

“We don’t  
know what  
we would  
do without  
you.”

## PROVIDING LIFE’S ESSENTIALS FOR BISHNA

Bishna is 88 years old and lives in a village in Gulmi District, Nepal. Unable to hear properly and no longer mobile, her only son Phattabahadur lives with her and cares for her full-time.

Her husband, Rifleman Tejbahadur Thapa, served as a Gurkha during World War Two, enlisting in November 1941 before returning to Nepal in 1947 as part of an Army downsizing. He sadly passed away in January 1995, and his pension was transferred to Bishna who continues to rely on it to buy life’s essentials.

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# A word from our CEO



Welcome to the latest edition of Samachara.

It is with immense gratitude that I can report that the response to our appeal in November from our Chairman, Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, has enabled

us to further bolster our robust medical efforts in Nepal. Where some of our services (our Welfare Pension, home visits, Residential Homes) are exclusive to our most vulnerable Gurkha veterans and widows, our medical service is open to all former Gurkhas and their families in Nepal. With no national health service equivalent, the service we provide at our state-of-the-art Medical Clinics is vital.

As you will read in this edition, we recently held a Medical Camp in Humla. The photos (on pages four and five) speak for themselves. To be able to change lives through the

provision of prosthetics is a source of immense pride for the team in Nepal as well as the Gurkha veterans in the remote regions where we sponsor the camps. They should also be a source of pride for you too – without your support, none of this is possible.

Ayo Gorkhali!

Al Howard  
CEO, The Gurkha Welfare Trust

Front page continued...



## LIFE IN THE HILLS

Though not considered particularly high by Nepali standards, Bishna's house sits at an altitude of 1,100 metres; around the same height as Ben Nevis. As you might imagine, the surrounding landscape is steep and the hills arduous. Getting around can be difficult, especially for the elderly. As a result, our team endeavour to visit Bishna and her family as often as possible – providing her with medication for her hypertension as well as her monthly pension, paid for by your donations. Read on to find out how we stepped in when disaster struck and Bishna's home was at risk.

# DEVASTATING LANDSLIDE HITS BISHNA'S VILLAGE



In July 2019, particularly heavy monsoon rains resulted in extensive flooding and landslides in Bishna's village. The results were devastating. Her son Phattabahadur explained: "The landslide took away all our cultivable land. There were cracks in the house and it just wasn't safe to live there anymore."

"We only found out after daybreak, when the landslide had happened (around 3am). We had feared it was another earthquake. A total of four houses were swept away in the village, but many more faced damage like ours. Some lost their land and others lost their cattle."

The local authority stepped up to provide immediate relief following the disaster: "The local authority provided us with temporary shelters in an open area near the village. We were put up in large tents and families had to share the tents and beds. About eight to ten of us had to sleep in large beds. They also provided us with rations and we cooked and ate together."

## ENTER THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

Our team were alerted to Bishna and Phattabahadur's situation and mobilised. Though the temporary shelters were a helpful immediate response, the weather was too cold for Bishna to be sleeping there. Thankfully, the pension we provide her allowed them to rent a local property, at a cost of 800NPR per month (approximately £5).

With a temporary roof over her head, the team then ensured Bishna and her son had everything they needed in the form of rations, cooking utensils and medicines before assessing the damage to her property.



CEO of GWT Al Howard visits Bishna after the disaster.

# A NEW HOME FIT FOR A QUEEN



The terrain made getting materials to the village difficult but the team persevered.



Unfortunately, the position of, and damage to, the old house meant that it needed to be condemned. Thankfully, the government were able to provide a new piece of land for them and thanks to your generous donations, we were able to construct a new earthquake-resilient home in a much safer location. Before construction began, Phattabahadur was full of excitement about their new home: "It's a wonderful thing that GWT is providing a house for her. Since we lost all we had, the government has provided us with a stable land near the village."

