

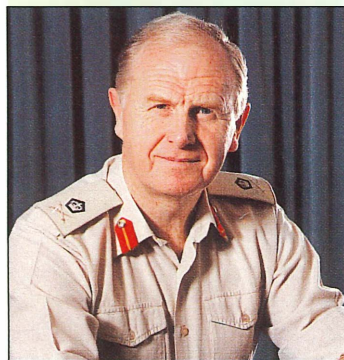
SAMACHARA



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

Winter 1996/97

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



**Lieutenant General Sir Sam Cowan KCB, CBE
Colonel Commandant
The Brigade of Gurkhas.
Chairman, The Gurkha
Welfare Trust**

Welcome to 'Samachara' the very first newsletter of the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Samachara is the Nepalese word for news and that is what we hope to give you in these occasional newsletters; news about our work, Gurkhas, Nepal and the people helping us both here and abroad.

The Army keeps me busy as Quartermaster General but the two appointments at the top of this column are a special source of pride. As an annual duty visitor to Nepal I can personally vouch for the tremendous commitment of our field staff. The extract from the Citation for the Wilkinson Sword of Peace Award reproduced on page 2 pays proper tribute to their heroic efforts, often in very difficult circumstances. I was very proud to receive the Sword on their behalf on my recent visit to Kathmandu.

On this page you can read about the early days of the Gurkha Welfare Trust and the enormous commitment the Trust now has as we seek to repay a debt of honour to over 10,700 Gurkha ex-servicemen and widows. Ratnam's story opposite is indeed an excellent case in point. We need to spread this message further afield. Please pass your copy to a friend or write to us at Baker Street for more copies.

Finally, I must thank Flemings for so generously sponsoring this first edition of 'Samachara'. I must also thank you, our supporters, on behalf of all those who benefit from your efforts, for all that you do to aid the cause of Gurkha Welfare.

TOO OLD TO FIGHT – TOO PROUD TO ASK

THE NEED FOR THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

It is dreadful to think that many brave, gallant and loyal servicemen who fought for Britain in the Second World War, in Malaya, Borneo and in later conflicts, are now suffering extreme hardship and destitution.

These are the famous Gurkhas, the fighting soldiers of Nepal who, as part of the British Army, fought alongside us throughout World War Two and beyond.

But the fearless and, to the enemy, fearsome Gurkha soldier of fifty years ago is in many cases now too old or infirm to provide for himself or his dependants in the harsh

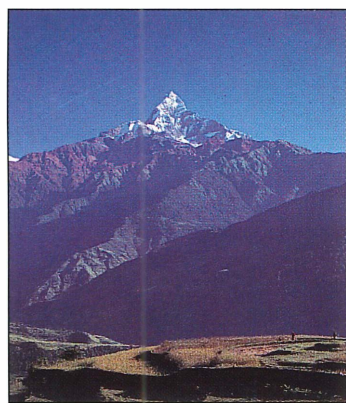
living conditions of his native Nepal. The fact that he is facing destitution, and in many cases even starvation, is really no fault of any government.

Many Gurkhas served for just the period of the War, or perhaps a few years afterwards, before returning to a normal life in their Himalayan homeland of Nepal. But crucially they did not serve the 15 years necessary to qualify for a British Army pension. The British "Tommy" who served for just the war did not get a pension either, but at least here he has a social security system to fall back upon.

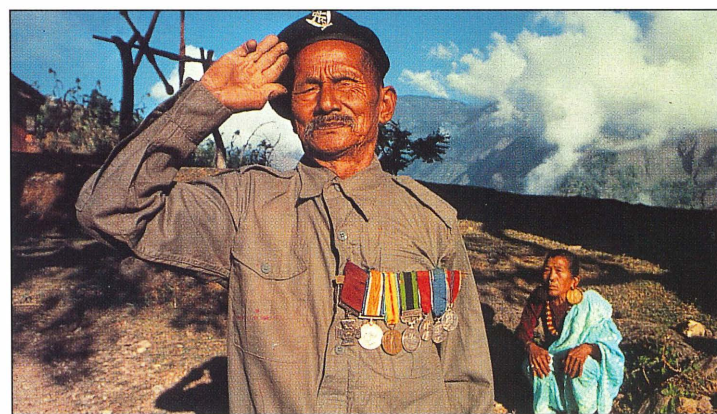
ONE OF THE POOREST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD

Nepal, capped by Mount Everest, is a really beautiful country - but is one of the poorest in the world.

