



# 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](mailto:society@powtaiwan.org)

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SPRING / SUMMER 2001

## RECONCILIATION...



Former POWs and camp guards together again at the  
Omine POW Camp Memorial

## .. AND REMEMBRANCE!



Harold Brant standing by the entrance to the Omine Coal Mine

**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: [society@powtaiwan.org](mailto:society@powtaiwan.org)

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**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!**

We welcome you to visit our website. There you will find a list of all the POW camps that were on Taiwan. By clicking on the name on the list, you will be able to read more about the camps and the men who were interned in them.

<http://www.powtaiwan.org/>

Please sign our guestbook and give us your comments, questions and suggestions.

Our email address is -  
[society@powtaiwan.org](mailto:society@powtaiwan.org)

\* \* \* \* \*

***Thought . . .***

“ Great minds discuss ideas...  
Average minds discuss events...  
Small minds discuss people. ”

# **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.

## **BUSY DAYS !** by Michael Hurst

This year has been one of the busiest yet for me and the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society. As further progress has been made, more opportunities have opened up for learning and sharing the work we are trying to do to remember the POWs.

One such opportunity presented itself in March with an invitation by Keiko Holmes to join a group of FEPOWs she was taking to Japan. Keiko is a Japanese lady who has committed her life to trying to bring reconciliation and peace between former POWs and their oppressors.

I met Keiko and the group from UK in Tokyo on March 22 and the following two weeks are ones I will never forget. There were POWs and family members representing various areas of the Pacific War, and two former Kinkaseki POWs - George Reynolds and Harold Brant, were among the group. Perhaps the biggest highlight for me was the trip to the former POW camp at Omine. More than 200 Taiwan POWs were sent to Japan in the closing months of the war to work in the coal mines, and many of the Kinkaseki men with whom we have been in contact were in the group who worked there. The people of Omine made us feel very welcome and a lovely civic reception was held for us.

Following this we went out to old camp site for a very meaningful memorial service. Harold - who had been a POW in the camp, laid a wreath along with two of his former camp guards. It was a very emotional time for all.

At a dinner which followed, one of the former guards got up and apologised for the way he had treated the prisoners and then sang the song "It's A Long Way To Tipperary" - which he had learned by listening to the POWs sing it on their way to work in the mine each day. There certainly was some reconciliation that day!



*Old enemies now sing together in friendship!*

The next day we went from Omine to Hiroshima where we took a tour of the Peace Memorial and Park. It was sobering to see the horrible destruction wrought by the atomic bomb, but once again we were reminded that if it had not been dropped, many more hundreds of thousands - including the POWs, would have died.

Back in Tokyo we attended a memorial service at the Hodogaya War Cemetery. The FEPOWs laid a wreath at the Cross of Remembrance and following the service we all spent time looking around. George and Harold and I laid some poppy crosses on the graves of former Taiwan POWs, and I also visited the Canadian and Australian sections to lay poppy crosses there. Once again the POWs will not be forgotten!



*With John Emmett (l) and Ken Davis in Canada*

I made a trip to Canada in April and May, and while there I had the opportunity to meet with two former Kinkaseki POWs - John Emmett, who is an old friend, and also Ken Davis, who we just discovered last year. We spent a lovely day together and had Chinese food!

While in Canada I noticed some ads for some very reasonable airfares to the UK so I decided to take the opportunity and go and visit our UK rep and my good friends Maurice and Barbara Rooney.

[\(con't. on page 9\)](#)



*FEPOW friends at Wymondham, Norfolk, UK*

## DRIVER ERNEST PARKER - ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS

In our last issue we appealed for help from our readers for information concerning Driver Ernest Parker of the Royal Corps of Signals. His wartime bride, now Mrs. Marjorie Garner, had been searching for years for any information on where he had been held as a POW and how he had died.

In response to our request, former Taiwan POW, and my good friend Maurice Cunningham, sent a note saying that he remembered an Ernest Parker - a tall, dark, quiet chap who was with him in the camp at Taichu. This was the key that we needed, and on doing some further research we were able to learn more of Ernest's story.

In November 1942 he was transported to Taiwan and landed at the port of Takao (now Kaohsiung). From there he was moved by train overnight to the Taichu Camp in the central part of the island.

