



# Never Forgotten

Vol. 12, Number 1

SPRING – SUMMER 2011

The Official Newsletter of the TAIWAN P.O.W. CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY

## 2011 - the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Taiwan POW Project



*The Taiwan POW Memorial Wall – awesome!*



*Architects Drawing of Phase II of the new Taiwan Prisoner of War Memorial Park*



*With AIT-KHH Chief Chris Castro at the Taiwan POW Hellships Memorial in Kaohsiung*



*Celebrating Memorial Day at the old Taipei Prison wall*

### REMEMBRANCE WEEK 2011

Be sure to mark the week of November 9 – 16 on your calendars and in your date books, and plan to be with us for our great 15<sup>th</sup> annual event which will feature a POW banquet on November 12th and the Remembrance Day service at the Prisoner of War Memorial Park at Kinkaseki on the 13th. This year we will also hold the dedication ceremony for Phase II of the POW Memorial Park with the new Taiwan POW Memorial Wall and POW Sculpture. We hope that former POWs and their families will make an effort to come as we have a special program prepared for these guests. If you are interested, and for more information, please contact the Society by mail or email at the addresses shown on page 2 of this newsletter. We look forward to having you with us here in November!

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Taiwan

## **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. [ *completed* ]
- \* to ensure the memory of the Taiwan POWs is not forgotten. [ *ongoing* ]
- \* to help with the organization of, and participate in, the memorial service for the Taiwan POWs at Jinguashi every November. [ *ongoing* ]
- \* 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. [ *ongoing* ]

## **LIST OF TAIWAN POW CAMPS. . . all found !**

1. KINKASEKI #1 (Jinguashi)
2. TAICHU #2 (Taichung)
3. HEITO #3 (PingTung)
4. SHIRAKAWA #4 (Chiayi)
5. TAIHOKU #5 MOSAK (Taipei)
6. TAIHOKU #6 (Taipei)
7. KARENKO (Hualien)
8. TAMAZATO (Yuli)
9. INRIN - (Yuanlin)
10. INRIN TEMP. (Yuanlin)
11. TOROKU - (Touliu)
12. TAKAO (Kaohsiung)
13. KUKUTSU (Taipei)
14. OKA (Taipei)
15. CHURON Evacuation Camp (Taipei)
16. MARUYAMA Evacuation Camp (Taipei)

## *Thought . . .*

Success – is the reward for  
turning believing into  
achievement.

## Welcome...

We are honoured to welcome Mr. Stephen Payton, the new Director of the New Zealand Commerce and Industry Office in Taipei as an ex-officio member of our board of directors as of this spring.

Stephen replaces Michelle Slade who left Taiwan for another posting in February. I want to express my appreciation for the interest and support that Michele and her husband gave to our Society. We look forward to working with Stephen and the staff of the NZCIO in the days ahead.

### A word regarding donations to the Society:

Banks in Taiwan are reluctant to accept anything other than US dollars, so if making a donation to the Society please send the funds in **US\$** - preferably in a bank wire / transfer to our account here. Please contact us for the pertinent account information. Thank you.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### FEPOW DAY – AUGUST 13, 2011

This year will be the fourth time that **FEPOW Day** has been celebrated here in Taiwan since the day to remember all of the Far East POWs – both military and civilian, was established in the UK in 2007.

Once again we will meet at the Spot Theatre – 18, Chungshan North Road Sec. 2 in downtown Taipei on Saturday evening August 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. There will be a display of POW and military artifacts, we will have a short memorial service to remember the POWs and then a feature POW film will be shown. Everyone is invited, but space is limited to around 75 persons, so please kindly let us know if you're planning to attend so we can reserve a seat for you. We hope to have a good turnout again this year.

### UK Taiwan POW Reunion

Once again this year there will be a reunion of former Taiwan POWs and their families held in the UK at South Shields, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. It will take place from **September 9 – 12**, and the program will follow a similar format to previous years.

There will be lots of time for good fellowship and some fun activities have been planned. On Sunday morning the special memorial service will be held at the Hebburn Cenotaph once again.

Reservations are required as space is limited, so be sure to book early in order to be able to attend.

