

Hill Overlooking Historic Areas

This memorial site and viewpoint was established in 1982 on a hill on the edge of Kure's Miyahara district, just east of National Route 487. The hill looks out over the shipyard where the battleship *Yamato* was built, the Former Imperial Navy Regional Headquarters, and the area that was once the Naval Arsenal. The hill's name, Rekishi no Mieru Oka—literally, the “Hill from Which History Can Be Seen”—aptly describes how this view captures the way Kure grew from several small, neighboring fishing communities into a naval port, and finally into the shipbuilding center that it is today.

Until the early Edo period (1603–1867), the area around Kure Bay was occupied by four small fishing villages. As these villages grew and eventually merged to form the town of Kure in 1686, their names were retained as the names of Kure's different neighborhoods. After Kure was chosen as the site of a major naval base two centuries later, the Miyahara district and much of the surrounding area were bought out, and the residents were relocated to make space for naval facilities. The majority of Kure's seashore became Imperial Navy property, and the villagers who had previously supported themselves through farming and fishing were employed by the navy instead. In order to create space for the many new buildings the naval base required, part of the bay was reclaimed, and a new city was built following a modern grid street plan. The city of Kure was officially established in 1902, and it grew rapidly as the naval station expanded.

Rekishi no Mieru Oka offers views of many historic buildings, including the Former Imperial Navy Regional Headquarters (now Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Headquarters, Kure District). It also provides a panorama of Kure Bay, where the Naval Arsenal was once located. The area previously occupied by the arsenal has now been converted into a modern shipyard that produces some of the largest oil tankers in the world. The battleship *Yamato*, known as the most heavily armed battleship ever built, was constructed in Kure between 1937 and 1941. In order to keep its construction secret from the public, the shipyard was covered by a tremendous roof. That roof still partially remains today, but it has since been moved to a neighboring shipyard that is still in use.

As part of establishing the Naval Arsenal, a tall brick wall was built on the hill to close off the grounds. In 1969, a monument commemorating the construction of the battleship *Yamato* was erected in the grassy space near the wall, and in 1978 a stone engraved with a poem praising the city of Kure became the second monument to be added to the spot. The poem was written in 1895 by renowned haiku poet Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) when

he visited the city to bid farewell to a friend departing on the battleship *Matsushima*. The monument to the *Yamato* consists of a tower modeled after the ship's bridge and a pair of artillery shells from its main guns. After the wall was torn down in 1982, a monument to the Naval Arsenal was erected where it stood, and the hill received its official name. In 1993, a monument to the old dock (which was removed when the bay was filled in) was added to the hill. Slabs of stone from the dock were arranged into a staircase that seems to lead down into the shipyard below.