

# THE BHUTAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 50

PRESIDENT: SIR SIMON BOWES LYON

SUMMER 2013

## SOCIETY VISIT TO HAREWOOD HOUSE

On Monday 29 April, twenty-two members of the Bhutan Society and friends led by Dorry Friesen, visited Harewood House in Yorkshire, the home of David Lascelles, the 8th Earl of Harewood. After an easy journey from London by train, the party were welcomed to the House and then given a guided tour of the main rooms. After lunch in a private room in the stables complex, David Lascelles joined the group for coffee and



retold the story of the stupa which he had conceived during a visit to Bhutan in 2002. In 2004 he had invited an experienced designer and builder of stupas, Lama Soman Chopel, and a team of three monks from Bhutan to come to England and supervise the construction of the stupa on condition that local stonemasons would be employed and local stone would be used in the building.

The team of four approved the proposed site and its relationship to the main house, controlled the project and importantly made all the decisions about the internal chambers and their contents - which were all brought from Bhutan. The stupa was completed in 2004 and consecrated in 2005. David then guided the Bhutan Society party down to the lake and through the Himalayan Garden to see the stupa. Constructed of Yorkshire sandstone, it sat beautifully in its woodland setting, surrounded by bamboo and rhododendrons and decked with prayer flags and some blue Mongolian prayer scarves. After a delightful and most enjoyable day the members thanked David for his hospitality and Dorry for all her brilliant organisation – and returned to London.

*Robin Lee and Andrew Sutton*

### ***Forthcoming Meeting***

#### **NUNS IN BHUTAN**

**7pm Monday 22 July 2013**

**Speaker: Dr Tashi Zangmo**

Dr Tashi Zangmo is the Director of The Bhutan Nuns Foundation and is visiting the UK to promote awareness of the nuns in Bhutan. She will speak about the history of nuns and nunneries in Bhutan, their daily life and their needs. She will also discuss nuns' education and training to empower themselves and to support their communities. Guests and anyone with interests in Buddhism are welcome and are asked to advise the Secretary or [info@bhutansociety.org](mailto:info@bhutansociety.org) if they wish to attend.

**Meeting will be held at The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE**

***Drinks will be available from 6.30 pm***

# SOCIETY NEWS

## **AUTUMN DIARY DATES**

***The dates of both the Society's AGM and the Annual Dinner have been confirmed.***

### ***The Annual General Meeting***

*The AGM will take place at The Travellers Club in London on Thursday 5th September 2013. It will be followed by a talk from our Chairman, Michael Rutland, on "Recent developments in Bhutan".*

### ***The Annual Dinner***

*This will be held at The Polish Hearth Club in London on Friday 4th October 2013.*

***Further information on both is enclosed***

### ***November meeting***

*Arrangements for an evening meeting of the Society in November should be finalised shortly. Details will then be e-mailed to those members for whom an e-address is held. It will also be posted on the Society's web site and detailed in the next Newsletter.*

## NEW WEB SITE

Our Chairman, Michael Rutland has informed us of the new web site for the British Honorary Consulate in Bhutan. Visit it at : [www.ukinbhutan.bt](http://www.ukinbhutan.bt)

## **Update on Wangdu Dzong Appeal**

**We are delighted to report that thanks to the marvellous generosity of the Society's members and friends, donations in support of The King's Appeal for the Reconstruction of Wangduephodrang Dzong now stand at £10,120. Much of this was donated under the terms of Gift Aid, giving a grand total of well over £12,000. Arrangements for the transfer of the funds are still being finalised, and we will be able to make a full report in our next issue and at the AGM in September. Thank you again to all who have donated to this Appeal.**

## **Made in Bhutan**

The screening of the documentary "Made in Bhutan" will take place on September 11th, 2013 in Asia House, in London. This short documentary, made by Hironnelle Chatelard, portrays the recent emergence of entrepreneurship in Bhutan.



