



THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 19

1995



*His Majesty The King of Nepal with
Sir Neil Thorne, Chairman of the Society*

See article page 7

Photograph by Courtesy of The Royal Nepalese Embassy

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THE BRITAIN NEPAL SOCIETY

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WITH COMPLIMENTS

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EDITORIAL

That our Society continues to flourish will be very apparent from a glance at the contents of Journal No. 19 and in particular from our Honorary Secretary's report. The year has been an eventful one with visits to London by both His Majesty the King of Nepal and the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister.

The memorable celebration of VJ Day in August, a celebration in which many of the Gurkhas stationed in the United Kingdom played so prominent a part to the delight of the British public, was attended also by a distinguished group of Gurkha Brigade ex-Servicemen from Nepal. During a few days after the strenuous events in London they were to have been taken to see Warwick Castle and the great city of Warwick, their host a former officer who, after being wounded near Imphal while serving with a Gurkha Battalion, pursued a very successful career in architecture, becoming the Chief Architect of the County of Warwickshire. Alas the exceptionally hot weather and the very demanding celebrations in London put the journey to Warwick out of the question and it remains to be carried out another time – perhaps by members of the Society!

Our usual article on the Nepal-Britain Society has had to be held over as details from our sister Society had not been received in time by Mayura Brown who does so much to keep us informed. Many congratulations to her on being elected the first Honorary member of the Yeti Association!

Members will read with pleasure Mayura's report on the notable event at Fulham Palace on 21st August where, while celebrating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of our Society, a large gathering of members and friends bade farewell in a suitable manner to Mr and Mrs Madhab P Khanal and thanked them most warmly for all they had done for the Society during a most active tour of duty at the Embassy in London.

Our Society has had some very sad losses during the year, as reported in the journal, and the recent death of Professor Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, the famous anthropologist, brings back to mind memorable talks given by him to the Society in London and duly published in the Journal (see No. 2 and No. 9). He was a strong supporter of the Society and it was always a great pleasure to welcome him and hear him speak. The obituary by Mayura Brown in this number is a special tribute by one who knew both the professor and his wife Elizabeth very well.

Lastly, we cannot forbear quoting more words of encouragement from our loyal member in North Wales. Susan Roberts writes: "Compliments and thanks to all who have contributed in the Journal (No. 18) which provides me with a link with the society and a connection with Nepal too." She read Journal No. 18 while looking after her father in hospital. "The quality of the writing was so rich in conveying pictures of well-trodden – and some newly discovered – areas of Nepal." We can but thank her for such kind words of praise.

General

The AGM in November 1994 was held at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, by kind permission of His Excellency Mr S P Shrestha, the Ambassador, who also gave a short talk to the members present. The meeting was followed by an excellent curry supper supplied by Mr Ranamagar of the Munal Restaurant 393 Upper Richmond Road in Putney. The meal was ably managed by Nelia Ranamagar, the Ambassador's Secretary, whose husband owns the Munal Restaurant.

Winter Lectures

On the 17th October, 1994, Elaine Brook gave a most interesting talk entitled 'Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints'. This talk was supported by some beautiful slides.

On the 24th January 1995, Colonel Charles Newton Dunn gave a talk entitled 'Kukris and Benevolence'. This gave our members a fascinating insight into the work carried out for the Gurkha Welfare Trusts. It was given in the Grand Committee Room, off Westminster Hall, in the House of Commons.

The third talk was given by Dr Rita Gardner, of Kings College, London, on the 4th March, who gave the Society an illustrated talk entitled 'Falling down or washing away' concerning the effects of soil erosion in the Middle Hills.

Other Events

The Annual Nepali Supper was held on Tuesday, 7th February once again in St Columba's Hall, Pont Street. This venue is ideal for holding our annual event, so we will probably continue to go there. As the Guest of Honour this year was our President, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, attendance was even higher than usual.

The Duke gave a delightful after dinner talk to an appreciative audience. Mr Manandhar and his family from the Natraj Restaurant, 93 Charlotte Street, provided an excellent Nepalese Supper, which was enjoyed by everyone.

A Reception was held on the 21st February in the IPU Room at the House of Commons for The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr M K Nepal, who was on a short official visit to this country. The Reception included a buffet supper excellently arranged by Sheila Buckland, and much appreciated by all the guests.

The Prime Minister of Nepal, The Rt. Hon. Mr Man Mohan Adhikari paid a flying visit to London on his way from Denmark where he had been attending the World Environment and Health Meeting. He expressed the wish to speak to the Society about his concerns for Nepal and at short notice our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, arranged for a Reception to be held at Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, which was followed in the Lecture Theatre by an interesting and illuminating talk by the Prime Minister.

*Pat Mellor
Honorary Secretary*

by Peter Donaldson

It was of great interest to all of us that His Majesty the King of Nepal was able to join in with the VE Day Anniversary events in Hyde Park. The scene on television showing the four Nepalese children escorting their King to the peace signing ceremony, together with other world leaders, proved to be a memorable occasion.

On the 10th May, His Majesty the King, accompanied by Princess Sruti and Prince Nirajan, visited Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and HRH Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace to mark their visit to London. It enabled both Royal families to meet and enjoy lunch together.

Later the same day, the Royal Nepalese Ambassador and Mrs. Shrestha invited guests to a Reception at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, in the gracious presence of His Majesty The King. The guests sensed a great air of excitement, especially amongst the Nepalese families. They had travelled to London from many areas of the country in order to see their Royal Family. The rooms of the Embassy, the marquee and the gardens were crowded, with the fine national costumes adding so much colour to the scene. The Nepalese waited patiently in the marquee for the King to arrive, being entertained by the immaculate Gurkha Pipe Band playing on the top terrace of the garden.

When the King arrived, he was met by his Ambassador and presented with a flower from each of the row of girls in National costume. The girls were so excited by the honour that their delight lasted long after the official reception. For the 'seventh flower girl' who lives in Man-

chester, we are sure she will be telling the story for years of how she personally handed a flower to her King.

In the main reception rooms, His Majesty the King, Princess Sruti and Prince Nirajan spent time speaking to many representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Gurkha Regiments, His Majesty's school from Eton days, and other guests. It was a great privilege for all of us who met the Royal Family to be able to talk about Nepal and the welcome given to those who worked in or visited their country.

The Royal Family then went into the garden and were able to see many of their people. Despite the cool evening, the families waited patiently until they were introduced, an event which for many would have been the first time of their lives.



