

# THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

Number 34

President: Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT GCMG FRSE

Summer 2006

### Photographic Exhibition & Sale

## IMAGES OF BHUTAN



All proceeds to the  
Bhutan Society Trust Fund

**Preview: Monday 16th October, 2006**

Official Opening: 6:30pm

Talk by Viscount Lascelles: 7:15pm

(Exhibition continues 17th-21st October)

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We are delighted to announce that an exhibition and sale of **outstanding photos of Bhutan**, organized by Baroness Dorothea Friesen, will be held at the Nehru Centre, London, from 16th-21st October.

The photos are priced at a very reasonable £40-£50 and all proceeds will be donated to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund.

Members are especially invited to attend the **preview evening** on Monday 16th October from 6:30pm. Drinks and snacks will be served and Viscount Lascelles will give an illustrated talk on the construction of the Bhutanese Stupa at Harewood House.

*Please see page 2 for full details...*

The Nehru Centre

8 South Audley Street, London W1K 1HF

### The 14th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

15th September, 2006



*Application form enclosed. Please also see p. 2*

**Monday 30th October, 2006**

### Insights into Life & Healthcare in Bhutan

An amusing illustrated talk in non-medical jargon!

By Prof. John Duncan

John Duncan is a Professor of Neurology (UCL), specialising in epilepsy. The most common serious disorder of the brain, epilepsy is nevertheless often not recognised or treated. This is particularly the case in Bhutan, which currently has no neurologists of its own.

In Nov. 2005, under the auspices of the Bhutanese Ministry of Health, Prof. Duncan was invited to visit Bhutan to see patients with epilepsy and to teach and advise on developing a treatment programme. He was shown around a number of hospitals and health centres and had the opportunity to visit patients in their homes.

Prof. Duncan kept an audio diary during his trip and has an array of interesting photos. He is an excellent and witty speaker with years of experience in the field!

**Monday 30th October, 2006**

**6:30pm for 7:00pm**

**The National Liberal Club  
Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE**

The Society's website is at [www.bhutansociety.org](http://www.bhutansociety.org) and carries information about the Society, news and events, an archive of Newsletters and a selection of interesting Bhutan-related links. The Bhutan Society of the UK, Unit 23, 19-21 Crawford Street, London W1H 1PJ. E-mail: [info@bhutansociety.org](mailto:info@bhutansociety.org) Fax: (020) 7580 2648

For membership enquiries please see the Society's website, or contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee  
E-mail: [lee.elizabeth@btopenworld.com](mailto:lee.elizabeth@btopenworld.com) Tel: (01483) 455764



# News and Updates from

**IMAGES OF BHUTAN** Photographic Exhibition and Sale (*continued from front page...*)

We are delighted that the exhibition will be opened by Viscount Lascelles – a great friend of Bhutan who recently commissioned a Bhutanese Stupa to be built in the grounds of his estate at Harewood, Yorkshire. Viscount Lascelles has very kindly agreed to give an illustrated talk on the Stupa: the background to the project, the construction and grand consecration!

**Illustrated Talk: The Building of the Harewood Stupa**  
Viscount Lascelles writes:

“In May 2002 I invited four Bhutanese monks to come to England to build a Stupa in the grounds of my family estate, Harewood in Yorkshire. The construction process of this Stupa – the only one of its kind in the UK – was quite an adventure! I shall be talking about how the project progressed from conception to consecration, with slides and some background on the history and meaning of the Stupa in Buddhist culture.”

*(Viscount Lascelles’ talk will start at 7:15pm)*

Baroness Friesen, the organiser of the exhibition, guides frequent tours to Bhutan. The two photographers whose work makes up this exhibition were both introduced to Bhutan by her. The photographers:

**A**LMERIE COLLOREDO-MANNSFELD was born in Prague, raised in Austria and studied at the Institute for Picture Journalism, Munich. In 1961 she moved to New York as assistant to Hans Namuth, a photographer specialising in portraits of artists - among them de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. She developed her career as a photo journalist, and had her portfolio accepted by the prestigious Magnum Associates.

She then worked for Klein & Associates, specialising in interiors and commercial photography. Moving back to Europe, she continued her work in architecture and photography while raising a family. Her work has been published in numerous books, magazines and catalogues.

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**P**ETER SPIRA has taken photographs from an early age – at school, in the army and at university. After retiring from his career in the City, his photographic work led to two exhibitions at London’s Nehru Centre, both in aid of charities for India. In 2005 he published a book of his photographs entitled “Faces of India”, with photos taken over the previous 15 years.

In 2001 he travelled to Bhutan with one of Baroness Friesen’s tours and was greatly struck by the beauty of the country and the charm of its people.

## The 14th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

15th September, 2006

House of Lords, London



The 14th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society will take place on Friday 15th September in the Peers’ Dining Room, House of Lords, London.

All Members and their friends are invited to join us for what is always a most enjoyable evening and a great way to catch up with old friends... and make new ones! Please see the enclosed flyer for full details and a ticket application form.

Please also consider sponsoring, or part sponsoring, a ticket for a Bhutanese student to attend – see the application form for details, or call Peter Li, the Annual Dinner Secretary, on: (01730) 893 829.

Our Annual Dinners held at the House of Lords are always oversubscribed. The venue imposes a strict limit on numbers, and we regret that it is impossible for us to ‘squeeze in’ extra people once the available tickets have been sold. Please be sure to return your application form and payment as soon as possible to be sure of getting tickets. Thank you!

Writer and explorer Neville Shulman CBE – a Life Member of the Society – has published a new book,

### **Climbing the Equator:**

### **Adventures in the Jungles and Mountains of Ecuador**

A long way from Bhutan, certainly, but a fascinating destination, and well worth a read this summer!

‘Climbing the Equator’ by Neville Shulman is published by Summersdale; Price: £7.99; ISBN: 184024 450X

The Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland is currently in the UK. He will return to Bhutan towards the end of August.

2 Windacres, Warren Road, Guildford GU1 2HG  
Tel: (01483) 538 189, E-mail: mrutland@aol.com

He would be delighted to meet Members visiting Bhutan during the periods when he is there – telephone him when you are in Thimphu.

PO Box 1044, Thimphu, Bhutan  
Tel: +975 2 361 183, E-mail: mrutland@aol.com

# the Bhutan Society



## A Dinner for Michael Rutland

by Jessica Beaghen

On Sunday 12th March the small number of British who are currently resident in Bhutan managed to spring a surprise dinner for Michael Rutland at the Jumolhari Hotel in Thimphu to celebrate his being awarded the OBE.

Kesang Wangchuk and Ugyen Wangmo, his son and daughter-in-law, were in on the act and managed to get him there without him knowing what was going on. Carolyn Tsering had organised the dinner, and, along with Rosemary Gyetse, supplied champagne (a rare treat!). It was a very pleasant evening, although we missed the two who couldn't make it, Richard Allen and Louise Dorji.

Those present were:

Carolyn Tsering, Rosemary Gyetse, Rajni Chavda, Susy Kirk, Jessica Beaghen, Barbara Lhendup and, of course, Michael, Ugyen and Kesang.



Michael with friends and well-wishers

We gathered in the sumptuous dining room of this refurbished boutique hotel and chatted over dinner and champagne. Carolyn explained that in the 60s Britain was one of the first countries to give support to Bhutan and how, with Michael's return to the country, this support had greatly increased. Over the years, many people from Britain had come to work in Bhutan, and although the numbers have now decreased the support is still there. We have all played a role in the country, which was recognised and appreciated by Michael, and we are very pleased he has been awarded the OBE on behalf of us all.

As Michael will not be receiving his 'gong' until November he was presented with one that had been made especially for the event, and then presented with a beautiful picture of White Dema, the Goddess of compassion and wisdom, which Michael assures us will be given a place in his newly refurbished traditional Bhutanese house.

## The Bhutan Society Rhododendron Tour: A Personal Account

by Matthew Heasman

Last year I was delighted to agree to an invitation by the Bhutan Society to take a group of Members to see Bhutan's beautiful Rhododendrons. The two-week tour included a three-day trek to the Rudong La in central Bhutan. This is my personal account of the trek.

On the morning of Tues 17th May those who were going on the trek to the Rudong La prepared themselves. The weather was fine and we got off to a good start. We were heading for an area called Phokphey today and there was a little confusion as to how far it was. Once underway the going seemed reasonably easy and we passed through farmland, bamboo meadow and forest. The bamboo meadows had some lovely dark red *Rh. thomsonii* and light pink *Rh. wallichii*. Through the steeper section in the *Tsuga dumosa* (Fir) forest there was *Primula tanneri* ssp. *nepalensis* (a lovely yellow species), *Rh. campylocarpum* (Yellow bells) and *Rh. arboreum* (red/pink) as well as the blood red truses of *Rh. succothii*.

After a steep section, while waiting back for the remainder of the party to catch up, there was suddenly an almighty thunderclap that terrified me as I was not expecting it! The rain started to pour down and I thought, "Here we go, this could be a wash out". Much to my surprise however, after about another three quarters of an hour we reached Phokphey and found the camp all set up awaiting our arrival. The campsite was a lovely bamboo meadow clearing in the forest. There were lots of rhododendrons as well as lovely primulas and *Meconopsis*. Then as if by magic the rain stopped. We enjoyed a well deserved lunch and then set about an afternoon's botanising in the surrounding area.

The flora found in the area was as follows: *Rh. succothii*, *Rh. hodgsonii* (large leaved with wine red flowers the size of a football), *Rh. setosum* (minature pink species), *Rh. anthopogon* (pink & yellow), *Rh. cinnibarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* (yellow), *Rh. wallichii* (pink), *Rh. flinckii* (Yellow with brown spots), *Rh. bhutanense* (pink, not in flower) and *Rh. campanulatum* (pink). Then *Primula calderiana* (deep purple), *P. tannerii* and *P. dickeana* (yellow), *Meconopsis paniculata* (not in flower, lovely leaf rosettes) and *Cassiope fastigiata* (white bells). The surrounding forest was natural *Abies densa*. It took us about three hours to go round the large bamboo meadow. The botanising was everything I could have hoped for and I couldn't wait for the following day's trek to the Rudong La.

On returning to camp, we found that the staff had cut us a pile of wood for a fire, so for the last few hours of the day we sat around the fire chatting about the day.

(continued overleaf...)



# News from the

(continued from page 3...)

On Wed 18th May I woke bright and early. The weather was looking good and I hoped it would stay that way. We had breakfast in a large dining tent that had been set up – all the comforts of home! After breakfast we set off and again there was some confusion over the journey length. It is hard to get an accurate estimate when you have never been there before, and you have to be cautious of what the guides say as they forget that they walk twice as fast as us!

The walk started with a path that gently climbs through the dense *Abies* forest. There was the lovely dark mauve *Primula calderiana* everywhere and some large leaved species of rhododendrons in flower, including *Rh. hodgsonii* and the lovely yellow *Rh. wightii*. This is the true species and not the poor plant commonly called *Rh. wightii* that is in cultivation. It is a very hard plant to grow as it suffers from root rot in cultivation. Funnily, every time you see it in the wild it is always growing in very damp places, the last thing you would think it likes.

The path began to get a little steeper, then we broke out above the tree line. The hill sides were covered in *Rh. wightii*, *Rh. flinckii* and *Rh. bhutanense*. *Rh. bhutanense*, which has pinky-red trusses, was not yet in flower. *Rh. flinckii* however was in flower, starting off orangey in bud and fading to yellow very quickly, with a flower tube which is brown spotted inside. Another striking feature of this plant is the orangey brown fur (Indumentum) on the underside of the leaves. Quite a desirable plant which luckily grows well in cultivation. We also found some smaller rosettes of another *Meconopsis* (*M. simplicifolia*).

