

# COUNTRY LIFE®

PPA MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR 2019

EVERY WEEK | DECEMBER

## Gordon setters: The gentlemen will see you now



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London Life and the birth of Bond



# Books

## Military

### **Gurkha Odyssey: Campaigning for the Crown**

Peter Duffell (Pen and Sword,  
£25)

### **Gurkha: 25 Years of the Royal Gurkha Rifles**

Craig Lawrence (Uniform, £30)

THE IMAGES shown on the covers of these two fine studies of the Gurkha rifleman are serendipitously complementary. Peter Duffell's thoughtful, amiable and idiosyncratic journey through Gurkha history, not least his own, has two Gurkha riflemen in the 1930s smiling wittingly at the camera on the cover. This is perhaps the popular image of the little Nepali soldiers who have faithfully served the British Crown since 1816.

Craig Lawrence's cover, meanwhile, presents an altogether more menacing image: a camouflaged face framed by crossed kukris, the battle-knife that



**Modern Gurkha soldiers training near Freetown, Sierra Leone**

is the universal emblem of the Gurkhas. This rifleman is not so much looking at the camera as challenging it, a reminder that the British army does not retain the men's services for sentimental reasons, but because they are formidable fighters. Although hillsmen, the Gurkhas have fought impressively in jungle, desert, the trenches, the wind-swept

moorland of the Falkands and, most recently, in Afghanistan.

The books dovetail in other respects, too. Lt-Gen Sir Peter Duffell, who, in 1965 aged only 26, won the Military Cross leading a company in Borneo, was the man who saved the Gurkhas during the savage defence cuts at the end of the Cold War. His vision of a unified regiment embodying the best traditions

of the four very different Gurkha infantry regiments came to fruition in 1994, with the creation of The Royal Gurkha Rifles, of which he became the first honorary colonel. Maj-Gen Lawrence, the third of the (so far) four honorary colonels, tells the story of the new regiment's first 25 years and packs it with illustrations.

One of them is delightfully telling: a recently commissioned British officer in mess kit, his hair boyishly long, talking with a much medalled Gurkha officer. The caption says that it is the responsibility of the regimental secretary 'to select young British officers who will be able to form strong relationships with the older and more experienced Gurkha officers with whom they will live and work'. Few jobs can need greater discernment.

I cannot recommend one book above the other. To understand the Gurkhas, past, present and future, you need to read both.

*Allan Mallinson*