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Top Left: George completing commando course in Lympstone in 1972. Copyright © 2025 George Nelson.

Top Right: Family photo of final officers mess function in army, 2006, Chatham, Kent. The corps of royal engineers officers mess. Copyright © 2025 George Nelson.

Text 1: George serving in Northern Ireland in 1972. Copyright © 2025 George Nelson.

Text 2: Group photo in 1974 whilst serving with the UN in Cyprus. Copyright © 2025 George Nelson.

Bottom Left: George visiting the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield in Staffordshire. Copyright © 2025 George Nelson.

Honourable Lieutenant Colonel GEORGE NELSON

Born 1952, Jamaica

● **1962**

Arrived in the UK on 13 February, at the age of 10.

● **1967**

Joined the British Army at 15 years and 9 months, training as a driver, radio operator and clerk in the Royal Engineers.

● **1969**

First tour in Northern Ireland as an 18-year-old soldier.

● **1975**

Married in 1975 to his childhood sweetheart Yvonne, with whom he had two children, Yolanda and Damien.



● **2006**

Retired from the army as a Lieutenant Colonel after a distinguished 39-year military career.



Lieutenant Colonel George Nelson was born in Jamaica in 1952 and moved to the UK in 1962 at the age of 10. His journey to Britain was eventful, involving an aircraft fire during a layover in New York, followed by his arrival in snowy Wolverhampton. Initially unprepared for the cold, Nelson recalls the heavy coats provided by Heathrow staff as a small comfort in the harsh English winter.

Coming from a family that moved to England in 1956, he was among the last of his siblings to join them. His expectations of England, shaped by the notion of the “mother country” with streets “paved with gold,” were quickly challenged by the reality of terraced houses and a less glamorous landscape. Despite this, he adjusted to life in England, with his first English friend being David, a schoolmate who took him under his wing at a time when Nelson was the only black child at school. At 15, following the tragic death of his mother in 1964, Nelson decided to join the army. His military career began in 1967 when he enlisted in the British Army’s boy service. He eventually served in various roles, including driver, radio operator, and clerk in the Royal Engineers. His military journey took him across Europe, including West Germany, Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus, where he became one of the few black soldiers in many of these units.

In 1975, Nelson married his long-time sweetheart Yvonne, with whom he had two children, and continued his distinguished military career, rising through the ranks. After 39 years of service, he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2006. Reflecting on his time in the army, Nelson speaks proudly of his achievements and the camaraderie he experienced, particularly in overcoming racial barriers in a predominantly white military.

