



Salvation Army
International Heritage Centre

Darkest England Gazette Research Guide

Prostitution and 'Rescue Work'



A MIDNIGHT SUPPER AT PICCADILLY.

The so-called 'Rescue Work' was an important feature of the Social Work from an early point in The Salvation Army's history. Perhaps the most high-profile and controversial part of the Women's Social Work, it was a particular concern of Florence E. Booth, née Soper, the wife of William and Catherine Booth's eldest son Bramwell who would go on to succeed his father as the second General. A separate periodical, *The Deliverer*, had been established in 1889 as a dedicated record of the Rescue Work and Women's Social Work, but the work was nevertheless also accorded a significant presence in the *Darkest England Gazette*. Mrs Bramwell Booth, as she was called, regularly contributed updates in her column 'Occasional Notes', written from her headquarters in Mare Street, Hackney, north London, where a well-known Rescue Home was situated.



Portrait of Florence E. Booth (Mrs Bramwell Booth) used in the banner for her column 'Occasional Notes'

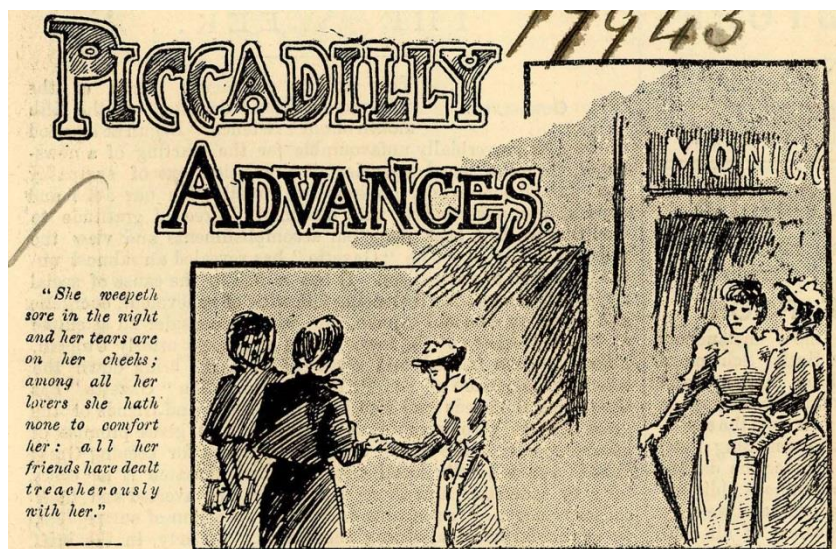
Broadly speaking, the Rescue Work sought to help women who had fallen foul of the period's strict sexual moral code. The Salvation Army's work to help unmarried mothers is reasonably well known (see, for instance, the *Darkest England Gazette* Research Guide on Maternity and child care), but the *Gazette* was especially interested in what it called the 'Midnight Work' or 'Piccadilly Work' which sought to support women out of sex work.

The area around Piccadilly Circus in central London was a hub of entertainment close to theatres, clubs, and bars, where soliciting was common. Around 1892, The Salvation Army had begun its so-called 'Midnight Patrols' in the area, a form of outreach work that saw female officers, called 'Midnight Workers', enter places like pubs and brothels to make contact with women who were engaged in or at risk of being drawn into sex work and let them know that The Salvation Army could offer them accommodation and support to find alternative work.



A prominent figure in this work was Mrs Major Annie Harding. She was active in the Women's Social Work and had previously contributed articles on the Rescue Homes and women's industries to the *Gazette*. In **issue 3**, she reported on prostitution around the busy London station King's Cross. From **issue 12** onwards her contributions concentrated on Piccadilly. Her article 'The Piccadilly Pioneers' reported that, while 'the condition of Piccadilly and its vicinity gets worse and worse', she felt that she and her team were 'gradually getting a good hold of the women'. Further articles show that her work developed quickly. For instance, the cover article of **issue 25** showcased the weekly 'Midnight Suppers' she had established in order to reach out to women working on the streets in the winter nights. 'In the Lamplight', her update on the work for the Christmas number (**issue 26**), was accompanied by statistical evidence of her progress: 6 suppers had been held, which had been attended by 150 women, while they had 'taken in' 25 women and been consulted for help by a further 23. Readers were encouraged to send monetary donations to Mrs Bramwell Booth in Hackney and practical gifts of food and clothing for the women direct to Mrs Harding in Piccadilly.

The Midnight Workers distributed copies of *The Deliverer* to the women they encountered, and we can assume that the regular references to this other periodical were also intended to point readers of the *Gazette* towards it. Helping women who contemporary society condemned as 'fallen' could be controversial, but the *Gazette's* matter-of-fact inclusion of the Rescue Work in its comprehensive picture of the Social Work could engage readers who might not otherwise have sought out *The Deliverer* or been interested in the Rescue Work.



The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,

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Accessing the *Darkest England Gazette*:

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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.

