



THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 20

1996



Outstanding Record of Service to the Society

See article page 11

*THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY
sends*

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THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal
Number 20
1996

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THE BRITAIN-NEPAL

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Tableaux

As our readers well know, this Journal is not directly concerned with sophisticated technology or the profounder aspects of philosophy and the natural sciences, or indeed with politics, but we do have links with the London University School of Oriental and African Studies, the Royal Society for Asian Affairs and other notable academic bodies and do try to keep in touch with them as a glance through the Journal will readily show.

The events of another active year are well reflected in Journal No 20 and for a full account of these we draw attention to 'The Society's News' while acknowledging that when so much has been happening at Burlington House, where our talks are held, and at the Royal Nepalese Embassy and the House of Commons where we come together from time to time, not all our activities can be fully recorded.

In this the twenty-sixth year since the foundation of our Society we rejoiced to hear of the award of the Prasiddha Prabal Gurkha Daksin Bahu II Class by His Majesty the King of Nepal to Mrs Mayura Brown, Founder Member and Vice President, who has been actively involved throughout the existence of the Society. The prestigious decoration was handed over to Mayura by His Excellency the Royal Nepalese Ambassador on 10th June this year, the award having been made on the occasion of His Majesty's 50th Birthday celebration. Many members of the Society were present in the Embassy to participate in the joy of this memorable event.

And so on to the Summer Outing to Brighton organised by the Yeti Association and attended by a considerable number of our members as is duly reported by our Honourary Secretary. In view of the remarkable development of the Gurkha Museum it is hoped that a future outing may again be aimed at Winchester, where of course the Museum is located, and perhaps also to Warwick Castle as recommended last year in the Journal! But when saying this, it has to be acknowledged that the seaside has distinct attractions in the summer.

Very much in the media recently has been the need for attention to the welfare of our ex-servicemen and their dependants. We can assure members that the Gurkha Welfare Scheme with its twenty-four active welfare centres in the hills of Nepal has achieved remarkable progress. Its success is beyond praise and the Trust which supports it fully deserves all the help it can be given.

The addresses and telephone numbers of both the Museum and the Welfare Trust are given elsewhere in the Journal, as indeed are those of many other important organisations such as the King Mahendra UK Trust for Nature Conservation, the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust, the Britain-Nepal Otolaryngology Service, KEEP UK and the Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce. We wish them all a very successful coming year.

We wish also the Royal Gurkha Rifles a splendid future despite the fact that they will be down to two Battalions

by the end of the year, one in the United Kingdom and the other in Brunei. The training of recruits was carried out very successfully at Church Crookham this year. The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, The Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Queen's Own Gurkha Transport Regiment are each represented by one fully trained and operational squadron. To them all the Society tenders its very sincere good wishes.

Nor must we conclude without a warm word of thanks to all who have contributed to the Journal and a very special thank you to Mr P K Donaldson for the excellent photographs which he

has provided for Journal No.20.

Finally some interesting news from Singapore. Colonel Bruce Niven, author of 'The Mountain Kingdom' and noted mountaineer, writes from Singapore where he is now Consultant in the Police Academy and where he has been reviewing the training system and also the recruitment procedures in Nepal on behalf of the Gurkha Contingent in Singapore. He is about to accompany to Dhaulagiri the Singapore team which will attempt Everest in 1998 when he hopes to be with them. We wish them all every success.

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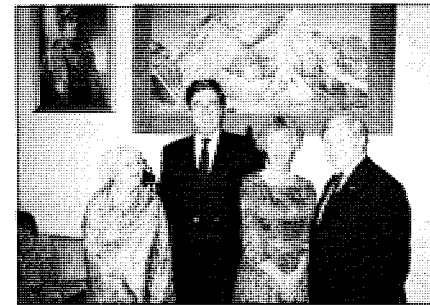
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General

The AGM in November 1995 was held at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, by kind permission of His Excellency Mr S P Shrestha, the Ambassador. The meeting was followed by an excellent curry supper once again supplied by Mr Ranamagar of the Munal Restaurant, 393 Upper Richmond Road in Putney. The Ambassador's secretary Nelia Ranamagar charmingly looked after all the members during the supper which was laid out in the Embassy official dining room adjoining the meeting room.



*At the Annual General Meeting-
Mr Smith, newly appointed H.M.
Ambassador to Nepal, with Mrs Smith,
Mayura Brown, Vice President of the
Society and Sir Neil Thorne*

Winter Lectures

Last October, on the 8th, our member Susie Dunsmore gave us a truly wonderful talk entitled 'Traditional and Innovative Nettle Tweed and Dhaka Cloth Couture - raising income and

helping the environment in the mountains of Nepal'. Her slides were fascinating, but it was her enthusiasm and obvious love of the work she undertakes with the weavers and their beautiful fabrics that gave the members who attended such pleasure.

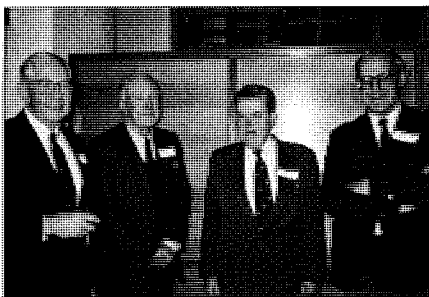
On the 5th December, 1995, Susie Thompson and Bruce Herrod gave a fascinating talk entitled 'Journey to Kailash' - using fine photography to illustrate the vanishing heritage of the Khasa Malla Kingdom in far west Nepal and their journey with a Sherpa couple to sacred Mt. Kailash.. The slides which accompanied this talk were absolutely stunning. The very sad news that I have recently received is that Bruce Herrod lost his life during the first South African attempt on Everest, while he was acting as photographer to the expedition. Our deep sympathy goes to Sue Thompson.

On the 5th March, Dr Michael Hutt of SOAS gave the members a talk entitled 'Palaces and Temples of Nepal', this was accompanied by beautiful slides, and his talk enthralled the large number of members who attended. An article based on his talk appears elsewhere in this Journal together with some of his photographs.

Our grateful thanks to all the speakers who give us their time, knowledge and beautiful slides to enjoy, and we look forward to entertaining them at the next Annual Nepali Supper in February.

