

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 35

2011

A LEGACY OF LOYALTY



The day will come when an entire generation will exist who will be unaware of the debt of honour owed to the Gurkha soldier; a generation which cannot remember, as we do, the brave and loyal service Gurkhas have given to the British Crown over nearly two centuries.

That is why we are asking those who do remember, to consider making a provision now for the time when funding and support for Gurkha welfare will be much harder to come by. You can do this by a legacy or bequest to the Gurkha Welfare Trust in your Will.

This will help to ensure the long-term future of our work.

In just the last four years the monthly 'welfare pension' we pay to some 10,400 Gurkha ex-servicemen and widows has risen from 2,500 NCR to 3,800 NCR to try and keep pace with inflation in Nepal. Welfare pensions alone cost the Trust £4.4 million last year. Who knows what the welfare pension will need to be in 10 or 20 years time.

If you do write or amend your Will to make a provision for the Trust then do please let us know. We hope it will be many years before we see the benefit of your legacy, but knowing that a number of our supporters have remembered the Trust in their Wills helps so much in our forward planning. Thank you.



PLEASE WRITE TO: The Gurkha Welfare Trust, PO Box 2170,
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or e-mail staffassistant@gwt.org.uk Registered charity No. 1103669

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Possibly the best tiger camera trap photo? © ZSL & NTNC.



The Darjeeling 'Toy Train' – full steam ahead. © DHRS.

Following the success of the 50th anniversary edition, I intend to maintain colour editions for the future, thanks to the help from our printers and to encourage and enhance the photographs that the contributors are able to produce. This edition will however be a slimmer one to take account both of cost and time of production as I am only too aware that recent editions have slipped in time. As always I am grateful to the contributors who have once again served up a good mixture of topics. Following the Society's News I have included an extract from the Gurkha Welfare Trust's newsletter *Samachara* which gives a diagrammatic view of the earthquake which hit east Nepal. Many of those who have trekked in the Pokhara area will have seen and possibly visited Lumle Agricultural Centre. Mark Temple, who worked there for a while, explains its origins as a Gurkha resettlement centre. Richard Morris, now secretary of 6th Gurkha Rifles Regimental Association, humorously describes a bus ride he took which echoes the experience of many who have found themselves in that situation. An American member of the Society, who was in the US Embassy in Kathmandu 1963 at the time of the American Everest Expedition (AMEE 63), was contacted by Brot Coburn who is researching the AMEE 63 for a forthcoming book. The late Lt Col Jimmy Roberts was responsible for transport for AMEE 63. As a result, the piece written by Jimmy Roberts came to light which describes how he started the trekking 'industry' in Nepal. This follows well from the last journal which described the formation of Tiger Tops by the late AV Jim Edwards. These two ventures came together to form the Tiger Mountain Group which continue to this day as leading

companies in tourism in Nepal. The Darjeeling Railway is well known to members. Paul Whittle, an expert on this has provided an interesting overview of the railway. This is to be the subject of a lecture in the autumn of 2012. Once again I am grateful to John Cross and the editor of *The Kukri* for permission include a piece originally written for that journal. Dr Mark Watson has continued his researches into early botanists in Nepal and has found the grave of Edward Gardner in Brookwood Cemetery, the first British Resident appointed to Kathmandu. Gardner was interested in plants and Watson described his work in the 2008 journal (edition no: 32). As the photographs demonstrate, the grave is in need of some repair. Wildlife, an important aspect of tourism in Nepal, apart from the need for conservation, is represented by two articles; one an update on the vulture crisis and the other on the Zoological Society of London's Edge Programme. I have included, as the frontispiece photograph possibly the best camera trap photograph of a tiger ever taken. I am grateful to ZSL and to NTNC (National Trust for Nature Conservation) for permission to use this and their other photographs. I have included an update on the Tom Hughes Family Trust that I know some members support. Seemingly Tom's work continues despite the many changes since he first set up the orphanage. The digital world advances. The Hodgson collection of papers has been put online as described by Dr Gellner. Projects of this nature require considerable time, dedication and funding. In this case this additional funding needed to complete the work was forthcoming from Friends of the British Library and Michael Palin. As has been mentioned at some of the recent meetings, all the Society's journals have now been

placed on the Digital Himalaya project website. The aim will be to tie this up with the Society's own website. Access to the Digital Himalaya website is: www.digitalhimalaya.com It is hoped to include a piece on this project in the next journal.

Inevitably the Society has lost some of its senior members over the last year. George Band, the youngest member of the 1953 Everest team died in August aged 82. By kind permission of Mrs Susan Band, I have included a short piece written by George on his first effort at climbing. This remains the copyright of the Band estate. In March Lt Col Harry Gregory, known as 'Greg', died at he age of 94. He was a very strong supporter of the Society having been at various times, treasurer, acting chairman, and founding editor of the journal; the latter post he held for 20 years. He was a life vice president. He had an active and distinguished life and career devoted to Nepal and the Gurkhas as his obituary clearly shows. Older members and those

who are also members of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs will be aware of the death, also in March, of Miss Marinel Fitzsimons, the long serving secretary of that Society. One of our more colourful members, Major General Sir Roy Redgrave, died in July aged 85. His interest in Nepal and the Society stemmed from his appointment as Major General Brigade of Gurkhas, although he was a Household Cavalry officer. He had a colourful background from his birth and continued in this vein for the rest of his distinguished military career and life. Sadly we learnt of the sudden and unexpected death of Nicholas Rhodes, son of the Society's first secretary, Ruth Rhodes. I have also included two other obituaries, both non-members, but of characters likely to be of interest or to have been known to members, Michael Peissel explorer and author and Dr Keith Sprigg linguistic expert in Himalayan languages and dialects.



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THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

By the Chairman

(Below is an edited version of the Chairman's report to the AGM)

Veterans of the Society's AGMs over the years will have noticed the Secretary's report has, this year, become the Chairman's report. This is due to the fact that, for the last year, the Society has been without a secretary, with secretarial duties being shared among the committee. Pat Mellor felt that after so many years as secretary she really needed finally to retire from the post, especially after the very busy 50th anniversary year. The post of secretary is a key one for the Society, and I hope that by the time you read this some progress will have been made to fill this gap. I hope that this report, which forms the basis of 'The Society's News' for the 2011 journal, will confirm that we have a secretary in post. I have to thank those committee members who have taken on extra work to keep the Society running throughout the year. *(I am glad to report that we have now the new Secretary – Mr Kul Kadel, in post.)*

In any event following our anniversary programme and without a secretary, it was decided to reduce events for 2011. Nevertheless the annual supper was as popular as ever and was well supported. I should point out that these occasions take a great deal of work, not only by the committee, but by other members of the Society who help to set up the hall in Pont Street. In the 'health & safety' driven world in which we somehow seemed to have fallen, such events attract increasing difficulties which so far we have been able to overcome. Sadly, long gone are the days of the early suppers which were described in the 2010 journal when Anthony Wieler's family and staff did all the cooking with committee help.

I should point out that not only have times changed but we are all much older.

Two lectures were held at the Medical Society of London, both of which were followed by an optional curry supper. This seems to have been a format that has attracted members. For those out of town it seems would rather make an evening out of their trip by which includes a meal, but also those in town who may have other engagements can have drink and then go on as they wish. Again, we are fortunate that we can bring in caterers to the Medical Society, not many venues permit this. Our speakers were Mr Gordon Davidson, an artist who delighted us with his the story of his painting trip to Nepal, complete with DVD and examples of his work and Mr Michael Jacobs who described the work of the charity Child Welfare Scheme Nepal. *(An exhibition of Mr Davidson's paintings is to be held at the Gurkha Museum 21 – 27 April 2011.)*

The Society has donated funds to the Gurkha Welfare Trust and the Child Welfare Scheme Nepal and to the Nepal part of the Acid Survivors Trust. The committee was also concerned at the recent earthquake in eastern Nepal and felt that the Society should make at least a token gesture of support. Funds were taken out (£1000) by Pat Mellor who was visiting Nepal in October. Following discussions with HE Mr John Tucknott and Colonel Andrew Mills, the DA, this sum was passed to the Field Director of the GWT to disperse. He would supervise the use of the funds which were used for repairs to schools and medical facilities that had been damaged. These facilities

would be 'civilian', not tied to just ex-Gurkhas. The advantage of using the GWT infrastructure ensures that funds are used properly. I am grateful to Colonel Mills and his staff for their assistance.

The 2010 journal, the first edition in colour, finally went out in September. The editor apologizes for its late publication as stated in the editorial but pleads that there was quite a deal of extra research and work involved. The aim is to bring out the 2011 edition in the first quarter of 2012. It will be a slimmer edition but colour, as appropriate, will be maintained.

For 2012 we have so far planned two lectures; 14th May, Mr Robin Garton will speak about Himalayan glaciers and on 4th October Miss Alison Marston will speak about her interest in education as it is currently being delivered in Nepal. The

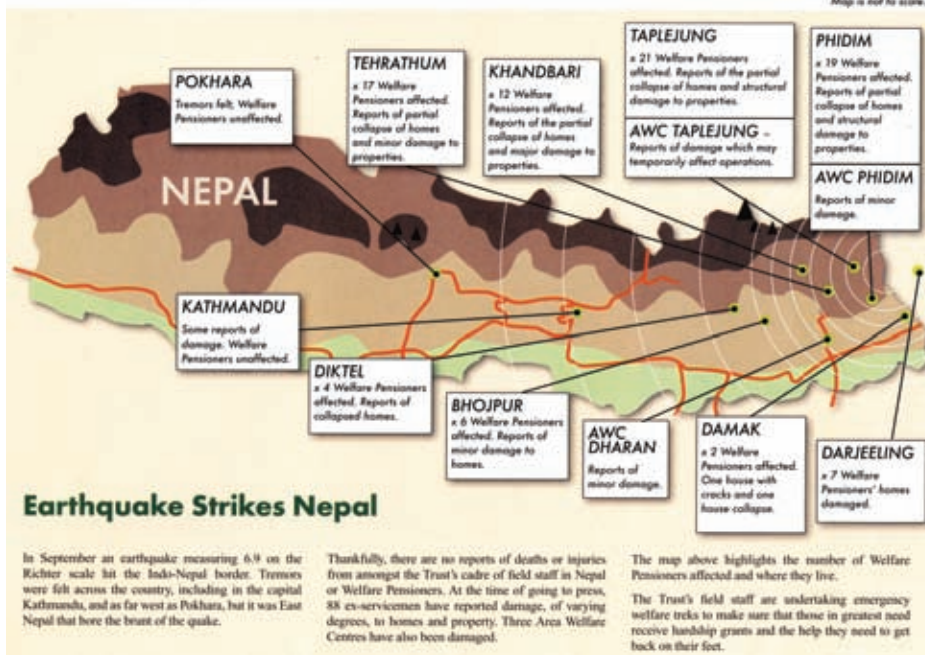
annual supper at Pont Street is to be held on 22nd February. The committee is looking at one two other talks in 2012. The 2012 AGM is slated for 6th December (tbc).

Sadly I have to record the death a number of members; Mr ERD French, Miss Marinel Fitzsimmons, Lt Col HCS Gregory (Greg) and Maj Gen Sir Roy Redgrave. Obituaries as appropriate will be included in the journal.

Postscript

Colonel Andrew Mills subsequently reported that the Society's donation was used to help with repairs to a secondary school at Marpak VDC near Dhading. The school had been originally built by the GWS in 2003. The earthquake caused half the building to slip away resulting in damage to the staff room and lavatory block. Remedial work is underway.

GWT, Samachara, No. 31



A REPORT ON THE BRITAIN NEPAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TRADE MISSION TO KATHMANDU – OCTOBER 2011

By Major Murray Jones

(This report was given by Maj Murray Jones at the Society's AGM)

The Britain Nepal Chamber of Commerce is a business-orientated organisation, with the aim of developing trade as an alternative to aid between the UK and Nepal. The Chamber's latest delegation from 12th to 19th October included a wide range of business interests. The first UK Trade Delegation to Nepal for over ten years was, by all accounts, a great success.

The success of the delegation was due in no small part to the enthusiastic support of a group of people. His Excellency the Nepalese Ambassador to London, Doctor Chalise, his Office Secretary, Prashanta Kunwar, and His Excellency the British Ambassador to Nepal, John Tucknott all worked hard to open a great number of doors for the delegation.

The initiative for the delegation gained ground under the chairmanship of Mr Peter Fowler, and was given active support by Ms Sabe Tibbitts, of UKTI and Mr Ash Verma, of Gateway Asia, in partnership with Mr Barry Jaynes, secretary of the Chamber. Also in Nepal, Mr Rajen Khetan of our sister organisation, the Nepal Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry was a notable contributor to the delegation's success. For political and availability reasons the dates for the trip were slipped a number of times until a firm date was settled upon.

The delegation was sponsored by two UK Government bodies; The FCO and UKTI, together with a number of other commercial organisations.

Over 20 delegates took part in a very busy programme of events, notably to meet a great number of Nepal Government Ministers and Secretaries, and also the likes of the Nepalese Bankers Association, the Governor of the

Rastra Bank, and the chairman of the Nepal Investment Bank Ltd, and leaders of four main political parties. The high point for the mission was meeting the President of Nepal, Dr Ram Baran Yadav.

Not only the daytime was filled with all of the visits, but the evenings as well. Starting with a briefing of the programme by the British Embassy, and again first thing the next day with them, a reception was held to meet some of the hosts of the following days. The Saturday was taken up by a guided trip to Bhaktapur and Nagarkot, with a dinner and entertainment.

The British College hosted a dinner, and finally a reception at the British Embassy provided an opportunity for the two Ambassadors and Mr Rajen Khetan to give short farewell speeches.

Members of the delegation were given chances to meet some counterparts on the Nepalese side and had chances of weighing up different prospects for future cooperation. Having established good links, there is already talk of preparing for the next mission. The increasing stability in Nepal and recognition by the ministers that time is short for developing trade links and inward investment means that we here must watch developments in such diverse matters as hydropower, medicinal herbs, tourism infrastructure, textiles and education, and be there when the deals are made. Nepal is eager and willing to develop its economy, and is keen to form partnerships with friends like the United Kingdom.

We believe that the mission, even though the timing was rather overdue, was a success and the momentum created now has to be retained.

THE HON EDWARD GARDNER - LOST BUT NOW FOUND

By Dr Mark Watson

Since I wrote 'Edward Gardner - the lost botanist of Nepal' (*BNS Journal Edition No.32, 2008*) my research has shed more light on the Honourable Edward Gardner's retirement years in London. Most exciting was my recent discovery of his grave in Brookwood Cemetery, and this short article is to share this news with Society members. Gardner's death certificate reveals that he died on 5th October 1861 of 'ossification of the heart' at 3a King Street, St James' Square. At that time parish burials in the centre of London had been stopped due to gross overcrowding, so London's dead were then interred in a series of satellite graveyards newly established in the suburbs. Brookwood, then called the London Necropolis, was a unique and brave new venture as it was sited much further out near Woking with coffins and mourners travelling by a special train from Waterloo. Brookwood was planned to be a 'city of the dead', capable of holding all of London's deceased, and its history makes fascinating reading (see John Clarke's *London Necropolis: A Guide to Brookwood Cemetery*, 2004).

When Edward died he had very few close relatives nearby and his sister's widower, Captain John Cornwall, arranged and paid for his funeral. Capt Cornwall was a member of the United Services Club, Pall Mall, and lived near Godalming, Surrey. The funeral itself was conducted by Francis Austin in London, presumably to make it easier for Edward's London friends to attend, with his coffin taken later to Brookwood. Edward was buried in a large, first class brick-lined private grave in the central Columbarium

area, in a prime spot looking out onto Cyprians Avenue. Today there are no graves of a similar date nearby, and so Edward's grave must have been particularly prominent and spectacular. John Clarke, historian at Brookwood, was unaware of the history of Edward Gardner's life and the importance of this grave, and so was very interested in the discovery and has incorporated this into his records.

As the photo shows, the memorial is rather grand, with a marble plaque inset into a square tapered column surmounted with a fine urn. The memorial reads simply "In memory of the Honourable Edward Gardner, 5th Son of Alan 1st Lord Gardner, Died Oct 6th 1861, Aged 77 Years". The grave is in generally in good condition, although the column leans slightly, perhaps indicating some



Edward Gardner's Grave at Brookwood.

© Dr Mark Watson.



Grave of Hon Edward Gardner showing damage. © Dr Mark Watson.

subsidence in the foundations. However, the most worrisome problem is the urn which has been badly cracked by rusting of the iron reinforcement rod (see photo).

For the short term the memorial appears safe, but it will need some attention to repair the damaged urn and perhaps correct the lean. At the same time it would be fitting to plant a few Nepalese shrubs or trees nearby to remind Edward of his days in Nepal and to highlight his importance to visitors. The owner of Brookwood is happy with these ideas, but we would need some funds to cover the costs. With the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the British presence in Kathmandu, following the Treaty of Segauli (1816) coming up in 2016, it is timely that we are considering this now and I would be delighted to hear from Society members who might be interested in supporting this restoration.

