The Japanese Cemetery in Broome, Western Australia contains over 900 graves, most of men who worked as pearl divers in the region. A small number of women and children are also buried there. Many of the deceased came from Taiji and other villages in the southern region of the Kii Peninsula. Government records from Western Australia show that a large number died from drowning, decompression sickness, stroke and beriberi. The cemetery contains over 700 Japanese tombstones in neat rows and is thought to be the largest such site outside of Japan.

The tombstones have a variety of shapes and styles, because they were erected by friends, co-workers, or family after the deceased had been buried. Most were carved in sandstone cut from the coast around Broome. They are engraved with the name, birthplace and date of death of the deceased, and occasionally the name of the person that erected them. Some of the tombstones have marble statues, in the Catholic style. Catholicism has been deeply rooted in the region since it began to spread there at the end of the 19th century, and a large Catholic cemetery sits next to the Japanese one in Broome. There were a small number of Japanese Catholics at the time, but with only a few exceptions they were buried in the Japanese cemetery. Before WW II there was a Japanese hospital in the area run by the Western Australia Broome Japanese Club, where Catholic nuns worked as nurses. Some of the patients there are said to have converted on their deathbeds, inspired by the faith of these nuns.

In Japan tombstones are often made from granite, which is used for its hardness and durability. The granite tombstones in the Japanese cemetery in Broome were carefully cut by master craftsmen and appear to have been brought over from Japan. Some bear the names of Japanese stonemasons. The tombstones made from sandstone are comparatively soft and have deteriorated with age. Fragments of various sizes from these tombstones are stored in the Broome Museum and a privately owned warehouse.

The history of the Japanese cemetery in Broome starts from the early 20th Century, after the peak years of the pearl harvesting industry. During some harvesting seasons dozens of divers lost their lives. The number of Japanese buried there decreased as the industry faded and medical technology evolved. However, pearl harvesting on the sea floor using large, heavy diving helmets continued until the mid 1970s, with harvesting boats spending up to eight weeks at sea, so accidents and deaths did not cease. Japanese immigrants that acquired Australian citizenship continued to live in Broome and so were buried in the Japanese cemetery when they died, and to this day it is carefully maintained by the Japanese and the local community members.

The cemetery's preservation was marked by several key historical events, such as a large restoration project in 1983. Sponsors of the restoration included Mr. Ryoichi Sasakawa, chairman of the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation, who made a large donation. Many other individuals also contributed, including Mr. Kazuo Tamaki, a member of the Japanese parliament in the House of Councilors who was originally from Gobo City in Wakayama Prefecture. A video taken of a memorial ceremony held on Sept. 11, 1983 shows a group of visitors led by the two men, honored by a large crowd for their contributions, and they can be seen receiving thanks for the renovation. At that time the old crumbling gravestones were replaced with newly cut black granite gravestones. There was a discussion as to whether to bury the old pieces in the cemetery after the renovation was completed, but instead they were stored in two locations, where they remain today.

It has been 30 years since the restoration of the cemetery, and Broome residents have sought advice from Buddhist scholars as to what to do with the remains of the old gravestones. Australian records also show that some Japanese were buried outside of the Japanese cemetery. In some cases Australian archives have information on deceased in the cemetery who had no descendants to look after their graves, which have since crumbled away. The local records rarely spell the names of the Japanese deceased or their hometowns correctly, but by comparing such records to the Japanese characters carved into the gravestones, the birthplaces of many of the deceased can be determined. The Taiji Historical Archives conducted an investigation into cemetery records in August 2013, with support from the Shire of Broome, Ms. Pearl Hamaguchi, Ms. Pauline Masuda and many other members of the Broome community. We will continue to work with the caretakers of the Broome Japanese Cemetery. Research will continue in order to produce in the near future a list of the deceased buried there in both English and Japanese.