
THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 31

2007



ACORN Nepal Trust

(Aid for Children of Rural Nepal
and Educational Trust)

Charitable Society Regd. No. 701/1999



फोन नं. : २७७७६२, २७८६३०

पो.ब.नं. : ३०४६ काठमाडौं

फ्याक्स : ९७७-१-२८२६८८

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ACORN Nepal Trust

बल्खु, काठमाडौं - १४



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 EDITORIAL

It is an inevitable fact that as the Society evolves over the years (now approaching fifty years in 2010) that some of those founder and early members have passed on. I noted last year that the World War II generation was passing and this has continued throughout the last twelve months. This year's obituaries include Lady Hunt, widow of our first President Lord Hunt, Mr Arthur Kellas, our second President, and one of our early Chairmen, Lt Col Charles Wylie. With mountaineers such as John Hunt and Charles Wylie, it was little wonder that many of the Society's early meetings were held in the Alpine Club in South Audley Street. It was the enthusiasm and interest of such people that set the Society on its way. We have to thank them, our predecessors, for their formative role in the Society's early years. In the need to ensure that link to those early days as we approach our fiftieth anniversary, the Society has invited Sylvia, Countess of Limerick to become one of our Vice Presidents. Lord Limerick was a founder member, was treasurer and wrote the Society's constitution. In the last edition I noted the changes at 12a Kensington Palace Gardens with the departure in the summer of 2006 of HE Mr Prabal SJB Rana to Kathmandu. The Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Dipendra Pratap Bista became the Charge d'Affaires. Mr Bista has also now returned to Nepal on his retirement in July 2007 to be replaced initially as Charge d'Affaires by Mr Jhabindra Prasad Aryal. With the arrival in November of HE Mr Murari Raj Sharma, Mr Aryal has assumed the position of Counsellor/Deputy Head of Mission. We were fortunate to be able to

welcome HE Mr Sharma at the AGM.

Events in Nepal continue to concern us all. Nevertheless members have continued to visit for treks, wildlife work and BRINOS, run by our secretary, Dr Neil Weir has held two successful medical camps in 2007. These are just some of the activities that have occupied members in Nepal.

In this edition of the journal tigers again feature in two articles. I have been able to reproduce the piece written by Charles Wylie for the 1964 edition of the *The Kukri* magazine, the journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas, about the Royal tiger shoot held in 1963. This recounts Charles' part in what was probably the last such shoot on that scale in the Terai. Rick Beven has written a piece about tigers in the remote villages. Jimmy Evans spoke to the Society about his first visit to Nepal after the war, before the country opened up to tourists and visitors, and has written an evocative description of that visit. Dr Mark Watson of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh, has written about the introduction of Dawn Redwood trees to Nepal and the specimen in the British embassy garden which he visited earlier in the year. Harish Karki has written about the early days of the formation of the Yeti Association. I have also been able to include updates on two charities that both the Society and members have supported. As ever I am grateful to all who support the journal, either by contributing interesting articles or by advertising which helps to keep costs down, and also to Peter Donaldson for the photographs at Society events.

THE ARCHIVIST

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. The editor of the journal and the committee

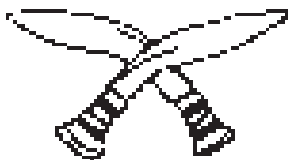
are planning to produce a short history of the Society over the period 1960 to 2010 to commemorate the Society's fiftieth anniversary in 2010. Archival material will play an important part in the production of this publication.

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

SOCIETY TIES SCARVES AND LAPEL BADGES

Mr David Jefford kindly looks after the sale of the Society ties and scarves which cost £10.00 each including postage. They are available from him at: 20 Longmead, Fleet, Hampshire GU52 7TR or at the AGM or one of our major functions

Miss Jane Loveless has supervised the production of a very attractive lapel badge which is available for sale for £3.00 at the AGM and other major functions.



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THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

By Dr Neil Weir
Honorary Secretary

During the year the Nepalese Embassy has been without an ambassador. We hope that the new Ambassador will have arrived in London in November 2006, and that we will be able to welcome him at a meeting. Mr Dipendra Pratap Bista, the Charge d'Affaires, an *ex officio* member of the Society's Executive Committee, has been particularly helpful to the Society and it was with much sadness that we learnt of his return to Nepal in July. For family reasons he left sooner than he had planned and thus we were unable to arrange a farewell party. He has been replaced by Mr Jhabindra P Aryal. I have been ably supported by my secretary, Mrs Daphne Field, until she retired at the end of May. The Society kindly made a generous gift to her to thank her for all the time she gave to the Society. Mrs Pat Mellor has continued to be a great support particularly by looking after membership matters.

LECTURES

The change of venue to the Medical Society of London has continued to be a success and two meetings have been followed by a Nepalese supper provided by the Munal Restaurant. The change has also been financially successful as was seen in the accounts. The lectures given were:

Tuesday 30 January 2007: Professor Michael Hutt: 'Monarchy, Maoists and Political Parties'.

Wednesday 28 March: Col William Shuttlewood: 'An update on the work of the Gurkha Welfare Trust'.

Tuesday 22 May: Dr Neil Weir and Mr Adam Schulberg: 'The work of the Britain Nepal Otolgoy Service in Nepal'; followed by a Nepali supper.

Tuesday 16 October: Col David Hayes: 'A review of the Brigade of Gurkhas and the new Terms and Conditions of Service'; followed by a Nepali supper.

We are grateful to all the speakers for their time, enthusiasm and excellent illustrations. As is the custom we shall look forward to receiving them as our guests at the Annual Nepali Supper on Thursday 21 February 2008.

DR RAGHAV DHITAL OBE

On 19 June some members of the Society were able to witness the investiture of Dr Dhital with an honorary OBE by Mr Howells, Minister of State at the FCO. The award recognised the work done by Dr Dhital for the Nepalese community in the UK and in fostering relations between our two countries.

ANNUAL NEPALI SUPPER

The supper, attended by 120 members and guests, was held on 22 February at St Columba's Church of Scotland Hall in Pont Street. Mr Dipendra Pratap Bista and the Chairman spoke.



The QGOOs and the bar staff before the supper party.



The Chairman flanked by the Charge d'Affaires, Mr Bista and Mrs Bista at the supper.



The Treasurer, Dr Peter Trott and friends at the supper.



Mr Harish Karki, Mrs Sneha Rana and Mr David Jefford at the supper.



Dr Howlett and friends at the supper.

SUMMER OUTING

Midsummer was typically wet and so was the day of the outing, but it was not allowed to spoil a visit by thirty members and their guests to Polesdon Lacy in the Surrey Hills.

FUTURE EVENTS

Lectures: The dates for the **2008** lectures, all of which will be held at the **Medical Society of London, 11 Chandos Street**, are to be held on:

Wednesday 30 January Miss Sue Carpenter: *'My world view.'*

Thursday 6 March Mr Ramesh Dhungel: *'The British Resident, Brian Hodgson and his manuscripts from Nepal.'*

Wednesday 21 May tba - followed by Nepali supper

Thursday 16 October tba - followed by Nepali supper

Annual Nepali Supper Thursday 21 February 2008 to be held at St Columba's Hall, Pont Street.

WEBSITE

www.britain-nepal-society.org.uk

Mr Derek Marsh of Crystal Consultants (UK) has continued to assist us with the website. It does need more input and we are still keen to hear of any organisations that have existing websites or email addresses which might like to be linked to the Society's website. The aim is for the BNS website to provide a comprehensive list of organisations undertaking work in Nepal as we often hear of organisations interested in the same subject but working quite independently without knowledge of each other.

DEATHS

It is with sadness that we report the death during 2007 of the following members:

Mr ARH Kellas CMG (former President)

Mr JK King

Mrs Ann Mitchell (former committee member)

Mr PJJ Lawrence

Lord Weatherill

Lt Col Charles Wylie OBE (former Chairman and Vice President)

Mr Theon Wilkinson MBE (founder of the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA))

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ROYAL TIGER SHOOT IN NEPAL

By Lt Col C G Wylie, 10 GR

(This article first appeared in the 1964 edition of 'The Kukri', the journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas. I am grateful for the editor's permission to reproduce it here in memory of Colonel Wylie. Those of us in Kathmandu at the time well remember Charles Wylie regaling us with the story. Mr RF Rosner, now a member of the Society, was then a Third Secretary at the US Embassy, lent Colonel Wylie his .375 rifle with which he used to shoot the tiger. I believe that this shoot in 1963 was probably one of the last tiger shoots on this scale in the Terai. Opinion changed towards conservation of tigers and their habitat as both declined following migration from the hills and development of agriculture in the Terai. To this end national parks were established such as Chitwan, Parsa, Bardia and Sukla Phanta which are now important areas for the survival of tigers. The problems for conservation in these areas were highlighted in the 2006 edition of the Journal. Subsequent holders of the Military Attaché post in Kathmandu are doubtless relieved that they were not called upon to uphold the honour of the UK and the Brigade of Gurkhas on tiger shoots! An account of this shoot, written by the late Lt Col Bill Gresham, then the US Military Attaché, appeared in the 2001 edition of the journal. Ed.)

In February 1963, the four Military Attachés in Kathmandu had the honour and great good fortune to be invited to His Majesty King Mahendra's tiger shoot in the District of Kanchenpur (*Now more popularly known as Sukla Phanta. Ed.*) at the western end of the Terai. Except for members and relatives of the Royal Family there were no other guests, so we were privileged indeed.

I had always secretly harboured hopes of taking part in a tiger shoot in Nepal. My imagination had first been kindled when as

a child I had fingered the long ornate hunting knife which hung on the wall at home and I had been told that it had been presented to my grandfather, then the Resident in Nepal, by the Archduke Franz Ferdinand (whose assassination in 1914 triggered off the First World War) when they had together been the guests of the Maharajah Dhir on a tiger shoot in the nineties. And then there was the beautiful skin of a tigress shot by my father on the Maharajah Joodha's shoot, just 30 years before, in, by coincidence, the same part of the Terai for which we were bound. It had seemed too much to hope, however, that a chance would ever come my way. Gone were the days of the massive shoots of the Rana Maharajahs some of whom used to shoot for three months in the year using four hundred elephants. King Mahendra, although a keen expert shot, was conscientiously engaged on the full time task of ruling his country and had little time for recreation. And, with the influx of foreign missions there were many more eligible to be invited than a Military Attaché. When it came then the invitation was all the more exciting for being totally unexpected.

I began to add up the score. Lt Col Bill Gresham, the American Army Attaché, and Colonel Bir Man Singh, the Indian Military Attaché, were enthusiastic and experienced shots. Colonel Kan Mai, the Red Chinese MA, was a dark horse. I had wasted my time, I now decided, climbing mountains. I realised with a jolt, that I had never even seen a live tiger outside a zoo. As to my prowess with a rifle, I knew that had deteriorated steadily since that first miraculous classification at Sandhurst, more years ago than I cared to recall, when I suspected my neighbour of firing on my target. And my experience of big game shooting was confined to one night after bear in Chamba, when the black mass,

dimly seen through the *makkai*, which I shot, had turned out to be a porcupine.

A glorious morning some days later found us assembling in the Royal Flight enclosure at Gauchar airport. Our invitations included wives, and Juanita Gresham and Pushpi Man Singh, dressed practically yet prettily for the jungle, brought charm and gaiety to our already high spirited party. Poor Kan Mai would no doubt have liked to bring his wife, but Communist negotiations evidently forbade this and in her place came the inevitable "interpreter" without who even the best linguists among the Red Chinese are not allowed to move outside the Embassy.

We flew West in the Dakota of the Royal Flight seated on folding canvas bench seats running down the sides, while tied down in the gangway were various last minute essentials for the camp; cases of Scotch, a "thunder box" and a magnificent yellow tin bath tub of truly royal dimensions. To the North the splendid array of the High Himalayas stood out in crystal clarity; Ganesh Himal, Himalchuli, the Annapurnas and Machapuchare thrusting its twin summits up defiantly. I saw again with astonishment the steepness of the Fish Tail's slopes and ridges up which we had edged and inched our way in 1957. Surely not there? But there we had been; there was the snowfield where Camp 4 was, and there the ice ridge through which Tashi had tunnelled. I thought of Wilfred Noyce whose body now lies amid the snows of the Russian Pamirs, the best of companions, and great British mountaineer of his generation; his craftsmanship had made the whole climb on Machapuchare possible carrying him to within a stone's throw of the top. (*Charles Wylie and Lord Chorley described this expedition in a lecture to the Society in 2000. Charles contributed a piece in the 2000 edition of the journal. Ed.*)

We landed at Dhangarhi as if in a new world, a flat, dusty world of dark graceful people, the Tharus of the far Western Terai,

shy and inquisitive, whose women wear masses of silver jewellery, heavy ankle bangles, quaint black hoods and flared skirts. Here we were met by Major Bharat Sinha of the Royal Nepalese Army, who had been detailed to look after us during the shoot. A two-hour drive through *sal* forest took us to the Royal Shikar Camp.

This can perhaps best be described as something between King Henry's camp before Agincourt and a country agricultural show. To begin with it was not in the jungle, but in a large area of grassland. In the centre was a high tent wall 100 yards square, inside which was the King's personal camp. An open belt 100 yards wide surrounded this, on the outside of which were the enclosures of the C-in-C, Inspector General of Police, Ministers and staff and also ours. All tents were very well pitched and each area screened off with "Connaughts". In the MAs' area, we each had a 180 lb tent (equipped with a bottle of whisky) with a private enclosure behind with small tents for bath and loo. We had a communal mess tent and two vast campfires. As well as our personal orderlies we were looked after by servants from the State Guest House at Kathmandu and by "pipas", the camp followers of the Nepalese Army, who were quite excellent.

We settled in, bathed and changed. In the evening we were invited to drinks at His Majesty's enclosure. There we were presented, and His Majesty inquired if we were comfortable. Later we walked over to another part of the camp to see some local dancing. The Tharu dancers looked magnificent with necklaces of animals' teeth, and peacocks' feathers fastened behind their heads. Their dancing in the flickering light of the camp fires could well have been a scene from some opera ballet.

Next morning we asked if we might go out with the elephants to see the ring formed rather than follow the normal practice for guests which is to join the ring only when definite news reaches the camp that there is tiger there.

Nepal is the only country in the world where the technique of ringing tigers by elephants is used. Locating a tiger and forming a ring around it, is an operation requiring considerable skill. Buffaloes are tied as bait, usually in jungle not far from a river. When the tiger has killed, he will first drag the carcass off to a spot where he can eat his fill undisturbed. He will then go to the river to drink and after that sleep off his meal not more than 2-300 yards away in the best cover he can find. Elephant grass provides the best cover of all.

When a kill has been discovered the *shikari* will inspect the river bank to find the tiger's pug marks. A good *shikari* will be able to tell the size and sex of the animal and whether it is with or without cubs. He will also be able to say almost exactly where the tiger will be lying up. He then blazes the trees or knots the elephant grass where he decides the ring should be formed.

On the Royal tiger shoot there may be anything up to 15 or 20 buffaloes out at any one time. When a *shikari* finds one killed he reports at once. Reporting today is speeded up by wireless messages to the Royal camp from reporting centres out in the jungle manned by the Nepalese Army. Sometimes reports of 5 or 6 kills come in in one day; only occasionally is there a blank day. Depending on the "*Khabar*", (information), His Majesty decides in the evening which tiger should be ringed and who should have the shot the following day. The rule is that only one person should shoot at any one tiger, so that there is no doubt as to who killed it.

After an early breakfast, we walked over to where the elephants were assembled to receive their riders. It was a magnificent sight; 54 elephants in one long rank, some highly painted, others with gaily coloured howdahs. In striking contrast at the end of the line was the King's helicopter.

The Nepalese officer in charge called our elephants out by name, one by one, and they came forward and knelt for us to

mount. For all their bulk, elephants are surprisingly agile and move along at a very brisk pace. We had hardly grown used to the ship-like motion, when we came to the river where the tiger had drunk after his kill. On the far bank a blazed tree marked the point at which the line of elephants divided to form the ring; one elephant went to the right, the next to the left, each column following the *shikari's* marks. Soon we emerged from the jungle to a large expanse of elephant grass, about 12 feet high, through which our elephants ploughed majestically in a half circle until the two columns met to complete the ring. A big shout then went up to make sure the tiger realised there were people all around him and that he should therefore stay put. Then the elephants started beating the grass down with their trunks, until there was a broad swathe cleared around the circumference of the ring. This done, the screen was unrolled from the backs of the elephants carrying it, and erected in the middle of the cleared band. This screen is a 6-foot high strip of white cloth which is put up to help keep the tiger in the ring. Of course tigers can easily break through it or jump it, but in fact they are frightened when they first see it and usually turn back.

When the screen was up the mahouts all shouted, "*Khabardar*" and then four or five elephants that had been left inside the ring to do the beating started looking for the tiger. Very soon there was a big growl and there was no longer any doubt that a tiger was there. The beating elephants then ignored the tiger and started clearing a killing area in front of where the shooter's howdah elephant was to be. They cleared a semi-circle about 30 yards in radius. However, there was still plenty of cover for the tiger even in this area, when they had finished. In the long elephant-grass beyond, there was no chance at all of seeing a tiger.

Now all was ready and we waited for the arrival of the Royal Party. While we waited there was much to watch; monkeys in the trees, green parrots flashing about and

pecking at the red cotton-wool tree blooms, and the delightful behaviour of the elephants whom I could never tire of watching. It was fascinating to see how they pulled out grass with their trunks, smacked it about against their legs to get the earth off the roots, and then carefully bit the bottom few inches off, and threw away the rest. Anything we dropped would be picked up with great care in the sensitive trunk tip and returned to us in the saddle. While we waited we were visited by the “mess” elephant which brought not only an excellent lunch but a complete bar directly alongside our elephants.

Shortly after the Royal Party arrived on elephants from the camp and transferred to the shooting howdahs, the Raj Kumar of Kasipur (whose mother is the sister of the Queen Mothers, King Tribhuvana’s widows) being detailed to shoot the tiger. The shout of “*Khabardar*” went up again and the elephants in the ring began to beat. When they met the tiger we could hear snarls and growls and see the elephant-grass moving as he ran about. Sometimes he charged the elephants and put them to flight. They would retire temporarily to the screen and then come back majestically. One elephant, Himal Kalli, was quite badly mauled and retired altogether from the ring. But the big tusker, Motiparsad, kept the others going. Once I saw a flash of yellow as the tiger came my side, but that was all. Suddenly there was a shot – the tiger had started to walk warily across the cleared patch in front of the howdah elephants. He had been hit in his spine; two more shots and the ring was broken and we all went up to see the dead tiger being measured and loaded on to an elephant to be taken away.

It was still quite early so we were told we could go off “*Phutkar*”. This means roaming around on your elephant shooting any game you see. Being on an elephant of course has tremendous advantages; you have an excellent view point and can move fast and far over any sort of ground. I put

up a hog deer at once, but couldn’t get a shot in the long grass. Later I heard the other MAs doing a lot of firing on my right. A *barasingha* had crossed right in front of them all, and all had missed. It had then been put up again in front of Kan Mai who got it. One up to China.

Next day all elephants were needed for a beat by His Majesty, so we went off in a jeep to get some duck-shooting at a *jheel* some twenty miles away. On the way we saw several groups of *chital* in one of which I shot a buck. There were lots of birds on the *jheel* but they seemed wise to guns and took off as soon as we arrived – 250 odd duck wheeling out of sight, a lovely sight. We also saw two enormous cranes with red necks that flew ponderously by, honking noisily.

The following day the MAs began their tigers. Bir Man Singh, being the doyen went first. It was soon evident there was more than one tiger in the ring. The elephants seemed to bump them every time they moved. The tigers also appeared to be very wild, rushing round at high speed growling most ferociously. Before long the grass parted suddenly right in front of my elephant and a tiger dived under the screen, flashed by and disappeared like a streak into the grass beyond. We had hardly got over this excitement when another tiger bounded out and made for the screen on the other side of my elephant. He failed to negotiate it and started to fight his way over, getting slightly tangled in the process. This was a marvellous cine shot, but my elephant thought otherwise – tigers to the right and tigers to the left were altogether too much for him and he bolted, leaving me clinging to my saddle ropes for dear life. Just at that moment Bir Man Singh took his chance and dropped the tiger with a fine shot. It measured 9ft 7ins.

Not content with this, the elephants found another tiger in the ring. Now it was Kan Mai’s turn. Bir Man Singh had taken 15 minutes over his, but it was four hours before Kan Mai’s tiger was finally killed.

The only excitement came when there was another escape from the ring. The tiger climbed over quite close to the shooting howdah. Kan Mai had an easy shot here, but failed to reload. There was still another tiger - the fourth - in the ring, and this, after 11 shots, Kan Mai dispatched. After all this it turned out to be a 6ft cub.

Although it was now late in the afternoon the C-in-C, General Nir, ordered another ring to be made. It was my shot next. By the time we had moved to the next place and had formed the ring, there were only some 40 minutes of daylight left.

We soon heard growls and a very fast and angry animal came rushing and bounding in and out of the grass like an express train going too fast to keep on the rails. I found it quite impossible to get my sights on him, let alone keep them there long enough to press the trigger. The express train disappeared unscathed, but shortly after obliged with a repeat performance. "Shoot, Shoot", shouted everyone. So I shot, and missed, and shot again. "It's wounded, it's dying", I was told, but it had disappeared completely. There were growls everywhere and one tiger (it was clear there was more than one in the ring) actually jumped on the back of an elephant. Finally the C-in-C decided I had got my tiger and when Bill Gresham said he could see one sitting looking at him, he was allowed to shoot. He shot three times and certainly hit, but no body could be found. There were still an awful lot of live tiger noises coming from the ring when it got completely dark so we left the screen up and the mahouts lit fires and stayed all night round the ring.

When we arrived again the next morning they had found one dead tigress - 9ft 3ins - which the C-in-C awarded to Bill Gresham as it had been found not far from where he had shot. Nothing more. As I had feared, I had missed; I really should have stuck to climbing mountains, I thought. But there was no time for fulminating, as I was back in the shooting howdah to get my

tiger. Soon one was located in a clump of reeds and my elephant was moved round there. The beating elephants flushed it and I had a reasonable shot as it bounded away from me at about 40 yards range. This time there was no doubt and it was quite immobilised. We broke the ring and I finished it off.

By this time we knew there was still a tiger in the ring. Prince Gyanendra - the King's second son - got this. Even this was not the end. Yet another was found and shot, again by Prince Gyanendra. When we came to pick up all the three killed that morning they were all found to be young ones who had been with their mother. Mine was a 7ft young tigress. Again four in the one ring, making a total of eight tigers ringed the day before.

It was still early and as the elephants were needed by the King, we asked if we could go back after black buck in the Landrovers. Bill had been in this area before and knew of a herd close by. We eventually spotted them about a mile away and went into action at once. There was a low ridge in front and the four MAs took up positions on this while the Landrovers worked round the herd's flanks and drove them towards the guns from the rear. The scheme worked perfectly and Bill got the big buck with the horns he wanted with a good standing shot at 200 yards. This was the first time I had seen black buck moving; never have I seen such graceful animals. The sight of the herd of 20 or 25 each leaping 5 or 6 feet in the air at each stride was quite lovely.

That night His Majesty graciously decided that the two young tigers shot by Kan Mai and me wouldn't count, and that we would be given a chance to get bigger ones. Kan Mai took the ring first next morning. We were told there were three tigers in the ring. One came out fairly soon and paused nicely in the open to give Kan Mai a good shot over which he made no mistake. The remaining two were specially lively and showed themselves enough for

General Nir to judge that they were young ones, about 8ft in length. It was my turn next, and General Nir asked me if I wanted to have a go at one of these, but I said I would rather not as they were not fully grown. All agreed this was right, so the screen was lifted and the ring of elephants broken to allow the young tigers to run off. They were not going to leave Mama, and very soon they had all our elephants trumpeting and stampeding off in all directions. This really was exciting. I was only a few yards from one tusker who was fending-off a young tiger with his tusks. Finally the ring of elephants withdrew to a safe distance and the tuskers eased the young tigers off into the jungle. General Nir himself measured Kan Mai's tigress and announced it to be 9ft 3ins – exactly the same as Bill Gresham's. Bill complained that this was carrying Nepalese neutrality too far! We spent the afternoon black-partridge shooting.

Next morning it was my turn again. It was a nice small ring. When we arrived everything was ready and I climbed into the shooting howdah next to the C-in-C. Prince Basundara, Prince Gyanendra, cine cameras galore, the Russian helicopter crews, Uncle Tom Cobley and all were there. One certainly feels "on the spot". My fellow MAs, each with a good tiger safely in the bag, had, to make it worse, given me a maximum of 5 minutes to kill my tiger. The shikaris said it was a big one.

At first move by the beating elephants, it started for the screen to my right. I could see the grass moving fast. Then it saw the screen and I had a momentary glimpse of most of its body as it turned and leapt. "Shoot, shoot", shouted everyone; excitement runs high and there is no lack of advice. But I was determined not to blaze away in the first few seconds, but rather to wait my time in spite of my colleagues' impatience. Now the tiger was bounding back in and out of the cover just inside the killing area. Still I could not see more than an occasional flash. Then

suddenly all of him was visible as he made a big bound over a patch of beaten elephant-grass. Would I ever get as good a chance as this again? This was it, I decided, and tried. My shot hit him in the spine, I learned later. Not a good shot in fact; I should have aimed and hit behind the shoulder, but there seemed to be no time to aim at all. However, I had beaten my colleagues' deadline!

The tiger's momentum had carried him to the edge of the long grass where he lay evidently finished, but still breathing. We broke the ring for the final coup de grace. It was a big animal – a male – and even after two further carefully-aimed shots with the telescopic sight it was still breathing. In spite of this General Nir ordered a *shikari* to dismount and pull its tail. This he did, without dire results. Finally it stopped breathing. It took almost a dozen men to pull it out. It measured 9ft 10ins.

After the *shikaris* had done their ritual – they place seven bits of grass side by side and put a drop of blood on each to appease the Bhandevi – we moved on to the next ring.

This was the last day's shooting and the last ring. His Majesty was to shoot. The *shikaris* had reserved what they judged to be the biggest tiger for this ring. The local villages were full of stories about a monster tiger, and excitement ran high.

