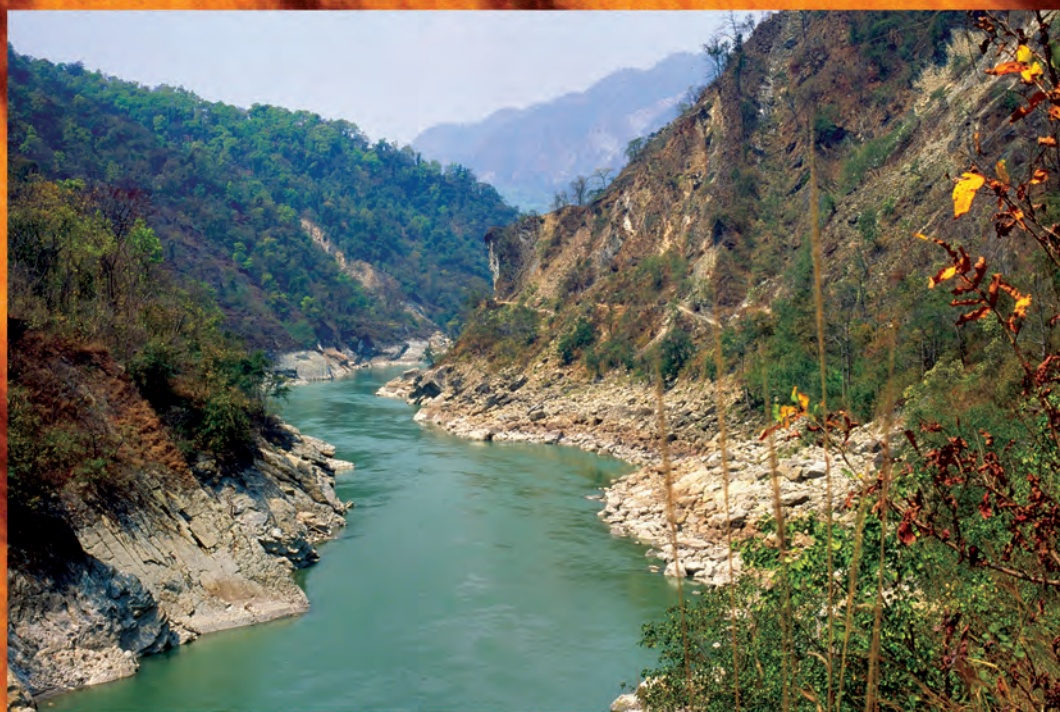




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BEHIND JIM CORBETT'S STORIES

AN ANALYTICAL JOURNEY TO 'CORBETT'S PLACES'
AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS



Guest author: Marc Newton (UK)
Foreword by Peter Byrne (USA)

LOGOS

Priyvrat Gadhvi (India)
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An Analytical Journey to
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Unanswered Questions

Guest author: **Marc Newton (UK)**

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Editor: **Bob Segrave**

Cover photos:

- (1) Jim Corbett (from Oxford University Press archives)
- (2) If you are trekking towards Chuka and Thak, you will be travelling along the mighty Sarda River. India is on your left side and Nepal is on your right, with Sarda acting as the border. This photo was taken by Manfred Walts during our 20 km trek to Chuka and Thak in April 2012

Back cover photo:

On the 19th April 2014, the authors of this book decided to commemorate their hero's death date by lighting a candle on the overhanging rock in Champa gorge, where Corbett killed his first man-eater

Book cover design: **Aleko Jikuridze**

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Foreword

In his life time, the India domiciled Jim Corbett, a man of Irish ancestry, lived as did many a colonial in British India, working hard to make a simple living and, through the monsoon months of every year, enduring the tropic heat of the Indian sun, the flies, the mosquitoes, the inevitable fevers and dysentery, and the inscrutable minds of the colony's enigmatic, indigenous people. In regard to the latter, he had one great advantage and that was, being born in India, he was thoroughly fluent in the language and customs of the great subcontinent and understanding of the simplicity and superstition that was with them a way of life.

As we know, most of his working life was spent at a place called Mokhamet Ghat, a ferry crossing on the Ganges River in the state of Bihar and his job was, simply, overseeing the shipping of goods from a railhead on one side of the river to another, on the other side. He worked there for many years until, at the turn of the century, something happened that changed his life forever and, in time, made him a legend in the land as one of its great naturalists and hunters... an incident that every student of his life and reader of his books knows under the name Champawat. For at that time he was asked by the British authorities in Naini Tal if he would undertake the hunting and shooting of a notorious man-eating tigress, one that had, until then, killed and devoured two hundred people in far west Nepal and more than two hundred in India.

Without hesitation, asking only that all other hunters be excluded from the field while he would be hunting the dangerous big cat and that the government reward money offered for killing the animal be withdrawn, Corbett set out to find the tiger and, after a short though highly dangerous hunt, was able to bring it to bay and put it down.

The successful shoot immediately imbued him with a reputation as a skilled shikari (hunter) to where, when another man-eater appeared on the scene in the same hill country, he was again asked by officialdom to go after it. With his reputation as a man-eater hunter firmly established, he was asked by the government to go after six more man-eating tigers and two man-eating leopards, all of which, over the course of four decades, he managed to put down.

Then, moving into his later years and with his health a little in the balance, he retired from the field and started writing about his life and his extraordinary hunting exploits, and in the process gained international fame. But he also brought to the attention of the public, through his great books, questions that to this day have never been satisfactorily answered, questions that have defied explanation and created great curiosity among his readers and now, the advent of this excellent book – to which I am honoured to be asked to write this brief Foreword.

The writers of this fine work – five authors from five continents – have done something that is long overdue with those of us who have studied Corbett's life. They

have conscientiously taken the time – time that has actually included energetic field work at the sites of some of Corbett's great hunts in Kumaon and Garhwal – to look deeply into some of the incidents that Corbett discusses in his books, especially the ones that have given rise to unanswered questions which same, many of us, to this day, find intriguing.

One of these is the source of, and reason for, a mysterious scream in the night from a village that was known to be totally deserted. Another is the question of whether Corbett ever hunted out of the hill country of northwest India-in this case in Nagpur, in central India. Another is the mystery of the Champawat bungalow, and strange happenings there. Yet another is the question of the deadly post World War 1 “war fever” and the possibility that it may have been the cause of what turned a harmless, Indian hill country leopard into one of deadliest man-eaters of all time, the dreaded man-eater of Rudraprayag.

This fine book, in the opinion of someone who has spent more than fifty years in the jungles of north India and the Nepal Terai – with five of them as an amateur hunter and twenty of them as a professional – is required reading for anyone interested in Carpet Sahib – as he was known to the native – and his extraordinary life as a hunter, naturalist, author, and above all – great humanitarian.

Peter Byrne, February 2014.

Author of

GONE ARE THE DAYS,

GENTLEMAN HUNTER

HUNTING IN THE JUNGLES AND MOUNTAINS OF NEPAL.

Acknowledgements

There's a big number of people the authors would like to thank and acknowledge, each one of whom individually contributed in a direct or indirect way in the making of this book.

