



THE
QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS
MAGAZINE



1995 ISSUE

THE
QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS
ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL

PHILIP W. COOK

No sooner had I finished assembling the Newsletter input for the Regimental Magazine than I received a letter from Peter Blundell to say that, alas, he would not be able to publish it in Hong Kong this year as he had hoped due to an unexpected change in circumstances. This presented me with the problems of obtaining input from an RHQ that had disbanded, from 67 Squadron who were on exercise in Nepal and from 69 Squadron where the OCs were in the middle of their handover. In addition, the days of having publications printed by the "system" have disappeared and thus I have had to obtain competitive tenders - fortunately something that I am well used to with a rapidly expanding company. I mention this not to elicit sympathy but merely to explain the new format of the magazine and any shortcomings that there might be in the contents.

There have been some significant changes within the Association over the last year. Brig Mike Stephens has handed over as Chairman to Brig John Edwards and Lt Col Andrew Tuggey has handed over as secretary to Maj John White and as Treasurer to Lt Col Roy Wilsher. Both Brig Mike and Col Andrew have done much for the Association over the last few years - we are most grateful to them for this.

I know what a bore it is when one is asked to contribute towards something like this, thus I am very grateful to all those who have contributed this time. Again I targeted about a third of our members for brief contributions to this year's Newsletter section and was most encouraged to receive many more replies than previously. I am sure that many members could produce a short article reflecting on either their service in the Regiment or on some other experience which would be of interest to members. Could I urge you please to put pen to paper and let me have the result.

Finally, I would encourage those of you who haven't been to either the GBA Sandhurst Reunion or our Association dinner recently to consider attending one or both events this year. The Sandhurst lunch is a marvellous opportunity to catch up with Brigade friends and recently our contingent has been one of the largest. Our dinners are always well attended and it is most encouraging to note the increasing number of younger members there as well as the "Old and Bold". I hope to see you at either event, meanwhile, my best wishes for a very happy 1995.

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN

Brig J. H. EDWARDS

I am very honoured to have been elected as your new chairman, and I hope to be able to do as good a job as my predecessors.

Circumstances within the Regiment have changed a good deal during the life of the Association. In the early days, the majority of new officers did two consecutive tours, and most of the more senior posts were filled by officers who had previous experience with the Regiment. Of late it has been the exception rather than the rule for officers to return to the Regiment for second and subsequent tours. The effect of this on the Association has been that, early on, people knew one another well and it was a close-knit organisation. In recent years there has been such a large number of new members joining that sadly there has been a lack of cohesion between the various generations which make up the Association.

I believe that we are now entering a new phase. When the Regiment is reduced to only one squadron, the number of new members joining the Association will be reduced to a trickle, and the membership will stabilise. I hope that in the coming years we will be able to bring this more or less finite number of members together to form, once more, a close-knit organisation, and this will be my main objective as Chairman.

I look forward to working with the Committee of the Association, and to meeting as many of you as possible.

Editor's Note

For those few members who do not know Brig John Edwards I felt that you might be interested to see a summary of his service in both the Regiment and the Brigade. There cannot be many other members of the Brigade with such extensive experience.

SUMMARY OF SERVICE with the BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

57-59	Troop Commander 68 Squadron
59-60	Recruit Party Commander
60-63	Adjutant
69-71	OC 68 Squadron
73-75	Commandant
78-79	Defence Attache Khatmandu
81-82	Deputy Commander Gurkha Field Force
84-87	Brigadier Brigade of Gurkhas

COMMANDANT'S NEWSLETTER

Lt Col P. H. BLUNDELL MBE RE

By the time you read this newsletter, the Regimental Headquarters of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers will have disbanded, Perowne Barracks will have closed and 67 Gurkha Independent Field Squadron QGE will be firmly established in Borneo Lines, Sek Kong.

So, what of the past year, from September 1993 to November 1994. 68 Gurkha Field Squadron finished 1993 on a high, completing Operation RIVERS in Nepal, a large disaster relief operation in which they built three temporary bridges on the main Prithvi highway, linking Kathmandu to the rest of Nepal and India. Two members of the Regiment, Maj John White (OC 68 Sqn) and SSgt Krishnadhaj Sahi (Tp SSgt 67 Sqn), received the MBE for their work in this operation and four other members, Lt Iain Stewart (Tp Comd 67 Sqn), WO2 P C Mansfield (MPF 70 Sqn), WO2 Yakub Limbu (SSM 68 Sqn) and Spr Ankaljang Sherpa (70 Sqn Ftr) all received the Commander British Forces Hong Kong Commendation for their part.

On 18th December 1993, both 68 Gurkha Field Squadron and 70 Support Squadron officially disbanded, although their manpower did not start leaving until mid-1994.

67 Gurkha Field Squadron have been very busy, both reorganising to their new squadron establishment and under-

taking a very hectic training period. In November 1993, the Squadron took part in a Brigade level Field Training Exercise (FTX) in Hong Kong. Over the winter period, it began reorganising its equipment and vehicles to reflect its new establishment, backloading the surplus equipment, including the boats. Another Brigade FTX followed in early April 1994. A section of sappers has been attached to the TTB from April to October, to undertake a trial as a boat section. The results of this trial are not known at the time of writing this letter, although it is possible that the trial may be extended to May 95. B Troop deployed on Exercise JUNGLE TROOPER for July and August 1994, also to Brunei, to undertake Jungle skills and to build a longhouse for the Training Team Brunei (TTB). Meanwhile, the remainder of the squadron was on Anti-Smuggling Task Force duties, in Hong Kong, for the period 1 July to 1 October 1994. At the time of writing, the Squadron is in Nepal, on Exercise HOLDFAST, from mid-October to mid-December 1994. They are to take part in a Royal Nepalese Army Engineer (RNAE) 5-year project to build a road from Katari to Okhaldhunga, in the mid-East of Nepal. The Squadron's part in this year's exercise is the building of a 60m long causeway and helping to extend the pilot track. On its return, the

Squadron will take its place in the new order of battle in Hong Kong.

69 Gurkha Field Squadron is now firmly a part of 36 Engineer Regiment in Maidstone, Kent. As you read this newsletter, the squadron will be split between Invicta Park, in Maidstone, and Kitchener Barracks, its traditional home. This is rather sad, but inevitable until the barracks rebuild in Maidstone is complete. During the past year, the Squadron has deployed to Kenya, on a very successful artisan project in support of the National Parks and deployed a field troop to the Falkland Islands, in support of 9 Parachute Squadron. It has taken part in many exercises in the UK, both CPXs and FTXs. In 1995, it is due to go to Canada, on Exercise WATERLEAP, from mid-May to mid-August.

On the resettlement side, the Regiment will have lost over 450 Gurkhas between December 94 and April 95, the largest number in the Brigade of Gurkhas. As such, a re-employment cell was set up in RHQ, misusing a British Officer, a QGO and, sometimes, a SNCO. Their remit was to find jobs for as many men as possible. After several meetings with some of the major Civil Engineer firms in Hong Kong, each man who was leaving was given the opportunity of an attachment for 4 weeks. This gave the soldier the chance to see what civilian worklife was like and for the potential employers to see what the men were like. At the time of writing this letter, November 1994, there are

now 165 ex-QGE men working in Hong Kong, mainly on the new airport projects. This is nearly a squadron's worth of men. There are another 40 jobs in the pipeline, with the possibility of many more, once the Airport Terminal contracts have been signed. So the outlook is very favourable. This aspect has certainly helped to keep morale up at a difficult time in the drawdown.

On the sporting front, the Regiment won the major units Tickle Fitness competition, obtaining 71% bonus points, which is certainly a Hong Kong record, if not an Army record. This was the last event we entered as a major unit.

As a finale, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers were runner's up for the 1993 Wilkinson Sword of Peace. This was announced in September 1994.

So, what of the future. Up to 1997, 67 Gurkha Independent Field Squadron, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers should be stable and relatively static. 69 Gurkha Field Squadron The Queen's Gurkha Engineers' number and name will continue into the foreseeable future. The Regiment is still held in high esteem and the morale of the men is excellent. Jai QGE.

QGE STAFF LIST

SENIOR SERVING OFFICERS OF THE REGIMENT

Brig HH Kerr OBE, BSc(Eng), sq	Asst Comd 3(UK) Div
Brig JA Thorp CBE, MA, psc†	Comd 15(NE) Inf Bde
Col JDC Anderson BSc(Eng), psc(n)†	Col(W) ES 21, HQ QMG
Col JG Baker MBE, BSc(Eng), psc†	COS RMCS Shrivenham
Col DR Bill BSc(Eng), psc	Col ASD 1
Col CW Haskell BSc(Eng), psc†, aic	ACOS Sp Div HQ NORTH
Lt Col IM Caws BSc(Eng), CEng, MICE, psc	SO1 HQ ARRC
Lt Col PGCP Druitt sq	SO2 LO HNS HQ UKSC(G)
Lt Col JR Durance BSc(Eng), psc	CO 35 Engr Regt
Lt Col PJ Gilbert BSc, MBA, psc†	CO R Mon RE(M)
Lt Col AD Harking BSc(Eng), psc†	SO1 DS Staff College
Lt Col MAC Hughes BSc(Eng), psc†	CO 39 Engr Regt
Lt Col LSI Inge	QM 3 RSME Regiment
Lt Col GC Kershaw BSc(Eng),	CRE Airfields Strike Command
Dip EM, CEng, MICE, sq	
Lt Col I Kinnear	HQ Engineer Resources
Lt Col RJ Little BSc(Eng), sq	SO1 Plans & Policy HQ North
Lt Col AWHH MacLeod BSc(Eng), psc†	CO 38 Engr Regt
Lt Col MD Reynolds BSc(Eng),	SO1 HQ AFCENT
CEng, EurIng, MICE, FIPlantE, sq	
Lt Col JA Ris BSc(Eng), psc†	SO1(W) LSOR 5
Lt Col AS Tuggey BSc(Eng), osc(MAL), sq	SO1 AT2 HQDT
Lt Col PA Wall OBE, MA, psc†	CO 32 Engr Regt
Lt Col GJ Whitty MBE	CO 101 Engr RegtEOD)(V)

OFFICERS OF THE REGIMENT

Lt Col PH Blundell MBE, BSc(Eng), psc†	Commandant
Maj CG Clayton	2IC/Drawdown Officer
Maj M Stevenson	OC 67 Gurkha Indep Fd Sqn
Maj AM Mills BSc(Eng), psc†	OC 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn
Maj AC Sheppard psc	OC 67 Sqn(Des)
Maj TLV Treanor MA, psc	OC 69 Sqn(Des)
Maj DG Gall MIHIE, AMICE	Design Team Commander
Capt PE Coxen	Adjutant
Capt RJ Orr BEng	2IC 67 Sqn
Capt RJ Peet BSc	2IC 69 Sqn
Capt IH Adamson BEng	Sp Tp Comd 67 Sqn

Capt LR Thomas	QM 67 Sqn
Capt DJ Coles	QM 69 Sqn
Lt R Wardlaw BEng	Tp Comd 67 Sqn
Lt RS Morton BSc	Tp Comd 67 Sqn
Lt JER Fernandes	Tp Comd 67 Sqn
Lt AC Clee BSc	Tp Comd 67 Sqn
Lt SW Cook BEng	Tp Comd 69 Sqn
Lt DF Pierce BSc, DipM	Tp Comd 69 Sqn
Lt SJ Thomas BEng	Tp Comd 69 Sqn

