

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 38

President: Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT GCMG FRSE

Summer 2008

Coronation date announced

See page 3



Bhutan: the world's youngest democracy

See pages 3, 4, 5 & 6



The 16th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

10th October, 2008



Application form enclosed. See also page 2

Recent Events in Bhutan

An informal talk by Michael Rutland

Monday 8th September, 2008

Michael Rutland, our Hon. Secretary and Bhutan's Hon. Consul to the UK, will again present his very popular annual roundup of news from Bhutan. This year has seen Bhutan's successful emergence as the world's youngest democracy, and the coronation of the 5th King will take place in November. A momentous year indeed!

Michael, who lives in Bhutan for much of each year, is particularly well placed to discuss the changes and developments taking place in the country, perhaps spiced with the odd bit of gossip! His talk will be illustrated with slides and there will be plenty of opportunity for questions.

**Monday 8th September, 2008
6:30pm for 7:00pm**

**The Oriental Club
Stratford Place, London W1C 1ES**

Drinks available before the lecture

PLEASE NOTE: Oriental Club rules require gentlemen to wear jacket and tie, and do not allow the wearing of jeans!

From Lord Wilson of Tillyorn President of the Bhutan Society



The Bhutan Society of the UK has now been in existence for just over 15 years. During that time I have had the great pleasure and honour of being President. It has been a joy to see the Society grow, flourish and contribute both to a greater understanding of the Kingdom of Bhutan and, in small practical ways, to the well-

being of organizations and individuals there.

The time has come to make changes in the organisation of the Society and to plan ahead for the future. I propose to step down as President later this year. My recommendation to the Officers of the Society will be that Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, who has such a long connection with Bhutan and who has served so well as Chairman of the Society, should take over as President. A suitable time for handing over the baton would be the Society's Annual Dinner in October.

If any member of the Society wishes to make alternative suggestions about who should be President, I should be grateful if they could contact me.

David Wilson

The Society's website is at www.bhutansociety.org and carries information about the Society, news and events, an archive of Newsletters and a selection of interesting Bhutan-related links. The Bhutan Society of the UK:

Unit 23, 19-21 Crawford Street, London W1H 1PJ E-mail: info@bhutansociety.org

For membership enquiries please see the Society's website, or contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee
E-mail: lee.elizabeth@btopenworld.com Tel: (01483) 455764



News & Updates from the Bhutan Society



Bhutan Book Event at the Travellers Club

Wednesday 17th September, 2008

An Evening Book Event featuring books on Bhutan will take place at the Travellers Club (106 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EP), commencing at 6pm on Wednesday 17th September.

Members of the Bhutan Society are most welcome to attend (please note: jackets and ties required for men). The function will be in the Library, said to be one of the finest rooms in London! A bar will be available.

Michael Rutland recalls first meeting Bhutan's new Minister of Education, Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdyel

I first met Lyonpo Thakur over 20 years ago when he was a student studying for his PGCE at London University's Institute of Education. I accompanied him and a group of other Bhutanese students on a trip to the Lake District and Scotland. One special characteristic of Lyonpo Thakur is his deep knowledge of and love for English Literature - during our visit to Wordsworth's birthplace it turned out that Lyonpo Thakur knew far more about the poet than the guide did!

On his return to Bhutan Thakur Singh became the highly respected Vice-Principal of Sherubtse College before setting up the Centre for Educational Research and Development in Paro. I wish him every success as Bhutan's new Education Minister, together of course with the Prime Minister and all the Ministers in the newly formed Cabinet. As the first Cabinet in the first democratically elected Government of Bhutan they are trailblazers.



Michael Rutland and the first democratically elected Minister of Education, Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdyel in Thimphu

The 16th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

Friday 10th October, 2008

The Travellers Club, Pall Mall, London



The 16th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society will take place on Friday 10th October at the Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EP. Lord Wilson will be stepping down as President of the Society and this will thus be his farewell dinner and our opportunity to express our thanks to him for all his support since the Society's inception.

All Members and their friends are invited to join us for what is always a most enjoyable evening and a great way to catch up with old friends... and make new ones! Please see the enclosed flyer for full details and a ticket application form.

