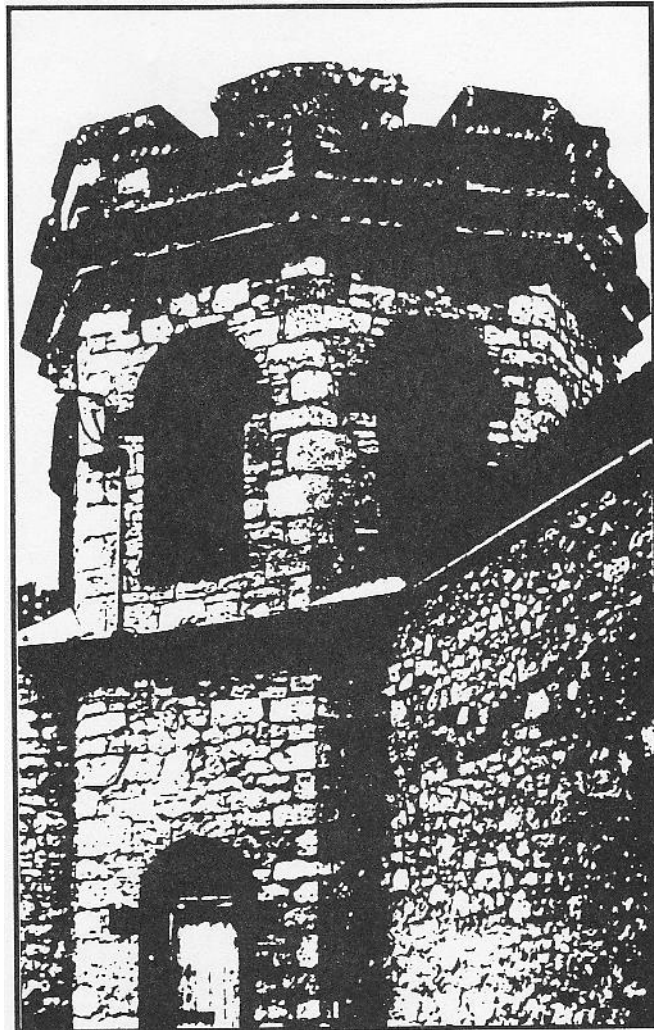


# Romantic Beginnings



A Century of Caring



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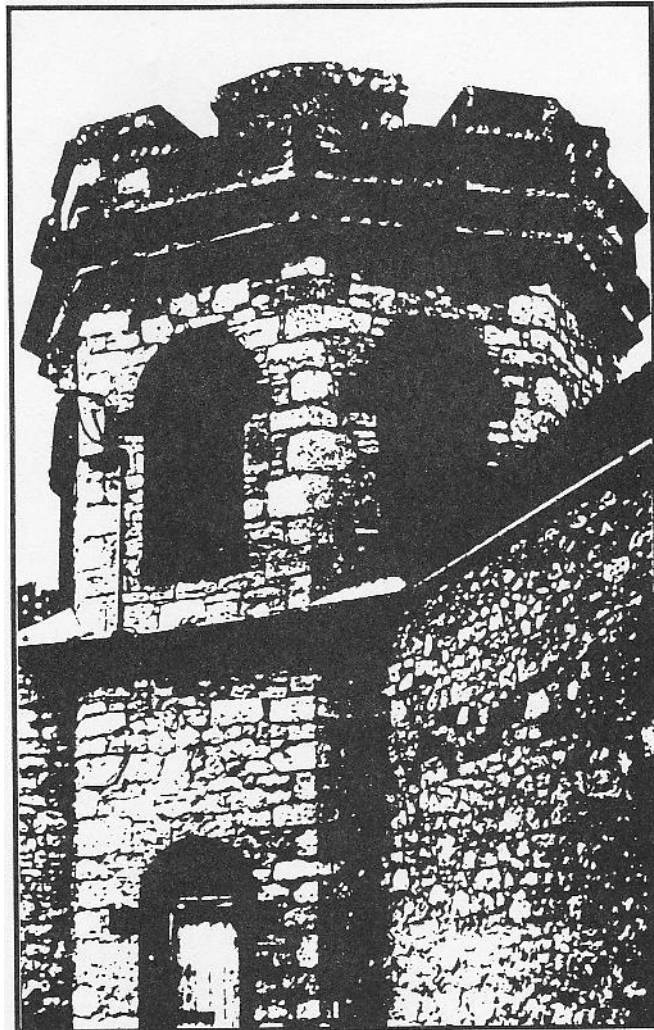
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From a thesis by Peter Adamson, Adelaide 1975

# Cover ***Hanging Tower*** - Adelaide Gaol Established 1841

# Romantic Beginnings



## The First Thirty Years

PRISONERS AID ASSOCIATION



# The By line

*There is no place in Australia where so much is done to help a discharged prisoner as is done in South Australia. In Adelaide there is a Society which is, without a doubt, the finest of its kind in the world. I refer to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society ..... managed by ladies and gentlemen who do it all for the love of their fallen fellow man.'*

*Letter from former prisoner to The Advertiser 18th August 1913*

In 1852 the Imperial Government stopped South Australia transporting its worst law-breakers to Van Dieman's Land. and the Colony's response was to introduce a system of hard labour, tight security and discipline. These were most strongly enforced at the quarry-sited Stockade (Yatala Labour Prison) built specially to receive those previously transported. It commenced operation in 1854.

