

‘[There is] no class of men, whatever were their errors, more deserving of kindness, commiseration and support, than British seamen’

*(Port of Hull Society 3rd anniversary speech
by Reverend James Sykes, 29 October 1824)*

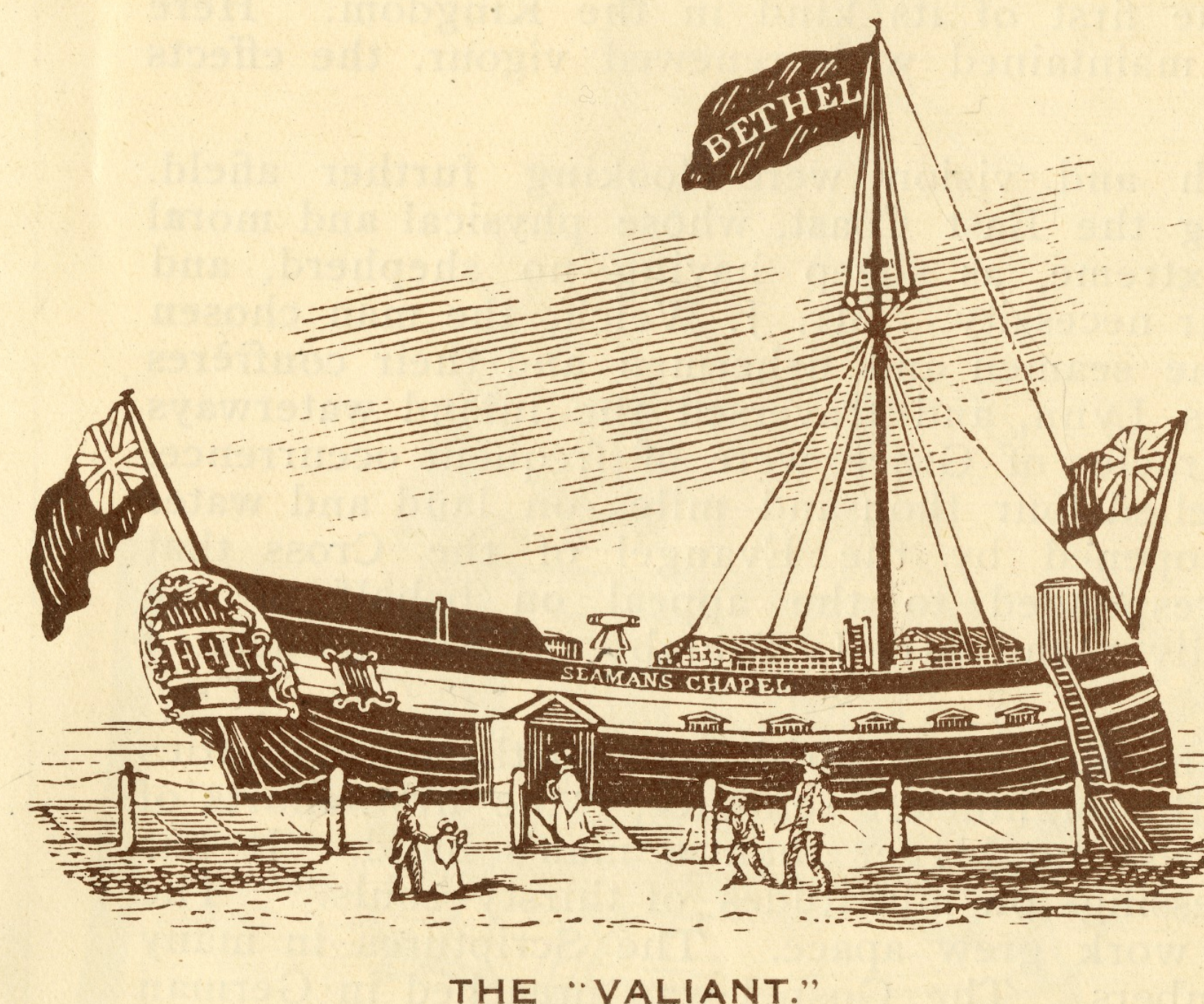
PORT OF HULL SOCIETY

Fact: The Port of Hull Society was formed in April 1821 and opened a Floating Chapel in October of the same year

On 19 April 1821 a group of philanthropic people with shipping related interests in Hull met at a schoolroom in Salthouse Lane to form the Port of Hull Society for the Religious Instruction of Seamen.

The society aimed to improve the spiritual and moral welfare of seafarers in the Port of Hull through the promotion of religious education.