When the beating began it was clear the *shikaris* were right, from the exceptionally loud roars. It was also clear the tiger had no intention of being flushed. He didn't wait for the elephants to move his way, he attacked them before they moved. He soon could do what he liked with them, and kept scattering them all over the ring, drawing blood from the biggest tusker. Hours passed without a view of him. Just as darkness was about to fall, the tiger was dimly seen lying up half way round the ring. The King sent the Rajah of Kasipur round to take the shot. After much pointing and peering through telescopic sights, the Rajah shot, but still the deep

growls continued. The King came round and added a few shots. No one knew whether the tiger was alive or dead, or wounded. Excitement was intense, as it was almost dark and we would have to find it if it was wounded.


Then quite suddenly came the most unexpected and dramatic dénouement to the whole shoot. There was a clap of thunder, a flash of lightning, and looking round we saw the sky was completely black. The next moment the storm hit us. A young hurricane, amid sheets of rain, sent the screen for six. The elephants all took off for home, with us clinging on for dear life once more. In a few moments the shoot had come to an end; the ring had disintegrated and the shooters were being borne away willy-nilly. It was as if some supernatural force had intervened. Later Princess Princep, who is a devout person, told us that this is what always happens when the Lord of the Jungle is killed. The tiger had in fact been killed, and at the very

moment the storm broke. He could well be called the Lord of the Jungle – he was 10ft 8ins – the third largest tiger ever killed in Nepal. No rain at all is expected at that time of the year; even the few showers that usually fall in January had been over a month before.

When all was sorted out we had a very pleasant evening in camp at a farewell buffet supper with the Royal family who were happy and informal and excellent hosts and hostesses. The King went outside with me and inspected my tiger and spoke about guns and calibres; he is obviously an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable shot.

We flew back to Kathmandu where the Airport Manager congratulated me on winning the “competition”. The MAs’ shooting had apparently been keenly followed in the capital!

So ended an exciting and memorable week.

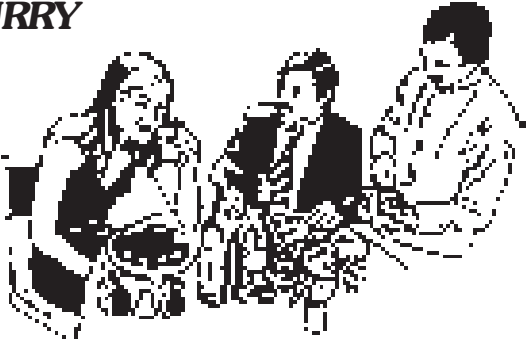


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THE AMBASSADOR'S DAWN REDWOOD

By Dr Mark Watson

(Mark Watson of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a taxonomic botanist specialising in the Sino-Himalayan region. He leads the Flora of Nepal project, an international collaboration of Nepalese, UK and Japanese botanists working together to produce the first comprehensive account of all the plants in Nepal. He travels often to Nepal engaged in field research, working with Nepalese colleagues and contributing to conservation efforts in Nepal.)

The dusty, rutted road that runs along the southern wall of the British Embassy in Kathmandu was our short cut from the bustle of Thamel to the sanctuary of the Embassy's Kingdon Hall where we ran our training workshops. Apart from school children and refuse workers (unfortunately this was a holding area before the fragrant contents of their teeming handcarts were collected by trucks) few tread this path. But, if you do, you may notice the tall, narrow spire of a tree towering above the red brick wall near a seldom-used side entrance. In summer you might pass this off as a rather ordinary conifer, but in autumn you would be surprised by the leaves turning a burnished bronze and later falling as the cold evenings take hold. This is no regular conifer but a Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), a deciduous tree with a fascinating history stretching back at least 90 million years.

My attention was first drawn to this tree by Major (Retd) Tom Le M. Spring-Smyth, a name familiar to me as the collector of many fine shrubs from Nepal now growing at the Royal Botanic

Garden Edinburgh, and a mutual friend of Tony Schilling, himself a renowned horticulturist with deep Nepalese connections. Spring-Smyth presented the tree to the British Embassy in 1971 and, on hearing that I was working at the Embassy, was keen for news of how this tree was faring after 35 years in the extremes of the Kathmandu climate. I contacted the British Ambassador and in due course was pleased to report back that this tree is doing very well indeed. Spring-Smyth was delighted and asked me to produce a commemorative plaque to explain a little of the tree's history and importance. This I did, and in March this year my wife Lesley and I presented it to HE Dr Andrew Hall and his wife Kathie in the Embassy. The stainless-steel plaque was made by Alexander Pollock Limited of Haddington, near Edinburgh, and now stands next to the tree where it is admired by visitors to the Ambassador's garden. This Dawn Redwood may well be known to Britain-Nepal Society members, and this article aims to provide a little background to its scientific importance and to draw together some strands of its history at the Embassy.

The Dawn Redwood genus *Metasequoia* was first described by a Japanese scientist in 1941 working on fossils from the Mesozoic Era dating back over 90 million years. Three species of *Metasequoia* are now recognised to have formed extensive forests across huge areas of the Northern Hemisphere at a time when the dinosaurs ruled the Earth. No fossils younger than 1.5 million years have been found and for several years the genus was thought to be extinct. Remarkably, at the same time as

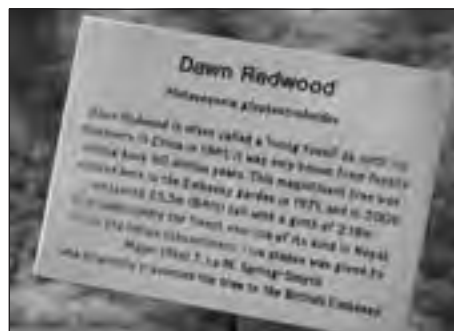
the naming of the fossil genus, an unusual tree was reported many thousands of miles away by a Chinese forester working in a remote part of Sichuan. After delays due to World War II, scientific specimens were collected from these trees, examined and named as an extant fourth species *M. glyptostroboides* by Cheng Wan-chun and Hu Hsen-hsu in 1948. Detailed fieldwork has now revealed that this species is very rare in the wild and occurs naturally in only a few localities in Hubei, Sichuan and Hunan provinces of China. The remarkable discovery of this 'living fossil' is of great scientific importance, and this enigmatic and beautiful tree has become a potent symbol linking the present with the past.



Head Gardener Madan Raj Thapa alongside the tree and plaque.

Dawn Redwood is a deciduous conifer of the family *Cupressaceae* and was introduced into cultivation by the Arnold Arboretum, Massachusetts in 1948. It is now widely grown in temperate regions where it is often planted as an ornamental

tree. Despite being in cultivation for less than 60 years, some planted specimens have already reached a towering 38m (125ft) in height with the red-brown buttressed trunks growing to 2m across (Ma Jin-shuang personal communication). The tallest tree in China is reported to be 420 years old and 42m (138ft) tall. Contrary to earlier reports in Nepal, this is a dioecious tree and bears both tiny, 6mm pollen-bearing cones borne in the spring and larger (to 2.5cm across), more conspicuous longer-lived, woody seed-bearing cones.



Plaque details.

In 1971 Spring-Smyth asked Roy Lancaster to bring two seedlings of Dawn Redwood from England when he journeyed to Nepal in late September. Lancaster, Len Beer and Dave Morris formed part of the University of Bangor plant collecting expedition (see Lancaster, *A Plantsman in Nepal*, 1981 and 1995). Spring-Smyth had thought that this fast-growing tree, not then known in Nepal, might prove suitable as a rapid source of timber, but these particular specimens were intended as gifts to the British and American Embassies in Kathmandu. The 'British' sapling was presented at a luncheon party at the Embassy where the Ambassador and his wife (Terence and Rita O'Brien) were joined by the Spring-Smyth's and



Tree in winter.



Tree in summer.

the expedition members. The Bangor expedition, rich in horticultural experts, elected a shady damp place in the SE corner of the Ambassador's Garden where this remarkable tree might flourish. Well they chose, as in 2006 it was growing strongly and measured 25.3m (84ft) in height. The following measurements are collated from several unpublished letters and notes.

The 'British' tree is undoubtedly the finest example of its kind in Nepal and is currently in very good condition. Recent examination, however, has revealed that the tree has developed a double leader, and once this has been pruned out, this plant will continue to be an excellent specimen tree. The 'American' tree fared less well as it happened to be planted close to competitive poplars, and its current status needs checking.

A few years after these Embassy saplings were planted, the Nepalese Department of Forests imported 20kg of seed directly from China in 1974/75. These seeds were grown in a Forest Nursery at Thimi (10km east of Kathmandu) and saplings planted out at various sites around the Kathmandu valley. Another report from China states that this large group of seeds was introduced into Nepal when Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiao-ping visited in February 1978 (Ma Jin-shuang personal communication), so some doubt remains on the actual date these seeds were introduced. In 2002 D.P. Acharya, a forester at the Department of Forest, wrote that some of these trees were growing well in various parts of the Valley. In 1978 Malcolm Campbell (Nepal-Australia Forestry Project) took 20cm long cuttings

Date	Height	Girth at Breast Height	Recorder
1978 (Aug)	10.55m	0.63cm	Malcolm Campbell
1996	21.8m (71ft 6in)	?	?
2002 (Jan)	24.1m (79ft 1in)	2.1m (6ft 11in)	Ronald Nash
2006 (Mar)	25.3m (84ft)	2.18m	Genevieve Bloomfield

from the British tree with a good number surviving and growing to 1.5m in the first year. In a letter to Tony Schilling, Campbell records that he planted out several on the Godavari Road and ten in private homes in the Valley. Whilst travelling in and around Kathmandu I have kept an eye out for Dawn Redwoods, but have hardly ever seen any others apart from a few in private gardens. It has been reported that some trees were planted on the road to Godavari, however, I have not noticed any on this route either. Unfortunately, it is highly likely that these have suffered the same fate as the other trees that formed the wonderful avenues of trees which line the road in old photographs. Almost none remain, most having been killed through excessive cutting for fodder and fuel, or removal to widen the roadway.

(Former and the present 'custodians' have commented below:

Mr Timothy George: "The tree gave us a scare in our first winter when it showed signs of losing its leaves. We hadn't realised that it was deciduous. We are delighted that Madan Raj Thapa is still there since we appointed him as the first gardener with any qualifications in an attempt to professionalize grounds maintenance."

HE Dr Andrew Hall: "This tree has always been impeccably well-behaved unlike our numerous and very beautiful jacarandas which have a habit of shedding massive boughs without the slightest warning as one did last year, just an hour or so after I had been enjoying a quiet smoke under its shade."

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THE TIGERS OF THULOSWARA

By Rick Beven

(Rick Beven served in the 6th Gurkha Rifles and then, on amalgamation, the Royal Gurkha Rifles. After retirement he spent several months travelling on foot across Nepal and interviewed many ex-servicemen, both young and old, about their experiences in the Army. He is currently an Arms Monitor with the UN Mission in Nepal. He lectured to the Society in 2003.)

“If you go to Thuloswara you must stay at our house”, said the Colonel. His son, Buddhiman, added, “It is on top of the hill, above the village”. You can see the house from miles around; from the old fort at Purankot across the valley, from the green forests of *chillaune* and *katouss* as you reach the top of the ridge, climbing up from Sundar Bazaar; and from the huge grey stone slab, the *sindure dhunga*, where the old rajas of Lamjung were once proclaimed king.

Until the happy Gods of fate caused the paths of these two to cross, Buddhiman’s family was one of the poorest in Thuloswara village. His father died when he was in his teens. Later, he had been too short to take the normal escape route of joining an army. For years Buddhiman’s family had struggled to make ends meet until the day that the Colonel adopted him as his son.

It is not uncommon in Nepal for an elder man, especially one who is unmarried or childless, to adopt a son. What is unusual is that Buddhiman is a Gurung of the Dura clan whilst his new father was a retired British Colonel in the Brigade of Gurkhas.

In his day the Colonel had been a brilliant if unorthodox officer. He had spent thirty-nine years of his military career in Asia and spoke nine Asian languages. He had fought the Japanese in Burma, the communists in Indo-China and Malaya, and the Indonesians in Borneo. When he retired he became an assistant lecturer at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

By now his eyesight was failing and a series of operations had left him visually impaired. In England he would probably have ended up in an old people’s home. In Nepal, his chosen home, his adopted family looked him after. Buddhiman became his eyes and constant companion.

Their house in the hills goes by the name of “Cadwallon Cottage”, an eccentricity from the mists of the Colonel’s distant ancestry. It is a typical Nepalese house of two storeys, better built than most, with ornately carved wooden windows and a long veranda. From its green lawn, surrounded by a very English grey stone wall, you can see the brilliant white ridges of Machhapuchhre and Annapurna in the Nepal Himalaya.

The Colonel and Buddhiman’s family live in Pokhara. Cadwallon Cottage is their village home, their house in the hills. Buddhiman’s *saru*, or brother-in-law, looks after it.

Rambahadur is also a poor man. He owns three buffaloes and is able to grow just enough maize and millet to feed his family. “You are baba’s friend”, he tells me as he presents me with a chicken for supper. When I ask

if I can buy some *ruxi*, the local spirit of the hills, he makes a fire and his wife brings out her heavy copper pan and distills alcohol from millet for the porters and I to drink with our chicken.

In the afternoon I visit the Captain Sahib. Captain Bakansing Dura is the oldest Gurkha serviceman in the village. He is a wrinkled, rotund old man with an oval face like a benevolent sealion. He will be ninety this monsoon, he tells me, sitting on the porch of his traditional mud-daubed house.

