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The third number of our Journal carries on the good work started in the year of Her Majesty the Queen's Silver Jubilee and we must again thank our distinguished contributors for making this possible. The contents are as usual very varied and completely non-political. They reflect the wide knowledge of Nepal - past and present - and the sincere concern for her future which characterise our steadily growing membership.

All the main contributions to the Journal are derived from lectures given to the Society at the Alpine Club or elsewhere.

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THE ROUTE ACROSS THE TESHU LAPCHA

by

Sir George Bishop, CB, OBE

Our interest in the Teshu Lapcha - the 5755m. pass which links the Khumbu with the Rolwaling - was first awakened by Eric Shipton's report on the Mount Everest reconnaissance expedition in 1951. After they abandoned their work on the ice fall leading to the Western Cwm, they turned their attention to exploring the area between Khumbu and Sun Kosi, dominated by Gauri Shankar (7010m.). This area runs along the borders with Tibet.

Hilary, Riddiford and Dutt went up the valley west of Thame and found the pass called Teshu Lapcha. Shipton wrote: "The pass, though involving some difficult ice climbing, was known to, and occasionally used by, Sherpas. It led through a maze of spectacular granite peaks over a northern off-shoot of the main range into the most remarkable gorge known as the Rolwaling, running west under the southern precipice of Gauri Shankar." "Rolwaling" is the Sherpa word for "furrow" and the valley is, indeed, a deep, steep-sided furrow in the ice topped ranges of granite.

Hilary in particular enjoyed this most direct route from Namche Bazaar to Kathmandu. He wrote: "It proved an exhilarating journey. The pass was technically demanding and the Rolwaling superbly beautiful. We crossed the Nepal hill country in the height of the harvest season and it was throbbing with music and laughter. For ten days we travelled through country that no European had visited before and we were warmly welcomed in every village."

It seemed to have all the features of Shangri-La! When in 1970 we trekked along the ordinary route to the Everest Base Camp there were tantalising glimpses of the Rolwaling range and the wild, unfrequented valleys leading up to them. It looked even more tempting when flying on later expeditions to the air strip at Lukla. The problems were a combination of the isolation, the objective hazards, like stone falls and avalanches, and the weather on the three difficult days on the glacier over the pass itself. Twice we had met up with parties who had suffered badly when they had been caught by a sudden change of weather. On both occasions there were some dead and many porters with severe frost bite.

We could not resist the temptation to try the Teshu Lapcha in 1974, even at our ages - 61 and 56.

We have found over the years that the chance of consistently good weather is higher in November than in any other autumn month. We talk to Colonel J. O. M. Roberts about the hazards. While the period May to September is, perhaps, the best, the pass can be crossed in October and November, but there is always a risk of heavy snow. The second, and perhaps more serious, hazard was the persistent stone falls and avalanches during the three days on the glacier. My map was

marked by Mike Cheney with a sinister row of crosses to ensure a continued awareness of the major area of stone falls!

We left Kathmandu at 6 am on a very misty morning on October 27, 1974. The vale was covered with thick morning mist but as the Landrover toiled up the ridge above the Indrawati, we burst through into a clear blue sky. To the north, the Langtang peaks caught the bright morning light and below us the vivid colours of the ripening rice made a patchwork quilt against the red soil. We travelled 40 miles up the Kodari road, passed the Chinese Hydro-Electric Station at Lamasangu (which is today the usual jumping-off point for the Everest trek) and continued eight miles upstream to the bridge at Barabesi - the last village before the frontier.

Our Sirdar, Pemba Norbu, who had been with us many times, accompanied us from Kathmandu, and waiting for us were our three other Sherpas together with twelve local porters and all the tents, equipment and food needed for the crossing. We reckoned it would take about sixteen days to reach Namche Bazaar and there was little prospect of buying additional supplies en route.

We started off on the west bank of the river to pass through Sun Kosi Bazaar. It is a small abandoned village with some solid stone houses and an ancient temple. It was once an important trading post but has been by-passed and stifled by the Kodari road which links Kathmandu with Lhasa. From an altitude of 900m. the route climbed westward through a good farming district with good fields of rice on the lower slopes. In the shade of some frangipani trees we rested and talked to two local people obviously walking to Bambisi to take the road to Kathmandu. It turned out that one had a first degree in botany and was en route to Columbia University to work for a Ph.D. She spoke with great authority about the diversity of ferns which we would find in the gorges ahead of us. On the second day we reached a high point of about 2900m. where we camped above the cultivation limit in a beautiful grazing ground surrounded by shrubs and trees. It was near here that in the first light of morning we had our first view of Gauri Shankar. Standing virtually at the head, above the Rolwaling gorge, it dominated the sky. One day we stopped for lunch beneath a shady tree on a pleasant turf balcony above the Bhotkosi with Gauri Shankar framed in trees near to us in full blossom, clear and splendid filling the view ahead.

We soon settled down to the steady routine of tea and biscuits at 6 am before packing up and resuming our march at 7 am, lunch at 11 am and enjoying afternoon tea at 3.30, when the camp was established for the night. There is no better way of relaxing after a year in the City. Good fresh air in the sun, lots of exercise, well cooked plain food, and all the sights and sounds of Nepal make one forget the problems of sterling or the fluctuations of the Dow Jones!

Compared with the more crowded Everest routes, the villages were much smaller, but perhaps because they see fewer Europeans, they were even more friendly. One day we passed close to a wedding feast and the host beckoned us to join them and share their chang as three musicians played. Others took great interest in our equipment and asked many questions of our stalwart friendly porters carrying their loads of 80 lbs. each. On the fifth day we turned along the mountainside and descended through rice fields to get into the Bhotekosi gorge. We looked down to the gorge, which we could see 2000 ft. below, to Gongar, a village of three or four houses. At the confluence of two rivers, almost at the entrance to the tropical forested gorge, was a small sandbank. It offered a tempting camp site. By 6 pm the tents were up, the porters fed and all was ready for our evening meal. The crux of the gorge was about 400 yards ahead and the water thundered through as the evening darkened. A picturesque party of twelve traders with hand-held lanterns of a different age came by, talking cheerfully despite their heavy loads of hides.

The Bhotekosi flows through the main range of the Himalayas in the deep Rongshar gorge. Two miles up the gorge from Gondar, the Rolwalling river plunges through a ravine to join it. The gorge at this point is about 3000 ft. deep. It is very narrow and the ill-defined track twists and climbs to force its way upward. The walls of the gorge on the eastern side are so steep that there is little or no vegetation. Waterfalls pour over the bare rock and fill the whole gorge with mist and spray. The combined effect of sunlight and moisture produces a botanist's paradise. Because so little direct light can reach the gorge it is a haven for rare plants.

Alas we had no time for research and photography but had to press on to cross the precarious bridge that led to the Rolwalling. The river was a beautiful blue tinged with white as it poured downhill. At first sight the way ahead looked impossible. It climbed steeply for about 1500 ft. up what seemed like a vertical wall. A cleverly engineered route with some well-placed steps cut in the bare rock led through a narrow gully until the gradient eased and took us through an assortment of shrubs to the little village of Simagong. We were royally entertained at the biggest house where the lady set us up on the veranda in her courtyard while the midday meal was cooking. We watched the daily round of agricultural operations.

We had two psychological setbacks. First we met a pair of British climbers from India who had abandoned the Teshi Lapcha because of the bitterly cold conditions. Although they were well equipped they retreated after two days on the glacier and were returning to Jiri to join the ordinary route to the Khumbu. Secondly a Dutch party of four people whom we met shortly afterwards were resting and nursing some slightly frost-bitten toes. We cheered ourselves up with the hope that the really cold weather might be over by the time we reached the pass and the belief that our Molitor boots would more effectively withstand the low temperatures!

When we curved eastward to drop into the Rolwaling valley, we passed through the remains of a huge forest of pine trees which had been destroyed by fire. Hundreds of tall, blackened tree stumps - 100 ft. or so high - lined the hillside, reminiscent of a shattered battle field in World War I. Secondary regeneration had produced multi-coloured shrubs and at this time of year the leaves seemed to vary from yellow and red, to every shade of brown and most shades of green.

By nightfall on the eighth day, we arrived at Beding (3693m), the only small village in the whole of the Rolwaling valley. Its score of buildings were on the slopes above a small alluvial plain alongside the river. We had had a long day and because it was very dark saw nothing of the village or of the people when we camped just in front of a big chorten on flat ground by the river. The next morning we heard children outside the tent and found youngsters gathering Yak dung for their fires. The next time we were camping there a year later, our first greeting at the same place came from a twenty-three year old postgraduate student from the University of Berkeley, California, working for her Ph.D. in sociology. Alone in the village for six months, four days walk from the nearest telegraph station, she had worked hard to establish a relationship with the villagers.

At Beding we had to engage porters for the glacier crossing. 3000 metres or so is the effective ceiling for valley porters. They cannot withstand the combined effects of altitude and cold and they do not normally have the woollen clothes and other equipment to venture confidently above the snowline. They were a confident and cheerful team and we sent them on their way with handfuls of extra rupees. Pemba Norbu was able to recruit six experienced porters including three Sherpas, two of whom wished to visit a brother who was a lama at the monastery at Thame. We also engaged some youngsters to bring up loads of firewood to our next camping site at Na Gaon (4183m.) because we were now above the tree line. This is the highest summer pasture in the Rolwaling. It consists of a dozen huts and about a score of small stone-walled fields on an alluvial fen on the north side of the river. Here in the short summer they can also grow the tasty and enjoyable potatoes which is such a vital part of the Sherpa diet. We had two days to acclimatize and on one expedition we found an interesting peak, Yalang Ri, which we returned to climb in 1975.

From Na Gaon the track crossed to the south side of the Rolwaling river and through low juniper bushes and boulders climbed up old moraine to Cho Pokhari just by the junction of two glaciers and below the 5000 ft. wall dropping down from Tsoboji (6689m.) and Dragkar-Go (6793m.). Here was a perfect camp site on flat glacial sand jammed in a triangle between the steep rock face, the terminal moraine of one glacier, and the lateral moraine of the main glacier. While the tents were being pitched we climbed the 150 ft. to the top of the main moraine. 300 ft. below was the long glacial lake nearly a mile long. At the further end the glacier plunged straight in and small icebergs had broken off

and were drifting downstream to the debris of the terminal moraine. The side of our moraine was nearly vertical. Ahead of us we could see black objects bouncing down the white glacial dust slopes kicking up small clouds of dust like exploding mortar shells. They gave the impression of cormorants diving into the lake - and we realised they were stone falls on a scale unprecedented in our experience. After a day in the full sun, the stone fall from the 2000 metre wall to our left was in full spate. We appreciated the advice we had been given!

A very early start was necessary to get our team across the most critical miles before the sun reached the peaks. So we struck camp at dawn and were on our way before 6 am. With ears that were attuned to falling stone we made our way across the boulder fields and over two avalanche cones to the head of the lake. By the time the sun was up we had covered the worst. We found a protected crater in the midst of big boulders and halted to rest our porters with cigarettes and glucose sweets. Over the moraine rising above the centre of the Rolwalling we watched the morning light change on the Dru-like granite peak of Chobomaree.

