



Never Forgotten

The Official Newsletter of the TAIWAN P.O.W. CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 665, YUNG HO, TAIPEI 234, TAIWAN, R.O.C.
TEL. 886-2-8660-8438 FAX: 886-2-8660-8439 E-mail: society@powtaiwan.org

Page 1

Winter 1999



THE KUKUTSU POW MEMORIAL STONE - dedicated on Saturday, November 20, 1999, on the site of the former "jungle camp" in the hills near Hsintien, Taipei, Taiwan.

Oh precious stone, before you we stand
Remembering the time when we tilled your
land. It's hard to believe that we're here,
and once more Through the portals of time,
can unlock your door.

Those who pass by and linger to stay
To read the words that you display,
Will ever know the tears that were dried
Or that every day, death's door was defied.

It was God Who was kind and let us live
And we're pleased to return, our thanks to give.
Knowing our ties will never sever
While you lie here - today and forever.

- penned specially for the dedication of the memorial by Kukutsu survivor, Maurice Rooney, who visited the site of the former camp in 1998.

TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 665, YUNG HO TAIPEI 234, TAIWAN,

R.O.C. TEL. 8660-8438 FAX. 8660-8439 E-MAIL

E-Mail: society@powtaiwan.org

TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY - BOARD OF DIRECTORS -

Michael Hurst, Director - VP and General Mgr. J. Chen Enterprises Taiwan; Writer, Historian

Dominic McAllister - Administration Director, British Trade & Cultural Office, Taipei Prof.

Jerome Keating PhD. - Writer, Historian, Professor, Chinese Culture University

Stuart Saunders - President, Esdesign Industrial Design Gerard Norris - Chairman / GM, Parke-Davis, Taiwan

Jack Hsu - Supervisor. Admin Dept., SEMPO, DORTS, Taipei City Gov't.

HISTORICAL ADVISORS. . .

Prof. Jack Geddes - Professor, Historian, Writer, Missionary

Harry Blackham - FEPOW, England

POW REPRESENTATIVES. . .

Maurice Rooney - UK Rep.

Sid Dodds - Australia Rep.

Geoff Monument - USA Rep.

Lawrie Philpott - New Zealand Rep.

EX-OFFICIO. . .

David Mulroney - Director, Canadian Trade Office in Taipei

Sam Gerovich - Representative, Australian Industry and Commerce Office, Taipei

Nick Bridge - Director, New Zealand Commerce and Industry Office, Taipei

David Cotes - Director-General, British Trade and Cultural Office, Taipei

LOGO of the TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY

Our logo - a poppy cross superimposed on a map of Taiwan was chosen because in the fall of 1998 the returning POWs laid poppy crosses at all the former campsites they visited. The poppy cross is recognised worldwide as a symbol of remembrance to war veterans.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY. . .

- to continue the search for survivors of the Taiwan POW camps from 1942 - 45
- to search for the locations of the former Japanese POW camps on the island of Taiwan
- to ensure the memory of the Taiwan POWs is not forgotten
- to participate with the Commonwealth and Allied community each year in a memorial service for the Taiwan POWs at Kinkaseki
- to help educate the people of Taiwan in a little-known part of their history
- to provide information to researchers, scholars, museums and POW groups on the Taiwan POWs' story

TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY ON THE 'NET!

The former Kinkaseki Memorial website has been enlarged and the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society has become the "umbrella" site for all the POW camps on Taiwan. The address has been changed from the previous Kinkaseki site.

Please visit our homepage at -

<http://www.powtaiwan.org>

Please sign our guestbook and give us your comments and if there is anything you would like to see added.

Our email address is - society@powtaiwan.org

* * * * *

Thought...

"We are constantly faced with great opportunities carefully disguised as unsolvable problems!"

ANOTHER ONE UP . . .

"THE KUKUTSU POW MEMORIAL"

The site of the Kukutsu POW Camp was located in the spring of 1997, when former Canadian Trade Office Director, Hugh Stephens, Michael Hurst and Jack and Polly Edwards made a trip to the countryside south of Taipei city in search of the camp. Jack and Polly had been in town for the initial service of remembrance that was organised to raise awareness of the Kinkaseki POW camp, and while in Taipei Jack expressed a desire to see if anything remained of the former Kukutsu Camp as well.

After much driving around, and when almost about to give up, the location of the site was pointed out to the group by two of the local area residents, so confirmed, positive identification was made.

During the next two years Michael Hurst further explored the area and former campsite with the aid of a journalist friend from Hsintien.



The Memorial in the former Kukutsu POW Camp

When the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society was formed last year, the idea was conceived to try to get permission to erect POW memorials at the sites of all the former camps that were located - where the situation was viable. Since Michael had gotten to know several of the local residents, he felt erecting a memorial at Kukutsu should not be too difficult a task.

The owner of the land was approached and after hearing the story and knowing of the Society's intentions, readily granted permission for the memorial stone to be placed in a corner of his garden which was once the site of the POW camp.

The Society was, at the time, also negotiating with the local authorities in Taichung County to seek permission to erect a POW memorial at the site of the former Taichu Camp (this is still ongoing), and had already located two pieces of beautiful green Taiwan marble. One of the pieces was procured and whisked off to a local stonework factory for engraving. On Friday, November 12, 1999 the Kukutsu POW Memorial stone was picked up from the engravers, transported to the hills south of Hsintien and installed in the garden grotto of the former POW camp site.

