

WHATEVER HAPPENDED TO.....

Having spent the last 3 ½ years in Brompton Barracks I have watched the redevelopment of Kitchener Barracks, once the home of 69 Indep Gurkha Fd Sqn, and seen various objects linking QGE to the area. This has sparked an idea for a series of articles in the coming editions of the magazine to visit camps and barracks that were once home to the Brigade of Gurkhas and QGE and see what has become of them.

I hope to cover Kitchener Barracks next year when the redevelopment work will be complete and after that I need to persuade Memsahab to let me go to Malaysia, Borneo, Hong Kong and back to Nepal!

.....PAKLIHAWA?

Following the 70th celebrations I took the daily flight from Pokhara to Bhairahawa, near Butwal in order to visit the former British Camp in Paklihawa, that sits very close to the Indian Border.

I had spoken about my plan during the previous few days and it turned out that Maj Prem Ale MVO and his wife, Pabitra were going to be on the same flight and wanted to accompany me to the Camp and see it for themselves. We were met at the airport by Kishor Thapa, the son of ex QGE SSgt Gambahadur Thapa who is currently AWO Gulmi and who kindly drove us the 20min to the camp.

The camp closed in 1978 when it was moved to Pokhara and is now the Tribhuvan University Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science.



I have tried with very little success to find photos of what the camp looked like when it was occupied by the British in order to compare and contrast the change over 40+ years. However, as soon as you walk in the architecture and layout is very similar to the likes of British Gurkhas Pokhara and the former camp in Dharan. You can easily imagine how it looked when it had a bit more TLC applied to it.

When we arrived we spoke to one of the many men milling around the entrance and one person keen to show us around was Bishnu Gurung who it turned out was a security guard when the British were still in residence.



Just inside the entrance, the Guard then and now



As you walk up the main road past the guardroom you pass what was the small hospital and attached morgue before getting to what was the camp offices.



Down a lane on the left is the water tower and the mandir, both of which are still in working order and the former officers' swimming pool which has become a fetid swamp! (photo below)



Further along the main stretch are the buildings that used to be the British Officers' quarters, complete with a still functioning badminton course.



Around the back of this area is where there used to be a small cemetery for those British personnel who died while stationed there. I am told 5 people are still buried there but sadly any sign that this is case has completely disappeared.



Retracing steps backwards and then walking down the lane with the swimming pool, you eventually come on the right to what used to be the Pension Paying Camp.



On the other side is the former Transit Camp where those selected to be trained as Gurkhas would be housed before being sent off to Malaya or Hong Kong for training.



Further along this road you get to the technical stores and Quatermaster's area and here there are a few signs of the British days of occupation.





Back at the main camp entrance, on the other side of the road is the former British School that sadly we did not have time to visit. However, talking to QGE members at the 70th celebrations it is clear that a significant number were educated there including Majs Damar Ghale and Yogprasard Gurung

In the boarded up Canteen there is still a menu on the wall and what appears to be the remains of a Dashain Ghar painting

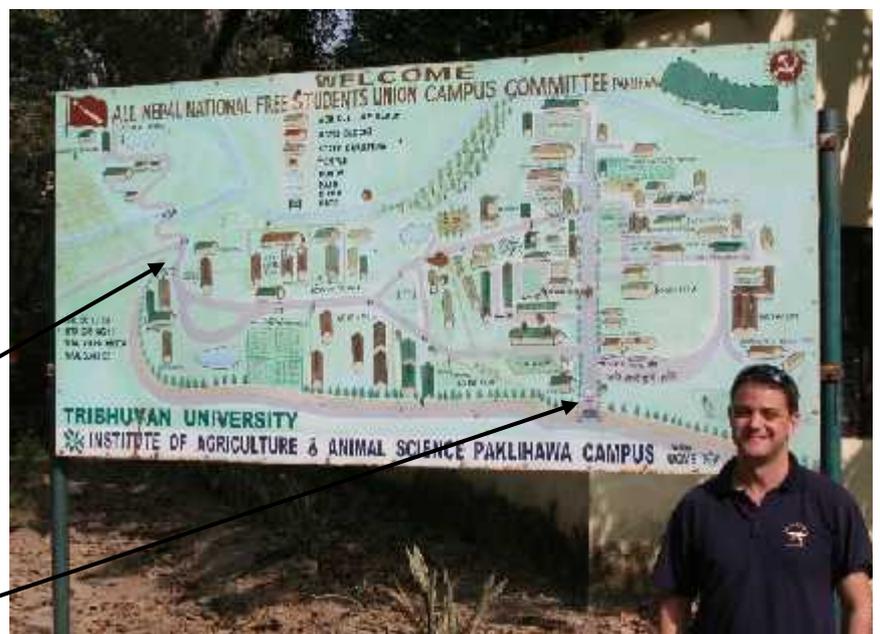


Bishnu Gurung, the former security guard who kindly showed us around

The road then runs to the rear gate to the camp, out beyond which is the Gurkha Cemetery and cremation ghat that is evidentially still in use today.



Rear Gate



Main Entrance

