



BRITAIN - NEPAL

SOCIETY

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As our Society gains in stature and approaches its twenty-first birthday the Journal continues to reflect its progress and to give a permanent form to the interesting and valuable talks which are arranged for members and their guests at the Alpine Club and elsewhere.

This year for the first time members assembled at the Royal Geographical Society where an exhibition was specially arranged for us of the remarkable watercolours and sketches made in the nineteenth century in Kathmandu by Dr. H. A. Oldfield, author of the well-known "Sketches of Nipal (sic)" published in 1880 but containing, among other fascinating material, a diary of events of the time of Prime Minister Jang Bahadur. This and other matters are referred to in the Honorary Secretary's Newsletter.

I need scarcely say how much we appreciate the privilege of being able to publish the articles which appear in this the fourth issue of our Journal and how grateful we are to their authors for providing us with the text of the talks given by them to the Society.

EDITOR

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NEWSLETTER

As in past years, interest in the Society's activities and its membership has continued to increase. We would like to thank all those who have given lectures and shown slides during the 1979/80 season of monthly meetings.

Lectures

The Society was delighted to be able to open the Season last October with a talk by Lord Hunt and Lieutenant Colonel C. G. Wylie on "Eastern Nepal Revisited - the 1953 Everest Party's Jubilee Trek". To accommodate the large audience the lecture was held at the Theatre in Kensington Central Library. Lord Hunt and Colonel Wylie have kindly provided us with the text of their talk for publication in the Journal and we are most grateful for this.

In December Lieutenant Colonel T. C. White gave a talk on "Some More about Tropical Birds" accompanied by superb coloured slides.

At the instigation of Lord Hunt, President of the Royal Geographical Society, we were able to hold at the premises of the RGS in January, an Exhibition of the Paintings of Dr. H. A. Oldfield who had been Surgeon to the British Residency in Nepal in the second half of the last century. The paintings had been carefully stored for half a century in the archives of the RGS, and had only recently been mounted and catalogued. A wine and cheese party was held as part of the evening's arrangements and this enjoyable occasion was attended by many members and their guests. There have been several requests for a similar function to form part of the annual programme of events.

In March, at the Alpine Club, Mr. C. R. M. Bangham, of Lincoln College, Oxford, gave an interesting talk based on research carried out in Nepal entitled "Where do the Real Sherpas Live?". The text of this talk is reproduced in the Journal.

Also at the Alpine Club in April, Mr. J. B. H. Jackson showed a large collection of interesting slides on "The Butterfly Walk - The Natural History of The Marsangdi Gorge, East of Annapurna". This was a particularly well attended meeting. The second part of Mr. Jackson's talk will follow next year and we hope thereafter to publish the whole text for the benefit of those of our members who are unable to attend meetings.

The final talk of the season was given in May by Professor D. Snellgrove on "The Remarkable Life of Pasang Khambache Sherpa" at the Alpine Club. This talk also proved most interesting.

Nepali Supper

In the presence of H. E. The Royal Nepalese Ambassador, Mr. Jharendra Narayan Singha, and his wife H. E. Madame Bhuvan Singha, the Nepali Annual Supper was held on 20 February at New Zealand House (by kind permission of the New Zealand

High Commissioner). Over two hundred members, Yetis (students) and their friends were present. The Society's new President, Sir George Bishop, welcomed the Guest of Honour, Lord Inchcape, Chairman of P & O, who has been a long standing friend of Nepal. Both H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador and Lord Inchcape addressed the gathering. As in past years we were fortunate to have the help of the Gurkha orderlies and pipers who added colour to the evening. They came from the 1st Battalion 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (Mess Sergeant and Orderlies) and the Overseas English Wing of the Army School of Languages, Wilton Park, Beaconsfield, respectively. Our thanks are due to the Commanding Officers concerned for this greatly appreciated help on the outstanding social event of our year.

Summer Outing

The Summer Outing this year took place on Saturday, 12th July, a little earlier than usual. Resulting from the popularity of the previous year's outing to the sea, as well as to the Pestalozzi Village at Seddlescombe, Nr. Battle, your Committee was asked to arrange another visit to a seaside town and this year the venue was Brighton. The outing was well attended by the Yetis and their friends, and despite dismal weather proved a most enjoyable occasion. An account of the outing appears in this Journal.

Change of President

Mr. A. R. H. Kellas relinquished the office of President of the Society at the last Annual General Meeting as he and Mrs. Kellas have now moved to Achateny by Acharacle, Argyll, Scotland. We wish Mr. and Mrs. Kellas many years of happiness in their new home. We are very fortunate to have as our new President Sir George Bishop who is a frequent visitor to Nepal.

The Nepal House, Pestalozzi Village

Recently eleven children from Nepal took up residence at the Nepal House with their Housemother, Mrs. Ratna Lamichanee. The Society wishes to take an interest in the activities of these children, and the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Society, will present a bicycle for the use of the children. Members who may wish to help personally in any way are asked to contact Mrs. Lamichanee, The Nepal House, Pestalozzi Village, Seddlescombe, Nr. Battle, Sussex.

Kathmandu Valley Appeal

As a result of an appeal at the Annual Nepali Supper, £125 was collected and donated to the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Fund. A cheque for this amount was handed over in Kathmandu by H. M. Ambassador, Mr. J. B. Denson, who is a Life Member of the Society.

