

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers



2021

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers

Her Majesty the Queen

Colonel in Chief:

Brigadier J L Clark CBE

Colonel of the Regiment:

Regimental Headquarters

Lt Col Mark Hendry MBE RE
Maj Kamalbahadur Khapung Limbu MVO QGE
Maj James Kelly RE
Capt Lauren Hardern RE
Capt Khadkabahadur Gurung

Commandant
Gurkha Major
Deputy Commandant
Adjutant
GRCMO

Field Officers

Maj Buddhibahadur Bhandari MVO
Maj Mike Gledhill RE
Maj Oliver Clark RE
Maj Ganeshprasad Gurung
Maj Purnasingh Tamang

SO2 G1 Welfare/ SSO HQ Brunei Garrison
OC 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
OC 70 Gurkha Field Squadron
QM 32 Engineer Regiment
OC Bde Culture and Language Team, HQBG

Captains

Capt Edward Borland RE
Capt Chris Marris RE
Capt Dirgha KC
Capt Bishwabahadur Rai
Capt Govindabahadur Rana
Capt Krishnakumar Pun
Capt Narendradhoj Gurung
Capt Khelendrabahadur Gurung
Capt Nareshkumar Limbu
Capt Ashokkumar Gurung
Capt Prithibahadur Chhantyal
Capt Andrew Barker RE
Capt Gary Forsey RE
Capt Hemraj Gurung
Capt Ramkumar Rai
Capt Chandra Pun

Squadron 21C, 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
Squadron 21C, 70 Gurkha Field Squadron
Wing Commander, Gurkha Company
Perie Tp Commander, 1 RSME Regiment
Quartermaster, British Gurkhas Pokhara
Operations Officer 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
Training Officer, ARRC Sp Bn
Operations Officer, 70 Gurkha Field Squadron
Battle Group Engineer, HQ Brunei Garrison
Wing Commander, Gurkha Company
Sp Tp Commander 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
Ech Commander, 69 Gurkha Field Squadron
Ech Commander, 70 Gurkha Field Squadron
Sp Tp Commander, 70 Gurkha Field Squadron
Platoon Commander, Gurkha Company
Curragh Tp Commander 3 RSME Regiment

Subalterns

Lt Bashir Hamaad RE
Lt Helen Bridgeman RE

Lt Patrick Burford RE
LT Will Pearce RE

Lt Thomas Penman RE
Lt Alistair Greatorex RE

RSM

WO1 (RSM) A P Malone RE



Affiliated Corps

The Corps of Royal Engineers

Regimental Marches

Pipes
Band

Far o'er the Sea
Wings

EDITORIAL

Andy Gooch



I trust that it will not come as a surprise to our readers to that this year's Journal is somewhat thinner than usual with regards to the regular updates and articles on social events from around the World. However, this is more than made up for by news from the serving Regiment who have had a difficult, but extremely rewarding year. Their support to the country's response to COVID has yet again showcased the adaptability, resilience and drive to succeed that is the trademark of QGE, and which those who are associated it have grown to know and respect. Can I take this opportunity to give a public vote of thanks, especially to the Gurkha Major and GRMCO sahebs for their sterling effort in getting the articles to me, proof read and on time. It is a lot of work and I thank all who supported the production of this publication. Something like this cannot be done without the help of many.

While the QGEA Updates are thin on the ground there are plenty of interesting articles in the Miscellaneous Section including some early memories of service with QGE from John Edwards, as well as an article about QGE service in Kosovo, that will form another chapter in the 3rd volume of our history that Stuart Brown is currently writing. A tip off earlier this year alerted me to an article produced in the Press and Journal about a MACC Task 69 Sqn deployed on to St Cyus, on the East Coast of Scotland in April 1985, and it is kindly reproduced inside, along with additional photos and memories from Maj (Ret'd) Haribahadur Thapa.

Due to competing commitments, I have not been able to produce another "Whatever happened to ..." article but I have an idea for next year and it involves the taking down and rebuilding of the Guardroom elsewhere!

Sadly, the nominal role of those who passed away, which covers 2 years due to not being able to get the data last year, is a long one and is a reminder of the very difficult times we are living through. A number of QGE stalwarts, a number of who I worked alongside in Nepal are remembered in the Obituary Section and on page 70 is a short piece highlighting a fundraising ride from Lands End to John O' Groats by the family and friends of Martin Gilliot who died in 2020.

Because of the pandemic no AGM was held in 2020 and so there are no minutes or financial statement to include this year however, if Members would like to see a copy of the financial state for the year, they can obtain a copy by contacting the Association Secretary.

For those in the UK receiving their copy it has once again been printed by Wealden Print due to the current restrictions in place in Nepal and the inability to get copies to the UK. The labelling and envelope stuffing production line has once more been even closer to home, but I am not sure how long this will survive on the promise of sweets, before I have to start financially remunerating the younger members of the Gooch clan!



As ever, if you have any comments or suggestions on how to improve this offering to our members, I would love to hear from you. And please, please keep the Family News coming. While I fear the pandemic still has some way to go before it runs its course, especially for all our friends and colleagues in Nepal, looking forward it is now early June as I write this editorial and the situation in the UK seems to be moving in the right direction. Therefore, I am feeling optimistic that with this will bring the opportunity for us to meet once more in social settings over the coming year. Jai QGE

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Message from the Colonel of the Regiment

Brigadier J L Clark CBE



This Journal is a vitally important publication for The Queen's Gurkha Engineers and it is a great privilege to be asked to write a message for this edition. The Journal provides an overview of every year of QGE service to the British Crown and is, as such, an invaluable record

of our history. It is, however, more than just history, it puts a very human face on 'QGE Sappers' and allows our soldiers and officers to showcase the tremendous work they do in often very trying circumstances.

I was deeply honoured and humbled to assume the appointment of the Colonel of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers on 29 September 2020. I am very grateful for the work of my predecessor, Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE Saheb and pay tribute to his dedication to the Regiment and significant achievements throughout his tenure. Notably, he steered us through the challenging phases of the 2015 Nepal earthquake. This devastating seismic event was felt throughout central and western Nepal and some of the service personnel within the Brigade of Gurkhas including QGE were directly affected. Both 69 and 70 Gurkha Fd Sqns deployed to Nepal as a part of Operation MARMAT and assisted Nepal, the home of the Gurkhas, to return to normality through a series of construction projects. More broadly the Regiment has prospered under his leadership with growth in QGE Phase 1 and Phase 2 training and a significant structural review leading to the growth of a third and fourth QGE Squadron in addition to expansion within the ARRC Gurkha Sp Bn, 3 RGR and the RSME. He has set the conditions for a very bright future and we are lucky that he has taken office as Colonel Commandant Brigade of Gurkhas. *Tapai ko madat ko nimti ekdam dherai dhanyabad, Wardlaw Saheb!*

Although I have never served as a QGE Officer, I come to the appointment with a long history of association with both 36 Engineer Regiment and Brigade of Gurkhas. My first posting was with 9 Parachute Squadron RE, when it was a sub-unit within 36 Engineer Regiment, and I forged close links with 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn during regimental exercises and major events including as the JNCO Cadre Officer, leaving me with many fond memories. I served with 1 RGR on part of Operation HERRICK 12 and in my recent role as Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, I had the privilege of learning more about Gurkha culture, tradition and *Kaida* first-hand with the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

I am delighted to take the helm as Colonel of the Regiment at a time of great opportunity. There are plans in place for Phase 3 growth to be completed by the end of this year, the expansion of the ARRC Gurkha Sp Bn by 2023 and the growth of 67 Gurkha Field Squadron by early 2024. This will enable us to offer improved opportunities for promotion at all ranks.

The last year has been very challenging due to COVID-19 and I am sure that its impact will be felt for some time. The pandemic has reminded us that security threats and tests of national resilience can take many forms. The UK will continue to play a leading international role in collective security, multilateral governance, tackling climate change and health risks, conflict resolution and poverty reduction for which it requires increasingly agile and adaptable Armed Forces. The Integrated Review signals a change of approach and recognises the need for a sharper, more dynamic and technically focussed military in order to adapt to a more competitive and fluid international environment. The change in posture will see a restructuring of the Regular Army to 72,500 which will determine the contribution to be made by QGE. We will see the results of the Army's work over the next year, but I am clear that the proposition is an exciting one that offers more relevant forces for the threats we face and an abundance of opportunity for those that serve.

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers emerge from 2020 with a subtly different profile and reputation. Our posture and contribution to the people of the UK during the fight against COVID-19 demonstrates our communications capability, planning capacity, trade skills and the ability to deliver under extreme conditions. We have continued to pursue excellence in the field of resilience; Project NIGHTINGALE, and Operations ROSE and RESCRIPT are just a few examples of our outstanding contribution to the nation's fight. The Queen's Gurkha Engineers are an integral, adaptable and flexible part of the Royal Engineers and the modern British Army. The Regiment continues to provide a unique engineering capability based on its cultural identity and operational effectiveness. We must not be complacent and our approach to our profession must continue to seek a simple precept: operationally we must be the best, and we must achieve this by harnessing our strengths of Regimental identity and our *Kaida* – the heady mix of our military traditions, Nepali culture and our unique QGE character. We are unique but we must remain humble and continue to excel.

This year we witnessed a 180% increase in size of the Training Party with 70 Sappers taking the oath of allegiance to The Queen's Gurkha Engineers; my first engagement as Colonel QGE. Despite the cancellation of social, cultural and traditional events including Dashain, I am pleased to report on a multitude of remotely organised events and activities under the Commandant Saheb which has ensured the maintenance of the moral component and our community. Victory in the Unit branding competition, Regiment e-FIFA competition and 'Sing with Sandhya' are a few highlights of QGE Sappers'



extracurricular prowess. Unfortunately, the Regiment has been unable to authorise leave in Nepal since March last year due to travel restrictions and lockdown, but it has a plan in place to allow leave in Nepal during the summer should wider conditions allow. I know that our families and children have also been unable to practice social, cultural and traditional events since the onset of the pandemic, so I am pleased with the hard work that is going into the planning of a large QGE social and cultural event in the summer. Pandit Prem Prasad Gaire has provided invaluable religious and spiritual service through remote means throughout this difficult time – this has all been very gratefully received. Despite sadly losing many Gurkha veterans both in Nepal and in the UK because of COVID-19, overall, our relatives and families remain safe and in good spirits both here and in Nepal.

As we move forward together, I will be looking actively at how the Regiment should continue to evolve. For now, we must ensure to deliver additional capability in line with the hard-won growth targets and continue to demonstrate our professionalism and loyalty wherever we serve. *Kaida* is what

makes us different and we must maintain this, always. We enjoy an excellent reputation around the world forged through the brave acts of our forefathers. Reputation is won hard and lost easily: our responsibility is to uphold our special Gurkha name and reputation.

Before I close, I would like to recognise and applaud the diligence, devotion and hard work of the committee of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers Association. A heartfelt thanks to all, particularly to Colonel (Ret'd) MP Carter who recently stood down as the Chairman after a period of superb stewardship. In his stead it is a great pleasure to welcome Colonel (Ret'd) Richard Walker as the new Chairman – we are lucky to have him.

I very much look forward to visiting you all as soon as the situation permits. I am immensely proud to have been given this unique responsibility and will commit heart, soul and sinew to take the Regiment forward. *Jai* QGE!

REGIMENTAL NEWS

THE COMMANDANTS'S REPORT

Lieutenant Colonel MD Hendry MBE RE



I have now had the honour of completing my first 8 months as Commandant of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers after being handed the reigns from Lt Col Mark Jones MBE. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has welcomed Sarah, Rafa and I back into the fold so warmly. I would

also like to extend a warm welcome to Brigadier John Clark CBE in his new role as Colonel of the Regiment and thank the outgoing Colonel, Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, for his monumental efforts and support over the last 4 years. My thanks also go to the outgoing QGEA Committee Chairman, Colonel (Ret'd) Mike Carter. Equally, I am pleased to welcome Colonel (Ret'd) Richard Walker as the new Chairman. Lastly, it is also a great privilege to be working alongside my old friend Major Kamal Khapung Limbu MVO as our Gurkha Major.

In what has been a memorable year for us all with unprecedented challenges and opportunities, the usual rich array of overseas operational deployments, sporting endeavours and cultural activities have been in somewhat more limited supply than usual. Yet the determination of QGE soldiers to support their families, Regiments and wider community has not faltered. Progress on the 3rd and 4th QGE

Squadrons as part of Project SHERPA continues to develop and I welcome the newest 70 QGE members of 74 Training Party from ITC Catterick who passed off the square in March 2021. Growth of 67 Gurkha Field Squadron is well underway, with the lead element implementation team due to arrive in July 2021 and to be fully established by 2024, allowing for ongoing work on QGE promotion structures to align. The highlights of the year have no doubt been the support our soldiers have provided to the country throughout the pandemic. QGE have been at the forefront of the national effort throughout and I commend you all for your hard work, fully recognising the unwavering support of our friends and families during this confusing and troubled period.

Operation RESCRIPT (Defence's response to the global pandemic) continues this year and I am enormously proud of the key contributions we have been able to provide. Whilst large portions of the Army dispersed in early 2020, QGE remained hard at work and played a key role in the construction of the NHS NIGHTINGALE Hospital at the ExCel Arena in London. A Troop from 70 Gurkha Field Squadron, led by Lt Stu Taylor and SSgt Yakthunghang Angbuhang, worked tirelessly alongside the NHS and civilian contractors to deliver this key asset in the fight against COVID-19. Thankfully the hospital was never filled, but their efforts ensured our Health Service had the resilience and extra capacity needed at a critical time for the UK.

Closer to home, 69 Gurkha Field Squadron deployed to conduct targeted mass testing in Kent as part of the Kent Resilience Unit. At a time when the South East had some of the highest transmission rates in the UK, this community testing programme was a vital tool in identifying asymptomatic members of the population and preventing the further spread



of the virus. Over a six-week period, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn conducted thousands of tests and played a key role in helping the local community, enabling the relaxation of restrictions we are beginning to see.

On Christmas Eve 2020, 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn deployed alongside 36 Engineer Regimental Headquarters as part of the UK Standby Battalion commitment. Our soldiers were tasked to help clear the backlog of hauliers waiting to cross The Channel in a scenario which was spiralling rapidly into a national supply chain crisis. As Commander of the UK Standby Battalion, it was a real privilege for me to watch the tireless work of 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn; they should all be immensely proud of their achievements. For up to 18 hours a day, they quickly ensured testing was no longer the limiting factor to keeping this vital national supply route open and allowed thousands of hauliers to return home for Christmas. The relief of those who had been stuck for days was palpable and the effect of their work was enormous with the British Ambassador to France writing personally to thank the sub-unit.

QGE have continued to be recognised both individually and collectively for their work. Capt Krishna Pun was the recipient of the Durand Medal, LCpl Sangit Gurung the Bowring Trophy winner and SSgt Akash the Worshipful Company of Mason's Award. Cpl Nishan Thakali was also awarded a CGS Commendation and Cpl Topjang Rai received the Corps Sports Award for Services to Mountain Biking. Many others have received Commander 8 Engineer Brigade Commendations and should be rightly proud of their achievements.

Finally, as I look ahead filled with optimism and hope of a brighter year to come, I am reminded of all the things we must look forward to. As travel restrictions lift, I plan to visit our soldiers at other ERE units across the country and hopefully abroad. I look forward to returning to Nepal to conduct a duty trek and visit many old friends and colleagues. Nearer to home in the UK, as restrictions ease, I am eager to see the reinstatement of cultural events and community activities that were unavoidably cancelled over the past year and see our close-knit family physically thriving again. Thank you all for the continued support that you and your families have given to me, the Regiment and the country in what has been a most difficult period. My wife Sarah and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the coming months. Jai QGE.



THE GURKHA MAJOR'S REPORT

Major Kamal Bahadur Khapung Limbu MVO



It hardly seems possible that it was 30 years ago that my father, who retired as GM Trg Depot Bde of Gurkhas and GM 10 GR, gave me his blessings and said that I needed to reach his rank and appointment. Here, I am today writing this report as the 26th Gurkha Major of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers; I am deeply humbled and truly delighted. Additionally, I am pleased to work for Commandant QGE, Lt Col M D Hendry MBE. I vividly remember our successful partnership during a deployment to France on a NATO exercise 19 years ago as Lt Hendry and Sgt Kamal Khapung, and then 4 years later during Ex WESSEX STORM as Sqn 2IC and acting SSM in 2006.

As another busy year draws to a close, I reflect with huge pride on the achievements of the Regiment despite the COVID-19 restrictions. 2021 has seen both 69 and 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn deployed on operations to support the UK Government during the fight against COVID-19. The tempo of work across 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn's portfolio continues to be demanding. The planning, coordination and execution of Op ROSE is worthy of particular note. This enabled more than 20,000 stranded hauliers in Dover and the South East of England to cross the English Channel following the emergence of a new strain of coronavirus in the UK. 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn also deserves praise for their role in Project NIGHTINGALE. Their dedication, diligence and professionalism was remarkable as they worked around the clock with other agencies, contractors and NHS workers to create the new NHS NIGHTINGALE Hospital with 4000 beds for coronavirus patients. On top of all of this, operational commitments have endured and 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn has delivered everything that has been asked; from the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), Winter Preparedness to UK Standby Battalion (UKSB). In addition, the Sqn was also able to schedule exercises incorporating combat engineering, infantry, driver, C3S and plant training alongside the annual raft of MATTs.

Equally, 2021 has been quite an outstanding year for 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn. The volume and variety of commitments has allowed the Sqn to continue to promote QGE and the Gurkha brand as a highly agile organisation, capable of responding to a wide range of tasks at short notice. The initial focus of the Squadron was MATTs, Operating in Built Up Area (OBUA) training, combat engineer training, in-house projects and then building up to Alpha (Section) and Bravo (Troop) level collective training. Deploying to Salisbury Plain on the Charlie (Squadron) level exercise at the end of March ensured their



combat engineering and infantry skills were tested in demanding situations in a variety of challenging environments. Deployment within Kent, conducting mass testing as part of Op RESCRIPT from 4 Jan to 11 Feb 21 allowed the Squadron to demonstrate their ability to operate in new and demanding situations outside their traditional core role. Their impact was immediate; evidenced by the numerous of letters of compliment from locals and dignitaries alike. In addition to being held at readiness for multiple tasks and Winter Preparedness the Sqn also deployed and conducted it's annual Section Competition. This showcased tactical and technical proficiency, leadership, management, courage, physical and mental toughness and developed teams and relationships.

The Regiment celebrated its 72nd Birthday in September and at the same time bade farewell to the outgoing Colonel of the Regiment, Lt Gen Richard Wardlaw OBE Saheb and Judith Memsahab. The Queen's Gurkha Engineers and it's soldiers are indebted to him for his outstanding contribution to the Regiment. On behalf of the Regiment and it's *Pariwar*, I sincerely thank him for his commitment and service. We are equally lucky to welcome to the fold, Brigadier J L Clark CBE Saheb as the new Colonel of the Regiment and Seema Memsahab to our QGE *Pariwar*. I am confident that the Regiment will flourish under his superb leadership. The Regiment has also begun to feel the admirable contributions from the new OC 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn, Major O B Clark RE, new Adjt QGE, Capt L Hardern RE and new RSM QGE, WO1 (RSM) A P Malone RE. I am confident that they will continue to build on the legacy of their predecessors.

I am delighted to report that QGE continues to grow as per Project SHERPA, as wider appreciation for the special qualities that the Regiment bring to the Royal Engineers is felt. The Regiment welcomed and attested 70 new Sappers from 74 Training Party on 12 Mar 21. QGE has seen growth within RMA, Warminster, MTMC and 3 RGR, with Phase 3 growth scheduled to be complete by the end of this year. QGE will see growth of an additional 10 PIDs within ARRC Gurkha Sp Bn in 3 tranches between 2021 to 2023. The reformation of 67 Gurkha Fd Sqn is well underway; the first tranche implementation team is set to report to 32 Engr Regt in July this year with the first main body tranche joining them between Sep – Dec 21. By 31 Mar 22 (IOC) 39 SPs will have joined 32 Engr Regt. A similar timeline will be repeated for the second and third tranches in order to meet FOC of 31 Mar 24. A date for the re-designation of 67 Gurkha Fd Sqn is currently planned to take place between Oct 22- Mar 23.

With the reduction of circa 10,000 soldiers across the Army as part of the Defence Integrated Review, combined with strong manning, recruiting and retention within the RE, I suspect the growth of 68 Gurkha Fd Sqn may be delayed or reviewed. RHQ QGE continues to effectively engage and communicate with all stakeholders (including APC, RE Work Force Plans, RHQ RE, 12 Gp, Army Org, HQBG and 32 Engr Regt) in order to ensure QGE growth includes a coherent structure. As a direct result the QGE LE career model and an overall structural review, including other ranks and trades, is taking place as part of Pj SHERPA. One outcome is the GRCMO PID will move to Army Personnel Centre, Glasgow, as SO3-QGE-

Sldrs from Summer 2021 in order to enable effective management of all QGE personnel in geographically separate sub-units.

COVID-19 has had an impact on all aspects of life since March 2020 and naturally one of the worst affected aspects was social events. The past 12 months have seen the cancellation of many prominent sporting events, exhibitions, concerts and the celebration of festivals in order to slow the spread of the virus. Unprecedented lockdowns, strict travel bans and social distancing measures saw the cancellation of the Brigade Week, Trail Walker, Dashain celebrations and numerous formal and informal social events and 'Messing'. QGE's Birthday celebration and Attestation Parade were conducted in a scaled back manner whilst religious and spiritual support was provided remotely by Pandit Prem Prasad Gaire. All of this has undoubtedly had an impact on morale but RHQ's careful and intelligent mitigation plan have allowed service personnel and families to engage and partake in remotely conducted events and celebrations.

Service personnel and their families wanting to travel to Nepal have been hit the hardest by COVID-19 due to travel restrictions and lockdown policies enforced by both the UK and Nepalese Governments. However, compassionate or severe welfare cases have been authorised to travel to Nepal on a case-by-case basis. The Regiment has planned for a period during summer this year to allow SPs to take leave in Nepal if restrictions allow and we hope that we can all return to normality this summer and be able to meet those we sorely miss.

Despite COVID-19 the Regiment has maintained it's sporting prowess through a series of remotely organised competitions. Wins in the Unit branding competition and Regiment e-FIFA competition were secured by Sprs Bijay and Subham Gurung respectively. Sprs Prakash and Devendra secured runners up positions in the Brigade of Gurkhas e-Sports Competition, while Cpl Top has continued to represent the Army at mountain biking. A six-person team from 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn secured joint top place in the virtual 'Sing with Sandhya' competition organised by the Gurkha Welfare Trust and Project Hello World and judged by no less than Mrs Joanna Lumley OBE and Mr Stephen Fry. The team recorded a song 'Tungna ko dhunma' that was mixed by Spr Christiano and edited by Spr Susan Nalbo, having been recorded individually by each musician in their own rooms.

Last but not least, the invaluable work from the QGEA Committee as always remains first class. In particular the outgoing Chairman Colonel (Ret'd) Mike Carter Saheb; thank you very much for your commitment and service. Equally, I am pleased to welcome Colonel (Ret'd) Richard Walker Saheb as the new Chairman and I look forward to working together again.

Jai QGE!



RHQ QGE NEWS

Captain Khadkabahadur Gurung (GRCMO)



'Pariwar ani Paltan'. My third tour as a Commissioned Officer has been a mixture of short stint as Training Officer ARRC Support Battalion followed by that of Gurkha Regimental Career Management Officer RHQ QGE. As I write this report, sadly, I am packing up again as we all know with promotion comes a new role and I will be handing over the GRCMO role to Captain Govinda Rana before my family and I move to Brunei, where I will assume the role of SO2 G1/SSO Brunei Garrison from Major Buddhi Bhandari MVO in June 2021.

When I took over from Major Ashok Gurung in May 2020, we were well and truly in the frontline in the fight against COVID-19 where once again QGE soldiers' versatility and professionalism were ever evident during the construction of the NHS Nightingale hospital, and delivery of Operations RESCRIPT and ROSE (covered elsewhere in the Journal). Outside of 36 Engineer Regiment, QGE members serving in ERE units have also contributed to the effort to tackle the global pandemic both in the UK and overseas. We must be proud of how far we have come and what we have achieved individually and collectively, including that done on our behalf by our families who remained resilient, committed and supportive during the darkest hours of pandemic.

Change of Command and Appointment. In July 2020, Lt Col Mark Jones MBE handed over the command of 36 Engineer Regiment and the role of Commandant QGE to Lt Col Mark Hendry MBE. Simultaneously, Maj Purnasingh Tamang handed over the Gurkha Major QGE appointment to Maj Kamal Khapung Limbu MVO. At the same time, RSM (WO1) A P Malone RE assumed the role of RSM QGE.

The post of Gurkha Support Assistant has now transferred from GSPS to QGE and been retitled the QGE Manning SNCO with SSgt Akash Tamang as the first incumbent. He has left on promotion to be the Training Coordinator in Gurkha Company and his successor has some big shoes to fill! From July 2021 the GRCMO post will move to APC Glasgow as SO3 QGE Soldiers which will be a significant change within RHQ QGE. This move will enable the provision of professional, effective and efficient career management of QGE soldiers as QGE sees its sub-units geographically spread out beyond Maidstone for the first time as part of Project SHERPA.

At Squadron level, Capt Sophie Piper RE handed over as 2IC 69 Gurkha Field Squadron to Capt Edward Borland RE and Maj Ian Pilbeam RE handed over the batten of OC 70 Gurkha Field Squadron to Maj Oily Clark RE.

QGE Workforce (WF). As at 31 Mar 21 QGE's liability was 338 with 374 soldiers on strength. The excess (36 pax) is linked to the transition phase of Project SHERPA but which will be balanced after the delivery of this phase. The 3 x RegC (LE) Majors and personnel on the Clerk of Works (CoW) course are not included in QGE WF figures as they are employed in wider E2 posts and are held against the resilience margin. The table above shows the units where all QGE soldiers are assigned to.

QGE WORKFORCE			
Unit	Liability	Strength	
36 Engr Regt	269	299	
1 RSME	9	9	75
2ITB	12	16	
3 RGR	6	6	
3 RSME	8	9	
ARRC SP BN	11	12	
HQ BGN	2	3	
HQ BWN GAR	6	5	
IBS	8	8	
RMAS	2	2	
SWS	4	4	
MTMC	1	1	
Total	338	374	(Excl 3x RegC & 5x CoWs)
Overall +/-		+36	
Training Pipeline			
Intake 18		1	
Intake 19		33	
Intake 20		42	
Total		76	

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Training Pipeline. Our recruiting inflow from Nepal is solid. Success rate at ITC Catterick, Minley and Chatham is a remarkable 100%. 70 Sappers from 74 Training Party attested at Gibraltar Barracks on 12 Mar 21 on successful completion of their Combat Engineer Class 3 course – Initial Trade Training (ITT) and most have now started Subsequent Trade Training (STT). A total of 76 Sappers will arrive at Invicta Park and Marne Barracks this year when they finish STT.

We identified this short-term over strength WF and seized the opportunity by sending volunteers away on the likes of the Commando Course, P Company, Pathfinder and UKSF Selection courses; I truly believe that next generation of Nimsdai (Mr Nirmal Purja MBE) is in the making.

Rank	QGE OR ToS as of 31 Mar 21				Total
	VEng(S)	VEng(F)	VEng(L)	OEng	
Spr	256	3	0	0	259
LCpl	18	48	0	0	66
Cpl	0	58	0	1	59
Sgt	0	23	0	0	23
SSgt	0	21	0	0	21
WO2	0	9	0	0	9
Total	274	162	0	1	437

Terms of Service (ToS). QGE Soldiers serve on the same ToS as RE Soldiers and the statistics as at 31 Mar 21 are shown in above. And includes all 70 Sappers from RI 20.

In 2020, 18 eligible candidates from Intakes 12 (x3) and 13 (x15) were boarded for VEng(F) Conversion and 28% (x5) were successful and accepted. The conversion quota in 2020 was significantly less than previous years and is due to the current QGE WF requirement and largely due to the





RHQ QGE (L to R): Capt Khadkhabahadur Gurung (GRCMO), Lt Col M Hendry MBE RE (Comdt), Brig J L Clark CBE (Col of Regt), Maj Kamalbahadur Khampang Limbu MVO (GM), WO1 (RSM) A P Malone RE (RSM QGE), Capt R Pickering RE (Temp Adjt)

repercussions of both large intakes and all OEng personnel having previously converted to VEng(F). This year a total of 31 candidates, Intakes 13 (x12) and 14 (x19) will go to the VEng(F) Conditional Selection Board but again, greater inflow and much lower outflow will compound the problem of limited quota for conversion. Outflow within QGE is primarily through CoW training, transfers and retirement at the end of a full career, although the next person is not due to go on pension until 2023. The VEng(F) conversion quota may lowered further if the opportunity to transfer or attend CoW training decreases and so careful expectation management is key at all levels. All need to understand that QGE WF behaviour is uniquely different to wider arms and services, and thus requires intelligent leadership and smart management. RHQ QGE is constantly seeking alternatives and exploiting opportunities to avoid the wastage of such highly trained and versatile soldiers, and ultimately our people do not want to leave and they wish to serve a full career within QGE. It reminds me of a famous quote. *“Train people well enough so that they can leave, treat people well enough so that they don’t want to leave”* – Sir Richard Branson.

Service Leavers (SL) and Transfer. Maj Ashok Gurung, Capt Dirgha KC, Capt Bishwa Rai, WO2 Birendra Kambang and SSgt Ram Phago have all retired after illustrious careers and decades of sterling service to QGE and the wider Army. Spr Sandesh Gauchan will also be leaving the service early in 2021 although he has been given a 3 month extension due to COVID-19 in order to allow him to complete a Level 6 Gas Engineer Diploma and he hopes to work in Kent or London after his placement. Transition and resettlement for our service leavers has been a difficult journey due to the pandemic. However, Capt Dirgha KC has started an FTRS assignment as an Officer Commanding, Brigade Culture and Language Training (OC BCLT) within HQBG. WO2 Birendra Kambang was also offered an FTRS job but he is seeking to secure a career within the RE Reserves as a commissioned officer. We are thankful to our SLs for their dedicated service to QGE. Our best wishes go to them and their families for their future endeavours. Additionally, six NCOs passed the CoW course in 2020 and accepted VEng(F) to serve within RE. LCpl Prem Tamang also received a VEng(F) on a successful transfer to RE.

QGE PIDs Expiring (Folding back). The increase in numbers taken into the Brigade during Recruit Intake 2017 saw an uplift in the number of training teams in Gurkha Company, ITC Catterick. The posts associated with these

extra teams will expire at the end of 2021 as the size of the Recruit Intake drops back to 240 from 2022 onwards. This will result in a number of uplifted QGE posts being dissolved and will see the return of a WO2 (Wing 2IC), 2 x Sgts (Trg 2IC, PI Sgt), 3 x Cpls and potentially some PTIs to the Regiment. Consequently, this has already impacted on SSgt to WO2 promotion quotas and will further impact on promotion opportunities, especially Cpl to Sgt. RHQ QGE has already highlighted the issue and is seeking viable alternatives and we are acutely aware promotion within QGE has always been highly competitive and fierce.

QGE LE Officers

Late Entry (LE) Commission. WO2 (SSM) Bikash Shrestha and WO2 (QMSI) Lal Rana were successfully selected for QGE LE commissioning under Short Service Commission (SSC LE) ToS in 2020. They will take over as Tp Comd, 67 Gurkha Field Squadron (initially as part of 37 Field Squadron RE) and Sp Tp Comd, 69 Gurkha Field Squadron respectively in July 2021. In 2020 all BG units accepted a wider ToS review and consequently commissioned their officers direct on Intermediate Regular Commission ((IRC (LE)) ToS instead of SSC (LE).

QGE LE Officer PIDs. 2020/21 has seen the reduction of a number of officer posts previously filled by QGE officers. These were of QM (Tech) ARRC Sp Bn, AI Leadership within REWW, British Forces Brunei, Wing Comd, Gurkha Coy and ARRC Sp Bn Trg Offr. Although the last post was not established and was filled by the Ops Offr 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn. However, with the support from RE WF Plans and HQBG, RHQ QGE has managed to convert the ARRC Sp Bn QM (Tech) to QGE E1 PID and the Regiment will also see an increase of QGE LE Tp Comd and QGE LE Ech Comd within 67 Gurkha Fd Sqn from 2021 and 2022 respectively.

QGE LE Structure and Career Model. In conjunction with all stakeholders (RE WF Plans, APC, HQ RE, HQ BG, 12 Gp, Army Org) RHQ QGE has conducted a review of QGE LE structures in order to secure a sustainable and coherent structure. This has been agreed by all stakeholders and Comd 12 Engr Gp will brief the findings to the RE 7 Ball Committee (the Corps’ primary People Policy forum) in late 2021.

Project SHERPA (QGE). The table opposite shows a summary of QGE growth until 2024. Phase 3 growth is almost complete.



UNIT/YEAR	2021				2022				2023				2024		Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Phase 3 Growth	1RSME: 3x Spr - PID filled as of 5 Apr 21. 3RSME: 4x Spr - PID will be filled from May 21 3RSME: 1x Cpl - TBC													8	
3RGR	B Coy 2 x Cpl (Cbt) - Filled from Mar 21. 1 x LCpl (Dvr) - PID filled from Mar 21				BHQ: Jun 22 1 x SSgt (Cbt)	C Coy: Dec 22 Sgt (C3S): 1 Cpl (Cbt): 2 Cpl (C3S): 1				TBC				8	
67 Gurkha Fd Sqn	Sep 21 (39) 1x Capt (Tp Comd) 1x WO2 (SSM) 1x SSgt 1x Sgt 2x Cpl 6x LCpl 27x Spr				Sep 22 (41) 1x Capt (Ech Comd) 4x SSgt 2x Sgt 5x Cpl 12x LCpl 17x Spr				Sep 23 (41) 3x SSgt 1x Sgt 3x Cpl 6x LCpl 28x Spr FOC: Mar 2024				121		
ARRC Sp Bn	Jul 21 (3) Spr-LCpl: Elec Spr-Cpl: Ftr Cpl: Elec				Jul 22 (3) Capt: QM(T) Cpl: POM Spr-Cpl: POM				Jul 23 (5) WO1: RSM WO2: RQMS(M) Sgt: Ftr Eqpt Spr: Dtmn E&M Spr: Dvr				11		

moving to the United Kingdom. Who would have thought that 25 years later, I would be planning and managing QGE WF in order to reform 67 Gurkha Field Squadron and raise its flag in 2022 as part of Project SHERPA; amazing! I feel honoured and hugely privileged. The table below shows the planning timeline for the reformation of 67 Gurkha Field Squadron, that will be part of 32 Engineer Regiment based at Marne Barracks, Catterick. The implementation team

3RGR. Three QGE members within A Coy are currently deployed to Somalia on Operation TANGHAM. A Coy is currently part of the 4 RIFLES ORBAT which consists of 3 companies, and focuses on operations in East Africa. B Coy 3 RGR is forming up and will join A Coy when ready. A further three QGE members recently assigned to B Coy have successfully completed a mandatory 2 week Specialised Infantry Cadre (SIC). On completion of three weeks live firing tactical training followed by a basic language course in UK, they will deploy to Kenya on mission specific training; Exercise ASKARI SPEAR. Following the Integrated Review, HQ Coy and C Coy 3RGR growth is temporarily paused. However, our plan is in place for QGE WF to fill the requirement once the growth resumes.

