

A BANKER, AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

Nicholas Wright, Head of Business Development, Jyske Bank Gibraltar

WORDS MARISA CUTILLAS PHOTOGRAPHY STEPHEN HERMIDA AND COURTESY OF NICHOLAS WRIGHT

Jyske Bank Gibraltar's Nicholas Wright recalls the high felt the first time he jumped out of a plane alone, from 15,000 feet up in the air. *"It was exhilarating!" he says, as he swipes his iPhone and shows me the video of that special day.* As I view him performing acrobatics in mid-air and moving to and from fellow-jumpers, I find my pre-conceptions of what a banker is, delightfully shattered.

Nicholas, or Nicky to colleagues and clients, has worked at Jyske Bank Gibraltar for over 20 years, where he currently heads the Business Development department, a post which involves overseeing the smooth transition to Gibraltar of assets belonging to overseas clients. "Clients used to keep their assets further afield, in countries like Switzerland or the Channel Islands, but as our client base is largely composed of British nationals living on the Costa del Sol, they prefer to be closer to their assets," he says, noting that Jyske Bank offers not only the typical services you would expect from a bank but also, wealth management. He explains: "We work alongside clients, helping them move forward in terms of what they want for themselves, their children and their grandchildren." Working as a team is crucial, as is flexibility in a client's degree of involvement. "One client might be used to dealing in finance and might wish to be involved in every step, while another might have inherited wealth and not know where to start."

One of the most defining features of Jyske Bank is the fact that none of its staff works on a commission basis. Says Nicholas, "Many times, when I first meet clients and I explain that we don't make any commission at all, I can physically see their shoulders drop; they instantly feel that

they don't have to be on the defensive. From the cashier right through to the CEO, nobody receives commissions."

The Jyske Bank team is renowned for being the cream of the crop; indeed, it includes people who have worked at highly prestigious institutions such as the Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland. How do they attract this level of excellence? Nicholas explains: "Jyske Bank isn't a rules-based organisation; it is a value-based organisation. In some companies, shareholders or clients are given more importance than employees but at Jyske, we realise that each of these pillars is vital. In many companies, all decisions have to go through one person, which impedes movement and job satisfaction. At Jyske, the staff has great responsibility, but also the confidence that comes from being able to make decisions in order to move ahead."

If you have a VISA card, you should read up on Jyske Bank's VISA programme; Nicholas challenges you to find a better one. He says: "I headed the VISA department for many years and came up with a system that clients love. What we really wanted to avoid was clients encountering a negative situation, where, say, they would try to pay at a restaurant with their VISA card and for some reason their card

would be rejected. We manage a pre-emptive client list programme, actively reviewing clients' available limits daily to ensure that they always have sufficient spending limits. Our programme advises us when a problem has occurred and within around five minutes we ring the client and solve it. We even increase their credit by phone if required." All VISA cards are made and monitored in-house, allowing clients to avoid long waits and impersonal service. "Larger banks cannot do this because they deal with millions of clients." At Jyske Bank, clients with a wealth portfolio ranging from €150,000 to millions of euros, are ensured exclusivity, personalisation and care 'beyond the call of duty'. Jyske additionally offers a multi-currency service, with many accounts comprising dollars, sterling or even yen!

Nicholas was born in Yorkshire to a Gibraltarian father and English mother, though his family moved to Gibraltar when he was eight. He describes his relationship with The Rock as "a complex thing", saying, "Some people can feel a bit closed-in but on the other hand, Gibraltar is such a great place to live. A key factor is safety; the crime rate is



