

“The church’s mission to the waterways communities:
A marginal mission to a marginal people?”

Dissertation submitted for the Degree of
MA in Theology, Mission and Ministry.

Word Count: 14307

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Foreword

I am a Christian, a Priest in the Church of England and a person who spends three or four weeks of each year on the canals of this country and who also volunteers as a skipper for a charity which gives boat trips for the elderly and disabled on the River Medway.¹ When one first visits a holiday or leisure destination it is all too easy to see it entirely through ‘rose-tinted spectacles’ and to fail to see the realities of the lives of the people amongst whom one passes. However, the more familiar one becomes with a place and its people, and as one learns the vocabulary and speaks to those who live there, the more it becomes possible to see the reality beneath the surface. Whilst I continue to love the beauty, tranquillity and history of the canals and rivers nevertheless the more time I spent there the more it became apparent that they are host to a great deal of hidden poverty.

My response to that growing awareness of hidden poverty was to ask myself: *‘What is the Church of England doing to meet both the obvious material needs of these people and to provide for their spiritual needs?’* This dissertation arises from a desire to answer that initial question but is also offered in the hope that my church will be encouraged to respond more positively to the needs of those who live on the waterways.

¹ < <http://www.kingfishermedwaytrust.org.uk> > [Accessed 10/5/19].

There are some common themes in the discussion that follows. The first, already mentioned, is that of *hiddenness*. The waterways themselves are often hidden from the view of ‘mainstream’ society and, even when discovered, the material and spiritual needs of the inhabitants are also often hidden. The second is that of being *marginal*. Interestingly plants that live close to water are often called marginals and the same label could be applied to those who live and minister there; those who live there are living on the margins of society and those engaged in mission are working at the margins of the church.

Given the nature of this dissertation, there is much use of the words, *mission*, *ministry* and *evangelism*. There is a danger that these words can be used wholly as synonyms, which I wish to avoid. Therefore, for these purposes, ‘mission’ refers to the highest level sending out of the whole church in response to and as part of the wider mission of God to the world. ‘Ministry’ and ‘Evangelism’ are both subsets of that mission: ‘Ministry’ involving an element of caring for or ministering to the needs of others arising from one’s faith but without any expectation of a faith response from those being ministered to and ‘evangelism’ being a proclamation or explanation of faith with a view of the other making a response of faith. These terms receive much attention in missiological literature (Bosch *et al.*) but it is not the proposition to explore those definitions further here.

Introduction

The waterways of England and Wales are, in many ways, a hidden world.² The navigable network is over 2200 miles long but, unless you have reason to venture onto the canals and rivers which lace through our towns and countryside, it is easy not to give them a second thought. As L.T.C. Rolt says:

Knowledge of them is confined to the narrow hump-backed bridges which trap the incautious motorist, or to an occasional glimpse from the train of a ribbon of still water winding through the meadows to some unknown destination.³

For the holiday-maker renting a narrow boat for a week in the summer, or the dog-walker or cyclist who ventures onto the tow path, it is exactly this separation from 'normal' life which they seek; isolated from traffic and crowds even in the middle of a city or idyllic remoteness in the country. This is the image of the waterways we encounter in holiday brochures and popular television programs like *Great Canal Journeys* and *Barging Around Britain*.⁴ And, it has to be said, there is nothing misleading about this image, albeit that it

² See [Appendix Figure 1](#) for a map of the current network.

³ Rolt, L.T.C. *Narrow Boat* 2nd Edition (Methuen 1948) p.11.

⁴ See, for example, Hoseasons <https://www.hoseasons.co.uk/boat-holidays/> [Accessed 10/1/19] and <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/great-canal-journeys> [Accessed 10/1/19] and <https://www.itv.com/presscentre/ep1week7/barging-round-britain-john-sergeant> [Accessed 10/1/19].

is not the whole reality. For the casual visitor or holiday maker this hiddenness, remoteness and idyllic isolation are a considerable part of the attraction, even in the middle of modern London:

At Angel the slope down to the canal was so steep I had to walk slowly not to slip. When I arrived at the bottom I felt like I'd stepped into a different, timeless world. In front of me was a straight canal leading to a curved low bridge. Within the water, a mirrored sky and colourful, slim steel boats. On either side, framing the scene, weeping willows, tall trees and dark ivy. The trees felt greener than they should be, as if someone had turned up the colour saturation. I felt an unfamiliar sense of peace and calm [...] This world I had stumbled upon was of different proportions, on a different colour spectrum.⁵

However, *hiddenness* can also be less positive. The waterways are not just home to casual visitors and summer holiday makers, but also to a considerable number of full-time residents. Some are there by virtue of choice, such as retirement, pursuing an alternative lifestyle or living in a more affordable style of housing in expensive city centres, but others find themselves living in dilapidated boats to avoid living on the streets. For this latter group, especially, the hiddenness of the waterways, the lack of a permanent address and the

⁵ Couchman, D. Afloat A Memoir (Quadrille 2019) p. 8.

remoteness of temporary moorings can make it difficult to access unemployment benefits, health services and even education. So, there can be a great deal of material poverty amongst those living on the waterways, and this poverty is often unseen by mainstream society. Further, it is suggested, that even amongst those boaters who are not living in poverty but are living afloat by choice, especially the retired, there can be problems associated with loneliness, alcoholism and the normal problems of old age, exacerbated by the physical demands of living on a boat.

The waterway system is therefore in a somewhat contradictory position of being both an idyllic holiday and retirement destination but also being the location of much unseen poverty and other needs and, as will be seen further below, it seems that those needs are inadequately responded to by *the state*. Further, this poses the question of whether the *church* has adequately recognised the existence of those communities as a locus for mission.

During the course of this dissertation the author will be exploring the proposition that the *institutional* church has often failed to recognise and respond to the needs of waterways communities for similar reasons to the state: it is simply not very good at dealing with transient and dispersed communities. The parish system and attendant canon law controlling access to occasional offices such as weddings and funerals are largely premised upon settled

geographic status.⁶ Further, it is suggested, that the dispersed nature of waterways communities often means that the number of waterway-based people in need in any particular parish is likely to be low and, to the extent it is noticed by the local church at all, is unlikely to be viewed differently from the needs of others living within the parish; this is both to misunderstand the peculiar needs of living on the waterway and the size of the waterways communities viewed on a national basis.

However, any failure on the part of the institutional church need not imply a wholesale failure on the part of all Christians to be missional to these communities. As we shall see, throughout the history of the waterways, up to and including the present day, the response of ‘the church’ has been of individual Christians and specialist mission societies and chaplaincies to arise in response to the perceived need of the waterways communities in their time. Some of those responses have focused on meeting particular needs of those communities, such as access to healthcare or education and some have focused more on being evangelistic towards them. However, in each case, those individuals, societies and chaplaincies which have ministered to or evangelised those on the waterways are often themselves highly marginal groups within the church.

⁶ E.g. Section 6 Marriage Act 1949 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/76/part/II/crossheading/marriage-by-banns> [Accessed 29/3/19] and Canon B38 <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-b> [Accessed 29/3/19].

So, as we venture onto the waterways, we are exploring a hidden world, populated with people living on the margins of society and, to the extent mission is happening at all, it is being carried out by those on the margins of the church.

In order to explore some of the issues posed by this marginal mission to a marginal people it is proposed to begin, very briefly, by considering the historical development of the waterways. This is to identify the different eras in the life of the waterways, which effects of the identity of the communities under discussion. I shall then be considering the church's mission to the earlier waterways communities, both as background and foil to the current situation. Next, I shall look at the current waterways communities in terms of their numbers, their different identities & needs and analysing church's mission towards them. It is then proposed to compare and contrast some recent legislative proposals by both the Government and the Church of England in relation to Gypsies, Roma and other travellers with the waterways communities and how this may affirm their marginal position in relation to both society and church. Finally, having explored and analysed the past and present mission of the church towards the waterways communities it is hoped to offer some tentative conclusions and proposals which may touch on the Church of England's response not only to the marginal communities on the waterways but, perhaps, to those on other margins of society.

The Changing Eras of the Waterways

Although the canals are often attractive places to visit, we should resist the temptation to romanticise their origins. They were created for the purpose of improving the transport of raw materials to factories and finished products to market, in order to make wealthy industrialists wealthier.

When roads were no more than rutted tracks and horse-drawn carts were highly limited in what they could carry, it was the ability of the canals to move tens of tonnes of materials at a time from where they were produced to where they were needed which helped fuel the industrial revolution. Josiah Wedgwood could easily transport his expensive wares from Stoke-on-Trent to the wealthy consumers in London, the Cadbury Brothers could transport milk from the countryside and cocoa from the ports to their factories in Bourneville and export chocolate back the rest of the country. Mill owners in the heart of Yorkshire could import raw cotton from America and export their cloth around the world, albeit that the mills themselves may have been dark and satanic.

So, by the 1760's there was an increasing demand for a reliable, efficient, cheap and speedy transport system [...] The Duke of Bridgewater's Canal was no technological miracle, but it did something new and it came at just the right moment [...] Before the Bridgewater Canal opened, coal sold in Manchester at 7d per hundredweight: the canal trade cut the price

exactly in half. Manufacturers and traders, seeing such a dramatic drop in costs became converts to the idea of canal transport [...] the great age of canal construction was begun.⁷

Between 1761 and 1850 some 4,800 miles of canal were built, amidst much canal mania. However, by the late 19th century the canals faced serious competition from the railways and, in fact, many railway companies bought the canal companies and deliberately let them decline. By the mid 20th century road transport was another significant source of competition and the canals seemed on the verge of terminal collapse.