Rock-cracking was the cornerstone of the new system. Hard labour and separate confinement were its dominant features. A hard worked man would not wish to return to gaol, would earn his keep while there, and emerge a better man. Although not considered as significant as hard labour, semi-solitary confinement was probably more rigorous and punitive. In theory men shut in cells each night had little time to plot escape, but much time to reflect on past mischief. Inmates were locked in separate cells for over half the day, and silence was enforced as far as possible while the men worked. In practice separation was more likely to cause mental breakdown than moral regeneration. Failure to realise this indicated a lack of understanding of the oppressiveness of denying man his social nature - there were few who attempted empathic consideration of the prisoners' lonely hours.

The Colony's first Probation Act was passed in 1887 - proposed in Parliament by Maurice Salom, MLC who said -

*The manufacture of gaol-birds is one of the processes which the majority of existing systems of justice and prison discipline carry out to the greatest perfection. The most numerous class of offenders are those who drift into evil courses simply because they have made one false move and find it easier to go on as they have begun than to retrace their steps.'*

The citizens of Adelaide in the 1880s were highly interested in crime and criminals, 'fallen' women and reformatories. Adelaide's social welfare activists had for some years been busily self-employed in numerous welfare institutions attending to the needs of the sick, the destitute and the poor. During the 80s several existing charitable, religious and moral pressure groups directed some of their efforts to a field new to them - the rehabilitation of criminals.

It was an era of close newspaper attention to law-breaking and the treatment of the convicted, and the public contributed many letters to the newspapers on these subjects. The 80s were characterised by sternness and an especially severe public attitude to larrikinism and sexual crimes against young girls. There was however at the same time a growing element of sympathy and leniency in other areas. This is shown in an editorial in *The Adelaide Observer*, a weekly newspaper, prepared to limit capital punishment to "murders of a specially atrocious character" - a view which would find wide acceptance a century later. It showed also in the general acceptance of remission of sentences on great public occasions - such as Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and the community's interest in the treatment of prisoners and aborigines. Significantly it showed also in the ease with which charitable organisations collected funds to assist prisoners.

In 1882 the *Observer* commented that although the boys at the reformatory were taught a trade, when they were released they had no place to go. The paper did not suggest that the government help them. Instead it referred to a *philanthropic gap* in the established voluntary welfare associations. There was no disputing the respective roles of government and community: it was tacitly accepted that once the transgressor left gaol the government washed its hands of him. The

small sums given to released prisoners were hardly sufficient to establish them either in lodgings or useful employment. They also needed friendship and advice.

About two years after the comment by the Observer there was a protest against the deficiency of charitable effort in this area by the Adelaide daily newspaper. *The South Australian Register*, and one of its journalists took a very active part in the following story. The origins of the Prisoners' Aid Association (P.A.A.) - now Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services ( O.A.R.S. ) - are clear in outline but lacking in some details. Considerable detective work is needed to put the story together. The first treasurer of The Prisoners' Aid Association, Mr G.C. Knight, said, in July 1891:

*The idea of forming a Prisoners' Aid Society was started nearly five years ago (1886) by the Rev. Mr. Rawson (actually Rawsthorne - the Bishop's Chaplain) who at that time was a member of the old Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friends Society.*

Rawsthorne was resident in Adelaide for only 2 years around 1884-6.

Knight went on to say that:

*The work was continued until 1889 when a special representative of The Register visited the Stockade (Yatala Labour Prison) and wrote a series of articles.' After the publication of those articles the work of the Society was supported by the public and so experienced increasing success. The journalist with the South Australian Register who wrote the articles to which Knight referred. was William John Sowden who later made the following comments -*

*The Association had a romantic beginning. It was the result of the influence of one of Victor Hugo's novels, "Les Miserables", which depicted the wretched persecution of prisoners under the penal law"*

He did not note that Hugo wrote about the old French penal system, nor did he say who read the novel. Perhaps it was Mr Rawsthorne! Unfortunately those comments, from PAA sources, leave almost all of the story untold. The origins are largely to be found in the records of the Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friends Society and the Charity Organisation Society which were founded in 1849 and 1884 respectively. The common aim of these societies was that of all 19th century philanthropy, namely *'to inculcate a spirit of independence in the poor, by encouraging self-help, diligence, thrift and sobriety'*. This standard Victorian approach was to become typical of the PAA's charitable work.

The formal, written PAA story begins with an Executive meeting of the Charity Organisation Society on 20 January 1885. The question of initiating a Discharged Prisoners' Association was discussed and it was resolved to bring on the matter at an early date as amalgamation with the Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friends Society was about to take place.

This amalgamation occurred on February 9th, 1885 when the South Australian Strangers' Friends and Charity Organisation was formed. This new society set up a number of sub-committees including a 'Prisoners' Aid Committee'. This sub-committee was called to meet on 2 July 1885 to consider 'Aid to Discharged Prisoners' but was adjourned because of the absence of the Rev. A.G. Rawsthorne. Another meeting of the subcommittee was scheduled for 28 August 1885 but achieved nothing as only two members - not including Rawsthorne - attended.

At the first annual meeting of this new society held on September 30th 1885, two contradictory views were put concerning aid to prisoners. One speaker said that there was neither 'satisfactory plan' nor a society for helping them. Later the Hon. Scott MLC stated: "The functions of the Discharged Prisoners' Association had been taken over. and a good deal was expected from this branch of the society.' A somewhat puzzling comment as to date no other reference has been found to this Association and it appears that little if any such functions even existed to be taken over. It was also stated at the same meeting that the committee intended 'to organize some efficient scheme for the purpose (of assisting discharged prisoners).

