
THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Journal

Number 23

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 EDITORIAL

This edition of the Journal marks the death of two of our former Presidents, Lord Hunt our founding President and Sir George Bishop our third President. Both these great men contributed not only to the Society and Anglo-Nepali relations but in many other spheres. Lord Hunt was initially a distinguished soldier whose leadership of the successful 1953 Everest expedition brought him into prominence on the world stage. His undoubted ability as a leader and a thinker took him into the fields of youth work and social affairs and as an adviser to government. Sir George Bishop was an eminent civil servant before entering into a successful career in the business world. Both men were keen mountaineers and were past Presidents of the Royal Geographic Society. Full tributes are elsewhere in the Journal. The world is very much the poorer for their passing.

At the end of 1998 the Society was concerned that His Majesty King Birendra was to attend the Cromwell Road Hospital for a heart condition. It was with much relief that we learnt that the treatment had been successful and that his subsequent visit later in the year for a check-up was equally reassuring.

The basis for Anglo-Nepali relationship initially resulted from war between Nepal and the East India Company when former adversaries became united in respect for each other. This in turn led to the formation of the Gurkha Regiments which, although much reduced, still exist today in the British Army. Research into the early history following the war of 1815 and the Treaty of Segauli has been described by Capt AP (Jimmy) Coleman in his

recently published work reviewed by Mayura Brown. Mention is made of the special relationship between the Gurkha soldiers and their British Officers that has always characterised service in the Brigade of Gurkhas. This is as true today as in the past. The deaths of Sgt Balam Rai and Lt Evans of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers on active service in Kosovo this year serves as the latest example. The Society extends their sympathy to the relatives of both families.

I hope readers will find the story behind 'that portrait' interesting. The Society is fortunate to have such a direct link in the person of Mayura Brown back to the days of the establishment of the Rana dynasty. Times have moved on and Nepal now has a constitutional monarchy and a system of political parties. Dr Andrew Hall of the FCO Research Department and former Deputy Head of Mission in Kathmandu returned there at the time of the last general election and has contributed an informative report.

Maintaining the military theme Maj Ken Ross describes his work with the Gurkha Welfare Trust on the ground in Nepal. Direct military links also exist between the British Army as a whole and the Royal Nepalese Army. The retiring Chief of Army Staff, General Dharmapal Bar Singh Thapa paid a farewell visit to UK earlier in the year. He had graduated from Sandhurst and had visited UK on a number of occasions and has many friends and contacts in the British Army, some of whom were able to meet him at a reception held at the Embassy. His successor, General Prajwalla Shumshere Jangbahdur Rana is also a graduate from Sandhurst and, as a Gunner, also of the Royal School of Artillery at Larkhill. I

am certain we shall see him in UK during his tenure.

The article written by Christine Russell of GAP in the last edition of the journal on the work of GAP students in Nepal is complemented by an article describing the experience of a GAP sponsored Nepalese teacher in a UK school. I am pleased that this edition features two of our younger members. Angela Karki, born and brought up in England, describes her feelings on first visiting Nepal and her relations there, and the problems of dealing with a cultural divide. James Yeats-Brown who masterminded the very successful photography competition that was displayed at the Nepali Supper explains the background to the competition. He is to be congratulated on a very successful and interesting event.

On an entirely different note Keith Howman, President of the World Pheasant Association, who gave a very interesting talk to the Society, describes

the Association's work in west Nepal, known as the Pipar Project and the involvement of the late Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Roberts.

I extend my thanks to all the contributors without whom there would be no journal, and to all those who support the journal by placing their advertisements with us. I must acknowledge the generous financial support given by our auditors Moore Stephens.

And finally returning once again to the unique military link between Britain and Nepal, members will be well aware that elements of the 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles from Brunei have been amongst the spearhead of the British deployment to East Timor in support of United Nations operations. At the time of writing the situation there looks grim, and I am certain all members will be watching anxiously at developments and wishing a safe return to all those involved.

Lawrie Group

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THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

by Pat Mellor
Honorary Secretary

Lectures

During this last year, we have carried on the plan to hold five talks between October and July, as the idea worked well during 1997/98.

In October 1998 Jonathan Gregson, a travel journalist with The Sunday Telegraph as well as other periodicals, gave the Society a talk on 'The British Gurkhas in Nepal' and their role in relation to tourism and conservation in the Annapurna region. Jonathan gave us a most interesting talk on the effects of tourism in everyday life, how conservation has to be planned to combat some aspects of tourism, and how ex-Gurkha soldiers fit into this role. He showed us wonderful colour slides of the area which were taken by his wife Sarah.

Keith Howman gave us a talk entitled 'Pokhara Peaks & Pheasants' in January 1999. This was about the legendary figure of the late Colonel Jimmy Roberts. It had been planned to have a joint talk, with Colonel Charles Wylie giving us an insight into the climbing side of Jimmy Roberts life, while Keith told us of the later part of his life which amongst many other things, was taken up with the conservation of pheasants in Nepal. Sadly, on that day Colonel Wylie attended the Thanksgiving Service for the life of his friend and climbing companion, and our first President, Lord Hunt and was, of course, unable to speak to us. However, Keith gave us a fascinating insight into the conservation of pheasants (not just pheasants as you find here, but many different gloriously coloured birds). Keith is the President of the World Pheasant Association, and is now active in running the Jimmy Roberts Memorial Fund which will be supporting The Pipar Project - an

area north of Pokhara which is home to five of Nepal's pheasant species. A leaflet is enclosed with this edition of the Journal.

For March 1999, some of our younger members had gathered together to arrange a presentation. Four of them gave us short talks - Angela Karki, (daughter of Harish Karki, past member of our Executive Committee and the President of the Yeti Association) spoke of her life at University. Her talk was followed by Abindra Karki, son of Colonel Karki, past Military Attache at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, who spoke on the choice of opportunities presented to him and his first decision to accompany his father to America and now to be with him in this country and attend University here. Then followed two talks on attempts on climbing Everest given by Paul Deegan and Peter Burrell of Exodus Travel. These were both very exciting and accompanied by beautiful slides. Altogether a varied and interesting evening.

Dr Krishna Shrestha delivered the May 1999 talk. His title was "Nepal - the land of unique ecosystem and rich biodiversity". Dr Shrestha is the Darwin Fellow in the Botany Department at the Natural History Museum and he gave us an outstanding talk on the natural history of Nepal, accompanied by most interesting slides which he had made to illustrate the different levels of natural ecosystems as well as beautiful pictures of flora and fauna. This evening was strongly supported, and we were honoured to welcome His Excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador and Her Royal Highness Princess Jotshana, who both enjoyed the talk.

Major Ken Ross gave the talk on the 6th July entitled 'The Welfare Pensioners', in which he explained to his audience how he, his wife and daughter, help the Gurkha Welfare Trust by visiting different Centres, where they photograph the pensioners and collect information on their background, so that the Gurkha Welfare Trust is able to give this information to their sponsors. Ken also explained about sponsorship and how the Gurkha Welfare Trust is always pleased to give information on this excellent way of helping the people of Nepal.

Our grateful thanks to all of these excellent speakers who gave us their time, shared their knowledge and showed us beautiful slides to enjoy. We look forward to entertaining them at the Annual Nepali Supper in February 2000.



Lt Col Gregory receives his presentation after long service as the Journal editor



The AGM 1998 in progress at the Royal Nepalese Embassy

AGM

The AGM in November 1998, was held at the Royal Nepalese Embassy, by kind permission of His Excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador and HRH Princess Jotshana, who were both able to attend. At this meeting members bid farewell to our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, and at the same time to our Vice-Chairman, Mr Roger Potter. They both ably acted for six years and seven years respectively and our grateful thanks go to them for all their leadership and efforts. The members

presented an engraved silver coaster to Sir Neil Thorne to mark the six years of his Chairmanship. Mr Peter Leggatt was elected as the new Chairman and Mr Peter Donaldson as Vice-Chairman. Before ending the meeting, the Chairman thanked Colonel Gregory, Editor of the Journal for the past 20 years, for having built the Journal into the excellent publication that it has become, and in appreciation of all the work that has gone into being editor, he was presented with an oil painting of a Nepalese scene by



Pat Mellor, Sir Neil Thorne and Roger Potter at the AGM



*HRH the Duke of Gloucester with
Neil Thorne and Mrs Sneha Rana
at the AGM*

one of our members, Mr Pat Durston. The meeting was followed by an excellent curry supper once again supplied by Mr Ranamagar of the Munal Restaurant, 393 Upper Richmond Road in Putney. The Ambassador's secretary Nilia Ranamagar looked after members during the supper which was laid out in the Embassy dining room adjoining the meeting room.



