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Occasional Newsletter 2/2015

1st October, 2015

Dear friends and well-wishers of Ogyen Choling Foundation,

This newsletter covers the period from May to September, 2015. With the monsoon rain, this period was the low season for tourism and visitors to the museum. Nevertheless, as you can read below it was eventful.

The Museum: There were few visitors (less than 100 from June 1st to August 30th) to the museum, so the Development Officer could work on repairs. With some additional help, he started to fill in the gaps between the planks in all the rooms of the top floor (fourth floor) of the museum with strips of wood. The rooms look much better and there is also less dust. We plan to do the same in all the other rooms of the museum. The floors will then be washed and polished. We think this will not only add to the aesthetics but that the polish may even stop the wood worm activity.

The collection of 36 masks received from Mr. Leo Caminada found a perfect space on the third floor landing of the museum. Leo, a Swiss, worked as a forest engineer in Bumthang and Paro in the 1970s and the 1980s. He was interested in wood working and during his time had a mask maker in Bumthang make masks for him to take with him when he returned to Switzerland. After his last visit to the Ogyen Choling museum Leo decided to return the mask to Bhutan and so donated his collection to the Ogyen Choling museum. We are indebted to Leo Caminada for his most thoughtful donation.



The line of masks displayed in the museum

Special visitors to Ogyen Choling: Bhutan Broadcasting Service(BBS), the only television and radio station in Bhutan, came to Ogyen Choling in June to do a programme on the museum and a second programme interviewing me (Kunzang Choden) as part of their celebration of Bhutanese writers for the Reading Year.

Also in June, curious villagers, both adults and children, gathered around Mr. Fust, a famous Swiss alp horn player, when he started playing his alp horn at the gate. With a little coaxing, Jamyang, a *gomchen* (lay monk) from the village brought out his *dungchen* (a temple horn) for a charming duet of two great horns.



The alphorn and the dungchen



Close inspection of the strange "dungchen"

In July filmmaker (and Ogyen Choling family member) Dechen Roder came, with a cast and crew of 31 to shoot scenes for her feature film "Honeygiver among the dogs." It was reassuring to have this group of young enthusiastic and disciplined people in the compound for over a week.



Filming in the village

Construction and renovations: In May most of the main structures for the residential buildings were completed and the masonry team left Ogyen Choling to concentrate on their beekeeping activities. Fortunately we could recruit two very competent masons from India to continue work on the residential buildings and to start renovation works in the old guest house and the remodeling of the shagor rooms.



Residence of Ugen Rinzin's family

Caretaker repainting: Again the caretaker of our temples went beyond his terms of his reference and took on the task of doing some minor repairs and painting one of the *chortens* outside the gate. After several days of dedicated work, the *chorten* is already beginning to look refreshed and beautiful. The village and the community are grateful for such initiatives

New Flagpole: Every ten years the flagpole for the *Ihadar* (the giant flagpole outside the Ogyen Choling manor) is replaced. This year in August the villagers helped to pull the pole that measured 14 arm spans from the forest to the compound. This was in preparation for the annual flag hoisting ritual, *Kangsoi* which happens in October or November.



Temple care taker painting the chorten



Pulling the flag pole

Local solutions to universal menaces: As the crops began to ripen we were preoccupied with what environmentalists euphemistically call “human wildlife conflict”. During the day we listened to stories of bear and wild boar destruction and at night we could hear the people shouting away the predators. The predators came into the village gardens and helped themselves to the fruits and beehives. In the absence of other weapons for protection we devised a rattle with old empty tins to protect our second beehive after the first hive was completely destroyed. We had planned to serve honey to our guests from our own hives but now we will have to supplement our stock.



Volley ball: In the summer we converted the area in front of the temple into a volley ball court. We wanted to provide a public common space where young people from the village could spend their leisure time. So far we have had very positive responses to the court with people coming to use the space almost every evening. Seeing the enthusiasm of the village we are convinced that there is a need for public space for sports. In our future plans for a parking space we will include space for a volleyball and possibly basketball courts.

Road to Tang: In August, all of us were very excited when we saw serious construction work for improving the existing farm road. Eventually the road, which was once dreaded by all drivers, will be blacktopped. This is wonderful for the valley and we anticipate this will motivate more visitors to visit Ogyen Choling.

As we go into the busy season tourist season (September- December) which is also the season of festivals in Bumthang we anticipate many more visitors to the museum .

You can look forward to our annual report which beside accounts of events and activities will include a report of achievements following the annual workplan and the financial report. In the meantime, for regular updates follow us on facebook at: Ogyen Choling Museum

We thank you warmly for your interest and we look forward to your continuing encouragement and support.

With best wishes

Kunzang Choden
(Executive Trustee)