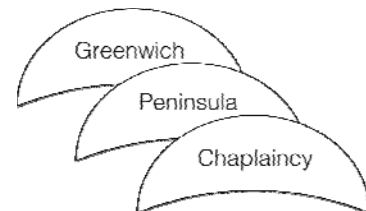


The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy



Newsletter January 2008

www.greenwich-peninsula-chaplaincy.org.uk

The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy provides chaplains from a variety of faiths on the Greenwich Peninsula: at The O2, on the construction sites, and for any individual or organisation working on the Peninsula.



The multifaith chaplains' team working at The O2 and elsewhere on the Greenwich Peninsula. (The Rev'd Nancy Odunewu and Mr. Harbhajan Singh were absent when the photograph was taken).

Chaplains visit the different venues in The O2, usually weekly, to join in conversations about whatever people want to talk about, but above all to listen and to keep confidences: for anything said to a chaplain will only be shared with someone else with their permission.

The chaplains' role is not to persuade anyone of the truth of any particular religion – but if anyone wants to talk about religion then the chaplain will of course be very happy to do so.

Messages can be left for chaplains on 020 8853 1336. The answering machine on this number is answered daily. Or email: info@greenwich-peninsula-chaplaincy.org.uk

Chaplains from the team also visit the Laing O'Rourke construction site in the Greenwich Millennium Village and the food refinery on the western side of the Peninsula



The team of chaplains which worked on the construction site from 2005 to July 2007. (The Rev'd Martyn Coe was absent when the photograph was taken)

Until July 2007 the chaplaincy provided chaplains every day from Monday to Friday on the construction site inside The O2. In the canteens and around the site chaplains were available for conversation with construction workers.

A high point of the year was the charity collection day in February 2007, when £400 was raised for Elderly People's Advocacy in Greenwich and the Salvation Army's holidays for children at risk. The construction company, Sir Robert McAlpine, matched the construction workers' donations.

A date for your diary

The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group, the charitable trust which governs the work of the chaplaincy, holds occasional conferences in order to report on its work and to consult with the local community and local faith communities on plans for the future. The next consultative conference will be on **Wednesday 5th March 2008**. We shall be distributing invitations in the new year; and you will also find an invitation on our website. In the meantime, please put the date in your diary.

Future projects

Chaplaincy on the construction sites which will open on the Greenwich Peninsula next year; and a building to manage for the work of the chaplaincy, the local faith communities, and community development.

Who built The O2?

Employment in the construction industry

by Derek Clacey

Building Contracting and Employment

Before becoming a full-time servant of the Church I was a quantity surveyor, and my experience of being a chaplain on The O2 construction site has rekindled my interest in employment conditions in the construction industry. It's a confusing picture.

On the Greenwich Peninsula Anschutz Entertainment Group Ltd. wanted an arena and other buildings put up inside what is now The O2, and they employed Sir Robert McAlpine to do it.

But who actually *built* it all?

As with all such projects, a chain of subcontractors organised groups of workers, right down to the individuals who actually put it all together. Separate packages of work: substructures, brickwork, frames, plastering, etc. were sublet by the main contractor to smaller contractors, who further sublet parts or all of it to still smaller companies who had easier access to the people who did the physical construction work. So thousands of people, most of whom are *not* directly employed by Sir Robert McAlpine, did the work.

The employment of staff

Contractors like Sir Robert McAlpine employ directly their own professional, technical and non-technical staff e.g. project/contract managers, quantity surveyors, estimators, site engineers, office managers, accountants, payroll staff etc.. They organise and run the contract either from a head or regional office or directly from temporary offices on site. Staff are normally salaried and will have a contract of employment, career prospects, and a company pension scheme which they will be encouraged to join. Every effort is made to deploy them elsewhere when the current contract(s) they are working on are completed. The larger the contractor, the more job security there will be, as the firm will be more able to weather times of recession successfully.

Medium sized and small contractors may offer less job security. Employees are more vulnerable to redundancy as the contractor will have fewer contracts to which to move its workforce.

The employment of tradesmen and site labourers (e.g. bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers etc.)

Tradesmen and labourers are less likely to be directly employed by large contractors because such firms do not want the expense of directly employing tradesmen who need repeated redeployment.