ATTACHED OFFICERS

Maj H Goshai RAMC	RMO
Maj MD Tetlow AGC(SPS)	Paymaster
Capt SA Licence AGC(ETS)	Resettlement Officer

GURKHA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Maj(GCO) Milanchandra Gurung RGR	OC Gallipoli Enclave
Capt(GCO) Mahendraprasad Gurung	Ops Offr 69 Sqn

QUEEN'S GURKHA OFFICERS

Maj(QGO) Surjabahadur Thapa MVO	Gurkha Major
Maj(QGO) Haribahadur Thapa	GM Pokhara
Capt(QGO) Judbahadur Gurung	Manning Officer
Capt(QGO) Nainabahadur Tamang	GCapt 67 Sqn
Capt(QGO) Budhikumar Gurung	GCapt 69 Sqn
Capt(QGO) Manbahadur Gurung	Families' Officer
Capt(QGO) Mohankumar Gurung	Troop QGO 69 Sqn
Capt(QGO) Binod Lama	Bde Resettlement Officer
Capt(QGO) Lalitprasad Limbu	Bde Catering Officer
Capt(QGO) Bhaktabahadur Rai	Asst Resettlement Officer
Capt(QGO) Giriraj Thapa	Troop QGO 67 Sqn
Capt(QGO) Bibakumar Rai	Troop QGO 67 Sqn
Lt(QGO) Hombahadur Limbu	Mil Wks Force Chilwell
Lt(QGO) Indraprasad Chhetri	Head Clerk BGTC Kathmandu
Lt(QGO) Ganesh Gurung	MTO 69 Sqn
Lt(QGO) Tshering Lama	Troop QGO 67 Sqn
Lt(QGO) Ravindra Sahi	BGMRO
Lt(QGO) Hombahadur Rana	Troop QGO 67 Sqn
Lt(QGO) Damar Ghale	Trg Offr 3 RSME Regt
Lt(QGO) Gangabahadur Gurung	Head Clerk
Lt(QGO) Tirthaman Gurung	Gurkha Quartermaster

67 SQUADRON NEWSLETTER

Capt R. J. ORR RE

The beginning of 1994 found 67 Gurkha Field Squadron as the only operational Sapper Squadron in Hong Kong. 68 Gurkha Field Squadron and 70 Support Squadron had recently been disbanded, and all members of the Squadron knew that the next 12 months would be extremely challenging and would involve a lot of hard work. We were not to be disappointed.

January saw the Squadron involved in support to the Regimental Cadre, support to 1 BW, who were conducting inter platoon training and support to the B1 Combat Engineer Course.

Meanwhile, the OC departed with Commandant QGE to conduct the initial recce for Ex HOLDFAST 94, which was due to be staged Oct-Dec 94 in Nepal. An invitation had been extended by the Royal Nepalese Army, following the success of OP RIVERS last year, for a Squadron to deploy to Nepal to assist on a road construction project. The recce party returned enthused by the whole idea and with the belief that it was both a viable and worthwhile project. The detailed recce was set for March.

February was quiet (calm before the storm?) punctuated with ATD sweep ups, ranges and some Young Officer Training (why was it Lt Judge said he hadn't read "Bravo Two Zero"?). The end of February saw the first of 3 week-

ends in which soldiers from the Squadron were deployed in support of a Raleigh International Selection Weekend. "B" Tp led the way this time, and they were able to prove beyond doubt that they knew how to thoroughly exhaust and test would-be venturers. Still, about one third of the candidates were selected.

March gave the new second in command, Capt R J Orr (vice Capt S Harris RE) a chance to be OC for a couple of weeks while the real OC deployed to Katari, E Nepal with his recce team to conduct the detailed recce for Ex HOLDFAST 94. Maj M Stevenson RE also found time to sort out some possible Adventurous Training by taking part in a white water rafting expedition. After 5 days, the OC was convinced that this was just what the lads would want to do in Nepal. The look, and silence, of the Gurkha Captain, on the OC'S return to Hong Kong, suggested that this enthusiasm may have been a little one-sided.

A week later, whilst the OC participated in the South China Sea Regatta, the Squadron, under the 2IC participated in a 48 Gurkha Inf Bde and LF FTX which required sapper support. Suffice to say that, after a lot of sweat preparing positions on Castle Peak Ranges, suitable explosions of bangalore torpedos, BATSIMS and thunderflashes

together with resolute defence by the OPFOR, the exercise was declared a success.

It was at about this time that the program for the next 6 months was completely rewritten. As a result of the amalgamation of the various Gurkha Rifle battalions, and the withdrawal to the UK of 1 BW, a 3 month gap had been identified in the military's support to the RHKP's Anti Smuggling Task Force (ASTF). This support involved the establishment of rural OPs in order to observe areas where smuggling was

GLE TROOPER 2/94 for 2 months, and the Squadron had to be ready to deploy in the wake of typhoons. To cap it all, a section of coxswains had deployed to Brunei to conduct trials with Rigid Raider boats on the rivers of Brunei.

The tempo of training for Ex JUNGLE TROOPER and ASTF rapidly increased until, on 2 Jul 94, the first OP teams deployed on the ground, and on 3 Jul 94, the Advance Party for Ex JUNGLE TROOPER deployed to Brunei.

The next 3 months saw a regular pattern develop with the ASTF roster,



The OC, Major Stevenson, hands over the finished project to the CO of the RNA BN, Lt Col Deepak Gurung.

suspected. Reports of such activity would be passed to ASTF HQ, who would move police assets to make arrests. New skills would be required, and a whole new training program drafted. To complicate matters further, the Squadron would be on ASTF duty whilst B Tp were deployed on Ex JUN-

as each of the 3 groups of four teams rotated on a 3 day basis - one group on the ground, the second group on stand by/preparing to deploy, and the 3rd group stood down. The Ops Room was manned on a 24 hour basis by the appropriate command elements and any relevant information passed to ASTF

HQ. Unfortunately there proved to be little relevant information to pass as smuggling activity in our sectors was very low. Motivation proved to be a big test for commanders at all levels, in particular the JNCO's with their teams on the sides of wind and rain swept hills at 2 a.m. on a cold September morning! Thus the continued high praise of the ASTF and the Military Liaison Officer and his assistant (both veterans of Close Observation Platoons in NI), who declared the Squadron was the best sub unit (including infantry) that they had worked with in Hong Kong, was well appreciated. Not surprisingly, though, no-one volunteered to transfer to the infantry!

Whilst the bulk of the Squadron was busy on ASTF duties, B Tp were enjoying a 2 months' tour in Brunei. They spent the first few weeks learning jungle survival and patrol skills following a program which included abseiling, live firing and ambushes. This period culminated in a 1 week FTX when the Troop, under the command of 2Lt Ward, conducted a pursuit operation for a troublesome guerilla leader and his band. After an insertion by helicopter, and march, the Troop finally transferred to Rigid Raiders, crewed by members of the Squadron conducting the Rigid Raiders Trials. The guerilla band was chased up river and finally run down in an abandoned Iban village. After a successful platoon attack, the notorious guerilla leader (also known as Capt(QGO) Bibakumar Rai) was captured. A successful campaign had been

concluded. The Troop then moved onto a couple of construction tasks. One involved the building of a new Iban hut for use as a target by TTB, and the other slope stabilization in order to prevent the grandstand from slipping into the live fire training area. After some well earned Adventure Training and R&R, the Troop returned in time to move from Perowne Barracks to Borneo Lines.

In September, the Squadron began to move out of Perowne Barracks and into Borneo Lines, occupying 70 Squadron's old patch. A lot of planning and preparation had been conducted prior to the move, which was to be conducted over a one week period. All went well and by 9 Sep the Squadron was working out of Sek Kong. By the time the Squadron started to depart for Ex HOLDFAST, (18 Oct), we were well established, although the Rear Party still had a lot to do.

Ex HOLDFAST, the construction of a bed level causeway, retaining wall and assorted bank protection work is described separately. Suffice to say it was a great success and proved to be an excellent start for the Squadron (which had been officially acknowledged as "67 Gurkha Indep Fd Sqn QGE on 31 Oct 94). It also proved to be a tremendous way to round off an incredibly busy, and successful, year for all concerned.

1994 has been a mixed year for sports, with the loss of the Nepal Cup in the final to TDBG after a successful season. The Squadron produced a commendable effort in the BFHK Athletics Championships, shot well in the



SPR Mulibir Rai on adventure training in Nepal.

HKSAAM, and beat the Kali Prasad Bn RNA at football (4-0) whilst in Nepal. Adventure Training has seen most of the Squadron trying White Water Rafting in Nepal, whilst others ventured up Mount Kinabalo in Sarawak, and dared to peer over the edge to Low's Gully 1500m below. Festivals have been celebrated with appropriate gusto and verve, and there have been some memorable (if somewhat hazy) Messings, and Mess functions. The British Officers have moved into a combined Army/RAF station Mess in Borneo Lines and it was obvious from the first joint function that those RAF chaps need educating about parties.

1994 has also seen a number of changes of personnel across the Squadron. Capt S Harris RE left as 2IC to take up post (and get married) as 2IC 69. Capt R J Orr RE replaced him in Feb 94. Capt (QGO) Haribahadur Thapa was

replaced as GCapt by Capt (QGO) Nainabahadur Tamang in Jan 94, and was himself replaced by Capt (QGO) Mohankumar Gurung. Hari Saheb is now GM BGP and Naina Saheb has proceeded on pension.

The Squadron also said goodbye to Lt E W Judge RE (35 Engr Regt and Bosnia) and Lt R Wardlaw RE (39 Engr Regt and the FI). In their place are Lt J E W Fernandes RE and Lt A Clee RE. 2 Lt H Ward RE (SSLC) departed for Cambridge University at the end of Aug 94 and 2Lt T White RE (SSLC) arrived during Ex HOLDFAST. In the beginning of 95, Maj M Stevenson RE hands over as OC to Maj A C Sheppard RE.

1994 has been an incredibly hectic, active and turbulent year, with a lot of changes, both in terms of people, locations and command status. We finish the year in excellent shape, ready to meet the challenges of 1995.

67 SQUADRON - EX HOLDFAST

Lt R. S. MORTON RE

As I prepared to depart on Ex HOLDFAST my ideas of exactly what was in store were sketchy to say the least. Photos and draughtsmans' drawings conjured up many images of what would be the Sqn's home for the next 8 weeks. As OIC for one of the flights I was determined to start the exercise off on the right foot, however Lt(QGO) Hombahadur Rana (A Tp (QGO) had other plans. He managed to lure the GCapt (Capt (QGO) Mohankumar Gurung) away from the departure gate at Kai Tak and with less than 15 minutes until take off neither were aboard.

Despite leaving Kathmandu a full 24 hrs after the advance party, we reached Katari only 3 hrs after they arrived. Contrary to popular belief they had not stopped at every hostelry along the way, but had in fact discovered that the Tata truck drivers were on a "go slow". SSgt Chitra had obviously suffered plant withdrawal symptoms after 10 hrs in a truck and had "volunteered" to stay with the QM's broken down Land Rover. The number 57 is normally associated with the number of Heinz varieties, but we in the Sqn all know that really its the time taken in hours for a dodgy Land Rover to travel from Kathmandu to Katari.