The work at Taichu was hard, back-breaking work. The prisoners were assigned the task of digging a flood diversion channel in the river bottom to keep the annual floodwaters of the monsoons and typhoons from washing away the road and rail bridges which spanned the river near the camp. The men worked long hours in the hot sun with no protection, little rest or water, and the work of moving tons of rock, stone and earth was all done by hand. The POWs dug and scraped and carried the rock and gravel from the river bed using only primitive tools - a chunkel and a two-handled bamboo basket. If the daily quota of rock was not removed, then the POWs were severely beaten up at the end of the day.

According to Maurice, Ernest was injured at work on one occasion and was in terrible pain. The Japs did not allow any medicine or treatment of the wounded - the camp doctors could only do their best to help alleviate the suffering of the men.

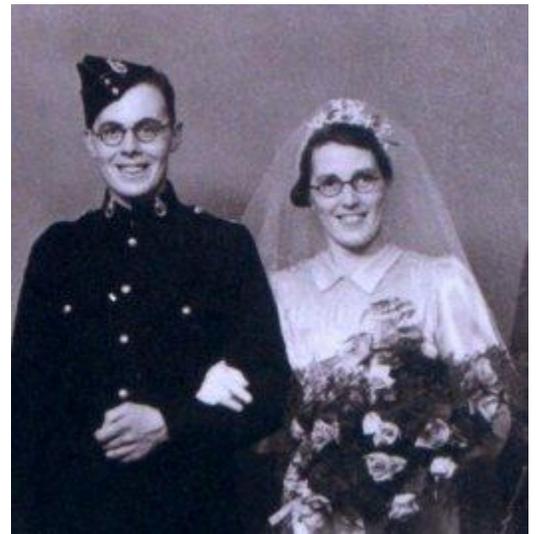
When it came time for bed every night, the POWs had to post a guard that changed every hour, to monitor the movements of the men - to the latrines etc. Maurice said that Ernest took more than his share of watches because he couldn't sleep anyway due to the pain, thus permitting his fellow POWs to get a longer and better night's rest.

In the spring of 1944 torrential rains swept down from the mountains and wiped out both of the bridges. The men, needless to say, were overjoyed, despite all the work that they had put in.

The floods also threatened the camp and part of it was actually flooded. The prisoners were moved out to another location in a small village nearby temporarily, and then as soon as they could be organised, most of the POWs were moved to Heito Camp in the south of the island. Some who were too sick or injured to make the journey remained behind, but most of the men were sent to Heito. (As far as we know, there were no deaths at the temporary camp where those sick men remained, so it has to be assumed that Ernest went to Heito with the bulk of the men and that is likely where he died.)

At Heito Camp the POWs worked at clearing old river-bottom land of rocks and stones so that sugar cane could be planted in the area. It was hot, back-breaking work too as they had to pick the rocks by hand, load them into bamboo baskets and then carry the baskets to be emptied into waiting railroad cars. Again, if the quota of rail cars was not filled at the end of the day, a bashing would occur.

Another big problem at Heito Camp was malaria. Most of the men who were in the camp at one time or another contracted malaria and suffered terribly with it. Many of the men did die from the disease, as well as from malnutrition and overwork. It is hard to say what may have caused Ernest's death - it could have been from any one of these things. It seems though, from the date of his death, that he didn't last too long after coming to Heito Camp so it might have been malaria in addition to the hard labour, that took him on September 26, 1944 at age



*Marjorie & Ernest Parker  
on their wedding day in 1941.*

24 years!.

Marjorie and her daughter Christine were with us last November, and it is really wonderful that they were able to visit the very site of the camp where it has turned out that Ernest was held for a time. They saw the camp and the river area, and also took part in the dedication of the Taichu POW Memorial.

What a fitting ending to the story, and I'm so glad that we were able to have a part in helping to bring this story to a close after all these years.

## **LIST OF TAIWAN POW CAMPS. . .**

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

### **TPCMS HOPES TO COMMEMORATE HEITO POW CAMP # 3 WITH NEW POW MEMORIAL (Update)**

The Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society is continuing negotiations with the R.O.C. military to try to obtain permission to erect a fourth POW memorial at the site of the former Heito Camp near the city of PingTung in the southern part of Taiwan.

As our regular readers know, the site of the former camp - which is a current R.O.C. army base, was discovered in September 1999 with the help of some local friends and one of the former camp guards who lives in the PingTung area. Since that time we have visited the camp on several occasions and have been warmly received by the officers and base personnel. All the applications have been forwarded to the appropriate departments of the Taiwan military and civil government offices, along with drawings of the memorial stone and diagrams of the location where we would like to place the stone - just outside the front gate of the army base which is the site of the former POW camp.