On October 8 the Committee for Discharged Prisoners met and amongst other recommendations asked that the money given by the Government to prisoners upon their release be given directly to the Committee to spend as they saw fit on the prisoners' behalves. They also wanted to be told seven days in advance of a prisoner's release so he could be met at the prison gates. They Intended to work with prisoners from the Stockade, the Adelaide Gaol and the hulk - a prison ship. They put these proposals to the Government. They met again on 12 October 1885, but no developments were recorded.

No significant progress had been made by the time of the next annual meeting on September 27th 1886. The Rev. W.R. Fletcher said that 'He would like to see something done to aid discharged prisoners, but was afraid the Society was not yet in a position to undertake the work, which required elaborate machinery.' Mr. W. Gilbert MP said that 'Aid to discharged prisoners required more supervision and management than the Society could give.' The Secretary (Mr. C. Lyons) said that the Society had afforded aid in the ordinary way to displaced prisoners. They had no special machinery to deal with the matter. The second annual report of 1886 recommended that a 'special Standing Sub-committee' be formed to aid discharged prisoners. Yet they already had formed one.

At a Full Committee meeting on 17 January 1887 a Rev Mr Whittington called attention to the question of Aid to Discharged Prisoners ... no reply had ever been received from the Government. A Deputation was sent to the Chief Secretary, after which there are no more minuted references. Strains within the amalgamated society then caused its dissolution which occurred formally on 31st May, 1887. It reverted back into its constituents and after this, according to one source, some of the members of the reconstituted Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friends Society commenced experimental work with prisoners.

They restricted their attention to the Stockade at Yatala. and referred to themselves as the Prisoners' Aid Society or Committee. The Strangers' Friend Society... "provided its goodwill whenever the Prisoners' Aid Committee were in financial straits by giving a little money.' Will J. Sowden was one of the committee, and in 1889, as special representative of *The Register*, he visited the prison. The publicity his articles gave to the prisoners' needs and the success of the experimental work probably led the workers to form the PAA, for early that year (according to Sowden looking back from 1928) they 'banded' themselves into an association and held their first formal committee meeting.

That first meeting, of which the minutes still exist, was held on 18 July 1889. At it 'the Treasurer, Mr G.C. Knight, gave a resume of the work of the Prisoners' Aid Association - that 'it had been started 2 years ago (in 1887).' This suggests that the PAA developed more from the experimental work of Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friends Society members than the preliminary efforts of the Charity Organisation Society. The minutes also noted that *The Register* had been of assistance. Shortly after the PAA printed for private circulation *Notes on the Stockade*, a pamphlet compiled from Sowden's series of Register articles. It was printed to raise money to aid prisoners and complete the decoration of the newly built church at the Stockade. The latter was well in progress, but required another fifty to sixty pounds. Books and clothing were also sought.

Until this appeal the founders had financed their own efforts, supplying most of the two hundred pounds spent before officially forming the PAA. In taking up their task the founders were eager to have the Prison authorities on side, and so asked Sheriff Boothby to be their patron. His name appeared prominently, always above theirs, on the initial publications; and they never seemed to miss an opportunity for praising his assistance, kindness and so on.

# Strong Foundations

The founders of The Prisoners' Aid Society were listed in Sowden's pamphlet. The seven who made up the Committee of Management up to the formalization of the PAA. They were: David Nock MP and Visiting Justice, James Scott J.P., William Burform, Charles Birks. G.C. Knight J.P. (first Honorary Treasurer), George Crase (first Honorary Secretary), and W.J. Sowden. (Of these seven founders four formed the new committee: Scott, Birks. Knight and Crase.) All were at some time active members of the ABSFS. In addition Crase was a former Secretary and Collector. When they needed additional help they turned to the ABSFS's then current Collector, Mr. A. Fance. Over the next few years several new committeemen joined the PAA. Most were members of the ABSFS, for example: J.B. Hack. R. Knowles. M.H. Madge. This meant that the PAA was predominantly Nonconformist, however the Charity Organisation Society held most of its meetings in the Church Office in Leigh Street which indicates a significant Anglican involvement.

Adelaide's women were also active philanthropic workers. But it was not until the 80's that a significant number of them became not only members but active members of these societies. Among them was a Miss C.H. Spence. It appears that male pressure may have kept them out of even these societies until the 80's. However, none of them is mentioned in regard to the PAA. The most likely explanation is obvious: working with prisoners was not thought to be fit work for women.

The founders were busy men. Four were on the committee of the Adelaide City Mission and four served at sometime on the committee of the Aborigines' Friends' Association. They served these and other charitable bodies constantly for many years.

A closer look at several of them revealed the breadth of their welfare activities.

During one of the two years experimental work preparatory to the P.A.A.'s foundation, Scott and Nock were co-treasurers of the South Australian Female Reformatory. Scott was secretary-treasurer of the South Australian Female Refuge, while Nock and Burford were on its committee. Nock was treasurer of the Belair Retreat and Fance its Collector. In 1891 the Sick Poor Fund was established by Sowden. Its Secretary and Treasurer were the P.A.A.'s Secretary and Treasurer, Crase and Knight, and two of its three committee members were drawn from the ABSFS. One was Mrs. Knight. These three societies worked in co-operation with each other. These were only their major involvements. The founders and their successors were prominent social activists.

The founders were also religious men. At least four were Methodists, and many of those who joined them came from various Methodist organisations. Predominantly they were Wesleyans. For these men. Hugo and Rawsthorne were sparks, Sowden and his articles likely prompters of consolidation: but strong humanitarian and religious convictions were the deeper springs of their drive. Before the Hugo spark these men were already selfless workers. "Les Miserables" merely added one new direction to their charitable and religious efforts.

Though their drive was both religious and humanitarian the former was probably the more basic and enduring. Their humanitarianism was based upon their Christian beliefs. Their evangelism attested to the primacy of the religious motivation. Christian altruism prompted their practical efforts: they helped men because they wanted to reform them.

