

*The Queen's Gurkha  
Engineers*



*2008*

# The Queens Gurkha Engineers

**Affiliated Colonel in Chief:** Her Majesty The Queen

**Colonel of the Regiment:** Major General D R Bill CB

**Officers of the Regiment:**

Lt Col R Wardlaw	Commandant
Maj Dudhprasad Gurung MVO	Gurkha Major
Capt D Robbins	Adjutant

**Field Officers:**

Maj RG Walker	OC 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
Maj GAR McCallum	OC 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron
Maj Dilparsad Limbu	G3 Ops Engineer HQ 5 Div
Maj Dhanbahadur Chand	Trg Major 75 Engineer Regiment (V)

**Captains:**

Capt Bishmaraj Gurung	Capt M D Hendry	Capt Prembahadur Ale
Capt Krishnabahadur Gurung	Capt A E Kirkin	Capt Yogprasad Thapa
Capt Rajen Gurung	Capt T P Gilbert	Capt E W Walsh
Capt Ekbahadur Gurung	Capt Uttamkumar Sherchan	Capt D J A Dias
Capt E J de Thompson	Capt Devkumar Gurung	Capt Bishnubahadur Ghale
Capt G W Drysdale	Capt Tulbahadur Ale MBE	Capt Tarabahadur Pun
Capt Mohankumar Tamang		

**Subalterns:**

Lt R D Grant	Lt S Hudson	Lt E T M Gay
--------------	-------------	--------------

**Affiliated Officers serving with the Brigade of Gurkhas:**

Capt C F Thoms RE	Capt P J Bridle RE
-------------------	--------------------

**RSM:**

WO1(RSM) S Clewley RE (RSM QGE)



## The Queens Gurkha Engineers Association

*President* – Major General DR Bill CB

*Chairman* – Brigadier A D HARKING OBE

*Secretary* – Col (Retd) J N B STUART

*Treasurer* – Mr M Adler

*Nepal Member* – Col (Retd) W J CHESSHIRE

*Editor* – I H ADAMSON

*Social Events Member* – Maj I MOORE RE

*Gurkha Major* – Maj Dudhprasad Gurung MVO

**Contacts:**

Editor: 01932 230376 [iain.adamson@homecall.co.uk](mailto:iain.adamson@homecall.co.uk)

Secretary: 01264 323185 [pearity@lemonia.org](mailto:pearity@lemonia.org)

# Editorial

Iain Adamson

I would like to start by thanking the Regiment and Association members for contributing so generously this year, albeit there was the annual plea for news on what you have all been up to over the last twelve months or so.

I remember when I left the Regiment in 2006 thinking how quickly my two years had passed, and amazed by how much the Regiment had crammed into that time. Reading the articles from the Regiment and from units where QGE personnel are serving, it would appear that if anything, life has become busier. The Regiment has returned from an extremely demanding operational tour in Afghanistan and at time of writing, is recovering. Whilst tinged with obvious sadness, the Regiment is rightly proud of their achievements and I am sure, like me, you will be gripped by some of what you are about to read (or have read if you have skipped the editorial due to it being boring!) 70 Squadron, less their Resources Troop, have been equally busy picking up a Regiment's worth of commitments and being on stand-by for possible deployment. You will see that they too have been incredibly busy, but reassuringly, have still managed to fit in some adventure training and have tackled everything with style. I remember being told whilst going through Sandhurst that Gurkhas do not like the cold. The photos and tales of our Gurkha engineer commandos show this to be false.

I have been equally fascinated by the numerous articles that have been sent in, and I must apologise to various authors for having had to trim some articles. Whilst at Christmas I was slightly concerned as to how I was going to fill the pages this year, I am glad to report that I was actually challenged by what to leave out for consideration for next year's Magazine. My apologies must therefore also go to those who submitted articles this year but which have not been included.

My thanks must go to a number of people who have assisted in putting together this year's Magazine. Captain Bhismaraj Gurung has diligently pulled together all of the Regimental contributions and will have helped co-ordinate getting it printed in Kathmandu and returned to UK. Honorary Major Hukumraj Thapa's help has again been invaluable, as has Jim Stuart's. I would still be tapping away at the keyboard if it was not for the speed typing of my wife, Tara. Thank you to all of you.



I started last year's editorial introducing myself, having just taken over the reins from Duncan Pierce. It is with some embarrassment and much sadness that I must stand down as editor after only two years. I left the Army in October 2007 and my first civilian job has kept me busier than I had ever intended. Living in Scotland, I am unable to attend committee meetings and have found myself with very little free time especially with a young family. I have therefore decided to hand over to someone who will be able to give the Magazine the attention it deserves.

I have tried to compile a Magazine that has something for all readers, from our serving soldiers to all ages of Association members living around the world, including an increasing audience in Nepal. It is your Magazine and I would therefore ask that you continue to support it and contribute articles and photos.

I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I have. I wish you the very best for the remainder of 2008. **Jai QGE!**

**STOP PRESS:** Capt Prembahadur Ale has been selected as one a Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer. A great achievement for Prem Saheb and the Regiment.

## Contents

Editorial.....	1	QGE Family Welfare.....	28
Message from Colonel of the Regiment.....	2	Core Operational Shooting Competition.....	29
Commandant's Report.....	3	Badminton Report.....	30
The Gurkha Major's Report.....	4	The Gurkha Language Course – Pokhara.....	31
RHQ QGE News.....	5	QGEA Chairman's Letter.....	32
69 Gurkha Field Squadron.....	7	Briefing from Pokhara.....	33
70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron.....	11	QGEA 59 <sup>th</sup> Anniversaries.....	35
70 Gurkha Fd Sp Sqn QGE .....	14	Photo News.....	37
Training Mission – Kabul.....	15	Reminiscences of a Line Boy.....	42
Engineer Task Force Tiger.....	16	Gorkha Museum Pokhara.....	44
Musa Quala – Diary of a Sapper.....	17	Horizontal Drilling in Nepal.....	45
Gurkha Commando Engineers.....	19	The '3 Poles' of the Earth.....	46
3 RSME News.....	20	Tiger Tiger.....	47
61 Training Party QGE.....	21	Recruit Party Officer.....	49
Infantry Training Centre Catterick.....	23	Outpost of the Empire.....	50
The Regimental Birthday.....	25	Recruit Training in the 1950s.....	52
British Gurkhas Kathmandu .....	26	A Letter from Hong Kong.....	54
From Gurkha Major to Training Major.....	27	Perowne Barracks 2008.....	55
My Transfer to the Royal Engineers.....	28	Archive.....	56
		Deaths and Obituaries.....	57
		Family News.....	60
		Accounts and Minutes.....	66



# Message from the Colonel of the Regiment

Major General David Bill CB

As I write this, RHQ and 69 Sqn have just returned from their 6 months sojourn in Afghanistan having completed a quite outstanding tour of duty in Helmand Province. As part of 36 Engr Regt they have operated in the most challenging environmental conditions and the complex operational demands placed on the Regiment have arguably never been greater. More detail of their exploits in Afghanistan follows in the various reports and articles from the Regiment, but suffice it to say that our Gurkha Engineers have performed magnificently with determined professionalism and eye-watering endurance. As I said in a recent letter to Richard Wardlaw: our reputation as a tough, professional and resourceful unit in the best traditions of the Brigade of Gurkhas and Royal Engineers can never have been higher and can do us no harm at all as we seek to expand our horizons in the next year or two.

Meanwhile 70 Sqn has hardly been sitting on its laurels. Many individual members deployed with the Regiment to Afghanistan and the remainder have been busy indeed, including being required to provide the Engineer Spearhead Lead Element – a task more normally given to a Field Squadron and a further demonstration of Gurkha Sapper flexibility and diverse talent. But again, more detail from Giles McCallum in his report.

The transition to revised terms and conditions of service for the serving Brigade has passed off pretty smoothly with the overwhelming majority opting for transfer, although the practical implications of managing in manning terms the change in length of service that this brings will continue to provide us with a serious challenge. But I remain confident that with the support of the EinC, pragmatic solutions will be found. For those already on pension and particularly for the pre-1997 generations, this issue will regrettably continue to provide a source of some disappointment for many, as is inevitably the case when such major changes are made. But there is a further implication that for many of the present and immediate past generation, they will opt, at least in the medium term, to remain in the UK on retirement from the Service. For the Gurkha Welfare Trust this poses practical problems for the future recruitment of AROs/AWOs etc as well as the wider societal implications that this development may bring to our traditional view of extended family arrangements in Nepal. Suffice it to say that the GWT has this issue firmly on its radar.

As far as our recruits are concerned, I can report that the new crop that I was lucky enough to see pass off both at Catterick and for a some what damp Kasam Khane Parade at Minley a few weeks ago, were an as impressive bunch as ever. As always the party afterwards was a delightful family occasion with much singing and dancing and ever more street wise contributions from our newest family members – break dancing and pop idol performances of some quality. Gurkha Majors of yore would not have been impressed!



Can I also take this opportunity to thank your QGEA Committee for their sterling efforts of the last year. Philip Cook after 5 years of Chairmanship has cleverly persuaded Tony Harking to take up the reins in his stead. Philip thank you for your vision and commitment during what has been a major time of change for our Association. Thank you also to Iain Adamson for his excellent editorial efforts – he assures me that this year's issue will afford me rather less exposure – there is a thing of too much publicity! Finally Jim Stuart has declared his intent to hang up the secretarial quill after some 13 years of labour. Regimental Councils and QGEA Committees will somehow never be the same. Jim – thank you so much for what has been a marathon stint.

Finally we, of course, celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year with parties to be held in Maidstone, Minley and Pokhara. I much look forward to seeing as many of those of you that can make it to one or other.

With all good wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Bill', written in a cursive style.



# The Commandant's Report 2007-08

Lieutenant Colonel R Wardlaw RE

As I write the Regiment has just recovered from Afghanistan where it has been involved in fighting one of the most violent and difficult of counter-insurgencies in recent military history. With most of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron and a large element of 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron tied to Operation HERRICK 7, the deployment to Helmand Province between September 2007 and March 2008 has been very much a Regimental commitment and so I think it is only right that I use the first part of my report to bring to life a little of what we have achieved in that time.

Just days after arriving in theatre, Gurkha sappers gained an early taste of the action on Op PALK WAHEL, at that time the largest operation of its kind to be undertaken in Helmand. Men from 69 Gurkha Field Squadron found themselves with little time to rehearse before bridging their first gap for real, at night and under the imminent threat of enemy fire. The subsequent advance to contact with 1RGR through the Green Zone, the heavily irrigated, jungle-like terrain either side of the Helmand River, was no less hairy, with the Gurkha sappers in the recently formed DELHI troop under the command of Captain Mohan Tamang in constant demand, either as firepower (one sapper expended 500 rds in one fire-fight with a determined RPG team!), or in the more conventional close support role, destroying numerous bunkers and compound walls. In the process, extraordinary demands were placed on their fitness and robustness; operating in 40°C of heat and carrying in excess of 80lbs on patrols lasting up to 18hrs, they were not found lacking.

The second major commitment for the Regiment came in late November with the decision to launch Op MAR KARARDAD and the liberation of the town of Musa Qal'eh from Taliban control. With engineer support for the operation commanded by OC 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, Major Richard Walker, the focus of our efforts in the vital 4 weeks following the removal of the Taliban was on hardening Coalition locations within the District Centre and building roads, Observation Posts and Vehicle Check Points (VCPs) to be subsequently manned by the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA). In what was a uniquely joint operation with the ANA, the ability to communicate with Afghan nationals in Urdu or basic Pashto gave the men an ability not only to direct and cajole the ANA soldiers but also to interact with the local nationals in a way that made them the envy of their American and British counterparts.

Outstanding performances in the face of the enemy have routinely been matched by the support the men have provided to those they live alongside in the numerous Forward Operating Bases which span the length and breadth of the Province. In the face of a very different enemy - the heat and cold, dust and mud of Helmand Province - Gurkha

sapper effort has improved the lot of so many others, delivering enduring engineer solutions in locations which

until our arrival were dismissed as 'just too difficult'. Everywhere I went both soldiers and officers took time to single out the efforts of their 'Gurkha sappers' – many were simply in awe of what they could do!

The Regiment has also played an instrumental part in the reconstruction and development work that underpins the wider counter-insurgency strategy. Advice and support from a Gurkha Clerk of Works and Military Plant Foreman not only smoothed the way for a number of significant projects but also played a critical part in the transfer of skills to both local Afghan government officials and contractors – essential if we are to see the Afghan Government stand on its own feet in due course.



Away from Afghanistan, this has been an exceptionally demanding year for the Regiment in so many other ways. While committed to supporting the deployment to Afghanistan, 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron were also tasked with providing an engineer troop in support of the Spearhead Land Element (SLE) Battalion, to be on high readiness to move anywhere from 1 April 2008. In addition, the Squadron has packed in a range of other activities including some exceptionally high profile construction tasks in support of civil communities both here in Kent and further afield in Nottingham. Concurrently, the Regiment has been preparing and training a large cohort of Commandos in order to meet the requirement for a 35 man Gurkha Commando Engineer Troop in 24 Commando Engineer Regiment, also from 1 April 2008. Many of those who join the new Regiment in Chivenor will find themselves in Helmand Province from September 2008 when the unit deploys in support of 3 Commando Brigade.

Against this operationally focussed backdrop, the introduction of new Terms and Conditions of Service and the associated Gurkha Offer to Transfer (GOTT) to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75/05 has levelled the playing field for serving soldiers with their British counterparts. It has also set the conditions for the Regiment and the wider Brigade to continue to play a full part in the British Army for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, the transition period for many of those currently serving will not be without its difficulties. With so many soldiers now able to serve beyond their traditional pension point, there will be considerable challenges in the short to medium term to maintain extant opportunities for promotion and commissioning. We may also see a significant migration of talent to the wider Corps and Army if many elect to transfer as is now their right – only time will tell.



A new and very welcome addition to the Regiment this year has been Mr Prem Prasad Gaire, our permanent Pandit. His arrival has enabled our soldiers and their families to observe their religious commitments in a way just not possible before. He has also added some much needed balance to the Christian ceremonies of 36 Engineer Regiment, marking our departure and return from Afghanistan by leading all, both British and Gurkha sapper, in Hindu prayers on both occasions. Dashain was of course a better and brighter occasion for having our own Pandit and, similarly, Tihar was celebrated in great style.

Despite the busy operational tempo of the Regiment you will be pleased to hear that we have maintained our reputation for sporting excellence. 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron spearheaded much of that success, winning as a Minor Unit in the RE Half Marathon, the Corps Cross Country Competition and coming a close 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 4<sup>th</sup> Division Cross Country Championships. As a Regiment we were the Plate Winners for the Nepal Cup and came a very creditable 4<sup>th</sup> place in Trailwalker. Captain Prembahadur Ale continued to excel on the badminton court, winning at Divisional level before taking (again) the Army Cup. Our shooting skills continue to set *the standard* for the wider Corps with the Regimental team, almost exclusively QGE soldiers, sweeping the board at the Corps SAAM. In addition Spr Kumar Pun and WO2 Meenjang Gurung were awarded the

Army Rifle Association 'Army 100' badge for being placed as the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> best shot respectively in the British Army.

In conclusion, I believe it is a most apposite time to reflect on 60 successful years since the Regiment was established. Given that so much of our early history was dominated by a different counter-insurgency in a different part of the World, it is immensely gratifying to see that The Queen's Gurkha Engineers continue to play a central part in the operational successes being enjoyed by the British Army of today. While equipment, training and procedures may have changed, the quality of our officers and soldiers has not. Over the last 6 months, under some of the most demanding operational conditions faced by any soldier in modern times, Gurkha sappers have played a central and vital part in enabling the infantry and others to Live, Move and Fight. As Commandant, it has been at once both humbling and inspiring to witness the bravery and commitment of the Gurkha sapper, persevering where others have been dissuaded and succeeding where others have failed. It would be no exaggeration to say that in this most recent of conflicts, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers have established a reputation second to none, reaffirming the high esteem in which the Regiment is held and building on the efforts and sacrifices of those who have gone before. On the eve of our 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday, I believe we can all take immense pride in their achievements. **Jai QGE!**

## The Gurkha Major's Report

*Major Dudhprasad Gurung MVO*

As I write these short notes, I well remember the words of advice given by Major Adamson (then my OC and of course the current editor of this magazine) before I assumed the appointment of GM QGE "Good luck and enjoy every moment of your tenure and also do plan now what you wish to do next because it will go in flash" and I promptly replied "hunchha sahib". Admittedly, I thought it is rather too optimistic to consider that far ahead at this early stage of your tenure so I took the advice moderately but now realise that I should perhaps think rather more seriously as time passes by so quickly and I can hardly believe that my first year in the post is almost up.

First I would like to introduce myself to those I have not yet had the opportunity of meeting. I became the 20<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Major of the Regiment in Aug 07 having served 1 year as Gurkha Regimental Career Management Officer, the post I held concurrently with another appointment as one of the Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers (to be the 10<sup>th</sup> member from the Regiment to hold this appointment). Prior to this appointment, I was the Gurkha Capt of 70 Gurkha Fd Sp Sqn. My other tours as an Officer included Tp Comd in 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn and two successive ERE tours respectively as QM BG Pokhara and Trg Tp Comd in Minley. I served my entire tour of SNCO including the SSM with 69 Sqn having completed service exclusively with 67 Gurkha Field Squadron in Hong Kong since joining the Regiment in 1980.

Over the years the Regiment has in many respects changed beyond recognition. The most significant change is the new approach to soldiering. The days have long gone when agonisingly for long hours spent on bulling, scrubbing or polishing the barrack room for seemingly endless rounds of inspections. Instead, the emphasis has now shifted from this harsh barrack room discipline to that of creating and existing in an environment which is more conducive to producing 'thinking soldiers'. But no matter whatever changes the Regiment has passed through, there are certain things that have remained unchanged such as 'Kaida' - the same regimental spirit, cheerfulness, enthusiasm and discipline of our Gurkha soldiers has not altered.

This year has been dominated purely by the hugely successful Op HERRICK 7 deployment. Detailed accounts from various sources will be captured elsewhere in this publication and need not be repeated here, however, it would be fair to say that those who did not deploy with the regiment have also endured extremely demanding and busy



times with the rear party delivering much needed support for both the regiment and families.

We are now firmly in the era of implementing the new Gurkha Terms and Conditions of Service that was announced last year and as Gurkha Major I would like to reiterate some of the notable changes which you may find interesting.

5 months Nepal long leave is ceased as of 1 Apr 07, instead soldiers are now entitled to 30 days annually. Family permission has been opened to all ranks on completion of 3 years service and, currently there are 200 families living in the Medway area with another 50 families, fully integrated with their British counterparts, elsewhere in the UK and overseas. In the meantime there are some 25 families on the waiting list to be called forward by mid 2008.

With the cessation of QGO commissioning, all Gurkha officers have now been converted to SSC/IRC (LE) hereafter commissioning will be direct to Capt rather than Lt. All our soldiers have now been transferred to open engagement which means irrespective of their rank they can now serve up to full 22 years subject to the needs of the service. On the one hand this is excellent news, but on the other this will uplift the Regiment's manning level beyond its limit. Hence, in the future the Regiment will see a number of soldiers transferring into the Corps and taking up increased number of ERE posts to absorb the surplus manpower within the QGE. Necessary planning by the RHQ QGE including both the Comdt and Col of the Regt is well underway to ensure that the smooth transition is being fully committed. To date, 6 Clk of Wks and one SF have so far completed their transfer respectively to the Corps and 22 SAS and further 9 applicants waiting for confirmation.

In the meantime QGE Gurkha Cdo Tp is gradually shaping up, as I write (in Mar 08) one Sgt and 16 other ranks have been fully embedded in 24 Cdo Engr Regt and further 18 will join them later this year to complete 35 men strong Troop.

## RHQ QGE News

*Capt Bishmaraj Gurung*

The last year has simply flashed by, or at least it seems so. Although the year was dominated by yet another successful operational tour of Afghanistan known as Op HERRICK 7, it has also been one of particularly significant change not only for the QGE but for the Bde of Gurkhas as a whole. It paved the way to bring the Gurkhas into line with their British counterparts in many ways including pay and pension with the introduction of Gurkha Terms and Conditions of Service (GTACOS) and Gurkha Offer To Transfer (GOTT). RHQ QGE's work for the Regiment, that of advisor to the Commandant while keeping a close link with the Bde HQ and various other agencies at MCM Div Glasgow, remained most significant. As always, it acted invariably as the first port of call for any issue or incident involving or affecting Gurkhas and this reinforcing the need for good lines of communication with all parties within the regiment.

The Regiment has secured 68 ERE appointments both within BG and in the Corps as well as few in the wider Army and I am very proud to say that they all have been meeting their new challenges with distinction and flying the QGE colour with great sense of pride. As always our Gurkha sappers still manage to achieve remarkable results on all courses they attend across the Army thus spreading the word widely their considerable talent and skill. In January this year 40 new Sappers joined the Regiment having successfully completed their Basic Combat Engineer training at Minley, bringing the total number of QGE personnel to 403.

In addition, QGE has some really good news to celebrate starting with Col of the Regt Gen Bill Saheb selected for promotion to Lt Gen. WO2 Buddhi Bhandari will be commissioned to Capt being the first person under the new system. Similarly Capt Ekbahadur Gurung and Prembahadur Ale have been selected for IRC within a month of transferring from QGO to SSC (LE). What a great achievement all around! I therefore wish to offer on everyones behalf very warm congratulations to all.

The last 18 months have in many respects been the most rewarding period for the Regiment with the main highlight being the very successful operational tour in Afghanistan and the arrival of new GTACOS package which is hugely welcomed by our soldiers at all levels. Therefore, I am glad to report that the Regiment both collectively and individually is in great form, in very high spirits and takes immense pride in 'Kaida'. Nevertheless, for RHQ QGE, the year ahead is much more challenging than ever before due to the implementation of the new GTACOS. We have been very fortunate to have Lt Col Wardlaw and Gen Bill Sahebs respectively as the Comdt and Col of the Regt at this very critical time of transition. Not only has their previous experience of the Regiment, but more so their dedication and interest towards the Regiment, has made the job in RHQ much simpler. Therefore we remain very optimistic that whatever comes in the future will be good for the Regiment. We look forward to the next 60 years! Jai QGE!!

Indeed, the work of RHQ QGE throughout the year has been to tackle the inevitable challenges faced as a result of the implementation of GTACOS. Since the Gurkha soldiers can now serve beyond their normal pension point, transfer to the wider Corps and Army has become a key focus and will continue to become so in the coming year. To date, 8 have completed the transfer process, 4 will have achieved this by September this year and 4 are in process. This in conjunction with securing more long term UKTAP posts outside QGE will continue to become a manning tool to achieve normality in promotion and commissioning while maintaining the right balance between operational effectiveness and the constant inflow of fresh blood into the QGE every year.





QGE is now 403 strong including 40 newly badged QGE sappers. There are altogether 84 on GURTAM ERE and other non-liability posts outside QGE where our soldiers have filled in; predominantly in 24 Engr Regt (Cdo), 3 x Gurkha Coys, 3 RSME Regt, 1 RSME Regt, QGE Boat Sect (Brunei), 50 HQ Sqn, BGN, HHCR (Windsor), and 20 Armd Bde (Germany). In spite of the regiment's main focus most of the year being on the operation, RHQ QGE still managed to successfully add a few more employment posts to its tally; 2 x QMSI posts within both the Royal Mons (M), Birmingham and Battlefield Engineering Wing (Minley), 1 x Gurkha Welfare WO post (GWFO) and most recently the 2IC 55 Sqn post. The creation of a new SSgt post as the assistant to Gurkha RCMO (GRCMO) is also in the process. In addition to this, the QGE have nominated three candidates for Clerk of Works (Clk of Wks) and one for Military Plant Foreman (MPF). The selection process for the new batch of potential Clk of Wks and MPF is already underway. A QGE GURTAM post (Utility and Petroleum Fitter Cpl) within 66 Fuel Sqn of QOGLR is also going to be filled permanently from this year.

Against the backdrop of the operational tour, the business remained as usual for QGE in the rear party. As recorded elsewhere in the journal, the 59<sup>th</sup> QGE Birthday was celebrated in similar fashion as in previous years with Colonel of the Regiment General Bill CB saheb in attendance. He assumed the full control at the helm for cutting the giant birthday cake who was assisted by the Comdt's wife, Judith memsahib, Lt Col N Bagley (CO Rear), Maj McCallum (acting Comdt QGE) and Maj Dudh Prasad Gurung MVO (GM). General Bill saheb also kindly presented an award to last year's winner of the Bowring Trophy to LCpl Koshbahadur Gurung of 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn; the award is presented to the best Lance Corporal of the year in QGE.

RHQ QGE comprises of Comdt, GM, Adjt, GRCMO, RSM, GMSA, Mov Clk and Courses Clk. As always personalities changed and to name a few; Capt Bishma took over from Maj Dudh as the Gurkha RCMO and WO1 S Clewley from WO1 DM Woolford as the RSM QGE. Capt Bishma is soon moving to Minley as the 2IC 55 Trg Sqn.

Dashain and Tihar were, as always, celebrated in the traditional way. Dashain drinks kick-started the festive season with curry lunch in the beautifully decorated MT hanger to which all those not of the Regiment, but who had helped us during the year were invited, Kalaratri strictly being an affair for the Regimental family. A month later Tihar, the festival of lights, was also celebrated in no lesser fashion among the euphoria of gambling, carol singing and dancing.

