



When you go home

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Naga veterans attending this year's KET/KES Scholarship Award ceremony at Charles Chasie's invitation. From left: Kakhu Khing, Khekiye Sema, Saishe Swu, Tuochalie Kemp, Sovehu Nienu.

Unique Voices: Naga veterans record their WWII stories

'ALTHOUGH we were in the dense forest we were happy. We were thousands in number and the British officers looked after us very well. But the thought of war and death was always at the forefront of our minds.'

So said Keduchu Kupa, speaking shortly before his death earlier this year, as he recalled serving with the 1st Battalion Assam Regiment just after the Battle of Kohima.

Recording such memories from the Naga veterans has become the personal project of Charles Chasie, President of the Kohima Educational Society, KET's sister organisation in Kohima. The project was first envisaged in 2014, when Amanda Shapland, granddaughter of Brigadier Shapland and a great supporter of KET, visited the area. When conversation turned to the important roles that the Nagas had played during WWII, such as soldiers, scouts, porters and stretcher bearers, it became clear that very few of the personal stories of the Naga veterans have been documented – until now.

Charles Chasie has spent much of the year interviewing veterans and their families, and seeing very different points of view. He plans to make a documentary of these stories to accompany a book, which will provide visitors with a more complete picture of the war.

Many Nagas responded to the call to join the Allied forces as a result of their loyalty to the British. Shitozu Sema's father had previously served with the Naga Labour Corps during WWI in France, while Sovehu Nienu, who celebrated his 100th birthday this year, remembered enrolling with five friends (without their parents' knowledge), attracted by the 'adventurousness of military life'.

For others, brutal treatment by Japanese troops proved decisive. Zhavise Vihienuo recalled that 'when their supplies did not come, they started pestering our people for food. As a result, the Nagas turned against them and began reporting Japanese camps and movements to the British.'

Nagas had a variety of wartime experiences. Tuochalie Kemp felt he had been very lucky to serve at the Training Centre in Shillong: 'All my friends died in the war,' he said. 'Who knows, I may also have died if I had gone to the frontlines!' Sovehu Nienu was able to use his local knowledge to lead 45 fellow soldiers to safety when they withdrew from Jessami, despite his wounds. Keduchu Kupa remembered the defeat of the Japanese troops at Mandalay Fort in 1945: 'As a reward we got ten days leave! Once this was up, we started training to jump from planes with

parachutes. There were plans to drop us into Singapore. But then the Americans dropped bombs and the war came to an end.'

Many men won gallantry awards, but as Penthungo Ezung recalls, 'we got only medals and no compensation. We took home the clothes we were wearing – that is all.' A number of surviving veterans now live in difficult conditions, lacking necessary care. Although they spoke with dignity and pride, a few thought that the British should have provided some form of pension. Some do receive an Indian pension from the Rajya Sainik Board (an autonomous ex-serviceman's association).

The children of many veterans received little or no education and were therefore unable to secure well-paid jobs. To counter this, KES/KET hope to ensure that as many descendants as possible receive scholarships, and this year awarded 23 to such recipients across five different tribes.

Certainly, it seems that the seed of British-Naga friendship sown on the battlefield continues to take root more than 70 years later. This is what KET and KES are about: giving back to those who were there when they were needed – and remembering their sacrifice with gratitude.

By Charles Chasie

Mind Your Health



THIS INITIATIVE, launched in January 2016, aims to provide women leaders in the remote villages of Nagaland with knowledge of basic healthcare. KES has partnered with a faith-based organisation in order to undertake such training. There are no doctors in these areas, and travel is hard, particularly during the long rainy months of April to September, when many roads become impassable.

The *Mind Your Health* initiative springs from KET's medical training programme, which was launched following a bequest from one of its founding members, Dr Keith Halnan, himself an oncologist.

Twenty-six women from fifteen neighbouring villages attended the first training session, which was held in remote Tuensang. The women, all

either church leaders or accredited social health activists, were selected by their local church and returned to their villages with this new expertise.

The training, which took place over three days, covered essential care requirements, including basic first aid, injections, treatment for diarrhoea and fever, checking blood pressure and treatment for high blood pressure, detecting diabetes, birth control, advice for pregnant women including immunisation of children, and basic midwifery skills. Cleanliness and disease and infection prevention were other major topics, tying in with KET/KES's latrine project described on page 3 opposite. Each woman was given a kit to take back with her to her village, consisting of a blood pressure monitor, a diabetes detector, a thermometer and weighing scales, as shown in the photograph below.

The kits can be seen lined up ready for distribution.

Several requests for further training courses have also been received and KES aims to hold courses each year, with the next scheduled in January 2017.

KES is preparing a basic healthcare manual for future reference for those attending training. The cost to train each woman is £175, which includes the kit and the three days boarding, food and transport.

Annie Getley, great granddaughter of General Grover, was visiting Kohima in January of this year to help in schools and to assist KES in the launch of *Mind Your Health*. Annie's contribution was enormously appreciated in Nagaland.

By Dr Phyobemo Ngully



Spending our pennies



RUSOMA, a small village located in the Kohima District, is home to 5000 Angami Nagas. The locals, like most hill people, make their living from agriculture but 70 per cent of the population live below India's poverty line.

Most villagers can only afford to build the most basic homes and nearly half have no working latrine, using the jungle instead. When the rainy season arrives, the water sources become polluted and the village is often plagued with ailments such as acute gastroenteritis, malnutrition, scrub typhus, malaria and typhoid.