Their first and largest single task for the period was evangelistic. The government had constructed at the Stockade a 'fine lofty building', to replace the old chapel. Having built well the government stopped, leaving the interior so plain that it had 'no more suggestion of sacredness about it than a square-sided cement bath.' But that was not its only deficiency. It had no gallery, and until one was provided, so that the Stockade staff and their families could sit apart from the

inmates, the government would not permit services to be held. The Association's founders, practical evangelists, provided the gallery and made the surroundings more conducive to conversion. They took over, as they and others were to do continually for many years, from where the government left the job-incomplete. Where necessary they furnished the chapel. They lined its walls, provided the altar, a cross, a clock, a one hundred and forty pounds organ, three coloured windows, and three tablets engraved respectively with the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed.

On the first Sunday in each month they conducted Divine Services there. This work was so important to Knight that he asked, at the first committee meeting, to be permitted to carry on until was completed. Having met formally they set about raising the sixty pounds necessary to complete the work. However, even at this first meeting, discussion was not restricted to the evangelical; Knight's outline of the previous two years' work showed this. ' Books had been collected for the Stockade library, prisoners upon release had been given.-

*'fresh clothing and (sent) ...away, the Barrier being a fine field for them. so that they may have every chance of rising in the world again, instead of ... (continuing) in their old habits.'*

The policy of sending prisoners away from the 'scenes of their fall' was a constant article of P.A.A. belief. The organisation was simple, and remained so. Meetings held approximately quarterly, mainly served to enable the Secretary to report on his work with the men and, with the treasurer, to report briefly on finances. They seldom discussed policy. No attempt was made to acquire premises.

Collection of funds was also simple. First they asked Mr J.H. Angas to head a list of potential subscribers with a donation to start the collection. Earlier Angas had 'volunteered to subscribe funds when needed...'. It became the practice for the secretary and treasurer to visit the Association's subscribers once a year. Despite their visitations, however, at least until 1895. the principle financial support was the totalizer fractions donated by the Racing Clubs. The P.A.A. often said that it needed more money but there is no evidence that the Association was hard pressed to find enough to function. The public of the day contained a significant number of persons who thought not of prisoners as irretrievably lost evil-doers.



# God Helps Those .

The Association was always well received by the Prison authorities. Their early request to hold monthly services was agreed to and willing cooperation extended. In a letter to the Association, written to be read at an A.G.M. and printed in the Register the Sheriff spoke well of the P.A.A. He mentioned that, 'Investigation into each case, extending to other sources than prison records, was made before aid was given. Not only was the Sheriff willing to assist by writing a letter of praise but he added. This department and the superintendent of the Labour Prison will always supply such reliable information as they possess to aid your efforts'. By 1905 cooperation extended even further,

The Superintendent of the Yatala Labour Prison (forwarded) to the secretary each month a list of the men to be discharged, with particulars regarding 'their conduct and the period of the detention...

The Association was composed of reformers. For them it was not a cliché to repeat: 'It's never too late to mend'. Upon that belief their spiritual and physical rehabilitation work was based. Having accepted that their major task was reformation of fallen character they considered how best to achieve it. Their answer was simple: the prisoners must be appealed to, and when released, they must be kept from temptation and their good intentions nurtured by kindly assistance. The assistance was usually designed to help men to help themselves.

Cruse stated their belief in the primacy of spiritual reform:

*'Always bearing in mind that to effect lasting reformation a man's soul must be touched, the association appeals first to the hearts of the men (with truth and song, the two greatest powers in the world) while they are in prison.*

The Monthly Services were designed 'to raise and elevate the men and make them better'. They pursued the reformation of prisoners' souls with unremitting zeal and apparent success. Their services were not restricted to preaching and denouncement of past evil, but looked forward to reform. Overall the members of the Association had faith in the prisoners. Although they did not expect thanks for their work, or success with every prisoner, they carried out their mission with the belief that even the saving of one soul was worthwhile, and the hope of saving more. No man, or at least unhardened criminal, was forever lost and damned. For them it was 'a pleasure to try and uplift our brethren from the stages they have fallen into to a higher sublimer life'. Their methods reflected their optimism and pleasure.

They took with them each first Sunday of the month, some of Adelaide's leading elocutionists and vocalists. To accompany the singing they took an organist and by the end of this period almost an orchestra: a pianist, two violinists, a flautist, a cometist (whose comet, only for use at Services, was bought by the P.A.A.), a clarionettist, and still an organist. These performers had to travel from Adelaide to Yatala in traps each month. Both ladies and gentlemen freely gave their time and services to entertain the men. Every effort was made to render the 'service attractive to some of them who would not give it a thought otherwise'. There was none of the conservative attitude, that if one's standard service was not appealing, then rather persons stay away than the form of devotion be changed.

They made a real effort to attract, to consider the prisoners' tastes, and not to reject or neglect them if they did not care for the traditional solemnities. The policy was an outstanding success. Attendances at their services were far greater than at the other services provided. They attracted men from all denominations, though no one was compelled to attend.

# The Evidence

The Association placed great importance on the church services at Yatala Labour Prison and each year selections from prisoners' letters were read to prove their efficacy.

On this point the following letter from a recently discharged prisoner may be taken as a fair type of others received by the Hon. Secretary from time to time:-

"Dear Sir - As a recently discharged prisoner from the Stockade, I desire to tender to yourself and Society my heartiest thanks for some forty thoroughly enjoyable, encouraging and comforting services. Your monthly visits are most eagerly looked forward to as something not only to enliven, but with the feeling that it is good to be there, and I can say without hesitation that the moral and religious tone of the place is decidedly improved by them, and in many cases the improvement is lasting. Personally, I always feel a better man after each service, and although as yet unable to say that I feel the redeeming influence of the Saviour's love, I have most certainly been led to feel the need of it...."