Needless to say that QGE has continued to enjoy significant success over the years in all fronts. It is believed the current success in Afghanistan has raised its operational and professional credentials to even higher level and it is fair to say that QGE is now held in very high esteem across the Bde of Gurkhas and the rest of the Army alike. The operational challenges will continue however equally important for RHQ QGE in the coming year will be the challenges posed by these new changes which must be met and overcome to ensure that we continue to play a full part as a key player within a mixed regiment. In all of this, RHQ QGE has been and will continue to be at the forefront, working hard in the interests of the regiment and its members past, present and future.

Jai QGE!





# 69 Gurkha Field Squadron QGE

Capt M Hendry 2IC 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn



Those of you who remember last year's article will remember that Op HERRICK 7 in Afghanistan was beginning to loom for Sep 07. The year seems to have passed very quickly as here we are in Northern Helmand and what a rollercoaster the year has been. A combination of intense Pre Deployment Training and an even busier Operational tour have the Squadron focussed on their current role and looking forward to some well deserved post operational tour leave.

During the year, the Squadron has conducted a number of challenging exercises in preparation for its deployment. The highlight of these was Ex ULLU RAJA in Brunei. Lt Rob Grant led a mixed troop of Gurkha Engineers and TA soldiers into the jungle to support the 1RGR Battle Group. The pace of life was hot and sweaty with our boys carrying out a number of specialist tasks including HLS construction, jungle river crossings and minor construction tasks. Working with 1RGR and the TA was an excellent experience for all involved and the long hours were perfect practice for what was to come on real operations. More of this later in the article but before moving onto the Sqn activities it is only right and proper that we mention particular individual achievements and sadly say farewell to those who have left the Sqn and moved onto greener pastures.

At SHQ level there has been a steady changeover of key personalities with the OC, Major Roger Fawcus handing over to Major Richard Walker just before we deployed to

theatre and the 2IC, Capt Andy Gooch handing over to Capt Mark Hendry. Roger has moved onto a sociable job working in recruiting and Andy is currently the Trg Adjt at Chatham looking after young Troop Commanders! Rich Walker is an old sweat from QGE having spent a Gap Year Commission with QGE in Hong Kong followed by 69 Sqn 2IC. Mark Hendry returns to 69 Sqn having previously been 1 Tp Comd followed by a tour as the Project Engr in Nepal. Capt Bishma moved on from 69 Sqn Gurkha Captain up to RHQ to become the GRCMO and is still very much part of Sqn life. Capt Yog moved into the role of Gurkha Captain from 70 Sqn but he has spent many years in 69 Sqn and knows all of our boys extremely well. The Sqn has also managed to promote its old SSM, Capt Mohan Tamang, to become Sp Tp Comd and receive a new SSM, WO2 Yam Pun on promotion from Catterick. At Tp level we have also said farewell to Capt Uttam Sherchan and Capt Bishnu Ghale who have both moved onto bigger and better things. We have welcomed back Capt Ek Gurung from Minley who has moved into a BGE post, a new post for 69 Sqn. With regards to promotions, apart from the commissions already mentioned, we have received 2 x WO2 both posted out on promotion, 3 x Cpls and 3 x LCpls.

As mentioned above, this year has been a myriad of exercises, pre deployment training and our current operational tour in Afghanistan. The first of these exercises saw a Sqn deployment to Salisbury Plain to support the Coldm Gds Battle Group for a 3 week TESEX.



A challenging and fun exercise that saw both Commanders and Sappers falling asleep on their feet! On our return we entered the sausage factory that is OPTAG training which resulted in the Sqn working 9 weekends in a row to achieve the required training standard for deployment to Afghanistan. This training culminated in a 10 day exercise where the Sqn was put through its paces in an Afghan simulated environment and again involved very little sleep and a lot of debriefing from the Directing Staff. Fun was had by all!

In amongst all of the exercises there was a steady trickle of personnel through key courses and refresher training for the up and coming deployment. These included Helicopter Handling Courses, Air Portable Ferry Bridge Instructor Courses and Pashtu Language Courses.

### **69 Gurkha Fd Sqn on Op HERRICK 7**

Following a much needed break on pre deployment leave, the Sqn formed up in Maidstone ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

The Sqn deployed at the beginning of Sep 07, completed RSOI and Special to Arms Trg in Camp Bastion before taking over from 8 Armoured Engr Sqn in mid Sep. It was important that we absorbed as much information from 8 Sqn as possible as, although you are well prepared from OPTAG trg, the reality can often have changed considerably. Initially, we were providing Engr support to the 1 Royal Anglian Battle Group in the Northern Helmand Area of Operations. This would soon change to the 40 Commando Battle Group (40 Cdo BG) in early Oct 07.



### **OC 69 Sqn takes over from OC 8 Sqn**

Throughout Op HERRICK 7, 69 Sqn also supplied key manpower to the Joint Force EOD Gp in the form of Search Teams and support to the Operational Mentoring Liaison Team (OMLT) which was a big drain on Sqn manpower, but a fascinating experience for all committed.

As soon as we had handed over from 8 Sqn, 69 Sqn was tasked to support the 1 Royal Gurkha Rifles Battle Group



***Cpl Sujan keeping a watchful eye over his search team***

(1RGR BG) throughout a Bde operation in the Hyderabad area of Helmand. Working with our friends in 1RGR was a great way to start operations in Helmand and set the tempo for the rest of the tour. This operation was called Op PALK WAHEL and required a Tp from 69 Sqn to provide close support to the 1RGR Coys. Engr works included building Infantry Assault Bridge, explosive compound entry and basic life support works for the BG. Our Plant Operators were kept extremely busy building shell scrapes to keep the infantry safe during the countless rocket attacks on the BG. Throughout this Op we were also lucky to have 20 Sqn personnel attached to our Sqn who assisted as Coy Gp Engrs and Sprs on the ground.

Whilst Op PALK WAHEL was ongoing, we also deployed the remainder of the Sqn out to the Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) in the Northern AO. Each of the FOB locs is very different in terms of geography and enemy activity. Lt Rob Grant (known to the locals in Helmand as 'Kajaki Rob') with 1 Tp was given the responsibility of Nowzad and Kajaki. Both of these locations required extensive winterisation works from the Sqn and key engr close support to busy patrol schedules. Under Capt Devkumar Gurung, H Tp's AO included Sangin, FOB Robinson and the new, partially constructed FOB Inkerman. Each of these locations would require extensive works in order to withstand the harsh Afghan winter and support to their patrolling which is almost a daily commitment.

Approaching November, the Brigade focus started to switch to the area of Musa Quala, not something that anyone was expecting or had planned for before we deployed. Musa Quala was famous in Helmand as a Taliban stronghold and a less than sociable night on the town. The name of this operation was Op MAR KARADAD. The shaping phases required 69 Sqn to commit Gurkha Engrs to 3 separate Mobility Operations Groups (MOGs). Each MOG had a Sect with it providing key mobility and close support during any kinetic activity. Capt Mohan Tamang was also lucky enough to deploy on one of these MOGs as a 'Sect Comd' which he enjoyed immensely whilst providing key support to C Sqn HCR (not a bad job for an LE Offr).





*LCpl Sachin on patrol with the Royal Angians early in the tour*

As the MOGs slowly built up the pressure on Musa Quala, the Sqn J4 world was whirling into action to start resourcing and supplying all of the stores for the construction of a Forward Operating Base, several Patrol Bases and Security Infra structure that would be required after the kinetic phase of operations. A formidable task with over 70 ISOs to be configured and over 8kms of HESCO required for initial estimate of works. With the sheer size of the works required and the continued commitment of our other FOBs a Tp, under the inspirational leadership of Lt Nick Fielding, from the Lead Air Support Sqn (LASS) in 39 Engr Regt, was flown out to theatre for the specific task of building FOB Edinburgh to the West of Musa Quala. The LASS Tp deployed for a 6 week period and almost straight onto the ground. They worked long hours in harsh conditions to get the FOB to its initial operating capability.

On completion of kinetic operations in urban Musa Quala, a further 45 pax from 69 Sqn moved into the area to start constructing other security infrastructure. Capt Dev Gurung was responsible for constructing the initial force protection works around the town District Centre with 20 pax and several plant vehicles, whilst Capt Mohan Tamang worked on OPs and PVCs to the West of the urban area. These works were carried out in filthy conditions throughout one of the hardest Afghan winters in memory. 69 Sqn pax did manage to bargain for the odd piece of livestock and you may not be surprised to hear that chickens and goats are

now a rare sight in North East Helmand Province.

As initial works in Musa Quala neared completion, 69 Sqn rebalanced itself to ensure that all of its outstations were receiving the support that they deserved and the LASS Tp, rather sadly, returned to the UK and 39 Regt for a well earned rest. The Sqn main effort did remain on developing infrastructure in Musa Quala and the surrounding area. Despite temperatures as low as -15 Celsius and huge amounts of rain fall we soldiered on providing COLPRO accommodation, much needed hot showers and installing power.

Concurrently with Op MAR KARADAD in Musa Quala, a significant bridge refurbishment was underway in Kajaki under Sgt Jiwan Rai. The existing 150m long Timber Bridge, constructed in the 1950s

was now in a weary state with danger of being washed away in the next significant downpour or snow melt. A complex task with significant resourcing issues. To the amazement of C Coy 40 Cdo, Sgt Jiwan replaced all cross bracing, road bearers and decking. With Health and Safety in mind, some very Nepali construction techniques were employed to make the task work and hopefully the bridge will now remain solid for a few more years at least.

SSgt Manjit Gurung and his Sect from H Tp have also recently made an appearance on Sky News whilst assisting

B Coy 40 Cdo in denying a drugs factory to the North of FOB Inkerman. Barmines were used and remain the weapon of choice for Cbt Engrs in Helmand Province.

The monumental efforts of our Sqn rear party and families back home cannot be overstated. Without the high level of support from SSgt Nar and his small team back in Maidstone the Sqn could not have carried out its role nearly as effectively. Working long hours and providing support to our families no matter what the hour, they deserve a sincere thank you from the remainder of the Sqn.

In summary, a very busy and hectic tour. Tragically, as a Regt, we lost two brave soldiers from 20 Sqn and our thoughts are with their families throughout what will be





*1RGR crossing Infantry Assault Bridge constructed by 69 Sqn*

a hard journey ahead. We have been involved in almost every type of engineering imaginable and the boys have more than a few tales of daring deeds to impress friends back home in Nepal. The tour combined with months of pre deployment preparation has left the whole Sqn more than a little weary and well poised to hand over to 9 Sqn who will undoubtedly have a busy summer tour. We have been very lucky to take the whole Sqn home to the UK relatively

intact and very much looking forward to a well earned break during Post Operational Tour Leave. We look forward to Op HERRICK

12 which will clearly start to become the focus from 2009 and beyond.

Jai 69 and Jai QGE.



# 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron QGE

*Capt Anna Kirkin, 2IC 70 Gurkha Fd Sp Sqn*

At the time of writing, 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron has just completed its FTX prior to taking on SLE with 2 RIFLES Battle Group on 25 Mar 08. A tremendously busy 72-hour exercise in Weymouth found the SLE Troop experiencing the very worst of the British weather and this, combined with lack of sleep and almost no time for brewing up, contributed to the overall extremely demanding nature of the Exercise. After some public order training in Northern Ireland, we will be ready to assume our role on Op VALERO when we deploy to Kosovo in the summer.

The last 12 months has been exceptionally busy for the whole of the QGE, and no less so for 70 Squadron, which has had soldiers deployed on Operations and Exercise in Gibraltar, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Italy, Kenya and Canada. Returning from Christmas leave in Jan 07, the Squadron undertook pre-deployment trade training and deployed from Maidstone to Gibraltar on Exercise 28<sup>th</sup> SHOT at the beginning of Feb. This is an annual Royal Engineer Exercise to practice an RE Squadron in the planning, management and execution of construction tasks. In all, the Squadron completed seven construction tasks over a ten week period, before conducting a two week infantry training exercise. The projects included rebuilding a Braithwaite water tank, demolishing an old look-out post, building a Middle-Eastern-style FIBUA house, and extending an office for the resident Royal Navy diving team. One project at the Airport involved removing the supporting wall from beneath the Control Tower to extend the Defence Fire Service accommodation. This project required the use of drills and breakers against the wall of a functioning RAF office complex, so the Gurkhas certainly did their bit for joint cooperation and understanding - but the tower is still standing!



*The completed FIBUA house on Ex 28<sup>th</sup> SHOT*

As one of five Field Support sub-units within the Royal Engineers, 70 Squadron has a comprehensive Resources Section. In order to practice the Resources Specialists and to remain isolated from any potential industrial action by civilian MOD employees in Gibraltar, it was decided that the Squadron would run all of the resourcing for the project "in-house". Financial and contractual delegation was granted, and by dealing directly with suppliers the Squadron man-



*Sqn management formal dinner in Gibraltar*

aged to knock 35% off the predicted budget for the Exercise. Gibraltar is an excellent location for Adventure Training and the Squadron managed to get away to kayak, ski, sail, water ski and dive during the deployment. The OC, Maj Giles McCallum, took the opportunity to indulge his passion for sailing whilst proving that Gurkhas make far better soldiers than sailors! Running regular trips in the British Forces Yacht "Pickle", he took on the daunting task of teaching Gurkhas to sail. It is fair to say that very few proved to be natural seamen, and most came back looking far greener than when they'd left. As a means to raise money for the Clinic Nepal and Pahar Trust charities, the Squadron put on a number of demonstrations for the locals including traditional Nepalese dances and a Tae Kwon Do display, which raised £1,500. The Squadron also took the opportunity to hold a formal management dinner inside the WWII tunnels during the visit of the new Commandant, Lt Col Richard Wardlaw. An outstanding meal was accompanied by music from the Squadron's Gurkha pipers and the marching band of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

Following the completion of the construction tasks, the Squadron focused on its key infantry skills during a two-week infantry Exercise. Unlike a Field Squadron where the Tp Comds would be fresh from the rigours of Sandhurst, bustling with enthusiasm and drive, 70 Sqn's Tp Comds are all of the Late Entry Officer variety. This caused a problem when Capt Yog Saheb was told to lead the raiding party



tasked with securing the tunnel entrances. His Troop was to be inserted via Rigid Raider and it was to the amusement of all bar the Raider's coxswain when, prior to launch, Capt Yog "briefed" him on his bad back, arthritic knees and plastic hip and told him "If you go fast and hurt me, I will give you a proper shoeing!"

Further drama was to beset the troops tasked to defend the tunnels as enemy. Having set up their defensive locations they were slightly concerned to find themselves in the pitch black when the power was switched off and the lights went out. Concern turned to fear, and fear to near hysteria when over a 4 hours period they could hear the attacks go in but could see nothing! Needless to say, they were more than a little relieved when their attack began and they were swiftly beaten into surrendering by the advancing forces. A victory for both non-kinetic and kinetic warfare!!

Ex 28<sup>th</sup> SHOT was a hugely successful deployment with our tradesmen producing a truly outstanding quality of workmanship on all of the projects. It was with fondness that we said goodbye to the friendly apes who had used our scaffold as climbing frames. Beside the Squadron's great success in Gibraltar the Rear Party, led by WO2 Buddhi Bhandari, did an extremely good job of maintaining the Sqn's equipment and vehicles.



*Jubilant Sqn TW team at finishing line*

In the early hours of 2 Sep 07, a Resources Node consisting of Capt Rajen Gurung (SO3 Engr Log), WO2 Jiwan (Res WO), GLOBAL NCO, DeMAS NCO, Yard NCO and Log Park Fitter NCO from the Squadron departed with 36 Engineer Regiment for a six month tour in Afghanistan (Op HERRICK 7). The team arrived at Kandahar Airport in the evening, welcomed by the dust and extremely hot weather, where they continue to be based. The main role of the Res Node was to provide second line Engineer

Resources Support and Logistic advice to Task Force Helmand Engineer Groups (36 Engineer Regiment, part of 52 Brigade, UK Works Group and other British non-Engineer Units in theatre).

On 10 Sep 07, having completed two days' busy RSOI package and one week of hand over/take over, the 70 Sqn Resources Node took over the Engineer Logistic Park Kandahar from the outgoing Unit, 65 Field Support Squadron. There was no time to hang around; the Node straightaway got into the daily business of the Log Park. During this time, TFH Engineer Groups had been preparing for a big push (Op PALK WAHEL) in Helmand Province, led by 16 Mech Bde. A huge amount of Engineer Logistic Support was required, including 12-bay Medium Girder Bridges, Infantry Assault Bridge sets, Engineering Plant, and various types of field fortification stores to be delivered either via road or air to the area of operations. Consequently, the gauntlet was thrown down for the Node, in particular considering the coordination and delivery of these stores in a very tight time frame. However, with the help of the experienced team familiar with previous operations, and swift planning and coordination by the Joint Force Logistic setup at Kandahar, the team managed to deliver the support in good time for the Operation.

As the tempo of operations remained consistently high, the Area of Responsibility expanded, hence the demands

put upon Engineer Logistic Materiel increased. Since September, the Res Node has been providing excellent support to all Units in theatre, and the Squadron looks forward to welcoming them all home at the end of March.

As well as conducting Combat Engineering training and some very high profile Military Aid to Civilian Community (MACC) tasks throughout the year, including the build of a car park at the National Holocaust Centre and an NEB at Bearsted Woodland Trust, the Squadron deployed to Ex PAHAD CHADNEY (TIGER) for one week's Adventure Training at Penhale Camp, Newquay.

Ex PAHAD CHADNEY (TIGER) was the Sqn's Level 2 Adventure Training expedition, led by Capt Bishnu Ghale,

which offered an excellent opportunity to get involved in various team building outdoor activities within an enjoyable environment. This was also a very good opportunity to explore local areas of beauty and historical influence within Cornwall for those who had never been to the South West of England. The place was absolutely beautiful, even for the beginning of November; we couldn't stop talking about these places, and how busy they must be during the summer months.

The main aim of the Exercise was to provide worthwhile





*Constructing the car park at the UK Holocaust Centre*

leadership and team building, conducting various fun-filled arduous activities in order to develop mental and physical team skills required for Operations. Among the activities were hill-walking, surfing, clay pigeon shooting, cycling, rock climbing and abseiling. With competent instructors running the different activities, the only thing the participants had to do was get involved as much as possible and enjoy the week. Coastal walking proved to be the most arduous activity, starting at England's most South-Westerly point, Land's End, and finishing near Mousehole, just outside Penzance, nigh on 24 km away. There were also opportunities to lead the group to different checkpoints, which built up our navigation confidence and practiced those who will be attending a Cadre in the near future. It was pretty exhausting at the end of the day! Surfing and clay pigeon shooting were the favourite activities amongst the guys, as they were something different from the norm. It was an amazing experience to surf on a wave! At first, we all were hesitating to get into the water as it looked (and was!) a bit chilly, but later everybody was enjoying it and didn't want to get out of the water. It was great fun to hit the clay pigeons but a great disappointment to miss. Cycling and rock climbing were fun as always. Apart from the adventure training activities, we also had a challenging orienteering competition to complete, organized by the QM, Capt Walsh. Overall, Exercise PAHAD CHADNEY was a great success. An arduous environment provided the ideal opportunity for Squadron personnel to develop leadership skills whilst also enhancing team cohesion.

In October, in the middle of training for SLE, the Squadron managed to carry out a Nepalese wedding for OC Saheb, Maj McCallum, and his wife.

The Squadron then deployed to Dartmoor Training Area to conduct Exercise KAKRINDO NETRITWO 07 meaning 'Leadership in freezing cold and miserable weather conditions'. It was the Squadron's annual Section Competition, the objective being to test the Sect Comds and Sections in individual and collective military skills in a challenging environment, in order to prepare for forthcoming SLE and future operations.

Each individual from the Sqn was heavily involved in the Exercise as there were 9 x 6-man Sections. The Sections were tested in personal admin, command and control, communication skills, battlefield casualty drills, mine strike, CBRN, offensive ops, scanning and military knowledge, physical stamina, shooting / marksmanship principles and the Orders process.



*Surfing at Penhale Sands*

The Squadron was very lucky to have Maj Gen DR Bill CB, Colonel of the Regiment of QGE, visiting the Sections. He spent two days visiting the stands and even took part in the March and Shoot, keeping the soldiers' morale high. The prizes, including a big Sungur (sponsored by Maj McCallum), were presented by Col of the Regt Saheb. The winning Section was led by Cpl Sushil Gurung who had only been in the Sqn for one week, and the runner-up Section and winners of the March and Shoot competition was led by Cpl Kriti Rai. Overall, the competition was extremely tough and demanding, and the Sections learnt a great deal from it.



*Sqn Section Competition Winners*



On the manning side, the Squadron bade farewell to many personalities this year: Capt Francis (Sqn 21C) to 1 RSME, Capt Yogprasad Thapa to 69 Sqn, Capt Kesur (QM) to TQM 39 Engineer Regiment, WO2 (SSM) Chitrabhadur Rana to Royal Mons Regiment, WO2 (QMSI) Meenjang Gurung to 3 RSME, WO2 (MPF) Hales to 1 RSME and Sgt Suman Thapa (Chief Clerk) to QOGLR.

New arrivals include Capt Kirkin (Sqn 21C), Capt Walsh (QM), WO2 (MPF) Markland, WO2 (QMSI) Kamalbahadur Khapung Limbu and Sgt Dhanbahadur Lama (Chief Clerk).

Jai 70 Sqn! Jai QGE!



*OC and Annabel Memsahab's Nepalese wedding*

## Resources Node, 70 Gurkha Fd Sp Sqn QGE, OP HERRICK 7

*Capt Rajen Gurung*

In the early hours of 2 Sep 07, a Resources Node consisting of one Officer, Capt Rajen Gurung (SO3 Engr Log), WO2 (ResWO), four other ranks (GLOBAL NCO, DeMAS NCO, Yard NCO and Log Park Fitter NCO) from 70 Gurkha Fd Sp Sqn departed for a six month tour in Afghanistan (Op HERRICK 7). The team arrived at Kandahar Airport in the evening, welcomed by the dust and extremely hot weather where they continue to be based. The main role of the Res Node is to provide third line Engineer Resources Support and Logistic advice to Task Force Helmand Engineer Groups (36 Engineer Regiment, part of 52 Brigade), UK Works Group and other British non-Engineer Units in theatre.

On 10 Sep 07, having completed two days busy RSOI package and one week of handover/ takeover, the Resources Node took over the Engineer Logistic Park Kandahar from the outgoing Unit, 65 Field Support Squadron. I must say there was no time to hang around; the Node straightaway got into the daily business of the Log Park. During this time, TFH Engineer Groups had been preparing for a big push (Op PULK WHALE) in Helmand

Province, led by 16 Mech Bde. A huge amount of Engineer Logistic Support was required, including 12-bay Medium Girder Bridges, Infantry Assault Bridge sets, Engineering Plant, and various types of field fortification stores to be delivered either via road or air to the area of operations. Consequently, the gauntlet was thrown down for the Node, in particular considering the coordination and delivery of

these stores in a very tight time frame. However, with the help of the experienced team familiar with previous operations, and swift planning and coordination by the Joint Force Logistic setup at Kandahar, the team managed to deliver the support in good time for the Operation.

As the tempo of operations has remained consistently high, so has the area of responsibility been expanded, and hence, the demands put upon Engineer Logistic Materiel have increased. For the first time, the Engineer Log Node has started holding 90-days' worth of Engineer Logistic Material and Plant equipment as a third line reserve; this will be issued to Units as required via road or air move in the area of operations. Within the Engineer Log Park, GLOBAL and OLIVER systems are used to demand and account for all MOD stores, VITAL is used to track consignments, and the DeMAS account is used for the Engineer Main accounts. Besides these accounts, the Node also operates a very busy LVP account for non-MOD items to be purchased for use in theatre. All these commodities have been delivered into theatre via two different routes, via air from UK to Kandahar, or via sea from UK to Karachi, Pakistan, the closest Sea Port of Disembarkation (SPOD), then via road to Kandahar. Depending upon the priority of demand, stores may take between seven and ninety days to reach theatre.

During this period the Node has hosted Recce and ELSI Teams from 23 Engineer Regiment and 8 Force Engineer Brigade respectively. The process for demanding, receiving, issuing and delivering Resources materiel never stops,





and in the meantime the Node has started back-loading Engineer equipment back to the UK. Of course, nobody is perfect and we are forever trying to develop new and improved ways of operating. Our tour is half-way through now, individuals have started going home on R&R, and we are expecting to be back home in late March '08. I continue to be amazed and proud of my team for the high quality of work produced, their dedication, eagerness to work long hours, and relentless cheerfulness.

Jai QGE!

## Gurkha Engineers on a Training Mission at KMTTC - Kabul

WO2 *Buddhibahadur Bhandari*

ORP, TL, SL and many more words, confused all of us initially whilst working with the Afghan National Army, ANA, at KMTTC (Kabul Military Training Centre) in Afghanistan. After HOTO it all became apparent that these abbreviations of military terminology were those used by the US Military.

Seven men teams from the Brigade of Gurkhas deployed to Afghanistan in mid Nov 07 to take over the expanded 3<sup>rd</sup> Coy of the Officer Cadet School in Kabul. SSgt Rajendra Rai and I were fortunate enough to represent the QGE in the Bde Trg Team dominated by RGR wallas. I must thank my OC and CO for recommending us for this deployment and providing us with such a rare and sought after opportunity. Upon arriving at the KMTTC, we learnt that the role had changed from OCS (Officer Candidate School) instructors to CTX (Collective Training Exercise) mentors. The CTX training team is embedded within 95<sup>th</sup> Div, TAG 218<sup>th</sup> BCT CJTFP of US Army and is commanded by Maj Umesh Pun MVO RGR.



*ANA Soldiers & Team Leaders are about to be briefed on FTX  
(1477 soldiers and 109 potential NCOs are on parade)*

The main role of the CTX team was to mentor both ANA soldiers and officers. Our CTX team took over from a Canadian training team and started operating independently

from 24 Nov 07. The CTX team develop training, implement training and instruction and conduct training assessment and leaders' mentorship of ANA soldiers and officers. The ANA Warrior Training Brigade's prime role is to train and prepare soldiers and team leaders for deployment on operations at a moments notice. Every fortnight, the CTX receives a new battalion (Kandak) for its final FTX where by soldiers and team leaders spend 2 weeks in the field before graduating as ANA soldiers and Sgts'. The first week primarily focuses on Squad attacks, Platoon attacks, MOUT, Recon Patrol, and Ambush day/night operations, all with both blank and live ammunition. Week 2 concentrates training towards more complex operations such as Advance to Contact, Deliberate Attack on an urban village, day and night FOB security operations consisting of QRF, Range Card, Convoy Ops, Manning of ECPs, and vehicle Anti-ambush drills.

The coalition forces have witnessed vast improvements in recently deployed ANA soldiers' & NCOs' training standards, leadership and fighting skills in the south. Constant positive feedback from coalition forces has made our team members



*CTX team members at One Tree Hill in Kabul*

proud and awarded us the recognition deserved as trainers in KMTTC, Kabul. The ANA mentor's instruction skills and



ability to organise training has improved dramatically since we took over the CTX and has motivated us to assess every aspect of the training and to either sustain efforts or seek



*"Winning hearts and minds of ANA" (WO2 Buddhi is preparing typical Afghani tea with an ANA MP at a remote Post in Kabul)*

to develop the training package. Time is flying by, but our team is strong, highly motivated and willing to contribute endless determination and effort to turn this new Army into a reliable and professional force. Our American allies have supported us in every aspect and never get tired of referring to our loyalty and friendship for which Gurkhas are renowned for.

To date, the CTX team has trained 8,923 soldiers and 756 team leaders of ANA. ANA is slowly becoming self-sufficient and has started to introduce more specific training such as artillery, engineering, commandos, SF and specialist personnel any army requires to fulfil their operational role effectively and efficiently. I am honoured and privileged to be part of the team dedicated to bringing peace, prosperity and stability to this war torn country. Although the work of the CTX is just a drop in the ocean, I believe in the longer run, it will pay off and ANA will become a strong and reliable army playing a vital role in sustaining the peace and prosperity of the Afghan people and their country for the foreseeable future.

## Finding a Post of Battle Group Engineer Task Force TIGER (1 RGR BG)

*Capt Yogprasad Thapa*

I am most fortunate, indeed the first Queen's Gurkha Engineer (QGE) Gurkha Officer, to have the honour and opportunity to provide real time Battle Group Engineer support to 1 RGR BG in the Brigade of Gurkhas history!

Immediately after I took over the appointment of Gurkha Captain of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, I explored all the opportunities available to deploy with the Sqn on Op HERRICK 7. After numerous requests and proposals I was rewarded with the assignment of Battle Group Engineer with 1 RGR BG who were to deploy on Op HERRICK 7 as a Reserve Battle Group (South) at the same time of the Sqn deployment.

In preparation, I completed a daunting week on Salisbury Plain with 1 RGR BG as a Battle Group Engineer, followed by attending a week long Pre-Deployment Training package with 2 YORKS as OC CS Coy OMLT. I was advised to take the BGE post, assuming I would be less busy and would be able to get ample opportunities to visit the 69 Sqn boys to provide G1 support.

Life was running at fast pace as I landed at KAF, regrouping with BG following weapon zeroing and completion of the necessary RSOI package. I was instructed to join the Principal Planning Team at Laskah Gah where they were planning the first operation (Op PALK WAHEL). Joining the experienced principle planning group late and without any previous experience and knowledge as a BGE was no less than nerve wracking. Most of the time I ended up learning new BG phrases which was unnerving. Being the reserve battle group in RC(S), we had to remain flexible and prepared to undertake new challenges with an unforeseen joint engineers group constraint as we did not have dedicated engineers with us; we were always relying on a

limited number of engineers until towards the final phase of the operation.

As the BGE within the principal planning team, my primary job was to analyse the ground constraints integrating the likely threat in liaison with the Intelligence Officer. I provided advice to the BG Comd on the ground and also advised on the possible Joint Engineers Group tasks and their requirement for the successful completion of the operation. Once a decision had been reached, I was to provide a brief as part of the orders process, outlining the ground and environmental conditions. I often found the interpretation of the ground challenging primarily due to my unfamiliarity with the terrain, large areas to cover, lack of information, availability of time and lacking the requisite extensive technical knowledge. Despite these circumstances, I was determined to give my best effort working long hours and enduring sleepless nights. During the deployment, I provided engineer advice as well as watch keeper duties as part of main forward body.

With the limited number of dedicated engineers in the BG, my additional responsibility was to coordinate Joint Engineers Group that included engineers, EOD and CMD drawn from various Task Forces (TFs) and nations. During the operation Joint Engineers Group played a vital role along with the assault companies. Their task was to provide close engineer support to assault companies that included explosive entry, route search, compound search, obstacle clearance, gap crossing and trench denial; these formed the critical phase of operation. Working with multi-national engineers was also challenging but rewarding. Time was always against us; regrouping, training and deployment being completed within short time-frames often very close



to the minimum safety time required. The most challenging aspect for me was to organise engineer resources that were required for the operation, often with no one to turn to for help!

For the first time in 25 years serving in the British Army, I found myself being totally immersed in various challenges, coordinating all aspects on my own and separated from



*Capt Pack (IO), 2Lt Watt (ISTAR) and Capt Yog (BGE)  
– During ground and threat integration process of Op  
BRESHNA.*

my Sqdn. I really wanted to offer more had I had more time and support. Time was always against me and being the only engineer in the BG, my scope of accomplishment was limited. With this attachment, I have gained extremely invaluable experience, which would have been missed if I had not accepted this post. These diverse experiences and challenges will remain with me for the duration of my career.

It has been an honour and privilege to work with such a professional team, above all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Chief of Staff and my colleague, the Int Officer for the concise guidance and steering required that were beyond my thoughts. I firmly believe that the success of a battle mission depends on the quality of the leader, a meticulous planning team and of course indomitable and professional troops, 1 RGR BG had the combination of all. Although I am leaving theatre early to return to post as the Gurkha Captain, I have every confidence that 1 RGR BG will continue to uphold the fine tradition of the Brigade of Gurkhas. By the virtue of its own right, 1 RGR BG has proven the definition of modern day Gurkhas that had been obscured until now.

Finally, wherever you go and whatever you do “Mata Durga Bhawani” always be with you.

## MUSA QUALA DIARY OF A SAPPER

*LCpl Ramkumar Rai*

69 Gurkha Fd Sqdn was once again involved in a major offensive operation in the Northern region of Helmand Province in Afghanistan. This time it was a ‘clear and secure’ operation in the town of Musa-Quala, the stronghold of Taliban insurgents. The operation was part of an Afghan National Army (ANA) led offensive, assisted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) during mid-December.

For many of us, Musa Quala was the first offensive within the confines of a built up area. A significant proportion of the town comprised concrete compounds or mud structure dwellings with often leaking timber framed roofs. From an engineering perspective, this presented us with some difficulty as the existing buildings did not provide support for the construction of defences such as sangars. The greatest concern to us was associated with the health and safety implications from the clean-up of the compounds to be used as defensive bases.

The following day, we commenced the first of many long days constructing the District Centre. Initially, we even took turns on sentry duty throughout the nights as we appeared particularly vulnerable to attacks. Our vulnerable state meant the temporary District Centre buildings and surroundings had to be well protected. Everything had to be constructed from scratch, and the amount of work at times seemed daunting.

We constructed quite a few patrol bases and PVCP around the DC. Our first movement out of the district centre, once



*Sappers from 69 Sqdn busy collecting rubbles for Sangars*

the first line of defence construction had been completed, was to conduct a PVCP to the south. Once finished, PVCPs would be occupied by the ANA to enable them to conduct vehicle and person searches on individuals entering the town. A major public road, and probably the only one entering the town from the South, separated the accommodation enclosures from the task enclosures. It was a very busy road and in terms of the nature of traffic, it was quite similar to the UK motorways with traffic congestion during peak hours. Though there were ANA and their British mentors manning observation posts, walking across from one end to the other for resources and stores amid the public and vehicles was beyond what I believe to be a comfortable security zone.





*Conducting a patrol in Musa Quala*

We normally had three days to finish a PVCP, which normally comprised 3 – 4 altered Sangars on roof tops, a few Deep Trench Latrines (DTL) and about 700 - 800m of Hesco perimeter walls around it, topped up with razor wires. Working with Osprey body armour and helmets would reduce the efficiency to a great extent. Working towards balancing the threat reduction and the improved efficiency of work was a huge challenge in itself.

Our Regimental Padre on Op Telic 4, had said, “Human -beings are creatures of habit”; we become accustomed to our surroundings and often, through complacency, allow our work priorities to transcend the risks posed.

The task to PB North was more problematic than others. To begin with, our movement to PB North was delayed for 5 days by torrential downpours. It seemed as if all the rockets, missiles and guns that were fired by ISAF missed the target as determined by the latter zero Battle Damage Assessment and instead punctured the sullen skies overhead. The effects were quite shocking. The normally shy River Wadi in front of the District Centre turned into a big bully, stretching as wide as 500m, intimidating all our vehicles and trying to devour all those attempting to negotiate their way across it. It actually managed to engulf one MTV, and an ANA’s personnel carrier for 5 days.

The proposed PB North site was located on the northern periphery of the town next to the public graveyard. At 05:00 hrs in the morning, we were informed by a US soldier who had been guarding the house that they were leaving that day. Our force protection, the ANA, who were supposed to

turn up before the US moved out, were nowhere to be seen. For 4 hours, the 10 Sappers conducted clearance sweeps of the area. The next day a young boy approached my mates, and as I spoke a bit of Pashtu, was summoned to interpret. He informed us about the recently laid IED just 600m from the hut we were staying in. He willingly led us to the place and showed us where it was buried. As we tried to get the EOD team on site, one of the ANAs cut the electric wire to the device and carried it back to the base on his shoulder - Mad people! It was later dealt with by the EOD in the District Centre. The young lad got \$50 in reward and seemed rather happy.

The full impact of these actions became apparent only two days later. In retaliation, the Taliban stormed into his house that night and the next day, the boy was found lying dead near the graveyard with a booby-trapped device lying underneath; he was apparently hung first. A sapper will always have more stories to tell than others. The story has not ended, it has just begun.

The onus is upon us engineers, to transform this place in the shortest time possible. Gauging the amount of resources we were received and used so far in Musa Quala, the huge transformation is not a surprise at all. “Engineers are always the busiest guys” one of the Sgt Majors from Task Force Fury commended on our hard working ethos. His praise was followed by an Army Commendation Medal for Capt Ek Saheb, then acting Tp Comd for the Engineer Detachment in the District Centre. As Maj Bower from the 2 Yorks, OMLT group said, ‘The Engineers are allowing us and the ANA to operate and remain in Musa Quala’. However ‘iconic’ the fall of Musa Quala was, it seems making it fall was the easier part; the making it stable, a secure place to operate from and well defended, was the task that was more challenging and will continue to be. Capt Dev Saheb said ‘The combined threat and the engineering challenge are unsurpassed’. It truly was, but to see the rewards of hard work and the recognition from visitors to the place is the joy a sapper works towards.



# GURKHA COMMANDOS

*Exercise OCTANS 2 – Spr Deepak Rai*

In the past, Norway was in the brink of invasion from neighbouring countries. Its geographical features helped it to defend the nation. Its snowy mountains proved to be a very reliable natural obstacle. On the other hand, Norwegian soldiers themselves were finding it hard to get up the mountains to fight the enemies. So fighting in the cold weather like Norway is thought to be very tough. Since then, British forces have been conducting regular training in Norway. The main aim of the exercise was to train mainly commando trained personnel to operate in the cold weather environment. It is said that commando training without cold weather training is incomplete.

As a part of 3 Commando Brigade, 59 Independent Commando Squadron, Royal Engineers deployed to Norway on 14<sup>th</sup> of January and so did the Gurkha Commandos. Cpl Naresh, Lcpl Mohan, Lcpl Raj, Spr Deepak and Spr Bishnu deployed Ex OCTANS -2 while the other members of the Gurkha Commando Section missed out because of courses and other commitments.

The exercise itself was divided into three phases, the first phase being the CWWC (cold weather warfare course). The aim of the course was to teach the soldiers to survive and fight in the extreme cold weather condition. The course was four weeks long. Each week consisted of 3 or 4 days living out in the field. The course itself began with learning basic skiing technique then surviving and fighting in extreme cold conditions consisting basic navigation, offensive and defensive tactics in the arctic condition by ski borne or without ski borne. We had the pleasure of jumping into the icy water on the frozen lake 'Ice Breaking Drill'. This is designed to train soldiers how to get safely out of water in case ice breaks up and the soldier finds himself in water. On the final day we skied all the way down to the pick up point after destroying all the enemies in the area which marked the end of the course.

The course was very demanding physically. The biggest enemy was the extreme cold weather. But we had done our homework which made our life little bit easier. We were



ready mentally and physically for whatever came in our way. Living in the field in itself is harder than normal as we all know. It was very tough for us as the temperature often dropped below -20 degrees. The temperature up to -30 degrees is considered deployable. Admin had to be spot-on to keep away from cold weather injuries. Putting gloves on was absolutely necessary all the time to avoid metal sticking to your hands. Skiing with full kit in the Bergen, dragging pulk containing section tents attached to the back provided enough reasons to be proud of, on the completion of the course. All the Gurkhas involved successfully completed the course.

The second phase for 59 commando squadron was STA (special to arms training) which was an engineering exercise. It included mine warfare, bridge demolition, ice demolition, bridge construction etc. This was a two week long phase exercise. The first week was walk through, talk through and in the second week we carried out all the tasks as best as it could be, in the minimum amount of time, tactically. The STA phase concluded with 3 days tactical exercise. Condor troop built FOB for this exercise using snow, where plant operators from the Sqn were busy building a snow bund by collecting snow from the surrounding area. While we were busy building a sangar using timber logs in four corners of the FOB and at the same time putting defensive obstacles around the FOB to stop the enemies' approach. Irrespective of how well our defence was, the enemy attacked all night. An end-ex was called on completion of 10 bay double storey MGB bridge, one of 59's favourite bridges.

The third and last phase was ex AB. It was a two week long exercise onboard ship. Condor troop, 59 Squadron boarded RFA Mounts Bay on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February and joined 45 Royal Marines Commando. Our mission was to provide close engineer support to the commando brigade and act as infantry troop. Several 'beach raid' drills were practised in the 1<sup>st</sup> week by boat and aviation both on day and night. This practice mastered our SOP with 45 RM. In the second week we were dropped off on the beaches by air and amphibious means. We conducted several successful



attacks. BRF (Brigade Recce Force) were feeding us all the information about the enemy. Exercise AB ended at midday on 8<sup>th</sup> March. 59 Commando Squadron flew back to the UK on 10<sup>th</sup> March. On the whole, the exercise was very beneficial. We considered ourselves lucky to have a chance to train in Norway. It provided us enough opportunities to brush up our military skills in the extreme cold environment. This exercise sure has built our capabilities in any weather condition.



LCpl Rajbahadur Gurung was attached to 45 Cdo RM to teach the Marines during the CWWC. LCpl Mohan Thapa who commanded his section throughout the deployment was awarded a Best Improvement trophy on the course. After well earned Easter leave, the newly formed 24 Cdo Engr Regt RE is straight into the Op HERRIK Pre Deployment Training. On the other hand more QGE Commandos have been posted in the Regt in the hope of a Gurkha Commando Troop within 24 Cdo Regt in the near future. Currently there are 16 QGE Commandos and 8 families living down in Chivenor. With the arrival of first and only Gurkha Commando (SNCO) Sgt Khadka Gurung has made a lot of differences in welfare, admin, family cohesion, ethos and pride of us Gurkhas, although he is employed as a Reconnaissance Sergeant in 59 Cdo Sqn. We hope and are very much committed to form a Gurkha Commando Troop in the future so that this continuation of serving closely with 3 Commando Brigade will last for next decade to come.

Jai Gurkha Commando

### 3 RSME - Minley Detachment

*Capt Uttamkumar Sherchan*



*Capt Uttamkumar Sherchan – Curragh Tp Comd  
 WO2 Mohan Gurung – QMSI, BEW  
 WO2 Meenjang Gurung – QMSI TSB  
 SSgt Janga Singjali – SNCO Curragh Tp  
 SSgt Madankaji Sunwar – SNCO Instructor, CIS Wing  
 Sgt Samir Thapa – SNCO Instructor, CIS Wing  
 Cpl Sanman Thapa – Trg JNCO Curragh Tp  
 Cpl Sharad Tambahangphe – Trg JNCO Curragh Tp  
 Cpl Ashok Gurung – Trg JNCO Curragh Tp*

We are renowned as the Gurkha Troop, although there is no such group as we are fully integrated with our British Counterparts. Within Curragh Troop, there are two sub-

troops, Curragh A and B. Each troop consists of 5 JNCOs and 1 SNCO. We are responsible for running Combat Engineer Courses and this year we successfully ran 8 courses and trained 300 young Sappers ready to enter the Field Army. In addition, we also picked up a number of RAAT tasks such as Army Cadet Force support and Gurkha Survival Stands etc.

There have been some significant changes this year although the impact to training has been kept to a minimum. For a start, there is no pass-off parade at the end of the Combat Engineering Class 3 course, so now you can only visualise what you have seen in the past at the Hawley lake with all those big bangs and charging towards the spectators with Kukri. They also took out the construction project week; hence, shortening the Basic Combat Engineering course from 10 weeks to 9. That said, training is still challenging both physically and mentally and more importantly feedback from various of our customers has been very encouraging.

#### **Training Standard Branch – HQ Combat Engineer School**

WO2 (QMSI) Meenjang Gurung took over the job of Combat Engineer Analyst / Validator in Training Design and Standards Branch in Headquarters Combat Engineer School in Gibraltar Barracks, Minley from 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008 for two years.

He is responsible for the writing and maintenance of all combat engineer questions banks, exam papers, testing,



and validation of phase 2 and 3 students on all courses run by the Combat Engineer School.

There are a number of courses that are run on a correspondence basis and he is responsible for ensuring that examination papers for the Combat Engineer 3 - 2 Retention Tests are sent to the unit, completed correctly, and returned for marking. The results are then entered in the TAFMIS database and units informed of the results.

He carries out International Validation and Trend Analysis on all Combat Engineer School and Engineer Training & Advisory Team courses.

### Communications & Information Systems (CIS) Wing



*Sgt Samir with students*

The CIS Wing is responsible for all communications training within the Corps of Royal Engineers and is being run by a staff of 21 military instructors who provide instruction for 15 different courses, ranging from the RE Troop Commanders to the Military Engineer Combat Class 3. The Army has

## 61 Training Party

*Spr Arpan Gurung*



Unlike past years, this year the Queen's Gurkha Engineers managed to attract 39 trainees, the highest number so far, from Recruit Intake

2007 on completion of our 42 weeks of Phase 1 Training at Infantry Training Centre (ITC) in Catterick. We arrived in Minley, Gibraltar Barracks 3 RSME for the Combat Engineering Class-3 training on 11 Nov 07. We are the 61<sup>st</sup> training group to go through in the history of the QGE, hence the title '61 Training Party'. The course was nine weeks long, during which we were taught and tested on

entered the digitised era and the Wing is at the forefront delivering training to both vocational communicators and non vocational operators throughout the Corps. The vocational courses range from 10 weeks Class 3 course to 5 weeks QMSI course whereas the non vocational courses range from 1 day at Class 3 Combat Engineers level to 10 days long course for Combat Engineer Class 2 -1.

### Battlefield Engineering Wing

*WO2 (QMSI) Mohan Gurung*

It has been a fantastic last 18 months here in the Battlefield Engineering Wing (BEW) and I am enjoying every moment of my time both in and out of work. I am currently working within the JNCO training Branch and I am responsible for the Field Section Commanders Course, along with 3 other QMSIs. We are often involved with other courses that run within the wing. They say, 'Learning is a lifelong process' and I couldn't agree more. I must admit I have learnt a lot after coming here. It has not only presented me with an opportunity to widen my horizons, but has also given me an ideal opportunity to deliver a better understanding of the Gurkhas to the wider Corps and beyond. As always, QGE personnel have shone through on courses and I have been lucky enough to have witnessed some outstanding performances from QGE course personnel during my time here in the BEW. Needless to say, it is purely down to pure discipline and the sheer hardworking ethos that we inherit from our forefathers. I feel proud particularly when my fellow instructors come to me and praise some of the QGE students on the course. Personally, I believe, we thrive on challenges and we shouldn't be afraid to embrace new challenges as long as we uphold our ethos.

My tour in BEW is coming to an end soon and I am looking forward to working in QGE again. I hope I can pass on my newly acquired knowledge when I go back to the QGE and I would strongly recommend this job to all upcoming QMSIs.

various aspects of Combat Engineering at basic level in order to become Sappers of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. Without a doubt, it was an intensive training phase both physically and mentally.

After just four weeks of training, we were very fortunate to have Christmas Stand Down leave. During this period we had some excellent opportunities to enjoy various educational visits and training organised by the permanent staffs. We visited the Imperial War Museum, the Gurkha Museum where we learnt about our history from past to present, and had a quick glance at one of the Seven Wonders of the World, 'Stonehenge'. In addition, we also enjoyed various sports organised by Cpl Sanman and Cpl Ashok.

Immediately after Christmas leave, the training resumed at its fast pace, learning new things each day with tests at the end of each module. We worked extremely hard and





It was an honour to have our own Colonel of the Regiment, Maj Gen DR Bill CB as the Reviewing Officer who kindly presented the following awards to the following Sappers:

Top Student Award - Spr Arpan Gurung  
The Best Combat Engineer Award - Spr Mirak Kandangwa  
The Best Work Book Award - Spr Amber Mangmu

The Kasam Khane Parade was followed by a curry lunch and some traditional dances from the 61 Training Party in the Lendrim Club. The 9 weeks have been a remarkable journey for us and a great start to our Army career as QGE Sappers. Lastly we the 61 Training Party would like to give big thanks to all the members of Cur B TP for their full support and hard work to complete our course successfully.

Jai QGE! Jai 61Trg Party!

*Trg Pty with Col of the Regt, Comdt and GM Sahebs*

completed all 8 modules producing an excellent course result average of 87.23%, which was quite an achievement. After completing the 8 modules we deployed on the final exercise for 5 days in the local training area, where we were continually assessed on our combat engineering skills. The final exercise ended with a run where our physical strength, determination, courage and teamwork were tested to our limit.

Following the final exercise, the preparation for the Kasam Khane Parade began. We had few rehearsals beforehand and the actual Kasam Khane Parade took place on Thursday 31 January 2008, in the presence of QGE, Ex QGE, QGE families, 3 RSME members and trainees' own families and relatives. The Kasam Khane Parade kicked off with the parade and Oath Taking Ceremony. The Band of Brigade of Gurkhas played some splendid tunes while the Training Party performed an outstanding parade apart from the wet weather.





# Infantry Training Centre Catterick

*Capt Tarabhadur Pun, No 1 Platoon Commander*

Until 1948 recruits, from the Brigade of Gurkhas were trained at Regimental Centres in India. With Indian independence and the division of the Brigade between the Indian and British Armies, British Gurkha recruit training was centralised at the Training Depot Brigade of Gurkhas (TDBG) at Sungei Patani, North Malaya on 15th August 1951. In 1971 the Depot moved to Malaya Lines in Hong Kong and remained there until December 1994. In 1994 it was re-titled the Gurkha Training Wing (GTW) and moved to Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Church Crookham, near Aldershot. In December 1999, GTW moved to 2nd Infantry Training Battalion, Infantry Training Centre (ITC), Catterick and then became The Gurkha Company, based in Helles Barracks. The Gurkha Company is part of the 2nd Infantry Training Battalion under Command Headquarters ITC Catterick with a permanent staff of 79 all ranks. The Gurkha Company currently consists of 230 recruits organised into two wings, A (Imphal) Wing and B (Meiktila) Wing. It is here where the role of The Gurkha Company is to mould a Nepalese youth into a Gurkha soldier, trained to be part of the modern British Army whilst retaining their proud heritage summed up in the Gurkha Motto, "Kantar Hunu Bhandra Marnu Ramro" - "It is better to die than live a coward".

The Company is run by enthusiastic instructors from across the Brigade of Gurkhas, whose ranks I joined in March 2007. Having taken over from Capt Dev Saheb last year I really felt that this was like a dream come true moment for me, as I always dreamt of becoming an instructor within this organisation from my days at the Training Depot Brigade of Gurkhas (TDBG) as a young and naive recruit in 1987. There are five platoons each comprising a Platoon Commander, a Sergeant and five Corporals with 46 recruits. It is a great privilege to be an Infantry Platoon Commander and an ambassador to all Corps Units. I believe the QGE provides an essential role in support of the training at the Gurkha Company and this must continue.

The routine work here is well renowned and although not as hard as the work faced on operational tours, it is certainly tiring and time consuming. The recruit intake of 2007 had their Pass Off on 10 October 2007 in the presence of the Inspecting Officer, Maj Gen D R Bill CB, who happened to be the current Colonel of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself. 40 trainee riflemen then joined QGE to become the proud new sappers after spending a further three months on Basic Combat Engineer training at 3 RSME in Minley.

Their Kasam Khane parade took place on 31 January 2008 in Minley which was witnessed by Comdt QGE, OC Gurkha Company and several Gurkha Majors of the Brigade together with their proud families. Apart from a Platoon Commander post, there are some other posts that QGE personnel have filled, such as the Training Coordinator (Trg Coord), two Section Commanders, a Storeman and PTI.

WO2 Yambahadur Pun (currently the SSM 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn) was succeeded by WO2 Dirgha KC who says: "My present responsibilities are poles apart compared to my previous assignment in my regiment. Perhaps my past experience of working in a Training Regiment assisted me in assimilating quickly into this very busy environment. I suppose being the Trg Coord and performing its duties is not as easy as one may think, although the job itself is quite challenging, I'm enjoying every moment of it. I find immense reward in organising adventure training and navigation days in between other duties from an endless job-list. Adventure Training gives an excellent opportunity for recruits to get outside of the normal military environment and it involves all trainees in various activities, simultaneously; it also helps them in developing their teamwork and leadership qualities. Navigation is an important aspect of military skills, and a one day competition is organised to give the recruits the opportunity to master their map reading skills as well as their physical fitness. As a Sapper, I have undertaken numerous tasks that mostly require skilled labour and initiative to achieve good standards."



*Col of the Regiment Inspecting the Parade*



The other two Section Commanders/Instructors from QGE out of 25 are Cpl Khelendra Gurung and Cpl Suryaprasad Tumbahamphe who replaced Cpl Birendra Khambang and Cpl Sushil Gurung respectively. Their efforts have been at extremes to the extent that they forget to break for tea or lunch during the day. Keeping the reputation of QGE, high as ever in Gurkha Company. A little known and forgettable post, but most useful, is the storeman in G4, LCpl Dambahadur Pun, who works extremely well not only in the post but in his trade work as an electrician within the Company. He explains, "When I was nominated to serve with the Company as a store man in Jan 2006, I thought that it was a chance to realise my dream I had since I passed my own recruit training. Those early and unfamiliar days have started to become familiar; as I always keep in mind that I am representing the QGE interest. A Storeman, as most think, works in a store, but I get involved working in the field with recruits which reminds me of the days being recruit myself. A small group of three staff, CQ department is well organised and bonds well to support the Company in all G4 aspects. I could not write this without taking the opportunity to thank all that have supported me."

Physical Training (PT) Team in Gurkha Company has been recognised for many years for the excellent work by QGE PTIs and in particular Sgt Rastra Rai, the Master of Martial Arts. This year the PT team has missed the presence of SSgt Rajen Rai, deployed on Operation HERRICK and Cpl Sanjeev Limbu currently in 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron. The Team commanded by a Gurkha SNCO consists of 5 Corporals from 5 different Gurkha units whom have welcomed Cpl Laxmi Okhrabu from QGE. He expresses, "The work of the Gurkha Company in ITC Catterick is probably well known to the Brigade of Gurkhas, but the little known PT Team is also doing the best to achieve the training objectives for recruits, based at McKay Gymnasium in Vimpy Barracks. We are mainly responsible for the training of Gurkha recruits to ensure they achieve their basic fitness level on completion of phase one and two training, we also take lessons for the British recruits. All the training delivered to recruits is progressive becoming gradually more arduous as the programme continues. The training programme and especially the outdoor activities are changed frequently due to the nature of the weather and the requirement of modern warfare training. Despite the busy hours in the gymnasium, assisting the troops in the field, providing support are normal routines, the work days are intense, demanding and highly challenging".

Gurkha Language Wing (GLW) working alongside Gurkha Company has QGE members assigned every now and then.

Recently the wing bid farewell to SSgt Surya Thapa who was the CQMS and warmly welcomed Sgt Kamal Gurung as a Sgt Instructor. He writes, "It is unquestionable that the Gurkhas in the British Army are the finest soldiers in the

world, as history has recorded, though it is inappropriate to boast. Having come from the foothill of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal to an entirely different culture in Europe, Gurkhas will experience difficulties in aspects of life and especially with language. Militarily speaking, one of the most essential key to any successful mission is clear communication to enable the completion of the common goal with teams and counterparts, hence training them towards a better understanding of the English language. GLW came into existence playing a significant role within the Gurkha Brigade and since has become an integral part. GLW is the present day title given to what it was formerly known as 28 Army Education Centre, Hong Kong. Formed in the latter half of 20th century with the main aim to educate Gurkha soldiers, enables the soldiers to meet the standards and demands of British Army battlefield requirement. The Wing is a small self regulating sub unit lead by an OC who has members of various cap badges as well as being supported by civilian English lecturers, who deliver essential survival skills in the English language for new trainee soldiers as well as SLP2 and SLP 3 Gurkha students who intend to refresh and upgrade their standards to enhance their career prospects. While on their SLP 2 and SLP 3 courses, students get the opportunity to enrol for Literacy and Numeracy exams. After successful completion, they can achieve ESOL and Literacy qualifications, through courses that are run three to four times a year. Each year GLW also runs three to four Basic Nepali and Survival Nepali courses for the British Officers serving in the Brigade of Gurkhas, the

Survival Nepali Course is currently 3 months long course based in Nepal. These courses have proven to be very beneficial to young officers, because it enables them to communicate in Nepali with their own soldiers and they acquire a basic knowledge in the background of the Kaidas and culture of the Gurkhas. This enhances respect, develops and maintains strong bonds between the commander and the soldier. Significantly, in addition to the normal duties and role, the GLW plays a pivotal part in setting the standards and grades for the exam papers for the recruits each year.

GLW consecutively conducting research and planning to enhance annual Gurkha recruit selection, enabling them to meet requirements.

GLW works as a normal sub unit actively taking part in the usual army routine activities, such as the annual MATTs, Battalion competitions and charity events, this tops up an already busy schedule, making this a challenging post."

Jai Gurkha Coy! Jai QGE!



# The Queen's Gurkha Engineers' 59<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration

*Spr Rajiv Chhetri*

A birthday is a symbol of beginning and an important date to mark the length of the journey that someone or something has achieved so far. But most importantly, it is a time of celebration and satisfaction which gets bigger as the years continue to add on. A birthday is also a day to revive the spirit which was formed on the day of birth and to remind all the members new and old, what sacrifices others have made for this to be possible and what's expected from them in the coming years. Hence, it was obvious for the Queen's Gurkha Engineers to celebrate our 59<sup>th</sup> birthday in a grand manner. The overall OIC of the event was Capt Bishnu Ghale who co-ordinated the entire occasion extremely well.

The Colonel of the Regiment, Lieutenant General DR Bill CB, came all the way from Italy to be our honoured guest. Throughout his short stay, the pre-planned programme was very well conducted. Former QGE members who live and work in the United Kingdom were also invited to celebrate



*Capt Jennings(ADC), OC 70, Col of the Regt, Comdt Memsahab, GM, and Rear Party CO Sahebs cutting the Birthday cake.*

the day as they gave many years of service to the Queen's Gurkha Engineers in order to keep it alive and healthy in the Army up to the present day and into the future.

On this special occasion, the formal Commissioning Parade took place for Capt Tulbahadur Ale, the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal was presented to SSgt Balram Pun, Cpl Jitbahadur Gurung and LCpl Pendular Rai, and finally the Bowring trophy was presented to LCpl Koshbahadur Gurung for the best Lance Corporal of QGE of the year.

Having everything out of the way, it was time to cut the cake. With so many years on its name and so many people to feed, the cake without a doubt was huge. The Khukuri used to cut the cake was also massive requiring all the officers around the General Saheb. 69 Gurkha Field Squadron was away on Op HERRICK making QGE livelier with their quality and professional work in the field. Although we missed their presence, we still managed to put up an exciting stage performance of songs and cultural dances to entertain our guests and the families present. After all the entertaining performances, the Col of the Regt gave a short speech stating our values and performance on various recent operations. His Nepali was incredibly fluent which reflected his years of experience with the Brigade of Gurkhas. The Colonel made his way back to the airport to fly back to Italy as soon as he finished his speech, which also was the end of the evening, leaving us with yet another challenging year ahead of us before we can celebrate another such happy day on 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday in Pokhara, Nepal, and of course in the UK. This will involve all the QGEA retired and serving members going to Pokhara, Nepal, to meet old members of the QGE and celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Queens' Gurkha Engineers in a grand manner. Jai QGE!!

## BOAT SECTION HQ BRUNEI GARRISON

*Cpl Mekhabahadur Rai*

Boat Sect consists of 4 people, SSgt Bhesbahadur Thapa (Boat Sect IC), Cpl Minbahadur Gurung (OBM Maintainer), Cpl Narbahadur Gurung (Boat Repairer) and Cpl Mekhabahadur Rai (Sea Survival Equipment Maintainer).

2007 has been yet another successful year for the Boat Section. We were involved in many activities throughout the year including a series of inspections, equipment functional tests, exercises and courses run by the Resident Battalion and TTB. We were involved in equipment maintenance tasks followed by preparation for IER inspection in July and BASS IPT inspection in August. We repaired boats using locally available repair kits, carried out maintenance tasks on more than 200 SSE and tested 40 OBMs for

serviceability with an excellent inspection report.

SSgt Bhesh (Boat Section IC) has set a "periodic equipment functional test" programme, which we carry out whenever time allows us. This has proved to be an effective programme as there have never been problems caused by equipment failure during exercises. We were involved in this programme throughout September. In October another inspection ECI came in. We prepared all necessary documents as directed by Garrison Workshop and had a good inspection report from ECI team. In November, we supported TTB on "Ex Aquarius", Jungle warfare course for the Norwegian Special Force and Military Tracking Instructor Course (MTIC).





*SSgt is Bhesh giving safety brief to Maj Gen Everson OBE GOC 4 Div before Riverine operation during Brunei visit*

After continuous use of our equipment, we had to make sure that it was up to the highest standard for one of the main tasks of the year, the JWAC, so we carried out another equipment functional test during the first three weeks of December. The JWAC kicked off in the last week of December. This year, we had qualified boat operators including an instructor from 22 Engineer Regiment to support us during JWAC. We carried out familiarisation training for them to brush up their skills. We had several rehearsals under the direction of SSgt Bhesh before the actual Exercise which went incredibly well.



*Riverine operation contact drill during JWAC*

All in all, Boat Section had an enjoyable and successful time throughout the Year 2007 and is looking forward to having the same in Year 2008.

Jai QGE!

## British Gurkhas Kathmandu

*Sgt Bikash Rai*

It seems like yesterday, but it has been almost thirteen months since I took up the post of Assistant RSM/ Transit SNCO/ Provost Sgt in British Gurkhas Kathmandu. With promotion and the prospect of a challenging new post in my home country, it was certainly an exiting time for me.

A lot has happened since I was posted on 5 Feb 07. With only three months remaining in this posting, I can look back at what has been achieved with tremendous pride and satisfaction. I must admit this has been a remarkable and busy year for me, implementation of GMAS is still in effect, dependants flying to the UK and Brunei and cessation of Nepal Leave with the last flight on 23 Feb 07. The uncertain future of the BGN has come to end and will remain as it is for the time being.

My role as an ARSM in BGK is a unique experience. The appointment itself largely involves the day to day running of BGK/BGN, assisting the RSM in all aspects of his job and occasionally fulfilling regimental duties in his absence.

The transition of soldiers and dependants has never been easier, especially during the disrupted periods in Kathmandu such as strikes, road blocks etc. The records show a total of 471 individuals have been moved as part of GMAS implementation, 182 compassionate and 230 newly selected

recruits were processed from BGK. In addition, un-scheduled arrivals of compassionate cases are to be monitored i.e. reception at airport and arrangement of their transport/ flights to the final destination. Reception of inbound and outbound flights has always been our top priority where we had to be extremely flexible whether by day or night.

BGN/ BGK has a strength of 50 serving personnel and over 300 Locally Employed Civilians (LEC), for which we are held responsible for, maintaining the law and order and ensuring discipline and the security of camp. Besides being an OIC Gymnasium, Swimming Pool and Mandir, I have to make sure everything is in its place. I would organise sports, social functions, passages/source of information and provide a link between the QGE and Brigade.

Like my predecessors, whilst I remain a loyal servant to QGE, I have also been privileged to serve the unit or the members of QGE/ Brigade. My tour to BGK also gave me the opportunity to attend the 59<sup>th</sup> QGE anniversary where I met Ex-QGE Budho Toli.

Unfortunately, my time in Nepal will come to end in July. Without a doubt, I will remember with great fondness my time in BGK.

Jai QGE!



# From Gurkha Major to Training Major of 75 Engr Regt(V)

*Maj Dhanbahadur Chand(Ex GM QGE)*

Having completed my tenure as the Gurkha Major of QGE, I was delighted to be posted as the Training Major at 75 Engr Regt in Warrington, Cheshire. I feel both proud and fortunate to secure such employment as I am the first GM QGE to be employed within the Regular Army post GM's tour. I would like to thank both Lt Col Nick Elliott MBE Saheb (Ex Comdt QGE) and my current CO, Lt Col Seán Harris Saheb for their support in making this happen.

I find the Trg Maj appointment a challenging one and in many ways a radical departure from my previous role. Having had no experience of regional forces and certainly never having worked alongside the Territorial Army, I have been struck by the differences between the two, both in the outlook from the regulars but also the differences in ethos between the Gurkha and British troops. Despite the fact that 36 Engr Regt is a mixed Gurkha/British regiment, my time here has offered me a closer insight into the British ways of working, the elements of military life that motivates the British soldier, and of course a close-up view of Manc, Scouse and Brummie humour- the squadrons are based in Manchester, Liverpool and Stoke.

I have found many fundamental differences between the Gurkha and British ways, particularly in how to deal with junior soldiers and the SNCOs, and have been lucky to have Harris Saheb as my CO who used to be OC 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn QGE when I was the G/Capt, and I am extremely grateful for all his advice and his Gurkhali is getting better every day. Overall my time here has already presented me with many interesting but rewarding challenges.



*Maj Dhan with CO 75 Engr Regt (V) Lt Col S Harris RE*

The job itself can get quite complicated as the management structure of the TA Regiments are scaled down in comparison to regular units, therefore, I tend to get involved across the range of regimental tasks. As well as being responsible for all aspects of training, I am required to manage the Man Training Days (MTDs) budget which sits presently at £1.2M per annum. I find this role both interesting and challenging as the TA soldiers' pay is based on the MTDs and they therefore have an intense interest in how this aspect of their income is managed.

I am currently working on preparing some of the Regimental personnel to deploy on Op TELIC 12 and others on Op TOSCA as supporting the regular army is the main goal of the TA.



(ABF), which has handed out £22,580 across to the ABF. The Regiment has a great chance of winning the Carrington Drum this year, and if successful, they will be the first TA unit ever to secure the Drum. My contribution to this charity effort was called The Everest Challenge, where I successfully climbed the equivalent height of the Mt Everest (8848m) on a step machine in 9 hours and 34 minutes. This event took place at the Trafford Centre in Manchester and allowed me to raise £2,000 towards the unit total.

Nearly a year in the post and the learning curve remains very steep. I continue to work with a determined approach, enjoy the work, and find that all members of the Regiment both TA and Regulars respectful and friendly towards me, not only for the rank I wear and for the work I produce, but also in essence my Gurkha heritage. Such is the interest in the Gurkhas, the Manchester Evening News and several other newspapers produced articles on my arrival; for a short time I was a celebrity! Although I have missed the QGE and the Gurkha environment and do keep in touch with the Regiment but time permitting. I do find myself lucky to be still serving but this was just a beginning. A long awaited review of the GTACOS has opened a golden gate which offered an opportunity to all Gurkha LE Officers to be able to employ in wider Corps of Royal Engineers and the wider army. I very much look forward of seeing more QGE Gurkha LE Officers being employed in the wider Corps, and I myself having experienced for nearly a year, have full confidence they all do first rate job in the most of the employments keeping the excellent reputation of QGE and Gurkha soldiers.

My family is still living in Maidstone due to the children's school and I am back to Muglishe life again living in a Substitute Single Living Accommodation in Warrington, Cheshire, where I travel down to and from fortnightly.



# My Transfer to the Royal Engineers

WO2 Kumar Gurung, Clk of Wks(M)



WO2 Kumar Gurung Clk of Wks (M) shaking hands with Col Iain Wright RE after receiving his new RE Cap badge.

Following the hardship of recruit selection in Nepal, I had the opportunity to join the Brigade of Gurkhas in 1987. After successful completion of Recruit Training at Malaya Lines Hong Kong, I joined the Queen's Gurkha Engineers and proudly served in several countries stretching from the Far East to the South Atlantic. Whilst serving with the Training Team Brunei as the Boat NCO, I was selected to attend the Royal Engineer's Clerk of Works (Mechanical) course.

## QGE Family Welfare

WO2 Ashokkumar Gurung, GWWO

After the implementation of enhanced Gurkha Married Accompanied Service (GMAS) on 1 April 2006, the number of family arrivals to the home of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, Maidstone, Kent rapidly increased. Currently we have 203 families residing in and around the Maidstone/Chatham areas. When the GMAS was initially introduced,



Academically, I was not prepared for this course but when you work hard anything is possible, and so I successfully completed the course and achieved a Higher National Diploma in Building Services Engineering. Being a Gurkha Sapper, there were no difficulties at all in integrating with my Royal Engineers counterparts and I fully embarked onto the career of the Clerk of Works (Mechanical) with the Corps of Royal Engineers serving in a variety of theatres. The recent announcement of Gurkha Terms and Conditions of Service offered me an opportunity to transfer into the wider Corps and Regiments within the British Army. After a careful consultation with RHQ QGE, I voluntarily made this decision to transfer into the Corps of Royal Engineers.

After 21 years of loyal service with the QGE and the Brigade of Gurkhas, this step was not easy to accept. However, this move may give a vital opportunity to my young fellow countrymen to serve

in this well known highly praised Brigade of Gurkhas in the British Army. Although I am proudly wearing the Corps of Royal Engineers badge, my heart and mind never leaves the QGE and the Brigade of Gurkhas. I wish every success to all past, present and future members of the Brigade of Gurkhas. To the Corps of Royal Engineers, I offer my experience, qualifications, loyalty and active service.

Jai QGE! Jai Bde of Gurkhas!

we didn't have enough Service Families Accommodation (SFA) for those arriving with the only alternative being Substitute Service Family Accommodation (SSFA). A huge gratitude is paid to our Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) Maj (Retd) Ray Edwards and ex GM QGE Major Dhanbahadur Chand, now SO2 Training Maj in 75 Engineer Regiment (V) for their hard work co-ordinating the SSFA within the Maidstone area.

Although the majority of our families reside at Invicta Park, 33 families are still living in SSFA around the Maidstone area. 40 Families are residing in SFA Brompton in the Gillingham area, 31 families are in long term rental accommodation in Barming and Aylesford, Kent and 2 families in SFA West Malling.

Recently, 64 long term void quarters have been refurbished and brought back into use for occupation in Invicta Park. Most of the families within Invicta Park were decanted into the newly refurbished quarters with help from a small element of Rear Party while the Regiment was away on



Op HERRICK 7. The other 87 quarters are now being upgraded as part of the Phase 2 modernisation programme. Once the Phase 2 quarters become ready, the Regiment plans to move families who are living in SSFA, into the new refurbished quarters.

Family Welfare is provided by a small department headed by Unit Welfare Officer Maj (Retd) Ray Edwards and Gurkha Major Dudhprasad Gurung MVO. The team consists of WO2 Ashok Gurung as Gurkha Welfare WO, Mrs Nilkamal Thapa and Mrs Ambika Limbu (currently on maternity Leave) as Gurkha Support Workers. As well as providing family Welfare, the team also promotes Gurkha customs, culture and traditions within the civilian community. The team also runs the Invicta Youth Club every Thursday evening between 1800-2000hrs for children aged between 8 and 16 years. Currently the club has 47 members, of which the majority are Gurkha Children.

With a new full time employed Pandit, Mr Premprasad Gaire, the Mandir parade on Sunday morning is becoming increasingly a focal point for the Gurkha community. The Pandit also provides moral and religious education to our families and children on various occasions. In order to maintain our cultural values and standards, the Gurkha



Major, Maj Dudhprasad Gurung MVO, QGE has been extremely positive in extending these facilities even further to our local schools where our children are studying.

In summary, Gurkha Families are always striving for the best here in sunny Maidstone. Life is even busier for most of the wives who are finding work, supporting their families and undertaking courses such as driving lessons.

## Corp Operational Shooting Competition (CORPOSC) 2007

WO2 Meenjung Gurung



*Regimental Shooting Team – Winner CORPOSC 2007. Sitting from left: WO1 (ex - RSM) D M Woolford, Lt Col R Wardlaw RE (CO), Maj Dhanbahadur Chand (ex - GM) and WO2 (QMSI) Meenjang Gurung (Team Captain). Standing from the left: LCpl Pritham Thapa, Spr Kumar Pun, Spr Dattahang Wanem and LCpl Purna Chautare.*

*“Any one can fire a gun but to become a good shot you need to concentrate, dedicate and apply the theory.” That was the advice given to us during the training by Maj JHC Furnell RE (Capt Royal Engineer Rifle Association (RERA)).*

Our training started with the team captains' course weekend over 3-4 Feb 07, which was organised by Capt Bowes-Lyon

RE, A/Sec RERA at Ash Ranges. Cpl Andy Griffith as RERA Team Coach, gave us a full briefing and prepared us for the competition. Two weekends and three days of Pre-CORPOSC session was organised for the RE teams where WO2 (QMSI) PF Quilliam RE (V) and Cpl Griffith made the best use of the time to take us through all the practices required for the final day.

Eventually the long awaited day arrived on Sun 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007 with lots of excitement. The team captains were briefed about the competition and issued with Squad Cards for the event at 15:00 hrs. The CORPOSC 07 actually started at 0830hrs on the next day with each team moving between the ranges at Pirbright and Ash arriving at each match within the allotted time. Even though the names of the top six shooters within the Corps had been finalised, Match 8 was organised on the final day of the competition to rank the best six shooters within all the Corps. The winning team of the individual Corp Falling Plate and Combat Snap match competed against the winning teams from the other Corps. Unfortunately we were unable to beat the Royal Signals who retained their title. We had to satisfy ourselves with being the runners up in the Combat Snap Match.

Our team consisted of myself (Overall 6<sup>th</sup>), LCpl Purna Chautare (1<sup>st</sup>), LCpl Pritam Thapa (8<sup>th</sup>), Spr Dattahang Wanem and Spr Kumar Pun (3<sup>rd</sup>). LCpl Purna was honoured as the RE All Arms Champion and was carried on the chair from 2N



Ranges to the Corp Tent where Brig CM Sexton ADC (E in C (A)) awarded the remainder of the prizes.

The outstanding performance produced by the team secured us victory winning the Chatham Shield (Overall Champion Shield). In particular, three of us including myself, LCpl Purna and Spr Kumar come within the top six in the RE Corp and were presented Corp Badges.

Lt Col R Wardlaw RE (CO 36 Engr Regt), Maj (QGO) Dhanbahadur Chand (GM QGE), Maj Fawcus (OC 69 Sqn) and members of the Regt who joined us on the final day were all delighted when we received the following trophies:

- Fire team Assessment – Winner
- Combat Snap Match – Winner
- Pistol Team Match – Winner
- LSW Match – Third

- FIBUA match - Winner
- Rupell Cup Match – Winner

- Association Match – Winner
- Roberts Cup Match – Winner
- Whitehead Cup Match – Winner

Jai 36 Engr Regt! Jai QGE!



LCpl Purna Chautare - RE All Arms Champion 2007

## Badminton Report - 2007/2008

*Capt Prembahadur Ale*

I must thank the editor for giving me this opportunity to report on recent QGE badminton achievements. I firmly believe that the Regiment has been excelling at badminton for many years. The history shows the regiment played superbly whilst in Hong Kong and is still going strong here in the UK. I am grateful to those Burho Sahebs who inspired us to become good players.



Badminton Team 2007/2008 with Maj McCallum and Maj Dudhprasad Gurung MVO

This year, although most of the good players were away either on operation or on overseas postings, the QGE still formed a very strong team with Capt Prembahadur Ale, LCpl Jasbahadur Thapa, LCpl Krishnabhadur Gurung (not in the photograph), LCpl Deependra Gurung, Spr Yograj Khembang and Spr Suraj Pun.

The team participated and comfortably won the 4th Division Championship and the Army Cup for 2007/2008. I am delighted to say that LCpl Jasbahadur Thapa and I were selected to represent the Army on the Tri-Service Competition in 2008. I am looking forward to bringing back to the regiment more trophies in the future.



QGE team 1988, Capt (QGO) Lalit Limbu, Lt (QGO) Gopal Gurung with other players. Capt Prem Ale (rear rank, right hand side).





# THE GURKHA LANGUAGE COURSE POKHARA

*Lt Stephen Hudson | Tp Comd, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn*

All who are aware of the Gurkha language course in Nepal consider it one of the best courses in the British Army. Three and a half months in Nepal, learning the language and experiencing the country is undoubtedly an incredible opportunity. Some joke that it amounts to a paid holiday and other sceptics suggest that it is an excessive expense, but I firmly believed that the all-round education and awareness gained, linguistically, culturally and geographically could never be matched by a language course in the UK.



*The QGE 59<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

The intensive lessons and daily tests are certainly challenging but it is the constant language practice once the working day has finished which makes the difference. Whether at festivals, Mess functions or being cornered by a retired QGO eager to gauge your progress, one's language ability is always pushed that little bit further. All the Nepalese that I met patiently encouraged me to practice and the taxi drivers to Mahendra Pul or Lakeside made excellent tutors. What I found invaluable though for cementing the fundamentals of Nepali was the total submersion while attached to the Gurkha Welfare Centre in Butwal and especially the Duty Trek from Dharan to Jiri - ten days from the nearest road or English speaker.



*Dashain Celebrations*

My time in Nepal was an education of both Gurkha and Nepali Culture. It removed some preconceptions and, I hope, started to reveal some much more impressive and humbling truths. I felt very privileged to witness both regional and central selection where 230 of the best were selected from 17,000 hopefuls. And equally insightful, at the other end of the spectrum, was meeting retired Gurkhas whether in the Terai or the Eastern Hills, which gave a sense of the History, life cycle and family that is the Gurkhas.

The Duty Trek was a fascinating opportunity to experience this, to appreciate those who have gone before and to see how people traditionally live in the hills. Whether in Jomsom in the Western Mountains, Chitwan in the jungles of the Terai or the bustling streets of Kathmandu, the opportunity to travel helped to form a varied picture of where the men I would soon serve with came from, as well as a sense of geographical scale of the country. I was lucky to be in Pokhara for Dashain and to witness the sacrificial blessing for the Brigade of Gurkhas. This, combined with other parties and meals, helped to increase my awareness, not only of the Nepali culture from which our soldiers come, but also the traditions of the Regiment.



*On trek near Diktel*

The language could be taught somewhere else but would not be as intense or as binding. One would also miss out on so much more in terms of a rounded education. There are hills in Catterick but they lack a certain Himalayan charm!

Jai QGE!



# QGEA Chairman's Letter

Tony Harking

To me, the arrival of the QGEA Magazine provides the opportunity to catch up on what has happened over the past year within both the serving and ex-serving QGE community. But it also provides the opportunity to look ahead and to see the opportunities for strengthening the strong bonds we share by virtue of our Gurkha service.

Our soldiers have once again shown their courage and skills during the tour of Afghanistan where the traditional soldiering virtues have been very necessary in tackling a determined enemy. In all that I have heard, from the Commandant, Lt Col Richard Wardlaw, and from others, it is very clear that the traditions of excellence nurtured over the 60 years of our existence remain as strong as ever. At RSME, the reputation and achievement of QGE continues as it has always done and the ability to send a Gurkha troop from Minley to undertake their All Arms Commando course ahead of their trade training at Chatham is another example of the contribution QGE offers to the Royal Engineers. So in our 60<sup>th</sup> year, it is excellent to see an outstanding serving population and we must strive to match that in our Association.

Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year will be marked in UK and Nepal and I hope as many of you as possible will be able to support the events that are planned and on which you will receive more information. The number of Association members going to Nepal in November, and the number of our retired soldiers who will join them, indicate a terrific celebration is in prospect and I thank Dom Vershoyle for his extensive administrative efforts to put the trip together. Whilst all this indicates a vibrant organisation, I would like to set us all a challenge in this 60<sup>th</sup> year of encouraging those who have more recent QGE service, both serving and ex-serving, to contribute to the association and to enjoy the unique bonds that exist between us.

I am extremely grateful to my committee for all they do and the quality of this magazine is testament to the hard work of Iain Adamson particularly as it has been undertaken alongside a demanding work schedule. We also owe a debt to the dedication of Jim Stuart who has served as our Secretary for some 13 years and who will hand over to John Wheeley in June. It is very difficult to sum up his achievements nor would he wish me to draw attention to them. However, his ability to maintain communication with Association members despite the mobility inherent in modern life is a testament in itself to his achievements.



Although Chairman for a shorter period, we also owe a major debt to Phil Cook for the way he has guided the Association and ensured that it is a vibrant forward looking organisation that is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. His keen business understanding in particular has benefited us greatly in this changing financial world; the funds have a much healthier look about them as a result. As his Adjutant from some years back, it is a particular pleasure for me to have taken over the reins of the Association from him and I look forward to working with you all during my tenure.

Jai QGE.

Tony Harking



Philip Cook and Jim Stuart in action at the 2007 AGM



# BRIEFING FROM POKHARA 2007/08

Hon Maj Hukumraj Thapa

## QGE DAY 2007



*Cake Cutting Ceremony" SSgt Jasbir Gurung with Hon Maj Hukumraj Thapa and Capt QM Krishnabhadur Gurung*

The 59<sup>th</sup> QGE Day was celebrated on 29 Sep 07 in the Association Compound at British Gurkhas Pokhara. Of the 90 members or so contacted to be present only 40 turned up which included wives and children. A few years ago the attendance used to be in the region of 200 which went down to 90 last year. A sudden heavy downpour on the day hampered members to join in and also another good reason for the reduced attendance is that many burho parties have ventured to UK on Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Thus, despite the encouraging effort by the Committee to make the celebration lively we suffered some wastage on our resources.

The most senior Sapper present was 21132584 SSgt retd Jasbir Gurung who was invited to cut the Birthday Cake. SSgt retd Jasbir joined the Indian Army in 1941 and was transferred to QGE in 1948. We welcomed Lt Hudson RE who was on his SLP 1 Nepali Language Course. It was nice to see 21168185 SSgt Surya Thapa QGE again this year who has been in Gurkha Language Wing for the last 2 years as an instructor. We also welcomed 21158903 Sgt retd Jaibahadur Thapa, inhabitant of Darjeeling, now posted to Pokhara as head of G4 Security for Standard Chartered Bank. After the delicious curry lunch everyone enjoyed a few rounds of Tombola and the Raffle Draw. 21158081 ex WO2 Chandrabahadur Gurung was, being a member of the Committee, responsible for arranging the purchase of a big goat Khasi as the first prize for the Raffle. Believe it or not, the surprise lucky winner was Chandra himself and I can assure that there was no foul play within the Committee Members!

Despite the heavy rain everyone present had an enjoyable gathering, especially meeting old friends and families whom we hardly see around. This year the QGEA annual contribution went up to £200 from £100 to all four locations in Kathmandu, Dharan, Pokhara and Darjeeling. This

has been extremely helpful in funding the celebrations. On behalf of all ex QGE members, I would like to thank the QGEA UK for their kind thoughts and generous cash contribution. Thanks also go to the Committee Members of Pokhara for overseeing the administration and making the celebration very successful indeed. Finally we look forward to meeting many old friends and families during the Regiment's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations in November this year in Pokhara. Jai QGE.

Note: Committee Members of Pokhara and also known as The A Team are as follows:

56718 Hon Maj Hukumraj Thapa  
56063 Hon Maj Haribahadur Thapa  
57097 Hon Maj Judbahadur Gurung  
57112 Capt retd Purnabahadur Gurung  
59649 Hon Capt Mohankumar Gurung  
60857 Capt retd Bhaktabahadur Rai  
61836 Capt retd Gangabahadur Gurung  
66753 Capt QM Krishnabhadur Gurung  
48075 Hon Lt Thakur Rana  
58081 WO2 retd Chandrabahadur Gurung  
59390 WO2 retd Narendrakumar Limbu

## VISITORS



*Lt Col John White in Pokhara*

On 21 Dec 07 the Committee Members hosted Lt Col John White Saheb and Moira Memsahab for a dinner at Barahi Hotel. They were visiting Nepal with their 3 girls for a short trek. They travelled by road from Kathmandu to Pokhara to look at the three bailey bridges (now replaced by permanent ones) built during Ops Rivers in 1994 when John was the last OC of 68 Sqn in Hong Kong. At the dinner, one of his Tp Comds of Ops Rivers 21160857 Capt retd Bhaktabahadur Rai was also present. And, John's first G/Capt 21155425 Hon Capt Dalbahadur Gurung telephoned to say hello to John and Memsahab from Kabul and to welcome them to his home town Pokhara.



## TITBITS ON NEPAL



Hundreds of vehicles seen queuing up to refill fuel in the capital has become a routine. People have been facing acute shortage of petroleum products and are forced to wait in line for more than ten hours at petrol stations to get the limited amount of fuel due to remorseless strikes in the Terai region, the only gate way to bring in petroleum products from the sole supplier India.

**Mobile Telephones.** Along with our leaders' dream of providing one mobile phone to every citizen of Nepal, Nepal Telecom continues selling new sim cards making huge profits. However they have failed to increase the traffic capacity for these sims to operate effectively, hence in frustration this 'dohori song', "Bhanchhan easy chha, Mayalai phone garyo Network Busy chha! (They say it is very easy, But when I phone my girlfriend the network is always busy)."

**Fuel Crisis.** On 19 Feb, to experience the crisis, I joined the diesel queue at 10pm nearby my house to fill up my LC as the tail end of the queue which had started at around 5Ppm had come closer to the pump. Words came round that they had restricted the issue of diesel worth Rs500 only (8 ltr). Come midnight when only 4 trucks were in front of me, we were told, "Diesel sakiyo, bholi try garnus (Stock ran out, try tomorrow)." No hard feelings, amid freezing cold and rain. Everyone seemed to be smiling for reasons of their own. Our Kanchha Manoj who was also on the jerrycan queue for several hours came grinning with 8 ltrs of diesel, whereby my LC's capacity is 90ltrs. As a matter of fact Nepal's debt to India on fuel is adding by the day by billions.

**Miscellaneous Points.** This year we suffered almost 6 months of Nepal Banda meaning the whole of Nepal comes to a stand still, or by Chakka Jam meaning jammed wheels with no movement of vehicles, causing a great loss towards the Nation's economy. Tourism sector was badly hampered and even those who ventured to the hills were pestered by illegal donation collectors. Poor tourists, just like me, do not understand about the different rates levied to them in travel fares, food & drinks and accommodation etc which

lead to verbal arguments and sometimes physical injuries. Furthermore, the excellent services of the electrically run trolley bus and long distant bus franchise set up by Japan and China, are no more in operation due to the lack of maintenance. And, while we are currently suffering without electricity for 8 hours a day, our leaders are promising electric trains running through major cities and beyond. They are also boasting to make New Nepal into Switzerland after the Constituent Assembly Election due on 10 Apr 08.

### QGE FAMILY TIES

Following their fathers' footsteps we have seen quite a few sons joining QGE in the past and this is an ongoing tradition. However, these days, it is not as easy as it used to be. The recent trend seen is that the sons and daughters born in the lines of the second generation are tying the knot within QGE families. They are as follows:

Miss Namrata Thapa, daughter of 21158134 Capt ret'd Chitrabahadur Thapa ex QGE, married Mr Roshan Gurung, son of 21161181 Lt ret'd Gopal Gurung ex QGE.

Miss Benu Gurung, eldest daughter of 21160351 Lt ret'd Dambahadur Gurung ex QGE, married 21167342 SSgt ret'd Gunbahadur Gurung ex QGE. Note: Gunbahadur's eldest brother was 21161183 WO2 ret'd Tulbahadur Gurung ex QGE.

Miss Sabnam Rai, daughter of 21160857 Capt ret'd Bhaktabahadur Rai ex QGE, married 21170508 Lcpl Ramkumar Rai now in QGE.

In Dec 2007, Miss Durga Gurung, the 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter of Lt ret'd Dambahadur Gurung married Dr Jasbahadur Gurung, son of 21151539 Lt ret'd Motiram Gurung ex QGE. Note: Motiram Saheb's eldest son 21168169 WO2 Somprasad Gurung late QGE, is now posted to QOGLR.



*From Left: Lt ret'd Motiram Gurung, Lt ret'd Dambahadur Gurung, Dr Jasbahadur Gurung, Miss Durga Gurung, Mrs Kenmaya Gurung and Mrs Chandrakumari Gurung.*

In Jan 2008 Miss Anita Gurung, daughter of 21159025 Hon Capt Budhibahadur Gurung MVO ex QGE, married Gdsman Ramesh Thapa of Irish Guards, and cousin of 21163655 Sg't ret'd Dalbahadur Rana ex QGE.



# 59<sup>th</sup> QGE Birthday Celebration – Dharan

WO2 (Rtd) Hit Bahadur Rana Magar



The 59<sup>th</sup> QGE Birthday was celebrated on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at Sainik Bhawan Dharan. QGE members and their families started to arrive at about 11 am and Gaph – Saph started with old and bold friends, and of course with our close friend beer bahadur. It was good to see that unexpected members turned out, including their families. The event started at about 12.30 am with the secretary Cpl Jaya Kumar Kerung opening proceedings. This was followed by a welcome speech by Vice Chairman WO2 Hit Bahadur Rana Magar to all VIP guests and members.

A toast to QGE was made by the Chairman Hon Lt Birkha Bahadur Limbu, who also read out the Special Routine Order issued by the Commandant QGE.

It was followed by a 59 candle Birthday cake, cut by the 4<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Major of the Queen's Gurkha Engineer Major Dharma Lal Thapa assisted by Capt QGO Kharka Bahadur Limbu. Some of QGE members may be interested to know about G/Major Dharma Lal Thapa :

1. Enlisted in 1933 at Gorakhpur, India for 2/6 GR
2. Posted to QGE – in 1948 Rank of Capt. QGO
3. GM QGE – 1962 – 64
4. Retd – 1964 from Malaysia

At present he is living in Dharan with his Kanchhi ( second wife ) and he is 94 years old, suffering with semi blindness and deaf. All of the members were very happy to see him because almost 80% of members did not know that he is an Ex- GM of QGE .

All the members and families enjoyed the celebration party and would like to thanks to the Chairman and all members of QGEA for the celebration fund for us.

# QGEA 59<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY – DARJEELING

Lt. (Retd) Arunkumar Zimba

As discussed and agreed by all the members in the last 58<sup>th</sup> QGEA Anniversary, the 59<sup>th</sup> QGE A Anniversary was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 at the New Dish Restaurant, Darjeeling at 1100 hrs.

SSgt Purnabhdur Chettri, Branch Chairperson of the Darjeeling Sub-Division welcomed everyone to the gathering A minute's silence was observed in the memory of Late Major James Bhujel. The proceedings were then handed over to Lt A. K. Zimba, President QGE A Darjeeling Area.

Lt. A.K. Zimba welcomed all the members to the Anniversary meet then read out the Special Routine Order, issued by the Commandant, Lt Col R Wardlaw RE and explained in detail the funds and expenses of the last year.

The president offered the eldest member present 21146049 Hon Lt Chandrasing Lama, and his wife, Khadas and then requested Hon Lt Chandrasing to cut the cake (Hon Lt Chandrasing Lama was enlisted in the Brigade of Gurkhas on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1948 and was posted to Royal Engineers and then later to Gurkha Engineers now QGE. He served the Brigade of Gurkhas for 24 years before retiring in November 1971).



The president also offered a khada to Ssgt Purnabahadur Chettri to thank him for making all the necessary arrangements for the party and a toast was then proposed for the success of the Regiment. It was an extremely interesting and enjoyable day for all the members and wives.

Lt Zimba announced that the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be held at Pokhara and asked the members planning to attend the





party to submit their names to their Branch Chairpersons by the end of November 2007.

After a brief discussion it was decided that the 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary meet would again be held in Darjeeling on 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2009.

Many thanks to all the members who helped to make the programme a success. And also thank to Maj Hukumraj Thapa and Lt Ravindra Sahi for helping us to arrange funding, SRO and the QGEA magazines.

Finally, on behalf of all the retired members, I would like to thank the Chairman QGE A and members for their kind contributions for the QGE day.

## 59<sup>th</sup> QGE Birthday Celebration – Wales

Ex members and families of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers in South Wales area once again managed to gather round for the 59<sup>th</sup> QGE birthday. Mr Indra Gurung (ex plant op 21163197) with his small fatigue party volunteered to coordinate the occasion, so on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2007 just over 70 family members gathered at Boating lake public park alongside the river bank in Cwmbran. It was good to see every one leaving all other commitments behind and chipping in their contributions for this important day. Mr Mahendrasing Gurung (ex RSM QGE) in the capacity of senior member of the community and Mr Dalbahadur Limbu the founder of ex Gurkhas in South Wales cut the Birthday cake. As tradition we all had cakes followed by aludam and many other variety



of home made tit-bits, and then the afternoon was wrapped off with field picnic type fresh messing. It was a memorable Regimental Birthday get together with lots of food and drinks and more importantly chatting the old and gold days of our past time with the Regiment in Hong Kong, Kitchener Bks and more recently in Maidstone and also about life now here

in South Wales. Where ever we are, we all wish all the best to our wonderful QGE regiment and it's continuous good work and progress in the future.



# The Regiment and Association in Action



OC 70 delivering Orders during Ex 28 Shot, Gibraltar



Winner Section of Section Competition 2007



70 Gurkha Fd Sq Sqn during Annual Cbt Engr Trg at Wyke Regis





70 Sqn's Sappers posing after completing footbridge project at Bearstead, Maidstone



Capt Tulbahadur Ale during Commissioning Parade



QGE Pipers at OC 70's wedding procession



QGE personnel with LCpl Johnson Beharry VC – Race for Heroes Charity Run, Aldershot



"Race for Life" – A Charity run for the ladies



OC 70 weds Annabel Memsahab in a Nepalese way







QGE Birthday parade at the Engr Log Park, Kandahar



69 Gurkha Fd Sqn – Howlett Zoo Project



69 Sqn at work in one of the FOBs



69 Sqn JF EOD Search team in action



Carrying out routine maintenance of Camp





69 Contingent led by OC 69, Maj R Walker during Welcome Home Parade



Farewell to GM Dhanbahadur Chand Shaheb & Didi



Gurkha wives with their badminton prizes



QGE Golf Meeting



Baby clinic with Health Visitor



Childrens outing at Legoland, Windsor



# QGEA AGM and Delhi Day Celebrations



# Bits and Pieces

## Reminiscences of a Gurkha Engineer Line Boy

*Maj (Retd) Mahendra Gurung*

[I unfortunately had to shorten this article. I am sure that Mahendra will send a copy of the full article – Ed]

I grew up in Barahpani, a small village situated an hour's drive and days walk west of Pokhara. My grandfather served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Gorkha Rifles and retired as a jemadar. My father, Harkabahadur, retired as Gurkha Captain 67 Gurkha Field Squadron. Father left home aged 14 following my grandfather's death and returned 14 years later on his first leave as a Corporal in the Gurkha Engineers, having seen service in the 1<sup>st</sup> Gorkha Rifles, and after demobilisation, playing an active part for two years in the popular struggle against the much hated Rana regime in Nepal. He married my mother during this leave and built the first school in the village. My memory of life in the village is one of immense fun and freedom. Without the modern day technological distractions, I was able to fully appreciate nature and my immediate environment. I can still see the white morning mist rising from the valleys below, and as the sun rose, the majesty of the mountains glistening gold in the distance and at night gazing in wonderment at the stars.

I remember father coming on leave and my difficulty in coming to terms with my paternal affections. Father had become a QGO and had family permission. I was sad leaving my friends and relatives but was excited about leaving for the unknown. I remember arriving at Sungei Besi speaking only the Gurung dialect and my consequent linguistic deficiency at school, struggling with Nepali, forget the English! Life as a line boy in Sungei Besi was a happy period, when my brother and I had the rare opportunity of spending a lot of time with father and enjoying the fishing, family walks, flying kites and a bottle of coca-cola once a week in the QGOs Mess. Our house was basic but comfortable and the toilet was a novelty after village life! I remember soldiers delivering blocks of ice for our wooden "freezer box" every few days. Our neighbour had been a Japanese POW in Singapore and after listening to his experiences, I remember the repugnance I felt towards our Japanese brethren. I was always stirred by the bugles sounding the reveille in the morning and bemused when father would suddenly stand to attention when the retreat was sounded at six in the evening.

I remember the orderly coming in early in the morning with father's uniform and seeing him pull his shirt down tight through his outrageously wide, crisply starched OG shorts. A land rover would turn up and he would stand on the tailboard so as not to crease his shorts, on his way to the parade square. It filled me with great pride watching father and the soldiers on parade, to the accompaniment of the Pipes and Drums.

We then moved to Kluang for a short period before moving to Tidworth with 68 Squadron. Father had left earlier with the advance party and I remember arriving to a cold and

dreary England after a long flight with stopovers in Bombay and Constantinople (Istanbul), but to find our house nice and warm, with the fire going and our first black and white TV! Mother became a fan of Coronation Street and I remember watching Robin Hood 'riding through the glade' and the assassination of John F Kennedy on the news.

I was the only foreign student in the local English school. Settling into the school was made more challenging by girls flocking around me obviously attracted more by my novelty rather than anything else! As a shy Nepali boy with limited command of the English language, at an age where the opposite sex is not who you wish to be associated with, this was not a situation to be in, an experience which despite my valiant efforts has sadly eluded me ever since! However I soon made friends with the boys and remember playing conkers, without having to do risk assessments, and enjoying the sports. School assembly was interesting and I learnt to sing the hymns and say the Lords prayer, which was very different to the bhajans (Hindu hymns) that I was used to!

As I was getting used to life in England, events in Brunei and the intentions of Indonesia's President Sukarno necessitated our return to Malaya. We lived in Kluang for a brief period where I attended the British Army Junior School with English kids, but played with my line boy Nepalese friends. We swam in the effluent ridden river which flowed through the nearby Malayan kampong - health and safety did not apply then and as far as I can recall no one drowned or died of cholera as a result! We fished in the river, had sword fights with rival gangs, complete with father's Gurkha hat. I remember going hunting with air guns with our QGO 'uncles' in the jungle, and using mosquito nets to catch catfish in the waterlogged ground under the trees, all good jungle survival training! The mosquitoes were troublesome but the daily quinine was awful!

We flew to Brunei in a Belvedere from Singapore. We lived in a house on stilts near Seria town not far from the sea. We were taken by four tonners to school. My school was an English wing to the larger Gurkha Children School. There were only about a dozen of us in the wing taught by one English teacher. She once drove a few of us in her mini minor to watch the Sultan's parade in Brunei Town and in the process must have broken all speed limits as we were late – a terrifying first experience in a car and which made the Italian job look mediocre!

After two pleasant years in Brunei we moved to Perowne Barracks in Hong Kong. We lived in a small two bedroom house in the QGOs quarters, with coke fire for cooking, which mother used to light up every morning. With 7 children, living in a two bedroom house was quite tight. I remember going to my English classmate's huge quarters in Castle Peak Gardens and feeling embarrassed to invite him



to our tiny house, there was no space anyway! I remember father coming home with his pistol during the troubles incited but Mao's Cultural Revolution and the temptation to play with it. I remember the excitement of being taken by my school teacher to watch Stoke City play Everton who had won the FA cup that year at the Hong Kong Stadium and the MCC play at the Hong Kong Cricket Club next to the Hong Kong Hilton.

Secondary school for me was to be in Bourne School in Singapore. One night I was duly put on an aircraft at Kai Tak airport arriving in Singapore the next morning, a tired, nervous and completely lost eleven year old, struggling with two large suitcases. Whilst there were several Gurkha boys in the boarding house, we were mostly kept apart and banned from speaking Nepali by the threat of the cane from Housemaster, obviously with the purpose of integrating us more with the British kids and to improve our English. Integration and acceptance of the majority code rather than multiculturalism was the order of the day and I guess it worked.

Boarding life was pleasant enough though restrictive. I learnt the proper way of eating peas and at social nights to politely ask 'the pleasure of a girl's dance', but I missed mother's cooking and eating with my fingers. Against my father's advice I learnt to play the guitar and became a member of the boarding house band, mainly to avoid the dancing and to skip prep for band practise. Living and being educated with British children at a time when hippy democracy and flower power were dominant obviously affected my view on life and was in stark contrast to my parents' views and this conflict of Nepali and western culture did trouble me for a while. My parents came to visit me on a number of occasions and finally on their way to Nepal on pension. I always made sure to present myself conservatively when they came so as not to upset them. I had been accepted as a boy soldier but allowed to finish school. I remember feeling sad saying goodbye to my family, whom I would not see for another 3 years.

I enjoyed all sports including rugby, until the fourth year when my British friends returned from the holidays a foot taller and 2 stones heavier than me! So that we did not forget our faith, on Sundays all Gurkha children would be bussed off to the nearby Gurkha Transit Camp to attend the mandir (temple) to sing bhajans and listen to the fascinating stories from the Ramayana. I am quite sure that the pundit did not approve of us in hipster trousers, flowery shirts and long hair, in contrast to his usual audience of well disciplined Gurkha soldiers. In order to consolidate our religious education, we would then visit the soldiers' cookhouse and treat ourselves to Gurkha curry, claiming to be soldiers, albeit without the mufti and short hair, on our way to Nepal leave – after all this was a transit camp! I consider myself fortunate to have been exposed to both the Hindu and Christian teachings and especially now that I believe myself to be a Buddhist!

With father having retired, I along with other Gurkha Engineer boys, were sent to the Regiment in Kluang for the school holidays, when we enjoyed the independence of living in the barracks – there were no bed checks for us at 2230 hrs! I remember Maj (QGO) Dhojbir Limbu welcoming us by getting the RSM to march us immediately to the

barbers. It was obvious that western culture did not fit in with the GM's view of life and as far as he was concerned we were soldiers not school kids! We had to have the obligatory Commandant's interview and I always wonder what he thought of us and the reason he felt he had of seeing us in his busy schedule! I suspect it was because we were part of the Regimental family and the GM thought it necessary. The GM also must have seen great potential in our footballing abilities and gave the "hukum" for us to attend training with the Nepal Cup Squad, who I am sure were as bemused or more likely irritated with us getting in their way. We ourselves would preferred to have stayed in bed longer and spent the time by the swimming pool like our British friends, instead of being run ragged and being kicked by hardened soldiers on the football pitch!

