



BRITAIN-NEPAL

SOCIETY

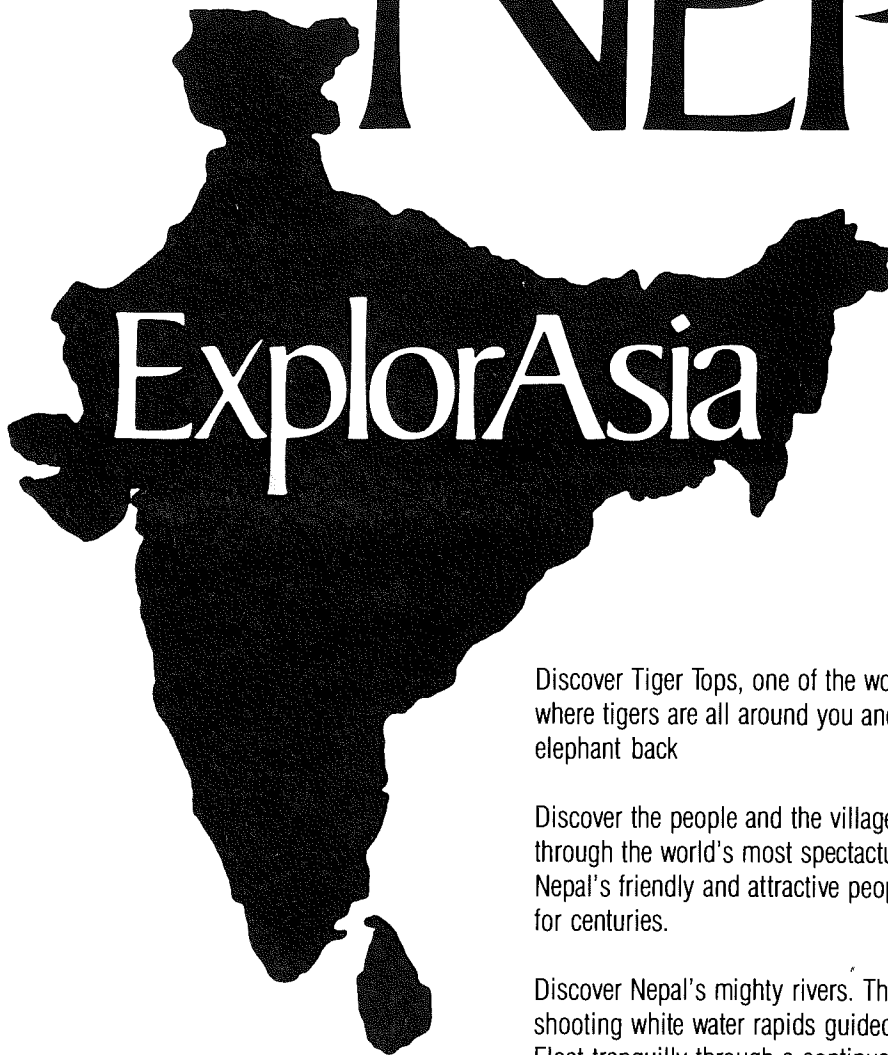
JOURNAL

NO. 10

1986

ROYAL VISIT

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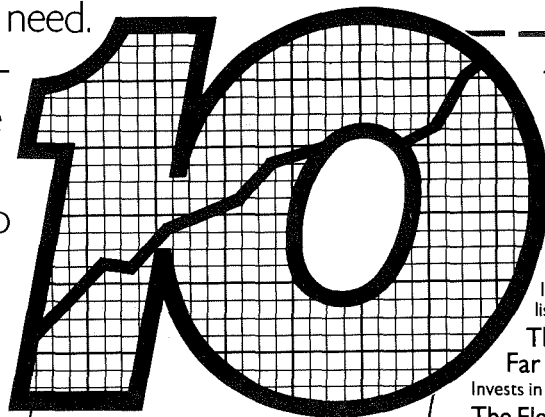
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ROYAL VISITOR AND ROYAL HOST - KATHMANDU 17 FEBRUARY 1986

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IN THIS NUMBER

In this the tenth issue of our Journal we have two Royal visits to celebrate - the visit to London last October of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Gyanendra and the Princess Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and the State Visit to Nepal in February this year of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh. Our own annual coming together at New Zealand House took place in the same week as the State Visit to Nepal and among the distinguished guests who graced the occasion were the Right Honourable Mr. Bernard Weatherill MP, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Mrs. Weatherill. Mr. Speaker addressed the record gathering in a light-hearted speech which is reproduced in extenso in the full account of the proceedings written for this number by Lillien and Norman Points; as is also the eloquent address delivered on the same occasion by that other distinguished and popular guest, Mr. Prabal Rana, representing the Ambassador who was away attending the great event in Kathmandu.

Our thanks are due to them and to all our contributors, notably Lord Hunt who placed at our disposal the notes of his memorable talk at the Royal Society of Arts at the opening of the season last autumn, with some excellent photographs. His "Odyssey of a Mountaineer" will delight those who were fortunate enough to attend the talk and we believe also those who were not able to come that evening.

Our thanks also to Lillien and Norman Points, Peter Pitts, Professor von Furer Haimendorf, Tony Schilling, Mayura Brown, Henry Lowe and all who have contributed to making our tenth number the varied and original offering we believe it to be.

The Royal visit of last October when our Patron and his Princess honoured the Society by attending the Reception in the Banqueting House in Whitehall and by welcoming HRH The Prince of Wales on behalf of the Society is described in the Newsletter in this Journal. Not very long afterwards occurred the event which, from the Society's point of view must be pronounced the outstanding event of 1986, the State Visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and The Duke of Edinburgh to Nepal.

Royal Visit to Nepal

The five days in Nepal, 17th to 21st February, were days of splendour and happiness. It was, as everyone knows, the second visit of the Royal couple to Kathmandu. What did it feel like after twenty-five years? The Queen answered this question herself in the opening remarks of her speech on the evening of the first day: "It is not always possible to make a second visit to places of which one has retained very happy memories; so Prince Philip and I are particularly delighted to return to Nepal to find that our memories have in no way played us false."

That was said at the State Banquet on the first day when replying to the moving and generous words of welcome addressed to the Royal visitors by their host, King Birendra, who spoke of his country's dedication to the maintenance of peace and the quest of new ideas. "We are convinced that a peaceful order of change is possible, can be meaningful and indeed be enduring when this is brought about by going into the roots of one's culture, values and tradition." Not merely for the progress she has achieved did Britain command respect but "also for what she has been able to nurture and maintain."

The Queen referred in her response to her Royal host's well-known initiative in declaring his country a zone of peace. "Britain, like Nepal, regards the establishment and maintenance of world peace as of the highest priority; so I am pleased to reaffirm my Government's support for Your Majesty's proposal, made almost exactly eleven years ago, that Nepal be declared a zone of peace.... Your Majesty, true independence and stability must be backed by sound economic development. My Government has therefore been glad to co-operate in a series of programmes designed to promote the economic well-being and development of Nepal and it is heartening to see this producing results."

The second day of the visit being Democracy Day and King Birendra being involved in celebrating this important anniversary with his people, the Queen was able to rest and Prince Philip enjoyed a visit to the Chitwan National Park where the rhino, tiger and gharial are protected and flourish.

On the third day there were visits to the Martyrs' Memorial, the Hanuman Dhoka Palace, the Tribhuvan Memorial Museum and near the museum, as the world press noted, the visitors were afforded a glimpse of the "Kumari" at her window. The Administrative Staff College, set up with the co-operation of the United Kingdom, was visited on this day and there followed a refreshing programme of traditional



HER MAJESTY VISITS THE HISTORIC CITY OF BHAKTAPUR ("CITY OF DEVOTEES")



HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS IN THE CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK (ROYAL SALUTE)

dances at the Royal Academy of Arts. At a Civic Reception the same day the Queen recalled "the wonderful greeting given to us in 1961 in your capital" and spoke of the relationship between Britain and Nepal as "both old and close and it is one by which we set great store. Our friendship is based on a mutual feeling of respect and affection."

The fourth day was a very full one which included visits to the Royal Botanical Gardens, the city of Bhaktapur with all its wonders of ancient architecture and craftsmanship and a never-to-be-forgotten meeting with some two hundred pensioned warriors of the Brigade of Gurkhas, most of them wearing decorations for gallantry and some the Victoria Cross. The Duke was able to fit in - insisted we are told on fitting in - a flying visit this day to the Brigade of Gurkhas Depot at Dharan in East Nepal where among many other things he saw the excellent hospital and spoke to many of the staff and patients.

Our brief account of the historic visit can alas scarcely touch the fringes - but we have to thank the Royal Nepalese Embassy in London and the Nepal Information Service for a very fine four-page leaflet with excellent coloured pictures entitled "A Tale of Two Monarchies" which tells the story more completely and vividly and of which we gratefully received sufficient copies for distribution to our members - a superb souvenir of a most memorable event.

Editor



HER MAJESTY AND THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH WITH FIVE VC HOLDERS

NEWSLETTER

The Society's programme of activities for the season 1985/86 was completed in May. It has been a very eventful year and the Chairman and Committee would like to thank the members for their tremendous support - attendances at the various functions and meetings have been excellent.

The 25th Anniversary Celebrations

The highlight of the season was the Society's 25th Anniversary Reception held in the magnificent setting of the Banqueting House in Whitehall on 2nd October 1985. The Society was greatly honoured with the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales and the Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev who was accompanied by HRH Princess Komal. HE the Nepalese Ambassador, Mr. Ishwari Raj Pandey, his daughter Amita and other members of his entourage and the Royal Nepalese Embassy. Sir George Bishop and Lady Bishop and the late Chairman, Lt. Col. C.J. Scott, welcomed Their Royal Highnesses on behalf of the Society.

HRH Prince Gyanendra addressed the 350 dignitaries, including the Speaker of the House of Commons, Mr. Bernard Weatherill and Mrs. Weatherill, and members and their guests, some of whom were Nepalese subjects residing in the UK. His Royal Highness referred to the Society's early days and its formation in 1960 at the time of the first visit to Nepal by Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh and to their forthcoming visit in February 1986. As Chairman of the Governing Board of Trustees of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation His Royal Highness spoke briefly about the work carried out by the Trust in Nepal.

The health of Her Majesty The Queen and that of His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev were toasted. Later much to the delight of the members and their guests Their Royal Highnesses mingled and chatted informally with them. It was a memorable and happy evening.

House of Commons Dinner

Also as part of the celebrations, the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group arranged a dinner at the House of Commons on 1st October at which the Guest of Honour was HRH Prince Gyanendra who was accompanied by members of his entourage, HE The Nepalese Ambassador, Miss Pandey, the Counsellor at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, Mr. Prabal S.J.B. Rana. Also present were Mr. Speaker Weatherill and Mrs. Weatherill, the President of the Parliamentary Group, Mr. Neil Thorne, MP and the Secretary, Dr. Michael Clarke and Mrs. Clarke, the President of the Society, Sir George Bishop and Lady Bishop, Vice-Presidents and Officers of the Society. The Speaker is a Life Member of the Society.

Lord Hunt - "Odyssey of a Mountaineer"

On Tuesday, 24th September, Lord Hunt, the first President of the Britain-Nepal Society and a founder member presented an illustrated lecture entitled "An Odyssey of a Mountaineer" at the Royal Society of Arts in John Adam Street, WC2. It was appropriate that Lord Hunt should begin the 25th Anniversary celebrations with his lecture and we are very grateful to him for doing so and for contributing an article to the Journal.

Joint Meeting with The Royal Geographical Society

The Society held a Meeting at the Royal Geographical Society in conjunction with the RGS on Monday, 30th September at which an illustrated lecture was given by Mr. Hermanta Misra from the King Mahendra Trust. He outlined the problems and challenges the Trust is facing in its efforts "to preserve and manage the natural resources of Nepal and to improve the quality of life of its people." He explained that the Trust is a non-governmental, non profit making organisation with headquarters in Kathmandu. His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev is the Trust's Patron.

The King Mahendra UK Trust

To support the work being carried out in Nepal, in 1986, the King Mahendra UK Trust came into being under the Chairmanship of Sir Arthur Norman, who is also a member of the Britain-Nepal Society.

In 1985 the members of the Society subscribed to the Trust's fund and subsequently, in a letter to Col. Scott, Sir Arthur expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Society for rounding up a generous contribution to the figure of £1,000. Further donations are of course always welcome and they may be sent to Sir Arthur Norman, KBE, DFC, Chairman UK Committee King Mahendra Trust, 5 Burlington Gardens, London, W1A 1DL.

Talks at The Alpine Club

Members of the Society were also fortunate to hear the following illustrated talks, and we are very grateful to all the speakers and thank them for the time and effort involved.

Thursday, 16th January 1986. An illustrated talk was given by Mr. P.C.C. Pitt, FRCS, MRCP on "A Surgeon in Nepal" at the Alpine Club. Mr. Pitt's article appears elsewhere in the Journal.

Thursday, 20th March, 1986. Professor C. von Furer-Haimendorf gave a very interesting illustrated talk on "Social change among the high altitude populations of Nepal." Professor Haimendorf, who has been a member of the Society for many years, is a much sort after speaker, and we are grateful to him for finding time to speak to us.

At the request of many members who heard Tony Schilling's talk last year, we arranged for him to come again. On Tuesday, 29th April, Tony gave an illustrated talk on "The way to Everest - Bananas to Edelweiss" - as always it was entertaining.

Guests are always welcome at the Meetings. Forms for membership application, banker's order forms and ties are available from the Secretary at the Meetings.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday, 25th November at the Royal Nepalese Embassy at the kind invitation of HE The Nepalese Ambassador. The Meeting was well attended after which the members enjoyed an excellent curry supper. The Chairman, Col. Scott chaired the Meeting with characteristic thoroughness and good humour and evident enjoyment. Tragically, it was to be the last function he attended as

Chairman, as on Monday, 13th January on his way home from work, Colin collapsed and died soon after at Westminster Hospital. He has been sadly missed by his colleagues and friends in the Society.

The President requested Lt. Col. H.C.S. Gregory, who was Vice-Chairman, to carry out the duties of Chairman until the next Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 12th November, 1986 at the Royal Nepalese Embassy.

The Annual Nepali Supper

The Annual Supper was held at New Zealand House on Wednesday, 19th February. As a full report on this function appears elsewhere in the Journal, there is no need for me to comment, other than briefly to thank Sir George Bishop for arranging for the Society to hold this event at New Zealand House annually. Members much appreciate the Supper being held at this venue, and we very much hope that Sir George will wave his magic wand once again and arrange for the Society to hold the Supper at the same place sometime in February 1987.

Our grateful thanks also to the Commanding Officer of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles for providing the Gurkha Orderlies, to the Gurkha Engineer Squadron Commander for the piper, to Mr. Manandhar and his family for providing the food, Mr. and Mrs. Bond for manning the microphone and Mr. Wieler whose Spring flowers brightened up the tables. Last but not least a word of thanks to Committee members who spent the afternoon helping the Secretary to prepare the rooms for the evening.

The Spring Outing

The Outing was to Wakehurst Place held on Saturday, 17th May on a very wet day. In spite of the weather there was a good turn out and we were delighted that HE The Nepalese Ambassador was able to join us.

We are greatly indebted to Tony Shilling who is the Deputy Curator at Wakehurst Place, for providing us with a large room, described as the Gardeners' Mess, where we were able to enjoy a delicious Nepali style picnic lunch.

During the afternoon, members were conducted around the gardens, and of particular interest was the Himalayan Walk and its splendid show of Rhododendrons.

Sir George Bishop

Congratulations to Sir George on being elected President of the Royal Geographical Society for a further year.

The late Mrs. Rosalind Broomhall

Those who knew Rosalind were saddened to hear of her death earlier this year. She had been unwell for sometime. Rosalind and her husband Paul, who is a past Chairman and now a Vice-President, over the years welcomed and entertained members of the Society and Nepalese students at their lovely home Penhurst, near Battle in Sussex. Rosalind will be sadly missed by all her friends.