Unlike this prisoner, some were completely converted. Occasionally, ex-prisoners were present at A.G.M.'s to testify to the good of the services. One declared them to be 'the brightest spots in the prisoners' lives'. Sometimes P.A.A. members would speak of the services and their good effects with tenderness and moving sentiment. If their attitudes were in some ways still harsh and a little puritanical towards the prisoners, none of this showed when they spoke of the response to their services. No description, however, surpassed the following in the Register:

It is not an uncommon occurrence to hear a singer's voice falter and to see a tear glisten as a prisoner, stirred to some tender recollection by the melody, drops his head in his hands. Those who attend are not preached at but the speaker forgets the past and speaks words of comfort for the future. The appreciation of the efforts of the society that exists among the men need not be dwelt upon when it is mentioned that the attendance is almost invariably 80 or 90 per cent.

The attendance quoted was probably slightly exaggerated, but the men's appreciation was not. Not only did the Association provide a service to suit the prisoners, but the attitude of their speakers seemed to be in keeping with the men's emotional tolerances and needs.

The prisoners were not pressed too hard nor asked 'to utter any religious shibboleth to secure for them a fresh start in life'. If their efforts organising attractive monthly services were not enough to prove their desire to meet the prisoners at their own level, and entertain, not just deliver dry conventional sermons, then the special Song Service they conducted each Christmas decided the point.

As usual, a special effort was put forth on Christmas Day to make the service bright and attractive. The Rev. Thomas Lloyd delivered an admirable address, and the Archer Street Sunday School Choir, under the conductorship of Mr. Pash, rendered Christmas carols. The Hon. E. Lucas, M.L.C., gave an appropriate recitation and Mr. J.J. Veale acted as organist...

After each service spiritual and physical reformation mixed. The service over, its organisers did not leave immediately, nor did they reserve Sunday mornings for simple religious or social pleasantries, but proceeded with their efforts towards regeneration. Those of the prisoners who desired to speak privately with the preacher after the service were generally permitted to do so, and if any of them were to complete their sentences during the subsequent month they were seen by the Secretary of the Society with a view to help being extended to them when their freedom was regained.

For the P.A.A. faith without works was certainly dead: spiritual and physical rehabilitation went together. Although they usually commenced their attempts to save the men's souls before they

ministered to their physical wants, they did not hold that the attempt to convert had to come first. Crase noted cases where 'moral regeneration (had) accompanied material success". And they helped discharged prisoners even if they had not shown signs of actual or potential conversion. Having appealed to the prisoners' souls they worked to keep them from temptation. They repeated their reasons for assisting men many times. The following was probably the most comprehensive statement of their attitude towards the material aspects of reformatory work. It brought several recurring ideas and beliefs together:

*The Association's work proceeds upon the knowledge of the melancholy fact that scarcely anyone else in a civilised community occupies a more pathetically helpless position than the man who has legally expiated his offence against society, when that man, often entirely friendless and almost penniless is again turned adrift in the world.*

The effect of prison life is naturally to weaken his power of initiative, and on his release he is subject to special and terribly seductive temptations arising out of his long alienation from social surroundings and his impaired self-restraint. In these circumstances, unless he is taken in a kindly way by the hand and assured that he is not wholly out of touch with his fellow-creatures, his lapse into further trouble is almost inevitable. Just at this critical point in his experiences this association intervenes.

They were understanding, fully and urgently aware of the immensity of the difficulties facing the newly released. They 'intervened' with cheer and assistance, and neither zeal nor dedication diminished. The ex-prisoner was alone and often friendless. He needed their intervention to restore his hope and self-respect, to comfort and advise him, to assist him to find work, and care for his most immediate needs for survival: to save him from temptation. A man unable to find work who returned to the company of his old associates, and frequented the scenes of his former life and fall was very likely to commit another offence, sometimes merely to survive, sometimes through weakness. The Association dedicated itself to preventing this. The scope of their activities showed, by its great diversity, not only their selflessness but also the depth of their understanding of the men's difficulties. In all their efforts. The objects were to minister to the physical wants of the unfortunate men... and at the same time to try to inspire them with higher spiritual ideals'.

In saving men from the temptations imposed by old scenes and old friends the association had always one simple answer: send them away. The best thing to do with discharged prisoners was to send them away from dangers where they were exposed to the witnesses of their downfall. Mr. Crase had endeavoured always to place as great a distance as possible between the men and their temptations.

They believed that the discharged should be kept apart from the city's Criminal kind. They strongly criticised the methods of the Prison-Gate Brigade.

He (Mr. Sowden) was not favourable to the barrack system of the Prison-Gate Brigade of the Salvation Army. They could not expect prisoners herded together after they had left the gaol to be reformed by their own mutual association, any more than they could expect a pint of ink to clarify a gallon of clear water.

# An Old Solution

Unfortunately quantification of the results of their policy was difficult. In 1892 and 1893 the percentage sent away was astounding: 100% and 90% respectively. The period 1889 to 1895 was the high water of voluntary "transportation". As all fares were paid by the Association until mid to late 1894, the policy used a large portion of their funds. They certainly believed in it.

