

[25/10/93]



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THE BRITAIN NEPAL SOCIETY

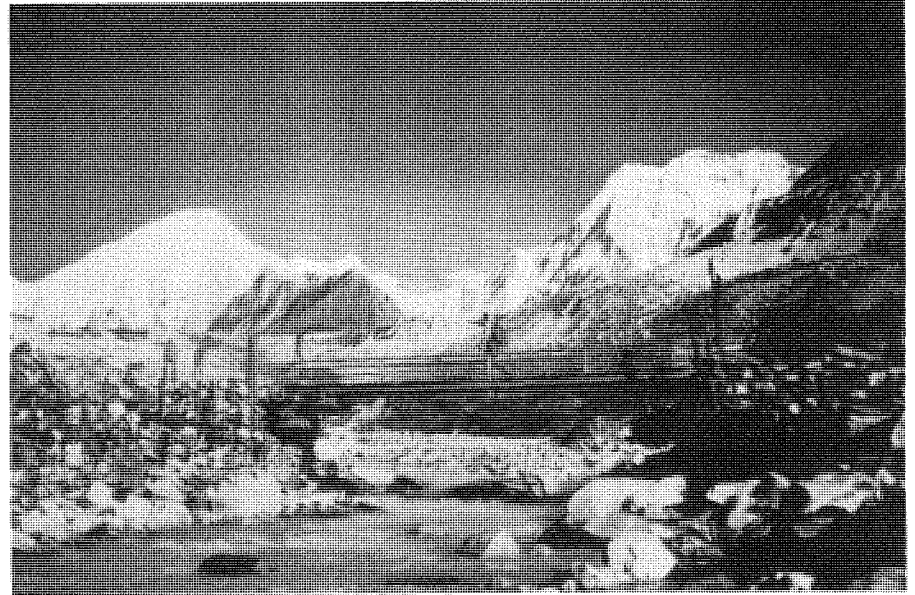
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*J o u r n a l*

Number 17

1993

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*Below Bintang one gazes  
North to Himlung Himal and Cheo Himal*

*See article Across the Larkya La page 25*

*Photo: Kev Reynolds*

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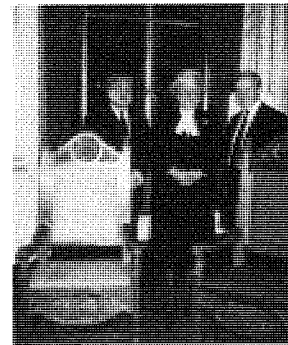
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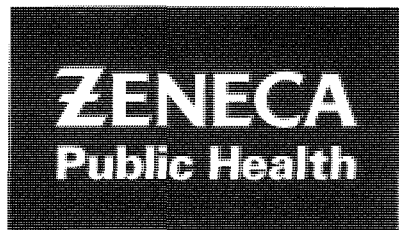
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*Speaker's Chairs of  
English Oak for  
Nepal. See article  
"Nepal" page 23*



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## EDITORIAL Return to Sagarmatha

Earlier this year, as our readers will know, a distinguished party of climbers, led by Lord Hunt, celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953, the year of Her Majesty the Queen's coronation, by a reunion within sight of the great mountain. They camped at Lukhla in a field provided by the Himalayan Trust. After a few days together there they moved up the valley to do "their own thing". Several wives, including Lady Hunt, accompanied the climbers. The camp at Lukhla was shared with the Television Crew which made the Channel 4 Film many readers will have seen. A special contribution to this Journal by Colonel Charles Wylie tells the story of the Reunion and adds some very interesting impressions.

Many other contributions by members well known in the Society appear in this the seventeenth number of our Journal and we take the opportunity to thank all our contributors for enabling us to maintain a high standard while providing our ever-growing membership with a wide variety of articles about Nepal and the Himalayas and also much information about the Society and its activities.

In March His Excellency the Royal Nepalese Ambassador addressed the Society in London on the subject of the General Election held in Nepal in 1991. Of his memorable speech the Journal is able to provide our readers with only a brief extract, owing to limitations of space. Similarly an article on Nepal by our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, which was published in the "Duncan Lawrie Bank Journal", can only be represented by an

extract but it has a bearing on the subject of the Ambassador's speech and we feel our readers will find it of very considerable interest.

Many have commented on the high quality of our last number. Writing from her home in North Wales, Susan Roberts had these kind words to say about it: "Congratulations on yet another splendid Journal ... its lay-out, the quality of paper and fascinating articles. I like the tone of optimism in the title "Firm Friends in a Troubled World". I did a little writing earlier this year and read some poetry which was taped for use at Glan Clwyd Hospital." A popular member of the Society Susan Roberts is a poet and has travelled widely. She recalls her meetings with the late Eric Mercer, for many years Honorary Secretary of the Society, and has some very kind words about him, all so well deserved.

Good causes are not lost sight of in this number, and as the Ambassador has been giving much thought to the subject of trade between our two countries we quote the following from a letter from Susi Dunsmore:

"Nepalese Textiles ... I would be grateful if you could put into the newsletter that the work of Nepalese weavers and embroiderers from the remote Eastern area of Nepal is available at the Museum of Man-kind shop, 6 Burlington Gardens — mainly scarves, ties, samplers or wall hangings, embroidered cushion covers and table cloths. Liberty, Regent Street, have commissioned exquisitely patterned woven shawls from the same area."

## Best Wishes for a Very Successful Year



## THE SOCIETY'S NEWS

by Joanna Thomas

This is my third and final year as your Secretary. There have been changes for the Society both at the Nepalese Embassy and in the Committee. Major General Bharat Keshar Simha retired as Ambassador in November. His successor is Mr. Shrestha whom we warmly welcome. At the A.G.M. Colonel Jimmy Evans retired as Chairman after seven years involvement on the Committee, and Brian Smith retired as Vice Chairman. I should like to thank them both for their time, energy and support. The Society had its first Election in its 32 years when Sir Neil Thorne O.B.E., T.D., D.L. was elected as Chairman.

The Committee is constantly reviewing its activities and is concerned about the costs of events to members. These have to be self funding. It has been agreed in committee that any funds surplus from the organisation of events should be used for the benefit of the people in Nepal. Last year we were able to contribute to the Fire in the Terai from general funds. This year an immediate contribution has been made to the recent floods, for which we are having an appeal.

Roger Potter has prepared a paper for the committee in relation to involving younger members. This has been discussed and is being implemented. (See article "Young Members".)

### Winter Lectures

■ On 30th September Mrs. Carol Inskipp, who has written a number of books,

spoke about the Birds of Nepal. (See article.)

■ On Tuesday 12th January, 1993 we departed from tradition and asked three travel companies: Explore Asia, Himalayan Kingdoms and Sherpa Expeditions to speak about particular aspects of the holidays they organise.

■ On Tuesday 6th March, 1993 His Excellency Mr. Surya Prasad Shrestha talked about the General Election in Nepal.

■ On Tuesday 27th April, 1993 Michael Dodwell from London Electricity talked about "Lighting up Nepal" and the progress they have been making in providing Electricity for people in the Kathmandu Valley.

### Other Events

■ **The Annual General Meeting** was held on Wednesday 4th November by kind permission of His Excellency, followed by a Curry Supper excellently provided by Mr. I. P. Manandhar and family from the Natraj Restaurant.

■ **The Nepali Supper** on Tuesday 16th February 1993 was for the first time held at St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street and was voted a great success. H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra, who was in England, was able to attend as our guest.

■ **The Summer Outing** this year on Thursday 8th July, was a river boat trip up and down the Thames.

■ On 14th October we had a very successful Reception at the House of Commons to say farewell to His Excellency, Major General Bharat Keshar Simha and

Madame Simha. This was sponsored by Sir John Stanley MP, the new Chairman of the Britain Nepal Parliamentary Group.

■ On 22nd December we had a small reception to welcome His Excellency Mr. Surya Prasad Shrestha and Mrs. Shrestha.

### ■ Lunch for the Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Britain-Nepal Society were invited by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to host a lunch for the Rt. Hon. Mr. Daman Nath Dhungana, Speaker of the House of Representatives, on his visit to London from the 6th to 13th June 1993.

The Speaker was accompanied by The Hon. Mr. Dilip Kumar Shahi, Vice-Chairman of the National Council (Upper House), The Hon. Mr. Gajendra Narayan Singh, Member of the House of Repre-

sentatives, The Hon. Mr. Nilambar Panthi, Member of the National Council, The Hon. Mrs. Thama Maya Thapa, Member of the House of Representatives and Mr. Surya Kiran Gurung, Secretary of the House of Representatives.

The lunch was held in the Rodin Restaurant, 4 Millbank, and the Society was represented by Sir Neil Thorne, Chairman, Mr. Roger Potter, Vice-Chairman, Mr. Peter Roberts, Membership Secretary, and Mr. David Jefford, Committee Member.

Detailed reports of many of these activities appear elsewhere in the journal.

I should like to thank Sir Neil Thorne and all the members of the Committee for making this another successful year.

*Joanna Thomas Honorary Secretary*

## THE NEPAL-BRITAIN SOCIETY

The Society held their annual dinner on November 27th, last year at the Shangri-La Hotel. The Guest of honour was the honourable Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deupa. Among the many guests were Major-General Bharat Keshar Simha, Sri Jharendra Singha and Mr. Damodar Gautam (who attended our Society's A.G.M. Supper on November 4th). During the evening, H.E. the British Ambassador read our message of good wishes to our sister Society. It mentioned as well our interest in education in Nepal, and the Reception at the House of Commons on October 14th last to bid a reluctant farewell to our very dear friends, Ambassador and Madame Simha. (See page 35.)

At our Nepali Supper on February 16th I read out the message of greetings and good wishes from Kathmandu. The Nepal-Britain Society had been very active last year organising thirteen events

ranging from slide presentations and panel debates to a cultural tour of Changu Narayan, a tennis tournament and performances of scenes from Shakespeare. The annual picnic at Kakani was a very enjoyable occasion.

