



BRITAIN - NEPAL

SOCIETY

JOURNAL

NO.6

1982

The format of our Journal continues unchanged although the contents are full of changes and variety. For the latter we again thank our contributors for allowing us to publish the text of their talks to the Society at the Alpine Club and Mrs. Frances Slade for writing a special article for us ("Treks and Trekkers") as she felt her talk, which came over so well as a commentary on her excellent slide-show, would not have the same effect in cold print. But her article does and we are very grateful to her for it.

Regarding the format, many members and even sister organisations have commented on its suitability, and we therefore keep it exactly as it was when, in the year of Her Majesty the Queen's Silver Jubilee, we ventured on a Journal for the first time. It is light to handle and inexpensive both to produce and to distribute.

EDITOR

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The Society's Opening of the Season Party, followed by a short film about Nepal (kindly loaned by H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador), was held in October. This occasion gave new members the opportunity of meeting the Committee and members of the Society and to learn about its functions and activities.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday, 19th January, and this year it took the form of a normal meeting at the Alpine Club rather than a special supper party, and was well supported with Sir George Bishop presiding and the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Singha among those present.

THE ANNUAL NEPALI SUPPER

On 23rd March we were once again able to hold the Nepali Supper at New Zealand House and it was attended by H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Singha; Mr. Neil Martin, MP, Minister for Overseas Development, who was the Guest of Honour, and H. E. the Deputy High Commissioner for New Zealand and Mrs. B. M. Brown. Also at the high table were Lord Hunt, Mr. Neal Thorne, MP, Secretary of the British Parliamentary Group for Nepal, Mr. R. T. Boscawen, MP, and General Sir Edwin Bramall and Lady Bramall.

Sir George Bishop welcomed the 215 members and guests and said they represented the best ever attendance at this function. Limitations of space unfortunately precluded a larger gathering. The curry supper was once again excellently arranged by Mr. Manandhar of the Natraj Restaurant. We were again fortunate to have the help of the Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers and also of the Pipers and smartly turned out Orderlies who came from the 1st Bn., 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles. Our thanks to them and to their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Morgan, for this much appreciated help.

In his speech after dinner, Sir George emphasised that the relationship between Britain and Nepal was probably better now than at any time in the past. He went on to thank the Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand for his kindness in making New Zealand House available to the Society for the evening and drew attention to the close links between New Zealand and Nepal which had followed in the wake of the part which Sir Edmund Hillary, together with Lord Hunt and Tenzing, had played in mountaineering and a number of beneficial activities in Nepal. Sir George expressed the pleasure of the Society at the presence of H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador and hoped he would be able to come again.

The Minister, in his speech, emphasised the strong links with Nepal and went on to say that as Minister for Overseas Development he was able to appreciate at first hand the matter of British aid for Nepal. The UK, he said, was doing a great deal on a limited budget to aid some twenty-three countries, of which only one received more aid than Nepal. UK aid included assistance with agriculture, water supply, education, forestry and medical matters (the last through the Britain Nepal Medical Trust).

The Minister referred to the construction of the East-West Highway and to the presence of many British advisers in Nepal who were deployed at the various levels at which they could best serve the country. Gurkhas returning from Hong Kong also played a part in assisting with the economic improvements so important in a rapidly developing country like Nepal.

Mr. Martin mentioned that the tea industry had now been established in Nepal and that the products of the Nepalese tea gardens were likely to be on the market in December 1982.

He next referred to the assistance that was to be given in the training of administrative staff similar to that provided at the UK Administrative Staff College at Henley and to the advent of the British Satellite which would assist in improving communications.

Finally, the Minister reminded his audience that, in principle, the requests for assistance were made by Nepal and that it was the happy duty of the British Government to treat such requests sympathetically and to respond whenever possible.

His Excellency the Nepalese Ambassador expressed the delight of himself and his wife at being invited once again to attend the annual supper of the Society. He had attended these occasions since their inception and hoped that he would be invited to do so again, even though he would soon be vacating his appointment. H.E. jestingly suggested that if invited perhaps the Society might be prepared to pay his air fare!

H.E. said he was especially happy to see that Mr. Neil Martin was present because this helped to show that the cordial relationship between Britain and Nepal had a practical basis. H.E. referred to a number of improvements in aid programmes which had followed the visit of Their Majesties The King and Queen of Nepal to the UK in 1980.

The generous economic assistance which the UK gave to Nepal was much appreciated and warmly welcomed, but since it was said that appetite increases with eating, more aid would always be welcomed in Nepal.

SUMMER OUTING

On Saturday, 24th July, the Outing to Chessington Zoo took place in cold and windy weather, but this did not deter 75 members, Yetis and children from enjoying a very pleasant day. Miss Susan Roberts writes about the Outing elsewhere in the Journal.

MONTHLY LECTURES AND MEETINGS - OCTOBER/APRIL

Interest in the Society's activities and its membership continues to grow. The monthly lectures were well attended and we would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have given these lectures.

On Tuesday, 17th November, Mrs. Frances Slade gave a light-hearted talk with slides on her experiences of "Treks and Trekkers". Mrs. Slade has led several treks in the Himalayas and Ramblers Association walks in the Alps. *

Miss K. Burton and Dr. Biggs gave an enjoyable talk on "The Craftsmen of Nepal", illustrated with numerous slides, on Tuesday, 8th December. Their delightful extempore remarks on the slides have so far defied every effort to reduce them to writing.

In February, Major D. J. R. Stack, RE gave an interesting talk with slides on "Engineering Aid in East Nepal - A Trek with a Purpose". *

The final talk of the season took place on Wednesday, 21st April, and was given by Mr. W. C. Young on "Overland to Nepal by Motor Caravan - 1977". * In view of the recent upheavals in Iran and Afghanistan, this journey was of particular interest as the route took them through both these countries. Bill Young and his wife are members of the Society and take a great interest in the welfare of the Nepalese children at the Pestalozzi Village.

/ * The text of the talk appears in this Journal. /

THE NEPALESE DANCERS AND MUSICIANS FROM KATHMANDU

On Monday, 5th July, the Mount Everest Cultural Society performed a programme of dancing and music at a Royal Gala Performance in the presence of H. R. H. The Prince of Wales at the Bloomsbury Theatre. His Royal Highness was greeted by H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador and Lord Hunt, the Chairman of the Nepalese Cultural Committee.

After the National Anthems the performance commenced with the traditional candle lit Arati dance. Dances from the regions of Nepal were presented, and the programme ended with a versatile arrangement of the Peacock Dance. His Royal Highness, accompanied by Mr. Sahade Rana, Patron of the Society, went back stage to meet the Company afterwards. To the acclaim of the critics the Company continued to perform each evening for a week at the Bloomsbury Theatre. This professional group should have been well pleased with its successful week's appearance in London.

FUTURE EVENTS

The season 1982/83 opens on Wednesday, 13th October with a talk by Miss Nancy Noel on "Less well known aspects of Nepal" with slides, at the Alpine Club. Miss Noel has been on five treks and two have been 'off the beaten track' and it is the last two which she intends to talk about.

On Wednesday, 10th November, Mr. F. F. Steele will lecture and show slides on "A Visit to Tibet and the North Side of Everest."

The Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place on Thursday, 2nd December at the Royal Nepalese Embassy at the kind invitation of H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador. *

Farewell Party for H. E. The Ambassador and Madame Singha

H. E. The Nepalese Ambassador will be relinquishing his post in February. The Committee, on behalf of the members of the Britain-Nepal Society, wish to organise a Farewell Party for His Excellency and Madame Singha at the House of Commons. *

The Annual Nepali Supper

Arrangements are being made for the Supper to be held at New Zealand House in February. *

An Exhibition to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Houston Flight over Everest

The Britain-Nepal Society are planning to hold an exhibition in May to commemorate this event. *

[* Details of these and other events will be circulated at a later date.]

MESSAGES

A congratulatory telegram was sent to T.R.H. The Prince and Princess of Wales on the birth of their son, H.R.H. Prince William of Wales. A message of congratulations was sent to our Patron, H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra of Nepal, on his birthday in July.

YETI ASSOCIATION

The Yeti Association held its Annual General Meeting on 29th February, 1982, and the following were elected to the Committee: President: Dr. M. P. Dungana; Vice President: Mr. H. B. Karki; Secretary: Mr. I. P. Manandhar; Treasurer: Dr. B. D. Chatao; Social Secretary: Mr. Mani Rana; Asst. Social Secretary: Dr. Bhinod Dungana. The Association membership includes 60 students and 40 non-students. Details of the Association can be obtained from Mr. I. P. Manandhar, Natraj Restaurant, 93 Charlotte Street, London W.1. (Tel: 01-637 0050).

OBITUARIES

It was with great sorrow that the Britain-Nepal Society learnt of the death of Princess Princep Shah who died in Bangkok earlier this year. She was the wife of the late Prince Himalaya of Nepal and an aunt of the present king of Nepal, King Birendra.

Princess Princep Shah devoted herself to helping refugees, and to improving the social services in her country. For more than twenty years she was Chairman of the Red Cross Society branch in Nepal. Her work earned her the United Nations "Nansen Award" in 1969.

The book of condolence at the Embassy was signed on behalf of the Britain-Nepal Society by the President, Sir George Bishop.

Another sad loss to the Society was the death of Sir George Falconer whose long and distinguished career overseas and at home included being Ambassador in Nepal during the critical war years.

We were very sorry to hear of the death of one of Britain's leading athletes of the 1930s who was also a member of the Society. Squadron Leader John Powell who died in July represented Great Britain in the Olympic Games in 1932 (where he was a finalist in the 800 metres) and again in 1936. On his retirement from active athletics he devoted much time to assisting and encouraging younger athletes. On his return from a recent visit to Nepal he set about raising funds for improving sports facilities in Kathmandu.

TRAVEL IN NEPAL

Members may like to have the addresses of firms who are Corporate Members of the Society:

Link Travel/Sherpa Expeditions,
131A Heston Road, Hounslow, Middlesex

Sherpa Co-operative Trekking (P) Ltd.,
G. P. O. Box 1338, Kamal Pokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal

ExplorAsia,
Blenheim House, Burnsall Street, London SW3 5XS

and to know that Mr. Andrew Brock, an individual member, operates a firm, Andrew Brock Travel Ltd., 10 Barley Mow Passage, London W4 4PH, which arranges "The Accessible Adventure" tours to Nepal.

A member of our Committee, Miss L. Coulthard, is organising a trek in the mountain regions of Helanbu, Langtang and the Ganes Himal in April 1983. Any member interested in joining this tour should write to Miss Coulthard, whose address is Draycott House, 10 Draycott Avenue, London SW3 2SA. This is purely a private venture.

STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPES

It would be a great help in keeping down costs if members sent a SAE when they write, if their letter requires an answer or any other action.

SOCIETY TIE

The price of the Britain-Nepal Society tie is £4.20 including postage.
Your Secretary holds a good stock of these.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Since 1 October 1980 the annual subscription for individual members has been £3.00. Those members who have not yet amended their Banker's Order are requested to do so as soon as possible, and to include any arrears due to the Society since October 1980.

We hope members will continue to attend and enjoy the programme of events arranged for them by the Committee.

CELIA BROWN
Hon. Secretary
1 Allen Mansions
Allen Street
London W8 6UY

TREKS AND TREKKERS

by Frances Slade

[Based on a talk given to the Society at the Alpine Club on 17 November 1981]

It is very easy (especially with such a responsive and receptive audience as I had at the Alpine Club on 17th November) to give a slide-show on treks and trekkers, but extremely difficult to produce the same sort of effect on paper. A series of pictures of frantic trekkers attempting to stuff too much clobber into kitbags which appear to have shrunk overnight can be funny, as can a sequence of the various forms of mod-cons (neither mod nor con actually) to be found in the higher fastnesses of the trekking routes. But try to describe these things and you immediately become very boring.

On the other hand I have been asked to write something, so I will attempt to describe, as unboringly as possible, what it is like to be a middle-aged, middle-class and female, leader of Himalayan treks. (And those three epithets are all points against me to start with). The young, husky, muscles-bulging, ice-axe wielding he-man is not likely to be enchanted by a trek leader who could be his mum, and the young and hopeful female looking forward to a male trek-leader whom she can hero-worship isn't going to be pleased either. Such trekkers, who are very often extremely nice people, have to be won over almost before the trek begins, which constitutes a minor challenge at the outset, but can usually be coped with. More awkward is the problem of those people who have no idea what trekking entails, how much they will dislike being dirty and tired, how weak and demoralised a minor stomach upset can make them feel, and, above all, who are unable to adapt to conditions they haven't encountered before, or to disappointments and route-changes made necessary by unpredictable conditions which all mountains can produce, and the Himalayas more than any others. These people are fortunately rare, because, by and large, the sort of people who want to trek are adaptable, resilient, and eager to profit from new experiences. But I've met a few difficult ones, and they are a real problem, not only because they can ruin a holiday for everyone around them, but also because, as leader, one wants every member of a trek to get the most out of it, to feel the expense and effort and preparation were all worth while because the rewards are so great.

However, forgetting the difficult ones, I've met some wonderful and unforgettable people over the years, and made close friends, not only in this country but all over the globe. Last Christmas I had long letters from Canada, the States, South Africa and Australia, most of them asking: "When are we going to trek together again?" This is heart-warming, and ample recompense for the rare times when some trekkers haven't, perhaps, felt that they and I were exactly soulmates.

Among the friends I have made among trekkers, I think I must mention one or two. First, and quite the most colourful character of all, is the lady who came on her first trek at the age of 68, (she's done three more since), having trained for a year, but never having slept in a tent in her life. A beautician, elegant and graceful, married three times - ("but the last one died just before the divorce, so I'm now a respectful widow..") - her language was indescribable, her cheerfulness unquenchable, and her stamina incredible. At 10,000 ft plus, in a snowstorm, she was found in her tent painting her toenails scarlet. "Well dear," she explained, "I've decided to wear lipstick to-night, and one must have both ends matching."

Then, Ralph, my oldest and in many ways my youngest trekker, aged 75, who climbed the 4,000 ft from Jorsale to Kunde, mostly in dense cloud and falling snow, puffing his lungs out, nose streaming, and, between gasps, non-stop protests pouring from him. But unbeatable. When I stayed with him in North Yorkshire he wore me out walking over the moors, searching for a rare plant last seen on his honeymoon 50 years ago. Tragically, darling Ralph was killed in a car accident last year.

Arthur was another unforgettable character. He wore Union Jack underpants, (never changed them as far as I remember), ate all unwanted food off everyone's plates as well as his own treble helping, carried a porter load for a day up the dreadful slog from Tatopani to Ghorapani (6,000'), and is currently cycling from Cairo to Khartoum.

One year I had a very upper-crust and stately-homes group, all of whom took to trekking and its rigours as ducks to water. Inevitably that was one trek when everything went wrong, loads got lost, porters fought each other or vanished overnight, and, worst of all, our cook turned out to be hopeless. A charming man, he produced, with pride and triumph, the most repulsive meals, always stone-cold and congealing. When I apologised to the group, one of them said, "Oh good heavens, not to worry. If you've been to Eton you can take anything."

As far as the actual treks are concerned - (I'm supposed to be writing about treks as well as trekkers) - I can only say that no matter how often one travels the same path the magic never fades. Every trek is different, even if the incomparable scenery is unchanged. Of the three Annapurna Sanctuary treks I have done, two were abortive (in early spring) because of avalanches and landslides in the Hinko area, but one of these "failures" was nevertheless a great success as a trek, and tremendous fun, because of the marvellous quality of the trekkers - their resilience and adaptability, their humour and determination to get the utmost out of their holiday. The other was marred by a small number among the trekkers who couldn't accept the disappointment or adapt to a new route, and nearly (but not quite!) ruined the whole trek for everybody. These two episodes proved to me that the success of any trek depends almost entirely on the quality of the trekkers. As if we didn't know!

Anything one says or writes about trekking wouldn't be complete without reference to a group of people for whom my love and admiration knows no bounds, and from whom we have a great deal to learn: our Sherpas. Not that they are saints; indeed they are human, with human failings, and we have occasionally had our differences. But, as far as one can generalise about any race of people, they are brave, kind, humorous, conscientious and utterly dependable. The loyalty and support I've had from our Sherpas when coping with difficult trekkers has been a source of wonderment and gratitude, and among them I can now, with pride, count some dear and valued friends.

And now, a final word on trekking in a country where we are, after all, only interlopers. I never forget that the country belongs to the people whose villages we pass through, whose homes we visit, and whose environment we are unconsciously despoiling. We owe these people so much; they accept us, welcome us, entertain and feed us, and, regrettably, too many of us treat them as showpieces, not as fellow human-beings. They deserve our respect and admiration, just as their country deserves all we can offer in terms of care and conservation, and if we leave it too late for concern to be translated into action maybe there will be, for our children and grandchildren, none of the joys we have experienced in trekking the high wildernesses of the world.

ENGINEERING AID IN EAST NEPAL - A TREK WITH A PURPOSE

by Major D. J. R. Stack, B.Sc. (Eng), Royal Engineers

∩ Talk given to the Society with Slides and Vufoils, at the Alpine Club, on
23rd February 1982 ∩

I start my talk in the jungles of Brunei where I took my Squadron on exercise at the end of a wonderful tour of duty based in Hong Kong. I start with some basic combat engineering - a Gurkha Sapper working on the construction of mock Vietnamese style underground strong points. Such work is not always so basic - here we have the relevance of this in that these Nepalis from the hills learn some of the basic skills that can be most useful in the hills. Believe me, there is tremendous scope for it there. The other connection is that my trek in February 1980 enabled me to make some contribution back to the country from where came the soldiers who had done so much work for me on all sorts of projects in Hong Kong.

The purpose of my trek was to conduct a reconnaissance on a number of engineering projects which were to be sponsored by "CEDAR", The Canadian Education and Development Aid and Rehabilitation. Two of them required detailed designs, namely a suspension bridge across the Tap Khola at Damdi, North of Bhojpur,

and a water supply scheme for the village of Saungdel further north near the source of the Rawa Khola.

A word about CEDAR. The programme first started in January 1976. The aim of the programme was to disburse Canadian Appeal money through the Brigade of Gurkhas Nepal infrastructure and with the approval and co-operation of the Nepalese local authorities to three main areas:

1. Education. Assistance to hill high schools, hostels for children attending schools at Dharan or Pokhara and the provision of scholarships.
2. Engineering Projects. Water supply, bridge construction and other hill construction projects such as school roofs, khulo or irrigation schemes.
3. Welfare Centres. The construction of so called 'Outreach Centres' to supplement or replace Brigade of Gurkhas existing Welfare Centres. Incidentally, these centres are manned by an Area Welfare Officer, an Assistant Area Welfare Officer (one usually visiting), a Medical Orderly with a drug store and a peon or two. The Area Welfare Officer hears cases from ex-Servicemen for claims on welfare money - such as for landslip or fire damage, loss of crops, etc. He can dish out certain amounts of money and report back to his HQ if more substantial help seems necessary.

I have not got recent figures unfortunately but the budget for 1978 was about £175,000 which includes pay for the CEDAR Administrators, project managers and supervisors.

It is important to note that CEDAR projects are co-ordinated with Nepal's own development plans and all projects have to be cleared through the relevant Anchal/Zilla officials. The Commander, British Gurkhas Nepal and his Welfare Officer control the programme on behalf of the Canadian Gurkha Appeal.

I travelled from Hong Kong to Kathmandu in early February 1980; from there I flew to Biratnagar and at Dharan collected together all the necessary kit, camping gear, food, cooking equipment, and also the required engineer measuring instruments, such as 100 ft tape measure and a level. Unfortunately, when I and another officer, Captain Tony Burnside, arrived all the CEDAR officers were away so we could only get between us one rather heavy, cumbersome albeit accurate, level which comprised a staff, a tripod and level. Luckily we were in the same locality for our first tasks. This was all instead of one light hand held instrument, the Abney level, which is quite accurate enough in countries for the sort of reconnaissance we were making.

We set off from Chatra where a landrover dropped us. The first and worst tragedy occurred here. One of the two bottles of rum broke on the journey.

Such vital stores need nursing carefully on bumpy rides. We wound our way up the Arun Khola along this very impressive cliff side path.

We camped for our first night just beyond the bridge over the Tamur Khola. The escarpment has unhappy memories for my wife when on a previous trek she had stepped on a large stone across a little rivulet only to see it dislodged just behind her and plunge down the slope into the river below.

Next day we got to Munga Ghat. We weren't too confident about the ferry itself but the boatmen were very skilled at playing the eddies. That night we camped just up the river Arkua from its junction with the Arun Khola. We then went on up the river valley into the Pikua Khola, crossing the river twenty-two times. (Here followed some interesting pictures of fish traps which unfortunately we cannot share with the reader. Ed.)

We used to stop for "Bhat" at about 0930 having started around 0700 on a cup of tea and a mug of muesli and glucose. These were marvellous breaks enabling wash and shave, time for reflection, prayer and Bible reading (for I am a Christian) and diary writing. Meanwhile the porters toiled at producing the food and then did the washing up - what a life for us it was.

Occasionally we would stop at "Bhattis" for tea or to buy oranges. We climbed from the river bed towards Bhojpur, passed through this wealthy village below Bhojpur, then on to Danwar, and had marvellous views on the way.

The last day of the journey out saw us climb over a 10,000 ft. ridge in freezing fog and then down into the next valley. Below the cloud we saw our first destination, Damdi, far below.

To save vital time I had sent one porter on ahead to the Area Welfare Officer at Diktel, very much off our quickest route, to get him to come and meet us at the bridge site. It was a bit of a gamble to arrange a military style RV in the hills but when we got down to the bridge site there he was with my porter. He had gathered all the important representatives from the surrounding villages so we quickly got down to business round the surviving bottle of rum and cigarettes which I circulated. Altogether a gratifying end to the day and the gamble that paid off.

By the time we finished it was dark and our food was cooked. After chatting into the evening round a fire by the river we turned in and slept in our tents which the porters had put up in the meantime.

Next day was unforgettable. I went with Tony Burnside about an hour's walk up to Kwarbung to see his project. We had both been invited to "Bhat" in the village. The headman was an ex Gurkha Engineer, Corporal Lalbahadur, and had laid on a great gathering and feast. I had had experience of the wonderful hospitality of the hill people before but nothing quite like this. We were

serenaded into the village by two Damais playing oboe-like instruments sounding a bit like a jumble of Arab music and modern jazz. We were feted with garlands on arrival and sat in specially prepared seats and plied with 'Rakshi'. Then followed speeches of welcome, a song from the choir, a natch and then the ceremonious arrival of the goat for the customary chop. The kukri was handed to me which came as a surprise and for a few moments before I got a grip of my senses I looked at the goat and sized up the awful task before me. However, having discreetly checked with AWO over protocol quite acceptably I passed the kukri to the Village Head. This "Kaida" (custom) was new to me as it is not practised in the Regiment.

After the chop I knew there would be a gap of an hour or two before any food so I suggested to my host, Lalbahadur, we look at the water supply task. It appeared very straightforward with an untapped source - a spring about half a mile from the village, with a short distribution to one or two extremities of what was a small village. After a sumptuous bhat I returned to my site leaving Tony.

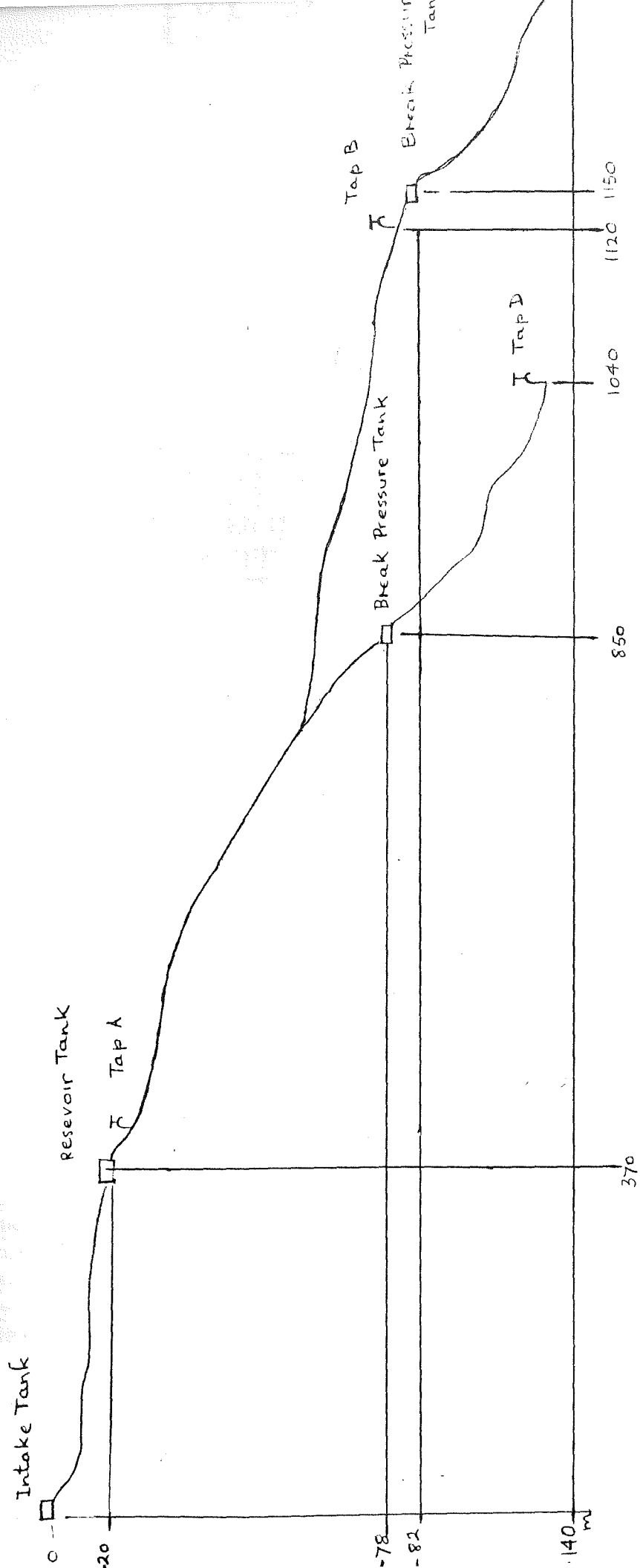
That evening I was similarly feted in the village above my site. It was more formal but being after dark and still out in the courtyard had a marvellous atmosphere - with kerosene lights, dancing and singing. It was an enchanting evening. When it was time to go I was escorted by two young men (prospective soldiers I believe) to my camp down a very steep hillside about 1,000 ft. My escorts each carried a torch, one behind, one in front - not electric but lighted bamboo strips about one metre long, very effective. So ended a day I'll never forget. It wasn't unproductive either; for we had seen Tony's project and I had seen one of the bridge sites - the one that was down river from where I had camped.

I had three bridge sites to look at in the area. The main one (No. 1) was across the Tap Khola at the junction with the Damdi tributary. The second (No. 2) was across the tributary at the same site. The third was about half way down the river. No. 1 was on the main route from the north to Dharan, Darjeeling through Bhojpur.

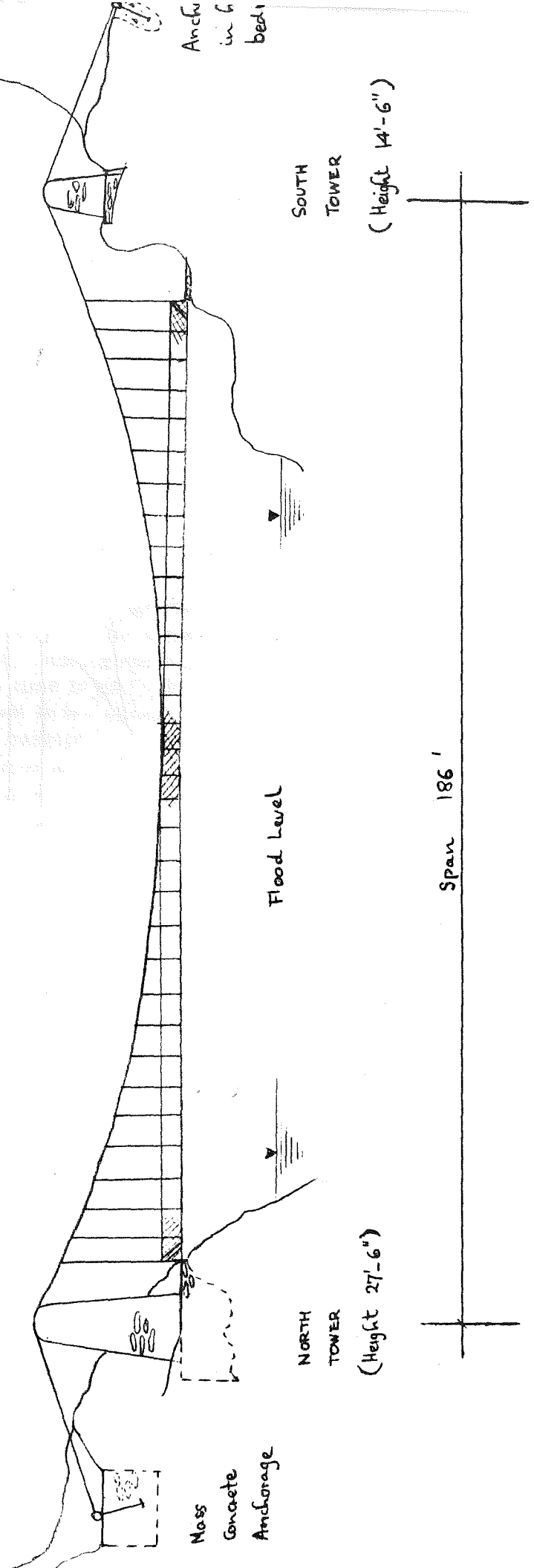
Bridge No. 2 would take local traffic going to Diktel. The third one could cater for both to some extent. The reason for having bridges was to enable movement during the monsoon.

