

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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PRESIDENT: SIR SIMON BOWES LYON

SUMMER 2016



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge with the King and Queen of Bhutan during their official visit to Bhutan in April.

See page 5 for more about this official visit

Diary date 2017

On 18 January 2017, Zara Fleming will give a talk to Society members and guests entitled: " The Cultural Identity of Bhutan"

More details in the next issue.

AUTUMN DAIRY DATES

Annual Dinner

This will be held at The Charterhouse, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6AN on Friday, 21 October, 2016.

Dinner will be served in the Great Chamber at The Charterhouse. See issue 53 for more information about this wonderful venue.

A booking form is enclosed. Please complete and return with payment to the Dinner Secretary, Mark Swinbank

Annual General Meeting

The next AGM of The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom will be held at The Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1 at 6.00 pm on Tuesday 4 October 2016
(AGM Agenda is enclosed)

At 7.00pm, following the formal business of the AGM, our Chairman, Michael Rutland OBE, will speak on 'Recent Developments in Bhutan'.

*Reception drinks from 5.30 pm
Usual dress code applies*

SOCIETY NEWS

Society visit to Winkworth and Vann

On Wednesday 5th May a group of members and some guests travelled into the Surrey countryside, first to the Winkworth Arboretum and then on to Vann.

Winkworth was the inspiration of Dr Wilfrid Fox who lived locally and, in the middle of the last century, introduced a wide variety of specimen trees into existing woodland which had been part of the Thorncombe estate. He gave part of the Arboretum to the National Trust in 1952 and the Trust subsequently acquired further adjacent acreage. The National Trust now actively manages the trees and supports public access – as did Dr Fox. We saw rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias in bloom and many deciduous trees coming into leaf on a sunny morning and were grateful for the advice and comments of our guide, Mr Peter Herring. Due homage was paid to the Bhutan pine, *Pinus Wallichiana*.

The party then moved on to Vann, home of Society member Mary Caroe. She kindly arranged our lovely lunch in the Barn where we were surrounded by all sorts of weavings and trophies from trips to Turkey. She explained the history of the house which, since its Elizabethan core, had been extended early in the twentieth century by noted architect, WD Caroe. Mary then took us outside and, after briefing us on the development of the gardens (Gertude Jekyll was involved with early planting schemes), let us wander between the formal areas, the herbaceous borders and the gardens on the banks of the stream. All too soon it was time to say farewell, clamber into the bus or car and set off for home. Our thanks go to Dorry Friesen for her efforts in coordinating the whole trip and to Mary Caroe and her team for their hospitality at Vann.

Bhutan watercolours for sale

Michael Blooman, Bhutan Society member, artist, explorer and plantsman, has generously offered to sell some of his paintings from Bhutan in aid of the Bhutan Society Trust Fund.

Michael, who trained at the Royal College of Art, painted a series of watercolours in Bhutan from 1991 to 1995 on five visits and treks. Five of these are now available for sale and are framed. He is donating all the proceeds to the Trust Fund. Further details of this and his other pictures – enlargements, prices and measurements – can be found on the Society's website at:



www.bhutansociety.org/watercolours

Members wishing to purchase any of the watercolours or to make further enquiries should contact Michael via www.michaelblooman.co.uk

or by e-mail at michaelblooman874@gmail.com

The Trustees are very grateful for Michael's support and will be able to use funds raised on current projects relating to disabled and disadvantaged

groups in Bhutan. Members will recall that the Trust Fund recently financed the cost of shipping equipment for use by disabled people in Bhutan. The Trustees vet and monitor their grants very carefully, ensuring they know how all funds are used.

SOCIETY MEETING REPORTS

At a Society meeting on 15 March 2016, four speakers presented contemporary views and updates on developments in Bhutan. Below are summaries of three presentations - the fourth, by Karma Yeshey, is on page 6.

GNH and Enterprise – the Business of Happiness by Fergus Lyon

Bhutan has offered the world an alternative development path with a focus on well being, culture and the environment. They have coined the term Gross National Happiness as a policy direction that gives an alternative to GDP. But this raises the question of what kind of economy might you have that focuses on GNH, and what kind of enterprise might be operating in this economy. Gross National Happiness is not a panacea, and Bhutan faces a number of challenges in ensuring that this approach to development reaches out to all the country and helps both young and old. However, it does raise interesting questions about the role of enterprises beyond large scale foreign direct investment.

Enterprise development and the creation of jobs is a crucial element of development in Bhutan. All parts of the economy have a role to play in increasing prosperity and this can come from public and private sectors, small and large organisations and urban and rural areas.

One interesting avenue is the social economy which aims to combine social, environmental or cultural objectives with commercial success. There are also examples of cooperatives supporting farmers' enterprises in the north and south of the country such as the Happy Green Cooperative, growing potatoes for local crisp manufacture. In a similar vein, the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative draws on GNH aspirations to support rural livelihoods and the entrepreneurial spirit. The social economy is also found in the service sector with Pushpa Chettri setting up the Bhutan Media and Communications Institute (BMCI) which has the social objective of providing training in media and journalism with a focus on local development. It is able to generate income from having contracts from government and NGOs to run courses and also from the fees that trainees are willing to pay.

Another social enterprise has been set up by Maiyesh Kumar Tamang preserving traditional skills and innovating new ceramic products. In addition a number of larger tourist related businesses have strong policies related to GNH that go beyond the usual aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility in order to develop eco-tourism or to reduce pollution.

These examples of enterprises show that there can be alternative businesses and a new economics, anchored in principles of well being, social justice, ecological constraints, long term investment and stability. While there is much attention to GNH globally, these entrepreneurs show how it can be put into practice. The challenge is to open the chance for entrepreneurship amongst those currently excluded.

Disease Surveillance - Lila Adhikari

At present Lila Adhikari is pursuing a Master's Degree in Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine with a Chevening Scholarship. Her current course covers areas of non-communicable and communicable diseases, social and environmental epidemiology and has helped her gain skills for epidemiology processes and the use of statistical methods for data analysis.

Before coming to the UK, she worked as a Laboratory Officer in the Royal Centre for Disease Control in Bhutan, specifically in the National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory, and was responsible for laboratory based surveillance of all forms of Tuberculosis. The latest addition to the Centre (which was established in 1989) was opened last year and is equipped with Bio-safety level 3 facilities to deal with highly pathogenic organisms and is a first of its kind in the country. When she returns to Bhutan, Lila Adhikari plans to use her new skills and knowledge to strengthen disease surveillance to deal with emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases and work in the area such as anti-microbial resistance problems in Bhutan.

Renewable Energy - Nikey Subba

Nikey is studying for an MSc Renewable Energy and Power Systems Management at City University London under the ERASMUS MUNDUS exchange programme. She graduated with a BE in Electronics and Communication Engineering last year. Whilst having an interest in renewable energy and how it could help limit climate change, her course at City is wide ranging and covers economics of the power industry, energy utilization and management, transmission and distribution systems, power system design and power electronics.

Hydropower, which is renewable in nature, is Bhutan's main source of energy. It also receives a good amount of solar radiation all through the year and about a year ago, in places which are known to be very windy, such as Wangdue Phodrang valley, wind turbines were installed. In the past few years the number of bio-gas plants has also increased in rural Bhutan benefiting a number of farmers. The main challenges for implementation of renewable energy on a large-scale in Bhutan are technical, institutional and financial. Little technical expertise exists in the field of renewable energy nor are there any institutions that study and research on renewable forms of energy. With her new knowledge, Nikey Subba would like to help Bhutan become more aware of the benefits of renewable forms of energy thus helping it become more environmentally friendly with sustainable energy sources available for the long term.

NEWS FROM THE



Meet the new Prince

The 10-week old son of King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and Queen Jetsun Pema was named Jigme Namgyal Wangchuck at a ceremony at Punakha Dzong on 21 April 2016. The naming ceremony was held to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the day that Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal arrived in Bhutan.

The King in his naming

ceremony speech said, " After profound contemplation, he has been named Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck in the sacred Machen Lhakhang. **Jigme** means fearless. It symbolizes great courage to overcome any challenge that he may confront in the future as he serves our country. **Namgyel** means victorious in all directions and victory over all obstacles. It is a name taken from the revered Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, who enabled the Dharma to flourish in all directions as prophesied by Guru Rinpoche. **Wangchuck** is the name of the royal lineage and dynasty." He went on to say, " When the time comes for Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck to serve his country, he must always place the concerns of his country above all else and serve his people justly with great love and dedication. It will be his sacred responsibility to build a harmonious and just society, and thereby, fulfil all the aspirations of his people."



The young Prince with proud members of his family



Their Royal Highnesses arriving at the naming ceremony at Punakha Dzong

Society's gift

We understand that the Society's gift to the young Prince - a complete boxed set of Beatrix Potter stories - has been delivered by Michael Rutland, and was well received.

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

Glimpses of the royal visit



One of the most charming souvenir gifts, given to their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge during their visit, was a pair of colourful coats for Prince George and Princess Charlotte, made by Bhutanes designer Chimmi Choden. The wool and silk-blend coats were hand-dyed and carried traditional motifs including the "Dorji" and "Pigeon's Eye" that have been used by Bhutanes weavers for generations.