Dr. Hemang Dixit was elected President at the Society's Annual General Meeting in March. He is a past President of the Nepal Medical Association. When he was in London in the 60s he became President of the yetis, and attended many of our lecture meetings. We wish him every success.

The previous President, Mr. Sagar Shumsher J.B. Rana, remains on the Committee. He is also a member of the Nepal Heritage Society. My husband and I spent a very happy evening with Sagar and his charming wife Brinda when we dined with them in London in October '92.

*Mayura Brown*

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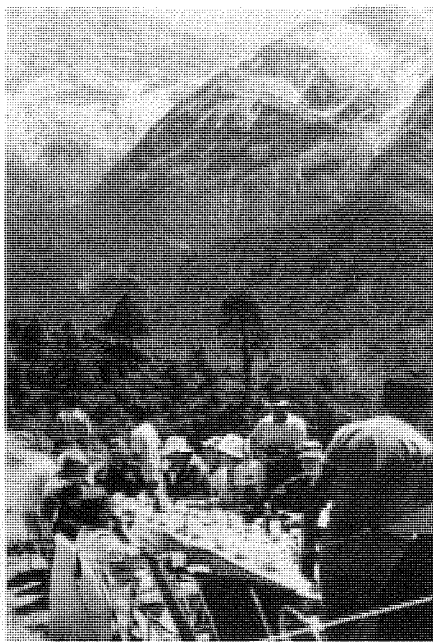
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## THE EVEREST FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY REUNION

by Charles Wylie

The 1953 Everest team had celebrated the 25th anniversary by trekking for three weeks from Darjeeling to the Sherpa district of Khumbu at the foot of Everest. Realising we would all be too decrepit to repeat this at the 50th anniversary, we opted for Reunion in 1993, this time flying to Lukhla.

Sadly death and invalidity reduced the numbers able to come and our party consisted of John Hunt, Ed Hillary, George Lowe, George Band, Mike Westmacott and me. Happily nearly all wives came too and the younger generation was represented by Pru Hunt and Louise Band.



*At the reunion camp at Lukhla*

Our aspirations and also our limitations varied considerably; ages ranged from 83 (John Hunt) to early twenties (Louise Band), and fitness from one with angina (me) to those bursting with health and energy (Joy and Pru Hunt). So a plan evolved whereby, after a few days together at a reunion camp near Lukhla, the party would move up the valley and split into different groups each doing their own thing: one to Gokyo, one to Kalapatthar above Base Camp and one to attempt the Island Peak.

The most energetic members (including Joy Hunt aged 80) flew out from England a week early and trekked for seven days from Jiri to the reunion camp. Ed Hillary combined pleasure with business: he and his wife Jane and the American and Canadian representatives of Ed's Himalayan Trust stayed with us at the reunion camp to start with and then went off by helicopter on Himalayan Trust business.

The whole Reunion 'bandobast' was in the capable hands of Classic Nepal, a Derbyshire trekking agency. We had never had it so good, to quote Harold Macmillan. There were tables and chairs, hot water for washing, an excellent commissariat and a willing and helpful Sherpa team attentive to our every need.

On arrival at Kathmandu we were met by an elephant with the words "Welcome to Lord Hunt and the 1953 Everest expedition members" painted in large red letters directly onto his ample flank. Our pleas for no special hospitality, sent in advance, had been quietly ignored. The Sherpa Association, the Nepalese Mountaineering

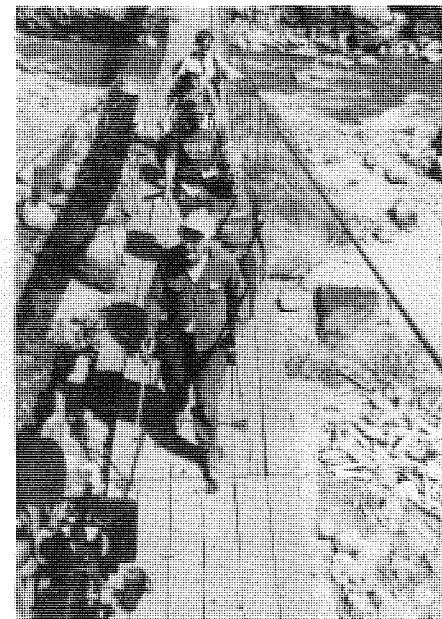
Association and our Ambassador all organised splendid receptions for us, each equally enjoyable, where we met many old friends. Among these were a number of Everest summiters — Chris Bonington, Reinhold Messner and several Sherpas including Pertemba, who has reached the top three times. Of our own 1953 party only Passang Phutar was in Kathmandu; it was good to see him again.

Thus regaled, we flew to Lukhla on a glorious morning. Soon we were dipping towards the tilted runway, perched on its ledge high above the Dudh Kosi gorge below. Each time one flies to Lukhla one is astonished at the extent of development round the airstrip. Hotels, tea houses and a complete village have sprung up to cater for, and thrive on, the large numbers of climbers and trekkers who fly in rather than spend two weeks walking from Kathmandu.

Our camp site was happily away from the crowds, a short walk over a shoulder and out of sight of the airstrip and village. Ed Hillary had kindly provided a field which is permanently leased by his Himalayan Trust. We shared the camp with two T.V. crews: Chris Rallings producing 'Return to Everest' which was shown on Channel 4 in May and a New Zealand team making a documentary on Ed Hillary's life. T.V. teams from other countries also visited the camp from time to time for interviews. John Hunt and Ed Hillary bore the brunt of these but on the whole TV and press were reasonably considerate and we were able to enjoy walks and dips in the icy streams round this delectable spot before moving up the valley.

After staging at Monjo we climbed to Namche, which now boasts a bank. Here we visited the excellent Sagarmatha Na-

tional Park Museum which has been built on the hill above the village. Some of the party broke off here to go up to Thami, Tenzing's birthplace, while the rest moved on to Kunde and then to Thyangboche. The monastery, destroyed by fire a few



*Crossing the Dudh Kosi*

years ago, has now been rebuilt thanks to an international effort and magnificent funding from the Himalayan Trust. The outside is already completed but there is still work going on inside. More of this below.

Moving on from Thyangboche I reached, indeed exceeded, my ceiling of 12,000', prescribed for me by the medics, at Pangboche, so reluctantly turned back while the others continued.

One party went up the Khumbu glacier to Base Camp, which they found occupied



*Thyangboche*

by no less than 18 expeditions! From Kolapathar, the view point opposite the ice-fall, they gazed down on a tented city looking, they said, rather like a giant pizza. While they were there a heavy snowfall occurred, with temperatures down to - 25C. The youngsters', that is under 70s', attempt on the Island Peak (20,000) was severely hampered by this weather. Nevertheless George Band and Mike Westmacott succeeded in reaching the summit.

Back in Thyangboche I requested an audience with the High Lama of Rimpoché (Reincarnation) who had kindly received our 25th anniversary party in 1978. After the formal exchange of Khadas (silk scarves), followed by tea, the Rimpoché produced a photograph of the 1953 team

and then showed me round the monastery. The outside has been painted by British Venture Scouts and there were Swiss volunteers busy fixing copper sheeting on the roof. The library of Tibetan religious books has been replaced with, I believe, funds from Germany. An enormous statue of Buddha was being constructed inside; this takes up most of the far wall of the ground and first floors. Everywhere there were electric cables, bringing power from the mini hydro electric station on the river below. I understand it was an electric heater which caused the fire, so one hopes the lesson has been truly learned.

I was impressed and heartened by what has been achieved. The Rimpoché is delighted, but points out that funds are still needed to finish the job.

The rest of the return journey was uneventful save for an unexpected five inches of snow during the night at Namche.

So ended our Reunion trek. 'What were your impressions?' I am often asked. 'Has everything changed?' For what they are worth here they are:

The first is of a smog-ridden Kathmandu. It is tragic that so beautiful a place should be under a blanket of pollution. Too many vehicles, badly maintained, particularly diesel lorries and motorised trishaws are the cause.

Next, I was delighted to find, in spite of what we had been led to believe, that there was very little litter along the track or at campsites. I think trekking agencies and their sirdars make very sure that rubbish is disposed of and temporary latrines are dug and filled in. The exception to this is broken glass which is to be seen virtually

everywhere. Why this should be I do not know. Everest itself, from all accounts, is a different story.

Another abiding impression is of the tremendous contribution Ed Hillary has made to the well being of the Sherpas of Khumbu and Solu. The impact of the twenty-six schools, the two hospitals, and thirteen village health clinics, the 1,000,000 trees already planted, the bridges, village water supplies and the two airstrips has to be seen to be fully appreciated. Space does not allow me to enlarge on this; suffice it to say that it is a remarkable achievement for which Ed Hillary deserves the highest praise.

Lastly, one cannot fail to be impressed by the sterling character of the Sherpas, cheerful and hardy as ever, and by their warm welcome. It was a tonic to be among them again.

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## BIRDS OF NEPAL

by Carol Inskipp

Over 830 bird species have been recorded in Nepal, a high number for such a small country. This species richness can be partly attributed to the wide range of altitude in the country. The tropical forests in the lowlands, such as in the Royal Chitwan National Park, support the largest number of bird species. At the other extreme is the alpine zone of the high peaks which holds the smallest number of species.

The other major factor contributing to Nepal's species richness is its position of overlap between the Oriental realm to the south and the Palaearctic realm to the north. The country's birds are therefore a mixture of both Oriental and Palaearctic species. One familiar Palaearctic bird is the Wren Troglodytes troglodytes, a common garden bird in Britain, which mainly occurs above 2,500m in the Nepalese Himalayas. Common Oriental birds in Nepal include the Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*, named for its characteristic metallic call which resembles a coppersmith at work.

About 20 bird species are now extinct in Nepal, including the magnificent Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*, which was first described for science from Nepal by Brian Hodgson. The habitat of tall evergreen fruiting trees which this bird requires probably no longer exists in the country. Hodgson lived in Nepal for over 23 years as British Resident in the early half of the last century. He is a forgotten pioneer of Himalayan natural history and discovered as many as 124 bird species and 31 mammal species new to science.

