



The Royal Gurkha Rifles Potential Officers Guide





Foreword

By

Brigadier D Pack OBE Colonel The Royal Gurkha Rifles

If you are reading this, the chances are that you are interested in becoming a commissioned officer in the Royal Gurkha Rifles. This is a privilege accorded to very few people – normally about six a year. Even though we take so few into our Regimental family, it remains true to say that we are open to anyone who has the right attributes, first of which is a passion for service with Gurkhas.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles is unlike any other Regiment in the British Army. With soldiers recruited from Nepal in one of the most rigorous military selection processes in the world, and officers of the highest calibre drawn from within the ranks of the Gurkhas and from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the Royal Gurkha Rifles is a blend of cultures and military traditions. That blend is cemented through professionalism, fitness and humility.

The first duty of any Army officer is to serve. In the Gurkhas we are quite clear that we serve our soldiers first. They deserve the best leadership – they have earned that right. This booklet explains a little of who we are, and how we do our business. We are a proud organisation, but not so proud as to think that we know it all. As a Gurkha officer you will be on a constant quest for excellence, always seeking ways to be better.

We are bound together with bonds of trust and friendship. Gurkha soldiers are both tough and gentle. They are professionally driven to achieve the highest standards and will work until they achieve them. They are enormously welcoming and will repay respect many times over. That mutual respect is the bedrock of the relationship between officer and soldier. For over 200 years countless British officers have experienced the depths of that respect and formed battle winning relationships with Gurkhas which have withstood, and even thrived on, the stress of combat. All new officers learn that they must put their soldiers before themselves, that they must be experts in their profession, and that they must lead through the highest example with humour and humility.

If this appeals to you, then read on. It could be the start of a life changing journey.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles is a regiment of the British Army with unique arrangements due to its history.

Officers are either commissioned from The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, or having completed many years in the ranks. All Gurkha soldiers are recruited as Nepalese citizens from Nepal.

The regiment has two Battalions (1 RGR and 2 RGR), one is based in Brunei, one in Shorncliffe, Kent. It also has three companies in the Army's Special Operations Brigade based in Aldershot, and Northern Ireland. We also have three training support Companies at Sandhurst, Brecon and Warminster. The Gurkha recruits training Company is at ITC Catterick.

This booklet is aimed at potential officers from Britain and the Commonwealth who wish to join directly through Sandhurst.



LEADING GURKHAS

Leading Gurkhas is a privilege. To give you a flavour of what is involved, here is what three Gurkhas expect from newly commissioned officers.

Major Dammarbahadur Shahi joined the British Army in 1982 and has served with and commanded many British Officers in a range of different appointments, including Gurkha Major, 2 RGR.

“ In addition to military professionalism, our soldiers expect their leaders to be fair and to have the moral courage and intellect to put things right when they are wrong. Officers must know where to go for advice and should be humble enough to ask for it, and to confirm what they have been told. An understanding of soldiers’ culture and background, and strengths and weaknesses, is key. A good officer will know the limits of their men and have the knowledge to support and educate them in whatever sphere. It is important that officers understand current welfare concerns and can provide timely information to their soldiers. ”

WO2 Jiwan Prasad Gurung joined the Gurkhas in 1998. He was the first Gurkha to become a Colour Sergeant Instructor for Officer Cadets at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

“ I expect potential officers who aspire to join the Gurkhas to be very professional and show good character. They must demonstrate humility and be respectful and compassionate towards their soldiers’ background and heritage. Gurkhas are culturally sensitive and humble people. They are very loyal and respectful, and they expect no less in return from their British Officers. ”

LCpl Sanjaya Thapa joined 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles in 2014. He completed his Junior Leadership Cadre in 2016 and was awarded Top Student.

“ British Officers play a vital role in the career of junior soldiers. Junior soldiers will always look up to follow their leader’s path, and to learn from them. When soldiers make mistakes, leaders highlight them and teach them how to rectify them. As a Lance Corporal, I expect British Officers to be professional with a sense of responsibility. They must be respectful and must not hesitate to interact with their soldiers. Soldiers will always work to the direction of their commander, so they expect quick decision making and good judgment. ”

GURKHA REGIMENTS

The British Indian Army

Gurkhas were first recruited into the East India Company's Armies in 1815, following the Anglo-Nepal wars. During these wars a deep feeling of mutual respect and admiration developed between British officers and the warriors of the Kingdom of Goorkha, and Nepalese soldiers were permitted to enlist for service in the East India Company.

