

Chapter 3

Fishing for Souls

1800–1856

Many nineteenth-century men and women from various Christian traditions were dedicated to providing spiritual and social welfare for fishermen and their families. Some were individual clergy who held a specific concern for their fisherfolk parishioners, others were laymen and women. The initiative for such work, however, was generated by the Bethel movement, which was concerned primarily with making converts and tended to be the preserve of evangelical individuals and groups. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Church of England was experiencing a difficult period, with many claiming it would not survive. By contrast, the Evangelicals, in the form of the New Dissent, composed mainly of Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists, were undergoing a period of revival.

3.1. Nonconformist Missions

The Bethel Movement

The impetus for the Bethel movement arose at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when large numbers of seafarers, including 90 per cent of the naval officers, found themselves unemployed.¹ This religious revival began on the Thames during the summer of 1814 under the influence of several Methodists: a young shoemaker, Zebedee Rogers, Captain David Simpson, of the brig *Friendship*, and Samuel Jennings, a local timber merchant who encouraged Rogers in his ship-visiting and helped finance the work. Others soon joined the group and by 1816 ships on the Thames were being regularly visited. Prayer meetings were held on the vessels and there was a shore-based Seamen's Mission in Samuel Jennings' grounds. This work was, as Roald Kverndal has pointed out, 'the first organised, ongoing programme of preaching known to have been established specifically for sailors'.² The revival along the Thames continued throughout 1816, the numbers of men

1. Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.131.

2. *Ibid.*, p.156.

attending the meetings grew and it became necessary to use some form of signal during the winter evenings to identify the vessel on which meetings would take place. This signal was initially a lantern hoisted to the topgallant masthead or placed high in the rigging but, with the approach of lighter evenings, it was inappropriate. Zebedee Rogers and his friends discussed the situation and decided upon the use of a flag. Captain Wilkins collected some blue material and Peter Hunt, a sailor, cut out the letters B E T H E L



Hoisting the Bethel flag.

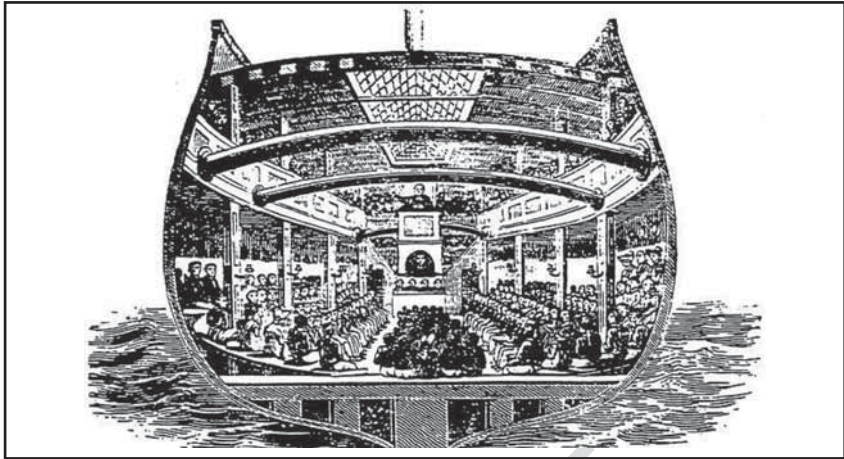
in white, Rogers' sister did the sewing and, on 23 March 1817, the flag was hoisted on the collier brig, *Zephyr*.¹ Other similar flags were later made including some with a dove and star added.

In 1818 the Bethel movement took on a more formal appearance with the establishment of the Nonconformist Port of London Society (PLS). The PLS opened a floating chapel (the *Ark*) on the Thames on 27 November 1818 and it quickly became a popular venue for visiting seafarers. The subsequent history of the Bethel movement, however, was one of infighting and the formation and demise of numerous groups and organisations within it. The eventual establishment of two national Nonconformist seafarers' missions, the British and Foreign Sailors' Society in 1833 and the Seamen's Christian Friend Society (SCFS) in 1846 (both arising out of the earlier work of the Bethel movement), was followed by a period of consolidation during which many of the provincial societies were drawn under their wings. There were, however, some notable exceptions, such as the Port of Hull Society (PHS) and the Bristol Channel Mission (BCM), which retained their independence.