We found a way down to the glacier which was dirty and undulating. It was heavy going for the porters in the heat of the day. Finally we reached the huge amphitheatre where our glacier made a right angle turn to the north. The route ahead was blocked with the ice wall of Bigphera-Go-Shar (6729m) which curved round the ice slopes from the peak to the south. To our left was a rock wall going up to 5896m. The snout of the glacier leading to our pass poured down an unclimbable ice fall alongside this bare ridge. Over to the west a rocky ramp about 700 feet projected through the ice and offered a possible route on to the glacier and the leader of the Beding men said it was the best of the two possible routes.

So we found a comparatively safe spot, protected from stones and ice because of a shelter of house-sized boulders where we could camp. A platform of stones was levelled, the tents were soon up, and as we had supper at the tent door we watched the orange light of the setting sun climb up the ice wall ahead of us. It was a night broken by intermittent avalanches which seemed to roar down all round us.

Next morning we were away very early to cross our glacier at a discreet distance from the snout and reach our rock ramp. Everyone froze as a huge serac broke off and coasted down in a huge avalanche to our left. No-one moved or spoke as the ice spilled into the trough and then lost momentum as it climbed towards us.

Our rock ramp provided a difficult scramble of about 700 feet until we reached the edge of the glacier which towered about fifty feet above us. We found a weak spot in the wall. Crampons were put on and after a heavy burst of step cutting, fixed ropes were established. Despite their 80 lb. loads and the awkward bundle of firewood perched on top, all our porters were soon established on the main glacier.

It stretched ahead of us rising gently for nearly three miles. It was heavily crevassed and there were signs of avalanches from the peak on both sides. There was a maze-like problem to be solved in finding the best route and in avoiding the more ominously sagging snow bridges. We broke the day by a pleasant respite for lunch in the safety of a hollow in the debris on the median moraine. At about three in the afternoon we saw ahead in the ice cliffs to our right the notch that marked the pass.

We camped well out in the glacier. With a cold wind from the north, it was the coldest night we have ever experienced. Our boots froze solid. We broke camp when the first touch of sun caught the highest peak on the eastern ridge of our glacier. We chilled our fingers while fixing crampons and roped up for the ascent of about 1200 ft. Snow and ice conditions were perfect. The route curved into the part towards brown rock on the right. The middle section steepened and the porters needed deeper steps as they tugged upwards. We found a place to rest safely and watched the light spread over the tangle of peaks and glaciers leading to Menlungtse and Gauri Shankar.

We soon reached the col. There was the usual change of mind and then a few more steps in the ice and from 5755m, we looked down towards the Khumbu. The skyline was filled with peaks over 20,000 ft. To our left the ridge of Tengi-Ragi-Tau (6943m) blocked the view of Annapurna Dablam while on our right we were blinkered by the ridge leading to Kwongde. In the centre was Thamaserku with Kangtega to the left and about them all the peaks between them and the Hongu basin. The shining ice of the peaks shaded into the blue and brown haze of the Dudh Kosi valley and the ridge behind Namche Bazaar which was just hidden from view. While the porters dropped down out of the wind we took many photographs.

The steep descent was tackled carefully. An impossible ice fall in the centre of the glacier forced us to seek a route to the left which provided problems in the shape of snow falls. We needed both crampons and ropes to safeguard the porters before we eventually reached the grey moraine. There was a descent of about 3000 ft, towards two small glacial lakes - one a Swiss blue and the other a cold grey - until we reached an indifferent track that curved downhill to the left. We were now in the shadows and it was getting colder as we walked the last mile along an old moraine to Thangbo - a summer pasture of half a dozen fields with three stone huts. Tired though we all were it was a perfect evening. The reserves of firewood which we had been holding in case we were trapped by fresh snow were squandered on a splendid bonfire around which we had supper.

We thoroughly enjoyed the route and repeated it, with some extra climbs in 1975. Provided it is tackled with the right equipment and with reserves to withstand bad weather on the glacier, it is an enjoyable and adventurous way to the Khumbu for a party with sound mountaineering experience.

Relaxed in our sleeping bags we planned our route for the next fourteen days. Having got to Thangbo on schedule, we decided to go and spend two days at Khumbu with Pemba Norbu and then to recruit a team of new porters to cross the ridge behind Lukla to get into the Hinko valley and so over the Mera La to the Hongu. It was this expedition that lead us to climb Mera Peak in 1978. By that time we were both old age pensioners. But that climb is another story.

✓ Editors Note: Sir George Bishop needs no introduction to members of the Society. He is, at the time of going to press, President Elect and will be taking over as President from Mr. Arthur Kellas, CMG, at the Annual General Meeting on 8 November 1979. ✓

THE BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE OF THE HIMALAYAS

THE SOLU KHUMBU REGION

by

John Sanday, B.Arch, ARIBA

The main area that I will be covering will be the Solu Khumbu region, the area around Everest and the route that most trekkers and climbers take to reach the Everest base camp. I wonder how many of the thousands of people who use this trail realise that there are over thirty well established Buddhist monasteries and temples along the route.

My interest in the buildings of the Himalayas was prompted by the Nepalese Government's concern for recording the cultural heritage of the Northern regions of Nepal and as a result, with their support, I was able to get together a team of specialists to carry out a fairly detailed survey of all the buildings we could find as well as trying to establish the historical development in this area. On all the trips I was accompanied by Dr. Corneille Jest, one of the leading experts on the culture of the Himalayas and on occasions by Wolfgang Korn, my former assistant in the Hanuman Dhoka project. Between us we were able to carry out very detailed examinations of both the buildings and the culture in the Khumbu region for at least twenty-five different religious

settlements. In Helanbu which was our first tour we really established a methodology on a series of buildings that both architecturally and historically were of no great importance, but being a stronghold of the Sherpas it produced a lot of interesting and useful information. We are anticipating a trip to the Muktinath area in the near future.

The first Buddhist temple encountered on the Everest trail was Changma Lhakhang which is approximately one hundred years old, built three generations ago by a member of the Salaka clan. Today the building is in very poor state. On the interior it has paintings on panels which are very crude in form and which are painted by the father of the present owner, Pema Nyigma. The more interesting features of the site are the two chorten named after Baudha and Swayambhu, the two main Buddhist sites in Kathmandu, and to be seen as landmarks in the surrounding countryside. These are surrounded by a maze of Mani Walls. The Baudha Chorten was built only forty years ago; both were damaged by the 1934 earthquake. On the western side there are further chorten as well as a long Mani Wall.

The religious activities are not very important. On the third Tibetan month the monks from Thodung and three religious men from the village whitewash the temples and chortens which takes four days. For the festivals the whole community is involved, but the owner is responsible for the repairs. It is a typical example of a clan temple which had its height when the community was stronger and whose future is now uncertain.

Leaving Goli on the south of the trail and Bakanje (Sakar) on the north, where it was noted there are further village Lhakhangs, the settlement of Sete comprising four houses and one temple is reached after approximately three hours walk from the Likho Khola. The small group of buildings consisting of the Lhakhang, Mani Dongyur and the founders clan house is located on a small plateau on the southern slope of the Kenja Khola at the edge of the forest at an altitude of 2,600m. The forest is of pine and rhododendron. The location is very impressive though the forest is rapidly declining.

The establishment of Sete Lhakhang is estimated to be about one hundred years old and built by a family of the Tragdo clan though no definite information as to the date of construction is available. The small chorten below the temple was erected at the same time. The Mani Dongyur, which is a building of special importance, was constructed about fifty years ago by the same family. The 1934 earthquake caused severe damage to this building group and the temple was partly rebuilt after it. The chapel which is on the upper floor is very simple and unadorned with paintings and large statues. It is nonetheless a large room with four central pillars supporting the roof above. On the simple altar are a set of copper statues which are over eighty years old and probably date from the

founding of the temple. The only religious paintings are to be found in the Mani Dongyur which is unusually sited beyond the immediate vicinity of the temple. Those representing the Nyingmapa rituals are of fine quality.

Jumbesi is an important cultural settlement. It is located on the right bank of the Jumbesi Khola, at an altitude of 1,700m. Fields are scarce but there is rich pasture ground on the surrounding slopes. The approach to the valley of Jumbesi coming from Sete is of real beauty as one has to climb up to the 3,500m. Lamjuri peak through forests and pastures and then descend a side valley of Jumbesi through the village Trag. Jumbesi is an important religious centre as there are many shrines scattered throughout the Jumbesi valley including a school of religious nature and a large monastery called Samdencholing where there are 150 religious followers from Tibet and a number of examples of Tibetan texts.

The village Lhakang of Jumbesi is set in its own courtyard and is the result of a rebuilding after a fire forty-five years ago. In the fire all historic information disappeared. The former temple was a single storey building unlike its predecessor, which is two storeyed. The interior paintings are of poor artistic quality. The only remarkable piece is the main statue of Opame made of painted clay which at the western end of the temple occupies the two storeys in height. The upper storey is lined with a copy of the Kanjur and the Tanjur. This, the first courtyard building encountered on the trail, is used for ceremonies and religious dances, the buildings surrounding the courtyard being shelter for the spectators.

As an example of a family temple, the temple of the Lama clan in Jumbesi was selected. The complex consists of temple, private house, Mani Dongyur and associated buildings, located on a flat terrace 100m. above Jumbesi. Set around a paved courtyard, the temple is more than one hundred years old, possibly surviving the 1934 earthquake intact. The temple itself occupies the western side of the courtyard with, on the northern side, the domestic dwellings and opposite a further dwelling that backs onto the courtyard. At the southern end abutting the temple there is the Mani Dongyur and a single storey building. The courtyard is otherwise enclosed by a 2 metre wall. The entrance to this group is through a gate in the south-eastern corner of the courtyard. The Lhakhang, a two storey building set on a plinth, is of traditional design, with a simple pitched roof surmounted by a pinnacle. The main entrance to the chapel, on the upper floor, is from the east through an open porch and up a flight of stairs in the southern corner of the porch. The lower level is used for stabling cattle. The chapel occupies the full upper floor area with windows overlooking the courtyard.

This group of buildings which is an extremely fine example of a family temple belongs to Lama Durje. The chapel on the upper floor is richly decorated and

contains the Kanjur and Tanjur, several statues and a gold and bronze statue of Sakye Thuba of very fine quality. There is also in the living quarters some of the finest paintings and carvings of any private chapel.

About four hours walk beyond Jumbesi, located high above the Solu Kola, at an altitude of 3,500m. is the monastic settlement of Chiwong set on a craggy outcrop with magnificent views.

