

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 9

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Annual Dinner Auction raises £1300 for the Trust Fund

Once again the Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society, held on November 8th at the National Liberal Club, proved to be a great success and was attended by 120 members and guests. A record number of over thirty students from Bhutan attended as guest of the Society and lent colour to the evening in their Khos and Kiras. Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, GCMG, President of the Society, presided at the Dinner, and we were pleased to welcome the President, Chairman and members of the the Womens' Council, as well as a visitor, Frau Marion Haas, from the Bhutan Himalay Club of Cologne, Germany. At the end of the evening an Auction was held in aid of the Bhutan Society

Trust Fund which raised over £1300, a considerable increase on last year's figure. Before the Auction, the eminent photographer Walter Lees presented Lord Wilson with a cheque for £2000 for the Trust Fund. This generous donation was the result of an exhibition of Walter Lee's photographs of Bhutan which had been held at Christie's in October. Lord Wilson proposed a toast to His Majesty the King of Bhutan on the occasion of the King's Birthday, and Karma Nedup, who is studying at Reading University, replied. At the end of the evening the Bhutanese students delighted guests by dancing the Lobey Lobey traditional farewell dance of Bhutan. The Annual Dinner this year (1997) will be on November 14th.

Trust Fund assists with Bhutan's first National Handicrafts Exhibition

In September Bhutan held its first national handicrafts exhibition in Thimphu. Lyonpo Dago Tshering, Home Minister and Chairman of the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs, which organised the Exhibition, explained that the purpose was to promote traditional arts and crafts and to give recognition to traditional artisans. The Bhutan Society Trust Fund was able to provide sponsorship for the production of posters and brochures for the Exhibition, and these were designed by a graphics designer from the UK, who is working with VSO in Bhutan on the design of postage stamps. The exhibition was opened by H.R.H. Dashi Gesar, Crown Prince of Bhutan.



European Bhutan Associations Meet in Thimphu

Bhutan Society member Liz Mostyn-Owen, at her own expense, travelled to Bhutan in November to represent the Bhutan Society of the UK at a gathering of representatives of the various Bhutan Friendship Associations. Here is her account of the event:

"In November the Royal Government of Bhutan organised the first visit of delegates from the European Bhutan Associations (EBA). This was initiated around two years ago by the delegate from Finland, and apart from him there were representatives from the Dutch, French, Swedish and UK Societies. I represented the UK Society, while the French Association (*Amis de Bhoutan*) was represented by Françoise Pommarot, who rightly remarked that "we had fruitful and frank exchanges with the Bhutan Government". During the course of the week-long programme, three official dinners were given for us, by the Minister of Planning, the Deputy Minister for the National Environment Commission, and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. For our part, we hosted a dinner for Bhutanese officials at the end of our stay.

We had briefings and discussions too. We spent an hour with Lyonpo C. Dorji, Minister of Planning, and this was followed by a meeting at the Conference Hall with Government officials during the course of which

we were able to ask and answer plenty of questions. Two mornings later, each of us gave a short talk to a large audience at the Banqueting Hall and afterwards we were photographed for Kuensel and interviewed by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service.

We visited the National Museum in Paro and Kiyochi Monastery as well as the Indigenous Hospital and the Painting School at Kawachangia. We were accompanied by Sangay Wangchuk, head of the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs when we visited and lodged at Tangu Monastery, north of Thimphu.

After being shown a fascinating video of the black-necked cranes on their annual visitation from Tibet, we set off for Phobjika to see them for ourselves, staying the night at the new Gangtey Guest House. Throughout our stay we were accompanied by Yeshey Dorji, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who looked after us day after day with unfailing kindness and patience.

We returned to Thimphu for the final Dinner hosted by the Foreign Minister. I was asked by my fellow-delegates to give the farewell speech of thanks and I was also able to hand over to the Foreign Minister a photograph of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales to be given informally (and unofficially!) to His Majesty the King of Bhutan."

Kuensel photograph of the visit of the European Bhutan Associations



our representative, Liz Mostyn-Owen, is in the front row centre with sunglasses

Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings of Bhutan

by

June Stutley

15th April 1997 at the National Liberal Club 6pm to 10pm



When visiting her husband Peter, during his working times in Bhutan June Stutley kept herself occupied by painting and drawing mainly architectural subjects in Bhutan. Her paintings and sketches form a valuable record of traditional Bhutanese domestic, religious and state architecture. June will be exhibiting sketches and paintings on Tuesday, April 15th 1997 at the National Liberal Club from 6pm before and after the Lecture on that day (by Peter Stutley). Many of her paintings and sketches will be for sale, and Mrs. Stutley has kindly agreed to give a part of the proceeds to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund.

