

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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Capacity Audience for Joanna Lumley

The Lecture Hall of the Royal Geographical Society was filled to capacity when well over seven hundred attended the lecture "In the Realm of the Thunder Dragon" by Joanna Lumley on May 14th. Tickets were sold out a fortnight before the Lecture, and we apologise to the many people who were disappointed. For those members who were not able to attend, the article on the next page by Cordelia Rayner gives a flavour of this highly successful evening, which raised a sum of over six thousand pounds for the Bhutan Society Trust Fund. The Society would like to express its sincere thanks to Joanna Lumley, not only for having been the benefactor through which this sum was raised, but for have given us all such an entertaining and enjoyable evening.



Bhutan Society visit to the Exhibition on Bhutan at the Hofburg, Vienna in December

The Hon. Secretary is hoping to organise a small party to visit the Exhibition on Bhutan which will open in Vienna in November. This will be the largest ethnographical exhibition ever about the Kingdom of Bhutan. The proposed dates are Friday, 5th, Saturday, 6th and Sunday, 7th December. We will fly out to Vienna on Friday evening and fly back on Sunday evening. This will leave some time for shopping and for a visit to the famous Christkindl Fair outside the Town Hall. On Saturday morning we shall visit the Exhibition and have a guided tour personally conducted by the Curator, Dr. Christian Schicklgruber. On Saturday evening we hope to arrange a Bhutan Society Supper at one of the well-known Cellars in Vienna. Accommodation for a maximum of fifteen people can be booked at the centrally located Pension Lerner (B & B). If more than that number wish to take part, then we shall look to supplement the number of beds by using other nearby pensions. Please let the Hon. Secretary know as soon as possible if you would like to take part in this trip to Vienna. Numbers must be limited. Further details including costs and detailed programme will then be sent to you.

Monday, 6th October, 1997

Francoise Pommarot

"The Masked Dances of Bhutan"

An illustrated lecture on the history and stories of these unique and colourful dance festivals for which Bhutan is famous.

Francoise Pommarot is an anthropologist who has lived in Bhutan for many years and is one of the foremost authorities on the Kingdom. She is the author of the well-known Guide to Bhutan.

The lecture will be at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1 at 7 for 7.30 pm

"In the Realm of the Thunder Dragon"
a review by Miss Cordelia Rayner of the Lecture by Joanna Lumley
in Aid of the Bhutan Society Trust Fund

"I remember, my cousin and I were standing looking out over a vast, lush green valley and we started laughing we were in a state of sublime disbelief really!"

A broad grin broke across Joanna Lumley's face as she spoke of her adventures in Bhutan. Behind her the projection screen displayed a slide of the lush Bhutanese landscape with the gleeful Weir grandchildren in the foreground. A multitude of slides showing both the first Weir expedition and Ms.Lumley's more recent visit provided a lively backdrop for the evening's talk cum history lesson cum dramatic recital! The most recent visit, her expedition last year in which she largely retraced her Grandfather's steps, however, formed the basis of the evening's presentation in aid of the Bhutan Society Trust Fund, attended by well over seven hundred people.

As the adventures of the two trips unfolded in tandem before us we were presented with two unique accounts of this beautiful country. The knee-high socks and hardy colonial shorts of her Grandfather's medical assistant Franz made a humorous counterpoint to the high-tech fleece and 'Goretex' walking boots worn by many of Ms.Lumley's film crew.

In 1931 the Weir family had gone to Bhutan on a formal diplomatic visit. From 1928 to 1932 Colonel Weir had been the nearest thing the British had to an Ambassador to the region including all of Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan. In 1930 King George V had asked him to present the insignia of a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire to the second King of Bhutan, and Colonel Weir undertook to deliver it personally. The Weir party included his wife, their daughter Joan Mary, (whose own daughter Maybe John was in the audience), a medical assistant and numerous guides to help them along their trek cross country from the West to the East of the Kingdom. They had expected to find a land largely untouched by Western influences, but what took them by surprise was the tremendous warmth and generosity of spirit which the Bhutanese displayed. The joy on Joanna Lumley's face as she recounted the tremendous welcome her relatives had received conveyed this delight her ancestors must have felt at the Bhutanese customs.

