



The Sirmooree

The Journal of 2nd King Edward VII's
Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)

Summer 2015

Number 75

To return to the Website please click here: http://www.2ndgurkhas.com/sirmoor_members.html



Her Majesty The Queen inspects the Queen's Truncheon at Buckingham Palace, 10 June 2015. See article p.51.

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A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is proving to be a memorable 200th anniversary year for the Regiment and for the whole of the Gurkha Brigade.

I am certain that everyone who attended the wonderful Durbar in Nepal will have carried back happy memories of friendships rekindled and the sense of a Regimental family whose strength has been much enhanced. The Anniversary medal, and the medallions for Regimental widows, was an inspired idea, has been much appreciated and will, I know, be worn on appropriate occasions by everyone in the Regiment, including our former Colonel-in-Chief. I again pay particular tribute to David Thomas and Yambahadur for bringing their organisational skills to bear on all the arrangements for the Durbar, along with a splendid team of retired Gurkha Officers in Nepal and I know we all look forward to the souvenir brochure that Nick Hinton is producing for everyone.

Our happiness at the reunion was sadly tempered by the shocking earthquakes that hit Nepal only three weeks later. Villages were flattened and Katmandu suffered terribly. There has been a heavy human and material cost. Mountaineers faced a hazardous experience on Everest and Ian Rigden's three year dream of placing a serving Gurkha on the summit was sadly ended. In response there has been a tremendous effort by many of our members to raise funds for earthquake relief. William Shuttlewood, Director of the Gurkha Welfare Trust, has not only overseen the Gurkha Pageant - brilliantly inspired by Ian Rigden at the Royal Hospital - as both a celebratory and fund-raising event but is also masterminding the delivery of relief in Nepal. And Christopher Lavender has also been bringing crucial Kadoorie assistance to bear where it is most needed in the Hills. Among many others, our Chairman has been indefatigable in his fund-raising efforts in the West Country and Andrew Duncan has been running a personal relief crusade in Nepal.

Of the wider anniversary celebrations those who watched the fine parade through of Brigade contingents marching through London from Wellington Barracks, past Buckingham Palace, down The Mall and through Horse Guards Arch to the Gurkha Statue, and attended a short service of rededication, will have admired the sharpness of the Rifle drill and the panache of the Brigade Band and the massed Pipes and Drums. These characteristics were also in evidence in the Guard Mounting by Brigade units throughout May at Buckingham Palace. I felt a strong sense of pride watching it all. Elsewhere I report on the sixth inspection by Her Majesty of the Queen's Truncheon at Buckingham Palace on 10 June – a memorable occasion we were able to share with the Royal Gurkha Rifles – and one at which your Chairman and I were proud to represent the Regiment.

On the 12 and 19 September we shall end our celebrations with two important events – the Club's 200th anniversary lunch at the Travellers' Club and a week later the Sirmoor Sathis gathering at in Reading where anniversary medals will be presented to those of the Regiment who were unable to receive them in Nepal. I hope to see as many of you as possible at both events.

PRD

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

What a year it has been! I can only reinforce all the President has said about our 200th Anniversary and the dreadful earthquake in Nepal that has consumed our thoughts and relief aid fund-raising endeavours ever since.

The Durbar lived up to everything one would have expected and more. David Thomas and Yambahadur Gurung masterminded the event over the last three years with a great deal of commitment and detailed work and brought it to a wonderful conclusion in March. Of course many others were involved, not least the Sirmoor Club Nepal Committee chaired by Bharatsing Chhetri Thapa, and its Durbar Sub-committee that took on the detailed arrangements in Nepal. The result was a masterpiece of innovation and organisation with touches of the 'wow' factor throughout, the greatest being

the production of the Commemoration Medal and the Medallion for our widows, so appropriately distributed on the Durbar Parade. The presence of The Queen's Truncheon in particular, its first time in Nepal, and the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, made the whole Durbar truly special and memorable. We now look forward to our 'Sirmoor 200' Reunion Luncheon on 12 September at the Travellers' Club, Pall Mall. I sincerely hope we will have a record turnout that the occasion merits. Furthermore I trust that Members will show their support for, and loyalty to, the Sirmoor Sathis by attending their 'Sirmoor 200' Delhi Day Reunion in Reading a week later on 19 September.

Our 200th Anniversary year is probably an appropriate time as any for General Peter to decide to stand down after a decade as our President. He will be handing over to Brigadier Ian Rigden sometime after the Sathis Delhi Day Reunion. Quite apart from being an enormous help to me in managing the Sirmoor Club and 2GR Trust and providing top cover when necessary, General Peter has guided our Committee and the 2GR Trustees with great wisdom, especially throughout the planning of the Durbar. He has always sought the highest standards of style and quality in everything we do, as was evidenced by the items of 'Sirmoor 200' memorabilia that he personally produced, plus the selection of the Travellers' Club for our Reunion this year and negotiations he conducted with the management of that Club to get the best possible deal. We also recall the many memorable speeches he has made, all of which he took great care in perfecting. But what will not have been apparent to everyone is the amount of time and trouble he has put into all our affairs outside our meetings. His judgement and skill in dealing with other organisations on our behalf has been masterful. However, his single most important contribution is the guidance policy paper on the future of the Sirmoor Club and the 2GR Trust that he produced in 2010 and updated in 2014. Indeed this document was so well presented that it has been adopted by other Regimental Associations for use as a template for their own future plans. There could not be a more fitting legacy than this. We are indeed indebted to General Peter for his tremendous commitment as our President over this important time in our history.

BCJ

EDITORIAL

I am very fortunate as the new Editor to have so many events to choose from this year, but sadly they include the disastrous earthquakes in Nepal. Much has been written about them and their aftermath, but I have included excerpts from Andrew Duncan's updates on his relief efforts because they give a direct, personal view of what it was like and the extreme difficulties involved in helping survivors.

I have also included a short account of our splendid Durbar and some photographs. Many more pictures and some videos are available on the website (http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/durbar_2015_memories.html). A full pictorial and written record will be published later in the year and DVDs of the event are also being produced – details to follow.

Even in a year of many anniversaries we should not overlook the Second Battalion's contribution to the war in France exactly a hundred years ago. The previous edition of *The Sirmooree* had several references to the First World War, but in this centenary year, Christopher Bullock has kindly put together a short history of what went on – lest we forget.

I would like to pay warm tribute to my predecessor as Editor, John Burlison. As our President noted in the last edition of *The Sirmooree*, his many years at the helm made a major contribution to maintaining the Regimental identity and keeping us all in touch. His handover to me, mostly conducted in the best of Sirmoor traditions over fine food and wine, was meticulous, and he dealt patiently and good-humouredly with my many questions. I am sure you will join me in thanking him and wishing him well for the future.

Finally, I would welcome feedback on the changes I have made to the format of *The Sirmooree*. Cost has inevitably been a factor in this: for example, embedding the colour photographs in the text rather than grouping them together as I have done would cost several hundred pounds more. If you have ideas about further improvements, please let me know.

In the next edition I am planning to report on other bicentennial events and what is happening in today's Brigade. If you would like to contribute please let me have your input by 1 March 2016.

NJHH

HONORARY SECRETARY'S NOTES

Membership

Membership Numbers.

Category	Numbers	Totals	Suspended	Totals
Full	173	177	16	161
Full – GCO	4			
Associate	34	122	27	95
- Attached				
Associate	34			
- Seconded				
Assoc – Others	1	53		
Assoc – Relative	53			
Hon Widows	65	80	12	68
Hon Ordinary	14			
Hon Ex Officio	1			
Grand Totals		379	55	324

New Members. Please welcome the following new members to the Sirmoor Club:

- Major Hitman Gurung (1/2GR)
- Capt Mahendra Phagami (2GR now 2RGR)
- Mrs Nicola Dawtrey (nee Skentelbery) (2/2GR 90-92)
- Mrs Annabel Mackenzie (daughter of Col David Scotson)

Membership Subscription Rates. Members are reminded that the Sirmoor Club Subscription rates are as follows:

- Full Members: £20 pa (those on QGO Pension rates £10 pa).
- Associate Members: £10 pa.
- Honorary Members: N/A

Suspensions/Removals. 43 members (16 Full, 27 Associate) who defaulted on their annual subscriptions had their Membership temporarily suspended and will not receive *The Sirmooree* or be able to access the 2GR website. Nine have since undertaken to pay and have been reinstated on a 'watch list'. In addition, 21 members who have no contact details have been removed from the Sirmoor address list.

2GR Website

Sirmoor Durbar. Still photos and some video clips of the Durbar are available at http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/durbar_2015_memories.html.

Other Links. As a reminder, you may find the following links useful:

- **Sirmoor Notices:**
http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/notice_board.html.
- **Sirmoor Topics:** <http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/topics.html>. This contains useful links including those to the GBA website, Gurkha 200, Gurkha Museum and Britain-Nepal Society.
- **Sirmoor Address List:**
<http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/members.html>. This is made available for GWT(UK) and the GBA use only. If you wish to remove your name please inform the Honorary Secretary.
- **The Sirmooree:** An online version of *The Sirmooree* is posted here:
http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/sirmooree_journal.html

Diary of Forthcoming Events

Sirmoor Club 200th Anniversary Reunion Lunch, 12 September 2015. The Sirmoor Club has negotiated excellent arrangements for this event at The Travellers' Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EP. The Club is particularly renowned for the elegance of its fine rooms and the quality of its food. This is a landmark Regimental occasion and Sirmoor Club members are strongly encouraged to attend. Seating for lunch is limited so please

submit your bids to the Honorary Secretary as soon as possible using the enclosed application form.

Sirmoor Sathi Delhi Day Reunion, 19 September 2015. This annual event will be held at The Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading RG1 8EQ. All Sirmooris are invited and full members and their wives are particularly welcome. Payment (£10) will be collected at the door. If attending please give the Honorary Secretary details of names and numbers by 6 September 2015 using the enclosed application form.

GBA Annual Dinner, 5 November 2015. The Gurkha Brigade Association Dinner will take place at the Army and Navy Club, 36 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN, on Thursday 5 November 2013, cost £55 a head. Dress is Black Tie with miniature medals. A cash bar will open at 1900 hours for pre-dinner drinks and dinner will be served at 1930 hours Please send applications for tickets direct to the Brigade Secretary by 27 October (preferably earlier) using the enclosed proforma.

Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph March Past, 8 November 2015. For Gurkha 200 there will be a large contingent from the Gurkha Brigade Association (160) and the Gurkha Welfare Society. The RV is at the Horse Guards Road entrance to Horse Guards Parade at 1000, and there is usually an informal lunch after the parade. Dress is dark suits or Regimental Blazer with medals, Regimental tie and Bowler or Gurkha Hat (if you possess either). Please contact the Honorary Secretary if you wish to attend.

Notices

Sirmoor Club AGM 2015. This year the AGM normally held prior to the Sirmoor Club Reunion will instead be online/postal The documents will be posted in the members' area of the website for members to view. Those on the web will be able to vote and post comments as required. Full members not on the web will receive a postal vote. Full details will be issued in due course.

Friends of the Gurkha Museum. MOD funding to all military museums has been severely cut, and they are now expected to be self-sufficient. The serving Brigade has increased their One Day Pay Scheme contribution so

the Gift Aid element can be apportioned to the Gurkha Museum. Former officers of the Brigade are also encouraged to help by becoming a Friend of the Museum. Details and application form can be found at <http://www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk/Friends/18>.

Britain-Nepal Society Membership. The Chairman of the Britain-Nepal Society has sent out an appeal to all those with an interest in Nepal to consider becoming a member. Details can be found on its website: <http://www.britain-nepal-society.org.uk>.

Sirmoor Club Reunion 2016. The Sirmoor Club AGM and annual reunion has been provisionally scheduled for Saturday 14th May 2016. More details will be circulated separately.

NWC

THE SIRMOOR REGISTER

Honours & Awards: New Year's Honours List 2015

Our congratulations to the following:

- **CBE.** Nigel W B **Dunlop** (2nd Bn 1977–80). For services to Business and Economy in Northern Ireland.
- **MBE.** Emma Willis (daughter of Michael **Willis** (1st Bn 1955–57)). For work with soldiers at Headley Court (shirt making and silver embossed sticks).

Deaths

Our sincere condolences to the families of the following:

- Colin **Banyard** (3rd Bn 1945–47) (date of death not known).

- Captain G A B **Brehaut** (4th Bn 1945-48) died at his home in Guernsey on 6 December 2014.
- Lady Avril **Bramall**, wife of Field Marshal Lord Bramall of Bushfield, Colonel of the Regiment 1976-86, died on Wednesday, 2 July 2015, at home in Crondall.
- Col T A **Cave** CBE (RC & 1st Bn 1942-1947) died peacefully on 21 June 2015 after a long illness.
- Colonel M P F (Peter) **Jones** CBE DSO OStJ (9GR 1937-1947) (1st & 2nd Bns 1947 - 1973) died 11 April 2015.
- Mrs Sandra **Linskey**, wife of the late Maj(QM) Lawrence Linskey (1st Bn (QM) 1978-1983), died 12 March 2015.
- Reverend W G D (Bill) **Sykes** (2nd Bn 1959-1961) died 17 January 2015.
- Major J E G **Vivian** MC and bar (2nd Bn 1947-59), 10th July 2015. An obituary will appear in the next edition of *The Sirmoore*.

Obituaries

Captain Geoffrey Arthur Brehaut

Geoffrey Brehaut died peacefully at home in Guernsey on 06 December 2014 aged 88. He was born on 29 August 1926. Both his father, Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Brehaut, and his mother were born in Guernsey, although the family left there in 1938 when his father was recalled to the Army.

Geoffrey was educated at Farnham Grammar School in Surrey. In August 1944 he joined The Queen's Royal Regiment as an Indian Army Cadet and, after training at Maidstone, went to the Officers' Training School at Bangalore. On 26 August 1945 he was appointed to the 2nd Goorkhas with an Emergency Commission and joined the Regimental Centre in Dehra

Dun. From then on, by slight mispronunciation of his name, we called him 'Brute' - a totally untrue schoolboy-type description if ever there was one. In late 1945 he was sent to the 4th Battalion in French Indo-China, now known as Vietnam, and while there he took part in an operation upriver from Saigon to root out Annamite rebels. He then went with the Battalion to North Borneo where he was QM and later a company commander as well as PRI and PMC. Brute led a party in the ascent of Mount Kinabalu and captained the Battalion football team in 1946 and 1947. He returned to India with the 4th Battalion and remained with it in Dinapore and Calcutta from September 1946 to November 1947.

After being demobilized in January 1948, Geoffrey worked in the City of London for a small, family- owned shipping company based there. During the 1970s and 80s he bought and sold small to medium sized merchant ships for which he visited maritime centres in Germany, Greece and Hong Kong to arrange vessel deliveries, besides doing business in many ports around Britain. In 1989, when the company needed another offshore Director, Geoffrey moved back to Guernsey from which he had been absent for 51 years. In Guernsey, with his own company, he acted as Agent for the Group until he retired in January 2014. He was a member of the Regimental Association/The Sirmoor Club from its inception until his death.

In 1950 Geoffrey married Miss Denise Lowen. Their only son, John, married Miss Sarah Lynch-Garbett whose father served in the 3rd Battalion 1st King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles in French Indo-China. We send our sympathy to Denise and John and Sarah and their family.

DRW

Colonel Terence Arthur Cave CBE

Terry Cave, who was born in Aldershot on 25 September 1923 while his father was serving there with The Royal Leicestershire Regiment, died on 21 June 2015 aged 91.

Having won a scholarship to Stonyhurst, Terry excelled there at sport and became Captain of Rugby, Cricket and Boxing, and Captain of the Catholic

Public Schools Cricket XI. On leaving school he was chosen to join The Royal Scots as an Indian Army Cadet and went to the Officers' Training School, Bangalore, before joining the 2nd Goorkhas in Dehra Dun in October 1942. In 1944 he served with the 1st Battalion in Italy, went with it to Greece, and returned with it to Dehra in 1946. He was then transferred to the Regimental Centre where, in January 1947, he married Miss Anne Gibbs. Shortly after that they left for England, on his posting to The Leicestershire Regiment as a regular officer.

Terry had a splendid career, full of interesting appointments. During his time with the 1st Battalion of The Leicesters he served in England, Germany, Hong Kong and Khartoum, where he was Adjutant. He went to University College, London, where he qualified as a 1st Class Interpreter in Hungarian and then became an Interpreter with British Troops, Austria. In 1957 he qualified at The Royal College of Military Science, Shrivenham, and became a Technical Staff Officer. In 1958 he transferred to the Intelligence Corps and from 1962 to 1965 he was Military Attaché in Budapest. After being Chief Instructor at The School of Military Intelligence, in 1971 he was appointed Defence Adviser and Military Attaché (Technical) in Prague. When he retired in 1974 he was appointed an Honorary Colonel and made CBE shortly afterwards.

DRW

Colonel Peter Jones

Peter Jones won an immediate DSO for successfully leading his company of Gurkhas on one of the most daunting of military operations: a night attack uphill. Wounded four times in the battle and losing his left eye, Jones refused to be evacuated until the objective — a bald, rocky hill in Tunisia — was secure.

By early 1943 the advance of the Anglo-American force from the west and the 8th Army from the east had confined the German and Italian armies in North Africa under General Hans-Jürgen von Arnim into a 100-mile arc between the coast west of Tunis and Enfidaville on the Gulf of Hammamet.

After staving off an Allied thrust towards Tunis, von Arnim defied expectations by pouring reinforcements into the besieged coastal strip.

This was doubly risky, as the 250,000 troops could not be fed via the sea lanes from Italy which were under constant Allied attack.

The Allied offensive began on the night of 19-20 April 1943 using four army corps. The veteran 4th Indian Division attacked the Djebel Garci, rising 1,000 feet from the plain in a series of misleading false crests and covered with scrub, with the 2nd New Zealand Division on the right and the lorried infantry brigade of the 7th Armoured Division on the left.

However, after four hours of bitter fighting the 4th Indian Division had fallen so far behind schedule that the commanding officer of the 1/9th Gurkhas ordered his men round the flank in a drive up the bare hillside.

Although the moon had risen, there was no time for the allocation of precise local objectives. Captain Jones was called forward at 0200 and told "Right, get on to the mountain and take the highest feature you can find. I want the Battalion established before daylight." Using a technique developed on the Indian North-West frontier, Jones sent his leading platoon to occupy a bare whale-shaped mound, some 300 yards long, from where it could give covering fire for the company's advance.

As he led the rest of his company forward a curtain of machine gun and mortar fire opened up — quickly followed by a rain of stick grenades indicating contact with the enemy's outposts. Pushing on, Jones hit the flank of another German company. But the Gurkhas got to work with their kukris until the enemy fled uphill. They left behind 44 dead.

'It was all hand-to-hand stuff' Jones described in the book *Forgotten Voices - Desert Victory* by Julian Thompson. "The Gurkhas drew their kukris and it was slaughter; occasionally a bayonet, but mostly kukri. I didn't use a kukri. The Bren gun crew with me were killed, and I took over the gun with quite good effect".

Wounded in the neck, Jones was then shot through both thighs and injured in the eye, but refused medical attention. "The battle ebbed and flowed, all in the dark, with a slight moon lit by flashes from rifles and machine guns. Grenades were going off. You glimpsed people. If they were German you attacked them." *The Times* report of the battle described the noise of guns

rending the air over the Tunisian mountains, as well as the sound of troops hacking down cactus bushes impeding their progress.

At one point one of Jones's platoon commanders came across a German section position and attacked with his kukri killing four, but making such a racket that more Germans were alerted "They got his kukri off him, and started to try and kill him with it. But they weren't very skilful, there was so much blood about that the kukri was slippery and he evaded them."

When Jones became short of ammunition, he told his company sergeant major to get some men and go to the battalion headquarters for more ammunition. "The next time I saw him I asked him if he had got more ammunition and he said 'Yes, and I've also killed four more Germans'".

When Jones protested that was not what he had told him to do the man replied "I'm doing both: I am collecting ammunition, but also collecting heads with my friend." Always calm and self-contained, Jones later recalled that by the morning the injury to his eye and the splinters in his thighs meant he "wasn't very mobile". But he continued until he had achieved his objective. "After a while I passed out and my men carried me down on a stretcher".

The citation for the immediate award of the Distinguished Service Order stated, "the outstanding gallantry and determination displayed by this officer at a critical moment of the battle played a major part in achieving the success by his brigade. His example inspired his company to hold its ground against the heavy and determined counter-attacks which followed."

Ironically, this was not enough to achieve the 10th Corps aim to block the north of the Cap Bon peninsula to prevent it being used for an Axis last stand in North Africa.