*The Vice Chairman, Peter Donaldson,
flanked by the Royal Nepalese
Ambassador and FM Sir John Chapple
at the Nepali Supper*

The 1999 Supper was held as usual in February in St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street. This venue is ideal for holding the event so we will probably continue to go there. 200 people attended the supper and our Guest of Honour was



*Lt Col Charles Wylie and Mrs Sheila
Wylie with HRH the Duke of Gloucester
at the AGM*

The Annual Supper

I have to start my report on the Supper by offering an apology to Mr Prasai, First Counsellor at the Royal Nepalese Embassy. In the 1998 year report I failed to say that His Excellency The Nepalese Ambassador had actually not been able to attend, and that Mr Prasai had ably taken his place, and gave the Society an excellent after dinner talk - I am so sorry Mr. Prasai.



*FM Sir John Chapple talks to the
members about the King Mahendra
Trust for Nature Conservation at the
Nepali Supper*



The Royal Nepalese Ambassador at the Nepali Supper

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple who gave the members an entertaining after dinner speech about the King Mahendra Trust. This year's Dinner was given a big boost by holding a Photographic Competition. This was the idea of one of our members, Mr James Yeats-Brown, who masterminded the whole thing, and what a success it was. So many members submitted really beautiful and fascinating pictures which were displayed round the hall and totally enhanced it. James has written a short article about the competition which is elsewhere in the journal. His excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador and Her Royal Highness Princess Jotshana also attended. Mr Manandhar and his family from the Natraj Restaurant, 93 Charlotte Street provided an excellent Nepalese Supper, which was enjoyed by everyone.



Baroness Friesen accepts the first prize on behalf of her husband in Society's photographic competition



FM Sir John Chapple congratulates Lt Col Charles Wylie on his prize winning photograph at the Nepali Supper

The Summer Outing

This year Lord and Lady Camoys welcomed us to their home, Stonor Park near Henley on Thames. We did make this visit in association with the Yeti, but it was actually our own members who took the initiative and about 70 people attended. What a wonderful day it was!



Stonor Park, home of Lord & Lady Camoys; venue for the Society's outing in July 1999

The weather was perfect, Stonor Park is beautiful and our Nepalese Picnic was delicious. Lady Camoys greeted us all on our arrival, and our Chairman Mr Peter Leggatt thanked her and Lord Camoys for their hospitality with a gift of a book on Nepal. His Excellency The Royal Nepalese Ambassador was also able to join us and partook of the picnic. Our grateful thanks must go to Lisa Severn, Curator of Stonor Park, for all her help and also to the informative guides in the House, who gave members an interesting insight into the background of the house, in which the Camoys family have lived for eight hundred years.

Reception held at The House of Lords - September 1999

Lord Greenway, cousin to our Chairman Mr Peter Leggatt, kindly hosted this Reception, which was held in the Peers' Dining Room in the House of Lords. We were honoured by the presence of both our Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal and our President, HRH The Duke of Gloucester. A hundred of our members attended this prestigious gathering in beautiful surroundings, and I think everyone felt that it was a most happy and successful evening.



Sir Neil Thorne with their Royal Highnesses Princess Jotshana, Prince Gyanendra and the Duke of Gloucester at the House of Lords reception



The Chairman, Peter Leggatt with Mr & Mrs Prasai and Lord Greenway at the House of Lords reception



Dudley Spain and Alistair Langlands at the House of Lords reception

General

Finally, I am pleased to report that our membership has increased quite considerably this year. We have enrolled just on 40 new members, and the total membership now stands at approximately 540.

Tiger Mountain
Full page ad

A PORTRAIT OF AN ANCESTOR
OR
A PORTRAIT SAVED

(Many members will have seen articles and letters in the press concerning the portrait of Jang Bahadur Rana and the television programme on the Foreign Office with glimpses of the portrait in the Foreign Secretary's Office. Sir Michael Scott, former ambassador to Nepal and Mrs Mayura Brown, great-granddaughter of Jang Bahadur, have contributed to the notes below - Ed)

Sir Michael Scott writes:

When the Rt Hon Robin Cook MP became the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in 1997 he decreed the removal from his new office of the portrait of Maharajah Jang Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister of Nepal, who visited Britain in 1850 and was received and honoured by Queen Victoria. Although admired by Foreign Secretaries over some years, it appeared that Mr Cook felt uncomfortable in the presence of what he regarded as evidence of Britain's Imperial past (not that Britain ever occupied Nepal, and Jang Bahadur came as a friend and ally).

This distinguished full-length portrait (by the court painter Bhajiman Citrakar who accompanied the Prime Minister) in its splendidly ornate gilt frame was to be consigned to the outer darkness.

Among those alarmed at this widely-reported decree was Mrs Mayura Brown, a founder and Vice-President of the Britain Nepal Society and a great granddaughter of that same Maharajah. Fearing that the painting's destination might be some dusty basement corridor in the FCO, a carefully worded letter was despatched to the Foreign Secretary's office in which Mrs Brown explained her interest and asked what was intended for the portrait of her great-grandfather.

This appears to have focused some minds wonderfully, and the reply explained that the painting was to be lodged with the new British Library at St



*His Excellency General Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal (1817-77, ruled 1846-77)
Oil painting by a Nepalese artist, 1849*

Pancras. The authorities there have come up trumps.

The Oriental and India Office Collections are housed in specially designed accommodation on the third floor. On a long white wall above some of the book-shelves there are nine portraits and pride of place in the centre,

longer than the others, is the full-length portrait of General Sir Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal (1817-1877). He is depicted wearing a magnificent green and gold tunic-coat, gem-encrusted helmet and plume, and a dress sabre. Flanking it are portraits of seven Indian and Persian dignitaries and one of Lord Clive.

Until 1998 the portrait, presented to the East India Company by the Sitter in 1850, had been seen in recent years mainly by Foreign Secretaries and their visitors - Ambassadors, Foreign Ministers, senior diplomats and the like - a few dozen in any year. In future it will be seen by hundreds of researchers, students and visitors to the Collections - a worthy resting place for such a historic and indeed attractive painting. As usual, Shakespeare got it right: "All's well that ends well".

Mrs Mayura Brown comments:

From my childhood I had heard about the portrait. I knew that my great-grandfather, Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana had, in 1850, taken this large painting to England, a long and very tedious journey. He was one of the first high-caste Hindus to break with religious convention and cross the "Kala pani", but an invitation from the British

Government was a great honour, and Jang Bahadur would carry greetings from the King of Nepal to Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. In London he offered his sword to the Queen should Britain ever require his services and that of his country. This promise was kept when Jang went down to India with a large contingent of Nepalese troops in support of the British during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. He was knighted for his loyal support.

In the late 1950's I was engaged on research at the India Office Library. In those days it was housed in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and I was taken to see the portrait of my great-grandfather. It was a stunning painting. It had been removed from its frame which was undergoing repairs. The late Dr Mildred Archer, Keeper of Paints and Drawings at the IOL gave me a photograph of the portrait.

Many years later, in 1987 I saw it again. The room of the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Douglas Hurd, was being refurbished and the portrait was put, for safe keeping, into the office of Lord Glenarthur, then Secretary of State. I had the privilege of being photographed beneath it. That photograph is now in the Gurkha Museum.