Firstly, the authors would like to express their gratitude towards Peter Byrne, who was one of the first Corbett-admirers to visit places mentioned in Corbett's books and document the same in the form of a book, which acted as a primer to our trips and research at these places. Peter shared pictures from his visits to Corbett-related places in 1975, when he would have seen the places just as Corbett would have a few decades ago. Thak village, now abandoned, is seen in full life in his pictures.

The authors would like to acknowledge all Corbett-lovers and enthusiasts who have attempted to go on his trails over the years and decades, including those who remain unknown to us. The names, some of whom we know and other's whom we discussed, include Durga Charan Kala, who wrote the first well-researched biography of Corbett, James Armstrong, who was also amongst the first visitors to these places, Jerry Jaleel the head of Jim Corbett Foundation, who has also written a biography of Corbett, A.J.T Johnsingh and IFS officers he mentions in his articles on Corbett-country, Joel Lyall, David Blake (formerly known by a different name), Richard Allen, Keith McAfferty- an acclaimed author himself, Siddharth Anand and his parents, late Omi and Mrs. Sumi Anand, Pankaj Saran Srivastava, and several others whose spirit of enquiry on Corbett we share and admire.

Special thanks are due to the descendants of the Corbett-family and Corbett's friends, many of whom were contacted and who contributed generously, as did Naresh Bedi, Sridhar Balan, Henry Walck Jr, his Son Brian Walck and his family who allowed us access to the well preserved skin of the Thak Tigress.

We would also like to thank Kamal Bisth and his team from Wildrift adventures, our camping and logistics suppliers who accompanied us on our trips provided wonderful meals, tents and necessary utilities. Kamal also enthusiastically worked with us at various places on the research itself, and we were witness to a new Corbett enthusiast shaping up.

A special mention is due for Rushika (14) and Jayalukshmi Gheerawo (12), the lovable daughters of Kotetcha Kristoff, who accompanied us on our often exhausting treks through the mountains and jungles, full of energy and fun, who made our trips livelier through their enthusiasm

The cherished trips and this work would not have been possible without the support of families and friends – and we express our deepest gratitude to Priyvrat Gadhvi's parents, his wife Vratika Gadhvi, Grant Matthew, Reis and Nima Flora. Special thanks to Bob Segrave for his editing skills, and Yuri Bakhtadze for his computer support and help in making a film about our trips to Kumaon.

Introduction

The mention of 'Jim Corbett' to a nature lover who hasn't read Corbett's books instantly brings to his or her mind that most famous abode of Tigers in present-day Uttarakhand – the Jim Corbett National Park, named after a mystical and legendary hunter of folklore who bravely shot man-eating tigers and leopards, yet who was also a conservationist, one of the earliest voices in defence of the jungle and its denizens. To the individual who has read Corbett and about Corbett, and who thus forms a part of the legion of Corbett admirers spanning several decades, the mystery and legend of the man only deepen!

Jim Corbett (1875-1955), hunter-conservationist – a paradoxical truism which is not the only oxymoron associated with his name. He was also an Indian Englishman – who left India when she became independent and yet who, in the evening of his life wrote movingly of the country he much loved through an evocative work, *My India* (1952), a reticent story-teller – who never much fancied his skills as a writer yet captured the imagination of millions around the world through his books, and towards the later years of his life, a shy celebrity – whose stories, despite being confined to the jungles and small villages of a remote region in North India, found resonance with an audience cutting across countries, continents, ages and generations.

It would be natural to attach a degree of flamboyance and celebrity with perhaps the most well-known name associated with wildlife in the world – a famous hunter, conservationist, celebrated author of best-selling books who lends his name to one of the last remaining natural homes of one of the world's most charismatic megafauna – the Royal Bengal Tiger. Yet, paradoxically Corbett was the epitome of simplicity and modesty.

It is perhaps in these paradoxes and curiosities associated with Jim Corbett that the origin of this book lies. This is not a biography – six have already been written – Corbett himself would have felt that's probably enough. This is rather an effort that emanates from a combination of the hearts of imaginative and curious readers of Corbett with the minds of analytically inclined & research-oriented professionals. It is an endeavour to bring to the reader the places, facts & theories associated with the legacy of Jim Corbett – to document locations, explain unanswered questions, and dispel errors in relation to Corbett's stories. We are grateful to all the authors who wrote about Corbett. The authorship of this book is the foremost symbol of Corbett's universal appeal - five authors from five continents, five different professions, different native languages and different age groups! Corbett's legacy is the adhesive that binds together this diversity, which is emblematic of the larger Corbett universe – the millions of admirers around the world who have enjoyed Corbett's stories and have vicariously experienced his adventures.

Never having thought of himself as a hero or his deeds of several years in helping poor & desperate villagers anything out of the ordinary, Corbett's writings present a man very matter-of-fact in his descriptions. In his introductory notes in the classic 'Man-eaters of Kumaon' (1944), he tells us of his endeavour to tone down the dramatic & sensational moments he experienced while in pursuit of man-eaters, yet the factual drama of his hunts is infectious and overpowering, transporting the reader to the scene of the action, with every repeated reading seeming like the experience relived!

It is to this imaginary picture that every Corbett lover forms in his mind about the stage and setting of his hunts that we bring the real places where some of his most famous encounters with man-eaters took place. We researched and travelled to places of these hunts, following in Corbett's footsteps, and confirming with in-depth analysis the exact locations of spots such as the rock where the Thak tigress met her end, the 'amphitheatre' where the Champawat man-eater was shot, the slate where the Chowgarh man-eater was killed and other such famous spots from Corbett's stories.

The book presents researched and documented facts on unresolved questions on Corbett's hunts – such as the mysterious case of the Nagpur man-eater and the factual date of the Chuka man-eater hunt.

Science-based perspectives are also offered on some of the queer experiences Corbett had while hunting some man-eaters, such as the mysterious human scream from the deserted village of Thak in 1938, or the strange experience he had while spending a night at a bungalow during the Champawat man-eater hunt in 1907.

The authors spent much time travelling to places and villages of Corbett's hunts in the forested areas of Kumaon – an enriching experience that made us re-live some of the experiences Corbett mentions in his books, and an experience desired by many-a-Corbett-fan!

True to Corbett's own strictly cautious and analytical methodology while trailing man-eaters, the authors maintained strict adherence to detailed analytical examination of every aspect of every finding, rigorously questioning and debating all emerging answers to the diverse set of queries we sought to address, and in some cases seeking advice from the world authorities on the subject. For instance, the rock where the Thak Tigress met her end was misrepresented by well-meaning but misinformed previous enquirers who went to identify it – and as a consequence the wrong place entered common belief as the site of that famous encounter between Corbett and the tigress. This book presents what we believe is the real site of the encounter, reinforced by data emerging from minute & detailed examination of Corbett description & presented with facts and pictures. Constant companions to the authors in their mission in Kumaon were Corbett's books and a compass, to trace as best possible sites of Corbett's encounters. A great tribute to Corbett's eidetic memory was the confirmation, in every detail, of the exact topography of the jungle places he describes in his books, some of which were written several decades after the encounter took place. We hope the read-

ers will find sufficient proof of our claims in the book. Apart from this, we have tried to present some aspects, which by their very nature cannot be presented irrefutably in a manner open to debate & further investigation. The book also contains a running commentary on the both trips (2012 and 2014), in the form of a trip Diary to enable the reader to enjoy and experience our visit to locations he or she shall most desire to visit in the future. A film-documentary, shot during our 2012 and 2014 trips and attached to this book, will bring an enhanced visual dimension to experience our trip, following footsteps of Jim Corbett.