In 1989 the International Council for Bird Preservation funded a study I made of the status and conservation of Nepal's forest birds. The high proportion of 77% of the country's breeding birds utilise forests. Nepal's forests are of international importance for birds. There are 124 breeding bird species for which Nepal may hold significant world populations. These species have a breeding distribution restricted to the Himalayas, north-east India, northern south-east Asia and south-west China. Nearly all these species are dependent on forests.



*Coppersmith Barbet*

The Kali Gandaki river has carved the world's deepest river valley right through the Himalayas. The river runs north-south almost through the middle of Nepal and the centre of the Himalayan chain. In general, forests to the east of the valley are

wetter and richer in species than those to the west. The ornithologist, Robert Fleming, was the first to point out that the valley is also an important divide in distribution for bird species. The world ranges of about 40 breeding bird species reach the western limit of their ranges in the valley or its watershed. One example is the Rufous-breasted Bush Robin *Tarsiger hyperythrus*, a Nepalese speciality, which favours undergrowth in rhododendron forests, especially near streams.

A high proportion of Nepal's bird species are considered threatened — over one fifth of all breeding birds including the pheasant, the Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra*, an inhabitant of oak/rhododendron forests. The male is a magnificent bird, largely coloured crimson. As many as 84% of Nepal's threatened birds, are dependent on forests and are suffering from the current widespread deforestation in the country. A few species which prefer open forests, or scrub, such as some bulbuls, flycatchers and the Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis* which occurs only in Nepal, must have increased as a result of forest depletion. However nearly all of these species are common and widespread in the country. Overall the populations of most Nepalese forest birds are likely to have decreased.

There has been a great expansion in tree-planting in recent years, but the overall impact on forest cover has been very small. Also the new uniform plantations,

which are of even-aged trees planted in lines, can never replace the richness and variety of a natural forest which may have taken hundreds of years to develop. This may sound a depressing picture, but much can be done to help and conserve Nepal's forests and their birds. Improving the management of the large areas of forest in poor condition would be much more valuable than planting more trees, for people as well as for birds. With protection, badly depleted forests have made dramatic recoveries. Improved management is now widely recognised by forestry experts in Nepal as the most important aspect of Nepalese forestry and has enormous potential for the future.

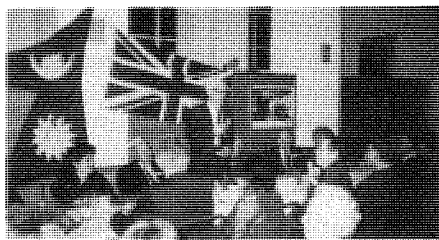
Nepal has an extensive protected area system covering over 10% of the country when taking into account the Annapurna Conservation Area which is managed by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, and the newly designated Makalu Barun National Park. Only about 20 of Nepal's breeding birds have not been found in the country's protected areas in the nesting season. However pressures on the protected areas are increasing and populations of some of their bird species will not be viable in the long term. One heartening sign for the future is the enthusiasm of members of the Nepal Bird Watching Club. Formed in 1982, this Club has an expanding membership of mainly young Nepalese, many of whom are active conservationists.

## THE ANNUAL NEPALI SUPPER

by Mayura Brown

Our Nepali Supper on February 16th was a very special occasion. We had the great honour and pleasure of welcoming our Patron, HRH Prince Gyanendra and HRH the Princess Komal to this event which is akin to an extended-family party. We were also happy to welcome Their Excellencies the Nepalese Ambassador and Madame Shrestha, and our First President, Lord Hunt.

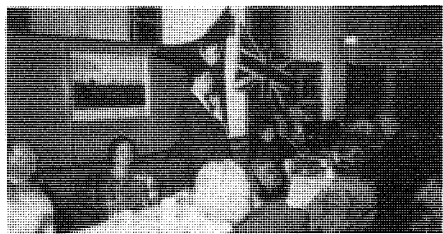
While we took our places for supper two Gurkha pipers of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers entertained us, concluding with a rendering of "Amazing Grace". After an excellent Nepali meal our Chairman, Sir Neil Thorne, read the gracious message of good wishes from H.M. the Queen. Lord Hunt then spoke and reminded us that the Society had started in 1960 and is continuing to thrive. His devotion to Nepal and her people was not only conveyed by his



*Lord Hunt Speaking*

words, but his interest in the well-being of the people is shown by his support of various beneficial projects, including the rebuilding of the Thyangboche Monastery. In his speech, HE the Ambassador told us that HRH Prince Gyanendra, besides playing an important role in the

preservation of the flora and fauna of Nepal as Chairman of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, is also contributing to the conservation of the National Heritage — a very important field with Nepal's ancient traditions and irreplaceable religious and architectural monuments. He mentioned the affection and respect Lord Hunt commands from



*His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra*

the Nepalese people for his contribution to the protection of their mountain environment.

Finally we heard from our Royal Patron. It is always gratifying to listen to HRH's words of encouragement and support for the Society which were warmly appreciated by our members.

The annual message of greetings and good wishes from the Nepal-Britain Society was read to the assembly and the two loyal toasts were drunk.

We wended our way home after a joyful evening. We had found the new venue for the Supper, St. Columba's Hall, most agreeable. Our thanks go to the Committee and their helpers for the attractive decorations which made the Hall look so cheerful on a cold winter's night.

## SOCIETY SUMMER OUTING — AN EVENING BOAT TRIP ON THE RIVER THAMES

by Iris Perowne Bolton

After days of hot, gorgeous summer weather the forecast was for rain. But we were in luck; by the time some ninety members and friends forgathered on the pier at Westminster the skies were grey but no rain had fallen, and before long the clouds had rolled away to give us a clear bright evening.

By seven o'clock the good ship PRIDELE had come alongside (in place of the expected ABERCORN which has broken its propeller shaft), all had boarded and we were progressing gaily upstream towards Lambeth Bridge. Or we thought all had boarded; to our surprise we suddenly found ourselves turning round and heading back to the pier to pick up two latecomers. Lucky people!

Off we set again, this time in earnest, past landmarks old and new; Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament with marquees on the terraces; the hideous green and yellow fortress built for MI5; Battersea Power Station, gaunt and empty, awaiting a useful future; the Buddhist Temple in Battersea Park; Albert Bridge in its sugar-almond coloured livery; Battersea Old Church, where Turner used to paint, dwarfed by modern blocks of flats; rows of luxury houseboats fronting Cheyne Row. Chelsea Harbour, haunt of yuppies, Wandsworth, Fulham, Putney ...

Meanwhile we were finding the boat comfortable and commodious. The main deck contained the bar and supper buffet and was laid out with dining tables and chairs; the upper deck more sparsely furnished with the "bridge" partitioned off up

front and a small open deck at the stern. Disappointingly they had failed to provide our requested audio system; so the Nepali music we had brought perforce remained unplayed. There was so much chatter that perhaps no-one would have heard it anyway! The commentary given by the captain later on was certainly almost impossible to understand, such was the noise level of all our happy voices.

The trip had been advertised to go upstream as far as Teddington before returning to Westminster, but a further disappointment lay in store for some of us when we were told that the Pridela was of too deep a draught to continue into the shallower reaches upstream on a falling tide. We were to exchange the elegant villas and parks of the upper tidal Thames for the urban views of the City and Docklands.

So just beyond the boathouses of Putney we went about, making our way back again past Wandsworth, Fulham, Battersea and Chelsea to Westminster and then beyond, downstream. Here there were more delights (and horrors) to be seen; the long classical facade of Somerset House confronting the concrete "carbuncle" of the National Theatre, the dome of St. Paul's barely visible among the skyscrapers of the City, Tower Bridge, the great Tower of London itself and the modern might of H.M.S. Belfast. Then the old warehouses of the London Docks, some still lying empty, dirty and forlorn, while others, tarted up and gleaming with glass and chrome, are homes and shopping ar-

cares and places of entertainment to erst-while yuppies and their successors. Among the monsters a small clutch of little pubs still ply their trade as they have done for three hundred years or more; The Prospect of Whitby, one of the oldest, The Mayflower near where the Pilgrim Fathers' ship was fitted out, The Angel, and the pub by Wapping Old Stairs where the notorious hanging judge, Judge Jeffries, was trapped when on the run after The Glorious Revolution of 1688.

On our return trip dusk had fallen and we found an entrancing different view of London, with buildings floodlit (frequently to their advantage) and festoons of lights strung out along the embankments.

All too soon we were back at Westminster, having had a splendid evening and for many, a view of London quite undreamt of. The only sadness was that more of our fellow members had not taken the opportunity of enjoying the boat trip with us.



# Explore Nepal



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## NEPAL'S GENERAL ELECTION — 1991

From a Speech to the Society in London  
by His Excellency Surya Prasad Shrestha

The May 1991 general election is a major historical landmark in Nepal. It was the second general election based on a multi-party system, the first having been held in 1959. Nepal has passed through a chequered history of political development. It was ruled by absolute Kings and hereditary Prime Ministers who were de-facto rulers. The Shah Kings, however, were reduced to figure-heads when Jung Bahadur Rana, a noble from the Rana family, staged a coup in 1846 and instituted a hereditary system of Rana family rule in which the eldest male member of the family enjoyed the position of the Prime Minister.

The Rana family rule, however, was displaced by a revolution that took place in 1950-51 allowing Nepal an opportunity for an experiment in democracy. The political change that dawned in Nepal was made possible by a combination of several factors — the political consciousness brought about by the events of World War II, anti-colonial movements throughout the third World, and the political transformation in India in 1947 and in China in 1949. The young and energetic educated Nepalese, who had actively participated in anti-British movements in India, organised a number of political parties in India to fight the tyranny of Rana oligarchy and to establish constitutional democracy. Nepali Congress Party, the largest of all these parties, organised and led a revolution in 1950 and the 104 year old Rana regime was toppled by the revolution that lasted exactly 104 days.

