

The Chapel of Lamb Holm

In the Orkney Islands, off the cold shores of northeast Scotland, lies a very bare, very small strip of land called Lamb Holm, only .15 square mile in area. The island is uninhabited, but it contains a tourist attraction of note, a remarkable Italian Chapel.

It was on Lamb Holm that Italian prisoners of World War II were kept. In 1942, more than 1,300 Italians were captured in North Africa and taken to Orkney, Scotland, where they remained until early 1945. About 550 of them were taken to Camp 60, on Lamb Holm, where they were put to work building the Churchill Barriers, four causeways created to block access to Scapa Flow, which was between Mainland, Orkney and the island of Burray.

In 1943, Maj. T.P. Buckland, the camp's new commandant, and Father Giacobazzi, the camp's priest, agreed that the men should have a place of worship. Two Nissen huts were joined together to form a makeshift chapel. The prisoners, under the leadership of one of their own, Domenico Chiocchetti, did all the work to transform the simple structure into a place of beauty.

The prisoners built it with their own hands out of anything they could find – scraps of wood, tin cans from the bully beef they got from rations, and other materials they could scrape together.

Their creativity and hard work produced a church building. Why?

Perhaps, back home in normal times, they rarely went to the churches around them. But now, this chapel they had produced became a sign – of God, and all that God in Jesus Christ came to mean.

It became a sign of hope, of deliverance, of a power above us and within us – a power greater than all our troubles.

Our God wants to manifest Himself in and through us in extraordinary ways – in good times as well as in the difficulties that confront us.

Let's be available to Him, as were these Italian prisoners.

– Beecher Hunter