We followed a path up the steep hillside and after about an hour arrived at the top of the Rudong La (13650 ft / 4160m). It was quite cold up there and there were still small patches of snow lingering, but it was dry and reasonably clear so we did get a good view of the surrounding countryside and the Himalaya to the North.

After lunch some of us started to go a little way down the other side. I knew that there was possibly a new species or sub-species of *Rhododendron* called *Rh. hodgsonii* Aff. near here, but unfortunately time and energy did not allow us to go far enough down to find it. I did spot some large winter resting buds of a *Primula* species. I would have loved to see them in flower. Maybe next time.

We retraced our steps back over the pass and made our way back to the camp. It always amazes me that you can return along the same track and see some quite different things! There were all sorts of plants sprouting, orchids and a strange looking plant that I thought may be parasitic. It turned out to be called *Soulea vaginata* (a member of the buttercup family *Ranunculaceae*). By the time we got back to camp it was mid afternoon and time for a nice rest. Some of us decided that a spot of fire building was in order,

which kept us busy until dusk.

I was in for a little surprise at the evening meal. To celebrate my eldest daughter Rebecca's 13th birthday the camp staff had baked and iced a cake! They put a candle on it and we all sang Happy Birthday to her. She did forgive me for being away on that special day.

After our evening meal we were treated to some traditional Bhutanese dancing and singing, led by the chief herdsman. Once the initial shyness of these kind people was gone they gave us a fantastic evening's entertainment around the fire. Before too long we were asked to join in and the dancing became somewhat livelier. Time to celebrate so I brought out my bottle of Bhutanese whisky and we all had a 'nip'. It is in fact very good whisky and of course only a fraction of the price of the genuine article. Needless to say I slept well.

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On Thur 19th May we retraced our steps back to Ugyen Choling. There had been quite a bit of rain during the night and some parts of the path were very slippery soft mud. I thought to myself, if it had been like this on the way up it would have been so much harder. I managed to get through the worst bit with only two slips into the mud.

Another hazard on the way down was the ponies. If you heard them coming your best bet was to get yourself off the track, if possible higher up as well! Lower down the sun must have been shining a lot more as the *Cotoneaster microphyllus* was covered in bloom and bees. When we arrived at Ugyen Choling it was still light so we took the opportunity to have a look around the museum. It is a great insight into how a wealthy Bhutanese family used to live. Then we carried on down the hill to the river where the bus and the drivers were waiting for us.

We drove back down the long Tang Chu road and I noticed the odd pink flower of *Rosa macrophylla*. At the road end did the short walk down to the "Burning Lake", a sacred place of worship to Buddhists. When we arrived back at Jakar there was an inter-region archery competition being held. The sports field was full of all sorts of people young and old. The distance between the pizza-sized targets is 147m. All the supporters line up along the line of fire or even behind the target. It's an amazing spectacle, something that would certainly never happen here in the UK on health and safety grounds!

That evening the meal in Jakar's comfortable Wangdi Choling hotel was full of stories of what we had all been up to over the last few days. I think everyone was quite relieved that the hard bit of the tour was over.

A full report of the trek is available online at:

[http://freespace.virgin.net/matthew.heasman/bhutan\\_index.html](http://freespace.virgin.net/matthew.heasman/bhutan_index.html)

The online report has colour photos of all the plants mentioned in this account, and a whole host more.

# Kingdom of Bhutan



## Training Bhutan's Nuns and Monks in Thangka Conservation

by Ann Shaftel MS, MA FIIC, FAIC, CAPC, Thangka Conservator ([annshaftel@mac.com](mailto:annshaftel@mac.com))

The thangka treasures of Bhutan, located in nunneries and monasteries throughout the country, are cared for by resident nuns and monks. The longevity and condition of these precious thangkas is determined every day as they are rolled, unrolled, displayed and stored. Therefore Lyonpo Jigme Thinley, in his accurate, thorough and compassionate vision, decided that nuns and monks must be trained in the conservation of thangkas.

Lyonpo Jigme shared his vision of this training course with me, while he was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the Second Gross National Happiness Conference in 2005. The Thangka Conservation Training Course for Nuns and Monks grew from his vision. The first sector of the course was offered in Thimphu in January-February to a class of six nuns, two monks, and four Department of Culture employees. Funding was provided by the Department, Friends of Bhutan's Culture, and The Getty Foundation.



*A nun concentrates on detailed conservation work*

Throughout this introductory two month course the nuns and monks proved to be able and dedicated students. Most understand English, and technical translation was provided by Tashi Lhendup, a Department Employee, expert thangka painter and Conservator in Training.

Lyonpo Jigme judged me well qualified to conduct this training course as I have worked with thangkas for 36 years, beginning in 1970 after meeting The Karmapa in Sarnath, India. The Karmapa told me that restoring thangkas "was my dharma work for this lifetime".

Following that meeting, I studied Himalayan Buddhist iconography, receiving an MA in Asian Art History and an MSC in Art Conservation. I also worked and studied at ICCROM in Rome. I teach thangka conservation and consult for major museums and monasteries. In 1980 I consulted for the London Buddhist Society and in 1992 worked on the thangkas in Rumtek Monastery. In 2005 I taught at University of Melbourne and in China, and in 2006 will teach in Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, in New York and in Russia.



*Smiling nuns carry out a risk management assessment*

Following the training the nuns and monks will return to their home nunneries and monasteries and teach others the basic care and handling techniques they have learned. The course emphasized that art conservation consists primarily of preventing damage, and secondly of stabilizing and restoring. The first week offered the chance to observe a thangka's creation to allow understanding of the physical construction and inherent fragility of the thangka form. Participants learned to observe older, damaged thangkas, and to write condition reports on them in Dzongkha or in English. During site visits they learned how to conduct risk management assessments of shrine halls: butter lamps, incense, damp wall, fluorescent lights, rodents, insects and damage to thangkas caused by humans: all was observed and documented.

Each participant was required to present their summaries to the class, and to a number of high-ranking visitors. Since these nuns and monks must teach thangka care to their Sangha (community), speaking skills were emphasized and developed. This proved challenging to some of the nuns, but they rose to the occasion in admirable fashion.

The participants learned that flat storage is better for thangkas than the rolled storage traditionally used, but until new storage units for nunneries and monasteries can be provided, safer thangka rolling techniques were taught and practiced. The final weeks consisted of hands-on basic stabilization techniques. More advanced conservation techniques will be taught in the subsequent years of this training, for which I am currently writing the syllabus.

Several of the participants have been selected for professional conservation training in English speaking countries and funding is being applied for.

There is robust logic in training nuns and monks in the care of thangkas in their home nunneries and monasteries. As this training continues over the next several years, Bhutan's thangka treasures will surely benefit.



# News from the

## Cordyceps: improving in price and quality

by Kencho Wangdi, Kuensel (July 2006)

A kilogram of Yartsa Goenbub (*cordyceps sinensi* – a fungus prized for its uses as herbal medicine \*) fetched an average of Nu. 75,000 (approx. £928), the highest so far this year, in an open auction held on Monday in Paro.

As the price of the *cordyceps* plant increases, fuelled by the rise in its demand in the international market, and as the Bhutanese farmers realises its monetary weight and what it could mean for their livelihood, concerns are raised about it being poached.

The Paro auction, in which about 5 kg of the *cordyceps* plants were sold, is the first of the series of auctions which will be held in the nine *geogs* (districts) identified by the Ministry of Agriculture. By August 15 the ministry expects to have auctioned about 300 kg of the plants. Buyers say the plants will be exported to the US, Singapore, China, and Hong Kong.

*Cordyceps* grow from May to the beginning of July and farmers are permitted to collect the plant from June 1-30. The one-month permit is to discourage over-harvesting of the plants and promote its sustainability, say officials.

But with poachers crossing Bhutan's northern borders and stealing the plants on a yearly basis, some observers are questioning the wisdom of the one-month harvest permit given to the Bhutanese farmers.

"The poachers steal for months. What's the use of restricting our own Bhutanese farmers," said one Bhutanese *cordyceps* plant exporter.

