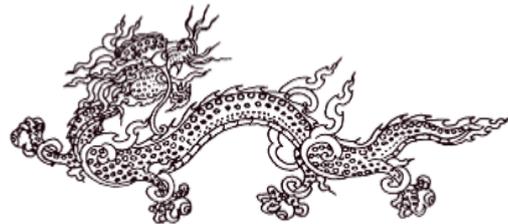


THE BHUTAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 65

PRESIDENT: SIR SIMON BOWES LYON

SUMMER 2018

A new look at your Committee

I would like to tell you of some changes in the Society's Committee, mostly following on from my move to Chairman.

First I am delighted that David Glazebrook is taking over as Secretary; having served as Treasurer since 2014 and, being familiar with Rosie's great work with Membership affairs, he already knows much of how the Society runs and will be a great support to us all.

Dorji Wangchuk will take over as Treasurer. Dorji (with his wife, Karma Choden) has been in the UK since 2007 when he came to the Judge Institute in Cambridge to read for an MBA. Since then he has had several jobs in the financial sector in both Edinburgh and London. Now living in Greenwich and with existing contacts with the Society, he is well placed to help us as Treasurer and also will bring new contacts with Bhutan. Please note that Dorji will talk to us about the 2018 elections in October (See page 2 for details).

Chris Watt has looked after our Website since 2010 and has now retired from the Committee. We are most grateful to him for his work with the Website which included a major update and re-design and are very pleased that he will remain in touch and available to provide support. We have co-opted Lucy Hornberger as our new Website Coordinator - and will propose her formal election to the Committee at the next AGM. Lucy knows the Society well, having edited the Newsletter for several years and been Treasurer from 2012-14. We are also very pleased that Elizabeth Jacobson has agreed to be our Annual Dinner Secretary.

We have a fresh approach to Events and will have an Events Group within the Committee comprising Dorry Friesen, Elizabeth Jacobson, Nicholas Thompson and me. Again we have co-opted Nicholas and will propose his election as Events Group Secretary at the AGM. Nicholas is a London based lawyer familiar with India and Bhutan and will help with the planning of events and information provided to members.

Fortunately it's not all change. I'm very pleased that Sylvia Robert-Sargeant and Rosie Glazebrook continue in charge of the Newsletter and Membership affairs with their characteristic enthusiasm and efficiency.

Andrew Sutton

Diary date

***The Annual General Meeting will be held at 6 pm on Monday 17 September 2018 at The Polish Hearth Club, 55 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, LONDON SW7 2PG
(Please see enclosed agenda)***

At 7pm, following the formal business of the AGM, Gerard and Anne Tardy and William Tacon will speak about ***The Loden Entrepreneurs Programme*** and their involvement in the last ten years. Anne and Gerard have worked with Dr Karma Phuntsho and the Loden Foundation from the start of the initiative to encourage young Bhutanese to start their own businesses – with assistance by way of loans and advice. William is one of the current 'mentors' who keep in touch with particular ventures, making regular visits to Bhutan in addition to counselling using today's Internet tools. They will highlight their talks with examples from the 143 projects in the Programme to date.

Members' Survey

The Bhutan Society has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Since 1992 many things have changed in Bhutan and in the UK – not least in our means of communication. The Committee now wishes to take stock of the Society's activities and the expectations of members.

Whilst Committee members have many ideas, it is important that you are part of the discussion. Enclosed is a short questionnaire and we would much appreciate your response by 31st July 2018. Many members will have already received an e-mail copy with a link to this survey.

We ask that you only complete it once!

Thank you.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**7pm, Monday 29 October, 2018 at The Polish Hearth Club,
55 Princes Terrace, Exhibition Road London SW7 20G**

BHUTAN'S ELECTIONS IN 2018

Speaker: Dorji Wangchuk

Dorji Wangchuk will review the preparations for and outcomes of the third cycle of parliamentary elections in Bhutan – not only the selection of the two parties for the final election votes but also the possible changes in the balance of power. He will also discuss the platforms and policies of the major political parties, and the likely focus areas of the new Government.

