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**THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY**

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*Journal*

Number 27

2003

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# ACORN Nepal Trust

(Aid for Children of Rural Nepal  
and Educational Trust)

Charitable Society Regd. No. 701/1999



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## ACORN Nepal Trust

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## **THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY**

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### CONTENTS

- 4 Editorial
- 6 The Society's News
- 11 HM King Gyanendra's Message to the Nepalese nation on  
Constitution Day
- 12 A Royal Wedding in Kathmandu
- 13 Everest - Memories, Reflections and Connections:  
Reflections by members of the 1953 team  
Lord Hunt and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute  
Abominable Snowman or Yeti
- 17 Alexander M Kellas: Seeking early solutions to the problem of Everest
- 20 Sir Edmund Hillary's Schoolhouses in the Clouds: their first  
inspection in 1968
- 26 Everest: The Southwest Face Attempt of Autumn 1972
- 35 The Himalayan Frontier Policy of British India and the significance of  
the 1923 Treaty of Friendship between Great Britain and Nepal
- 40 Brian Houghton Hodgson – A Pioneer of Himalayan Zoology
- 44 Of Gompas, Chortens, Mani Walls and Yaks – A trek through Mustang  
and Dolpo
- 55 The Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce
- 57 From the Editor's In-Tray
- 59 Archivist
- 61 Book Reviews
- 65 Obituary
- 66 Important Addresses
- 67 Notes on the Britain – Nepal Society
- 68 Officers and Committee of the Society



*Mr Prabal SJB Rana – The Royal Nepalese Ambassador presents his credentials to Her Majesty The Queen*



*Mount Everest.*

*Lady Bishop.*

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 EDITORIAL
 

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The year 2003 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first successful ascent of Everest by Ed Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa. The mystery of whether Mallory and Irvine made it in 1924 remains despite the discovery of Mallory's body in May 1999. The all-important camera that he was carrying, which may provide the answer to this enduring question, has still not been found.

Mount Everest is better known by those who live the Everest region as *Sagarmatha* in Nepali and *Chomolongma* in Tibetan. However 'Everest' has remained the internationally used name. When it was first discovered by the Survey of India it was known as 'Peak 15'; at that time all the peaks that had been recorded were numbered. The height calculated by the Survey in 1856 was 29,002 feet. Today the height has been computed at 29,035 feet using the modern GPS system. According to the geology of the region, as the Indian landmass continues to push into the continent of Asia, so the Himalayan range is slowly forced upwards by the resultant tectonic pressure. The first westerner to attempt an approach to the mountain was Capt John Noel in 1913 when he got within 40 miles of Everest disguised as a Muslim, but this did not fool the Tibetan guards and he was forced to withdraw. However the information that he brought back was vital for the subsequent expedition planning which was delayed by the First World War. It was not until 1921 that the first reconnaissance, led by Lt Col Howard-Bury, and included Dr AM Kellas, took place. I suspect that in the minds of the general public, Nepal is characterised by Mount Everest and the Gurkhas. Throughout the year there have been ceremonies and lectures to mark this

important anniversary in the annals of mountaineering. This edition of the Society journal has a distinct Everest flavour in many of the articles and reflects the Society's links and interests in Mount Everest as a symbol of Nepal. Lord Hunt was our founding President and four of the surviving members of Hunt's team are Society members, notably Lt Col Charles Wylie, a former chairman and a current Vice President. Their memories and reflections are supplemented by other connections. Mrs Celia Brown's records produced an excellent informal photograph of Lord Hunt and Tenzing Sherpa in Darjeeling. The late Mayura Brown's papers included an old newspaper cutting concerning another enduring mystery of the Himalayan region, that of the 'yeti', the name used by our Nepalese friends for their own association. The link with former chairman and current Vice President, Mr Arthur Kellas, was by chance discovered in the mountaineering literature. The part played by his uncle, Dr Alexander Kellas, is under recognised. I am grateful to Mr George Rodway for providing an article at short notice and for researching the photograph. Another member, Dr Bob Jordan writes about the first inspection of the Hillary schools in Solu Khumbu which he carried out in 1968. Yet another member, Maj Kelvin Kent, describes his experiences on an epic, if unsuccessful, attempt on the Southwest face of Everest which took place in 1972. Away from the Everest theme Professor Subedi informed the Society about the 1923 Treaty of Friendship between our two countries. I am grateful to Carol Inskipp for her article on probably the most famous of the early British Residents in Kathmandu in the nineteenth century,

Brian Houghton Hodgson. He was clearly a man with a wide variety of interests of whom, I hope, we shall hear more at a future meeting.

Lady Cowan has written of her experiences on trek with her husband, General Sir Sam Cowan in the remote region of Upper Mustang.

This year saw the departure of Dr Basnyat and his wife HRH Princess Jotshana, our Patron, to Nepal on completion of his tour of duty as the Royal Nepalese Ambassador. The Society is very much looking forward to seeing our Patron back in UK soon. In place of Dr Basnyat we welcome back HE Mr Prabal SJB Rana. Mr Prabal Rana is no stranger to the UK. He was a student at University College London 1958 to 1961, and is a founder member of both the Society and of the Yeti Association. He was also Minister Counsellor 1982 to 1987. He is following

in the footsteps of his father, General Kiran SJB Rana, who was also a former Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the UK.

The news from Nepal about the continuing Maoist insurgency is still a cause for concern. This continues to affect the numbers of tourists visiting Nepal, although there was a small increase in the autumn. We all hope that a satisfactory solution can soon be achieved to bring the country back to normality.

Finally I must thank those who have supported the journal with their advertisements and also the contributors for their efforts without whom there would be no journal. Once again I wish to acknowledge the work of the Society's own amateur photographer, Mr Peter Donaldson, for his continuing efforts at the Society's events. I regret that cost and space limit the amount of photographs that can be included.



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## THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

by Pat Mellor  
Honorary Secretary

Once again we were privileged to be able to hold our AGM at The Royal Nepalese Embassy. However this year we are welcoming the new Ambassador, having wished good bye to our Patron, HRH Princess Jotshana and Dr S B Basnyat, who are now happily settled back in Kathmandu. In order to give members an opportunity to meet His Excellency, Mr Prabal S J B Rana, the Committee held a Champagne Reception in his honour directly following the AGM and before the Curry Supper. I think members appreciated this opportunity to welcome His Excellency and to wish him a happy and fulfilling time in London



*The Ambassador with Mrs Celia Brown and Colonel Swanston at the AGM.*



*Miss Antonia Derry, Sir Neil Thorne, Sheila and Mrs Marion Donaldson at the AGM.*

### Lectures

In 2003 the Society was able to hold four lectures at the Society of Antiquaries, and one at the Zoological Society of London.

On Tuesday, 14th January, Professor Subedi of the University of Middlesex, gave a lecture to members entitled 'The Significance of the 1923 Peace and Friendship Treaty between Britain and Nepal'. Professor Subedi's talk on this historical subject so fascinated our members that the Committee wish to invite him to speak to us again in the future.



*The committee say farewell to Dr Basnyat and HRH Princess Jotshana.*

On Tuesday, 25th March Major Rick Beven, who had recently retired from The Brigade of Gurkhas, gave a talk to members entitled 'When Gurkhas Go Home'. Rick Beven went on extended 'walk about' having retired and walked right across Nepal, and on his way spoke to old soldiers and young ones about their life after leaving the army. This was of great interest to many of our members, and certainly to all those who attended. Thank you for a most interesting talk and heart warming pictures.

The Zoological Society of London was the next venue for a lecture by Mrs Carol Inskipp on 5th May on the amazing collection of pictures of birds and



mammals assembled by Brian Houghton Hodgson whilst Resident in Kathmandu in the nineteenth century. This lecture was arranged by Jane Loveless, a member of our committee, who works in the conservation programme department of the Zoological Society. With her help, the Zoological Society library kindly opened their archives so that members attending had the opportunity to see some of the original paintings by Hodgson, or, perhaps, by the Nepali students that he had trained. This was an unusual and special event and was well attended.



*Sir Michael and Lady Scott with the Ambassador, Mr David Waterhouse and Lady Bishop at the AGM.*

On Tuesday, 3rd June, Chris Chadwell, who is a botanist specializing in the Himalayas, gave a lecture entitled 'Plant Hunting in the Lumbasumba Himal, East Nepal – Peter Wallington Remembered' which of course fascinated many of us as the slides were so wonderful.



*The two newly elected Vice Presidents, Mr Peter Leggatt and Mrs Pat Mellor.*

In September the Society supported the charity, 'Need in Nepal', by circulating information about a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society given by Sir Mark Tully entitled 'One or Two Indias'. I am sure that everyone knows of Sir Mark Tully, having heard him on the BBC over the years, and his lecture was inspirational and thought provoking.



*Dr William Brown and Mrs Celia Brown with their display of Everest and mountaineering photographs at the Supper.*

Finally, on the 7th October, Major Kelvin Kent brought the year's programme of lectures to a close by his presentation on the 1972 British attempt on the Southwest Face of Everest.

Our grateful thanks to all of these excellent speakers who gave us their time, shared their knowledge and showed beautiful slides. We look forward to meeting them again and thanking them personally at the Annual Nepali Supper on 17th February 2004.

Our programme for 2004 is already full, and so I do hope many members will be able to join us on the following dates:

Monday, 19th January 2004 – Dr Gillian Holdsworth from the Britain Nepal Medical Trust, title, '30 years of health care in Nepal – The Britain Nepal Medical Trust'

Tuesday, 30th March 2004 – Mr Philip Holmes of the Esther Benjamins Trust, will speak on 'Helping Nepal's

marginalised children'

Tuesday, 22nd June 2004 – Mr Chris Evans of the Jajarkot Permaculture Project and Himalayan Permaculture Group will be speaking on the subject of 'Forty farmers' favourites' Some time in May 2004 we are hoping to arrange a lecture by Mr David Waterhouse on 'Brian Houghton Hodgson and the origins of Himalayan studies' to be held possibly at the Royal Nepalese Embassy. The arrangements will be announced in due course. Tuesday, 5th October 2004 will be the final lecture of the year and is to be given by Dr Ramesh Dhungel of SOAS, and his subject is 'Mustang'.



*The Patron, HRH Princess Jotshana, with the Secretary and Mrs Marion Donaldson at the Society Supper.*

All these lectures, except for the one by Mr David Waterhouse, are to take place at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. At the same time, I would like to make my usual reminder about parking outside the Society, which is very restricted. If anyone wishes to bring their car to the Society, they should phone the Secretary first (020 7479 7080) and she will be pleased to issue a parking pass subject to availability. This availability is for up to 2 cars only, and that includes their own staff. It is therefore not feasible for members to bring their cars on the 'off chance' of parking at Burlington House.

### **Annual Nepali Supper**

As usual, the Supper was held at St Columba's Church of Scotland Hall in Pont Street on the 20th February. This was a special evening to commemorate 50 years since the ascent of Everest and we were honoured to have as our speaker, Lt Col Charles Wylie, a member of the 1953 expedition and also as honoured guests our President, HRH The Duke of Gloucester together with our Patron, HRH Princess Jotshana, and HE The Royal Nepalese Ambassador, Dr Basnyat. On this special evening, Mrs Celia Brown, the Society's archivist, had prepared a display of pictures of Everest and other archival material particularly associated with the Himalayas. This was of great interest to those attending. In fact approximately 180 people attended the supper, which again was excellently prepared by the Munal Restaurant of Putney, and was enjoyed by all. As our Patron and HE The Ambassador were leaving London shortly, the President of our Society, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, presented them with a gift from the Society to commemorate their time in London. We have to thank the 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles for providing a piper to play during the evening and for the two bar orderlies who efficiently looked after the bar. Also we



*HRH The Duke of Gloucester presents a farewell gift to Dr Basnyat at the Society Supper.*

were very happy to welcome the two Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers to the Supper as guests of the Society.

### Summer Outing

The Summer Outing this year was earlier than usual on 15th June, because we wanted to ensure that the Yeti Association could join us for a trip down the River Thames, since they had many Sunday events themselves in July. My prayers for good weather therefore had to be extra special, but as usual they were answered when the day dawned brilliantly sunny with a light breeze. We had an overwhelming response and there were just about 200 people on a specially organized boat called the MV Eltham, which took us floating down to Greenwich and then on to the Thames Barrier before returning to Westminster. During the voyage we served a Nepali picnic arranged by Kem Ranamagar of the Munal Restaurant in Putney, which everyone enjoyed. It was a wonderful day out when everyone was able not only to see the sights but also to mix together happily.

The date for the Summer Outing next year is not yet finalized, but will be either Sunday, 4th or 11th July 2004.



*Mr Hari Shrestha, Dr Dhital, Mr Prabhakar Rana, Mr Peter Leggatt and Lt Col Gerry Birch enjoying the 'on-board' bar.*



*Mr John Ackroyd and some Yeti friends on board at the summer outing.*

### Other Matters

On behalf of the Society, I arranged for flowers to be delivered to the Embassy on the occasion of His Majesty, King Gyanendra's birthday on the 7th July, and also flowers to welcome Their Majesties on a short visit to this country in September. The Officers and other members of the Society were greatly honoured to be invited to a Reception at the Royal Nepalese Embassy to meet Their Majesties and the King graciously found the time to speak to everyone.



*All aboard on the summer outing.*

In the Honours List this year, we must congratulate Brigadier Sir Miles Hunt-Davis on the award of KCVO, and Major Nicholas Barne, Equerry to our President, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, who was elevated to CVO. Another member of the Society, Maj PH Ridlington, was awarded the MBE for his work for the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

The Society donated £500 to the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, to enable a student to attend environmental courses in this country. In addition there was our usual annual grant of £250 to the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Earlier in this report I mentioned Mrs Celia Brown and I would like to tell members that she has accepted the task of Archivist for the Society. Now that the society is drawing closer to its 50th anniversary, it is important to think about its history and I know that this will be in good hands. Mrs Brown looks forward to collecting details, but members should speak to her in the first instance. (*See details elsewhere in the journal. Ed.*)

### **Society Ties**

As I think you are aware, we now have a **new** tie – it is the same pattern as before but is a more up-to-date shape and in silk. The price is £10 including postage and they may be obtained from David Jefford, 20 Longmead, Fleet, Hants, GU13 9TR, by post or at one of our functions.

### **Royal Nepalese Embassy**

I do want to say that so many of our events and functions would not be possible without the help, support and encouragement of HE The Royal Nepalese Ambassador, and his staff, and in particular Mrs Nilia Ranamager who is so unfailingly charming and helpful.

### **Deaths**

It is with sadness that I have to report that I received notification of the deaths of the following members:

Mr SP Chibber  
Maj DHL Parker  
Mr Kanak Tuladhar

Members will be sad to learn that Mrs Joan Robertson, wife of Maj Gen JAR Robertson, one of our Vice Presidents, died earlier in the year. The Society was represented at her funeral by the Chairman, Mr Peter Leggatt, and the Secretary. Also Mrs Betty Leathart, wife of the late Maj Scott Leathart, died in September 2003. Her husband's obituary appeared in the last edition of the journal. Maj and Mrs Leathart regularly attended Society events.

## **ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE JOURNAL**

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HIS MAJESTY KING GYANENDRA'S MESSAGE TO THE NEPALESE NATION  
ON THE 14TH CONSTITUTION DAY, 9TH NOVEMBER 2003

“On the occasion of Constitution day, we extend our best wishes to all the Nepali people. In order to relieve the country from the prevailing uneasy situation and achieve the goals enshrined in the Constitution, it is imperative that an environment of peace, security and good governance prevails in the country, while all those committed to multiparty

democracy, work together in earnest. As this is what every Nepali yearns for, all the countrymen must be united, guided by our traditions and ethos. We hope this day inspires all those who have faith in democracy to unite in fulfilling popular aspirations and realising the objectives enshrined in the Constitution.”

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## A ROYAL WEDDING IN KATHMANDU

The Society was well represented at the wedding of HRH Princess Prearana, only daughter of HM King Gyanendra, to Mr Rajbahadur Singh, which took place in January 2003 when Lord Camoys, Sir Neil Thorne, Mr Peter Leggatt and Mrs Frances Spackman were invited. Mrs Spackman writes: "The organization of the event was impeccable, but the sartorial instructions were something of a challenge. The Princess had emailed me in advance to warn me that black for such occasions is considered to be 'unlucky' and red is too 'royal'. The embassy had advised that long gowns were the

appropriate attire for ladies. The men were in 'white tie', always less of a problem for them. We all had five invitations to various ceremonies and receptions, each of which was a vivid, fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable experience. It was a wedding that had everything, solemnity, spectacular glamour, hospitality and sheer good fun. The overriding feeling throughout the whole period of the ceremony was that after all the trials and tribulations of the past few years the Royal family was entitled to the happy occasion that it undoubtedly was."



*Sir Neil Thorne, Gen Bharat Simha, Mr Peter Leggatt and Mr Prabhakar SJB Rana.*



*HRH Princess Prearana with Mr Raj Bahadur Singh and Mrs Spackman.*

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## EVEREST - MEMORIES, REFLECTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

The Society has strong connections with the successful 1953 Everest expedition whose golden jubilee was celebrated this year. We were fortunate in 1960 that our founding president was Lord Hunt, the leader of this expedition as Colonel John Hunt in 1953. Four of the surviving members of that expedition are members of the Society. This article includes quotes from them and other Society connections with Mount Everest.

### **Sir Edmund Hillary on the summit on 29th May 1953**

“I looked at Tenzing and in spite of the balaclava, goggles and oxygen mask all encrusted with long icicles that concealed his face, there was no disguising his infectious grin of pure delight as he looked all around him. We shook hands and then Tenzing threw his arm around my shoulders and we thumped each other on the back until we were almost breathless.”

### **Memories and Reflections of 1953**

#### **Charles Wylie writes:**

We were up early as we had a long day ahead. I was leading 15 Sherpas on the last stage of their big carry to the South Col camps at 26,000ft. Their loads were vital to establish an effective high-altitude base from which two summit pairs, with their support parties, could make their attempts, staying if necessary for about a week to allow for bad weather. It was a greater quantity of stores than had ever been carried to that height before, the equivalent of Annapurna, then the highest summit yet climbed.

I wondered if we could make it. Half of my team had failed to start for the Col the day before as they were suffering badly from anoxia (lack of oxygen). I had dosed

them liberally with the appropriate remedial pills, and now they were all on the move again, but had to carry up a further two thousand feet, where there would be even less oxygen.

One of the salient points of John Hunt's plan was to establish this large camp on the South Col, the highest place for so many tents. This, we hoped, might allow the first summit pair, Evans and Bourdillon, to reach the top. If they failed, then it would be necessary to pitch a single two-man tent even higher, as near the summit as possible, for the second summit pair, Hillary and Tenzing.

So much store did John Hunt put on this big carry by the Sherpas that he had sent on the summit pair, Hillary and Tenzing to give us a hand. Ed Hillary had asked me how best he and Tenzing could help us. I asked them to go ahead and remake the track, which had been obliterated by the storm of the night before.

The rationing of our precious stock of oxygen allowed for members of the climbing team to use oxygen below the Col, so that they could lead Sherpas effectively but there was not enough oxygen to give this boost to the Sherpas as well.

So Hillary and Tenzing were on oxygen without loads, and so was I. They steamed ahead at high speed, while I and my gallant band of 15 Sherpas followed much more slowly. Every few minutes one of them would whistle, the signal for all to halt. After regaining their breath, they would continue until they had to bend over their ice axes and pant and pant and pant.

Slowly, oh so slowly, we traversed across the big snowfield to the Geneva Spur. There we turned off the traverse and climbed directly upwards. There was still 500ft to climb when my oxygen ran out. We had been on the move for 5½ hours, and I had

used up all my cylinders' capacity.

Then one of the Sherpas, Kancha, reached the end of his endurance. It was clear he could go no further so I took his load on. I felt strangely elated; I was now in the same boat as the Sherpas, without oxygen and with a load.

Hillary and Tenzing, having reached the Col passed us on their way down and gave us all words of encouragement. We had now reached 26,000ft and could look down on the Col. We were soon there. The Sherpas dumped their loads, glad to get the weight off their shoulders.

It was a great moment; Everest's back had been broken. There was still much to be achieved above the Col, but now the summit attempts could begin. We piled the stores and returned, picking up Kancha on the way, none the worse for his vigil in the snow. By the time we reached Camp VII again we had been out for 10½ hours, all on a single cup of tea, and for some, a little cereal. The Sherpas had given of their very best. The official history states: 'It was the Sherpa's finest hour.'

### **George Band writes:**

In mid-May we were now in the second phase of the build-up, continuing to escort the daily Low Level and High Level Sherpa carrying teams. I was back on form. On my way up from Base, I set up the short-wave radio and aerial at Camp III on the lip of the Western Cwm and had the most marvellous atmospheric-free reception from the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Sir John Barbarolli was conducting the Hallé Orchestra playing Beethoven's Leonora No. 3. I think the walls of the Western Cwm and the Lhotse Face were acting as one huge satellite dish focusing the radio waves perfectly onto my aerial. John Hunt joined me in our little two-man tent and after receiving the Met. Bulletins we listened to *Scrapbook for 1929*. It was the year I was born, during the Great Depression. John was 19 at the time, and very

impressionable, he recalled. He was the Senior Under Officer at Sandhurst and it was his fifth alpine climbing season. We were both almost weeping with emotion.

Most of us were now moving up to live at Camp IV, which became our Advance Base and gave a grandstand view of the Lhotse Face.

Every morning we looked anxiously upwards to see if there was any activity, none more anxious than John Hunt himself. My abiding memory is of him sitting on a packing case, elbows resting on knees, smears of sunblock cream giving him an unnaturally pale face, only partly shaded by a floppy hat, eyes peering through binoculars up at the highest point reached so far. He had driven himself hard; at 42 he was the oldest of us climbers and one wondered at the extent of his reserves.

Little did we realize how much all our lives were about to be changed. On 26th September, I found myself in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, sharing Sir John Barbarolli's private dressing room with Ed Hillary, now also a Knight of the Realm. I was giving my first public Everest lecture to a full house followed by rapturous applause. In fact, we gave both a matinee and an evening lecture with just time in between for tea and cucumber sandwiches with the Lord Mayor and the Bishop.

The Lord Mayor, Alderman A Moss, said that afterwards he would like to invite 'a few intimate friends' to meet us. It turned out to be a formal reception for 200. I could hardly sleep that night, my head was in such a whirl!

### **Mike Westmacott writes:**

The first ascent of Everest was not the end of the story. Many non-climbers thought it must be. 'The Ultimate Challenge', said the press. 'Everest *khatam hogaya*, Everest is finished' said one of our Sherpas, by which he probably meant that a useful source of employment had come to an end. How wrong he was, and however many more



'ultimate challenges' have since been invented! Eric Shipton said 'Now we can get back to proper mountaineering.' He meant the exploration of unvisited areas, coupled with ascents of new and exciting routes on better known peaks. But he would not have predicted the continuing fascination with Everest itself or the hundreds of ascents now achieved, only a few of them in any way exploratory.

Partly stimulated by the event itself, encouraged by the promotion of 'outdoor education', facilitated by increased leisure time and rising incomes, the number of climbers has grown tremendously. Most are not pioneers, but have fun on well-known

rock climbs and well-explored peaks, facing their own challenges. Some, with time and money available, go to Everest, still a tough job for anyone, and a dangerous one, however you do it. But many take the Shipton route, searching out peaks and routes in the world's mountains that have not yet been explored or followed to the top. For them, Everest 1953 has been of more practical use, through the income generated for the Mount Everest Foundation by books and lectures after 1953. To the members of the original team, this is one of the happiest outcomes of our success.

#### LORD HUNT AND THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINEERING INSTITUTE

Following the successful ascent of Everest, the Darjeeling Himalayan Mountaineering Institute was founded in November 1954 and opened by Pandit Nehru in rented accommodation near Lebung. Later the Institute moved its permanent headquarters to Birch Hill, Darjeeling. The photograph was taken at a party held in the Institute's headquarters in 1965 when Lord and Lady Hunt were the guests of honour. I am grateful to Celia Brown from whose records it comes, which I found by chance at the Gurkha Museum. The photograph shows

Mr SJ Emmett, Celia Brown's father who at that time was President of the Darjeeling Planters' Club. He is standing immediately behind Lord Hunt. Celia's mother is on Lady Hunt's right. Tenzing, Director of Field Training at the Institute, is seated on the floor at the front with Colonel BS Jaiswal, the Institute's principal. Next to him is Tenzing's deputy and nephew, Gombu. The remainder of the group include other tea planters and their wives and residents of Darjeeling.



*Lord and Lady Hunt at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute with Tenzing Norgay.*

## THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN OR 'YETI'

The legendary 'Abominable Snowman', known locally as the 'Yeti', has been associated with the wild region near Mount Everest since mysterious footprints were first brought to the attention of the world by Eric Shipton's famous photographs for *The Times* showing both a single footprint and a line of them disappearing into the distance. These photographs were taken in the area of the Menlung Chu, east of Everest, on the 1951 Reconnaissance Expedition. Whilst sorting through the late Mayura Brown's papers, I came across a cutting from the *Daily Express* date lined New Delhi 30th December 1952 headlined, 'Snowman attacks Everest porter.' It goes on to say:

'An "abominable snowman" attacked an Indian porter during the recent unsuccessful Swiss Mount Everest expedition. Members of the expedition admitted that they had not seen the fabulous creature themselves but "had definitely heard padding and shuffling of something outside our tents at night at heights where there were no animals." The porter told them one of the "snowmen" seized him on the Lhotse Glacier but made off when other Sherpas ran to his rescue.....The Swiss said they had no other evidence to corroborate the story. "But it is easy to imagine things" they added. "It might have been the snowman. It might have been a bear or some freak of the imagination." One of the porters said they often heard the cry of a yeti at night. He was unable to say whether it was a shriek, snuffle or growl. There have been many reports of the existence of an unusual creature roaming the upper wastes of Everest. Some have described it as a tailless, hairy, sub-human anthropoid. Others say it is a large mountain bear.'

There has always been a good deal of speculation surrounding the existence of the 'Yeti'. The picture of a 'yeti scalp' shown here was taken in 1968 by Dr Bob Jordan on a visit to Khumjung (see his article

elsewhere in the journal). Was this originally an elaborate hoax by Shipton for gullible readers of *The Times* and continued by the locals based on their legends. Members of the 1951 expedition were, according to the piece in *Everest-Summit of Achievement* recently published by the Royal Geographical Society, 'confused and reticent' about the sighting of the tracks.

The consensus seems to favour the Himalayan bear. (*'Everest-Summit of Achievement' is reviewed elsewhere in the journal. Ed.*)

The argument continues today in Nepal. The September 27th edition of The Daily Telegraph reported that a Japanese climber, Makato Nebuka, claimed that the yeti was really a Himalayan brown bear (*Ursus arctos*). The claim, made in the Kathmandu Post, was declared "controversial" and "fallacious". Mr Thirtha Bahadur Pradhanga, described as "an amateur yetiologist" and the chief government surveyor, said that it was too soon to "simply deny that the yeti exists." He also said the "yeti" means "rock animal" in the Sherpa language. Dr Ram Kumar Pandey, a linguist from Trubhuvan University said: "No one should draw conclusions from linguistic coincidences."

I suspect that this will run and run!



*The Village Elder of Khumjung, Nima Tashi with the yeti scalp. Dr R Jordan. 1968.*

## ALEXANDER M. KELLAS: SEEKING EARLY SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF EVEREST

By George W. Rodway

*(By a chance reading of a mountaineering history book, I came across the name of Alexander Kellas in connection with the 1921 Everest Reconnaissance Expedition. Suspecting a Society connection, further research proved this to be the case. One of our previous Chairmen and current Vice-Presidents, Mr Arthur Kellas, is the nephew of the late Dr Alexander Kellas. Members will be aware that Mr Arthur Kellas was ambassador in Kathmandu, 1966 to 1970. I am grateful to Mr Rodway for providing this article. Ed)*

Since the untimely death of Scottish explorer, climber, and scientist Dr. Alexander Mitchell Kellas (born 1868) due to illness on the 5th of June, 1921 near the village of Kampa Dzong, Tibet during the early stages of the first Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, he has received relatively little attention in either the mountaineering or scientific literature despite his noteworthy contributions to high altitude physiology and exploration. Some of this can certainly be attributed to Dr. Kellas' retiring disposition, as he did not care to publicize his high altitude physiology and mountaineering accomplishments with other than a relatively small number of primarily scientific-oriented papers.

After the 1935 publication of "Alexander M. Kellas, ein Pionier des Himalaja" by Paul Geissler in *Deutsche Alpenzeitung* (Geissler, 1935), no publication devoted to Kellas appeared in English until 1987, aside from an occasional mention in major Himalayan exploration and mountaineering histories such as, for example, those of Mason (Mason, 1955) and Unsworth (Unsworth,

2000). In 1987, West wrote a detailed account of Kellas' life that was published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* (West, 1987), followed by a more strictly mountaineering-oriented account shortly thereafter in the 1989/90 volume of *The Alpine Journal* (West, 1989/90). A.M. Kellas further entered the consciousness of those interested in the history of high altitude mountaineering when the journal *High Altitude Medicine & Biology* published his magnum opus "A Consideration of the Possibility of Ascending Mount Everest" in 2001 (Kellas, 2001). This work is unique in that it displays not only Kellas' grasp of the *physiological* difficulties involved in ascending the highest mountain on earth, but it is clear that he intimately understood the *physical* difficulties that would be involved in climbing Everest as well. Copies of this manuscript had lain dormant in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and The Alpine Club in London since 1920. Kellas had completed it shortly before sailing on his last voyage to Asia in April of 1920 (from which he never returned), and with the exception of a poor French translation in a very obscure place, the Proceedings of the Congres de l'Alpinisme (Kellas, 1921), it had not seen publication.

Kellas, as improbable a figure as he was, can be argued to have been not only one of the finest exploratory Himalayan mountaineers in history, but also the first person to apply state of the art knowledge of high altitude physiology to field investigations at altitudes over 6,000m. It is extremely likely that by the time of his death he had spent more time above 6,000m than anyone on earth, undertaking

no fewer than eight Himalayan expeditions between 1907 and 1921 (West, 1989/90).

Aside from Kellas' participation in the 1921 Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, it is almost certain that his most significant contribution to the advancement of mountaineering at extreme altitude was a high altitude physiological field study - the 1920 Kamet Expedition - undertaken with Henry T. Morshead. Morshead soon after distinguished himself by being the first man, along with Mallory, Somervell, and Norton, to break the 8,000m barrier on Everest in 1922. The undertaking on Kamet (7,756m), conceived and organized by Kellas, was unique because it specifically emphasized investigation of the practical difficulties inherent in climbing at very high altitudes. During



*Dr Alexander Kellas. This photograph accompanied his obituary in the Alpine Club Journal 1921/22.*

this endeavour, with Morshead's assistance, Kellas carried out the first rigorous tests of the value of supplementary oxygen for climbing at high altitude in preparation for the Everest Reconnaissance Expedition the following year.

A.M. Kellas was one of the first Europeans to recognize the natural mountaineering talents of Himalayan natives, and he was almost certainly the first to rely extensively on them as sole climbing companions during numerous extended high altitude explorations and climbs in the Sikkim and Garhwal Himalaya. Kellas' qualities did not go unnoticed by his British companions in the few Himalayan ventures he undertook where he did not explore and climb exclusively with native porters. In a touching letter written from Tibet shortly after Kellas' death and dated 19 June 1921, a man who figured prominently in the early exploration and climbing history of Everest, J.B.L. Noel, summarized his opinion of Kellas' "outstanding points" to Arthur R. Hinks, Secretary of the RGS (Noel, 19 June 1921):

1. An experienced amateur mountaineer going at Himalayan peaks alone, with supporting party of specially selected and trained native porters;
2. First to discover the best natives for mountaineering, namely Sherpa Bhotias, and first to train teams of Sherpas for high climbing above 23,000 ft.;
3. His tactful and successful handling of natives in regard to successful joint mountaineering projects in the Himalaya;
4. His wonderful energy, perseverance, and drive – the fundamental qualities that enable the mountaineer to conquer his surroundings.

Noel ended his letter to Hinks with a prophetic “I am sure we will all miss Kellas very much indeed”.

In point of fact, aside from being deprived of a moving force in Himalayan exploration, the British mountaineering establishment did not again have such a proponent, aside perhaps from George Ingle Finch, willing and able to systematically evaluate the value of supplementary oxygen for climbing at high altitude until physiologist Griffith Pugh once again took up the challenge in the early 1950s in preparation for the successful 1953 ascent of Everest.

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*(The author is currently writing a detailed manuscript concerning Kellas and Morshead's 1920 expedition to Kamet. He lives in the USA, working at the Department of Acute/Tertiary Care, School of Nursing, University of Pittsburgh. An active mountaineer, he is a member of both the American and British Alpine Clubs, and has a long-standing interest in the history of high altitude physiology. Ed.)*

## SIR EDMUND HILLARY'S SCHOOLHOUSES IN THE CLOUDS: THEIR FIRST INSPECTION IN 1968

By Bob Jordan

*(This article is based on the lecture given by Dr Bob Jordan, a member of the Society, on 2nd October 2001. Dr Jordan worked for the British Council for seven years and served in Nepal 1965-69. He later joined the staff of Manchester University where he became a tutor in English for overseas students in the English language department. He returned to Nepal several times in later years, again assisting the British Council. He is now a full time writer and researcher in the English language and has published a number of books on the subject. His most recent publication, 'English All Over the Place', was reviewed in the 2001 journal in which this story features.)*

My major task in Kathmandu over the period 1965 to 1969 was the teaching of high school teachers of English on the five month in-service courses run by the British Council. One of my additional duties was to attend occasional cocktail parties at the British Embassy, usually at the weekends, where we were expected to talk with the visitors and other guests. On this particular Saturday, 3rd August 1968, the VIP was Sir Edmund Hillary. He returned to Nepal every year to revisit the Solu Khumbu to repay his debts to the Sherpas for helping him to climb Mount Everest in 1953.

