



## Definitely a trip of a lifetime! Nepal 2015

After applying and successfully receiving some funding from the Founder President's Bursary nearly 10 years ago, I was contacted by the same company I completed my BCU 3\* kayaking qualification with all those years ago to see if I would be interested in going to Nepal for three weeks, trekking, exploring and living with families up in the mountains. I OBVIOUSLY jumped at the chance – and it just shows it pays to keep in touch with people!

So, on the 18<sup>th</sup> April this year I found myself on the way to Heathrow Airport to meet seven other complete strangers to undertake the trip of a lifetime. After two long flights we finally reached Kathmandu - the capital of Nepal. This also marked my 26<sup>th</sup> birthday!

At 4 a.m. the next morning (waaaaay before my normal alarm clock and whilst the UK was just tucking into bed) we were up and off to catch a tiny plane into the mountains and the airstrip of Lukla. Lukla is well known by many for being the 'World's Most Deadly Airstrip.' The 'plane can only fly in completely clear conditions because in Nepal the 'clouds have mountains hiding in them.' We skimmed the tops of trees, squeezed between narrow gaps in the mountains and finally (thankfully) landed safely on the 750 metres tarmac strip that was precariously balanced with a long drop at one end and a sheer cliff face at the other. So... I was glad the brakes were working well!



*Lukla Airstrip - named the most dangerous airport in the world.  
YouTube a landing for more proof!*

The scenery was AMAZING as we saw snow topped mountains, huge rhododendron forests and deep, roaring glacial rivers. Every corner you turned on the winding Everest Base Camp Trail as we climbed ever higher, held a new experience, from old men gambling with dice games, to small children with snotty noses and grubby faces shouting "Namaste", or long trains of yaks carrying everything from gas bottles, to rice to more luxurious items like orange juice.

EVERYTHING in the mountains has to be carried either by porters balancing it on their foreheads or mules and yaks being whipped along by their owners



*Top Left: Yak Train*

*Right : Village man carrying load.*

*Bottom Left: Our Porters, each carrying three people's rucksacks!*





One big difference compared to just walking at home was getting used to the altitude. We flew in at 2800 metres above sea level and over the course of the next week would get up to 5000m, but still feel dwarfed by the humongous mountains that surrounded us and of course Everest towering above the rest at 8848m. In order to acclimatise to the lack of oxygen we had to walk slowly. I was very glad of this and couldn't have gone any quicker as I spent most of it huffing and puffing despite being relatively fit before leaving home. We factored in 'acclimatisation' days where we would climb up to a higher altitude; take a rest and then drop down again to sleep that night.

Every evening we would arrive at a new guesthouse along the trail where the family would prepare dinner, often the Nepalese staple dish of Daal Bhat which was a Lentil Curry with Rice> Many people will spend their lives only eating this dish twice a day. We also sampled some more Nepalese treats such as Yak Cheese, deep golden runny honey and Momos, which is basically a deep fried mini Cornish pasty! Then with the sunset, and limited electricity the darkness would engulf us and we would crawl into our sleeping bags and try to recharge our batteries for the next day.

After spending a day acclimatising in Phortse village, at almost 4000m we woke on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> April, ready and raring at 6 a.m., to the realisation that we had been snowed in! There was a layer of snow on the ground but the bigger concern was the mist that had completely engulfed the village so thick that we couldn't even see out the window. We ate breakfast of porridge, as planned, and decided to wait a few hours for it to clear.

At 11 a.m. the snow had stopped and the mist had cleared somewhat, so our Sherpa guides said we could make a short day and head to the next village along, just a few hours by foot to get a change of scenery. We set off, and after less than five minutes the blizzard was coming in again, so much so that a bit of stray hair from under my hat froze!! Temperatures were about minus 5 degrees C, but with all the climbing we were all working up quite a sweat. At what turned out to be 11:56 a.m. Nepalese time I began to feel quite faint; oddly so did the person next to me.