Messages

The President of the Society, Sir George Bishop, sent a message of condolence to H. E. The Ambassador, Mr. Jharendra N. Singha, on the death of HRH Prince Himalaya Bir Bikram Shah in Kathmandu on 10th May 1980, and also signed the

Book of Condolence at the Embassy.

Flowers were sent to HRH The Duchess of Gloucester with the good wishes of the Society on the birth of her daughter on 4 March 1980.

A message of good wishes on the occasion of the birthday of our Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal, was sent in July.

Membership Fees

For many years the Annual Subscription has remained constant, but with the mounting costs of postage and printing, etc., it was agreed at the AGM held on 7th November 1979, to increase the Ordinary Membership fee from £2 to £3, to take effect from October 1980. Members are reminded to please change their Banker's Orders accordingly.

Society Tie

The price of the Britain-Nepal Society tie is now £3.95 including postage.

Society Car Badge

Thresher and Glenny have a stock of the Society's car badge at £3.90 each.

Members' Letters

It would be a great help in keeping down costs if members could please send an SAE if their letter requires an answer or any other action.

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THE FIRST ASCENT OF EVEREST

(EASTERN NEPAL REVISITED - THE 1953 EVEREST EXPEDITION'S

JUBILEE TREK)

Introductory Note by Lieutenant Colonel C. G. Wylie

On 11th October 1979 Lord Hunt and Colonel Charles Wylie lectured on the Jubilee Reunion of the first ascent of Everest by Lord Hunt's party in 1953. By way of introduction Lord Hunt had made a unique collection of slides of previous Everest expeditions from various sources, including the archives of the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society of which he was the President. He showed these to give a historical perspective to the 1953 expedition.

Lord Hunt gave a brilliant and fascinating resume of the Everest saga, beginning with the discovery by the Survey of India that the peak, later named Everest after the then Surveyor General, Sir George Everest, was higher than any other hitherto surveyed. He told of the earliest efforts just after the turn of the century by Longstaff and others to get permission to go to the mountain, and of the granting of permission by the Dalai Lama through the good offices of Sir Charles Bell, our political agent in Lhasa, for the first reconnaissance expedition in 1921 led by Colonel Howard Bury. Lord Hunt's pictures showed dramatically how the assault expeditions which followed in 1922, 1924, 1933, 1936 and 1938, all approaching the mountain through Tibet to attempt the climb from the North, had had to contend with the unknown problem of high altitude climbing, unknown weather conditions, and clothing and equipment much of which was more suitable for Scottish moors than raging blizzards at 28,000 ft. Several times members of those expeditions had reached that height only to be forced to retreat by bad weather or by the effects of altitude, or both. Each party had gained experience, but the mountain was still unclimbed when after World War II climbers began to look again towards their ultimate goal.

The political situation changed with the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Access from the North was no longer possible, but shortly after Nepal, which had been a closed country, opened its frontiers to foreigners, climbers turned their attention to the South side of Everest. In 1951 a reconnaissance party led by Eric Shipton climbed the Khumbu ice fall and saw that there was a possible route via the Western Cwm South Col and South East Ridge. The Swiss were quick to ask for permission and mounted two expeditions the following year, one before and one after the monsoon. On the first the guide, Raymond Lambert, and Tenzing reached 28,000 ft. with little support for the final stage of their attempt.

Such was the background for the 1953 expedition. Lord Hunt showed a selection of slides to highlight interesting aspects of his expedition, particularly the comradeship which united the members of his party and which expressed itself in their regular Reunions. In their Jubilee year a specially successful and well attended celebration had been held in Snowdonia over the weekend nearest the anniversary of the ascent, 29th May. Sir Edmund Hillary had come from New Zealand and members of the previous pre-War Everest expeditions, including Professor Noel Odell, had also been present. Tenzing had spent two weeks in England staying with members of the party.

The second part of the Reunion was held in Nepal after the monsoon. The aim was to meet as many of the expedition's Sherpa team as possible. Some had moved to Darjeeling, but others were still in Khumbu. The plan was to travel first to Darjeeling and after a few days there to trek the 200 odd miles across the hills of North Eastern Nepal to the Everest area where the party was to spend some ten days climbing or trekking in Khumbu according to individual inclination.

Charles Wylie showed slides of Darjeeling, the trek through the Hills and aspects of Khumbu. The party of twelve consisted of five members of the 1953 party, four with their wives, one reserve member with his wife (both of whom were doctors) and Jennifer, the widow of Tom Bourdillon who had reached the South Summit in 1953, and had later been killed in the Alps. They were accommodated while in Darjeeling at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, where Tenzing had been Director of Training since its foundation after his ascent of Everest until a year or two before the Reunion party's visit. Tenzing and his wife, Daku, offered generous hospitality and the opportunity to meet all the old 1953 party Sherpas living in the town. Daku, who now operates a trekking business, organised the "bandobast" for the trek, as well as the porters. Tenzing was unfortunately only able to accompany the party for the first few days as he was due to go on an Antarctic VIP cruise as a guest lecturer. Such is fame.

ADDRESS BY LORD HUNT OF LLANVAIR WATERDINE, KG, CBE, DSO DCL

Last year was the Silver Jubilee of the first ascent of Everest - Sargarmatha - in 1953. You have invited Charles Wylie and myself to come once again, as we did twenty years on in 1973, to tell you about an Anniversary Trek which some of the original members of the expedition made across East Nepal to mark the occasion.