I got a taste for local politics over No. 3. It was a special request of the Area Welfare Officer on the grounds that a child was drowned when a bamboo bridge collapsed, a year or two before. It turned out that the Area Welfare Officer's house was just above the chosen site. A bridge would have saved him half an hour's walk up-river and back. Fortunately there were good engineering reasons why we could not consider it which gave me the means of selecting the upper sites without upsetting him.

SAUNGDEL WATER SUPPLY PROJECT



TAP KHOLA SUSPENSION BRIDGE AT DAMDI



The day after all the entertainment I set to work on site No. 1 which was my most important job. I had re-sited camp with my porters, resisting strong pressure to move up to the village up the hill. I had to determine a number of things before I could do a survey. I was due to get the level off Tony the next day so that gave me a day to come up with a firm alignment. There were a number of factors to consider, all inter-related. Span, position of towers, anchorages, foundations, local geology, height of towers, labour, tradesmen, time, cost. Many would be determined by calculation, but a detailed look at the ground for the minimum span between viable locations for towers and anchorages required a bit of digging to check on soil and the depth of bed rock was necessary. Eventually I arrived at an alignment. I had a long interview with Captain N B, the Project Liaison Officer (PLO) who made arrangements for whatever help I needed. I found out about labour - provided free by surrounding villages, the availability and going rate for master tradesmen - stonemasons, carpenters and blacksmiths were going to be necessary. The PLO arranged for an ex Gurkha Engineers Lance Corporal to give advice on the stonemason work and I learnt a bit about their trade and requirements. They needed tools from outside, particularly "Jampas", and cement.

I had to find out what other materials would be provided locally - sand and stone from river bed, timber felled from the forests 8,000 ft up on the ridges.

I had to find out how all the metal components would be carried (India via Dharan) where the porters would come from and how much they would charge for the round trip.

The thought of 20 + porters carrying two 250 ft suspension cables!

Next day having got the level from Tony, who then departed to another area, I set about surveying the profile of the alignment. I spent a while computing at my 'desk'. That evening I made calculations and came up with a provisional design. I then had to check the alignment again, knowing the dimensions/position of tower and anchorages to see if they would fit.

Before we left that area I surveyed site No. 2 as a secondary task to be undertaken if money was available.

We set off having been there four days, on a long, one day trek to Saungdel. It was right up near the source of the Rawa Khola. As we arrived we experienced a three-quarters eclipse of the sun.

The situation was very different here. The ex-Serviceman who was the nominated PLO had gone to Brunei. They were therefore less disposed to help. But at least they knew about the scheme and could show us the source and where water was required. I did not improve things by insisting on pitching camp outside the village, just beside the water source at the top of the intended scheme, thus depriving the villagers, or most of them, of a source of entertainment. We had great difficulty

in getting any firewood or fresh vegetables. It was inevitably the Panchayat Member for Wards 9 and 10 where the water was required who was most helpful, but it took time before we realised this in order to make better use of him.

Before dark, I walked the whole scheme and wished I had Tony Burnside's task at Kwabung. My scheme had an existing watering place as a source to begin with, was about three times the length and twice the height drop and no ex Gurkha Engineer to help.

So to bed.

The business of survey was quite a lengthy process. Steep slopes of which there were a few were particularly so because of changing station every five metres in some places. I won't go into detail about the design of the scheme except to say that an intake tank at source, a reservoir tank and break pressure tanks every ninety feet depending on pipe size and thickness were required. My design had to say where these were to go and what design they were to be built to.

I was helped immensely in all of this by a most useful booklet published by UNICEF in about 1978 and I believe revised in 1980 called, I think, "Village Water Supply in Nepal".

The interesting features of this scheme were :

1. It was a poor village with all the more need for help.
2. The existing source was a potential hornets' nest for internal strife between wards.
3. There would be a very critical flow problem in the dry season.
4. There was a problem over taps, and of reservoir tanks running out because of taps being left turned on.

Like the bridge, I had to find out what tradesmen were available and their charges. The main requirements for materials from outside were plastic pipe, fittings, and cement; otherwise requirements were similar to the bridge except that being high there was a charge for bringing up sand from the river.

Unfortunately I had to leave it that the job was just feasible but that there was some technical risk and considerable political risk. I had learnt a lot and would be more critical of an initial report before embarking on any time-wasting survey. It was particularly sad to arrive at this conclusion for a village that had less going for them and less chance of acquiring help than the bridge villages who were much more on the beaten track.

We set off at midday on our fourth day there, sent on our way with delicious "Jaure" and "Roti" in Ward 10 Panchayat Member's house.

We returned the same way staying at my head porter's house. We diverted at Munga going up to Pakribas for a day before descending through Dhankuta and travelling to Mulghat new road and back over Sanguri Ridge to Dharan.

Six days of hard work computing, designing and writing reports followed before I returned to Hong Kong.

OVERLAND TO NEPAL

by W. C. Young

⌈Talk given to the Society with Cinematograph Films on 21st April 1982⌋

In 1974 my wife Elizabeth and I were lucky in being able to take six months off in order to travel in our Landrover from Tangiers to Cape Town, and greatly enjoyed the experience of crossing the Sahara into West Africa, and subsequently driving down from Kenya into South Africa. We returned on the "Edinburgh Castle" and our son and his fiance (now his wife) drove the vehicle home to UK.

A year after our return, our second daughter, Francesca, and her husband Tony, a Civil Engineer, were off to Nigeria on an 18 month assignment and suggested before they left that we combine on a joint expedition to Nepal, we to drive out and they to bring the vehicle back from Kathmandu.

This project formed the basis for 18 months of planning, including the purchase of a second-hand Ford Transit Motor Caravan. With limited space available, correct planning of all items to be carried is essential, and a balance has to be struck between the essential and desirable; this includes food, fuel carrying capacity, spares, medical, clothing and heating for the return journey before the onset of winter.

The Ford Transit Caravan was chosen partly because of its roominess and equipment inside, which included a calor gas cooker, and fridge (which rarely worked for long), ample storage space including a hanging cupboard for clothes; ease of conversion for day sitting to night sleeping; and a convenient table which could be set up independently outside the vehicle, useful in hot weather; as well as the likely availability of spares on the way. (This was to prove useful in Turkey).

Much helpful advice was obtained from many sources from those who had undertaken the journey. Not least from Lieutenant Colonel Lionel Gregory, brother of the

Society's Treasurer, who has now led ten Comex expeditions from this country to India, eight of which were overland. Not only was the route information invaluable, but we were also given many contacts en route which were most useful and helpful. In addition, we were honoured by being invited to call our little two-person expedition "COMEX 8½" and we flew the Comex flag on our bonnet all the way there and back. Not only was this quite impressive to those we dealt with on the way but, amusingly, in Pakistan and India we found we were being mistaken for high ranking Army officers and saluted by all the sentries we passed.

