

1 IDENTIFICATION

Name and Title	RECONSTRUCTION OF CHANGI CHAPEL
Location	The grassy area bounded by Miles Road, Harrison Road, and the Duntroon Chapel Car-park, Royal Military College, Duntroon.
Block and Section	Block 4, Section 119, Campbell.
Curtilage	All the area bounded by Miles Road, Duntroon Chapel Car-park, and Harrison Road.
Builder/Architect Original construction	Prisoners of War, Changi Goal Camp, notably Hamish Cameron -Smith, (Scots Catholic, architect) and Lieut Hugh Simon Thwaites. 1944-5
Reconstruction Plans Building	Australian Construction Services ACE, Royal Australian Army 1987-8

2. DESCRIPTION

The reconstructed chapel is an open structure, 12' by 16', made mainly from timber, masonite and galvanized iron. Its pitched roof of reddish terra cotta tiles is raised several feet above the walls. This is supported by four large wooden posts, one at each corner of the structure.

The altar wall at the back of the Chapel is a stepped wall of masonite, painted white with a green trim. The wooden altar is centrally placed, and directly above it is a rectangle of green, galvanised iron with a white cross superimposed on it.

The sides of the structure comprise partially of wall and partially green altar rail, while the front of the chapel is green altar rail only, with a small gate at the centre.

There is a large light fixed to the centre of the roof which points onto the altar.

The Chapel has been reconstructed on concrete slabs 20' by 26' with a concrete tub growing rosemary at each corner of the front.

In front on the LHS side is a plaque which reads:

NATIONAL PRISONER OF WAR MEMORIAL  
DEDICATED TO  
THE 35,000 AUSTRALIAN SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN  
TAKEN PRISONER IN THE FOLLOWING WARS

War in South Africa, Boer War	1899 - 1902
World War 1	1914 - 1918
World War 11	1939 - 1945
Korean War	1950 - 1953

Unveiled by a former Prisoner of War.  
on 15th August 1988

In front on the RHS side is a plaque which reads:  
'This Chapel was originally constructed by prisoners of war in Changi Camp, Singapore Island in 1944. Its construction was an act of enduring faith in the midst of extreme adversity. After the War the Chapel was returned to Australia for preservation. It was erected on this site as a national memorial to all Australian Prisoners of War on 15 August 1988. Funds for erection and maintenance of this memorial were provided by public subscription'  
The landscape of the site is to symbolise the original Changi Site. It is built in the centre of a grassy parkland, with axis centred on existing gum trees.

### 3. HISTORY

Prisoners of war from the 8th Division AIF were interned in the Changi Gaol Camp from 1943 onward, and within weeks of their arrival had determined to build a Catholic Chapel. Originally a simple post and beam structure with a frond floor was erected under the guidance of Cameron-Smith and Simon-Thwaites. The Chapel evolved over an extended period utilizing found materials, and it was used as a place of worship until the end of the War. In October 1945 the War Graves Unit, including a Corporal Lee, spent a few days by chance in the Changi Camp, en route to Sumatra. Corporal Lee made a request to the British to save the Chapel, which was one of the few structures that had not been fired. Permission was granted and after extensive photos, dimensional drawings and sketches were made by Lee, the Chapel was dismantled by a working party of surrendered Japanese personnel. It was crated to Australia in 1947, with the intention that the Chapel be re-constructed as a fitting memorial for "prisoners of war who had had little recognition for the extreme adversity under which many had lived and died" (Cpl Lee). The crates were stored in the Australian War Memorial where they remained forgotten for 40 years.

It was finally offered to Australian Defence Force Academy, and in 1987 reconstruction work commenced. An application for funds from the Bi-Centennial Authority was rejected, so the Army launched a nationwide public appeal for funds. In consultation with the Australian Heritage Commission a site at Duntroon was chosen in the centre of a pocket of parkland close to the Duntroon Chapel.

The items inside the crates were marked with alphabetic and numerical codes enabling accurate re-construction.

INCLUDED were the Cross from the roof and the roof tiles  
Panel from above the altar and the altar  
Most of the floor tiles  
Two roof beams and struts  
Timber framing from the side walls  
Few pieces of timber trim  
CGI skirting  
Electrical switchboard  
Electrical light fittings

MISSING were Two front posts (Replacements were necessary)  
The roof frame (Replacement was necessary)

Some of the roof tiles were broken. Originally from Malabaar Tile Works, Feroke in India, they were matched by identical tiles

from St Mary's Church, Rose Hill, Sydney. There was no attempt at replacement of missing tiles from the floor.

Although photos and sketches from 1945/6 indicate that the Chapel was not wired, the electrical switchboard and wiring found in the crate were installed. Paint samples were matched at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, and the Chapel painted in its original colours.

The Chapel was dedicated as a national memorial to all Australian prisoners of War on 15th August 1988, the anniversary of the end of the War, and was attended by Max Lee, and many of the Changi survivors and their relatives. Both Simon Thwaites, a Catholic priest in England, and Cameron Smith, an architect in Zambia were traced though too late to attend the dedication ceremony. They were subsequently brought to Australia in May 1989, when Father Simon Thwaites celebrated Mass in the Chapel.

#### REFERENCES.

Peter Freeman and Associates. Conservation Plan  
Re-construction of Changi Chapel as a National POW Memorial  
RMC Duntroon, Canberra March 1990  
Canberra Times 16/8/88  
Australian Construction Service Archives  
Duntroon Archives, and Minutes of Trustees Meetings

#### 4. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The re-constructed Changi Chapel serves as a national memorial to all prisoners of war, and a reminder of the enduring faith of many under the most adverse circumstances.

#### 5. CONSERVATION

Regular inspections are undertaken every 3 months while more detailed inspections occur in Jan/Feb and July/August each year due to the uncertainty of durability of components.

#### 6. NOTIFICATION

Commandant, RMC Duntroon.

#### 7. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

#### 8 SUMMARY

This small chapel was originally constructed in the Changi Prisoner of War Camp in Singapore Island in 1944 utilising found materials. It is a simple open timber framed building with a tiled roof. It has a timber, galvanised iron and masonite altar wall with a wooden altar. After the War it was returned to Australia and faithfully restored at Duntroon in 1988 by the Army helped by funds provided by public subscription. It was dedicated as a national memorial to all prisoners of war and serves as a reminder of the enduring faith of many under the most adverse circumstances, and is also used as a multi-

denominational place of worship

9. RECOMMENDATION  
TO CLASSIFY AS AN ADJUNCT TO ANOTHER CLASSIFIED PLACE (Duntroon)
  
10. DECISIONS  
Decision of the Council and date  
Nomination for inclusion to the Register of the National Estate  
Date  
Acceptance/rejection for RNE and date  
Submission for ACT Heritage Register and date.  
Acceptance/rejection for ACT Heritage Register and date.