Veedon Fleece

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THE PIPAR PROJECT

by Keith Howman

The name of Colonel Jimmy Roberts will long be remembered principally as a soldier in the Gurkhas, a mountaineer and the founder of Mountain Travel, the first trekking agency in Nepal which is now a part of the Tiger Mountain Group.

Less well known was his interest in ornithology, photography and pheasants. Still less well known was his key role in setting up 'The Pipar Project' in association with the World Pheasant Association (WPA) of which he chaired their chapter in Nepal and was a Vice President.



The 'Pipar Project' school at Kerua

school which had one teacher and one classroom. His plan was to start, through WPA, regular, though by UK standards small, payments that would provide additional teaching facilities.

The first project was the building of an extra classroom onto the primary school at Kerua, onto the single classroom school that they had back in 1983. This was completed for some £200 but then inevitably a school teacher was needed for it! A teacher Mr Bishnu was found and WPA agreed to fund him - this has continued for some 16 years and he is now headmaster of the school which now has five classrooms and five teachers.

The following year, a request was made for desks and benches for the school as the children were quite literally sitting on the earth floor for their classes. This was again approved but again had inevitable consequences.

The eldest children moved on down the valley to the middle school where they found themselves back on the earth floors and before long we had a cry for help from the middle school for desks and benches. Again, WPA obliged and again the inevitable happened a few years later when they moved onto the

map

'The Pipar Project' began in 1979 when Tony Lelliot, a young MSc student, was funded by WPA to survey the area known as Pipar (see map), north of Pokhara which was already known to be home to five of Nepal's six Himalayan pheasant species. His work resulted in a management plan for the area and led, in 1983, to the funding of two guards for the area. Shortly after that Colonel Jimmy came up with a new proposal which he felt would be more effective long term in protecting the then unspoilt forests and the pheasants that lived in and above them. This was to assist the Panchayat (village council) of the nearest village to 'Pipar' with their local primary



Publicising the 'Pipar Project' in the villages

high school in Ghartok. The high school at the same time was desperate for an extra sizeable classroom and funding was found, through WPA, from the Spedan Lewis Charitable Trust for this.

For some sixteen years, WPA has supported schools below 'Pipar' without ever missing a year but with what result? The organisation's objective was simple - persuade the local people to maintain the forest in as good a shape as when first visited by WPA in 1978 and see that hunting was only done by the local villagers and not by outsiders. To monitor this, teams have gone at regular intervals from the UK up until 1997. In 1998 the survey team was made up by members of Bird Conservation Nepal, who are now WPA's affiliate in Nepal. WPA's South Asia Regional Office Director, Dr Rahul Kaul, who had been there in previous years, led the team and so for the first time a Nepali team has taken over the monitoring of the area.

All surveys have indicated that the forest remains unspoilt and the pheasant numbers stable - although supported annually, the support has never exceeded £1000 in any one year and must represent the cheapest and most successful conservation of a large area of forest and mountains ever undertaken.

Colonel Jimmy Roberts sadly died in November 1997. However, WPA has set up a memorial fund in his name which aims to raise the funds to continue what he started.

Anyone wishing to know more about the fund or the work of WPA, should write to Nicola Chalmers-Watson at WPA, PO Box 5, Lower Basildon, Reading, RG8 9PF, UK.



Jimmy Roberts tending his pheasant pens in Pokhara

GAP
full page ad

BRITAIN TO NEPAL AND NEPAL TO BRITAIN EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE WITH GAP

by Katherine Taylor, GAP Publicity Officer

GAP Activity Projects is an educational charity with over quarter of a century of experience of providing voluntary work opportunities overseas for young British 18-year-olds in their year out between school and higher education, employment or training. GAP is also an exchange organisation and brings nearly 350 young people from overseas to undertake voluntary work in the UK each year.

Each year GAP sends approximately sixty 18-year-old volunteers to assist with the teaching of English in Nepal. An integral part of the Nepal project, however, is a teaching observation and practice programme for three Nepali teachers visiting the UK. Each teacher spends a month with a host school observing the British education system. In return pupils at the school gain a first-hand insight into the culture, geography and traditions of Nepal. Teachers return to their own schools in Nepal with a wealth of new ideas about teaching and classroom techniques.

Krishna Bhat from Jana Priya Secondary School in Pokhara visited the UK under GAP's auspices in April 1997.



Nepali teachers Ishwor Man Rai, Krishna Bhat and Krishna Parsad Dhakal with Julie Glossop (Co-ordinator UK) at GAP House in Apr 97



Mr CM Yogi with a pupil at Fielding Primary School in Mar 96

He describes his experiences below.

"I still remember, it was about quarter past ten. As soon as I entered the staff room, the GAP volunteers George Bush and David Railley called me over to them. With his usual smile David told me that they wanted to recommend me to the GAP office to take part in the exchange programme. It was an important opportunity for me.

On the 4th April, I, with two other Nepali teachers flew to London from Kathmandu. Julie Glossop, GAP UK Project Co-ordinator met us there and explained the details of the programme.

I spent the first week in London living at George Bush's parents' home. I have no proper words to describe my experiences of living in London; my host family helped me to visit so many different places.

After one week I moved to Southampton for four weeks. I had been invited by St Mary's Primary School. The headteacher and all the staff in the school were very helpful to me and I had time to observe all the different classes so that I



*Children with special needs
at Northmoor Reserve Centre
Apr 97*

gained new ideas, methods and teaching techniques. I found that many students were interested to know more about Nepal and my school. At St Mary's most of the pupils are from the families of different religions, languages and cultures. Children from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh families were taught with the help of bilingual teachers. On certain days I visited other secondary and primary schools in Southampton. In

many ways these schools were different from schools in Nepal, though there were some similarities as well. Teachers and pupils here in the UK are fortunate to get the opportunity to use different sorts of teaching aids and materials which are not available in most of our schools in Nepal.

Each day of my six weeks in England was exciting. Every day I gained new ideas, feelings and experiences. In short, for an ordinary teacher of Nepal like me, the chance to visit one of the most advanced countries of the world like the United Kingdom is very important. I am confident that I am going back to my country with broader knowledge, new vision and enthusiasm."

GAP would be interested to hear from any individual who would be interested in hosting a Nepali teacher in his or her home or school in February 2000. Please contact Ruth McDowell at GAP on 0118 956 2917 or email

Rmcdowell@gap.org.uk

GAP is grateful to the Britain-Nepal Society for the financial support given

Munal Tandoori

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A NEAR MISS

by Angela Karki

(This piece is based on the presentation given by Miss Angela Karki to the Society as part of the Young Members Evening on 23 March 1999)

When I decided to take the opportunity of speaking to the Society as part of the Young Members 'Near Miss Evening', I thought no problem, everybody has some sort of near miss in their lives and I'm not an exception to the rule and that's where my first sense of panic set in. What exactly had I volunteered myself for! It's all very well sitting in the audience as I have done many times before and feeling a sense of pride as I often see my father in the spotlight, but now it was my turn.

When I turned six I had my very first taste of Nepal. To me I was just visiting my grandmother and grandfather, no big deal except that after seventeen long tedious hours in an airplane I realised that there was a difference between my peers and me. When they talked about seeing their Nan it was just a case of jumping in the car and in no time they were at Nan's. Certainly at no point was a plane mentioned. After a series of visits to the cockpit the novelty of the journey began to wear thin both for the cabin crew and me. We eventually arrived in Kathmandu, and no sooner arrived at the airport than we gathered our many belongings and began yet another journey on to my grandmother's house in the lively area of Thamel.

As you can imagine at that age there was nothing to dampen my spirits. The atmosphere was emotional as everyone turned to embrace us and we were showered with much affection; then the language set in. I'd never encountered a room full of people all speaking my mother's language but there was a very

natural air of familiarity that put me at ease for the time being at least. I say this but one of my earliest recollections was of sitting on my grandmother's back porch singing all the well known hymns that I had learned at school. It was only then that I realised that I was afraid of forgetting the English I was so accustomed to using as my main means of communication.