At Dashain, all Gurkha children would be invited to the nearby Gurkha Transit Camp. I remember one year when we invited some of our British friends. All of them got dead drunk on the freely flowing Gurkha rum and one of them in his totally inebriated state lifted the head of the young buffalo, dripping with fresh blood that had just been successfully decapitated, to the joyful roar of the Gurkha soldiers. This was sacrilegious and the Gurkha Major had them evicted immediately and we were never again to invite them. I have no doubt we took the blame for any bad luck that the unit suffered in that year. I suspect that nowadays, the School as well as the Army would have been sued for gross negligence!

Thankfully and not soon enough, my exams were over and it was time for me to start adulthood as a Gurkha soldier. Before this though, I went on a short leave to Nepal, barely avoiding death through sea sickness on our two week voyage on an LSL from Hong Kong to Calcutta via Brunei and Singapore. So, our three days in terra firma in Barrackpore was very much welcome prior to the three day train journey to Paklihawa and then a couple more days by bus and foot to my village. The houses in the village appeared smaller and the topography much steeper than I had known as a child. I felt happy to be reunited with my relatives and friends but returning to the village after ten years and no longer able to speak the Gurung dialect I felt out of touch, and embarrassed at my inadequacy. Confused and determined not to forget my roots, I returned to Hong Kong to start my recruit training. Life as a line boy had come to an end and now I was to be purged of all western influence to embark on my life time ambition to become a true Gurkha in the footsteps of my grandfather and father. I had been thrust from a simple, hierarchical village life onto a liberal, volatile, rapidly changing western way of life and finally to the world of "kaida", tradition and authority where western attitudes were viewed with suspicion. Whether my varied but relatively sheltered life as a line boy, lacking the hard village life experience of the typical "hill" soldiers helped me to become an effective Gurkha soldier is not for me to judge, but it definitely provided me with the motivation as well as giving me a good start to a long, satisfying and happy journey with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers family, but that's another story!

Author served in QGE 1971 – 2004 retiring as a Major and was the first Queens Gurkha Engineer to command a Royal Engineer Squadron.



# GURKHA MEMORIAL MUSEUM – POKHARA, NEPAL

Honorary Major Judbahadur Gurung



As I was about to go on pension in July 1997, the burning question from all well wishers was what I was going to do after I left the Army. Quite confidently I told everyone that I was going to renovate the family house in Ghandruk, set up the Gurkha Museum and build a commercial complex in Kathmandu. In the process I was going to write a family history and a story about Ghandruk. It did not help when I was offered a job in Papua New Guinea and Australia with the Jardines Company and I hastily disappeared Down Under. However prior to my departure I had got started on the Museum work and correspondence was activated while out there in PNG.

The job in PNG did not get off to a sound start as the PNG army barged into my office one day and put in some searching questions about me being a mercenary. I did reply that I was an ex Gurkha soldier but in no way was I involved in any other activities other than being the Operational Officer of the Jardines Company in Hong Kong. The Sandline Case and the weapon supply to quell the Bougainville problem was at its height and the involvement of Jardines Flemings made my stay more uncomfortable. I decided to return back to Nepal to the 50th Reunion and all the other pending works that I had shelved.

I therefore teamed up with Captain Yeknarain Gurung Ex 1/2 GR who had been holding the fort while I had been away to somehow resurrect the fledging fortunes of the Gurkha Memorial Museum. It did not help to have the museum located in a residential area and the sky rocking Kathmandu house rent threatening to dissolve the whole idea even before it got off the ground. In order to attract more visitors we needed more items for the museum and the first line of call was the houses of Ex QGE personnel who gave me flags of 67 and 68 squadrons as well as an Argentinean mess tin to more bizarre government property toilet papers as well as the rusted and trusted jackknife. Slowly the items began to pour in especially through the Regimental Association of Nepal (RAN) to which I was privileged to be the General Secretary.

As we plodded on hand to mouth with the survival of the museum, we had to make some far reaching decisions on the future of the museum. After consulting with RAN we decided to move it to Pokhara to an old house belonging to an Ex WO2 from 2 GR who kindly wavered the rent for a year in order for us to have some breathing space. We spoke to the International Mountain Museum to ask them if we could be accommodated within their premises to which they declined. The Western Regional Museum here in Pokhara was also approached and although they did not exactly say no, the bureaucracy meant at best at least 3-4 years and at worst nothing. Then Colonel Sharland the British Gurkha Nepal Commander kindly came to our rescue and offered us the tail end of the Pokhara Camp to which we accepted with open arms. By this time Major Yambahadur Gurung Ex 2/2 GR had joined us as the Chairman after taking over from Captain Yeknarain.



Thus we laid the foundation stone for the museum on the 4th October 2004 with great trepidation, as we were not sure where the money was going to come from. The budget to build

the whole thing came to a staggering Nrs 13 million (£100 000). The fund had to be raised as quickly as possible in order to get rid of any pessimism. Hence, the novel idea of 'One Lakh Donor' and the '£100 buy a brick' was hatched - time was not on our side. Much to our surprise, the fund raising moved ahead rapidly with the generosity of the Ex Gurkhas coming to the fore. As of 1 February 2008, the Nrs 10 million mark was surpassed and more and more people are supporting us. We still can not rest on our laurels as we still have some way to go.

The Gurkha Memorial Museum is rising like the phoenix from the fire and the 3 storey building is now completed. Flags of all Gurkha Regiments are fluttering on the roof top while the giant museum sign will be difficult to miss being at the entrance to the British Gurkha Pokhara Camp. The Chairman of the Museum Associations in UK has visited twice to advice on the layout of the museum and the



background sound tracks to bring alive the battle cry tinged with the regimental march past music.

Once completed you enter the



museum premises to be greeted by our guard in uniform and the statue of a Gurkha Soldier flanked by two guns, part of which was recovered from the Palace in Tansen before it was built down by the Maoist. As you enter the museum, you have the inscription of the famous words written by Sir Ralph Turner....The Bravest of the Brave.....

The building consists of the History of the Gurkhas in chronicle order starting from the Anglo-Indian Wars in the Ground Floor, the Infantry Regiments Display in the First Floor and the Corps and Specialist Units on the Top Floor. The walls are being filled with regimental photos which will be rotated periodically and hence any relevant photos will be most welcome. Display cabinet will have uniforms of different periods and if you still have any of these stacked away in some corner of your house we will dry clean them and maybe it will find its own niche in our museum. There is a large library with plenty of shelves waiting to be filled

up with regimental history books and records. We have managed to find one training pamphlet in Roman Gurkhali. Your contribution is invaluable. Of course if you want to buy a brick then it is only £100- and your name will be inscribed in the annals of the museum.

I do not want to pre-empt the whole thing as you will see for yourself when you visit here on 23 November 2008, when I will personally guide you through the galleries just as I did on the 50th Renion. By the way, I have managed to renovate the house in Ghandruk (you are welcome to trek with me if you so desire after the reunion), the commercial complex is up and running in Kathmandu and the research on the family is completed and I am probably waiting until I retire from Kadoorie before I complete the book. I now can see the light at the end of the tunnel. When I will get across the tunnel is anybody's guess.

## HORIZONTAL DRILLING IN NEPAL

*Capt (QGO) Retd Bhakta Bahadur Rai*



*Horizontal Drilling at Mulabari village in Syangja district*

Rural Water & Sanitation Programme (RWSP) is an integral part of the Gurkha Welfare Scheme. It aims to improve health, hygiene practices and enhance quality of life in poor rural village communities by providing access to clean water and sanitation effectively. RWSP implements 80 drinking water schemes each year in remote hill communities of Nepal. The majority of schemes are gravity fed systems. There are 122 staff in RWSP, including 12 Ex Sappers of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. RWSP is well equipped, with modern Auto-cad and Hydraulic-cad computerised systems replacing the old design drawing boards.

The previous monitoring evidence showed that some 30% of the GWS built projects water sources yield in the hills of Nepal decreased below designed demand or sometimes dried out during the dry seasons. To overcome the problem, in late 2004, portable water drilling equipment was procured at a cost of approximately £200K. The equipment has the

capacity to construct boreholes up to 100 metres deep both horizontally and vertically. These holes will create man-made gravity spring flows to provide an increased supply of water in the existing reservoir tanks where there is insufficient yield in the dry seasons. This is the very first innovative operation of this kind and scale in Nepal.

In the beginning, a number of sites had been identified by mobilising a local geologist for feasibility surveys. Initially several technical and social complications were encountered. For instance, socially the neighbour communities perceived that horizontal drillings would dry out all their water sources in the catchment area. Another major technical problem experienced was the loss of air pressure when the drill hits an open dry fissure or a soft feature without any water. These problems were mitigated by making full use of the equipment, together with comprehensive social input to raise awareness within the community. Horizontal Drilling remained the main effort, but Vertical Drilling was also considered as a subsidiary option. Vertical Drilling would extend the drilling scope and benefit the needy population of Terai (plain region) and bhriti-madhesh (Boulder Zone) belts. There is a perceived demand for pumped, reticulated systems and household supply as the next level of service in the Terai.

The water supply system with small and simple overhead tanks with a limited piped distribution to community tapstands, or even to individual households for populations of 50 to 150 households has been considered as a viable concept for the future in Nepal. Two pilot projects have already been initiated in Morang and Dang districts, which are under progress and anticipated to be completed in late 2009 as model projects. Therefore the versatility of RWSP drilling equipment could widen the drilling operation's scope for a variety of purposes.



The drilling cell consists of a 4-man team led by Drill Manager SSgt Retd Kamalsing Gurung Ex QGE under Programme Director Capt Retd Bhakta Bahadur Rai Ex QGE. To date the RWSP Drilling Team has carried out

seven horizontal drilling and four vertical drilling operations successfully. Some promising prospects for horizontal and vertical drillings in the hills are in the pipeline for future innovations.



*Standing from Left. Driller Purusottam Thapa, Asst Manager Cple retd Bomprasad Rai ex GCSPF and Driller Naran Thapa*

*Sitting from Left: Snr Engr Mr Jeewan Shercahn Senior Engineer, Director RWSP Capt retd Bhaktabahadur Rai 60857 and Manager SSgt retd Kamal Gurung 60292*

## The '3 Poles' of the Earth

Adrian Hayes



In the adventure world, walking to the North Pole, South Pole and summiting Mt Everest, with the latter often referred to as the '3<sup>rd</sup> Pole'. Probably the three greatest feats of human endurance and exploration of the last century. Each challenge alone has occupied the world for 100 years, swallowed countless lives, and given rise to such a library of spine chilling literature, that attempting even one of them is a well-near impossible dream for all but a few masochists in the World. To attempt all three is, well, probably a bit insane.

Insane indeed, but on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2007 I reached the South Pole, my 3<sup>rd</sup> Pole, having summited Mt Everest and walked to the North in the preceding year and a half – for the record becoming the 15<sup>th</sup> person in the World, and the fastest person in history, to achieve the feat.

Flattering though this was, the whole concept and project was simply three life long dreams that I had no idea whether I'd be the 15<sup>th</sup> or 1500<sup>th</sup> person when I started planning it in 2003, only learning I'd be the fastest a month before leaving for Antarctica.

Having climbed on an off since I was 18, Everest was the first I attempted and, after three years of planning and three Himalayan preparatory expeditions, I summited the World's tallest mountain on 25 May 2006 as part of an 11 man team. On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007, 11 months later, I reached the North Pole after a 50 day expedition across the Arctic Ocean from Canada as part of a 3 man team. And finally, just 8 months after this, reached the opposite end of the Earth on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2007 after a 47 day expedition from the coast of Antarctica as part of a 5 man team. A total time of 19 months and three days from summiting Everest to reaching the South Pole. It was, indeed, a very busy 19 months.....

The other 14 adventurers who have achieved the feat – 3 x South Koreans, 3 x Frenchmen, 2 x Norwegians, 2 x Swedes, a Russian, Spaniard, Japanese, and British





explorer David Hempleman-Adams, make up the remaining members of this unusual club. Hempleman-Adams, who is probably Britain's most well-known adventurer after Sir Ranulph Fiennes and was a great inspiration to me, generously praised the feat in the UK's Daily Mail on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2007. "It's a magnificent achievement" he wrote. "People think that with satellite phones and global positioning satellite systems that it has got easier, but it's still extremely hard and dangerous, and very few people have done it".

I couldn't agree more. Each challenge is immense and the fitness levels and mental disciplines required for all of them are huge. But in addition, they are also three very different expeditions requiring very different skills - with very low success rates, particularly on Everest and the North Pole, which is probably why so few people have achieved all three.

For fitness, I'm lucky to live in a country, the UAE, which has much you need to prepare yourself for such feats – a thriving sporting/fitness scene, big mountains to train on and a soft sandy beach 2 minutes from my house to pull tyres for 3-4 hours every day, essential training for the Poles. The only problem is the heat, typically +45C instead of -45C. I am indeed the only so-called "Polar explorer" stupid enough to live in a desert.

Each of the three challenges had numerous obstacles and immense challenges to overcome, but in its simplest summary, altitude was the greatest challenge on Everest; cold the greatest obstacle on the North Pole; and wind the undoubted nemesis in reaching the South Pole. The cold on the North Pole, down to -60C for two nights with many days below -50C (absolute temperatures, not wind-chill included), is utterly impossible to describe other than to say you're in total shock. The wind on the South Pole, meanwhile, up to 100 km/hr that battered into your face and body, day in day out, just left you like a punch drunk boxer. The lack of oxygen on Everest, meanwhile, probably needs no explanation. To make the latter even worse, my oxygen mask only worked for the final two hours of my summit night from the South Col to the top and back again. Suffice to say,

after 12 hours without O<sub>2</sub>, the 6 hour descent was the worst and hardest experience of my whole life.

Physically, I suffered frostbite to my nose on all three expeditions, minor frostbite to my fingers on the North Pole, but thankfully all of them kept intact - though 3 of my team-mates on Everest all lost toes. For me, the worst potential problem of many, many problems you face on such expeditions was, however, an embarrassing ripped polar suit right in front of my crutch. With two layers underneath one might wonder how such an issue could cause problems, but when you have 100 km/hour katabatic winds blasting through a hole the size of a saucer in such a delicate region, let me assure you that you get very cold. So cold in fact, that I couldn't feel a thing after two hours, and had to resort to doing something that I only learned from my former QGE and 7GR colleagues every Saturday night in Hong Kong - stuffing socks down my pants..... I don't mind severely frozen fingers or toes, but there's some places you definitely don't want to get frostbite!

Which was the hardest of the three? This may surprise many readers but whilst on any one day, and particularly summit night, Everest was easily the hardest physical challenge I'd ever experienced, you do, however, get a lot of rest time in base camp. Essential acclimatising rest time in relatively comfortable conditions, good food, good sleep and warm sunshine. On the Poles there is no rest and no respite from the elements at all, and you have to keep moving whatever the weather. Thus, overall, the North Pole was not only the hardest of the three, but is probably the hardest physical challenge on our entire planet. The South Pole comes next. Both are absolutely brutal, and it says something when you have to relegate summiting Mt Everest as the 'easiest' of the three. Nothing was easy about any of them.

And why? The full answer would probably fill up the whole of this journal, but I'll simplify it enough to say I actually, strangely enough, quite enjoy it .....

*For dispatches and pictures from Adrian's 3 Poles achievement go to [www.adrianhayes.com](http://www.adrianhayes.com)*

## Tiger Tiger

*John Kitching*



Now in those ancient and far off times of which I have previously written, it was announced that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Angle Irons, as they were known by the other members of the 28<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Brigade, were to be withdrawn from the onerous task of trying to eliminate the few last remaining Communist Terrorists who occasionally came down from their fastnesses in the jungles of Thailand and went south on mysterious errands to the rest of Malaya. Not being notably sporting, they gave no warning of these journeys and therefore, the 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade cheerfully wasted considerable time and energy in trying to intercept them. The Angle Irons in particular had put two long years into this activity and its approaching cessation was viewed with considerable joy. However, the battalion had a band



which had devoted its two years to different, more musical duties but had still received General Service (Malaya clasp) despite never having lifted a rifle in anger nor put one foot into the ulu. They wished to rectify this lack of warlike experience and suffer some modest level of privation (enough to talk about at home) before embarking, and so were lent to me to help build my road.

They were a willing lot and set up their base camp on the rocky and rather attractive western shore of the great Perak River, upstream of some minor rapids where the gentle drowsy-making tumbling of the river ensured that they slept well after they got over the initial aches and pains of this sudden change in their work load and style of living. They set to work with a will on this, the centre stretch of the new highway I was there to build.

When, from time to time they needed a little help, Maya the elephant would amble to the rescue though, as it took most of her working day to get to them and back and, as she soon learned, no bananas grew on that side of the river, she went there as little as possible. Further, at this point she was trying to teach a young bull elephant belonging to a local kampong to be a good, politely mannered and useful beast, I have to say (and so did everyone else!) with little success, and this took up a lot of her spare time.

Now on Sundays we took some slight rest by only working half a day and on one such day I chose to go and see how the Angle Irons were getting on. I was highly impressed by the speed they were clearing the road bed which seemed to stretch endlessly on, bending into and out of the myriad inlets and combs that formed the river bank and producing a clear division between the river shore and the jungle behind. I arrived at their base camp and expressed my pleasure and was invited to curry lunch. And also to a band concert which was due to follow.

Band concert? In the Jungle? Yes, a real Band concert - as they used to say - up the ulu! Secreted in the various Bergens and stores packs that the Band had brought with them were their metal instruments, there just in case they were asked to play at some opening ceremony or if perhaps there was a chance to practise occasionally. And duly while having our seconds of curry and holding the next can of Victoria Bitters or Swan Lager (remember this was the Commonwealth Brigade) the band brought out their gleaming silver and wearing nothing more than jungle hats and the odd pair of shorts for those perching on the hotter rocks, sat themselves among the boulders by the riverside and started to play. Their music seemed to carry well over the jungle and even the roar of the rapids and the chatter of the monkeys were stilled. We loved it.



Then there hove into site, driving downstream and moving fast, a longboat of the 13/18 Hussars water taxi service, the inevitable Malay boatmen and a 40 horse Johnson at the stern and midships just the top of a jungle hat showing a red Aussie identification band. The band immediately changed tune and the lad in the boat was startled from whatever deep reverie he had drifted into with 'Waltzing Matilda'. As such a compliment clearly had to be returned the soldier rose to his feet in the swaying boat, turned to face our shore and as the boat approached us, he sloped arms then swung passed us smartly at the present, despite his swaying chariot, to the cheers of the onlookers.

The concert continued for another 30 or so minutes, but then a shot was heard and we stood to. A quick discussion led to the belief that perhaps a small patrol that had left us during lunch must have run into trouble and the opposition must be about. We mounted an immediate follow up and, led by an Iban tracker, we quickly found a very scared patrol - but no Communists. The patrol had run into a Tiger!

Unsure of the proper procedures for dealing with live tigers, a strange omission from the syllabus at the Jungle Warfare School, they had bravely turned their back on the threat and then one lad had put his Sterling over his shoulder and fired a round! The Tiger had continued on its way undisturbed at its normal steady walk, so the Iban told us, probably not even blinking. 'Are you sure it was a tiger?' 'Yes' he said, 'Can't you smell it?' There was indeed a pungent odour. And from that day to this I can always tell the smell of a tiger.



# Recruit Party Officer

John Getley

It was 1959; Paklihawa was the new recruiting camp in Nepal. I'd driven there overland from England. After three years with A Troop in 69 Squadron on ante terrorist operations in Malaya and a long leave in UK, I was to be party officer to 160 hill recruits; chosen to raise 70 Park Squadron the following year.

Traditionally the gallas had brought the lads to Lehra and Jalkapahar in India for enlistment. Now a tented camp was opened in Nepal. The DCRE had built it with an artesian well that fed the water tank, a swimming pool and toilets with running water, these last upset the diehards who preferred the services of the biste walla, to empty their potties. My duties were simple; each of the one thousand recruits was required to sign twelve times for their military kit. To shortcut this, the office runner applied a thumbprint 12,000 times and I similarly perjured myself with signatures. Off duty I was put to survey Forest Blocks with a 100ft tape, Prismatic compass and a handful of enthusiastic young men. We'd work all day and stay, like Jorrocks, wherever we'd eaten that evening. The highlight was the Christmas Shoot in a forest lodge. Like the days of the Raj, MGBG had flown up from Malaya, the Contractors Christmas Cake was served in saucers of rum and the shotgun, I'd borrowed from Ranjit the medical orderly, had a barrel made from the drawbar of a land rover that bulged getting worse each day. We shot snipe in the paddy, driven nilgai in the forest and duck in the evening on the thal.

Our move to the Training Depot in Malaya began with a ten mile march to the railhead, then two days in the train; changing from narrow gauge to wide at Benares, where we crossed the Ganges. The old hands new how to make tea in the engine's boiler. And, in due time we came to the Barackpore Transit Camp, outside Calcutta. We'd a fortnight there with the recruits, who were now pretty overcome with their new situation, taken up with drill and PT and singing through the evening. We travelled by BI boat down the Hooghly River and stopped for some days in Rangoon before we sailed for Penang. Officers had cabins but the troops and their families travelled as deck passengers. The ships crew put an awning over the deck and everyone, cooking, sleeping and resting made themselves comfortable under it's shade.

From Penang, we had a short trip in a 3 tonner over the ferry to Alor Star and Sungei Patani, a rubber town. The Depot was an old airfield with bashas, huts made from palm leaves, around the perimeter for the companies. Each Regiment had its Training Company, while 5 Company was shared by the Engineers & Signals. We were here for eleven months. By day there was endless drill with pick helves carried across the shoulders to straighten the back; the recruits had been enlisted at near enough sixteen and a half as more amenable to discipline and development at that age. There was sport in the afternoon and singing and dancing through the evening. There was range work, bayonet fighting and education too. At the end the infantry

recruits would be expected to go straight into operation in the jungle with their battalions.

The move to the Engineer Training Centre in Kluang took twenty-four hours by train. Training would last for sixteen weeks here and was centred on last war equipment stockpiled locally in Singapore; Bailey Bridge, Close Support Raft, mines & mine clearance, explosives and booby traps, assault boats and watermanship stores. Each section was followed by a written test and the end result would dictate whether a recruit might expect an A or a B trade or even be remustered as a cook.



Kluang was the heart of the rubber plantations, the place you could shop, have Chinese meals or mix with friends in the Planters Club. For weekends away, Singapore was a couple of hours in an old car. Mersing too was close, but on the East Coast in the South China with sandy beaches and great swimming. As each stage in the training ended you could take the Troop there for a break under the palm trees. You could buy turtle eggs in the market and other exotics and take assault boats out to the Islands.

It was a long training when all the units were crying out for manpower, but it seems to have worked well. It was still part of the settling in period for the Gurkha Brigade into the British Army and had to be gradual to succeed. It produced good soldiers and over the years good Officers too.



# OUTPOST OF THE EMPIRE

Major (Retd) R J Francis

Kluang, when I first knew it in the early fifties was a small provincial town in the back of beyond in south central Johore. There may have always been a Malay Kampong on this site, but it only achieved any importance when the railway from Singapore to Seremban and then north was put through. The area was then developed with rubber and oil palm plantations, and with them came European estate managers, large labour forces and demand for industrial and domestic goods. The town slowly built up. The prime advantage that it always had was that it was on the main railway line, but a clear disadvantage was that it was some 20 miles off the main road to the north.

Before World War II, in anticipation of some military threat, the airfield in Kluang was developed on a significant scale, and finished with gravel and grass which held its form for many years. In December 1941, the Japanese duly arrived. Their strategy was to land from the sea on the eastern coast of Malaya close to the Thai border. From there, they drove south to the western or Indian Ocean coast where the bulk of the population lived with all its commercial and industrial development. On the east coast, the Japs did some light seaborne leap frogging, but this only became important as they neared Singapore. Then they developed the East-West road from Jemaluang through Kluang to Batu Pahat. Thus mercifully Kluang was spared the worst of the fighting, although it was briefly defended by 22 Indian Infantry Brigade and it is reported that a fire-eating Lt Col Parkin lead his 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Sikh Regiment in a bayonet fight across Kluang airfield in which 150 Japanese were killed and the rest driven off.

After World War II, the United Kingdom restored its presence in the Far East, and this included a military establishment in Kluang. By this time, Indian independence had been realised, and four regiments of Gurkha infantry, each of two battalions, had come to Malaya. One of these came to Kluang, and with them was set up an Engineer Training Centre (ETC). At the time, in 1948, the first unit of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, i.e. 67 Squadron, was formed. The functions of the ETC were to provide for Sappers in Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore basic training, trade training, cadre courses for junior NCOs and local support to the Garrison. As the Sappers involved were British, Gurkha and Malay troops, the ETC built up, and with it the Garrison, and Kluang Town.

In all their overseas territories, the British always established a club for their resident expatriates, and a golf course. Some say that it was usually the other way round, but Kluang was a bit late developing, so that by 1952 or so, it only had a club and a few practice-type holes of golf alongside. The Club was outside the town down the Singapore Road, on the west side of the road on rising ground, far enough back to avoid the through traffic, and in the shade of the very few native trees that survived there.

I never knew who ran the Club, or how. Presumably, the backbone of the management must have been the planters, the Public Works Department and Malayan Railways, with some Garrison representation. It was all very calmly and nicely done in an unobtrusive way, and in its simple style, everything worked. The Club provided indoors a copious bar, a large anteroom and dining room all in one, and outside, in addition to the golf course, there was one if not two tennis courts.

The Club buildings were timber framed with corrugated iron roofs and attap walls. Attap was dried Malayan grass of a large and very coarse texture known as lallang, but dried and made up into panels on wooden slats, and the slats nailed to the timbers to make up the walls. This wall covering fluttered and flapped in the slightest breeze, it provided homes for countless insects and small lizards, but it kept out the rain and the worst of the sun's heat.

The membership of the Club included some remarkable characters. One was Tungku Abu Bakr, one of the many sons of the Sultan of Johore, reputedly by a Tamil staff member in the Palace in Johore Bahru. The Sultan himself proudly boasted that he was the last surviving ruler in the world who had personally negotiated a treaty with Queen Victoria. His son, our Club member, was slightly less distinguished, and held a nominal appointment in the State Agricultural Centre down the road to Batu Pahat. He was never known to play games, or to eat very much, but he had a vast thirst for whisky and soda. Snakey Donald and Sandy Mitchell were two very Scottish estate managers from out of town. They were only rarely in the Club, but always together, and then for days and nights non-stop at the bar, and reputedly they were survivors of numerous attacks and ambushes out on their estate. It is worth remembering that for all their outrageous toots and benders, such planters all over Malaya achieved productivity in terms of latex and palm oil in tons per acre, at twice the level ever achieved in Indonesia. This was at a time when Indonesia had very similar climate and soils, the same low-cost labour, and no emergency!

Most of the work of running the Club was done by an all-purpose resident steward of the Chinese variety called Ah Soon, who lived with his family in the outhouses at the back. Ah Soon kept the bar and the bar stocks, swept out the front rooms, and provided instant food at anytime for any number of people. Food was simple, some European dishes, and the rest, curried chicken, noodles, Gulu Malacca and so on. As I remember, no prior orders, warnings or bookings were ever needed.

The Malay people in Malaya were so much withdrawn into their own communities that a European could do a lifetime's work in the country and never know anything about them. However, I remember an occasion when I was in the Club chatting and drinking with Tungku Abu Bakr, when he



suddenly lost his temper with the steward Ah Soon, and roared at him in furious Malay which I could not understand. To my astonishment, Ah Soon came out from behind the bar on his knees, and knelt his way across the floor till he stopped at the Tungku's feet. The Tungku then completed his tirade and Ah Soon went back in the same mode, behind the bar. Many years later, I learned that this practice of proceeding to Sir's presence on one's knees was often seen all over Indonesia, and was taken as full proof of the arrogance and cruelty of the imperialists, by the weaker minded lefties who was it for the first time. In fact it was an ancient Malay way of doing things which westerners simply took up to preserve the status quo ante.

In the fullness of time, the Malayan Emergency came to an end, peace and prosperity returned, and the then

fashionable cry for independence was heard. Malaya briefly included Singapore, but that did not last long, and soon after Malaya became Greater Malaysia and included Labuan, Sarawak and Sabah, all a thousand miles away. In imperial days, all dependent territories were expected to pay for themselves, and they mostly did. After the War however, entirely new institutions such as the United Nations, The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were set up. For the first time, Malaya had access to funds on a quite new scale, with the result that the country is now transformed, with two lane dual highways, the world's tallest building and so on. Those of us who knew an earlier age nevertheless, have a host of happy memories.



The main gate entrance to 63 Gurkha Inf Bde at Kluang in 1955



# RECRUIT TRAINING IN THE 1950s

Ian Thomson

The Brigade of Gurkhas and the Gurkha Engineers were very different in early 1955 in many ways. The Brigade consisted of eight infantry battalions and the Depot Brigade of Gurkhas. The Gurkha Engineers (and the Gurkha Signals) had not yet become part of the Brigade of Gurkhas, although this took place on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1955.

All the basic military training for Gurkha soldiers took place at the Depot Brigade of Gurkhas in Sungei Patani in Kedah. The Depot consisted of an HQ with an Administrative Coy, four Training Coys (one for each Regt), Boys Coy and a Gurkha Signal Training Wing – a total of about 2,000 all ranks. The Depot was built of timber and basha buildings round three sides of a grass airfield (an old pre-war RAF airfield) and surrounded by rubber estates. Gurkha Engineer and Gurkha Signal recruits were allocated to one of the Training Coys each of which averaged about 300 recruits, and was commanded by a major with about twelve years service, mostly commanding companies in Burma and Malaya with distinction. They were all high-grade officers.



Temerloh Ferry, Malaya  
operated by Gurkha Engineers c1950's  
(Photo: Unknown) – Taken from RE Museum Homepage

In early 1955, the Regt was faced with a recruitment problem. It hoped, indeed expected, to raise a third sqn, either a Field or a Field Park, in the near future. In addition, there were a large number of re-walas who had enlisted in the Gurkha Brigade in the early part of the war and were approaching the end of their fifteen years service. It was therefore agreed that the recruit intake in the Autumn of 1955 would be approximately 150. With such a large number of recruits, the Commandant decided to send a BO and a QGO to the Depot to see them through their basic training and subsequently their basic combat engineer training at the Engineer Training Centre in Kluang. I was thus twitched out of 67 Sqn and posted to the Depot in October 1955. Our recruits were to be trained by Maj

Charles Carroll of the 1/6. All the company officers and the NCO instructors were put through a Drill and WT course of about a month before the recruits arrived. Our QGO was Lt (QGO) Girman Thapa who had defended Sungei Patani against the Japanese in 1941 when he was a young NCO in 1/2 GR. Our NCOs had been hand-picked by the Regt and provided the Platoon and Section Comdrs.

The administrative staff were all 6GR. At that time, there were no recruiting depots in Nepal. We had two in India – Lehra for the Western recruits and Jalapahar (near Darjeeling) for the Eastern ones. There was a Transit Camp in Calcutta. The recruits travelled from the Recruiting Depots to Sungei Patani by train to Calcutta, then by ship to Penang and across to the Depot by ferry and trucks. They arrived quite bewildered. The ex-Boys from Boys Company joined them and were able to play the old soldier role.

The first priority was to accustom the recruits to wearing boots and to correct their posture. In the hills they were used to walking on steep slopes and to carrying heavy loads on their heads and backs and their physique was attuned to this. On their early drill parades, they carried sticks placed behind the neck and gripped each side; this forced the shoulders back into a more upright position (this technique had proved controversial in pre-war days, as some Brigade officers thought it might lead to TB). The PT training was designed to strengthen the arms and upper body and generally to make them put on weight. Rifle and small arms firing require strong arms and wrists. The recruits were weighed every month and the results noted. The average weight of a recruit on arrival was 105lbs.

The day's programme started with drill at 06.30 until bhat at 09.00. No-one was allowed to sit down during this period as it would crease the shorts. The Commandant, Lt Col Johnny Curling, and the GM would visit each company while standing up in the back of an open Land rover. Equally terrifying was the arrival of the Chief Instructor, Maj Peter Jones, who had an eye like a hawk (he only had one eye). After bhat, there were PT periods in the training areas in the nearby rubber estates, weapon training on the 25 yard range, and later on the 600 yard range. The targets on the short range were minutely examined by the Coy Comd and compared with the previous ones; I was expected to say what action I had taken to correct any faults. All the recruits had an hours rest on their beds after tea. They also had education lessons on basic English (only the ex-boys had any knowledge of written or spoken English) and simple Maths. There were lessons on Jungle Warfare, patrolling etc. Games then followed – football, basketball and volleyball.

After evening bhat when the BOs were not allowed into the Lines, the G/Capt and his staff carried on the training on health and cleanliness, discipline, kit cleaning, nauch and maruni training etc.



Our Commandant, Lt Col John Bowring, would visit us periodically, arriving either piloting his own plane or in his Rolls, accompanied by his wife Iona, and a perfectly marked Dalmatian. The Gurkha driver would drop the Commandant off at the Mess and then drive Iona to the Rest House.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July, the Gurkha Engineers were subsumed into the Brigade of Gurkhas, taking its place in the line to the left of 10GR. This meant that we would no longer be entitled to lead the Passing-out parade. The new Gurkha Engineer cap badges were presented to each recruit at a special parade.

The training climaxed with a few days in a Jungle Camp nearby. No CTs were encountered.

Each Company celebrated Dashera separately. As we were in a 6GR company, we followed their kaida, which allowed the more saucy maranis to earn a little extra money. About this time, the Regt found that the third Sqn was not going to be formed in the near future. We were told that about 75 of our recruits would be transferred to the Infantry battalions after the Passing-out parade. It was a sad end to a successful training period, and the Gurkha Engineer NCOs felt the blow most keenly. We were able to retain the recruits whom we felt would do best as Combat Engineers, and said goodbye to half of our recruits.

The six month Combat Engineer training was carried out at the Gurkha Training Sqn in the Engineer Training Centre in Kluang. The recruits travelled from Sungei Patani to Kluang by Troop Train. They had previously been allocated to 67 or 68 Sqns on an equal basis. They were divided into two recruit parties, No 6 under me for the 67 recruits and No 7 under John English for 68. The ETC had excellent training facilities. The Combat Engr Class 3 course lasted six months.

Because of a shortage of QGOs in the Regt, neither Recruit Party had a QGO. Girman Saheb had returned to 68 Sqn. He would have been invaluable. As it was, both Recruit Parties had to manage with only a BO and a Sgt. There were of course the G/Capt of the Training Sqn and his staff. All the recruits passed their Combat Engineer Class 3. At the end of the course, John English and I divided our recruit parties into three and despatched them to their various Troops who were spread over Malaya.

By today's standards, 15 months recruit training might seem very prolonged, but the recruits were very different then. They had virtually no schooling in the hills, and had not seen a white man before arriving at the Recruiting Depots. They did however have all the qualities which we all so much admire and love in a Gurkha soldier. I learnt a great deal, not only from Charles Carroll, but from Girman Saheb, our NCOs and of course the recruits themselves.



# A Letter from Hong Kong

Graham Price

Some readers will find it incomprehensible that when I joined the Regiment there were no IDD phone calls from Hong Kong to UK, and we relied on the weekly letters home, nay we watched as the SDS Landrover drove into Perowne Barracks wondering if there was any mail.

My Mother kept every "chitti" I sent over my first tour with the regiment. On passing through the UK last year I scooped up 2 letters, written in 1980. I assume the facts are correct, although now, even I as Author do not remember the details. So with apologies for any character assassination, I repeat "letters to Mother"

The Queens Gurkha Engineers  
British Forces Post Office 1

11 March 1980

Dear Mum,

I recall by recourse to a calendar that today is Tuesday. Last night a Beating Retreat for General Cunningham. It went quite well with the cocktail party before, which will no doubt cost a fortune.

The big dukh is on the leave front. I rashly agreed to meet Andrew Smith in the Phillipines in May, thinking that that I would not be able to afford the planned RTW trip in the summer.

John Pinel has been told he cannot go on leave as the IO will be on his language course and the new establishment may have to be resolved around Easter. Andrew and I are convinced we could cover. I will have to do 2IC when Andrew is on the South China Sea race anyway. The whole business of work is rather difficult now there are only 3 officers who don't play golf.

Chris (brother) will not have received his birthday card as the C Clerk didn't post it "didn't have a stamp saheb".

Tomorrow the General's visit to Tolo, where he can see the Cunningham Hut, built by his son last year. I have been detailed to accompany him to Sam's Tailors in the afternoon. Should be interesting.

I forgot to mention that Bill crashed my car again the other day. I have discovered that MMA for bicycles is 0.9p per mile.

Big day tomorrow as it is anybody's guess which LS the helicopter will land on. The RAF seem to have an amazing capacity for complicating everthing. They managed to foul up dropping a rigid raider on the sea today because they didn't have the radio on.

Enclosed some photographs, will walk sideways to bed.

All the best

Graham





# PEROWNE BARRACKS 2008

Graham Price

Those who remember our lovely camp at Perowne Barracks may be interested to hear what it is being used for now. Perowne Barracks was not one of the sites handed over to the PLA in 1997, and for a while it provided accommodation for Lingnan University, and Gordon Hard was used as a Customs training establishment. But in 1998 when Kai Tak Airport was closed, a charity known as Crossroads was granted some space in the old airport buildings. When the time for demolition of Kai Tak came, Crossroads was without a home. But thankfully Perowne is now home to Crossroads International, on a short term tenancy.



*Get on Parade – Regimental Parade Square*

Crossroads International, which launched in 1995: is a non-profit corporation which takes Hong Kong's quality out of date goods and redistributes them to people in need, locally and internationally. The goods are received in Perowne Barracks where volunteers sort them, catalogue the items, repack where necessary and then the items are loaded into containers for dispatch world wide. All consignments are to order e.g. "can you help us with supplies for a school in Africa?" – so desks, pens, books will be carefully packed, together with the customs documentation. And a personal touch, letters from the volunteers to the recipients are enclosed, together with one of those throw away cameras to photograph the items in use and send back to Crossroads.

There is more information on their website.

<http://www.crossroads.org.hk>



*Knocking on the Commandant's Door*

Crossroads frequently have visitors, former members of the Regiment who drop in to look at their old barracks. They are made very welcome. One request they have from us, is that they would really appreciate some photographs of Perowne in its heyday. So if you have any good photographs of Perowne in its glory, preferably some with buildings that they can identify in the background, they will be proudly displayed.

Whilst some may be saddened to see our lovely barracks in a state of less than RSM pristine order, it is a tribute to the designers that the buildings have so readily found another function, and I for one am pleased to see the Barracks performing such valuable service that is changing the lives of the deprived world wide. You might say that it is our best MACC project ever.



*Commandant's Office 2008*



# Archive



## DASHERA KLUANG 1962 STYLE

A clean "chop" if ever there was one. Dancing was the evening celebrations that followed, where Rum and Rum was served disguised as Rum and Coca-Cola



Gurkha Lieutenant Champasing Gurung shakes hand with the Engineer-in-Chief, Major General A.D Campbell, CB, CBE, DSO MC on his visit at Engineers Training Camp (E.T.C) Kluang 1952.



Passing Out Parade of 19 Recruit Training Party taken by Major General JHS Bowring, CB, OBE, MC Engineer in Chief and Colonel Of The Gurkha Engineers at Kluang 1969.



# Ex QGE Deaths 2007-08

*My thanks to Hon Maj Hukumraj Thapa who supplied much of the detail*

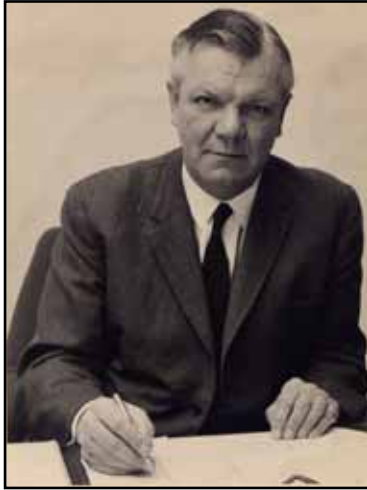
Number	Rank	Name	Caste	Died
480181	CAPT(QGO)	MINBAHADUR	GURUNG	20-Nov-07
21131835	LCPL	NANDABIR	THAPA	30-Dec-07
21131845	SSGT	SAMATBAHADUR	GURUNG	14-Apr-07
21132574	SPR	HEMLAL	PUN	05-Jan-08
21132644	LCPL	NAINABAHADUR	PUN	15-Feb-07
21132755	WO1	SUNBAHADUR	GURUNG	28-Nov-07
21132762	CPL	MAINBAHADUR	GURUNG	04-Oct-07
21132798	CPL	SANTABIR	THAPA	15-Oct-07
21132832	CPL	FATEBAHADUR	RAI	16-Apr-07
21132847	SPR	KAMANSING	GURUNG	27-Aug-07
21132899	CPL	GUNJAMAN	THAPA	18-Jul-07
21132900	WO1	DURGABAHADUR	RANA	16-Jun-07
21135598	SPR	MAKALA	LIMBU	20-Jun-07
21137134	SGT	KRISHNABIR	RAI	02-May-07
21137266	SPR	BIRBAHADUR	GURUNG	04-Jan-08
21139320	SPR	NARBAHADUR	BURATHOKI	08-Jun-07
21139335	LCPL	DURGEBAHADUR	THAPA	01-Dec-07
21140764	CPL	ISWARMAN	RAI	21-Apr-07
21141493	LCPL	RAJBAHADUR	ROKA	09-Nov-07
21145851	SGT	HARKABAHADUR	GURUNG	10-May-07
21145901	SPR	GAMBAHADUR	GURUNG	01-Mar-07
21145933	SPR	GAMBAHADUR	THAPA	06-Sep-07
21148903	LCPL	HARKARAJ	RAI	21-Feb-07
21148911	CPL	OLAKBAHADUR	SUNWAR	13-Feb-07
21148959	CPL	GANGABAHADUR	PUN	23-Nov-07
21149565	SSGT	JANGAPARSAD	RAI	11-Oct-07
21150060	SPR	SAHADHAN	RAI	19-Oct-07
21150084	SPR	BHIMBAHADUR	LIMBU	29-Jul-07
21150102	SPR	LACHHIMIPARSAD	RAI	30-Jan-07
21151171	CPL	JASBAHADUR	RANA	13-Feb-07
21151243	LCPL	BHARIMAN	RAI	21-Nov-07
21151258	SPR	MEMBERBAHADUR	RAI	26-Jul-07
21152464	CPL	RANBAHADUR	THAPA	24-Oct-07
21155344	CPL	KABIRBAHADUR	LIMBU	09-Apr-07
21157660	LCPL	BHAKTAKUMAR	RAI	18-Oct-07
21158013	CPL	DILLIBAHADUR	LIMBU	21-Apr-07
21164887	LCPL	GOBINDABAHADUR	GHARTI	14-Dec-07



# Obituaries

## Major CEH Edwards MBE MC

Born 30<sup>th</sup> November 1919, died 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007



Colin Elston Hyde Edwards was born at Fort Bakloh in Baluchistan, which is now part of Pakistan, on 30<sup>th</sup> November, St Andrews day, 1919, where his father was serving with 7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles. He had strong Gurkha connections. Apart from his father, his maternal grandfather and an uncle were also 7<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas, he served

in the Gurkha Engineers, as did his much younger brother John, and his son-in-law was a 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha.

For the first four years of his life he remained in Baluchistan, until in 1924 his father was seconded to command the Gilgit Scouts way up on the NW Frontier, and one of the remotest outposts of Empire, accessible only on horseback, and then only for 3 months of the year when the pass was clear of snow. He must have had an unusual and exciting life there, but was probably rather lonely without the company of other children. From there, at the tender age of 6, he was sent home to school in England. He had guardians with whom he spent his holidays, but only saw his parents when they came on furlough, which was roughly every 5 years.

In 1933, by which time he was at Marlborough, his father died in India. It is a telling comment on the lack of

understanding of children at that time, that the school's reaction was to put him on his own in the sanatorium – solitary confinement! His mother with two much younger children then returned to England and settled near Winchester, and for the next few years he led a more conventional life.

In 1937 he went to Woolwich, where he became one of the four under-officers, and in 1939 was commissioned into the Royal Engineers. He and his contemporaries were therefore pitched straight into the war, and he and two others from his batch were specially selected to join 4<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron, which was forming up at Chatham prior to moving out to Egypt to become the sapper element in 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. The squadron duly went to the Western Desert, and Colin fought through the campaign until the extreme misfortune of his capture, when the Germans overran the Division at the end of 1941. For his initiative and gallantry while leading a fighting patrol during the campaign he was awarded an MC.

He spent 2 years in captivity in Italy, until the Italian capitulation, when he escaped. He was on the run for 3 months, trying to make his way to the British lines, but sadly was recaptured by the Germans, just behind their front line, on his birthday, “not much of a birthday present” he recorded in a notebook. He was taken to Germany and spent the rest of the war there. During his time in captivity he was determined to keep his brain active. Apart from endless escape planning, he learned Italian and the rudiments of German, and tried his hand at the piano, clarinet and saxophone.

## CAPT (QGO) MINBAHADUR GURUNG MBE (1933 – 2007)

by Hon Maj Hukumraj Thapa



Capt (QGO) ret'd Minbahadur Gurung MBE died in his home town Pokhara on 20 Nov 07 at the age of 74. He hailed from Bhadaure Tamagi village Ward No 2 of Kaski District. He was enlisted on 3 Dec 51 and his intake was the very first recruits to be taken into QGE and to become the No 1 Training Party. After

training he was posted to 67 Sqn in Kluang. His hard work and enthusiasm was rewarded and he was promoted rapidly through the ranks, reaching Lt (QGO) in August 1965 and Capt (QGO) in April of 1970.

Hon Maj Bhimbahadur Gurung wrote, “What sad news. I certainly missed my number 1 Capt Minbahadur Gurung MBE. We were the No 1 Recruit Intake of the Royal Engineers Gurkha in 1952. We were both recruited in Dec 1951 at Lehra Sarai. We sailed to Penang from Calcutta by a passenger liner called Santiago which carried some 1200 passengers and the journey took three weeks. We watched flying fish for the first time together while we were given half an hour for fresh air to go up from the bottom of the deck which was below the water level. After basic training



in Sungei Patani and Kluang he was posted to 67 Sqn. He was the first two to be promoted to L/Cpl among 85 of us. We used to call him Chai Chong (after the name of a local Chinese who was the Regimental Photographer in Sungei Besi Camp) because he was keen on photography. His hard work especially as EOD officer in Hong Kong during the cultural revolution was highly recognized and he was awarded MBE on the Queen's Birthday list in 1968. His final job as G/Capt with OC Maj Getley was to disband 70 Gurkha Fd PK Sqn in Mouberry Camp in Singapore before retiring in 1971"



A tribute from Maj (Retd) Dermot Stack, "Capt Minbahadur was my first QGO in 1 Tp, 68 Independent Gurkha Field Squadron in Sep 69 in Hong Kong. He was quite a daunting man to work with as a new saheb in the Regiment! He had won his MBE for painstaking work clearing all but two [believed taken by Chinese for examination] APers mines out of many thousands laid around the border positions. He was highly respected and revered in the Regiment. He was an excellent mentor and I quickly learnt much about *Kaida* and other aspects of life in a Gurkha Regiment from him. Capt Minbahadur was a great entrepreneur and I had the privilege of visiting his hotel and attached entertainment a year or two after he retired when I went on trek. He was undoubtedly a man of great stature and I feel privileged to have served with him."

Soon after his retirement in 1971, he established an institution named Danfe Kala Mandir in Pokhara, a cultural dance troupe with the aim of entertaining locals and foreigners alike, as well as to preserve and develop

the Nepali traditions and culture of singing and dancing. Being the first of its kind, where instead of 'marunis' (males dressed as females), the dance performers were young girls and boys. Minbahadur had to go through a lot of hassles from the authorities and neighbours until it was formally sanctioned by the government as a legal business in 1975. His effort excelled very soon and Danfe Kala Mandir was renowned for its professionalism in the field of entertainment all over Nepal. It became so popular that his audiences included the Royal Families of Nepal, Prince Charles, Prince Naruhito of Japan, ex PM of America Mr & Mrs Jimmy Carter. As well as Nepal the troupe performed very successfully in India, Sikkim, France, Hong Kong and Spain.

In the national level competitions his troupe won a few coveted awards. He trained over 600 youths (boys and girls) some of whom are now professionals in the field of entertainment. He has produced about 2 dozens feature films, dozens of audio video cassettes and CDs and published a couple of books on ethnic culture, traditions and songs. He was decorated with the Silver Jubilee Medal on the occasion of coronation of the King of Nepal HM Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva. He has received certificate of admiration and formally honoured by various organisations.

Minbahadur always attended the QGE social functions and met with the various QGE officers from UK. The demise of Minbahadur saheb has been a great loss to the Pokhara community as a whole. On behalf of all members of the Regiment our deepest condolences go to his bereaved family. We pray to the Buddha Bhagawan that his soul rests in peace. He is survived by his wife Maiti, son Mohan Kumar (Pritwiman) and daughter Sabitri (Bishnu).



# FAMILY NEWS

## Iain and Tara Adamson 1993-95, 2004-06

At the time of writing an update for last year's magazine Iain was in the process of leaving the Army and Tara was house hunting. In the end we moved to Perth the week before Christmas and are currently enjoying exploring Perthshire. Iain now works for ESA McIntosh, one of Havelock Europa's companies, for whom John Archibald also works. Life is busy but extremely enjoyable. Tara is unleashing her pent up frustrations of having had to live in magnolia surroundings for seven years and is quickly making up for the lost time of not being able to paint without asking! Henry (6) has settled into his new school and is desperately trying to master a Scottish accent in order to fit in. Ollie (4) continues to bulldoze his way through life and has quickly established himself at nursery. Even with the best intentions we realise that keeping in touch will be much more difficult. We will do our best during our brief sojourns south of the border to see as many friends as possible. It goes without saying that we have an open house for anyone passing, perhaps on the way further north.

## John and Karen Archibald 1974 – 77

You would expect me to know better at my age, but, having hung up my long distance walking boots for a year after the Caledonian Challenge in 2006, I will be dusting them off again this year in aid of the GWT. Together with three Gurkha Sappers and three Gurkhas from the Sandhurst Demo Company I shall be walking the 200 mile 'Gurkha Way' coast to coast from Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula to Stonehaven from 11 to 18 August. That's a marathon every day for 8 days. Expect to receive a begging letter shortly!

## Mark and Sally Baker 2000 - 02

Since my last contribution to the families' news in 2006 quite a lot has come to pass.

I managed to dig my claws in deep enough as 2IC of 59 Indep Cdo Sqn RE for MCM Div to allow my deployment to Afghanistan with 3 Commando Brigade RM and with the now well-established section of commando-trained Gurkha Sappers. Helmund province lived up to expectations as did the QGE section, who proved to be all that I had come to expect of Gurkha Sappers from my time as a QGE tp comd. By the end of the tour the section had squarely earned the highest respect of the Squadron and Royal Marines, and many a tale of selfless commitment resounded amongst all ranks Gurkha, Sapper and Marine.

In Jan 07 I moved (back!) to Sandhurst to take up my current post as a member of the Directing Staff on the commissioning course. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience taking cadets through from day one to commissioning 12 months later, and also a fabulous opportunity to re-acquaint oneself with the splendid diversity

of capbadges and characters which is Sandhurst. I have also had plenty of chance to practise a line or two of *Nepali bhasa* with Gurkha Company (Sittang) who have clearly not lost the art of playing a very jovial *dushman* despite being shot several hundred times per exercise by the cadets!

With Maj Roger Morton also at Sandhurst as a company commander and senior Sapper representative, there is a healthy QGE representation. I am also pleased to report that there is a healthy constant of interest in QGE amongst those cadets with Sappers as a choice of arm.

Most significantly though 2007 was the year I surrendered my Muglishe status to my childhood sweetheart, Sally. This now leaves only one from the original five who founded the 'Muglishe Club' on our long language course in 2001. We had a wonderful church service in a small village in North Devon and then headed off through France and Switzerland to the Amalfi Coast. Now that Sandhurst hosts the Late Entry Officer Course it has been interesting to see the



reaction of the QGE LE's as they discover that Baker Saheb has finally tied the knot; admittedly my tour as a tp comd did not inspire much hope!

Mark & Sally Baker

Jai QGE!

## Alex and Annabel Brown (1997-1999)

Alex and Annabel returned from an FCO posting to Buenos Aires in 2005, and since then have been living in much less pleasant south London and eyeing up the postings list.

Annabel has leapfrogged Alex on the civil service greasy pole, and is now Senior Gardens Advisor for English Heritage. If all goes well Annabel is due to give birth in September, and with a little luck we might be off somewhere nice in 2009.



### Jeremy and Sarah Chapman 1967 – 72

Jeremy left the Federation of Master Builders last year and is now working part time for a Solicitors' practice in Yeovil, which suits him and is enjoyable. He deals with building disputes between clients and their builders, more often than not when clients refuse to pay their builders for one reason or another. He became a Mediator last year.

We now have one son, his wife and baby plus 30 chickens, 14 ducks and now at least 14 ducklings, and 2 more dogs staying with us. Thank goodness the horses are a few fields away and we don't have to feed them. Hence our sudden interest in getting away to visit friends this summer (and our other son in Canada). Our daughter in law will hopefully be a fully fledged GP by this time next year and they will return to their home in Herefordshire.

### David and Alida Clifton 1965-68, 69-72



From an earlier update you may remember that David sailed his small 28' yacht Cracklin' Rosie single handed all the way to the Falkland Islands, having rounded Cape Horn. Equipment malfunctions and storms caused delays and by the time he reached the Falklands, summer time in the South Atlantic was coming to an end.

New equipment was needed for the return journey and so David found a berth for the boat and flew home. The plan was to return in November 2006 to resume his voyage. New sails and equipment were sent by freight and David duly flew back to Port Stanley in November 2006. He waited for the freight to arrive, and waited and waited. There was a deadline to be home as all the family were booked to go to Mauritius in April 2007 to attend the wedding of youngest son John, to Nadege. They choose to get married there as Nadege, who is half Mauritian, wanted to have her Grandmother at her wedding and she was too frail to come to the UK.



The delays with the freight meant that David would not be able to complete the journey in time for the wedding. So he reluctantly abandoned the trip and flew home again. Mauritius was beautiful and it was a real treat for all the Cliftons to have an exotic holiday together; something that will probably never happen again.

And now we are 2008! This nine month voyage is taking a lot longer than anticipated, but David is back in Port Stanley, Cracklin' Rosie is back in the water and has just completed a successful test sail around the islands. An interesting encounter occurred whilst David was at anchor in a cove, riding out a gale. He was joined by an Army adventurous

training yacht, the skipper of which was one of his students from Kiel! Talk about a small world!

As I write David is putting the final touches to boat and stores and then he will depart for home.

We will not get a lot of news as there is no satellite 'phone on board, but he hopes to sail back via Tristan da Cunha, Ascension Islands, the Azores, Portugal and home. We wish him a safe journey and fair winds.

**[I believe that David is due back towards the end of June – Ed]**

### Phyl and Philip Cook 1966-71, 77-79, 85-87



The last year has been particularly eventful for us. With us selling our main business, and with Philip handing over his role in the QGEA we have been free to buy a property in the Dordogne with our son, Stewart and his wife Michelle. We have also been busy planning a rally of old Dutch barges from France to the Black Sea, a distance of some 3,500 km.

In between everything else we have managed some skiing breaks over the winter and a trip to Antarctica. The latter was an experience of a lifetime and included a swim (without wet suits!) which, needless to say, was both brief and extremely bracing.

We are now on our boat on the Rhine having just left Strasbourg and, with five other boats, are heading towards Vienna where we plan to arrive in late June. After that we will continue down the Danube via Budapest and Belgrade to the Delta Danube, hopefully arriving there in late September. We will probably then leave the boat in the Bulgarian Black Sea resort of Varna whilst we return to Western Europe for the winter. Next year we will head back with her to Western Europe, hopefully via the Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, if we can arrange to transport by road the boats (which weigh over 50 tonnes) across the missing link in Belarus.

What with all that plus seven grandchildren life is busy but great fun.



**Rob and Margaret Cross  
HK 1986-88, BGN 91-94**

I know that this is an old cliché but having retired in January 2007 Rob has never been busier!

Rob's last job has been as a civil servant working for Defence Estates (MPBW/PSA to the old hands) In his last year he was actively involved in letting then running the maintenance contracts in Cyprus, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. The latter was the main focus of his job involving multiple long flights to & from FI via Ascension Island. Always with camera clutched under arm as hand baggage! But that is now behind him.

Since retiring Rob & Margaret have set up a small business selling photographs taken worldwide. (See [www.crosscultureimages.com](http://www.crosscultureimages.com)). This has kept them both VERY busy. They print, mount and make the frames for the photos, (up to A2) size so you can imagine the hustle & bustle to get ready for a craft show.

Margaret continues to work part time, (to get from under Rob's feet?) working with schools to try and get local teachers and industry linked. Though part time it involves a good deal of commitment on her part to get teachers interested.

Elder daughter Alison & husband Nigel are living in New York State where his job has taken them. They greatly miss their former lives in Botswana and the access to wildlife. Alison has become established as an African wildlife artist (See [www.NichollsWildlifeArt.com](http://www.NichollsWildlifeArt.com))

Carolyn continues to live in Bristol and edits magazines for the recycling industry but is currently looking for a change probably in charity work. Any reasonable offers?

Margaret & Rob are still very much involved with the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Rob is now North Midlands Coordinator for the Trust. Their next event being a lunch in their local Nepali (ex QGS GM) restaurant.



**Andrew and Paula Foxley 1986 – 88**

Andrew, Paula and Phoebe (aged 4 in June 2008), now moved to Inkpen village in Berkshire near Hungerford 18 months ago. Still Flying for bmi (Airbus) and Consulting for Dstl on Helicopter procurement Projects (amongst others) at Farnborough. Enjoying work but too busy, love living

in Rural West Berkshire and still flying part-time for the TA. Paula is an Architect working for a Developer locally. Phoebe starts school in September 2008.

**Tony and Lynda Harking 1981-84, 86-88**

In terms of the Harking family, it is a couple of years since I last penned a note on what we have been up to. Well, we are approaching our second anniversary at Chatham and the job has been tremendous with plenty of variety, outstanding young officers (who are kept on the straight and narrow by the Training Adjutant, Andy Gooch) and soldiers coming through the training system and the challenge of taking RSME into a Public Private Partnership contract with a consortium called Holdfast. I see a great deal of Graham Gibbs in his role as Commander Combat Engineer School and with his Chief of Staff, Ian Moore, the Gurkha connection remains strong in Minley too. Because of quartering problems in Maidstone, many Gurkha families are accommodated in Chatham which means that the links between RSME and 36 Engineer Regiment remain close. The next commanding officer at Maidstone has not served directly with Gurkhas although as the Officer Commanding 20 Field Squadron he worked alongside them. However, as he is currently working with me in Chatham, he is getting plenty of indoctrination. In keeping with the QGE tradition for New Year's Eve parties, the Gilberts hosted another superb night in Wales and I just hope the photographs don't get out!



Life in Pasley House has not been quite as rewarding for Lynda having given up the prospect of her dream job to move to Chatham and then facing the constant struggle of trying to maintain a Grade II listed quarter through Modern Housing Solutions. However, for Philippa and Alexander, who are now both at Durham University, good use of the space has been made to invite their friends to parties which have invariably been orderly – or has the intimidating proximity of armed guards been a contributory factor? Lynda has moved from hospital to practice nursing and though that was a career change brought about by the move to Chatham rather than choice, she has by and large enjoyed the absence of night shifts and the pressure of working in NHS hospitals.

I look forward to seeing you all at the lunch on 28 June and at other occasions during the year, including Nepal for those going.

**Douglas and Margaret Humphrey 1966-71, 1984**

Douglas and Margaret Humphrey have another grandchild making four now (Tallulah, Ed, Isabel and Abigail in descending ages). Both Brett and Lara and their respective families live close at hand which is marvellous - so Margaret spends much of her time dutifully baby-sitting.





Douglas continues to run his Education Consultancy which seems to be expanding year on year; the problem is keeping it manageable! He works mainly with the Russian market and, at the time of writing, is about to make his 29th visit. He has also visited Thailand to open up the market there and is co-operating with Pippa Watt who works for Mentor in Bangkok - some of you may remember Andrew (7 GR) and Pippa Watt from Hong Kong days. Pippa's boss is Ian Bushell another ex Gurkha. And a further surprise - the Chairman of Governors of one of the schools that Douglas works with is Richard Marriott. Small world. Douglas is still keen to recruit host families in the SW and SE who may be willing to host (paid) Russian and Thai students (9-15 years) for Exeat Weekends. Any takers?

### **Martin and Janice Lodge 1988-91**

Been back in HKG for just over 7 years, most lately working for Standard Bank (the South African one – not StanChart!).

Married to Janice, with one 3 year old (Justine, aka "Bella") and another on the way (already named "Rosie" by Bella; hope it's not a boy).

Run into GQE-walas on occasions, most often ex-BOs Date & Price, who also got lost trying to return to Blighty.

### **Roger and Claire Morton 1993 – 95**



Roger and Claire Morton are now living in Camberley with Hamish (10) and Angus (8). Roger is a company commander and senior Sapper at RMAF having commanded 26 Armd Engr Sqn in Hohne until Aug 07. Roger's football boots have just about been hung up for the last time and he

is attempting to relearn Nepali with the help of the Sandhurst gurkha company.

### **Colin and Moneena Peebles 1977-80, 83-85, 90-92**

A relatively short update from the Peebles Clan as a sequel to last year's contribution. Perhaps most memorable was our trip to Argentina in February last year where we travelled



the country with Euan and later Callum. It was wonderful to have a very different holiday for nearly 3 weeks with the boys, particularly as Euan speaks fluent local Spanish.

*Euan, Moneena and Callum at the Iguazu Falls on the Argentinian/Brazilian border.*

We also took a trip to Munich, which was originally planned to see Catriona and to experience the Oktoberfest, but in the event, it was to help her recover from a life threatening illness. Thankfully she is now on her way back to what is a full recovery.

March this year saw the whole family on a skiing holiday in the French Alps which was challenging for the parents who had not ski-ed downhill before. Much hilarity, many bruises and several broken bones ensued but we have agreed to do it again!



*Malcolm, Kirsten, Callum and Euan on the slopes at Les Gets.*

In April we took a trip south and touched base with several relatives and friends, including our Filipino maid Aida, who is now housekeeping a palatial residence in the New Forest and seeking permanent UK employment.



*Colin, Aida and Moneena in the New Forest.*

Apart from the travel, the only other significant news is that Colin has finished working with the police after 13½ years and is considering options that will allow a bit more golf (if he survives the Edinburgh marathon)!

Moneena continues to be extraordinarily busy with her property development and succeeded this year in turning



a dilapidated 3-bedroomed flat into 2 most impressive one-bedroom flats. Sara Beeny would have been proud of her. We continue to be amazed by her energy and growing knowledge of the building profession, not to mention her ability with a paintbrush! Sadly, she has failed to pay enough attention to her golf which I am insisting she rectifies this year.

Kirsten continues to train potential officers at Worthy Down and may be featuring in a TV documentary later in the year. Catriona lives in Munich and is developing her career with a German investment bank.

Callum, having spent nearly 4 years clearing minefields with the Halo Trust is now UK Sales Manager with an engineering company based in Wiltshire.

Euan is just finishing his Law and Spanish degree at Glasgow University and Malcolm as an Army scholar, is reading politics at Edinburgh, prior to going to Sandhurst in January 2010.

Finally, Moneena and Colin will be going to Nepal for the reunion when we also hope to visit the school in Rampur, Chitwan, which in conjunction with Hon Maj Bhimbahadur Gurung MVO, we have raised funds to refurbish.

#### **Graham and Rebecca Price 1977-80, 81-83**

Graham and Rebecca continue to man the stay behind party in Hong Kong. Our spirit has not been dampened by the recent demise of the US dollar, although our purchasing power has! We have taken up a new sport, sailing on our Catamaran, which is a permanent memory of Samuel our eldest son. David our youngest graduates from Durham this year. The world remains his oyster, and we await with interest both his choice of employment and on which continent to pursue it. Meanwhile I look forward to seeing many sathi haru in Nepal later this year.

#### **Ian, Sally, Tom, Ben and George Slack 1989, 91-93**



Having spent a couple of fantastic years in the US we left in mid 2007 and moved across the globe to Singapore. Everyone seemed to settle in extremely well and much quicker than after the move to the US. The boys (Tom 13, Ben 12 and George 9) all enjoy school and are most impressed that they have Gurkha guards at their school and are practicing their Nepali! Sally has started a photography business and I continue to work for UBS. I have managed a few trips to Hong Kong and have even bumped into some of my ex soldiers working around town . . . what a small world. If anyone wishes to contact us or see what we've been up to, they can do so through the family website at: [http://web.](http://web.mac.com/sallyslack)

[web.mac.com/sallyslack](http://web.mac.com/sallyslack)- this includes links and contact details as well as pictures of the family. Love to all and keep well - Jai QGE

#### **John and Susan Shanahan 1983-85, 92-93**

We had an excellent time in HQ British Forces Cyprus in Episkopi, Cyprus for 2 1/2 years during which the twins, Jack and Scott, really enjoyed the Primary School and had an absolutely fantastic little lifestyle. However, we had a review of what we wanted out of life, especially for the boys, and found the UK did not feature that highly.

In addition, I received a siren call and very nice offer from the Australian Army, whom I had worked with before on numerous occasions, including whilst with the Gurkhas. This proved too strong an attraction and so we decided to move lock, stock and barrel "Down Under" and I banged out without any real concerns at all. I left the British Army on 10 April 2008 and enlisted at Australia House in London the next day. We had left Cyprus on a VC10, older than all of us put together and flying backwards as ever, and then flew to Australia Business Class, which was a great welcome and an indication of where the two Armies are going!

I am working in Land HQ in Victoria Barracks, Sydney, which is a superb place to start and initial impressions are extremely favourable - new kit, an expanding Army, pay rises, lots of operational commitments and morale through the ceiling. Add to that excellent schools and a superb lifestyle and we have absolutely no regrets whatsoever. The slouch hat and uniform takes some getting used to though!

We would love to host anyone coming our way and wish you all the very best for the future.

#### **Andrew and Clare Tuggey 1969-70, 75-78, 82-84**

Andrew and Clare continue to live in Monmouthshire, not far away from the Gilberts and just across the Severn from the Knowles. Clare runs the house and the small barn conversion next door as well as her own website design and management business, [www.uptodatematters.co.uk](http://www.uptodatematters.co.uk), which is aimed at promoting smaller businesses and individual enterprises such as holiday lets and B&Bs, although she does have a couple of big business clients as well. She also chairs the local RNLI.

Andrew commutes weekly to Westminster where he works in the Houses of Parliament running the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA UK), [www.cpaukbranch.org](http://www.cpaukbranch.org), which deals in good governance and strengthening parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth and elsewhere. The job is extremely interesting, very satisfying and involves quite a lot of overseas travel. He sees Mark Lancaster from time to time. Running the Gwent ABF also takes up some of his spare time.....

Piers is married to Laura and George was born in August 2006; Piers just making the happy event from Iraq,



appearing at the Chelsea & Westminster straight from BZN in all his military kit, much to the amusement of an RAMC doctor chum whom he bumped into at the hospital entrance. Piers left RGJ/The Rifles in May 2007 and is an underwriter with Marsh. Laura, having left Save the Children now is a consultant on Child-Trafficking issues. George expects his first sibling this October. They live in Tooting, the new Notting Hill.

Oliver (Oli to his chums) is runs his successful water sports business, Big Blue [www.bigbluekitesurfing.com](http://www.bigbluekitesurfing.com) in West Wales at Newgale in Pembrokeshire. This year he has added four more activities to the Big Blue Experience - snowkiting during the season in Switzerland; by skiing uphill towed by a very large kite one could save on skilift passes, and to complete the Big Blue days of kitesurfing, kiteboarding and windsurfing, he now offers waveboarding, paddleboarding and coaststeering.

Henry was commissioned into RGJ in December 2006 which became the Rifles a couple of months later. After Brecon he and three other make-learnees were attached to 4 RIFLES in Basra from where he managed to appear in the Daily Telegraph/Country Life article; "I'm young, single and in Iraq... drop me a line", thereby causing his girlfriend to have a sense of humour failure. He currently is with 2 RIFLES at Ballykinler.

#### **Andrew and Sarah Venmore 1991 – 94**

The Venmores are still in New Zealand, having lived near Whangarei in the North Island for 12 years now. Andrew is the manager of the Water Services Division of the local authority, a position he has had for the last five years. Sarah is contemplating a return to work as an Occupational Therapist now that both Abbey and Mia are at school. Flynn, the youngest, is nearly three and like his father is obsessed with fishing. Whilst moves to other more exotic locations have been considered, the lifestyle in New Zealand, especially for the children, means a change is unlikely in the near future. They live on five acres of land overlooking the sea with a few sheep and increasing pressure from the girls to get a pony. QGEA visitors to New Zealand wishing to call in would be most welcome.

#### **David and Judy Walker 1975-77, 86-88**



David and Judy continue to work but are thinking more often of retirement and of drifting around England in a narrow boat. James is now sole proprietor of his pub, the Bathurst Arms ([www.bathurstarms.com](http://www.bathurstarms.com)), in North Cerney, Gloucestershire, and has won several plaudits, one of which was being amongst the best twenty landlords in England. James and Hayley now have two children, Jude, who is coming up 2, and new-born Dulcie. William married his long-time fiancée Poppy last summer and they continue to live in Epsom. He is now a great panjandrum in the Department of Transport and Poppy works for the met Police, with a team from which she recently completed the London Marathon. Charlie is coming to the end of his first year at Leeds reading history.

#### **Richard and Jenny Walker 1990-91, 01-03, 08-**



Some of you will recall that Major Richard Walker served a SSLC in 1990 / 1991 with 67, 68 and very briefly with 70 Sqn in HK. He has since served with 36 in 20 Sqn as a Tp Comd, 59 Indep Cdo Sqn, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn QGE as 2IC, HQ EinC(A) (in the O&D job when he was actively trying to influence the development of the Commando Gurkha concept) and more recently as SO2 Engr Ops & Plans in HQ ARRC / HQ CFC-A / HQ ISAF.

Richard assumed command of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron in Jul 08 and deployed to Afghanistan after a Mission Rehearsal Exercise and a brief time with the family (having returned from 10 Months in Afghanistan with the HQ ARRC in Feb of 2007) in Sep 2007.

So, family news is that I still have a family, but they are all quite a lot different to the family I left in 2005 when I deployed to Afghanistan first. Jenny remains committed to the cause and has single handedly brought up Elizabeth (now 4 1/2) and Oliver now 2. We are living in Maidstone and truly honoured to have this opportunity to serve with QGE one more time. Elizabeth wears a Bindi at every possible opportunity (normally stolen from Madhu Thapa) and both Elizabeth and Oliver have a love of the mountains, skiing, adventure and motor sport.

We are all looking forward to catching up with the broader QGEA membership, especially with a milestone Birthday event this year (which 69 has volunteered to organise) and hope to share some of our pictures and stories of Afghanistan, as there are some 'hoofing' stories to tell.





## ITEMS 5 – 60<sup>th</sup> REUNION PLANS

8. Col Dom Verschoyle outlined his work on the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Reunion planned for Nepal in 2008. He and Gill would circulate a detailed programme and costs after their trip to Nepal in mid November 2007. His advance notice, issued to members, is attached to these minutes. The main points were:
  - a. The Reunion will take place over about 12 days within the period 17 November to 1 December 2008. The main gatherings will take place in Pokhara on 22 and 23 November 2008.
  - b. The programme would be similar to that of the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion in 1998: starting with a group flight out to Kathmandu, two nights in Kathmandu to include a drinks party, a move to Pokhara and the main events there. After that he plans a selection of activities including a mini trek of about 4 days or a visit to Chitwan National Park of about the same duration. There could be side trips such as an Everest flight and white water rafting. The parties will return to Kathmandu for a final evening before flying back to the UK.
  - c. The main events in Pokhara and the drinks party in Kathmandu would be organised by QGEA Nepal, who are also assisting with the planning for the UK contingent.
9. Funding. The Chairman stated that the Committee had allocated £5,000 for the Nepal end of the event and that Acorn People, the recruitment agency that the previous GM, Hon Maj Dalbahadur Limbu, now worked for, had pledged £5,000 as well. These funds would be used to help cover the costs of the older pensioners in Nepal participating. UK members would pay their own costs.
10. Discussion. Following some discussion on what other Associations were putting towards their similar events, it was agreed that fundraising should be encouraged to ensure that the Nepal end of the Reunion was properly financed. However, it was also agreed that QGEA should not compete with Associations such as the QOGLR for whom 2008 marked their 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## ITEM 6 – FUTURE TRUST STRUCTURAL CHANGES

11. The Chairman reminded members that, due to financial and regulatory pressures, it had already been agreed by them that the Regimental, Perowne and Association's funds be held as sub-accounts in one overall fund. There is now further pressure from the Charity Commission to merge the Regimental and Perowne Trusts. He had discussed this with Mrs Iris Bolton who accepted this on the understanding that the funds would continue to be held in a discrete sub-account and that the name of the awards would continue. Thus, subject to the Perowne and Regimental Trust's Trustees agreement, the merger of these trusts would go ahead. This would not impact on the Association where no further changes were envisaged.
12. Lt Col Tomlinson asked whether the Perowne Trust was to be run down. The Chairman explained that the Trustees had decided that in view of the projected decline in demand for the awards, it was important for the Trust to be used to maximum effect now, and thus capital would be used to fund students.

## ITEM 7 – FUTURE COMMITTEE CHANGES

13. The Chairman stated that he would stand down soon and that Brig Tony Harking had been approached to be his successor. He stated that unless there were any objections he would hand over after the January 2008 Regimental meeting.
14. The President expressed thanks on behalf of all the Association to Col Cook for all his hard work during his tenure as Chairman. In particular he mentioned the revision of the financial side that the Chairman had brought about.



## ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15. Maj John Parfect gave a summary of the Pahar Trust's progress over the year covering the schools being built, those being renovated plus the work on hostels and medical centres. Overall the Pahar Trust continued to achieve a tremendous amount. A review of the work done recently is attached to the Minutes.
16. Lt Col Nick Tomlinson again mentioned his dislike of the title The Gurkha Engineers. The President stated that, whatever members thought, any change was not a matter for the Association. In answer to Col Worthington's question on whether Maidstone would ever become a Gurkha only regiment, he stated that that the current British and Gurkha mix at Maidstone was very successful within the current British Army. He suggested that any further expansion of Gurkha engineers in the Army would probably be in the new sapper commando regiment following on from the very successful QGE pilot there.
17. Maj Bob Cross mentioned the very successful Museum at Pokhara and suggested an article on it for the next Magazine and our website.

Action:

Editor

18. Chatham Dinner in aid of the Regimental Trust. The Chairman outlined his thoughts on a Chatham dinner in aid of the Regimental Funds. He considered that there was sufficient goodwill amongst the Kent population for such an occasion and that a similar event in aid of the Pahar Trust had been productive. There was insufficient time for an in depth discussion, but members seemed not to be particularly enthusiastic.

J N B STUART  
Colonel  
Secretary

17<sup>th</sup> October 2007

## Accounts

Technology has prevented me from being able to include the accounts this year. I am able to email or post a copy to anyone who requests me to do so. My apologies - Ed