Research

The elemental desire to know more about Jim Corbett and his life inevitably stems in a reader's mind while reading his stories, as the intrigued and engaged reader is taken apace with Corbett on his hunts, and vicariously imagines the situation, sights, experience and adventure through Corbett's uniquely dense yet lucid narrative.

In such 'desire to know more on Corbett', lies the origins of the authors' research, which was conducted arduously over the past several years, individually and jointly, across countries and indeed continents.

The primary desire, which led to the inception of this research on Corbett, was to visit and identify the precise locations of his famous hunts. This primer led to other distinctive aspects related to Corbett being pursued, until a first compilation was attained, which is presented in this book.

Given that Corbett's exploits were based in remote and rustic Kumaon and Garhwal, several accounts persist in locales where his hunts occurred. These stories, passed down generations, are not devoid of revisions, and hence special care had to be taken while examining sites, people and stories related to the subjects that were encountered.

While researching places, the authors maintained a disciplined and stringent adherence to Corbett's descriptions as the most reliable tool in the research, and any deviation from his description was rejected. An insidious aspect of researching the locales of Corbett's hunts is the terrain, which is quite bewildering and often inaccessible with dense overgrowth. In addition, occurrence of significant topographical changes over-time, effects of weather, shifting of land, filling up of spaces such as ravines, changes in paths and tracks, alterations in human settlements and other natural features make the locales a towering challenge to decipher and co-relate with Corbett's descriptions. That said, after careful scrutiny, the detail and memory of Corbett in recounting and depicting these places and their inherent features is gloriously validated, as we found his descriptions exceptionally accurate!

A careful reconstruction of events was attempted, while diligently following Corbett's words. Measurements were made and details strongly debated before agreeing on a specific location as the most plausible.

Data was unearthed on several interesting characters featuring in Corbett's stories. A detailed cross-examination of people, such as descendants, who proposed names and other information on such characters, was made, until the information was deemed to be reliable and plausible.

Individually, the authors researched aspects that were then presented to the group and examined for accuracy and plausibility

Amongst the authors, Dr. Manfred Watl (Germany) was the first to embark on Corbett's trails (2007). He visited several sites multiple times in the last decade, while taking excellent photographs of places of relevance and significance, which proved to be a very useful tool later in the research. Dr. Watl also wrote a detail-oriented account of our collaborative visits in 2012 and 2014, presented as diaries in this book. His work aided in narrowing the area of research significantly, thereby saving much time and effort. Manfred also contributed in-depth analyses of the reasons of big cats becoming man-eaters, an area where Corbett is still the biggest authority.

Dr. Joseph Jordania (Australia) made the first in-depth and scientific examination of a specific site of a Corbett hunt, and presented his finding for review to the larger Corbett community via the Jim Corbett Foundation of Canada. His find of the rock where Corbett killed the Thak tigress in 2011 became the inspiration for our common trip to Kumaon in 2012 and subsequently writing of this book. Dr. Jordania also established contact with Peter Byrne, a pioneering pursuer of Corbett who was amongst the first to visit places such as Thak, Chuka, Champawat and others way back in 1975.

Priyvrat Gadhvi (India) unearthed several findings that answered many lingering questions on Corbett's stories – such as the question of the mysterious 'Nagpur man-eater' referred to in a letter in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, discrepancies pertaining to hunts such as Rudraprayag and Chowgarh. Gadhvi researched at the National Archives of India where interesting items were found and also pursued descendants of people connected to Corbett, a highlight of which was to come in contact with the Walck family in the United States, in possession of the skin of the Thak man-eater, willed to Henry Walck by Corbett.

Preetum Gheerawo (Indian name Kotecha Kristoff, from Mauritius) made a detailed pursuit of important articles, such as Corbett's rifles and their present homes, his surviving video films and other rare items. Kotecha documented the whereabouts of Corbett man-eater skins, researched a significant and undocumented hunt, and made an account of numerous unnamed characters from Corbett's stories.

Fernando Quevedo de Oliveira (Brazil), an avid wildlife photographer, ably created a crisp video compilation of the various sites that were video-graphed during our tours in Kumaon, which would serve to succinctly showcase to a viewer the contours of places associated with Corbett's stories.

An important item of pursuit was a surviving copy of Corbett's original *Jungle Stories*, 1935, the prelude to *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, only a hundred copies of which

were printed. Considered the holy-grail of the Corbett universe, only about 2 or 3 copies of this work are said to survive. Enquiries were made with descendants of friends and relatives of Corbett, which originally yielded no results. An inaccessible copy was traced in the United States, with the probability of another being present in the country. A breakthrough was achieved when Kotecha Kristoff made contact with Mark Newton, our guest-author and the director of John Rigby and Co, an avid Corbett fan, who had recently received a well preserved copy in the United Kingdom, presented by a rare book collector.

Amongst the descendants of family & friends of Corbett, the authors established contact with the family of George Marshall, Jim's grand-nephew who resides in the United Kingdom. They graciously supplied rare pictures from the family collection. Also contacted were Sir William Ibbotson's family, a grandson's family living in South Africa who directed us to Ibbotson's son Michael and his family, residing in the United Kingdom. Another Corbett descendant contacted was Jonathan Lincoln-Gordon whose father David Lincoln-Gordon had a lot of contact with Jim during his East Africa years.

Numerous other attempts were made to glean pertinent bits of information on people who featured in Corbett's stories. Contact was made with Satbir Singh, the grandson of the Maharaja of Jind, a good friend of Corbett. Singh recalled his grandfather's close association with Corbett and the special Tiger skin labelled 'Jim's Tiger' that Corbett helped the Maharaja procure. The skin has since been lost or destroyed and the palace sold

Several attempts, including an advertisement in local newspapers in Champawat, were made to trace the descendants of the 'Tehsildar of Champawat', who assisted Corbett in his famous Champawat hunt in 1907. No success was achieved, and needless to say, this led to a veritable wild goose chase

The Oxford University Press offices in Mumbai were expected to have a treasure-trove of Corbett articles, copies of his manuscripts, letters and correspondences with RE Hawkins, his first biography by Marjorie Clough, photographs etc. Enquiries made received a positive response; however the pertinent material remained unattained.

Authors of several articles on Corbett, appearing in Indian and international publications, were corresponded with, including Dr AJT Johnsingh and Sridhar Balan. They graciously supplied useful information to assist in our work.

Naresh Bedi, of the famous wildlife film-maker duo Bedi Brothers, very kindly sent us a DVD of a documentary on Corbett made for the Uttarakhand Forest department, which has amongst other general information, priceless clips from Corbett's own recorded videos, including the video entitled '7 Tigers.'

The authors had the opportunity of visiting Akshay Shah in Ranikhet, a close associate of the late Durga Charan Kala, the historian who authored the first researched

biography of Corbett, a brilliant work entitled *Jim Corbett of Kumaon*, published in 1979. This gave the authors an opportunity to have an insight into Kala's pioneering work on Corbett.