"Dancers processed in lines down the steep valley side to greet my Grandfather and mother and aunt Joan Mary at the top of the mountain and did not stop performing until they reached the valley floor six miles below!"

The only tangible record of that initial journey include period photos and haunting archive film (some of which was of those welcoming dancers) showing the

Weirs and the Second King of Bhutan. However, Joanna also spoke of "an imbued love of Bhutan" which her family had inherited as a consequence of hearing about and seeing all the wonderful sights experienced by their grandparents. Perhaps it is not surprising then that thanks to a contract with an independent film company, Icon Films (whose help to the Bhutan Society in helping to set up Joanna's lecture was very much appreciated) Ms. Lumley took the first opportunity to explore this noble Kingdom for herself.

A documentary of her travels will be broadcast on television in the Autumn. Going on the brilliantly vivid vignettes of Bhutanese life as seen through Ms.Lumley's eyes, including a wonderful description of her first impression of a hill-side Dzong, the film should prove to be a well observed and witty view of Bhutan. There is also a book, written by Joanna Lumley, to accompany the film which contains, amongst other things, the map her grandfather drew while in the country. Many other photographic gems which Ms.Lumley could not fit into her lecture will also be found in the book, which a well-informed "bird" suggests really brings out the warmth and character of the author.

As the evening came to a close and people began to filter out into the darkness of the London night one could hear the murmur of an audience delighted, as much by the charming and witty speaker as by the subject matter itself. Comments of praise came not only from those who, like myself, had known little of the Kingdom before the talk but also from those there who knew a great deal and to whom Bhutan has meant a great deal. Ms.Lumley, who gamely admitted at the beginning of her speech that she "had never done anything like this before" delivered a refreshing and well-pitched talk, full of humour, wonderfully evocative descriptions, and surprises - the first being her plea, right at the beginning, "please may I have my notes back" to the Society's President Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, - he had inadvertently picked them up from the lectern after his introduction!

(Note: the Bhutan Society would like to thank Harry and Laura Marshall of Icon Films, and Genette Dagioglou and Peter Li of the Bhutan Society for their assistance in mounting this lecture, the largest Bhutan - focused event the United Kingdom has seen. And of course, a very special thanks to Joanna Lumley herself. We are pleased to welcome her as a Life Member of the Society.)

Cordelia Rayner is about to start her degree in Geography at Oxford University, having been a pupil at the George Abbot School Guildford.

Au Pairs from Bhutan

Two girls from the Kingdom of Bhutan, of good family, would like to come to England to work as "au pairs". They would like to be together, or at least close to each other. They will pay their own air fares, and expect only normal "au pair" wages. They are willing to look after children, do some cooking and cleaning, and would like to be here for about a year. If you are interested please telephone
Mrs. Estie Steele on 01962 777353

Do you telephone to Bhutan ?

If you do, you may like to know that the cheapest rates found so far by the Hon. Secretary are with RSL Globalphone who charge 72.85 pence per minute. This rate applies 24 hours a day seven days a week and includes VAT.

To open an account telephone them on 0800 074 0800 and quote referral reference number 0007314

If any member knows of a cheaper provider please tell the Hon. Secretary.

The Womens' Council sponsors Child Healthcare Nurse from Bhutan

The Womens' Council have awarded a scholarship for a one year special course in Child Care to *Ms. Sonam Deki* of the Royal Institute of Health Science in Thimphu. Sonam will attend the Course, specially designed for those involved in Child Care in developing countries, at Ware College Hertfordshire, starting in September. If any member would like to meet Sonam while she is here, particularly to offer hospitality in the vacations, or would like to have further details about the Womens' Council please write or fax the Hon. Secretary.

Bhutanese Horticulturist at RHS Wisley Gardens.

Mr. Pem Dorji, A horticulturist from the Municipality of Thimphu will commence a year's work experience course at the Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Gardens in September. He will be the first student from Bhutan at the Gardens. On his return the intention is that he should implement initiatives to beautify the rapidly urbanising city of Thimphu through gardens and plantings. The Bhutan Society Trust Fund has made his training possible by providing his Delhi - London travel costs.

