
Cyril Young Memorial Chapel

**Interpretation
Strategy
April 2021**

People in Nature



CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Objectives.....	2
Framework	2
Context.....	3
Heritage Significance: Local Significance	3
Visitor Target Audience.....	4
Visitor Experience	5
Why interpret the Chapel	5
Preliminary Heritage Theme and Sub-Themes (What)	5
Overarching Heritage Theme (Positioning Statement).....	6
Sub-Themes	7
Sub-themes cont.....	8
Presentation of Heritage Themes (Where & How)	9
Three key visitor sites for interpretative installations	9
Site Plan with Visitor Interpretive Sites	10
Preparation of the site for visitation: a staged process	10
Examples of potential Interpretive signage:	14

INTRODUCTION

This framework has been prepared to outline the heritage stories for the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel (Shoreham) and to recommend broad interpretive themes, visitor access and interpretive installations/signs.

In addition to the three key interpretive sites, the Buxton Bushland Reserve precinct has also been considered to provide context for the interpretation. This includes considerations of both access and how immersion in nature is relevant to telling the overall story of the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel.

This interpretation framework is based on material provided in the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel Camp Buxton Conservation Management Plan (Landmark Heritage 2020), Buxton Bushland Reserve Site Plan and a site visit with CYMCA members in January 2021.

OBJECTIVES

In line with the aspirations expressed by the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel Association (CYMCA), the objectives for this Interpretation Plan are:

- Provide a thematic framework to assist with the development of interpretive content for the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel;
- Develop recommendations regarding visitor flows and appropriate spaces / sites for interpretation and provision of visitor information, and;
- Develop recommendations around where and how different themes should be presented.

FRAMEWORK



CONTEXT

The Cyril Young Memorial Chapel (hereafter, "the Chapel") is located in the original grounds of YMCA Camp Buxton, one of a number of youth camps established post WWII on the Mornington Peninsula where outdoor chapels were not unusual.

The Chapel pulpit, pulpit platform and seat supports are somewhat in ruins as are some of the rock walls, however the entrance is largely intact. A formal Conservation Management Plan including necessary conservation work, required materials, replanting requirements and scheduled maintenance plan has been prepared (Landmark Heritage 2000).



Entrance of the Chapel showing the low stone entry walls with supports for the bench seating and pulpit.
(*peopleinnature* 2021)

The natural bushland setting of the Chapel is somewhat compromised by a previous housing sub-division with both a misaligned boundary bisecting the site such that it is partially in private property and the proximity of an adjoining property's fencing and pool impacting the amenity of the site.

The original Chapel approach pathway would have been from the camp to the south-west on land now held as private property.



Location of the Chapel, set between Buxton Bushland Reserve (to the north and east), and the subdivided camp site (south). The rows of seat bases show the location of the Chapel. Note the new dwelling at 51 Marine Parade, just to its south-east.
(Mornington Peninsula Shire, 18 April 2019)

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance (excerpt from Landmark Heritage 2020)

The following statement of significance has been formulated to encapsulate the most important aspects of the Cyril Young Memorial Chapel's heritage significance, i.e. those that reach the threshold of local significance.

WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT?

The Chapel was constructed shortly after World War II at YMCA Camp Buxton founded in Shoreham in the mid-1920s. The Camp Committee began planning for the Chapel in 1945 and it was completed in time for an official opening on 22 December 1951.

Significant original fabric to survive in the cleared woodland setting includes:

- Moorooduc Stone entrance walls
- Moorooduc Stone pulpit, including the metal dedication plaque to Ivan Young, and the surrounding platform
- Cast-concrete seat bases within a layout of two rows of seating with a central aisle
- Mature Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus Ovata*) trees along the edges of the Chapel
- Commemorative avenue of Lilly Pillies and plantings of Queensland Brush Box by international guests at the international Older Boys Camp in December 1951

The broader natural bushland setting of the Buxton Bushland Reserve, an abundant wetland habitat of indigenous flora and fauna, is a major contributory element.

HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

The Chapel is of local historical, representative, aesthetic, social and associative significance to the Mornington Peninsula Shire and of social significance to the broader community of former Victorian, Australian and International campers who attended Camp Buxton during YMCA ownership.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

Historically, the Chapel demonstrates the profound impact World War II had on communities in Victoria. As a place created for and by boys and young men in the 1920s and 1930s, the war would have exacted a particular dramatic toll on the cohort of campers and their families, marking a place of particularly poignancy. While formally dedicated to Cyril Young, the Chapel was intended as a memorial to all of the YMCA fraternity who served and who fell.

VISITOR TARGET AUDIENCE

At present the Chapel would only hold interest for, or even be known to a relatively small number of people but with thoughtful promotion, improved access, restoration and appropriate interpretation of both the Chapel's significance and its unique context in the bushland reserve, visitation would grow.

Existing visitation would be a few Shoreham residents, holidaymakers and campers, most likely those people with a past connection to YMCA Buxton Camp.

Given the local significance of the Chapel it is important to broaden the potential target audience for the interpretation to cater for local Shoreham residents and holiday makers, residents of the Mornington Peninsula Shire interested in both war history locally and/or outdoor Chapels, and relatives of boys and young men that attended YMCA Buxton Camp and who may have taken part in WW11.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

As mentioned above the Chapel would only be visited by those few that know it exists or those that happen across it whilst walking through Buxton Bushland Reserve. Even less would appreciate the significance of the Chapel; the historical background and cultural values represented in the ruins and site. The personal stories would be generally unknown.

The visitor experience could be greatly enhanced through sensitive site restoration, access and interpretation. This will result in greater immediate, as well as longer lasting effect on visitors.

WHY INTERPRET THE CHAPEL

The Chapel has a significant role to play in the wider community, as its presence and stories are a way to understanding and appreciating the "*unique combination of values...emergent from the post-war optimism of 1950s that continue to have significant cultural salience in twenty-first century Australia*" (ibid 2000:44).

Interpreting the multiple heritage values of the Chapel to visitors and the community will enrich the visitor experience and convey the importance of preserving cultural heritage. The Chapel stands as:

- a war memorial, and tribute to community service and volunteerism;
- an expression of ecumenicalism, globalism and reconciliation; and,
- a shrine to the inseparableness of human lives and the lives of all creatures in nature as inspired by camp leaders within young boys attending YMCA Camp Buxton and the outdoor Chapel during the mid 20th century.

Therefore, if the visitor is prepared to spend time and be open to the experience, the Chapel has much to offer 'body, mind and spirit'.

PRELIMINARY HERITAGE THEME AND SUB-THEMES (WHAT)

Themes provide a flexible framework for expressing the key topics to be interpreted at "The Chapel in the Woods"*. They reflect the *essence* of the stories to be interpreted in a way that flows and links one to the other. The aim is to enable the visitor to enjoy and more easily grasp the key cultural heritage (predominantly) messages being presented about the Chapel and its historical use in its unique bushland setting.

**peopleinnature* note: "Chapel in the Woods" was originally envisioned by Cyril Young when he was Chairman of the Buxton Camp Committee (YMCA 1966 Melbourne's Manhood). But "woods" is a very European expression and the Chapel is situated in the Buxton Bushland Reserve. Other options might be: The Chapel in the Bush / by the sea / in the forest / under the trees and stars / under the sky / The Chapel of body, mind and spirit/ Bushland Chapel.

OVERARCHING HERITAGE THEME (POSITIONING STATEMENT)

The Chapel is much more than a ruin; this Chapel represents the unfathomable polarities of human experience: the unimaginable sacrifices and suffering of war and the vibrant intangible spiritual inspiration of our inextricable interbeingness with the natural environment, past, present and future. (B. Genat, ex-camper, pers.comm. 2021)



This Chapel continues to represent core values enshrined and fostered by the Melbourne YMCA in an era of post-second world war optimism:

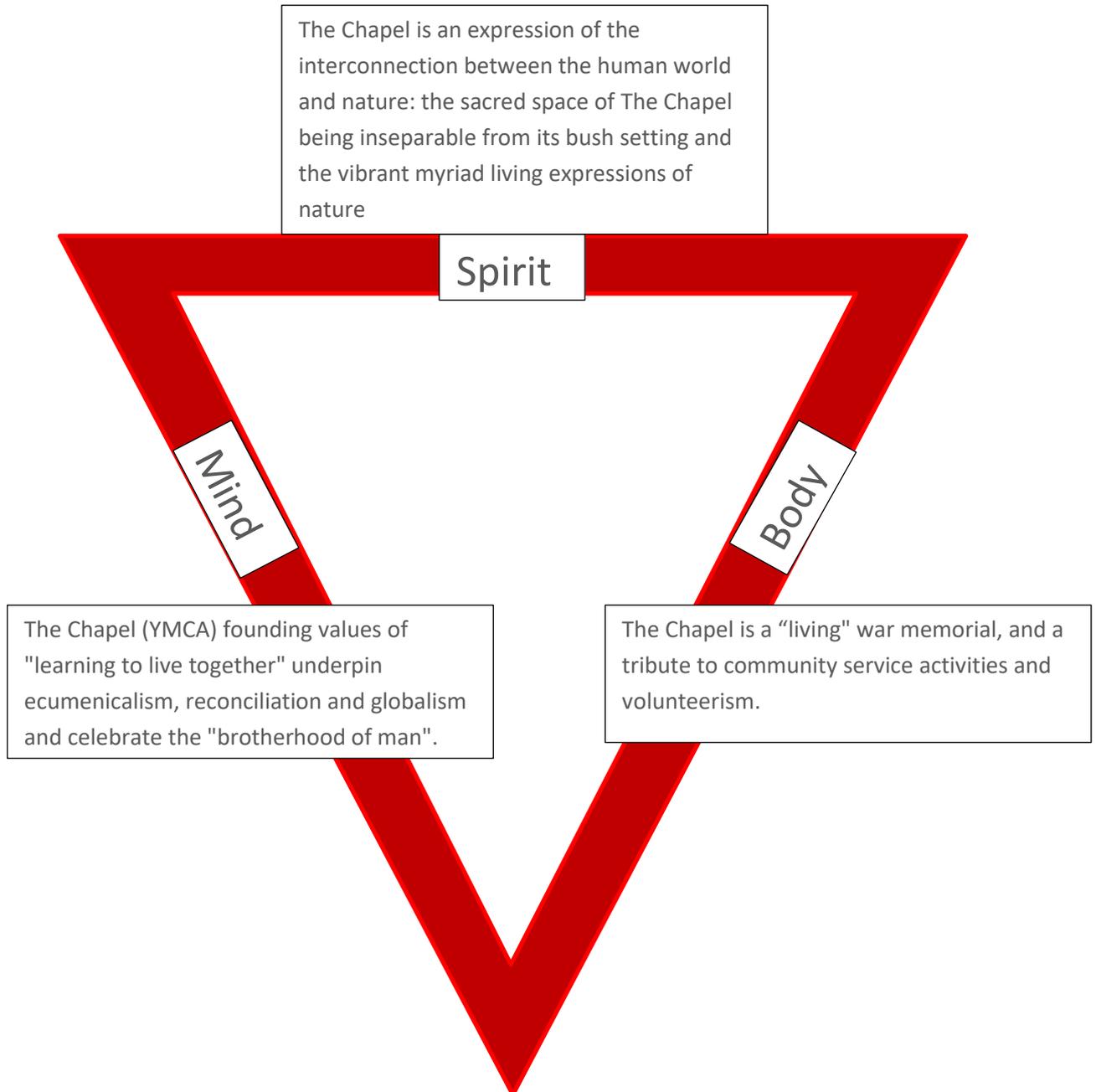
- valuing community, including service to, respect for and sacrifice on behalf of community;
- appreciating the wonder of the natural world and our interconnectedness with it; and,
- engendering an appreciation for the greater unfathomable realm of the spiritual.



