

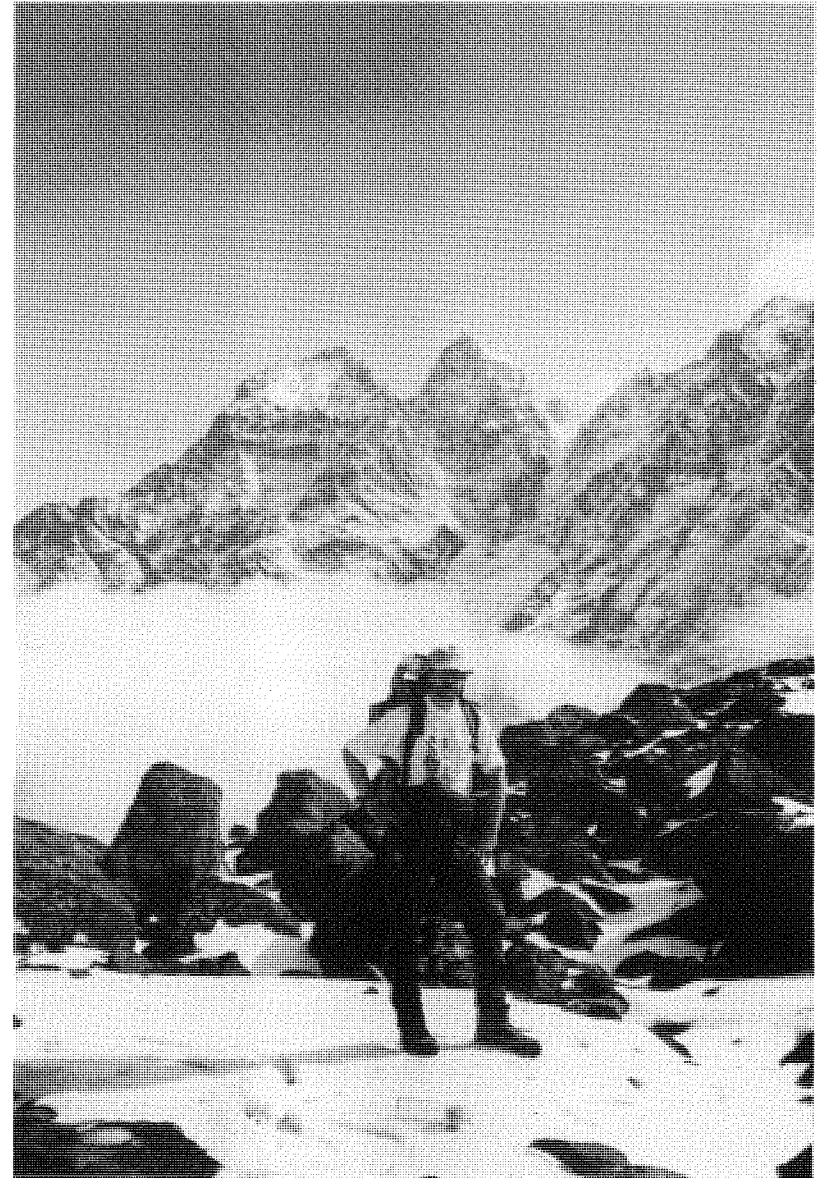


THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

J o u r n a l

Number 16

1992



Expedition leader in the Hinku Valley
see article 'Exercise Hinku Heaven' page 18

Best Wishes for a Very Successful Year



THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

Firm Friends in a Troubled World

That we live in a very troubled world is plain enough and the true worth of friendship is seen most clearly when trouble seems almost to be overwhelming. But friendship comes out in innumerable small ways and some of these are reflected in the contents of this the sixteenth issue of our Journal. The chief object of our Society, the promotion and fostering of good relations between the peoples of the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Nepal, is never lost sight of while carrying out busy social and cultural programmes.

Our first duty must be to welcome the new chairman of the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group, the Rt. Hon. Sir John Stanley MP, whom we look forward to seeing at some of our gatherings when his duties allow of it. Our hearty congratulations to his predecessor, Sir Neil Thorne, who has done so much to foster good relations, on both his Knighthood and his Gurkha Dakshina Bahu.

Articles based on talks given in London to members of the Society, and usually by members of the Society, will be found in this as in previous issues of the Journal. Burlington House has provided a convenient and interesting venue for these talks. We now offer our readers Colonel Langlands on 'Kadoorie Aid in Nepal' and Nicholas Rhodes, a former Honorary Treasurer of the Society, on 'The Coinage of Nepal'. The reviewer of Nicholas Rhodes's book on this subject, in Journal No.14, told us that the author's interest in coins had begun when he was eight years old and his collection rivalled that of the British Museum! Members wishing to

pursue the subject should obtain Nicholas's book which is published by the Royal Numismatic Society. They could also look it up at Appendix 25 to the second volume of Perceval Langdon's great book on Nepal.

The Society's 'Summer Outing' to Stowe School in Buckingham is the subject of a remarkable contribution by Iris Perowne Bolton who, herself an architect, has given our readers architectural and historical information which only someone with her experience and qualifications could have done.

Major Tony Rudall's enterprising and carefully planned journey with his Joint Services team from Bovington Garrison to Lukla in East Nepal and on to the Hinku Valley and Mera Peak below Everest was the subject of a long and detailed report. His article, taken from it, tells of the admiration felt by the team and its leader for the people they encountered and concern for the marvellous scenery through which the expedition took them.

One of the outstanding events of the Society's year has always been the Nepali Supper. Those who attended in February will not have forgotten Brian Blessed's rousing and indeed most dramatic account of his adventures in the Himalayas where he achieved a lifetime's ambition.

The Society continues its enthusiastic support for the King Mahendra U.K. Trust for Nature Conservation and looks forward to the possibility of a talk from Major Dudley Spain, a Trustee, who was in Nepal for nine weeks this year on an extensive tour. He was kept very busy but

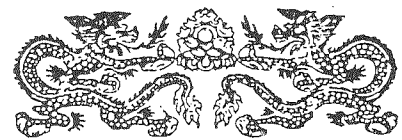
had time to discover that the avocado trees he had planted ten years ago were doing well!

It remains only to refer readers to the 'good causes' mentioned in the Journal and to invite support for them and for our advertisers, but not forgetting to thank His Excellency the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Simha for all the help and encouragement enjoyed by the Society during what our Honorary Secretary rightly describes in her report ('The Society's News') as 'another successful year'.

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THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

This was another successful year in the history of the Society. The year's activities were well supported as interest in the Society grows. The only change in the committee was the retirement of John Ackroyd, David Jefford joined as our new committee member. There will, however, be a number of changes in the next few years as five year terms of office come to an end.

The 1991/92 winter meetings were as follows:

■ Tuesday 29th October - **Across Tibet by Bicycle** by Cecilia Nevill who, in the tradition of the Victorian lady travellers, cycled East to West across Tibet.

■ Tuesday 14th January - **Coins of Nepal** by Nicholas Rhodes. Following the publication of his book 'Coins of Nepal' reviewed in the 1990 Journal, Nicholas opened the door to the importance and role of coins in identifying the history and developments in a country.

■ Tuesday 17th March - **Himalayan Wilderness**. Roger Mear talked about the many wildernesses, including the Himalayan ones which he had visited, his concern about their preservation and the formation of the Wilderness Trust.

■ Tuesday 5th May - **Kadoorie Aid in Nepal** by Lt. Col. Alastair Langlands who described the work undertaken in Nepal through the generous funding of the Kadoorie brothers who live in Hong Kong.

■ **The Annual Nepali Supper** at the Kensington Town Hall on Tuesday 17th February. More people were able to attend than last year. Our guest of honour was Brian Blessed, whose enthusiasm for Nepal and Everest was extremely infectious. A report of the evening is elsewhere in the Journal.

■ **The Summer Outing** jointly organised with the Yeti Association - we plan to do this on alternate years. We visited Stowe School, by kind invitation of the Headmaster, Jeremy Nicholas. We had lunch in the school dining room and then had a choice of cultural or sports activities during the afternoon. About 180 people came; a report appears elsewhere in the Journal.

■ **The Annual General Meeting** Last year's AGM was held on 21st November 1991, at the Embassy, by kind permission of His Excellency Major General Bharat Keshar Simha. We were extremely lucky that the date coincided with the visit of Prince Gyanendra our Patron who attended and met members after the meeting. To allow more circulation space, the Ambassador very kindly made available the Embassy's Reception Rooms.