We left UK on 11th August 1977 and reached Kathmandu on 2nd October, a journey of some 8,000 miles in just under eight weeks, averaging around 230 miles per driving day. Generally we preferred to rise early and make camp an hour or so before dark: this meant usually a 5 a.m. dawn reveille, although sometimes as early as 3 a.m. if we had a particularly long day ahead of us, and driving off one and a half hours later; and retiring to bed after an evening meal around 9 p.m. latest in order to obtain adequate rest. This was quite a strenuous programme and one tended to get very tired, particularly when the weather became very hot (Turkey) or very humid (Pakistan and India), or a very long day's driving was involved, sometimes ten hours. We always had an hour's halt around 11 a.m. for refreshment and relaxation, during which time Elizabeth would write up our diary.

Looking back on the trip, one powerful impression remains: this was the wonderful friendliness, help and hospitality we received all along the way. From the small Hungarian village where the dynamo gave trouble and no one in the crowd gathered round spoke English (German saved the day here), the isolated Turkish farm near the Iranian frontier who insisted on treating us as honoured guests and entertaining us to dinner, the Iranian farmer who gave us a bucketful of hazel nuts, to the Sikh family in Batcha, India, who entertained us so hospitably, it was always the same. Abdullah Afghanzadeh in Kabul (a friend of Lionel Gregory) insisted on us staying in his hotel as his guests. Nihat Batu in Samson on the Black Sea spent the best part of five days helping us get our engine fixed; and five Pakistani officers passing by in their car came over to warn us not to camp overnight outside Peshawar as it was too dangerous. This continued right throughout the whole trip.

We crossed Europe as quickly as possible, completing the 2,000 miles to Istanbul through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and then into Turkey at Edirne. Highlights were the beautiful wrought-ironwork in Regensburg, Vienna's traffic-free centre at night with many buildings floodlit, the depressingly shabby state of Budapest and the narrow gorge from Yugoslavia past Belgrade into Turkey.

In Istanbul we stayed in a very crowded camp-site on the European side, and watched the sixty or so cars on the London-Sydney Car Rally come in from Athens and leave for Eastern Turkey. Memorable was the intense heat (over 95 degrees Fahrenheit, with even local Turks complaining), the wonderful views over the Bosphorous and

the Dardanelles from the Tokapi Palace, the Sophia and Suleiman (Blue) Mosques and a fascinating boat trip up beyond the new Bosphorous bridge with a fabulous sunset over the water from the restaurant where we dined.

After a two-day stay for some rest, maintenance and sightseeing, we crossed the new bridge to the Asian shore and took the ferry from Kartel to Yalova across the Sea of Marmara to Bursa, a former capital of Turkey, and a charming old city built on a hillside. As soon as we left Istanbul, the temperature of the water in the radiator of the van rose to boiling point, and kept on doing this, in spite of repeated halts and visits to garages for checks on any likely sources of trouble - water pump, radiator, thermostat, gaskets, etc. Finally, between Ankara and Samsun on the Black Sea, 150 miles from the latter, it blew up. Luckily we were near a petrol station where we pulled in, and after spending the night there, I hitch-hiked the 150 miles to Samsun and managed to return with a Ford Mechanic. Unable to rectify the trouble, the van was loaded on to the back of a lorry and shipped to Samsun where fortunately spare parts were available to rebuild almost the complete engine - a costly breakdown.

This delayed us five days, but as soon as the engine was repaired, we pushed along the Black Sea Coast as far as Trebizond, then over the Sigana (6782 ft.) and Kopdaji (7887 ft.) Passes to rejoin the main Ankara-Iran route. Here one runs over the Turkish plain, a vast grain growing area, scorched brown after the harvest by the fierce sun.

Some 2-3 hours short of the Iranian frontier, darkness began to fall and, as one is advised not to camp unattended nor to drive at night, we sought safety at an isolated Turkish farm high up the hillside above the road. Given permission to park in their orchard, we were just starting to prepare our evening meal when they came to invite us into the farmhouse, where we were served a magnificent meal by the womenfolk of the household. These joined us and the menfolk later and we had a wonderful evening together. They could not have been kinder or more hospitable.

The next day we passed four Kurds travelling on the road, the women in their gaily coloured dresses. Before reaching the frontier at Dogubayit, we caught glimpses of Mount Ararat (18000 ft) through the clouds, and finally getting a fine view of the cone-shaped snow-covered summit from the South.

After a night in the campsite of beautiful Shangoli Park in Tabriz, we crossed the Elburz Mountains via Ardibil to reach the Caspian near the Russian frontier at Astara. Here the vegetation is lush, and the climate warm and wet - a completely different world from the arid Southern parts of Iran. From Astara to Chalus is a very uninteresting drive as one cannot see the Caspian from the road, but the pass thence back over the Elburz Mountains to Teheran is quite awe-inspiringly magnificent, through a very narrow gorge and then climbing up steeply on a finely engineered road.

After a couple of days relaxation in Teheran, we re-crossed the mountains for the third time and reached Mashad, in Eastern Iran. This is the next most important

centre after Mecca where the 8th Imam is buried. The Central Mosque complex is tremendously impressive with its golden dome and beautiful ceramics, filled by thousands of devoted pilgrims from all over the Moslem world for a special Holy Day.

Thence we drove over the frontier into Afghanistan. The first city, some 70 miles from the frontier is Herat which we reached after a very tiring drive in the dark having been delayed by uncooperative Afghan customs. Here one enters a completely different world, with few motor vehicles and the majority of transport being by donkey, horse-drawn cart or on foot. The mosque, ancient castle and the markets are quite fascinating, filled by fierce looking Afghans all armed to the teeth.

Camping outside the main centre in Afghanistan is not considered safe so the overlanders do the Herat-Kandahar and Kandahar-Kabul sections each in one day and park overnight in the car parks of the main hotels in each city where there are night guards to keep the would-be intruders out. The roads are magnificent, concreted and with excellent surfaces, the Western section being built by the Russians and the Eastern by the Americans. Looking back now, it seems strange that one can no longer traverse the country as we did due to the Russian invaders' presence.

Kabul is not unlike Kathmandu in situation and elevation, on a flat plain surrounded by hills, dominated by the fort and with the fascinating bazaar area of the main street Jodi Maiwand. Here we had been recommended the Homayun Hotel, owned by Abdullah Afghanzadeh, a friend of Lionel Gregory and where we were received by him with great hospitality, all payment being refused. We were particularly impressed by Nadir Shah's beautiful mausoleum with its multi-coloured marbles inside as well as the Babur Gardens, made by Shah Jehan who loved and spent much time in the pleasant summer climate of Kabul. Unfortunately time did not allow us to go North to visit Nazar-i-Sharif as planned, due to loss of time against schedule following the engine trouble in Turkey; so we left regretfully after two days, and drove through the narrow and magnificently impressive Kabul Pass and over the Khyber down into Pakistan. At the frontier post on the Khyber, we delivered a photograph taken of the guard by Comex 8, and actually found one of the guards in the photo; who, of course, was delighted to have it. They pressed us to stay for refreshments and the night, but as we wanted to clear the Pass area, which is a "No-man's land" at night, that evening, we pushed on and camped at the Youth Hostel in Peshawar. Although it was a joy, after several weeks of traversing by parched landscapes, to see water lying in pools and greenery after the recent monsoons, it had become tremendously hot and sticky. Of all our journey, traversing Pakistan and India in this heat and not being able to sleep properly at night in the stuffy van which had to be sealed against mosquitos who devoured Elizabeth, but fortunately ignored me, was probably the most trying period of all.

The next night was spent at the Dutch R. C. Medical Mission at Gujrat where we were made extremely welcome by Sister Tonns: and the following day coincided

with the ending of Ramadan and all the families and children outside on holiday in their beautiful brightly coloured new clothes.