There was an account of what he and his friends were doing in his book **Schoolhouse in the Clouds** (1964): I had just read the Penguin edition (1968) before meeting Sir Edmund. They were providing primary schools, piped water supplies, hospitals and medical aid; of these what the Sherpas most wanted was schools for their children – “though our children have eyes but still they are blind!”. So started an

impressive programme of primary school building for the Sherpas. The first school to be built was Khumjung in 1961, followed by Pangboche, Thami and others in 1963, and Junbesi in 1964.

Sir Edmund asked me a number of questions about my work, including which parts of the country I had to visit to see schools and interview teachers. He seemed very interested. At last I was able to ask him something about the primary schools he had funded – ‘What goes on inside them?’.

To cut a long story short, three days later, my wife Jane and I were invited to lunch with the British Council Representative, Robert Arbuthnott, and his wife Robina, to meet Sir Edmund Hillary again, with his wife Louise. He wanted to ask more questions about teaching. It led to the adventure of a lifetime and the high point of our four years in Nepal. Jane was also a qualified teacher and Sir Edmund invited us to make the first inspection of the schools in Solu Khumbu ‘to find out what goes on inside them’. This would involve observing English classes, seeing teachers’ methods and children’s reactions, and testing some of the teachers; also noting attendance figures, carrying out inventory checks, and assessing the general condition of the school.

Sir Edmund drew up the itinerary, saying it “will involve a devil of a lot of walking”. I thought, if he says so then it certainly will – and it did! In seventeen days we visited seven schools and inspected four of them (Khumjung, Pangboche, Junbesi and Chaunrikharkar). This involved walking a total of 75 hours up and down mountainsides and along valleys, at heights varying between 5,500

and 13,500 feet.

Ed, as he liked friends to call him, provided the plane to take us from Kathmandu to Lukla, about 9,000 feet on the side of a mountain. The small Helio Courier could not land the first morning because of low, dense cloud. The next day, 3rd September, it managed to get through the clouds and mist and land on the bumpy grass, which had only been flattened four years previously to make the airstrip. Ed met us and arranged for us to have two Sherpas, with two more to join up later, to carry tents, baggage and food. One of them, Kanchha, was to be our guide, interpreter and cook. Ed then discussed the itinerary before setting off with a group to go jet-boating on the River Arun.



*School supplies arriving at Lukla airstrip.*

So we started on our work trek; unfortunately, rain poured down as we struggled up the Dudh Kosi valley towards Namche Bazar. Our first night in a tent, where we were asleep by 8pm, was disturbed at 3am by the sound of heavy rain lashing the canvas. Jane developed a slight headache and I felt a bit weak in the legs: both were symptoms of altitude sickness which, fortunately, vanished after a day. We continued on our way and, after pausing in Namche Bazar, arrived a couple of hours later at Khunde Hospital. Ed's Himalayan Trust had funded the building of it at the end of 1966 and it was staffed by volunteer doctors from New Zealand. We were met by Dr Dick Evans and his

wife Leslie who greeted us with traditional white scarves which they draped around our necks. Our tent was pitched outside the hospital but we ate inside their kitchen. They had only been there two weeks; they were relieving the first New Zealand doctor whom we had seen at Lukla with Ed – Dr John McKinnon and his wife Diana.

Khunde Hospital became our base for a while as we inspected Khumjung School then up via Thyangboche Monastery to Pangboche School and back again, before trekking down to Junbesi School, Seleri and, finally, Chaunrikharkar School, not far from Lukla.

Although the weather throughout the trek was mostly cloudy and wet, being the tail-end of the monsoon, we still got the occasional wonderful views of the white peaks of Thamserku, Ama Dablam and the Everest group. We had our first sighting of yaks, and the cross-breeds of yaks and cows – zopkios and zums. They made their presence felt by rubbing against our tent's guy ropes at night.



*A class at Khumjung school.*

Hillary was revered throughout Solu Khumbu as though he were king. This was understandable in view of all the projects funded through his Himalayan Trust. In addition to schools, hospitals, health centres and drinking water systems, there were also bridges, forest nurseries and environmental conservation programmes. I

admired all that he was doing and was glad to be able to help in a small way. When we told Sherpas that we were visiting schools on Ed's behalf, it was like using a password as it opened all doors and ensured a warm welcome.



*A class outside the school at Chaunrikhakar.*

We had memorable meetings with many interesting people. We visited the home in Khumjung of Kappa Kalden, an elderly Sherpa artist, who had painted many of the marvellous murals in the temples and monasteries. We saw him painting a picture of the Buddhist Wheel of Life for Ed Hillary, and ordered two paintings for ourselves. Also in Khumjung we were escorted around the small gumpa, or temple, by the village elder, Nima Tarshi, and shown the famous yeti scalp that had been taken in 1960 to the USA and elsewhere for scientific analysis by Ed and Khunjo Chumbi, the village elder at the time. The scalp seemed to be made from the skin of a serow, the thick-coated mountain goat-antelope. At Thyangboche Monastery we were greeted by Nawang Tenzing Jangpo, the Head Lama, with the traditional white scarves he had blessed, and drank tea with him. At Pangboche Monastery we were shown another yeti scalp and skeleton of a hand. Much of our excitement stemmed from the feeling that reality was blending into legend.

One consequence of the wet weather that we had never experienced before was

leeches. They managed to get into our hair and clothing by dropping off rocks and trees and climbing up onto our shoes; they then squeezed their way down inside our socks and up our trouser legs. The only way to remove the leeches was to press a lighted cigarette on them so that they released their hold. Every night in our tent we had to carry out a body search and inspect each other's heads. Not an easily forgotten experience!

Near the end of the visit when we were back at Khunde Hospital, Dick and Leslie Evans showed us a lovely little black-and-white ball of fluff. It was a Tibetan terrier puppy given to Ed Hillary by a grateful Tibetan at Thami village, which had also been provided with a primary school. Ed could not take the dog with him, so we were offered it. We accepted with pleasure: as it came from Thami and was a bitch we decided to call her Tammy.



*Teaching staff at Khumjung.*

At 7.20am on 20th September, we said goodbye to our Sherpa friends and started loading our baggage into the plane at Lukla airstrip. Jane got in with Tammy on her lap; then it was discovered that two other passengers had to get back to Kathmandu urgently, so they got in but there was no room for me. "Never mind," said the pilot, "I'll be back for you tomorrow morning at the same time." Returning to the tent with only the clothes I stood up in, I waited and waited. I then



understood the meaning of the proverb "Tomorrow never comes". The plane tried to land during the next six days but could not because of low, thick cloud and rain. Boredom took on a deeper meaning. Eventually it managed to land on 27th September and I returned home to the bliss of lying in the first bath for twenty-six days.

What of the schools we inspected? It was certainly instructive to be in classes and watch children sitting cross-legged on the wooden floors writing in exercise books on low wooden desks. The teachers did their best with their limited training and resources, and the children tried hard to learn. The detailed results of the inspection formed a twenty-page report for Ed Hillary. It was gratifying to be informed in the following months that the major recommendations were being implemented. No pun is intended when I say that the trip was the high point of our four years in Nepal.

#### Footnote

*The Chairman of the Trust, Mr George Lowe, wrote in a recent Trust newsletter: "Despite serious problems in Nepal between the elected government and Maoist insurgents, the programme of work of the Himalayan Trust goes on. Both sides claim that the good work of the Trust will not be hindered. There are great difficulties for field workers and many of the local people are very frightened by what is happening. Our team of Nepalese Teacher Trainers continues the 'on the job' programme in the schools...."*

*Any member wishing to help the work in the Solu Khumbu of the Sir Edmund Hillary Trust UK should contact the Secretary, Mrs Mary Lowe, 'Danewood', Upper Holloway, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5AW. Ed.*

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## EVEREST: THE BRITISH SOUTHWEST FACE ATTEMPT OF AUTUMN 1972.

By Kelvin Kent FRGS.

*(This article is based on a lecture given by Maj KBS Kent to the Society on 7th October 2003.*

*Maj Kent was commissioned into The Royal Signals and served with Gurkha Signals in Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Hong Kong and Nepal. Whilst in Nepal he became interested in trekking expeditions and subsequently became involved with a number of major climbing expeditions in Nepal and other areas where he was able to use his talents as an expedition administrator. On retiring from the Army he set up a business in the USA, where he now lives. He is a member of the Society.)*

### History

By mid 1972 only 28 people had stood on the top of the world's highest mountain, unless, of course, we wish to add Mallory and Irvine. These ascents had included a number of routes but no one had achieved the sought-after direct Southwest Face. Our own expedition also failed to reach the top, despite a very strong and experienced team, but for different reasons from previous attempts on this Face. It was not until three years later, in 1975, that five members of Chris Bonington's repeat attempt on the Face were successful. Since then only a Polish team in 1980 and a Russian team in 1982 have summited by starting out on the Southwest Face, however both teams reached the top only by moving over to the ridges on the right or left respectively.

To put things into perspective, the Nepalese Himalaya had been closed to climbing for nearly five years leading up to 1969, and although Bonington had had his eyes on this route for some time, the Japanese were already ahead in planning. They did a small reconnaissance expedition in the spring of 1969 and followed that with a larger force in the post monsoon season, with the objective of getting to 26,000 feet,

which was just below the final major obstacle, the rock band. Then came the very busy spring of 1970. The Japanese launched a huge 39 member attempt, complete with no less than 26 high altitude Sherpas. Their dual mission was to summit the Southwest Face and provide the spectacle of the first man to ski down Everest. At this time, I was accompanying Chris Bonington and his team to west Nepal to climb the South Face of Annapurna, which was completed successfully with Don Whillans and Dougal Haston becoming the first pair to summit by that route. Simultaneously, Maj Bruce Niven, 10th Gurkha Rifles, and the British Army team were making their own successful bid on Annapurna by the Northern or French 'Herzog' route. Unfortunately the Japanese expedition attempting the Southwest Face suffered seven Sherpa fatalities and split their large team to make a two pronged assault on both the Southwest Face and the Southeast Ridge (no doubt because the Southwest Face route was so difficult and the Southeast route more doable), thus ensuring the important goal of getting the first Japanese climber to the top of Everest. Eventually, due to dangerous stone-fall conditions and a number of accidents, their expedition was called off after reaching about 26,300 feet on the Face. This was despite the fact that weather conditions were relatively good.

A year later, the ill-fated International Everest Expedition in which ten countries were represented, set out to accomplish the task. Jimmy Roberts was appointed joint leader with Norman Dhyrenforth. From the start there were serious disagreements concerning styles, financial support and actual objectives and even selection of team members. To make matters worse, the storms which the Japanese had somehow

not encountered, were particularly bad and the circumstances surrounding the death of the Indian climber, Harsh Bahuguna, was a serious blow to both the strength and morale of the party. Further disagreements followed resulting in a complete split while others became sick with a type of glandular fever. Eventually, Don Whillans and Dougal Haston of the UK contingent went back up the Face and reached the Japanese high point. They also recced a possible new route up into the left portion of the rock band, climbing another 300 feet from where it would have been relatively easy to traverse east towards the more well known ridge leading up from the South Col. However, they remained true to their mission in the hope that necessary supplies of rope, oxygen, tentage and manpower support would follow. This did not happen and so, yet another attempt came to a close.



*Indian Air Force photograph showing southwest face route.*

In the spring of 1972 a third team, led by a German doctor, Karl Herrlichoffer,

eagerly presented itself to answer the challenge. This team again included Don Whillans who certainly was prepared to go higher than his last attempt. It also had, amongst others, the very experienced combination of Hamish McInnis and Doug Scott from UK, and Herman Buhl from Germany and Reinhold Messner from Italy. However the expedition seemed to lack sound organization and soon showed itself to be deficient in equipment and planning. There were major medical problems and mistrust amongst members. Eventually, after huge delays, a Camp 6 was established at about the same elevation as Whillans' and Haston's earlier high point, but the following day the weather turned so bad that the attempt had to be abandoned.

### **Our Team**

And so began the preparations for our own expedition, even though there were several other parties ahead of us in the queue for Nepalese Foreign Office clearance. As it turned out, a number of cancellations occurred and with only two months warning Bonington was given the go ahead. This meant that we would be looking at the post monsoon season with its accompanying fierce jet stream above Everest, which, historically, provides the least chance of success. Nevertheless the decision was made to proceed with all due haste. Mike Cheney in Kathmandu was to be our local organizer with Liz Hawley handling our mail and media connections. The team itself, under the leadership of Bonington, was to consist of three initial lead climbers, Dougal Haston, Nick Estcourt and Mick Burke (who would also be our cinematographer), with later additions of Doug Scott, Hamish McInnis, Dave Bathgate and equipment specialist Graham Tiso. For support, Barney Rosedale (who had done so much for the Britain Nepal Medical Trust) was chosen as doctor and I was to be Base Camp manager and in charge of food and communications. Mick

Burk's wife, Beth, also accompanied us. Our Sherpa team was to be headed by old-school veteran Pemba Tharke from Phortse and the younger, more modern and union-like Sona Ishi from Namchhe. Jimmy Roberts (with whom Chris had climbed in the 1961 Nuptse expedition), was asked to be and took on the role of Deputy Leader. Dr R.B. Subba was the Nepalese Liaison Officer.



*The author in mid October.*

At this time I had just returned as Deputy Leader of John Blashford-Snell's British Trans Americas Expedition which successfully took two Range Rovers from Anchorage, Alaska to Terra Del Fuego in southern Chile. We had completed the longest ever unbroken land journey of over 17,000 miles and traversed the infamous Darien Gap in Panama and Columbia where no road existed. Having previously served two tours with the Brigade of Gurkhas, I was commanding a company at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst from which I had to obtain a three months leave. My role included some fundraising work and the putting together of the nearly five tons of food packs. We had over eight tons of equipment flown out to Kathmandu via Delhi, and by the time Chris arrived all was cleared through customs and laid out in the

grounds of the Shanker Hotel. The Sirdars, some of the Sherpas, including cooks, cookboys, and other key personnel were there and communication channels had been set up with the British Embassy and Liz Hawley.

### **The Monsoon and Approach**

We set out at the end of August, using buses to take us to Lamosangu where over 400 porters were assembled, together with the remainder of our Sherpa party which included mail runners and locally purchased provisions. We split into two parties and started out on what was to be a very wet and slippery approach march northeast to the Dudh Kosi and on up to Namchhe Bazar. Our first minor but uncomfortable casualties were from the effects of leeches and almost continuous monsoon rain and damp. The river and stream crossings were difficult and sometimes dangerous. All in all it was not pleasant and very time consuming, and several loads were lost. All the climbing and support team, often bedraggled, accompanied one of the two main porter parties except Jimmy Roberts, who was to fly out later to Lukla and walk (despite his bad hip), up to Base Camp. All High altitude Sherpas were to receive NCRs 15 per day plus keep and equipment in addition to various bonuses worked out during the expedition. On 6th September the first party reached Namchhe and transferred a portion of the equipment to yaks. Later, at Thyangboche, the second party caught up. This group included Dougal Haston and an Australian friend of his, Tony Tighe, who had obtained permission to trek up to base camp. A couple of days later, the weather turned colder and at Lobuje it snowed which meant that we had to break out all the cold weather supplies for the team, Sherpas and remaining porters.

It was 16th September when the first loads and climbers arrived at Base Camp

which had altered dramatically from when I had first visited in 1964. This time there was already a lot of snow and the snowline was down to 14,000 feet, but soon it became fine and clear. Unlike more recent times, we had the entire area virtually to ourselves, although a French party were way over to our left getting ready for an attempt on Pumori. Our first goal was to sort out some 5 tons of gear that was earmarked to be carried up through the icefall into the Western Cwm. Hamish McInnis immediately set out to establish a safe route up through the 1800 foot elevation gain to a Camp 1 site. He was followed by Chris, Dave Bathgate and Nick Estcourt with our oldest and most experienced icefall Sherpa, the 55 year old Phurkipa who was put in charge of route maintenance. It was difficult work and took five days to establish a relatively safe route, through which up to 25 loads a day could be conveyed to the Cwm. But even now, some of the Sherpas, led by Sona Ishi, were demanding extra pay and toys. The weather again turned bad and led us to believe that this year there was to be no gap between the monsoon finishing and the start of winter weather. The new snow was wet and heavy and caused several of the tents, including mine, to collapse and break. The temperature plunged to minus 10 degrees C. And so, what should have been a routine task of carrying through the icefall, became an exhausting, debilitating and time consuming business.