Karma Yönten will also be present to discuss the challenges facing young Bhutanese entrepreneurs. Karma Yönten, founder of "Greener Way", and an entrepreneur supported by the Loden Foundation, was recently named as the "Global Environmental Entrepreneur 2013" by Youth Business International.

***For more information visit the web site [www.lodenfoundation.co.uk](http://www.lodenfoundation.co.uk)***

## **NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE**

***During 2013 three issues of the Society Newsletter will be published - end of February, June and September. Notices of any Society meetings not included in the Newsletters will be notified directly to members via e-mail and on the Society's web site. Please make sure that the Membership Secretary, Rosie Glazebrook, has your latest e-mail address. All contact details are shown on page 8.***

# SOCIETY REPORT

## What I did during my holidays.....

*Richard Gould, one of the oldest members of the Society, recalls the fascinating experiences of his early travels in Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan. Part 2 tells of his adventures in Bhutan.*

We were heading for the village of Haa where Raja Tobgye Dorji and his wife Rani Chuni, both Bhutanese, had a house. Tobgye was a short, rather fat jolly extrovert whose favourite recreation was horseracing. Chuni was petite and rather shy. They were delightful hosts and spoke English fluently.

As we approached Haa, we crossed the river by a picturesque cantilever bridge. The water looked just like the rivers in Kashmir, but the only fish were small bottom-feeders with whiskers and mouths on the under side of their heads called snow trout. My father (BJ) had already seen the potential for introducing brown trout to such waters, but several early attempts had failed. He had tried with ova and with fish of different sizes. The journey on the backs of animals had been challenge enough, but the chief problem was to keep the small fish close enough together to allow breeding. The rivers were too large and swift. Nevertheless, he had not given up.

Our stay in Haa was marked by the arrival of many official telegrams, delivered by dak runners, which indicated that the crisis in Europe with Hitler was escalating towards war. However our stay in Haa was delightful. Tobgye Dorji had very recently built a large swimming pool. It was in the ground near, but not flooded by the river. We had so much fun, swimming and splashing around, and precariously punting several dugout canoes, which were no more than hollowed tree-trunks. During our stay there was a festival of games. This included archery, with traditional wooden bows, water sports, duels with a pillow of straw astride a pole suspended over the water and, of course, there were dances.

We were granted also our wish to experience a shoot in the jungle. We rose early and walked out through the dense forest to reach a series of roughly prepared shooting platforms built in trees. A long line of beaters advanced steadily and noisily towards us. All sorts of game came through: many birds, including spectacular pheasants, several kinds of deer and then two bears. I had a shotgun and fired at one, which immediately rolled over in a somersault, and they both galloped off. This was the worst of outcomes, and a tracker was sent to finish the animal off.

One day BJ asked Bob and me if there was anything special we would like to do. After thought we said yes, we would like to go on a genuine little camping expedition with no frills. This was agreed and with some delight we set off without the usual escorting crowd. Alas, as we came over the brow of a hill, we found a major tented camp had been set up - our urge to experience the thrill of self-sufficiency was dead!

We each had comfortable tents, camp beds, steaming hot water for our baths and a full meal of several courses, complete with French wines. Our hosts had decided it unthinkable for their honoured guests to rough it to any degree that they could prevent!

Meanwhile the clouds of war were becoming ever more menacing. The next part of our journey was to visit the town of Paro. The Paro Penlop was particularly famed for the spectacular dances he put on with full theatrical costume. He had arranged to present a series of such dances in our honour. We were full of high expectation.



*The 18th century home of the 23rd Paro Penlop recently converted into a Heritage farmhouse*

This was dashed by the arrival of ever more alarming news from Europe. BJ decided that he had to get direct access to the telegraph line. The quickest way would be to take a high pass to the north-west and drop down to the little town of Phari, just inside Tibet. We were very sad to leave Bhutan and the Dorjis.

