

GURKHA REGIMENTS IN THE BRITISH ARMY POST WORLD WAR II

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The Indian Army contained ten regiments of Gurkha Rifles. With independence in 1947, six of these transferred to the new Indian Army and four were transferred to the British Army as the Brigade of Gurkhas. The battalions for the British Army not already in Malaya moved from India to Burma and then Malaya. From 1 Jan 1948, these four regiments were designated as part of The Gurkha Regiment, but that “organization” was eliminated 23 Sep 1948 and the four were then known collectively as the Brigade of Gurkhas. Later, Gurkhas would be formed in other components, and these would also be considered part of the Brigade.

1948 – 1994

2nd King Edward VII’s Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)

1st/2nd GR

1948	Malaya ¹ (Singapore)
1960?	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade by Apr)
1962?	moved to Malaya (99 th Gurkha Brigade by Jul)
Dec 1962	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade)
Feb 1963	moved to Malaya
Aug 1963	moved to Borneo
Oct 1963	moved to Malaysia
Dec 1963	moved to Borneo ²
1964?	moved to Malaysia
1971	moved to Hong Kong
1975	moved to Brunei
1977	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1979	moved to Church Crookham
1981	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1985	moved to Brunei
1987	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1989	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1991	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
14 Sep 1992	amalgamated with 2 nd /2 nd GR without change in designation
1 Jul 1994	Amalgamated with 1 st /6 th GR to form 1 st Bn Royal Gurkha Rifles

2nd/2nd GR

1948	Malaya ³
Sep 1953	moved to Hong Kong
1957?	Malaya ⁴
1962?	moved to Hong Kong (under 48 th Gurkha Brigade by Jul)
Apr 1964	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade)
1966?	moved to Hong Kong
1968	moved to Malaysia or Brunei
1970	reduced to a Company
1972	Battalion reformed at Hong Kong
1975	moved to Church Crookham

¹ Known assignments include Johore Sub-District by Aug 1948, Southern Sub-District by Dec 1949, 26th Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1950 and 99th Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1953 (also with it in Apr 1957).

² Under 51st Gurkha Brigade in Aug 1965.

³ Under Northern Sub-District in Aug 1948 and Dec 1949; 26th Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1950 and 48th Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1953.

⁴ Under 26th Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1957 and under 99th Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1960.

[2nd/2nd GR]

1977	moved to Hong Kong
1981	moved to Brunei
1983	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1985	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1987	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1991	moved to Brunei
14 Sep 1992	amalgamated with 1 st /2 nd GR

6th Gurkha Rifles

1 Jan 1959: **6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles**

1st/6th GR

Jan 1948	moved from Burma to Malaya ⁵
Nov 1956	moved to Hong Kong
1957	returned to Malaya? ⁶
May 1962	moved to Church Crookham (51 st Gurkha Brigade)
Jan 1964	moved to Borneo with brigade
Aug 1965	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
16 Jun 1969	amalgamated with 2 nd /6 th GR without change in designation ⁷
1973	moved to Brunei
1975	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1977	moved to Church Crookham
1978	temporarily in Belize
1979	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1983	moved to Brunei
1985	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1987	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1989	moved to Hong Kong
1991	moved to Hong Kong
Jun 1993	moved to Brunei
1994	moved to Hong Kong
1 Jul 1994	amalgamated with 1 st /2 nd GR to form 1 st Bn Royal Gurkha Rifles

2nd/6th GR

1948	Malaya (Central Sub-District)
Oct 1948	moved to Hong Kong (26 th Gurkha Brigade)
Apr 1950	moved to Malaya with 26 th Gurkha Brigade ⁸
Jul 1962	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
May 1963	moved to Borneo
Sep 1963	moved to Malaysia
Feb 1964	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade) ⁹
Oct 1965	moved to Malaysia
16 Jun 1969	Amalgamated in Hong Kong with 1 st /6 th GR

⁵ Under Northern Sub-District by Aug 1948; under 48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade by Dec 1949 (same in Dec 1950 and Apr 1953).