In the service of the East India Company the Gurkhas played a key part in keeping the peace in British India. For their actions at Delhi during the Indian Mutiny The Sirmoor Battalion (later the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)) were awarded the distinction of being made a Rifle regiment, and subsequently honoured with The Queen's Truncheon, akin to the colours of the line infantry and still carried by The Royal Gurkha Rifles today.

Gurkhas fought in every major theatre of the first and second world wars; from the trenches of Neuve Chapelle, to the jungles of Burma. Wherever they went they strengthened their reputation for toughness in adversity and an uncompromising desire to succeed. Along with the reputation, strong friendships were made at every turn, including from fighting in Italy in 1945 a unique affiliation with a cavalry regiment – now the Kings Royal Hussars.

No fewer than 40 Gurkha battalions served in the second world war and over 43,000 Gurkhas were killed, wounded or reported missing over the course of both world wars.

Post Indian Partition

After the partition of India in 1947, four regiments of the Gurkha Brigade were transferred to the British Army, and formed the nucleus of the modern Brigade of Gurkhas, they were; 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)),

6th Queen Elizabeth' Own Gurkha Rifles, 7th (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) Gurkha Rifles and 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, these Regiments included and formed the nucleus of the modern Brigade of Gurkhas.

The Gurkha Rifles were the mainstay of the British Army's response to the Malayan Emergency, fighting Chinese- sponsored Communist Terrorists in the jungles of South East Asia and also serving with distinction during the Brunei Revolt of 1962 and the Confrontation with Indonesia in Borneo. Time served in South East Asia saw the development of an enduring relationship with the Sultanate of Brunei, and a reputation for unparalleled excellence in Jungle Warfare.

The focus of the Brigade of Gurkhas then shifted to Hong Kong where Gurkha battalions were vital to the Anti-Illegal Immigrant patrols against the flow of refugees from China in the 1970s and 1980s. The 7th (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) Gurkha Rifles were deployed from the UK as part of the British Task Force which recaptured the Falkland Islands from the Argentinians in 1982.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles

Following the Government's Options for Change, the four regiments of Gurkha Rifles amalgamated to form a single regiment titled 'The Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR)'. Eventually two light infantry battalions, 1

RGR and 2 RGR were formed. The regiment has carried forward the traditions of its forebears, reflected in its uniform, the battle honours borne on its drums and the property on display, and in use, in the battalions. For over a decade additional Gurkha reinforcement

In 1999 1 RGR deployed from the UK and were among the lead troops to enter Kosovo. At the same time 2 RGR deployed to East Timor as part of an Australian-led peace enforcement mission following a breakdown of law and order. 2 RGR later deployed to Sierra Leone and Bosnia, and a company of 1 RGR reinforced The Royal Irish during the advance into Iraq in 2003. There were multiple tours of the Balkans in the same period.

The Regiment's recent history has been dominated by its outstanding contribution to operations in Afghanistan since 2001. RGR officers and soldiers have served with distinction and honour throughout the two-decade long campaign, some on multiple occasions, suffering hardship and loss, yet furthering their reputation as some of the world's best infantry soldiers.

Since the drawdown in Afghanistan, both battalions have deployed on a number of

companies served with distinction with British infantry battalions on operations around the world.

Since 1996 the two RGR battalions have been based in the UK and Brunei; rotating between the two locations every 3 or 4 years.

operations and training teams across the world, most notably to Mali as part of the EU's training mission.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles Today

In 2016, the UK-based battalion joined 16th Air Assault Brigade. Many officers and soldiers are parachute trained and the unit is prepared to conduct short notice deployments around the world in the air assault role.

Another battalion serves in Brunei, at the specific invitation of HM The Sultan, as the British Army's only dedicated jungle warfare battalion.