On Saturday, November 20, 1999 with three former POWs of the Kukutsu Camp present - the POW Memorial was dedicated. Jack Edwards, Ben Gough and John Marshall all took part in the ceremony which featured comments from TPCMS Director Michael Hurst, and the Director-General of the British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei, Mr. David Coates. Ex-POW Jim Scott who was not at Kukutsu, joined his mates in remembering their former comrades.

After a prayer of dedication by Jack Geddes, poppy wreaths were laid in honour of those who did not return and for those who still survive.



(l-r) Ben Gough, John Marshall and Jack Edwards by the meorial.

To date we have located 29 survivors of the former Kukutsu POW Camp and all have been sent a letter notifying them of the building and dedication of the memorial, along with a photo of the Kukutsu memorial stone, so that they will know that they and their mates have not and will not ever be forgotten.

The Return to Taiwan POW Camp #3 - HEITO



Soldiers' barracks where the POW huts once stood

Wednesday, November 3, 1999 - the phone rang and it was Miss Lee calling from PingTung. I was momentarily shocked when I heard what she had to say to me.

She was calling for her boss Miss Huang (our historical contact in the PingTung area), to tell me that permission had been granted by the Taiwan military for a visit inside their army base which was the former site of the Heito POW Camp! The time for the visit had been allocated as the next Monday - November 8, and could I make it there by 9:00am to join them for a tour of the base and campsite area? An added bonus was that Mr. Lin, the former camp guard - who we had met on our first trip, would accompany us on the visit.

I nearly jumped for joy at the news. Now we had a chance to check out the site of the old Heito Camp firsthand to really see if anything remained from that earlier time, and we would have Mr. Lin - who was there in wartime, to point things out for us.

Time was very short, and as we were already very busy preparing for the upcoming visit of the POWs for our annual Remembrance Weekend, there was not a minute to lose. Arrangements were hastily made for transportation to PingTung and our accommodation.

On Sunday the 7th we took the train to the south of Taiwan as we wanted to be there in plenty of time so as not to miss out on a minute of this great adventure.

Early Monday morning, Miss Huang picked us up and we drove to the army base. There, we were joined by reporters from the Liberty Times and China News as well as a television news-team from Formosa TV. We were also met by Mr. Lin and his son-in-law who was a former local official and the wife of a member of the National Legislature for the PingTung area. In addition, to our great surprise, were two other former camp guards, Mr. Huang and Mr. Yang.

Since our visit in September, Miss Huang and her staff had been busy, trying to locate some of the other former guards who had been friends of Mr. Lin's and had found these other two still residing in the southern part of Taiwan. Like Mr. Lin, they had been conscripted as youths to serve as perimeter guards at the camp.

On entering the camp we were welcomed by a special officer that had been sent for the occasion by army headquarters - Capt. Yang. He was a most gracious host and listened intently as we told the story of the former POW camp and of the POWs who were interned here.

As we walked around the camp area the three former guards took turns telling us of their experiences and of their observations and interactions with the POWs. They pointed out where the various buildings in the camp

had been located - the Japanese offices, living quarters and guardhouses, as well as the prisoners' huts, kitchen, latrines and parade area. Mr. Lin pointed out the location of the crude camp "hospital" and a hut that was allocated as a chapel - he called it - where the bodies of the POWs who died were kept before burial.

The present military base has been enlarged on the one side to allow more room for manoeuvres, but otherwise the camp retains its approximate shape and size from the early days. As we were told on our earlier visit, there is nothing left in the camp from that former time, but now we have seen it first hand and have a good description of the layout from which to make accurate drawings of the site.

We came away very satisfied and thankful for all the effort that was put forth on our behalf by Miss Huang and Miss Lee, the former guards and our friends and supporters in the PingTung area. Thanks for a job well done.



Former Camp guards discuss the camp layout

LIST OF TAIWAN POW CAMPS. . .

1. KINKASEKI (CHINGUASHI) - found
2. TAICHU (TAICHUNG) - found
3. HEITO (PINGTUNG) - found
4. SHIRAKAWA (CHIAYI)
5. TAIHOKU #1/5 ? (TAIPEI)
6. TAIHOKU #6 (TAIPEI) - almost
7. KARENKO (HUALIEN) - found
8. TAMAZATO (YULI) - found
9. KUKUTSU (TAIPEI) - found
10. TAIHOKU - OKA (TAIPEI) - almost
11. TAIHOKU - MOSAK (TAIPEI)

UPDATE ON POW CAMPS...

Although the locations of the senior officers' camps at KARENKO and TAMAZATO have been known to us for some time now, as far as we knew, there were no living survivors, as most of the senior officers were already in their forties or fifties at the time of their internment. Hence there didn't seem to be much hope of obtaining any first-hand information about these camps and so we haven't devoted too much time to their memory.

However, last month, in response to a story on the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society in a UK FEPOW newsletter, Mr. Jack Catherall - one of the former assistants to one of the senior officers contacted us through Maurice Rooney, our rep. in the UK. What a find! Now we will be able to learn first-hand of the experiences of the senior officers in those camps. Stay tuned for more in a future issue!