His Majesty meeting guests in the Embassy garden

Everyone agreed the Reception was a memorable experience and a fitting way to conclude the VE Day Anniversary events.

Photograph by courtesy of The Royal Nepalese Embassy

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ANNUAL NEPALI SUPPER

by Mayura Brown

The plaintive tones of the pipes greeted us as we approached St. Columba's Hall on the evening of February 7th. A lone Gurkha Piper stood at the top of the stairway. In the hall below, members and guests were being served with drinks by cheerful young Gurkha Orderlies of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles. Reminiscences were being exchanged, for this year we would be commemorating the victories of World War 2, first in Europe and then Japan. It is also the 35th year of our Society's existence, and it was a great privilege to welcome as the Guest of Honour, our President, HRH the Duke of Gloucester. We were happy to welcome as well Their Excellencies the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Shrestha and the Embassy party.

As we took our places at the various tables, animated conversations continued between the British and Nepalese members. We ate with relish the excellent food that Mr Ishwar Manandhar invariably provides for us. After the meal, our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, read out the gracious and much appreciated message from Her Majesty the Queen, then he invited the Ambassador to speak. His Excellency said he was highly pleased to be at our Supper, especially as His Royal Highness, our President, was able to be with us. The warm, friendly people-to-people relations guaranteed the continued success of the Society. The expanding ties between the two countries will enhance co-operation, and he referred to the newly formed Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce.

When HRH the Duke spoke, he said he took great pleasure in seeing the cross-section of interests in Nepal represented among the members of the Society, ranging from Academic connections through to tourism. He was sure that Nepal would develop her full potential. There was hope for further partnership. It was good to find many Nepalese present, and he added that we must welcome them as the British have been made welcome in Nepal.

Our members should be reminded that His Royal Highness has been associated with our Society long before he became its President. On a memorable occasion at St. James's Palace on December 8th. 1970, the Duke (then Prince Richard) gave a "Presentation of Scenes of Nepal" with enchanting views of the country. This was in the presence of his Mother, HRH the Duchess of Gloucester, and Field-Marshal Lord Harding, Chairman of the National Committee, Gurkha Welfare Appeal. (The Appeal was prior to the formation of the Gurkha Welfare Trust.)

When the two loyal toasts had been drunk and the message from the Nepal-Britain Society read to the assembly, the two Women's Council Scholarship Students, Mrs. Jaya Pradhan and Miss Sabina Khanal were presented to the Duke by Dr. Dhital, President of the Yeti Association. HRH met and spoke to many of our members.

For organising another successful event our thanks go to the Committee and their helpers, to Mr Manandhar and family for their thoughtful care during the Supper, to Mr. Weiler for the floral

decorations, and warm thanks to Colonel Pearson, Commanding Officer of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles (now the 3rd Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles).

One more happy evening was over, but as we said our farewells we could not help thinking of all the brave, loyal and gallant Gurkhas who had served the British Crown with such courage and fidelity.

FIRST HONORARY YETI

On December 26th 1994, after a lunch held by the Yeti Association in honour of the Birthday of His Majesty King Birendra, and in the presence of His Excellency the Nepalese Ambassador, Mrs Mayura Brown was elected the first Honorary Yeti. The citation was as follows:

"We are pleased to confer upon you Honorary membership of our Association

This is the 180th year (1815-1995) of their devoted service, and though there is now only one Regiment, the Royal Gurkha Rifles, we must NEVER forget that the strongest tie between Britain and Nepal, and the foundation of the undying friendship of the two countries has been, and always will be, Johnny Gurkha.

in recognition of your valuable contribution towards Nepal and Nepali people as per Article III of our constitution.

We wish you every success in your effort and hope you will continue your excellent work as ever."

Uttam Amatya, General Secretary
Dr Raghav Dhital, President

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THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEPAL IN LONDON

(Adapted from a report by Tunku Varadarajan and Michael Binyon in The Times of 18th March 95)

Addressing members of the Society at Chatham House, St. James's Square, Mr Adhikari outlined the priorities of his Government. He was in London on a private visit following the Copenhagen social summit.

Among the priorities were the encouragement of the private sector, land reform and the linking of Nepal's economy to the "global reality" without which, he said, the economy would remain backward.

He added that it was impossible for the State to manage every aspect of the economy and called for investment from the developed world, particularly from Britain.

Explaining the apparent contradiction between his proclaimed communism and his faith in market forces, he said that Nepal's communists had to accommodate to the country's conditions. When they had slavishly followed other foreign communists they failed to win any support at home. "Sometimes people ask, 'How come a communist is talking this way?' I say, 'This is reality. We can't ignore it.'"

Multiparty democracy and respect for the monarchy were basic tenets of the new constitution of Nepal, the World's only Hindu Kingdom.

Mr Adhikari said relations with Britain were excellent and he praised British Government help for retired Gurkha soldiers and schemes to help them buy land in their villages.

Clearly proud of the Gurkhas' martial tradition, he said that his Government would be willing to contribute its soldiers to any United Nations peacekeeping operation when it was asked to do so.

The occasion was as usual a very friendly and happy one with a very good attendance by members of the Society who appreciated being addressed in a frank and relaxed manner by Mr Adhikari when there must have been so many demands on his time. He was warmly thanked by Sir Neil Thorne, Chairman of the Society, on behalf of all members who attended the talk in the historic setting of Chatham House.

Footnote

While recovering in hospital from injuries received in a helicopter accident last August, Mr Manmohan Adhikari tendered his resignation as Prime Minister. He has been succeeded by the leader of the Nepali Congress Parliamentary Party, Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, a former Research Fellow in Political Science at the London School of Economics, who places the alleviation of poverty high among his priorities.

Ed

A VISIT TO ACAP

by Lt Col G D Birch

Many members will be aware of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) and some will have trekked though the project area and paid the trekking fee for entry. Those members who heard the lecture given by Major Dudley Spain in January last year will also be aware that this project is the flagship project of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC). Members of long standing will probably remember the launch of KMTNC in the 1980s, and the presentation given by the then Director, Dr Hermanta Mishra, at the RGS.



