

PATRICK PIRIE-GORDON, BANKER TO THE BRIGADE

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I was extremely interested to read Anthony Wieler's article in the 2019 Journal on the formation of the Gurkha Welfare Trust and can offer a little more information about this subject.

In the late 1960's Mr G. P Pirie-Gordon (referred to hereafter as 'PG'), local director of Holt's Branch, Glyn Mills & Co, located in Whitehall, had become heavily involved with the Gurkha Brigade (for which his firm acted as Agents) in the formation of Regimental Trusts for all the rifle regiments of the Brigade (not Signals, Engineers or Transport at this time. Their trusts were formed later). The reason for this was to preserve regimental assets, cash, investments and chattels in the event of disbandment, which was considered to be a real possibility.

He travelled to Malaya where he and Generals Patterson and Robertson had discussions and laid out a plan to create four new regimental trusts. There were already some trusts in being but these were dated in origin and purpose and, whilst they were kept in existence for a time, it was felt best to create totally new instruments.

On his return to the UK he went to see his friend George Young, a senior solicitor with Messrs Fisher, Dowson & Wasbrough and together they drafted the initial Deeds of Trust. You will note from Anthony's article that these two civilians feature on the list of original trustees of the GWT. The Deeds were adopted formally by each regiment in 1969, which happened to be the year that I left the Regular Army and joined Glyn Mills & Co at Holt's.



The Brigade's Banker - Patrick Pirie-Gordon

Concurrently with all this activity at regimental level, the GWT was established with an initial fund-raising target of £1 million (incidentally PG was busy setting up other trusts, such as that for the RAF Museum, with an identical fundraising plan). Naturally when funds started to materialise a banking account was required and this was established at Holt's with regular transfers of cash to the Ionian Bank Trustee Company for investment.

My own part in the grand plan was that I had to be retrained from being an infantry officer to becoming a banker. This took about two years as I was shipped around all sorts of departments within Holt's learning the trade. Eventually I landed in Central Office, which was PG's outer office responsible

for liaison, as Service Agents, with the MOD and units in our agency, and I became a sort of assistant adjutant to him and was responsible for trust book keeping and accountancy, minute taking, visits to units and a whole plethora of sometimes peculiar tasks. I should explain more about this most extraordinary man, PG.

First of all, his sartorial taste. He was always immaculately dressed in long black jacket, pin stripe trousers, highly polished black shoes and spats. He had braces, the like of which I had never seen before. These had many pulleys and elasticated elements designed to hold up his trousers so that they hung perfectly. He was a Wykehamist of Scottish aristocratic decent. His knowledge of Latin and Greek was prodigious. He became an advisor to charities and custodian of trust funds to many organisations including The Queen's Nursing Institute, The Highland Society of London, The Joint Services Expeditions Trust, The Mount Everest Foundation, The Athenaeum Club, The Gurkha Welfare Appeal, The Venerable Order of St John and The Royal George Society. He was a Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society and Holt's became the acknowledged centre of excellence for the financial aspects of exploration. He was also Master of the Worshipful Company of Skinners. He encouraged

me to participate to the full in such activities and through him I was appointed treasurer of the British Army Everest Expedition of 1976, which got me out to Nepal for a couple of weeks.

During the War he was a Gunner, mentioned in despatches twice and in 1945 was appointed to command the 2nd Survey Regiment as a very young lieutenant colonel. He had a remarkably wide range of achievements but his modesty prevented much of this being known by anyone outside his family. I would say that he included his outer office as "family". (One evening he and I were working late on a set of accounts that would not balance. At about 23.00 he said that we would knock it on the head for the night as we had broken the back of the problem. He said that we should have something to eat and we crossed Whitehall, entered the Golden Egg cafe, where he was obviously well known, and we sat down to eggs, beans and chips!). His sense of fun was prodigious and was a scholar and philanthropist, soldier and churchman, musician and mason, geographer and historian, astronomer, gardener, laird and friend to all.

The Army, and The Brigade of Gurkhas in particular, owe him a huge vote of thanks. I could write much more about my boss and great friend PG. He died on 4th April 2011 in Buthlaw, Aberdeenshire aged 92. RIP PG.