The revolution introduced the concept of constitutional monarchy and the Shah King, reduced to a figure-head by the Ranas, emerged from obscurity as constitutional monarch. The new political party leaders of Nepal, inexperienced as they were in establishing and managing democratic institutions, spent a number of years in factional conflicts pending the making of the Constitution and conducting the general elections. In 1959, King Mahendra, the father of the present King, promulgated the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal. The King retained the emergency power himself while allowing for parliamentary general elections.

Nepal conducted the first parliamentary general election in March 1959 in which 9 parties and 268 independent candidates contested 109 seats in the Lower House of Parliament. The Nepali Congress won an absolute majority with 74 seats and subsequently formed the government with its leader B. P. Koirala as the first democratically elected Prime Minister. The government did not last long with the royal take-over on December 15, 1960.

In 1962 King Mahendra promulgated a new Constitution introducing a concept of "guided democracy" in the form of a Panchayat system. Panchayats, which have remained as social institutions of five men councils since time immemorial in Nepal, were a socio-political forum to discuss local problems and pass decisions of socio-political importance. The Panchayat was a hierarchical tier system

structured at village, district, zonal, and national levels. Elections to all these bodies except the lowest tier were conducted indirectly in which individuals, rather than parties, were allowed to contest. Discontentment against the monocratic panchayat polity continued to grow and in 1979 the King called for a National Referendum in which the people were asked to choose between a reformed partyless panchayat system and the multi-party system. In the Referendum held in 1980, the panchayat system emerged victorious with 55% of the votes, allowing the conformists to claim legitimacy for the panchayat system. The King, meanwhile, made a commitment to respect the minority opinion. Following the Referendum the panchayat system entered into a new phase in which the Constitution introduced the concepts of adult franchise, the Prime Minister being elected by and responsible to the National Panchayat.

The post-Referendum politics of Nepal were marked by an increasing political polarisation. Two elections (1981 and 1986) were conducted on a non-party basis. The multi-party side composed of banned Nepali Congress and the divided Communist Parties, continued their protest against the panchayat system. The splintered opposition, however, succeeded in forging unity by late 1989 and 1990. A United Left Front also joined the movement along with Nepali Congress to establish multi-party democracy. Violent clashes occurred resulting in the death of many activists and citizens. Taking this into consideration, His Majesty King Birendra restored the multi-party system dismantling the entire fabric of the partyless Panchayat Polity in 1990.

With the readvent of a multi-party system a new interim government led by Nepali Congress Leader, K. P. Bhattarai along with the Left Front was formed with the two major tasks — preparation of a new democratic Constitution based on a multi-party system and holding a general election within one year.

Only an accurate and authentic electoral roll of voters could provide a sound basis for free, fair and impartial elections.

The Election Commission first published the Electoral Roll of all the 205 constituencies of the Kingdom with sufficient opportunities for correcting the rolls by the electors which numbered 10,694,535 as total voters. After revisions and the inclusion of those left out, the final number of voters was put at 11,191,777. The computerised electoral list was made available in all election constituencies.

With the concurrence of the Supreme Court, the Zonal Judges and District Judges and other Officers of the Judicial Services, were appointed Chief Returning Officers and Returning Officers in all the 205 constituencies. Their duties were to supervise, guide and co-ordinate the election works and to conduct free and fair polls in their respective areas. They were entitled to assign the necessary number of officials for conducting polls at polling centres and sub-centres. The total number of personnel engaged during the voting in all the polling centres was 62,881.

Returning Officers all over Nepal notified the election programme on March 25, 1991. The programme included the filing of nomination papers by candidates, objection on candidacy, scrutiny and withdrawal.

A total of 1,615 candidates filed their nominations by the end of the nomination

day. Of the 1,615 candidates, 1,218 were from the political parties. But 270 candidates later on withdrew their nominations and only 1,345 were left in the race. Of the 1,345 candidates, 219 were independents.

The parties were constitutionally required to nominate at least five percent of women. Therefore, of the total of 1,345 candidates, 80 were women.

In each of the polling centres, before the start of polling, the ballot boxes were displayed to the satisfaction of the candidates or their agents that they were empty. As soon as the polling was closed, the ballot boxes were properly sealed in the presence of the candidates or their representatives. The ballot boxes were then transported to the district headquarters under guard and candidates or their agents were allowed to accompany the boxes. At the district headquarters, the boxes were delivered to the Returning Officer with the seals intact and they remained under his custody until the counting of votes.

Once all the ballot boxes from a constituency had arrived at the district headquarters, the Returning Officer fixed the date and time for counting of votes. On completion of counting, the results were officially declared by the Returning Officer.

There were delays in some constituencies in counting the votes because polling officials had to travel on foot from remote polling stations to the district headquarters where counting was done.

Though the vote count was manually done in all the 75 administrative districts, automatization of vote count, information retrieval, processing and dissemination was another new venture that the Election Commission introduced in the General Election 1991.

The election was conducted peacefully in a fair and free atmosphere. International observers also had a close eye-view of its fairness.

Electors motivation that played a pivotal role in setting the course of democratic build up in the country, turned into a remarkable participation with a turn-out of 65.15% exercising their democratic rights.

The participation of 65.15% was higher than expected. The participation of the women voters was also significant. The low percentage of invalid votes (4.42%) in terms of the high illiteracy rate in the country shows that literacy is not the only measuring parameter in terms of political consciousness among the people.

The difficult geographic terrain had not hampered the voters in exercising their right to vote. It shows that the people of Nepal are conscious enough in choosing their representatives by exercising their voting right and see that multi-party democracy works well and gives the country a stable political situation.

Out of 219 independent candidates only 3 succeeded in the election, which clearly indicates that people are more aligned to the political parties and their programmes.

Out of 1,345 contesting candidates, only 28 (2%) have lodged a protest, i.e. 9 against election crime and 19 against election results. Out of 1,345 candidates, 751 forfeited their deposits.

There was a presumption that Nepalese voters being illiterate and isolated may be influenced by the communal and regional forces that emerged during the post movement and pre-election period. This has not proved true as the voters clearly aligned themselves with the programmes of the political parties.

## The Gurkha Museum

The Gurkha Museum commemorates the services of the Gurkhas to the British since 1815.

The story starts with a view of the Gurkha and Nepal, his homeland, before the visitor is taken through the main chapters of Gurkha military history from 1815 to the present day.

The displays cover the Gurkhas' service in the old Indian Army which took them to battlefields across the world — the North West and North East Frontiers of India, France and Belgium, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Burma, Malaya, North Africa, Italy and many more besides.

From 1948 onwards the displays cover the story of the four Gurkha regiments transferred to the British Army and the corps which were subsequently raised to join them. They have served all over the world, including the campaigns in Malaya, Brunei, Borneo and the Falklands Islands.

The number serving Gurkha soldiers grew to over 120,000 in each World War. Every Gurkha soldier has been a volunteer; none has ever been a conscript. Their graves lie in the many parts of the world far from their home.

Today Gurkhas from the villages in the hills of Nepal still serve as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. The Gurkha Museum does honour to the memory and service of them all.

### The Gurkha Museum

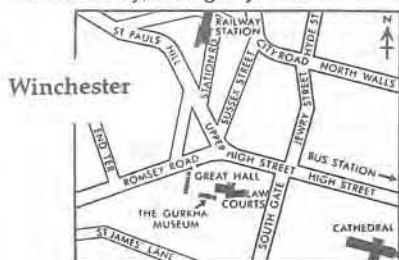
The Gurkha Museum has something to interest people of all ages and is very suitable for a family outing. Besides tableaux, dioramas and showcases it has visual and voice descriptions of the history of Gurkha regiments and a gallery commemorating the winners of 26 Victoria Crosses.

There is also a shop well stocked with things which relate to Gurkhas and Nepal.

### Opening Times

Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm

The Museum is closed on Sunday and Monday except on public holidays. It is also closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.



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## NEPAL

by Sir Neil Thorne OBE, TD, DL

(From an article contributed to the Duncan Lawrie Bank Journal)

Having been the first foreign country to be allowed access to Nepal for the purposes of recruiting its young men, it was natural that in 1832 we should be the first country to open a legation there. The first overseas Nepalese Embassy was opened in London in 1934, and it was not until 1948 that the next foreign representation took place, when Nepal exchanged ambassadors with India. Today, there are 19 missions in Kathmandu.

Until 1769, Nepal consisted of a number of separate kingdoms. In that year they were brought together by the King of Gorkha — Prithvi Narayan Shah — who, together with the head of his family both before and since, was expected by his subjects to have some of the divine virtues of the Hindu God, Vishnu. This royal line was served by a hereditary prime minister until 1951 when the regime was overthrown by the then King Tribhuvan, grandfather of the present King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

Historically, Nepal was governed by Panchayats. A Panchayat was a five man council and they were structured on a hierarchical tier system, with village, district, zonal and national Panchayats. Except for the lowest tier, elections to these bodies were conducted indirectly on an individual rather than a party basis. However, by 1990, the system was blamed for all national ills and following riots in several major towns the King set about introducing a new constitution. Following a detailed study, a parliament based on the Westminster system of two chambers was

established. A general election followed in May 1991 and outside observers from other countries were invited to be present to establish whether or not the elections had been held in a free and fair manner.

During the elections, a number of participating delegations made offers of gifts for the use of the new parliament. I suggested that for the first time, the British parliament should make a presentation to the parliament of a non-Commonwealth country. Chairs for the speakers of both chambers seemed the most appropriate gift and accordingly, two chairs of Yorkshire oak were hand carved in Ampleforth, Yorkshire. They were presented to the Nepalese Ambassador in London and have now been dispatched to Kathmandu.

There is no doubt that Nepal is a spectacularly beautiful country. The temples, palaces and monuments of Patan, Kathmandu, Gorkha and Pokhara all vie with the awesome majesty of the Himalayas. Yet to Westerners trekking through the foothills of Nepal, the Nepalese way of life would appear to recall that of Europe in the middle ages. Barely 1,300 miles of motorable road serve a country of some 57,000 square miles and many villagers face a walk through the hills of five days or more to reach the nearest road link. Electricity is unheard of in all but the largest towns.

