

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



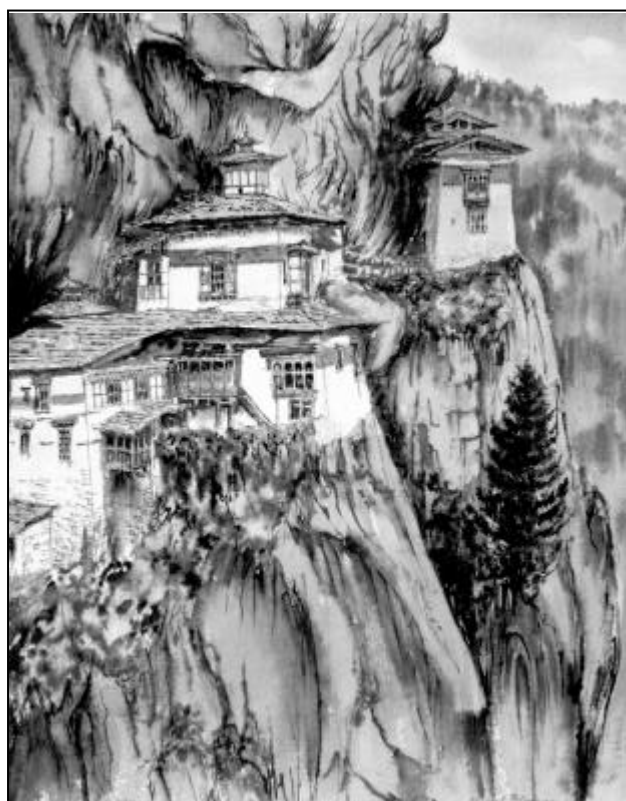
NEWSLETTER

Number 24

President: Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT, GCMG

September 2002

The 10th Anniversary of the Bhutan Society 1992-2002



Taktsang Lhakhang

Watercolour by Michael Blooman A.R.C.A.
Image 28cm x 36cm, Framed 47cm x 55cm

Painting to be Auctioned at Annual Dinner

There will be an opportunity to bid for a painting by Michael Blooman A.R.C.A. at the Society's Annual Dinner on 18 October (see page 3).

Michael has very kindly donated this watercolour depicting Taktsang Lhakhang prior to the tragic fire. The painting will be on view throughout the evening and the auction will be 'silent' with bids being written and placed in the envelopes provided. All money raised will go to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund.

Anyone who would like to place a bid, but who will not be attending the dinner, can do so by contacting Linda Li-Davies on (01730) 893829.

Michael Blooman A.R.C.A.

Michael Blooman travelled widely in Bhutan on five expeditions between 1991 and 1995 and painted a series of watercolours. This watercolour of Taktsang Lhakhang was painted in 1991 before the fire of 19 April 1998. Taktsang Lhakhang, the 'Tiger's Lair' as it is known, clings to a precipitous cliff some 2,600 feet above the valley and is believed to be where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to bring Buddhism to the Paro valley.

Michael Blooman studied painting at the Royal College of Art in the early 1960s. He was a lecturer at Maidstone College of Art and recently retired from teaching Art at Brentwood School. He is presently painting a series of watercolours of Yunnan and also enjoys working in Italy and along the fossil coastline near Lyme Regis. He has a particular interest in relief print-making and works with an Albion press in his studio at Wickham Bishops. His first one-man exhibition in London was in 1975 and his work is in public and private collections.

www.bhutansociety.org

The Bhutan Society Website is now online at www.bhutansociety.org, providing information about the Society and how to become a member, together with details of forthcoming events, an archive of past newsletters and a list of Bhutan-related links. The above picture of Taktsang Lhakhang can also be seen in colour.