Dr Kezevituo, a resident of Kohima and a member of KES, often travels to surrounding villages and had already identified Rusoma as a village in need. The Rotary Club of North Hawaii, one of KET's active supporters, offered a donation which allowed a project of latrine building to go ahead, as part of the education programme devoted to cleanliness awareness.

Thanks to the Rotary of Hawaii, the Rotary of Kohima, KET and private funding from Kohima, seven latrines in four separate buildings and locations in Rusoma have now been completed, at a cost of £700 per building. KES has taken on responsibility to carry out the health education component, and is also looking to expand the programme into other villages.



Scholarships for veterans' descendants



From left: Sepoy Penthungo Ezung, Chumyami, his granddaughter, and Ntsenbemo Murry

THIS YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY was another great success, with 151 scholarships being awarded, 66 of them new this year. Amongst the new awards is a music scholarship, donated by the family of Edgar Merrey, which has been given to Petenei Tacu.

Twenty-three scholarships were awarded for the first time to descendants of Naga veterans. Many of these were donated in the memory of UK veterans, underlining the strength of the message of memory and gratitude. Two such scholars are from Wokha – Ntsenbemo Murry is the

grandson of Sepoy Chorhon Lotha and his scholarship was awarded in memory of Sgt Frederick Jarvis of the 7th Worcester Regiment, who was killed in action. Chumyami Ezung is the granddaughter of Sepoy Penthungo Ezung, and her scholarship was awarded in Ray Jackson's memory.

Another 11 scholarships were given to students entering year 11 as part of our newly extended programme announced last year. Nearly all of these students live in the more remote areas of Nagaland and come from families who make a living from the land.



Roland Wreford plunges earthwards on his 75th birthday to raise money for KET, while William Getley enjoys some well-earned refreshment after his epic sponsored bike ride along the Pilgrims' Way to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain.

Kohima Day 2016



Friends and supporters once again gathered on 7 July in the Dean's Garden at York Minster to commemorate the Battle of Kohima. Nearly 200 people attended the Service and lunch, including 13 veterans who laid their own wreaths in memory of those who did not come home, while the band played 'The Road to Mandalay'. Bishop James Jones gave a wonderfully moving address. KET is indebted to both York Minster and 2 Signals at Imphal Barracks, without whose help the day would not be possible. The Kohima Day Service will take place next year on **Thursday 6 July 2017** and we look forward to welcoming you and your friends and family.

Kohima History Library

One of KET's first projects, ten years ago, was to establish a reference library in the Kohima Central Library. Alongside a wide variety of vocational reference titles and dictionaries, KET also created the Keith Halnan Medical Library and started a small collection of military history titles, to inform future generations about the battle that took place in their villages. The books on the battle were well received and KET has now been able to send an additional 85 titles. Some local schools used the information held in the library as a basis for an essay competition.

Fundraisers go to extremes

KET supporters have distinguished themselves in 2016 with the lengths that they will go to in order to raise money for the cause.

Roland Wreford decided to celebrate his 75th birthday in style this September, by carrying out a sky dive alongside his friend Mick Brighton. Roland and Mick both served with the Territorial Army, with Roland's last role being commanding officer of 5 Royal Anglian, part of 2nd Division. He was aware of the story of Kohima through the TA, but his fascination with the subject has grown in recent years and he was able to visit in February 2016.

As he learnt of KET's activities, Roland was determined to raise awareness of the Trust within the Royal Anglian Regimental family and he and Mick wanted to fundraise for it. What better way to do so than to plunge 15,000 feet to earth – whilst raising a magnificent £4000.

This summer William Getley, great grandson of General Grover, also decided to raise funds for KET by cycling over 800km across northern Spain, starting in Irún and ending in Santiago de Compostela. William was undeterred by an accident just before departure, and by the fact his friend had to pull out, making most of the ride alone. He raised almost £2,500 and wishes to thank his generous supporters.

2017 Fundraisers

KET is delighted to have a place in the April 2017 London Marathon and Phin Lyman, son of Rob Lyman, has volunteered to run and raise funds for the Trust. In addition, KET has secured a fundraising place in the Prudential Ride London—Surrey 100 (a 100-mile cycling challenge), which will be taken up by Charles Barclay. Further details on their fundraising and the chance to sponsor both will appear on the KET website.

New Chairman and President

KET has appointed a new Chairman, Major General David Shaw CBE (retd). David commanded 2nd Division, and since leaving the Army has established a number of business ventures. KET wishes to thank Dr Rob Lyman, the outgoing Chairman, for his six years of dedicated service and guidance, and is delighted that he will remain a KET Trustee.

Major General Murray Naylor (retd) has accepted KET's invitation to become its President. Murray also commanded 2nd Division, and is well-known to the Trust as its first Chairman and a regular attendee of remembrance events at York.

KET shop

KET's online shop has books, DVDs and CDs, as well as Naga goods and Christmas cards available for purchase. Rob Lyman's newly published title, *Among the Headhunters*, is listed (with 50% of the cover price going to KET if purchased through this site). It is the complete story of Pangsha, starting in 1937 and culminating in the building of the hostel two years ago. Gordon Graham's book *The Trees are All Young on Garrison Hill* is also available in audio (on CD) or as an ebook.

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