WELCOME !

We want to welcome Mr. David Coates, Director-General of the British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei as an ex-officio director of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society.

Mr. Coates arrived in Taipei about the same time as the Society was formed, and thus needed a little time to "settle in". He assumes the same role as the other Commonwealth Representatives in supporting our objectives and helping out where possible.

He has already been active, having spoken at the dedication of the Kukutsu POW Memorial this past November. Welcome David and thank you for your support.

AMERICAN POW NEWS. . .

By Jerome Keating

I recently received a letter from Mr. Clement Schmidt of Florida who was a POW at Taichu Camp. He was among the group of American POWs who inhabited the camp prior to the arrival of the British POWs in November 1942, and is the only survivor we have found from this group so far. We are hoping he can supply further details about the camp at that time.

REGARDING PTE. BROWNING

The former POW from the UK who was in the senior officers' camp at Karenko (see UPDATE ON POW CAMPS) has told us that he remembers a Pte. H. R. Browning from Arkansas who worked in the camp "hospital" there. Later he moved to Shirakawa Camp and from there accompanied the senior officers all the way to Mukden, North China. Now we know that Browning came to Taiwan along with General Wainwright's group of officers from the Philippines and also how he spent his time in Taiwan. It's thrilling to see more pieces of this intriguing story coming together. Maybe we'll find Pte. Browning yet!

AMERICA'S TEN MOST WANTED !

1. S/Sgt. E.A. Johnson - Trenton, New Jersey
2. S/Sgt. A.J. Raynis - Brooklyn, New York
3. Pfc. W.B. Smith - Salinas, California
4. Pfc. J.P. Kondrasiewicz - Kensington, Penna.
5. Pfc. B. Dean - Breckenbridge, Texas
6. Capt. C.V. Kern - Tulsa, Oklahoma
7. Capt. L. Schneider - Portland, Oregon
8. Sgt. P. Brodsky - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
9. Pfc. A.Z. Encinas - Jerome, Arizona
10. Pfc. B.P. Paradise - Boystown, Nebraska

These ten men were the only Americans to go to Kinkaseki, and so far we have been unable to trace the whereabouts of any of them. The first five on the list came into Kinkaseki on October 26, 1944 from the camp at Taihoku. The last five came in on May 16, 1945 - Kern, Schneider, Brodsky and Encinas came from Shirakawa, while Paradise came from Taihoku.

Johnson, Raynis, Smith and Dean were sent to Japan in February 1945, and the other six finished out the war at the Kukutsu "jungle camp" near Taihoku.

We know that Pfc's. Brodsky and Encinas were in hospital in Taihoku immediately after the Japanese surrender, so it is assumed that they did return to the States after the war.

If anyone knows any of these men, or can help us trace their whereabouts, please contact us right away. We want to tell them they haven't been forgotten!

WEB-WATCH

Be sure to continue to watch the POWTAIWAN website in the weeks to come. We will be adding more information regarding several of the other POW camps that we have found. [www.powtaiwan.org]

TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY IN THE NEWS . . .

The Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society has received a lot of very good coverage and publicity in the media in the past several months.

In September, when we discovered the site of the former Heito Camp, the LIBERTY TIMES - a major Chinese language newspaper went national with the story and photo as reported by a local PingTung reporter. The TAIWAN TIMES, another Chinese paper, also gave us coverage in its southern Taiwan edition.

In early November when we made a return visit to the Heito Camp, once again the LIBERTY TIMES ran a half-page story with photos in its national edition. FORMOSA TELEVISION - one of the "big 4" in Taiwan, was also there and produced a feature TV story subsequent to our visit.

The TAIWAN NEWS, one of the island's three English language papers, covered the story of the dedication of the Kukutsu Memorial with articles and photos on two pages by feature writer Steven Crook, and once again the LIBERTY TIMES - Taipei Branch also covered the story nationally with a lovely photo and writeup.

In late December the CHINA TIMES WEEKLY - a magazine with the largest weekly circulation in the ROC, ran a 5-page spread with story and photos of the Society and its program to find the Taiwan POW camps and to remember the men who suffered so much at the hands of the Japanese here during the Second World War.

As this issue goes to press, a Taipei Times (English language paper) feature writer is currently working on another article, and TTV (Taiwan Television - national TV) is planning a half hour special to explore more of the POWs' story.

We are very grateful for all the support being shown by the Taiwan media in the POWs' story. With their help - and your continued support, more of the story WILL be told, thus helping to fulfill our aims and objectives!

NEW MEMORIALS !!!

--- "TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY - HOPING TO PLACE MEMORIALS AT TWO MORE POW CAMPS" . . . an update -

As we told you in our last issue, the TPCMS has been negotiating with government officials and local residents in the hopes of placing POW Memorial stones at both the former POW camps of Taichu - south of Taichung City, and Kukutsu - near Taipei. As you know from reading this issue, the Kukutsu Memorial was erected and dedicated this past November 20, so that completes one part.

Negotiations are still ongoing with the authorities at Taichung, and our feeling is that things are going well and it is expected that the memorial stone will be approved very soon.