The Association pressed for free passes for ex-prisoners. Among the many men who spoke for free passes was the Rev. J. Day Thompson. His reasoning was idealistic: The Government ought not only to dispense justice, but they should also act kindly as a parent and on the side of love. Motivated by financial considerations, as well as an indignation against the Government that was prompted by a concern for the prisoners, the Association's treasurer spoke on the matter:

The Committee thought that the Government might reasonably be expected to give prisoners when they emerged from the Stockade free passes to carry them back to their homes. (Hear, hear). This, however, was at present refused... The Society certainly objected to prisoners not being granted this privilege, as it simply meant that they would drift into the slums again and filter back to gaol. (Hear, hear).

They approached the Government personally in 1894 and it was 'mentioned with satisfaction' the same year that they were given free passes to the value of twenty five pounds. The passes, however, only carried men to the borders of S.A. As many were sent to other colonies, the P.A.A. still spent a significant portion of its funds on 'transportation'.

In the same year some men were started in small businesses in the city and suburbs. The next year although the bulk of prisoners were still sent away there were more efforts of this kind. Men were 'supplied with the tools of their trade' and placed in businesses or situations, near or in the city.

From then on less were sent away but the practice was still very significant; In 1896 and 1897 probably 30% or more were sent away, thereafter 45 to 50% is a likely, if conservatively low, figure.

The policy changed in another way too. Knight had stated simply in 1890 'we sent them away out of the Colony'. It seems likely that as the number voluntarily 'transported' decreased so too did the proportion going to the other colonies.

Their belief in the efficaciousness of "transportation" did not decline: rather they came to accept and exercise other ideas. They attempted to avoid temptation and give the new start in life by more practical efforts at home. The rapid increase in other assisting activities accompanied the decline in sending away.

Notwithstanding the decline in the proportion of prisoners sent away from nearly all assisted to about half, and the lesser numbers sent outside S.A., the policy remained', coupled with finding men jobs, the Association's most used and significant practical form of assistance.

*...they were sent away to the country, where they could be free from the dangers of city life, or if situations were obtained in the metropolis it was only in places where there was an immunity from temptation. (Hear, hear).*

There was also an overseas aspect of voluntary "transportation". As early as 1890 one man was sent to India. Sending men to their homes overseas was usually accomplished by getting them a 'situation' on a ship, thus enabling them to work their own way. This was nearly always arranged by committeeman, E. Hounslow, who was the Seaman's Missionary at Port Adelaide. To have paid the whole fare would probably have been beyond the Association's means, and would have

too much resemblance demeaning charity: to help a man work his own way was to help him to help himself..

.Late in 1890 the P.A.A.'s attention was focused on two Indians. Re the case of Callow (a hindoo) Mr. Knight reported that Agi the priest went up to see him and it was thought that his sentence was hardly deserved, the Government said that if Agi would send him away out of the country they would let him go, the other Hindoo Adam Khan, his was a bad case. would have nothing to do with him.

Despite the 'badness' of Adam Khan, sentenced for life, he later was seen on board a vessel for India, passage four pounds was paid. Agi and Mr. Knight went bond for him to two hundred pounds each.

(In 1896)...Yep Sue a Chinaman imprisoned for life (was) sent away to China (being released by the Government) on condition that he left the colony for his native place .The Governor Sir Fowell Buxton and P.A.A. each contributed three pounds to his passage .The Association helped men irrespective of race and religious belief. For Christian colonials of English origins to so willingly assist pagan foreign criminals serving major sentences showed the depth of P.A.A. commitment to reform and assistance of prisoners.

To save men from temptations produced by hunger, lack of lodgings and inability to find employment, the Association gave them money, provided meals, shelter, clothes, and sought jobs. Material help ranged from the providing of tents to a set of teeth. Even for prisoners sent away these things were often done. Until they were able to catch the train or embark from Port Adelaide, they were fed and sheltered in the city, and Crase made 'certain so far as he could of the prospects of their employment at their destination'.

# Working Out Your Problems

The search for work for former offenders was a major task of those involved in Prisoners Aid work. Often positions were found on stations, particularly Elders', and at Broken Hill. One suspected that the gentleman for whom the P.A.A. supplied 'American cowboy clothes' was destined either to the former or a circus. Men were equipped with boot-making and carpentering tools. In two notable cases, where the tools were purchased wholesale, the self-help principle was particularly prominent. The men were given the equipment 'on the Hire Agreement system' and were expected to pay for it by instalments. One poor fellow was provided (gratis it seemed) with 'Hammers for stone cracking'. Another was "started as an expert cleaner and presser".

In cases where that course seems to be the best the unfortunate fellows are assisted to start in some small business in the city or the suburbs, and these experiments have in the majority of instances been successful. In the highest sense these men are helped to help themselves, and in this way they develop thrifty habits.

Help was given in various ways. Some were 'started in hawking and trading in a small way with financial help'. One man was given 30 shillings to commence selling drugs. In addition the Association was willing to give freely 'the benefit of its advice'. Others were given small bags of articles to peddle door to door. The troubles to which they went were meticulous and thorough, their intentions kind, and they were careless of their own time. Although these efforts were commendable, in one instance their attempt to stimulate self-help was excessive.

Mrs. Crawford destitute and almost an invalid whose husband left Yatala 9 years ago; the Society helped with a little second hand furniture, potatoes, onions, lollies, scales and weights to sell to earn a small livelihood, the amount costing four pounds.

Wives and families assisted were probably few. This fewness, however, did not indicate lack of sympathy or holding back: the help given was either long-term or comprehensive (as in Mrs. Crawford's case) or both.

A Mrs. Bridges was paid seven shillings and six pence (? nine shillings and six pence) a week (for an unspecified time) until her husband's release. Later they sought work for the eldest son. When one prisoner's wife and family arrived from Ireland they were assisted with stretchers, pillows, mattresses, rugs and blankets, and in addition the wife and daughter were recommended for employment, which they successfully obtained.

