



The KOHIMA Educational Trust

June 2005
Newsletter No.1

Welcome to our new format Newsletter. I am pleased to report that the Trust is really getting into its stride. Generous contributions to the fund are steadily coming in; a collection of books has been dispatched to Kohima to support the creation of a new school library there; we have exciting plans for the development of our charitable work and new trustees have been recruited to help to take our programme forward. In short, we are very much in business.

We shall be publishing this newsletter from time to time to keep you abreast of the Trust's plans and progress. Included are the names of the trustees, six of whom were appointed in December 2004, and bring fresh thinking and new skills. They will help to take forward the work we are endeavouring to do in Nagaland, aided by your encouragement and generosity.

The purpose of the Trust remains to provide educational assistance to the Naga people in order to perpetuate the respect we feel for them and to repay the debt of honour we owe them for the unstinting help given to 2nd Division and other British Army units during the battles of 1944. I do hope we can continue to count upon your help in taking forward and expanding this work. It is in a noble cause and is deserving of support.

Thank you for the help you have already given us.

Major General Murray Naylor, Chairman

Kohima Reference Library Project

Over 130 titles have been selected for our gift of a Library to serve the schools of Kohima. Our goal is to provide a collection of vocational books as well as atlases, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. The library will be located in the new Kohima Town Hall by the end of the year.

All the books are approved by our Naga advisors. If you have books you would like to donate, please send details to the Marlow Office.

We will soon be on the Web!

We want to reach out to a wider audience. A good website is the most powerful modern means of doing this. Simply typing the word "Kohima" into an internet search engine will offer our website as a source of information, events, points of contact and much more, including links to related sites.

John Botterill, the Commanding Officer of 2 Signal Regiment has kindly agreed to sponsor our route to the internet, using his own Information Systems engineers, a very low cost option, which will nevertheless give us full access to the powers of the internet. We hope very shortly to let you all know the site's proper address, and look forward to using it in the years ahead, not only as a valuable source of information about the Trust's activities, but also as a means whereby you can donate to the Trust 'on-line'.

Donations

Donations and pledges so far total nearly £60,000. We are immensely grateful for the generosity of our many friends for this support. Regular giving by means of a Standing Order is the most effective way of supporting the Trust. If you would like to contribute please fill in the enclosed form and return to the Marlow Office.

Celebrating the 60th anniversary of WW2 the MoD published a series of booklets on significant battles. The first was on Kohima. If you would like a copy, please contact the Marlow Office.

Future Projects

Among future projects being considered by the Trustees are essay competitions for Naga students; seminars for Naga schoolteachers; scholarships for students from needy families; Twinning of Naga and British schools; provision of text books; and exchange visits with schools in the UK.

Upcoming Events

- Pheluopfelie Kesiezie is visiting the UK in July with a group of Naga school children. This will coincide with the Trustees' meeting in Marlow on 16-17th July, when we will hear first hand about the progress of the Trust in Nagaland.
- The Trust will have a stand at the celebrations at Blenheim Palace, celebrating VJ Day, 14th August. We look forward to seeing you there.

Who are our Trustees?

Major General Murray Naylor
Retired Army Officer and currently an elected Councillor for North Yorkshire County Council.

Lily Das

A journalist who was born in Kohima and visits Nagaland regularly.

Gordon Graham

Retired Chairman and Chief Executive of the international publishing house, Butterworths.

Lieutenant Colonel

John Botterill

Commanding Officer of 2 Signal Regiment, York.

Sylvia May

International Sales Director of HarperCollins Publishers.

Hugh Young

Retired Army Officer.

Robert Lyman

Operations Director for Amey Business Services.

Joan Potter

Retired Social Services manager.

Simon Willis

International Director at York University.

John Jessop

Retired Army Officer and Educationalist.

Kohima Revisited

In January Gordon and Betty Graham, and Robert and Sylvia May visited Kohima, where they were given warm hospitality by Pheluopfelie Kesiezie and his colleagues. They were able to meet the Chief Secretary of the Government, Mr Talitemjen Ao; the Minister for Education, Mr Shiirholezie Liezietsu; the Governor General, Mr Shvamal Datta and Major General SS Kumar, Inspector General of the Assam Rifles in Nagaland. All of them warmly accepted the mission of the Trust.

Kohima, once an obscure mountain village is now a jostling, jumbled city of 70,000 souls, its narrow, twisting, ill-paved streets crammed with honking cars, mini-taxis and lorries; its buildings – from hundreds of flimsy shacks to the grandiose new Police Headquarters on Jail Hill – clinging precariously to the steep hillside.

Returning to Kohima sixty years after the battle, Gordon reflected that no one could grasp the severity of the 2nd Division's task or the virtuosity of its performance without going there. "Steep jungle-covered hillsides" does not convey the sheer physical intimidation of striving up them to confront an entrenched



Children at the Camerons' memorial (right of the picture) in Naga Village

enemy. There are no flat places. To those below, the landscape towers. The elders of Kohima Village, red-blanketed, barefooted, wizened, clutching their wooden flagons of zu, told the visitors their stories, at a ceremony in Naga Village, at which Robert May presented the villagers with a collection of books about the battle.

During the Grahams' and Mays' visit, an Advisory Committee of Naga educators was formed, headed by Mr Pheluopfelie Kesiezie, headmaster of a secondary school in Kohima. The other members are Mr Atuo Meshiir, a school teacher who is also curator of the war cemetery; Mr Charles Chasie, newspaperman and social reformer, and Mr Shiirholezie Liezietsu, the Nagaland Minister of Education, who remembers being taken away at the age of eight from Kohima Village by his mother on April 4th, 1944. The family lived in the jungle until the

end of June. Their house, which stood on Church Knoll, was totally destroyed.

After the battle 61 years ago, British Army engineers helped the people of Kohima to rebuild their houses and also built a new hospital on the spur below Garrison Hill and a secondary school near Merema, structures which have weathered well the sixty years since they were built. After 1947, communications between the British veterans and their Naga allies were scarce and spasmodic, but the establishment of the Trust will do much to restore this imbalance.

61st Anniversary Dinner

On 14th May 2005 H.Q. 2nd Division hosted a formal dinner in the Officers' Moss at Craigiehall near Edinburgh to mark the 61st anniversary of the battle of Kohima. Major General and Mrs Euan Loudon and the officers and spouses enjoyed a menu of dishes created in honour of the two Kohima VC's, Capt. John Randle and Lance Corporal John Harman, and of Major General John Grover, who commanded the Division at the time of battle. Among the guests were three Kohima veterans, Capt. Howard Woodcock, Capt. Keith Halman and Major Gordon Graham, the last of whom, speaking about the significance of the battle, drew attention to the contribution of the Nagas to the victory, and described the formation of the Trust as a vital link between the past and the future.

Kohima Memorial Service, York Minster

The annual memorial service was held at York Minster on Tuesday 26th April 2005 on the 61st anniversary of the battle, attended by some 240 serving officers and soldiers, veterans, their friends and relations and ex-members of the 2nd Division. During the service Pericles' Funeral Oration was read by Captain Howard Woodcock, a veteran of the battle, and the poem "No tears were shed at Kohima"

recited by the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 2nd Signal Regiment.

After the Service the clergy and congregation moved to the Kohima memorial in the Minster garden where wreaths were laid by Captain Keith Halman, also a veteran of the battle, and Major General Euan Loudon CBE, the General Officer Commanding 2nd Division. It was a fitting and moving commemoration.

The next Kohima Memorial Service will be on Tuesday 25th April 2006.

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