Messages

A message of congratulations was sent to His Majesty the King of Nepal on his birthday on 28th December.

A message of congratulations was also sent to our Patron HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal on his birthday in July.

For many years the messages from the Britain-Nepal Society have been drafted and forwarded by Mrs. Mayura Brown. We much appreciate her help and take this opportunity to thank her.

The Nepal-Britain Society

The following letter was received by the President from the Nepal-Britain Society.

Dear Sir George,

We are writing to thank you and all the members of the Britain-Nepal Society for your greetings and good wishes on the occasion of the visit by our Patron, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

It was indeed a splendid evening with 150 guests and Prince Philip spoke to many of them. The gathering was televised by Nepal TV and was given good press coverage. Our members were delighted with the occasion.

For your information, the Society elected a new President just previous to the visit and he is Krishna Bikram Thapa, who for many years was a member of the British Embassy staff.

Again our thanks to the Britain Nepal Society,

Yours sincerely,
SGD: D.D. Shrestha.

Departures

Mr. Prabal S.J.B. Rana, Counsellor at the Royal Nepalese Embassy will be returning to Kathmandu in the New Year. He and his wife Shanti and their two sons Prashant and Prabir have been good friends of the Society during their stay, and will be greatly missed.

Lt. Col. C.B. Gurung, the Military Attache and the Committee member for the Embassy and his wife Bina will also be departing for Kathmandu shortly. We wish them all bon voyage.

Subscriptions

The Hon. Treasurer has asked me to remind Ordinary members, who are still paying their subscriptions at the old rate of £3, that they should inform their banks that their subscriptions have been increased to £5, payable annually on the 1st October. Corporate members should also make sure that their bankers orders are up to date.

Please note that from the 1st October 1986 the Life membership subscription will be increased from £40 to £60.

Society tie

The price of the Britain-Nepal Society tie is £5 including postage. Your Secretary holds a large stock of these high quality ties which have been specially made for the Society by the old-established firm of Messrs. Thresher and Glenny.

Stamped addressed envelopes

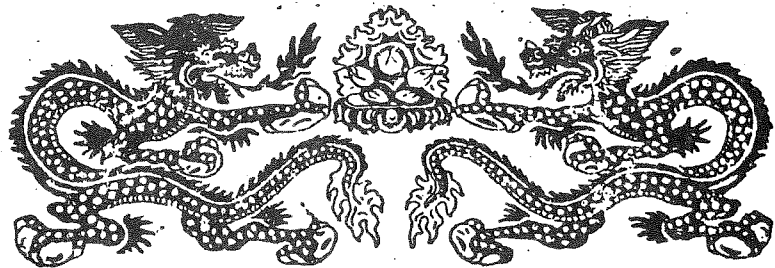
It would be helpful in keeping down costs if members sent a SAE when they write if their letter requires an answer.

Future Programme

Details of the monthly meetings and functions to be held during 1986/87 season will be given by the Secretary at the Annual General Meeting which is to be held at the Royal Nepalese Embassy (by kind invitation of HE The Ambassador) on the 12th November 1986.

We hope that you will enjoy the next season's programme and look forward to seeing as many members as possible.

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



FORTHCOMING BOOKS

SAGARMATHA - "MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE" - THE STORY OF MT EVEREST NATIONAL PARK by Margaret and Bruce Jefferies. Foreword by Edmund Hillary. Cobb/Horwood publications, 92-94 Ellice Road, Glenfield, Auchland. 195 pp. 130 GM Art Paper. 4 colours throughout. \$24.95.

IN GURKHA COMPANY by Lieutenant Colonel J. P. Cross. Arms and Armour Press, 2-6 Hampstead High Street, London NW3 1QR. 27 October 1986. £12.95. \$19.95 USA. After an exceptionally varied and adventurous Army career which included command of Border Scouts in Borneo and of the Gurkha Independent Parachute Company, and a spell in Laos as Defence Attache, Colonel Cross, who speaks nine Asian languages, has recently been a language researcher at the Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu and was honoured with permission to reside permanently in Nepal. This should be an exceptionally exciting and informative book.

See also Book Reviews and Other Books of Interest

ODYSSEY OF A MOUNTAINEER

[From Talk given to the Society at The Royal Society of Arts on 24th September 1985 by The Lord Hunt of Llanvair Waterdine KG CBE DSO DCL]

After enjoying the unique experience of hearing Lord Shinwell speak in the House of Lords on the occasion of his 100th birthday - a most lucid and fascinating glimpse into his political past from 1921 onwards - it occurred to me that this lecture would have been much more interesting if I had the advantage of an additional quarter of a century. The period to be covered is the same; there is a faded photograph in the family album of an 11-year-old wearing shorts and armed with a walking stick, roped to a Swiss Guide on the Grindelwald Glacier, dated 1921. Had I been 100, I might have been able to regale you with reminiscences of pioneering climbs in the European Alps around the turn of the century, when the golden age of mountaineering was drawing to a close. I would have rubbed shoulders with some of those pioneers, as my father did with Edward Whymper, in whose youth the Matterhorn was the ultimate goal of Alpinists' ambitions. At least it was the great Victorians who fired my youthful imagination. Whymper's "Scrambles Amongst The Alps" was one book which had just that effect.

Leslie Stephen, who wrote "The Playground of Europe" about climbing in that epoch, was another source of inspiration. Had he lived on he would have been 152 today and would have done my job far better; he was a defrocked priest and, by all accounts, a most colourful character.

HEROES FROM CHILDHOOD DAYS

Alfred Mummery, too, is one of my heroes from childhood days. His book "My Climbs in The Alps and Caucasus" is another classic. Mummery pushed the limits of what was deemed to be possible in climbing a long step forward. He advanced the frontier of exploration to reach the highest summits. He was killed in a daring attempt on Nanga Parbat, western Bastion of the Himalayas, in 1895.

It is worth remembering that the difficulties for Alpine climbers began long before they reached the foot of the mountain; a journey from the rail-head by horse-drawn 'diligence' over rough roads; a climb, partly up untracked slopes, weighted down with gourds of wine and legs of mutton. To finish in a bivouac under boulders beside the glacier. Compare this with air travel, cable cars, helicopters and the huge over-crowded mountain huts of today!

CONTRASTING EPOCHS

My own beginning lay midway between these two contrasting epochs. The great pioneers climbed with local professional guides. Whymper took them with him to explore the Andes and Mummery was accompanied by guides in the Caucasus and the Himalayas. The years of my own apprenticeship, during winter ski touring and summer climbing, were also - for the most part - with Swiss and French guides. Today, the practice is largely confined to unskilled tourists. So I can be grateful for this link with the past, before the days of ski lifts and other mechanical assistance, but with the companionship of professionals from the old school.

All this is in the nature of a "trailer". I am inviting you to travel back and forth in time under the auspices of "magic carpet travel" to areas which, in their day, were still remote and difficult of access.

VALE OF KASHMIR

We have arrived in the Vale of Kashmir fifty-four years ago. The Pir Panjal Range,

which in Spring-time and Winter provides a shining back cloth to the southern borders of the valley was, at that time, a lonely wilderness, familiar above the forest fringe only to shepherds. Today, Gulmarg and its surroundings are a fashionable winter and summer resort. For two seasons in succession, two young officers and a tea merchant from Calcutta used a tent to explore this area on skis. We were incredibly ill-equipped; our tents weighed some thirty pounds; like the Alpine pioneers we used blankets, having no sleeping bags; and we carried bundles of firewood for fuel. The R.G.S. Expedition Committee would not have approved of our ideas, and I don't blame them. But we succeeded in traversing great tracts of that snow-covered vastness and pioneering its entry into the list of ski resorts which it is today.

THE KARAKORAM

We received a salutary lesson in the behaviour of snow in the Himalaya; it was a foretaste of bigger things. So let's take off northwards to that magnificent mountain range - The Karakoram - whose gleaming summits including K2, I had viewed from the highest point in the Pir Panjal.

Four young officers and two Sherpas, provided by the Himalayan Club, set off from Srinagar fifty years ago to find a mountain which featured approximately on an early sheet of the Survey of India maps. The main attraction in our youthful minds was its height: 25,400 feet. It took them three weeks hard trekking, covering 20-30 miles a day to reach its vicinity in the district of Baltistan. They spent another ten days searching for the peak and possible approaches to its foot. Today, you can travel most of the way by fast motor road on the route to Leh, capital of Ladakh. They had no maps and their only guide book was a monumental tome: "Two Summers in the Ice World of the Eastern Karakoram" by a Dr and Mrs Bullock-Workman, who had visited the area twentythree years beforehand. Eventually they discovered a hitherto unknown glacier and hired the entire male population of the highest village to carry their baggage, still guessing that the glacier would lead them to the desired destination. Those fifty ragamuffins were a likeable crowd. They had never seen Europeans, and yet they knew all about industrial action. Most were physically deformed and mentally retarded by their isolation from their own tribal neighbours in other villages. In-breeding and goitre were prevalent in those parts at that period.

There followed a chapter of dramas, misfortunes and sheer folly which would take too long to describe. Perhaps the most surprising thing was, despite all, that party very nearly climbed that mountain.

The last straw was one of those frequent 4-5 day storms for which the Karakoram are renowned, and which struck us just as we set foot on the summit ridge (24,500 feet).

Incidentally, the Expedition Advisory Centre would have been interested in some of our equipment: sledge; double rucksacks; skis - and those cretinous cripples earned our undying gratitude and admiration by coming up through the continuing storm to help us back from the mountain.

Pursuing the analogy of our package tour, we have made a great leap forward of 45 years, to return to a district in the same range at no great distance from Baltistan as the crow flies; but inhabited by a very different tribe. Hunza featured prominently in the history of the British Raj before the turn of the century, when Russian ambitions posed a threat to this remote corner of our empire. The Durand Expedition of 1891 will be familiar to many of you, as will the name of the illustrious Francis Younghusband.



EVEREST 1953 -
FIRST ASSAULT



WESTERN ALPS
SCHALLI HORN

Our journey this time could hardly be more in contrast with that earlier one of a half century ago: different in the way of approach and, even more so, in terms of time: two days instead of three weeks, along that astonishing feat of Sino-Pakistan engineering, the 'Karakoram Highway', which leads to Kashgar in Chinese Sinkiang province, beyond the Kunjerab Pass. Many of you will be familiar with the expedition of 1980 through Keith Millar's book, and lectures and seminars. So let's turn off the Hunza Valley near the hamlet of Pasu and trace the first pioneering footsteps of Lieutenant Cochrane in 1892 through the gorge of the Shimshall river - following, too, in reverse, the route taken by Shipton and Spender who, in 1937, re-entered what was then Kashmir over the Shimshall Pass, after spending six months exploring that hidden land - that 'blank on the map' - which lay beyond the great mountain range.

Such is the pace of change that Shimshall, only four years on since our journey (one of the first half dozen such journeys by Europeans) to one of the (then) remotest villages in Asia, already features in a Pakistani tourist brochure.

The Shimshalls are akin to their cousins the Tadjiks in the neighbouring Soviet Republic of Tadjikistan; they speak the same language 'Wakhi'. They are descendants of highway robbers who used to lie in wait to pillage the caravans plying between Kashgar and Ladakh. Today, they are peaceful farmers, tending their yak herds on the high Pamirs beyond the pass and cultivating the fertile soil around the village. Although Ismailis, their culture is much influenced by myths from a misty past.

JOINT SOVIET-BRITISH EXPEDITION

At a point in time midway between those two Karakoram Expeditions three British members and two Russian members of a joint Soviet-Russian Expedition stood upon the summit of a previously unclimbed and unnamed peak in the West Pamirs and looked southwards towards K2 and the other Karakoram giants. It was perhaps the best moment of an otherwise ill-starred expedition and we named our peak Co-Brushestvo (Friendship or Concord).

DIVERSITY IN EXPERIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

One of the delights about mountains is their diversity in experience and environment. We have been spending some time in rain-starved and somewhat frightening mountains, subject to earth tremors as the tectonic plate which carries the Indian Sub-Continent collides with the main mass of Asia ("Continents in Collision"). Your tour tonight points up this contrast by enabling you to wander at leisure eastwards through the delectable foreground of the great peaks. These scenes represent some twelve treks, stretching from beyond the western outlyers of Dhaulagiri in West Nepal to the eastern frontier of Sikkim, Nepal's neighbouring State which lies with Chinese Tibet. In imagination, we arrive at Jelep and the Natu La's: notable because this was the route taken by all the pre-War Everest Expeditions. Notable too, for this was the line of advance of China's invading Army into India in 1964.

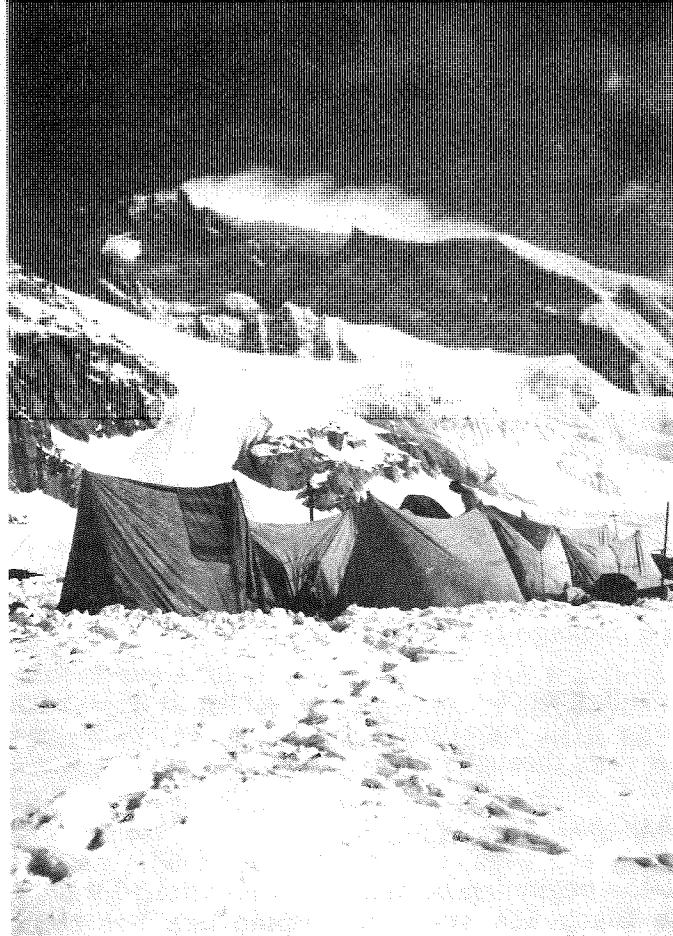
The twelve journeys span some 500 miles of mountain terrain and - in time - more than fifty years - about ten miles per year. Yet I have no sense of being upstaged by the Crane Brothers, who traversed the whole 2,000 miles of the Himalaya in 101 days.

KANGCHENJUNGA

Just to our north and close at hand is Kangchenjunga, third highest mountain in the world. So on leaving the Natu La, let's pay it a visit. The season is December.



ALTORU KANGRI EXPEDITION 1935 PEAK 36
(INFLATING A SKIN RAFT)



SALTORU KANGRI 1935 25,400ft.
(FROM BASE CAMP)



ZEMU GLACIER EXPEDITION 1937



Zemu Glacier Expedition 1937
(Dawa Thundup - C.R.Cooke - Hawang - Kitar -
Joy Hunt - Pasang - John Hunt - P.Kukuli)

It is exceedingly cold in the shadow of the great peak, as we camp and climb from the Zemu Glacier on the surrounding mountains. Higher up that terrible scourge the winter west wind is making life well nigh intolerable. Yet strangely enough, that's precisely why we are here... We returned convinced that the chances of climbing Everest or any others of the highest Himalayan mountains - in mid-winter, were out of the question. It was nearly another half century before that prognosis was disproved: by members of a Polish expedition, who climbed Everest in February 1980.

EVEREST

It's time to pay a call on Everest, for we are now westward bound. In his book "South Col" Wilfrid Noyce recalled how, when he made a second trip to that place in support of the second assault on 28th May 1953, he met, among other Expedition members, Alfred Gregory. He described the encounter thus: "And there I met Alfred Gregory, a Travel Agent from Blackpool". This curious reference to one of his comrades has proved to be prophetic, for here we are, at the South Col: on a package tour.

I don't propose to keep you long in this inhospitable spot, where the west wind blows with appalling ferocity almost every moment of every day on all but very few days throughout the year.

CAUCASUS

At the beginning of this talk I mentioned the Caucasus. That great barrier between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea lies along our line of flight as we continue our journey westwards; so we will stop over briefly in the Soviet Republic of Georgia. The range was explored in the 1860's by Douglas Freshfield, who climbed its lower summit, Elbruz in 1868. A number of other British Mountaineers followed in his footsteps in the 70's and 80's (Mummery, Hastings, Collie, Cockin, Donkin, Fox etc.)

GREECE AND EGYPT

We have spent a good deal of time in some very cold places and - to ring the changes - the itinerary now takes us to some hot and arid mountains. 'Magic Carpet Travel' has quite a large choice to offer its clients. In Greece, there could be the ascent of Mount Olympus; or a travers of the Pindos Mountains which form the back-bone of that country; or, most interesting of all, would be a trip to the Akti Peninsular and the ascent of its holy Mountain Athos, that shapely pyramid which rises as a shining beacon for mariners in the Aegean Sea, with its upper reaches snow-covered in winter. Unfortunately for the membership of this tour, no women - indeed, no females of any species, not even chickens - may set foot on Athos. On balance, it seemed best to leave the mountains of Greece out of the programme and instead visit two other mountain groups; both of them in Egypt.

'Mons Claudianus' was the name given by the Romans to a remote settlement in the Red Sea hills, inland from the southern end of the Gulf of Suez where, centuries ago, a military garrison - we identified the 22nd Legion - supervised the labours of Christians and other slaves who worked in the surrounding quarries of Porphyry granite to supply building materials for the cities of the Empire.

Shortly after the war, very little was known about this place and no serious excavation had taken place. Hard by is Egypt's highest mountain: Gebel el Shayib el Banat 7,150 feet, whose first ascent in 1921 was described by George Murray in the Geographical Journal.

SINAI

Today, you can travel easily by air or by road to visit Saint Catherine's Monastery in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsular. Nearly 40 years ago it was quite a different matter for a party of Army officers and their wives, stationed on the Suez Canal: three days of very rough going, with a good deal of guess work as to the route through various untracked Wadis. When we did arrive in the Wadi Safsafa, we received a warm welcome from the Abbot.

THE TATRAS - "DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS"

We are now passing over Europe in north-westerly direction, heading towards arctic waters. Below us we can see the Carpathians which at this point provide a frontier between Czechoslovakia and Poland. The Tatras are such "delectable mountains" that I could wish to make a brief call there and see something of the "Gurals" or Highlanders and their way of life, dances, etc.

LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

But now a long stage to arrive, with touch-down on a sandy beach with ice floes just off-shore, is Scoresbyland - a part of the East Coast of Greenland and beyond the Arctic Circle. For myself and my companions in 1960, the attraction had been a book by Ernst Hofer with the unlikely title "Arctic Riviera".

So here we are in the land of the midnight sun, where great glaciers sweep down from the ice-cap to calve as icebergs into the Fjords. It is a land where men and mammals meet on a footing of friendship...

GLACIOLOGY

Glaciology is an interesting science allied to geology. In Greenland arctic glaciers terminate in the ocean and go afloat. In Hunza the Expedition witnessed a glacier make a 'great leap forward' to engulf a section of the Karakoram Highway; whether in protest against the Chinese engineers who constructed that northern section; or to make a commentary on their otherwise impeccable surveying skills; or even to demonstrate that natural forces can make human 'great leaps forward' look puny by comparison. In the Alps, that glacier above Grindelwald where I stood as a child has long since retreated more than 1,000 vertical feet up the flanks of the Matterhorn, leaving smooth limestone slabs in its wake. In Peru, the Andean glaciers slide tidily to rest, devoid of unsightly moraine rubble, on the grassy slopes of the Altiplano and here, in the sub-arctic mountain range of Saint Elias in Canada's coastal far north-west, one mighty ice stream, dwarfed by the white wilderness of snow and ice, was in a state of 'surge' when we camped beside it eighteen years ago.

THE ANDES

Before leaving the American continent, we must glance at one of the greatest mountain chains on the earth's surface: The Andes. One of the glaciers I mentioned above flows from the flanks of the splendid peak: Salcantay. We skirted around its southern approaches, crossing a high pass, before joining the much trodden Inca Trail...

This has been a long journey into the past. We are about to land in the present, at the point where I started my odyssey sixty-five years ago. The date: 1984. The place: The Canton of Wallis. The Occasion: another journey into the past, to mark the passage of 75 years (my own span) of association between Swiss and British climbers. Appropriately, we were required by our hosts to wear the clothing

and to arm ourselves with climbing equipment used in Edwardian times.

GREAT FIGURES FROM THE PAST

It was a joyous occasion, evocative of some great climbs and sundry adventures on the familiar peaks which surround Zermatt and Saas-Fee. "This fine buttress diminished by distance" (Young).

And it was a splendid reunion of old friends and climbing companions. At various points along the way I have introduced my own friends and at others I have saluted those great figures from a past beyond my own span of years. At this meet, we commemorated the construction of an Alpine climbing hut which the British Alpine Club donated to the S.A.C. in the year 1912. Only one among the company gathered to mark that event had also been present at the original ceremony. He (Noel Odell) is counted among the pioneers and I am only one among very many who count it a privilege that he should be a personal friend.

We have just returned from the realm of memory, aided by a touch of fantasy. The 'Magic Carpet' can now be returned to the library from which I borrowed it.

You will have noted that, from time to time, I also borrowed other people's property in the form of titles of some well known mountaineering authors. My final choice is Tilman's "When Men and Mountains Meet" for - when you come to think about it - that is what this journey has been all about.

A SURGEON IN NEPAL

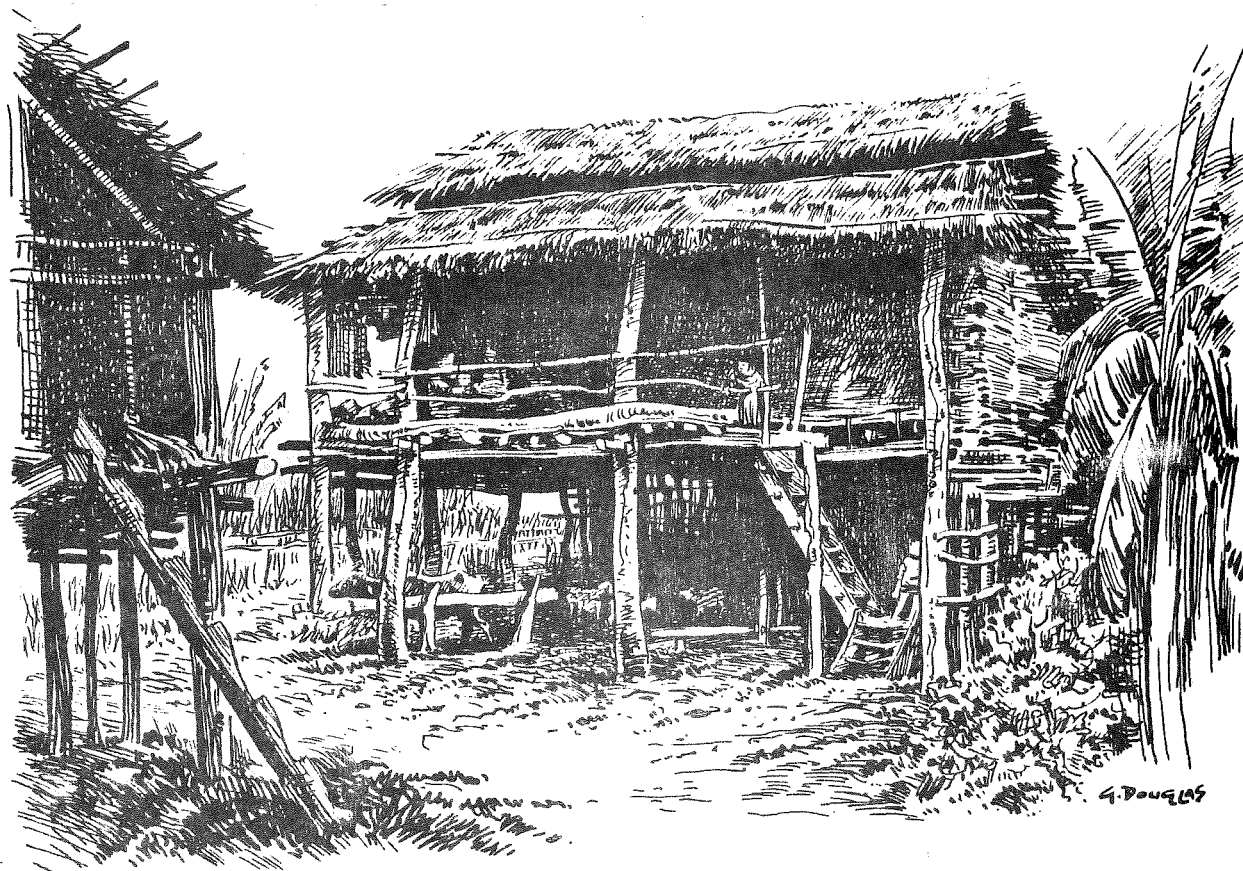
[Talk given to the Society at The Alpine Club by Peter Pitt FRCS MRCP]

(I gave my address to the British-Nepal Society on Thursday January 16th 1986, on the sad occasion of the sudden death of Lieutenant Colonel C J Scott OBE, Chairman of the Society. It was the wish of his family that the lecture should go ahead.)

I served as a British Army surgeon at Dharan, East Nepal, for two years from 1966 to 1968.

We left the United Kingdom in April when two thirds of the counties of England were snow-bound and I had to push the car out of a snow-drift on our way to Heathrow. We arrived at Calcutta on the hottest day of the year so far. We were met by my paediatric friend in Calcutta who immediately enquired whether my son James, aged three months, had been vaccinated against smallpox. I explained to him that I had enquired of the Army paediatricians if that was safe. I had been warned that a complication called vaccinia might occur. This means that the little fellow could have broken out in smallpox-like eruptions and suffered brain damage, but with my wife, Anna, still feeding him, we had been assured that sufficient antibodies would get to James through Anna's milk. My Indian colleague, however, was aghast, and he made us close all the windows in the car

THE FASCINATING SKETCHES ON THESE AND OTHER PAGES BY THE WELL KNOWN DARJEELING ARTIST GEORGE DOUGLAS ARE PRESENTED BY PETER AND ANNA PITT (See article "A Surgeon in Nepal")



to prevent any dust getting in and we sweltered all the way back to his house in the appalling Calcutta heat to the salvation of his air conditioned guest bedroom. I then asked my friend to vaccinate him, but he refused, telling me to get it done as soon as we reached Dharan. This we did because, in addition to his advice, corpses had been discovered in the nearby forest; these poor villagers had died from smallpox. As luck would have it, James did, indeed, suffer from vaccinia, but, fortunately, escaped any dreaded complications.

Indeed, as we said goodbye to Brigadier Tony Taggart, on our last day, I did venture to him that I thought James was a bit backward, because all he could say, at the age of two years and three months, was Mum and Dad. Brigadier Taggart smiled at us. The two used to chat together in fluent Gurkhali when they met on one of the Ayah's walks. It immediately dawned on me that James realised it was not worth bothering to talk to his parents!

The reason why I was in Nepal was to look after the surgical needs of the staff at the Cantonment and to help with the twice-yearly recruiting of the Nepalese to the British Army. As this produced such a tiny workload, we opened the British Hospital (some sixty beds) as "Aid to Nepal" and tackled practically every problem that could be treated by surgery. We also ran a small maternity unit.

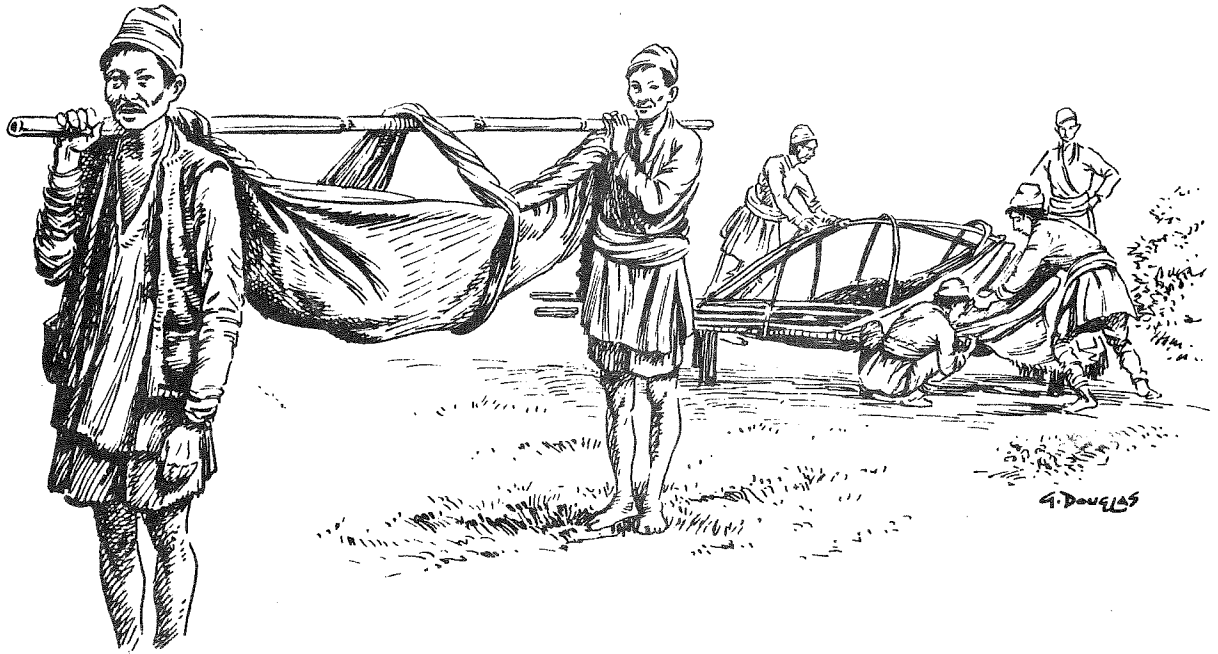
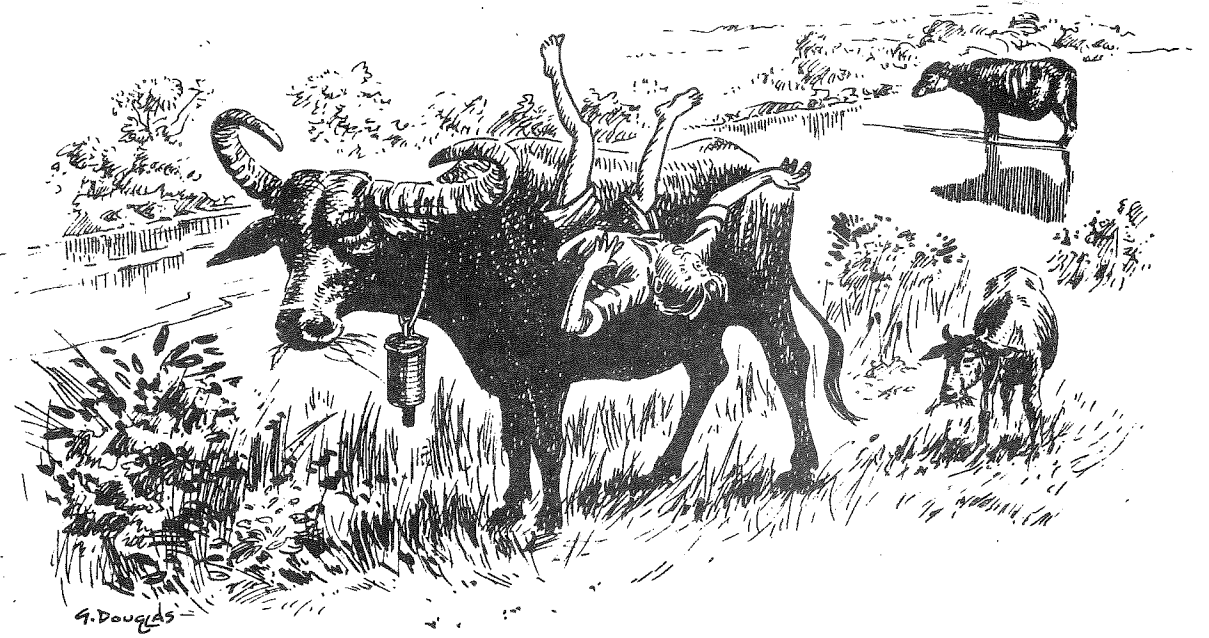
The Terai of Nepal was once one of the most dangerous places in the world to live, because of the Anophelene mosquito and malaria and only the Tharu tribe could survive there. Malaria was wiped out in Nepal with the help of the World Health Organisation who sprayed all the ground from 4,000 feet below, but it is beginning to come back now. Also, due to the World Health Organisation, smallpox has now been wiped off the face of the earth, hopefully never to return.