Phari had the reputation of being the dirtiest town in Tibet. There was no sanitation and the streets were filthy. The British post was a little way out, and sat beneath the spectacular snow-covered peak of Mt Chomolhari. In a small compound kept up by the British, with the Union Flag bravely flying over it, an office could be set up.

Courtesy visits were exchanged between BJ and the Dzong Pen, and we were invited to dinner in the Dzong. This was an agonising affair as none of the Tibetans spoke English. The food, which was eaten with chopsticks, was not just unfamiliar, but to our taste disgusting. The worst mouthful was a large, dried sea slug, considered a great delicacy. In the mouth, this regained both its natural size and its slime. It was tough as rubber and my teeth could not chew it, and my mind rejected it, as did my stomach. The meal was washed down with chung, a local potent barley beer. It made me feel woozy and sick. It was indeed a memorable meal!

For a few days we received telegrams thick and fast, and Bob and I helped by translating the coded messages. Chamberlain in London had declared war. It was now important to get back to Gangtok. This entailed a long march including, once again, the Natu La pass. So ended, prematurely, our unique holiday in Bhutan and Tibet.

# NEWS FROM THE

## Rupee and credit crisis continues to escalate

The incumbent government's term ended with claims of having achieved economic growth and stability, but the fact remains that the Indian Rupee (INR) situation continues to have a major and escalating impact on businesses across the country.

Though the main sectors affected are the construction industry and real estate business, the crisis has also had a domino effect on all associated business and workers. Apart from a shortage of INR and budgetary cut backs, non-availability of credit from commercial banks are among the major issues affecting businesses. Some major projects have been stalled while some have been delayed. Ever since the INR issue surfaced last year, the central bank imposed new restrictions on banks on April 2012, leading to a virtual credit freeze on housing, vehicle and other loans. This continues to have a severe impact on the domestic economy with many businesses in the private sector, either closing down or operating at a bare minimum capacity. There are still no signs of the credit restrictions being lifted with Rupee borrowings hovering around Nu 20 bn.

Though the government has shown unemployment figures of 2.1%, however, Bhutan's biggest employer, which is the private and corporate sector, has seen large numbers of people losing jobs at all levels. The president of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), Ugen Tshechup Dorji said, "What I have always maintained is that one of the vital ingredients of a country's development is the construction, infrastructure or the real estate sector. For the government or authorities to come with a policy to ban housing loans, there is huge adverse impact on many business enterprises or skilled workers".

Economic affairs Secretary Dasho Sonam Tshering said one should be prepared to face such situations in a commercial venture. He also insisted that the affected businesses should try to explore alternatives or temporary measures to cope with the problem. "There are no immediate measures that the government can initiate but to hope that the economy will improve. If the affected parties find any solutions or measures that they feel the government can adopt, they should bring it up and engage with the government," he concluded.

---

## Spreading wings

Come 2014, the National Airline, Drukair will operate international flights to Hong Kong and Mumbai. At present, Drukair has international flights to Singapore, Thailand, Nepal, Kolkata, Bangladesh and New Delhi.

"Hongkong is an important gateway for tourists coming in from Japan, China, Korea and US, and we have seen good growth of tourists numbers," said the Managing Director of Drukair, Tandin Jamso. He also said they should be able to tap the western and southern parts of India by having an air route in Mumbai. The Department of Civil Aviation has completed all the formalities to launch air routes to Mumbai, but the department is yet to sign the Air Service Agreement for Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Qatar has also expressed an interest to sign the Air Service agreement with Bhutan.