The Society has also given some serious thought to erecting a memorial just outside the military base which is the present sight of the former Heito Camp. There has been considerable interest and support from our friends in the south of Taiwan, and so we are looking seriously at going ahead with this project sometime this year.

However, as mentioned in our last newsletter, the memorial stones cost around NT\$10,500.00 each, and funds are urgently needed to pay for them.

Thanks to the generous donations of several of our supporters, the Kukutsu Memorial has been paid for already, but we would ask for your help as we try to raise the funds to pay for the next two. We need YOUR support to help with this worthwhile cause!

We are appealing to all those who are interested in helping to remember and honour the former POWs to donate just NT\$1000 each (about US\$35.00); then the job can be completed. This is a great opportunity for those who really care about the POWs to share in the cost of the memorials.

Donations may be sent to the Society c/o our mailing address - please send by registered mail. For further information please contact us by phone, fax or email. Thank you for your care and consideration of this matter, and we look forward to your support to see these projects completed.

WHY WE DO IT

The following letter was received from former POW, Mr. Eric Carter of the 1st/5th Sherwood Foresters who was interned in Kinkaseki and the Kukutsu “jungle camp”. It came in reply to a letter we sent notifying him of the building and dedication of the Kukutsu POW Memorial this past November.

Mr. E. Carter
xxxxxxxxxxx
Notts., England

December 17, 1999

Taiwan P.O.W. Camps Memorial Society
P.O. Box 665, Yung Ho
Taipei 234, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Dear Michael,

May I thank you most sincerely for your letter of December 4th 1999, which I received this morning. It gave me immense pleasure to realise that all these miles away, and after all this time, my colleagues and I are remembered and honoured, and it makes me feel so humble and proud of your Society.

It also adds to my feelings of shame and betrayal of my own Government, who have persistently refused to acknowledge our claims for compensation, and indeed have given substantial financial support and assistance to the Japanese, who perpetrated such heinous crimes against humanity, and are guilty of such unforgivable atrocities from 1942/45.

It has always been my wish to return and pay my last respects to all those at rest in Taiwan, but financial circumstances could not permit, and now also my physical condition makes it an impossibility. It is therefore with an overwhelming sense of gratitude that I salute all members of your Society for acting on my behalf, for doing all that I would like to do personally, and for giving the recognition and honour to those who are still with us.

Could I ask you to keep me in touch with any developments and news, and accept my thanks once again. You must know also that the thoughts of my wife and I were very much with you during the recent earthquake disaster and hope that all concerned escaped without damage or loss. A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All!

God bless you all,

Eric and Joan Carter

(It's this kind of letter when received from our POW friends that makes all the hard work and sacrifice “worth it all”. To see their happiness when they know that they and their comrades have not and will not, be forgotten is more than words can express. Won't you join with us in this great project?)

REMEMBRANCE DAY 1999

by Michael Hurst

This past November a very wonderful and meaningful Weekend of Remembrance was held here in Taipei as part of the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Earlier in the year a Commonwealth Remembrance Committee had been formed to oversee the planning and organization of the annual Remembrance Day event in Taipei each November. Each fall a different Commonwealth representative will be responsible for that year's ceremonies along with their respective community organization. This year Canada took the first turn with assistance from the Canadian Society.



Four former Kinkaseki POWs (l-r) - John Marshall, Ben Gough, Jim Scott and Jack Edwards remember past times and friends.

As is usually the case, there were several former prisoners of war (POWs) who returned to Taiwan for this event which is held at the site of the Kinkaseki POW Memorial in the village of Chinguashi. This year we had four returning POWs - Jack Edwards from Hong Kong and Ben Gough, John Marshall and Jim Scott - all from Scotland. Ben, John and Jim arrived in Taipei on Tuesday November 16 as guests of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society, and on the 17th were taken out to Kinkaseki for a private visit in the CTOT van so kindly provided by Mr. Mulroney. The men spent time touring the site and reminiscing about bygone days and their former mates.

On Friday evening Jack Edwards arrived from Hong Kong and then on Saturday, November 20, the men all took part in the dedication of a new POW Memorial at the Kukutsu "jungle camp" in the hills near Hsintien. The memorial was erected in memory of the more than 300 men who were interned in this camp in the last months of the war. There are 29 known survivors from that camp living today.

Later that same evening, the Banker's Club was the venue for the annual POW dinner, which was hosted by the CTOT and emceed by Trade Office Director, David Mulroney. After a sumptuous buffet, the audience was moved as they listened to the stories and anecdotes from the POWs. At the conclusion of the evening's activities everyone was treated to some wartime music by POWs Jim Scott on the piano and John Marshall on the harmonica.

Sunday the 21st saw approximately forty people turn out for the memorial service at Kinkaseki. Piper Robert Noakes led the group down the hill to the memorial site, where the ceremony was held under a nearby pavilion as it threatened to rain at any time. (It never did.)

Master of Ceremonies, Josh Hodgson of the CTOT, led the service which featured an address by Mr. Mulroney on behalf of the Commonwealth representatives, as well as speeches and readings by all four of the former POWs. Canadian missionary Fr. Louis Gendron S.J. gave a few words and then led in the prayers of remembrance, before the wreath laying ceremony took place at the memorial itself.