SUB-THEMES

There are three key sub- themes under the headings of the YMCA's triangular logo which symbolised its commitment to promoting a balance between body, mind and spirit within the youth who passed through its programs at the YMCA Camp Buxton.

Each of these sub themes can be expressed by a number of stories and personal reflections.



SUB-THEMES CONT.

BODY

The YMCA Camp Buxton program provided young campers with a broad range of sporting and outdoor activities including swimming, archery and rock climbing emphasising the wellbeing of the physical body. Likewise, rostered maintenance tasks for all participants and the "Fire of Friendship" gathering with community singing around the campfire contributed to a feeling for the community body.

The Chapel as tended currently by community volunteers is a living memorial and tribute to community service and volunteerism. As a 'living' war memorial it brings into focus the ultimate sacrifice made on behalf of community.

- Who was Cyril Young & why Chapel named after him?

MIND

YMCA Camp Buxton accommodated young boys from the inner and outer suburbs of Melbourne with little prior experience away from family, close to nature in their most impressionable and formative years. The camp program sought to inculcate self-reliance and wholesome independence, to enable boys to "stand on their own two feet". This was emphasised through the use of slogans such as "Let's make it ourselves" (YMCA 1966 Melbourne's Manhood), enabling the building of creativity and self-confidence in one's own abilities.

Likewise emphasis was placed on learning to live together, to give and take and to understand and respect others of different backgrounds. The opening of The Chapel at the International Older Boys Camp in 1951 extended these values to those of ecumenicalism, reconciliation and globalism celebrating the "brotherhood of man".

- Hundreds of boys attended Camp Buxton and camp diaries and newsletters recorded the myriad facets of camp life that made an impression upon them.

SPIRIT

Chapel services, together with the traditional Fire of Friendship ceremony held at the Firepit located in the adjacent bushland, built the feeling and spirit of community experienced by the young campers.

In particular, chapel services and Fire of Friendship ceremonies at night were purposefully dramatic, setting off the darkness and the light, as the campfire and flaming torches illuminated natural and apparitions of supernatural forms of the surrounding bush dancing in the firelight.

The Chapel is an expression of the interconnection between the human world and nature: the sacred space of the Chapel being inseparable from its bush setting and the vibrant myriad living expressions of nature.

PRESENTATION OF HERITAGE THEMES (WHERE & HOW)

THREE KEY VISITOR SITES FOR INTERPRETATIVE INSTALLATIONS

1. Visitor arrival/start of walk – carpark (sub-theme Body).

Introduction to the Reserve bushland, walk duration, distance, difficulty (accompanied by a small mud map) and background information including overview of the Chapel's heritage significance – setting the scene & developing a sense of arrival at somewhere special.

2. Approach to Chapel (along the path about 100m - sub theme Mind).

Who was Cyril Young and what did both he and the YMCA pre WW11 embody – "learning to live together in nature (and its unpredictability)". This interpretive stop prepares the visitor for the Chapel 'experience' emphasising the importance *natural setting* to design & construction

3. Chapel (sub theme Spirit) - Spiritual connection nature & humans.

Emphasis on the Chapel as a place for quiet reflection (given proximity of private residences this may at times be difficult)

Interpretive Installations: signs should reflect each other in design and material (complementary materials ensemble). However, they should not be identical. Honouring the naturalness of the Chapel, they should employ the use of natural materials such as rock and timber.

