

Your Gurkha Welfare Trust newsletter
Samachara means 'news' in Nepali

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HEARTFELT THANKS FROM VETERAN'S GRANDDAUGHTER

We recently received a touching letter from Lilamaya Tamang, the granddaughter of late World War Two veteran Ramsingh Gurung. Lilamaya thanked our team for providing Ramsingh with a pension and medical support, which helped him live with dignity in his later years.

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A nation gave us their sons – clean water is the least they deserve



Times are hard. The accompanying appeal with this newsletter references the UK Government’s withdrawal of funding from our long-established water programme in Nepal. This, despite the programme continually being rated in the highest category for effectiveness worldwide.

Though we will continue the projects, it will be on a much reduced scale. Inevitably there will

now be people who will miss out on having access to something so fundamental that we here in the UK take for granted – clean and safe drinking water. Lives are at risk as a result.

We find ourselves in the invidious position of having to ask you, our generous supporters, to help us bridge the gap in Government funding. Especially in the economy we find ourselves in. Whatever you are able to contribute please know what an immense difference it makes to the lives of men and women in Nepal.

Some of these people fought for Britain in years gone by. Some of them saw their husbands, their sons, or their brothers head to Gurkha recruitment and never come home. We owe them for their bravery, their

courage and we owe Nepal – the country that gave us its sons.

I rarely use this section of our newsletter to put out such a call to arms – but such is my frustration at the situation, I feel it is necessary today. Over the coming months I will be monitoring the water programme delivery and our funding situation closely, to ensure that we are able to get enough support to fund those most in need.

Dhanyabad

Al Howard

[Signature]

CEO, The Gurkha Welfare Trust

A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION!

Ramsingh lived to be 100 years old, and on his 100th birthday the whole family gathered together to celebrate his long life.

Sadly, Ramsingh recently passed away, and his granddaughter Lilamaya got in touch to express her gratitude for the work of The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

“My grandfather received regular visits from GWT team members, who would bring medicines and seasonal clothes to him. During his last days, he was admitted to the hospital in Kathmandu which was also fully funded by the GWT.”



A LETTER OF APPRECIATION

To The Gurkha Welfare Trust,

On behalf of our beloved Centenarian and veteran, my late grandfather Ramsingh Gurung, we would like to thank the entire Gurkha Welfare Trust team wholeheartedly for their support and care (both emotionally and financially) that our family and my late Grandfather received throughout these years.

Born in the rural village of Tikhadhunga, Dhading, Nepal in the year 1923 AD, our late grandfather Ramsingh Gurung joined the Gurkha Regiment Army and fought during World War II with the utmost bravery and honour during the years 1943 AD – 1946 AD. After the conclusion of World War II, he retired and returned home to his family in the village and continued living a simple yet peaceful and beautiful life. At the time of his return, he was not aware of any pensions/benefits he should have received for his service during World War II as a Gurkha Rifleman. However, after almost six decades later from his retirement, in the year 2007 AD, I was able to establish his contacts with The Gurkha Welfare Trust office located in Kathmandu, Nepal. The team at The Gurkha Welfare Trust were very kind, respectful, empathetic and did their very best to assist my grandfather in receiving his Welfare Pension from the office regularly.

Back then, we didn’t have access to electricity and proper road transportation in our village. The team from The Gurkha Welfare Trust had to trek for a day from the nearby town to hand in medications, seasonal clothing, and a welfare pension to my grandfather. Yet, the team continued to deliver their utmost care and kindness to my ageing grandfather and a few other veterans around the neighbouring villages. The team showed genuine support and care both financially and emotionally during the times of various calamities and illnesses, such as the earthquake in 2015 and the Covid-19 pandemic. Our late grandfather was hospitalised during the Covid-19 outbreak, but he came out triumphant and we were able to celebrate his glorious 100th Birthday with all the family members around. It was truly a magical and blessed moment for us all. During his final days he was again admitted to the hospital in Kathmandu and peacefully passed away on the 21st of December 2022. In all those difficult times, The Gurkha Welfare Trust always provided their presence and support.

Once again, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude and thankfulness to The Gurkha Welfare Trust (all the team members) for providing a Welfare Pension, financial and health services from the year 2007 AD to 2023 AD and making my late grandfather’s final years comfortable and memorable.

Our best wishes that The Gurkha Welfare Trust continues their great humanitarian and social services among the communities in need.

Kind regards and best wishes,

Lilamaya Tamang

(Granddaughter of late Ramsingh Gurung)

RAMSINGH GURUNG - A LIFE LIVED WITH DIGNITY



A YOUNG MAN IN THE ARMY

At just 20 years old, Ramsingh Gurung was recruited as a Gurkha Rifleman in 1943, at the peak of World War Two. After his recruitment and training in Hyderabad in India, he was stationed at Kerala, Ranchi, and Burma. Over the course of three and a half years, he fought with the utmost bravery and courage.

SUPPORTED BY THE GWT

When the war ended, Ramsingh returned to his village in Nepal and reunited with his family. He lived a humble and peaceful life, working for a while as a potter in Pokhara, but it was difficult to make ends meet and support his family.

When we learned that Ramsingh needed help, we ensured he received a monthly pension and medical care. With support from the GWT, he was able to live a long and healthy life.

RIP DR GANESH THAPA, 1986 – 2023



A BELOVED COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

It was with immense sadness that we announced the passing of our staff member, Dr Ganesh Thapa in January.

Dr Ganesh (pictured) was one of the 72 passengers and crew aboard the Yeti Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara which crashed on Sunday 15 January. Having visited his family, Dr Ganesh was returning to The Gurkha Welfare Trust's headquarters when the tragedy occurred.

A diligent, caring and skilled doctor, Dr Ganesh was liked by all he met. He leaves behind a wife and young daughter.

Speaking at the time, our CEO, Al Howard commented: *"We are all devastated and heartbroken about the death of our beloved colleague, Dr Ganesh Thapa. Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by this horrendous disaster in Nepal."*

Our office in Nepal will be closed on Monday 16 Jan to observe the national day of mourning. May the deceased rest in peace."

Understandably the teams in Nepal and the UK remain shocked and saddened. Plans are afoot for a memorial in his name. We will update you in a future Samachara when this comes to fruition.

PENSIONERS ENJOY TRIP TO SACRED SITE

It was a great privilege for pensioners from our Dharan Residential Home for vulnerable Gurkha veterans and widows to visit the sacred site of Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha.

"To fulfil the wishes and dreams of our residents is our first priority. We were pleased to see their smiles and happy faces," said staff member Dev Bhakta Thapa.



GWT AMBASSADORS UPDATE

RECORD-BREAKER HARI

By the time you read this article it is hoped that Gurkha Welfare Trust Ambassador and Gurkha veteran, Hari Budha Magar, will have broken the world record to become the first ever double above-knee amputee to summit Mount Everest.

Hari is an inspiring man who dreamt of climbing Mount Everest as a young boy. He was born in a small, remote village in Western Nepal. At just 19 years old, Hari joined the British Army, going on to serve 15 years with The Royal Gurkha Rifles. In 2010, he was injured while serving in Afghanistan and lost both of his legs above the knee.

Explaining the plan before he set off, Hari described the route he would take:

"I will climb the world's tallest mountain via the South Col route from Nepal. The route weaves through the treacherous Khumbu Ice Fall to the Western Cwm, before heading up the imposing wall of ice that is the Lhotse Face."

I will then trek across the Yellow Band and the Geneva Spur to the South Col. The South Col is the site of Camp IV, from which I will make my summit attempt. My final push will take me via the Balcony, South Summit and the famous Hillary Step."



Hari raised over £250k to fund his trek. We look forward to reporting on the whole adventure in the next edition of Samachara.

Find out more about Hari at: www.gwt.org.uk/Hari

WELCOME, MIRA

The Gurkha Welfare Trust is also happy to announce a new Ambassador for our work. Mira Rai is a Nepali trail runner and sky runner. Mira boasts an incredible record of racing achievements and was previously named National Geographic Adventurer of the Year.

"I was just a regular village girl and was living a simple village life but I aspired to do something big and meaningful, defy the socio-economic constraints that held me back."

Mira is a role model to thousands of young women in Nepal and an ardent supporter of our work.



JOHNNY'S JOURNEY ACROSS NEPAL

Meanwhile, another Trust Ambassador Johnny Fenn has completed his own incredible feat – walking the length of Nepal.

Johnny and his team, Mini and Rakshya, started out in Jhulagjat on the border with India before heading east for some 1,400 miles. Johnny's journey took him over 100 days and he and his

team mostly survived on basic food such as rice "dal bhat"; no meat and just water or tea to drink.

His incredible efforts raised funds for The Gurkha Welfare Trust and Hello World.

As an established photographer, Johnny took some amazing shots along the way. You can read the full story of his incredible trek and view a gallery at:

www.gwt.org.uk/walking-nepal



LOOKING AFTER A HERO IN OUR RESIDENTIAL HOME

We would like to thank all the supporters who donated to our last appeal, which highlighted our rehabilitation services for injured Gurkha veterans and widows at our Residential Homes.

These homes in Kaski and Dharan provide round-the-clock care to some of our most vulnerable pensioners, who would otherwise struggle to live alone. With no comparable facility in Nepal, they set the standard of care for the elderly.

Padam Bahadur Rai, aged 79, is one of the Gurkha veterans who lives at our home in Dharan. Much beloved and full of character, Padam has been looked after by our staff since 2018.

NEARLY A DECADE OF BRAVE SERVICE

Padam served as a Gurkha for just under 10 years. He enlisted with the 2/7 Gurkha Rifles in 1961 and trained in India before being sent out to Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Brunei.

“Those ten years were some of my most treasured times, during which I battled against adversaries,” said Padam. “In Brunei I would carry a hefty load of supplies to the general purpose machine gun.

“After being released from the British Army, I went back to Nepal in 1971. I continued to reside in my village with my family once I was sent back home.”

About 12 years after retiring from the Army, Padam discovered The Gurkha Welfare Trust’s services. He registered with our Area Welfare Centre in Diktal, and for decades we ensured that he lived comfortably by providing him with a monthly pension and medical care.

A LIFELINE IN HIS TIME OF NEED

Four years ago, Padam suffered from a sudden illness. He was in a particularly vulnerable situation as he was living in a remote village, far away from any hospitals or health posts. One of his family members reached out to the Trust and we immediately arranged for his transportation to a hospital.

Once he was in a more stable condition, we invited him to live at our Residential Home in Dharan to receive round-the-clock care.

When it comes to looking after our Gurkha veterans and widows, we take a holistic approach. We wanted to not only ensure Padam recovered from his illness, but also monitor his overall nutrition and mental wellbeing. It is all about boosting the quality of life for our pensioners in every way possible, to help them live the lives they deserve.

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Padam before rehabilitation



EXCELLENT CARE

After admission to the Residential Home, Padam soon gained a healthy weight, enjoying nutritious meals.

“My initial impression of the Residential Home was that they provided excellent lodging, medical care, and cuisine in a pleasant setting,” Padam said.

“My favourite is the Dhero (thick porridge) with chicken curry soup. The Residential Home provides this meal every week and I love it.”

During the day, our staff organise plenty of activities to keep residents busy, including board games, field trips, and celebrations for religious holidays.

“I like taking quizzes and playing indoor games. I enjoy exploring new locations too,” Padam said.

“Most recently, we visited Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha. I also appreciate how the Residential Home respectfully observes all the various holidays, which helps me connect with the other residents and is just lovely.”

“I owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone at The Gurkha Welfare Trust, and the donors in the UK, for the great Residential Home service. It gives us veterans a warm, comfortable place to receive high-quality, all-encompassing care and I am happy to stay here.”



Padam (right) and a fellow Gurkha veteran on a summer outing

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS IN NEPAL

As part of our Schools Programme we repair and refurbish schools in rural Nepal. This could be anything from repairing a leaky roof to constructing a gender-separate toilet block, or simply providing new desks and benches. Even a small improvement can make a huge difference to the comfort and well-being of students.



Classroom furniture



Gender-separate toilets



Handwashing stations



Repairs and repainting



Incinerator and secure fencing



New science laboratory

BRINGING CLEAN WATER TO EVERY FAMILY
IN LAMAGAON

In rural Nepal many people do not have easy access to clean, safe water, one of the most basic necessities of life. Our water projects in Nepal construct tap stands for every household in a village, bringing clean water straight to villagers' doorsteps.

One of our recent projects was in Lamagaon, a rural village situated 1,240 metres above sea level in Nepal's Lamjung District. Although the village is only 110km east of Pokhara, it is a steep and winding ride on unpaved roads that can take up to seven hours by car to reach.

Lamagaon previously had a drinking water system with communal taps built in 1979. However, with only a few taps to share between 721 villagers, people faced long queues and had to carry heavy buckets back to their homes. During monsoon season, mud and debris would wash into the water supply, making it unsafe to drink.

"In the past, we had communal taps where we had to queue," said Uma Gurung, one of the villagers in Lamagaon. "The supply was



irregular. We normally queued for 10 to 15 minutes. However, during the dry season it used to be very difficult. We queued for hours, sometimes until 11 or 12 at night."

Over the course of 15 months, our team worked together with the village to pipe clean water into Lamagaon. In total, we constructed 115 tap stands - one for every household, plus taps for the local primary school and community hall.

For every water project, we encourage the whole village to get involved so that the community takes ownership of the project. We also promote leadership roles for the women in the village. Uma served as the Treasurer for Lamagaon's water project

and contributed to the system's construction. "We did a lot of work, digging trenches in the cliffs and carrying loads," she said.