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ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON'S 'EDGE'
PROGRAMME SUPPORT TO NTNC

By Cath Lawson

EDGE Fellows Co-ordinator, Zoological Society of London

Last November, with kind support from the UK Trust for Nature Conservation (UKTNCN) in Nepal, the Zoological Society of London's (ZSL) EDGE of Existence Programme, working in conjunction with the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), visited Nepal to deliver its inaugural 'Conservation Tools' training course. The four-week long course was held at NTNC's Biodiversity Conservation Centre at Sauraha, on the edge of Chitwan National Park, and eight international and seven Nepali early-career conservationists attended. Participants from Nepal included staff from NTNC, the Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation

(DNPWC) in Chitwan National Park, Bird Conservation Nepal, the Institute of Forestry, Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation, and Makalu Barun National Park.

This training course is a key element of the support that the EDGE of Existence programme, which focuses on **E**volutionarily **D**istinct and **G**lobally **E**ndangered species, provides to young and aspiring conservationists in developing countries. The course aims to provide in-depth knowledge and practical experience in the latest conservation science so that participants gain the skills required to develop and manage successful species conservation projects.

Via a series of lectures, hands-on field practicals and assessments, international and national scientists from ZSL and NTNC taught four core modules: the principles of conservation biology - an introduction to the importance of biological diversity and the associated threats and protection strategies; ecological monitoring - advanced census techniques for mammals, amphibians and vegetation and the related tools for analysis; social science surveying techniques - including questionnaire design, interview techniques, observational studies, and participatory rural appraisal; and applied conservation action - a synopsis of the formulation and implementation of species action planning.

To illustrate the theory that was being taught, participants visited a number of the conservation initiatives that are taking place in the Chitwan area. Having spent



EDGE workers surveying.

© ZSL & NTNC.

some time reviewing the Vulture Conservation Action Plan for Nepal, for example, it was incredibly valuable to then visit the Vulture Breeding Centre that is housed at the DNPWC's headquarters in Kasara. Participants also gained great insight to how community-based conservation can work effectively by visiting a range of the community projects that NTNC are involved with including: a community forest group, a biofuel village, a veterinary clinic, and the Elephant Breeding Centre.

Over the four weeks, the participants also directly contributed to local conservation efforts by working with NTNC staff to undertake four mini-projects. These projects included assessing the population status and distribution of gharials (freshwater, fish-eating

crocodiles) through water-based line transect surveying, using camera-traps to survey medium to large bodied mammals in the Barandabhar corridor, elephant-back line transects to assess tiger prey-base species in the Barandabhar corridor, and questionnaire surveying of tourists' and residents' attitudes. In addition to capturing some remarkable images of tigers, the data collected and analysis conducted will contribute to NTNC's long-term research efforts.

ZSL carried out a similar training course in Mongolia last year, and it is hoped to carry out such training courses on an annual basis at its field project sites around the world.



EDGE Participants and their 'transport'.

© ZSL & NTNC.

THE VULTURE CRISIS – AN UPDATE

By Dr Anna Collar

(Dr Anna Collar is the administrator of the Ancient India and Iran Trust based in Cambridge. She is the daughter of Dr Nigel Collar, a leading ornithologist specialising in oriental birds and has accompanied him on birding trips to Asia. This article appeared in 'Indiran' the Trust's newsletter and provides Society members with a useful update.)

Birds, Cows & Diclofenac

Vultures in Asia have been disappearing faster than the dodo. Anna Collar finds out why, and what conservationists are doing to save these iconic birds from extinction.

["The crisis facing vultures is one of the worst facing the natural world" — Chris Bowden, RSPB (BirdLife in the UK)]

In February, the Trust was lucky enough to hear a lecture on the devastating decline of vulture populations in south Asia, given by Rhys Green and Conor

Jameson from the RSPB. Vultures in India, Pakistan and Nepal used to number in the tens of millions, flocking over rubbish dumps, an integral part of daily life. In the last ten years, their numbers have plummeted so fast that three species, the Oriental White-backed, Slender-billed and Long-billed vultures, are now classed by the IUCN Red List (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) as Critically Endangered.

Bald-headed, bloodied from thrusting their beaks deep into carcasses, vultures are a vital part of the food chain: a flock of vultures can strip the corpse of a cow to a skeleton within an hour. Their role as nature's clearers of the dead is central to maintaining a healthy and safe environment, keeping down populations of dogs, flies and diseases. In India and Pakistan, the Oriental White-backed Vulture used to be so populous that it was probably the most common large bird of prey in the world: vultures have enjoyed an abundance of food in south Asia, where livestock numbers exceed 500 million. Their numbers were high enough for Parsi communities to practise the sky burial required by their religion with ease. Between 1991-2000, the population of the Oriental White-backed dropped by 96%; less severe but still devastating declines were also observed in Long- and Slender-billed Vulture populations.



Family of vultures.

© Dr Anna Collar.

When bodies of dead vultures were examined, it was revealed that over three-quarters died from kidney failure due to visceral gout. Different suggestions were made as to the cause, but it was not until 2003 that the breakthrough came. Researchers from The Peregrine Fund, working in Pakistan, found that the presence of a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, diclofenac, in liver and kidney taken from dead vultures was perfectly correlated with the finding of visceral gout.

Administered to alleviate pain in cattle or water buffalo, diclofenac had been in use in India since 1994 and in Pakistan since about 1998. Scepticism remained, because the drug disappears completely from the body of a cow within a week of administration. How could something that disappears so fast have been the sole cause of such a dramatic decline? Modelling showed the remarkable fact that, even if less than 1% of livestock carcasses had lethal levels of diclofenac present, this would still be enough to cause the decline that had been observed in the Oriental White-backed. Further analysis showed that, in actuality, 10% of ungulate carcasses had detectable diclofenac and about 1% carried a lethal dose.

Because the drug is no longer under patent, more than 50 companies in India alone manufactured diclofenac, and it was until recently in widespread use. Thankfully, an alternative drug, meloxicam, was tested on vultures, found to be non-toxic, and in 2006, a ban on veterinary

manufacture and use of diclofenac was enacted in India, Pakistan and Nepal. However, diclofenac is still legally on sale for veterinary use in India: diclofenac formulated for humans having been diverted illegally into the veterinary market. Preventing the illegal use by vets and farmers is now proving to be a further serious challenge. Various awareness campaigns and education programmes are underway to try to limit and stop the sale and use, and it is vital this effort is maintained.

Although vulture populations may never reach the levels that existed before the crash, their situation is slowly improving – most recently with the news of the successful fledging in 2010 of ten vulture chicks (all three species) at captive breeding centres in India (*And in Nepal. See Journal No 33. Ed.*) for the first time. Captive breeding for eventual release into the wild is the only way the total extinction of these majestic creatures will be prevented, and although it is a long battle, it will work – if the use of diclofenac can be entirely eliminated from veterinary and everyday farming practice.



Villagers with vultures.

© Dr Anna Collar.

THE FOUNDING OF LUMLE AGRICULTURAL CENTRE

By Mark Temple

In the literature of agricultural development in Nepal the name Lumle Agricultural Centre (LAC) is illustrious. And for British residents in Kathmandu in the 1970's, when travel was much less easy than it is now, Lumle, just a one day walk west from Pokhara with attractive views of Annapurna on the way, was a popular destination. How did this British aid funded institution begin?

In the late 1960's the Brigade of Gurkhas was reduced from about 16,000 to 8,000 men in a few years as part of Britain's withdrawal from East of Suez. Among the Gurkhas there were many redundancies including those with only a few years of service which meant they received just a lump sum and no pension. The Major General Brigade of Gurkhas, General Patterson, fought many battles in Whitehall to save the Brigade of Gurkhas and to get something done for those who returned prematurely to Nepal. He warned, if action was not taken, khukris would be out and the gutters run with blood – but maybe he was speaking metaphorically. Thus the British Gurkha Ex-servicemen's Reintegration Training Scheme was created with funds from the aid programme then run by the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM). The first director was Brigadier Gordon Richardson a retired Gurkha officer. He was based in the British Embassy in Kathmandu from where he set up training activities for Gurkha ex-servicemen as primary school teachers, village dispensers and builders. From early on it was recognised that most ex-servicemen were farmers and plans were formulated to set

up two agricultural training centres and farms, one in the western recruiting area and one in the east. These had to be in countryside typical of where ex-Gurkhas lived, ie steep hillsides, fields all terraced and in areas without roads.

John Flatt was recruited by the ODM and arrived in Kathmandu January 1968. He had experience in East Africa where he had set up the University Farm at Makerere, Uganda, and in the UK where he worked for a large animal feed firm. His wife Hazel joined him in September after sorting out the home base in the UK for their five children.

John Flatt's first task was to find suitable land which the Nepal Government would buy. An allocation of £600,000 had been made by ODM to pay for everything except the land to get an agricultural training centre set up. It was suggested that the centre in the west be started first, largely because Brigadier Richardson had served in 2nd Goorkha Rifles, a regiment which recruited from west Nepal, and was the area he knew best and where he had contacts.

Within a few weeks John Flatt and Brigadier Richardson were trekking from the Pokhara area westwards. In those days Pokhara was not accessible by road but had an airport. The Pension Paying Post Pokhara (PPPP) with its corrugated iron Nissen hut store and dwelling house for the welfare officer was in a grassy field surrounded by a wall and provided a base from which to organise the treks. They walked up the main path to Gandrung and explored both sides of the ridges. At one point Chhitre was an area Richardson

favoured. John Flatt's objection was that the only promising site he could see was well populated and some of it seemed to belong to the Pradhan Pancha (an elected village headman in Panchayat raj days). They could hardly expect him to cooperate in losing his land. It was also mainly a northern aspect and for a wider range of farming and products it would be better to have a more southerly aspect.

Key considerations in choosing the site were proximity to Pokhara for accessibility, elevation, aspect and water supplies. In the Himalayas people have a great interest in the water and the steams that come down the hillsides because they need them for irrigating paddy fields lower down. It was preferable that the new centre should control water from a ridge top down so that the water would be unpolluted and that the site should have a main stream at the bottom so that there would be no difficulty of taking other people's water. At Lumle they found a southern aspect and quite a bit of forest at the top which meant there was a reasonable catchment which others would not interfere with. It was also not so high from top to bottom that it interfered with other people's farms.

The land chosen was between the villages of Pamdur and Lumle and did not belong to one or the other. The site was in Lumle's area to the west of the main stream and Pamdur's area to the east of it. At the point when the site was chosen this fact was unknown to John Flatt and he only discovered it later when it came to marking out the site. The land was only farmed occasionally – it was out-farmed not part of the in-fields. Hence it was cropped infrequently.

It was about February 1968 by the time Flatt and Richardson had settled on the

site and photographs were taken from the opposite hillside.

John got a lot of help from the British Ambassador, Arthur Kellas. He introduced John to senior officials in the ministries in Kathmandu and whenever he saw John Flatt he would say "have you found your site yet?" When he heard that the site was selected he wanted to see it and arranged to fly to Pokhara that Tuesday morning, use the Landover (the Lumle Landover was the sixth vehicle into Pokhara up the newly constructed road from the plains) which in the dry season could reach Naudanda Phedi (the foot of the steeper hill) and walk up to Lumle, returning the following afternoon to Kathmandu. The ambassador was a fit and energetic man and he got to Lumle and did a thorough inspection of the site before returning to Kathmandu the next day. A few days later he accompanied John to see the Director of Agriculture who objected to the site because it was too far away from Kathmandu, right out in the blue and not suitable from that point of view. "Ah", piped up the ambassador, "I went there on Tuesday and came back on Wednesday and I have seen the site." That rather sunk the remoteness objection.

In April 1968 John Flatt pitched his tents at the LAC site and worked with a Nepali surveyor to mark it out. Marking out the site created a stir. A lot of people came along and began to heckle and ask what they were at. John had Ganesh Bahadur Gurung from Pokhara with him and he helped pacify the crowds and tell them what was going on. The camp was pitched near the Pokhara to Jomosom trekking route at the bottom of the LAC site so it was easily visible. They were just sitting on the path where everyone came to have a look which was useful PR as

well as being conveniently near a stream. The tents were scrounged from the army – seven man ridge tents with fly sheets.

When John decided he should put up a boundary wall he got in touch with the chief secretary of the government and asked if he could do so to control the grazing. He said that it was quite impossible for him to do so and the only person who could give permission was the King. However the chief secretary said if John could see a way to doing it “we” will not stop you. Flatt and Richardson decided that the right approach was to give the contracts for erecting the wall to both Pamdur and Lumle villages. At first the wall was not popular and sections were knocked down by disgruntled local people. They were rebuilt quickly and so it became an established idea.

Some of the Nepalis working for John at this time had started off portering for him and Richardson on their first treks from Pokhara. They included Lekhbahadur Gurung and Ram Bahadur Gurung. There were also two local British ex-Gurkha officers (QGOs) who were soon on the staff, one of whom was from the village of Lumle. Both Lumle and Pamdur villages were mixed villages of Gurungs and Brahmins and the former were commonly recruited to Gurkha units but the latter very rarely. John Flatt had a policy to make friends with everyone in the district and this was a district centre, not just a centre for one family. But tension over awarding contracts for supply of stone and timber for building the centre caused a near riot at one point. One or two of his staff thought that the contracts should go to their families! John was backed up by one of his senior staff, Ananta Bahadur Shrestha. Eventually 24 villages tendered for the work. After the

near riot John announced a one week cooling off period before the successful tenders were notified. By then he had arranged for a contingent of police to be present. Villagers were instructed to arrive in groups with the senior man at the front to collect their notice of success or lack of it in tendering. They were accompanied off the site by the police and instructed not to open their envelope until the boundary wall was reached. No more contracts would be issued that day. The superintendent of police was concerned at the number of people arriving with kukris. He said to John, “you did not tell us to bring our rifles or kukris! We have our kukris but not our rifles.” John suggested, “do as I say and it will probably work,” and it did.

Putting up buildings at LAC took a large part of John’s effort in the early years. He was helped by a British architect who was working for United Mission to Nepal on the construction of Tansen Hospital. He visited John and gave him some guidelines and plans. Because local stone and timber was intended to be used in the construction, including roofing slates, making sufficiently strong trusses to support the weight of the roofs was a key constraint. John himself designed some buildings, rearranging the elements of the designs (standard roof trusses, windows, doors etc.) to layout new building plans himself. Newar craftsmen from Kathmandu were hired to do the skilled work, and a sawing pit and a wood working workshop established. Walls were built of stone with mud mortar and then pointed with cement to make them weather proof.

Recruiting agriculturalists was a problem. The Department of Agriculture did not want to send John some of their

best men. Eventually he was sent Ananta Bahadur Shrestha who was from Kathmandu valley. He felt like a fish out of water amongst the Gurungs. He stuck it out through the difficult early days. He eventually went to the UK and did a PhD at Reading University and ended up working for the UN in Pakistan.

John and Hazel Flatt lived in tents at LAC through the two monsoons of 1968 and 1969 before they were able to move into the newly built buildings. They set a good example by being among the last of the staff to move on from living under canvas.

John Flatt was a somewhat old fashioned Englishman, who to youthful eyes seemed to come from a colonial age which was fast disappearing. However he had many of the virtues of colonialism as well as a few of the vices. He never learnt to speak more than a few words of Nepali which left him quite socially isolated at Lumle. However he believed strongly in team spirit and was effective in developing a team at LAC which grew and developed long after he had moved on. John's practical approach was very productive. His wife Hazel was an essential part of the duo and she worked hard to study the natural history of the area and was a generous hostess. John and Hazel were members of the Church of England and their faith was central to their lives.

Some years later John was sent to Eastern Nepal where he identified the site of Pakhribas Agricultural Centre. John Flatt was awarded the OBE in 1973 in recognition of his work in Nepal.

One can add an ironic postscript to this information about the founding of Lumle Agricultural Centre. In 1989, when I revisited for the first time, I wandered

around Pamdur Danra with my old friend Manbahadur Gurung and we walked up to the old fort on the ridge top which must date from the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah or perhaps of the Rajah of Kaski. Manbahaur was bemoaning the changes that had taken place such as that the Gurung Lamas no longer kept the hail away from the villages' crops. Looking towards LAC I asked why so many terraces were uncultivated. "Ah" he said, "they used to be cultivated but then LAC opened and people had a cash income and gave up." This is surely a proof that Chayanov was right! (Chayanov 1925)

We should not leave this story without mentioning the unsung heroes of the job. They are the British taxpayers who, sometimes in impecunious circumstances, paid an infinitesimal part of the cost. Secondly the porters who carried every bag of cement, nail, pipe, sheet of corrugated iron, bath and WC from the PPPP to Lumle.

Reference:

Chayanov A V (1925), Peasant Farm Organization and On the Theory of Non-Capitalist Economic Systems.

(This article is based on an interview with John and Hazel Flatt in March 1997. Mark was on the staff at LAC from 1972 to 1974.)

