

NEPAL TREK WITH A REAL PURPOSE

IN THE FIRST HOLIDAY BREAK THIS YEAR, five ACG Senior College students embarked on an 18 day trip to Nepal. This particular trip meant that Michael Lockie, Michael Dick, Luke Mannell, Jack Tolley and Georgina Norrie had to arrive at the airport not two hours before departing but six hours before. They needed time to get to know the other members of the travelling team. Once they reached Kathmandu, the friendships had already been cemented.

Their first interesting experience was ignoring the porters at the hotel who swarmed upon them urging them to hand over their bags - this meant parting with money and they were advised to hang onto their luggage. Kathmandu was buzzing with activity and in Jack Tolley's words "the streets were hairy with scooters dodging in and out past big trucks. We saw one 250cc scooter with a father, mother and two kids on the back. The father had a cellphone under his helmet and was talking at the same time as driving." It is interesting to note that the law only requires the driver to wear a helmet and the rest of the family were unprotected.

When considering going on a trek of this kind, there is concern about whether or not one has the fitness to cope, however, most participants were not too worried. During the ten days of the trek when they moved from Jorsale to Namche Bazzar they climbed 600 metres going up such a steep incline that they plodded. John Gully, the organiser of the trek, calls it the "gully crawl" as it took them six hours. Being passed by porters and Sherpas who did it in 45 minutes with 40 kg packs on their backs was somewhat daunting.

One of the best experiences was being given a blessing from Lama Geeshee. They were all given a red and orange string to put around their necks that he blessed. Jack says "that it was a moving experience".

However, the main objective of the trip was to take part in the reforestation of that area. Edmund Hilary, rightly or wrongly, has been blamed for the deforestation of this region. The goal of the trek was to be part of the planting of trees. It is hoped that over ten years, one million trees will be planted. The ACG Senior College students potted the first seedlings and put up a green house on the way up to Ghart. At Ghart, there is a school and our students took toys for the children that had been collected at our College. When they presented the toys, together with pencils and pens, the children's looks were staggering. This is the first generation of children to go to school there as they are poor farmers' children. There was one teacher aged nineteen. On leaving, the children took the walk back with those on the trek as they were staying in the same village. Our students enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with this group of students and to get to know them.

The trek back took three days and was somewhat rushed. However, the team enjoyed retracing their steps because they saw things from a different perspective. They went past the nursery that they had begun to set up and had the pleasure of seeing it finished.

Jack is definite when he says that the trip was "for people that are willing to find something new both about themselves and the world and treasure that when they came back." This was not just a trip where you saved the money and simply went. It was a trip with a purpose.



1) Kathmandu - Bouddhanath. 2) Khumjung Village.
3) Airstrip at Lukla. 4) Ghaat school.
5) Tengboche - View of the mountains (Everest in left behind).

L to R: Jack Tolley, Michael Lockie, Luke Mannell, Georgina Norrie and Michael Dick.