67 Gurkha Field Squadron QGE, 32 Engineer Regiment RE. The handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 seems a distant memory to many of us. I was a young Sapper in C Tp when we witnessed the 67 Gurkha Field Squadron flag being lowered in Borneo Lines for the final time. It was a mixed feeling of sadness and excitement; sad to see that many members were made redundant and excited that we were

(Tp Comd, Tp SSgt and 2 x Combat Cpls) will report to 37 Field Squadron RE in July 2021 to conduct initial administration and set the conditions to usher the main body, including families and children when they arrive. This process will repeat itself in 2022 and 2023 for subsequent Tps and the redesignation parade is scheduled for between Oct 22 and Mar 23.

ARRC Sp Bn. The Battalion will be renamed as ARRC Gurkha Sp Bn in July 2021. Each year, QGE's footprint will increase until 2024 as shown in the table.

HONOURS, AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Durand Medal 2020

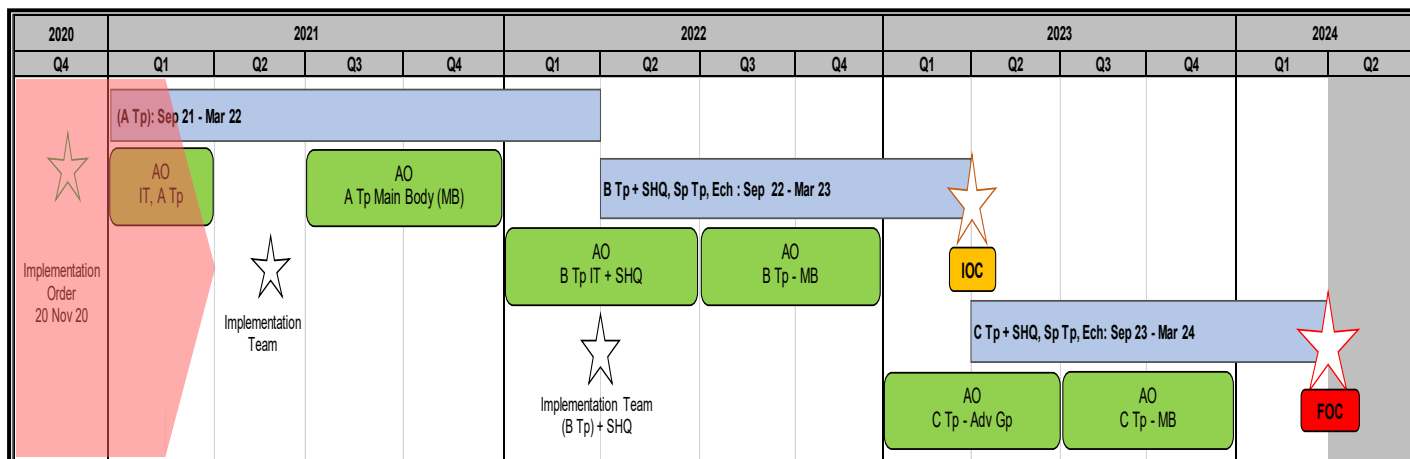
21169347 Capt Krishnakumar Pun Winner
21169677 Capt Ashok Kumar Gurung Runner Up

Bowring Trophy 2020

30085059 LCpl Sangit Gurung Winner
30120263 LCpl Mahesh Gurung Runner Up

Chief of General Staff's Commendation

21168280 Capt Dirgha KC



Note: IT – Implementation Team, AO – Assignment Order, IOC – Initial Operating Capability, FOC – Full Operating Capability



Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

21169588 WO2 Birendrakumar Kambang
21170376 WO2 Premkumar Jabegu Limbu

Chief Royal Engineer's Commendation

21171246 SSgt Akash Tamang
21171826 Cpl Nishan Thakali

Commander Field Army Coin

21170030 SSgt Chandrabahadur Budha Magar

General Officer Commanding's Commendation

21169990 WO2 Lalbahadur Rana

Commander ARRC's Commendation

21170589 SSgt Tilak Pun
21171742 Cpl Ujjwalkumar Glan

Commander ARRC's Coin

30166829 LCpl Jagadish Gurung
30188392 LCpl Angsiahng Thopra

Commander British Forces Brunei's Coin

21170789 SSgt Deepak Rai
21170752 Cpl Sagar Gurung
21170809 Cpl Mahendra Angbuhang
21171061 Cpl Rajkumar Thapa

Commander 8 Engineer Brigade Commendation

21169976 Capt Prithibahadur Chhantyal
21172032 LCpl Nepal Singh Rai

74 Training Party – Initial Trade Training (Cbt Engr CI 3)

30337610 Spr Nischal Shrestha Overall Top Student
30338366 Spr Subash Limbu Top Academic Student

ME Cbt Class 1 Top Student

30208391 LCpl Arun Thapa (Cse 20/03)
30207816 LCpl Sahadev Magar (Cse 20/06)

ME Cbt Initial Trade Training (Cse 20/10) - Top Student

30293258 Spr Dhawak Garbuja

ME C3S 0-2 4302/20/002 Cse - Top Student

30312724 Spr Hitson Magar

Mason Award

21171246 SSgt Akash Tamang

The Hackett Award

30274671 Spr David Gurung

Corps Sports Award – Exceptional Service to Mountain Biking

30085777 Cpl Topjang Rai

CONVERSION OF COMMISSION**Regular Commission (Late Entry) – RegC (LE)**

21168756 Major Kamalbahadur Khapung Limbu MVO
21169289 Captain Khadkabahadur Gurung

PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**Promotion to Major**

21169289 Captain Khadkabahadur Gurung

Promotion to Late Entry Officer Captain (SSC LE)

21169982 WO2 (SSM) Bikash Shrestha
21169990 WO2 (QMSI) Lal Bahadur Rana

SSM Appointment

21170652 WO2 Jayandra Garbuja. 37 Fd Sqn, 32 Engr Regt
21170737 WO2 Suresh Sherma. 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn

Promotion to WO2

21170526 SSgt Yakthunghang Angbuhang
21171246 SSgt Akash Tamang

Promotion to SSgt

21170256 Sgt Kiran Pratap Rai
21170616 Sgt Gajendra Kumar Gurung
21170568 Sgt Raju Sunuwar
21170761 Sgt Shivakumar Rai
21170994 Sgt Lilaram Rai
21171050 Sgt Pabankumar Thapa Magar
21171503 Sgt Basanta Gurung
21171582 Sgt Jasbahadur Rai

Promotion to Sgt

21170927 Cpl Prithibikram Limbu
21171370 Cpl Rabin Thapa
21171624 Cpl Gaurav Gurung
21171653 Cpl Dilbahadur Pun
21171726 Cpl Krishnakumar Rai
21171742 Cpl Ujjwalkumar Glan
30048363 Cpl Nagesh Sunuwar

Promotion to Cpl

21171826 A/Cpl Nishan Thakali
21171921 A/Cpl Robin Pun
21172026 L Cpl Ganesh Khatri
30048388 LCpl Roshan Rai
30048402 LCpl Dhiraj Rai
30085137 LCpl Omraj Gurung
30120269 LCpl Sujana Jwarchan
30120348 LCpl Ushal Mukhiya Sunuwar
30120669 LCpl Gyabin Limbu
30141874 LCpl Laonya Bikram Singh Limbu
30166864 LCpl Arun Gurung

Promotion to LCpl

21171218 Spr Nabin Limbu
30120270 Spr Sushilkumar Shrish
30142387 Spr John Pahalman Gurung
30188410 Spr Ngima Dhenduk Bhole
30188420 Spr Devendra Wagle
30188637 Spr Prakash Rai
30189124 Spr Mannbahadur Gurung
30207791 Spr Jirahang Rai
30207839 Spr Sagarkumar Limbu
30208405 Spr Deepak Gurung
30229178 Spr Suman Pachabahiya
30229246 Spr Bibek Chhetri



TRANSFER / RETIREMENT / DISCHARGE

Transfer to RE

21172027 LCpl Prem Tamang

Clerk of Works

21171881 SSgt Bijay Shrestha
 21171945 SSgt Binod Rai
 21171964 SSgt Mirak Kandangwa

21171998 SSgt Arun Tumbahangphe
 30085687 SSgt Dharmendra Dewan
 30085728 SSgt Samir Thebe

Retirement/Discharge 2021

21168202 Maj Ashokkumar Gurung	Jan 21
21168280 Capt Dirgha KC	Feb 21
21168531 Capt Bishwabhadur Rai	Apr 21
21169588 WO2 Birendrakumar Kambang	Apr 21
21170105 SSgt Ramprasand Phago	Mar 21
30229241 Spr Sandesh Gauchan	May 21

69 GURKHA FIELD SQUADRON

Major Mike Gledhill RE

This year has been fraught with challenges. The effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic has hit the 69 Squadron Family Group hard, with all within it having to weather this seemingly endless storm. Yet the tenacious spirit of the Squadron has endured regardless, etching out activity to ensure that the fighting power of the organisation lives on. From innovative social functions to the ‘back to basics’ training exercises in Copehill Down and Pippingford Park, the soldiers of the Squadron have risen to the challenge despite all that has been thrown at them. Resolutely supported by their families, they have done everything that has been asked of them and all should be justifiably proud of what they and the Squadron have achieved during this fractious period.

Squadron Personnel Changes

The Squadron’s return from operations in South Sudan in March 2020 saw a number of key personalities come and go. Most notably was the changeover of the Squadron Sergeant Major from the outgoing WO2 Chandrabhadur Pun, who on commissioning took command of Curragh Troop at Minley, handing over to WO2 Bikash Shrestha. At the same time the Squadron was very sad to see the Second in Command, Capt Sophie Piper, leave the Service after a remarkable tenure handing over the reins to Capt Edward Borland. This period also saw two new troop commanders arrive: 2Lt Helen Bridgman and 2Lt Tom Penman who took command of I Troop and G Troop from Lt Zach Tarrant-Taylor and Lt Louis Trup respectively. Within the Echelon Department, Capt Andrew ‘Ronnie’ Barker posted on handing over to Capt Rob Green.

There was also a large changeover within the SNCO cohort with SSgt Jayendra Garbuja and Sgt Lilaram Rai leaving on promotion and Sgt Dilprasad Gurung and Sgt Bhupendra Rai posted on. They were replaced by Sgt Raju Tulachan, Sgt Dilbahadur Pun, Sgt Sandesh Rai, Sgt Jeffon Beharry and SSgt Shivakumar Rai. The Construction Supervision Cell also saw WO2 Doran-Thorpe, SSgt Cottam and SSgt Charlery join the QGE Family, however, WO2 Doran-Thorpe very quickly moved on promotion back up to Chilwell.

Invicta Park Barracks Perimeter Security Upgrade

In and amongst the turmoil of the national lockdown and the subsequent quarantine measures that followed, it was crucial that we recognised the mental strain placed on the members

of QGE, especially those living in Single Living Accommodation. Having just returned to the United Kingdom from South Sudan and with Nepal leave cancelled resulting in a large proportion of the Squadron having to endure lockdown in the block, it was vitally important that we identified opportunities to undertake activity to allow soldiers to once again interact with each other. Such an opportunity presented itself when the Regimental Second in Command identified urgent work that was required to upgrade areas of the Invicta Park Barracks perimeter that had fallen into disrepair. A team under the new troop



commander, 2Lt Cpl Gyanendra inspecting the fence Helen Bridgman and upgrade work

Sgt Raju Tulachan, undertook the task which included anchoring new fence posts, fixing large swathes of barbed wire, spot welding brackets onto the front gate and the wholesale clearance of vegetation. A relatively easy first task post operations but an important one, nonetheless.

A Shift to the Virtual Realm (13 Apr – 17 Jul 20)

The onset of lockdown required the Squadron to adapt its processes and command from a distance through whatever means possible. This led to the instigation of a virtual battle rhythm that encompassed everything from physical training to Squadron ‘Tea and Toast’. Although difficult to accept at first, the Squadron persevered, and it eventually became second nature to speak to a two-dimensional image of each other as we continued to conduct normal Squadron business through our phones and computers. This of course could never replace actual face to face interaction, and the Headquarters sought any and all opportunities to safely allow real interaction. Such an opportunity arose at the beginning of June 2020 as the Government loosened the reins and the





Cpl Degnath Pokhrel delivering orders during Battlecraft Syllabus training

need to begin training became paramount. A back-to-basics Battle Craft Syllabus was put together to enable the troops to conduct section battle drills and revise combat engineering within the

confines of Invicta Park Barracks. The field troops practiced their craft up and down Troodos Hill which was good to see after an absence of a couple of months. It also kept those in the nearby married quarters on their toes as soldiers took positions and conducted casualty evacuations along Malden Drive.

within the Squadron. Cpl Basanta Thamsuhang led with the event, having to overcome some serious force health protection risks to enable the competition to go ahead, the final of which was attended by Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas and Commandant QGE. The event saw soldiers compete in an insidious mix of cardio and static max repetition exercises within the Walled Garden, ending of course with a mandatory bleep test. The winner of the team event was I Troop with LCpl Rupesh Gurung taking the individual prize.

Management and Squadron Summer Function (15 Jul 20)

After an excruciating long absence of a Squadron social function it was time to explore the possibility of having one, within Government rules of course. The first was a management function that took place at the local Nepali restaurant, The Gurkha Kitchen, who were good enough to close the whole facility for our sole use. It was an extremely well attended affair and the Squadron never realised how many REME 'attachments' we had until the offer of a Gurkha curry came up. The event was organised by Sgt Raju



Col BG, OC 69 and the GM being put through their paces

Ex Sapper Fit (29 Jun – 3 Jul 20)

Having to endure PT within the confines of one's living room for the past few months, it was decided that it was time to create a safe yet challenging physical training competition

Tulachan and was exactly what the management team needed and provided an opportunity to say a few words to a long list of new arrivals and leavers from the Squadron. The success of this function allowed us to roll straight into a Squadron Summer function organised by Cpl Roshan



Welcoming the new Commandant Saheb and Gurkha Major Saheb



Chhantyal which took place in the Walled Garden. All members of the Squadron attended the event in and amongst much fanfare albeit in a restricted manner.

QGE Welcome to New Commandant and GM (11 Sep 20)

It was great to see the return of Lt Col Mark Hendry MBE back to QGE as Commandant and equally so the arrival of Maj Kamal Khapung MVO as Gurkha Major. Such an event had to be marked with a celebration and so the Squadron under the SSM, WO2 Bikash Shrestha, planned a fitting QGE welcome to the two new prominent Regimental personalities. Unfortunately, the event had to be scaled down with only a select few from across the QGE family attending. Hosted in the All Ranks Mess, the formal dinner and entertainment was capped by a few drinks in the Unit Study Centre.

Ex KHUKURI CHALLENGE – Squadron Section Competition (15-18 Sep 20)

There are few tests more demanding for a soldier than the Section Competition. After a rather long hiatus of any 'green activity', it was time to take the leap of faith and deploy to Pippingford Park for the Squadron Section Competition. The event took place over three days, encompassing numerous stands during a particularly warm spell, resulting in a gruelling challenge for all those that took part. Naturally the obligatory events of the section attack, a CBRN serial, the MGOB build and the vehicle recovery stand were interspersed with a night navigational exercise, a water crossing, a waterpoint build, a signals task and a mental agility stand to allow for the full



LCpl Dikendra and his section attempting the river crossing

breadth of skillsets to be tested. As the first shake out of the Squadron since it's return from South Sudan it was unsurprising that there was a large amount of excitement for the event. Probably something to do with the majority of the Squadron being confined to Single Living Accommodation for the best part of five months. Organising such an event had the added complexity of it having to be COVID compliant, and

SSgt Basanta Gurung did a sterling job ensuring for everyone's safety by having to draft a mammoth thirty-page risk assessment. As mentioned, the event itself took part during some particularly high-end summer temperatures, resulting in the Operations Officer, Capt Krishna Pun keeping a close eye on the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature throughout the exercise and curtailing activity when required. This gave some sections a particular advantage as they only had to mimic wearing full 4R during the CBRN serial, much to their relief and the disgust of the other sections. Credit must be given to all who took part as it was a testing exercise with the final weighted run signifying the end of it all. The winning section came from I Troop under command of Cpl Suryahang Rai with Cpl Gyanendra Thapamagar's Section from H Troop coming second overall.

Ex RISE OF THE PHOENIX – Trailwalker Alternative (23 Sep 20)

The cancellation of Trailwalker 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic created a hole in the Regimental program, which thanks to some pragmatic organisation by Cpl Rusal Thapa, was filled by an alternative event known as Ex RISE OF THE PHOENIX. The event consisted of teams of four having to conduct a marathon over the arduous terrain of the Kent Downs, in particular the North Down's Way. The event started and finished on the sports pitches of Invicta Park Barracks and saw some 30 teams take part within different age categories on the 42.2km route. It was impressive to see such a good uptake of individuals from across the Regiment not only taking part, but also volunteering to man the three, much needed checkpoints. The event was extremely well orchestrated, with teams leaving at five-minute intervals throughout the morning to begin their journey around the arduous route. Miraculously, only two members of the Regiment had to be retired due to injury/exhaustion which was remarkable as many runners admitted before the event that 10km was the furthest they had ever run. The winning team was from 70 Gurkha Field Squadron, who had conducted much training and had a support team that would make many Olympic teams jealous. They came in with a winning time of 3 hours and 58 minutes. The other results were as follows:

Names	Team	Finish Time	Categories
Spr Prabin Spr Merin Spr Dipen Spr Tularaj	Team SPARTA	3 hrs 48 min	20-29 Years
Maj Gledhill Capt Borland Lt Bridgeman Lt Penman	Team 69 OFFICERS	4 hrs 7 min	Mix Team
Cpl Sangam Cpl Manoj Cpl Bikash LCpl Mahesh	Team FLYING CORPORALS	4 hrs 28 min	30-39 Years
Capt Krishna Capt Barker Capt Khelendra Capt Forsey	Team LE	6 hrs 21 min	40 + Years





Team C3S looking strong on the run

Ex KHUKURI URBAN CRAWL – OBUA Package Copehill Down Village (5-9 Oct 20)

As with many things in life, it is not what you know but who you know that matters. This is especially true in the Army and it was the connections of the Echelon Commander, Captain 'Ronnie Barker' that secured the Squadron exclusive access to Copehill Down Village for one week in order to allow for some much-needed urban training. Luck would also have it that Captain Barker was also an OBUA instructor and so could lead with the training which saw a steady progression of urban skills being acquired over five days. The training event was

stations that were beyond repair. After some careful negotiating over resources from the Logistics Node, the two-week project commenced tackling the refurbishment of eleven stations and the decommissioning a further four. The project was a success but due to the current COVID restrictions, the Trail hasn't had its Grand opening just yet; one for the future.



Spr Deepak Gurung ensuring the Trim Trail station is level

Gurkha Museum Visit (21 Oct 20)

Long overdue was some cultural activity for the Squadron and so when the opportunity arose, we immediately exploited it in the form of a visit to the Gurkha Museum in Winchester. Planned and executed by Cpl Madan Thapa, the trip saw a large proportion of the Squadron make their way to Winchester to better understand QGE and their wider Gurkha heritage.



Cpl Gyanendra's Section leading the charge as the break in group

unique in the fact that a Sapper Squadron could practice whatever they wanted with the full exclusive use of the village real estate. Training consisted of the urban assault course, zero visibility indoor mazes, experiences of operating in a claustrophobic sewer system and learning various methods of building entry; all interspersed with lots of room and building clearances. Of course this training culminated in a pre-dawn Squadron attack onto the Eastern end of the village which tested troops in a highly kinetic break-in battle.

Trim Trail Upgrade Project (14-27 Oct 20)

After many years standing open to the elements it was obvious that the on-camp Trim Trail was very much in need of an upgrade. Not only would such a task benefit all within the Invicta Park Barracks community, but it would give some of our tradesmen a chance to revisit some of their skills. The Squadron therefore took it upon itself to instigate the upgrade work with I Troop leading the charge under the leadership of Lt Helen Bridgman. The project required remediating most of the existing stations as well as putting to bed some of the

Op RESCRIPT (4 Jan – 11 Feb 21)

The COVID-19 crisis resulted in many units being placed at readiness in preparation to support the Government's mass testing initiative. 69 Gurkha Field Squadron was no different and the Squadron found itself at five days' notice to move for the final quarter of 2020. After two false starts, it was finally mobilised to support Kent County Council deliver mass testing in early January 2021. Under command of 35 Engineer Regiment, the Squadron deployed to

set up and run six Asymptomatic Mass Testing sites before handing them over to the Council. Further into the task, we took over a further two testing centres to run and eventually hand over to the Council. Although the task was 12hrs a day,



LCpl Milan assisting a member of the public complete her COVID test registration



7 days a week it was a rather comfortable affair. Certainly, the most comfortable any of us older sweats had experienced on operations as we found ourselves accommodated in 3- and 4-star hotels. That said, the task was testing yet rewarding as we were able to help in the Nation's fight against COVID-19. The finer detail of the deployment is encompassed in a separate article within the journal.

Project Maker Space (1 Feb – 31 Mar 21)

With Commander Field Army's focus on innovation and a push from the Regimental Second in Command, Maj James Kelly, the Squadron volunteered to support the creation of a MakerSpace; a workspace to allow members from the Regiment and their wider families to experiment and learn new skills. The Squadron lead for the project was the Military Plant Foreman, SSgt Scot Petrie, who as the innovation lead, was the natural choice for the project. From the design concept to resourcing and final construction, the project involved elements from across the Squadron, predominantly from H Troop, who provided the bulk of the Military Construction Force under Lt Hamaad Basir and SSgt Bishnu Gurung. The project, delayed many times due to the Squadron deployment on Op RESCRIPT, and various iterations of lockdown, finally saw the bulk of construction carried out in the Able Hanger during the period February-March 2021. Fabricators, Electricians and Builder & Structural



LCpl Nayan Limbu doing some crucial welding

Finishers were all key to its success. The design saw the procurement of three ISO containers which were then fabricated to make a suitable workspace both indoors and outdoors for interested personnel to utilise. Equipped with lathes, CNC wood cutting machines and other useful tools, it will provide everyone the opportunity to sign up to the MakerSpace group and 'tinker' to their hearts content.

Ex INVICTA STALLION (8 – 22 Mar 21)

In preparation for the Squadron's impending deployment in support of two Battlegroups on Ex WESSEX STORM, there was a requirement to undergo a validation exercise known as Ex INVICTA STALLION. Originally planned to be a two-week Regimental exercise, the Squadron's deployment on Op RESCRIPT meant that our own sub-unit exercise had to be cancelled and incorporated into Ex INVICTA STALLION. As a result the training progression was reduced by half and the Regimental Exercise had to be tailored accordingly to allow for the Squadron to train in the first week, followed by validation in the second week; a rather difficult task considering the reduced timeline. Resetting from the rather comfortable deployment in support of Kent County Council whereby we were housed in hotels, to the windswept forestry



Centre of the bridge-building a crossing over the Avon

blocks of Salisbury Plain in what was a horrendous period of weather took some getting used to. This would be a learning curve for all involved, from the young sappers of Intake 2019 to the Squadron Headquarters Group who had not exercised since returning from Op TRENTON 8. Everyone was put through their paces, reacquainting themselves with combat engineering skills and the resourcing effort required to enable such tasks as a 12 Bay Double Story MGB build over the River Avon to the construction of 4-man battle trenches on the RE Training Area. The words camming up and de-camming became synonymous with the exercise much to the disgust of all. Night driving, a task not undertaken for a while became a comedy of errors as Plant Operators and Troop Commanders fell asleep, resulting in split callsigns which, compounded with navigational errors resulted in a steep learning curve for the whole force. But the inevitable mistakes were quickly learned and by the time we crossed the line of departure for the Regimental exercise in the second week we were a slick sub-unit ready for anything. An attack on Imber Village and an 18-hour CBRN serial saw the Squadron back in for tea and medals after what was a testing but rewarding two weeks on Salisbury Plain. The highlight of the exercise was definitely seeing the Squadron Second in Command, Capt Ed Borland, attempting to pack away his poncho during a particularly windy reveille as well as listening to the sounds of his tent being blown away with him asleep in it at 0300hrs in the middle of the exercise.

Conclusion

It has been a rather unusual and testing year for the Squadron Group but as always, it has persevered and learned much from the experience. The Squadron now routinely sees it's establishment at over 150 soldiers; the breadth and experience that this provides, together with the support of our families is what gives us our strength of character to weather any future storm. *Jai QGE.*



70 GURKHA FIELD SQUADRON

Maj O B Clark RE

Introduction

The past year has been unlike any other; fraught with uncertainties and frustrations. Despite this, 70 Gurkha Field Sqn have prevailed and have continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination. It is important to take stock and reflect upon the Squadron's achievements of the past year.

This year 70 Gurkha Field Sqn has supported operations at home and abroad, whilst simultaneously upholding its Very High Readiness status for numerous operations. More specifically it has been committed to the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in support of NATO (Op AGORA); Op TEMPERER (the UK response to a terrorist attack) and UK resilience operations through the United Kingdom's Standby Battalion (UKSB). Throughout the Squadron has continued to deliver essential operationally focused training, maintained an impressive 90+% deployability level and delivered tangible effect on operations which has been felt internationally.

Project Nightingale (Op RESCRIPT)

The first lockdown in March 2020 dispersed the Squadron and ceased planned activity. As the pandemic's grip on the nation tightened and the concern of the NHS being overwhelmed became more prevalent, Project NIGHTINGALE was activated. This involved the transformation of the Excel Centre in London into a vast hospital in anticipation that the NHS would not be able to cope with the deluge of COVID-19 patients. At impressive pace, the Regiment deployed a recce team and then a Military Construction Force to the Excel Centre. The task was led by 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn and commanded by Lt Stu Taylor and SSgt Yakthunghang Anghuhang. The dynamic team, liaising with numerous stakeholders across Government rapidly constructed partition walls for thousands of cubicles and then installed electrics and ventilation to enable the hospital to be fully operational.



Military and Civilian Electricians preparing trunkings for ICU cubicles

A remarkable effort from the team in supporting the Nation when in need. A more detailed article Project Nightingale can be found on Pg 22.

Following this peak of activity, the Squadron resumed dispersed working but began to diversify its training as its interactions became more vital. The Squadron impressively maintained a substantial level of training through ZOOM,

SKYPE and MS Teams, and developed new ways to socialise and engage.



ICU beds are ready to receive COVID patients

Maintaining Very High Readiness

During a momentary easing of lockdown restrictions, the Squadron grabbed an opportunity to conduct Battlefield Craft Syllabus (BCS) training and Specific to Role training within Invicta Park Barracks in June as well as some driver training in July. This break in lockdown was a welcome source of interaction and allowed the Squadron to physically train to maintain its readiness. The BCS training covered both infantry and combat engineering activities which were beneficial in improving the Sprs and JNCOs skills. Thereafter, Support Troop jumped at the opportunity to deliver a General Service Conversion module from Canterbury Training Area and successfully qualified six soldiers to drive Land Rovers.



August 2020 saw the Squadron welcome Major Oliver Clark RE as the new Officer Commanding who took the reins from Major Ian Pilbeam RE. Soon after a staggered Summer break, 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn was tested on its High Readiness callout procedures as an assessment for its contribution to the NATO VJTF. Individual kit, equipment, documents and vehicles were rigorously inspected to ensure the Squadron could guarantee a rapid and efficient deployment if called upon. The Squadron had no issues in passing with flying colours. As part of the VJTF commitment the Squadron operated out of Husky wheeled armoured vehicles. This new addition to the Squadron's Equipment Table has required it to change the way in which Troops operate and has provided the Squadron with a potent platform from which to protect itself and others. The fleet is a force multiplier but does require stringent





Sp Tp after completion of Ex SIPALU DRIVER

maintenance and a continuous training schedule to ensure deployability is maintained. A new cohort of Vehicle Commanders and 2ICs completed their Husky Commander course to deepen the Squadron's resilience.



Concurrently, the Squadron demonstrated its versatility in the construction of a Mountain Bike Trail around the perimeter of Invicta Park Barracks (IPB). With the Regiment becoming awash with talented and budding cyclist this 4 km trail that hugs the fence offers a varied and challenging array of obstacles to negotiate. Support Troop worked closely with the Squadron Construction Supervision Cell (CSC) to design and construct the course. It offers some technically challenging parts for the advanced riders as well as moderately challenging sections for the novices and children from the community.

In September, further easing of restrictions together with the necessity for all

troops to maintain their currency and competency in core skills saw the Squadron conduct Special to Arms training simultaneously in four locations throughout the UK. The Officer Commanding, Battlegroup Engineer (BGE) and BGE party ventured to Scotland on Ex GALLOWAY HACKLE in support of 3 SCOTS BG. This exercise helped fine tune the Battlegroup's All Arms interoperability as a means to maintain its continued readiness for NATO's VJTF commitment.

The Squadron planning team ran through the tactical planning estimates and helped deepen its relationships with 3 SCOTS, as well as hosting General Officer Commanding 1 (UK) Division.

Concurrently, the Field Troops deployed to Wyke Regis Training Area in Weymouth on Ex DHARILO PUL NIRMAN 20. Here under some beautiful weather, they completed combat engineering training which covered bridging (Logistical Support Bridge, Medium Girder Bridge and Medium Girder Over Bridge), basic combat engineering and watermanship training. A well-run exercise which culminated in a passionate and well fought for raft race.

Meanwhile, Support Troop completed refresher plant training on the Wainscott training area. This well-planned package helped maintain Troop competency in operating and maintaining numerous plant vehicles. The graduated training allowed the troops to hone their skills on a range of tasks, testing their abilities through scenario-based stands. The stands covered grading for route maintenance, digging of tank ditches and mortar pits along with lifts for crane operators. All these skills are vital for the Squadron to be competent in its provision of survivability, mobility and counter mobility support. At the same time the Signals Troop proved BOWAN communications at Invicta Park Barracks. They tested and proved both voice and data communications, relayed messages over numerous kilometres throughout Kent. The passing of reports and returns in this manner replicates



Sp Tp, 70 Sqn, after completion of their Plant Trg



important task that would be crucial during operations. They also explored the capabilities of new recce tablets that will prove to be a force multiplier for recce elements within the Squadron.

After returning from a week of combat engineering training, the Squadron quickly switched its focus to Fighting in Built Up Areas (FIBUA) and Fighting in Woods and Forests (FIWAF). Planned by J Troop with support from instructors from 1 RGR, this was another well executed exercise that offered the Squadron some variety. Furthermore, with close quarter combat in the urban environment becoming the most likely setting in which the military will fight in, this training is key to the Squadron's rounded skill set. This exercise also displayed the Sappers' ability to operate both as combat engineers and as rifleman in a range of environments.



The RCO actively over watching the bullet's landing area



Cpl Bikash's Section learning to clear rooms and corridors on Ex DHARILO CHADKE SIPAHI

During October, the Squadron refreshed its core skills on the ranges. A successfully run Squadron range day was followed by some members engaging on a week long range package for Phase 1 of Ex INVICTA GUNNERY CADRE at Lydd Ranges, which qualified the Gunners as Platform Weapon Operators. The 16 qualified gunners moved to Lulworth for Phase 2 where they were trained to engage targets up to 1100m at both day and night from their Husky Armoured Vehicles using the General-Purpose Machine Gun.



Spr Gobinda conducting a GPMG NSP drill



70 Sqn personnel after completion of Ex DHARILO CHADKE SIPAHI



Prior to Christmas, L Tp management led a team of eight to support the delivery of post recruit training and trade selection for Recruit Intake 2020 (74 Training Party). The team worked dynamically through strict COVID-19 restrictions to interview, mentor and assess the Training Party. Due to a number of personnel undergoing isolation and with strict social distancing the management team had to swiftly adapt to the unfolding COVID-19 situation which meant almost 90% of the lessons had to be converted to remote delivery. Credit to 2Lt Allister Graetorex and SSgt Joseph Subba that 74 Training Party were put through their paces to identify what trade would best suit each individual for their future career in QGE. We warmly welcome these men and their families to QGE.

Operation ROSE

As the Regiment went on a well earned Christmas Leave the Squadron remained at readiness over the period as part of UKSB. With COVID-19 causing havoc throughout the UK and extensive flooding in the South West of the country, the Squadron was under no illusion that it was highly likely they would be called to support the Nation in some form and at some point. The new COVID-19 variant found in the UK resulted in the French authority closing it's borders to prevent further transmission throughout the Continent. This resulted in thousands of hauliers bound for France being stranded in Kent, blocking movement in large areas of the county. This crisis resulted in 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn's high readiness being put to the test over Christmas.

A rapid deployment was activated for the UKSB to support a high tempo UK resilience operation named 'Op ROSE'. The response saw the Squadron deploy as part of a Military Assistance to Civil Authority task to conduct coronavirus lateral flow testing for hauliers throughout Kent in order to allow them to return to the Continent. The coronavirus lateral flow testing HQ was commanded by RHQ 36 Engr Regt and contained six sub-units at it's peak. The Task Force successfully carried out more than 21,000 lateral flow tests (LFT) between 23 - 29 Dec 20. It's quick response tipped the balance in unblocking Kent's roads and enabled hauliers to return to the Continent for Christmas.

A proud moment for the Squadron to be the first sub-unit to respond to the crisis as well as the first to recce and establish three fundamental testing sites in the vicinity of Dover and M20 (Junction 11). What was pleasing to see was the way the soldiers of 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn conducted their business. Professional, considerate and in a positive upbeat manner despite the arduous conditions. Most impressive was that it was the second time the Squadron was able to support the Nation in its fight against COVID-19.

A Pivot to Construction

Returning from a well-deserved Christmas Leave in February the Squadron switched its focus to construction projects, with a Joint Force Enabling Exercise (Ex PINESTICK) in Cyprus due in September 2021. The CSC continued tirelessly to conduct operational infrastructure reces throughout the country to scope options for pre-deployment training. A small team, consisting of construction and logistics experts deployed to Cyprus on the initial recce under command of the

Operations Officer. This recce helped shape the training and preparation requirements for Ex PINESTICK. As part of a gradual re-focus to trade training the Troops have been taking opportunities to dust off their trade skills in the form of low-level projects within IPB. These projects consisted of a Mess Decking project (L Troop), Welfare/Troop Shelter (J Troop), modular bar build and the refurbishment of a seating area (K Troop).



Before and after: Spr Sujan, K Tp, working on the seating outside Chard and Dundas blocks



Just prior to Easter leave Support Troop started their first element of pre deployment training in Thetford. A substantial task tested both management and trade skills as the team upgraded culverts and enhanced almost one kilometre of road in support of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. All these tasks have been a fantastic training opportunity and have provided valuable lessons for design teams, tradesman and management throughout the Squadron. They are also the first of many steps towards Ex PINESTICK and should set the conditions for a successful deployment.

Overseas Exercises and Operations

Throughout the year the Squadron has also maintained persistent support to overseas operations and exercises. In the UK, L Troop and Support Troop deployed two sections to support Op SHADER and Op TOSCA mission specific exercises. They delivered wide ranging combat engineering



effect and received high praise from the directing staff for their contribution. Further afield, LCpl Sunil has flown the flag of 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn in fine form, providing excellent engineering and trade advice to commanders on Op NEWCOMBE (Mali).

In America the Squadron has been represented in a Corps level collective training exercise called Ex WARFIGHTER 21.4. This simulated exercise is the largest multinational war-fighter exercise ever executed. Support was provided to the Divisional Engineer Group led by 25 Close Support Engineer Group within 3 (UK) Division. This was a great opportunity to help the Iron Division achieve validation and improve its interoperability with its French and American partners.

Adventurous Training and Sports



70 Sqn officers team taking part in the Regt'l marathon

Sports and adventurous training have been understandably sparse this year. Despite this there have been small windows of opportunity that have been taken. With Trailwalker cancelled, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn and gym staff organised an excellent endurance challenge called the RISE OF THE PHOENIX. This arduous challenge involved a marathon over the undulating Kent Downs. Nearly 40 teams of 4 from across the Regiment demonstrated some impressive resilience throughout this challenge. Many teams from 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn went into the race well prepared after countless miles of training and hours of preparation. This effort paid off with 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn picking up three of five of the category wins. Most impressive was 'Team Sparta 18' who topped the competition of 120 soldiers with an impressive time of 3 hours and 48 minutes on a very tough route.



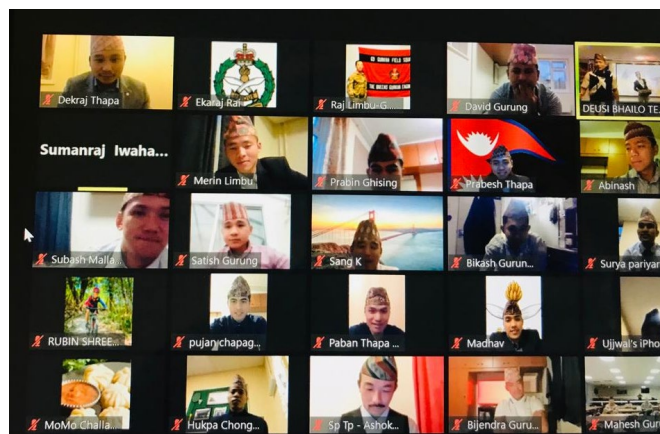
70 Sqn SNCO team after completion of the Regt'l marathon

COVID-19 unfortunately cancelled an overseas adventurous training exercise to Spain, but this was swiftly replaced by a

two-week multi activity package throughout the UK. The activities consisted of walking in Wales or Kent, kayaking or paddle boarding, quad biking locally or walking up then cycling down Snowdon. The event was coordinated by the Ech Comd but executed by numerous Section Commanders where 72% of the Squadron members got away on an activity package.

Maintaining Tradition

The Squadron had the honour to organise the 72nd QGE Birthday this year. The event could thankfully go ahead but was understandably tailored to reduce its scale and mitigate any spread of COVID-19. The guest of honour was the Colonel of the Regiment, Lt General Richard Wardlaw OBE. More poignant than most years, this year we bade him farewell as Col of the Regt. He has assumed the prestigious position as Colonel Commandant of the Bridge of Gurkhas. The traditional format was maintained as closely as possible. The parade and presentations on the square Sas well as the cutting of the cake was followed swiftly by food, entertainment and speeches inside the hanger. K Troop did not disappoint in delivering a highly enjoyable event that was rounded off superbly by General Wardlaw Saheb's speech as he reflected upon his time in 36 Engr Regt and fond memories in QGE.

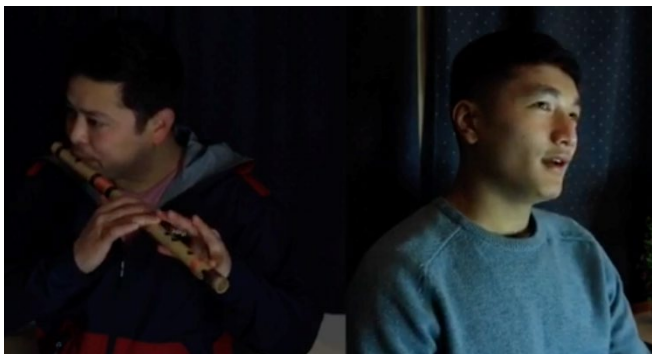


36 Engr Regt Personnel enjoying a virtual Tihar event

Unfortunately, large scale Dashain celebrations had to be cancelled this year and Tihar had to take a different format to tradition. J Troop impressively organised the first ever QGE Virtual Tihar celebration. Broadcasted to hundreds of soldiers and their families throughout the QGE community. The wide-ranging talents of 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn soldiers were again showcased with some excellent entertainment, including singing and well-choreographed cultural dancing. The highlight of the event was the Momo Eating Competition, in which 20 Fd Sqn ran away with the win after devouring 20 momos in a record time. A brilliant event that was a light break for the community during tough COVID-19 restrictions.

During the depths of lockdown, many of the bhaiharu and gurujharu had an opportunity to further develop their music talents and music production skills. A group from 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn entered a short music video to the 'Sing with Sandhya' competition. The competition was in support of the Gurkha Welfare Trust and Hello World. It was judged by Joanna Lumley and Steven Fry, and the talented group achieved an impressive joint first prize in this hotly contested competition. Well done.





Cpl Amir (left) playing his flute and Spr Biswas (right) singing during a virtual charity singing competition



Spr Suraj (left) playing his guitar while Spr Subham (right)



Spr Cristiano (left) and Spr Subham (right) leading the vocals

Charity and Support to the Community

Despite COVID-19 restrictions the Squadron continued its charitable support while abiding by the government guidelines. WO2 (SSM) Eka Rai kicked off the year during lockdown by completing an impressive 24 hr Watt Bike challenge, covering a staggering 589Km. He received international support from QGE members around the world and raised an impressive £3,808 for the Maidstone and Royal Tunbridge Wells NHS charity fund. This inspiring feat was followed later by a team of Sappers led by Cpl Yogesh who organised another Watt Bike event. The event covered 1,566 km in 8.5 hrs (the distance equals the number of days that the First World War was fought for). The team raised a commendable £1,226 for the Pahar Trust Nepal and Royal British Legion.

The Squadron bid farewell to several members of the management; Capt Marris (2IC) retires from the military and is replaced by Capt Collins. Capt Forsey (Ech Comd) is

replaced by Capt Fudge and Lt Burford (J Tp Comd) was replaced by 2Lt Campbell. The Squadron wish them all good luck and warmly welcome the new members to the 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn family.



Farewell to Capt Marris and Lt Burford

Looking to the Future

70 Gurkha Fd Sqn is optimistic for what 2021-22 has to offer as COVID-19 eases its grip on the world. The chance to take those opportunities lost in 2020 will be refreshing and cathartic for all. More importantly the chance to celebrate key events and successes with the wider QGE family is something we are all longing for. Irrespective of what challenges and opportunities next year holds, what will remain a constant is that 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn will continue to be a positive and inclusive sub-unit that is proud of its history and excited for its future.

We will be ready, and we will be focused.

Jai 36 Engr Regiment, Jai QGE, Jai 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn!

50 HQ & SP SQN - QGE UPDATE

Cpl Deviram Rai

Just like it's mascot 'Griffin', I found 50 HQ and Sp Sqn to be mysterious and unique. Mysterious, because not many people from the Regiment get to see the wide range of work that it undertakes and unique, because of its size, ORBAT and diversity. A phrase that everyone hears as a member of this Regiment is; '50 Sqn is a different beast'. I always used to wonder why, until I was assigned to the Squadron last year and had the privilege to experience it first-hand. If I had to explain 50 HQ & Sp Sqn in one sentence, then it would be "the brain and backbone of the Regiment".

Despite six members of QGE being employed in the Sqn for over a decade their work is rarely covered in the Journal. Therefore, I am both humbled and delighted to be given the opportunity to provide an overview of the detachment's roles and responsibilities and how they have been integral to the success of the Sqn over the last year.



Roles and responsibilities

QGE soldiers in 50 HQ and Sp Sqn are employed in the Log Node, C3S and MT departments and consist of those listed below. Capt Narendra Gurung will be assigned to the Squadron as Comd Log Node from Summer 2021

Name	Responsibilities
SSgt Paban Thapa	C3S SNCO
Sgt Rabin Thapa	Sp Tp SNCO
Cpl Devi Ram Rai	Sp Tp Cpl
Cpl Nirajan Budhathoki	Log Node
Cpl Birendra Thapa Magar	C3S Cpl
LCpl Anup Rai	MT JNCO
LCpl Bibek Gurung	C3S Tp, Temp assignment
Spr Bishnu Ale	C3S Tp, Temp assignment
Spr Hebin Chhantyal	C3S Tp, Temp assignment
Spr Hitson Magar	C3S Tp, Temp assignment

Log Node Tp: Cpl Nirajan Budathoki, the only QGE member in the Tp is currently in Kenya on a 6 month trawl. As a Sqn PTI he is instrumental to not only his Tp but to the Sqn alike. One of his highlights this year has been the Regiment Marathon race when he led a team from the Sqn and managed to secure 3rd position in the mixed team category.

C3S Tp: Enabled by SSgt Paban Kumar Thapa Magar, this Tp more than any is a true reflection of the diversity in 36 Engr Regt where 50% of it's members are from QGE and QGE personnel have been serving in this Tp since 2013.



MT/Sp Tp: 50 HQ & Sp Sqn holds the largest fleet of military vehicles within the Regt hence Sgt Rabin Thapa supported Cpl Deviram, LCpl Anup and their RE counterparts carries a huge responsibility and plays a critical part in maintaining the Sqn's operational effectiveness.

Achievements

Despite the pandemic QGE personnel employed within 50 HQ & Sp Sqn were heavily involved in various activities throughout the year. Ex INVICTA TAMAR, a Regimental Section Competition held on the Dartmoor Training Area was an arduous event encompassing a wide a range of military activities that demanded a high level of both infantry and combat engineering skills and it was with great satisfaction that we managed to outperform the other 12 sections and

emerge victorious. The credit goes to all the section members who dug out blind during those challenging times.



Operations: Just prior to Christmas as 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn and RHQ deployed on Operation ROSE to conduct lateral flow tests for lorry drivers waiting to travel to France, QGE personnel within 50 HQ & Sp Sqn worked alongside NHS in order to transport these test kit. Additionally the Sqn worked alongside charities, and local community leaders in Kent to deliver food packages to the hauliers and those in need. We made sure that nothing went to waste and all that was received was redistributed to food banks and homeless and other charities across Kent and Sussex. Over 4 vans full of goods were delivered and I found it really satisfying to know I'd been a part of something that had such a positive impact on people's lives: A great sense of achievement.



Exercise: 50 HQ & Sp Sqn deployed as part of the Regiment to Salisbury Plain Training Area on Ex INVICTA STALLION for 2 weeks in March 2021. The Sqn was put to the test carrying out the full range of combat engineering, infantry, communications, management, command and leadership tasks. It was able to demonstrate it's robust operational effectiveness, strong work ethic and selfless commitment by delivering an exceptional performance in extremely challenging weather conditions. The Sqn's hard work and successful performance was recognised with praise from CO and filled the Sqn with a sense of great pride.

Jai 50 HQ & Sp Sqn, Jai QGE!



OP RESCRIPT, NIGHTINGALE HOSPITAL, EXCEL CENTE LONDON

SSgt Yakthunghang Angbuhang



In early 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the UK, the UK Government identified the requirement for an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in the ExCel Centre, London. This was to be the first of a number of NHS Nightingale Hospitals to be constructed. At the time, 36

Engineer Regiment were held at readiness as the COVID Support Force (CSF) in support of Operation RESCRIPT.

On 22 Mar 20, deployment orders were issued for a Troop of 31 artisan tradesmen from across 36 Engineer Regiment and QGE. Led by Lt S Taylor and SSgt Yakthunghang Angbuhang, they were immediately deployed to the ExCel Centre, supporting civilian contractors and NHS staff with planning and executing the hasty construction of an ICU capable of treating severely affected COVID patients. The aim of the project, Project NIGHTINGALE, was to deliver 4000 bed-spaces under significant time and resource constraints. Unsurprisingly, the project was a focal point for the Government and public, and therefore subject to intense media coverage; it was a privilege for the Regiment to showcase the capability of the military on a national stage.



The Troop was formed of various ranks and trades: Carpenters and Joiners, Heating and Plumbing engineers, Fitters and Electricians all deployed with the same aim of delivering Military Aid to the Civil Authorities as per the Government request. On arrival at the task site the Troop presence had an immediate impact, demonstrating trade experience, proactivity and a desire to get on with the job at hand. Initially some challenges were faced collaborating with an array of external contractors however, as the project progressed processes were aligned and a comfortable, co-operative working environment endured. This

was testament to the commitment of all present to achieve their common goals.

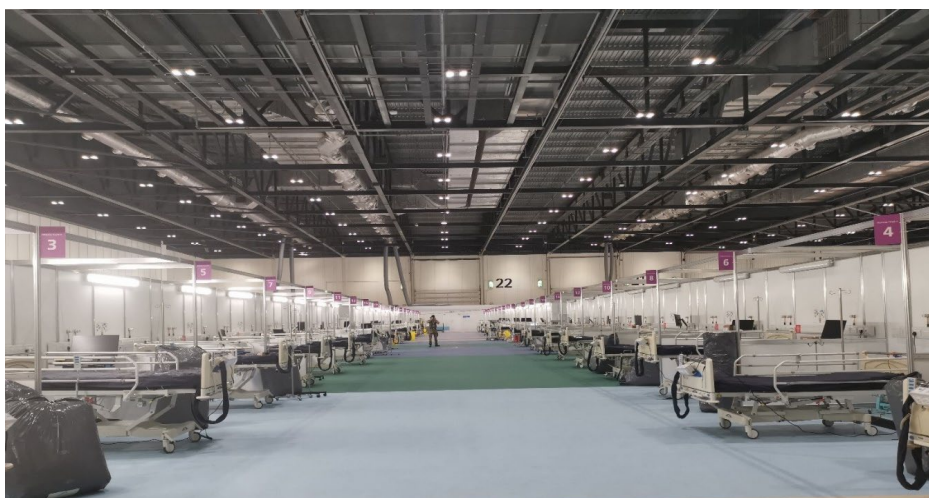


Civilian and military tradesmen working together while LCpl Mahesh installs MDF board to support a cubical



LCpl Nirpesh (left) preparing trunking for ICU cubicles, while Cpl Ganga installs a medical air supply connection

The Carpenter and Joiners were heavily involved with the construction of cubicles from plyboard and fabricated metal frames before the Electricians got involved and fitted the required trunking on the cubicle walls. The Fitters and Heating & Plumbing engineers added great value assisting civilian contractors with installing the emergency gas pipes in patient bed spaces as well as installing hand washing basins



A glimpse of NHS Nightingale after completion





Personnel from 36 Engr and QGE proudly pose after completion of the NHS Nightingale

in every cubicle. During the construction phase the Tp Comd, Lt Taylor, became a key figure in assisting with planning and delivering the project to time and quality constraints, whilst I liaised with civilian contractors on the ground; roles were clearly defined and understood. A strong work ethic, clear communication and effective command and control allowed the Troop to punch well above it's weight, demonstrating the versatility and capability of the military in an adverse environment.

Ultimately, the efforts and enthusiasm of the deployed Troop enabled the timely and successful delivery of this project on the national main effort. The opportunity to deploy in this capacity on Op RESCRIPT was unique and extremely satisfying. Using artisan trade skills to serve the country at what was, and continues to be a difficult time should form a source of pride for those involved for years to come. Jai QGE.

OP ROSE

Lt Will Pearce, K Tp Comd



Manston Airfield, Kent on 23 Dec 2020

On 20 Dec 2020, following the discovery of a new UK-based COVID-19 variant, France closed it's borders with the UK. Hauliers were stacked up across Kent, unable to continue

their journey to the Continent, and the French Government subsequently mandated all cross-channel transport required a negative COVID-19 test in order to travel. As the lead UK Standby Battalion contingent for the South East, 70 Sqn and RHQ rapidly deployed to assist their civilian counterparts as part of Op ROSE, the UK Government's response to the issue. The Haulier Testing Reliance Unit (HTRU) was established and commanded

by CO 36 Engr Regt, where he quickly focused efforts to recce and conduct mass testing of hauliers throughout Kent. Focus was centred on three sites: Manston Airport (also HTRU HQ), the M20 and Dover Port.



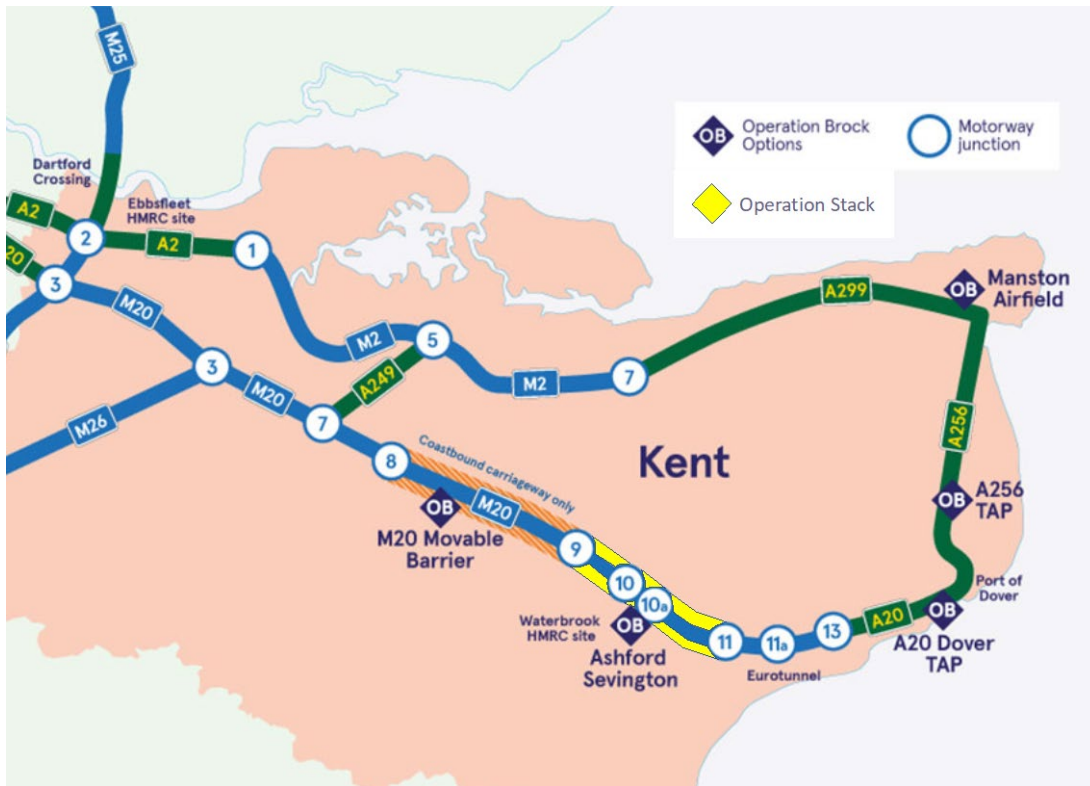
70 Sqn receiving an initial brief on the use of lateral flow test kits

Having received a tuition package in the use of Lateral Flow Devices from 35 Engr Regt, 70 Sqn moved first to the M20, where miles of stacked vehicles greeted them on arrival. The initial recce adapted processes already in use at static testing sites across Kent for use on a mobile site and by 1800 on 23 Dec 20, testing was underway. Impressively from receipt of deployment orders to delivering effect had taken as little as 18 hours. Shift patterns were established to enable 24-hour testing and in bitterly cold conditions the initial 12-hour + rotation settled in for their first night combing through the miles of stranded hauliers.



70 Sqn personnel standing ready to issue certificates to hauliers once negative tests have been confirmed





In the early hours of 24 Dec, as the M20 site testing gathered pace, SHQ elements receded two further testing sites at Dover Port and on arterial roads to the Port itself; the stranded hauliers filled all the roads into Dover, grinding the town and Port to a standstill. The atmospherics grew more tense as drivers became increasingly agitated and aggressive after

days of being stuck in sub-optimal living conditions. Quick decisions and reactions directed force elements to Dover to resolve the issue, and by the following morning 70 Sqn had established a further two testing sites. The pace of testing was multiplied as civilian Mobile Testing



CO 36 visiting the M20 Test Site on Christmas Eve

Teams and French paramedics joined an international effort to collaboratively resolve the crisis. Once fully established, the Dover sites were handed over to follow-on forces from 1 Royal Welsh on their arrival on Christmas Eve. This allowed 70 Sqn to focus on the M20.



Spr Sunil demonstrates the use of a lateral flow test kit at a Dover testing site

Over the course of the next 48 hours, 70 Sqn refined the testing process. Ratios of hauliers to testers were optimised, with a half-squadron force achieving in excess of 100 tests per hour. Great innovation, empathy and patience was shown by personnel on the ground as they attempted to overcome an often-significant language barriers with hauliers originating mostly from Eastern Europe. Inevitably, this did result in some very amusing miscommunications and Google translate attempts! On Christmas Eve, the M20 site, combined with the expansion of the testing sites at the Port of Dover, brought a degree of order to an initially chaotic environment. This enabled organised loading of cross-channel ferries to alleviate some of the congestion.



The night shift continue testing in sub-optimal conditions

Christmas Day itself brought an uplift in spirits from both hauliers and military personnel alike (particularly with one lorry driver who, having over-indulged on Christmas drinks, decided to drive and found herself becoming more familiar with our police colleagues). Op STACK, the first of two multi-mile M20 vehicle packets, had been fully cleared. As the Army assumed command on the ground, it was also identified that food provisions to stranded hauliers were insufficient and required a specialist contribution to support procedures





Capt Mark Paul, QM(T) 36 Engr Regt, running the welfare support depot

already in place. Engaging with charities, external organisations and hauliers, a team from the Sqn led by the QM (Tech) and LCpl Umesh were able to deliver in excess of 1000 hot meals twice daily to where they were most needed.

As progress moved to Op BROCK, the

second M20-based vehicle park, a workforce surge arrived. 70 Sqn was tasked to lead a tri-sub-unit workforce peaking at over 150 deployed personnel along with attachments from the Polish military keen to assist with helping lorry drivers return home. Having delivered lessons to Companies from both the Royal Welsh and Welsh Guards, 70 Sqn embedded sections within these sub-units, mentoring and coaching them through the testing process with great effect. Coordinating with police forces on the ground to manage traffic flow, over 8 miles of stacked vehicles had been tested, certificated and cleared for release within 24 hours.



LCpl Sujan and Spr David conducting an RSOI package to 1 RGR

By 1900hrs on the 26 Dec, the backlog of stationary vehicles that stretched as far as Maidstone had been tested ready for release, leaving a manageable trickle of vehicles arriving from across Kent. With the bulk of the work complete, 70 Sqn re-focused efforts on training up the 1 RGR Battalion who were set to take control of the haulier testing program. Subsequently, on 29 Dec 20, 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn and 36 Engr Regt HQ officially handed over their responsibilities; it had been a great privilege for all involved to contribute to a national main effort. Through perseverance, work-ethic and effective coordination with both civilian counterparts and military sub-units alike, lorries on both the M20 and at the Dover Port were successfully tested and vehicles certified for release for their onward journey to France; a very rewarding Christmas that will stay with those deployed for years to come.



Secretary of State for Transport, Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP published regular updates during Op ROSE using HTRU data, as did other official sources

Op RESCRIPT

Lt Helen Bridgman and Lt Tom Penman

Introduction

Flexibility and adaptability are critical to handling unique and unprecedented challenges during a global pandemic. In early Jan 21, 69 Gurkha Field Squadron deployed on Op RESCRIPT as part of the Kent Resilience Unit to work hand in hand with Kent County Council in the delivery of a community testing programme.



Spr Pujan Shrestha extracting solution from the swab head. ATS Birchington

A little over a year since the first National Lockdown and the military has certainly been kept busy. Everyone's lives have been impacted in some manner and we have all been called upon to play our part. Having seen our QGE counterparts in 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn contribute to both the Nightingale Hospital and Op ROSE in Dover, there was eagerness to deploy and assist the national effort. Prior to Christmas, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn was assigned to 'Winter Preparedness 20' ORBAT and transitioned to a state of readiness. Simultaneously, a new, more contagious variant of COVID-19 was emerging in Kent. Kent County Council issued a Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) request for support, rolling out a rapid community



testing programme and 36 Engr Regt were geographically well placed to be of assistance. The nature of the task became clear in late December and our soldiers, many of whom had spent several months pent up in Single Living Accommodation, began their preparations. This included completing online training packages and analysing the Standard Operating Instructions and lessons learnt from the Liverpool pilot. Immediately following Christmas leave, 75 members of the Squadron departed Invicta Park Barracks to task sites in Birchington, Kemsley and Canterbury. Over the course of the next 39 days, the Sqn tested asymptomatic members of these communities before moving on to establish further testing centres. Our work helped break the chain of transmission by identifying carriers, informing them to isolate and hence reducing the pressure on the NHS. Testing was conducted using Lateral Flow devices which provide results within 30 mins.

Site Recce

Asymptomatic Testing Sites were established in pre-existing buildings ranging from youth centres and libraries to art galleries. The location of Asymptomatic Testing Sites and the facilities available were critical for mission success. On receiving the postcode for the proposed site, Troop Commanders were deployed as Recce assets to establish the feasibility of the venue. The establishment of the site would prove the most challenging aspect due to the number of stakeholders and time pressure of impending bookings. Typically, a two-day window was allocated for recce and site set up. Within this time, several large deliveries of critical stores were received and processed by the team. Liaising with key stakeholders was essential and they varied from site to site. Typically they included building owners, Council representatives, cleaners, security guards and the waste management team. The efficient flow of customers through the site was important to avoid queues. Bottlenecks needed promptly identifying and resolving. Some sites were ideal for meeting our requirements; others required significant redesign. Key attributes included good ventilation and a one-way system with disabled access at both the entrance and exit. Furthermore, a large registration room was also necessary to facilitate a fast-track system. Welfare rooms were established to allow the team to relax during breaks and take on highly nutritional pot noodles!



PPE donned, training complete; QGE personnel ready to serve the Sittingbourne community

Clinical Training

NHS representatives delivered a training package to the workforce at Kent County Showground. This covered the registration process, donning and doffing PPE and importantly how to physically conduct the test. The team needed to understand how to instruct the public to take the swab and to gain this understanding, physical experience was required. Unfortunately for the bhaiharu nominated to act as customers during training, this caused slight discomfort for a little longer than anticipated. At the testing centres, this explanation would then take place behind a perspex screen, hence clarity and visual cues were critical. Once content that the swab was complete, the clinical aspect of the process commenced. All personnel were trained in combining the swab with the solution and dripping the solution into the well on the device. JNCOs, such as LCpl Finju Sherpa seen below, operated the results processing station, whereby devices were placed whilst the 30 min maturation period was observed. The test processing arena was cordoned off and termed the ‘red zone’ with full Personal Protective Equipment required to enter. The time the test was conducted was marked on the test along with the bay number. A robust cleaning routine was conducted between customers on both the customer facing and clinical side of the booth. The bay numbering system allowed us to identify which bays positive individuals had occupied. For added assurance, these bays received a deep clean and all parties who had been in contact with the test donned fresh PPE.



Working alongside Local Authorities

Every site had two representatives from the council working in shifts throughout the week. They were ultimately leading the

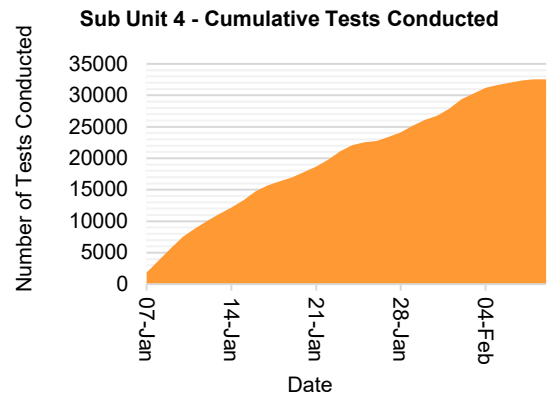


Lt Penman is explaining the operating process to KCC Liaison Officer at ATS Canterbury



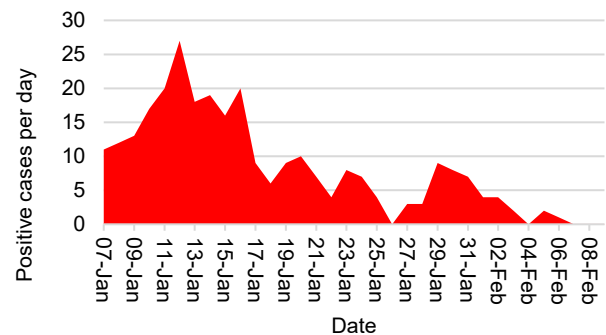
project with our support. We would eventually hand over when a civilian work force had been trained and established. The Kent County Council site leads had been recruited specifically to run these sites and were generally retired individuals from the Armed Forces or the Police. This made it easier to establish a working relationship, with them also providing a huge amount of their own experiences, spanning an entire career which was very useful. Due to the sites being rapidly established we were not sure whether the testing booths had been built already resulting in us, as all good sappers do, deploy with the G1098 just in case. Luckily the booths were already constructed allowing us to focus on how the site would function when the influx of people came on opening day; all whilst bearing social distancing in mind. The sites were run by the Troop Commander and Staff Sergeant, with the total Troop size being 22 personnel. Interesting as the local council were planning a staffing size of 44 personnel.

Through the delivery of 33 days of testing, 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn administered over 31,000 tests, finding over 280 positive cases in the community. The chart demonstrates how these tests were accumulated over the deployment.



Sub Unit 4 Cumulative Tests Conducted

A drop in asymptomatic carriers circulating within the community was observed towards the end of the deployment as showcased below.



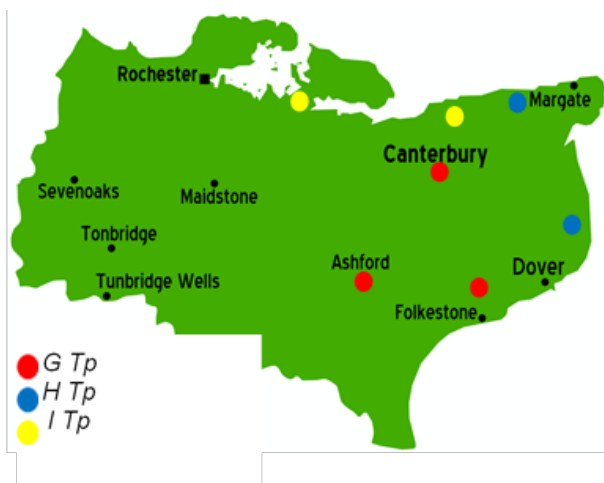
Sub Unit 4 Positive Cases Identified



LCpl Milan assisting a member of the public to complete her COVID test registration

Statistics

Over the course of the deployment 7 Asymptomatic Testing Sites were established, operated and then ultimately transitioned to the civilian workforce. The map below shows the geographic location of the sites within Kent County.



ATS locations established and operated by 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn

Sites were operational from 0900hrs – 1900hrs, 7 days a week in order to permit maximum attendance. Typically, key workers would occupy the early morning slots with families and elderly preferring weekend appointments. The customer demographic changed drastically between sites, but our flexible workforce were able to respond to evolving requirements. The daily capacity of a centre was pre-designated based on its catchment area and building size. Medium sized centres, running at 100% capacity, administered approximately 800 tests per day. Individuals familiar with the registration process would spend less than 5 minutes onsite. Minimising the time spent queuing was critical to encouraging individuals to return for repeat tests as per the Government’s recommendation. In addition, processing individuals faster reduced unnecessary exposure to other members of the community whilst queuing. However, speed was never a substitute for safety of either our workforce or our customers.





*Spr Bikesh explaining the swab procedure to customer at Kemsley
ATS*



*Spr Fadindra (Intake 2019) explaining his role to Comdt QGE and
GM QGE*

Safety of the Workforce

Being on the frontline against an adversary is commonplace for military personnel. In this instance, COVID-19 played the role of the invisible enemy. As with any environment the risks posed to the workforce were thoroughly analysed and mitigating measures implemented. Throughout the operation the number 1 priority remained the safety of the workforce. Without a fit and healthy team we would be unable to provide a testing service so desperately required by the Nation.

A multitude of mitigating measures were enforced. First, the team were tested regularly to allow any outbreaks to be identified and isolated early. This testing was extended to external cleaners, security guards and any other individuals who were operating in close proximity to the team. Second, social distancing was rigidly enforced across all aspects of operation. Feeding times were staggered, coach seating dispersed, and accommodation blocks occupied at reduced capacity. In the rare instance of infection, government guidelines were followed with close contacts traced and isolation enforced.

Problem Solving

There was a vast amount of problem solving and quick thinking that took place from day to day at all levels, as no one had personally taken part in anything like this before; it was a steep learning curve for us all including the Local Authority. We initially had to use our imagination before the public arrived to pre-empt any problems we may have encountered. The key problem born out of Liverpool was that it took so long for people to register on their mobile devices at the site when they received their registration card. With a variety of technological abilities across the wide customer demographic, there was ultimately going to be people who were going to hold up the entire queue. The Troop came up with a method, by utilising the space that the art gallery provided, to create a fast lane. This way, those requiring assistance could stop at a 'help station' and those who had completed the registration process could take the fast track.

Another piece of great innovation was thought up by Spr Bijay Lama who came up with a step-by step guide for the public to follow through the process, saving swathes of time. This freed up the workforce to help those absolutely in need and unblocked the registration choke point, giving us a good flow through to the testing area.

Interactions with the General Public

It is not often that Gurkhas have the opportunity to interact with the British public on mass and all were very excited to offer good customer service. I, on the other hand, had not long ago reflected on my many days working in hospitality waiting on tables and did not expect to be back in a similar situation so soon. But this was quite different and I was eager to make people feel at ease and get them through the site as safely and efficiently as possible.

As expected, the public coming through the door were from all walks of life, from young to old, from native English speakers to those who did not speak a word of English. Being in the South-East, so close to the borders with Europe meant there were a number of individuals who we had to assist using the Google translate application to try and bridge the language gap, which worked very well.



Spr Sanjok explains to the customer the swabbing process

We also had some brushes with fame during the operation with a visit from BBC Radio Kent to follow the Chief Executive of Kent County Council through our site, on the opening day.



We even featured in a national newspaper, the Daily Star, where Spr Sumanraj Iwahang was modelling some test tubes in full PPE. LCpl Dikendra Limbu was interviewed by BFBS for a piece on Op RESCRIPT which aired in late February.



Spr Binod receiving a food parcel from Sal from Sittingbourne Morrisons store. ATS Kemsley

We were taken back by the outpouring of good wishes, appreciation and generosity by the good people of Kent. We received several cards that had been handmade by children; we would be stopped and thanked by passers-by; and we would sometimes get treats donated by local businesses which was fantastic for everyone's morale; especially when it was from Wagamamas.

Transitioning to a civilian workforce

Following a couple of weeks of running the sites and refining processes it was time to handover to the civilian workforce, who were now trained and ready. The sites would close for the day to allow them to take a COVID test on arrival and conduct their physical training in a safe manner. Cpl Bishnu Magar, LCpl Himal Limbu, LCpl Prabin Limbu, and Spr Shishir Budha Magar would make up the continuity team at the Canterbury testing site to facilitate their training alongside the Kent County Council instructor. They did a fantastic job of making them feel at ease, where some may have felt intimidated by the uniform. Not only did they learn about the running of a testing site, but also about the Brigade of Gurkhas, QGE and some of our customs and traditions. It was incredibly interesting to get the chance to work with the Local Authorities, an experience you don't expect to have when you think of joining the Armed Forces, but one that will stay with everyone for many years to come.



KRU SU4, LCpl Batawaran explaining IT process at ATS, Hawkinge

Conclusion

For the 90 soldiers from the Sqn deployed as part of the Kent Resilience Unit, this MACA task was an opportunity to play our part in a time of national distress. Providing a service on our own doorstep within the communities of Kent made the task particularly poignant. The people of Kent were most welcoming of the military, their kind words and generosity acting as a catalyst, boosting morale and driving the team forward. Engaging and assisting individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds allowed us to develop and refine our communication skills. Diplomacy, humility and professionalism were critical in equal measure. We are very proud to have played our small part within the wider national response. Together, we have overcome challenges and in doing so exhibited the very best qualities of Gurkhas. We stand ready, better prepared than ever, to be called upon should our services be required. *Jai QGE!*



Spr Rajan Sunam checking customer's temperature before they enter the ATS in Birchington

QGE Birthday and Farewell to Lt Gen R Wardlaw OBE

Lt Will Pearce, K Tp Comd

An annual highlight on the QGE calendar, the Regimental Birthday was not to be stopped by such trivial obstacles as global pandemics. On the contrary, in 2020, the 72nd Birthday celebration had a heightened sense of importance, providing an opportunity for a community to come together and celebrate their unique history, traditions and *Kaida*; a source of joy against an otherwise sullen COVID-dominated backdrop. The celebration also served as a send-off for the Col of the Regt, Lt Gen Richard Wardlaw Saheb, as he moved on to pastures new; we were delighted he was able to join us for the day.





Comdt QGE and Gurkha Major bidding farewell to the Col of the Regt

This year, K Tp, 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn were tasked with the formalities and the setup was necessarily different to years gone by. Due to COVID-19 considerations the unfortunate decision was taken to limit attendance to serving QGE personnel only, with the Col of the Regt as our special guest - we look forward to welcoming our families and externally employed QGE *Pariwar* back on future events. And so, on a bitterly cold 26 Sep, the Regt gathered on the Parade Square for a socially distanced celebration.



LCpl Mahesh, 70 Sqn, having supported the band of Bde of Gurkhas

The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas set the tone for the festivities with true spirit in the face of challenging weather. A dynamic program, including multiple musical numbers and a Khukuri pattern, couldn't be dampened (figuratively speaking) by sporadic downpours. Fortunately these had subsided prior to the presentation ceremony much to the relief of the support team standing by with the emergency gazebo! The Regt was privileged to recognise the enduring contributions of Capt Krishna Pun, winner of the Durand Medal 2020, for his outstanding service to QGE over a career spanning more than 20 years. Congratulations were also given to LCpl Sangit Gurung, winner of the Bowring Trophy 2020 and LCpl Mahesh Gurung as runner up. This is awarded to the JNCO assessed to be the best in QGE; an individual full of potential to be realised, and a career to watch!



The Col of the Regt, Comdt QGE and Gurkha Major conducting the cake-cutting ceremony

Following the cake cutting ceremony, the Regiment was fortunate to hear from Comdt QGE, Lt Col Mark Hendry MBE, as he summarised the vast and varied achievements of both QGE Squadrons over the past 12 months. Lt Gen Wardlaw Saheb's stories from a lifetime of service to QGE also provided great amusement and pause for thought; his presence at the helm as Col QGE will be greatly missed. It was therefore fitting that a Gurkha curry and traditional entertainment package followed the Parade; any send-off would be incomplete without them.



2IC Sahebharu of 36 Engr Regt enjoying a Birthday lunch

Following the speeches in the (questionable) warmth of the AV(W) Hangar an enhanced Gurkha curry lunch was served. This was greatly enjoyed by all and our thanks go, as ever to the Gurkha chefs for their tireless work and engagement with the planning process. As for after-lunch entertainment the audience were treated to a range of talents, from aggressive khukuri patterns, to both modern and traditional Nepalese dance performances. The diverse abilities possessed by serving QGE soldiers never fail to disappoint and the quality of performances is a testament to our soldiers' dedication and passion for tradition, and commitment to entertaining their peers.





Spr Dipen and Spr Pradeep displaying a modern dance

An emotive pipes and drums display brought an end to proceedings. The Regt was able to say a final farewell to Lt Gen Wardlaw Saheb and wish him well in his new role as Col Comdt Brigade of Gurkhas; his understanding of Gurkha soldiers and Kaida will undoubtedly serve the Brigade well in the years to come.



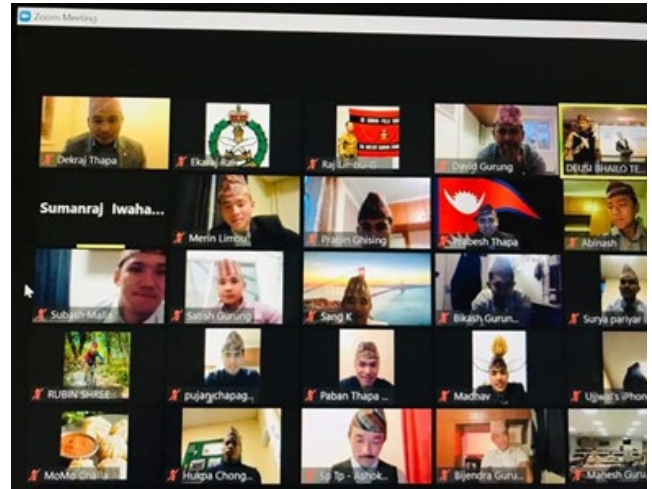
QGE Drummers pictured during their performance

Final thanks go to Comdt Saheb for permitting a COVID compliant event; all attendees; and all who assisted with the setup and delivery. We look forward to seeing what the next 12 months hold for the Regt, and a hopefully more widely attended celebration in 2021. *Jai QGE!*

Virtual Tihar Celebration

Lt Patrick Burford, J Tp Comd

Given the restrictions imposed by numerous national lockdowns and the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, recognising, and celebrating traditional Nepali festivals has been exceedingly difficult this year. For this reason, it was only right that 36 Engineer Regiment and The Queen's Gurkha Engineers cancelled the planned Dashain celebrations. As a result, household bubbles were forced to adjust and observe the Festival in private. However, not wanting another Festival to pass by unrecognised and with a momentary easing of Covid-19 restrictions the Regiment successfully observed Tihar, albeit in virtual form.



Celebrations were opened to the entire 36 Engineer Regiment community, including all British counterparts, who attended the event in great spirits. This was an excellent opportunity for all members of the Regiment who may be unfamiliar with Gurkha culture to better understand QGE's beliefs and traditions. This was further enhanced by the Gurkha Major who delivered an introductory presentation on what Tihar means and why it is celebrated.



Cpl Yogesh and team presenting Deusi Bhailo song during a virtual Tihar Celebration

70 Gurkha Field Squadron then delivered an interactive entertainment package that observed traditional Tihar customs. The entertainment included cultural songs, dances and blessings. The highlight of the event was a Momo eating competition. Department leads from across the Regiment, including the Commanding Officer, were selected to go head-to-head in a live competition where they were challenged to eat 15 Momos as quickly as possible. The competition was closely contested but in the end, it was 20 Squadron that were victorious.

The event was a welcomed distraction from the ongoing pandemic and brought together the Regiment by virtual means. We now look forward to next year's celebrations in the hope that we may once again come together and observe Tihar in the usual manner.





Senior Management team of 36 Engr Regt taking part in a Momo eating competition

Regimental Sports News

SSgt Joseph Subba, L Tp SSgt

In normal times sporting events throughout the year have typically been fantastic opportunities to build team spirit, enhance the competitive edge and raise moral. Unfortunately this year has been very different. Despite this QGE have strived to grasp every sporting opportunity. The invisible enemy (coronavirus) has disrupted all aspects of life and sports have been no exception. Significant annual events such as the Nepal Cup, as well as the sports that QGE have historically enjoyed huge success in, such as badminton, volleyball, cricket and squash were understandably cancelled. Regardless, the thirst for competition prevailed and every opportunity was taken during the brief periods when lockdown was eased to play sport. Furthermore, our soldiers adapted their skills as the sporting competitions moved from the pitches to the computer consoles with e-sports now taking a prime position in the sporting calendar.

With people spending more time indoors due to lockdown, the global video game industry has thrived. 36 Engineer Regiment and QGE became pioneers by organising the first ever Brigade e-FIFA competition. With the ability to easily social distance, e-sports provided the perfect platform by which soldiers and officers could maintain that competitive edge while remaining safe. Amongst all the talented and proficient video gamers, Spr Subham Gurung from C3S Troop 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn won the first ever QGE e-FIFA competition. With QGE leading the way, this competition was a stepping-stone for QGE Sappers to participate in the Brigade of Gurkhas e-Sports competition.



Cpl Sunrise and Spr Rubin taking part in the e-sports competition

This initiative allowed soldiers from all the Gurkha units to bond in a way that had not been witnessed before. The competition was 5 days long, with 2 representatives from each unit participating. The competition was fierce as all competitors were well prepared having honed their skills during lockdown. Although the voraciousness seen during the Nepal Cup may not have been as prevalent in the e-sports competition, the passion and skill most certainly was. Sprs Prakash (69 Gurkha Fd Sqn) and Spr Devendra (70 Gurkha Fd Sqn) took part in the competition and secured the positions of runners up.



Spr Subham winner of the e-sports competition

After the Prime Minister announced the easing of lockdown restrictions in Jun 20, the golfers were in good spirits. A friendly match against the Met Police was organised by SSgt FJ Sherpa in which members from 36 Engr Regt and QGE, including Comdt QGE and the QM participated. Despite being the defending champions and with high expectations, the Regt couldn't defend it's title this year as most of the team were unfortunately out of practice.



A friendly match between 36 Engr Regt and the Met Police

As a result of the pandemic, Oxfam and the Gurkha Welfare Trust sadly announced the cancellation of the Trailwalker event. Losing this QGE tradition was a real blow to moral; despite this the Regiment replaced this event with the Ex RISE OF THE PHOENIX. Cpl Rusal Thapa and his team organised a meticulous event where almost 40 teams from across the Regiment participated. In teams of 4 people, the runners were subject to a gruelling 42.2 km run across the undulating Kent Downs which started and finished at Invicta Park Barracks. There were 5 categories and the winners were as follows;

- Overall winner - 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn
- Below 30 years - 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn
- 30 – 39 year - 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn
- Mixed team - 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn
- 40 years plus- Mixed team represented from both 69 and 70 Gurkha Fd Sqn





Team Intake 18 - the winner of the Regt'l marathon

An incredible effort by all participants and some impressive times for the distance. Over 120 runners in total entered the event, all displaying exceptional resilience and dedication. The event was meticulously organised by 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn and a wider Regimental support team. Although not the traditional Trailwalker event it was a fitting competition in its place.



Cpl Top representing the Army

Mountain Biking was also one of the very few permissible sports this year and has grown in the Regiment. Since lockdown it has gained even more popularity and the number of participants has sky - rocketed. Cpl Top Jang Rai (70 Gurkha Fd Sqn) competed in the UK Southern X-country series representing the Army team in Jul 20.

2020 was a disappointing year for sport. However, QGE remain optimistic for the forthcoming year where our commentative spirit and love of team endeavours will no doubt be fulfilled. *Jai QGE!*

Life as the Unit Welfare Warrant Officer (UWWO)

WO2 Rojan Rai



I took the appointment of Unit Welfare Warrant Officer in Aug 20 and my role is to provide accessible, independent, confidential and professional specialist welfare services to the Service Personnel (SP) and families of 36 Engineer Regiment and The Queen's Gurkha Engineers in order to strengthen and enhance the resilience of SPs and

their families. This pandemic has hugely impacted on our normal life and has affected us all in many different ways and I and the rest of the Welfare Team have been trying our best

to deliver support to the Nepalese community and the rest of the Regiment.

We (Welfare Team) managed to conduct some Virtual Family Activities and delivered welfare services for all the families of the soldiers mobilized in support of the response to Op RESCRIPT from 4 Jan – 11 Feb 21. The main aim of the activities was to promote inclusive social engagement within the 36 Engineer Regiment Families Community. We conducted Virtual Coffee Catch Up with Quizzes, a weekly Photography Competition, a Treasure Trail and Family Orienteering Challenge. All these helped the families to reduce their loneliness and receive comprehensive welfare services. It also helped us to ensure that community members had access to valued social settings and activities.



Virtual Activity Winners

BFBS (Gurkha) Shorncliffe has been broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week offering an attractive mixture of programming aimed at Gurkha Soldiers and the wider Gurkha community. Their mission is to champion the amazing work of the UK Armed Forces. They have worked tirelessly throughout lockdown to keep their media and welfare services going for the Armed Forces, and to highlight the achievements of individuals and groups within the military community. Some of the families from QGE participated in Lockdown Diary (BFBS Gurkha Radio) to describe how life was going, including thoughts, feelings, facts and indeed whatever they thought was important. I witnessed that this programme helped others to gain courage to share their stories, too. The Comdt Saheb and GM Saheb also utilised the BFBS connectivity for key messaging across the Brigade community, which helped us (SPs and families) to enjoy a better understanding of QGE affairs.

Due to COVID-19 our community temple was closed and mass gatherings have been prohibited since March 2020. As result QGE was prevented from celebrating our key festivals in the traditional manner and the GM QGE also appealed to confine this year's Dashain celebrations to family groups only for obvious health reasons. However, the key religious aspects of the Festival were still observed by GM QGE and Pundit Prem Prasad Gaire on behalf of the QGE Pariwar. This started with Jamara Aunsi which was observed in the temple on Fri 16 Oct 20.

On the second day – Ghatasthapana, a mixture of barley and maize seeds (Jamara) were sowed and cultivated over the next ten days in order to use as part of the blessings given to all individuals during Tika.

Phulpati was observed on 23 Oct 20 and it literally means flowers, leaves and plants. Key personnel including command elements gathered to celebrate the day with great joy.



'Bringing Phulpati', brings all the nine goddesses into our unit. Each of the nine plants represent a goddess – collectively taken to represent Health, Wealth and Prosperity. Entering a 'Phulpati home' is to enter into Health, Wealth and Prosperity.



Phulpati Celebration

Kalaratri is the seventh of the nine forms of the Goddess Durga, collectively known as the Navadurga. This form of the Goddess Durga is believed to be the destroyer of all demon entities, ghosts, spirits and negative energies, who flee upon knowing of her arrival. Sadly this year members of QGE could not gather for an evening of entertainment to celebrate the event in the traditional manner.

Mahanawami was celebrated on 25 Oct 20 and it was the day of sacrifice. After prayers multiple goats (replicas) were sacrificed using a large ceremonial khukri. This day is also known as the 'demon-hunting day' because members of the defeated demon army strive to save themselves by hiding in the bodies of animals and fowls. Comdt QGE rewarded the man who slayed the goats with a monetary gift and a white Pagari (head covering).



Mahanawami Celebration

On 26 Oct 2020, QGE SPs and their families could not assemble at the Temple due to the pandemic where under normal circumstances GM QGE and Pundit Ji could present each SP with Tika and bless them with good health, wealth and prosperity. However, Jamara and Tika were made

available for collection for all SPs and their families from the Temple.

Despite lockdown, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers observed a major festival successfully following the Defence and Government guidelines and adhering to the Force Health Protection measures.

QGE UPDATE, ITC CATTERICK

Cpl Kulbir Sapkota

It is my privilege to present to you the annual report on The Queen's Gurkha Engineers in Gurkha Company, ITC Catterick. As a Section Commander, this employment has enabled me to observe and understand the Combat Infantryman Course (Gurkha) ((CIC(G)) from an instructor's perspective; a stark contrast from being a student.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic the tempo of Gurkha Company remains extremely high. Members of QGE are contributing to all major events and training being undertaken by ITC Catterick. Over the past 12 months members of QGE along with the members of BG units have been committed to mould Nepalese youths into trained soldiers for the British Army. I am delighted to report that all members of QGE continue to achieve success in training, on exercises and in competitions in very challenging circumstances.



QGE permanent staffs ITC celebrated 72nd QGE Birthday

There are currently 15 members of QGE giving their services to Gurkha Company. B Wing Commander, Capt Ashok Kumar Gurung commands three Platoons, consisting of 3 officers, 17 other permanent staff and 100 recruits. Captain Ramkumar Rai commands a Platoon while WO2 Suresh Sherma is the Training Coordinator, responsible for the planning and booking resources for all aspects of the training programme. QGE personnel are integral to the training delivery here at Gurkha Company as they continue to uphold professionalism and deliver tangible outputs in the many other roles including Training Coordinator 2IC, Platoon Sergeants, Section Commanders and PTIs. Platoon Sergeant, Sgt Santosh Goley deserves a special mention as he is the lead instructor for the delivery of Close Quarter Combat (CQC). Taekwondo forms the basis of CQC, a unique and distinctive combat skill within the CIC(G) and forms a large part of close quarter training. Gurkha Trainee Rifleman are presented with a combat



'Khukuri' on successful completion of CQC summative assessment.



Sgt Santosh Goley demonstrating CQC skills to RI20

2IC training co-ordinator, Sgt Bikram Gurung was commended by Comd School of Infantry (SCHINF) for an exceptional delivery of Wet Gap Crossing training. The first training of its kind since training establishments reintroduced the skill to the syllabus. Adventurous training this year had to be adjusted and modified due to COVID-19 restrictions and yet again, Sgt Bikram Gurung showcased his effective planning, management and leadership skills whilst leading adventurous training.



Cpl Gaurav and his section crossing the wet gap during final exercise

Cpl Anil Rai led the refurbishment of 'Devasthan', a vital ground for us all, in terms of cultural and traditional significance. The delivery and execution of this fundamental project has been commendable. He also initiated and articulated the idea of purchasing an unlimited entertainment Netflix account for each Wing. This initiative was appreciated, welcomed and praised by all permanent staffs and trainees alike. The charity movie night during COVID-19 showed his unique intuition in advancing morale and welfare needs of trainees. Additionally, his fund-raising efforts for St Teresa's Hospice which provides end-of-life care and support for South Durham and North Yorkshire raised £850 and was applauded and recognised by both the military and civilian communities.



Cpl Anil presented cheque to Dr Harry Byrne of St Teresa's Hospice

Gurkha Company is in the process of optimising its ORBAT in order to remain a sustainable training force as it sees the reduction in the number of trainees from next year. The key to the new ORBAT is to sustain and enhance our operational effectiveness which ensures that we are always fit for purpose. Integral to this process is the adoption of a Brigade-wide vision; this will be ratified shortly but essentially revolves around presenting Gurkha Company, "as an agile, flexible and adaptable part of the ITC offering a special capability". Our ability to train top quality soldiers has always been one of our key strengths. We continue to benefit from a balanced selection of instructors from QGE. However, as the Gurkha Company is going through the restructuring process, we will have to reduce our numbers in line with other units.

There have been numerous challenges for the members of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers thus far this training year as COVID-19 has tightened its grip over the World. Some of them mundane as we were forced to adopt a very restrictive training programme and relied upon remote delivery and others far more serious. Nevertheless, we Sappers are extremely well trained for what we are undertaking and have proved once again that we are more than capable and ready. The way we have embraced our various roles and how well we have done in the numerous training evolutions have been extremely impressive. *Jai QGE!*



WO2 Birendrakumar Kambang with his leaving presentation from QGE permanent ITC Catterick





QGE Gurkha Company Detachment Farewell to Capt Dirgha KC.

Rear Row from L-R: Cpl Gaurav Tamang (1PI, 2Sect Comd), Sgt Santosh Goley (9 PI Sgt), Cpl Dipash Gurung (G4 Cpl CQMS), Cpl Dhanprasad Ghale (PTI)

Front Row from L-R: Sgt Bikram Gurung (Trg SNCO), Capt Ramkumar Rai (3PI Comd), Capt Dirgha KC, Capt Ashokkumar Gurung (B Wing Comd), WO2 Suresh Sherma (Trg WO)

3 RSME Regiment

Capt Chandra Pun, Curragh Tp Comd



The year 2020 was nothing like anything that anyone could have predicted.. The more we reflect on 2020 the more we are reminded of the isolation, dramatic concern with safety, and the utter dependency on virtual platforms. Yet even now after 2020 has come and gone the challenges we

faced continue. The COVID-19 pandemic and it's limitations to the effectiveness of the training environment, and more importantly human freedom, remains very challenging.

After completing my tenure as SSM 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, and Op TRENTON 8, I took over the command of QGE's Training Team at Minley as Curragh Troop Commander, 55 Trg Sqn in June 2020. It didn't take long for me to realise the high standards set by my predecessor Capt Khelendra Gurung, were still echoing across 3 RSME Regt. It became very clear to me that I would have to dedicate myself diligently to sustain the training delivery that encompasses our ethos, and utilise the various experiences brought from the many different units across RE and QGE to my advantage. The first thing I had in my mind to implement was to set up a healthy working environment founded on total mutual respect, team approachability and a Troop wide overarching positive attitude. Over time this has become the work ethic that has benefited the diversity of trainees that is so particular to this training establishment.

The training cycle for 2020/21 was dominated by the COVID-19 crises and so far 3 RSME Regt has endured very well by adapting various new strategies and employing elements of virtual training which allow us to practice within the safety

limitations imposed by the COVID guidelines. Although all the Training Objectives were achieved during the courses, it wasn't possible to produce the usual high sense of realistic training. However, through initiative we were still able to produce soldiers that successfully hit the high standards needed by the Field Army. So far, we have successfully delivered three Cbt Engr Class 3 courses, one Cbt Engr Class 1 course and one RE/QGE integrated Cbt Engr Class 3 course.

Out of many highlights of the year, from running the virtual Trailwalker 2020 and multiple successful charitable events, the 74 Training Party Combat Engineering Course was unrivalled. It was a unique privilege that the entire team and I could contribute to the future of QGE. The pre-existing issues of Course 74 Training Party, along with the threat of dwindling

numbers from COVID-19, was apparent but the biggest concern was to get all trainees through the course without allowing anyone to be unjustly held back by the COVID-19 limitations. With only a few COVID turbulences, we managed to get them all through the Attestation Parade under the presence of the reviewing officer, Col of the Regt, Brig J L Clark CBE.

As earlier claimed, COVID-19 has made our ability to train more restrictive and difficult, but through it all we continued to strive to better ourselves and improve our abilities as instructors in every way.

74 Training Party Combat Engineer Class 3 Course

This year 70 new Sappers arrived just in time for the Christmas leave. This leave period was very limited by the nationwide lockdown and international travel restrictions. However, we utilised this opportunity to educate them on the International GCSE pathway for the first time and kept them occupied by setting up a Strava Running Charity led by Cpl Amber Mangmu. The virtual charity run was developed to cover the distance from Land's End to John o' Groats, (1420 km) to raise money for the PAHAR Trust. Unexpectedly we raised £1,450.

The new intake of QGE Sappers started their journey on the RE/QGE integrated Cbt Engr course which ran from 4 Jan – 18 Mar 21. The Challenges presented by the large numbers alongside the lingering COVID-19 treat and training restrictions were always hindering our training plan. However, this was overcome by merging two troops (SSgt Dipak Tamang from Hook Tp, and SSgt Prakash Gurung from Curragh Tp) together for certain aspects while allowing each to train independently for other aspects. The Attestation Parade took place on 12 Mar 21 and after 10 weeks of an intensive course, Spr Nishal Shrestha distinguished himself by claiming the Top Combat Engineer Student Award while



Spr Subash Limbu earned the right to the Top Academic Student Award.



Tabbing

Troop Structure

To support our mission, we have one SSgt and five highly capable Cpl Instructors (3 QGE & 2 RE). Curragh Troop's backbone is the Tp SSgt, SSgt Prakash Gurung who is continuously maintaining and pursuing the delivery of training excellence, utilising his various qualifications including PSBC. Cpl Roshan Budha Magar has moved to Instructor Troop and is now mentoring the staff and JNCOs across the Corps of Royal Engineers. Resourceful and creative, Cpl Victor Fombo is now an Acting Sgt in Valley Troop, delivering lessons to JNCOs on the Junior Commanders' and Field Section Commanders' Courses. Meanwhile Cpl Amber Mangmu, and newly posted Cpl Omraj Gurung are both aspiring to be resounding QGE ambassadors at 3 RSME Regt.



Breathing

Within the wider 3 RSME Regt there are two other ERE posts, filled by Sprs Binod Limbu and Chet Gurung. Outside of 3 RSME Regt but still in Minley Station, Sgt Krishna Rai has successfully assumed the post as a C3S Instructor, replacing SSgt Pawan Thapa, while LCpl Bijay Ale has successfully assumed the role of driver for Comd 8 Engr Bde.

As a unit we have all contributed through professionalism, motivation and respect to further enhance the reputation of QGE at 3 RSME. Due to the Troop's unrelenting selfless commitment and veracious work ethic on behalf of the Sqn, the Tp and QGE as a whole received special recognition by being awarded the CO's Coin for the very first time.

Changes to turn Combat Engr Class 3 Course into a Class 2 Course

Enhancing the current training model and bringing the training in line with the future Army needs, it has been decided the current Cbt Engr Class 3 course will be altered and trainees will now achieve a Class 2 competence on completion and no longer need to take the 3-2 Tick Test when in their first unit. The new Class 2 course has increased to 12 weeks from the original 10 weeks and will accommodate a few changes, such as the introduction Counter Explosive Ordnance awareness, the new Combat Water Supply System, sports afternoons and additional PT sessions to prepare trainees to pass the new, Army wide fitness assessments that have replaced the PFA and .CFT. A lot of evaluation and evidence has been put into the design and we expect to see the first Cbt Engr CI 2 course commencing in April 2021.

ROAD TO BECOMING A SAPPER

Spr Pukar Gurung

Ten weeks of the gruelling Combat Engineer Class 3 course is what it takes to become a proud Gurkha sapper in The Queen's Gurkha Engineers. 74 Training Party completed their Combat Engineer Class 3 course and took the oath of allegiance to The Queen's Gurkha Engineers during the Attestation Parade held at Gibraltar Barracks on 12 Mar 21. The oath of allegiance was taken in the presence of the Colonel of the Regiment Brigadier J L Clark CBE, Commandant QGE, Lt Col M D Hendry MBE and Gurkha Major QGE, Maj K B Khapung Limbu MVO.



Trenching

The primary aim of the course is to provide an understanding of both Force Support and Close Support engineering tasks. Due to the large number of students, we completed the course as two separate troops alongside British and Commonwealth soldiers. The course was divided into four different phases, each culminating with a final exercise. Classroom lessons and in camp instruction provided us with the ability, knowledge and skills required to perform combat engineer tasks. Whilst the final exercise assessed our ability to apply combat engineering knowledge and skills under pressure in a tough and contested environment. We were all presented with our QGE stable belt on completion of a gruelling and tough final run at the end of the final exercise.

The COVID-19 pandemic was at its height throughout the course but with a thorough mitigation plan the course was run and managed in an effective, efficient and professional



manner; hats off to all the instructors. During the initial phases of the course we found it quite challenging to cope with an e-learning environment. This was further exacerbated by a busy course schedule and different regional accents from the Royal Engineer instructors. Early exposure to the Royal Engineer instructors is the way forward in order to continuously improve communication skills from the very early stages of our career; one we recommend we sustain.



Bridging

We were extremely fortunate to be exposed to activities in addition to the course. Cpl Amber Mangmu organised a potted sports day and a charity run covering the length of the UK, North to South, in support of various charities. All instructors and students took part and we managed to raise just over £1500. This was the first team building and charity event that I was introduced to. All of 74 Training Party learnt a lot and we will continue to support worthy causes during our career.



Hook Troop CASEVSC

The Attestation Parade started with all 74 Training Party and instructors formed up on the Parade Square during a very cold and rainy day. The Reviewing Officer arrived at the dais and after the general salute, he inspected the Parade. Next the oath of allegiance was read by the Gurkha Major QGE which was repeated by us all. We then sang the Corps song and took the oath of allegiance to the Regiment in groups of three by touching the QGE flag. The reviewing officer awarded the Top Academic Student award to Spr Subash Limbu and the Overall Top Combat Engineer Student award went to Spr Nischal Shrestha.



I was very touched by the Reviewing Officer's speech when he reminded us that this was the last course that we will complete as a group with all our Numberies. From this point forward we will embark on separate journeys, some of us will go straight to 1 RSME to begin trade courses, some will start driver training in Minley, whilst some will join the Regiment in Maidstone. He also reminded us that we are all at the beginning of our military journey and our career is in our hands. We are only as good as our next move, so we need to give our all and be ambitious. We should not get to where we want to at the expense of our fellows and our family, but to make a difference in our Troop, our Squadron, our Regiment and our Army. We should set high goals, listen to and respect others, learn and adapt and seek continuous improvement. I will never forget the last words from the reviewing officer; "Always remember who you now are; a Sapper in The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, a Gurkha in the Brigade of Gurkhas, and a soldier in the British Army. Be proud of all."



I wish to thank all the instructors for their time, effort and dedication during the course. I wish all my Numberies, the very best of luck in their dedicated service from this day forward. *Jai QGE!*



1 RSME UPDATE

Cpl Arpan Gurung

When, as the most junior Training Party and the most junior group of QGE Sappers, I along with many of my 'Numberies' were assigned to 1 RSME Regt to complete our Artisan training course we were strongly encouraged to immerse ourselves into QGE culture and to support those institutions that inform and support QGE. At the time this included making a regular annual subscription to the QGE Journal by joining The Queen's Gurkha Engineers Association. I believe it remains good advice for today for all of us to continue to support the Association through which we support our ex-serviceman, protect and enhance our own QGE heritage and demonstrate a wider interest in our rich history. It also remains important that within the QGE fraternity we continue to keep ourselves fully informed by contributing to and writing for our own QGE Journal. I am truly delighted and humbled to write the 1 RSME Regt update for this year.

QGE Sappers continue to receive the highest standard of trade training when at 1 RSME Regt in conjunction with Mid Kent College Training Services. While COVID-19 continues to remain a critical global challenge, 1 RSME Regt has ensured that all personnel are able to continue to develop the high level of trade training that is required of its service personnel. Conducting safe and effective trade training in the new environment of social distancing has undoubtedly presented its challenges. The provision of effective remote training, adjusting delivery methods and modifying roles and responsibilities enabled instructors to meet training objectives by bringing together a broad variety of different skill sets. In some cases, there has still been the need to bring a large number of individuals together or into close contact with their training aids while still maintaining a 2m distance between trainees and their instructors and this has led to many innovative solutions. These include video cameras on instructors capturing images of engine parts which are streamed back to students with tablets standing 2m apart. It is clear one solution may lie in the virtual world for the foreseeable future.

In the current COVID-19 climate, generating a safe place for training was imperative. This required 1 RSME Regt to modify classroom layouts, establish one-way systems within the buildings, creating hand washing facilities, implementing the compulsory wearing of face masks, promoting the use of hand gel and enforcing social distancing. The use of classroom based virtual trade training delivered powerful, educational and engaging training that developed skills, built confidence and increased operational effectiveness. Virtual training added flexibility to the training process by providing instructors with a cost-effective training system and saved travel time. One obvious advantage of the virtual realm is that the current generation of new soldiers are already well-versed in using these types of technology. The use of virtual reality headsets, game controllers and handheld devices are an everyday staple of the popular gaming environment which made transplanting those skills into the Subsequent Trade Training environment a natural next step.

Over the last 12 months, more than 100 QGE Sappers have completed Class 2 trade training and 15 have completed Class 1 trade training, amongst them Spr Birdhan (C&J), Spr Chet (B&C) and Spr Ashish (Fab) who all secured top student position on their respective courses; well done and congratulations to them.

Though our day to day lives may not sound as exciting as some of the operational units, we are here to serve the constant high tempo and different streams in which we find ourselves operating, certainly make for an interesting life. *Jai QGE!*

INFANTRY BATTLE SCHOOL BRECON

LCpl Amit Gurung and Spr Gun Bahadur Saru Magar

Overview

Located in the heart of the Brecon Beacons, the Infantry Battle School (IBS) provides excellent training to infanteers and others arms alike on a wide syllabus of tactics and skill at arms. Having recently subordinated to the Land Warfare Centre from the Army Recruiting Initial Training Centre, IBS is keenly interested in training, developing and teaching tactics and doctrine using emerging new technology.

Within IBS' Training Support Division (TSD), the Assault Pioneer Platoon has been exceptionally busy. It plays a principal role in ensuring that all the training divisions are able to execute fieldcraft training to the highest standard. The majority of this support encompasses providing Battle Noise Simulations and assisting in the preparation of field defences. The 16 man platoon is made up of personnel drawn from across the Brigade of Gurkhas although is predominantly QGE and it encompasses several Demolition Safety Officers and Battle Noise Safety Supervisors. WO2 (QMSI) Lal Bahadur Rana is the current PI Comd; the first to command the PI in a GURTAM post.

Tactical Administration Team

As COVID-19 gripped the planet, IBS took early measures to minimize the impact of the pandemic on their teaching delivery. The out-going CO, Lt Col Chandler RGR, initiated a Tactical Administration Team (TAT) one week before the National Lockdown was imposed, and they were in charge with tackling outbreaks within camp. The TAT was ordered to lead on the implementation of force health protection measures to ensure social distancing across IBS and to establish an



LCpl Amit Gurung working in the TAT

isolation facility for suspected and positive cases. While training at IBS was halted for five weeks in April and May 2020

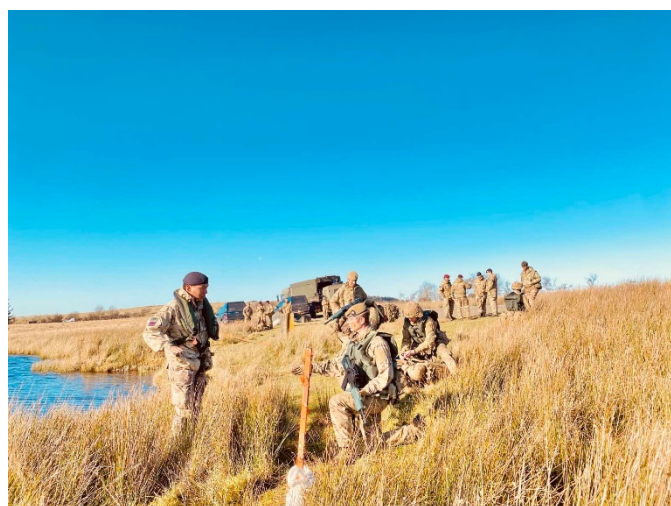


due to Government policy, the TAT provided round-the-clock observation and medical support for cases identified on camp. As the scale of the pandemic grew, so too did the job of the TAT; support was offered to Joint Military Command Wales to assist in providing an isolation facility for symptomatic and contact patients to enable training to continue where possible.

While wearing full PPE, the team monitored their patients frequently, providing them with meals, reconditioning rooms once quarantine periods were complete, and executing daily medical checks from the Senior Medical Officer. The TAT's contribution to IBS during this extremely testing period was significant, and their dedication was highly praised by the Chain of Command.

Historical Wet Gap Crossing

During the Autumn of 2020, Junior Division approached the Assault Pioneer Platoon seeking SME advice and assistance in introducing a Wet Gap Crossing serial into the Section Commanders' Battle Course. While a few locations were initially identified, a small lake on Sennybridge Training Area was confirmed by a recce as the best location to conduct this. Sgt Sangarsha Rai (QGE) was tasked to lead the event as a qualified Watermanship Safety Officer. Careful planning, preparation and rehearsals were conducted to eliminate the risks and provide an excellent training event. Stores containing an inflatable safety boat, life jackets and buoyancy aids were taken on loan from Bicester and this was all then tested during the confirmatory recce and rehearsal on site. On the day of the event the WSO conducted his final check and delivered the mandatory safety brief on the dangers of water hazards and the emergency medical plan. The exercising troops were issued their buoyancy aids and then divided into groups of four, each escorted by an instructor. With the safety crew keenly gazing across the water from their boat, the teams entered the water and reached the far bank after 5 minutes of bergen-raft aided swimming.



Sgt Sangarsha (WSO) briefing a Sect Comd before conducting a wet gap crossing on the SCBS

With the last team across onto the far bank, the safety crew were able to breathe a sigh of relief and feel a sense of achievement. The activity had set the benchmark for delivery of a risk to life activity. The success was felt strongly within

the Platoon when further requests for wet gap crossing support were made for future Section Commanders' and Platoon Sergeants' Battle Courses.



SCBC Students are conducting wet gap crossing drill in SENTA

Field Defence Upgrade

The Assault Pioneer Platoon is a key stakeholder for the delivery of Field Defence training through providing suitable facilities. The demo area on IBS was close to being obsolete and well overdue for an upgrade. Sgt Tikaraj Limbu (RGR) planned and executed a revamp of this facility; rebuilding the battle trenches and wire obstacles. Before the task every battle trench was full of water and in a very poor condition; sandbags were decayed and sand was falling into the trenches. The team began by draining water from the trenches using a generator and submersible pump. Thereafter, they changed all the perished sandbags with double layers to future-proof the facility. Grass covering the wire obstacles were stripped, and where needed new wire was laid out. The project was also an excellent opportunity for the combat engineers and pioneers to refresh their skills in field fortification.



GPMG SF upgrading by APNR Members

72nd QGE Birthday

WO2 Lal Bahadur Rana carefully initiated the QGE Birthday celebrations during the pandemic. Planning was led by Sgt Gaurab Gurung (QGE), with strict guidelines of social distancing and face masks being adhered to during the event.

This event marking the birth of QGE was celebrated by all members of Training Support Division on 28 Sep 20, strengthening the bond shared by all Gurkhas. The



participants gathered at 9am to set up for the da and at 10am the small ceremony began.

The QMSI first delivered a brief history of QGE, followed by announcing the winners of the Bowring Trophy and Durand Medal 2020. Maj Prembahadur Gurung, OC TSD, then highlighted some of the opportunities QGE members of TSD had seized that year and the benefits of working within a multi-cap badge environment.



Coy HQ personnel were invited for QGE 72nd Birthday

Orienteering during Lockdown

The IBS team has begun its training to compete for the Inter-Unit Army Orienteering Competition (UAOC) 2020 by taking part in Military League South (MLS) orienteering events. The IBS team aimed to train as many keen and enthusiastic individuals as possible, led by Cpl Bhesh Bahadur Gurung (QGE). The British Army Orienteering Club (BAOC) is the focal point for all Army Orienteers and the club is divided into three areas; North, Centre and South. MLS runs orienteering events almost every Wednesday to attract Service Personnel participants and capture wider service orienteering enthusiasts.

After the relaxing of rules following the first National Lockdown, orienteering was one of the first sports to be allowed because of its nature and the first MLS event attended was held on 5 Aug 20 at Longmoor. All participants have been very keen to attend as many MLS events as they possibly could, showing their interest in the sport. IBS should be proud that they have successfully developed orienteering skills in individuals despite the restrictions that have been in place, and there are the foundations set to grow a keen and competent orienteering team.

Mountain Bike at Bike Park Wales

In August 2020, Assault Pioneer Platoon deployed on a team bonding event at Bike Park Wales; the UK's first full scale mountain bike park. Following the issue of mountain bike equipment, the team headed onto the trails filled with excitement for the day ahead. They first were driven to the top of a hill, roughly an hour from the kit issue point. They then disembarked and prepared their bikes ready for the ride ahead. The routes caters for beginners through to advanced levels of difficulty; the team decided they would settle on intermediate as the majority were novices to mountain biking. The trail was initially easy, but as they progressed further down they encountered more challenges. Despite the climb up the hill by vehicle, the team managed to make it to the bottom in under 15 minutes. This meant they had ample time

to go again, this time electing to try their hand on some of the more advanced routes. These were significantly more demanding but having warmed up on the earlier routes all were able to rise to meet the challenge. The event was a real thrill; it will remain in all our memories as a really enjoyable event that strengthened our brotherhood. Alongside developing this healthy bond within the Platoon, it made us face a challenge and overcome our initial fear.



GURKHA COMPANY TAVOLETO (GC(T)), WARMINSTER

Sgt Bhim Parangden



L to R: Sgt Bhim Parangden, Cpl Roshan, LCpl Anil, Sgt Bhim Limbu

Gurkha Company Tavoletto was established in Aug 2018 in Waterloo Lines, Warminster as part of the Support Weapon School (SWS). With 50 personnel from multiple cap badges, Gurkha Company (Tavoletto) (GC(T)) has configured itself to support both the SWS and Reconnaissance Armoured Tactics Divisions (RATD). GC(T) support every need and provide all manner of training support ranging from human resource to kit and equipment. GC(T) is configured into four key areas of responsibility; Assault Pioneer, MT, Signals, and Crypto.

The Assault Pioneer Platoon focuses on battle noise simulation, demolitions, river crossing and obstacle breaching for course personnel, while the MT Platoon provides all vehicles, drivers and vehicle commanders for the exercising troops. The Signals Platoon coordinates the issuing of radios and maintaining the comms network for all the exercising troops. The Communication and Crypto Material Management Cell provides the Crypto and Bowman Communication plan in



order to support the SWS and it's parent 2* organisation, Land Warfare Centre which includes supporting the Field Training Unit commitments to collective training exercises.



Sgt Bhim Limbu briefing Maj Gen CJ Bell CBE (GOC ARITC) on the Pioneer Capability

Four QGE members (2x SNCO and 2x JNCO) are currently posted to GC(T) under the command of Maj Chandra Bahadur Pun (RGR). Sgt Bhim Parangden is assigned to GC(T) HQ as a Resources SNCO and responsible for not just the management of resources but also identifying any GC(T) manpower and equipment shortfalls in advance, in order to bid for support from the SET (Support to Experimentation and Training) team. Sgt Bhim Limbu and LCpl Anil Tamang are assigned to Assault Pioneer Platoon. Sgt Bhim Limbu acts as a Demolition Safety Officer (DSO), Watermanship Safety Officer Basic (WSO(B)) and Water Safety Equipment Supervisor (WSES) to support SWS and RATD exercises. LCpl Anil is a Combat Engineer Class 1 and employed as a safety boat operator and Water Safety Equipment (WSE) maintainer. Cpl Roshan Chhantyal is assigned to the MT Platoon as an MT Section Commander and he holds the responsibilities of Details NCO, Unit JAMES Administrator and SWS white fleet manager.



Sgt Bhim Parangden supporting RATD river crossing exercise

MISSION READY TRAINING CENTRE, BASINGBOURN

SSgt Lilaram Rai

On completion of a very successful tenure in 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn including Op TRENTON 8, I took over a newly formed

QGE post as Company Quartermaster Sergeant, Basingbourn (CQMS BBN) in July 2020. This post is a direct result of wider QGE growth and I am delighted to be given the opportunity to write the very first update from the Mission Ready Training Centre Basingbourn (MRTC BBN) for the QGE Magazine.

Mission and Overview. MRTC's Mission is "To deliver Mission-Specific and Pre-Deployment Training for Specific Operations and Tasks in order to support the timely generation of Force Elements at Readiness". MRTC is a unique and diverse establishment, represented by a multiple cap-badges from across the Army. This is the gateway for all troops, due for deployment overseas or in the UK on exercises and operations. MRTC has been providing all mission specific and pre-deployment training for those on Op SHADER (Iraq), Op TORAL (Afghanistan), Op TOSCA (Cyprus), Op NEWCOMBE (Mali), Op TURUS (Chad) and Op ELGIN (Balkans). In addition, it runs and conducts numerous courses in order to prepare troops for wider field Army commitments.

CQMS BBN responsibilities include everything that would be expected of a CQMS / SQMS in a Field Squadron and this year had been a hugely challenging one with a steep learning curve due to COVID-19. A tough and complex environment that requires additional resources in order to adhere to COVID-19 Force Health Protection Instructions.



CQMS BBN - SSgt Lila setting up new IT system for MRTC

I am the only serving member from QGE within MRTC BBN and I am acutely aware of the impact and repercussions that my performance and general conduct may have upon QGE as it seeks to safeguard this important post that will allow further opportunities for promotion for those who follow me. Since my assignment last year, my endeavours have been to continually perform to the best of my ability, seek continuous improvement and pursue excellence. It is my absolute honour and privilege to operate as a QGE ambassador within MRTC BBN. *Jai QGE!*

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST

SSgt Kiranpratap Rai

On promotion to SSgt I took over the responsibilities of the Communications Information Systems (CIS) Wing CQMS, Sandhurst Support Unit at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS).





This post is part of the Brigade of Gurkhas Growth Plan and it gives me a great deal of pleasure to write an article from the perspective of a SNCO serving at RMAS. RMAS is the single gateway for all Direct Entry Officers – which also includes a Regular cohort of international participants. The Academy holds a distinct and unique position not only in the UK but also on the International Stage – renowned for producing highly trained officers, crucial to meeting the ever-changing global operating environment.



SSgt Gajendra Gurung delivering a lesson on command and task to Officer Cadets Course (Junior Team)

To meet this demand, RMAS employs a cadre of high calibre multi-cap badge instructors who are selected for the post following a rigorous and challenging four-week cadre / selection course. Each intake (Spring / Summer / Winter) comprises of approximately 250 cadets who are assigned to a Company (Coy) within Old or New College. The OCdt training syllabus is 42 weeks long with the training cycle divided in to three distinct 14 week terms known as the Junior, Intermediate and Senior terms.

The CIS Wing is responsible for the delivery of tactical communications training and is structured into four distinct departments consisting of three training divisions (aligned to the respective training terms) and a G4/6 support team. In addition to instruction, the CIS Wing is also responsible for the provision of communications support to the multitude of field training exercises. As the CQMS, I lead a small team responsible for maintaining the Academy's largest and most complex inventory – a role in which I am directly accountable to the Regimental Sergeant Major Instructor (RSMI). My daily activities consist of managing the Bowman account, and the constant maintenance and replacement of damaged equipment. In addition, I have exploited the opportunity to support the wider Academy by deploying on training exercises to perform safety monitoring activities and conduct practical assessments of OCdts on various training serials.

SSgt Gajendra Gurung is employed as the first QGE member of Borneo Company (Coy), Old College in the role of CQMS. His key responsibility is the control, maintenance and safe custody of the G1098 stores, accommodation, arms and miscellaneous accounts and he also deploys and supports the Coy on every exercise. As a combat engineer subject matter expert, he instructs OCdts on how to tie knots & lashings and how to operate pully systems, including arranging the Command Tasks demonstrations which has proved extremely rewarding.



SSgt Kiran Rai manning CP7 on Ex LONG REACH

In summary, RMAS has provided me with an excellent opportunity, both as an individual and also more broadly to my Regiment. I have really enjoyed the experience of working in a prestigious and internationally renowned environment and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that I will encounter during my remaining time within the post.

ARRC SUPPORT BATTALION

Cpl Manoj Gurung

The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Support Battalion, part of 1 (UK) Signal Brigade and based in the beautiful countryside of Gloucestershire will be renamed the ARRC Gurkha Support Battalion on 5 Jul 21. A historic day and a very important event in our calendar as we further embark on expanding the Brigade of Gurkhas.

ARRC Support Battalion supports the UK led 3-star NATO High Readiness Force Headquarters and it's task is to



PROJECT, PROTECT and SUSTAIN the expeditionary force element of HQ ARRC in order to support contingent operations. The Battalion is made up of two Sqns, HQ Sqn and 14 Sqn. The Battalion is highly diverse in its nature owing to it's multi-cap badge members. Logistics (RLC and QOGLR) provide the much in need lift, QGE and RGR provide combined intimate Force Protection and close combat support, and the Royal Engineers provide the power supply to Headquarters.

The Queens Gurkha Engineers have been an integral part of this unique Battalion over the last few years and currently there are 12 members of QGE posted to the Battalion, ranging from the Battalion Training Officer to a Sect 2IC, all split between HQ Sqn and 14 Sqn.

Year 2020 - 2021 has been a unique year for all of us as we have never encountered an enemy so invisible yet so powerful. Carrying out daily duties has been a challenge, let alone the full spectrum of capabilities we offer to the Battalion. Although it has been a difficult year, we have managed to achieve so much as a group of professionals. From remote learning, never ending Zoom sessions, virtual physical training sessions to finally being back in the field. It has been more than a unique experience for all of us. In no particular order, below are some of the events we managed to successfully conduct this year.

The Army Triathlon 12 Hour Zwift Challenge

Over the course of 12 hours on Saturday 30 May 20, the Army Triathlon team took part in a virtual fundraising cycle challenge to raise money for the ABF Foundation. Members of the Army Triathlon Association, including Major General



LCpls Angshihang, Krishna and Jagadish

John Mead OBE and Commander Field Army, Lieutenant General Ivan Jones CBE, took part in a 12hr non-stop ride on the virtual cycling platform, Zwift. This was an open race for everyone regardless of their abilities and four members of the ARRC Sp Bn didn't miss this opportunity to raise money for a good cause and prove their physical and mental robustness.

The Battalion, 2IC Maj Williams along with LCpl Jagadish Gurung, LCpl Krishna Tilija Pun and LCpl Angshihang Limbu set up their bikes outside the Officers' Mess in Imjin Barracks to attract more donations. The event started at 6am and there were no breaks for food and water, so the riders had to nourish themselves whilst cycling. After a gruelling 12 hrs in hot weather, the team managed to collect more funds than

expected. This event not only tested the physical and mental robustness but also taught the importance of being involved and contributing towards a good cause.

Three Peaks Challenge – DOKO

While the country was battling away against an invisible enemy and the front line was spearheaded by the NHS, we wanted to show enough support and gratitude to the brave men and women of this unique organisation. Therefore, Gurkha soldiers serving within the ARRC Support Battalion decided to climb the 3 peaks to raise some money and show our gratitude to the NHS in Gloucestershire who have been working relentlessly during this pandemic. Troops completed a 26km march carrying a traditional Nepalese 'Doko' baskets filled with sand weighing 25kg. The distance of 26km was chosen as it is the combined height of the 3 highest mountains in the World; Everest, K2 and Kanchenjunga. A generous amount was raised through this event and it has been passed on to the local Gloucestershire NHS.



The Poppy Appeal

This year's Poppy Appeal was forced to adapt to the threat of COVID-19. Millions of people across the UK were unable to leave their homes for many reasons other than a form of exercise and so registering to support the British Legion Poppy Appeal seemed the way forward to help each other during this pandemic. Therefore, as a Physical Training Instructor, LCpl Jagadish Gurung from Close Support Troop,



Lt Col I Sands (CO ARRC Sp Bn) awarded first prize of 5km Virtual Charity Race to LCpl Prabesh

organised a 5km virtual challenge with his 2IC Rfn Sabindra Limbu at South Cerney Airfield from 14 - 18 Nov 20. Runners were given five days to submit their best run time that was recorded on their GPS watches or Strava via WhatsApp. The results were published at 0730 hours on 19 Nov 20. Prizes



were presented by ARRC SP Bn and were distributed to the winners by Lt Col I Sands, CO ARRC Sp Bn.

Ex FLYING SPEAR 2020

In the lead up to a major NATO exercise, the ARRC Sp Bn has been testing and preparing personnel kit and equipment. With the exercise being evaluated by NATO's Land Command



HQ in Turkey, troops from the Support Battalion rehearsed deploying, protecting and sustaining a warfighting Corps level HQ. Following the delivery of new military tents, soldiers rehearsed constructing a rapidly deployable headquarters and these 'DRASH' tents will form staff working areas and command posts for the UK's largest deployable NATO base. The versatility of the

Sappers again proved to be an asset for the Battalion as on completion of constructing field defences for the HQ, LCpl Jagadish, LCpl Krishna and LCpl Angshihang were soon on site constructing the newly arrived 'DRASH' tents. It was a short and rapid exercise which was conducted within the premises of the Battalion.

Ex LOYAL LEDA 2020

After enduring months of uncertainty and speculation, on 21 Sep 20 the Battalion finally deployed on Ex LOYAL LEDA 20; a largescale command post exercise for HQ ARRC with over 1000 multinational troops. The exercise was conducted within two key locations of Brize Norton and RAF Fairford and we provided the real-life support for the build-up, main and recovery phases which altogether lasted for 3 months. Our specific job on Ex LL 20 was the construction of defences and provision of force protection for the base. On successful completion of the exercise, amid the pandemic and chaos we quietly deconstructed and prepared all the kit for re-deployment. The Battalion then stood down for a deserved Christmas Leave.



Close Sp Tp constructing Triple concertina wire fencing around a Network Equipment Room

Conclusion

This eventful year, which rather seemed to be dull at the beginning with a lot of uncertainty and chaos, has turned out to be an exceptional year for all of us. A small team of 12 members accompanied by families sit quietly in the beautiful

countryside of Gloucestershire and keep flying the flag of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers ever so high. We now embark on a completely different journey as we become the ARRC Gurkha Sp Bn. With Project Sherpa moving forward we look forward to seeing the addition of QM Tech, RSM ARRC Sp Bn, RQMS and an additional 10 QGE PIDs within the Power Supply Troop by 2023. *Jai QGE!*

BRITISH FORCES BRUNEI

Capt Naresh Limbu

This year's account is slightly different from other years as COVID-19 has made an ominous impact, and like the rest of society we have also come to terms with the acceptance of the new normal. We are in a very fortunate position in Brunei in comparison to the rest of the World as we are living in a COVID free country while the rest of the World is in an episode of uncertainty.

Maj Buddhi continues to lead the British Forces Brunei (BFB) Welfare and SSO Teams and is the main point of contact for all welfare agencies. He is responsible for welfare, housing and wellbeing of the electric mix of c2k individuals within BFB including SPs, civil servants, contractors, spouses and children. Despite Brunei being an apparent paradise the circumstances are mentally testing and isolating for many families. These factors have been intensified during the COVID crisis when BFB was cut off from the rest of the World. Thankfully the welfare and housing departments within BFB had already anticipated the worst-case scenario. They had already invested resources and foresight into facility enhancement and community bonding which ensured BFB personnel got on with their normal routine without felling being isolated.

I have been busy looking after the Brunei Boat Section and providing BGE support to 2RGR and BFB HQ. BGE SME advice on all field engineering matters and training area maintenance has been extremely valuable and this includes the management and building of Jungle Base Camps and Heli Landing Sites for Ex ATAP HURDLE. I also had the opportunity to lead the welfare team responsible for proving G1 support to isolating troops and families in the designated isolation centres in Brunei from Dec 20 – Feb 21. A thankless task for many, but it offered me with an opportunity to expand and build on G1 KSE.

New arrivals are always joyful as they bring the breath of fresh air and we warmly welcomed Maj Ranjan Badgami (OC JWD), Cpl Mahendra Angbuhang, Cpl Sachin Limbu and their families. Farewells are never easy as this disrupts our friendship bonds and last year we said goodbye to Maj Ashok Khanal, WO2 Suraj Pun, Cpl Sagar Gurung and their families. In the summer, Maj Buddhi and I are due to move to new posts in the UK. We are grateful for the generosity and companionship he has shown us and we wish him the very best of luck.





QGE 72nd Birthday in Brunei

Brunei Boat Section (BBS):

BBS's enduring boat support to SF, the Resident Infantry Battalion and Jungle Warfare Division remain resolute. Amid the pandemic BBS has successfully delivered the All Arms Basic Boat Operator course, supported a Bn exercise (Ex KUKRI DEFENDER 20) as well as many high-profile visits. This year's highlight was support on Ex KD where the Boat Section's expertise was used extensively on all phases; insertion, resupply, transition, medevac and finally, the extraction; the exercise hinged on our boat support. By the end the operators were weary and boats and engines were on the verge of giving up, but BBS proved its worthiness. Subsequently, the Commander British Forces Brunei coins were awarded to all BBS members for excellence and professionalism.



BBS with BFB Comd's Coin

Life in Brunei is unbelievably challenging but equally enjoyable. Regardless of circumstances and travel restrictions, we, the Far East Sappers, with an agile mindset to adapt to any environment, have always found time to socialise and make the most of being in Brunei..

‘A’ COMPANY, 3 ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES – QGE DETACHMENT UPDATE

Cpl Nishal Thakali

As part of Project SHERPA a number of Other Ranks (OR) posts have been allocated to QGE as permanent E1 PIDs within the re-forming 3rd Bn, The Royal Gurkha Rifles. Therefore, on 6 January 2020, a team of three Sappers (Cpl Nishal, Cpl Robin, LCpl Nabin) from QGE were assigned to A Coy 3RGR as the initial phase of growth got underway.



2IC A Coy, 3 RGR Captain Jiwan Gurung congratulating LCpl Robin and LCpl Nishan on their promotion to Cpl

A (CORIANO) Coy is the first Coy to reform and it is co-located with the 1st Bn, the Royal Gurkha Rifles at Sir John Moore Barracks. 3 RGR is now one of the Specialised Infantry Battalions and will form a component of the newly established Ranger Regiment. A and B Coy will be attached to other Battalions in the Ranger Regiment whilst the formation of BHQ and the remaining Coy has been put on hold as a result of the recently announced Defence Integrated Review.





Left. Cpl Robin showing skills as a sharp shooter during LFTT
Right. Cpl Nishan on Ex MAYAN SPEAR

Almost immediately after the re-formation, on 24 Jan 20 the Coy deployed to Kenya on Ex ASKARI SPEAR 2020. This OTX was an excellent opportunity for our Sappers to showcase a range of combat engineering skills, knowledge and capability. Unfortunately, COVID-19 meant we had to extract early back to the UK in April. Our return was met by a very different UK, after spending weeks cut off from news in the Kenyan bush we were now met with isolation and social distancing. However, during this period we focused on various training serials such as essay competitions. Thereafter, the A Coy CoC developed a rigorous conceptual development package which lasted until August 2020 and which proved to be a huge advantage for all of us for what was to come. This package prepared for the unexpected, for operations and especially for the Specialised Infantry Cadre. We were coached and trained through a plethora of military skills including the Combat Estimate, theatre research, problem solving techniques, analysis and geopolitical debates, current affairs and discussions on Violent Extremist Organisations (VEOs) across Africa.

In September 2020 members of A Coy completed the Specialised Infantry Cadre which tested us in a wide range of topics and skills including military knowledge, essay writing, navigation and concluded with a 48 hrs arduous patrol across the Sennybridge Training Area in Wales. We also completed a 2 week live firing package on Lydd Ranges and Salisbury Plain, as well as several specialist training courses.



Beating the Heat - Cpl Nishan making most out of his break time during Ex MAYAN SPEAR

The training culminated in a final test exercise (FTX), Ex MAYAN SPEAR (Ex MS), in Belize. Despite COVID-19 and the UK being in national lockdown, we deployed with a number of mitigations in place. Ex MS was an arduous 40-day jungle exercise in the Belizean jungle. We were challenged and assessed across the spectrum of infantry tactical settings such as offensive, defensive, patrols, Live Fire Tactical Training and an FTX. With numerous jungle warfare instructors and all RGR personnel having had several years of experience in the jungles of Brunei, A (CORIANO) Coy set the benchmark for excellence for the exercise. LCpl Nabin Pun (QGE) excelled across all the activities and as a direct result he was awarded the 3 RGR Commanding Officer's Coin for the Best Team Player. This was due to his hard work, professionalism and enthusiasm during a very challenging exercise. All three of us are consistently focused on operational effectiveness, professionalism, continuous improvement and relentless pursuit of excellence in order to uphold QGE and it's KAIDA. *Jai* QGE!



END-EX MAYAN SPEAR 2021 A COMPANY, 3 RGR

BRITISH GURKHAS POKHARA

Capt Govindabhadur Rana

As it is time to say goodbye to Pokhara, I felt it was important to reflect on my job as the Quartermaster (QM) British Gurkhas Pokhara (BGP) in this tumultuous period. The first year of my job flew by so fast it was hard to keep up. We sent 432 recruits (RI20) to the UK; the most significant intake of Gurkha recruits since 1985 and a further



140 recruits to Singapore. Thereafter the global pandemic hit the world and we did not escape from it. Recruiting activity was ceased, BGP families were repatriated to the UK and Civilian Staff (CS) stayed at home, leaving Serving Personnel and critical CS to live and survive for almost six months. The team that were left behind established a close bond and experienced the hard work our CS carried out. Morning area cleaning became the norm as the usually busy streets of Pokhara lay silent. After the situation changed families returned to Nepal and recruiting continued with significant changes.

We said farewell to Sgt Shivakumar Rai during this period who was promoted and moved to 69 Gurkha Field Squadron as the MT SSgt. We welcomed Sergeant Dibesh Lama as the new BGP MT Sgt. Despite the pandemic, daily routine tasks continued and we still managed to conduct memorial services,



various commemorative events and numerous sporting affairs obviously within the COVID-19 restrictions.



Early Starts, Central Selection

Recruiting - Recruit Intake 2021

This year we were unable to run the advertising campaign, Registration or Regional Selection due to the pandemic and a decision was made to run just Central Selection which itself was subject to change as the COVID-19 situation developed. We called forward the Potential Recruits that were unsuccessful at Central Selection the previous year. After a great deal of detailed planning on how to run the central selection for RI21, we finally came up with multiple solutions where we could run the selection in a COVID free environment by keeping both potential recruits and conducting staff safe.



RI 2021 Attestation Parade

We prepared the Camp by establishing plenty of handwashing facilities, implementing a one-way system, putting up signboards with instructions and enforcing social distancing with strict but practical working patterns. We hired party palaces to be used as multiple holding areas where we kept potential recruits after their selection and before results. We invited 590 potential recruits to take part in a three-day selection process where we were incredibly successful in producing 340 Trainee Riflemen for the British Army and 140 Trainee Policemen for the Gurkha Contingent Singapore Police Force (GCSPF), all without the transmission of coronavirus. This was achieved due to the invaluable assistance and advice from healthcare professionals.



Recruit Intake 2021, Quartermaster issuing the military kit

Look Forward

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection process for Recruit Intake 2022 is well underway. The advertising phase is starting in April and the Registration Phase will begin in May. For safety reasons, this year all selection processes will be conducted from British Gurkhas Pokhara. We will invite Potential Recruits in small numbers to maintain a COVID free environment but this will mean the process will take longer. Due to our correct procedures and determination, I am fully confident that the selection for RI22 will be successful. Driver training, porter training and adventure training are lined up to resume again in the next few months.

I am now coming to the end of my two-year tour as the Quartermaster, British Gurkhas Pokhara. Captain Krishnakumar Pun Saheb will take over from me in July and I wish him the very best of luck for his tenure.



Visit to Lt Col (Ret'd) J P Cross OBE saheb (96 years old) in his house recently



LIFE AS MT SGT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Sgt Shivakumar Rai

COVID 19 made a significant impact on the life of millions of people around the World and life in BGP was no different as restrictions were placed on us. This included restricting the movement of personnel to stop the spread of coronavirus. And a normally vibrant camp with hundreds of personnel soon looked deserted with only limited serving personnel remaining. This was further exacerbated by a political decision made to repatriate all the families from BGP to Larkhill, UK. We initially thought that it was a matter of weeks and the families would be back but unfortunately it wasn't the case. It took 7-8 months for families to return to Nepal.



Families repatriated to the UK leaving their fathers and husbands

With civilian staff staying at home it fell to a small number of SP to maintain the real estate which was a difficult task. The daily routine of SP switched to cleaning and maintaining the camp while managing fitness and health. In no time we became experts in handling brooms and we were able to rapidly clean and sweep huge camp areas in a short space of time. The risk of transmitting coronavirus was high and SPs were restricted on leaving camp. We were only allowed to go out for essential shopping once a week. Life in BGP was quite frustrating especially when families were away for such a long time. I also realized that my wife is a much better chef than I.



Sergeant Shiva sweeping drainage around camp during lockdown, no civilian staffs in camp

During this challenging time there were plenty of events organised to keep us sane. The biggest was the mini-golf which was introduced on the football pitch. The game of cricket was also equally very famous. Most of us had never played cricket before but were soon waiting eagerly for a Wednesday sports afternoon cricket match. We also took advantage of the swimming pool in camp that are were so fortunate to have. As the lockdown eased Nepali civilian

staff were allowed back in the camp for critical tasks which saw an increase in morale as we handed over the responsibilities of camp cleaning to them. Our lives were also very difficult due to the family separation but in true Gurkha

fashion we came together as a family and helped out each other.

4th COAS International Tri-Adventure Competition 2021.

Four members from British Gurkhas Pokhara put together a team led by Capt Govinda Rana to represent the British Army at the 4th Chief of Army Staff (COAS) International Tri-Adventure Competition 2021. The event was held on Saturday 20 March 2021 around the Trishuli River, Dhading District. The event was organised by the Nepal Army and consisted of a 6.7km run, 26km bicycle ride and 11km of rafting. A total of 20 teams entered including four International and four female teams. The Nepal Army team snatched the podium while the International Trophy was secured by a team from Pakistan. With great teamwork combined with superb coordination and determination the British Gurkhas Nepal team settled with 11th position.

Sports, Adventures and Miscellaneous



Badminton Tournament during lockdown - only Runners Up this time



BGP Mini Golf Tournament



*L. QM meets Ex QM in Pahar Trust Cycling Charity Event
R. Farwell to MT Sgt, Sgt Shiva*



QGEA NEWS

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Richard Walker



It is with enormous pride that I write my first introduction as Chairman of the Association. I have taken over from Mike Carter who has helped us to navigate successfully a number of very significant events in the history of the Regimental family during his tenure.

I hope to be able to fill Mike's shoes and assist us all in taking our Association and our extended network through the next exciting period of progress in a rich history.

I had the good fortune to have served in Hong Kong with 67, 68 and 70 Squadron and as 2IC 69 Squadron was fortunate to be close to the formation of our standalone troop in 26 Engineer Regiment as well as having been intimately involved in the Commando capability from start to finish. I had the pleasure to work with Brigade, Corps and Army senior leadership as the more recent changes were shaping up when I was OC 69 Squadron, Commandant and on the Army Staff too. Therefore, having retained a strong connection with our history and been part of shaping our future, I am very excited about working with all those that we support and represent as we progress through the next stages of the Regimental lifecycle. The reformation of 67 Squadron and the ongoing changes surrounding the Army and Brigade of Gurkhas structures present many opportunities, but also will bring their own challenges too. I trust that we all agree on the Association's important role in providing support, counsel, guidance and connectivity to our widest membership during times of such modernisation and change, while continuing to remain relevant to those of us long since retired from active service.

I am very conscious of my part in helping us navigate this, working with all our internal and external stakeholders, such that the legacy of the Association and Regiment so dear to our hearts continues to be a bright one and one of which we can all feel proud.

This year I would like to place particular emphasis on our part in supporting the changes, ensuring that the Association remains representative of a growing membership and of course considering the impact of the ever-expanding geographical footprint of the extended Regimental family too. We must begin to shape our next milestone birthday celebrations too - our 75th is not that far off after all.

Can I close by thanking you all for continuing to make this 'your Association' that will serve all of us during our serving and retired lifetimes. Keep connected and keep talking and please do lean-in to the growing 'post Covid' Association social scene; after all we have a lot of catching up to do as lockdown constraints are eased.

I look forward to seeing you at the Regimental Birthday.

QGEA FAMILY CONGRATULATIONS

Along with the honours and awards detailed on Pg 8 for serving members of the Regiment it is with great pleasure we are able to record that following members of the Association have also been recognised for national awards.

- Brig Mark Lancaster TD VR PC, being created a peer as Baron Lancaster of Kimbolton.
- Lt Gen Sir Tyrone Urch KBE. Knighted in recognition of his role as Standing Joint Commander, in which he led the military's contribution to the UK's fight against COVID-19.
- Nick Elliot MBE CB. Awarded a CB for services to the COVID 19 response as Director General, Vaccine Taskforce.
- Anthony Price OBE - For services to the energy storage industry.
- Rob Cross MBE - For services to Gurkha Veterans.
- Maj Dom Dias MBE - For operational service in the Middle East.
- Lt Cols Jamie Stuart and Fee Scotter have been selected for promotion to Colonel in the coming year.

CURRENT QGEA COMMITTEE

President.	Brig J L Clark CBE
Chairman.	Col (Ret'd) R Walker OBE
Secretary.	Maj (Ret'd) I Moore
Gurkha Secretary.	Maj (Ret'd) Prembahadur Ale MVO
Treasurer.	Mr M Adler esq
Social Media Editor.	Maj M Gledhill RE
Journal Editor.	Lt Col (Ret'd) A Gooch
Social Events Member.	Lt Col R Oakes RE
Regimental History.	Lt Col S Brown RE
Commandant.	Lt Col MD Hendry MBE
Gurkha Major.	Maj Kamal Bahadur Khapung
Limbu MVO	



QGEA LONDON DINNER – 5 MARCH 2022

As you may have heard, we've managed to secure a date to reschedule the Annual Dinner, it is still in London and will be held at **The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn** on **Saturday 5 March 2022**. The venue can take 150 and we had over 112 for the delayed March 2020 date, so we're looking to make it bigger and better and a real chance to catch-up, re-connect and share lockdown stories! As before, it is still open to Association members' guests as well, and will give us a chance to welcome our new Colonel of the Regiment to the wider QGE Pariwar. We're also getting back in touch with those who served with QGE during Op HERRICK (intermittently from 2007 onwards), as well as Op MARMAT (2015-16), **so please do pass on this invite to those whom you know**, who may have lost touch. For those stalwarts who attended in 2019, the format is the same, just a larger more magnificent room (see below).



Reception Drinks. From 7pm on the Dias for all Association members and their partners and guests.

Dinner. A three course Asian themed menu will be served from 8pm in The Hall. Musical Accompaniment will be provided by an ensemble from the Band of the Royal Yeomanry (Inns of Court & City Yeomanry). Short speeches, toasts and coffee will follow, with musical accompaniment by a QGE Piper, before retiring to the bar.

Dress. Likely to be lounge suit and cocktail dresses to encourage more junior members to attend.

Cost. At this range it will be £70 per head, which includes a subsidy from the Association...notwithstanding the amazing and historical location, I can guarantee you will be bowled over by the menu...worth every penny! Do please feel free to bring guests, and of course parking is free, and cars can be left overnight. Members will need to source their own accommodation if they intend on staying in Town. Payment details will be promulgated the week before the event. Please do bring cash or card for the bar after dinner.

I do hope you can make it, **please let me know if you can**, hopefully see you there! Lt Col Rob Oakes, social member: Rob.Oakes924@mod.gov.uk or 07879 468 011.

Keep up to date with all the latest news through the following websites:

www.qgea.org - Our own QGEA Website has been revamped and has a new fresh, more user friendly look and feel. Huge thank you to OC 69 Sqn, Mike Gledhill for doing this.



www.gurkhabde.com – the new website for the GBA

or why not join the QGEA Facebook site, just search for QGEA Members

or follow the QGEA Twitter feed: @qgeassoc

NEPAL UPDATE

Maj (Ret'd) Hukumraj Thapa

Nepal and Covid-19 in 2021

In the last year's report I wrote on 7 Jun 2020, "There is a general concern that if the number of cases surge like that of Europe and USA then Nepal would be caught short in its preparedness to provide proper health care as a result of ill-equipped hospitals and substandard quarantine facilities which are already facing a grave management issues." At that time Nepal had recorded a total of 3,000 cases and 14 deaths. In April 2021 the figures recorded was 3400 deaths but within a month, by May 21 the numbers had escalated at an alarming rate with around 9,000 cases and over 100 deaths being recorded each day, doubling the total death figure to over 6,000! As a result, almost all districts have now enforced at least 2 weeks of lockdown in the hope of breaking the chain.

Recently the Covid-19 situation in India has worsened which had had a knock-on effect for Nepal as thousands of Nepalese workers from India were forced to return home, through open land borders. There are no proper screening or quarantine facilities at the dozen or more entry points along the land border. So, Nepal has suddenly been hit by the second wave. It is also reported that the latest variant is 50% more contagious than the UK Variant which has been a huge shock and the Nepalese are now not feeling as lucky as they were last year.



Compounding the situation is the fact that India, due to its own crisis has abruptly stopped exports of oxygen and vaccines to Nepal. Officials warn that situation might become catastrophic if the shortage of medicines continues for much longer. It is reported that most hospital beds for special cases are full and even where beds may be available, admission is being refused due to severe shortages of oxygen and ventilators. Meanwhile, Nepal has temporarily stopped its vaccination program due to a shortage of doses. The vaccines were initially donated by India and China but to date under 2% of the general population are vaccinated along with approximately 20% of front-line workers and senior citizens.

On the political front, while hundreds of patients are fighting for their lives due to lack of health facilities all over the country, the Prime Minister is busy trying to hold on to power. Infighting erupted within PM Oli's ruling party at the same time as Corona Virus was first seen in Nepal around early 2020. Politicians are also blamed for spreading the virus by organizing mass rallies and speeches in Kathmandu and various districts. As such their attention towards the health of the people has been completely neglected. The mismanagement of the pandemic and mishandling of the budget in Nepal were also reflected in several international media channels.

Right now, there is a great need for the supply of vaccines, oxygen and medicines. For this, Nepal has to totally rely on the goodwill of the international community. To this affect, Regimental Association Nepal recently appealed to Col Comdt BG, Lt Gen Richard Wardlaw requesting assistance to supply necessary vaccines and medical equipment for the veterans in Nepal. We were very pleased to receive prompt assurance from the Col Comdt that action to secure assistance through the UK Govt and the MoD UK is being sought. The latest report announced that a UK Military Medical Team was heading to Nepal to assess the situation. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Richard Wardlaw Saheb, the people of UK and the UK Govt for their generous assistance.

SOCIAL FRONT



Early Heavy B'Fast before hitting the City. 3348 Bhala, 5425 DBG, 6718 HRT

Due to worldwide domination of Covid-19, all social functions and holiday plans were thrown in the bins. As such we the veterans were unable to celebrate the 72nd QGE Day in 2020 in Nepal, as well as in Darjeeling, Hong Kong, Australia and the United Kingdom. The A-Team in Pokhara also went dead quiet. I and my wife's short trip to Australia to meet our son

Amrit, his wife Darshana and the newly born grandson Rhythm was extended to a very long 14 months due to intermittent lockdowns. Like elsewhere around the world, all the pubs in Australia were shut for much of my time there. However, when they briefly opened I did manage to arrange a couple of BhetGhats in these lovely pubs with some veterans living in or visiting Australia.



The Charles Dickens Tavern. From Left 8069 Naina, 5425 DBG, 6718 HRT, 9648 Binod

After 14 months Down Under, we thought we were lucky to catch the beautiful Singapore Airlines plane back to Nepal but soon after our 10 days home quarantine, we were found locked down again due to the nationwide Covid-19 crisis. Hence, I can only request everyone. "pray for a peaceful world to be able to visit amazing places to meet friends and relatives, Covid-19 willing!"



QGE Burho Party: Binod and Poonam Lama, Naina & Paru Tamang, Hukumraj and Parvati Thapa, Dalbahadur Gurung



The Edinburgh Castle Pub. From left clockwise: Mr Bom Yonjan ex GRU, 5425 DBG ex QGE, 2717 Harka Rai ex QOGLR, 6718 HRT ex QGE, 8069 Naina ex QGE and Insp Mohan Rana ex GCSPF



Ex QGE Veterans UK – QGE 72nd Birthday celebrations

Capt (Re'td) Tirthaman Gurung

The ex-QGE Veterans living in the South of England / Greater London could not celebrate the 72nd QGE Birthday in the usual style at the Samuel Cody Community Centre in Farnborough due to COVID19. So, with restrictions still in place it was decided at the last minute to hold the QGE 72nd Birthday Celebrations at The Queen Hotel in Aldershot to which only the members of the Coordinating ex QGE 'A' Team were able to attend.



As scheduled, the 'A' Team members assembled outside the hotel at 0900hrs on Saturday 26 September 2020 to be briefed and checked in by the security staff of the hotel and for once there was not the need for a fatigue party to prepare the venue. We ordered our food and while we were waiting to be served we set up our QGE Banner for a quick photo session. We somehow managed to convince the venue staff about the Banner and the importance of the day to us.



The Commanding Officer's Routine Order was read out and the QGE Magazine was also distributed to the members. The bills were paid by Capt Chitra Gurung Saheb who kindly sponsored on the occasion of his son Amar's wedding. Many congratulations and best wishes to Chitra Saheb & family.



Unfortunately, we had to miss the traditional QGE pipes & drums display this year but we hope to see you all at the 73rd QGE Birthday celebrations that will held on Saturday 24th September 2021 at the Samuel Cody Community Centre, subject to COVID19. Jai QGE



MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES

MY FIRST TOUR

John Edwards

This article is really a series of anecdotes, hung on the framework of my first tour with the Regiment.



I joined the Regiment in 1957 as a troop commander. In order to be selected I had to be interviewed by the Colonel of the Regiment, General Lance Perowne, which was an intimidating experience. It took place at his home near Guildford, which included a small estate with a stream running through it. There had been a storm, and a tree had been blown down partly blocking the stream. General Lance had recently been visited by Narbahadur Sahib (portrait in the Mess and QGOO at that time), just after this occurrence, and General P showed him and said "you are an engineer, how should I remove it?" Narbahadur replied that he would tie a rope round it

and get 30 men to pull it out. General P had one elderly man to look after the place.

I travelled to Singapore on a troop ship, together with Malcolm Thomson, also joining the Regiment. We had a cabin for three, the third being a Lt Brewer who never showed up. The Suez Canal was blocked as a result of the Middle East War, so it was a long trip (a month) round the Cape, and we were very glad of the extra space; we drank a toast to him every evening.

It was a brand-new Bibby Line ship, destined to be a luxury liner when no longer required as a troopship. The three classes of accommodation were run as they would be when the ship became a liner, and as officers we travelled first class in considerable style. WOs and Sergeants travelled second class, and rank and file wives third class. The holds of the ship had been converted into troop decks, which is where the rank & file lived. The bunks were five high, and you had to walk sideways between them. It was airless and congested. The married R&F on board were not allowed to travel with their wives, who were third class passengers, while their husbands were on the troop decks; a fairly inhuman

arrangement. As an impressionable young man I was slightly uncomfortable with the contrast between the luxury in which we lived in first class and the conditions on the troop decks, but it did not stop me enjoying the former.

All the subalterns on board had tasks, and mine were as a troop deck officer, and third class entertainment (which I was at pains to explain was first class entertainment for third class passengers). My troop deck was below the water line and excruciatingly hot when we got into the tropics. There was only room for half the men to sleep on deck, and the other half sweltered below. I had an old, not very bright, infantry troop deck sergeant and one day, on my daily inspection of the troop deck, I found a man in his bunk. When I asked the sergeant why he said that the man had been to the doctor, and returned with some medicine and a chitty saying BD, which the sergeant took to mean "bed down", rather than take your medicine "bi diem".

During the mornings we did PT and other simple military training. The most enjoyable activity was shooting balloons off the stern of the ship. There were lectures about Malaya, and we, the officers, gave lectures to groups of soldiers, which were of questionable value. The afternoons were free.

On board was a 10th Gurkha officer, returning from long leave, who when he heard that we were going to join the Brigade, offered to teach us Gurkhali. His fee was as much gin as he could drink every lunch time, which at 3d a tot was not too much of a burden! He spoke the language well, was a good teacher and we arrived at the Regiment with a rudimentary knowledge of the language, which stood me in good stead, as I was sent straight to 68 Squadron which was on operations in Johore (the Emergency was still in progress).

The Regiment was based at Sungei Besi near Kuala Lumpur. On arrival in Singapore, I was met by my brother, who was Brigade Major of 63 Brigade at the time. I spent the first night at his home in Kluang, about two hours drive away in Johore. Next day I had a fascinating rail journey to Kuala Lumpur, passing through unfamiliar countryside that alternated between jungle, rubber trees and palm oil plantations.

Before joining our squadrons, Malcolm and I stayed at the Regimental base at Sungei Besi for a couple of weeks. One day we were sent into town to get uniforms made by the regimental tailor, and the same day there was a curry lunch in the mess, to entertain the officers of the SAS (the only other major unit in Kuala Lumpur). We returned to camp at about 4pm, to find that they had not yet sat down to lunch! We thought we had joined some sort of madhouse.

68 Squadron had established a base camp in the jungle, at the end of a long laterite (earth) track. For some reason my



squadron commander (Bill Branford) wanted his car at the base, and I was instructed to drive it there. I asked the intelligence officer (Peter Whitestone) for a map, but he said "you don't need a map. There is only one road in Malaya; you drive south on it for about two hours and your orderly will tell you when to turn off". Fortunately, I completed the journey successfully, with my orderly beside me, who had to stick his rifle out of the window because it would not fit in the car.

I had a wonderful time as a troop commander. We were mostly employed in building jeep tracks through the jungle, to connect company bases, from which the Emergency was conducted, to allow rapid reinforcement from one to another, when there was a contact. I found that the soldiers were good at this work e.g. building bridges over small streams, using timber cut down from the surrounding jungle, because it was the sort of thing they did at home in the hills.

At one stage during the tour, my troop was sent to support a battle group, based on a British battalion, on a seaborne assault exercise with the Americans, in an uninhabited area of North Borneo, Ex Saddle Up. We embarked on an American liberty ship, and lived on American rations, which were completely unfamiliar to the men. The food was laid out buffet style, and everyone took what they fancied. This might include a slice of pizza, some chilli con carne and ice cream, all on the same plate. Of course, the ship was dry and there was a fuss when it was discovered that the Padre had his communion wine with him.

We spent some days at sea as part of a naval exercise, before anchoring off the beach on which we were to land. A naval bombardment took place, before we went ashore in amphibious APCs, propelled by their tracks. Our waterproofed D4 bulldozer trundled ashore through the shallows. We opened lanes through a mine field (not very satisfactory training, as there was nothing in the ground to find), and constructed a jeep track up the escarpment at the back of the beach, up which the APCs crawled, and subsequently the resupply vehicles. Fortunately, there was no rain and we managed to keep it open by dint of constant maintenance. The exercise lasted about two days, and at the end we enjoyed a BBQ on the beach with the Americans, at which beer was allowed and provided. Then we sailed back to Singapore.

At the end of the tour I was sent to command our recruits during their training; first at the BG Depot at Sungei Patani in Kedah, where they did the full infantry training. It was when the Regiment was expanding fast, to its maximum strength ever of 1400 (three field squadrons in Malaya, UK and Hong Kong and a HQ and training establishment in Kluang), and I had 130 recruits. The whole Brigade was expanding, and there were over a thousand men on the passing out parade. From my position standing in front of my contingent of three troops, I had a grandstand view of the long front row of spectators as it filled up. The Governor was there, the Commander-in-Chief, and many dignitaries. Two chairs in the middle were left vacant for the inspecting officer and his wife.

Eventually a yellow Rolls-Royce (the royal colour in Malaya) drew up, and the inspecting officer, the Sultan of Kedah, stepped out followed by TWO wives. What followed was a pantomime. A flustered staff officer went down one side of the front row asking every one to budge up. They all did, some reluctantly, and the last person fell off the end, and another chair had to be provided.

I then took the recruits to the Engineer Training Centre in Kluang, where they underwent their Sapper training. It was fascinating to watch these enthusiastic young minds absorbing all the information like sponges. I knew that I had one looming problem, of finding seven men for the Pipes & Drums (then 41 strong), which would not be popular. Without much hope of success I called for volunteers, and was relieved when a complete section responded. They had looked around at the competition, come to the conclusion that none of them was going to rise very far up the greasy pole, and wanted to stay together. The whole party finally went to join their Squadrons, as fully trained soldiers and sappers.

That was the end of my first tour. I spent three more tours with the Regiment, as adjutant, squadron commander and commandant, and went on to be Defence Attaché in Kathmandu, deputy commander of 48 Brigade and Brigadier BG, but that first tour stays in my mind as a wonderful experience, and introduction to the Regiment.

RETURN TO SANDHURST

Peter Whitestone

In September 2019, the Sandhurst Trust invited Intakes 3 and 4, who were officer cadets in 1948 and 1949, to visit the Royal Military Academy to mark the 70th anniversary of our commissioning. Initial responses indicated that I was the only Sapper from 4 Batch, so I scoured the RE and QGE Lists and canvassed the 5 other apparent possibles. One lived in Scotland and was standing by his daughter who had cancer, one was in a care home, one had "gone away", one had the wrong phone number in the List, and I had no reply from the fifth. So, of the 12 people originally listed as attending (3 from Intake 3, 6 from Intake 4 and 3 guests), Sally and I found ourselves to be 2 of 11 (2 from Intake 3, 4 from Intake 4 and 5 guests) -- 314 cadets had passed out from Intake 4 alone in December 1949!

Present cadets were not in residence at the time of our visit so the Academy was eerily empty and quiet but it meant we were relatively free to wander in Old College and visit the History Room (the museum of Sandhurst), the splendid Indian Army Room (the original chapel) and the present impressive Royal Memorial Chapel. There was also a stall in the Grand Entrance hall where we could obtain souvenirs, postcards etc.

Despite arrangements for wheelchairs there were actually none, and we assembled in the Marlborough Room (an ante-room) for coffee, to see photos and memorabilia of our time at the RMAS, to get (re)acquainted with our fellow cadets and meet their guests, and chat with Louise Martin of the



Sandhurst Trust and the several other members of the Academy staff who kindly entertained us.

We were given reminders of our time at Sandhurst in the form of extracts from "The Wish Stream" (the RMAS Journal) listing us as cadets in our Junior Term (the first of 3 half-years) and as gazetted into our Regiments and Corps after our Senior Term; a "Roll of Officers, Lecturers, Warrant Officers and Officer Cadets" for our Intermediate Term which showed that the Commandant, Major General Hugh Stockwell, had an impressive staff of military (including the revered Academy RSM, J. C. Lord of the Grenadier Guards) and civilians -- some 65 lecturers! -- to train and educate us; and also extracts from folios for "Reports on Officer Cadets" which reminded us of our progress and shortcomings through the course, e.g. "should learn the importance of punctuality", "inclined to go his own way", "the most improved cadet in the class" (probably needed to be!), generally "Satisfactory" and sometimes "Better than most" but also occasionally "Not up to the Standard of the Majority"! Ultimately "a satisfactory Senior Term" with interesting pluses and minuses...

Among the members of staff who came and talked with us and had lunch with us was the Commandant himself, Major General Paul Nanson. This was an extremely kind sparing of his time as not only was he Commandant of the Royal Military Academy but also GOC Recruiting and Initial Training Command, a post which he retained after his 5 years at Sandhurst.

Before we left we were given a "goody bag" containing the documents mentioned above and, most generously, a copy of

"Sandhurst: a tradition of leadership", a large, beautifully illustrated book edited from accounts by a multitude of contributors and with a forward by General Nanson. It is a history of the training of army officers and the establishments -- the old Academy ("The Shop"), the College, Mons, Bagshot (WRAC) and particularly the present RMA -- with their procedures, traditions and development. Royal Engineers and Gurkhas have their mention -- the former from the days at Woolwich and the latter as the Sittang Company which helps field training, for example -- as do the entry of foreign and female cadets.

We went down the Grand Entrance steps of Old College, up which the Adjutant had ridden his charger on our Sovereign's Parade 70 years before, to end an enjoyable visit to our alma mater.

IMPROVISED BRIDGING

Austin Thorp

Should anyone reading this ever go to Singapore I strongly recommend a visit to a small museum on the top of Kent Ridge at 31 Bukit Chandu. It is well off the normal tourist routes, but it is one of the most interesting small military museums I have ever visited. It is housed in a colonial era senior officer's bungalow now beautifully restored and turned into a museum called "Reflections at Bukit Chandu". It tells the story of the Battle of Bukit Chandu fought over 12 – 14 Feb 1942. The 159 survivors of the Malay Regiment led by Lieutenant Adnan Bin Saidi dug in on the top of Bukit Chandu in what was to be a truly heroic, suicidal stand which deserves



to be better known and celebrated as one of the outstanding events of that dismal saga now known as 'The Fall of Singapore'. For 2 days this small group held up the advance of the 13,000 men of Lieutenant-General Mutaguchi Renya's 18th Division. The Malay Regiment's position on the hill was eventually overrun by the Japanese and the battle ended in hand-to-hand combat after the last few defenders ran out of ammunition. All the officers except one, Lieutenant Abbas Abdul-Manan, and most of the men, were killed in the fighting or massacred in the aftermath.



The mural on the museum's wall is an artist's impression of the Battle of Bukit Chandu

As a Gurkha Engineer who served in Brunei, Malaya and briefly in Singapore I thought I knew a thing or two about improvised bridging. But the photograph on the previous page attracted my attention and my immediate thought was "Why did I never think of that?"; and then "I never realised that part of a Sapper's job description was "Keep the infantry's feet dry – whatever it takes"! No wonder the Japanese Army moved so fast down the Malay Peninsula.

I spoke to the young curator and asked to copy it. Having explained that I was an Army Engineer I asked if I could use it and he was delighted that I wanted to; that said he then asked me "Were you here fighting in the war?" I didn't know I looked that ancient!

If you do visit, I recommend the longish walk along the Southern Ridges Trail from North West to South East, which links Kent Ridge Park, Telok Blangah Hill Park and Mount Faber Park; this is a spectacular trail, much of it at tree top level, along elevated walkways through jungle with terrific views of the South coast of Singapore. You'll also pass one or two extremely expensive houses on the ridge. Take plenty of water and lots of sun screen – and your camera. Once you have visited the museum stroll on to the top of Mount Faber. A restorative beer or two and an ice cream (or vice versa) will probably sap your resolve to do any more walking so to avoid the knee jarring descent to sea level take the cable car down. If you look like me, the attendants will be concerned as to whether you are capable of getting into a moving car and

they'll offer to stop it for you. Age (however young you think you are) has certain perks!

HAMI JASTO CHHAINA! – 25 YEARS OF GURKHA COMMANDOS

Andy Clee



The first Gurkha Commando!

In 1996, 67 Gurkha Independent Field Squadron QGE was preparing to disband as the UK got ready to hand Hong Kong to China. Redundancies were being planned and prospects of employment within QGE for those that survived the cut were about to be limited to one field squadron. The OC, Sheppard Saheb (himself a former commando) spotted an opportunity for Gurkhas to serve with what was then 59 Independent Commando Squadron, who always had spare places for the right sort of soldier! Plans were hatched and the call for a few volunteers went out.

So, in early March of that year, myself and Spr (later SSgt) Narprasad Gurung and Spr (now Maj) Khadka Bahadur Gurung started training in earnest for the All Arms Commando Course later that year. We threw everything at it, borrowing the local RGR Battalion's tug-o-war rope for regain practice, training up to three times a day and spending sports afternoons (remember those?) and weekends with 'bergens' on getting the miles in on the wild hills of the New Territories.

We might not have been prepared for a cold UK spring, but the hard training paid off. I can still remember the impressed look on the faces of the 59 instructors on the 'Beat Up' as the QGE boys hit the heaves bar for our first session. They were slightly less impressed with one of my heaves, which lit a fire in me. 'I'll bl**dy show you,' I thought and smashed the first run out like a mad man. I guess it did me a favour, no-one



ever took me on in the first round of 'it pays to be a winner' after that!

The 3 week 'Beat Up' saw us getting well acquainted with the hills and sand dunes of North Devon, Dartmoor and, as a special treat (rumour had it that our PTI wanted to bag a few Munros) we spent a week in Scotland training on the same ground as our commando forebears. It took a bit of adjustment to get used to doing a 'cheeky' circuit training session after a hard day on the hills, but it was all part of the fun (?).



Mountain training on Ben Nevis

Unfortunately, an injury sustained on the assault course at Okehampton meant that Spr Narprasad Grung couldn't continue to the main course. Which left two of us from QGE, and the other survivors from the 'Beat Up', cap badges blackened and wash kits appropriately camouflaged, facing 8 weeks of the All Arms Commando Course at Lympstone. By then, we all knew that if we could avoid injury, we'd make it. And most of us did, getting through the key milestones of the course, spending weeks 'in the field' and getting slightly perplexed by 'Royal's' obsession with 'admin in the field' (it all makes sense when you do a winter in the Arctic).



The author finally understanding 'admin in the field'



Welcome home' in Hong Kong

I was posted to 59 after my tour with QGE, but it took a few more years before Gurkhas served with them. The first QGE section deployed on operations with 3 Commando Brigade on Op HERRICK 5, serving with distinction. The formation of 24 Commando Engineer Regiment (of which I was lucky enough to be a part) opened more opportunities. By the time we deployed on Op HERRICK 9 there were around 40 QGE personnel on the ORBAT, occupying prominent positions



Green 'lids' awarded at the end of the 30 miler

within the Regiment (including Recce Tp SSgt), working in exposed positions alongside the Afghan National Army and more than showing their worth at every turn. QGE Commandos returned to Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 14 and have served with 24 ever since. I hope that one day we get the chance to hear the accounts of these operations in their own words.

Judging by the range of cap badges (QGE, QGSigs, QOGLR) and the unique spin put on the two Gurkha Commando reunions that have been held (dhoko race, pull ups, sit ups, swim test, and with a beer can in hand, a warm down) and some of the tattoos (!), I think it's safe to say that the Gurkha





Gurkha Commando Reunion

Commando 'experiment' from 25 years ago, has been a resounding success. It's incredible to think that I've been lucky enough to be included (in a very small way) in part of that story. And it fills me with immense pride when I see a few Gurkha faces amongst those training with 24's Achnacarrrie Troop for the next Commando Course when I'm out and about doing my own 'old man phys' here in North Devon. Keep sending them! Jai Commando QGE!

KADOORIE AGRICULTURAL AID ASSOCIATION 2021

Maj (Retd') Jodbahadur Gurung Earthquake Rebuild Consultant.



The Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association (KAAA) is structured as though it were a Gurkha Independent Field Squadron. Amongst our senior staff, we have a number of retired officers from the Regiment and here's a taste of what they've been up to over the past year:

The KAAA Earthquake Team has now rebuilt 9 villages since the earthquakes struck in 2015 which amounts to some 600

houses and we plan to build a further 200 houses before winding the project down in February 2022. The past year has been challenging as the Government stopped most construction work during Lockdown. That included some of our project sites, from where we had to return 35 skilled labourers home. Many have not returned yet; so, instead, we are now using locally employed staff, under our supervision.

We have primarily concentrated on relocating villages in Dhading, Gorkha and Lamjung districts, where some traditional villages sites are now deemed too dangerous to rebuild homes.



A typical brick house with sandwich roof

This year we completed 70 houses for Sangkosh and 38 houses for Amsara in the hills around Dhadingbhensi. All houses were either 2 or 3 room constructions. We use



metal/foam/metal sandwich panels for some of the walls and roofs; this proves popular as it provides much needed insulation in summer and winter.

Capt (Ret'd) Mohankumar Gurung – Fish Consultant.



As the Fish Consultant, I am responsible for the profitable running of KAAA's Indreni Trout Farm. Situated in Bhujung Khola, Kaski, it is a pilot project testing out the idea of growing trout for

profit, food and local employment. Ultimately, we hope to expand the scheme, sharing the profit with the villagers to improve amenities and provide welfare funding.

The project, which employs three specialist Kadoorie Staff and two trainees, has been a great success. It is now three years old; we are already bringing 10 tons of trout to market per annum, generating some 28% net profit. This has allowed us to pay off the original start up loan from KAAA; the business now stands alone on a secure footing.

Marketing has been a challenge, as I have no experience to draw upon. But with the help of old friends, particularly in the Bhat Bhateni Super Market chain (Nepal's largest chain, and whose founder's brother served in QGE) and our neighbours in the Gandaki Trout Farm, we have sold more trout than I thought possible. One of the Kadoorie trustees questioned the wisdom of moving trout to market along Nepal's dirt tracks – I was able to reassure him that dead trout, frozen solid, don't mind the odd bump!



Feeding time at Indreni Trout Farm

Capt (Ret'd) Meenjang Gurung – Training Director.

It is my great honour to lead our small team that offers greater opportunities in life to the disadvantaged. As Training Director, my role is to recruit and manage the deprived and underprivileged youths on the KAAA employment training scheme. The scheme started in 1998 when KAAA sponsored the training of Masons and Plumbers to employ as their own project labour. Since then, more than 6500 youths (aged 17-27) have gained the skills necessary to find a good job. Currently KAAA sponsors some 540 youths a year on 30 different courses ranging from 1 week to 36 months in length, including Pre-Diploma and Diploma/Certificate Level courses:



Since then, more than 6500 youths (aged 17-27) have gained the skills necessary to find a good job. Currently KAAA sponsors some 540 youths a year on 30 different courses ranging from 1 week to 36 months in length, including Pre-Diploma and Diploma/Certificate Level courses:

Short Term Courses (3-13 Months)	Electrician, Electronics, Mason & Plumber, Carpenter & Shuttering, Welder, Tailoring, Cooking & Baking, Motorcycle, Automobile, General Mechanic, Offset Printing and Draftsman
Pre-Diploma Courses (18 Months)	Civil Engineers (Overseer), Survey Engineers (Amin), Social Mobilizer, Veterinary Science (JTA V) and Agriculture (Plant) Science (JTA A).
Diploma/Certificate Level (36 Months)	Certificate in Dental Science (CDS), Diploma in Pharmacy, Proficiency Certificate Level in Nursing and Medicine, Diplomas in Engineering.

All courses are accredited by the Government of Nepal's Council for Technical, Educational and Vocational Training (CTEVT).



Employment Training: Shuttering and Steel fixing



LIBERATION OF HONG KONG 1945

John Edwards



When I retired from the Army, in Hong Kong, I became General Manager of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club.

One day in 1990, a man visited the Club who had been a War Office civilian in Hong Kong before the war, and a member of the Club. When

the Japanese invaded in 1941 he became a POW in Sham Shui Po camp, and remained there until RN ships sailed into Hong Kong Harbour, and liberated the territory in 1945. I showed him round the Club, and he told me how it had been in those bygone days, took him to lunch, and introduced him to as many members as possible, and he told us some interesting tales.

The people of Hong Kong had a tough time during the occupation. Food was scarce, and many became homeless because of American bombing. Public transport and utilities failed. Much of the population was employed without wages in shipbuilding and agriculture. Vendors and bankers were deprived of their possessions. There were atrocities, including rape and torture, and it is estimated that 10,000 people were executed. The schools were closed so that a generation of Hong Kong children had no education. The population fell by two thirds.

When our visitor was released, the first thing he did was to go back to the Club, and was delighted to find that it was undamaged and as it had been before the war; the Japanese had used it as an officers' club. However, when he went back the next day he found it a complete wreck. Locals had broken in and removed everything made of wood for firewood, the furniture, doors, panelling, even the bar. When the Club reopened, a man appeared who had been a barman in the Club, with a tin box containing bar chits, which he had carefully retained. They weren't much use because many of the members were dead, others never returned to Hong Kong and most of the signatures were unrecognisable, but he was rewarded for his loyalty.

While in the camp, those who had been members of the Club were determined to keep things going, and devised a game, which allowed them to continue to race. They managed to acquire enough cardboard on which to draw a huge plan of the harbour, which was then divided into a large number of squares. They each made for themselves small model yachts, carved from whatever material they could scrounge. A dice showing numbers 5 to 10 was rolled, and a yacht could

move the number of squares indicated, in any direction, but this was moderated by various factors. They had tide tables, and the tide was taken into account. The wind in the area was very variable because of all the buildings around, and a reading was taken before each move, to determine strength and direction. The point of sailing, i.e. close-hauled, reaching or running was also a factor. An officer-of-the-day was appointed, who decided the course, and set out marks on the plan to indicate it. He was also the arbiter of the rules, with whom there was no argument. Normal racing rules applied, e.g. port gives way to starboard, overtaking boat keeps clear, and rules about giving way when rounding marks. There were cries of "starboard" and "give way" as the game progressed. A game lasted several hours, but this did not matter, as the one thing of which they were not short was time.

It was really interesting to have him with us, and a most memorable day.

QGE IN KOSOVO

Stuart Brown

(Editor's Note. This is the 2nd article by Stuart Brown that will become part of the 3rd Volume of the Regimental History)

Introduction

Although the dust and acrimony were beginning to settle in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia and Slovenia, the wars of the Former Yugoslavia were far from over. Following the peace treaty of 1995 and a period of relative calm, fighting broke out in 1999 in Kosovo as it too sought independence from Serbian rule. Whilst the crises in BiH, Croatia, Slovenia and then in Kosovo appear and are often referenced as two separate wars, they were in fact distinct phases of one bigger conflict over the future of post-Communist Yugoslavia and Serbian dominance. The war in Kosovo was no less brutal than its predecessor and was to claim some 10,000 lives, including an officer and soldier from QGE. The conflict in Kosovo also brought NATO back to war, raised questions over the place of Russia on the international stage and triggered a debate in the UN that was to change the rules concerning the use of violence in international relations (UN, 2020). Most importantly, perhaps, the war in Kosovo brought about the end of Milošević's rule in Serbia and his eventual arrest (Calvocoressi, 2009).

Background

Kosovo had never been a republic of Yugoslavia like BiH and Croatia but instead an *autonomous province* of Serbia. Populated mostly by Serbs until the encroachment of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th Century, Kosovo was to remain an important factor in Serbian history and identity. Despite that, by the time the crisis began, the ethnicity of Kosovo was 90% Albanian.

Kosovo was outside of the terms of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) and re-elected in 1997, Slobodan Milošević sought to address the ethnic balance by triggering oppressive treatment of the Albanian population of Kosovo in early 1998.



Fearing a return to the ferocity and brutality of the Bosnian War, the International community were this time much quicker to react and the UN sponsored talks between the Serbian and Kosovan leaders. But the peace that brought was short-lived, as Milošević, goaded by attacks by the newly formed Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA) on Serbian officials, instigated more atrocities by Serbs in September 1998, forcing thousands of Albanians to flee their homes and start a refugee crisis. A ceasefire was brokered and a peace-monitoring mission by 2,000 unarmed monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were deployed.

The ensuing peace was very short-lived. In December 1998, evidence of a massacre of 45 Albanians in the village of Racak was discovered in the south-eastern quarter of Kosovo (Economist, Kosovo on the Brink Again, 1999), which in turn sparked international outrage and a build-up of NATO air and land forces in the Adriatic began. Attempts to negotiate a mutually acceptable peace failed and, in an attempt to force Milošević to end the violence, NATO launched air attacks on Serbia on 24 March 1999, under 'Operation ALLIED FORCE'. The air attacks failed and rather than backing down Milošević commenced another round of ethnic cleansing to drive the Albanians out: some 500,000 refugees escaped to Albania and 100,000 south to Macedonia. Largely successful in his bid to depopulate Kosovo of the Albanians, the NATO air campaign's effects on the Serbian population and economy, combined with the possibility of NATO land operations, and his own indictment for war crimes by the UN on 27 May 1999,

lead Milošević to seek a deal (Byman & Waxman, 2011). Following negotiations, the Serbian Army began to leave on 10 June and the first of NATO's peace-keeping force, KFOR, entered Kosovo on the 12th, as did the Russian Army who took up position on the strategically important airfield next to the capital, Pristina. By 20 June 1999, the Serbian withdrawal was complete and KFOR firmly established and at full strength amounted to 50,000 personnel (Kent & Young, 2004).

Interestingly, Russia agreed its troops in Kosovo would work under NATO command, something that would have been quite unimaginable 10 years prior (NATO, NATO's Role in relation to the conflict in Kosovo, 1999).

The resulting agreement left Kosovo a part of Serbia with no definite plans for an independence referendum in sight but at least the slaughter had ended. Kosovo eventually gained independence in 2008 but Serbia, Russia and five other EU states are yet to formally recognise it (Economist, Albin Kurti's New Start in Kosovo, 2020). QGE was to deploy three times to Kosovo, in support of Operation ALLIED FORCE (with the UK element called Op AGRICOLA) in 1999 and again in 2000/01, and finally as part of the stabilisation force under Op VALERO in 2008.

QGE on Op AGRICOLA 1 - 1999

Preparation.

In 1999, 36 Engineer Regiment provided General Engineer Support to the 3rd (UK) Division and 5 Airborne Brigade (which re-formed as 16 Air Assault Brigade later that year). Whilst 36 Engineer Regiment was earmarked to support 5 Airborne Brigade, 69 Squadron was not originally part of the Order of Battle (ORBAT). That changed when the 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles (1RGR) was added to the Brigade deployment and it was calculated another Engineer sub-unit would be required to deliver the necessary close support engineering, and what better cap-badge to do that

than QGE. The Squadron was at the time on exercise in Weymouth, with a Troop supporting 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment (1 R IRISH) on an exercise on Salisbury Plain. The training continued but now with a much more focused, pre-deployment edge. Once 1RGR had moved down from Scotland, Gurkhas carried out Pre-Deployment Training together and Cpl (later Capt) Tarabahdur Pun, a Section Commander in G Troop at the time, remembers how 'training with fellow Gurkhas made it all



easier.’ The training focus then shifted to the Royal School of Military Engineering (RSME) at Chatham for Artisan refresher training although Op AGRICOLA 1 was to become primarily a combat, not construction, engineer deployment. There was no doubt, however, the working relationships built up over this hectic period were to come in very useful when deployed.

The Squadron eventually deployed after a couple more days of training with 1 RGR from Church Crookham via Birmingham Airport to Skopje in what was then known as the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), now known as Northern Macedonia. Moved from there to the woods of Petrovac training area, where the Squadron found itself living under ponchos in what was already starting to feel very much like a fully airborne operation. Sgt (later Major) Devkumar Gurung was the Operations Sergeant and remembers how the Squadron ‘at that point had nothing, we were just “bivvied up” in the woods and the OC was in endless O Gps as we all started to work out what we were going to be doing in the next few days’.

An Exciting Day.

D-Day approached and the negotiated entry into Kosovo by NATO troops was about to begin. Unexpectedly, on 11 June, a Russian convoy was observed driving into Kosovo from the north, headed towards Kosovo’s only airport at Pristina. The mission for 5 Airborne Brigade was suddenly changing from one of a peaceful relief in place of the Serbian Army and paramilitaries to a potential fight for control of the airfield. The prospect of real combat with the Russian Army, to seize what might be an occupied airfield, loomed large. The impact of which on European stability and peace were all too apparent.

‘Suddenly,’ remembered Capt (later Lt Col) Roger Fawcus, the Squadron Second in Command at the time, ‘we were faced with the prospect of a full-on fight with the Russians and we had nothing in terms of proper kit for this sort of thing. We simply sat in baking sunshine in a field all day, waiting for the helicopters to come and pick us up, into what might be the start of World War Three. At one point a Light Wheeled Tractor came around with its bucket full of ammunition and we all just filled our pockets and pouches with as many live rounds and grenades as we could carry. There was no QM present to get us to sign for anything: it was a free for all.

RE HQ Mess in Chatham). ‘We landed on the bridge, as that was thought to be the safest for us and the helicopters from any booby traps,’ said Cpl Pun, the senior Section Commander. ‘The bridge was next to a big tunnel and we had to clear it all, it was all pretty clear and whilst we found some ammunition boxes, none of them were found to be booby-trapped. We just got into a routine of two Sappers up front with trip-wire feelers, I then followed about 5 metres behind them, with the rest of the Section following behind me. 1 RGR provided our local security so we could focus on the job. We were not allowed to go far from the road’s edge, which made

¹ One Capt (later Lt Col Chris Warhurst) who was to go on to be a Deputy Commandant of QGE.

any down time tricky. Although I did meet my brother, who was a Vehicle Mechanic in 1 RGR – we were literally brothers in arms that day.’

It was a necessarily slow job and the Gurkhas were surprised when the Brigadier commanding 5 Airborne Brigade shot past in his vehicle, unable to wait in his hurry to get to Pristina airport, hotly pursued by what looked like the World’s press. Despite them clearing the tarmacked road, 1 Troop carried on as planned to clear the verges, taking 2 days to complete the job. This painstaking and potentially dangerous work was carried out in the full glare of the international media, with the Gurkhas feeding and sleeping on cleared ground next to the road as they went, just feet from the heavy convoys that were starting to make their way up to Pristina. Fortunately, nothing was found.

Once through the defile, the Squadron moved to the town of Lipjan to set up close to 1 R IRISH Battle Group Headquarters. The Squadron was given a dis-used chicken farm to live in and although it was a ready supply of fresh eggs, the site was filthy and the Sqn were only too pleased five weeks later to be relocated to a paper recycling mill in Lipjan town. The sections took a long time to clear the site and the 1RGR and 1 R IRISH harbour areas for any booby traps but none were found. Starting to make a home for themselves, with no building materials of their own, the Squadron used what it could find, including items located by the Battlegroup Engineer of 2 PARA¹; the trouble was no one had asked whether these building materials could be used, ‘which upset the locals a bit,’ remembers Sgt Devkumar Gurung.

The Longest, Longest Day – 21 June.

The local population were very quick in reporting a wealth of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), all of which needed to be marked and eventually destroyed or made safe and it was in this role that tragedy struck 69 Squadron on 21 June, which Capt Fawcus still remembers as his ‘longest, longest day.’ Lt Gareth Evans and Sgt².Balam Rai, of G Tp, were tasked to respond to a report of UXO near a school in the western part of the Squadron Area of Operations. Taking the decision to move some bomblets so they could be blown up, one of the bomblets detonated, which caused an explosion which killed both Lt Evans and Sgt Rai outright. As this incident took place, an unconnected mine-strike was reported nearby. ‘We didn’t know what was going on,’ said Capt Fawcus. ‘Gareth’s driver was in shock and trying to report back to us what had happened over the radio but this was coming in at the same time as reports of the other mine-strike. The situation was utterly confusing. Eventually, the news come in that two of our people were dead. The Gurkhas wanted to know exactly what had gone on but we could only tell them what we knew, which initially wasn’t very much.

‘The pre-deployment training had not covered how to deal with operational deaths and so SHQ tried to follow the

² Balam Rai was a Sgt on the day he was killed but selected for promotion to SSgt. People have frequently and understandably honoured him as a SSgt ever since.





Lt Gareth Evans and Sgr Balaram Rai

truck, held on one-minute's notice to move from SHQ. They were called out many times, but the fires were very small and QGE's Fire Brigade soon got frustrated at how their time was being wasted on what they saw as a bit of a waste of a Sapper's skills.

On their first operational deployment, a Finnish Battalion had deployed with the NATO force and 69 Squadron were tasked to provide their Engineer support. Totally new to military operations, their CO invited SHQ 69 Sqn to a memorable dinner to discuss the working and living routines which ended in classic Finnish style, involving a sauna. The tour certainly had an international edge to it - the Squadron was not only to work with Finns but also with Norwegian, Canadian, French and Dutch soldiers, working amongst a population of Kosovans, Serbs and the occasional Croat.

doctrinal procedures but found them written for a war-fighting, not peace support, setting and so we had to develop how to deal with the deaths as appropriately we could. These were, after all, the first operational deaths in QGE since 1982.'

The Squadron could not help but turn inward for a short spell after the incident, Supported by the R IRISH Chaplain who, although a Christian, was respected as a man of God who found the words to help the Gurkhas come to terms with the tragedy. Cpl Pun remembers how the Troop spent a long time talking about how they would cope with their Tp Comd and Sgt dead. The situation was made in many ways worse because the Squadron was not allowed to relay to their families what had happened until Sgt Rai's mother had been formally notified in her home in Dharan, which took two excruciating days. The families of officers and soldiers alike had all heard on the news of how two members of the Squadron had been killed but had no idea if it was their husband, son or father involved. The waiting period was unbearably tense, amplifying the pain and concern. Eventually the embargo was lifted, the news released in detail and the dead put into coffins for what was to be a moving repatriation ceremony, bringing the immediate grieving to a close so the Squadron could brace itself for the work to come

Subsequent Tasks and Return.

The job of marking UXO continued but the Squadron was of course much more wary but the focus of the effort switched noticeably from clearance to General Support Engineering, building sangars for the deployed force in their new bases and hardening Operations Rooms, as well as providing life support where they could, such as fitting wash basins and showers. The Squadron also built the Brigade Water Point before redeploying to Gloglovac to build another, smaller, water point for the small hospital, working with Non-Government Organisation (NGO) staff from Oxfam. Cpl Pun secured the support of a local lad, who acted as his interpreter, and kept the local population happy using two of his Sappers who were QGE Pipers with musical renditions.

The Squadron also provided a make-shift fire brigade for the town of Lipjan, with a water-bowser towed behind a 4-ton

Shortly after the death of Lt Evans and Sgt Rai, Cpl Pun returned to the UK for 2 weeks R&R, although some of the Sqn only got as far as Macedonia for theirs. He was informed whilst on leave that he had been selected for promotion to Sgt and was already wearing the new rank slide when he returned to Kosovo to be employed as the Local Purchase Officer, with Sapper (later Capt) Ashok as his driver. One of Sgt Pun's early responsibilities was to support the building of a 45m Logistic Support Bridge near Pristina, leading aggregate convoys up from Macedonia. When opened by the Commander of HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), Lieutenant General Jackson, the bridge was formally named the Evans/ Balaram Rai Bridge.

There were a number of other, smaller, engineering tasks with the geographic focus of effort moving from Lipan to Pristina, which was to become the long-term concentration for follow-on forces were to be located to continue the stabilisation effort. In all, 69 Squadron worked to 5 Airborne Brigade, 4 Armoured Brigade and 19 Mechanised Brigade, under the command of 36, 21 and 38 Engineer Regiments respectively, supporting 1 R IRISH, 1 PARA, 2 PARA and 1 RGR. One unusual task was given to Sgt Devkumar Gurung, deployed to the main shopping mall in the capital, Pristina, supported by Sappers from 9 (Para) Squadron RE, to build security works like knife-rest barriers, in preparation for a Very Very Important Person (VVIP) visitor. The VVIP turned out to be the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who gave an address to the crowd there and later took the time to thank the Engineer task commander in person. Not a bad way to end your first ever operational tour!



Before long, the security situation in Kosovo stabilised enough for 5 Airborne Brigade to be released and returned home. With



their supporting units starting to pack up and return to the UK, 69 Squadron recovered back to Maidstone, job done but missing two valued comrades, whose deaths were to shadow the recollection of this operation by all involved (69 Gurkha Fd Sqn, 2000).



Welcome Home Party for 69 Sqn



The Chippie Shop

Busy though this newly-reformed and deployed Squadron was, there was still time to celebrate Dashain, with one of the chief Kalaratri guests being Colonel Caws (at the time Commander Royal Engineers, 3rd (UK) Division) who was able to return to QGE after a 17 year gap. The Squadron also celebrated the Regimental Birthday and Tihar in style, bringing that Gurkha flair to a biting Balkan autumn and winter.

QGE on Op AGRICOLA 4 – 2000/01

Having reformed in July 2000, 70 Squadron was quickly deployed to Kosovo on Op AGRICOLA 4 in its new role as a Field Support Squadron, commanded by Major Jim Crawford. Supporting 26 Engineer Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Lemay), this was another opportunity for QGE to demonstrate how it could deploy to support other engineer units besides 36 Engineer Regiment. The Squadron tasks were varied but very much represented the new kind of capabilities QGE could now provide. After pre-deployment training and Balkan driver training, interrupted with a reformation parade, the Squadron deployed with Support Troop (Lieutenant (QGO) Dhan Chand) constructing some 15Km of MLC 25 roads that would connect a series of villages populated mostly by Serbian minorities to the southwest of the capital, Pristina, costing some £1.2M. The programme was aimed at supporting local community interaction and it was soon clear how the Serbs choosing to remain living in Kosovo really did appreciate the efforts of the Gurkhas. Support Troop was also to make itself popular when, after far heavier snowfall than was expected hit late in the year, plant was used to provide Snow and Ice Clearance (SNIC), working 24 hours a day to keep the Main Supply Routes around Pristina open. The Troop also carried out the ground preparation works for what was to become a temporary camp.

The Commandant also visited, accompanied by the GM and RSM, to confirm the Squadron as fully re-formed and operational, as well as to conduct a memorial ceremony for Lieutenant Evans and Sgt Rai at a specially constructed cairn built by 70 Squadron.



At another ceremony, Corporal Ram Ramjali and Lance Corporal Suryabikram Rai were awarded United Nations Commendation Certificates for their work in repairing the refrigeration units at the temporary forensic mortuary (70 Gur Fd Sqn, 2001).

Resources and Workshops Troop (Captain Tim Lee) provided Engineer Logistic Support to the deployed Engineer Regiment Group. This involved not only the maintenance and repair of all the Engineer Construction Plant in theatre and the sourcing and managing of construction materiel but also - reminiscent of the days of QGE workshops in Malaya and Hong Kong - manufacturing pre-fabricated sangars for subsequent construction across the British Brigade's area of operations and dog kennels, repairing Christchurch bridging cribs, preparing pre-formed concrete reinforcement and seemingly everything in between. The Squadron also trained and deployed a High-Risk Search Team, using specialised equipment, to hunt for unexploded ordnance.

In a year of rapid development and change for the officers and soldiers of a Squadron that was not to reach full strength until well after its return from Kosovo, the build up to and deployment on Op AGRICOLA 4 stands out as a moment of intense organisational pressure and the need to quickly become experts in many new subjects. This demanded a great deal of adaptability from Gurkhas who had been much more used to providing Close and General Support Engineering since the closure of Hong Kong. Great pressure was applied to all involved, which was met with good humour and perseverance. Crucially, this deployment meant 70 Squadron had a real taste of life as a deployed Engineer Logistic Squadron, skills that would be tested to the full in less than 2 years' time on Op TELIC.

QGE on Op VALERO - 2008



QGE was not to return to Kosovo for seven years, with 70 Squadron returning to support 2nd Battalion, The Rifles (2 RIFLES) from May to July 2008 as an impromptu Spearhead Land Element (SLE) deployment. Political tension increased in Kosovo, having been mostly at peace since 1999, as the move towards Kosovan independence gained momentum and the security situation deteriorated noticeably. Deploying to the very north of Kosovo, closest to the border with Serbia proper - and where Serbian and Kosovan relations were stretched most - the Squadron's pre-deployment training was spent in preparing mostly for Public Order operations. The OC, Maj Giles McCallum, deployed to support Battle Group Headquarters, with the remaining 34 deployed personnel, commanded by Capt (later Major) Bishnu Ghale providing Engineer Support to Public Order operations.



Op VALERO pre-deployment training

On arrival in theatre, the Kosovan situation was already stabilising and was more benign than originally expected. Held on notice to move for Public Order operations, the Troop, instead of sitting idle, focused effort on Civil/ Military Cooperation (CIMIC): bolstering relations with the local population to help support the desire for a peaceful political transition of Kosovan sovereignty. The CIMIC effort started with the refurbishment of a bridge connecting a monastery to its local community. The Devic Bridge had deteriorated over time and, with promises of financial support from the French Government (this sector of Kosovo was under French control for security), 70 Squadron dismantled the old bridge, improved the culverts, and then re-built it under increasing time pressure: The likelihood of returning to the UK earlier than planned was now being arranged. Other tasks carried out by the Troop were a refurbishment of a clinic in Plemintina and a repair of the water mill drainage system at Banyan.



The Devic Bridge

Before the Gurkhas knew it, and with the security situation in Kosovo calming significantly, it was time to return home. Adding way more value to the deployment than originally conceived, Capt Bishnu Ghale was awarded the Joint Commander's Commendation to honour the work of an industrious officer and his soldiers (QGE, 2009).

ST CYRUS: HOW GURKHAS BUILT A BRIDGE FULLED BY TOM AND JERRY, JAMES BOND AND SPICY CHICKEN

Scott Begbie and DC Thomson

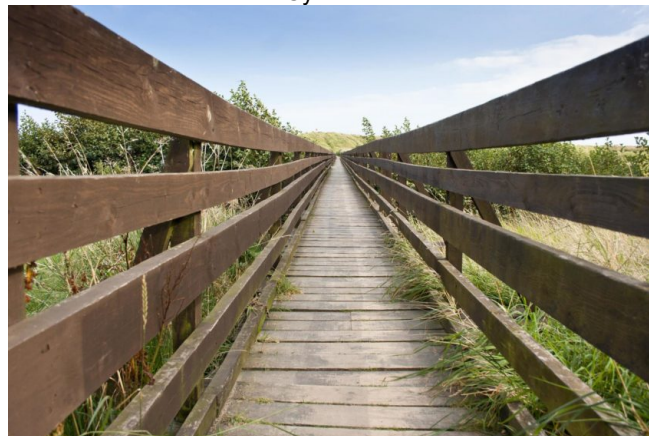
(Editor's Comment. The following article featured in the Press and Journal on 28 January 2021 and was seen by an eagle eyed Association member. Having contacted the author Scott Begbie, he gave permission for the article to be reproduced and asked that DC Thomson was also credited.

I got in touch with Maj (Ret'd) Haribahadur Thapa who was the Tp QGO at the time and he has shared some of his memories and photos at the end of this article)

Today, St Cyrus National Nature Reserve is an oasis of calm, the sound of the wind sighing through dune grass and wildflower, the lapping of waves on sand, interrupted only by the cries of myriad birds that call it home. But 35 years ago, this tranquil spot was alive to the sawing of stone, the hammering of nails, the sound of wooden stakes being pile-driven into the ground and the banter and commands of a squadron of Gurkha engineers.

This was 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, hard at work building a wooden bridge across an old salt marsh, creating a vital link between the reserve and the beach. It is a vital structure that has stood the test of time, still in use since it was finished in 1985 – a testament to the tireless engineers who built it.

At the time of its construction, the Gurkhas created quite a stir on the reserve, said Ewen Cameron, who was then the nature reserve warden for the St Cyrus site.



The 350-foot long Gurkha bridge built by Gurkhas in 1985 as a training exercise at St Cyrus



They liked James Bond films



“The atmosphere on the reserve when they were here was fantastic, they were great guys,” he said, adding there were 25 to 30 Gurkhas involved. “One of the things I liked about them was that they had a TV and video player and they liked to watch videos – and they liked to watch Tom and Jerry cartoons and they liked James Bond film. I used to take them round different videos, but that was always their favourite.” Ewen was also invited

to join them for lunch a couple of times, with the Gurkhas being one of the few elements of the British Army who didn't live on field rations on deployment, but were always provided with fresh produce to cook with.

“The first time they had some chicken and salad and I thought: ‘Oh, that looks grand’ and took a big mouthful. But when they chopped up the whole chickens, they never took the bones out, so I ended up chewing on bits of bone and goodness knows what else and some pretty hot spicy peppers. “But they were fantastic guys, and so good-humoured.”

The presence of the Gurkha troop at the St Cyrus National Nature Reserve came about as a happy marriage between the need for a bridge at the reserve and the willingness of the British Army to reach out to help communities, said Ewen, who retired about four years ago.



The Gurkhas ready for action at St Cyrus

Dodgy, old, rickety bridge

Around that time the army had a thing called Opmac, which stood for Operation Military Aid to the Civil Community,” said Ewen, adding its successor scheme Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) is now helping with the UK's coronavirus rollout.

“It is good PR for the Army, but also a good training exercise. Over the years, the Nature Conservancy Council had a number of projects at nature reserves done through this Opmac scheme. “The chief warden for the north-east of Scotland at the time, Dick Balharry – who was one of the most amazing people I have across in my life – had good contacts with the Opmac scheme and that's how the Gurkhas ended up at St Cyrus.”

Ewen said that much of what is now dry ground was at the time the old salt marsh area at the reserve. It meant a long detour for people who had visited the reserve to get out on to the beach. He said: “There was a very dodgy, rickety old bridge that the salmon fishermen used to get to their nets when they were based at the Kirkside, which was the Tay Salmon Company's station for St Cyrus. Members of the public were using it, but it wasn't safe and the company were getting anxious about it.

“It was decided it would be a good idea to put in a proper, sound footbridge. The district council would pay for it and bought the materials, the Tay Salmon Company provided the site, and we provided the Gurkhas.”



The bridge over the salt marsh at St Cyrus National Nature Reserve takes shape in 1985, courtesy of Gurkha engineers

Army are strong on brute force

Ewen said the 69 Gurkha Field Squadron – who have over the years played a role in relief efforts such as rebuilding work after the landslips that hit villages in Nepal – camped on the ground where there is now a visitor centre and office. They also used the old lifeboat station as their mess hall and recreation area.

“When they arrived, we used the lifeboat station to store a big caravan for a seasonal warden to use in the summertime to be on site. I said we needed to get the caravan out, which was big and long and had to be carefully manoeuvred out of there. But the Army – and I don't mean this in a rude way – are quite strong on brute force. So the lieutenant in charge, a guy called Hari Thapa, told his soldiers and they were straight in, grabbed this caravan and hauled it out, scraping bits off it.”

The Gurkha troop was endlessly inventive when it came to building the bridge, including digging in the big uprights to support the bridge, said Ewen who took the photographs of the work in progress which you see here.

“That was quite hard work and I went down one day and they had improvised a pile driver. They had a stone saw and they cut out big blocks of stone from a rocky outcrop. They suspended these from a rope and pulley and that was their pile driver,” he said.





The improvised pile driver, dreamed up by the Gurkhas

“If you think about it, nowadays that work would all be done by hydraulic equipment and diesel power. But it was pretty much all built by hand.”

After being hard at work for two or three months, the new structure, which quickly became called the Gurkha Bridge, was officially opened on May 22 1985, by Kincardine and Deeside District Council convener Donald McKenzie.

Led over by a piper

Fittingly, he used a traditional Gurkha blade, the kukri, to cut the ribbon as he declared it open. He was marched across the bridge and back led by a piper.

As a thank you to the Gurkhas, they were given a tour of the north-east, including Balmoral Castle, Glen Muick Nature Reserve and Lochnagar Distillery.



Kincardine and Deeside District Council convener Donald McKenzie uses a kukri to declare the bridge open

The Gurkha Bridge was an invaluable asset for St Cyrus Nature Reserve ... and still is today at a time when, pre-Covid, it was attracting about 150,000 visitors a year to this oasis of precious wildlife and natural beauty, operated under the auspices of NatureScot, Scotland’s nature agency.

Therese Alampo, the St Cyrus nature reserve manager today, said: “The bridge is the main access to the beach. It’s not just to get people across this soggy area, it really does protect the rest of the reserve from people just splaying out.”



Driftwood on the beach at the St Cyrus Nature Reserve... the bridge was a link to the sands

Showing signs of age now

But now the Gurkha Bridge is in need of some attention, with the passage of time taking its toll and while still safe needs work. While the pilings which the Gurkhas so expertly and firmly placed are still as sound as ever, the soft wood aspects of the bridge are wearing.

“The bridge is showing real signs of its age now,” said Therese. “It would be wonderful to get the Gurkhas back as we have had an inspection done and we do need to future proof and we do need a new bridge, which will be very costly. The area does still flood from time to time and it’s still wet. But we need it to protect the reserve.”

Therese said exactly how the bridge will be reworked and paid is in the very early stages.



The bridge as it looked in 2014

“But if there is anybody reading this who has a similar scheme for people to do it for us, like the Gurkhas, that would be wonderful. We do have a tradition of people helping us out.”

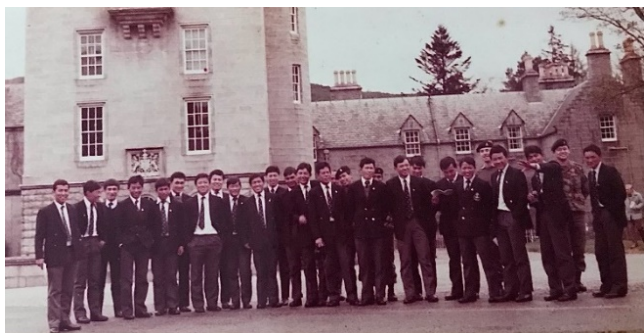
Maj Haribahadur Thapa remembers the following:

“36 years ago G Troop was deployed on Ex Famous-Grouse to St Cyrus Nature Reserve, Scotland on 10 April 1985 to construct a 350 foot bridge. The task was challenging due to having to take into account the tides. During the pile driving we had to wait for low tide. First we found pile driving a bit difficult, but later we found the magic of improvised pile driving and all went very well. All credit goes to my troop SSgt (Capt



(Ret'd) Man Bahadur Gurung). When we finished pile driving all our tasks were easy and not hampered by high tide. It was a good task for a troop.

Our boys gained lots of experiences from the project. We completed the project on 30 May 1985 and returned to Kitchener Barracks on 4 June 1985. During our project we had an opportunity to visit Balmoral Castle and the Malt Whiskey Trail. The Whiskey Trail was a good fun for our boys, especially whiskey tasting; even teetotalers tried!



Visit to Malt Whiskey distillery Lochnagar

During the project lots of visitors came praised our work. The St Cyrus Nature Reserve Warden, Mr Ewen Cameron, was very helpful and friendly; we enjoyed working with him during the project.



Visitors: CO Lt Col PW Cook and Memsahab, OC 69 SQN Maj Anderson and G/ Capt Hukumraj Thapa. Young lady in the centre was a "little Turn bird" researcher

GURKHA ENGINEERS, THE QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS AND ROYAL ENGINEERS INSIGNIA

Maj (Ret'd) Judbahadur Gurung

Cap Badge



The cap badge above was then authorised after the Gurkha Engineers were formed by the Royal Warrant, as part of the Brigade of Gurkhas, on 28 September 1955 and hence why this day is celebrated as the Regimental Birthday. This badge is worn to this day



On 21 April 1977, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved the Title of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers. However, the previous cap badge was retained to this day, but this new badge was used on notepaper, cards and other official documents for QGE.

The Monogram or Cypher



However, the Monogram or Cypher as shown above is used on notepaper, cards and other official documents for the Royal Engineers.

Royal Engineer Grenade



The grenade first appeared on Royal Engineers uniform in 1824 when it was worn on the tail of an Officer's full dress coat. In 1825 a brass grenade was introduced for other ranks of the Royal Sappers and Miners. Later the grenade came to be worn on the epaulet and then the collar. In 1922 the '9 flamed' grenade was authorised (whilst the Royal Artillery grenade only has 7).

PATRON SAINT

The Patron Saint of the Royal Engineers is Saint Barbara. Saint Barbara lived during the mid-third century and is the Patron Saint because of her old legend association with lightning and mathematics.



Her story consists of her being carefully protected by her father who kept her locked in a tower in order to preserve her from the outside world. Barbara then becomes a Christian in secret. When her father found this information, he took upon his sword to kill her but her prayers created an opening in which she was transported to a mountain gorge where two shepherds watched their flocks. Her father pursued her, was rebuffed by the first shepherd and then betrayed by the second who turned to stone and his flock turned to locusts. Her father tortured her. However, because she kept true to her faith each night her wounds healed, and the flames set to burn her would extinguish when they came near her. Her father then sentenced her to death to be carried out by him. However, after the beheading as punishment he was struck by a lightning and his body consumed by flames. Saint Barbara's tomb then became a site for more miracles.

Saint Barbara became the Patron Saint of Artillerymen. She is also traditionally the Patron of Armourers, Military Engineers, Gunsmiths, Miners and anyone else who worked with cannon and explosives. She is the Patron Saint of the Italian Navy also. Saint Barbara's day is also celebrated by many other military units including the Royal Artillery and RAF armourers and also many sections of the Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, Irish and Norwegian armies that deal with explosives. She is also the Patron Saint of the US Navy and Marine Corps Aviation Ordnance men.

SEARCH FOR A PAINTING

David Corsellis

During our tour in Hong Kong, my wife Jane painted a large picture of the Pipes and Drums playing on the hillside above Perowne Barracks which I last saw quite a few years ago in the Mess at Gordon Barracks. We wondered whether it had survived all the various moves of QGE?

She also painted a portrait for the QGOs' Mess of the then Gurkha Major, Kesabhadur Limbu, (who was going on pension and was determined to take it with him - he was dissuaded by my G Captain, Embahadur) and portraits of Captain Bhimbahadur who was a Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer and General Bill Jackson.

If anyone could find out what happened to them or perhaps better put me in touch with someone who might know where they are we would be most interested.

(Editor's Comment. Two of the paintings mentioned above still hang in the Officers' Mess; that of General Jackson and Capt Bhimbahadur. The one of the Pipes and Drums is on the books of the RE HQ Mess in Chatham, and is currently on loan to a senior officer of the Regiment. All 3 are reproduced below. The only one that has yet not been tracked down is that of Kesabhadur Limbu)



A CHALLENGE IN HONOUR OF MARTIN GILLOTT

Having grown up around the army – his father, Peter, served with the Royal Hussars for 33 years – Captain Martin Gillott started his own military career in December 1987, boarding a plane bound for Hong Kong to join his own regiment, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers where he served first as A Tp Comd, 67 Sqn and later as 2IC 67 Sqn. During his military career Martin operated in Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Borneo and Brunei where he spent time helping those in need, including providing a supply of clean water to rural villages in communities with either no access of their own, or water which was unsafe.

In 1995, Martin joined a four-man team to take part in Hong Kong's most demanding race, the 100km MacLehose Trail. The infamous Gurkha training route sought to test endurance and teamwork and was the exercise that Trailwalker UK was founded on!

'Sadly, Martin was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer in July 2020. In typical stoic fashion, following his diagnosis, Martin set himself the challenge to run from Lands' End to John O'Groats. He had hoped to achieve the challenge in a month, which would mean tackling 30 miles a day – all of this despite the fact that his cancer had already spread from his pancreas to his liver. Tragically, Martin passed away in October last year, before he was able to take on his incredible challenge. Martin was a great supporter of the Gurkhas, and his close family and friends are keen to continue that legacy.





An extraordinary tribute to an extraordinary man

'Martin Gillott was a historian, a philosopher, a poet, an artist, a joker, an entertainer, a loyal friend and first rate soldier.'

The Challenge

The LEJOG team is led by Martin's wife, Miranda, and close friends, Guy Henshaw (2IC 68 Sqn), Roger Owens (Regtl Ops Offr) and David Bill (not the Gen, Tp Comd, 68 Sqn) and is formed of several of Martin and Miranda's closest friends. Respecting Martin's original challenge, the team will be setting off on Sunday 12 September from Lands' End and cycling over 1,000 miles before ending their extraordinary efforts in John O'Groats on Sunday 26 September.

Supporting the Work of the GWS

Funds from this epic journey will be raised to help rebuild Shree Bhagwati Higher Secondary School in Nepal, which sustained considerable damage in the devastating earthquakes of 2015. This rebuild will not only provide a safe working environment for staff and students but also improve access to education and in turn offer a better future to Nepali children. By naming a school building in Martin's honour, we want to honour his legacy – a Gurkha to the end, with a passion for helping others

Help the GWS raise £2 with every £1 you donate

If you would like to support the team in their efforts, and donate towards the building of Shree Bhagwati, your donations will be doubled. A generous donor has agreed to match-fund donations to The Gurkha Welfare Trust through this appeal, up to the value of £40k. Meaning that your support can go even further.

<https://www.gwt.org.uk/news/lejog/>

A JOURNEY TO BURMA (MYANMAR)

Reproduced with kind permission of Brig (Ret'd) Ian McGill who wrote the article prior to the recent military coup.

I visited Burma (now Myanmar) earlier this year to honour my father's eldest brother (Malcolm) who was killed near Imphal, close to the Indian border, during the Second World War while serving with the Gurkhas. He was the eldest of four brothers who all fought in different campaigns, but he was the only one who sadly died. My father was wounded in Italy and the younger two remained unscathed. VE Day 75 was celebrated on 8th May this year, but the war in Burma against the

Japanese continued for a further 3 months until mid August 1945. The achievements of the "Forgotten 14th Army" during the Second World War were extraordinary and will hopefully always be remembered. This article gives a brief overview of just some of the events during that campaign and includes a personal story about my uncle. There were many other battles and events which are not mentioned here.



A view of just some of the pagodas at Bagan

The Pagan Dynasty from 850 AD for some 400 years was the first kingdom to unify much of the country and Bagan became a hub for Buddhism where thousands of temples were built. After defeat by the Mongols in 1249 the country suffered from considerable turmoil and strife through the next six centuries. The British gained control of the country in 1885 after three Anglo-Burmese Wars. Colonial rule thereafter brought in a large India population as civil servants but no amount of dedicated administration, as described in some of Rudyard Kipling's stories about India, could alter the fact that grafting Burma on to India was repugnant to Burmese nationalism. After decades being part of India it became an autonomous colony of the British Empire in 1937 with its own parliament, but it is not surprising that a number of Burmese joined the Japanese to drive out the British in 1942. They ended up switching to the Allies near the end of the war once the tide turned.

The Japanese overran the country in a lightning offensive that began shortly after the surprise attack at Pearl Harbour. British forces were unprepared and the Japanese captured Moulmein on the 31st January 1942 before then heading north. During their relentless advance their ruthlessness, brutal professionalism and savagery shocked those accustomed to codes of military conduct. Their ferocity of onslaught, fanaticism, willingness to die for their Emperor and their belief in Japanese superiority gave them a psychological advantage over the British and Allied troops. Their offensive soon forced the 17th Indian Division to withdraw to the River Sittang. The railway bridge here was demolished on 23rd February 1942 when two of the three brigades of 17 Division were still on the eastern bank. Many of those trapped on the wrong side eventually managed to swim or ford across but they lost much of their heavy equipment (artillery, vehicles



and ammunition) and the Division was severely weakened. Although it managed to extricate itself there was no hope of saving Rangoon and the British were forced to begin a long retreat to India.



The demolished Sittang Bridge, looking south. The new replacement bridge is in the background

There followed a regrouping of units and the 1st Burma Corps was formed in March 1942, with General Bill Slim appointed to command its two British infantry divisions and one armoured brigade. He led the fighting withdrawal of his Corps back to India in very difficult circumstances, with starving refugees, disorganised stragglers and the sick and wounded clogging the primitive roads and tracks.

The Allies mounted two operations during the 1942-43 dry season. The first was an unsuccessful offensive in Arakan and the second was the first Chindit long-range penetration behind Japanese front lines to damage the main north-south railway and other Japanese communication lines. The Chindits suffered heavy casualties but the operation proved that British and Indian soldiers could operate in the jungle effectively and helped restore morale among Allied troops. The Allied Army in Eastern India was reorganised and re-trained and General Slim became the commander of the 14th Army with two Corps under command, 4th and 33rd Corps. He greatly enhanced his army's effectiveness, with better integration of his infantry with tanks, gunners and engineers, much closer liaison with the air force, far better logistic support using aircraft and more imaginative tactics. He forged a sense of belief among his troops and made thorough preparations to drive the Japanese all the way back to Rangoon and out of Burma.

In a second Arakan offensive in February 1944 the Japanese 28th Army was heavily defeated at Ngakyedauk. The Japanese had used their usual encircling tactic to surround the 7th Indian Division, expecting that the division would try and break out when they would then be destroyed piecemeal. But this time, the division stood and fought, being resupplied by air, and it was the Japanese who were forced to retreat when their supplies ran out. They suffered heavily and it was the first significant change in fortune for the Allies. Soon afterwards the Japanese major offensive in central Burma started. They intended to capture Imphal and Kohima and then advance further into India. The road between Kohima and Imphal was cut on 29th March 1944 and the siege of Kohima lasted from 8th to 20th April. It took several more

weeks to clear the Kohima area before the road to Imphal was reopened on 22nd June. The Imphal and Kohima battles were extraordinarily brutal; the Japanese 15th Army attacked again and again with astonishing ferocity but eventually ran out of ammunition, food and equipment and ended up starving and exhausted. Their defeat was the turning point of the campaign.

Malcolm was killed near Imphal on 26th June 1944 by shrapnel from an artillery shell. Some weeks earlier he had been wounded in the left lung but had recovered. Extracts from a letter he wrote nine days before he died illustrate what he and others faced at that time. (Letter dated 17th June 44)



Pointing to Malcolm's name inscribed on one of the colonnades, one of 27,000 names. There are over 6,000 graves in the surrounding cemetery

" at midnight we were attacked in great force. A part of our perimeter was overrun, and the situation looked fairly grim. It was pitch dark and pouring with rain, and the general discomfort was not improved by the yelling and screaming of the Japs, who were vainly trying to broaden the bridgehead that they had secured. I managed to collect a spare platoon and an officer named Jim Moloney led them in a counter attack that ultimately succeeded in driving out the Japs, but poor Moloney was killed. Next morning our perimeter was a shambles. The Japs had withdrawn to the hills, but had left a number of "do

or die' snipers, who made life most uncomfortable for all of us throughout the day and we only succeeded in liquidating them after knocking down the bunkers and bunds behind which they were installed by using 2 pounder anti-tank guns and masses of grenades. The rain continued to fall in buckets and conditions became indescribable. Our bunkers were all completely flooded. I almost had to swim out of mine in the middle of the night and all my kit, fortunately very little, was completely destroyed or lost. All the graves which had been dug were uncovered by water and scores of corpses, in various stages of decomposition, floated into our area

The Japanese withdrew after the defeat, leaving many dead and dying along the way. They continued to fight fierce delaying engagements as the 14th Army followed up their retreat, driving them back across the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers, before continuing advancing south and almost all the way to Rangoon, while 15th Indian Corps (now under command of Allied Forces, South East Asia) captured Akyab on the coast and fought an amphibious campaign to reach Rangoon just before them. Plans were being made for the



final clearance of Japanese forces from Burma and Malaya, when the atom bombs dropped on Japan in August 1945 led to the Japanese surrender just over three months after the war in Europe finished.



The Ava Bridge at Mandalay over the Irrawaddy River soon after sunrise

The Burma Campaign could be summarised for the British and Allied troops who fought there in just four words: Retreat, Recovery, Renewal and Redemption. Slim's eventual victory perhaps helped the British, unlike the French, Dutch or, later, the Americans to leave Asia with some dignity.



The Taukkyan Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery and Memorial near Rangoon.

After the war, it was clear that the British could no longer hold on to Burma. The Nationalist Aung San steered Burma towards independence but was assassinated with six other of his cabinet ministers on 19th July 1947. Burma became independent on 4th January 1948 and then faced several years of near-anarchy. In 1988, serious conflicts occurred between pro-democracy demonstrators and the military dictatorship, resulting in thousands of deaths. The government formed the State Law and Restoration Council (later reconstituted in 1997 as the State Peace and Development Council), declared martial law and changed the country's name to Myanmar. Growing increasingly nervous about the charismatic Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Aung San and leader of the popular National League for Democracy (NLD), they placed her under house arrest and put off the democratic elections they had promised. Modern reforms eventually began to take place and a landmark was the 2015 elections where The NLD won a sweeping victory. Because she is married to a foreigner Aung San Suu Kyi was barred from becoming President but was instead appointed State Counsellor, and it is not clear just how much influence she has

over the generals. The country today faces many challenges and criticism from the outside world for its handling of the continuing clashes between ethnic minorities in the Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states. How it will eventually develop remains to be seen, but throughout my short, fascinating visit I was impressed by the peoples' self-reliance, humour, charm and grace.

*Ship me somewhere east of Suez,
where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments
an' a man can raise a thirst;
For the temple-bells are callin',
an' it's there that I would be –
By the old Moulmein Pagoda,
looking lazy at the sea;
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings
when we went to Mandalay!
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder
outer China 'cross the Bay!*

Rudyard Kipling



Sunset over the Salween River and Moulmein

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO.....

Sadly this year I have not been able to get time to research a former Gurkha base but next year I intend to cover Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Church Crookham. The one time home of HQ BG, the Language Wing and the UK based Gurkha Infantry Battalion. In carrying out initial research about the camp did you know the Guardroom was taken apart, moved and rebuilt and now can be found in the Aldershot Military Museum!



Ex QGE DEATHS 2019-21 as at 31 May 2021

Number	Rank	Name	Date of Death	Location
486311	HON MAJ	BHIMBAHADUR GHARTI	24 OCT 20	KATHMANDU
525600	CAPT	IMANHANG LIMBU	9 DEC 20	KATHMANDU
21131833	LCPL	RANBAHADUR RANA	15 JAN 20	BUTWAL
21131846	CPL	BHAKTABAHADUR GURUNG	7 NOV 20	POKHARA
21132202	SPR	SHRIKRISHNA GURUNG	3 FEB 21	KATHMANDU
21132295	LCPL	NUMBAHADUR GURUNG	15 JAN 20	POKHARA
21132619	WO1	SINGBAHADUR GURUNG	3 DEC 20	POKHARA
21132753	SPR	DALBAHADUR RAI	11 MAY 20	MORANG DIST
21132866	SPR	LALKAJI GURUNG	10 MAR 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21139337	SGT	JUMBAHADUR GURUNG	23 MAR 21	POKHARA
21139991	SGT	BALARAM RAI	5 JAN 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21140936	SSGT	PURNABAHADUR CHHETRI	10 MAY 21	DARJEELING
21141468	CPL	KHARKABAHADUR PUN	30 AUG20	BUTWAL
21141488	WO2	UDBAHADUR GURUNG	1 NOV 20	KATHMANDU
21141490	LCPL	DILBAHADUR GURUNG	7 FEB 21	TANAHU DIST
21145897	SGT	THAMANSING THAPA	7 MAY21	BUTWAL
21145904	SPR	BIRBAHADUR THAPA	2 MA 20	NEPALGUNJ
21147186	SGT	AGAMBAHADUR GURUNG	4 JAN 20	KATHMANDU
21148989	CPL	BHIMBAHADUR GURUNG	2 AUG 19	UNITED KINGDOM
21150023	SPR	TEKBAHADUR THAPA	12 JUL 20	POKHARA
21150074	SPR	BALBAHADUR RAI	29 OCT19	TBN
21150091	LCPL	BHARATI RAI	11 DEC19	DHARAN
21150118	SPR	TULBIR PUN	17 JAN 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21150299	CPL	HIRABAHADUR GURUNG	16 APR 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21151178	CPL	DEVIBAHADUR GURUNG	13 JAN 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21151198	CPL	HASTABIR GURUNG	15 APR 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21151212	SPR	DILIBAHADUR LIMBU	2 SEP 19	DHARAN
21151214	LCPL	LALBAHADUR LIMBU	15 FEB 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21151218	SPR	THAMANSING GURUNG	14 SEP 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21151241	SPR	PADMAKESAR RAI	23 SEP 20	BHOJPUR
21151254	LCPL	RELBABHADUR GURUNG	19 JAN 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21151290	SPR	ASHBAHADUR GURUNG	20 MAY 21	UNITED KINGDOM
21151511	CPL	GUPTABAHADUR GURUNG	28 SEP 19	POKHARA
21152488	SGT	BOMBAHADUR GURUNG	20 DEC 20	LAMJUNG
21152966	SSGT	BELBAHADUR GURUNG	6 FEB 21	POKHARA
21154292	SPR	MANBAHADUR CHHETRI	5 OCT20	UNITED KINGDOM
21154305	SSGT	PHULBAHADUR GURUNG	21 APR 20	CHITWAN
21154319	LCPL	MANBAHADUR RANA	5 AUG19	TBN
21155303	WO2	UTTAMBAHADUR THAPA	7 OCT 20	CHITWAN
21155933	CPL	PARSURAM RAI	20 MAY 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21157028	WO1	DHANBAHADUR GURUNG	15 OCT 20	POKHARA
21157683	SGT	KRISHNABAHADUR LIMBU	9 FEB 20	DHARAN
21157727	CPL	TILBAHADUR BURA	11 OCT 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21158668	CPL	KALIPRASAD MAGAR	26 FEB 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21158967	LCPL	PREMBAHADUR LIMBU	23 FEB 21	UNITED KINGDOM



21159894	CPL	SHERBAHADUR LIMBU	24 DEC 20	DHARAN
21162801	SPR	MADANKUMAR RAI	23 APR 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21164864	CPL	NIRBAHADUR GURUNG	14 MAR 21	CANADA
21165206	SPR	SHIVAKUMAR GURUNG	8 APR20	UNITED KINGDOM
21165414	LCPL	LAXMANPRASAD SHRESTHA	15APR 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21166464	LCPL	KRISHNABAHADUR GAHA	24 NOV 20	UNITED KINGDOM
21166492	SPR	KHAGENDRA LIMBU	20 MAY 21	KATHMANDU
21179082	SSGT	LALBAHADUR GURUNG	20 DEC 20	POKHARA
	CAPT	MIKE CALVERT	27 JAN 21	
	MAJOR	JAMES COFFEY	20 JUL 20	
	MAJ	FRANK CRONK	24 AUG 2018	
	MRS	MARGRET CROSS	13 AUG 20	
	MRS	ERICA ELDERKIN	23 JUL 2018.	
	CAPT	MARTIN GILLOT	FRI 1 OCT 20	
	MAJ	ANDY GOUCHER	23 MAR 21	
	MRS	HEATHER PERFECT		
	MR	EDWIN (EDDIE) VALLANCE		

Editor's Note The list covers two years as due to the pandemic it was not possible in 2020 to get a nominal role from the BG Records Office in Pokhara. Sadly I suspect there may be others not captured.

OBITUARIES

Compiled by Majors (Ret'd) Milanchandra Gurung MBE, Hukumraj Thapa and Surjabahadur Thapa MVO

Major QGO Bhimbahadur Thapa Gharti (1935 – 2020)



Bhimbahadur Saheb, passed away peacefully in Kathmandu on 24 Oct 20. He was born in 1935 in a village called Ishmapurkot in Gulmi, West Nepal. As was the aspiration of every young man back then he too dreamed of becoming a "British Lahure", and hence made his way to the Recruiting Depot and was enlisted as a Boy Soldier on 21 Jan 50 at BGRD Kunraghat.

After two and a half years he completing his training in the Boys' Company, Training Depot in Sungei Patani. Becoming a member of the Gurkha Engineers he travelled by train to Sungei Besi, Malaya, which at the time was the Headquarters the Regiment. He then attended Combat Engineer 3 training as part of No 4 Training Party after which he was posted to 67 Gurkha Field Squadron. During his time in the Field Squadron in the 50s and 60s, he was involved in the Malaya and Borneo Confrontations and was awarded the relevant campaign medals.

Bhim saheb, being an ex-boy soldier was ahead of, and better than most of his colleagues in those essential military skills such as leadership, fieldcraft, discipline and sports, as well as entertainment, and accordingly gained promotion relatively quickly. By the time he had reached the rank of WO2, he had attended all the necessary junior and senior military courses including Drill, Weapons Training, Heli Handler's Course, JWS, Regt Messing Officers' Course and Combat Engineer B1.

He was appointed SSM 67 Gurkha Field Squadron in 1967 and soon after promoted to Lt (QGO) on 5 Mar 68 at which point he took over as Troop QGO A Troop 67 Squadron in Kluang. He oversaw many engineering projects, first in Malaysia and then around the Colony in Hong Kong. He was the Tp QGO of 19 Trg Party before being promoted to Capt (QGO) on 10 Nov 71 and was subsequently appointed The Training Officer. He later became G/Capt 68 Sqn from 1972 to 1978 based in Bowring Camp. During his six years as G/Capt 68 Sqn he saw through 4 OCs namely John Speight, Bill Chesshyre, John Worthington and Mike Gaffney.





Finally, he was appointed as the 9th Gurkha Major QGE on 9 Nov 78 and held the post until he retired in late 1981 after 31 years of exemplary service. Coincidentally, in the final year of Bhim saheb's service in the Regiment Lt Col John Worthington, ex OC 68

Sqn, replaced Lt Col Mike Stephens as Comdt QGE to bid farewell to his old G/Capt.

During his time as the G/Major the Regiment won the Nepal Cup twice and entertained a number of General Staff Officers from the UK. However, most importantly 69 Sqn was reformed in the UK during his time and credit goes to the then GM - Major (QGO) Bhimbahadur Gharti. Bhim saheb. Despite being "GM saheb" he was always open to suggestions, was approachable, had a friendly nature and always had a smile on his face even when he was giving you the "third degree"! He had a long and successful career in the Regiment of which he was very proud, and we are grateful to him for his distinguished service to the Regiment.

After retirement back in Nepal, Bhim saheb remained active by securing a job as Administrative Officer of Budhanilkant English Secondary School, followed by the Manager of Gokarna Golf Course and finally alongside Major (ret'd) David Owen RE, as Project Supervisor on the Muglin Road Project.

He is survived by his 2nd wife and three sons. His first wife sadly passed away, sometime ago. His eldest son, Eknath retired from the Royal Nepalese Army as Lt Col and lives in Kathmandu.

Rest in eternal peace Bhim saheb. The Regiment thanks you for your loyal service and will miss you.

21157028 WO1 (Retd) Dhanbahadur Gurung (1950- 2020)



WO1 Dhanbahadur Gurung, who originally hailed from an idyllic village called Nalma in Lamjung District very sadly passed away on 15 October 2020 in Kathmandu at the age of seventy. He had some health complications lately and was admitted to The Manipal Hospital in Pokhara for observation. Later,

he was transferred to Grande Hospital in Kathmandu, where he very sadly died and left this world for a better place.

To fulfil his and his parents' aspirations, he enlisted in the Brigade of Gurkhas as a boy soldier in 1964. After completing the three year Boys' Company Training in Sungei Patani, Malaya, he was posted as a Clerk to The Gurkha Engineers in 1967, then based in Kluang, Malaya.

He quickly settled in and steadily rose through the ranks to reach the rank of Warrant Officer Class One and held the prestigious post of Regimental Head Clerk before being posted to the MoD in the Old Admiralty Building as Co-ordinator to the Brigade LO, which was sadly his last appointment before retiring. He retired after a long and distinguished service of 22 years in the Brigade of Gurkhas.

On retirement he settled in Pokhara and soon secured a job as an Accounts Officer with the GWA Canada Project and later as the Office Manager in the GWT (N) Project Cell. Not long after retiring from his second career and until recently, he was presiding as The Chairman of the Pahar Trust Nepal Project. He was also an active Secretary of the Lamjung Gurung Community.

Dhan had a very friendly, amicable, helpful and a gentle personality with a heart of gold and always had a smile on his face, even when he was upset. He was also immensely popular with people of all ranks and positions and was held in high esteem in the Regiment.

He will be missed by his friends from the Army, people he worked with in Pokhara, members of his Gurung Community, all those who knew him and of course by his loving family.

Our sincerest condolences go to his wife and children and his relatives. You were always a real gentleman. Rest in peace DB.

Captain (Ret'd) Imanhang Limbu BEM (1951 – 2020)

Capt Imanhang Limbu saheb, 69 years old, very sadly passed away on 9 Dec 2020 in Kathmandu after being infected with Covid 19. This terrible news came as a total shock and one of disbelief to us all.

Imanhang Limbu saheb hailed from a village called Nesum in Taplejung and enlisted into the Brigade of Gurkhas as a boy soldier in 1965, and spent nearly three years in Sungei Patani. He was then selected for the Gurkha Engineers and completed his Combat



Engineering B3 training in Kluang as part of 19 Training Party. From day one in the Regt/Sqn Iman saheb demonstrated outstanding soldierly and leadership qualities, excellent educational prowess, sporting talent and the knack for getting on with everyone, irrespective of rank and position.

After completing his Combat B3 training he was posted to 67 Gurkha Field Squadron in Kluang and worked on many projects in the Field Troop and it was not long before he was selected to attend the Survey Engineer Class 3 course in the UK, and passed with high marks.

In the Regiment, Iman saheb worked on many projects in Hong Kong, mostly as a surveyor and in the process managed to pick up promotion relatively quickly. All surveyors in the Regiment were posted to field troops and therefore, he did not miss out on working alongside them on projects or combat engineering tasks. As an NCO he proved himself to be a competent troop NCO as well as a surveyor and was promoted to Lt (QGO) in Jul 86. After working successfully as a Troop QGO in 67 and 69 Sqns he was promoted to Capt (QGO) in Apr 91. During his distinguished service in the Regt he served in Malaya, HK, Singapore, UK, Falkland Islands, Brunei, Kenya, Belize, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

It was as a result of his work in the Solomon Islands that he was very deservedly awarded the BEM; probably the highlight of his career. In 1972 an earthquake hit The Solomon Islands and at short notice QGE was tasked to travel there to assess the threat to the inhabitants on one of the remote islands and advise them on precautions to take to remain safe. The two officers led by Major N Tomlinson, seconded by Captain Anderson and four soldiers were split up in pairs and singleton parties. Spr Iman, on his own, was winched down from a helicopter in the heavily forested area where the earthquake had blocked a large stream, which if it gave way would wipe out the village downstream. Spr Iman very bravely made his way to the village, arriving just in time to advise the villagers to leave and in doing so saved many lives. The team leader Maj Tomlinson quite rightly recommended Iman for BEM; he did not panic, used his initiative, remained calm and focused and therefore was thoroughly deserving of the award.

In addition Iman was a brilliant sportsman and participated in most sports, excelling in football for many years and was a member of the successful Nepal Cup team in the 70s and 80s. After a dedicated and successful career in the Brigade spanning over 30 years he retired back to Nepal. His last appointment in the Regiment was Asst Trg Offr and after retiring in 1995 he settled in Kathmandu.

He did not spend long as a retiree because he soon secured a Team Leader role with the Kadoorie Agricultural Development Project in Nepal, and that was only the start of his many jobs and appointments post retirement. From when he retired to until recently, he worked as an executive committee member with a Hydropower Company in South East Asia; as a Senior Construction Supervisor in Vietnam and as an Inspector of Works at the Kap Shui Mun Cable Bridge in Hong Kong. He was also the Deputy Chairman of QGE RAN in Nepal. All in all an impressive and an outstanding CV.

The untimely death of Capt Imanhang Limbu from Covid-19 is heart breaking and very, very sad indeed. Our sincerest condolences go to his bereaved family, his loving wife and two sons. We hope they can muster the courage to overcome the pain of losing this wonderful man and what a gentleman he was. Rest in peace Iman saheb.

WO2 (Ret'd) Uttam Thapa (Shrestha)

WO2 Uttam Thapa, popularly known as "Drum Major" very sadly, passed away on 7 Oct 20 in Narayangurh Chitwan, Nepal.



He hailed from Bandipur, Tanahun in West Nepal and was enlisted in the Brigade of Gurkhas in 1962 and after completing his Recruit Training in Sungei Patani, Malaya, he attended the Basic Combat Engineering B3 course in Kluang as part of No 14 Training Party. On the successful completion of this he was he posted to the Regimental Pipes and

Drums (P&D) Platoon, where he served until his retirement. He worked very hard from the beginning, maintaining his discipline, dutifully learning his trade and deservedly gaining promotion, reaching the rank of WO2 Drum Major before he retired.

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers was proud to have its own independent Pipes & Drums under the leadership of WO2 Uttam from 1977 to 1984. The P&D, a unique entity, presented themselves magnificently and were extra ordinarily smart on any ceremonial occasions such as Regimental Parades, Military Tattoos, Beating Retreat Ceremonies, Guest Nights etc. Under the command of WO2 Uttam the P&D performed on many such occasions with highest of standard in front of Royalties and VIPs, not only in Hong Kong but in many overseas venues including Brunei, Australia, Toronto Canada and the United Kingdom. Last but not least, the P&D provide a great morale booster for those taking part in the ceremonial events and the spectators, young and old alike who always received them with a huge cheers.

As a person, he was very affable, friendly, good mannered and always had a smile on his face. He was also a keen sportsman and participated in platoon and mess sports. Upon retirement he settled down in Narayangurh, Chitwan where he became a very successful entrepreneur. He is survived by his wife, a daughter and a son. May his soul rest peacefully in the heavenly abode.



FAMILY NEWS

Major Prem (Bahadur) and Pabitra Ale MVO



Since last writing a piece of family news for the QGEA magazine, many things have remained the same; I am still working at Sutton Valence School as a Cadet instructor and have been for over 10 years now. Pabitra is continuously looking after the house and the pariwar, while Sudeep has now completed his

university degree and has gone on to graduate as a Pilot Officer from RAF Cranwell in 2018. He is currently a Flight Lieutenant and is about to start his helicopter flying course. Salina has also completed her university degree and is working in London. Finally, Anup is in the final stage of his degree at the University of Leicester.

This past year has been a turbulent one for everyone, myself included. I was twice furloughed from work, due to the school closures, but I remained busy with house refurbishments and a lot of golf. Unfortunately, Anup and I both succumbed to the COVID virus, but luckily the rest of the family have not. Anup had very mild symptoms but I did suffer slightly more and was laid in bed resting for a week. Thankfully, it was not serious, and I did not have to go to hospital.

Salina has been working from home for the whole year and has focused on her health. She has dragged both mum and me to join her in various fitness classes in the garden, like Body Attack. More importantly, she has tried to keep me on a strict dieting by weighing me every Monday morning to see our progress. We were all able to shift the COVID weight however, I have now found it harder to lose weight than previously. Those who know me will know the obvious reasons for this. Sudeep's pilot course been postponed and so in the meantime he has been executing regimental duties at RAF Wittering. He also came home when the rules allowed him to do so. Sudeep is looking forward to continuing his helicopter flying course at RAF Shawberry, starting this summer. Kancho chora Anup is doing a year in industry as part of his degree and is currently working as an Intern Salesperson with Vodaphone in Newbury. He will go back to Leicester to complete his final year of university in September 2021 and will graduate in 2022.

Due to the Pandemicx a lot of school activities were either cancelled or postponed, including our trip to Nepal in October

2020. I was looking forward to meeting Khil for Raksi and the A-team in Pokhara. Now this trip has been rescheduled for October 2023 but I may not be there as I am thinking to finish in September 2023.

Major Dom & Sarah Dias (08 – 20)

Since leaving 69 Sqn in 2010 I have had an eclectic and exciting combination of jobs and adventures, including another tour of Afghanistan, a stint at MOD Main Building, 3 years Loan Service in Oman and more recently some time on less well known operations in Israel and the West Bank.



Needless to say, it was time for a bit of stability and I now find myself at Army Headquarters in the Support Directorate, at the heart of future equipment planning for the Army – changes are afoot, so it is a fascinating time to be involved. In my first tour at Army HQ, I have been very pleasantly surprised with the job and the location – not least the excellent Nepalese restaurant in the town centre.

In a difficult year for everyone, Sarah and I were very lucky to welcome into the world a beautiful baby girl, Serena, back in June and can't wait to introduce her to many of our QGE friends in the near future.

To cap off what has been an above average year for us as a family, I was also exceptionally surprised and humbled to have been appointed as a Member of the Most Excellent order of the British Empire in the March 2021 Operational Honours List.

Col (Ret'd) Andrew Mills OBE

(81-84), (93-94), (DA Kathmandu 09-13), (Dir KAAA 16-..).

After five years at the helm, Andrew is enjoying life as Director of the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association (KAAA), based in Pokhara. Mercifully unaffected by the Covid Pandemic, KAAA has continued to work pretty much as normal, bringing infrastructure projects and employment training to the middle and



upper hills. KAAA continues to push out to the North and West where the requirements are greatest, which has led to exciting trekking opportunities in Kalikot, Mugu and Humla districts.

The travel restrictions put paid to all international travel, so Andrew's been Nepal based for the past 13 months, during which time he's met only 10 Caucasians face to face. Becoming more barking by the day, Dhal Bhat is now the default setting, and he communicates with considerable head wobbling.

He sends greetings to QGE friends near and far, and invites them call in when visiting Nepal.

Graham and Rebecca Price
(77-80, 81-83)



I recall as a young officer in Hong Kong hearing tales of the Regiment in Singapore, Malaya and Borneo from very senior men, and thinking that Hong Kong was now the home of the Regiment, where real stuff was being done. Now, I am one of the old buffers who remembers Hong Kong but none of the present reality of life in Maidstone and deployments worldwide, not to mention the re-role and memorably London Public Duties.

Well, the stay behind party in Hong Kong is in good shape, somewhat thinner on the British Officer Roll – only Richard Beazley and myself remaining to our knowledge, but a good swathe of Gurkha officers and men, mostly employed in important work and respected by all around them.

Despite my time in Hong Kong I have never really mastered Cantonese, so I get a great kick out of using my limited command of Nepali on a daily basis. The security detail at my wife's school are all Nepalese, some ex-soldiers, as are a

significant proportion of the staff at the Aberdeen Boat Club. There is considerable amusement when it is discovered that Mr Price can say a few words in their mother tongue.

Rebecca and I have been here continuously since 1992, two sons grew up here and graduated from British Universities. As many friends know we also have a daughter, Hannah in Year 7 at South Island School and a son Ethan who is in Year 4 at Quarry Bay School. Neither child has been to school for more than a few weeks, half days only, since the back end of 2019. David is still serving in AAC and lives in Suffolk.

Rebecca is still teaching at the Chinese International School and myself, I have been doing a selection of small jobs and trying to be at least partially gainfully employed, although my wife confided that she likes me not working so I can be home to manage the children. With working from home and school by Zoom the boundaries have been very confused.

I have timed out of my role as District Commissioner for the English Speaking Scouts, and have filled the rest of my time with committee work for the Aberdeen Boat Club, where I am now in charge of House and Building and they call me a Rear Commodore, which sounds rather rude but makes me a signatory on the bank account and I get very good service from the staff!

You may remember we own a catamaran, Poppytoo, which we bought and shipped to Hong Kong very much in memory of Samuel, and she has given us much pleasure over the years. As my ability to leap around a boat has slowed, we have teamed up with a young family who are looking after the boat for us in return for being able to use it themselves.

Many of you phoned us up in 2019 and early 2020 concerned by what you saw on the TV about the civil unrest in Hong Kong; thank you for your concern. The weekend rioting got beyond tedious; it was destructive. China was quite restrained I thought and did not unleash the PLA. Covid came as something of a relief as it damped down the protests. But then in July last year we had the National Security Law, and be in no doubt who is in charge now.

We put on a brave face and day to day of course our life has not changed much, it was Covid restrictions which dominated our attention. We have had a fairly easy time compared to parts of the UK. Transport has never stopped, but bars are closed, and restaurants open with restrictions. We are now getting vaccines and there is hope of further relaxation. However you may not enter Hong Kong without 21 days mandatory quarantine in a hotel. So, for ordinary mortals that means no travel. You can fly to the UK, but you may not fly back at this time lest you bring in the UK variant! (They assure us the measure is not political.)

Hong Kong will still seem familiar if you visit, but of course the changes are legion. Gradually Mom and Pop shops are disappearing, the inevitable consolidation of businesses and property development does not seem to have slowed, despite no tourists.



The Hong Kong Sevens should have been on as I write this, but we are hoping they will run in November 2021 – postponed twice already from March 2020.

With no overseas travel, Hong Kong people have taken to the paths and hills in multitudes. The Beaches were closed due to restrictions, but have opened today – so hopefully we can get out and swim or do water sports this summer. Memories of travelling to Nepal for the Reunion seem so improbable now, but what a great trip that was.

There is also a big surge in interest in the Battle of Hong Kong, Japanese invasion and so on – and much exploration of the defensive positions. Metal detectors are always turning up buttons, and shell cases and in some cases boxes of live ammunition. The Police are responsible for Bomb Disposal and there is a regular turning up of WWII bombs, one last weekend and one today I think. I'm not sure how many Crossrail dug up in London, but any central area excavation near the harbour here has a pretty good chance of a bomb!

What of Perowne barracks and places we love? The Gurkha Married Quarters area has been surrendered for Housing Development, and as far as I know the original Squadron Barracks is still being used by the Charity "Crossroads". So the Pig Farm and Kesabhadur Hall can still be seen – but for how much longer I'm not sure. The new build above the highway which I occupied in 67 Squadron in 1982, was demolished and for many years now has been the site of Harrow International School. The MT complex and Ammunition Bunkers were handed back to Government, along with Gordon Hard.

I seldom go to that part of the New Territories, but I am still in touch with Richard Lee of Ah Lee fame, whose run down shop is still opposite the PLA barracks at Sek Kong. He will still gladly produce an excellently tailored suit for you, and has many loyal customers in UK. He probably has your measurements in his pile of books!

So what of the future for the Prices? We will not stay in our beloved Hong Kong for ever, financial constraints dictate that we think about UK schooling for Hannah and Ethan, and we miss all of you so look forward to a return to the UK and keeping those promises to look you all up!

Bill and Jane Wiggett (65 – 71)

Responding to a request as Andy is, unsurprisingly, short of family news this year.

Just settled in my comfy armchair – it's 3rd April – when my 'phone pinged with unwanted news. Seems gyms can reopen next week and my personal trainer Nathan, ex Royal Marine torturer, is ready to receive me on the 13th – appropriate date!

I have, up to now during the shutdown, been reflecting on life and the world in general whilst comfortably relaxing my old and broken body (actually I am in reasonably good nick with second jab tomorrow!). Unfortunately, been unable to spend the winter in the sunny Caribbean where I am still Chairman



of the Board of Directors of Sugar Hill – check it out and go there!

Things changed for us in 2020 and I am back on the treadmill. The best news of all is that Janet and I have a Granddaughter Etta, our first grandchild, born in May last year. Total joy and walking at 10

months, albeit like her grandfather after a few shandys! So, Alice our daughter will be handing some responsibility to us when she goes back to teaching later this year. Tom, our son, has yet to start. Taking a lead from me as Alice, our first born, arrived when I was 40!

Tom's Company – <https://longtailmixers.com/> – goes from strength to strength and has been resilient during the lockdown.

Fortunately, the lock down has not been too bad for us as we have access to the countryside, and I have been busy housebuilding. What I mean is 'dolls' house building! Thought it would take me no more than a couple of weeks. It's now three months on but 'Covid Manor' is just about complete but needs furnishing. Tried to make it without plans or drawings. Not a good idea! But, job done. Never again! (see pics) Note – if you ever get the urge to make one, use MDF not plywood!



Been putting off retirement from my Company, but as UAE Armed Forces keep me busy from time to time, I have decided to carry on till I'm 80 (currently 77 – eight months younger than Doug Humphrey though!)

Just about to send this to Andy when I opened a draw and found the missing silver regimental pommel to my cane. Hurrah! Been looking for that for ages. Apart for Kukri and 'photos, it's one of my few mementoes left from days of old. And that's news? Happy Days.



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The deadline for material to be with the Editor for 2022 Magazine is 1 May 2022 and will cover the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are poor has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion.

There are a number of reasons why the number of people in the world who are poor has increased. One reason is that the world's population has grown rapidly, and this has put a strain on the world's resources.

Another reason is that the world's economy has not grown fast enough to keep pace with the world's population. This has led to a decline in the world's per capita income.

There are also a number of other factors that have contributed to the increase in the number of people in the world who are poor. These include the effects of globalization, the impact of the environment, and the effects of war and conflict.

It is clear that the number of people in the world who are poor has increased significantly in the 1990s. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

There are a number of things that can be done to help reduce the number of people in the world who are poor. These include increasing the world's economic growth, improving the world's environment, and promoting peace and stability.

It is important that we take action now to address the problem of poverty in the world. If we do not, the number of people in the world who are poor will continue to increase.

The world's population is growing rapidly, and this is putting a strain on the world's resources. We need to find ways to use the world's resources more efficiently.

The world's economy has not grown fast enough to keep pace with the world's population. We need to find ways to increase the world's economic growth.

The world's environment is being degraded, and this is having a negative impact on the world's economy and the lives of people around the world. We need to find ways to improve the world's environment.

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