A Tp was tasked with building what was to be known as "Tin Talk Camp" - so called because it was built on 3 lev-

els of a paddy field. SSgt Kesh was impressed with the name since it showed:

"Co-operation and liaison between QGE, BGN and RNA: 3 levels of military involvement".

However, it was all much simpler than that - the name had been dreamed up by a Tp Comd after all!

Priorities were set and erecting the dining tent was first on the list. It was closely followed by the Sqn bar since the OC had given "cold beer by my arrival" as a specified task in his deployment orders. By nightfall we had food (OK so it was compo, but it was food all the same), cold beer and running water. By the time the OC arrived next day (with Capt Adamson who had stayed in Kathmandu to "sort things out") there was drinking water, accommodation and electricity throughout the camp.

C Tp soon arrived and helped complete the camp construction the next day. All that remained was an inspection, something which the site owner was only too happy to oblige with. Everything passed his initial inspection except that Capt Adamson had forgotten to bring his boots. The "RSM" (as the site owner came to be known) was thereafter seen to conduct camp inspections at least daily to check that we weren't letting our initial high standards slip.

With the camp set up it was time for Capt(QGO) Tshering Lama (Project Officer) to put on his hard hat, erect his umbrella/parasol on site and begin what we were all here for: the construction of a 65m long, 2 lane bed level causeway and a retaining wall. Plant Tp began moving boulders from the site and soon the field troop were able to begin work. The surveyors set out the line with LCpl Gunbahadur Gurung

Rupsing set about constructing the road aprons. In C Tp LCpl Deepak began the never-ending task of water redirection off the site whilst Cpls Dobahadur and Tikadhan began the construction of the curtain walls.

The causeway construction was technically relatively simple and there was plenty of advice on hand from duty trek bound Tp Comds (Lt Clee and Capt Adamson). Lt Fenandez was ever



The construction site - Day 7.

being the first to suffer a bout of “Tin Talk Tummy” (TTT). As onlookers gathered the pace of work increased and the QM (Capt L R Thomas RE) was surely tempted to charge a fee for all spectators. “Remember it’s for the good and welfare of the soldiers”.

From A Tp, LCpl Ashok and his section began building the “mother of all Retaining Walls”, Cpl Ramesh became the culvert upgrading sect comd and Cpl

present during the first few days acting as the unit press correspondent until it was discovered that his camera contained no film. Meanwhile, the QM was making a name for himself in Katari as a bargain hunter knocking shekels (sorry - I mean rupees) off anything and everything up for sale. But remember “it’s all for the good and welfare of the soldiers”.



'C' Troop constructing the downstream gabion basket wall.

As adventure training began the site started to empty and jobs were reshuffled - at times not dissimilar to an episode of "Yes Minister". With Tshering Saheb going on a recce to the Sun Kosi River for a possible future HOLDFAST project, his slot was up for grabs. With a 1st class Civil Engineering Graduate from Cambridge in the form of Lt Fernandez I was sure that I was safe. But no, he was given the nod to do his 2 to 1 AT+P (Adventure Training + Photography) Cse - which frankly he needed to do. That left yours truly to remember all that I could from "Ex GOLDEN HORSESHOE" whilst on the YOs course.

Obviously 3 years studying Geography at University would be a great help especially those courses on fluvial geomorphology(!), soil erosion and transport geography. Luckily I had the experience of Lt Hom, SSgts Chitra, Chitra and Kesh to keep me on the straight and narrow (excuse the pun).

With Tshering Saheb's return, 75% of the road was complete and thankfully only a little remedial action was required. But as the torrential downpour threw 4 cm of rain onto the site in an hour and the stream transformed into a raging torrent, I was left to wonder what damage had been done. C Tp's hard work had been washed away overnight, but thankfully the damage was repairable - only Bay 13 was beyond repair. The concrete was ripped out and the bay prepared for pouring the following day. The next evening we all had a "deja vu" as another 4 cm fell in the same timespan just as Tshering Saheb left for Pokara. The boys managed to save the day and were rewarded with good weather for the pour of the 1st bay, for the rest of the project, and with a very relieved Asst Project Officer. Tshering Saheb returned again a week later and with a few minor alterations the project was completed 9 days ahead of schedule.

But it was not all work and no play. Many of the boys managed to get home for Tihar whilst the officers drank ruksi and played golf (not simultaneously). The Sqn were beaten

by the RNA volleyball team despite Spr Jangabahadur Sinjali's valiant and athletic attempts to save the day. Revenge was sweet when we beat the RNA 4-0 at football with Lt Hom coming out of retirement to partner Sgt Watts (Pay NCO) and ensure a skillful display. Spr Bilbahadur and Cpl Dobahadur did their best to demolish Katari Town F.C's wooden goals and Spr Bhadrasingh kept the Kaliparsad Bn CO out of harms way.

We had visits from Comdt QGE, Colonel of the Regt and CBF - all with plenty to report. The Comdt saw us in the early stages and significantly boosted morale. Maj Gen Peck was introduced to volleyball and picked it up very quickly although SSM (WO2 Yakub Limbu) confused everyone by wearing his shorts back to front. The CBF was treated to a nautch by local villagers although we think that the 2IC

(Capt R J Orr RE) enjoyed it more than anybody else.

But all good things come to an end (yes - another cliché) and it was time to return to Hong Kong via Kathmandu and to the real world once again. Ex HOLDFAST was good training, good fun and certainly enabled the Sqn to get away and do a meaningful task which will definitely be of use to East Nepal. However, any report on the exercise could not be complete without those immortal words which could be heard every Saturday and Sunday night (amongst others) on the transport returning from Katari

SIM SIMEE, PANI MA....

....Oh will I ever forget!



SPR Bhadrasing Limbu after the squadron football team's victory over the Royal Nepalese Army's team.

69 SQUADRON NEWSLETTER

OC Maj A. M. MILLS RE

2IC Capt R. J. PEET RE

GCapt Capt (QGO) BUDHIKUMAR GURUNG

SSM WO2 (SSM) JAGATPRASAD GURUNG

The year began as John Shannahan flew back from Kenya, where he had just deployed the Squadron on Exercise OAKAPPLE, as Andrew Mills flew back from the Falklands, where he had just completed a roulement tour as OC 20 Squadron. After an hour's handover, John went on to Camberley and Andrew flew straight out to Kenya as the new OC.

The exercise, based in the Aberdare Highlands, included the construction of a Warden's House, Rangers' Accommodation, 3 different types of bridges and 10 kilometres of forest boundary electric fencing. It did not take long for the jungle drums to spread the news for, within weeks, Nick Tomlinson walked out of the bush, having come down from Somalia where he had been working for the UN and Harry and Alison Vialou Clark drove across from Gil Gil where Harry has been working as the Bursar of Pembroke House School. They enjoyed seeing the projects and made the most of the chance to catch up on Regimental news. Later, we were able to help Harry with the design of new classrooms for a local school which are being built, under Harry's sponsorship, by a troop from 38 Engineer Regiment.

Our own projects went well and, despite the vagaries of the Kenyan resources system, the tasks were finished on time and to the usual high standards of Gurkha workmanship. The experience will have helped 2 of the officers, Andy Venmore and Piers Vickers, who have since left the Army and are now studying for higher degrees in engineering for the developing world. Despite the presence of armed rangers, the wild life showed a great deal of interest in the troop camps, particularly on goat delivery days and, once, the leopard did manage to devour one of Hom Saheb's flock.

In April we returned, greeting Capt (GCO) Mahendraprasad Gurung and his Troop who had just come back from a 4 month tour in the Falklands with 9 Parachute Squadron, in time to take stock before launching ourselves into the busy Regimental schedule, with a loading trial, a board of officers, 2 combat engineer exercises and a patrol exercise in Sennybridge. This proved its worth for, later in the year, Stewart Cook and his team managed to win a silver medal in the Cambrian Patrol Competition and they are now training hard for the Divisional Patrol Exercise.

In July, 2 small troops under Simon Thomas and WO2 Dalbahadur Limbu deployed to Catterick for 5 months to help 20 Squadron build a permanent Battalion Defensive Position and other training facilities there. They did a good job and proved once again that we can work successfully alongside British Troops and produce really high quality workmanship.

On the manning side it has been a particularly difficult year as we have sent some 90 men on pension and redundancy in the last 6 months and even though many of them have found second careers in Nepal, Hong Kong and Brunei and younger soldiers are joining us from Damar Saheb's Training Troop, this has inevitably taken its toll. However, the soldiers have stoically kept working right up to their departures and the Squadron's performance has largely been unaffected.

We have also moved half of the Squadron out of Kitchener Barracks in to Invicta Park in Maidstone, the remaining 2 field troops will follow when the Maidstone rebuild is complete at the end of 1995. That too could have been difficult; but 36 Engineer Regiment, under Lt Col Robbie Burns, has been particularly helpful and accommodating and is obviously very pleased to have us join them. We have built a temple, have our own lines and have even managed to retain a Squadron Club, yes - with our own fruit machines! The Officers' Mess has been transformed by the Mess Property from Perowne and, with the exception of Maj Gen Bowring's tiger skin which alarms some of the more conscience-stricken wives, is very greatly admired. Do come and see it.



Early days of ski training for the AMF (L) Troop.

Andrew Mills, who is to become the next ERLO, is now handing the Squadron over to Tim Treanor who will have an exciting tour. The high points of next year will be a Squadron construction exercise in Alberta and taking over of the AMF(L) field troop role, for which we have already had men training in Norway.

So, the Squadron is in good heart and, following a year of enormous change, is now properly manned and established to take its place as a key field squadron within a British Regiment. Thank you to all of you who have helped to make this possible; the stage is now set and we are looking forward to playing a major role. Jai 69 Squadron!

RETURN TO MWEIGA

Maj PETER KERSHAW

As Quartermaster of 69 Gurkha Engineer Squadron Maj Peter Kershaw is as experienced an African hand as any and has seen many changes since British soldiers left in the early 1960s after the ferocity of the Mau Mau rebellion.

He was delighted to experience the same welcome he remembered as a young man in 1967 from Eric and Vena Johansen, managers of the Mweiga estates. They used to run a "Highland Leave Scheme" for soldiers from Aden.

British engineers have carried out projects in Kenya for many years, and have always used the Johansen's land and water at Mweiga as their base. Maj Kershaw used their pool to give swimming lessons to the Gurkhas.

The work of the British Sappers is paid for with money donated to the Rhino Ark, a worldwide charity which supports Kenya Wildlife Services' Aberdare National Park.

Squadron headquarters is some 100 miles north of Nairobi and only a mile from Treetops, where the Queen was told of her father's death. It is at an altitude of 8,000 ft, with the troop sites several thousand feet higher in the bamboo forests of the Aberdare mountains.

The Aberdare Country Club, of which Vena Johansen is a manageress, is a popular venue offering excellent hospitality. During their 4 days of local leave and 4 days adventurous training, Sappers can enjoy activities including camel treks, walks up Mount Kenya and scuba diving off the East African coast.

The jobs Maj Kershaw carried out 27 years ago were basically the same although the end result was not as sophisticated because not much concrete was used. "We used nearly all natural resources, and timber which we chopped down ourselves," he said.

CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

Elephants have right of way in Kenya's National Parks, where 69 Gurkha Field Squadron carried out a variety of construction tasks for the Kenya Wildlife Services. Confronted by one of the huge beasts, Cpl Sukraj Limbu was making a tactical withdrawal when the elephant charged him. Cpl Sukraj escaped and reported the incident to a warden. He was told never to turn away or reverse because animals could take this as a sign of weakness. Thereafter, instead of elephants charging him, Cpl Sukraj charged the elephants - slowly and carefully.



The Road Project.

“They are not as friendly as in Nepal. We charge them slowly because they are big and need time to get out of the way”, he explained. Sgt Gambahadur Thapa took the easy way out. He sent drivers such as Cpl Kharkabahadur Limbu along a road where he had had a close encounter with an elephant on a bend. As Sgt Gambahadur squeezed past in his Land Rover, it turned and trumpeted its displeasure, nearly depositing the terrified Gurkha in the woods.

Lt Simon Thomas, ALPHA Troop commander, imagined he was strolling through an English wood until a bush roared at him. He had not seen the lion just 50 feet away and he was suddenly glad he had an armed ranger with him.

The Sappers took the sensible precaution of having armed wardens with them as they worked, and avoided walking or driving at night if possible. It was nevertheless slightly unnerving to be taking a shower at ALPHA Troop's “bamboo palace” and hear elephants snapping off the bamboo and munching it.

A colony of birds in a nearby tree brought memories of home for the Sappers - there was so much screeching and cackling going on there that it was affectionately known as the “wives' club”.

REGTL COL VISITS 69 SQUADRON

UNIT CORRESPONDENT

Maj Gen R. L. Peck CB, Regtl Col The Queen's Gurkha Engineers visited 69 Gurkha Field Squadron QGE on 22 July 1994.

The main purpose of his visit was to present various awards to members of the Squadron.

For this occasion the Squadron was on parade and once the OC Maj A M Mills RE had reported to the General, the General made the following presentations:



The Regtl Col presents
LCpl Agnikumar Thapa with his
Parachute Wings

Op Rivers Medals

Capt (QGO) Budhikumar Gurung	21163664	Sgt Niraj Thapa
Spr Yamparsad Tamang	21164058	LCpl Keshbahadur Thapa
Spr Krishnakumar Rai	21164352	Sgt Bhimbahadur Gurung
Cpl Bhaktabahadur Basnet	21165312	Spr Dhanjit Limbu
Spr Angkaljang Sherpa	21165595	LCpl Giriraj Limbu
LCpl Suryabahadur Thapa	21167514	
	21168185	

The "Wings" for successful completion of Pegasus Company

Spr Dirgha Khatri Chhetri	21168280
LCpl Agnikumar Thapa	21168490

Warrant Officer Parchment

WO2 Dalbahadur Limbu	21161754
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Commander British Forces Hong Kong Commendation

Spr Angkaljang Sherpa	21165996
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After these presentations, the Gurkha Major, Maj (QGO) Surjabahadur Thapa MVO who was also visiting the Squadron at the time made a speech and then presented a magnificent silver centre piece of the Queen's Gurkha Officers to the General who accepted it on behalf of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron.

The Gurkha Major explained that the silver was a presentation from the Queen's Gurkha Officers' Mess in memory of all the QGOs of the Regiment past and present.

The General then made a speech congratulating the Squadron on a fine parade and the recipients on their awards. He also thanked the Gurkha Major for the silver piece of the QGOs and said that he would ensure that it finds its rightful place on all regimen-

tal occasions to remind everyone of the outstanding service that the QGOs have given to the Regiment.

After the parade the OC and the Acting 2IC, Capt (QGO) Budhikumar Gurung, briefed the General on the Squadron. This was followed by drinks in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess where he had the opportunity to speak to all SNCOs of the Squadron. He then had lunch with the Officers in the QGOs' Mess before departing.

69 SQUADRON - EX LAMO KADAM

Cpl ROJENDRA GURUNG

In early October, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn deployed to Wales on Exercise LAMO KADAM (long stride) for a bit of patrolling, so we thought. We were dropped off by coach at the Sennybridge Training Area to be whisked off to carry out some zeroing before being shown a large hangar to spend the night in. Orders followed that evening and early next morning we were taken by Bedfords to our start points.

Burdened with much weight our first task was to get to a check point which was on top of none other than the much publicised Pen-y-Fen. We thought it would not be as bad as going up the mountains back home in Nepal but after a while it did begin to feel like it and the nostalgia was not too welcome. We trudged on and finally made it to

the top. A quick test in the Law of Armed Conflict confronted us before we were given the direction to our next check point. Going downhill was not as bad as going up and we managed to get to the harbour area for the night but not before we had unravelled the names of foreign mines and AFVs.

After a good night's rest it was a speed march for about 15km through fairly round ground, to a signals stand. After having tuned into Radio Nepal on the PRC 320 we were deemed to be good enough to proceed on to the next stand. A sick looking LCpl Surja lay on the ground obviously requiring some form of bandaging. A quick mummification saw to his quick recovery before we were allowed to rest for the night.



Preliminary training in Scotland.

Things were hotting up now as we neared the objective. An uphill slog brought us to a NBC stand before we were allowed to proceed to our final pick up point from where we were driven to a harbour area but it was not to be a restful night. Instead we were to

conduct a close target recce of an enemy position. Finally in the early dark hours of the morning we had some rest only to be given orders for a speed march to launch a final attack on an approaching enemy force 7 miles away!

We found that on the way we had to



A well earned break.

cross an obstacle course but that did not stop us and once we got to the ranges we unleashed our weapons in fury blowing the enemy to smithereens. Once all the teams had finished and ENDEX was declared we all had a quick wash, an even quicker meal, and listened to the winners being announced. We then

boarded the coaches to head back for Maidstone to celebrate Dashain. On the coaches we felt definitely exhausted but as well as seeing a bit of Wales we all thought it had been a tough but enjoyable exercise and certainly “LAMO KADAM”.

THE FELDOM PROJECT

Lt S. J. THOMAS RE

Tired and short tempered, clothed in exercise garb, the spot inducing war-paint still smeared across my features I stumbled blindly into the ‘O’ Gp. I muttered a humble apology for the state of my appearance and settled into a one of the soft chairs of the OC’s office, hoping to sleep through the proceedings

without snoring too loudly. Yet unfortunately it was destined not to be.

“And G Tp, You will deploy to Catterick to support 20 Sqn on the Feldom Project”; the words echoed around my mind and brought my consciousness scurrying back from the brink of the peaceful abyss.



Comd Engrs UKLF, Brig I. McGill, checks a trench for size.



WO11 Dalbahadur Limbu and G Troop.

One week and another exercise later I found myself OPCON 20 Fd Sqn speeding northward on the endless A1 heading for Catterick 'the Jewel of the north' and my home for the coming 5 months. On arriving a short briefing by the C of W SSgt Crew and a tour of the sites revealed the extend of my task. G Tp were to construct, using precast concrete section, a permanent defensive position of 60 trenches and 5 (18,000 ltr) latrines. Other associated tasks included a 2m high protective earth bund; gravel tracks totalling 1000m and 5 ISO container concrete pad foundations for stores.

A few days later the rapidly revamped and trade orientated G Tp arrived in the blazing sunshine of a North Yorkshire summer's day. Work began in earnest on Tuesday 5th July '94, although problems with delivery of stores and equipment resulted in the project

work not picking up its full momentum until the start of the second week. After that, work progressed at steady pace, though the varied geology of the site did its best to hinder progress particularly with regard to the excavations of the 5 Latrines, which had to be dug to a depth of 5m.

By the time Summer Block Leave came along good progress had been made, thanks mainly to the unceasing efforts of Sgt Uttamsing Gurung, my Tp SNCO. The return to work after the block leave brought with it a new problem in the form of heavy rain, not unusual for Catterick you might think but certainly undesirable. The site became rather boggy and only the constant nagging about sticking to the tracks from Cpl MacFarlane our attached Plant Cpl saved the site from further damage.

As September rolled into October and Autumn gripped the site, the

planties carefully closed the doors of their machines and turned up their cab heaters while the men of G Tp decked out in waterproofs and every stitch of clothing they could find began to look more like 'Michelin Man' than soldiers.

Dashain brought a welcome break for G Tp with a week back at barracks in Maidstone to celebrate the festival. While we celebrated, the regimental cogs were slowly grinding around, so that when it came time to once again board the coach for the return to the pleasures of the north we found I Tp

along for the pumps as they say. Also I found myself tasked to take over Support Troop from Lt 'Big D' Pierce who apparently had managed to get himself on an extended holiday to Norway. He gave some pathetic excuses about an AMF(L) Tp but we know the truth.

So a week of confusion later, WO2 Dalbahadur Limbu was, after a thorough, yet swift hand over, crowned as OC G Tp and I exited stage right heading for Maidstone and trying to remember where I had hidden all those YO course precis on plant.

COLD IN KENYA!

Lt S. J. THOMAS RE OC BRAVO Troop

0630 hours and the temperature is climbing slowly from below zero degrees centigrade, a chill mist rising above the bamboo forest. Kenya? You may not think so. But in the high mountains of the Aberdares (approximately 10,000 feet) this is the reality faced every morning by the members of BRAVO Troop 69 Gurkha Field Squadron QGE.

As the sun climbs slowly into the sky and the temperature rises in response, within the confines of their troop camp (inside the Aberdare National Park) the Gurkhas of BRAVO Troop are climbing aboard the transport which will carry them to the 3 Troop task sites.

On the site of the ranger accommodation block, now half constructed, the barked commands, issued under the glare of the Kenyan sun, are from the lips of the Tp SSgt Jagatprasad Gurung. Slowly but surely under his direction a single storey block house and an ablution building are growing from the bare earth. A great improvement on the tin shack in which the rangers presently reside.

Higher and deeper into the National Park, some 15km up the dust choked track from the Wandare Gate in the shadow of Oldonya Lesatima (400m), the highest mountain in the Park, the icy water of the Kihoni River crosses the track. Here labouring hard are 2

Section BRAVO Troop, watched over by Sgt Suresh Gurung. Where once a blocked and crumbling culvert carried the icy flow under the track, now stands a 5m wide excavation in which the foundations for a new timber bridge are rising up, while an armed Park ranger keeps watch for any sign of the lions that prowl the bush of the Aberdare Park. 1km before the bridge site where a tributary of the Kihoni River flows across the track a half section of attached Pioneers from 187 (TANCREED) Squadron are struggling in the heat replacing

the existing culvert and extending it.

All the tasks are progressing well, but the work is hard, leaving the boys little time to appreciate the scenery around them and watch for the buffalo and elephant which are common in the Park. Moving back and forward between the sites provides the best opportunity for observing the Park's wildlife and the skills and nerve of the drivers has been called into question more than once by a hatti (Nepali for elephant) stubbornly refusing to give up the section of track it has occupied.



Construction of NCO accomodation.

REGIMENTAL HISTORY

ORIGINS & INCEPTION 1838 - 1951

Editor's Note

I am particularly grateful to Brig Hank Bowen for his precise of Gen Lance Perowne's excellent book, Gurkha Sapper. This precis, which will be published in full over the next few editions of the magazine, will form part of the second volume of our Regimental history which Brig Hank is currently working on and which I'm sure you will enjoy when it is published.