A curious find was a 1946 edition copy of *Man-eaters of Kumaon* in Chuka village. A village family showed us the book, gifted to the family by James Armstrong during a visit in 1990, a name we often encountered in our research as one of the early pursuers of Corbett's legacy. Armstrong mentioned an address in Edinburgh on the book, but has since moved from that place, as enquiries at the address yielded no results. Written with pencil on the back of the book, were names of the two Tewari brothers, one of whom had been the victim of the Thak tigress.

In September 2013, a landmark research was published in *Nature* communications, entitled 'The Tiger genome and comparative analysis with Lion and Snow leopard genomes', the first ever whole genome sequencing of the Tiger, Lion and Snow Leopard. Priyvratt Gadhvi, one of the authors of the publication, referenced Corbett's 'Temple Tiger and more Man-eaters of Kumaon' (1954) on a discussion on the olfactory senses of Tigers, as a tribute to the great naturalist.

There are several hitherto unexplored aspects, people and places that remain from Jim Corbett's world as summons to Corbett admirers, to pursue and explore. We hope this forms the basis of our future editions or works.

The authors wish to emphasize that the research has been conducted in right earnest, with care taken to scrutinize discoveries and avoid mistakes. Many places of other hunts and aspects not included herein remain to be researched, and, also if contrarian findings vis-a-vis any detail contained herein are credibly established, we would welcome them as further steps towards bringing Corbett's legacy closer to his admirers.

In conclusion, we would like to state that the book is a token of gratitude to the great man – Jim Corbett and to the greater cause of environment protection and wildlife conservation that he espoused. We hope the readers have as much fun and joy reading it, as we have had writing it.

PRIYVRAT GADHVI, India

PREETUM GHEERAWO, Mauritius

MANFRED WALTL, Germany

JOSEPH JORDANIA, Australia

FERNANDO QUEVEDO DE OLIVEIRA, Brazil

PART ONE: PLACES

This part of the book deals with the places associated with Jim Corbett's historic hunts. Most of the precise sites of Corbett's hunts are almost impossible to establish because of the changing nature of the topography and the places themselves, but in some cases, when the hunts found their climax at well defined rocks, there is a much better possibility of finding them.

Here we have discussed the projecting rock at the Champa river amphitheatre, where the mortally wounded Champawat tigress made her last stand, the giant "school slate" where the story of the Chowgarh tigress found its conclusion, the four feet high rock with a ledge where the Thak tigress was shot from, and the ascending giant rock where the Thak tigress closely escaped death.

We give the full account of our search and the finds, with accompanying photos, complemented with our pros and cons about the places we found. We tried to make it possible for the Corbett followers to find these places easily if they decide to visit them.

The Champawat Tigris Amphitheatre

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

This paper is dedicated to the finding of the spot where the Champawat tigress, the first man-eater shot by Jim Corbett, met its end in dramatic circumstances after a scrappy beat on an early afternoon in the spring of the year 1907. Owing to its ancientness, this particular hunt, which is now over a century old and was already 36 years old when Corbett put it into writing, was very difficult to pursue. This is because of the fact that the main protagonists are long gone since at least two generations back, the lack of village names in the vicinity of the hunt given in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* (1944) and the extensive development that Champawat has undergone since then. Champawat has now become the main town of a district also called Champawat, which was formerly called the Eastern Almora. The finding of the exact spot could not have been possible without the reconnaissance job done by Manfred Walzl in 2007 and by a stroke of good luck back in April 2012. In April 2014 the site was again investigated until the village of the last victim was found and also confirmed the location of the famous haunted bungalow.

Prologue - 2012 Campaign for the Champawat site

After having set-off from Chuka, done the 28 kilometres walk to Thuligad, gone to Tanakpur to book the Champawat Tourist Rest House (an undertaking of the Uttarakhand Government), a final drive for three and a half long hours to Champawat was still necessary. That day (13th April, 2012) seemed never to end till finally we were in our rooms under a chilling 8°C temperature. Dr Jordania and Priyvrat were still arguing as whether the shower in their room produced a water temperature similar to or worse than the the Sharda River. I had quickly given a shower to my little girls and was eagerly waiting for Manfred to come with the beers and our dinner that he had proposed to fetch for us from the Champawat Bazaar. Owing to the hard day we had, girls having their dinner and while drinking the no-need-to-put-in-the-fridge-beer (8°C beer is not that bad!), plans were being made for the next day. Although plans we had made in plenty when enjoying our food and drink, but no one dared to remind the party that we had no exact starting point to begin with the next day.

To be sincere with our readers, I wish to point that we didn't really expect to find the exact spot of the Champawat tigress hunt, but at least we had agreed the previous night that the key locations would be quite easy to locate. These involved (1) The Champa river (not yet called Lohaghat River) gorge, (2) The Champawat Forest Bungalow, (3) and the Gaudi village where Peter Byrne (Shikari Sahib, 2003) claimed the last victim of the tigress lived. Manfred, who had previously dealt with the Champawat

Forest bungalow in his previous visit said it is not too difficult to locate because it is found on the way from Champawat to Tamuli while driving along the Talla-Des Road (not immediately concerned with the Talla-Des Man-eater) and to leave the Talla-Des road at the junction after it crosses a bridge. Incidentally the bridge is on the river which carves its way through the Champa Gorge. Manfred further added that according to Peter Byrne and the guide from his last visit, the Champawat Forest bungalow is called the Phungar Forest bungalow, and on hearing that name, I could not find a suitable reason why this name has been assigned for it. Only in 2014, we had come to conclusions that it was named after the village Phungar. Anyway, the only importance it meant now was that the bungalow was to be our starting point for our investigation and by deduction on the story by Corbett, Gaudi village wouldn't be too far, the Champa gorge neither, this would however have been proved wrong later. While we had only tea as breakfast on that morning of the 14th April 2012, an early start was highly recommended because Dr Jordania and Priyvrat would have only half of this day to spend in the research and the next half would be their drive to Delhi Airport, to leave me, Manfred and the girls alone to tackle the next milestone, the Chowgarh tigress hunting spot.

The turn of luck – killing site found first

We split our group in two parts for there were two cars supplied to us by our tour operator, myself and the girls in the small Tata Indica and the rest of the boys in the Toyota, our drivers had had beforehand the instruction to go along the Talla-Des road in the direction of Tamuli and to ask where we should turn to go to the Phungar Forest Bungalow and the Champa gorge. The key point of the story, fortunately for you, dear Reader, is that you need not go too far in the narration to find that we reached the killing spot of the Champawat man-eater first by pure luck.

I had asked the driver of our car to enquire at a shop if we could buy a packet of biscuits for the girls, and the kind man of our driver Mr Shankar Singh Bakhuni said he would also take the opportunity to ask the direction as well. We were in the leading car and the boys' car had stopped behind us when our driver had entered the parking space in front of a shop . While being seated and the motor still running our driver had asked two things at the same time, yelling to the man standing in front of the trade if he had biscuits and if he knew where the Champawat gorge, Gaudi and Phungar Forest Bungalow road was. The man, appearing to be a shopkeeper told the driver, he didn't have biscuits but the 'Gaudi, forest, gorge and ...other things" he was looking for is to take the next junction to the left some 500 metres ahead and they sell biscuits there!! Two exclamations are needed here, I'm sure the reader will understand why.

