

Agape World



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What beautiful summers days we have been enjoying! Have you had your holidays yet? Recently we enjoyed attending the annual summer get together at the Japanese Embassy. It was on 15th June. It was excellent because so many people gathered there. We missed the former Ambassador, Mr Hayashi very much but we had a new Ambassador who spoke perfect English. Kate suggested that we should have second round at the RAF Club almost next door to the Japanese Embassy. Would you be joining us if we arranged it? We look forward to your response.

My garden has been transformed!

My neighbour had kept his destroyed fence untouched for about a year but finally he had a new one built recently. There are various summer vegetables and flowers thriving under the summer's sunshine in my garden. Now we enjoy our garden not only looking at it but also having salads each day straight after harvesting them.



Doris Sheppard

Len and Doris were Agape World's long lasting friends. We have many significant memories together. Now Len is all alone but has his sons and daughters who are very supportive. Doris's brother was a POW and the ship he was on was torpedoed. Len and Doris used to come to Agape Paradise Lunch until she was too ill to come. She often decorated our dessert table with her lovely home-made biscuits.

BarBara Wearn

Even though BarBara was born with polio she overcame her disadvantage, was able to walk and was very active. She married a POW and had four children but her husband died young leaving four young children for her to bring up. I met her in her 60s. She often came to London for her charity support or campaigns and visited me in my office (it was in the City) and took me to a theatre. When she was seventy she went to Burma and cycled to help children who suffer because of polio and raised £5,000. Although she died last December, as she donated her body to a medical institution, there was no funeral. Her family arranged a wonderful Thanksgiving Service for her in July, which Harue and I attended.

Sad News

There are some unfortunate news to inform you today. Doris Sheppard died (at 88) in June and our chairman, Geoff Larcomb led the funeral service in London. Afterwards we were invited for refreshment. We met Len's family members.

Harue drove me to the **Thanksgiving Memorial Service** of **BarBara Wearn** in North Devon in July. BarBara died at 89.

Norman Burrows, who was nearly 99, an Iruka-boy, in Lincolnshire, died in late July.

Here is our Trustee Member, Harue Taguchi

I was born and raised in downtown Tokyo in a rented house with my parents and elder sister. Despite his inexperience, sugar rationing, and difficulty moulding the small decorative sweets, my father started a *wagashi* (traditional Japanese sweets) business after the war. His sweets were large and delicious and pleased his customers. Soon his cake shop was the most popular in the district. The whole family had a role in running our business and home but I was a carefree child and not very useful! I longed to explore beyond Japan, partly to free myself from the non-stop demands of the *wagashi* business. In Japan, *wagashi* are an essential part of many celebrations: birth, marriage (a box of cakes is given to all guests), death and new year, as well as the uniquely seasonal celebrations such as girls day, boys day etc.

In 1972, a few years after it became easier for ordinary Japanese to go abroad, fifteen of us travelled by ship from Yokohama to Nakhodka in USSR, and then by train to Vladivostok, whence we flew to Moscow. Then we went by train through the continent, finally reaching London on my 22nd birthday. Two years later, while working in Regent Street, I met the English man who became my husband



in 1976. Despite the hostility and apprehension they might have felt, his family welcomed me. My family were just relieved to know I was happy and safe.

In 1986 we began two great adventures: my husband founded the Wagashi Japanese Bakery in London, and our first daughter was born. After my day job at an airline, I helped with the new business as much as I could.

Six years later, with a second daughter on the way, and having been made redundant because the airline was having financial difficulties, I decided to channel all my energy into helping run the business.

Life is strange indeed! Having left Japan to escape the hectic lifestyle of running a Japanese sweet business, I ended up running one in London for 30 years! Nowadays, I enjoy taking a back seat and looking after my youngest grandson while his mother is working, just like my grandmother used to do for my mother.

I had heard about Keiko Holmes before we actually met. Then I got to know her properly at a bible study group where through her life story, I learnt that God sustained her in her darkest moments and led her towards His greater work, helping people find peace through reconciliation.

I joined Agape World about five years ago and responsible for its book keeping.

I am thankful to God for the opportunity to be part of Agape World and happy to follow whatever God wants us to do in the future.

I am expecting my friends, Keiko Kosuge and Dr Yuko Takahashi, to come and stay at my house for over two months from late September to the first week of December this year. They are planning to run Alpha Course (Christian Course) and to attend other courses. We are planning to have a Paradise Lunch on Saturday 1st October. POW family advised me that October 1st will be good. Hope you can join us.

Visiting Elizabeth and Lorna Evans

Elizabeth Hallett often invites me to her home and introduces me to new FEPOWs and Internees and their families. Her father was a FEPOW in Hokkaido and I got to know several people who were in Hokkaido.

This Spring, Elizabeth introduced me to Lorna Evans. Lorna's father was on the Thai-Burma railway.

In early August, I was invited by Lorna for tea at her lovely home in Wimbledon. She will



be 99 in October, enjoys walking on Wimbledon common, playing Scrabble with her friends, using an iPad and going shopping by bus. She was born in Japan as her father was working there. His contract ended when Lorna was eleven years old. She and her late husband travelled extensively. Her son lives in London and her daughter lives in America with her family. Lorna travels to the States and sees her granddaughter at Easter each year.