The more subtle temptations to return to crime, such as loss of self-respect and self-worth, they also attempted to counter. They treated the men with warmth and kindness, believing that 'the power of kindness had a lot to do with restoring men to the paths of virtue. Offering them the Saviour's word of forgiveness and atonement may also have helped. "Transportation" helped too: it placed men in communities innocent of their pasts, except where their potential and actual employers were told of their records. Even sending away was done with kindness:

They did not give the discharged prisoner the money and send him away. For instance, Mr. Crase, amongst other things went to the station, bought the ticket, and saw that he was properly started on his Journey. That meant a good deal of work. Prisoners were not given a "good riddance" departure by a man eager to clear them from the colony but farewelled with a warm hand-shake and a word of cheery reassurance, by someone genuinely interested in them and hopeful for their welfare and reformation.

They visited the prisoners on week days and got to know them prior to release. Those visits... tended to humanise the men, and show them there were people who took an active interest in them' The Association's first female committee member, Mrs. E.B. Turner, the wife of a Baptist minister, wrote to friendless inmates. According to her report for 1905 she made 46 visits to the friendless and wrote 98 letters.

In 1907 they started arranging monthly lectures. They became a permanent event. The first series was on first-aid. And the secretary eventually became involved in the trickiest of matters:

The secretary had another task added to the different kinds of work, namely to reconcile wives to their husbands - a most delicate operation.

The P.A.A. very seldom pressured for changes in the penal system, or sought the early release of prisoners. However, they occasionally sought the release of imprisoned foreigners. The plights of the Chinaman or Indian moved them and in these cases, freeing the man did not release him upon the Australian colonies. They assisted these men home. At least once they similarly assisted aborigines.

The Society has been very successful in securing the release of the two aborigines sentenced to 10 years who had already served 4 of them for attempt to murder; after giving them blankets have returned back again to Alice Springs from whence they came.

They were though reluctant to assist Europeans. Their reason was pragmatic.

The letter of Michael O'Donnell a prisoner who has been confined to Yatala for 28 1/2 years, asking to assist him to get out of prison, in conjunction with the Government. But it was decided that while we were willing to do what we could for the men after they leave Yatala it was quite out of our province to meddle with the Authorities as we should only lessen our influence with them. For the same reason they refused requests from the Criminological Society and the Penal Reform Association for joint action. Crase was once instructed to reply to the Penal Reform Association -

*we do not consider it advisable to take any part as an Association lest the privilege which we now enjoy should be curtailed. We have however every sympathy with your endeavours to ameliorate the condition of prisoners...*

Several P.A.A. members though, joined the Penal Reform Association.

Despite their general restraint they approached the government about minor matters closely related to their work. Apart from obtaining permission to hold services and later lectures, they lobbied for free passes, a subsidy, and to be given the money due to prisoners upon their release. They complained that prisoners' clothes were neglected, moth-eaten and unwearable by discharge time.

Once they sought a more radical end:

It was... proposed that a deputation wait upon the Government asking that the men be permitted to work so as to save money, either to send to their families or to be saved up for themselves when they are discharged. It remained only a suggestion.

Most of the Association's practical and spiritual actions were enlightened, appropriate and understanding. But some were hard. Nearly all of these were the products of a strong Puritan element in their religious beliefs.

During the first book collection the secretary noted that '500 volumes had been received, 350 were suitable for the prisoners use. and the balance were distributed among the guards, etc.'. From 1889 to mid-1892 ladies sometimes conducted the monthly services. The Sheriff became a little 'timid of the ladies continuing' and held that the Chief Secretary's permission be sought. This was sufficient for the P.A.A. to ask the ladies stop: it 'would likely do harm', 'as some of the men got their passions disturbed'.

The Association was firmly opposed to 'drink'. In 1892 the committee, after carefully investigating the cases during the past 4 years, found that drink is the cause of at least 75 per cent of the downfall of the men. and they cannot but lift their voice against this scourge...

They took three actions, in addition to public protest, to deal with the menace. They asked

prisoners to sign the pledge: an aim still pursued in 1914. They asked the government to grant this Society the power to control the money which they (the prisoners) receive on their discharge, so as to prevent so much waste in drink...The request was agreed to, probably in 1899, provided that the prisoner consented. To the Association's regret, only a few 'availed themselves' of the "service". Lastly they lobbied against the brewers' custom of sending free beer to the Stockade at Christmas. Mrs. Turner, the wife of a Baptist minister, enlisted the aid of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and by 1907 the practice was stopped. To compensate for the loss she organised annually, 'Christmas Cheer', consisting of cakes, fruit, milk and tea. These manifestations of Puritanism were pursued in the belief that the prisoners would benefit. They sprang from the same religious drive that produced the Association's most selfless and dedicated workers.