## Malaria eradication

*As Bhutan marked the World Malaria Day in May, Health Ministry said malaria cases in the Country had declined drastically. The figure went down from 40,000 in 1994 to just 82 cases in 2012. Deaths due to malaria have also come down from 48 then to just one last year. The Director General of the Department of Medical Services, Dr. Ugyen Dophu, said the Ministry is working towards elimination of malaria. Health officials said the decline has been made possible because of improved socio-economic development and with support from global fund to fight aids, tuberculosis and malaria (GFATM). They also distribute treated mosquito nets and carry out Indoor Residual Spray twice a year.*

# KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

## The challenges of being an election official

Polling officials, returning to Gasa from Lunana on June 6 after the primary round, warned their replacing team that they should watch out for landslides, since continuous rainfall had now blocked most routes. Accompanied by seven porters, the seventeen member election team that comprised twelve army personnel, a presiding officer, three polling officers and a medical doctor had left for Lunana from Goenshari in mid-May.

With the onset of the monsoon, the snows had started to melt and, by the time of the general election in July, the entire route would be slippery and likely blocked. Election team members were provided with sunglasses, bag, mattress and plastic sheets - on a returnable basis - as well as rubber boots. These were to be well used! Their presiding officer said, "We met with small land-



***Election team cross Mount Ganjula on their way back to Gasa.***

slides throughout the entire route but, unlike us, the next team wouldn't face as much difficulty as we did in crossing the snow-covered routes". However despite the challenges the team encountered, they said it was worth going to Lunana, for they saw Lunaps returning just to vote from far-flung mountains like Rakashong, Sertshola and Chumzhung on the night before the poll-day. "People prioritised election; walking for three to four days to vote, and even taking a break from cordyceps collection," said the presiding officer. Lunana saw a 185-voter turnout of the 248 eligible voters. On their way back the team lost their route for several hours between Mount Ganjula and Tseriphu, and had to climb on icebergs, as they

couldn't find the way out. Mount Ganjula is about 4,900m above sea level and a five-day walk from Goenshari. Temporary covers made with plastic sheets were pitched wherever the night fell and were stretched to give a snug cover for the seventeen members of the team. Fortunately none suffered too many after effects!

### **Bronze statue nearing completion**

The construction of the 154 feet statue of Guru Rinpoche in Tangmachu, Lhuntse is nearing completion. The world's tallest Guru statue could be complete latest by September, this year. Some Nu.250 million



has been spent on its construction by the Druk Odiyana Foundation, a non-profit organisation. The Foundation has received donations from devotees within the country and outside for the giant bronze statue of the Guru. The patron of the project, Kunzang Tobgay, says another four to five Nu. million is required to complete remaining works. But 90 per cent of the works are complete, he maintains. The statue will house three different lhakhangs, the Choeku Lhakhang in the upper floor, Longku Lhakhang in the middle, and Trulku Lhakhang and a museum on the ground floor.

# NEWS AND UPDATES

## ***Look who is watching!***

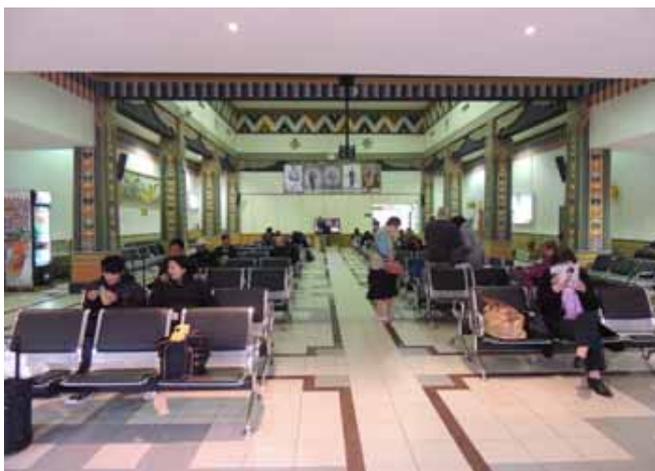
In a few months, it should become possible to view parts of Bhutan using Google Maps with Street View. The Street View of Google Maps is a popular feature that allows people to virtually explore and navigate neighbourhoods through panoramic street-level images. The feature, currently available for 48 countries will soon add Bhutan to the list. The company