Poppy wreaths were laid by the returning POWs, the other War Veterans, the Commonwealth Representatives and the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society. A moment's silence was followed by the playing of Amazing Grace on the bagpipes as the ceremony drew to a close.

Everyone who was present that November day was once again moved as they remembered friends and loved ones who have been involved in war. Our POW guests were especially grateful as they told me later, for all the kind hospitality

shown to them by the people of Taiwan - both expat and local, and that they would never forget this return visit to the land of their former imprisonment. We will certainly not forget them either!



David Mulroney (l), Josh Hodgson (2nd r) and Michael Hurst (r), with POWs at Kinkaseki Memorial Service.

Note: Our thanks to British Airways for helping with the POWs airlights, and to the Grand Formosa Regent and Imperial Intercontinental hotels in Taipei for their assistance with the POWs' accommodation.

“DOWN UNDER” NEWS. . .

Our representative in New Zealand, Mr. Lawrie Philpott, has informed us that in response to an article on the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society he ran in the New Zealand Returned Services Association magazine, he received a letter from former Taiwan POW Stan Lang, who was in the Royal Artillery and was interned in the camps at Taichu, Heito, Taihoku and Oka. Stan is the only former Taiwan POW survivor that we have found in New Zealand so far, and we hope that we will be able to locate more in the days to come. We have contacted him in the hopes of learning more about his time here and the camps in which he was held. There were only a few New Zealanders on Taiwan and we hope that some record can be found as to their whereabouts. We thank Lawrie for all his perseverance and hard work on our behalf.

THE TAIHOKU - OKA CAMP

In June of 1945, with the war going very badly for them and Taihoku (Taipei) being constantly bombed, the Japanese POW camp HQ in Taihoku decided to “recruit” a group of POWs to go into the mountains and build huts so that men could be transferred up there “for their safety”. In fact -as it is now known, the prisoners were to be killed up there when the Allies landed on Taiwan.

A party of 100 men left Taihoku Camp #6 on June 12 and spent all day hiking up into the mountains to where the camp was to be located. They were billeted at a school while they finished the first two huts, and then on July 1, they were moved into this new camp where they had little food, and had to sleep on the ground in the huts.

On July 2nd 50 more men came “up the hill” to add to the already overcrowded camp. A third hut was finished but the food got worse. Most of the men were sick and suffered from malaria, beri-beri, fatigue and beatings from the guards. By July 18 more than 100 were so sick they were unfit for work. On August 7 only 38 men reported for work - the rest were too weak or ill to even stand up. Ten men died in the camp - from starvation, disease and beatings, and of those who had gone up to OKA Camp, seven more would die within days of their return to the main camp at Taihoku after the war’s end. On August 21 - a week after peace had been declared - the men of OKA Camp returned to the main holding camp in Taihoku where they awaited rescue by the Allied forces coming in. The hardships the men suffered are chronicled in several POW accounts we have received, and this is just one more, formerly unknown story of the unspeakable cruelty of the Japanese towards the POWs during WW II. More will be told!

TAIHOKU CAMP #6 - GETTING CLOSER!

The location of Taihoku Camp #6 is getting more clear every week as information continues to come in from various sources. Both former POWs overseas and local Taiwanese friends and supporters have helped to shed more light on the whereabouts of this main POW site through contacts made over the past few months.

During the POWs’ visit this past November, we took them sightseeing one day and later went for a drive in the vicinity where we believe the #6 Camp is located. To our surprise we found the area had been cleared of the former old military buildings which had previously occupied the site, and that the gate to the area had been left open. We seized upon the opportunity to go inside the compound for a closer look. Once inside, and with the opportunity to assess the location from a perspective not thus afforded, I felt sure that this was either the site of the former camp - or very close to it.

We took some photos of the area - just in case, and now plan to go back and try to find someone living in the vicinity who might have remembered the camp or the POWs.

Finding the location of this main camp is of prime importance as so much of the Taiwan POWs’ story revolves around it. Taihoku #6 was the camp where approximately half of the first group of British POWs from the hellship ‘England Maru’ were sent on first arriving in Taiwan. Many of the men from this group, including Dr. Wheeler, were sent to Kinkaseki in relief of the men who had died or who were too ill to work.

Also, men passed through this camp from most of the other camps on Taiwan either on their way to Japan, or as the war drew to a close. We currently have 24 living survivors who spent part of their POW life in this camp, as well as many more who passed through, and these men are all eager to hear about our discovery of their former camp. We won’t disappoint you men!

We won’t disappoint you men!

THE SEARCH FOR THE TAIHOKU “OKA” CAMP

As mentioned in an earlier article, the whereabouts of the “OKA” jungle camp have consistently eluded us. Even the six survivors of the former camp that we have corresponded with, could not provide any real leads, so we were really stumped as to where to even begin to look for this camp.

Then one evening in a phone conversation with Jack Geddes, I mentioned something about this “mystery” camp - which I thought “might” be up in the mountains north of Taipei City. I mentioned that the POWs spoke of coal heaps, and Jack immediately started talking about a narrow-gauge railway that ran up a certain valley in the mountains north of the city - and with coal mine slag heaps along the side. This was the very thing the POWs had described. It seems that Jack and his family had hiked in that valley many years ago. Finally, we had a lead!