"I am happy that The GWT is going to build it because I've seen one that you built in a nearby village, I think she is going to like it!" Thankfully, the new home has lived up to expectations and the mother and son now live with dignity and a sense of pride in their beautiful new home.



## PROVIDING FREE MEDICAL CARE IN THE HILLS OF NEPAL



**At the end of August 2021, we had an extremely busy medical camp in Humla, a remote and difficult to reach district in the mountains of north-west Nepal.**

Humla is one of the most underprivileged districts in Nepal in terms of infrastructure, development, road access, education and health services. Running a medical camp in such a remote location in uncertain monsoon weather was a challenge. The team pulled together expertise from external specialists and received support from local authorities and volunteers.

It was incredibly rewarding to be able to help so many patients, some of whom walked for several days to get to the camp.

### LIFE-CHANGING TREATMENT

*“Because it’s so remote and deprived, it is very challenging to conduct a camp in Humla,” said Dr Gerda Pohl, Medical Director.*

*“But although it is difficult, it is also very worthwhile, as the patients coming to the camp have no realistic alternative to receive these life-changing treatments.”*

Over three days, GWT medical staff worked tirelessly to provide medical treatment, check-ups and surgeries, and supply medicines.

*“(The) medical camp team always feel proud to serve these people,” said Jay Limbu, Project Manager.*

Our medical camps provide free treatment for people living in the most remote communities in Nepal – for many this is the only medical assistance they receive.

The camp was a great success. Overall, we treated 633 patients, carried out 262 audiogram tests, and prescribed 140 hearing aids. Our medical teams also conducted 22 ear surgeries and completed 50 cataract surgeries.

Sixty patients with disabilities were given mobility aids or measured for prosthetics. A few months later, we hosted a fitment camp, the first of its kind in Humla, where we fitted the new prosthetic limbs.

On the next page find out how fitting prosthetics has transformed the lives of three children.



## FITTING PROSTHETICS FOR NEPALI CHILDREN

### FIRST STEPS FOR TEJBAHADUR

Several years ago, young Tejbahadur Budhathoki fell from a roof and broke his leg. Sadly, the local health post in his village did not have the capacity to treat his injury, and his condition worsened. By the time Tejbahadur arrived at a hospital, doctors had no choice but to amputate his leg.

*“He can’t walk and is unable to go to school,” said Tejbahadur’s father, Parba. “We were informed about this camp by the local health post. We are positive that your help will have a positive impact.”*

*“We are from a poor family. We could not have afforded this because of our financial condition. We are very happy that you have helped us. It would have been very expensive if we had to travel to the city to get the treatment. Although it took us three days to get here, we are very happy. Many ‘dhanyabad’ (thank you) to you all.”*



### HELPING SONIYA WALK AGAIN

12-year-old Soniya had a tragic accident in which her feet were badly burnt, and doctors needed to amputate her toes. Ever since, she has had difficulty walking.

*“We came to know about the camp from the local health worker,” said her mother, Jyaula. “The new feet look good. I am not sure how it’s going to be in the future. It is a great deed that you have done.”*

**“Because of your efforts our daughter has been able to overcome her physical disability.”**

### GIVING BHAKTARAJ NEW HANDS

Bhaktaraj Budha, also aged 12, had to have both his hands amputated after being electrocuted. In our Humla Medical Camp earlier this year, we took Bhaktaraj’s measurements for new prosthetics.

*“He was checked upon during the medical camp earlier,” said Tula, Bhaktaraj’s father. “Now, they have installed the artificial hands. You have invested so much. We are indebted to you for this generosity. Your organisation has helped so much.”*

Bhaktaraj told us he hasn’t learned how to write yet aside from writing his name, but with his new prosthetics he is excited to start.





REHABILITATING PENSIONERS:  
GETTING HAUSARI BACK ON HER FEET



Our Residential Homes in Kaski and Dharan provide round-the-clock care to some of our most vulnerable Gurkha veterans and widows, who would otherwise struggle to live alone.