The monastery in present state was founded by a wealthy Sherpa, Lama Sangye, in 1923. He gave property which provides an annual support from its revenue, as well as cattle. The monastery is occupied by monks and nuns. The upper part contains the main temple, a religious school and the monks' dwellings and below the dividing wall, the Mani Lhakhang, a private temple, the lodgings for the nuns and a building recently constructed for Tibetan refugees. This settlement is well organised within an enclosing wall, an entrance gate and chorten with a central pathway leading to it.

The main temple of a size only comparable to that of Tangboche, is built in a rectangular shape, 10:20m. x 14:20m., with two storeys. An important large courtyard with verandahed galleries around it encloses the main facade. There is also around the main chapel an enclosed circumambulatory with prayer wheels and the 1,000 images of the 11 headed Buddha in clay. The assembly hall contains the Kanjur and Tangyur and several good murals. (For a detailed description see D. Snellgrove's *Buddhist Himalayas*, p.219 on seq). The upper floor contains three rooms, a chapel with mural panels containing a set of 36 Buddhas. The second room is the room of the fierce divinities where the dance masks are stored and a third room is where the head lama stays. A large balcony accessible for this floor opens onto the courtyard from where the lamas can watch the ceremonies. On the eastern side of the courtyard is a very large kitchen which is used during the main ceremonies.

Chiwong monastery at its peak had fifty monks. Today this number has dwindled to ten, and one has the impression that there is neither guidance nor interest and the foundation is in a very bad state. The religious school no longer functions and is in a pitiful state. About half of the monks' dwellings are in a collapsed state. The monks claim that they have no support from the benefactors or surrounding community. Chiwong not only needs technical and financial assistance from the communities and/or the project, but could become a nucleus of cultural interest to visitors insofar as the religious life is maintained.

The Lhakhang of Rimishung is reputedly one of the oldest settlements in the area, located to the left of the trail from Luwelha.

The temple was founded by Sama Sanga Dorje four hundred and seventy-five years ago and is called Pema Choling. This earlier Gompa was located more to the south of the existing one but was burned down during the war between Jung Bahadur Rana and the Tibetan armies. The present site was chosen afterwards according to the following tradition: 'A Tibetan soldier is said to have stolen one of the

statues from the temple and was returning to Tibet with it. Not far from Tingri the statue became very heavy and he was unable to carry it. The sky darkened and there was a heavy hailstorm during which the statue spoke to its bearer requesting that it be returned to its original site where there was a tree with white leaves. The Tibetan obeyed and thus the new site was established. The tree with the white leaves still survives on the western side of the temple.

The present temple is of simple structure and underwent major renovation in 1976, though it has not yet been completely redecorated. The altar on the southern side contains statues of Guru Dragpo, Guru Rimpoche and Sangedongma. A few religious texts, Yum and Dorje Dijsha, are in racks on the western side of the altar.

Above Nawoche to the north west, in the river valley of the Bhote Kosi along with Thame, one of the highest permanent settlements is found. It was and still is, a very important trading route linking the Solu Khumbu region with Tingri in Tibet. The Thame Gompa is situated at an altitude of 4,000 - 13,000 m. in a small valley overlooking the Thame Kola. The monastic settlement is situated on a south east facing rock faced about 200m. above the village settlement of Thame. The monastic group consists of about twenty dwellings situated to the west of the main temple built into the side of the cliff, the temple which from the north is protected by a cave, is free standing and beyond it to the east there are a few small dwellings. The views that this site commands are exceptional overlooking the moraine from the Tasi Lapcha to the Khumbu Yula and the Kantega. The settlement is located just below the tree level and birch, juniper and rhodedendron just manage to grow at this level.

According to the Sherpa tradition Pangboche Thame and Rimijung are the oldest settlements of the Everest region. The monastery of Thame, called Dechenchokor, was built five generations ago by a lama from Tibet. The present lama, aged 15 and born in Rolwaling, is named Sheltrup Tempe Gelgson and he is the incarnation of lama Tondrup. The settlement itself is arranged around the main temple and courtyard. The main temple, which is rectangular in shape, is laid out in the traditional manner with four pillars and contains the Kangyur flanking the altars on the northern wall with the statues of Chirenze, Opame and Guru Rimpoche on the northern walls. The western wall is lined with the Tangyur and the statue of Ston-pa is centrally placed in a small alcove. The southern wall containing the only windows has paintings on wooden panels representing the following divinities; Drolma, Guru Rimpoche, Phurwa. The eastern side with the entrance has further painted panels. The first floor is the private chapel and dwelling of the lama. Today in 1977 twenty monks, including one teacher, live in the community and they come mainly from the Thame valley and Rolwaling. They belong to the Nyingmapa sect and they

follow the Mindroling monastic rule. The benefactors are the villagers of Thame and also tourists who make a considerable donation to the upkeep of the buildings.

Beyond Thame and just across the Nepalese border in nomansland is the Gompa of Kirog. The temple whose religious name is Sanga Choling, is a village temple situated within its own settlement of seven houses, one of which belonging to the lama is attached to the temple complex. The temple is set within its own courtyard, facing east, and is flanked on the south by a Mani Dongyur and the keeper's house. On the northern side there is the lama's dwelling and an extension used as a meditation room by the lama and finally a communal kitchen. The temple itself is raised above the courtyard. It was enlarged to its present size about twenty years ago. The extension took place to the west and part of the cliff was cut away and a further two pillars were added making four. The original two were repaired and re-used in the roof. The interior of the chapel is partly panelled. On the southern side there are three statues, Opame, Janak Dorje and Dorje Sempa, which are flanked on both sides by racks containing volumes of the Kangyur. The northern side contains a few painted panels representing the union of the precious ones, Guru Drakmar and Drolma. The eastern wall is plain. The roof space is full of books and printing blocks. The existing roof is described by the locals as a 'Tibetan roof' because of its flat construction though this is not entirely correct. The Mani Dongyur was constructed 108 years ago and the paintings on wooden panels, though partly destroyed, are of interest. Running clockwise from the door the following are represented: Tsepame, Kuntung, Tsambo, Marmeje, Champa, Chirenze, Opame and Guru Rimpoche. Behind the temple and just below the cliff there is a small sanctuary where printed prayer flags are offered twice a year. The founder of the temple was Ralwa Dorje estimated at four hundred and twenty generations ago. Three hundred and thirty generations ago the building was destroyed completely by fire. One day a girl collecting wood discovered just above the former location of the temple, a bronze statue of Guru Rimpoche, which was intact and which is believed to have 'flown' from the former site during the fire. The villagers therefore decided to build a new temple, the existing one, on this site. The present lama, Lanca Tensing, belongs to the Nyingmapa order, is married and his son is also trained as a lama. There are also eleven other members trained in religious practices.

In the heart of the Sherpa area is the splendid Lhakhang of Kumjung. The temple's date of construction could not be ascertained. In 1965 however, repairs and alterations were carried out including the recovering of the roof in tin sheeting and the enlarging of the central window above the entrance porch. Further renovation work was carried out to the forecourt of the temple which was completed in 1973. This did not include the common kitchen and caretaker's quarters which have yet to be repaired. The main hall of the temple is of larger proportion than is common and is simply decorated. On the southern and northern walls there are racks containing the Tangyur (225 volumes) and part of the 108 volumes of the Kangyur. On the western wall there are large statues of Chirenze, Opame, Jamang,

Chanak, Dorje and Guru Rimpoche, and the remainder of the Kangyur. In the north west corner there is a very large statue of Champa. A few thankas are fixed to the pillars.

Perhaps the most renowned of all the Buddhist monastery settlements in the Nepalese Himalayas is the monastery of Tangboche. It is located in a fine position on its own hill at an altitude of 3,800 m. between the Imju Kola and the Dudh Kosi on the main trail to Everest. The temple was founded by Lama Guluk in 1923 and was rebuilt after it collapsed in the earthquake of 1934. It is preceded by a two-tiered arcaded building forming a courtyard which was rebuilt two years ago, replacing a former dilapidated structure. The entrance porch, which is partly masked with a curtain made of yak hair, contains on the southern side the imprints of lama Sanja Dorje's hands and feet in a rock. (It is said that he flew from here to Pangboche by his magic powers.) The walls are pannelled and decorated with, on the south wall, the wheel of life, the guard of the four orientes and the Potala. On the ceiling over the main entrance the mandala of Kuntungzangpo and over the door the heads of seven snowlions. The assembly hall of fine proportions, one of the largest visited, is square and set out on a four pillar grid. The main altar is on the western wall and contains the statues of Champa, Chirenze and Guru Rimpoche; to the south of the altar a rack containing the Kangyur and to the north the Yum. On the north wall centrally placed, a statue of Champa and to the west, the volumes of the Nyingmabum and Guurbum and on the east those of the Tangyur. On the eastern wall on both sides of the entrance there are paintings on wooden panels representing a set of Buddhas and the Shrongons of the finest quality. On the southern wall, which contains three windows, there are, in the following order from left to right: Stonpa, Chirenze, Stonpa and Heruka. The general standard of painting and carving, particularly of the pillars and beams, is of the finest quality. A set of very beautiful thankas are hanging from the western beam in front of the altar. Upstairs on the western wall of the Sersong chapel there is a rack of biographical books on lamas followed by gilded statues of Tsepame, Guru Rimpoche, Kyejhokpawa, Chirenze, Chugdor and then follows a text of the Rinchenterdzo. On the northern side there is the statue of lama Ngawang Tensing Sangbo, a silver Chorten inlaid with gold, turquoise and coral, which contains the remains of lama Guluk with a statue of the same lama standing alongside. The eastern and southern walls are covered with painted panels representing Dorjechang, Kuntung Zamgbo and Dorje Sempa. The last of the rooms, the Shongkang, containing the fierce divinities, was not entered. Sixteen monks led by lama Ngawang Tensing Norbu Sangbo, a Sherpa born in Namche from the monastic community, and they follow the monastic rule of Mindroling of the Nyingmapa order.

From Tangboche the trail runs almost due north along the Imja Kola amidst a forest of Juniper and Rhododendron. As one approaches Pangboche the intensity of an accumulation of religious expression is demonstrated in the increasing number of Chorten, Mani walls, carved rocks and prayer flags. The village is divided into two groups of houses, the lower at 3,900m. and the upper at 13,000 m. The settlement is orientated to the east and is shaped like a conch shell. Below

the temple there is a series of terraced fields down to the river. The houses are built along contour lines flanking the temple but not beneath it. According to tradition Pangboche was founded by Lama Sanga Dorje, and was at the beginning a monastic settlement with six or seven religious dwellings. It was only afterwards that it became an agricultural settlement. The village consists now of sixty houses. Above the village, at about 200 m., there are six hermitages facing south just under the Tawoche peak, the protective divinity of Pangboche.

