed, eight hundred of whom had already applied. Ex-servicemen could watch from the enclosure. One of the Members of Parliament for Preston, Mr A.R. Kennnedy K.C., requested special permission from the War Office to allow relatives of the dead to wear their medals, an honour only usually allowed at Remembrance Day Services, and this was granted. The Harris Library had purchased the registers of the War Dead from the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission and these were available for public viewing, as was a map of the war cemeteries.

With nine days to go, the Catholic authorities pulled out of the arrangements. Up to this point they had understood that the unveiling would be a civil service of dedication, but when it became known that the service would have recognisable religious elements, it put the Catholic community in a dilemma. On one hand Catholics, who made up a very large minority in Preston, had given generously to the War Memorial Fund. On the other they were forbidden by Canon Law 1258 "Communicato in Sacris" to assist actively in any way at, or to take any part in, the religious services of non-Catholic Christians. A meeting of Parish Priests asked for a civil ceremony instead or, seeing that 9 May was a Sunday, perhaps each denomination could have its own service. The proposal was rejected and no Catholic took an active part in the unveiling, though it is entirely possible that some went to watch. Many Catholics must have felt compromised. Within forty years later both this law and attitudes were slowly being relaxed.

The General Strike brought the country to a standstill for over a week starting on 3 May. The post-war slump and the French occupation of the Ruhr had cut the demand for coal and the mine owners wanted to cut miners' hours and pay. As a result the miners came out on strike and were locked out and the Trades Union Congress called the General Strike to support these workers. As a result, both the Lancashire Daily Post and the Preston Guardian came out as typewritten sheets. Inevitably the unveiling of the Memorial was postponed.

Life returned to normal on 12 May and the ceremony was re-arranged for Sunday 13 June. The Preston Guardian, a weekly published on Saturdays, made some comments on the eve of the unveiling:

"The stars in their courses seem to have been against the War Memorial right from the start. Those who have worked hardest for it will not be sorry to see the project finally completed after all the discussion and controversy."

There were hints made that a sizeable number of people did not entirely favour the Memorial's form. When other towns' are considered with their realistic statues and bronzes, perhaps Preston's was seen as a little too unworldly or ethereal. Despite this, money had "flowed in". Alderman Matthew was congratulated for his "quiet persistence" and the completion of the task was a "...real personal triumph".

The unveiling ceremony took place on a sunny Sunday morning with little or no breeze. A film was made by Will Onda (Councillor Hugh Rain) and is now stored at the North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University. The Mayor, Councillor Woolley, welcomed the Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Jellicoe of Scapa, GCB, OM, GCVO, and asked him to perform the unveiling. In reply, Earl Jellicoe thanked the town for its sacrifices in the War and for the courage of the



men who had fought in it. He also added that it was the duty of everyone to care for those in the community who had been damaged in any way in the War, not just with sympathy but with practical help also. He praised the unity of purpose which prevailed in wartime and expressed a wish that this spirit would be replicated to see Britain out of its present difficulties. He also spoke about the Empire and praised the sacrifice of those who lived thousands of miles away who gave their lives. Two Preston examples are Philip Gardner and Walter Ford. The Gardner family had emigrated to Australia in 1909, but their son was killed at Ypres and his name inscribed on the Menin Gate. Walter Ford left his printer's

job in America to join the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in 1915. He was killed by shellfire and buried under debris on 19 September 1916 and his name is recorded on the Thiepval Monument.

At the end of his speech, Earl Jellicoe pulled the cord which lowered the Union Jack from the central sculptures. The Mayor's chaplain dedicated the monument and the Free Church President said prayers for Peace and those who mourn. The Lord's Prayer was said and "O God Our Help In Ages Past" was sung. Wreaths were laid by



the Admiral, the Mayor and Alderman Matthew on behalf of those in the town who had subscribed. Wreaths were also laid by military and civic groups, and private individuals. The Admiral's wreath was made up of laurels, iris and ferns, with the inscription "To the glorious dead, a tribute of deepest respect and admiration - Jellicoe". The Mayor's was of red roses and ferns with a wide blue band, on which were the words, "From the people of Preston in honoured memory of their beloved dead".



The Preston Guardian, on 19 June commended Earl Jellicoe for his common, human touch. It said he had "unassuming simplicity" and commented that he had spent a great deal of time with widows and orphans before he passed into his position for the ceremony. He also made many "unrehearsed expressions of thanks and goodwill" to the crowds as he left the Town Hall. The following morning he was spotted in the queue for the booking office at Preston Station, dressed in a grey overcoat and bowler hat. He was saluted by every railway employee he saw who recognised him on the way to his train.

In the week after the ceremony, people stopped in numbers in front of the Memorial to look at the wreaths and flowers, and to place their own. Some men passing by were seen to raise their hats, as had become the custom at the Cenotaph in London. At least now the town could hold its Remembrance Service in front of a fitting, permanent memorial, which happened for the first time in November 1926.

Less than a year later on 14 September 1927, the Preston Guardian printed an article headed "Abusing the Memorial" in which it reported that complaints had been made about damage to the War Memorial flower beds. Wire netting had had to be put up to stop people leaning back and crushing the flowers. A low

metal fence was then put around the Memorial wall to ensure the monument was "...kept as sacred as in was intended to be." This wall had become "...a resting place, a lounge for idlers, a waiting room for bus travellers, a dumping ground for baskets and a convenient place for the consumption of slabs of ice cream." So, it seems, nothing is new.