Bursaries for Bhutan School Pupils
Again this year the Bhutan Society Trust Fund is providing a number of small bursaries for needy school pupils. These are intended to help the pupils purchase the school uniforms, PE kits, shoes and other basic necessities which are not provided by the school. Pupils are selected by the Trust Fund Committee in Bhutan which includes Marion Young (the VSO Field Director), Karma Nawang Ura and Kesang Wangchuk.

The Bhutan Society 5th Annual Dinner

*You are invited to the
5th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan
Society on
Friday November 14th
at 7.30 for 8 pm
at the
National Liberal Club
Whitehall Place SW1
Requests for tickets (£18.50) to
Peter LI,
19, KAY CRESCENT
HEADLEY DOWN
BORDON
HANTS
GU35 8AH*

Update on the Southern Problem

During this current year a number of joint talks have been held between officials of the Bhutan and Nepal Governments. It was felt that talks at this level would prove to be more productive at this stage as preparation for a further round of Ministerial Meetings. It was unfortunate that after these talks a change of Government in Nepal created some uncertainties. However, these talks have indeed proved helpful and at the SAARC Heads of State Meeting in May His Majesty the King held productive talks with the new Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Lokendra Bahadur Chand, as a result of which it is likely that a meeting at Minister level will follow in the near future.

Rongthong Kinley Dorji remains under arrest in India while discussions go on about possible extradition to Bhutan, where five cases of financial fraud and default had been registered against him by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Bank of Bhutan, the Department of Revenue and Customs the Ministry of Finance and private parties before he absconded to Nepal.

New Book by Neville Shalman

Neville Shalman, a member of the Bhutan Society since its inception, joined a fund-raising expedition trekking through Iryan Jaya in New Guinea, and during this journey attempts the climb up the Carstensz Pyramid and the glacial Ngga Pulu, and meets the Stone Age Dani tribe. He has written about his experiences in a book "Zen Explorations in Remotest New Guinea" ISBN 1840240059 published by Summerdale at £12.99

The film of Joanna Lumley's Journey in Bhutan will be broadcast on BBC TV sometime in the Autumn. There will also be a book to go with the film.
Look out for them.

New Members of the Bhutan Society since January 1997.

Dr	PETER GOLDSWORTHY	SALCOMBE
	MILADA KALAB	DURHAM
Mr	THINLEY DORJI	YORK
Mr	NADO DUKPA	LEEDS
Mr	MORROUGH KAVANAGH	LONDON
LORD	WELLOUGHBY de BROKE	
		MORETON IN MARSH
MRS	DIANA KRUGER	ANDOVER
	LIZ BANKS	BENNINGDEN
MAJOR	PETER FOX LINTON	LONDON
DR	BERYL HARTLEY	OXFORD
MR	ALAN BATTERBURY	GULDFORD
DR	JENNIFER STUTLEY	COWES
MR	PATRICK MAKIN	LONDON
	MICHAEL PAZDA	BENFLEET
	CHRISTINE WALKER	LONDON
	SIBBLEY SOH	LONDON
	JEREMY WHITE	LONDON
	J.R. McMANUS	LONDON
MRS	JULIE GREEN	LONDON
	JENNI MOGRIDGE	BROMLEY
MR	P.A. LEONGATT, MBE	SEVENDOAKS
	JUDE HEATON	EASTBOURNE
MR	CRAIG DENNIS	LONDON
MR	DAVID HUMPHREYS	LONDON
	JEANNE CONSTABLE	LONDON
	BRENDA KLUG	LONDON
MR	JOHN F. WRIGHT	CATERHAM
	JOANNA LUMLEY	LONDON
	TERESA HEADY	LONDON
	DAVID CRAIG	SAXMUNDHAM
	D.N. FREUND	GREAT MISSENDEN

Contributions to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund

Thanks to the following contributors to the Trust Fund between January and July 1997.

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SUSAN BLENCOE (2nd Donation)
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CAPT. & MRS. WEATHERALL
DAVID THOMPSON
JOANNA LUMLEY (Lecture)
DR. G.L. HENSON
HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS LTD
M.F. PAZDA

The Trust Fund is attempting to build up an endowment fund of £50,000 to generate through investment a steady and guaranteed income for the future.