The cultural and religious history of Pangboche needs to be related to the life of Lama Sanga Dorje who is said to have been the person responsible for the spread of the Buddhist religion in the Khumbu region. Pangboche is always related in its development with the settlements of Thame, Rimijung and Kirog. The presence of Lama Sanga Dorje is once again manifested by the imprints of his hands and feet and religious implements in rocks on the way up to Pangboche. The temple named Sanga Choling was built many generations ago although no specific date is available. It follows the typical pattern with a courtyard fronting the temple with an open entrance porch. The porch is panelled and decorated with the wheel of life, the guardians of the four quarters and the Potala. In the chapel, laid out in the traditional manner, the altar, on the western wall, contains a statue of Guru Rimpoche, flanked on both sides by racks of the Kangyur. The remaining walls are decorated with painted panels of the divinities of the Nyingmapa order. In the upper chapel the walls are again panelled. On the northern side statues of Guru Rimpoche, Tsepame, and two statues of Phortse as well as statues of Lama Pangboche and Umse. There are racks of religious texts such as the Dorje Chorpa also to be found in this room. The paintings were completed seven years ago by a sherpa from Namche Bazaar. The lantern itself contains panels painted about thirty years ago. The chapel would not be complete without mentioning the Yeti skull and hand, and other religious manifestations. The temple is flanked on either side by Mani Dongyur and decorated internally with painted panels.

The village of Dingboche has no religious buildings other than two large Chorten and Mani walls at its entrance. Above the village, at an altitude of 4,600m. and facing south-east there are three groups of religious dwellings mostly hermitages, the major group being at an altitude of 4,520 m. This group is referred to as Namkartsang. The main group is sheltered under a rock and contains three different buildings, one of which is a small simple chapel (3:20 m x 4:20 m) containing a few texts and a thanka. The two other buildings are simple lodgings. These settlements are used for meditation and at present two monks from Tangboche are living there for one month. The cave used to be the meditation cave of Lama Sanga Dorje.

The Buddhist culture and architecture of the Himalayas is a subject that cannot be summarised in such a short space of time, because its scope is so vast. I have attempted in this short paper to outline the cultural activities of one of

the most popular trekking areas in Nepal. I hope it may therefore serve as a stimulus to those who are venturing for the first time into this fascinating area and that they will seek out, rather as we did, the hidden culture and customs; for those who have already visited this region and who perhaps overlooked the cultural aspects, it may serve as an excuse for them to return to Solu Khumbu or maybe to another area and seek out this new dimension in trekking.

The reasons for our surveys throughout the Northern Regions are several. Of course the main reason is for recording a culture that may, through force of circumstances, disappear; to make some assessment of the condition of the buildings, their use and importance; however one of the main reasons is that we are trying to promote an interest in this culture as it is felt that it is one way of ensuring its future. By its promotion, we feel that the religious fervour could be stimulated and that monks and novices would be encouraged to return once again to some of the more important monasteries which would breathe new life and purpose into them. These religious buildings never would, nor should survive without religious motivation. In practice it will be difficult to create this stimulus; UNESCO has however started by adopting the Northern Regions Cultural Heritage Programme and the first move of recording the buildings, customs and culture is now under way. Hopefully, this will lead to a greater awareness by the general public, both in Nepal and abroad, of this unique culture.

∟ Editor's Note: Members who enjoyed the BBC 2 "World About Us" programme in which John Sanday told Christopher Matthew about his task in Kathmandu will know what has been occupying him there during the last few years - even if they missed his talks to the Society and did not read his article in the first issue of our Journal. To quote from the Radio Times of 5-11 May 1979: "When in 1970 it was first mooted that 27 year-old conservation architect John Sanday should fly out to Nepal and make an inventory of all the historic buildings in the Kathmandu Valley on behalf of UNESCO, he knew so little about the place that he had to look it up in an atlas." His most daunting task was the restoration of the old royal palace (the Hanuman Dhoka) in time for the coronation of King Birendra. Since then he has become an authority on the architecture and crafts of the Valley - and, as the above article shows, not only of the Valley. Recently he has been totally committed to the important work of stabilising the Swayambhu landslide. ∟

JOURNEY TO KHEMBALUNG - A LOST VALLEY OF THE BUDDHISTS

by

Dr. Elizabeth Rogers

[Elizabeth Rogers is a Lecturer in the Zoology Department at Edinburgh University. She came there after obtaining a Zoology degree at Oxford, a doctorate at Yale University, and after some research work in Italy. Although her research has to do with the biology of cells, she has always been a field biologist at heart, and siezes any available opportunity to go and look at animals and plants in the wild. On this expedition, one of her commissions was to find out about certain aspects of the breeding of yaks in Nepal - and this led to several interesting discussions with farmers both in the Chhoyang valley and elsewhere.]

Our expedition to East Nepal in October 1977 had all the ingredients of classical adventure - exploration of unknown territory, difficult and dangerous terrain, Buddhist legends, and mythical beasts. The party brought together for the trip consisted of climbers, biologists, a doctor, an anthropologist, and a film crew whose task it was to make a documentary film for BBC Scotland of our journey and ourselves (see footnote for names of expedition members).

The route originally planned was to traverse from the Arun River valley in the east to the Dudh Khosi valley in the west, passing to the south of the Iswa glacier and the Chamlang massif, emerging either over the Mera La to Lukhla or over the Amphu Labtsa pass to the south of Nuptse. We knew that the area we were to traverse was thought by many to be the most spectacular in the whole Himalayan range, characterised as it is by densely forested precipitous gorges descending from magnificent peaks like Chamlang (24,006 ft) and Makalu (27,790 ft). We also knew that no one was known to have got out of any of the valleys we were to traverse by their respective gorges, and that the two passes at the western end of our route were prone to blockage by snow. But explorers are not supposed to be daunted by such obstacles as blocked passes or impenetrable valleys - indeed they habitually head for such things, and so did we.

One of the valleys on our route, called the Chhoyang, was of particular interest to us. We had reason to believe that it was associated with an ancient Buddhist legend involving the famous Guru Rimpoche (Padmasambhava), who established Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century A.D. Through conversations with the Rimpoche of Tengpoche monastery in Solu Khumbu and with anthropologists, we knew that the Chhoyang might be the site of one of the beyul or lost valleys established when Guru Rimpoche was alive. This valley was called Khembalung, and the old texts described it as having four ways into it, which seemed to

intersect in the Chhoyang. The texts also gave many signs by which the valley might be recognised, and by which people might know when to go there and how to attain it (see second footnote). To westerners whose concept of Shrang-La has developed mostly by way of Hollywood out of James Hilton's book "The Lost Horizon", it may come as a surprise to hear that the beyul are part of an ancient Tibetan tradition. It is thought that whilst travelling in the Himalaya, Guru Rimpoche established several beyul - possibly as many as twenty, from Western Nepal into Sikkim and Bhutan. It is believed that these hidden valleys will serve as refuges for Buddhist doctrine and its followers in times of danger and war, but that they may not be revealed as such until Buddhism is so threatened. Khembalung is relatively well known among Buddhists from its legend, but its location is not familiar to people outside its immediate neighbourhood, and even there it seems that several places are associated with the name of Khembalung. It was not marked on any of our maps.

So it was that when we left Kathmandu in October 1977, we had decided to try and locate Khembalung up the Chhoyang valley, but we did not know then even whether it was associated with a particular place, or whether there was anything to see which would give visual evidence of its important place in Buddhist legend. Mike Cheney, of Sherpa Co-Operative in Kathmandu, had arranged for some people from neighbouring valleys to accompany us as porters. We were to meet them at Dharan where our journey was to start. There we went, armed with some primitive copies of the Survey of India one-inch maps covering the Chhoyang and Iswa valleys and showing by their contour lines that getting up either would be a major task.

With porters and food we walked in through magnificent country from Dharan to Tumlingtar, using the well-established trails through Dhankuta and Hile. We caught our first tantalising views of Chamlang and Makalu, some sixty miles away across innumerable intervening ranges. At Tumlingtar we waited for some BBC film gear that was held up in Calcutta to catch us up, since otherwise we could not shoot our documentary. During this time we were able to talk with our porters from the remote valleys we were aiming for. One evening, round the camp fire, Joe Reinhard, our anthropologist who spoke Nepali, found that one of our porters knew the Chhoyang valley. As we sat there impatiently waiting for Joe to translate, a fascinating story unfolded to us, which suddenly meant that our journey was no longer towards something vague and indefinable, but had a definite goal - a sacred cave and a village called Khembalung. There was a cave through which people could walk, and a Lama who went there and performed rituals. Also there was an animal called a chu-ti, four-legged and cat-like, that lived above the village near a lake.

If only we had had film then to record the intentness and excitement round that camp fire! All our Sherpas and many of the porters joined in as it became obvious that an adventure was brewing. The big question was: how to get to the Chhoyang? Which side of the Arun river should we go? Where were there

bridges? Would they have been washed away in the monsoon? Would the climbers have to establish a route up the gorge first, or could we approach from the ridge above? We eventually decided to make a considerable detour up the east side of the Arun to the only bridge known to be in working order, and to approach the Chhoyang from the east, not up its gorge. Once our film gear had reached us we did this, walking via Khandbari where a Tibetan traveller confirmed our porter's tales of a sacred cave at Khembalung, and along the ridge above the Arun to Num. From this ridge, we could see over into the Chhoyang valley - a view which fully confirmed its steep and densely wooded character. Not long after leaving Khandbari, we got into the cloud belt that hangs like a cummerbund between about six and thirteen thousand feet in that area. We left the warm cultivated foothills, and entered the wet forest which we were not to leave until we emerged onto the snows near the head of the Chhoyang twelve days later.

After descending a precipitous and slippery path down the side of the Arun gorge below Num, we crossed the raging green waters of the Arun on a swaying bridge, and immediately climbed again for thousands of feet to a wet and cloudy campsite at Sedua, a tiny remote Sherpa village. There we met Norbu Lama, in whose house was an ancient Tibetan text about Khembalung. Hearing that we wanted to go there, Norbu Lama offered to accompany us, and also told us much more of the sacred cave as he sat below a tanka depicting Guru Rimpoche in his various manifestations, one of which had him with a chu-ti. The chu-ti, we heard, lives by a lake above the cave. It is neither a tiger nor a leopard. Sinners inevitably take a difficult route to the cave and end up in the lake. Non-sinners find it easy to reach and go through the cave, thereby gaining merit and perhaps having wishes granted.

With Norbu Lama we climbed up over the ridge above the Iswa Khola (river), descending and crossed the river over a bridge which precariously spanned the gorge. As I reached the far bank, a cross beam gave way and the river a hundred feet below seemed all too close in the split second before a porter's helping hand heaved me onto firm ground. Crossing the Chhoyang river was even more problematical. It had no bridge at all. In fact, just getting to its banks involved hacking a trail through dense subtropical forest, and camping on the only piece of level ground for miles around, which also just happened to be covered with nine-foot stinging 'nettles'. Slithering down the sides of the gorge might have involved using climbing ropes had there not been trees to grab. We built a bridge out of tree trunks and ropes, crossed, and climbed a few hundred feet up the other side to the village of Khembalung itself, lying in a clearing on the other side of the hill.