So on Wednesday, December 29, Jack and I, Jerry Norris and Stuart Saunders took off in Stuart’s car to try to find the valley which Jack and the POWs spoke about.

After spending some time driving up various “dead-end” mountain roads which ran high up into the hills, we returned to the main valley bottom again to try another approach on the opposite side of the valley.

We stopped at the foot of another mountain road to ask one of the older local residents if he knew where the old rail-line ran and where the old coal mine was located. He told us we were standing on the spot where the rail-line came down from the mountain and pointed to the now-paved narrow road up the mountain as the place where formerly the old were laid.

So now we had the valley; we just had to try to find where the camp site might have been. We asked the old man if he knew anything about the Japanese POW camp. He remembered the Japanese being there, but knew nothing of the camp - which wasn’t surprising since the Japanese army did not want the local residents to know anything about the camps and what went on in them. This is characteristic of all the camps on Taiwan - and also, all of Asia.

The POWs mentioned some sort of school where they were billeted for the period while they built the bamboo huts. Several local residents told us of a school which would have dated from the wartime period that was located across the valley and high up on the mountain. We decided that since this area was not accessible from our present location we might check it out another time, and started up the road where the former rail-line ran.

After much driving and further searching we came across another older man who had worked in the coal mine. He offered to show us where its former location had been. The mine was closed in 1983 and all traces of the works had been removed. The mountain grasses and forests had all but overgrown the area. He too knew nothing of the former POW camp and never recalled seeing any POWs anywhere near the mine. This would also be correct, as the POWs never spoke of having anything to do with the mine, but that on their way to and from the camp to get supplies from the village in the valley, they passed the rail-lines and the coal slag heaps. They were never allowed to use the railway to carry their goods back to camp - they always had to walk up the mountain with their heavy loads. It was only after they were liberated on their last trip down the mountain that they were put on small flatcars by the local Taiwanese who had sympathy for them and helped them on their way.

The weather began to close in, and as the afternoon wore on and the rains came down, we knew we would not find the camp that day. We are pleased with the leads we have and the contacts made however, and are looking forward soon to making another attempt at finding the camp. We will certainly check out the old school and its environs and see if there may be any older residents in that area who might remember the POWs from that earlier time.

So you see, finding these camps is not a simple matter. Even with good leads it often takes several tries, but we are not giving up. The challenge is there and we’re up to that challenge - to find these camps - so that all will know what took place here so many years ago.

THANKS FOR THE HELP!

We want to specially thank the following companies for their generous support to our cause over this past year. . .

BRITISH ASIA AIRWAYS

- for assisting with flights for the UK POW Reunion trip last summer and the flights of the POWs who visited Taiwan this past November.

GRAND FORMOSA REGENT HOTEL and the IMPERIAL INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

- who so graciously provided accommodation for our POW guests this past November.

It is with corporate support like this that we are able to see our goals fulfilled, and we thank them for their great community spirit.

THINK ABOUT IT. . . .

by Michael Hurst

Over the past couple of years as I have gone about my daily routine of life, I have often been suddenly jolted by reality as I compared what I was doing at that very moment to how it must have been for the POWs here on Taiwan those many years ago.

For example, one Monday morning I woke up, not feeling "all that well" - most likely having a touch of the flu. My body ached from fever and I felt listless and tired. I didn't feel like getting up and going to work that morning and decided to remain in the snug confines of my bed until this had all passed.

As I lay there contemplating my sorry state, my memory drifted back to one of the POW's diaries I had recently been reading. In it he told of experiences just like mine - where he and many of his mates felt so weak and ill when they heard the call for reveille each morning, that all they wanted to do was pull the blankets up over their heads and go back to sleep. But they had to get up and go to "work" anyway - most often at the "urging" of the guards and often at bayonet point! There was no "option", they just HAD to go, no matter how badly they felt or how sick they were.

Some time later, for some unknown reason I contracted a case of diarrhea, and as I frequented my nice sanitary bathroom in relative "comfort" with its plentiful supply of toilet paper, I began to think of the POWs and the multitude cases of dysentery and diarrhea that they had to contend with. They had no toilet paper and no proper facilities to use most of the time. I thought of them being force-marched to work and then made to slave under horrid conditions - still plagued by the need to frequently stop and attend to the call of nature, knowing even then, that as they did so, they would not be able to complete the work required of them which would result in a further beating at the end of the day.

Not so long ago in December - when the weather turned quite cold in Taipei, I found myself complaining about the damp bitter cold as I put on an extra sweater and turned up the electric heater a bit more. Then my mind returned to another POW's story of his time here in the Taihoku Camp when the weather was so cold and he despaired of ever being warm again. The crude wood and bamboo huts were drafty and let in the rain and cold, and with no heaters it was impossible to get warm. This went on day after day - for many weeks!

The prisoners never had an abundance of clothes - most wore only a shirt and trousers in the coldest months of winter, sometimes augmented with a sweater or jacket if they could get their hands on one. At night they slept on beds made of planks with only a couple of rough wool army blankets to keep them warm. My bed was soft and warm and I could have all the blankets I wanted to keep warm. I thought of this POW who survived the war, and I wondered of I could have done the same under similar circumstances.