Michael Peter Feltham Jones was born in 1919 at the depot of the 9th Gurkha Rifles in Debra Dun, thought to be the most spectacularly situated military establishment in India with superb views over the Himalayas.

He was the second son of Captain AS Jones of the 9th Gurkhas, the regiment that in 1919 had been ordered by Brigadier-General Reginald

Dyer to fire on an unarmed assembly in the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, India.

Jones was educated at Denstone College in Staffordshire and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst from where commissioning into the Indian Army was highly competitive.

He first served with 1/9th Gurkhas on the north-west frontier in 1940, then in Iraq and at the battles of the Mareth Line and Wadi Akarit before Enfidaville. Loss of his eye kept him out of active service for six months until returning briefly to 1/9th Gurkhas in Egypt and returning to India to command a training battalion at Dehra Dun.

When the 9th Gurkha Rifles were chosen to join the new Indian Army following partition of the subcontinent in 1947, he transferred to the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkha Rifles in British service. He served as chief instructor of the jungle warfare school in Johore Bahru in Malaya during the communist emergency of the 1950s — teaching how to fight, live and navigate in the jungle. As Colonel Brigadier of Gurkhas in 1966, Jones was faced with the unenviable task of running down the strength of the brigade from 15,000 to 10,000 men.

He married Patricia Chidlaw-Roberts whom he met when she was working for the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) as one of the 'Braddell Rise' girls — said to be the prettiest group in Singapore. They had four children: Michael who made a career in banking in New York, Deborah, Nicola and Melanie, all of whom followed the example of the late Dowager Duchess of Devonshire by describing themselves simply "a housewife". After Jones retired in 1973, he and his wife settled in Hampshire.

He had completed his military service as Defence Attaché in Jakarta. Only six years earlier, in 1963, the British Embassy had been burned to the ground and looted by a mob in retaliation for British support for Malaysia when President Sukarno launched his armed campaign of confrontation with the new federation. Relations were strained but the sensitivity and dedication with which Jones carried out this last post were, said colleagues, characteristic of the man.

Reprinted with permission from *The Times*, 22 April 2015

Colonel Johnny Lawes has also written about Peter Jones:

"I first met Peter in Dehra Dun in 1946 when I was an 18-year old 2nd Lieutenant and he was a distinguished young Major in 9GR with a DSO and one eye. My earliest impressions of him were of a very distinguished figure in a dinner jacket with a black patch over one eye scintillating at many parties at the Dehra Dun Club and other mess parties and gatherings. His mother and mine were friends so he heard of my arrival, gave me lots of good advice, and enrolled me in the 2GR/9GR cricket team. I was at Peter and Pat's wedding in Singapore on 11 August 1951 and they remained friends of mine and were always very kind and hospitable.

Peter was a Company Commander and Battalion 2IC in 1/2GR during operations in Malaya from 1948. He was transferred to 2/2GR on 12 July 1956 following the death of Bill Truss and Pahalmansing Gurung. He commanded 2/2GR from October 1960 until April 1963.

I was Commandant 2/2GR when Peter was Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas in 1968. He was very helpful to me and all COs over rundown and redundancy problems. He was awarded the CBE.

After retirement he was Honorary Secretary of the St John Ambulance Brigade in Winchester from 1974 to 1984 and was awarded the Order of St John.

He was a very keen and good cricketer and opened the batting for Sandhurst and played against the MCC. He played for 2GR throughout his service. He was also a keen golfer and played both games until prevented by old age and illness.

Peter was a superlative officer and gentleman. He was a brilliant and gallant leader and commander: strict and firm but kind and thoughtful with a great sense of humour. He was dedicated to his men's welfare and, of course had a very extensive knowledge and understanding of all matters military. He was very popular with all his juniors and those under his command."

SIRMOOR CLUB MEMBERS' NEWS

In addition to being awarded a MBE in the New Years Honours List for her work in support of disabled soldiers, **Emma Willis** (daughter of Michael Willis (1st Bn 1955 – 57) has also been made a Deputy Lord Lieutenant Gloucestershire, on which we offer our warm congratulations.

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple, to his pleasant surprise, met his former ADC **Julian Haskard** at the Army vs Navy polo match on the 11 July. Julian lives in Australia with his wife Michelle and three children Cosmo (23), Piers (19) and Hugo (16) but regularly goes back and forth to Ireland to see his parents, and also travels extensively on business.

While fund-raising for the GWT Earthquake Appeal, **Nick Hinton** made two unexpected connections with the Sirmoor diaspora. The first was the discovery that a colleague of his in IBM is the grandson of **Major John Miller** [1st Bn 1942-45]. 'Dusty' Miller has several honourable mentions in Volume 3 of the Regimental History and the distinction of having won a MM in 1940, as a Lance-Corporal in the Scots Guards, for shooting down a German aircraft that was strafing Kenley airfield. Nick's daughter Lucy also helped with fund-raising. To her surprise she discovered that her boss, the owner of the PR company for which she had worked for over two years, is the daughter of **Major Alexander Irving** [3rd Bn 1942-46]. Alex served with No 7 Column in the first Chindit expedition, escaping through China when the column was dispersed, and with 3/2GR in the Arakan. He also took part in Operation Zipper, the landings in Malaya after the Japanese surrender. It's a small world.....

Rachel Magowan, who we very much enjoyed meeting at the Durbar, has been trying to pin down the details of her family relationship to **General Frederick Young**, who raised the Sirmoor Rifles in 1815. She is descended from his cousin Robert Young. There are a further five generations between Robert and Rachel, which presumably makes her Frederick's great-great-great-great-great niece – but any amateur genealogist who has a better idea is welcome to comment!

Peter Duffell, a longstanding member of the MCC, spoke at the Club's AGM about the impact of the earthquake on cricket in that country. A week later the MCC Chairman contacted him to say the Committee had, for the first time in 30 years, agreed to hold a ground collection for Nepal earthquake relief at the Lord's Test Match on 23 May. Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas arranged for 50 Gurkha soldiers to assist. They collected £20,000 for the GWT, a remarkable achievement. *(See photograph p 26 – Ed)*. As a thank-you, General Sir Peter Wall, Chairman of the GWT, presented the President of the MCC with a ceremonial kukri, remarking that it might come in useful at Committee meetings.

Several Sirmooris have been physically exerting themselves to raise money for Gurkha charities. In April **Charlie Duffell** ran the Virgin London Marathon to raise money for GWT. Coincidentally **Ben Thomas** was running the same race to generate funding for CAIRN. **Ed and Sarah Mackaness** took part in Trailwalker in July, also to raise money for GWT. **Ian Ridgen** participated in Trailwalker too – the fifth year he has done so – as a member of the cross-Regimental 'Gurkha burhos' team, fundraising for GWT and Oxfam in Nepal. *(I am sure many others have been involved in similarly admirable activities; do please let me know about them – Ed)*.

As Colonel RGR **Craig Lawrence** has had a very busy year dealing with Gurkha 200 events. Nonetheless, he has found time to author an excellent commemorative history of the Brigade, *The Gurkhas: 200 Years of Service to the Crown* – reviewed on page 54. Less well known is that he has also published a novel, *The Legacy*, a story bringing together a beautiful mountaineer who has just completed her doctorate, an ex-Gurkha officer, an assassin stalking a man whose company has developed a revolutionary social media application and a hedge fund manager. It gets splendid reviews on Amazon. The jury is out on how much of it is based on Craig's personal experience!

Since leaving the Army **Sean Crane** has been Chief Executive of the Honourable Artillery Company. On 10 June he was kind enough to invite **Ed Mackaness, James Coulson, Nick Hinton, Dan Huntington, and Christopher Lavender** to lunch there. To make the occasion appropriately Regimental the centrepiece on the lunch table was the miniature replica of the Queen's Truncheon presented to Sean when he left command.

Annabel Mackenzie, daughter of **David Scotson** noticed that her three year old son **Ned** was the most junior Durbar attendee. She arranged a picture of him with the most senior person present, Field Marshal Chapple – see page 26.

SIRMOOR CLUB ACTIVITIES

Sirmoor Piscatorial Society (SPS)

River Meon. 2-3 June 2015

“Give a man a fish and he is hungry the next day. Teach him how to fish and you get rid of him for the whole week-end!”

Anon

Well, it was not quite like that this year for the SPS on the Meon. Tony Berry, Bruce Jackman and David Thomas were the only members who answered the call to fish. It has certainly been a busy anniversary year with Gurkha 200, Agincourt, Magna Carta, Waterloo, Gallipoli, Dunkirk, VE Day and, if you want to add to the list in these days of the SNP – the siege of Carlisle in 1315! So Sirmoor fishing was sandwiched between all these events although we were more affected by the Sirmoor 200 Durbar, the dreadful Nepal Earthquake, the re-dedication of the Gurkha Memorial, and then the Gurkha 200 Pageant. It was not surprising therefore that we were down to only the hard core of fishermen. Nonetheless it may be time to think up other new exciting fishing waters and probably a different way of attracting rods. All ideas are welcome.

We were due to meet on Monday 1 June but the weather was so bad that OIC SPS (David Thomas) made the sensible decision to delay the start until the next day. The first good news was that we found an excellent pub in Droxford, called the Baker's Arms, at which to RV for an delicious lunch on Tuesday 2 June to start the fishing trip. The weather had improved and it got better by the day. Although there was not much rising we all caught some small trout that we gallantly returned.

Bruce and Tony with their respective memsahebs, Carol and Sally, were accommodated for Tuesday night at Panhazard, David and Joanna's lovely house in the New Forest. Norman and Alison Corbett joined us for a sumptuous dinner at which Joanna looked after us all in considerable style; we lacked for nothing.

On Wednesday morning we awoke at a civilized hour to a glorious day and had David Thomas's 'signature' Full English breakfast on the terrace. We drew for beats and were soon off to the Meon again. We all caught small trout and Tony landed and returned a two pound chub. The morning went quickly and soon it was time to RV at our favourite picnic spot by the river for a late lunch. This time we managed to open the field gate and those who scorn 'Chelsea Tractors' might like to know that David's made it down the steep slope right to the river bank with all the gear, and back up again! Joanna and the Mems provided us with a handsome picnic and we spent a happy hour and a half in quintessentially English surroundings on a sunny summer's day.

The Jackmans and Berrys had to depart in the afternoon but David was able to fish into the evening. There was a good hatch of mayfly and he caught two beautiful trout of just under a pound each; one of which was wild and returned (as per the rules for the beat) but the other was a 'stockie' and is now in his deep freeze. Interestingly its stomach contained three caddis nymphs still in their shells so the bottom of the river was its main provider of food and rising to mayfly was a change from its feeding habit up to then.