Early Nineteenth-Century Missions to Fishermen

During the first half of the nineteenth century fishermen were not seen as a distinct group for evangelisation but were subsumed under a general concern for seafarers. Even so, missionaries were active in fishing communities, amongst inshore fishermen and those who worked on British lakes and rivers. Indeed, the Rev. G.C. Smith regularly preached to fishermen in Grimsby, Hull and other ports during the 1820s, and his

1. Pike, *op.cit.* (1897), pp.36-7.



*Interior view of the Thames Floating Chapel, the Ark,
which was moored at London Docks in May 1818.*

journals, the *Sailors' Magazine and Naval Miscellany* (1820–1827) and the *New Sailors' Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (1827–), contain numerous articles referring to this work.

'Whale fishery'¹ was also the subject of Christian missions, and Bethel flags were hoisted on board whaling ships to invite crew members to Sunday services. The Port of Hull Society cared for the whaling crews in Hull; and the Zetland, Davis Strait, Greenland Fishery, and Marine Bible Society (established at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands on 23 March 1818) looked after whaling crews and fishermen who visited the Islands.² Some of the captains of whaling ships kept Sunday as a day of rest and provided religious services for their men, and there is a record of a Captain Manger writing to Captain Francis Reynolds (of the Port of Hull Society) providing details of a religious service near Baffin Island.³

Fishermen, however, do not appear to have immediately taken to using the Bethel flag on their vessels, as Smith lamented:

It is to be hoped that we may soon hear of Bethel Flags being hoisted in fishing vessels: their crews now, I am sorry to say, too often land on the coast, to spend the Lord's Day in drinking and quarrelling.⁴

1. Whales are not fish but mammals. The term 'whale fishery', however, is commonly used in the literature on the subject of maritime mission.

2. *The Sailors' Magazine* (London), 1820, pp.305-8; Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.147, says this society was formed in conjunction with the *Edinburgh Bible Society*.

3. Jennifer C. Rowley, *The Hull Whale Fishery* (Lockington Publishing Co, 1982), p.22.

4. *The Sailors Magazine* (London), 1821, p.303.

Yet earlier that same year (1821) he had referred to the establishment of a Sailors' Children's Bethel Union at the fishing port of Newlyn with one of its aims being, 'that a Bethel Flag be obtained for this place, to hoist on board of vessels occasionally lying here'. Smith also credited the Methodists with having preached to the Newlyn fishermen well before the advent of the Bethel Movement.¹

In the summer edition of the *Sailors' Magazine* for 1820, we read of a concern for Sabbath observance amongst North Sea fishermen:

Captain J.B. commanded a fishing-smack which was in the habit of fishing on the Dogger Bank, in the North Sea off the coast of Holland, (and noted for the multitude and excellent quality of its fish). As a servant of the Most High God, he considered himself bound to obey his commandments, especially that solemn injunction, 'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy' – he had been accustomed also to value the Sabbath-day as a day of rest.²

There was also Christian work among Irish and Scottish fishermen, especially those who visited the Thames, and Smith published an address specifically for fishermen in February 1821, commenting that: 'The coast is thickly peopled, and almost every port, and cove, and creek, has inhabitants whose sole employ is to bring the produce of the sea and rivers to land.'³ In the spring of 1821 a Bethel Union was formed at Barking, where 600-700 men and boys were employed in fishing. Other coastal fishing ports soon followed in establishing similar societies, including Great Yarmouth, Margate and Plymouth, as well as ports in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and the Shetland Islands. The Plymouth Bethel Union had a particularly thriving contingent of fishermen whose influence reached along the west coast, where other Bethel unions were soon established in fishing towns such as Brixham and Dartmouth.⁴

Given the nature of this missionary work, it is not surprising that later reports of the Naval and Military Bible Society (founded in 1779) explicitly included fishermen as one of the seafaring categories to which it ministered.⁵ Nevertheless, fishermen were not ministered to in any systematic way and in 1827 the Prayer Book and Homily Society lamented that fishermen as a

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 161.