Market gardening at Luwang

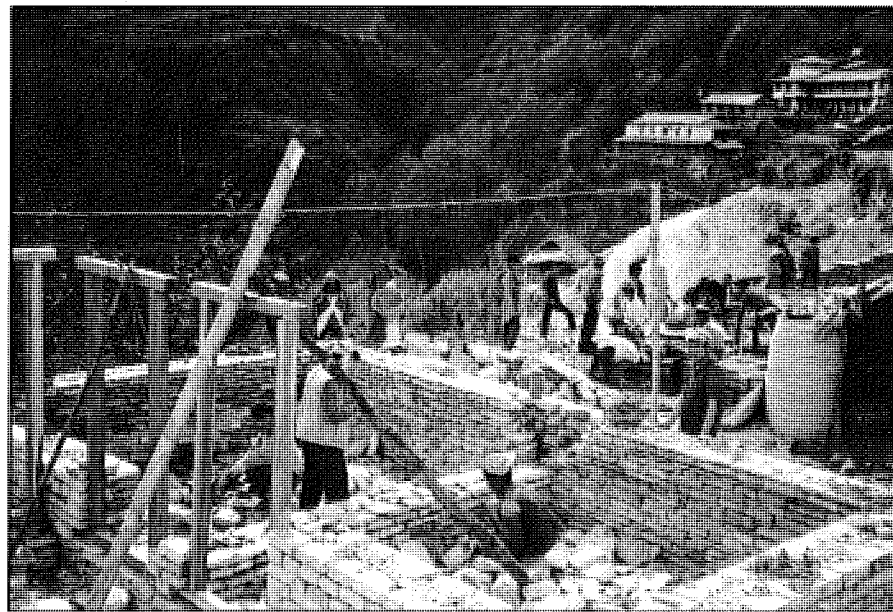
Since those days the KMTNC has grown, and its projects have won international recognition and awards in the area of conservation and sustainable tourism. The ACAP project in the heavily trekked area to the south of Annapurna has been at the forefront of the Trust's activities. A research centre run by KMTNC is located at Saurha in the Royal Chitwan National Park in the central Terai area.

Much of the funding for the Trust's work comes from international sources. A network of foreign chapters has been established to assist the Kathmandu based trustees with obtaining funds, both from national governments and fund raising activities. Nations involved include the USA, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple is the Chairman of the UK chapter, and is also on the main KMTNC board in Kathmandu. During a short visit to Nepal in September 1992 he was able to visit the then acting Secretary of KMTNC in Kathmandu, and also the research centre in Chitwan. My wife and I were fortunate to be able to accompany him on this tour in the last month of our tour of duty at the Embassy in Kathmandu.

In early 1994 as I was finally retiring from the Army, the Field Marshal asked me to go back to Nepal to look at the current work of the trust on behalf of the UK trustees. In the event the visit proved to be one of the most interesting of our treks and visits to Nepal.

With the departure of Dr Hermanta Mishra to an appointment in the USA, Dr



Health post under construction at Gandruk

Chandra Gurung the Director of ACAP had, in addition, taken over temporarily the post of Secretary to the Trustees (the de facto Trust Director). A very full programme for our 3 weeks was arranged to include a return to the research centre at Saurha in the Terai, and visits to the 'frontline' offices in the ACAP area.

The increase of tourism in Nepal has had a serious impact on the ecology of the most visited areas. Unlike the authorities in Bhutan who control tightly the annual quota of visitors and restrict tourism to the low volume high cost market, tourism in Nepal has grown more haphazardly over the years. Nepal was the goal of many overland wanderers in the 1960s and 70s. Whilst there are some high spending tourists, by far the majority are backpackers and trekkers, most of the former travelling

alone or in small groups. It is in the field of sustainable tourism that KMTNC is attempting to make an impact. The main pillar of KMTNC policy is that there can be no conservation without development. To achieve this the people in the conservation areas must understand not only the needs of the tourists, but also how to manage the ecology of their area, thus ensuring that best use is made of local resources, and that these resources are sustainable.

All the 'frontline' offices are run by highly motivated degree level Trust officers. They are responsible for planning and implementing projects within their own areas based on KMTNC overall policy. Their plans and budgets are submitted to the Kathmandu HQ for vetting and approval. Offices are also responsible for monitoring ongoing projects. There is a

heavy burden on officers to win the 'hearts and minds' of villagers in their areas. Education is pivotal to KMTNC policy, and will have to be prolonged since sustainable development seeks to change patterns of life and agriculture developed over centuries. This cannot be achieved in short two or five year bursts. The continued support of ODA in this field is particularly welcome.

The range of development work being undertaken includes:

- a) Forestry. To provide a source of fuel wood, construction material and fodder, and to stabilise land against landslides with:
 - Community plantations
 - Private plantations
 - Tree nurseries (both ACAP project and privately owned)
- b) Market Gardening. To provide an income for villagers by better production and a wider range of vegetables with:
 - ACAP owned demonstration plots
 - Private nurseries
 - Kitchen gardens
- c) Hotel Management. To instruct on how to run trekking lodges for visitors in a clean and economical manner that takes account of the environment. This includes use of back boilers, low wattage cookers where electricity is available, hygiene and toilets, and the establishment of kerosene depots.
- d) Eco-tourism. To develop trekking routes away from the main trails but to manage such routes in an environmentally sensitive way. This includes trail repairs, provision of campsites and toilets, and minimising wood and fodder collection in areas such as oak and rhododendron forests that are habitats

for flora and fauna of interest to visitors.

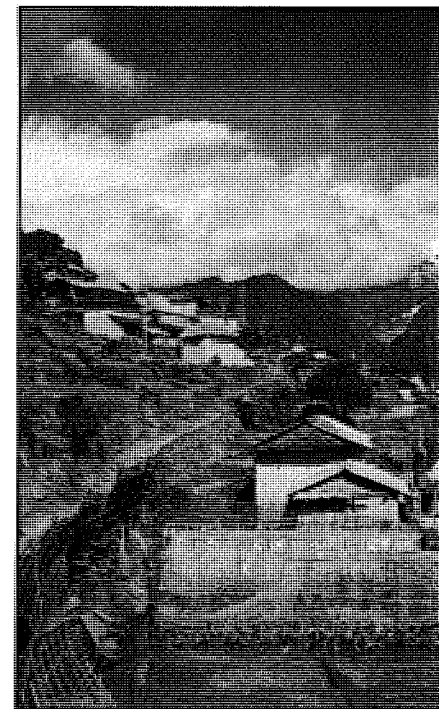
- e) Conservation Education. Programmes for both schools and local villagers. Street theatre and mobile briefing teams visiting their areas. Conservation is now part of the curriculum of education in Nepalese schools.
- f) Women's Development Programmes. These programmes address the need for greater participation in ACAP activities. This is proving quite successful in several areas and has resulted in an increased awareness by women for ACAP's aims. Women's groups have been active in fund raising for local development and in improving their own life within the family.
- g) Micro-Hydro Electricity (micro-hydel) Programmes. An example is the recently completed project in Ghandruk.
- h) School Building Projects. Renovation and expansion of school buildings.