But if the canals are left to the mercies of economists and scientific planners, before many years are past the last of them will become a weedy, stagnant ditch, and the bright boats will rot at the wharves, to live on only in old men's memories.⁸

However, at least partly because of Rolt's work (he formed the Inland Waterways Association which lobbied to protect and restore the waterways⁹) there has been something of a canal renaissance over the last half century, with

⁷ Burton A. *The Canal Builders* (Tempus 2005) pp17-18

⁸ Rolt *Narrow Boat* pp194-5

⁹ See, e.g. https://www.waterways.org.uk/about/iwa_what_we_do [Accessed 16/4/19]

many closed canals being reopened by the efforts of volunteers and many others under active reconstruction.¹⁰

For the purposes of this dissertation it is posited that there have been three broad eras of life on the waterways:

1. the Construction era;
2. the Working Canal era; and
3. the Leisure Canal era.

In relation to the '*Leisure Canal era*' nomenclature it is absolutely accepted that this may feel like something of a misnomer for those more needy groups who find themselves living on the canal; theirs is certainly not a life or an experience of leisure. However, it is proposed on the basis that this contrasts with when the canals were fulfilling their intended purpose during the Working era, so it is about the canal system itself being more at leisure, as well as being a leisure destination for some, rather than an experience of all those living on it. The terms 'Present' or 'Current' era were rejected as we are discussing a period

¹⁰ For example the Kennet & Avon canal was reopened in 1990 (<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/kennet-and-avon-canal>) [Accessed 16/4/19], the Dudley Canal in 1992 (<http://dudleycanaltrust.org.uk/history/timeline/>) [Accessed 16/4/19] and the Cotswold Canal is being restored (<https://cotswoldcanals.com>) [Accessed 16/4/19].

which dates back to the 1970s and onwards for, possibly, many decades to come.

Although it is possible to date when the first and last canals were built (as noted above) one should resist the temptation to treat these eras as clearly following one another on a national basis; rather they overlap one another. For example, the Bridgewater Canal was the first to be constructed and was therefore the first to become a working canal whilst others were under construction. Similarly, at the end of the working canal era, which extended into the 1970s, there was overlap with the early leisure users.¹¹ Therefore, when one considers these eras below, one should not assume that the whole country was in the same period at the same time; they did not succeed one another like the reigns of monarchs but should be viewed as somewhat more ‘organic’.

Notwithstanding the somewhat fluid dating of these eras there can be no doubt that the purpose and nature of the canals has evolved considerably during their history: from lateral building sites to the equivalent of motorways transporting heavy goods to places where many spend their leisure time, and repositories of built heritage and sites of special scientific interest.¹² As the canals have

¹¹ Actually the Working Canal era is not entirely finished see, for example, https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/business/derbyshire-firm-goes-back-using-2786848?fbclid=IwAR0JcAsJdkQ3XXOCKLBI2D1MwNaC66DdOmDtclTcLhskxbkpskWJI_Q7OxE (Accessed 23/4/19).

¹² For example the Anderton Boat Lift and Foxton Inclined Plane < <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-history/canal-heritage/boat-lifts>>

changed so have the identities of the communities using them and this is explored further below.

[Accessed 11/5/19] and the Montgomery Canal SSSI <
<https://landandheritage.com/blog/montgomery-canal-restoration/>> [Accessed 11/5/19].

The Identity of the Waterways Communities during the Construction and Working Canal eras

The reason for dividing the history of the waterways into these three broad eras above is because the identity of the waterways communities under discussion changes accordingly.

When referring to the people who live on the waterways, the plural term ‘communities’ has been used throughout, and this is deliberate. It would certainly be misleading to talk about a singular waterways community, sharing either a common origin or consistent need, as this has not been true either throughout history or into the present. In fact, the lack of there being a single waterways community, forming an identifiable minority on racial or other grounds, appears to be the prime cause of these groups not receiving the same attention, either by the church or the state, as that being given to Roma and Irish travellers.¹³

During the Construction era the community under discussion are the ‘navvies’, who dug the canals. This was a substantial group of people, who were often not welcome in the settled communities through which they were digging:

¹³ See section “[Comparison with other travelling communities](#)” below.

In the making of canals, it is the general custom to employ gangs of hands who travel from one work to another and do nothing else. These banditti, known in some parts of England by the name of ‘Navies’ or ‘Navigators’...are generally the terror of the surrounding country; they are as completely a class by themselves as the Gipsies. Possessed of all the daring recklessness of the Smuggler, without any of his redeeming qualities.¹⁴

Whilst many of the navvies were Irish in origin this was by no means universally true. In the early stages of canal construction many would have been local labourers or farm hands who developed specialist skills in construction and then started travelling across the country during the canal (and railway) building boom. So, the navvies were a distinct group who lived and worked on the margins of society, but they had no single ethnic origin and were quite a diverse group of ‘*banditti*’! They usually worked far from their home communities, for extended periods of time, and lived in harsh conditions.¹⁵

During the Working Canal era the main inhabitants of the canal were the boatmen, and latterly their families, who lived and worked on the narrowboats

¹⁴ Burton (2005) p.139

¹⁵ It should be borne in mind that the navvies were involved both digging the canals and in building the railways. The missions to the navvies discussed below include them in both of these capacities.

and barges which carried the goods around the network. This was also a considerable number of people:

In the early nineteenth century, boat people would have numbered possibly 100,000, including large numbers on the river barges, a considerable class [at that time].¹⁶

The boatmen were a sizeable and often distinct community, but it does not seem that they shared any ethnic origins with land-based travellers: ‘There is no evidence to support a gypsy background, except for the similar boat and waggon decoration.’¹⁷ It is interesting that this comparison to, but distinction from, the Gypsy communities were made because, as we shall see, this is a comparison and a distinction which has continued into the modern era, to the disadvantage of the waterways communities.

So, in the Construction phase the ‘navvies’ are the marginal community under consideration and in the Working Canal era it is the boatmen and their families. It is unlikely that there was much cross-over between these groups, not least because of the quite different skill-sets of those occupations.

¹⁶ Paget-Tomlinson, E. *The Illustrated History of Canal and River Navigations* (Landmark Publishing 2006) p 272

¹⁷ Paget-Tomlinson (2006) p 272

Mission during the Construction and Working Canal eras

The response of the church to the physical and spiritual needs of the navvies and boatmen during the Construction and Working eras of the canals (so broadly from the 1760's to the 1970's) is a substantial subject in its own right, which has received some academic attention.¹⁸ Whilst the author believes that there is a great deal more research that could be done in this area it is the intention for the purposes of this dissertation to focus on the much less researched of mission to the current waterways communities.¹⁹ Therefore, this section is intended to set the historical context for the current situation, rather than seek to be definitive.

In 18th and 19th century rural England it is probably uncontroversial to suggest that much of society was quite parochial, in every sense of the word. In the midst of that parochial society the Church of England, as the established church, tended to 'hatch, match and dispatch' those who lived within the parish, and the necessity of being resident within the parish (or having substantial connections

¹⁸ For example, Freer, W. & Foster, G. *Canal Boatmen's Mission* (Railway and Canal Historical Society 2004) and Freer, W. *Canal Boat People 1840-1970* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis University of Nottingham 1991 EthOS ID: 281065).

¹⁹ In particular the archives of the Navvy Mission Society at Lambeth Palace Library and the London City Mission would repay further investigation. See e.g. <<https://www.lcm.org.uk/our-mission/archives/LCM-Magazine-Indexes-1836>> [Accessed 2/4/19].

with the parish) continues to be enshrined within canon law to this day.²⁰ One could suggest that the parish system, almost by definition, creates a ‘local church for local people’. Whilst that may be ideal, incarnational, ministry for settled and stable communities it is suggested that this makes it much less able, or perhaps even willing, to be missional towards more transient communities.

Into the midst of these stable, parochial, communities came first the navvies, digging their way through the landscape. In the same way that one should not romanticise the canals it would also be a mistake to romanticise the navvies. We have already seen them called ‘*banditti*’ and there can be little doubt that they were hard working but also a hard drinking, hard swearing and probably quite a disruptive presence.

The navvies could be sure, when they came to a new district, that there would be more to curse them than to welcome them. A Lancashire clergyman preached a sermon on the subject, though there is no record that any navvies came to listen. He began with a half-hearted welcome to the newcomers, then got down to the main business of a tirade against

²⁰ As above, see e.g. Section 6 Marriage Act 1949. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/76/part/II/crossheading/marriage-by-banns> [Accessed 29/3/19] and Canon B38 <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-b> [Accessed 29/3/19].

navvies, who 'cheat, and steal, and drink, and swear, and fight, and do all kinds of mischief to themselves and others.'²¹

Not long after the navvies had passed through the canals would be filled with water and the boatmen would replace them as the transient community.

Although, perhaps, less obviously disruptive they were still a community apart from the settled peoples around them. Despite the rather ambivalent response by the local clergy it is clear that others saw the navvies and boatmen as communities to be missional towards although, at first, such missions were also highly localised and uncoordinated.

Examples of these include wharf-side missions in the 1820s²² and even the creation of a floating church for boatmen in Worcester by the Rev'd John Davies who:

[...] was very concerned about the bad moral state of the boatmen on river and canal, numbering with their families "about 3000 souls". These people did not respond to his efforts to get them to come to church: "they were found averse to assemble at Church with the more respectable classes of the Community". So in 1842, with the aid of various grants and

²¹ Burton A. *The Canal Builders* (Tempus 2005) p. 141.