It appeared strange, at first, that they sold biscuits at the Phungar Forest bungalow or next to the Champa gorge, but for me, the most important was to get something on the stomach for the girls, so I did not question the fact, when our driver signalled

to the driver of the boys' car to follow him. Now, Manfred who was in the boys' car suspected that something was going wrong, and later he confessed to me that he knew it was the wrong direction to the Phungar Forest Bungalow, but at last when we headed in that road, he noticed that we were on the opposite side of the Champa gorge, meaning the opposite side to where he investigated in 2007 and found the Phungar Forest Bungalow. Manfred was therefore not too worried because he now had an opportunity to see the Champa gorge from the other side. The road was winding, sloping and bumpy, till some 5kms after entering the road we reached a place where it was practically impossible to go further by car.

There was a small shop on the left of the road and when we enquired there ... BANG ON LUCK!!! The shopkeeper Gopal Singh Bohra is the grandson of Dhungar Singh, the latter, who as a kid, had assisted in the beat and hunt of the Champawat tigress in 1907. The village where his shop is situated adjacent to is Gaudi... and he sells biscuits! While digesting the exclamation, 'No Way', I said to myself, this was too good to be true. I was inclined to believe the local usual folklore of "My grandfather had hunted with Corbett", "My great grand uncle was there in 19..", "I will tell you the story of the man-eater...et all"; when visiting Corbett's hunting spots, was also deep-rooted here. I was still more convinced of the Corbett folklore when the shopkeeper proposed to get in our car to bring us to the spot where the famous tigress met its end. And he's asking Ten rupees too... not for the guided tour, I'm ashamed of having thought so, but this time to produce biscuits for the girls while myself, Manfred, Dr Jordania and Priyvrat went down the gorge to investigate. I felt sorry for misjudging the shopkeeper, Gopal Singh Bohra, who, being a good man, you even refused to take a tip for showing us the way, and the girls still remember the good vanilla and orange flavored biscuits he brought for them, God shall keep you safe and well.

Investigating down the gorge - The Amphitheatre

To admit one's mistake is said to redeem oneself, still I made another while we had made a 50 metres descent on a more or less not steep slope. I was convinced that it could not have been the place of the hunt because Corbett mentioned bracken and ringals (hill bamboos) as to the place where the tigress had entered the gorge after killing the 16-year-old girl, the last victim. But we were at the place the hunt ended, not where it started. My doubts had cost us some precious minutes though, before I went further down to investigate. The gradient of the slope was fairly easy, but still though one must guide himself properly through the hairpins cut on the ground by honey-collectors (evidence of their activity was found in a discarded bee-nest), to avoid a fall or rather a tumble of several metres in depth. While "Man-eaters of Kumaon" was being consulted in quick succession by Manfred, Dr Jordania and Priyvrat, one conclusion came into mind simultaneously for the three of them, which Manfred voiced out: "We're looking at the Amphitheatre..."

Now, before we proceed further to explain why we now had a stronger feel that we had arrived at the right place, it is necessary to explain where we were and how we reached there. I already said that we intended to go along the Talla-Des road to investigate the Forest bungalow there (Corbett's famous bungalow in which he experienced a super-natural event) and we should be able to find the place he proposes for the shooting of the tigress, but as already mentioned, the Talla-Des road junction was missed and we entered a junction to the left, almost north easterly towards Gaudi village. We did not know that we were heading towards Gaudi village, which Byrne (Shikari Sahib, 2003) mentions that the last victim of the Champawat tigress was from. The distance from this junction to the shop of Mr Gopal Singh Bohra or the temple found opposite to his shop is exactly 4.9kms. When Mr Bohra entered the car, we drove backwards and directed us to the place of shooting of the tigress which he knew from to his grandfather Dhungar Singh Bohra. We covered only 400 metres, arriving at the crest of an adjacent ridge to the road. The accuracy of our measurement obtained from the odometer reading of the Tata Indica is roughly out by 50 metres each way. This adjacent ridge slopes down towards the mouth of the gorge and at the point where it meets the river bed, the course of the river, which follows the gorge, changes direction, in that coming from a West direction, it is arrested by a rock wall on the opposite side of the gorge and its course goes due North after encountering this rock wall.

While copies of 'Man-Eaters of Kumaon' were being scanned for other details, Dr Jordania, who had been the only one of us equipped with a compass, encountered the following lines in his book which Corbett writes:

"I was sitting on the south edge of a great amphitheatre of hills, without a habitation of any kind in sight. A stream entering from the west had fretted its way down, cutting a deep valley right across the amphitheatre. To the east the stream had struck solid rock, and turning north had left the amphitheatre by a narrow gorge."

This matches both the place which we were contemplating while sitting, just like Corbett was, and the remarks Manfred made earlier about the 'amphitheatre' he is now attempting to describe us: This is the amphitheatre, very steep edges of a long running gorge interspersed with hills and ridges at every place where the river bends itself. The remark of Manfred came almost simultaneously with Dr Jordania checking the compass for directions.

The direction of the river course aligned itself perfectly with the red pointer of the compass towards the North. The river was entering the gorge from the west and was changing its course towards the North. This was an unmistakable characteristic of the place Corbett mentions while seeing the amphitheatre in the background. Now we were all convinced and the next step apart from going further down to investigate for more, was to reconstruct the scene of the beat and the paths and directions taken by all actors of the beat and hunt of that spring of 1907, tigress also comprising.

Discussing the validity of Gaudi as the last victim's village

Before reconstructing Corbett's path while going after the Champawat tigress or the path of the beaters on the next day, let us first discuss if the last victim was really of Gaudi village or not. While in 2012 it seemed very attractive to believe that Gaudi was the right village because of the proximity to the killing site, later on, there was mounting evidence to show that Gaudi could not have been the village which Corbett mentions in the italic quotes two paragraphs below.

Peter Byrne has been a very valuable help for us to reach anywhere near where we should have been. His book indicated us Gaudi village, a lucky mistake for us, while misguiding us to the village of the last victim but to fall on Gopal Singh Bohra who showed us the killing spot. Byrne also proposed a killing site for the Champawat man-eater in his book. Therefore we had to make further investigations to be sure that we were at the right spot. No attempt is made here to disprove Byrne's proposed site but only a reconstruction of events from *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* and the actual terrain to find any mismatch between Gaudi and what Corbett writes in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*:

"I was standing talking to him [tehsildar] while looking down a long sloping hill with a village surrounded by cultivated land in the distance, when I saw a man leave the village and start up the hill in our direction..."

To discuss the validity of our site let us quash our original beliefs (in 2012) that the last victim's village was from Gaudi, from the following points:

Gaudi is the village North-East to the killing spot. It is 500 metres to the proposed killing spot (Gopal Bohra's spot) and ranges until some 3kms away on the hills that border the Champa gorge towards Lohaghat. A very long and extended village indeed, not one that could have been surrounded by cultivation.