Nepal is an independent mountain Kingdom stretching for five hundred miles along the northern frontier of India. To the North its boundary with Tibet (China) lies buried in the snows of the Grand Himalaya, and a hundred miles to the South the boundary with India marches along the foothills and plain of the Terai, to the East lies Sikkim, and further over Bhutan, while to the West are the Indian hill states of Gharwal and Kumaon. In between are the "Hills", wherein dwell the martial clans from which the Gurkha comes. The central valley of Khatmandhu, - the true Nepal - forms an ethnic barrier between the Western tribes, predominantly the Magars and Gurungs, and the Eastern tribes of the Rai and Limbu. The reader should turn elsewhere to explore the geography and peoples of Nepal, their history, their constitution and their religions. Suffice it to say the ethnology and entomology of Nepal is complex. An ancient history of invasion and internal conflict has generated a race in varying proportions Indo-Mongol in blood; a religion compounded of Hindu

orthodoxy mixed with Buddhism (the ruling class, and the priests are Brahmin); and a national language derived from Sanskrit through Hindi, originally known as khas-kura (the proper language) but now accepted as the national language, Nepali, but within the Army referred to as Gurkhali; while most clans have their own language.

Other parts of the area, now part of India, were originally under the dominion of Nepal but were lost to the Honourable East India company at the conclusion of the Nepal War of 1814-1816. The Treaty of Segouli, 1815, laid the seeds of the Gurkha tradition of service with, first the Indian and then, the British Army. Out of the dusty clauses of that treaty, and its declaration of "perpetual friendship" sprang the ten rifle regiments of the Gurkha Brigade, whose soldiers served throughout India, and the surrounding countries of Burma and Afghanistan, and during the two great wars of this century even further afield. No less than 200,000 Gurkhas served during the Great War of 1914-1918, and forty five battalions took part in the

1939-1945 war. This was the Gurkha connection of which the Nepalese prime minister, Maharaja Padma Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, spoke, in 1947, at the signing of the Tripartite Agreement between India, Nepal and Great Britain.

India became an independent nation and country on 17 August 1947. The Tripartite Agreement, between India, Nepal and Great Britain, was announced on 1st December 1947. In that agreement Nepal agreed to the continuing recruitment of Gurkha hillmen, in Nepal, up to a total of twenty battalions, divided between the United Kingdom and India, with a maximum strength of 25,000 men. The British contingent was fixed at four regiments, each of two battalions, with a manpower ceiling of 10,400 all ranks. This agreement led to the establishment of the Brigade of Gurkhas, in the British Army, and in the years that followed to the formation of the Gurkha Engineers.

An inconspicuous paragraph, half buried in the verbiage of the several documents annexed to the Agreement read, "...it should be pointed out to all Gurkha personnel that there will be chances of promotion not only in the Infantry (Rifle) Units but also in other roles, through future expansion, to include Gurkha Units of Artillery, Engineers, Signals, S&T, Ordnance, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and Medical...".

The Tripartite Agreement was never ratified, formally, by the Governments concerned and is not, therefore, a Treaty.

However, the long term planning of the British post war army was based on the presumption that the Government of Nepal would be prepared to allow sufficient men to be recruited to establish the equivalent of an Infantry Division in South East Asia. India agreed in principle to the United Kingdom recruiting, in Nepal, up to "a possible strength of a division, say 25,000 men", subject to the proviso that this should not interfere with recruitment into Gurkha units of the Indian Army. Efforts to obtain formal Nepalese agreement to higher British ceilings were unsuccessful. Nevertheless the strength of the British Gurkha contingent was allowed to rise, by tacit consent, to a peak of 14,875 in November 1966, of which the Engineers accounted for approximately one tenth of the total. In 1948, however, the ceiling was for 10,600 men. Four regiments, the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles, each of two battalions, were selected to transfer to the British Army.

The conventional Indian Army organisation for a Division was of three brigades, each of one British and two Indian/ Gurkha battalions, which, in the plan for the field army, would account for six of the battalions to be transferred. The remaining regiment, of two battalions was to be converted into Artillery. The plan for the supporting Arms, other than Artillery, was for them to be provided by the respective Corps of the British Army, some of whom would raise new Gurkha units by recruiting and training volunteers from three of the Rifle Regiments, (ie excluding the 7th,

who were to become Artillery) and by direct recruitment, and reenlistment, from the hills.

The Malayan Emergency started in June 1948, and continued until December 1958. All Gurkha battalions, therefore, as they arrived, were committed fully to operations in the towns, villages and rubber estates of Malaya. Most of the battalions were under establishment and had a very high percentage of recruits, and had to train and commit soldiers to operations as best they could. In these circumstances it was difficult for them to give help to the embryonic Gurkha Engineers. That they gave as much as they did is to their eternal credit and without this brotherly support the new unit would have foundered.

Early in 1948 a War Office Letter was circulated to all Royal Engineer Units stating that a Gurkha Engineer Regiment was to be raised and called for British Officer volunteers to join the first squadron to be raised in Malaya. The plan was to raise the Gurkha Divisional Engineer Regiment over four years, forming a new squadron every year and establishing the Regimental HQ in 1951. The then Chief Engineer FARELF, Brigadier WGR Nutt, reckoned that "we would have our work cut out, anyway at first, to turn Gurkha soldiers into sappers without having to turn untrained Gurkhas into soldiers". Accordingly the first squadron was to be made up from some 300 re-enlisted Gurkha riflemen, with a cadre of Gurkha officers and NCO's from the 2nd, 6th and 10th Gurkha Rifles. When the

roll came to be called it was found to contain men from every one of the former Gurkha Regiments of the Indian Army. In this way the Gurkha Engineers were privileged to absorb, from the beginning, some small part of the entire Gurkha history and tradition, and, unlike the Rifle Regiments, have a balance between Western and Eastern clans.

The Gurkha Training Squadron, Royal Engineers assembled at Kluang, in South Malaya, in December 1948, the cadre consisted of 6 British Officers (Major J Thornber, Captains Bennet, Tovell, Birse, and Parfect, and Lieutenant FA Cronk), two British NCO's (Serjeants Walker and Hastings) and 34 Gurkha ranks (11 officers, 2 Warrant Officers, 11 Sergeants, 6 Corporals, 4 Lance Corporals and riflemen. Among these was the first Gurkha Major, Major (KGO) Parmansing Rana, 2GR, and a further eight men who were later to reach the rank of Gurkha Major, either in the Gurkha Engineers or elsewhere in the Brigade of Gurkhas (Santabir Thapa, Dharamlal Thapa, Kalusing Limbu, Dhojbir Limbu, Jitbahadur Gurung, Narbahadur Thapa, Deobahadur Thapa, Aitahang Limbu). In addition a JCO and three havildars from the Madras Sappers and Miners, were seconded from the Indian Army.

The first 100 recruits assembled and started field engineer training in November 1948. Numbers 2 and 3 Training parties followed at short intervals and a second cadre party was started shortly afterwards. Training, however,

did not go according to plan as demands began to arrive for detachments to guard some of the many rubber estates which were coming under attack from communist terrorists. The Squadron was intermittently employed on estate guards and jungle operations. The squadron had no integral transport, had no signal equipment nor trained signallers, and, perhaps less important in their eyes, no clerks nor cooks. The powers that be evidently considered that as part of the Engineer Training Centre they would be provided with this support by the parent unit. Malay speaking clerks, and Moslem cooks, were not much use to a Gurkhali speaking Hindu! The involvement in operations meant that the Gurkha Engineers spent only half of their time on training, and much of that concentrated on Weapon Training, Fieldcraft and Physical Training, with basic Field Engineering fitting in where it could. It is not surprising that the Gurkha Training Squadron reached the end of its first year of existence without having completed the planned engineer training programme, and that an exasperated staff officer should complain that "three hundred honest to god infantrymen were neither fish, fowl nor good red herrings". Nevertheless on 1st October 1949 the Gurkha Training Squadron became 67 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers. Only the NCO cadre was in camp that day, the squadron had been deployed onto emergency operations. It was not until December that the squadron could concentrate and march out of the ETC to set up its independ-

ent existence. The squadron could now turn to troop training, trades training and organise its administration!

The second Training Squadron was then assembled, based on a cadre formed from 67 Squadron and re-enlistments direct from the hills. They were to follow a similar, disrupted, programme of training and build up and become, in August 1950, 68 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers.

During 1950 the decision was taken to discontinue the conversion of the 7th Gurkha Rifles to Artillery. The two battalions which had been designated for conversion did receive an input of Royal Artillery officers and NCO's, and received some initial training, but along with other Gurkha units were very quickly involved in anti - terrorist operations, and therefore the conversion was very slow. Simultaneous to the decision to stop their conversion there was building up a strong and increasing pressure to discontinue the Engineer and Signals experiments. Field Marshal Slim, General HARDING (later Field Marshal) CinC FARELF, General Poett (later CIGS), and General Campbell, the Engineer in Chief, were all involved, at one time or the other, in these discussions. The decision was that the formation of 68 Squadron would go ahead. That this decision was taken in the same year that the Gunner experiment was aborted, may be accepted as a watershed in the history of the Regiment. From that date forward the reality of the Gurkha Sapper was established, albeit at a slower pace than was envisaged

earlier. The outbreak of the war in Korea in the summer of 1950 created another diversion, but did provide an opportunity for the fledging engineer regiment to establish itself as a coherent, integral unit. On 24 August 27 Infantry Brigade, consisting of only two battalions (1st Bn The Middlesex Regiment and 1st Bn The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) sailed from Hong Kong to Pusan to assist the hard pressed Americans in Korea. There were no infantry battalions available in the Far East to plug the gap left in 40 Division in Hong Kong. The division was already under strength by two battalions as the two Gurkha Infantry battalions serving there had been withdrawn earlier in the year to join in the operations against the terrorists in Malaya. The decision was taken, therefore, to send the two Gurkha squadrons of Royal Engineers to Hong Kong, in their proven capacity as infantry, while giving them the opportunity to continue their training and employment as sappers. The immediate effect was to bring all engineer training to a full stop while the units organised themselves onto an operational footing as infantry. 68 Squadron had to extract some 260 Gurkha NCO's and men out of the Engineer Training Centre in order to form up the squadron headquarters and three troops. A small training squadron remained in Kluang to continue trades training and to prepare for the latest batch of recruits. There was no regimental commander!

The senior squadron commander, Major Colin Edwards, commanding 67

Squadron set about planning, coordinating and executing the move to Hong Kong, where the the units were to draw their equipment and take their place in the defence of the colony. The two squadrons of the nascent regiment arrived in Hong Kong on on 11th September 1950 and immediately took their place in the line. Together with a British engineer unit, 54 Field Sqn, they formed a composite 'infantry' battalion.

From this time on we find the rather clumsy bracketted suffix disappearing from the titles of the two squadrons, instead of 67 and 68 Field Squadron (Gurkha), Royal Engineers, they became, in usage if not authorized, 67 and 68 Gurkha Field Squadrons.