Trying The Steps of Private Aubrey - Jack Ford - My Great Granddad
 Joe (Great Grandson)

My Great Granddad, Private Aubrey Jack Ford, was captured in Singapore in 1942, and held prisoner in Hokkaido, Japan, until 14th September 1945. Unable to discuss his ordeal with my Granddad, the family only became aware of his experiences through a secret diary he kept throughout his his captivity. When I received this



diary, I decided to spend 3 months in Japan, and, if possible, to visit the places where Aubrey had been a POW, with my father and grandfather. A few vague

descriptions and some research my grandfather had done in the 1990s, were all we had to go on. Fortunately, grand had uncovered a leaflet of an organisation called AGAPE (now AGAPE WORLD) whose mission it was and is to help FEPOWs and their families. Although 15 years old, I emailed the address on the back. A lady called Keiko Holmes answered and set us off on an incredible, emotional adventure.

My father and grandfather joined me in Tokyo on 12th October 2015. We then flew to Hokkaido where Chris Holmes, Keiko's son, had managed to pinpoint the camp and steel mine in the southern port of Muroran where Great Granddad was held from 1st December 1942 until 7th June 1945. Hokkaido is known for the severity of its climate and uninhabitable places. When he wasn't in hospital with Malaria, dysentery or

diarrhoea, Great Granddad worked as free labour in the Mitsui Mining Company mines which started in 1942. One diary entry reads, *'I'm very well although I have been in hospital this past fortnight with Malaria'*. We tried to imagine his life as we walked around Muroran and visited the 'Steel Memorial Muroran Hospital' and found a statue marking the site of the original mine.

Toward the end of the war, fear of an imminent American invasion, forced the Japanese to send the POWs on a 9-hour train journey north to Ashibetsu. Great

Granddad's account of this journey was one of the few clues that enabled Chris to help us. With our trusty Sat-Nav, Miss Navi-Saki, it took us more than three hours of driving through beautiful countryside on deserted roads to reach Ashibetsu. We identified the 5.5km stretch of railway (now a road) that passed the POW camp entrance and that evening found in difficult to sleep.

Finally, I'd like to finish by thanking Chris Holmes and his wife, Manami, who saved us from searching for a needle in a haystack! From the beginning Chris answered any questions and Manami's phone calls to the Japanese local authorities opened up whole avenues of information to us. Nothing I have written could quite capture the emotion and accomplishments of the week we, the three generations,

spent travelling together in Hokkaido. Instead I'll end with the last extract of my Great Grandfather's diary as he made his final journey by boat from Manilla, Philippines, back to England to be reunited with his wife and children. 'Now dear it's about teatime, a few more Sundays and I'll be having tea with you all once again. I hope a little salad stuff will still be available. Those green tomatoes in a piece of flannel in the drawer, yes, and some chestnuts too. These things will be home. The life of love is not counted by the years; once born in the heart it abides for ever. Sown in the furrows of time it blooms in those immortal fields where no shadows wait to hide the sun and no chill of death checks the eternal growth. I know the Lord will make a way for me, if I live a holy life, shun the wrong and do the right. Nobody knows of the work it



makes to keep a home together, nobody knows of the steps it takes. Nobody knows but Mother. Thank you for it all darling, I'll try to understand. Your

loving hubby, Jack
 xxxxxxxxx'

Pilgrimage 2017 Brief Provisional Itinerary

Day 1.	Wed	25/October	Depart from Heathrow
Day 2.	Thur	26	Arrive at Haneda. Connection to Nagasaki.
Day 3.	Fri	27	Sightseeing and Million Dollar Nagasaki Night View.
Day 4.	Sat	28	Memorial Service at Koyagi with the local people
Day 5.	Sun	29	Free morning. Sightseeing
Day 6.	Mon	30	Depart for Kyoto
Day 7.	Tue	31	Sightseeing in Kyoto
Day 8.	Wed	1	Nov. Depart for Kiwa-Cho
Day 9.	Thur	2	Sightseeing
Day10.	Fri	3	Kiwa-Cho Festival
Day 11.	Sat	4	Memorial Service for the Iruka Boys
Day 12.	Sun	5	Depart for Tokyo
Day 13.	Mon	6	Tokyo Sightseeing
Day 14.	Tue	7	Tokyo
Day 15	Wed	8	Depart from Haneda. Arrive at Heathrow



There is a beautiful Memorial for the Nagasaki/Koyagi POWs in Koyagi, Nagasaki. We are planning to have a memorial service there with the local people. We are not going to miss the spectacular night view of the city on this pilgrimage. Nagasaki has been connected with the West for centuries and it is full of exciting museums and intriguing love stories with the West. We will also be visiting the Peace Park.

We say good-bye to Nagasaki and move to Kyoto by local train and the Bullet train. Mariko and other members of Agape World in Kyoto will accompany us to visit renowned historical places such as Golden Temple, Nijo Castle and walk about the old, old narrow streets of the city. We will also be able to sample Kyoto's culinary delights! We may stay at our friends' homes for one night.