This year, as members know, we launched an appeal to help the Gap Organisation Teacher Exchange, as well as the Lakshmi Thapa School. We feel it is important to keep close links with Nepal and make specific contributions from time to time.

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Changes to next year's programme are the January lecture, where three travel companies will talk about the holidays they arrange. The supper will take place at St. Columba's Church, Pont Street. Their overheads are low, which means the cost for the supper can be lower. 1993 is the fortieth anniversary of the climbing of Mount Everest and the Foundation has planned a number of events.

Once again I would like to thank Colonel Jimmy Evans for his support, as well as all the members of the committee.

Joanna Thomas
Honorary Secretary
August 1992

Colonel Evans writes:

The new Chairman of the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group is the Rt. Hon. Sir John Stanley MP for Tonbridge and Malling. The new group is already five strong.

There were extensive fires in Nepal before the monsoon, so disastrous this year that the Prime Minister opened a special Natural Disaster Relief Fund. The Ambassador wrote to me about it, and in consultation with officers of the Committee we decided to make an immediate donation of £500 on behalf of the Society, since there was not time nor would it have been timely to launch another appeal. A very kind letter of appreciation was received from His Excellency (see below).

Congratulations were sent to two long-time members of the Society, Sir John Chapple on his outstanding promotion to

Field Marshal and Peter Duffell on his Knighthood. Also of course to Neil Thorne on his Gurkha Dakshina Bahu and his Knighthood.

*Major General Bharat Keshar Simha
Royal Nepalese Embassy
12a Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4QU*

Dear Colonel Evans,

This is just to let you know how much we all enjoyed the combined outing of The Britain-Nepal Society and The Yeti Association on 7th June at Stowe School. The lunch was excellent and the place itself had such majestic and magnificent surroundings. We would like to express our deepest thanks to you and to all those concerned for such a wonderful arrangement.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and all the members of The Britain-Nepal Society for such a prompt donation to the Natural Disaster Relief Fund. Please accept my sincere appreciation as I feel this is a testimony to the goodwill and friendship which is prevailing between our two Kingdoms and people.

The address in London of the King Mahendra U.K. Trust for Nature Conservation remains unchanged.

26 Little Chester Street
London. SW1X 7AP

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KADOORIE AID IN NEPAL

by Lieutenant Colonel Alastair Langlands

The philanthropic activities of Lord Kadoorie and his brother Sir Horace Kadoorie, are well known. But what is not so well known is how they came to help the Gurkhas.

It all started in 1968 in Hong Kong, where Horace Kadoorie was a close friend of the Commander of 48 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, Brigadier (later Major General) 'Bunny' Burnett. The Brigadier asked Horace if Gurkhas could attend agricultural courses on the Kadoorie Farm while they were still serving in Hong Kong.

Horace readily agreed, and to date some 6000 Gurkhas have attended these courses, learning about vegetable culture, fruit growing, poultry and pig keeping.

It was also in 1968 that Horace agreed to donate inputs to the British Gurkha Resettlement Farms in Nepal, as well as to the British funded Agricultural Centres at Lumle and Pakribas. Inputs took the form of livestock, vegetable seed, fruit trees, farm equipment and buildings.

When 'Bunny' Burnett became Major General Brigade of Gurkhas he invited Horace to join him on a visit to Nepal. I was stationed at the British Gurkha Centre, Paklihawa at the time, and in December 1972 had the pleasure of showing Horace the livestock and buildings he had given to our Resettlement Farm.

The General knew I was due to leave the army shortly, to take up an appointment at Lumle Agricultural Centre in West Nepal. So he suggested to Horace that I did my Resettlement Course with him in Hong Kong.

Horace agreed and in October 1973 I found myself in Hong Kong as his guest on the Kadoorie Farm. Here, surrounded by beautiful flowers, Horace or his Chinese staff showed me how they reared improved breeds of pigs, poultry and ducks. They also showed how they distributed livestock and fruit trees to farmers in need, through the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association (KAAA), which is entirely financed by Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie.



*Sir Horace Kadoorie at
Pankhu Drinking Water Project,
Okhaldhunga, East Nepal*

The two brothers founded the KAAA in 1951 to help destitute refugees who had fled to Hong Kong from mainland China. They believed the highest degree of charity is to help a man in need, by entering into partnership with him or by providing work for him so he may become self-supporting.

The KAAA set about answering calls for help with gifts of livestock and fruit trees, as well as bags of cement to build sties and other buildings. They also gave advice and training on animal husbandry and horticulture. I was taken to visit several farmers who had been helped to success from nothing, and was also shown many KAAA Community projects: roads, dams, bridges, sea walls, irrigation channels, to mention only a few ways aid has been given.



Purangaon Suspension Bridge, Myagdi, West Nepal

On the eve of my departure for Nepal Horace said: 'Remember our policy is to help those who are prepared to help themselves. You have seen how KAAA helps individuals and communities in Hong Kong. When you get back to Nepal let me know if you find any deserving individuals or communities needing help and I will see what we can do about it.'

During the next ten years, while working for Overseas Development at Lumle, I received many requests for aid from individuals and communities. I passed



Kadoorie Target Area in Lamjung, West Nepal, with Dudhpokhari Himal in the background

them on to Horace and his response was always swift and generous.

To begin with individual aid took the form of gifts of livestock and fruit trees. However, it soon became apparent that these inputs were undermining the efforts of HMGN's Agricultural Development Bank, who also gave farmers similar inputs, but on repayment. So the KAAA free gifts, to a select few around Lumle, caused considerable jealousy and had to stop. Instead, Horace concentrated on helping people suffering extreme hardship: landslide and fire victims, shelter and food for the destitute.

Each year Horace sent large donations for community projects: drinking water systems and foot bridges were given top priority. Initially, help was also given for schools, tracks and dispensaries.

When I retired from Lumle in 1983 Horace asked me to be his full-time Representative with British Gurkhas Nepal, through whom all future KAAA projects were to be channelled. We have an office

beside the British Gurkha Camp in Pokhara and form a branch of the British Gurkha Welfare Scheme. A small staff is based here to administer KAAA funds and carry out engineering projects.

I live in a flat above the office but spend much of my time on trek in the hills checking KAAA projects. I am able to do this because I have an excellent administrative team in Pokhara led by Hon. Lt. (GCO) Amarsing Lama MBE ex 6 GR.

No matter what time of year one treks, each day is filled with scenes of indescribable beauty. In winter, crisp, cool days often bring snow peaks to watch over you; during the rains everything is lush and green, colourful mountain flowers and butterflies are at their best. It is always

with a wonderful feeling of freedom that I set off on these treks, away from diesel fumes and noisy towns.

We start each day just after dawn, with our kit packed into baskets, carried on the backs of porters, supported by bands around their foreheads. I have an excellent team of porters who are responsible for making the treks so enjoyable. They are always laughing and sharing jokes on the trail, making light of any problems on the way such as rain or leeches!

At around 10 o'clock each morning we stop for a curry, cooked to perfection by the porters on kerosene stoves. We all enjoy this break: weary shoulders are rested and it is an ideal time to bird watch or read. But the best time of day is in the



Kadoorie Target Area in Gorkha, West Nepal looking towards the Darondi River with Baudha Himal in the background

evening. After some eight hours of walking up and down hills, it is bliss to be able to sit down and enjoy a mug of steaming lemon tea. In no time at all tents are up and a meal cooking. We often receive visits from friendly, cheerful children and farmers who come to talk or have a peep into the saheb's strange dwelling! Whenever possible I call on Ex-servicemen and it is fun to chat about the good old days.

When we reach a KAAA bridge or water project under construction I spend some time with our staff, who are Ex-servicemen from the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. Our work is carried out in 'Target Areas' in East and West Nepal. These Target Areas and projects (usually 6 bridges and up to 20 water systems) are selected each year by the Commander, British Gurkhas Nepal. After approval has been obtained from Sir Horace and HMG, we start work after the rains and complete all the projects before the monsoon of the following year.

KAAA also supports Area Welfare Centres with their agricultural programme: mainly with fruit trees and vegetables. But in 8 Welfare Centres aid has also been given to establish pig units and methane gas plants.

So far KAAA has helped build some 200 drinking water systems and nearly 100 bridges; also several schools, tracks, irrigation channels and dispensaries. To date over £5,000,000 has been donated by Sir Horace Kadoorie and his brother to help Nepal. It is of interest to note that neither brother has ever had a separate

bank account. What they own is owned jointly so that, in effect, all expenditure is incurred jointly.