The village consisted of the homes of just two families of Sherpas, whose antecedents had come over from Solu Khumbu (near Everest) a few generations before. One man was a farmer who had a thriving herd of yak-cattle hybrids,

and a magnificent pure-bred yak bull which he had walked over the lowland trails from Namche Bazaar - a walk of perhaps two or three weeks. We found that another tiny settlement above the village was also included in the general designation "Khembalung", which seemed to include the whole valley and its cave. Two lamas lived in the higher village, called Dobatak, and it was to their houses that we went to assemble for our ceremony in the sacred cave. One of the lamas, Lakpa Gelu, was unfortunately away, but the other, Da Tshering, and many of the local people came with us to the cave.

The cave lies about 1300 feet above the Chhoyang river, at an overall height above sea level of about 7250 feet. Just before we got there, the path passed beneath an overhang with Tibetan inscriptions on the rock. There we took off our shoes, then crossed a sacred stream which ran down the hillside beside the cave entrance. It is important to touch the water here before entering the cave. Prayer flags mark the entrance, which is otherwise hidden behind dense undergrowth, trees and lianas. Inside is a level area where about twenty people can gather before the altar. This is a shelf in the rock, where there are further Tibetan inscriptions. After placing butter lamps and offerings, as well as sprigs of juniper and Artemisia upon the altar, Norbu Lama and Da Tshering performed a ritual, using traditional instruments and chanting prayers. Sacred texts, one containing prayers to Guru Rimpoche, and one about Khembalung were opened upon the altar. After the ceremony, which was dedicated to Guru Rimpoche, we descended into the cave down a passage through limestone rock. Here it is said that sinners will be trapped no matter how thin they are, while others complete their passage and emerge further down the hill. Many of us did this, following the flaming torches of the villagers.

And so we had seen Khembalung, a hidden valley of the Buddhists. Or had we? Although most people we talked to thought that Khembalung was only to be found in the Chhoyang valley, some said there were other sacred places in the Barun and Iswa valleys which were also called Khembalung. Perhaps only in a time of great need for Buddhism and its followers will the true Khembalung be revealed.

Meanwhile, we left this peaceful place, invisible to the outside world as it is, veiled in clouds and hidden behind the meanderings of the Chhoyang's steep gorge. We went on up through bamboo and rhododendron into the snows at the foot of Chamlang, and so, eventually, back to civilisation. But that is another story.

Footnote 1: The expedition members were Hamish MacInnes, Joe Brown, Cynthia Williamson, Yvon Chouinard, Peter Hackett, John Reinhard, Adolphe de Spoelberch, Robin Chalmers, Gordon Forsyth, Andrew Dunn and Elizabeth Rogers. Our Sirdar was Norbu Sherpa from Namche Bazaar, and our Liaison Officer was Bal Krishna Sharma of Kathmandu.

Footnote 2: A paper on Khembalung accompanied by a translation of two Tibetan texts about it has been published by Johan Reinhard, the anthropologist on our expedition. It appears in Kailash, a Journal of Himalayan Studies, vol. VI, No. 1 (1978). Kailash is published in Kathmandu.

THE NEPAL OF THE PAST

by

Kenneth C. Keymer

Now you can go to Nepal by package tour; my theme of earlier times is summarised by this good thumb-nail sketch in a travel brochure: "This unspoiled kingdom, virtually inaccessible by land, and forbidden to foreigners until a few years ago, developed its own picturesque civilisation isolated from the rest of the world." Percival Landon's "Nepal" (1928) records about 150 European visitors during the 44 years before 1925 - different indeed from the numbers since 1951 with the opening of the country and the facility of air travel.

Where I make this a personal account, that is not for self-advertisement but to bring to life to a past period and to our special connection with Nepal. Our family business was an East India Merchant House, and in 1898 we were appointed Agent in London for the Maharaja and Government of Nepal. I have a handwritten letter of 30 August 1898 from General Deb Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana, the Commander-in-Chief, regarding early orders and enquiries. (I give the full designation of the Rana family, dropping it hereafter for brevity.) General Deva was then the Maharaja; General Chandra followed in 1901 and his good rule continued until his death in 1928.

Maharaja Chandra was officially invited to Britain in 1908; my father went to Paris to meet the party and he and our office gave them every assistance during the visit. This was the start of a special friendship between Maharaja Chandra and my father and our family, soon leading to an invitation to my father to visit Nepal in 1912. Later, when I had grown up in the business, I was invited in 1931, 1938, 1947 and 1951. It is interesting that these visits covered all the Maharajas from General Chandra onwards - Maharajas Bhim, Joodha, Padma and Mohun.

Also on each visit I had the privilege of meeting H.M. the King, Tribhuban Bir Bikram Shah. Ours was certainly a close association spanning fifty-three years.

This developed in accord - a fascinating association with a romance that can hardly be found in the world of today. Nepal's first hydro-electric power station at Pharping was initiated in Maharaja Chandra's visit and started about 1909. A letter of 21 June 1912 from my father to Maharaja Chandra is of special interest. It opens: "When I had the pleasure of seeing you in Nepal, you were good enough to discuss with me the methods of transport into Nepal; and I made the suggestion possibly a ropeway might prove the best method. . . ." Also: "I wish your Highness would consider the question of a light railway from Ruksal to the point where the aerial ropeway would join. . . ." The War delayed these projects; the ropeway came in 1923, the railway about 1928 and was one of the few major schemes that we did not handle.

The progress included waterworks, telephone system, various factories and later the second hydro-electric plant and extension of the ropeway. There was also much diversity - statues, paintings, furnishings and general requirements. Of particular interest were the many consultations. Most fascinating of all were the weekly mails; rarely did one leave without a long letter to the Maharaja on personal interests, local and international affairs and works in hand or envisaged. The Maharaja responded as regularly and in a similar way.

In assessing the Nepal of the past we must try to avoid two attitudes that are prevalent today. Firstly denigration, particularly of the past and without regard for the circumstances of the times; this is a ready and often poor form of achieving popular writing. Secondly, selective or double-standards; little concern is shown for what is happening in, say, Vietnam and elsewhere. Russia moves into Angola and the Horn of Africa - there is rarely a protest. Recently Afghanistan was virtually taken over; most of us can recall the earlier times when there was a great sensitivity about the North West Frontier - now this act seems hardly to have been noticed by the West, though Lord Alport ('Times' 13.9.78) wrote of the alarm bells ringing in Asia. Yet on the other hand we are off like a pack of wolves after Rhodesia and South Africa.

By these attitudes the Rana regime has had its full share of denigration. Yes, they were autocrats, but they were benevolent ones and patriots who had Nepal at heart and, remembering the mediaeval surroundings, contributed much to the wellbeing of their country. Yes, too, they were the handlers of the exchequer and had a benefit out of it - but what about various leaders and politicians in the world today?

The Ranas were people of considerable education and width of view. Maharaja Chandra abolished slavery in Nepal. He established the Tri-Chandra College.

For the Great War he instantly put the Gurkhas at the Allies' side, and in 1915 gave 21 machine guns which my father presented to H.M. King George VI on his behalf. Many material benefits came to Nepal during his and his successors' rule; no doubt more could have been done, but remember the era and the problems.

In a letter of 20 July 1947 to me from Maharaja Padma, after expressing his pleasure that Commanding General Kaiser was presenting his credentials as Nepal's first Ambassador at our Court, he wrote: "You will be interested to know that I have set up a Reforms Committee to prepare a constitutional scheme for our country. The committee has already prepared an outline and is hard at work preparing the details. I am eagerly looking forward to the day when I shall be having the very great pleasure of announcing a new constitution for our country." The needs were fully in mind but things moved too fast after the last war, just as they moved too fast for Britain in many matters.

Seemingly there has been a wish to pull a veil over the Nepal of the past; instead, I submit that Nepal can look back to a heritage that compares favourably with much that is happening in the world today.

We come to the slides; they are before the days of colour, and the 'magic lantern' to show them is also of the past - this leaflet tells of its use by my father in 1889. My commentary for each slide is abbreviated into the following synopsis for this printed report.

We go along the old journey which I did three times, including my wife in 1938, starting on, say, a Monday evening by train from Calcutta and arriving in Kathmandu on Thursday afternoon - the early morning change at Mokemmeh Ghat to cross the Ganges, and the day-long slow railway journey until evening arrival at Raxaul and a night in the rest house. As we are guests of the Maharaja a senior Nepalese meets us there, and so to the nearby Nepal Government Railway which in some four hours winds up the 25 miles from the Terai to Amlekhgang; thence a change to a car or mail-bus for the next 25 miles of 'Scottish Highland' type of country to Bhimphedi at 3000 ft. There was no road or railway in my father's time; Maharaja Chandra arranged for three elephants to carry his baggage and, in view of the malarial area, desired him to go quickly through so he left Raxaul at 6 a.m. in a doolie chair and was carried almost continuously until arrival at Bhimphedi at 4. am. - 22 hours.

Bhimphedi was the start of the main and final section, and the slide shows the group of porters collecting our baggage, and the ponies. We climb steeply and steadily the 2850 feet to Sisagarhi - a slide shows the only road, a track rougher than that up Ben Nevis. The Sisagarhi rest house was always a great

pleasure, with its wood fire and - utter surprise on the first occasion - an English tea lying ready and kindly sent out with a servant by Roy and Bob Kilburne. It is cool outside, amid lovely scenery, and southwards the hills roll down to the Indian plain.

We have come to Thursday morning - an early start, first up a few hundred feet to the Pass with its fine view of the Kuli Kana Valley and, if lucky about clouds, to the great backcloth of the Himalayan peaks. Here, too, one meets the ropeway; this was designed in our office and I have the list of the 160 or more special drawings - a ropeway of monocable type, 14 miles long over this mountainous section of the route, in eight sections or loops. One picture shows the start of a 2573 ft. span over a valley.

We wind down into the Kuli Kana Valley and so along it for most of the morning with Chandragiri looming higher and higher ahead. After a picnic lunch we climb it to 7400 ft. and achieve the astounding view of the Valley of Kathmandu lying some 3000 ft. below. There, as the bottom of an old lake and some twenty by thirteen miles in size, lies the amphitheatre of our story and again, if one is lucky, with such a magnificent backcloth. There are the three cities of Kathmandu, Bhatgoan and Patan and the subsidiary Kirtipur with their wealth of temples and shrines. One's imagination is stirred by the fact that in 1480 a Malla king bequeathed these three cities separately to his progeny; thus within the confines of the Valley there were three principalities, often warring together. We move on, zigzagging down from Chandragiri to Thankot in the Valley, and so on to Kathmandu by car, usually in time for tea.

Here, at Gaucher which became Kathmandu Airport, we landed in 1951. The old romantic journey was replaced by two hours of flying from Calcutta - convenient, but no longer did the achieving of Kathmandu have the build-up of those travels.

This is a picture of the lovely and memorable architecture of Kathmandu Durbar Square; the architecture of the Newars. In 1768 Prithvi Narayan, King of Gorka to the west of Nepal, expanded eastwards and captured the Valley - thus the entry of the Gurkhas.

