

National Federation of Far East Prisoner of War Clubs & Associations

Clubs and Associations were formed throughout Great Britain from the 1948 onwards, many in 1950. Eventually there were 69. Their purpose was to bring back the comradeship and spirit that existed in the POW Camps and to help one another.

The Clubs and Associations formed in the early days started to communicate with each other helped by the yearly get together event organised by the London Association at the Festival Hall London, and in the early 1950's the Federation was formed rather than create a National Association. This was advantageous as no headquarter unit was formed with overall control, thereby each Club / Association had equal rights and status, giving greater recognition of the Fepow 'cause' within its own area. There was one basic requirement of each Club / Association in that it had to have a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Welfare Officer. The reason was to ensure accountability when dealing money at least for welfare grants as two signatories were required confirming receipt.

The Federation had a constitution and a sound structure, which enabled it among other things to deal with health and welfare in a way that became recognised by Government Departments. The structure was based on an 'Areas Council' comprised of a representative from each Area. The areas were West Country, South of England, Wales, the Midlands, North West, North East, Scotland and East Anglia. Each Club / Association would be represented at an Area Committee under an elected Chairman and would reach decisions on matters concerning their area and nationally. The executive was made up of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Welfare Adviser.

Example – South of England Area comprised Clubs / Associations based on Bath, Bournemouth, Isle of Wight, London, Portsmouth, Southampton, Swindon and Weymouth.

Representative of these Areas would meet as Areas Council, twice a year to deal with and reach decisions on FEPOW matters affecting the membership. Decisions of the Area Committees were conveyed to the National Secretary by way of minutes. From these minutes items formed the agenda for the yearly Conference. Decisions made at Conference gave the Federation's Executive authority to represent and make representations on behalf of Fepows to Government Departments and national organisations involved in veterans' matters of health and welfare. In fact the Federation was well respected.

Among the advantages arising from this national organisation was communication, in other words, on such matters as tropical diseases, their treatment and where obtained, war disability pensions including support and welfare grants for those in necessitous circumstances as well as items of a social nature.

Secondly Fepows did not act as individuals but as an officer representing a Club / Association or the Federation when visiting a Fepow in hospital, meetings of national organisations, the Fepow Unit now part of the Veterans Agency at Norcross and Medical Centres dealing with tropical diseases. The national organisations involved in veteran matters included the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and the National Memorial Arboretum Trust now run by TRBL.

On the social side weekend reunions for all were organised, mainly annually, at the time of the Conference by Clubs / Associations at seaside resorts where appropriate facilities existed and were fully supported by the Federation. These provided a means of publicity for Fepows.

An annual donation was made towards the cost of the Federation's administration via an application, by the Trustees of the Far East POW Central Welfare Fund and the Far East POW and Internees Fund because it was the main agency for Fepow welfare through the Welfare Officers of Clubs / Association.

Robert Hucklesby. 24/04/17

Background. Secretary of the Lowestoft FEPOW Association 1950 – 1951 before moving to Poole. Joined the Bournemouth, Poole and District POW Association in the late 1950s, Welfare Officer for a time, Representative at Conference from the late 1960s to 2005 and Chairman from 1982 – 2005 when the Association was wound up.

South of England Area Committee member in late 1960s then Chairman 1985 to 2005.

Representative on Areas Council 2003 – 2005.

Trustee of Fepow Central Welfare Fund and Far East POW and Internee Fund from 1996 – 2009 part as Vice Chairman and Chairman.