Language aside my only other problem was the inevitable - I caught a virus! Here, it was not the fact that I was ill that made me feel the way I did, it was my futile protests of how, if I was only suffering from one symptom, that to me, equated to one bottle of medicine and not to the four brightly coloured concoctions that were repeatedly force fed to me!

As we began to settle in a little more, my mother had decided that whilst I was in Nepal I should join my cousins in receiving tutoring in written Nepali. At first it was all very exciting, then after a month or so my mother began enquiring into boarding schools and, if there was any chance of me getting into one of these prestigious institutions.

The journey to one particular boarding school at Kurseong near Darjeeling was phenomenal and seemed to go on forever. The car we were in was packed to its capacity and the weather in any other circumstances would have been a luxury, except that it was the equivalent of human sardines in a hot tin can, no such thing as a sunroof. Nevertheless, I managed to soothe myself by looking at the landscape that

unfolded before me. The lush green terrain, the clear sky above, the small houses constructed high on either side of us and in the middle of all this, a long and winding road that to me would never end. I remember that in a way it reminded me of the yellow brick road from the 'Wizard of Oz', except of course it was rather more dusty and full of potholes. We had a short break at which point I encountered some other children who I found staring at me. To them I seemed abnormally large compared to their very petite frames and enlarged features, but we managed to exchange smiles and our names and the bonus of sharing my sweets with them.

After lengthy talks with a very kind headmistress she agreed to allow me to enrol but, in doing so I realised that this would entail staying in Nepal. This part was great except it occurred to me, that the equation did not include my father,

mother or even my brother. Naturally I didn't savour the prospect of being without them. Also I knew that my parents and brother would not be able to visit as often as I would need them to. So my reaction, when my mother asked what would I like to do, was no real surprise, I cried.

When I look back now and see the opportunity that I had been given I feel ashamed, but my age did not allow me to understand the repercussions and how this would affect me in my later years. If I knew then what I have attained now I would be able to write at length to my parents in their first language, I would no longer feel tongue tied trying to interpret words from English to Nepali with my grandmother.

But, all has not been lost, once I have completed my degree I intend to learn written Nepali so, when my turn comes I am able to give my children the

Summit Hotel

USSHER TOURS

THE WELFARE PENSIONERS

by Ken Ross

Early in 1997, the family decided on another trip to Nepal. Once again we hoped to do something useful for the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT), so I wrote to Guy Glanville, the Brigade Welfare Officer, volunteering our services. His response was prompt. He phoned from Pokhara to ask if we could stay for a week at the Area Welfare Centre (AWC) at Diktel in eastern Nepal. Our task would be to interview and take photographs of some 300 Welfare Pensioners who would be coming in that week to draw their quarterly pensions. The brief reports we were to prepare on each pensioner, together with a photograph, would be sent to sponsors in the UK to keep them up to date and to add a personal touch.

Our response was equally prompt. We accepted the task with interest and eager anticipation. We could combine our task with trekking in Nepal, and would be able to hire the excellent porters and trekking stores maintained by the Welfare authorities. The plan was for my wife, Alison, our daughter Jane and myself to carry out the task at Diktel. Prior to that there would be a family trek in the Pokhara area, including daughters Elizabeth and Kate, and Kate's fiancé (now husband) Derek.

Jane and I formed the Advance Party. We flew to Kathmandu towards the end of February, and stayed there for three days at the very comfortable Summit Hotel. We used the time obtaining trekking permits, and planning our Pokhara trek with the help of Kit Spencer, a former Brigade Welfare Officer. He is now Manager of 'Summit Trekking', a trekking firm attached to the Hotel. Future trekkers note that name!

Armed with Kit's recommendations, Jane and I set off by road to Pokhara, where we booked in again at the Meera Hotel, owned by our good friend ex-Captain Mekh Bahadur Gurung, 2GR. Next day we reported to the Gurkha Camp to see Captain Krishnabhadur Rai (ex 7GR), the sponsorship Co-ordinator of the GWT and largely responsible for the organising of our mission, and the 'Porter-Major', who is in charge of all the porters and trekking stores at Pokhara.

A day or so later the other members of our party arrived by air. Next morning we all went to the Camp to meet our porters. We held discussions with the No 1 Porter about rations. The basic rations were standard - rice, dal, tea, sugar, powdered milk etc., and we discussed extras such as fresh vegetables, tinned fish and meat, instant coffee and other items according to people's tastes. 'No 1' then completed his list, and having received a cash advance, went down to the bazaar with a couple of the other porters to make the purchases.

Early the following morning the GWS Land Rover reported to the Meera to take us to our RV with the porters, a village about three miles to the east of Pokhara. Here the trek began. First we crossed a wide river, shallow at that time of year, pausing on the other side while the porters cooked the morning meal. After that we began to climb, but the first day's march was a fairly short one. We camped on top of a round hill with a splendid view, and before very long we were struck by a violent thunderstorm with torrential rain. Luckily the tents were up by then, so we were able to flee for shelter. The storm ended as suddenly as it started, and we had our evening meal in

the calm which followed. Next morning the air was as clear as crystal, and we had the most magnificent panorama of the Himalayas, including Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Machha Puchare (the famous Fish Tail), Lamjung and other peaks further to the west.

It was a lovely and varied trek, miles off any tourist beaten track. Our route followed an arc first north east, then east of Pokhara, and finally southwards down the valley of the beautiful Marsyangdi River, towards the main Kathmandu to Pokhara highway. The scenery was rich and varied, and the going equally varied - long hard climbs and steep descents, interspersed with sometimes lengthy fairly level stretches. We passed through many villages where there was much friendly chatter with the local people, while, as usual on trek, we were the object of curious study by the lovely Nepali children.

Among our experiences, some highlights stand out: the evening when a number of villagers sat down around our camp and began to sing Nepali songs and dance to the throb of madals, the Nepali drum, to be joined by our cheerful porters; after a short march a lazy time spent beside a lovely river, when bathing and washing clothes was the order of the day; the time when Elizabeth made such a hit with the children with her bubble blowing kit, sending streams of bubbles over their heads which they chased laughing with delight; a halt by the house of a fine old 8GR veteran, where we watched with fascination while his daughter-in-law distilled local rakshi on her home made still; and a pause for our morning meal at the Area Welfare Centre of Lamjung, where we received the usual hospitable welcome from the Area Welfare Officer (AWO) and his staff.

After nine nights and ten days on trek

we reached the village of Turture, on the Marsyangdi. A pretty rough road runs from the main road to and beyond Turture, and we decided to speed up our return to Pokhara by completing the trip by local bus. A trip by Nepali bus can always be an adventure, and this one was no exception.

The bus was, as always, crowded, and the younger members of our party and the porters were consigned to the roof. Space was made inside for the 'ancients', Alison and myself, by moving two of the younger passengers to the roof as well! Those on the roof loved the journey, which was not entirely without incident. Shortly after reaching the main road, there was a loud bang, and we came to a halt. We had a burst tyre, by no means an uncommon incident with Nepali buses and taxis.

The bus crew obviously had plenty of experience as regards punctures, and set to promptly without fuss to jack up the affected wheel. The procedure involved a young boy diving under the bus to position the jack, while our porters helped by lowering the spare wheel from the roof on a rope. We regarded the spare tyre with some concern, especially the prominent patches of canvas showing where the rubber had worn through!

No matter. We made it safely back to Pokhara and so ended our family trek.

Very early the next morning, Alison, Jane and I set off in a GWS Land Rover for Dharan, in the east, where we were to embark on our trip to Diktel. The others returned to Kathmandu later in the day, on their way home.

The drive to Dharan is a long one. We had done the journey back in 1993, and we were very happy to have the same driver this time. Ex Rfn Arabahadur Rai is an excellent fellow and a first rate driver. Much of the route lies along the

flat plain of the Terai, where we were relieved to find that extensive and much needed repairs had been carried out on a long stretch which in 1993 could have been fairly described as a series of enormous potholes joined here and there by the odd patch of tarmac! The journey was a lot quicker this time, but still took 10 hours.

