

Happy 75th  
birthday  
Joanna Lumley!

## GURKHA ROYALTY

On 1 May, we wished Joanna Lumley a very happy 75th birthday. The national treasure, who became our Vice Patron in 2009, has been a huge supporter of our cause for many years, visiting a number of our projects in Nepal. A name synonymous with the Gurkhas, Joanna is adored by the brave soldiers.



# A word from our CEO



## Welcome to the latest edition of Samachara

I would like to start this newsletter with my sincere gratitude.

In February, we sent an appeal to our supporters to help us give Gurkha veterans and widows everything

they need to make a house a home. For some, that might be a brand new house. For others, it could be a smokeless stove to safely cook meals for their families who share the living space. We have been stunned by the response to the appeal, and I am delighted to say that our teams in Nepal have been working tirelessly, and have already completed some of the homes your generous donations have helped us build.

We recently completed a medical camp in Dolpa, an area so remote that there is no road access. Patients travelled from far and wide to receive our medical care – for most it’s their only chance to see a doctor or a nurse. As well as continuing to provide hearing aids, sight tests

and cataract removals, we also fitted prosthetic limbs, a life changing service for those who need it.

As the Government’s roadmap is rolled out, we are really looking forward to hosting our catalogue of fundraising challenges, including the gruelling Trailwalker challenge this September. I hope to see some of you there!

**Al Howard**  
CEO  
The Gurkha Welfare Trust



As a daughter of the Brigade, the Gurkhas have always held a special place in Joanna Lumley’s heart. Joanna’s father Major James Rutherford Lumley served with the 6th Gurkha Rifles during the Second World War. He served alongside two Victoria Cross winners, the late Lachhiman Gurung and the late Tulbahadur Pun, who saved his life in Burma.

Here’s just some of the ways Joanna Lumley has supported our cause over the years:

## 1. CAMPAIGNING FOR GURKHAS STRUCK BY THE 2015 EARTHQUAKE

When two devastating earthquakes struck Nepal in 2015, she campaigned endlessly to raise awareness and support those who had lost their homes. She appeared on ITV’s This Morning to explain how the earthquakes had devastated Nepal and its communities, and lead an appeal on BBC Radio 4 in aid of our earthquake response.

*“For 200 years Gurkhas have chosen to serve the UK, fighting for us in conflicts across the world. Those isolated hillside villages have offered up their best young men to be soldiers of the Queen. My father served with the Gurkhas and I grew up a daughter of the regiment. Now I’m proud to be Vice Patron of The Gurkha Welfare Trust. This charity cares for thousands of Gurkha veterans, their families and communities in Nepal.”*

## 2. NARRATING OUR G200 PAGEANT

During 2015’s Gurkha bicentenary, Joanna supported various fundraising events including narrating at our spectacular Gurkha 200 Pageant attended by the Queen.

## 3. ALWAYS HELPING US RAISE VITAL FUNDS

Not only has Joanna donated numerous prizes to our recent auctions and raffle, she’s also always eager to support others who take on their own fundraising challenges on our behalf.

## 4. VISITING OUR WORK

As our Vice Patron, Joanna has visited a number of our projects across Nepal. Pictured above is Joanna opening Kalika Lower Secondary School, a school we built in Tiplyang located in the Myagdi district of Nepal.

## 5. THANKING STAFF AND SUPPORTERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Last April, Joanna was keen to let our team, and our dedicated supporters know that she was thinking of us during this difficult time.

*“I just want to send you a huge amount of thanks. You’re all being amazing in these difficult times and I can only imagine how terribly hard it is out in Nepal at the moment. It’s so hard to visit people and take care of the elderly.”*

*“Deri deri dhanyabad – thank you so very very much. Everything I love about The Gurkha Welfare Trust is wrapped up in all of you.”*

## TUL BAHADUR PUN VC

The late Tul Bahadur Pun was awarded the Victoria Cross on 23 June 1944 for acts of valour in Mogaung, Burma.

He bravely saved the lives of dozens of men, including Major James Lumley, father of our Vice Patron Joanna Lumley OBE.



## THANKS TO YOU THEY HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

A massive thank you to everyone who donated to our last appeal to help us give Gurkha veterans and widows everything they need to make a house a home.

We have already completed building some of the new homes and rainwater harvesting systems, as well as delivering cooking equipment like smokeless stoves.

Thagisara Thapa’s home is one of the homes we have already completed this year.