Other Events

The Annual Nepali Supper was held on Tuesday 22nd February at St Columba's Hall, Pont Street. The venue is ideal for holding our Annual event so we will probably continue to go there. The Guest of Honour this year was Lady Limerick, whose husband is a member of the Society. She gave the



*Old friends at the Nepali supper
(21 Feb 96)*

after dinner talk and her subject was the Red Cross in Nepal. Mr Manandhar and his family from the Natraj Restaurant, 93 Charlotte Street provided an excellent Nepalese Supper, which was enjoyed by everyone. This event was extremely well supported by 174 members attending.

The Summer outing this year was a joint affair between the Britain-Nepal Society and the Yeti Association, and was arranged to take place on the 18th August. We all gathered together for a day trip to Brighton. The journey was only marred by the fact that one coach broke down on the way and about 2.5 hours was spent by your Secretary and Treasurer, the President of the Yeti Society and many other members sitting on the hard shoulder of the M23!

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On arrival the plan was to enjoy the sights of Brighton and the seaside during the day and then gather together for a tea party at the very comfortable new Thistle Hotel on the front, to enable the members of both Societies to renew old acquaintances and forge new friendships. I am pleased to report that this was a great success and many members attended including HE The Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Shrestha.

Our Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra B.B. Shah and Princess Komal R L D Shah together with their son, HRH Prince Paras B.B. Shah, made a brief visit to this country in July. Time was too short for the Society to arrange a reception in their honour. However, I am pleased to report that we did mark

their visit by sending them bouquets of flowers with best wishes from the Committee, Vice-Presidents and members of the Society.

Finally, I am sure that members will be pleased to hear about the appeal made about three years ago for children's books for the ASMAN Library in Kathmandu. Members generously gave 600 books for this appeal. However, because there were so many books, it has taken some time for arrangements to be made for them to be transported to Nepal. We are all most grateful to HE The Nepalese Ambassador for undertaking these arrangements. The Committee's grateful thanks to His Excellency and to members for their kindness in giving so many books.



Vice President Mrs Celia Brown with Dr William Brown and members at the Royal Birthday Celebration at the Embassy on 4th January.



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The Chairman of the Society and many members had great pleasure in being present at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, on 10th June 1996, for the ceremony of the handing over by the Royal Nepalese Ambassador, of the decoration Prāsida Prabal Gurkha Daksin Bahu II Class awarded by His Majesty the King of Nepal to Mrs Mayura Brown. On the same occasion they were able to thank and bid farewell to Colonel C.M.S. Guring on completion of his duties in London.

When the Britain-Nepal Society was formed in 1960, Mayura Brown assisted the Founder, Madame Bhuban Singha, during the first year of its existence. Primarily it was necessary to enlarge the membership. Mayura wrote to several people including Sir Ralph Turner, General Sir Francis Taker, and her Uncle Field-Marshal Kaiser who had been a previous Nepalese Ambassador in Britain. After becoming a Life Member of the Society, F.-M. Kaiser decided to form the Nepal-Britain Society in Kathmandu, which accounts for Mayura's continuing contact with it to the present day.

In the Society's second year Mayura became Hon. Treasurer and was able to promote her idea of lecture meetings for the members. As she had been at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, for a while in the 50's and was a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, she was able to find a number of suitable and eminent lecturers.

During 1962 she became a member

of the Women's Council because she felt that Nepal would benefit from affiliation to the Council. This was achieved with the help of the late Mrs Winifred Coulson, a former vice president of the Society.

In recent years and through the efforts of Mrs Celia Brown, an executive member of the Women's Council and for 12 years this Society's Honorary Secretary, a number of Nepalese girls have had training in Child Welfare through the Assisted Scholarship Scheme. Two Nepalese girls are in England at the moment undergoing tuition.

The question arose in 1968 of forming a Britain-Nepal Parliamentary group. Mayura wrote to those M.P's



Mrs Mayura Brown

who had served with the Gurkhas or had contacts with Nepal. She has always kept in touch with the Group and was especially pleased when the Hon. Secretaryship was held by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton M.P. whose Father, the Marquis of Clydesdale, was the first airman to fly over Mount Everest. That was in 1933 when she

met the Expedition's photographer in Kathmandu.

When the Ralph Turner Memorial lecture took place in May 1985 at the Royal Asiatic Society. Mayura suggested that the then Ambassador, Ishwari Raj Pandey, should present a volume of the poems written by His late Majesty, King Mahendra, to the Society. The presentation was made after the lecture.

Mayura served on the Committee in the early years as Vice-Chairman, and has been a vice-president for many years. She has carried on her duties of sending Birthday letters to H.M the

King and to HRH Prince Gyanendra, prepares the AGM messages to the Patron, as well as the messages to the Nepal-Britain Society. In the early days she produced newsletters for the Society before the advent of the printed Journal to which she contributes regularly.

Her main concerns are the protection of the culture and traditions of Nepal and its environment, respect for the religions of the country and appreciation of its unique architecture, as well as support for the retention and preservation of its ancient crafts, including its elegant textiles.

There is much interest in the London residence of my Great-grandfather, Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana, during his visit here.

A Nepalese Embassy headed by Jang Bahadur, Prime Minister of Nepal, arrived in England in May 1850. They were accommodated in a splendid mansion in Richmond Terrace (off Whitehall). Probably an establishment for visiting dignitaries, it was provided with beautiful paintings, elegant furniture, chandeliers, and costly Brussels carpets. It was lighted by gas

which must have surprised and delighted the Nepalese.

Besides these very pleasing apartments, a garden to the north gave excellent views of the River Thames. A large lawn lay to the east of the house, and to the south was the public road.

There are some buildings in Richmond Terrace today that resemble those in the sketch made of the area in 1850. However, it might be difficult to locate the exact house now since modern constructions have taken place in the vicinity.