After visiting Kyoto, we will leave for Kiwa-Cho, Kumano City, Mie Prefecture, where the local people erected a memorial/grave for the 16 Iruka POWs (Iruka Boys) who died there during WWII. The local people have looked after it, and held memorial services twice a

year, for many years. In 1988 the memorial inspired me to look for the 16 POWs' mothers and their comrades who returned. During our 1996 pilgrimage to Kiwa-Cho, we joined in their town festival. Mr Saraie (who knew Iruka POWs), Senior Citizen Club leader, would like us to join them this time. We mustn't miss the breath-taking boat trip through the rapidly-flowing Toro-Gorge, between precipitous cliffs.

Kiwa-Cho has lush green unspoiled countryside. Kumano has been a place of worship where serious believers travelled from afar to the three Shinto shrines. There are many narrow paths leading to them called "Kumano Kodo (old path)", which became a Unesco World Heritage. You will be dazzled by the late Autumn colours in Kiwa-Cho.

After a few days of tranquillity we will move to the busy city of Tokyo where we hope to visit the British Embassy for tea and biscuits. You may like to dash out to see/buy some electric gadgets in Akihabara or do some last minute souvenir shopping with Agape people. There is always the bustling city to explore.

The pilgrimage will be around £3,200 per person (depends on Japanese Yen) As A.W is not able to help the cost, each pilgrim will have to find his/her own. If anyone can

support this pilgrimage, it will be greatly appreciated.

We also hope to plan a pilgrimage to Hokkaido in 2018 or so (September would be good) if we have enough

people who are interested. Chris, my son, will help organise pilgrimage(s) in Hokkaido, as Joe mentioned in his essay. Chris also has been financing my trips to Japan recent years.

Iruka Boys and my father

Yobun Shima

My father was born in Vancouver, Canada, in 1914, and moved to Japan when his family returned home in 1933 to resettle there permanently. He worked as an English-speaking interpreter at Iruka POW camp between 1944 and 1945. After the war, he had a wide-ranging international career. Later on, he set up private English language classes in Kyoto and taught for about fifty years. He passed away in 1998.

In 1990 he unexpectedly had an opportunity to attend a reunion with Iruka Boys, and was very excited about it. I accompanied my parents to a memorial service held in Iruka. He told me about my elder sister, Machiko, many times. She was born in Iruka in January 1945, but soon was taken seriously ill. One of the POWs was an army doctor, Robert J. S. Wilson. He kindly offered medical care to her, and as a result, she luckily recovered from her illness. This episode shows the strong friendship and bond that existed between Iruka Boys and my father.



Among my father's belongings are many letters and Christmas cards from Iruka Boys and their families. They had been sent to him from Jesse Adams, Joe W. Cummings, Jack Shotton, Jim Swordy, A. B. Johnston, Bill Ingrey, J. Crais, Richard White, Robert J. S. Wilson, Jimmy Walker, Norman Burrows, Joan Craig, J. T. Cragie and Morien James. I would like to email copies of these letters and cards to the families of the senders upon request. My email address is sevenses1990@hotmail.co.jp.

A book, *Of Rice and Men*, written by Jimmy Walker mentions my father's name. I was recently introduced to Dawn and Malcolm, the children of Norman Burrows who had visited Japan on a *Pilgrimage* trip in 1990. I am sorry about the recent demise of Norman Burrows.

Finally, I am very grateful to Keiko Holmes for her successful initiative to bring Iruka Boys and many other POWs to Japan. Photos: above: Fred, his wife and Richard White (Iruka Boy).

At the memorial: Fred and his son, Yobun.

HARRY WALTON

Mark Owen (Son-in-law) with a group of 26 FEPOWs, 'The Iruka Boys', to attend a service at the Iruka (now called Kiwa-Cho) Memorial. The trip was arranged by Keiko Holmes OBE who went on to organise further trips and eventually founded the charity 'Agape' in 1996.

Harry's daughters, Sandra, who lives near Leyburn, and Carole, who lives near Stamford, said: "Apart from small stories, Dad never really went into great

Harry Walton, a former soldier and FEPOW, passed away one month before his 96th birthday on 7th November in Leeds. He joined the army in 1939, served as a machine gunner in Norfolk and France, and suffered as a POW in Changi (Singapore), on the notorious Thai-Burma railway and in the copper mines at Iruka, Japan.

In 1992, Harry returned to Japan

detail about the War. Then a couple of years ago we asked him to write down as much as he wanted to about his time in the War so that we could pass it on to his 4 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. We wanted them to know how courageous and brave he had been. He was one of the most gentle and respected men who would have done anything for us."

Linda, an Indonesian lady generously invited me to her country and Singapore from 7th December 2015 to 1st March this year, to do Agape World ministries. They took me to various churches, gatherings, a prison and an orphanage. Mostly poverty stricken places. However, Indonesian people are, as far as I experienced, generally happy people. I wanted to visit several POW camp sites but as Linda lives outside Indonesia and other reasons we were unable to fulfil the plan. I am a little disappointed about it.