*“I can’t believe it – I have a new home! Thank you so much.”*

See the impact new homes have on the lives of Gurkha veterans and widows.

Visit [www.gwt.org.uk/safe-place](http://www.gwt.org.uk/safe-place) to watch our video.



The couple who kindly funded this home for Thagisara first met many years ago when they were serving with and for Gurkhas





## “Army days were difficult”

### Gurkha veteran Sher Bahadur Limbu

**76 year old Rifleman Sher Bahadur Limbu served the British Army in the 1960s.**

*“I didn’t serve in the Army for long, I just served for seven years, but during that time I worked honestly. The officers didn’t punish me for any reason, didn’t have any fights with my friends, everything went well. We were all together as a family, we laughed, helped each other and stayed together.”*

Sher was recruited in Dharan, in the east of Nepal. Then, he was taken to Malaysia on a ship to do his training. The next few months were spent travelling to Hong Kong, Laos and then back again.

*“During the Army days I remember that we used to carry rice but had no time to cook and eat it. They used*

*to give us a bottle of rum, but I did not drink alcohol. Cigarettes were free. We had to fight in the front line, sometimes they used to send us in the jungle with a compass and we had to fight through the thorns, roots, muds, ponds, mountains and make our way through.*

*“Army days were difficult. We had to search for the enemies. They used to hide. If they found us, they would kill us, if we found them then we used to kill them. If we found information about the enemy’s location then we used to go, hide over there and wait for them for hours. We could not make any sound, nor could we speak, it was very difficult.*

*“It used to rain for 24 hours a day. There used to be thousands of big leeches, thorny bushes, quicksand*

*where people used to get stuck and die. Winds used to blow, rain used to fall continuously, and leeches used to crawl in our bodies and bite us without us knowing about it.*

*“They used to give one bottle of water. With that one bottle of water we had to make tea, cook rice, drink .... everything with just that one bottle of water. After finishing eating, we had to bury the leftovers. Officers used to monitor us. Even though we were thirsty and hungry, we had to stop thinking about that and do our duty. There used to be fruits like litchi, coconuts and other different fruit all over the forest on the floor but they wouldn’t allow us to eat it. We always had to be alert because we never knew from where the enemies would attack us or when we had to attack them.*

*“We had to wait for the enemies in those harsh conditions. I have not faced such hardship and suffering in my life like that. At that time, I didn’t think I would come back home alive.”*

Mercilessly, Sher Bahadur and his comrades made it out alive, but many soldiers in other battalions died.

*“My battalion, 7th Gurkha Rifles, were about to enter a battle but instead they sent 10th Gurkha Rifles. It was that battle where Rambahadur Limbu won his Victoria Cross. Many people died in that battle. When we went over there, it looked like a landslide. All the trees had died and some were uprooted. We had to stay in that place and do our duty over there. We were there to inspect and guard the place so that the enemies wouldn’t recapture that place. While doing our duty over there we could hear people murmuring, we could smell blood and sometimes we could hear people crying.”*

When Sher returned to his home in Nepal at the age of 25, he had nothing. He had no money and no land.

*“In our days we had to work very hard. If we compare today’s work with the work we did in our time, I*



*don’t feel like people are working. We had to work very hard before. We had to work in the fields just so that we could eat. My parents didn’t let us sleep, they told us to make threads from wool so that we can make clothes for ourselves.”*

### ENTER THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

Now an elderly gentleman, Sher lives with his wife Agya and two of their sons who help look after them.

We have been providing a monthly Welfare Pension for Sher, we give him the medical care he needs, and we even brought easily accessible clean water to his village. More recently, we

built the family a new earthquake- and-monsoon-resilient house.

*“The old house had a thatched roof which used to leak when it rained and was not built with proper house building materials. Last year, the house was destroyed completely and GWT built me a new house. I am very happy. It was difficult before. Bedroom and kitchen were all together, everyone stayed together so it was quite difficult. Now it’s very easy and convenient.”*

The water in Sher’s village was funded by the Trailwalker UK challenge event.

*“It’s already been 10 years or so since the water tap was built. Before that we had to walk half an hour just to reach to the water tap. There used to be a lot of people queuing up for water.”*

*“I am happy to receive support and pension from the GWT. If they keep on supporting us like this then I think we will live longer.”*

Sher gave us a message to pass onto our supporters:

*“Hope you keep on helping us and fulfill our needs. Hope our donors live with peace and harmony. Thank you very much for looking after us and helping us. Hope we can live longer and receive your donations until our last day.”*





# Changing lives in the hills of Nepal

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries with 45% of the population living below the poverty line.

