A POEM FROM THE HKBRAS VISIT TO EAST BHUTAN, FEBRUARY 2003

JOHN WILSON

HKBRAS TOUR TO EASTERN BHUTAN

This is the tale of the RAS tour
to Eastern Bhutan in two thousand and four.

There's something not right there - now what can it be?

Oh yes, the year was in fact 2-0-0-3.

The tour was the brainchild of Doc Brian Shaw,
who'd been to East Bhutan and wanted some more
of its gompas and chortens and drubdas and dzongs;
to spend a few days well away from the throngs
of Chinese New Year in polluted Hong Kong.

If you'd know more about it, come list to my song.

Let us turn first to Felicity Shaw,
who said she 'assisted' but then did much more.

Those in her 'bus never felt spirits sag,
and often they heard the cry - 'Where's my red bag?'
He's so very careful - avoids every drop -

and never complains when we shout 'photo-op!' ['comfort stop'].

Kinga and Karma and Nawang our guides,

and Dechen the driver and Pinto besides,

gave very good service for EMTT;

we hope that their futures will be complaint-free.

But as for the rest of the shower on those 'buses,

who all fell asleep while we drove through high passes,

just what can I say to instruct and amuse?

Who first shall I finger - who next shall I choose?

There's Tony the tripod who kept us all guessing -

What f-stop? What angle? What focus lock?

At Senghor, the first of our al fresco messing,

we heard Tony say "Now then, who's got my rock?"

Mary wears her single status with pride;

but en route to Bumtaling she had a personal guide.
In camp Mary mentioned that 'sound travels fast.'

At six the next morning we had peace at last!

Did Nicholas try to abandon his wife?

Did he say to the driver 'Now drive for your life'?

Did he know that his Lorene had been left behind?

I'm sure that he didn't - he's not that unkind!

Angus hails from Scotland,

where real men go bare, forsooth.

If he takes his kaftan off,

all you'll see is - hair? The truth

is only known to Bebe, his clever lawyer wife.

(She's the one who's expertise is matrimonial strife!)

National Workforce gangs sit breaking stones;

at the end of the day they must have aching bones.

Ah yes, that reminds me - Sir David, our knight,

would like to see Bhutan tourism more bright,
but not by the use of electrical schemes

with cables and pylons which shatter our dreams.

But put in some plumbing, and finish the floors,

and fix all the wiring and make sure the water's hot!

(We'll all drink to that.)

Brian C. flew in from London, just to join the Bhutan tour.

If you ask him 'Was it worth the effort?' He will answer 'Sure.

I have seen the Himalayas, I've enjoyed the clear blue sky.

I have seen the zoars and takins and the yaks in pastures high.

I have swum in icy rivers, I have drunk the Tiger beer.

So of course I think it's worth it to have come from there to here!' 

For Italian chic in the matter of shoes,

don't look any further, I know who I'd choose.

Gigi and her mother Giovanna must know

how to find rugged footwear, for they don't walk slow!

Now speaking of shoes, there's a tale I can tell

about a nice couple I've got to know well.
The big photo-takers on 'bus number two
were Jenny and Colin. He's at Hong Kong U.

But if you should ask him to publish the fact,
he will say 'Not at all, I have far too much tact.'

But if you should ask for the time of the Day,
Colin will grimace, while Jenny will say -
'There's a watch — in my shoe!'

Phylis's costume is bright as the prayer flags,
flying on poles from bridges and high crags.

When all the cranes flew away, I should think
that Phylis's face must have turned brightest pink!

If you tell walkers to get on the 'bus,
the last ones to get on are Andrew and Russ.
They go down the road like a shot from a gun,
and never buy trinkets or have any fun:

except in the river, with little to wear,
they plunge in and splash and come puffing for air.

The name of the river was Dangmi - I knew
you would laugh when I told you the name of the ch'uu.

'Dang me if it isn't a great big white whale
got into our river; that sure makes a tale!' 

Peter was happy once we'd been inside
the Trashigang dzong with its floorboards so wide.

But as for the rest of the travelling herd,
our Peter was clear - he just gave them the bird.

No, that's not quite fair; he's Hon. Sec. of the RAS,
and has to make sure that good things come to pass.

In the matter of birthdays, a party to make,
there's never a doubt that our Pete takes the cake!

Marlene came a cropper on the road from Pele La;
fell down on the black ice - nearly got hit by a car.

But she came up smiling - Marlene's never sad for long.
She was right as rain next morning when we visited a dzong.

And finally, Kevin and Sarah and Rocky,
my time's nearly up - you should count yourselves lucky.
I know you had some jolly times in the bar,
but you didn’t play dice,
the Bhutanese vice,
even in noisy Mongar!

So Brian - we thank you for taking us there,
and bringing us back, all safe and secure.
With lots of felicitous tips from your wife,
you took us to Bhutan - and gave us a life!

So goodbye to Trongsa and Wangdi Phodrang,
and Trashigang Yangtse, and others spelt wrong
by putting an “r” in that doesn’t belong.
We’ve loved being with you, but now we must go
back to our own houses in Shamshuipo,
or Shanghai, or London; wherever we live.
We’ve all deeply drunk of the spirit you give.

So goodbye to Thimpu, Bumthang, Bumtaling,
and those other Bhutanese place-names that ring
like Somerset farmers all counting their sheep.

We’ll no more disturb you - in rest may you sleep.

Over — and out!

JOHN F. WILSON
PARO, BHUTAN
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