Along with providing a high standard of care, our Residential Homes provide temporary bed spaces for veterans and widows who need rehabilitation after suffering from injuries and other physical ailments.

Gurkha widow Hausari Gurung, aged 80, sustained a severe back injury 30 years ago after falling from a tree. As she grew older, the injury gradually caused her to develop curvature of the spine, back pain, and weakness of her limbs. Eventually, she was unable to walk or stand.

Hausari started receiving rehabilitation therapy at our Kaski Residential Home. Little by little, through daily stretching, exercise, and gait training, she gained the strength to stand up and walk on her own.

During a pensioner’s rehabilitation, we also seek to improve their nutrition, hygiene, and social wellbeing, boosting their overall quality of life so they can live happily. Once they leave rehabilitation, we provide their carers with follow-up advice on how to continue exercises and therapies at home.

Hausari’s success story is one of many at our Residential Homes. We are committed to aiding elderly Gurkha veterans and widows in their time of greatest need.



### HOMES FOR THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE

Many Gurkha veterans and widows across Nepal still live in homes which are in poor repair and at risk from landslides, flooding, or earthquake.

We continue to work hard to construct new earthquake-resilient homes for our pensioners, giving them the best chance of staying safe should the worst happen.

Konkabahadur and his wife were living in an old house made of wood, mud and stone, in a remote village four hour’s walk from the nearest road. We built a safe new home for them making use of locally available materials.

**“I am very happy. I had never imagined that I would get this sort of help. You built a house for me. I now have a nice place to live in. Thank you!”**

## WHEN THERE WAS NO-ONE TO LOOK AFTER HIM, MANSING NEEDED OUR SUPPORT

Veteran Mansing Pun has been receiving his pension from The GWT since 1997. The team recently visited him to deliver medicines and check his health.

Mansing, originally from Sikha village in Myagdi district, enlisted in the Gurkhas in 1943 and underwent recruitment training in Dehradun, India. He was selected for guard duty, joined the Guards Company and was assigned to the Dehradun Centre as a guard throughout his service, before being made redundant.

### SUPPORT FROM OUR MOBILE TEAM

Mansing is very fit for a 96-year-old and can get around the house on his own and look after himself. He can hear very little from the left ear and requires a hearing aid. When he received a visit from the Mobile Health Practitioner the device was not working properly and he was struggling to hear or make conversation. He has been referred to an ear specialist at a local hospital.

Mansing’s wife passed away many years ago and he has three sons and four daughters; all of his sons live overseas. He now lives with his youngest daughter Naumati, whose husband Bambahadur Pun was an officer in the Indian Army.

We spoke to Bambahadur about his father-in law and the support he receives from The GWT.

**“After my retirement, I returned to Nepal and settled in Pokhara. My father-in-law used to live alone in the village in a tiny shed. All his sons are working overseas and he was alone. Both my parents had passed away so my wife and I decided to bring him to our house and look after him. He is like a father to me.”**

### SURVIVING LOCKDOWN

Mansing, like many of our pensioners, used to collect his pension from the local Area Welfare Centre, but during lockdown many of them were unable to make the journey. The local team in Kaski made every effort to visit veterans and widows in their own homes, especially those who required a medical assessment.

**“GWT is looking after veterans like him, which I think is commendable. Back in the village, when there was**

no one to look after him, the amount he received as pension is what helped him get through the hardships. Even now, you provide him with medicines.

**“We live nearby so I can take him to the AWC for any medical conditions. Recently, because of the lockdown, we have been unable to go there but you have come to the house to deliver the medicines.”**

### KEEPING IN TOUCH

GWT staff have also made use of text messaging to keep in touch with veterans and widows in isolated areas, and pass on important news and advice.

**“You are taking extra effort to take care of people like him. You also informed about the increase in Welfare Pension through SMS, which I think is wonderful!”**



“I MAY BE GONE A WHILE...”



On 12 April 2021, Jim Morton left his home in Sheffield to start an incredible journey. Jim set himself the challenge of walking the entire coast of mainland Great Britain, supporting Gurkha veterans with every step.