! A Reminder !

Please remember to pay your subscription of £10 (for individual members) for 1997. We are a small Society - the subscription has remained unchanged since the Society was founded - and running expenses such as postage, printing and stationery become slowly greater. We rely on you paying your Subscription promptly! Thank you to all those who pay by Standing Order. It is a great help! Standing Order forms

are enclosed with this Newsletter in case you would like to pay in this way. Please send subscriptions and/or completed Standing Order Forms to the Hon. Treasurer, Nicholas Rhodes, 28, Napier Gardens, HYTHE, Kent CT21 6DD. Probably due to an oversight a number of members still have not paid their subscription for 1996.

Please let the Hon. Secretary know if you wish to resign, though we hope you don't!

Actress JOANNA LUMLEY to Lecture for the Bhutan Society Trust Fund

In what we hope will be a major attraction to raise funds for the Bhutan Society Trust Fund, the renowned actress Joanna Lumley has kindly agreed to give a Lecture at the Royal Geographical Society on **Wednesday, 14th May, at 7pm.** Joanna Lumley's grandfather, Colonel Weir was the British Political Officer in Sikkim when in 1931 he travelled with his daughter and sister-in-law to Bhutan to present the KCIE to the second King, Jigme Wangchuk. In October last year Joanna Lumley, accompanied by her cousin and Bhutan Society member Maybe Jehu, travelled to Bhutan to make a television film about her grandfather's journey. The RGS Bar and Garden will be open from 6pm for pre-lecture drinks with Lord Wilson and Joanna Lumley. **Please come, and bring as many friends as you can.** Ticket cost £10, and we would like to raise as much money as we can for the Trust Fund by having an audience of 700 - this is quite a challenge for our small Society, so please do support what promises to be an excellent evening. **After the lecture there will be a Buffet Supper for Joanna Lumley in the Council Room of the Royal Geographical Society.** The numbers are strictly limited to 50, and priority will be given to members of the Bhutan Society in order of application! The cost is £21 to include wine. Please note that requests for tickets for the Buffet Supper should be directed to the Hon. Secretary, with cheques payable to "The Bhutan Society Trust Fund".

ICRC happy with cooperation in Bhutan



His Majesty with Mr. Delapraz (left), and the ICRC delegation

"OUR COOPERATION with Bhutan has been very fruitful, even in a difficult context," said Mr. David Delapraz, the Regional Delegate in India for the International Committee of the Red Cross, who led a ICRC delegation to Bhutan on its sixth visit to the kingdom.

"I remember very well our first visit to Bhutan, in January, 1983," he told Kuenzel. "Bhutan wasn't prepared to face such a difficult task. Four years later, our dialogue with the royal government has borne fruit because the conditions in the jail are very decent, medical

care is assured, and food is good."

"I am very satisfied with this cooperation which is a kind of technical cooperation," said Mr. Delapraz, who established the ICRC office in India in 1982 with two people and expanded it to a staff strength of 24. "I have learned that, if we have any unclear points we can discuss it and we can find agreement."

Mr. Delapraz received an audience with His Majesty the King on January 14. He met the Home Minister, Lyonpo Dago Tshering, and other senior Bhutanese officials.

The delegation, which included the New Deputy Regional Delegate in India, Mr. Denis Allistone, concluded its week-long visit with a wrap-up meeting with officials of the Home Ministry on January 17.

Bhutan's Home Minister, Lyonpo Dago Tshering, said that he was happy with the close cooperation and understanding which had developed between the ICRC and the royal government. The international perspective of the ICRC and the professionalism of its delegates had greatly benefited Bhutan over the years, he said.

KINGDOM FROM THE SKY

A Bird's Eye View of Bhutan

by

Captain David Young

Bhutan has so many scenic beauties to delight the eye that when I was asked last October to plan a one-hour sightseeing flight round Bhutan the problem was not so much what to include as what to leave out. Having seen the high mountains to the North from a distance I longed to see them from much closer and these went to the top of the list. However, I had also heard tales of the beauty and remoteness of some of the places in the east and also along the southern Dzonghags, journey times to which were counted in several days walking to add to the driving times to the roadhead, and a sightseeing flight seemed to offer the opportunity to view these in the minimum time and with the least effort. Bhutan, despite taking three days by the lateral road from Thimphu to Samdrup Jongkhar, is a very small country and can be covered from east to west by the BAe-146 in under 30 minutes. Even so there is a limit to how much can be covered in an hour and the route we have devised has had to be a compromise to try to show as many facets of this lovely land as possible in the time available.