These early days in Hong Kong were not happy. There was intense rivalry and jealousy between the two squadrons. For a time they were located in separate camps. The essential process of indoctrination of British officers, by attaching them to Gurkha battalions before they joined the Gurkha sappers, had been interrupted, so there were British officers with only a smattering of Gurkhali and little if any knowledge of Gurkha traditions and culture. Side by side with them there were a number of British NCO's, down to the rank of L Cpl, who were integrated into the HQ's and field troops, to provide administrative and technical backing, but who had slowly but surely been incorporated into the executive chain of command, sometimes bypassing the Gurkha net. Relations between the Gurkha officers, all of them experienced infantrymen but

with no engineer skills or knowledge, and the British NCO's, therefore, were far from cordial. The Gurkhas for their part could still be described as a motley lot of diverse basic loyalties, including some real bad hats, and as yet not entirely recognising themselves as sappers. After all they were still on the rolls of their parent infantry regiments and only seconded to the Royal Engineers. Furthermore, the command structure was confused and complicated. The command of the provisional battalion for operations, and preparations for them, was with the CRE 40 Division, who was CO of 24 Field Engineer, however, in the engineer context this did not apply, as the two squadrons reported, independently, to the Chief Engineer, Brigadier Cavendish. For Gurkha matters the line led back to the Major General Brigade of Gurkhas. Basic recruit training was carried out at the newly formed Training Depot Brigade of Gurkhas (TDBG) at Sungei Patani in North Malaya, while combat engineer and trades training was with the Gurkha Training Squadron at the Engineer Training Centre in Kluang, in Malaya.

In the circumstances it is not surprising that the partly trained, inexperienced and untried experimental units should have stumbled into difficulties. They should never have been placed in such a position without a coherent recognised and accepted system of unified command.

Trouble did come in the form of a confrontation between the Gurkhas and the British NCO's during Dasher, in

October 1950. The situation was rapidly restored by the two squadron commanders, Majors Bennet and Edmonds, and the Gurkha Major Parmansing Rana, but not before these warning signals had been seen and recognised by the Major General Brigade of Gurkhas and the engineer chain of command. Colonel Graham, the senior staff officer of the Brigade was dispatched to Hong Kong and left the British officers in no doubt as to their responsibility in the sorry affair. The majority of all the junior British NCO's were posted out. Some of the more reactionary old men were sent on early pension. Most importantly it was agreed that a Regimental HQ should be established as a matter of priority. In addition it was agreed that an experienced British officer from the Brigade should be attached to the regiment as Brigade of Gurkhas Liaison Officer, or BGLO. Major Geoff Walsh 6GR was duly appointed to be followed by Major John (Lofty) Whitehead 7 GR. The Gurkha Engineers owe a tremendous debt to these two officers who did so much for the regiment.

The roots of a strong tradition, perhaps paradoxically, were laid in this "Year of Confusion", which started on all Fools Day 1950 with the announcement of the birth of 68 "Gurkha" Field Squadron followed by the rush to Hong Kong and a reversion, albeit temporary, to the infantry role. It was in the Beas Stables, Lo Wu and Fan Ling that the conflicting kaida of the different Indian Army regiments was laid to rest and that a new one was born.

On 13 April 1951 a provisional establishment for a skeleton regimental HQ, to command the two Gurkha field squadrons in Hong Kong, was approved by GHQ FARELF. The Training Squadron was to remain an integral part of the ETC. On 5th July 1951 Lieutenant Colonel FM Hill, was appointed the first commanding officer of 50 Field Engineer Regiment. He brought with him

experience of the Indian Army where he had served with the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners. He had been the wartime CRE of an Indian Division, and had a practical command of Hindustani. In the immortal words of Sherbahadur Limbu, later a Gurkha Major, uttered many years later but remembering the time "Here on we adopt the sapper way of life".

NEPAL REVISITED

Brig D. H. BOWEN OBE

The highlight of the past twelve months was our trip out to Nepal in October last year. We spent four weeks on the trip and visited Khatmandu, Gorkha, Pokhara, trekked from Pokhara to the West via Lewang, Birithanthi, Deopur (Amarbahadur's village), Lespar, Keng, Bajung and Khusma, and then returned, via the Kaski ridge, calling in at Lumle, Naudanda and Sarangkot to Pokhara. We were entertained by retired QGOs and Seniors in Pokhara who took us to see Captain Minbahadur's Damphe Nautch show, then to bhat at the Hong Kong Hotel, and attended the QGEA annual birthday party in the British Gurkha camp. We met far too many old friends to mention them all. They all gave us a tremendous welcome and asked after all their old sahebs. Hon Lt Amarbahadur Gurung, aged 82, was in tremendous

form and entertained us royally in his home in Deopur. Amarbahadur was GM when General John Bowring was CO, and I was the Adjutant. Sunar Gurung and Hukumraj Thapa looked after all our arrangements and were most kind. We then moved on to the Terai, to visit Kharkajang Gurung in Butwal, where he was running the Welfare Centre (he is to start in Pokhara as ARO Welfare in January 1995) and then on to meet Major QGO Deobahadur Thapa (Surjabadur Saheb's father), my Gurkha Captain in 68 Squadron in Borneo. We were put up in the family hotel, the "Yeti", for three days, and given the chance of visiting Pakhlihawa and Lumbini and meeting many of the retired QGE in the area. Deobahadur and his wife escorted and entertained us the whole time. We came out of the hills slimmer than we had left UK but they

soon put too much flesh back on us. Then back to Khatmandu, we stayed one night with Kharkajang in his home, one night with Bob and Margaret Cross, and were invited to lunch in the British Camp officers mess (joint BO and QGO). They had very kindly invited a number of retired QGE QGO's so we met up with Bharatsing Limbu, Bhimbahadur Gharti, and Indrakamal Tamang amongst others. We went on to the DCRE's yard for a farewell party where we met up with many more old friends.

I can assure anyone who is thinking of going out to Nepal that a very warm

welcome will await you. It is not difficult; there are many more roads to enable you to get around - albeit in very primitive "buses". Electricity is available in most main "valley towns", so you can charge up your video camera batteries. There are lots of hotels, of varying standard and price, and there are many old friends around to advise and help you choose the right place and help you with porters and equipment. The only advice I would add is don't go down the main tourist routes. There are many unspoilt villages and routes you can choose. Juliet and I are going back in 1997, anyone care to join us?

1995 DIARY DATES

13th MAY 1995

**Gurkha Brigade Reunion
RMA Sandhurst**

29th SEPT 1995

**QGEA AGM and Dinner
Staff College
Camberley (see below)**

16th NOV 1995

**Gurkha Brigade
Association Dinner
Army and Navy Club**

GBA SANDHURST REUNION

There was an excellent turnout by the QGEA last year at the Gurkha Brigade Reunion at Sandhurst. This year's reunion promises to be very well attended by members from all regiments of the Brigade and from all vintages. It will begin, as before, with a Service in the Memorial Chapel at 11.00 am followed by pre-lunch drinks in the Indian Army Memorial Room at 12.00. Tickets can be obtained after Easter from LOBG whose office will move to Church Crookham on 1 April 1995.

The contact is:

Lt Col G. C. J. L. Pearson RGR
Regimental Headquarters
The Brigade of Gurkhas
Queen Elizabeth Barracks
Church Crookham
Hampshire GU13 ORJ

REGIMENTAL DINNER

There was much discussion at the last AGM over the future of the annual dinner at Chatham. Following Andrew Tuggey's survey last year, opinion seemed to be equally divided between holding the event at Chatham or alternating between Chatham and Minley. With the move in November 1994 of HQ EinC to Minley, it was hoped that the subsequent rebuild would give us the capacity required to return the event there - sadly that has not been the case. However, the Staff College is a possible option and as this appeared to suit most members' requirements as regards location and as a three course meal can be arranged for much the same price as we paid last year for Bhat, the committee has decided to hold this year's reunion there.

In the past some members have indicated that they do not attend the reunions because they find that they do not know many people. In an attempt to overcome the problem this year, seating will be arranged according to the years spent with the Regiment. An application form for the reunion is on the flyer accompanying this journal and you will notice that the Seceretary has asked you to state which years you were with the Regiment so that he can arrange the seating accordingly.

THE PAHAR TRUST IN NEPAL

Patron Sir GEORGE COOPER GCB MC DL

The Pahar Trust was created to provide schools for the children of the Nepalese mountain region.

It operates through a self help programme of ex-Gurkha servicemen. With the shrinking of the forces and hence an increase in the number of returning

friends and local organisations have also helped.

These new schools will each have slate roofs, stone and brick walls, glazed windows and toilet facilities and will be centres of learning for many years to come.



Tom and Chandrabahadur.

servicemen, the aim is to utilise the excellent training received from Her Majesty's Service to provide schools for over 10,000 children.

The organisation of these much needed projects is the work of two ex-servicemen of the Brigade of Gurkhas, Mr Tom Langridge and Mr Chandrabahadur Gurung, both of whom served as Warrant Officers in the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. Other ex-servicemen from various regiments of the Brigade of Gurkhas as well as

Although each project has a team of professional artisans paid for by the Pahar Trust, the work is very labour intensive due to difficult working conditions. For this reason the villagers themselves provide the labour necessary for collecting and carrying the building materials. For example, in a typical school, villagers will have to produce over 25 tonnes of aggregate using simple hand tools. Furthermore, the workers will need to carry about 7,000 slates



The finished product - Pokhari Thok.

produced in remote quarries to the school site.

The construction is of the highest quality and uses only local materials but adheres to proper Forestation Management and conservation.

The first school was completed in 1991 in the village of Pokhari Thok followed by Ghamrang in 1992 and Eklekhet in 1993. Further schools are currently under construction in Pakhi Kot and Pokhara and are planned in Pasgaun and Sindi in late 1994.

Other minor projects completed to date are: Storm damaged school roof

replaced. Help in the supply of drinking water. Solar lighting schemes. Medical Aid.

Nearly 1000 children have already benefitted from the work of the Pahar Trust. Our objective is to reach a further 9000 as quickly as possible.

Your generosity will help us to achieve this.

Any donations should be sent to:

The Pahar Trust,
c/o Tom Langridge,
5 Foxsteep Cottage,
Crazies Hill, Wargrave,
Berks RG10 8NB.



MEMBERS' NEWS

JOHN & MAUREEN ALLEN “John, an active fisherman keeps busy with various agencies dealing with conservation of migratory fish, river pollution etc. Maureen, is in good form but due to have a knee replacement shortly. She has recently been to Australia, S. Africa and Canada.

Deidre heads a busy PR and Promotions organisation based in Johannesburg. Patrick married, no children, is a freelance Defense Correspondent, based in UK. Has recently had four books published. Michael married, has a son and lives in Toronto. He is in the International Racehorse transportation business.”

DAVID & GAY BILL “We have had a very happy time at Waterbeach which sadly draws to a close with David’s posting to London. Having asked for South Africa, New York, Naples etc it was not all that surprising! Gay is staying at Cambridge for 6 months to complete an art and design course and then we all move back to the house in Camberley in mid 95. The boys are thriving at Lambrook with James taking common entrance this Summer and Sophie continues to boss us all about!”

HANK & JULIET BOWEN “Very little has changed as far as our young are concerned, from what appeared in the last newsletter. None of them are married, neither are they showing any signs of it. Clive’s business in Saudi keeps him very busy, the factory is almost completed and soon the firm will start marketing their own cosmetic products, shampoo etc. Clive runs the show in England but visits Saudi regularly. Claire is still with her computer games company. The boss in UK left for another job so Claire is now one of a triumvirate who run the operation in Europe and report direct to the American President. Paul is now a barrister. He had already qualified as a solicitor but handed in his papers the day after being entered on the rolls. He has finished his pupillage but has not yet found a permanent position so is not earning much.