During the election period - from February till May for the National Council elections and August to October for the National Assembly elections - the Election Commission of Bhutan has stated that no public gathering will be allowed. The prohibition of public gatherings during this period, which will include religious activities and marriage ceremonies, will be part of their efforts to ensure free and fair elections.

Annual Dinner 2018

The Annual Dinner will be held on Monday 26th November at The National Liberal Club 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

A booking form is enclosed.

MEETING REPORT

On the evening of 16 March the ballroom of the Polish Hearth Club in South Kensington became a cinema for a selection of Bhutanese films – old and new. Fifty members and guests had reserved places; the enormous screen was unfurled and all necessary equipment was in place (and tested!).

The evening started at 5.30 with a series of short films. Three were contemporary. **Taking Aim**, directed by Michael Rogers and produced by Singapore based Scott Woodward, linked rural life and traditional butter tea making with an archery competition and then looked forward to the participation of a female archer in the 2016 Olympic Games. The other two were directed by Loday Chopel; in one we watched and listened to an old man determined to continue to live (and look after himself) in his village despite all the changes around him in the twenty first century; the other follows an old lady who finds her surroundings in a town changed and frightening. The fourth film, silent, was borrowed from the British Film Institute archives; shot by Lt Col FM Bailey, it showed various scenes in rural Bhutan in 1928 with His Majesty The Second King, early in his reign, tracing the Bhutan-Assam border along with elephants, traditionally dressed soldiers and also dancers; an unstructured but charming film. After a supper interval, the evening continued with a showing of **Kushuthara – Pattern of Love**, filmed in 2013, released in 2017. We were most fortunate as the director, Karma Deki, sent a video message recorded specially for our showing and Emrhys Cooper, the film's Somerset born and now New York resident male star, joined us in person to introduce the film and answer questions afterwards. In the film, as Charlie an American photographer, he arrives in a weaving village in Luentse. The story develops and the lead female character has to decide whether to remain faithful to her loving husband or choose Charlie who may well be the reincarnation of her lover from a prior life. Oh, the twists and turns of karma! The evening was much enjoyed and the format could easily be repeated with other Bhutanese films. Many thanks must go to Elizabeth Jacobson for choosing and successfully negotiating the rights to show the films and then coordinating everything with the Polish Hearth Club.

NEWS

The Royal Textile Academy

The Royal Textile Academy (RTA) was instituted in May 2005 under Royal Patronage as a non-profit, non-government organization and was registered with the Civil Society Organization Authority in 2012.

The RTA is dedicated to preserving and promoting Bhutanese textiles in particular and the thirteen arts in general. It will also be striving to promote the unique culture and traditions of Bhutan by creating international awareness and encouraging international collaboration by promoting mutually beneficial exhibits and educational programmes. In recognition of its services to Bhutan the RTA was honoured with the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty The King in 2016.

Two of the four phased construction projects of the Academy were inaugurated in 2013 and the third phase will be completed this year. It will include an additional gallery and also office spaces for rent which will be a major source of income for the sustainability of the RTA and its programmes.

Phase I includes:

* **The Textile Museum** with two galleries. The Upper Gallery is dedicated to a permanent exhibition which gives visitors a comprehensive understanding of the various types of Bhutanese textiles. The exhibitions in the Lower Gallery are changed annually and are often related to national events of the year.



* **The Conservation Unit** that is focused on the restoration and preservation of textiles and other artifacts which are of historical significance.

* **The Collections Unit** that is responsible for collecting and documenting textiles that are an important part of Bhutan's cultural heritage.

* **The Museum Shop** where visitors can purchase textiles, books and a wide variety of souvenirs. The shop is also an outlet for goods produced in The Weaving Centre.