Our visit started at Saurha based at the research centre in the Chitwan National Park. The Trust initially took over from the Smithsonian Institute work on tiger conservation. Other projects have followed including work on the Asian one-horned Rhino and an ongoing project on the Sloth Bear. The Park is one of the main tourist attractions with the famous Tiger Tops Lodge and tented camp within it. Over the years many cheaper lodges have moved to the edge of the Park and the volume of tourists has greatly increased. The declaration of the area as a National Park and its attendant regulations has not always had the whole-hearted support of the local villagers who resent a remote government imposing restrictions on their way of life and agricultural practices.

The standard method of transport within the park is by elephant, and by this means not only were we able to look at game and birds, but also visit projects run by the Trust in surrounding villages. The serious damage that had resulted from the 1993 monsoon was all too apparent. Large areas of rice fields and some young plantations had been devastated by the spread of a layer of silt 2-3 feet deep, totally useless for growing rice or any crops. It will take years for the earth to return to a fertile state. However not all was lost. We met a local village conservation group at the plantation and they clearly appreciated the help of the Trust. One of the problems is to make plantations rhino proof by digging something akin to an anti-tank ditch! If properly managed and planted these plantations can provide much needed fodder and in time, fuel. The Trust has helped by providing subsidised saplings and fencing. The village has to take on the responsibility of control and management. We saw direct evidence of this both here and in the hill areas, but there the main enemies were landslides and goats! We also visited a tree nursery run by the Trust from where villagers could obtain food plants at a reasonable price and also agricultural advice. Improved vegetable growing by using a greater variety of vegetables and improved seed was another technique that has been introduced into the area. By this means not only does the grower improve his diet, but he can sell surplus crops to the tourist lodges and obtain an income. By establishing nurseries and demonstration plots the word is spread both by example and through village conservation committees. Moving through the surrounding villages one could see the houses that had followed the

new regime. The problem faced by the Trust is the sheer size of the area compared with their available resources, not only in finance but also providing suitable staff. A health post established in the area was also seen as a positive benefit by all the villagers we spoke to.

After three all too short days we bade farewell to Saurha and drove to Pokhara where Lt Col Alastair Langlands made us welcome at his flat just outside the Recruiting Centre. Alastair is the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association liaison officer and is also involved with KMTNC. Our time was spent on visiting projects in the ACAP area in the foothills of the Annapurna group. Visits were undertaken



An ACAP demonstration plot at Sikles



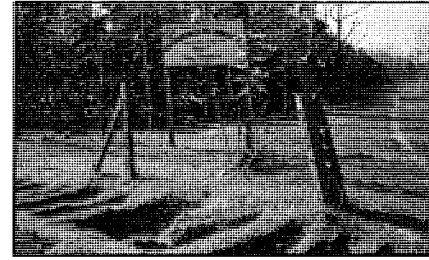
The Annapurna 2 group from above Sikles

to offices in Luwang, Sikles, Ghalekharka and the ACAP HQ at Ghandruk. The emphasis in each area was slightly different depending upon local need. Forestry and horticulture was a common thread throughout the area, again supported by the Trust's nurseries, private nurseries set up with the Trust's help and demonstration plots. Major villages on trekking routes required hotel management training whilst a more remote trekking route was being established in the Sikles to Ghalekharka area to relieve pressure on the more popular routes.

What was clear to us was that through the Trust practical aid was being channelled to the villages where it was needed. The charge that aid is so often syphoned off at higher levels in so many aid projects worldwide, does not apply in this case.

Much of the success is due to the dedication of the staff, and the fact that the majority of the staff are Gurungs originating from the area. This allowed them to establish a good rapport with the villagers.

The success of the Trust's work and its recognition by international conservation bodies led HMG Nepal to increase its area of responsibility to include Upper Mustang and Manang, making a total of 7,000 square kms, when the Ministry of Tourism opened up that area to tourists in 1992. This has posed a greatly increased challenge to the Trust. The new area has a totally different and even more fragile ecology in the trans-Himalayan zone. The inhabitants are of Tibetan ethnic origin and owed their existence to the trans-Himalayan trade to supplement their meagre living standards. Trade has now all but




A plantation in the Terai showing an anti-rhino ditch

ceased and the area was closed to all outsiders, and served as a base for Tibetan guerrilla operations against the invading Chinese. The area is one of the last strongholds of the old Tibetan culture and religion. The challenge for the Trust is to manage with sensitivity the introduction of tourism and the subsequent western influence whilst retaining the unique culture and ecology of the area. Although the

principles of sustainable eco-tourism are still valid, the application of them in this vastly different environment will need a great deal of skill, patience and resources. We must hope that KMTNC can fulfil this role.



A villager benefits from horticultural training – selling his quality vegetables in Saurha




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GURUNG LAMAS AND HAIL

by Mark Temple

One feature of life in Gurung villages which has received little comment is the role the Lamas played in keeping hail away from village crops.

When I lived with a Lama's household in 1973 in Kaski District, his hail "contract" was important. We lived in the village of Pangdur Danra, but the Lama, Dhanbahadur Gurung, did his hail prevention work in Dhampus. Another Lama who lived in Pangdur kept the hail away from our village's crops.

The fee Dhanbahadur received for his work was sixteen large sacks of rice. To earn his fee he camped on the top of Dhampus ridge for about six weeks in a makeshift hut of the sort that shepherds use. He did the work while the rice crop was ripening in October and November for then the crop was at its most vulnerable stage. One Saturday while I was not at work, Dhanbahadur's wife sent Kanchhi (his youngest daughter) and me off to see him with supplies of good things to eat. The walk took us about two hours.

We found Dhanbahadur sitting under the bamboo mats of his shelter, reading and chanting his prayers. I did not like to interrupt him but eventually he broke off and we chatted and ate our picnic. He said how very hard work it was and rather exhausting keeping the hail away. Fifteen months earlier I had completed a university course in environmental physics but courtesy forbade me telling Dhanbahadur that I did not believe he was having any effect. In these days Gurung Lamas were

busy and well paid for hail prevention duties throughout the area on the South side of the Annapurna Range, from Gandrung to Sikles and no doubt beyond. I never did discover how each village collected the grain to pay the Lamas but it was organised by the Panchayat in which the old Mukhiyas often still had influence.