A SIMPLE BUS RIDE

By Richard Morris

(Having gained a law degree at Birmingham University, Richard Morris undertook a 3 year short service commission with 6th QEO Gukha Rifles, serving in Malaysia and Hong Kong, and during his service had the opportunity to visit Nepal. On completion of his service he qualified as a solicitor and practised in London, retiring in 2008. Subsequently he took a 'TEFL' course and in 2009 spent a term teaching English in a village school in Nepal. He hopes to revisit the school during the 6 GR durbar planned for 2013. He is currently the Hon Sec of 6 GR Association. Anyone who has travelled on buses in Nepal will readily identify with this experience. Ed.)

"Tomorrow is a holiday and we can go to Besi Sahar. It's a simple bus ride from here" said Bhim Sir, with whom I am staying. Bhim Sir, is a typical Gurung and would make the best type of CSM, if life had not chosen for him to be a school teacher; hence the title Bhim Sir.

He and his delightful family live in the main house which is just as you would know it; save that the roof is of corrugated iron and not thatch. He has both mains electricity (except when the load sharing cuts it out) and solar power, so boasts both a TV and an electric rice cooker (although the family think that the rice does not taste the same and prefer their rice cooked on an open wood fire).

"Good", I reply, "What time does the bus depart?"

"Probably about 8 o'clock," he states.

"Where does it go from?"

"That depends," he vaguely replies.

"Depends on what?" I stupidly ask.

Why are you English so finicky he thinks but is of course far too polite to say so.

"It depends on where it gets to," he firmly answers. I wisely decide not to pursue the point.

"So we will need to have an early breakfast if we are to get to the bus stop on time, won't we?" I continue.

"Oh no, Richard Sir! (I am also a teacher). You should have your breakfast at your usual time." We both know that "the usual time" is a variable measurement but generally finishes around 8.00am.

I envisage myself gulping down my breakfast and running down the hills, as I know for a fact that the bus cannot possibly reach the village. I retire to bed a little perplexed. Perhaps I had misunderstood and he meant 8 o'clock in the evening?

Tomorrow arrives and Bhim Sir is out cutting grass for the *bhainse*, whilst young Bhakta brings a *doko* full of *daura* (firewood). The only break in the morning routine is that little Amrita does not come to my room for a reading lesson. Otherwise I take my breakfast at "the usual time".

It is now a 7.45 am and I can see that Bhim Sir is ready to go but then the phone rings. We boast a mobile phone which sometimes gets a reception which is wonderful but generally the caller cannot hear us reply. On this occasion, not only do we get a reception but the caller can also hear us! So delighted are we with this success that Bhim Sir chats to the caller at length and then invites the rest of his family to chat amidst much hilarity.

By now the time is 8.10 and I am convinced that the bus will have gone and am mentally making alternative plans as to how best to spend the holiday.

To my surprise once the conversation is over Bhim Sir leaps into action, grabs a small haversack and announces “We must go, it is getting late.”

I am now in a minor panic as after 40 years as an office wallah there is no way I am going to keep up with Bhim Sir, even if we are only going downhill. Fortunately after five minutes of determined pace out of the village, Bhim Sir, perhaps sensing my incompetence at walking, slows the pace and starts pointing out the houses of friends and fellow teachers. Inevitably others join us on the track as we all make our way steadily downwards. And then Bhim Sir meets an old friend and chat begins in rapid Gurung kura. So, I rashly ask the bystanders what Bhim Sir is talking about. First there are shrieks of delight from those who do not know that I can speak some Nepali. This is closely followed by much vociferous argument and gesticulations involving hearty slaps amongst themselves, whilst they correct and disagree with each other. Eventually I elicit that the two men have said hello to each other.

The time is now 8.30am, so once again I ask Bhim Sir when the bus leaves. “Usually at 8 o'clock Sir” he firmly replies, inwardly puzzling as to why I was asking when he had already told me yesterday. Anyway, we continue on our way, a jolly party of about 10 or so, ambling downhill as though going to a *mela* (fair).

As we drift along chatting away, I notice to my great surprise, parked next to an old house is a health and safety nightmare. So decrepit is the vehicle that I assume it has been abandoned and the house owner is probably keeping chickens in it. Once upon a time it was brightly decorated but after years of toil, it is now more dented than painted. Incidentally I have seen one even older and that proudly bore the name

“Susmiths Travelies” and we all thought that Rodney had retired!

The time is now about 9.00am but to be frank I am wondering if my watch is in fact correct. Then a dishevelled young man emerges from his house and we are clearly disturbing his dalbhat (meal) but he leaps into the bus and furiously pumps the horn. At this our jolly crowd becomes a seething mass and in the blink of an eye the bus is completely jam packed with people, packages, chickens, a small goat, luggage and indescribable bags tied up with string. The luggage rack on the roof is similarly covered mostly with rumbustious young men who are clearly looking forward to the ride.

This presents Bhim Sir and me with a diplomatic problem. As teachers, we have a certain status but firstly we cannot physically get into the bus and secondly we cannot ask the two old *bajyaus* (grandmothers) nearest the door to give up their seats.

Bhim Sir points to the roof. “Are you afraid?” he asks. I think of the honour of the Regiment and answer “Of course not!” as convincingly as I can. Meanwhile the dishevelled youth pumps the horn some more and we climb onto the roof amidst the luggage and in my case cling to the luggage rack for dear life.

An even younger and more unkempt youth appears from nowhere and hysterically shouts “Besi Sahar” whilst the first youth continues to pump the horn. I can no longer tell you what the time is, as both arms are firmly clamped to the luggage rail and by now, even I have realised that it is not really relevant and the bus will go when it has a full load. A small toddler emerges from the bystanders and gets onto the bus unaccompanied. Shouts and screams follow as mother rushes out of the house and retrieves the child. Two

ladies who initially fought their way into the back of the bus now decide that they don't want to go to Besi Sahar and with some difficulty and discomfort to their fellow travellers get off the bus.

Then the great moment comes and the first dishevelled youth starts the engine and for us on the roof, this is a kind of Chinese torture, as the vibrations feel like sitting on a pneumatic drill! With a final flourish on the horn and further shouts from the second youth, the Driver Saheb crunches the bus into gear and begins to move slowly forwards. Thank goodness, as the black diesel fumes coming straight up to the roof make me want to choke. Just as the bus is moving, three women bystanders suddenly decide that they want to go Besi Sahar and amidst shouts of encouragement from us on the roof and alarm from those already jammed inside, they squeeze in with a skill I have not seen matched in 40 years of using the London Underground!

The second unkempt youth now leaps at the moving bus and hangs off the side. He is the ticket collector, except that there are no tickets. He holds a wodge of money in his teeth and by clambering around the outside negotiates a fare with those near a window, although I notice that he never gives any change. The wodge in his mouth therefore simply gets bigger. Then he climbs on top and Bhim Sir wisely suggests that we pay when we get off. I realise that there will inevitably be a surcharge for this delay but even the notion of releasing one hand to find my wallet only makes me cling on more tightly. Those who have been ocean racing in a severe storm will have some inkling of the conditions we next endure, except that the crew on a sailing boat deliberately swing against the tilt and yawl whilst my rumbustious friends seem to go deliberately with the pitch and swing forcing us on the

end to gape even further over the edge than we ever thought possible. Secondly on a rough Himalayan track you generally have a choice between jagged rocks and trees on one side and a breath defying drop on the other side, ending in a fast flowing icy river strewn with menacing boulders. In my present predicament a place in the Fastnet race seems a softer option.

Suddenly the boisterous lads at the front shriek and squirm about but as I am facing backwards, I don't know why, until a low twangy branch catches the back of my neck and to their great delight almost catapults me off the back of the bus!

Now you would think that we roof riders would pray for a bit of straight flat road but you would be wrong, as on such sections as there are, the driver saheb accelerates and inevitably hits the next stray rock or pothole at speed thus launching us all into the air, so that we come crashing down on the roof and in my case with the benefit of a hip replacement, sounding like a blacksmith at work and causing further denting to the already crumpled roof.

The clutch shudders and the gears crunch as we meet a particularly awkward incline and the bus stops. I am poised at about 85 degrees staring over the cliff side at a steep green jungle chasm below but in front of my nose is resting a magnificent butterfly. It is iridescent brown and purple like nothing I have ever seen before. You cannot help but notice the amazing variety of butterflies in Nepal, but this is very special and I wonder if it is rare? If only I had a head camera which I could operate with my teeth. Whilst I am pondering this impractical concept, we shudder into life and my winged friend delicately flutters away as though to emphasise the contrast between his and my own clumsy form of motion.

But now I start to see the hills and mountains afresh; an uninterrupted view in every direction. The rumbustious boys are right; this really is the way to travel! As we near a village you can see the rice fields turning from green to gold, you can nose into people's houses and even chat with those leaning over their balconies. Thus did the victorious Roman armies enter Rome leaning out of their chariots and the Allies re-enter Paris riding on the sides of their tanks. Small boys run after the bus and cling on for a few yards and then tumble off much to the delight of all, except the ticket collector. The sun is shining so we break into song although I have no idea of what I am singing; Paverotti never got a better reception than when I join in!

No longer is it quite so steep and the villages become more frequent which means more people try to get on. I have a suspicion that some are trying to barter with those already on board but by now I would not miss this trip for the world. On the power-lines are sitting two black fork tailed drongos, just as I have seen in South Africa. A little roadside house proudly displays the badge of 5GR and at every stop street traders surround us and try to sell us inedible foods and ancient drinks.

We are nearly at our journey's end and this I know because four of the rumbustious boys suddenly stand up and in unison leap off the bus onto the grassy bank. But oh! One has forgotten his bag and is now running after the bus frantically waving his arms. We find the bag and throw it down to him with such speed and accuracy it bowls him straight over. Everyone is in stitches, including the lad who has been so firmly re-united with his haversack. TV was never as good as this!

The four boys are not only high spirited but shrewd as they will be in Besi Sahar before us. The closer we get, the more

traffic we meet which involves reversing, creeping around the edge of impossibly narrow corners and manoeuvring over ledges and against cliff sides which we remaining roof riders are able to inspect at very close quarters. Amidst all this two motorbikes appear and weave their way between the manoeuvring bus and oncoming lorry. Clearly the bikes are racing as the second bike hares through the ever narrowing gap at a greater speed than the first.

Then we meet another bus and whilst I am thinking that our driver has at last lost his nerve, to my relief is slowing down; simultaneously to my amazement, so is the oncoming bus. They stop exactly cab to cab and exchange endless conversations in a special driver's language full of flourishes, handshakes and laughs. A few hundred yards further on we meet another bus. Not to be outdone the ticket collector bangs the side of the bus firmly which is the instruction to stop. How the driver can tell the ticket collectors bangs from all the other bangs (including those of passengers wanting to get off or customers trying to get on – I do not know). Nevertheless he does, and instantly stops the bus. So does the oncoming bus driver and the two drivers stare at each other in stony silence. Is this a stand off? Far from it, as the two ticket collectors scramble on to their respective roofs, shake hands, hug each other and generally discuss life as one would with a long lost brother. They are speaking Nepali but at such a rate that even we remaining roof riders get bored. We therefore amuse ourselves by encouraging passing small boys to climb onto the roofs. This does the trick and both ticket collectors are forced to interrupt their life histories to chase off the invaders from their respective roofs. Meanwhile the two drivers challenge each other at engine

revving and gear crashing before abruptly releasing their clutches and pouncing like wild cats at the vehicles in front of them who have foolishly attempted to overtake one bus and come face to face with the other stationary bus.

People are now leaving our bus at any opportunity but I half suspect that the bus driver slows down till they get ready to leap from the open door and then accelerates when they are about to jump off. Needless to say this does not deter either young or old who even take up the challenge carrying babies, parcels and the small goat who would no doubt have been most nimble if he had been allowed to jump by himself.

At last we reach a flattish piece of rock strewn ground about the size of a football pitch – indeed this is what it is sometimes used for; but it also doubles as the bus terminal. Of course if you are travelling on elsewhere you have a quarter of a mile of

unmade rocky path over which to get your suitcase before reaching the point where the others buses depart but on this occasion Bhim Sir and I are not so encumbered. We therefore clamber down and he tries vainly to avoid the additional charge I knew would be incurred for non payment in transit and seeing my white face, we are lucky that the ticket collector doesn't charge for me at tourist rates. He therefore walks away from the bus and glumly remarks, "What a boring journey, I hope that we have a better trip home". I pretend not to have heard, whilst I contemplate the prospect of a more exciting return journey!

(I could not have undertaken this teaching assignment in Nepal without the support of BCCT (British Consultancies Charitable Trust) and St James Place Trust and I am indebted to them for their kind support. TRM.)

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1964: HOW IT ALL BEGAN – THE FOUNDING OF MOUNTAIN TRAVEL

By the late Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Roberts LVO, MBE, MC

(Colonel Jimmy Roberts tells the story of how he established Mountain Travel in Nepal. He died in 1997 after a distinguished career in 1st Gurkha Rifles starting in 1937, transferring to 2nd Gurkha Rifles post 1947. His motivation from his earliest days was to climb mountains so the Gurkha regiments of the Indian Army seemed to him the best opportunity of achieving this. His obituary was published in Journal No 22 in 1998. Mountain Travel is still regarded as the leading trekking company in Nepal, www.tigermountain.com. This was written in 1976. Ed.)

From my copy of the department of Tourism Annual Statistical Report I learn that in 1975, 12,587 people visited Nepal for “trekking or mountaineering”, or 13% of the visitor total of 92,440. The figure may be slightly inflated and those for some earlier years are definitely wrong. However to 40 in 1965 is about right if one includes mountaineering expeditions, for that was the year that Mountain Travel began operations in Nepal - with eight clients that year.

If you are reading these pages with thoughts of trekking in Nepal, fear not we shall try and ensure the remaining 12,586 people do not intrude on your privacy. But what of the years between and what was happening before 1965? Some comments on the history of Himalayan mountaineering and travel may be of interest to those coming on the scene. I have grown up (I refuse absolutely to write “grown old”) with modern Himalayan mountaineering and I have watched and pioneered mountaineering and trekking in Nepal literally from the beginning. So I may be forgiven if personal opinions and sometimes seemingly unessential personal recollections

tend to intrude unduly--- at least they may enliven my story. For, although the history of recent Himalayan mountaineering may be interesting, it is no longer particularly amusing.

I came out to India and joined the old British Indian Army at the end of 1936, I joined the Indian Army partly because I was unqualified for any more intellectual employment, but mainly because I wanted to climb in the Himalayas - not just one expedition, but a whole lifetime of mountaineering and exploration. It worked. And even if the highest places were denied to me, I have no regrets. Fate dealt me a number of good cards, and if I did not always play them properly, that was my fault.

At that time the whole of the Himalaya and Karakorum lay open like a vast and fascinating book. Generally speaking, either permits were not needed, or could be obtained easily enough. The peak height record stood at 25,600 feet (Nanda Devi); not a single mountain over 26,000 had ever been climbed. Entry into Tibet was attended by more formality, but that was not too difficult if one could provide bona fide scientific or collecting aims. Bhutan was the same. But at that time, for a mountaineer at least, the lure of Nepal was far more potent than Tibet or Bhutan. And in the mountain book only the chapter titled: “Nepal” remained closed, the pages uncut. Now, and indeed until 1948, visits to Kathmandu were by invitation only, either from the Rana rulers or the British Embassy. The rest of the Kingdom was firmly closed to foreigners, exception being made in the case of Kanchenjunga, to which access was permitted in special circumstances by way of a high pass in North Sikkim. Now it is

strange to think that then, Pokhara exerted a greater fascination than Lhasa, and was certainly less known. Fourteen years were to pass before I set foot in Nepal myself, and this long wait, and the magic pictures conjured up during the waiting years, must account for the fact that I have never quite lost my sense of wonder and privilege of being allowed inside Nepal at all. I try to remember that others may have a different attitude, but even so I feel my face beginning to flush when someone says “Hell, why can’t I go up the Kali Gandaki? I didn’t come all this way to go to Dorphatan”. Until the war began in 1939, possibly three or four expeditions used to come out from Europe or America each year. For the rest there were in India (including of course the countries we now call Pakistan and Bangladesh) hundreds of army officers and civilian government officials and business people, mostly British, and of these a considerable number would take up their summer holiday in the hills. In the Indian Army we were allowed two or three months local leave each year and nine months home in three. Annual leave was a privilege and not a right and could be withheld or reduced by one’s commanding officer. It depended on what one intended to do. The social life or “poodle faking” (lying around on house boats-I am uncertain of the derivation of the term.) was frowned on, but a request to keep a date with a rifle and some unfortunate wild sheep or goat on a high pass in central Asia was a certain passport to leave. So was an application to climb a mountain. Although this was considered a little strange, and I doubt if there were more than 100 people in the whole of India at that time who aspired to real climbing, as compared to trekking and more general exploration.

Meanwhile, our ambitious young mountaineer was getting quickly into his

stride. His mountain scheming had extended beyond the mere Indian Army and he had managed to insert himself into a Gurkha Regiment with headquarters at 6000 feet on the flanks of the Pir Panjal range.

