

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 71

PRESIDENT: SIR SIMON BOWES LYON

SUMMER 2020

A message from our President

Dear Fellow Members,

In this uncertain time, the flow of conversations and updates between Bhutan and the United Kingdom is a striking reminder of just how connected our world has become. While these connections are mostly at a distance, we are also grateful for the contribution of several Bhutanese who are working in the National Health Service, as well as members' acts of kindness to help students and each other.

I was also delighted to know that the Society's Trust Fund had recently received a generous gift from one of our members. The money, in the form of small grants, was to be offered to each of our visiting students from Bhutan as a gift from the Society. We wanted them to spend it as they wished and also to know that they have friends in this country who are sharing these difficult times with them and can be here as a friendly voice to contact whilst away from their homes.

As President of the Society, I also want to send you all warm wishes as we share the challenges of the Covid-19 virus and to say that I remain optimistic about our capacity to support one another, both as individuals and as communities, during these abnormal times. It is also most gratifying to hear that Bhutan is showing the world how best to deal with this dangerous disease.

With warm wishes,

Simon Bowes Lyon



Committee Member retires

After more than ten years' service, Dorry Friesen has stepped down from the Committee. Her main connection with Bhutan was as a leader of cultural or study tours, so her significant experience was of great help to the Society when organising our various visits, including the Musee Guimet in Paris, Winkworth Arboretum and Highgrove House. However one of her very early tours to Bhutan in 1999, which pre-dated the arrival of television, was a challenge when some of her first guests had to balance the discomforts of some 'indescribable' makeshift accommodation in a Bumthang monastery (minus loos) against an equally unplanned stay in a royal lodge at the end! Among her many other travels have been frequent

visits to India, where a family association with the celebrated anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf led her to translate one of his works, almost to follow him into academia, and later to be invited to attend his cremation in a tribal village. As a painter, Dorry has exhibited her watercolours for charity and also organised a sale of Bhutanese photographs at the Nehru Centre. Thanks go to Dorry from us all and we hope we shall continue to enjoy her company and travel tales at future meetings.

SOCIETY NEWS

The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom was founded on October 6th, 1992, inspired by the growing connections between the two countries. The Society held its inaugural meeting in London on Bhutan National Day, December 17th, 1992. From an idea shared by a handful of founders, we have grown to a thriving community of some 500 members who value the links connecting Bhutan and the UK. Our members range from professionals with interests including art, culture, environment, and Gross National Happiness to those who have visited Bhutan and wish to maintain an association and to Bhutanese studying in the UK who are welcomed as honorary members.

The Society is approaching its 30th anniversary and the Committee has taken the opportunity to review what we do and how we do it, not least because Bhutan and the UK have developed considerably over the last three decades. In considering these questions, your Committee has listened to the results of the survey that members completed in 2019. Representatives of the Committee also attended a meeting of European Bhutan Friendship Associations in Thimphu last November, as reported in our Spring 2020 Newsletter.

In response, the Committee has developed a statement of the purpose and principal activities of our Society, which is laid out below. At the heart is a simple **vision**, to achieve “the warmest friendship and cultural relations between the people of Bhutan and the UK”. At the time of writing the need for connections and communication is only being reinforced by the challenges of the Covid-19 virus.

We hope members will welcome this as a revitalised expression of our aims, rather than any major change in direction. Members should expect: regular newsletters that continue to inform, educate and entertain; an invigorated website enhancing communication with members and non-members alike; a lively programme of events, including evening talks, films and the annual dinner; continued support for Bhutanese studying in the UK who are invited to all Society events; further opportunities for members to contribute to projects sponsored by the Bhutan Society Trust Fund; and the affairs of the Society managed with financial responsibility.

Finally, a request: the Society is all the richer because of the feedback, ideas, and involvement of our fellow members. Please keep in touch using the contact details on the back page of the Newsletter.

Signed on April 20, 2020 by your Committee members: Dee Cano, David Glazebrook, Rosie Glazebrook, Lucy Hornberger, Elizabeth Jacobson, Sylvia Robert-Sargeant, Andrew Sutton, Nicholas Thompson, Dorji Wangchuk.

CONSTITUTION

The Aims of the Society as set out in our Constitution are:

- i. To encourage and promote knowledge and understanding of the Kingdom of Bhutan
- ii. To encourage cultural and educational links between the Kingdom of Bhutan and the United Kingdom
- iii. To promote and foster good relations between the Kingdom of Bhutan and the United Kingdom

MISSION

The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom seeks to foster and strengthen relations between the UK and the Kingdom of Bhutan. This includes the cultural, educational and social life of Bhutan and the UK.

VISION

The warmest friendship and cultural relations between the people of Bhutan and the UK.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

MEMBERSHIP

We maintain an efficiently run membership organisation.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

We communicate developments within Bhutan and the United Kingdom of mutual interest to our members and stakeholders.

EVENTS

We organise cultural, educational and social events for our members.

WELCOME FOR BHUTANESE

We offer contacts and participation in the Society’s activities to Bhutanese who are in the UK to live, study, work and/or visit.