What would you like to see on the website? Do you know of any particularly interesting or useful Bhutan-related links that you would like to share with other members? All input and suggestions will be most welcome. Please e-mail Bodo Hornberger at bodo@globeflower.com

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News & Updates from

Polytunnel Cheque Presented

The appeal organised by Jessica Beaghen in conjunction with the Bhutan Society for funds to rebuild the Polytunnels in Thimphu's Royal Botanic Gardens Serbithang has successfully reached its target of £1,600. Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland recently presented the cheque to the Minister of Agriculture and Prime Minister, Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, and the Director of Bhutan's National Biodiversity Centre, Dr. Ugyen Tshewang.



Michael Rutland presents the cheque to Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, watched by Dr. Ugyen Tshewang

A letter of appreciation to both Jessica Beaghen for her person efforts and to the Bhutan Society for its support has been received from His Excellency Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji.

Exhibition of Textiles from Bhutan

17th - 29th September 2002

The October Gallery

24 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AL

Mon - Sat 12.30-5.30pm, Sunday by appointment

For more information please contact Alatheia Vavasour
Tel.: (020) 7242 7367, vavasour@bigpond.com

For centuries Bhutan has been greatly admired for its textiles. The innovative use of colour and design as well as the delicate supplementary weft and warp patterning of the weavings has created a brilliant and complex art form deeply embedded in the history and culture of the country.

The finest Bhutanese weavings are still worn on special occasions, such as religious festivals. The designs express spiritual values and encourage the contemplation of colour which is seen as an exercise in bringing one closer to enlightenment. The compulsory wearing of national dress during work hours as well as on formal occasions is of great assistance to the survival of the textile industry.

Vavasour Fabrics, initiated by Alatheia Vavasour in 1995, is a company dedicated to supporting the Bhutanese hand woven textile industry. Vavasour commissions traditional weavings as well as buying new and vintage pieces. She made her sixth trip to Bhutan in October 2001. Exhibitions are held annually in Vavasour's home base of Sydney, Australia, and less regularly in Melbourne and Perth. This is her third exhibition in London.

Minister Prepares for Sponsored Walk

by Kencho Wangdi & Sonam Maekay Penjor

The WHO's health theme for the year being "Move For Health", the Bhutanese minister for health and education, Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, is gearing up to do just that. The minister is about to undertake his sponsored walk across the kingdom, from Trashigang to Thimphu. Carrying a 25kg rucksack, the minister takes a two-hour walk every day to train for the big event, scheduled to start on September 25. 'It is not going to be easy,' he says. 'I have to train hard.'

Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, accompanied by six volunteers, will cover 560 kilometres in 15 days following the old route which lies largely untrodden after the arrival of motor vehicles. There will be no official *chadi* (preparations) by dzongkhags along the way. The team will clear paths and carry their own packs, without the aid of ponies and porters. They will cook and camp on their own. The minister will stop in villages, health units and schools along the way to talk about healthy lifestyles and other health messages. Numerous volunteers are expected to join the team for a part of the journey at different points along the route.

Sponsorship funds are already pouring in. More than Nu. 8.6 million (£115,000) has been collected since mid-June from friends and well-wishers around the world, including Nu 0.32 million (£4,300) collected within Bhutan. In addition to the walk, a special fund-raising committee is planning many other activities such as food festivals, film festivals, sales of t-shirts, lotteries, badges and stamps around the country to generate further funds.

All money collected will go to the Bhutan Health Trust Fund (BHTF). The department of health aims to raise at least US\$24 million (£15 million) for the BHTF. The accumulated fund will be used to ensure a permanent supply of essential drugs and quality vaccines for the Bhutanese population.

A website established for the walk is at www.move4health.gov.bt and further information on the Bhutan Health Trust Fund may be found at www.bhtf.gov.bt.

Sponsorship pledges may be for a single total amount, per kilometre (560), per hour (150) or per day (15). Monies will be collected following the walk and transferred to Bhutan as one sum, thus minimising bank charges.