His eyes are still as sharp as a crocodile's as he recounts thirty-three years of military service. Pictures of him sitting amongst British Gurkha Officers attired in starched white tropical uniforms hang proudly on the walls of his house. In 1947, when India gained its independence from Britain, he was going to transfer to the Indian Army. "Then I saw my British officers crying and I changed my mind", he tells me.

He shuffles off to get his medals, unwrapping them from a brown handkerchief: the North West Frontier Medal, the 1939 – 45 Star, the Burma Star, the War Service Medal, the 1939 – 45 India Medal, the Indian Independence Medal, the General Service Medal (Malaya) and the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

These days he is too old and arthritic to walk far. Every day he takes a constitutional walk up to the ridge above his house. His relatives have built a special stone seat for him underneath a scarlet rhododendron tree. He walks there each day to sit on the side of the hill and survey his land. When I rise to leave he says to

me "*Pheri, pheri bhetaunla*", 'let us meet again.'

In the evening, Rambahadur shows me where the water is piped from a hill a mile away to a water tank where I can wash. "From time to time", he says as he watches over me, "a *bagh* comes here to drink." "Every evening?" I ask, looking up from my half-finished ablutions, not believing that a tiger could survive in these heavily populated hills. "No, just when he has killed a buffalo or a goat belonging to the village and is thirsty after eating so much salt", Rambahadur answers.

The next day Rambahadur accompanies us for a short distance to show us the short cut through the jungle to the next village. Just beyond a small Shivite temple, beside the path along the ridge, there are two rows of grey stones that slope to join in the middle, forming a tight tunnel. "What are those?" I ask. "That is an old tiger trap", Rambahadur tells me. "A goat used be tethered at night at one end of the trap and the tiger would be attracted by its cries. It could only reach the goat by entering the tunnel and, once it did, a large rock would fall behind it, trapping it inside. It would remain there all night, roaring and unable to eat the goat or escape. Then in the morning the villagers would come and spear it to death."

(There are no prizes for guessing the identity of 'the Colonel'. Ed.)

KATHMANDU – WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG

By Colonel J M Evans MC

(This article is based on the lecture given to the Society by Col Jimmy Evans on 1st February 2005 and was also published in the 2006 edition of 'The Kukri', journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas. I am grateful for permission to reproduce it here. Ed.)

Nepal is an old country. Kathmandu is an old, old city - but when my friend Derek Royals and I went there in 1946 it looked fresh and green and new. We were young - so the world was young. We spent a month there. It was the journey of a lifetime. I want to tell you how it all came about.

After the long campaign in Burma, all of us serving with the Gurkhas, far away from home, looked upon the battalion as our second family. Sitting around the camp fires at night we never tired of listening to the men talking about life in the villages in the hills of Nepal, the glorious mountain country where no foreigners were allowed. Many a British Officer would have given a month's pay just to go across the border.

I do not know what gave me the bold idea, but we wrote a letter to the British Minister in Kathmandu. We said that our one desire was to visit the land of our soldiers. Was it ever possible that we could be allowed in?

Six weeks passed then out of the blue a telegram arrived at our camp: *"Expect you for one month October. Passports follow. McLeod, Lt Colonel Acting Head of Legation"*. We could hardly believe it. Two weeks later a heavy envelope arrived from Nepal. We spread out the contents on the mess-table: passports, hand written on rice-paper and two pages of closely-typed instructions strictly to be followed by us on our journey.

Our old Commanding Officer was quite envious but said we could take our annual month's leave. We could also take two riflemen each to act as orderlies. There were instructions about dress. Having

seldom worn a coat or tie in the last four years, we had a smart jacket and trousers run up by the *darzi*. Together with Service Dress uniforms, two shotguns and other impedimenta it took ten porters to carry our trunks when we walked in.

Accompanied by the four orderlies, who were looking forward to the trip as much as Royals and I, we set off by Indian broad gauge railway on 21st September 1946. We could not wait to get out of the heat and dust of the plains of India. Passing through Lucknow, we began to think we were on the way at last. The station was crowded with Gurkha soldiers going on leave, untidy after long days on the train, but all dressed alike; no badges but wearing the Hat Felt, Gurkha, civilian shirt and a knitted wool scarf, bright green or red slung over the shoulder, to which was tied a towel and spare clothing and pushed into it also, each man carried a kukri.

I made brief notes of the journey in an old black notebook which I found again a short while ago, to which I will lapse into occasionally. The thoughts may sound a bit callow now, but is what we thought and felt at the time.

"Changed trains. Crowded and dirty. Fleas on seat. Orderlies whine, can't find standing-room. Hustle them into our large first class. Start game of cards. Train stops in night and does not move for five hours"

There is a rumour of an accident ahead, and it proves to be correct. Later we pass the ill-fated train, leaning on a curve, the middle coaches telescoped, still uncleared. Not a good sight, the driver drunk. Moving on: *"We reach Raxaul, railhead for the 25 miles of Nepal's little narrow gauge railway, greeted by the Overseer. Begin to feel important. Inside Nepal, still hot and dusty, but plenty Gurkha faces around. To the well built Legation Rest-House, hot tin bath with Wrights Coal Tar soap"*.

We rise early on the 24th September and board the little train in the VIP carriage to journey through depressing thick *Terai* jungle. At the first stop a near-naked ascetic looking Indian Sadhu gets in and Royals and I fall silent. Is he allowed in here? We wonder. He surveys us somewhat condescendingly, then in precise English he wants to know what we are doing here. He starts talking to me about philosophy and higher thought. Royals looks out of the window in disdain.

I drive the engine for the last stage to railhead at Amlekganj. Amlekganj! Hotter than India with a milling crowd scrambling towards the bus, we are led by our Sadhu, loin cloth flying. No first class for him now! We get the two front seats, reserved at 2 Rupees each. My notes say: "*Well made metal road. Imperceptibly going higher and higher, and cooler. Rippling river; clear blue water. Nepal at last?*" We pass through the tunnel at Churia, where 130 years earlier General Ochterlony began his night march against the flanks of the Nepalese Army.

Arriving at Bhimpedi, the end of the road, a friendly crowd helps our ten sturdy coolies to load. A fifteen year old youth shoulders my 80lb tin trunk. We see the famous ropeway ahead, and, 1500 feet above, Sisagarhi fort which, garrisoned by Nepalese soldiers, we reach at nightfall after a stiff climb. Eat. Sleep like logs.

25th September. A grand day. Rise at 6am, destination Kathmandu. There are fifteen miles and two mountain passes on the only track that leads to the secluded valley. Within the hour we are at the top of the first pass, Chisapani Garhi, with a distant view of the great snow mountains, the land we have heard about for the last four years. Along the bank of another rippling river, we are now passing people all the time, mainly carrying loads, even the young girls. The girls, they are pretty! The orderlies dawdle.

With ten miles behind us, five more to go, we halt and buy a large meal of rice and milk and eggs. Refreshed after a quick swim in the river we press on to the top of the Chandragiri Pass and see the sunlit valley of Kathmandu spread out below, as seen by pilgrims through the ages.

For some reason, my staccato entry reads: "*Over the Chandragiri - first view of the valley - it looks OK*".

Royals and I race ahead down a short cut to a village 2000 feet below at the edge of the valley. Waiting there is a small group of Legation staff and the old Legation car, a big black Buick, Chandrabahadur the driver, and the Mukhya.

The Mukhya is part of what would nowadays be called the Secret Service. He was to be with us everywhere we went over the next few weeks (or nearly everywhere).

As we are driven, first along a rough track and then a finely metalled road, we wonder once again that this enormous car must have been carried in on men's backs over the two passes – together with 200 other vehicles over the years, plus two steamrollers, electric lamp posts etc.

We pass through villages of red brick



The British Legation car, a Buick, awaits the arrival of the party.

houses surrounded by fields heavy with golden autumn corn; then past pagodas, temples, white palaces and mansions. As the streets become narrower the appearance of the brick and timber houses remind us of medieval England, with their upper

floors protruding into the street.

We arrive in the Legation compound – a little bit of England. We are just unpacking when the entire foreign population arrives – Colonel McLeod the acting Minister and Envoy Plenipotentiary, and Mrs McLeod and, somewhat to our chagrin, two other young British Officers who, friends of the family, have come for a few days only.

We are invited to dinner. The McLeods have been good to us. He has organised five days of sightseeing to cover every temple, significant building and historical site; and she has put flowers in our rooms.

Novel for us, the Rest House has stairs, bedrooms, and sprung beds. We are happy, but the orderlies are not. Darkness is coming down, they have all our kit to unpack, and they can find only a damp outhouse to sleep in. Nor can they get any food. “Things are different here” says Kesarman, “Caste rules. We can only eat in certain places”.

I say: “But you are soldiers. This sort of thing does not happen in the Battalion”, “What!” he exclaims “Sahib, you could not find a more holy place than this! You do not know how careful we have to be”. We were to remember these words later. The four of them are miserable for a time; then we tell them to sleep in the downstairs room for the night. Suddenly they are cheerful again, unpacking and shifting the furniture.

Royals and I hurriedly change into uniform and walk across to dinner with the McLeods. We hear stories about life in the valley and feel contented and relaxed, a small community isolated in a strange land over the mountains; but a welcoming friendly land. Late to bed, dog tired.

The next seven days were of continuous sightseeing. You would be bored to know how we looked at temples, visited Patan, Bhatagaon or Bhaktapur and gazed at carvings, statues and palaces since now they are well known and even ‘world heritage sites’. To tell the truth, we were not all that interested in temples and

archaeology at our age. All we wanted was to see the hills and the people and the villages. Nevertheless, we had a good time.

Always in attendance, quietly watching our every move was the Mukhya. His role was to see that we came to no harm, that we did no harm, that we did not meet undesirable people and that we did not desecrate the holy places. He did not become a close friend; there was strict protocol in those days, but he became a good companion.

Except in crowded markets and bazaars,



The steam engine at Amlekganj.

the streets seemed quiet and, compared with India, cleaner. Everyone walked, moving slowly out of the way to stare at the occasional approach of a car.

Wherever we went, as soon as we got out of the Legation car, a crowd of a hundred or so silent people formed behind us. Some would whisper to the orderlies: “Who are they? Where do they come from?” It was a bit of a strain at times. Occasionally Royals, who was big and boisterous, would wink at me and we would spin round and speak to them in our rough Gurkhali. Occasionally a more educated bystander would reply to us in Hindustani, which for some reason always irritated us.

One day that has stayed in my mind

forever was our first sight of Bodhnath, the massive Buddhist pagoda of the all-seeing eyes. We had hoped to see the venerated Cheeni Lama there but he was praying. Instead, stretched out on the grassy bank enjoying a picnic, were the two other visitors on their last day. The scene was idyllic. My notes say: "*Lunch on the downs – circle of mountains surround the valley – crops ripening in the fields – well built cottages – contrast of richness and poverty – hard working sturdy people, but very poor.*"

An Edwardian visitor described the scene thus: "Its main feature is the great pair of eyes, which gaze serenely over the smiling fields of the Valley, as they have done for a thousand years and more. Before those impassive eyes had passed the ebb and flow of the country's history, tribal battles, alien horsemen trampling down the golden grain growing up to its very wall. To us, from the outside world of the twentieth century, the calm eyes seem to regard us with a mild supercilious stare, an incident in the passage of time. We, on our part, endeavour to read some story on this inscrutable mask".

I went back a few years ago. Look at it now.

We had planned to break the mould of sightseeing, and go to the furthest place allowed, Nagarkot, on the edge of the valley. But in the evening everything changed. Colonel McLeod sent a message to say that His Highness the Maharajah, the *Teen Sirkar*, would be pleased to have us visit him at 4pm next day. It was a rare honour, and quite unexpected.

Promptly at 3.30pm the next day we were taken by car by Mirsuba Prakat Man Sing OBE, the Liaison Officer to the British Mission. The big vehicle drove slowly, passers-by gave a deep salaam in case we were important and as we approached the Singha Durbar it surged forward to go through the gates at precisely 4 o'clock. With some trepidation we mounted the steps

and were ushered into a throne room where the tall stately figure of the Maharajah was standing. He was unsmiling, yet seemed pleased to see us. I felt at ease. He sat down, three officers on either side, and opened the conversation. "Are you enjoying your stay? How long have you been in the Army?" and so on. Finally I felt emboldened to speak. "Your Highness, our wish has long been to see the land and villages of our men. Would it be possible to go walking out of the Valley for a few days?" "But how would you eat and sleep" he said. "We would eat rice" we replied. "You eat rice!" he exclaimed. "*Bhat khanchha?*"

We told him we did and he beckoned and



Jimmy Evans and his party at the legation.

spoke to one of his courtiers, who crouched forward bending low. "We shall see" he said with a smile "Meanwhile you must attend the big *Dashera* parade tomorrow".

The parade was on the afternoon of the next day. We pressed our uniforms again and followed the Minister's car in a small Austin 7. Over ten thousand troops were drawn up in serried ranks on the vast *Maidan*, known as the *Tundikhel*. Under the 400 year old *Pepal* tree in the centre, thirty Army Generals were gathered. The Maharajah arrived in a Daimler with a cavalry escort and, four outriders on brand new auto-cycles. One was backfiring badly! The procession moved slowly round the massed troops. Silence fell, there were a few shy cheers as a coach approached in which was the King himself, His Majesty King Tribhuvan, who only appeared once a

year. The Generals bowed to the ground. We saluted. We were not allowed to speak to him, nor he to us.