CONNECTIONS

We cultivate and maintain connections with Bhutanese and UK individuals and organisations.

CHARITABLE SUPPORT

We work with, and support, charitable projects undertaken by The Bhutan Society Fund.

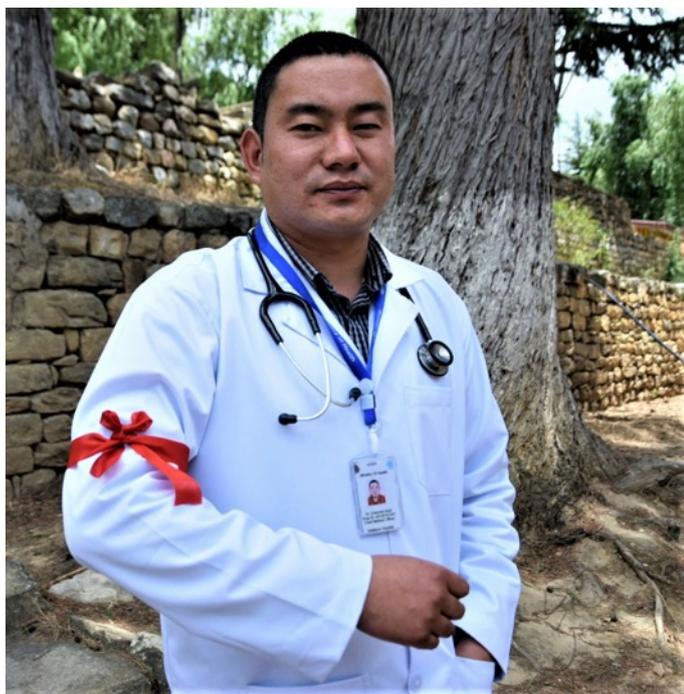
Agreed, Committee Meeting 9th October 2019

NEWS FROM BHUTAN

Dr Chencho Dorji

Many members will have enjoyed meeting Dr Chencho Dorji when he was studying in the UK recently. When he returned home late last year, he kindly agreed to keep in touch with us and below he outlines his life back in Bhutan.

Dr Chencho Dorji works as the Chief Medical Officer at the Gidakom Hospital. Gidakom Hospital was initially constructed by the Leprosy Mission in 1965, but with slowly expanding services, the hospital also became known as the National Prosthetic and Orthotic Centre and, from 1995 onwards, it became the Centre for treating and managing patients with TB. Today, it functions as the National Centre for Multidrug Resistant Tuberculosis Treatment (MDR-TB), Leprosy and Rehabilitation, Detox and treatment, and also as the Thimphu General Hospital. Having worked with the people living with TB and leprosy for more than 5 years, Dr Dorji, wanted to learn more about the causes and treatment for the increasing number of drug resistant TB cases in Bhutan. This resulted in his visit to the UK in 2018 to study for a Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (DTMH) at the prestigious London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.



Following his DTMH course, Dr Dorji returned to Bhutan and, apart from managing the patients in the hospital, he has been involved at a national level in developing strategic documents and treatment guidelines working towards eliminating TB in the country by 2030. In addition, he has been involved in training all categories of health workers, including the specialists from the three regional referral hospitals. He has also initiated a health screening programme for more remote populations and promoting prevention and early detection of TB, leprosy and cervical cancer as well as preventive measures for good sanitation and hygiene, including menstrual hygiene. This latter area has

involved his working with students, nuns and women in remote areas following which the Ministry of Education has started its nation wide campaigns in schools (Red Dots campaign).

One group benefiting from Dr Dorji's interests are the people of the remote village of Dagala which is a 4 day walk from the nearest surfaced road and at an altitude around 4200 meters. He says his inspiration comes from seeing the stigma around menstrual hygiene being reduced, bad practices being abolished and remarkable improvement being made to the extent that, currently, all the women and girls in that village use sanitary pads and dispose of them hygienically.

He is now also a member of Bhutan's National Rapid Response Team dealing with the Covid-19 virus. We wish him well.

New Committee member

We are delighted that Dee Cano is the new Student Liaison Officer for the Society.

Not surprisingly, with the current pandemic, she has been very busy supporting Bhutanese students in the



UK with the unexpected challenges that have emerged for them. Both the **WhatsApp** group and the personal contact she has established, have provided the students with a timely and much appreciated forum for the exchange of ideas and sharing of information - so helpful when students are far from home.

After returning from her first trip to Bhutan in 2016, she did 3 things. She joined the Bhutan Society, took a course in archery and booked her second trip to Bhutan!

When not supporting the students, Dee works as a Learning and Development Consultant which includes judging for National Training Awards, executive coaching, and designing training programmes.

We welcome her to the Committee and look forward to hearing more about her new role with the Society at some future date. In the meantime she continues to keep regular contact with students which has allowed her to not only get to know the students better but also to use every opportunity to improve her Dzongkha, both spoken and written!

CONTACT LIST

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NOTE

*If you have not done so already, please send your e-mail address to ***rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com*** who will add it to the database.*

There is no plan to go paperless, but it is often convenient to communicate information electronically at short notice.