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THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

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Boris Lissanevitch, Father Marshall Moran and Toni Hagen in Kathmandu in the late 1960s (taken by Tony Schilling)

NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron: HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal

President: HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO

The Britain-Nepal Society was founded in 1960 to promote good relations between the peoples of the UK and Nepal. We especially wish to foster friendship between UK citizens with a particular interest in Nepal and Nepalese citizens resident - whether permanently or temporarily - in this country. A much valued feature of the Society is the ease and conviviality with which members of every background and all ages mingle together.

Members are drawn from all walks of life including mountaineers, travellers, teachers, returned volunteers, aid workers, doctors, business people, members of the Diplomatic Service and serving and retired officers of the Brigade of Gurkhas. The bond they all share is an abiding interest in and affection for Nepal and the Nepalese people. Membership is open to those of all ages over 18 and a particular welcome goes to applications from those under 35.

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £15 (husband and wife members £25) per annum. Life members, a single payment of £300, joint life membership a payment of £500 and corporate business members £50 and charities £25 per annum. Concessionary rates are available at both ends of the age range.

The Annual Journal includes a wide range of articles about Nepal and is sent free to all members.

We keep in close touch with the Nepal-Britain Society in Kathmandu, and their members are welcome to attend all of the Britain-Nepal Society's functions.

However we do not have reciprocal membership.

Members of the YETI Association which provides equally for Nepalese residents or those staying in this country are also welcome to attend the Britain-Nepal Society's functions, and can become full members of the Britain-Nepal Society in the usual way. The YETI is a flourishing organisation and they publish their own attractive journal.

Throughout the year, the Society holds a programme of evening talks, which are currently held at the Society of Antiquaries, in Burlington House, Piccadilly where members are encouraged to meet each other over a drink before lectures.

The Society holds an Annual Nepali Supper, usually in February and a Summer Outing which is often shared with the Yeti Association. In the Autumn we hold our AGM, which is followed by a curry supper normally held at the Nepalese Embassy. The Society also hold receptions and hospitality for visiting senior Nepalese.

Apart from the Summer Outing, events normally take place in London.

The Committee are actively seeking suggestions from members for ways of expanding and developing the programme.

Those interested in joining the Society should write to the Honorary Secretary:-

Mrs Pat Mellor
3(c) Gunnersbury Avenue
Ealing, London W5 3NH
Tel: 020 8992 0173

 EDITORIAL

The year 2000 marks the fortieth year of the Society's existence.

The majority of the articles in this millennial edition look back some forty years to the period of the early 1960s and beyond. I am indebted to Tony Schilling for his thoughtfulness in offering to the Society, from his archives, a copy of the photograph used as the frontispiece. This photograph depicts a famous triumvirate of ex-patriots (Boris Lissanevitch, Father Moran and Toni Hagen) who made great contributions, in differing fields, to Nepal in the early days following the opening up of the country to the outside world post 1950. By complete chance last year in Pokhara I met Victor Klenov, a mountaineer from Odessa in the Ukraine. It was Odessa where Boris Lissanevitch was born and this set Klenov on course to research Boris's life and work. Boris became a legend in his own time as the 'father of tourism' in Nepal. Klenov sketches his early life in Russia and the events that led him to Nepal where he eventually died. His wife, Inger, still lives in the Valley.

Some time after returning to England I was made aware that a biography of Father Marshall Moran had been written by Donald Messerschmidt. I was able to secure a copy by the good offices of a Society member who was in Nepal. Later casual conversation with John Brown elicited the fact that in 1960 he had come to know Father Moran quite well after his record-breaking flight from UK to Nepal in a light aircraft. I too knew him in the early 1960s and always found him both dedicated and enthusiastic, enthusiasm which had not been dulled when I met him again thirty-five years later in 1989/90, not long before he died. His funeral was the most amazing mixture of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist ritual, reflecting the beliefs of those he had taught. John Brown has written an appreciation of his life in the accompanying review article.

The third member of the group, Toni Hagen, sadly I have never met. This is not so surprising since he spent so much of his time travelling to the most remote parts of Nepal. I have added some brief notes about him for completeness.

Continuing the theme of flight, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has provided the text of his lecture about his father's flight over Everest in April 1933, a pioneering achievement of the highest degree. It was in March 1933 that Mayura Brown travelled by train, truck and on foot along the old road to Kathmandu over the Chandraghiri and Chisapanighiri passes. She describes her journey and arrival in Kathmandu, a journey she was not to repeat for almost sixty years, but this time by air.

At the start of the year Charles Wylie and Roger Chorley gave a fascinating presentation on their epic climb on the Machapuchare Expedition which took place in the spring of 1957. This lecture produced one of the highest turnouts for a Society meeting and I am grateful to Charles Wylie for reducing this to an article for publication in the journal for the benefit of members who were unable to attend. The full story of the expedition is described by Wilfred Noyce, one of the expedition members, in his book 'Climbing the Fish's Tail'. The original book is now out of print but a paperback version has been reprinted by Book Faith India and is available from Pilgrims Book House, Thamel, Kathmandu.

A number of interesting books concerning Nepal, the Gurkhas and associated topics have been published in the last few years. I hope readers find the reviews of sufficient interest to stimulate further reading.

Finally my thanks go to all those who have contributed to the journal and, where relevant, to their original editors. The Society is grateful too to those organisations that continue to help sponsor the journal by their advertisements.



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THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

by Pat Mellor
Honorary Secretary

Lectures

During 2000, we were only able to book the Society of Antiquaries for four lectures. The Society's lecture theatre is becoming so popular that even booking one year ahead is difficult but in spite of this we have had some very interesting talks, well attended by members.

The first talk of the year, in February, was given jointly by Colonel Charles Wylie and Lord Chorley with the title of 'Climbing the Fish Tail - The Machapuchare Expedition 1957'. As members will imagine, this was a real draw, and we had a full house for a fascinating talk with wonderful slides. The expedition is described elsewhere in the journal.

Our second talk in March was a cameo of four short presentatons entitled 'Nepal - Another Dimension'. The first was given by Mr Hari Shresta, First Counsellor at the Royal Nepalese Embassy. The Ambassador, who also spoke to the audience, and HRH Princess Jotshana attended to support their First Counsellor. This was followed by three short talks by young 'GAPers', who are all now at university. The first was by Mr Simon Dodsworth, who spent time in Nepal before taking up his place at Newcastle University. He was followed by Mr Ben Maher and Mr George Blom Cooper who gave us a joint insight into life as a GAP student. It was so interesting to hear from them what it is like to go to Nepal and help in remote schools when they had never been there before, particularly as they spoke no Nepali! It was a steep learning curve, otherwise there was a chance that you would not get any 'dhal bhat'! The excellent slides and the description of their lives there, and the chance to talk to them afterwards made a very enjoyable evening. All three are now completely entranced by Nepal and cannot wait to return. Thank you for a wonderful evening.



Lt Col Charles Wylie and Lord Chorley with members after their lecture on Climbing 'The Fish Tail' - the Machapuchare expedition in 1956

The third talk in July was given by Charles Allen and entitled 'The Hunt for Shangri-La' - the title of his recently published book. This talk concerned his return to Nepal and Tibet to the Mount Kailash area to look again into early Tibetan history with regard to the pre-Buddhist religion of Bon and its connection with Shang-shung and Shangri-La. What a thought provoking talk but also highlighted by amusing stories of his travels and thoughts. The slides were exceptional too.

The event booked in October was postponed as we received an invitation from the Zoological Society to attend a lecture there to be given by Dr Flamand, a veterinary surgeon presently on a three year project at the Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal. The lecture was entitled 'A Tiger at My Tail?', and was most informative, added to which it was interesting and different to go to the Zoological Society in Regents Park.

Our grateful thanks goes to all these excellent speakers who gave us their time, shared their knowledge and showed us beautiful slides. We look forward to meeting them again and thanking them personally at the Annual Nepali Supper in March 2001.



General Sir Sam Cowan at the Nepali Supper

The Annual Supper

As usual, the supper was held at St Columba's Church Hall in Pont Street in February. About 170 people attended the supper which was prepared by Mr Manandhar of the Natraj Restaurant in Charlotte Street and was enjoyed by all who attended. His excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador and HRH Princess Jotshana attended the evening, and our guest of honour was General Sir Sam Cowan, KCB, CBE, who gave an entertaining after dinner speech about the original 'Goorkhas' and their amazing bravery and determination - not absolutely matched by our own soldiers deployed in India at that time! All our members who were present really enjoyed the talk, and I think all felt that General Sir Sam would be most welcome back. This was another successful and happy evening.



The Chairman, the Royal Nepalese Ambassador, Lady Anne Cowan and FM Sir John Chapple at the Nepali Supper



Princess Jotshana presenting champagne to the winner of the Society tour draw, Mrs J Rasmussen

The Summer Outing

I am pleased to be able to report that the 2000 summer outing was a success. We travelled down to Winchester and visited the Gurkha Museum followed by a buffet style lunch at a new Nepalese Restaurant in Winchester, called the Gurkha Chef. Following this tiffin, we made our way to the Hillier Arboretum and Gardens near Romsey, and in particular to visit the Gurkha Memorial Garden which has recently been



The chautara at the Gurkha Memorial Garden

laid out there. Approximately fifty members joined in this outing, and although the weather was not brilliant, it did not rain! We were joined by the Yeti Association who, after we had all spent a fascinating time in the Museum and spent lots of money in the shop, went directly to the Hillier Gardens for a picnic. When our own members arrived at the gardens, we were greeted by the curator,



The Chairman, Maj Tom Spring-Smythe, the Editor and Mr Mike Buffin, Curator of the Hillier Arboretum

Mr Mike Buffin, who spent the rest of the afternoon guiding us around and giving us the history of the gardens and also how the Gurkha Memorial Garden was planned and set out. They had, of course, been greatly helped by Maj Tom Spring-Smythe, a former Gurkha Sapper and expert on horticulture and Himalayan plants, who had the original idea for the garden. We were honoured and so pleased that he was able to join us at the garden and answer questions from interested members. At this point we started to wonder where our Yeti friends were, and found them all having had a splendid afternoon, but leaving us sad that we had not joined them earlier.

The Royal Geographical Society Lecture and Supper

The last event before the AGM was an evening at the Royal Geographical Society. This was a prestigious lecture, given by Mr Barney Smith, lately Ambassador to Nepal and Mr Charles Allen entitled 'Oldfield and Sketches of Nepal'. Mr Charles Allen kindly stepped into the breach at the last minute, as Mr Kanak Dixit who had agreed to give the lecture with Mr Barney Smith, had unfortunately had a mountaineering accident which had kept him in hospital in Nepal. All the members attending wished him well and

† (In 1966 the Society mounted a photographic exhibition with support from the Kodak Company. Initially it was shown at the Quantas gallery in Piccadilly in November. It was subsequently moved to the Royal Geographical Society where it remained from December 1966 to June 1967. A further event was held at the RGS in 1979. Mrs Celia Brown writes: "The first opportunity for the Society to view the Oldfield sketches took place in the autumn of 1979, thanks to Lord Hunt who was then President of the Royal Geographical Society." Ed.)

a speedy recovery. A candlelit supper followed the lecture. Approximately seventy members attended, and together with RGS members, the RGS hosted about 170 people. His excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador and HRH Princess Jotshana attended the lecture and the supper which followed. This was a wonderful evening, and it was agreed that it should be repeated in the future.†

General

Members will already have noted that the Committee is planning a Society tour to Nepal in November 2001. Plans will include special visits that can only be arranged through Society contacts. Interested members may wish to contact me, so that I can give them an outline of possible events likely to be included in the proposed itinerary.



Jermyns House at the Hillier Arboretum

Deaths

It is with sadness that I have to report that the following members have died during this last year:

Captain A P Coleman
Mr John R Dunsmore
Mr A L Gillibrand
Mr Roger Harrop
Lieutenant Colonel T M Lowe
Major Ronald John Massey
Mr James M Patrick
Colonel D E Travers

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FROM ODESSA TO KATHMANDU

by Victor Klenov

A few decades ago when only chosen people could visit secret Himalayan kingdoms, closed for centuries to the outside world, the Himalayas were as remote, spiritually beckoning and as contemplative as any earthly paradise. Roerich and Sidorov, Shangri-La and Everest, Lumbini where Buddha was born, Gurkhas and kukris and yetis. Who didn't know these clichés? When Nepal was opened it attracted romantics in swarms. Nepal rapidly became a Shangri-La for hippies, esoteric societies came to study sex habits of monkeys on Swayambhunath Hill, scholars wrote tomes on the dietary habits of yetis but all this was later.

In the beginning there was the Name, and this name was Boris, with the accent on the first syllable. Under this name he was known throughout the Kathmandu valley. Without exaggeration it is possible to assert that this name has opened up Nepal to many foreigners - a land forbidden for so many centuries. For many years this name has been repeated by thousands of travellers, movie stars, princes and mountaineers. The name was in the subtitle of the book 'Tiger for Breakfast' written in 1966 by the well-known French writer Michel Peissel, who explored Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. The hero of this book was not a king, prince or high lama, but the owner of the Royal Hotel in Kathmandu - Boris Lissanevitch - a Russian émigré from Odessa.

After taking part in the Odessa climbing expedition to Dhaulagiri, I wandered into Thamel, the famous tourist bazaar in Kathmandu. "Hello, Russian", one bookseller called out to me, "there are books about Boris from Russia here". And then occurred a small miracle of discovery. Besides 'Tiger for Breakfast' I found a novel 'The Mountain is Young' by the Chinese writer Han Su Yin and 'My kind of Kathmandu' by Desmond Doig. Before me there was an exotic history of Boris

Lissanevitch's life. But was it a real story or did the authors exaggerate? I began an exploration.

During two weeks of quest in Kathmandu I had seen numerous photos from his archive and had talks with many people who knew and loved Boris. There were his wife Inger and son Alex, who has been keeping his father's archive, his close friends Jim Edwards and Bernadette Vasseur, Toni Hagen and Elizabeth Hawley and many others. I read about Boris in the books of famous travellers and explorers and in all the guidebooks on Nepal. I regret the fate that I never met Boris. But those who roam the world are bound sooner or later to meet him if not in person then in the multitude of his friends, who bear the impress to his remarkable personality. He was one of the few people who have been vouchsafed in full measure the greatest gift the gods can grant - the art of living.

To quote Boris Nikolayevitch Lissanevitch himself, "My family was from Odessa, the great seaport on the Black Sea. I had three brothers. I was the youngest of my family. Our Odessa home was on the outskirts of the town, between the racetrack and the Cadet School. Those were two places that played the most important parts in my life in Odessa, and have remained in my heart all my life"

Boris's great grandfather was Lieutenant General Grigory Lissanevitch, a great soldier, honoured by the emperors of Russia, Pavel and Alexander 1. Nicholas Lissanevitch, Boris's father, was quite famous in Russia as a horse breeder and rider. Although Boris, a modest man, did not like to recall the titles of his family (unlike so many Russians who thrive today on princedoms and dukedoms of their own invention) his family coat of arms and the hundreds of photographs saved by his mother, testified to the luxurious lifestyle of

the Lissanevitchs in Odessa before the revolution.

Paradoxical, but sincere and not without humour, was Boris's comment in answer to questions as to how he had been launched on his incredible career: "I owe everything to the Russian revolution. Otherwise I would have followed my elder brothers into the Imperial Navy, and then joined my father horse breeding at our country home in the hamlet of Lissanevitchovka near Odessa."

He was born on 4th October 1905, and at the age of nine was sent to the Cadet School in Odessa. At this school with the rigours of discipline he received his formal education. Four years later while he was still there, the revolution broke out in Russia.

During this tumultuous period Odessa was degenerating into chaos and confusion. The French fleet had for a while taken possession of the city and held parts of it together with the White Russian Army. "One quarter of the town was in the hands of the Reds, while anarchist bandits held another district. Barricades of furniture were piled up in the streets. One could see opposing flags flying just a few hundred feet apart. At fifteen I experienced gunfire and was hit by a bullet in the thigh".

Boris's boyhood was already symptomatic of his later life. His family experienced everything from famine, typhus, starvation to the loss of the elder sons. As the Revolution neared its end, the family had to think of some way of removing Boris from suspicion. It so happened that their distant relative, Mrs Gamsakhurdia, was the ballet mistress and teacher at the Odessa opera and ballet theatre, a grandiose copy of the Vienna Opera. Boris's alibi was found. He joined the ballet school and corps de ballet of the opera. Slim, well built, strong and agile he made an excellent pupil and after one year was admitted to her troupe.

"With famine, typhus and the revolution I learned the relativity of values early. In those days in Odessa a gold dinner service could not have purchased a loaf of bread, Boris

remembered. A total disregard for money was later to be one of Boris's major characteristics. He could gamble away a fortune in the evening as easily as he could ruin himself by his great generosity. In 1924 during a performance of "The Prophet" by Meyerbeer the stage manager overdid himself that night, not only was the castle scenery burned, but the entire Odessa Opera House went up in flames. This event provided a plausible pretext for Boris to leave Russia and travel to Paris where he obtained a contract at the Alhambra Theatre. In Versailles he took out Nansen's certificate, the League of Nations passport for refugees.

"The fact that I was a refugee and had no national papers," Boris explained, "was responsible for my eventual settling in Asia, but when I managed to escape from Russia I had no idea then where that flight would lead me".

The Ballet Russe, which thanks to the genius of a Russian by the name of Sergei Diaghiliev, became one of the most refined arts on the stage. Gregoriev and Balanchine invited Boris to come to the Theatre Sarah Bernadette to undergo the examination by the great master himself.

"I was so excited", remarked Boris, "that I overdid myself. I had never done a double turn in the air before but in front of Diaghiliev I just flew and I was taken on." It was a wonderful new life. From 1925 until 1929 he was to live at the incredible tempo set by one of the greatest artistic geniuses of his time. The Ballet toured in London, Paris, Monte Carlo, in Spain, Italy with the full repertoire - Le Carnival, Le Boutique Fantastique, Prince Igor, Petrouchka, Mercure, Parade, The Firebird. Off the stage Boris met and became friendly with such figures as Cocteau, Deren, Matisse, Stravinsky, Dali, and Picasso. These were five unforgettable years.

Together with Vera Nemtchinova as one of the leading dancers Boris was to tour South America on a two year contract. With an Argentinian visa and ticket to Buenos

Aires in his pocket Boris was watching a rehearsal of Chaliapin's opera company in Monte Carlo when he noticed a very lovely girl, Kira Schbatcheva. By the end of the lunch they were in love. The ticket and a contract at a nice, fat salary were sent back. He toured Europe for the next three years. Boris then received an invitation to take their act on an extended tour of the Far East.

India, Burma, China, Java, Ceylon... and Bali island. "I was absolutely shattered by the beauty and charm of the island, its people and music. The dancing, coupled with the music and the scenery simply sent me mad. I was totally captivated by the East."

Thanks to an invitation by his friend Lainelot, Boris was able to indulge his love for sport, that was rapidly to become his greatest passion - big game shooting. Boris spent in all three months in the bush in Indochina. He shot three leopards, three tigers and numerous other beasts. "I hunted on the territory of the fierce Mois tribes, which used blowpipes with poison arrows. A convict of definitely sinister aspect, who had killed his wife and mother-in-law, was ordered to carry my gun. I smoked opium - gift from the King of Cambodia. They stayed in Angkor. "I left Angkor stunned by the beauty and charm of the place."

Now at last they were on their way back to Europe. But, Boris had no real home, he was a refugee. On the other hand, India offered them a possibility of eventually obtaining a British passport. He headed for Calcutta, where, with the help of his influential friends, he created the famous mixed Indian - British 300 Club. The club was opened in 1936 in a large palace, known as "Philips Folly" built by a fabulously rich Armenian for a beautiful young lady. Unfortunately on the day before they planned their wedding, his fiancée ran away with a common soldier...

Maharajas, princes, diplomats and businessmen, millionaires and sportsmen, travellers and pilots - all knew Boris as the

hospitable host of the most exclusive club in Calcutta, where East meets West.

In Calcutta started a long-term friendship with the fearless pilot Emmanuel Golitsyn, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and General Mahabir from Nepal. At this club Boris met HM King Tribhuvan of Nepal, then a prisoner of his own Prime Minister. From the instant they met, Boris and King Tribhuvan became good friends.

Boris took an active part in the reinstallation of King Tribhuvan on the throne of Nepal. (It is interesting that several times in his life Boris had been suspected of being a spy. Thanks to his charm Boris had an unusually wide circle of friends and acquaintances and the exceptional breadth of his information on happenings in Asia were the causes of such suspicions. The Indians thought Boris a Russian agent, the Russians thought him an American agent, and the Americans, a Russian agent! Was he an Asian Kim Philby or Lawrence of Arabia? Asked, he only smiled, "I'm more a Marco Polo".

After the war Boris and Kira visited United States. Kira decided to remain in America and started a ballet school. Boris met a beautiful young blond from Denmark, Inger Pheiffer. They married in 1948.

In 1952 together with his wife and two sons, Misha and Alex, on the invitation of King Tribhuvan, Boris arrived in Nepal.

"Beyond the valley of Kathmandu I discovered the Asia of Kipling, a mixture of China and India set in a landscape, that makes Switzerland look tame. The charm and beauty of this country were incomparable. I knew this land would have to be my home." Enchanted with the incredible beauty of the Kathmandu Valley, Boris appreciated the great possibilities of tourism in Nepal. The first climbing expeditions drew the attention of the world to the great snowy ranges of Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Everest.

But in 1954 it was still as difficult to enter Nepal as to enter Tibet. Formalities were

long and complicated. No road led to Nepal, and visas were almost unobtainable. Boris mentioned the possibilities of tourism to many of his Nepalese friends, among whom was the Prime Minister. All these people at first only smiled: "How could tourists be interested in Nepal, a country that has no beautiful buildings, steel bridges, sky scrapers and museums?"

Boris suddenly had the idea of opening a hotel that could cater more fittingly to the future visitors and increased numbers of foreigners to be expected in the Valley. But in the Valley there was virtually nothing available such as gas, kerosene, electricity and good food. A century-old curfew obliged all people to stay at home after 11 pm.

Boris introduced to Nepal dozens of varieties of fruits and vegetables that were unknown in the country - carrots, beetroot, spinach, lettuce and strawberries. He set up a bakery. He also had to teach the servants such strange things as how to wear shoes, how to wash their hands and not to serve clients the water from "the little white wells in the bathroom," as they called the toilets.

In August 1954, the Royal Hotel - unique hotel from Kathmandu to Calcutta 450 miles away - was opened and described. "On the hotel staircase, framed by the stuffed heads of two rhinoceroses, two crocodiles and tigers gaping at each other, was a sturdy, handsome man. Bear hug, broad smile and Russian accent. This was Boris."

After much persuasive talk and string pulling, Boris obtained government agreement that visas could be delivered for the first three groups on their arrival.

It was no small event for the kingdom or the outside world, and 'Life' magazine on 28 March 1955, ran a four page feature article on the event: "The irresistible stream of tourism, which has upset so many sanctuaries, finally broke into remote Nepal. Nestled in the Himalayas, Nepal has for a century peevishly shut its borders to all but a few foreigners. But recently Boris Lissanevitch, a British naturalised ex-

Russian from Odessa, managed to lease a palace in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, and to convert it into the "Royal Hotel" by flying everything from cutlery to cooks to flush toilets. Then Lissanevitch lobbied until Nepal allowed Thomas Cook and Sons to fly in tourist groups... The experts of the agency consider that Nepal has great tourist future."

The King was so impressed by the evident enthusiasm of the tourists for his country and his crafts, that he gave orders to his ministers right there, on the terrace of the Royal Hotel that in the future visas should be issued to all tourists on sight. Thus Nepal, thanks to Boris's efforts, was suddenly open to the world.

But East is East. After the death in 1955 of King Tribhuvan, his great and true friend, Boris also learned that politics in Nepal was still on the level of medieval palace and court intrigues. As a result he stayed in prison for two months. He was innocent, but it seemed that for lack of a true judicial system nothing could be done to release him. In the East authorities need to "save face".

After two months he was released and was received by the King, who expressed the hope that he had "no hard feelings" over the unfortunate episode.

Boris's prison ordeal did a great deal to increase his popularity in Kathmandu. He had received a letter from the Royal Palace as follows: "His Majesty has given orders that Boris Lissanevitch should arrange the catering for all the guests attending the forthcoming Coronation."

Boris was now to turn the tables and serve the King. He became one of the key figures in Nepal. Boris determined to do everything to help ensure that the Coronation should be a successful and memorable occasion. With his inherent humour he had solved all problems. When the customs detained the delivery of alcoholic drinks to the Royal Hotel, where 180 correspondents from all around were staying, Boris dictated to Inger a letter to Field Marshal Keshar (Kaiser): "Your Excellency my patience is exhausted.

I again went in prison. The correspondents are drinking water, understand - WATER! If the position is not changed, I am afraid the Coronation will be a complete disaster”.

After the Coronation, so colourfully described by the well-known writer, Han Su Yin and good friend of Boris, whom she portrayed under the name of Vissili, in her novel ‘The Mountain is young’, the Royal Hotel became the meeting place of Europeans and Nepalese, the centre of political and tourist life in Nepal. And Boris with his buoyant charm and enthusiastic personality became the leading spirit of the city’s social activities.

His closest friends became the Swiss geologist Toni Hagen, the “American Lama”, Father Moran, and the correspondent and artist Desmond Doig. Boris became very friendly with Prince Basundra, the King’s brother and Field Marshal Kaiser, an oriental Voltaire.

The usual excitements began each day as the entire world seemed to flock to Kathmandu. At the Royal Hotel Boris has played host to such celebrities as Presidium Chairman Voroshilov of Russia. Chou En-Lai, Jawaharlal Nerhu, and Indira Gandhi, Crown Prince Akahito of Japan and Soviet cosmonauts Tereshkova and Nikolayev. Yes the Russian Embassy had asked Boris to handle the reception, an amusing tribute to Boris’s popularity since he was a refugee from communist Russia. Boris in high spirits, became one of their friends.

One of the biggest events in Boris’s life in Kathmandu was the state visit of HM Queen Elizabeth II of England to Nepal in 1961. An autographed portrait of the Queen reminds how she called Boris “My best Russian-British subject” and thanked him.

“How do you think you can catch him alone?” someone asked Inger in those days, “In fifteen years we have been married, I have spent only two evenings alone with him.”

In the 1950s and 1960s Kathmandu was becoming the mountaineering capital of the

world, and the inner sanctum of climbing in Nepal was invariably the Yak and Yeti bar of the Royal Hotel.

Boris a sportsman at heart and keen amateur explorer, placed himself entirely at the disposal of the expeditions, sharing the knowledge of its country and its leaders to assist everyone he could to start for the mountains. Climbers became a familiar sight at the Royal Hotel. Boris patiently accompanied the leaders through the maze of the corridors of the Singha Durbar, and countless expeditions benefited from his generosity in the form of cut rates for accommodation. “I’ve always lost money on expeditions”, Boris recalled. “The climbers would come back starved, but in a week I ought to see them eat!” “But Boris, we never will be rich if we go on like this,” Inger retorted, “Don’t worry dear, after the death we will live in the Paradise Valley,” Boris answered.

Living in Kathmandu he has been close to all the tragedies and joys of climbing. In his flat he had a copy of ‘Everest 1933’, H. Rutledge’s book on his expedition of that year, autographed by all the leaders and most of the climbers of successful expeditions to Everest. His friends Sir Edmund Hillary, Norman Dhyrenfurth, Raymond Lambert, Barry Bishop, Jim Whittaker, Tenzing Norkay and many others. He kept in his flat a box with little rocks from the tops of the world’s highest peaks given by victorious climbing expeditions... “That from Everest is a gift from my friend Bishop, that from Makalu from Franko and from Jannu from Terray, that from Dhaulagiri from my old friend Dhyrenfurth”. These trophies to him were rarer and harder to come by than the skins of tigers or white leopard.

Boris’s flat reflected clearly the varied aspects of his personality. On a grand piano besides golden Buddhas from Tibet stood autographed portraits of Queen Elizabeth II of England and King Mahendra of Nepal. A huge cabinet harboured Boris’s incredible

record collection ranging from the music of Stravinsky, which Boris knew so well, to the folk dances of his Ukrainian homeland.

From the first 'snowman (yeti) expeditions' to the last, Boris was deeply involved in these investigations. He had on hand the 'Alka-Seltza' gun or 'Yeti gun' given to him by Tom Slick's expedition, a strange piece of weaponry designed to put the monster to sleep. And there are no exaggerations that Boris had been called by one of the large American papers "the Number Two attraction in Nepal after Everest".

Soon after the Royal Hotel closed in 1970, Boris's Yak and Yeti restaurant opened in the former Rana Palace - The Lal Durbar, which became one of the truly grand restaurants of Asia. Its Russian fare, prepared from Boris's 100-year-old family recipes, borsch, beef stroganoff, schaslyk, omelette, and also special drinks, created by Boris, which were divine!

Mr MacNamara, the President of the World Bank granted him credit for construction of the five star Hotel Yak and Yeti. This hotel opened in 1977 but arguments with his principal partner led Boris to leave it.

In 1978 he opened the restaurant 'Boris' in the street with the poetic name of '32 Butterflies'. In 1982 he opened another restaurant in Durbar Marg, where sometimes the King was to be seen. His son Alex also opened a restaurant under the same name.

Boris died on 20th October 1985. Sir Edmund Hillary who conquered Mount

Everest then New Zealand's Ambassador to India and Nepal, came for the funeral and called Boris Lissanevitch, "One of the great characters of Kathmandu, who was always full of life, exciting ideas and never dull".

Here was a man as legendary as Everest; the man who has lived ten full lives in one. Happy-go-lucky and violent and passionate. The playboy and artist, collector. The raconteur and the administrator. To many, Boris seems to escape analysis, and this is no doubt the cause of his being legendary. He was a deep sensitive man, with a great sense of honour. His personality has cast its spell over the people of all nations and level of society from waiters to monarchs and from the maharajas to mountaineers. At a British Embassy cemetery in Kathmandu I have photographed the modest tombstone with Boris family's coat of arms and inscription: "Boris Nikolayevitch Lissanevitch born Odessa October 4th 1905 died Kathmandu October 20th 1985", Boris has become a large part of the make-up of Nepal. He is the father of international tourism in Nepal.

"What is it really that you value? What drives you on?" he was asked. Boris swept his arms around the Royal Hotel, toward the distant crest of the snow summits, past the terai and over the temples' pagodas of Kathmandu, "All this" he said, "is a game", and the friend of rajahs and refugees added, "There is only one thing that counts - it is how many people you make happy".

A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER

by Mayura Brown

In March 1933 I made a memorable journey to Kathmandu. In those days the small town of Raxaul was the point of entry into Nepal. One left the broad gauge railway on the Indian side of the town and crossed the border into Nepalese territory. The first night was spent at the rest house in Raxaul. When dinner was over I went upstairs to the bedroom with my ayah Padmimaya. As we were settling down to sleep we heard strange noises coming from the garden below. From our window, we saw in the bright moonlight, three or four hyenas quarrelling. They were ugly, repulsive creatures with furtive movements. We were too sleepy to bother with their disagreeable behaviour.



Guest house at Raxaul

After breakfast next morning we walked to the tiny Raxaul station. People were waiting to board the narrow gauge train pulled by an engine called Mahabir. As we were escorted to our compartment, I noticed the profusion of poppies growing beside the track in colours I had not seen before, ranging from pure white through to shades of pink and peach to the traditional red. The train set off at a cheery pace, but after a



Nepal Government Railway engine at Raxaul station

while it seemed to be slowing down. Only when it stopped did I realize the skill of our Nepali train driver. I found that the door of my compartment was exactly in front of a temporary platform raised beside the railway track. When I opened the door there stood one of my relatives, General Daman, Governor of Birgunj, waiting to welcome me with a garland and many kind words - a delightful and unexpected surprise. We continued our journey till we reached the town of Amlekgunj where the railway ended.

A car, driver and my guard, an elderly soldier, were waiting for us. Travellers from the train hurried towards a decrepit bus parked nearby and tried to cram into whatever space they could find with their assortment of luggage. We drove off carefully, avoiding the stragglers. It was a pleasant day for travelling and I enjoyed the drive. We stopped at a "check point" where I put my signature to a paper stating that I had passed through safely. I had to complete this at various places, for had there been any mishap, perhaps an accident, it would be possible to discover between which two points it had occurred.

Our next stop was Bhimphedi from where the hills begin to rise up. I expected to find a horse saddled and waiting for me as I was in full riding kit. To my dismay I found a litter! No silken hangings adorned this vehicle like those used by ladies in romantic tales. This litter comprised of a wooden chair with a



The old railway station at Amlekhganj - 1992 (GDB)

large hood above and a place for one's feet below. Two very stout poles on either side of this contraption would rest on the shoulders of the porters. As soon as I was seated, it was raised up and the porters set off. Padmimaya's litter did not have a hood and was obviously lighter than mine, however I heard the panting of the porters who, trudging behind, had to bear her ample weight. Our path looked well-trodden though rough; it was more a track than a road. I had one small piece of luggage for my immediate use, the heavy ones were conveyed to Kathmandu on the ropeway built in 1923 with great skill and imagination by Sir Daniel Keymer of Keymer Son & Co Ltd, London. At the time it was regarded in technical ropeway circles as being a very notable piece of engineering in the world. It carried goods into Kathmandu over 14 miles of semi-mountainous areas and was maintained by the dedicated care of the late R G Kilburne MIEE, (his widow was one of



On the way to Kathmandu: an example of the litters in use c1933.

our earliest members).

It was late afternoon when we reached Sisaghari (official name Chisapanighari).



The rest house at Chisapanighari

The night was to be spent at the dak-bungalow which nestled below a fort, built I assumed, to protect the very narrow defile on the crest of the hill. Shortly after our arrival the Colonel in command of the fort came to see that all was in order. The porters had received the allowance for their evening meal and had gone off to find quarters for the night. I was informed that Colonel Etherton had decided to ride on to Kathmandu after a rest at the bungalow. Would I care for the chicken which had been roasted for his dinner, or the Nepali food being cooked for me? With such abundance at our disposal, Padmimaya hurried off joyfully to the kitchen to have a vast meal prepared. She had to organize our picnic lunch for the next day as well.

I decided to have a short walk in the area, and as I stood looking up at the narrow pass, I was told that one of General Ochterlony's elephants had died there and held up his advance for a considerable time. (I have not verified this event, but it sounded plausible).

The usual ration of hot water awaited me when I got back to the bungalow. I was able to wash and get ready for the evening meal. I did not think any of the staff here were aware of the reason for Colonel Etherton's invitation to visit Nepal. He was secretary of the Everest Expedition (to overfly the mountain). What would a flight over Everest mean to people who had never seen an aeroplane. It was a very heroic but extremely

hazardous proposition. Brave men risking their lives in two small planes buffeted by fierce mountain winds. It was beyond contemplation. I tried to put it out of my mind.

We retired early to the bedroom. The windows here had iron bars and wooden shutters which were closed. As I was undressing we heard grunts, snarls and soft thuds. I put my hand through the bars and half opened a shutter. Though drifting clouds lessened the light from the moon, several large spotted cats, probably leopards, could be seen just outside our window. I would have liked to watch them prowling around so near, but their strong, pungent odour caused me to close the shutters hurriedly. It was reminiscent of the tiger house in a zoo. Padmimaya closed the glass shutters as well for we wanted a quiet night.

Next morning was crisp and clear. I decided not to use the litter for the early part of the journey. I would walk. After we said our farewells to the Colonel and his family outside the fort, I climbed up the hill with the others following. When I reached the rocky defile I had to stop as two crossed rifles with fixed bayonets barred my way. The smiling soldiers removed their weapons and saluted smartly. I started down the steep hill carefully, then waited to see the litters get through the gap safely. I could not help thinking of Ochterlony's poor elephant.

The journey continued with changes from walking to using the litter. The scenery was similar to other Himalayan areas like Darjeeling or Simla, but this landscape was uncluttered and serene. Occasionally there was something outstanding, like the cascade of yellow orchid blossoms draped over a tree, or the somnolent fish which allowed me to stroke it when we stopped for a drink from the Bagmati River where the water was cold and crystal clear.

We stopped for a while at the village of Khulikhani. I was surprised to find that the village shop had a good supply of cigarettes. I bought the entire stock for my porters who



The porters and sepoy guard below the Chandraghiri pass

had only pieces of cigarettes to share when they had a smoke during rest periods. We moved on till we reached Chitlung. It was time for lunch and there was a pleasant meadow available. While the food was being laid out I looked around. Beyond and almost vertically above us rose the Chandragiri pass. I felt we should make it on foot instead of the porters having to carry us up that steep incline. It required a tremendous effort, and Padmimaya had to be helped along sometimes, but we made it! At the top, a path went round a mound which had a saucer-like indentation full of coins. As was the custom, we made our offerings to the goddess Devi, in gratitude for our safe ascent. When we walked round the mound and looked down, the Kathmandu Valley lay before us with its timeless architecture and sacred shrines. Beyond stretched a bank of clouds across the horizon, while the great snowy peaks seem to float above.

Padmimaya called them the pillars that held up the sky. No traveller who had been privileged to witness this scene could ever erase from their mind the beauty and wonder of it. We stood in awe for a while, transported to another world. Slowly we began making the long descent, still on foot, to reach Thankot where a car was waiting for me. It was a short drive to Kathmandu.

My very kind great uncle, Joodha Shamsher, had become Prime Minister in September 1932. He had entrusted the arrangements for my visit to his eldest son, General Bahadur, who was the Huzooria General. (It was General Badahur who was



The Commander-in-Chief with senior Generals of the Royal Nepalese Army on the Tundikhel - 22nd March 1933

the first Nepalese Minister to be accredited to Britain and he opened the Legation, now Embassy, in Kensington).

I looked forward to seeing my family members and attending the parades on the Tundikhel. At a military review, I was seated in the marquee next to a Mr Bonnett. He told me he was the photographer of the Everest Expedition. His information about the flight was most interesting. While I listened to him I reflected on the fate of the climbers who

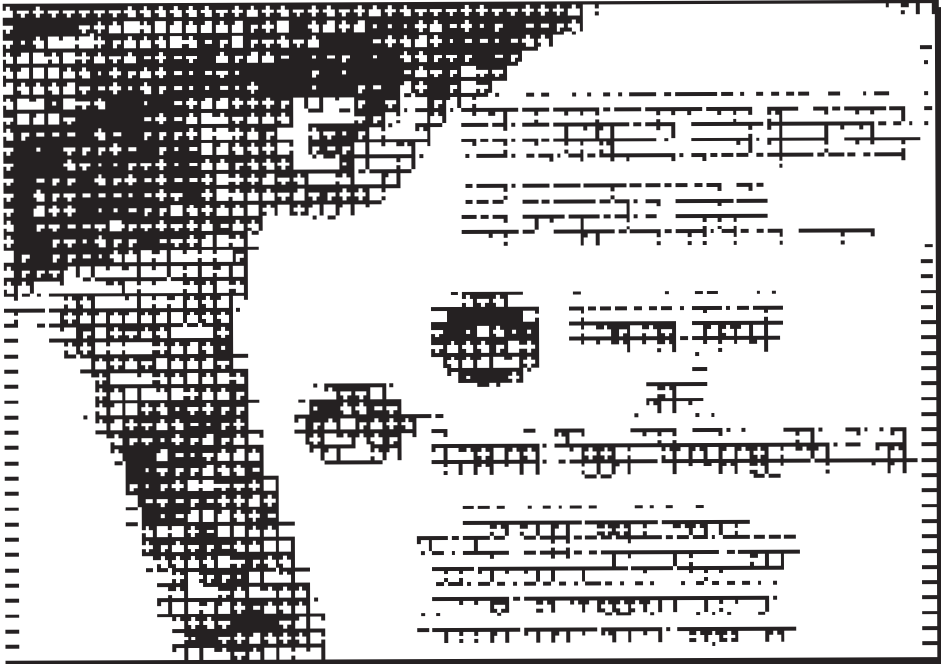
had perished on the icy slopes. What if the plane crashed? I kept my fearful thoughts to myself.

By April the planes, to my intense relief, had flown over Everest and returned safely



Parade on the Tundikhel - March 1933

to their base; a splendid achievement. I considered the long journey one had to undertake to reach Kathmandu. Would it ever be possible to fly there? In 1933 it was only a dream.



MAN'S FIRST FLIGHT OVER EVEREST

by James Douglas-Hamilton



*Sons of the 1933 Everest pilots:
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and Douglas
McIntyre*

The story began in 1932, in the Smoking Room of the House of Commons. The MP for the Scottish Universities, the author John Buchan, was talking to my father who was then the second-youngest MP in the Commons. They were discussing Mount Everest which lay at the heart of the Himalayas. The last stronghold of nature unseen by man, it had already claimed the lives of 13 men who had sought to climb it.

In 1924 greater heights than ever were reached by Mallory and Irvine. On June 8 of that year they were seen within a few hundred feet of the summit, before a mist came down, and from that moment no-one ever saw Mallory and Irvine alive again.

There had already been attempts to fly over Mount Everest. The Atlantic had been flown in 1919 by Alcock and Brown, and Admiral Byrd had flown over the North and South Poles. Only Everest remained.

The idea to fly over it had been that of Colonel Stewart Blacker, a forceful dynamic, and courageous man. His grandfather, Colonel Valentine Blacker - the First Surveyor-General of India - had been involved in mapping Hindustan. However, he had taken part in a duel in which both he and his opponent had been killed. Now, as a matter of honour, Stewart Blacker wished to complete the task and my father was drafted into his plans.

In March 1932 Colonel Blacker had proposed to the Royal Geographical Society that there should be an expedition with the aims of mapping Mount Everest from the air by photograph and in so doing set a new height record for an aircraft carrying two people.

The Royal Geographical Society gave its blessing to the proposed expedition, as did the Government and the Air Council, and plans were put in place by the British Flight to Mount Everest Committee for experimental British aircraft to take on the task, supported by British equipment, including clothes, watches and even camp equipment.

Before long news about the expedition leaked to the press, with the result that a protest meeting was arranged by the East Renfrewshire Conservative Association to prevent my father, who was the Marquis of Douglas Clydesdale and the MP for East Renfrewshire, from going. Clydesdale was struck down with flu, and sent a message to the meeting: "There is only one original flight really worthwhile, that is the flight over Mount Everest, which alone stands out as the only significant part of the world which has not been flown over... I feel that this is an opportunity in which I can really be of some service to my country."

As a result, his association resolved to commend him for his courage, and to give him leave of absence. Accordingly, arrangements were made for Clydesdale and his Flight Commander David McIntyre to act as pilots, with Colonel Blacker and a photographer, Bonnett, acting as observers, under the leadership of Air Commodore Fellows. They knew that to fly over Mount Everest would lead to problems from lack of oxygen and excessive wind levels. Therefore, they had to be certain that they had expertly designed aircraft, adapted cameras, specially heated oxygen

apparatuses and heated clothing. Clearly the aircraft would have to be constructed to confront the dangers. It was considered that the Bristol Pegasus engine IS3 was the best in the world. It was an air-cooled radial engine with nine cylinders, supercharged so that it could function at full power at very high altitudes.

The Committee's interest in Westland had been kindled by Flight Lieutenant Uwins who had won the world altitude record, flying a single seater at 43,976 feet. The Flight Lieutenant recommended the Westland PB3 as it had the fastest rate of climb of any two-seater which the RAF had tested. It was an experimental military aircraft, capable of photo-reconnaissance, bombing and of carrying a torpedo. The Westland Wallace was similar, adapted by the Royal Air Force to replace the Westland Wapiti.

The aircraft had a high undercarriage, was 34ft long, with a wing span of 46½ ft, and the Westland Aircraft company agreed to sent their mechanic Francis Burnard.

Purnea in Bihar, 160 miles from Everest, was where they would set up their base camp, and if there was engine failure the aircraft might glide for up to 70 miles. So they would be within gliding distance of level country for two-thirds of their track. To save weight they decided to take no parachutes, which meant that, if they were to survive, there could be no scope for any kind of engine failure near Everest. So the Bristol Aircraft Company and the Burmah Shell Company took great trouble to provide specially concocted fuel, which would not freeze at great heights.

The pilots were subjected to medical tests, and Sir Robert Gorman invented oxygen equipment for the aircraft. Three 750 litre cylinders had been prepared to carry oxygen, made from vibrac, a steel of great strength, with copper and aluminium pipes connected to it. The oxygen from the cylinder would flow down the piping to a gauge and then to a regulator which had a valve enabling the

pilot to increase or reduce the pressure. The oxygen would move on to the flow meter, and to the instrument board, into which a socket could be pushed attaching a flexible tube leading to the pilots' and observers' oxygen masks.

If even a drop of moisture froze in a valve, blocking it, fatal consequences might follow. At 30,000ft one man could use six litres of oxygen each minute. The pilots had experimented in the Oxygen Chamber at Farnborough. They'd been told that if oxygen failed at 30,000 feet, unconsciousness would follow in 30 seconds. The experiment taught them that in the event of oxygen failure some seconds would elapse before unconsciousness, and if the emergency supply was switched on, a few deep breaths would lead to recovery.

They also enlisted the support of the Director of Meteorology in India, who set up balloon stations to calculate wind speed. This was essential because they knew that there were fierce eddies of winds, including mighty blasts and currents or air rising and falling in the vicinity of Everest.

The Commanding Officer of the Meteorological flight at Duxford wrote that "a severe down current near the mountain would be very dangerous as the aircraft might easily lose many thousands of feet in a matter of seconds." He went on to say that possible disaster would occur if violent bumps caused structural failure, or if there was engine or magnetic stoppage, or a fracture of a fuel pipe, or even a hitch with the oxygen.

The expedition finally set off with the blessing of King George V, the Viceroy of India, the Government and the Air Ministry. While the large aircraft departed in crates, Clydesdale, Blacker and the others left in small aircraft. After many adventures they arrived in Karachi, where they saw their aircraft assembled and then flew on to Delhi and then to Purnea.

For some days after arriving at Purnea the weather was against them and their attention

had been turned to the possibility of crocodiles in the nearby pool where they swam, and to the presence of a cobra in their bungalow. But on April 3rd 1933 the two aircraft roared down the runway and started to climb steadily up through the clouds, and the four men soon found themselves within a semi-circle of the most gigantic mountains in the world. As they later wrote: "The panorama presented itself to us in its startling white beauty... the dust haze, completely obscuring the foothills, rose well above the snowline, with the result that this arc of great mountains appeared detached from the earth and suggested an eerie land floating in a drab sea somewhere between earth and sky."

As they approached Everest they were hit by a terrific down draught, a down rush of air which took the aircraft down 2000 feet, both aircraft hurtling towards the east ridge of Everest. Colonel Blacker later wrote: "The scene was superb, and beyond description... Suddenly, with the door of the floor half open, I became aware of a sensation of dropping through space... The altimeter needle almost swung down through a couple of thousand feet. In this great down draught of the winds, it seemed as though we should never clear the crags of the south peak on the way to Everest now towering above us."

As the aircraft hurtled down towards the ridge, Clydesdale's only sensation was one of gladness that whatever might happen only one aircraft was behind him, and not his whole Squadron. As it happened he scraped over the south peak by a few feet. He circled again and again to gain height.

McIntyre was in a worse position. He had been 1000 feet above the ridge and he was now below it. "A turn to the left meant going back in to the down current and the peaks below; a down-turn to the right would have taken us almost instantly into Makalu at 200 mph. There was nothing we could do but climb straight ahead and hope to clear the lowest part of the barrier range. A fortunate

up current just short of the ridge carried us up by a few feet and we scraped over." In what he described as "a mad risk" he had to circle three times, crabbing over the ridge to gain sufficient height to make the attempt to fly over the summit.

Then Bonnett had an accident. Filling the camera with film he trod on his oxygen pipe, fracturing it. Feeling weak, he subsided to the floor and tied a handkerchief around the broken pipe. Maybe this saved his life. He then tried to rise and was overcome. McIntyre was worried that Bonnett might be dead and resolved to fly over the summit once and then lose height to allow him to recover. Then he saw Clydesdale's aircraft above and ahead of him, flying straight for the summit.

After getting over the south peak Clydesdale's aircraft found itself in an upward draught of air and he was swept up into the sky. At 10.05am his aircraft surged over the summit of Everest. Colonel Blacker watched through the floor. "The crest came up to meet me as I crouched and I almost wondered whether the railskid would strike the summit."

They then flew into the plume over Everest and the ice rattled off the aircraft. They circled and flew over the summit a second time. As he looked down at the mighty mountain and at Chamlung Clydesdale realised that Everest and the Himalayas were much greater than the Alps over which he had flown, with cliffs and glaciers greater than any in the world.

By this time the oxygen gauge was moving down. The 15 minutes spent near or at the summit had incorporated a lifetime of amazing experiences and yet it was all too short.

Flying back, McIntyre was having trouble with his oxygen. He tried to look at Bonnett, but he had to hold the aircraft on its course. At 8000 feet he saw Bonnett struggling up from the floor, looking green, but alive.

Three hours after take-off, both aircraft made a perfect landing. Bonnett was shaken

but alright and McIntyre had a heat blister on one hand. Clydesdale, Blacker, McIntyre and Bonnett wrenched off their clothing and they made for the swimming pool. The threat of flesh-eating crocodiles seemed as nothing in comparison to the stupendous challenge of flying over the world's highest mountain.

The Everest mail was posted. One letter was addressed to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. Inside Clydesdale had written. "Dear Prime Minister. This letter is of no consequence, but the cancellation stamp may be of some value one day." The Prime Minister wrote on it in pencil. "Give to my daughter Sheila."

Meanwhile the world press reported the flight with great admiration. The *Central European Times* wrote: "The British Flight over Mount Everest is a feat which will stand by itself in the history of aviation. In point of careful and scientific preparation it is compared to Admiral Byrd's flight over the South Pole. In point of flying and navigation skills it is equalled by Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.

"The battle against winds of a force, of which plain-talking mortals have no conception, against treacherous up and down currents, against cold and lack of oxygen, is one which can only tempt men for whom the difficulty of the obstacles is but a call for further effort to overcome it."

Great achievement though it was, for Clydesdale, McIntyre and Ellison, the reserve pilot, the Everest flight was only a starting point for a journey which was ultimately to lead to the fulfilment of a dream. Before leaving for India, Clydesdale had stated that he wished to further the interests of aviation in Britain, and he looked forward to the creation of a Scottish aircraft industry. At that time it had appeared in the press as a throwaway line, but he had in fact meant it.

Their first step was to find a base and they alighted on the idea of forming a flying school. They knew the Government was

expanding the Royal Air Force without increasing expenditure and were allowing certain groups to open flying schools. Applicants could fly as civilians for the first 50 hours, and then join the RAF to complete their training.

In August 1935 Clydesdale, McIntyre, Clydesdale's brother, Geordie and the directors of the De Havilland aircraft company formed the Scottish College of Aviation Limited, which, within a year, became Scottish Aviation Limited. Its purpose included introducing the aviation industry in its various forms to Scotland, as well as tuition in how to fly. They were joined by the reserve pilot Dick Ellison.

Prestwick was chosen as the company's location, largely because it enjoyed fog-free weather conditions. Clydesdale became the Chairman of Scottish Aviation Limited, with David McIntyre as Managing Director and Dick Ellison as the Chief Test Pilot.

At first the aerodrome consisted of 157 acres, and then a further 191 acres were bought to accommodate a hangar, offices and a control tower. The Air Ministry approved its use as a flying school operating Tiger Moths, and in early 1935 the first batch of 34 pilots were trained, many of whom would take part in the Battle of Britain. This was only the beginning, for McIntyre had been heard to remark what within 10 years Prestwick would have an international airport and an aviation industry, a prophecy which turned out to be correct.

In 1937 pilots in the RAF Volunteer Reserve began to train at Prestwick on Hawker Harts. A year later a school for the training of navigators flying in Ansons was opened there.

When war broke out in 1939 McIntyre was the Station Commander. He closed the road across the aerodrome, doubling its size overnight. By the end of 1940 Prestwick had been selected as the best aerodrome in Britain for aircraft crossing the Atlantic. McIntyre recommended that the runway be increased to 2200 yards in length. After a

struggle with the Air Ministry he got his way, receiving Canadian support.

Soon there would be 1000 transatlantic crossings in and out of Prestwick each month and the Scottish Aviation factory which had appeared so modestly before the war began to expand by leaps and bounds. The Palace of Engineering at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, had been moved to Prestwick. This had been a terrific effort, and within the new building of Scottish Aviation Ltd it would be possible to retain Spitfires, Hurricanes, Liberators, Hudsons, Skuas, Rocs and Lysanders.

At the end of the war McIntyre and Hamilton persuaded Tom Johnson, Secretary of State for Scotland, to support Prestwick's case for a 24-hour service and status as Britain's second international airport.

McIntyre produced two aircraft, the Prestwick Pioneer and the Twin Pioneer, which had a short take-off and landing capacity. The Prestwick Pioneer was a small military reconnaissance aircraft and was used extensively during the Emergency in Malaya. After a number of mergers Scottish Aviation became the Scottish division of British Aerospace, employing in the region of 2000 persons, and building the Jetstream Executive aircraft. Nearby, there were other factories servicing jet engines.

In 1957 Hamilton received the tragic news that McIntyre, flying a Prestwick Pioneer in North Africa, had been killed. The aircraft developed metal fatigue, a wing broke off and it plunged into the ground. Also two of his younger brothers, all of whom joined the Royal Air Force, died in air crashes. His brother David died on operational duties in 1944 and his brother Malcolm disappeared

in a huge storm around Mount Cameroon in 1964 with his son Neil, after flying across the Atlantic to Africa. Like Mallory's ice axe found by Hugh Rutledge's expedition in 1933, the wreckage of the aircraft was not discovered until years later.

An aviation industry in Scotland was the legacy which Hamilton and McIntyre left their country. Even if they had not done so, they would still be remembered. For Britain has not lost its ardour for adventure, and there will always be admiration for young men of courage who are willing to risk their lives to face the perils of the unknown. It is appropriate to end with the words by both of them in the *Pilot's Book of Everest*:

"Our expedition was concerned particularly with the science of flight, of geography and exploration. No man can come close to the great peaks without acknowledging a sense of awe and understanding something of the fascinations they hold. We saw the mountain on both occasions in high sunshine when there were few shadows to shroud her mystery. In softer lights one might expect to feel something of the romance of these enormous masses of rock and ice.

"Something of the mystery has been overcome and something of the unknown has been revealed; yet the Mistress of the World remains remote, immense and magnificent. The best that we could bring back was but a faint impression of her dignity and beauty."

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(Dr William Brown writes: "The chairman and committee of the Society organised a special evening on 23rd May 1983 to commemorate this first flight over Everest held at the Royal Society of Arts in John Adam St, Adelphi. The suggestion that the Society might celebrate the 50th anniversary of this historic event presented the committee with a daunting task. A film was located in the National Film Archives but the base was old and brittle and any editing required would have been expensive. The problem was however solved by a chance remark at a meeting of the Fellows at the Royal Society of Arts of which I was then a Vice-President." Dr Brown is planning an article for the 2001 edition of the journal to complete the story. An article about this meeting can be found in the 1983 journal. Ed.)



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TONI HAGEN

Toni Hagen, the Swiss geologist, is the third member of the triumvirate of expatriates featured on the frontispiece photograph. Born in August 1917 he studied as a geologist in Zurich and in 1950 he arrived in Nepal as a member of the first Swiss mission. Between 1953 and 1959 he conducted a geological survey for the UN and was subsequently appointed as the Director of the Basic Survey Department of Nepal (1959-60). His survey work took him to all corners of the land where he was often the first westerner to have penetrated remote districts such as Upper Mustang. He used a system of dak runners to maintain communications with his base in Kathmandu. Although initially his treks involved large numbers of porters, experience taught him that 'lightweight' treks with ten porters were more efficient. He was surprised to find the inhabitants of Manang had expensive Swiss watches which they had obtained as a result of their travels

all over South East Asia buying and selling jewellery as they went. Following his extensive travels across the length and breadth of the country he produced the first 'coffee table' book on Nepal entitled 'Nepal', published in 1961 by Kummerley and Frey in Berne. The colour photographs of this first edition were quite outstanding, featuring the remote areas of Dolpo and Mustang in the west as well as studies from the Valley, the Terai and Pokhara. This book was in great demand by the small number of expatriates then living in Nepal. The note in my own copy from 1962 indicates that it was bought through Boris at the Royal Hotel. In more recent times large numbers of high quality 'coffee table' books on Nepal have been produced, but I doubt that they have had the same impact as that of the original work by Toni Hagen. This book has been republished in recent years and was available in bookshops in Kathmandu.

Editor



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THE FISH TAIL - THE MACHAPUCHARÉ EXPEDITION 1957

by Charles Wylie

Machapuchare, the Fish Tail, must be one of the most spectacular mountains in the world. At 23,000 feet it stands alone, erect and serene, supremely beautiful. It dominates Pokhara and Central Nepal, featuring in almost all the photographs of that region. So steep are its slopes that in 1956 no one had ever attempted to climb it. It was a virgin peak, a real challenge for mountaineers.

It was indeed an irresistible challenge for Jimmy Roberts and me. We were old climbing partners; one of the reasons we had both joined the 1st Gurkhas was that there was plenty of good climbing at the Regimental Centre, Dharmsala, which lay just below the 18,000 feet snow covered Dhaula Dhar range. We had spent many a happy weekend climbing there with our men, and after the war we had enjoyed two wonderful months climbing in the Alps together.

In 1956 Jimmy was commanding the western Gurkha Recruiting Depot at Lehra, in India near the border with Nepal, and I was on a staff job at the MOD in the U.K. We wrote to each other, our letters crossing in the post, both proposing that we "have a go" at Machapuchare. Our positive replies were hardly necessary.

The next step was to ensure that there was a possible route up the mountain. Jimmy was well placed to make a reconnaissance. Taking the strong young Sherpa, Ang Nima, they went up the gorge of the Modi Khola to the west of the Fish Tail. To Jimmy's surprise the gorge ended well below its glacier source, opening out into a wide amphitheatre (now known as the Annapurna Sanctuary) some two miles in diameter, not shown on maps existing at the time. Jimmy was, we believe, the first outsider to have penetrated the Sanctuary. He was able to make a compass survey which the Royal Geographical Society was glad to

incorporate on new maps of the area. He also saw and photographed a possible route up at least the lower part of the Fish Tail. This led via a left handed traverse to the ridge connecting Machapuchare with the Annapurna range. From that point we might be able to follow the ridge southwards or, if that proved too difficult, to cross the ridge and try our luck on the eastern slopes.

Heartened by this news, I recruited as strong a climbing team as I could in the UK - Wilfred Noyce, then probably our best mountaineer, who, like Mallory before him, was a Charterhouse schoolmaster and an Everest climber; David Cox his climbing partner, an Oxford don, and the Hon Roger Chorley, a younger and highly competent climber. I also chose and collected all the stores, equipment and supplies we would need and arranged for them to be transported to Nepal, partly by sea and partly on an RAF training flight to India.

The party first met together in April 1957 at Lehra, whence we could just see Machapuchare from the roof of the Mess. Our Sherpa team joined us there too; Ang Nima, Tashi, a veteran of many expeditions, his nephew Ang Tsering a youngster of considerable promise, and Da Temba whose forte was cooking. We flew to Pokhara and camped in a field where we had to wait for no less than three precious weeks for our stores to arrive from Calcutta. The ship with these stores had unfortunately been delayed.

At last we started out, with fifty porters up the Modi gorge. At the highest village, Chomrong, Jimmy consulted the elders, including the bahun, who told us there was a goddess on top. We must propitiate her by making a sacrifice of a goat or a sheep, put prayer flags on the shrine at the top of the gorge and not eat any meat nor even eggs, otherwise there would be a bad harvest. We promised to abide by these 'rules'. In the event we believe the goddess was in no way

disturbed and a good harvest followed.

We emerged from the gorge in a snow storm to find our Base Camp site already under snow. We were glad when our excellent porters, bare footed and scantily clad, were scampering back down to good shelter. We started without delay on a short period of acclimatization. At 23,000 feet the height would not present a serious problem, but nevertheless it was prudent to break ourselves into altitude slowly.

While Jimmy, Ang Nima and I tried to reach the 20,000 feet col which overlooks on the south side the village of Ghandrung, Wilfred, David and Roger started up our proposed route on Machapuchare. This began up a deep gully which we called 'Gardyloo gully' (an English corruption of the French "Gardez l'eau", the medieval housewives' shout as they threw the slops out of the window). We had feared the gully might prove to be too much of a danger as an avalanche conduit but our party felt it was worth the risk. As it turned out, no avalanches came down the gully throughout the expedition. Above the gully they established Camp 1. Next morning Roger did not feel well and stayed in camp while the others reconnoitered ahead. When they returned, Roger had taken a turn for the worse and the next day he began to descend.

When Jimmy and I got back to Base Camp we found Roger paralysed from the waist down. He had climbed up the 500 feet from the Modi to Base, alone - an incredible feat. We did not know it at the time, but he was suffering from polio. We at once sent a Sherpa down to send back a carrying party and to alert the hospital in Pokhara. The carrying party arrived amazingly quickly, armed with a doko which they proceeded to convert into a 'human ambulance' - i.e. a seat the patient sits in, back-to-back with the porter. Once ready, with Jimmy in charge, the party left, watched anxiously by us as they crossed the steep and slippery slabs below. Fortunately the strong lad carrying Roger was surefooted and well up to his

task, while Roger we hoped gazed backward though sadly up at the lovely mountains he was leaving.

Our Sherpa had meanwhile reached the Shining Hospital in Pokhara. At that time this was the only hospital there, run by a British mission, the Nepal Evangelical Band (now the International Nepal Fellowship). When the Principal, the redoubtable Miss Steel, heard the news she was already in bed. She dressed at once and set off in the dark. So quickly did she climb the track that she could hardly have had any rest on the way. We had worked out that she would meet the carrying party somewhere around Ghandrung, but in fact she met it not far below Base Camp, a magnificent effort. Now Roger was in good hands, with a doctor who knew how to treat him.

Roger stayed at the Shining Hospital for three weeks and was then flown back to UK. He made a remarkable recovery and was eventually able to resume an almost normal life, even skiing, although he still has a limp. The fact that he was later in turn President of the Alpine Club, the Royal Geographical Society and the National Trust, speaks volumes for his determination and courage.

Naturally he was sadly missed on Machapuchare. And so was our leader, Jimmy Roberts who, typically, had selflessly sacrificed his part in the climb; by the time he returned the rest of us, now down to three, had progressed far up the mountain. I will not bore the lay reader with details of the climb, climbers can read Wilfred Noyce's book 'Climbing the Fish's Tail' or the Alpine or Himalayan Journals. Suffice it to say it was one of the most rewarding and exciting climbs any of us had ever done.

Having run the gauntlet of 'Gardyloo gully' unscathed, we climbed out of it onto the broad shelf leading to the ridge. We had three adventures on the way. First, Wilfred, David and I were swept away by what Wilfred called a 'snow slide'. This mini avalanche hit us chest high tumbling us over and over and tearing our ice axes, rucksacks,

goggles, gloves, headgear - anything removeable - off us. Fortunately the 'slide' stopped just before it would have poured over a 300 ft ice precipice. Another time a storm left the slopes streaming with hailstones which threatened to swamp our tent; working hard with our aluminium plates we succeeded in diverting the torrent of hailstones enough to save the tent. We moved the camp next day to below the bergschrund (the large crevasse which separates the snow slopes from the ridge above) which would protect our tents from any avalanches or hail slides. Our third adventure took place at Camp 2, where we were airing our sleeping bags in the sun by folding them across the tent ridges. A sudden gust of wind filled my bag (a treasured relic of the '53 Everest expedition) like a balloon and lifted it up till it sailed swiftly away across the Sanctuary, never to be seen again!

Reaching the ridge involved climbing a bulging wall of hard blue ice - the most precarious and exposed pitch I have ever climbed, before or since. Once on the ridge it was clear we would have to cross it and chance our luck on the other side. Fortunately by descending some 500 ft we found a sloping shelf which we could follow to a small snowfield where we could pitch Camp 4. From there our way was barred by a steep-sided ice ridge which hid the route ahead. Climbing it next day we found we had to descend some 400 ft to reach another shelf which led to the upper snowfield below the summit tower. It was then clear we would need a further camp on the upper snowfield. This meant returning to Base to fetch more food, rope and other stores.

Back at Base we enjoyed two days rest, while Tashi made a rope ladder to fix on the ice ridge beyond Camp 4. Returning to Camp 4, Wilfred and David, our summit party, crossed the ice ridge with the help of Tashi's rope ladder to the shelf below and then traversed up to the upper snowfield. Tashi and I remained at Camp 4 in support. The summit party managed to put Camp 5

reasonably high on the snowfield and then prepared for an early start for the summit bid.

Meanwhile Tashi and I discussed how we could best help the summit party. We finally came up with a plan to tunnel through the ice ridge and fix Tashi's rope ladder so that it hung down from the far end of the tunnel. This would at least save the summiters, tired as they would be, much steep and exhausting climbing.

Starting at 4.00 a.m. the summit pair first ploughed through soft snow for about 500 ft. Above the bergschrund the snow hardened and step cutting became necessary. They took turns at leading and the slope steepened. They drew level, then passed the great overhang to their right and they knew that they were getting near the top. By this time the slope had turned into hard blue ice, into which more and more blows of the ice axe were needed to cut a step. They had already been on the move for seven hours, it was snowing and looked as if it was getting worse. If it became a white-out, it would be difficult to find their camp again. Reluctantly they both came to the same conclusion, that it would be prudent to give up the summit bid and get back. They were just 150 ft - 50 metres - from the top. It must have been a difficult decision, but it was clearly a sound mountaineering one.

The snowstorm did in fact get worse and there was soon a white-out. However they found the line of marker flags they had planted on the way up and these led them safely to their tent.

Meanwhile Tashi and I taking turns, were tunnelling through the ice ridge. I am sure Tashi could have done well as a Durham coal miner; when he was cutting at the ice face I was hard put to shovel away the chippings. Thanks largely to his efforts we finally broke through and we were able to fix both the rope ladder and a climbing rope down the climbers' return route. The tunnel was 30 ft long and high enough to get through at a crouch. Wilfred and David were

astonished and delighted to see it and I believe it saved them much effort, exhausted as they were after their summit bid.

So ended the expedition's attempt to climb the Fish Tail. We had failed to get to the top, but in fact we were quite satisfied with the outcome. We had had a wonderful adventure; we had broken new ground and had shown that Machapuchare could be climbed. Perhaps the goddess had just drawn a line 150 feet below the top. We had meticulously followed her rules and she in return had seen that we all got back safely. This was certainly the view of the bahun of Chomrong. What is more, there was a good harvest that year.

After the expedition, Jimmy Roberts went to Kathmandu to make his report to the appropriate minister, who, I believe was General Khattri. In doing so, Jimmy suggested that as all the mountains in the world would soon have been climbed, would it not be a good thing if one mountain, and that in Nepal, the most mountainous country in the world, remained forever unclimbed? The Minister thought this was an excellent plan, and so far at least, no other expedition has been given permission to attempt the Fish Tail, which thereby remains inviolate.



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THE YETI ASSOCIATION

Like the Society, the Yeti Association has an annual programme of events. At the invitation of the Yetis a number of members attended. Peter Donaldson writes:

“The Evans’s and the Donaldsons were able to represent the Society firstly on the Yeti summer outing to Bournemouth in August 1999 and secondly on the occasion of Democracy Day on 20th February 2000. On each occasion HE the Royal Nepalese Ambassador and HRH Princess Jotshana were able to be present and took an active part in both events. The Society members were made most welcome and much enjoyed the hospitality shown to them. For the Bournemouth outing three coaches made the journey from London and, after some

original route finding, fortunately resolved by the Yeti’s excellent mobile phone network, all met on the sea front. The bracing air and bright sunshine was enjoyed by all, and some of the younger members braved a swim in the sea. For the Democracy Day celebrations some had travelled long distances but all managed to pack into the Johnnie Gurkha Restaurant in Aldershot. The afternoon started with a display of respect to HM King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev. This was followed by speeches, some of which were kindly given in English for our benefit. Music, singing and a buffet curry lunch meant that the celebrations proved to be happy and enjoyable for both adults and children alike.”



Yetis celebrating Democracy Day

A NOTE FROM DARJEELING

(Many members are familiar with the Darjeeling District in West Bengal including one of our Vice Presidents who was brought up there, our Chairman with his interests in the famous tea and our Secretary who was born there. Sunday Telegraph readers amongst our membership will have seen the article surrounding the visit of our Secretary to Darjeeling in November 1998 and her reaction to the visit. Below is a letter to the editor of "Asian Affairs", the journal of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, to whom I am indebted for permission to reproduce. Ed)

Letter to the Editor of "Asian Affairs"

From Dr Victor Funnell, 24 April 1999

Sir

Members of the Society may be interested to know that the Planters' Club in Darjeeling, which I recently visited, is the proud possessor of one of the two Gatling guns taken with the Younghusband expedition to

Tibet in 1904. It stands on a raised platform, for better viewing, in a room near the entrance to the Club, where it is kept burnished and right and shown off to visitors. The weapon is of ingenious construction, with part of the rear mounting adapted for use as trench tools, in case of need.

I am happy to report that the Club itself is in excellent shape, and efficiently run by its courteous secretary, the mustached Major J.S. Rana (retd.), from Dehra Dun. The spacious bedroom suites - no two the same - are each provided with a bucket of coal by an open fireplace. The Billiard room is hung with photos of famous climbers who stayed there, from Mallory and Irvine onwards. The Dining room is furnished with spotless white tablecloths, and the Library contains an interesting collection of mostly old volumes. Visitors are welcome.

Yours etc.
Victor Funnell



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 SNIPPETS FROM THE EDITOR'S IN-TRAY

(From time to time I receive or obtain small items of news and events either through the English language press in Kathmandu, British papers or recent visitors to Nepal. I have included a few items that may be of some general interest. If any member has anything to contribute for this feature for 2001, please forward to me. As is usual, the decision to include or otherwise rests with the editor. Ed.)

Carpets

Early in the year the British Wool Marketing Board visited Nepal to highlight the suitability of British wool for use in carpet making. This was followed by a Nepalese delegation to UK to promote the sale of Nepalese carpets.

The Dome

The Millennium Dome was the venue for a Nepali music and dance programme arranged through the auspices of the Royal Nepalese Embassy on 21st May.

Philately

Three Nepalese philatelists were awarded medals for their presentations and collections at The World Postal Exhibition 2000 held in London.

The Friendship Bridge

It was reported in June that the Friendship Bridge linking Nepal to China at the head of the Kodari Road suffered damage as a result of heavy vehicular traffic. Apparently a convoy of vehicles bringing heavy equipment from China to the Indrawati and Bhote Kosi hydel projects was the cause.

Stolen Artefacts

Members will be aware that over the years numerous works of art have been removed from the Valley and have found their way into various collections worldwide. Professor Bangdel in Kathmandu has estimated that 50% to 60% of the important pieces have been stolen since Nepal was opened to the outside world. Very fine stone carvings that were placed outside the many temples were easy to remove. A report by Martin Spice for 'The Guardian' in September told of the decision made by the Berlin Museum of Indian Art to return a stone relief of Shiva. Apparently this particular item had been removed from a village near Dhulikhel in 1982 and sold in 1985. It has now been returned to the Patan Museum.

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 REVIEW ARTICLE

Moran of Kathmandu: Priest, Educator & Ham Radio 'Voice of the Himalayas'. By Donald Messerschmidt. White Orchid Press, Bangkok, 1997. Pp 314. B/W photos. Bibliog. Index. Pb. ISBN 974 89271 6 4.
 (The book has been on sale at Pilgrims Book House, Thamel, Kathmandu; cost NCRs 650. Editor)

A great many people are aware of Father Marshall Denise Moran, SJ, the subject of Donald A Messerschmidt's fascinating biography of this remarkable man.

My first encounter with Father Moran was in 1960 when two friends and I from Oxbridge flew an Auster single engined aircraft from England to Nepal and hoped to do something useful for the Tibetan refugees who had fled from Tibet. Father Moran was at the heart of the international relief campaign, just one of the many charitable good deeds which he undertook during his lifetime. I met him several times later when I returned to Kathmandu for brief visits, and he became for me a true inspiration. It is for me, therefore, a real privilege and pleasure to recommend Donald Messerschmidt's splendid account of Father Marshall Moran's life story and enormous contribution to advancing education in Nepal.

The Jesuits Patna Mission in India was only ten years old when Chicago born Marshall Moran was assigned to work there in 1929. It was four years later and after many months of recurring and debilitating bouts of amoebic dysentery, combined with the jaundice of contagious hepatitis, two of the most common afflictions of India, that his superiors decided that it was time for him to resume formal theological studies towards his eventual completion of the Four Vows which bind Jesuits to their society and to the work of the church. It was at the St. Mary's Seminary at Kurseong in the Bengal hills that he trained in the last phase of theological and philosophical studies in preparation for



Father Marshall Moran with two young pupils in the 1960s.

ordination and the rest of his life as a fully professed Jesuit priest. Marshall's life in Patna during the 1940's was closely tied to the founding and growth of St. Xavier's High School. He served for ten years as its principal, giving up the post on the eve of his move to Nepal in 1951. From 1940-1948 he also served as Rector of the Jesuit Mission House.

Many other activities had also kept him busy. He helped found the Patna Women's College and the Holy Family Hospital, he assisted with many other mission building projects around Bihar. He became a respected administrator. He was particularly astute at gathering support for educational projects. He was skilled at negotiating land purchases and contracts. And in other ways he was very adept at threading his way skillfully through the political and social mazes of pre-imposed

independence in Indian society. As time passed he felt a special calling to help Nepal improve its educational foundations.

Among his many activities he served as a senior adviser to the Indian administrators of Patna University. He sat on the boards of studies for education, philosophy, Latin and Greek and was honoured with the Governor's appointment at Patna University Senate.

It was through these experiences that he visited and learned much about Nepalese education and society in general. The Nepalese rarely welcomed outside visitors, although they tolerated with severe restrictions the presence of an official British Government diplomat, or resident.

The journey from India into Nepal in those days was by an ancient coal fired narrow gauge railway. The train huffed and puffed along beside open fields where villagers were busy reaping the rice crop, then through the fearful Char Koshai Jhaari, an 8 mile stretch of malaria infested tarai, a lowland jungle thicket which separated the plain and the foothills. This was the malaria infested forest that had repulsed British troops during their assault on Nepal in 1814. Every few miles the train stopped to take on water. Marshall thought he had seen narrow gauge trains, but this one he says, was extra narrow and extra slow, it took 3 hours to go 20 miles!

At that time the educational system was often talked about, but not much was done to improve it. The Durbar High School and the Trichandra College were founded early in the 28 year reign of Prime Minister Chandra Rana, but there had been little progress in education since then. Nepal was an educational backwater. By Marshall's extraordinary personality, diplomacy and determination he became known to the establishment and pressed home the need for a Jesuit school in Nepal. He gradually gained support and he eventually in 1950, was visited by General Mirgendra Rana, who informed him personally that indeed the government was ready to allow the Jesuits to start a school.

A site for the school was discovered in Godavari, one of the Prime Minister's small summer estates. It was located at the base of the north side of the Mahabharat hills about 8 miles south of Kathmandu. Godavari, the name means "chrysanthemum", a place for flowers, forests and wild life. Naturally ideal for a school, Marshall thought, but there was an enormous amount to do to transform the estate into a school. Marshall hired a crew of carpenters, plumbers and electricians to renovate and convert. Much had to be done however, and there were many trials ahead. As the school grew in size, Marshall paid considerable attention to recruiting staff and was quite successful in getting good teachers, including American Jesuits, Indian scholastics and Nepalese lay teachers. As the schools image of quality education grew, so did his importance as it's "contact man", as someone has called him. He was a real diplomat in the sense of always striving to project a good personal image and a good school image.

By 1954, the three year old school was becoming overcrowded and the older boys needed a high school in which to continue their studies. After long discussions with the priests at Godavari, their superiors in Patna and the Nepalese authorities, Marshall prepared to open a second school closer to Kathmandu in order to accommodate the increase in day scholars and boarders and those ready to move on. He located a Rana palace in Jawalakhel on the outskirts of the city at Patan, which was purchased for the equivalent of US\$147,000 at the time.

One of the most liberal reforms of Marshall's after St. Xavier School at Jawalakhel was under way, was the opening of a school for Nepalese girls. The founding of St Mary's School for Girls was a major historic event for Nepal. Marshall played a major role in helping to install the property and in contracting for renovations. St Mary's School opened on February 15, 1955 for the first 15 girls. A month later the hostel was ready, to which 20 girls were assigned.

Tibetan Refugee Work

By the early 1960's Nepal was on the map so to speak and people were flooding to Kathmandu, not all were curious tourists from the west, thousands of destitute refugees were arriving from Tibet. In 1950 Chinese troops invaded Tibet, but it took until 1959 for local resentment to come dramatically to a head in an event that shook Lhasa and greatly effected its neighbours, India and Nepal to the south. About 20,000 Tibetans fled to Nepal, many others to India and Bhutan. A great many of those coming to Nepal were nomads from western Tibet. Their conditions were pitiful, the land was very different from their highland homeland, bringing only what they could carry on their yaks to the border and on their backs from there downward to the Himalayan foothills. It was not until the plight of those especially in Kathmandu, came to the attention of the police authorities, and some resident ex-pats including Father Moran, that the refugee problem was addressed. He had much to do, one problem was to replace the refugee's heavy smelly woollen garb brought down from the cold plateau of Tibet with light weight cotton clothing

Marshall knew that the Nepalese Government was virtually incapable of providing much help to the Tibetans since there was little money and little expertise to work with refugees, whose conditions were as pitiful as these. There was no Red Cross or any other group helping the Tibetans who had never lived in a house in their lives, 90% were nomads.

He began by forming the Nepal International Tibetan Refugee Relief Committee or NITRRC. The Committee was comprised of a number of prominent foreigners in the community whose task was to collect, administer and disburse funds and relief on behalf of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. In 1965 Father Moran and his committee turned over the responsibility for Tibetan refuge work to the International Committee of the Red Cross (his work was later taken over

in Nepal by the Swiss government). Then life settled back down to more normal proportions, Marshall never tired of reading about Tibetan religion however, nor meeting and greeting famous Tibetologists, or Lamas when he had the chance.

“The Voice of the Himalayas”

“He is the kind who loves everybody, loves to talk to people, loves to visit on the air. But being “a rare one” and the only ham ever in Nepal, it is pretty hard for the guys to get to work him. When there is a big pile-up no-one gets through.” The amateur radio hobby was a big part of Marshall's long life. Those who knew him in daily life called him Father Moran, but on the air ways his friends shortened that to just Father, although he was also known by the more distinctive radio nickname of “Mickey Mouse”. Far and wide among the great amateur radio enthusiasts he was singularly renowned as the “ham priest” of the Himalayas.

In 1960 when he first put his new station on the air at Kathmandu he talked to the world virtually every day. Father Moran's list of world radio contacts included both kings and commoners. His ham radio friends were Majesties Juan Carlos of Spain and Hussain of Jordan. Marshall's little black book and phenomenal memory were well known. One frequent “DX” contact described him as “having a memory like the proverbial elephant. He never forgets a thing, he carries that little black book with him and can dig out the name and phone number of anybody he has visited.”

World Wide Recognition

Father Moran's lifelong commitment to public service was recognized worldwide within the amateur radio fraternity and he became only the second person ever to be presented with the prestigious “International Humanitarian Award” by a quarter of a million members of the American relay league. He was praised as one who through amateur radio devoted promoting the welfare

of mankind and as a man with an indomitable spirit to learn as well as teach.

Last Days

Father Marshall D. Moran S.J. died at age 85 on Tuesday, April 14, 1992. A memorial service was held in Kathmandu in the spacious grounds of St. Xaviour's, Jawalakhel School which Marshall Moran had founded 38 years before. Nearly a thousand of Marshall's friends and devotees attended as Christians, Hindus and Buddhist alike and 800 signed the condolence book, a testimony to his fame. One mourner who knew him very well described Marshall as everyone knew him - a walking encyclopedia on the history of Nepal and a dictionary of name related to it.

Jolene Unsoeld, a former member of the U.S. Congress and a good friend said "The story of Father Moran's life is an important

one for this time in world history, when real heroes are too few. He was one among that handful of truly inspired individuals, dedicated to helping people improve their lives, working diligently among some of the poorest of the world's poor. He did a splendid job of it, with sincere motivations and supported by the strict and self-effacing discipline of the Jesuit Order. We admired him for that and we will never forget this man of God who dedicated his active life to the peoples of Nepal and India and somewhere out of the range of our own radio, he is impatiently revving his motor cycle, still inspiring, and always ready to leap forward into adventure in some other lifetime".

I commend Don Messerschmidt's story of Father Marshall Moran in its entirety, since it is a remarkable story of accomplishment.

John M Brown

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 BOOK REVIEWS

Doctors for Democracy: Health Professionals in the Nepal Revolution.

By Vincanne Adams. *Cambridge Studies in Medical Anthropology 6*, Cambridge University Press, 1998. *Illus. Notes. Bibliog. Index.* £50. Hb. ISBN 0 521 58486 8. £18.95. Pb. ISBN 0 521 58548 1

The purpose of this interesting book is to examine the role that medical professionals played in the 1990 revolution in Nepal which ushered in multiparty democracy. It is based on interviews with rural villagers and medical professionals (including nurses, paramedicals and medical students) and presents a very different view of the People's Movement from that of conventional historical accounts.

The book commences with an overview of medical science as a domain of power in Nepal, contextualised within medical politics in a developing country; and continues with a review of Nepalese politics and a discussion of the movement towards democracy which culminated in the overthrow of a corrupt system based on monarchical patronage, caste and family connections. The result, although arguably still corrupt, is a more democratic society that, although Westernised, is still culturally Nepali. At the time of the crucial political events of 1990 Nepalese doctors and other health professionals became overtly politically active. Many had long subscribed to the theory that the best medicine for Nepal was rural-based preventative healthcare for the masses, embodying appropriate technology. Doctors who were powerless to have much effect upon health problems whose root cause was social inequality reasoned that the best healthcare they could provide might be assisting in political and social reform. The central pivot of the book is an examination of the activities of health professionals during the 1990 revolution, followed by an analysis of their motivations and a discussion of the ethics of medical involvement in politics. The Nepal experience is then set in a more global

context and attention is paid to the post-revolution political agendas, with a final chapter involving the reader in a debate about the relationship between truth and privilege. The debate stems from Adam's view that the activities of medical professionals during the revolution had a morality based upon traditional Nepali values about duty, political engagement and the uses of objective truth, rather than a political agenda fostering an undesirable degree of Westernisation.

It could be read with profit by those interested in the cultural landscapes of Nepal as well as in its recent political history, and also by those concerned with the interface of science and ethics.

Myra Shackley
(*I am indebted to the Editor of 'Asian Affairs', journal of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, for permission to use the above extract of Professor Shackley's review. Ed*)

Soldier Sahibs: The Men who made the North-West Frontier. By Charles Allen. *John Murray, London, 2000. Pp. xii + 368. Acknowledgement. Glossary. Bibliog. Index.* £22.50. Hb. ISBN 0 7195 54187.

In his splendid new book "Soldier Sahibs" Charles Allen provides us with the very human story of how a group of men, mostly young and working alone during the years between the end of the Second Sikh War in 1849 and the beginning of the Mutiny in 1857, brought an unprecedented degree of order to the Punjab and to what would later become the Northwest Frontier Province. The vindication of their efforts was the arrival at the Ridge at Delhi of the Punjab Frontier Force regiments, many members of which had only a relatively short time before, as members of the Sikh Army - *The Khalsa*, had come dangerously close to defeating the combined armies of the Crown and the East India Company. These redoubtable fighting men - Sikhs, Punjabi Musalmans, Jats and

Puktuns (Pathans) along with the non-Punjabi Gurkhas would henceforth form the backbone of the Indian Army which would emerge from the ashes of the Sepoy Mutiny.

Before the Anglo-Nepal Wars the borders of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom of the Punjab and that of the Gurkhas marched in very close proximity. Ranjit Singh had great admiration for the hill fighting abilities of the Gurkhas and recruited them into his army before the British did into theirs. The Guides and other units of the Punjab Frontier Force recruited companies of Gurkhas from those formerly in the service of the Sikhs. These Gurkha companies would eventually be amalgamated into a single regiment, which in time became the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force).

The performance of Gurkha irregular units fighting with the British during the Sikh war more than overcame any doubts about the loyalty of the Gurkhas that may have risen in the Punjab from an occurrence at Multan the beginning of the Second Sikh War, when a Gurkha unit of the Sikh Army defected leaving the two British Officers they were charged with protecting to be murdered by rebellious soldiers of the *Khalsa*.

Mr Allen, a member of this Society with close family ties to the Brigade of Gurkhas, does not fail to bring to the attention of the reader that the lamentable conduct of the Gurkhas at Multan was the only instance "... in the course of the long relationship between the British and the Gurkhas in which Gurkha troops (albeit in the service of the Sikh Durbar) deserted their British officers."

Among the soldier Sahibs of the title were true paladins - Harry Lumsden, founder of the Guides, Herbert Edwardes of Bannu and above all Mr Allen's forebear - John Nicholson, the hero of the siege of Delhi, during which he was killed, and who bizarrely would become the deity of a Punjabi cult, the "Nikal Seynites." "Soldier Sahibs" is replete with stories of extra-ordinary valour and resolute leadership in battle. However, the lasting legacy of the Soldier Sahibs was to lay the foundations for the frontier policies of the

Raj. These policies allowed the Puktuns to maintain their own distinctive tribal way of life and become a third force between what is now Pakistan and Afganistan, where the Puktun Taliban now holds sway.

"Soldier Sahibs" is history at its very best. By illuminating the personalities of the men involved in the context of their times Charles Allen has given us a window on a generally neglected and currently unfashionable part of the history of the Raj. By looking through that window we can clearly discern the origins of the turbulence still afflicting India, Pakistan and Afganistan.

R.F. Rosner

Imperial Warriors: Britain and the Gurkhas. By Tony Gould. *Granta Books*. London. 1999. pp480. B/W Photos. Maps. Bibliog. Index. £20. Hb. ISBN1 86207 2841.

In 1951 an acerbic former literary editor of *The Spectator* was commissioned by *Life Magazine* to spend several weeks with a unit of the British army engaged in operations against the communist terrorists in the Malayan jungle. He returned full of praise for the 'absolute loyalty' of the men, which was reciprocated by their officers with a 'quality of love' found nowhere else in the army. 'Their men,' he wrote of these officers, 'are their passion'. the writer was Graham Greene, the unit was the 2/7th Gurkha Rifles and he was spot on.

The extraordinary degree of affection in which the Gurkhas of the British army are held, not just by their British officers but by the British public at large, is a phenomenon that has existed now for almost a century and a half. Whenever news that a company of the now much depleted Royal Gurkha Rifles is being sent into a war zone - whether Kosovo or East Timor - appears on our television screens it sends a collective shiver down the spines of half the nation, briefly uniting the *Sun* with the *Guardian* reader (for all the latter's concerns about discriminatory pay and colonial hangovers).

What is even more extraordinary about the

nation's love affair with the Gurkhas is that we know full well that these Nepalese hillmen are mercenaries. *Hired to Kill* was in the 1960s the title of a notorious autobiography written by a former Gurkha officer (John Morris, who went on to become head of BBC Radio's Third Programme) but that, in essence, is what the British army's Gurkhas are.

It is generally supposed that the Gurkhas came into being in the aftermath of the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-15, when Clause 5 of the Convention of Agreement signed between Major-General Ochterlony and the defeated Nepalese general Kaji Amar Singh Thapa on 15 May 1815 declared that 'all the troops in the service of Nepal... will be at liberty to enter into the service of the British Government'. But, as Tony Gould shows in his highly readable account of this association, the first Nepalese to fight for the British were turncoats: the 300 men of the Nusseeree Pulteen who quite happily went into action against their own former comrades at the assault on Malaun in April 1815. What is striking about that first action - and a great many since - is that these 300 men fought with the quiet professionalism that is the hallmark of the Gurkha soldier. Their British commander described their performance in glowing terms, commenting that they executed every order 'with cheerfulness, good humour and an acknowledgement of gratitude for the kindness of their present employers'. These also are hallmarks familiar to any British soldier who ever marched alongside a Gurkha.

Enlarging on the masterly thesis on the beginnings of Gurkha service with the British written by A.P. Coleman (published under the title *A Special Corps* by the Pentland Press at £20, all proceeds going directly to the Gurkha Welfare Trust), Tony Gould shows how the Gurkhas brought to the Bengal army their own highly effective military ethos. Some two-thirds of the 4,700 men who formed the first batch of the British Gurkhas were Kumaonis, Garhwalis, Sirmuris and others

whose hill-country had been overrun by Prithvi Narayan Shah's Gorkha army. But the remaining third was composed of those same battle-hardened Gorkha troops led by extremely competent Gorkha subadars. Free of caste prejudices, highly adaptable and toughened by spartan upbringing, they knocked the spots off the caste-ridden Rajputs and Brahmans who then made up the bulk of the East India Company's Bengal army. British officers merely added modern infantry tactics and weaponry.

Passion entered the equation when it became clear to the British officers who joined the Gurkha regiments that the Gurkha rifleman's overriding concern was to be a better soldier. This tended to bring out the best in his officers. Those who lived up to his exacting standards were rewarded with unquestioning loyalty while those who failed to meet them were usually given the push. Eccentrics and mysogenists tended to flourish.

The British public's regard was won by degrees and largely by word of mouth through its soldiery. It began in 1857 with HM 60th Rifles (later the King's Royal Rifle Corps) sharing the defence of Hindu Rao's House on Delhi Ridge with the Sirmoor Battalion (later the 2nd Goorkhas) and continued through innumerable frontier campaigns, notable bonds being formed between the 72nd Highlanders (1st Battalion Seaforth's) and the 5th Gurkhas during the Afgan war of 1878, and the 92nd Highlanders (Gordon Highlanders) and the 2nd Goorkhas during the Tirah Campaign of 1897. The second world war and National Service thereafter did the rest.

Tony Gould got to know the Gurkhas as a national serviceman in Malaya (like Morris, he joined the BBC), but his account is very far from being the usual gallimaufry of rosy regimental anecdotes and tales of derring-do. It is a ground-breaking history replete with scholarship and fascinating asides of the sort that are now anathema to many publisher's editors: the fact, for example, that the two founding fathers of the Gurkhas - Ochterlony

and Fraser - notched up no less than 20 wives between them. For those looking for the reality rather than the romance of the British Gurkhas, this account can hardly be bettered.

Charles Allen

(I am indebted to the Editor of The Spectator for permission to reproduce this review. Ed)

The Search for Shangri-La: A Journey into Tibetan History. By Charles Allen. Little, Brown & Co, London. 1999. Pp 305. Colour Photos. Line Drawings. Maps. Glossary.

Bibliog. Index. £17.99. *Hb.* ISBN 0 316 64810 8. Also published by Abacus. £7.99. *Pb.* ISBN 0 349 11141 1.

Since the novel by James Hilton 'Lost Horizon', the mystery of the whereabouts of Shangri-La, alleged to be a hidden valley in the Himalayas, has caught the imagination of readers and explorers alike. Did it or does it exist? Charles Allen, a writer and traveller with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the region, its history and its religions, Buddhism and the earlier Bon religion, must surely be an explorer with a good chance of discovering this secret, real or imagined. The book describes the journeys he has made to the area in an attempt to locate the valley during the period 1996 to 1998. The author narrated his latest journey in 1998 to the Society when he took a BBC film crew to the remote valley he penetrated on previous treks. His research led him to identify the area as the ancient kingdom of Shang-shung. It was then that he obtained yet more local knowledge of further evidence just beyond the area that time and travel permits then allowed. This tantalising prospect has become the basis of another expedition proposed for 2001. Chapters of the book are variously devoted to the journeys which include, travelling through the remote NW corner of Nepal into Tibet, a visit to Pakistan to Swat to look at the area of the old Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara and to western Tibet from Lhasa. The author looks at the possibilities of the origins of the kingdom of the shadowy Prester John being also associated with this region. He intersperses

the trials and tribulations of his travels with a great deal of historical background to Tibet and Central Asia and its various religions.

This is a very rich diet and does require the reader to have at least some rudimentary knowledge of the subject. Nevertheless it is a work of great interest to travellers who have made cursory visits to the area or who plan to do so and wish to know more of its complex history.

GDB

Kingdoms Beyond the Clouds. Journeys in Search of the Himalayan Kings.

By Jonathon Gregson. Macmillan, London.

2000. Pp 510. Colour Photos. Maps.

Glossary. Bibliog. Index. £14.99 *Hb.* ISBN 0 333 76550 8.

In this work Gregson gives an overview of the 'Himalayan Kingdoms'. He defines the 'kingdoms' as Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Mustang. In reality nowadays only Nepal and Bhutan could be described as kingdoms in the normal sense. Tibet is now part of China, Sikkim is a state of the Indian Union and Mustang is an area within Nepal. All these 'kingdoms' were autonomous at some stage in their history. Gregson sets out to interview the 'kings' of these states, namely the Dalai Lama of Tibet, HM King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal, HM King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan, the Mustang Raja, Jigme Dorje Palbar and the Chogyal of Sikkim, Prince Wangchuk. He succeeds with all except the Chogyal of Sikkim. For each 'kingdom' there is a description of its history and the up-to-date situation there, particularly in respect of the 'king'. The book is a distillation of a series of travels that Gregson has undertaken to the area over recent years. He is well qualified to undertake his task since he was born and brought up in India. He met the young Crown Prince of Bhutan there and was at school with him in England. Much of the area he writes about he first visited in his childhood and youth and since then has gained both a love and wide experience of the Himalayan region. He describes his travels to

reach the kingdoms which sometimes required quite difficult journeys such as that to Lo Manthang in remote Mustang, and the problems of protocol he encounters in order to gain the all-important interview. It is a tribute to both his tenacity and journalistic skills that he succeeds in obtaining four out of five of the interviews he sought. This book provides

both a travel narrative and an insight to the region and some of its political problems that is clearly and thoughtfully written. It should be included on the shelves of anyone who has more than a passing interest in the Himalayan region.

GDB

Too Old To Fight-



Nepal, home of Mt. Everest the highest peak in the world, is also home of the Gurkhas, the legendary soldiers. Renowned for their loyalty, the Gurkhas have won 13 Victoria Crosses for conspicuous bravery. The Gurkhas have served the British Crown since 1815. Gurkhas served in both World Wars, and their sons and grandsons continue to serve the British Army.

Always serving abroad, they return home to one of the poorest countries in the world, which has no state welfare system, and where natural disasters are common-place. For these Gurkhas, retirement and old age means a continued struggle to exist. Many ex-Gurkhas do not even have a Service pension. We help over 11,000 each month and need to help more. Please help them face the hardships and challenges of home.

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THE ASSOCIATION FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING

by Jon Clennell, Hon. Sec., AfOL

Current Commemorative Projects, in recognition of the work of Lord Hunt with young people.

Many people have been influenced by the work of the late Lord Hunt in developing adventurous initiatives for the young people of Britain and overseas. His greatness was in his ability to inspire and encourage so many, from all quarters, to help him to pursue his goal throughout his life and beyond. His team's success in conquering Mt Everest, inspired many individuals to strive for personal achievement, and his leadership led directly to the establishment of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, the John Hunt Exploration Group and the consolidation of Endeavour Training as mainstream inspirational youth development training, and many other ventures. The principles established in those early days have been taken up by youth workers, all over the world.

He was president and founder member of the Britain-Nepal Society; also, a most active President of the Alpine Club and the Climbers Club and Everest related organisations. Later, he became an extremely involved President of quite a number of well-known youth projects and socially concerned organisations. His appointment as a Life Peer offered an opportunity regularly to express his views to a wider and very influential policy-making audience. From early days as a young Army officer in India, he appreciated that diversion of youthful energies from offending behaviour was a

legitimate and worthwhile use of public resources. He brought public attention to focus on these perceptions, through a noteworthy consultation held at St George's House, Windsor Castle in 1986, which he brought to a conclusion in the form of the publication he edited, 'In Search of Adventure'.

The Foundation for Outdoor Adventure, in conjunction with AfOL, supported by many other bodies and individuals, including Lady Hunt and the family, are now initiating two commemorative projects. Firstly, the John Hunt Award Trust (JHAT) is being launched, whereby grant aid is offered to groups of young people for innovative and imaginative ventures, of benefit to them and their Community, particularly in areas of disadvantage. Mobex North East, hopes through Project 2000 to encourage a variety of such youth ventures, as an exemplar from this initiative.

The second project, is to be the production of a 'Celebratory Publication', a book of reminiscences, archive material, photographs and other contributions that will celebrate John Hunt's life and work with and for young people. Proceeds from this publication will go to support the work of the JHAT. Anyone who has been with the "John Hunt experience", as worker and/or participant, who would wish to contribute in some way, is invited to contact Jon Clennell, currently acting as co-ordinator for the working party.

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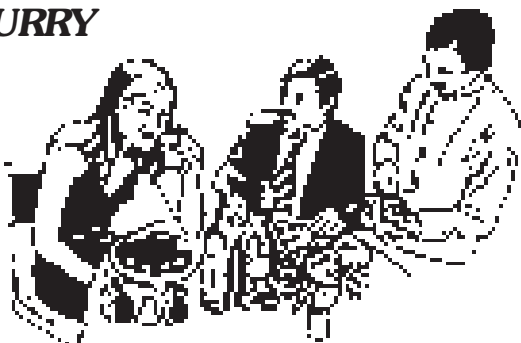


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 OBITUARIES

Agansing Rai VC MM

Agansing Rai died in Kathmandu aged 80. He was born in the village of Amsara in the Okhaldunga district of east Nepal. He enlisted in 1941 in the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) and was posted to 2/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles. By 1943 he had been promoted to Naik (Corporal) and had been awarded the Military Medal for action in the Chin Hills. In June 1944 his battalion was holding the Bishenpur-Silchar track close to Imphal. It was essential to hold Imphal to prevent a Japanese breakthrough towards India. The battalion was ordered to attack a strong Japanese position that was dominating the track. Such an attack had to negotiate a steep slope, cleared of vegetation that provided the defenders a clear field of fire of at least 80 yards. In this action Agansing Rai led three separate attacks across open ground leading his section and remnants of his platoon to such effect that the Japanese were forced to flee, leaving two 37mm gun crews dead and one bunker was completely wiped out. A second VC was also won in that action by 2/5th Gurkha Rifles by Subedar Ntrebahadur Thapa. This was the decisive action in the defence of Imphal. On Partition 5 Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) remained with the Indian Army and Agansing Rai stayed with his battalion. He was subsequently promoted to Subadar and was granted the rank of honorary Lieutenant on retirement. He made several visits to the UK for the VC and GC holders reunions.

Capt A P Coleman

Capt A P Coleman, known as 'Jimmy' to his military colleagues, served in 1st King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles in the Second World War, retiring in 1947. He was a founder member of the 1st Gurkha Rifles Association in the UK, and maintained his

interest in Nepal and the Gurkhas throughout his life. For most of his subsequent career he was connected with the British Museum (Natural History) reaching the position of Deputy Director. In retirement he became a close friend of Mr Ean Ramsay, great-great-grandson of Maj Gen Sir David Ochterlony who led a division in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814. He was invited to write an account of the origin of the employment of Gurkhas in the service of the Crown. For this purpose he joined the King's College London. In the course of his researches he was assisted by Sir Michael Scott (also a former officer of 1st Gurkha Rifles and subsequently Ambassador to Kathmandu 1974-77). His Work 'A Special Corps: The Beginnings of Gurkha Service with the British', was published in 1999 and reviewed by Mayura Brown in the 1999 journal.

**Sir Anthony Duff
GCMG CVO DSO DSC**

Sir Anthony Duff has died aged 80. He had a very distinguished career in the Royal Navy which he joined in 1933 at Dartmouth. He volunteered for service in submarines. He was awarded the DSC in 1943 for his part in the attack on the *Tirpitz*. In 1944 he was awarded the DSO for his actions in *Stubborn* in the North Atlantic. After the war, and on failing an eyesight test, he joined the Foreign Office. After tours of duty in Cairo, Paris and Bonn, he was appointed Ambassador to Nepal in 1964 when he was able to engage in long treks in the surrounding hills. After further tours in Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, London and Southern Rhodesia he was appointed Director-General of MI5 and finally became chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Lt Col T M O Lowe

Lt Col Henry Lowe died on 13 Jul 00, aged 79. He was born in Naini Tal, his father serving there in the Indian Civil Service. He was commissioned into the 3rd Gurkha Rifles from RMA Sandhurst in 1931, and after a year with the Dorsetshire Regiment joined 2/3 GR. He served on the NW Frontier until he was appointed ADC to the Viceroy in March 1939, a fitting appointment for an efficient and punctilious officer. In 1941 he was posted as Adjutant to the newly raised 4/3 GR. After a wartime course at the Staff College he held a Brigade Major's post. He transferred to 10 GR in 1945 then in Italy and subsequently commanded 1/10 GR in Chittagong in October 1946. On Independence he transferred to the RAOC with whom he served in UK and BAOR until his retirement in 1963. Since retirement he became a pillar of the 3GR Association as secretary and editor of their journal. He was an expert on Gurkha affairs and became a nationally recognised reviewer of books and publications. In this role he made many contributions to the Britain-Nepal Society Journal and was a great help to the past editor.

(I am grateful to Maj Gen RWL McAlister for providing the basis for this obituary. Ed)

Col D F Neill OBE MC

Col Nicky Neill has died aged 78. born in Belfast and educated at the City of London School, he was commissioned into the 2nd Goorkha Rifles in 1941. He took part in the first Chindit expedition into Burma with Orde Wingate. He later fought in the Arakan campaign and he was awarded the MC for his leadership in the fierce fighting in the Mayu mountains. In 1945 it was his company that was involved in the action at Tamandu in the southern Arakan where Rifleman Bhanbhagta Gurung was awarded the VC. Having been granted a regular commission, Neill went to Malaya with his battalion 2/2nd Goorkha Rifles and was immediately involved in the campaign

against the communist terrorists, personally accounting for seven out of ten in one operation. In subsequent years this total rose to 21 killed in close jungle operations. He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the MBE. Due to his skill and operational experience in the jungle, he was the first officer to hold the position as Chief Instructor of the Jungle Warfare School in Johore. Having been appointed CO of 2/2nd Goorkha Rifles he was almost immediately involved in 'Confrontation', the campaign against Indonesia on the island of Borneo (Kalimantan). The battalion was involved in the secret cross-border operations into Indonesian Borneo known as 'Operation Claret.' This presented a problem since any casualties could not be left on the Indonesian side of the border but neither were helicopter flights permitted for evacuation. However one of his NCO's was seriously wounded and would probably have succumbed to gangrene before he could be carried back. Neill ordered the battalion helicopter forward and flew with it to a hastily cleared landing site from where the man was successfully lifted to safety. However the action incurred the censure of higher authority. Neill however was awarded the OBE for the success of his battalion's operations, although in other circumstances the DSO would probably have been appropriate. Subsequently he was promoted to acting Colonel as Commandant of the Gurkha Training Depot at Sungie Patani. His last post before retirement was as Defence Attaché in Kathmandu 1969-1972.

Maj P Richardson DSO

Maj Peter Richardson was born in Delhi in 1919. After school in England and attendance at RMA Sandhurst, he was commissioned into the 9th Gurkha Rifles. He served on the NW Frontier, Baluchistan and Burma before transferring to 2nd Goorkha Rifles on Partition in

1947. The majority of the post-war Brigade of Gurkhas was sent to Malaya to counter the communist terrorists who were threatening the stability of the area. He was awarded the DSO in 1950 for a brilliant action fought near Johore when his company accounted for 27 terrorists for the loss of one Gurkha. Throughout his service he remained devoted to his soldiers, holding appointments, in Nepal as a Recruiting Officer and Welfare

Officer. As a bachelor he lived a rather spartan existence and took every opportunity to visit Nepal whilst on leave from Malaya. I well remember discovering a sleeping body, wrapped in a mosquito net on the platform of Katihar railway station in Bihar in 1963. It turned out to be Peter on his way to Dharan - the hard way.

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