⁶ Under 2nd Federal Brigade by Apr 1957 and 63rd Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1960.

⁷ Sometimes referred to simply as 6th GR.

⁸ Known to still be with 26th Gurkha Brigade in Apr 1953 and Apr 1957; under 17th Gurkha Division/OCLF Malaya in Apr 1960.

⁹ Under 51st Gurkha Brigade in Aug 1965.

7th Gurkha Rifles

1 Jan 1959: **7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles**

1st/7th GR

Jan 1948	Moved from Burma to Malaya
May 1948	began conversion as 101 st Field Regiment RA (7 th Gurkha Rifles)
Jun 1949	converted back to infantry ¹⁰
Apr 1959	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1962	moved to Malaya ¹¹
Feb 1963	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade)
Mar 1965	moved to Malaya
1 Aug 1970	amalgamated with 2 nd /7 th GR without change in designation
Sep 1971	moved to Church Crookham ¹²
Mar 1973	moved to Hong Kong
Mar 1977	moved to Brunei
May 1981	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Infantry Brigade)
1982	served in Falklands with brigade in Apr ¹³
May 1983	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1987	moved to Brunei
1989	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1991	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1993	moved to Hong Kong
1 Jul 1994	redesignated as 2 nd Bn Royal Gurkha Rifles

2nd/7th GR

1948	Malaya
May 1948	began conversion as 102 nd Field Regiment RA (7 th Gurkha Rifles)
Jun 1949	converted back to infantry ¹⁴
Apr 1954	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
Feb 1957	moved to Malaya (99 th Gurkha Brigade)
Oct 1962	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
Apr 1963	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade) ¹⁵
Jun 1964	moved to Malaysia?
1965	moved to Hong Kong ¹⁶
1 Aug 1970	amalgamated with 1 st /7 th GR
1 Apr 1982	New 2 nd /7 th GR formed in Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1987	disbanded in Hong Kong

¹⁰ Under Central Sub-District by Aug 1948 (during conversion to RA, which was never complete) and Southern Sub-District by Dec 1949; under 48th Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1950 and 53rd Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1953 (same in Apr 1957).

¹¹ Under North Malaya Sub-District by Jul 1962 (same in Dec 1962).

¹² In Dec 1971 became first Gurkha unit to perform Public Duties in London, returning ca. Jan 1972 to Church Crookham.

¹³ Awarded battle honour FALKLAND ISLANDS 1982.

¹⁴ In Central Sub-District by Aug 1948 (during conversion to RA, which was never complete) and 48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade by Dec 1949; in 63rd Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1950 (same Apr 1953).

¹⁵ By Feb 1964 under 51st Gurkha Brigade.

¹⁶ Under 48th Gurkha Brigade by Aug 1965.

10th Gurkha Rifles

Oct 1949: **10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles**

1st/10th GR

Jan 1948	Moved from Burma to Malaya ¹⁷
1957?	moved to Hong Kong ¹⁸
1960?	moved to Malaya ¹⁹
1964	moved to Borneo ²⁰
May 1965	moved to Malaysia
1966	returned to Borneo Jan-Feb only
Sep 1968	amalgamated with 2 nd /10 th GR without change in designation ²¹
1969	moved to Hong Kong
Mar 1973	moved to Church Crookham
1974	served a tour on Cyprus and then returned to Church Crookham
1975	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
Dec 1976	48 th Gurkha Brigade redesignated Gurkha Field Force
1979	moved to Brunei
1981	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force)
1983	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1985	moved to Hong Kong (Gurkha Field Force; 1987: 48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1989	moved to Brunei
1991	moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Brigade)
1993	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1 Jul 1994	redesignated as 3 rd Bn Royal Gurkha Rifles

2nd/10th GR

1948	Hong Kong ²²
Apr 1950	moved to Malaya with 26 th Gurkha Brigade ²³
1962?	moved to Hong Kong ²⁴
Oct 1962	moved to Malaya (to Singapore Dec)
Apr 1963	moved to Borneo ²⁵
Apr 1964	moved to Malaysia
Jul 1965	moved to Borneo (99 th Gurkha Brigade)
Jan 1966	moved to Malaysia
Sep 1968	amalgamated with 1 st /10 th GR

¹⁷ In Johore Sub-District by Aug 1948, under 48th Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1949, Malaya Command by Apr 1953.

