

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 37

President: Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT GCMG FRSE

Summer 2007

Monday 17th September, 2007

Recent Events in Bhutan

An informal talk by Michael Rutland



Michael Rutland, our Hon. Secretary and Bhutan's Hon. Consul to the UK, will give his very popular annual roundup of events that have taken place in Bhutan over the past 12 months. This year has been particularly interesting and challenging with emerging political system causing some confusion, and the painfully slow appearance of political parties...

The talk will be illustrated with slides and the intention is to provide plenty of opportunity for the audience to ask questions about any aspects of modern Bhutan which interest them.

Michael, who lives in Bhutan for much of each year, is particularly well placed to discuss the changes and developments taking place in the country, perhaps spiced with the odd bit of gossip!

Monday 17th September, 2007

6:30pm for 7:00pm

**The Oriental Club
Stratford Place, London W1C 1ES**

Drinks available before the lecture

PLEASE NOTE: Oriental Club rules require gentlemen to wear jacket and tie, and do not allow the wearing of jeans!

The 15th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

26th October, 2007



Application form enclosed. Please also see p. 2



**Lyonpo
Dawa
Tsering**

1935-2007



**Dasho
Lhendup
Dorji**

1935-2007

For obituaries see page 5

The Society's website is at 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

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



News and Updates from

Bhutanese Scouts attend UK Jamboree

A troop of seven Scouts represented Bhutan at the 21st World Scout Jamboree held at Hylands Park, Essex from 27th July to 7th August. They were accompanied by their leader, Mr. Phurba Wangdi.



The seven Scouts with leader Mr Phurba Wangdi, Michael Rutland and Sir Simon and Lady Bowes Lyon at their home St. Paul's Walden Bury

The four girls and three boys from Trongsa, Paro, Thimphu and Tsirang arrived in England on July 21st for a week's sightseeing as guests of the Bhutan Society of the UK. For all except one Scout, it was their first ever journey out of Bhutan. The Troop were hosted by Scouts from Ripley and Mellow, near Guildford, and stayed with Scout families for their first three nights. They visited HMS Victory and saw their first sight of the sea at Southsea, where they all paddled and some even swam. One surprise was that sea water tasted salty! In the evening the Ripley Scouts hosted a barbecue for them.

On their second day the Mayor of Guildford hosted a morning reception in the Guildhall, Guildford, then they visited Windsor Castle, and in the evening the Mellow Scouts hosted a campfire supper, where they enjoyed toasting marshmallows. Hon. Consul Michael Rutland guided them through two and half days in London which saw them visiting all the major sights, as well as enjoying a flight on the London Eye. The Troop stayed overnight at the home of Sir Simon and Lady Bowes Lyon before being driven to the Jamboree Site near Chelmsford. Miraculously they didn't get rained on once during the whole week!

The 21st Jamboree marks the Centenary of the Scouting Movement, and the Bhutanese Troop joined more than 40,000 Scouts from all over the world. Six of the Scouts and the leader were funded by the Scouts Association of Bhutan, whose Patron is HM King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck. One scout has been sponsored by the Bhutan Society Trust Fund. Certainly this, their first visit to the United Kingdom, will leave indelible memories for these young Bhutanese.

The 15th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society

27th October, 2007

The National Liberal Club, London



The 15th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society will take place on Friday 27th October at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall, 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 contact Peter Li, the Annual Dinner Secretary, on (01730) 893 829 or by e-mail at peter_li@uk.ibm.com

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

2 Windacres, Warren Road, Guildford GU1 2HG

Tel: (01483) 538 189

Please note, NEW e-mail address:

rutland.michael@googlemail.com



Four of the Scouts enjoy their last breakfast at the Jamboree: Thinley Zam and Tshering Dolkar from Thimphu, Tshering Dem from Paro and Damche from Wangdi Phodrang

the Bhutan Society



Songs and Traditions of Laya An audio CD recorded in Laya, Bhutan



The tradition of the archery in Laya must have begun long ago. It was originally a contest between the Nobs, who were the yak owning families, and the Sekops who had no yak. Now it takes place between the villages from one half of Laya and the villages from the other. The Pashi end against the Tongra end. East against West.

Archery in Bhutan is a major pastime for boys and men and a game will often prolong a celebration or a festival by a day or two. For some the game resembles a battle scene.