For more information about the reunion and to reserve a place, please contact Mrs. Eileen Bacon at [wrinkly54@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wrinkly54@yahoo.co.uk).

## FROM THE DIRECTOR. . .

This November is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Remembrance Day service at the Church of the Good Shepherd (Anglican) here in Taipei where we first learned about the notorious Kinkaseki Prisoner of War Camp in what is now the village of Jinguashi, Taiwan. It was from that service and the interest that followed, that led to the creation of the Kinkaseki Memorial Committee and the building of the Taiwan POW Memorial which was dedicated on November 23, 1997 on the site of the former POW camp. "The rest is history" - as they say.

Since that time - under the auspices of the *Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society*, all of the 16 former POW camps have been found and their stories documented. More than 300 former Taiwan POWs and their families have been contacted worldwide and a huge archive of stories, photos, documents and artifacts have been collected. Memorials have been built at six other POW sites on the island with another planned for this fall and two more to follow after that.

Speaking of new memorials, things are progressing well at this time with the ROC Ministry of Defense for the building of a memorial on the site of the Taihoku #6 Camp in the Taipei suburb of Tachih. This was the main camp in Taipei and saw the movement of thousands of soldiers through it from 1942 – 45. We hope to have it ready for dedication this November during our Remembrance Week event.

We are very proud of all the memorials that have been built, but the most significant thing recently has been the completion of Phase II of the Taiwan POW Memorial Park construction project. I have devoted considerable space to telling this story (*see pages 6-7*) and suffice to say it is one of the greatest things that has been accomplished to honour the memory of the more than 4350 allied POWs who were interned here during WW II. The POW Memorial Wall with the names of every former Taiwan POW engraved on it is simply awesome and just has to be seen to be fully appreciated. The life-size bronze sculpture of the two POWs is also a fitting tribute to their great spirit.

We have had several events this spring to further remember the POWs and the Veterans. On May 20<sup>th</sup> the *Taiwan Hellships Memorial Wall display* was officially opened at the museum in the War and Peace Park at Kaohsiung Harbour. (*See story pg 5*)

We also held a Memorial Day service at the site of the old Taipei Prison Wall where the American airmen were held after being shot down over Taiwan during bombing raids. This was the first time we have held this service and it will become an annual event from now on. (*See story on page 8*)

In closing I would like to thank all our friends and supporters once again for your encouragement through your emails and your financial gifts toward our work. Together we are making certain that our beloved Taiwan POWs will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,

*Michael Hurst MBE*

# In Memoriam

*The following former Taiwan POWs have passed away since our last newsletter.*

*We extend our sincerest sympathy to the families of these men and assure them that although they are no longer with us, they will not be forgotten!*

**DAVID A. TOPPING**

PFC., 27 BG 91 BS, US ARMY AIR CORPS  
AUGUST 13, 2010

**EDWIN H. KLUEMPER**

RM3C., US NAVY  
NOVEMBER 10, 2010

**LESLEY R. JOY**

L/BDR., 80<sup>TH</sup> ANTI-TANK REGIMENT, R.A.  
JANUARY 6, 2011

**CORNELUS M. LEEUWENBURGH**

GNR. ROYAL NETHERLANDS INDIES ARMY  
JANUARY 26, 2011

**JACK V. FOWLER**

PTE., 4<sup>TH</sup> BTN. SUFFOLK REG'T.  
FEBRUARY 1, 2011

**ONUFROWICZ WILLIAM (Onufry)**

T/SGT., US ARMY AIR CORPS  
FEBRUARY 7, 2011

**JAMES H.D. WICKHAM**

LIEUT., ROYAL ENGINEERS  
MAY 10, 2011

**JOHN P.D. COUPER**

SGMN., 9/11<sup>TH</sup> INDIAN DIVISION SIGNALS  
MAY 21, 2011

*"We Will Remember Them"*

*Please let us know if you hear of the passing of any former Taiwan POW and send us the information as we want to make sure they are remembered once more on this page.*

## PLEASE HELP US - NOW!

In the past few months we have received a number of first time emails from people telling us that their father, grandfather, uncle etc. has just passed away. It is always sad when we hear of a POW's passing, but in response I write to them and ask "Why didn't you write to us sooner and tell us about your relative while he was still alive?" "We want to hear from them, and about them, so we can learn more of the POWs' stories to further insure that they are recorded and that the men are not forgotten."