We also have two 'Rifle Companies' based in the South East of England and one in Northern Ireland who are part of the Army Special Operations Brigade Group. It will enhance the UK's ability to work alongside partner nation Forces overseas to encourage stability, security and support conflict prevention.



GURKHA SOLDIERS

Gurkha soldiers are recruited exclusively from Nepal, a rugged land-locked country spread across the Himalayas and sandwiched between China and India.

Nepal is a diverse country; in the North, the scarcely populated upper Himalayas rise to more than 8,000 metres and contain eight of the world's highest peaks. The central belt is known as the middle hills, or pahar, which would pass for a mountain range in any other country. It is a region of scattered subsistence farming, cut with deep gorges and fast flowing rivers, where villages cling on to the steep slopes laced with terraced fields. This is the traditional Gurkha recruiting heartland. Further south, Nepal flattens suddenly into the terai, a hot, fertile area made up of towns, open fields and sparse jungle that butts up to the Indian border.

The country shapes the Gurkha soldier, and it is tough and unforgiving. Traditionally, most of our soldiers came from farming families in the middle hills, inured to the hardship of mountain life where school could be several hours walk from home, and cold nights were often spent watching livestock or tending rice paddies. But this also bred an intensely strong bond of family ties and fierce independence. It is perhaps no surprise that Gurkhas are endlessly patient, physically robust, and deeply loyal to those who earn their trust.

In the 21st century, Gurkha soldiers now come from across Nepal. Some will still have a farming background, and others will have a college education and perhaps a degree. Regardless, their characteristics remain unchanged. They are tough, disciplined, quick to laugh, warm-hearted, and extremely talented.





Nepalese Society

Nepalese society is divided into a social structure known as jaat. Traditionally Gurkha recruits came from one of four major jaat groupings; Gurung, Magar, Limbu and Rai. Nowadays, selection is open to all in Nepal as long as potential recruits meet the necessary educational and physical standards. An understanding of the jaat system is vital for officers in The Royal Gurkha Rifles, who will need to rapidly understand the culture of their soldiers. They will also learn Nepali on a bespoke course run in the British Gurkhas camp in Pokhara, Western Nepal. Although the standard of soldiers' English is now very high it remains vital that officers can converse in the Gurkhas' mother tongue, for intense situations on operations as much as socially within the Regimental family.

Whilst Hinduism is the majority religion in Nepal, Buddhism is also widely practised, along with other more local religious beliefs. Islam, Sikhism and Christianity are also followed in some parts of the country. This diversity is reflected in The Royal Gurkha Rifles where Hindu and Buddhist religious teachers work side-by-side, and a full range of festivities are celebrated.

British Officers are expected to attend these as a sign of respect, and such events are often highlights of the Regimental calendar.

Kaida

The Nepalese word kaida describes the combination of customs and tradition that make the Gurkhas what we are.

Through kaida we encourage professional excellence at all times, combined with a respect for others and an obligation to each other. Kaida fosters team spirit and a sense of identity and ethos which is the envy of other regiments. Developing and upholding kaida can involve anything from ensuring the celebration of religious festivals, putting the needs of soldiers first, bonding over the shared cooking and eating of traditional Nepalese food (known as messing), to showing respect to elders and paying the correct complements to various ranks, family members and age groups across the Regimental family.





A SOLDIER'S JOURNEY

The Gurkha recruiting process is one of the toughest of any Army in the world. Several hundred young soldiers are recruited every year from over 10,000 applicants.

After an extended period of advertising through traditional community briefs in every district in Nepal, social media, TV and radio, candidates are invited to register. The registration process ensures that candidates can prove that they have met the required educational and physiological standards.

They are then called forward for the first real filtering stage, regional selection. This one-day process involves rigorous education, medical and physical tests, and an interview. Successful applicants are placed in an order of merit and, if they fall within the quota, are called forward to the final stage at central Selection.

The young aspiring Gurkha soldiers who arrive at the gates of the British camp in Pokhara, Western Nepal for central selection have come far, but the biggest test lies ahead, for their performance over the coming three weeks will determine the course of their life. They will know that only half of the several hundred assembled will be successful. They will be tested again and again; maths and muscle, English and endurance, ingenuity and initiative, and in the end will be placed in a strict order.

If they make the grade, they are ready to become a Gurkha soldier.

The most famous and daunting test for the aspiring recruits is the doko race, a 5.8km route up a steep hill carrying 15kg in a traditional Nepalese wicker basket known as a doko. It is a true test of determination, character and grit and ensures that those selected will be robust enough to meet the high physical demands expected of the Gurkha soldier.

Successful new recruits are kitted out and flown to Catterick in North Yorkshire to complete the 9-month long Combat Infantryman's Course (Gurkha) in Gurkha Company of the Infantry Training Centre. They train alongside all the infantry soldiers of the British Army with a separate programme which includes cultural assimilation and English language training. Standards are extremely high, and the passing out parade is a moment of intense pride for soldiers and their families. Our new Gurkha Riflemen know just how hard they will have to work to live up to the reputation that their forefathers have built. They are fit, extremely motivated, with good weapon handling skills, sound field-craft and are proficient at map reading, but they are also at the start of their military journey. This is the point at which they meet their new platoon commander, which could be you.

AN OFFICER'S JOURNEY

Selection for a commission in The Royal Gurkha Rifles will not happen until the third term of the Commissioning Course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Prior to this, as a potential officer, your own research will be key.

You should take every opportunity to try and better understand the Regiment, through reading, visiting the Gurkha Museum, and registering your interest with the Regimental Secretary who will interview you and organise a visit to the Royal Gurkha Rifles battalion in Shorncliffe to get a better feel for life in the Regiment. Once you reach Sandhurst you will undergo a series of interviews and have opportunity to spend time with the Gurkha officers and soldiers who work there, as well as undertaking a longer visit to the UK-based battalion. The selection process culminates in an interview by the Regimental Selection Board; if selected, you will become an officer in the Royal Gurkha Rifles from the day you complete the demanding training course at Sandhurst and are finally commissioned.

Early Years

Your first year after commissioning involves a combination of further training, and early leadership of your platoon. You will complete the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon, and soon afterwards the Nepali Language Course in Nepal. You may also complete the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course or the All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection Course, otherwise known as "P Company", depending on your location. You will lead your platoon through a variety of training which could take place anywhere in the world and will focus on either jungle warfare training (Brunei) or Air Landing Operations (UK).

No matter which Battalion you join - or where you are posted - there is a chance of deploying on operations, most often with soldiers from the Battalion, but also as an individual in support of another part of the Army.

Our officers have diverse backgrounds and interests. Beyond soldiering, there is plenty of scope for adventurous training, sport and wider development. Recently our Young Officers have summited Mount Everest, circumnavigated Ellesmere Island in the Arctic in kayaks and crossed the Antarctic solo.

They have taken part in the Marathon des Sables, cycled across the United States, completed rugby tours of South East Asia and organized Battlefield Studies as far afield as Burma. Officers have represented the Army at rugby and taken part in countless other activities. Competitive sport of all types is a big part of life in The Royal Gurkha Rifles and there is never a dull moment.

The next step is normally to lead a specialist support platoon, such as mortars or reconnaissance, although other opportunities exist, such as recruiting in Nepal. You may also have the opportunity to serve as a Team Commander in one of our three companies in the Army Special Operations Brigade which are trained, structured and equipped to work alongside partner forces from other nations, helping to counter terrorism and build stability overseas. It is at this point that officers sometimes decide to attempt Special Forces selection.

You would then be expected to take up a senior Captain's appointment, perhaps working

directly for the Commanding Officer within the Battalion, or training cadets at Sandhurst, or in another part of the Army. When selected for promotion to Major you will attend extended command and staff training at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham, before a two-year stint as a staff officer in the wider Army or Ministry of Defence. You will then be ready for the privilege of commanding a company of about 100 Gurkhas. The defining feature of an officer's early regimental life should be the time spent with Gurkha soldiers. Our soldiers will appreciate any efforts by officers to understand their language and culture and it is key to invest time in this from the very start of your career. Battalion life is busy but there will be many opportunities to socialise with, and get to know, your Platoon be it playing sports, 'messing' or organizing adventurous training and other activities.