2. *The Sailors' Magazine* (London), 1820, p.190.

3. *Ibid.*, pp.226, 396; *The Sailors' Magazine* (London), 1821, p.70.

4. *The Sailors' Magazine* (London), 1820, pp.305-8; 1821, pp.321, 323, 489, 492; 1822, pp.10-17. See also Kennerley, *op. cit.* (1989), pp.70ff.

5. Report of the Proceedings of the Naval and Military Bible Society, 1826, p.8ff.: 'Laws and Regulations' (quoted in Miller, *op. cit.* (1989), p.48).

group had been neglected and river fishermen completely ignored.¹ There were, however, some organisations, such as the Port of Hull Society, which put a high priority on caring for fisherfolk.

The Port of Hull Society

As with many such societies, the roots of the Port of Hull Society were laid many years preceding its official establishment in 1821. It is quite likely, for example, that the Rev. G.C. Smith visited the port prior to 1821 and urged the local churches to begin a society and to establish a ‘floating chapel’. He was certainly known well enough to the founders for them to invite him to attend the first anniversary meeting on 17 October 1822. There were also good links with Smith’s Bethel Union, which provided occasional preachers such as the Rev. W.H. Angas.² What is known is that one important development was the establishment of the Hull Marine Bible Association, formally instituted on 13 February 1817 at a meeting with 700-800 seafarers. A prominent part was played by Captain Francis Reynolds, a Hull merchant seafarer, who acted as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) dispersing tracts and scriptures wherever he travelled in the world (which he was doing as early as 1810).³ He wrote to the society on 24 June 1813, saying that his crew had formed a Marine Bible Association – the first of its kind.⁴ We are informed by Sir James Reckitt that whaling crews were eager to attend Sunday services prior to the commencement of the whaling season in the spring, and there were also opportunities for crews of the whaling ships to attend services at sea on board vessels which carried a Bethel flag, with as many as 500-600 men attending.⁵ The Hull Marine Bible Association and the Hull Religious Tract Society both appear to have given whole-hearted support to the new society, and provided scriptures and tracts at reduced prices. We are not told what event precipitated the move by several clergymen and Captain Reynolds to set up a local society on a more formal basis, although it was clearly influenced by the Port of London Society and its floating *Ark*. The group met initially in 1820 in a small chapel vestry to consider what could be done for the Hull seafarers.⁶ This meeting was followed by a public meeting in St Mary’s Boys’ School, Salthouse Lane, on 19 April 1821, when ‘The Port of Hull Society for the Religious Instruction of Seamen’ was formally instituted. William Rust, a local gold and silversmith, and

1. *The Missionary Register*, 1827, p.236.

2. *Chart and Compass*, 1897, pp.20, 367.

3. Port of Hull Society, Fourth Annual Report, 1825, p.43.

4. British and Foreign Bible Society, Home Correspondence.

5. Sir J. Reckitt, *Lifeboat and Anchor* (Port of Hull Society & Sailors’ Orphans’ Home, 1907), p.9; PHS, First Annual Report, 1822, pp.15, 17-18.

6. *Ibid.*, p.15; 1866, p.24.