The greatest scourge to the Nepalese is tuberculosis ("the disease of kings") as only a rich sufferer could afford the treatment for tuberculosis. In and around Dharan the homes of the Nepalese are built on stilts for ventilation and their hospitable owners invite travellers into the one-room home. If that traveller has tuberculosis, then the whole family might die of that disease in the next few years. The Nepalese cook in the corner of these buildings and the fumes sterilise the timbers. Sadly they have scant regard for the fire drill learned in the Army and fearful fires and subsequent burns result. We tried to work in conjunction with the witch doctors and never interfered with the charms that many of the villagers were wearing. (I showed a whole series of revolting pictures of skin cancer, probably the result of exposure to the sunlight and also of tumours of the salivary glands, which only occur in this part of the world and the adjacent area of China.)

Having performed a certain operation, e.g. repairing a hare-lip and removing a bladder stone, word would spread to the villagers saying that they could tackle this sort of condition at the British Hospital and for the next few weeks we would deal with many such problems.

The whole of the rest of the camp drank Marvel milk, but we drank buffalo milk - buffalo milk is free of tuberculosis; however, our supplies were becoming thinner and thinner and it worked out that we were being diluted four-fold and not even with the lovely clean, pure water that we had in the Cantonment. Sadly, when I only agreed to pay for the milk we were receiving, our milk supply was cut off and we were back on Marvel milk which of course is very good for you anyway!

(I described my visits to Tiger Tops, to Srinagar in Kashmir and Kathmandu in an attempt to break up the slides of the afflictions of the brave and suffering villagers of Nepal.



I felt very touched indeed by the kind words I received by way of introduction and thanks and for the way my talk was received.)

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL MEDICAL TRUST

Members of our Society are not unaware of the great work being done by the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust in Nepal. Charles Wylie, a Vice President of this Society and a Trustee of the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust since its foundation, suggests that members might like to know of some recent changes. "We are now truly international", he reports, "with Canadians, Americans, Dutch and Norwegians involved and with funding from Holland and Norway. We are starting on forestry and have opened a new clinic in Diktel.

"The Bhojpur self-financing scheme is being extended to Taplejung this year and then to other districts in each of the next two years.

"Prince Charles is now our patron".

We look forward to publishing another and longer report in our next Journal and in the meantime wish Lieutenant Colonel Charles Wylie and his fellow Trustees and all who are involved both in Nepal and at home in the splendid work of the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust every success in their new undertakings and in their unceasing efforts to win support for their work for the people of Nepal.

THE EFFECT OF TOURISM ON NEPAL

[Precis of a Talk given to the Society at The Alpine Club on 20 March 1986
by Professor Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf]

There are few homelands of great historic civilizations which remained closed to western travellers well into the middle of the twentieth century. The Kingdom of Nepal, which as early as the first millenium A.D. was a meeting place of Indian and Tibetan scholars and artists, is such a country; for until 1951 it was inaccessible to westerners, the only exception being a few British emissaries permitted to visit Kathmandu but not to travel beyond the periphery of the Nepal valley.

Nepalese citizens were allowed to leave their country and to accept service in the Gurkha regiments of the British-Indian army, and some went occasionally to India to trade or to visit Buddhist centres of pilgrimage. But on the whole few Nepalis had any contact with outsiders and the majority of the people in remote Himalayan valleys had never seen Europeans or any other foreigners from countries beyond India.

When in 1951 the end of Rana rule and the restoration of the effective power of the royal house resulted in the lifting of the barriers and the first European

travellers were allowed to enter Nepal, they found that soon after having crossed the frontier they had either to walk or to ride on horseback if they wanted to reach the capital Kathmandu. Two days of such leisurely travel brought them to the Nepal valley, and there they found an atmosphere recalling Marco Polo's descriptions of Central Asian cities. There was virtually no wheeled traffic, all goods were carried on the backs or shoulders of men and women, and hardly anyone wore garments other than those locally produced of indigenous materials.

This idyllic state of affairs did not last long. When in 1951 the gates were flung wide open to the twentieth century, Western embassies and aid missions were established, and the Nepalese intelligentsia began to ignore the Hindu taboo on contact with outsiders, previously shunned as polluting. The resulting exposure to modern ideas and ways of living altered both the physical and the psychological milieu of Nepal and particularly of the capital Kathmandu. With the construction of an airport and the building of motorable roads linking the valley with India, the initial trickle of foreigners swelled soon to a flood. By 1975 every year close on 100,000 overseas tourists entered Nepal, and with this invasion arose the need for hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and other tourist-related services.

Acquaintance with western habits and material standards inevitably affected the traditional system of values, particularly among the younger generation. The fine old brick buildings of Kathmandu decorated with exquisite wood carvings gave way to concrete structures of no architectural merit, motor-cars became common means of transport, and western style clothes became fashionable. Transistor radios and motor cycles came to be valued more than ancestral paintings and images. Many of the latter were sold to tourists and ultimately exported, with the result that some priceless pieces of Nepalese art are now in foreign collections.

As long as tourists confined themselves to Kathmandu where they stayed in hotels and had thus little contact with the local population, their influence on Nepalese social life was indirect and hence of limited power to bring about change. Even the wave of "hippies", which swept over Nepal in the 1960s left no lasting marks. But after a few years the tourists began to fan out into the countryside, and their treks tended to concentrate on the regions of high altitude much publicized by the glamorous accounts and films of various mountaineering expeditions. While in Kathmandu tourists had encountered a large urban population not easily deflected from their accustomed code of conduct, but the much smaller and less sophisticated communities in remote Himalayan valleys put up less resistance to the influence of tourists. This is clearly apparent among the Sherpas of the Mount Everest region. This tribe of hill-farmers and yak-breeders experienced the full impact of tourism, both in the shape of mountaineers, who recruited the men as porters, and of parties of trekkers. As in their villages there were not hotels or inns the tourists sought accommodation in Sherpa houses, thereby impinging on the owners' domestic life throughout the touring seasons. No doubt, the Sherpas earn now a great deal of money by acting as guides and camp servants, but the price they pay for their new affluence is the disruption of their traditional life-style. Most able-bodied men spend nowadays only two or three months of the year in their villages, and during the rest of the year they are either on treks, often in regions far from their homes, or they stay in Kathmandu waiting for jobs in the tourist business. Hence their wives and children are left alone for most of the year. The women have to look after house and fields, and care for the cattle, taking the yak to the high pastures, a task which was previously the exclusive responsibility of the men. Many of the Sherpa men have now secondary homes and often also additional wives in Kathmandu. Sherpa culture as it existed even ten or twelve years ago is now on the point of disintegration and this development must be attributed mainly to the effects of tourism.

In India tourism is almost entirely restricted to the big cities and the vicinity of famous archaeological sites. There the earnings of foreign currency are an advantage not counter-balanced by disruptive influences on the traditional culture and life-style.

The problems created by tourism in some of the smaller Asian countries cannot be compared with the effect of tourism on countries such as Spain, Italy, Switzerland or Austria. In the latter countries tourists and the host population stand on more or less similar levels of economic and social development, whereas in places such as Nepal there is an unbridgeable gap between the material standards of overseas visitors and those of the local people, whose value system tends to be irremediably confused by the blatant affluence of the majority of tourists. For Sherpa guides are skilful enough to calculate that a tourist coming to Nepal by air spends on a three-week holiday more than the total annual expenditure of a Sherpa family.

THE ROAD TO EVEREST

[Talk given to the Society by Tony Schilling, Deputy Curator of Wakehurst Place, at The Alpine Club on 29th April 1986 under the title of "The Way to Everest - Bananas to Edelweiss". This article had already appeared in "The Garden", the Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1978, July and August, but has been specially up-dated by the author for publication here.]

Plant collecting is by reputation a romantic business and when the scene of activity is focused on the Everest area of east Nepal the romance becomes magnified and intriguingly interwoven with the history of man's endeavours in other fields of exploration.

In view of its appeal to the imagination it is surprising that so little has been published regarding the plants of the area - especially considering the relative ease with which one can get there today.

With the Khumbu region of Everest having been recently designated a National Park by the Royal Nepalese Government, it is an appropriate time to refer to records of the botanical exploration of the area and to draw attention to the more interesting plants which come from this mystical corner of the world.

The first recorded botanical exploration in Eastern Nepal was that of Sir Joseph Hooker in the early winter of 1848, (See Journal No. 9) but this only touched on the area close to the borders of Sikkim. Probably the first foreigner to see the Nepalese side of Everest was that great mountaineer George Leigh Mallory. The year was 1921, the time of the first reconnaissance of Everest, and his 19,500-foot (5944-m) vantage point was the Lho La (the eastern pass), between Kumbutse and Everest. It must have been an exciting moment and one can imagine his musing at the botanical wealth of the mysterious valleys that stretched out below him towards the plains of India. In "The Epic of Mount Everest", Younghusband writes ".....Mallory could see a lovely group of mountains away to the south in Nepal...what beauties they must contain! What forests and flowers!" Almost

a decade passed before the first plant collecting of any significance was to take place on Everest's southern flank; the area we know as the Khumbu - home of the Sherpas.

In 1930 Major Lal Dhwoj, a retired Nepalese army officer with botanical training in the Darjeeling Botanic Garden, made a botanical survey in the Khumbu as well as the adjoining areas of Solu and Rolwaling. His journeys lasted from June until October and comprised 666 collections. One of his most exciting finds was a dwarf Himalayan poppy which nowadays is commonplace in many western gardens and appropriately named Meconopsis dhwojii. Another 'first' for Dhwoj was seed collections of Gentiana ornata. Although herbarium specimens had been obtained by native pilgrims for Wallich in 1820 it was over one hundred years before seed reached the outside world.

Following Dhwoj's death, another Nepali, K. N. Sharma, continued his work, and was followed in 1948 by an Indian botanist, M. L. Banerji. Between 1948 and 1956, Banerji made five visits to east Nepal, but although he included the Khumbu area, details of his precise routes are not clear.

Following the end of Nepal's political isolation in 1949 the first Europeans entered this botanical arena. In 1952 A. Zimmermann, a member of the Geneva Everest mountaineering expedition, collected throughout the surrounding valleys of Everest as well as to the south and west. In 1954 C. R. Stoner collected whilst involved in the Daily Mail sponsored search for the Abominable Snowman. He did not find the Yeti, but he did add 94 herbarium specimens to the collections at Kew! J. D. A. Stainton, who has possibly travelled in Nepal more extensively than any other botanist, made his way into the upper Dudh Kosi valley in 1964 with McCosh and Bowes-Lyon, and in mid November of 1969 worked alone as far as the Everest base camp.

In 1966 I spent July and August in the company of M. L. Banerji and A. R. Sakya, conducting a botanical survey in the Khumbu for the Nepalese Government's Department of Medicinal Plants. Our party penetrated high into the region and my personal herbarium collections mounted to 194 numbers plus a collection of living plants.

During the last few years the Everest area has suddenly become much less of a botanical blank. The Nepalese Department of Medicinal Plants has conducted several collecting expeditions to this and adjoining zones of east Nepal and detailed flora are at present in the making. However, the story is still unfinished and some gaps need to be filled before the whole area can be considered fully surveyed. I frequently have the good fortune and privilege to re-visit Nepal and in the autumns of 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1985, I walked once again that greatest of mountain pilgrim ways - the 'road' from Kathmandu to Everest. The 200-mile (322-km) route is exceedingly varied both in geography and vegetation, but a detailed account of the entire journey is not possible within this article.

From the Lamjura Pass, an 11,500-foot (3505-m) high pass, it is nine days walk to Kathmandu, and it represents the gateway to the Sherpa regions of Solu and Khumbu. Already the hot low valleys of the first few days seem far behind. The beauties of hillside clothed in curtains of Pinus roxburghii, the terraced hillsides of emerald green rice, and the warm temperate forests of Alnus nepalensis, Castanopsis tribuloides and Fraxinusa floribunda have become a part of a pleasant multicoloured blur upon the memory.

Now we enter another field of interest. The last 1500 feet (457 m) of the Lamjura shows a variety of interest. One progresses through dense temperate forests dominated by Acer spp., Magnolia campbelli, Rhododendron arboreum, Sorbus

cuspidata and several Quercus spp. This changes at approximately 10,000 feet (3048 m) to mixed conifer forest of Abies spectabilis and Tsuga dumosa but many of the species from lower elevations such as Rhododendron arboreum and Acer campbellii remain. Gradually, as one climbs to 11,000 feet (3353 m) the rhododendrons begin to dominate, the commonest addition being R. barbatum but higher still, just below the summit of the pass, R. campanulatum takes dominance. Amongst all this, Usnea and other lichen species hang in grey-green festoons which, in the mists and clouds of the monsoon, create an eerie atmosphere.

In the wet summer months many delights cheer the traveller, such as Androsace sarmentosa, Anaphalis nepalensis, and the dwarf mauve-blue Strobilanthes wallichii. By comparison, October brings autumnal delights with Berberis concinna dripping with coral red fruits, Cyananthus lobatus and, most beautiful of all, Gentiana ornata which clothes the summit ridge in a sheet of blue.

Beyond this great pass the forest track descends through glades of Iris clarkei and, having passed through the appealing villages of Jumbesi, climbs again to the Buddhist temple of Takshindu. En route, if the weather is clear, one can gain a tempting view of Everest and other high peaks of the Khumbu over 40 miles (64.5 km) away to the east. Set against foreground alpine meadows seemingly poised in space, this is one of the most beautiful parts of the trek. Far below slopes and gorges clad in Bhutan pine, Pinus wallichiana, lead steeply to the river bed whilst at one's feet are so many exciting plants that no superlatives seem adequate for their description. In March these slopes are lit with waves of Primula denticulata, but in the monsoon these are replaced by silver-foliaged Anaphalis and Potentilla species, the sundew Drosera peltata var. lunata, Anemone obtusiloba, the purple Pedicularis gracilis var. stricta and that Himalayan expression of our native 'Grass of Parnassus' - Parnassia nubicola. Microglossa albescens, Spiraea bella and Colquhounia coccinea are associated shrubs, and in the gullies along the hillside that peculiar spiny-capsuled hazel, Corylus ferox, bears pink catkins in autumn.