(Dharmasala is in the State of what is now Himachel Pradesh). So in 1937 I was able to climb for a total of about three weeks among the granite peaks of the Dhaula Dar, and in 1938 joined an expedition attempting Masherbrum in the Karakorum..

There were five of us in the party, plus four Sherpas and we needed sixty porters to carry all our loads. That year there was another British attempt on Everest from the North, and a German expedition led by Paul Bauer to Nanga Parbat, and an American expedition to K2. There was some friendly rivalry with the Americans with whom we shared part of the trail in, but never actually met. And a report that the entire party had been seen (Houston and Bates were two of them) squatting in row cooling their blistered feet in the water of the Indus was received with satisfaction.

For a twenty year old, Masherbrum was a rather shattering experience. I acclimatized very slowly, was frostbitten, could not sleep (oh, those un-ending hours of waking nightmare) and it never seemed to stop snowing. Finally two of our friends were severely frostbitten in a summit attempt and I watched as their toes wither and blacken and fingers drop off-literally-as I helped the doctor with their dressings. Next year, I felt, it would have to be those sheep and goats. However by the time I reached Srinagar I had perked up a little and reading a newspaper report that they had failed on Everest but might return in the autumn, I wrote to Tilman, the leader, giving him the welcome news that I would be available to join them on their second attempt. Sometime later I received a terse reply, written from the Planters Club, Darjeeling. There was to be no autumn

attempt, and in any case I would not have been wanted.

In 1939 I spent two months climbing in Kulu and Spiti with three riflemen from my Gurkha Regiment, but meanwhile a new light had arisen on the horizon. A new expedition to climb Everest from Tibet was being organized for the fall of 1940, and following Masherbrum I was asked to join. Mostly it was a new team to replace those who had spent the last six years trudging to and fro between Darjeeling and the Rongbuk glacier. A Captain Hunt was another of the members. It was an alluring prospect, just the right age, and first home leave in three months getting fit in the Alps.

I don't regret the war - but wish they could have put it off for a couple of years, as it gave me the experience of parachuting and command of the first operational drop of the war in South East Asia. Dispirited after failures in the mountains, I still return sometimes to bask in the uncertain glow of that small and not very dangerous parachute operation into North Burma in 1942. (I should add that I had done my best to avoid the operation in the first place). The boredom, the sheer utter misery of war, and the few moments of truth which make it sometimes seem worthwhile, compare very closely with high altitude climbing. I feel a great admiration for the young men who voluntarily, without any clarion call from King and Country, endure similar miseries on high and steep mountain faces. Maybe it's not quite as dangerous as war, and maybe television provides the call. But never mind, I admire them.

In case you are still with me, I'll skip three expeditions, including a daring attempt at Kanchenjunga during the war years which reached 20,000 feet, leaving only the upper 8000 feet of the great mountain unconquered, and proceed to 1949 and the beginning of the chapter titled "Nepal" in our book of the mountains.

That year the Himalayan committee of the Royal Geographical Society and Alpine Club applied to the Nepal Government for permission to send a small expedition to the South Face of Mount Everest. This was refused, but Tilman and Peter Lloyd were permitted to enter the Langtang Valley north of Kathmandu. Once again I wrote to Bill Tilman. Same result as 1938! However in 1950 the committee received permission to send an expedition to Annapurna, and at the same time the French were permitted to attempt Dhaulagiri. Now it was Tillman's turn to write to me.

There were four of us climbers, in addition to our leader, who was 20 years older and by far the strongest and fittest. It was an ill organized and badly led expedition which made its base camp above the Manang Valley the day the monsoon began and failed to reach even the lowly Annapurna IV. Personally I was relieved when superficially frostbitten feet put an end to my own climbing and I was able to take the rest of the monsoon exploring the Mannagbhot and Bhimtakothe valleys and collecting birds for the British Museum. At the end, too, came a special reward when having walked across with one Sherpa to enter Pokhara and entered my own private Mecca. Poor Pokhara has taken a bit of a hammering in the 26 years passed, but I have not changed my opinion I formed then, there is no other mountain view in the world to equal Machapuchare and Annapurna hanging there in the sky above the green Pokhara plain. Meanwhile Herzog and the French had failed on Dhaulagiri but had climbed "our" mountain. Waving and publicity were a curtain raiser to even greater events in 1953, and the even more vigorous waving of flags.

I went to Everest that year myself only as a sort of poor relation purveyor of oxygen loads. However I was glad to go in

any capacity, and although not particularly generous by nature, I have never questioned the fairness of the selection of the team. Success was by no means certain and I knew that in the event of failure there would be another attempt after the monsoon. It seemed reasonable to suppose that some members might be killed or frostbitten or at least become tired, and that replacements would be needed in the autumn. So dumping my oxygen loads at base camp I went off to prove myself. Made the first explorations of the Lumding, Inukhu and Hongu valleys, the first ascent of Mera Peak and the south-to-north crossing of the Amphu Lapchha pass in basketball boots - two firsts in one. Alas all to no avail. Hastening back to join my regiment in Malaya, I heard the news one hot night in June from Indian policemen who were searching my rucksack in Jainagar on the Nepal border. And I rejoiced with the rest of the world.

A wind blows across the highest of mountains of Asia and rattles the tiles on the roofs of houses in the valleys below. Doors swing open and others slam shut. This too is a land of uneasy frontiers and political winds blow across the frontiers and open and close doors. Tibet became first difficult of access, and soon impossible. Relations between India and China became strained, and finally reached the breaking point of war in 1962. India and Pakistan fought in Kashmir. During these years, which continued in effect until the early 1970's Pakistan sometimes permitted the entry of a few expeditions to such mountains as Nanga Parbat, but apart from Nepal, the remainder of the Himalayan ranges from Bhutan to Kashmir remained firmly closed to foreign expeditions. Nepal closed her own mountains for three years from 1966 to 1968 in sympathy with trans-Himalayan tensions prevailing at the time.

The years from 1950 to 1965 were the

golden age of climbing and exploration in Nepal. Permits were of course required, but there were no restrictions, as after 1969, on particular peaks, which might or might not be attempted. Most of the highest peaks were climbed during these years, but yet there were never too many expeditions in the field at one time. Generally speaking the expeditions were not too large and publicity and ballyhoo remained at a low level. After 1969 the flood gates opened and although the Japanese can claim, possibly to have been the most successful single nation in the game of climbing in the Nepal Himalayas, it was the very number of Japanese which devalued Nepal mountaineering for a time to the status of a football league. Now, in 1976, the doors of India and Pakistan have eased open once again (mainly for economic reasons) and we have a situation (apart from Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim) not so different to that I have described 40 years ago, plus the bonus of Nepal. However the permit system is now stricter and more complicated.

After 1953 I continued to return to Nepal from army service in Malaya almost yearly, to the detriment of my army career. In 1954 I climbed Putha Hiunchuli (23,800 feet) with one Sherpa, and this remains my humble personal height record. Machapuchare followed in 1956 and 1957, Noyce and Cox reaching a point about 50 meters below the north summit in the latter years. In 1960 Annapurna II was the last 26,000 footer to fall, Grant, Bonnington and Ang Nima being the assault trio. In 1962 and 1965 I scraped around the flanks of Dhaulagiri VI, mistaking it for Dhaulagiri IV. Like Machapuchare, "D 4" was an old ambition but proved even more difficult to grasp than the proverbial 'Fish Tail' itself. Meanwhile in 1958 fate dealt me one more card, an ace this time, and this gives me the opportunity gradually to switch the theme of my story from expeditionary

mountaineering to trekking and the origins of Mountain Travel.

Towards the end of 1958 I was appointed to the newly created post of Military Attaché to the British Embassy in Kathmandu, and I have lived in Nepal ever since. In those days the Embassy staff was very small and so, at first, it was paradoxically more difficult to get away than it had been before. (*It still is! Ed.*) However from now on I was at the centre of the Nepalese mountain scene, and the 1960 expedition to Annapurna II was fitted into this period. My appointment was for three years and rather weakly I managed to have this extended for another two years, I say 'weakly', as I had already decided to retire from the army and to devote myself full time to the mountains. Now I was merely opting for another two years of security on good army pay. But again fate intervened and this time dealt me a joker in the shape of a Brigadier (we don't call them Brigadier-Generals in the British Army) who turned up in Kathmandu on leave. Unfortunately (or fortunately) I took a dislike to his face and was unwise (or wise) enough to tell him so rather late one night in the Yak and Yeti Bar in the old Royal Hotel. Rather unfairly, for he had no official standing in Nepal – he later reported me for "insulting" him. No, I was not court-martialled or sacked, but the two-year Embassy extension was cancelled and I took the hint and retired voluntarily. At the same time I also did two other things. I wrote to Norman Dyrenfurth and volunteered my services for the American Mount Everest Expedition planned for 1963. And I went to see my friend the Director of Tourism to discuss some ideas with him. I shall always be grateful to Norman for allowing me to join AMEE 1963. This gave me both an immediate object to work for and afterwards, a sense of partnership in probably the most

outstanding feat yet performed on Everest, barring the first ascent. I refer, of course, to the Unsoeld and Hornbein climb of the West Ridge and subsequent traverse of the mountain -although I would accord almost equal honor to the diminutive Japanese housewife who reached the summit with a single Sherpa companion in 1975.

In 1971 and again in 1972 I returned to Everest in a more exalted capacity than the "transportation officer" of 1963. However a disability now prevented me from going beyond base camp, and that is no place for a leader or his deputy to remain. The International Expedition of 1971 is probably remembered now mainly for the walk-out of the four so-called "Latins" in protest against concentrating all our efforts on the South West Face climb. In fact the seeds of failure had already been sown when a spell of appalling weather followed the quite unnecessary death of a well-loved Indian member. The expedition was, if anything, strengthened by the departure of the dissidents, (three of whom were in any case probably somewhat too elderly for very high altitude work), only to be decimated by an outbreak of apparently infectious fever. Despite all this, we did not do too badly and my main regret was the loss of a childish and innocent personal belief that mountaineers of a certain caliber and reputation must also be gentlemen (to use an out-moded expression). After the expedition had failed, the mutual personal abuse and accusation which broke out among some of the members (and not only the Latins) were quite extraordinary and continued for over two years. At the same time, encouraged by the press, some normally well-respected Himalayan pundits were unable to resist the heady satisfaction of having a personal cut at the expedition corpse. Now, to return now to more pleasant and important matters.

After AMEE 1963 I decided to remain in Nepal and create my own means of employment there. The field of 'mountains' obviously suggests itself - indeed I had few other qualifications. But within that field my credentials were good- a long standing knowledge of the country, the people and their language, and more recently some familiarity with the official circles in the capital. I thought back to early days in Kashmir of providing all camp gear, staff, porters, and food for an agreed daily rate. However there the methods the agents used were old-fashioned and the equipment heavy; army tents, sheets and blankets, camp cots and camp furniture, china cups and plates. There were also the considerations that these agents catered mostly for seasoned travellers who spoke the local language and who remained in full control of their caravans. At this stage I should mention the terms 'trek' and 'trekking' etc, which are now very commonly used and understood, but I think were novel to some in 1964. The derivation is from an old Boer word but the terms were often used in Himalayan literature in connection with mountain camping and travel and so on that I never had any doubt that the beast forming in my mind would be called a 'Trekking Agency'. It would be based on what I had already seen in Kashmir, but stream-lined and modified by lessons learned in expeditionary mountaineering. However as clients or 'trekkers' would not be experienced in Nepal conditions, we would have to maintain a greater degree of control, which would necessitate a high standard of trekking staff and their training.

Beginnings were modest. I remember sketching out a plan to provide for no less than 8 trekkers in the field at one time. I would have 8 bags, 8 pads, 8 this and 8 that. I wrote down 8 tents, scratched out the 8 and wrote 4 - let 'em share I said to myself.

I placed a small but expensive advertisement in 'Holiday Magazine' which produced five replies, two obviously from curious children; one lady wrote "Mount Everest' ... here we go again, get out the entero-vioform...rush me details." With dollar signs beckoning me, I duly rushed. But alas, silence prevailed. Perhaps she could not read my writing - Mountain Travel owned no typewriter in those days. By now, towards the end of 1964, it was however registered with the Government as the first Trekking Agency in Nepal, and it was to remain the only one for the next four years. My first clients came to do an Everest Trek in the early spring of 1965. There was a story in circulation a year or two after that these were "three American grandmothers... and Roberts was horrified at what he had taken on" or words to that effect. In fact two were unmarried so were unlikely to be grandmothers, and a more sporting trio of enthusiastic and appreciative ladies I have never since handled.

Business prospered and I hired Dawa Norbu Sherpa as an assistant. Now I need not do the typing myself - yes, we had bought a typewriter - and a year later Mike Cheney joined us. These two names are inseparable with the story of the development of Mountain Travel. Meanwhile in 1967 there had come an important breakthrough. Sometime in the spring (I think) of that year a letter landed on my desk proposing that the writer brought two trekking groups to Nepal in the autumn. It was signed 'LEO' in large flourishing letters. That was the beginning of a long and fruitful association. Leo leBon was at that time Manager of Thomas Cook in San Francisco and he brought or sent over groups under Cook's banner in both 1967 and 1968. In 1967 we trekked and talked, and Leo trekked and thought, and towards the end of 1968 founded, together

with Allen Steck and Barry Bishop, Mountain Travel (USA) Inc.

Another equally fruitful association, which began with a letter that I received from him in 1966, was with Warwick Deacock's Australian Company "Ausventure". Warwick had been a mountaineering friend in our army days. Australians of course take their summer holidays at Christmas time and the very numerous Ausventure treks began happily to fill what had been a slack season. Later on Warwick brought our first New Zealanders. His first Australian trekking group arrived in early December 1967. Soon Ausventure treks spread to cover the whole trekking season and as the public recognized, the dictates of the weather both in the case of high places in winter and also the hoped for visibility that fluctuates with the time of years. So we then saw trekking from both countries with some "cross posting" of clients and also leaders between USA /Australia /New Zealand.

Even in 1966 the days of 8 sets of equipment were long past and I soon had to begin considering the problem of "how big". In order to preserve the exclusive quality of the mountain experience I wondered if I should not turn people away. But the demand grew and grew and now there were other agents coming into the field. Turning people away would not reduce the numbers coming to trek, so it seemed better to expand and at least try and ensure that the good name created for trekking in Nepal did not suffer. With expansion there was the danger of losing the personal touch, which is vital in an operation of this sort. However by selection, by training, by example and influence, and the delegation of responsibility, it may be possible for a special spirit to permeate an organization, down to the humblest Sherpa "kitchen boy". This I hope we may have achieved in Mountain Travel.

There was, too, the question of approach, of what we were trying to achieve - the aim behind the way a trek was conducted. Stated simply, I would say we are trying to show you the mountains of Nepal, its valleys and villages and people, under the best possible conditions, but without shielding you from reality. One hears criticism of groups who trek through Nepal isolated from the people and the country by their own entourage and disinterest. That it is not, I hope, our way of running a trek. Rather we try to give you all the ingredients of enjoyment with Sherpas who look after you but do not intrude. The final, total experience remains yours to create, and to enjoy to the full without organizational worries or distractions.

I have attempted, somewhat awkwardly I fear, to express something of the philosophy, which lies behind the name Mountain Travel, as I feel this should be shared with those who come to trek with us in Nepal.

Now I must say something about our Sherpas, as this is quite a special relationship. We have all heard that the Sherpas are splendid fellows. And we have heard that they have been 'spoilt' (by expeditions, trekking, tourism or education - take your choice). Probably the truth lies somewhere in between. As in any community, there are 'bad' ones, and the wages and other rewards now become customary for mountaineering and trekking work are high by Sherpa standards. However the good ones-and there are many, are very good indeed and repay wages many times over with willing work, loyalty and comradeship. On an expedition or a trek they serve superbly but without any trace of servility. Sherpas give trekking agencies in Nepal a most unfair advantage over their counterparts in other parts of the Himalayas. I cannot hide the truth - I love them. And at times they drive me stark, staring mad.

The year 1966, when Mountain Travel was beginning to give a fair amount of employment to Sherpas, also marked the end of mountaineering expedition activity for three years. Khumbu was already suffering from the economic effects of the closure of the once profitable trade with Tibet, and this new source of employment, then and swelling steadily in coming years, was a Godsend to the Sherpa people. Now, it is all taken for granted and tends to rate less honorably than the aid (hospitals, schools and bridges) given to the Sherpa community by an outside source. However, someone had to start it all and trekking gave the Sherpas not charity, but money and self-respect. Now times are good, but those earlier years have not been forgotten in the villages, which lie at the foot of Mount Everest.