The match in Laya takes place during June over the third and fourth days of *Laya Bumkhosa*. The purpose of this festival is to prevent sickness, encourage good crops and protect the yak from bears and snow leopards. Invocations and offerings are made to local deities. The match does indeed resemble a battle scene. But the most important battle is taking place out of sight. Shamanic priests from both ends of Laya perform rituals during the night. Whichever priest performs correctly, the deity will favour his team to win the match. Whichever team East or West wins the match the deity will give greater protection to the villagers on that side. There is much at stake not just an archer's pride or prowess.

And so the whole community takes part. Men and women together perform their ritual and often riotous songs at the beginning of each day at the archery ground in the belief that it will bring their team victory.

Roy Cameron was living and working in Laya with his family and recorded several of these songs for his own interest. One cold evening, beside a roaring stove, Roy also recorded some of the best singing voices in Laya as they performed without instruments a selection of love songs and religious songs.

Fianlly, seven years later, the recordings were edited and made into an CD. With financial assistance from the BBC and the Bhutan Society, Roy has produced 300 copies. They are currently for sale in selected resorts and craft shops in Paro and Thimphu, however the majority will be handed over to the Laya community who will sell them to the many trekking parties that pass through. A legally binding agreement or *chathrim* will be drawn up and jointly administered by the Laya community and Jigme Dorji National Park. All proceeds from the CD sales will be banked and the funds used for environment and development projects identified by the Laya community.

Two songs taken from the CD will be featured by the BBC in its forthcoming *TRIBE* series to be broadcast in the early autumn. Focusing on the lives of remote peoples around the globe, one of the programmes is about the people in Laya.

The CD is also housed on the website for Digital Himalaya www.digitalhimalaya.com. The Digital Himalaya project was established in 2000 to preserve in digital format a range of ethnographic materials from the Himalayan region including films, still photographs, sound recordings, field notes, maps and rare journals.

The Bhutan Society has 15 copies of **Songs and Traditions of Laya** and these can be purchased at a cost of £15 each (incl. p&p) by sending a cheque payable to The Bhutan Society plus a note with your name & address to:

Lucy Hornberger, The Bhutan Society, Unit 23, 19-21 Crawford St., London W1H 1PJ

Tel: 020 7580 2617 or e-mail: info@bhutansociety.org



News from the

May you live in interesting times!

These days in Thimphu the dinner party conversation is all about politics. Or to be more precise, the personalities of politics!

For the last few months rumour and gossip, even at the most quiet of times the lifeblood of Thimphu society, have had a field day as political parties and rumours of political parties have come and gone. The first party to come out was the Peoples Democratic Party. It was widely rumoured that it would be led by Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Minister of Agriculture, but since he was still a serving Cabinet Minister he could not admit the truth of the rumour – civil servants are strictly forbidden to take any part in politics.

Since the dissolution of the Cabinet a couple of weeks ago, however, the role of former Ministers in the forthcoming political process have become clearer. True, Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup will indeed be the leader of the Peoples Democratic Party, and the former Health Minister, Lyonpo Dr. Jigmi Singay, will be joining him.

So far, and disappointingly, there is only one other party, the *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* which will be led by Lyonpo Jigme Thinley, formerly Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs. Lined up with him in this second party are former Lyonpos Khandu Wangchuk, Yeshe Zimba, Ugyen Tshering, and Wangdi Norbu. All those seven Ministers have now resigned from Government Service, and the country is in the charge of a caretaker-Cabinet of just three Ministers who will not be joining the political scum, with Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji as the Prime Minister.

One problem for both the political parties, who each need to field one candidate in each of Bhutan's 47 constituencies, is finding enough candidates. All candidates must be university graduates, of which there are about 9,000 in Bhutan. Most of those are in the Civil Service, and to join a political party a civil servant must resign – and does not get his or her job back if his or her candidature is unsuccessful. Understandably, many good quality civil servants are reluctant to abandon a secure job future for the uncertain rewards of politics.

According to the Constitution, which is not yet enacted, there are two stages in the election for the National Assembly. The first election is to choose the two political parties which will go on to contest, in the second election, for the National Assembly seats. However, the question is being asked what happens if there are only two political parties anyway? Is the first round of the elections process then really necessary?

However, it is becoming clear that even if a third party does not emerge in the coming months (the Elections will be held in February 2008) the two already declared parties will offer the people a genuine and a difficult choice.