¹⁸ Under 48th Gurkha Brigade there by Apr 1957.

¹⁹ Under 63rd Gurkha Brigade there by Apr 1960 (that brigade HQ left Jan 1962); under 99th Gurkha Brigade by Jul 1962.

²⁰ Under 5th Federal Brigade by Feb 1964.

²¹ Although sometimes referred to simply as 10th GR after that date.

²² Under 27th Infantry Brigade by Sep 1948, under 26th Gurkha Brigade by Dec 1949.

²³ Under 99th Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1953, 1st Federal Brigade by Apr 1957, 63rd Gurkha Brigade by Apr 1960 (that brigade HQ left Jan 1962).

²⁴ Under 48th Gurkha Brigade there by Jul 1962.

²⁵ Under 99th Gurkha Brigade by Feb 1964.

1994 to Date

The Royal Gurkha Rifles

Formed 1 Jul 1994 as a large regiment from the four existing Gurkha Rifle regiments.²⁶

1st RGR

1 Jul 1994	formed in Hong Kong by amalgamation of 1 st /2 nd and 1 st /6 th GR
Oct 1996	moved to Church Crookham (5 th Airborne Brigade)
1997	one coy deployed to Bosnia Aug-Dec
1999	deployed to Macedonia and Kosovo Jun-Aug with brigade
Aug 2000	moved to Brunei, and then East Timor
2001	returned to Brunei
2002?	moved to Shorncliffe
Jul 2003	assigned to 2 nd Infantry Brigade at Shorncliffe
2003	deployed to Bosnia and then returned to Shorncliffe

2nd RGR

1 Jul 1994	formed at Brunei by redesignation of 1 st /7 th GR ²⁷
26 Nov 1996	amalgamated with 3 rd RGR without change in designation
1999	deployed two companies (?) to East Timor Sep-Dec
Aug 2000	moved to Shorncliffe
2001	C Coy deployed to Afghanistan with 2 nd Bn Parachute Regiment, then returned
2002?	moved to Brunei

3rd RGR

1 Jul 1994	formed at Church Crookham by redesignation of 1 st /10 th GR (5 th Airborne Brigade)
Jun 1996	moved to Brunei
26 Nov 1996	amalgamated with 2 nd RGR

Other Elements of the Brigade of Gurkhas

The Brigade of Gurkhas includes—besides the infantry—The Queen’s Gurkha Engineers (added 1955 as Gurkha Engineers and redesignated 1977), The Queen’s Gurkha Signals (also added 1955, as Gurkha Signals and also redesignated 1977), and The Queen’s Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (raised 1958 as the Gurkha Army Service Corps, redesignated 1965 as The Gurkha Transport Regiment, 1992 as The Queen’s Own Gurkha Transport Regiment, and the current designation in 2001).

The Queen’s Gurkha Engineers currently comprises 69 Gurkha Field Squadron QGE and 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron QGE, both in 36 Engineer Regiment. The prior 67 and 68 Gurkha Field Squadrons GE/QGE were disbanded in Jun 1996 and 1968, respectively. At one time the Gurkha squadrons were united in 50 (Gurkha) Engineer Regiment, which was the divisional regiment for 17th Gurkha Division. (The squadrons were largely independent from 1961, the 17th Gurkha Division was disbanded in 1966, and the regiment itself retitled in 1988 as The Queen’s Gurkha Engineers; the