For thousands of people living in rural areas of Nepal, often healthcare simply isn't an option. The World Health Organisation estimates the ratio of doctors to the population is one to every 18,000 people. As a result, many people suffer needlessly with relatively simple-to-fix complaints like tooth-ache, cataracts or simple skin conditions.

As part of our commitment to the communities of Gurkha veterans, we host Medical Camps which are open to everyone. Since our first one back in March 1999, these camps have treated well over 150,000 people.

At the beginning of this year, we hosted a three day camp in Tehrathum. For one of the first times, we were able to make use of a local hospital for the camp, as opposed to hosting it in tents and temporary shelters.

## DELIVERING A CAMP WITH MILITARY PRECISION

COVID-19 posed its own challenge to the camp. All of our doctors and staff involved were tested, as were patients. To avoid any crowds, there was a pre-screening camp & appointment system. We ran the pre-screening camp at six different municipalities via local health workers for patient selection. Each of these

were given a target number for patient numbers, which was based on their total population. Patients from each of the six municipalities were then given a specific date for attending the camp.

In total, 267 people were registered over the three days. Of these, 198 (74%) received some form of definitive treatment, which included things like cataract surgery, hearing aid fitting, ear irrigation and the prescription of antibiotics.

## FITTING OF A PROSTHESIS - A NEW WAY OF LIFE FOR JIT

Jit Bahadur Thapa, 50, lives 14km from where the camp was held. He walked from half way, which took him over four hours.

"I never had an opportunity to study. As a young man I went to Malaysia to find work and that's where I lost my hand in an accident while working

in a rubber factory. After getting treatment in Malaysia I returned back to Nepal.

"It was very difficult. Some people used to treat me nicely and some used to call me names. People used to say that I don't have hand, they used to ask me questions like how will I take care of my family and raise my kids. I used to get hurt. But what to do, this was my destiny. But after all this I didn't lose hope. I still haven't and I am still working. In this village I am a person who doesn't have a hand but I have amazed people. I have 40 - 70 goats, I have also planted cardamom and I also have a small shop!"

As part of our service, we have fitted Jit for a prosthesis. Something he had never thought possible before.



## Back to school after lockdown

We create inspiring, safe places to learn for thousands of children who otherwise wouldn't have access to an education.

Shree Malawardevi Secondary School is located in the Rupandehi District, a one hour drive from our nearest office in Butwal. As this area is in Nepal's Terai region, away from the Himalayas, the land is relatively flat and almost all pupils are able to ride bicycles to school.

Pupils in Nepal returned to their lessons recently as COVID-19 restrictions were eased. However, the children have had a huge gap in their education. In a developing country like Nepal, children and teachers are unlikely to have internet access. They can't take part in lessons over Zoom like children in the UK. Parents are often too busy working, collecting water, and farming, and don't have time or resources to homeschool them.

We caught up with some of the staff and children to find out what it was like in lockdown, and what it meant for them to return to school.

## MR MEENA KUMARI GAUTAM (TEACHER)

"During the lockdown, we were unable to conduct any classes. Mediums like internet and online classes are out of the question for the low-level income parents in this community. They barely have the basic necessities.

"We resumed classes just over a



month ago and we are running it in two shifts every day - morning and afternoon. We have students coming to school from as far as one hour by bicycle."

## SHIVAM (10 YEARS OLD)

"My village is Chhapiya which is about 40/45 mins by cycle. There is another school nearby my village but it's not very good. I like it here. We speak Bhojpuri in our home. My father works in Mumbai, India and I have my mom and elder sister in the house. My mom works as a labour in the fields.

"My favourite subject is Maths. I'm glad to be back at school."

## LAXMI (15 YEARS OLD)

"Our village is Bahadur Gaon and is about 20 mins ride by bicycle. My father died when I was young and my mother supports me, my brother and sister. She works as a labour in fields.

During the lockdown, we didn't have any classes so I worked with my mum in the fields and helped her as much as I could."



# Protecting Nepal: Home of the Gurkhas

Not only do we deliver financial support to Gurkha veterans and widows, we also help their communities, which span large areas of Nepal. While we deliver this vital aid across Nepal's beautiful natural environment, it's important that we do this in the most environmentally friendly way possible.