A higher proportion of tradesmen will be directly employed by smaller general contractors, or by

subcontractors specialising in their trade. They are usually employed and paid at an hourly rate (plus possibly a bonus, which varies according to output), and with some reference to the terms and conditions of the Working Rule Agreement.¹ Direct employment thus confers certain rights which result in greater job security, and it also enables proven skills and length of service to be rewarded by the company.

Still others are self-employed (sometimes referred to as 'one man bands'), making themselves available for hire by contractors and subcontractors, for individual projects which require their trades. The main characteristic of this form of employment is that it is short term, and the advantages are that it offers opportunities for higher pay through negotiated rates for each job (sometimes referred to as working on 'the lump', i.e. a lump sum agreed for a job), the freedom to choose whether or not to take on particular jobs, the ability to negotiate the terms of the contract, and (lamentably) the ability to leave a job before it is finished. However, self-employment offers less job security and fewer prospects, and it is the self employed person's responsibility to find the next contract and to organise their own pension.

Some characteristics of employment in the construction industry.

- It is worthwhile: you can see the results of your labour
- Good use of practical skills and aptitudes
- Variable pay
- Conditions of employment vary from company to company, particularly between staff and tradespersons
- Prospects and advancement are less clear for tradesmen and labourers than for staff.
- Stimulation of different working environments
- Opportunities for team working
- Job security is often poor. Contractors' work loads may shift wildly in a short time, between a glut when there is a lot of work on offer and when they have been successful in tendering for it, resulting in a sudden requirement for labour, often at short notice - and a slump, when contracts are scarce and workers need to be laid off.
- Pensions: larger companies are more likely to offer a contributory pension scheme and to contribute to it themselves. The self-employed

¹ The Working Rule Agreement is a nationally recognised agreement between employers in the building trade and the relevant Trade Unions. It includes minimum rates of pay for tradesmen and labourers (although virtually nobody works for the minimum hourly rates), and more importantly the general terms and conditions of employment.

have to make their own arrangements, and they often don't. Take-up of pension schemes is less likely with younger employees, and more likely to be left until later in life (if at all).

- Health and Safety issues are involved in working in cold, heat, poor atmospheric conditions, at heights, with high physical demands, with long hours of work, and with pressure of deadlines.
- Daily travelling/ living away from home
- Employment terms and conditions become more obscure and open to abuse the further along the spectrum of employee/self employed you go. Responsibility for tax, National Insurance, annual leave and general conditions of employment become less clear. Such problems related to casual labour impact particularly on foreign/migratory workers.
- It is not clear who should take responsibility for training and for the development of skills.

Some spiritual, ethical and theological points for reflection

- *The nature of work.* Is work more than just a means to an end, i.e. earning a living?
- *Justice and fairness.* What is appropriate for one job may not be so in another.
- *Conditions of employment* need to reflect the value given to all. How much does society value the contribution made by those in the construction industry?
- *Self esteem, status, and self-regard.* How do employees regard themselves through the work they do and what they produce?
- *There is a 'macho', almost exclusively all male building site culture* which needs to be understood. The building site is one of the few remaining bastions of the male only workplace in an age of equal employment opportunity.
- *Travelling and/or living away from home.* A construction worker can find themselves on a job in a different part of the country at a day's notice. This has an effect on family life.
- *Health and safety.* People are not working in factory controlled conditions, each site is different, and heavy plant is operating in temporary conditions. Taking health and safety seriously by enshrining it in company policy is particularly important, and a sign that workers are valued and cared for.

Visiting the Laing O'Rourke construction site at the Greenwich Millennium Village

by Michael Dent

For those familiar with the work undertaken by the Chaplaincy Team at The O2, there is a sense in which the current phase of development in the

Greenwich Millenium Village Extension is just another construction site. It is as multi ethnic, multi cultural, and multi faith as its more famous neighbour. However, there are two or three major differences. The number of people employed is rather less than a tenth of those working on the O2 at its peak, and whereas our ministry there was largely on the ground, here it is on seven to nine floors of the apartments being developed. Another small difference is because a reasonably large number of women are employed in the Office, as Surveyors and to run the Dining Room facilities, the proportion of women to men is higher.