Habitations of Gaudi village are spread out on the hillsides that compose the land topography and at first we believed that at the foot of on one of these hills, the last victim was killed. In reality, the lowest habitations of Gaudi are still high up on the North Eastern side of the gorge, quite elevated indeed. This to avoid the rushing waters of the Champa river during the monsoon months.

If Gaudi was the village of the last victim, then the bungalow that Corbett stayed should have been overlooking the village for him to see a man start off hurriedly and head towards him. To have overlooked the village, there is no place higher than the village itself on this side of the gorge.

Manfred and I, had thoroughly investigated the village the next day after finding Dhungar Singh. We could not find any sort of ruins of an ancient bungalow nor any villager or even Gopal Singh Bohra's son, a forest officer could tell us that if a bungalow had existed in the near vicinity of their village.

Furthermore, there was not a single inhabitant of Gaudi that could tell us of a tiger victim, a girl aged sixteen, some 100 years ago, or even her subsequent relatives though they knew Corbett well.

In *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* we read that: “The tehsildar was waiting for me at the village. I explained the position to him and asked him to take immediate steps to collect as many men he could, and to meet me at the tree where the girl had been killed at ten o’clock the following morning. Promising to do his best, he left for Champawat, while I climbed the hill to the bungalow.” This obviously indicates that the village of the last victim is on the same side of the gorge as the Forest Bungalow (no crossing of gorge is mentioned).

The last point being very important, if we still assume Gaudi as the village, then the beat (or at least the assembled men) should have been collected there. But Gaudi is on the opposite side of the gorge’s amphitheatre. To have conducted the beat from Gaudi would have been contrary to what had been written in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*: “If I could collect sufficient men to beat the entire length of the ridge from the stream to the precipitous hill...” The precipitous hill as mentioned earlier is a feature of the amphitheatre on the Phungar side of the ridge.

So, in conclusion, Gaudi could not have been the place where the last victim was from. Phungar is on the side of the precipitous hill and the densely wooded patch slope. Let’s see why it is a better candidate.

Phungar as the village hosting the last victim and the bungalow

As quoted earlier from *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, the bungalow, which Corbett occupied when the last victim was carried by the tigress, overlooked the village. When we had been in Phungar in 2012, Manfred and I had concluded that the Phungar forest bungalow did not overlook Gaudi village, so initially it had been discounted as a potential candidate. But since Gaudi is no longer assumed as the correct village, then Phungar comes in actuality again. Just a line to tell you that from the beginning (i.e. since 2012) Manfred was the first to tell us that Phungar might still stand a better candidate for the bungalow location than Gaudi and that when Byrne affirmed the last victim was from Gaudi and the bungalow in Phungar, only one of them should stand good.

On the 18th April 2014, we had therefore set for Phungar first and found that the village had hosted the last victim of the Champawat man-eater. This account is found at the ‘People and Places’ section of this book. So if the last victim was of Phungar, then the Phungar forest bungalow must have been the famous bungalow where Corbett occupied and experienced a super-natural event. The relative of the last victim, a very frail old man, was therefore picked from the Phungar village and brought to the bungalow to share our lunch and for our interview.

During our three visits in April 2014 the bungalow was allegedly occupied by an official from the forest department, and as he was away for a several days, we did not manage to go inside of the Corbett room. Although the other room, that was occupied in 1907 by Bahadur, Corbett's friend and servant, was accessible and we entered it. Investigations had been going into and outside the yard of the Phungar bungalow and here are the points that stand in its favour:

There is no other forest bungalow or 'Dak' (post runner) bungalow very near Phungar or even near Gaudi. The closest other bungalow lies East of Phungar some 5 kms towards the main road to Lohaghat. This is a Dak (post runner) bungalow and could well have been the first bungalow which Corbett stays in when coming to Champawat after the man-eater as quoted in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*: "The tehsildar of Champawat, to whom I had been given letters of introduction, paid me a visit that night at the Dak bungalow where I was putting up, and suggested I should move next day to a bungalow a few miles away, in the vicinity of which many human beings had been killed."

Phungar Forest Bungalow is not a Dak Bungalow, but occupied by the Forest Department (now of Uttarakhand as mentioned on a sign at the entrance). It consists of a very old building (two-roomed) and two other newer structures, one presumably for the watchman near the gate and the third, at the rear, as an office. I cannot say for certain that it is now occupied because we had come on weekends for both trips, once in 2012 and three times in 2014, and no officer of any kind was present. It is the two-roomed very. old building which we suspected to be the Corbett bungalow. It has an inscription P.W.D., meaning Public Works Department, instead of the usual inscription DFO (Divisional Forest Office) as affixed on the first building near the gate.

Dr Jordania who had been scanning the surroundings of the Phungar bungalow with Manfred reported to me that Phungar village where we picked the old man (relative of the last victim: see elsewhere in book) is seen over the wall of the bungalow's fence. Though later he was doubtful whether the village he had seen was Phungar or not. If indeed it was Phungar seen from the bungalow, this could be the most important point since it tallies with Corbett saying that from the bungalow he could see a man setting off from the village.

Phungar village, now that we were certain that it hosted the last victim, is not seen on the opposite side of the gorge (Gaudi side). The bungalow if one existed there, could not be a suitable candidate.

Gaudi village is not seen from the Phungar bungalow. It appears strange because as mentioned earlier, Gaudi has some quite elevated habitations. This is due to the fact that Phungar village lies much lower than the bungalow. The bungalow is on the eastern slope of a hill which borders the Champa gorge on that side. Therefore, Gaudi being in the north-east is barred by the hilltop. Byrne could only have got only one

of these right: Gaudi as the village, or Phungar as the bungalow. It turns out to be the latter.

Reconstructing Corbett's footsteps and the beat for the tigress

Once you agree with those facts stated above, which we have verified on the actual ground to have been very realistically described by Corbett, we can continue by again standing down the gorge where the river changes course, in that coming from the west, it is arrested by a rocky cliff and diverts to the north. You will have to refer to the Sketch Map for that purpose now.

The old man, relative of the last victim, had been very helpful in the confirmation of Phungar village as the village of the last victim. According to him, and we verified that fact, the girl was killed some 200 metres from the Phungar village on the brow of the gorge. The starting reference for these 200 metres is the edge of the village overlooking the wooded patch where the old man was pointing to show where her aunt was killed. The bungalow to this reference point is approximately 500 metres (Odometer reading testified). This leaves you some 500 metres walk to the village and still some 200 metres towards the wooded patch to the tree where the girl was killed.

Let us see now, how the beat is organised. For our reader to have a clear picture of the situation, imagine that at noon on the day the tigress was killed, you, acting as Corbett, have two hundred and ninety eight men to lead from the point of assembly (the tree under which the girl was killed, as per previous description) and you proceed by taking them on the ridge, which joins the wooded patch which runs almost parallel to the valley formed by the Champa stream. You have your *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* book with you and you have just followed these lines to accomplish the previous:

"When the men were assembled and had received the ammunition they needed, I took them to the brow of the hill where the girl's skirt was lying, and pointing to a pine tree on the opposite hill..." and later

"Making a wide detour I crossed the upper end of the valley, gained the opposite hill and made my way down..."

