

POW CAMPS IN JAPAN.

Taeko Sasamoto is a [founding](#) member of the POW Research Network in Japan. She has been researching POW camps in Japan for 10 years and is friend of Neil MacPherson.

Three Japanese ladies who are prominent members of the Research Network , Taeko Sassamoto, Yoshiko Tamura & Nori Nagasawa and have received international recognition for their work. The British Government have awarded Taeko & Yoshiko the MBE and the Australian Government the following award.

A great part of their work is in meeting families of POWs visiting the Allied War Cemetery in Yokohama and acting as guides,

Australia-Japan Foundation Award Winners 2005

The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer, presented the 2005 Australia-Japan Foundation Award to outstanding Japanese individuals and organisations in a ceremony at the Australian Embassy on Tuesday **22nd March 2005**.



(L-R) Mrs Nori Nagasawa, Ms Michiko Aoki, Mr Shinichiro Ryoki, Mrs Taeko Sasamoto, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Alexander Downer, Mrs Yoshiko Tamura, Mr Fukuzo Iwasaki, Mrs Yasuyo Iwasaki and Ambassador Mr Murray McLean

The 2005 awards reflect the remarkable diversity of ties between the two countries. A tourism operator, an energy company executive, an actress and theatre promoter, and three supporters of former prisoners of war were recognized for their contribution to the strong relationship that exists between Australia and Japan.

In response to a query received by the Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association, Taeko Sasamoto supplied detailed information on the “Hellship” Rashin-maru and the Yamane and Niihama POW camps.

NIHAMA camp was established as Fukuoka No.13 Branch Camp at Isoura, Niihama City, Ehime Prefecture on April 22, 1943. The camp name was often changed and finally was named Hiroshima No.2 Branch Camp on April 13, 1945. The POWs were used by Sumitomo Chemistry Company and they worked mainly at the refinery. 644 POWs (401 Dutch, 242 Australian and 1 Armenian). 33 POWs died while under imprisonment.

YAMANE camp was established as a branch compound of Niihama Camp at Yamane,

Sumino-cho, Nii-gun (current Niihama City), Ehime Prefecture on May 1, 1944. It was renamed as Hiroshima No.3 Dispatched Camp on April 13, 1945. POWs were used by Sumitomo Mining Company and they worked at Besshi copper mine. The camp was closed on May 19, 1945 and the POWs were moved to Niihama camp. 12 POWs died while under imprisonment.

Taeko Sasamoto has not visited the camp sites of Yamane nor Niihama but an acquaintance, Mr.Fumiaki Fujimoto, who is a high school teacher in Imabari near Niihama, researched both camps with his students and conferred with Taeko .

Taeko advises there is no memorial or museum dedicated to the history of Australian POW's at either camp sites. The Niihama camp site was turned into an industrial zone and the Yamane camp site was turned into a residential zone. The mine was closed a long time ago. Though there is a mine museum at the mine site, there is no exhibition concerning POWs. Only a part of the track from the mine to the refinery remains.

Mr.Fujimoto has interviewed a former guard of Niihama camp who was tried as a war criminal after the war. He is over 90 years old now. Mr.Fujimoto has also interviewed a man who was a tobacco shop owner at the front of the refinery. He was friendly with POWs.

If visits to Niihama and Yamane are contemplated, Mr.Fujimoto will be willing to guide people to the camp sites and introduce the tobacco shop owner. (The former guard may be reluctant to meet ex-POWs or their families) Mr.Fujimoto has to lead his students to England for study from 25th March to 1st April.

Should a visit to the peace museum in Hiroshima be planned, a friend of Taeko who lives near Hiroshima will act as a guide.

There is a Commonwealth War Cemetery in Yokohama where more than 1700 POWs, including Australian who died in Japan, were buried. (Taeko lives near the cemetery). The POWs who died at Niihama and Yamane were buried at the Labuan Cemetery in Borneo.