Initially I started meeting and greeting people in the offices, the dining facility staff, and the construction workers as they ate in the Dining Room or enjoyed the sun terrace with its picnic tables and seats outside. More recently I have been offered a degree of freedom in wandering the shells of the blocks, some of which are still concrete shells, whereas others are clearly apartments - the internal walls erected, and the electricians hard at work installing miles of cables. This has a definite advantage from a chaplain's point of view. In the dining area some will happily be seen talking to the chaplain, but others will not. Getting out and about where men are working in ones, twos, or threes, means initial conversations are very relaxed. I find a little light-hearted banter often opens doors. When I have climbed to the fifth floor and arrive somewhat short of breath to where a couple of men are sweeping and tidying away equipment, a possible answer to the question 'what are you as a priest doing here?' can often bring a friendly response with the answer 'as little as possible for a few minutes after climbing those stairs' (rather than a five minute sermon on the joys of workplace ministry). It often leads to a degree of amusement - most construction site workers think the clergy work very hard and totally seriously for many hours a week. Another form of friendly approach is, on hearing the fourth swear word of the strongest kind from a work area, to go in with a bright and breezy 'good morning - are things not going well?' This leads to an apology (I always assure people the words they have just used are those I have heard thousands of times before) and this often leads to the individual explaining the problem, and then going on to tell me details of the work being undertaken.

I recently attended a 'retirement do' for an industrial chaplain, who said she always got more out of her visits than she put into them. It is easy to cause embarrassment by telling people how much they encourage us, but the really friendly supportive reception I always receive from the gate keeper, the office receptionist, and the two chaps who unflinchingly remind me where I put my hard hat and protective gloves at the end of my previous visit, always gives the next visit a really good start. After that, life is always easier when you are chatting to someone whom you have spoken to at least once before, and they realise you are not there with the sole intention

of dragging them off to the nearest Church, or of judging them because their lifestyle may be somewhat chaotic at best.

I recently spent three weeks in the west country, and was heartened that a few people missed my visits. In fact, I really felt the first visit on my return was like someone who had been on holiday from their actual workplace - people told me about the holidays they had taken, or their holiday plans, and seemed genuinely interested in what I had done with my time away. It was on this visit that two or three people asked me to pray for them - especially at the time they were working most Saturdays and some Sundays. I have never seen it as an integral part of workplace ministry to burst into religious activity at every opportunity, but over the years I have met many people who have a life of vicarious faith and prayer. Though full of

doubt themselves they find the chaplain's faith helpful. Though unable to pray (or perhaps unable to admit to doing so) there remains a comfort that someone else still does from time to time.

In recent visits I have seen real workplace pressures begin to emerge as stage one nears completion. One thing that construction workers seem to possess is a real sense of humour. In another place I visit in Kent, ninety per cent of the workers will greet me with a catalogue of sins management have committed against them. In the construction industry, people seem far better at dealing with the task in hand, rather than reflecting on the imperfections of their lot in life.

This report would be incomplete without a note of thanks to Laing O`Rourke and Dean Summers for allowing me to undertake this piece of work.

The chaplains

For biographies, please see the website:

www.greenwich-peninsula-chaplaincy.org.uk



Mr. Nigel Anderson



Mrs. Davinder Kaur Babra



Sheikh Ali Hassan Barakat



The Rev'd Derek Clacey



The Rev'd Martyn Coe



The Rev'd Michael Dent



The Rev'd Cynthia Finnerty



Capt. Eileen Halliday



The Rev'd Nancy Odunewu



Mr. Harbhajan Singh



The Rev'd Malcolm Torry

The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group is grateful to: The volunteer chaplains; members of our Council of Reference: a group of religious leaders with whom the Steering Group consult; Meridian Delta Ltd., English Partnerships, Anschutz Entertainment Group, Greenwich Borough Council, Greenwich Local Labour and Business, Greenwich Multi Faith Forum, the borough's Ecumenical Borough Deans, Meridian Delta Ltd., Sir Robert McAlpine, Laing O'Rourke, McNicholas, and the managements of the restaurants, bars and other venues in the entertainment district in The O2, for all the help which they have given; the Community Development Foundation and local faith communities for funding the chaplaincy.

Quoting from this newsletter: We are happy for people to quote from this newsletter provided the quotation is accompanied by a note to say that the material was first published in this newsletter.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group

The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group: The chaplaincy is managed by the Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group which is a registered charity, no. 1107892. The trustees are: Mr. Saeed Ahmad, Mr. Peyman Beheshti, the Rev'd Elaine Cranmer (treasurer), Rabbi Tony Hammond, the Rev'd Harry Lanham, the Rev'd Mike Leader (Chair), The Rev'd Christopher Moody, Ms Kuheli Mookerjee, Cllr Jagir Sekhon, and the Rev'd Jim Teeling.

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