The starting and finishing point, of course, had to be the airport at Paro and the route was chosen not only for the places to be overflown but also bearing in mind that passengers on both sides of the aircraft should have an equal opportunity to see and photograph the most spectacular views. Consequently, as can be seen from the sketch map, the route follows a rough figure of eight stretching from the western border with Tibet at one end to Trashigang in the east at the other and concentrates on the northern Dzonghags which offer some of the most outstanding scenery.

Having decided the route the next consideration was the planned altitude. We decided to plan for a height of around 22,000 feet which could be changed at the Captain's discretion depending on the atmospheric conditions. Also, even in the clearer skies of winter, there is no guarantee that some of the route may not be cloud covered so the Captain's discretion has to extend to changing the route as well as the height to make the best use of the time available.

To try to describe the route in graphic detail and to do justice to the magnificence of the scenery is, I suspect, beyond the abilities of any writer and is certainly beyond mine. Consequently I will restrict myself to outlining the route and mentioning the places and areas that we try to point out during the flight. We have found that pointing out places is not as easy as it sounds for many reasons: the view from the cockpit is quite different (and I have to confess rather better) than the views from the cabin, it is difficult to find the right words to ensure that the passengers are looking at the same mountain or valley and sometimes, sitting on the left side of the aircraft, the Captain is trying to describe something on the right which he cannot see but is being described to him by the First Officer. Incidentally we try to keep the flightdeck door open throughout the flight and encourage passengers to visit the cockpit at any time that the Seat Belt Signs are turned Off. For ease of description I will divide the route into seven parts.

PARO TO CHHUDZOM

After take-off the flight follows the line of the main Paro valley to Chhudrom, or Confluence, as the Paro and Thimphu rivers join there. On the left side of the aircraft, nestling against the cliff, is the Dakharpo Lhakang and just beyond it is the Guru Lhakang where Guru Padmasambhava meditated.

On the right of the aircraft you can see Chelala pass which leads to the Ha valley and crosses the ridge at just under 4000 metres or 13,100 feet. On the left, high on the mountain is the Lhakang of Dhoenkola where legend has it that a thief who stole one of the temple plates found he could not let go of it and cut off his own hand to rid himself of his booty. Visitors are still shown the dried remains of the hand.

CHHUDZOM TO BARSHONG

On this part of the route we fly up the main valley to Thimphu passing almost directly over Khasadrapchu opposite which, on the left side of the aircraft, lies the Gidakom valley. A little further, on the right side, can be seen the Dochhula Pass which leads to Wangdi Phodrang and the east. We then fly over Thimphu and shortly after pass between the Cheri and Tango Gompas which are now centres of meditation. On the left side can be seen the mountains of Jhomolhari and Jchu Drake, probably the most famous landmarks in Bhutan.

BARSHONG TO WARTHANG

This leg of the flight allows those on the left hand side to view the high mountains on the Bhutan/Tibet border and the great Tibetan plain beyond. Reference to the map should enable the passenger to identify the mountains but the best known are Gangchey Ta, Masang Gang, the Tsbendaygang Group, Table Mountain, Gangkar Punsum and Kula Kangri. Shortly after leaving Barshong we cross the valley of the Mho Chu which leads down to Punakha and Wangdi Phodrang on the right side of the aircraft and up to Gasa and Laya on the left. As we get closer to the mountains we enter an area of permanent snow, glaciers and deep blue morainic lakes. The views in every direction in this area are quite breathtaking and offer the photographer unequalled opportunities to capture the beauty of the mountains.

WARTHANG TO TRASHIGANG VIA LHUNTSHI

From Warthang to Trashigang the route lies Southeast over some of the most remote parts of the Kingdom. On the left the mountains stretch far into Tibet while, on the right, the mountains are not as high but still provide formidable obstacles to travel and offer outstanding scenery. Over this part of the flight we try to come down to 17,000 or 18,000 feet to give better views of the area. Trashigang, the principal town in the East is a two or three day drive from Thimphu which gives some idea of the problems of communication. Even by the scenic route, Druk Air covers the distance in 26 minutes.

TRASHIGANG TO JICHU DRAMO

From Trashigang the route follows the main east-west road past Mongar, Thamsingla, one of the most formidable passes in Bhutan, and Ura to Jakar in the Bumthang valley. We then turn north west towards Jichu Dramo and Kincherzoe giving those on the right side their view of Gankar Punsum, Chisangang Ri and Kula Kangri.