*Approach march during the monsoon.*

### **The build up**

Above and about four miles further on, at the top end of the Cwm, just under the Lhotse Face, was Camp 2, which we intended to become our advance base camp. Again, with a fresh 18 inches of snowfall, these carries became laborious and extremely slow. The dry air at 21,000 feet also took its toll and caused almost unstoppable coughing spells. Eventually supplies were built up for both Camps 1 and 2, and Estcourt and Bathgate were able to push on to a Camp 3 site on the face itself, which was perched on a narrow ledge below a formidable rock cliff. Following this move, Doug Scott and Mick Burke were able to pitch a combination of four tents and box tents here at about 22,500 feet so that our third camp could be occupied and accept supplies for the upper face climb. It was now 4th October and Jimmy Roberts had just arrived at Base Camp, enabling me to make a couple of carries up through the icefall and subsequently spend some time at Camp 1. Another individual, Ken Wilson, editor of *Mountain* magazine, had also arrived (at his own expense) and he too came up to Camp 1. My next move was to carry up to Camp 2 and help with the logistics from there. In the meantime, Burke and Haston were up on the face putting in fixed ropes to a Camp 4 location. Unfortunately, the weather again turned for the worse with high winds, whiteout conditions and falling temperatures. They had to descend and it was not until several days later that it became possible to resume the climb. By this time Camp 3 was a shambles and one of the 'Whillans' box tents was a write-off. Virtually the whole of Camp 3 had to be excavated and now the temperature was falling to 20 below.

It took nearly two days to force the route back up to Camp 4 at approximately 24,600 feet and by that time the full move to Advance Base had been completed. This camp now had its own cook tent and

communal dining tent plus a dozen or so other tents and considerable supply piles. However, the icefall was proving to be far from stable and avalanches from both sides of the Cwm, as well as huge ones from Pumori which blanketed our Base Camp, were becoming common place. Nevertheless on 12th October, Camp 4 was established by Haston, McInnis, Sirdar Pemba Tharke and Pertemba from where they set out for a possible Camp 5 location. By this time several other Sherpas and some of our climbers were not well and Barney Rosedale himself was suffering from a cracked rib.

The route to Camp 4 was steep, partly rocky and followed the path of a long gully which was a natural chute for falling debris. Above the Camp 4 site, which was on the sheer face at an angle of 60 degrees, the route up to Camp 5 veered right and followed a large snow and rock filled couloir to 26,000 feet. Now, at last, things looked better but we were seriously behind in getting the requisite number of loads up the mountain towards Camp 4 which needed a substantial build-up to sustain the push above.

### **The Winds**

Then, on 15th October, the winds returned in full fury. By this time Chris and four Sherpas were at Camp 4 with most of the lead climbers below, waiting for an opportunity to move up. But the conditions became indescribable. Spindrift avalanches roared down the mountain and the noise became deafening. Large blocks of snow, ice and rocks hurtled down the very routes that had been established and the wind chill factor was equivalent to an arctic blizzard. All climbing was limited. I was now at Camp 3, having filled the gap because of attrition and partly because I saw an opportunity to assist Chris and reach a higher point than I had on Annapurna. I knew that there was a need to get crucial supplies up to Camp 4 but did not realize

the severity of the storm because Chris's communications were out. Amongst other things, I was carrying spare batteries and a new radio and the four Sherpas with me had oxygen, food, and other supplies necessary for the next phase. And so we set out to reach Camp 4 at the height of the storm. As we turned from the relative shelter of the ledge into the chute, it became apparent that it was going to be a struggle. Almost immediately one Sherpa turned back and after some time on the fixed ropes, the other two Sherpas overtook me as they were going much more strongly. Against their advice, I carried on behind them although the white-out conditions and falling debris did not permit me to gauge where I was in relation to Camp 4 above. After what seemed like hours, the two Sherpas suddenly appeared in front of me like ghosts in the fog. Again they beckoned me down as it was impossible to speak because of the noise of the wind but, foolishly I insisted on continuing by myself, albeit with frozen feet and hands, thinking that I was very close. Regrettably, this was not the case and it took me another two hours before I stumbled into Camp 4, exhausted. The fact that I gained some satisfaction in delivering my load was no consolation and Chris was not at all pleased with me because he had to dispatch one of his best Sherpas, Ang Phu, to accompany me all the way back down to Camp 2. Needless to say, this was a very long day and I consider myself lucky to have made it, thanks, in large part to Ang Phu and Dr Barney Rosedale's efficient treatment with oxygen, hot water treatments and rehydration. In the event I lost part of a finger and had several skin grafts.

As a result of this severe storm, Camp 3 was basically buried and even at Camp 2, where I was holed up for several more days, many tents had to be dug out and the larger ones were bent up considerably. More than half of all of our tents were now out of action. The wind was so strong that



sleeping was virtually impossible and venturing outside, even for necessities, was a nightmare. Chris, though, decided to sit out the storm at Camp 4 under ferocious conditions, hoping that the weather would abate. On 19th October the wind did diminish and it became clear again. Chris and two of the Sherpas ventured out with supply loads to reach the old site of Camp 5. However, this step forward could not be sustained due to the situation below and general exhaustion, so the Camp 4 party descended to Camp 2, leaving no one above there.

Two days later, Bathgate and Estcourt returned to Camp 4 where they had to rebuild it due to substantial damage. The Sherpas did not like it there at all but nevertheless helped with more carries to Camp 5, enabling it to be temporarily occupied. However, as luck would have it, the winds suddenly returned and the rebuilt Camp 4 was once more in ruins. All were forced to return to Camp 2 where the atmosphere was now grim. I was now back at Base Camp and most of the rest of the team were scattered between Base and Camp 2. It became a waiting game with every passing day reducing the chance of success less.

On 28th October, there was a break in the weather but supplies were now running out and the results of attrition were very evident. Chris made the decision, after much consultation, to make one last push. This involved massive carries up through the now very dangerous icefall and further moves of supplies and manpower to Camp 2. Graham Tiso was holding out at Camp 3 but Base Camp had received nearly three feet of snow and our supply route back to Lobuje was completely blocked. Camp 1 was buried and, with the piercing cold and blowing snow, some of the 6 foot marker poles in the Cwm were no longer visible. Everything had to be dug out and reorganized. Three days later, Burke and Scott, with several Sherpas in support, were

back up at Camp 4, which they had to completely rebuild, not being able to locate any of the previously deposited supplies which were either buried or blown away. Camp 3 was now stockpiled and the Sherpas were doing heroic carries direct from 2 to 4 and back to 2 which was about 3,600 vertical feet, enabling Scott and Burke to get back to Camp 5 where they were able to erect a platform and tent and stay the night. Estcourt and Bathgate then came up to Camp 4, followed by Tiso with Chris now commanding the climb from Camp 2.



*High wind at Advance base Camp (Camp 2).*

At Camp 5 the sun did not reach the tent until 2 pm. It was a steep and difficult 45 degree angle to the right to climb to the proposed Camp 6 location at just over 27,000 feet above which the rock band presented a formidable obstacle. Both Scott and Burke were now suffering from haemorrhoids, bad headaches and mild frostbite and had a stove which did not work. The temperature was now well below minus 30. As a result, they were forced to consider descending the next day but Estcourt and Bathgate were able to reach Camp 5 and continue the effort. Meanwhile, from Camp 1, McInnis and Haston, who had been resting, were ordered back up for a final push above Camp 5. The temperature was now beginning to drop dramatically and additional sleeping bags, mattresses, stoves and oxygen were required merely to survive the night. But

even in these conditions Scott and Estcourt managed to run some rope out to the rock band. Sherpas Pertemba and Jangbo joined in the effort and in the end, 1200 feet of rope had been fixed and an altitude of 26,700 feet attained. It was now 45 degrees below and Scott and Burke descended to Camp 2.

### **The Final Push and Defeat**

Things looked better as Tiso manned Camp 4 and later, with three Sherpas, made carries to Camp 5 to where Chris had now moved. The next day, Bathgate did a carry from 5 to the site at 6, but again, logistics controlled the pace. More loads had to come up to Camp 5 and problems with the oxygen valves exacerbated the situation. Then Estcourt and Pertemba, in a supreme effort, reached the possible Camp 6 location in extremely difficult circumstances in which they nearly perished. By this time the climb had become a situation against declining odds. On 11th November Chris, with Ang Phurba, who had both returned to Camp 5, climbed all the way back to the Estcourt high point to try to locate a definite location for Camp 6 which was a thousand feet above the South Col. However due to lack of time and severe conditions, they were unable to establish a camp and had to retreat. At the same time, Tiso had been struck on the head by falling rock at Camp 4 and had to come down for stitches at Advance Base. Jimmy Roberts, meanwhile, had moved out of Base Camp and was positioned near the top of Kala Patar from where he could communicate with the climbers and see all movements on the face clearly with binoculars. The next day, Chris managed one more solo carry to the proposed Camp 6 position and returned to 5, where, a little later, Haston and McInnis arrived and had to erect another box tent, which collapsed in the night and resulted in very little rest. Then, on 14th November, Haston and McInnis, with Burke and Scott following

them, despite the grim news of an Indian weather service report indicating 200 kmh winds on the top, made one last supreme effort get back to Camp 6. In the event McInnis had to turn back early because of oxygen problems and the other three barely made it before having to retreat once again because of what Haston described as “erupting winds which viciously asserted their authority”. There was absolutely no way a tent could be erected as, by now, the cold was beyond that which the human body could endure. Even thinking was almost impossible. The wind speed, approaching 100 mph, had become continuous and there was extreme danger of oxygen supply systems freezing up. Furthermore, the route upwards through what had earlier been a snow-covered couloir, was now bare rock and not doable under the prevailing circumstances. Even the option of moving over to the Southeast ridge proved to be suicidal and, almost without the need to sum up the situation, everyone silently agreed that defeat had to be admitted. Everyone was relieved.

### **Tragedy**

By this time, Chris Brasher, the reporter from The Observer, who had arrived earlier and spent time at Camp 2, had gone down to Kunde to interview Ed Hillary but on hearing news of our decision to call things off, hurried back to Base Camp for the final story. But even in failure tragedy was to overcome the expedition.

Barney Rosedale was overseeing the evacuation with two Sherpas at Camp 2 while the main party of climbers returned to Base via Camp 1. On their way from 1 to Base, they met a second party of 20 Sherpas who were coming up to Camp 1 to help carry gear down. Below them and going slower was Tony Tighe who had, it was felt, earned the reward for all of his hard work at Base, to make one unofficial trip up the icefall to greet his friend Dougal Haston on his way down. Shortly

afterwards, the Sherpas heard a loud roar below them, which could also be heard from Camp 1. That afternoon, a couple of Sherpas contacted me to announce that they thought that there had been a serac collapse and that they were worried because of the number of individuals who were likely to have been in the vicinity. A little later, this was confirmed by several more Sherpas who had now returned to Base. Their report indicated that the seracs had collapsed after one party had descended but there were yet others behind them. Eventually, Barney and the rest of the Sherpas arrived back but there was no sight of Tony Tighe. It turned out that Tony had been caught in the collapse while still going up and was therefore never seen by the party coming down. Later still, other Sherpas explained that they experienced the collapse when they were just above the obstacle which actually gave way under them, leaving one Sherpa (Ang Tande) suspended on a rope. Jangbo, together with Barney and Pertemba, had to respond immediately to rescue him in order to avoid another fatality even though they were not aware that Tony had actually perished. Indeed, had the main party of Sherpas been a couple of minutes faster or slower, many of them would have been caught.

That evening, although everyone was exhausted, a search party returned to the collapse site and searched in the dark, but to no avail. Next day another party, led by mountain rescue expert Hamish McInnis, returned to the site, hoping for some sign but there was none.

And so, this expedition, despite careful planning, a strong team with excellent leadership and very fine performances by all team climbers and Sherpas, had to admit defeat notwithstanding a worthy effort. They had reached an elevation of 27,300

feet. The main reason for failure to attain the summit was the combination of bitter cold, high winds and difficulty of route extension above Camp 6.



*Dougal Haston at Camp 6. Doug Scott.*

In 1975, another team, also led by Chris Bonington, succeeded with five members reaching the summit in somewhat better conditions and by choosing a more climbable route which went left rather than right, through the rock band. They also started nearly one month earlier in order to beat the onset of the fierce winds. Nevertheless in their victory, they lost Mick Burke, who was credited with reaching the top but who never made it back and whose body has not been found.

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## THE HIMALAYAN FRONTIER POLICY OF BRITISH-INDIA AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1923 TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND NEPAL

By Professor Surya P. Subedi

*(This paper is based on a lecture given to the Society on 14th January 2003 by Dr Surya P Subedi. He is Professor of International Law and heads the Centre for Legal Research at Middlesex University. He is also Professorial Research Associate and Visiting Professor of Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is currently Chairman of the Britain-Nepal Academic Association in London.)*

### **Introduction**

The term 'Himalayan Frontier of British India' is a hated term in present day Nepal because of India's attempt to keep Nepal within the broader Indian security framework. However a survey of the events leading up to the conclusion of the 1923 Treaty reveals that this policy was supported by Nepal at the time of its conception and that both the venerable Bhim Sen Thapa and Chandra Shumsher, one of the most shrewd Rana Prime Ministers, were indirect contributors to the making of this policy of British India. The policy worked well in the interest of both Britain and Nepal and the 1923 Treaty continued in the same vein. The spirit that governed the 1816 Treaty of Segauli governed the 1923 Treaty and in turn this treaty governs the present 1950 Treaty with India – a controversial document in Nepal and a continuing irritant in present-day Indo-Nepali relations. Therefore, to understand the 1950 Treaty one has to understand the background to the 1923 Treaty and its provisions. It is in this context that this short paper aims to analyse the

significance of the events leading up to its conclusion in 1923, and its relevance to today's situation.

### **Nature of relations between Britain and Nepal**

Britain has traditionally supported the status quo in Nepal. Britain supported the Ranas and the Panchayat system until the situation became untenable. After granting independence to India, British interests in Nepal diminished dramatically. The Ranas were no longer in power in Nepal and Britain as a 'State in retreat' no longer had a strategic interest in Nepal. The nature of relations with Nepal changed and the focus was on helping Nepal to develop her economy. Britain has been helping Nepal to reduce poverty, to empower women and those belonging to disadvantaged ethnic groups, to promote good governance and to preserve and promote democracy and human rights. At present Britain is at the forefront of the campaign to help Nepal deal with the current Maoist problem.

Relations between the peoples of the two countries at the unofficial level continue to grow as increasing numbers of tourists from Britain continued to visit Nepal every year. There is a sizeable number of missionaries in Nepal, even in the remotest parts of the country, followed by researchers and charity or aid workers. Thus, Britain's relations with Nepal are very different today from what they were at the height of British Imperial power. The 1923 Treaty was a treaty concluded with Nepal at the height of this power. Before looking at the provisions of

the treaty it is necessary to provide a brief survey of major events in the history of relations between these two countries leading up to the Treaty's conclusion.

### **Major events in Britain-Nepal relations prior to the 1923 Treaty**

The first real encounter between the forces of Nepal and Britain took place when King Prithvi Narayan Shah halted the advance of Captain Kinloch in 1767. This was the time when the King was in the process of uniting Nepal. He laid down the foundations of Nepalese foreign policy stating that Nepal was a small country sandwiched between the two giants of Asia and had thus to maintain a policy of neutrality and equilibrium between the two. However, when a war broke out between China and Nepal and the Chinese came all the way to within striking distance of Kathmandu, a treaty was concluded between the two countries in 1792, designed to prevent China from invading Nepal. However the treaty gave China the opportunity to make a suzerain claim over Nepal.

Indeed, for a while, the Nepalese used the Chinese connection to prevent any possible advances by the British from the south. Nevertheless, the bitter experience of the war with the Chinese, coming so close to Kathmandu, caused the rulers of Nepal to develop closer relations with Britain. They were seeking to cultivate better relations with their southern neighbour should they need assistance in the event of any further Chinese aggression. As a result of Nepal's attempts to develop these closer relations with Britain, a Treaty of Commerce, which included a provision for a British Resident in Nepal, was concluded between the two countries in 1801.

However, when both Nepal and Britain were in the process of expansion, their interests clashed which led to the outbreak of hostilities between them in 1814. In spite of having a 'suzerain' claim over Nepal, China did not come to Nepal's aid. Article 5 of the 1792 Treaty stated that "if Nepal be ever invaded by a foreign power, China would not fail to help her." Any Chinese claim over Nepal should have effectively ended after this failure, but the Chinese official position vis-à-vis Nepal did not change. Nepal had lost the war with the British and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship was concluded at Segauli in 1816 under which Nepal ceded some territory, mainly part of the Terai region of the southern plains, to British India.

### **The Origin of the Himalayan Frontier Policy**

The origin of the Himalayan Frontier Policy was the Treaty of Segauli itself. The defeat at the hands of the British and the cloud of the Chinese claim of suzerainty hanging over Nepal had put Bhim Sen Thapa in a very difficult situation. This was a turning point for Nepal in the conduct of her foreign relations. Bhim Sen Thapa saw one Indian state after another come within the net of the British India, and his policy was steadily directed to save Nepal from a similar fate. Both Jang Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher, the Rana Prime Ministers, saw the world around them through the same binoculars. Hence, the policy they pursued was a policy of appeasement towards the British, whether it was assisting them in the suppression of mutiny within India or inviting the members of the British ruling class to lavish big game hunts in Nepal, rather

than seek shelter as a suzerain under the Chinese umbrella. China could not be relied upon since they had failed to assist Nepal during the war with the British. The attempts to cultivate good relations with the then expanding mighty British Empire led to the conclusion of a treaty in 1860 restoring to Nepal by Britain the whole of the lowlands between the river Kali and the district of Gorakhpur.