²⁶ In 1994, the Gurkhas also furnished three additional infantry companies, used in understrength British battalions: 1st Royal Scots [B Coy], 1st Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment, and 2nd Parachute Regiment. ‘C’ (Gurkha) Coy 2nd Parachute Regiment was disbanded Nov 2001 and its personnel returned to The Royal Gurkha Rifles. The company in 1st Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment was disbanded about 1996; the company from 1st Royal Scots may have gone to 1st Bn The Highlanders ca. 2001; there was also a D (Gurkha) Coy in 1st Royal Irish Regiment ca. 2000—2003. Currently, the only remaining reinforcement company is A (Gallipoli) Coy, 1st Bn The Highlanders. In addition, there were Gurkha Demonstration Companies [their official designation] at the Infantry Training Centre, Brecon, Wales, and the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. They provide “enemy” and demonstration units for those training facilities. Apparently the demonstration companies are now “mainly” rather than exclusively Gurkha.

²⁷ May have been redesignated in Hong Kong and moved to Brunei Aug 1994.

regimental headquarters was disbanded in 1994 (although there is a small headquarters element at Maidstone: the station of 36 Engineer Regiment and the two existing Gurkha squadrons).

The Queen's Gurkha Signals currently comprises 246 (Gurkha) Signal Squadron, which was reformed beginning Jan 2000 at York (completed in 2003), as part of 2nd Signal Regiment, and 250 (Gurkha) Signal Squadron, reformed 1990 at Bramcote as part of 30th Signal Regiment. 246 had been the signal squadron of the 48th Gurkha Brigade/Gurkha Field Force and then numbered as 246. In 1982 it became the Hong Kong Gurkha Signal Squadron, which was disbanded in 1997. 250 had been part of 17th Signal Regiment until that regiment was disbanded in 1971. A variety of Gurkha signal squadrons existed earlier, under various designations. The major unit was 17th Gurkha Infantry Division Signal Regiment, formed in 1952, retitled 1959 as 17th Gurkha Signal Regiment, and disbanded in 1971.

Currently, **The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment** contains the 28 Transport Squadron QOGLR, part of 10 Transport Regiment RLC, and 94 Stores Squadron QOGLR, part of 9 Supply Regiment RLC. The former squadron had been Gurkha from 1958 (one of the first two companies formed), while the latter was converted to Gurkha personnel in 2002. The original Gurkha Army Service Corps included the 28, 30, 31 and 34 Companies (redesignated squadrons in 1965). These were disbanded at various dates until only 28 Squadron (an ambulance squadron prior to Options for Change) remained.

There was a Gurkha Provost Company raised 1949 and disbanded in 1969, and a Gurkha Independent Parachute Company existed during Borneo operations in the 1960s, surviving about ten years all told until disbanded.

The Brigade of Gurkhas has a small Headquarters at Airfield Camp near Netheravon, Wiltshire. It has no operational role over Gurkha units. Rather, to quote from its web page, "The mission of HQBG is to provide advice and direction on matters of policy affecting the service of Gurkhas as part of the British Army in order to ensure the Brigade's efficient and effective delivery of military capability."

Gurkha training was centralized 15 Aug 1951 at Training Depot, Brigade of Gurkhas, at Sungei Patani in north Malaya. The depot moved to Hong Kong in 1971, closing down there in Dec 1994. That same year it was reestablished as the Gurkha Training Wing (GTW) at Church Crookham in the UK. In Dec 1999 it became Gurkha Coy, 3rd Bn, Infantry Training Centre, Catterick. There is also a Brigade Training Team, established in 1995 for NCO courses; it is currently at Shorncliffe.