What of the future? The growth of wilderness travel in Nepal during the past ten years has been phenomenal. The foreign exchange earnings from trekking have been considerable, and more important, converted into rupees, these earnings - in the form of Sherpas' and porters' pay, food purchases and so on - have reached people in remote mountain areas, not just a few pockets in Kathmandu. The facilities which have been developed in Nepal have enabled people, who never dreamt that it would be possible, to enjoy an expeditionary type holiday in the Himalaya. India and Pakistan have not been slow to realize the economic advantages of thus utilizing their own Himalayan assets, and have opened hitherto restricted areas to foreigners, despite the fact that the security situation in those areas has not materially changed. On the debit side, in Nepal we hear of dirty campsites and trails littered with rubbish (the legacy of mountaineering expeditions as much as trekkers) and crowds of hikers invading the peace of the mountains. The now widespread realization that the first problem

does really exist, amounts at least to partial solution. The over popularity of certain trekking goals and routes merits more comment. The Mount Everest region, in particular, pays the penalty for combining vistas of the highest mountain in the world with the homeland of the Sherpas. Unfortunately the airstrip at Lukla makes it all too easy for people to get there. But even in the Everest region it is possible to follow the trails on which you are likely to meet many fellow trekkers. And in other parts of Nepal, given some avoidance of main trails and two or three days to get clear of them, one can practically guarantee that you will meet very few foreigners and that you may not have to share a camp site - if that is what you want.

In some ways the opening of the mountains of India and Pakistan is welcome, as this may remove some pressure from Nepal. In other ways, we in Nepal must of course consider the competitive aspect and whether the removal of pressure produces other results.

Postscript by Lisa Choegy, Kathmandu, 6 December 2011

Started by Col Jimmy and Mountain Travel in 1964, Nepal's trekking industry has grown into serious business that contributes significantly to Nepal's tourism revenue, spreads livelihood benefits throughout poor mountain regions, and provides employment for thousands of Nepalis. Trekking in Nepal is now widely recognized as an ecotourism and pro-poor tourism model of how to reduce poverty and improve lives in remote rural areas with minimal infrastructure and maximum community involvement.

Last year about 125,000 foreigners visited the mountains of Nepal representing 20% of total arrivals or one in four non-Indian foreign visitors (Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and

Department of Immigration). Trekkers either travel independently along the more frequented routes or are looked after by one of the 1,240 registered trekking agencies escorted by 6,745 guides. Trekking contributes significantly to Nepal's average length of stay (13 days), repeat visitors, and average spend. With regard to mountaineering, Nepal attracted 6,032 climbers in 1,209 expeditions in 2010, with 77% of all mountaineering royalties coming from Mt Sagarmatha (Everest).

Trends in 2011 indicate continued strong growth, especially in the most popular trek areas of Annapurna, Langtang and Everest, which combined comprise 93% of all trekkers. Overcrowding, climate change, social disruption and other impacts are causing concern. The Great Himalaya Trail, a 150-day "great walk" with its 1,700km network of existing trails and trade routes spanning the entire country, is being developed and promoted to connect

neglected valleys and brings tourism benefits in between and beyond these established trekking circuits. Divided into 10 sections, what's best when depends on the season and motivation of each trekking group - the more remote and unspoiled parts of Nepal are still best experienced from a tent, in great comfort of course with Col Jimmy's Sherpas in support. Although he may not have approved of many changes seen in the Nepal Himalaya in recent years, Col Jimmy would surely have supported the Great Himalaya Trail concept with its potential to explore more of the spectacular countryside and to improve the lives of many people in the mountains of Nepal that he loved so much.



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THE TOM HUGHES FAMILY TRUST – AN UPDATE

By David Bannister

(This is an edited version of the Tom Hughes Family Trust Newsletter by David Bannister.)

It is with great sadness that I need to inform you of the recent deaths of three long-time friends of Tom and the Hughes family. Many of you will know or have heard Tom talk of Jill Cook-James, Ranjitsing Rai and Pat Cook.

Jill was one of Tom's earliest friends in Nepal, having been working as a missionary there and in Bihar, north India since the mid-1960s. It was her former home, Jiwan Jyoti in Dharan, that Tom purchased in 1971 in which to establish his own home, the start of 35 years dedication to his family. Since returning from India about six years ago, Jill had endured the total limitations of Alzheimer's disease and died peacefully near the Cook family home in Chippenham in mid-November.

Ranjitsing Rai was another of Tom's earliest friends in Dharan. In the late 1950s, Ranjit had been medically discharged from 10th Gurkha Rifles after a major operation for TB and had embarked on a second career as a medical orderly at the recruiting depot in Paklihawa, West Nepal. By the time that Tom met him in the late 1960s, Ranjit had risen to be the Administrative Officer at the British Military Hospital (BMH) in Dharan, where he served until his retirement. Their friendship remained strong until Tom's death in 2005. During his long and distinguished service Ranjit was awarded both the MBE and OSTJ (Officer of the Venerable Order of St John). Since Tom's death, Ranjit had acted as counsellor and mentor to Meharman and the rest of the family. During my latest trip to Nepal in November last year I managed a short visit to see him on the day before I left Dharan. Ranjit had been unwell since April and he felt unable and unwilling to make the

suggested journey to Delhi for treatment. However, he was his usual cheerful self and asked to be remembered to all of his many friends in the UK. He died on 20 December 2011, aged 84, at BP Koirala Hospital in Dharan (on the site of the old BMH).

Pat Cook, elder sister of Jill Cook-James, arrived in Nepal in 1980 to live and work as a midwife and missionary among the local population. She quickly persuaded Tom to let her move into a room in Jiwan Jyoti, initially sharing the house with Shankar and Jiwan. Over several years Pat established herself as a well-loved and respected member of the fledgling Christian churches in Dharan and she continued to visit the family regularly after she moved back to UK, even celebrating her 80th birthday at Naya Jiwan Ghar in January 2007. Pat had been suffering for the past year with debilitating bone cancer. She died on 28 December 2011 in hospital in Chippenham. All will be sadly missed by the Hughes family.

Moving on to family matters, it became apparent during my November visit that the BFPO mail system was again being denied our use (quite legitimately) though I received some assurances that Christmas cards and small items of mail would be allowed through. In the event this proved not to be the case and several Christmas mail items for the family were returned to the UK (to a friend of Tom's who had the foresight to put a return address on her card!) These will now be carried by hand of a Trustee who is visiting the family in the next week. For the future, all mail must now be sent through the normal Royal Mail system addressed to '**....Name..., The Hughes Family House, 12/159 Chatara Line, DHARAN, Sunsari, Nepal.**'

Hopefully, the Nepali postal system will be able to cope!

Of the other family members, Nabin, one of the elder stay-at-home brothers, managed to obtain a visa to work in Saudi Arabia and departed Nepal at the end of September to work as a cleaner in a gymnasium. His first reports home say that he is enjoying his work and has been 'promoted' to become an assistant fitness instructor. We are hoping that Rajen, now 23, will be equally successful in obtaining a visa and overseas employment.

Subash and Bharat, both 17-year olds, were successful in passing their SLC (School Leaving Certificate) exams last summer and have both joined a local college for further studies. Santosh, 18, who had been asked to leave the house because of his previous poor behaviour, pleaded for a second (or third) chance and has now settled down to enrol on a college course. He has also taken on the responsibility in the house for helping the younger boys with their homework, which is a welcome change of behaviour from an academically gifted young man. He took over these responsibilities from Sachin, also very gifted, who returned to his family home in autumn 2011 after successfully completing his secondary education to help support his widowed mother. We have pledged to continue supporting him financially through college.

Bikram, now aged 17, looks set to be in school only until April 2012 and is unlikely to complete his School Leaving Certificate but, with a keen practical interest in electrics, we are hoping that he will be a suitable candidate to be put forward for a training course sponsored by the Kadoorie (KAAA) organisation. However, things are never easy and his lack of Nepalese citizenship papers means that Meharman will first have to attempt registration for him; this is not likely to be straightforward

as like many others Bikram was abandoned in the bazaar before being handed into Tom's care and his parentage may be difficult to prove.

During my November visit everyone living at the house or in the bazaar was in good spirits and good health, although Shankar developed severe stomach pains during my stay. His wife, Biswas, called on Meharman for assistance and he was taken to the BP Koirala Hospital for treatment. He has fully recovered since.

The general situation in Nepal appears to be gradually improving under the new Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, a Maoist, who has attracted support with his vision for the country's future development. Whether he can sustain the improvement in a coalition of eight parties remains to be seen. Life is still plagued by up to 16-hour power cuts every day and like the rest of the world price increases for food and other daily requirements are common. However on a more positive note the church mission school construction work, with which Meharman is involved, is going well and should be completed soon. During the build, Meharman has acted as the project manager and he will assume the role of school business manager once it is open. All this from a man that failed to complete his formal education in order to help Tom around the home! He still manages to run the Hughes' family home with Anita and in his spare time has enrolled in night classes to complete his School Leaving Certificate after a gap of sixteen years!

(From the above it can be seen that Tom's original work continues to thrive despite the difficulties encountered. It is hoped to publish a fuller obituary for Ranjitsing Rai in the next edition of the journal. Ed.)

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 own 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.

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HODGSON ONLINE

By David Gellner

(David Gellner is Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford University)

The long awaited online catalogue of the Hodgson Collection was launched by Michael Palin at a function hosted by Oliver Urquhart, the Head of African and Asian Studies, at the British Library on 25 July 2011.

Brian Houghton Hodgson lived in Kathmandu from 1820 to 1843 and in Darjeeling from 1845 to 1858. He was the British Resident in Nepal from 1833 to 1843. During his time in Nepal and India, he amassed a huge collection of documents on multifarious subjects in a wide variety of languages. The subjects covered include ethnography, linguistics, religion, castes and customs, laws, tax regimes and history. Some 972 of these documents, comprising a total of some 15,300 folios plus scrolls, unnumbered notebooks and loose letters, were deposited at the India Office Library in London in 1864.

At the launch, David Gellner (Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford) described his first attempts to use the Collection during his doctoral research in the 1980s. He said he quickly realized that although various scholars had dipped into it in the past, the Collection had been seriously under-utilized because only twelve of its 104 volumes had ever been properly catalogued. In 2000, he approached Michael Hutt (Professor of Nepali and Himalayan Studies at SOAS) with the suggestion that they should jointly apply for funding to produce such a catalogue. In 2001 they received a grant from the Leverhulme Trust which enabled them to

employ Ramesh Dhungel, a leading Nepali historian, as a cataloguer-researcher for a period of three years. *(Members will remember that Ramesh Dhungel addressed the Society on his work on the history of the Mustang area in 2004 and on the Hodgson Collection in 2008. Ed.)*

Michael Hutt explained how the catalogue had been produced. While Ramesh Dhungel did the bulk of the work, the project was also assisted by Sonam Rinchen Lepcha, Heleen Plaisier, Bairagi Kainla, Shukra Sagar Shrestha, Chandra Prasad Tripathee and Firdous Ali, who read the many documents in the Collection that are written in Lepcha and Limbu (Tibeto-Burman languages of east Nepal also spoken in Darjeeling and Sikkim), Newari (the indigenous language of the Kathmandu valley), various languages of Nepal's southern Terai zone, including Maithili and Dehati, and Urdu and Persian. However, the work turned out to require more time than originally estimated and when the Leverhulme funding came to an end the Catalogue was not yet ready for publication. It was at this point that Michael Palin came to its rescue, generously providing the project with funding that enabled it to employ Ramesh Dhungel for a further year. As this additional year drew to a close, the Friends of the British Library stepped in to extend it for six more months, by which time there was a complete first draft of the catalogue. The work of editing this and preparing it for online

publication was completed by John Whelpton, an independent scholar based in Hong Kong, Mark Turin, a researcher based at the University of Cambridge, and Burkhard Quessel, the Curator of Tibetan Collections at the British Library. Michael Hutt expressed his and David Gellner's thanks to the Leverhulme Trust, Michael Palin, and the Friends of the British Library, and to all whose work had contributed to the completion of this enormous task.

Finally, Michael Palin explained that he had agreed to provide the project with financial help because he felt that such scholarship was rare in the present day and deserved to be widely disseminated. He then formally launched the catalogue website with the click of a mouse.

To view the Hodgson catalogue, go to:
<http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/hodgson>

(Note this archive does not include the ornithological paintings held by the Zoological Society of London, some of which were included in the last edition of the journal. Ed.)



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VICE AND VIRTUE

By JP Cross

(I am grateful to the editor of 'The Kukri', journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas for permission to reproduce this piece. Ed.)

VICE

The barren, boulder-strewn, steep hillside where he had been born was five days hard walk away when the man who had left home to make good found himself tired and hungry, near his destination, but at the bottom of a steep hill. He travelled light but, even so, found the way up the hill a strain as there was nowhere he could rest till he reached the top and the track was difficult with loose stones. He envisaged a resting place half way, just where he had noticed a cooling breeze (for it was mid-*Chait* [end of April] and the weather had turned hot). 'When I have my first son,' he mused, 'I will pay for a flagged path and a resting place to be made.' He saw, in his mind's eye, the *chautara*, the square stone platform, with the shelf all around it where a man could easily rest his load.

Two trees were always planted together on a *chautara*, the *bar* and the *pipal*. Custom, from time immemorial, has required these trees be married by the priests, just like man and woman, with correctly read divinations found from the almanac. He day-dreamed further: 'How wonderful if my son's marriage and that of the trees coincided.' As he lulled himself to sleep that night he mentally completed the picture by envisaging the little stone-flagged tank some yards in front of the *chautara* with the carved wooden pole so essential to ritual, sticking up in the water. Unluckily his eldest son and the trees were far too young to be married when he unexpectedly died.

The years passed. The son grew up under his mother's care but his father's dream of a joint marriage never materialised. There was only enough money for his marriage, none for the two trees. 'Never mind,' he thought. 'My eldest son's birth will be an occasion for this to happen.'

However, despite all hopes, he did not sire a son and heir, only a daughter. He was a diligent worker and by the standards of the time, some sixty years previously, was rich. He told his friends about his hopes and day-dreams when he took counsel with them on how to remedy such matters. It was pronounced that he should make a vow for the bar and the pipal to be properly and expensively married and he would be blessed with a son.

Now there were two servants, nicknamed Gophlé (the one with chubby cheeks) and Sikuté (the thin one), trusted implicitly, but who were, unfortunately, filled with greed at their master's richness. They were cunning, clever and low-minded, contriving to act both at the marriage ceremony and for its preparation in such a way that they could get their hands on the money and escape with it. In this they were successful and both managed to get away unscathed, with enough money to make themselves significantly richer than those with whom they eventually found themselves.

The fury of the deprived man was only matched by the disappointment, at remaining unrewarded, of those whose counsels he had needed. A curse was put

on both the thieves that they too should never have any sons and that, however successful their money might seem to make them, they be doomed to disappointment.

More years passed. Sikuté married and built a house. The house was robbed and later collapsed in an earthquake. His fowls were continuously taken by jackals and his one daughter was born a simpleton. She grew up, married, had a family and all, less the son-in-law, were mortally stricken. The son-in-law remarried and had eight children, five being 'touched by the gods'. The villagers shunned them and shed no tear when three of them, along with their grandfather, died. Somehow or other the curse was implicitly known of if never explicitly discussed. The house in which the remnants of the family lived was ill-starred and even when Sikuté's son-in-law and second wife died within two days of one another, the unintelligible prattle and dangerous tantrums of the two remaining hapless ones were grim reminders of the folly of the act of greed that prevented a significant act of devotion.

Gophlé moved to a different area and likewise produced no son. A similar catalogue as Sikuté's would be tedious; suffice it to say that he was still alive then and despised and shunned by other villagers as being a load-mouthed, cantankerous bully who still lived under the strain of the curse.

"How do you know all this?" I asked my companion at the end of this involved story.

"One of the thieves was my grandfather," he replied, "and you saw what my uncles were like in my village before we moved to last night's place. It so happened that the other thief was the owner of the house we were staying in last night."

VIRTUE

In a land constantly menaced by landslides and soil erosion, scraping a living from the soil is precarious. The widow and her only son had moved back to where her husband had come from, soon after his death. Life was hard and son, Narbahadur Rai, joined the army as soon as he was old enough. He sent his mother as much money as he could and by dint of a good record had reached Gurkha Captain when I joined the battalion. He had married late for a Gurkha, after the Burma War, and had a large and contented family. His youngest son, aged six, was the apple of his father's eye.

After he had retired on pension (he died in 1986) Narbahadur was elected the village leader. Among other things he soon had a school built for primary classes and two teachers were engaged. Many problems of the villagers came his way and, although frequently exasperated, he was a popular and successful arbiter. His fame spread and the village was to be honoured by an unusually high official visiting it.

Great activity ensued. Village paths were repaired, broken walls restored and the school re-decorated. Outside the school was a large boulder that was not embedded in the ground but lay slightly tilted. It offended Narbahadur's sense of tidiness as the gap had become a collecting place of waste. He decided to try and get it flush with the ground so he arranged for a group of twenty-four men armed with crowbars to move it. It was a feat to find enough crowbars for the job but, try hard as they might, they could not budge the boulder at all.