The Officers' Mess

Unless married, and accompanied, you will initially live in the Officers' Mess. The Mess is a central part of life for all officers of the Regiment and is the place where the character and ethos of the battalion can be found; in many ways it is the heart of the Regiment. Much of the Regiment's property and silverware is displayed in the Mess, and as a junior officer you will have the chance to learn about our history.

The Mess provides somewhere your friends and family can feel at ease, and there will be many opportunities for you to enjoy the regular formal and informal events which are held there.

Whether you are in Brunei or in the UK you will find the Mess a welcoming place which embodies the fraternity of our Officer Corps, and you will make friends for life.



Lt Ben Gartland - Officer Commanding Tracker Platoon - 1 RGR

Upon completing the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course, I arrived at 1 RGR when the Battalion was still in 16 Bde and was thrown straight into the fast-paced lifestyle for which it is well known. Within my first two months I had conducted air assault training in helicopters, completed a company level exercise, been on adventure training, acted as a commander for the Hunter Force at the SERE school in Cornwall and been traditionally welcomed to the Officers' Mess. We were the high readiness company in the Battlegroup at that time and with the war in Ukraine breaking out the pulse of the Battalion was running high. These hectic, but rewarding, first few weeks would be a sign of things to come.

Now that I had enjoyed the privilege of working with Gurkha Soldiers for the first time, I had to learn the language and immerse myself in the culture of Nepal by attending the Language Course. This is one of the seminal moments of a young officer's career, allowing them the unparalleled opportunity to learn Nepalese and begin to truly understand the lives and often humble beginnings of our awe-inspiring soldiers. I traded my AATAM for a Nepalese dictionary and grammar booklet, setting to work for ten long weeks in the classroom at the British camp in Pokhara. I was part of a bumper course due to a COVID backlog and formed close friendships with the other eleven RGR Officers on the course. On weekends we would go trekking in the Himalayas, spend quiet days by Phewa lake or head out to Lakeside for some beers in the evening. As part of the course, we completed the infamous Doko race, a must pass event for RGR officers, and spent two weeks on a duty trek visiting Gurkha pensioners in remote parts of Nepal. We had, in some part, experienced the beginnings and also the end of a Gurkha soldier's journey in the British army.

Back from the language course, it was time for the unit move to Brunei. C Coy were the first to move that summer, full of excitement at the prospect of a new environment, a different way of soldiering and fresh opportunities. I had been selected to lead the Cambrian Patrol team whilst in Nepal and so after settling into my new surroundings in Brunei set about preparing with the team for this next challenge. Sweaty marches in the Brunei heat, combined with the Brigade of Gurkhas Training team's preparation clearly put us in good stead as we achieved the Gold Medal that Autumn. I had also been selected as the Alpine Ski team captain for that winter and not long after I had returned to Brunei, I was back to France to compete with a team of 8 in the Infantry Ski Championships, Ex Frosted Blade. Both competitions gave me the unique insight into just how wonderful it is to work alongside

our Rfn and JNCOs, their deep-rooted will to win and their passion to support their fellow team members.

On returning to Brunei, I attended the Operational Tracking Instructor's Course (OTIC) at the Jungle Warfare Division (JWD) as preparation for my next job as OC of the Tracker Pl. OTIC was a testing experience, learning to soldier in the jungle, learning the skill of tracking and learning how to analyse my findings and contribute to the wider ISTAR picture. My newly gained qualification as an OTI almost immediately saw me trawled for an Op MONOGRAM tasking in Indonesia. I deployed as the OC of the Mission Specific Training team and delivered a tracking and jungle skills package to Indonesia Counter Terrorist Police. Working at reach, in a foreign country, with a highly functioning partner force, I was able to truly witness the uncanny ability of our regiment's SNCOs to win over friends, deliver excellent training and constantly think on their feet.



Lt Ben Gartland and 1 RGR soldiers on the Operational Tracking Instructor's Course (OTIC)

The second half of that year mirrored the first. I returned to JWD, this time as an instructor, and helped to deliver the second OTIC of that year. This was an experience that tested me in new ways, having to mentor and coach individual's senior to me in the officer cohort as well as NCOs who possessed immeasurably more experience than I had. From the news lens of an instructor however, I was able to see first-hand just how impressively our soldiers perform on externally run courses and the high regard in which

they are held by the DS. It was an experience that left me feeling very proud to be an officer in the RGR. Following OTIC, I deployed for the second time that year on Op MONOGRAM to Indonesia and delivered a subsequent package of training, this time elevating it to a 'train the trainer' looking to develop a self-sustaining organisation.