Though troubled by a broken hip Sir Horace, who is 90 and a bachelor, visits Nepal every year and goes to remote areas by helicopter and sedan-chair to meet KAAA staff in the field and declare open some of our projects. Lord and Lady Kadoorie also take a great interest in our work and have inspected many KAAA projects in Nepal. They have one son, the Hon Michael Kadoorie, who with his wife Betty have given generous support for many projects in Nepal and have visited the country several times. Lord and Lady Kadoorie also have one daughter, Rita (the Hon. Mrs. McAulay) who is married to Ronald McAulay. They have also visited Nepal on several occasions and have given substantial donations for projects which help Gurkhas.

Sir Horace Kadoorie has made it clear that, as long as there is a requirement, and the Gurkha Welfare Scheme is operating in Nepal, Kadoorie Aid will be available to help Gurkhas.

The Britain-Nepal Medical Trust
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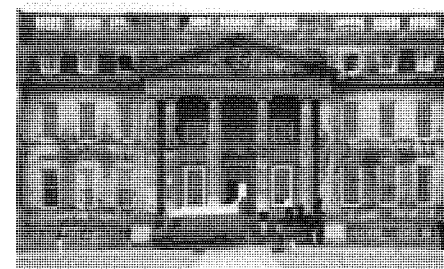
SUMMER OUTING

The Joint BNS and Yeti Summer Outing to Stowe School and Landscape Gardens
by Iris Perowne Bolton

After some delay, two extremely full coaches and several accompanying cars were speeding off from the Royal Nepalese Embassy and up the M40 on their way to Stowe. (Perhaps 'speeding' was the wrong word; part of the motorway was shrouded in mist!) Meanwhile family parties in other cars were homing in to Stowe from different directions, all eager to meet their friends and have a good day out.

The members of the BNS and the Yetis had most kindly been invited by Stowe School, through the good offices of our committee member Mr. Roger Potter, who was recently a master there. When the main coach party arrived, HE the Nepalese Ambassador and others were greeted by the Headmaster Mr. Jeremy Nichols who, regretting that he had other commitments, put us into the most excellent care of Mr. Michael Hornby, a senior tutor and member of our Society, who with Roger Potter has taken a number of school expeditions to Nepal. A small group of sixth-form boys and girls were also on hand to help.

First, lunch. No-one could fail to have been impressed by the exterior of the great main building of Stowe School, with its pillared portico and colonnaded wings, built progressively during the 18th century as a house for the Temple family, later Dukes of Buckingham. However, this was nothing compared to the rooms we were now to see. We had forgathered in the North Hall, remodelled by the architect Vanbrugh in the 1730s with a coved ceiling heavily painted by the then fashion-



The front entrance, Stowe School

able interior decorator William Kent, depicting Viscount Cobham, the owner, as a Greek warrior with Mars the God of War. We were led through the quite spectacular Marble Saloon, an oval hall with marble floor, huge columns, heavily carved frieze and a coffered dome 57 feet high. It is the chief room of the house and, had the double doors at either end been open together with those of all the other State Rooms, we should have been able to see 75 yards in either direction!

The rooms in which we were to lunch were two of those same State Rooms, the State Dining Room and the former State Drawing Room, now the Temple Room. They are furnished as typical school dining rooms with plain tables and chairs, but one has only to look up to see the splendour that must have been; sumptuous moulded and painted ceilings and carved chimney-pieces and doorcases of the 1740s in the former and delicate neo-classical details of the 1770s in the latter. A most delicious cold lunch had been laid on for us, causing many of us to comment

how much better it was than the school food we remembered! We fell upon it eagerly amidst much talk and merriment.

Half an hour later, greatly refreshed, we made our way outdoors to continue the day's programme. The House may be grand, but it is Stowe's gardens that are quite unique; a layout of grass, water, trees and 'temples' evolved over seventy-five years to create the ideal Classical Landscape of the 18th century. The term 'temple' is used to describe all the garden buildings but they are many and varied and include commemorative monuments, bridges, grottoes, pavilions and arches; thirty-two of the original fifty 'temples' still remain and it was to one of these, the Queen's Temple (built to honour Queen Charlotte, who nursed her husband George III back to health in 1789), that we were now led and which was to be our base for the rest of the day.

The first event was to be a treasure hunt - or rather two treasure hunts, one for children who were given a list of items to collect such as leaves, flowers, stones etc. and one for adults who were given a series of clues to which answers had to be found. It was clear that these related to the various 'temples' in the grounds. Some of us elected to go it alone, but others took advantage of a proffered conducted tour led by a sixth-form boy who talked most interestingly as he guided the party round the various monuments, lakes and bridges, finishing at the little parish church which nestles in the trees beside the house.

Again a choice of activities; some chose to have a guided tour of the State Rooms of the House and were shown not only those which we had seen at lunch but

also the exquisitely decorated State Music Room, apparently unique in England with its Pompeian style wall paintings and painted and decorated ceiling; the Large Library, still in use as such, with its brass-grilled mahogany bookcases, original gallery and splendid neo-classical ceiling of 1801, and the Blue Room formerly hung with blue silk damask.

For those of more athletic bent, both young and old, a programme of sports had been arranged on the school running track; running races for different age groups, welly throwing and egg-and-spoon and three-legged races were all hugely enjoyed by the participants, even His Excellency taking part with apparent great delight. And for those whose idea of the perfect English Sunday afternoon is to sit and watch cricket, two matches were on hand; one on the north side of the house and one on the south, the latter with the backdrop of "one of the finest views in England", across the lake and up the avenue to the massive Corinthian Arch three-quarters of a mile away.

To complete the day the School had also most kindly provided tea and sandwiches for us at the Queen's Temple, refreshment most appreciated after everyone's exertions. Prizes were drawn for in the Raffle and the winners of the treasure hunts appropriately rewarded. All too soon it was time to pack up and go. It had been altogether a very happy and memorable occasion for which we are extremely grateful to Mr. Michael Hornby and Stowe School.

A total of 180 people, including members of both the Britain-Nepal Society and the Yetis, their families and guests of the Embassy, took part.

THE ANNUAL NEPALI SUPPER

by Mayura Brown

We returned to the Kensington Town Hall for our Nepali Supper on February 12th with a larger attendance than last year. Among the guests were members of the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group and two members of the Nepal-Britain Society, Mr. Jharendra Rana whose father, the late General Krishna, was Nepalese Ambassador in London in the 1930's, and Mrs. Manju Rana, the sister of Sri Jharendra Shingha, a previous Ambassador whom most of our members will remember.

The present Ambassador, General Bharat Simha, says he finds it most encouraging to see the support this event receives from our members which shows their affection for and interest in Nepal has not diminished. Recent Elections had taken place in Nepal without incident. British Parliamentary Observers had been present including Mr. Neil Thorne (now Sir Neil).

Sir George Bishop, standing in for our President, introduced our Guest Speaker, the well-known actor, Mr. Brian Blessed. From his youth Mr. Blessed had been obsessed by the story of George Mallory who was lost on Everest in 1924 with his companion, Irvine. He wanted to follow in Mallory's footsteps, wearing similar clothes, and without oxygen as Mallory had done. Our young members may not know that those early expeditions started in Darjeeling and then approached Ever-

est from the North through Tibet. It was this route that was taken by Brian Blessed and his camera crew, and the film was seen by most of us on TV, though we were not told what altitude was reached. He gave us a most exhilarating and entertaining account of his adventures, and intends to make another attempt on the mountain in aid of various charities.

We wish him every success and hope the Gods will be kind to him once again.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Colonel J.M. Evans, MC,
Chairman,
The Britain-Nepal Society.

I send my warm thanks to you, the Vice-Presidents and the members of the Britain-Nepal Society for your kind message of loyal greetings, sent on the occasion of your Annual Supper at the Kensington Town Hall.

I received this message with much pleasure and send my best wishes to all concerned for an enjoyable and successful occasion.

ELIZABETH R.

12th February, 1992.

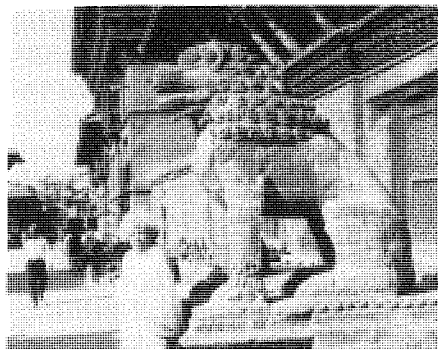


RETURN TO THE VALLEY

Mayura Brown, a founder member of the Society, celebrated her eightieth birthday in August. She served on the Committee, first as Hon. Treasurer, then as Vice-Chairman, and after that became a Vice-President. In those early days she was instrumental in arranging lectures for the Society's meetings because of her contacts with SOAS and the Royal Asiatic Society. She also endeavoured to increase the membership by writing to people connected with Nepal, including two prominent ones - General Sir Francis Tuker and Sir Ralph Turner. She produced two Newsletters annually before the advent of the present Journal to which she has contributed regularly. Her principal duty is to send Birthday greetings to H.M. the King and to our Patron, H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra on behalf of the Society. She prepares the reply to our Patron's A.G.M. messages, and also our message to the Nepal-Britain Society (founded by her uncle Field-Marshal Kaiser), has kept in touch with the Anglo-Nepalese Parliamentary Group from its inception, and of course the Foreign Office. She has taken on many chores for the Society as they arrived.

In recognition to her long service to the Society (thirty-two years), she was invited to Kathmandu with her husband, a gracious gesture by our Patron, H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra, with the warm support of H.E. the Ambassador and Madame Simha. Mr. Prabhakar S.J.B. Rana handled all arrangements for their stay and drew up the itinerary.

Everyone told Mayura that the Kathmandu Valley would be unrecognisable



In Patan, March 1992

from the place she knew in her youth. Nepal, alas, cannot be kept in a time capsule, and it has changed as so much of the world has done. Streets crowded with traffic, a great increase in population, the disappearance of the green fields that once surrounded Kathmandu. When she looked out of the window of their suite in the Soaltee Hotel, the landscape beyond resembled a Tuscan hill-town - red earth beneath the clustered houses.

However, March is a delightful month in Nepal, and Mayura said it was a fabulous holiday for her and Tom. They had the privilege of dining with Their Royal Highnesses, Prince Gyanendra and the Princess Komal. The British Ambassador, Mr. Timothy George, very kindly held a Reception which included three ex-Nepalese Ambassadors to Britain, Mr. and Mrs. B.P. Khanal and many relatives and old friends. There was lunch with Sri Jharendra Shinga in his charming garden, a large family gathering at the Cocktail Party given by Prabal Rana with the Rani

Kiran present. Mr. Prabhakar Rana of the King Mahendra Wild Life Trust and the Heritage Society was their host at a Dinner in the Royal Suite of the Soaltee Hotel. On the last day of their stay, the lunch given by Mr. Sagar Rana, President of the Nepal-Britain Society. The British Ambassador and Mrs. George were among the guests. It was interesting to hear that Shakespeare's Birthday would be celebrated in Kathmandu by the Society, an honour sadly denied the Bard in his own country! Perhaps our Society could do something about this - say an outing to Stratford-on-Avon.

There were visits to General Sridhar and his family and to Sri Ishwari Raj Pandey. Both he and his wife, Gita, are in better health. The new office of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation was also visited. HRH Prince Gyanendra is Chairman of the Trust. In London earlier in the year, the Ambassador had been presented with the world prize for the Annapurna Conservation Area Project by Dr. David Bellamy. Dr. Chandra Gurung, the Area Project Manager, was also present. Members may have seen this event on ITV. ACAP has been an outstanding success, and it is hoped that similar projects will come into being in the near future.

Mayura wanted to see some parts of the Valley that she had known well. First to the temple of Swayambhunath with its present stairway. (John Sanday gave an illustrated talk to our members on his

work to save and rebuild part of the hill when it began to collapse some years ago). Then the old Kathmandu city centre. To save the irreplaceable buildings in the historic Durbar Square from the pollution of the heavy vehicular traffic, the area could be turned into a pedestrian precinct. Fortunately the interiors of both cities, Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) and Patan, are safe, so far, from the menace of traffic. Here one could sit for a while in peace and reflect on times past.

An unforgettable experience was the "Mountain Flight" when it was possible to view the awe-inspiring range of the Eastern Himalayas from a distance of less than 14 miles while in the comfort of a pressurized aircraft. The journey to and from Kathmandu was by Royal Nepal Airlines with passengers receiving every comfort and attention.

It was, said Mayura, a great joy for an old lady to receive such a welcome and so much affection from her relatives. It was a journey she may not be able to repeat because of her age and arthritis, but it has left her with a wealth of memories of the Valley and its kindly folk.

(Birthday greetings and flowers were sent by the Chairman and Committee Members and also on behalf of all members of the Society to a most popular and active Vice-President without whose cheerful and charming presence no meeting of the Society would feel complete. Ed.)

EXERCISE HINKU HEAVEN (8th April to 27 May 1992) by Tony Rudall

The Royal Geographical Society is housed in an impressive building in Kensington. Eighteen months ago I spent a weekend there at their seminar on "Small Expeditions". I was interested to see photographs on the walls of past explorers. Nearly all were servicemen. In the High Tatra Mountains in Czechoslovakia last year my military team of climbers carried out a simple survey of lichen growth. This year I wondered if they could turn their attention to Nepal.

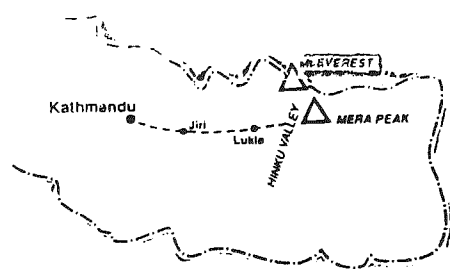
Ian Bruce, our local MP, who has special responsibilities for Nepal, supported our plan to carry out a survey of the impact of trekkers in the remote Hinku valley. He helped me gain information on the subject and, through him, Ian Price and I visited the Nepalese Embassy in London. The Ambassador helped put the problems of his country in perspective and made us appreciate the difficulties the poorer countries have meeting the needs of an ever-increasing population. I contacted Rita Gardner of the Dept of Geography at Kings College London. She is also the secretary of the RGS. She told me what to look for in the Hinku Valley and advised us to simply report our observations as we trekked from Lukhla into the Hinku Valley and on towards Mera Peak.

During the trek in from Jiri to Lukhla it seemed that the main impact on the environment was the advance of agriculture which over many years had removed most of the trees and terraced all the hills. There was a stark contrast between the countryside we travelled through on the way to Lukhla and the almost untouched Hinku

Valley. This changed our approach to the study. We decided to make general observations rather than a detailed survey of man's minimal (as yet) impact on the valley.

From the moment they arrived in Nepal the team seemed to become involved in assessing what they saw. They discussed the way of life of people in the capital Kathmandu, and these observations and discussions continued during the bus ride to Jiri and the trek to Lukhla. In the Hinku Valley there seemed to be little point in measuring the width of paths, counting the number of gulleys or landslides as there seemed to be so little evidence of damage to the environment. The team members were often so tired (or ill) that they wouldn't have felt inclined to stop and record such things in detail. It seemed better to give a general description of the environment and perhaps "voice a warning" through these pages!

The Trek - Jiri to Lukhla



The impact of agriculture in this area has been well documented. Only the steepest slopes had a good covering of trees. The April/May period is pre-monsoon and everywhere was generally brown, dry and



Plank sawing near Lamjura Pass

dusty. There were few trekkers on the route between Jiri and Lukhla. We met probably no more than twenty. However the owner of a tea-house in Junbesi did say the place was inundated in October/November each year, the "trekking season". The peaceful, friendly people seemed very happy. Even the little girl who had received no medical attention for her badly scalded legs laughed, joked and played volleyball with the team!

Above Lukhla - towards the Zatrwa La
The path from Lukhla traversed fields and then entered the forest. There was much evidence of deforestation (possibly escalating, considering the evergrowing needs of Lukhla):

- Completely de-nuded areas, some put over to agriculture, others awaiting cultivation.
- Large areas (acres) of partially felled forest with tree stumps and rotting trees.

Woodcutters

- Plank sawing sites. (However plank sawing is a slow process restricting the rate of deforestation. Until chain saws arrive?).
- Porters carrying planks - about a ton of wood passed the team in 10 minutes.

Approach

The paths through the forest were often broad and in many places there were alternative routes around rocks and trees showing extensive use. Gulleys led off the trail and small landslides had occurred, undermining the paths. In places the top-soil had been washed away exposing bare stones and rock.