It was, in large part, intended as a reunion of old friends who first climbed the mountain. Charles and I thought that you might care to share with us a few of our recollections of that climb; our reflections on the development of mountaineering on Everest and surrounding peaks in Khumbu in the following years; our impressions on the impact of that event upon the area in which the great mountain is located, on the people who live there and, indirectly, upon Nepal. One relevant point about this kind of talk is that, precisely because of these developments, any description of a high-level journey across Nepal has become such a commonplace of the package tour industry, that it no longer merits a lecture before this Society.

I will not weary you, nor embarrass myself, with sentimental memories: I will limit myself to one or two vignettes of our climb in 1953. Essentially, the occasion last year was a reunion of old friends and it is appropriate to recall in particular some members of my team who could not share it - Wilf Noyce, Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon. We who have survived have gone on enjoying a friendship which has endured and grown ever since that experience in 1953.

There have been many annual reunions in North Wales where we have enjoyed the generous hospitality of Chris and Jo Briggs at the Pen y Gwyrd Hotel - where we met for training weekends before the climb. It was only after fifteen such gatherings with our wives and, as the years passed, with children and grandchildren as well, that we widened the interval to every five years. In 1963, ten years on, we were able to share the experience with the Swiss who had so nearly got there first in 1952, and who, by then, had reached the top - in 1956. The meet was in Switzerland and was a most joyous affair.

Twenty years on, there was a much larger gathering to celebrate the occasion. For by then the Japanese and the Indian mountaineers had joined the select band of successful Everest climbers. This time the Indian Mountaineering Federation were the hosts and Darjeeling the venue. You will remember that Charles Wylie and I described that event and our journey across Nepal from Khumbu which preceded it with my wife and Alf Gregory. This was another very special kind of reunion for we were able to meet again with Tenzing and a number of our old Sherpas. A number of other famous fountaineers, most of them old friends of mine, were present to take part in the event.

Five years later, 1978, provided yet another opportunity to continue this long saga of Everest Meets. It was the Silver Jubilee of our climb. Once again there was a reunion in North Wales. The "Family" was larger than ever. Some of us were, alas, no longer the fine figures of vigorous manhood we had been twenty-five years before.

Then in the autumn, six members of the original team who were still reasonably mobile, with Dr. Hamish Nicol who had been one of my reserves, our wives and Jennifer Bourdillon, widow of Tom, set off for another meeting with our Sherpas, combined with a journey to the Mountain. We decided to reverse the order of events of 1973 and thus walk the high level route from Darjeeling to Khumbu.

Darjeeling provided the perfect rendez vous for the meet and the H.M.I. was an appropriate centre; for it was the brain-child of B. C. Roy, then Chief Minister of the West Bengal Government. It had received the approval and support of the Central Government, through Jawaharlal Nehru,

We had a happy and hectic four days there, being generously feted at St. Paul's School, where my third daughter had worked as matron, and at the Gurkha Training Regiment Officers Mess. Darjeeling holds fond memories for me, stretching back to 1932. My first daughter was born there at the moment of the fateful meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler at Munich in 1938. Darjeeling has the merit for the aging of having changed so little in all the years between. But over all those years, and especially during the past quarter of a century, much has changed elsewhere in Nepal. Since this evening's talk is about Everest, let me refer to change in that context. Within two years of our climb, both the other two mountains exceeding 28,000 feet in height - L2 and Kangchenjunga - had been climbed. Within ten years, all the fourteen Himalayan peaks above 8,000 metres had also been climbed. Only one of these, Annapurna, had been climbed before the ascent of Everest, in 1950 by a French party.

A number of other peaks of over 22,000 feet, which had seemed impossible by the standards of mountaineering in 1953, had fallen to the determined and skilful climbers from several countries, in the Eastern Himalaya alone. The same story was being repeated elsewhere in Nepal and in other great mountain ranges - Makalu, Kangtega and Thamserku, Taboche, Amai Dablang, Khotse, Nuptse. All of these, as some would say, had been conquered; though not without exacting their toll in terms of human lives.

So it was not long before what might be called the heroic age of pioneering ascents on still unclimbed - or virgin - summits, was followed, as it had been in the Western Alps a century beforehand, by a new era in mountaineering history. It was ushered in by a new wave of daring young climbers intent on filling in the detail, uninterested in the ways of least resistance - they dubbed our climb on Everest as the "Yak" Route - looking for harder ways for their own sakes, up the steep buttresses and precipices, which challenged their skill, their new techniques - and their spirit.

They were pursuing mountaineering, not as exploration, but as a sport. To take Everest as just one example of this sporting approach in what is fast becoming the playground of the Himalayas:

1. Between 1971 and 1978 there have been five assaults on its South-West face, by Japanese, European, International and British parties. It was, as you know, Bonington's expedition in 1975 which at last solved that problem.
2. The Chinese made one, and probably two, ascents from Tibet: via the North Col and the Northern Ridges. That was the route which had been the scene of so much British endeavour between the World Wars.
3. The Americans climbed by the West Ridge: partly also by the North Face, and followed this up by descending our route, in 1963.
4. The Japanese made further records: by a ski descent from the South Col, and by making the first ascent of a woman climber.
5. Last year an Austrian team included two men who climbed Everest without resort to Oxygen.

(There is even a book about canoeing down Everest. Soon it will be descending the mountain on a tea tray.)