The population of Nepal is almost 16 million, of which half are farmers, living at altitudes of between 3,000 and 12,000 feet. Their homes, families and livelihoods are under constant threat from natural disasters — earth tremors, landslides, floods

and hailstorms, disease, crop failure and water shortage are all common. Consequently, farmland, terraced fields and even whole villages can disappear under the monsoon rains. There is no welfare state to support the Nepalese people, nor is there a health service — indeed the entire country is served by only 500 or so doctors; in the hill regions, modern medicines are almost unknown. Not surprisingly, life expectancy averages less than 50 years.

Education too poses a problem. The literacy rate in Nepal is about 25%. Those children fortunate enough to live near to a school face a walk of up to three hours, there and back, each day. Only primary education is free and most schools are in ramshackle buildings with very little in the way of furniture and books. Sadly, many older children do not receive a worthwhile secondary education, even if there is a school nearby and the fees are within the family's means, as they are often unable to spare the child from tending the family's crops or livestock. For similar reasons, access to such higher education facilities as exist in the major towns is limited.

Over the years, the Nepalese have acquired an empathy with the British. Many who have experienced their charm and know their history would like to offer

more help, to go some way toward repaying the debt we owe to a race who have spilt so much of their blood in helping us to preserve our own freedom and prosperity. But there are difficulties, not least of which is the problem of identifying suitable schemes which can be funded, implemented and maintained at a satisfactory level to benefit the local economy. One scheme which would prove invaluable would be a major hydro-electric programme, as this would not only provide a much needed efficient fuel source, it would also reduce the need to cut down trees for fuel, and thereby limit soil erosion.

During my time in parliament I was able to increase substantially the number of parliamentary clerks who came here from Kathmandu to gain experience of the Westminster procedure. I would hope that a similar scheme might be introduced for Nepalese civil servants, where-by they could be attached to our own civil service for a number of months to see how government business works. This would make it easier for aid to be handled in the most efficient way possible, benefitting those who need and deserve it most. Maybe then, the efforts to repay our steadfast ally will truly have an effect on the lives of the peoples within this beautiful mountain kingdom.



## ACROSS THE LARKYA LA

By Kev Reynolds

London-based Sherpa Expeditions took their first trek to Nepal in the early seventies. Everest was the goal, the ultimate destination for any mountain-trekker burdened with dreams, as it clearly is today. But over the years other regions beyond Khumbu have become accessible, and those of us who have succumbed to the spell of this magical kingdom of snow-capped peaks and smiling, warm-hearted people, return at every opportunity to add to the list of ambitions satisfied. Is it possible, though, to satisfy all one's dreams; to quench that longing for the harmony of the foothills, or eye-squinting vistas of wonder matched by a porter's smile? I doubt it. So each year Nepal calls and one's explorations grow.



*Camp at Samdo—Highest village on Manaslu Circuit*

With the recent lifting of access restrictions many long- forbidden corners have been eagerly hitched to the landscape of dreams. Among them is the Manaslu Himal and its draining valleys, the Buri Gandaki and Dudh Khola. As soon as it became known late in 1991 that a circuit

of Manaslu was to be made possible for a maximum of 400 trekkers a year, Sherpa Expeditions applied for some of those places and invited me to join their first trek. And what a trek that turned out to be!



*High above Samdo Larkya peak left and Larkya La right*

A foothill crest an hour above Gorkha set the tone for the next twenty-three days. The panorama gained was indeed a vision of glory: Annapurna II, Peak 29 (Ngadi Chuli), Himalchuli, Baudha Peak, the Ganes Himal — all hovering in a pretence of cloud on a far horizon, while in between terraced foothills rolled one after another into the swallowing haze of afternoon.

For two days we walked across and along those foothills with snow-peaks as a distant lure, then down to Arughat Bazaar for an introduction to the Buri Gandaki, the river that was to be our constant companion and guide for the next twelve days.

The Buri Gandaki carves a deep shaft through the mountains. Huge walls, smoothly impressive, soar above the rapids to blinker all who enter. Big moun-

tains are snatched from view for hours on end; shadows match the thunder of water on rock, while high above, cascades spray in long slender ribbons from grooves cut in the sky. Then the valley twists and November sunlight floods in, washing tiny terraces and straw- or stone-capped villages alike. One bathes in its generous warmth before plunging down to the boulder bed, shuffling shadows again, then rising once more on a helter-skelter train typical of Nepalese flat.

Manaslu offered its profile on the trail to Llogaon, but grew in stature with summit spikes on show from Samagaon, a large and distinctive village hunched at its glacial feet. An arc of mountains, each with its napkin of glaciers, formed a majestic wall above Samagaon, but from Samdo, the highest village of all, one could set those mountains in perspective, study them as mountains are often best studied — from mid-height. Then they produced a backcloth of splendour and, incidentally, one of the finest views ever to greet a dreaming trekker on emerging from his tent.

We camped three nights at Samdo, and I'm so glad we did, for it not only gave an opportunity to acclimatise before tackling the Larkya La, but also to explore further, to absorb those views and the bare wind-swept hills that rolled towards Tibet, while at night an overfull moon doused the valley in silver that sparkled on diamonds of frost.

At Duwang, a yak pasture at 15,000 feet where we camped prior to crossing the pass, anger intruded and bruised an otherwise all-pervading atmosphere of deep contentment. For what we found was a site strewn with garbage left by a party of trekkers who had leap-frogged ours



*Village boy proudly shows off his young sister (lower valley of the Buri Gandaki)*

whilst we were at Samdo. Their tell-tale rubbish was an insult, not only to us, to the pristine environment we had so joyfully embraced each day but, perhaps worst of all, to the trusting nature of the Nepali people. Manaslu is an area subject to a 'minimum-impact code'. All food, cooking fuel etc must be carried in, and all rubbish carried out; just 400 trekkers a year are granted the privilege of experiencing such a glorious landscape, and a liaison officer is assigned to each party — with the responsibility, presumably, of policing the regulations. And that trust had been betrayed, privilege abused. Around that near-arctic site paper, tin cans, plastic and polythene snagged tiny shrubs or lay glued with frost to the rock-hard ground and iced streams. At Duwang anger exploded, but it also energised our group into a determined clean-up operation — an unwelcome task, but one that needed tackling.

We left in the bitter pre-dawn darkness next morning, heading south-west on a surprisingly gentle rise through an ablation valley beside the rubble-strewn glacier that drains the Larkya La. The pass itself, at 17,103 ft, proved to be a broad saddle with a clutter of cairns, chortens and prayer flags, and a clear view down-



*Trekkers resting high above Samdo—Larkya Peak in Background*

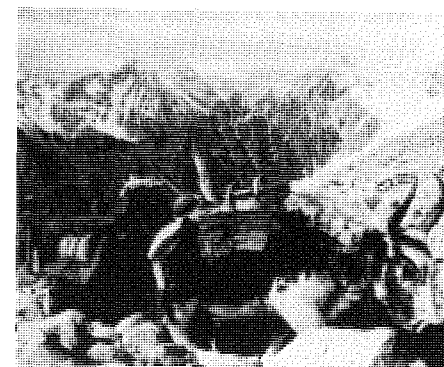
valley to graceful Pang Phuchi, the mountain that protects Samdo. But once we began the descent into the wind on the western side, so a new enchantment entered our field of vision. Below lay a huge basin into which poured glaciers, moraines and milky torrents. Above rose peak upon peak in a maze of geological disorder; ice walls and snowfields dazzled the sun, black ribs and fluted ridges hinted at adventures for the future — while we called a halt for lunch on a stony shelf out of the wind, an ice-sheathed stream for company, and about as much raw beauty as any man might hope to witness on a Friday noon in November. (If heaven can match this, past sins are going to deny me more than I dare imagine ...)

It was a long knee-wrecking descent to the yak meadow at Bimtang, but from that frosted level plain Cheo Himal filled the blank space left by the black curtain walls of the valley to the north, while Manaslu and Phungi jostled for attention to the south-east. Next day took us in Manaslu's shadow on a delightful path through the enchanted forest — first trees for nearly a week — and down to warmer climes.

Joining the Annapurna Circuit at Dhara-pani, where the Dudh Khola gave itself

up to the Marsyangdi, was something of a shock to the system. For eighteen days we'd had the mountains virtually to ourselves, the valleys shared only with locals. But now it seemed all the world had come to visit, and until we reached Khudi a very different atmosphere prevailed.

Then we struck away from the Marsyangdi and took to a succession of foothill crests, warm and colourful, with millet and rice in the fields and garlands of poinsettia suspended above the trail. From a ridge-top camp at Baglungpani we lounged at sunset and watched the light fade on Annapurna II, Lamjung Himal, on Phungi, Manaslu and Peak 29, and knew



*Laden Yaks below Larkya La*

again that sense of deep contentment that is one of the gifts of trekking in Nepal.

Contentment, peace, tranquillity of spirit; perhaps that is what is meant by the phrase: Nepal is there to change you ... ?

[The Manaslu trek, plus many others in Nepal and elsewhere, is included in the latest brochure from Sherpa Expeditions, and is available from: 131a Heston Road, Hounslow, Middx TW5 0RD (081 577 7187)]



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**YOUNG MEMBERS**

by Roger Potter

Over the past decade or so it has been increasingly possible for a growing number of young people from this country to visit Nepal and, to a considerably lesser extent, of course, for young Nepalis to come to this country. From time to time members suggest that this younger age group is not as represented in our membership as it might be and in view of this the committee has recently been giving thought to finding ways of encouraging more people in their early twenties or thirties to join the Society. Committee members also feel that other members would like to know what we have in mind so that they can express their own views.

Resourceful as ever, young people find a variety of ways of realising their ambition to get to Nepal. A surprisingly large number of schools and universities are now undertaking climbing and trekking expeditions to the Himalayas and many of these maintain their contacts through aid or projects of one sort or another. Some years ago, for instance, pupils and staff at Stowe raised over £20,000 for Save the Children Fund medical centres at Baglung and Surkhet.

Organisations such as GAP and Schools Partnership Worldwide, both of which are already corporate members of the Britain-Nepal Society, are sending more and more young volunteers on teaching and environmental programmes, whilst VSO continues to cater for a somewhat older age group.

There is also a slow but steady increase in the number of Nepalis coming to this country to study or on reciprocal pro-

grammes. The Nepalese Embassy is aware of some 28 Nepalese students in British Universities under the British Council scheme. Readers may be aware that half of the funds raised by the Society's recent successful appeal have been dedicated to assisting a programme under which GAP will bring fifteen Nepalese primary teachers to this country over a three year period. The first group will arrive in this country in January 1994 and it may well be that members of the Society will wish to meet them at one or other of our functions or even be able to help with entertaining and hospitality.

Quite apart from those travelling between the two countries under the aegis of such organisations many other young people journey to Nepal during their wandering months before settling into a career. Like all visitors to Nepal they are likely to return enthused by the country — its people, its culture and its landscapes. Some, though obviously not all, of these young people would give and gain a great deal through membership of the Society and potentially make a tangible contribution to the promotion and fostering of "good relations between the peoples of the UK and Nepal" — the principal objective of the Society.

The Executive Committee has, in view of all this, been considering ways of welcoming appropriately recommended young members to the Society. Our aim, of course, is to broaden the age range of those who would enjoy our programme of lectures and activities without in any way changing the nature of the Society. For a



start, we are delighted that Alina Stonor has agreed to become a co-opted member of the Committee as a representative of the Society's younger members. Alina has long and varied family connections with Nepal and an active interest in the country and we much look forward to her contributions to our discussions.

Other ideas being floated are the active encouragement of schools and universities that have visited Nepal to become corporate members; the encouragement of existing corporate members to make fuller use of the entitlement of five of their own members to attend lectures; the publicis-

ing of the Society both through the Nepalese Embassy in London and through our embassy and the British Council in Kathmandu; and the possibility of encouraging affiliation to the Society of interested groups in universities where there is a strong nucleus of Nepalese students or UK students with an active and informed interest in Nepal.

We hope that these and other ideas will help to strengthen the Society yet further and would be delighted to hear the ideas of fellow members or their reactions (of whatever flavour!) to ours.

## THE RUINS OF KHOLA SONGBRE

by Mark Temple

Khola Songbre is one of the names by which the local people know a ruined village which is considered to be amongst the oldest Gurung settlements. By happy chance I got the opportunity to visit it in April 1992. I was on my way with a small party of friends towards the Namun Pass and on our first night out of Pokhara we stayed at the village of Thak and met Dr. Alan Macfarlane, an anthropologist who first researched there 25 years ago. He suggested we should try to find Khola Songbre, about which he had heard reports but never visited.

The oral tradition among the Gurungs of many of the villages to the North East of Pokhara, including Thak, Tangtin, Khilang and Siklis, is that their villages were founded by forebears who moved down from Khola Songbre. The ruins were reported to be high on the Lekh above Tangtin.

Alan asked that if we found the village we should note the shape and number of the houses and photograph the ruins. The original shape of Gurung houses, oval or square, has been a question of some controversy amongst those interested in Gurung culture.

From Thak we walked to Tangting and enlisted the help of Damarsingh Gurung to act as our guide. After two days not very hurried walking and two nights camping in the jungle we arrived at Khola Songbre. It is on the South facing slope of the ridge to the North of the Ganch Khola at a height of 3,300 metres. The position is 28 degrees 22.7 minutes North and 84 degrees 11.7 East. To reach the site requires a one day detour from the main trekking routes from

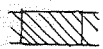
Tangting or Siklos to the Namun Pass. The site would only be normally visited by cattle herds from the Bhujung area who graze the pastures in this part of forest during the monsoon. A knowledgeable local guide is needed to follow the minor forest paths.

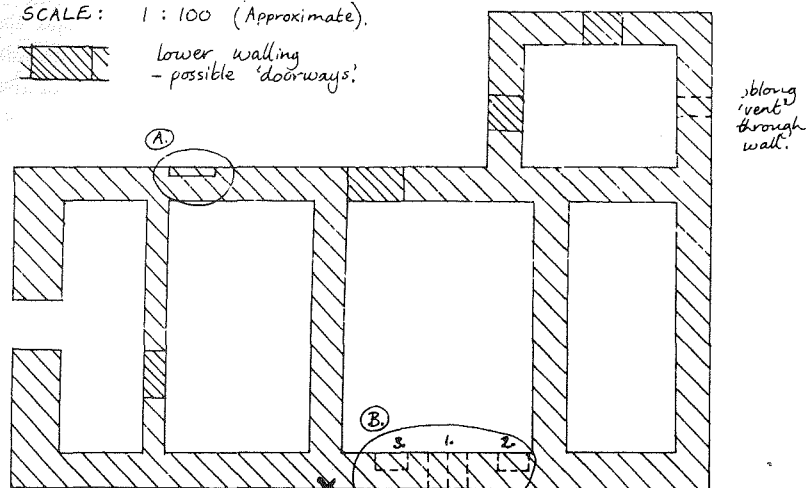
The ruins are extensive and the most intact walls still stand about 14 feet high. The photograph and plan show the largest and most intact building which lies on its own one hundred yards to the West of the main settlement. The main site suggests a small central square and alleys between the clustered houses are discernible. In the centre of the square is a stone post about three feet tall. All the houses have four sides and the corners are often the best preserved part of the walls. None appeared oval. From the height of the walls it seems clear that at least some houses had two storeys. Large trees grow from within the ruins and it is clear that the site has been abandoned for several hundred years and perhaps much longer. We did not have the time to explore the area thoroughly but identified forty houses in the main settlement.

Khola Songbre is 1,300 metres higher than the highest villages occupied by the Gurungs today. Our guide, Damarsingh, explained that it is said in his village of Tangting that the people from Khola Songbre occupied three other sites above Tangting before the present day village was founded. Much more limited ruins can be observed in these places although we did not have the opportunity to see them.

KHOLA SONGBRE - Plan of Large House to the West of the Settlement.

SCALE: 1 : 100 (Approximate).

 lower walling - possible 'doorways'.



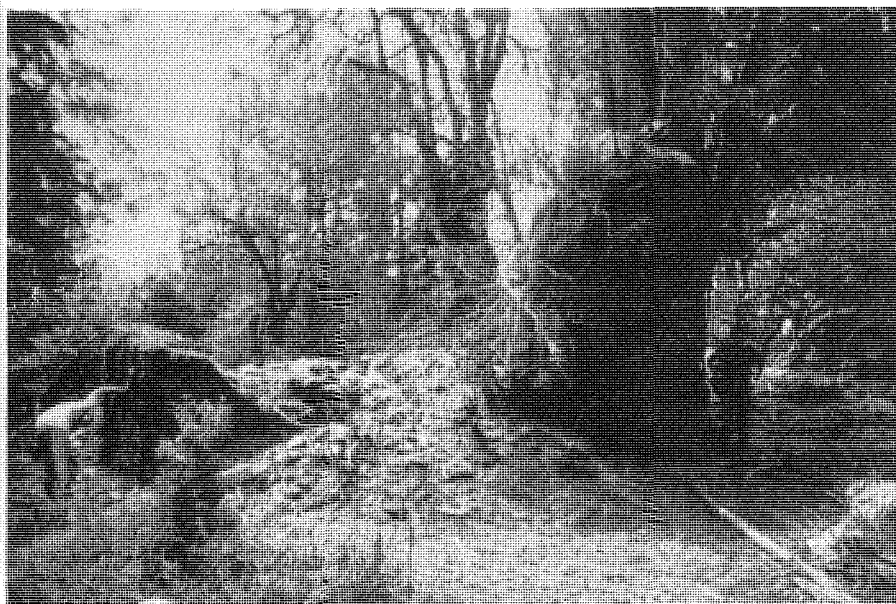
Highest point measured  
3.5m of wall still standing.

What do the ruins of Khola Songbre imply about the origins of the Gurungs? The fact that this village was settled in an era when there must have been a lot of available forest at lower altitudes suggests that its climate and resources were preferred by the early Gurungs who founded it. They presumably moved in from a similar or higher area and so their livestock and crops and perhaps even the lifestyle of the people led them to select this site. They could have moved West or East along the Annapurna Range but the proximity of the Namun Pass makes a migration from Manang or Tibet possible.

Standing in those ruins one cannot but respect the hardiness of the people who built their village in beautiful but tough, cold country. Their successors went on to

populate a big area of the South-eastern slopes of the Annapurna Range. Perhaps Khola Songbre is the village to which Dr. Macfarlane and I.B. Gurung refer in their book "Gurungs of Nepal" when they say in relation to their origin that "they came to a single village, where their traditions and culture were confirmed and then gradually dispersed to their present settlements". Their way of life was presumably mainly pastoral but it will require archaeological skills to fill in the gaps in the oral tradition of their descendants.

Our party comprised Damarsing Gurung, Lekhabhadur Gurung, Bhesbahadur Gurung, Surjiman Gurung, Martin Wright and Catherine Ruthven — who did the drawing.



*Extensive Ruins*

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## TREKKING GENTLY IN THE HIMALAYA

by Mayura Brown

This is the message in a small, important book which trekkers can buy from the Traveller Information Centre (Tridevi Marg, Thamel, Kathmandu). With an estimated 70,000 trekkers of all nationalities invading Nepal annually, the fragile environment of the Himalaya is under continual adverse pressure. The Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (KEEP) whose Patron is Lord Hunt, and the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) are at the T.I. Centre to give help and advice to anyone who calls 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday to Friday. There is a Coffee shop, Library and reading-room, a lecture-hall and boards with weather reports and health and safety notices.