Juliet and I continue to enjoy retirement. Juliet has taken up golf, but alas cannot get into Huntercombe, but has joined one at Hadden Hill near Didcot, so we can choose where to play!

Apart from our visit to Nepal which is covered in a separate article, we have also managed a sailing trip together on the East Coast of Spain this year, when Juliet and I joined her brother in helping an old school chum of his, from South Africa, who now lives in the USA, to move his 43 foot yacht from Aroposa (between Valencia and Barcelona) down to Malaga. We took two and a half weeks, enjoyed a lot of

sun, had a few days of strong winds, but mainly adverse though gentle winds 'on the nose'. We were horrified by the tourist concentrations, but fortunately we did not have to suffer them, we usually anchored off the beach. It was a lot of fun. Brother Jeremy and his schoolchum, together with another American went on to sail across the Atlantic to the Caribbean.”

RICHARD & JILL BURNET “Jill and Richard Burnet produced Freddie in April 93 and he is now a very healthy bouncy delight. The last 2 years have been spent in CATC, Warminster. I have been the first one into a new job in Tactical Engagement Simulation, definitely the way ahead for all training in the future. Jill has worked for 18 months and is now fully qualified as a GP. We are off to 21 Engineer Regiment in December and look forward to a busy 2 years in Nienburg including a trip to Bosnia.”

CHRIS & SARAH COCKERHILL “Chris has been OC 15 Fd Pk Sqn at Ripon for the last year where he continues to improve his golf handicap. Sarah is working hard at establishing her Interior Design & Craft business. Camilla (9) is enjoying life at Edgerley Hall, Millfield whilst Miles (5) is just coming to terms with having to attend the local school.”

RICHARD COBBOLD “Since leaving 70 Sqn I have been involved with quartering - firstly on the technical side and latterly on the staff side. We are now living at Church Crookham and I may get involved with works associated with the move of Gurkha training and regimental functions to UK.”

STEPHEN DATE “I have been out of the Army for some 18 months and was fortunate enough to pick work with Jardines builders - Gammon Construction Limited - however HK was not for me. I have now been in Hanoi for some 15 months where I am the project manager/senior engineer on an office development for HK Land. Though very hard work and long hours, the rewards both professional, social and financial are great. I am a great lover of the Vietnamese and see myself here for some years to come. All visitors most welcome.

Martin and Catherine Gillott and David and Jane Bill are all successfully raising families in HK. Martin is broking with the Swiss Bank and David is a manager with Jardine Securicor. The only other QGE Wallah I know of in HK is Roger Owens who has turned his hand most successfully to fluency in Manderin and is selling construction plant and equipment in Mainland China.

Should anybody wish to contact me then I can be reached via:

Gammon Construction Ltd	or	Gammon Construction (Vietnam) Ltd
28/F Devon House		4/F Xunhasaba Buildings
G79 Kings Road		32 Hai Ba Trong
Quarry Bay		Hanoi
PO Box 9711 GPO		Fax 00844 247330
Hong Kong		Tel 00844 247297
Fax 00852 516 6025		Home 00844 227961
Tel 00852 516 8845		

JOHN & JANE EDWARDS “John retired for the second time from the post of General Manager of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club in May 93, and he and Jane now live in Westerham, Kent. They occupy their time playing golf, sailing their 28' boat kept on the Medway and travelling, most recently to Southern India and Sri Lanka.”

DICK & PAM FRANCIS “Dick finally retired after being a Halcrow administrator (Quetta 1991), but Pam is still busy as an agency nurse!

Dick is a Conservative Branch Secretary and Treasurer, and weighs in for all elections from Euro level down to Town Council. Being a Polling District Organiser is rather like being a Troop Commander, and equally difficult to do really well.

When not on the stump, Dick fills in with stamp collecting, and would be glad to hear of current sources and old collections.”

GRAHAM & SHEILA GIBBS “We have moved from 21 Engr Regt in Nienberg to Camberley. Graham is the Senior RE Representative at RMAS and takes over command of Waterloo Company in January. He joins Andy Maclachlan, a platoon commander, at the Academy. With Andrew Mills having replaced Ian Caws as ERLO, QGE officers are in very prominent positions with regard to the quality and selection of young officers in the Corps. (Is this wise?...replies on a postcard to the Editor!) Mark and Leslie Foden have been in touch with Graham recently and, amongst numerous plans for the future, are now in serious training for a fund raising ‘round the coast of Great Britain Cycle ride’ next year. They aim to complete 4000 miles in 40 days and would like their friends to join them at various points along the route to keep them company. The 4 days in the Scottish Highlands are not recommended!”

JOHN & GILLIAN GUNNS “Since leaving the Regiment in 1988 I have spent a year at Staff College, 2 years as Chief of Staff 8 Inf Bde and 2 years commanding 4 Fd Sqn in Germany and Belize. I am currently out to grass as the SO2 Engr (Ops/O&D) at HQ UKLF. I married Gillian in 1991 and we have since found time to accumulate 2 trainee terrorists, Josephine in 1992 and Elaine in August this year.”

PETER & JULIET HARVEY “It was great fun being at the Sungei Besi reunion on 7th July. I met the Adjutant and expected to be told I was improperly dressed; I met both OC’s of 68 Sqn and as Tp Comd of A Troop expected Jimmy Radford to tell me again that my laterite surfacing of the airstrip at Pengarang, South Johore, had too high a clay content and would have to be scraped off.

It was quite a wrench, on the way home, reverting from Lt, later Captain having filled in the blank cheque for the Troop’s Sahib’s promotion party organised by Sgt Dilbahadur Gurung - to retired Colonel, now Mr!! The good old days?”

DOUGIE HOWIE “Volunteered for redundancy in Phase 2 but was unsuccessful until Phase 3. Currently thinking about the possibility of setting up a small business involved with placid water canoeing as an educational sport and recreational activity.”

DOUGLAS & MARGARET HUMPHREY “We are enjoying ourselves and living life to the full. Douglas is the Administration Manager for Millfield Schools when between helping to look after 1800 pupils, 250 teaching staff and 550 non teaching staff he finds time to play veterans hockey, squash and do some off shore cruising. Margaret, meanwhile, manages the Junior School Sports, Uniform and Stationery Shop. QGEA members are always welcome to pop in or stay overnight - perhaps en route to the SW: they live in a small village 3 miles north of the A303 not far from Street. Tel 0458 223703”

TONY & LORNA KERR “Tony & Lorna Kerr leave Germany soon and move back to live in Zouch Manor in Tidworth, (from mid January tel no. 0980 846757). Tony is posted to be Asst Comd 3(UK) Div. They are looking forward to being nearer the children and the golf course. Sean is a SHO at St Richards Hospital, Chichester and Nicola is in her final year of clinical school at UCH.”

ROGER & VAL LITTLE “After three and a half years in London, most of them with John Baker, I escaped from Engr 6, handed over to John Wheely to ensure QGE numbers were kept up. Off with Val, Oliver and Kate to Stavanger in August 94 to a NATO post. Oliver has settled in well in his first year at prep school in Sussex.”

HAMISH & LIZZIE MAC LEOD “We are in Ripon where Hamish is commanding 38 Engineer Regiment, which is the Close Support Regiment which, in the main, supports 19 Mechanized Brigade based in Catterick. However, 15 Field Park Squadron supports 1 (United Kingdom) Division on operations, and 51 Field Squadron (Airmobile) supports 24 Airmobile Brigade based in Colchester.

38 Engineer Regiment has been busy, sending initially a heavily reinforced 11 Field Squadron Group to Bosnia on Operation GRAPPLE 3 in November 1993. After 3 months Hamish deployed to Bosnia along with a tiny Tactical Headquarters, and 15 Field Park Squadron Headquarters, to improve command and control. Later 32 Field Squadron deployed along with the 1st Battalion Duke of Wellington’s Regiment when the British presence was enhanced. When the main body of the Regiment Group recovered to the United Kingdom at the end of April, having handed over to 36 Engineer Regiment from Maidstone, 32 Squadron remained in theatre to complete a full 6 months tour. Meanwhile 51 Squadron deployed to the Falkland Islands for a 4 month tour. 38 Engineer Regiment are currently scheduled to go back to Bosnia in November 1995 so it is quite a merry go round.

Hamish and Lizzie contend with Alexandra and Kirsty, now both seven and attending a local school in Ripon, and Amanda who is a handful at two.

The newly arrived Second in Command is James Hignett who along with Nicky arrived from Bulford. The Adjutant is Andrew Barr. He and Emilia have arrived from Hameln via JDSC. Andrew has passed his IPSE exam at staff level. Emilia is working with Ciba Giegy in Harrogate.

Chris Cockerill is commanding 15 Squadron. He and Sarah came to Ripon from the Military Works Force at Chilwell. Camilla is at boarding school, and Miles at school locally in Ripon. The Second in Command is Bob Stephens. He and Cheryl came to Ripon from the United States where Bob was doing his PQE civilian attachment.

Ian Stewart is Second in Command of 51 Squadron but in fact finds himself filling a gap as Acting Officer Commanding, prior to going to JDSC. He and Fiona live in quarters in Harrogate along with the Stephens.”

RICHARD & VAL MARRIOTT “We are still in Wimbledon but from 1997 will be spending more time in our French house, inland from Biarritz. We will be visiting Sabah in Spring 95, where our elder daughter will be the third generation to work, doing her medical school ‘elective’. Richard is now responsible for BT’s corporate strategy, public policy and relations with other players.”

ANDREW MILLS “I am now nearing the end of my squadron command tour. I spent one year with 20 Squadron and a second with 69 Squadron which included 2 long construction projects in Kenya and, less fun, a Falklands tour. I am now about to take over from Ian Caws as ERLO where my priority will be to seek out the next generation of Bambinos for the Black Buttoned Mafia.”

DENIS & ANN O’KEEFE “Since leaving the Regiment in 1989, Ann & Denis O’Keefe have been ensconced in Germany, first with The Royal Green Jackets on Osnabruck and then with the Headquarters of the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps in Bielefeld and Rheindahlen. They have recently moved to Headquarters 1st (UK) Armoured Division in Herford and are thoroughly Europeanised, now being acknowledged experts on sausages and beer.”

JOHN & HEATHER PERFECT “In April 1994 I had my 70th birthday. Philip’s letter requesting some family news came as I was thinking back 46 years to October 1948 when I flew from Heathrow to Singapore to start my Gurkha adventure. Heather and I had married a couple of months previously, and it was 18 months before she was able to join me in Kluang. Where have all those years gone to, and how quickly time rushes by!

I retired from the Army in 1958, and spent the next 23 years to 1981 working for ICI at Billingham on Teeside. Initially as a training manager and later as a personnel manager, keeping all the commercial and administrative departments of a division of ICI numbering 16,000 people in the mid 1960s. In the early years I was in charge of the training of about 700 craft apprentices and some 20-30 graduate apprentices. From the mid seventies onwards (by then as a personnel manager) I was asked to set up courses to help people face the financial problems of taking early retirement in their 50s.