What is more relevant to my theme of change is that Everest soon assumed the image of a status symbol, which every self-respecting nation that valued mountaineering as an index of its superiority sought to add to its battle honours. After the Swiss and the Americans and the Indians came the French, Italians, Austrians, Germans, Spaniards, from Europe; the Argentinians from South

America; the South Koreans, Japanese and Chinese from Eastern Asia; the New Zealanders from the Antipodes; and very probably, the Russians as well.

All these came and saw - but by no means all conquered. On my reckoning, there have been about twenty-four expeditions following ours, of which only half (12) have been successful. More than sixty people have stood on the summit, two of them twice. More than forty have died.

A consequence of this magnetic attraction of a mountain for the aspirations of mankind has been the twice-yearly invasion of one small area of Nepal, and the "booking" of Everest (for the Government requires that their approval be given and a fee paid) for many years ahead. The scale of this frequent invasion has to be seen to be believed. When Charles Wylie, my wife and Gregory and I were in Khumbu in 1973, an Italian expedition of some sixty-five climbers was attacking Everest with their mountain troops, supported by 1,000 Sherpas; to say nothing of helicopters flying overhead between Lukla and Base Camp. In the villages there was a strange silence and a curious emptiness. Only women and children were left to tend the flocks and till the fields. Food and fuel were already becoming a problem as these latter day armies and the tourist traffic sweeping up the approach routes on package tours to Everest Base Camp grows year by year.

It is true that Himalayan mountaineering is now evolving towards smaller, more lightly equipped and more informal parties of friends, who treat these biggest mountains as though they were no higher than those in the Western Alps, who need fewer porters and make less demands on local resources. At present, the Government makes these modest enterprises difficult by the high price of fees and the cost of liaison officers. They also insist that a Nepalese citizen must always be a member of the summit party. In short, the Government favours the larger, more prestigious, and supposedly more responsible expeditions, which have sponsorship or approval from their own national governments despite their impact on social conditions and on the economy in the local areas.

But it may prove to be as broad as it is long. For a change towards a more relaxed policy would doubtless have the effect of multiplying the number of parties.

COLONEL WYLIE TAKES UP THE STORY

The start originally planned was from Tonglu on the Singalila ridge, the Nepal-India border. But entry to Nepal can now only be made at certain specified points and this involved returning to the plains, crossing the Nepalese border at Khakrabhatta and climbing up to Ilam by jeep to start walking from there. By the time the Singalila ridge had been gained from the Nepalese side a three day detour had been made. Two days delightful walking along the ridge with breath-taking views of Kangchenjunga ahead and the Everest group far to the North West were however ample reward for the long steep climb to the ridge at the very beginning of the trek.

Dropping off the ridge at Phalut the party camped near the village of Lieutenant Rambahadur Limbu, VC, 10th Gurkha Rifles. Colonel Wylie, a retired officer of the same regiment, and Sheila Wylie had been invited to his house (Lieutenant Rambahadur, the only serving VC, was with the regiment in Hong Kong). They found a puja in progress for the VC's step-grandmother to provide for her in the life hereafter. No less than fifty-seven men from the village, Chamlingdanra, were serving in Gurkha units of the British or Indian armies. Most of the others were ex-servicemen. On none of his previous treks had Colonel Wylie met so many ex-servicemen or servicemen on leave. So was it throughout Limbuan, especially in Panchtar district.

The party crossed the Tamur, climbed to the Milke Danra ridge, descended via Chainpur, where they visited the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust clinic, and crossed the Arun by the new girder bridge at Tumlingtar. Near Dingmaya they met a woman bijuwa or phedangma in full regalia, complete with her retinue of musicians. Popularly known as witch doctors to Westerners, people having certain unexplained powers can and do effect lasting cures, fulfilling a need where modern medicine has still to be made available. Crossing the Salpa Bhanjyang, 12,000 feet, the party spent the only off day of their three week trek, celebrating Bhai Tika at the Rai village of Gudel. The Darjeeling Tamang porters, now far from home, returned from here, and the party enjoyed the cheerful banter and singing of Rais and Rainis as they crossed the wild and remote valleys of the Hungu and Inukhu to reach Pangkongma and Sherpa country. Next day they joined the well worn Kathmandu-Everest track and once again were in the company of Europeans. In nearly three weeks they had only met one other Westerner - an American Peace Corps volunteer.

Lukhla airstrip held memories for Charles Wylie who had been in the plane which had made the first landing there in 1964. Sir Edmund Hillary and about one hundred Sherpas had spent the night before dancing Sherpa dances to stamp in the freshly dug earth. Now, on a fine day, ten or more flights of Twin Otters come in on one day and a small shanty town had sprung up to cater for the tourist traffic. The party found it pleasanter to camp a little way from this somewhat squalid spot.

Continuing up the Dudh Kosi valley, the party had its first reunion with old Sherpas of the '53 expedition, meeting by chance Dawa Tensing, the Deputy Sirdar of the expedition and Sirdar of the first ascent of Kangchenjunga and most of Charles Evans' other expeditions. The party was later to stay at his house near Thyangboche and enjoy the hospitality of this staunch and stalwart old man, loved and respected by his British friends and revered by his Sherpa compatriots.

Further up the valley the party were among the first to be charged dues for entering the newly created Khumbu National Park. Later they were to meet the New Zealand Warden and to see the imaginative start that has been made to conserve wild life and to replant the rapidly dwindling stocks of timber. In this the Warden was being helped by a group of some forty people from Britain from Endeavour, a youth organisation which combines service with adventure. While some climbed and explored in the area of the Imja and Khumbu glaciers, others planted spruce seedlings below Trashilingo.