When much of South Asia came under the British colonial rule and Nepal was under the imperial influence, the British were pursuing a policy which regarded the Himalayas as the ultimate frontier with the Chinese empire. Consequently, Tibet, rather than Nepal, was regarded as a buffer zone between the two empires. The 1906 Convention between Great Britain and China with regard to the inviolability of the status of Tibet provided that Great Britain would not invade or interfere with the territory of Tibet or permit any other foreign state to do so. A similar provision was included in the Convention concluded between Great Britain and Russia in 1907, which recognized the suzerain rights of China in Tibet. In spite of the letters written by the German Imperial Chancellor and others during the Great War inciting Nepal against the British, Nepal remained true to her friendship with the British. However the continuing presence of a British Resident in Kathmandu remained the main irritant in Nepal's relations with the British.

### **Conclusion of the 1923 Treaty**

It was the first peacetime treaty concluded by Nepal with any foreign power and it was done in style. A grand ceremony took place in the Grand Council Hall of the Palace to mark the conclusion of the

treaty. The British Resident, Lieutenant Colonel O'Connor, was received with full military honours, including a 31 gun salute fired from the Tundi Khel. A two day national holiday was announced in Nepal. Prisoners had a three month remission of their sentences and Kathmandu was illuminated that night. The Rana Prime Minister, Chandra Shumsher, described the Treaty as "a magnificent dome crowning the whole" in the relations between the two countries.

### **Main provisions of the Treaty**

The main provision of the treaty was the recognition of Nepal's independence by Britain. Article 1 of the treaty stated that "There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Governments of Great Britain and Nepal, and the two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect each other's independence, both internal and external." The treaty also allowed for the importation of ammunition through India and stated that no levy would be imposed on the goods being imported into Nepal through India. A collateral understanding attached to the treaty of 1923 ratified and confirmed permission to recruit Gurkhas from within Nepal for the British Indian Army, and the status of the British Resident in Nepal became that of an 'envoy.'

### **Significance of the Treaty**

From Nepal's point of view, the most significant provision of the treaty was that it secured Britain's formal recognition of Nepal as a sovereign and independent State. It was more of a symbolic treaty as it did not make much visible change. It was psychologically important however for Nepal to secure this recognition.

Unlike many peace treaties, this treaty did not bring to an end any state of hostility. It was part of the package designed to reward Nepal for her help during the Great War and was negotiated over a period of about three years. Territorial compensation was considered by Britain but was ruled out. This was the first such treaty concluded by the British Empire, at the height of its imperial power, with any minor State which could so easily have been governed directly by them.

The other most significant achievement for Nepal was that through the conclusion of this treaty Britain officially denied China any claim to suzerainty over Nepal by virtue of the 1792 Treaty which had stated in Article 1 that “China should henceforth be considered as father to both Nepal and Tibet, who should regard each other as brothers.” Article 6 of the 1792 Treaty had required Nepal to send tributary missions to Nepal every five years. It depends on how one translates and interprets the letters sent by the Kings of Nepal to the Chinese Emperor with the gifts. Some observers may argue that even as late as in 1894 Nepal implicitly accepted its status as a vassal state of China. The Chinese had a habit of never surrendering any inch of territory over which they have ever had even a transitory influence, and Nepal had reasons to be concerned about it. When Nepal strengthened her relations with Britain, she was less worried about China. The last tributary mission to China was dispatched in 1907. When China demanded another mission in 1912 Nepal declined. Britain came to the defence of Nepal and stated that it would also defend Sikkim and Bhutan against any Chinese claims over these kingdoms. This was termed as the ‘Himalayan frontier policy’

and was adopted to insulate Nepal from any Chinese claim of vassalage.

The famous visit of the Rana Prime Minister, Chandra Shumsher, to England in 1908 was crucial in cementing Nepal's relations with Britain and the assurances that Nepal received from Britain resulted from this visit. A consignment of ammunition was received in Nepal in 1912 to help defend Nepal against any possible Chinese threat. It should also be noted that the treaty was concluded after the Barcelona Convention which had been adopted in 1921 providing for freedom of transit for land-locked countries. The British were perhaps also honouring that Convention and the tradition of her relations with Nepal, a land-locked country. After the conclusion of the 1923 Treaty, Nepal began to come more into contact with other States and the treaty made such processes easier.

### **Conclusion**

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs shows that it was the 1923 Treaty that implicitly endorsed the ‘Himalayan frontier policy’ of Britain and British India. It was not a treaty imposed by Britain more a treaty favoured by Nepal. This was a watershed in terms of Nepal’s alliance with her southern neighbour and a deliberate attempt to detach herself from her neighbour in the north. It was a happy occasion for Nepal and the pomp and pageantry that was displayed in Kathmandu confirmed it. The 1923 Treaty is an instrument which kept Nepal free when the whole of South Asia went through a period of redrawing of boundaries and creating new States when the British were leaving India. It is this treaty which sent a clear message to China that its claim over Nepal was at an



end. It also signified that the then mighty British Empire was more civilized than many other imperial powers and was willing to deal even with small powers on equal footing, provided that they were friendly to the British. It was perhaps the existence of this treaty that prevented Indian hawks like Ballav Bhai Patel from annexing Nepal in the aftermath of Indian independence. Therefore, although now it is merely a document of historical interest, it is this treaty which helped Nepal preserve its independence, from both the British and the Chinese, which the people of this country enjoy today.

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### Author's Note:

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*(An interesting treatise on Nepal's foreign relations for the period 1770 to 1970 can be found in 'Nepal - Strategy for Survival' by Leo Rose, published by the University of California Press, 1971. Ed.)*

## BRIAN HOUGHTON HODGSON – A PIONEER OF HIMALAYAN ZOOLOGY

By Carol Inskipp

*(This article is based on a lecture given by Carol Inskipp at the Zoological Society of London for both ZSL and Society members on 6th May 2003. Carol Inskipp is one of the leading authorities on the ornithology of Nepal and the Indian Subcontinent. She is co-author, with her husband and others, of a number of books on ornithology of that area including 'Birds of Nepal' which was reviewed in the 2002 journal. She also wrote, with Mark Cocker, 'A Himalayan Ornithologist – the Life and Work of Brian Houghton Hodgson', published in 1988.)*

Our present-day knowledge of the birds and mammals of the Himalayan region can be traced back to the pioneering work of a remarkable nineteenth century naturalist, scholar and administrator, Brian Houghton Hodgson.

When Hodgson first arrived in Nepal in 1820, as Assistant Resident, little was known of the country's fauna. Its abundant and colourful wildlife, still obvious today, attracted his attention and inspired him to discover and systematise the species he found. Nepal is exceptionally rich in biodiversity considering the country's small size.

Hodgson's achievements in the field of natural history are extensive. His detailed observations provided almost all of the information available on Nepalese wildlife until this century. He remained in Nepal becoming Resident in 1833 and was finally relieved of his post in 1843 following the changes in policy instituted when Lord Auckland was succeeded by Lord Ellenborough as Governor-General in Calcutta.

A large number of animal species, mostly mammals and birds bear his name. Among the birds there is Hodgson's Pipit, Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo, Hodgson's Redstart, *Columba hodgsonii* – Speckled Woodpigeon and a number of others. There is a genus named after him – *Hodgsonius* – a singular honour shared by few other ornithologists. Several mammals are named after him including Hodgson's Flying Squirrel, Hodgson's Bat, *Panholops hodgsonii* – the Chiru or Tibetan Antelope, and even a Colubrid snake – *Elaphe hodgsonii*.

There is little information about how Hodgson went about his zoological work, since his opportunities for observing animals in the wild were very restricted. In over twenty years in the country his travels were almost entirely limited to the Kathmandu Valley and the trail from Kathmandu south to the Indian border at Segauli due to restrictions imposed by the Rana court on all movements on the staff of the British Residency.

There is no doubt that Hodgson's principal contribution in the field of natural history was his ornithological work. A total collection of 9512 bird specimens was one of the largest single collections made in Asia and consisted of 672 species; three quarters of the country's present total. Of these over 124 were previously unknown to science. He is credited with first descriptions of 80 bird species, the rest being mainly attributed to Blyth, the Gray brothers and Gould who described the species based on Hodgson's specimens. Hodgson's mammal collection of 903 specimens was also important. Of the total 124 species he

found, 87 came from Nepal, constituting about two thirds of those now recorded in the country, while an extra 37 species came from Tibet and the Indian states east of the Nepalese border. Although 22 species new to science were attributed to Hodgson, there were nine other species for which others such as Blyth and the Grays took the credit.

His contribution falls into three categories: his extensive collection of vertebrate specimens, his published papers together with a mass of unpublished notes and finally a magnificent collection of water colour paintings.

Hodgson's least recognised achievement is his collection of water colour paintings. There are two major sets of paintings. The original 1125 sheets of birds and 487 on mammals are held in the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) library. A later set of paintings was executed, largely a reworking and improvement of those now kept at the ZSL, with some new additions including 30 sheets of amphibians, reptiles and fish. This later set is held at The Natural History Museum, but their original purpose was to illustrate a work on Himalayan zoology that Hodgson aimed to publish.

Hodgson was not an artist and the paintings and pencil sketches were executed by skilled Nepalis under his guidance. Sadly little is known about these artists. Rajman Singh is the best known and signed several of his paintings but the large majority are unsigned. Hodgson was fully aware of the excellence of his artists' work and pointed this out in his letters and public announcements about his proposed book on the zoology of Nepal. The later

paintings of Hodgson's artists were certainly more scientifically accurate as well as more lifelike than any published previously on Asian birds.

The backs of the paintings held in the ZSL library are covered with full descriptions of plumage, furs, colours of bills, legs, feet and irides, and detailed measurements. Hodgson also wrote extensively on behaviour, including breeding behaviour, nests and eggs, altitudes, localities and dates of collection.

He made strenuous attempts to publish an illustrated book on the fauna of Nepal over a period of more than ten years, but these were all unsuccessful. First he advertised in Indian journals to find subscribers. At this time he had plans for a work on a grand scale in which the parts were to be issued at regular intervals over a number of years. When this failed to attract sufficient support, Hodgson wrote to several potential collaborators, including John Gould, who was then Curator at the ZSL. His failure was due to a combination of factors acting against him. He had deep disagreements with Gould. Finding funds was a problem as publishing such a large number of colour paintings would have been extremely expensive. Undoubtedly, bad luck played a part but so did his remote postings and the absence of a supportive network of like-minded men in England where the technology and resources to make it happen were available. Using the stunning and lifelike watercolours now held in The Natural History Museum and in the ZSL, backed up by his extensive scientific research, Hodgson had the potential to publish an outstanding natural history book of his day. He would have been credited with far more first descriptions of

species if his illustrations had been published.

On account of the restrictions on the movements of British staff in the Residency, most of Hodgson's specimens were collected for him by a team of trappers. Virtually nothing is known about these men. Sadly Hodgson must have also been disappointed about the fate of his magnificent collection of skins. Today his bird specimens are in very poor condition. This is partly because of their very unusual method of preparation with their wings outstretched and not folded. This resulted in their being damaged in transit. A large number of the specimens also suffered by not being unpacked for many years. Hodgson meticulously labelled all his specimens. Unfortunately the Gray brothers at the British Museum deliberately removed and destroyed his Nepali labels, so that important information has been totally lost for the great majority of the specimens.

One important aspect of Hodgson's bird and mammal studies was his interest in observing and describing species' behaviour and habitat at every opportunity. He was one of the earliest fieldworkers to do this, believing the information helped to classify species. While his papers mainly comprise detailed descriptions of plumages and external and internal structure, he often included lively and interesting accounts and notes of bird behaviour which he made from field observations.

Hodgson's relations with the museum world were never easy, and his feelings of disappointment and mistrust may have contributed to his lack of activity in this area later in his life. From early on he severely criticised 'museum men' as 'closet naturalists' who he believed

contrived to take the credit for the discovery of new species based on his specimens. Whether he was justified in his conclusion that he was cheated out of due recognition is difficult to ascertain. However it is certainly true that many species that he described as new in his papers were attributed to others, notably the Gray brothers, Blyth and Gould. But the time was one of confusion, with many species being described at around the same time from different sources.

Hodgson returned to England in 1858 after a period of living in Darjeeling but did no further work on zoology. Probably he felt disillusioned. In 1859 he wrote: 'No-one knows better what pains and cost have been bestowed by me upon zoology and no-one better knows how little fruit of said pains and cost I have yet realised owing to the indifference of the so-called patrons of science....I must have stood without dispute the greatest discoverer nearly on record – certainly by far the greatest on record for northern India for my particular field'.

Hodgson's apparent disillusionment was particularly sad as he certainly had a high reputation amongst leading zoologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tributes were widely made to him acknowledging the importance of his work. For instance, in his classic book on ornithology 'The Birds of India' published in 1862, Jerdon wrote: 'Mr Hodgson, for many years our accomplished Resident at the Court of Nepal, has added very largely to our knowledge of the Birds of the Himalayas, few of which escaped his zealous researches'. In his comprehensive and highly acclaimed 'Fauna of British India', Stuart Baker considered that Hodgson, together with Jerdon and Blyth were the

fathers of Indian ornithology.

Considering these accolades from eminent zoologists of the time, it is extraordinary that Hodgson received few marks of reward for services to zoology. The Zoological Society of London awarded Hodgson a silver medal for his help in obtaining a pheasant collection in 1859, and in 1863 he was made an Honorary Member of the Society. He was also elected a member of the Linnean Society and of the Royal Asiatic Society with flattering expressions of regard. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1877. His obituary in 'Ibis', the well-respected journal of the British Ornithologists' Union, does not however do justice to his great achievements. Although the donation of his huge collection of zoological specimens to the British Museum is acknowledged, the significance of his discoveries of numerous species for science is not described. No details are given of the

importance of his scientific papers. While there is a mention of his donation of zoological drawings to the British Museum, the obituary does not state they were colour paintings nor give any idea of their large number nor of their excellence. Perhaps this inadequate acknowledgement of Hodgson's zoological achievements in his obituary was at least partly due to the lengthy period between his last zoological publication and his death in 1894. Most zoologists of the day simply did not know him. Sadly Hodgson's achievements are hardly recognised by naturalists who live in or visit the Himalayas today although his name is certainly familiar to them. Yet he laid the foundations of studies on Himalayan fauna and provided almost all the information available on Nepalese mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles until the second half of the twentieth century, when Nepal, for the first time, was opened up to a new generation of zoologists.

## OF GOMPAS, CHORTENS, MANI WALLS AND YAKS A TREK THROUGH MUSTANG AND DOLPO

By Anne Cowan

*(During his last year in the Army, Gen Sir Sam Cowan, Colonel Commandant Brigade of Gurkhas and Lady Cowan were able to undertake treks in the remote areas of Upper Mustang and Dolpo. The article below is from the diary written by Lady Cowan on their visit to Mustang. The literary references were selected by Gen Cowan and the photographs were taken by him. The trek to Dolpo will feature in the 2004 journal. Ed)*

The inspiration for this long trek came from a number of books, most of them read long ago, but a few were carried with us on the trek to provide guidance and insight. Michel Peissel in 1964 was the first foreigner authorised to reside at length in Mustang and he recorded his experiences in "Mustang – A Lost Tibetan Kingdom." At that time Mustang, as with northern Dolpo, was effectively under the control of the Khampas – fierce warriors from 3000 miles away in the eastern Tibetan province of Kham – who were being funded and supplied by the CIA and India to wage an insurgency against the Chinese Army in Tibet. His book was a daily and invaluable guide to us in Mustang. Professor David Snellgrove, a leading authority on Tibetan Buddhism, travelled through Dolpo and Mustang in 1956 and his "Himalayan Pilgrimage" was a mine of useful information, particularly in Dolpo. Harka Gurung, a geologist, travelled in Mustang in 1973 and part of Southern Dolpo in 1966: his "Vignettes of Nepal" remains an excellent read. Eric Valli, a Frenchman has travelled a lot in Dolpo over the last twenty years and his "Caravans of the Himalaya" is good on the history of Dolpo and life in the region today. Inevitably, the first reading of Peter Matthiessen's "The Snow Leopard" provided the initial inspiration to visit Dolpo one day and it was a great pleasure

to read the relevant sections as we trod almost the same path from Dunai to Shey. Finally, Keith Dowman's "The Sacred Life of Tibet" is a clear introduction to some of the key concepts of Tibetan Buddhism and the Lonely Planet "Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya" was a vital companion, particularly when we went off the map and beyond our porters' experience in the northernmost part of Dolpo. Above all, we must thank our friend Lt Col Narayan Singh Pun, late Royal Nepalese Army, for his tremendous help and encouragement – he made the dream come true!