So PLEASE - if you have a loved one who was a Taiwan POW and who is still living, please send us a letter or an email and tell us about him -

## BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

## REMEMBERING DEAR FEPOW FRIENDS. . .

**JACK V. FOWLER** - 4<sup>TH</sup> BTN. SUFFOLK REG'T.

Our dear friend Jack Fowler passed away on February 1<sup>st</sup> after a short illness. I first met Jack and his lovely wife Pearl at the first Taiwan POW Reunion at Gunton Hall in the UK in 1999 and it seems that we never lost touch. They came out to Taiwan on three occasions for our Remembrance Week event and I even bumped into them one time during a visit I made to Singapore for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore Commemoration. We were together at subsequent reunions in the UK and we kept in close touch over the years, first by mail and later by email.

Jack and Pearl went to nearly all the POW reunions, dinners and events, including those at Buckingham Palace to which they were invited. They were members and avid supporters of COFEPOW in the UK. Just last year he had the thrill of meeting with Dame Vera Lynn in London.

Jack was a character and could tell a joke with the best of them, but he had a very serious side as well when it came to remembering his time as a POW here in Taiwan and especially the mates he lost.

Like so many of my dear FEPOW friends who have passed away over the years, he will be sadly missed, but he will never be forgotten. Rest in Peace my friend!

**CORNELUS M. LEEUWENBURGH** -

GNR. ROYAL NETHERLANDS INDIES ARMY

Cornelius aka "Kees" Leeuwenburgh was one of only three former Dutch POWs that we have come to know in the past fifteen years of doing this work, and he was so helpful in telling us the story of the Dutch POWs from the NEI who were here in the camps on Taiwan.

Kees and his mates fought the Japanese for just a short time before the NEI surrendered in March 1942. He went from his home in Java to Taiwan as a POW via Singapore in February 1943 with the Dutch "Special Party" and was first interned in Karenko Camp. In May he was transferred to Heito Camp where he remained until it was bombed in February 1945. He then moved to Taihoku Camp 6 and finally ended up in the hell camp of OKA where he finished out the war. He was so sick and weak at the end that he barely survived. Another 3 - 4 weeks and all the men in that camp would have been dead.

He was evacuated on the USS Block Island to Manila and on boarding his rucksack with all his earthly possessions was thrown overboard. When he told a crewmember about this the sailor went to the kitchen and got 5 - USN silver spoons to give to Kees - to "start his new life with". He treasured those spoons as they gave him new hope. He presented us with 3 of them several years ago saying he didn't need them anymore as he was very happy now.

Kees and his wife Yvonne immigrated to Australia after the war and lived in the Brisbane area. He was a good friend and he will always be remembered!



# POW HELLSHIPS DISPLAY OPENED AT KAOHSIUNG

After two years in the making we are proud and happy to announce that the Taiwan POW Hellships display opened in the Taiwan Veterans' Museum at the War and Peace Park on Chijin Island in Kaohsiung on Friday May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Taiwan played a significant role in the story of the hellships. Being a Japanese colony and secure base, it served as a haven for many ships en route to Japan as well as a prime destination for POWs being used as slave labour for the Japanese war effort. More than 4300 Allied POWs were brought to Taiwan by hellship to slave in the fourteen POW camps located here on the island. Every POW who was on Taiwan came here by hellship, and many left the same way, later going to Japan and Manchuria where they finished out the war. In total almost 30,000 POWs were transported to and from the Taiwan ports of Kaohsiung (Takao) and Keelung during World War II. In 2006 the Society and the Kaohsiung City Gov't. erected the *Taiwan Hellships Memorial* to honour and remember those men.

The POW Hellship display was requested by the Taiwan Veterans' Association and the Kaohsiung City History Museum in order to tell more of the story of the Japanese Hellships and the allied prisoners of war who suffered and died on them in Taiwan waters during World War II. The permanent display will help visitors to the War and Peace Park and museum to understand more fully the story of the Hellships and to appreciate the memorial we erected and dedicated to the victims, and which is now an integral part of the War and Peace Park.

