



'The QVSR Revd David Roe Annual Lecture'

Background and Introduction

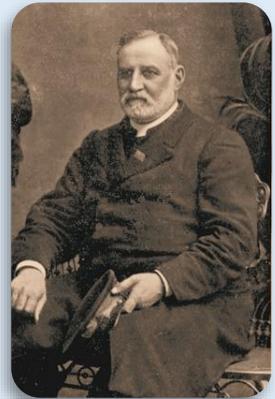
From the earliest days of QVSR, there have been many who have made an outstanding contribution to seeing the work of the Mission develop and grow.

One of the most outstanding of these “giants of faith” was the Revd David Roe, the first Superintendent of the Mission from 1898 – 1919. He died in 1921 aged 74 years and is buried in Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

Born in Staffordshire in 1847, David spent much of his early life in America, where he came to faith and became a Methodist. On his return to Britain in 1875 he began training for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry and was ordained in 1879.

David was appointed to QVSR at a significant time in the developing story of its work and it would require someone with his skills, determination, energy and vision to lay the foundations on which future generations would build.

Like many other mission superintendents working in the East End of London at that time, David Roe travelled the country, preaching and speaking about the work and seeking financial and other support.



His appeal to wider Methodism was to highlight the desperate situation facing seafarers and that their needs were frequently ignored or overlooked.

We get a sense of why he felt so strongly about the need to help from a report in a local newspaper of a speech he gave earlier in his ministry.

In his farewell speech at Willesden Wesleyan Church in London, before taking up another appointment, he gave a little insight into his own life and experience that would shape his ministry in the years to come.

He said:

"My life has been a very chequered one, I have passed through many trials and difficulties. I know what poverty means and what it is like to have only a basic bed on which to sleep. I look back upon those early years when I was a mere waif on the waves of time, but I am thankful to God, that I have been permitted to enjoy, in these later years, many of the good things in life"

Here was a man who found himself ministering to some of the poorest of the poor, what drove him, what inspired him, was that he could speak from personal experience.

It is clear from the annual reports of the Mission and articles taken from newspapers that David Roe was a man of great conviction and determination. The work of the Mission and the opening of the building in 1902 to provide accommodation for seafarers was only possible because of his tireless work.

In 1903, the QVSR report says:

“Day after day, week after week, David Roe carefully watched the erection of this building, and it is but recording a simple fact to say that this work is due to the ceaseless oversight and his practical acquaintance with the needs of the work. It has been an immense tax on his strength to carry this work through in addition to the ordinary trying work of travelling here, there and everywhere to advocate the claims of the mission.”

In 1913, the Chairman of the QVSR committee, the Revd John Bell, said this:

“I want to speak to you about young men who have visions. 16 years ago, when Mr Roe came to the seamen’s mission to take charge of what was then only a small affair, Mr Roe had a vision. He saw the possibilities of this useful work, he saw what might be, and he set to work to materialize that vision and today the result is a splendid pile of buildings.”

In a QVSR Annual Report David Roe wrote the following:

“The past year has been a year of strenuous toil and no little anxiety, a year in which we have seen our faith honoured, and our work blessed in so many ways, and amidst all the recollections of busy weeks and months, we are humbly conscious that the best of all has been that God has been with us, working in and through us to the glory of his holy name.

It is therefore with full hearts that we gratefully acknowledge his manifold mercies and express our deep thankfulness for his continued guidance and abundant manifestation of the wonders of his grace.”

The Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest and its ministry today stands as a living witness to Revd David Roe's great life's work, and we have chosen to honour him through the establishment of:

The QVSR Revd David Roe Annual Lecture

This lecture is designed to invite prominent people from the church and maritime world to stimulate debate and wider consideration of the role of the church in society and the challenges faced by the Maritime industry in an increasingly inter-connected world.

The current CEO, Chair, Trustees and staff of QVSR, invite you to join with us for the inaugural lecture to be given by Mr Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary of the Methodist Church.

Revd. A. Cameron Kirkwood

QVSR Chaplain