²² Paget-Tomlinson (2006) p 274.

endowments, he fitted up an old Severn barge, The Albion, as a floating chapel for their use, and moored it at the old St. Clement's churchyard.²³

As laudable as these individual undertakings were it seems that they were not particularly effective:

The problem with the pre-Society missions was they were unconnected and haphazard: even the heaviest dose of religion was no good if the navy never saw a Christian again. For this reason they were pretty ineffective, in spite of the fact there were plenty of them.²⁴

The 'Society' mentioned above was the Navy Mission Society founded in 1877. It is notable, in this context, that the founding members of the NMS were Anglicans, both clergy and lay.²⁵

²³ <

<http://www.users.totalise.co.uk/~fortroyal/WorcestershirePast/people/watermenskn.html>> [Accessed 2/4/19] Floating churches also exist today but these do not seem to be primarily aimed at the need of the waterways communities, see e.g. <<http://stpetersbarge.org>> [Accessed 7/5/19].

²⁴ Sullivan, D The Navyman Chapter 20.

<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/work/sullivan/20.html> (Accessed 25/4/19).

²⁵ The NMS was founded by the Revd. Lewis M. Evans, rector of Leathley, near Otley, and Mrs Elizabeth Garnett, following their work among the navvies at Lindley reservoir near Otley. In some quarters, Elizabeth Garnett was regarded as the real founder of the NMS and, following her death in 1921, a memorial was erected in Ripon Cathedral in 1926 to honour her involvement with NMS. <

http://www.uwhg.org.uk/field_work/erg/navvy_mission/navvy_mission.html> [Accessed 2/4/19].

The aim of the society was to send specially qualified clergymen, scripture readers and later ex-navvies as missionaries to where they were needed - i.e. to sites where navvies were working - to establish day schools, Sunday Schools, lending libraries, Temperance associations, night schools, reading rooms, clothing clubs and savings banks, to bring within reach of the navy the benefits enjoyed by other working men at that time. It became a very well run organisation. They were told when projects involving navvies were going to take place. They had a set format, so people knew what to expect when the Navy Mission Society was involved, though some navvies liked the amenities on offer more than the religion that was preached!²⁶

The NMS, together with the Incorporated Seaman & Boatmen's Friend Society and London City Mission created a fairly substantial network of chapels, boatmen's institutes and boatmen's 'rests' across the whole canal system, some of which can still be seen today.²⁷ The NMS itself continues, albeit now in the form of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, as of course does London City Mission.²⁸

²⁶ < http://www.uwhg.org.uk/field_work/erg/navvy_mission/navvy_mission.html > [Accessed 2/4/19].

²⁷ E.g. The Birchills Boatmen's Rest. < <http://www.jim-storey.com/museum.htm> > [Accessed 2/4/19].

²⁸ < <http://www.icf-online.org/info.php?ident=history> > [Accessed 2/4/19] & <https://www.lcm.org.uk> [Accessed 25/4/19].

As with many forms of mission it is much easier to measure activity in the area of practical assistance rendered than effectiveness in terms of spiritual growth or conversion to faith. The author submits that this is especially the case when dealing with mission to a transient, perhaps non-literate, community as it is much less likely that there will be sufficient consistency of oversight or record keeping to track, say, baptisms following contact with a mission. That said, the fact that the NMS was able to use ex-navvies as missionaries would certainly indicate an element of spiritual effectiveness. However, it is submitted that a ministerial act to the marginalised is a missionary act in itself²⁹ and, in that regard, it is undoubted that this network had an impact on the navvies and boatmen:

[...] if the coffee rooms, recreation rooms, schools, maternity rooms, laundries and washing facilities were as well-used by boat people as they seem to have been, then the missions could certainly be said to have brought significant relief to these people [...] ³⁰

Before we cross from mission in the Construction and Working Canal eras to the Leisure Canal era it would be appropriate to mention one notable figure in the history of the canals who performed a solo ministry to the boatmen and their families and who appears to have had a substantial impact on their lives. This is

²⁹ E.g. Prov 14:31.

³⁰ Freer, W (Railway and Canal Historical Society 2004) p. 61.

Sister Mary Ward of Stoke Bruerne who acted as a nurse, mid-wife and confidant to the boating community from before the introduction of the National Health Service up to the end of the Working Canal era.

You can't take me away from boat people. There isn't one of them wouldn't die for me, or one I wouldn't die for.³¹

She devoted her life to caring for those on the canal and, although this ministry took a medical form it does seem to have been motivated by her Christian faith. It would be possible to write an entire dissertation on Sister Mary Ward but it is helpful to be reminded by her that not all mission and ministry needs to be centralised in order to be effective.

To conclude this section, it is suggested that during the Construction and Working Canal era that the Church of England, as an institution, was not overtly missional towards either the navvies or the boatmen, in the sense that there was no apparent effort at Diocesan or higher level to encourage parishes to be missional to those groups. However, it is also apparent that many of the individuals, missions and societies which did undertake such mission often had their roots within the institutional church. Therefore, although these early missionaries to the waterways communities were often operating at or beyond

³¹ http://clutch.open.ac.uk/schools/stokebruerne99/Sister_Mary.html [Accessed 25/4/19].

the margins of the institutional church during the course of that ministry, it could also be argued that it was the institutional church which ‘raised up’ and ‘sent out’ (no matter how informally) many of the people who undertook this work. It would therefore be too simplistic to posit a complete absence of the Church of England in this mission to the marginalised during this period, but it is probably more true to suggest that the institutional church played a background, empowering, role by helping to create and release missionaries into this field. Of course, it cannot be ignored that a great deal of the earlier part of the period under consideration also coincided with the ascension and apogee of the Church of England’s missionary activity to Africa and Asia:

[...] “It is the duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen;” and the Society for Missions to Africa and the East was formed (in 1812 renamed The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East).³²

Therefore, it could be argued, that the creation of missions and missionaries was a substantial part of the church’s culture at that time, albeit usually focused on mission overseas rather than closer to home. We shall see how this compares to the more current situation further below.

³² Church Mission Societies Archives: <
http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/church_missionary_society_archive_general/editorial%20introduction%20by%20rosemary%20keen.aspx> [Accessed 13/5/19].

The identity and needs of the Waterways Communities during the Leisure Canal era

During the Leisure Canal era it is suggested that there is even more diversity in the different communities which occupy that space. For the purposes of this dissertation these communities could be categorised as follows:

1. Holiday-makers who may be renting a boat for limited time;
2. Those who live on boats with a permanent mooring but who work ‘ashore’ and merely use their boat as a floating home;
3. People of independent means (usually retired) who have either sold or rented out their house and are spending extended periods (months or years) cruising the waterways;
4. People who have ‘dropped out’ of mainstream society and are living permanently on boats, either moored together with those in a similar position or cruising the system alone; and,
5. Non-boaters such as walkers, cyclists and ‘gongoozlers’³³ who use the tow paths and ‘hang around’ at locks and bridges.

³³ “Early 20th century (originally denoting a person who idly watched activity on a canal); rare before 1970: perhaps from Lincolnshire dialect gawn and gooze ‘stare, gape’”. <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gongoozler>> [Accessed 16/4/19].

Groups 1 and 2 above treat the waterways simply as a place of leisure for a very limited period, in the case of holiday makers, or as a convenient place to float their home, in the case of the employed city dwellers. Interestingly this latter group seems to have grown significantly in recent years as property prices and the cost of commuting in cities such as London means that a boat and a residential mooring is often considerably cheaper than a flat.³⁴

It is submitted that groups 1 and 2 are unlikely to have significant pastoral needs which cannot be met by churches or society in the normal way; both groups will normally be resident in one location and will therefore have access to a local church and vice versa.

When one first encounters group 3 (the apparently affluent, usually retired) it is hard to imagine they have any needs at all. They often live on very smart narrow boats, perhaps with some dogs or cats, and they may even have a G&T on the go whilst operating the locks. They usually present themselves as ‘living the dream’. However, when one speaks to them a little more (perhaps chatting whilst working the locks together or when moored next to each other overnight) it soon becomes apparent that there can be issues not far below the surface.

Those who are not part of a couple can be chronically lonely, those who are part

³⁴ E.g. <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/04/troubled-waterways-canals-london-housing-crisis-property-boats>> [Accessed 10/1/19].

of a couple may not be as happy together as they first appear, they may miss the longer-term friendship of living in a more settled community, there may be health issues, the constant G&T may indicate an alcohol issue and they are highly unlikely to be part of any worshipping community. So, there may be a host of needs present which may either be caused by their idyllic looking lifestyle or which could certainly be exacerbated by it. Although this group may not have significant material needs they may have considerable need to belong to a settled community and / or unmet spiritual needs.

Group 4 presents on the most obviously needy section of the waterways but may also be the hardest to access. This group could probably be sub-divided into those who are not well off but have chosen to live on the waterways as part of an alternative lifestyle, this would be the equivalent of a land-based ‘new age traveller’, and those who are also not well off but have ended up living on the waterways because they have run out of options elsewhere. This group 4 includes those who are living in real poverty and who are often only one small rung up from being homeless and on the streets. Their boats are often old and run-down³⁵ and, by virtue of their transient lifestyle and lack of a land-based address, the inhabitants may struggle with accessing benefits, securing normal employment, having a GP or dentist or any of the other normal support structures of society, including even the police:

³⁵ See Figure 1.

I was only too aware of how difficult it was to call the police when you lived on a boat [...] Although on the waterways you could escape the ever-present feeling of being observed by the state, with that feeling came slow to non-existent police response to crime. Being nomadic didn't mix with other officialdom either, like bank accounts, voting, insurance, GP surgeries and HMRC.³⁶



Figure 1 A 'liveaboard' boat³⁷

³⁶ Couchman, D. (Quadrille 2019) p. 77.