Congregationalist, was elected chairman, and he was supported by an Anglican layman, William H. Dikes (a local shipbuilder and manager of the Yorkshire District Bank) as treasurer and Captain Francis Reynolds (recently retired) as one of three 'gratuitous secretaries'. They were supported by a committee of twelve local clergy and twenty laymen. The constitution followed the already established form of the Port of London Society¹ and among the resolutions passed at the first meeting was the following: 'This meeting considers it highly desirable that in order to induce *Seamen* to attend to the preaching of the Gospel a *Ship* should be purchased and fitted up especially for their accommodation in public worship.'²

The society was to be interdenominational and services were held on board ships and in a local sail loft. Enquiries were made about the possibility of obtaining a vessel which would be suitable as a floating chapel, and during the first year funds were received from many notable people including the Rt Hon. William Wilberforce and Captain William Scoresby.³ Captain Scoresby had been an ardent supporter of the Naval and Military Bible Society since 1794 and had given fifty guineas in 1816 to support the foundation of the Whitby Marine Bible Society. In May 1827, he was appointed Britain's first full-time Anglican seamen's chaplain with the Liverpool Mariners' Floating Church.⁴

An old merchant vessel, the *Valiant*, was obtained and fitted out with a chapel to hold 550-650 people⁵ and was officially opened on 3 October 1821, when the Rev. Dr Raffles of Liverpool preached the first sermon on board. The services were popular, with 200-300 people present at each meeting, but despite this popularity it was not until 1834 that a missionary, the Rev. H. Spencer, was appointed as chaplain. Apart from arranging services on board the *Valiant*, he was responsible for visiting vessels in the harbour, talking to the seafarers in the port, preaching in the open air and caring for all the practical needs of seafarers.⁶ The *Valiant* served as a floating chapel until 1849 when its work was taken over by a Sailors'

1. *Ibid.*, p.4; Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.229.

2. *Ibid.*, p.11.

3. Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.146.

4. *Ibid.*, pp.287-8.

5. C. Mitchell, *The Long Watch* (Sailors' Children's Society, 1961), p.17; PHS Annual Report, 1822, pp.12, 22. The *Valiant* had begun life as a Dutch merchantman named *Cornelius and Maria*, but was captured in the Channel in 1803. After repairs and a refit, she was commissioned into the English mercantile marine and renamed the *Valiant*. In 1814 she was purchased by Thompson's of Hull who sold her to the Port of Hull Society in 1821. Alterations and adaptations cost £457.6s.8d – of which £89.11s.4d was recouped from the sale of old materials.

6. Reckitt, *op.cit.* (1907); Mitchell, *op.cit.* (1961), p.23.

Institute and Chapel, which had opened in Waterhouse Lane in 1842. In the meantime, a library had been established for the use of seafarers and fishermen, an orphanage was opened for the children of seafarers and a marine school proved to be popular.

The society retained its independence and branched out in new directions. Although a certain basic education was necessary for seafarers to rise in the profession, there was little in the way of formal assessment. It was November 1850 before captains and mates in the merchant service were required



The Valiant floating chapel of the Port of Hull Society.

to hold certificates, although skippers and second hands on fishing vessels were not included in this process until 1880,¹ thus the Port of Hull Society's establishment of the marine school met an obvious need. The PHS had been established for seafarers in general but, with the rapid development of the fishing industry along the Yorkshire coast during the 1840s, a Coast Mission was inaugurated to co-ordinate the work of the various local missions. This aspect of the work had its genesis in 1832 when the society held a meeting at Grimsby with a view to establishing a mission in that port. The work expanded and

a second missionary, Mr J. Welch, 'a converted sailor', was appointed in 1843, and auxiliary groups were formed in the coastal towns and villages. By 1845 the Committee of the Port of Hull Society was able to report that the mission was active from the Humber to the Tees, with societies running in many of the smaller ports along the coast. Other missionaries were appointed to oversee the growing amount of work and by 1853 five men were employed in this task. On the eve of the international religious revival of 1858–61 a Mr Sharah was appointed as a missionary to the society and proved to be such a dynamic employee that, when he died in 1898, the society was established on a secure basis, working with fishermen and other seafarers all along the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire coasts, and provided a thriving orphanage for seafarers' children.