recently began using its own vehicles mounted with special cameras to drive around Thimphu, taking street-level photographs of public locations. It eventually will move to other parts of Bhutan. Launching the project, Google product manager, Divon Wan said, "This activity represents a long-term investment with the objective of capturing imagery across Bhutan over the next few years. We're excited about the opportunity to work with the Information Ministry as this will help create better awareness of this unique country, and attract more tourism." As anticipated a few concerns about privacy and sensitive areas were raised by observers. Dasho Kinley Dorji on behalf of the Government pointed out that Google has agreed that it will respect people's privacy and sensitivities, such as cultural and spiritual sites, and also border areas. However, he said that if private establishments wished for Google to capture imagery inside their premises, it would be up to Google. "What we really want to do is make the best use of technology for our benefit, and, at the same time, avoid any risks." he said.

## **New trends in tourist arrivals**

Tourism arrivals last year were recorded at 105,407, an increase of 64 percent from the previous year. Of the total 54,685 were international or dollar paying tourists and 50,722 were regional visitors from the neighbouring countries of India and Bangladesh. Among the arrivals,, Japanese tourists surpassed arrivals from the United States, which, until last year, continued to dominate international tourist arrivals. Last year, Japanese tourist arrivals constituted 16 percent of the total arrivals, followed by USA with 14 percent and China with 8 percent. "Arrivals from Zambia, Malta and Seychelles were recorded for the first time, suggesting a growing interest for Bhutan in the global community," the tourism monitor states. The major entry and exit ports used by tourists last year were Bangkok and Kathmandu, with 41 percent and 26 percent of the total arrivals. The monitor also states that the Singapore sector,



which was opened in the third quarter of 2012, also saw significant arrival figures, suggesting a viable entry point for visitors. Like the past years, Bhutan continues to be a cultural destination, with over 90 percent of the tourists visiting on cultural tours. However nature-based activities, such as trekking, bird watching, flora and fauna and adventure sports, were a growing interest for visitors.

# NEWS AND UPDATES

## Treks versus tracks

What is welcome to the local community may not be for the foreign paying guest. Whilst the numerous farm roads, built in the past five years have been a huge asset to connect remote villages, they have cut through many of the existing trekking routes. Some tourists, who expected to walk and trek through pristine forests and untouched landscape, have not been happy. There are around 23 trekking routes in the country of durations varying from one night to about forty nights. More than 4,000 km of farm roads crisscross the countryside, benefiting around 44,000 rural households.

Tour operators said trek duration had to be cut short, because of farm roads, and in some cases, trekkers had to walk the roads to complete the treks. Bhutan Tourism Corporation said they stopped getting trekkers for the Bumthang cultural trek owing to the new farm roads and they were no longer interested in walking the route.

However other tour companies believe it is time to survey and explore alternative routes, of which there are many, but new trek routes need time and money to be developed. Although Bhutan is a trekker's paradise, most tourists see the country as a cultural destination. "We have to do a lot of marketing and promotion when it comes to trekking," a tour operator said. "Some companies still lack the trekking facilities we would like to offer."

## Wangchuk - the yak herder

In what is being hailed as a huge encouragement for wildlife conservation in Bhutan, camera traps have for the first time captured shots of a family of three snow leopards.



These shots, which indicate that snow leopards are breeding and thriving, were captured by camera traps placed by Wangchuk, a yak herder in Tsharjathang, between Lingshi and Laya.

Wangchuk placed the camera traps in February this year, after one of his yaks was killed, and got several hundred shots of a family of three snow leopards eating his yak. "In the images, it appears to be a mother and grown cubs that are at the kill, and they look healthy and well-fed," a park official said.

## Bhutanese Film Festival in Hungary

On 30 April 2013 from 4 pm to midnight, Budapest successfully hosted the first Bhutanese Film Festival - probably the first of its kind in the world. 20 hand-picked short, documentary and feature films were screened representing the diversity and excitement of Bhutan's emerging motion picture landscape. The films were accompanied by roundtable discussions with experts in Gross National Happiness, Bollywood, Buddhism and film making and a photo exhibition was organised in the entrance hall.

