



The Glacier Trust

Remembering Robin Garton & moving forward positively

Jamie Forsyth (Co-Director)

On the 25th September 2015, our founder and Director of The Glacier Trust, Robin Garton, tragically went missing in the Glencoe area of Scotland. As such an experienced walker, trekker, mountaineer, and even ice climber (at the heroic age of 69!), a solo hike in the Scottish Highlands was well within Robin's comfort zone. It was a glorious day up in Glencoe on the 25th and he would have been in his element, as he was most times I was with him. Even up five and a half thousand meters after five gruelling days trekking into the middle of the Himalayas, Robin was always on top form and totally dedicated to what he was doing, which, to the huge benefit of thousands of the poorest Nepalese farmers and their families, was often raising money for The Glacier Trust and ensuring this money was spent in the most efficient and effective manner. This mantle has now been passed on; to the new Co-Directors, Jamie Forsyth (that's me) and Richard Allen, and to the board of trustees, Peter Osborne, Andy

Rutherford, Juerg Merz and Craig Hutton.

The Trust is in a strong position, and we are currently running four Climate Change Adaptation projects and also have an education programme, now focused on periglacial/permafrost science that is beginning to gain traction and thrive. To continue to make a positive difference in Nepal we are in the process of restructuring by setting up a Project Evaluation Committee that will function with the goal of ensuring that all our projects are scientifically sound as well as appropriate, socially, culturally, economically and environmentally. This committee, or the PEC as it will be known, is to be made up of members with specific scientific expertise in the areas in which the Trust is working. For example, one member who has also agreed to become a Trustee is Dr Craig Hutton of the University of Southampton, who's socio-environmental research, much of which is centered on the South Asian region, will be invaluable to many of our climate change adaptation projects; we also have Associate Professor Steve Gurney from the University of Reading who is highly experienced in periglacial and permafrost science



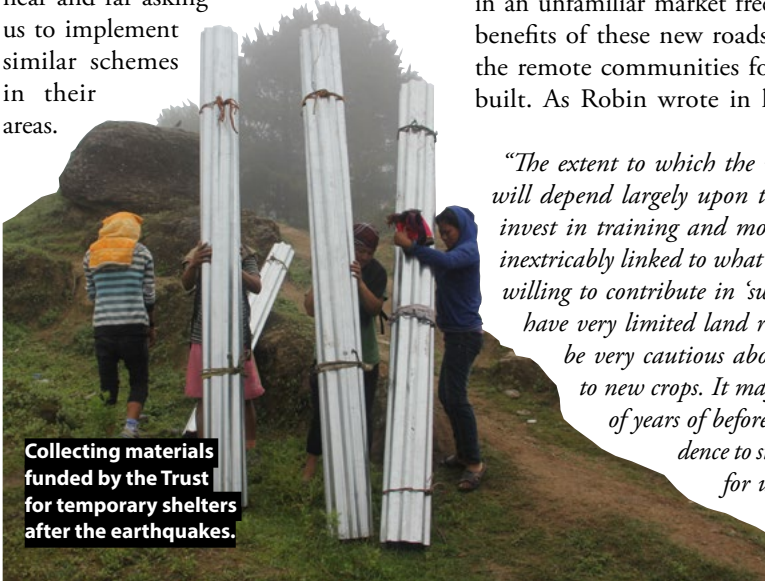
so will be a great benefit to our education programme; and we also benefit from the priceless help of Dr Juerg Merz (a current trustee) and Richard Allen (one of the two Co-Directors), who have been with the Trust since its inception and have both lived in Kathmandu for many years now. Juerg and Richard will offer a sound scientific background as well as a unique view of the social, cultural and political facets which are a factor in every project we run.

Robin's wife Lee and children Will and Francesca are very supportive of our restructuring and forward planning, and are delighted that Robin's legacy is secure. We hope that a Garton will join us as a trustee in the near future.

Nepal's turbulent year and The Glacier Trust's work

It has been a turbulent year in Nepal: two major earthquakes devastating many lives, a new constitution (65-years in the making), and the recent troubles in the border area which have led to fuel shortages all over the country. Whatever way you look at it, it has been an eventful year of fluctuations for Nepal. However, in this time of challenges the Trust has shown true stability through our solidarity with the communities with which we work, and as a result our projects continue to grow and increase the quality of many lives.

Having been lucky enough to travel with Robin to Nepal on his trip in March of last year, Co-Director Jamie got to see first-hand how we at The Glacier Trust are helping some of the poorest and remotest communities across the mountainous regions of Nepal. Whilst in country, we visited all four of our currently running climate change adaptation projects, and it was a joy to see Robin's principles of 'small is beautiful' being implemented so aptly, and with such commitment of time and patience by the dedicated implementing partners. Jamie was also inspired to see first-hand the practical and highly tangible solutions that the Trust was providing to these communities. A true measure of this success can be seen through the many requests we have had from communities both near and far asking us to implement similar schemes in their areas.



Collecting materials funded by the Trust for temporary shelters after the earthquakes.



Terraces of onion and cabbage, grown by a community in the Solukhumbu district in which we work.

Robin really had an excellent grasp on how to use small amounts of money to make the biggest impact possible, this was partly due to his talent for identifying dedicated and focused implementing partners.

The ongoing Rural Access Programme (RAP) (funded by DFID) has introduced a massive road building scheme throughout rural Nepal that has opened up otherwise isolated markets to farmers. At TGT we are building on DFIDs scheme by educating communities in our project areas on how to grow additional cash crops and rear livestock for market, and to provide the market nous needed by inexperienced farmers in an unfamiliar market free-for-all so that the benefits of these new roads will really benefit the remote communities for which they were built. As Robin wrote in his last newsletter:

"The extent to which the whole RAP succeeds will depend largely upon the time NGOs can invest in training and monitoring and this is inextricably linked to what the communities are willing to contribute in 'sweat equity'. Farmers have very limited land resources and need to be very cautious about designating these to new crops. It may take quite a couple of years of before they have the confidence to start growing anything for untested markets. Set against that, larger NGOs are anxious

to keep costs of time and staff to a minimum in order to present a low overhead profile to their sponsors and the donating public. They have a very difficult balance to achieve."

This is where the funding commitment from The Glacier Trust linked with the time spent ensuring that each project is truly successful and sustainable is so impressive. We give training, materials and, probably most importantly, *time* to effect positive changes.

An example of this comes from one of our projects in the Himalayan foothills where farmers, instead of focusing on producing just enough food for the year to sustain their families, are now focusing on learning how to grow cash crops out of season using poly tunnels funded by you, and then being trained on how to bring this additional crop to market. This creation of an additional crop leads to additional cash which means an improved ability to adapt to unforeseen changes brought about by climate change. We have also been seeing more social cohesion throughout the implementation of our projects, within community meetings, and in the effort and teamwork needed in tree planting or in constructing polytunnels; and on a grander scale in the combined 'sweat equity' from local farmers needed for the construction of the [Agro-Forestry Resource Centre \(AFRC\)](#), in Deusa VDC in Solukhumbu District. In

addition, the creation of co-operatives that enable the whole community to deliver their additional crops to market has been a great bonding experience for many communities.

Just a month after Robin and Jamie returned to the UK, the first of two devastating earthquakes hit Nepal on the 25th April 2015. Although the Trust is not an emergency relief organisation, and because the Government of Nepal funnelled international aid into just the six most affected districts, we immediately had an obligation to the communities that we support - all but one of 'our' communities were outside of these six districts. Unfortunately as most of our project areas are adjacent to the six most affected districts, the damage was still severe. In particular was the village of Waku (Solukhumbu District), already a landslide prone area, where 849 houses were damaged or destroyed making them uninhabitable. As the monsoon was approaching in June, a [number of interventions](#) needed to be made in the form of: temporary shelter, to last out the rainy season; distribution of improved seeds for rice and fast growing vegetables, to cover immediate nutritional needs; and distribution of saplings and seedlings of various fruit, fodder and native forest trees, to compensate for the high demand on forest timber for reconstruction of the many, many



The AFRC from week one through to completion.

houses damaged or destroyed. Also, very importantly, the Trust funded a month and a half of vocational training on earthquake resistant carpentry and masonry, resulting in 44 new 'seismic resilient' carpenters and masons! Now the construction is underway and we have every confidence in our communities, as we have seen before the incredible amount of time and effort they voluntarily put into the projects we run. Now your kind donations are needed to build on this recovery through expanding our existing projects and some exciting new ones that are in the pipeline...



A proud farmer with her cabbage crop ready to harvest and sell.

Projects in the pipeline!

We have a number of ways to move forward with The Glacier Trust; we have applications from our existing project partners for more funding to extend the good work already done and, following consultations with our partners, we now wish to add a few extra project strings to our bow, through:

A programme of introducing sustainable tree cropping throughout our Solukhumbu based communities. Essentially this will increase household income through the sale of nuts, fruits, and coffee whilst also allowing the intercropping of herbs, vegetables and other marketable crops between the tree rows. This area is also highly prone to dangerous landsliding, therefore the tree planting in this project will be done in such a way so as to act as a form of bioengineering thereby stabilising slopes and reducing the risk of landslides. This programme will build on the great success so far of the AFRC and will cost £30,000 in total.

A programme introducing improved cooking stoves (ICS) at a number of villages on the Chinese/Tibetan border. As some of you may recall, we have done this sort of project before with great success, markedly improving health in the home by reducing the use of open hearth fires that cause numerous respiratory problems, especially to children, and also reducing the amount of wood used as the improved stoves need between 30-50% less wood than an open hearth fire! This programme will cost £25,000.

Possible extensions to existing projects: TGT has worked with Practical Action on some very successful climate change adaptation projects in the foothills of the Himalayas teaching communities sustainable farming practices in farmer field schools. We also work with [Helvetas](#), a Swiss NGO, teaching Mid-Hills communities organic farming practices in our Integrated Pest Management project. We may wish to extend both of these projects.

Now we just need a bit of 'sweat equity' from you in the form of donations, please!

Our Education Programme

All of the aforementioned current and pipeline projects come under our Climate Adaptation projects programme. However we also fund a Higher Education programme which is starting to gain some traction in Nepal through an increasingly popular annual summer school and field trip, both organised and implemented by the Trust.

In his report of last year, Robin mentioned that we had now changed the focus of our higher education programme to permafrost and periglacial studies in Nepal. To put this into context, the periglacial domain is the area immediately below a glacier that is permafrost rich (this is rock or soil, frequently mixed with ground ice) that is at or below 0°C for two or more years), and thawing of this, currently exacerbated by climate change, influences a broad range of environmental systems including water resources and chemistry, erosion, vegetation change and even landslides. At present, the communities with which we work all sit below the periglacial realm; however Robin always aimed to serve vulnerable communities in all parts of the Nepalese mountains. As robust scientific data plays the base for all of our projects, we are unable to reach the higher mountain communities in the periglacial zone because a severe lack of academic study in this area limits our knowledge of the appropriate way to proceed with a project. Robin wanted to change this. By working with academic institutions in Nepal



The HiPer summer school and field trip.



Having picked up where Robin left off, the support and solidarity that the members of the TGT team and our supporters have shown has been incredible. Please, please make a donation if you can, as the work Robin has set in motion is imperative, timely and inspiring and it needs to continue. Your whole donation will hit the spot as our core costs are covered by external grants. Thankyou.



Robin, doing what he did best.

to put periglacial/permafrost studies on the agenda (and hopefully onto a Nepalese university's curriculum), we aim to fill this academic void. It is a crucial subject for a country where 20% of the landmass is permanently frozen.

We've now run two Himalayan Periglacial (HiPer) summer schools and one field trip over the past two years that have all been really successful. The summer schools teach students the basic science and then push them to construct their own views and theories on an area of mountain periglacial science that interests them. Leading onto an assessed presentation and report, the top three students of each summer school are awarded a place on the following year's field trip where they conduct the fieldwork component for their master's dissertation. In this way, as well as educating and enabling students in this area, the Trust, the students and the local partner university, gain primary research data, which may form the basis of PhD theses. The more annual events TGT can organise, the more attention and traction this important area of scientific research will establish. And you know you must be on the right track when a student's feedback form includes the line "this was one of the best training events I have ever attended"!

Another main outcome has been teaching the students how to think critically and articulate their thoughts. Teaching at some universities in Nepal mainly consists of lectures with little space and time for discussions and seminars; TGT believes that the more dialogue between teacher and student the better, trying to bring students out of their shells by encouraging them to question what they are being taught. More funding is needed to continue this incredibly important programme.

Donate by cheque: by sending a cheque made out to 'The Glacier Trust' at: Roundway House, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2EG.

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Donate online: via our brand new website (www.theglaciertrust.org), just go to the donate button and you'll be guided from there. Please also leave a comment on what you think of us and the work we do in Nepal, and 'Like' us on our Facebook and Twitter pages as this is an extremely powerful way of building awareness of The Glacier Trust and spreading the word of what we do!