The opposite hill you observe from where you stand now is the opposite side (western side) of steep valley formed by the Champa river. I don't know if you would be able to accomplish this nowadays since the valley down is steeply eroded, but I think, without making too much of a detour, my friends Manfred Watzl, Dr Jordania and Priyvrat Gadhvi with the help of the valuable Kamal Bisth, managed to do that in less than 2 hours on the 18th April 2014. Then they proceeded like you shall do now towards the part of the gorge where the grand finale would be waiting. You catch the thread from *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*:

"I was still a hundred and fifty yards from the gorge..." and later

"As I ran down the hill I noticed that there was a patch of green grass near the mouth of the gorge..." And while hiding in the grass,

“Facing me was the hill that was being beaten, and the gorge that I hoped the tigress would make for was behind my left shoulder.”

You have accomplished those steps carefully as Corbett describes and you have reached the spot where the densely wooded hill (which your men are beating) meets a precipitous hill, both on the eastern side of the Champa river. A third feature added to this landscape is the western side of the river which hosts a ridge with a steep descent down the valley below. A view from the top of the ridge is shown here, but remember that you are down.

This is place where the river bed crosses from the west to the north. Directly in front of you, there is the precipitous hill and to the right, not seen on the photo provided there is the densely wooded hill beaten by your men, shown here.

To the left you have the yellowish pine trees of the precipitous hill and to the right is the densely wooded patch slope of the hill. The line of intersection between these two features is clearly seen, though the ravine between them is not visible here, but only when you reach the bed of the stream, which I assume you have reached by now and waiting. When you finally see the tigress coming, she appears to your right at the end of the wooded patch some 300 metres away. There she encounters the (missed?) shots of the tehsildar and you also send a ‘despairing bullet after her’. The tigress then heads back into the wooded patch and some time later re-appears to your left as Corbett mentions in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*:

“...I was holding my breath and listening for the screams that would herald the tigress’s arrival when she suddenly broke cover to my left front and, taking the stream at a bound, came straight for the gorge...”

Obviously she broke cover to your left (remember you had the gorge behind your left shoulder), at the intersection of the wooded patch slope with the precipitous hill, two features forming the gorge and crossed the river and coming on the western bank, where you are in the grass. You fire two shots at the tigress, the last at a range of less than 30 metres. Then you give another look to your *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* book to confirm where the tigress had gone after this second shot:

“Very slowly she turned, crossed the stream to her right, climbed over some fallen rocks, and found a narrow ledge that went diagonally up and across the face of the precipitous hill to where there was a great flat projecting rock.”

You observe carefully the above lines to follow the tigress’s footsteps and here is what you find (see the photo of the protruding rock where the Champawat tigress died).

Nowadays, after more a century of wearing and erosion, the ascending ledge to the projecting rock from the left is no longer the one which can afford you a steady foothold. But certainly the tigress should have taken it if it had to go on the projecting

rock from the river bed. The last time you consult your *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* book is to confirm the accuracy of the projecting rock as the measurement given in your book:

“At the rock, which was twelve to fourteen feet high in height, their advance was checked, for the outer face had been worn smooth by the stream when in spate...”

My friends have measured this rock to be fifteen feet high. This measurement, taken more than 100 years after, correlates almost perfectly, when taking into account the wearing of the base of the stream. You are delighted to have found the killing site of Corbett's first man-eater.

Epilogue

We have been amply rewarded for our perseverance of having visited this place of significance twice in 3 years. We thank Gopal Singh Bohra, Shankar Singh Bakhuni, Kamal Bisth and his team and last but not least Dev Singh Bohra for their invaluable contribution of finding and asserting the exactness of the spots described above.

The Chowgarh Tigress's giant slate

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

"This rock about which I have said so much
I can best describe as a giant school slate,
two feet thick at its lower end, and standing up
not quite perpendicularly on one of its long sides."

Jim Corbett: The Chowgarh Tigers, Man-Eaters of Kumaon

This paper is about finding the place where the elder Chowgarh tigress, meaning the mother man-eating tigress whose cub was mistaken for herself and accidentally shot by Jim Corbett previously, met its end on the 11th of April 1930 in a thrilling encounter with the hunter, late that afternoon. The place, on the western side of the Kala Agar ridge, characterized by a giant school slate-lie rock some 15 feet high was yet to be found by anyone who had done research on Corbett hunting spots. In April 2012, we (Manfred and myself) were not 100% sure to have found the correct 'slate' though we might have reached the correct spot at an accuracy within 400 metres, inside or just outside a semicircle having that radius and whose centre would be at the spot of the 'slate' we have found. Unfortunately, our account was not published and only circulated among close friends and we thought that it would be somehow left to one's own appreciation to agree or disagree with the said finding, while the latter option opens the door to anyone as adventurous as their hero, Jim Corbett, to try to locate the 'slate', for themselves using the original paper as a guide and of course a copy of "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" on hand. However, no one followed our heels nor succeeded in finding a more appropriate spot for the 'slate'. In the meantime, even Manfred and I grew critical on our finding and were mad at ourselves that we did not try the 'OTHER' alternative as you'll learn here. Therefore, we came back in April 2014 accompanied by Dr Jordania and Priyvrat and made amends to our 2012 misgivings.

As a matter of reference for distances and to respect the original text of Corbett, both the Imperial foot, yard and mile and the Metric metre shall be used, approximate conversions being that 1 mile=1600 metres=1780 yards; and 1 yard=0.9 metre=3 feet

The 2012 Trip - How we got there and why?

After setting off from Champawat on the 15th of April 2012, we had planned our next stop to be the Okhalkanda Forest House falling under the Divisional Forest Office of Nainital, and we were always nervous, myself and Manfred due to the fact of both the difficulty of the finding of the slate which no one has ever achieved yet and that we were just two now, after Dr Jordania and Priyvrat had to return to Delhi as per their respective schedules.

Another worry solely resting on my shoulders were that my two daughters would have to be left with our driver in the car when Manfred and I went on our investigation which to our best estimate would have taken four hours. We arrived at such a conclusion the night before, just after settling at the Okhalkanda Forest House, which had been graciously made available to our disposal by the Chief Medical Officer of Nainital). Then between two full-pints of 8% strong Indian beer, which after our 6 hour drive, made us new men again, Manfred presented a paper entitled “Finding the Chowgarh Slate” which he prepared prior to his travel and while discussing though it, drew the conclusion that we would need some 4 hours, not less, for the task of finding the slate.

I had questioned Manfred about our chances since the very first minute we met in Delhi 10 days earlier, and he only answered my question after giving me ample information about his first search there, some 4 years earlier, and after telling me that he had prepared a paper for it, which we would discuss it once we are in Okhalkanda, and added plainly: We have a good chance... For me it was insufficient and I wanted a figure in percentage if possible to assess our chances, but Manfred kept saying he was pretty sure he was quite near four years ago and the rock was at most a mile from he stopped his searching. That gave me full hopes, for searching within a mile radius for two persons is the not the hardest achievable task on earth, but what followed next on the 16th of April 2012 would prove me wrong.