For further information on the walk please contact:

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the Bhutan Society



The 10th Annual Dinner Friday 18 October 2002



The 10th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society will take place on Friday 18 October 2002 in the Great Hall of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, London. Tickets are still available from the Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland. Please see the enclosed flyer for an application form.

Join us for this celebration of the Bhutan Society's 10th Anniversary in the presence of HRH The Crown Prince of Bhutan and in the company of the Presidents of the ten other European Bhutan Friendship Societies and Bhutan Society Member Joanna Lumley.

Do you have a spare room?

Representatives of the European Bhutan Societies will be attending our 10th Annual Dinner on 18 October 2002. Would any London-resident members of the Bhutan Society be able to accommodate one or two of these representatives for the nights of Friday 18 and Saturday 19 October? In particular two representatives of the Swedish-Bhutan Society (males) are seeking accommodation.

If you can help, please contact Lucy Hornberger on (020) 7580 2617 or e-mail lucy@globeflower.com. Your hospitality would be much appreciated.

Paris Flat Available for Short Let

Françoise Pommaret, research fellow and founder of the French Bhutan Society, *Les Amis du Bhoutan*, will be in Bhutan this winter and is looking for a tenant for her flat in Paris. The flat is available from 12 November 2002 to 2 January 2003 for any length of time from 2 weeks to the whole period.

It is a spacious 4th floor flat with a lift, 3 mins. walk from subways stations right in the centre of Paris. Accommodation comprises a large sitting-cum-dining room, kitchen with all appliances, large bedroom with double bed and small bedroom with another double bed, separate toilet and bathroom. Shops and other facilities are all nearby.

Price: 600 US\$ per 2 weeks or 1200 US\$ per month all inclusive and furnished, except phone.

E-mail: fpommaret@aol.com

Tel.: +33 1 44 83 95 65

VAST Receives Trust Fund Donation

Earlier this summer Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland and Hon. Treasurer Nicholas Rhodes presented a Bhutan Society Trust Fund cheque for £250 to the Voluntary Artists Studio Thimphu (VAST). The money will be used to support the very popular art workshops for children that VAST runs on Saturdays in Thimphu. These workshops are always well attended and take place amid an atmosphere of liveliness and excitement.



Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland and Hon. Treasurer Nicholas Rhodes present a cheque for £250 to VAST

The Voluntary Artists Studio Thimphu (VAST) was established in 1988 by a group of working artists using the Artshop Gallery as their base. It is an independent artists' guild with the explicit mission of promoting the importance and value of visual art. Currently VAST has 120 active students and members.

In the light of current social and demographic developments in Bhutan leading to an increasing youth problem, the main target group of VAST consists of school children and young students. VAST's main objectives are to provide an opportunity to young people in Bhutan to develop their artistic talents, and to facilitate participation in the national and international art realm. At the same time the Studio seeks to develop vocational skills and encourages alternative positive use of free time by sharing social responsibilities.

VAST strives to reach its objectives by organising artistic actions and other socially useful productive work. The main activities are free weekend classes, art camps, excursions, art talks and exhibitions. Furthermore, art projects for the promotion of issues related to health, hygiene and environment take place regularly.

While VAST is mainly depending on the artists who voluntarily work at the Studio, additional expenses have to be covered by donations as well as through some compensation received for various artistic services rendered to national and international institutions. Amongst its latest ventures has been the modelling of the new town square for the Thimphu City Corporation as well as the design of the disabled children's playground at the local hospital sponsored by the Save the Children Fund.



The History of Bhutan's National Flag

by Tshering Gyeltshen, *Kuensel Online*

A booklet to be published by the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) gives an account of the history of the national flag and anthem, and explains how the dragon and the name 'Druk' came to be associated with Bhutan.

The first national flag was created at the initiative of the second king, His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck. It was designed in 1947 by Mayuem Choying Wangmo Dorji, as a national flag was required for Bhutan's attendance at the First Asian Conference in New Delhi (March 23, 1947).



The flag behind the throne in the National Assembly Hall is in the style of the first national flag.

This first flag was square with a green dragon embroidered horizontally. The dragon was green in keeping with the traditional and religious reference to it as *yu druk ngoem* (turquoise green dragon). According to Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, 'My mother, Mayuem Choying Wangmo Dorji, chose the dragon as the symbol of our Kingdom of Druk and the colours yellow and orange as they are the colours of our Buddhist religion. The flag was sewn in Dr. and Mrs. Graham's Arts and Crafts School in Kalimpong'.

A second national flag was used when the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck visited eastern Bhutan in 1956. Miniature flags based on the first version were fixed onto the saddle of every tenth horse of the royal convoy.

The flag was redesigned with significant alterations in the late 1950s when the Gangtok-based Indian Political Officer came to Bhutan. Most notably the flag became rectangular, measuring nine by six feet, and the green dragon was replaced by a white one, placed diagonally. In 1968, when the royal secretariat shifted to Tashichhodzong from Taba, His late Majesty started the tradition of hoisting the national flag in front of government offices.

The Bhutanese national anthem was composed in 1953 upon the advice of His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The lyrics and tune were composed taking the national anthems of India and England as references. The original music was composed by Bhutan's first bandmaster, Aku Tongmi. The Royal Guest Master, Dasho Gyaldon Thinley, wrote the original 12-line lyrics of the anthem, later shortened to six lines by Dasho Shingkhari Lam and the present Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC)

News from the

secretary, Dasho Sangay Dorji.

A researcher at the CBS, Sonam Kinga, who co-authored the booklet with researcher Dorji Penjore, told Kuensel that the centre decided to publish the booklet because few people knew about the origins of these two important national symbols. 'There is a whole history behind it which we thought we should document,' he said. The booklet will contain the English translation of the national anthem lyrics, both the old and the later versions, and also the code of use for the national flag.

The Centre for Bhutan Studies
P.O. Box 1111, Thimphu, Bhutan
www.geocities.com/bhutanstudies

Mobile Phones Come to Bhutan

Kuensel Online

The long range Senao phone hand sets that have gained popularity over the years are soon to face competition from a Bhutan Telecom (BT) cellular phone service.

BT will work with one of three vendors – Mitsui (Japan), Telos Technology (Canada) or TCIL (Telecommunication Consultants India Ltd.) – in creating the mobile network service. Phase I of the network will cover Thimphu, Paro, Chukha, Gedu, Tala and Phuentsholing and is expected to be ready for commercial launch in July 2003.

'The selected vendor will build a series of base station towers, put in place a switching system, and test and commission the network', B-Mobile project manager Tashi Tshering explained. Although the roll-out of a mobile service network is faster than that of a fixed phone network, Bhutan's terrain could pose some difficulties.

The estimated cost is Nu 350 million (£4.8 million), including personnel training and a maintenance budget. BT plans to raise the money by either taking a 'supplier's credit' from the vendor or by issuing bonds.

BT will initially sell the mobile phone hand sets (GSM 900 spectrum) and later encourage dealers. The service will have both pre-paid and post-paid schemes to suit government and individual users and there are plans to provide a 'roaming facility' with neighbouring countries. The tariff structure will be similar to India's – Nu 4 (£0.05) a minute, for both outgoing and incoming calls.

The service should be useful to contractors, travel agents and other businesses. 'I think the mobile phones will do well,' said an executive of an audio visual company. 'There are a good number of Bhutanese who are busy and who would like to possess a sleek phone that is convenient and useful.' But the call rates concern prospective customers. 'I am not sure that I want a service where I have to pay for both calls I make and those I receive', commented a tour operator.

Kingdom of Bhutan



Bhutan's National Assembly – The future is here

Editorial, Kuensel Online

Spectators at the National Assembly are a little awed these days by the heat of the debate as Assembly members confront each other across the floor of the august hall. Increasingly, individual members are questioning authority and decision makers with growing vigour, be it government organisations or the service forces.

The free-for-all exchange has even silenced distant observers who have been critical of the Assembly proceedings, especially those who did not understand the nuances of some of the past debates. In fact, indicating a trend towards the other extreme, we hear a new term, 'minister bashing'.

The atmosphere seems to have affected the mid-section of the Assembly membership, the dzongdas, normally a lively group. The debate has become far more exciting than the agenda promised. Recently the members took the government to task on the militant and refugee issues, border harassment in Lhamoizingkha, the proposal for a new Assembly hall, as well as the northern boundary talks. Later the chimis were no less emotional on excess land, national security, and the drafting of by-laws and regulations.

As the debate picked up, the chimis were caught mid-step in their aggressive submissions when they were reminded that there was a need to back up their statements with action. For example, after last year's fervent pleas for militia training for thousands of Bhutanese youth, they had come up with a total of 24 volunteers. The Assembly members were soon reminding themselves of the need to maintain the integrity of the open discussions. Just as some views of government representatives were interpreted as being merely a defence of their actions, the reactions of some chimis were alleged to be somewhat that of a herd mentality.

Meanwhile, if we had any doubts on the reality of His Majesty the King's vision to separate the three arms of government, they are gone. There is already a clear separation, to an extent that a cabinet minister even thought the debate came through like political opposition.

In that sense the check and balance mechanism which was envisioned is already taking shape. The internal control mechanisms are falling into place. The only question which might be left open is the interpretation and conclusion of the Assembly discussions. How is the debate weighed into an overall endorsement? The members of the Assembly must all ratify the proceedings and resolutions at the end of the session, but if political parties eventually start dominating this highest legislative body, 'who will watch the watchdog'?

If we were ever truly alarmed by the idea of devolution of authority, including His Majesty the King's introduction of a written Constitution, the protests were short-lived.

Judging by the enthusiasm today, there are signs that the Constitution, in some ways, could even be pre-empted. Whether it is intended or not, the debates, the speeches, even the silences are more politicised every day.

Debates are often carried beyond the agenda as speakers become excited by various themes. In this new era we see a wider perspective given to issues like national security, a better insight into the political reform process, and a more professional look at problems like employment, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS. Sometimes we see the need for views to be related to broader national interests.

Outside the Assembly, discussions have also moved to the qualification of people's representatives – the gups, chimis, and royal advisory councillors – in the light of their greatly enhanced responsibilities. With the Ninth Plan already launched and the Constitution coming under intensified discussions, this is just the beginning of this strand of thought. We are already seeing the future.

Bhutan's HDI Ranking Improves

by Bishal Rai, Kuensel Online

Bhutan has been ranked 140 out of 173 countries in the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) report 2002. The ranking is based on the human development index (HDI) which is a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and income per person.

Bhutan has a HDI of 0.494 and is placed third after Pakistan and the Sudan in the category 'low human development' – a category with 36 countries. In the SAARC region Bhutan is ahead of Nepal and Bangladesh but after India and Pakistan.

A press release from the UNDP stated, 'The 2002 ranking represents an improvement for Bhutan over last year's figures and indeed each year has seen a steady improvement in the rating accorded to Bhutan. This information does not necessarily provide the full picture, particularly given the index was calculated on a population figure of over two million, now recognised as incorrect.'

Norway remains at the top of the HDI, with Sweden, Canada and Belgium close behind, displacing Australia and the United States.

The HDR indicates that two years after world leaders set measurable objectives for development and poverty eradication, 55 countries with 23% of the world's people are on track to achieve three-quarters of the goals. 33 countries with 26% of world's people are failing on more than half of the targets. Bhutan is on track to achieve the goals in only two areas: reducing under-five and infant mortality rates by two-thirds. The HDR report highlights that a vital element in making the goals viable would be increasing aid from developed nations. On average, these countries give around 0.25% of their GNP in aid. Estimates suggest that double this amount is needed to meet the goals – still well below the 0.7 percent of GNP agreed by the UN General Assembly in 1970.