The stocky figure of a General then strode to the centre and called out the order, "From the centre seven rounds, fire!" There was a pause then suddenly from the centre the soldiers started firing. A thunder of sound rolled round the ranks until it met in the centre again, and all hell was let loose as the mountain guns opened fire. Clouds of acrid smoke billowed across the *Tundikhel*, as the echoes rolled across the Valley. Then it was all over.

Kathmandu was a place of contrasts and for us also. Four hours after the magnificent parade found Royals and I drinking *raksi* in the *Jemardarni's* humble hotel in the depths of the bazaar. We had Nepali clothes made for us. Determined to see other aspects of the country, I am now ashamed to say we had slipped out of the Legation compound at night. We fondly thought no-one knew, but Colonel McLeod said later that *Teen Sirkar* knew everything.

Perhaps he forgave us, for permission came for us to go over the mountains in No 1 West, and we set off, first stop the Legation Rest House at Kakani. It was said you could sometimes see Mount Everest from there. Rising before dawn, grasping our Kodak box camera, we got a brief glimpse of Sagarmarta, a rare sight in those days.

There follows five days leisurely walking and bivouacking down the Nawakot and the Trisuli Rivers, where we fondly believed no foreigners had ever set foot before – except an invading Chinese Army, which was turned back when they reached Trisuli. Our men were enjoying it greatly, relaxed and chatting up the girls in every village. Back in the Battalion we led them in a paternal way. Here they felt responsible for us, teaching us about the customs and taboos of the villages. We fed in travellers' tea-shops, and halted to shoot for the pot and cook a meal. Once, when I had failed to shoot a single bird from a flock of wood

pigeon overhead, Harkarman asked if he could take my shotgun while we rested. He wandered off for over an hour then suddenly there was a loud bang from only a few yards away, and seven plump "*parewa*" tumbled down from the tree above.

One stormy night on the floor of a



Bodnath as it was in 1946.

headman's house, we found it easy to believe that strange forces exist in the high mountains. While sipping rice-beer with the villagers in the light of an oil lamp, one of the men said they could show us a spirit. A man stood up and began to hum softly and his eyes glazed over and he trembled uncontrollably. The onlookers were also humming as the man stiffened and as if in a trance began jerking upwards. His knees didn't bend. In frenzy, eyes staring, he was propelled upwards. His head banged on the low rafters. Three villagers leapt up and tried to hold him down. Only gradually did he subside, and collapse in a heap in the corner. "The spirits come close to earth in the mountains" said Kesarman. Royals and I, full of beer, were soon asleep in our valises.

It was nearly all over. We walked back to Kathmandu and reported to Colonel McLeod, but there was one more surprise. Maharajah Padma invited us to see the film 'Henry V' starring Laurence Olivier, in the drawing-room of the palace. The film had only just been released in London. When it finished we clicked our heels to say goodbye. He gave us each a kukri which I

have treasured ever since. I wrote a formal letter of thanks and was surprised to receive a written reply.

Maharajah Padma was a good man. In his short reign, in my opinion, he put forward the first tentative reforms that would lead to democracy in Nepal.

The holiday was over; we looked back to the hills with nostalgia. It was the best holiday I'd ever had.

There is a twist at the end of the tale. The Battalion was posted to the North West Frontier. When we got there I heard that Harkarman Rai had been left behind in hospital, dangerously ill. Henry Burrows, with the rear party takes up the story. He went to see Harkarman who was in a coma and could not speak. The doctors could find no cause. Subedar Major Agam who was with Burrows, said we must call in a Nepalese healer. A wizened old man arrived, strode briskly to the bedside, took one look and said "I want a live cockerel and some rice". He lit a fire on the grass outside the hospital and cooked a portion of the blood

of the cockerel, rice, and some herbs and, with an incantation, took it to the bedside and commanded Harkarman "Eat" "*Khao*". Very slowly Harkarman opened his lips. "Eat it all" said the old man. He explained that Harkarman must have unknowingly done something wrong or offended the gods in Kathmandu. "He will be all right now. That will be ten Rupees". Harkarman came back to life, and recovered completely, to leave the Army after Independence.

Royals and I swore we would return and do a long trek one day. We planned we would leave the Army and start a transport company when Nepal opened up more. Things did not work out that way. Derek Royals became a tea planter in Darjeeling. He finished there as the last remaining British manager. He was awarded the OBE for his good work in the area. My path led elsewhere. I got back to Kathmandu eventually on many business visits, but we never did make that long trek together.

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THE ESTHER BENJAMINS TRUST - AN UPDATE

By Philip Holmes

It is a reflection of the world attitude towards circuses that many people now object to their existence; not just because they are an anachronistic form of 'entertainment' but on the grounds of their inhumane treatment of animals. Countries all over the globe have made great strides in protecting the interests of the creatures likely to be exposed to a life in the circus, with many implementing legislation to prohibit the use of certain species of animal.

Indeed, India is one such country to have banned the use of certain animals in its circuses, bowing to international pressure from political and animal welfare activists. Unfortunately, this ban has not been extended to the use of children – many of whom are the innocent victims of the thriving child trafficking industry in the sub-continent.

Children – predominantly young girls from the age of five upwards – are taken from neighbouring Nepal, with many opportunist traffickers taking advantage of the country's abject poverty to exploit children and their families, and in the process subject young girls to lives of despair in India's big circuses. These children are mentally, physically and sometimes sexually abused by circus masters whose only goal is lining their own pockets.

The Esther Benjamins Trust has established itself at the forefront of the fight against this atrocious industry to help give Nepali girls their childhood back. Set up in 1999 by Lt Col (Retd) Philip Holmes in memory of his wife who took her own life in the same year through her despair at childlessness, the Trust has grown to become a recognised authority on child trafficking in Nepal. It is now a leading registered charity that works exclusively for disadvantaged and stigmatised Nepalese children and young people. The Esther Benjamins Trust – Nepal (EBT-N) is

the Nepal counterpart of the Trust, based in Kathmandu, where Director, Philip Holmes lives and works.

Since its inception, EBT-N has worked tirelessly with a partner organisation, the Nepal Child Welfare Foundation (NCWF), to offer freedom and refuge to some of the neediest children in Nepal. In addition to rescuing girls from circuses – a very dangerous activity – the Trust offers respite for children who would otherwise be forced to live with their convict parents in jail, as well as to street children.

Wherever possible, rescued children are reunited with their families, but where this is not practicable the Trust strives to provide them with a loving and safe environment in which they can enjoy their childhood. EBT-N prioritises education and the acquisition of vocational skills in the belief that they can help young people to break free from the clutches of poverty. The younger children are introduced into the education system, while the older girls are encouraged to develop the skills that will support them in adult life.

We place great emphasis in empowering people to be the agents of their own development, in the hope that they will then have the freedom to choose their own path in life.

One example of this is the Trust's thriving mosaic-making school. The students were originally offered classes in the creative subject as a form of catharsis. It enabled them to express themselves individually and have fun in the process. When Philip Holmes realised that some of the girls had a particular aptitude for mosaic making, he created a full-time workshop in his Kathmandu home for them to use.

Now, some of the students are producing bespoke mosaics commissioned by prominent individuals from Nepal and the UK, making their own income through something they love. They take full

responsibility for their work, with the Trust providing a supportive framework which allows them to flourish. The artists receive a salary, and as the business grows will help to decide its future direction. Any surplus generated by the commissioning of mosaics is directed to the Circus Children Project, which seeks to provide other vulnerable children with similar opportunities.

The Esther Benjamins Trust now has refuges in Godawari, Bhairahawa and Hetauda, and also supports a day centre for deaf and disabled children in Bhairahawa.

If you would like to help us to continue to make a difference to the lives of these marginalised young people, please visit our website or contact us at the addresses listed below to which donations may be sent.

The Esther Benjamins Trust
Third floor
2 Cloth Court
London EC1A 7LS
www.ebtrust.org.uk

(The work of the EBT was featured in More4 News following the rescue of 20 Nepalese girls (the youngest only 10 years old) from 'a notoriously abusive circus' in India. A full report appeared in the 'Daily Telegraph' in the summer. The rescue was a dangerous proposition in a lawless part of Uttar Pradesh as the circus had links with the local police and enjoyed some protection as a result. The rescuers had to run the gauntlet of thugs in their efforts to release the girls. In the first place their parents are either deceived by those seeking girls for this work or sometimes wish to off load unwanted children. The girls undergo painful and abusive training and treatment. These girls are now being cared for by the EBT in Nepal. Ed.)



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Membership enquiries are invited to:

The Secretary, RSAA, 2 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PJ
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Email: sec@rsaa.org.uk Website: www.rsaa.org.uk

GIVING NEPALESE CHILDREN A CHILDHOOD

The Esther Benjamins Trust is a registered children's charity working for some of the most marginalised children in Nepal. It was set up in 1999 by Lt Col Philip Holmes in memory of his wife who took her life in January of that year because of childlessness.

The Trust works through its twin partner organisation, the Nepal Child Welfare Foundation, which is unique in being run by former British Army Gurkha officers. Since its inception, the Trust has given freedom and a loving home to innocent children imprisoned in adult jails alongside parents (the two youngest are pictured), and street children escaping domestic abuse. We fund education for deaf children and we are rescuing and rehabilitating some of the hundreds of Nepalese girls who have been trafficked into India to work as circus performers. Held on long contracts in grim conditions, these girls are subject to frequent physical and sexual abuse. We bring them back to Nepal to their families and communities. We offer education to younger ones to prepare them for mainstream school, and training and employment to older ones at a range of farming and business initiatives that we are developing.

By supporting our work with a donation or legacy you will enable us to continue our vital work with disadvantaged and discriminated against children. Help us to turn their lives around, from lives of misery with no hope to lives full of the joys of a happy healthy childhood and a positive future. Thank you for your support.

The Esther Benjamins Trust, 3 - 9 Broomhill Road, London SW18 4JQ

Tel: 020 8877 2519 or 2520

Fax: 020 8877 2520

Email: ebtrust@hotmail.com

website: www.ebtrust.org.uk

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Images from 2005 BRINOS ear surgery camp - Nepal, March 2005

Richard Oliver - photographer - 020 8547 5005



Images © Richard Oliver 2005

The Britain-Nepal Otology Service

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THE TOM HUGHES FAMILY TRUST - AN UPDATE

Below is an extract from David Bannister's July 2007 newsletter:

The family had enjoyed their 2006 family Christmas together in Dharan and the younger boys had been overjoyed to receive small gifts from the UK. However it soon became apparent that several larger parcels had not been delivered and were held in the BFPO postal system in Kathmandu. Despite several attempts to effect delivery the family was informed that, unless the parcels were collected from the BFPO office in Kathmandu they would be returned to the UK. Ramesh, one of the elder brothers who live in the city, recovered them to his home and Meharman's wife, Anita, was despatched on the overnight bus to collect them. The idea was that she also took a couple of days break in Kathmandu before returning.

In the event, on the afternoon that Anita left Dharan there were political demonstrations and riots across the Terai and several buses on the main East-West Highway to Kathmandu were torched and four people killed. Anita's bus was stopped and the occupants forced to run for their lives before their bus too was set on fire. Anita lost all of her possessions in the panic including her handbag containing cash and personal items. She sought shelter in a local village for two days before being helped by the police to reach Hetauda, a small town on the Highway. She spent three more nights there because of further troubles before finally making it to Kathmandu on the sixth day, with no money and only the clothes that she stood up in. Luckily she was able to stay with Ramesh and his wife, Rena, although it was a further three weeks before the troubles quietened enough for her to attempt the return journey, laden with the Christmas presents and other mail. During Anita's stay, Ramesh was fortunate enough to be able to travel to the UK for a very short visit in late February. Rena, who works for Gulf Air, was able to purchase a very much discounted ticket allowing Ramesh the

opportunity of visiting many of Tom's family and friends in the Warrington area.

Martyn Powell (*a member of the Society. Ed*) managed a very much disrupted visit to the family, also in late February 2006, and this was very much appreciated by all. Due to the ongoing strikes he had to spend his final night in Biratnagar, but managed to get the last flight out to Kathmandu before the airport was forced to close.

Life in Dharan itself is generally quieter now that the Maoists are more involved in local politics but this has had mixed blessings for the family. In the family's favour, Meharman was able to complete the citizenship registration for several of the boys when the Maoists threatened violence to the registration officials if they did not speed up the process for the many thousands who were without documentation to prove their parentage and place of birth. (Several of Tom's boys fell into this category for obvious reasons). However, our biggest concern over the past few months has been the threat of compulsory occupation of Tom's house and land so that a new bus terminus can be built on the site. In this, several 'friends' sought to find favour with local government officials by pointing out that the family could easily be moved to a plot of land out of the *Bazaar* with minimal, if any, compensation being offered. This has caused considerable anxiety to Meharman and the others living at home, who have been accosted regularly by several neighbours who see the opportunity for opening small but very profitable businesses in their own properties. However, in line with Tom's wish to gift the property to another charity once the existing family members had no further use for the house, we have managed to complete the transfer of the title of the property from Ranjitsing Rai, who held it on Tom's behalf, to the Nepal Nazareth Society, a Catholic charity, who own and run several hospitals and (Navjyoti) schools throughout Nepal. Without the

untiring help of Ranjit we would never have been able to complete the transfer in the face of such strong opposition.