At approximately 2pm on May 20<sup>th</sup> a remembrance ceremony for the Taiwan Veterans and the POWs was held at the Glory Pier in Kaohsiung Harbor followed by a boat ride on the harbor during which time we passed over the location where the hellship Enoura Maru was bombed and over 350 American POWs were killed. Flowers were laid on the water near the site and a moment's silence observed.

Following this we proceeded to the War and Peace Park by group bus and a short ceremony was held to honour the Taiwanese War Veterans, and flowers were laid on the memorials in the park. Then we went inside the museum for the opening of the POW Hellships display at approx. 5:00pm. This was followed by refreshments and the activity concluded around 7:15pm.

I was so pleased to have the participation of the AIT Kaohsiung Branch at the ceremonies. It was especially fitting since almost all of the men killed in the Enoura Maru bombing were Americans and AIT has been involved with us in this project right from the start. Branch Chief Chris Castro and Stephen Green, Chief of the Commercial Section, were both present for the day's events. Mr. Castro spoke at the memorial service on the pier and Mr. Green joined the boat ride and helped me lay the wreath on the water over the Enoura Maru site. Later Mr. Castro helped me lay a wreath for the POWs and also honoured us with a speech at the dedication of the POW Hellship display in the museum. Following this we pulled down a red cloth together to unveil the wall display.

I would like to also thank Mr. Jeff Chiang, Chairman of the Taiwan Veterans Assoc. and his staff, and Ms. Wang Wen-Tsui, Director of the Kaohsiung City History Museum for all their help and support in this great project.

I encourage our friends here in Taiwan to visit the War and Peace Park and museum if you have the chance. The site of the memorial park is north of Chijin Windmill Park (旗津風車公園北邊) at No. 990, Chijin 3<sup>rd</sup> Rd. (旗津三路 990 號).

*Photo of the Taiwan POW Hellships wall display in the War & Peace Park Museum in Kaohsiung*



*Top: Laying the wreath with Stephen Green  
Bottom: With Jeff Chiang, Ms. Wang & Chief Castro by the POW Hellships display*



# THE TAIWAN PRISONER OF WAR MEMORIAL PARK PHASE II - FINALLY COMPLETED



*The former Kinkaseki POW Camp during WW II*

That this year is the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the movement to learn about the former Japanese Prisoner of War camps on Taiwan during World War II is a milestone in itself.

However, this year we have reached an even greater milestone as we seek to ensure that the allied POWs who suffered in those camps will have their story told and that they will never be forgotten. We have finally seen the completion of the Taiwan Prisoner of War Memorial Park, located on the site of the former Kinkaseki POW Camp at Jinguashi Taiwan.

For many years after the war, the area that formerly was the Kinkaseki POW Camp lay a dormant wasteland. No-one would live in a place that had seen such suffering and death, and so the place became overgrown with weeds and abandoned. Later a few squatters moved onto the land and built houses on one side, but the main area remained untouched.

Then about 1990 the village decided to clean up the area and build a small park on the site. It was a lovely little park with two pavilions and walkways, and dotted with flowering shrubs and trees.

In May 1997, following our first memorial service in the park, the Kinkaseki Memorial Committee approached the village about building the POW Memorial on the site. A location was found and work commenced and the memorial was dedicated on November 23, 1997.

The years that followed saw many former Taiwan POWs and their families return to Jinguashi to visit the site of the old camp and to take part in memorial services put on by the Society and the Commonwealth Remembrance Committee. The POWs were able to lay old ghosts to rest and remember lost comrades, and family members would connect with their loved ones.

In 2005, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW II, the Taipei County Gov't decided to renovate the village park and undertook a major construction project there. The architect wanted to make the park a place of remembrance for the POWs and we worked closely together to make that happen. The park was then renamed the "Taiwan Prisoner of War Memorial Park" and

was dedicated on November 20<sup>th</sup> of that year. The following year the Society erected the *Eternal Flame of Peace and Remembrance Sculpture* and in 2007 the Taiwan POW Tree - a living memorial to the POWs, was dedicated.



*The Taiwan POW Memorial Park, Phase I - constructed in 2005 by the Taipei County Gov't. It contains the original POW Memorial, the Eternal Flame of Peace and Remembrance and the POW Memorial Tree.*

Late in 2009 I got a call from the Taipei County Gov't. telling me that they wanted to further upgrade the POW Memorial Park in Jinguashi and asked for my help in designing some new features that could be added to enhance the appearance of the park.

During the spring I met with the architect of the project Mr. Alex Yang who I had worked with in 2005. Mr. Yang had some great ideas, and together we came up with a plan which was approved by the county gov't.

The plan was to build a 56 foot (17 m) polished black granite memorial wall similar to the Vietnam Wall in Washington DC, with the names of all the Taiwan POWs engraved on it. Near the wall there would be a meditation square with gardens and benches where visitors could sit and relax and reflect on the lives and the sacrifices of the POWs. The area would contain an information board telling the story of all 16 camps so people could learn about all the POW camps in Taiwan, not only Kinkaseki.



*Area of the old unused basketball court at the back of the park before the construction of Phase II*



# TAIWAN POW PARK cont'd. . .

We also planned to have a large map of Taiwan showing the location of all 16 former POW camps engraved on a granite plinth, and finally there would be a life-size bronze statue, a sculpture of two POWs struggling to help each other survive. The statue would be entitled "Mates" and would hopefully convey to visitors the plight of the POWs and their strong spirit. These additions would be located on the site of the unused basketball court at the back area of the park. There would also be some upgrading done to the landscaping and walkways.

Unfortunately things did not progress smoothly or quickly enough to enable us to have even a part of the work completed in time for our Remembrance Week event in 2010 as planned, but I'm happy to say that the work is now completed and everything is ready for this year's event which will take place on Sunday November 13, 2011.

This POW Memorial Park in Jinguashi Taiwan is the only park in the world dedicated to the Far East Prisoners of War. We are very proud and happy that it is located here in Taiwan and that we have had a part in making it a reality.

Photos of the wall and the sculpture:



*POW Sculpture "Mates"  
situated near the wall*



*(left) Views of the wall looking both ways.  
(Above) Please come and experience  
the "spirit of the wall" for yourself !*

## REMEMBRANCE WEEK 2011

This year's Remembrance Week event will be very special as it is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first memorial service held to remember the POWs – truly a milestone event, and we have a wonderful and exciting program planned for this year.

Our program will begin on Thursday November 10<sup>th</sup> with a tour to Jinguashi to visit the Gold Ecological Park with its mining museum and tunnel, and the site of the former Kinkaseki POW Camp and the mine area where the POWs worked. On the return trip to Taipei we will stop off at the port of Keelung to visit the docks where the POWs who first came into Kinkaseki landed, and from where all of the POWs who were left on Taiwan at the end of the war were evacuated.

Friday will be a day of sightseeing around Taipei City, highlighted by a buffet lunch at the Grand Hotel and followed by a dedication ceremony for the new POW Memorial we hope to have erected on the site of the former Taihoku Camp # 6. Saturday we will visit the Kukutsu "jungle" Camp, and the evening will feature a banquet in honour of the POWs.

On Sunday morning the dedication of Phase II of the POW Park will be held and the POW sculpture will be unveiled. After this, our annual Remembrance Day Service will be held by the POW Memorial, followed by a picnic lunch. This is a day that all those who have been involved in the work to remember the Taiwan POWs will want to attend. Hopefully we will have at least one or two POWs present with us and a number of family members from overseas as well.

I cannot emphasize enough how magnificent and beautiful the Taiwan POW Memorial Wall is. The photos above do not do it justice. It is awesome and has to be seen up close and personally to be fully appreciated. I know that the POWs who come here will feel that they are once again in the presence of their mates, and for family members, it will be a chance to really connect with those loved ones who suffered - and in some cases died, here in Taiwan.

I hope that we will get many overseas visitors joining us this year. It may be the last time for the POWs as so many are getting on in years, but we hope that whoever can come, will. Please contact us for more information and assistance.



## SOCIETY TAKES PART IN ANZAC DAY



*Society Director laying a wreath on ANZAC Day*

For the ninth time in as many years, the Society participated with our Australian and New Zealand friends to celebrate ANZAC Day here in Taiwan. There were 55 Australian POWs on Taiwan - three of whom died. There was only one New Zealand POW – an officer in the RNZAF, who was held in the officers' camp before later going to Manchuria.

It is always our honour to take part in this moving ceremony which is held at the Australian Residence each year on April 25<sup>th</sup>. We'll be there next year!

## TAIPEI EUROPEAN SCHOOL STUDENTS VISIT JINGUASHI

Once again this year on May 26<sup>th</sup>, the Grade 9 history students of the Taipei European Intl. School went on a day trip to Jinguashi, led by our host Mr. Michael Hurst, Director of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society. There were 66 students and 6 teachers and while the weather was not the best, we had a very enjoyable time.

We visited the Gold Museum and the mine tunnel nearby, and got a feeling for what the POWs must have felt going to work in its depths every day. Mr. Hurst explained about the suffering the POWs had to endure in the camp, and about the slave work down the mine.

Later we visited the top of the hill overlooking the old mine area and saw the path the POWs had to take to and from work every day. We learned about the death tunnel and the order to kill all the prisoners. Then we visited the former POW camp site and the POW Park which was still under construction.

We first visited the newly completed POW Memorial Wall of Remembrance and it was incredible to see all the names of more than 4000 men who had been prisoners of war here in Taiwan in WW II. We had a short service afterward where we read some poems and had a minute's silence to remember the POWs and their suffering for our freedom. It was a great day and one which we won't soon forget.

## MEMORIAL DAY 2011



*Wreaths by the old prison wall on Memorial Day*

This year, in response to a query from one of our new American members living in Taipei as to whether anything was being done here on Memorial Day, we decided to organize the first ever Memorial Day service put on by our Society.

As it was such short notice, arrangements were quickly made and calls and emails went out to some of the Americans we knew who are living in the Taipei area. Despite the short notice, a number of friends turned up at the old Taipei Prison Wall – the site of the memorial plaque that we erected and dedicated to the American airmen who were held in the prison, and those who were executed there on June 19, 1945, at 11:30 on Monday May 30<sup>th</sup> for a short service of remembrance.

Poems were read and a prayer was offered for the veterans – and for those still fighting to keep the freedom that we cherish today. Wreaths were laid, two minutes of silence were observed and Last Post and Reveille were played.

Following the service a time of fellowship was had over lunch at a nearby restaurant and everyone agreed that it was a worthwhile and meaningful event. We plan to make this an annual Society event and next year it will be organized and announced sooner. Our thanks to those who took part, and hopefully next year we'll have a much bigger gathering.

\* \* \* \* \*



*TES Students by the Taiwan POW Memorial*



# A PIECE OF THE USS BLOCK ISLAND COMES HOME

The *USS Block Island* CVE-106 was one of the two US Navy aircraft carriers and four destroyer escorts that helped to evacuate the Taiwan POWs from Keelung Harbour and transport them to Manila following the Japanese surrender in September 1945. The former crew-members have a wonderful association which helps them to keep in touch and every year they have a reunion to remember former times and comrades. In 2007 I was honoured and privileged to be able to attend the reunion in Providence RI, USA (See article in the Spring-Summer 2007 newsletter).



*The USS Block Island off Taiwan in 1945*

Over the years I have kept in close touch with the BI Association through their newsletter editor and my good friend Bill MacInnes and his lovely wife Judy. Together we have shared knowledge and information and co-operated together with the former crew members to tell - not only the story of the POWs and the evacuation, but also the efforts and courage of the men of the *USS Block Island* and the other ships that helped to rescue the POWs in September 1945.

Bill and the former crew members have shared their stories with us (see article in the Spring-Summer 2010 newsletter), as well as photos and mementoes – like the kilt belonging to former Taiwan POW James Gray.

This past fall I had an email from Bill telling me that he had just recently received a piece of the wooden planking that covered the flight deck of the *USS Block Island* during WW II. He asked if I would like to have it for our museum collection. I immediately replied that I would.

There is a tradition in the US Navy that those men who were part of the first crew at the commissioning of a ship were later given a piece of the deck planking as a remembrance of their service. They thus became known as “plank owners” of that ship and this was a great honour.