Dhanbahadur grew up in the village of Lumle which is a mixed Brahmin and Gurung village. His father was a Lama and sent him to study with the Brahmins although he never went to school. Later he studied in a Buddhist monastery in Thakkola for seven years.

I left in 1974 and did not return until 1989. Dhanbahadur's wife had died and he had got old and given up his work as a Lama. In fact he had always had other sources of income such as supplying building stone, a tea shop and his Lama doctoring work which included traditional medicine and modern drugs! He was said to be rich and have gold in the house, which explained the big dog he had kept. I had often felt uneasy when he was treating obviously ill people but the nearest doctor was fourteen miles walk away and 3,000 feet down the hill.

In 1989 I wandered with my old friend Manbahadur up to the ruined fort in Pangdur Danra. Casually, he mentioned in passing, that this was the place where the lamas had sat to keep the hail away from Pangdur's crops. They didn't do it any more he explained - in Pangdur or anywhere else in the Gurung homelands.

"No-one believes that stuff any more. Years of radio weather forecasts and what the kids learn in school have put paid to that". And that was not the only thing that

had changed. Unlike Kanchhi, her three sons do not speak the Gurung language, and a brand new motor road had just been built past the door of the Lama's house.

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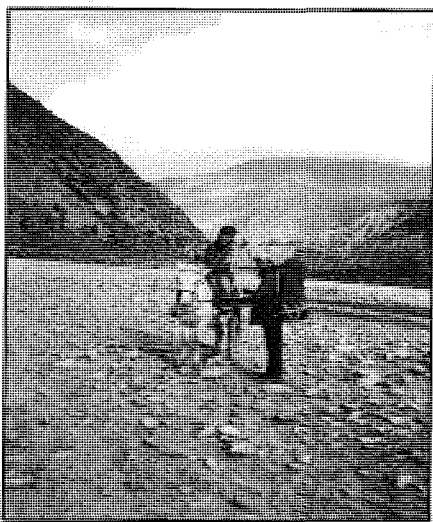
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AN OLD MAN ON THE JOMOSOM TRAIL

by Rupert Blum

The first time I hit the Jomosom Trail was three years ago. However, being 74 then, I found that I could not manage the full round trip from Pokhara in the time I had available. So I decided to do it the easy way when I went to Nepal again last November: I flew to Jomosom and walked back.

What a hair-raising flight, skimming over ridges some 3,000m high and then flying up the Kali Gandaki Valley between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, each topping 8,000m! There is an airstrip at Jomosom, but as no planes can normally land or take off after 9am because of gale force winds howling up the valley after the sun has been out for a couple of hours, there are only a few flights by little bush planes



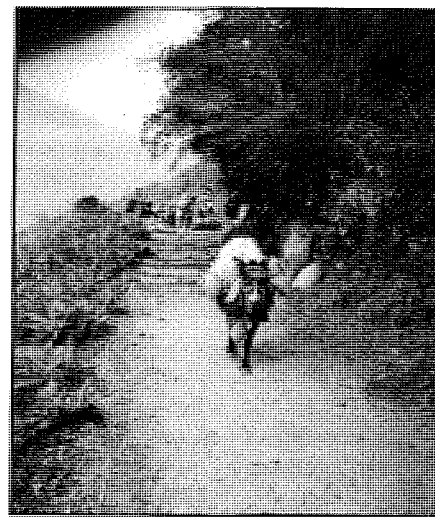
*My porter talking to a friend near
Tukuche*

each morning. These are always heavily booked for the trip back to Pokhara.

Most walkers who fly one way do so back from Jomosom, but the other way round makes a much better trek. There are no problems about seats on planes (I had just one fellow passenger, the rest of the seats were collapsed and the space taken up with sacks of freight), the scenery became more attractive with each day's walk and by far the most splendid viewpoint is reached just a day and a half before the end.

The Jomosom Trail is a historic trade route between Tibet and the lowlands of Nepal, with loads of salt and wool travelling down and mostly grain going up. It follows the Kali Gandaki River, which rises on the northern side of the Himalayan watershed close to the Tibetan border and makes its way through the main chain between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. This route is still very much alive with caravans of ponies, donkeys and mules and, on its upper section, yaks. Nowadays they carry most of the food and drink for the trekkers' lodges and for the officials and army at Jomosom, as well as consumer goods, which the villagers can now afford. However, at one point fairly low down, the valley is so narrow that no mule track could be made; so the trail rises to 3,000m to cross over into another valley to reach Pokhara.

Stepping off the plane at Jomosom (8,900 ft, 2713m) is rather a shock; bare mountains all around and between them a flat dusty valley almost devoid of vegetation. Clearly a place to get out of as fast as



The leader of a caravan

possible if you do not care for deserts; so I got myself a porter straight away and set off down the valley to Tukuche (8,500 ft, 2591m), a very easy day's walk.

After a couple of hours, a little vegetation began to appear and the landscape started to be quite attractive by the time we got to this little walled town. Tukuche was the main place in the valley during the heyday of the Kali Gandaki trade route and has several remarkably fine houses with attractive courtyards; some of these former merchants' mansions have now been turned into trekkers' lodges. One of their best features is that they have heating in the main room by way of a brazier under the table, which is covered with a huge cloth reaching down to one's knees to keep in the warmth.

The next day I continued to Ghasa (6,700ft, 2040m), at first on the still flat valley floor but then, as the valley narrows, increasingly along the mountainside

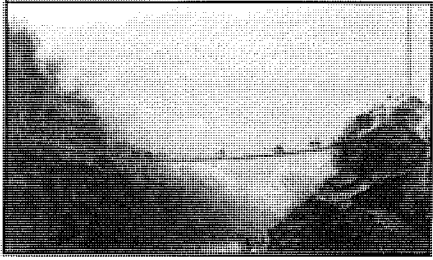
with the river roaring below. Vegetation becomes lush all the time and the slopes begin to be covered with pine trees. This section is still fairly easy walking, but there is quite a lot of up and down.

The trail from Ghasa to Tatopani (3,900 ft, 1189m) is the most spectacular part of the valley. Along this section, the Kali Gandaki squeezes its way through the main range of the Himalayas between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. The path rises and drops to find places where a route could be cut into the rocks, in some places with almost sheer drops of hundreds of metres down to the foaming river. Seeing a section like this ahead is rather frightening to someone prone to vertigo like me, but in fact, to provide enough space for loaded pack animals, the path is always wide enough to be able to walk on the inside, out of sight of the drop down to the river.