So ended a glorious two days fishing. Anyone for next year?

DLT

Sirmoor Golf Society (SGS)

In order to get good deals with Golf Clubs it is necessary for visiting clubs to have at least 12 players. This is becoming increasingly difficult with the SGS as age takes its toll of our members. Thus we have widened our membership to others in the Brigade of Gurkhas who play as Honorary SGS members (indicated with '(H)' against their names in the reports) and we are considering opening up certain fixtures as 'Invitation Days'.

Swinley Forest Golf Club – 4 March 2015

To celebrate the Regiment's 200th anniversary we decided to start the season on one of the finest golf courses, Swinley Forest Golf Club, rated to be one of the top 100 golf courses in the world and accurately described in some reviews:

"Swinley Forest is an absolutely charming golf course on the famous Surrey/Berkshire sand belt, but it's a club that is frozen in time, exclusive, unusual and totally eccentric. There is no Captain and despite being in existence for over 100 years, no history except in the members' heads. Only recently have scorecards been printed, holes allocated par figures, and competitions been introduced for Swinley's distinguished members. The fact that there are no obligatory handicaps and members choose what they play off, says something of the membership's attitude to life".

"It is said that 'members of The Berkshire Golf Club are all gentlemen and love to play golf; all the Sunningdale members love to play golf but not all are gentlemen; and all the Swinley Forest members are gentlemen but don't give a fig whether they play golf or not!'"

Richard Kemmis Betty managed to get a great deal with the Club so it was no wonder that we had a very promising response from members ending up with 23 players who played in six groups of three or four: Jon Aslett, Derek & Ann Burton, Willie Bicket (H), Tim Chappell, Nick Cooke (H), Bob Couldrey (H), Norman & Alison Corbett, Peter Duffell, David Harrison (H), Rosie Harrop, Nigel Hodges, Bruce Jackman, Alexander Kemmis Betty and his guest Nigel Baker, Richard Kemmis Betty, Anita Morley (H), Phil Murray, Mark Pettigrew, Mike & Jenny Roe (H), and William Shuttlewood.

Richard produced an interesting format for the day; an Individual Stableford Competition that included pairs playing against each other in a Four Ball Better Ball Competition. He has a cunning way of managing this when there are only three players in a group!

In keeping with the eccentricity of the Club our start was delayed as we were obliged by the Club rules to wait for a late Club Member, accompanied by his dog, to tee off! But we showed some Sirmoor style as we gathered on the 1st Tee – especially in attire with Peter Duffell in plus

fours with Regimental lali stockings, and Tim Chappell in a Regimental sweater with a wide lali stripe around the chest. So all was set for a great day's golf despite a Spring chill in the air which made the mug of consomme soup with a slug of Tio Pepe at the Halfway Hut most welcome.

The competition between pairs in each group produced some good mini-matches, the most notable being Nigel Baker and Anita Morley surprisingly proving too strong for Mark Pettigrew and Alexander Kemmis Betty, and Richard Kemmis Betty and Mike Roe beating Rosie Harrop and Phil Murray on the last hole after a miracle shot by Mike Roe.

The individual prizes went to: Nigel Baker – Winner with 35 points; Anita Morley – Best Lady with 32 points; Mark Pettigrew – Nearest the Pin; Norman Corbett – Longest Drive; Willie Bicket – the 'John Aslett Over 20 Handicap' prize. Nobody deserved the Sevi Prize (doing the most audacious shot that produces a result) so the prize went to Jenny Roe who somehow fell down a sinkhole! And breaking with Sirmoor tradition of not allowing any player to win more than one prize, she was awarded the plastic duck 'Joker' prize because she also fell in love with the duck!

We finished the day with an outstanding curry meal where the Club Chef produced five different curries and a wonderful selection of puddings. It was a great start to the SGS golfing season.

(A photograph of the participants at Swinley Forest is on page 27 – Ed).

SGS Championship – Corhampton Golf Club – 14 May 2015

We had a disappointing turnout with just 13 players this year: Jon Aslett, Derek Burton, Steve Clifton, Nick Cooke (H), Norman & Alison Corbett, Bob Couldrey (H), David Harrison, Bruce Jackman, Richard Kemmis Betty, Mark Pettigrew, and Mike & Jenny Roe (H). A few regulars had pathetic excuses not to come and challenge Mark Pettigrew who returned to defend his title and the Trophy which he won this time last year. The day started with continuous light, but soaking, rain that eventually cleared up but not before most people were pretty wet. Nevertheless the Sirmoor spirit came to the fore and the day was played in good humour throughout.

The Champion and winner of the 2nd Goorkhas Golf Trophy, as well as the much coveted red & black dice-boarded flat hat, was Steve Clifton with a score of 35. This is the second time he has won the Trophy, which means an automatic cut of four strokes to his handicap at next year's Championships. Mark Pettigrew was Runner Up, very nearly retaining the Trophy, with a score of 34. Norman Corbett was third with 29 points. The Best Lady was Allison Corbett also with 29 points, but the prize went to Jenny Roe because Alison had won the Longest Drive (yes, that included the men!). Nobody even got onto the green at the 6th to win Nearest The Pin! However, Steve Clifton won Nearest The Pin on the 13th but the prize went to Richard Kemmis Betty as the second nearest shot because Steve had already won a prize (the Trophy). The 'John Aslett Over 20 Handicap' prize was jointly won by Derek Burton and Bruce Jackman. Two plastic ducks were awarded; one to Jon Aslett for colliding with the Club wheelie bin in his buggy, and the other to Nick for coming with no waterproofs – he did well to survive! The Joker prize went to Norman Corbett who consistently putted further past the hole than the length of his original putt. He won a putting practice machine!

A challenging day's golf ended with the excellent traditional Curry meal we always enjoy at Corhampton. Let's hope more players turn out next year.

BCJ

The Sirmoor Yacht Squadron (SYS)

After a year's break from sailing because of the Regiment's 200th Anniversary celebrations the SYS programme of sailing will begin again in 2016. The intended sailing schedule is:

The SYS Regatta at Cowes – late June or early July 2016 (dates tbc)

As usual we will be based on The Royal Corinthian Yacht Club. The well established programme is to gather on a Sunday evening for a BBQ, spend the Monday morning sorting out crews of three per boat (Sonar) and refreshing on the rules and etiquette of dinghy racing, then race that afternoon and on the Tuesday morning, dispersing after prize-giving and lunch. Those interested in taking part in this hugely enjoyable sailing event

should contact Bruce Jackman on 0117 973 3317 or, preferably, at bruce.jackman@btopenworld.com.

SYS Mediterranean Odyssey – September 2016 (tbc)

Once again we intend to take to the high seas with a flotilla of large yachts for a cruising holiday in the Mediterranean. We believe in sailing comfort and therefore hire boats with enough heads and berths for one per couple on board. We need to give some thought to our destination next year as the situation in Turkey and Greece may persuade us to try elsewhere, a matter to be agreed with all those wishing to participate. It is obviously desirable that crews chose themselves. To that end anyone interested in coming on this popular holiday is asked to form a crew and then contact Bruce Jackman (contact details above).

BCJ

ARTICLES

Earthquake Diary

Andrew Duncan raised and disbursed over £20,000 for the relief efforts he describes, which has now closed down. This article consists of edited excerpts from his updates to contributors.

1 May 2015

The earthquake was very frightening. Fortunately I had a tent and some camping gear and was quite comfortable in the garden with my landlady and her family until the worst of the aftershocks had dissipated. We are still getting some shakes now, five days after the main event.

Next day I went through Sankhu, which is largely reduced to rubble. There was a Chinese rescue team with the Nepal Armed Police to pull survivors and bodies out of the ruins. People are living in the fields under plastic sheeting. I gave them the limited supplies that I had.

(Continued on p.34)



Colour Sergeant Padam Gurung RGR ringing the 5-minute bell at Lord's accompanied by Derek Brewer, the MCC Chief Executive. See story p18.



Lady Chapple; Field Marshal Chapple (most senior Durbar attendee), General Duffell, Annabel Mackenzie, and Ned Mackenzie (most junior Durbar attendee) at the Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. See story p19.



The President and Chairman at Buckingham Palace when The Queen inspected The Truncheon, with the Gurkha Majors of 1RGR and 2RGR, both formerly 2GR – see story p51.



Members of the Sirmoor Golf Society at Swinley Forest. See story p21.

The Sirmoor Durbar 2015



The Parade assembles in the British Gurkha Camp, Pokhara, 28th March 2015.



The Queen's Truncheon marches on Parade



The Chairman of the Sirmoor Club pins a Sirmoor medal on Captain Khilbahadur Thapa.



The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas marches off.



Field Marshal Chapple unveils the new Lal Gate at the Gurkha Museum, Pokhara



The Chautara lunch after the Parade



David Thomas pays his respects
to the Truncheon at the Chautara lunch



The British Officers' team in the Tug of
War at the Families Durbar



The Nepal Army Band at the Sounding of Retreat.



Trumpeters of the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas at the Sounding of Retreat.

The Nepal Earthquake (see article p25)



Kodari earthquake refugees.



The Kodari camp in Kathmandu.



Unloading CGI at Gairi Gaun.



A woman in Konje with the ruins of her house.



Temporary classrooms at Mahakali School.



Rebuilding Nagarkot School.

I went to Nagarkot, the village of a friend of mine. All the houses are destroyed. His family were camping out beside the ruin but had scavenged CGI to make a temporary shelter. We saw no government presence or relief effort in the villages.

3 May 2015

Yesterday I went by motorcycle to Sindhupalchowk, reportedly the worst affected area in the country. Some villages had been completely destroyed while others close by appeared unscathed. The beauty of the scenery was in stark contrast to the scenes of devastation and the stench of bodies still buried under rubble.

People in Kathmandu had taken the plight of their fellow citizens to heart and there was a long stream of every type of transport imaginable carrying relief supplies. I also saw rescue teams from Portugal, Norway, the UK, Japan and others but the Nepal government relief effort was again noticeable by its absence.

7 May 2015

I volunteered to help a GWS relief programme in Dhading, west of Kathmandu, and located a temporary base for sending supplies up to the remote villages near the Tibetan border. The road proved too bad for our motorbikes. Only the Land Rover from the Welfare Centre was tough enough for the job.

