



Never Forgotten

The Official Newsletter of the TAIWAN P.O.W. CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY
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NEW ORGANIZATION FACES GREAT CHALLENGES. . .

The newly formed TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY faces a great many challenges as it begins to try to fulfill its mandate to locate the former POW camps on Taiwan and to remember the men who suffered in them at the hands of their cruel Japanese captors.

The first obstacle is a lack of detailed information about the POW camps on Taiwan and many other places in the Far East. After the war ended in 1945 there was a deliberate attempt by the Allied powers at that time to just be over and done with the war and as a result information was hastily and often inaccurately gathered.

There was little real attempt to pursue the Japanese war criminals who had perpetrated such heinous crimes against humanity - not only toward the POWs, but against the civilian population as well. Much was "swept under the rug" in favour of bringing the war to a swift close and also to ensure Japan's alliance with the Allies against the upcoming communist threat in Asia. Many western diplomats at the time felt that Japan had suffered enough and so shouldn't be made to endure any more. With this carelessness, a great deal of misinformation was gathered and much of the true story omitted, so that today it is difficult to trace the records of the POW camps and what took place in them.

Another large factor contributing to the dilemma is that Taiwan has changed so much in the past 55 years, to the point where there are very few landmarks recognisable now from that earlier period.

However, with a lot of careful and painstaking research it is possible to locate the remains of the former POW camps here. To date four others beside Kinkaseki have been located and work is underway by the society to track down the remainder. In the months to come we hope to bring you updated information as new discoveries are made

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TAIWAN POW CAMPS

MEMORIAL SOCIETY. . .

- to continue the search for survivors of the Taiwan POW camps from 1942 – 1945
- to search for the locations of the former Japanese POW camps on the island of Taiwan
- to ensure that the survivors of these POW camps know that they and their comrades are 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 scholars, researchers, museums and POW groups on the Taiwan POWs' story

UPDATE ON LOCATING THE TAIWAN POW CAMPS

by Michael Hurst

During the past year, we have explored various places on the island in an effort to locate some of the other former Japanese Prisoner of War camps that were located here during World War II.

After many trips to libraries and archives - pouring over old records and maps from the Japanese era, and with the remembrances of many of the former POWs interned there, we have been able to locate a number of these former camps.

1. KUKUTSU - "JUNGLE CAMP" -

When Jack Edwards was with us in the spring of 1997 we took a trip out to the Hsintien area with Hugh Stephens in search of the former "jungle camp" described in Jack's book. We were able to find the location of the camp area with help from the local residents, and later, on subsequent visits, the area where the POWs planted sweet potatoes and peanuts was also located.

A more detailed exploration of the campsite was undertaken in the fall of 1998 by the writer. Then when the POWs came in November we were able to take them out to the site for a look. As one commented, "It is wonderful to be able to retrace one's steps taken so many years ago - this is a very moving experience for me".

2. KARENKO & TAMAZATO CAMPS -

Early last year during the Chinese New Year holiday on a trip to Hualien, we were able to confirm the location of the former KARENKO CAMP where the senior British, Dutch and American officers and the former governors of Singapore and Hong Kong were held for a time. Further south at YuLi, the location of the temporary TAMAZATO holding camp, was also identified.

4.TAICHU CAMP -

Since three of the five ex-POWs who came to Taiwan for last November's remembrance service had spent time in the TAICHU CAMP near Taichung, I wanted to try to locate this camp in advance of their coming so we could take them to see the location of their earlier internment.

After much research - and just two weeks before they arrived, we were finally able to locate the camp, which was later verified when the POWs saw it again for themselves. Sid, Ben and Maurice were delighted to be able to stand on the bank of the river where they had laboured more than 50 years before, and the memories and friendships from that former time came flooding back.

5.TAIHOKU CAMP -

One of the POWs - Stan Vickerstaff, had spent considerable time in the TAIHOKU CAMP (the former name for Taipei) before being sent to Kinkaseki near the end of the war. With his help during the visit, we were able to find the approximate site of one of the former camps that were located here in Taipei. The search for the Taihoku camps has

been made all the more difficult due to the fact that Taipei and area has changed so much over the past 50 years. The search is ongoing at this time.

There are still more camps to locate and a lot more research to be done, but I feel that they can all be found in time and with perseverance. This is a great challenge for a historian - to explore and see history come alive once again. It is also very rewarding, for when the POWs come back to Taiwan, we can show them their former camps again. If anyone can provide further information in this regard or knows or any other sources of information, please contact us. Your assistance will be appreciated - and acknowledged.