1. W. Mawer, *Adventures in Sympathy* (A. Brown & Sons, 1935), p.5.

The Methodists' Fishermen's Missions

The Methodists had been among the first religious groups to establish a formal response to the spiritual and practical needs of seafarers, although it was not until 1843 that the Wesleyan Seamen's Mission was founded with its base at St George's Church, Cable Street, London. (It moved to the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest in 1902.) The work involved not only meeting with seafarers on the docks, but visiting families at home, tackling issues of social reform and caring for the sick and dying. Fishermen on their smacks at Billingsgate were also regularly visited.¹ The Wesleyan Seamen's Mission was also memorable in its appointment of the first Sailors' Bible Woman whose job was to converse with seafarers on their arrival in port, where she supplied them with details of the respectable boarding houses, provided them with literature and invited them to attend the Seamen's Chapel.



A Wesleyan 'Sailors' Bible Woman' c.1850.

The Primitive Methodists, an offshoot of the Wesleyans, had also been active, especially among fishing communities along the Cornish and Yorkshire coasts. They made a huge impact on a number of smaller communities, such as the Yorkshire town of Filey where they were responsible for a revival in 1823 with long-lasting effect on the community.

1. Wesleyan Seamen's Mission Quarterly Paper, September 1878, p.1.

Community members regularly referred to this event, and the town embraced Sabbatarianism in the 1830s. A play was recently written and produced by local people to commemorate these events.

3.2. Church of England Missions

With the growth and influence of the Port of Hull Society, the Church of England took an interest in being represented in the missionary work with seafarers in Hull. In 1828, a former independent chapel on Princes Dockside was borrowed and the Rev. John Robinson appointed minister. Later, in 1834, the Hull Mariners' Church was erected by voluntary subscription. Another group, the Sailors' Rest Society came into being in 1841 on the site of the independent chapel, and in 1873 developed links with the Missions to Seamen in London. A Seamen's Mission Hall was built in Posterngate in 1886, and in 1899 the Hull Mariners' Church Society amalgamated with the Sailors' Rest Society under the title of the Hull Mariners' Church and Sailors' Rest Society, in connexion with the Missions to Seamen. The PHS, however, remained independent, changing its name in 1917 to the Port of Hull Society's Sailors' Orphan Homes, then to the Sailors' Children's Society (SCS) in 1951, and more recently to the Sailors' Families' Society.

The Episcopal Floating Church Society

While the benevolent societies were gathering momentum in the early years of the nineteenth century, others saw the need for more innovative forms of religious contact with seafarers. The lack of welcome for seafarers in churches led to proposals for the use of modified old hulks as seamen's churches. The hulks had become redundant following the end of the Anglo-French wars and many were converted for use as training ships, prison hulks and floating hospitals – these latter being useful when epidemics of highly infectious diseases such as cholera and typhoid broke out. In 1818 the Nonconformists made their case to the Admiralty for the use of some hulks as floating churches and thus the first, the *Ark*, was established on the Thames. Leaders of the Church of England were informed of this development, in the hope that they might provide clergy and services for Anglican seafarers, but, although the Nonconformist initiative was supported by individual evangelical clergymen, the Church of England could not officially cooperate in sharing public worship with Dissenters. Kverndal has commented on this situation: 'This initiative [for a floating chapel], originating with a Dissenter, is significant as the

first in a long series of requests from different quarters through the years for more direct Church of England involvement in seamen's mission activity.¹

Encouraged by recent developments in Bristol, Dublin and Liverpool,² and concerned about the influence of Dissenters, the Episcopal Floating Church Society was inaugurated in London on 20 July 1825. The Lord Mayor of London chaired the meeting, several members of the peerage gave their support, and a chaplain was appointed with pastoral responsibility for seafarers on the Thames between London Bridge and the Pool.³ Resolutions passed included an acknowledgement that the Church had been failing seafarers. The EFCS looked forward to having its own floating church in due course and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prime Minister and the Bishop of London gave their support in 1827. The Admiralty allocated HMS *Brazen* in February 1828 to be refitted as a floating church, and the Rev. G.C. Smith was invited, along with Captains George Cornish Gambier and Robert James Elliot, to examine and advise on the vessel's suitability. After its refit, it was towed up the Thames and moored in the Lower Pool at Rotherhithe opposite the Nonconformist *Ark*. Unfortunately, further delays followed and it was not opened for services until Good Friday, 1829. The delay in getting the vessel ready has confused numerous writers: M. Walrond, for example, said the floating church was opened in 1826; and Anson concurs in *The Sea Apostleship in the Port of London*, saying that, 'the first service took place on Good Friday, 1826'.⁴