We spent only one night at Dharan. Next morning, along with our porters, we drove to a roadhouse close to the foothills, and there began a trek of 4 days to Diktel. Again it was a lovely trek, but pretty strenuous in parts, down into deep river valleys and up onto the ridges. On our second morning we enjoyed the novelty of being ferried across the Sun Kosi river in a large dug-out canoe. It was fascinating to watch the deft manner in which the two ferrymen, armed with paddles, one in the bow and one in the stern, steered the long canoe across the river, making full use of the swift current. We managed to capture this scene on video.

We stopped one night at the area Welfare Centre at Khotang, reached at the end by a steep, steep climb. Were we glad to arrive! Although the AWO and his Assistant had no prior notice of our arrival, they greeted us cheerfully and proceeded to revive us with cold Tuborg beer.

We reached Diktel one afternoon. On the following day, Capt Parsuram Rai, the AWO, briefed us. He explained that the vast majority of the pensioners would be coming in during the next three days. Since most of them lived one, two or even three days' journey from the AWC, it was important that there should be no undue delay in paying the pensions and interviewing the pensioners. Every extra day away from home cost them money.

We spent the rest of the day

completing our preparations and taking a stroll round Diktel, which included a visit to the very basic hospital and one to the crowded open-air bazaar.

Early next morning a large crowd of pensioners, mostly men but including a substantial number of women, had gathered outside the AWC. As soon as the gates were opened, they flooded in and after a harangue from Capt Parsuram - standing on a chair - they began lining up to collect their pensions. There was much good humoured chatter, since many of them had not met since the last pension paying three months earlier.

Having collected their pensions, the pensioners were directed to the table some distance away where Alison and I sat. There they stacked their Pension Books in order of their arrival, so that the interviews could be conducted in strict rotation. This was important, as everyone was in a hurry to be on their way home.

At first only I did the interviews but it soon became obvious that, at this rate, we would never complete the task in the time available. Alison therefore began interviewing as well. Fortunately her Nepali is good, learned originally many years ago when she worked in the 2/7th Family Lines. Our No 1 Porter also joined the team, helping to sort out complicated matters and occasionally intervening to keep one or two of the more garrulous pensioners to the point!

We had earlier developed a format for the interviews so that the results would be consistent. We would begin with questions about the pensioner's age, health and family circumstances. Was his wife still alive? How many children did they have, and where were they? Married daughters, and indeed married sons and their families, had often moved away, sometimes a long way away. Sometimes all contact had been lost, particularly with

sons, often because they had gone abroad or elsewhere in Nepal in search of work. In some cases the old people lived with a daughter or daughter-in-law and family. In others, family members lived nearby, and could give a hand. Some couples lived alone, and some widowed pensioners lived entirely on their own.

Then we asked about their homes. How many days walk was it from the AWC? Did they own their own home, and how much land did they have? Most had a patch of about three ropanis, just under half an acre, perhaps yielding food for two to three months depending on the nature of the soil and the number of mouths to be fed. Sometimes one or two grandchildren would live with their grandparents, helping with household chores or in the fields. Where there were no family members at hand, outside help had to be hired.

We asked about livestock. Many pensioners had one or two cows or buffaloes which provided milk. Some had a pair of bullocks, used for ploughing, which could also be hired out to neighbours to bring in a little extra cash. Nearly everyone kept some chickens.

'What about water and fuel?' we asked. Thanks in great measure to the efforts of the GWT, piped water is being brought to more and more villages, but is by no means universal. It takes some of our pensioners one or two hours each day to fetch water and some even longer, while gathering and bringing in a load of wood for fuel will usually take a whole day. Again, if there are no family members living nearby to help, someone has to be paid to do those essential chores.

We also asked the old soldiers about Army Service (the widows rarely had any idea about where their husbands had been!). We heard many interesting stories

about their campaigns in Burma, the Western Desert, Italy, and later in Borneo. None was more remarkable than that of one man who had been taken prisoner in Burma. He was a member of the working party with some other Gurkha and Chinese labourers, when they escaped. They finally reached Chungking! From there they were flown back to India by the US Air Force - after their bona fides had been proved to the satisfaction of the American Authorities by an Indian Army team flown into Chungking for the purpose.

After the interview, each pensioner would move to another table, where Jane sat armed with her camera and a wooden board, on which she would chalk the Army Number of the pensioner concerned (or in the case of a widow, her late husband's). The number would be displayed by the pensioner or widow, a procedure essential for the purposes of identification.

For three days we worked solidly from 0730 to 1730, with a half-hour break for morning bhat. The pace slackened thereafter, giving us a chance to go through all the lists again with the Captain Sahib.

Our time in Diktel thus came to an end, and we set off for the Area Welfare Centre at Rumjatar, near Okhaldunga to the north. Again it was a beautiful trek, part of it through forests red with rhododendrons.

In 1993 we had discovered from the Record Office at Pokhara that my old orderly in the 2/7th, Arimardhan Thapa (an Eastern Thapa), was still alive and lived in a village called Manebanjyang. It happened that Manebanjyang lay not far from our route to Okhaldunga, so with the aid of the Welfare Staff at Rumjatar a meeting was arranged. It took place at our campsite at the top of a long, very

steep climb out of the Dudh Kosi valley. So we met Arimardhan again after a gap of 40 years! It was he who gave Alison her first Nepali lessons when she came out to join me in Kuala Lumpur soon after we were married. It was a very happy interlude.

In due course we arrived at Rumjatar after an interesting visit to the Mission Hospital at Okhaldunga. A couple of days later, we walked to the nearby airfield for our flight to Kathmandu, but one last meeting of interest awaited us. When we reached the airport, the AWO who accompanied us spotted a very distinguished Gurkha Veteran, Agansing Rai VC of the 5th Royal Gurkhas. He had come to meet a friend, and what a cheerful and friendly character he was.

I would like to end by quoting a passage from our letter to sponsors which accompanied the photographs:

“For us, the week in Diktel was an intensely interesting and often moving experience. The critical importance of the

Gurkha Welfare Trust was brought home to us time and again in the course of meeting and talking to nearly 300 Gurkha ex-servicemen and widows. Yet despite the poverty and hardship they face, there was scarcely a word of complaint from any of these proud old men and women. They are extremely grateful for their Welfare Pensions, without which most of them would face destitution. Rest assured that your generous contribution is immensely important and very much appreciated. “What would we do without our pensions?”, was a theme we heard all the time.”

The need for sponsors is still very great. Only 2200 out of the 11,200 Welfare Pensions being paid are sponsored. I would urge anyone in a position to sponsor one of our veterans or a widow who has not yet done so to think about it.

(This was originally published in the 43 Gurkha Lorried Brigade Journal - Ed)

Binnie Black & Veatch

OBSERVING THE 1999 ELECTIONS - A PERSONAL VIEW

by Andrew Hall

Having been present in 1994 for Nepal's second general election since the restoration of democracy, I was delighted to be invited back in 1999, in part to act as an international observer in the two-stage general election held in May. The intervening years had been turbulent ones in Nepalese politics. The failure of any party in 1994 to gain an overall majority of the 205 parliamentary seats had led to a merry-go-round of short-lived minority and coalition governments, seemingly in every possible combination. Things had been further complicated by splits in two of the main parties, the Unified Marxist-Leninists (UML) and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP).

Moreover, politics had taken an ugly turn with the declaration of "people's war" by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in February 1996 and the subsequent deaths of more than eight hundred people, some at the hands of the Maoists, others in police counter-terrorist actions. Were the bright hopes which attended the 1990 democracy movement now irretrievably tarnished?

Certainly, the general mood prior to polling seemed uneasy. Would the voters, dismayed by their politicians' antics, stay at home? Would the Maoists deliver on their threat to cause major disruption? Would the result be another hung Parliament? The UML suffered a further blow with the death during campaigning of its veteran and widely admired leader, Manmohan Adhikari.