While wishing all visitors to Nepal a really memorable stay among unsurpassed scenery, one must ask them to respect the religion, culture and traditions of the Nepalese people. KEEP can be of invaluable assistance in these matters, and some prior literature can be obtained from their U.K. office, 72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh EH6 5QG (Tel. 031-554-9977).

The greatest disadvantage of tourism is the amount of non-biodegradable, non-burnable garbage left behind by travellers. At our 12th January lecture meeting we were shown a selection of excellent slides by Mr. Steven Berry and Mr. Kev Reynolds of areas where they had trekked. Mr.

Reynolds, whose strong affection for the mountains was greatly appreciated, told us about the rubbish left by some trekkers where they had camped. It took him and his party several hours to clear up these other peoples' refuse, and this act of courtesy earned our gratitude. (The talk by Mr. K.K. Gurung on the Chitwan National Park deserves a special article and will appear at a later date.)

Now that the West has become conservation-minded and engages in re-cycling so much that was once thrown away, how can we possibly allow Everest to become a vast rubbish dump. I was brought up to revere Sagarmatha (Everest) as a sacred place. The early climbers held the mountains in awe when ascent and descent were both dangerous and difficult. Now queues form to allow one group to go up as the others go down. In May this year thirty-eight reached the summit. Lord Hunt, leader of the 1953 Everest Expedition, has said that the mountain these days is "an appalling sight with all the litter left by climbers. It is also horrifying that human bodies are left there". Is it too much to ask that both climbers and trekkers show some courtesy and consideration to these great mountains and the people who dwell below them.

(See "The Mountain that fell to Earth" by Ed. Douglas in 'New Scientist' Magazine 19 May 1993.)

## KATHMANDU ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECT

by Jo Chittenden

In response to tragedy people can often feel a need to turn the situation around, and it becomes the inspiration for something worthwhile and lasting. When Tracey Taylor-Young was killed during our climbing expedition in Nepal, Tracey's fiancé Johnnie Woods and I responded to this need with "The Kathmandu Environmental Education Project" (KEEP).

Our aim was to set up an information centre for trekkers which would provide reliable trekking and safety information while making visitors aware of the social and environmental concerns related to tourism in Nepal. Two years on the project is up and running in Spring 1993 Lord Hunt and Chris Bonington opened KEEP's "Trekker's Information Centre" in Kathmandu.

The centre's facilities include a lecture hall, coffee shop and a library and reading room. Displays and notice boards give details of the Nepalese environment and culture, and of responsible trekking practices, together with weather reports and health and safety information. Staff at the centre are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, they will give trekkers advice on how to "trek gently", encouraging them to query trekking agents about responsible practices and showing them how to cooperate with the conservation initiatives taken by locals in trekking areas.

A strong and enthusiastic committee chaired by Dr. Chandra Gurung, Director

of the "Annapurna Conservation Area Project" is now running KEEP in Nepal which is taking KEEP's message of responsibility and "minimum impact" to the trekking agents themselves. Together with ACAP and TAAN (the "Trekking Agents Association of Nepal") the committee have devised a very successful programme of environmental training workshops for the guides and field staff of local trekking agencies. This season KEEP also hopes to run a wilderness First Aid course for guides, encouraging more Nepalese trek leaders in the industry.

The project was a timely one and thanks to the support and encouragement of many organisations and individuals in Nepal it has been a great success. Given the resources to continue with its practical education programmes KEEP can make an enormous contribution to the development of a more responsible trekking industry in Nepal. The single most important source of funds for the future will be our supporter scheme and we are encouraging all those concerned about the Himalaya and its people, especially those who have trekked in Nepal to join.

[If you would like to receive more information about KEEP, or to become a supporter and receive our seasonal newsletter please contact Jo Chittenden or Johnnie Woods at KEEP, 72 Newhaven Rd, Edinburgh EH6 5QG. Tel: 031 554 9977 Fax: 031 554 8656]

## OBITUARY

Madame Teeka Rajya Laxmi Simha M.V.O.

We heard, to our very great sorrow, that Madame Teeka Rajya Laxmi Simha, M.V.O. had died on 11th June 1993. The daughter of the late General Kiran S.J.B. Rana (Nepalese Ambassador in London during the '70's) she had a very distinguished career.

Cherry (as she was affectionately called) studied at both Allahabad University (B.A. Course) and the Lady Irwin College, New Delhi. From 1954-58 she worked as Deputy Secretary for the Women Volunteer Service in Kathmandu. In 1958 she was appointed Secretary to the Vice-President of the Nepalese Parliament, and in 1963 travelled to the Scandinavian countries and Israel representing Nepal regarding Adult Education.

Our members became acquainted with Cherry in 1964 when she came to London with her husband Bharat who was appointed Military Attache at the Royal Nepalese Embassy. While she fulfilled her duties at the Embassy, she cared for her husband and sons with devotion, represented Nepal on the Women's Council, and managed to fit in a Diploma Course in Photography at the Ealing Technical College. When our Society mounted its Photographic Exhibition in 1966, she received high praise from a member of the Kodak Company for her photographs of a Nepali Wedding.

After returning to Nepal in 1968, she established the first ever Colour Processing Laboratory in Kathmandu. She was

appointed one of the Royal photographers at the Wedding in 1970 of HRH Crown Prince Birendra, and again in 1975 when the Prince was crowned King.

From 1973-78 she served as an Executive Committee member of the Royal Nepalese Film Corporation, and became Chairman and General Manager 1982-1988. During this period she represented Nepal at the Cannes, Montreal and Tashkent Film Festivals, thus promoting Nepalese films.

We were all delighted to welcome Bharat and Cherry back to London in 1988 when he became Royal Nepalese Ambassador. She was in very poor health, but concealed her suffering with immense courage. Only those very close to her knew that often she attended Hospital in the morning and would welcome guests at a Reception in the evening.

She received many honours and medals, but her dedicated and untiring work for her country was without any thought of reward. This strong sense of duty and love for her homeland should be an inspiration to others who should feel pride in the achievements of a Nepalese girl. We will always think of her with affection.

We send our deepest sympathies and condolences to General Bharat Simha, to Rani Kiran, to Cherry's sons, her brothers and all the family.

**Mayura Brown**

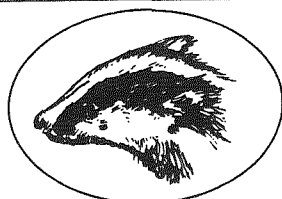
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## BOOK REVIEWS

by Lieutenant-Colonel T.M. Lowe

**Everest: the Best Writing and Pictures from 70 years of Human Endeavour** by P. Gillman. Little, Brown. £25.00 208 pages.

Alfred Gregory's Everest. Constable. £16.95 178 pages

The Ascent of Everest by John Hunt. Hodder. £12.99 (Paperback)

Almost every year there is a formal anniversary of some sort. For 1993, however, there is something special, apart from the 40th anniversary of the Queen's coronation. Mountain climbing in 1953 had reached a new peak, because in May of that year Mount Everest was climbed for the first time and at Coronation time. Happily, it was a British Expedition which succeeded, although the final ascent was made by a New Zealander (Hillary) and a Sherpa (Tensing).

Like so many memorable events the ascent of Everest has generated a lot of publicity, much of it well deserved. Book publishers have done a lot to keep us well informed, but the best has now been brought together in two first class publications. Although the two latest books which deal with Everest tell us all about the British attempts to get to the top of the world's highest mountain, their presentation is somewhat different and they complement each other. Both have much to offer.

Peter Gillman (himself a mountaineer and a much respected journalist) has edited the larger of the two books. Little has been left out of his book. It covers everything from the early expeditions to a nominal roll of those who have died in the numerous attempts to climb Everest.

The outer garments of the early climbers is something that catches the eye. Perhaps it was that the gods which guard the peaks were not best pleased when sahibs wearing well-cut plus- four suits and topees tried to climb the mountain. Most of the pictures in the Gillman book are in colour.

Gregory is not only a mountaineer with Everest experience, but he is also a photographer par excellence. His camera work is superb, even though his photographs are not in colour — only black and white. Gregory's book is smaller than that edited by Gillman. It is, nevertheless, in no way an inferior piece of work — just different.

"The Ascent of Everest" has been re-issued to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the successful climb of Mount Everest in 1953. The author is now a Peer and a Knight of the Garter. Hunt's book speaks for itself. It is a classic piece of staff work by a distinguished soldier, a leader of the first rank and a person of the highest integrity, though modest withal.

A pity that the price of these books is comparatively high. However, remind your family that you would like a birthday present before you start tackling Everest in 1994 before the monsoon breaks and you become a statistic in one of the books.

**The story of Gurkha VCs.** The Gurkha Museum £15.00 82 pages.

Lists of VCs won by British officers and Gurkhas have long been available, but now for the first time the names, personal details and photos of those who have won the VC have been brought together in one publication.

The title "The Story of Gurkha VCs" is, of course, somewhat misleading, because this book also includes details of the VCs awarded to British officers who were serving in Gurkha Regiments at the time they were awarded the Victoria Cross. The VC was instituted in the 19th century by H.M. Queen Victoria. Pedantic insistence on good staff work would have given the book a clearer title, but let that pass.

Although Gurkhas were not eligible for the VC until after 1911, it was not awarded to a Gurkha until World War I and, even in that war, only two VCs were won by Gurkhas, both of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, a Regiment of the Republic of India since 1948.

If you have an enquiring turn of mind, then you might wish to know that VCs have been awarded to: Magars - 5, Gurungs - 4, Chettri - 1, Rai - 1, Limbu - 1, Lama - 1 and awards by Regiments are as follows:

Regiment	British	Gurkha
<b>Brigade of Gurkas</b>		
2GR	1	2
6GR	1	1
7GR	—	1
10GR	—	1
<b>India from 1948</b>		
1GR	2	—
3GR	—	2
4GR	1	—
5GR	3	4
8GR	3	1
9GR	2	1
	13	13

**The Mystery of Mallory and Irvine** by T. Holzel and A. Salkeld. Cape. £12.50 322 pages.

In the mountaineering world of the Himalayas the names Everest, Mallory and Irvine are linked inextricably. Not because those two mountaineers might have succeeded in climbing Everest. If, indeed, they did succeed, their achievement is shrouded in mystery. Successive expeditions in the 1930s failed to find any trace of Mallory and Irvine. It was Tom Holzel who had his own theories about the success, or failure, of Mallory and Irvine which prompted him to write this book, prior to getting permission from the Chinese Mountaineering Association to retrace, if possible, the steps and the circumstances of the last climb of Mallory and Irvine before they disappeared.