The LOGO TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY

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

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A BIG MYSTERY - The POW Cemeteries

We have been in contact with Ex-POW Maurice Cunningham who was interned in the camps at Taichu, Heito and Taihoku. As we have corresponded over the past months he has raised the issue of what happened to all the bodies of the POWs who died in these former camps and others on Taiwan. We know that the POWs who died at Kinkaseki were buried on "Boot Hill"

across the valley from the camp, and later were moved to the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Sai Wan Bay in Hong Kong after the war, but the whereabouts of the bodies of the POWs who died elsewhere is a mystery.

Many of the Kinkaseki men who left the camp, being too ill or weak to work, also died in these other camps, so it is of real interest that we look into what became of their remains.

Perhaps there may be some former POWs out there who were held in the other camps who may be able to shed some light on where the various POW camp cemeteries were located, and perhaps someone is aware of what happened to the POWs buried in those cemeteries. Anyone having any information or possible leads, is asked to contact us and we will endeavour to track down the former locations of such cemeteries.

"HELP WANTED. . ."

The TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY is looking for assistance in several areas as we seek to study and learn more about the POWs who were interned in Taiwan during World War II.

First, we are looking for those who were here as POWs to come forth with their stories and any facts which will aid us in our research.

Second, we would encourage other interested persons to join with us and help with research and discovery trips to the sites of the former camps.

Third, we need some financial support to assist with the costs of postage for our correspondence with the POWs, and also the printing and mailing of our newsletters. Most of our other setup costs have already been met through donations of money and services by several of our supporters and friends.

If you can be of any assistance to us in any of these areas, we would love to hear from you. If you wish to make a donation, please send it by registered mail to us at the address on the first page. Thank you.

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. You can 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

SOCIETY RECEIVES LIST OF AMERICAN EX-POWS

Recently, through a contact in the US, we received a list of surviving American POWs who were interned in Taiwan during World War II. The list came from the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association. We have been corresponding with them and plan to work more closely together in the future. We are now contacting these POWs to find out where they were held captive and to learn more about their experiences here. It is hoped that this new pool of survivors can provide further information and insight into the other camps on Taiwan.

THE TRAIL OF THE AUSTRALIANS

Sam Gerovich, Representative of the Australian Commerce and Industry Office in Taipei, has provided a list of Australian ex-POWs who were interned on Taiwan during the Second World War. The list was supplied by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. There are 33 names on the list and an attempt is being made at this time through our Australia rep., Sid Dodds, to see if any of these former POWs still survive.

THE SEARCH FOR TWO ELUSIVE TAIPEI POW CAMPS

According to information received from some of the POWs, there was another "jungle camp" in the hills near Taipei at the end of the war. The most well-known of the jungle camps is the one referred to in the books by Jack Edwards and Arthur Titherington - where the survivors of Kinkaseki were sent. This camp called "Kukutsu", was located in the hills south of Hsintien, a southern suburb of Taipei. We have already located the site of this camp. (see pg. 2)

This "other" jungle camp was somewhere in the close proximity of Taipei city at the time, but not in the same area as the Kukutsu Camp. The POWs tell of a long climb of 5 miles to reach this camp high in the hills - a journey that took all day.

To date we have made contact with four of the survivors of this camp, including the medical officer, Dr. Coone, an American who had been interned in the Philippines for most of the war and who had come to Taipei right at the end, only to be sent "up the hill" to the camp they called the "OKA CAMP"

So far we have been unable to ascertain just where this camp might have been located, or even which direction from Taipei it lay. We have a list of all the POWs who were in this camp - mostly British, with some American and a few from Australia, Ireland, India, the Philippines and Holland.

Also, there was another camp referred to in the Allied Intelligence reports after the war as Taihoku-Mosak Camp, where it is reported that a number of the senior officers were kept for a very short time while in transit through Taiwan. All details about this camp remain a mystery.

If any of our readers can help shed some light on the possible location of these camps, or have information that can help us learn more about them, please contact us as soon as possible. Thank you!

. . from the Director

This brings to a close the first edition of our TAIWAN POW CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY newsletter.

As you can see we have many interesting projects on the go and many more that we hope to undertake in the future. To date this has all been pretty much a one-man show, as I have spent the past year compiling a great deal of material from various sources and doing a lot of research on my own.

However, with the formation of the Society we now have a real team to carry on the work that was begun on the Kinkaseki Committee, and I trust we will have the support and enthusiasm of the local community as well as that of the surviving POWs we have contacted. So until next time -

Let Us Never Forget!