Concerns are also raised on the practicalities of having an auction. Why not allow buyer and seller to meet whenever they want for the transaction? Why wait for the official auction dates? Some believe the trade should be de-regulated and left to the free market. Other farmers, however, point out that open auctions fetch them good prices, which reward their hard work.

Farmers collect the *cordyceps* plants and then dry them for about two months. They are then weighed and sold.

Harvesting Yartsa Goenbub was legalised on June 17, 2004. According to farmers, the legalisation of harvesting Yartsa Goenbub has immensely helped improve their life. The collection of Yartsa Goenbub has become their main source of cash.

Sonam Tobgay of the agriculture ministry's marketing services told Kuensel that there is an 'optimistic' trend in the price and the quality of the *cordyceps* plants.

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\* For further information and pictures of *cordyceps sinensi* see Newsletters 26 & 33, available online at: <http://www.bhutansociety.org/newsletter.html>

## Rights and Wrongs in Bhutan

Kuensel Editorial

The management of one office in Thimphu recounts a dilemma faced by many Bhutanese people. The office canteen had hired a 13-year old girl to serve food and beverages. The girl sent her salary home to help her old parents. But we are not supposed to employ minors and, after receiving criticism, the management asked the canteen to stop employing her. The girl was sent home to her village and, because the family did not have any income and could not send her to school anyway, she reportedly went astray. Some of us would see that as a good policy applied in the wrong circumstances.

When representatives of Bhutanese society – doctors, lawyers, teachers, students – discussed violence against children in Bhutan recently some of us were a little alarmed by the list of apparent abuses that our children are subjected to. But while we must discuss such issues and also follow up on problems, we should understand the problem in the right perspective.

We welcome initiatives which are obviously inspired by progressive international norms and standards. It is good to understand accepted healthy practices and also problems faced by other countries. But we must not over-do it.

To start with we need studies to be faithfully conducted, not just pre-conducted surveys where 'experts' fill in the blanks when they get an assignment. There are many such experts in our region. It is also critical that the surveys are conducted in the Bhutanese context so that they reflect the real problems. It is likely that many so-called abuses are taking place only because the parents and other adults are not aware that some of their actions are wrong.

A senior UNICEF representative would often point out that, in all the developing countries he had worked, he had never seen children enjoy more security and family care than Bhutan. Yet he found even government organisations unwilling to discuss the issue of child rights because "rights" often carries the connotation of being "wrongs".

We know that some problems in our society need urgent attention. In households where alcoholism is common – and many families do suffer from this problem – children may be seriously abused. Equally disturbing, children are allowed to become alcoholics at an early age.

Applied in the wrong context, even well-intentioned pointers could do more harm than good. For example, the issue of domestic responsibilities keeps coming up. It was natural and a very good system in a rural household for the children to help by fetching firewood and water, looking after the siblings, and helping at home. By international conventions this is wrong.

But when we see our children today, sitting in front of the television for hours, soaking in unhealthy images, such a wrong seems so right in comparison.

# Kingdom of Bhutan



## Dasho Ugen Dorji 1933-2006

Dasho Ugen Dorji, known to many as Dasho 'Rimp', died at the age of 74 in Phuentsholing on Saturday 25th March.

Dasho Ugen Dorji was a son of Gongzim Sonam Tobgay Dorji and Rani Chuni Wangmo of Bhutan House, Kalimpong. A younger brother of HM The Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang Wangchuck, he was recognised as the reincarnation of Boedhay Rinpoche, a renowned lama who was a strong influence in Tibet and Mongolia. At the age of nine he went to Tibet to study, and returned to Bhutan House in 1944. He was an accomplished sportsman in his youth, and later on a passionate golfer.

In 1959 with a capital of 2,500 Ngultrums (approx. £31) he founded a trading house which, with his uncanny sense for business, he built into the Tashi Group of companies. He was undoubtedly Bhutan's most successful entrepreneur, starting large scale industries such as Bhutan Carbide and Chemicals, Bhutan Ferro Alloys, the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan and the Bhutan Lottery. In 1980 he founded the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote the growth of the private sector. He also gave generously to charity, and established and funded a guest house for terminally ill cancer patients from Bhutan in Kolkata.