The relationship between Anglicans and Nonconformists began well, not least because of the involvement of several of Smith's friends and supporters on the committee of the EFCS. However, despite the initial cooperation, Smith's relationship with his colleagues deteriorated in 1831 when Captain Elliot, apparently supported by Captain Gambier, invited the Bishop of London to become patron of the Sailors' Home which was being built in Well Street (now called Ensign Street). The Bishop agreed, on condition that the chaplain would be an Anglican and the chapel consecrated by the Church of England. This development alienated Smith (a Baptist minister) as he feared that Dissenting clergy would be excluded. Nevertheless, the situation eventually enabled the EFCS and the Sailors'

1. Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.182.

2. Report of the Proceedings of the Port of Dublin Society for the Religious Instruction of Seamen, 1824; Howley Papers (Lambeth Palace), p.213; Kverndal, *op. cit.* (1986), p.288.

3. *Ibid.*, p.186.

4. *New Sailors' Magazine (London)*, 1828, p.433. M.L. Walrond, *Launching Out Into the Deep* (London: SPCK, 1904), p.xiii; Kverndal, *op. cit.*, p.293; Anson concurs in his *The Sea Apostleship in the Port of London*, 1991, p.20.

Home to amalgamate in the early 1840s. Close links were also forged with: the Destitute Sailors' Asylum, opened in 1827; St Paul's Church for Seamen, built in Dock Street in 1847;¹ and the Thames Church Mission, founded in 1844. The Sailors' Home and the Destitute Sailors' Asylum not only shared the same premises but were run by the same group of people: the Marquis of Cholmondeley, Capt. Jonathan Chapman, Joseph Meade, Capt. W.E. Farrer and the Hon. William Waldegrave; with Captain Elliott and the Rev. G.C. Smith as employees. The various Anglican societies also employed the same chaplain, each agreeing to share responsibility for his salary – prompting Alston Kennerley to suggest that these societies were now in essence a unified Anglican Mission in the Port of London.

Although the Anglican floating church was popular at first, interest quickly waned. Financial problems and some acrimony amongst members of the EFCS committee added to the difficulties and, as the situation deteriorated, so did the vessel, which sank in 1832. Nevertheless, it was repaired and two years later towed to a new site at the Admiralty Pier by the Tower where it remained until 1845. By this time, however, it had ceased to perform any church function and was finally abandoned in 1847.²

The Bristol Channel Mission

Despite the location of a floating church in Bristol during the early 1820s, there was a significant floating population that never saw a church visitor. This came to the attention of the Rev. Dr John Ashley in 1835, when he noted the serious lack of church involvement among the fishermen working in the Bristol Channel, and he began visiting fishermen on the islands and at sea. He appears initially to have received little practical support from existing Anglican societies and sought the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1837. Ashley was encouraged to establish the Bristol Channel Mission as an independent local society, which he did in the spring of 1839, three and a half years after his first visit to fisherfolk on the island of Steep Holm. A sailing church, the *Eirene*, was obtained in 1839, although following some delays in work on the vessel, initial visits to the Bristol Channel ports did not occur until the autumn of 1840. Dr Ashley then set out in the spring of 1841 to hold services and visit the fishing fleets.³

1. Kennerley, *op. cit.* (1989), p.63.

2. *New Sailors Magazine (London)*, 1832, p.360.

3. Report of the Bristol Channel Mission, 1842, pp.15,20. Kverndal says the vessel was built in 1841, and Kennerley (*op. cit.* (1989), p.65) says Ashley visited churches in South Wales, Devon and Somerset during 1841 to raise funds to build the vessel. This date, however, is disputable as Ashley himself says he was doing

In 1845, the society's name changed to the Bristol Channel Seamen's Mission (BCSM) and, although Dr Ashley continued visiting for another five years – mainly self-supported – ill-health and the reduction of his personal income eventually forced him to retire. Over a period of fifteen years he visited 14,000 ships, sold 5,000 Bibles and prayer books, and provided countless services in the *Eirene*.¹ Five years of uncertainty and growing debts followed. The work, however, was taken up again in 1855 and reorganised as the Bristol Missions to Seamen (BMS) under the direction of the Rev. Thomas Cave Childs. Protracted discussions followed and the BMS eventually merged with the Missions to Seamen in 1858.

The Thames Church Mission

While Dr Ashley's work was progressing, other events were taking place in London. Several gentlemen who had been involved with the EFCS were saddened at its diminished effectiveness,² and a visit was arranged in 1844 to view the work of the Bristol Channel Mission. Impressed with what they saw they determined to form a society for the Thames based on similar principles, and the Thames Church Mission was inaugurated in London on 23 February 1844, with an office at the Seamen's Hospital, King William Street. The new society grew Phoenix-like from the ashes of the EFCS, with its jurisdiction being the Thames from the Pool of London to Gravesend, but modified along the lines of the Bristol Channel Mission.

The later Reports of the TCM refer to five founders, although only three of these were mentioned by name in other documents: Sir Henry Hope (1787–1863), Captain Maude (1798–1886) and the Marquis of Cholmondeley (1800–84).³ It seems likely that the other two were Captains Robert J. Elliot and George C. Gambier – both of whom may have been the initiators of the idea for a floating church on the Thames. There were, however, seven people present at the inaugural meeting held on 23 February 1844, with apologies for absence from two others. Several had been involved with charitable work amongst seafarers for many years. Captains Elliott and Gambier had been involved with the Rev. G.C. Smith

deputation work in the vessel during 1840 (BCM Report, 1842, p.15). The vessel was apparently completed by September 1839, as £450 had been paid for it on 1 June and £775.0s.9d was paid to the carpenters and joiners in September 1839 (BCM Report, 1842, Accounts).

1. BCM Report, 1842, p.20.
2. Miller, 2017, p. 48-49
3. TCM Annual Report for the years 1881–85, p.34 (copies in the British Museum Library, London. Sir Henry Hope and Captain Maude are mentioned as being founders of the TCM in M.R. Kingsford's *The Mersey Mission to Seafarers 1856–1956* (Abingdon: 1957), p.xxiii.

in establishing the Port of London Society (1818) and the Destitute Sailors' Asylum in 1827, among other initiatives, and all three had links with the Episcopal Floating Church Society. The Hon. William Waldegrave, RN, was a member of the EFCS Committee and the Destitute Sailors' Asylum; and Lord Cholmondeley later became Patron to Henry Cook's Portsmouth and Gosport Seamen's Mission and was a member of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society Committee.

It was agreed to send a deputation to the Bishop of London to seek his support and patronage for the Thames Church Mission. As Captain Elliot had already gained the Bishop of London's patronage for the Sailors' Home in 1831, he could therefore expect a positive welcome. The Bishop was obviously pleased with the formation of the TCM, in that he offered to write to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking whether he would be willing to become the society's Patron. A sub-committee was established to produce the society's prospectus, and its first meeting was held on 23 February 1844, at 32 Sackville Street (the home of the EFCS). The Bishop of London agreed to become a patron, and the Lord Mayor of London and Bishops of Rochester and Winchester became vice-presidents. The Bishops of these diocese are often mentioned together and apparently often supported Anglo-Catholic activities, calling for a 'mission' in late 1873.¹

The development of Roman Catholic revivalism had its roots in 1840 when the Roman Catholic Archbishop, Nicholas Wiseman, asked Pope Gregory XVI to support the foundation of missionary priests in England. Despite initial lukewarm support, the Redemptionists, Passionists and Rosminian religious orders began parish missions in the UK during 1842–4.² The development of the Roman Catholic parochial missions clearly affected the Anglo-Catholics and ten years later they also began to develop parochial missions. Given the revival of Church work on the Thames, in the form of the Thames Church Mission in 1844, it seems likely that some incentive was drawn from these non-evangelical developments, although the TCM Committee encountered a number of clashes with the Anglo-Catholics.

The general aim of the TCM's work was stated as being to provide 'pastoral superintendence to the colliers and other shipping on the Thames',³ although the aims and objectives were expanded and formalised during May of that year and various formal appointments were made. A vessel, the *Swan*, was loaned to the TCM by the Admiralty in May 1844, although

1. Parsons, *op. cit.*, Vol. I (1988), p.228.

2. *Ibid.*, p.223.

3. TCM Minutes, 1844, p.1.

it was in a poor state. Repairs were carried out and a chapel fitted to hold 100 people, and a flag, pennant and code of signals were adopted after the manner of the Bristol Channel Mission.¹ Operations at first centred on the main body of the river, but in 1846 the chaplain was instructed to include visits to outward-bound vessels and fishing craft lying off Gravesend. This included a wide range of craft such as convict ships, troop ships, emigrant vessels, as well as colliers and fishing vessels. Later, during the 1860s and 1870s, the TCM chaplain was appointed 'ship's chaplain' to training ships such as HMS *Cornwall*, *Worcester*, *Goliath*, *Arethusa* and *Chichester*, which proved useful to the TCM as it received a regular fee from the training ships for the chaplain's services. Nevertheless, a constant supply of funds was necessary if the TCM was to maintain the work of the *Swan* up and down the Thames and, after the early success of its mission was over, it became necessary to explore other ways of ensuring a regular income. It was proposed that a lay assistant to the chaplain be appointed to release the chaplain for deputation work on behalf of the society, and this was implemented in early 1850. Nevertheless, it soon became obvious that the work on the Thames was far more than could be adequately covered by one or two men. The river was therefore divided into three districts ([1] upriver work, the Pool *etc.*, [2] Victoria Dock area and [3] Gravesend Reach), with missionaries to be employed for each district as soon as funds allowed. Problems with staff inevitably arose from time to time, but a certain degree of stability was achieved eventually and the TCM Committee was pleased with the developments.

The Missions to Seamen

Despite the consolidation of the various Anglican seafarers' missions in London, it was not until 1856 that a truly national Anglican society, the Missions to Seamen, was formed, under the direction of the Rev. W.H.G. Kingston – although the TCM refused to join. The objects and regulations of the Missions to Seamen make its sphere of influence and church affiliation clear:

1. The object of the Society is the spiritual welfare of the seafaring classes at home and abroad.
2. In pursuance of this object the Society will use every means consistent with the principles and received practice of the Church of England.
3. The operations of the Society shall for the most part be carried

1. See the typed history of the TCM (unsigned) in the Missions to Seamen's Archives at the Hull History Centre.

on afloat, and for this purpose its Chaplains and Scripture readers shall, as far as possible, be provided with vessels and boats for visiting the ships in roadsteads, rivers, and harbours.¹

At the first public meeting, held on 10 March 1857, the first resolution drew attention to the Church of England's lethargic response to the needs of seafarers, and its slowness in committing itself to further this obligation:

That this meeting, fully sensible how little has been done by the Church of England for the evangelisation of its seafaring population, recognises its obligations to care for the souls of British sailors, and pledges itself to use the most strenuous exertions to provide them with that spiritual instruction of which they are so much in need.²

By the late 1850s many of the country's seafarers' missions were drawn under the umbrella of the three national organisations, the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, Seamen's Christian Friend Society and the Missions to Seamen, but by this time the rapid development of the fishing industry was taking place and new areas for mission were opening up.

1. TCM Minutes, January 1852.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.74-5.