With his Gurkha flag proudly planted in his backpack, Jim set off on foot, with his wife Sue following in their motorhome. We have kept up with their daily updates on Facebook and Strava, with amazing photos of Jim's trek along the remote and stunningly beautiful coast of Scotland. With his flag now slightly ragged, and thousands of miles under his belt, Jim continues his journey undaunted.



## A LIFELONG DREAM

Jim had the idea of walking the entire British coastline when he was just seven. It wasn't until the age of 60 that Jim finally realised this lifelong ambition.

“I had seen a programme on TV about lighthouses and became fascinated by them. The summer of 1968 brought my first visit to a lighthouse at Flamborough and from then on I decided I must see them all so decided the best way to do this would be to walk around the coast.”

Jim has a long-held respect for the Gurkhas, having worked closely with them when he served on HMS Gurkha. After seeing how Gurkha veterans and their families suffered in Nepal following the devastating earthquake in 2015, he decided to use his walk to raise funds for The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

## TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Jim has come across his fair share of dangers and obstacles during his journey.

“The most challenging part to this point has been the coast around Argyle, where there are no defined paths. Sometimes I was clinging to the cliff edges or hacking my way through forests. I have been prickled, nettled, and electrocuted. I have fallen 20 feet down a waterfall and then fell in the sea and rivers. It's been a challenge.”

The 61-year-old even remained cheerful after surviving a terrifying fall from a cliff in Glenelg. “I'm no dafter than I was before!” he said.

“I was walking along and what I was stood on just crumbled underneath me. I didn't get any warning, I didn't have time to worry or panic. I woke up 20ft below, I don't know how long I was unconscious for.”



He shouted for help and was heard by a nearby group of canoeists who called for a rescue team. He was winched off the cliff by a coastguard team and taken to hospital. Jim had a lucky escape, with only a broken thumb and cuts and bruises to show for the fall. Undeterred, he was back on the road after just two days' rest.

Jim's walk has taken him through some of the toughest terrain he has ever experienced, most days covering between 15 and 20 miles. He has been bowled over by the kindness and hospitality of local residents, whether it's a place to park the motorhome, the offer of a hot meal, or use of their washing machine.

## AN ASTOUNDING ACHIEVEMENT

The support Jim receives through his Facebook page gives him the boost he needs to continue onward. “My motivation comes from the hundreds of good will messages and donations, and what I am raising for our friends the Gurkhas.”

On 2 December, still in Scotland, and having walked over 4,000 miles, Jim's daily post revealed just how much this support means to him:

“Morning everybody. Freezing cold and miserable...weather's not so good either. But forget cold and miserable, sleet and snow and gale force winds, forget all that. Because what matters is my JustGiving page for The Gurkha Welfare Trust has just gone through the £8,000 mark. We can get warm, we can get dry, but what we want is money for The GWT – and that's what we're getting!”

You can help Jim towards his target of £50,000 by donating here:  
[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richard-morton11](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richard-morton11)

Feeling inspired by Jim's incredible story? Test yourself with one of our challenge events in 2022 – get out there, get active, and get fundraising!

23-25 SEPTEMBER 2022  
**TRAILWALKER**  
4 PEOPLE | 100KM | 30 HOURS



## GET READY FOR TRAILWALKER 2022!

**100km. A team of four. A support crew. 30 hours.**

Trailwalker is the ultimate in long distance challenges – a 100km trek across the rugged South Downs, finishing at Brighton Racecourse.

Organised in partnership with Oxfam, the event is open to all, and you will be raising funds to support both charities. Whether you aim to run the route and compete with the fastest teams, or take a slower pace with time to enjoy the scenery, this will be an unforgettable weekend.

So set up your team, put in the training miles, assemble your support crew, kit and supplies... and look forward to the cheering crowds and delicious curry that await you at the finish!