Britain - Nepal Chamber Of Commerce

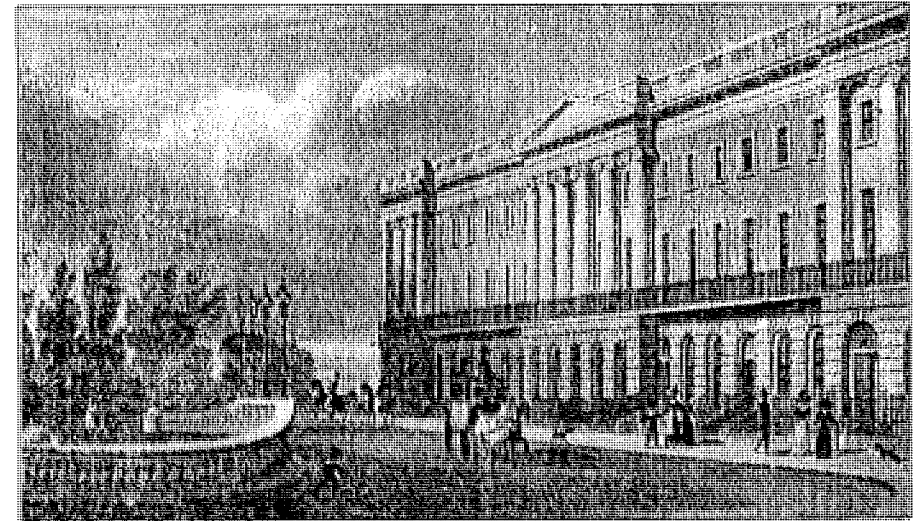
The Chamber encourages two way trade between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Nepal.

It acts as an interface through a newsletter, meetings, and a membership list, for those seeking to develop contacts in this sphere and welcomes new members with similar aims.

For further information contact:

*The Secretary
Britain - Nepal Chamber Of Commerce
Sir John Lyon House
Upper Thames Street
London EC4V 3PA*

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Richmond Terrace in 1850

Prime Minister Jang Bahadur visited the United Kingdom during the period 25 May to 21 August 1850 as the guest of Queen Victoria. This memorable visit was followed by one almost equally memorable to the Continent. Ed.

On behalf of our Society I sent a message of greetings and good wishes to the Nepal-Britain Society for their Annual Dinner on the 17th November 1995. It was very pleasing to hear of the Dinner's success with over 100 guests present. The Society said farewell to Her Majesty's Ambassador, Mr Timothy George, who had provided it 'with much support during his five years stay in Nepal'.

We welcomed his successor, Mr Barney Smith (and Mrs Smith) at our AGM last November tendering our good wishes for his term of office in

Nepal, which we are sure will be very enjoyable.

The Society in Kathmandu had organised a lively programme of activities with a variety of talks and discussions. They hope to increase interest in their Society which will extend the goodwill that exists already between Nepal and Britain.

At our Nepali Supper in February, I read out the warm and friendly message sent by the Nepal-Britain Society for our members and guests, among whom we were delighted to see Timothy and Richenda George.

With All Good Wishes

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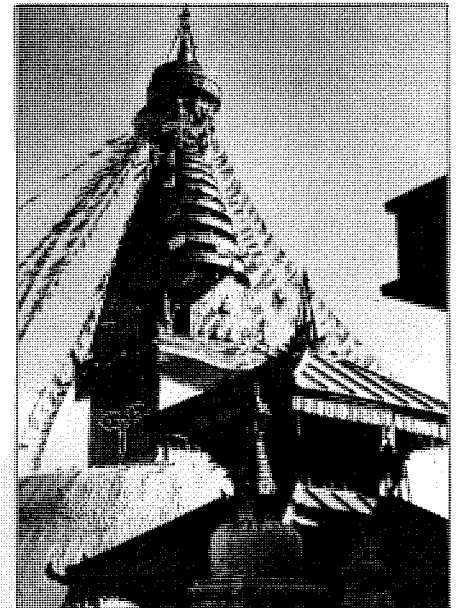
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If asked, the members of this Society would probably offer a wide variety of reasons for their attachment to Nepal. These might range from a record of service with the Gurkhas, to a diplomatic posting in Kathmandu, to happy memories of a trekking holiday, to an abiding love of bhaat and raksi. And of course many members are themselves of Nepali origin and need no further excuse. What we all share is a concern and an affection for a particular country and the peoples and cultures that dwell within it. There are particular places within that country that have a heightened meaning and significance and with which we are all acquainted to some extent. Those I have in mind - and we will all have our own favourites - are situated in the 'heart of Nepal', the Kathmandu valley. If the valley is the heart of Nepal, these places are a part of its soul.

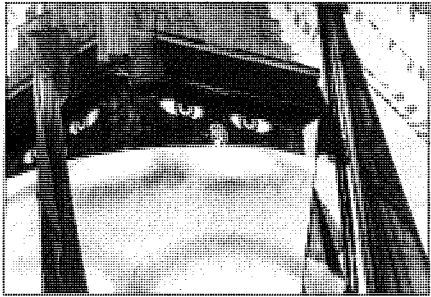
Even the most casual visitor to the Kathmandu valley (and almost every foreigner who visits Nepal makes his/her first acquaintance with the kingdom there) cannot fail to notice that its townscapes are punctuated at regular intervals by temples, stupas and shrines. These are not located arbitrarily, and many - though not necessarily those of the greatest architectural splendour - are important points in a religious and spatial matrix in the old sections of each town. The medieval settlements now form only a minor part of the rapidly-spreading conurbation of Kathmandu-Lalitpur, though Bhaktapur retains its integrity. If

we all share an affection for Nepal then we must also share a concern about the valley's deteriorating environment and the sorry state of many minor temples and monasteries, not to mention the dilapidated condition of the old Newar houses whose appearance is so much more pleasing than that of the rash of new concrete structures out by the ring road.