Dasho Ugen Dorji stood prominently among his generation of Bhutanese pioneers and earned himself a place in Bhutanese history. He lived in an exciting era, and his death turns another page in the evolution of Bhutan. Michael Rutland attended the cremation and called to express condolences to the family on behalf of the Bhutan Society of the UK.

*(with acknowledgement to Kuensel)*

## Two New Newspapers for Bhutan

Two new weekly newspapers, the **Bhutan Times** and the **Bhutan Observer**, have begun publication. Information and communication minister, Lyonpo Leki Dorji, confirmed that both are free enterprises solely owned by Bhutanese and published in Bhutan. Neither have received government commitment or subsidies.

"Newspapers will play an important role once the draft Constitution is endorsed in 2008," he said, adding that the media is and will continue to be indispensable in educating and informing people about the coming changes in the political system.

## Training for Young Footballers Kicks Off

*by Bishal Rai, Kuensel, April 2006*

**S**itting at the edge of the Bhutan Football Federation's training field at Chang Jiji, Thimphu, Jigme Yonten says, "I want to be in the national team. They are good but I want to be better." The 13-year-old pulls on a green and yellow football jersey, ties his boots and then kicks the ball under the direction of a coach. This marks not only the aspiration of a young boy but also the launch of a new era in Bhutanese football – the Bhutan Football Federation (BFF) has finally kick-started its long overdue plan to lay the foundations of professional football in Bhutan.

A total of 23 boys under 14 years old selected in a nation-wide talent hunt are being groomed by the Federation to become Bhutan's future soccer heroes. The boys, the possible future national squad, are housed at the Federation's 60 bed hostel built by the FIFA Goal Project, which has also built an office and a training field.

"We have launched a long awaited plan and vision for promoting professional football in Bhutan," BFF general secretary, Ugyen Wangchuk, said. The plan had been on hold because of a major hurdle: admission to schools in Thimphu for the selected boys. The education ministry finally accepted the proposal last month. The Federation will train, house and feed the boys until they are 17 years old and eligible to become national players. "This way we will have a better choice of technically sound professional players," said Ugyen Wangchuk.

The boys are currently undergoing basic training – ball feeling, juggling, shooting and dribbling – under local youth coaches to develop their technical skills. The training takes place every evening after school for about two hours. The boys also spend time in the Federation's multi gym or watching television in the dining hall. The proposed morning training session has been called off on the grounds that the boys would be too tired for school.

One of the selected players, Migma Dorji, 14, is enjoying everything about the course, including being in Thimphu. He idolises Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney and wants to become a midfielder for the national team. "My parents allowed me to train and I don't want to miss the opportunity," he said when asked if his parents were happy with his decision.

Jigme Yonten's father declared that he was happy to encourage his boy to join the Federation and pursue his interest. "We encourage it, but it shouldn't lead to a compromise with study which is still the first priority," he said.

"We stress education first, and then football," said Ugyen Wangchuk. "We have employed a school teacher as the warden for the boys to ensure that they carry out their school duties properly".