*(For those interested in further reading about the operations against the Chinese carried out by the Mustang-based Khamba guerrillas in the early 1960s, Michel Piessel's book, now out of print, 'Cavaliers of Kham – The Secret War in Tibet', gives a good account. It includes the role of the governments in the region and the complicated geopolitics of this little known conflict. Ed.)*

### **DAY 1 - Thursday 19 September - Jomsom to Kagbeni**

We arrived in Jomsom by helicopter from Pokhara, having flown up the great gorge between the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges, and were met by Ramji Tamang, our Sirdar, and taken to the hotel for breakfast while he sorted out some of the paperwork. We met Purba the Cook and our five porters. The plan was to use mules for the rest of our kit, but Ramji still had to fix this. We checked in at the Police Post, and started to walk up the road, past the Nepal Army Mountain Training School. At the end of Jomsom the road became a track along the river bed of the Kali Gandaki, and we proceeded along the west side, and up along the river bank where the river itself wound round near the edge. The river at this time

of the year is quite shallow, and winds around the broad flood plain. Further down the river goes through deep gorges and becomes stronger until it eventually reaches the Terai. We crossed the river on a high bridge, and came across an apple seller who wanted some medication for an ulcer on his leg. Just then a Nepali who was passing by told us he was a doctor, accompanied by a Nepali nurse, and they were on their way to spend a month at the Muktinath hospital. He told the apple seller to come and get treatment at the hospital. We continued up the eastern bank, past Ekhai bhatti (one inn) and the route up to the great pilgrimage shrine at Muktinath, and soon came to the village of Kagbeni.

*“It was at Kagbeni that I felt that I had entered a different culture world. In spite of the fact that the place-name had Sanskrit suffix of ‘beni’ for a river confluence, Kagbeni with its markedly arid climate, mud-walled houses, Tibetan dress and language was more representative of the northern borderland.*

*The close-packed mud houses with enormous walls gave Kagbeni an appearance of a fortress-town which it was in the past. The old fort that once occupied a strategic location at the crossroads was now in ruins.”* Harka Gurung.

We stopped at a lodge and had lunch, then visited the Gompa and the fortress which contained lots of old houses. The gompa was built in 1429 and had about ten monks in residence. It started to rain so we went back to the lodge, where we stayed for the night in a room with en-suite shower and loo. After our evening meal there was great excitement because a ‘Thulo Lama’ (big lama – an important monk) was passing through the village, and we went onto the rooftop to see him going by on his horse, blessing villagers as he went. He had come from Dehra Dun in India and was on his way to Lo Manthang.

## **DAY 2 - Friday 20 September - Kagbeni to Tchele**

First we had to wait for our Liaison/Environment Officer to turn up which he did eventually. We walked past the Fort to the National Park Office where we had to sign in with our Permits, and set off down to the river. We found the river path was impassable as the river had moved across it, so we retraced our steps and climbed up to take the high road above the river. At about ten o’clock every morning the wind starts blowing northward up the river valley until about four o’clock in the afternoon. This is why all the planes have to arrive in and leave Jomsom by that time – the early morning rush. This wind balances the high pressure of the southern side of the Himalayas with the low pressure of the Tibetan plateau. It starts with the warming up of the north Indian plain and the narrowness between the two 8000m peaks must account for its great force. It is not bad when you are walking up the valley, but on the way down the sand gets into your eyes and nose, and makes life uncomfortable. We stopped for lunch at Tangbe, near a stream, and after lunch we saw eight mules that had been hired to carry the camping equipment and our kit, with their muleman. There were fort-like ruins above our picnic site, and the women of the village were washing clothes where they had diverted the stream. We carried on across the tributary at Chhuksang where we would divert towards Muktinath on our return journey. Across the river we saw the high cliffs, sculpted by wind into vertical ribs like giant red organ-pipes above the mouths of inaccessible caves. We descended to the riverbed which comprised a mixture of black shales, dark sandstones and red quartzites, and approached a double bridge, which we crossed, and this was where we left the Kali Gandaki, which then passed through an impassable gorge, and we glimpsed it briefly later on. Before climbing up to Tchele we looked back and could see

a huge cliff which had dropped into the Kali Gandaki, dividing the river into two. We could see a horizontal series of caves high above the river, which may have been lived in at some stage many years ago. We climbed up a steep slope into Tchele and camped in a former stableyard at the end of the village. This was our first night's camping, but we did have a room where we had our evening meal and breakfast. There was great discussion between Sam, Ramji and our Liaison Officer as to where we would stop on the way to Lo Manthang.

### **DAY 3 - Saturday 21 September - Tchele to Shyambochen**

We climbed from Tchele up a very steep path toward Ghyakar which was a very colourful village across a canyon. We climbed the path in the cliffs to Tchele La at 3630m. The path to Samar was a gentle slope down and we had lunch in the courtyard of a house. The village had poplars by the stream at the entrance to the village, and as you left, going north there was a mani wall, and a big chorten archway with a huge prayer wheel inside. Many of the houses were decorated with sheep's horns above the entrance. This village had been used by the Khampa fighters during the 1960's for a night stop. There was a steep descent to the valley bottom, and a steep ascent up to another chorten where we had our first great view of Mustang.

*"The climb was over, and from the top of the pass we looked into a new universe. The landscape was incredible: before us lay the great Central Asian highlands extending to the north as far as we could see.*

*....Already we could see into Tibet. At last we reached the roof of the world, or rather the edge of that roof"* M Peissel.

We went across another valley and up to Bhena La at 4000m. Then there was a steady descent to Shyangmochen which has two small hotels. On our way towards the village we saw a black and white yak making its own way home for the night. We

camped by one of the hotels. It rained during the night and we had trouble with the mules which tried to graze around the tents.

### **DAY 4 - Sunday 22 September - Shyambochen to Ghemi**

It was a short climb to the chorten above the village on an overcast morning. From the pass we could see the village of Geilling with its big gumpa and chorten. We took the higher, straighter route to Nyi La at 4000m via Tamagaon which had three or four houses. We passed a large isolated chorten whose vivid colours stood out against the grey sky. It was a long steep climb to the Pass which is the southern boundary of Lo.

*"Before me spread a yellow and ochre desert .... a succession of barren, wind eroded crags overlooking deep gorges and canyons which cut across an inferno of parched soil, like deep scars in a vast sand pile.... I slowly began to see its weird beauty, its grandeur that spoke to the soul... Where the inhabitants of Mustang lived I could not imagine. Somewhere before me, hidden in the creases of this tormented landscape, must be the towns and villages of the Kingdom of Lo."* M Peissel.



*A chorten at Lhato below Shamboche.*

We had a long walk down to the chorten which marked the approach to Ghemi, and there we met three women trekkers who had a female Sirdar and female porters. They were very excited as they had been given a blessing by the 'Thulo Lama' when they were in Ghemi. Peissel records that just



before his visit Ghemi had been largely abandoned owing to the lack of water and general poverty, but everything changed when Ghemi became the central commissary for all the Khampa magars (armed camps): *"The trade and business brought in by the great Khampa caravans had made the town live again"*. As we walked down we could see beyond Ghemi spectacular cliffs in red, blue and grey. There was a big stir when we arrived in Ghemi with everybody in their festival clothes for the Lama's visit. We saw him going through the village and all the people looked very happy. We stopped at the Raju Hotel where we had lunch and spent the night. During the afternoon we wandered round the village watching the work of bringing in and winnowing the barley.

#### **DAY 5 - Monday 23 September - Ghemi to Tsarang**

We walked down to the river and crossed the old mule bridge, under a modern bridge which passed over it. Above the river was a very long mani wall:

*"Our track led up a valley between red and pink cliffs. Ahead of us stretched a wall. Three hundred yards long which was gaily painted in red and yellow. This was a prayer wall, the longest I had ever seen. Sealed into its sides were thousands of flat slabs of stone, carved with the ritual prayer, 'Om mani padme hom'.... When I asked what the wall was called, I was told that it represented the intestines of a demon that had been killed many years ago by the saint Urgen Rimpoche" M Peissel.*

To the right of the mani wall was a small, modern Japanese-built hospital, experimental farm and a school. On the left we had views of Drakmar, a village we were to pass through on our return journey. We went up the hill to the Choya La, and it was a long easy slope down. We passed two herds of goats and sheep being driven to Pokhara to be sold for Dasain. The animals were reared in Tibet, and middlemen from

the Lo Manthang area crossed the border to buy them and bring them back, then traders from Pokhara buy up the flocks and drive them down towards Pokhara. They have to pay taxes in the villages they drive through for grazing and resting overnight. There was a spectacular view of Tsarang from the pass, which had changed little since Peissel's day.

*"I hardly dared believe my eyes when I gazed upon Tsarang, looking like a delicate miniature painted in reds and greens and white spots by an over-conscientious illustrator of children's books. A great castle, five stories high, stood upon a crest dominating a steep gorge. ... The small houses were set in a very green carpet that ran up the sloping bed of an ancient glacier. As if the castle by itself did not sufficiently convey an idea of mediaeval grandeur, on its right, on a slightly lower rise, stood the challenging form of a huge monastery painted brick red and pink. The principal block of the monastery, around which smaller buildings cowered, was painted in gay vertical stripes of red, white and blue-grey. To welcome us into this haven of the past were three great chortens, vividly decorated and painted in bright orange and red ochre. The base of the first of these opened to form an archway door."*



*The long mani wall at Ghemi.*

We walked around the walled fields, where red buckwheat was being harvested, to a wide mall which provided access to the town and went on to the lodge. Here we met the owner Tsewang Bista who spoke excellent English and was involved with his

cousin in a trekking agency. We had lunch and in the afternoon visited the red Gompa and the white Dzong (fort). They were expecting the Thulo Lama the next day so there were prayer flags all over the Gompa. At the Gompa we met a young schoolteacher, Rupa Sharma, from Jomsom, who teaches 18 young trainee monks. After seeing the prayer hall, Rupa showed us round the rest of the Gompa - a 500 year old prayer hall which was no longer used, but had some fine wallpaintings which were deteriorating badly, the schoolroom and rooms where the boys lived. We also saw the chief lama's living quarters and the stuffed snow leopard, and we went out onto the roof. When we went to the Fort the lama-caretaker guided us around the part which was still standing. It was built on five stories, one of which had a prayer room. We also saw a room with swords, helmets, martial equipment and a cut-off hand.

#### **DAY 6 - Tuesday 24 September - Tsarang to Lo Manthang**

We set off down the riverside, through a chorten, up the side of the hill and over the first pass through a deserted landscape. We went on along the path, and up the hillside to Lo La, where we climbed to the top of the ridge to view Lo Manthang. It was a great moment. Down below was the fabled walled city set in a wide plain. (Monthang - "The Plain of Aspiration"). To its north on a dominant hill were the ruins of Ketcher Dzong, the original palace of Ame Pal (1380-1450), the founding King of Mustang and builder of the city. On a lower hill were the ruins of the queen's castle which is now a sky burial site. To the left we could see the striped colours of Namgyal Gompa on a great rocky bastion and beyond that the outlines of the white buildings of the Raja's summer palace at Tingkhar. We stopped to take it all in. We could also see two helicopters - the Crown Prince, Paras was visiting Mustang and was about to leave Lo Manthang. We descended to the next pass,

which had cairns and prayer flags, in common with all hill passes in Mustang.

We continued down to the walled city and entered by the side entrance of Surendra Bista's little hotel where we had lunch. We met a Dr Gurung from the little hospital outside Ghemi - he was an eastern Gurung from Rumjatar. We settled into a room in an annex for the next four nights - we decided not to camp on the rooftop as there was a very dangerous ladder to reach it. The ladders used to gain access to the roof of these houses were usually tree trunks with steps gouged out at intervals, which the local people mounted at speed, but which we mounted very carefully.



*The entrance chorten at Tsarang with the old fort and gompa in the distance.*

In the afternoon we looked around Lo Manthang. There were no other foreigners at this stage. There was again great excitement as the 'Thulo Lama' was in the Gompa. The ladies were waiting to see him in their black shawls. We met Pema Bista who showed us where to go, first to get our Kapas (ceremonial white silk scarves for giving to the Lama - and which he returns with his blessing) from the kitchen, where we met an amazing old hunchback lady from another age. We had to avoid the mastiffs dogs near the kitchen, then went into the Assembly Hall for a blessing and talked to the Raja and the Queen. We saw them return to the palace shortly after in a procession. Later we walked all round the walled city. In front of the main entrance was a very impressive row of large, painted chortens which reached to the edge of the canyon beyond.

*"The chorten, meaning literally 'support for worship', is the typical Buddhist monument, derived originally from Indian models. In every Buddhist country it has developed a distinctive pattern, but its significance remains essentially the same. Primarily a shrine, in which relics were enclosed, it came to symbolize universal buddhahood. Texts, representing perfect wisdom, and images as symbols of buddha-forms, often replace actual relics. Just as the noble aspiration of buddhahood is conceived as embracing the whole of existence, so the outward form of the chorten is identified in its different parts with the five elements, which represent schematically the sum total of phenomenal existence. The square base is identified with earth, the dome with water; the tapering upper section with fire, the lunar crescent with air and the solar disk with space. The entrance-chorten, known locally as 'ka-ni chorten', may not quite conform with this pattern, for the dome is sometimes replaced by a double tier. Architecturally it is just an entrance-porch conceived as a chorten. It is usually painted inside on the ceiling and four walls with sets of divinities, representing the school of Tibetan religion which is practised locally."* D Snellgrove.

We checked into the Police Station and continued walking around the town. Sadly the historic walls are not as impressive as they once must have been. Twenty years ago the Raja sold some of the surrounding land to local people. As a result numerous stables, houses and stone-walled fields now adjoin the wall. We were told that the Raja now regrets the sale! We entered to explore the town and to check in at the ACAP office which was very tidy as the Prince had just been visiting that morning. We said goodbye to our Liaison Officer that evening as he planned to leave for Jomsom the next morning. We also met the policeman who was to accompany us on the next two days, a requirement for those going towards the border.

## **DAY 7 - Wednesday 25 September - Lo Manthang**

Horses had been ordered and we set off in cold, damp, overcast, windy conditions. We rode up towards Choser, the eastern of the two valleys which go north from Lo Manthang, this is the old historic trading route to Lhasa, and a new road has recently been built to meet up with the road across the border in Tibet. There had been a landslide near the border 25 days before, so the twice-weekly lorry had not brought in goods, and there was no idea of when the road would be repaired. We first visited the monastery at Garphu. It was surrounded by about ten small, very neat white houses. Of the four main orders of Tibetan Buddhism, the Sakyama sect dominates in Mustang. Garphu belongs to the ancient Nymymapa sect which allows its monks to marry. When Michel Peissel visited he reported that it was the most dynamic gompa in Mustang with many lamas and their families there, though he also found that most of the leading lamas were unmarried. Sadly there are no lamas resident now. We were shown round the gompa by a lady caretaker. It was well kept and beautifully proportioned with many interesting wall paintings and books, and a wooden floor. The lady told us that on a few days a year some Nymymapa lamas from a monastery south of Jomsom visit and bring the place back to life.



*Aerial view of Lo Mantang.*

Another 15 minutes of riding/walking up a steep canyon brought us to Nyphu Gompa. Peissel gives a excellent description of his first impressions:

*"Nyphu ... is set in a cliff one thousand feet high. A great portion of the cliff had been painted white; it was dotted with dozens of little black holes, which were the windows of over fifty small caves stacked, one on top of the other, in the rock. In the centre of this group of caves ... was a large square wall, painted red, that seemed to be suspended in the air. Here was the largest and most inaccessible of Mustangs' cave monasteries. Nyphu has all the elements of the snugness of an underground hive and all the grandeur of an eagle's nest."* Michel Peissel.

Peissel found no monks present and was shown round by a caretaker, "an unpleasant old man." We found one lama in residence. After entering, we had to climb a series of stone steps and wooden ladders. The main sanctuary hall was cut into the rock. There was an elaborate altar area and many wall paintings, books and thankas. The lama explained that there were many passages and cells further into the cliff. It was an amazing place.

About 10 minutes further on, up another canyon, we had the chance to explore one of the many cave complexes in the area of Mustang. A young local boy produced a key, which opened a lock on a hatch, which led up through endless ladders and passages into the complex. It was very large and elaborate with many kitchens and living areas. There is much discussion about the provenance of these complexes: ancient man or built in more recent times for protection or meditation? Perhaps these are not exclusive categories. Later in the afternoon, on our way back to Lo Manthang we passed a small village where the people live partly in houses and adjoining caves.

We had a picnic in the sun and had an easier return. It was quite exciting riding through the fast flowing river, but the horses never moved out of a slow amble unless the lad was riding, and he managed to canter with whip flailing in one hand.

In the evening we had various visitors -

the policeman, the teacher at the Gompa and Pema Bista who joined us for a glass of whiskey.

### **DAY 8 - Thursday 26 September - Lo Manthang**

We walked north up the western valley in lovely weather to see the striped Gompa of Namgyal - it was well guarded by two chained mastiffs which made a lot of noise, but nobody was there to show us round. We walked through the villages where the harvesting was taking place, over a small river and up over a pass to Chumjung, the most northerly village in Mustang. At the other side of the valley we saw some yaks so we went over to see them. Shortly after we passed a school and met the sweet schoolteacher but the school was empty.