As the party approached Kunde a harassed member of the staff of the Hillary hospital brought an urgent plea for medical help. The hospital doctor was away, so Drs. Hamish and Mary Nicol, assisted by Sheila Wylie, a nursing sister, helped in a difficult breach delivery. The child was safely born nine hours later but sadly died next day. At Kunde the party divided, the climbing group going on with yak transport provided by Ang Namgyal, one of the high altitude porters on the '53 expedition, while the remainder stayed to wander at will for the next ten days among the villages and valleys of upper Khumbu.

In glorious weather the low level group spent a happy week visiting many old Sherpa friends, enjoying the birds and flowers, and generally discovering much of interest in the way of life, religion and culture of the splendid rugged people, the Sherpas. The pattern of life has been significantly changed by the increase in expeditions and tourists. Tourism is now Nepal's major industry, in fact virtually the only means of earning foreign exchange, and of course Everest is one of the major attractions. Of the 130,000 odd tourists who come to Nepal annually, a high proportion visit Khumbu. During the season Sherpa villages are almost empty, inhabited mainly by old men and children while the able-bodied members of the family are away earning their living as porters. No longer is it necessary to grow crops to sell outside Khumbu, only enough for internal needs.

The old staple diet of potatoes and barley is changing too. Now excellent cauliflowers, cabbages, beans and other vegetables are readily to be had thanks to New Zealand and Japanese aid schemes. Electricity too should be available in some of the villages on the completion of a local hydro electric to be installed by Austrians on the Dudh Kosi between Thami and Namche.

After visiting Thami, Tenzing's birthplace, where they stayed at the house of Mingma, Jennifer Bourdillon's "tent orderly" Sherpani, Khumjung where they saw the Yeti scalp and called on Kapa Kalden, the artist, Phorcha where they met Sen Tenzing, Shipton's renowned "Foreign Sportsman", the group returned via Pangboche to stay with Dawa Tenzing at Deboche until the return of the climbers. Their stay there coincided with the unique Mani Rimdu festival which takes place annually at Thyangboche Monastery. They were privileged to see all three days of this fabulous ceremony during which the Lamas perform the ritual devil dances dressed in grotesque masks and brilliantly coloured costumes while the High Lama, on his throne on the balcony above the courtyard, reads from the good books to the people of Khumbu assembled below, to the clash of cymbals and the boom of 20 ft. horns.

John Hunt then told the story of the climbing group. They established a high camp in the Cholo Khola valley in fine but very cold weather for it was then late November, and enjoyed a few days of good climbing in the area. Some made a quick dash up the Khumbu glacier and were lucky to have ideal weather for their view of the Everest group from Kalapathar above Base Camp. Their photographs of this uniquely beautiful panorama must have been among the best ever shown to the Society.

John and Joy Hunt, despite advancing years, crossed the 18,000 ft. col to the Chujima Valley, seeing on the way three quite separate and well defined yeti tracks.

The footprints measured 14 inches by 7 inches and had clearly been made by a very heavy animal. There were also marks suggesting a tail touching the snow at times.

The party reunited at Dawa Tenzing's house, where this magnificent old friend insisted on providing an immense meal washed down in true Sherpa style with tongbas of chang and rakshi.

Before starting their return journey, the party was granted, through the good offices of Dawa Tenzing, an audience of the High Lama at Thyangboche Monastery. This Rimpoche or Reincarnation is the second most holy Buddhist in Nepal, a dignified, intelligent and highly religious person. The party met with full ceremonial exchanges of Khadas and were regaled with brick tea and rancid butter, chang and rakshi while for over one and a half hours they discussed with the Lama a variety of topics including world ecumenity, Buddhist representation in a Hindu country, the Dalai Lama, the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the tourist litter problem.

Back at Lukla the party found over 150 people waiting for a flight. No planes had been able to come in for five days. Miraculously the next morning dawned clear and they were able to fly straight out, for the rule is that those who have booked have priority on the day of their booking.

'WHERE DO THE REAL SHERPAS LIVE?'

by Charles R. M. Bangham

You may be wondering why I have called this talk "Where do the real Sherpas live?". Is there any doubt on the matter? Do the Sherpas not live in Khumbu? I hope that it will become clear during the course of this article that the matter is not so straightforward.

I first went to Nepal in the monsoon of 1975, with two friends from Cambridge, to study the genetics and the lung function in an isolated high-altitude population. We chose to go to the Rolwaling Valley, just west of Khumbu, on the advice of two anthropologists then in Kathmandu, Julian Wake and Joe Reinhart.

Made accessible to foreigners in about 1974, the Rolwaling valley had been visited very little since Eric Shipton and others looked down into it on the Everest reconnaissance expedition nearly twenty-five years earlier, although an American anthropologist, Janice Sacherer, had lived there for nearly a year as soon as it was opened.

We spent ten days in the higher village of Beding, at 3700 metres, or 12,000 feet altitude, in the cold and damp, and two of us entertained the Sherpas with a variety of tests indoors while Philip Andrews-Speed chipped away at the rocks in the drizzle outside.