In Lapang, on the Ankhu Khola in Dhading, people were sleeping in whatever makeshift structures they could build from the ruins of their homes. The village had limited supplies of food, but most items were running out and even in Dhading Besi, the district centre, few consumables were in the market.

Behind our camp was a destroyed house. The occupants' six year-old son, Saphal, was looking miserable with one sandal and one plastic shoe worn on the wrong foot. His clothing and other shoes were buried under the rubble. I took him a new pair of shoes a few days later. Like most of the kids in the village Saphal has some kind of skin infection. It looks a little like chicken pox. I asked his mother to consult the GWS medic.

I also hear there is quite a lot of diarrhoea in the villages, so I will take in more medicines and rehydration salts.

12 May 2015

Few people get an undisturbed night's rest as aftershocks continue. We felt quite a big one the day before yesterday at about 1530.

This is traditionally the planting season but vital seeds have been buried or washed away by unseasonal heavy rain. There is an urgent need to distribute seed and fertilizer to ensure long term food security. Meanwhile if people are to have the energy to work their fields they need more substantial nutrition than biscuits and instant noodles.

15 May 2015

The second big earthquake, 7.3 on the Richter scale, hit us on Tuesday with an epicenter of Namche Bazaar. I was at AWC Bagmati. We were on the ground floor and were able to move out on to the lawn where we watched the building sway and shake. A few bricks came loose, but there was no serious damage. The patients in the clinic hobbled or were carried out, some in considerable distress. We also had an influx of people from the neighbouring houses who had nowhere else safe to go.

Someone had contacted GWS for assistance to a Dalit (low caste) community living south of Dulikhel. They were in a bad way before the earthquake and are now much worse off. As they fall outside the remit of GWS and other major relief agencies I agreed to take them on.

19 May 2015

I have been distributing relief materials sent from Thailand by my old friend Major General Patchara Rattakul. After meeting the needs of individuals, I split the rest between GWS and the Rowadolu Bhusinga Sarokar Samaj (RBSS) a non-profit organization run by my business partner Tenzi Sherpa to support remote communities in Okhaldunga, his home district. He could not get a helicopter so he is faced with a huge bill for trucks and tractors to move supplies to where the villagers can come to collect them. Apparently all of the Nepal Army helicopters are grounded – maybe lack of spares or pilots out of flying hours.

23 May 2015

Many of the volunteer groups have stopped their relief work and returned to their day jobs but help is still desperately needed . The villagers in Sindupalchowk are having a particularly hard time as the earthquake opened great cracks in the ground and the threat of landslides is very high. Whole villages are trapped on sharp ridgelines, wondering when they will be swept away. The only option is to relocate them by helicopter.

I was up in Nagarkot again on Friday. Coming back through Bhaktapur I saw farmers trying to get in their wheat crop. It has already been standing too long so the grain is falling from the seed heads before they can harvest. They then have to find somewhere to store it.

26 May 2015

Early evening Saturday a sudden windstorm sent dust clouds and debris spiralling across the open ground in front of my house. It hit a recently constructed building in which a number of earthquake victims were sheltering. The walls had already been damaged, but the tin roof was intact until the wind hit it with incredible force, tearing it off and demolishing much of what remained of the walls. The wind was reported to have killed three people in East Nepal.

Earlier that same day our convoy of relief materials set out for Okhaldunga, complete with police escort to prevent looting. They were getting close to Jiri when a windstorm struck, uprooting trees and throwing them across the road, blocking further passage. A house had its roof torn off and the wall fell in, killing the householder instantly. Our volunteers had to purchase saws to cut their way through to Rawadolu, the distribution point. The Nepal Army had a platoon there that was due to move on, but stayed to ensure the security of our relief materials and their distribution.

On Sunday a landslide in the Kali Gandaki gorge was reported, damming the river and causing a lake two kilometres long to form behind it. People living in settlements downstream, including the town of Beni, were evacuated to higher ground as a precaution against the dam

bursting. Fortunately the river itself cleared the blockage and the danger is now reported to be over.

Yesterday I delivered 15 bundles of CGI for the Gairi Gaun villagers to construct shelters. I hope to deliver another 80 bundles. I met a couple of UNICEF employees who were seeing what they could do to help. So far it is still private individuals and organizations that are in the forefront of the relief effort.

30 May 2015

I received a call from Samundra Gurung of Kodari, a border town on the Nepal side of the Friendship Bridge to Tibet. The entire town was destroyed. 1,200 people have been relocated to Mulpani on the outskirts of Kathmandu, where the Chinese have provided them with tents and food. Samundra was with a group of a further 62 people, including young babies and his 92 year-old grandmother, who are camped in a field close to the Pepsi Cola bottling plant behind Kathmandu airport. They are in a pitiful condition in a miserable and unsanitary location. I have provided them with a few tarpaulins and bought them a week's worth of food supplies and some mosquito nets. I would like to see them moved to a healthier location.

5 June 2015

The second shipment of relief materials from Thailand has been cleared and distribution started.

I have given the IDPs from Kodari a pump and pipes to try and solve the water problem and overflowing pit latrine. It seems to be working. I have also given them three water filters and some secondhand clothing collected by my landlady and neighbours. Next week I am hoping to arrange a health camp for them with a Nepali lady doctor. I will also need to buy them more food.

Last week I provided 40 bundles of CGI to Sana Gaun, the village next to Gairi Gaun. I have been asked to provide a further 10 bundles for the school which caters to the kids from both villages. This work is progressing well.

I went to Nagarkot today to check on the building of temporary classrooms for Mahankal School, for which I bought the CGI and other materials. I also paid for their transportation. The men from Gurung Gaun have almost completed three out of the five classrooms.

11 June 2015

The opening ceremony of the Nagarkot classrooms was a grand affair. Well known TV and radio entertainers got the kids laughing, singing and dancing while putting across more serious messages about how to stay safe and avoid being trafficked in the wake of the disaster.

The BBC says we can expect the monsoon to break this weekend. The farmers badly need the rain for their crops but it will make getting relief materials to the more remote locations more difficult. The tube well at home is still dry, so we have to fetch water in buckets from the communal well for washing and cleaning and flushing the loo.

The absence of rainfall has not stopped the landslides. A particularly large one in Taplejung last week killed 58 people. The Nepal Army had to suspend the search for bodies in Langtang because so many more slips kept occurring, injuring some of the soldiers. There are still thought to be over 100 bodies buried in the remains of the village.

17 June 2015

This morning just before 0600 there was a violent jolt. The neighbours all came out of their houses shouting “Bhuinchal ayo! (Earthquake!)”. The epicenter was Kathmandu so it probably felt bigger than the recorded magnitude of 4.4. It was shortly followed by a 5.2 in Sindupalchowk and then another two there before 0800 of 4.0 and 5.1. It is really unnerving how the aftershocks keep coming .

To date I have supplied 159 bundles of CGI to the residents of Gairi Gaun, Sana Gaun and the local school. On the way there recently I passed a group of young Nepali cyclists who had been constructing temporary metal classrooms. These “Nepali Cyclists Ride to Rebuild” had done a splendid job, erecting ten shelters during the morning.

28 June 2015

This week the international donor community pledged US\$ 4.4 billion dollars, 66 per cent of the total needed. They stressed the need for transparency and accountability of the funds committed. Let's hope that with this much international interest the funds will get to where they're needed and not end up in some minister's pocket!

The Nepalese government has been keen to announce the end of the relief phase but many of the international agencies protested that it is too soon. There are many people who have received little, if anything.

Tenzi Sherpa has been back to Rawadolu in Okhaldunga with a team of Australian and Nepali doctors. They took tents and blankets provided by a friend of mine in Bangkok. I contributed to the transportation costs. In less than a week they treated over 1,700 patients before having to retreat in the face of the advancing monsoon. We have finally had some welcome rain in Kathmandu, but it meant that relief distribution to some areas has had to be suspended.

4 July 2015

On Saturday evening Samundra Gurung, my contact point for the Kodari victims, brought a relative from the nearby village of Gumbang. The 190 people there, including newborn babies, received two tarpaulins per household from the government but they were very thin and got torn. The rice the government provided has run out. A Buddhist group donated 1,000 rupees per household but that did not last long either. The villagers built temporary shelters with CGI recovered from their ruined homes, but have had to move four times in the last two months due to continuing landslides. They are now desperately short of food. I sent them NPR 150,000-worth of supplies, mostly food but also solar panels to provide limited lighting and charge mobile phones. That and the transportation charges just about cleared me out of the money with which I had intended to keep the Kodari IDPs going until the end of the monsoon so I told Samundra I cannot continue to feed the 70 people camped out near the Pepsi-Cola plant. I will introduce him to the Shelter and Settlement Officer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN arm responsible for people displaced by the earthquake.

10 July 2015

I paid a carpenter NPR 15,000 to make six beds for mothers with small babies in the Pepsi Cola camp. This has become very waterlogged and they are sleeping on groundsheets. I also paid for repairs to Samundra's motorcycle, which was damaged by landslide last time he went up to his village. Without his help I would not be able to achieve so much for his people.

Discussions about relocating the Kodari IDPs don't seem to be going anywhere. My initial contact in IOM passed their case on to someone who immediately tried to shift it back to me. He then said that IOM do not look after such people, but he would try to find an NGO that would! It looks like we are their best bet for the immediate future. I really wonder what some of these NGOs do to justify their existence.

I am still waiting for Basant Kunwar to get back to me about the situation in Banakhu, East of Kathmandu. He has been roped into the endless round of seminars and "workshops" that seem to be the stock-in-trade of international NGOs. These workshops waste time and don't get any work done. In some ways I sympathize with the Nepal government when they ask international donors not to distribute their relief through international NGOs.

Andrew Duncan

The people from Kodari are now supported by the Ride High Foundation. You are welcome to subscribe via their website (www.ridehigh.com). The Gurkha Brigade Association and Sirmoor Club recommend donations to relief efforts are made via the Gurkha Welfare Trust (www.gwt.org.uk).

The Sirmoor Durbar 2015

A souvenir programme of the Durbar will be produced later this year, including many pages of pictures. In the interim readers of *The Sirmoor*, particularly those who could not attend in person, might be interested in this short account of what went on.

