

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

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PROUD VETERAN PHUR BAHADUR RECALLS HIS ARMY DAYS

We caught up with eighty-year-old Gurkha veteran Phur Bahadur Sunwar and his wife when they arrived at our Patrol Base in Jiri earlier this year to attend a quarterly clinic for medical check-ups.

Visiting the base is a huge boost to the well-being of our veterans, as they not only receive vital medical care, but also have a chance to chat with former comrades and share memories of their Army days.

Continues on page 3

“I was recruited into the Army in 1961 in Dharan. I only had 25 Rupees when I went for the recruitment barefoot.”

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Elections always provide a degree of preceding uncertainty and an element of the unknown immediately following them.

However, we also know that The Gurkha Welfare Trust remains dynamic enough to react to whatever challenges may arise.

You may remember that last year, following government cuts, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's funding for the construction of water projects in Nepal was withdrawn. Yet thanks

to your support, we continue to deliver safe water to communities in the hills.

Even after the pandemic, during the cost-of-living crisis here in the UK, we were still able to manage our finances effectively to ensure that Gurkha veterans and their families were provided financial support and essential medical care.

These examples prove that, with your ongoing support, we can continue to weather these storms. And in Nepal, the storms continue to be more physical in nature.

I urge you to read the update on page eight, which outlines the worsening monsoon conditions the team are battling as you read this.

It underlines the reason why our disaster risk reduction strategy is so important.

Nepal is one of the harshest environments in the world, made even more challenging with poor infrastructure and the constant risk of seismic activity. It is why we need to ensure we stand ready when disaster occurs and above all, that the communities we serve are prepared for every eventuality.

Jai GWT!



Al Howard
CEO, The Gurkha Welfare Trust

RECOGNITION IN THE KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST

We are absolutely delighted to announce that GWT Ambassador and record breaking mountaineer Hari Budha Magar has been awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the King's Birthday Honours for service to disability awareness.

GWT Chairman Lt Gen. Richard Wardlaw was also recognised in the military division of the King's Honours list, becoming a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB).



Hari Budha Magar MBE



Lt Gen. Richard Wardlaw CB

PROVIDING A VITAL MEDICAL SERVICE TO VETERANS

Our teams in Nepal are based at our Area Welfare Centres (AWCs), which run quarterly clinics where pensioners can access medical services alongside collecting their pension payment.

Staff also head out into the field to carry out home visits, providing medical care to the most vulnerable and to those who live in remote regions and are unable to travel to a clinic.

Medical staff carry out health checks including weight measurement, blood sugar level tests and blood pressure checks, sharing advice and exercises to help maintain their health as well as provide relief from joint pain.





Phur Bahadur and Mina Devi

PHUR BHAHADUR'S STORY

Phur Bahadur Sunwar and his wife Mina Devi travelled to Patrol Base Jiri on foot. Phur is a veteran of the 10th Gurkha Rifles and thanks to your support has been receiving a pension from the Trust since 2006.

"I was recruited into the Army in 1961 in Dharan - from there we travelled to Jogmani, on to Calcutta, and then flew to Singapore. Over there, we trained and learned how to use weapons. We also had to participate in physical training sessions and parades. First, they used to train us by carrying a stick, and later they gave us an SLR rifle.

"During my time, many weapons have changed. Instead of the SLR, the AR-15 was introduced, and the LMG was replaced by the GPMG. The two-inch mortar and rocket launcher were among the many weapons that were changed. I also received training on a firearm that was on a ship. Not everyone could use it, you needed to be strong."

A MEDAL FOR BRAVERY

"I fought in Borneo against Indonesia and received a medal for my efforts. We had to venture into a dense forest where the trees were so tall that our eyes couldn't gauge their height. You could only see a small portion of the sky. We had to walk through swampy areas where we couldn't see the ground.

"There was an incident in which five or six soldiers from the 11th platoon died in a boat accident. We had to ambush the enemy and wait for them in the forest. We couldn't speak or make any noise while walking through the jungle. It used to rain heavily and we had to carry our rations for four to five days as well as a mosquito net. Our boots and clothes were dropped from the helicopter so we could discard our old ones and put on new ones.

"I served in the Army for 9 years and 230 days. They said that those who would leave the Army would receive a payment of NPR 360. At that time, I raised my hand. It had only been six months since I was promoted to Lance Corporal. After leaving the Army, I went to India and worked as a security guard for 30 years in a company. After retiring, I came back to Nepal."

THE PENSION IS A LIFELINE FOR VETERANS

"I receive a monthly pension from GWT*. Sometimes I go to collect my money, and sometimes my youngest son does it for me.

"My farm is located quite a distance from my home, so I have to hire someone to carry manure to the field, an ox to plough the field, and sometimes labourers to help with the work. Of course we also have to buy food and clothes, so all of the pension is spent on those necessities. I enjoy eating meat once a week. I love consuming milk, ghee, and honey.

"I am happy to have received support from the British public. We have worked for them, so in return they are helping us. If not, then life would have been difficult. I would like to thank all the supporters. God bless them all. I hope they live long and continue to help people like us."

*The monthly pension is currently NPR 17,500 - approximately £108.

(NPR = Nepalese Rupees)



A visit to the Patrol Base is a welcome opportunity to swap Army stories.

MEET THE TEAM: INTERVIEW WITH EZINA RAI

MEET EZINA

As the population of Gurkha veterans and their widows in Nepal ages, the medical support that The Gurkha Welfare Trust provides becomes increasingly important.

As well as holding regular clinics at our Area Welfare Centres, we have teams of medical staff who travel into rural and remote parts of Nepal to deliver support to those who are unable to travel to the clinics.

We spoke to Ezina Rai who has been working for The Gurkha Welfare Trust in Nepal for two years. She began her role with us as a Medical Centre Assistant in Dharan, in eastern Nepal. Ezina has recently been promoted to a Mobile Health Practitioner (MHP), and has relocated to our Area Welfare Centre in Baglung, 584km away.

Why did you chose to work for The Gurkha Welfare Trust?

Before working at GWT, I was an Intensive Care Unit Nurse at Birat Medical College Teaching Hospital. Working for the GWT appealed to me because of the opportunity

to contribute to meaningful humanitarian work, to support veterans and their families and to make a positive impact by reaching out to them through door-to-door health services.

Additionally, the chance to work with a dedicated team committed to service and social responsibility would be fulfilling.

What challenges do you face in your role?

The challenge that I face as an MHP is providing health care services in remote areas with limited access. Travelling via motorbike involves adventurous road trips and weather challenges!

The longest journey that I have taken to reach our pensioners was when I travelled from Baglung to Sikha, Kindu. The trip was over 80km each way and took two days to complete.

However overcoming these obstacles can be rewarding as it allows me to make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of those who I serve.

Without the support of efficient and excellent bike riders from AWC Baglung I would never be able to reach these needy beneficiaries.

What do you like most about your role with the Trust?

My favourite part of the job is helping ex-servicemen by providing door-to-door health services, building good relationships, continuous learning, good problem solving and making a positive impact on veterans' lives.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I like to read books, take short hikes, practice self care, explore nature and connect with loved ones.



WATER PROJECT BRINGS RELIEF TO CHHEMDI VILLAGE



Located approximately five hours' drive from Pokhara in the west of Nepal, Chhemdi village predominantly comprises members of the Magar community who rely on subsistence farming for their livelihood. There are 71 households and a village population of just over 300.

THE OLD WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

Water scarcity has long been a challenge for the village, with women spending considerable time trekking to collect water for their households.

Although a communal water supply system was established in 1996/97 by a development agency, its reliability remained inconsistent.

Thanks to the recent efforts of The Gurkha Welfare Trust, and your support, the village now boasts a dependable and hygienic water supply system. With individual taps installed at each home, villagers now have access to clean water around the clock.

Mr Deuman Purja is Chairman of the Water Users' Sanitation and Management Committee.

"The old water supply system was installed over 25 years ago. We collected water from two water sources, and these were supplied to the village through communal taps constructed at various points within the village."

He further commented,

"Since the water collection chambers were open in the old system, dirty debris would often run through the water pipes. During monsoon, the villagers would have to drink turbid water and there was always a risk of contamination and water-borne diseases. We would have to purify or treat the water before drinking it."

CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Ms. Anu Thakali, Secretary of the Water Users' Sanitation and Management Committee, expressed her satisfaction with the new system, saying:

"I am working as a Secretary in Chhemdi. I am a housewife and look after my household and agriculture. We all are happy with the construction work of this water supply project. I am feeling good

right now. It is so good to have safe water in all households."

She credited The Gurkha Welfare Trust for not only engineering the project but also for educating the community on essential sanitation and hygiene practices.

"The GWT not only constructed the physical structures but they imparted knowledge on the importance of water source protection, Gender Equality And Social Inclusion (GESI), water purification and the need to have a resilient and sustainable water supply system."

Anu highlighted the committee's decision to waive contributions for vulnerable households, stating:

"Some of the villagers were not able to provide the community contribution required, especially those with a physical disability, the elderly and people with lower income. There were three households like that and the committee have agreed to waive their contribution which I think is a great communal effort."

Expressing gratitude, Anu concluded: *"Thank you for the hard work and I would like to thank the donors for this project."*

PLANS TO TRANSFORM JANAKALYAN SECONDARY SCHOOL



THE VILLAGE AND THE COMMUNITY

Chiuri Bhanjyang village is located about an hour and half's drive from our Area Welfare Centre (AWC) in Dharan, with over half of the journey off-road. The village sits at an altitude of 1,150 metres in a hilly region where geographical challenges present significant obstacles to development and daily life.

The villagers are dependent on subsistence farming, but the income is barely enough to last them throughout the year. Many of the young people have gone overseas to work, in hope of a better future and in order to support their family members back home.

THE SCHOOL

Janakalyan school currently has over 250 students with a catchment area of several

surrounding villages. The terrain makes life difficult for the students - without proper roads or public transport, some must walk for over two hours to get to school.

The school is desperately in need of refurbishment, lacking basic infrastructure and facilities. There is a need for more classrooms, rooms for administration staff and the principal, a proper toilet block for boys, a library, a computer lab, desks and benches.

Principal Sujan Thebe explains the challenges faced by school staff.

"Janakalyan School was established in 1981 through the many efforts and hardships of village elders. I have been told that some villagers even sold their belongings to contribute to the establishment of the school here.

"The school was initially built in a different location, but as the site was prone to very strong winds, it was shifted to a different site.

The second location was also found to be not suitable, and it was finally moved here.

"The school faces the difficulty of being stable financially. Most of the villagers are from the lower income groups. Those who are better off have migrated to the towns below. The geographical remoteness of the area is also a hindrance.

"Because of insufficient space, we had to partition this two room building to four rooms. We do not have sufficient office space as well. Teachers, administration staff and the principal share the same room. We do not have a library or a computer lab. While we have toilets for girls, we lack proper toilets for the boys. There aren't enough desks and benches as well. There are a lot of challenges!"

THE GURKHA CONNECTION

"I was aware of The Gurkha Welfare Trust and it's services. My father is an ex Indian Army Gurkha while my uncles are ex British Army Gurkhas. There are generations of Gurkhas in my family. The applicant for the school project is also a Gurkha veteran.

"I also attempted several times to become a Gurkha but did not succeed!"





“For me, a Gurkha means someone who is loyal, hardworking and disciplined.”

Capt (Ret'd) Kedar Rai is the Senior Area Welfare Officer at AWC Dharan. Kedar served in the Queen's Gurkha Signals for 28 years and was deployed to many parts of the world including Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I am originally from Diktel (eastern Nepal). In the past, it used to take us a minimum of four days to walk to Dharan from my village. Now, we have road access, but it's still about eight to nine hours' drive. I was recruited from my village through a 'gallah', now they are known as Senior Recruiting Assistants. I was eighteen-and-a-half years old when I joined the British Army.”

“My father had eight siblings and seven of them joined the British Army.”

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Kedar has been working for The Gurkha Welfare Trust for over seven years and is still enjoying his role.

“Our main struggles are the geography, the weather and our movement from A to B. Because it is challenging during the monsoon due to flash floods, rain etc.”

“Another issue is the expectation of our beneficiaries. They have high expectations from The Gurkha Welfare Trust. In terms of importance, our beneficiaries come first. But our communities are also equally important, because those are the

communities from where we get potential Gurkha recruits.

“Area Welfare Centre Dharan has a big area of responsibility, covering eight districts. The communities come to us, or we go to them - we visit the school to understand their actual needs. Their requirements could be furniture, roof replacement, painting, playground, school perimeter fence or classrooms. And if we judge there is a genuine need, we complete the documents and submit to our GWT headquarters for further consideration from the board.”

“I am involved in the projects from the start to the finish. This year AWC Dharan had nine projects which were all completed on time... We keep a very close eye on our projects to ensure that they meet the Trust's high standards.”

THANK YOU

We are immensely grateful to everyone who donated in response to our last appeal, helping us get lifesaving medical support and equipment to Gurkha veterans and widows.

Our teams will do whatever it takes to reach people in the most remote communities - even if it means continuing the journey on foot.



THE CHALLENGES OF THE ANNUAL MONSOON



Nepal's monsoon season typically spans from June to September, with the peak occurring in July and August. While the monsoon is essential for agriculture, which is the backbone of Nepal's economy, it also brings with it the increased risks of flooding and landslides, particularly in the remote and mountainous regions where many of our most vulnerable Gurkha veterans and their families live.

Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority reports that in the past five years, over 1,000 people have lost their lives to monsoon-related disasters, and tens of thousands have been displaced.

Infrastructure damage, including the destruction of homes, roads, and bridges, has led to significant economic losses, estimated at over \$100 million annually.

WORSENING CONDITIONS

Unfortunately recent studies and meteorological data indicate that this year's monsoon will be more severe than usual, a trend attributed to the impact of climate change. At the time of writing, heavy rain has already set in.

The latest forecasts by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology predict a 20% increase in rainfall compared to the long-term average.

The surge in precipitation is alarming, considering that Nepal already experiences some of the highest levels of annual rainfall in the world, with the monsoon contributing up to 80% of the total annual precipitation.

VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

The risk to our vulnerable Gurkha veterans and their communities extends further than the substantial topographical damage.

The monsoon period also sees a considerable rise in the incidence of water-borne disease such as diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid and dysentery, with a resulting increase in hospital admissions.

For a country like Nepal where there is little or no effective healthcare provision, people die from entirely preventable illnesses that prevail in the wet season.

OUR TEAMS PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

In the face of these growing challenges, the work of The Gurkha Welfare Trust is more critical than ever. With your support, we continue to be proactive in reaching those most in need.

Our teams of drivers, medical and welfare staff journey deep into the hills of Nepal with 4x4 all-terrain vehicles and off-road motorbikes to visit our pensioners.

Our disaster risk reduction strategy encompasses the construction of Earthquake-Resilient homes as well as providing immediate financial relief and support in the aftermath of floods and landslides.

Meanwhile, our Rural Water and Sanitation Programme continues to educate communities across Nepal about sanitation and hygiene as well as providing vital access to safe water.



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

We have had a host of exciting events throughout the summer, with volunteers out in force helping at Doko races, Armed Forces Day celebrations, summer shows and more. Volunteering is enjoyable and hugely rewarding – please get in touch if you would like to find out more.

www.gwt.org.uk/volunteer

LAST CALL FOR TRAILWALKER VOLUNTEERS!

Trailwalker weekend is from 27-29 September – we still need volunteers for checkpoints at various locations on the South Downs between Petersfield and Brighton. It promises to be a great weekend, we'll provide meals and you can camp overnight too. If you can help please email trailwalker@gwt.org.uk



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP



20th May 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship between Nepal and Britain.

Mr Rishi Sunak addressed the Nepali community during a special ceremony at No.10 Downing Street, praising the contributions of the British Gurkhas in strengthening bilateral relations. The Prime Minister highlighted the historical relationship between Nepal and the UK, recalling the past visit of King Charles to Nepal.



The Ambassador of Nepal to the UK, Gyan Chandra Acharya, said that the 1923 Treaty of Friendship bolstered Nepal's presence in the global arena and promoted international relations. Highlighting Nepal's social and political progress, he acknowledged the support provided by Britain in Nepal's development.

Acharya expressed his belief that Nepal-UK bilateral relations will expand and strengthen in the coming century.

SUPPORT US WITH A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

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 the utmost courage and loyalty alongside British soldiers and their families.

We hear so many wonderful 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 through generations: some humorous, others describing acts of bravery, each poignant in its own way.

We were honoured to receive a gift from the Will of long-standing supporter, Ralph. During his service as a Sergeant in the Education

Corps, Ralph had taught English to Gurkhas and their families in Nepal. He held the Gurkhas in the highest regard and when he returned home he often talked about them to his family. Ralph's daughter told us how important this time was for Ralph and how he retained links with the Gurkhas throughout his life.

"My father was a very passionate advocate of the Gurkhas over the years, and he would have been delighted to know that the gift in his Will is helping people who were so close to his heart."

We all share a history with the Gurkhas. A bond that has stood for over 200 years. You can ensure this bond lives on by making a gift in your Will to the Gurkha Welfare Trust.



For more details, please contact Carolyn Derryman, our Legacy Co-ordinator on 01722 343110 or carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk. You can also download a free guide at: www.gwt.org.uk/legacy

OUR SUPPORTERS PUT IN EPIC EFFORTS TO RAISE FUNDS

DOKO CHALLENGES 2024

In June we saw over 200 supporters donning a weighted Doko basket and tackling a 5km cross country route at our annual Doko Challenges in Leeds and London.

Combined the events raised an incredible £12,800 in support of our work.

Well done to all those who took part!



LEGENDARY SUPPORTER JIM MORTON WALKS THE D-DAY BEACHES

The man who walked over 9,500 miles around the coast of the UK in 2021, and author of 'I May be Gone a While' took on a new endeavour in June.

On 30 May, Jim Morton began his latest feat to walk the length of the five beaches of the D-Day Normandy landings, concluding on the 80th Anniversary of D-Day and raising money for The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Jim walked in memory of his father who fought on Sword Beach during the D-Day landings. Jim believes that this one day defined his whole life.

Jim has raised over £40,000 so far through his incredible dedication and stamina. Thank you Jim!



UPCOMING CHALLENGES

Berlin Marathon - 29 September 2024
Cardiff Half Marathon - 6 October 2024
Royal Parks Half Marathon - 13 October 2024
Great South Run - 20 October 2024
Dublin Marathon - 27 October 2024
London Landmarks Half Marathon - 6 April 2025
TCS London Marathon - 27 April 2025

www.gwt.org.uk/events

NEPAL POON HILL TREK

2-13 November 2024

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit Nepal and embark on a five-day trek across the breathtaking Annapurna region, taking in stunning views of the famous "Fishtail" Mountain.

You'll also have the opportunity to see our work in action, meeting our team in Pokhara and visiting some local projects.

www.gwt.org.uk/nepaltrek24



curry
night
2024

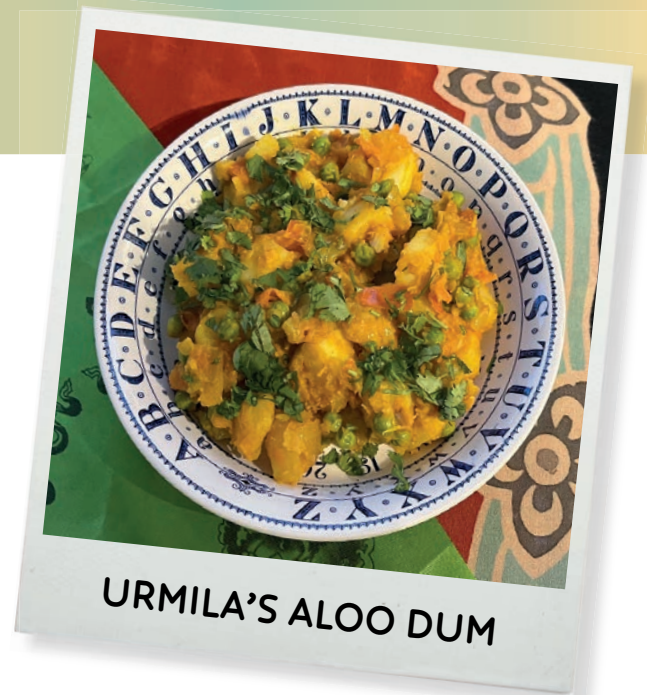
HOST A CURRY NIGHT THIS AUTUMN

Gather your 'chilli and spice and all friends nice' together this October and treat them to a Gurkha curry night. Dashain Festival, the biggest in Nepal, runs from 3-12 October - join our many supporters who will be hosting a curry night in celebration and to raise vital funds to support our work.

To get you started, we're treating you to a recipe for Aloo Dum, a dish that is really easy to prepare and is popular as a starter or side dish in Nepal. The recipe is kindly supplied by Urmila who is the wife of our Ambassador, Hari Budha Magar.

Register now to receive your fundraising materials and bring the taste of Nepal to your home.

Register at: www.gwt.org.uk/currynight



ALOO DUM RECIPE v

ingredients

500g potatoes
4 tsp olive or vegetable oil
4 cloves of fresh garlic, finely chopped
1 small chunk of fresh ginger, finely chopped
1 large onion, finely diced
200g fresh tomatoes, finely diced
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin powder
1/2 tsp turmeric
1 tsp ground ginger powder
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp chilli powder
100g peas
2 tsp fresh lemon juice
Salt, to taste
Small bunch of fresh coriander, finely chopped

method

1. Prepare the potatoes by peeling them and placing in a pan of hot water over a high heat. Bring to the boil and then reduce to a medium heat. Continue to boil the potatoes until they are soft and fluffy. Once cooked, remove from the heat, strain the excess water, and leave to cool.
2. Whilst the potatoes are cooling, prepare the ingredients. Finely chop the fresh ginger, fresh coriander and garlic cloves, and finely dice the onion and tomatoes.
3. Once the potatoes have cooled, cut them into bite-size pieces.
4. With all the ingredients prepared, heat a large pan with 4 tsp of olive oil or vegetable oil over a medium heat.
5. Once up to temperature, add the chopped garlic and ginger and stir lightly until golden brown.
6. Add the onion and again gently fry until golden brown.
7. Reduce to a low heat, then add all the powdered spices (1 tsp coriander, 1 tsp cumin, 1/2 tsp turmeric, 1 tsp ginger, 1 tsp garlic, 1 tsp chilli) and stir well so they do not burn.
8. Add the chopped tomatoes and salt to taste, and mix well.
9. Cover the pan with a lid and let it cook until a sauce is formed. If the mixture looks a little dry, add a splash of water.
10. Add 2 tsp fresh lemon juice and stir in the peas until cooked.
11. Add the bite-size potatoes, stirring well, and cooking for a further 2-3 minutes to heat through thoroughly.
12. Add more salt to taste. Garnish with freshly chopped coriander and serve.



GWT ANNUAL AUCTION 19 - 26 AUGUST 2024

The GWT Annual Online Auction returns in August with another fantastic selection of gifts and experiences.

Headline items include dinner for two at the Britannia Gurkha Restaurant, famed for its delicious Nepali cuisine (pictured) and a stunning Luminor watch.

There will also be a wide range of unique items and gifts including a GWT Anniversary shawl, beautiful presentation kukri knife, Veuve Clicquot champagne, signed photographs of Dame Joanna Lumley and exclusive items from our GWT Ambassadors.

Please note: bidding is online and UK only

Bidding from 9am on Monday 19th August to 9pm on Monday 26 August

Bidding starts on 19 August - www.gwt.org.uk/auction24

THE BAND OF THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS IN CONCERT

The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas will be performing at two fundraising events later this year. We look forward to stunning performances from the band featuring a lively mix of Nepali music, military tunes and popular songs.

Tickets for both events are strictly limited and so purchasing your tickets early is advised.

The Garden Rooms at Tennants, Leyburn
Monday 4 November 2024

Christmas Concert in Victoria, London
Tuesday 17 December 2024

Find out more and buy tickets:
www.gwt.org.uk/events



NEW IN OUR SHOP - GWT CHRISTMAS CARDS AND FLAG T-SHIRTS

Introducing our new range of Christmas cards with six delightful designs - available in our online shop now. We also have a super range of clothing and accessories including a stylish new T-shirt with the UK and Nepali flags.



Pack of 10 cards £4.50



Jungle Hat £10
Baseball Cap £14
Flag T shirt £20

ORDER NOW >> shop.gwt.org.uk
*** or call 01722 323955 ***