

Other Names	Cool Palms Open Air Chapel, Mandalay	
Street Address	Mandalay Road	Mandalay
Title Details/ GPS Coordinates	(E: 681386 N: 7758953)	

Historical Context

The Methodist Church Young People’s Department was part of the Church’s initiative to the Christian education of young people. It acquired properties and established camps in Queensland in the 1960s. The Camp Movement had been part of the Church programme for some years but exploded in the post-war years. Camps were divided into age categories, junior (primary school age), secondary and young people (16 and over). They were established to provide a wholesome holiday environment as well as leadership training.

Proserpine in the early 1960s was a prosperous town, supported by a buoyant sugar industry and expanding with the sugar mill. Land at Mandalay Point, now part of the town of Whitsunday, was acquired by the Methodist Church in June 1965 and Cool Palms was established. The property covered 112 acres, some of which was sold as building allotments. The highest part of the site, with magnificent sea view, was intended for a motel. The first camp was to be held in May, but was cancelled due to heavy rain. The camp passed to the Uniting Church when in 1977 it was formed from the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches. At this time there was a working bee, with the Fuller family of Proserpine the local leader. Guinea grass had overgrown the site, so that even a Hills Hoist and a tractor were hidden. There was nothing else on the site.

The Methodist Church built a two story building where the upper storey was the caretaker’s flat, leaders’ and guest rooms and lecture room, to be used initially as dormitories, and the lower a dining room, converting to a meeting hall and kitchen. It was officially opened on 1 November 1969 by the President of the Queensland Methodist Conference, Rev. C. D. Alcorn, before a congregation which included 25 women and five men who had travelled by bus. Two brass plaques embedded in the bricks commemorated the occasion and the work of the builders. The builder was Howard Walsh; he and his wife were the first camp supervisors. Summer camps were programmed for boys and girls and adults at Cool Palms for December/January 1969. School and university students from Brisbane and Rockhampton would arrive by bus. The outdoor chapel was built by the Walsh family. Overlooking Mandalay Bay, it had a large wooden cross, about three metres high and two metres wide, three or four wooden benches, made from local stones and timber sleepers, and an altar of stone and cement with a hardwood top. The wooden structures have been renovated by a previous owner. Pines were planted in a semi-circle around the chapel area, behind the seating, going up the hill.

The Uniting Church sold the Cool Palms camp site in December 1986, when other church camp sites were also sold off and the office closed. The site was then maintained in a clean condition by the new owner, Tony Moscato who with his mother Simone bought Cool Palms in 1986, and sold it in 2000, and by other local people. It is now used as an unofficial camp site by backpackers who arrive in vans and camp free for several nights. It is not now being regularly cleaned.

Physical Description

Located on sloping land on the waterfront at the end of Mandalay Road, the Open Air Chapel retains its principle features and layout, orientated to the view over Mandalay Bay. At high tide the water contributes to create a location with high aesthetic value, at low tide a cement boat ramp is revealed and the area looks over mudflats.

The Open Air Chapel comprises a large timber cross, painted white, located on closest to the eastern edge of the site. Four timber wooden benches, arranged in more or less in a semi-circle around the chapel area, gradually ascend the hill. The altar is constructed of stone overlooking Mandalay Bay. Mature pines line either side of the seated area, enclosing the area and giving it an intimate aesthetic.

Integrity	Fair	Condition	Fair
Statutory Listings	No statutory listings		
Non-Statutory Listings	No non-statutory listings		
Inspection Date	13/10/2010		

References

DERM. State Wide Survey Draft Research Report, 2007.

Heritage Significance	
Criteria	Definition
A	<i>The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region’s history.</i>
Statement	The Open Air Chapel at Mandalay Point demonstrates the evolution of the Methodist Church’s educational activities in the region during the 1960s when the Youth Camp Movement was a popular way of providing young people with a wholesome holiday environment combined with leadership training.
B	<i>The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the region’s cultural heritage.</i>
Statement	The Open Air Chapel at Mandalay Point is a rare and relatively intact example of the Camp Movement during the 1960s in the Whitsunday Region. The remaining timber seats, timber cross and stone altar, as well as the pine trees enclosing the space, evidence of this practice that was once common but which is becoming increasingly rare.
E	<i>The place is important to the region because of its aesthetic significance</i>
Statement	The Open Air Chapel at Mandalay Point demonstrates high aesthetic values in its setting on the edge of Mandalay Bay and its views out over the water. The pine trees surrounding the chapel setting contribute significantly to the sense of place, as does the unincumbered view from the seats to the water. The chapel’s location in the reserve demonstrates the interaction of the church’s educational practices with the environment.