Please also consider sponsoring, or part sponsoring, a ticket for a Bhutanese student to attend - see the application form for details, or contact Peter Li, the Annual Dinner Secretary, on (01730) 893 829 or by e-mail at peter_li@uk.ibm.com

Would you be interested in a talk on Bhutanese philately?

The Society is considering organising a talk on Bhutanese philately by one of the world's foremost authorities on, and collectors of, Bhutanese stamps.

As this is a somewhat specialised area, we are keen to gauge the level of interest before going ahead. If it sounds of interest please let us know by calling Events Secretary John Davey on (020) 7608 1696 or by e-mail at: jhhdavey@yahoo.co.uk Thank you.

The Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland is currently in the UK. He will be attending the Annual Dinner on Oct. 10th and returning to Bhutan in mid-October. He then expects to be in Bhutan until summer 2009.

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Bhutan's Election: a brief overview

By Michael Rutland

Bhutan's first multiparty democratic election for the National Assembly was held on 24th March. In a landslide result which has shocked most people, the Druk Phuentsum Tshogpa Party led by former Home Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley won 44 of the 47 seats. The People's Democratic Party led by former Agriculture Minister Sangay Ngedup won only three seats. Most of the winning DPT candidates won by large margins, and the pattern was uniform across all parts of the Kingdom.

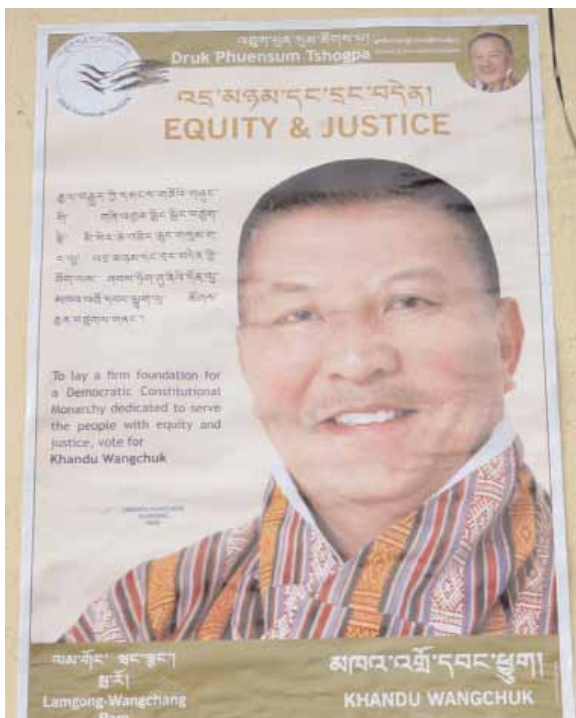
Both parties had very similar manifestos, and the election was therefore very much based on the personalities of the candidates and party leaders. The general view was for a close contest, so the magnitude of the landslide has been a big surprise.

The leader of the losing party, former Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, failed to win his seat in his home constituency. The former Health Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Singay also failed to win in his own constituency.

The result could mean that there is no effective Opposition in the new National Assembly. It also indicates that the Bhutanese nationwide have voted for "steady as she goes", - my own interpretation!

One of the first acts of the newly elected National Assembly will be to pass the new Constitution under which the King becomes a fully constitutional monarch.

The election went very smoothly, without incident. The polling ended at 5pm and the results from all constituencies were available by 9pm the same day. No hanging chads!



The Coronation

Celebrations to be held on November 6th, 7th & 8th

The Coronation of Bhutan's Fifth *Druk Gyalpo* (King) will take place at Tashichho Dzong on the 8th day of the 9th month of the Earth Male Rat Year (November 6th, 2008). Three enlightened astrologers jointly proposed this most auspicious date for the Coronation and His Majesty The King has granted his approval.

His Majesty will don the Raven Crown and formally assume the embodiment of the Supreme Protector: protector of the nation's security, the guardian of the Constitution, and the inspiration for Gross National Happiness. As part of the ceremony His Majesty The King will grant an audience to the general public on the afternoon of November 6th at Tashichho Dzong during which the general public will have opportunities to offer *tashi khadar* (white scarf of goodwill) to His Majesty.