Here are just some of the ways we try and protect the environment when we're delivering our work in Nepal:

## Preventing water waste

Some Gurkha veterans, widows and their communities live out of reach of a safe water source. For those living in such remote areas, we install harvest tanks that can collect up to 1,000 litres of rainwater. We supply them with a water filter so that they can recycle this water into clean drinking water.

We also install Simple Drip Irrigation (SDI), which is an effective way of improving crop yields. It allows farmers to produce their grains and vegetables during the dry season. SDI is also a much more efficient way of avoiding water wastage; 50-60% less wastage compared with the traditional carrying buckets method.



## Eco-friendly offices

Our offices across Nepal use solar panels, which capture the sun's energy, to power our lightbulbs and computers. Not only an environmental initiative, solar panels are an efficient way to generate electricity, which is often scarce in Nepal.



## Reducing air pollution with smokeless stoves

Smokeless stoves are designed to exhaust smoke out of the home using natural airflow. These small appliances are also designed to burn more efficiently at a higher temperature, ensuring less pollution and particles. All of the new homes we build for Gurkha veterans and widows include a smokeless stove.



## Stopping the spread of disease

Sanitation has always been at the forefront of our water projects. We don't start laying out the pipes and installing the taps until we are 100% happy that the community know how to keep it free of contamination. We visit the villages to provide them with education on sanitation to help prevent the spread of disease within the community.



## Resident profile: Bhimbahadur Gurung

THE EIGHTH IN OUR SERIES OF  
GUEST PROFILES FROM OUR TWO  
RESIDENTIAL HOMES IN NEPAL

how relieved they were, after ten days of continual fighting, to receive help from another Company. They did eventually overcome the enemy but there was a heavy loss of their troops.

Three years after his enlistment, he returned on leave to his village to get married. Bhim was discharged from the Army in 1947 and returned to Jerkha to farm and take care of his family. After six years of marriage, his first son was born. They had a further seven children; three sons and four daughters.

"I had a very happy marriage. My wife sadly passed away in 2011. My children had moved away, and I was left alone with no-one to care for me. It was very hard."

In 2013, we asked Bhim if he would like to live in one of our Residential Homes in Pokhara, where we could provide him with round the clock care, to which he agreed. He's very happy there, and describes it as "heaven". He loves spending his time knitting scarves for himself and the other residents.

### Bhimbahadur Gurung is 96 years old, but is remarkably sharp, with a crystal-clear memory.

He was born in 1924, the fourth child of nine, in the village of Jerka, Lamjung District, where he lived with his parents, five brothers and three sisters. There was no school in the village, but Bhim's father had learned letters and numbers from an Indian Yogi (yoga master) and passed on the knowledge to him.

His family was very poor:

"When I was seven years old, a market came to the nearby village. I really wanted to go and asked my mother's permission but she said no as we had no money. I persisted

in asking and eventually my mother gave me four paisa (copper coins). It was the happiest day of my childhood, which I kept secret from my brothers and sisters!"

"I bought six oranges for one paisa, and spent my remaining three paisa on a bag to carry them in. When my mother found out she was not pleased and said the local tailor could have made one much cheaper."

Bhim joined the Indian Brigade of Gurkhas in Kunaghat when he was 18 years old. After six months basic training and four months training in jungle warfare, he was deployed to Nag Danda. He was a Bren gunner in his Company and launched wave after wave of attacks onto a well-defended enemy position. He vividly recalls





## Trailwalker UK 24 - 26 September 2021 100km. A team of four. 30 hours.

Organised in partnership with Oxfam, Trailwalker is the ultimate in long-distance challenges.

Teams of four will take on an unforgettable 100km journey in under 30 hours across the South Downs.

The event is managed by Gurkhas. Gurkha teams lead the charge but thousands of competitors take part from all age groups.

Nothing will beat the feeling of walking over the finish line... except maybe that first bite of the Gurkha curry that will be waiting for you!

Raise money, push yourself to the limit, and face a challenge you'll remember the rest of your life.



**YOUR ADVENTURE  
STARTS HERE**

Sign your team up at:  
[www.gwt.org.uk/events-and-challenges/trailwalker-2021/](http://www.gwt.org.uk/events-and-challenges/trailwalker-2021/)

### MORE RUNS AND CHALLENGES IN 2021

#### DOKO CHALLENGE NORTH

**23 MAY 2021**

Take on the Gurkhas in Penrith in our 5km run with a twist

#### DOKO CHALLENGE SOUTH

**6 JUNE 2021**

Don't miss out on your chance to take on the Gurkha Doko race in Wimbledon.