THE HINKU VALLEY Tuli Kharka (4,400m)

At above 14,000' there were no trees and only sparse vegetation. Small areas had been flattened for tents. The path wound down from Tuli Kharka through low scrub

and then rhododendrons. Only a very narrow, sometimes imperceptible, trail led downwards.

Tashing Dingma (3,500m)

A small cleared area beside a stream where the trail enters the true forest. The forest was much denser than anywhere we had seen before. The quantity and quality of the vegetation seemed to be much different. At a similar altitude on the trek in, the Lamjura Pass had seemed like an eerie, desolate place with sparse low twisted trees. Here the huge himalayan pines (nothing of their stature had been seen before) rose above tangled dripping moss covered vegetation which became more "jungle-like" as we descended. Nowhere was the path more than one foot wide and there was little obvious gulleyming. Landslides seemed natural phenomena. There was evidence of the occasional felled tree and some were charred where porters had lit fires. However on the return trip we passed a small

team of woodcutters, laboriously sawing planks, destined for Tangnag, by hand.

Upwards to Tangnag. The trail followed the river bank up through the valley, climbing gradually. There were several obvious, but small, campsites. One was used on our return which was right on the river's edge and just big enough to squeeze in seven tents. Sometimes the path was not obvious. We climbed through dwindling untouched rain-forest, through spreading rhododendrons into a Dartmoor-like landscape, and on further to the "moon-scape" moraines surrounding Tangnag. Yaks grazed on grassy areas in the forest near the river's banks. Their presence probably preserved the small clear area of forest. These areas could be used, and abused, if the volume of trekkers increased.

Some specific observations

Conservation minded trekkers use kerosene for fuel on their expeditions. Our porters carried our fuel in 40 litre plastic

containers. This fuel was used predominantly for cooking our food. The porters cooked their own food on wood fires. To carry enough kerosene for their use would have needed more porters to carry the kerosene etc., etc. The porters generally forage for twigs and fallen branches for their fires making little impact on the forest. However the larger the caravan the larger the campsite required and the greater the impact on that particular area. Our Sirdar also conserved some of our kerosene - by using more wood - for possible use by the porters on their return over the Zatrwa La. Porters are generally poorly equipped for cold nights in their caves. Small woodfires keep them warm. With little wood to be found at Tuli Kharka on our way into the valley two of the porters had suffered badly.

The porters would stop frequently and often - within seconds - have a little fire going to boil water for their many rice meals, for warmth and as a morale booster. It was pretty miserable at Chutanga and most afternoons in the Hinku Valley. The porters helped us gather wood which was sometimes huge fallen branches. Since they were already lying on the forest floor this assuaged our guilt. However had previous caravans killed the original tree off by chopping off its branches? Were we using up valuable 'porters' fuel so future expeditions would be forced to use living trees? At Kohte our cooks built a fire for cooking to save kerosene for the return trip. They used only fallen trees but the evening we arrived at the site they built a large stock of chopped wood. The following morning some was used to cook breakfast and then we were upset to see them set light to the remaining pile! When we

explained that the wood could have been used on our return they said that others would only use it before we came back. We pointed out that that would be far better than simply burning it for fun and forcing other expeditions or Yak herders to chop down more trees! This seemed to be something of a revelation. A small step for conservation?

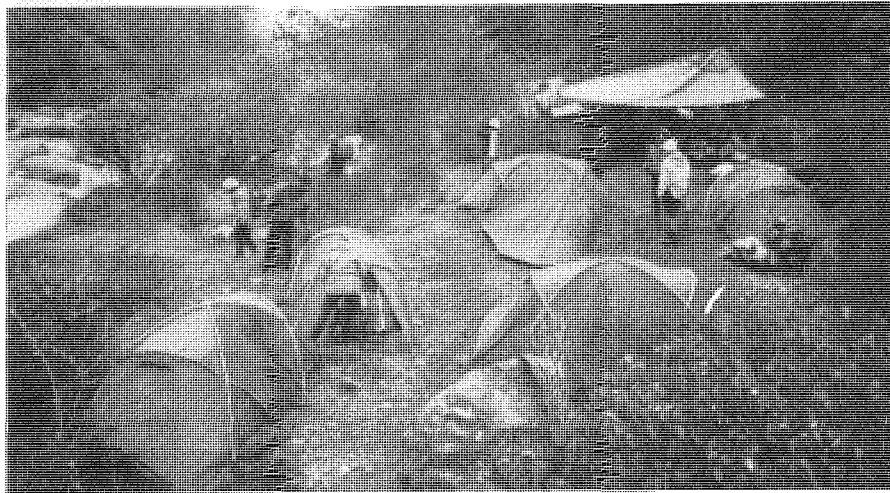


A resident of Bursa

The locations of the main campsites in the Valley have been listed here and have been documented in other publications. These clearings in the forest will obviously enlarge with more use. There was evidence of other spots used by trekkers, porters or Yak herders:

- Fire blackened ground and stones arranged for fire-places.
- A small amount of litter; rusting tins, some plastic and paper.

A few Yaks browsed in the forest, more were located around Tangnag. The Yak-



Campsite by the Hinku River



A typical 'Sherpa' load

herders had a small collection of temporary homes in stone huts at the head of the valley. More Yaks are driven up the valley to graze during the monsoon apparently. At present the numbers are probably determined by the amount of grass that grows above the forest during the monsoon. The valley could support more Yaks if more of the forest was felled.

There are no proper tea-houses in the Hinku Valley at present. Trekkers can be invited into one of the huts at Tangnag to buy Chang or a powerful local wine. However a Tea-house was under construction (although not very rapid) at Tangnag. One party of woodcutters were observed in the forest preparing planks for the building. This work could be in response to a predicted huge increase in the number of

treks entering the valley. Many UK-based firms are beginning to feature Mera Treks in their brochures. Greater numbers would obviously rapidly change everything described in this report. More trekkers require more fuel. Kerosene requires more porters. An easy option is to chop down trees. This might encourage more Yak herders and more support for the trekkers through more tea-houses. More locals living in the valley might lead to further forest clearance for farming to produce vegetables to be sold to the trekkers.

Judith Swinden took many photographs of the tens of different species of flora she observed around Chutanga and in the Hinku Valley. The lichen 'Rhizo-Carpon Geographicum' was observed on the rocks which made up the glacial moraines at the head of the valley. The presence of this lichen, which can be observed in Europe, might prompt some readers to plan an expedition to study its growth giving further clues to glacial recession and global warning.

The team spotted very few wild animals (although one Yak in particular seemed very upset!) Dippers were abundant at the river's edge and crows were very common. A flock of 20 or so choughs were spotted on a grassy slope about 1km below Tangnag. Snow Leopard tracks were seen in the snow on the Hinku side of the Zatwra La.

Conclusions

The team felt privileged to have visited an area of outstanding natural beauty which could well change dramatically in the next ten years. With careful management trekkers could have little impact on their surroundings, satisfying their ever increasing

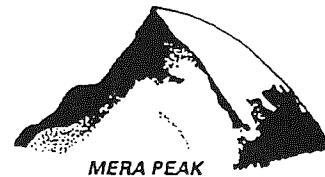
need for adventure and guaranteeing a higher standard of living for the local population.

The team took to the friendly Nepalese people but were disturbed by the lack of medical help available, the poor sanitation and the very hard lives of most Nepalese people. They must have been very envious of us but never seemed resentful. People throughout the world deserve better, but improvements cost money. Conservationists preach about preserving the environment but Nepal desperately needs the

income from visitors. It is also no use "throwing money at the problems" as has been done in other Third World countries. Projects flounder and technology crumbles. Should we not try to persuade more and more people to care about the problems. Newspapers have been far more interested in the environmental issues raised by Exercise Hinku Heaven than the altitude reached by the team. People are interested and people ultimately persuade governments to act more responsibly on their behalf.