Approaching Tatopani, the valley becomes a little wider and vegetation very lush, with oranges a big feature. This is the end of the valley section, which I found quite comfortable to do in three days. However, there are plenty of villages with lodges all along the way, so doing it in four or five stages presents no problems.

Tatopani is a good place for a day's rest. Its climate is balmy even in midwinter, the lodges will do your laundry and one of them is run by a French woman, with the result that the food is some of the best in the valley. However, the pools below the village, fed by hot springs for which Tatopani is famous, are a disappointment if you are hoping for a little comfort in which to ease weary limbs.

Because of almost impossible gorges below Tatopani, the track leaves the Kali Gandaki here to climb from the river onto



Caravan crossing the Kali Gandaki near Tatopani

a high ridge and over into the next valley to the east. Soon after leaving Tatopani, the path crosses the Kali Gandaki by a spectacular suspension bridge and then climbs steeply up the mountainside; the first couple of hours are the worst, after which steep sections alternate with quite gentle ones.

This climb makes for the two most arduous days of the trek. Fit, young people do the 1700m rise in a day, but I took a day and a half, spending the night at the little village of Sikla (6,820ft, 2079m) and continued to Ghorapani (9,450ft, 2880m) next morning. The reward for this effort is a complete change of scenery:

Looking back, Dhaulagiri emerges as a giant white lump, other mountains appear in front and, closer up, the slopes are bright green with farmed terraces interspersed with copses and forests.

A stop at Ghorapani is a must; it commands wonderful views, with even better ones from a point some 300m higher known as Poon Hill (10,478ft, 3194m). However, by lunchtime, both are usually shrouded in thick mist for the rest of the day, so be sure to bring either good company or a good book to Ghorapani if you do not want a depressing afternoon stuck

in a cloud while waiting for clear weather first thing next morning.

The descent to Birethanti (3,600ft, 1097m) for a bus or taxi back to Pokhara is often done in a day, but this is a great mistake. After a week surrounded by huge mountains, there is nothing like putting in lots of stops for glasses of tea to enjoy the sunshine and the unfolding panorama of the foothills of the Himalayas, with occasional glimpses back to the white giants you leave behind. Tirkhedunga (5,175ft, 1577m) at the bottom of the steepest downhill section of the trek or nearby Hille make convenient overnight stops before the final two or three hours down to Birethanti.



Dhaulagiri from Sikla

The Jomosom Trail is hard to beat for variety of scenery in the course of the week's walk. You start in the broad, flat valley around Jomosom and Tukucho, enclosed by barren mountains. This is rather a desolate scene but enlivened by an occasional couple of galloping horsemen suggestive of Genghis Khan's Mongolia.

As the valley narrows between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, you are hardly ever out of earshot of the tinkling bells of caravans of ponies, mules or yaks with bales of goods strapped to each side, while sometimes you have to make room for

flocks of sheep and goats driven to or from their summer pasture or, perhaps, to market in Pokhara. There is constant traffic of men and women going about their business, often with huge loads on their backs, plus many trekkers, the younger ones carrying their own packs and the older ones followed by their porters. All this busy traffic on foot and hoof suggests the Canterbury Tales, except that the greeting is not 'God be with you' but 'Namaste', usually said with a friendly smile.

Finally, the stiff climb out of the Kali Gandaki Valley to Ghorapani brings

broadening views and, peeping above lower ridges, increasingly frequent glimpses of the great white giants until the full panorama unfolds when you get to the top. Here you enter in the country of the Gurungs, among whom service in Gurkha Regiments continues to be a proud tradition.

(The author will be happy to provide practical information to anyone tempted to follow in his footsteps. His address is Prior House, Stoke Prior, Herefordshire HR6 0NB)

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We are always sorry when our Nepalese friends return home, but we try to make it a joyful 'Au revoir'. A farewell party was held for Minister-Counsellor Madhub Khanal and Mrs Binita Khanal on August 21st. at Fulham Palace. We are also celebrating the Society's 35th. Anniversary, so the two events were combined. Sadly, our First President, Lord Hunt was unable to join us. H.E. the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Shrestha were among those present, as well as some of the Burma Star Veterans who had marched down the Mall in the 19th. August parade, and two of the original founder-members of the Society, Mr Dudley Spain and myself. In those early days we hardly imagined that we would be a lively Society 35 years on! Our thanks must go to those who have helped over the years to make it a success. Some members have to travel quite a distance to attend our cheery gatherings, but they know a warm welcome awaits them.

In the course of the evening our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, presented Madhub and Binita with a photo frame each, and Binita also received a bouquet of flowers. Madhub's sincere words and thanks prove that personal friendships help to cement the ties between Nepal and Britain. We hope the Khanals will take back to Kathmandu many happy memories of their stay in London.

The new venue for our Party in Fulham was very pleasing. The large room had charming floral decorations, delicious Nepali snacks were laid out for us, Committee members were busy serving drinks, (orange juice seemed much in demand). The weather was perfect, and we were able to sit on the patio over-looking a large, tranquil garden without even a murmur from the London traffic reaching us. We can look forward now to the start of our 36th year.

Mayura Brown.



The inaugural meeting of the Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce was held in the Ballroom of the Royal Nepalese Embassy on 25th January this year and a great deal of progress has been made since then. An offer to hold and administer the Chamber's files for the first year was made by Trade Association Management and gratefully accepted by the Committee. A detailed list of Committee Members with contact numbers will be issued shortly followed by a full membership list. In the meantime the Chamber has issued its first

Newsletter, a very professional and attractive publication with short and informative articles on a variety of business topics.

The administrative address of the Chamber is – Sir John Lyon House, 5 High Timber Street, Upper Thames Street, London EC4V 3PA. Tel: 0171 329 0950 Fax: 0171 329 4218. Any BNS member interested in joining as a Company or as an interested individual should ring or write to Jimmy Evans (Chairman) at the above address.

Ed

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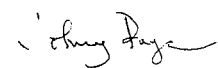
Dear Friends,

Although many of you may be well acquainted with the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust, some of you may not have come across us before. We are a small independent charity which for the past twenty six years has been providing much needed health care to thousands of people living in the remote mountainous areas of the Eastern Region of Nepal.