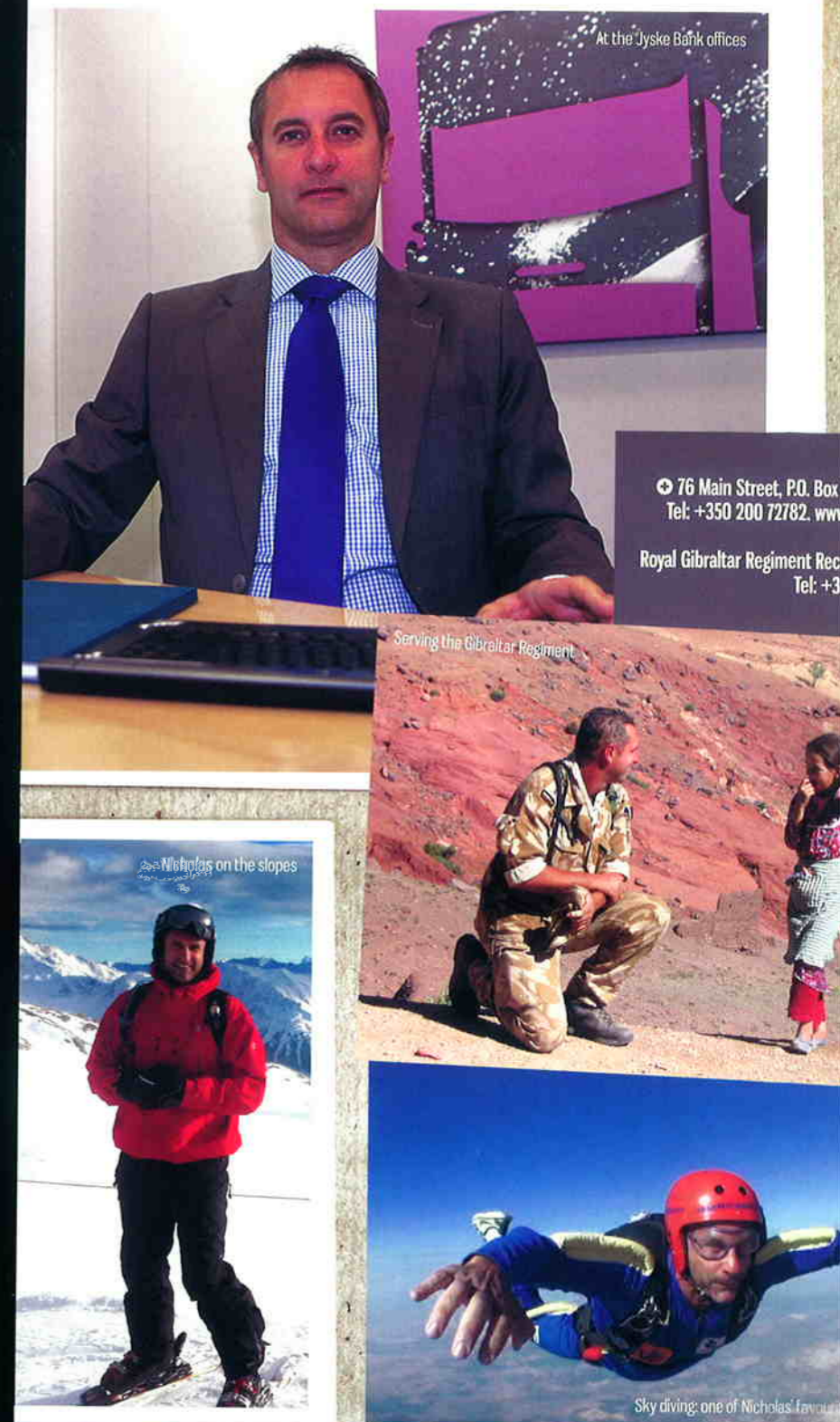
practically non-existent here. Then there's the proximity of everything; it is easy to get around on foot. Gibraltar also boasts a very cosmopolitan society and we are thriving despite the global economic downturn. This is in part owing to the financial sector but also to smaller industries (like the local crystal industry) and tourism."

Nicholas may have adapted to the environment, but one thing he has always missed is the cold: "I miss the snow and the beautiful, green Nature of England," he says, which is why he often gets away for skiing or mountain climbing trips. He recently climbed to the top of Mount Toubkal, in the Moroccan High Atlas, which is 4,167 metres high. His family is another passion; Nicholas' wife, Alison, works in Gibraltar's Tax Department, while his daughter, Alexandra (aged 17) is already driving a red mini and contemplating her future at a UK University. Nicholas tells me that the Gibraltar government pays the University tuition of all its citizens (even if the University is overseas), an unheard-of privilege in any other nation.

Nicholas is a proud family man, avid sportsman, dedicated banker... how else could he surprise me? By telling me he was an Officer for the Royal Gibraltar Regiment for 12 years until he retired three years ago! He began military life as a Royal Navy Reserve diver in his late teens in the midst of the Gulf War crisis, rising at 5am to hit the Gibraltar port and dive, searching military vessels and commercial ships for possible bombs. "After a two-hour dive, my day began at Jyske Bank," he says, laughing. "I started as a junior clerk and moved into internal settlements and SWIFT payments, before heading the VISA Department and eventually holding my current post." Far from taking its toll on the young banker, the marriage of these disparate careers provided the variety he had always craved.

Nicholas proudly recalls having paraded at Buckingham Palace during the Changing of the Guard when he was a lieutenant in 2001, and shows me pictures of his recent visit to London for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. "The Royal Gibraltar Regiment took part in the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace and in the 62-gun salute from the Tower of London, a highly significant event which few other British Regiments are lucky enough to be chosen to participate in," he says, adding, "The Royal Gibraltar Regiment has both ceremonial and operational duties, and has served as part of the British Army in Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Iraq, to name a few places. A dozen men are currently serving on the frontline of Afghanistan."

The Regiment has played an important role in some of the most historically significant events in Gibraltar. "Many people don't know it but despite the fact Gibraltar is only three miles long,



it houses 35 miles of military tunnels." Nicholas also reminds us of secret nooks in Gibraltar which played an important role in the unfolding of history. "In the 1800's, the US President Grant dined in St George's Hall and to this day, special events are held there." Many military traditions of old are still celebrated to this day, such as the Ceremony of the Keys. The latter commemorates the important role played by the Port Sergeant until the 20th century, in which he would lock all the entrances to Gibraltar every evening, in a formal ceremony taken part in by a drummer and platoon soldiers.

As Nicholas heads back to work, he encourages

me to learn to skydive and commends a company in Seville, SkyDive Spain, for their professionalism and precision. "When you are taking an important jump like that, you want to make sure it will turn out well," he says. "The staff there are amazing; even if you do a tandem jump with them, they make you feel like the experience was as new and special for them as it was for you." Of course, Nicholas could easily say the same about wealth management; making an important financial decision also takes a huge leap of faith. With people like Nicholas on its team, you know that with Jyske Bank, you will always land on solid ground. ☺