In just one year I had completed a JWD course, returned as an instructor and deployed on operations twice as an OC, all as a Lt. These are the sorts of opportunities you might be able to expect as a young officer in the RGR however it is imperative to remember that these are predicated on the reputation this regiment and its soldiers have built over the past 30 years, and the wider brigade over the past 200 and counting. It is up to us, as junior officers, to continue to drive this legacy alongside our NCOs and Rfn to ensure that the RGR is looked upon as a high-performing organisation and is afforded these opportunities in the future.

Lastly, I think it's important to iterate that it isn't all work in Brunei. Being stationed in South-East Asia is an amazing experience. It places the Battalion in a completely different INT/Battle picture: the Indo Pacific. It also puts us in geographic proximity to some of our Regiment's finest battle honours: Burma, Malaya and Borneo. Thus, allowing us, in part to connect with the acts of heroism and struggle in the jungles of South-East Asia more readily than our counterparts in the wider army in the UK. Outside of work, opportunities for once in a lifetime travel abound. I, myself, having visited South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan and the United States so far.

If you're considering a career in the RGR, have a desire to work alongside our Gurkha Soldiers and are tantalised by the opportunities that derive from their hard-won reputation, then I implore you to volunteer to embark upon the adventure of a lifetime, something which you won't find in any other regiment.

Lt Henry Clark a Rifle Platoon Commander in 2 RGR

I arrived as a Platoon Commander in C (TAMANDU) Coy, 48 hours after completing the Platoon Commander's Battle Course (PCBC) in Brecon. I was instantly deployed onto the final three weeks of Ex WESSEX STORM, a Battle Group exercise aimed at validating 2 RGR prior to being held at 24 hours notice to move within 16 Air Assault Brigade for the following year. This was a fantastic experience meeting the Officers, NCOs and Riflemen. Spending time in the field was an excellent opportunity to get to know the men.

Within the next couple of months, I visited Monte Cassino on a 'Battlefield Study' to Italy and completed the Public Order Exercise Conducting Officer course. This qualification came into use almost immediately, having been tasked to deliver public order training serials across the Battalion, which included petrol bombing the Harlequins Rugby team on their visit to 2 RGR. Shortly after, I deployed on the Junior Leadership Cadre as Enemy Commander and then as a Platoon Commander. This is a key moment in every Gurkha's career and shapes their competition to promote to LCpl. It is a privilege to be a part of and to watch the riflemen develop as the next generation of the British Army's finest NCOs.

I then flew to Nepal for my Nepali Culture & Language Course based in Pokhara. This was an unbelievable 10-week course consisting mainly of classroom based learning but allowing for plenty of time for exploring on the weekends around the mountains, towns and lakes of Nepal and completing the infamous Doko race. This was followed by a 10 day Directed Duty Trek visiting Gurkha pensioners and their families in the remote villages – something civilians genuinely pay thousands for!

After returning to the UK, I deployed on exercises in the UK, and on Ex EAGER LION in Jordan, a large multinational exercise. I was selected to lead the 2 RGR contingent in a demo attack inserting by Black Hawk helicopter onto an urban complex, operating within a Jordanian QRF company alongside the Italian Pathfinders and a UK Ranger team. This presented a great opportunity for working with international counterparts and hear how the reputation of the Gurkhas is infamous worldwide.

Next came Champion Company Competition, one of the most important events in the RGR's calendar which pits each company against each other in a variety of military and sporting events. I represented the Coy in Military Skills, Sittang Race, swimming, and British Army Warrior Fitness. We were crowned the overall winners although it was a close fought battle. This two-week period demonstrated the level of dedication, fitness and professionalism of all ranks and was a fantastic time to bond over a shared goal through some arduous events and training. All thoughts of the hours of hard training were most definitely forgotten during the post-results Company party!