Getting the parliament houses ready

By Yachna Gurung, *Bhutan Times*

With the first general elections getting nearer, the National Assembly Secretariat and the Department of National Properties are racing to get the parliament halls ready. The secretary of the National Assembly, Dasho Nima Tshering, said drawings of the National Assembly Hall have been completed and work will begin soon.

We expect the hall to be ready by the beginning of 2008, he said. There have been many bottlenecks, especially the number of members in the National Assembly which kept fluctuating.

Sessions of the National Assembly (lower house) will be held at the present convention hall, which will be renamed the National Assembly Hall. The National Council (upper house) will have its sittings in the Royal Banquet Hall. Joint-sittings will be held at the National Assembly Hall which will have 100 seats arranged in an arc-shape with visitors gallery and a separate seating arrangement for the press. The hall will have digital conference equipment, a video archival system, security and surveillance. A simultaneous interpretation system and individual electronic voting machines for the members will also be put in place.

The seating arrangement for the members has not been finalized. Previously we thought of having different colour seats for the members of the ruling and opposition parties but we dropped the idea since we thought there should not be any differentiation, said Tshering Dorji, a National Assembly official.

No specific structure is being built for the National Council sessions. The older of the two Royal Banquet Halls will be demolished and reconstructed as a two-storey building with basement parking, said Phub Rinzin, project engineer at the Department of Urban Development.

The National Assembly will have 47 members representing the constituencies. The National Council will have 25 members comprising one elected member from each of the 20 dzongkhags and five eminent persons nominated by the Druk Gyalpo.

According to the draft Constitution, the Speaker and the Chairperson will conduct the proceedings of the National Assembly and the National Council, respectively. The Speaker will preside over joint-sittings of the houses. The Druk Gyalpo will summon the first sitting after each general election and both the houses will assemble twice a year. Extraordinary sessions of the parliament may also be convened on the command of the Druk Gyalpo when the circumstances so demand.

The proceedings of the parliament will be open to the public unless the Chairperson or the Speaker excludes them for a part or all of the proceedings in the interest of public order, national security etc., said Dasho Nima.

Kingdom of Bhutan



Lyonpo Dawa Tsering

1935-2007

Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Bhutan's Minister for Foreign Affairs for almost three decades and one of the country's most important figures in modern times, passed away in May at the age of 71.

Holding the post of Bhutan's foreign minister from the early 1970s until his retirement in the late 90s, not only did Lyonpo Dawa gain an entry in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's longest serving foreign minister, but he also played a seminal role in the emergence of Bhutan into the global community. Moreover, as Director of Education in the 1960s he made the crucial decision that the language of education would be English, realising that this would serve to greatly facilitate Bhutan's contacts with the outside world and the whole process of the newly instituted national development plans.

Born in 1935, Lyonpo Dawa attended the University of Calcutta where he obtained a BA (Economics & Political Science) in 1956 and Bachelor of Law in 1959. He was appointed Director of Education in 1960 and went on to serve as Secretary General for Planning & Development (1965), and First Minister for Planning & Development in 1969. In 1972, he became the Minister for Foreign Affairs and served the country in that capacity for 28 years. He was the recipient of several awards, most notably the Druk Thuksel award, and the Coronation Gold medal.

Lyonpo Dawa was a man of many interests. A lover of the arts, he particularly appreciated theatre and was renowned as an avid reader. He was a meticulous man who believed in careful research and preparation. He would doubtless have reached the top no matter where he was and what he did. He was a natural athlete and excelled both on the tennis lawn and the soccer field, taking long walks to keep fit as he grew older.

As a leader, Lyonpo Dawa took pains to select the right people and demanded the highest standards. Every interaction with him was memorable, for he had the knack of using colourful phrases to drive home his message with precision and, often, devastating impact. Many officers he selected and mentored went on to distinguish themselves in high positions. Ahead of the times in many ways, he ensured gender balance and to this day, the Bhutanese diplomatic corps stands out in the world in this regard. As Bhutan heads into a multi-party democracy her people would do well to heed his advice on the crucial role of civil society, of which he was a great advocate.

(with acknowledgement to Kuensel)

Dasho Lhendup Dorji

1935-2007

A former prime minister of Bhutan, Dasho Lhendup Dorji (Dasho Lenny), passed away in mid-April. He was 71.

The cremation ceremony was attended by His Majesty The King and members of the Royal Family as well as government ministers, representatives from the international community, relatives and friends from around the world. Hundreds of well wishers gathered to pay their final respect and prayers for a man many remember as an icon for an era that has now passed.

