

When the camp commander realised how talented an artist he was, Chiocchetti was given time to paint the rest of the chapel – his other paintings included depictions of St Francis of Assisi and St Catherine of Siena. When the prisoners were eventually released at the end of the war, Chiocchetti stayed on Lamb Holm to finish his paintings.

In 1958, with the chapel the only remaining memory of the Italian prisoners, a presentation committee was established to ensure it was looked after into the future. Over the years since, new artworks have been added, included a carved figure of Christ gifted by the citizens of Chiocchetti's home town of Moena; and he also sent detailed instructions for a cross and canopy which were then constructed in Kirkwall, Orkney's capital.



In 1964 Chiocchetti and his wife Maria visited the chapel again, bringing with them a gift of a set of Stations of the Cross. Chiocchetti died in 1999 but fifteen years later, in 2014, a Mass was held at the chapel to mark its seventieth anniversary – and his daughter Angela sang a solo.

AN ENCHANTING PLACE

In the late 1990s the American travel writer Bill Bryson spent several weeks in Orkney to research an article and he left in no doubt about his favourite place there. He wrote that he chanced upon the chapel unexpectedly, and found it "simply a lovingly made, and almost impossibly gorgeous, chapel... it is one of the most enchanting places I have ever come across, and alone worth going to Orkney for".

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.

You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

FIRST READING Daniel 12:1-3

PSALM Psalm 15

RESPONSE Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.

1. O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; it is you yourself who are my prize.

I keep the Lord ever in my sight: since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm. R.

2. And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; even my body shall rest in safety.

For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay. R.

3. You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right hand happiness for ever. R.

SECOND READING Hebrews 10:11-14. 18

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Stay awake and stand ready, because you do not know the hour when the Son of Man is coming. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 13:24-32

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

Next Sunday's Readings:

Daniel 7:13-14
Apocalypse 1:5-8
John 18:33-37

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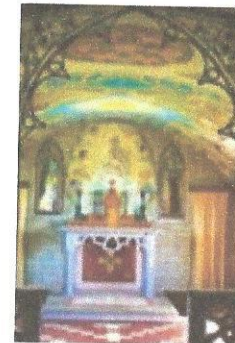
THE CHURCH IN A NISSEN HUT – THE POW CHAPEL IN ORKNEY

In October 1939, soon after the outbreak of World War Two, a German submarine entered the waters of Scapa Flow off the north-east coast of Scotland and sank a British battleship called HMS Royal Oak, with the loss of 834 lives. Winston Churchill, who at that time was First Sea Lord, visited nearby Orkney in the days following the attack, and decided to construct barriers to close off the entrance to Scapa Flow and make the British ships based there more secure.

Orkney is a stunning series of islands, but one thing it lacked and still, rather wonderfully, lacks to this day is large numbers of people. So Churchill needed labour to build his sea defences; and after thousands of Italian soldiers were captured fighting the Allies in North Africa, it was decided to transport several hundred of them to Orkney to work on the project.

The men – 550 of them altogether – were billeted in a camp on Lamb Holm, an island in Orkney. An Italian priest, Fr Gioachino Giacobazzi, was stationed with them; initially he would say Mass using a table in the prisoners' mess, but one day someone had the idea of attaching two Nissen huts together to create a chapel.

One of the prisoners who attended services at the chapel, Domenico Chiocchetti, had always dreamed of becoming an artist, but his family couldn't afford to send him to art college. Instead he was apprenticed to a church to train as a church painter. This, and a prayer card given to him by his mother depicting the Madonna and Child by the artist Nicolo Barabino, gave Chiocchetti the idea of creating a large painting like it above the altar. As he painted, other prisoners created a concrete facade for the exterior, so the building resembled a church rather than a Nissen hut; and Giuseppe Palumbi, who had been a blacksmith before the war, created an intricately worked rood screen. Outside the church, the men also created a statue of St George (the patron saint of soldiers) killing the dragon – it also remains there to this day. The chapel, unsurprisingly, was dedicated to peace, and a white dove flies across the sanctuary ceiling.



Houses of God



On this Remembrance Sunday, Joanna Moorhead looks at a chapel in an unexpected location, which has become a symbol of peace and reconciliation.



14 NOVEMBER 2021

33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I