

OBITUARY – LIEUTENANT COLONEL LHM GREGORY OBE

Lionel Hugh Michael Gregory (known as "Greg"), who is widely recognised as a pivotal figure in the early days of Gurkha Signals (now Queen's Gurkha Signals) in Malaya in the 1950s and a long time supporter and friend thereafter, died on 17 Feb 14. He was a man of strong religious beliefs, who also established the Ten Tors and Comex organisations.

On 1 January 1948, four Gurkha Infantry Regiments were transferred from the Indian army to the British Army as The Brigade of Gurkhas and stationed in Malaya. Concurrently a new Division was formed in Malaya, titled 17th Gurkha Infantry Division in order to maintain a connection with 17th Indian Infantry Division and its three Infantry Brigades, 48, 63 and 99, largely manned by Gurkha battalions throughout the 1942-45 campaign in Burma during World War Two (and particularly prominent in the battles of 1944-45 that defeated the Japanese Imperial Army). In pursuance of a policy to include Gurkha manned supporting Arms and Services within the new Division, Engineer and Signals units were raised. By 1950 Gurkha manpower had been recruited and trained in Royal Signals trades to form an operational Signals Squadron.



Commissioned in 1941, with distinguished wartime service in Royal Corps of Signals units, (Mentioned in Despatches four times), in 1950 Major Gregory was posted to Malaya, (where his brother was serving with the 10th Gurkha Rifles) to join the nascent Gurkha Royal Signals unit, based in an old transit camp on the northern boundary of the capital city, Kuala Lumpur. With a background ability to write and speak Urdu, he quickly became fluent in Gurkhali and familiarised himself with Nepalese culture and customs. He learned to play the "madal" as well as many of the songs and dances performed by Gurkha soldiers to entertain themselves. A master of "battis masala", his fiery hot curries were legendary amongst both Gurkha and British guests who enjoyed his hospitality.

Given command of the first fully trained Gurkha signals squadron, in December 1950 he deployed it to Kuala Lipis, to provide the command and administrative communications for 48 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, whose battalions were engaged in the **Malayan Emergency** campaign against Communist Terrorists attempting to overthrow the National government. In October 1951, during his tenure, "Greg" made a familiarisation visit to the British Gurkhas Lines of Communication organisation and their Depots in India, which included a journey to Kathmandu and an Audience with King Mahendra.

In 1952 "Greg" left the squadron and returned to Kuala Lumpur, to take command of the expanding Gurkha Signals Regiment. The new, **Maxwell Road Camp** comprised a number of wooden huts, built on and around a

small hill feature, with mostly tented accommodation for all ranks and the Gurkha families. Ignoring the official identity, "Greg" renamed it **Lamjung Camp**; (Lamjung was the home of the Gurkha Major, Major (QGO) Parsuram Gurung MBE (late 2/2 GR)). From 1953 – 1955, Lieutenant Colonel Gregory was Commanding Officer 17th Gurkha Divisional Signals Regiment and Commander Royal Signals in 17th Gurkha Infantry Division. In December 1953 he was appointed a Member of The Order of The British Empire, (MBE).

Known as "Giri-giri Saheb" by all Gurkha ranks, Lieutenant Colonel Gregory was determined to ensure that, despite some scepticism concerning the Regiment's signalling competence within The Royal Corps of Signals and some reticence to welcome a non-infantry unit into The Brigade of Gurkhas, the Regiment would achieve its rightful place in both organisations. As all the Gurkha manpower was enlisted into The Brigade of Gurkhas, the basic style of dress of Gurkha Signals was consistent with that of Infantry regiments, modified to incorporate some features of Royal Signals dress, in particular to replace Rifle Green uniform with the Corps Blue and Scarlet equivalent. "Greg" opted for light Infantry black dress accoutrements, including metal rank insignia, "Sam Browne" belt, (replaced later with a Pouch belt), boots, shoes, and buttons on clothing. Dark blue was selected for Regimental identity: hosetops, rank chevrons, stable belt, puttees and anklets.

"Greg's" initiative produced the Regimental Crest, the design and initial manufacture of the Capbadge, (funded by the Officers!). Through an affiliation with 51st Highland he persuaded the "Keeper" of the Grant Tartan to permit its use by the Regiment. He raised the Pipes and Drums and personally trained a team of Gurkha "Scottish" dancers. In 1956 "Greg", on behalf of the Regiment, attended a ceremony at St. James' Palace where HRH The Princess Royal presented her Pipe Banner to him. This was the first Royal Pipe Banner to be presented to a unit of The Brigade of Gurkhas.

On 23 September 1954 the Regiment paraded in Lamjung Camp to be presented with its own capbadge by Major General Perowne CB CBE, Major General Brigade of Gurkhas. All former and currently serving members of Queen's Gurkha Signals recognise that they owe much to Colonel Gregory for their cap badge and the content of the speech delivered by General Perowne on the day, (repeated on the parade in Gurkhali, without notes by Lieutenant Colonel Gregory). Notably: "By your badge men shall know you. By your loyalty, by your behaviour, and by your technical skill, judge you as men, and measure your efficiency as men." These words, written by Lieutenant Colonel Gregory continue to inspire members of the Regiment, British and Gurkha to this day and are a foundation of the Regiment's kaida. By the time he handed over command of the Regiment in 1955, "Greg" had created a Regimental identity recognised by Royal Signals as competent and efficient communicators and as a respected member of the Brigade of Gurkhas family.

After leaving the Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Gregory continued paving the way for future generations; as Commanding officer of the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Corps of Signals, (based at Denbury near Newton Abbot in Devon) he opened up adventurous training to disadvantaged youths by the creation of the two day Dartmoor Ten Tors Expedition, the first one being in September 1960, organised and run by his unit. Today the Ten Tors Expedition is a nationally recognised annual event, organised and supported by military units but so popular that that participation is limited to 400 teams of six teenagers aged 14 and 19 years. The event celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2010. After leaving the Army Lionel Gregory organised and led the Commonwealth Expedition (COMEX), the first one in 1965 being an expedition from Britain to India in support of multicultural ideals of the British Commonwealth. There have been 15 Expeditions. He also wrote a number of books, including *Journey of a Lifetime: Story of Ten Tors and Commonwealth Expeditions* (1997) and *Crying Drums: The Story of Comex, the Commonwealth Expedition* (1972). He was promoted to an Officer of The Order of the British Empire, (OBE) on 30 December 1998, "for services to Commonwealth youth".

Lionel Gregory's funeral was held in St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Edinburgh. Brigadier SMA Lee represented the Colonel of the Regiment, the present Gurkha Major and other officers were also present, giving a final salute from Queen's Gurkha Signals as his cortege drove away after the service.