We are eagerly awaiting the response and if all goes well, we hope to start work on the Heito POW Memorial stone within the next few weeks. A dedication ceremony will follow at

## **UPDATE ON POW CAMPS...**

### **"One More To Go"**

Fourteen out of the fifteen Taiwan POW camps have been found!

With the discovery of the two former camps at Inrin (see story on page 6 ) that just leaves the Oka Camp in the hills north of Taipei as the only former camp we have yet to find. This camp has proved to be one of the most difficult and has eluded us for the past three years. So much has changed in the Taipei area over the past 56 years, and so little remains of what was here back in 1945 that it has been difficult to find many traces of the former site.

After all our research we are pretty certain of the general area where the camp should be found, but finding the exact site is difficult because the camp was located deep in the forests high up on the mountain and is only accessible by a 2 - 3 hour walk through the bush and over a mountain trail. We have felt that we needed to have a pretty good idea as to the exact location of the camp before venturing out to find it.

Another problem that is unique to this camp is that we had been unable to find any of the local residents who remembered the POW camp or the prisoners. Usually it has been the local Taiwanese who live in the area of the camps, who have helped us to finally verify the camp locations, but try as we might no-one seemed to have any knowledge in the areas which we have searched so far.

However, we kept up the search and continued to question the local residents and early in August we finally had stroke of luck. We found an elderly lady in the village that remembered the POWs and the approximate location of the camp. She put it very close to the area that our research had earlier indicated, so now we have some confirmation. Earlier another village resident had told us that he remembered his father telling him that

some future date.

We are grateful for all the interest and support that has been shown for this memorial. The funds are all in place and we are ready to begin as soon as permission is granted. Watch for further updates on the memorial.

there were ten soldiers buried by the temple in the village.  
So now, in mid-September, we are planning to make the trek up into the mountain to verify the site of the Oka Camp. We'll have more to report in our next issue.

## DISCOVERY OF THE INRIN POW CAMP SITES

In June 1944 the Taichu POW Camp was flooded, and the POWs who remained in the camp at that time were evacuated for their safety. Around 200 men were sent to the camp at Heito and approximately 100 men who were too ill or frail to be moved that far, were moved to the nearby town of Inrin (present day Yuanlin) and lodged in a school there. The camp became known as the INRIN POW CAMP. The men were cared for by two British doctors, and by growing some vegetables and doing very little work, they slowly recovered.

In November 1944 a group of POWs - mostly Americans, who had suffered untold hardships on the hellship "Hokusen Maru" (aka. Haro Maru / Benjo Maru), were brought to Inrin to recuperate from their harrowing voyage. There was not room for them in the main school where the British POWs were housed so another school nearby was pressed into service.

For the first few weeks the British doctors attended to the medical needs of the American POWs, while several of the British POWs helped the beleaguered Americans set up their camp kitchen and get their camp organised. This camp became known as the INRIN TEMPORARY CAMP.

Two months later in February 1945, the Americans were removed from this camp and sent back to Takao where they were loaded aboard another hellship and sent on to Japan to continue their work as slaves of the Japanese.

On our trip to Central Taiwan in the autumn of 2000 in search of the Shirakawa and Toroko Camps, we tried to find the location of these two camps at Yuanlin, but ran out of time. We had some idea as to their possible location, but a lot more research was required.

In early August after many more months of research, a breakthrough was finally achieved in the search for the two Inrin POW camps. We received information that led us to an 89 year-old resident of the town of Yuanlin who had lived near the schools and knew about the camps and the POWs and their time there.

On August 29 Tina and Michael travelled to the town of Yuanlin and met with Mr. Lin. They had a delightful time talking to this gentleman who knew so much of the local history. He told them many stories about the POWs and their experiences as he saw them, and was most helpful in documenting some of the facts that we had been given by two of the surviving POWs that we have found from this camp.

After a visit in Mr. Lin's home they went together to see the locations of the two former POW camps. They first visited the site of the main Inrin Camp where Mr. Lin showed them the area of the school that was formerly taken up by the camp. Following this they visited the other school which housed the American POWs.