However, this brief essay is not intended to bewail the imperfection and decay that every Hindu knows is an inevitable part of the Kali Yuga, the current era of degeneration. Instead, its intention is to celebrate the survival of Nepal's holiest shrines, those that Keith Dowman in his recent book calls the



Swayambhu stupa, with the Hariti temple in the foreground

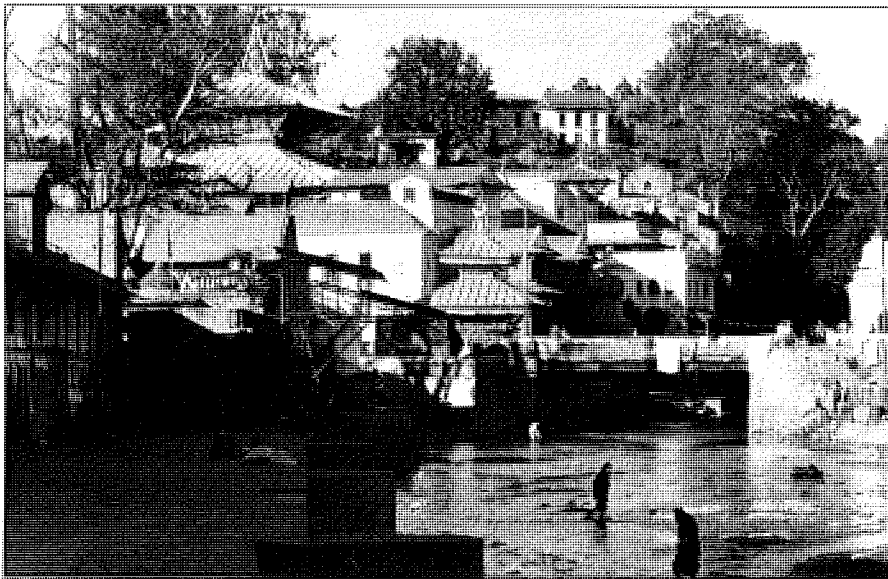


The great stupa at Bauddha. From Michael Hutt (ed) Nepal: a guide to the art and architecture of the Kathmandu valley. Kiscadale Publications, 1994.

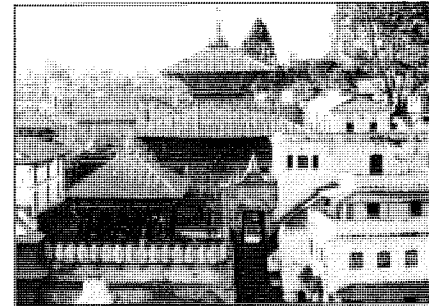
'power places' of Nepal. The first rank of these includes the Buddhist stupas of Swayambhu and Bauddha, the Shaiva Hindu temple of Pashupati and the Vaishnava Hindu temple of Changu

Narayan. Each of these probably dates from the early years of the Licchavi Period. There are of course other temples and stupas of equal antiquity in Nepal, but in my opinion these four sanctuaries are supreme.

The first walk I ever took through Kathmandu on my first visit in 1978 is one that I try to repeat whenever I return, for no real purpose other than for old times' sake. It begins beside the old Hanuman Dhoka palace: one crosses the square to the Ashoka Ganesh shrine next to the great barn-like pavilion of Kasthamandapa from which the city takes its name. From there, one dips down into Maruhiti, following a narrow lane to the Bishnumati river. Nowadays, the



The Pashupati temple complex, looking upstream along the Bagmati river.



Pashupati temple, seen from the hill of Mrigasthali.

picturesque architecture along that lane reminds me of the time when much of old Kathmandu was like this! Over the Bishnumati one goes by way of a swaying ropebridge, then up through the houses of Dallu (green ricefields studded with egrets 28 years ago) to the street that leads to the foot of Singum or Gopuccha hill, with the eyes of Swayambhu looking down from above. One pauses for a while beside the decorated concrete arch that marks the beginning of the climb to the stupa: there will probably be a few beggars sitting along the way, silently waiting for alms from passing pilgrims, as well as Tibetan women performing their prostrations. Then one climbs in the footsteps of the pilgrims who have come this way for at least 1500 years, up to the great stupa of Swayambhu, the 'Self-Made'.

Everyone who visits Nepal comes to hear of the Buddhist myth of the draining of the Kathmandu Valley: of how the Bodhisattva Manjushri came down from the north when he heard of

the miraculous appearance of a lotus-borne flame on the surface of the lake, and of how he cleaved the hills to the south to release its waters and render the valley fit for human habitation and the fostering of religion. And of how a stupa - originally a low dome-shaped reliquary mound - was built up, layer upon layer, year upon year, into the extraordinary structure that exists today, with its complex finial, painted eyes, and thirteen copper rings representing the levels of Buddhist perfection, topped off with the parasol of kingship. Up on its hill, festooned with prayer-flags and flanked by the two white sikhara towers that King Pratap Malla added in the 17th century, the stupa of Swayambhu can be seen for miles around and has become one of the icons of Nepali national culture.

If Swayambhu is the principal monument of Vajrayana, the Buddhism practiced by many Newars, the still larger stupa of Bauddha on the other side of the capital is the central shrine for the Buddhist peoples of Nepal's hills and mountains, and for Nepal's Tibetan settlers and refugees. Only some thirty years ago this massive stupa formed the centre of a small hamlet surrounded by fields: now a broad street lined with unprepossessing buildings runs alongside it, though once one is inside the sanctuary it is easy to imagine that little has really changed. The stupa of Bauddha stands on a broad plinth of interlocking platforms, upon which the visitor may climb, though the true pilgrims are those who circle the

stupa in a clockwise direction fingering beads or twirling their prayerwheels and muttering the basic prayer of Tibetan Buddhism: Om Mani Padme Hum. From the plinth one can see the new monasteries and meditation centres that have grown up around the stupa in the wake of the flight of refugees from Tibet in the 1960's and the growth of Western interest in Himalayan Buddhism.

The presence of Buddhism looms large in Kathmandu, and the line that divides it from Hinduism is often difficult to draw. However, Nepal is the



Deity on a roof strut of the temple of Changu Narayan.