In his search for material for the book Holzel has had the advantage of close collaboration with Miss Salkeld, a distinguished researcher and historian in the field of mountain climbing, especially in the Himalayas.

Holzel and his co-author have examined the available evidence relating to the last attempt of the 1924 expedition when Mallory and Irvine went for the summit. As Holzel says, 'It would be years before we could feel ready to revise the story that the documents seemed to tell, but together we decided to become historical detectives.'

In the early part of the book the authors have looked closely at matters relating to previous British expeditions and all those who took part. The personalities of Mallory and Irvine come under close scrutiny, particularly their mutual relationship, because there had been speculation that Mallory might even have abandoned Irvine in

a desperate solo attempt to reach the summit. It was well known that Mallory had an urge to get to the top at virtually any cost.

The book is packed with a great deal of information about almost everything connected with the final attempt and the happenings which led up to it. The expedient of using oxygen is dealt with at length. Ultimately, the difference between success and failure is one in which the human factor plays a vital part. Did Mallory and Irvine reach the top? After more than sixty years this must be a matter of academic interest. Hillary and Tensing got to the summit and no mystery surrounds that achievement.

**Quartered Safe Out Here — A recollection of the War in Burma** by George MacDonald Fraser. Harvill. £16.00 228 pages.

G.M. Fraser is, of course, better known as the author of the Flashman series. From Flashman, that archetypal cad, to the 14th Army in Burma is a long hop, but less fanciful than you might think for many of those who took part in that campaign far from home.

Fraser's book deals chiefly with the battles in which his battalion of the Border Regiment was engaged. He has, nevertheless, devoted a few pages to the Gurkha as he saw him. The Regiment was 1/10 GR in 63 Indian Infantry Brigade.

A Gurkha subaltern once told Fraser that "commanding a platoon of Gurkhas was like leading a group of perfectly disciplined ten-year-olds". There are other comments about Gurkhas which, perhaps, you should read for yourself. They all reflect the high regard which the author

had for the Gurkhas alongside whom his battalion served.

**Tigers of the Raj — The Shikar Diaries of Colonel R.W. Burton.** Edited by Jacqueline Toovey. Alan Sutton. £12.95 295 pages.

Anyone who shoots wild animals, especially big game, is regarded with horror by many so-called conservationists. Men like Colonel Burton did not spend their lives killing every species of big game, especially the large felines, just for fun. Like Corbett, Burton was a conservationist at heart, but unlike Corbett he didn't restrict his shikar to the foothills of the Himalayas. Instead, he covered the length and breadth of India and he kept diaries which have been used as the basis for this book. In addition, he wrote much for the journal of the Bombay Natural History Society. His grand-daughter and the publishers are to be congratulated on giving us a book which will be relished by anyone who had the good fortune to see, and do, some of the things that Burton did in the sub-continent before partition brought about changes.

**Across the Threshold of Battle** by Harold James. The Book Guild. £12.95 250 pages.

Harold James is no stranger in tales of World War II and Burma. He was an officer of the 8th Gurkhas, but in the events described in this book he was with the 3/2nd Gurkhas where he was awarded the MC for the part he played whilst serving in the Chindits.

James has described clearly and without exaggeration all that he saw and experienced in what was without doubt a thoroughly disagreeable campaign in ex-

tremes of heat and wet. The type of warfare in which his battalion was engaged was something new — no front lines or flanks. Supply was by aircraft drops and the evacuation of sick and wounded was virtually non-existent.

What does not come out clearly enough is the tremendous cost in men and materiel of the campaign. The Indian Official Historian writes that 'the strategic value of the campaign was nil'. However, there were some advantages, chief amongst which was that it was feasible to maintain a small force by supply drops alone.

James has much to say about Gurkhas even though it adds little to our knowledge about them. They lived up to the highest traditions of their race and, as soldiers, did what was expected of them. The 3/2nd Gurkhas learned much from their experi-

ence in this the first expedition led by that highly eccentric and controversial soldier — Orde Wingate. The battalion later fought a more orthodox war in Burma as part of the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade where they distinguished themselves.

In this story of the first Chindit operation in Burma James has included two post scripts in one of which he describes a meeting with a Gurkha who had served under him nearly 50 years ago in the operation.

It is remarkable that James has crammed so much into 250 pages. The maps in this book form the end papers of the book, but they are indifferent. Perhaps helpful maps didn't exist.

(See also review by Mayura Brown. Ed.)

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## BOOK REVIEW

by Mayura Brown

"Across the Threshold of Battle" by Harold James. The Book Guild Ltd., 25 High Street, Lewes, Sussex. £12.95.

This book was published in February 1993 exactly 50 years after Brigadier Orde Wingate's first expeditionary force entered Burma 300 miles behind the Japanese lines to disrupt supplies. Wingate had 3,000 British, Burmese and Gurkha troops and 1,000 mules. In 1943 we in Britain were still threatened by the menace of Hitler. The war in Burma seemed remote. Our faint memories were stirred in 1990 when the late Ian Mac Horten (mentioned in this book) gave a quietly impressive talk to the Society

about his experiences in enemy territory during that campaign. (See Journal No. 15)

The name "Chindit" has acquired well-deserved acclaim, but many of us have only a vague knowledge of the hardship and perils that faced these young men. Mostly very young soldiers unacquainted with jungle warfare, they were expected to operate in unknown terrain. We should refresh our memories by reading this book which reveals the courage and endurance that was required of them. The author, using material from both sides, plus his own experiences and those of his colleagues, guides the reader graphically

through the events that took place and the regions in which they occurred. It shows as well his genuine devotion to the animals who, in their humble way, also served. Because of the known vicious brutality of the enemy to those they captured, Wingate ordered that mortally wounded men were to be given an overdose of morphine to ease their passing — a compassionate command. Yet it was devastating to read: "I had to give the wounded

Gurkha a lethal shot of morphia. He lay in the grass, his body smashed by Japanese machine-gun bullets, groaning with pain, face as yellow as the evil-smelling grass in which he huddled. But I was only nineteen ...". These young officers matured, and like their predecessors became devoted to the Gurkhas they commanded, but will the 'bravest of the brave' be remembered for their unswerving loyalty after 1997?

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## SOME OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST

(Contributed by Lieutenant Colonel T.M. Lowe)

- In the Shade of Kanchenjunga** by Jennifer Fox. £9.00 BACSA  
**At the Hand of Man** by R. Bonner. £16.99 Simon & Schuster  
**The Siege of Krishnapur** by J.G. Farrell. £6.99 (PB) Phoenix  
**Ballooning over Everest** by L. Dickinson. £14.99 Cape  
**No Place to Fall — Super Alpinism in the High Himalaya** by V. Saunders. £17.00 Hodder (Nov 93)  
**The High Mountains Of The Alps Volume I — The 4,000m Peaks** by G. Dumler & W. Burkhart. £25.00 Hodder (Nov 93)  
**A Dry Ship to the Mountains — Across the Caucasus** by D. Farson. £16.99 Joseph (Feb 94)  
**On the Edge of Europe — Mountaineering in the Caucasus** by A. Salkeld & J. Bermudez. £16.99 Hodder  
**Beyond Risk — Conversations with Climbers** by N. O'Connell. £15.99 Hodder  
**Game Parks of India** by T. Sinclair. £12.95 Hodder (Jan 94)  
**The Fate of the Elephant** by D.H. Chadwick. £17.50 Viking  
**Mountains and Memories** by Welhelmina Edwards. £12.50 Penthandle  
**The Unforgettable Army — Slim's XIV Army in Burma** by M. Hickey. £25.00 Spellmount



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## NOTES ON THE BRITAIN-NEPAL SOCIETY

Patron H.R.H. Prince Gyanendra B.B. Shah of Nepal  
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Our aim is to promote and foster good relations between the people of the United Kingdom and Nepal. The Society was founded in 1960, under the patronage of His late Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva of Nepal during his State Visit to London: Lord Hunt became the first President.

British and Nepalese subjects, and business firms or corporate bodies are eligible for membership.

Members include serving and retired Gurkhas, mountaineers, members of the Diplomatic Service, schoolmasters, doctors, nurses, businessmen and scholars.

Ordinary members pay a subscription of £10 per annum. Life members - a single payment of £150 and Corporate Members £25. The Journal is sent free to all members.

Members of the "YETI" Association for Nepal's resident or staying in Britain are welcome at all functions. They are eligible to join as full members in the usual way. They have a flourishing organisation of their own and publish their own attractive journal. The Society's programme includes:

- monthly lectures or events from October to May in London;

- a Spring or Summer outing to a place of interest;
- receptions and hospitality for visitors from Nepal;
- the AGM in November and an annual supper party in February or March.

We keep in touch with the Nepal-Britain Society in Kathmandu which the late H.H. Field Marshal Sir Kaiser, a Life Member of the Society, founded shortly before his death.

The Britain-Nepal Society has a growing membership and there is tremendous enthusiasm for Nepal. Our meetings, which are usually well attended, provide an excellent opportunity for members and their guests to get together. Our membership, not counting Honorary Members and Corporate Members, is now well over five hundred.

The President of our Society is His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, GVCVO.

The Committee welcome new members amongst people with a genuine interest in Nepal. The address of the Honorary Membership Secretary is:

Peter Roberts Esq.  
14 Court Royal  
Carlton Drive  
London SW15 2BJ

Joanna Thomas  
Honorary Secretary

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