There is nothing left now from those earlier times, although Mr. Lin did say that the two-storey building that had housed the POWs at the main camp had only been torn down about two years ago. Today, modern three-storey school buildings stand on the sites erasing all traces of those former days.

Although the buildings are gone now, the memories of the the men who spent time in these two camps can never be erased. By rediscovering the locations of these two camps once again after all these years, we can also help to keep these memories alive, so that what those men suffered there will never be forgotten!



Old wartime photo of the school at Yuanlin, which became the Inrin Temporary POW Camp . This camp housed about 500 American POWs for two months from November 1944 to January 1945.

## **POW BOOK**

In our last issue I had asked if anyone could help with information regarding the book "Captive In Formosa" by Dr. Norman Cliff. A short time later a copy of the book was sent to me by my good friend and former Taiwan POW, John Green.

The book gives a vivid account of the struggle of one POW to survive and the faith which helped him to get through it all. I heartily recommend it.

Much to my surprise a few weeks later, I received a letter from Dr. Cliff. He kindly let me know that he has a good supply of the book and would be happy to make it available to anyone who is interested in getting a copy.

It is a 64-page paperback, with many interesting photos, drawings and documents. The price is 6.95 pds. plus postage and it can be obtained by writing to Dr Cliff at: 4 Hall Terrace, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0XR, England.

## **Comings and Goings. . .**

We want to say goodbye and good luck to former New Zealand Trade Office Director Nick Bridge, who left us this spring, and welcome to our ex-officio board his replacement, Charles Finny. It was a real pleasure having Nick on our board and in particular working with him on last year's Remembrance Week activities. Charles has already got involved by connecting the Society with a NZ government project to remember the FEPOWs.

We are very sad to have to say goodbye to Dominic McAllister who has served on our board for the past three years in the important role of treasurer. "Dom" also helped greatly with the Taichu POW Memorial Project and we will miss his enthusiasm and good advice.

That said, we are pleased to welcome to our board, Andrew Currey. Andrew is the Community Liaison Officer at the Australian Commerce and Industry Office and was formerly employed by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. He has a wealth of knowledge about museums and is a historian in his own right. Andrew has been helping us out since last November when he assisted with the dedication service for the Taichu POW Memorial.

David Mulroney of the Canadian Trade Office also left this August and we welcome his replacement Ted Lipman to our ex-officio board as well. With

## ***In Memoriam***

**Dr. Herbert W. Coone**  
**- U.S. Army Medical Corps**

Dr. Coone was taken prisoner by the Japanese when the island of Corrigedor fell in May 1942. He was held in various camps on the Philippines until he was moved to Shirakawa and Taihoku Camps in Taiwan. Later he was among the party to be sent to the OKA Camp where he stayed until the war ended.

At 89 years of age, Dr. Coone was instrumental in providing information and lists of POWs who were on Taiwan. I talked with him on the telephone last summer when I was in Canada, and was able to tell him that we were on the trail of the Oka Camp, and hoped to locate it one day. He was quite pleased to hear what we were doing to remember the men.

**Mr. George Hinton**  
**- 155th Field Reg't. R.A.**

Sadly we received word in April this year that Lieut. George Hinton of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry had passed away. George was one of the first officers that we found when we began our search for Kinkaseki survivors several years ago, and he was able to supply a good deal of information to us.

**Mr. Fred Down**  
**- Royal Engineers**

Although I never had the pleasure and privilege to meet him personally, I count Fred Down as one of my closest POW friends. We exchanged many letters, and have had some good conversations on the telephone over the past few years.

Fred provided us with a lot of information about the Taichu and Kinkaseki Camps, and he was also prominently featured in the film "A War Story".

In 1999 he gave me his FEPOW sweater which I wear with pride every year on Remembrance Day, and which I will always cherish.

Fred was always willing to do what he could to promote the FEPOW Spirit among the men who survived the terrible ordeal as POWs. He will be sadly missed by all those who knew him.

**Mr. Sidney Edwards**  
**- 80th Anti-Tank Reg't. R.A.**

this new team we hope to continue the work of remembering and honouring the FEPOWs.

Sid Edwards passed away on August 9, 2001. He was an avid member of his local FEPOW club and enjoyed the monthly meetings with his mates.

## **ANOTHER GREAT POW PROJECT...**

by Michael Hurst

For the past five years another POW project has been going on in Asia - this one is in Thailand! Rod Beattie, the curator of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries in Kanchanaburi, has been exploring the length of the Thailand-Burma "Death Railway" in his spare time, collecting information and artifacts in an effort to learn more of what the POWs suffered and to help preserve their memory.

I have been to visit Rod on several occasions and have found that we are very alike in our work and what we are trying to do for the POWs. We have become very close friends and try to help each other in whatever way we can to achieve our similar goals.

This is an exciting year for Rod and his colleagues as they are embarking on a great new venture - the building of the "Thailand-Burma Railway Centre".

This has been a dream of Rod's for many years and now it is finally coming together. The construction of the new museum and research centre, which is located adjacent to the main War Graves Cemetery in Kanchanaburi, was begun in the spring and the building is now well under way.

Naturally there are great costs involved, and all of the work so far is being privately funded by Rod and his colleagues. I have seen the plans and prospectus for the new centre and it is going to be a wonderful museum - telling the real story of the "Bridge on the River Kwai" and of the POWs and what they suffered. In addition to a first class museum with artifacts and displays, there will be a research centre to help further the study of the war years, and most importantly, a memorial centre to remember the men. The new centre will enhance and upgrade the existing memorials created by the two War Cemeteries and the Hellfire Pass Museum.

I know how much this means to Rod and how he has devoted - and is devoting, every minute of his life to realise his goal. We need to get behind him and the group with our moral and financial support, to help this new centre become a reality. If you or your company or organisation would like to have a part, you can obtain more information by contacting Rod at:

**The Thailand-Burma Railway Centre**

65/6 Moo Ban Jirakan

Kanchanaburi, 71000, Thailand

Tel. 034 620050 Fax. 034 622975

Email: railway@access.inet.co.th

## **\*\*\* NEW CHANGES TO OUR WEBSITE**

In May, while visiting my son in Calgary, we discussed our website and what we could do to make it more interesting and informative to our readers. We came up with the idea of turning the site into a real POW memorial - telling the story of the camps and also remembering the men who suffered in those camps to bring us the freedom that we so often take for granted today.

As a result, we have reworked the entire website, changing the look and the coloring to reflect more of a S.E. Asian POW view. We have made the site easier to navigate and more concise in content.

There is now a section on the POW camps, one on the POWs, and another on the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society itself. This section has all the information about the Society, as well as all of the newsletters we have published to date.

We have also created a memorial Honour Roll - listing the names of all those men that we have been able to find thus far who were POWs on Taiwan. To date we have compiled almost 2600 names, but the list is not complete and we hope to add more names in the future. If you were a POW on Taiwan, or know of anyone who was, please get in touch with us by email or letter with the details and we will add the name to our list.

## **VIRTUAL POW MUSEUM**

### **- COMING IN THE FUTURE...**

We have also decided to add a new section to the website - a virtual POW Museum. It will feature a collection of POW and S.E. Asian World War II artifacts that we have been gathering over the past several years. Many of these have been contributed or loaned by the POWs themselves, and a number of other items have been purchased from various sources around the world. We hope to have a photo of the artifact and a description of its history and the part it played in the POWs' story - just as if you were looking at displays in a real museum.

## **GUESTBOOK...**

We have a guestbook on our website and would really like to hear from those who visit. We value your comments and suggestions and would especially like to hear from former POWs or their families.

## A STRANGE TURN OF EVENTS. . . by Michael Hurst

Many times over the past few years as I have worked on this wonderful Kinkaseki and Taiwan POW project, people have asked if I had any relatives who were Far East prisoners of war. I have always replied that I did not, that all my relatives were involved in the war in Europe.

In addition to my involvement in the POW project, I have - for several years, been interested in tracing the family history on my mother's side (I know very little about my father's side of the family), and have been working on building a family tree as time has permitted. About a year ago I finished the main draft and sent copies to some of my relatives for their reference. My mother's father came from Norfolk in England, and like every family tree we had branches of relatives seemingly everywhere. One of my grandfather's uncles emigrated to Australia in 1876 and carried on the clan "down under". A cousin in Toronto knew of these relatives and sent a copy of my family tree to them. I received a letter from an uncle in Brisbane in January this year, telling me the story of our family there.

It turns out that my mother had two twin cousins -born in 1918, who were called up in 1940 with the 2/10th Field Reg't. R.A.A. After training, they were part of the 22nd Brigade, 8th Division AIF which was sent to Singapore in February 1941.

After taking part in the battle for Malaya and Singapore, they were taken prisoner by the Japanese and within several months were sent to Burma as part of "A" Force to work on that end of the infamous Death Railway. They worked their way down the line, finally finishing up at Tha Makam where the main bridge over the Kwai river was built.

Following the completion of the Railway, they were returned to Singapore in June of 1944, and in September were put on the hellship Rakuyo Maru for a journey to Japan. On September 12 the Rakuyo Maru was torpedoed by an American submarine in the South China Sea and 1159 POWs were lost when the Japanese left them to die. My mother's two cousins were among those who perished.

So now after all this time, I find out that I DO have a personal relationship to some FEPOWs after all. My relatives in Australia sent me the photograph of my second-cousins (pictured above) who are remembered on the War Memorial in Borneo.

My second-cousins were John James Cobon and Temple Burkitt Cobon. They were only 26 years old when they died. It certainly is a small world!



*"The Cobon twins" - Temple Burke Cobon & John James Cobon - died 1944*

## BUSY DAYS. . . (con't. from page 3)

I spent ten days in the Norfolk area and had the opportunity while there to attend the annual FEPOW memorial church service in the 1000 year-old abbey at Wymondham. I met many POWs and their families there, and I also took the opportunity while in the UK to call many of my Taiwan POW friends on the phone. It was a great time of reunion and all too soon it came to an end.

Then it was back to Canada again to spend some more time with my family there. My son and I worked on the website (see article on page 8) and all in all the trip was very worthwhile.

The summer months have been busy ones too, as we have been putting together the POW Honour Roll and exploring for camps. It seems that the task is never done, but we get such joy from doing it that it hardly seems like work at all sometimes.

## ***WORKING TOGETHER. . .***

From time to time we hear of organisations who are engaged in similar kinds of projects to what we are doing. In the past year we have come in contact with the excellent work of the “Second World War Experience Centre” in the UK. We feel that our interests are similar and our work certainly compliments each other. I have asked the Centre to present an article for our readers in the hope that the personal stories of those involved in that great conflict will not be lost, but will be preserved for future generations forever. If you can help to preserve a part of military history, please get in touch with the staff at the Centre. (Ed.)

### **The Second World War Experience Centre**

The Second World War Experience Centre was created to save a crucial part of our heritage. Year by year, countless letters, diaries and memories from the Second World War period are disappearing. The aim of the Centre is to rescue the surviving personal evidence of the men and women who participated in the Second World War in whatever capacity. The Centre is concerned not only with soldiers, sailors and airmen, but with the daily civilian and military experience of all men, women and children in every community during wartime, both Allied and Axis. The collection we are preserving for posterity includes wartime letters, diaries, photographs, maps, newspapers, books, official papers and ‘three-dimensional material’ evoking the period.

The intention is to make such material available to researchers, students and to the general public so that we can inform present and future generations about their important, fascinating past, thus promoting understanding and respect. We have original and recollected material relating to more than 30 Far Eastern Prisoners of War and civilian internees. The first set of Far Eastern P.O.W. material that the Centre received came from Maurice Cunningham in Quinton, Birmingham, who was a P.O.W. from 1941 to 1945. Maurice’s memoirs and photographs were used in the exhibition which marked the launch of the Centre in September 1999. Maurice’s exhibition panel read:

“It is impossible to convey to other people what life was like in those Camps. I really did think that I had been killed during the fighting and gone to Hell. Although we kept our spirit, we had forgotten how to smile. I could not envisage any other life than the one I was undergoing. I knew that the War had to end, but I could only think of having enough rice to eat. With the passing of the years, there is still the occasional nightmare, but not like those years after the War. I am really appreciative that I survived against all the odds and am still here. I do not recall dates but even now, some of the things that happened are very clear in my memory. All the close friends I lost - I can picture their faces and I still hear their voices. It will always be yesterday to me.

The people at home here could never visualise the life we had led in those Jap P.O.W. camps. We always said then, that if we survived to return home, no one would ever believe what had happened to us. I do hope that more attention is given to teaching other generations what happened to their fathers and grandfathers. I am appalled at the lack of knowledge, even of people in their forties. We do not expect them to fully understand, just as long as they know”.

It is Maurice’s concern about the lack of knowledge and understanding amongst younger generations that lies at the heart of the Centre’s work to promote understanding and remembrance. In order to do this work we need your help. This can come in the form of original documentation, written or recorded memories relating to the Second World War. Original or recollected material is preserved in the Centre’s archives for the purposes of responsible research. We also reach a wider audience by illustrating the Centre’s Website and the Centre’s twice-yearly journal, *Everyone’s War* with material held at the Centre. Membership of the Centre entitles Friends to receipt of the journal.

For more information, please contact the Director, Dr Peter H. Liddle F.R.Hist.S., the Business Director, Claire Harder MA or the Archival Assistant, Tracy Craggs at The Second World War Experience Centre, 6-8 York

Place, Leeds, LS1 2DS; tel: (0113) 2450475; fax: (0113) 2349265; E-Mail: [enquiries@war-experience.org](mailto:enquiries@war-experience.org) or see our Website: <http://www.war-experience.org/>

**Book Review. . .** by Michael Hurst

## **DEATH ON THE HELLSHIPS**

Historian Gregory Michno has recently completed what I feel is the best book ever produced on the story of the infamous Japanese “hellships” of World War II.

The terrible treatment of Japanese prisoners of war has been much written about, but with this book readers will learn of another whole saga of the Allied POWs’ experiences at sea. It is such a disturbing story that it makes the Bataan Death March pale by comparison.

Greg has obtained accounts from American, British, Australian and Dutch POWs, as well as Japanese wartime convoy histories and shipping records listing all the “correct” names of the hellships, the cargoes they carried, the routes they took and what happened to them. This is supported by recently declassified radio intelligence reports, a wealth of archival information and official documents from the US Air Force and Navy.

From interviews with surviving POWs, he tells of the horrors they experienced as they were crammed by the thousands into the holds of old cargo ships and transported from place to place to be slaves of the Japanese. He presents a detailed picture of what happened to the more than 150,000 Allied prisoners who were transported by these hellships and the 21,000 POWs who died.

Many of the deaths were attributable to beatings, disease, and a lack of food and water, but as Greg points out, many more were caused by Allied torpedoes and bombs. He reports that this so-called “friendly fire” was not always accidental - apparently at times it was more important to sink Japanese ships than to worry about POWs!

Greg has become a good friend and has helped us on many occasions with information regarding the hellships and the POWs. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in this aspect of the POWs’ story.

The book is 334 pages, hardcover, with 20 photos and 4 line drawings (ISBN 1-55750-482-2). It is available online from any of the major internet booksellers - barnesandnoble.com or amazon.com, or directly from the Naval Institute at [www.navalinstitute.org](http://www.navalinstitute.org). The book can most likely be ordered through your local bookstore as well.

## **--- from the Director**

Our apologies for the delay in getting this newsletter to press. These past few months have been so full of activity and discovery that we have very little time to attend to other matters. As mentioned in our article on pages 3 and 9, we have had a wonderful time travelling and visiting POWs and friends in several countries and have been kept quite busy promoting our work.

The revamping of our website over the past few months has been another huge undertaking and I want to thank my son, Bob in Canada, for all his untiring devotion to us and the POWs in helping us to get this big job done. He is our webmaster and has a first-class site of his own at [www.rcaf.com](http://www.rcaf.com) which tells the story of the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1920 to the present. If you are interested in military aviation history this site is well worth a look.

We are very excited about the discovery of the Inrin camps and look forward to finding the actual site of the OKA Camp in the coming month or so. We are also hoping to receive permission for the Heito POW Memorial soon and that will bring on more work.

I would like to thank all those - both here in Taiwan as well as overseas, who continue to support and encourage us in this work. We get letters and emails from all over the world and it means so much to have you behind us, helping us do what we do so that the memory of these great men will “never be forgotten”.

## **Let Us Never Forget !**

### **SPECIAL EVENT - MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**

November will soon be here, and with it comes our Annual POW Remembrance Week program. Once again this year, the two main events are the POW memorial banquet on Saturday November 17, and the annual Remembrance Service at Kinkaseki on Sunday November 18.

This year the British Trade and Cultural Office is managing these two events, and the TPCMS is working closely with David Coates and his staff to ensure their success.

As always, some of the former POWs and their families are coming to Taiwan and we will be

taking them on tours of the camps and doing everything possible to give them a very meaningful experience.

We invite all those in close proximity to Taiwan to join for this great time. For further information you may contact the POW Society, or Sarah Farrell at the British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei.