



Salvation Army International Heritage Centre

Darkest England Gazette Research Guide

Salvation Army colonies



The well-known frontispiece to General William Booth's 1890 text *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (see page 2 of this Research Guide) highlights the centrality to The Salvation Army's Social Work of the notion of 'colonies'. The image shows Salvationists guiding the 'submerged', as Booth called people drowning in the sea of extreme poverty, through the City Colonies and Farm Colony to the ultimate object, the 'colony across the sea'. Each of these so-called colonies functioned as a reception station for people with no other safety net to protect them from the impact of unemployment, exploitation, addiction, etc. The colonies offered immediate material help but also sought to teach people work skills and to convert them to Christianity with the aim of equipping them for a new and better life. The possibility of emigration – allowing people to leave the sites of their difficult earlier lives for places that offered more opportunities – was considered an important part of this process.

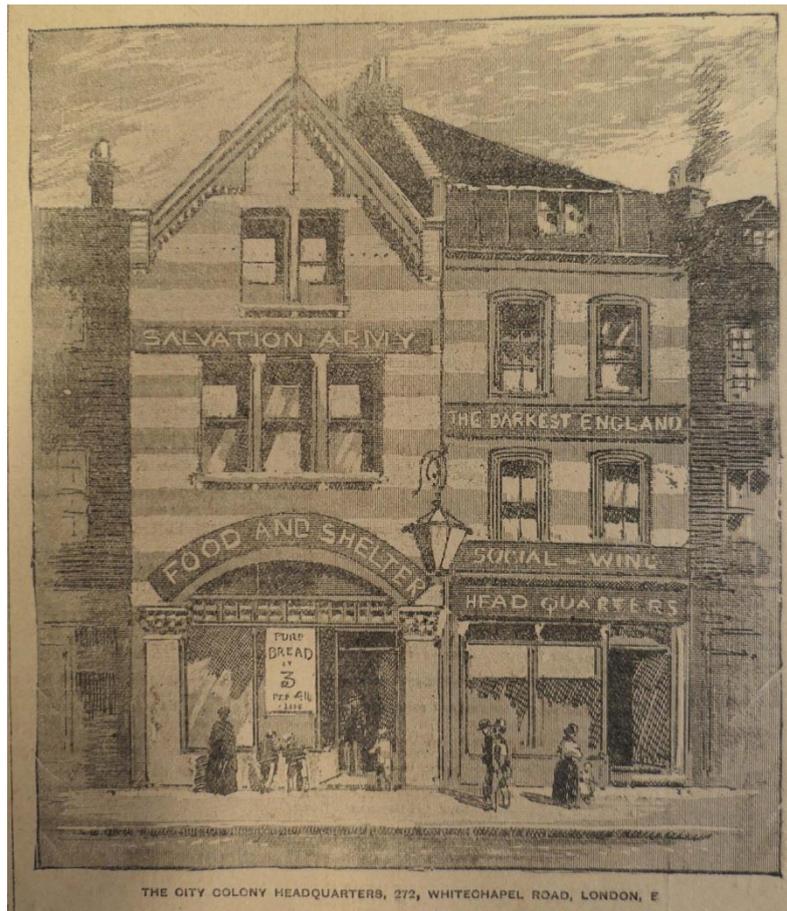
The word 'colony' is now inextricably linked with ideas of empire. While Booth did not propose the Darkest England Scheme with the intention of subjugating other peoples and cultures, there are common points between his use of the term and that of contemporary imperialists. The term 'colony', for Booth, indicated the expansion of The Salvation Army's work, allowing for the settlement of dispossessed people in new areas. The 'colonisation' of parts of Darkest England (and the rest of the world) meant changing these areas to institute a Salvationist approach to life.



Frontispiece of *In Darkest London and the Way Out* (1890) by General William Booth, illustrating the 'way out' of the deprivation of 'Darkest England' through Salvation Army colonies.