Narbahadur's youngest son was a spectator to this and, on the morrow, when all the men were away doing something

else, he crawled into the gap between boulder and ground to remove the rubbish and thereby please his father. No sooner was he underneath when the boulder, obviously loosened by the exertions of the previous day, subsided. An indentation in the ground allowed just enough room for the little boy's head to be undamaged, but not so his body, which was almost, but not quite, crushed outright.

Some little girls playing nearby rushed to get help when they saw what had happened, but with all the men away the womenfolk were unable to organise themselves. Narbahadur's eldest daughter, however, saw the need for immediate action. In desperation, she told all the other little girls to run back to the scene of the accident and try to move the boulder by themselves. Their search for help had taken twenty minutes, an uncomfortably long time under the circumstances, but a muffled bleat from the little boy showed he was still alive, albeit probably hideously broken. So, armed with pieces of wood, a dozen little girls, aged between eight and twelve, tried with might and main to shift the boulder. With superhuman strength, they managed to lift it sufficiently high and just long enough

for one little girl to snatch the trapped boy from underneath before the sheer weight of rock exerted its overpowering pressure and it again subsided.

The lad was laid on the ground, purple-faced with near suffocation, as his father rushed to the scene. Narbahadur very gently lifted his son up, even more carefully took his shirt off and, when he realised that the only damage was a large and ugly bruise, unashamedly wept.

"Wasn't that miraculous?" I asked him.

"Yes," he replied. "I cannot explain what happened except to say that the gods helped me out. To show my appreciation I have had a chautara made and a bar and a pipal tree planted and have vowed that they be properly married...on the same day as my son, if possible, as my grandfather had once so wished for my father."

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Images from 29th BRINOS ear surgery camp - Nepalgunj - March 2005



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TOY TRAIN TO THE CLOUDS
THE DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY

By Paul Whittle

Vice Chairman, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) is rightly world famous. For over 130 years little British-built steam locomotives have been climbing 7,000 feet up to the 'Raj' Hill Station of Darjeeling.

The DHR's links with Nepal are many and various. As long ago as 1886 the line's founder, Franklin Prestage, proposed a 90 mile extension to Tamakote with the aim of developing a trade in Tibetan wool and converting the hill slopes to tea gardens. However, the political climate was firmly against the scheme. In the 1920s the DHR was used on several occasions to convey stores and equipment for the attempts on Everest. Today the majority of local people are still Gorkhas of ethnic Nepali background, with the schools using Nepali and English as the preferred media of instruction.

Notwithstanding its current fame, less than twenty years ago Indian Railways planned to close almost the entire 55 mile line. They were in a hurry to abolish steam haulage, and the loss-making DHR did not feature on their modernisation agenda. Fortunately, in the nick of time, supporters in India and internationally, recognised the uniqueness of this early hill railway with its remarkable zigzags and spirals - and the rest is, as they say, history. For in 1999 UNESCO awarded the line World Heritage Site status, the first industrial WHS in South East Asia, and only the second railway in the world to get that coveted accolade.

Saving the railway from closure was a huge team effort, and a part of that team

was the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society. My first visit to Darjeeling was in 2002 when I joined the DHRS, initially handling its public relations and later taking on the additional role of Vice Chairman.

The DHR is a remarkable piece of railway engineering. It took three years to build and opened in 1881 becoming India's first hill railway. The two foot gauge track was laid alongside the steep, winding Hill Cart Road and where the gradient was too steep for the trains, loops and reverses were constructed for an easier route. For its time it was an engineering triumph and it was that innovation that much later gave the line its World Heritage title. Although present day road users, faced with over 170 level crossings along the shared route, are not always appreciative of that nineteenth century innovation!

Throughout its history the DHR has faced many challenges. Perhaps the biggest difficulty is that the line runs through a very fragile landscape. Every monsoon season (May to September) sees the Darjeeling region drenched by massive rainfall. The railway is then at the mercy of whatever happens on the adjoining hillsides, well beyond its immediate control. A particularly vulnerable point is at Pagla Jhora ('Raging Torrent') where a severe landslide in mid 2009 caused a 500 metre stretch of road and railway to fall down the hillside. Expensive repairs started, but just as these were nearing completion the monsoon rains of 2011

wrecked all the repairs and created even more damage. But even this was not the end of Mother Nature's assault. For only a few months later the whole area was shaken by a powerful earthquake which triggered a further bad landslide near the railway workshop at Tindharia. The result was that the workshop became isolated from both the upper and lower sections of the line, wrecking the repair and maintenance schedules. As I pen this article in early 2012 it seems it will be many months yet before the DHR is fully restored to normal traffic.

Another major issue has been the troubled politics of the region. For many years there has been a widely-held view, centred on Darjeeling, that the region, currently ruled from distant Kolkata (Calcutta) with only an under-funded, weak local administration, should be given the autonomy of a separate 'Gorkhaland'.

In recent years the main local political party (GJM) stepped up its independence campaign and, along with other government-run bodies, the DHR was caught up in the widespread strikes and other disruption. All this has deterred tourism and essential, desperately needed investment in local infrastructure such as reliable electricity and water supply. (Much of Darjeeling still relies on water tanker deliveries and the poor road conditions are a constant source of aggravation). To widespread relief, the political future is now looking more hopeful. There has been a change of state government, the promise of increased investment, and a new more powerful and properly funded local administration. The all-important tourist industry is recovering strongly.

Since World Heritage recognition, Indian Railways has committed very



Cooling by hand at Kurseong engine shed.

© DHRs.

firmly to maintaining and developing the railway. Track has been replaced, bridges rebuilt, new carriages provided and even two new steam locomotives built. Four modern diesel locomotives haul most normal services, but a dozen old steam engines handle tourist specials and a daily service train between Kurseong and Darjeeling. The line's workshop at Tindharia, complete with its original belt-driven machinery, is still busy overhauling the locomotives and carriages. The recruitment in mid-2011 of almost 20 high-calibre young apprentices (both male and female) was a welcome confirmation of investment in the DHR's long term future.

But what has been achieved by that World Heritage 'badge' given over a decade ago? Following the award, it's clear that hopes and aspirations were raised too high. Local people believed, or convinced themselves, that great pots of UNESCO money would start flowing in, and that this poor part of north-east India would soon be reaping the benefits. In reality, the DHR World Heritage Site is simply a very thin 55 mile corridor in a region that suffers from under-investment in all manner of ways. So when tangible

improvements and prosperity did not happen overnight (or even years later) disillusionment set in. UNESCO has played its part in priming the pump and funding planning conferences, but ultimately it is the Indian Government at national, state and local level that must provide the essential new infrastructure that will enable the railway to capitalise on its fame.

And what of the role of the DHR Society based almost 5,000 miles away? Well, on formation in late 1997 our first priority was to help save the railway. Our mission statement was, and still is, "To promote awareness of, interest in, and support for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway". We now have almost 800 members in 24 countries, a dynamic support group in India, and a web site that hosts 30,000 hits each year. We sponsored the first steam charter trains on the line, bringing in valuable extra revenue, and our associated travel firm, Darjeeling Tours Ltd, is the acknowledged leader in rail tours to the DHR and elsewhere in India.

One particularly satisfying development in 2011 was our response to an invitation by Indian Railways to help them improve

the performance and reliability of the British-built steam locomotives. Made in Manchester and Glasgow (the oldest dating from 1892) the fleet was showing clear signs of old age: the railway's management had the good sense to realise that, over the years, many of the old skills in looking after them had been lost as loco crews and workshop staff had retired. Fortunately, amongst our membership we had two



Students and shunting. The loco dates from 1914.

© DHRS.

highly experienced steam loco engineers and after two visits they had improved significantly the performance of two engines. Working in close partnership with the workshop staff, they also set in place the new procedures and training routines needed to restore the rest of the fleet to good health.

Of course, the prime reason for the DHR's construction was freight traffic. Uphill would go foodstuffs, coal and machinery whilst downhill would come the steadily increasing loads of tea as the estates expanded. Today, tea is still a hugely important part of the local economy with 80 tea estates employing



Archive picture of the Chunbati loop.

about 40,000 workers. Sadly, road competition has meant that freight services ended twenty years ago. However, in direct response to a proposal from the DHRS, the DHR management has restored to full working order five of the old freight vans; the plan is to use them for publicity runs –perhaps recreating the special trains that conveyed the ‘first flush’ pickings of tea down to the main line and on to the world tea markets in Calcutta.

But the DHRS is much more than a society for railway enthusiasts. In recent years, as the line's future has stabilised, we have steadily expanded our activities to benefit the communities living along the line. Our Education Group works with local schools, providing resource material that connects the children with the history and relevance of the railway. It also sponsors highly successful school competitions, and charters school specials for children too poor to experience a ride on the line that often runs right past their front doors. In all this we receive the most marvellous help and support from the ladies of the Inner Wheel Club of

Darjeeling. Our associated charity, the Darjeeling Railway Community Support (DRCS), funds projects along the line ranging from children's playgrounds, local employment opportunities and training, to health and dental check ups. Recent grants have provided urgent roof repairs to Darjeeling's historic Planters Hospital, feeding

programmes, grants for HIV/Aids awareness training and re-housing a small school which had only the most basic facilities.

But none of this would be possible without the enthusiastic support of our many friends and partners in India. It was through this combined effort that in 2010 we gained a special award from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRPS) for ‘Best International Achievement’. There is



The daily diesel Darjeeling to Kurseong.

© DHRS.

always much more to do. But we know that our efforts are appreciated, not just by the railway authorities, but also by the many local people who are starting to derive some benefit from their little railway getting its World Heritage status.

And what of my role as Vice Chairman of the DHRS? Well, it is immensely varied, sometimes frustrating but always interesting. My main tasks include day-to-day liaison with the management of the DHR and other officers of Indian Railways, including the occasional hosting when they come to the UK on fact-finding visits. In the reverse direction it is always a delight to return to Darjeeling, to meet up with old friends and develop new contacts for our various activities. There is also liaison with the UNESCO office in Delhi on heritage issues, issuing press releases, giving talks to groups, and fielding a constant stream of enquiries

about the DHR from around the world and India itself. I even get e-mails from intending travellers in India asking “if the DHR trains are running on time?” Now that’s a real compliment as to how well the DHRS is regarded!

Like to Know More?

In addition to his DHR talks, Paul (who lives at Woking) gives a wide range of illustrated lectures to raise money for charities in India and Burma. For details of these talks and of the DHRS (including a free sample copy of the ‘Darjeeling Mail’ magazine) contact Paul at 01932 346549 or at pro@dhers.org). The DHRS web site is at www.dhers.org and is acknowledged as the most reliable source of travel information about the DHR.

(Paul Whittle is due to give a talk to the Society on 6th November 2012. Ed.)

Honours & Awards

On 28 April, the Chancellor of the Nepal Academy presented Professor Hutt with the Nai Derukha International Award at a ceremony held at the Nepal government's Department of Information in Kathmandu. The award is given each year by Nai Prakashan, a Nepali publishing house.

The Darjeeling District

Members will be aware that there has been a period of unrest since the 1980s in the Darjeeling area which has a largely ethnic Nepalese population. In July 2011 an agreement was signed with federal and regional officials and Gorkha ethnic groups. The agreement would create an

autonomous body to administer the Darjeeling district. This would be known as the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA). The GTA will have full control over public works, tourism, social welfare, agriculture and healthcare. The GTA mirrors similar arrangements with other ethnic groups in the northeast such as the Bodoland territorial council.



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EVENTS AT THE GURKHA MUSEUM 2012

21 -26 April

Exhibition of paintings
by Gordon Davidson '*Nepal Awakening*'

8 June

Lecture & curry lunch: subject:
'*The Gurkhas Special Force*'
Speaker: Professor Chris Bellamy,
Author, Military Historian, Director
Greenwich Maritime Institute.
Time: 1100 am.

4 August - 2 September

Temporary Summer Exhibition:
'*Brunei: A Look Back; A Look Forward –
A Fifty Year Partnership*'

11 October

Lecture & sandwich lunch: subject:
'*Decorated Bandsmen 1914 – 1945*'.
The talk will cover awards from the
Victoria Cross to the Military Medal for
members of Regimental bands throughout
the British Army.
Speaker: Stephen Mason, Military
Researcher & Lecturer .
Time: 1230 pm.

12 October

Lecture & curry lunch: subject:
"*Gurkhas – Eleven Years in Afghanistan –
For What?*" Speaker: Lieutenant Colonel
Gerald Strickland DSO MBE RGR,
former Battalion CO and currently Staff
College Instructor.
Time: 1100 am

15 November Lecture & sandwich lunch:
Subject: "*Irregular Correspondence*". The
talk will cover the 192 Laurie family
letters written from the Crimea, India,
Hong Kong and Nova Scotia during
interesting times (1855 -1865) by three
brothers. One of the brothers is the
lecturer's grandfather. Speaker: William
Dyson-Laurie, Lecturer.
Time: 1230 pm.

6 December Lecture & sandwich lunch:
subject: '*Winston Churchill's Toyshop – as
Experienced in Gordon Rogers's War*'
Speaker: Gordon Rogers will speak on the
main WW2 weapon's experimental
establishment at Whitchurch, just north of
Aylesbury where Sir Winston Churchill
took a direct controlling influence. 26
weapons were invented there and went
into service. There is also a link to
Bletchley Park.
Time: 1240 pm.

Booking is essential for all lectures.
Tel: 01962 842832;
Email: curator@thegurkhamuseum.co.uk
Costs: Sandwich lunch £6;
Curry lunch £30.

FIRST TIME ON A ROPE

By George Band

In 1946 I was seventeen and went to stay with my uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Thomas Reid in Heaton Moor, Stockport. To reach them from school in Somerset I had bicycled up through north Wales and seen climbers on the crags in Snowdonia. On arrival in Stockport I had noticed a talk about climbing in Scotland advertised so I went to it and was totally enthralled by the pictures of these huge mountains and the whole beauty of the landscape. For some time I had wanted to do some climbing but didn't know anybody to go with so at the end of the lecture I asked the speaker, "What could I do?" "Well," he said, "nearly every weekend we go out to one of the gritstone crags in the Pennines. You could join us there on Sunday." I got out some of my uncle's maps, found a bus that would take me to within 13 miles of Laddow rocks and determined to get there. It was already afternoon by the time I got there and I reminded the lecturer of his kind offer. He held out the end of a rope to tie on and we stood at the bottom of something called Giant's Staircase classed as an 'easy'. It was indeed easy he realised I should have no difficulty in doing some simple routes.

Just beside the Staircase was a square-cut overhang which must have been in the 'severe' cut category because while negotiating the overhang a climber fell off and swung into space; I was very impressed how the leader was able to hold him without, I think, the assurance of any real belay.

Soon it was time to pack up. The others had bivouacked at the crag the previous Saturday night. About five miles away there was a railway station at Hayfield and we could just catch an evening train. As we walked over the moorland my new-found friends were singing from a classical repertoire – the third movement from Beethoven's seventh symphony and parts of Mendelssohn's Italian symphony. If Barbirolli was conducting a superb concert by the Halle orchestra in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, they always had a tussle whether to go climbing or buy tickets for the concert. We just managed to catch the train and I realised from that moment I was totally hooked on climbing.

(I am grateful to Mrs Susan Band for permission to publish this piece. Ed.)

SOCIETY TIES SCARVES AND LAPEL BADGES

Mrs Jenifer Evans has kindly taken on the sale of the Society ties and scarves which cost £10.00 each including postage. They are available from her at: Bangers Mead, Lower Froyle, Alton, Hampshire GU34 4LL 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.

Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire. By Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper. Penguin Books, 2008. Pp 674, £6.99. ISBN 978-0-141-01738-9. 34 illustrations, 5 maps.

Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper are Cambridge dons, the former Professor of Imperial and Naval History and the latter Senior Lecturer in History. The book is a scholarly study ie, it has an index, bibliography and notes and is in the form of a narrative account of events which had beginnings in 1937 with the full scale attack on China by Japanese Imperialists and which only drew to a conclusion in the 1970's with the finish of the Vietnam war and the economic renaissance of Japan. It concentrates on the years immediately after the war up to 1949 and is a sequel to the authors' earlier work "Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan" (Allen Lane, 2004). Before the preface there are 10 pages of "dramatis personae" which provide a very helpful glossary for those of us who have forgotten the names and activities of the key characters who participated in the birth pangs of this new Asian world.

The geographical region is "The Crescent", which is pivotal on the Isthmus of Kra in south Thailand between the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea through which Churchill wanted to build a canal. It curves north to Burma, Bengal and India to the West, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Indo-China to the East. Southwards Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia are included. Following the defeat and surrender of the Japanese in September

1945 this area was awash with the remnants of defeated and victorious armies against a background of competing nationalist factions, many of which were at each others throats. This had odd consequences so that in Indo-China for instance the British and Americans allied themselves with the Japanese against the French who strongly opposed the nationalist forces under Ho Chi Minh who would eventually triumph in the Vietnam War. The strains and conflicts are reflected in the chapter headings which include "Burma Intransigent", "Bengal on the Brink", "Britain's Forgotten War in Vietnam", "One Empire Unravels, Another is Born", "Britain's Terminal Crisis in Burma" and "Freedom and Revolution". The complicated events are described with clarity and cogent analysis and as a result of Britain's colonial responsibility involving a huge area and many countries; one becomes aware of the interdigitated nature of the plot.