On the way to Pokhara many Sirmooris attended Brigade of Gurkhas events in Kathmandu. The British Embassy had arranged a reception on the evening of 25 March. Under the direction of the Defence Attaché, Colonel Sean Harris late RE/QGE, the Residency lawn had been covered with a large tent and lights were strung among the foliage. The principal guest from the UK was the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Houghton. Several other senior officers from Britain and Nepal were invited. As well as 2GR attendees there were several of those going to the simultaneous 7GR event in Dharan. Other regiments were also well represented. Waiters and waitresses generously refreshed drinks and offered canapés but, disappointingly for an ambassadorial cocktail party, no Ferrero Rocher chocolates. The trumpeters and pipers of the Royal Gurkha Rifles band entertained us, and speeches were made by senior diplomats and soldiers about the importance of the military connection between the British and Nepalese. It was a well-organised, enjoyable and sociable introduction to events of the following days.

The following day The Nepalese Army hosted a *bhela* for all regiments of the Brigade on Tundikhel, within sight of the historic Bhimsen tower that has since been demolished by the earthquake. This gathering was followed by curry lunch in a covered and decorated area nearby. Sadly a tattoo planned that afternoon in the local football stadium had to be abandoned because of a torrential thunderstorm.

27 March was a travel day. Most of those coming from Kathmandu had opted to fly to Pokhara. Those on earlier flights achieved this between the morning cloud lifting and the poor weather closing in again, but many travelling later had to go by road, arriving very late at night. For those lucky enough to fly, the reception at Pokhara airport, splendidly organised by Major Hitman Gurung, made the visitors feel very welcome to a specifically 2nd Goorkhas environment. Visitors registered for the Durbar at the reception centre in the Gurkha Haven hotel, where an efficient team under Major Debiprasad Ghale issued everyone with 2GR hats, commemorative medals and tickets for the following two days' events. It was a gregarious meeting-place where many old friendships and acquaintances were renewed as people passed through.

28 March dawned clear and bright. Some attributed this miraculous change in the weather to the presence of The Queen's Truncheon, the Nishani Mai. It was the first time it had been in Nepal and therefore perhaps had the advantage of surprise over the local weather gods. Over the roofs of the British Gurkha camp was clearly visible the magnificent sight of Macchapucchare, the fishtail mountain. From early morning onwards Sirmooris and their families made their way to the parade ground, the re-rôled football pitch behind the recruit accommodation and offices. Most of the men were dressed in smart Regimental mufti with 2GR Durbar hats, and many wore impressive collections of British, Bruneian and other medals. The Gurkha ladies, as always, added gaiety to the occasion with their brightly coloured saris.

At 0830 Major Yambahadur Gurung explained the sequence of events over the Tannoy and then we carried out a well-executed and impressive parade – and in the best of 2nd Goorkhas traditions, without a rehearsal. The Parade Commander, Major Dilbahadur Gurung, summoned the RGR Band and the 12 company markers. Nearly 1,000 other ranks and then officers fell in as just sharply as they would have done in years past, grouped in companies organized by year of enlistment. As the parade saluted, the Queen's Truncheon was marched on by the Truncheon Jemadar, Captain Dolbahadur Gurung, formerly 2GR and now 2IC of the British Camp in Pokhara, accompanied by an escort of retired NCOs. Field Marshal Sir John Chapple led a group of other senior officers on to the saluting dais: Lieutenant-General Sir Peter Duffell, President of the Sirmoor Rifles Association; General Sir Peter Wall, Colonel Commandant of the Brigade of Gurkhas; and Brigadier-General Jaswant representing the Nepalese Army. Brigadier Bruce Jackman, the Chairman of the Sirmoor Rifles Association, and Captain Bharatsing Thapa Chhetri, the Chairman of the Sirmoor Club Nepal, both stood to attention beside the dais.

General Duffell made a speech in which he welcomed those attending and read out Her Majesty The Queen's appreciative reply to the message of loyal greeting he had sent her on behalf of the 2nd Goorkhas. He reminded us of the honour and distinction of belonging to such a proud Regiment, and of the enduring and memorable nature of the Durbar to those taking part and future generations.

The medal ceremony then took place. Field Marshal Chapple presented Major Yambahadur Gurung with the British Empire Medal for his dedication and energy in setting up the Gurkha Museum in Pokhara, just outside the gates of the British Camp. Former Commandants and Gurkha Majors had their Sirmoor Durbar medals pinned on their chests by the President and Chairmen of the UK and Nepal Sirmoor Associations before they in turn pinned medals on the men in their companies. Field Marshal Chapple, the President and the two Chairmen presented medals to officers and soldiers unable to be on parade and Lady Chapple, Lady Duffell and other ex-Commandant's wives gave medallions to the widows.

For the march past The Truncheon was placed in the hands of the oldest Gurkha Officer on parade, 97-year old Captain Bhagtasing Pun MM, seated in his wheelchair. (The oldest Sirmoori present was Naik Lalbahadur Gurung, at 101 years old). The parade turned to the right, stepped off by companies and wheeled left and left again past the saluting dais, giving a smart eyes right as they passed The Truncheon before wheeling again and marching off parade. The Truncheon and the Band followed, and the splendid spectacle, almost certainly the last 2nd Goorkhas parade of any size in the Regiment's long and glorious history, was at an end.

Before lunch many went to the Museum, where Field Marshal Chapple unveiled a replica of the 'Lal Gate'. The original was built in Dehra Dun in 1915 to commemorate the Regiment's first centenary and it was also a war memorial. The location of its modern bicentennial replica has limited its size and it has been decorated with the insignia of the Gurkha regiments instead of listing the names of 2GR casualties, but it is otherwise an accurate reproduction of the central archway of the original, including the impressive bronze silhouette of King Edward VII.

The rest of the afternoon was spent socialising enjoyably in the central area of the Gurkha camp around the *chautara* and in the shade of several large trees. A welcome arch had been set up with some impressive artwork depicting events in the Regiment's history. Flags in company colours indicated where canteens provided *tipan-tapan*, *bhat* and beer, and a large tent had been put up for senior guests. The Truncheon was stationed to one side to give individuals the opportunity to pay their respects as they would have done in years past when it was in the Quarterguard. At intervals the

Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas provided music, often accompanied by enthusiastic but not always skilful dancing. It was another very enjoyable opportunity to socialize with old friends and make a few new ones. As the sun sank lower in the sky people made their way back to their accommodation or to continue the movement elsewhere. The streets, bars and restaurants of Pokhara were full of partying Sirmooris that night.

On the morning of 29 March many of the British officers and their families attended a hunt breakfast at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, an impressive hotel set on a hill above Pokhara, first discovered on HRH The Prince of Wales's trek in Nepal in 1997. Mid-morning a number of people went to Kaski retirement home, a remarkable institution on the outskirts of Pokhara next to the GWS Kaski Area Welfare Centre that is home to 25 very elderly Gurkha soldiers and widows. The 2GR and 6GR Associations had jointly funded a garden for the home, and General Duffell unveiled a plaque commemorating this. The flower garden still has some way to go before reaching maturity but the pensioners have already started to develop an impressive vegetable patch.

Meanwhile the rest of the 2GR community had reconvened at the Pokhara Exhibition Ground for the picnic. Major Lacchimirasid Gurung and his team had set up tents and a large, colourful stage. Beer and *tipan-tapan* were again available to fuel the socializing and chat. Games were organised including a tug-of-war, guessing the weight of the goat, and ladies' musical chairs. Various entertainments were provided onstage. There were a few light showers, but in general the weather remained in awe of the Nishani Mai. Late in the afternoon generous helpings of *bhat* were again made available. It was all reminiscent of Dasheras celebrated by Sirmooris in many places around the world in the past.

In the early evening the RGR Band and the Nepalese Army Band sounded Retreat with a programme that included *marunis* and kukri dancers. A stray dog that seemed particularly attached to the Nepalese Bandmaster had to be chased away. As darkness fell the dark green uniforms of the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, their silver instruments, and the bright scarlet and gold of the Nepalese Band, all set against the striking backdrop of the Himalayas, made for an impressive and romantic spectacle. General Duffell stepped forward to thank the bands and those who had organised the day's events

and the Durbar as a whole. He also voiced the thoughts of many in hoping we would don our Regimental medals and meet again in future. After the Sunset Ceremony and the National Anthems, followed by three rousing cheers for the Sirmoor Rifles, the Bands marched off. The main programme of the Durbar was over.

The following day, 30 March, there was a morning golf competition at Major Rambahadur Gurung's challenging and spectacular course on the outskirts of the town. Unfortunately the players had to complete their rounds in steady rain. Golf was followed by a delicious curry lunch in the Clubhouse, arranged by the Sirmoor Trustees to thank those involved in setting up and running the Durbar. Presentations were made to Major David Thomas and Major Yambahadur Gurung as the chief architects of the Durbar as well as to individual members of the Sirmoor Club Nepal Durbar Committee. Lastly, prizes were awarded to the intrepid and still slightly damp winners of the golf. The following day there was another lunch, when the Sirmoor Club Nepal Committee thanked those who had helped set up and run the excellent arrangements.

All the organised events of the Durbar itself were now over and people dispersed back to their homes or headed off on post-Durbar activities such as trekking or rafting. So much had happened during the previous few days it was difficult to comprehend all that had gone on and its significance. As Annabel Venning, a daughter of the Regiment, wrote later in her article for *The Daily Telegraph*, it was 'an occasion that was as significant to me – perhaps more so – as the Queen's Golden Jubilee, the London Olympics and a family reunion rolled into one'. Senior guests made it clear they appreciated the considerable thought and detailed effort that had gone into the planning and execution, and how privileged they felt to have been invited. Most simply reflected on how remarkable it was that so many of us had gathered together more than 20 years since the Regiment had merged into the Royal Gurkha Rifles, to celebrate the proud history and continued comradeship of the Sirmoor Rifles in such an enjoyable and memorable way.

NJHH

The Second Battalion in France

12 October 1914 - 9 November 1915

As Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener structured the Indian Army so two divisions could be deployed overseas. In this as in many other matters he differed with the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who along with the government felt any European conflict would be short-lived and that Britain's main contribution would be its Royal Navy.

In the event Kitchener was right. Not only was the war to go on for years rather than months but Britain's small but superbly trained Expeditionary Force was all but destroyed in the retreat from Mons in August/September 1914. With the French army desperately in need of help and Kitchener's new army still being trained, Kitchener ordered the despatch of the two Indian divisions from Lahore and Meerut.

The 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Goorkhas (2/2GR) was in The Dehra Dun Brigade of The Meerut Division, brigaded with 1st Seaforth Highlanders, 1/9th Gurkha Rifles (1/9GR) and 6th Jat Light Infantry, all under Brigadier General Johnson. The Garwal Brigade included 2/3rd Gurkhas (2/3GR) and The Bareilly Brigade 2/8th Gurkhas (2/8GR). Divisional troops included a cavalry regiment, Royal Engineers, Royal Artillery and Pioneers.