The yarn was hand-dyed using organic ingredients found locally. Walnut shells called tago poko in Dzongkha were used to create the soft brown colour and rather than using the traditional yak wool, the pink hues were achieved by boiling madder and lac, which is a scarlet resin secreted by the lac insect and harvested from an infested tree. The yellow shades were infused with turmeric and the leaves of the Asiatic Sweet Leaf plant.



NEWS AND UPDATES

Wall painting conservation - an opportunity to support the development of Bhutanese expertise

The Courtauld Institute of Art has offered Karma Yeshey a place on a three year MA course on Conservation of Wall Painting, starting later in 2016. Karma Yeshey graduated with a BSc in Life Sciences from Sherubtse College, Bhutan, in 2008; after passing the Royal Civil Service Examinations, he was an Assistant Conservator at the Textile Museum in Thimphu; currently he is at The Courtauld on a one year MA course in Buddhist Art: History and Conservation. Karma gave a short presentation on Bhutan Textiles at a recent Society meeting and a summary of his talk is given below.

This course is essentially theoretical, combining art history, the principles of conservation and Buddhism. The three year course aims to complete all round training – scientific and practical – to equip a professional wall painting conservator. It is the only course of its type in the English-speaking world and is only held once every three years for a small and select number of students.

The Courtauld has been involved in a number of significant wall-painting projects in Bhutan in recent years – not least in continuing work with the fabulous paintings at Tango monastery. Officials at The Courtauld are excited at the prospect of training Karma Yeshey and of his return to Bhutan with relevant skills enabling him to contribute to the Tango project and to become a leader in wall painting protection and conservation. Three year London based courses with field work experience do not come cheap. All sorts of potential funds are being explored both in Bhutan and in London as it is likely that a combination will be needed to cover Karma Yeshey's fees and subsistence.

On behalf of The Courtauld, we bring this opportunity to your attention as we consider this request for assistance to be exceptional. The Society would like to help coordinate any support which members wish to contribute. Offers of assistance – maybe smaller, maybe larger – could well accumulate to a useful total. Together they will also evidence members' interest in the long-term projects for wall paintings in Bhutan. Please contact Andrew Sutton if you wish to help or have any questions (andrewsutton001@aol.com). He will forward responses to The Courtauld which, having considered how any gifts can be used, will contact donors directly. As The Courtauld is a registered charity it should be possible for donations to be made to it under Gift Aid.

Bhutanese Textiles - Karma Yeshey

Textiles are a symbol of national identity in Bhutan. They play a significant role in all official, religious and social events. The Gho and the Kira are worn by every Bhutanese on any occasion; Dzongs and temples are adorned with highly decorative textiles imbued with deep religious significance and utilitarian textiles are used for many other purposes. So textiles are an important aspect of Bhutanese cultural society.

"Thagzo" or the craft of weaving is one of the thirteen traditional crafts of Bhutan collectively known as "Zorigchusum". Textiles are a unique art form traditional to Bhutan and its people. Bhutanese textiles are appreciated for their intricate patterns, their meticulous process of creation and the deep sacred connotation embodied in them. Bhutanese textiles have gained international recognition in the last few decades.

Opening Your Heart Project Update

The Project Team were so grateful for the donation of £700 from the Bhutan Society. This was used on Emma's Slade's recent trip to the Eastern branch of Drak-tsho to help in the provision of 80 mattresses, pillows and sheets for those children who are boarding



Awaiting delivery at Drak-tsho

at the school. This year their focus is on continuing the work with Drak-tsho. This charity works to help children with special needs gain life skills and a vocational training such as weaving or painting. The next challenge is building a separate girls' hostel with adequate drainage facilities.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Perception of corruption in Asia-Pacific

Last month Transparency International released its latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI). It makes for sober reading but there are lessons to be drawn, not least from Bhutan. Whilst the corruption problem in the Asia-Pacific region has not abated, there are some bright spots in this dreary picture. The organization cites many countries of the Asia Pacific region such as Sri Lanka or Mongolia where anti-corruption efforts are viewed positively, but among the relatively less developed countries, Bhutan is one of the most impressive as it is now among the top 30 performers in the world in the CPI ranking.

Over the years, Bhutan's policies on tackling corruption have reflected positively in this index. Its rank has moved from 49th in 2009 to 27th in 2015. The goal is to reach a rank of 20th within the next two years. Among the various reasons for this improved performance are the following:

- Strong political commitment from the top.
- Strong leadership at the Anti-corruption Commission in tackling unethical cases and bringing attention to the misdeeds of public officials.
- Systemic focus on considering ethics in public service, including the roles played by institutions such as the Royal Audit Authority, the Royal Civil Service Commission, schools, and religious institutions, among others.

