



Salvation Army  
International Heritage Centre

**Darkest England Gazette Research Guide**

**Addiction**



**THE DARKEST ENGLAND DINNER TABLE.**



The *Darkest England Gazette* was deeply concerned with the harmful impact of addiction on the income, health, and wellbeing of sufferers and their families. This applied equally to addiction to substances such as alcohol or opium and to compulsive behaviour such as gambling. Cautionary tales of the consequences of addiction are included in various forms, from reportage to fiction and poetry. There is a strong focus on how addiction can lead to other vices: for instance, gambling and alcohol abuse are connected as they tend to take place in the same spaces, while pubs create opportunities for solicitation, and opium addicts are regularly portrayed as living with romantic partners out of wedlock. In addition, addictions are depicted as a drain on financial resources that can bring individuals and their families to poverty.

The three addictions that feature most prominently in the *Gazette* are:

- **Gambling**

Gambling, to a greater degree than substance abuse, is represented as an addiction that affects people across social classes. This is reflected, for instance, in accounts of horse-racing meetings, such as 'The Epsom Saturnalia' in **issue 51**, or club life, such as 'British Clubs and their Members' in **issue 36**. As with other addictions, however, there is a strong focus on compulsive gambling as a strain on the income of working people and their dependants, as illustrated, for example, with the image of the hungry 'Gambler's Child' in a Newcastle slum neighbourhood in **issue 20**. In **issue 27**, an article entitled 'How to Sink' by Commissioner Elijah Cadman, head of the social work, presents a picture of 'The Twin Vices: Drink and Gambling', showing how the serving of alcohol alongside card games fuels both addictions. The serial story 'Joe Angus: A Gambling Story of the North', which begins in **issue 48**, offers a fictional cautionary tale about the social and personal impact of gambling.



- **Alcohol**

The roots of The Salvation Army's opposition to alcohol go as far back as the founding of the organisation. Like many other social reformers during the period, the Army saw alcohol as a burden specifically on the finances of families in poverty. This is evident from illustrations such as 'The Darkest England Dinner Table', the cover of **issue 19**. The success of the 'Darkest England' social scheme is often portrayed as linked to the defeat of alcoholism as a problem that sapped both working people's incomes and their physical and mental strength and welfare. This is reflected, for instance, in George Logan's poem 'A Christmas Contrast' in the 1893 Christmas number, **issue 26**, which depicts an alcoholic father contrasting his own poor home and hungry children with those of the wealthy publican who profits by his dependency. Harry Davis's poem 'When the Drink is Swept Away' in **issue 4** dwells hopefully on a society free from alcohol. See also our [research blog](#) on The Salvation Army's ['war on drink'](#).

- **Opium**

Opium is represented in the *Gazette* as a new and concerning form of addiction, identified as concentrated primarily in the Chinese communities in Limehouse in East London and in Sydney. This sense of opium as a cross-cultural threat emerges from articles such as 'With that Chinees' in **issue 10**, which states that:

... the East End Chinese opium dens need dealing with by law, before their ghastly practices gain a tighter grip of the English. The ravages of drink, gambling and immorality are surely sufficient. We do not require the addition of opium-smoking to the list of national vices.

The tendency to associate the drug with China (it had been the subject of the two so-called 'Opium Wars' between Britain and China in 1839–1841 and 1856–1860) allowed concern regarding it to become linked with prejudices about race, immigration, and intercultural interaction. This is reflected in articles like 'Midnight Adventures on Sydney Streets' in **issue 31**.

**The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,**

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## Accessing the *Darkest England Gazette*:

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre is currently working to digitise the *Darkest England Gazette* as a fully open access online resource. While we complete the digitisation process, we are able to offer sample scans of some issues and articles as part of our [Digital Collections](#).

If you would like to see an issue or article that is not currently available on the [Darkest England Gazette page](#), please feel free to [contact the Heritage Centre](#) for help. We may be able to send you a scan of the relevant pages, or you would be very welcome to visit our Reading Room in person to view the *Gazette* for yourself.