Signage at Visitor Sites:

1. Arrival/Start of walk: 1 sign
2. Approach to Chapel: 1 or 2 smaller totem signs
3. Chapel: 1 or 2 smaller signs (totem, 'prayer book' &/or part seat - see examples, p14).

SITE PLAN WITH VISITOR INTERPRETIVE SITES



PREPARATION OF THE SITE FOR VISITATION: A STAGED PROCESS

STAGE 1 SITE RESTORATION AT THE CHAPEL

Minimal work is required to present the Chapel's built elements safely to the community. This is summarised below:

- Restore the rock pulpit and platform.
- Repair several seats to allow visitors to sit, reflect and enjoy surroundings (it is not necessary to rebuild all the seats, the exposed concrete seat legs add a sense of what might have been).
- Remove any fallen trees and branches and trim or fell existing dead trees (an arborist may be needed to assess safety of existing trees and determine whether they are infected with dieback (phytophthora)).



Replace several timber seats and remove dead and fallen trees and branches



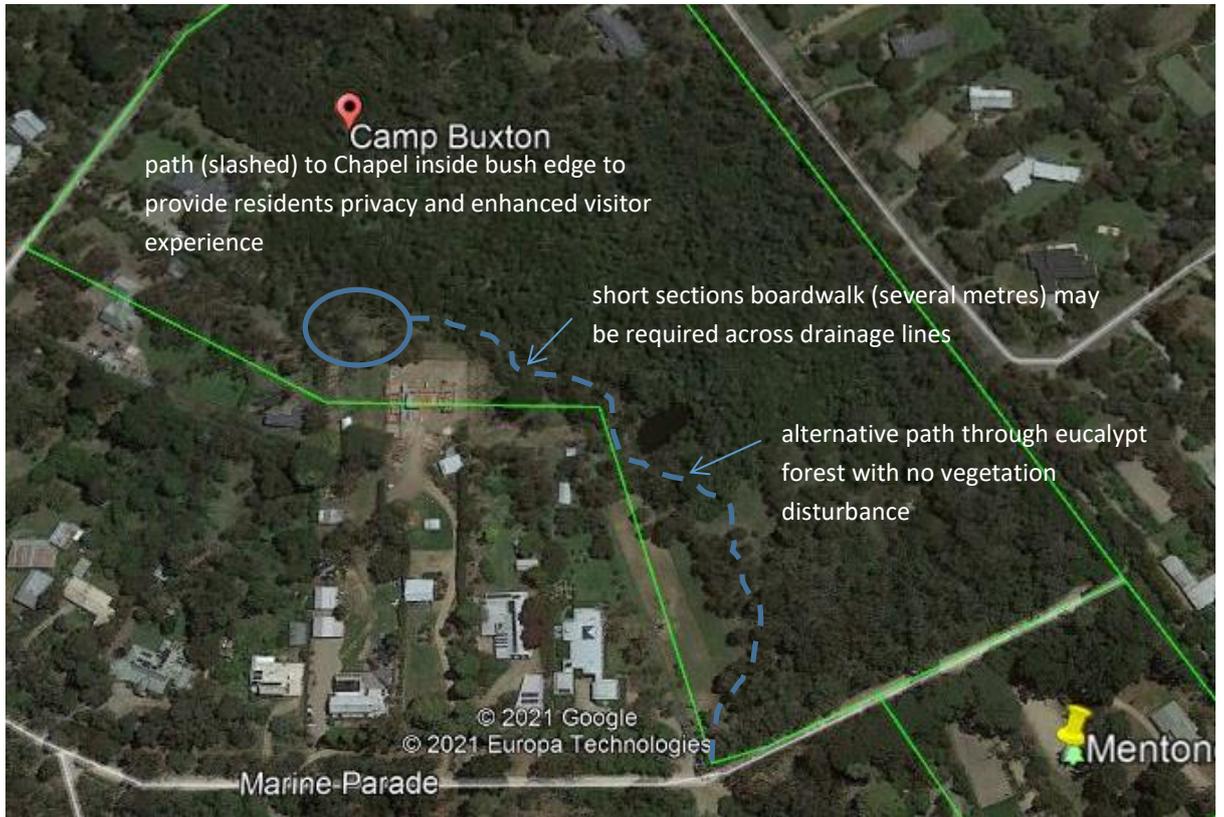
Restore pulpit so it looks less like a vandalised fireplace