Sign up now at [www.gwt.org.uk/trailwalker2022](http://www.gwt.org.uk/trailwalker2022)

## THE DOKO CHALLENGE RETURNS

Take on the ultimate race faced by Gurkha Army recruits in Nepal! Your challenge is to run 5km carrying a weighted Doko basket, with your choice of weight from 5kg, 10kg or 15kg. You can aim for the target finish time of 46 minutes, or just have fun running with your friends. Either way you will deserve the medal and chilled beer awaiting you at the finish line!

Register now at [www.gwt.org.uk/doko](http://www.gwt.org.uk/doko)

The Doko Challenge North – Greystoke Castle, Penrith – 8 May 2022

The Doko Challenge South – Wimbledon Common, London – 12 June 2022



## A PRESCRIPTION FOR LIFE

As our Gurkha veterans and widows grow older and more fragile, we provide them with an international standard of medical care at our clinics, medical camps, and through home visits by our Pensioner Support Teams.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who donated in response to our last appeal, helping us to provide the medical care our pensioners so desperately need.

With your support we are providing medication, equipment and mobility aids, and vaccines to keep them safe in the winter months.

We are also supplying vital diagnostic kits that our mobile medical teams need to spot and monitor underlying health conditions.





# Conquering Mera Peak in aid of Gurkha veterans



Andrew Bentham's mission to reach the summit of Mera Peak was inspired by a trek three years earlier, when he and his friends hiked to Everest Basecamp. Uplifted by this achievement, he decided he would return to take on Nepal's highest trekking peak.

To complement his challenge, Andrew chose to raise funds for The Gurkha Welfare Trust. As a veteran himself, he has always been aware of the Gurkhas' bravery and skill.

"As a teenager I heard stories of how the Gurkhas were resilient, robust, and resourceful," Andrew said. "The reason why I chose The Gurkha Welfare Trust was because I wanted to do something for the people of Nepal...the veterans, the widows, the families."

## Preparing for the Challenge

To train for the expedition Andrew took part in many UK events, tackled a number of peaks including 108 Wainwrights in the Lake District, and hiked to the top of Snowdon twice.

"When I was training, there was no way I could replicate the altitude of Mera Peak," Andrew said. "All I could do was make sure I was physically fit enough to achieve the goal of getting to the top of Mera Peak."

## Reaching the Summit

After two long years of training, Andrew finally arrived in Nepal in October 2021, having postponed his trip due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. "It was an uplifting feeling to be back in Nepal," he said.

Andrew's trek to Mera Peak was solo assisted, hiking with only a mountain guide and a porter by his side.

Conditions were favourable during the climb with clear blue skies, but the

hot sun overhead proved to be a real challenge. After a tough 10-day trek, he was elated to reach the south peak of the mountain at an altitude of 6,150 metres.

Conquering Mera Peak was thrilling, but even more exciting was the tremendous support Andrew received along the way. He has raised over £3,500 for The GWT.

"To say 'thank you' is not enough, but it's all I can really give," he said.

"So many people were so generous with what they donated over these two years. I knew that the funds these people were raising went directly to helping the lives of people in Nepal. It's been a fantastic experience."