The team at Lukhla



Exercise HINKU HEAVEN

Bovington Garrison's Joint Services Expedition to the Himalayas

THE COINAGE OF NEPAL

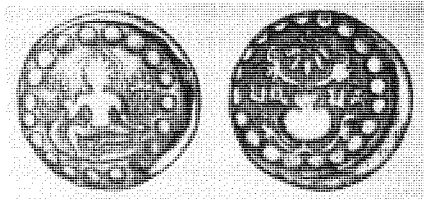
by Nicholas Rhodes

In my illustrated talk to the Society entitled *The Coinage of Nepal*, I demonstrated how coins give an insight into many aspects of Nepalese culture over the centuries. Their very existence sheds light on the economic and social structure of the country; the issuing authority sheds light on the political history; the quality of production indicates technological developments; the choice of metal sheds light on the development of mining if the metal came from outside Nepal; the choice of design often sheds light on the religion, and in particular the symbolism of both the Hindu and Buddhist religions, which flourished side by side; the treatment of the design sheds light on artistic developments. In fact there is hardly any aspect of Nepalese culture that is totally untouched by money, and the fact that most coins are precisely datable often makes them valuable historical documents.

The earliest coins were struck in Nepal between c.575 and 700 AD, during the Lichhavi period. These coins exhibit a very high standard of artistic maturity, far superior to anything being made in India at this period. It is interesting to note that none of them bear the name of the Lichhavi King, who must have been primarily a religious figurehead, although a few have the names of the secular prime ministers of the country, such as Amshu Varman.

Copper coin with the image of the god of wealth c.650 AD

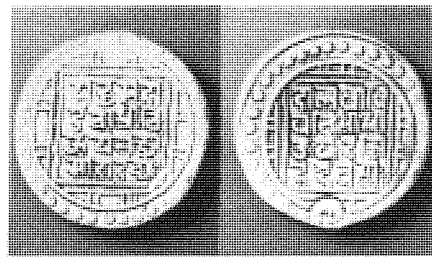
The coins were made out of locally mined copper, and are rarely found outside the



Kathmandu Valley. Their use is confirmed by the contemporary stone inscriptions that can be found in the Valley.

From between 700 AD and 1540 AD, hardly any coins were struck in Nepal, indicating a return to the barter system. Only in 1100 AD did a few silver and gold coins appear. Neither silver nor gold are mined in Nepal, so the metal must have reached Nepal as a result of international trade; the gold probably came from Tibet and the silver from India, indicating the existence of a trans-Himalayan trade passing through Nepal at that time.

Silver tangka of King Indra Simha of Dolakha, 1540-48

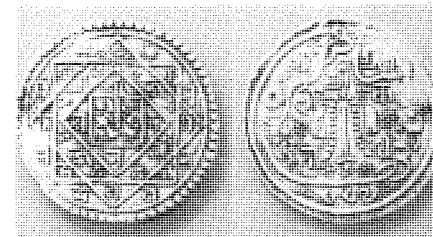


During the sixteenth century, Dolakha was an independent Newar Kingdom, situated in the Kosi valley, and controlling an important trade route that passed up the valley, from India to Tibet. It was not long before the three Malla Kingdoms of the

Valley noticed the growing wealth and power of Dolakha, and before the end of the century Dolakha had been conquered by the King of Kathmandu. From then on all the trans-Himalayan trade between India and Tibet passed through the Valley, and fine silver coins were being struck there.

The 150 years of the Malla Dynasty, from 1600 to 1750 AD, saw a tremendous flowering of Nepalese culture, financed by the profits from the lucrative transit trade. The Nepalese established trading houses in Lhasa and the other major towns of Tibet, and enforced a monopoly over the trade between India and Tibet. Many beautiful coins were struck by the three kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, initially in fine silver, but after 1735 the coins were debased to 67% and then to only 50% fine. These coins were then used to finance the building of the numerous fine palaces and temples that were built during this period.

Mohar of Tej Narsimha of Patan 1765-58



In contrast to other art forms, such as sculpture and painting, which often include images of various Hindu deities or of the Buddha, the designs on the coins never included any such images, but often

consisted of geometric patterns called Yantras, which are artistically very attractive. These Yantras were a form of religious code, allowing the initiated to venerate their deities, while not jeopardizing the commercial success of the coins by offending potential users who professed other religious faiths.

Many of the debased coins were sent to Tibet as part of the trading relationship and formed the basis of the currency of that country; indeed Nepalese coins of this period continued to circulate in Tibet until early this century.

During this period all the coins in circulation were of silver, the main denomination ranging from the "mohar" weighing 5g, to the "dam" which weighed 0.04g. Occasionally, however, an even smaller coin, the "jawa", was struck, weighing only 0.01g, and these are the smallest coins in the world.

In 1768 the Kathmandu Valley was conquered by Prithvi Narayan, King of Gorkha, and ancestor of King Birendra. Prithvi Narayan and his successors extended the Kingdom far to the east and west, until in 1815, after a war with the British, the borders of Nepal were fixed at their present limits.

Coins continued to be struck in the Kathmandu Valley, but of good silver, and Prithvi Narayan refused to accept the debased coins that had been sent to Tibet by the Malla Kings as of equal in value to his new fine silver coins. This dispute with Tibet resulted in the loss of most of the transit trade with Tibet, and ultimately, between 1789 and 1792, led to two short wars with Tibet.



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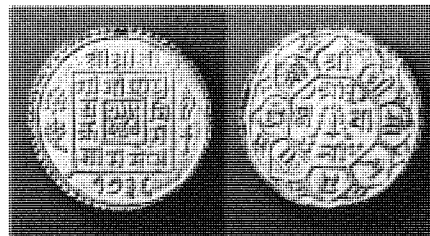
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**Gold 1½ Mohar of Girvan Yuddha
(Judha) Vikram**



During the Rana period, between 1847 and 1950, coins were struck in the name of the Shah Dynasty kings. Many beautiful gold coins were struck, but these were mainly used for presentation purposes. For example, when Jang Bahadur Rana visited Britain in 1851 he

presented a number of fine gold coins to Queen Victoria, and these are now in the British Museum collection.

During the 19th century copper coins became widely used in Nepal, often struck at mints situated in the hills, close to the copper mines, but after 1950 all minting was centralised at the mint in Kathmandu. In recent years, as inflation has reduced the value of the rupee, coins have been increasingly replaced by paper money in common circulation, but they are still struck to fill the demand for very small change. Larger coins are struck purely to satisfy the growing demand for Nepalese coins from collectors both in Nepal and internationally.

Explore Nepal



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FORTY YEARS AFTER

University of East Anglia Proposed Trek to the Base Camp of Everest.

In 1953, Sir Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary became the first men to climb Mount Everest - at 8,848m, the highest mountain in the world. At the request of Sir Tenzing's second son, Mr. Jamling Tenzing, a group of nine students, mainly from the University of East Anglia, but including three former pupils from the John Taylor High School, Barton-under Needwood, will trek to the Everest Base Camp in January 1993 to mark the 40th anniversary of the conquest. Mr. Jamling Tenzing, a close schoolfriend of one of the students, is in addition hoping to lead us on this expedition. The proceeds raised from the programme will go for the benefit of the Kumbeshwar Technical School in Kathmandu, Nepal, established to help socially and economically deprived pupils.

The school provides for the most unfortunate sectors of the Nepalese community. It seeks to do this by providing primary education and skills training in order to

help its pupils become self-sufficient. It also runs an orphanage and provides health care for the community at large. We are hoping to raise £10,000 for the school towards an extension.

In addition to the trek we are proposing a series of events including a piano concert by Mr Tom McKentosh in the Royal Nepalese academy, Nepal, in September 1992. A fund raising committee has been set up in Nepal, including the wife of the British Ambassador to Nepal, Mrs Richenda George. We have already received coverage in the local press, the Norwich Evening News of March 18th, 1992, in addition to which we have been promised at least three further articles. We hope soon to be featured in a national newspaper and in local television.

Sponsors are needed. If you would like to help or be involved in any way please write to:- Friends of KTS, Care of 70 Croxall Road, Edingale, Tamworth, Staffordshire BT9 9JE

YETI Association
(Nepali Association in U.K.)
Dr. Raghav Dhital,
48 Cheyne Avenue,
South Woodford,
LONDON E18 2DR

THIS YEAR'S GOOD CAUSES

(Annual Appeal 1992)

It has been customary in recent years to make an annual appeal for a charity compatible with the aims of our Society. Since the special effort made for earthquake relief in 1989, which met with a most generous response, there has been no further appeal.

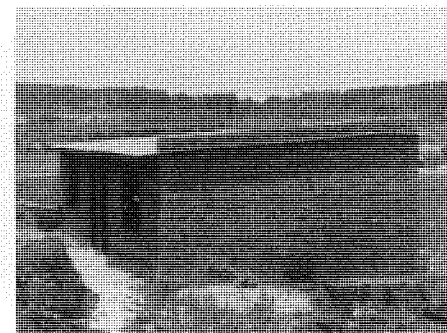
In the meantime the committee has examined several aspects of charitable work to ensure that whatever modest sums we can raise are put to the best use for Nepal. It was considered that members would prefer that projects should be specific rather than the handing-over of a lump sum for general use.