The first phase of polling on 3 May covered 90 seats and nearly six million voters. Thirty teams of international observers, co-ordinated by the UN Development Programme, fanned out

across the country. Seven included British personnel. Of course, weeks of preparation by the Election Commission and by the Nepal Police had preceded this moment - sending out election officials equipped with ballot boxes and all the associated paraphernalia, providing security to the polling booths, in the most far-flung districts. A notable innovation was a pilot scheme using voter identity cards in some districts. In Lalitpur, where I observed, the ID cards were in use and seemed remarkably effective. Although not a hundred per cent foolproof they made personation and under-age voting - common complaints in areas without ID cards - much more difficult.

There was a festive atmosphere that day in Lalitpur, both in the town of Patan and the villages beyond. Women had put on their best clothes, people lingered around the polling centres after they had voted to catch up with the neighbours and friends. And there was a good-natured buzz of chatter and activity in the polling stations themselves. Those I saw, including one for women, staffed only by women, were extremely well regulated. Returning Officers - civil servants drafted in from a variety of Ministries - took pains to help the elderly or confused and to defuse complaints or problems with good-humour.

Of course, it was not such a happy story everywhere. Polls were countermanded in 50 centres where major irregularities occurred and there were reports of violent incidents in a handful of districts following clashes between groups of party workers. But the threat of Maoist violence failed to materialise, although turnout was down

in the dozen or so districts where they are influential. Elsewhere, turnout was around the 65 per cent level recorded in previous elections.

The picture on 17 May, when the remaining 110 constituencies voted (polls were postponed in five constituencies owing to the deaths of candidates), was similar. The international observers were now joined by two British MPs - Mr Ian Bruce who observed in the area around Janakpur, and Mr Anthony Steen who observed in Palpa. Voter turnout was again high, there were some sporadic violent incidents and re-polling was ordered in 20 centres. But the Election Commission once more earned praise from international observers for its effective organisation.

All eyes now turned to the count - a fascinating and remarkably transparent procedure. In Kathmandu, which had voted on 3 May, ballot boxes had been kept under armed guard until the count began on the evening of 17 May. Candidates or their agents and party workers were free to observe the entire process from the opening of the boxes to the sorting of papers and the actual count. They could, and frequently did, challenge decisions where the figures did not seem to tally or where papers had not

been clearly marked and vigorous debate would often ensue!

Just as the turnout had belied fears of voter apathy, so the final result showed that the voters clearly knew their minds. The Nepali Congress emerged well ahead of its main rival, with 110 seats to the 68 won by the Unified Marxist-Leninists - a return to the respective positions they occupied after the 1991 elections. In terms of vote share the Nepali Congress took 36.3 per cent of the votes while the UML won 30.7 per cent. The RRP (Thapa) was a distant third with 11 seats (10.2 per cent of the votes) while a handful of smaller parties shared the remainder. The breakaway party from the UML won no seats. Commentators generally felt that the fact that the Nepali Congress had fought the elections as a united party, unlike the UML and RPP, had given it a significant edge.

The 1999 elections then were a victory for democracy. Far from being disillusioned the voters participated enthusiastically. The people rejected those calling for violence or lending them tacit support. They showed that democracy could deliver stable government - the challenge ahead for Prime Minister Bhattarai and his new team.

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BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

by James Yeats-Brown

When I was invited to join the New Membership Sub-Committee last year, I was delighted to find, as a photographer myself, that the Committee was already discussing the idea of holding a photographic exhibition to run at one of the Society's events. It was obvious that among the membership there must be a wonderful and varied collection of photographs of Nepal taken over a period of time and that if we could find a way of bringing them together for the Annual Supper, they would provide a topic of discussion as well as a picturesque backdrop.

We decided to hold a competition and offer some prizes as a way of encouraging people to send in photographs, but there was no way of knowing what sort of response we would get. In the end, we needn't have worried as the number of entries surpassed all our expectations: by the closing date, there were nearly 200 photographs to be sorted and judged. This was clearly going to be a big task.

We were delighted that His Excellency, the Royal Nepalese Ambassador agreed to be the chief judge, along with our Chairman, Peter Leggatt and myself. The overall quality of the photographs was extremely high, but rather than simply look for technical merit, we wanted the winning pictures to reflect truly some aspect of Nepal's culture and landscape.

The overall first prize, a professional camera bag kindly donated by Nikon camera specialists Grays of Westminster,

was awarded to Baron Friesen for his excellent photograph titled "The Great Bodhnath Chaitya: the all-seeing eye of supreme Buddhahood". The prize was collected on his behalf by his wife.

The judges awarded second prize to C. Eaton's "Wayside music man on the road to Jumla", for its depiction of a traditional yet threatened part of Nepal's culture, the ballad singers popularly known as "Gaine". The prize was a £50 voucher for film processing and printing, kindly given to us by Sky Photographic Services.

A book token was awarded as third prize to Charles Wylie for his dramatic black and white photograph, "Ice Ridge at Machhapuchhare". There were three further runners-up, Christine Purdy, RCA McAllister, and SM Birch, who received signed copies of "A House in Kathmandu", kindly donated by the author and Society member, Harold James.

As if the judging hadn't been difficult enough, there followed a frantic rush to display as many of the photographs as we could before guests arrived for the Annual Supper. Our original instinct had been right: there certainly was a huge variety of pictures for everyone to enjoy and which reflected the vast combined experience of Nepal that exists in our membership. A big thank you is owed to those who donated prizes but, equally, we thank those who contributed photographs and helped make the event a success.



'The Great Bodhnath Chaitya'
- Baron Bernard Hubert Friesen



*'The offering of Lakh Batti'
- Christine Purdy*

*'Ice Ridge at Machhapuchhare'
- Charles Wylie*

Himalayan Kingdoms

 TRIBUTES

**John, Lord Hunt KG, CBE, DSO
1910-1998**


John Hunt and Tenzing Norgay

The Society was greatly saddened when they heard of the death of John Hunt in November 1998. One of the founder members of the Society, he was its first president from 1960 to 1975. He loved Nepal, not just for its mountains, but for its people too, doing much to promote and help Nepal and the Nepalese.

Lord Longford, John Hunt's fellow peer and Garter Knight said that in his opinion John Hunt was "the greatest Englishman of his time." Be that as it may there can be no doubt that he was an outstanding man, who strove to succeed and did succeed in virtually all his endeavours, from Sandhurst, where he passed in and also passed out top, a rare double, winning the Sword of Honour and the King's Gold Medal, to leading the expedition which first climbed Everest, to his elevation for political and social services to that elite body of twenty-six, the Knights of the Garter, the highest order of chivalry, granted only by HM The Queen. These and many other honours were rightly heaped upon him, but he was a modest man and never sought them, indeed he thought seriously of refusing the Garter.

With his regiment, the 60th Rifles (now the Royal Green Jackets) in India, he soon found new challenges, volunteering for secondment to the Indian Police for active operations against terrorists in Bengal, winning the Police Medal. Off duty, he looked for further challenges. He had, as a schoolboy, grown to love mountains. He took part in the attempt on the Karakoram peak, K36 (later named Soltoro Kangri) climbing to 24,500 feet. He might well have been selected as a member of the 1936 Everest expedition had not the medical board detected a heart 'murmur'. He was warned to be careful climbing the stairs! Undeterred, he took leave in Sikkim with his wife, Joy, making a reconnaissance of the east flank of Kangchenjunga and climbing one of the summits of Nepal Peak.

World War Two saw him first as Chief Instructor at the mountain warfare school in Scotland, then commanding a battalion of his regiment in severe fighting in Italy where he won the DSO, and finally commanding a brigade of the 4th Indian Division helping to restore peace between rival factions after the withdrawal of the Germans from Greece - a period he described as the most difficult in all his experience, before or since. Typically, he was successful and was made a CBE.

After the war, following a spell with Field Marshal Montgomery at Headquarters Allied Forces Central Europe at Fontainebleau, he was posted to the Headquarters of 1st British Corps in Germany. It was there that he received the invitation to lead the 1953 Everest expedition, "I could hardly believe my luck," he wrote.