Here is pictured an occasion in the King's Durbar Hall in 1938, with His Majesty on the throne and the Nobles along this side. One's mind runs backwards; if there had been a Shakespeare to write the tragedies of Nepal he would have found as much fascinating material as he did in Britain. Nearby outside, the Kot Massacre took place in 1846, initiated by Queen Lakshmi Devi. Jung Bahadur quelled it with a section of the army and was promptly made Prime Minister, but the Queen's intrigues continued so he banished her to Benares and took over all powers as Supreme Commander-in-Chief. He was a man of great courage and character; he initiated the Rana line and gave Nepal thirty years of notably good rule. Officially invited to England in 1850, he was lionised by the public,

and was much liked by Queen Victoria. He helped the British at the time of the Mutiny. For those who criticise him and his beginnings, I suggest that there is a parallel in Kenyatta a hundred years later; he rose from the horrors of Mau Mau, gave Kenya a comparable period of good rule, and has been much venerated as a statesman.

Other slides show the panorama of the Valley - Kal Bhairub and the House of Wood, street scenes and the cheerful interested crowds when we went shopping, terraced fields, Patan founded by the Emperor Asoka about 250 BC, the pagoda-like temple in Bhatgoan, quiet Kirtipur village, and Pushpatinath (Shiva) the 'Benares' of Nepal.

This picture brings memories for many of us - the tree and saluting base on the Maidan (Tundi Khel) where many parades and events took place; this one is the Gauri Jatra festival of 1938 and shows H. M. The King, Maharaja Joodha and Colonel Bailey, the British Minister. The slide showing Roy and Bob Kilburne recalls that he was appointed Chief Engineer to the Nepal Government in 1928 and was remarkably versatile and able in all that he did for the ropeway, the power stations and other engineering projects, and was sadly missed on his early death in 1952. Two slides give an impression of the power station work - an article in an engineering journal of New York in 1965 said that thanks to an Aid project America was supplying a power station which would bring electricity to Kathmandu for the first time. I wrote to that journal saying that if they visited the office in London they could see the specification of the Pharping station of 1909, built by Nepal so long before the advent of any such external Aid; you will share my appreciation that they printed my letter.

Finally we visit the two particularly notable Buddhist stupas. Firstly Shimbu Nath by climbing its hill that was sacred even in Asoka's time, and then Bodh Nath lying in the fields of the Valley and with its eyes gazing out over so much of Nepal's history.

This is not the opportunity to study the whole development of Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal, yet it can be briefly summarised. Nepal, like India, was Hindu and was largely converted to Buddhism, but people wanted more colour in life and turned again, though rather differently. In India the re-conversion was to full Hinduism, helped by Buddha having been made an eighth incarnation of Vishnu, but in Nepal there was a considerable degree of integration. Then in the thirteenth century the Moslem invasions of India led to desecration of the temples, but those waves broke against the Himalayan walls. So Kathmandu stands as a living museum of the middle ages and earlier; a museum of religion and architecture that have grown, and have been preserved, in this unique way. I like the description "The Restful and the Restless" in Percy Brown's "Picturesque Nepal". Here are two thankas which I bought from the Chini Lama at Bodh Nath in 1931 - the Restless is well depicted by Shiva, and the Restful in this serene Buddha.

BRITISH AID TO NEPAL

by

W. T. Birrell

Aid in General

There are a number of reasons why the British Government spends taxpayers' money on aid to developing countries. The political reason for giving aid is not the crude one of hoping to buy friends and influence people. It is simply that it is a cardinal feature of our foreign policy to encourage economic, political and social stability throughout the world and we think that this is less likely to be attained while large parts of the world's population are living in abject poverty.

The total British Government aid disbursements in net terms in the year 1977 (the last year for which officially published statistics are available) was £524m.

The orthodox international method for measuring an aid donor country's performance is to express it as a percentage of the country's gross national product, in other words to show what proportion of its total annually generated wealth is given to developing countries. In 1977 the United Kingdom's percentage was 0.38%. The average percentage of member countries of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD - 0.31% of gross national product.

Aid to Nepal

Total British Government disbursements on aid to Nepal in the financial year ended 31 March 1979 were about £6m. It is always difficult to forecast future disbursements but the disbursements in the current financial year ending 31 March 1980 will be considerably higher.

It is interesting to compare the amount of British Government aid given to Nepal with that given to some neighbouring countries. Of course the amount of aid in absolute terms given to such countries as India and Bangladesh is considerably higher than that given to Nepal but then the populations of India and Bangladesh are considerably higher than the population of Nepal. The following figures indicate the amount of aid per head of the population given to the various countries in 1977:

Nepal	-	£0.32	per head of population
Bangladesh	-	£0.27	" " " "
Sri Lanka	-	£0.21	" " " "
Pakistan	-	£0.20	" " " "
Afghanistan	-	£0.12	" " " "
India	-	£0.10	" " " "

No official figures are yet available for 1978 but the total disbursements of aid for Nepal in 1978 was higher than in 1977.

Of the various British aid experts currently working in Nepal there are 32 technical co-operation officers, 21 VSO volunteers and 32 staff from the Property Services Agency and related consultant engineers working on the construction of the road from Dharan to Dhankuta.

On-Going Capital Aid Projects

Dharan/Dhankuta Road: The main highway for Nepal is the East-West Highway running the length of the Terai. This Highway is nearly completed by various aid donors - the Russians, the Indians, the Americans, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and ourselves. His Majesty's Government of Nepal decided that it should have a number of roads running from the East-West Highway into the Hills and requested the British Government to construct the road from Dharan to Dhankuta which had been designated as the capital of the Eastern development region. There would thus be a road running from Jogbani on the Indian border through Biratnagar and Itahara on the East-West Highway and Dharan, all the way up to Dhankuta. The Property Services Agency are building this road on behalf of ODA at an estimated cost of £15m out of our aid funds. They are employing labour intensive methods. Work started at the beginning of 1977 and is estimated to take about five years. It is a daunting task through difficult terrain but the Property Services Agency have made a good start and are well up to schedule.

Grain Store Warehouses: The Nepal Food Corporation are charged with the task of buying and selling grains including subsidised sales to the poorer villages in the Hills. One of their problems has been that of storage as a result of which the British Government agreed to assist with the supply and construction of 14 new warehouses at an approximate cost of £500,000 to be erected at Kathmandu and Hetauda. The project got off to some false starts but now seems to be proceeding satisfactorily.

Nepal Malaria Eradication Programme: This is a very worthwhile programme and although the Government of Nepal no longer thinks that it will be possible to eradicate malaria - at any rate in the short term - it is endeavouring to contain the disease and the programme has been relatively successful. We hope to be able to continue assisting with this programme. Money spent so far is about £450,000.

Diesel Electricity Generators: As visitors to parts of Nepal which have mains electricity supply will know, there are frequent cuts in electricity or voltage reductions during the winter period. For the central zone, including Kathmandu Valley, the Government of Nepal is pinning high hopes on expected hydro-electric supply from the Kulekhani Power Station being built with the assistance of World Bank finance. However, this is not expected to be completed and commissioned before about 1982 - or possibly later. The British Government agreed to provide

ten megawatts worth of diesel electricity generators to help during winter peak seasons before the Kulekhani Power Station comes on stream. In agreeing to provide these generators as a short term measure we had it in mind that when they were no longer required at Hetauda, where they are to be installed, they could be moved elsewhere and serve a useful purpose somewhere else in Nepal. However, later studies have suggested that the full benefits of the Kulekhani Power Station will not be enjoyed until some years later than was previously expected and that earlier forecasts of supply and demand will have to be revised upwards in respect of demand. It therefore seems possible that the need for the generators at Hetauda will be for a considerably longer period than had been envisaged. The estimated cost of these generators is about £2,250,000.

Aircraft: We have agreed to provide the Government of Nepal with aid for the purchase of an Avro aircraft which the Government will pass on to the Royal Nepal Airline Corporation. RNAC already have two Avro aircraft (and there is a third aircraft in the Royal flight). They are used mostly for internal domestic schedule services between such airports as Kathmandu and Nepalgunj and Kathmandu and Biratnagar and also for some charter services during the tourist season. Because of the nature of the terrain and the lack of roads, air transport has become an important role in the development of the country. The Avro flights to the Terai airports can be, and are, used for connecting flights to Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) airstrips in the Hills by other aircraft which are suitable for flights to such airstrips. The use of the aircraft for tourist travel is also a helpful means of adding to the country's foreign exchange earnings which are very much needed for her development. We have also agreed to consider providing a second aircraft if experience after twelve months operation of this first aircraft indicates that there is a case for a second aircraft and that the RNAC have been able to cope with the operating, maintenance, and management problems of their expanded fleet (they are increasing their numbers of Boeings and Twin Otters as well as Avros). The cost of this assistance will be about £3,100,000 per aircraft.

Telecommunications: We have agreed to join with the World Bank in their third telecommunications project in Nepal. Our specific assistance will be in the form of an earth satellite station, a telex exchange and some teleprinters. Although the earth satellite station might sound like something out of a science fiction novel it in fact will help Nepal link up to the international communications satellite above the Indian Ocean which in turn can connect with satellites over the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. This will enable Nepal to communicate directly by telephone more effectively with the outside world than is presently the case. The advantages to the country's development of this improved facility must be obvious and hardly needs stating. The telex exchange and the teleprinters together with the World Bank's own contribution to this project will improve internal communications - of inestimable importance in the country's development - as well as linking up with the international telecommunications. The estimated cost of this assistance to the British Government is £2,600,000.

Tea Development: We have agreed to provide capital aid of about £3,700,000 over a long period to help the Government of Nepal with the rehabilitation of the tea industry in Eastern Nepal. We shall work through the Nepal Tea Development Corporation in assisting its estates and those of some private estate growers and also through the Agricultural Development Bank of Nepal in helping some out-growers. We shall also help with the rehabilitation of some of the existing tea factories and building some new tea factories. The area concerned is contiguous with Darjeeling and we are confident that good quality tea can be produced there. Some of the tea will be used for internal consumption and perhaps reduce Nepal's reliance on imports.

Food Grains: Last year we agreed financial aid of about £700,000 for the purchase by the Nepal Food Corporation of some maize and rice to help them over a difficult harvest period when their statutory levies of rice from the rice exporting companies was dramatically reduced thus reducing their own ability to help food deficit areas in the Hills.