STAGE 2 ACCESS

Ideally, from a visitor experience perspective, it would be best to approach the Chapel through the Buxton Bushland Reserve via the original YMCA Camp Buxton Fire Pit. Unfortunately, due to the ecological sensitivity and intact nature of the bush (valuable coastal remnant vegetation) this is not possible.

However, it is worth investigating a slashed (or mown) path from the existing carpark on Marine Parade through the drier eucalypt forest, avoiding any wet areas and vegetation disturbance. Some minimal boardwalk/bridging may be necessary across very short sections. The experience would be greatly enhanced by walking through forest rather than along property fence lines and through cleared fire breaks. This would also provide an opportunity for the visitor to appreciate the natural setting and not be distracted by or intrude upon privacy of neighbouring homes and their occupants.

If this option is not possible, the existing route, although wet and exposed to private property (until recent plantings mature), will have to suffice.



STAGE 3 INTERPRETATION

Final stage of the project is signage and interpretation. See presentation of heritage themes at 3 sites Page 10.

AT THE CHAPEL

A guided meditation focused on the senses: Site 3 (may be appropriate embedded in restored seat or as the embossed copper leaves of a prayer book placed for a visitor to read as a focus for contemplation while seated).

For example, a guided contemplation:

"As you sit in this sacred space, relax and soften in the belly . . . feel the weight of your body on the seat - your feet connected to the earth, the warmth of the sun on your cheek and the breeze rustling your hair . . .

Listen to the call of the birds, the wind in the leaves and the sounds of children playing . . .

Smell the scent of eucalyptus, the fecundity of humus and the damp of the wetland . . .

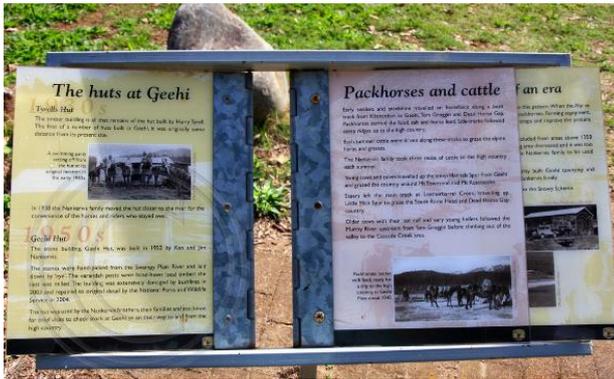
Taste the moisture in the earth, the dew on the leaves and the faint flavour of salt on the breeze . . .

Open your eyes and allow the multiple shades of green, the juxtaposition of shadow and light and the myriad curving forms of nature to rest and settle in your vision . . .

Contact the ineffable sense of the vibrancy of all life (including your own), the healing grace of nature and your inseparableness with the whole of the living world . . .

Sit with this and contemplate this shrine and its meaning for as long as it feels supportive and interesting.

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE:



An example of an interpretive sign in the form of a book with multiple pages for more in depth story telling.

This very old sign is at a historic hut in Kosciuszko NP and the closest example I could find – a more contemporary layout and sign design using materials in keeping with the Chapel site would be required. This sign type would allow the visitor to read as much or little about the Chapel heritage and associated people as inclined



Totems are an excellent way to guide people along a path and simultaneously providing simple interpretive messages, either in word or illustrations.

Any written material should be kept to a minimum.



Interpretive panels embedded into walls or seats can be an unobtrusive method of story-telling. Seats especially allow for contemplation at the site. This may be appropriate for one or two of the restored Chapel seats.