Today the Trust employs around 150 Nepalese staff who provide TB and leprosy treatment for the people of the eight hill districts of the region and who train other health workers in diagnosis, treatment and prevention of common diseases. This will ensure that in the future people living in these remote areas will not need to travel days on foot for their urgent medical care. We also ensure that an affordable and regular supply of essential medicines is made available to people in the most remote areas, through a cost sharing drug scheme and through local shopkeepers. Our community health and development programme in Sankhuwasabha District is providing daily literacy classes to over 400 village women and is supporting community based groups to identify and solve their own problems through collective action.

The Britain Nepal Medical Trust is a unique organisation targeting help precisely where it is needed, providing health care to remote mountain villages which the Government services cannot reach. To enable us to continue these projects we need your support, so please help us to help the people of Nepal enjoy a healthier life. By supporting the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust you can be sure that your gift will be well used.

Thanking you,



Dr. Johnny Payne
Chairman of the Trustees

OBITUARIES

Mrs Gita Pandey

At our Annual General Meeting on November 15th. last year, we stood in sad silence for a minute to honour the memory of Mrs. Gita Pandey who had died in Kathmandu on October 27th. 1994. We heard to our sorrow that her husband, Ishwari Raj Pandey, had passed away on June 5th. this year, also in Kathmandu. The Society has lost two devoted friends.

The Pandeyes came to London in 1969 when Ishwari became First Secretary at the Nepalese Embassy. He had paid a fleeting visit to London a few years earlier with a delegation from the Nepalese Foreign Office who were guests at one of our lecture meetings. After Ishwari's term of office was over here, he held some interesting appointments - First Secretary at the United Nations, Minister at Delhi and Chargé d' Affaires at Tehran.

When he returned to London as Ambassador in 1983, we were grieved to find Gita in very poor health due to a stroke. Unable to walk or stand, she was obliged to receive guests at the Embassy Receptions while seated. However, she made gallant efforts to be mobile, using a walking-frame with small wheels. We held a Farewell Party for them in January 1988 when Ishwari returned to Nepal to take up the post of Additional Foreign Secretary. He had to resign in 1989, at the height of his career, due to kidney failure which troubled him to the end. It grieves one to see how these kind and gentle people suffered such an unkind fate. We sent our deepest condolences to their family, especially to their daughter Amita who was

very well known to our members and most supportive of her parents.

Mayura Brown.

Professor Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf

One of our earliest members, Professor Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf died on June 11th aged 85. Members have doubtless read the extensive obituaries of this eminent Anthropologist in the national newspapers. At our very first lecture meeting, held at the Nepalese Embassy on January 24th. 1962, he showed a colour film of the "Sherpas of Eastern Nepal" just before he and Mrs. Haimendorf left for a visit to Jumla. Among those present on that day were H.M. King Birendra, then Crown-Prince and a student at Eton, HRH Prince Gyanendra, and a visiting Minister from Nepal, the late Bishwabanda Thapa. Over the years Professor Haimendorf has enlightened and entertained us with many interesting and informative talks and slides. Both the Professor and his wife had a deep affection for Nepal and her people. Sadly Elizabeth died some years ago while they were in India. Such warm and caring friends can never be replaced, but we are the happier for having known them.

Mayura Brown.

Mrs. Winifred Coulson OBE

We heard with very deep sorrow of the death on September 1st of Mrs. Winifred Coulson OBE, a past Vice-President and a very early member of the Society. She worked in Kathmandu in the 60s and returned home in 1971. It was while in

Nepal Winifred had the idea of an Assisted Scholarship Scheme, organised by the Women's Council, for the training of Asian girls in Child Welfare. She became President-of-Honour of the Women's Council later. Her many friends, British and Nepalese, will be comforted to know that Winifred passed away in peace with

her family round her. Flowers were sent by the Society.

Winifred achieved national fame for her poetry and other writings. We remember her here for her outstanding work for Nepal.

Mayura Brown.

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BOOK REVIEWS

MEMORIES OF INDIA

by Ruby Gray. Printed privately. 212 pages

Apart from her ability to put pen to paper, Ruby was an artist. A number of her works were given to the National Army Museum some years before it had been decided to establish a Gurkha Museum at Winchester.

Not many of us have the talent to write, draw and paint. Ruby certainly had the ability to do those three things and she did them really well.

What you will find in "memories of India" is a story by someone who lived the sort of life that is long past, but who also was able to describe everything she saw and in some detail. There was a time when no one had any wish to read about what happened whilst the British were in India. Now, however, people have begun to realise that what the British did in India in no way resembled what the Belgians did in the Congo, or other European countries did in some other parts of Africa.

Wives played a significant part in what their men folk did as soldiers, administrators or business men in the Indian sub-continent. It is reminiscences such as Ruby has committed to paper that will help future generations to realise that India was not the land where you went to make a quick buck and then get out as fast as you could. Some people did just that, but they were few and far between.

Sadly the only child of her marriage to Charles was a son who was killed whilst a pilot in the Royal Navy during World War Two. Charles himself was captured in North Africa in 1942. He was commanding a Brigade which included the 2/3rd Gurkhas.

The end papers of the book are maps of India which are much better than those you will find in many books.

T.M. Lowe

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

by Rebecca Stephens. Macmillan. £14.99 196 pages

BEYOND THE LIMITS

by Stacy Allison. Little, Brown. £16.99. 282 pages

Here we have books by women both of whom have climbed Mount Everest. Books by men who have accomplished the same feat, irrespective of the route taken to the top, tend to follow a pattern. The two books reviewed here show a markedly

different approach to the same problem and it is not just a matter of semantics.

Miss Allison is a citizen of the USA, whilst Miss Stephens is plain British. The differences between these two ladies are not simply a matter of nationality. The American is almost a professional climb-

er, whereas the British girl, although no novice to high altitude climbing, could not claim to be as highly experienced a mountaineer as Miss Allison. In fact, her personal experience of the high stuff began only in 1989 with the Anglo-American expedition of that year.

Miss Stephens had a meeting with Lord Hunt who led the successful expedition to Everest in 1953 when, to her astonishment, he said 'Everest – well it wasn't my favourite mountain and I don't suppose it will be yours'. Nevertheless, he wished her well.

In describing everything she saw and did, Miss Stephens has adopted a friendly style. It contrasts strangely with what the American lady says about climbing, but perhaps her editor had an eye to what the American public would read, and how

much they would pay, for a book about a very high mountain named after a Briton.