More news from the

Dzongkha: A Step Closer to Microsoft Windows

by Tshering Gyeltshen, Kuensel Online

Some time next year, Bhutanese will be able to create websites, surf the information superhighway, send e-mails, chat, and generally do everything that people do today in English on the computer – all in Dzongkha. There will also be a variety of Dzongkha fonts to indulge users' fancies and preferences.

All this will happen when Dzongkha is integrated into Microsoft Windows, possibly as soon as the first quarter of 2003. The Orient Foundation, a UK firm which specializes in multimedia applications and building digital libraries in the 'Mahayana Buddhist worlds' is assisting the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) with the development of this system. The Dzongkha Windows will eventually have all the basic applications such as Operating System, Access, Excel, Internet Explorer, Word, and Publisher. The system will also be compatible with other multimedia applications such as Adobe Photoshop and Pagemaker and with operating systems like Mac and Linux.

The president of The Orient Foundation, Graham P. Coleman, told Kuensel that the primary objective of integrating Dzongkha into Windows was 'to make using the computer as easy and comfortable in Dzongkha as in English. Anyone should be able to sit down anywhere in the world and use the computer in Dzongkha without any hitch or difficulty,' he said.

The Dzongkha Windows system is based on the international standard computer charactering code called 'Unicode' and consists of five main components – a standard keyboard, a system font, two document or word fonts, a locale (which gives information such as time, date, weather, days of the week, etc.), and sorting rules. Around 4,500 Dzongkha letters, characters and religious symbols have now been developed, including *drilbu*, *dorji*, *norbu* and other important and widely-used religious symbols.

The system font for Windows is given an entirely new appearance and letters do not have the characteristic tapering edges. They have blunt edges like the English alphabet. All the newly designed fonts are actually based on Dzongkha characters written by Bhutanese lams and calligraphy artists. According to Chris Fynn who developed the Dzongkha fonts for Windows, thousands of combinations called 'glyphs' have been put in every letter or character to enable it to support complicated texts and letters. For example, some of the new fonts have as many as 4,600 glyphs whereas the existing ones only have a maximum of 800 glyphs. 'With this new system all kinds of religious texts and scripts can now be computerized, including the *datho* (book of annual astrological predictions)' said Chris Fynn.



Chris Fynn teaches a trainee how to design Dzongkha fonts

Currently there are around seven different Dzongkha computer systems in Bhutan all using different charactering codes, none of which are based on Unicode. The Dzongkha system of the National Library, *Peme Tshewang* is the only system using both the *tshuyig* and *jogyig* (capital and small letter) fonts. Several systems reportedly have three fonts but even these are said to be slight variations of the same font having almost the same appearance. All the existing systems can function only with the aid of 'dongle', a hardware with in-built codes that fits into the computer and allows it to encrypt Dzongkha fonts. Because of this basic deficiency, the existing systems do not support any of the primary functions a computer normally performs. 'Forget e-mails, even files cannot be saved in Dzongkha,' said Chris Fynn. The biggest disadvantage, however, is that the systems are not compatible with each other. For example, a document composed in a DDC computer cannot be opened in a National Library computer.

With Dzongkha Windows all these issues will be a thing of the past says Chris Fynn. The royal government, the Orient Foundation, Microsoft Corp., and the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) are funding the Dzongkha Windows integration project, with the bulk of the funds being contributed by the SDC.

Another offshoot of the project is a training programme for the design and creation of Dzongkha fonts. A small group of Bhutanese IT managers, freelance artists, monks and computer operators has been trained by Chris Fynn to design and develop Dzongkha fonts. The trainees created four new Dzongkha fonts in the course of their six-month training, which concluded this week.

In July the DDC marked the formal completion of the Dzongkha computerization project with a traditional ceremony at which certificates were awarded to the trainees.

Kingdom of Bhutan



The Stray Dogs of Bhutan

by Topsy Hughes

Stray dogs roam all over Bhutan and, when I was there last year I was amazed at the large number everywhere. They included litters of puppies curled up on pavements, often in cardboard boxes. In Thimphu alone it is estimated that there are at least 2000 stray dogs.

Although neglected and often suffering from mange and eye infections, they are accepted, and to some extent fed, by the local people. However, the numbers are now so great that they have become a cause of concern, especially in Thimphu, not least since rabies is present in Bhutan.

Tashi Payden – an enterprising lady – has been instrumental in establishing the RSPCA in Bhutan. This is not affiliated to the RSPCA in England and stands for the Royal Society for the Protection and Care of Animals. Its patron is one of the Queens of Bhutan and the word ‘care’ has been used because, while there is no evidence of cruelty, there is a real need for care.

I read about this dog problem in a previous newsletter and met Tashi in Thimphu last October. Armed with large bags of dog biscuits brought from England, (somewhat to the surprise of Gulf Air!), I went out with her for several hours one evening to feed some of these dogs. They were to be found in large groups all over the town and came in droves for this largesse – not all immediately realising that my offerings were food! Most were friendly, some nervous, but there was virtually no fighting over the biscuits. I could have done with a lot more of them – the dogs loved them.

I am involved with animal welfare and was very impressed with the work that Tashi is doing and her commitment to trying to reduce the ever-increasing number of stray dogs. Last year, a neutering programme combined with vaccination against rabies and treatment of mange was started in Thimphu and local people were encouraged, by means of a small payment of, I think, 20 Ngultrum, to bring those dogs to a local veterinary surgeon. Tashi personally saw to the after care of the females – no mean achievement, as facilities were extremely basic and several hundred were neutered.

To date, funding for this project, which is in its infancy, has been raised locally. I found it very heartening to see what a developing country like Bhutan is doing to address this problem for the benefit of both dogs and people.

It is estimated £4,000-5,000 would cover the costs of neutering, vaccinating and providing some after care for the dog population of Thimphu and, when more money is available, this programme will be continued. Later, it is hoped it will be possible to extend it to other areas of the country.

When one considers the cost of having one dog neutered in England, this is a very small sum.

Two-third of Thimphu's Dog Population is Rabies Free

by Sonam Maekay Penjor, Kuensel Online



Street dogs in Thimphu

The RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection and Care of animals) coordinator, Tashi Payden, told Kuensel that approximately 2,000 dogs from an estimated population of 3,000 in the capital have been sterilised and vaccinated.

In March this year, a Japanese medical volunteer came through the RSPCA with vaccines worth Nu. 500,000 (£6,500) leading to the formation of a ‘mobile unit’ consisting of volunteers, the veterinary hospital, and the city corporation. The unit’s mission was to free the town of the increasing and unruly canine population, and ended up sterilising about 300 dogs from the vegetable market, ‘Hong Kong Market’, swimming pool area and Changlam, among other areas, in a period of ten days.

The RSPCA has grown stronger over the years. In 1999, it received a plot of land in Serbithang from the government where it built an animal care centre with Nu 2.2 million (£30,000) of funding support from the Sustainable Development Secretariat (SDS).

The RSPCA has also been receiving US\$ 10,000 (£6,500) since 2001 from Michael Mars of the Mars Foundation, besides other donors. The foundation will continue to fund the RSPCA for a period of five years. At present the funds are being utilized to buy equipment for the shelter and to cover operational costs at the centre.

Some Thimphu residents feel that the stray population has increased, but according to Tashi Payden there has actually been a marginal decrease. ‘People tend to notice more dogs due to awareness from campaigns,’ said Tashi.