Then on through Lucknow and across into India, where we visited the impressive Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar during the Centenary Celebrations, gleaming in the evening sunlight. At Batala, a few hours further on, we were entertained by a delightful Sikh family, the Singh Manns, a teacher at the local school where a cousin of mine had taught. Delhi was our next target where we arrived on 18th September on schedule as originally planned, via lovely Chandigarh, the new University Town designed by Combusier. A six-hour night drive from there to Delhi was an experience not willingly to be repeated, with unlit bicycles, lorries and bullock carts going the same way, and lorries coming the other towards us with either full head lights or no lights at all. We were greatly relieved to reach safely our Indian friends in Delhi with whom we had been invited to stay.

After a short trip to Agra, where the Taj Mahal exceeded our expectations, and Fatehpur Sikri, we left Delhi for the foothills to the North, to follow the road from the railhead in the plain at Kot-e-Goddan through Nainital to Raniket first surveyed and then constructed in the 1880's by Elizabeth's Grandfather, an Engineer in the Indian Public Works Department. These hill station towns lie around 6000 ft. amidst beautiful pine forests, and Naintital, with its lake surrounded by 2000 ft. higher hills is particularly attractive. One last night in the hills before descending to the sticky plain again was at the Ramakrishna Mission where we were invited in by the Swami to dinner and comfortable beds in a cool room for the night. Passing through Lucknow and Faizabad, we reached the Nepalese frontier late in the second day, and after a night at the Lumbini Hotel at Bhairawa, finally drove into Pokhara where we camped on the flat ground at the end of the Lake. After 48 hours of almost nonstop torrential rain (but we did gain a five-minute glimpse of the Anapurna range and Machhapuchare), we decided to leave for Kathmandu, where I am glad to say the weather was considerably kinder.

Mike Cheney was all ready to organise our twelve-day trek up Lantang from Betavati, and we were back in Kathmandu in time to welcome Francesca and Tony from Lagos and to spend a week's sightseeing in and around Kathmandu with them before flying back on 25th October ourselves and they starting their drive home. It had been a most enjoyable, successful, fascinating, if somewhat strenuous trip.

SUMMER OUTING TO CHESSINGTON ZOO

by Susan Roberts

Long before the coach arrived groups of families had gathered together at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, among them Tashi who still recalled our visit to the seaside at Hastings. From under the green lacey arches of the Kensington Palace Gardens plane trees, one full coachload and a couple of cars started on our Summer Outing.

About seventy of us entered the gates of Chessington Zoo, which had been chosen with the idea that it was a place with plenty to do and see for all, and not too far from London. Chessington's Zoological Gardens were opened in 1931, the idea of a Mr. Goddard. But the area is steeped in history, Chessington Manor having been built in 1348. Queen Elizabeth I visited her soldiers here and later it was a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War. Cromwell's men set the original manor on fire. Then in 1660 the mansion was rebuilt and aptly named "Burnt Stub" because it had been "burnt to a stub". This name remains today.

On entering the grounds of Chessington Zoo one is immediately impressed by the pleasant landscaping of the grounds. The Zoo is situated in a position of command over a sea of green rolling country.

After a sandwich lunch well topped by Mr. Manandhar's tasty samosas, the delights of Chessington were ours. A pair of Orang Utan from Borneo were first on our tour of the Zoo. These animals from the tropical forests communicate with lip-smacking sounds and have a terrifying roar. The Gorillas we saw were from the rain forests of the Western Congo. Their diet, in spite of their size and ferocious looks, is mainly fruit and leaves, and they are usually gentle and peaceful, the chest-beating and mock charges being usually only bluff. The Puma is an amazing animal, so composed and graceful-looking as it perches on high. Pumas are known for their strength, stamina and remarkable agility; they can leap up to forty feet in distance, fifteen feet in height, and have been known to drop sixty feet to the ground without harm. When content they purr like cats and they feed on deer and small animals. We wandered beside the lily pond where the pink and white sails of lilies shaded the many fish from the sun. The children were amazed at the long legs and necks of the next animals we saw, Chessington's two giraffes. The giraffe is the tallest living animal and can grow to eighteen feet high. It is found in Africa, south of the Sahara, and can go for long periods without water. Next, the delight of all children, the Elephant. The one we saw is an Indian elephant and has smaller ears and tusks with a more arched back than its African relations. Elephants can sleep both standing up and lying down. They are the most expensive animals in the Zoo to feed costing over £2,000 a year - 24 loaves a day, 20 pounds of apples, 20 pounds of carrots, 16 pounds of bran, 20 pounds of potatoes - some diet!

An added attraction at Chessington is its Circus. A resident circus has been part of the Zoo ever since 1933. Most of us attended the 2 o'clock performance to see Circus Hassani, founded three years ago by Ali Hassani and his wife, Tamara.

Ali is from Morocco which is where, for centuries, acrobats have lived and performed. Tamara is from a famous circus family being one of the six children of the celebrated clown, Coco. The spotlights on, and then the band began to play as the lights flickered on and off in different colours and we all clapped our hands to the rhythm of the music (and many feet too!) Ring Mistress Mina, garbed in a scarlet coat with a matching scarlet sequined waistcoat, announced the acts. First on were the clowns. One so smart in his pink and green loud check suit and his friend in scarlet trousers supported by wide colourful braces, a flat black hat and some rather outsize-looking shoes which turned up at the toes. The Juggler's sense of timing fascinated all, especially when he performed with flame torches. Two different clowns appeared having been told they would receive ten thousand pounds if they stayed in bed for ten minutes. Of course, they never received the prize as they were in a haunted bed over which a massive spider perched and later a ghost, so the two clowns were constantly leaving the haunted bed - the children full of screams until the clowns once more brought laughter. Silence descended upon us as with awe we watched Miss Danielle ascend high on the trapeze, clothed in pink and yellow beads and sequins, like some exotic bird of paradise with feathered plumes sprouting from her head. She gracefully floated above, suspended from one ankle, from her heels, and smiling all the time, and finally swung from her toes, she being the only person to perform such a feat without any safety device. Again, between the acts, the mischievous and amusing clowns returned, jovially sprinkling the audience with water, and then our time under the 'big top' was over.

In the Rose Garden some of the Nepalese ladies gracefully posed amidst the flowers for photographs. Whilst gazing at what could have been a dirty old rock, it suddenly moved and one realised it was a Hippopotamus! When fully grown, a hippopotamus can weigh up to two and a half tons and live for fifty years, and if you have wondered about his name, well it means "River Horse". The penguins stood out clearly like a group of nuns against their stone-age-looking habitat, the Master of Ceremonies being the King Penguin, twice the height of the others with egg yolk yellow colour clearly daubed on the side of his head and like a bib under his chin, and with a splash of pink under his long beak. There are as many as eighteen species of penguin, all of which are confined to the Southern Hemisphere and range in size from a mere thirty centimetres to about a hundred and fifteen, this being the Emperor Penguins' size. As well as the penguin's storage of fat he has, under his thick waterproof plumage, a layer of air trapped next to his body which helps to retain body heat. The King we saw had, we were informed, just gone through his first moult.

The attractions were now so many we did not know which way to turn - arctic or tropical animals, British farm animals, the Children's Zoo with its familiar faces - rabbits, donkeys, goats and sheep, Shetland ponies, pigs and mice - a ride on the small train or a Bird's eye view from the big wheel. However, we were drawn to the Ring Lemurs, of Madagascar, with their brilliant orange eyes. Nearby were the Gibbons, amidst many ropes, nets and bamboos, in a glass enclosed cage. These animals, the smallest of the Great Ape family, obviously

enjoy extending their limbs to the full being able to perch on a rope like a trapeze artist whilst an outstretched arm collects food from a tree. They use their long and powerful arms to "fly" through the tropical rain forests in their native lands in South East Asia.