After the war the *USS Block Island* CVE-106 was laid up in storage for a time and then later used as a navy training vessel. Following this it was once more re-commissioned for service in the Korean War. However, while being re-fitted, all of the wooden flight

deck planking was removed and replaced, and the original planking was put in storage at the US Naval Historical Center at the Washington Navy Yard.



*F6F Hellcat on Block Island wooden deck – April 1945*

Several years ago, Ken Bruce an active Block Island Association member went to Washington and requested pieces of the decking to give to surviving Block Island crew members and their families, and a number of pieces were released to him for this purpose. All of the surviving members at that time received one in honour of their service. The US Navy Historical Center verified at that time that these were the original planks from the WW II *Block Island* and Bill also sent us a copy of their certificate.

Some time ago, the former president of the BI Association, Walter “Smiley” Burnett, passed away and his piece of plank was returned to Bill for safe-keeping. Bill immediately thought of us and how wonderful it would be if a piece of that ship could be on display here once again in Taiwan after so many years and in memory of the BI crew members. So one day just after the New Year, a package arrived from San Diego and the piece of deck wood is now on display in my office. We are thrilled to have it and it will be shown at our FEPOW Day event this year, as well as at the display in November during Remembrance Week.



*The piece of the USS Block Island wooden flight deck*

## NOTES FOR POW VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES . . .

### **BRITISH GOV'T PAYMENT TO POWS, WIDOWS AND FAMILIES – STILL AVAILABLE**

The £10,000 Ex-Gratia payment for British service people who were held captive by the Japanese during World War II – also known as the “special gratuity” is still available, so those who have not already claimed it - and now also family members, can apply for it.

#### **The categories of persons eligible to make a claim for this Ex-Gratia payment include:**

- 1.) Surviving former members of HM Armed Forces who were held as prisoners of war in the Far East during the Second World War.
- 2.) Surviving British civilians who were interned by the Japanese in the Far East during the Second World War.
- 3.) The surviving widow or widower of a person who would otherwise have been entitled under categories 1 and 2 above.
- 4.) If both the FEPOW and the surviving widow died after the year 2000, then the eldest son or daughter qualifies.

**How to claim:** Telephone the free Veterans Agency helpline at 0800 169 22 77 for details. You will need to provide your name, current address, telephone number, date of birth, National Insurance number and whether you are already receiving a War Disablement Pension or a War Widow / Widowers Pension.

To qualify the FEPOW must have been alive in the year 2000 or the surviving widow after the year 2000.

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### **HEROES RETURN TRIP FUNDING EXTENSION ANNOUNCED. . .**

Here is some fantastic news - the UK National Lottery Heroes Return 2 funding of trips for veterans, wives, widows and / or carers has been extended.

If you have not previously claimed, for a trip to the Far East, veterans and widows are eligible for up to £2,000, a veteran/widow and spouse or carer up to £3,700, and up to £5,500 for a veteran, spouse and carer.

If you would like to know more about this grant, please check their web site

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_heroes\\_return](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_heroes_return) or telephone the helpline at 0845 0000 121.

**To all our FEPOW friends and family members** - this offer from the Big Lottery Fund provides a great opportunity for you to come to Taiwan in 2011. The **Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society** organizes an annual Remembrance Week Event every year in November and visitors are also welcome to come throughout the year as well. We can help you with travel arrangements and with the application forms if necessary. If you are interested, please contact us for more info on the dates of our events and how we can help. We would love to have you with us and to be able to take you back to the site(s) of your former camp(s) and pay tribute to your mates. You may contact us by mail or email – see details on page 2.

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### **UNCLAIMED WAR MEDALS (BRITISH)**

For any Taiwan FEPOWS who do not have their medals - they can still be claimed. Also, next of kin of deceased ex-service personnel can claim their relatives' medals. Information and medals can only be released to the direct legal next of kin. A *Certificate of Kinship* form needs to be filled out and a photocopy of the relevant death certificate should also be submitted.

For further information and forms please contact - Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), MOD Medal Office Building 250, Imjin Barracks, Gloucester GL3 1HW, telephone number 0141 224 3600, or Veterans Free phone - 0800 085 3600.