Dasho Lhendup Dorji was born in 1935 at Bhutan House, Kalimpong. The youngest of five siblings and brother to Her Majesty the Royal Grand Mother, he was educated at St Joseph's College North Point, Darjeeling, Choate Preparatory School and Cornell University, New York. He was the first Bhutanese to study in the US where he excelled at boxing and took part in the Golden Gloves Tournament.

On returning to Bhutan his first assignment was to measure land. He travelled throughout the country with an iron chain manually calculating the terrain using the measurement system prevalent at the time. He later served as Post Master General, Paro Thrimpon, Deputy and later Secretary General of the Development Wing. He was conferred the red scarf by the Third Druk Gyalpo in 1958.

An outstanding sportsman, he enjoyed playing archery and was the first Bhutanese to win golf and tennis tournaments in Nepal and India, later continuing his winning streak in Thimphu. He had a true love of horse racing and was a prominent figure within the racing circles of India and the UK.

A flamboyant man in all aspects, he was an international figure with a wide circle of friends that stretched across the globe. He socialised with political leaders, businessmen, athletes, the rich and famous, yet was equally at home with people from all walks of life. Many of his closest friends were people of humble backgrounds with whom he was complete at ease. He was highly principled, a legendary host and loyal friend. He firmly believed that it was the duty of the people to serve King and country with loyalty above all else.

Illness did not stop him from living the way he wanted. He continued to be whom and what he was and kept a great sense of humour. He fought his disease every step of the way in a manner that showed both resilience and grace.

(with acknowledgement to Kuensel)



News from the Kingdom of Bhutan



India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty ratified

by Karma Choden, Kuensel

As the final step in concluding a historic process the government of Bhutan and the government of India exchanged the Instruments of Ratification of the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty in Thimphu on March 3rd. The Indian ambassador, Mr Sudhir Vyas, and the Bhutanese foreign minister, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, signed and exchanged the document, bringing the Treaty into force.

The Treaty was signed between the two countries on February 8, 2007 in New Delhi, India, during the visit to India by His Majesty, King Jigme Khesar.

Mr Vyas said the Treaty symbolised a new stage in the growth and development of the bilateral relationship. It reflects the contemporary realities of how this relationship has evolved and it also serves as a foundation for the continued expansion and growth of this relationship to even greater heights.

Bhutan-India Mega Hydroelectric Project Agreement Signed

Kuensel, July 2007

Bhutan and India have signed a landmark agreement on implementation of the 1,095 MW Punatshangchhu-1 hydroelectric project, the largest project ever to be undertaken in Bhutan in partnership with the government of India.

The run-of-the-river scheme project will be located on the Punatshangchhu river in Wangduephodrang dzongkhag between 8.5km and 18.5km downstream of the Wangduephodrang bridge. With pre-construction activities already started the construction of the project estimated to cost Nu. 35,000 million (approx. GBP 400 million) is expected to commence in 2008 and be completed by 2014.

The project will have six 182.50 MW turbines with annual average energy generation of 5377.45 GWh, a 137m high concrete gravity dam, a 7.5km long (10.3m diameter) headrace tunnel, two vertical pressure shafts and an underground powerhouse.

The agreement also includes a new provision that would enable both governments to benefit from Carbon Emission Revenue.

The preparation of Detailed Project Reports for two other mega hydro projects the Punatsangchhu II and Mangdechhu are at an advanced stage.

The project will greatly contribute towards the achievement of the Bhutanese government's plan to export a minimum of 5,000 mw of hydropower to India by 2020, said Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk.

US starts Bhutan refugees resettlement process

The United States has begun the formal process of resettling over 60,000 Bhutanese refugees in the US over the next five years. An overseas processing entity (OPE) has been set up in Nepal to prepare the refugees for resettlement. It is hoped that an initial 8,000 will be able to fly to the U.S. by 2008.

According to the embassy official, Nepal has already given the green light to the U.S. government to begin planning for a resettlement program based on the assumption that third-country resettlement will be an integral component of a comprehensive solution for the Bhutanese refugees. In the last 15 years over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have entered seven camps in eastern Nepal.

Some of the camp leaders are making considerable efforts among the international community to try to prevent the resettlement programme from going ahead. However, given the great opportunities for a better life that the U.S. resettlement programme means for the families in the camps, there is no doubt that the offer is highly attractive.