JICHU DRAMO TO LINGSHI

This time it is the turn of those on the right to view the Bhutan Himalayas and, in the distance, the great Tibetan plateau as the flight follows the line of the Snowman Trek towards the west. This is a second opportunity to see the snow, ice and lakes in the Lunana district. This part of the flight goes almost directly over Gasa, famous for its hot springs, and those passengers on the left will be able to look down the valley from Gasa to Panakha and Wangdi Phodrang.

LINGSHI TO PARO

Having passed Khang Bum on the left side we turn south-west over Lingshi towards Jichu Drake and Jhomolhari and start the descent into Paro. We now follow the Jhomolhari trek route and aim to pass over the Jhomolhari Base Camp at Jangotang giving the most spectacular views of the mountains and the Tibetan plain beyond. Flying on down the valley we emerge into the Paro valley by the Dragyel Dzong with Kyichu Monastery on the right while, on the left, clinging to the cliff, is the famous temple at Taktsang (the "Tiger's Nest"). Just a couple of minutes remain to make the final landing checks and line up with the runway while the Paro Dzong passes down the left hand side before we complete our flight.

Conclusion

We, in Druk Air, have tried to devise a sightseeing flight which combines the spectacular, the remote and the most beautiful parts of a country whose beauty exhausts the superlatives in the English language. Having flown over the Alps, the Andes, the Rockies and most of the Himalayas I do not believe that anywhere else in the world can match Bhutan for the sheer magnificence and variety of its scenery and the grandeur of its mountains. Words are a poor medium to describe such beauty, photographs give only a narrow view of the breathtaking whole and, in my view, the only way to appreciate fully the unique splendour that is Bhutan is to join us on the flight that we call "Kingdom from the Sky". You'll never regret it.

[Note: Captain David Young lives and works in Thimphu as Flight Operations Manager for Druk Air, having for several years flown as a Druk Air BA147 Captain. He is married to Marion Young, who serves as Field Director for Voluntary Service Overseas. They are both members of the Bhutan Society. David Young originally wrote this article for the Druk Air In-Flight Magazine]



Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom

The Annual General Meeting of the Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom will take place at 6pm on Wednesday, 19th March, 1997, in the David Lloyd George Room, The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1. Members who wish to place items on the Agenda should inform the Hon. Secretary at least 14 days before the date of the AGM.

The Lecture by David Lang "Plant Hunting in North East Sikkim" will take place after the AGM at 7pm.

Calendar of Meetings for 1997

Wednesday, 19th March
at 7pm at the Nat.Lib.Club
"Plant Hunting in N.E. Sikkim" by David Lang
Preceded by AGM at 6pm

Tuesday, 15th April
at 7pm at the Nat.Lib.Club
"Which Way Forward" - a discussion on sustainable development in Bhutan led by Peter Stotley.
An Exhibition of Paintings and Sketches of Bhutan by Jane Stotley before and after the Discussion

Wednesday, 14th May
at 7pm at the Royal Geographical Society "In the Realm of the Thunder Dragon" by Joanna Lumsley.
A Charity Lecture in aid of the Bhutan Society Trust Fund. Tickets £10. Followed by a Buffet Supper in the Council Room of the RGS. Tickets £21 - limited numbers for Supper - priority for Bhutan Society members

Saturday, 7th June at 12 o'clock.
Lunch and Tour of the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens at Wisley (nr Guildford) led by Jim Gardiner, Curator of Wisley Gardens.

1st Week of October:
"The Masked Dances of Bhutan" by Françoise Pommeret - exact date to be finalised.

Friday, 14th November: Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society. Details to follow.

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

PRESIDENT: LORD WILSON OF TILBURNY GCMB

VICE-PRESIDENT: JOYV GOELET

CHAIRMAN: SIMON BOWEN LYON

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Peter Lofting, Norwanta Goelet, Helen Lee*

The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom was founded on 6th October 1992 as a response to the growing connections between the two countries. The Society held its Inaugural Meeting in London on Bhutan National Day, December 17th 1992.

The Aims of the Bhutan Society are:

- to encourage and promote knowledge and understanding of the Kingdom of Bhutan, its history and its culture
- to encourage cultural and educational links between the peoples of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the United Kingdom
- to act as a link between all people, particularly those in the United Kingdom, who are interested in or who have connections with the Kingdom of Bhutan
- to promote and foster good relations between the peoples of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the United Kingdom

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE BHUTAN SOCIETY
(OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOCIETY OR ABOUT BHUTAN)

WRITE TO:

THE HON. SECRETARY, FRIARY FHEW, DRUMMOND ROAD GUILDFORD, SURREY. GU7 4NS

TEL and FAX: 0483 35189