On-Going Technical Co-operation Projects

Kosi Hills Area Rural Development Programme (KHARDEP): Recent studies have challenged the previously held view that the construction of a major road in a developing country would of itself produce beneficial development results for the local population. We accordingly agreed to meet a request from His Majesty's Government of Nepal to help with an integrated rural development programme in the Kosi Hills area of Eastern Nepal North of Dhankuta which would be opened up by the Dharan/Dhankuta road. With an integrated rural development programme we would hope to provide assistance in such important areas as agriculture, irrigation, communications, cottage industries, education, health, etc. The assistance will take the form of financial assistance of about £4m to provide materials and meet local labour costs for a programme which has been and is being worked out by our technical co-operation experts working in concert with officials from His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

Gurkha Reintegration Training Scheme: This is our longest standing technical co-operation project and was started in 1968 as a means of assisting ex-Gurkhas from the British Army to reintegrate into their village life after demobilisation. The main thrust of this scheme is, and always has been, in agriculture although assistance has been given in medicine and education as well. The scheme originally started at the Lumle Agricultural Centre in Western Nepal where some agricultural training courses were given at the Centre. This did not prove to be an unqualified success - partly because many of those who came to the courses were wrongly motivated and came for a return to the regimental club atmosphere rather than for serious training and partly because those who were serious farmers were too busy farming to spend time on training courses. In 1975 it was therefore decided to change the tactics and, while a small number

of training courses continued at the Centres, the emphasis was changed to adaptive research and trials work on different crops and livestock at the Centres and neighbouring farms to extension work in the villages. In the meantime a second Centre had been established at Pakhribas in Eastern Nepal. With this switch of emphasis to extension work in the villages using locally recruited and trained Field Assistants operating from their own farms as the first contact point with farmers it became no longer practicable to restrict the benefit of the schemes to ex-Gurkhas. (One cannot assist one farmer in a village and ignore his neighbour if he wishes to have assistance in the same manner and it would not be sensible to do so.) The benefits of the scheme are therefore no longer exclusively for ex-Gurkhas although the geographical location of the Centres in or near main Gurkha recruiting areas means that a substantial proportion of the beneficiaries will be ex-Gurkhas.

The medical and educational courses at Dharan were also only qualified successes insofar as the Government of Nepal did not at first accept successful students from these courses into their Health Service or as primary school teachers and the educational courses were stopped - although the medical courses continued because the students were able to find gainful employment, usually operating private dispensaries. Recent negotiations with the Government of Nepal have led to an agreement that successful students from the medical courses with modified curriculum will be accepted as Auxiliary Health Workers to work in Government health aid posts in remote Hill villages which are currently suffering from a shortage of paramedical assistance. Negotiations with the Ministry of Education have also led us to hope that students from education courses with modified curricula will be acceptable in future as primary school teachers although we still have a few points of detail to resolve on this particular agreement. We are therefore very pleased to think that the scheme will be able to help remote Hills villages with the supply of primary school teachers and paramedical workers since they are suffering from an acute shortage of both.

We carried out an inspection of the scheme at the end of last year to consider how successful it was being and what changes if any should be made in the future. I am glad to be able to say that the inspection report's findings were generally satisfactory and that we were persuaded that the scheme is making a substantial contribution to the improvement in living standards of local families. In time it will have to be handed over to His Majesty's Government of Nepal and integrated within their services, but before this happens we hope to carry out some more work on this scheme with a view to making it more cost effective and thus easier for His Majesty's Government of Nepal to take it over and to replicate its methods elsewhere in Nepal. Because it no longer confers its benefits exclusively to ex-Gurkhas it has been decided to drop the title of the scheme and refer to the individual Centres by their own titles.

Technical Education: One of the many skills shortages that Nepal suffers from is a shortage of skilled engineers. We have therefore agreed to complement assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in helping the Institute of Engineering at Tribhuvan University to develop their courses in civil engineering. The two multilateral organisations will be providing capital aid for buildings and equipment etc., and we shall be providing technical co-operation in developing curricula, drawing up equipment lists, designing accommodation, etc. Our technical co-operation is given through the form of a "link" between Paisley College of Technology and associated colleges in the Strathclyde Education Authority and the Institute of Engineering.

Budhanilkantha School: In response to a request by the present King's father about ten years ago the British Government provided some capital aid to the Government of Nepal for the construction and furnishing of a boys boarding school just outside Kathmandu. Additionally we have provided technical co-operation to fill the posts of headmaster, bursar and some other teacher posts over a period of ten years, to provide a contribution towards the scholarship fund and to give some training for Nepalese teachers and to provide some equipment. The school is a unique organisation being a boarding school for boys drawn from a wide cross-section of social, cultural and geographical strata of Nepal. One third of the boys are scholarship boys and two are enrolled from each of 25 of the administrative districts each year. Since there are 75 administrative districts this means that each district provides two boys every three years. All the reports that we have so far received about the school point to high academic standards but the first cohort of the school has yet to take the School Leaving Certificate. It will do so next year.

Training in the United Kingdom: We spend about £400,000 to £500,000 each year in providing training courses in the United Kingdom for Nepalese students. These cover a wide variety of disciplines and sectors but emphasis is placed on training needs identified by some visiting professional advisers or consultants. They cover such fields as agriculture, education, engineering and administration.

Forestry: Some recent statistics have shown that 25% of Nepal's forest land has been denuded over the past decade. Trees are valuable in Nepal for animal fodder, fuel wood, timber for construction purposes and in the fight against erosion. The deforestation is therefore alarming. We have agreed to help the Government of Nepal with the establishment of a Forest Research Centre and a Silvicultural Trials Unit to co-ordinate some of the silvicultural trials work in Nepal to ascertain the best types of trees to grow in different circumstances. We have also agreed in principle to assist with a training programme in association with the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the United States Agency for International Development in helping to build up skilled manpower in Nepal to husband their forestry resources and to create new forests.

Miscellaneous: Also included in our technical co-operation programme are assistance to the following fields:

Water supply and sewerage ;
Economic services to the Industrial Services Centre and
the Agricultural Projects Services Centre ;
Telecommunications ;
Grain storage technology ;
Management consultancy ;
Various consultancies possibly leading to capital aid projects ;
Other educational assistance ;
Financial assistance to Save the Children Fund and the
Britain-Nepal Medical Trust.

Possible New Projects in Nepal

Eastern Region Rural Water Supplies: We have agreed in principle to provide about £1,800,000 for assistance with some two dozen rural water supply schemes in Eastern Nepal. This will be used primarily for buying the material - piping, cement, pumps. In addition we will provide a water engineer and a storekeeper for about two years.

Dubi Bridge: We have agreed in principle to rebuild the bridge at the village of Dubi on the busy road from Jogbani to Dharan which was, I understand, built originally by the British Government to assist with our Brigade of Gurkhas cantonment at Dharan.

Diagnostic Laboratory: We are studying the report of a consultant who visited Nepal to consider the desirability of assisting the Government of Nepal with the establishment of a diagnostic laboratory at Dharan which would assist with training of microscopologists in the region and act as a regional referral laboratory.

∟ Editor's Note: This is a slightly shortened version of the very interesting address given to the Society by Mr. W. T. Birrell of the Overseas Development Administration, at the Alpine Club, on 16 May 1979 ∟

THE OTHER END OF THE TELESCOPE

/ A note on the work of the Save The Children Fund in Nepal
by Dr. David Nabarro based on his talk to the Society /

Nepal is a very hard country - mountainous, rocky and most of it at a high altitude. There is a desperate shortage of arable land and this means that the people don't grow enough protein because they concentrate, rightly, on filling their bellies and they can do this best with maize and lentils and rice. So one of the major problems is bad feeding. Theoretically the basic diet is good, but there are several factors which prevent people here from eating a balanced diet. One factor is that weather makes it difficult to grow vegetables at any time except the autumn.

Also, local customs sometimes run counter to good feeding practice. They don't feed green vegetables to children under the age of five because they believe it gives them diarrhoea. They also give very little food to pregnant women because they believe that too much food will cause a bad birth. They don't give special food to children during the weaning period either, and they only feed their weaned babies two or three times a day - if you feed children often you use up extra firewood and a lot of extra time, and Nepali women don't have much time because they work in the fields and have no running water.

Children are usually weaned at six months and sometimes earlier, and the result is severe malnutrition. Malnutrition, TB and diarrhoea are endemic in Nepal and often fatal. But improving the health of the children depends on an inter-related spectrum of development. A real improvement in the health of the children will only happen when other aspects of daily living are improved... when houses are warm and dry; when there is running water and when there is enough food to be had. Health promotion programmes, however urgent, are not enough. The development of local agriculture is just as important.

Save the Children have three projects in Nepal: in Surkhet, in Dhankuta and in Baglung, opened in 1976, 1977 and 1978 respectively, all administered from Kathmandu. In Surkhet the main work is developing nutritional and health care in a chain of villages. In Dhankuta, a series of sub-centres operate, principally in Ankisalla, using a local staff of about twenty people who are trained as health 'catalysts', who involve the villagers in the development of better preventative and curative medicine. In Baglung the clinic works closely with the District Hospital and the Children's Centre.

The Nepal Childrens' Organisation has been active with the Fund and its work is considerably supported by the Ministry of Overseas Development of the UK, and Canada and Australia.

We are terribly lucky to be working with a Government that is very keen to improve the life of their people without wanting radical changes made overnight. These people live in hills that can only be reached by foot; they are subsistence farmers, or porters, or make things in their homes and sell them. They live in self-contained communities.

Instead of imposing the West's sophisticated pattern of living on these people, the Government encourages them to place the accent on village life.... In those parts of Nepal where the twentieth century has caught up with the villagers the consequences are not happy. People lose their sense of order and dignity and rush around buying radios and Western appliances that merely help the fabric of their own society to fall apart.

The Fund is educating villagers about health in a way which makes sure they are not dependent on foreign medical teams; so that they understand when they are ill and what they can do about it. Then they will take advantage of their own Government aid agencies and it will be their water supply, their improved agriculture, their improved village and their better health.

SUMMER OUTING 1979

VISIT TO THE PESTALOZZI VILLAGE
NEAR SEDLESCOMBE, SUSSEX

by

Susan E. Roberts

Saturday, 4th August 1979..... about ninety adults and children travelled in a group comprising two coaches and several cars to the Pestalozzi Village. Through a tanglewood of suburbia we followed the snake-like road to the up-and-down country, through Pembury and Robertsbridge, along a steep and winding lane to a drive-way where giant weathered thistles greeted us, their imperial colour now showing the effects of time - we had arrived at the Pestalozzi Village.

This Village, like the Swiss Pestalozzi Village, is comprised of international students, but the German and Indian Villages take only their respective nationals. The Pestalozzi Village at Sedlescombe was started in 1958 and officially opened in 1959 when it housed children from displaced camps in Germany, being from fifteen different countries. However, the present population numbers fifty children,

four Housemothers, four Instructors who teach carpentry, metal-work, building and farming, and one Nurse - a Tibetan - trained and qualified as an SRN in the UK. In order to keep expenditure down to a minimum the Village try to be as self-supporting as possible, grow their own produce and have a good live-stock family of hens, pigs, ducks, goats and beef-cattle. The corn, barley and oats are sold, although some is of course used for their own cattle-food. At the time of our visit there were six different nationalities at the Village - Nigerian, Arab, Indian, Thai, Tibetan and Vietnamese, each with its own house. The Village is pleasantly situated on an incline with a north-westerly aspect over-looking the village of Sedlescombe just a quarter of a mile away.