Back in London, he took over the Everest office at the Royal Geographical Society and lost no time in tackling two crucial problems, the plan and the selection of the team. He said modestly, "Perhaps I was able to contribute a sense of military pragmatism." This he certainly did, but a much greater contribution was his leadership. His plan on which all the organisation and preparations were based, was followed in every detail on the mountain - a perfect example of lucid thinking and foresight.

The selection of the party was a different matter. Most of the possibles had climbed with Eric Shipton, who was to have been the leader. Several had refused to go with any other leader. John decided to talk individually to each of them, travelling all over the country to meet them. As a result all agreed to follow him as leader. In the event we were a very happy and united party and have remained firm friends ever since.

John Hunt was a brilliant thinker, a quick and lucid writer and very thorough. He had an adventurous spirit through which he inspired others. He was at heart a humble man with charm and sympathy for others. He gave for instance, unstinted credit to Eric Shipton and to past Everest expeditions, including the Swiss, for all the invaluable experience they had gained. He wrote, "We climbed on the shoulders of others." These characteristics as much as his leadership were to prove decisive on Everest. John made us feel our own part was essential to success. Although he would have liked to have gone to the top himself, he knew, as leader, his role was lower down, controlling the expedition as a whole. During the summit attempts however, he put himself in the group providing close support to the summit climbers in order to be able to make vital decisions and

provide early aid if required. He reached a height of 27,500 feet, a considerable achievement for one aged 43. He wrote "gasping and moaning for breath was an experience I'll never forget, a real fight for life."

After Hillary and Tenzing's success, John said the expedition would be the greatest achievement of his life. Little did he know then what further successes he personally would achieve. Following the expedition, for which he received a knighthood and the Nepalese decoration, the Gorkha Dakshina Bahu, he was appointed Deputy Commandant of the Army Staff College at Camberley with the rank of Brigadier. However by then John Hunt had become a national figure whose qualities were much in demand outside the Army. He was invited by HRH Prince Philip to set up a scheme for British youth. The idea was very much in line with John's own thinking, so he left the army and became the first director of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, a post he was to fill for 10 years.

Under his enthusiastic direction, the Scheme grew and flourished. Today, over 40 years since its inception, the scheme has benefited over two and a half million young people of both sexes. It has also shown that when set individual challenges many will achieve standards they thought they could never achieve in competition with others. In this way they gained invaluable confidence.

Through the success of the Award Scheme he was seen as the accepted champion of youth becoming the president or chairman of a number of organisations concerned with young people. He believed that many of the challenges needed by the young could often be met in wilderness areas or open spaces. He was able to do much to conserve such areas through his position

as Chairman of the Council for National Parks. He was also president of the Alpine Club and of the Royal Geographical Society.

Other responsible posts followed. The Prime Minister, then Harold Wilson, invited him to head a mission to Nigeria to advise on relief aid to those suffering from the civil war. Another mission was to Northern Ireland, which as a result of his report, led to the disbandment of the 'B' Specials. He was also a member of the Royal Commission on the Press and Chairman of the Parole Board. To all these enterprises, John applied his considerable intellectual skill, sound judgement and common sense. His opinions were not only useful to the government but were also of great value in debate in the House of Lords, of which he was an active and conscientious member.

In spite of all these and many other exacting commitments, John Hunt found time to take parties of young people on adventurous trips to Greenland, Alaska, the Pindus Mountains of Greece, the Polish Tatras and many other places. He organised and led an Anglo-Soviet expedition to the Pamirs in Central Asia, one object of which was to break down some of the tension of the cold war through the sport of mountaineering. John also played a leading role in cementing friendships which endure today with climbers in France, Germany, Switzerland, India and Nepal.

Throughout his long life, John Hunt always turned to the mountains for relaxation. Apart from those areas already mentioned he also climbed in the Pyrenees, the Caucasus and many other ranges. But it was to Nepal that he returned as often as possible. For the silver jubilee of our ascent of Everest he and his Everest 'family' trekked the 100 odd miles from Darjeeling to Khumbu to revisit that wonderful homeland of the Sherpas and renew contacts with many friends. A few years before he had covered the same ground in reverse with a smaller group, and for the 40th anniversary the six survivors of our ageing and dwindling party flew to Lukhla and spent a memorable two weeks in that unique and mountainous area.

John Hunt was a man with natural authority, judicious and kindly in its exercise, a leader of ability, a man of vision with a deep felt concern for young people and a true love for the outdoors, particularly the mountains and wild places. Throughout his long and active life John was strongly supported by his wife, Joy, a Wimbledon tennis player who became an able mountaineer, to whom he was married for 62 years, and their 4 daughters. The Society offers them sincere condolences and best wishes for the future.

CG Wylie

Sir George Bishop CB, OBE



George Bishop with Norbu Sherpa

In 1979 a flourishing Britain-Nepal Society welcomed Sir George Bishop, known to be a keen mountaineer and frequent visitor to Nepal, as President in succession to Lord Hunt, first President, and Arthur Kellas, former Ambassador to Nepal, and it was mainly due to Sir George himself that ten years later the Society had the honour of welcoming His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester as President.

The Society went from strength to strength and Sir George kept an eye on its progress with words of encouragement from time to time. So it came as a shock to us all when we heard the sad news that Sir George had died at his home in Beaconsfield on the 11th of April. He was in his eighty-fifth year and had an amazing list of high achievements to his credit. Early in his life, after graduating from the London School of Economics, he had joined the Civil

Service, and when the war came he was attracted to the Army but was too promising a civil servant to be spared. Many other fields of marvellous achievement lay in store.

Lady Bishop kindly wrote that his life came to an end without pain. He had survived a much less severe stroke seven years before but had recovered sufficiently to be motored to France, Switzerland and Italy. The previous November he had accompanied Lady Bishop to South Africa, "where he had long wanted to visit. He spent a fortnight in the winelands making excursions by coach and even got to the top of Table Mountain in the cable car! He remained good-humoured and uncomplaining throughout. I was lucky to have him so long".

Thus it was travel and adventure to the end in keeping with his wonderful life of achievement. As the "Daily Telegraph" put it in a long and fascinating obituary: "Sir George Bishop was a high-flying Civil Servant before becoming Chairman of Booker McConnell, he was also President of the Royal Geographical Society. His modest cheerful manner disguised a mountaineer's indomitable spirit and a first class mind. In 1959 he became the youngest deputy secretary in the Civil Service when, at 45, he was promoted to that rank in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Two years later he left to become a Director of Booker McConnell, then primarily a sugar producer in British Guyana. The Company also acquired a profitable portfolio of literary copyrights, including those of Ian Fleming, which provided funding from the Booker Prize for Fiction. Bishop became Vice-Chairman of Booker in 1971 and was Chairman from 1972 to 1979. In later years he was also a director of Barclays Bank, Rank

Hovis McDougall and the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation. He was a governor of the National Institute of Social and Economic Research, a member of the Civil Service Manpower Review Panel, a member of the Royal Commission on the Press and President of the West India Committee”.

Yet to be mentioned are Sir George’s enthusiastic involvements in mountaineering and rally driving. Again quoting from the “Daily Telegraph”:
 “From his early years Bishop was a keen mountaineer and rally driver. He won the Riley Motor Club winter trials of 1937. With his wife Una, he climbed extensively in the Alps and Himalayas, where he made 18 expeditions and built up a library of 12,000 photographs. In 1983 he became chairman of the management committee of the Mount Everest Foundation. In the same year he also became President of the Royal Geographical Society. There his

achievements ranged from restoring the iron railings around the Society’s Headquarters in Kensington Gore to mounting and taking part in a scientific expedition to the unexplored King Leopold mountain range in Western Australia.”

Members who were around in 1979 when Sir George became our President will not have forgotten his splendid contribution to Journal No. 3. It was entitled “The Route Across the Teshi Lapcha” and was given pride of place among many first-class contributions. It must have left readers in no doubt as to their new President’s passionate interest in mountaineering, an interest which remained with him to the end.