Ex EAGER LION in Jordan

I was fortunate to deployed with C Company on Op SANDROCK as part of NATO's Strategic Reserve Force commitment to Kosovo where I currently write this article. This task has us conducting peacekeeping operations including patrolling, and discreet observation posts along the ABL (Administrative Boundary Line) with Serbia and North Macedonia. In the upcoming few months, I plan to lead a Battlefield study to Tavoletto in Italy, partake in the new recruit intake 2024 induction cadre and deploy to the Falkland Islands for 11-weeks on FIRIC.

Other events I have shared with my Platoon include visiting my hometown, Bournemouth, earlier this year for the weekend to watch AFC Bournemouth vs Liverpool. I also took my Company paintballing which was great fun as 80 very competitive infantry soldiers terrorised their civilian opponents with highly accurate suppressive fire and effective last bound drills!

I have had a very diverse and exciting year and a half as a Platoon Commander so far. It has been an honour interacting with and leading the kindest and friendliest, yet toughest soldiers you could hope to command on operations and in the UK, and I look forward to more to come.

Lt George Patterson - Team Commander in F (Falklands) Company, 2 Ranger Battalion

After a year at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) heavily impacted by Covid 19 and three months of the Platoon Commander Battle Course in the British Winter arriving into the sweltering heat of Brunei, getting to grips with training in the Jungle and living in a mess that overlooks the South China Sea all felt a bit surreal. I was welcomed by my platoon with a traditional “messaging”.

After a few months in Brunei, I began my Nepali Language and Culture Course, undoubtedly one of the most unique and enjoyable opportunities anywhere in the Army and the only way to begin to understand the background from which our soldiers come. The camp in Pokhara, which is overlooked by the Himalaya’s offers an enclave of calm, amongst the chaotic liveliness of the city, ten weeks of language lessons take place, broken up with weekends spent white water rafting, paragliding, and trekking some of the famous routes on the Annapurna circuit. I capped off my time in Pokhara by first running the traditional Doko race and then competing in the Himalayan extreme triathlon with several other course mates.



SNLC Students after completing Himalayan Extreme Triathlon

Following this I spent two weeks trekking with local Nepali guides in the remote Khandbari Region visiting Gurkha Welfare Pensioners on behalf of the Gurkha Welfare Trust, an unforgettable experience hearing the stories of Gurkha veterans as old as 98.

With 2 RGR about to return to the UK from Brunei and become part of 16 Air Assault Brigade I was fortunate to be selected to attend P Coy with eight riflemen, returning to the UK direct from Nepal I began an eight week beat up before heading to Catterick for the four-week course. Over a series of events the course aims to test an individual's motivation, mental resilience, and fitness. It certainly delivered on its aim! P Coy is one of many challenging courses you will have the opportunity to attend as a junior officer alongside our soldiers.



Two members of 2 RGR having finished P Coy

With my platoon settled back in the UK, I was fortunate that my final year as a platoon commander followed a natural progression, beginning with some local exercises focussed on basic skills, building towards an overseas exercise in an impressive urban complex in France, and culminating with Ex WESSEX STORM 2 RGR Battle Group's validation exercise. Going through this process as a platoon, with plenty of time in the field, built camaraderie and friendships as well as efficient skills and drills. The bond you build with the junior riflemen who you joined the Battalion alongside is particularly special as you integrate, learn and progress together. Ex WESSEX STORM served as the capstone to my time as a platoon commander, validating the 2 RGR Battle Group to be held at the highest deployable readiness. The five weeks tested me and my platoon in all areas, but

also offered an uninterrupted period working together as a team in what was my final few weeks as a Platoon Commander.



Lt George Patterson and his Platoon Sergeant during Ex WESSEX STORM

With my platoon command complete, my second job took me to F Company, 2 Ranger Battalion, an all Gurkha Company within the Army Special Operations Brigade. For junior officers, moving to Team Command in the Ranger's guarantee's the opportunity to deploy alongside Gurkha soldiers, while simultaneously exposing us to the wider Army and Defence. The role has seen me deploy on Operation INTERFLEX, training Ukrainian section commanders, before beginning the 6-month training cycle in preparation for deployment to East Africa during 2024. While my time with the RGR has given me many unique experiences from training in the depths of the Brunei jungle to assaulting targets from the back of a CH-47 (Chinook) it is the bond I've built with Gurkha soldiers that stands out the most. Humble, humorous, and fearless, there is no greater privilege than being welcomed into Gurkha culture and to work shoulder to shoulder with some of the finest warriors on earth.