Prior to the event, the Festival's website and dedicated Facebook page reached over 32,000 people and finally a total of 350 people attended the Festival! All movies were in English or English subtitled, so they were also suitable for English-speaking audience.

The event was initiated and organised by the Hungarian Bhutan Friendship Society in collaboration with Budapest Film. Others involved were the Motion Picture Association of Bhutan, Loden Foundation and the Agra Cultural Travel Agency. Special thanks was given to the Royal Embassy of Bhutan in Brussels also for their support.

The Film Festival was judged a great success demonstrating the public interest of Europe in Bhutan in general and its unique motion picture culture in particular. The Hungarian Bhutan Friendship Society will continue promoting Bhutan through similar cultural events.

## Photography in Bhutan

Photography is a core interest of most travellers and whether you visit Bhutan during the cultural festivals or are enjoying the Himalayas through treks, walks and drives, there will be ample opportunity to photograph dzongs, people, landscapes and villages. However for those primarily interested in photography, there are real advantages in choosing a dedicated photography tour company. It should at least mean that you are traveling with like minded people who are happy to get up early for the best light rather than sleep in and get there too late! It should ideally mean an itinerary designed specifically for photographers with specially arranged photographic opportunities. In Bhutan most photographic tours will use a number of four wheel drives rather than a bus, each with their own driver and guide. This means that you can stop where and when you want along the road and that the whole group can go to different sites in the same location rather than all arriving at once. Some tours have more emphasis on teaching/learning than others. Usually any level of experience is welcome, so you don't have to be an 'expert' to join a photography tour.



What gear you bring to Bhutan is largely a product of your interests, skill level and wallet. You will get some great pictures with just about any equipment, so the first thing to bring is a 'good eye'. This is a learned skill and is best acquired before you arrive!

**For more information contact Tourist Council of Bhutan [www.tourism.gov.bt](http://www.tourism.gov.bt)**

***NOTE: In future issues we will continue exploring in more detail the many other activities that attract visitors to Bhutan.***

## CONTACT LIST

Chairman	Michael Rutland OBE (Bhutan) PO Box 1044 Thimphu 00975 1761 8553  (UK) 2 Windacres, Warren Rd, Guildford Surrey. <a href="mailto:rutland.michael@gmail.com">rutland.michael@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Andrew Sutton 01306 88 43 49 <a href="mailto:andrewsutton001@aol.com">andrewsutton001@aol.com</a>
Treasurer	Lucy Hornberger 01707 256 249 <a href="mailto:lucy@globeflower.com">lucy@globeflower.com</a>
Membership	Rosie Glazebrook <a href="mailto:rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com">rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	Sylvia Robert-Sargeant <a href="mailto:editor@bhutansociety.org">editor@bhutansociety.org</a>
Programme Secretary	John Davey <a href="mailto:jhdavey@yahoo.co.uk">jhdavey@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Events	Dorothea von Friesen <a href="mailto:dorotheafriesen@gmail.com">dorotheafriesen@gmail.com</a>
Web Master	Chris Watt <a href="mailto:website@bhutansociety.org">website@bhutansociety.org</a>
General Enquiries	<a href="mailto:info@bhutansociety.org">info@bhutansociety.org</a>  West Walls, Cotmandene Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2BL
Website	<a href="http://www.bhutansociety.org">www.bhutansociety.org</a>

### NOTE

*If you have not already done so, we would appreciate you sending your latest e-mail address to the Membership Secretary at:*

***[rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com](mailto:rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com)***

*who will then add it to the database. There is no plan for the Society to go 'paperless' but there are times when it could be very convenient to communicate information electronically at short notice.*

**Published by The Bhutan Society  
of the United Kingdom**