



## **The History of The Howard League for Penal Reform, 1866-1948** **ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship**

### **University of Leicester and the Howard League for Penal Reform**

#### **Full details of the academic content of the studentship - The History of The Howard League for Penal Reform, 1866-1948**

##### ***The project:***

The project aims to produce the first academic history of the work of the Howard League (est. 1866), including the National Association for the Abolition of Capital Punishment (est. 1923, and merged with the League in 1948). The project's overriding objective is to enable the Howard League to understand itself as an organisation, by researching aspects of the relationship between its campaign work, the larger economic and social context, and actual penal reform, at historically specified moments in the past.

The overall aims of the studentship are to: (1) produce innovative academic knowledge about the history of Howard League campaigning, framed within the larger economic and social histories of Britain, including of poverty, welfare, gender, childhood and adolescence, and of penal reform; (2) create new historical resources for the use of The Howard League and its members, showing the relevance of historical analysis for today's penal debates; (3) engage in knowledge exchange activities that will enhance public understanding of the historicity of penal reform.

##### ***Research Questions:***

Main question: How and why has The Howard League campaigned for penal reform?

Sub-questions include:

- What underpinned the relative success or failure of The League's work? How did its activities relate to the wider economic and social context?
- How, why and with what effect did The League work with parliamentary select committees, and with Home, Colonial and Foreign Office officials?
- How did campaigns about penal reform, the abolition of capital punishment, the treatment of women and juvenile prisoners, and prisoner discharge and support change over time?
- Why were so many women involved in penal reform, and what specific roles did they play?
- In what ways was The League related to other social reform campaigns, e.g. by Quakers, or concerning prisoners of war and refugees?
- What was the nature and impact of The League's international work and advocacy?
- Was The League part of a global movement for penal reform? What were the points of convergence and divergence between The League, the associations of other countries and colonies, and international organisations, e.g. the League of Nations (est. 1910) and International Labour Organisation (est. 1919)?

**Methodology:**

The student will begin with **(1)** a comparative empirical and theoretical literature review, drawn from criminal justice history, penology and the history of gender, youth, poverty and welfare. **(2)** They will use this multi-disciplinary foundation to map the changing economic and social history context, and the history of penal change and reform, from the mid-1800s on. This work will be both quantitative and qualitative - to capture the scale, scope and character of the changing conditions that determined transformations in punishment, as well as the changing nature of incarceration, execution and other forms of punishment. **(3)** Through this work, the student will identify their precise interests – their theoretical framework and research questions - within identifiable historiographical gaps for the period after 1866. **(4)** The student will then begin work on contemporary published literature (e.g. in the British Library, online e.g. at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)), triangulating analysis against targeted parts of The Howard League and National Association for the Abolition of Capital Punishment papers held at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick. **(5)** The student will then move on to work in the same way, on other relevant collections at the Modern Records Centre - including for example the Radical Alternatives to Prison Campaign documents (1972-). **(6)** Finally, s/he will next research other contemporary sources that complement the material collected in stages (4) and (5), including parliamentary papers (online); and Home Office office papers (The National Archives, Kew).

There is an extraordinarily wide diversity of sources on The Howard League, and this will allow the student considerable flexibility to develop their methodological skills and interests. A key and distinct feature of the papers is their international scope, including holdings on India, Australia, Europe, Japan, Latin America and the USA, as well as its relations with the League of Nations and International Labour Organisation.

**Partnership activities and outcomes:**

The student will author/ organize:

- (1) two public-facing articles.
- (2) a series of six research briefings/ summaries (4-6 pages of A4 each), which draw out lessons and key ideas showing the relevance of historical analysis of the League's past campaigns and methods on today's penal debates (some of these will form the basis of an online exhibition via [www.omeka.net](http://www.omeka.net)).
- (3) an academic/ practitioner workshop.
- (4) a 'Festival of Social Sciences' schools event.
- (5) contributions to the Howard League's blog.