The first problem is that there are so many deserving cases. Out of several recommendations, the following are proposed for this year's good causes:

Miss Lakshmi Thapa's school near Bhaktipur (Bal Balika Awasiya Vidhyalay)

Lakshmi Thapa started this village school after serving 3 years as a house-mother in the Pestalozzi Village in Sussex. Through her own efforts she persuaded villagers to build a school hut and commenced teaching with bare essentials and no furniture in 1990. A committee member visiting Kathmandu now is due to visit her and assess how we can help, preferably with materials in kind.

Colonel Evans writes:- "Splashing through the rice-fields at the end of the monsoon two years ago, we eventually found Lakshmi Thapa's school on a low ridge in a far corner of the Kathmandu valley. No one we asked had heard of it.



Another two-roomed house for nursery and kindergarten (we need to build the upper storey)

No wonder: it was just a small hut, with the small children obediently sitting on the mud floor, being instructed by, of all people, a lady from Sussex, who had heard of Lakshmi Thapa's project from the Pestalozzi Village in England and decided to come and help her for a month. The redoubtable Miss Lakshmi was nearby, planning a syllabus in an exercise book. She told how she had got the nearby villagers to help build the hut and of her plans. Two years later, the hut had expanded with the outlines of a second storey and a two-roomed kindergarten has been built and on which she plans also to build a second floor. If all goes well it is hoped that the Society will help with the provision of bricks, cement and timber."

GAP Organisation Teacher Exchange
The GAP Organisation arranges for students to work abroad in their gap year between school and university. They pay



Class I children

their own fares and subsistence. The large Nepal contingent go to village schools and are generally helpful (for a period of three months). It is a great experience for them, and GAP headquarters in Reading have asked if we will sponsor the air-fare and some expenses for one Nepali teacher to come to an English primary school for 8-10 weeks as a start of GAP's 3 year plan for Nepal Britain exchanges.

As it is constituted the Society has been unable to register as a Charity, so we have opened a separate bank account for a Charitable Fund, to be used only and entirely for this purpose. Many generous contributions have been received. Further con-

tributions will be gratefully acknowledged by our Hon Treasurer

Alan Durston Esq
87 Pine Hill
Epsom Surrey KT18 7BJ

J M Evans, Chairman

The address of the Britain-Nepal
Otology Service (BRINOS) is:

2 West Road,
Guildford GU1 1AV

GAP IN NEPAL

A Progress Report by Christine Russell

When I first went out to Nepal for GAP in May 1991, GAP was sending young people as volunteer teachers for periods of three months on a tourist visa. As a former teacher, I had been a little sceptical about how useful 18 year olds could be and had thought that it would be the volunteers who derived most benefit from the experience. They do indeed develop greatly in personal terms from their contact with Nepali people and culture and come back committed to maintaining their links with Nepal. However, I have also been impressed by the contribution which they make to the Nepali schools. As native speakers of English they do much to raise the standard of English and in addition introduce many extra-curricular activities. I am therefore very pleased that on

my last visit I succeeded in getting GAP registered with the Social Services National Co-ordinating Council, which means that our volunteers will be able to teach for 6 months and that we can now go ahead with our scheme for twinning each Nepali school with a British primary school and bringing a Nepali teacher from each GAP school over to the UK for an in-service training course. I hope to bring the first 3 Nepali teachers over in the spring of 1994. GAP's scheme is essentially one of cultural exchange, and in Nepal GAP is working closely with Matribhoomi Sevak Sangh, a voluntary service organisation which aims to perpetuate Nepali cultural values and shares GAP's ideas of promoting international understanding and fellowship.



Mary Manning teaching at the Ideal English Boarding School

OBITUARIES

The following appeared in THE TIMES of May 9 1992

John Boyd Denson, CMG, OBE

John Denson, a former British ambassador in Nepal, died on April 24 aged 65. He was born on August 13, 1926.

John Denson was Britain's charge d'affaires in Peking towards the end of China's cultural revolution. When he arrived at the start of 1969 the British mission was still a burnt-out shell after being sacked two years before by the Red Guards - who had also beaten up his predecessor. Denson himself was once jostled and held for two hours by an angry, xenophobic mob until he was able to seek help from a police station.

His three years as "our man in Peking" will be remembered, however, as a period of developing rapprochement, not only between China and this country but between the People's Republic and the rest of the world. This was the time of "ping pong diplomacy" and Henry Kissinger - and one in which Denson himself scored something of a diplomatic triumph by being officially allowed to tour China. Among his happier duties during his first year in Peking was to welcome the Ruter's journalist Anthony Grey when he was finally released after more than two years under house arrest.

Denson had to leave prematurely in 1971 for medical treatment for a back condition in Hong Kong. But by then he had done the job expected of him by preparing the way for his successor John Addis to become the first fully fledged

British ambassador in Peking. It was a job for which Denson was singularly well qualified. A fluent Mandarin speaker and leading Foreign Office sinologist he had spent the previous three years in Whitehall as assistant head of the Far East department. As such he had been involved in the negotiations which led to Britain's de-recognition of the nationalist Chinese government in Formosa and the re-establishment of full diplomatic relations with Peking. His appointment as chargé d'affaires in succession to Percy Craddock (later to become Mrs Thatcher's special adviser on foreign affairs) was seen as a significant step forward.

At one point in his career it seemed as if trouble was John Denson's business. He served in Laos throughout two coups d'état (with fighting across the border in Vietnam) and was consul-general in Athens from 1973-1977 - a period which saw the British embassy attacked by government-sponsored thugs following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

He was Britain's envoy in Kathmandu between 1977 and 1983, an unusually long appointment which reflected his suitability in the job. But his hopes of then returning to a Chinese speaking country were frustrated by the lack of a suitable senior vacancy. So instead he chose early retirement.

Born in Sunderland, Denson went with his family to Cambridge while still a child and was educated at the Perse School. He served in the Royal Artillery during the last year of the war, then was transferred to the Intelligence Corps and drafted to

Malaysia where he interrogated Japanese prisoners of war.

A gifted linguist, he read English and oriental languages at St John's College, Cambridge, before entering the Diplomatic Service in 1951. His early postings included Hong Kong, Peking, Tokyo, Helsinki and Washington.

John Denson was an unstuffy diplomat who loved music, "looking at paintings" and good wine. He was also an accomplished amateur actor who took part, while ambassador in Nepal, in charity Christmas performances of *Toad of Toad Hall* and *Charlie's Aunt* and in retirement organised play readings.

He married in 1957 Joyce Symondson, a fellow diplomat whom he met and courted in Hong Kong and Peking; she survives him.

(John Denson was one of the earliest members of the Society. Ed.)

Lieutenant Colonel A E E Mercer OBE, MC

Eric Mercer's sudden death on 14 February 1991 in hospital followed a massive heart attack five days earlier. He had collapsed as he stepped off the train late in the evening but, true to form, he struggled home on his own. A worried niece saw him a few days later and despite protest rushed him to hospital.

One of the most modest and unassuming of men, Eric was a lion in his day. He arrived with a party of reinforcements in the Chin Hills to find the CO evacuated, wounded and himself in temporary command as Captain. He relished the situation and at a time of brief respite impressed everyone with his immediate grasp of the situation and his text-book knowledge.

Prior to this at Bakloh he was, in the eyes of many of the newly commissioned officers, the epitome of the good regimental officer. Correct in bearing and demeanour, knowledgeable and completely dedicated to his work and to the Regiment he was nevertheless approachable; although following a monastic lifestyle himself, he could tell a good story about some of the exploits of our predecessors.

Shortly after his arrival on the Burma front, the Japanese began the offensive in Imphal. During nine months of intermittent action which followed, Eric Mercer's memorable achievement was the defence of the Phaetu ridge by his company, for which he received the immediate award of the Military Cross. Another accolade he reported on return to England was to find that his photograph on the mantelpiece of his senior aunt had been promoted two places, above less be-medalled Mercers.

Wounded through the shoulder during the monsoon amidst the mud of the Silchar Track, he appeared almost happy as he proudly displayed his arm in a sling. With shades of things to come, he refused medical attention until ordered back to the CCP.