³⁷ Photo Copyright Michelle Smith < https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/blog/sam-worrall-inequality-on-the-cut/?fbclid=IwAR00jSKI6jZR0dAOzgZEIOOtUF0daK_zDQwF9XImha21O--rmRaBsygHHx0 > [Accessed 9/5/19].

In relation to accessing benefits the official Department of Work and Pensions position is that the homeless can access benefits (using a 'care of' address) however the experience of many homeless people is that this is a significant challenge.³⁸ The roll out of Universal Credit, and the need to submit claims using the internet, has also had an adverse impact on the waterways communities:

Limited access to the internet aboard canal boats, particularly in more rural areas, not being able to access computers in libraries (either because they have closed down or due to not having an address to register), lack of transport, cruising further afield into neighbouring local authorities, all impact upon being able to receive benefits.³⁹

In relation to accessing health care GP practices can refuse to register patients who do not live within their boundaries.⁴⁰ In addition bodies such as the Canal and Rivers Trust, local authorities and private landowners can evict boaters and

³⁸ See, for example: <https://www.katebelgrave.com/2016/09/i-cant-get-benefits-because-im-homeless-and-i-havent-got-an-address-wtf-is-going-on-here/> [Accessed 10/1/19].

³⁹ Worrall, S. *Inequality on the Cut* 8/2/19 < https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/blog/sam-worrall-inequality-on-the-cut/?fbclid=IwAR00jSKI6jZR0dAOzgZEIOOtUF0daK_zDQwF9XImha21O--rmRaBsygHHx0 > [Accessed 9/5/19].

⁴⁰ <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-practice/> [Accessed 10/1/19] See also < https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/travellers-turned-away-from-gp-surgeries-despite-nhs-guidance?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other > [Accessed 2/4/19].

even, *in extremis*, confiscate their boats for non-payment of licences or because the landowner wishes to use the land differently.⁴¹

It can also be harder for this group to access even the most basic necessities of life: gas for cooking and heating has to be bought by the bottle and is not cheap or easy to transport. If they do not have a home mooring (which are expensive) and wish to avoid a fine or confiscation, then they are obliged to keep moving every 14 days (as a ‘continuous cruiser’) and the cost of diesel is significant. Emptying toilets can be expensive, if one needs a ‘pump out’, or heavy and inconvenient if one uses a ‘cassette’. Even having access to fresh water will involve either moving the boat to a water point or transporting heavy containers. Although, for some (the ‘new age travellers’ and in common with group 3), there is an element of choice in adopting this lifestyle this is not true for all and, for all of the above, in the event of illness, accident or a change of financial circumstances the additional challenges of living afloat can give rise to a great deal of need.

It is therefore suggested that it is groups 3 and 4 who present the greatest issue in terms of both accessing certain aspects of spiritual care and whom the institutional church finds it hardest to reach and to serve. Interestingly, arising from interviews with the waterways chaplains, a considerable time is also spent

⁴¹ < <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/slum-boats-along-thames-path-15960784>> [Accessed 2/4/19].

with group 5, the casual visitors to the waterways, who are the most disparate and unlikely to identify themselves as a ‘waterways community’ at all but who, nonetheless, may find themselves in need whilst enjoying the hiddenness of the waterways.

It should therefore be clear that there is a considerable diversity of identity and need amongst the waterways communities, ranging from tourists and city-workers who happen to live on a boat to those who are, to all intents and purposes, homeless and for whom a barely-floating wreck is a refuge from being on the streets, and a range of need in-between these extremes. In the next section, and before looking at mission to these communities, the author will be considering briefly the quantification of these communities.

The size of the Waterways Communities in the Leisure Canal era.

How many people are currently living on the waterways? Sadly, although this is an obvious question, hard numbers to this question are hard to come by, and this is certainly an area which would benefit from further quantitative research, using greater resources than the author has available. Whilst it may appear a simple matter to discover how many people are living on and using the waterways the challenges to obtaining a straightforward number are as follows:

The waterways are not under a single ownership or control. Whilst the majority of the canal network is controlled by the Canal and River Trust this is not wholly the case.⁴² The afore-mentioned Bridgewater Canal is owned by the Bridgewater Canal Company,⁴³ the Basingstoke Canal is controlled by a Society run jointly by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils,⁴⁴ the River Wey and Godalming Navigations are controlled by the National Trust,⁴⁵ the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal are managed by a subsidiary of the Inland Waterway Association⁴⁶ and the majority of other navigable rivers (as opposed to canals) are controlled by the Environment Agency.⁴⁷

⁴² <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk> [Accessed 23/4/19].

⁴³ <http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk> [Accessed 23/4/19].

⁴⁴ <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk> [Accessed 23/4/19].

⁴⁵ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/river-wey-and-godalming-navigations-and-dapdune-wharf> [Accessed 23/4/19].

⁴⁶ https://www.waterways.org.uk/essex_waterways/essex_waterways [Accessed 23/4/19].

⁴⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> [Accessed 23/4/19].

Those who rent moorings either in cities or on the non-towpath side of the canal will do so from many thousands of landowners whose land abuts the waterways and over whom there is no form of central control or register; and the nature of the waterways are such (i.e. long and easily accessible) that it is difficult even for the owners / controllers to have an accurate knowledge of who is using it, especially in relation to the most marginal group 4, who are the most likely to be unlicensed.

Having acknowledged these challenges to obtaining accurate figures the author nonetheless wrote to each of the bodies mentioned in paragraph 1 above and made a Freedom of Information Act request with regard to their number of licenced boats and their estimate of the number of unlicensed boats on their waterways. Sadly, having made those requests, and then followed them up some months later, substantive responses were only received from the Canal and River Trust and the Environment Agency. The Canal and River Trust referred to their annual report which stated that they have some 33,000 licensed boats on their canals.⁴⁸ They did not make any estimate for the number of unlicensed boats. The Environment Agency stated that they have 30,704 licenced boats and they estimated a further 3% would be unlicensed.⁴⁹ Although these are the two largest bodies responsible for boat licensing the

⁴⁸ < <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/news/record-level-of-investment-and-public-involvement-in-britains-waterways> > [Accessed 2/4/19].

⁴⁹ Confirmed by email dated 24/1/19 following a FOI request.

bodies who did not respond nonetheless control significant stretches of waterway which, between them, could be another 5,000 boats, taking us to around 70,000 boats (assuming the 3% applies to each). Bearing in mind that many boats are likely to be multiple occupancy then we could be considering waterways communities of 140,000 - 200,000 people, which exceeds the estimate for the number of boatmen on the canals during the Working Canal era. This number is also highly comparable to the number of Gypsy and Irish Travellers, which was officially 58,000 in the 2011 census but, bearing in mind the level of non-response to the census, is estimated to be in the region of 300,000.⁵⁰

The fact that the number of those living on the waterways is not huge emphasises the fact that we are talking about a marginal as opposed to a mainstream section of society (which is part of the premise of this dissertation) but, nonetheless, demonstrates that we are potentially considering tens of thousands of people who are living in various states of need on the margins and *out of sight and out of mind* of both the state and the institutional church.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/whatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales/2014-01-21> (Accessed 23/4/19) See also Clarke, C Here to Stay The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain (University of Hertfordshire Press 2006) pp 19 -21 for the challenges inherent in estimating traveller numbers.

Mission in the Leisure Canal era

In continuity with the situation extant in the Construction and Working eras touched on above the Church of England appears to have little institutional involvement with mission to the current waterways communities. Of course, as with all such sweeping statements, there are localised exceptions: some parish churches, based near the canals, such as All Saints Braunston, have prided themselves on their links with the waterways communities, some Dioceses are content to ‘signpost’ volunteers towards the Waterways Chaplaincy, at least one Church of England curate has added this ministry to her portfolio and the Diocese of St. Albans has some formal involvement with the Waterways Chaplaincy, which will be explored further below.⁵¹ In addition, in 2015 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, visited the Grand Union Canal in Watford to see the work of the Waterways Chaplains and said, whilst there:

The Church exists to go to people, not to wait for them to come into church. Jesus Christ went out to people. And so the work of the chaplain is to go to people and not hang around and wait, which, of

⁵¹ See <https://www.allsaintsbraunston.org.uk/canal-links> [Accessed 5/4/19] < <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/2016/07/05/chaplaincy-waterways/>> [Accessed 29/4/19] and < <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/news/trainee-vicar-becomes-chaplain-waterways>> [Accessed 29/4/19].

course, people on boats never will come in because they just go straight past.⁵²

However, despite these entirely commendable and accurate words, and the limited exceptions noted, it does not appear that the Church of England is actively supporting this mission on a national level. Further, and as will be touched on below, General Synod has recently missed an opportunity to become so involved.⁵³

Notwithstanding this absence of institutional engagement and, again in continuity with the previous eras, there is Christian mission being carried out on the waterways by specialist missions and chaplaincies. There are presently three main bodies which exist:

1. Boaters' Christian Fellowship (BCF);⁵⁴
2. Canal Ministries (until recently known as Boats of Hope);⁵⁵ and
3. The Waterways Chaplaincy.⁵⁶

⁵² <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/latest-news/news-archive-2015/archbishop-praises-work-narrowboat-chaplains> [Accessed 29/4/19].

⁵³ See **Comparison with other travelling communities** section below.

⁵⁴ <https://www.boaterschristianfellowship.org.uk> [Accessed 29/4/19] For the sake of full disclosure the author is a recent member of BCF.

⁵⁵ <https://www.canalministries.org.uk> [Accessed 29/4/19].

⁵⁶ < <https://www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk> > [Accessed 2/4/19].