*Mani walls and chortens at the entrance to Lo Mantang.*

There were various children running around, the harvesting was taking place so none of the children went to school, either they had to help with the work, or look after the younger children. As we moved east we walked across very damp green turf full of springs which are the source of the Kali Gandaki. We crossed the river on a small bridge and skirted past chortens and an old gompa on a ridge above us before entering the scattered village of Nyamdo. We had a picnic lunch in the fields among the harvesters. All the fields have stone walls around them to keep out the animals, but when they need to go into the field they simply dismantle the wall. After lunch we returned to Lo Manthang by the route we

had taken up the valley the day before, which gave us another opportunity to walk past Garphu Gompa. We walked for about 8 hours during the day. In the evening we met John Sanday who had been restoring the Gompas in Lo Manthang, funded by the American Himalayan Foundation, and arranged to meet him the next morning to see some of his work. There were two elderly ladies in Lo on that day, and a Swiss couple had also arrived. We went to see Pema Bista in his shop, and he took us to his house to sample Tsampa and Tibetan tea. Tibetan tea is salty. Tsampa is roasted barley flour, to which Tibetan tea, sugar and yak butter can be added, and stirred to make a thick porridge mix. We found it very filling.

#### **DAY 9 - Friday 27 September - Lo Manthang**

John Sanday showed us round Thupchen Gompa which he had helped restore. We were to ride ponies up to Yak Karka, but were slightly delayed as John was departing, and many people wanted to say goodbye to him. It was a long ride up into the hills, at first between the fields and then through the open spaces with old forts on the high places. Mustang abounds with the ruins of these old forts, reflecting its strategic position astride the most direct and easily negotiable corridor between the Tibetan plateau and the tropical plains of India. We climbed to about 3400m/14500ft where we saw lots of yaks grazing, and came across a family of drokpas (nomadic yak herders) who were setting up their tent and all their belongings were scattered around the fire. They were very friendly. There was grandfather and grandmother, the son and his wife and the baby. They had just moved down from the high pasture the day before, and ten yaks had carried their kit. There was a flat circle surrounded by a raised shelf of flat stones. The yak-hair tent was erected above this, and sacks of grain and household effects were placed on the

stones and against the tent sides to keep out the wind and draughts. A small shrine was placed against the side opposite the entrance. They were bringing all their possessions inside. We were offered chang (a sweet barley-based beer). They spoke very little Nepali as most of the local people speak the Lopa version of Tibetan. They were delightful people and asked for nothing. They owned about 100 yaks, and we saw about 50 grazing in the vicinity. We had a picnic lunch on the way down, and later saw a string of yaks which had been taken below Lo Manthang to drink salty water from a pool in the valley. They then returned to the cooler uplands. On our return from the ride we rested as we had a busy afternoon and evening. We set off to visit the main Gompas with Lhundup Gyatso, a Tibetan teacher for the lamas. We had tea with the lamas in the dining area by the kitchen, looked around the school for the young lamas, visited Chhoede Gompa and Choprang Gompa nearby and Jampa Lhakhang Gompa which had been restored.



*Hall of the Great Statue at Lo Mantang*

An audience with the Raja had been arranged for 5pm so we went to Surendra Bista's lodgings and met a group of Norwegian trekkers who had recently arrived. We then went across to the Palace entrance, climbed various rickety steps and ladders and arrived in his Room. We presented Kapas, as did Ramji and Chhongba and Sam talked to the Raja through his Secretary/Interpreter. We were given Tibetan tea (with salt) and pastry biscuits. When we left the Raja gave us Kapas. Afterwards we went to Pema's shop

and bought a lapis necklace. After our evening meal Karma, the horse guide came round for a whiskey. Just before he arrived we heard the familiar tune he whistled when he was cajoling and guiding his horses.

### **DAY 10 - Saturday 28 September - Lo Manthang to Drakmar**

We left at about 8am and trekked towards the monastery of Lo Ghekar. It was a stiff walk, and the path was not very clear in places but after four hours we saw the gompa. Set in a grove of large trees, Peissel described it accurately as "a jewel" though he recorded that when he visited there was a large Khampa camp beside it. Snellgrove also visited:

*"We made our way to the monastery, a great red and white building, with rows of new prayer wheels round the outside walls and four new chortens at the corners. It is known as Lo Ge Kar - 'Pure virtue of Lo' ... It is planned inside after the style of a private house ... On the first storey are four rooms, the walls of which are covered with rows of small paintings on flat stones set within wooden frames, all different, most pleasing and each deserving careful study ... There was a sense of living intimacy about this monastery."*

It is a special place and the hundreds of small paintings are rare treasures. No lama was present but the young guide was very helpful.

We had lunch in the courtyard in front of the gompa, and then set off towards the next passes and dropped down to Drakmar (red cliffs). The colour of the cliffs is said to be from the demon slain by Guru Rimpoche whose intestines are at the mani wall in Ghemi! It was a pleasant village and the sun shone on the dramatic cliffs with lots of caves, but our guide was not sure of the camping place and led us way beyond the village. On our return we found a rather damp but adequate site. All the villages in the region have to have a decent source of water to irrigate the crops. The region in

general is barren, with thorn bushes or scrub. There are amazing rock formations in various colours, red or blue, or in other places grey, brown and greens.

### **DAY 11 - Sunday 29 September - Drakmar to Gheiling**

We left Drakmar on another brilliant morning and walked down the left side of the valley. The porters and mules took the right hand side, which meant a steep climb up and descent to Ghemi. We found ourselves beside the long mani wall again and visited Doctor Rajendra Gurung at the hospital. It had a beautiful garden in the Japanese style with cosmos and marigolds within the courtyard layout, and we had coffee and a good talk. We proceeded to Ghemi and had a long walk up and over the pass to Gheiling, another gem of a village:

*"Gheiling looked like a tapestry made of pink, red and striped ochre motifs hanging on the background of a soaring yellow cliff. The coloured designs were formed by the painted ruins of an ancient fort, two monasteries, and various chortens stuck upon the vertical side of a mountain, at the foot of which lay a soft green carpet of grass where small springs rose through the ground. Around the grassy patch stood some thirty spotless white houses, edged like dominoes by the black outlines of little walls of brushwood which were set around the flat roofs."*

It was very dusty as we walked down to the village, and we were met on the road with a hot drink, by a porter who guided us to our lodge for lunch. We looked around the village in the afternoon. The gompa had modern paintings, and there were various other religious buildings in and around the village. We talked to some of the villagers who had completed the harvesting and were now threshing in the yards. When we got back we found that our oldest porter had a cut on the head and concussion after he was hit on the head by a stone which had fallen off a wall where it had been placed to hold

one of our drying towels. He was sleeping in the sun.

In the lodge were a family, consisting of the grandmother, two daughters and five grandchildren. The husband of one of the daughters was away trading in India for about four months. The brother of the daughters had gone to New York and was last heard from eight months before. We promised to write to the brother and send him some photographs. The grandmother was almost blind, and the two daughters did most of the work, looking after the lodge and working in the fields. It was quite usual to find the men away for months on end, selling local handicrafts or cheap goods from China. Two goat herders (ghotali) from Dolpo were drinking in the lodge, and an old man was turning his prayer wheel all evening.

#### **DAY 12 - Monday 30 September - Gheiling to Tchele**

We set off quite early - it was a long walk up out of the valley, past various mani and chortens but when we got to Syamboche La we heard two of the mules were missing so there was a big search all around the village. Eventually they were found sleeping in a shed nearby. There was a great view of the Himal from the pass. Just below it we passed an imposing lhato, a square structure which marks the presence of a local god. Most passes just have a cairn where travellers can add a rock to give thanks for arrival and solicit protection for the way ahead. We walked down from the pass, past our previous campsite, and up and down the steep valleys to lunch at Samar in a pleasant orchard behind the house. There were several flocks of sheep and goats travelling to Pokhara. We also met a group of six inspecting community projects for ACAP, there were three girls and three men of various nationalities - American/Finnish/etc and including a Nepali. Eventually Ramji and the mules arrived at 2pm, so we set off immediately

for Tchele for the night stop. We had to cross one high pass with great views in every direction before the long descent to the village. Three groups of trekkers had already installed themselves, so we stayed in the 'Hotel Deurali' for the night. An interesting aspect of this stop was that if you wanted to go to the local toilet, you had to go down the ladder, along a side passage, and through a door outside which a mastiff was chained. You then crossed the narrow roadway, went into a stable where three horse were spending the night, climbed up six or seven steps to perform over a hole where the compost was building up. It was quite an adventure in the middle of the night!

#### **DAY 13 - Tuesday 1 October - Tchele to Tetang**

This was to be a short day and we set off from Tchele on a sunny day with great views of the Nilgiri peak. We crossed the two bridges and walked along the river floor and up through Chhuksang to join the Narshing Khola. Willow trees grew along the river and the irrigation channels. We waded across the river and up to Tetang, a medieval village with narrow paths, some of which were supported from below by wooden struts. We reached a sunny camping site, but it became very windy as the afternoon wore on and nearly blew away our tents. We had lunch and a half days rest. We had excellent views of the local village, the Kali Gandaki and up the cliffs where we were to walk tomorrow. Chhongba produced a saligram he had found - a black stone which when broken open reveals the fossilised remains of pre-historic ammonites of more than 140 million years. We walked up to the school above the village, which had mani walls, prayer wheels and chortens. On our return the village ladies tried to hassle us, and Ramji had to pay them to go away. As darkness fell a man started shouting all over the valley as he had lost his dog. Then a dog started barking in the

valley for hours, and started again early in the morning in a different direction.

#### **DAY 14 - Wednesday 2 October - Tetang to Muktinath**

We set off at 7am up the hillside, past a small lake, beside the cliffs and on over the plateau. The next valley became difficult to walk along as the loose shale kept giving way. We kept going up towards the pass. We ate our packed lunch and a German couple and their porters passed us at this stage. We reached Gnyu La at 4200m and had great views of Muktinath, Dhaulagiri, the Nilgiris and the area of the Thorung La. It had taken us four hours to reach the pass and it took another three hours to reach our camping site below Muktinath, but it was an interesting route, with glimpses of the Annapurna Circuit paths, and we visited the shrine with its 108 jets of water and the natural gas flames in a nearby temple which appear to burn from 'earth', 'water', and 'stone'. We got to the camp site at 2pm and relaxed during the afternoon. There were many guest houses and hotels in Ranigaon built for the pilgrims and trekkers descending from Thorung La. In normal times the area can take 200-250 people, but when we were there there were about 20-30 people. Tourism is down, and younger pilgrims are stopped on the route in by the police as they are meant to have a permit from their local Hindu temple or Buddhist shrine. It is a bad time for tourism in Nepal but we profited from the empty paths and lodges. We met the nurse who we had encountered early in our trek, and she dressed our porter's head and gave him antibiotics. We saw the German couple, and they were planning a rest day then to climb UP to the Thorung La and back through Manang.

By this stage there had been a lot of discussion about our trek in Dolpo. The porters were unwilling to be left in Dolpo when we were helicoptered out - they were unsure about the soldiers and the Maoists.

During the night a pony got loose and started eating a cardboard box very noisily. I tried to tie him up again, but he got loose later.

#### **DAY 15 - Thursday 3 October - Muktinath to Jomsom**

We set off early down the mountain - bed tea at 5.30 then breakfast and we left at 6.50 but it was very chilly. The route was down all the way - through Jarokot and various other villages. It was a long descent to Eklai Bhatti. We saw the doctor from Muktinath who had held a clinic at Kagbeni the day before, also Tsewang Bista from Tsarang and a teacher from Garphu who had heard about us.

We had a nice cup of coffee and apple pie at Eklai Bhatti, went over the high bridge and continued most of the way down on the river bed where it was very windy indeed, especially where the ravine narrowed. There were also good views of Nilgiri and Daulaghiri all the way down. We arrived at the Majesty Hotel in Jomsom at 12.20, and could see the Nilgiri north face towering above us from the hotel.





## THE BRITAIN-NEPAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (BNCC)

By Anthony Wieler

The Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce (BNCC) was founded some seven years ago by Colonel Jimmy Evans, a previous chairman of the Britain-Nepal Society, to meet the need to promote business between Britain and Nepal. During its existence over the last seven years the BNCC has carried out business by staging trade promotions and attending the Himalayan Expos and other events, drawing attention to the great opportunities which Nepal offers. The hope is that the work of the BNCC will help to unite Nepal's 23 million people in a real effort attract investment and develop their own economy and so generate their own revenues. In this way it is to be hoped that Nepal can gradually become less reliant on aid. The adage is 'trade is better than aid'

Members of the BNCC include Adam Gilchrist, whose company 'Veedon Fleece' manufactures high quality carpets to customers' own chosen designs in wool, silk or pashmina. In 2002 Veedon Fleece sponsored a major fund-raising reception at the Royal Nepalese Embassy focussed on the great potential of the tourist industry. Less than 500,000 tourists visited Nepal each year, before the insurgency, and the potential expansion of this industry is immense. However the current situation in Nepal has caused a major down turn in tourism.

Nepal is situated between two of the fastest growing economies of the world, China and India.

Nepal has may be the greatest hydro-electric capacity of any country (or continent?), and the great biodiversity, with a climatic range from extremes of both high and low temperatures that

would enable Nepal to become the 'market garden' for India, providing opportunities for the export of flowers, fruit, herbal and medicinal products to India and elsewhere..

Nepal's famous Gurkha soldiers have proved that these rugged mountain people can work hard and efficiently, when they have the right leadership and direction. The CBI has offered to help BNCC to get this message across to British businessmen about the potential of Nepal.

In July 2003 the BNCC organised a 'Forum' on cash remittances to Nepal, from the rapidly growing numbers of Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) in the 'Diaspora', with 90,000 Nepalis in Malaysia, and similarly large numbers in Dubai, the USA, Canada and in the UK. This BNCC Forum covered all the other competing legitimate methods of transferring funds back to Nepal, so that the NRNs need not rely on the 'underground' method of 'Hundi' which is frowned on because of its use by terrorist organisations and money-launderers. Representatives of the leading banks attended and spoke at the Forum (and full reports including a verbatim transcript can be obtained from BNCC at cost of £25). The potential statistical benefit to the Foreign Currency Reserves and Balance of Payments in Nepal are obvious if these remittances are made through the approved channels.

On 17 September BNCC visited the Mayor of London's offices where they had an opportunity to meet the Greater London Authority (GLA) Asian Affairs Adviser and listened to a talk about the GLA and a tour of the building.

BNCC were represented at a major

conference for the NRNs in Kathmandu in October, exploring the many ways in which the Non-Resident Nepalis can help Nepal.

BNCC has its own website < [www.nepal-trade.org.uk](http://www.nepal-trade.org.uk) > and the membership is expanding, with garment manufacture and IT as two strong sectors. BNCC has designed a bright new 'tricolor' tie, combining our two flags, which it is hoped will be worn by the staff in the supporting Nepali restaurants in UK.

In July the BNCC held a luncheon reception in Dartmouth House, Charles Street, London to welcome the new Ambassador, His Excellency Prabal S.J.B.Rana back to London. This was

attended by The Rt Hon Sir John Nott (President of BNCC), The Viscount Slim, Peter Leggatt and other distinguished members, both Nepali and British.

BNCC invited Sir Jeffrey James, the British Government's Special Adviser to Nepal, to meet its committee and key members to discuss the business aspect of the present situation in Nepal at luncheon in London on 28th August.

Every effort is being made by BNCC to promote the hoped-for development of the economy of Nepal, as soon as a ceasefire can be assured and stability restored and maintained and that this will act as an incentive to all concerned to make the concessions required to achieve this objective.

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S IN-TRAY

### Honours and Awards

Maj PH Ridlington, late Queen's Gurkha Signals, has been awarded the MBE for his work for the Gurkha Welfare Trust. One of his many tasks whilst on trek in the hills inspecting work carried out by the Trust, was to obtain photographs of individual soldiers which are then sent, with a progress report, to their sponsors in UK.

The Nepalese government awarded honorary citizenship to Sir Edmund Hillary in August in this Jubilee year of the ascent of Everest. Summiteers were also awarded special medals by the government; most were given out at the August ceremony. However those British summiteers who were unable to be in Kathmandu at that time received theirs at a special reception held by the Ambassador, HE Mr Prabal Rana at the Embassy. Those present included Mr Doug Scott, the first Englishman to reach the summit.

### Toni Hagen

Older members will be saddened to learn of the death on 18th April 2003 of Toni Hagen at the age of 85, the Swiss geologist and development aid expert. He was a member of the Swiss aid mission invited by the Nepalese government to Nepal in 1950. He was the first foreigner to be granted access to remote parts of the country.

He became particularly interested in the plight of the Tibetan refugees that were arriving in Nepal following the Chinese invasion in 1950. Through his influence Nepal received and continues to benefit from Swiss development aid. He produced the first 'coffee table' book, entitled *Nepal*, of photos from his travels to areas such as Upper Mustang but these were accompanied by serious chapters on geology, ethnic diversity and development.