When it comes to food, I am usually fine with almost anything, and not one to complain about what I am served. However, living in Taiwan and having rice as the main staple dish does make me wish for other varieties of food now and again. Whenever I get thinking this way now, I am reminded once again of the POWs and that they had NOTHING but rice basically - three times a day - EVERYDAY for 3 1/2 YEARS! To go with this, they did have a thin watery green soup and now and again sweet potato tops, a bit of cabbage or other "unknown" vegetables. Occasionally they were given bananas or oranges - OF WHICH THEY ATE THE SKINS, PEELS AND ALL, and on very special occasions the POW cooks were given a bit of pork to go into a stew. One wonders what a bit of pork could do to enhance the taste and nutritional value of a stew for 700 men!

So let us all be mindful as we go about our lives today - what it was like for the POWs back then, and what they suffered - in their everyday life in the camps (not to mention the beatings and the ravages of disease), to bring us our freedom and the peace and prosperity we enjoy today - JUST THINK ABOUT IT!

As former Kinkaseki Committee Chairmen Jeff Cox so aptly put it when he was addressing the gathering at the Memorial in 1998 - "If it wasn't for those POWs doing what they did here in Taiwan those many years ago, then we "expats" would not be doing what we are doing today!" We owe them all a debt of gratitude that can NEVER be repaid!

BECAUSE OF A POSTCARD !

I have a Taiwanese friend who is interested in stamps and who has given me some articles about Taiwan POW postcards. One such article contained a photocopy of a card addressed to a Sapper Reg Howard. I immediately recognized the name as one of the men who had been a POW at Kinkaseki. I enquired with our UK rep, Maurice Rooney - a good friend of Mr. Howard's, who was in the same squad at Kinkaseki. From the details I gave, Maurice was able to confirm that the postcard did belong to Reg.

Later, I invited my friend over to show me some of his wartime stamp collection. He has a great selection of first-day covers and Japanese postcards - mostly propaganda stuff, and a number of other wartime artifacts. Then he pulled out a stamp dealer's auction catalogue to show me some of the items inside - including two POW postcards that were up for auction.

Well I couldn't believe my eyes when I looked at the card - whose name do you think was on the cover?

2078653 SAPPER M.A. ROONEY
288TH FIELD COY., ROYAL ENGINEERS
SINGAPORE
BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR
C/O JAPANESE RED CROSS, TOKYO

It was postmarked NORWICH - 17 April 1943 and across one end is written in pen -
"Received June 1st, 1944"

This is just absolutely unbelievable. Here I am, 56 years later, sitting in my livingroom talking with a new Taiwanese friend who I had met only 3 weeks earlier - who shows me a stamp catalogue with a POW postcard addressed to my good friend and our Society rep in the UK. What a small world!

My friend couldn't believe it either. He loaned me the catalogue so I could make a photocopy to give to Maurice. I asked my friend how he thought such POW postcards could have ended up in Taiwan when all this mail "should" have either been delivered to the POWs or returned to England, and he had no explanation. I deduced that it must have come from mail the Japanese Army never bothered to deliver, although I did wonder at the writing on it marked "Received June 1st 1944".

Maurice later emailed me saying that both he and Reg had sold most of their cards after the war when they needed some extra money, so that explains how they got into circulation again.

The British dealer who bought them must have re-sold them and "down the line" over many years, they have somehow ended up back here in Taiwan. What a story!! I am trying to contact the stamp store that published the catalogue to try to find the owner and at least ask him for a photocopy of the original - if I cannot obtain it.

As mentioned, there were two POW postcards in the catalogue, and the other one was from a Bob Paradise that was addressed to a Rev. Flanagan in Nebraska. I thought I recognized the name "Paradise" so I checked in my files and found he was the last man who came into Kinkaseki from Taihoku Camp No. 6 in May 1945. He was a US soldier - PFC Robert P. Paradise, and he would also have gone with the Kinkaseki men to Kukutsu. Another fantastic coincidence!

This POW research has taken some strange and wonderful turns, and what a small world it is turning out to be indeed. Talk about things being terribly exciting! It just makes me wonder what is going to turn up next - from where and from whom?

WAR MEDALS BRING INQUIRY - Bdr. Rogers story

In late January we received an email from Mr. Steve Verralls of Hong Kong - a wartime medal collector, who had recently obtained a set of WW II medals belonging to a Bdr. John Rodgers (853376) of the 5th Field Reg't. R.A. who he believed had been a POW on Taiwan. He was looking for information on Bdr. Rodgers - what camp(s) he might have been in and anything we might know about him.

By checking through the records we have, I was able to confirm that Bdr. Rodgers was in fact a POW on Taiwan. We even had a record of his death in the OKA Camp on August 16, 1945 from an entry in another POW's diary that I have.

So from what info we had, Bdr. Rodgers' story unfolds this way. He was on the hellship England Maru which brought the first draft of POWs to Taihoku and Kinkaseki on November 14, 1942. Since he was never at Kinkaseki, he likely would have been at No. 6 Camp in Taihoku (Taipei) for the entire time except for the last couple of months when he went to the OKA Camp. He is now buried in Sai Wan Bay Cemetery in Hong Kong.

We are looking for more info on Bdr. Rodgers so if there are any former 5th Field Reg't men from Taihoku - or others who knew him, or can tell us anything more about him, please let us know.

Interested parties can also write to Mr. Verralls directly at P.O. Box 559, Tai Po Post Office, Tai Po, NT, Hong Kong.

I hope we can help Mr. Verralls further, and as well add to our knowledge of another former Taiwan POW.

ONE STEP CLOSER . . .

In March of last year my wife and I spent a few days in Singapore. The trip initially started out as a holiday, but when I saw how wartime history has been preserved there, I immediately started exploring the various sites to see what I could learn. I felt it was important to learn more about the background of the fall of Singapore and how the POWs spent the early part of their incarceration before they were sent to Taiwan.

I managed to take in quite a bit of information and got some great glimpses into the POWs' story on that first trip, but time ran out for me and I vowed I would return again to complete the research I had started.

So on January 24 this year, we returned once again to the beautiful "garden city". Having seen the main wartime sites on my previous visit - ie. Changi Prison Museum and Chapel, The Battle Box Command HQ, the Kranji War Cemetery, as well as a number of well-known historic sites in the downtown area, this time I wanted to explore further afield and check out the sites of the battle - which are not so easily accessible to the average tourist.

The day following our arrival was pouring rain but as I had a schedule to keep I set out for my appointed rounds. First a visit to Bukit Timah Hill where one of the fiercest battles was fought and then on to Bukit Batok Hill where the POWs were forced to build a monument to the Japanese war dead.

From there I made my way to the old Ford Factory where Japanese General Yamashita accepted the surrender of General Percival and the Allied forces - the beginning of 3 1/2 horrible years of suffering for more than 125,000 POWs.



The old Ford Factory - where the Allies surrendered to the Japanese

From the Ford Factory I went to the south coast to explore the coastal batteries and bunkers left from the battles in that area. Then on to the Alexandra Hospital to see where the terrible massacre of innocent doctors, nurses and patients was perpetrated by the Japanese army on February 14, 1942. I talked with the PR department staff who were most helpful in providing additional information.

In the afternoon I went out to Changi Beach and saw the place where hundreds of innocent Chinese civilians were murdered, while the POWs were forced to watch and then later to bury the dead.

I revisited Changi Prison Museum and had another talk with the curator there. While there I spent a little time at the POW Chapel Memorial - reflecting once again in the POWs' story and what they suffered for our freedom.

The next day - with much improved weather, we visited Sentosa Island - a popular tourist and amusement venue. First on the agenda was a visit to Fort Siloso on the western end of the island - the site of the big guns during the last days of Singapore. Then it was on to the Images of Singapore exhibit with its excellent display of wartime history, complete with very realistic dioramas.

The trip was a great success and I now feel I have a better grounding in the POWs' story. Knowing "how it all began" in Singapore will give a better basis for further research and will bring us ONE STEP CLOSER to the Taiwan POWs' story!

In Memorium

James Scott, affectionately known as “Jimmy”, passed away in hospital on December 14 after a short illness. He had recently returned from a trip to Taiwan for the annual Weekend of Remembrance where he took part, along with three other former Taiwan POWs, in a remembrance service and the dedication of the Kukutsu POW Memorial.

Jim was in the first group of POWs to go into the notorious Kinkaseki POW Camp in November 1942 and stayed until almost the very end, being sent out to the camp at Shirakawa early in the spring of 1945.

In his 80th year, Jim was full of life, and according to everyone who knew him, lived life to the full every day. He had an indomitable spirit - ready to take on anything that he wanted to do.

All his life Jim had been a musician. In prison camp he played the accordion at camp concerts to help cheer his mates, and after the war played both accordion and piano at local hotels, pubs and events. Jim endeared himself to all those he met in Taiwan. His cheery smile and lively piano playing will not soon be forgotten.



Former Kinkaseki POW, Jim Scott - standing beside the Kinkaseki POW Memorial on Remembrance Day 1999.

On his return from Taiwan, Jim had been excitedly telling everyone of the wonderful time he had. He was so pleased to have at last fulfilled his longtime wish to return again to Taiwan. He suffered a stroke two weeks after his return and passed away peacefully in hospital a week later.

Our heartfelt sympathy and warmest wishes go out to all his family at this time, with the assurance that he will be sadly missed, but he won't ever be forgotten!

--- from the Director This past couple of months have been filled with much emotion. First, there was the revisiting of the Heito Camp in early November. Next came the erecting and dedication of the Kukutsu POW Memorial stone on the site of the former camp. Then the wonderful Remembrance Weekend which took place, featuring the POW banquet and Remembrance Day service at Kinkaseki under the auspices of the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei and the Canadian Society. These were all occasions for much rejoicing as we saw more of our efforts to remember the former POWs of Taiwan come to fruition. But there was sadness too, as we learned of the passing of Jim Scott who had been with us only a few weeks before.

And so the work goes on - as we seek to find the remains of several more camps and erect memorials at those we have found. We need the help of all those who are interested in helping to learn, understand and preserve the POWs' story. We would like to hear from you with any questions or ideas you may have, and also with your financial support.

As I have said many times, we have a great team who are willing to do the work, but we need financial help to cover the costs of copying and documenting the POWs' stories, the printing and postage for the newsletter, and general operating expenses. Anything you can do to help will be most gratefully appreciated!

Let Us Never Forget!