I will never truly be able to explain the event that happened next and that was so widely captured and circulated by the world's media. I looked ahead along the path and saw a boulder, roughly the size of a single decker bus rocking backwards and forwards, pivoting directly above the heads of four of my group. I thought it must be the altitude, and that I was slowly losing my marbles, but knew I had to say something: "THAT ROCK'S MOVING", I screamed, as the group began to realise what was happening and all ran back towards me. Our Sherpa then confirmed; "It's an EARTHQUAKE!" At this moment I lay on the ground (watching the mountain above me wobble like jelly) feeling as if I was stood on a huge water bed and nervously waited for the surely inevitable rocks falling from above. We could hear the roaring of landslides beneath us as we waited on the precariously positioned path half way up a mountain! But then, the shaking stopped; the landslides stopped and there was complete silence. It seemed to be over. There was a huge wave of relief at the fact we were all OK and unharmed. So we just .... carried on trekking!

It was only then I truly appreciated the complete 'middle of nowhere' enormity of the mountains. We had no way of contacting anyone, no way of anyone contacting us, and no knowledge of where the earthquake had hit. For all we knew it was localised, and maybe we were part of a small handful who had felt it – how wrong we were. We saw no one else that day until reaching the tea house for dinner and to rest our heads. As we got higher into the mountains the accommodation became more and more basic and hygiene facilities were taking a dramatic down turn! The tea house had relatively little damage, but later that night, the owner who had a small portable radio with a bad signal managed to translate to us that a 7.9 magnitude quake had left over 1500 dead in Kathmandu, many of the ancient monuments flattened and no word from a possibly destroyed Everest Base Camp. It was then we realised we may be in the middle of a National Disaster and there was a strong chance that this would have made BBC News. We made a plan that in the morning we had to find some way to get a message back home that we were safe.



*(Photo: the outside Shower which would work well on a Sea Ranger Camp!)*

We all went to bed feeling anxious and thinking of our loved ones back home worrying. In the night there were two more large aftershocks, one taking out the kitchen wall of where we were staying. The next morning after a BIG bowl of porridge we set off towards Gokyo, our original highest planned destination, not knowing what we would find along the way. The few people we saw were all heading in the opposite direction, trying to escape the mountains for lower ground, but we continued, finding places we should have been and finding whole villages wiped out and the people wandering in a daze wondering what to do next. Many were sleeping in tents outside the wrecks of their homes as they were too afraid to go back indoors or had nothing to go back to. It was sad to see that all their worldly possessions, mostly cooking pots and pans, didn't even cover the bedsheets they had pulled them out on.

*Panoramic View of the Glacier I walked on.*



After a very long eight hours and climbing over 600 metres in height we made it to Gokyo. A blizzard was coming in again and due to the altitude we were now walking through snow up to our waist, which was exhausting. By the time we got to our home for the night I was completely done in! The real killer was that the guesthouse had a phone, but it was solar powered, and due to the snow storms was not charged up plus all the phone transmitters were down in the entire valley. With nothing else we could do, we ate dinner, stoked the fire with dried yak poop and tried to keep spirits up.

Later that evening our Sherpa, Lopsang, had been out seeing who was left in the ghost town of a village that had largely been abandoned. He managed to find a Doctor, from Liverpool, in the rescue centre – and hurrah he had a satellite phone. These phones are very expensive and run down quickly, but our leader was permitted one 30 second phone call to the UK for £10, which seemed like pennies to us at that moment to be able to get a message back we were safe. That was a huge relief.

*Panoramic View of Gokyo's 3<sup>rd</sup> Lake.*



We all slept in the large communal dining room that night as it was made of plywood walls and a corrugated plastic roof, so if we did have another strong aftershock, which were a frequent occurrence, we would be safer than in the stone built dormitories. The next day we felt we had earned a well-deserved break, so spent the day in the Gokyo Lakes area surrounded by snowy peaks and got the opportunity to go walking on a glacier, which was amazing, but also a bit scary that you hear it slowly moving all the time!



