

Will Your Anchor Hold?

William Alexander Smith, a young Scottish Territorial Army Officer, confessed one day his frustration. On a Saturday afternoon he could control and drill 100 men but found it impossible the next day to control a handful of boys in a Bible Class. A friend made a suggestion – why not try some of the “Army Formula” on the young men?

In 1883, William Smith adopted this idea and established what was to become the 1st Glasgow Company of the Boys’ Brigade – the idea rapidly grew to become first, a national, then an international uniformed organisation.

William Smith adopted as the badge for the organisation an anchor with the legend

“Sure and Stedfast”. Taken from Hebrews 6: 19: *“which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil”*

(King James Version - AV)



(For those of you, familiar with the BB badge of today, the red cross was added on amalgamation with the Boys’ Life Brigade in 1926)

As a boy in the 1st East Cowes Company of the Boys’ Brigade I regularly sang the “unofficial anthem” of the Brigade – the well known hymn by Priscilla Owens, “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?”

“Will your anchor hold?”

If any of you have taken a cruise holiday or sailed on some other substantial voyage you will probably be familiar with the sound of the anchor and chain running out -a very loud sound – the anchor and chain are substantial objects.



How can such large and heavy objects **not** hold a ship in a fixed position?

If you have sailed or are familiar with small coastal craft you will know there are a number of things that have to be

considered before dropping the anchor.



1. What is the seabed like?

It could be rock, sand shingle or mud.

2. What sort of anchor have you got?

General purpose or a model specific for say rock or mud?

3. What is the depth of water?

How will it change with the tide?

Most small boats use an anchor line rather than chain but usually have a short length of chain between the anchor and the line – to lie on the seabed and keep the anchor at the correct angle.

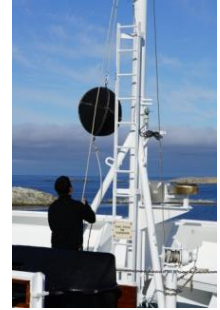
The anchor is down – can the crew relax?

It is still important to keep an anchor watch – in both small and large vessels. Bearings are taken and if they are unchanging the crew know they are securely anchored and not “dragging the anchor”.

When Trinity House operated manned lightships (before the days of GPS) each lightship had near it a substantially anchored buoy and this was used daily to check the position of the lightship. A neighbour in East Cowes was one of the Masters of the Shambles Lightship – off Portland Bill. I remember the day that the BBC issued a warning to mariners: “Ignore the Shambles Light – it is believed the lightship has dragged her anchor and is out of position!”

One more thing to do! Hoist a round shape to show others that you are at anchor.

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*



The question is asked and the response given in the Refrain to each verse:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll; (Hebrews 6: 19 again)
Fastened to the Rock which can never move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

Can we link the words of this hymn and the practicalities of anchoring securely to our lives?

Our anchor, in life, is or should be grounded in unmovable rock – one of the best holding grounds.

The rock is there but is our anchor engaging with it?

On an Educational Cruise, we were on the SS Uganda steaming through the Santorini caldera. The First Officer, who was navigating, informed us that they now knew the exact position of the underwater “mountain” and could anchor successfully if required. Let the anchor go in the wrong position in Santorini and anchor and chain would be lost in deep water as the chain ran out completely and broke the rope linking it to the ship – it had run out to the “bitter end”.

Do we have confidence that we have lowered our anchor onto good holding ground or is there even a danger that the anchor we put down will find nothing and be lost?

Even when we have made that secure connection we need to keep a constant check on it. Our faith is not a one-time experience, somewhere in the past, it is on-going. Just as the watch keeper needs to check those bearings we need to ensure that our anchor has not dragged and is missing the rock foundation.

“The Rock which can never move” – Yes, the rock may never move but the anchor can drift from it!

Finally – is our “anchor ball” in clear sight for all to see? Will others, by looking at us or by listening to the words we say know that we are followers of Jesus? Where does evangelism feature in our lives?

Let us pray that our anchor holds firmly in the rock, whatever life throws at us, and that *“grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love”* we may radiate that love to all around us.