

An Adelaide Gaol Resident

James Patrick Hodge

Greatest number of convictions at Adelaide Gaol!

There is some discussion as to who is the record holder for the number of convictions resulting in a stay in Adelaide Gaol. Many believe that James Patrick Hodge is the record holder. He was born in 1910 and amassed over 400 convictions.

Hodge developed drinking habits from an early age and progressed into alcoholism which shaped his life until his death in 1971. Most of his earlier convictions were for drunkenness or begging. Begging for money in front of the police station in Angas Street earned him three months in 1932 and then shortly after his release The Advertiser reported:

“Crowd Of 500 Follows Man Alleged to have been turning somersaults in the Adelaide Arcade. About 2.30 p.m. yesterday a man was followed along James Place to North Terrace by a crowd of about 500 persons.

When arrested by Constable Beaty the man was standing on the back of a car talking to the crowd. When the patrol van arrived the man said. "Clear the way." and crouching down like an athlete about to start in a race, took a running jump into the van.

At the City Watchouse James Patrick Hodge (22) was charged with drunkenness, and with having used indecent language in a public place. He will appear the Adelaide Police Court today”

Hodge was usually described as a labourer or hairdresser during his numerous court appearances.

In 1935 he was arrested for being drunk and placed in the cells at Payenham Police Station. He managed to escape by damaging the padlock securing the door but was soon picked up and fined £3 plus £1 costs (including 5/- to replace the padlock), given 14 days for being drunk and 2 months for being convicted three times in a year.

In 1936 he recorded his 100th conviction when drunk in Hindmarsh Square. He was given six weeks.

In 1937 he turned up in Melbourne where he took part in the theft of two motor vehicles. That enterprise earned him 3 months.

Back in South Australia and after a couple more convictions for drunkenness and indecent language he was arrested for begging in 1940. At his appearance before the magistrate he said, “I promise you faithfully, your worship that if you give me another chance I will never enter this court again. I will join up with the military straight away.” The magistrate promptly replied, “It does not follow that you will be accepted! You are sentenced to 28 days.”

In 1942, after several more convictions, Hodge and a co-conspirator stole a wireless set from a car in Grote Street. Unfortunately for the pair the owner, a boxing promoter, caught them in the act, and being a heavily built man he dispensed his own brand of justice while performing a citizens arrest. In spite

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of black eyes they were both given 3 months to reflect on the crime.

Early in 1945 Hodge was given 2 months for stealing 4/- worth of wine from Hardy's Winery. He said that he broke in to get a New Year's drink for some of his pals, but it was so long since he had tasted any decent wine that he drank too much and it dropped him in his tracks. When police turned up they found Hodge lying on his back asleep and snoring loudly. The liquid he consumed was a wine sediment of around 90 percent proof spirit, which was used to make power alcohol!

In early 1946 Hodge gave his address as Kuitpo Colony where he was trying to break his addiction to alcohol but his efforts were unsuccessful.

On 8 March 1946 he was convicted of assaulting a police officer and using indecent language in Hindley Street resulting in a sentence of two months and two weeks.

As time went on Hodge became violent and he had several convictions for assault including heavily punching a German man in 1950. Hodge defended his actions by saying that his brother had fought in the war and he was 'squaring up for him'.

In 1952 he received two months for assaulting a 77 year old man who refused his request for money.

Between other convictions for theft and indecent language he received six months in 1953 when he assaulted Brigadier Linsell, officer in charge of the Salvation Army Men's Home in Whitmore Square. In his defence Hodge told the court that he punched Brigadier Linsell in the face after being refused a bed at the Men's Home.

Because of his lifestyle Hodge was very well known to staff at Adelaide Gaol and his alcohol abuse and convictions continued until his death and burial in West Terrace Cemetery in 1971.

The Salvation Army Aged Care Home at Angle Park is named Linsell Lodge in honour of the Brigadier."

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