Boaters' Christian Fellowship

BCF is a member-based organisation (with 600 members in 2019) whose primary purposes is to facilitate worship, fellowship and support networks amongst boat owners, and those interested in the waterways, who are *already practising Christians*.⁵⁷ It does, it says, *witness* to the Christian faith in the following ways:

We can often be seen at many events around the system. We may be running a stand, and/or providing fun interactive games and activities for old and young alike. When appropriate, we offer a hospitality boat, where people are welcome to come aboard for a chat, a cuppa, maybe cake and, of course, prayer is always on offer.⁵⁸

Whilst this type of event is, doubtless, an important witness to the presence of Christians on the waterways this does rather remind one of a church fête-style witness; being evidence of the existence of a Christian community whilst being neither directly ministerial to the needs of others, not directly evangelistic towards them. However, this needs to be viewed within the context that BCF works closely with both Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy in supporting their respective ministries (see below) and, therefore, does not seek

⁵⁷ To become a member of BCF one needs to be able to accede to their statement of faith, which is expressly Christian.

⁵⁸ <https://www.boaterschristianfellowship.org.uk/witness.html> [Accessed 29/4/19]

to position itself as an alternate provider of either. It could therefore be argued that BCF is the equivalent of the institutional church on the waterway, providing a base for and empowering those who are called to be missionary outside the confines of that body and happy to be joined by those who wish to step over their threshold.

Although BCF is the largest of the Christian bodies operating on the waterways on the basis that it would not appear to be active in mission to the wider waterways communities (beyond its membership) it is not the intention of the author to explore the work of this group in detail, other than to note its existence and its support for the work of Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy. This does not mean that the mission of BCF is thought of as unimportant by the author. On the contrary, thinking back to the waterways communities identified earlier, one has little doubt that those boaters in groups 1-3 (perhaps especially 3) who either identify as Christian, or who are on the verge of doing so, will be able to find a Christian community in BCF which can provide support and companionship even to those constantly on the move; boats belonging to BCF members are often identifiable by their stickers and they publish a directory which assists members looking to meet others. However, it is posited, that both Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy are more intentionally missional towards the harder to reach parts of the waterways communities.

Canal Ministries

Canal Ministries is a group of 19 ‘evangelists’ living on 10 narrow boats, although they also have two land-based members. Although the members of Canal Ministries are all members of BCF nonetheless Canal Ministries is not a subsidiary of BCF but is an independent body having its own board of trustees. The mission of Canal Ministries is, in their own words:

Canal Ministries is an organisation that seeks to share God’s love and bring the message of salvation to those who live, work and play on the waterways of Great Britain. [...] Our objective is to get alongside the people that use these waterways and present them with the message of salvation. [...] Each of the team live aboard their boat. [...] Our parish is the network of canals and rivers of England and Wales. [...] Our work is to share the Good News of salvation to those that we meet on our daily travels. Sometimes we may sail with another boat for a few days, and at other times there are only a couple of minutes as we meet at a lock to sew a few seeds for Christ.⁵⁹

It is interesting that Canal Ministries use the word ‘alongside’ here because this is a word which crops up as an important feature in Waterways Chaplaincy and

⁵⁹ < <https://youtu.be/b6BRmVZUzos> > [Accessed via <www.canalministries.org.uk> 7/5/19]

in the wider chaplaincy literature, and it is the intention to return to this further below.

The fact that such a high percentage of those involved with Canal Ministries live full time aboard their own boats, amidst the communities to whom they minister, means that this is a highly incarnational form of ministry.⁶⁰ Although the waterways communities are diverse there is, nonetheless, a shared vocabulary and experience of living on the canal which may not be readily understood by those without that experience. Although this may not be as extreme as Vincent Donovan's mission to the Masai in Kenya it is nevertheless suggested that a missiology that starts with a deep understanding of, and a presence within, a community is ultimately more 'Christ-like' than seeking to 'do mission' to a community from the outside.⁶¹

As the 'evangelist' title of the Canal Ministry members suggests this group is the most overtly evangelistic of the waterways ministry groups, and they hold missions each summer (at the height of the holiday season) in different parts of the canal network.⁶²

⁶⁰ Some of the Canal Ministries boats have their own websites, enabling one to track their progress around the system See, e.g. Sola Gratia < <https://www.sola-gratia.org.uk/index.html> > [Accessed 2/4/19].

⁶¹ See Donovan, V. *Christianity Rediscovered* (Orbis 2003).

⁶² See Figure 2 for a photograph of their 2017 mission.

Over a two week period we cruise a short stretch of the canal network and, with the help and support of local churches, we take meetings, services, run coffee mornings, there are fêtes and garden parties and folk evenings. We use a clown and have puppet shows to entertain the children and adults and present parables, bible stories and a gospel message. [...] These events provide an excellent opportunity to share with people. But even in the midst of a crowd sharing of Jesus and what he has done for us by taking our punishment on the cross is always best on a one to one basis and that is the daily routine of the Canal Ministries team. Wherever people cross our paths it is a possible God-given opportunity to share the Good News of forgiveness and hope for the next life. The rivers and canals of England and Wales are our mission field.⁶³

Having mentioned church fêtes in relation to the witness of BCF it is interesting to see Canal Ministries be happy to use that word in relation to their mission especially as it is clear from the context that they see nothing inimical between a fête and a direct presentation of the gospel message. It is also interesting to observe their use of the phrase ‘mission field’, in relation to the waterways, as this makes an express link with the type of language more commonly used by those travelling to far-off places to carry out mission and emphasises the fact

⁶³ < <https://youtu.be/b6BRmVZUzos> > [Accessed via <www.canalministries.org.uk> [Accessed 7/5/19].

that they view that place and those communities as being in need of such mission.



Figure 2 *The Mission on the Canal* ⁶⁴

Although Canal Ministries is the most overtly evangelistic of the three bodies under consideration it is important to note, especially when comparing them with the Waterways Chaplaincy, that they do not view their mission to the waterways communities as being *solely* evangelistic. They are clear that they are also there to assist other boaters in deeply practical ways including the

⁶⁴ 21 May 2017 Copyright Tim Clarke Used with permission
<<https://www.onephotographaday.org.uk/the-mission-on-the-canal/>> [Accessed 1/5/2019].

provision of food, fuel, help with mechanical issues, referring to other agencies for help with medical needs, benefits or education, referring to Waterways Chaplains or local churches for ongoing support and ‘emotional and spiritual’ support.⁶⁵ It should be clear from this both that Canal Ministries are happy to work with the Waterways Chaplaincy and that their mission contains substantial elements which look more like chaplaincy ministry than evangelism. Therefore, although Canal Ministries are explicit about both their Christian origins and their desire for those that they come into contact with to become Christian it is apparent that in the context of living on the waterways that there cannot always be strict compartmentalisation between evangelism and chaplaincy-style ministry.

Canal Ministries is therefore a relatively small group (not forgetting that we are looking at a marginal rather than a mainstream ministry) who are living openly as Christians amongst and as part of the waterways communities, who practice ‘classical’ evangelism in the form of canal-side mission meetings but who also seek to serve the needs of the waterways communities in practical ways, as an integral part of their mission. Although the author is interested in examining the theology of chaplaincy, and especially the line between ‘being present’ and being overtly evangelistic, this group is an interesting and useful reminder that

⁶⁵ < <https://www.canalministries.org.uk/about-us.html> > [Accessed 1/5/19]

the praxis of living out a deeply incarnational ministry can give rise to similar issues for those not in chaplaincy roles.

Finally, when planning this dissertation it was the author's intention to spend some time with Canal Ministries, not only seeking to interview some of the evangelists but also to spend some time with them as a mini ethnographic study. Sadly some arrangements had to be cancelled because of sickness at their end and could not be remade in the time available. In terms of scope for further study it is suggested that an incarnational / ethnographic study of such an incarnational mission within such apparently domestic climes could be fruitful.

The Waterways Chaplaincy

Waterways Chaplaincy is a relatively new ministry and arose directly from the perception that the waterways were becoming home to a needy and forgotten section of society:

The chaplaincy initiative occurred at the same time as the Salvation Army had produced a report about poverty and its effects called *The Seeds of Exclusion*.⁶⁶ The report acknowledged that approximately 20 percent of

⁶⁶ The first Seeds of Exclusion report was published in July 2008: Bonner, Dr Adrian & Luscombe, Claire, *Seeds of Exclusion* (The Salvation Army 2008) and referenced here in the 2009 version: < http://uki-cache.salvationarmy.org/41281856-cd9d-4c4f-9c43-672e34cae846_The%20Seeds%20of%20Exclusion%202009.pdf > [Accessed 13/5/19].

the UK population lives in relative poverty. This included about 2-3 percent of people with moderate to severe mental health problems, as well as alcohol and drug users who were not able to access education, employment or training easily; it also included those with young children. These were people who were hard to reach – often ‘excluded’ from access to opportunities. Workplace Matters had identified the migration of a small percentage of such people looking for what they saw as a cheaper and alternative lifestyle on the inland waterways of the UK. However, the waterways were, and are, in the main a largely unsupported part of society.⁶⁷

Whilst it works closely with BCF and Canal Ministries it is interesting that Waterways Chaplaincy has its origins in neither of them but in Workplace Matters, which specialises in workplace chaplaincy and, in addition to the waterways, also supports chaplains in Luton Airport, Sainsburys and casinos.⁶⁸ As it is part of the purpose of this dissertation to examine the Church of England’s institutional engagement with mission to the waterways communities it is pertinent here to consider the extent of that church’s involvement with Workplace Matters at an organisational level. The good news is that there is

⁶⁷ Howard, Sue Dr *Celebrating Success in Supporting the marginalised on the move* (Waterways Chaplaincy Workplace Matters 31 October 2017) p 17.