It has also been hinted that the OPE will be useful for repatriating other refugees living in Nepal, mainly Tibetans. "Even though the OPE is being set up for the Bhutanese refugees, it could be used to help process other refugees, if cases so warrant," said the official. There are around 25,000 Tibetan refugees currently in Nepal.

Bumper tourist arrivals expected in 2008

Tour operators in Bhutan are expecting a huge leap in tourist arrivals in 2008, attracted by the coronation and centenary celebrations. Observers, however, question the capacity of the infrastructure accommodation, transport and guide services are all areas for concern. Some even foresee a hospitality crunch that might ultimately damage the high-end image of Bhutan.

Lhatu Wangchuk, Director General of Tourism, disagrees. We can certainly handle the expected number of tourists in terms of infrastructure, he said, adding that several new attractions are planned across the country. A Royal Heritage Trek will be developed from Bumthang to Kuengarabten in Trongsa. A Royal heritage site will be developed at Kurtoe in Lhuentse and the Royal Palaces Wangduechoeling and Samchoeling will be opened.

In addition, sports and food festivals will be organized for 2008 and there are plans to open up Manas National Park and Merak-Sakteng to tourists. Merak-Sakteng will be opened as an exclusive product, the Director General said. There may even be surcharges to prevent overcrowding and to maintain the quality of services.



Profile: Bhutanese in the UK



In the first of what we hope will be a series of profiles of Bhutanese studying and/or working in the UK, Kuenga Wangmo talks about her life and experiences here.

What are you studying for your PhD in the UK?

I am working towards a PhD in Archaeology at Cambridge University. I am focusing on historical architecture, studying the centrality of the *dzong* or monastery-fortresses in the construction of Bhutanese identity. Key to my research is the study of the physical structures combined with a phenomenological understanding of the built environment with its natural and social landscape.

Where and what have you studied previously?

I studied Archaeology and Social Anthropology as an undergraduate at Harvard University. I then took a year off to do fieldwork in India and the US prior to commencing my graduate studies. For three months I worked on an Early Iron Age site in South India with a team of archaeologists from the Universities of Chicago and Michigan. The site was a fortified hilltop settlement in a village called Kalabaglay. Besides finding settlement features and artefacts from the period, we also dug up a lot of bones! Then I returned to the US for a few months to work in Virginia on an early Native American site from the Woodland Period.



Kuenga Wangmo with the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University, Alison Richard

Why did you choose Cambridge?

The simple answer is that the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge is ranked among the best in the world. I knew I wanted to go to graduate school all along and after my undergraduate studies in the US I wanted to be in Europe this time. It wasn't just about getting a degree from a good university but also about wanting to see more of the world and experience different peoples and cultures. Furthermore, places like Stonehenge and the Fens have intrigued me ever since I learnt of them, so it wasn't a difficult decision.

What do you hope to do when you finish here?

After my studies I hope to be able to work on an archaeological project in Bhutan. As you may already know, Bhutan has yet to establish archaeology as a field of research. We do not have an archaeological unit established and awareness of archaeology among Bhutanese has only recently improved. A lot needs to be done! But with a supportive government and my own enthusiasm for a more objective account of Bhutan's past

based on material evidence, I look forward to a challenging and very exciting future.

What has surprised you most about life in the UK?

That the countryside actually looks this pretty in reality, and the gardens and people's love and devotion to them. Also that the college buttery is not self-serve buffet style! Academically, I think what surprised me the most is the way PhD programs are styled here. Much is left to the student in the belief that, with minimum interference from the professors, students can develop the skill to direct their research in a individual and optimal manner. This licence for creative independence is highly commendable,

however I feel that there is a serious risk of de-motivating students, especially those who need a more little structure. Overall, I think there needs to be a better balance between intervention and self-motivation

Apart from your family, what do you miss about Bhutan?

I miss our clear blue skies and snow-capped mountains, the colourfully decorated monasteries and houses. I miss the winding mountain roads and the rhododendrons, picnicking by the

MoChu in Punakha and looking down onto Thimphu at night from Sangaygang. Teasing little monks till their faces turn the colour of their robes and attending crowded weddings and local festivals. Most of all I miss good *ema datshi* and a big mug of *suja* with breakfast every morning.

What advice would you give to those interested in studying in the UK?

The most important advice I have is to make the most of one's time in these amazing institutions. Besides one's regular classes and research, there's so much going on within the campus: interesting seminars, important talks on climate change, war and democracy, cultural events, social gatherings, just to name a few. It is a great opportunity to meet inspiring world leaders, scientists, activists and interesting people from all walks of life. Get involved, join clubs and make a set of good friends. It's only natural that we are homesick at times but getting involved and having good friends keep those feelings to a minimum. It has worked for me at least!

Interview by Andrew Sutton



Golfing on the Roof of the World: In Pursuit of Gross National Happiness

by Rick Lipsey

Published by Bloomsbury, 2007

ISBN: 10-159691050X

Hardback, 253 pages; £11.16 from www.amazon.com

Rick Lipsey is a New York based golfer and writer for Sports Illustrated Magazine. While visiting Bhutan in 2000, he was invited to spend some months at the Royal Thimphu Golf Club as its first professional; he accepted.

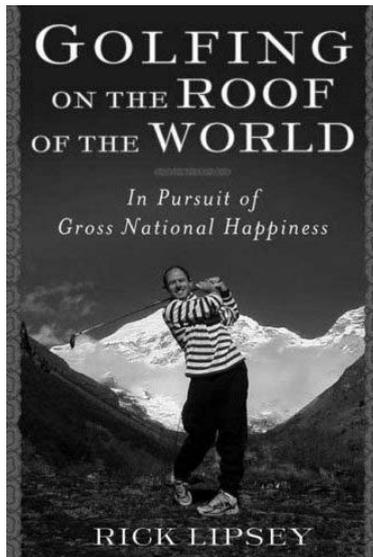
He and his wife returned to Bhutan in the autumn of 2002 with their first child, less than a year old, to work he at the golf club and she, a lawyer, soon with the Chief Justice. The book recounts incidents in their lives including conversations with several of the movers and shakers of Thimphu who are also golfers. Amongst other things, we hear about the wedding of the daughter of the *Dzongdad* of Wangdi, go on a trek to Jangthang and meet both an idiosyncratic lama and a Bhutanese Christian priest.

In a conversational New York idiom, Lipsey provides golf tips amongst snippets of Bhutan's history and reflections on the changes in the country and Gross National Happiness. He offers different views of his ethics when there's a chance that his appointment was based on a mistaken belief that he had once coached Tiger Woods, Lipsey decides that silence is the best policy; when he sees a contestant treading the ground behind his ball during the Bhutan Open, Lipsey is near apoplectic that the sacred rules of golf may have been infringed!

While golf is open to all in Bhutan, it is played by those with the time and resources to get the necessary equipment. Lipsey used his US contacts to bring in kit for the kids and has established the Bhutan Youth Golf Association (<http://www.golfbhutan.com>) to continue the work he started with the local juniors.

The book is an easy read but without any pictures save that of our intrepid author swinging a club with Jhomolhari in the background, on the dustcover.

Review by Andrew Sutton



The grant that made all the difference...

Karma Ura reports on the successful outcome of a student grant from the Estie Steele Trust

Sonam Dendup was the beneficiary of a grant from the Estie Steele Trust. These days he works as livestock extension officer in one of the remotest postings in Zhemgang district. I last saw him two years ago during an official trip he made to Thimphu.

The Trust's financial support made all difference to him. The grant began while he was in class VII and it was thanks to it that he was able to complete his Class X schooling in Khaling High School in Eastern Bhutan. After he graduated from Class X, he was successful in getting admission to a diploma course in the National Resource Training Institute where he studied for three years in extension service for in agriculture, forestry and livestock. He specialized in livestock extension services and came out with a top position in the final examination.

He then applied to get a permanent job as livestock extension programme officer in the government and was accepted. If I remember correctly, he has now been in post for the best part of four years in the remotest of the 20 districts in the Bhutan.

I remember that there was a balance of Nu 50 or 60,000 (approx: in the grant and he proposed that he would very much like to go Thailand for a study tour on farming, arranged by a colleague of his who was undergoing training in Thailand with the support of the Bhutanese government. Considering that Sonam had never been outside Bhutan, we agreed that it would be progressive and useful for him to see a totally different environment to the one he was so familiar with. He visited Thailand for two weeks. A successful trip in particular the broiler farms he saw amazed him!

A Photo-journey through Bhutan

Bhutan Society Members Derek and Sheila Henderson have created an interesting and very wide ranging online gallery of photos from their travels across Bhutan. See:

<http://tinyurl.com/yvomss>



Young girls on the way to school, Trongsar
by Derek Henderson, 2007