From Takshindhu the trail plunges 4,000 feet (1219 m) into the exciting gorge of the Dudh Kosi and turns due north towards some of the highest peaks on earth. Once clear of the upper forest Luculia gratissima graces the wayside, and just before the valley bottom the scattered warm temperate forest includes Quercus glauca, Symplocos and Litsea species, and the orchid Dendrobium densiflorum.

Above the nearby dream-like scattered Rai village of Jubing occurs a single tree of Wightia speciosissima, its delicately scented tubular flowers readily catching the eye in October and reminding one of a pink flowered Paulownia to which it is, after all, closely related.

For the next three days the route follows the eastern flank of the Dudh Kosi gorge, often high above the river and sometimes at its side. The way is full of surprises, cruel ascents and descents and magical deep forests in which shelter well known garden plants such as Cardiocrinum giganteum, Vaccinium glaucoalbum and the October flowering orchid, Pleione praecox. Where the density of the tree canopy eases to give hints of glades the yellow monsoon-flowering Spathoglottis ixioides occurs in great drifts on saturated leech-infested mossy rocks. Other exciting finds in 1966 on this stretch of the trail were Rodgersia nepalensis (first found here by Dhwoj in 1930), the maroon form of Meconopsis nepaulensis, Rhododendron triflorum and a truly superb ginger lily, closely related to Hedychium densiflorum. The perfume is intoxicating and the flower colour is best described as salmon-yellow. It grows to a height of 2½ to 3 feet (76 to 91 cm) in mixed temperate forest on steep west facing slopes and appears to be restricted to a small area between the small settlements of Puiyon and Surkya. The herbarium sheet in the Kew Herbarium reads "Hedychium sp. not matched. Schilling 1027". Happily,

living material was also despatched to Kew (S.870) and this has since been propagated to secure it a niche in cultivation, as a hardy herbaceous perennial for at least the southern counties of Britain. In August 1982 this ginger lily was granted an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society in London and has since been given the clonal name 'Stephen' in honour of my son who was born in Kathmandu in 1966.

Another delight of this valley is the strange climbing gentian Tripterospermum speciosum. Its mauve-blue pendulous flowers are produced in October and bedeck the twining stems which weave their tenuous way amongst the surrounding shrubs of viburnum, hypericum and cotoneaster. The trees are covered in a multitude of epiphytes and in autumn the golden fronds of the ferns and the yellow-green of the mosses add an extra dimension of beauty and mystique to the trail. Perhaps the most interesting of these "arboreal appendages" is Hymenopogon parasiticus with its linear cream-coloured bracts surrounding the unusual white umbels of turkish-towelling like flowers. The bracts often persist and become skeletonised and with the charm of its autumn coloured leaves this species gives almost a surfeit of enjoyment.

After crossing and recrossing the thundering waters of the Dudh Kosi time and time again the trail at last leaves the deep, precipitous gorge and the steep climb to Namche Bazar starts. This is not only a climb from a pine clad river gorge out on to an open hillside, it is a climb from one kind of world into another. At last one is really entering the high Khumbu, the land of the highland Sherpa, the land of Buddhist temples and the land of Everest and the steep path from the Dudh Kosi to Namche Bazar gradually shakes off the last of the Bhutan pines and silver firs. The wayside shrubs of Rhododendron lepidotum, Rosa sericea and Berberis spp. shelter a tantalising wealth of herbaceous plants such as Thalictrum chelidonii, Leontopodium strachey, Lilium nepalense and the liver purple Salvia castanea, its corolla tube covered in a white pubescence. Most of these plants are at their best in the monsoon, but in October the undoubted highlights of this stretch of the path are dumpy cushions of the pale blue Gentiana depressa which are often associated with the prostrate Cotoneaster microphyllus which hugs the banks and plasters the rocks in a tablecloth-like manner.

Namche Bazar is set at an altitude of 11,500 feet (3505 m) in a spectacular amphitheatre high above the mighty Gorge of the Bhote Kosi. It is the largest village in the Khumbu and as such is the administrative centre of the area. All about high peaks appear to hang in the sky; peaks with awesome ice-fluted ridges, such as Kwangde, Karyolung and the sacred peak of Kumbila.

Above and beyond the way leads northwards at an almost constant contour across a steep hillside, 2,000 feet (609 m) above the white waters of the now deep and distant Dudh Kosi. In July Notholirion macrophyllum graces the pathside and Euphorbia himalayensis turns flame scarlet in the dry post-monsoon air of the Himalayan autumn; the spade-shaped leaves of ragworts desiccate to a flat-brown colour and crumble like potato crisps at a touch. Gentiana depressa still commands equal pride of place with its associates amongst which is Thermopsis barbata. This semi-procumbent grey-pubescent leaved legume species produces large liver-purple flowers in high monsoon.

Beyond the village of Tesinga the path descends through birch and pine to cross the Dudh Kosi for the last time. In 1966 the exceptional monsoon rains had made this bridge extremely dangerous and consequently I had been unable to get closer to Everest. Instead I travelled north-west and collected in the Bhote Kosi valley as far as the mouth of the Rolwalling Himal. Nowadays the bridge is passable allowing one to proceed obliquely up a steep wooded hillside to the monastery of Thangboche. This must surely be one of the most beautiful places in the world.

The temple perches upon a knoll towards the end of a high narrow spur. This great spur stems from the secondary peaks of Kangtega, 22,178 feet (6760 m), and throws itself at right angles out across the Imja Khola valley which lies over a thousand feet below. Far across this void lies the settlement of Porche, its scattered houses clinging to a shelving flank of Taweche.

To the south one looks back to the impressive depths of the approach route, but northwards the view is even more exciting for there, far beyond the treeline and dominating all at the head of the Imja valley stands the highest peak on earth. Still more than 12 miles (19.5 km) away, the summit pyramid of Everest stands tantalisingly half hidden by the $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile (2.5 km) high ice ridge which links the adjoining peaks of Nuptse to the bastion-like summit of Lhotse.

If the geography of the Thangboche scene is not enough in itself the wealth of the surrounding vegetation adds still more to its beauty. Abies spectabilis and Betula utilis wreathed in huge tattered strings of grey-green lichen dominate the forest, but other species such as Juniperus recurva, a white fruited Sorbus species, Rosa macrophylla and great drifts of Rhododendron wallachii and R. campylocarpum add their colours to nature's palette. The autumn scarlet of Berberis angulosa is indescribably flamboyant, whilst the more subtle appeal of the minute Gentiana carinata reminds one that neither the size nor scale has any direct bearing on the measurement of beauty.

The monastery of Thangboche is only about forty years old, the previous one was destroyed by an earthquake. The present Head Lama, accepted as the reincarnation of the last, is the first Sherpa to be chosen for this holy office, all others having been Tibetan. The monks exhibit a broad and sympathetic attitude towards outside influences and beliefs alien to their own, hypocrisy and intolerance seem to have no place in the minds of these people who have put aside their lives to meditation and prayer.

Northwards beyond Thangboche the way descends into the Imja valley and by way of Pangboche proceeds beneath the towering turret of Ama Dablam and on to the windy yak pastures of Periche which are set at an altitude of 14,000 feet (4267 m). This stretch of the walk boasts many plants familiar to western gardeners and many others strange and rarely seen outside their native haunts. A prostrate cotoneaster, Cotoneaster adpressus, is frequently seen in association with Salix sikkimensis and the ubiquitous Berberis species, whilst between and across the rocks grow a myriad of dwarf shrubs and alpiners. Primulas are here in variety with P. wollastonii shining the brightest in the monsoon mists, whilst Polygonum vacciniifolium clothes the rocks and Potentilla cuneata graces the short turf.

Polygonum tortuosum takes its name from its curious zig-zag stem habit. This plant is recorded from a wide area of the Himalaya and is an attractive alpine bi-stort well worth more common representation in horticulture. White to pale pink flowers are produced when the monsoon clouds hang damp and persistent on these south facing slopes, but in the autumn the leaves rapidly wither and turn a magical burnt orange-scarlet in the dry air. Sadly it is impossible to reproduce this climatic sequence in gardens and thus it is likely that the brilliance of its autumn garb will be diminished. For all that, it is still worthy of a place if only for its non-invasive and unusual habit of growth.

The last of the birch forests fade out at well over 13,000 feet (3962 m). We now step onwards into a wilder treeless world of alpine meadows, stabilised moraine and the dwarf scrub of Juniperus indica, Potentilla arbuscula, Rhododendron setosum, R. anthopogon and Berberis everestiana.

Northwards the Imja valley extends up into a higher glacial maze beneath the

peaks of Lhotse, Baruntse and mighty Makalu, but the way to Everest turns north-west beneath the incredibly steep walls of Taweche and Tsolatse. Tsolatse, 21,129 feet (6440 m), stands proud, its needle sharp summit guarded by sheer and frightening walls of rock, snow and fluted ice. Beneath its shadow the flat bottom of the Lobuje valley leads on to the terminal moraine of the Khumbu glacier. The wet broken ground here is botanically rich. Primula sikkimensis flank the numerous streamlets and a fascinating dwarf mat-like mixture of Hippophae thibetana, Ephedra gerardiana and Lonicera hispida add additional interest to the muddled drifts of dwarf rhododendrons, potentillas and berberis which still persist.

The Tibetan buckthorn, Hippophae, and the Ephedra both bear orange fruits in late October. Following the example of the Sherpas, I ate some of the Hippophae fruits, but quickly concluded that it was an acquired taste! Before the introduction of potatoes to the Khumbu via Darjeeling over 100 years ago the Sherpas probably ate these fruits of necessity. In those days existence was marginally tolerable, and apart from growing buckwheat and barley in the more favoured sites the Sherpas relied on their yak herds and trading expertise for survival. Now, with their improved diet and employment created by the increase in Himalayan mountaineering and trekking, the hardships have been blunted.

Beyond Lobuje the mysteries of Everest's immediate flanks are at last revealed and ahead can be seen the borders of Nepal and Chinese Tibet represented by the immense walls and summits of Pumori, Lingtren and Khumbutse. Immediately to the east of Khumbutse lies the Lho La. The traveller of today feels the privilege of having soaked in the beauties of this corner of Nepal which Mallory more than fifty years ago could only dream about. Times and politics change and ironically it is now our turn to muse on the currently hidden and forbidden mountains and flowers of many parts of Tibet.

Beyond Lobuje, lateral moraines are followed to the barren hollow known as Gorak Shep - the 'Place of the Dead Crow'. This is set in a wild corner between the Khumbu and Changri Nup moraines. Some 1500 feet (457 m) above stands the barren rocky hill named Kalapattar dwarfed in turn by the majestic white pyramid of Pumori which rises a mile higher and is immediately dominant.

One is now drawing close to the limits of vegetation and all other forms of permanent life. The eroded turf of Kalapattar stands as an amazing reminder of the diverse vegetation of Nepal. The bananas, giant bamboos, laurels and sal of the lower valleys are only 30 miles (48 km) to the south, but when one is perched at over 18,000 feet (5486 m) in the High Khumbu they seem but a dream from another world. Here, the vegetable kingdom is reduced to those species which can endure the harshness of this barren climate. There are cushion plants such as Arenaria polytrichoides, Rhododendron nivale, saxifrages, Anaphalis, Leontopodium and Saussurea species, but little else represents the last sentinels of plant life except a modicum of alpine sedges and grasses and a few lichens and mosses. Records show that the families Caryophyllaceae and Cruciferae seem the best adapted to altitude. The American ecologist Swan has recorded Stellaria decumbens from an altitude of 20,130 feet (6136 m) in Nepal and the Swiss botanist/mountaineer, Zimmermann, found various small plants in morainic debris close to camps 4 and 5, at 21,000 feet (6400 m), in the western cwm of Everest.

From the 18,500 feet (5639 m) high and rocky summit of Kalapattar one may gaze down upon a chaos of glacial moraine above which towers the great summit pyramid of Everest. Now it is a mere 4 miles (6.5 km) away, impressively close but still 2 vertical miles (3.25 km) higher than this humble vantage point and one feels but a step away from the moon amongst such vast desolation and wilderness. On

all sides plunge steep rotting cliffs overlooking the basal glaciers and ice falls of Pumori. The sensations of personal insignificance and aloneness are very real and one should experience the wonders of sunset on Everest from this point, for it is a wild but hauntingly beautiful place from which to watch the end of a day.

My 1976 diary notes best portray such feelings of fulfilment: "After the amber tones of sunset had ebbed and dusk began to creep in, I descended in haste with my Sherpa to the comparative warmth of our lonely camp.

"At the foot of Kalapattar I stopped and left Pembertharkay to go on across the last of the moraine to camp. It seemed imperative to delay and cling to the final moments of what I felt sure had been a unique experience; the last hour had been beyond adequate description and its beauty, like a fast fading bloom, had been made all the greater by its gossamer-like ephemerality. Its colour had come and gone with a stealth quite imperceptible.

"Now the last real light of day had faded from the western skies, the blue in the east had deepened to indigo, the air sharpened, the night's frosts swept the land and the first star glowed. The whole world was alive with the shining of light.

"I turned and looked back to Pumori's summit; a last pallor had taken its snows and the first of the moonlight was filtering along the ridges leading up to its summit cone. It seemed unjust that others were not there to share this moment of silent majesty, this birth of a Himalayan night. Beauty is surely for all men, but the great joy of it that evening was mine alone."

Everest base camp is another two or three hours beyond Gorak Shep and is an awesome place. The route leads up and through the centre of the Khumbu glacier across wearisome, shifting, moranic debris and between the strange and eerie towering seracs of an ice-corridor known as Phantom Alley. This is no place for a botanist. There is nothing here but sterile rock and ice and an almost unreal silence which is broken only by the periodic groan of overburdened stone, the roar of the none-to-distant avalanche and the clatter of melting ice.

Man, by his quest for the knowledge of these great wild places of the world has ironically threatened their pattern of existence. One can argue that it is the inevitable scheme of things, but it is nonetheless man's responsibility to solve the problems he has created. It is earnestly hoped that the ambitious and comprehensive conservation measures incorporated into the Royal Nepalese Government's plans for the Everest National Park will afford this essential protection and thereby safeguard the ecology and the beauty of the Khumbu from the continuous pressures of progress and for the benefit of generations to come.

Footnote: Tony Schilling writes: "I am sorry if "The Road to Everest" is a bit heavy on botany but those who are particularly interested will find it quite a useful reference if trekking in the Khumbu."

**Lilium nepalense
Jumbesi**



NEPALI SUPPER IN NEW ZEALAND HOUSE
by Norman and Lillian Points

Every facet of the 1986 Nepali supper seemed to reflect its own special and individual significance for the 260 members and guests who converged on New Zealand House on 19th February. Happy coincidence decreed that our annual gathering to feast together took place during the State Visit to Nepal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. While they were experiencing all the pageantry and warm hospitality extended by Their Majesties King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and Queen Aishwarya in Kathmandu, we in London were simultaneously celebrating the warm friendship and myriad links between our two countries. Television, radio and newspapers had been giving full coverage of the Royal visit; so Nepal was in the forefront of public consciousness. As an added bonus, the date immediately followed that of Nepal's own Democracy Day, thus enhancing the general sense of rejoicing for everyone, but especially for Nepalese members and their friends.

Of course, the Queen's State Visit did mean that the Ambassador could not join us as is customary; he was busy attending the ceremonies in Nepal and many of us had watched him on television. We did miss his presence, but his place was taken by a great friend of the Britain-Nepal Society, the Charge d'Affaires, Mr. Prabal SJB Rana, known to so many members who have been introduced to him at the numerous Society events he attends throughout the year.

So there we were - thankfully escaping from a bitterly cold London night into the warmth of New Zealand House. Groups were greeting each other by that focal meeting-point in the hall - the magnificent Pouihi 'totem pole' carved (between singing engagements) by Inia te Wiata and completed by his two sons after his death. Two new members summed up the whole atmosphere: "We've never known another society in which one feels so immediately at home, so warmly welcome as a newcomer and so eagerly questioned about links of common interest."

