

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's Column

Award-winning, celebrity-endorsed and nationally publicised – this might go some way to describing the last year for Porters' Progress UK. A lot has happened at PPUK since our last newsletter, and I hope you'll enjoy finding our more in the articles below.

Mountain guide Kenton Cool is a ten-times Everest summiteers and a true 'adventure celebrity'. He has been a steadfast supporter of Porters' Progress UK from its inception, and his respect and admiration for the sherpas and porters on his expeditions are exemplary. We are delighted that Kenton has agreed to be our Patron. We welcome him and the energy and enthusiasm he brings, qualities which have taken him to great heights in more than one sense.

Also this year, Porters' Progress UK won the Expedition & Wilderness Medicine Company of the Year Award, and Trustee Denise Prior won the Expedition & Wilderness Medicine Person of the Year Award for her work with PPUK. Many congratulations to Denise, and to Trustee Mary Morell, also nominated for the same award.

Two of our team, Luke Walker and Marcella Turanova, have also been featured in the pages of Trail Magazine in a feature about PPUK. Most importantly, we have continued our work supporting mountain porters by way of clothing banks and educational projects.

It has been a huge pleasure and privilege for me to have been PPUK's Chairman for the past five years. This is my last newsletter as Chairman, as I am now handing over to Mary Morell, who has been a trustee of PPUK from its start. Mary is a leading light in the world of respiratory physiology, with a keen interest in the effects of altitude. She has recently been appointed Professor at Imperial College. I am sure Mary will be a superb leader for PPUK on the next leg of its journey. Please look out for her and get to know her.

I'll let the team do the talking in their articles below, but before I sign off, I want to let you know that PPUK is run entirely by volunteers. At our Autumn Lecture you will hear me making a plea for more volunteers because we would love to sustain the momentum we've gained this year. To run PPUK more efficiently and more effectively, we need you! We are a friendly bunch, and volunteering is thoroughly rewarding. If you think you might like to help carry us forward on this wave, please get in touch with me or any of the team.

As ever, our sincere thanks for your support. It makes all the difference to PPUK and the porters for whom we're all working. Without you, we would not be here.

Best wishes

Toby

Toby Gee

SOME COOL NEWS FROM PPUK

He needs little introduction, but I think I'll give him one anyway. A guy I've now known for a number of years, Kenton Cool never ceases to amaze me. When your day job is scaling the great Alpine North Faces and guiding characters like Sir Ranulph Fiennes to the summit of Everest, it must be hard to come up with yet more attention-grabbing challenges. But Kenton this year did something which left us all captivated, and based on the amount of attention in the media (just search for Kenton on the BBC website for example), a lot of the wider public too. I won't spoil things for those who are attending our lecture (all of you, I hope!), but suffice it to say that Kenton's latest expedition to Everest was truly an historic moment.



For us at PPUK, Kenton has always stood as a real asset within the mountaineering community. A highly conscientious climber, Kenton is known for being unabashed in sharing his views on how porters and sherpas should be treated – if you don't show them respect, you shouldn't be climbing with them on the mountain. This is one of the many reasons that we were absolutely delighted when Kenton agreed to be our Patron. Few can command the attention of both the climbing and non-climbing public like KC, and he's already shown typical energy in his commitment to PPUK. So thanks again to Kenton for agreeing to act as our figurehead, and we hope you'll all keep tuned in to his on-going adventures. He's also become a brand ambassador for Sherpa clothing, which has a grass-roots support structure for mountain people in Nepal, so do consider checking the brand out.

By Gaby Dean

PPUK WINS AN OSCAR!

Well, not exactly. But in its short existence PPUK has not previously experienced such remarkable recognition as that which we have enjoyed this year. Porters' Progress UK was announced as Expedition & Wilderness Medicine Company of the Year – with the award itself being presented at the World Extreme Conference on 17th April at the Royal School of Medicine by Jon Snow. This truly is a great honour, as the 'Company of the Year' award is presented to the company or organisation that has made an exceptional impact on extreme medicine, setting new standards in its fields of expertise whether it is in research, product or leadership.



The accolades didn't end here however. Denise Prior, a founding member of PPUK, was awarded Expedition & Wilderness Medicine Person of the Year in a separate category which "recognises outstanding healthcare professionals that have made a significant contribution to the specialised area of extreme medicine, whether through research, leadership, innovation or mentorship". Another of our trustees, Mary Morrell, was also shortlisted for the 'Person of the Year' category, marking a truly exceptional level of recognition for the work PPUK has directly and indirectly been involved with.

By Toby Gee

THE BIG QUESTION: WHAT DO PORTERS REALLY NEED?

Porters' Progress UK is an organisation which works remotely – we're all based here in the UK, and despite most of us having trekked and travelled in Nepal, it is of course not the same as living there. Fortunately we have a number of trusted contacts on the ground, each of whom helps ensure that we are able to maximise our efforts and provide support to the right initiatives. However this year we decided that as our momentum as an organisation increased, we wanted a corresponding level of insight into the people we're seeking to help and input from the porters themselves as to how best to help them.

To this end, PPUK is undertaking a survey in Nepal to ask trekking porters what support they would like to have from us. We are keen to do this so we can be sure we are properly targeting our efforts, and our supporters' generosity, to meet the needs directly identified by porters themselves in ways which are most meaningful to them. To carry out this research we are working with Jo Chaffer, a Nepal based research consultant, and Sherpa Brothers, who run treks in Nepal. This research has been arranged to coincide with the autumn trekking season and questionnaires are being distributed to porters in the Khumbu, Annapurna and Langtang regions.

In September and October approximately 500 questionnaires are being taken up with KE Adventure and Sherpa Brothers' trekking groups. Porters will be encouraged to complete them with the assistance of their Sirdar or the trek leader. To widen our understanding, the survey will also gather information from related organisations like the Nepal Tourism Board, local trekking companies and the porter unions. Data collection will finish in November, with the analysis and report due in January 2013. These survey results will mean we can be confident that our support for trekking porters is properly informed and directed to meet the needs of this very disadvantaged group who are often without a voice, and the communities they come from. We are very grateful to Jo Chaffer, Sherpa Brothers and KE Adventure for their enthusiastic and generous support in carrying out this important survey.

By Venetia Simmonds

THE EVEREST CLOTHING BANK



The Everest Clothing Bank continues to operate successfully from Lukla, providing hundreds of porters each season with much-needed clothing and sleeping bags to improve their safety in the mountains. Many trekking and climbing

porters are unused to high altitude travel or are engaged by independent trekkers or Nepali agencies who do not always provide adequate clothing and equipment. The clothing bank model is highly successful: The bank lends clothing to porters for an affordable deposit, which is returned to the porter when he or she returns the clothing in reasonable condition (subject

to a small cleaning charge). The clothing can then be used again and again to help keep many porters safe, and does not end up in the second hand clothing shops in Kathmandu.

Porters' Progress UK is the sole funder of the Everest Clothing Bank, which is run by the Himalayan Club, a local organisation in Lukla. The clothing bank is therefore run by and for Nepali people. Our latest contribution to the clothing bank is to supply funding for 100 two-man sleeping bags, made to a good standard in Nepal. This is an initiative which came from the porters themselves. As Roald Amundsen said in relation to his successful 1912 South Pole expedition, two-person sleeping bags have many advantages (although he added that they are not to everyone's liking). So we are very pleased that the Nepali porters are contributing such innovations themselves.

By Toby Gee

FROM TRAIL MAGAZINE TO LUKLA



Earlier in the year Porters Progress UK was contacted by Simon Ingram the Editor of Trail Magazine, who suggested organising a gear collection on our behalf - little did they know what they were letting themselves in for!

The campaign snowballed, with donations rolling in from all around the UK. The collection coincided with Kenton's 10th summit attempt on Everest, and he released a video from Base camp thanking Trail readers for their generous donations on behalf of PPUK. Soon the Trail offices became swamped, and the 'Mountain of Gear' pictures soon appeared.

When PPUK volunteer Marcela Turanova and I appeared at Trail HQ in Peterborough to collect it all, we couldn't believe our eyes! There were literally 10-15 large sacks and boxes

packed with gear that we hauled, with the help of the fantastic folks at Trail, into our van.

In total 515 items, weighing approximately 130kgs, were delivered to our new depot - which was kindly donated by Artstraider & Sportstraider, sister charities helping supply skills but also sports clothes to young people.

All the kit will be put to good use clothing porters in either Nepal or Tanzania. And it will get there thanks to a wonderful offer from Simon Lowe from Adventure travel company Jagged Globe, who offered to facilitate getting the gear out to Nepal. Yet more good will come from Sportstraider's wonderful partner - Planet Zero - who offered to drive the load up to Jagged Globe's HQ near Manchester.

As I write, representatives from the Himalayan Club in Kathmandu are transporting the gear up to Lukla, where it will go straight into service in the clothing bank.

Porters Progress UK would like to thank everyone involved in this tremendous effort for all their help and assistance, it is incredible what can be done through the goodwill of so many dedicated individuals.

By Luke Walker

GOKYO PORTER SHELTER SPONSORED BY PPUK

Porters' Progress UK has partnered with Community Action Nepal and International Porters Protection Group to build a porter shelter at Gokyo in the Khumbu region of Nepal.

Recently the impact of climate change has led to changes to the routes taken by the porters. This has meant more trekking at higher altitudes and there is now an urgent need to build this shelter and medical room at an altitude of 5200m. The shelter will provide

emergency accommodation for up to 100 porters. To date approximately 70% of the total estimated cost of £52,500 has been raised, including a £15,000 contribution from Porters' Progress UK and a substantial commitment from the local community who will be responsible for the building and running of the shelter under the guidance of Community Action Nepal, together with International Porter Protection Group.

By Denise Prior



PPUK SUPPORTS THE DIMM



The Internationally recognized Diploma in Mountain Medicine (DIMM) is run in 9 different countries. In the UK alone, more than a hundred diplomats have graduated and are now using their skills on expeditions around the world.

PPUK is proud to support the first DIMM specifically tailored to the needs of Nepalese doctors. Dr. Buddha Basnyat and Dr. David Hillebrandt conceived the notion the DMM to carried out in the foothills of the Himalayas and this year PPUK (along with other charities) helped to make this happen. Dr. Maniraj Neupane from Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal and Dr. Suzy Stokes took the overall responsibility of the course, with volunteers from Germany, Switzerland and UK plus 4 Nepali mountain guides. Six international and 8 Nepali students were enrolled for the first intake in Nov 2011; all the Nepali doctors received full or part scholarships. The successful course was a mixture of class-room sessions delivered in Kathmandu and practical skills training in the field. The not so unusual issues such as cancelled flights to Lukla occurred during the course, but despite this all went well and the candidates also made a short visit to the Porters Progress UK clothing bank.

If you would like to find out more about this course please contact us at PPUK or the Nepal DMM committee.

By Mary Morrell

PROUD, TOUGH, VULNERABLE



It is an honour to have been elected as the new Chairperson of PPUK. I would like to start my term by using this space to give you a brief flavour of who I am and how I see PPUK developing.

The bit about me.... I am a Professor at Imperial College London. I have worked in the UK and the USA, and before I started my research career I was a nurse. I now run a research group at Royal Brompton Hospital in London where we investigate sleep-related

breathing disorders.

I first became involved with porter issues while participating in an altitude research project organised by Medex. In 2003, I was sitting in a Teahouse at Tangnag (4,360m) with another Trustee Denise Prior and we saw an IPPG (International Porters Protection Group) poster. Its proclamation that porters are 'Proud, Tough, Vulnerable' has stuck with us since that first trek and contributed in many ways to the development of Porters' Progress UK. Almost 10 years later we continue on our mission to facilitate the safe treatment, education and empowerment of mountain porters and their communities. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make this possible.

Our previous Chairman Toby Gee, who has been an excellent leader, has given me some headers that I am going to repeat here because I think they embody our approach:

1. One of the strengths of PPUK is the founding concept that we are all about empowerment –we aim to create independence, not dependence. Otherwise if and/or when we stop operating, we may leave a situation which could turn out worse than how we found it.
2. Keep innovative e.g. the clothing bank concept; the sunglasses amnesty; 2-person sleeping bags for porters at their request.
3. PPUK should be fun, by which we mean that everyone in PPUK and involved with PPUK gets so much out of being involved – volunteering works (ask Lord Coe!).

During the next four years I would like to see Porters' Progress UK continue to grow into a sustainable charity that works closely with other NGOs and charities to deliver the projects that porters themselves want and need – making these wonderful people less vulnerable. You can count on me to do my utmost to turn this vision into reality with enthusiasm and integrity.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our fund raising evenings. If you would like to volunteer to help in any way or feel you have potentially useful skills to offer please contact us at

Namaste,
Mary

By Mary Morrell

DATES

BEST OF KENDAL FESTIVAL

Thurs 21 March 2013
7.00 – 10.00 pm

Screenings of the best mountain films from one of the most prestigious mountain festivals in the world.

Further details of the films will be detailed online in the new year

This is A fund raising event for PPUK.

Tickets: £12.50 available from www.worldexpeditions.co.uk

Royal Geographical Society
1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR
Exhibition Road Doors open and cash bar in the Map Room from 6.00PM

SAVE THE DATE:
AUTUMN LECTURE
(Speaker to be announced Spring 2013)

Thurs 28 November 2013
7.00 – 9.00 pm

Royal Geographical Society
1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR
Exhibition Road Doors open and cash bar in the Map Room from 6.00PM