



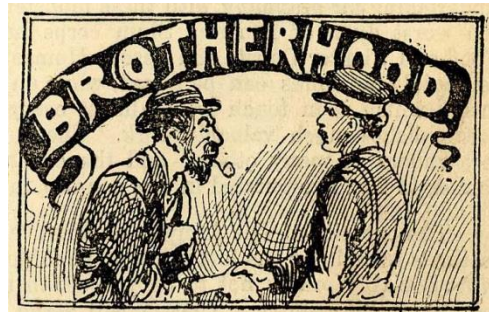
## **Darkest England Gazette Research Guide**

### **Poetry and songs**



Music and songs have been central to worship in The Salvation Army from its early beginnings. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the organisation was famous for setting religious words to the tune of popular songs to attract the public and encourage participation; while songs written by Salvationists have been collected into *The Salvation Army Songbook* over a period of many decades. These songs, sometimes with an indication of a well-known tune or even with sheet music, were regularly printed in Salvation Army periodicals.

The first issues of the *Gazette* offered weekly songs on its back page, but the magazine soon began to include poems too. The first song in **issue 1** was 'God Bless the *Gazette*', specially written for the occasion by Noah Allsop, Sergeant-Major at Rock Ferry corps. Every issue



of the *Gazette* carries at least one poem or song, sometimes with an eye-catching illustration around its title. Key themes were religion and the joy of salvation (particularly in the songs, such as 'A Heart-Prayer' by S. A. Faulkner in **issue 1**), descriptions of poverty conditions and the impact of alcohol (for example in 'A

Christmas Contrast' in **issue 26**), alongside praise of the Social Scheme (for instance 'The General's Social Ladder' by George Sayer in **issue 3**) and specifically the Grace-before-Meat donation scheme (such as 'A Plea for the Light Brigade' by Ruth Tracy in **issue 13**). Fellowship is also celebrated, as in 'Brotherhood' by Arthur W. Bovan (**issue 7**).

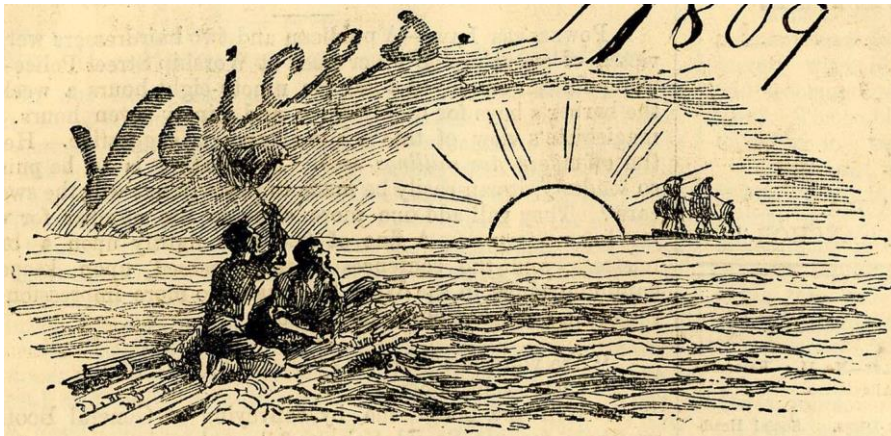


While some of the poems and songs are published anonymously, poems are the most likely of all types of contributions in the *Gazette* to be signed by their author. This allows us to identify regular contributors, but it can be difficult to find further information about these writers. From the first issues there are regular submissions by George Logan, but his name does not appear in our catalogue; the same is true for regular contributors George Sayer of Leicester I corps, John Joseph Adlard (or J. J. A.), and Alfred Dedamess. Of B. Conybeare we know little more than that they usually submitted poems about the Grace-before-Meat scheme. This suggests that they were personally involved with the scheme, perhaps as a local 'Light Brigade' District Agent who collected donations from Grace-before-Meat tins.

Others names are recognisable, sometimes from information given about them elsewhere in the *Gazette*. One of the most prolific poets in the magazine appears variously as A. W. B. or Arthur W. Bovan. Adjutant Bovan (d. 1903) may have been involved with the Whitechapel Food Depot, then recently established under the aegis of former restaurant owner James Flawn; in **issue 1** a report of the Food Depot is written by 'A. W. B.' on behalf of Flawn. Others were known as poets and song writers; Brigadier Ruth Tracy, for instance, published her songs through a number of Salvation Army platforms. **Issue 31** contains a poem signed 'H. H. B.': this is almost certain to be Herbert H. Booth, one of William and Catherine Booth's sons, who was known as a songwriter. Songs by him and his wife Cornelia had appeared in the collection *Songs of Peace and War* in 1890.



It is largely thanks to the *Gazette* itself, as well as to *The Deliverer*, the periodical dedicated to the Rescue Work (see also the *Darkest England Gazette* Research Guide on prostitution and the Rescue Work), that one of the poets we know most about is Captain Barbara Wilson of the Rescue Work. Alongside her regular poetry, she is profiled with a portrait in the rubric 'Social Vignettes' in **issue 22**. According to this, she was in charge of the bookbinding factory that offered employment to women on Rawstone Street off Goswell Road in London.



**The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,  
April 2020**

## 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.