Illustration of the Valiant floating chapel [U DMS]



Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette, 13 Apr 1821

**THE
SHIP-OWNERS, MERCHANTS,
UNDERWRITERS,**

AND all PERSONS concerned in the SHIPPING INTEREST of HULL, are respectfully informed that a PUBLIC MEETING will be held in the Boys' School Room, in SALTHOUSE-LANE, on THURSDAY the 19th inst. at ELEVEN o'clock in the Forenoon, (and not on the 16th in the Evening, as advertised in the Rockingham and Packet) for the purpose of forming a SOCIETY for the PROMOTION of RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION among SEAMEN. It is hoped that the importance of the object will secure a numerous attendance, and that the Ladies of Hull will countenance this undertaking by their presence and support.

By Order of the Provisional Committee,
(Signed) THOS. THONGER } Secretaries.
Hull, April 12, 1821. WM. GIBSON, jun. }

The society acquired the 'Valiant', a former Dutch warship, and converted it as a floating chapel.

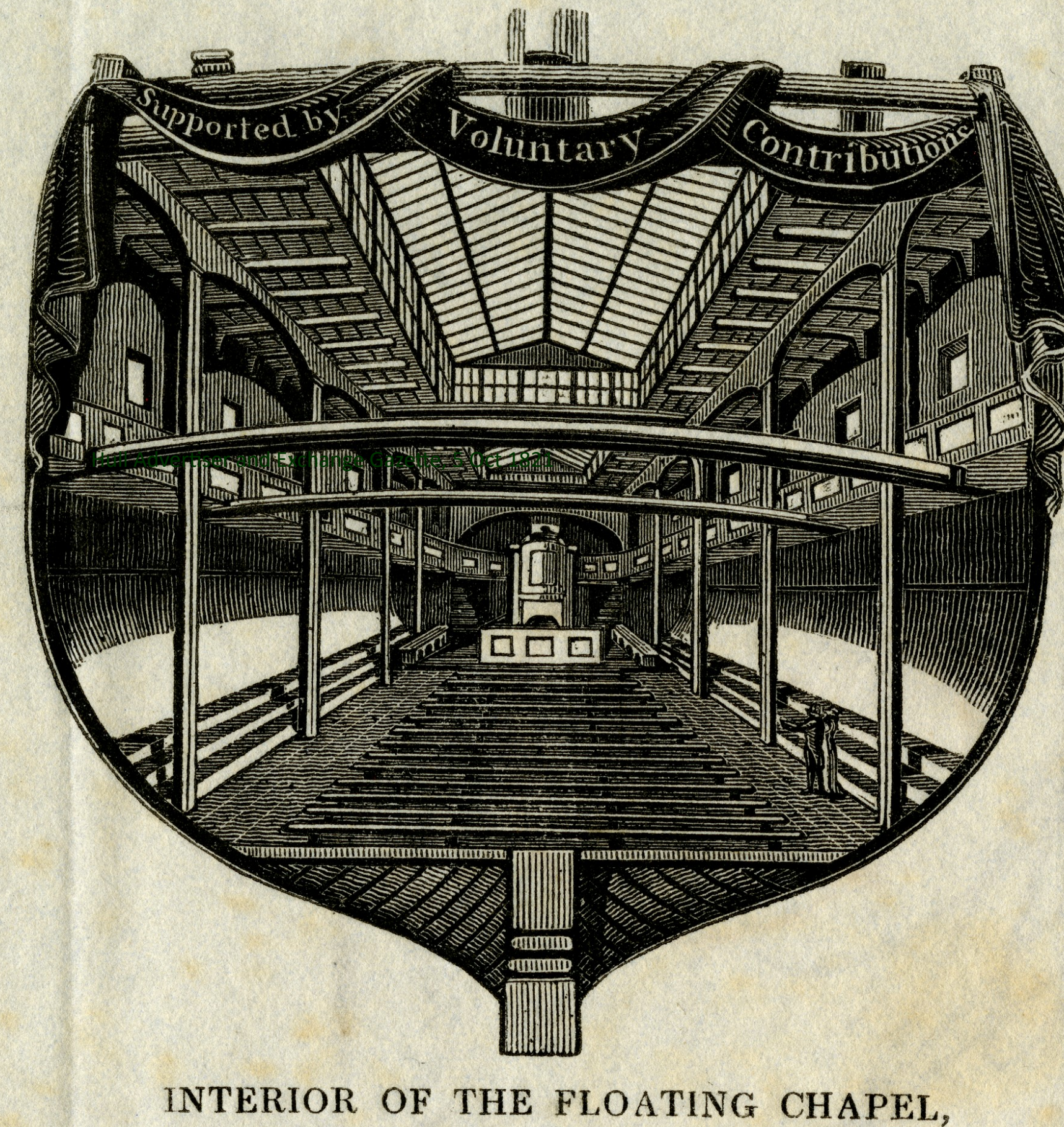
The chapel opened in Queen's Dock on 5 October 1821 so that seafarers and their families could attend regular services. It was later moved to Junction Dock (subsequently known as Prince's Dock).