Topsy Hughes would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in supporting Tashi Payden’s efforts. Please contact her at:

Brantridge Lodge, Brantridge Lane, Balcombe,

W. Sussex, RH17 6JT

Tel./Fax: (01444) 400 530



Bhutan Connections



From Orpington to Thimphu – A trip of a lifetime

by Steve Bennett, FIFA Referee

While Brazil were beating Germany in the World Cup Final, the world's two lowest-ranking football teams were fighting it out in Bhutan. It was a great honour for me to be selected to referee this extraordinary contest.

Bhutan and Montserrat – the Dragons are facing the Monster Rats! Prior to the match Bhutan sits 202nd in the FIFA world rankings, with Montserrat 203rd. But both teams agree it's not just about winning, but also a celebration of the coming together of FIFA's two newest countries.

Montserrat is a colourful opponent. The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean is famous for the calypso and black sand beaches and, these days, for the massive volcanic eruption of 1995 that destroyed two-thirds of the island, and caused half of its 11,000 population to scatter across the globe.

In front of me at Thimphu's Changlimithang Stadium, 15,000 spectators wait patiently. Beyond, the Himalayas rise spectacularly under rain clouds as the monsoon season takes hold. The air is thin – 8,000 feet above sea level is going to take its toll on everyone, including me. The home crowd witness the arrival of the Crown Prince and the pre-match entertainment begins. It is without doubt the most colourful scene I am likely ever to see anywhere in the world.

Having spent a few days acclimatising, my two Bhutanese assistants and myself prepare for the job in hand. Our dressing room is like Piccadilly Circus. It's actually the Bhutan Olympic Committee's Office and you don't need a pass to get in. I've already given my pre-match instructions back at the hotel – a few diagrams and some encouraging words of support to get us through this momentous occasion. Our warm up routine has been somewhat hampered by the pre-match entertainment of dancers and marching bands on the field. However, managing to avoid the puddles created by a combination of the local fire brigade watering the pitch the day before and the heavy overnight rain, we complete our warm up.

Led by the traditional FIFA 'Fair Play' flag, the two teams follow the officials onto the field and line up facing the 'Tribune' where the Crown Prince and Presidents of both National Associations will be presented. Both teams are accompanied by local school children dressed in their traditional colourful costumes. Throughout the match the crowd chants endlessly – for both sides!

The game itself is fairly one-sided. Bhutan takes an early lead through their captain Wangyel Dorji after only four minutes, but fail to capitalise on it until late in the second half. Montserrat never give up, but the task proves too great as Bhutan creates more chances late on to secure a deserved 4-0 victory.

To conclude proceedings, the Crown Prince leads the traditional Buddhist dance on the field, accompanied by

the players, officials, special guests and the media. A sight to behold!

The match was a historic event. Prime Minister Wangchuck declared a school holiday immediately after the final whistle to wild celebrations from the crowd. Fair Play was the order of the day with both sides sharing a metal trophy cleaved in two in the spirit of fairness.

Now that Bhutan has opened its door to the beautiful game, the aim is to rise up the FIFA rankings and establish itself amongst the other footballing nations. Since their victory against Montserrat they have moved up three places and now lie 199th. Watch out Brazil!

Football Referees Trained

by Kuensel Online

A professional referee from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has trained 34 Bhutanese in officiating over the most popular game in the country.

The trainees at the four-day course organised by the Bhutan Football Federation (BFF) were drawn from various football clubs, schools, institutes and dzongkhags.

The instructor, Mr. Nik Ahmad Haji Yaakub is head of the refereeing department of the AFC. He officiated at the Bhutan-Kuwait match in 2001. He stressed that a referee should go to the field with a clear conscience. He should understand the laws of the game, and interpret and apply them firmly and decisively.

This is the second national refereeing course conducted by the BFF.

The Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland will be in Bhutan until the the end of September, and in Guildford from 2 October until 22 October.

He will then be in Bhutan again from 27 October until May 2003.

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Michael Rutland will be delighted to meet members of the Bhutan Society visiting Bhutan during the periods when he is there. Please telephone him when you are in Thimphu.