Having a water source outside of each home reduced the burden on women and children, who had spent hours collecting water each day. Now, children in the village have the time to attend school, while women can focus on other work. Villagers have also started to use their taps as a simple irrigation system to grow crops in the dry season, to maintain a healthier diet.

"It is very convenient now. We don't have to queue. We don't have to stand in line to take a bath - we now have access to water anytime we want. It is also convenient for cooking. I use the water for my vegetables and flowers too.

"I want to thank the supporters for helping us install such a wonderful project in our village. Dherai Dherai Dhanyabad! (Thank you very very much!)"



GWT STAFF TAKE ON INCREDIBLE CHALLENGES!

Our team in Nepal work tirelessly throughout the year, but even so, some of our staff have found the time to take on phenomenal challenges to fundraise for our work.



A GRAND CYCLE THROUGH THE NEPALI HILLS

Three of our staff in Nepal set off on 4 March to cycle 135km through the stunning hills of Darjeeling in just two days. They raised over £1,300 for the Trust's vital work supporting Gurkha veterans and widows.

Vinod, Indra, and Rajendra started in Sikkim and rode through Namche, Singtam and Teesta, covering elevations up to 2,140m. Vinod said it was a surreal experience cycling



through the hills of Darjeeling, where his forefathers once walked.

"It is so significant in history and tradition and above all, it was to raise funds for The Gurkha Welfare Trust, so that our old and frail pensioners could continue to receive the care that they need," he said.

Indra and Vinod joined the Brigade of Gurkhas in 1990 and served for 30 years with the British Army before coming to work for the Trust. Rajendra is a doctor and the son of a Gurkha veteran, and he

has provided medical care to our pensioners for 12 years.

"[Working for the GWT] has given us immense pride and satisfaction to serve our own fellow Gurkha veterans," said Vinod. "The Trust's pension is a lifeline for many pensioners, allowing them to live with dignity. These pensioners need our support more than ever, especially now they are frail and in old age."

TACKLING THE EVEREST MARATHON

Another GWT staff member, Phatta Gurung, will take on this year's Everest Marathon on 29 May. He aims to raise £6,000 for our vital work supporting Gurkha veterans and widows in Nepal.

This will be a particularly challenging race for Phatta, as he had only a few months to prepare and has never before climbed above an altitude of 4,000 metres.


Phatta will be taking on the highest marathon in the world - starting at Everest Base Camp.

"This is a massive task for me, but it is nothing compared to what our veterans have gone through," he said.


"It is those Gurkha veterans who today have very little despite having done so much for the UK during the most challenging of times in the history of the British Army. Without their sacrifices, I and my family would not have been able to enjoy the freedom and lifestyle that we have today."

Phatta recently joined Johnny Fenn for part of his walk across Nepal (see article on page 5).





Inspired to take on a challenge for the 'Bravest of the Brave'?
Check out our upcoming events at www.gwt.org.uk/events
Or call 01722 323955 to tell us about your own venture



Why do people leave a gift in their Will to The Gurkha Welfare Trust?

Everyone has their own reason for leaving a gift to the Trust in their Will. These gifts play a vital part in supporting those Gurkhas who have fought with utmost courage and loyalty alongside British soldiers and their families.

We hear many wonderful and gracious stories from supporters. Some share tales of comradeship with Gurkhas encountered during their own military service. Others tell stories of respect and admiration for Gurkhas passed down the generations: some humorous, others describing acts of bravery, each poignant in its own way.

One of our supporters, Diane, shared that her decision to leave a gift in her Will stems from a family history intertwined with Gurkha soldiers. At the beginning of the

twentieth century, her grandfather led a Regiment of Gurkhas. When he and the Regiment were due to return home to the UK from service overseas, her grandmother, who was pregnant at the time, was sent ahead with the children.

The day after the men reached Tidworth Garrison, Diane's grandmother very sadly died in childbirth. It was her grandfather's Gurkha soldiers who, with the utmost respect for their CO and his family, proudly acted as pallbearers. Diane says that her grandfather loved his men dearly.

Some supporters have no direct connection but leave a gift in their Will as an act of gratitude to veterans who helped us fight for the freedoms we enjoy today. Whatever your connection with the Gurkhas, will you consider leaving a gift in your Will?

If you would like more information, please contact Carolyn Derryman, our Legacy Co-ordinator on 01722 343110 or carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk. Carolyn would be delighted to send our guide to leaving a gift in your Will, or you can download it from our website:

www.gwt.org.uk/legacy



FROM THE BRIGADE

On the evening of 17th January The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, with Pipes and Drums from The Second Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, performed a Sounding Retreat at the House of Lords.

Taking the salute was the Speaker of the House of Commons, Chief of General Staff (British Army) and the Rt Hon the Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton, TD PC.

The Band, along with the Pipes and Drums, put on an impeccable display of music and military precision marching in front of guests of The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

The event was the idea of Lord Lancaster who is also a Brigadier and the Deputy Colonel Commandant Brigade of Gurkhas. The chief guest was the Rt. Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State

for Defence and a friend and direct contemporary at Sandhurst of our CEO. A number of personnel from across the Brigade of Gurkhas attended including our Colonel Commandant Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, Chairman of the GWT.

The event was followed by drinks and dinner in the House of Lords for the invited guests.



THE GURKHAS IN WWII - FIERCE AND COURAGEOUS FIGHTERS

The 8th of May 1945 marked the date of unconditional surrender of Axis forces in Europe, known as V.E. Day. Prior to this historic moment the British 8th Army had fought first in North Africa against Italian and German Axis troops, and with the collapse of the Axis holdings there, had continued their advance north into Sicily and the Italian mainland, even as Italy surrendered and joined the Allied cause.

Throughout these campaigns Gurkha soldiers had fought as part of the 4th Indian Division of the 8th Army, taking part in famous set-piece battles at Tobruk and El-Alamein in North Africa and then once operations moved to Italy Gurkha troops became heavily involved in the advance north.

Most notably, Gurkhas fought at the Battles of Monte Cassino in 1944 as part of Allied attempts to take the ancient monastery of that name in the face of fanatical German resistance as part of the Allied advance toward Rome. As the battle progressed, the 1st Battalion

of the 9th Gurkha Rifles played an important part in an attack towards the monastery and came close to reaching it, holding out for over a week before being forced back.

As the Allies pushed on and Rome was taken, the campaign shifted from arduous mountain warfare to continuous river crossings and bitter battles for small village strongholds. Gurkha units, including the 43rd Gurkha Lorried Infantry Brigade, composed of three Gurkha Battalions, were at the forefront of these pushes and reached some of the northernmost points of Allied advance of the entire theatre by the time the war ended, facing last-ditch German resistance in battles such as the capture of the village of Medicina on 16th March 1945.

Two Gurkha soldiers received the Victoria Cross for their actions during this period, both posthumously. Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa of the 9th Gurkha Rifles was killed covering the withdrawal of his fellow soldiers and rescuing wounded men under



heavy German fire near San Marino in September 1944, whilst Rifleman Thaman Gurung of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) was killed suppressing a German advance with Bren Gun fire and allowing the withdrawal of the rest of his platoon out of danger near Monte San Bartolo in November 1944.

The Gurkhas' role in defeating the Axis was instrumental, and in so doing they faced some of the fiercest fighting seen in the entire conflict.

Explore the history of the Gurkhas: thegurkhamuseum.co.uk



UPCOMING EVENTS & CHALLENGES

THE DOKO CHALLENGE SOUTH

11 June 2023

Run in the footsteps of the Bravest of the Brave! Join us at Wimbledon Common for a 5km race with a difference.

GURKHA GOLF DAY

29 June 2023

Golf clubs at the ready for our annual Golf Day at the beautiful Bristol and Clifton Golf Club.

TRAILWALKER

22-24 September 2023

Get ready for the adventure of a lifetime! As a team of four, trek 100km across the South Downs, taking in stunning scenery along the way.

Find out more:

www.gwt.org.uk/events

01722 323955 | events@gwt.org.uk



THE GWT SHOP

We are loving this GWT branded dog collar and lead, available now for just £20.

Our online shop has a range of quality clothing and gifts - shop now while stocks last!

shop.gwt.org.uk



TEDDY BEAR AUCTION RETURNS!

Auction runs from 22nd - 29th May

The Gurkha Welfare Trust's supporters have been hard at work dressing adorable teddy bears in a Gurkha or Nepali theme for our incredibly popular teddy auction!

www.gwt.org.uk/teddy-auction

Bidding starts 22nd May



THE ULTIMATE TEAM ENDURANCE EVENT

22-24 SEPTEMBER 2023
TRAILWALKER
4 PEOPLE | 100KM | 30 HOURS

Take on the Trailwalker Challenge! As a team of four, walk, jog or run 100km across the South Downs alongside Gurkha soldiers in under 30 hours, raising vital funds in support of The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Free Camping • Exclusive medal & T-shirt • Checkpoint support • Gurkha curry at the finish

trailwalker.gwt.org.uk