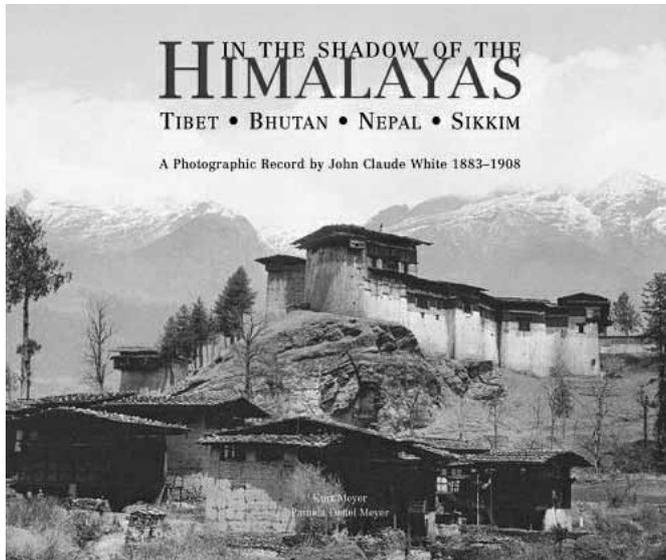


# Bhutan Connections



**In the Shadow of the Himalayas:  
Tibet - Bhutan - Nepal - Sikkim  
A Photographic Record  
by John Claude White 1883-1908  
by Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer**

Published by Mapin Publishing India, Nov. 2005  
ISBN: 189020661X  
Hardback, 192 pages, 113 quadratone sepia photographs  
Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or ask your bookseller to order it for you from Art Books International Ltd.:  
Tel: 020 7953 7271, [www.art-bks.com](http://www.art-bks.com)



*The cover of the book is a particularly good image of Drukylul Dzong in its intact state*

John Claude White was a civil engineer by education, a colonial administrator by profession, and a photographer by vocation. His photographs of the Himalayas were taken from 1883-1908. He worked for a year as an engineer at the British Residency in Kathmandu and spent twenty-one years based in Gangtok, Sikkim as the first British political officer overseeing the British interests in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Wherever he travelled, he photographed the world around him: panoramas of the vast Tibetan landscape; mountains and glaciers of Sikkim; portraits of the royal court of the king of Bhutan; the monks and monasteries of Lhasa. Mules followed him on the rugged mountain trails bearing his photographic equipment, and ensuring that the fragile glass plates survived the long return trip south intact, to be printed by the Johnston and Hoffman photography studio. White spent his entire professional life working for the British Raj. In 1909 he retired to England, where he published his memoirs: *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*. This book is a tribute to this extraordinary photographer.

**A Portrait of Bhutan:  
The Treasures of the Thunder Dragon  
by Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck**

Published by Viking/Penguin India, May 2006  
ISBN: 0670999016  
Hardback, 224 pages; £21.98 from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck's second book, 'A Portrait of Bhutan', is far more than that, writes Kinley Dorji in Kuensel:

"Her Majesty goes beyond the raw natural beauty of the country, into its soul. Presented in an elegant narrative, it comes across like a painting by someone who knows and feels deeply for the land and the people. And, for the Bhutanese reader, it is like going on a vividly perceptive voyage across the length and breadth of the country with the author.

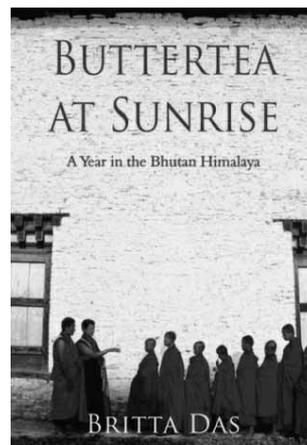
The book begins with a comprehensive introduction followed by three sections. In the first section Ashi Dorji Wangmo describes herself literally 'growing with Bhutan', in the second she looks at traditional beliefs and practices, and the third section is about people and places". A rich and fascinating book, born out of personal perceptions and drawn entirely from Her Majesty's personal experiences.

**Buttertea at Sunrise:  
A year in the Bhutan Himalaya  
by Britta Das**

Published by Summersdale, May 2006  
ISBN: 1840244984  
Paperback: 320 pages, £7.99

**B**uttertea at Sunrise is a both a travel memoir and a sincere account of the experiences of a volunteer physiotherapist working at the Mongar Referral Hospital.

Britta Das went to Bhutan as a VSO volunteer in 1997. She finds her good intentions swiftly put to the test amid monsoons, fleas and other difficult conditions. But as she visits patients and friends in the mountains and learns more about Buddhism, Bhutan casts its spell on her. She makes friends and falls in love...



The author's website ([www.brittadas.com](http://www.brittadas.com)) complements the book with photos, maps and other information about Bhutan.