⁶⁸ <https://www.workplacematters.org.uk> [Accessed 7/5/19] Workplace Matters is formally called Ecumenical Partnerships Initiative, a company limited by guarantee, trading as Workplace Matters.

certainly *some* involvement: The Bishop of St. Albans, Rt. Rev'd Alan Smith, is a Patron and Canon Mark Russell, also on the Archbishop's Council, is a Trustee. The less good news is that the level of St. Alban's financial support to Workplace Matters was decreased significantly in 2017, leading to the redundancy of the CEO. Further, St Alban's is the *only* Church of England Diocese mentioned, despite the fact that the work of the Waterways Chaplaincy is virtually nationwide. However, a good number of other churches also support Workplace Matters including the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the United Reform Church, the Salvation Army and the Religious Society of Friends, and some non-church donors such as London Luton Airport and the Canal and River Trust.⁶⁹ Given this diversity of support, and the fact that this ministry arose from the publication of a Salvation Army report, it is probably uncontroversial to say that the Waterways Chaplaincy is not wholly a Church of England initiative nor, given the fact that 41 other Church of England Dioceses are not involved, there is not a huge amount of institutional engagement by the national Church of England.

Having noted that the Church of England is only one amongst many in this ecumenical partnership (which should not be surprising given the nature of ecumenism) it should be mentioned that the National Senior Waterways

⁶⁹ As per Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Year Ending 31 December 2017 for Ecumenical Partnerships Initiatives trading as Workplace Matters and filed with Companies House. < <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/06951383/filing-history> > [Accessed 13/5/19].

Chaplain, Rev'd Mark Chester, is a Church of England priest, and former Vicar and military chaplain. There is something perhaps reminiscent here of the institutional church being able to raise up and send out ministers to these marginal missions, as we saw in the previous canal eras. All other chaplains are engaged as volunteers and come from a wide variety of church backgrounds. There are no non-Christian chaplains engaged with this ministry although it is understood that there are mechanisms to refer people onto non-Christian ministers if required. Including probationers there are currently 77 chaplains across the network and, it is understood, that it is planned to grow the chaplaincy to 200 volunteers by 2020.⁷⁰ Although this may sound like a substantial number (when compared to Canal Ministries, for example) when one realises that each chaplain only undertakes to walk a mile a week even 200 chaplains would cover less than 10% of the network.

Although there is a substantial element of co-operation and even overlap between BCF, Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy it is also clear that each is distinct in its approach and the Waterways Chaplaincy, as the name would suggest, has more in common with chaplaincy as one might encounter it in the more expected contexts of schools, prisons, hospitals or the military.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *BCF Word, The Quarterly Magazine of the Boaters' Christian Fellowship* Spring 2019 pp 20-21.

⁷¹ See Figure 3 The Leisure Canal era ministries.

Having touched on the distinction between evangelism and chaplaincy-style ministry, in relation to Canal Ministries above, it is worth now looking at this from the perspective of the Waterways Chaplaincy:

Whilst chaplains are motivated by their Christian calling and values, they are not overtly evangelistic and they do not proselytize; rather they live out Christian spirituality as they voluntarily walk alongside people giving them support, getting to know them and helping them to ‘move on’ from the often negative situation they are in to something more positive.

Chaplains offer encouragement to all people regardless of religion, orientation or race.⁷²

Here we again encounter the word ‘alongside’ which, as it happens is also part of the strapline for Waterways Chaplaincy (“*coming alongside you*”). Naturally there is an element of a play on words here because boats come alongside one another as they either travel side by side or moor up against one another. When people come ‘alongside’ one another then, similarly, it looks more like the companionship of equals traveling, or resting, together than a leader showing the way to another. This concept of ‘alongsidedness’ is also mentioned by Victoria Slater, albeit in the context of military chaplaincy:

⁷² Howard (2017) p 7

[...] chaplaincy affords ways for the Church as the people of God to be *alongside* people in their daily lives, offering, in Chris’s words, the “gift of faith.” Chaplains are in a position to engage with those who are not church members and to address individual and social concerns from within the particular realities of everyday life.⁷³

This is very different from the ‘come and join us’ model either of the settled parish church or even of the existing Christians within BCF. The Waterways Chaplains (and Canal Ministries when carrying out their practical ministry) are getting alongside those living with quite particular concerns arising from the realities of their everyday life, and it is quite likely that those concerns would simply not be understood by those who don’t speak the vocabulary of the waterways.

Although Canal Ministries and Waterways Chaplaincy complement each other, and work with each other in practice, it should be apparent that they are starting from quite different, albeit equally Christian, places: Canal Ministries are primarily evangelistic in purpose and their service to the practical needs of the waterways communities is an adjunct to their evangelism whereas for the Waterways Chaplaincy they are starting from a Christian imperative to serve the

⁷³ Slater, V. *Living church in the world: chaplaincy and the mission of the church* (Practical Theology, 5 no 3 Dec 2012) p. 314

most needy in society. However, and this is important, this does not mean that Waterways Chaplaincy are disinterested in serving the spiritual needs of those they encounter, because that is far from true.

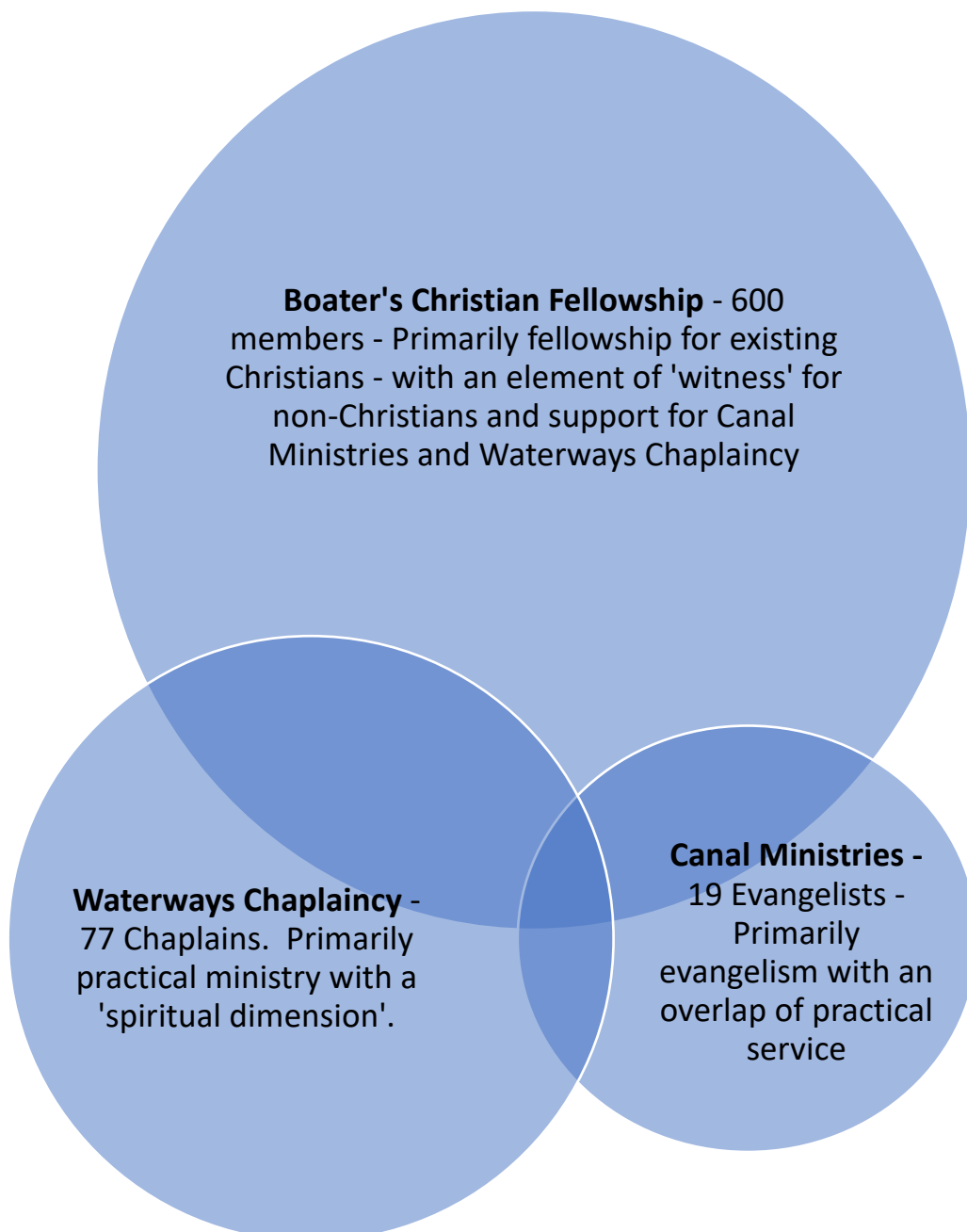


Figure 3 The Leisure Canal era ministries

As part of the research for this dissertation the author interviewed a number of waterways chaplains and we explored this intersection between chaplaincy-style ministry and evangelism, and would highlight the following, starting with the National Senior Waterways Chaplain, Rev'd Mark Chester:

[...] the eternal spiritual dimension needs to be part of every encounter, even if the recipient does not know it. We give away fridge prayer magnets. Gets Jesus on the agenda. Not sure whether sowing seeds, watering them or about to harvest them. But everything must have an explicitly spiritual dimension from the perspective of the chaplain [...]