Throughout the dialogue interesting characters appear including Tom Driberg who was a war correspondent and latterly Labour MP who, as a result of his wheeling and dealing claimed subsequently to have "nearly prevented the Vietnam War". He and Mountbatten struck up a surprisingly good relationship which was fuelled by late night discussion with alcoholic lubrication so that the representatives of Royalty and the Labour movement achieved an unlikely consensus. Poignant are the quoted remarks of a certain Derek van den Boegarde a British army captain who had fought in Northern Europe following D Day and was posted to India and the Far

East as part of the British force required for the S E Asia liberation. These were war weary men and in his subsequent memoirs as the film actor Dirk Bogard he describes Singapore as “a white-washed bastard Tunbridge Wells – with palm trees”. Subsequently, he was posted to Java where the Japanese prisoners of war were often naked except for their boots, peaked caps and flapping loin cloths.

This is a major historical account and may be definitive. Has it relevance to the present conflicts in the Middle East? Probably not although the release in 2010 of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma provides echos of the events in 1947 concerning her father Aung San who was the Burmese national leader and former soldier favoured by the British and who was assassinated by left wing revolutionaries. Furthermore, the revolutions last year in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are the climax of about 40 years of comparative stability since the time span of this book albeit under autocratic dictatorships. Perhaps now we are witnessing the next phase in the political development of the region and how this works out will be the subject of future analysis. This book is thoroughly recommended especially to those who can remember the events and others with the curiosity to wonder what, how and why.

PA Trott

The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas: Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics. *By Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and Gerard Toffin. Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2011. Pp346. ISBN 978-81-321-0524-4.*

This is Volume 4 of a series under the title of *Governance, Conflict and Civil Action*.

It may surprise many people to know

that “belonging” is a technical word in Social Anthropological Circles (Social Science) and is divided into four categories, commonality, mutuality, allegiance and entitlement. This book explores these concepts in the communities living in the Himalayan region which consists mainly of Nepal. It is an academic book, the fourth volume in a series of publications entitled “Governance, Conflict and Civil Action” set in and around Nepal and edited by David Gellner who is professor of Anthropology at Oxford and a Fellow of All Souls. This volume is the outcome of an international conference held in New Delhi in March 2007 and the 14 chapters are written by the contributors. There is an interesting Introduction written by the editors who review the subject overall and summarise the individual chapters.

Although many will find the jargon difficult to understand, words like matrilineality, salience, territoriality and indigeneity abound, the general sense serves to identify belonging in communities whether to family, village, caste or nation and record these affiliations through several research investigations. Conclusions are rather hard to come by but reading the 24 page Introduction is worthwhile as here all the individual contributions are summarised. The chapter by Professor Sanjay Kumar Pandey, currently at Cambridge University is particularly interesting and identifies belonging in the complicated development of the Naga people in North East India and Assam. They are a mongoloid race and came to their present abode from different directions and at different times. They developed a governance system based on villages of a few hundred people in which an elder was present and a small

democratically elected group of people. Language was very diverse and numerous dialects developed some of which are almost incomprehensible. Their progress under British administration to statehood within the present day India via fighting as a unit in the First World War is fascinating to read about and illustrates the wide range of social progress within the need for belonging.

This book is recommended to those interested in the social history of Nepal and may have lessons for those involved in the present political impasse in the region.

PA Trott

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Fame of the Name – How there is much more to the Gurkha than sheer courage 1857-1947. By JP Cross.

Blenheim Press. 2011. Hb. £19.95. ISBN 978-1-906302-22-1.

(This can be purchased through www.blenheimpressltd.co.uk)

The Blenheim Press announcement of John Cross's latest book in his series of historical novels is given below:

'The name Gurkha is justly famed throughout the World for the soldierly qualities of the men that bear it. Famed for their endurance, famed for their discipline, and famed above all for their courage in battle and their deadly use of the kukri in combat at close quarters. And yet, that is only half the story, for their hard existence has also given the hill men of Nepal self-reliance, keen powers of observation allied with cunning, and an amazing tenacity and single-mindedness of purpose. These less well-known qualities are the main focus in this book, which takes the story of the Gurkhas forward from mid Victorian times (post-Mutiny) to the end of World War II. This is the fourth book in this series of historical novels, following *The Throne of Stone*, *The Restless Quest*, and *The Crown of Renown*.' The latter book covers the period 1819 – 1857 - the start of Gurkha recruitment and the Indian Mutiny. The latest novel, *The Fame of the Name*, brings the story up to modern times from the Victorian era. See p.88 of the last edition of the journal concerning *The Restless Quest* and *The Crown of Renown*.

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

OBITUARIES

Mr George Band OBE

George died peacefully at home with his family on 26th August aged 82. He was the youngest and one of the last surviving members of the successful 1953 Everest expedition led by John Hunt. Two years later in 1955 he made the first ascent with Joe Brown of Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain and regarded as more difficult than Mount Everest. Band was chosen by Hunt on the basis of his alpine experience the previous season. He had worked for a glaciologist on Monte Rosa for some two months thus allowing him to earn sufficient foreign exchange to have a lengthy stay abroad, denied to those who had to rely only on the meagre £25 allowance permitted for foreign travel from UK at that time. Band had the tasks of dealing with food and radio equipment for the expedition. He helped to establish the route through the Khumbu Icefall. After the return to UK he completed his degree at in geology Cambridge.

He was born in Taiwan and went to school at Eltham College and completed his national service with the Royal Corps of Signals. After Cambridge University he went on to study petroleum engineering at Imperial College. After Kanchenjunga, Band went on to climb in the Alps, Karakoram and the Andes. In 1957 he joined Royal Dutch Shell as a petroleum engineer, working in oil and gas exploration. His work took him to many interesting places including the USA, Venezuela, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Oman, The Netherlands, and Malaysia. In the latter he became managing director for Shell in Sarawak and Sabah.

Following the discovery of oil in the North Sea, there were opportunities back in UK. From 1984 until 1999 Band was Director-General of the UK Offshore Operators' Association and vice-chairman of Premier Oil.

After retiring he was able to devote time to mountaineering and charity work associated with the Himalayas. He became president of the Alpine Club and of the British Mountaineering Council. Other roles were as chairman of the Mount Everest Foundation and the Himalayan Trust (formed by the late Sir Edmund Hillary). Over the years since the success of the 1953 Everest team, the members met regularly for reunions at the Pen-Y-Gwryd Hotel in north Wales which was the base for the team's initial training and on occasions returned to Nepal. But as time passed the number of surviving members inevitably dwindled. Despite increasing age, Band continued to climb and trek at lower levels, particularly in Nepal where he visited the Sherpas that he had known and their families and was able to see for himself the results of the work of the Himalayan Trust. In 2009 he was finally awarded the OBE for services to mountaineering and charity work. He wrote *The Road to Rakaposhi* (1955), *50 Years on Top of the World* (2003) and *Summit* (2006). George was a member of the Society and gave a number of lectures over the years, most recently in 2009 when he updated the Society on the work of the Himalayan Trust. He also contributed to the Society's journal. He was able, throughout his life, to repay his good fortune of being selected at such a young age to take part in the first successful

ascent of Everest. He will be long remembered for his contribution to British mountaineering and for his support to the Sherpas who played such an important part in the successful ascent.

GDB

(I am grateful both to Mrs Susan Band & the Daily Telegraph for the information for this piece. Ed.)



Greg with the late Mrs Mayura Brown at the Nepalese embassy.

Lt Col HCS Gregory OBE, KSG

Harry Gregory or Colonel ‘Greg’ as he was known to so many members of the Society, died on 5th March 2011 aged 94. He was a senior and longstanding life member of the Society. He had devoted a life-long service to the Gurkhas and Nepal. On retiring from the active list, he took up an RO post with the Liaison Office of the Brigade of Gurkhas (LOBG) in MOD. It was whilst he was in that appointment that he started his great contribution to the Society. He variously held the appointments as treasurer, acting chairman and latterly as founding editor of

the journal, a post he held for 20 years. His service to the Society was recognised by his appointment as a vice-president. Greg was born at Wallington, Surrey on 26th October 1916. After his father, who served in World War I with 1st Battalion The Royal Scots, died of wounds in January 1918, Greg was taken by his mother to the Nilgiri Hills (Blue Mountains) of South India where her family owned property. It was there that Greg spent many of his formative years, developing as a scholar of some distinction and as a good sportsman.

Below is an extract written by Major General RWL McAlister from the 10th Gurkha Rifles Association journal:

“Greg was 23 years old when war broke out, a man rather than a boy. When he was commissioned into the 10th Gurkhas in 1940 and joined the 3rd Battalion, he was older than the most recently joined regular officers from Sandhurst. By age and relative maturity, and probably with a hint of precocious gravitas, he clearly stood out as ready for responsibility and was soon made Adjutant. It was a post he was to fill with distinction for the next four years, two of them in battle. Following the British retreat from Burma, the 3rd /10th joined the 23rd Indian Division in June 1942 in an all Gurkha brigade, the 37th , alongside 3rd /3rd and 3rd /5th . They were at once involved in long-range patrolling down on the Chindwin River, and sometimes over the river into Jap held territory. These operations continued throughout 1943. Jim Tainsh who joined 3rd /10th at Imphal in 1943 says he has never forgotten Greg’s advice that his first priority must be to look after one’s Gurkha soldiers. He also remembers being ordered to ride a horse, an officer’s reconnaissance vehicle in

those days; it bolted and he fell off. The next thing he remembers is Greg leaning over him and saying ‘Tainsh, you’ll have to do better than that in this battalion’

In March 1944, when the Japanese took the offensive in its ‘march on Delhi’, the 3rd/10th and 3rd/5th, by now hardened veterans, distinguished themselves in breaking the Jap roadblocks on the Tiddim Road, which had threatened to cut off the withdrawal to the Imphal Plain of the 17th Division. Both battalions were themselves cut off for six days with Japs to south and north. Jim Tainsh who was wounded at this action reminds us that the wounded could not be evacuated during those six days and how grateful he and the other wounded were that Greg came to the RAP to visit and update them every day on the progress of the battle. Greg also wrote to Jim in hospital with battalion news. You never forget comrades like that. Greg was next involved in the operations at Ukhrul countering the Jap thrust from north east of Imphal but in May the 23rd Division moved to the vital Shenam Pass guarding the approach to Imphal from the southeast. The bitter defence of Shenam is often described as ‘The ordeal at Shenam’. Whilst nothing can detract from the valour of the Royal West Kents at Kohima, it should be noted that their famous siege lasted 15 days, and the clearing of Kohima and the road south to beleaguered Imphal took a further two months – two and a half months in all. But the defence of Shenam and Scraggy, the foremost defended hilltop which too few have heard of, raged at close quarters for three and a half months. When the Japs, hooking round the forward positions, threw the Rajputana Rifles off Gibraltar, the highest hill on the pass, it was the 3rd Battalion’s counter attack under Major Dick Edwards which

retook it. Colonel Marindin of the 3rd/5th, looking back from one of the foremost hills, witnessed the action and, astonished and thrilled at the speed and vigour of 3rd/10th’s assault, commented that it was the first time he had ever seen the Japs run. When, with the opening of the Imphal-Kohima road, resources enabled a major attack to be mounted at Shenam, the 3rd/10th was selected to retake Scraggy; in a four hour battle which finally ended the Japanese offensive on that front, ammunition ran out twice – 3700 grenades were used by the Battalion that morning and 115 casualties were suffered. Credit of course to those in the front line but spare a thought for the 2i/c, the Adjutant, the Subedar Major, the Quartermaster and Greg, at the heart of it all, was awarded a Mention-in-Despatches.

The war then took Greg and the 3rd/10th through amphibious landing training, the unopposed landing on Malaya in September 1945 and then on with 37th Brigade and the 3rd/3rd and 3rd/5th comrades to the operations in Java. British, Gurkha, and Indian troops went only to establish a semblance of order in which to secure the release of the Allied POWs and internees (RAPWI) held hostage by the Indonesians and indeed disarm and repatriate the Japanese. But the Indonesians saw no such transparency and fought to prevent what they reckoned was an attempt to re-establish Dutch Colonial rule. Greg commanded a company in these operations from October 1945 to October 1946 in which the 3rd/10th suffered not far short of 100 casualties in a so-called year of peace. The 10th GR History calls it ‘The Java Nightmare’ and ‘this unhappy episode amid death, suffering, suspicion and treachery’. An Indonesian truce meant nothing and a promise that a road would

be open could never be trusted; Greg's embussed company was ambushed more than once and had to fight its way through. He earned another 'Mention'.

With the disbandment of the 3rd Battalion in April 1947, Greg was posted to the Training Centre at Alhail and, as the senior officer there commanded during the difficult days of Independence and the Opt. Aged thirty he handled, with immense discretion, the inharmonious attitude of those opting for India (led by the Centre's Subedar Major) towards those opting for the British army. In the midst of acrimony, Nick Carter recalled that 'Greg's quiet calm, his impartiality, determination and serene air of authority met every crisis and was transmitted to us all'.

Joining the 1st Battalion, Malaya and the Emergency then followed and, in the 1950s, a posting to command a recruiting depot on the Nepalese border where Greg earned the MBE and a Brigade wide recognition among Gurkha soldiers of his sterling qualities. There followed further operations in Malaya with the 1st Battalion where he was Mentioned in Despatches twice more. Chris Pike recalled that in 1954 "Greg was my first company commander and I learned more from him in my first two years than during the rest of my service. What was exceptional was his huge knowledge, respect and understanding of Gurkha customs, culture and tradition; his complete openness and honesty with all soldiers. He was deeply trusted and respected and held in great affection by all ranks."

Greg was appointed to command the Record Office. Here his methodical staff work and wide knowledge of the Gurkha soldier made him an outstanding holder of

that important post. How fortunate it was that Greg was still the Record Officer at the time of the Borneo run-down, by now a Lieutenant Colonel. We can take pride in the fact that the acceptable terms negotiated with MOD were largely the work of Greg, John Chapple and Colin Maddison. Greg was duly rewarded with the OBE.

After retiring in 1972 Greg worked for ten years as an RO in the Liaison Office in MOD under Duncan Green, during which he assisted in the Gurkha pay reviews. There simply never was any question of a withdrawal from Gurkha affairs. He became an Honorary Life Trustee of the Gurkha Welfare Trust."

During his time at MOD in the BGLO's office, one of his major responsibilities was for Gurkha pay and conditions of service. It was here that he met and worked with another eventual member of the Society, Mr Ashley Adams who writes: "I worked with Greg after his active service when he was an RO in the Brigade of Gurkhas Liaison Office in MOD. In 1975 – 1977. I was leader of the MOD Overseas Forces Pay Review Team which was charged with assessing pay, pensions and conditions of service for Gurkhas and other overseas enlisted troops. The team had to take economic and social evidence on the ground in Nepal. This required annual visits to the main Gurkha resettlement areas in Nepal to look at actual living costs and local conditions. Greg was our guide and mentor both in Nepal and back in MOD. His efficiency, charm, helpfulness and local knowledge ensured the smooth running of the Team's reviews. He pressed for the best interests of the Gurkhas in a resolute but balanced and polite way. His reputation and respect in Nepal eased our

work and ensured equitable outcomes. He became a good friend and introduced me to the Society. His civility and affinity for the Gurkhas always shone through.”

General McAlister continues:

“We cannot doubt that much of the Gurkhas’ loyalty, courage and robust cheerfulness rubbed off in his own character. To the end of his life, Greg maintained a steady correspondence with his old comrades in the east. Gurkha soldiers throughout the Brigade loved and respected his measured, impartial, patient and transparent handling of their careers. Greg tried to look for the best in people. Slow to utter criticism, he was a quiet, kindly, friendly, modest man; there was no great fire or ambition, certainly no presumption; no flashes of occasional brilliance; just a steady reliability and resolution, ever ready to help, unflappable and calm in a crisis; a man for the long haul; a ‘love thy neighbour’ Christian. We laymen would say he was a saint.

But let us not forget that this seemingly gentle, unassuming man was physically as tough as old boots – a man of oak-like durability. In his younger days he was a towering and rock-like centre half at regimental team level and later an excellent tennis player, becoming FARELF doubles champion. In his eighties he could still walk ten miles (often to visit the grave of his beloved wife Joanna); in his nineties, still vehemently self-reliant. With all the work and energy he put into his life, he could not have survived to 94 if he had not been as hard as nails.”