Simon Howarth and I were asking the Sherpas to blow into a spirometer, a sort of souped-up bellows, so we could measure their lung capacity. This was always a

source of amusement and our greatest difficulty was to stop them laughing into the machine. I took blood samples by finger-prick, and after using a drop to find out their blood group, I stored a few drops on a small square of cotton sheet, which Simon and I took back to Scotland Yard Forensic Laboratory to analyse.

Some of you know of a substance called PTC which tastes very bitter to some people but quite tasteless to others. Whether you can taste it or not is decided by a single gene, and you can get a measure of genetic relatedness to other populations by finding the proportion of people who can taste it. We also did this rather elaborate test on the Sherpas.

After ten days we moved down 6,000 feet to the only other permanent village in the valley, Simigaon or 'bean village', a lush green settlement above the Bhote Kosi.

I was rather sceptical when most of the population in Simigaon claimed to be Sherpa, for they looked quite different from the Beding Sherpas, and it was the Beding people whom we imagined to be the "real Sherpas". The trouble is that since the Sherpas have become so famous for their mountaineering, some people have found it worth their while to call themselves Sherpas whose relationship to the Sherpas is tenuous. We carried out the same tests as in Beding on one hundred people, a mixture of Sherpas, Tamangs and a few Hindus, and then set off home, feeding the leeches liberally en route.

Now when analysing our data, I found that the Beding Sherpas had a very high proportion of people with blood group B, while the Sherpas of Simigaon had a rather high frequency of blood group O. Although this didn't fit in very well with any information we had on nearby populations, partly because there was very little of it, it seemed, if anything, to indicate that the Beding people were related to Khumbu Sherpas, while the Simigaon ones were related to Sherpas in Solu, in the hills.

I wrote to Professor C. Jest of the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique in Paris to ask him some questions on the Sherpas, and he put me in touch with his then PhD student, Janice Sacherer, who as I mentioned above had lived in Beding for nearly a year. When I sent her a summary of our work in Rolwaling she became very excited, because it corresponded very well with the material that she had obtained in Beding - for she had been told that the Beding Sherpas came from Khumbu, or from Tibet via Khumbu, while Simigaon had been settled by Solu Sherpas.

After a day or two poring over our results, by the end of which we had put the entire population of Beding on one genealogy, Janice suggested that we should collaborate further, and extend the work we had been doing separately over the rest of the Sherpa population of Nepal. So in December of 1976, we found ourselves back in Nepal.

We spent an enervating month in Kathmandu knitting red tape and unravelling it again, and at last left for Helambu, towards the end of January 1977.

Many of you will know Helambu, which is a popular valley for walking in. Although my main interest was now the fertility of Sherpas, I was continuing some of the tests such as blood grouping that we had done in Rolwaling, and Janice was recording the clan names - Sherpas are organized into clans, rather like the clans of the Scottish Highlanders - and the vocabulary, which varies a surprising amount from

valley to valley. She was also asking the villagers, in many of the villages we visited, what special names they give to their close relatives - since you can infer quite a lot about the marriage system and the way it is changing from these words. As in Nepali, there is a huge number of different terms given to these relatives.

We spent a month walking round the villages of Helambu, also side-stepping into the valley on either side of the Helambu valley proper. Our suspicions grew towards the end of that month that the Helambu population are not as closely related to the Sherpas of Solu and Khumbu as they said they were. This was compounded by the fact that they used not Sherpa clan names, but Tamang clan names; and we met Patrick Robinson, from the Durham University project in Langtang who said that an old lady in Langtang had told him that her ancestors, and those of the Helambu population, were Tamangs, not Sherpas. Their language was quite distinct from Solu-Khumbu Sherpa, and their blood groups showed no particular affinity either to Rolwaling or Solu-Khumbu Sherpas.

The reason that we had been using the Sherpas of Solu as a sort of yardstick to compare other groups with was because a group of Germans in the 1960s discovered some written records of Sherpa history, which until then had been thought not to exist. These records indicated that the first Sherpas to settle in Nepal came in the middle 1500s, and took land in the then unoccupied Solu; only a few stayed in Khumbu, at Pangboche. There were two or three later waves of immigration of Sherpas into Nepal, in the following centuries; and because of increasing population in Solu, the later immigrants had to stay in the less hospitable land at high altitude in Khumbu.

So our next destination was Solu; we set off in the middle of March, on the beginning of the approach march to Everest. After nearly a week we reached Bhandar, or Chyangma, our first Sherpa village in Solu, where we stopped to ask questions and take blood samples.

While in Chyangma, something happened that is typical of an anthropologist's work: we heard a rather vague story, little more than a rumour, that some way south there lived some people who were related to the inhabitants of Helambu, but who lived as other hill tribes, and called themselves the Kagate or 'paper people'. You cannot afford to ignore this sort of rumour, for it might lead you on to a big discovery. So we made a detour, walking for two days south to reach the Kagate villages.

These were miserably poor villages, hard hit by a recent famine, and where there were obvious signs of food shortage and of malnutrition. We did what little we could with the drugs available - mostly antibiotic ointments, wound dressings, worm medicines and iron and vitamin pills, and then crossed the huge Likhua Khola before turning north towards Solu proper. After two more days' walk we arrived in the large and wealthy Sherpa village of Tapting, where we stayed with a man who had dissembled as a Tamang in order to be recruited into the Gurkhas, from which he was now retired. He had designed his new house in part imitation of the Western style, with fruit trees planted round the stone terrace.