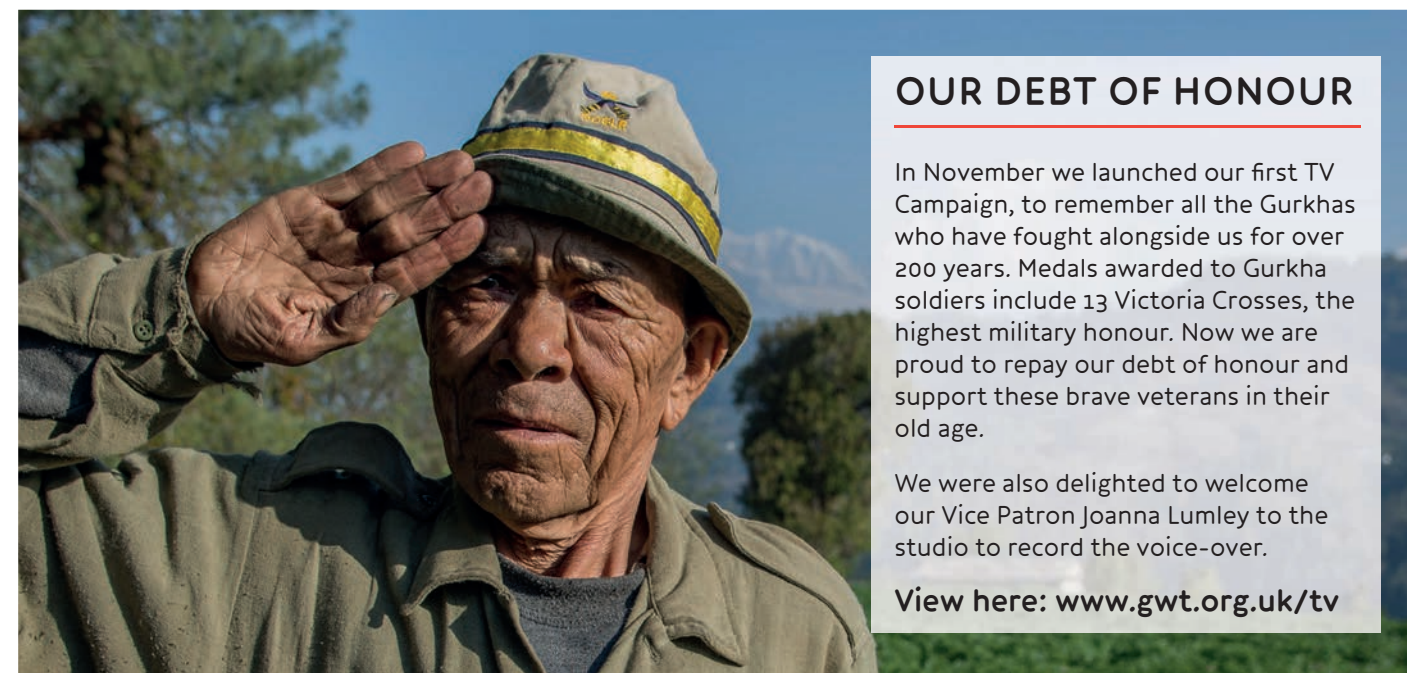
## Elsewhere at GWT

### NEW RANGE OF PRODUCTS IN OUR ONLINE SHOP

Our online shop features a great selection of exclusive GWT-branded merchandise. Show your support with a classic GWT hoodie, or browse for gifts for your friends and family – or even your pet!

We have recently introduced an exciting new range including the GWT rugby shirt and baseball cap, embroidered with the famous crossed kukri logo.

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



### OUR DEBT OF HONOUR

In November we launched our first TV Campaign, to remember all the Gurkhas who have fought alongside us for over 200 years. Medals awarded to Gurkha soldiers include 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest military honour. Now we are proud to repay our debt of honour and support these brave veterans in their old age.

We were also delighted to welcome our Vice Patron Joanna Lumley to the studio to record the voice-over.

View here: [www.gwt.org.uk/tv](https://www.gwt.org.uk/tv)

## MORE RUNS AND CHALLENGES IN 2022

### EASTER 50 CHALLENGE

9 April 2022

The first of our new challenge events, offering you a 25k or 50k route. The Easter 50 takes you through Windsor Great Park, Runnymede, and along the scenic Thames Path.

### BRIGHTON MARATHON WEEKEND

10 April 2022

Run the 10k or Marathon along the spectacular Brighton seafront and through this colourful, bustling city.

### JURASSIC COAST CHALLENGE

14-15 May 2022

Walk, jog or run the famous Jurassic Coast in Dorset.

### EDINBURGH MARATHON FESTIVAL

29 May 2022

Edinburgh Marathon is a fast and flat course ideal for your first marathon or if you are looking for a PB!

