

## **Mrs Lieutenant-Colonel Dinah Bray**

When first she stood on Australian soil Dinah Hayes was a newly commissioned Lieutenant only a couple of weeks past her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday – she spent the rest of her life serving God in The Salvation Army. Her unfaltering happy disposition and fine singing voice earned her the sobriquet of *Happy Dinah*.

Lieutenant Hayes and her fellow pioneer officers from the UK arrived at Adelaide in November 1883 and soon had great successes along the Yorke Peninsula establishing corps at such towns as Port Pirie, Wallaroo, Moonta and the Moonta Mines.

By the end of 1883 these pioneer officers had been so successful in South Australia and Victoria that Staff-Captain and Mrs Gibbs with eight other officers including Lieutenant Hayes, were sent to Tasmania.

Intent on providing a way out for women trapped in undesirable lifestyles, Mrs Staff-Captain Gibbs and Lieutenant Hayes established the Army's first Women's Rescue Home in Launceston in December 1883.

By the end of 1884 several Tasmanian Corps had been established and Dinah was transferred to Melbourne where she assisted in the opening of new centres and the consolidation of the Army's Colonial operations.

In 1886 Dinah married Captain James Bray and for the next two years the Bray's had several Corps appointments in Melbourne until they were appointed to manage the Prison-Gate Home in Ballarat. The move into full-time Social Work would see the Dinah contributing significantly in the establishment of homes and the development of the Army's Social Service Departments.

In 1893 Ensign James and Dinah Bray were appointed to a small farm property near Heidelberg. It was a time of great social change in the way Governments dealt with children previously committed to reformatories, abolishing such institutions in favour of privately run homes. The Salvation Army promptly became the major provider of care and the Heidelberg farm was the first children's home in the Army world, and was immediately followed by a similar establishment for girls.

Then for six years Major James and Dinah Bray managed the Bayswater children's farm, where Dinah took charge of day to day operations of the boys' care and the overseeing of female staff. She supported her husband in his work, as was the customary duty of women Officers at the time. And more than ever, she excelled in her efforts to positively effect the real-life outcome for those in her charge working laboriously to secure for them a happy existence, attending to both their physical and spiritual welfare.

In 1905 Dinah's life took a dramatic turn when James was elevated to Brigadier and appointed a succession of staff roles within the Army's Social Department. At age forty, Dinah found herself without a Salvation Army appointment other than that of Mrs Brigadier James Bray. For Dinah, her hands-on career might well have been severely curtailed if not for her unquestioning belief in God's will, her commitment to serve and a genuine love of others.

Whilst the official duties of the Brigadier's wife were limited, Dinah did not surrender to a life of leisure. She diligently worked where she felt led.

In 1908 James and Dinah were appointed to New Zealand, where they remained for seventeen years until retirement. Dinah worked in an unofficial capacity amongst the soldiers of the Wellington Corps and supported the Corps' Officers in their work. She took a special interest in the youth earning her respect beyond the confines of the local corps community. Her love of, and belief in the potential of children, also saw her deeply involved in the interests of the young girls residing at the Florence Booth Girls' Home.

The Brays retired early because of James' failing health at the age of sixty, and returned to Australia.

*Happy Dinah* achieved many things in her lifetime, contributing significantly to the development of the Salvation Army in Australia and New Zealand. It is fair to say that her simple faith and will to do good, resulted in the success of many colonial pioneering ventures, encouraging flexibility in government approaches to social problems that previously attracted a criminal classification. Yet through it all, Dinah never sought glory or recognition for herself but was motivated by her belief in God and worked to bring joy and comfort to as many people as her years on earth allowed.