Lionel, Greg’s eldest son, who followed him into the Gurkha Brigade and who is a member of the Society, has added the following lines:

“To the end of his life, Greg was totally devoted to the memory of his wife, Sabina Joanna (nee Stryjska) whom he married in 1944 and whose father, a Polish Cavalry Officer, and three brothers had died fighting the Russians in eastern Poland at the start of World War II. Joanna was with him until she was tragically killed in a car accident in 1978, four years before Greg retired in 1982. They had five sons - Lionel, Robert, Francis, Patrick and Christopher. On his own for over thirty three years, Greg continued to live at his home in Thanet, a corner of England that he loved, and, with great fortitude and resolute independence, to carry out his duties to the full in all his many involvements - particularly the Brigade of Gurkhas, the Gurkha Welfare Trust, the Britain Nepal Society, the United Services Catholic Association and the support of his local Church. He was also, throughout, the mainstay of his family in every way. He is buried next to Joanna in the churchyard of St Augustine’s Abbey, Ramsgate.

(I am grateful to Major General RWL McAlister, Mr Ashley Adams and Lt Col Lionel Gregory for their assistance in producing this piece. Ed.)

Miss Marinel Fitzsimons MBE

Marinel Fitzsimons died aged 94 on 26th March. She was the long standing secretary of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs (RSAA). She took up her appointment as secretary in 1968 of the then Royal Central Asian Society, [the change of the Society’s title to the RSAA took place on 1st January 1975], remaining with the Society until her retirement in 1995. She had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Society’s members and was the prime arranger of all

their tours of Asia throughout her tenure as secretary. The tours started in 1971 to mark the Society's 70th anniversary year. Marinel joined the Britain-Nepal Society in 1980 as a result of the RSAA tour to Nepal in that year and in this respect was greatly assisted by the late Major Dudley Spain, Oriental Secretary in Kathmandu and the then ambassador, the late Mr John Denson. She wrote about her experiences on the tours in *Round and About in Asia – The Royal Society for Asian Affairs Tours 1971-1995*. This work was reviewed in the journal edition No 28 – 2004.

GDB

Major General Sir Roy Redgrave KBE MC

Roy Redgrave died on 3rd July 2011 aged 85. He had both a distinguished and colourful military career. His interest in Nepal was the result of his last appointment as Major General Brigade of Gurkhas, an honorary title that went with his post as Commander British Forces Hong Kong (1978-1980), a somewhat unusual appointment for a Household Cavalry officer.

Ashley Adams who was Civil Secretary during his tenure wrote; "...an unforgettable character, amusing, urbane and approachable. Although not from the Brigade he took his MGBG responsibilities very seriously."

His colourful background started in the Athenee Palace Hotel in Bucharest in September 1925 where he was born, apparently shortly after his mother, daughter of a Romanian general, had checked in. His father was involved with oil drilling with Romanian oil companies. He was connected to the famous family of actors as his father was Sir Michael Redgrave's half-brother. World War II

broke out whilst he was at Sherborne School in England. He enlisted in the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues) as a trooper, subsequently being commissioned and posted to 1st Household Cavalry Regiment (1HCR). He went with his unit through Holland and was part of the advance into northern Germany. It was in the last week of the war that he won an immediate MC for action to save his wireless operator from his burning armoured car. His vehicle had been hit and was burning, trapping the operator inside. Redgrave, under fire, pulled the man out during which he himself was also wounded. Despite this he went back to assist his driver who had been killed. He was unable to lift his operator so he made his way back under what cover was available, returning with six troopers with whom he engaged the enemy and brought back the wounded. Not until later, early next morning, was he himself attended to. He remained in the Army after the war serving in Germany and Cyprus where he was mentioned in despatches. He learnt to ride and commanded the Household Cavalry Regiment in London and commanded The Blues in BAOR. Later he was the British Commandant in Berlin where he visited Rudolf Hess in Spandau Prison. Apparently he was the 14th British commandant to visit Hess and was the first to have spoken to him in German. Following retirement he became Director General of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. He was appointed Honorary Colonel of 31st Signal Regiment (V). In retirement he travelled widely and wrote two books, *Balkan Blue* (2000) and *The Adventures of Colonel Daffodil* (2006). He became known as 'Colonel Daffodil' as his wife's Pekinese of that name used to follow him around on

barrack inspections! He was a strong supporter of the Society for many years until illness overtook him, always a good raconteur and full of amusing anecdotes from his active life. He will be a much missed character by older members of the Society.

(I am grateful to the Daily Telegraph for the information for this piece. Ed.)

Mr Nicholas Rhodes

The Society was sad to learn of the recent and unexpected death of Nicholas Rhodes, son of the Society's first secretary, Ruth Rhodes. Later Nicholas held the post of treasurer in 1969/70. Looking back through previous journals and some of the late Mrs Mayura Brown's letters, I noted that he had given a talk to the Society in 1992 on the coinage of Nepal which followed the publication of *The Coinage of Nepal – from earliest times until 1911* (1990) which he co-authored with K. Gabrisch and C Valdetaro. This work, published by the Royal Numismatic Society, was reviewed in journal edition no. 14 (1990) by Mayura Brown. In her review for the journal Mayura Brown stated; "When Nicholas Rhodes was our Hon Treasurer in 1969 we were aware of his interest in coins, but we did not know that it had started when he was eight years old. Now his collection of Nepalese coins rivals that of the British Museum.... ..It is the first comprehensive catalogue of Nepalese coins ever attempted..." Copies of the book were presented to His Late Majesty King Birendra, the Royal Nepalese Academy and Tribhuvan University. He was married to Deki, a Sikkimese girl from the Darjeeling area.

In recent years Nicholas and Deki researched one of her more famous ancestors SW Laden La who was a

member of the Imperial Police Service. They wrote *A Man of the Frontier S. W. Laden La (1876- 1936): His Life and Times in Darjeeling and Tibet*. This work describes his early life and his work in Lhasa. He was a member of the Bell mission to Lhasa in 1920 and subsequently in 1923 was invited to form a police force there. This was not a successful project due to the internal pressures by the differing political and religious groups surrounding the Dalai Lama. This work was reviewed in journal edition no. 32 (2008).

In Nicholas, the Society will miss another link to its past.

GDB

Michel Peissel

Michel Peissel died in Paris aged 74 on 7th October 2011. Although he was not a member of the Society, many senior members will have read his books on Nepal, probably the most well-known being *Tiger for Breakfast*. This tells the story of Boris's earlier days at the Royal Hotel in Kathmandu (now the Election Commission building). He was one of the first westerners to explore the remote 'kingdom' of Mustang. As a result he wrote *Mustang a lost Tibetan Kingdom* and *The Cavaliers of Kham*. The former work details the culture of the kingdom and the latter the 'secret' war waged by the Khamba guerrillas against the Chinese army in Tibet.

Peissel was born in Paris, the son of a French diplomat but was educated in England since his father was posted to London, learning first English before French. He attended Oxford University and Harvard Business School. He became interested in Tibet having read Fosco Maraini's *Secret Tibet*. His first

expeditions were to Mexico and Belize which were to change the direction of his life. A life of adventure beckoned and in 1959 he set off for Sikkim, hoping to go to Bhutan. Entry was forbidden so he fell to studying the Sherpas of the Solu Khumbu. Whilst in Nepal he learnt about the remote kingdom of Mustang, an enclave of Nepal surrounded on three sides by Tibet. He determined to visit this area and dressed as a Tibetan remained there with his translator for several months. His anthropological work formed the basis of his thesis at the Sorbonne and *Mustang a lost Tibetan Kingdom*, which became a bestseller and helped to secure a financial future for subsequent expeditions.

He visited Mustang in 1966 and 1967 and in 1969 crossed Bhutan from east to west which resulted in his *Lords and Lamas, a solitary Expedition across the Secret Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan* (1970). In 1972 he published *Cavaliers of Kham*. This caused something of an uproar with the authorities, American, Nepalese and Chinese. He was banned from entering China for many years. His book described the 'secret' war that had been going on for twenty years between the Khamba guerrillas operating out of Mustang, supported by the CIA, Nationalist China, India and other players in the game. The Khambas attacked Chinese convoys along the roads to the north of the main Himalayan range in Tibet. As the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out in their obituary, their journalist, George Patterson had been reporting this conflict in the 1950s but had been ignored. Mustang was closed to foreigners for the next twenty-five years due to political sensitivity. The Royal Nepalese Army brought this phase to a close in 1974 when the Khambas in Mustang were rounded

up. Peissel went on to travel and write in other parts of Asia. After a hovercraft expedition up the Kali Gandaki River he visited Ladakh, Zanskar, the source of the Ganges, the Mekong River and in 1997 the cave system in Guge in western Tibet. One of his last books was *Tibet, the Secret Continent* (2003). He has been described as an unrivalled adventurer as his books make very clear.

(I am grateful to the Daily Telegraph for the information for this piece. Ed.)

Dr Richard Keith Sprigg (1922-2011)

Dr Keith Sprigg was not a member of the Society, but was well known to older members with links to the Darjeeling District. I first met him in Kalimpong in December 1989. My wife, son and I were having Christmas leave from Kathmandu. We were taken by the Area Welfare Officer of the GWT to meet 'one of the local characters' as he explained. My diary records that we met Dr Sprigg and his wife on the veranda of the Himalaya Hotel on 29th December. We were immediately plied with stiff brandy & ginger. Dr Sprigg showed me what he was working on – a Limbu dialect I seem to remember. After lunch we left to the sound of his bagpipes.

[His wife was the grand-daughter of David Macdonald. The Himalaya Hotel was Macdonald's house to where he retired. Macdonald was of British/Sikkimese stock, born and bred in Darjeeling. He developed a strong interest in the local culture and languages. As a result he was taken on the 1904 Younghusband expedition to Lhasa as an interpreter. One result of this venture was an agreement between the British and Tibetan authorities to establish trade agencies in Yatung in the Chumbi Valley and at Gyantse. Macdonald held the post

of Trade Agent in Yatung and lived there for twenty years from 1905, sometime doubling as trade agent in Gyantse and was for a short period acting political officer in Sikkim. During this time he made journeys to Lhasa and other places in Tibet and became a friend of the Dalai Lama. There was considerable turbulence in Tibet between the Tibetans and the Chinese in the years after the Younghusband expedition which resulted in the flight of the Dalai Lama to India in 1910. The latter arrived at Macdonald's house in Yatung in February requesting sanctuary as he was being pursued by a posse of the Chinese military. Hence a friendship was made between Macdonald and the Dalai Lama. These events are described in Macdonald's book *Twenty Years in Tibet*. This was republished in 2002 by Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.]

Dr Heleen Plaisier of SOAS writes: "With the death of Richard Keith Sprigg on September 8, 2011, the Himalayan scholarly community has to say farewell to this pioneering intellectual, who was a generous mentor and engaging friend to many of us. Keith Sprigg remains well-known for his important contributions to Tibetan, Lepcha, Limbu, Burmese and other languages, as well as for his Firthian approach to phonology applied to the field of comparative Tibeto-Burman linguistics.

Keith Sprigg was born in Melton Mowbray in the United Kingdom on March 31, 1922 and completed his first academic degree in Cambridge in 1942, where he received a First Class Honours in the Classical Tripos. He joined the Royal Air Force during the Second World War and between 1943 and 1947 he served in the UK, India, Ceylon, Singapore and Japan. During this eventful

period, he managed to pursue his linguistic studies and obtained War Degrees, a BA in 1944 and an MA in 1947.

In 1948, Keith started working at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London as a Lecturer in Phonetics. He studied Tibetan in Kalimpong and Gyantse, during visits in 1949 and 1950, during which time he was mentored by David Macdonald. This visit not only kindled a long-lasting interest in both Tibetan and Lepcha, but in Kalimpong, Keith also met his future wife Ray Margaret Williams, a granddaughter of David Macdonald. Keith and Ray married in 1952 in Melton Mowbray.

During 1951 and 1952, the Lepcha scholar Karphoo Tamsang from Kalimpong worked with Keith on the Lepcha language at the School of Oriental and African Studies. In 1955 and 1956, Keith and Ray went on an expedition to Nepal to do fieldwork for six months. The country had not been open to foreign visitors for long as they travelled from eastern Nepal to Kathmandu, which made for an interesting and impressive journey. Keith was able to collect abundant material on the languages he had become interested in, such as Limbu, Newari, Bantawa, Sherpa and Tamang.

Following this long fieldtrip, Ray and Keith had two children, David, born in 1957, and Maya, who was born in 1958. Keith continued to work at SOAS, and the first fieldtrip would be followed by many others, to Sikkim, Pakistan and India. He completed a PhD in the 'Phonetics and Phonology of Tibetan (Lhasa dialect)', and was promoted to Reader in Phonetics at SOAS in 1968.

When Ray suffered a stroke on New Year's Eve of 1975, she remained partially

paralysed and her health was fragile. In 1980, Keith took early retirement and he and Ray settled in Kalimpong. In Kalimpong, Dr Sprigg became somewhat of an institution. He was much-liked by the local residents, to whom he would often address an elaborate greeting in their native language, which left some of them dazzled even after many years of doing so. Many scholarly guests from all over the world came to seek his advice and guidance, or simply to enjoy the delightful company of him and his wife. Those who did not know him personally in Kalimpong recall the sound of Keith's bagpipes, which travelled far in the hills and were familiar to many.

In 1982 he was awarded a Litt D by the University of Cambridge, and on his 65th birthday a Festschrift was presented to him (D Bradley, M Mazaudon and EJA Henderson, eds, 1988, *Prosodic Analysis and Asian Linguistics to honour R.K. Sprigg*, Pacific Linguistics). A bibliography of his work up to 1987 can be found in his Festschrift. For his work on Lepcha language, culture and history, Keith was awarded the KP Tamsang Lepcha Language and Literary Award in 1996. He was made a life member of the Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association in 1997, who refer to him as 'a champion of the Lepchas'.

When Ray died in 1999, Keith returned to the UK and initially stayed with his children. Keith later remarried and lived in Crowborough, Sussex, with his second wife Elizabeth. In his later years, Keith was struck by macular degeneration, but although his eyesight slowly deteriorated, he kept working and completed a dictionary of Balti, which was published in 2002 (RK Sprigg, *Balti-English English-Balti Dictionary*, London,

Routledge Curzon). Elizabeth and Keith enjoyed travelling and visited several conferences together. Keith kept in touch with the academic world and his colleagues and former students until his health started giving away. The last year of his life, Keith was not in good health and his eyesight was very poor. He was lovingly nursed by his wife at home.

Those of us who have had the privilege of knowing this remarkable man may recall Keith appreciated saying a cheerful goodbye, along the lines of 'Happy we have met, happy we have been, happily we part and happy we shall meet again'. We remember his intellectual sharpness, his generosity and his unfailing sense of humour. Keith Sprigg shall be dearly missed by many."

My later memories of him were visiting him in Dr Graham's Homes on subsequent visits to Kalimpong and his visits to linguistic conferences in Kathmandu. These used to create problems with visas to and from India. There was the inescapable feeling of 'Staying On.'

GDB

(I am grateful to Dr Heleen Plaisier for permission to use her draft written for 'The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research. Ed.)

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The Britain-Nepal Chamber of Commerce
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The Gurkha Museum
Peninsula Barracks
Romsey Road
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8TS
Tel: (01962) 842832
www.thegurkhamuseum.co.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

Bird Conservation Nepal
PO Box 12465
Lazimpat
Kathmandu
Nepal
Tel: + 977 1 4417805
www.birdlifenepal.org/

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, students, teachers, returned volunteers, aid workers, doctors, business people, members of the Diplomatic Service and Armed Forces. 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. 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, or Canning House, Belgrave Square, where members are encouraged to meet each other over a drink beforehand.

The Society holds an Annual Nepali Supper, usually in February and in the autumn we hold our AGM. The Society also holds receptions and hospitality for visiting senior Nepalese.

Those interested in joining the Society should write to the Secretary, Mr Kul Kadel at: kulkadel@hotmail.com

Website: www.britain-nepal-society.org.uk

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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

Vice-Presidents

Brigadier AB Taggart MC

Mrs Celia Brown**

Colonel JM Evans MC

Sir Neil Thorne OBE, TD, DL

Mrs Pat Mellor

Sylvia Countess of Limerick CBE

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Vice-Chairman: Colonel John SK Swanston

Honorary Secretary: Mr Kul Kadel

Honorary Treasurer: Dr Peter A Trott

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Mr Gavin Edgerley-Harris

Mrs Jenifer Evans

Mr Harish Karki

Miss Jane Loveless

Mr IP Manandhar

Mrs Maggie Solon

Mrs Frances Spackman

Mrs Ambika Luintel, (Minister Counsellor), the Nepalese Embassy (*ex officio*)

Post vacant FCO (*ex officio*)

Mr Simon L Lord ED, HQ Brigade of Gurkhas (*ex officio*)

Mrs Celia Brown Archivist** (*ex officio*)

Editor of the Journal: Lieutenant Colonel GD Birch*



ACORN Nepal Trust

(Aid for Children of Rural Nepal
and Educational Trust)

Charitable Society Regd. No. 701/1999



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पो.ब.नं. : ३०४६ काठमाडौं
प्याक्स : ९७७-९-२८२६८८

नेपालका ग्रामीण बालबालिकाहरू लागि सहायता संस्था

ACORN Nepal Trust

बन्धु, काठमाडौं - १४

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