As ever, Sir George and Lady Bishop contributed to this atmosphere, putting everyone at ease as they received guests at the head of the impressive staircase. Very quickly, the laughter, talk and exchange of news and views threatened to drown even the stirring music of the piper from the Gurkha Engineers. He (Lance Corporal Minbahadur) told us that he had served for 12 years and this was in fact the second occasion on which he had played for our Nepali supper. He too must have been thinking especially of comrades back at home on leave or retired, many of them travelling (at Her Majesty's special request) to meet her at a reception in Kathmandu. Indeed, Captain Rambahadur Limbu VC MVO had been at table with us only last year (1985) just before retiring: he was one of the five Gurkha VCs still living who met the Royal visitors the day after our supper. (The sixth was too frail to undertake a long and arduous journey.) London papers carried splendid photographs on the 21st February - the Queen, Prince Philip and five proud VCs. All this activity back in Nepal gave an 'extra dimension' to the skirl of the pipes and the presence among us of Gurkha soldiers, cheerful and immaculate as ever watchful that no glass went empty.

Soon it was time to go down to the dining hall which had been decked in scarlet and white, both national flags brilliant behind the dais, spring flowers blooming at every table.

Eating the Nepali supper together in an informal buffet atmosphere surely has a special significance for everyone, quite apart from demonstrating common bonds with Nepal and each other. For some it is a taste of home - far away and maybe seldom visited. For others recollections of gracious hospitality enjoyed in Nepal, perhaps by mountaineering teams outward or homeward bound. For regular visitors it would

be a familiar delicious aromatic Nepali feast, eaten this time in London, organised by our indefatigable Honorary Secretary, Celia Brown, and prepared as usual by Mr. Manandhar's efficient team. Whatever may have been each personal evocation, it is certain that we did good justice to the abundant spread.

All conversation hushed as our President Sir George Bishop rose, first to propose the loyal toasts to both monarchs who were, most unusually, together in Nepal. No wonder this added an extra warmth to voices raised in response to the toasts. In fact Sir George opened his speech by reminding us that Her Majesty The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh were in the midst of a full programme in Nepal. That morning, they had made a tour of Royal Palaces and Museums, followed by a civic reception: their day was to be rounded off by a cultural display given in the impressive Royal Academy Hall in Kathmandu.

As is customary, Sir George had earlier sent to the Palace a letter conveying loyal greeting to the Queen from the Society on the occasion of the annual Nepali Supper. Her Majesty's Private Secretary, Sir William Heseltine, had replied in acknowledgement as Her Majesty would be in Kathmandu on the date of our supper. He particularly mentioned that she had been keenly looking forward to the visit and greatly appreciated the loyal greetings of members.

Sir George told us that two days previously, on 17th February, the Duke of Edinburgh had attended a reception given in Kathmandu by our sister society. He had sent warm greetings on that occasion, so that they would know that we were thinking of them. It had, indeed, been a remarkable year of fraternal exchange between our two countries. Highlights had been the 25th Anniversary celebration reception in London in October, when our Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra, with the Princess Komal, had signally honoured us by flying from Kathmandu to be present and to welcome HRH The Prince of Wales as Guest of Honour. During his week-long visit, our Patron had attended a dinner given by the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group at the Palace of Westminster, at which Mr. Speaker Weatherill had presided and become a life member of our Society.

One event of great sadness in a year which had otherwise gone so well was the tragic and sudden death of Lieutenant Colonel Colin James Scott, OBE, Chairman of the Society. He had worked so hard to make our anniversary year a great success and would be sorely missed as a good friend and colleague. After his retirement from the Brigade of Gurkhas, he had devoted himself thoroughly to the affairs of the Britain-Nepal Society as well as the Gurkha Welfare Trusts.

The Vice-Chairman, Lieutenant Colonel H. C. S. Gregory, OBE, had for the time being taken over the responsibilities of Chairman and he, together with the Committee, would be working on proposals to be put forward for next year at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Sir George then turned to his formal welcome and toast to all his distinguished guests. He asked to be forgiven for not mentioning by name everyone at the top table, but he did particularly wish to make special reference to three. First, Mr. Prabal SJB Rana, Charge d'Affaires at the Royal Nepalese Embassy in the absence of the Ambassador in Kathmandu, together with his charming wife, Shanti. Secondly, the Acting High Commissioner for New Zealand, Mr. Neil Walter and Mrs. Walter. Thanks were due especially to him and his predecessors for permitting the use of New Zealand House for the annual supper. There was, of course, a special link between New Zealand, Nepal and Britain through the fact that our Honorary Member, Sir Edmund Hillary was New Zealand's Ambassador in Nepal. And nobody who had fought in the New Zealand Division would ever forget the Gurkhas who had been alongside them at Cassino.

Thirdly, the President expressed pleasure in having Mr. Neil Thorne MP as one of our guests again. As Chairman of the Anglo-Nepalese All Party Parliamentary Group, he made sure in the House of Commons that a proper perspective was kept towards everything that HM Government dealt with in relation to Nepal. He had visited Kathmandu immediately after the Society's Jubilee Reception in the Banqueting House.

Representatives were present also from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Overseas Development Administration, to which Departments special appreciation was due from the Society for the lively contribution which British aid funds made to Nepal. Examples were the promotion of agricultural projects, the road building programme, and especially last year's major contribution of 15 million rupees towards the new Administrative Staff College which was being furnished by the British Government who were providing also the Deputy Director and Director of Studies. On that very day HM The Queen had inspected the College.

Finally, Sir George welcomed the Guest of Honour, Mr. Speaker - The Right Honourable Bernard Weatherill MP - together with Mrs. Weatherill. Mr. Speaker had come from the precincts of the House to join us all too briefly for supper. The essence of parliamentary life was embodied in the office of Speaker of the House of Commons. It was he, who when confirmed in office, demanded for Parliament "all those ancient and undoubted privileges, especially the freedom of speech in debate, the freedom from arrest and the free access to Her Majesty whenever occasion shall demand, and that the most favourable construction shall be put on all their proceedings."

In discharging those awesome responsibilities Mr. Speaker Weatherill was helped by experiences gained through 22 years as Member for Croydon North East, by his tolerance, sense of humour and deep understanding of Parliamentary traditions.

Earlier that year he and Mrs. Weatherill had been able to visit Kathmandu when official duties had taken him to Delhi to confer with his Commonwealth colleagues. That traditional meeting of Speakers from the Commonwealth was a most important way of passing on the great traditions of the Mother of Parliaments to newer legislatures.

Everyone then rose to join Sir George in drinking the health of our guests, coupled with the name of Mr. Speaker Weatherill.

Within seconds of rising to respond to the toast to the guests, Mr. Speaker Weatherill had provoked an outburst of laughter and applause. Declaring that in the House of Commons he had become accustomed to wearing something on his head when he rose in his place, he solemnly donned a flowered Nepali cap. This gesture from our newest life member warmed the company to him before he had completed two sentences. "Lynn and I", he was saying, "will always remember New Year's Day 1986 which we spent in Kathmandu - our first visit and not I hope our last."

Referring to "the pleasure we have in wearing that marvellous tie I see some of you wearing this evening", Mr. Speaker continued: "Today I have been entertaining in the House of Commons two clerks from the Panchayat both of whom said to me, "Where can I buy that?" And I was able to say, "I think not in Carnaby Street". Maybe we can do something about it. Although this was our first visit I know that many of you have much greater experience of Nepal than we have. Few of you, I suspect, saw Nepal as long ago as I did - certainly none of the ladies present would have seen it. Some of the males - you General I think - who, forty years ago, looked longingly over the border as I did from Dehra Dun but in those days we were unable to enter Nepal. It was therefore a particular pleasure for me to be able to go in January of this year. But tonight, ladies and gentlemen, we're all united in one thing and that is our affection for Nepal and for its people and our determination to help, in any and every way we can, that country for which we all have so much love. And

it is a great pleasure to see Neil Thorne with us here this evening. He Chairman of the British-Nepal Parliamentary Group in the House. Normally I'm not at all pleased to see MPs at my dinners outside the House of Commons. First of all, they've never heard me speak except perhaps to pull them up and because, secondly, I'm not supposed to leave the place anyway and it's one of the fictions that I'm away. I hope that most of them believe I'm having a quiet supper upstairs in my flat and will be returning for the vote in about ten minutes time. And I agree with you, Sir George, how much we envy Her Majesty in Nepal at this time. Our visit was a Parliamentary one; my wife and I were on our way to the Commonwealth Speakers Conference in New Delhi and we received an invitation to be the guests of the King which we accepted with alacrity and with gratitude. At least one newspaper on our arrival proclaimed that I had served in a Gurkha regiment. I must tell you that is untrue. It's not such a crime, it seems, these days to wear someone else's old school tie but those of you who have read George Thomas's book may remember the story of George wearing an Old Etonian tie one day in the House of Commons and one of the Tory members coming up to him saying, "When were you at Eton?" and he said "I beg your pardon?" "When were you at Eton?" he said, "your tie". "Oh" he said, "I bought it at the Co-op!" But I must tell you it's a major crime to wear someone else's regimental tie and I wouldn't claim that.

I was commissioned in the British Army in 1940 - a British Cavalry regiment. However, I lacked £150 a year which was highly material even in wartime and after about nine months of struggle my Colonel sent for me, gave me dinner and said our sister regiment was expanding now the Japanese had come into the war - how would I like to join them and "you will be able to live on your pay." So off I went and I joined the 19th Lancers and my first three months were spent in Dehra Dun until 1941 doing initial training with the 2nd Gurkhas and learning Urdu. I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that this was a great turning point in my life. I will always remember, and some of you who are as old as me may remember, what was written on the walls of the Chetwode Hall at the Indian Military Academy.

"The safety, honour and welfare of your country comes first - always and every time.

The safety and comfort of your men comes second - always and every time.

Your own safety and welfare comes last - always and every time."

That is something which I think all of us who have had or may have in the future the privilege of serving in positions of command will always bear in mind.

I did subsequently meet I think it was the third battalion of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles in the Arakan when we were serving there. I remember in particular the bravery of that Battalion in Myebun when we fought side by side in a very bloody battle. It was therefore a special pleasure for me to have visited in the early part of this year the Gurkha Centre in Dharan and to spend a splendid day there with Colonel John Burlison who is himself a 2nd Gurkha, two other younger officers and some rather older Gurkha officers at the Recruiting Centre. Unfortunately it was not a time when the recruits were present but I was fascinated to hear how the recruiting was carried out - some of you here who were in the Gurkha Brigade will know all about that - and the fact that Colonel Burlison told me that it was not possible to do the sifting inside the camp. They had to take the recruits outside onto the roads because they only took something like 1 in 20 of the volunteers and such was the distress, so great the tears, when they were rejected and were sent back to their villages they couldn't do this inside the camp as they probably wouldn't leave! I think that is a great tribute to those who are so anxious to join the British Gurkha battalions.

There is a certain sensitiveness, I think, about the Gurkha Brigade amongst the politicians in Nepal but that was certainly not reflected amongst the people that

I met out in the countryside. Now I must digress for a moment. I was brought up, I must tell you, in the Labour tradition. Nothing wrong with that - my father led the last decent strike of tailors and I was brought up to believe that we had exploited our Empire. It was a result of serving for five years in India with my Regiment that I realised we perhaps did exploit our Empire but I think on balance we gave much more than we took! My wife and I recently visited our Regiment in Pakistan and one of the things we shall always remember is what was supposed to be a half-hour visit with General Zia. Very cautious about politicians he was until I mentioned my General. Some of the members here may remember General Roland Denning. I have on the walls of my loo at home the first letter I received when I got into Parliament and it was from Roland which said this:

"Dear Weatherill - I am astounded to be informed that an officer of the Regiment is going into politics. It is a dishonest profession. I pray you may prove to be the exception. I very much doubt it! - Yours etc."

I think General Zia was in broad agreement with that view! But I must tell you it's not a dishonest profession and I've done my best to explode the General's misunderstanding of it. We always refer to each other in the House as Honourable Members and the greatest crime is indeed to act dishonourably. When we were in New Delhi for the Commonwealth Speakers Conference in the New Year quite the most touching thing was that three of the Jawans from my Regiment legged it in from the villages - about 2½ days - in order to camp in my hotel and it was a most moving thing to see them. Very old men now - I realise how old I must look too and I would just like to say this - forgive me for this is nostalgia - but pensioners of our regiment do have a very special place in the honour and in the life of any regiment because they are the connecting link between the present and the past. They have given the best years of their lives to the glory of their unit and they have built many of its traditions: the young soldiers get their inspiration from the bearing, discipline and dignified ways of these pensioners. They are a crucial influence in keeping the army flag flying in their villages and that is as true of the British Army and the Indian Army as of the Gurkha Brigade in Nepal.

It is fascinating to see their faces when they witness a ceremonial parade of their old Regiment and to see and feel the pride and affection and the loyalty which shines forth. It's perhaps difficult for civilians to understand this.

There's an old story of Queen Victoria some of you may know, inspecting her troops at Chobham Ridges, just outside Aldershot. They had had a very heavy day in the hot sun and Her Majesty said that she would prefer that they marched past in their ordinary kit rather than she dismiss them in their full dress uniform. As they marched past she was downwind of them and she said to those standing by her, "Pray what is this strange smell?" The General standing by her side said, "Madam - that is esprit de corps!". You all know what I mean!

I mustn't go on too long. I just want to say this to you. There's rather a vogue these days you know to have films on the telly and in the cinema about our Empire - 'Passage to India', 'Jewel in the Crown', 'Gandhi' and all that. These recreations of the Raj often depict the British as being stupid and brutal, and the Indians treated with unremitting snobbery if not downright cruelty. Anyone who knows anything about it at all knows this is a grotesque picture of the truth. Anybody who had any doubt about that should have been with us in New Delhi for the Commonwealth Speakers Conference and heard the quite remarkable tribute that was paid to all of us but particularly, I say humbly, to the Lord Chancellor and to myself and to the British by the Indian Speaker in his farewell speech and you know, ladies and gentlemen, we should not allow myths to be perpetuated. The awful thing about myths is that if you go on repeating them often enough people come to believe them as the truth and I would just like to say to you it's about time we stopped it. Of course, the main

reason for our visit to Nepal was to visit the Panchayat and we were magnificently escorted throughout by the Speaker. We had most interesting and valuable discussions with the Prime Minister and with the Foreign Secretary but perhaps the highlight of our visit was when the King sent his helicopter to Kathmandu and we flew over those ranges of hills down to see him when he was in camp. We had a most interesting discussion and I hope I was able to allay some of the misconceptions which some of the newspapers in our country and some other people in our country have been projecting about Nepal. I would just like to say, as Neil Thorne is here, that the British Nepal Parliamentary Group plays a valuable part in the House of Commons in seeking to keep the record straight.

