

# CHIJMES



**Client:**  
CHIJMES Investment Pte Ltd

**Architect:**  
Ong & Ong Architects

**Engineer:**  
Ove Arup & Partners

**Contractor:**  
Low Keng Huat (S) Ltd

## 1997 AWARD

**T**his project offers one of the most important and exciting restoration and development opportunities in Singapore. It involves the restoration of two monuments, the Former CHIJ Chapel (currently Chijmes Hall) designed by Father Nain and built in 1902-1904 and Caldwell House designed by G D Coleman and built in 1842, conservation of existing buildings, the introduction of new buildings within the site to complement the design and the adaptive reuse of the existing old buildings.

In-depth and extensive research were carried out prior to restoration works. Conservation specialists and skilled craftsmen from as far as France and Italy were engaged to undertake the project. Guided by a Supervisory Design Panel, the 3-R principle of maximum Retention, sensitive Restoration and careful Repair and the "Top-Down" approach were observed.

Throughout construction and restoration, careful



*A grand dame restored*

protective measures were taken to ensure the structural stability of the buildings. The spire of the chapel was hoisted to the ground and re-cladded with AME before re-installation to its original position. Chemical injection into the walls just above the floor to act as damp-proof membrane was used to counter the problem of rising damp. Before any works were carried out in the chapel, the stained glass panels were removed and sent to Lyon in France for restoration. Meticulous care was taken to ensure the

architectural elements such as column capitals, joinery and metal works were restored and repaired to their original design intention. Mechanical and electrical services were well concealed.

The new buildings complemented the monuments and conservation buildings in terms of scale and design.

On the whole, the project is sensitively and tastefully restored, resulting in an integrated multi-purpose use complex of the highest quality



*Details of landscape features*



*Interior view of Chapel*



*Detail of facade of newly built block. Architectural language used is similar to that of adjacent Block D*



*Conservation extended to elements of historical significance & symbolism such as the Gate of Hope*



*Interior columns & ceiling boards retained, restored, and replaced*



*Restored column capital*



*Grating over drain*



*Pavilion added to enhance ambience of the place*



*Restored corrugated ceilings immediately behind Caldwell House*

## **CHIJMES**

### Social & Historical Background

#### **19th century**

- 18 August 1852 - Father Beurel bought over the Caldwell House earlier built by Mr Coleman. This was the advent and beginning of the Convent building.
- 20 December 1853 - Father Beurel, subsequently, bought over and saw to the demolition of the adjoining house which was meant to become an orphanage in merger with the Convent.

Mother St. Mathilde had significant contributions to the initial setting up and operation of the newly established Convent.

During the early years, many outsiders and bodies followed in contributions of donations which led to the growth and development of the compound.

In 1855, a small house was built for borders which was later demolished and replaced by today's building found located immediately behind the Caldwell's house. It is in this same year that the Chapel and schoolrooms were completed.

In 1891/1892, the building of today's Block F situated along the Southern boundary was built. Similarly, monetary funds were raised by the Government, however the primary source of funds were mainly donations from various prominent individuals and the active Protestant community.

#### **20th century**

At the turn of the Century, construction for the new neogothic chapel addition with galleries flanked to the side began rapidly.

It was not long before the Chapel, in 1901, was reconstructed again as the original Chapel had deteriorated poorly to a condition with which was structurally unsafe and unsound.

Upon completion in 1904, the Chapel was once again consecrated. Father Charles Benedict Nain was the architect and author of the characteristic architectural details with which we have fondly come to have known.

## Development Chronology

### **Classical Buildings**

- Block A - Caldwell House was built in 1842 and extended in 1852 by Father Beurel.
- Blocks C & F - Open Galleries. There are no written documents describing the construction but from the architecture and construction details, they were likely to have been built in mid of 19th century with ongoing modifications.
- Block D - Orphanage was built approximately between 1860 and 1890.

### **Neogothic Buildings**

- Block B - Chapel was built in 1902-1904.
  - Grotto was built in this time (but was demolished in 1991 for widening of Victoria Street)
- Block G - Gallery was built after construction of Chapel (approximately 1910).

### **Modern Buildings**

- Block E - Dormitory was built in the 1950s.