We then crossed the valley to the village of Gora, where we were royally entertained for three days by the family of the head man of the village. We rarely disliked the Sherpas we stayed with, but no family was ever as pleasant to us as this Lama family. They proudly told us that whenever Sir Edmund Hillary was nearby, he would make a detour to visit them: though they told us that this was largely because of their chang, which was certainly the best I have had.

Leaving Gora, still under the influence of chang, we walked to the market in Salleri, and were immediately overwhelmed by the profusion of people and food.

The rhododendrons at last told us that we were nearing Khumbu, and we looked forward to the chill air of higher altitudes. Strangely enough, this was the Sherpa area where we had least work to do; since it is most famous, and always thought of as the centre of Sherpa country, most work that had been done concerning the Sherpas had been done in Khumbu. But I wanted to take some blood samples from Sherpas to measure the concentrations of certain hormones, and Janice had some questions outstanding from her last visit to Khumbu.

So we spent two weeks, based in Pheriche, working with Peter Hackett of the Himalayan Rescue Association, who had agreed to help me in my hormone work. And while here, we took the opportunity to go up to Kala Pattar.

The samples for hormone analysis were liquid blood, unlike the genetic samples. And they were kept in liquid nitrogen, which had to be flown back to Kathmandu as soon as possible before it all evaporated. So we rushed down to lower altitude, and despatched the samples from Syangboche as we passed, to be met in Kathmandu by Mike Cheney, who had kindly agreed to take them to Britain himself.

We should have liked to be able to cross east to the Arun valley at high altitude, but we had little time and less equipment, and no-one in the party had been that way before. So we followed the Dudh Kosi south for a couple of days, and then branched sharply to the east, over the 10,000 ft Pangkongma La. There followed a tiring but very interesting walk over two more 10,000 ft. passes and across the Hongu and Hinku rivers, to meet the Arun.

We had come to the Arun on another of those dubious rumours, according to which there were Sherpas living high up on the sides of the Arun valley. After an exhausting and frustrating three days' slog up the wrong side of the river - 'wrong' because there was not a proper path - we were beginning to wonder whether we had come to the east in vain, for we had seen no sign of Sherpas. And when we finally reached the village we had been heading for, Sedua, we were sure that we had been misled: the houses were not a bit like those in Solu and Khumbu, and it is rare for the Sherpas to adapt their architectural style to that of the surrounding people. Also, it was a very damp place, which we thought the Sherpas would dislike.

But the faces which greeted us looked familiar enough, and to our grateful surprise we heard them speak proper Solu Sherpa - closer to Solu language, in fact, than

was the Khumbu Sherpas' language. And these people, sure enough, had relatives in Solu and a few in Khumbu. We now think it is likely that these villages were settled by people from Solu, displaced either by poverty or by shortage of land; or possibly, in some cases, because they were banished outlaws.

Sedua had been very badly hit by recent hail storms, and there was a general air of despondency. But the next village, our last Sherpa village, had by some freak escaped the hail and it was one of the most cheerful villages we had visited. Its name was Yakua.

Having taken our fiftieth blood sample from an Arun Sherpa, we decided that we had enough data. So, turning our heads towards home, we all but ran over the Arun, down the ridge through Num and Khandbari, where I returned to last October. On the evening of the same day we reached Tumlingtar, we arrived back in Kathmandu.

While walking from Khumbu to the Arun valley, we had been analysing the blood grouping results. Since we were aware of the Germans' work which showed that different clans of Sherpas had immigrated from Tibet at different times, we analysed these results according to clan. And we discovered a very striking thing: the blood group frequencies in the old clans, the first immigrants about four hundred years ago, were quite different from those not only of all the surrounding populations, but also those of the new Sherpa clans. In fact, the old clans had a very high frequency of blood group O.

So to answer my question, "Where do the real Sherpas live?" is, as you can see, not easy; there are several distinct types of Sherpa, and perhaps several degrees of Sherpahood. I suppose it is rather like asking "Where do the real English live?" or "Where do the real Jews live?"

Coming as she did from the United States, Janice pointed out that the other main populations which have very high O gene frequency are the American Indians, whose predecessors are known to have come from Siberia, although it is not certain when. Now we have nothing like enough evidence to prove this wild conjecture, but we think it is quite possible that the Sherpas and the American Indians had common ancestors. And with this rather exciting possibility, I must stop, before I make any more rash theories.

Members would wish to know that the classic work on the subject of Sherpas, "The Sherpas of Nepal" by Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf who is a member of our Society, is published by JOHN MURRAY, 50 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BD.

Ed.

A VISIT TO BRIGHTON
THE SUMMER OUTING 12 JULY 1980

by

Beatrice Emmett

The morning of July 12th began bright and sunny and full of promise for an enjoyable outing - a trip out of London and down to the coast at Brighton.

By 9.30 a.m. a large party of Nepalese, adults and children resident in the UK along with several members of the Society, had grouped themselves outside the Royal Nepalese Embassy for the Annual Summer Outing arranged by the Committee of the Britain-Nepal Society. There was an air of excitement and expectation about this gathering and much chatter and moving around. The outing was planned to consist of a coach drive down to Brighton, lunch at the Hall of the Good Shepherd, followed by a choice of either joining a party to go round the Royal Pavilion or visiting the town.

Last year's outing to Hastings and a sight of the sea to many had obviously been a new and fascinating experience; so, of course, this year it had to be a visit to the sea again, and thus it was that Brighton was chosen for the outing.