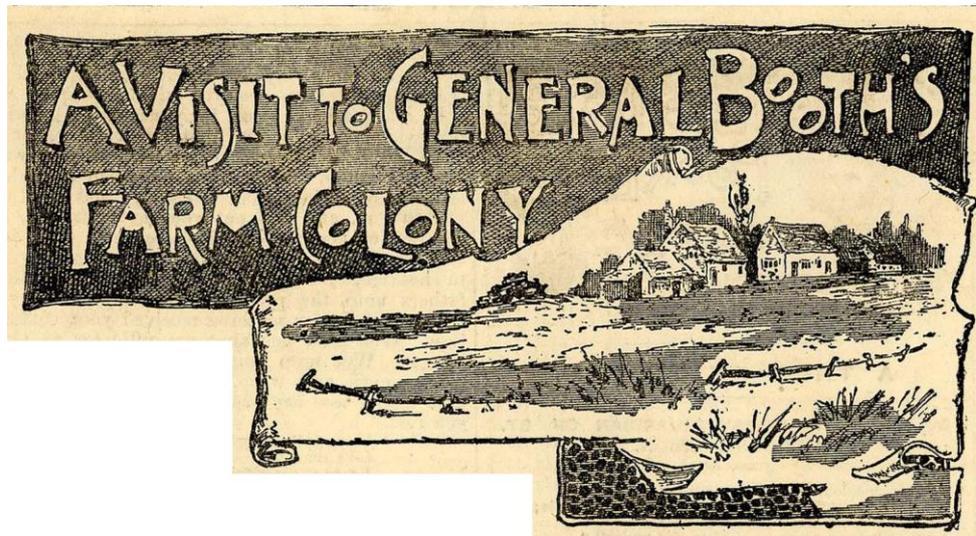
City Colonies

The City Colonies were a key part of The Salvation Army's front-line social work. Many people's first port of call were the Food and Shelter Depots which offered cheap canteens and accommodation for people whose acute poverty put them at risk of hunger and homelessness. Many of the Shelters (homeless hostels) and Rescue Homes for women were connected to The Salvation Army's industries and workplaces, so that homeless and unemployed people could be offered food and accommodation as well as work. These workplaces, known as 'Elevators', engaged in a variety of industries such as 'salvage work' – that is, collecting, sorting, and repurposing waste products including paper and tins (see, for instance, 'A Day at the Darkest England Wharf', **issue 4**). The *Gazette* was eager to give insights into as much of the City Colonies' work as possible. For instance, the 'Types of Workers' series that ran from **issue 1** to **issue 22** portrayed workers in the many Salvation Army workplaces. The products of the various industries, such as the women's knitting and bookbinding factories, were widely advertised in the *Gazette*, while readers were encouraged to make waste products available for the salvage work. The City Colonies could also work as reception centres that helped people into employment outside The Salvation Army, referred them to the Farm Colony, or helped them to emigrate.



The 'City Colony Headquarters' in Whitechapel Road, east London, from the *Social Gazette* (the successor to the *Darkest England Gazette*), 26 October 1895.

Hadleigh Farm Colony



The Salvation Army Farm Colony, established in Hadleigh, Essex, in 1891, was an important marker for The Salvation Army. The Army advocated a return to farm labour as one solution to the contemporary industrial malaise marked by the ubiquity of unemployment and sweated labour (see also the *Darkest England Gazette* Research Guide on sweating), and it intended to establish farm colonies in other countries on the Hadleigh model. Hadleigh Farm Colony, under the direction of Major William Stitt, therefore features prominently in the *Gazette* which published frequent reports under the heading 'Farm Colony Notes' as well as special reportage on seasonal changes and types of work carried out. Examples such as 'The Farm Colony Festivities' in **issue 28** and 'Spring-Time at the Farm-Colony' in **issue 44** portrayed Hadleigh as a dynamic, efficient, and harmonious community.

In this context, it was important for the *Gazette* to defend Hadleigh's reputation against attacks in other periodicals that its readers might come across. Thus, for instance, the article 'Hadleigh Farm Colony: Unfounded Attack' in **issue 49** responds with indignation to an accusation that the Farm Colony sold its produce for less than its market value, thereby undermining the income of other local sellers.

Hadleigh Farm survives today as The Salvation Army's [Hadleigh Farm Estate](#). Its Rare Breeds Centre and Tea Rooms are open to the public.

The 'Colony Over-Sea'



The Salvation Army and its work had become established globally by the time the *Darkest England Gazette* began publication, and the periodical reported frequently on branches of the Social Work in other countries, including Rescue Work in Canada and India, the Children's Home in San Francisco, hostels for homeless people in New York, and support for ex-prisoners in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). By 1894, furthermore, farm colonies modelled on Hadleigh had been established in Canada, New Zealand, Gujarat in India, and Pakenham in Australia. The third pillar of William Booth's proposals in *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, the 'Colony Over-Sea', proved difficult to establish, however.

It is important to note that the proposed 'Colony Over-Sea' differed from other international Social Work initiatives. While they, like the City Colonies in British and Irish cities, were developed as a response to perceived social needs within these countries, the 'Colony Over-Sea' was explicitly intended as a destination for emigrants from Britain who saw few work opportunities in their home country and were willing to be trained to farm abroad. Booth's original intention was for this colony to be established within the British Empire, which he considered to be an extension of Britain itself, or, as he put it: 'simply pieces of Britain distributed about the world, enabling the Britisher to have access to the richest parts of the earth' (*In Darkest England and the Way Out*, chapter 4). For more information about the history of The Salvation Army's migration schemes, see our Subject Guide on migration and our [research blog](#) on The Salvation Army and [emigration](#).

The 1893 Christmas number of the *Gazette* (**issue 26**) saw the beginning of a series of articles by Commissioner John Carleton entitled 'The Coming Colony Over Sea' to explain the plans for the colony and why they were taking some time to come to fruition. The problem, according to Carleton, was two-fold – firstly, a lack of money, as the funds raised by the publication of *In Darkest England* had been used to establish the City Colonies and Farm Colony, and secondly, the difficulty of deciding where the colony should be established. By this point, the Army leaders seemed less wedded to a location within the British Empire, not least because, as Carleton notes, they had received offers of land in numerous other countries across the Americas, Europe, and Africa. This first article included a call to readers willing to share with Carleton their 'practical experience' of 'any [...] country which would be suitable for an Over-Sea Colony'. Carleton's series expounding the practical plans for the colony ran from **issue 26** until **issue 32**. Negotiations with several countries over the proposed colony, later also referred to as the Land Settlement Scheme, continued until Booth's death in 1912, but no Colony Over-Sea was ever established.

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,

July 2019

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.

