

## WHAT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH BARRACKS, CHURCH CROOKHAM TODAY?



I happened to be in the area of Church Crookham and sought to drop in on the housing estate that had been our old home of Queen Elizabeth Barracks. The Clerk of the Parish Council, Jayne Hawkins, whom I had got to know in the past, said I would be welcome. She warned me that much of the area is too new to feature on GPS guidance systems and she gave me directions that would get me there.

I was amused to be directed down Gurung Road, and Rana Way, to Kukri Gardens, and so on! The soldiers who visit say that they get their bearings of the old camp from the large trees that are still standing amongst the new houses but otherwise there is nothing else that is recognizable from all those years ago. However the general layout seems familiar and one can easily say that the Mess was there and the cinema there. Everywhere are smart, neat brick houses, three or four bedrooms apiece, some smaller, and all to varying designs. There seemed to be many grass verges but few flower beds at present. I gather there is a large area of vegetable allotments down where the MT yard was. To one side is the old football ground, now a general recreation area, and below that is a sport arena still being developed. The whole atmosphere of this very extensive estate, it is more a parkland really, was open uncluttered, spacious, light and airy.

By the main entrance off Sandy Lane is a podium area with a smart Gurkha statue looking rather severe. Round his neck is a collection of yellow scarves adding an air of mystery, or history, to the whole image, placed there by visiting Gurkha soldiers.

He stands with his back to the little orchard of 80 apple trees (Coxes and Blenheims) that I planted in the 1970's, now called the Sirmoor Orchard. The apples in season go to local residents and the trees are pruned each year.

The translation of the old wooden hutted barracks complex to an area of modern houses has been sensitively achieved with good results. Decent and proper use has been made of what was for three decades our old home. Call in if you are passing and see if you agree!