Then on to Bonnie and Clyde, polar bears who were born just under a year ago, Bonnie on 1st December and Clyde 20th November 1981. Both are now very small, but they could grow to ten feet in length and attain a height of five feet with a life span to forty years. In spite of quite a long life span, a polar bear could, in the Arctic, live without ever seeing land at all. His home is on floating ice and he even hibernates in a den of ice.

Four o'clock was seal time, so we joined the throng of people by the two seal ponds. The seals - not singing for their supper but certainly performing for us and their supper - lived up to expectations. They were so fast and graceful in the water, especially when the keeper appeared with his bucket of fish. Gracing the rocks like some ancient chieftain was the sealion, the seals dwarfed by his massive form. The sealion, though clumsy and awkward on land is, like the seals, fast and graceful in the water. Unlike the sealion, the seal has no visible ears and cannot use its rear flippers when on land.

Next the Celebrity Bird Garden which was opened in June 1981 and is now considered to be one of the largest bird gardens in the country. The incredible variety of birds made one realize how little one knows of feathered creatures outside our own land. The power of flight has captured the imagination of man throughout the ages, having the ability to fly above the earth - a dream of freedom to many. Snowy owls from Canada, midnight-blue and yellow ringed eyes of the Brazilian macaw, the Indian hornbill with his amazing flat-horned head, storks, cranes, vultures and eagles.

About five o'clock we left Chessington bound for London, and many sleepy heads enjoyed a nap brought on by the bracing air and the pleasant weariness after a happy day. But others talked about the Zoo. How much food did it take to support such a large family? Someone knew the answer - 240 lbs of bananas, 700 lbs of apples, 800 lbs of meat, about 170 stons of fish, and many other things besides. Chessington Zoo could surely do with having its own Covent Garden!

Following Mrs. Sheila Kimber's lecture to the Society at the Alpine Club on 16th April 1981, the items listed below are available from her should anyone wish to contact her direct (Oakfield Lodge, Conghurst Lane, Hawkhurst, Kent):

1. A HANDBOOK OF ORCHIDS. Price £8.50 plus postage and packing. Contains 23 colour illustrations of orchids, mostly indigenous to the Himalayan foothills, which Mrs. Kimber collected on her visits to those regions, with an Introduction, and a page of description opposite each illustration.

This book was published in 1964, and has been reviewed by the Orchid Societies of Great Britain and America. It is not intended as a scientific

reference book, but rather as a book which orchid growers, and particularly those who have lived in the East and visited the Himalayan foothills, and the hills of South India, would appreciate; written by someone whose love of those regions inspired her not only to collect botanical data, but who also went to study the culture and customs of the tribal peoples of those regions.

Mrs. Kimber was one of those who represented the United Kingdom in an International Exhibition of contemporary Botanical Art and Illustration in Pittsburgh in 1968, and her "Handbook of Orchids" is in the permanent collection of the Hunt Botanical Library of the Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

2. COLOUR PRINTS. Reproductions of Mrs. Kimber's oil paintings:

(a) Poinsettia spray (collected and painted in the Himalayan foothills)
Price: £2

(b) Arrangement of tropical flora from the Asian sub-continent.
Price: £3

3. GREETING CARDS.

(a) Tibetans & Kanchenjunga (in colour). Price: 25p each with envelopes.

(b) St. Paul's Cathedral) 2 designs, black & white, lithographed from
Buckingham Palace) original sketches. Price: 15p each with
envelopes.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Recalling Mrs. Kimber's very interesting and well-attended talk to the Society last year, I think it will not be inappropriate to quote here the words with which Mrs. Winifred Coulson, OBE (Vice President) thanked the speaker on that occasion - words well merited.

"Mrs. Kimber, it is very hard for me to express thanks to you adequately. Because you have opened to us a whole lifetime of experience, really, or part of it. From Mother Teresa in the slums of Calcutta, and her wonderful work - I won't forget that picture of the tenderness of the younger nun holding the baby found in a dustbin - right through up to Sikkim, to that wonderful view of Kanchenjunga in the very earliest dawn, and the rosy tint on the mountains. You opened all this world of experience to us, and we are so fortunate to have had some tinge of your experience. And, of course, you brought to it not only a painter's eye, which has helped you in choosing your photographs and your composition for your photographs, but your wonderful warmth of heart and a great mind behind it, which really understands so well what is meant, what is thought. I think we have been very fortunate tonight, because we have realised what one person can do in this life. One person with heart and mind, and with some skill, and also tremendous courage and a great sense of humour, and really not only getting more from life, but giving a lot. So thank you very much, Mrs. Kimber, we really have enjoyed it tremendously, and you have given us a very wonderful experience."

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUSTS

For 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 £161,00 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 25 Welfare Centres, each one specially built for the purpose, or rented as a temporary measure. These have been 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 number 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. 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. Assistance is also given by the Trusts to many widows and this help has been substantially increased.

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), Major General A. B. Matthews, CBE, DSO, ED, CD, and Major M. L. J. Burke, CD.

Further very substantial 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. This important Foundation is designed to help the Gurkhas now and in the long term.

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. Col. A. A. Mains, Hon. Secretary)
c/o Gurkha Museum, Queen Elizabeth Barracks,
Church Crookham, Aldershot, Hants GU13 0RJ

Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel T. M. Lowe

In less than 200 pages Mr. Faux has given us an exciting story of a high altitude climber who is probably the best in the world. It includes a sympathetic, but shrewd assessment of a complex, ruthless, ambitious, mercurial and technically brilliant mountaineer. Reinhold Messner, from the South Tyrol, was born in 1944. Early in his career he decided that Everest without the use of oxygen was something he must try: he would not 'artificially lower the top of the mountain to him.' Try he did, and what is more, he succeeded - twice. On the second occasion it was a solo effort.

Mr. Faux has covered Messner's climbs in Europe, South America and, in particular, the "eight thousanders" (peaks of 8000 metres or more in height) in the Himalayas. The climbing style which Messner perfected in the Alps, and subsequently applied with great effect in the Himalayas, is well described.

Just how far it is possible to go without courting certain death was a technique which Messner developed progressively with each climb he made. In doing so he enjoyed a measure of luck denied to many who died, or who had to abandon their attempts to conquer the highest peaks. His luck, however, deserted him on Nanga Parbat when his brother was killed during the descent and when he himself suffered frost bite which resulted in the amputation of six toes.

In the early stages of his climbing career Messner (a professional architect by training) lacked the financial backing and other support necessary for successful expeditions to far off places. Largely through his own efforts and determination these were forthcoming later. His five year marriage to a former German baroness ended at the age of 33. The surprise is that it lasted so long. His restless desire for high altitude climbing did nothing to help.

According to a newspaper report dated mid-August 1982, Messner has climbed two peaks of over 26,000 feet in the Pakistan Himalayas in 1982. How much more is left for Messner at the age of 38? He is now a man of means, has his own mountaineering school and is in great demand as a lecturer and adviser.

The author, a Times journalist and himself a mountaineer, has made liberal use of the technical terms employed in climbing, but a glossary of such terms would have been a great help to lay readers, especially when so many are not English.

T. M. L.

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.

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The Britain-Nepal Society has a growing membership and there is tremendous enthusiasm for Nepal. Our meetings, which are usually attended by about one hundred 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.

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