In their Commanding Officer 2/2GR were very fortunate. Charles Norie had been with the Regiment all his service. He had lost an arm and gained a DSO with them in the Tirah Campaign against the Afridis. He was to show his leadership time and again in France, surviving the war and rising to Major General.

The move of 2/2GR from Dehra Dun by train to Bombay was carried out very efficiently. There they were equipped with a more modern version of the Lee Enfield rifle and other additional items of clothing and kit. From Bombay they were convoyed by troopship escorted by The Royal Navy, arriving in Marseilles in Southern France on 12 October. The Meerut Division concentrated there, received warm clothing and was again re-equipped with upgraded Lee Enfield rifles. The Indian Corps Commander, General Willcocks, took exception to their black greatcoats which were changed for khaki ones. They then entrained for Orleans where they

zeroed their rifles and received serge uniforms and entrenching tools plus many pamphlets on how to defeat 'The Boche'. It was at this time Lieutenant Hamish Reid wrote to his parents saying he would be in the trenches by midnight and that there was '..a HELL of a battle going on'. By the time they got the letter, he was dead.

When 2/2GR reached their deployment area the situation was critical. The massive French attack to re-take Lorraine on 22 August had been disastrously repulsed with the loss of 300,000 casualties. The Germans Schlieffen plan (named after its originator Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen) envisaged the bulk of the German army in a huge turning movement through Belgium and Northern France descending upon Paris. To start with it was spectacularly successful, driving back or destroying all before it including the BEF, the Belgium army and much of the French army. However, the French Government were fleeing from Paris to Bordeaux when General Joffre, the Commander of the French army, realised the Germans had disregarded Schlieffen's death bed plea to 'keep the right strong!' and were diverting troops to a subsidiary thrust on to the Marne. Seizing his chance he used the troops he had gathered to defend Paris to thrust east, inflicting a heavy reverse on the Germans on 8 September. Thereafter the Germans diverted their attention to the 'race for the sea' to try and seize the channel ports. Meanwhile the front stabilized in a line from Ypres through Neuve Chapelle and Givenchy to Loos and Arras. This left large areas of France and most of Belgium in German hands and the British fighting to hold Ypres and keep the Germans away from the port of Zeebrugge.

The area north-east of Neuve Chapelle village where 2/2GR was deployed had not been selected for any tactical reason but was simply where the tide of battle had stabilized. As a defensive area it left much to be desired, being flat, featureless and with a high water table. 2/2GR took over from a Northumberland Fusilier battalion who had tried to improve existing drainage ditches into some sort of trench system. However there were no communication trenches or traverses and the parapets, such as they were, were much battered by previous shelling. 2/2GR started to take casualties almost immediately including No 1 Double Company Commander Major Macpherson who was shot through the head. (The double company system was an Indian army formation and in a battalion consisted of four

double companies of about 80 in each company. It was later changed to normal company organisation).

Since a German attack was felt to be imminent, digging was the first priority. This however proved to be extremely difficult as the trenches immediately filled up with water. Without sandbags or revetting materials it was impossible to strengthen the weak parapets which rifle and machine gun bullets could easily pierce. As the Regimental History notes '...Life under these conditions was one of utter discomfort, wallowing in mud and filth continually digging or bailing out water.'

On 27 and 28 October the Germans attacked in strength, taking Neuve Chapelle. They soon started shelling 2/2GR trenches which quickly collapsed. German trenches were only 30 yards away and they were able to deploy their trench mortars (of which we had none) to great effect. On 2 November a tornado of fire concentrated on 2/2GR No 1 Double Company, obliterating the trenches and forcing them to take shelter with the next company in line, No 2 Double Company. Lieutenant Lucas commanding No 1 Double Company was killed as was Major Becher commanding No 2 Double Company. The Germans were now occupying both Double Companies' trenches.

Major Ross commanding No 3 Double Company with the Battalion's Subedar Major Mansing Bohra led a gallant counter attack to retrieve the lost trenches but to no avail, Major Ross being killed in the attempt. Lieutenant Reid had taken over No 4 Double Company after its commander Major Barton had been killed earlier in the day. Realising the gravity of the situation he sent a message to the battalion on his left, The Connaught Rangers, asking for assistance in a counter-attack to drive the Germans out of the lost trenches. Meeting the reinforcement from the Connaught Rangers and guiding them to meet up with No 4 Double Company he and the Sergeant leading The Connaughts were killed. As this was happening Lieutenant Walcott and Lieutenant Innes of the MG detachment led any men they could collect in a vain counter-attack to regain the lost trenches, both dying in the attempt. No 4 Double Company under its Gurkha Officers and supported by some 150 Connaughts now launched their attack. The Germans had got a machine gun into the trenches which firing in enfilade mowed down Gurkhas and Connaughts alike. Only the Battalion reserve

was left, and Colonel Norie led this in a forlorn hope. With him was Captain McCleverty, the Adjutant Captain Corse-Scott and Colonel Norie's younger brother Major Frank Norie, seconded as an interpreter from 6th Gurkha Rifles. They approached along the intersection between 2/2GR and 2/9th Gurkhas and destroyed a trench mortar before retiring to re-ammunition. Colonel Norie persuaded Colonel Swanston commanding the Poona Horse to join him with two unmounted squadrons in another attempt to regain the lost trenches. Advancing to within 150 yards they were cut to ribbons by concentrated machine gun fire. Colonel Swanston was killed. Colonel Norie tried again from a different direction just before dark with his reserve and men from the reserve battalion of Royal Scots Fusiliers. His brother Frank was seriously wounded. The attack was unsuccessful and Colonel Norie withdrew his decimated battalion and inserted the Royal Scots Fusiliers in their place between The Connaught Rangers and 2/9GR.

It had been a savage introduction to European war for 2/2GR with 7 British officers and 31 Gurkhas killed, another 37 missing and 68 wounded, all in appalling conditions of mud and squalor against a European enemy plentifully equipped with trench mortars, machine guns and grenades and supported by excellent artillery, all of which were lacking for our own men - (there were only two machine guns per Indian Army battalion as opposed to four in British battalions.).

However whilst 2/2GR and other units of The Dehra Dun Brigade were holding the line, General Sir Douglas Haig, commanding First Army, was planning what was to be the first British offensive of the war to take back the key village of Neuve Chapelle and the high ground beyond. Soon 2/2GR were involved in the meticulous preparations which included the positioning of 480 guns of varying calibres, recces and rehearsals. On 10 March 1915 after a huge artillery barrage the Garwal Brigade attacked driving all before it and re-taking Neuve Chapelle village. The Dehra Dun Brigade, including 2/2GR, followed up and had the task of clearing the wood beyond called the 'Bois de Biez'. This they did with some success and few casualties but later were ordered to withdraw to the intermediate position of the Des Layes stream because follow-up troops had lost touch.

2/2GR were ordered to prepare to attack the Bois de Biez the next morning, having already held it and been ordered to withdraw. However the accompanying troops of 8th Division failed to appear and the attack was postponed until the afternoon. By this time the Germans had heavily reinforced the Bois de Biez and 2/2GR in their exposed position on the Des Layes stream started to take casualties. In the event the attack never went in although 2/2GR had lost 19 killed and 41 wounded with 27 missing. The Germans counter attacked in large numbers but failed to take back Neuve Chapelle. Over 2,000 bodies were counted in front of The Meerut Division.

Thus ended the battle of Neuve Chapelle, which had taken the village and advanced the front a thousand yards over a two mile stretch. After a war of retreat and defence the British Army had at last gone onto the offensive and congratulatory telegrams flowed in. The Indian Corps, which had been involved throughout, suffered over 4,000 casualties.

The Germans now started to use gas and since at this stage there were no gas masks the Gurkhas tied white cloths saturated in bicarbonate of soda round their faces. A new offensive between Givenchy and Neuve Chapelle was ordered which came to be known as the battle of Festubert. Taking part in this attack were 2/2GR, two battalions of Seaforths, elements of the Welsh Regiment and the 6th Jats. On 9 May 1915 at 0536, after a terrific artillery bombardment, the attack went in. The German machine guns had not been silenced by the artillery bombardment and all battalions sustained heavy casualties. The attack ground to a halt. Total 2/2GR casualties were 25 killed including four British officers, 62 wounded and 6 missing. Some ground was gained but none of the main objectives were achieved.

This was the last major battle in France in which 2/2GR were involved. Kitchener's new army was now entering the fray and it was felt the Indian Corps would be better employed in the fighting in Mesopotamia against the Turks where the Indian Army formed the bulk of the British forces. On 9 November 1915 2/2GR left Marseilles for the Suez canal area to fend off any Turkish attempt to cut it. They left behind the graves of 16 British officers, 10 Gurkha officers and 161 GORs with 313 wounded and 109 missing of whom one was a British officer.

Many accolades were given and The Prince of Wales came to France and personally thanked gathered representatives of The Indian Corps. They had endured the heat and wrath of battle at a vital period in the war and given The British Army the breathing space it desperately needed to prepare itself for eventual victory. All honour to them.

CJDB

Her Majesty The Queen Inspects the Queen's Truncheon

Wednesday 10 June 2015

(Please see the frontispiece on p.1)

We made our way through the North Gate, across the Forecourt and Quadrangle and up the shallow steps of the Grand Entrance to Buckingham Palace. Equerries ushered us into a side room so that the Representative Party from the Royal Gurkha Rifles – two Commanding Officers and their Gurkha Majors and the 2nd Goorkhas party of myself and Bruce could change into uniforms and morning dress. The Truncheon Jemadar and his escort unpacked the Truncheon from its box, assembled it and gave it a final polish. Then together with the Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers we made our way to the Bow Room with its glorious views of the Palace gardens where the sixth inspection of the Truncheon undertaken by the Queen during the course of her long reign was to take place. With the guidance of the Eequerry we rehearsed the inspection procedures under the probing lenses of a TV camera and assorted photographers discreetly located in the shadows. We awaited the arrival of the Queen. It was during this interlude that I was happily reminded that both Gurkha Majors, Chandrabahadur Pun of the First Battalion and Prembahadur Gurung of the Second Battalion, had been enlisted and served their formative years with the 2nd Goorkhas. We immediately organised a Regimental photograph (see p.27).

