

Two Former Commanders of the Same Elite Gurkha Squadron Reunite in Nepal: From Iraq Battlefields to a Map-Less Trek Across the Himalayas – and a Dramatic Eagle Encounter

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Pokhara, Nepal – Release date 09 March 2026 – In a gripping interview captured on film, Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Fenn, a serving soldier and former commander of 94 Squadron Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment during intense operations in Iraq, sat down for an in-depth conversation with Cumbrian retired Lieutenant Colonel Neil Jurd OBE – who also led the same squadron on operations in Iraq three years later, where he was wounded by shrapnel from a mortar strike.

Filmed in Fenn's serene garden in Pokhara, Nepal, the 47-minute Leader-Connect interview episode opens with an unforgettable spectacle: two Steppe Eagles lock in aerial combat and crash-land just yards from the pair, battling fiercely before soaring away - an appropriate and rather exciting start to a conversation which is gripping from the outset.

The discussion spans their shared military heritage with the Brigade of Gurkhas, including Fenn's vivid memory of mistaking incoming bullets kicking up desert sand for raindrops during his Iraq tour. Both men reflect on commanding the same tight-knit unit in high-stakes environments, and talk with obvious affection of many of the troops they served with and led.

At the heart of the interview is Fenn's extraordinary 2023 achievement: a 16-week (114-day), map-less trek across the full length of Nepal from west to east – covering nearly 1,500 miles and 60 miles of vertical ascent through rugged hills, landslides, lightning storms, and precarious paths with sheer drops. Accompanied only by two porters and relying on guidance from local villagers (elders for hidden trails, younger ones for modern shortcuts), Fenn deliberately travelled without maps to immerse fully in the terrain and communities he has long championed. Remarkably he almost never got lost, although he does discuss the one time when he was off-course, and exceptionally cold.

The solo-style adventure raised approximately £50,000 for The Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT) most of which went to the Gurkha Welfare Trust (with the balance going to a project to bring communications to isolated areas) the charity where Fenn now serves as Field Director, supporting Gurkha veterans, widows, families, and communities with medical care, residential homes, clean water, earthquake-resistant housing, and education initiatives. A book detailing the journey is slated for release in 2026.

"Johnny's trek was nothing short of remarkable, and I think comes from his deep love of Nepal and its people, as well as his incredible spirit of adventure" said Neil Jurd OBE, founder of Leader-Connect, a UK-based leadership development organisation delivering experiential training, online courses, and podcasts. "Coupled with our shared command of the same Gurkha squadron years apart, this conversation has so many themes that will interest leaders, but perhaps most importantly it is about bringing ideas to life stepping confidently into the unknown".

Fenn, a 25-year British Army veteran (16 with the Brigade of Gurkhas, including service in East Timor and Iraq), later founded Photo Journeys, leading photographic expeditions worldwide and capturing images of figures such as the late Prince Philip, explorer Levison Wood, double-amputee mountaineer Hari Budha Magar, and actress Joanna Lumley. Now based in Nepal as GWT's Field Director, he continues to bridge military legacy, adventure, and charitable impact.

The Leader-Connect episode is available now at:

<https://leader-connect.co.uk/videos/neil-jurd-sits-down-with-lieutenant-colonel-johnny-fenn-in-nepal/>

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