### RIDE LONDON

29 May 2022

A unique opportunity to cycle 100 miles on traffic-free roads through the heart of London then on through the beautiful Essex countryside.

For more details on these events visit [www.gwt.org.uk/challenges](https://www.gwt.org.uk/challenges)

## THE BREMONT GWT WATCH PRESENTATIONS

On Wednesday 17th November, just outside Henley-on-Thames, a select group of The Gurkha Welfare Trust supporters and watch enthusiasts gathered at The Wing, the recently opened headquarters of Bremont Watch Company. They were presented with their GWT Bremont Broadsword watches by Bremont co-founder, Giles English.

As part of our successful partnership with Bremont they have created a limited edition of 50 watches, the sales of which generate a substantial donation from Bremont to The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

For more information, please contact Piers Lawson on 01722 343102 or [pierslawson@gwt.org.uk](mailto:pierslawson@gwt.org.uk)







Photo credit: The Ritz London

## Win Tea for Two at The Ritz with Dame Joanna

Enter the GWT raffle for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet national treasure Dame Joanna Lumley. One lucky winner and guest will share Afternoon Tea with the esteemed actress, presenter, author and activist at the world-famous Ritz Hotel in Mayfair, London.

Tickets cost £5 each

Enter now at: [www.gwt.org.uk/raffle2022](http://www.gwt.org.uk/raffle2022)

EXCLUSIVE PRIZE -  
ENTER NOW!

## From The Gurkha Museum: New online lecture series

Gharma Sunnu, translating to mean 'To listen at home', was set up by The Gurkha Museum over lockdown in 2021. The purpose of the Gharm Sunnu online activities is ultimately to increase reach and engagement beyond those within easy travelling distance of Winchester.

Bringing their exhibitions and lectures online as well as introducing a brand-new podcast series, Gharm Sunnu's most recent online exhibition was on mountaineering within the Brigade of Gurkhas, titled 'Tales from the Mountains'.

The exhibition details the remarkable mountaineering achievements of Gurkhas, both past and present. It features interviews with the first double amputee mountaineer to scale Mera Peak, Hari Budha Magar; and Major Gethin Davies, the man leading the British Army's 2022 expedition back to Nepal. The exhibition can still be viewed on the Museum's website alongside the rest of their Gharm Sunnu series.



After four successful live streamed lectures in 2021 (most recently on Field Marshal Bill Slim, presented by former Gurkha Officers Bob Couldrey, John Mackinlay and Ray Pett), the Museum looks forward to more lectures in the new year. We will be launching a new set of podcasts including a VJ Day special as well as stories behind three of the battlefield paintings on show in Winchester.

Visit [www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk/gharma-sunnu](http://www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk/gharma-sunnu) to find out more information.

## From the Brigade: The New Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas

In November the Brigade welcomed Colonel David Robinson as its new Colonel.

Colonel David Robinson joined the British Army in 1991 into the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles which subsequently became part of The Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR) in 1994. During his initial tours in UK and Brunei he deployed to Northern Ireland with The Parachute Regiment. He was involved in training in Hong Kong, New Zealand and Swaziland, and spent two years as a Platoon Commander at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

He went on to command an RGR Rifle Company, deploying to Bosnia and then the Ivory Coast before returning to the Gurkha fold in 2007 with 2 RGR deploying to Afghanistan.

After two years as Chief of Staff at Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.



In 2011 he took command of 1 RGR and then moved the Battalion and dependants to Brunei where he took on the additional role as Garrison Commander to the established UK base there. In 2013, he returned to the UK as Directing Staff at the Advanced Command and Staff Course before being promoted to Colonel in 2015.

He then deployed to Ukraine before being assigned as Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations and Engagement at Headquarters Regional Command which also oversaw British Gurkhas Nepal and the Gurkha recruitment there. In 2018, he moved to take on Training Operations overseeing the Army's (including Gurkhas) Basic Training.

[www.gurkhabde.com](http://www.gurkhabde.com)