A short piece on his life was featured in the 2000 edition of the journal along with a photograph of him with two other famous expatriates, Father Moran and Boris Lissanevitch, who had such great influence on Nepal in the early years, post 1950.

### From the WWF-UK

**Tigers in Nepal:** According to the latest estimate of tiger numbers in the Terai Arc, the overall population has increased by 29% since 1995. The number of tigers now stands at 123 individuals with increases of 25% in the Royal Chitwan National Park, followed by 29% in Bardia and 53% in the Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve.

**One-horned Rhinos:** Ten rhinos were moved from Chitwan to Bardia in April 2003, bringing the total number of animals in Bardia to 96. Since 1986 WWF has worked with the Nepalese Government to create a second viable population of rhinos in Bardia with the target set for 100 animals. It was hoped that the translocation would have taken the total to 100 animals but tragically four rhinos were poached for their horns earlier in the month. It is hoped that following a number of expected births due in May this milestone will have been reached.

### Bird life in Nepal

Bird life in Nepal is one of the major wildlife tourist attractions. The Oriental Bird Club (OBC) exists to promote interest in birds in Asia and acts as a forum providing information and encouragement for conservation-orientated research in the region.

The club publishes annually a journal, *The Forktail*, and two bulletins. The latest bulletin states that three new species for Nepal have apparently been recorded over the period mid 2002 to mid 2003, Tibetan

Sandgrouse, *Syrrhaptes tibetanus* near Bhrikuti Himal in the Mustang District at elevations over 16,000 feet in the enlarged Annapurna Conservation Area; Purple-backed Starlings *Sturnus sturninus* at the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve; Moustached Warblers *Acrocephalus melanopogon* at the Royal Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve.

Nepal has its own organization – Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). BCN have recently formed their own Rare Birds Committee to consider, monitor and record rare species. This committee includes Tim and Carol Inskipp who have long experience of Nepal's bird life.

To the non-birdwatcher vultures are probably not that popular, however they perform a vital scavenging function across the Indian subcontinent. There has been what is described as a 'catastrophic collapse' in the populations of Long-billed *Gyps indicus* and White-rumped *Gyps*

*bengalensis* Vultures across India, Pakistan and Nepal. The uneaten carcasses of cattle and other animals cause disease and encourage feral dogs with the attendant risk from rabies and other serious diseases. The cause of this is as yet not fully understood. Possibilities include an infectious disease or virus, or some form of toxin used in treating sick cattle. A possible 'vulture rescue' project in Nepal is under discussion with support from the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, with the initiative lying with the RSPB and the Zoological Society of London.

#### **An Internet Café for Everest**

Apparently there is a report that a Sherpa, Tsering Gyaltzen, plans to open an internet café at the Everest Base Camp location for the spring an autumn climbing seasons!

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THE ARCHIVIST

At the Annual General Meeting held in November the out going Chairman, Mr. Peter Leggatt, mentioned that there is a need for the Society to have an archivist since there are valuable records and unique and interesting recollections to be collected from members of the Society and Nepal.

Mrs. Celia Brown has agreed to take on the task of collecting archival material

and in obtaining where possible, brief memoirs. She would like to hear from anyone who may wish to contribute. However, in the first instance she would appreciate it if members could let her know what they have available.

Her address is : 1 Allen Mansions, Allen Street, London W8 6UY and [email:celia.collington@btopenworld.com](mailto:celia.collington@btopenworld.com)

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 BOOK REVIEWS
 

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**Everest: Summit of Achievement.** Edited by Stephen Venables. *Royal Geographical Society & Bloomsbury, London, 2003. Pp 252. Colour and B&W plates. Hb £35. ISBN 0 7475 6223 7.*

In this fiftieth anniversary year of the ascent of Mount Everest, Stephen Venables has brought together a team of contributors with unparalleled access to the unique and extensive Everest archives of the Royal Geographical Society to produce an outstanding record of exploration and mountaineering. John Keay, a noted historian, describes the early survey work and discovery of the peak by the Survey of India. Ed Douglas, journalist and climber contributes a chapter on the people and their way of life both to the north and south of the mountain. Venables himself records the history of the early expeditions from 1921 to 1953. Tashi Tenzing, grandson of Tenzing Norgay and his wife Judy describe the part played by the Sherpas throughout the whole story, without whom success could not have been achieved. Sue Thompson and Mike Westmacott have collated photographs and thumbnail sketches of expedition members over the period 1921 to 1953. Sir Edmund Hillary has written the preface which is followed by a message from the Dalai Lama. The photographs are particularly evocative, many have not been published before. One cannot help wondering however why a work produced by such a traditionally British institution seems to have opted for American spelling, eg 'endeavor', 'labor' and 'traveled'. This is a well produced work which will have great appeal to all who have been to Nepal and Tibet whether as climbers, trekkers or tourists who have been content to view

Everest from afar. It stands as a fine record of high endeavour for all those involved in the Everest story.

*(Note: The cost to RGS members is greatly discounted, but it is nevertheless excellent value at the retail cost of £35. Ed.)*

**Many Tongues, One People: the making of Tharu identity in Nepal.** By Arjun Guneratne. *Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London. 2002. pp. xvii + 236. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pb £12.95. ISBN 0-8014-8728-5.*

Unlike their famous countrymen, the Gurkhas and the Sherpas, the Tharu are not well known to the world at large – or for that matter within Nepal. Nevertheless, the Tharu constitute approximately 10 % of the population of Nepal and are the second largest of the tribal groups – as opposed to those categorized as caste Hindus, Newars or members of a “martial race” such as the Magars, Gurungs, Rais and Limbus. Until fairly recently the Tharu lived relatively untouched by the outside world in the Nepali part of the Gangetic plain known as the Terai. Viewed as the aboriginal inhabitants of the heavily forested Terai, they were long classified by the Rana Government of Nepal as being among the “enslaveable classes”.

The Tharu had developed a degree of genetic immunity to malaria, which permitted them to live year-round in small villages in the Terai. There was little or no contact between distant Tharu groups, who often spoke different languages or with the Nepalese in general. The isolation of the Tharu came to end with the eradication of malaria in the late 1960's, which permitted large numbers of Nepalese from the hills to

settle in the Terai, in many cases, disposing the Tharu from lands they had long cultivated. The building of the East-West Highway (still a work in progress) accelerated the process and along with the development of wildlife tourism brought contact with the wider world. All of these factors not only made the development of a unified and distinct Tharu ethnicity possible, but with the beginnings of party politics in Nepal - a necessity.

*Many Tongues, One People: the making of Tharu identity in Nepal* is the story of the effect this process has had on the Tharu. Although a scholarly anthropological work the book contains considerable background on the operation of caste and ethnic identity in Nepal and in India, which is easily accessible to the informed layman. For this reason it is highly recommended to anyone with an interest in Nepal - especially those, who in their visits to the Terai to view tigers and the other game animals of the jungle, have had contact with the Tharu without realizing their unique history.

RF Rosner

*(I am indebted to the Editor of 'Asian Affairs', journal of the Royal Society for 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](http://www.rsaa.org.uk). Ed)*

### **Whatabouts and Whereabouts in Asia.**

*By JP Cross. Serendipity, London, 2002. Pp viii + 189. Illust. Pb. £12.95. ISBN 1 8439 4035 3.*

Members of the Society will be familiar with other works by John Cross, mainly autobiographical, about his unique military career with the Gurkhas in South and SE Asia. This book is a distillation of his experiences throughout his life in Asia. These are told in his own inimitable and

pithy anecdotal style to which we are accustomed, with plenty of 'word play' as befits an expert linguist. His career starts in India and he serves in Burma, Indo-China and later on the North West Frontier and takes part in the 1947 partition of India and sees all its horrors. On moving to Malaya his unit is soon involved in the Malayan emergency and this is where his ability as a 'jungle specialist' becomes apparent. His ability to learn obscure languages and dialects is put to good use and this experience also enables him to make a major contribution in the Borneo Confrontation operations that followed in the mid 1960s. His last appointment in Malaya was as Chief Instructor of the Jungle Warfare School. His experience there, having been responsible for training many Asian students, made him a suitable choice for his next post as Defence Attache in Vietiane, Laos. He is then posted to Nepal where on retirement he chooses to settle, uniquely being granted permission to remain by the King of Nepal. Initially he studied in Kathmandu at the university and now lives in Pokhara with his adopted family. The stories he has chosen for this work reflect his experiences and the lessons that he learnt throughout his varied and interesting life, and especially the wide range of people with whom he had contact, both high and low. A sample of one of the more amusing incidents was the request by one of Cross's Gurkhas for 'a horizontal bomb'. They stopped at a canteen run by the Women's Auxiliary Service (Burma) to ask one on of the ladies. She was, naturally, nonplussed. After a considerable kerfuffle it transpired that 'oriental balm' was what was wanted! The title of the work reflects his wide travels in the area and refers to an early story from Dharamsala, depot of the 1st Gurkha Rifles (Cross's first Gurkha unit). Apparently the mother of a Gurkha soldier wanted to find



out what and where her son had got to after the war had finished. Not being very literate, it was the fashion to use 'writers' in the bazaar to draft letters for those unable to write. The scribe wrote: 'To: 4/1 GR. Ref [No. Rank. Name.] Send whatabouts and whereabouts.' This 'word play' clearly appealed to Cross and is a very apt title for this enjoyable, amusing, unconventional and thought provoking book for anyone with an interest in South and SE Asia, its people and events over the last sixty years.

GDB

**The Ranas of Nepal.** By Prabhakar SJB Rana, Pashupati SJB Rana and Gautam SJB Rana. Naef, Geneva, 2002. ISBN 2 8313 0377 X.

This work deftly encapsulates, with short narratives and lavish photographs, an insight into the life and times of a family, not only during the 104 years of hereditary Prime Ministerial rule which influenced and shaped the Kingdom, but also how the years of this epoch impacted on the culture and still pervade it to this day. Written by Ranas about Ranas, it offers a fresh perspective without glossing over what would now be considered unsavoury acts of intrigue, ruthless power play and a decadent life style.

The book begins with the early history of the Licchavi and Malla influences before concentrating on Prithvi Narayan Shah's military campaigns against neighbouring principalities which coalesced into the Kingdom of Nepal. The next section deals with the ascendancy of Rana power and how General Jung Bahadur's astuteness and courage enabled him to exploit the raging power struggle between King Prithvi Narayan Shah's descendents. After much blood letting, including the famous 'Kot massacre' in 1846, Jung Bahadur is

finally able to establish a tenuous power base when he is appointed by then prevailing Queen to the post of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief. This compelling story continues with Jung Bahadur's struggle to cement relations with the Royal family, the precursor to the establishment of the system of hereditary Prime Ministers, which lasted until 1950. After World War II, in a changed world order, the system was clearly out of step in this new era. His Majesty King Trubhuvan officially took back the reigns of power. The book, illustrated with a wealth of archival photographs, follows successive Rana power struggles throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This includes periods such as the *Satrabhai* (seventeen brothers) where Dhir Shumshere appointed his seventeen sons to all the key administrative posts in order to quell any potential dissension. The second half of the book covers a variety of topics under the banner of 'Rana Culture'. Sub sectioned into six parts, it explores diverse aspects such as the Rana hierarchical system *Rolewallahs*, those who were in line in the 'Role of Succession', the penchant for big game hunting or *shikar*, a favourite sport of the Maharajahs and the drive to put on a show for foreign dignitaries. Photographs of pelts hanging out to dry and a unique carpet composed of more than a hundred skins are thought provoking in today's world of nature conservation. Rana architecture, ceremonies, costumes and jewellery are also examined. This book, with its extraordinary and unique collection of photographs along with a crisp narrative, vividly captures the essence of a bygone but important era in the development of the nation.

Sneha Rana

(The book can be purchased from Delhi booksellers for ICRs 4500. Ed)

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 OBITUARY
 

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**Maj DHL Parker, MBE, MC**

Maj Dennis Parker, a member of the Society, died earlier this year at the age of 84. After obtaining his degree at Oxford University, he was commissioned into the 1st Gurkha Rifles in April 1941. Whilst serving in the Burma campaign he was awarded an immediate MC. His commanding officer of the time recently wrote of Parker, "He was one of my best company commanders and a gallant soldier who commanded his Gurkhas most efficiently and would never commit them to battle against the Japs if he considered there would be unnecessary casualties. He was a forceful but sympathetic leader and after one fierce action he carried out with his company which had a pronounced bearing on our future operations, he was awarded an immediate MC for his gallantry and leadership. He was a very popular officer with a nice sense of humour which often raised morale amongst the British officers and his Gurkhas in adverse conditions." He served with 4/1st Gurkha Rifles until the end of the war and afterwards in South East Asia. He returned to Peshawar and was posted to the reformed 2/1st

Gurkha Rifles. Having been granted a regular commission in the British Army, he transferred to 1/2nd Goorkha Rifles on Indian independence in 1947. He served with that unit in Malaya as a company commander until, as a result of an attack of polio, he had to retire from the service. He recovered from his illness and later worked for Unilever in Nigeria. Whilst there and as a result of his friendship with Sir Leonard Chehine, VC, he helped to found two Cheshire homes for the disabled in West Africa. For his charitable work he was awarded the MBE. A prominent member of the 1st Gurkha Rifles Regimental Association, he took part in the great memorial parade held in London to mark the 50th anniversary of VJ Day in 1995. Many members will remember that poignant occasion. His other interests included music, and he was a talented French horn player. Dennis remained unmarried but leaves an adopted son.

*(I am grateful to Capt JH Burgess, secretary of the 1st Gurkha Rifles Regimental Association, for providing the basis for this obituary. Ed)*

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IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

The King Mahendra U.K. Trust for  
Nature Conservation  
15 Old Bailey  
London EC4M 7EF  
Tel (020) 7506 1000

The Gurkha Welfare Trust  
PO Box 18215  
2nd Floor, 1 Old Street  
London EC1V 9XB  
Tel (020) 7251 5234  
Fax (020) 7251 5248

School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London  
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square  
London WC1H 0XG  
Tel (020) 7898 4034

The Britain Nepal Otolaryngology Service  
(BRINOS)  
2 West Road  
Guildford GU1 2AU  
Tel (01483) 69719  
Fax (01483) 306380

Yeti Association  
(Nepali Association in UK)  
Mr Harish Karki  
Johnnie Gurkha's  
186 Victoria Road  
Aldershot  
Hants.  
Tel (01252) 328773

KEEP (UK)  
Johnnie Woods  
Flat 5A  
6 Randall Park  
Belfast BT9 6JJ  
Tel (028) 9038 2977

GAP House  
44 Queen's Road  
Reading  
Berkshire RG1 4BB  
Tel (0118) 959 4914

The Wilderness Trust  
c/o ECCO Tours Ltd  
4 Macclesfield Street  
London W1V 7LB  
Tel and Fax (020) 7494 1300

The Britain-Nepal Medical Trust  
130 Vale Road  
Tonbridge  
Kent TN9 1SP  
Tel (01732) 360284

The Gurkha Museum  
Peninsula Barracks  
Romsey Road  
Winchester  
Hampshire SO23 8TS  
Tel (01962) 842832

Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce  
(Administrative Office)  
Tamesis House  
35 St Philip's Avenue  
Worcester Park  
Surrey KT4 8JS  
Tel (020) 8330 6446  
Fax (020) 8330 7447

The Pahar Trust  
c/o Tom Langridge  
5 Foxsteep Cottage  
Crazies Hill Wargrave  
Berks RG10 8NB  
Tel (01734) 404004

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

## NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

*Patron:* HRH Princess Jotshana Rajya Laxmi Devi Basnyat

*President:* HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO

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

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

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

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

We keep in close touch with the Nepal-Britain Society in Kathmandu, and their members are welcome to attend all 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 organization and they publish their own attractive journal.

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

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 which normally takes place at the Royal Nepalese Embassy. The Society also holds receptions and hospitality for visiting senior Nepalese.

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

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

Those interested in joining the Society should write to the Honorary (Membership) Secretary:

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

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## THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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*Patron:* Her Royal Highness Princess Jotshana Rajya Laxmi Devi Basnyat

*President:* His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester KG, GCVO

*Vice-Presidents*

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Mr ARH Kellas CMG  
Brigadier AB Taggart MC  
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Mrs Celia Brown#  
Colonel JM Evans MC  
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Mrs Pat Mellor\*\*

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Miss Jane Loveless  
Mr Siddant Raj Pandey  
Mrs Sneha Rana  
Mr Stuart Sessions MBE  
Mrs Joanna Thomas  
Mr Neil Weir  
Mr Dipendra Pratap Bista Minister Counsellor, Royal Nepalese Embassy (*ex officio*)  
Mr Andrew Mitchell, FCO (*ex officio*)  
Major PH Gay, Brigade of Gurkhas Secretariat (*ex officio*)

*\*Editor of the Journal:* Lieutenant Colonel GD Birch

*#Archivist:* Mrs Celia Brown