

A NEW SHELLHOLE FOR THE ORDER

---Press Release 25 June 2024---

Post Formosa-Pacific Shellhole

Saturday, 15th June 2024 marked another milestone in MOTHdom, with the Chartering and opening of the Order's first Shellhole in the Asia-Pacific region. At 14:30, local time, in Malibu West Bar, home to US Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 9957, in the old Combat Zone of Taipei, members of the soon-to-be chartered Shellhole were joined via Zoom by members of the National Executive and Moths from across South Africa, Ireland, and further afield for the chartering of Post Formosa-Pacific Shellhole in Taiwan. This new unit is registered as an Outpost of General Headquarters.

Discussions on the possibility of starting something in Taiwan began exactly five months before when (now) PFP Shellhole Old Bill Mark Wilkie approached General Secretary Moth Brian Porter and National Exco members, Moths Stan Bezuidenhout and Philip McLachlan in order to confirm the requirements for such a possibility. During April, a resolution was passed by the National Executive granting approval for the establishment of a Shellhole in Taiwan. Prospective members of the new Shellhole joined Cyber Shellhole to undergo induction into the Order, to form the core around which the proposed Shellhole could be built. From Cyber Shellhole, the founding members of the new Shellhole were transferred across to establish the Post Formosa-Pacific Shellhole.



Scott Ellinger and Mark Wilkie

Taiwan is entirely new territory for the MOTH and, the fledgling Shellhole faces a unique situation on the ground. Firstly, Taiwan

Beginnings

The origins of the Shellhole, however, run deeper than the initial contact back in January.

South African military veterans had been having get-togethers and were involved in the remembrance of Allied POWs held in Japanese POW camps on the island during the Pacific Campaign of World War II for over twenty years. Among the POWs held on the island were ten South Africans serving with British forces when captured.

For several years, Taiwan-based South African military veterans have been cleaning memorials and placing remembrance notes on behalf of family members of former POWs held on the island. Up until 2015, former Allied POWs regularly returned to Taiwan for Remembrance Sunday each year.

A veterans group affiliated with one of the other South African veterans' organisations had been established, but due to the lack of interest expressed by that organisation over what was being done in Taiwan, the Taiwan group decided to end their association with that organisation and explore other options, and so approached the MOTH.

is a former Japanese colony and, as such, fought on the side of Imperial Japan during World War II. It is the location that the Japanese chose to hold their most valuable Allied POWs; the captured Allied high command and the most skilled technicians. Although the Allies never attempted to land on the island because of the mountainous terrain, some of the largest air and sea battles of the Pacific Theatre were fought over and around the island, including the Battle of Okinawa. There were about a hundred members of the South African Naval Forces, including two SANF pilots, involved in the Okinawan Campaign. Thus, for the first time, an Asian-based South African MOTH Shellhole is actively taking part in Pacific War remembrance activities in the North-western Pacific within the territory where the Battle of Okinawa was fought, and remembering SANF seamen and airmen, alongside the Americans, Australians, British, Canadians, and New Zealanders.

Further, interaction with other veteran's organisations is only partly with those of other Commonwealth nations. The dominant veterans' organisations are the Veterans Affairs Council (Taiwan), and the VFW of the United States-VFW Post 9957, The Flying Tigers. The Flying Tigers, named for the legendary Pacific War fighter group, was established on Taiwan 60 years ago, during the early Vietnam War era. The Flying Tigers have been very supportive of the effort to establish a Shellhole in Taiwan. The Chartering of the Shellhole took place at their Post. Lt Col. Scott Ellinger (Rtd) of the Flying Tigers Executive agreed to act as the appointed official for the MOTH Executive during the Chartering.



Shellhole members line up for their first photograph

Following the presentation of the Charter to the Shellhole, elected and appointed officers were installed. The elected officers are Moths Mark Wilkie as Old Bill, Johan Fritz as Deputy Old Bill, John Ecclestone as Adjutant/Executive Officer, and Tobie Openshaw as Communications Officer. Given the international nature of veterans' interaction on Taiwan, US Army veteran Scott Ellinger and New Zealand Army veteran Bernie Moore were also installed as appointed officers; Scott, who is an ordained minister, will act as the Shellhole chaplain, and Bernie will act as an assistant Old Bill focusing on Commonwealth liaison. The Chartering of the Shellhole was attended by Michael Hurst MBE, Director of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society, and by Dean Karalekas, a veteran of the royal Canadian Navy.

Moving ahead, Post Formosa-Pacific Shellhole looks forward to providing a home for South African veterans in the Far East and expanding the reach of the Order into the Pacific.

All those in attendance – wished the Shellhole well for the future!

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