Always an element of the spiritual – not simply service. Some chaplains would happily spend all day mending someone's boat but would forget to pray for them, so we emphasise this all the time. Pray before they go out. Pray when they get back and release them to God [...] Gently trail faith and wait for them to ask. But always wait for them to ask. People ask why are you a chaplain or what do they do. Offer to pray for people. Trail it in the little things. Telling stories. The gospel is fundamentally about relationships.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Extract from Interview 22/1/19.

This is an important reflection as it makes clear that chaplaincy ministry is not just about what is done on a practical level, or what the recipient perceives as the ‘transaction’. Given the nature of boating and, perhaps, given the nature of those attracted to this ministry, and as Rev’d Mark Chester identifies, it would be entirely possible for chaplains to spend their entire time fixing boats or helping people with other areas of their lives but as he makes clear both here, and in the training given to new waterways chaplains,⁷⁵ that the ‘spiritual dimension’ has to be part of each encounter, even if only from the perspective of the chaplain. But sometimes that spiritual dimension becomes an express part of a conversation, as another Senior Chaplain said:

I don’t think there is any such thing as the social gospel – it’s just the gospel. Christ helped people. No differentiation. Talk when you get the opportunity. Pray when you can with people, prayed with people on the towpath. Sometimes it’s that and sometimes it is more practical help. The chaplaincy is not overtly evangelistic but if the opportunity arises, such as the opportunity to take a funeral [...] It’s no time to shy away from what your faith stands for and that’s what your there for.⁷⁶

And when speaking to some newly authorised chaplains it was clear that they are equally aware of the spiritual dimension of their work:

⁷⁵ The author attended a training day for Waterways Chaplains on 17 February 2018.

⁷⁶ Barbara Davis, Senior Chaplain, interview 22/1/19

You become very aware that these people are lonely...How desperately important it is to make contact with people, to speak with them...And if the conversation goes any further and becomes a spiritual conversation, fine [...] When it is very quiet we stand and pray and ask for God's protection for those who are using the waterway, in whatever way they use it. We offer friendship and love to people, so they are aware of the love of God.⁷⁷

It would therefore be too simplistic to characterise the Waterways Chaplaincy as being about practical service to the exclusion of evangelism, or to argue a false dichotomy between their ministry and that exercised by Canal Ministries. It should be clear from the above, and as illustrated in Figure 3, that there are substantial intersections between their different missions. Nonetheless the *primary* purpose of the Waterways Chaplaincy is to look after the needs of those who find themselves living on the waterways and who, for whatever reason, encounter difficulties in their lives. The interviewees for this dissertation gave many such examples but, for the sake of brevity, a flavour only can be given:

⁷⁷ David & Diane Pickford, Chaplains, extract from interview 22/1/19.

[...] Another guy moved into the marina who had a job but had an alcohol problem. Lost his job. Eventually met with him as a chaplain. Went onto his boat – the bottom of the boat was full of water, so he was walking in water. Bottles all over the place. No working fridge. No heat, not much food. We pumped his boat out a couple of times. Put some lights in. Helped with food. He was desperate. He didn't think he had a drink problem. He had fallen in the canal twice. Once between the pontoon and the boat. Had to get help to pull him out [...] I think the Chaplaincy has literally saved lives.⁷⁸

[I was] walking a towpath with another chaplain and a lady was walking her dog. She said, "I'm so glad I've seen you". It turned out her Godson had been run over and killed at a level crossing. In the freezing cold there was an extended conversation about grief and bereavement and God for 40 minutes, including prayer. Lots of chaplaincy is ministry on the hoof. [Another] Lady who contacted chaplaincy who was concerned about another lady in a boat, as boat was getting scruffy. Turned out she had had cancer, not looking after herself, had run out of food and hygiene had gone and boat overrun by rats. Had a mooring problem as overstaying. So, we contacted CRT and got an extension to her mooring, sorted out her benefits, got a couple of people from local church to come

⁷⁸ Barbara Davis, Senior Chaplain, extract from interview 22/1/19.

and clean up her boat, got a cat to keep her company and keep rats down.⁷⁹

To close this section, and as a partial answer to my initial presenting question, it is apparent that there is a Christian presence on the waterways and it could even be said that between the three bodies of BCF, Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy, that they cover a wide spectrum of need across the different waterways communities, from those existing Christians who wish to be part of a worshipping community to those in dire need who may need the most basic of practical assistance. However, before seeking to draw any final conclusions, it may be useful to briefly examine the way in which both the state and the church has treated another, highly comparable, marginal group to see whether this may inform those conclusions.

⁷⁹ Rev'd Mark Chester, National Senior Waterways Chaplain, extract from interview 22/1/19.

Comparison with other travelling communities.

As has already been observed there are both parallels and distinctions to be made between the waterways communities and other travelling communities and, for this reason, there is an element of mutuality between those who have made a study of waterways communities and those who have studied Roma and other land-based travelling communities. For example, Dr Jodie Matthews of Huddersfield University has been appointed as the Canal and River Trust's first Honorary Research Fellow. Dr Matthews has written about the attitude of 19th century society both to Roma and to canal people of that time.⁸⁰ The parallels between these are communities are striking, as Dr Matthews says:

The many comparisons between the Romani community and the canal boat people is what first led me to the tales of the waterways. Like Romani communities canal boat people were misrepresented by outsiders in children's books, literature and newspapers. Canal boat people were seen as a community in need of reform and civilisation, they were seen as being Sabbath breakers, cruel to their children and hard drinkers.⁸¹

⁸⁰ See, for example, Matthews, Jodie (2013) "Thousands of these floating hovels": Picturing Bargees in Image and Text, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 35:2, 121-142 and Matthews, J. (2015). Where are the Romanies? An Absent Presence in Narratives of Britishness. *Identity papers: A journal of British and Irish studies*, 1(1), 79-90. <https://doi.org/10.5920/idp.2015.1179>.

⁸¹ <https://vimeo.com/217810104> [Accessed 1/4/19].

The similarities in the practical challenges of daily life and the type of discrimination suffered is not limited to the 19th century but is also a present-day issue for those living full time on the waterways:

Liveaboard boaters face discrimination in similar ways to Gypsies and Travellers. Sometimes this can be in the form of verbal abuse, often from holiday boaters of the more partying tendencies. There is also negative stereotyping from passers-by and judgements on how tidy or shiny boats might look, or how much ‘tat’ is on the roof. There are many boat owners on the canal who quite openly despise liveaboard boaters, accusing them of being ‘continuously moored’ or ‘bridgehoppers’ (referring to how little some of them are alleged to move their boats). Phrases such as ‘linear scum’, ‘water pikeys’ and ‘river Gypsies’ delivered in aggressive tones are ones thrown at many liveaboards.⁸²

Despite these undoubted similarities in public perception and representation in popular culture, and despite the many practical similarities in lifestyle between someone living in a boat and someone living in a caravan, there are also important differences between these communities, which have had an

⁸² Worrall, S. *Inequality on the Cut* 8/2/19 < https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/blog/sam-worrall-inequality-on-the-cut/?fbclid=IwAR00jSKI6jZR0dAOzgZEIOOtUF0daK_zDQwF9XImha21O--rmRaBsygHHx0 > [Accessed 9/5/19].

impact on their treatment by both society and the church. The chief difference in this context is one of race or ethnic origin. The Romani people have their origin in North Indian and Persia, they made their way to Britain across Europe and have been present here for some 500 years.⁸³ Other land-based travellers in England are usually of Irish origin. As such both Roma and Irish travellers are members of identifiable ethnic minorities. Whilst this may also have been true of the Irish ‘navvies’ who originally dug the canals there is no reason to believe this to be true either of the boatmen who later worked the canals, or the modern waterways dwellers. In the modern context this means that Roma and Irish travellers have been subject to a great deal more racial discrimination than those living on the waterways. Indeed, racial discrimination against Roma and Irish travellers has been described as ‘the last acceptable racism’.⁸⁴ In terms of portrayal in popular culture it could be argued that programs such as ‘*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*’ is simply a 21st century version of the stereotyped portrayal of travellers in 19th century literature.⁸⁵

⁸³ The misnomer ‘Gypsy’ came from the misconception that they came originally from Egypt. See, for example <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/romani-people-0010492> [Accessed 1/4/19].

⁸⁴ Doherty M, 2016 “The Last Acceptable Racism”, The Guardian 15th January < <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/15/acceptable-racism-gypsies-travellers-prejudice>> [Accessed 1/4/19] see also Mohdin, A. “UK Politicians accused of racist rhetoric against travellers”. The Guardian 14th May < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/14/uk-politicians-accused-of-racist-rhetoric-against-travellers>> [Accessed 14/5/19].

⁸⁵ < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Fat_Gypsy_Weddings> [Accessed 1/4/19].

Whilst this racism is obviously unacceptable and subjects members of both the Roma and Irish traveller communities at a disadvantage in some respects when compared to people who live on the waterways, it could also be argued that the higher profile of those communities also means that they receive legislative assistance that has been denied to the more hidden waterways communities.

There have been two recent examples of this: One from the Church of England's General Synod and the other from Parliament. The first comes from a report put to General Synod on 23 February 2019.⁸⁶ The report was prepared by the Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and sets out a challenging summary of the racism suffered by those communities. For example:

Extreme levels of hostility are the norm today, fuelled by irresponsible media coverage, of the kind that would be met by outrage if targeted at any other group [...] 9 out of 10 traveller children have suffered racial abuse and 2/3 have been bullied or physically attacked. Many from the Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma communities now seek to hide their identity when applying for jobs as they know it will generally reduce their chances of employment.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ GS 2123 <<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/GS%202123.pdf>> [Accessed 1/4/19].