Phase II includes:



* **The Weaving Centre** where a 'Skills Development Training for Weavers' is held to train and equip students/women in the different weaving techniques, the art of yarn dyeing, marketing and colour combinations and basic book keeping skills. Pre-booked short courses on dyeing and weaving can also be arranged for visitors.

* **An Exhibition Gallery** where short term exhibitions are organized in collaboration with other organizations or individual artists. The gallery is also rented out to interested parties for special events.

* **The Administrative Office** that oversees the functioning of the RTA and implementation of various projects and programmes.

New Consulate opens

In February 2018, Bhutan opened its second Consulate Office in eastern India at Panjabari in Guwahati, Assam.

The Office was inaugurated jointly by Bhutan's Foreign Minister, Damcho Dorji and Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal. The Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay, was also present at the inaugural ceremony.



In an effort towards prompting rapid economic growth, Bhutan's major political parties have aimed to diversify the country's foreign policy without necessarily changing the century old policy of "limited engagements." As a result, by 2013 Bhutan had established diplomatic relations with 53 countries, an expansion from the existing 25 countries. This has been followed in the past five years by the Government focusing on strengthening relations with India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. The aim again was to further improve Bhutan's economy whilst at the same time ensuring that Bhutan's security and sovereignty were maintained.

The new Consulate Office can economically benefit Bhutan by connecting more of the country with neighbouring provinces in India. It can also help smooth border trade, facilitate investments to Bhutan and boost tourism. On the same occasion the Foreign Minister announced that Bhutan would soon have a Bhutan-Singapore air service via Assam.

Choosing smaller families

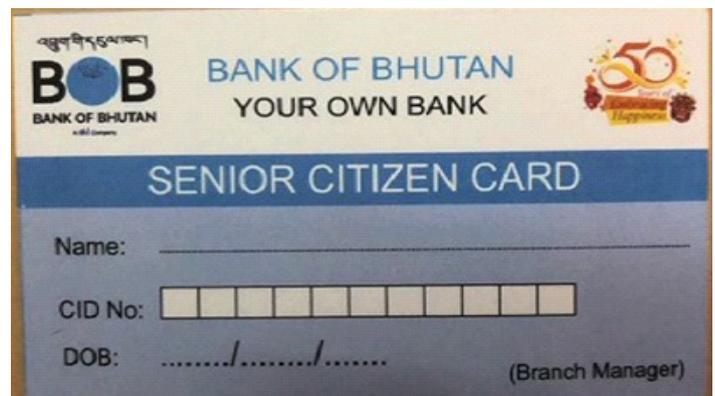
A growing number of Bhutanese families are going for fewer children. Up until the 1980's, the total fertility rate was on average six children per woman; today, it is 1.9 (UK rate is 1.8).

Experts and demographers warn that the trend, in the long run, could affect the country in many ways as this is below the replacement level of 2.1. Maintaining the replacement level is considered crucial for population stabilisation as a declining fertility rate is deemed problematic. One major adverse impact, if it continues, is that it could leave the country with a growing ageing population (aged 65 and above) and a shrinking workforce.

Some think the health ministry's family planning programme in the early 1990's was misunderstood and could be partly blamed for the declining fertility rate whilst many others believe it is largely circumstance-driven e.g. economic positions of young people forcing them to marry later, not marry or decide not to have children. Women now also constitute a significant portion of the national workforce. All of these are seen as factors contributing to the declining fertility rate.

Service for Senior Savers

The Bank of Bhutan (BoB) has just launched 'Senior Citizen Priority Counter' so now all BoB offices across the country will have dedicated counters to cater to senior citizens. The banking services include withdrawal, deposit and opening of new accounts and any individual aged 60 years and above will be eligible to use the new service. However it will not be providing foreign exchange services to elderly people.



A BoB spokesperson added that to identify clients as senior citizens, they will be issued with an identification card by bank offices. Senior citizens in Thimphu have welcomed the initiative.

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

EU Support for Bhutan

In May 2018, the European Union (EU) provided Bhutan with a fund of 4 million Euros to help diversify the country's exports and to promote "Brand Bhutan".

The EU-Bhutan Trade Support Project will run over 40 months and will be managed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in collaboration with the Government of Bhutan. This project is expected to increase the country's exports by developing a value chain on selected products of horticulture and textile handicrafts, developing efficient market linkages and trade and investment regulatory framework. EU Ambassador, Tomasz Kozlowski, said the project was designed in consultation with the Bhutanese Government, the private sector and Civil Society Organisations.

He said that the EU provides budgetary support without dictating the terms and conditions because the country has well-established economic and social development policies. "We have a strong conviction that the Bhutanese government knows better how to spend the fund. It is a reflection of trust and confidence," he said. "In the future, other areas of cooperation in science and technology also offer scope and potential". The EU Ambassador also said that the EU can accommodate more Bhutanese students to pursue higher education in European countries through programmes like Erasmus plus and the Marie Curie Scheme, where fellowships are offered in research works. The EU has also sanctioned a fund of Euro 16.5M for rural development and climate change programmes. Another Euro 20M has been granted for the development of local government and fiscal decentralisation programmes. Political Affairs Counsellor Thibault Devenlay said technology transfer and capacity development in the field of renewable energy could be accommodated under the climate programmes. Between 2014 and 2022, the EU has committed to provide financial assistance of Euro 52M to Bhutan. One of the EU delegates said that it is for the country to come up with programmes and identify areas where budgetary support is required. "Bilateral relations between the EU and Bhutan are beyond the development agenda," the Ambassador said adding that political cooperation and ties are at their best. Since 1982, the EU and Bhutan have worked together in various development cooperation projects targeted to reduce poverty, enhance food security and strengthen the democratisation process.

New offices for Druk Air in Thimphu



Graffiti or Art?

The French street artist, Invader, is known for affixing his guerrilla mosaics, which evoke the pixelated graphics of 1970's arcade games, in out-of-the-way places. But his latest adventure has him placing his art on sacred Buddhist sites in Bhutan.

Many call it both a poor choice and inappropriate whilst others referred to his graffiti on the wall of Cheri Monastery and a choeten on the way to Taktshang as disrespectful to the Bhutanese culture. He also worked on a culvert in Thinleygang and other areas in Paro and Thimphu.

Whilst the artist claimed that he had permission of the monk in charge of Cheri Monastery to post his art on the its walls, it is yet to be confirmed.

One Bhutanese said, "Defacing old temples and disrespecting culture of places you travel to isn't art. It is vandalism. We will remove your childish installations."

Another Bhutanese asked him to take down this particular piece of artwork from Cheri Monastery out of respect for cultural and spiritual heritage.

She said, "I am deeply disappointed with your guide and tour agency for allowing this to happen."

MEETING REPORT

At our Society meeting in May 2018 we enjoyed presentations from three speakers on aspects of life in Bhutan today. Below are their summaries of the presentations.

Managing food safety and related issues

Ms Tashi Yangzom

Bhutan is predominantly an agriculture-based society, with more than 58% of the population relying on agriculture for their livelihoods. Its agricultural policies are focused on pursuing sustainable food systems to positively impact human and planetary health and also to promote organic, climate-smart and zero-waste agriculture. Food security issues in Bhutan are primarily governed by the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, 2014 and food safety is governed by the Food Act 2005 and its Regulations.

Bhutan has made substantial progress in overcoming transient food insecurity and malnutrition through increased domestic production and food imports. However, food security is affected by natural disasters, climate change, rapid urbanization, lifestyle changes and changes in dietary behaviours. Considering the complex and global nature of food supply, some of the current food safety issues are: new and emerging food-borne hazards, increasing burden of food-borne illness, new technologies and food fraud/adulteration. .

Under the Food Act, Bhutan has established the National Food Quality and Safety Commission, the National Codex Committee, the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) and the National Food Testing Laboratory. As the national food control agency and national food inspectorate, BAFRA is mandated to enforce food regulations and standards, to protect public health by ensuring that food is safe and for ensuring plant and animal bio-security. It carries out a preventive risk-based approach - regulating food businesses, training, promoting food safety management systems, licensing food handlers, regulating food import/export/retail and facilitating trade.

The BRACE Project

Dr Frances Harris

The BRACE project (Building Bhutanese Resilience Against Cataclysmic Events) is funded by a consortium of UK research councils and the Department for International Development, under the banner of the Global Challenges Research Fund. The aim is to encourage people from a range of disciplines across academia to work together to address a challenging development problem. BRACE focuses on building resilience to earthquakes in Bhutan. This is timely, as following earthquakes in Bhutan in 2009 and 2011, and the major earthquake in Nepal in 2015, there is more awareness of the possibility of a large earthquake in Bhutan.

The presentation outlined the different ways in which a range of disciplines, from history and archaeology, through geography to geology and seismology, were all contributing to the project. The research also represents a lovely collaboration between Bhutanese and International scientists and organisations. The presentation went on to discuss the findings of almost 50 interviews with stakeholders from across Bhutan (government ministers and regional and local officials. farmers and businesses) concerning the perceived impacts of earthquakes, both in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake, and in the longer term.

Development - Challenges and Opportunities

Mr Kinzang Dorjic

When I started school in 1987, very little existed in the form of modern development in Bhutan. Bartering was the currency of our economy. At less than 25 per cent, Bhutan's literacy rate was one of the lowest in the world. Average life expectancy was 45 years. For every 1000 live births, more than 100 infants did not make it to the age of five. Fast forward to 2018. In that period, we have essentially lifted ourselves out of the sort of a medieval setting of my childhood and emerged in the 21st century. What is amazing is how smooth that process has been for Bhutan and our people. Today, Bhutan has become an example for other developing countries. We not only have better living standards to show for our development, we have progressed in every aspect of our society.

Of course none of these would have been possible without our Kings. Bhutan's story is in fact a story of the vision and the leadership of our Kings. Today, we are fortunate to have not one but three Kings: our former King who is in retirement, our current King, and our three year old Prince. As a nation, we have never been more certain about our future than we are now.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Mountain Echoes Literary Festival

22-25 August 2018 - in and around Thimphu

Mountain Echoes is an initiative of the India-Bhutan Foundation in association with Siyahi. This Festival offers a platform for literature, debate and cultural exchange and this year will host a number of sessions, workshops, performances, exhibitions and an open session.

Speakers already confirmed include:

Andrew Quintman: Buddhist teacher, researcher

Chewang Rinzin: Director of the Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS)

Daniel C Taylor: Nature conservationist, educational innovator, community change implementer

Dave Goulson: Author, specialises in the ecology and conservation of bumblebees

Dr Sonal Mansingh: Indian classical dancer

Paulo Lemos Horta: Author of *The Marvellous Thieves of the Arabian Nights*

Sonam Wangmo Jhalani: Development specialist

Tandin Bidha: Actress

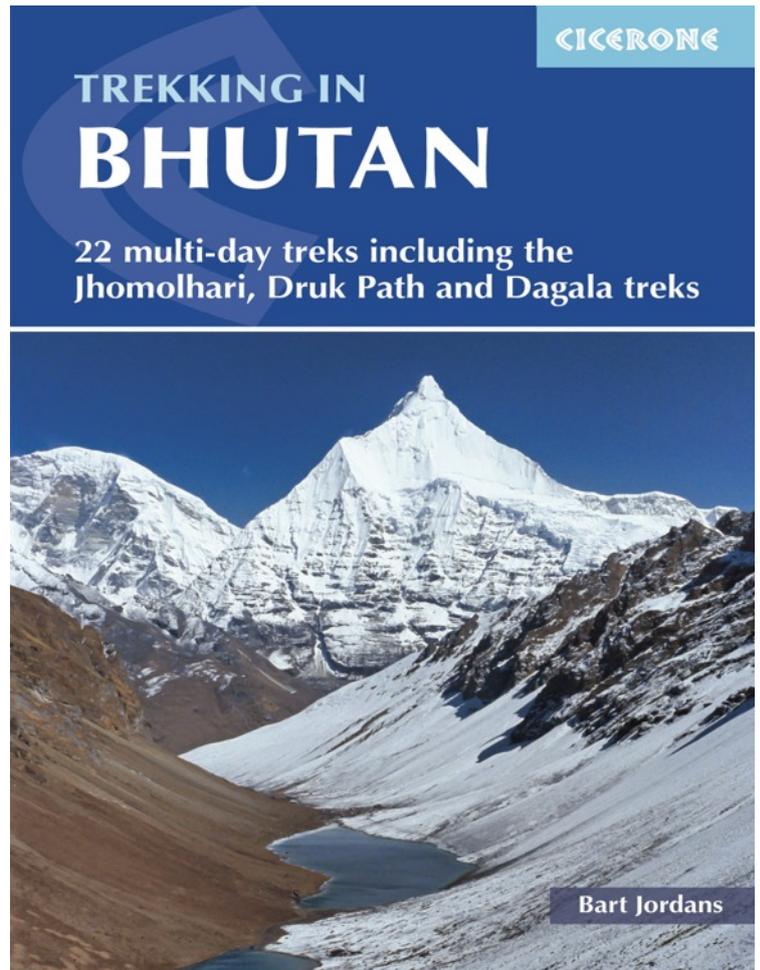
Usha Uthup: Musician

Valmik Thapar: Naturalist, conservationist, writer .

Her Majesty The Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck is the Patron of the Festival.



The festival is free and open to all.
To register and for more information visit :
www.mountainechoes.org



Published: March 2018 by Bart Jordans

£19.95

ISBN: 9781852849191

This 3rd edition is an updated and comprehensive guide about trekking on both the classic and lesser known routes in Bhutan.

It is full of advice to help plan and prepare your trek along with plentiful cultural information to enhance your visit.

It covers all the practicalities with notes on trekking seasons, outfitters, transport, accommodation and food, ethics and etiquette as well as medical factors you need to consider when travelling at high altitudes.

Bart Jordans has been guiding and exploring treks and trekking peaks in the Himalayas and elsewhere since 1984. He lived in Bhutan for four years and still works as a trekking guide.

New role for horses

The number of horses in the country has been decreasing as more surfaced roads are being built making the rearing of horses for transportation gradually irrelevant.

With the exception of a few highland communities, and for orange transportation in some parts of Bhutan, the tradition of rearing horses is slowly disappearing from the villages and horses can now be seen straying both in the wild and in urban areas. So, what does the future hold for the horse and horse owners in Bhutan?

Statistics from the National Horse Breeding Farm in Bumthang showed that there were 27,887 horses in the country in 2004 but the figure had dropped to about 18,890 in 2016. However the farm is working towards transforming the usage of horses from traditional load-carrying purposes to more lucrative uses. It believes that with the increasing number of tourists visiting the country, the demand will return for more horse riding opportunities.



The Farm currently has more than 70 horses, of 4 different breeds, but only about 50 acres of pastureland and 16 staff to manage all the various aspects of work needed. "We don't as yet have experts to do any research on the quality of different breeds of horses in the country," said the Farm Manager.

"However our Ministry has told us that we will be trained and provided with the necessary knowledge to carry out our new and extended duties." So the farm has already started working towards encouraging and promoting eco-tourism through horse riding among other associated activities.

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NOTE

*If you have not done so already, please send your e-mail address to ***rosieglazebrook@hotmail.com*** who will add it to the database.*

There is no plan to go paperless but it is often convenient to communicate information electronically at short notice.