# Hitting the Wall

There was, however, an area where they tended to take a very hard, yet understandable line. While the Association was full of hope and willing help for first offenders, as a man's number of offences grew some members' attitudes hardened abruptly. This was most noticeable in Theodore Hack and Sowden. Both, especially Hack, were motivated by the desire to reform prisoners. Hack believed that 'most of the prisoners were young men susceptible to good influence' and that 'the first offenders were those who would be mostly benefited' by their aid. The criminals though, 'had been helped more than they should be'. This attitude was probably common amongst those who held a distinction between first and later offenders. Sowden's opinions, if he meant them seriously, were far harder. ... men after their first experience of life in a labour prison were then, and then only, in the plastic stage in which some might be done with them. One criminologist had declared that a man convicted a second time of felony would always thereafter be a felon. (Through repeated offences) ... were involved professional criminals - men who really took a pride in their wretched defiance of the law - and for these, humanly speaking, there was very little hope. Indeed, some French authorities on the treatment of criminals seriously suggested that after a man's third conviction of a grave offence he should be placed in a lethal chamber and unmercifully done to death, for the same reason as that for which snakes are killed - because they are a menace to the community. He was, of course, aware of the beautiful teaching of Tennyson's introductory verse to "In Memoriam" -

*I held in truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in  
divers tones. That men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.*

It seemed, however as if at a certain stage in some men's lives those stones formed an impassable barricade, instead of a means of ascent from bad to good. The necessity of preserving discipline in the prison subjected men to an unceasing clockwork-like precision of action. They must indeed be treated like little children in some respects and like sin-hardened reprobates in others. Upon the prisoners' release .... the public ought to show practical sympathy with the fallen by taking world-wearied men by hand in the time of their great crises - when everything seemed against them - by feeding them if hungry, clothing them if naked, and ministering unto them at all times in a brotherly, practical way; so convincing them that the social system had a place for even them and that the wonderful divine economy which took account of the fall of a sparrow embraced them also in its gracious circle. Some years later Sowden repeated his sympathy for the theory of the Frenchman. There was in Sowden a tension which may at times have found likenesses in others, especially men like Moncrieff. His comments embraced the harshest and warmest P.A.A. sentiments. This oscillation between callousness and compassion indicated that even in the most devoted, prolonged ministering to criminals could result in at least momentary self-doubt, and a savage out-of-character solution to that unrepentant, unreformed, refractoriness that failed to respond to kindness.

# The Record

Throughout this early period the bulk of the Association's work was carried out by secretary Crase. His principal support usually came from the Treasurer. Between one and five other members of the committee commonly helped. The chief activists all gave their labours willingly and honorarily, and as a result the Association was always run with extreme economy. Working expenses were frequently below ten pounds a year. Money was chiefly spent on postage, advertising, meetings, and the hire of traps to take parties to Yatala for Divine Services. Without fail Crase was the hardest worker. To Mr. Crase they were deeply indebted, as on the average he gave two days a week of his time to the work of the succour of prisoners.

He was the epitome of the Association's selfless drive and unremitting zeal: even if he immodestly and continually said so himself. Crase wrote all the minutes and delivered all the annual reports from 1889 until his death in 1922. Self-praise had a consistent part in his publicly delivered reports to A.G.M.'s.

These gentlemen (referring to Hack and himself) have continued with unabated zeal their self-imposed labours in the interests of humanity; and the committee feels that no eulogium which it could pronounce upon them could exaggerate their merits.

Despite the lack of restraint Crase was truthful. Others, among the prisoners, consistently praised him. Crase read to each A.G.M. a selection of pieces from prisoners' letters. This served to prove the good coming from the Association's work.

One attested to Crase's sympathy for prisoners:

*The kind and feeling way in which your worthy Hon. Secretary treats a man at once puts him at ease, and convinces him that he is not alone or uncared for in the world. I would like to specially thank the Secretary for the kind way he put a few extra shillings in my way. Such tenderness and consideration to a man's tender feelings cannot be too highly appreciated.*

Crases regard for men's feelings enabled him to work closely with prisoners. He was the chief agent of the Association's material help. In 1918 the committee met in his absence and in recognition of his 29 years' service and 70th birthday, granted him one hundred pounds honorarium. It was the first money given to him. In 1920 the secretary was awarded an annual fifty two pounds. Crase died shortly after. To attract a new and professional-type charity worker the Association offered two hundred and fifty pounds a year. Others were selfless and kind too. A.B. Moncrieffs selflessness was marked by a self-denying devotion.

He knew nothing more depressing than a visit to the Stockade. If they were working for the thanks they were likely to receive they would be disappointed. If, however, they were working for the good the Society was likely to do they would have their reward. (Hear. hear).

This selflessness, without the slightest prejudice or malice towards criminals, was most strongly expressed by the Treasurer, S.B. Hunt. Referring to Lord Kitchener he said that

He believed God cared more for the man who had conquered himself than for a man who was chief of an army. He was glad the association had done something for a man like that. (Cheers). Despite occasional harshness, the Association's attitudes and actions were dominated by humanitarian sympathy.

The mission of these religious men was carried on without sectarian bias. This in part accounted for their success. The committee claimed that they had reformed a significant number of men. Estimates were many and varied. Sowden was conservative, saying that in its first twelve years 20 or 30 men had been 'reclaimed'. Others claimed more successes, but gave no figures.

Numerous letters from prisoners and public backed the members' claims that they were performing a worthwhile service. They frequently claimed that re-conviction, especially of first-offenders, "was diminished by their work. Prisoners attested to this, to the good done by the Divine Services and to the kindness of the Association's officers.

There is no place in Australia where so much is done to help a discharge prisoner as is done in South Australia. In Adelaide there is a society which is, without a doubt, the finest of its kind in the world. I refer to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society. In Victoria and New South Wales they have Prisoners' Aid Societies which are run by paid officers and do very little (if any) good to anyone except the paid secretaries. The Adelaide society is managed and all the work carried out by ladies and gentlemen who do not receive one penny for their work. but who do it all for the love of their fallen fellow man.

The Association was always one of those few societies whose members were unceasingly active, whose time spent in charitable work probably exceeded the time spent talking about it. They were always ready to assist. Perhaps their reliability was their greatest strength and achievement:

*'... it is a grand thing to feel that if ever I should want real sound help I have friends in your society who would help me along in life.'*