The age range of the children is eleven to eighteen years, and some even remain until they are twenty-one or twenty-two years of age as they are usually attending a college or university by that time and so the Village is very much regarded as a home to the student of further education. A general scholastic education is given to the children at the local school, as well as English classes in the Village one evening a week, and on Saturdays they partake in a wide range of practical experiences within the Village. One probably wonders how the children arrive at a quite secluded part of the English country-side from such extreme corners of our globe. Well, the children are selected by committees in their respective countries and funds are from private sources only - sadly, the Village purse is not great, especially as they have to rely entirely on charity in the form of voluntary subscriptions making them far too dependent upon legacies. They really need, if at all possible, to build up a reserve rather than having to live from day to day using capital.

Mr. J. A. B. Gale, MA, Warden of the Village, greeted us upon arrival and escorted us to the Library for refreshments where we were able to meet a few of the 'inhabitants' of the Village, including Mrs. Brann who had arranged a delicious curry luncheon, followed by fresh fruit, enormously enjoyed by all. The Library is a split-level building with the library itself on the ground floor and the upper area reserved as the nursing area, where the girl students receive nursing instruction.

After lunch our tour commenced with Mr. Gale as our guide. The first stop was at the Carpentry Shop where students of all ages, boys and girls, work together and receive a good general training in carpentry and its uses. We saw an interesting model which is used as an example in the building of huts and houses, the fine point of this particular example being that it exhibits the Canadian designed method of constructing buildings without using joints, and for such a system only one skilled supervisory person is required with a back-up of unskilled workers. The main carpentry area was a high-ceilinged room with a mezzanine floor at one end for storing timber. Nothing goes to waste - from odd pieces of wood seed boxes are made.

Whilst our Members' children amused themselves happily in the mound of sand adjoining the Carpentry Shop, we wandered across the drive-way to the New Wing in a house totalling some twenty rooms. Part of this house is already occupied by Arab children. The section we visited was the 'second' wing of the house with eight study-bedrooms for children, kitchen and bathroom facilities, a sittingroom and bedroom for the Housemother and a common room cum gymnasium. All the rooms were light and airy, each study-bedroom had furniture made by the children, i. e. , a bookshelf affixed to the wall, desk, chair and even the bedframe, one of which had a drawer neatly fitted in. The wood was cheap plywood (shutter cement) and they had used the 'good' side out. Even the plumbing had child-participation when it was installed. By now, this new wing will be fully occupied by both Arab and Thai children.

Unfortunately we didn't have sufficient time to visit all of the houses. We wandered by the Arab, Indian, Nigerian and Vietnamese houses which commanded fine views over and beyond the Thai House. The Thai House is a two-storey building behind which is the games room. This building reminded one of a hat.

Our next port-of-call was The Metal Shop, situated near the forty year old windmill which had been a gift to the Village. The windmill had been reconstructed by a person interested in these lovely wind instruments, though there is still some work to do on it, after which it will be erected near one of the three ponds in the Village to pump water to the fields for the cattle. In the Metal Shop, as in the Carpentry Shop, both boys and girls of all ages work together and are instructed in a wide variety of skills from gas to electric arc welding. Even the youngest children of eleven years of age do simple forge work. One of the first exercises all students are taught is how to make a chair. We saw good examples of the students' work such as lamps, wall brackets and all manner of intricate wrought iron items. No matter how academic a child is he must learn some craft work.

The Tibetan House nestles cozily in a tucked away and sheltered position behind the windmill. Here in an aura of peace, in the large common room which houses a shrine and several tankas, we chatted with three of the Tibetan students.

Self-sufficiency and resourcefulness are so evident where the young children are able to make chicken feeders and drinkers and a feeding trough from an oil drum or fit a safety bar on a tractor. On their return to their native country they are well equipped to utilize to the full the materials and equipment to hand.

In spite of such a variety of nationalities there is just one basic kitchen where most of the meals are prepared. The meals are then distributed to the kitchen of each house where the students add their own spices. As already mentioned, each Saturday the students are busily engaged in practical work at the Village, and even during the holidays four days a week are spent in learning how to use their hands and body in hard work, and so to appreciate the disciplines of running

a farm. So not much time to be idle, but in the midst of all this the children are able to retain their own basic cultures. During the year there is a variety of festival celebrations and as the Village is most keen that the students retain their own languages, all students receive 'language' instruction in their own mother tongue. Every year they go away to live under canvass for two weeks - for the last three years to Talding in Kent.

Mr. Gale and the Village are now looking forward very much to the arrival of the Nepalese students this autumn, probably at the end of September. There will be six children and one Housemother. So by this time next year the Nepalese students will be well established.

The visit left one with the impressions of peace and harmony, a remarkable feat - six nations living and working side by side and yet able to retain their own culture whilst absorbing some of the richness of each other's heritage. These children are being well equipped to face tomorrow's changing and challenging world. On behalf of us all who visited the Pestalozzi Village one can only commend everyone involved for the valuable work that is being done. A visit to be remembered.

So close to the sea we were, so after farewells to Mr. Gale and the Pestalozzi Village off to Hastings - bracing salt air and ice creams under the hot sun. We wandered along streets of the old town, wishing some of the buildings could break into speech to tell of tales from yesterday, to the fishing museum housed in a church where the sign at the font showed 1972 the year of the last baptism, and those gaunt austere looking structures - for fishing nets, one was told. Only a few fishing boats rested on the pebbled beach - more amusements now than fishing boats, how the tide has turned on what was once but a thriving fishing area. "Where is the bank on the other side?" commented one little boy. It was his first encounter with the sea and, no doubt, for many other Nepalis who so enjoyed themselves that they would like another seaside visit next year. That was Hastings, just a breath we had, then back via the up-and-down land once again wrapped in its veil of mist and mystery.

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUSTS

For the Gurkha Ex-Servicemen and their dependants the Gurkha Welfare Trusts do what the Army Benevolent Fund does for the United Kingdom Ex-Servicemen. During the current year they are providing a sum of £108,000 for distribution in the hill areas of Nepal in the form of grants and pensions.

The income available for distribution comes from three sources. The first and chief one is invested capital. This money was donated in several Commonwealth

countries but mainly in the United Kingdom and is handled by a leading investment management company in the City of London, Robert Fleming and Company Limited. The second source is covenants which have been entered into by serving and retired officers of the Brigade of Gurkhas and civilian well wishers, including many leading UK firms. The third source is current donations and funds raised by voluntary supporters, and this includes the Gurkha Battalion stationed in the UK.

The Brigade of Gurkhas Welfare Scheme which operates with the full approval of the authorities in Nepal is responsible for distributing the funds. It does this through 23 Welfare Centres, each one specially built for the purpose or rented as a temporary measure. Those which have been built were paid for by the Gurkha Welfare Appeal (Canada). Each Welfare Centre is staffed by Gurkha Ex-Servicemen whose salaries are covered by a British Government grant.

The Gurkha Ex-Servicemen who can benefit from the money provided by the Trusts are broadly in two groups - those who have served with The Brigade of Gurkhas which since 1948 has been an integral part of the British Army, and those greater numbers of volunteers, now growing old where they still survive, who served for a few years during the Second World War. The majority of these went back to their homes in the mountains after the war and received no pension as their service of five or six years was, of course, not long enough for pension. Many were disabled and the survivors of these receive disablement pensions for which the Government of India has assumed responsibility. But such pensions are relatively small and, though improved from time to time, have not kept up with inflation. Pensions are also paid to many widows and these have been substantially increased during the current year to bring them up closer to the level of Service pensions.

The character of the Gurkha is never lost sight of in the plans that are made for assisting Ex-Servicemen. He always has been and still is a self-reliant hill farmer who is proud without being arrogant. He does not hold out his hand for assistance easily. This fact is well understood and respected by those who manage the Trusts.

The Trusts are managed by ten Managing Trustees, including the Major General Brigade of Gurkhas who is the Chairman, and a General Secretary (Miss Jacqueline Craig). In Nepal the Commander British Gurkhas Nepal and his Welfare Officer are responsible for all decisions and disbursements. The Managing Trustees meet once a year in London and decide on the amount of money to be provided in the following year. It is hoped that the next meeting will be attended by both the Chairman of the Gurkha Welfare Appeal (Canada), Lieutenant Colonel W. Kenneth Robinson, C. St. J., CD, MP, and the President of the Gurkha Welfare Trust Foundation (U. S. A.), Mr. Ellice McDonald, Jr., of Delaware.

The Canadian and Australian Appeals are still active and are run with remarkable vigour by Major M. L. J. Burke, CD (late 4 GR), of Toronto, and Major J. R. Ricketts, MBE (late 5 RGR), of New South Wales, respectively, to both of whom we are deeply indebted for their dedicated work.

LT. COL. H. C. S. GREGORY
MANAGING TRUSTEE

ADDRESSES

The Gurkha Welfare Trusts
Room 543, Lansdowne House,
Berkeley Square, London W1X 6AA

The Britain-Nepal Medical Trust,
Stafford House, 16 East Street
Tonbridge, Kent.

The Gurkha Museum, (Lt. Col. M. P. Dewing, Curator)
Queen Elizabeth Barracks,
Church Crookham,
Aldershot, Hants. GU13 0RJ

Society of Friends of the Gurkha Museum,
(Lt. Colonel A. A. Mains, Hon. Secretary)
c/o Gurkha Museum, Queen Elizabeth Barracks
Church Crookham, Aldershot, Hants.

Patron: H. R. H. PRINCE GYANENDRA OF NEPAL

Our aim is to promote and foster good relations between the peoples of the United Kingdom and Nepal.

The Society was founded in 1960, under the patronage of His late Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva of Nepal during his State Visit to London; Lord Hunt became the first President.

British and Nepalese subjects, and business firms or corporate bodies resident in Britain or Nepal are eligible for membership.

Members include serving and retired Gurkhas, mountaineers, members of the Diplomatic Service, schoolmasters, doctors, nurses and businessmen.

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £2 per annum (to be increased to £3.00 for all payments due on 1 October 1980 or thereafter).

Life Members - a single payment of £40.

The "Yetis" - Nepalese Students in Britain are honorary members during their stay in the United Kingdom and are particularly welcome at all functions, especially the annual Summer Outing.

The Society's programme includes:

Monthly lectures at the Alpine Club and elsewhere, meetings and films from October to May;
Receptions and hospitality for visiting Nepalese;
An AGM in November and an annual supper party in February.

We keep in touch with the Nepal-Britain Society in Kathmandu which the late H. H. Field Marshal Sir Kaiser, a Life Member of our Society, founded shortly before his death.

The Britain-Nepal Society has a growing membership and there is tremendous enthusiasm for Nepal. Our meetings, which are usually attended by about 100 people each, provide an excellent opportunity for us to get together over a drink. Our membership, not counting the "Yetis", Honorary Members and Corporate Members, is now well over five hundred.

The Committee welcome new members amongst people with a genuine interest in Nepal. The address of the Hon. Secretary is:

Mrs. W. Brown (Celia)
1 Allen Mansions,
Allen Street, London W8 6UY

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