There is no state welfare system of any kind; monsoon floods and landslides often carry away homes, roads and even whole villages. Medical care provides one doctor for every twenty thousand people



Nepal



*Karnabahadur Rana VC, ex-3rd. Gurkha Rifles with his wife
photograph: Photographers International Ltd.*

and costs a lot of money. There are very few roads and distance is generally measured in the number of days it takes to walk to your destination.

But to the Gurkha this is home and he is as proud of his homeland as he is of his service in the British Army

If one is too old and frail to work one's small patch of land high in the hills and there is no money coming in then destitution and starvation are real possibilities.

SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE

The problems of hardship and destitution facing Gurkha ex-servicemen began to emerge during the late 1960s. It was apparent that something had to be done. After all, these are ex-soldiers of the Crown to whom we owe a debt of

honour.

And so in 1969 The Gurkha Welfare Trust was established.

From a base of around 1,500 ex-servicemen in those early days, the Trust is now supporting over 10,700 Gurkha ex-servicemen and widows. The numbers have of course grown as the years have gone by and more of these old soldiers need our help.

On page three, you can see how The Gurkha Welfare Trust works to relieve hardship and distress; through regular welfare pensions, through special hardship grants when disaster strikes, through medical assistance and community aid.

As a registered charity, the aim of our Trustees is clear - *That no deserving Gurkha ex-serviceman or his widow should be turned away in time of need.*

A CASE IN POINT

On a recent tour of Nepal, the Trust Director Colonel (Ret'd) Evan Powell-Jones visited the Area Welfare Centre at Syangja. The Area Welfare Officer there had, on a routine trek in the hills, come across an old soldier living destitute in his village supported only by hand-outs from his fellow villagers.

The AWO was told that this man had fought for the British in most of the major campaigns in World War Two. Sadly he had no proof of his war service, his papers, such as they were, were destroyed when his house burnt down years ago and he had never claimed the medals he had earned so valiantly.

Knowing of the impending visit of the Director, who had served with Gurkha units since the early 1960s, the AWO asked this old soldier to come down to the Welfare Centre for a chat.

Late in the evening, on the verandah of the Welfare Centre, 76 year old Rifleman Ratnam Tamung re-lived his war experiences, talking of people, places and battles which he could have only known about had he been there, and most of which the Director was able to verify.

The AWO was able to make an immediate grant to tide over Ratnam and to put him on the list for a regular monthly

welfare pension.

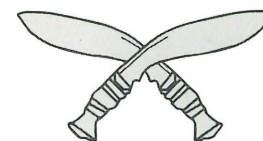
It was wonderful to see this grand old soldier come alive again talking of the old days and

to see him set off for his village knowing his dignity was restored and his future welfare assured.



*Ratnam Tamung (R) talking to Trust Director Colonel Evan Powell-Jones (L)
photograph: Jim Tomsett*

SUPPORT AT ALL LEVELS



PRINCE'S POLO SUPPORTS THE GURKHA WELFARE

A tremendous and welcome boost to the work of the Gurkha Welfare Trust was provided by a special charity polo match between HRH The Prince of Wales' team and a team lead by HM The Sultan of Brunei.

In the glorious setting of Cirencester Park, the two teams were led on to the polo ground by the band of the Brigade of Gurkhas and Pipes & Drums of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles. A closely fought match was watched by several hundred invited guests and general

spectators, who were also entertained by the band during lunch.

The whole event was sponsored by the Royal jewellers, Asprey, who presented a most magnificent cheque for £25,000 to Lieutenant General Sam Cowan, Chairman of the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Our sincere thanks to His Royal Highness and His Majesty, to Aspreys and to Cirencester Park for organising such a splendid and rewarding afternoon.



The Polo Teams: HRH Prince of Wales (L.) HM Sultan of Brunei (R.)
photograph: Bryan Berkeley ARPS

WILKINSON SWORD OF PEACE

A Tribute to the Gurkha Welfare Scheme

The Gurkha Welfare Scheme is the field arm in Nepal of The Gurkha Welfare Trust. This year the service of the GWS was recognised when it was awarded the Wilkinson Sword of Peace for 1995



We are delighted to re-produce this extract from the Citation for the Wilkinson Sword of Peace Award

"...much of the field work in Nepal is carried out by retired Nepalese Gurkha Officers who live with their staff of assistants, medics and runners in 24 Welfare Centres situated across the whole of the country. These dedicated men spend 11 months of every year away from their wives and families in the hills of Nepal serving the local community. Their Centres are a focus of aid for the local population, both ex-military and civilian and no-one in genuine need is ever turned away. The local Welfare Officers take to the hills in all weathers to investigate the circumstances of poverty or destitution ex-servicemen live in, they face up to the misery of landslides, floods and fire first hand, looking for new opportunities to help either individuals or whole communities. They are renowned throughout the hill communities of Nepal for being firm but fair.

Thus it is for the work of the Welfare Officers - once men of war, now men of peace - that this Citation for the Wilkinson Sword of Peace 1995 is made."

NEW REGIONAL BRANCH NETWORK

Fundraising for the Gurkha Welfare Trust has taken on an exciting impetus thanks to the development of a network of voluntary regional fundraising branches throughout Great Britain.

These voluntary branches are very important in the overall fundraising strategy of the Trust, not only creating awareness of the plight of Gurkha ex-servicemen but also generating much needed income for the Trust at a truly local level. In his message on page one, the Trust Chairman Lieutenant General Sam Cowan stresses the importance of spreading our message further afield. Through the branches the Gurkha Welfare Trust will be represented at many county events, as well as running high-profile events of their own.

We will be delighted to hear from anyone who may be able to set up and run a branch (or sub-branch) in a 'vacant' area, or who might help an existing branch - all on a voluntary basis of course! Please contact us at the GWT office in Baker Street

REGIONAL BRANCHES OF THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

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NEWS IN BRIEF

NEW BOOKS

WITH THE GURKHAS
by Scott Leathart

Major Scott Leathart served with 3/9GR and 1/2 GR before raising and commanding the Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police. He has published his experiences in a new book "With the Gurkhas 1940-1959". It is a fascinating read, full of small observations about daily life, which bring the memoir vividly to life and give a sharp feel to soldiering in a Gurkha battalion. Thanks to an anonymous benefactor the total sales from the entire first edition (bought direct from the Publisher) will be donated to the GWT. Details on how to order are available from the Gurkha Welfare Trust Office.

BOOST FROM BOXING DAY FILM (and repeat!)

The excellent documentary 'THE GURKHAS' first shown on BBC2 television on Boxing Day 1995 and repeated in September 1996, generated unprecedented interest in the Gurkhas. When the Trust office opened after the Christmas break it was swamped with letters requesting more information. Similarly the repeat showing kept our telephone ringing for several days. Any genuine interest in Gurkhas and Gurkha welfare is to be welcomed and we thank the film's producer, Michael Begg, both for a wonderful and moving film and for bringing the Gurkha Welfare Trust to a much wider audience;

NEW ADDRESS

Please note that the Trust office moved last year. *The Gurkha Welfare Trust is now at Third Floor, 88 Baker Street, London W1M 2AX. Telephone 0171 707 1925*

TOO OLD TO FIGHT – TOO PROUD TO ASK



OMBAHADUR GURING

Rifleman Ombahadur Guring who served with the 2nd Gurkhas during World War II is 82 years old. He does not have a family and has been reliant on GWT since 1983.



DURGABHADUR KHATRI

Rifleman Durgabhadur Khatri served with a Gurkha Parachute Battalion during World War II. Although 73 years old Durgabhadur tills other people's land to help support his family but relies upon support from GWT.



KHIMKUMARI

Khimkumari's husband, late Rifleman Dalbahadur Thapa, served with 1/9th Gurkhas during the Second World War. He died 25 years ago and is survived by a son and Khimkumari. The family live in a hut and are dependent upon the GWT for support.



MANBAHADUR RANA

A veteran of World War II Manbahadur saw action with the 3rd Gurkhas in the Far East and Europe. He is now dependent upon the GWT to support himself and his wife.

REPAYING A DEBT OF HONOUR

A LOOK AT THE WORK OF THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST IN NEPAL

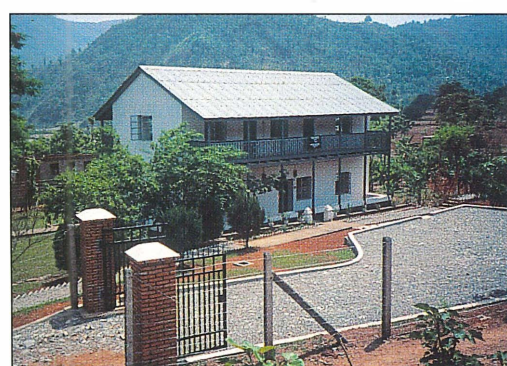
There is no doubt that we in this country owe the Gurkhas a debt of honour and The Gurkha Welfare Trust is working to repay that debt. The work of the Trust is vital to the health, well-being and quality of life for literally thousands of old soldiers and their families in Nepal.

THE GURKHA WELFARE SCHEME

The Gurkha Welfare Scheme (GWS) is the Trust's field arm in Nepal. It is directed by a Commander, a serving British Officer based in Kathmandu and run by the Brigade of Gurkhas Welfare Officer based at the British Gurkhas Camp in Pokhara.

Scheme could not exist or operate without these experienced and trusted men on the ground. A routine trek around the hill villages on an AWO's "patch", might mean a walk of more than seven days. One has to be fit to be an AWO!

This entire team, from Commander to medical orderly, is paid for by the Ministry of Defence and represents no cost at all to The Gurkha Welfare Trust.



An Area Welfare Centre

These Officers have responsibility for 24 Area Welfare Centres (AWC) spread throughout Nepal.

Each AWC is staffed by an Area Welfare Officer (AWO), two Assistants and a medical orderly. These men are all Nepalese, ex-Gurkhas, with a strong knowledge of the countryside and its customs.

The job of the AWO is to identify Gurkha ex-servicemen in need of help and investigate special cases of hardship and distress. They can make on-the-spot cash grants in cases of fire and monsoon damage and recommend further help. The



A Medical Orderly preparing his treatment room.

The Gurkha Welfare Trust provides a regular monthly pension, equivalent to around £10 (depending upon the current rate of exchange) to over 10,700 veterans and widows who otherwise have no income at all. Pensions are collected from the nearest AWC, although the nearest can often mean a round-trip walk of up to a day. Welfare pensioners can meet old comrades, socialise and obtain basic medical treatment for minor ailments and injuries.

It is relatively simple to multiply 10,700 by £10 and arrive at £107,000. The Trust has to find this amount,



Gurkha ex-servicemen receiving their monthly welfare pension.

month in, month out to meet this commitment. Once a veteran or his widow is on our books we must never let them down.

We also help in other ways. AWOs investigated over 4,000 cases of hardship last year - principally loss of home, belongings, crops and livestock caused by monsoon floods and landslides, or by fire - and made emergency payments totalling over £136,000 to help alleviate distress, rebuild homes and replace belongings.

COMMUNITY AID

The Gurkha Welfare Trust

works in partnership with the Overseas Development Agency, the Kadoori Agricultural Aid Association and other agencies to provide direct aid to communities, villages and schools.

Projects include the provision of clean water to remote hill villages; replacing rickety and dangerous footbridges and a programme of improving school buildings and facilities. These projects not only directly benefit Gurkha ex-servicemen, their children and their village, but also helps the Kingdom of Nepal.

SOME FACTS & FIGURES

- * The GWS expenditure in Nepal last year was £2.7 million
- * Welfare pensions cost £1.2 million
- * 36% of welfare pensioners are 70 years old
- * 25% are 75 years old
- * 33% of welfare pensioners are widows



Lachin Gurung, widow of Cpl. Krishna Prasad Gurung, ex 6th Gurkha Rifles, in the ruin of her burnt out house. The Trust paid her a special hardship grant to help rebuild her home.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

THE SPONSORED PENSIONS APPEAL



£10 per month will provide this basic food for a day.

If you will covenant a payment of just £10 per month, we can ensure that a welfare pension is paid to an old-soldier or widow on your behalf. We will also send you details and a photograph of the pensioner you are supporting.

Each pension we are able to get sponsored enables more of our hard-won charity funds to go towards providing additional help through medical care, or by emergency grants when hardship or

disaster strikes.

We have over 900 sponsors already taking part in this scheme - but we have 10,700 pensions to pay each month, every month!

Please do help us if you can. Your support now will not only help to repay 180 years of loyalty, service and sacrifice by the Gurkhas, but will also make sure that an individual old soldier or his widow has enough to eat - and can maintain their dignity in the village.

THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

Gurkhas have been serving the British Crown for 180 years, and have fought and died alongside British comrades in nearly every theatre of war around the world

THE EARLY DAYS.

The connection began towards the end of the 18th century in war between the British, in the shape of The Honourable East India Company, and the expansionist warrior Gurkha



state of Nepal. By the end of the war a mutual respect had grown up between British and Gurkha and the Gurkha suggestion that they would rather fight with the British than against them was swiftly accepted!

In the 19th century Gurkhas saw service in the sub-continent of India. They took part in operations in China, Afghanistan, 'Asia Minor' and Cyprus.