In the New Year of 1927 work started on the second part of the War Memorial, the Roll of Honour on the staircases in the Entrance Hall of the Harris Museum. A profoundly deaf stonemason carved the names into the plaque set into the walls every night after the building was closed, to prevent interruptions by the



public. Mr Blanchflower, the Museum caretaker, patrolled the building with his dog or watched the mason working. Each night, at midnight, a policeman called in for an update in the course of his duty. Twice during this period intruders were seen; one turned out to be a stuffed baboon left out for restoration in the basement and the other was the Chief Librarian, Mr Helliwell, taking papers out of the safe while working late.

When the work was finished in the Autumn, the Roll of Honour was unveiled and dedicated on Wednesday 2 November 1927, almost exactly ten years to the day (3 November 1917) when a permanent Roll of Honour was announced to the public. The Preston Guardian, on 5 November, described the arrangement of names as having "quiet, restrained dignity". The War Memorial Book, containing the names and addresses of all who had contributed the Memorial Fund, "however small", was put in a glass case in "an honoured place" opposite the entrance. Alderman Matthew suggested that a page should be turned every day, a tradition which ran for about seventy years.

The Mayor, Councillor J. Hunt, unveiled the panels and Alderman Matthew gave a speech. He said that the names could be read "in reverence and quietness" where they are inscribed in the Museum. He said that the project had been completely paid for, was free from any debt and could be seen as a fitting memorial. Colonel H. Parker DSO, Officer Commanding the 4th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment said that seven hundred and fourteen names of the regiment's dead were represented and that their families would appreciate the permanent display. "I could not conceive a more beautiful place for the purpose," he said.

Having said all this, the Roll of Honour is not a complete record of all the Preston men killed in the War. Only the families of the dead could submit names and

omissions may have happened for a number of reasons personal and private. Some families simply chose not to take up the offer. The Anderton family of Marsh Lane chose to have their eldest son's name included on the family grave in Preston Cemetery and on the War Memorial at St Walburge's, but not on the Roll of Honour because they were still so bitter at the loss of their eldest son, Frank. However, men from the poorest streets, like the two John Charnocks (uncle and nephew) from Mill Hill are represented because cost was not an issue, being made entirely free by the system of subscription.

There were complaints that some names were missing, yet, as the War Memorial Committee strenuously pointed out, "Every effort has been made to get an exact and complete list." There certainly had been no rush and forms had been available for relatives for ten years. There had been frequent reminders and announcements with the lists of names always open for inspection. A War Memorial souvenir had been produced with a list, which had also printed in the Preston Guardian, showing all the collected names. It had also been possible, even up to the time of the inscription of the panels for additions to be made. "What more could possibly have been done is difficult to imagine," stated the Preston Guardian on 19 November 1927. Names were added, over the years, out of sequence and alphabetical order as late as 1940. As to the completeness of the Roll of Honour, one small but substantial example which could be used is that of the Memorial at St Walburge's. Of the one hundred and fifty six names recorded there, only one hundred and fourteen are present at the Harris.

Alderman Matthew could be satisfied that his efforts had been well rewarded. He was re-elected as Alderman in 1929, 1935 and 1941. He retired in 1935 when British Home Stores bought his business and became a Freeman of the Borough in 1937 for his services to the town especially as the chairman of the Parks and Baths Committee, taking a big part in rebuilding Saul Street Baths and the purchase of Ashton Park from Dick, Kerr Ltd. He was inducted on the same day in March 1938 as the Earl of Derby. He died in Lytham on 31 March 1942 and was buried at St Cuthbert's Lytham. At his memorial service, The Vicar of Preston paid tribute to his "delightful personal qualities" and his faith which led him to "great public services".

For eighty years the War Memorial has stood as a graceful work of art, an emphatic and outstanding statement of grief, remembrance and gratitude for all Preston's war dead. On special occasions its steps, walls and pedestal have accommodated crowds greeting and supporting Preston North End teams, dignitaries and Royalty. When King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited in 1937, the Memorial's garden and lower levels were flooded with young people. As time went on, industrial pollution



affected the Memorial far less than its near neighbours built in Longridge stone, but its whiteness was restored when it was cleaned for the 1972 Guild.



As in 1927, some passers-by used the Memorial walls and steps for access and as seats, but a disgraceful episode in 1982 when two drunks were seen standing next to the central figure, greater efforts were made to keep the area sacred. A Lancashire Evening Post article on 21 July 1982 reported similar behaviour and the Council's half hearted response of putting a "keep off" sign on it and a chain across the steps. The accompanying photograph shows the War Memorial (wrongly calling it a cenotaph) bathed in sunshine with about a dozen people sitting on its various levels.

The lower levels facing the Flag Market and Friargate were reshaped in the late 1990s, introducing a gradual and subtle arrangement of steps accommodating



the falling levels of land to the west of the Memorial, and heavy chains were put across both sets of steps. The whole structure was restored to its former glory by Preston Council in 2005, repairing weather damage and renovating where necessary. The worst damage was on the face and head of the central figure (above left), which was repaired using Portland

stone dust, bound with lime and moulded using hand-held tools (above right), while natural stone insets were used to repair the main stonework.

This building and the planning which preceded it had followed a long and tortuous process, but the end result was certainly the "worthy monument" which Alderman Astley-Bell had promised at St Walburge's in 1923.

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The photographs of Earl Jellicoe are in the Public Domain.

All other photographs were either taken by me, or are in my possession and are in the Public Domain.