#### VITALITY BIG HALF

**22 AUGUST 2021**

Join Team GWT this year and take on one of London's most popular half marathons.

#### LONDON MARATHON VIRTUAL

**3 OCTOBER 2021**

Tackle the world-famous marathon from home.

#### CARDIFF HALF MARATHON

**3 OCTOBER 2021**

Set in the heart of the capital of Wales, this popular half marathon takes you on a grand tour of Cardiff's landmarks and historic buildings.

For the latest information on the events above please visit [www.gwt.org.uk/challenges](http://www.gwt.org.uk/challenges)

## Elsewhere at GWT



### OUR NEW ONLINE SHOP

We have launched a small number of GWT-branded products for supporters to purchase on our new online shop.

Numbers for these initial goods are extremely limited. We hope to expand our offer in the future. As our valued supporter, you'll be the first to know.

Visit [shop.gwt.org.uk](http://shop.gwt.org.uk)

### GARDEN GALA WEEK 20 - 27 JUNE 2021

Help us celebrate Father's Day and Armed Forces Weekend by hosting your garden party this June to fundraise for our work.

Around the country, supporters just like you will be gathering friends and family, local community groups, and colleagues together in their gardens, sharing stories, taking part in gala activities, and honouring their Gurkha connections.

To join in and request your free gala kit, head to:  
[www.gwt.org.uk/gala21](http://www.gwt.org.uk/gala21)



Gurkha Welfare Trust

**ARDEN GALA**

### THANK YOU VALERIE



Mrs Valerie Fox was a long-standing supporter of our work in her lifetime. Her father was a captain in the Army during the Second World War and served with Gurkhas in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Italy. He told Valerie, and later his grandchildren, how they were excellent and brave soldiers. As an adult, Valerie read an article about the distances some Nepali women and children had to travel to fetch clean drinking water. She felt strongly that people that had fought and made sacrifices for our country should not have to live that way.

Valerie was well known for singing in amateur dramatics in her local area and gave regular concerts to church groups, Darby & Joan, Lions Clubs and other community groups. Whenever she was given money for her expenses, she kindly donated them to The Gurkha Welfare Trust. Later in life, she interspersed humorous talks with the singing and used this an opportunity to talk in more detail to raise awareness about our work.

Valerie sadly passed away in January and in a final generous gesture, left a legacy gift in her Will. Her kindness is helping us support the Gurkha veterans that she heard stories of, growing up, to live with dignity through the delivery of financial, medical and community aid.

If you would like to learn more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Carolyn Derryman, Legacy Officer, on 01722 343110 or [carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk](mailto:carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk)



# From the Brigade: New Gurkha Recruits arrive in the UK



## Congratulations to the new Gurkha recruits who recently arrived in the UK.

In February, 340 new Gurkha recruits were selected to join the British Army, having passed an arduous selection process in Pokhara, Nepal.

The soldiers arrived at Manchester Airport in early March and then travelled by coach to the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

Upon arrival, each soldier was tested for COVID-19 and then a period of isolation took place before they started their training.

They are currently at the Infantry Training Centre with Gurkha Company Catterick and will be there until November 2021 before joining their units.

Visit [www.gurkhabde.com](http://www.gurkhabde.com) for updates on their progress.



## Listen now: The Gurkha Welfare Trust Podcast

We're excited to announce the launch of our new podcast featuring interviews with the Gurkha veterans and widows we care for, along with some of our most interesting friends of the Trust.

The podcast will give you a greater insight into the work we do in Nepal and how we help Gurkha veterans and their families.

### EPISODE ONE: RIFLEMAN RANA BAHADUR TAMANG

At just 16 years-old, Rifleman Rana Bahadur Tamang was recruited to be a Gurkha from his home in Darbang, west Nepal. He went on to train for two years, learning how to shoot, how to fight and how to survive in the jungle.



### EPISODE TWO: AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NIMS PURJA MBE

When Nims joined the Forces, he had his heart set on one thing. A challenge which took him to the highest peaks around the world and one that has consumed his every day since.



### EPISODE THREE: RIFLEMAN KULMAN RAI

97 year-old Gurkha veteran Kulman Rai bravely served during World War Two. Like many other Gurkha veterans before him, Kulman faced a life of hardship when he returned to Nepal after the war.



Visit [www.gwt.org.uk/podcast](http://www.gwt.org.uk/podcast) to listen to and download our episodes