The 7th-century sculpture of Vishnu Vishwarupa at Changu Narayan. From Michael Hutt (ed) Nepal: a guide to the art and architecture of the Kathmandu valley. Kiscadale Publications, 1994

world's only Hindu kingdom and Shiva is its guardian deity. The most important Hindu temple in Nepal is that dedicated to Pashupati, the 'Lord of the Beasts', a name given here to Shiva. Those of us who are not Hindus may not enter the inner sanctuary, where the devout can perform their religious duties undistracted by the tourist's camera. Instead, we may cross the sacred Bagmati river to the hillside opposite, which affords the splendid view recorded on film many thousands of times each year: of the broad two-tiered pagoda surrounded by subsidiary

shrines where Lord Pashupati, protector of Nepal, receives offerings and supplications day in and day out through the year. Often, a funeral pyre will be burning on the riverbank a little downstream, where the ashes of the deceased will ultimately mingle with the waters of the holy Bagmati. On several occasions I have witnessed the spectacle of a group of tourists photographing the mourners there, and have wondered how such tourists would react if the situation were ever reversed.

The last of the four places to be mentioned here is less frequented by foreign visitors, but in some respects is the most interesting of the four. If you have the time and the energy, you may find that the most fulfilling way to visit the temple of Changu Narayan is to walk from the northern outskirts of Bhaktapur town - this is especially pleasant in the late summer, for the path winds through terraced fields of rice where no two shades of green are alike. The temple stands at the end of a promontory of higher ground that juts out across the valley floor between Bhaktapur to the south and the valley of the Manohara river to the north. It is a marvellously elaborate example of the classic Newar pagoda temple with an exuberance of woodcarving and repousee metalwork that defies description. Here one can inspect the pillar inscription of King Manadeva, the

oldest inscription ever found in the Kathmandu valley, dating from 464 AD but apparently still perfectly legible if you can read Gupta characters (must confess that I cannot!)

Also, several of the kingdom's oldest and most exquisite stone sculptures are dotted about the temple courtyard, now thankfully secured in strong brick niches to deter the ubiquitous art thieves. Of particular interest is a huge stone Garuda which kneels in a posture of adoration before the main shrine door, whose moustachioed face is reputed to be modelled upon the face of King Manadeva. My own favourite is the 7th-century representation of Vishnu appearing in all of his different manifestations simultaneously to the awestruck warrior Arjuna, a sculpture known as Vishvarupa.

From Changu Narayan, if you have walked to the temple, you have the choice of either returning to Bhaktapur or proceeding down the other side of the hill and turning west toward Baudha, crossing the Manohara river en route. It would be a long day, but a fulfilling one, to visit each of these four places in turn, moving perhaps from west to east across the Kathmandu valley, setting out at dawn for Swayambhu and ending at dusk at Changu. Perhaps such a day would bring the traveller a little closer to the soul of Mother Nepal.

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GLIMPSES AROUND THE VALLEY

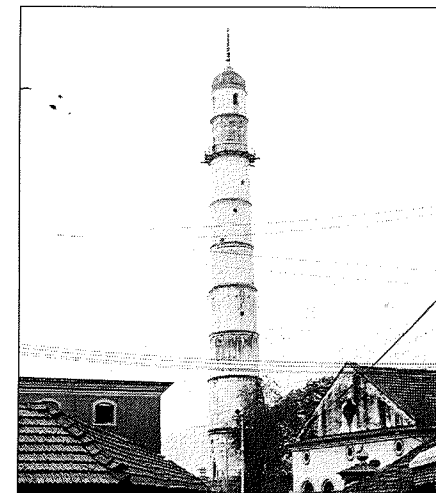
by Lieutenant Colonel G.D. Birch

During my time in Kathmandu an exhibition of early photos of the city was held in 1991 at the Bal Mandir. This generated much more interest than the organisers foresaw and resulted in the exhibition's timeframe being doubled. Unfortunately my own photos of the early 1960's had been left behind so I was unable to submit anything.



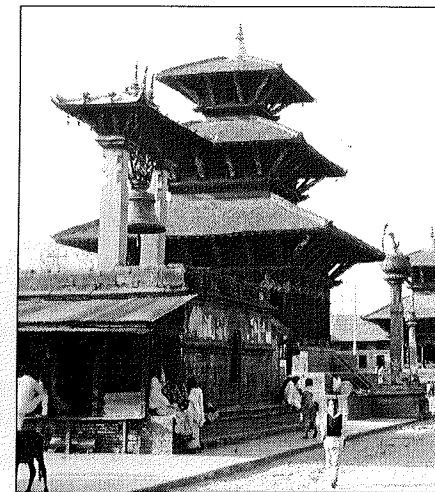
Elephant transport by the Rani Pokari

Those shown here were taken in 1962-63. Kathmandu has grown remarkably quickly over the last 30 years or so, with increased acceleration especially over the last 10 years as those who have known it during that time will be well aware. Development up to the early 1950's was kept in check by the Government's policy of isolation from the rest of the Sub-Continent. With the fall of the Rana regime in 1951 the borders were tentatively opened, and by the time I first visited

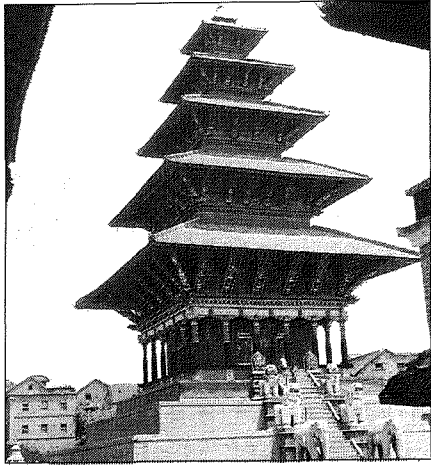


The Bhimsen Tower

the country in 1962 there was an embryo tourist industry depending upon a few mountaineering expeditions or some intrepid tourists who ventured as far as Kathmandu for 2-3 days



Patan - no cars, no tourists



The Nyatapala, Bhaktapur

sightseeing, based on the Royal Hotel run by Boris and Inge Vassilevitch. As Nepal became better known in the late 1960s and into the 1970s Kathmandu became something of a 'Mecca' on the 'Hippy Trail' of those times across Asia. Low budget tourism took off and the valley became exposed to rapid and uncontrolled development which is still the case today. Tourism has not been the only development as there are now garment and carpet factories, some run by Tibetan refugees or their descendants. There are roads, offices and monasteries where there were once open fields.

Johnnie Gurkha's



In a Nepalese surrounding

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Though the inclement weather hampered some members from attending our Annual Supper on February 21st, over 170 were present at our usual venue, St. Columba's Hall, including Their Excellencies, the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Shrestha with the Embassy party, and our Guest of Honour, the Countess of Limerick, Chairman of Red Cross International, who was one of our earliest members. Our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, extended a warm welcome to all. There was, however, a very special welcome for courageous General Jim Robertson (86) who, with Mrs Robertson, had braved the cold to join us after a very serious accident and many painful months in hospital, and also for Mrs. Ann Mitchell, who had just had a hip replacement. Their staunch support, despite their infirmities, was greatly appreciated. Sabash!

Soon it was time to take our places at the tables. As ever, Mr. Manandhar's menu was excellent. With reckless disregard for our waistlines, many of us took delicious second helpings. At the conclusion of the meal we had the privilege and pleasure of hearing the gracious message from Her Majesty the Queen read to us by our Chairman.

The close and ancient ties between the two countries was mentioned by H.E. the Ambassador in his speech, reminding us of the VE and VJ commemoration during the previous year when British and Gurkhas

remembered their shared wartime exploits. Now, he said, it was time to consider the mutual benefit of bi-lateral trade and the continual support of democratic values. It was encouraging to find that the visits of Nepalese politicians to this country were reciprocated by British Parliamentarians going to Nepal.

Lady Limerick gave a lively and most interesting talk. It showed her care and concern for the Nepalese people. Shortly after her marriage she visited Nepal with her husband, (then Viscount Glentworth), who is a keen mountaineer. They travelled to the Langtang area, a good introduction to the country, for she became acquainted with the demanding terrain and the arduous life of the villagers. The work to contain natural disasters in Nepal, vast landslides for example, is formidable. The work of the Red Cross is far from easy. Sylvia made many useful observations, and it is comforting to have such a valuable and knowledgeable friend to turn to for advice.

It was disappointing that the Earl of Limerick was unable to join us, but he sent his regards in an amusing little poem. He took over the Hon. Treasuryship from me in 1964, and helped to iron out some creases in the Society's Constitution which had been assembled rather hurriedly in 1960. Every Hon. Treasurer that followed should be very thankful to him that all subscriptions are paid yearly on a fixed

date. I had to send out weekly notices to members for subscription renewals on the day they joined the Society - a time consuming chore.

After the loyal toasts had been drunk, I read out the message from the Nepal-Britain Society. As another enjoyable evening was over, we said our 'Au revoirs' till next year. Our grateful thanks go to our Committee and helpers for the work undertaken to make the

Hall so welcoming, to Mr Wieler for the charming floral decorations he supplies ever year, to Mr. Manandhar and his family who always give us special attention, and last but not least, our splendid Gurkha Pipers.

As always on this occasion the presence of the pipers from the Royal Gurkha Rifles was very gratefully appreciated.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR ASIAN AFFAIRS by Lieutenant Colonel G.D. Birch

The Society was founded in 1901 to promote interest in Asia. Originally known as the Royal Central Asian Society it had the ring of the 19th century and the 'great game'. Its formation occurred just in this century but the Younghusband expedition to Tibet inspired by Lord Curzon, the last major event of the game, had still to take place. Sir Francis Younghusband was a founder member of the Society and Lord Curzon its president 1918 - 1925.

The Society was renamed in 1975 to reflect its true area of interest and Nepal falls squarely within the Society's remit. A glance at my 1965 membership list reveals a number of distinguished people who had and have great interest in Nepal. These included Lt. Gen Sir Francis Taker a famous Gurkha Brigade officer and author of several excellent books on Nepal, India and the Gurkhas; Lt Col Eric Bailey, probably the last player of the 'great game' who had accompanied Younghusband to Tibet, outwitted the Bolsheviks in Bokhara, and journeyed across Tibet into Assam, and whose last appointment was Minister Resident in Kathmandu. I know that a number of long standing Britain Nepal Society members already

belong to the Royal Society for Asian Affairs including Dudley Spain, Cynthia Stephenson and Marinel Fitzsimons (the recently retired secretary of the R.Soc.AA)

The benefits of belonging to the Society include access to an extremely comprehensive library on Asia, with not only many old and rare books but also contemporary works, a series of lunchtime lectures held between October and July in London, and the Society's Journal that is published three times a year. The Journal is well recognised as one of the best publications of its type on Asia covering, as do the lectures, a whole range of topics including current affairs, geopolitics, defence, economics, exploration, culture, anthropology and much else.

The annual subscription is £45 for those living within 60 miles of London, £35 for those over this distance and £31 for overseas members. There is also a junior membership (under 21) at £5. For anyone wishing to be a journal subscriber only, the cost is £32 per year. Anyone wishing to join may either contact me or the Secretary, Royal Society for Asian Affairs at 2 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PJ.

OBITUARY - Major Peter Cecil Jebb

We heard with deep sorrow of the very sudden death on the 11th August of Major Peter Jebb, an early member of our Society and a past member of the committee. Colonel Jimmy Evans and Mrs Pat Mellor represented the Society at his funeral. A donation to the Gurkha Welfare Trust has been made by the Society in his honour. It is sad to lose such a dynamic and supportive friend, especially one so devoted to Nepal and to our Society. We will miss his cheerful presence at our events. He cannot be replaced - but we are the happier for having known him.

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BOOK REVIEWS

'Kirtipur, An Urban community in Nepal' Editors Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy 258 pages. Araxus Books £43.

Among the ancient towns of the Kathmandu Valley Kirtipur, the oldest, is the least known to visitors. It has retained much of the atmosphere and character of the past. An increasing population and the demands of the tourist industry are beginning to erode the life-style and structure of this unique site. (1998 is the 'Visit Nepal Year')

It was therefore very encouraging to discover that the Greenwich University had a project 'to study the historic heritage and present conditions of Kirtipur with a view to its conservation and development'. The Editors have produced a timely and informative volume which will be of immense value to future scholars. The wise inclusion of mainly Nepali contributors among the experts, including two residents of Kirtipur, is to be highly commended. Every aspect of the town is covered in the eighteen chapters, and ably supported by numerous photographs, architectural drawings, town plans and maps.

My chief interest is in the continual preservation of the temples, medieval buildings and antiquities, a very expensive undertaking for a poor country like Nepal. UNESCO, among others, has given some assistance, but I feel the work of restoration has been patchy and several monuments have been lost. Any new development in Kirtipur should be handled with the utmost sensitivity. Dr. Shokoohy, the project Director, has rightly commented

that 'the development of tourism in Kirtipur must be planned and controlled from its infancy, to make sure that it does not have an adverse effect on the culture of the town, or the originality of the historic sights, something which unhappily has already happened not only in the Durbar Squares of Kathmandu and Patan, but also Bhaktapur' (p.188). Among the blots I saw in Kathmandu in 1992 were the haphazard rash of small houses, while in one of the ancient squares a six storey edifice overshadowed its medieval neighbours. When we visited the late Ishwari Raj Pandey, (Nepalese Ambassador in London 1983-88), his small private temple was menaced by another modern six-storey block. The old centres of Patan and Bhatgoan (Bhaktapur) seem to have 'shrunk' perceptibly since my youth, though they have been spared the heavy traffic pollution that is plaguing Kathmandu. The problem of traffic requires serious consideration in any development plan for Kirtipur. Apart from its detrimental effect on the health of the inhabitants, it will be extremely harmful to the fabric of the ancient buildings and sculptures of the town.

A better understanding of the perils of development in these medieval areas, without entirely diminishing their hereditary culture, will be gained by reading this excellent book. I recommend it most strongly to our members. *Mayura Brown*

The Call of Nepal (A Personal Nepalese Odyssey In A Different Dimension)

For over 50 years J.P. Cross has been very closely connected with the people of Nepal. First, for nearly forty years, as a soldier then as a very privileged civilian. His name is known by countless thousands of Nepalis and on one 107 day journey to East, West and South, he met someone he knew, or who knew him, every day. It is said by the Gurkhas that if you put a sheet in front of his face you can't tell he is not a Nepali, so perfect is his accent and so fitting his vocabulary. Despite there being many dedicated people who love the Nepalis, few have managed to 'feel the pulse' of acceptability to the extent achieved by J.P. Cross.

He now lives in Nepal with his

adoptive family, and he is in the unique position of being the only foreigner ever allowed to be a land-owner and a householder in the history of that country.

This fascinating story has been written with obvious sincerity and the author's love for the people and the country shines through the pages. He has written it partly because he feels he owes it to the extraordinary strong relationship between Nepal and Britain and also to honour his surrogate family. They have made the evening his life so wonderful.

Address your order to: New Millennium, 292 Kennington Road, London SE11 4LD. UK £9.95

With the Gurkhas India, Burma, Singapore, Indonesia 1940 - 1959, Scott Leathart

The 1940s and 50s were times of great change in India and South East Asia. Christmas 1940 found Scott Leathart in Victoria Barracks at Aldershot prior to a seven week voyage to Bombay in a converted meat ship, the Highland Chieftain, which was a stranger both to physical comfort and culinary delights. Commissioned in Bangalore, he joined the 3rd/9th Gurkha Rifles on the North West Frontier; thence to Bengal before facing the Japanese in the rain-forests of Burma. Early in his service and especially in Mountbatten's 'Forgotten Army', with all its hardships, he realised how privileged he was to serve with the Gurkhas whose loyalty and courage gained his increasing admiration.

Wounded in action during Wingate's 2nd Chindit Campaign behind the Japanese lines, he was invalided home, but managed to rejoin his Battalion in 1946 for service in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, before returning to India and transferring to the 2nd Gurkha Rifles after the turmoil of Independence. In 1949 after action in the Malayan Emergency, he joined the Colonial Service and raised the Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police, commanding it for 10 years during the island's progress from Colony to the Republic, which the expanding contingent still loyally serves. There was also time to marry, to honeymoon in the Himalayas and holiday in the Australian Outback with a three month old son.

With the Gurkhas is one man's memoir and a moving tribute to the men with whom he served, combined with many observations on the wildlife taken from letters written home (often in pencil from 'the back of beyond') and a daily diary kept since 1948. It is a unique, authentic and entertaining story, a feast of memories covering 20 years of fast moving events, pleasures and privations, based on the close bonds between a British Officer and his Gurkha colleagues, as explained in Field Marshall Sir John Chapple's Foreword.

Born in 1919, Scott Leathart was educated at St Edwards School, Oxford, and Oxford University, taking a Forestry degree. There followed distinguished service with Gurkhas in

the Far East. In 1949 he was mentioned in Despatches, received the Colonial Police Medal in 1957 and was made MBE in 1960. He was Secretary of the Royal Forestry Society 1959-74, and Editor of its journal 1960-84, and has written three books on forestry and trees. With his wife, Betty, he now lives in Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire.

All proceeds to the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Please order from The Pentland Press Ltd, 3 Regal Lane, Soham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5BA, England. £17.50 per copy. For single copy orders please add £2.50 p&p UK and £5.00 p&p overseas. Post and packaging free for orders of two or more copies (UK only).
(The Author is a Member of the Britain-Nepal Society)

BOOK REVIEWS BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL T.M LOWE

Chomolungma - Goddess, Mother of the Earth by G. Dingle and M. Perry Hodder & Stoughton. £14.95. 172 pages

Here we have a book about climbing the highest mountain in the world which is entitled quite simply 'Chomolungma', the ancient name for Mount Everest. This book is not the story of a successful climb to the very top of the mountain, but one of failure without loss of life. The route selected by the New Zealand expedition of 1985 was via the north face of Chomolungma - the traditional route of the early British expeditions. Unlike many other attempts which took place before the advent of the South West Monsoon, this one was tried in September.

The story of the attempt is well told; the author is no novice in this field. He is a mountaineer with an international reputation. The book is filled with first

rate coloured photographs and numerous maps and sketches to help the reader. Unusually, in books of this sort, there are separate appendices which give details of previous expeditions from the Chinese side; a table of successful ascents by seasons and by routes; comparative costs of some expeditions; deaths by route (keep away from the North Ridge, or you may end up in a Deep Freezer which doesn't switch off). Table 7, the successful climbers per expedition, shows Britain very low down. Perhaps it was the plus-fours and homburg hats which helped to lower the rate? The advice by Mike Perry concerning photography is well worth reading, even if you can't, or won't, climb to the top.

The Mystery of Mallory and Irvine by T. Holzel and A. Salkeld Cape. £12.50. 322 pages.

In the mountaineering world of the Himalayas the names Everest, Mallory and Irvine are linked inextricably. Not because these two mountaineers might have succeeded in climbing Everest. If, indeed, they did succeed, their achievement is shrouded in mystery. Successive expeditions in the 1930s failed to find any trace of Mallory and Irvine. It was Tom Holzel who had his own theories about the success, or failure, of Mallory and Irvine which prompted him to write this book, prior to getting permission from the Chinese Mountaineering Association to retrace, if possible, the steps and the circumstances of the last climb of Mallory and Irvine before they disappeared.

In his search for material for the book Holzel has had the advantage of close collaboration with Miss Salkeld, a distinguished researcher and historian in the field of mountain climbing, especially in the Himalayas.

Holzel and his co-author have examined the available evidence relating to the last attempt of the 1924 expedition when Mallory and Irvine went to the Summit. As Holzel says, 'It would be years before we could feel ready to revise the story that the documents seemed to tell, but together we decided to become historical

detectives'.

In the early part of the book the authors have looked closely at matters relating to previous British expeditions and all those who took part. The personalities of Mallory and Irvine come under close scrutiny, particularly their mutual relationship, because there had been speculation that Mallory might even have abandoned Irvine in a desperate solo attempt to reach the summit. It was well known that Mallory had an urge to get to the top at virtually any cost.

The book is packed with a great deal of information about almost everything connected with the final attempt and the happenings which led up to it. The expedient of using oxygen is dealt with at length. Ultimately, the difference between success and failure is one in which the human factor plays a vital part. Did Mallory and Irvine reach the top? After more than sixty years this must be a matter of academic interest. Hillary and Tensing got to the summit and no mystery surrounds that achievement.

By the time this book was published the co-authors were in the Himalayas trying to retrace the route of the fatal ascent. That, however, should provide material for another book, or a film, or TV documentary.

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

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

make climbing difficult.

'The Windhorse' is not the story of two high altitude climbers, but the tale of two young ladies who reached Kala Patthar which is above the Everest Base

Camp. Nothing noteworthy about that you might think. One of the girls, however, was totally blind even if the other was familiar with the Himalayas, as a member of two expeditions in those parts.

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

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

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

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

Smythe was a prolific writer and his writings give clear and detailed accounts of his climbs in different parts of the world. He was not just a

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

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

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

The saga of the selection of leader and climbers for the 1933 Everest Expedition provides us with an insight into the workings of a committee which dealt with these things. Smythe was not selected to be leader because 'there was, about Smythe, the stench of professionalism ... Smythe's vice seems to have been that he actually needed his earnings from this source' (writing about mountaineering). There were other reasons why Smythe was 'persona

non grata' to members of the climbing establishment, the Alpine Club and the Everest Committee. Earlier climbers were men whose background included a major public school, the universities of Oxford or Cambridge, commissioned rank in the Armed Forces or status in the highly regarded professions at the time. Smythe, alas, had attended a minor public school and was trained to be an electrical engineer. He had, moreover, learned to climb mountains without help from patrons. Some prejudice you will say against a man who had already reached one of the peaks of the Kanchenjunga range and who, for good measure, had organised and led a successful expedition to the top of Kamet! Perhaps the best

explanation of Smythe's approach to mountaineering is summed up in his own words:

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

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

Into Thin Air by John Pilkington. George Allen & Urwin. £10.95. 171 pages.

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

This book is an entertaining story of Pilkington's trek in Nepal in 1982. He stopped off at New Delhi and Varanasi (formerly Benares) en route to Kathmandu. From Kathmandu Pilkington set off for Magar and Gurung country. His walking days ended at Pithoragarh, some fifty miles from Almora. The trek was a solo effort

for the author for most of the 500 miles covered by him. It was an Earl of Cadogan who said, 'Never go abroad, it's a dreadful place' and there were times during the trek when Pilkington echoed the sentiments of the noble Earl. The author had attended a crash course in Nepali before starting out, but soon realised that Nepali, as spoken in Kathmandu, wasn't understood in many of the villages which were included in his itinerary. His diet consisted of curry, rice and lentils much of the time and large quantities of sweet tea.

He found little difficulty in forming a

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

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

This book has a number of mini sketch maps and the end papers are helpful maps of the places visited. The

photos in the book are in black and white. A glossary of Nepali words which are sprinkled liberally throughout the text will be useful for readers who are unfamiliar with the Nepali language.

Let the author have the last word.: 'Those of us from the West who have been privileged to meet the Nepalis at home in their astonishing country remember them with well deserved affection expressed eloquently earlier in this century by Sir Ralph Turner'. Those words, of course, will be familiar to anyone who has served in a Gurkha Regiment. (See page 2: The Gurkha Welfare Trust)

Honey Hunters of Nepal by E. Valli and D. Summers. Thames & Hudson. £16.95. 104 pages. Large paperback.

This is not just another book about Nepal and Gurkhas. It is a very large paperback and tells the story of the Honey Hunters not only in words but also more dramatically in superb photographs. The main tribe from which the hunters come are the Gurungs. Few officers of Gurkha Regiments will have heard of the activities of Manilal and his fellow hunters who set out to rob the hives of

the giant black bees in Southern Nepal, so now they can read all about it.

The script which precedes the photos is informative and the photos themselves have been enlarged many times. The photographer used a Leica R4 for the purpose. As a publication the book will fill a gap in what most of us know about Gurkhas and their ways. Not all Gurkhas were soldiers.

Lieutenant Colonel HCS Gregory OBE KSG

On the occasion of his 80th birthday, I am sure the members would like to join in wishing him best wishes and thanking him for producing the Britain-Nepal Society Journal for so many years. Celia Brown.

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If your address has not been included here please accept our apologies and request inclusion in the next journal. Ed.

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 'YETI' Association for Nepali'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 a 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 Honourary 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 Honourary Secretary is:
Mrs E.P. Mellor
3c Gunnersbury Avenue
Ealing Common
London W5 3NH

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