A library was established on board in 1823 for the use of seafarers, and contained books on navigational subjects as well as religious matters.

The library proved popular, and a system of 'ship and sea library' boxes was established in 1826, which allowed a box of books to be borrowed for the

Fact: In 1823 a seamen's library was established on the Floating Chapel and the following year the society opened an evening school on board

Illustration of the inside of the floating chapel, mid-19th cent. [C DMX/8/8]



The Floating Chapel for Seamen was opened for Divine Worship on Wednesday morning last, when a most eloquent and impressive sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, from Isaiah 69th chap. part 5th verse—"The abundance of the seas shall be converted to Thee." The preceding evening, Dr. R. preached a preparatory sermon in Waltham-Street Chapel, from 1st James, iii. chap. 15th verse—"This is a faithful saying, &c." which appeared to make a deep impression on a crowded and attentive congregation. The Rev. Thomas Smith, of Rotherham, preached in Fish-street Chapel on Wednesday evening; and also a most excellent sermon on board the Floating Chapel, on Thursday morning, from Luke—"Lord, are there few that be saved, &c.;" a great interest appeared to be excited in behalf of Seamen, whose immortal interests have certainly been much neglected. We hope, now that a Place of Worship is provided for their express accommodation, and where all the Ministers will officiate gratuitously, that they will not only be induced to attend, but be much benefitted by it. Messrs. Highfield, Kelk, and Marsden, Methodist Ministers; also Messrs. Gilbert, Thonger, Curwen, &c. assisted in the interesting services on this occasion. The collections exceeded 80l.

Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette, 5 Oct 1821

A marine evening school had opened in the Floating Chapel by 1824 to improve the writing, reading, arithmetic and navigation skills of seamen and apprentices. There was also a Sunday school in operation.

After a few years of the society's operation, shipmasters reported lower rates of drunkenness as a result of the facilities offered on board the 'Valiant', and the endeavour was classified a success.

Reprint of a painting of the Valiant floating chapel, 20th cent. [C DSSF/1/2/5/40b]



The society sought to extend their work, and in 1834 instituted a Seamen’s Missionary post to minister to seafarers ‘wherever they might be found’.

The missionary’s work involved visiting seafarers on board ships, in local institutes and at home.

Missionaries were also responsible for holding services at various chapels in the city, delivering religious tracts to the seafaring community, and listening to the stories of the men and their families.

Fact: In 1842, a Sailors’ Institute was established on Waterhouse Lane to replace the Floating Chapel



Photograph showing the exterior of the East Hull Seamen’s Institute, 1941 [C DSSF]

Fishermen's and Sailors' Bethel, HESSLE ROAD.		
Weekly Services.		
SUNDAY	...	Gospel Service, 10-45 a.m. and 6-30 p.m. School, 2-30 p.m. Baptisms, 2-30 p.m.
MONDAY	...	Sewing Meeting, 2-30 p.m. Tea, 5 p.m.
TUESDAY	...	Baptisms, 6-30 p.m. Gospel Service, 7-30 p.m. Teachers Meeting, 8-30 p.m. Choir Practice, 8-45 p.m.
WEDNESDAY	...	Junior Christian Endeavour, 6-30 p.m. Girl Guides, 7-30 p.m.
THE BETHEL IS REGISTERED FOR MARRIAGES.		

Illustration of the Alexandra Dock mission hall, 1912 [C DSSF/1/3/7/5]



EAST HULL SAILORS' MISSION.		
WILLIAMSON STREET, Holderness Road and Hedon Road.		
SAILORS' REST, READING ROOMS AND INSTITUTE		
Open every day from from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.		
DAILY PAPERS. STATIONERY PROVIDED FREE.		
SERVICES.		
SUNDAY	...	Gospel Services, 11-0 a.m. and 6-30 p.m. Sunday School, 2-30 p.m.
MONDAY	...	Women's Meeting, 3 p.m.
WEDNESDAY	...	Bible Class, 7-30 p.m.
Bibles and Hymn Books provided and all seats free. Registered for Marriages.		



Waterhouse Lane Seamen’s Institute, mid 19th century [C DSSF/1/9/3/29]

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PORT OF HULL SOCIETY
The Valiant—NEW SEAMEN'S HOSTEL,
35 CARR LANE, HULL.

I regret that owing to unforeseen circumstances it has been found necessary to postpone the arrangements for private views of our new Seamen's Hostel to the following dates:—

**Wednesday, 16th April, Ladies' Day.
Thursday and Friday,
17th and 18th April, Gentlemen's Days.**

I hope we shall have the pleasure of your company on one of these days at 3-0 p.m. and that the altered arrangements will not cause you inconvenience.

C. ERIC EXLEY,
Hon. Secretary.

Invitation to inspect the seamen’s hostel on Carr Lane, 1941 [C DSSF/1/2/5/44]