It is our hope that the transfer has now secured the future for the family in Naya Jiwan Ghar, as the Tom Hughes Family Trust in UK has entered into an agreement with the Nepal Nazareth Society to lease-back the house and the major part of the land for the next twenty years during which time we will build a smaller property on the site to house the disabled boys. The smaller house and the land, which will include the cemetery garden, will be leased back for 99 years. It is the Nepal Nazareth Society's wish to be able to build a small school on part of the site within the next few years and a larger school once the occupation of the main house is no longer required. We hope and pray that now the transfer is complete the agitation for the family will die down.

Life for the whole family continues with as much normality as the general situation allows. In his spare time Meharman has continued to help build their new church. The Zion Methodist Church had been housed in temporary accommodation since it was established some years ago but the purchase of land had enabled a new church to be built. The main church building and school room has been completed and a kitchen is now being added. It is incredible that in thirty years the situation has changed from persecution of Nepali Christians to one where many new churches are being built. There are forty in Dharan!

During the Easter period I was able to travel out to Dharan again and spent a very enjoyable ten days at the house. It was nice to see them all again in such good spirits. It was also nice to meet again with Ranjitsing Rai and it was during this time that I managed to get the lease-back agreements signed and instigated some building and maintenance work on the house, including the building of a shower room with solar-heated water, the refurbishment of the toilets and washroom and additional guttering to stop wind-blown rain entering the house during the monsoon. In Kathmandu I hoped

to resolve our postal problems but it soon became apparent that we are to some degree victims of others' misdeeds. With so many ex-Gurkha soldiers resident in the UK, the BFPO system was being swamped by people sending large items back to relatives in Nepal, by-passing Nepalese customs. A MOD audit had disclosed over 80% of the mail was unauthorised. As a consequence **all** non-entitled mail has been banned, including us. I have however been assured that **letters only** will be accepted in the short term, although this will be curtailed if further abuses of the BFPO system are uncovered.

After Note:

RANJIT SINGH RAI

David writes:

I have recently heard by telephone from Meharman that Ranjit had a fall from a ladder last week and was admitted to BPKIHS in Dharan with three fractured ribs and a head injury (severe concussion). He has since been transferred to a hospital in Siliguri for EEG scan and other neurological tests. He is conscious and receiving family visitors when possible, but is somewhat confused.

PS for Gerry. This is the same Ranjit as you remembered from your time in Dharan. (1962/63. Ed.) He finally retired as the BMH Administrator and was awarded both the MBE and OSTJ (Order of St John). Prior to this incident, Ranjit was in robust health, belying his 82 years. He has 'held' all of Tom's homes in his name since 1971 and has maintained a keen interest in the welfare of the family throughout the past thirty-six years. Since Tom's death he has been a pillar of strength for the family and has been untiring in his efforts to effect the transfer of the land and property according to Tom's wishes. I am sure that many of your ex-Dharan readers will remember him. He continues to take an active part in Dharan affairs and is a Trustee of the Don Boscoe orphanage in the *Bazaar* as well as an advisor to the Navjyoti School.

(November 2007: David wrote to say that Ranjit had fully recovered although it took him sometime to 'clear his head'. Ed.)

THE YETI NEPALI ASSOCIATION BORN IN LONDON

By Harish Karki

(Harish Karki wrote about the start of the Nepalese restaurant industry in UK in the last edition of the journal. In this article he writes of his part in the formation of the Yeti Association. Ed)

The Yet Association was established in 1960 and we are the founding Nepalese association in the United Kingdom. Since our establishment our aims have remained constant. They are to serve as a forum for a Nepalese social and cultural base, therefore providing and strengthening our community.

The Yeti Association was originally set up by those Nepalese students who were given scholarship opportunities backed by the British Council. At that time the association was in its infancy and, had it not been for the perseverance and forethought of those individuals, the Nepalese community, which encompasses all the cultural and social activities we have today, would not be in existence now.

When Mr. Manandhar and I first learnt of the Nepalese association and its lapsed period of activities we made various enquiries of the Royal Nepalese Embassy and the British Council (BC) based at 10 Spring Gardens in London SW1. We made it our duty to revamp the Nepalese Association and to drum up support and interest for the new influx of Nepali families and individuals arriving in the UK. After various meetings were held with the BC and the founding students, they informed the group that, whilst they were still interested in the Yeti Association, it would become difficult for them to remain as actively involved as before. A resolution was passed to form a board to run the association based on a

60:40 ratio student to non-student representatives. Within a few years, this was revised and an agreement was reached to reverse the ratio in favour of a majority of non-student representation, and the constitution was later amended to reflect this.

Mr Ishwar Manandhar and I have been associated with the Yeti Association for a considerable time. The meetings were often held at either the Natraj Restaurant in Charlotte Street or at my humble abode in Hanover Steps, St Georges Field W2.

The Himalayan Yeti Association (HYA) was founded shortly after the London Yeti Association, in Manchester, to provide an extended hand to those Nepalese located further north. After many discussions it was agreed that this would remain a branch of the Yeti Association albeit known as the Himalayan Yeti Association.

It was part of our dream and ambition to provide further branches throughout the UK in order to strengthen ties and encourage unity for the Nepalese living away from Nepal.

Part of the appeal of the Yeti Association was that we were able to identify the need to find specific services such as a Kosheli Cultural Group (which was established in 1986); they would help to entertain the growing Nepalese community and offer a platform for these families to showcase the talent of the new up coming second generation of Nepalese in the UK. This highly motivated group was set up by Mr. Madhan Thapa.

The pressures of trying to provide support and information to a growing Nepalese community took its toll. Both Ishwar Manandhar and I had to promote the work of the Yeti Association, attend

and brief the Nepalese Ambassador, as well as attending functions held at the embassy, trying to earn a living as restaurateurs whilst endeavouring to share what time was left with our own families.

This indeed was in those days a long and drawn out affair as all Yeti minute records were then stored at the embassy and everything had to be cascaded for the information of the Ambassador.

It is important to note that during the birth of the Yeti Association in London, the Britain Nepal Society (BNS) were also beginning to draw closer ties with Nepal through the shared common interests of its members. These individuals had a love and deep respect for Nepal, the Gurkhas and all the Nepali traditions. At every AGM held by the BNS, the chairman would invite the Yeti Association president to speak to the members and tell the meeting what the Association had been doing during the year.

Here I would like to mention some details of the Nepalese students who studied in the UK under the Colombo Plan. This plan monitored students studying, receiving training and going on to post graduate studies. The subjects studied included highway engineering, transport planning, co-operatives, education and teacher training, jute and timber technology, land survey, most medical related subjects and civil government. These students normally spent from 3 months to five years training and qualifying from British universities and institutes.

The support received from the BNS has ensured a very happy and firm relationship.

The dream of having a Yeti Nepali House was always a theme running throughout these years and it is still yet to

come into fruition. We urged the Nepalese community to support the cause as generously as possible and I still believe that this will happen in the not too distant future and within our life times.

Our beloved and dearly departed Crown Prince Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (later His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev) whilst studying at Eton, graciously accepted our invitation to become our patron. We felt that with this support, the Yeti Association could achieve the status and growth it deserved. If it had not been for this renewed interest and patronage the Yeti Association would probably have collapsed. It was though the sheer determination that both Ishwar Manadhar and I managed to lift the Yeti from the ashes.

After a number of years Ishwar Manandhar and I felt that it was time to handover to a new team to provide much-needed new blood and a new perspective. It was agreed that Dr. Dhital would continue to carry the torch to better and stronger days. The Yeti Association had been an onerous task, both busy and fulfilling. I had begun acting as secretary / board member to eventually bearing the weight and responsibility of President. I knew that for the longer term it was time for a change and was grateful that Dr Rhagav Dhital was able to takeover the Association.

This is our oldest historical and cultural association which we are hoping will become the pillar / cornerstone of our lives in the UK. We must preserve our Nepalese identity and remain proud of our heritage through open and challenging discussions and constant education.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S IN-TRAY

Honours and Awards

Dr Rhagav Dhital has been awarded an honorary OBE for his services to Anglo – Nepali relations. He was presented with his award by Dr Kim Howells MP, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at the FCO on 19th June 2007.

Colonel David Hayes, Colonel Brigade of Gurkhas, was made a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in recognition of his work in establishing the new terms and conditions of service for the Brigade of Gurkhas. This has been a long term project and the award recognises the work that he and his team have carried out over the last few years. Colonel Hayes, a member of the Society, addressed members at the October meeting.

The King Mahendra UK Trust for Nature Conservation

The King Mahendra UK Trust for Nature Conservation (KMUKTNC) has changed its title to 'The UK Trust for Nature Conservation in Nepal' (UKTNCN). This is in line with changes made by the Nepalese government to the parent trust, the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC). The new title in Nepal is the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). The change in title to the UK trust has been registered with the Charity Commission. The new point of contact for the trust, which will be administered from the Zoological Society of London, (ZSL), is Miss Jane Loveless, a former member of the Society's committee.

Regional Reports

The Chinese opened a rail link to Lhasa last year and there are apparently plans to extend this link towards the Nathu La pass into Sikkim. A report in *Himal Southasian* indicates that this may have prodded the

Indian Government into looking to extend the Indian rail system to Nepal. They report that links to Nepalganj, Bhairawa, Bardibas, Biratnagar and Kakarvitta are under consideration. This may hail the increase from the narrow gauge or *choti* line to broad gauge. Some members will remember the hassle associated with changing from broad to narrow gauge at Katihar Junction on the trip from Calcutta to Jogbani, en route to Dharan.

Village Twinning

The villages of Wimbish and Debden in Essex have set up a twinning arrangement with the largely Gurung village of Tang Ting. Tang Ting is situated further up the valley from Siklis (another famous Gurung village from where many men have served in the Brigade of Gurkhas and the home of the late Dr Chandra Gurung). This has been brought about through the Gurkha soldiers serving with 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) which is located in Carver Barracks, Wimbish, near Saffron Walden. Children of the soldiers attend the local school so there are good links with the local community. The Nepalese Charge d'Affaires, Mr Dipendra Pratap Bista attended the formal twinning ceremony.

The Gurkha Museum

The Summer Exhibition this year is entitled: "60th Anniversary of the start of the Malayan Campaign" and is being held between 9th August and 7th September 2008.

Wildlife and Conservation Action

Koshi Tappu. I visited the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust (WWT) site at Welney in the Fens on, as it happened, World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2007. In talking to one of the young (and attractive!) volunteer wardens, I learnt that

WWT had an ongoing project at the Koshi Tappu Reserve. (*See Journal 29 pages 19-21 for a description of Koshi Tappu situated above the River Koshi dam. Ed.*) This is a new project which seeks to work with local communities to help them manage the wetlands outside the reserve to obtain a sustainable livelihood so that they are not forced to exploit fish and other wildlife resources inside the reserve.

The ongoing vulture crisis in the Indian subcontinent. In the last edition of the journal the decline of the vulture was clearly set out. Progress continues but only slowly. So far it has not been possible to establish a captive breeding centre in Nepal, although plans exist. The breeding of vultures in the centre in India is proving difficult, but since this is the first time that such a project with vultures has been attempted the team are learning by experience. Although the drug diclofenac has been banned and a replacement identified, there is still a great deal of the

drug still in the system and it will take time to effect a complete change. [Diclofenac is used by farmers to treat cattle as a pain-killing drug. It is the presence of diclofenac in the carcasses eaten by vultures that has caused the catastrophic decline in population.] The replacement drug, meloxicam, has to be manufactured in quantity and distributed across the whole area. This will take time. Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN,) with Dr Hem Sagar Baral, has been trying to help on a small scale in Nepal with a 'safe cow' project. This entails purchasing old stock from farmers which is no longer productive, and that has not been dosed with diclofenac; keeping it until death and then using the untainted (ie no diclofenac) carcass to feed the vultures. This is all being funded by BCN. Since it has been found that vultures travel further afield than was originally thought, it is not certain how effective this is likely to be. However it may help to slow the effects in a small area.

HIMAL SOUTHASIAN

Himal Southasian is a monthly news and current affairs magazine which is published in Kathmandu. Originally it dealt only with Nepal but due to its increasing success it now covers the SAARC / South Asian region. The editors consider this to be a 'review magazine' that contains longer and more analytical articles, two of which are reproduced in this edition of the Britain – Nepal Society Journal by kind permission of the editor.

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 OBITUARIES

Major MJ Fuller

Major Martin Fuller died on 19th October 2006. He was born in Portsmouth in 1926 and enlisted in the Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) as an Indian Army Cadet in November 1943. After officer training in Mhow, he was commissioned into the 4th Prince of Wales Own Gurkha Rifles in July 1945, serving at their Regimental Centre until posted back to UK. Following the reduction of the post war Army and the transfer of 4GR to the new post-independence Indian Army, he found himself with a regular commission in the RASC. In 1950 he was able to return to the Brigade of Gurkhas and transferred to the 2nd Goorkha Rifles, joining 2/2 GR at Ipoh. He held a number of regimental appointments in Malaya before employment as a Ground Liaison Officer (GLO) with the RAF during the Radfan campaign. After a tour of duty as the Chief Instructor of the Gurkha Training Depot and a period in the British Embassy, Kathmandu as Assistant Military Attaché, he returned to UK and worked with the Brigade of Gurkhas Liaison Officer in MOD. On retirement he returned to the Middle East and served as a GLO with the Sultan of Oman's Air Force but was wounded and spent six months in Headley Court on rehabilitation. He next became a Queen's Messenger from 1972 to 1978. Still not able to settle, he served for a further three years as a contract officer with the Royal Brunei Armed Forces, eventually retiring after some thirty-eight years service. In retirement he lived in Forestside in Sussex. He was for many years secretary of the 4th Gurkha Rifles Association. He had a good memory of the Brigade of Gurkhas and was often consulted by John Masters (late 4GR) and John Cross on points of detail for their books. He was a member of the Society

and also advised the journal editor when asked. Sadly he died before the last of the 4th Gurkha Rifles Association reunions, held at Stoke Poges Golf Club in June 2007 with which he had been so involved in the detailed planning.