For members of the Society it was always a great pleasure to meet Sir George and to hear him speak. He will be long remembered by them.

HCS Gregory

Britain Nepal Chamber of
 Commerce

 BOOK REVIEWS

A Special Corps: The Beginnings of Gurkha Service with the British.

By AP Coleman. *The Pentland Press, Durham, 1999. Pp 317. Plates, B/W Photos, Maps, Appendices, Notes, Bibliog, Index. £20. Hb ISBN 1 85821 606 0.*

The majority of those who have purchased this book will be conversant with the fact, however vaguely that the 1814-1816 war brought about the founding of the 'Gurkhas'. Readers will be able to enhance their knowledge or renew it by reading Capt Coleman's very detailed work. It was an interesting assignment for me to contribute this review. My great-great-grandmother was the niece of Bhim Sen Thapa the implacable opponent of the British, nevertheless I have a sincere admiration for his adversary, that courteous soldier, David Ochterlony. We should have an annual 'Ochterlony Day' to celebrate his perception and far-sightedness which resulted in this very 'Special Corps'.

The author's extensive research commences with the period prior to the dispute between Nepal and the East India Company when both parties were extending their conquests. Kumaon and Garhwal with the hills beyond were brought under Nepalese rule, but Kangra eluded them, and my Thapa great-great-grandfather was killed during the assault on Kot Kangra (p.53) while my Kunwar one was severely wounded. My two ancestral families fought resolutely alongside their countrymen against the British, but in those days there was a touch of gallantry in war as exemplified by General Ochterlony.

As countries disagree over borders, so opposing armies always have differing

views about battles. Here we have the British version of events carefully laid before us with accounts of the war supplemented by documents, maps, treaties and information on the founding of the early regiments.

The Gurkha regiments were increased, and much has been said about the great bond that developed between the British Officers and the men under their command so that they and their families all became akin to a large family group. Outsiders cannot comprehend this sympathetic understanding that exists between the British and Nepalese.

It came as a great shock therefore to read "Jang Bahadur promised much but delivered very little" (p.239); a complete misunderstanding of the man and his character. He took an enormous personal risk by visiting England in 1850 in an effort to cement accord between the two countries while the Nepalese continued to resent with passion "the loss of half their Empire" (p.131) to the British, including part of their profitable Terai lands. When Jang returned home to Nepal there was an attempt on his life, and a plot to remove him from office was discovered and thwarted. In the circumstances prevailing at the time he could hardly display his amity towards the British, nor could he allow unlimited recruitment of men to serve under them. They paid Gurkhas much less than their other native troops, and these meagre salaries left the Gurkha on the verge of starvation (pp.227,228). General Ochterlony would have assessed correctly the situation, resulting in Jang Bahadur's necessary caution. He would have appreciated as well the great value gained by the British of the support by a prominent Hindu

personality like Jang Bahadur during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.

Brian Hodgson did not “persuade Jang Bahadur to provide ... a contingent of the Nepalese Army to fight for the British” (p.239). Hodgson had to persuade ‘Khabadhar’ Canning to accept them. My great-grandfather had every intention of keeping faith with Queen Victoria. When he heard about the outbreak of trouble in India, Jang made an offer of Nepalese troops to Capt Ramsey, the British Resident in Kathmandu, despite opposition from some Bharadars. It was Canning and a few senior officers who were reluctant to allow even part of the Nepalese Army to enter India. Jang’s main concern was the rescue of Sir Henry Lawrence whom he held in high regard. It was to his immense sorrow that Sir Henry died before Lucknow was relieved.

The booty carried back to Nepal by Jang’s troops (p.239) was common practice among victorious armies at that period. The sepoys in the British regiments were not above indulging in these activities. His service in India during the Mutiny was a matter of great pride to Jang Bahadur. Every year, on the birthday of HM Queen Victoria, he had a salute of 21 guns fired in her honour. I wonder to what devious scheme of his this act would have been attributed.

I have trawled most diligently through numerous records in the India Office Library dealing with the Mutiny to verify that part of my family history and have found it very satisfactory.

Capt Coleman has produced an excellent and extremely useful reference book dealing with the very early period of Anglo-Nepalese contacts in India and the birth of an incomparable brave and loyal Corps.

Mayura Brown

A House in Kathmandu

By Harold James. Janus Publishing Co, 1997. Pp 292. B/W Plates. Maps. £14.95. Hb. ISBN 1 85756 3687.

The author, one of Wingate’s Chindits, was awarded the MC at the age of nineteen, but it was many years before he visited Nepal to acquaint himself with the homeland of the men he had commanded. He fell in love with the country and was charmed by its inhabitants, but again, a period of years elapsed before he was able to fulfil his dream of having a house in Kathmandu. This followed many visits to Nepal. He found a Nepalese family who not only helped to supervise the building of the house, but also adopted him.

His next ambition was to discover some of the battlefields of the 1814-1816 war, since “In the schools of Nepal the pupils are taught about the Battle of Nalapani” and “Even 180 years later, the heroes of those days, like Balbhadra Kunwar, inspired commander at Nalapani, and Bhakti Thapa, fighting fiercely at the very cannon’s mouth at Deothal, are still heroes to the Nepali children of today” (p.193).

It was General Ochterlony’s chivalrous treatment of the courageous old warrior, Bhakti Thapa that inspired my affection for him. He gave orders for Bhakti’s body to be wrapped in a cashmere shawl as a token of respect, and sent back to Amar Singh Thapa with a message granting a truce for two days so that the Gurkha dead and wounded could be collected. The British troops were able to see the flames of Bhakti’s funeral pyre on which his two widows committed ‘suttee’ (p.246). Harold James visited the Boston Library in Massachusetts to carry out research on Ochterlony (p.226).

The latter part of this book gives very interesting accounts of those early battles - interesting because they have a

perception of the Nepalese mind and feelings. I am more than pleased to recommend this book since it revives the sagas we cherish of courage and gallantry which should never be forgotten.

Mayura Brown

The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research (EBHR)

Dr Michael Hutt, Senior Lecturer in Nepali at SOAS has brought this publication to my attention. This journal has its origins in the Sudasien Institut in Heidelberg where it was first published in 1991. It was subsequently moved to Paris

and is now settled at SOAS. There are two issues per year available on subscription, the 3 year rate is £30 (student £25) and the one year rate is £12 (student £10). The publication is described as a refereed journal which will be of interest mainly to academics and scholars of the Himalayan region. The November issue has a selection of articles on Nepalese current affairs. The EBHR can be obtained through the Publications Office at SOAS whose address is elsewhere in the journal.

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

NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron: HRH Prince Gyanendra of Nepal

President: HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO

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

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

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £10 (husband and wife members £20) per annum. Life Members, a single payment of £150, and Corporate Members £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 of the Britain-Nepal Society's functions. However we do not have reciprocal membership.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs Pat Mellor
3(c) Gunnersbury Avenue
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Tel: 020 8992 0173

THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

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JOIN OUR JOURNEY

Join our journey of discovery, a journey to new worlds and distant lands, across cultures and borders, hemispheres and continents, from our past to our future.

Today, the nations of the Commonwealth celebrate a shared history and culture, but how did this come about? The British Empire is a half-forgotten memory and yet through the Commonwealth, the legacy it left behind continues to influence the modern world. Exploration, the Pilgrim Fathers, Slavery and world trade, all of these form part of our story.

The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum allows the hidden history of the Commonwealth and Empire to be rediscovered by new generations, bringing this amazing story to life. Oral history, film, photographs, costumes and other artifacts colourfully show the rich tapestry of cultures and people affected by both the Commonwealth and Empire.

The important work to record and collect the past for future generations must continue. Our immediate priorities are to open the galleries to the public, establish education programmes and continue to develop the oral history archive. We need **YOUR** help to do this.

If you would like to find out more about ways in which you can help the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, either by becoming a friend, being interviewed for our oral history archive or donating artefacts, please contact Jason Dyer,

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to this scheme over the last three years.