



Expedition Newsletter

Welcome to the sixth of our regular news letters. If you discover anything of interest and want to share it (links, articles etc), let us know and we'll include it.

May's Meeting

Quite a few of you missed out on meeting up with 4 members of the Ghurka Regiment this week. This time it was an informal affair with everyone splitting into 4 groups for a general chat. Thanks to Hillary for providing the "Nepalese nibbles" for us to try. The Ghurkas have invited us to join them at their mess in Aldershot for a "Ghurka Curry" in September / October

Service Project

It is looking like our service project will be sorting out the water supply at a village outside Kathmandu. The village is called Nayapati, it is about 1 hour drive west from Kathmandu - still within the Kathmandu valley. Despite being in the valley, it is a very deprived area in need of great help.

It is likely to involve cleaning out the water source, in this case a spring, refurbishing the filter beds and updating the distribution system and then help make a water collection point.

Fitness and Practice

Alex has been in contact with the fitness suite at Spectrum and they are interested in offering us a "special deal". If you have not already replied to his Email then please do so as soon as possible.

Eleven of us (9 explorers plus Mark and myself) got some early practice in by going on the Explorer Hill walking (*see picture*). It was good to see everyone getting on and "looking out" for each other. We are just hoping the weather is a bit better in Nepal than South Wales!

Ripley Farmers Market

Next Market is on the 10th June. We have two volunteers for June's market but no one for July and August. I note 9 of you have yet to put your names down!

In Brief

Downs Link Bike Ride

The sponsored bike ride planned by County has been cancelled due to lack of support. We were one of the few groups who even showed an interest.

Uniform Badges

Those of you at the May meeting will already have received your badges. The rest can collect from me next time. You get one each but can buy up to two additional ones at a £1 each. They go above the world membership badge on your shirt.

Get Better Soon

To Chris Gee who's had to have his appendix out.



News Spotlight

The Next Expedition team meeting will be held on **THURSDAY 22nd June 2006** Venue will be Merrow unless notified otherwise. We'll be doing something outdoors. Starting time 19:30.

298 days to go and counting



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This month we have a brief look at history, religion and some recent weather news!

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

For a tiny Himalayan backwater, Nepal has played a surprisingly pivotal role in Asian history. In its early days it reared the Buddha and hosted the great Indian emperor Ashoka; much later, its remarkable conquests led it into wars with Tibet and Britain, and during the past three decades it has come to be regarded as a vital buffer state by both India and China. Its name and recorded history go back nearly 3000 years, although it has existed as a nation for barely 200: before 1769, "Nepal" referred only to a kingdom based within the Kathmandu Valley.

NEPALI WEATHER CHAOS

After coping with the extreme conditions in the Brecon Beacons the expedition team may have to prepare for unusual weather in Nepal next year. The Sagarmatha National Park (Everest region) has experienced a snow-free winter. Good? Perhaps not. Severe snow storms hit the area in the middle of March and again in April creating major problems for the teams preparing for the season's climbing expeditions. Local people were taken by surprise as well as visitors but the exceptional conditions have brought welcome relief for farmers allowing them to sow spring barley after a very dry winter.



Snow-bound Namche Bazaar

Over recent years fears have increased that extreme environments such as the Himalaya are particularly sensitive to climatic changes brought on by global warming. It is believed that glacier melt is accelerating causing knock on effects to local ecologies.

For more information see the following link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4954546.stm>

RELIGION: HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, SHAMANISM

To say that religion is an important part of Nepali life is a considerable understatement: it is life. In the Nepali world view, just about every act has spiritual implications; the gods are assumed to have a hand in every success or misfortune and must be appeased continuously. Belief and ritual form the basis of the whole social order, governing the way husbands relate to wives, parents to children and even the king to his subjects.

Three religious strands intertwine in Nepal: Hinduism, Buddhism and Shamanism. In theory, these faiths are philosophically incompatible, but Nepalis, being an exceptionally tolerant lot, tend to overlook the differences. As practiced by the masses, each employs superstition and rites of passage to get followers through the present life, and codes of behavior to prepare them for the next. Hindu priests, Buddhist lamas and tribal Shaman play similar roles in their respective communities. Indeed, it's really only outside observers who bother to distinguish between the religions and dwell on their outward differences most Nepalis find such distinctions needlessly academic.

Hinduism is the state religion of Nepal, and the government claims that ninety percent of the population is Hindu. However, there are social advantages to professing Hinduism in Nepal, and official statistics doesn't reflect the extent to which many Nepalis blithely combine Hinduism with Buddhist or Shamanist beliefs. In general, Hinduism prevails at the lower elevations and Buddhism in the Himalaya, while Shamanism is strongest among the ethnic minorities of the hills