Now I must come to an end as I see my wife looking at her watch. She's very valuable to me! How am I going to sum all this up? You know there's an old story that if you've been bitten by a snake there's no good talking to anybody else unless they've also been bitten by a snake as only they really understand. All of you do understand what I've been trying to say about our affection for that wonderful country, Nepal. Will it be spoilt by the invasion of tourists which I suppose will inevitably happen? Will the people lose their simplicity and way of life? Above all, will their traditional values be usurped and replaced by our Western culture? I do hope not. I couldn't help reflecting as we were going on one of our mini treks - all of two hours I think - the rest of you who have done five days - that story you know of Alexander and his Generals having conquered all the known world sat down one day with his Generals to consult their charts and found to their astonishment that they had marched off the map! To a very great extent that is exactly what has happened to us in our world today and I do hope that Nepal won't rush into the technological "revolution" too quickly. It has hardly brought great happiness to the Western world and I think the endearing view we all have of Nepal is the happiness of the people. So I'm going to end by quoting a poem - very unusual at a dinner. A successful society is like a tree. It has its roots in the past, it flourishes in the present and it gives hope of a continuing if changing future. But if you force its growth it may flower early and will then wither. If you put poison on its roots or hack at its trunk it will die. To grow to its full potential it needs time and it needs space and it needs above all to be well rooted and have care, especially in its youth. Every speech, ladies and gentlemen, should have a message and this is mine - not just for Nepal but for our country as well. The poem - I do not know its author but it contains my message - is called "Trees":

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light
That stood out on an open plain
Never became a forest King
But lived and died a scrubby thing.
The man who never had to toil
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.
Good timber does not grow in ease
The stronger the wind the tougher the trees
The fire of the sky, the greater the length
The more the storm, the more the strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snows
In tree or man good timber grows
Where thickest stands the forest growth
Are found the patriarchs of both
And they hold converse with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many hymns and much of strife
This is the common law of life.

Mr. Speaker Weatherill sat down amid an ovation which reflected not only the apt seriousness of his thinking but also enjoyment of the several witty anecdotes which had been interspersed - and which are so impossible to reproduce in the written word where the laughter and nuances are lost. It had been heart-warming to listen to him.

More spontaneous applause broke out as Mr. Prabal SJB Rana rose to speak as Charge d'Affaires, Royal Nepalese Embassy in the absence of HE The Ambassador, Mr. Pandey, who was away attending the State Visit to Nepal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

After thanking Mr. Speaker for the warm words about Nepal, he expressed the hope that there would be more opportunities for further and longer visits to his country by Mr. and Mrs. Weatherill. He continued: It is a very happy coincidence that the Britain-Nepal Society is having its Annual Supper today at the time of the present Royal Visit to Nepal. The tumultuous reception and the warmest of welcomes which are being accorded to The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh not only reflects the bonds of friendship so happily subsisting between Nepal and the United Kingdom but also signifies the high respect and esteem that we have and hold for the institution of monarchy common to both our countries.

Exchanges of visits at the highest level contribute immeasurably towards further strengthening the ties of friendship. Many of you present here will, no doubt, remember the State Visits of His Late Majesty King Mahendra to Britain in 1960; while the more recent visit of Their Majesties King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah to the United Kingdom in 1980 is still fresh in our minds. The present State Visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to Nepal which is taking place after exactly 25 years is yet another significant landmark in the annals of Nepal-Britain relations.

Few countries have endured a period of uninterrupted friendship for 170 years specially between those that are geographically so far apart. The fact that Nepal and Britain have been able to do so is due to the mutual understanding and respect for each other's interests and aspirations, as well as for traditional values and culture. That hundreds of thousands of Nepalese soldiers fought side by side with the British in two world wars to bring peace in the world, no doubt, has resulted in the close affinity between our two peoples.

The spirit of 'live and let live' is close to our heart. Indeed, Nepal's foreign policy is based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, non-alignment and on the ideals of the United Nations Charter. Our commitment to peace and development is exemplified in His Majesty King Birendra's proposition, made at the time of his coronation in 1975, that Nepal be declared a 'Zone of Peace'. Seventy countries including the United Kingdom have already extended their support to this proposal.

Peace and development are indivisible, especially for a country like Nepal. The Nepalese people are indeed fortunate to have the enlightened leadership of His Majesty King Birendra, who since his accession in 1972, is deeply committed to the economic, social and political development of the country. His abiding faith in the ideals of democracy led to the first ever national referendum to be held in Nepal in 1980. The people's choice for the Partyless Democratic Panchayat System places special emphasis on the process of decentralization by encouraging the people's representative to be active and responsible in the task of development.

Mr. President: there have been considerable positive changes in Nepal since the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh made their first State Visit. Especially in the field of education, health, transportation and generation of hydro-electrical power. Tourism which was in its infancy in 1961 has now become a major foreign exchange earner.

The degree of progress achieved so far must be seen in the light of the constraints that face us. Nepal is land-locked and is among the least developed of the developing countries. We are aware of the enormous task that lies ahead. Providing basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, health and education by the turn of the century is now a high priority. Every effort is being made to utilize all available resources - most important of which is the tremendous potential of our water resources. People-participation in development activities has been stressed and the country has been divided into five development regions to ensure that progress is balanced. The periodic royal tours to various parts of the country are a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to the Nepalese people to participate with greater zeal for the country's overall development. Under the able and wise guidance of His Majesty King Birendra Nepal is looking to the future with renewed confidence.

In the challenging task to achieve accelerated economic progress Nepal appreciates the cooperation from friendly countries. British assistance which started in 1961, has increased over the years to the present level of £9½ million annually. Britain has helped to build our infrastructure in transportation, telecommunications, health and manpower improvement. An important feature of British cooperation is that it has always been consistent with our national development plans and objectives. It is, indeed, heartening to note from the speech of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Kathmandu the day before yesterday that Britain hopes to increase its bilateral assistance to Nepal this year.

Mr. President: I need hardly stress the importance which a friendship society can play in fostering and further strengthening the ties of friendship between two countries. It is very gratifying to note that the Britain-Nepal Society from its very inception has been fulfilling this role admirably. Due to the resolute efforts and the support of its members the Society has grown in size and strength.

The Reception last year to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Society, which was held in the presence of the Prince of Wales and the patron of the Society His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra, was a memorable event. I would like to take this opportunity of once again expressing our appreciation to you Mr. President, the Committee, and to all members of the Society who took part in organising such a grand function.

Mr. President: I would like to take this opportunity to express once again our deep sorrow at the sudden passing away of the Chairman, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Scott, recently. His contribution to the Society will always be remembered.

Increasing numbers of British people today know more about Nepal than just as the home of the mighty Himalayas and of the valiant Gurkhas. Our rich cultural heritage, the wealth of our flora and fauna as well as problems of deforestation, soil erosion and the lack of natural resources is now getting a wider coverage than before. The contribution made by the Britain-Nepal Society in the efforts to give a clear and true picture of Nepal in all its facets through lectures and talks by eminent persons is truly noteworthy. I am confident that the Society will continue to play this role with greater vigour in the coming years.

Now allow me, Mr. President, to thank you and all the members of the Britain-Nepal Society for organising this delightful evening.

I wish the Britain-Nepal Society every success in all its future activities.

Thank you.

Once the applause had died down and the President had warmly thanked the Charge d'Affaires, it was time to escort Mr. Speaker somewhat hurriedly from the room as

his presence was required in the House of Commons. However, everyone else was able to continue enjoying the company - an opportunity to linger over discussion of the speeches and to bask in the general aura of goodwill. All too soon we had to say our farewells and venture out in the cold February air, carrying memories of yet another enjoyable and successful reunion.

MORE GEORGE DOUGLAS SKETCHES



TIGER ATTACKS PORCUPINE AND GETS A QUILL IN HIS PAW



ENRAGED TIGER (QUILL IN PAW) ATTACKS UNFORTUNATE HUNTER

OBITUARIES

MRS. ROSALIND BROOMHALL

The Society has lost a good friend and staunch supporter by the death of Mrs. Rosalind Broomhall on the 18th April 1986. She was born in Simla in the days of the Raj in India where generations of her family served with distinction. Her grandfather, Sir George Allen, gave Rudyard Kipling his first job in India. A maternal ancestor, John Jacob, founded an irregular cavalry regiment called Jacob's Horse which later became the 14th Scinde Horse.

After 'finishing school' in Switzerland, Rosalind undertook a brief nursing and para-medical course at one of the London hospitals. She then returned to India to drive a small caravan equipped as a medical clinic, and was able to help the Nepalese border villages near Gorakhpur.

In 1938 she married Mr. Paul Broomhall and they were frequent visitors to Nepal. Her great interest was in the medical work undertaken in Nepal, and she was a life-long friend of the founders of the Shining Hospital at Pokhara. She also visited the newer hospitals and health-centres in the country, often travelling on foot or by pony. Her particular concern was with leprosy work, and she paid several visits to the leprosy hospital at Malunga.

Besides giving hospitality to members of the Britain-Nepal Society, very many Nepalies were guests at the Broomhall house at Penhurst, and the Nepali children from the Pestalozzi Village were always welcome. Despite her failing health, Rosalind still gave parties for them and their House-mothers. She will be very sadly missed by all of us, and especially by the little Nepalies at Pestalozzi.

M.B.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL COLIN JAMES SCOTT, OBE

It was with profound shock and sorrow that I heard of Colin's death, on 13th January 1986, in Westminster Hospital, where he had been taken after collapsing on his way home from work.

I first met him in 1958 when I arrived in Hong Kong on temporary posting to the 1/6th Gurkha Rifles. He had joined the battalion in 1951, following in the footsteps of his father, Major General J. Bruce Scott, who had served in the Regiment for many years in the pre-War period, and at the time of my arrival Colin was the Adjutant.

I was soon struck by the enormous patience, good temper and quiet determination which he showed in what, at times, was no easy assignment. He had a direct, down-to-earth approach to the problems which faced him and although he could be very direct and forthright in his dealings with people, he also had a dry, rather caustic wit and a good sense of humour which, combined with his obvious ability, common-sense and basically placid nature, made him well liked both by the Gurkha soldiers and by his fellow officers. He and I were members of a foursome which regularly dined together in a restaurant in the town and I always found him cheeful, amusing and very easy to get on with - truly a "good companion".

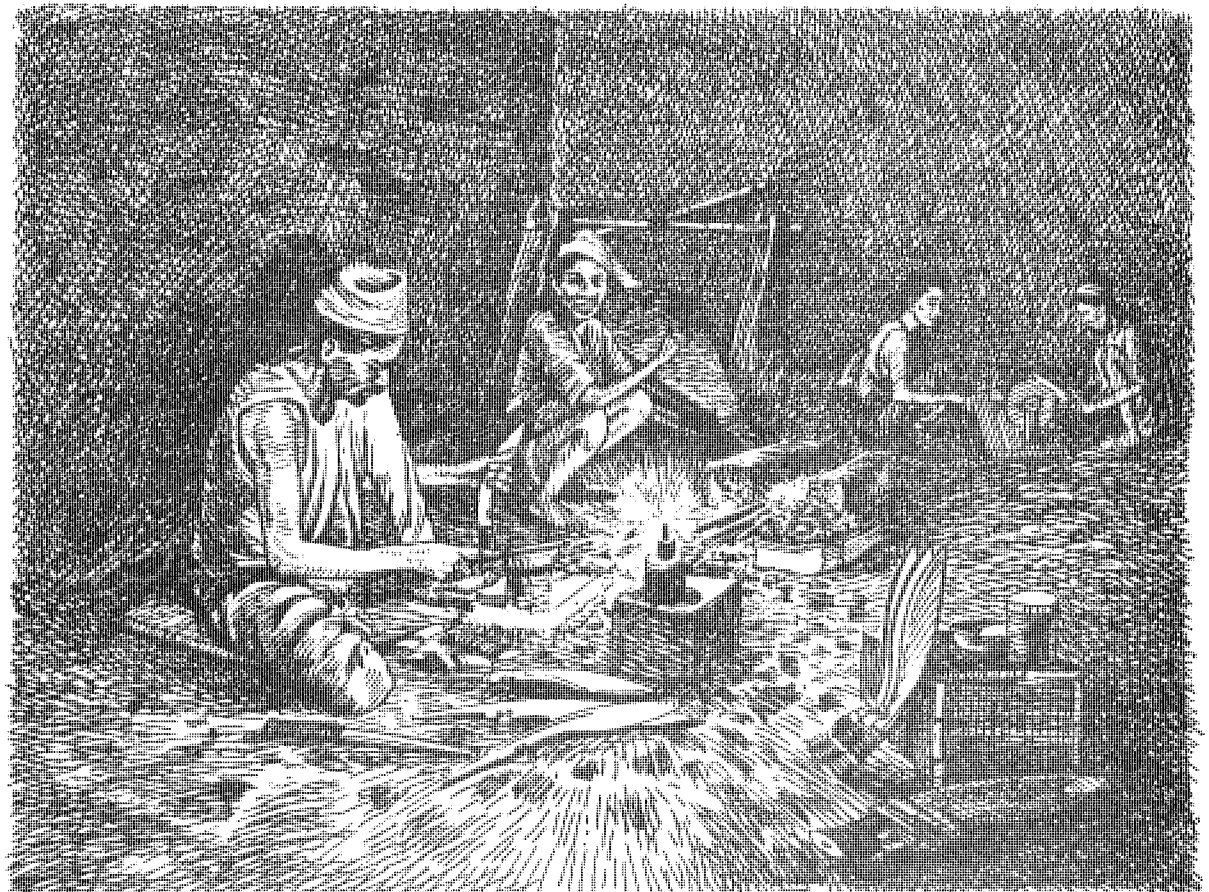
Some years later, after a variety of different appointments, including, to his great joy, command of his own battalion, he became Deputy Commander, British Gurkhas Nepal and for his services in these various posts he was awarded a very well deserved OBE.

When he retired he took up an appointment in the Ministry of Defence which ensured his continuing close contact with the Brigade of Gurkhas and became Managing Trustee of the Gurkha Welfare Trust, Secretary of the 6th Gurkhas' Regimental Association and, of course, a member, and later Chairman, of the Committee of our Society.

I do not, I am sure, need to elaborate on the sterling work he did in this latter capacity. Suffice it to say that, from the moment he joined the Committee, his ability to see straight to the heart of a problem, his sound commonsense and his directness, were of the greatest value in our discussions and his charm and sense of humour were assets which ensured that he got on very well with all members of the Society. He was always prepared to work hard on our behalf and despite his many other interests, gave unstinted support to the Society in all its activities. Under his guidance, the Society expanded and flourished.

He will be much missed by his wide circle of friends, especially in the Gurkha world, the high regard in which he was held there being amply demonstrated by the very large numbers who attended his funeral on 22nd January 1986. He will also be sadly missed by all of us in the Society to which he gave such invaluable and resolute support.

A.B.T.



KUKRI MAKERS - DHARAN BAZAAR

BOOK REVIEWS

"The Steadfast Gurkha" by Charles Messenger.

A Leo Cooper Book. Secker & Warburg, 1985. Pp XII, 147. Foreword by Field Marshal the Lord Harding of Petherton. Maps. Photographs. Index. £15.00.

Lieutenant Colonel Colin Scott is mentioned several times, as would be expected, in "The Steadfast Gurkha" by Charles Messenger, published by Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg, the very appropriately titled Historical Record of the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, Vol. 3 1948-82.

Handsomely bound and with clear maps and excellent photographs, "The Steadfast Gurkha" covers in some 150 pages the enthralling story of the transfer of this Regiment from the old Indian Army to the British Army in 1948, the long drawn out operations of the Malayan Emergency including the dramatic "Templer Era", with fascinating glimpses of the unchanging regimental life of the two Battalions and their accompanying families, and then the strenuous years of the Confrontation war in Borneo in which the 6th Gurkhas played a conspicuous part.

Two short concluding chapters tell the story of the Amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd Battalions in June 1968 to form the Regiment as it exists today and all that happened thereafter including the extraordinary episodes of "border duties" in Hong Kong when hundreds of "illegal immigrants" attempted every night to cross into the Colony from China. The restraint and consideration with which these difficult duties were carried out have doubtless contributed to the good relations that prevail in that part of the world today.

In his Foreword, Field Marshal Lord Harding of Petherton makes it clear that he means every word when he says, "I am immensely proud of my long and happy association with The Sixth Gurkha Rifles" and he has this to say about the families: "It was always a great pleasure and encouragement for us both (himself and Lady Harding) to see the splendid way in which they, like their menfolk, so rapidly adapted themselves to radical changes in their social, cultural and domestic environment without for one moment losing their natural modesty, dignity and charm. They made an outstanding contribution to the morale and contentment of the whole of the Regiment."

