

The Origins of the War Memorial Hall

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with input from Sharon Lim, SAC Heritage Committee

When viewed from the air, St Andrew's Cathedral resembles a full cross. The North and South transepts are located at right angles to the nave and this transforms the building into a cruciform.

While long-time members may be able to remember the completion of the South Transept Hall in 1983, did you know that there was a Memorial extension to the North Transept in the 1950s? If you look closely at the exterior of the building, you will notice military emblems on the balconies and walls. These are commemorative plaques of forces who fought in the Singapore and Malayan Campaigns (8th December 1941 to 31st January 1942) and of countries that were allies during the Second World War.

History of the War Memorial Hall

The War Memorial Hall was added to the original church building in 1952. It was erected to commemorate those fallen in Malaya and Singapore from 1941 to 1945. The foundation stone was laid on 14 January 1952 and the War Memorial Hall was officially opened on 12 September 1952 by General Sir Gerald Templer, High Commissioner for Malaya.

When the War Memorial Hall first opened, it consisted of a hall and smaller rooms which served as a space for the community to participate in church activities. A key feature of the War Memorial Hall was the Graham White Library. The library was named in honour of Archdeacon Graham White (1884-1945) who passed away in an internment camp in the last months prior to the Japanese surrender. The library had an alcove which was home to nine volumes of the Book of Remembrance. These volumes record the names of those, European and Asian, who gave their lives in Southeast Asia. These books are currently stored with the Diocese of Singapore for safekeeping.



Laying of the foundation stone, 14 January 1952.

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

By the 1950s, the church was growing and more space was required for the social and cultural life of the congregation. The Sunday School would meet in the odd corners of the Cathedral in cramped and crowded conditions while Youth Fellowship meetings were held at St Andrew's School. Before his passing, Archdeacon White had the vision of building a parish hall which could serve as a centre for community life and further the work of the Diocese. To honour his wishes, a Parish Hall was established in the War Memorial Hall. It became a space where various groups – young and old, visitors and newcomers - could feel welcome and at home. Sunday School, Youth Fellowship meetings and Parish breakfasts were held at the Parish Hall and the rooms were used by the clergy to meet people and conduct their ministry work.

How did the War Memorial Hall come about?

In 1951, a Cathedral Memorial Appeal Committee was established to raise funds for the building of the War Memorial Hall. The Governor of Singapore, Sir Franklin Gimson was appointed the chairman and the meeting and the committee comprised the Bishop of Singapore, other leaders of the Christian community, the American Consul-General, the Australian Commissioner and locals who were key figures in the Singapore community. They included war heroine Mrs Elizabeth Choy, Mrs Percy McNeice, Mr Jacob Ballas, Mr Thio Chan Bee (first Asian Principal of Anglo Chinese School), Mr Cecil Kaan (Vice Chair of Anglican High School), Mr Yap Pheng Geck (President of the Straits Chinese British Association) and Mr T.W Ong (Partner of law firm Laycock and Ong).



Opening of the War Memorial Hall, 12 September 1952.

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

As we remember the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 16 February 2022, the War Memorial Hall and Graham White Library reminds us of those who died during World War II. We pay tribute to their sacrifices and treasure the freedoms that we have today.

I am sure that respect for the lives of Archdeacon and Mrs Graham White together with their fellow sufferers who endured the horrors of the Japanese Occupation will provide a source of inspiration to all who use this building and they will, through its use, become better Christians and better citizens. I hope that what I have said will convince you of the worthiness of the objective which inspired this appeal.

SIR FRANKLIN GIMSON, 1951

St. Andrew's Cathedral War Memorial Hall



In commemoration of the fallen in Malaya & Singapore 1941 - 1945

**\$ 250,000
NEEDED NOW**

The appeal committee managed to raise \$250,000 and it was noted that the bulk of contributions were from the Graham White Memorial Fund. There were also significant contributions from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Ex-Services Association of Singapore.



HRH The Duchess of Kent with Archdeacon Robin Woods at the War Memorial Hall, October 1952.

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore