
THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 25

2001

CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial
- 6 A Tribute to His Late Majesty King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev
- 7 Royal Audiences
- 8 11th September - Messages of Condolence
- 9 The Society's News by Pat Mellor
- 14 A 'Recce' Trip to Nepal - 2001 by Peter Donaldson
- 19 Britain-Nepal Otology Service (BRINOS) by Neil Weir
- 22 A Royal Tiger Shoot by Col WG Gresham
- 31 The Gurkha Museum in Kathmandu by Maj Maniparsad Rai
- 33 From the Editor's In-Tray
- 37 Review Articles
- 41 Book Reviews
- 44 Obituaries
- 48 Important Addresses
- 50 Notes on the Britain-Nepal Society
- 51 President, Vice-President and Committee



HM King Gyanendra Bikram Shah Dev



HM Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah

 EDITORIAL

The year 2002 has truly been and 'annus horribilis' for Nepal. The tragic events of the 1st June shocked and stunned the whole nation which was then plunged into a period of deep mourning for the loss of a much beloved monarch and his close family. For me, and I suspect many members of the society, the news broke over Sunday morning breakfast on 2nd June. It was hard to take in and the situation was, for some of us, all the more poignant as members of the Gurkha Brigade Association were due to gather at the Memorial Chapel at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst that morning for their annual memorial service and lunch. The tragedy made this a much more sombre event, and it should not be forgotten that His Late Majesty King Birendra held the rank of honorary Field Marshal in the British Army. At least it was an early opportunity for the Association to pay their respects which was done in an entirely appropriate manner led by the Senior Chaplain. Books of condolence were opened at the Royal NepAlese Embassy and this gave many members the chance to pay their own respects and show solidarity with their Nepalese friends. Such support was very much appreciated by the Ambassador, his staff and the whole Nepalese community. The tragedy generated a good deal of interest and speculation in the media, and our Chairman was interviewed by Jeremy Paxman on TV. Some details of the events at the Royal palace in Kathmandu are unlikely to be fully known or understood and there is little point in speculation. Suffice to say that this event has been one of great disaster for Nepal and we must hope that, with support, the nation will come through these events to achieve stability again. As a society we are fortunate to have met and to know His Majesty King Gyanendra upon whom now

so much depends. As HRH Prince Gyanendra he was a gracious and supportive Patron of the society. That the society is greatly valued is shown by the report of the Chairman on the audiences he was granted by His Late Majesty King Birendra at the end of 2000 and more recently by His Majesty King Gyanendra in December 2001. A tribute to His Late Majesty King Birendra has been provided by Dr Raghav Dhital.

If this tragedy were not enough, HRH Princess Prekshya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah was killed in a helicopter crash at Rara Lake in northwest Nepal some five months later.

It is a matter of historical fact that the accession of His Majesty King Gyanendra to the throne is the second occasion on which he has been anointed as monarch. He was briefly put on the throne at the age of four in 1950 at the time of the collapse of the old Rana regime when his grandfather, King Tribhuvan fled to India. King Tribhuvan returned to Nepal some months later and continued his reign until his death in 1955.

Members will be all too aware of the Maoist insurgency, simmering away during the last five years, that has added to Nepal's problems. Reports of serious incidents have from time to time surfaced in the press. Over two thousand people have been killed in such incidents. Whilst initially the insurgency had its roots in the mid-west of the country, it has spread quite widely in recent years. His Late Majesty King Birendra was naturally very concerned and was, with his Government, reluctant to bring the full force of the security forces to bear against the insurgents on the grounds of not wishing to exacerbate the problem with Nepalese fighting Nepalese. His Majesty King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Sherbahadur Deuba were faced with the

same dilemma, but the situation came to a head following the breakdown of talks that had been initiated in the autumn and a state of emergency was declared in November and the Royal Nepalese Army was deployed.

Prior to these events there was the tragedy in New York on 11th September which had an immediate effect on tourism worldwide. This was yet another blow to Nepal which relies so heavily on the tourism industry. The threat of a possible prolonged war in Afghanistan in the autumn meant that the majority of the potential visitors cancelled their arrangements. This even affected the society's planned tour for last November, which has been postponed until 2002. However a smaller number, including the Vice Chairman and Secretary, went ahead and a report of their trip is in this journal. The visit will have been a valuable 'recce'. Readers will note that despite the state of emergency and the attendant curfews, they were given a tremendous welcome by all the Nepalese whom they met and especially our sister society, the Nepal-Britain Society. By the time you receive this I hope that some of you will have heard firsthand from Major Murray Jones the details of that visit and the plans for autumn 2002 at the lecture scheduled for January 2002. Earlier in the year I had the good fortune to go with a party of Army birdwatchers to Kathmandu and to the Kosi Thappu reserve in the southeast. At that time it was clear that tourist numbers had fallen but that the impact on tourists there was not great. By chance two gap year students from my village spent time last year in the far west and in the Syanga areas. Although Maoists visited the schools where they were teaching, they were in no physical danger. More recent reports indicate that there is not the support for the insurgents that might have seemed to be the case previously. As I write this tension is also rising in the South Asian region on the borders

between India and Pakistan. This will also have the effect of frightening away potential tourists to the area, inevitably including Nepal. We can only hope that diplomatic initiatives will prevail here and that in Nepal, government and military working together can improve the situation for all those Nepalese that wish to live in peace and harmony.

Although the society tour has been postponed hopes are still alive for the trip to take place next November. Anyone wishing to travel to Nepal should of course take heed of Foreign Office advice. Details of how to access this are given elsewhere in the journal.

Turning now to the content of this edition, apart from the usual reports and reviews and items already mentioned, there is a short article on the Gurkha Museum which has been established in Kathmandu and should repay a visit by the society tour in the autumn. Dr Neil Weir has given us an update on his valuable work with Britain Nepal Otology Service (BRINOS). Away from all the gloom I have been able to include a whole chapter from a book compiled by Colonel John Roush formerly of the US Army concerning a Royal tiger shoot that took place west Nepal in 1963. Reading this now it seems hardly credible that this took place in my lifetime given the huge changes in attitude to wildlife conservation. At the time I was in fact serving in Nepal and although I was not present I knew Colonel Bill Gresham, the US Military Attaché, and of course Colonel Charles Wylie then the British Military Attaché, and remember well the stories that were told afterwards. Colonel Roush's book is reviewed by Mr Ron Rosner, himself a keen shot who was also on the staff of the US Embassy at the time.

Finally my thanks, as always, go to the contributors, without whom there would be no journal and to those who sponsor the journal with their advertisements.

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A TRIBUTE TO HIS LATE MAJESTY KING BIRENDRA BIKRAM SHAH DEV

On 1st June 2001, Nepal lost almost its entire Royal family in a tragic incident. In a matter of minutes, King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Crown Prince Dipendra and Prince Nirajan, Princesses Shruti, Shanti, Sharada and Jayanti. Former Prince Dhirendra and Kumar Khadga spouse of Princess Sharada lost their lives most tragically. The Nepalese people both inside and outside of Nepal were shocked and saddened by this unthinkable and unimaginable event. So were many friends of Nepal all over the world. Here in the United Kingdom, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and other members of the Royal family, politicians and others expressed their condolences profoundly, so did the general public. Undoubtedly, this show of support and sympathy was a great comfort for the Nepalese people in their time of need.

Late King Birendra, Crown Prince Dipendra and Prince Nirajan were all educated at Eton. They had special affection for this country and its people. Over the years, the Nepalese community

in Britain and members of Britain-Nepal Society had several opportunities to meet them and know them. The late King and other members of the Royal family always greeted them with warmth and affection. The news of the sudden loss was an absolute shock for us all. We shall miss them greatly.

His Majesty The Late King Birendra will be remembered as a monarch who felt for his people, kept the national interest close to his heart and tried to change the monarchy with the times. His adherence to the letter and spirit of the constitution of Nepal after the political change of 1990, was greatly admired and appreciated both nationally and internationally.

In this year of mourning, our thoughts are with the present monarch, His Majesty King Gyanendra, members of the Royal family and the people of Nepal. May the Almighty God give them courage to overcome this enormous grief and provide strength to shoulder the huge responsibility that lies ahead.



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ROYAL AUDIENCES

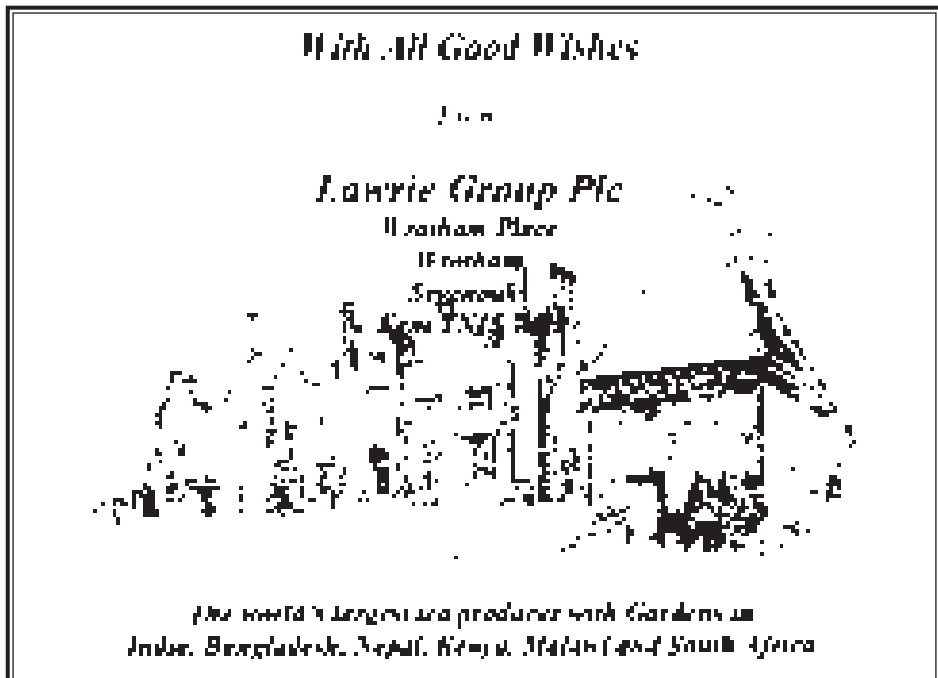
by Peter Leggatt
Chairman

On 1st December 2001 I was very privileged to be invited to an audience with His Late Majesty King Birendra. This was at the Royal Palace and I met His Majesty in his study. It was my first meeting and sadly, it was to be my only one. His Majesty enquired with great interest about the activities of the Society and we also discussed the world tea industry with which I am connected. At the end of the audience, His Majesty specifically asked me to convey his good wishes to all members of the Society.

Almost a year later, on 10th December 2001, His Majesty King Gyanendra graciously granted me an audience. Again this was at the Royal Palace and in the same study in which I had previously seen his late brother. I have been

fortunate in knowing His Majesty for some years in connection with the Society and for other reasons. His Majesty seemed extremely well, in spite of the many pressures on him - in particular the Maoist situation and the then impending SAARC meeting.

We were able to discuss many subjects including of course the Society and His Majesty said that his wishes regarding patronship would be notified in due course. His Majesty ended the audience by asking me to convey his good wishes to all his friends in the United Kingdom. Likewise, I was able to express to Their Majesties and HRH The Crown Prince, the Society's most sincere good wishes for their health and happiness in the coming year.



 11th SEPTEMBER 2001 - MESSAGES OF CONDOLENCE

Following the tragic events that took place at the World Trade Centre in New York, the texts of the messages of condolence sent by His Majesty King Gyanendra and the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr Sherbahadur Deuba to President Bush are reproduced below:

'His Excellency
Mr George W Bush
President of the United States of America

Excellency,

We are shocked to learn of the horrific acts of terrorism resulting in the incalculable loss of innocent lives and damage to property in the soil of the United States of America. Such cowardly acts violate all international norms and human dignity. They must be condemned and crimes against humanity and perpetrators brought to justice.

As a nation which has always been a strong advocate of peace, Nepal believes that all countries must join hands in combating and eliminating terrorism from the World.

The Government and people of Nepal join us in conveying to Your Excellency and, through you, to the affected families along with the Government and people of the United States of America our heartfelt condolences and sympathies in this hour of great tragedy.

12 September 2001

GYANENDRA R'

'His Excellency
Mr George W Bush
President of the United States of America

Excellency,

The news of terrorist attacks that struck in New York and Washington DC yesterday has come as a deep shock to us all. At this hour of great tragedy, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathies to Your Excellency and, through you, to the bereaved and affected families, the people and Government of the United States of America. His Majesty's Government of Nepal strongly condemns this act of terrorism.

On this sad occasion, I reiterate the unequivocal condemnation of His Majesty's Government of Nepal of all forms of and manifestations of terrorism. This dastardly act has once again brought to the fore the need for more cooperation between the government and the peoples of the World to eradicate such evil from the civilised World.

12 September 2001

*Sherbahadur Deuba
Prime Minister of
The Kingdom of Nepal'*

THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

by Pat Mellor
Honorary Secretary

Before I start my report about the Society's various events I think we all know that the year 2001 has been overshadowed for everyone, and in particular for the members of the Britain-Nepal Society by the tragic and sad events in Nepal. The Society's deepest sympathy goes to HRH Princess Jotshana, HE The Royal Ambassador of Nepal and their family. If that were not enough, the events of 11th September in New York once again plunged everyone into sadness and gloom.

Lectures

Amidst all the tragedy and trauma, it was inevitable that some of our lectures had to be abandoned. However, I am pleased to say that nevertheless we did manage to have three outstanding lectures. They worked because we had to arrange things at the last moment!

The first lecture of the year, in January 2001, was of course already arranged and was given by Adam Gilchrist, whose firm, Veedon Carpets, is in Kathmandu. He told members about the difficulties that he had overcome in the design and making of these pure wool, close stitched carpets. Now he is making carpets to order world wide in modern and traditional patterns. Members were able to not only admire the wonderful slides but also to touch and feel the actual carpets that Adam and his wife Clare had brought to the Society of Antiquaries for members to see. This was a really lovely evening.

The second lecture, which took place in June, was given by Mr Theon Wilkinson who is honorary secretary of the British Association of Cemeteries in South Asia. However, his talk was nothing to do with cemeteries, but was entitled 'Walking into Kathmandu in 1946 with Sir Clutha McKenzie from St Dunstan's'. This was a



Nepalese hand made rug of 'tiger' design by David Sheppard

truly fascinating talk. Sir Clutha was blind, but not at all daunted by that; he enjoyed every moment, particularly all the more hair-raising incidents, that happened on his journey in Nepal. The photographs shown to us were black and white pictures of a different Nepal, in a different time. Mr Wilkinson took us through their journey with such interest and humour. It was a most enjoyable lecture.

The next lecture, which was due to take place in September and was to have been given by George Band on the 'Himalayan Trust Projects Phaphlu - Everest Trek 2001' was abandoned due to the 11th September tragedy, and it was felt that out of respect for the USA we would not hold that talk, but have postponed it until 2002.

The final lecture for 2001 was given by Dr Bob Jordan in October, and his title was 'Sir Edmund Hillary's Schoolhouses in the Clouds'. This was a wonderful talk, and Bob took us through the whole

history of how Sir Edmund Hillary had felt that after his epic climb he very much wanted to repay the Nepalese in some way for the wonderful experience he had had whilst in their country. He has therefore been supporting and building schools for the Nepalese children ever since, and I believe, visits them every year. Sir Edmund has set up a charity to continue the work and our Society does of course support it.

Our grateful thanks goes to all of 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 February 2002.

We now look forward to the lectures to be held in 2002. The current plans are:
29th January 2002 - Major Murray Jones will talk on the Society's 2001 unofficial 'recce' to Nepal which took place from 15th November to 3rd December and outlining the proposed itinerary for Britain-Nepal Society trip in 2002, which we hope will attract many members to join.

27th March 2002 - Mr George Band will talk on 'The Himalayan Trust Projects Phaphlu - Everest Trek 2001.'

25th June 2002 - Dr Bill Gould of the United Mission to Nepal Hospitals' Endowment Trust whose title is 'The Challenge of Health Care in Nepal'.

1st October 2002 - Claire Waring will talk on the 'Honey Hunters of Nepal'.

The Society Visit to Nepal

It had been decided by a popular vote taken by members who proposed to go on the society visit, to postpone it until 2002, when hopefully the world situation would have calmed down. The talk to be given by Major Murray Jones on 29th January will concern the unscheduled trip undertaken by only five members who considered it a 'recce' and planning visit.

We are hoping that the November 2002 tour will prove to be a success and that many members will take advantage of the opportunity of visiting Nepal under the auspices of the society and the Nepal-Britain Society who are looking forward to welcoming us.

Annual Nepali Supper



Field Marshal Lord Bramall, the Chairman and Mrs Jennifer Evans at the supper

As usual, the Supper was held at St Columba's Church Hall in Pont Street during March. About 170 people attended the Supper, which was prepared by the Munal Restaurant of Putney and was enjoyed by everyone who attended. His Excellency the Royal Nepalese Ambassador and HRH Princess Jotshana attended the evening, and our guest of honour was Field Marshal Lord Bramall, who gave an entertaining after dinner



Mr Prabakhar Rana, Lady Bramall and Lt Col Charles Wylie at the supper



Col William Shuttlewood, Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas, Mrs Sheila Birch, the Editor and Frl Ahlendorf at the supper

speech. All members who were present really enjoyed this talk, yet another successful and happy evening.

Summer Outing

I am pleased to be able to report that the 2001 Summer Outing was an unqualified success. Some of us travelled by coach, but the majority travelled by car to Wrotham Place, our Chairman's Company Head Office in Kent. In the beautiful gardens Peter Leggatt had arranged marquee, large umbrellas, tables and chairs for our comfort, and we really needed them as the day was gloriously hot. The swimming pool was a real temptation, which I am glad to say was made the most of by members' children. We had a delicious picnic lunch, prepared for us by Kim Ranamagar of the Munal Restaurant, and wine was kindly donated by the Chairman and the Royal Nepalese Ambassador. We were honoured to be joined by the Ambassador, Dr Basnyet, and Mr Hari Shrestha, the First Counsellor. We then made our way to Ightham Mote, a fascinating National Trust moated house. There we were given an interesting introductory talk by Valerie Redman, who made the ancient house and its cottages come alive for us. After a welcome cup of tea in the tea rooms, we all made our way home. It was certainly a memorable summer outing.

Society Ties

I am pleased to be able to announce that your committee has agreed the production of a new tie. The design is as before, but the motif is clearer, and the tie is made in silk and will be priced at £10. David Jefford is kindly continuing to look after the sale of ties, for which we are most grateful.

Deaths

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

Lieutenant Colonel TG Blackford
Brigadier IA Christie
Mrs Kemmis Betty
Major Malcolm Meerondonk
General Sir Walter Walker



Mr Timothy George with the Ambassador at the AGM



Dr Dhital, M Mandhar, Sir Neil Thorne and Mrs Joanna Thomas at the AGM



Princess Jotshana and Mr Anthony Wieler at the AGM



The Editor, Maj Dudley Spain and the Chairman at the AGM



The Ambassador and Princess Jotshana and members at the AGM

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A 'RECCE' TRIP TO NEPAL - 2001

by Peter Donaldson

It has been a disappointment that the official tour to Nepal has had to be postponed until the autumn of 2002. Nevertheless, five of us set off from a damp and cold Heathrow with high hopes of meeting our Nepali friends once again and enjoying a Nepalese welcome. It proved to be even better than expected and a very useful 'recce' for the 2002 trip.

Murray Jones had set about rearranging the itinerary to accommodate the smaller number. On arrival at Kathmandu Airport we were rapidly taken to our hotel, the Shanker, in order to start our tours of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur as soon as possible. Murray had lived in the area, consequently we were taken around many interesting parts not on the usual tourist routes. Good evening meals, cultural shows and a lunch at the Dhulikhel mountain resort set high above the Valley, were all memorable experiences. Our kind hosts, including the President of the Nepal-Britain Society, Mrs Pratima Pandey and many members were pleased to welcome us to their country.

We went to both Kirtipur and Chobar, villages in the southwestern side of the Valley, not often visited, which gave us the opportunity to see all the swords, pots and pans which decorate the exteriors of their temples. Kirtipur was the last of the Malla fortified villages to fall to the Gorkha forces of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769-70. At Chobar there was a family festival being celebrated and we were privileged to observe the religious procedures and food preparations. After driving up Phulchowki (at over 9,000 feet the highest point on the rim of the Valley) we viewed the surrounding peaks through rather hazy conditions, and on return called in to see Father Boniface at St Xavier's School at Godavari which is supported by some society members. To



The Secretary, Mrs Pratima Pandey, President of the Nepal-Britain Society and the Vice Chairman at the Shanker Hotel

our surprise they presented us each with a posy of flowers and had organised a concert for us. This included 80 primary school children singing "All things bright and beautiful" in English as well as in Nepali, plus a series of local dances performed by the senior students.

En route for Chitwan having left Kathmandu, we encountered the usual convoy of lorries grinding their way up the hills (or lying by the roadside with ominous signs of black oil oozing out of their gearboxes) together with two lorries trying simultaneously to get through a small gap in a landslide!

Our lodge at Chitwan, Temple Tiger, was in the park itself. On our arrival, we were greeted by two cheery boatmen who poled our boat across the river for a welcoming drink before we took the Landrovers to the lodge. During our three night stay in the park, the four elephant rides we had enabled us to see many of the native birds and animals, including wild rhinos and their calves. No tigers were seen but pug marks of two female and one male were seen on one morning ride showing that they had been about the previous night. A loud noise caused by two large rhinos fighting woke up the whole jungle!

We visited the King Mahendra Trust (KMT) centre at Sauraha. The director explained the centre's conservation activities and the progress they were making despite their limited finances. The museum was full of interesting anatomical specimens. A short ferry ride and walk brought us to the elephant breeding centre where, after waiting for the animals to return from grazing, we were nuzzled by a baby elephant who obviously thought our cameras might be a new type of food.

As we were behind schedule, great haste was made by our driver to get us back to the lodge. With dusk rapidly approaching, we began to wonder how we could sleep overnight in the coach! We need not have worried, as during the whole trip, the organisation was extremely good. The coach came to a halt by the riverbank. Out of the gloom the solitary boatman, who had patiently waited for us, appeared and quietly poled us up river to a point only he knew so well, turned into the main stream and then into turbulent waters before landing us exactly at a minute landing stage on the opposite bank in the dark. The waiting Landrovers obviated the possibility of a long walk back in the darkness. Racing through the night on familiar routes known to the drivers we were soon back in camp, despite a delay due to a rhino on the track who was not at all pleased to be disturbed.

From Chitwan we drove to Pokhara staying at a new hotel, the Phulbari Resort Hotel, built near the top of the main ravine. It was apparent that in the last ten years the town had grown almost beyond recognition, though it was disappointing to note that there were so few travellers and tourists in the hotels.

We drove up to Naudanda, a ridge overlooking the valley, and walked to the top where we located a fine picnic site with a great mountain backdrop for the

2002 tour. The mountains had not been visible for four days but our luck was in and the skies cleared giving us a view of the Fishtail in all its glory, with both points of the tail clearly visible from this excellent vantage point.



The 'recce party' at Naudanda with the Annapurna range in the background

We visited the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) headquarters in Pokhara. ACAP is one of KMT's most successful projects, having won major international awards for their work. The director gave us a graphic overview of the work the 130 staff members undertake in improving the area. The work includes training in managing tourism and improved agricultural techniques. For instance their design of a new type of more efficient stove is being readily accepted thus reducing reliance on firewood for fuel. After the house owner purchases the stove, ACAP pays for the transport, installation and maintenance costs. (*For a full description of ACAP see the 1995 journal. Ed.*)

We were privileged to be invited by Lt Col John Cross into his home where he has lived for many years since his retirement from the Brigade of Gurkhas. We had a stimulating conversation with a briefing on the local situation which was accompanied by a welcome cup of tea. We were made so welcome that we have brought back some copies of his latest



Lt Col John Cross 'at home' in Pokhara with the 'rece party'

book (and first novel) “The Throne of Stone” for any member who would like to buy a copy. *(The book is reviewed elsewhere in the journal. For a signed copy see me. Ed).*

The next part of our visit to the Pokhara valley was to the beautiful lake, Begnas Tal. The hotel manager and two boatmen were waiting for us in a boat with a sunshade and we were paddled quietly across the lake. After rounding the headland we saw the Begnas Lake Resort hotel chalets built into the hillside surrounded by fruit trees which provided our welcome drink of fresh orange juice. After climbing up to the restaurant, having passed its swimming pool, we had lunch on the balcony with fresh fish from the lake below. It was an idyllic setting. The boatmen paddled us back across the lake but the mobile phones refused to make contact with the Tiger Mountain Lodge so it was not possible to locate our next pick up point. On landing and wondering about our next move, we espied an olive green Landrover with its ex Gurkha driver standing quietly beside it. The driver knew every inch of the steep

and circuitous track up to the resort and with the engine roaring we arrived at the top just as the sun was setting. Marcus Cotton, a society member, welcomed us and after drinks and talking around the log fire, we settled down to dinner. Leaving later that night, the Landrover driver showed great skill in driving back to Pokhara, only pausing at a police checkpoint where the police officer said “You are most welcome in our country”, a welcome that was echoed throughout our visit.

Leaving Pokhara for Kathmandu, we stopped for two days at a newly constructed hotel, the Riverside Springs Resort hotel near Mugling with its own chalets and swimming pool. On the first day of our stay we drove to Gorkha and walked up the vast number of steps to the Gorkha Durbar or palace, the original seat of the Gorkha kings and the present Shah dynasty. The stunning view of Manaslu and the surrounding peaks was a rewarding sight after the arduous walk to get there. Next day, the use of the new cable car to Manakamana avoided a hard day’s walk and enabled us to visit the holy shrine known as the Bhagwati Mandir. This is a popular shrine where families pray for the birth of sons in particular. Climbing to the top, the mountains stood out with great beauty and the flat area upon which we were standing could be another picnic site for the 2002 tour. We then visited the homes of two Gurkha ex-servicemen, Bishnu Malla and Mahabir Gurung. Following the first visit, we were invited to see the village school at Khaireni with very basic working conditions that the teachers had to cope with. Due to the forced closure of boarding schools, the 2300 pupils were being taught in classes of about 130 by 15 teachers on a rota basis. Organised by a master with a whistle, the 500 pupils present gave us a PT display before setting off home. The school hopes that

some voluntary organisation will be able to come forward with finance to help them in the not too distant future.

Running late again for the second visit, we then met ex Sgt Maj Mahabir Gurung who greeted us in front of his hotel home. He led us out to the back of the house, down to the river where he proudly showed us the walkway suspension bridge he had built with the aid from the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT). We then walked on into his village at Kurintar where again supported by GWT, he had been able to install a clean water supply. We were invited into the homes of some of the villagers and it was most encouraging to see what one Gurkha ex-serviceman, supported by the GWT, could do to improve the living conditions of the village where he was born. Having already received a good deal of financial support for this village, further funds were not available for a much-needed school. He therefore set about building it himself, equipping it and persuading an 18 year old to be a teacher for the rest of the village children.

Leaving Mugling we drove to Nagarkot to see the mountains once more. On the way we stopped off to see the rusting remains of the Kathmandu chair lift. The old goods buckets are still hanging from the cables. It was interesting to think that all the equipment required for the successful ascent of Everest came up from the Terai in these buckets.

At Nagarkot, at the Chautari Hotel, we saw a marvellous sunset - the whole face of Langtang seemed to have a red hot



The 'recce party' relaxing over breakfast at Nagarkot

volcano pouring down it. Woken at 5.30 am to be ready for sunrise, the hotel ensured we were kept warm with hot coffee and tea whilst we stood on the promontory. No matter how often one sees sunsets and sunrises in the Himalayas, it always has a magical effect.

On our return to Kathmandu, we spent our last hours meeting friends and making our final shopping trips in Thamel for more 'retail therapy', including of course a visit to Pilgrims bookshop. A comment was made at Charles Wylie's talk last year on "Climbing the Fish's Tail" that Wilfred Noyce's book has been reprinted and we were pleased to find they still had copies in stock. *(These are paperback copies but do include the black and white photos. Ed).*

With all our treasures and happy memories of a most enjoyable tour, so well organised by Murray, we set off for home thinking about the official tour in 2002. Are you coming along next autumn? I do hope so.

***TIGER MOUNTAIN
NEPAL GROUP***

Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge & Tented Camp

Tiger Tops Tharu Village

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Village

Tiger Tops Karnali Jungle Lodge & Tented Camp

Mountain Travel Nepal

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Himalayan River Exploration

(Pioneers of wildlife, adventure and cultural travel in Nepal)

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BRITAIN-NEPAL OTOLOGY SERVICE (BRINOS)

by Neil Weir

At the end of November this year BRINOS completed its 22nd Ear Surgery Camp. Founded in 1988 with the purpose of assisting the then few Nepalese ENT surgeons to deliver ear care to those people unable to reach Kathmandu, BRINOS has held camps in many locations but predominately at Dharan in the east and Nepalgunj in the west.

So far 23,000 patients have been seen and treated and 2,370 operations to prevent the development of life threatening complications and restore hearing have been performed. At each camp we have the opportunity to work closely with Nepali ENT surgeons and to contribute to their training.



Ear surgery in progress



Hearing testing performed by the Community Ear Worker in a village screening camp

We were very conscious at the beginning that we were seeing the end stages of ear disease. Whilst these patients could not be ignored and were much in need of active surgical treatment we knew that about 50% of the problems we were seeing were in reality preventable.

The fact that in the Year of the Disabled (1981) a survey of disability in Nepal revealed that deafness was the largest single disability was uppermost in our minds when we commissioned a nationwide survey of deafness and ear disease in

1991. Over 16,000 people were surveyed over a period of eight months by a British and Nepalese team. The main findings were:

- 2.7 million out of the population of 19 million were significantly deaf
- 1.5 million had abnormal ear drums indicative of preventable ear disease
- 32% of hearing impairment is associated with middle ear infection or its sequelae and 70% of these sufferers are in the school age group
- 61% of individuals aware of ear problems had never attended their health post: of the 39% who had received treatment, 66% were unsatisfied

The last point in particular was the catalyst for our next project which was to collaborate with the Nepal Ear Foundation and IMPACT in a four year pilot scheme of Primary Ear Care. We chose the Kavre district of 350,000 people at the eastern end of the Kathmandu Valley and trained 24 Health Workers from ten health posts. They were supported by ENT surgeons from the

Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital who visited the district three times a week to operate and hold outpatient clinics. Some aspects of this study were successful but so much depended on the enthusiasm of the individual health worker whose task was to deliver a wide range of health care. Inevitably some neglected ear disease and concentrated more on life-threatening conditions.

During our time in Nepalgunj we have learnt of the provision of primary care in the field of eye disease. They have a strong successful community eye worker programme supported by volunteers from each village. In March 2000 we supported the appointment of the first community ear worker (CEW) who since has established himself in five village development committees (VDC's) and has trained 60 volunteers to assist him. He in turn is supported and was trained by the local ENT surgeon in Nepalgunj who in turn refers more complex surgical cases to our twice yearly ear surgery camps. This project has proved to be sustainable and self supporting and has already linked with the Banke branch of the King Mahendra Trust and is shortly to be reproduced in conjunction with the Community Health Unit of the Nepal Medical College. This year we have trained our CEW in hearing testing and in the care, maintenance and provision of hearing aids.



Donated anaesthetic equipment



A relaxing day off

We see this model as one which reaches out completely to the people of Nepal and is driven by them as the initiative and demand for ear care comes from the volunteers to whom the people turn.

There will still be a need for ear surgery camps outside the Kathmandu Valley and the catchment area of established ENT departments in regional medical schools. Where local ENT surgeons do not perform complex ear surgery they can nevertheless be involved in the training and support of CEW's. Mobile ear surgery camps can then be requested as the demand arises.

If we were to be asked what BRINOS has achieved over the last twelve years apart from quantifiable direct care, we would reply that firstly, the people of Nepal are now much more aware that their ear disease can be treated and, secondly, that we are gratified that there has been a marked increase in young doctors wishing to study ENT.

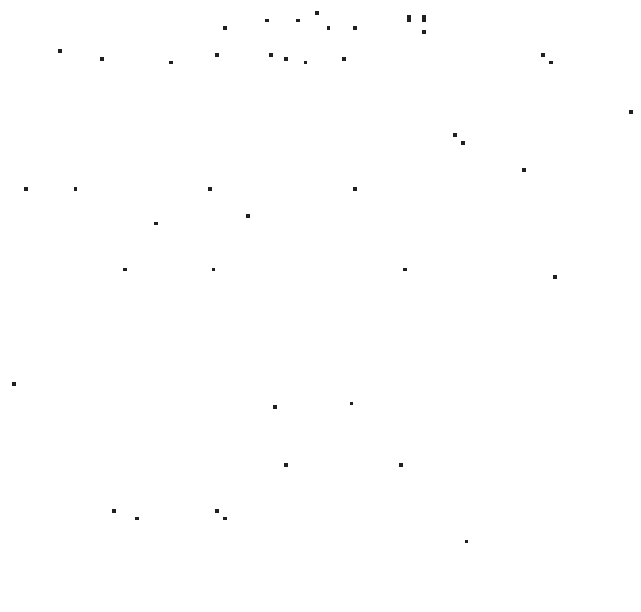
There are many highlights to each of the camps and each team member takes away with them wonderful memories of the country and its gentle trusting people. We often ask ourselves whether we would so willingly entrust ourselves to a group of foreign surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses!

BRINOS has now reached a stage of consolidation. We need to continue the

ear surgery camps but we equally need to put our resources and energies into establishing CEW's throughout the country. With the good co-operation of the ENT surgeons and the village district committees this should be realisable particularly in the areas of maximum population.

In time there will be more well trained

ENT surgeons who will not all stay in the Kathmandu Valley and with this will inevitably be an increase in the standard of ear care provision. BRINOS looks forward to co-operating with our Nepalese colleagues to achieve our common goal, namely the reduction of preventable ear disease and the restoration of hearing where possible.



A ROYAL TIGER SHOOT

by Colonel WG Gresham US Army (Retd)

(Colonel Bill Gresham was appointed as US Military Attache to Nepal in 1962/63, only the second officer to fill this post. Apart from his interest in hunting game, he was also an amateur radio enthusiast and as such was a friend of the late Father Marshall Moran. He operated from Kathmandu using the callsign 9N1 DD (ie 'Donald Duck') to partner Father Moran whose callsign was 9N1 MM (ie 'Micky Mouse'). Both these radio 'hams' encouraged me to open a station in Dharan using the 'stand by' radio station on the Singapore link. We used 9N1 BG. This station was operated for about 15 months, before orders were received that it should be closed down! This piece has been extracted from Hunting Dangerous Game with the Maharajahs compiled by Colonel JH Roush US Army (Retd) and is the chapter written by Colonel Gresham. The book is reviewed elsewhere in the journal by Mr RF Rosner, who was on the staff of the US Embassy at the time when these events took place. Lt Col Charles Wylie was the British Military Attache and as described also took part in the shoot. Quite apart from the change in attitude to such activities in this modern age, I feel sure that succeeding military attaches were and are much relieved that the honour of their nation was not dependent upon their ability 'to bag a tiger'! Sadly, Colonel Gresham died in early 1999 before the book was published. Ed).

In February 1963, I was included among the four foreign Military Attaches in Kathmandu who had the honor and good fortune to be invited to participate in the elegant and most exciting tiger shoot of HM King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who died in 1972 and was succeeded by his son Birendra.



*'Ready, aim, fire!'
Shooting from the howdah. Terai, c 1920*

The king had been crowned in 1955 as the only Hindu monarch of the world. He was supposedly "the incarnation of Vishnu", who, as the second god of the Hindu triad, was called the Preserver. He was also called "King of Kings, Five times Godly. Valorous Warrior and Divine Emperor." But he didn't act that way to us. He was quite open and cordial. It must have been a magnificent sight during the coronation activities to have seen the scores of gorgeously caparisoned elephants of the royal entourage parade around the Tundikhel, the vast parade ground in the center of Kathmandu.

Also attending were his brother Prince Basundhara, and other notables. The hunt was held in the District of Kanchenpur at the western end of the Terai region of the foothills of the Himalayas. The Terai jungles then constituted a great belt of rain forest that ran parallel to the Himalayas along the foothills. The Terai was refreshed by the many alpine torrents that flow out of the magnificent mountains.

The tactics of the convoluted hunt involved establishing an elephant ring, a moving wall of dozens of elephants enclosing within a massive circle one or more ferocious tigers. All that I had been told suggested the adventure would be an

exciting event that I was eager to take part in.

Those that had seen the operation on previous occasions spoke enthusiastically of the frenzied action generated in this jungle sports pageant. This sort of grandiose recreation was reserved for kings and princes, and was performed for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1961. This uniquely Nepalese tactic takes an enormous amount of organization, as it involves many active participants and dozens of highly trained elephants in the midst of undisturbed jungles and grass lands. Within the kingdom the royalty had the option of hunting over any selected area within hundreds of square miles. Some of the world's highest and most spectacular mountain peaks are displayed in the background like a gorgeous mural curtain to the pageant.

While in the past the massive hunts were held by Nepal's Rana Maharajas, this grand style of ostentatious shooting had not been done in Nepal for many years. In their magnificent displays of pageantry, those affairs had generated a reputation of being the most elaborate tiger hunts in the world. Some of the previous kings used to shoot for three months of the year, using as many as four hundred elephants. King Mahendra, although a keen and expert shot, was conscientiously involved in devoting his full time attending to the problems of his country and thus had little time for recreation.

Hunting with me were Lieutenant Colonel Charles G Wylie of the 10th Gurkhas and the British Military Attache (M.A.), the Indian M.A., Colonel Bir Man Singh and the Red Chinese M.A. Colonel Kan Mai. Both Col. Singh and I were experienced hunters, while Charles was not. The Chinese officer was a man of

unknown abilities. We were all excited to become a part of the sport of kings and princes - royal tiger shooting - and the *Terai* was noted for holding magnum sized tigers.

Our hunting trip commenced on a glorious morning when we assembled at the Royal Flight enclosure at Gauchar airport. The sun had just blessed the grand mountains of the Himalaya as we assembled. Wives were also included in the invitation for the party, so my wife Juanita and Pushpi Man Singh added feminine charm to the assemblage. Col. Kan Mai was accompanied by the required "interpreter", without whom the Red Chinese were not allowed to leave the Embassy.

We flew west in the Dakota DC-3 of the Royal Flight seated on folding canvas bench seats running down the sides. Tied down in the gangway were assorted supplies including a magnificent yellow tin bathtub of royal dimensions. We marveled at the views of magnificent mountains from the tiny windows as we flew at a slightly lower altitude. Billowing great white clouds accentuated the marvelous scenery.

We landed at Dhangarhi in the far western *Terai*. The scene suggested a different world, a landscape inhabited by contrasting people. We were met by Major Bharat Sinha of the Royal Nepalese Army (an infantry force of about 14,000 men), who had been detailed to be our escort. A two hour drive through thick *sal* and teakwood forest took us to the royal *shikar* camp, which was a more elegant bivouac than army people are accustomed to.

We were not in the jungle, but in a large area of tall grassland. A high wall tent stretching a hundred yards across was set up in the center. The fluttering

Charles Wylie was a member of the first successful conquest of Mount Everest with the Edmund Hillary Expedition. He was in charge of equipment and supplies for that memorable first ascent. Also a great climber, he reached the south Col at 7,986 meters.

standards proclaimed that a man of importance was there. Inside was the King's personal camp. An open belt a hundred yards wide surrounded this, outside of which were the tents of the other officials present as well as ours. In the area designated for the military attaches, we each had a large tent, sparsely furnished yet with a bottle of whiskey on the table. Each principal tent had a private enclosure with small tents for bath and latrine. A communal mess was set up, and two large campfires were kept going. In addition to our personal orderlies, we were attended by servants from the State Guest House at Kathmandu and orderlies from the Nepalese Army. Our stay was made more enjoyable by their thoughtful assistance.

We settled in, bathed, and changed clothes. That evening we were invited to have drinks with His Majesty, who inquired if we were comfortable. We were told that there were good auguries for a successful hunt. Later we walked to another part of camp to watch some local dances performed by *Tharu* natives. The dancers were shy and inquisitive. The women were adorned with silver jewelry, heavy ankle bangles, quaint black hoods and flared skirts. The men created a colorful display with their necklaces of animal's teeth and headdresses of peacock feathers. Their dancing within the flickering light of the camp fires suggested a scene from some quaint folk-opera ballet.

The next morning we asked if we might go out to watch the forming of the ring. Guests normally wait to go out until the ring has been set and there is news that a tiger has been enclosed.

First of all, young buffaloes are tied up as bait in various locations, usually in jungle not far from a river. When the tiger has killed the *katra*, he will drag the carcass off to a spot where he can eat his fill without disturbance. The tiger then

goes to the river to drink. Afterwards the tiger sleeps in dense cover, usually not more than three hundred yards away and often within tall elephant grass.

When a kill has been found the *shikari* will search for the tiger's pug marks. From those he will determine the size and sex of the animal and whether it is with cubs. He will also predict where the tiger will be lying up. With blazed trees or knots to the elephant grass he indicates where the ring should be formed. One had to be very careful to watch for cobras there in the high grass of the *Terai*.

On such royal tiger shoots there might be as many as 15 or 20 buffaloes tied out at any one day. At that time one could purchase a young bull for the equivalent of about five dollars. When a *shikari* finds one killed, he immediately reports *khobar* (news of tiger) at once. Often there might be five or six such reports each day, seldom none. His Majesty decided in the evening which tiger should be ringed and who should be designated as the shooter for the following day. The rule was that only one person should shoot at any one tiger, so that there would be no doubt as to who was successful.

The Nepalese officer in charge called out one by one our elephants by name, and their *mahout* had the huge creature come forward and kneel for us to mount. Despite their bulk, elephants are quite agile and move along briskly. We had hardly become accustomed to the ship-like rocking motion, when we came to the river where the tiger had drunk after his kill. On the far bank a blazed tree, marked by an earlier scout, indicated the point where the column of elephants divided to form the ring. The elephants had alternated in right and left turns. We emerged from the jungle into a large expanse of elephant grass, much of it twelve feet high. Our elephants proceeded through the reeds majestically with confidence and eventually met to

complete the ring.

All the participants then shouted in chorus to make the tiger aware there were people surrounding him. It was believed then that he would stay put. Then the elephants started beating the grass down with their trunks, creating a broad swathe of cleared ground around the perimeter of the ring. A silk white cloth six feet wide was then unfurled from an elephant to form a perimeter fence. While tigers could easily break through it or jump the screen, they are usually contained and turn back.

When the screen was up the *mahouts* all shouted, "*Khabardar*"! Then four or five specially trained attack elephants started looking for the tiger. Soon the tigers responded with frightening roars. The call of the tiger in its great *AH-OOONGH* is soul stirring, something I shall always remember, the beating elephants then ignored the tiger and started clearing a killing area in front of the elephant on which was riding the designated shooter. A semi-circle about thirty yards in radius was created. In the long elephant grass beyond the cleared area the dense reeds precluded any chance of seeing a tiger.

After these preparations we awaited the arrival of the royal party. During the pause we were entertained by the creatures of the forest. In addition to the fascinating scrambles of monkeys overhead, many birds flittered in and out of the scene. The elephants took advantage of the pause to pull browse from the vicinity. While we waited we were served an excellent lunch by the "mess elephant", including a complete bar for those so inclined.

With the arrival of the royal party we took our assigned places on the shooting *howdahs* and moved out. The shout of *Khabardar* rang out from the *mahouts*, and the elephants in the ring began their beat. When they approached the place

where we thought one tiger rested we heard great snarls and growls while the movements of the elephant grass disclosed the tiger's path as they ran about.

Within the ring formed by 36 elephants were several cornered tigers. Each tiger was a revved up fighting mass of diabolical fury, utterly fearless of man or elephant, and dangerous to both. When faced with a tiger's charge, the elephants responded with shrieking bellows and often stampeded out of the way. The thrills and heart-bursting excitement continued for much of the morning.

Occasionally the tiger charged one of the elephants, putting the great beast to flight. The elephant would retire temporarily to the screen, but then ponderously march back with great dignity. However, the elephant *Himil Kalli* was quite badly mauled and retired altogether from the ring.

Yet, the great tusker *Motiparsad* kept the others going. While we occasionally saw a flash of color as a tiger appeared briefly in part, no one had any clear shot. Suddenly, the melee was interrupted by a shot. The designated shooter of the day, the *Rajah-Kumar* of Kasipur, a relative of the Queen of Nepal, fired as the tiger warily crossed the cleared patch. He was hit in the spine and was immobilized. Two more shots finished the matter. The ring was broken and we all moved in to admire the tiger and load it up on a pad atop the elephant's back.

Since it was still quite early in the day, we were granted the privilege of going off *Phutkar* (open shooting). We were free to roam the area on our elephants in search of mixed game. Col. Wylie put up a hog deer but didn't get a clear shot. I was more fortunate in shooting a deer. While a *barasingha* crossed in front of the rest of the group, all missed the fleet stag. Later the *barasingha* was put up again and Kan Mai made his shot count.

On the next day all of the elephants were required for a beat by His Majesty, so the military attaches went off in a jeep for a duck hunt at a *jheel* (a body of water) some twenty miles away. Along the way several herds of *chital* were sighted. Col. Wylie dropped a buck with respectable antlers. While there were lots of ducks on the lake they seemed alert and took off before we could get a shot.

The following day the M.A.'s were designated as shooters and began their attempts to bag their tigers. Bir Man Singh, being the senior officer, went first. It was soon evident that we had more than one tiger in the ring. The elephants seemed to encounter tigers with every movement. As the circle of elephants drew in, narrowing the cover, the area seemed alive with irate tigers. The great cats were wild, rushing about at high speed, growling ferociously. The courses of the tigers were only indicated by the waving reeds and the agitation of the elephants.

Suddenly the grass parted right in front of us and a tiger dived under the screen and disappeared into the grass beyond. We had hardly recovered from that excitement, when another tiger bounded out and made for the screen on the other side of the elephant. He failed to get through. As he tried to fight his way over, he became tangled up in the screen. My elephant became very upset. Tigers to the right and left were altogether too much for his patience. My elephant retreated in a total stampede, while I hung on for dear life. However, Bir Man Singh seized his opportunity and dropped the splendid tiger with a fine shot. It measured nine feet seven inches.

Not content with our bag, the elephants found another tiger in the ring. Then it became Kan Mai's turn to shoot. While it had taken Col. Singh only a quarter hour

to bag his, four hours were consumed in the next assault. During that time another tiger charged the elephants and made his escape from the ring. The tiger nearly reached the *howdah*, giving an opportunity for a shot at close range. However Kan Mai missed and failed to reload in time for another shot. Still another tiger remained in the ring. Finally after eleven shots Col. Mai bagged his tiger, which turned out to be a six foot long cub.

Although it was late in the afternoon, General Nir⁽¹⁾, the Nepalese Commander in Chief, ordered another ring to be made. It was then Col. Wylie's turn to shoot. But by the time we had moved to another area and had formed the ring, there was less than an hour of daylight remaining.

We soon heard growls. An angry animal rushed forward, bounding in and out of the grass in full charge. His charge was announced by a blood-curdling roar. Col. Wylie found it difficult to get his sights on the tiger who disappeared unscathed. When shooting from a quivering elephant, it is unlikely that you will get more than one aimed shot. So it must be placed well and allow for a proper lead.

Soon the tiger returned in another rapid advance. "Shoot, Shoot," shouted everyone. Several shots did not drop the beast. I saw it tumble in the air, but right itself.

"It's wounded, it's dying," someone called out, but the tiger had disappeared completely. There were growls everywhere, and elephants trumpeting, for one tiger had jumped up on the back of a pachyderm several places to my right. Fortunately the men aboard escaped injury.

Then I told General Nir that I could see a tiger looking at me. The General suggested that I shoot. I was using a

(1) Later promoted to Field Marshal

30.06 rifle, and I fired three rounds. I was apprehensive of the effectiveness of the first round, for sometimes the truculent elephant foils your shooting. At the precise moment of trigger pull the beast may take it into her head to fidget. I was certain that I had hit the tiger. He roared with a volume of threat I've never heard before or since. One knew that he was hurt and more importantly he was angry as hell! But unfortunately no body could be found. There was still an awful lot of fearful roars from live tigers challenging from within the ring. However, it became completely dark. So we lifted the screen, while *mahouts* remained in the area, lit fires and kept a vigil all night long around the ring.

When we returned the next morning we found a large tiger laid out in the grass, the one I believed I fired at, measuring nine feet three inches. General Nir decided that it was mine, for it was found not far from where I had shot at the animal. No other dead tigers were found. Col. Wylie's tiger was not found, and we all concluded that he had missed. Yet he was eager to try again and got aboard the shooting *howdah* to resume the hunt.

Soon one was located in a clump of reeds, and his elephant proceeded toward it. The beating elephants flushed the predator and Wylie had a reasonable shot as it bounded away at about forty yards range. This time there was no doubt of the result. It was quite immobilized. The ring was broken, and Col. Wylie finished it off.

We knew there was still another tiger in the ring. Prince Gyanendra, the King's second son, was designated as the shooter, and he was successful. Yet another tiger was found within the ring and was shot by Prince Gyanendra. As we picked up the three tigers killed that morning we found them to all be young animals who had been with their mother. Col. Wylie bagged a seven foot young tigress.

The morning was still young. As the

elephants were needed by the King, we asked if we could hunt black buck antelope from the landrovers. I had been in the area before and had seen a herd in that vicinity. We eventually spotted them and went into action. We took advantage of a low ridge in front of us. The four military attaches took up positions on the ridge while the natives driving the vehicles worked around the herd's flanks and pushed them towards the hunters. The plan worked perfectly, and I got the largest buck with a splendid set of horns. It was a standing shot from 200 yards. Those black buck are such graceful animals. The sight of the herd of 20 or 25 animals leaping five or six feet in the air at each stride was quite an impressive sight.

That night His Majesty decided that the two young tigers shot by Colonels Wylie and Mai would not count against their quota. They were to be given a second chance to shoot mature animals. Kan Mai took the first ring the following morning, becoming the designated shooter, where it was believed there were three tigers. One came out fairly soon and paused conveniently in the open to give Col. Mai a good shot, which he did well. The remaining two were unusually lively. General Nir judged them to be young animals, about eight feet in length. General Nir asked Col. Wylie if he wanted to try for one of those, however he declined. The screen was lifted and the ring of elephants broken to allow the young tigers to scamper off. However they remained with their parent, and soon they had all of our elephants trumpeting and stampeding in a wild melee. One tusker was vigorously fending off a young tiger with his tusks. Finally the ring of elephants withdrew, and the tuskers eased the young tigers off toward the jungle. Gen. Nir measured Kan Mai's tigress and determined it to be nine feet three inches, exactly the same length as mine. We spent

the afternoon with shotguns after black partridge.

On the next morning Col. Wylie had another chance within a small ring. All was ready when we drove up to the scene, and I climbed into the shooting *howdah* with General Nir. Prince Basundara and Prince Gyanendra, carrying rifles, rode other elephants. Other men were equipped with cine cameras. Col. Wylie felt as if he were on the spot, with everyone directing their attention upon his performance. The *shikaris* said the tiger was a big one. Each of his fellow military attaches had their tiger in the bag, so we gave him plenty of advice when the movements through the grass started. Soon the tiger was at the screen and paused momentarily.

"Shoot, shoot!" everyone shouted. Excitement ran high, but he was determined to wait his time for a clear shot, in spite of all his colleagues' impatience. Col. Wylie could not see more than an occasional flash of stripes. Thick cover obscured the dashing beast. Then suddenly the tiger was fully visible as he made a broad bound over an opening where the grass had been beaten down. Wylie's shot hit the tiger in the spine, we learned later. While it was not a good placement, the shot did put the tiger down.

The momentum of the tiger's rush carried him to the edge of the long grass, where he lay still breathing. The ring was broken and Col. Wylie gave the beast a final *coup de grace*. It took a dozen men to pull the big tiger out, for it measured nine feet ten inches.

The *shikaris* performed a ritual to placate the spirits of the great tiger, much as they had done for the others. They placed seven bits of grass side by side and put a drop of blood on each, this to appease the *Bhandevi* (spirits). We then moved on to the next ring.

We had reached the last day of shooting and entered the last ring. His

Majesty was to shoot. The *shikaris* had reserved what they believed to be the largest tiger. The local villagers had told many stories about a monster tiger frequenting the area. Thus excitement ran high.

When the beating began it became quite clear the *shikaris* were right, judging by the exceptionally loud roars. It was also apparent that the tiger had no intention of being flushed. He didn't wait for the elephants to move his way. He attacked them first off. He showed that he had the upper hand. The elephants were afraid of the great predator and scattered all over the ring. The tiger drew blood from the largest tusker. Hours passed without our gaining a glimpse of the great tiger. Just as darkness was about to fall, the tiger was spotted with a faint outline partially masked by foliage, lying up half way around the ring. The King sent the Rajah of Kasipur around to take the shot. After much pointing of the rifle and peering through the telescopic sights, a shot was fired. However the deep growls continued and the elephants continued their tremors. The King rode up and added several shots. The excitement was intense. It was almost dark, and we couldn't see what the status was. We would have to ascertain if the tiger was dead or wounded.

Then quite suddenly a dramatic ending brought the hunt to a conclusion. A flash of lightening and then a clap of thunder caught our attention as the sky became indigo. The next moment a severe storm hit us, a miniature hurricane. Sheets of rain sent us retreating toward shelter. The elephants all took off for camp, with us clinging on for dear life. The ring had disintegrated and the shooters were being borne away in haste. Later, Princess Princep, a devout Hindu, told us that a similar situation occurred whenever the Lord of the Jungle is killed. The great tiger had expired at the very moment the

storm broke. It was appropriate for him to be called the Lord of the Jungle, for he was huge, ten feet eight inches, the third largest tiger ever taken in Nepal. No rain had been expected during that month, yet we had a deluge.

We had a very pleasant evening in camp enjoying a farewell buffet supper with the Royal family, who were cordial and informal hosts and hostesses. The King came outside with the military attaches and inspected each tiger, complementing each officer in turn. His facility in discussing guns and shooting equipment and techniques gave us the impression that he was a most knowledgeable sportsman. As the United States Military Attache I saw King Mahendra weekly. He impressed me as both smart and capable. I had the opportunity to fire one of his rifles which had been a present from President Eisenhower.

Although I had much prior hunting experience I had far more excitement in those few days than within any other earlier outdoor adventures. Like any other initiate I had for a second or two the sudden spasm of fear when facing the overpowering roar of a tiger charging the elephant I was riding. The tiger was a thunderbolt of powerful action launched in fury. If one fell off the *howdah* heaven

help the man afoot.

The thrills of those several days remain vivid in my memory. I recall well those infuriated tigers, seeing the great striped bodies hurtling forward against the ring of elephants. The strains of the confrontation overcame the calm that I tried to maintain as a seasoned Infantry Officer and veteran of deadly combat.

About a year later I was fortunate to bag my second tiger from a *machan* at Hitaura, a fine male tiger that measured 10 feet 2 inches. A near shot behind the ear did him in, using my own rifle, a 30.06 caliber. I was hunting then with Gen. Nir's brother, who later served as Nepal's Attache in London.

I tried several times to shoot a leopard, but each time I missed. Following three missed shots the natives told me that I was not destined to kill a leopard, and they would not participate in further attempts. They were very superstitious people with many restraints in their complicated animist beliefs.

I came away from my duty in Nepal with the conclusion that one who goes after tiger has reached the ultimate hunt. Surely the tiger epitomizes the peak of ferocity, incredible strength and savage cunning.

social climbers.



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THE GURKHA MUSEUM IN KATHMANDU

by Major (Retd) Maniparsad Rai late 7th Gurkha Rifles

In the early 90's a group of ex-Gurkhas conceived the idea of setting up a museum in their own native land to show their countrymen and their children the legacy from the Brigade of Gurkhas in which they had spent their lives. Their initial action was to organise the first Victoria Cross Holders' Reception in 1994 in Kathmandu. During the welcome ceremony, the famous sons of the country were felicitated for having brought so much honour to the Nation. Naturally too, a case for the preservation of the historical memorabilia from the Brigade of Gurkhas and Gorkha Brigade (Indian Army) in a dedicated Museum in Kathmandu, was put to the Chief Guest, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. The Prime Minister was very encouraging.

There was delay, His Majesty's Government finally authorised the establishment of the Gurkha Memorial Trust-cum-Museum in 1996 and allocated Nrs. 1,000,000 (about £10,000). Thus a start was made. The Museum is in Lainchaur, in a side street, opposite the Malla Hotel. It is housed in a rented flat converted to an office, store and Display Rooms. Collection of uniforms, medals, badges and other military items were solicited from all and sundry. A great start was made with donations from individual ex-Servicemen who gave swords and uniforms to give the Museum an authentic look. Some Regiments and the Gurkha Museum at Winchester have contributed generously with items surplus to their own collection. It's all grist to the mill! The Museum has also purchased medals and books written about the Gurkhas with a view to building up a library in the future.

In 1998 the Museum staff organised the 2nd Gathering of the VC Recipients. This time, befittingly, the Highlight was the audience with His Majesty the King at the Royal Palace. The Museum's founding members had seen their dream come true.

The Museum is here to stay, or is it? It had been naively assumed that HMG having given a starting grant would continue to give a similar grant annually. Not so! The staff have had to apply for a Government grant each year for far less generous handouts. They have also had to explore other possible sources of income generation in order to keep the museum going. These efforts have led them to organise Nepali Cultural Shows, sale of souvenir items, sponsorship and advertise for membership of the Museum. Visiting dignitaries have not been spared either! Thus measures to generate more funds have been receiving a high priority.

The Executive Committee with Chairman Capt (QGO) Yeknarain Gurung, Ex2GR is anxious but not daunted. They have come a long way but know that they have not arrived - yet. They intend to have a place of their own. To this target, HMG has been requested to grant them land where the Museum may be built. If and when that land is available, there will be a major drive for funding to build the Museum itself and the attendant furniture and precious military memorabilia to fill the showcases.

Appeal: These retired soldiers have come thus far with little but a dream to sustain them. They have a long way to go yet and the problems are daunting. Merely staying alive is one of them. Readers interested in assisting this band of visionaries or inquiring about any particular matter are invited to contact the members at the following address:

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ACORN Nepal Trust

(Aid for Children of Rural Nepal Trust)

Charitable Society Regd. No. 701/1999



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ACORN Nepal Trust

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 FROM THE EDITOR'S IN-TRAY

A Progress Around Nepal

Below is an extract from a letter I received from Lt Col (Retd) John Cross who is currently compiling an oral history of Gurkha ex-servicemen. This has involved him and Buddhiman in a good deal of travel through the country, including visits to the Gurkha Welfare Trust's area welfare centres (AWCs). I felt that this piece was very evocative and I have his permission to share it with you through the journal:

Buddhiman and I got back to Pokhara safely after a 46-day quest for oral military history in the east of the country. I had arranged for ex-servicemen to collect in eight AWCs, six of which could only be reached by walking and, although the total distance was 160 miles over seven mountains, the highest climb being around the 8,500 feet mark - taking ten hours, freezing much of the time - we walked for three days thrice and two days thrice. In one centre a jackal got over the wire and was killed by one of the porters. Early next morning people started queuing up for the blood and the meat, the former being a cure for venereal disease, the latter for arthritis.

On our walk three 'firsts' were: four pine martens 'cavorting' all at once; a peacock in a field of winter wheat with his mate flying around overhead; and a Sherpa youth in his early teens, stark nude and weeping, one hand covering his genitals and the other wiping his tears, as he was being scourged along the track, driven by two hard-faced women with rattan canes. I had neither seen nor heard of such treatment but Buddhiman said that, when small, he had heard that such punishment was meted out for one day to those who had tried to run away from home. The rhododendron forests were ablaze with red flowers and, for much of

the time, the Himalayas starkly visible. In the uplands we saw several yak trains with up to a dozen animals at a time, all 'dressed' in colourful ribbons and cords, driven by young teenagers.

The whole journey made a wonderful pedestrian, in its literal sense, change from normal morning walks. I was happy to note that, even the two days we walked about 25 miles there were no aches or pains. However, after eight hours of watching where Buddhiman put his feet down in front of me so I could 'manage' my tunnel vision specs, I did start to feel a touch giddy. I had last visited the east eleven and a half years ago. I was astonished and humbled at the overwhelming warmth universally shown. Of those who came to meet me a few had walked for three days, many for two, with the best part of a day's journey a commonplace for the remainder. Both for renewing old friendships and for my historical quest, I felt it was an unmitigated success with sincere and unabashed demonstrations of friendship everywhere. In some cases tears and a choking voice were a testament of sincerity mere words could not have shown. We interviewed 178 ex-servicemen to make a total east and west of around 300, and collected some good stories. Since then I have been very hard at it, producing two drafts for the publisher as he only has room for 33% of my material and until he gets it he cannot judge whether he wants a little of a lot or a lot of a little.

I was delighted to meet up with those who had been with me in earlier years. Apart from men from my old company, a man in another regiment well remembered when I walked into his camp one evening, having escaped from an Iban longhouse when, the previous night, I had

been threatened with decapitation, and locked into a room the better to be decapitated the next - that very! - morning. He was the man who had brewed me a drink of tea, the most welcome I had ever had in my life, I told him, as it had been a long day with nothing at all till then. Another man had been with me in a swamp when the company of my sister battalion to my north, not having been told that our operational boundary had been extended to the north, nearly caused a horrendous shoot out between us. We only did not have a face-to-face massacre by the man on my left recognising cousin. Such reminiscences rolled the years back in no time flat!

JP Cross

UK Assistance for Tiger Monitoring in Nepal

The British Government has given a grant of US\$ 36,000 to WWF Nepal for a tiger-monitoring project in Chitwan, Bardia and Shuklaphanta tiger conservation units.

According to a press release of the British Embassy here in Kathmandu, WWF Nepal will use the funds to work with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation to monitor tigers in the wild. The technology of camera trapping has been applied in the Royal Bardia National Park since 1997 and was extended to Shuklaphanta in 1998. The field teams have been able to use the pictures to gather information about 28 tigers (24 in Bardia and 4 in Shuklaphanta). This data has been compiled and analysed to develop a comprehensive and unique record of a species threatened with extinction.

This project is part of an on-going programme of conservation activities funded by the British Government which

includes a study of Nepal's compliance with its CITES obligations which was published in May 1999.

This is an extract from the Kathmandu *Independent* on 12 Jan 00, now defunct:

Unveiling Princely Nepal

'Unveiling Princely Nepal' was the title given to an exhibition held in August 2001 by the Gurkha Museum in Winchester as part of the ongoing programme of special events. The exhibition consisted of a display of rare photographs taken by three generations of the Chitraker family who have been court photographers since 1901. Most of the photographs were taken by Dirgha Man Chitraker with some also from his son's work, Ganesh Man Chitraker who took over from his father in 1908. The display also featured more recent work done by Kiran Man Chitraker (son of Ganesh Man) who is also Chief Cameraman for Nepal Television. The original idea for the exhibition stemmed from Louise Weir, of Headline Book Publishing, whose family has long connections in Nepal. Her great grandfather was the doctor to the British Resident in Kathmandu and her grandfather was born in Kathmandu in 1891. It was whilst Louise's parents were on a visit to Kathmandu that they met Betty Woodsend, an American citizen, formerly on the staff of the US Embassy, who chose to remain in Nepal and after 40 years still lives there. Betty knew the Chitraker family well and from this meeting the idea for the exhibition was born. The photographs provided a unique opportunity to look at the rich cultural heritage and social transformation that occurred from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day. The picture featured in the review article on big game hunting in Nepal and India is from the Chitraker collection.

The Gurkha Welfare Trust Charity Race Day at Newmarket 30th June 2001

The Gurkha Welfare Trust was fortunate in being allocated one of the much prized 'charity race days' at Newmarket on 30th June. The weather was good, as was the turnout to support the event from the public, including members of the society. Thanks to the hard work of the organising committee and the inspiration from Mrs Lavinia Lynam whose idea it was, along with generous sponsors, led by HSBC, a total £250,000 was raised for the Trust.



General Sir Sam Cowan flanked by the Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers with Mrs Lavinia Lynam



The Band and Pipes & Drums of the Brigade of Gurkhas on the Course at Newmarket

The Late Sir Anthony Duff (Obituary 2000 Journal)

It has been pointed out to me that Sir Anthony was chairman of the Society for a short period in 1967/68. He had to relinquish the appointment on his sudden posting to Kuala Lumpur.

FCO Advice

Anyone wishing to travel abroad is advised to check the updated situation via the Internet.

The website is: www.fco.gov.uk. From the main page go to the lefthand side menu and see 'travelling overseas', choose the relevant country for advice, current highlights and background briefs.



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 REVIEW ARTICLES

HUNTING GAME IN NEPAL AND INDIA

Gone are the days. *By Peter Byrne.*
Safari Press Inc, 2001. Pp xxiv + 342.
Illus. Notes. Bibliog. Hb. US\$ 70. ISBN 1
57157 130 2. Limited edition of 1000
copies available only from the publisher
at www.safaripress.com

Hunting dangerous game with the Maharajahs. *By John H Roush and Shuja Ul Islam. Himalayan Books, 2001. Pp xx + 311. Appx. Glossary. Index. Hb. US\$ 70. ISBN 0 9600830 2 2. Available from the authors at www.coljhroush@home.com. Orders by post may be made to Col JH Roush, 27 Terrace Avenue, Kentfield CA, USA. Fax 415 459 5183.*

The early years of the 1960s were a special time for those of us privileged to have lived then in Nepal and to a slightly lesser extent, in India. The British Raj had ended only 14 years before and its legacy was still a palpable presence. Indeed, there were everyday echoes not only of the post 1857 Imperial Raj but also of an even earlier time. Both Nepali and Indian rupees were current in Nepal, with the latter worth somewhat more than the former. It was usual when given a price in the bazaar to ask: “*kampani ki mohar?*” Nepali rupees were called *mohars* after the small common gold coin of pre-Mutiny India while the name for Indian rupees harked back to the coins of the Honourable East India Company in use at the same time.

Although solar topees had gone out of fashion (except for Indian Railway Station Masters) it was still possible to engage in the same field sports – big game hunting, bird shooting and pig sticking which were

so much a part of the pre-Independence life of Sahibs – both European and Indian. The advent of the jeep opened large areas of formerly remote Indian jungles to weekend shikaris. The controls and restraint of the Raj and Native Princes were replaced by a much more “democratic” attitude about the use of land and conservation of game and other natural resources.

In Nepal the situation was different. Historically big-game hunting, especially of tigers was the prerogative of the Royal family and the Ranas, the erstwhile hereditary Prime Ministers and de-facto rulers of Nepal. In 1960, King Mahendra overturned the elected Nepali Congress government and assumed direct rule. The King was an avid hunter and continued the formal big game shoots at which it was common to entertain visiting British Royalty and other dignitaries. During a royal visit in 1961 Prince Philip, who was then president of the World Wild Life Fund, was only able to avoid shooting by pleading an “infected” trigger finger. So as not to further offend the Nepalese, who had gone to prodigious expense to provide a shooting “camp” of great luxury, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home undertook the shooting honours. Although a noted field sportsman in Britain, Lord Home had never shot at a tiger before from the back of an elephant and after missing twice required assistance of two other members of the party to kill the animal. He went on to bag a rare Indian Rhinoceros. While the shoot was condemned in much of the British press as cruel blood sport and the waste of an unconscionably large amount of money by one of the poorest countries in the world, King Mahendra continued his formal tiger shoots, although on a less lavish scale.

Unlike Africa, with its professional “White Hunters” hired by rich Europeans and Americans to take them on *Safari* – the Arabic word for “journey” (the root *safar* – has come into Hindustani and Nepali with the same meaning – but without the romantic African overtones), big-game hunting in India under the British Raj was the province of the Native Aristocracy, British civil and military officers and planters. It was not only a socially acceptable avocation but was viewed as positively contributing to the general good by eliminating animals that represented a threat to the population – most particularly tigers. This was especially true of the planters, who lived in close proximity with the native population and wildlife. From the very beginning of the British experience in India a steady stream of books concerning Indian wildlife, especially the tiger, and the authors’ adventures in the jungle, appeared on the lists of London publishers. The most famous being those of Jim Corbett – the legendary hunter of man-eating tigers, whose books, after 50 years, remain in print in India and elsewhere.

The year 2001 saw the publication of two books, which arguably could be the last of the first hand accounts of what life was like as the old-order of Maharajahs and Sahibs was coming to an end and the shooting of tigers was still a measure of a man’s stature.

Peter Byrne’s aptly entitled *Gone are the Days* is firmly in the Corbett tradition. It is the never to be repeated story of Byrne’s life among the people of India as a tea planter in Eastern India and of the circumstances which later drew him into becoming a professional “White Hunter” in Nepal – one of the very few in the Sub-Continent. Even though India had achieved independence almost a year before Byrne arrived to work as an Assistant Manager for The Doors Tea

Company, his living and working conditions had changed very little from those of fifty years before. We learn much about the Indians and later the Nepalese, with whom Byrne worked in the past and continues to do so to this day. While much of the book is concerned with *Shikar* (the Hindustani and Nepali word for hunting) it is always in the context of the time and place. It must be remembered that there were many more tigers in India and Nepal when sport hunting was strictly controlled and there was relatively little poaching for Chinese medicine or encroachment on the habitat of the tiger and its natural prey by an ever-expanding population. It was the increase in poaching and the deterioration of habitat that caused Byrne to cease commercial hunting in 1968 and to establish a game reserve in his former hunting ground in southwest Nepal. The story how this area became the fully protected Royal Sukila Phanta Wildlife Reserve is a testimony to his persistence and dedication in the face of indifference and often outright antagonism of the international conservation establishment. *Gone are the Days* is written in a fluent anecdotal style and will evoke memories of the Sub-Continent for anyone who has ever visited there. *Gone are the Days* will stand as the worthy culmination of the longstanding literary tradition of books ostensibly about *shikar*, but which impart the writer’s deep understanding of the land, people and animals of South Asia.

Hunting Dangerous Game With The Maharajahs is in the tradition of another kind of Indian sporting memoir – that which is focused very much on the details of the chase. The major part of the book is taken up by the hunting experiences of Shuja Ul Islam, a member of a wealthy North Indian Muslim family. His father was a close friend of the Hindu Maharaj-Kumar of Benares with whom he shared a passionate love for the hunting of tigers

and other big game. This is an account of hunting in India, complete with Solar Topis, whisky pegs, elephants and very expensive double rifles from Holland & Holland, in fact all of the impedimenta of the British Raj, but without the British. According to Shuja Ul Islam the major difference in shikar dress between the British and his group of Indians, was that the former wore neckties and latter did not. With almost unlimited time and resources, unlike most British sportsmen, Indian princes and others of the privileged classes were able to run up fantastic bags of tigers and other big game. The Maharaj-Kumar of Benares alone shot over 300 tigers. Even though *Hunting Dangerous Game With The Maharajas* is primarily a book about hunting, it does provide a window on a little known aspect of life in pre-Independence India. Nowadays the princes have turned their palaces into hotels and Shuja Ul Islam, after migrating first to Pakistan, now lives in California.

Besides Shuja Ul Islam's reminiscences and other hunting stories, *Hunting Dangerous Game With The Maharajas*, contains the account of a formal tiger shoot in 1963 by the King of Nepal. This account appears in full elsewhere in this edition of 'the journal'. It is of particular interest to members of the Britain-Nepal Society, as one of our most distinguished members Lt. Col. Charles Wylie was a participant, along with the American Military Attaché, the late Col. William Gresham, who wrote the account, and the Indian and Chinese attachés.

While the reviewer was too far down in the diplomatic pecking order to be invited to a royal shoot he did loan his heavy rifle to Charles Wylie for the Attachés Shoot and has vivid memories of hearing first hand accounts of it from both Charles and Bill Gresham shortly after their return to Kathmandu from the Terai. The reviewer also went out on *shikar* three times with

Peter Byrne, finally shooting his own tiger, a cattle killer over a natural kill, on the last *shikar*, having already left Kathmandu en-route to a posting in South America. The reviewer realizes that much of what is discussed in these books is very politically incorrect by most current standards. However, the reading of them has brought renewed clarity to his recollections of his own days in the field in Nepal with gun or rifle. These are among the most vivid and happy memories of what were probably the most interesting and formative years of his life. To be on *shikar* was to be an active participant in the life of the jungle – where everything, including man, is either predator or prey – or many cases both at the same time.

R F Rosner

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST TO BIRDWATCHERS VISITING NEPAL AND INDIA

Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

By Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp. Christopher Helm, 1998. (Reprinted by Oxford University Press, Delhi, for sale on the Subcontinent). Pp 887. 153 Colour plates. Distribution maps. List of References. Gloss. Index. £55. Hb ISBN 0 7136 40004 9.

Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

By Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp. Christopher Helm, 1999. Pp 384. 153 Colour plates. Distribution maps. Tables on difficult species. List of references. Index. £17.99. Pbk. ISBN 0 7136 5165 2.

Birds of Nepal. By Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp. Christopher Helm, 2000. Pp 288. 110 Colour plates. Appdx. Tables. List of References. Gloss. Index. £19.99. Pbk. ISBN 0 7136 5166 0.

When I first carried out a tour of duty in Nepal in 1962 I was introduced to bird watching by one of the civilian surveyors engaged on the final phases of the construction of the camp in Dharan. As the Motor Transport Officer I frequently travelled the road between Dharan and Jogbani, the rail head in India. It would have been hard not to have noticed the birds on that journey. Storks, egrets and kingfishers were abundant in the paddy fields and ditches. The only field guides available at that time were those produced by the famous Indian ornithologist, Salim Ali, which I obtained from Darjeeling. The books remained the only field guides for the area, (although *A Field Guide to the Birds of South East Asia* was useful) until *Birds of Nepal* by Fleming, Fleming and Bangdel appeared in 1976. Over the previous fifteen years Nepal had seen a huge growth in tourism including wildlife tourism. Fleming filled the bill but there were no species distribution maps and the colour reproduction left much to be desired. It proved very popular however and went on to a third edition published in 1984. By an administrative oversight I left my first edition behind in 1989 when I returned for a second tour this time to Kathmandu. Fortunately I bought a second copy in Thamel for about NRS 700 and thought no more of it until I was asked by visitors for copies. None were to be had with the exception of a very part-worn copy on offer at \$100 at Lakeside in Pokhara. Even now copies in the UK in specialist booksellers range from £25 to £50. At last however a good deal of material has been produced. The major work is *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* by Grimmet, Inskipp and Inskipp. An update on the ten volume *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* by Ali and

Ripley (see obit. Ripley elsewhere) was long over due. This work does not fully replace the *Handbook* but the colour plates which are well drawn, and the quality of reproduction are vast improvements. It is a rather weighty tome for field use but this is where its value lies. Possibly recognising this, the *Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* based on the larger work has been produced by the same authors as a field guide companion. This has distribution maps that are helpful, my only real criticisms are that the maps do not occur adjacent to the relevant colour plates, and that local names are not included. The books use the Sibley & Monroe taxonomic order rather than the standard Voous order which is initially somewhat confusing. Also stemming from the larger work is *Birds of Nepal* a field guide of good quality again based on the same series of plates but in a smaller format. There are no distribution maps but altitude and habitat are given for the likely range of each species. It follows the standard format with species descriptions shown opposite the pictures and with very much improved colour reproduction. I had the opportunity to use both these guides on a recent visit to India and Nepal. The sizes of the books allow them to be fitted conveniently into outside rucksack pockets or safari jackets. A fourth edition of the Fleming book has been produced but with all the new quality work now on the market its value, apart from collectors, must now be very limited. It is pleasing that at last good quality practical guides are now available to birdwatchers visiting Nepal and the remainder of the Subcontinent.

GDB

 BOOK REVIEWS

The Throne of Stone. By JP Cross.
Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 2000.
Gloss. NCRs 650. Pb. ISBN 99933 10 07 7.

Many will have read Cross's earlier books describing a unique career in the Far East. This career took him from Burma in 1944 to Indo-China, Malaya, Borneo and back to Indo-China (as DA in Laos) and finally to Nepal. On retirement he settled in Nepal, with special Royal permission, where he has lived ever since. His book *The Call of Nepal* tells of how he settled in Nepal and something of his life and experiences there. *The Throne of Stone* is his first attempt at a full work of fiction. The historical background is unusual as the plot is set against an early period of history, 1479 - 1559. Most members of the society have at least a passing knowledge of the rise of the house of Gorkha, the exploits of Prithi Narayan Shah and the events of the early part of the 19th century leading to the Anglo Nepali War of 1814-15 and thereafter. This earlier period is however much less well known. Cross has used his researches whilst at Tribhuvan University to good effect providing an outline of real historical events within which to weave his plot, much based on the history researched by Professor Regmis. The story surrounds the inter action between differing tribes at various levels in the Western hills and with the plains people. He describes how the Tibetan monks go about obtaining young recruits for the remote monastery, and how the traditional relationships between villagers of the high and middle hills and the plains of northern India interact. The story tells of how, during this early period of history, these relationships and rivalries became disrupted due to famines across the area and the impact this had over a large area of the hills and plains. The plot centres around a small area of Nepal

whose tribal chief had, by tradition, been proclaimed on a large stone on top of a mountain, but the story stretches to Delhi and its Moslem rulers of that time. The dramatic khud race described in the story is a true life event, and the knick in the wooden roof of the temple at Gorkha is actually there to see. The plot is complex and requires concentration in order to follow the story. Cross has realised this and has provided a list of the main players to which the reader can refer. There is also a chronology of events. A knowledge of Nepal and its customs is also essential to get full benefit from this well written yarn. It portrays a very basic and brutish life style that existed in those times where feuds, violence and superstition were endemic. This original and fascinating book is not one to be read in bed before sleep, requiring reading with concentration in as smaller number of sittings as possible. The book has been translated into Japanese and there was talk in Nepal of its suitability for a film. Cross is considering a sequel to bring the story up to more modern times. The book can be obtained either directly from Cross c/o BFPO 4. The cost is £10, incl p&p, cheque to Nat West, Sturminster Newton Branch, sort code 55-61-09, or through the Gurkha Museum.

GDB

(I have a limited number of signed copies available. Ed.)

English all over the place. By Gerry Abbott & Bob Jordan, *Starhaven, London, 2001. Pp iv + 158 £10. Pb. ISBN 0 936315 15 6.*

This delightful book written by Dr Bob Jordan (a member of the society) and Gerry Abbott describes their experiences whilst teaching English in a number of

widespread and diverse places around the world. These include Finland, Nepal where Jordan was posted as a British Council officer, Sierra Leone, Greece and China. Jordan writes of his own experience of 'searching for the Spiny Babbler' in the Kathmandu valley (see obituary - Dillon Ripley elsewhere) with Bob Fleming, co-author with his father, of *Birds of Nepal*. He also tells of his experience of a snake in the Officers' Mess in Dharan. Abbott recounts stories from Thailand, Sabah, Sarawak and Burma amongst others. These reminiscences are sympathetically and sensitively written which the reviewer found strongly evocative. Each chapter can be read separately with its own anecdotes making it a good bedside read or it can be read straight through. This highly readable book will, I am sure, strike chords with many members especially those who have worked and travelled abroad.

GDB

Tibetan Border Worlds: A Geohistorical Analysis of Trade and Traders. By Wim van Spengen. Kegan Paul International, 2000. Pp 307. Maps. Figs. Illus. Glossary. Refs. Appendices. Index. Hb £45. ISBN 0 7103 0592 3.

Wim van Spengen has set out to produce a detailed interdisciplinary study of the Nyshingba, a group of people of Tibetan origin who live and trade from Manang in Nepal. The book is divided into two parts: the first, using almost exclusively secondary sources, looks at the way in which the Nyshingba evolved as traders; the second part is based on the author's original research, the result of his own visit to the area in 1981. The aim of the study is to chart the rise of the group as long-distance international traders in a broad geohistorical context and to compare their experiences with those of neighbouring groups. The author

concludes that, though the Nyshingba did not begin with the obvious advantages of access to the main Himalayan trade routes or even have the active backing of the Kathmandu government until 1962 (a watershed year for them), they are nevertheless extremely successful. He argues that this success is related to a number of factors including British imperialism in India and Tibet, which led to an intensification of trade on the Indian borders especially after the Younghusband invasion of 1904, and Chinese aggression in Tibet, especially after 1945, which prompted them to use jungle border routes into Burma and Southeast Asia that less courageous and determined groups would not explore.

One of the most striking things about the first half of the book is the care taken to marshal the vast wealth of available material about Tibet and to present it clearly and succinctly. As van Spengen explains, there are "travel writers and travel liars", and he takes time to evaluate and summarise the sources he has used at the end of each section, providing a useful guide for his readers. There is some excellent material here and the various influences upon trade, both secular and monastic, are well drawn. The accompanying maps and diagrams showing trade routes are also very helpful.

The second part of the book dealing with the Nyshingba and their trading patterns is a little disappointing. The author has gone to great pains to explain that the first part was intended to provide a context, and I expected a more rounded exploration of the way in which the Nyshingba live and think. There is a brief description of the way in which village life has been affected by trade in more recent times and there are some illuminating case histories and trading stories, but these simply whetted my appetite for more. One clue to the absence of detailed information about the

Nyshingba lies in the Appendices, which provide a fascinating insight into the problems faced by the author in making contact with them in 1981. Apart from the obvious language difficulties (despite the Nepalese interpreter), van Spengen had to overcome the instinctive prejudice against outsiders from villagers often engaged in trade that was frequently only semi-legal. Rumours that he was working for the CIA did not help his case!

The examination of trading patterns, routes and commodities and the scale and scope of the trade is the main strength of this ambitious study and is thoroughly explored, making this an important book about a very interesting and tenacious group of people who managed to exploit almost every avenue open to them and prosper against adversity.

Wendy Palace

(I am indebted to the Editor of 'Asian Affairs', journal of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, for permission to reproduce this review. Ed.)

Himalaya: Life on the Edge of the World. By David Zurick and P.P. Karan. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp 354. Illus. Notes. Appendix. Index. £22.50. Hb. ISBN 0 8018 6168 3.

This lavish publication, a field and documentary study by two Kentucky professors, explores the geology, histories, cultures and economies of the countries of the Himalayan mountain range from the Indus to the Brahmaputra river valleys and the Ganges to Tibet. Their careful research causes them deep concern about an "uniquely fragile environment" and they do not fail to repeat their anxieties.

Happily, however, they are not only alarmed but also hopeful. They are well prepared to challenge the "Green Myth" of terminal degradation, recalling that "the Himalayan mountains after all have been settled for centuries by people who shaped

the land to meet their needs." In any case, they argue, significant danger "issues from a perplexing mix of natural and human factors, not from any single cause", such as over-population, deforestation, industrial extraction, or dams or roads. The remedy is not to resist inevitable change, nor to "pave the route to Shangri La", nor to make of the mountains a theme park in which "tourists play and villagers watch", but it is to seek a "delicate balance between nature and society". Easier said in books than done in the field. But it can be done nevertheless. They recommend, for example, the agricultural development projects under way in the Richu Khola valley in Sikkim and the promotion of the national parks of Sagarmatha and Annapurna in Nepal under the auspices of the King Mahendra Trust.

Perhaps it is not surprising that an American academic study barely mentions the economic and social input of the British and Indian Gurkha regiments. Moreover, the great British Resident Brian Hodgson (not Hodgeson) was surely interested in more than the "colonial" commercial exploitation of Nepal in the 19th century, however unethical the policies of the East India Company may have been.

The book is richly illustrated by well-chosen photographs of spectacular landscape and people at work. Copious notes refer to a variety of primary and secondary sources. Appendices of numerical tables measure population and cultivation throughout the last century. The result is a substantial contribution to Himalayan scholarship.

A. R. H. Kellas

(I am indebted to the Editor of 'Asian Affairs', journal of the Royal Society of Asian Affairs for permission to reproduce this review. The address of the Society is: 2 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PJ. The website is: www.rsaa.org.uk)

OBITUARIES

Mr John Roderick Dunsmore

It is with great sadness that the Society learnt of the death in November 2000 of John Dunsmore, at the age of seventy three. He, with his wife Susi, had been a great supporter of the Society and had had great personal experience in Nepal as an agronomist. After attending Merchant Taylors School, Crosby, he obtained a National Service Commission in the Gordon Highlanders and was attached to the Officers Training School in Bangalore. On returning home he worked on a farm in Mull prior to going up to Downing College in Cambridge to read Agriculture. Whilst there he developed a keen interest in rowing and became both a distinguished oarsman and coach. After Cambridge he took a diploma in tropical agriculture in Trinidad. His first overseas appointment was to Malaya and four years later he moved to Sarawak as Assistant Director of Agriculture (Research) with the responsibility of setting up the Sarawak Agricultural Research Centre. It was here that he met his future wife, Susi, who was teaching art at the Teacher Training College in Kuching. His eleven years experience in Sarawak gave him the practical basis of his future work aimed at alleviation of poverty through coordination of resources for agriculture and rural development. After leaving Sarawak he joined the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) as a Senior Principal Scientific Officer. His work with the ODA in preparing and initiating projects took him to many countries including Belize, The Gambia, Yemen, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Despite his wide experience in these areas it was perhaps his work in Nepal that gave him his greatest inspiration. He was very closely involved with the Koshi Hills Area Development

Programme (KHARDEP) in east Nepal. It was at this stage in his career that he was made a member of the Imperial Service Order and was invested by Her Majesty The Queen during her State Visit to Nepal in 1986. He retired from the ODA in 1987 but continued to work as a consultant in his chosen field, working to improve the lot of those living in poverty and environmental degradation. With his wife he retained an abiding interest in Nepal right up to the time of his death. He had been asked to write a paper for the Hill Agricultural Research Project (HARP). Despite failing health he completed this task but was unable to attend the subsequent discussions in Nepal. The staff of HARP have pledged to ensure that the work he planned would be carried out as tribute to his memory. The Society will be very much the poorer for the loss of a member who was dedicated to his work in Nepal and who gave so much to its people.

GDB

Major Malcolm Meerendonk MBE BA FIL

Malcolm Meerendonk, a life member of the society, died in August 2001. He was well known by a generation of young British officers who joined the Brigade of Gurkhas during the late 1950's and early 1960's for whom he was their Gurkhali language instructor.

He enlisted in October 1941 whilst studying at Kings College, London, and received an Indian Army commission in December that year. On arrival in India in April 1943 he underwent basic training and studied Urdu at Mhow before joining 6th Gurkha Rifles at their depot in Abbotabad. The next 18 months service was spent at the depot and for a period he

was attached to 2/3 Gurkha Rifles on operations against village communal disturbances. In December 1944 he was attached to the 2nd (Nepal) Rifles, a battalion of the Royal Nepalese Army, as supervising officer. This battalion was engaged on pipeline protection duties on the Indian lines of communication in support of the Burma campaign. [A contingent from the Royal Nepalese Army was provided by the Nepalese government in support of the Indian Army during the Second World War. Units were also deployed in Burma and the North West Frontier]. After hostilities ceased he was attached to the Weapons and Equipment and Medical Directorates in Delhi, researching treatment of snakebite. He returned to the depot 6th GR at Abbotabad in April 1946 prior to returning to UK and transfer to the Royal Army Educational Corps.

His linguistic ability with experience in India and a period of research in Nepal resulted in his becoming the Senior Education Officer at the Training Depot Brigade of Gurkhas at Sungei Patani in Malaya, responsible for managing education for recruits, permanent staff and young British officers. For his work there he was awarded the MBE.

He wrote the 'Basic Gurkhali Grammar' published in 1949 (in Roman Script) which was used as the textbook for all Gurkhali language training courses for many years. Additionally he wrote the 'Basic Gurkhali Dictionary' published in 1959. This was a most useful pocketbook carried routinely by many British Officers to provide a quick solution to grammatical, numerical and vocabulary problems. The Gurkhali, or more properly the Nepali he taught was correct in grammar and style, somewhat beyond the everyday language spoken by the Gurkha soldiers themselves. This style of Nepali became known irreverently by the British officers as 'Donk kura'. He was the

founding editor in 1948 of the weekly newspaper 'Parbate' which has a Brigade wide circulation providing news from Nepal and UK and from units.

He was a man with an exceedingly wide breadth of interests in which he achieved a high level of competence. These included athletics, boxing, fencing, music, drama and mountaineering, a somewhat eclectic mixture for a regular soldier. In 1963 he visited Dolpo a remote part of north west Nepal, only the second foreigner to do so following the famous anthropologist, Dr Snellgrove, who visited in 1956.

Malcolm Meerendonk was an academic of proven ability but also a somewhat eccentric character. He always smoked cigarettes either in a cigarette holder or Indian style through a closed fist with the cigarette between the third and little finger of the hand. He also had a fondness for snakes which he would produce at drinks parties on the lawn of his quarter in Sungei Patani. My abiding memory of him, apart from his presence in the classroom, is of him arriving through the glass doors of the Officers Mess in Dharan from a trek in the pouring rain wearing grey flannel shorts, 44 pattern pack and carrying an ice axe.

Malcolm Meerendonk was a character of his time who, through his language skills and many other abilities, made a very significant contribution to the Brigade of Gurkhas of the immediate post war era.

GDB

Dillon Ripley

Dillon Ripley died in Washington last year aged 87. He was for 20 years Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. From an early age he developed a keen interest in ornithology as a result of travels with his parents, even walking for six weeks in Tibet in 1927. After school in New Hampshire and attending Yale

University he went on to study zoology at Colombia University and then followed a career in natural history including taking part in expeditions to the Far East and New Guinea. In 1939 he became an assistant at the American Museum of Natural History and completed his Ph D at Harvard and was then appointed Assistant Curator of Birds at the Smithsonian. During World War 2 he served in the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA, due to his knowledge of Asia. His role was the co-ordination of American and British intelligence operations. War notwithstanding he took opportunities to continue his studies and collect specimens. He is alleged to have stalked and shot a specimen in the grounds of the HQ whilst in full view of a cocktail party being hosted by Admiral Mountbatten. Unfortunately he was wearing only a towel at the time which dropped to the floor as he was taking aim. After the war he returned to his career in academe, as Professor of Biology at Yale and continued to make field trips in Asia. He worked closely with Salim Ali of the Bombay Natural History Society and with him co-authored the standard work of ornithological reference for the Indian sub-continent, *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (in ten volumes). The production of this work took ten years, between 1964 and 1974. Ripley was primarily responsible for the taxonomic aspects. In 1947 he was fortunate to obtain special permission from the Maharajah to enter Nepal to carry out fieldwork. The story of his time there is told in the rather famous book that will probably be known, at least to some members, *The Search for the Spiny Babbler*. The Spiny Babbler is the only Nepal endemic species. The expedition to find it necessitated a return to India involving a rail journey from Raxaul through Uttar Pradesh to Kaurelia Ghat and back across the Nepalese border to

Tikapur. From there a column of bullock carts, elephants and many coolies was assembled to cross the Terai with the coolies going up into the hills in the Dailekh area. This bird was eventually found. However it falls into the category known by birdwatchers as 'LBJ' ie 'little brown job'. It has to be said that this species can be seen occasionally on the edge of the Valley. Ripley was awarded many honours for his work including the President's Medal of Freedom in 1985 and an honorary KBE in 1979.

GDB

(A less dramatic search for the Spiny Babbler in the area of Phulchowki is described in Dr Jordan's book, *English all over the Place*, reviewed in this journal. *The Search for the Spiny Babbler* was originally published in 1952. It was reprinted in 1978 in the Bibliotheca Himalayica series by Ratna Pustak Bhandar in Kathmandu. Copies were available in Pilgrims Bookshop in Thamel. Ed.)

General Sir Walter Walker KCB CBE DSO**

General Sir Walter Walker died in August 2001 aged 88. He epitomised all that one would expect from a British General with his piercing blue eyes, bristling moustache and immaculate turn out. All British officers on joining the Brigade were interviewed by him during his tenure as Major General Brigade of Gurkhas. They were left in no possible doubt that he expected the highest professional standards from such officers whom he considered, rightly, to be privileged to have been selected for service with Gurkhas. By the time he was appointed to the command of 17 Gurkha Division in Malaya he had proved to be an outstanding field commander having successfully commanded, on operations, a battalion in Burma and both a battalion and a brigade during the Malayan

emergency. However the end of the emergency saw the start of retrenchment in the early 1960s and he was faced with government plans to make significant cuts in the Brigade of Gurkhas. From then on he would become something of a thorn in the side of successive politicians and his military superiors. In 1962 the 'confrontation' with Indonesia postponed such plans. Despite having described the cuts as a 'betrayal' and having been forced to apologise to the then Chief of the Imperial General Staff resulting from his personal efforts to defend the Brigade, he was sent back to Borneo to be Director of Operations. The campaign involved countering Indonesian incursions into Sarawak and North Borneo (now Sabah) along a 1200 mile jungle frontier with

Indonesian East Kalimantan. He was one of the most highly decorated commanders having been awarded the DSO for action in Burma with bars both for the Malayan emergency and 'confrontation'. In addition he was created CBE as a brigade commander in Malaya. It was not until his appointment as GOC Northern Command did he receive a long awaited knighthood in 1968. This delay was attributed to his forthright views which did not always accord with higher authority. His final appointment was Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Northern Europe. He retired in 1972 but continued to take a robust view of current affairs throughout the remainder of his life.

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NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron: HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal

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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 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
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Tel: 020 8992 0173

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