The enthronement will be followed by two days of celebrations at Changlimithang Stadium. The first day of the celebrations will feature diverse entertainment and cultural programmes performed by all sections of society from every corner of the Kingdom. The second day will be more informal, with games, competitions and entertainments that include spectators. The Coronation will be primarily celebrated together by The King and the people with minimal guests from outside.



Above: Michael Rutland on his way to vote in Thimphu
Left: An election poster for DPT candidate Khandu Wangchuk in Paro



News from the

Party Presidents' Statements

The President of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT), Jigmi Y. Thinley, said that as the governing party, the DPT will remain accountable to the electorate. He announced that all Druk Phuensum Tshogpa candidates will be required to visit their constituencies twice a year to explain what the governing party is doing to achieve their development plans and find out what more needs to be done. He said the party will enhance accountability and transparency through the media. Jigmi Thinley also said his party had been taken by surprise by their overwhelming majority, having expected to win at most about 28-31 seats.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly members elected from the DPT, Yeshey Zimba and Ugyen Tshering, said they too were surprised by their party's overwhelming win in the national assembly election. Yeshey Zimba said that although the opposition is weak, the National Council will help ensure that the party is accountable to the public.

"The National Council enjoys a very large power in Bhutan. They will be keeping a very close watch on the government and, more importantly, we now have the press too." Yeshey Zimba said. He continued by stating that the DPT will not allow the party's interest to overtake the national interest, and that press freedom in the kingdom is assured and access to information will be guaranteed unless the information is highly classified. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), the country's sole broadcaster, will get much more freedom.

The President of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Sangay Ngedup, offered his *tashi delek* (congratulations) to Druk Phuensum Tshogpa and gave his assurance that the PDP will fully support the governing party. He was surprised, he continued, by the election result but the people have made their choice, and the PDP will respect that choice with dignity and humility and serve the people as the opposition, working closely with the DPT to realize the noble objectives of Their Majesties the Kings. Sangay Ngedup asked his party candidates, members, and supporters not to lose hope - the PDP is here to stay and all should work together to strengthen the PDP so that they can contest the next election.

Lord Wilson's Letter of Congratulation to Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley

The Master's Lodge
Peterhouse
Cambridge
CB2 1QY

7 April 2008

Dear Lyonpo Jigmi,

May I send very warm congratulations, on behalf of the officers and members of the Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom, on the success of the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa in the recent elections and, to Your Excellency personally, on being appointed the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

May you, and the Government you lead, have every success in the coming five years.

With very best wishes, coupled with our personal congratulations, from my wife, Natasha, and myself.

David Wilson



She's not too sure about democracy...



... but she's a big fan of Gross National Happiness!

photos: Michael Rutland

Kingdom of Bhutan



The New Cabinet

On April 9th the governing party, Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT), announced the names of the Cabinet Ministers and the National Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The meeting also endorsed the party president Jigmi Y. Thinley as the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet Ministers and the National Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker are as follows:

Yeshey Zimba - Minister for Works & Human Settlements

Yeshey Zimba has a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. He has served as Finance Secretary, Finance Minister, Minister of Trade & Industry, and two terms as Prime Minister. He was conferred the orange scarf and title of *lyonpo* in 1998.

Khandu Wangchuk - Minister for Economic Affairs

Khandu Wangchuk has a Bachelor's degree from St. Stephens College in New Delhi. He began his career as a trainee officer in 1974. He has served as Director General, RCSC Secretary, Agriculture Secretary, and Deputy Minister of Agriculture Ministry, Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Khandu Wangchuk has also served two terms as Prime Minister in 2001 and 2006. He was conferred the orange scarf and the rank of Minister in 1998.

Wangdi Norbu - Finance Minister

Wangdi Norbu has a Bachelor's degree in Economics from University of Western Australia in 1976. He has taken specialized mid-term trainings in finances including programming and policies at Public Accounts & Audit in London, and the IMF in Washington DC among others. He became Finance Minister in 2003. He was conferred the orange scarf and title of *lyonpo* in 2003

Ugyen Tshering - Foreign Minister

Ugyen Tshering has a Bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley, USA. He began his career in the Planning Commission in 1978, becoming Director in 1986. He has served as the Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations in New York and Minister of Labour and Human Resources. He was conferred the orange scarf in 2003.

Zangley Dukpa - Health Minister.

Zangley Dukpa has a Masters degree in Education from Bristol University, UK. He has served as Principal of Sherubtse College, as Dzongda of Chhukha and Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan. He was conferred the red scarf in 1994.

Minjur Dorji - Minister for Home & Cultural Affairs

Minjur Dorji graduated from the Shaheed Bhagat Singh College in Delhi, India with a Bachelor's degree in Commerce. He has a Post Graduation degree in Auditing

from the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation. He started his career in 1986 as a trainee officer with Royal Audit Authority. He has served as assistant Auditor General and as Dzongda in Monggar and Trashigang.

Thakur Singh Powdyel - Minister for Education

Thakur Singh Powdyel has a Master's degree in English from North Hills University in Shillong, India. He earned his PGCE from Institute of Education, University of London, UK. He has served as a lecturer and Vice Principal of Sherubtse College and Director of the Centre for Education Research. He was a visiting Professor to Kyoto University, Japan.

Pema Gyamtsho - Agriculture Minister

Pema Gyamtsho has a PhD from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland and a Master's degree in Science from New Zealand. He has worked in various fields such as rural development, planning, project management, and research. He resigned as the Deputy Resident Coordinator of Helvetas to join politics.

Nandalal Rai - Info. & Communications Minister

Nandalal Rai has a Bachelors degree in Arts from NDA, Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India and obtained a Master's degree in Science from University of Madras, India. He joined the Royal Bhutan Army as a cadet officer and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1976. He has worked in various capacities as Platoon and Company Commander and the Chief Administrative Officer.

Dorji Wangdi - Labour & Human Resources Minister

Dorji Wangdi has a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from Sherubtse College and a Master's degree in Business Administration from Maastricht School of Management, Netherlands. He has served as assistant Planning Officer in the Ministry of Planning, Program Officer in the Ministry of Finance and Deputy Cabinet Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat.

Jigme Tshultim - Speaker of National Assembly

Jigme Tshultim has a Bachelor's degree from St. Joseph College in Darjeeling, India and has pursued post graduate studies in Public Administration at Manchester, UK. He served the Royal Government for 32 years in various senior positions such as Managing Director of Tourism Corporation, Dzongda in Paro, Samtse & Monggar, Chief of Protocol in the Foreign Ministry and Ambassador to Bangladesh. He was conferred the red scarf in 1997.

Yangkhu Tshering Sherpa - Deputy Speaker

Yangkhu Tshering Sherpa graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Dzongkha from Sherubtse College. He served as a Dzongkha teacher for more than 15 years before resigning to join politics.



News from Bhutan



Bhutan becomes the world's youngest democracy

By Tshering Tashi (jojostshering@googlemail.com)

Bhutan has become the youngest member in the club of parliamentary democracies. The March 24th elections marked a key turning point in a smooth process of transition from monarchy to democracy. With its success, the Bhutanese people have fulfilled the vision of the "father of democracy" the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

Those unfamiliar with developments in Bhutan may think the democratisation a sudden step. But history shows that the process started 101 years ago. In 1907 our ancestors elected our first hereditary King. Since then the five successive Kings have not only safeguarded and strengthened the sovereignty of Bhutan but also ensured that we enjoyed peace and stability. All our Kings have worked tirelessly and selflessly in promoting the interests of the nation and the prosperity and well being of the people.

During the Fourth King's 32 year reign, he has carefully balanced development and preserving the environment, tradition and culture. In 2006, Bhutan's per capita income was US\$1,321. Bhutan has 64% forest cover and is one of the last living museums of tradition and culture.

Consequently, we Bhutanese hold our monarchy in high esteem. Two years ago, the Fourth King travelled throughout Bhutan to chair consultation meetings to discuss the draft constitution. During the meetings many Bhutanese strongly raised concerns about the proposed introduction of democracy. Most felt it was premature and pleaded with their benevolent monarch to reconsider his advocacy of this new system.

Now however, most Bhutanese are grateful for this "shock and awe" approach. I suspect the intention of the Fourth King's dramatic approach was to educate and raise awareness about the merits of parliamentary democracy. Soon the people saw that this new system was essential to safeguard the identity and strengthen the sovereignty of the last Mahayana Buddhist kingdom and immediate neighbour of India, the world's largest democracy. Acknowledging the strengths of democracy, and the role of Bhutan in the 21st century, the Bhutanese accepted the visionary royal initiative for political change.

On December 9th, 2006, the Fourth King stunned the nation when he abdicated in favour of his son. In doing so he broke all royal protocols and created history. Initially Bhutanese were deeply shocked, but soon awed by the realisation that our King had given us a special gift, empowering us to charter our own future.

The Fourth King - a playmaker in his basketball team - has always maintained that the fate of Bhutan should not lie in the hands of one person. Indeed, an anti-monarchist foreigner who, following a royal audience, developed deep reverence for the Fourth King, said, "The King himself

never liked nor believed in monarchy." This conviction has been directly translated into the birth of parliamentary democracy in Bhutan.

The initial resistance of the Bhutanese people to change soon subsided. Our faith in the vision of our monarch and widespread respect for his continual selfless acts, even to give up power, made us realize and accept his vision for the kingdom. In keeping with Buddhist philosophies that propagate impermanence and encourage change, we became more agreeable to change and participated with enthusiasm in the transition.

In 2007 seven out of the ten ministers, along with many capable officers, resigned from the Government to stand as candidates in the elections. Two political parties (People's Democratic Party and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa) emerged. The Fourth King took a personal interest in the drafting of the new constitution, studying the constitutions of over 200 countries and engaging in much discussion. The 34 Articles of the draft constitution have been debated and discussed with all Bhutanese countrywide.

In 2005, in the Fourth King's last formal public address to the nation on the occasion of the 98th National Day, he reminded and assured us that democracy was not being introduced in haste, but adopted following a 26 year process of decentralization and devolution of power to the people. *Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdus* (state assemblies) were established in 1981, commencing decentralization. In 1991 the *geog* (district block) assembly was introduced and administrators at state level were empowered with administrative and financial powers. During 2006 and 2007 the Election Commission educated the people in the process of parliamentary democracy.

The Kings of Bhutan were always careful to modernise but not westernise. They have been mindful to view the world through eastern spiritual eyes with respect to nature and human life, yet embrace modern western concepts like openness, optimism and use of science. In modernising Bhutan, they have attempted to avoid the pitfalls of westernisation like individualism and materialism. In our region where democracy has failed more than it has succeeded, we hope Bhutan will help to increase conviction in the system of democracy.

Despite the people's initial scepticism, Bhutan has emerged from its first elections as united and strong as it was under the rule of our monarchs. The first business of the newly elected parliament will be the adoption of the constitution. Our 28 year old Oxford educated Fifth King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, will then formally become the first Democratic Constitutional Monarch with the primary job of upholding the constitution and being the symbol of unity of Bhutan.



Profile: Bhutanese in the UK



Continuing our series of profiles of Bhutanese studying and/or working in the UK, Karma Tenzin talks about his life and experiences here

What were you doing in Bhutan before you came to England?

I was working in the Royal Audit Authority of Bhutan, and I will be working in the same organisation after completing my course.

What are you studying here and why did you choose London?

I am doing a Professional Course, ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), which I believe is truly a global profession. I have been very fortunate to get such an opportunity and I am very grateful to the Royal Government of Bhutan for giving me this opportunity.

It was not a difficult decision for me to come to London. I wanted to experience western life and experience the culture. So I thought London would be the best place to go. Besides, my colleagues in Bhutan, who had done the same course, advised me to choose London because of the availability of quality tuition, a good learning environment, access to learning materials and above all an exposure to the real business world.

What features of London life came as a surprise to you?

People. London is flooded with people from other parts of the world. It is indeed a melting pot. London has turned into a multicultural society. It is a great opportunity to see different people from different parts of the world.

The transportation system is excellent and people are making best use of it. I never found buses or trains running empty. People are busy 24 / 7.

Have you been able to see much of the country during your stay?

I have visited most of the historical places in London and I have some more on my list to visit before I return to my country. Apart from London, I have visited Stratford-upon-Avon, Oxford, the Sussex Open Air Museum and Woburn Safari Park. Besides I had an opportunity to walk the Thames Path from Marlow to Henley, and the Cotswolds Circular walk. The country sites are very beautiful and spectacular.

It was an honour to visit Sir Simon and Lady Caroline Bowes Lyon in December 2007. The walk around the farm at St Paul's Walden was a memorable one.

Have there been any unusual events during your stay?

Well, I was contacted by the Daily Mail as they were assembling a photograph with someone from as many countries as possible. I appeared as "the Bhutanese" in the collage which was published in the paper on 3rd January 2007. When the issue

came out, it was fascinating to note how the whole world has flocked to Britain!

Being away from Bhutan, apart from your family and friends, what have you missed most?

A silent atmosphere, drives through the curving roads, visits to monasteries on auspicious days to offer butter lamps, picnics in the woods, morning walks uphill and my work in the office.



Karma Tenzin in front of Buckingham Palace

Interview by Andrew Sutton



Bhutan Connections



Bhutan issues CD-ROM stamp!

Bhutan's unmatched innovation in postage stamps is again demonstrated with the Kingdom's release of the world's first CD-ROM postage stamp. The tiny CD-Rom features short documentaries about the historic events of 2008: the 100th anniversary of the monarchy, the coronation of the 5th King and the signing of the new constitution as Bhutan becomes a democracy.



In addition to watching the footage, or displaying the CD-ROM stamp in a frame or album, it can naturally be used as postage (assuming of course you are in Bhutan!). Bhutan has a tradition of producing unusual stamps - the "talking stamp" in the form of a record (1973) is particularly famous. Scented stamps and stamps made of silk and steel have also been among those issued by Bhutan.

The CR-ROM postage stamp is available online from Creative Products International:

<http://www.bhutanpostagestamps.com>

Alternatively contact the company by phone in the USA on: 00-1-412-521-0400, or by fax on 00-1-412-521-2008.

Non-philatelists will also enjoy browsing this beautifully designed website, with interesting information such as the fact that Bhutan produced her first airmail stamp long before the country's airport was built! Postage stamps were in fact Bhutan's main source of revenue for many years, greatly aiding the country's development.



The Bhutanese record stamp of 1973: treasured by collectors!

Bhutan: A Trekker's Guide (2nd Ed.)

by Bart Jordans

Published by Cicerone, 2nd edition 2008

ISBN: 9781852845537

Paperback, 336 pages; £15.00



Cicerone has issued a second edition of its delightful guide. Pocket-sized and clearly presented, it summarises the available treks in Bhutan and provides day-by-day commentaries. Some treks in the first edition (2005) have been left out because either they have not been opened or they have been changed substantially. In four cases they have been replaced by new treks.

Descriptions have been updated for changes, such as in the extent of feeder roads.

This is a trekker's book with entertaining pieces on conditions, kit and health. It will certainly assist those considering a trip to Bhutan. The reader gets an excellent feel of what's on offer - 27 routes are described, ranging from 2 to 24 days in length - and of the demands and uncertainties of different routes. Bart Jordans has done well to explore the routes over many years but particularly while resident, with his family, in Bhutan for four years from 1999.

Andrew Sutton

A (much) cheaper way to call Bhutan from the UK!

Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland recommends a service called "Telediscount" (<http://www.telediscount.co.uk>) that he has found reliable for calling Bhutan from the UK.

At 9p per minute to a landline and 7p a minute to a mobile phone, it is substantially cheaper than BT rates (approx: 50p-75p per minute depending on time of day, discount plan etc.). Using the Telediscount service doesn't require any sign-up and the cost of the call is automatically billed to your usual telephone bill.

How to call:

To call a landline number in Bhutan dial 0871 343 74 74 then 00975 and the number. Remember, Thimphu numbers are preceded by 2, for example Michael's number is: 00975 2 361183

To call a mobile number in Bhutan dial 0871 772 46 46 then 00975 and the mobile number (without the first 0). For example, Michael's mobile number is: 00975 17618553