During the Second World War around 140,000 military personnel were captured by the Japanese. These Far East prisoners of war (FEPOW) remained imprisoned until the end of the war, August 1945.

This exhibition provides a unique glimpse of the battle to survive extreme adversity in wartime. It explores the self-help strategies used by British servicemen including making art as therapy and as a way of documenting their situation.

The artwork had to be created in secret as it was forbidden by the Japanese. It records all aspects of FEPOW life, from the realities of living in extreme conditions to finding beauty in the tropical flora and fauna, plus humorous cartoons to boost morale.

FEPOW hurriedly documented daily existence using pencils and pen and ink wherever they found themselves.

Secrecy was imperative as punishment was swift and harsh. Artworks were kept hidden, sometimes rolled up inside bamboo tubes, in walking sticks and artificial limbs, buried in bottles or tins under huts and even with the dead.

The artwork and artifacts displayed here eventually made the long journey back to Britain as the men returned home. Many have been kept by the families and have never been exhibited before.