Captain Rob Cannon RGR – Operations Coordinator British Gurkhas Pokhara

I am currently based in Pokhara, a beautiful city in the west of Nepal and home to Gurkha recruiting. My role is the Operations / Coordination officer (Ops Coord) in British Gurkhas Pokhara. It has been a real privilege to live and work in Nepal as an officer in the RGR for the past two years (2022-2024). Having previously been out to Pokhara as a second lieutenant on the three-month Nepali language course (mandatory for all junior officers in the Brigade of Gurkhas), I saw the Ops Coord post and knew I would love to do it if the opportunity arose. This post is tied to the RGR and will always be filled by a British officer. It is, without a doubt, one of the most rewarding and unique posts in the whole of the British Army.

The main focus of the role is assisting with the annual recruitment of between 200-400 young Nepalese men into joining the British Army as the next generation of Gurkhas. The recruits are selected from over 10 000 applicants, filtered through rigorous physical, education, medical and character assessments during different phases throughout the year. This includes the infamous doko run; a best-effort arduous run up in the mountains carrying 15kg of sand in a wicker basket traditionally used to carry supplies in the hilly regions of Nepal – a test unique to the Gurkhas.

The highlight of the recruiting cycle for myself is being one of the two British officers, alongside two Gurkha officers, interviewing hundreds of potential recruits (PRs) to identify the right individuals for the Brigade of Gurkhas. Following the final phase of the selection process, those PRs selected now become trainee riflemen and pledge their allegiance to the British Crown in a spectacular Attestation Parade. This year in 2024, the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Patrick Sanders, the British Army's most senior officer was the guest of honour, which demonstrates how significant the recruitment of Gurkhas is to the British Army.

Being based in Nepal I have been fortunate to have travelled extensively by road and by foot across the country, often surrounded by the mighty Himalayas; from the far west districts of Mugu and Jumla to the eastern Solukhumbu region, home to Everest. Trekking is by far the best way to see and understand Nepal; through this I have learned more about the different cultures within the 77 different districts and seen the towns and villages where our Gurkha soldiers are recruited from, all the while improving my Nepali language.

Prior to being based out in Nepal, I was in Brunei and Kenya and have not been based in the UK since 2019. The RGR is truly the best regiment in the Army for overseas travel and adventure, while serving alongside some of the finest soldiers in the world – no one else can offer such variety and experiences.



In this pamphlet we have tried to answer some of the most important questions you may have about becoming an officer in The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

If you would like to know more, arrange an interview with the RGR Regimental Representative or organise a visit to an RGR battalion, please contact the RGR Regimental Secretary at the details below:

Regimental Secretary
The Royal Gurkha Rifles
Regimental Headquarters
Robertson House
CAMBERLEY
GU15 4NP

07956 080378

GurkhasBde-RegtSec@mod.gov.uk

Further information, with links to an array of social media platforms on the RGR and the wider Brigade of Gurkhas is available online at:

<http://www.gurkhabde.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheGurkhaBrigadeAssociation/>

https://twitter.com/Gurkha_Brigade

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/thegurkhabrigadeassociation/>

The following books offer an insight into the history and customs of leading Gurkha soldiers:

- Journeys Hazardous - Christopher Bullock
- Bugles and a Tiger - John Masters
- The Gurkhas, The Inside Story of the World's Most Feared Soldiers - John Parker
- In Gurkha Company - JP Cross
- The Gurkhas, 200 Years of Service to the Crown - Maj Gen JC Lawrence CBE
- Gurkha, 25 Years of The Royal Gurkha Rifles – Maj Gen J C Lawrence CBE
- A Gurkha Odyssey – Lt Gen Sir Peter Duffell

It is also recommended that you visit the Gurkha Museum at Winchester:

www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk

