

**PRESTON REMEMBERS**

Rehearsal Draft  
1 September 2015

Written by Helen Newall  
From the research of the Preston Remembers Volunteers

Music composed and arranged by Matt Baker

## **CHARACTERS**

Sergeant Major

Narrator(s)

A chorus of spoken voices

Joe Garstang – a conscientious objector

John Gregson – an army man

Beatrice Blackhurst – who set up the Preston Free Buffet

Catherine Gregson – John's wife

Two Gregson children

Newspaper boys

A chorus of ladies

A chorus of soldiers

## **SONGS**

*Pack up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag* (2015)

Words: George Henry Powell

Music: Felix Powell

Arranged: Matt Baker

*Good-bye-eee* (1917)

Words & Music: R.P. Weston & Bert Lee.

Arranged: Matt Baker

*There's a Long, Long Trail* (1915)

Words: Stoddard King

Alternative Words: Cheshire Regiment

Music: Zo Elliott

Arranged: Matt Baker

*Keep the Home Fires Burning* (2014)

Words: Lena Gilbert Ford

Music: Ivor Novello

Arranged: Matt Baker

*Your King and Country Want You* (1914)

Words & Music: Paul Rubens

Arranged: Matt Baker

*The Conscientious Objector's Lament* (1917)

Words & Music: Davy Burnaby & Gitz Rice

Arranged: Matt Baker

*When this Lousy War is Over* (1914+)

Words: (*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*)

Alternative words: Trenches traditional

Music: Charles Crozat Converse (1868)

*The Grand Old Duke of York*

Traditional

Alternative words: Helen Newall

Arranged: Matt Baker

*They Shall Grow Not Old: verse from For the Fallen (1914)*

Words: Laurence Binyon

Music: Matt Baker

## PRESTON REMEMBERS

*SONG TO MARCH INTO SPACE.*

*The cast is drilled into position by a Sergeant Gregson.*

*Placards:*

*Women of Lancashire!*

*Votes for Women. Etc*

*They sing as they march.*

### **SONG: PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES**

ALL	Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, And smile, smile, smile! While you've a Lucifer to light your fag, Smile, Boys, that's the style. What's the use of worrying? It never was worthwhile. So, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, And smile, smile, smile!
SERG	Company, to your duties!! Fall out!
NARRATOR	1915.
ALL	An eventful year.
VOICE	The armies are entrenched from Belgium to Switzerland.
VOICE	Zeppelins float over Great Britain and rain down fire-bombs and high explosives.
VOICE	Germany deploys chlorine gas at Ypres.
VOICE	The Lusitania is sunk.
VOICE	58,000 Allied soldiers die at Gallipoli.
VOICE	And Nurse Edith Cavell is shot for helping Allied soldiers lost behind the lines.
ALL	A very busy year.
GARSTANG	And to think some folk were saying it would be all over by Christmas.
GREGSON	And it wasn't.
BEATRICE	But while it continues, we'll do our very best to refresh with tea and cakes those weary soldiers and sailors who find themselves at Preston Station.

## **SONG: GOODBYE-EE**

*We see a vignette of a platform: a goodbye between a soldier and a wife. Mrs Blackhurst pours out tea for another weary soldier from a metal teapot.*

ALL                      Goodbye-ee, goodbye-ee,  
                              Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee,  
                              Tho' it's hard to part I know,  
                              I'll be tickled to death to go.

*Hum the rest under the next*

## **SCENE: GREGSON**

GREGSON            It's not like the old days.

NARRATOR          John Gregson, an army man.

GREGSON            We don't fight hand to hand: we sit in the mud and watch each other.

NARRATOR          Before this lark, he was a weaver.

GREGSON            (*Salutes*) But it wasn't for me, so I joined the Colours for a spell of adventure. After my time was up, I had a fine life driving trams. I was still a reservist, mind.

NARRATOR          A proper dapper man: a Preston man.

GREGSON            So in 1914, I was called up.

CATHERINE          Must you go, John?

GREGSON            I've been a soldier, Catherine. They need men like me out there.

CATHERINE          But you've two babbies now to consider: be careful, John.

GREGSON            I will.

NARRATOR          And so, he was out at the Front before some folk had even got their coats on.

NEWSPAPER          Read all about it.

GREGSON            Dear Catherine, there a bit of a scrap, and I was made acting sergeant, but I'm now promoted to full Sergeant.

NARRATOR          And this, for gallantry in action, and the capture of a machine gun.

GREGSON        And I have been recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal. I have some leave due, so I'll be back with you in no time, Cathy.

NARRATOR      His last letter home...

**SONG: LONG, LONG TRAIL**

ALL                There's a long, long trail a-winding  
                      Into the land of my dreams,  
                      Where the nightingales are singing  
                      And a white moon beams:  
                      There's a long, long night of waiting  
                      Until my dreams all come true;  
                      Till the day when I'll be going down  
                      That long, long trail with you.

**SCENE: BEATRICE**

NEWSPAPER      Read all about it! Troops on the move!

BEATRICE        And when they move, they must be cared for.

NARRATOR      Beatrice Blackhurst: a lady with the welfare of others always in mind.

*A group of ladies gather to listen to Beatrice.*

BEATRICE        Therefore, I propose we constitute the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet Association.

*Ladies murmur in agreement*

BEATRICE        The object of our organisation shall be to provide and supply light refreshments to all members of His Majesty's Naval and Military Forces passing through Preston Station.

*Ladies applaud and put aprons on.*

BEATRICE        And we shall offer a welcome on this station all day and all night, every day and every night. More tea, Captain?

NARRATOR      Thank you, ma'am.

*The ladies lift mugs and plates of buns.*

**SONG: KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING**

LADIES:         Keep the home fires burning

While your hearts are yearning,  
Though your lads are far away they dream of home.  
There's a silver lining, through the dark clouds shining,  
Turn the dark cloud inside out,  
'Till the boys come home.

**SCENE: GARSTANG**

*Placards are lifted!*  
*Humming: Your King and Your Country*

VOICE	Come into the ranks and fight for your king and country!
VOICE	Remember Belgium: Enlist today!
LADIES	Women of Britain say go!
VOICE	Your Country Needs You.
LADIES	Votes for Women:
BEATRICE	But by Reason Not Force.
NEWSPAPER	Read all about it! Read all about it: Military Service Act, 1916 brings in Conscription.
VOICE	Every man to whom the act applies will, on Thursday March 2 <sup>nd</sup> , be deemed to have enlisted for the duration of the war unless he be excepted or exempt.
VOICE	Any man who has adequate grounds for applying to a Local Panel for a Certificate of Exemption must do so before March 2 <sup>nd</sup> .
VOICE	Why wait for the Act to apply to you!
ALL	Enlist today!

## **SONG: KING AND COUNTRY**

ALL                    Oh, we don't want to lose you but we think you ought to go.  
For your King and your country both need you so.  
We shall want you and miss you  
But with all our might and main  
We shall cheer you, thank you, bless you  
When you come home again.

GARSTANG        But I'll not kill a man for a political ideal, law or no law.

NARRATOR        Joe Garstang: a market gardener and a fitness instructor.

VOICE             And a Conscientious Objector.

VOICE             A conchie!

VOICE             A shirker!

VOICE             A coward!

*They raise white feathers.*

GARSTANG        I'm not training these lads up to be cannon fodder.

VOICE             At least join the Friends Ambulance Unit. Play your part, man!

GARSTANG        I cannot condone any enterprise involving the killing of another.

NARRATOR        And they imprison him with the other Conchies.

VOICE             And if they won't assist, let 'em rot.

NARRATOR        Many went on hunger strike, and were force-fed. Their right to vote was removed for 5 years. In appalling prison conditions 73 conscientious objectors died. After the war, many remained imprisoned.

*GARSTANG is straitjacketed during the next.*

GARSTANG        I promised to behave normally. And I did. But this war is not normal. This slaughter is not normal.



### **SONG: THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR'S LAMENT**

- (<http://www.wv1photos.com/ButForGawdsSakeDontSendMe.html>)
- (<https://www.worldcat.org/title/conscientious-objectors-lament-song-written-and-composed-by-d-burnaby-and-g-rice-etc/oclc/498918622>)

VOICE            Perhaps you wonder what I am,  
I will explain to you,  
My conscience is the only thing,  
That helps to pull me through.  
Objection is a thing that I  
Have studied thoroughly,  
I don't object to fighting Huns,  
But should hate them fighting me.

ALL                Send out the Army and The Navy,  
Send out the rank and file,  
Send out the brave old Territorials  
They'll face the danger with a smile.  
Send out the boys of the Old Brigade  
Who made Old England free  
Send out the bakers, and the bloomin' profit-makers  
But for Gawd's sake don't send me.

NARRATOR        And the men out at the Front are inclined to agree.

### **SONG: WHEN THIS LOUSY WAR IS OVER**

ALL                (*Raucous*) When this lousy war is over,  
No more soldiering for me  
When I get me civvy clothes on,  
Oh how happy I shall be

GREGSON          (*Sad, bitter*) People said when we enlisted,  
Fame and medals we would win,  
But the fame is in the guardroom,  
And those medals made of tin...

### **SCENE: BACK TO THE FRONT**

*All humming Roses Are Blooming in Picardie*

NARRATOR        A last photograph before John Gregson returns to the Belgian  
trenches.

*GREGSON and CATHY and 2 sons and daughter  
gather for a photograph.*

BEATRICE         Tea, Sergeant Gregson?

GREGSON          Thank you kindly, madam.

BEATRICE      And our very best wishes go with you.

*GREGSON marches back to the Front.*

**SONG: GRAND OLD DUKE OF YORK**

MEN              Oh The grand old Duke of York  
                      He had ten thousand men  
                      He marched them out of the front line trench  
                      And he marched them in again  
                      And when they were stood they had rum  
                      And when they were sat they had bread  
                      But when they put their head above the parapet  
                      They were dead...

NARRATOR      The War Diaries: 26 June 1815. A hard day in the trenches, the enemy shelling our lines very heavily. 11 men were killed and 9 wounded.

GREGSON        Dear Cathy. We've been digging trenches. It's hot work, but I'm doing fine. All my love, John.

NARRATOR      27 June 1915. Another normal day with plenty of shelling and Trench Mortars. 2 men killed and 8 wounded.

*An envelope is delivered to Catherine Gregson which she opens.*

VOICE            Dear Mrs Gregson, I deeply regret to inform you of the death of Sgt John Gregson...

*She drops the telegram.*

NARRATOR      We will remember them.

GREGSON        John Gregson. Sergeant. 1st Battalion East Lancashire Regiment. Died 1915, aged 33. Buried at Talana Farm Cemetery, Belgium.

NARRATOR      We will remember them.

BEATRICE        Beatrice Blackhurst's Buffet on Preston Station was open throughout the war, serving two and half million men.

NARRATOR      She lived to see women get the vote, to see the first women KC's in 1949 and women serving on juries in 1921. She died aged 85 in 1955.

GARSTANG       Joseph Garstang never recovered from his repeated imprisonments and died of ill health in 1928.

NARRATOR     His heart was in the countryside, in the wide spaces where a man  
may breathe the pleasant odour of leaf mould, wet earth or the sweet  
scent of a thousand flowers.

**SONG: FOR THE FALLEN**

ALL             They shall grow not old  
As they that are left grow old  
Age shall not weary them  
Nor the years condemn  
At the going down of the sun  
And in the morning  
We will remember them

<End>