Camp Life

FEPOW acted as a workforce for the Japanese in locations throughout south-east Asia and the Far East. They were often moved between countries or sent to work on roads and railways, down mines and in heavy industry.

Japanese military philosophy held that anyone surrendering was beneath contempt. Treatment of captives was harsh. FEPOW were controlled by their unpredictable captors, living from day to day in fear of punishment for the slightest infringement. Red Cross parcels were deliberately withheld.

FEPOW had to be resourceful, learning from those who had lived and worked in the East. They utilised all scrap materials available to them and used the ever-present bamboo to make life bearable. Scavenging became a necessity.

Camp accommodation varied from bamboo huts roofed with palm leaves in the tropics, to draughty wooden dormitories in the colder, industrial northern regions.