On the stroke of midday, escorted by the Colonel in Chief and the Acting Colonel of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, James Robinson, and her Orderly Officers and with the Gun salute marking the Duke of Edinburgh's 94th birthday rattling the windows, the Queen entered the Bow Room. The Truncheon Jemadar slowly lifted the Truncheon out of its shoulder belt and stood it on

the floor and inclined it towards the Queen to inspect. I saw from sideways on that the Prince of Wales was wearing his Sirmoor Club tie.

The Queen noted the new silver band on the Truncheon and expressed surprise about how many times she had inspected it. She spoke about the previous evening's Pageant and it was clear she had both enjoyed it and was intrigued by what she had seen. She moved down the line of the Representative Party. From my pocket I produced the 1975 Regimental Christmas Card that had recorded a previous inspection when Brigadier Pat Kent was our Colonel. We noted that she had been wearing a dress of black and red diceboard material that had much impressed everyone in the admirable way it had chimed regimentally. After some twenty minutes the inspection was over and the Queen withdrew.

Then to our surprise we were all invited to join the Prince of Wales for a drink and canapés in the Equerry's office where we enjoyed some 45 minutes of light hearted banter and discussion about Gurkha customs and the Pageant. There was much exchange and laughter with the Gurkha Officers. I took the opportunity to present our former Colonel-in-Chief with his anniversary medal which he seemed most pleased to receive. He asked whether he should wear it on his visit to the Royal Gurkha Rifles on their Regimental birthday in July and I said I thought that would be splendid (*and so he did: see photo p.58 - Ed*).

Then it was time to go and having changed back into civvies we left the Palace and regained contact with the real world outside.

PRD

Singapore 1955/1956

We were operating in South Johore in 1955 and 1956 with our permanent base in Slim Barracks, Pasir Panjang, Singapore.

There were two occasions when riots broke out in Singapore and the Battalion was called down from their jungle bases to help give "Military Aid to the Civilian Power".

By the time we had redeployed most of the rioting had subsided. The Battalion was mostly deployed on controlling the key junctions in Singapore.

Our Tactical Headquarters was set up in the Police Station opposite Raffles Hotel.

Things quietened down and three or four of us were sitting round in the Police Station discussing the riots and what had caused them. We were pretty ignorant of the political issues underlying them. Our job was to restore order.

Most of the information we had came from articles in *The Straits Times*. They made much of one of the key players who was called Lee Kwan Yew. We had not heard of him, but we learnt that his parents ran a shop in Singapore, and that he had won a scholarship to Cambridge where he had obtained a distinguished degree at Fitzwilliam College. In our discussion we had commented rather unfavourably about someone who had such advantages; some of which had been due to the educational arrangements supported by the Colonial administration. We wondered why he was now causing such trouble.

After a while the Police Sergeant who was on duty behind the duty desk, interjected to say “He is my younger brother”. This stopped us in our tracks and we apologized for whatever we had said, even though we couldn’t precisely remember quite what we had said.

The Police Sergeant then said that we need not apologize because it was all true. His parents had worked hard to help their talented son and had high hopes that he would return to the family business on his return from UK; but instead he had chosen to become a fire-brand anti-colonial leader – and so on.

JLC

BOOKS

***The Gurkhas: 200 Years of Service to the Crown*, by Major-General J C Lawrence CBE.**

Craig Lawrence has written the official commemorative book of the Gurkha Bicentenary. It is a handsome tome, interestingly structured, well written and splendidly illustrated.

The book is very professionally and imaginatively put together and edited. History inevitably has a linear quality which in a book of this sort can rob familiar material of interest. Craig has cleverly countered this by breaking up the nine chapters of historical narrative with 'Special Interest Sections' on topics such as the kukri, bagpipes and tartan in the Brigade, bands and paratroopers. He has also used contemporary photographs to give the book a modern feel and reproductions of paintings and drawings to bring alive episodes for which no photographs exist. This all results in structure and content that makes for easy access and repays either concentrated attention or piecemeal browsing. I strongly recommend it both as a celebration of 200 years of proud history and as an inspiring and interesting work in its own right.

In addition to commemorating the Bicentenary, the book is intended to raise money for the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Copies cost £40 and can be ordered from The Gurkha Museum, telephone 01962 842832, or from their website (www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk).

NJHH

***Arc of the Gurkha: From Nepal to the British Army*, by Alex Schlacher**

The publication of *Arc of the Gurkha* on the eve of the 200th anniversary celebrations of Gurkha service to the British Crown is serendipitous. There will be many looking for a suitable souvenir to mark the occasion. Alex Schlacher book provides a stunning photographic record of the contemporary battle-tested Brigade.

Her book, a photographic traverse of the Gurkha journey from recruit selection to retirement, is also one of the most comprehensive documentaries of what it means to be a Gurkha since Robin Adshead's *Gurkha, The Legendary Soldier* was published in 1970.

Like the Gurkhas themselves photography and publishing have changed beyond recognition over the past 40 years. Schlacher's portraits stare out of the pages with haunting clarity. There is the additional frisson, which will be shared across the Brigade, of recognizing many of her subjects whilst leafing through her portfolio.

Where Schlacher's book differs from many other similar books is that she has also invested time and effort to delve into the stories behind her portraits. These intimate vignettes provide a fascinating social history of the Brigade. Adshead's *Gurkha* introduced us to the genre: Schlacher's portraits and captions illuminate the Gurkha soul.

Schlacher, an Austrian, was working on a very different project, embedded with the US Marines in Helmand Province in Afghanistan, when she first encountered Gurkhas. A chance meeting with the Commanding Officer of 2RGR led to an invitation to visit. Like many others before she was bowled over by her first encounter. For the next three years she followed them round the world with her camera.

Arc of the Gurkha covers the full span of the Gurkha experience, from recruit selection in Nepal to basic training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick and then service in all the Brigade's regiments. She goes further, recording many portraits of retired Gurkhas in Nepal and the UK: her oldest subject is a 94-year old QGO who joined the Brigade in 1938. Nor does she flinch from the aftermath of war. There are powerful portraits of Gurkhas who lost limbs in the conflict in Afghanistan.

Fortuitously, a far-sighted Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas allowed Schlacher to have unprecedented access to all the regiments in the Brigade to complete her project. Alex was able to visit Gurkhas around the globe. She accompanied them on operational tours in Afghanistan, visited them in Brunei jungles and on overseas exercises in Australia and Kenya. The Gurkhas clearly took to her. There is a photograph of her, sadly not in the

book, surrounded by smiling Rifleman after she had spent a gruelling 12 days with them in the jungle in Brunei.

Schlachar is not the first female photographer to photograph Gurkhas. Alison Locke covered similar ground in 1999 and 2000 with her photo-documentary of Gurkha recruit selection, culminating in an exhibition 'Crossing the Black Water' at the Gurkha Museum in Winchester. Although there are some colour images in *Arc of the Gurkha*, Schlacher – like Locke – prefers to use black and white film rather than digital as a medium for her portraits.

Schlacher deliberately focused her camera on Gurkhas. I wish she had also included some photographs of British Gurkha Officers in her book. Gurkhas do not serve in isolation, despite the assumptions of the British public.

This is minor carping of a very fine book. I cannot better Brigadier Ridgen's summation in his introduction: "This is an exceptional book, with images of rare beauty. It is a very special contribution to the history of the Brigade....". Officers and men across the Brigade will be keen to have a copy on their coffee tables and campaign chests. Every Regimental PRI should order a plentiful supply.

Reprinted by kind permission of Rick Beven, who is both the author of the review and editor of the 6GRR Journal in which it first appeared.

Notice of a Proposal –Lieutenant Colonel John Cross

John Cross has been asked to produce a book of stories of Gurkhas as experienced by British officers. He is looking for stories of 1,500 to 2,500 words each, written in the first person singular. He is hoping for recollections of specific wartime operations, but would also like to hear about incidents during peacetime training. The book will be published in early 2017 so John would be grateful if offers could reach him 1 August 2016 at the latest. Any maps and photos provided will, of course, be returned.

His contact details are: Lt Col J P Cross, BG Pokhara, BFPO 4, phone **-977-61-431181; Mobile (Buddhiman's) **-977-98560-23285, e-mail; jpxpkr@wlink.com.np

PROPERTY AND PRI

Auction of returned 2GR property from RGR – 30 September 2015. The postal 'sealed bid' of 2GR property no longer required by RGR has been postponed to Wednesday 30 September 2015. A letter with full details and bid form have been sent to Members not on e-mail, and also posted on the Members Notice Board on the 2GR website. To view the property, please visit <http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/auction.html>. This is the original list and has not been amended to reflect the items removed and added as described in the Confirmatory Letter.

2nd Goorkha Public Duties Tie. The Honorary Secretary has a small stock of Public Duties ties for sale at £5 per tie plus post and packaging. The design is a diagonal regimental dice board on a rifle green background with the Queen's Crown in white between the dicing. The tie is made of crimplene.

Sirmoor Rifles 200th Anniversary Memorabilia. The President of the Sirmoor Club commissioned four elegant memorabilia to commemorate our 200th anniversary. For further details please visit: <http://www.2ndgoorkhas.com/SIRMOOR%20RIFLES%20200TH%20ANNIVERSARY%20MEMORABILIA-rev.pdf>.

The following items can be ordered from the Gurkha Museum, telephone 01962 842832. They can be viewed and ordered via their website (www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk):

Gurkha 200 Commemorative Medal. The Brigade has commissioned a bronze 57mm medal to celebrate 200 years of Gurkha history made by the Bighury Mint in Devon. Price: £35 + £4.50 postage and packing.

Gurkha 200 Bone China Plate. Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas in conjunction with the Gurkha Museum has produced a bone china plate (Approx. 10 ½") showing all of the badges of the past and present units of the Gurkha Brigade with the G200 logo at the centre of the plate. The cost of the plate is £29.95 including P&P, or £27.75 if collected direct.

The Sirmoor Bicentennial Medal



- The Bicentennial Commemorative Medal is awarded to those who have served with 2GR, including seconded and attached personnel.
- Widows are awarded a Medallion. This consists of the same medal but instead of a ribbon bar has a lanyard of material 1.5cm wide in the same colours and diceboard pattern.
- The medal was made in Patan, Kathmandu by a craftsman who makes medals for the Nepal Army. The ribbon was made in the UK.
- Any members of the Sirmoor Club who have not yet received their medal are requested to contact the Honorary Secretary.



His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, formerly Colonel-in-Chief of the 2nd Goorkhas, wearing his Sirmoor Bicentennial Medal when visiting 2GR at Shorncliffe, 1 July 2015