GDB

(I am grateful for permission from Major JJ Burlison, editor of the 'Sirmooree', the journal of the Sirmoor Club, the 2nd Goorkha Rifles Association, to reproduce an edited version of this obituary that first appeared in the Winter 2006/7 edition. Ed.)

Lady Hunt

Lady Hunt, wife of the late Lord Hunt died on Sunday 19th March 2006 aged 93. Joy met John Hunt in 1936 when he was home on leave from his regiment, then in India, The King's Royal Rifle Corps (later to become The Royal Green Jackets). In those days officers were often posted to India for several years and a comparatively short leave of 3-4 months to UK was usually the only opportunity to find a wife. Time was of the essence. (This system continued for officers of the Brigade of Gurkhas into the 1960s.) They met in the summer and were married in September. Joy was 23 and John 26. Even at this stage in his life John already had considerable climbing experience in the Alps and the Himalayas. On the other hand Joy had no such experience neither had she been further a field than her Aunt's cottage in Devon, although she was no mean athlete having competed in tennis at county and Wimbledon standard. Her honeymoon was spent rock climbing in the Lake District and five weeks after being married she was on her way to India on an ocean liner. Her first home was in Rangoon where she discovered her life-long interest in gardening. She was excited to see the

tropical trees and plants that grew there. John did not pursue the usual military pursuits such as polo but with Joy would go bird watching and butterfly collecting. In 1937 John got leave to go on another expedition, this time to explore the eastern side of Kanchenjunga. Joy went with the team and from the base camp at the foot of the Zemu glacier she and John climbed to 21,300 feet on Sugar Loaf. It was here with startling suddenness that the entire slope that they had just climbed broke away in wind-slab avalanche and thundered down to the glacier below with terrifying speed. Joy recorded in her diary, "I was too astonished to be terrified". John later recalled that this was one of his most providential escapes in fifty years of climbing. At this stage the wind and cold were unbearable and they turned back less than 300 feet from the top. That night John wrote in his diary, "Joy has done amazingly well". It was clear that as a natural athlete Joy had taken to climbing like a duck to water. Her balance, coordination and fitness developed through tennis made her a more talented rock climber than John who relied on his huge hands, brute strength and determination rather than delicate footwork. She went on to become an exceptional climber and mountaineer in her own right. John Hunt retired from the Army after 28 years service and then began his work with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Whilst this enabled Joy to have a more settled life, their four daughters notwithstanding, she was able to travel with her husband as his work took him to many places around the world. Mountains and adventurous travel amongst friends and family became her passion. Her travels took her to places from the Himalayas to the Sinai desert to the jungles of Borneo. She climbed and skied in the Alps and took part in expeditions to Greenland, the Polish Tatra and the Pindus mountains in Greece. There were of course the Everest

anniversary visits to Nepal and treks between Darjeeling and Solu Khumbu. She had legendary energy, enthusiasm and stamina. A prime example was on the 40th anniversary trek in 1993. Lord Hunt, then aged 83, was happy to fly to Lukla with his daughter Prue but Joy insisted on walking in with the main group from Jiri to Lukla. She was determined not to hold the group up and was always first to arrive at the campsites and led the way into Lukla. Whilst visiting Australia, at the age of 87, she had to be restrained from attempting to climb Ayers Rock. Throughout her long and active life she gave unfailing support to her husband and family and at the same time obtained so much fulfilment in all her travels and activities.

(I am grateful to Mrs Sally Nesbitt, Lady Hunt's daughter, and Mr George Band for providing the information for this piece. Ed.)

Mr ARH Kellas CMG

Mr Arthur Kellas died in Edinburgh on 6th March 2007 aged 91. He was educated in Scotland at Aberdeen Grammar School and Aberdeen and Oxford Universities. He also attended the Ecole des Sciences Politique in Paris. He joined the diplomatic service in 1939 just prior to the start of World War II, but then volunteered for the armed services and was commissioned into The Border Regiment. He served in the Parachute Regiment and took part in special operations in North Africa and Greece. He was twice mentioned in despatches. He returned to the diplomatic service and served in Teheran 1944 to 1947. His subsequent career was very much concerned with the Middle East, serving in Cairo (1954 – 52), Baghdad (1954 – 58) and counsellor in Teheran (1958 – 62). He attended the Imperial Defence College course in 1962/64 which was followed by a tour as Consul General in Tel Aviv. He was

appointed ambassador to Nepal in 1966 until 1970. This was followed by a return to the Middle East as ambassador to the Yemen (1972 – 74) and his final appointment was as High Commissioner to Tanzania. In his retirement he took up the post as President of the Society for Lord Hunt, a position he held until 1979 when he moved to Scotland, living for much of the time on the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula. Sir Patrick Moberly, at the memorial service for Arthur, highlighted Arthur's passion for travel to reach remote places where he met shepherds, soldiers, tribesmen, village elders, as well as provincial governors and local mayors. He learnt to speak Persian fluently from his first posting to Persia in 1944 as Iran was then known. He climbed in the mountains there which rather mystified the local population. This early experience fitted him for the post of Oriental Counsellor in Tehran later in his career. It was in Tehran that he met his future wife, Bridget, the then ambassador's daughter, whom he married in 1952. At this time amateur dramatics were popular amongst the Iranian middle class and Bridget with other British residents were asked to perform at the Shah's Palace. After a posting to Finland, Arthur returned to the Middle East, this time to Egypt, as the Embassy's press attaché. As Sir Patrick commented, Arthur had the 'distinction' of being declared *persona non grata* by the Egyptian government. Colonel Nasser had given a newspaper interview amounting to a tirade against British imperialism. Local correspondents clamoured all day for comment from the Embassy, Arthur as the press attaché initially declined to comment. However in the end in exasperation he quoted an Arab saying; "The dogs may bark but the caravan moves on." This was taken as an insult and led him to a summary return to London. This did not harm his career as a few months later he was appointed Head of

Chancery in Baghdad. He and Bridget lived in an old Turkish house on the banks of the River Tigris with orange and pomegranate trees and date palms in the garden. Their neighbours were the archaeologist Max Mallowan and his wife Agatha Christie, with whom they became great friends. Arthur would often canoe down the river to the embassy and on one occasion he and Bridget floated down to the military attaché's garden on inflated inner tubes. Arthur took the opportunity to travel to the Kurdish areas and to the wetlands in the south inhabited by the Marsh Arabs. Mrs Helen Hickey, wife of the military attaché, Lt Col Hickey, remembers their time in Kathmandu when Arthur was ambassador there. She writes: "In the sixties in Kathmandu, except for the visits of theatrical companies arranged by the British Council, there was little European entertainment so people made their own. There was amazing talent amongst the small diplomatic and local British community. The Kellas' house was the scene of wonderful parties and entertainment, evenings of poetic recitations, music, singers and magicians. There were many gatherings of the Nepalese Royal family and military and civilian dignitaries. With few embassies in Kathmandu at that time it was possible for the British to maintain their special friendship with the Nepalese and this included the great honour of having Their Majesties the King and Queen to dinner. Nepal was definitely the right country for the Kellas family as they were all keen walkers and went for wonderful treks in the mountains." There was already a family connection with the Himalayas. His uncle, Dr Alexander Kellas, has been described as one of the finest exploratory Himalayan mountaineers. He was the first person to apply state of the art physiology to field investigations at altitudes over 6000m. He also was the first to discover the advantages of using Sherpas on high

altitude climbs in the Himalayas. (*See Journal No 27, 2003, p. 17-19. Ed.*) Arthur himself wrote that travel was in his blood – this is not difficult to see. Robert Arbuthnott, who was Director of the British Council in Kathmandu, worked closely with Arthur on cultural and educational matters. Both men were involved with the start of the so-called ‘Eton of Nepal’ whose first headmaster was John Tyson of Rugby School, a geographer and keen Himalayan climber. It was Tyson’s dream but there were many difficulties in setting up the project which was adopted by the Ministry of Overseas Development and their educational department. The building site for the school had to be moved from Sundarijal to Budhanilkantha. A new architect had to be found after the first one fell ill and a new headmaster, John Wakeman, to succeed Tyson after his six years of service. Robert and Arthur worked hard together to see the project launched. They were backed by the enthusiastic support of Crown Prince Birendra. It was a great joint venture and the school stands today as a beacon for education in Nepal. Arbuthnott goes on to recount the events surrounding the first theatre tour from Britain to Nepal. “When we received Nepal’s first ever theatre tour from Britain, Arthur offered his full support. He had the embassy staff hunting for ‘thunderboxes’ for the non-existent dressing rooms in the theatre, and persuaded the King to attend the first night and gave a party for the Prime Minister and members of the Royal Family. For the Nepalese he was exactly what they expected an ambassador to be: tall, energetic with a distinguished war record, with his monocle screwed into his good eye he looked the part. The Nepalese Royal family and leading members of the Government, the Army and the professions, had the greatest respect for his judgement and a liking for his personality.”

Arthur was an obvious choice to take



over from Lord Hunt as the Society’s President in 1975. He was an enthusiastic President helping to foster the Society’s aims. He was however drawn back to Scotland in retirement, spending most of his time at his ‘croft’ on the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula. Helen Hickey visited the Kellas family there and writes: “The view out to sea included the islands of Rum, Eigg and Muck. When we asked for instructions on how to reach them, with a twinkle in his eye, Arthur replied: “Ask anyone you see, they’ll tell you.” As we drove across the miles of deserted moorland, all we could see were grazing sheep. When we arrived at our destination at the end of the road, there were sheep grazing on the roof of the house.” Arthur Kellas had an exciting and distinguished life and career. An accomplished soldier, diplomat and linguist he gave so much in the service of his country. He has been variously described as a wise, brave and gentle colleague and friend and will be long remembered as charismatic soldier and diplomat.

GDB

(I am grateful to Sir Patrick Moberly, Mrs Helen Hickey and Mr Robert Arbuthnott for providing the information for this piece. Ed.)

Mrs Ann Mitchell

Ann Mitchell joined the Committee in 1987 at the same time as Myrtle Ross. They served together for over five years

and came to epitomise a marvellous group of retired ladies of London who through their enthusiasm for the Society and their affection for Nepal and its people have kept alive and flourishing the aim of the founders.

Short in stature she was however an 'unmissable' figure at lectures and events, always cheerful, meeting, greeting and handing around the crisps and nuts. For many more years, until a fall slowed her down, she was one of the volunteers to prepare the hall and tables for the annual Nepali supper, to which she would always bring a large party of relatives and friends. Indeed it was a nephew, a well-known architect involved in the rehabilitation of Durbar Square in Kathmandu, who first aroused her interest in Nepal.

Despite the loss of her second husband, and later her walking accident, she remained positive and enjoyed the simple pleasures of life. Myrtle Ross remembers with nostalgia the day she invited Ann to lunch to have a good chat and share a glass of wine. Ann finished the bottle and fell fast asleep.

We who knew her miss her companionship

Lord Weatherill

Lord Weatherill died on Sunday 6th May 2007 at the age of 86. Much has been written in other places about his political career and his contribution to Parliament where he was Speaker from 1983 to 1992. He originated from a well known tailoring family. He remembered his routes and to this effect always carried a tailor's thimble. When asked why, he said: "to keep me humble". He used to relate the story that on his first election to the House of Commons he overheard a Tory grandee say: "My God, what is this place coming to? They've got my tailor in here." Lord Weatherill became a member of the Society probably as a result of his

war service in the Indian Army in Burma and Malaya where he first came into contact with the Gurkhas. Initially he enlisted on the day war broke out in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but was sent home to 'grow up'. Later he was commissioned into the 4/7th Dragoon Guards, transferring to the 19th King George's Own Lancers of the Indian Army. It was here that he came to have such respect for the Gurkhas. In his later years he was made a visit to Nepal whilst Speaker. He was a longstanding friend of Brigadier Wieler, father of Anthony Wieler, and as such was a great helper in the early days of the launch of the Gurkha Welfare Appeal. I briefly met Lord Weatherill at one or two Society functions and I do remember that he would sometimes manage to come to the Society's annual curry supper and that in 1998 he was our guest of honour and gave us a very entertaining after dinner speech. We were honoured that he maintained his interest in the Gurkhas and Nepal throughout his long and very distinguished life.