What has also been clear is that the government's focus on improving the delivery of public services—for example, in providing permits and licenses, land titles, and birth certificates—has meant that, importantly, the average citizen has seen substantial improvements in how the public sector has served its mandates.

Whilst the CPI needs to be viewed with a degree of caution as the primary approach is one of measuring 'perceptions', it is difficult to accurately determine the scope and scale of corruption since much is not measured or reported. Still, the CPI is probably the most widely used measure in the world today. It helps focus attention on the problem in a manner that allows for comparisons across different countries and regions, even as those comparisons need to be viewed with some caution.

However one main lesson to be drawn from the performance of Bhutan in the CPI, is that political commitment to providing better services to citizens will translate into more positive perceptions of how the government is tackling corruption in the public sector.

Preserving tradition and culture

The Prime Minister recently announced the Government's decision to revise the salary and incentives for mask and folk dancers across the country.



Dancers at Ura Tshechu

The Government approved a 135 per cent increase in stipend for Dhodhams, champoens and chamjubs (head and lead mask dancers) and tspoems (lead singer and dancer) from Nu 10,200 per annum to Nu 24,000 with a monthly entitlement of Nu 2,000. The stipend for mask and folk dancers is increased to Nu 18,000 a year from Nu 7,650 a year, a similar increase of 135 per cent.

These dancers will also be entitled to a raised daily sustenance allowance (DSA) at par with local government functionaries of Nu 300 for mask and folk dancers whilst Dhodhams, champoens, chamjubs and tspoems will now be entitled to Nu 500 DSA.

The revision comes at a time when local governments from across the country are raising alarms on the dearth of mask and folk dancers that threaten the existence of the tshechus and rituals in the communities. The raise will have a financial implication for the Government of Nu 23.1 million annually. This stipend was last revised in 2010.

Schools to get quake-resistant desks

Classroom desks and tables are reputedly robust enough to deal with most rough and tumble activities of a normal school. However one requirement not normally requested is that they also be earthquake resistant!

The challenge has been met. After much testing, supremely engineered quake-resistant tables can be made and will shortly be supplied to the schools around Bhutan.

In late January demonstration tests were done which included dropping boulders, weighing 356kg, twelve feet onto typical school desks and tables. Not surprisingly they fell apart. The demonstration was led by two scientists currently working in Israel, Professor Ido Bruno and Arthur Brutter. They have been developing a new earthquake-resistant desk which stood strong when a weight of 422kg was dropped from the same distance. The design withstood a series of other rigorous impact tests and has received the approval of the Structural Engineering Department of the University of Padua, Italy. Such earthquake-resistant desks and tables are designed to be used in a range of building types and collapse scenarios. Attending the demonstration were representatives from the Department of Disaster Management (DDM), School Liaison and Coordination Division, Royal Bhutan Police, District Disaster Management Officers, District Education Officers and principals of Phuentsholing schools. This was followed by a weeklong training of local furniture houses



in Phuentsholing. Earthquakes damaged more than 230 schools in Bhutan in 2009 and 2011. Whilst schools conduct mock drills and teach students to duck under the tables and desks in the event of an earthquake, such drills will be effective only if such furniture is strong enough to withstand heavy impact. Whilst there is a clear need for such desks and tables, the price could become an issue. Tshewang Rinzin, principal of

Phuentsholing Lower Secondary School (PLSS) said, the school has decided to replace old desks with protective ones. "I may even be the first principal to opt for the safety desks but," he said, "regular ones today cost around Nu 1,200 and a new protective table may be about Nu 6,000". However the current desk and table designs that schools use have not changed in about 20 years and the quality has dwindled over the years after the job of monitoring was decentralised.

Israel's AD Meraz Industries Limited (ADMIL) has given the use of the patent of the protective desks as "a gift to the people of Bhutan from Israel." ADMIL is the trade partner of Professor Ido Bruno and Arthur Brutter.

CONTACT LIST

Chairman	Michael Rutland OBE (Bhutan) PO Box 1044 Thimphu 00975 1761 8553 rutland.michael@gmail.com
Vice - Chairman and Secretary	Andrew Sutton 01306 88 43 49 andrewsutton001@aol.com
Treasurer	David Glazebrook ndkglazebrook@hotmail.com
Membership	Rosie Glazebrook rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Sylvia Robert-Sargeant editor@bhutansociety.org
Programme Secretaries	Dorothea von Friesen dorotheafriesen@gmail.com Elizabeth Jacobson
Dinner Secretary	Mark Swinbank mark.swinbank@btinternet.com
Web Editor	Chris Watt website@bhutansociety.org
General Enquiries	info@bhutansociety.org West Walls, Cotmandene Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2BL
Website	www.bhutansociety.org

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

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.

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