In 1981, I took early retirement and was approached to join a finance house, Hambro Life, now Allied Dunbar - as a salesman. The challenge of becoming self employed was a culture shock - so different from the sheltered life I had experienced in the Army and in ICI (both have similar cultures of hierarchy, people described as officers, NCOs and other ranks, decision making by committee on major policy issues etc etc). However by applying what I had previously learnt in problem solving, writing reports in simple English, and helping people make a successful start to their retirement, I had nine interesting years of full time work, and more recently four years of part time consultancy. ICI still ask me to run pre-retirement courses for them! The bonuses of the job with Allied Dunbar were the annual conventions for husbands and wives (or vice versa) in places like Cannes, Greece, cruising in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, Hong Kong, San Francisco and Bangkok.

In 1977, I was persuaded to stand as a County Councillor for North Yorkshire. At that time I thought it would be an interesting part time job in retirement. That expectation was totally fulfilled for the next 16 years, until May 1993 when I was not re-elected. The main strand was continuous membership of the Police Authority, and the last six years as chairman. I still marvel that a county the size of North Yorkshire is policed effectively by a force of about 1400 full time officers, 450 specials and 500 civilians. In the past 4-5 years there have been radical changes in attitude by police officers, marked slimming of management structures, and total application of modern information technology to handle data and intelligence. My second main area of interest has been education. I remain a governor of the local primary school (120 pupils) and secondary school (1150 pupils). Local Management of Schools (LMS) and the National Curriculum (modified by the Deering Report) have increased substantially the responsibility of governors and interest in the job. In North Yorkshire we are blessed by having high quality teachers and heads, and governors with strong commitment and a wide range of experience to bring to bear.

While all this has been happening, the family has continued to grow. We have five grown up children and 10 grandchildren ranging from age 17 down to age 1. They all live in the South, but love to return to the wide open heathers of the North York Moors and the conservation area of Coxwold. We have not escaped the national statistics of broken marriages. Jane is now happily married for the second time and Penny is in the midst of divorce proceedings. Louise has recovered from a heart attack a year ago. Wendy is the founder head of a Montessori School in London and Jeremy works for the Economist. We have a close knit family and a friendly community in Coxwold, with plenty of neighbourly help to each other, ably led by a lovely vicar. What more could anyone want?"

DAVID & LESLEY PHILPOTT "We certainly didn't expect to be out here in Hong Kong as we approached retirement. Life is often hectic but we are enjoying ourselves and trying to make the most out of the opportunities that present themselves. This is especially relevant to travel and holidays. One of David's long-term plans is to return to Borneo and visit some of the airstrips that he helped to construct with 67 and 69 squadrons between 1959-65! I shall go too, but plan on spending my time snorkelling (this is a new pastime and I am thoroughly hooked on it).

Our son Andrew and his wife have recently made us very proud grandparents. But of course we shall have to wait until retirement before seeing very much of our beautiful granddaughter. Strange how the wheel turns round again - our parents had to put up with us being overseas. However, we do have the benefits of modern technology to help shorten the distance between us. Easy telephone links and the marvels of video cameras."

GRAHAM & REBECCA PRICE “We have now completed two years in Hong Kong and are hanging on as long as possible! Rebecca is teaching at the Chinese International School and one of her students is a grand daughter of the Deng Xio Ping so we are well connected.

Life in Hong Kong continues to be exciting, but the landscape is being drastically changed by the massive reclamation and construction projects that are in progress. Our headquarters in Prince of Wales Building will remain on the sea front for only a few months more.

My own job has been most enjoyable with frequent visits to both Brunei and Nepal. I meet many present and retired members of the Regiment in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Hong Kong. I am constantly amazed by the achievements of “C” Troop wallahs, who are involved in exciting projects all over the world. Many return to Hong Kong and 71 Squadron (the unofficial name for the large toli now working on Airport Core Projects). Binodkumar Lama Saheb, the Brigade resettlement officer, says there are plenty of jobs for our soldiers in Hong Kong, but visas and work permits are a problem.

Tekansing Saheb is running a school in Pokhara, which he founded himself, built himself (literally) and is now the Principal. There is a good QGE representation in the Garrison works office including Mr Thaku Rana who looks after the GWO in Pokhara, whilst ex Capt (QGO) Manikumar Rai and Dambermansing Gurung together with the RSM WO 1 Birka Rai keep Kathmandu in order. Also in Pokhara is Maj (QGO) Haribahadur Thapa (GM), and our ex 67 sqn Clerk Tika Rai corrects my signals for me.

It is a constant delight to bump into old friends from the Regiment, now a highly mobile body of men. I have met ex soldiers in transit at Bangkok airport en route to GRU in Brunei, in the Hong Kong Bank in Central whilst popping back to Hong Kong to collect a new “global access ETC card”, and of course in the streets of Kathmandu.

I have been extremely fortunate, and can assure readers in the UK that many of you are remembered by friends in Nepal. I even visited a 7GR village in East Nepal and was surprised to see a framed photograph of 68 Sqn, commanded by Bill Chesshyre, at San Wai range, hanging under the eaves. When I asked the ex 7GR soldier why he had a photograph of Gurkha Engineers hanging on his wall, he said he had been given it and anyway it was a jolly nice photograph. I promised to send him a better print of 67 Sqn!”

PAUL REEDMAN “I am 30 minutes drive from Capetown in one of the most beautiful parts of the Cape and I am here to stay. Should any members of QGEA wish to visit this part of the world, I do have spare accommodation and a caravan (Rugby World Cup 1995!).

My son Marcus is shortly passing out from Sandhurst and has been accepted in 2 RGR (Brunei), one of my old stamping grounds.

I am very happily actively retired - sailing, tennis, bridge and exploring Southern Africa. I have been to the Skeleton Coast of Namibia and the Namib desert, as well as the delights of the South African Garden Route East of Capetown.”

JOHN & SUSAN SHANAHAN “The Black Bag list was announced in September and I have been posted to JDSC as an Instructor. JDSC has now moved up to Camberley and MS Branch have obviously decided that my future lies in officer training as I was a Platoon Commander at Sandhurst only two and a half years ago! It is just as well that Camberley suits Susan for her job, but so much for “join the army and see the world!”

ALISTAIR & JANE SHEPPARD “We have a fourth member of the family - Sam - born at Christmas. We are enjoying the multi-national ARRC but we are due to move again at the end of the year.” (Editors Note: Taking over 67 Sqn from Mark Stevenson).

KEN & SALLY SLACK “Since leaving Hong Kong in late 1994 Sally and I returned to UK where I attended JCSC. Following JCSC (where I received a staff pass) we were posted to 28 Engr Regt as 2ic of 23 Amph Engr Sqn. Also in Hameln are Ty and Gilli Urch and Brandon Wellard both late of QGE. In July we had our first child, a son, Tom. Shortly after his birth I disappeared again off to Bosnia on OP GRAPPLE 5, from Aug 94 - March 95. Tom continues to grow at an alarming rate and unfortunately for him is the spitting image of his father.

There is life after the QGE, however, it is nice to meet the odd ex Gurkha and discuss life in Hong Kong (trust me most of them are odd!). Before ending I must send both our regards to the many friends we left in Hong Kong and thank them all for making our time there so special.”

CHARLES & ROMA SPOTTISWOODE “After taking ‘the terms’, in 1976 I joined John Holland (RE retired) in a partnership exporting antiques to the Continent. However two years later I got involved, on a part time basis, with a small charity which required a new direction and new leadership. The job quickly took over my life and I have been in the voluntary sector ever since.

Because of the commuting, we moved to London from Hastings in 1981 and since then my career has encompassed, being Director of the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, setting up an appeal for a hospice in Sutton, raising money for the strangely named Royal Surgical Aid Society and my present post for the last four years, raising money for the British Home and Hospital for Incurables at Streatham. (£1,000 every working day is a daunting task!)

Roma trained as a Practice Manager and worked for some time for a group of GPs in Stockwell. However she “retired” a year ago and her interest is now concentrated on a 2 year British Wheel of Yoga teacher’s diploma course. Having been on the committee of the Breast Care and Mastectomy Association, she now works as a volunteer for the successor organisation, “Breast Cancer Care”.

Eldest daughter Barbara lives and works in Stamford. Handicapped daughter Katherine has moved under “care in the community” from a hospital to a brand new house near us, where she lives with 3 other severely handicapped residents in some style and enjoys a more normal life. Youngest, Anne, now divorced, lives near us in East Dulwich (actually West Lewisham!) with her two delightful daughters.

Our long term plans are to move to Shropshire and enjoy the rural life we really crave.”

DERMOT & MARY STACK “Redundant 1 Mar 94. Member of small team running an independent church in Urban Deprived Area in Glasgow. Finola (18) has won a place at Dundee Art School, Camillia (17) doing A levels at Fettes and Cambridge candidate. Edward (13) has won a foundation award to Fettes in Sept 94.”

NICK TOMLINSON “I have been working for the United Nations Operation in Sumatra (UNOSOM) since January 1994 as their out-stations engineer, a job which takes me by air country wide. Two breaks away in Kenya were spent with 69 Squadron on project at Mweiga, and another with Harry and Alison Vialou Clark at Gilgil which included tea with the RE troop on project there. A close colleague in UNOSOM is Pratapsing Malla, formerly Brigadier General Chief Engineer of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), once RNLO in Hong Kong, and before that a friend in Kluang in 1966 on long attachment to the Gurkha Engineers with his wife. Another old regimental comrade at UNOSOM is Manbahadeer Pun former Captain (QGO). ‘Ubique’ is very apt for us. Until October our escorts were provided by the RNA (Bn HQ + 2 Coys) who were latterly commanded by Lt Col Bajra Gurung former Military Attache at his embassy in London. UNOSOM will be withdrawn by March 1995.”

STEVE & CAROLINE WARD “Currently I am at Shrivenham where I am studying for a MSc in The Weapons Effects on Structures (WES). I will be here until the end of the year. I then take up appointment as the SI in the Design Engineer Wing at RSME with responsibility for the Long Civils Course. I am quite looking forward to the job, although the location does leave some room for improvement”.

I remarried in 1986 to Caroline and we have two children. Harry is four at the end of February and Rosie who will be one year old at the beginning of the same month.

On a professional note I was intrigued by a recent article in the New Civil Engineer (the weekly magazine for the Institute of Civil Engineers) about the fixed crossing at Ma Wan to Lantau. The area holds a special memory for me as Boat Troop Commander because it was on the route between Gordon Hard and HMS Tamar and was notorious for standing waves due to rip tides. The article explained the progress of the work and commented that 120 ex-Gurkha sappers were working on the crossing spinning the main steel cables, fitting the hangers and other associated work some 200 metres above sea level! The contractor was particularly impressed with their dedication, discipline and endurance. They even keep the old rank structure.”

KATE WILLIAMS “I have now left the Army on completion of my short service commission, and am currently employed with the Corporation of London (the local Authority for the City) as their Assistant Emergency Planning Officer.”

HARRY VIALOU CLARK “I retired in December 1989 and formed GEC/Plessey’s civil engineering department, in Coventry. Lots of money and a frightful lifestyle could not hold me and three years later I resigned. Three days before that I heard I was to be Bursar at a largely ex-pat primary school in Kenya’s Great Rift Valley. Alison connived?? in the scheme and I did two years and have now “finally” retired. We shall see! We live in Gilgil, a spot many old soldiers will remember from Mau Mau days. It is great to be back in my country of origin. Come and see!”