The technicalities of getting to the top of Everest are described well enough in both books. It must, however, be said that Miss Allison's way of putting pen to paper leaves something to be desired. Personal problems in her life are mentioned but it is questionable if they should appear in a book about climbing the highest mountain in the world.

Miss Stephens had an excellent rapport with the Sherpas on her expedition, evidence of her approach to people. On a mountain you have to rely implicitly on people who climb with you and Sherpas, like Gurkhas, are quick to respond to those who treat them as equals trying to achieve the same result. *T.M.Lowe*

THE HIGH MOUNTAINS OF THE ALPS

by H Dumler and W Burkhardt. Diadem £30.00 224 pages

The number of persons who have had an urge – a compelling urge – to climb mountains tend to satisfy that urge by climbing in the European Alps before moving on to other parts of the world. Most, perhaps all, the great climbers up to date have had their High Altitude climbing experience in Europe. The Himalayas are perhaps the ultimate experience in high altitude climbing, but it would be foolish to underestimate what the European Alps have to offer. Access to the Alps is a lot cheaper than an expedition to the Himalayas. Of course, there is always a danger in high altitude climbing anywhere in the world, but the risks inherent in climbing in the high mountains of the Alps are probably less than in some other places. Rescue is likely to be closer at hand, if difficulties

suddenly face a climber but it is much more expensive if you have the same sort of problem east of Suez, or in some other part of the mountain climbing world.

This splendid book is beautifully illustrated with superb photographs and neat pen-and-ink sketches. It is, moreover, a mine of information about Europe's "Four Thousanders". It should prove able to excite early starters to acquire a proper knowledge of good climbing, if they wish to graduate eventually to the "Eight Thousanders" of the world with a lot of expensive logistic backing.

If a member of your family tells you that he (or she) wants to climb mountains, then find £30.00 from your 'piggy bank' and you could earn their gratitude for a long time to come. *T.M.Lowe*

OTHER BOOKS OF NOTE

WARRIOR GENTLEMEN

'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination by Lionel Caplan
Berghahn Books £26.00

Of late, there has been growing interest in how non-Western peoples have been and continue to be depicted in the literatures of the West. In anthropology, attention has focused on the range of literary devices employed in ethnographic texts to distance and exoticize the subjects of discourse, and ultimately contribute to their subordination. This study eschews the tendency to regard virtually all depictions of non-Western "others" as amenable to the same kinds of "orientalist" analysis, and argues that the portrayals found in such writings must be examined in their particular historical and political settings.

These themes are explored by analysing the voluminous literature by military authors who have written and continue to write about the "Gurkhas", those legendary soldiers from Nepal who have served in Britain's Imperial and post-Imperial armies for more than two centuries. The author discovers that, instead of exoticiz-

ing them, the military writers find in their subjects the quintessential virtues of the European officers themselves: the Gurkhas appear as warriors and gentlemen. However, the author does not rest here: utilising a wealth of literary, historical, ethnographic sources and the results of his own fieldwork, he investigates the wider social and cultural contexts in which the European chroniclers of the Gurkhas have been nurtured.

Lionel Caplan, born in Montreal, is Professor of South Asian Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He has maintained an ongoing research interest in Nepal since he first did fieldwork in the country in 1964-65 but has also done fieldwork among Indian Christians in South India. His publications include *Land and Social Change in East Nepal* (1970) and *Class and Culture in Urban India* (1987).

NEPAL Art and Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley

Michael Hutt with David N Gellner, Axel Michaels, Greta Rana and Govinda Tandan
£25.00 Kiscadale Publications

Essential for both the traveller and scholar alike, This important work fills a long dormant gap in the literature of this spectacular region and is a product of many years of individual research by scholars of Nepal's history, religion, art and sociology. It draws on a variety of authoritative

studies of Nepal's cultural history that have been published in European and Nepalese languages.

The guide begins with an overview of the history of Nepal. This focuses on the Kathmandu Valley, with its rich and sophisticated culture, but also outlines

developments of historical importance outside the Valley. This is followed by a detailed introduction to religion as it is practised in Nepal: here, the focus is on Hinduism and Buddhism, and on the major deities of each tradition, their relationship to one another, and their representation in art and sculpture.

There are also introductory chapters on the main forms of architecture and the principal art forms: Painting, stone sculpture, metalcasting and woodcarving.

The second part of the book consists of in-depth descriptions of specific sites within the Kathmandu Valley, each written by a scholar who has a long and intimate acquaintance with the temples, palaces,

stupas and other monuments he or she describes. The book is copiously illustrated with photographs in monochrome and colour, and contains maps and line-drawings. There is a chronology and a full glossary of Nepali, Newari and Sanskrit terms.

Although written mainly by academics, the book is intended for a general readership. Easily portable in format, Nepal does not tell the reader where to stay, what to eat or what to wear. It will though help those who wish to appreciate the cultural splendours of Nepal in their historical and religious context and require more information than is imparted by the average tourist guidebook.

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN THE 8TH GURKHA RIFLES

A Burma Memoir by Scott Gilmore and Patrick Davis

An American who fought alongside British officers and Nepalese troops against the Japanese in Burma.

America was still neutral when, in the autumn of 1941, a tall, solid thirty-year-old advertising executive from Connecticut volunteered to serve as an American Field Service ambulance driver in the British Army. It was the start of an adventure that took Scott Gilmore to Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, India and finally to the jungles of Burma.

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN THE 8TH GURKHA RIFLES is a war memoir unlike any other. It is a fast-moving story of a quietly witty and observant young American serving with a band of legendary Asian warriors during some of the

days of Britain's greatest glory. Scott Gilmore's Gurkha war is one you will not soon forget.

After the war, Scott Gilmore returned to his family's publishing business, for which he travelled all over the world. The career of fellow Gurkha officer Patrick Davis was in book publishing and university administration. He is the author of *A Child at Arms*.

228 pages 30 photographs & 4 maps
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Fax: (0171) 915 4380

The Britain Nepal Otolology Service
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SOME MORE BOOKS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Contributed by Lt Col T M Lowe

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THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

sends its greetings and best wishes to all units of

The Brigade of Gurkhas

*wherever they may be stationed and
in particular to the Battalions of*

The Royal Gurkha Rifles

in the United Kingdom, in Hong Kong and in Brunei

and wishes them all a great and glorious future

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 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 "YETP" Association for Nepalis 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 E.P. Mellor
3c Gunnersbury Avenue,
Ealing Common,
London W5 3NH

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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