After a good rest, and getting to our high point of 5000 metres we began the descent back down the mountains. In contrast to the way up being constantly out of breath, the more oxygen rich air streamed into our lungs and we practically skipped our way back down the thick snowy landscapes and across boulder fields next to freezing cold rivers and enjoyed the sunshine and new scenery as we took a slightly different route back down. Once again we passed destroyed, abandoned villages but also people trying to rebuild their homes and get on with life which was amazing to see.

*Snow covered Yak at sunrise.*

A few days later we made it back to Namche Bazaar, one of the larger villages with a hundred or so houses, many shops and a bakery which we frequented a few times! We stayed here for a few days and did day hikes, always returning to the warmth of our guest house and friendliness of the Sherpa owners. Unfortunately a week after we left another large earthquake of 7.3 Magnitude hit Nepal again; this time Namche was at the epicentre. The Nepalese people are tough cookies though, who have to live a harsh existence, but natural disasters can't be helped and are unfortunately just a part of life for them.

Two weeks after flying into the mountains, and with so many memories, new friends and hundreds of photos, it was time to fly back to Kathmandu. The tiny flight that I had been so scared of on the way out seemed nothing in comparison to the things we had experienced, so I piled on to the 14-seater plane with my bag on my lap and said goodbye to the mountains.

Sometimes when opportunities arise they seem pretty daunting, scary and completely out of your comfort zone, but this is one adventure I was glad to make it back alive from, but even more glad that I had the chance to do it!

*Naomi Stanley*

*SRS Waterwitch (ex SRS Vandyck)*

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**THE SOUTH & SOUTH WEST FLOTILLA AQUA GAMES** were held in February. It was a chance for us to all get together and have fun in the water during the nippy winter months – cue a nice warm swimming pool in Hampshire!

To kick the event off there was a traditional 'swimming gala.' After some nail biting moments and photo finishes with only two points separating Waterwitch and Achilles, Achilles went home with the Silver Medal, meaning Mermaid were crowned 2015 winners and have sent this great photo with them all showing off their certificates!



The second half of the afternoon was a cross-crew team building challenge. All the crews were split into three teams so everyone had the chance to chat to new people and make some friends. The girls launched themselves into some crazy games, such as the 'Outfit Relay' where they raced from one end of the pool to the other, made trickier by the fact they had to adorn swimming hat, goggles, arm bands and flippers at every hand over! Some of the Flotilla's best swimmers were left flapping in the water when trying to negotiate to the other end with tiny flippers haphazardly squeezed onto their feet and swimming hats half coming off! There were also elements that will come in very useful as a Sea Ranger, and were good to practice, such as line throwing to save a 'casualty' and a competition to see who could tread water the longest whilst doing the YMCA!

As always, the event was rounded off with prizes being awarded, everyone receiving a certificate for participating, and a good old tuck shop! Thanks everyone who attended for participating so enthusiastically. Please spread the message around your crews and hopefully we can get even more attending next time!

# Council Matters

## New structure - Council of Management

Council of Management will be a largely elected Council of Management (members of which are the trustees of the charity). There will no longer be formal Flotilla groupings. Council is very conscious of the vital roles Flotilla Officers undertook and will ensure that these continue in an alternative structure. The restructured Council will be supported by an "operational group" with a small core of individuals who would have the ability to co-opt people for specific requirements.

The main priorities for your Council of Management are now to clarify the detail of the new structure and to revise and update the respective Rules & Regulations to reflect the revised constitution. The new structure of the Council of Management (Trustee Board) and its supporting operational group will be implemented in a transitional period to iron out the roles and responsibilities of the new group.



Follow us on Twitter  
**@Sea\_Rangers**

**Officers' Uniform and Badges** – there is now an option for Officers to wear lanyards in No1 uniform. Boating bars may also be worn by Officers.

**Petty Officers** – the uniform and recognition of Petty Officers across the Association has been reviewed and standardised. There has been differing practice and interpretation of the Rules & Regulations in some crews. With immediate effect Petty Officers will continue to wear Sea Ranger hats, but will wear a black tie and lanyard (not neckerchief). A Petty Officer can be from the age of 16 but at the crew's discretion.

**Website** – Officers' area of the website is now back up and running. This is a password protected area. Work is underway to get more forms added as soon as possible.



You can now follow Sea Rangers on Facebook

**Crew Emails** – each crew has been set up with email address (e.g. crewname@searangers.org.uk) by our Marketing Advisor to help raise the profile of your crew as part of a larger organisation. Details of how to login have been circulated to all Senior Officers. Please use the email account, especially when emailing external bodies.

**Reminder - Service to mark 95 years of Sea Rangers** and 40 years of the SRA as an independent organisation.

Invitations have been sent to all crews, members and Friends as well as guests and VIPs.

The Service will be held on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015, St James' Church, Poole at 2.30pm.

Please contact Hayley Vincent if you have not received your invitation – [hayleyjames84@msn.com](mailto:hayleyjames84@msn.com)



## Dates for your Diary

11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
26<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
17<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
21<sup>st</sup> November 2015  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
7<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Lord Amory Training Weekend, London  
Council of Management, Woking  
Church Service – 95 years Sea Rangers, Poole  
Council of Management  
Council of Management  
Council of Management  
Training Day & Annual General Meeting (venue tbc)

# Around the Crews

## *SRS Churchill Recognised by Royal British Legion*

In recognition of the support and assistance given to the Poppy Appeal Coffee Mornings, SRS Churchill has been awarded a 5- year certificate of appreciation. The certificate was presented to the crew by Chris Hayden, the Poppy Appeal Organiser, Brixham Branch of the Royal British Legion.



As part of BrixFest over the May Bank Holiday, the crew's Officers ran a book and tombola stall outside the cabin and raised a fabulous amount for crew funds.

## *SRS Waterwitch* spent an evening in

February looking at the stars and planets through the telescopes at the observatory in Durlston Country Park near Swanage.

As part of Poole Festival of Running, manned the water stations for the runners and also ran a cake stall raising an amazing amount of money for the crew and to send to a village in Nepal that Naomi had taken safe haven in during the earthquake in April. This village was hit by the second earthquake.



## *CSRS Frobisher*

A team from Frobisher Cadets had an enjoyable weekend in Essex competing for the Dolphin Trophy and the Olive Richardson Trophy. For the latter the girls were challenged to complete four friendship bracelets, one each, whilst taking part in the Dolphin events. It was a struggle to finish them in the time but they managed and proudly won the trophy!

Thank you to Jenny, Julia and Julie for planning a wonderful weekend event complete with good weather, a camp-fire on Saturday evening, a water-slide and the birth of a kid on the farm on Sunday morning!

## SRA Boating Base Rose Cottage ... the Ins and Outs of a Working Party

Once a month a band of willing helpers can be spotted busying around the Cottage. Armed with tools of different shapes and sizes, paint brushes, and many pairs of strong gloves, they get to work on the range of tasks that need doing to keep the cottage and all the boats ready for use by Crews.

So just how did that new cooker and the gas bottles get over to the cottage? By Tyvac of course, the same way any other service engineer or environmental helpers get across. One chap said to me, as he was coming over to investigate a strange invader to the cottage, "You know - its jobs like these that I really enjoy". He was (I think) more thorough than he would have been and would often pause to watch the odd duck or boat go by!

You certainly need a few muscles to move the larger bits of equipment that the cottage needs. Steps, steep banks and getting them in and out of Tyvac all adds to the equation. Luckily we have not lost anything to the river ... yet!



So a big thank you to all our volunteers at the cottage.

**Rose Cottage Committee**

## Some Basic General Boating Hints for Rose Cottage Users For Motor Boats and/or Oars

*Information produced by Vera Corner Halligan MBE*

**MOORING** – In normal conditions, fenders out and painters made fast fore and aft. In adverse conditions use two additional lines, known as springs, which prevent the boat from moving forwards and backwards – on additional line goes from forward on the boat to a stern post on land and the other from the stern of the boat to a forward post on the land. Lines must allow for some rise or fall.

**COMING ALONGSIDE** – Always against the current of the wind, whichever is the stronger. Fenders out, oars boated, crutches unshipped. Never bows on unless circumstances give no alternative. Be able to throw a line round a post or bollard from the boat. Remove rudder from rowing boats.

**PAINTERS** – Always keep coiled when not in use, coiling from the fixed end. Avoid stern painters falling into the water as it could foul the prop and put the engine out of action. If the rope did get round the prop, immediately go into neutral and try to get the rope off. If unsuccessful switch off engine and go alongside use oars, boathook or kedging. It would have to be taken off before re-starting the engine. Do not leave painters on the decking when under way. Props can also be fouled by plastic bags etc. Carry a clasp knife.

**CASTING OFF** – Untie and stow springs if they have been used. Check gear and see that lanyards on crutches are tied on etc before casting off. If there is no bowman you may need to single up. Shove off using loom of the oar and not the blade and the blunt end of the boathook.

**GOING AGROUND** – Go off the way you went on i.e. if bows on go astern. Shove off with oar and/or boathook. Be prepared to move weight or gently rock the boat. If stirring up mud go into neutral. Once afloat check water outlet is not blocked.

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**TOWING** – Towing aft – Keep slow and keep a constant check on the towed boat. If seated in towed boat keep aft. If possible use stern line of towing boat so you are in control to make a quick release. It must be possible to release the tow quickly. If towing alongside use fenders and fore and aft springs.

**FERRY GLIDING** (crabbing) – Is the ability to cross a strong current, or wind, by keeping the bows of the boat at an angle against the current, maintaining a forward motion. The boat will go sideways (watch ducks and swans). This will enable you to sue the current to your advantage.

**HANDS** – Keep off gunwales and clear of rope coils when making fast. Never drag hands in the water over the side.

**WEIRS** – Take heed of the DANGER signs which are above the weirs and keep well clear. When below a weir KEEP WELL AWAY from the sluices and swirling stoppers as they cause very dangerous currents, often unseen.

**WARNING BOARDS** – No boating when RED BOARDS are displayed on the lock gates. When YELLOW BOARDS are displayed, experienced helms only, who need to take extra care.

**NAVIGATION** – Keep to the starboard side of the river. If in the centre of the river and another boat is approaching, go to starboard. If overtaking, steer to port and overtake on your starboard to the other boat's port side. Port and starboard buoys are warning you of underwater hazards, KEEP CLEAR. They read as proceeding up river and are read in reverse when going downstream. Use navigation lights at lighting up time for motor craft, rowing boats must carry a torch.

**FISHING** – Keep clear of lines and floats.

**DINGHY RACING** – In passing, slow down, watch the wind direction and keep clear of course marker buoys and the sailing dinghies. They cannot stop or go astern.

**WIND EFFECT** – Be aware and allow for the adverse effect of the wind and strong current on steering.

**LOCK ETIQUETTE** – Wait your turn unless waved in by the lock keeper. Be able to throw a painter round a bollard or to the lock keeper. Switch off engine. Check the lock closing times for your return journey. Know how to work a lock.

**BRAKES** – There are none. Think ahead and slow down and go astern if necessary. Boats need time to react. If rowing, hold water.

**ENGINE FAILURE** – If the engine fails, aim to get alongside to the banks – you may need to use oars, boat hook or kedge. To kedge, make the anchor line fast to the Samson post and throw the anchor towards the bank and pull the boat towards it and repeat. Keep the boat steering upstream during this process.

**SPEED** – Never go flat out. Check the effect of the boat's wash on the bank. Don't make waves – it erodes the bank and destroys the natural habitat, e.g. birds' nests.

**TRAIL OARS** – If going through a narrow space, e.g. a bridge arch, use the momentum of the boats and be immediately ready to continue rowing.

**Articles, news items and photographs for inclusion in the Autumn Sea Ranger News should be sent to [marketing@searangers.org.uk](mailto:marketing@searangers.org.uk) by 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015**