GDB

JME

Lieutenant Colonel CG Wylie OBE

Charles Wylie died on 18th July 2007 aged 86. His family have had a long connection with Nepal and the Gurkhas. His grandfather, Maj Gen H Wylie, CSI, was the Resident in Kathmandu 1891 to 1899. His father was an officer in the 4th Gurkha Rifles (4 GR) and Charles was born at Bakloh, the 4 GR regimental centre where his father was then the Chief Recruiting Officer, on Christmas Eve 1919. His early childhood was spent in India in sight of the High Himalayas and it was in Bakloh that he first learnt to speak Gurkhali (soldiers' Nepali). As was the custom in those days, Charles was sent to school in England at the age of six. He was looked after by his uncle's family who took him climbing in UK and to the Alps. This

experience together with the influence of his housemaster at Marlborough School, Mr Edwin Kempson, who had been a member of the 1935 and 1936 expeditions to Everest, gave him the impetus to become a very keen and skilled climber. Apart from his interest in mountaineering he was a very accomplished all-round athlete. In the year that he passed out from Sandhurst, 1939, he was the British Pentathlon Champion. However the intervention of World War II effectively ended his athletic potential. Initially he was attached to the East Yorkshire Regiment (all Indian Army officers had to serve briefly in a British unit before joining their Indian regiment) and then joined the 1st Gurkha Rifles (1 GR) on the North West Frontier. Just prior to the start of the war, he managed to climb Dhaula Dhar, a peak in the Himalayas of northern Punjab. After operations on the Frontier, his battalion, along with other units, was sent to Malaya to counter the Japanese invasion. The British and Indian units were overwhelmed in this campaign and they were forced to withdraw towards Singapore. In the ensuing withdrawal through the jungle, units were split up and supplies became non-existent. Charles with a small party of Gurkhas was eventually captured whilst lying up in a planter's bungalow on a rubber estate near the Slim River. Charles described this incident in the draft of his memoirs, *Peaks and Troughs*, (in litt), and in a recording he made in 2005 at the Gurkha Museum. With virtually no ammunition Charles decided that nothing would be gained in this situation by further fighting. One of the Japanese soldiers who had surrounded the bungalow entered. "He was astonished to see all of us there with our hands up. Anyhow he thought he had better kill somebody and came straight for me (I was the little one). But he was a bit hesitant. I detected it. He was just about to shove a bayonet into my stomach and I very

quietly put my hands down and pushed his long bayonet to one side and then I handed my pistol to him. And that was it. They were funnily little chaps." Charles was sent to the infamous 'death railway' in Thailand. He was always reluctant speak of his experiences there. "Hope kept us going" was all he said. After the war he returned to his regiment, then in Peshawar. He was able to take an opportunity to climb in the Garhwal Himalayas on Nilkanta (21,640 feet) in 1947. He also visited the Alps with his friend and mountaineering colleague, Jimmy Roberts, of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles. They undertook several serious climbs including the Piz Palu and the traverse of the Matterhorn over the Zmutt and Italian Ridges. Charles was subsequently elected to membership of the Alpine Club the following December. On Indian independence 1 GR became part of the Indian Army; Charles transferred to the 10th Gurkha Rifles which became part of the British Army. He was soon back in Malaya and was involved with anti-terrorist operations during the Malayan Emergency. Charles was a known mountaineer of recent experience in both the Alps and the Himalayas. In addition he spoke Nepali and had practical knowledge of Nepal and the Nepalese. Post-war expeditions to Everest had to attempt the climb from the Nepalese side as the pre-war Chinese route was 'off limits' to westerners. Charles was therefore an obvious candidate to play a major part in any British attempt on the mountain. He was appointed organizing secretary for the 1953 Everest expedition by the Himalayan Committee, a full time task that required his release from military duties for the duration. Charles was responsible for coordinating all aspects of the preparations. The question of leadership of the expedition has been written about in various accounts of the expedition but the choice fell on Colonel John Hunt. John Hunt made the point, "We

have to be grateful to him that the expedition's equipment was so meticulously prepared and documented, that every minor detail was thought of and provided for." A fellow member of the eventual team, George Band, wrote: "I had never met Charles before being involved with Everest, and knew nothing about his earlier climbing so I looked up his application for the Alpine Club in 1947, proposed by no less than Geoffrey Winthrop Young, and was astonished to read he had already made four visits to the Alps as a teenager, climbing over 25 respectable peaks." Band continues: "As transport officer, and a fluent Urdu and Nepali speaker, Charles calmly undertook the mind-boggling task of marshalling the hundreds of porters and forty Sherpas without whom Hillary and Tenzing would not have reached the summit of Mount Everest. He was almost literally responsible for keeping the show on the road, both to and up the mountain, soothing porters' grievances and keeping their spirits up. In this he worked closely with Tenzing whom he had helped persuade to join the expedition as *sirdar*."

They had climbed together in India in 1948 so he was well aware of Tenzing's abilities. Initially Tenzing was reluctant as he had spent the 1951/52 seasons with the Swiss attempts on the mountain. However Tenzing accepted, helping to provide the strong team on which the expedition was formed. Both men had the ability not only as organizers but also as potential summit climbers. On arrival in India Charles became the expedition's transport officer. Band continues: "Indeed, the partnership between Tenzing and Wylie as they handled the Everest *bandobast* was probably as central to the expedition's success as the pairing of Tenzing and Hillary for the summit bid. Imperturbable, modest and unfailingly polite, Charles really did fit the image of the quintessential English gentleman. Yet with

his family's three generations of association with Nepal and its Gurkhas, his very gentleness might be said to have more of a Nepali quality than English." As team member Wilfrid Noyce, observed: "It would have been difficult to find two more gentlemanly military men to rule over us than Charles and John." It took three weeks in those days to walk from Kathmandu to Namche Bazaar in the Everest area. The Army had provided five Gurkha NCOs to help, but Charles, apart from overseeing the movement of the expedition through the Nepalese countryside, had much to do with translating as necessary and generally keeping the show on the road.

Communications to Kathmandu were via a radio link to Namche and then by runner to Base Camp. Whilst there, Charles received the news of the birth of a son. The message (now part of the Everest story) read: "I am transported with great exultation to announce the birth of your son. I hope that you have cause for similar rejoicing at least once a year. Please pay the bearer one rupee." Charles' major contribution to the actual climb was the epic 'carry' to the South Col. All successful bids to climb a major Himalayan peak require a period of reasonable weather, never guaranteed, and to have the necessary high camps ready-stocked to permit the summit team to climb straight through with minimum loads. Band describes this operation: "In the final assault, Noyce and Wylie were allocated the South Col 'carry', the vital job of getting two teams of Sherpas - 14 in all - with their loads to the Col at 26,000ft - a height equivalent to that of Annapurna, then the highest summit yet climbed. Some 500lbs of equipment and stores were needed on the Col prior to any determined summit bids. But for 12 days the expedition was close to being beaten by fresh snow, cold and wind on the Lhotse Face - the 4,000ft barrier that had to be

climbed to reach the Col from the Western Cwm. Noyce, with a single Sherpa Annullu, made the first breakthrough to the Col on 21st May when the other Sherpas needed a day's rest. Then came Wylie's major contribution. It was an inspiring moment for those of us at Advanced Base in the Cwm when we saw 17 figures strung out on the Traverse between Camp VII at 24,000ft and the Col. Hunt had rushed up Hillary and Tenzing to give fresh impetus, and in their footsteps on the face came Wylie now escorting all 14 Sherpas, each with a 30lb load. One Sherpa failed to make it, but Wylie took over his load, completing the ascent to the Col despite running out of oxygen. As they dumped their loads at the Col, the expedition's progress was back on course. It was the Sherpas' finest hour."

Charles returned to military duties back with 10 GR in Malaya. He did however continue climbing with Jimmy Roberts and he was a member of the team that tackled the famous Machapuchare or 'Fish Tail Peak' that is the backdrop to the town of Pokhara. The story of this epic climb in which the summit pair was stopped by columns of blue ice just 150 feet short of the top by is given in Wilfred Noyce's classic mountaineering book, *Climbing the Fish's Tail*. Charles, with Lord Chorley, described this in a lecture to the Society in 2000. (See *journal No 24. Ed.*) Once again Charles returned to operations in Malaya with 2/10 GR. Gen Sir Gary Johnson writes: "Charles was OC B Company and carried out a successful counter-terrorist action in the State of Johore. Information was received that a group of terrorists were planning to emerge from the jungle to pick up rations from a chicken coop on the edge of a village. A small group of Gurkha soldiers were smuggled into the coop by night. After two days, during which the soldiers remained concealed and quiet, the bandits came and were duly accounted for. It was a classic little operation which took

place just three days before 31st August 1957 when Malaya achieved independence. The success was due to a mixture of careful planning, focussed activity and leadership by example of the company commander. Charles had only just returned from UK leave via Nepal. His reputation as a soldier and a mountaineer had preceded him. Now within two months of his return he had pulled off this remarkable coup. As a raw young subaltern in the battalion I had expected a whirlwind, but this man of action turned out to be the most courteous and modest person one could hope to meet. I soon realized that these two aspects of his character existed together in complete harmony, and were his constant hallmarks."

The years 1961 to 1964 saw Charles back in Kathmandu as the Military Attaché. This was a very appropriate posting for him and it was here that I first had the privilege of meeting him when, as a young subaltern, I was the Signals Officer in Dharan. He had taken over from Jimmy Roberts who had retired and stayed in Nepal to help visiting mountaineering expeditions, eventually becoming the 'father' of the developing tourist trekking trade. The problems of maintaining HF radio communications with aging equipment gave me many trips to Kathmandu. Charles was always kind,



helpful and understanding and I learnt much about Nepal through these visits. We worked together on a number of projects including provision of radio equipment for the Royal Nepalese Army. He was also interested in the progress of the 'Chinese' road that was then under construction along which I had walked on a trek to Kathmandu. It was a lovely time to be in Kathmandu and stimulated my further interest that one day I might follow in his footsteps there. The atmosphere then was still very much as described by Han Su Yin in *The Mountain is Young*. Charles' last posting was as the Brigade's liaison officer in the MOD. He was the voice of the Brigade in UK. Post 'Confrontation' in Borneo the Brigade of Gurkhas suffered a severe cut in numbers resulting in a significant number of soldiers being made redundant. Following this decision, the Gurkha Welfare Trust was set up. Charles was heavily involved with this in the early days of publicising and obtaining the support needed prior to the launch of the appeal. The work of the Trust continues to this day. In retirement Charles became involved with charity work. For some time he worked for the Canine Defence League.

Later he was a founder member of the Britain – Nepal Medical Trust, becoming its executive secretary from 1986 to 1994. In 1995 Charles was awarded the OBE for

his charity work. He was the ideal choice as an early Chairman for the Society in the late 1960s/early 1970s, working with Lord Hunt, our first President. After five years as Chairman he became a Vice President. He was a strong supporter of the Society and a source of knowledge and advice to subsequent chairmen and members throughout his life. He maintained close links with Nepal through his many contacts both in the climbing and military worlds. He was concerned at recent events and it was only in April 2007 that I visited him for the last time to update him. The words of General Johnson at Charles' memorial service reflect all that has been said of him and how he conducted his life: "Charles was both a gentle man and a gentleman, in all senses of that term. Always optimistic, always positive, always engaged, he was a handsome man and an attractive personality, and these traits seemed to grow even more pronounced with the years. He grew old gracefully and remained alert to the last."

GDB

(Full obituaries appeared in both 'The Daily Telegraph' and 'The Independent' on the 27th July 2007. I am grateful to Mr George Band and General Sir Gary Johnson for assistance with this piece. Ed.)

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**Note: The Trust is moving to Salisbury
in March 2008**

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)
Greensand Cottage
Puttenham Road
Seale
Farnham GU10 1HP
Tel: (01252) 783265

Yeti Association
(Nepali Association in UK)
66 Abbey Avenue
Wembley
Middlesex HA0 1LL
Email:
yetinepaliassociation@hotmail.com

The Esther Benjamin's Trust
Third Floor
2 Cloth Court
London EC1A 7LS
Website: www.ebtrust.org.uk

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
PO Box BNCC
c/o 12a Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4QU
Tel/Fax: (01483) 304150/428668
www.nepal-trade.org.uk

Student Partnership Worldwide
17 Deans Yard
London SW1P 3PB

The Royal Society for Asian Affairs
2 Belgrave Square
London SW1X 8PJ
Tel: (020) 7235 5122
www.rsaa.org.uk

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

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 Medical Society of London, Chandos Street, off Cavendish Square, where members are encouraged to meet each other over a drink beforehand.

The Society holds an Annual Nepali Supper, usually in February and other events which are some times 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 Nepalese Embassy. The Society also holds receptions and hospitality for visiting senior Nepalese.

Events normally take place in London unless otherwise advised.

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

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron: Her Royal Highness Princess Jotshana Rajya Laxmi Devi Basnyat

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

Vice-Presidents

Brigadier AB Taggart MC
Lieutenant Colonel HCS Gregory OBE, KSG
Mrs Celia Brown#
Colonel JM Evans MC
Sir Neil Thorne OBE, TD, DL
Mr Peter A Leggatt MBE
Mrs Pat Mellor**

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Chairman: Lieutenant Colonel Gerry D Birch*

Vice-Chairman: Mr John L Ackroyd

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Honorary Treasurer: Dr Peter A Trott

Mrs Liza Clifton
Miss Louisa Hutchinson
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Mr Simon L Lord ED, HQ Brigade of Gurkhas (*ex officio*)

Editor of the Journal: Lieutenant Colonel GD Birch*

Membership Secretary: Mrs Pat Mellor**

Archivist: Mrs Celia Brown #