

# NAMASTE!

Dear Supporters,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our Porters Progress 2013 newsletter; my first as the Chair.

We have had an extraordinary year, and all the activities you will read about have been made possible with your support and contributions.

**What do porters really want?** PPUK was founded with the central theme of empowerment. With this in mind we conducted an extensive survey of porters in Nepal to determine how we can best focus our efforts. The overwhelming request was for education. Here's how we have responded:

- Funding of language classes at the Everest clothing bank in Lukla, and the KEEP offices in Kathmandu.
- Printing of 1,000 booklets in Nepalese on the effect of high altitude – these are being transported up to Goyko and Machermo during the autumn trekking season by our volunteers.
- Extending this opportunity beyond Nepal's borders, we're supporting an outstanding initiative from Khupa Care Pakistan to train porters in Pakistan to deal with the effects of high altitude.

**Shared visions:** In the last year we've been working increasingly closely with Community Action Nepal (CAN). Thanks to your donations – totaling over £15,000 – we have been able to co-fund the building of a porter shelter in the Gokyo region of Nepal. This generosity also supported the

purchase of specialist equipment, such as oxygen concentrators, to equip the medical room. Peter Thompson, one of our Trustees, is going to tell you more about this project and our relationship with CAN below.

**Equipped for the future:** Our clothing bank and kit donation activities have also expanded in 2013. We continue to fund the EVEREST Clothing Bank in Lukla, as well as providing kit donations in Tanzania for porters through the Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project. We're extending our reach with clothing banks for porters in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and in Pakistan, both of which are being set up with funding from PPUK.

**Our pledge:** Tourism is critical to the economies of the regions in which we work, and porter jobs are valuable sources of income for thousands of families. Porters remain at the bottom of the economic food chain but with your help we can make a difference. PPUK believes that *no one should die or become seriously ill while working in high altitude mountain regions.*

We receive no grants and rely entirely on your goodwill and generosity to help achieve this goal.

Visit [www.portersprogressuk.org](http://www.portersprogressuk.org) for more information.

Namaste,  
Mary

Mary Morrell, Chair



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# PPUK NEWS



# A VIEW FROM NEPAL

This time 12 months ago my idea of a decent cycle ride was a 10-mile loop along the banks of the Thames. But sat at home one Sunday evening, I stumbled across an advert for a 100-mile bike ride taking place in August 2013 on the Olympic road race route. It was free to enter and there was going to be a ballot for places. Knowing how unsuccessful I normally am with these things, I signed up and thought nothing more of it.

Roll the clock forward a few months and I came home to find a magazine in my hallway saying 'Congratulations on your place in the Ride 100'. Providence it seemed had called my bluff. Now I had to think about training...

Luckily I have friends who are experienced cyclists to guide me through the early days. My first foray into long distance bike rides was an 86-miler in the New Forest. In theory this should have been a great day out on a nice flat course with no time pressure. After seven hours of torrential rain and a howling head wind, I completed the ride (and one of the most miserable days of my life - albeit that we made up for it in the pub on Saturday night!)

By coincidence, around this time I'd started to get involved with Porters Progress UK following a request for volunteers. The idea was born that my ride would become a PPUK fundraiser, and with a JustGiving page set up, I managed to secure generous donations from friends, family and work colleagues.

As the days before the race rapidly ticked down, I made the most of eating more and training less in order to build up my energy reserves. But on the day the signs were good - the weather was pretty much perfect, and a couple of hours in I was ahead of plan and feeling great.

Facing the three big Surrey Hills (Newlands Corner, Leith Hill and Box Hill), I somehow managed to keep this hour lead thanks to some gritted teeth and determined riding. My goal was to finish in just under seven hours, but having gained this lead on myself, I put my head down and raced the last 27 miles to the finish. I completed the race in a time of five hours and 56 mins.

With donations continuing to flow in after the event I completely thrashed my fundraising target - the latest total standing at £835. This outcome was made all the sweeter by the next of my big challenges - a trip to Nepal back in October.

I combined a trek to Everest Base Camp and the Gokyo lakes with an opportunity to see the projects that PPUK supports first-hand. Every drop of sweat was worth it having seen the porter shelter at Gokyo, which will help improve healthcare and save lives amongst mountain porters (find our more in Peter's article). I'd love to think that more people will consider similar fundraising activities in support of PPUK!

**Emma's JustGiving page is still open if you'd like to congratulate her and support her fundraising activities for Porters Progress UK.**

<http://www.justgiving.com/Emma-Swinnerton>

Emma Swinnerton, Volunteer

Whilst working as a doctor at the Machermo Rescue Post in Nepal, I have seen the hardships that the porter community endure, and looked into new ways to help them. Following a few long discussions with Mary Morrell, chairperson of Porters Progress UK, I have found a way we can work together with PPUK to make a real difference.

In February we collaborated with an expedition company to help transport some of the donations that individuals and companies have generously made to PPUK. They kindly linked us with an Everest Base Camp charity trek group who took twenty donated waterproof jackets in a spare rucksack. On the first evening in the mountains the trekking team distributed them amongst the porters. Not only did this seemingly small act improve their working conditions substantially, it also gave our team the perfect opportunity to educate trekkers about the challenges facing modern day porters.

The porter team had a celebration party in the kitchen that evening and the jackets were subsequently worn throughout the trek. A huge thank you has to be extended to Steve Desson who helped transport the kit.

Following the success of this venture we are now looking at ways of forming new relationships with charity trekking agencies to facilitate the transport of donated kit to Nepal and Tanzania. This will benefit both the porters and enhance the overall experience for the trekkers. To make the process as equitable and sustainable as possible, we are hoping to form a way of delivering the majority of the kit to local clothing banks, who provide the necessary gear to those who need it most.

Along with initiatives such as those coming from PPUK, I'm happy to report that many of the larger trekking organisations who work with British charity trekking agencies, today provide better working standards for their porters than in the past. There's still a lot of ground to cover, but working collaboratively we're heading in the right direction.

Suzanne Hale, Volunteer

# A SHARED VISION: PPUK & CAN

As a charity based primarily in the UK, we are always aware of the need to develop close relationships with locally based groups who share our central goal of improving the lives of mountain porters and their communities. One such group is Community Action Nepal (CAN), the charity founded twenty years ago by Doug Scott CBE, one of the world's leading high altitude mountaineers and a man who has worked tirelessly for the benefit of the people of Nepal.

CAN's operational base is in Nepal, focusing mainly on the most remote locations within the Middle Hill Regions which are home to many working porters. Typically living at lower altitudes outside the trekking season, and paid less for their trekking services, this group is particularly vulnerable to medical problems at high altitude - frequently compounded by socioeconomic factors and cultural differences in symptom and illness reporting.

CAN patron Sir Chris Bonington says: "The reality is that climbing Everest doesn't even come close to what Doug has achieved, on behalf of others, when he founded this organisation. Not only has CAN made a very real difference by improving the living conditions within many mountain communities, it's also done a tremendous amount to help sustain the culture and support the values of a very remarkable people".

PPUK and CAN share a belief in empowerment and sustainability; all of CAN's projects are joint efforts with the mountain communities themselves. These communities must help identify ways of improving the quality and sustainability of their daily life, and typically support one third of the project cost through resources and materials.

To date, CAN have completed more than 40 projects in Nepal, ranging from schools to health posts to rescue centres and alternative revenue generation schemes. Now PPUK is working with CAN to help complete further projects in Nepal's remote regions.

The decision to build a porter rescue shelter and medical room in the remote Gokyo Lakes area, situated on one of the approaches to Everest base camp, relied on the collective fundraising efforts of CAN and PPUK. Porter rescue shelters provide affordable overnight accommodation for mountain porters, along with medical assistance provided by volunteer doctors on site (a detailed description of this project is available on our website).

The porter shelter model is a proven model; Gokyo follows the success of two other shelters at Machermo and Gorak Shep, built

and operated by CAN and IPPG (International Porters Protection Group) with funding from the Himalaya Trust UK. These provide treatment to hundreds of porters during the trekking seasons and which have contributed directly to the saving of many lives.

Thanks to the generosity of you - our supporters - PPUK has been able to fund half the cost of the Gokyo shelter. We are delighted to say that the shelter is now open, and will provide critical support to porters during the current climbing season. Motivated by this opportunity to make a significant difference on the ground in Nepal, we're continuing to work closely with CAN to explore new project opportunities - both organisations sharing the vision of a Nepalese porter community that will one day receive the levels of recognition, equality and empowerment deserving of them.

Full details of all CAN's projects can be found at:  
[www.canepal.org.uk](http://www.canepal.org.uk)

Peter Thomson, Trustee



# DATES FOR 2014

**Thursday 27 March 2014**  
**BEST OF KENDAL FESTIVAL**  
7.00 – 10.00 pm

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

Tickets: £12.50 available from [www.portersprogressuk.org/events](http://www.portersprogressuk.org/events) from January 2014

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**Thursday 27 November 2014**  
**AUTUMN LECTURE**  
7.00 – 9.00 pm

(Speaker to be announced Spring 2014)  
Tickets £12.50 available from [www.portersprogressuk.org/events](http://www.portersprogressuk.org/events) from September 2014

Royal Geographical Society  
1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR

# PPUK HELPS PORTERS IN PAKISTAN

PPUK has joined forces with Khurpa Care, a support organisation for porters working along trekking routes in the Baltoro region of Pakistan. While porter welfare and training opportunities are improving in Nepal, this is not the case for those in Pakistan.

Based in Skardu, Khurpa Care was set up eight years ago to meet this need. They have now developed a training programme that is designed to help porters learn vital skills, covering a range of topics from health and safety at altitude to their rights and responsibilities. In the spring of 2013 support for this training programme was approved by the Deputy Commissioner of Baltistan who is a long term supporter of Khurpa Care.

PPUK is already supporting porter training courses in Nepal, based on the findings of our research into porter needs in 2012, and so we felt a strong desire to support the aspiration presented to us by Khurpa Care. Their training is being delivered during the trekking seasons of August / September 2013 and June / July 2014 by professionally accredited instructors. These individuals have been trained in Baltistan by the International Mountain Leadership Institute (USA), the Alpine Club of Pakistan and the Pakistan Red Crescent.

Training courses include Basic Awareness & Information Gathering sessions, Glacier Travel & Crevasse Rescue, Medical Rescue & Evacuation, First Aid & High Altitude Illness and Environmental Awareness. All the sessions are monitored by the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, giving PPUK the opportunity to assess how the training is received and make any adjustments for the 2014 season.

Courses will take place in and around Payu on the Baltoro Glacier - a regular acclimatisation spot at which porters normally spend a couple of days with trekkers. The rocky landscape and nearby glacier provides an excellent practical training ground during these breaks in between treks. Khurpa Care has also identified two new locations at Concordia and Urdukas where training could also be based.

Courses like these are only able to run with your support. If you would like to donate towards these training programmes please contact us at [info@portersprogressuk.org](mailto:info@portersprogressuk.org)

Venetia Simonds, Trustee