Soon after 10 a.m. the two coaches hired for the occasion arrived and the children of the party hurried excitedly to seat themselves by the windows from which they gave shy little smiles and waves, as Nepalese children will, given the slightest encouragement. Then Mr. Manandhar's enormous luncheon dekchis arrived and, emitting delicious spicy aromas, were loaded on to the coaches together with large bags containing refreshments to be distributed on the journey. At last all was ready and the coaches triumphantly set off southwards making for the coast.

Unfortunately the bright sunny skies soon gave way to our usual cloudy ones and showers threatened, but the weather never actually spoiled any plans. The venue turned out to be perfect for our purpose, but it was a bit difficult to find. However, by the time the coaches appeared on the scene the advance party, led by the two Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers, had already arrived in cars and had set out the trestle tables and brightly coloured chairs. Mr. and Mrs. Sykes had the drinks laid out. Even the oven in the spacious kitchen had been set to warm in anticipation.

Once the party arrived, it took them no time at all to settle down at the tables and it was a delight to see the children tucking into generous helpings of curry and rice. After lunch, some of the ladies took over the washing up in the kitchen and everything was left spotless and tidy.

The Society was delighted that H. E. the Nepalese Ambassador, together with several members and families from the Embassy, were able to join the outing this year, and that our new President, Sir George Bishop, and Lady Bishop were also able to attend.

With lunch over we were all free to choose where to go - to the seafront, to the shops or to join the arranged tour of the Royal Pavilion. We parted with strict instructions to meet at 4.30 p.m. at the entrance to the Pavilion - an unmistakable landmark if ever there was one!

At the Pavilion the guide was awaiting our party. She gave us a brief preliminary resume of the history of the strange fantasy Palace which we were about to see - a Palace dreamed up by an extraordinary Prince and inspired by a rather charming real Chinese wallpaper.

We followed our guide into the magnificent banqueting room lit by a chandelier of unusual and profuse design which surely could be weighed in tons. Wherever one looked no detail seemed to be too insignificant to be decorated and always with great originality. The glittering dining table was richly set, and over it hung in all its sophistication the great chandelier surmounted by a winged dragon and suspended from a painting on the ceiling of what looked like a banana tree!

And then the kitchen - a big bright room with four tall palm trees of cast iron supporting the roof. Every wall was shelved and stacked with row upon row of copper pots and pans, all necessary no doubt to produce the overburdened menus of the time - a sample of which showed 36 courses at one dinner! No diet-watching for this Prince and his guests!

Incidentally, the copper pans in the kitchen, like much of the furniture and carpets, are not the original ones because those were removed by order of Queen Victoria who, understandably, disapproved of the Pavilion. She even ordered the Pavilion to be dismantled in 1840, but in 1850 the municipality of Brighton acquired the building so it is now a Regency Museum.

There was also one sad-looking room with a few relics saved from a vandal's fire which show how extremely fine and beautiful the music room must have been. Slowly money is coming in for its restoration.

By way of contrast we walked through quiet restful rooms with ceilings painted to resemble gentle skies and interesting prints on the walls which would have needed hours to examine in detail. Finally, we saw the authentic Chinese wallpaper, still in place and in good condition, which had inspired the Prince Regent to build this curious Pavilion and to top it up with so many domes.

It is worth mentioning that Nash was responsible for the Indian style architecture and for the use of cast iron to strengthen other Oriental features, for instance, the "bamboo" staircase. Truly it is a "fun place" for a pleasure loving Prince and now a "fun place" but also a serious historical one, for the people who visit and also for those who live in Brighton.

It really was a fascinating afternoon and it was interesting to see how many of our Nepalese friends were interested enough to join the tour and walk through the Pavilion.

When we all met up again there was much last minute clicking of cameras to preserve the occasion for souvenirs - and then all too soon the coaches were once again on their way - back to London.

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 £125,000 for distribution in the hill areas of Nepal in the form of grants, pensions and scholarships.

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 & 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. In addition, all serving officers and soldiers of the Brigade of Gurkhas contribute one day's pay to the Fund.

The Brigade of Gurkhas Welfare Scheme which operates with the full approval of the authorities in Nepal is responsible for distributing the money. 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 Trust (Canada) which is a separate Trust financed in 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 do, of course, receive disablement pensions for which the Government of India has assumed responsibility. But such pensions are relatively small and extra help can be badly needed in some cases. Pensions are also paid by the Trusts to many widows and these have been substantially increased during the current year to bring them up closer to the level of Government 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 operate the scheme.

The Trusts are managed by twelve Managing Trustees, including the Major General Brigade of Gurkhas who is the Chairman. 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. This yearly meeting is usually also attended by the Chairman and Secretary of the Gurkha Welfare Trust (Canada), Lieutenant Colonel W. Kenneth Robinson, C.St.J., CD, MP, and Major M. L. J. Burke, CD

Further support for the welfare operations comes from the Gurkha Welfare Trust Foundation (U.S.A.) set up by Mr. and Mrs. Ellice McDonald, Jr., of Delaware, and from the Gurkha Welfare Appeal in Australia which is run with unflinching vigour by a former officer of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, Major J. R. Ricketts, MBE.

Anyone wishing to contribute by donation or covenant to the Gurkha Welfare Trusts should contact the General Secretary, Miss Jacqueline Craig, whose address is given below.

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.

NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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 £3 per annum. 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 the 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 Honorary Secretary is:

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

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