ANNEX: GURKHA FORMATIONS

17th Gurkha Infantry Division was formed 1 Sep 1952 in Malaya from HQ South Malaya District.²⁸ It controlled 48th and 63rd Gurkha Brigades and (possibly) 26th Gurkha Brigade. 99th Gurkha Brigade formed about same time and came under command. By 1962 spread out in various locations in the Far East. 48th Gurkha Brigade was at Hong Kong and 99th Gurkha Brigade in Malaya. (63rd Gurkha Brigade was relieved by 1962 when it was amalgamated in the UK with 51st Infantry Brigade to form 51st Gurkha Brigade.) Headquarters moved to Borneo (Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei) ca. Jan 1964, taking over 5th Malaysian Brigade, 99th Gurkha Brigade, and 51st Gurkha Brigade (which had come from the UK). 3rd Commando Brigade RM added Jan 1965 and 19th Infantry Brigade in Mar 1965. Redesignated Malaya Dist ca 1966 (British withdrew from Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei Sep-Oct 1966).

26th Gurkha Brigade formed Jul 1948 in Hong Kong. Became part of new 40th Division there Jun 1949. Sent to Malaya early Apr 1950. By Apr 1953 under 17th Gurkha Division. Served in Malaya to 1959 and then disbanded.

48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade was formed Dec 1949 by redesignation of Johore Sub-District in Pehang, Malaya. Assigned Sep 1952 to new 17th Gurkha Division. (By Apr 1953, under North Malaya Sub District.) By Apr 1957 was garrison at Hong Kong. *Redesignated Dec 1976 as Gurkha Field Force*. That was redesignated 1987 as 48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade. Disbanded ca. 1992 (possibly later, clearly no later than 1994).

In Jan 1962 (?) the 51st Infantry Brigade and 63rd Gurkha Brigade were amalgamated in the UK as **51st Gurkha Infantry Brigade**, as spearhead of the strategic reserve. HQ sent to Brunei Feb 1964, taking over units there. Redesignated before Jan 1973 as **51st Infantry Brigade**.

63rd Gurkha Infantry Brigade was formed Jul 1950 at Negri Sembilan, Malaya. Assigned Sep 1952 to new 17th Gurkha Division. HQ moved ca. Jan 1962 to the UK and amalgamated with 51st Infantry Brigade.

99th Gurkha Brigade was formed Sep 1952 in South Johore, Malaya; assigned new 17th Gurkha Division. Regrouped in Singapore by 1962. Moved to Brunei Dec 1962. Returned to Singapore ca Sep 1963. Moved to Sarawak Jan 1964. Relieved again Jan 1965 (and returned to Singapore?). Disbanded later.

Formation Signs: 17th Gurkha Division: crossed kukris in white on a very dark green rectangle. This was changed by the early 1960s the sign of the old 17th Indian Division: a black cat on a yellow rectangle. The 48th, 63rd and 99th Gurkha Brigades used crossed kukris in white on red, black, and brown rectangles, respectively.

²⁸ The designation was chosen to commemorate 17th Indian Infantry Division, which had the longest service in Burma of any division during World War II. However, there was no actual lineal connection with that formation.

SOURCES:

The obvious starting point is the official web page for the Brigade of Gurkhas, http://www.army.mod.uk/brigade_of_gurkhas/index.htm, which also exists as <http://www.brigadeofgurkhas.co.uk/>. Surprisingly, while there is extensive historical information on the various Gurkha engineer, signals, and transport units, there is a complete lack of any information on this site about the four old regiments that formed The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

This lack can be remedied in part by going to The Brigade of Gurkhas page from Todd Mills' British Army web site, <http://regiments.org/regiments/southasia/gurkha/RGR.htm>.

A good overall work is Mike Chappell, *The Gurkhas* [Osprey Elite Series 49] (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1993). As with all Osprey works it is more a survey than a detailed history, with a lot of information on uniforms.

Operational detail prior to 1970 is somewhat incomplete and not always consistent. I have mainly followed Gregory Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart: A History of the British Army 1945-1970* (London: William Kimber, 1971) and Malcolm A. Bellis, *The British Army Overseas 1945-1970* (privately published, 2001). This was supplemented by notes from Graham A. Watson; his notes were used for the period from 1971 to the 1994 amalgamation; the period from 1994 is from the web sites and his notes.