MEMORIAL TO THE VISIT OF THE KAIWO MARU

DARWIN

19~25 JUNE 1936
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BY
JOHN LAMB
This booklet is an expanded version of the article In Memory of the Visit of the Kaiwō Maru, by the same author, published in *Northern Territory Historical Studies*: Issue No.26, 2015. It has been prepared in celebration of 80 years since the first visit of the vessel to Darwin, and Australia, and in the hope that the acknowledged heritage value of the memorial cairn will be properly considered in conjunction with its safe custody and display.

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The Kaiwō Maru was built for the Nautical Training Institute of the Japanese Government Department of Education at the Kawasaki shipyards in Kobe and launched at 8:32 a.m. on 14 February 1930. It is what was known as an auxiliary barque, and together with a sister ship, the Nippon Maru, was used for the training of future merchant marine officers. Cadets spent three years at one of the Japanese maritime training colleges before spending 12 months on one of these vessels.

Fig.1 The Kaiwō Maru at Darwin wharf, June 1936 (P10575.005, Australian War Memorial)
In 1936, on one of its training voyages, which were predominantly in the Pacific Ocean, the *Kaiwō Maru* made a six day visit to Darwin, arriving on Friday 19th June and departing on Thursday 25th. This was the first and only time before the war that the vessel visited Australia and Darwin was its only port of call in Australia. It was the 14th voyage of the ship and began on 2nd May 1936. The course was via Yokkaichi in Japan, to Palau and Angaur Island before stopping at Port Darwin and then going on to Batavia and Singapore and back to Tokyo via Yokohama – returning on 31st August after a journey of 9,506 nautical miles.

In addition to Captain Kichitarō Miyamoto (宮本吉太郎) and 13 other officers, there were 33 general crew, and 64 cadets (including five from the maritime communications training school in Korea) undertaking their training in general seamanship, navigation and meteorology. From around this time such cadets were probably beginning also to receive military instruction on guns and torpedo tubes and later as war approached many were probably conscripted into the naval reserve, but at this time fears of war were probably of far less concern to the residents of Darwin than some growing anxiety over the early intrusion of the Japanese pearling fleet into the seas not far off the coast of the Northern Territory. The arrival of such an impressively large, traditional tall ship used for mercantile training was welcomed with warmth and nostalgia in this port still so dependent on shipping.

Just before the vessel left Japan two places had been offered on board to special trade emissaries or economic researchers who might be able to take advantage of the opportunity and assist in the goodwill activities of the voyage. The two men who took up this offer were OHTANI Toshiharu (大谷敏冶教授), a professor of marketing and business administration at Otaru College of Commerce (小樽高等商業学校) in Hokkaido, who planned to study business methods here, and the other was KODERA Yasukichi (小寺康吉教授), a professor of the College of Commerce, Takaoka (高岡高等商業学校). After actively supporting the functions in Darwin, Prof. Ohtani left the ship and went on to Sydney by air, then after visiting other capital cities, returned to Japan via Manila, while Prof. Kodera travelled on with the vessel to Batavia, Singapore and back to Japan.

Following their Friday arrival the two passengers and crew were apparently given time to explore Darwin over the weekend and then there was a busy schedule of engagements. The officers and professors were invited to a civic reception at the Town Hall from 11 a.m. on the Monday hosted by the Mayor, Cr. J. H. Brogan, and that evening to an official Government dinner at the Victoria Hotel hosted by Mr. L. H. A. Giles, Acting Administrator in the absence of Col. R. H. Weddell.
On Tuesday evening Captain Miyamoto then hosted a sumptuous return dinner on the Kaiwō Maru for various Darwin officials and important locals, followed on the Wednesday afternoon by an ‘at home’ on board the ship with a variety of entertainment and a buffet meal, and that evening a dinner for Mr. & Mrs. Xavier Herbert. At 9 a.m. the following morning, Thursday, the Kaiwō Maru departed.

Each of the official functions had an air of warm hospitality. In relation to the civic reception it was reported that:

‘About 50 residents were present when his Worship the Mayor (Cr. J. H. Brogan) in proposing the loyal toast, extended a warm welcome to the visitors, and said he hoped their stay in Darwin would be a happy and enjoyable one.

Judge Wells in adding to the Mayor’s words of welcome said all sailors and lovers of ships of the olden days would enjoy the sight of the tall masted ship now in the harbour. It was a wonderful sight and he hoped to see it under sail before it resumed its voyage. He said the students should be proud of the fact that they were being trained on a ship of that type and that they were doing real sailor’s work.”

At the official Government dinner the 38 participants were intermingled at a long decorated table, with the Australian and Japanese flags conspicuously displayed on the wall supported by the Union Jack, and speeches emphasising the friendly relations existing between Australia and Japan were made. Mr. Giles is reported as saying that he hoped that trade relations between Australia and Japan would extend along lines beneficial to both countries, as it should between friendly nations, and that Australia highly valued its trade with Japan; while Captain Miyamoto responded observing that a pleasant breeze was blowing and a strong tide running between Australia and Japan, which were friendly nations on the eastern side of the Pacific, and that this
was a symbol of the friendship which existed between the two nations and which should be
preserved. Professor Kodera noted that when he was in England he had found the description of
Japan in school textbooks was unfortunately about 100 years out of date and said he hoped
Australians would be able to visit Japan and form a correct impression. He also hoped that the
visit of the training ship would be a step towards the maintenance of cordial relations between
the two nations, and Professor Ohtani added that the visit of the training ship to Darwin was
really ‘a mission of good will’.\n
The Tuesday evening meal was held in the dining saloon of the Kaiwō Maru which had been
tastefully decorated for the occasion. While a six course meal of Japanese dishes was being
enjoyed Captain Miyamoto and Professor Ohtani thanked the people of Darwin for the
hospitality extended to the officers and the students, and various officials including Mr. Giles,
Judge Wells, Dr. C. E. Cook, and Mayor Brogan, responded in kind.

The Wednesday afternoon ‘at home’ on the Kaiwō Maru was a much more casual affair, but with
about 300 persons attending and the cadets taking charge of small groups and escorting them
over the vessel, pointing out any features of interest. The cadets then gave Kendo and Judo
demonstrations with Mr. T. Nulty, of the Administrative Branch, acting as announcer, and this
was followed by refreshments served on the opposite side of the ship, buffet fashion.

‘After the entertainment, guests assembled round the refreshment tables, where Japanese
food, to be eaten with chop-sticks, awaited them. Meat loaf, potato salad with green peas,
rice cakes, sliced ginger, sandwiches of varied flavors and thin Japanese biscuits, comprised
the menu, with Japanese beer, and champagne cider for drinks. Shop-sticks [sic], in neat
white paper wrappers, lay beside each plate, which was of the thinnest wood, and bore
scenes of Japanese interest. Many of these plates were afterwards autographed by the hosts,
and presented to the guests as souvenirs of the afternoon. All present sampled the food with
gusto, and enjoyed the strange tastes and varied flavors.’\n
One local resident who in later life fondly recalled this ‘spick-and-span ship, and a spick-and-span
crew’ and his experience then was Mr. W. E. (Bill) Eacott. At the time, his father was the manager
of the pearling firm Gregory and Company, which employed many Japanese, and he was about
11 years old.

‘My father took me up on the bridge, or somewhere – with the captain. He was talking
to me, and he said would I like to come back on the ship with him to Japan. And of
course, being a gullible child, I raced to my father and said, “I’ve been asked to go back
to Japan on the ship. Can I go, Dad?” Of course, there was no chance of that, I was too
young for one thing, and the captain wouldn’t have done it anyway.

But that was quite a sight, that ship. I’d never seen such a beautiful ship in Darwin
Harbour. I’d seen lots of naval ships, our Navy and the British Navy, but I don’t
remember any other navies up till then. But this Japanese naval ship --- it wasn’t a
warship as such, and that’s why, in my eyes, it was beautiful.’\n
Xavier Herbert was well known in Darwin as both a chemist and author. He had previously been the Dispenser at the hospital and in October 1935 had been appointed a Protector of Aboriginals and acting Superintendent of the Khalin Compound. He had, by this time, finished his novel *Capricornia*, although it had not yet been published, and was said to be working on a novel about the pearling industry. He was an honorary member of the Japanese Society of Darwin and seemingly the only non-Asian admitted to the Society. While not attended by reporters, the private dinner on the final Wednesday evening was mentioned in a lengthy newspaper report the day after the ship departed and presumably had input from Xavier Herbert himself.

'The Japanese Society of Darwin wish to thank the citizens of this town in general for the cordial reception given to their countrymen during the visit of the Japanese Government training ship Kaiwo Maru. They are naturally proud of the progressiveness of their nation, and hence are grateful for the praise of the fine vessel and her personnel that the people of Darwin have liberally voiced. One of the chief tasks of the Japanese Society is to
cultivate the friendship of the people of the Commonwealth for the sake of the mutual progress of both nations. Captain Miyamoto of the Japanese Government training ship "Kaiwo Maru," devoted the last evening of his stay in Darwin to entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Xavier Herbert aboard the ship. Mr. Herbert, who is an honorary member of the Japanese Society of Darwin and of the Japan-Australia Society, is held in high respect by Japanese people in many quarters, not only because of his generous feeling towards a people who suffer many discomforts as aliens, but because of his deep knowledge of the characters of both the Australian and Japanese people and their national affairs and particularly because of his broad vision of both nations' futures. Nevertheless, he is a patriotic Australian as few are, and a stout adherent to the ideal of White Australia. Captain Miyamoto expressed himself to the President of the local Japanese Society, Mr. I. Okada, as having been greatly impressed by what he had learnt from his several talks with Mr. Herbert. 

On the Thursday morning a large crowd assembled on the wharf, children from the local school and convent marched to the headlands to watch the departure and Judge Wells got his wish, when with a favourable wind and tide the Kaiwō Maru passed down the harbour under almost full sail. One newspaper reported as follows:

‘On Thursday morning at nine o'clock, with a strong breeze blowing, the "Kaiwo Maru" sailed out of the harbour under her own power. The many people who had gathered along the Esplanade to witness the vessel's departure under sail were afforded an unprecedented sight when it gently, wended its course out of the harbour with its white sails billowing in the breeze. Passing the Residency the ship's flag was dipped. From Darwin the training ship will journey to Batavia en route to Japan.’

Fig.5 The Kaiwō Maru departing Darwin (PH0375/0050 Marella Collection, Northern Territory Library)
A memorial cairn, about 90 cm. in height, was prepared in commemoration of the visit, and is said to have been signed by officers of the ship and placed outside the Japanese Club.

The inscription reads: 「大日本政府練習船海王丸寄港記念」 ’Memorial to the call at port of the Greater Japan Government training ship Kaiwō Maru’. The name of the vessel ‘海王’ means ‘Sea King’ and today is phonetically read かいおう Kaiō, but in classical Japanese was かいとう Kaiwō.
The cairn was ‘lost’ for many years, but in 2008 was unearthed during excavation work in the vicinity of 41 Woods Street. Being unexpectedly unearthed by heavy equipment it suffered significant damage, but as it was clearly inscribed with Kanji (Chinese characters) it was given to the Chung Wah Society, located further along Woods Street, for identification and safe keeping. The Society identified what it was, but with no obvious alternative location for display, retained it in its museum.

Although missing the insignia and the beginning of the inscription the explanation that it is a memorial to the visit of the training vessel Kaiwō Maru remains. The missing insignia was apparently finished in yellow and the calligraphy has lost its original blank paint highlighting.

Fig.7 Kaiwō Maru memorial cairn (April 2014)
On the back of cairn is the inscription

皇 紀 二 千 五 百 九 十 年 建 立 月

“Erected in the Imperial Era Year 2596 June”
(i.e. counting from the establishment of the Imperial dynasty in the year 660BC.)

The area below this where signatures, if any, would most likely have been has flaked off. They presumably would have been in the form of Hanko stamps and may have been on some form of little plaque set into the back.

There is one small set of marks further down and to the right of this bordered area which one suspects might have been left by the person who prepared the cairn. It appears to be something like コーフデ in Katakana, but this bears no identifiable similarity to the name of any crew member.
The damage to the cairn reveals it to have been made of an inner core of hard reinforced concrete to which was applied a thin cement render into which the inscriptions were pressed and marks carved before the render was fully set. It is possible that the Kaiwō Maru carried a number of such cast templates ready for rendering at each port of call, but there is no known record of any similar cairns and it is surmised that its construction was probably facilitated by local Japanese. As the ship was built with a very high freeboard allowing all living and recreation spaces to receive natural light, it needed a large amount of ballast to provide the necessary stability to the hull, and accordingly carried not only 640 tons of copper, but also 130 tons of reinforced concrete ballast. A number of small casts could have been easily carried, but would not have been part of such more permanent ballast.

Fig.10  Map of central Darwin ca. 1939 showing lot numbers and where the cairn was unearthed

The site where the cairn was rediscovered was in 1936 known as Lot 283, and from land valuation records was held in the name of the well-known business man and pearling master, MURAMATSU Jirō (村松次郎), or ‘Muramats’ as he wrote it (and mistakenly recorded as Zira Muramats). However, this was held by him on behalf of the Japanese Society of Port Darwin as it was the site of the Japanese Club built in 1931 by local builder Jack Buscall, and there was an undertaking to the Darwin Town Council that that this property, obtained from P. Durkin, would be held “in the name of trustees who would be naturalised”. Aerial and other photographs of the time (see Fig. 12) indicate a substantial building on the site as does the quick survey of the built environment done in December 1940 by the Chief Surveyor of the Town Council, A. R. Miller, who indicates, “Residence – N.A.D. office and store in house – Japanese” on this site. Muramatsu
himself would appear to have resided on Lot 384 (with his Australian-born wife) near the corner of Peel Street, opposite the school, which was where he had his office (although he also owned Lot 333 which had a ‘Residence and Pearl Shed’). \textsuperscript{xiv}

There has been a suggestion that the Murakami family lived here, but this is incorrect\textsuperscript{xv}, although MURAKAMI Yasukichi (村上安吉) may have been the person who photographed the cairn. In 1936 and still at the time of internment, Yasukichi and his family were living in one of the Stone Houses on Cavenagh Street where he also had his photographic studio. They were said to own a property on Woods Street not far from the school, and had begun to build there just before their internment. \textsuperscript{xvi}

MURAMATSU Jirō died on the 7\textsuperscript{th} January 1943 during internment at Tatura in Victoria, as did MURAKAMI Yasukichi the following year, and probate records\textsuperscript{xvii} on the estate of the former list ownership of various properties in Cossack and Roebourne, but none in Darwin. Lot 283 was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1946\textsuperscript{xviii}.

\textbf{Fig.11} MURAKAMI Yoshio with son Tarō outside the Stone House studio of his uncle and father-in-law MURAKAMI Yasukichi, photographed by MURAKAMI Jūkichi. (Murakami Family Collection)

On 3\textsuperscript{rd} March 1950, Yasukichi’s widow, Shigeno, obtained compensation (of £140.10.3) for the forced acquisition of Lot 245 further down Woods Street on the corner of McLachlan Street which was presumably the block they were just about to build a house on when the war started and which was said to have been sold after the war. At the time of the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the family actually living in this residence that also served as the Japan Club was that of a third Japanese of high standing in the community up till then, (John) NAKASHIBA Iwamatsu (中芝 岩松), and that is why it also included the office and store of his company, N.A.D. Co. (North
Australia Development Company). The lease which he had had on premises in Cavenagh Street for many years expired in 1940 and as the local newspaper reported:

“The NAD. Co. wish to announce to the Public that their 12 years lease will expire on June 30th and they will be removing to the Japanese Society’s Building, Wood St., which will be their Registered office, and where business will be conducted temporarily until their own building is erected. All persons wishing to communicate by telephone are requested to ring 37, not 36.” xix

![Fig.12 Members of the Darwin Japanese Society in front of their Wood Street building, taken around 1936, with NAKASHIBA Iwamatsu in dark pants and Xavier Herbert seated beside MURAMATSU Jirō at the opposite end of the front row. (Courtesy of David Murakami)](image)

The front part of Lot 283, 41 Woods Street, where the cairn was found, became Lot 2388 and was obtained by Alfred Chin in April 1949. The house he had built on it (designed by Brisbane architects Hennessy & Hennessy in March 1952) was in a 1993 study considered to have heritage significance as: “A good example of post-war Chinese house genre”.xx The lot is now a small part of the multi-storey complex built by Gwelo Developments Pty. Ltd., at the corner of Knuckey and Woods Streets and it was in the construction of part of this development that the cairn was uncovered.

All indications are that the photograph of the cairn was taken under the tree outside the Japanese Club on Lot 283 (looking south towards block 284) sometime not long after it was placed there by the crew of the Kaiwō Maru and it apparently remained in the vicinity until the excavations of 2008.
In May 2015, in accordance with the recommendation of the Heritage Council, the cairn was given interim protection as a heritage object. This protection was, however, withdrawn by Minister Tollner in late November 2015 on the advice of the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment with the assertion that: ‘The conservation of small portable objects such as this is the role of the museum sector.’ Its future therefore remains uncertain.

Fig.13  View from under tree at rear of Stone Houses (Murakami’s studio was on the far left) looking towards the apartments constructed over the site where the cairn was placed. (April 2014)

At the start of the War in the Pacific all of the yards of the Kaiwō Maru were removed and the ship became a purely motorized vessel with standing masts. She survived the war, and then in 1955, after re-rigging and some apparent refurbishment and minor modifications, returned to use as a training vessel until retired on 16th September 1989 following the commissioning of a similar but larger Kaiwō Maru II. The vessel was never scrapped, but was cleaned up and placed on exhibit in Kaiwō Maru Park in the city of Imizu, Toyama. Trained volunteers manually unfurl the sails ten times a year, and the vessel is still used in one-day and overnight training courses for those with an interest in ocean sailing without leaving port, however, it is believed that maintenance costs are high and it is doubtful that such use can continue much longer.
END NOTES

i  Renshū Hansen Nippon Maru Kaiō Maru 50-nenshi p.10 (Schauffelen states 27.1.1930 but this was the date the Nippon Maru was launched.)

ii  CA 20.8.1936 p.15 (The given names Toshiharu and Yasukichi are the most likely readings but are not certain.)

iii  NS 23.6.1936 p.10

iv  Ibid.

v  TDB 2 July 1936 p.12

vi  NTRS 226 TS 758 Tape2, p.5


viii  NS 26.6.1936 p.4

ix  Ibid.

x  Schauffelen p.188

xi  Based on part of map of Town of Darwin, Hundred of Bagot, County of Palmerston, Northern Territory, ca. 1939 from NT Archives Service

xii  NTRS 1563

xiii  NS 23.1.1931 p.6, 6.2.1931 p.3 & 20.2.1931 p.4


xv  As suggested by a former resident of Woods St., Mrs Eddy, and shown on an early version (July 2013) of a map of Darwin as it was on 18 February 1942 (before the bombing), drawn and researched by Sean Casey.

xvi  NTRS T96 pp. 3 & 9

xvii  Sissons MS3092 Box 47 - Probate Statement of Assets & Liabilities of Jiro Muramats

xviii  NTRS 1563 (Lot 283) and Welke & Wilson p.201, supported by details on Blocks 283 and 2388 extracted from a database created by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure now Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment (through NT Archives Service)

xix  NS 25.6.1940

xx  Welke & Wilson p.201
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