⁸⁷ GS 2123. p.1.

However, the challenges faced by the Roma and Irish Traveller community are not limited to this sort of overt racism, but also include a form of ‘institutional racism’, which may sound familiar in the context of waterways dwellers:

Without secure accommodation and safe stopping places access to education, employment and health is severely restricted...Many GP receptionists will refuse to register people with no permanent address [...] Churches too have been part of this institutional racism, in their failure to welcome Gypsies and Travellers into the full life of their communities. There is much anecdotal evidence of people being refused Baptism, Weddings and Funerals.⁸⁸

The motion put to General Synod on the basis of that report included a request, *inter alia*:

[...] every diocese to appoint a chaplain to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, to provide pastoral care, harness the potential for church growth among those communities [...]

⁸⁸ GS 2123. p.3.

This motion was overwhelmingly adopted (by 265 to 1), which therefore places the obligation on each diocese to appoint a chaplain as described.

The author of this dissertation wrote to Dr Elizabeth Henry (the author of this report and the National Adviser to the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns) and asked whether it had been considered to include waterways-based travelling people within the definition of 'other traveller communities', which would have extended this additional pastoral care to them. Dr Henry replied:

Your question gives food for thought, however, the groups that we (Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma ((CNGTR)) refer to are those communities that define themselves (or are identified as) 'Irish travellers' and/or travellers.

We have not discussed whether only travellers who are land based are included. However, it would be fair to say that we refer to people who share an ethnic (culture/history/colour/nationality and /or national origin) identity.⁸⁹

It is undoubtedly true that this General Synod motion was framed with a view to tackling the racial discrimination faced by Roma and Irish travellers, which do

⁸⁹ Email to author dated 8 April 2019.

not face the waterways communities in the same way. However, it is also true that those who live an itinerant life on the waterways face many similar challenges to the Roma and Irish travellers, including practical challenges such as the quality of housing and all the problems of accessing the services of both the state and the church. It is therefore suggested that, as laudable as this motion was, by framing the debate solely within the realm of racial discrimination rather than disadvantage exacerbated by comparable lifestyles, that it was a missed opportunity to encourage the Church of England to take the provision of chaplaincy services to the waterways communities more seriously.

The second, similar, example of waterways-based travellers receiving less assistance from those in authority than Roma or Irish travellers, despite facing many similar issues in practice, comes from a House of Commons Committee Report by the Women's and Equalities Committee (published on 5 April 2019).⁹⁰ However, in contrast to the General Synod report, this report at least did acknowledge the needs of other, non-ethnic-minority, travelling groups and expressed the *hope* that they would receive similar attention, whilst not actually seeking to offer it:

⁹⁰<<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>> [Accessed 8/4/19] See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/04/government-has-comprehensively-failed-gypsies-say-mps> [Accessed 8/4/19].

The term Traveller can also encompass groups that travel, including, but not limited to, New Travellers, Boaters, Bargees and Showpeople. While these communities share many of the barriers faced by people who are ethnically Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller, covering all these groups in a single inquiry would not do justice to their needs. Our hope is that the recommendations in this report will benefit not only those that are in the three groups we have focussed on but everyone who travels or is not a part of the settled community.⁹¹

This simultaneous inclusion of ‘Boat Dwellers’ within the definition of ‘Traveller’ but excluding them from detailed consideration is also echoed within the literature.⁹²

It would therefore appear that the waterways communities are not only marginal vis-à-vis ‘mainstream’ society but they also appear to be equally marginal vis-à-vis other travelling communities. This is not to denigrate the need to tackle and overcome the discrimination based on race which may be an additional challenge to Roma and Irish Travellers but it is perhaps unfortunate that the fact that waterways travellers are not a distinct ethnic minority has meant that the

⁹¹ Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities Paragraph 3.

<<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.htm>>
[Accessed 10/4/19].

⁹² Clarke, C (University of Hertfordshire Press 2006) p. 14.

comparable practical challenges their lifestyle presents has not been addressed by either the Church of England or the Government.

Conclusions and recommendations

There can be little doubt, for all the reasons explored above, that those who live on the canals and rivers are living on the margin of society and are even marginal in relation to other groups of travellers. This marginality appears to have been true for the entire history of the canals. Even when the canals formed the transport backbone of the industrial revolution and were therefore integral to the growth of mainstream society, nonetheless those who lived their lives on the waterways were apart from that society.

In the modern Leisure Canal era some choose to be on that margin, to immerse themselves in the hiddenness of the waterways, for the peace and tranquillity which it has, in abundance. Whilst money and health are sufficient to keep boats in good order and to cope with some of the physical challenges then it can be a good life. But even for those who have chosen this life, either through retirement or a desire to live an alternative lifestyle, both money and health can give out, perhaps suddenly. In those circumstances the blessings of being hidden, of being at the margin, can become a curse.

And that curse will have been all too apparent for those who have not chosen this life but who may have had the hiddenness of life on the waterways thrust upon them by divorce, unemployment or sickness. Those who have been driven

to the margin by the challenges of mainstream society may be overwhelmed when faced with some of the additional challenges of trying to survive there. The waterways have always been a marginal place, populated by a marginal people, and it brings its own particular needs and challenges, both physical and spiritual and the communities who live on the waterways have therefore always presented the church with a peculiar set of needs and challenges.

The response of the Church of England to the peculiar needs and challenges of these marginal people, throughout the ages, appears to have been ambivalent. Some Vicars have preached against the '*banditti*' while others have created floating churches. The Archbishop of Canterbury has said warm words about the work of the Waterways Chaplaincy but the one Church of England diocese which has been actively involved in that work has had to substantially reduce its giving. It is suggested that the Church of England, as a whole, appears to have given little positive attention to this group and it is possible that the parish-residency requirements for access to some occasional offices may have even contributed to the marginalisation of those who live on the move.

Further, it feels like a missed opportunity that when both General Synod and Government have recently considered the particular needs of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers that the needs of those who travel on the waterways seems to fall either entirely outside the purview of the initiative (in the case of General

Synod) or are acknowledged as being subject to the same ‘barriers’ and yet are not explicitly included within the ambit of the report.

A straightforward recommendation to the Church of England is that it should revisit GS2123 and include the waterways communities within the definition of ‘other travellers’ and, therefore, engage with providing chaplaincy services to those communities, in addition to the Roma and Irish travellers. Of course, this does not mean that the Church of England needs to try and reinvent chaplaincy to the waterways; rather it is suggested that each of the dioceses could meet this obligation by seeking to support the existing Waterways Chaplaincy. Even a relatively modest contribution, but replicated across all 42 dioceses, would go a long way towards helping this chaplaincy meet the need which exists in this marginal group.

If those who live on the waterways are a marginal group in society then those who are missional towards them appear to be equally marginal in relation to the church. The evangelists in Canal Ministries appear to hold no formal positions within any church and the chaplains within Waterways Chaplaincy are exercising a highly marginal ministry.

[...] chaplains have often found themselves marginal to the life of the church in whose name they minister.⁹³

One of the themes of this work has been ‘*hiddenness*’ and this does not just apply to the waterways and those who live there. Rather, it is submitted, that chaplaincy itself is a ‘hidden ministry’.⁹⁴

Within this hidden ministry the existence of waterways chaplaincy is mentioned as existing⁹⁵ but it receives none of the dedicated coverage given to chaplaincy in healthcare, schools, the military, the prison service, airports or even football clubs.⁹⁶ It would therefore seem that those parts of the church which do reach out to those living on the waterways are exercising a highly marginal ministry to a highly marginal community.

In relation to further research which could be carried out specifically in the area of mission to the waterways communities it has already been mentioned that there could be further quantitative research to better identify the total size of the population under consideration. Further, albeit from a different perspective, it

⁹³ Swift, C. *Hospital Chaplaincy in the Twenty-First Century* (Ashgate 2009) foreword.

⁹⁴ Todd, Andrew, Slater, Victoria and Dunlop, Sarah *The Church of England’s Involvement in Chaplaincy Research Report for The Mission and Public Affairs Council* (2014) p. 22.

⁹⁵ Ryan, Ben *A Very Modern Ministry: Chaplaincy in the UK* (Theos 2015) p.15.

⁹⁶ Threlfall-Holmes, M. & M. Newitt *Being a Chaplain* (SPCK 2011).

could be insightful to carry out a more extended research project perhaps living and working alongside both Canal Ministries and the Waterways Chaplaincy.

However, it is suggested that there is scope for a much bigger piece of work in relation to the theology and place of chaplaincy ministry itself, particularly in a community as opposed to a sector-specific context.⁹⁷ There is a good argument to be made that in an increasingly ‘post-Christendom’ age that chaplaincy should move from the margins and become the missionary future of the church.

Rev’d Mark Chester was unequivocal:

Chaplaincy is in the broadest sense is the next big thing for the church.

The emerging movement which could transform society and the church.

It is about meeting people in their world and not expecting them to come into your world because they are not going to churches and it is much more flexible and truly every member ministry. We still need the local church but in terms of outreach chaplaincy is the headliner. [...] This is the area the institutional church should be seeking to invest in terms of their entrepreneurial thinking.⁹⁸

Now there’s a challenge to the church!

⁹⁷ See, e.g. Slater, V. *Living church in the world: chaplaincy and the mission of the church* (Practical Theology, 5 no 3 Dec 2012) p. 308 referencing the dearth of research in this area.

⁹⁸ Rev’d Mark Chester, National Senior Waterways Chaplain, extract from interview 22/1/19.

Appendix 1



Figure 4 The Waterways of England and Wales⁹⁹

⁹⁹ https://www.waterways.org.uk/boating/route_planning/canal_map

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