

# Ceremony marks 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Featherston incident

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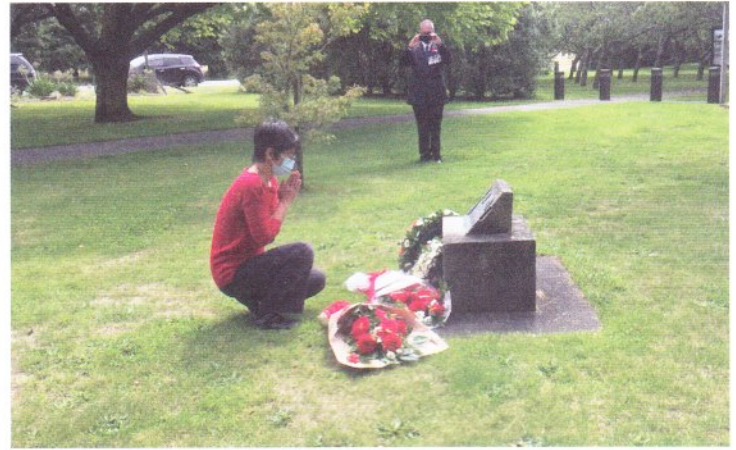
As Wellingtonians drive back home after a weekend in the Wairarapa, many would be unaware of the history behind the small memorial park they pass on SH2, a couple of kilometres north of Featherston. And if you told them it commemorates “the Featherston incident”, they would be none the wiser.

But an important part of local history is encapsulated by the park, near what used to be New Zealand’s largest military training camp.

Housing 7500 men during the First World War, the Featherston camp was later dismantled, only to be re-established in 1942 to house 800 Japanese prisoners of war.

On 25 February 1943, a riot broke out at the camp. A guard fired a warning shot, which “may have” wounded Lieutenant Adachi Toshio, reports [nzhistory.govt.nz](http://nzhistory.govt.nz). The prisoners rose to their feet and the guards opened fire. The incident resulted in the deaths of 48 Japanese prisoners of war.

In late February, a group of dignitaries gathered at the garden to mark the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, laying flowers and wreaths. Attendees included South Wairarapa Mayor Alex Beijen, Japan’s Ambassador Mr Koichi Ito and the Australian High Commissioner Patricia Forsythe. Japanese prisoners of war also died in Cowra, a small town in New South Wales.



Local resident Keiko Nojima lays flowers on behalf of the Heritage Museum and Chor Farmer choir, a Japanese choir that regularly visits Featherston.

After a welcome by local kaumatua, wreaths were laid on behalf of all three countries, the local RSA, Anzac Club, Featherston Heritage Museum, the Japan Society and forestry company JNL. A cherry tree orchard next to the park was created by Toshio Nakamoto, a Japanese philanthropist and former JNL owner.

Then flowers and wreaths were laid at memorials for the Japanese war dead and for Private Walter Allan Pelvin, the New Zealander who died.

A plaque commemorates the site with a 17th-century haiku:

*Behold the summer grass  
All that remains of the  
Dreams of warriors.*



Japanese ambassador to New Zealand, Mr Koichi Ito, lays a wreath in memory of a New Zealand soldier killed during the Featherston incident.

**Life**  
CELEBRANT

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