WORLD WAR ONE

In World War 1 thousands of Gurkhas joined the Army. Gurkhas were the first British units to break the German line

at Neuve Chappelle. They also fought in the Middle East and most notably at Gallipoli.

WORLD WAR TWO

During the Second World War, the number of Gurkha battalions more than doubled to a total of 46. Gurkhas fought in North Africa, Italy, Greece and Burma. Inevitably, it was in Burma where their contribution was massive, taking part in all the bitter battles of 'Defeat into Victory'. Their exploits in the 2nd Chindit Operation resulted in a number of VCs.

In effect, the entire youth of Nepal was placed at the disposal of the British. Casualties were heavy, especially in Burma and Italy and thousands were killed or wounded.

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND BEYOND

With Indian Independence in 1947, the ten regiments of Gurkhas were split between the armies of the independent India and of Britain. The 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 10th, Gurkha Rifles moved to the British Army and were immediately thrown into the campaign to combat communist insurgency in Malaya. The Borneo

campaign followed, involving more jungle fighting.

Gurkhas were in action in the Falklands and in the Gulf conflicts and are presently in Bosnia.

TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

From the end of 1996 there will be just two Gurkha infantry battalions, one based in the United Kingdom and



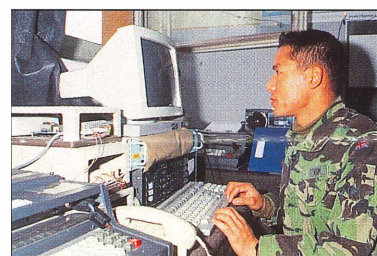
one in Brunei. There will also be a squadron of Queen's Gurkha Engineers based at Maidstone, a squadron of Queen's Gurkha Signals at Bramcote and a squadron of Queen's Own Gurkha Transport Regiment at Colchester. In addition, Gurkha reserve companies will be serving with the the 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots,



the 1st Battalion of The Prince of Wales Royal Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.

Competition to get into the British Army is still very fierce in Nepal. There are usually hundreds of applicants for every recruit vacancy

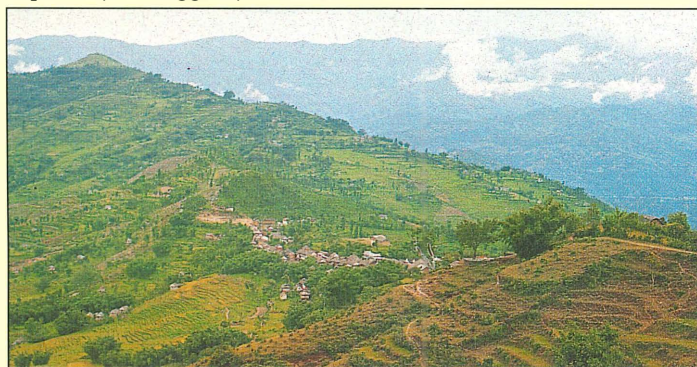
The history, traditions and ethos of Britain's Gurkhas are graphically portrayed in The Gurkha Museum at Peninsula Barracks, Winchester. For more information ring the Museum on (01962) 842832.



THINKING OF TREKKING?

If you are thinking of trekking or taking a holiday in Nepal may we suggest you talk,

in the first instance, to World-Wide Journeys of 8 Comeragh Road, London W14. There is



Nepal

a direct benefit to the Gurkha Welfare Trust, as World Wide Journeys will make a donation to the Trust for every trek, holiday or flight booked through them, if you mention the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Their treks are run by an ex-British Gurkha Officer, Kit Spencer, of Summit Nepal Trekking based in Kathmandu.

Rowan Patterson of World-Wide Journeys will be happy to provide more information

TAILPIECE

BEGGARS IN PEARLS



We couldn't resist this piece from 'The Evening Standard'

"Recent suggestions that Gurkha veterans fare poorly in retirement is only part of the hardship the crack regiment must confront. Did you know, for example, that many recruits are posted to Britain speaking only Gurkhali?"

They start service here with an intensive course of basic English. At the end of this, they are given a rail ticket to some Surrey town and told to carry out a list of small tasks which involve English conversation. Back at barracks they are then required to write an essay about the day's experiences.

One Gurkha new recruit wrote " Guildford is a very nice place, and the people are very well off. Even the beggars wear pearls"

Subsequent investigation revealed the young Gurkha had been accosted in the town centre by one of those nice Surrey ladies who collect for the Lifeboats"



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