It is remarkable that the author of this vivid narrative never served with Gurkhas. As a former officer of the Royal Tank Regiment, he says, his service never took him East of Suez. All the more credit to him for telling the whole story quite as well as if he had been present and had served with Gurkhas for years. I should add that he generously acknowledges his debt to Colonel Hugh Pettigrew for his part in preparing the material for the book.

H.C.S.G.

"Gurkhas" by Sandro Tucci with a foreword by HRH the Prince of Wales and an introduction by Lieutenant Colonel J.P. Cross. 160 pages. 80 photographs. (Hamish Hamilton). £15.00.

In his generous foreword HRH Prince Charles writes that being Colonel-in-Chief 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas "is one of the greatest privileges of my life, as well as being one of the greatest pleasures".

There is no doubt about his sincere regard for the Gurkha soldier and his affection for Nepal which is warmly reciprocated. I am grateful to His Royal Highness for saying that "the Gurkha soldier is in no sense a mercenary" a term often used so annoyingly by the media. These men, whose loyalty and bravery have made them a legend, wish to pursue "an honourable profession" - soldiering. This book serves to show how this is achieved.

Lieutenant Colonel Cross has written a comprehensive and interesting introduction which complements the photographs that follow. In addition he traces the history of the Gurkhas' service to Britain from the time of the East India Company to the present day, and gives information on all aspects of their army life. While he commends their martial qualities, he also has a sympathetic perception of their difficulties. There are two small errors in this otherwise excellent chapter. On p.11, "In 1792 Nepal's eastward expansion caused a war with Tibet". China held suzerainty over Tibet at that period so the conflict involved Chinese troops in battles with part of the Nepalese army under the command of Damodar Pande. These engagements took place on Tibetan as well as Nepalese soil. On p.13, Maharaja Jang Bahadur journeyed to England in 1850 not 1846. The latter date was the year when he assumed power in Nepal.

Sandro Tucci's photographs set out to show us the lives of the would-be Gurkhas from their childhood in the harsh environment of Nepal's spectacular mountains, through their endeavours to be selected for the army, their rigorous training, their service and eventual retirement. The pictures display a sensitive appreciation of the hardship that has to be undertaken in preparation for a military career in a Gurkha battalion, the duties assigned to the men, their obvious pride in reaching perfection, and the honour of becoming HM the Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer.

It is well nigh impossible to choose for special attention a few pictures from this impressive collection, but I was deeply touched by two. On p.50 were some youngsters with their books seated on a grassy slope in front of their teacher in an open-air 'school'. On p.51 were a group of small boys who often "had to walk for more than an hour up the mountain-side to theirs". Would there be a future in the Gurkhas for those lads? It has been sad to recollect the reduction of the Gurkha regiments in the British Army, and even sadder to contemplate their eventual fate when Hong Kong is returned to China in 1997. For the moment, however, we can enjoy this admirable book with pride, for it is not only a tribute to the Gurkhas but to their British officers as well between whom there is a strong sense of devotion and respect.

Mayura Brown.

"The Two Year Mountain: A Nepal Journey" by Phil Deutschle.
Bradt Publications 1986. (Hardback £10.95. Paperback £5.95).

Despite the "Assignment Description" given to an American Peace Corps Volunteer about life in the remote Himalayan village where he/she will be required to teach, the reality is far more formidable. Apart from the loneliness in a foreign country, the unknown conventions, strange food, illness, and lack of amenities all take their toll. It may be fun to wash one's hair in a mountain stream during a fortnight's trek in the high hills, but quite a daunting prospect during a long Himalayan winter. It is not only the survival of the physically fit that has to be considered

but their ability to adjust mentally to the conditions. The author has given an honest account of the experiences of his group after their arrival in Nepal, and their disillusionment when they found that "Shangri-la" did not live up to their expectations. Two hundred rupees was stolen from him, and one of his compatriots had to pay fifty rupees for the return of his 'stolen' sun-glasses. Later, Mr. Deutschle was asked to pay twenty rupees for a plate of dhal-bhaat in one village, while he had previously paid only five rupees in another. The poor locals were learning fast how to make money from rich foreigners. The author has commented that foreign influence due to the influx of travellers was undermining traditional Nepali values. I consider the greatest disaster was to allow the 'hippies' into the country.

The Peace Corps volunteers had a three month crash course in Nepali. After some initial difficulties 'Philipsir', as his pupils called him, settled down in his assigned village of Aiselukharka to teach English and science. He seems to have coped successfully with his pupils and the villagers, and managed to get in some climbing in his spare time as well.

His stay in Nepal coincided with a very interesting event, the Referendum in 1980 to decide whether the Panchayat system of government should remain. Deutschle's sensible conclusions were that Nepal "was unprepared for a true democracy. I felt that the monarchy was a good government for Nepal. The country could not afford the inefficiency of a fluctuating democracy". A reader who is not well acquainted with Nepal will discover that the outlook of the villagers is different from that of people in the towns. When a teacher from Kathmandu came to Aiselukharka to ask the teachers to go on strike, they replied that their purpose was to teach, not to strike.

If there are any criticisms about Philipsir's behaviour in Nepal, it was his foolhardiness in attempting to climb alone in the mountains, especially the 20,5880 ft. Pharchamo which had already claimed two lives, his rashness in trying to be photographed near a rhino in the Chitwan National Park, and his complete craziness in sleeping alone in a clearing in the Park at night.

There are a few inaccuracies in the narrative. HM King Birendra was educated at Eton before going on to the University of Tokyo and to Harvard. Mahadev is a male deity not a goddess, and the important autumn festival referred to is Dasain not Dasai. It is a pity that the sample of Nepali script was printed upside down, and there are several printer's errors in the text. However, the author has contributed some delightful pen and ink sketches of Nepal.

Philipsir's final farewell to his hill village is full of sadness. Like many young people nowadays he came from a broken family. His girl-friend had found consolation with others in America. He had no home to return to. He concluded: "Living alone in the midst of America's enormity would be a drastic step down from the sense of community that I had in Aiselukharka. In two years I had matured from a juvenile who could hardly speak the language to a capable adult whose opinion was respected. But I was giving this up for an unknown job in a world of concrete and gasoline." Philipsir can always look back on the friendship and affection given him by the simple villagers of Aiselukharka.

Mayura Brown.

Flowers of the Himalaya by Oleg Polunin and Adam Stainton.
Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. 580. Gloss. Bibliog. Index. Maps. £29.50.

This beautifully produced book contains descriptions of 1,500 species and covers an area comprising parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal. There are over 690 colour photographs and 315 line drawings which help to simplify identification of the wild flowers of the Himalaya. The illustrations are of a high standard.

The two experienced authors have also provided an introduction which is a mine of information for the intending traveller on where and when to visit the area to obtain the maximum advantage. In addition the introduction contains some interesting observation of man and his animals and also gives a "conservation" warning that the increasing number of tourists may impoverish some areas of plants.

The book is based on the Himalayan collection of the British Museum (Natural History) to which both authors have contributed considerably over the years.

Cynthia Stephenson

The above review by our former Honorary Secretary was written for and has already appeared in "Asian Affairs", the Journal of the R.S.A.A.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Lieutenant Colonel T. M. Lowe

Smythe's Mountains - the climbs of F. S. Smythe by Harry Calvert.
Victor Gollancz. £14.95. 223 pages.

High altitude mountaineering has been fashionable for many years past and there are plans for more expeditions in the years ahead. Smythe's climbing career covered more than 40 years and included everything from the Welsh Hills to the highest Himalayas. The top of Everest, alas, eluded him, but only just.

Calvert has given us a first rate account of an extraordinary man who, by any standards, was one of the greatest climbers of his time. Calvert has traced in some detail the life of Smythe who started climbing at the age of seven in Switzerland and died before his fiftieth birthday in Darjeeling in 1949.

Smythe was a prolific writer and his writings give clear and detailed accounts of his climbs in different parts of the world. He was not just a determined climber whether in the Alps, the Himalayas, or the Rocky Mountains. 'He was a sensibly cautious man who admitted to fear, but his fear and judgement did not keep him off the mountain.' The author touches on Smythe's trek along the Bhyundar Valley of which Smythe has written in his book "The Valley of the Flowers". A book to read at any time.

The saga of the selection of leader and climbers for the 1933 Everest Expedition provides us with an insight into the workings of a committee which dealt with these things. Smythe was not selected to be leader because 'there was, about

Smythe, the stench of professionalism.....Smythe's vice seems to have been that he actually needed his earnings from this source' [writing about mountaineering.] There were other reasons why Smythe was 'persona non grata' to members of the climbing establishment, the Alpine Club and the Everest Committee. Earlier climbers were men whose background included a major public school, the universities of Oxford or Cambridge, commissioned rank in the Armed Forces or status in the highly regarded professions of the time. Smythe, alas, had attended a minor public school and was training to be an electrical engineer. He had, moreover, learned to climb mountains without help from patrons. Some prejudice you will say against a man who had already reached one of the peaks of the Kanchenjunga range and who, for good measure, had organised and led a successful expedition to the top of Kamet! Perhaps the best explanation of Smythe's approach to mountaineering is summed up in his own words:

"Deeply engrained in the mountaineer is a desire for adventure, far and high, and to attain some indefinable spiritual degree of attunement with the beauties of the universe."

The author and the publishers are to be congratulated on a book which will be read by mountaineers, both amateur and professional, and, let us hope, by selection committees where they still exist. How many great climbers over the years have not put pen to paper? Few publishers would not seize a chance to bring out a good book about mountains and those who climb them.

Into Thin Air by John Pilkington.

George Allen & Unwin. £10.95 171 pages.

High altitude climbers are the subject of other reviews in this Journal. Pilkington has had experience of high mountains in Africa and the Americas, but he is said to be rather more a compulsive traveller than a climber.

This book is an entertaining story of Pilkington's trek in Nepal in 1982. He stopped off at New Delhi and Varanasi (formerly Benares) en route to Kathmandu. From Kathmandu Pilkington set off for Magar and Gurung country. His walking days ended at Pithoragarh, some fifty miles from Almora. The trek was a solo effort for the author for most of the 500 miles covered by him. It was an Earl of Cadogan who said, "Never go abroad, it's a dreadful place" and there were times during the trek when Pilkington echoed the sentiments of the noble Earl. The author had attended a crash course in Nepali before starting out, but soon realised that Nepali, as spoken in Kathmandu, wasn't understood in many of the villages which were included in his itinerary. His diet consisted of curry, rice and lentils much of the time and large quantities of sweet tea.

He found little difficulty in forming a rapport with the inhabitants of the area in which he trekked. On one occasion he met a former Q.G.O. (Captain) whose appearance suggested that he was 100 years of age, but when Pilkington was asked "How is Aldershot these days?" he had quickly to revise his assessment of the Gurkha's age.

Here and there you will find an apocryphal story. What happened on the banks of the Suez Canal during the First World War is something new. The Q.G.O. says it was true. He was on the banks of the Canal at the time.

This book has a number of mini sketch maps and the end papers are helpful maps of the places visited. The photos in the book are in black and white; the text deserves something better. A glossary of Nepali words which are sprinkled liberally throughout the text will be useful for readers who are unfamiliar with the Nepali

language.

Let the author have the last word. "Those of us from the West who have been privileged to meet the Nepalis at home in their astonishing country remember them with well deserved affection expressed eloquently earlier in this century by Sir Ralph Turner." Those words, of course, will be familiar to anyone who has served in a Gurkha Regiment.

The Windhorse by Elaine Brook and Julie Donnelly.
Jonathan Cape. £9.95. 223 pages.

Climbing Everest or any other high peak in the Himalayas, is not an every day occurrence. Those who attempt high peaks are physically fit and have no obvious impediment which could make climbing difficult.

"The Windhorse" is not the story of two high altitude climbers, but the tale of two young ladies who reached Kala Patthar which is above the Everest Base Camp. Nothing noteworthy about that you might think. One of the girls, however, was totally blind even if the other was familiar with the Himalayas, as a member of two expeditions in those parts.

Courage of a very high order and great determination to succeed were characteristics of these two girls. Apart from anything else it was a winter journey. The book is a moving account of what can be achieved if the will is there.

Elaine is a Nepali speaker and this must have made her task somewhat less difficult. Even so, how many of us would have managed to shepherd a blind companion on a journey which is described so vividly in this book?

Why the title "The Windhorse"? Read the book and you will be better informed. The text is supported by some excellent photographs in colour. How sad that a person so courageous as Julie can't see them.

Eric Shipton - The six mountains travel books.

Diadem Books Ltd. £16.95 800 pages.

Shipton and Smythe were in many ways two of a kind, but there was an essential difference in their outlook. Both men were high altitude climbers of the first order and both were included in the Everest Expeditions of 1936 and 1938. Shipton was also appointed a leader of the Reconnaissance party to Mount Everest in 1935. The Everest Committee was clearly in a benevolent mood at the time. Smythe must have smiled to himself when he heard of the Committee's decision.

Shipton's style of writing is easy to read and very informative. There are plenty of photos (black and white only), but there is no index. On pages 796-800 there is a useful summary of "Shipton's Mountaineering Record 1922-73". It does not, however, compensate for the omission of an index.

Other Books of Interest

"Savage Snows" by W. Unsworth. £10.95 Hodder

"Eiger, Wall of Death" by A. Roth. £4.95. Gollanacz (paperback)

"The Next Horizon" by C. Bonington. £4.95. Gollancz (paperback)

"Scrambles Amongst The Alps" (1986 edition) by E. Whymper. £14.95. Joseph

"Summit Fever" by A. Greig. £11.95 Hutchinson

"Painted Mountains" by S. Venables. £10.95. Hodder (November 1986)

"The Everest Years" by C. Bonington. £14.95. Hodder (October 1986)

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUSTS (UK)

The Trusts have increased their support for the Gurkha Welfare Scheme in Nepal which has become a complex operation involving Canada, the U.S.A. and the Kadoorie family in Hong Kong.

During the current year the Trusts are providing about a quarter of a million pounds and the British Government grant to pay for the staffing by ex-Servicemen of the 25 Welfare Centres has been substantially increased.

2. - 300,000

The funds donated to the Trusts in the past and currently have been managed with excellent results by the well-known City of London firm, Robert Fleming & Company Limited. All officers and soldiers of the Brigade of Gurkhas have continued their contribution of one day's pay to the Fund and the covenanted payments by retired officers and well-wishers show no signs of diminishing.

In Nepal the Scheme enjoys the full approval of the Nepalese authorities.

The yearly meeting of the Trustees was held on 31 January 1986 and was attended by Mr. and Mrs. Ellice McDonald, Jr., of Delaware, founders of the Gurkha Welfare Trust Foundation (USA), and by Major M. L. J. Burke, MBE, CD and representatives of the Gurkha Welfare Trust (Canada).

Contributions (donations or covenanted payments) are still needed and anyone wishing to help should contact the General Secretary, Miss Jacqueline Craig at: Archway North, Old Admiralty Building, Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BE

OTHER ADDRESSES

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

Tel: (0732) 360284

**The Gurkha Museum
Queen Elizabeth Barracks
Church Crookham, Aldershot, Hants**

Tel: (0252) 613541

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. Last year it celebrated its silver jubilee.

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, businessmen and scholars.

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £5 per annum. Life members - a single payment of £60.

The "Yetis" - Nepalese studying or resident in Britain - are welcome at all functions. They are eligible to join as full members in the usual way. They have a flourishing organisation of their own and publish their own attractive journal.

The Society's programme includes:

Monthly lectures at the Alpine Club and elsewhere, meetings and films;

A Spring or Summer outing to a place of interest;

Receptions and hospitality for visiting Nepalese;

An AGM in November and an annual supper party in February or March.

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 one hundred people each, provide an excellent opportunity for members and their guests to get together. Our membership, not counting Honorary Members and Corporate Members, is now well over five hundred.

The President of our Society, Sir George Bishop, CB, OBE, is also President of the Royal Geographical Society.

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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