Eric Mercer was born in 1914. After a peripatetic upbringing he was really happy with school life at Pangbourne. He left early at sixteen to work on his father's farm in British Columbia. Three years later he was back in England, too old to go to Sandhurst but determined to get into the Indian Army. He worked his way through the ranks, was selected for Sandhurst and passed out third in order of merit. He joined the 1/4th PWO Gurkha Rifles, thereby following in the footsteps of a grandfather and several relatives. In 1941

he helped as Quartermaster to raise the 3rd battalion at Bakloh.

After Burma, he attended Quetta Staff College in 1945, thence assuming a staff appointment at Allied HQ in Indonesia, where he was Mentioned-in-Despatches. After Indian Independence he joined the Royal Artillery, later serving as Military Attache in South Korea for which he was appointed OBE. He retired after forty-six long years of service in 1981.

But not to put his feet up. He was secretary of the Britain-Nepal Society for several years and was active in the Anglo-Korean Tibetan Society and latterly, the Friends of St Helena. He was involved in local societies, was governor of two primary schools and a regular church-goer. "Who in the congregation could have guessed", said the local vicar at his funeral, "that this so likeable and humble man, had such a distinguished military career."

A non-smoker, non-drinker and frugal in his habits, Eric nevertheless sallied forth once or twice a year in his retirement on long visits to countries he had known, or to see friends he had made - men and

women, soldiers and diplomats and academics, in his long career. Back in England he would meet them and conduct their sons and daughters when they came to visit or to study.

J M Evans

ADDRESSES

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BOOK REVIEWS

by Lieutenant Colonel T.M. Lowe

High Asia by Jill Neate Unwin Hyman
£25.00 213 pages

For, perhaps, the first time we have a book in which the approaches to the mountain peaks in Asia (all over 7,000 metres) have been gathered together in one place and which, at the same time, is a book in which each peak is examined from the point of view of its climbability, so to speak. The whole spectrum is arranged neatly into areas in which the Seven Thousanders are to be found e.g. the Eastern Himalayas, Kumaon and Garhwal, the Hindu Kush, China and Tibet.

Each of the areas is examined in geographical and historical detail, so that the time spent in extensive research is reduced to the minimum. Each main area has its own bibliography at the end of the book.

A 'Peak Index' and a 'People Index' will give you some idea of the sort of people who are climbing in Asia and the nationalities which they represent. This does something to dispel the belief that it was only the so-called pukka sahibs who had an interest in climbing the highest peaks in Asia. You might wonder why well known figures in the world of high altitude climbing are not mentioned, but they were not what the author describes as 'summiters' ie first on the summit.

The price of this book is well above average, but so too is the quality of the book-style, photographs, the layout and the presentation. The end papers show the geographical locations of the Seven Thousanders at a glance. The publishers are to be congratulated on the production of a thoroughly useful book of reference.

The Insider's Guide to Nepal
by Brian Tetley. Moorland Publishing
£10.99 211 pages

From time to time Guide Books on Nepal have been reviewed in the Journal of the Society. This is the latest book by the same authors of "Journey through Nepal" which was reviewed in Journal No 12/1988. There is, of course, some similarity, but the present book is undoubtedly a better piece of writing. It is comprehensive, has a wealth of information which will assist not only the casual visitor, but the high altitude trekker alike.

The guide has a host of first rate photographs by the highly talented Mohammed Amin; a valuable reading list on almost everything to do with Nepal and a good index. Maps of many areas are provided and a useful pull-out map of the whole country. At £10.99 the Guide is a good buy and small enough to fit in a pocket (220 x 140 mm).

Quartered Safe out here
by G.M. Fraser Harper Collins (Harvill) £16.00 227 pages

Fraser, as many will know, is the author of the Flashman series. This book is the story of a British Infantry platoon in Burma during World War II. It might lack some of the excitement that the activities of Flashman provided.

For many who served in a Gurkha Regiment during the battles in Burma, it will be a reminder that Gurkhas were held in very high regard by men of a North Country Regiment.

SOME OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST

(Contributed by Lieutenant Colonel T.M. Lowe)


| TITLE | AUTHOR | PRICE | PUBLISHER |
|---|------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Everest Reconnaissance | C.Howard-Bury & G.L. Mallory | £16.95 | Hodder |
| People in High Places | A.Salkeld | £14.99 | Cape |
| The High Mountains of the Alps | H.Dumler & W.Burkhardt | £25.00 | Hodder |
| Himalayan Climber | D.Scott | £17.95 | Hodder |
| The Glacier Peaks of the Eastern Alps | J.Neate | £12.99 | Hodder |
| Pipes, Kukris & Nips | G.M.Forteath | £14.50 | Pentland Press |
| John Masters - a regimented life | J.Clay | £20.00 | Joseph |
| * Sons of John Company 1903-1991 | J.Gaylor | £28.00 | Spellmount |
| Lahore to Lucknow (Indian Mutiny Journal of A.M.Lang) | Edited by D.Blomfield | £19.95 | Cooper |
| Elephants | Edited by J.Shoshani | £25.00 | Simon & Schuster |
| The Turquoise Mountain | B.Blessed | £14.99 | Bloomsbury |
| High Drama in the Caucasus | D.Farson | £16.99 | Joseph (Jan 1993) |
| * A cry from the Wild | L.Ruben | £13.95 | Macdonald |

* of particular interest

Attention is also invited to the following new books by authors well known to members of the Society:-

Special Men, Special War (Portraits of the SAS and Drafar) by Colonel B.M. Niven MBE, MA (Obtainable in the UK from SAS Regimental Association, Duke of York's HQ Building, Room 39, Centre Block, London. SW3 4SQ)


First In, Last Out An Unconventional British Officer in Indo-China (1945-46 & 1972-76) by J.P. Cross, 233 pages, 26 illustrations £27.50 (Brassey's UK)



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The Gurkha Museum

The Gurkha Museum commemorates the services of the Gurkhas to the British since 1815.

The story starts with a view of the Gurkha and Nepal, his homeland, before the visitor is taken through the main chapters of Gurkha military history from 1815 to the present day.

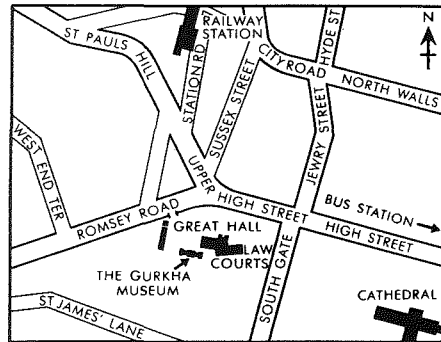
The displays cover the Gurkhas' service in the old Indian Army which took them to battlefields across the world – the North West and North East Frontiers of India, France and Belgium, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Burma, Malaya, North Africa, Italy and many more besides.

From 1948 onwards the displays cover the story of the four Gurkha regiments transferred to the British Army and the corps which were subsequently raised to join them. They have served all over the world, including the campaigns in Malaya, Brunei, Borneo and the Falkland Islands.

The number of serving Gurkha soldiers grew to over 120,000 in each World War. Every Gurkha soldier has been a volunteer; none has ever been a conscript. Their graves lie in many parts of the world far from their home.

Today Gurkhas from the villages in the hills of Nepal still serve as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. The Gurkha Museum does honour to the memory and service of them all.

Winchester



There is a car park beside the Museum.

The Gurkha Museum

The Gurkha Museum has something to interest people of all ages and is very suitable for a family outing. Besides tableaux, dioramas and showcases it has visual and voice descriptions of the history of Gurkha regiments and a gallery commemorating the winners of 26 Victoria Crosses.

There is also a shop well stocked with things which relate to Gurkhas and Nepal.

Opening Times

Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm

The Museum is closed on Sunday and Monday except on public holidays. It is also closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra B.B. Shah of Nepal

President: H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, GCVO

Our aim is to promote and foster good relations between the people of the United Kingdom and Nepal. The Society was founded in 1960, under the patronage of His late Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva of Nepal during his State Visit to London: Lord Hunt, became the first President.

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

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

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £10 per annum. Life members - a single payment of £150 and Corporate Members £25. The Journal is sent free to all members.

Members of the "YETI" Association for Nepal's resident or staying 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 or events from October to May in London;

- a Spring or Summer outing to a place of interest;
- receptions and hospitality for visitors from Nepal;
- the 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 well attended, 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 is His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, GCVO.

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

Mrs. Joanna Thomas
24 Carthew Villas
London. W6 OBS

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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