Our supposed only one hour drive to Kala Agar village from Okhalkanda via Pakhari via Khansiun via Gargari (all are small ‘pattis’ or assembly of habitations forming a village, all of which the Chowgarh tigress claimed one victim) came to an abrupt stop some one hour after we started just before Khansiun when Jayalukshmi my youngest daughter asked to go out to regurgitate her breakfast. She had just been recovering from an attack of gastro-enteritis suffered in Chuka 4 days earlier and that would have been the only explanation of her ill health though another might suggest that it was not the best option to start driving just after having had breakfast along a long and winding hill road which is heavily broken and bumpy at some places. Then finally one hour after our forced halt, we reached Kala Agar village and stopped at the first shop in sight on the left side of the road to enquire about our starting point: The Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. This was a teashop cum grocery and the owner tells us to take the steps up the terraces some fifty metres further on the same left side as the shop. He further added, that once the steps been engaged, to enquire further with the inhabitants of the terraces should we find difficulty in getting through.

Handing a 100 rupee note to our driver Shankar Singh Bhakuni, originating from Haldwani, a man of immense generosity and patience, I instructed him to look after the girls and to use the money to buy food and drinks for them should that become necessary. And Manfred adding to him not to worry if he sees us taking more than the four hours we had prescribed. If I had known an ounce out of a ton of what would

be awaiting us in terms of the terrain that should be negotiated to reach our goal, I would also have asked our driver to send for a search party should he not see us returning after five hours. This only came to mind when after reaching the western face of the Kala Agar ridge, we noticed that we would have to negotiate among severe neck-breaking gradients.

The Kala Agar Forest Bungalow – The First Objective

Words run high, and fast too, in those Kumaon hills just like in the days of Jim Corbett. Having engaged the first few terraces from the main road, we came along a man, of a wise-age-looking face, accompanied by his two sons, the youngest being at most 13 years old. He said in Hindi, he'll help us to find the Kala Agar Forest bungalow, without myself, already out of breath, having had the time to whisper to him to indicate us the direction or to ask him how he knew where we were going. This, very hospitable, proud member of the hardy hill folks heir line of the Kumaon hills, graciously offered us to have tea and, after his disappointment, since we politely declined, offered his youngest son to guide us to the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. He then recognized Manfred, telling him, while I translated, that he remembers him four years back when he came to their village and investigated the Forest Bungalow and places around it. He then instructed his son to remain with us for any purpose that we would need. We thanked him and I told him, we would need his son only up to the Forest Bungalow and we shall send him back when we reach there.

Winding continuously, while gaining altitude for every terrace that we crossed, we arrived at a more or less straighter part along a wider terrace where the boy pointed towards the bungalow and Manfred duly acknowledges. In our advancing direction, we could see two independent buildings consisting of bricks and inverted V-shaped roofs tiled with metal and wood sheets and the closer we got, I was telling myself that these buildings cannot be from the time of Corbett.

Therefore the boy was persistently queried about the old bungalow and while himself was unsure, because of his junior age, he called upon a friend of his, who incidentally appeared on the scene, certainly as a result of the "high running words of the hills". The second boy knew more about the place, saying that not to worry, the Government officer who attends these bungalows would be called upon to give us more details, but that we were not ready to wait for. A close inspection of the building on the right hand side (in relation to our advancing direction) shows that it is the one of the two which is in activity and the other one seems to have been abandoned.

The abandoned bungalow has a date of 1956 on it, and whether it is the date it has ceased to be used or the date erected, we did not know. While swerving around this older building to answer the previous question, I noticed two more, older buildings, the one just behind the active forest bungalow, seemed the oldest. Climbing a one-metre wall which separates the two buildings, I went to investigate and take some

photos. But no further clue was to be obtained about its date of construction or activity. Thanking the boys with a small note in our handshakes, we sent them back to the village and we went uphill in the western direction to try to locate the forest road. In Corbett times, the forest road ran from the bungalow to the north face of the ridge and continued on the face until it turns at the crossing of the northern and western faces. Nowadays, everywhere is terraced and while engaging uphill in terraced fields for some 400 metres while gaining some 100m altitude, we came to a wide footpath about two metres wide, bordered on each side with split rock, which do the duty of walls, for securing this path against erosion. It is this footpath which Manfred says is the same old forest road path from Kala Agar to Chamoli.

The North/West Crossing Point of the Ridge and Peter Byrne

Besides having a compass with us and Manfred's notes we had The "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" copy as prime reference. Photostats of Peter Byrne book (2003) were with Manfred and I had a copy of both Booth's *Carpet Sahib* (2011 Edition) and Kala's *Jim Corbett of Kumaon* (2009 Edition) in my bag.

Checking with the compass showed that we were exactly along the northern face of the Kala Agar ridge and if we followed that path for a little more than a kilometre, which was an estimate for the extreme visible part of the ridge, we would be crossing faces and be on the western side of it. The compass reassured me, although Manfred was already dead-confident, because Jim Corbett mentioned in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*:

"I had gone out that day at 2 p.m. with the intention of tying up my three buffaloes at selected places along the forest road, when at a point a mile from the bungalow, where the road crosses a ridge and goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range, I came on a large party of men who had been out collecting firewood"

There was no mistake possible now we were on the right track. Therefore the position of the forest bungalow also might have not changed since 1930. Corbett's letter (to Maggie) appearing in Booth's *Carpet Sahib* gives a good indication of the spot as well and as from now we were walking with opened book copies in our hands, till Manfred indicated that there is one investigation to do before we carry on. He takes out photocopies (of Peter Byrne's *Shikari Sahib* 2003) and tells me some 400 metres from where we are, there is a spot which is described as the Chowgarh slate by the said author, and is only some ten metres on the right of the forest footpath.

Arriving at that spot Manfred turned facing me and bowed slightly to his left and with his hands elegantly showing towards a fifteen foot rock, invites me to enter the dense thorned bushes path which leads to this rock, this we accomplished with some difficulty and a few scratches on the skin later, we reached the rock.

It would have been perfect for us to present this rock as the giant slate where the Chowgarh tigress met its end, if only... it was on the other side of the ridge. As

it was clearly described by Jim Corbett, the stalking starts beyond the point where the northern side crossed the western side of the ridge and the forest path continues beyond that point that is on the western side of the ridge. No doubt about that as the letter of Corbett to Maggie (In Booth's 2011 Ed pg 244) also confirms (letter to Maggie dated the 11th April 1930) the hunt took place on the other side of the ridge; we will come back to this a little later. Also, Byrne's rock is only some 800 metres from the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow, midway towards the crossing of the faces of the ridge. Therefore after Manfred took some shots and I did a video, we set off to our first real target: where the forest footpath joins the crossing of the northern and western faces of the Kala Agar ridge.

The Crossing of the faces of the Kala Agar Range and Beyond

The footpath seemed interminable. It went up and down in smooth gradients, winding and marrying every curve of the Kala Agar Range. Along this footpath now, the compass needle still refused to switch positions from north to west, even after we reached the extreme edge of the ridge, doubts were highly instilled even if Manfred told me that he had previously experienced this direction change a little further on the footpath where it curves along the extreme edge of the ridge. Then finally when my counts had reached 780 metres (from Byrne's rock) or so, and just when I was about to say we had gone too further, Manfred announces the incredible: Here, he says, the compass needle changes direction along this curve. Now, there were not, to my knowledge, another place along this footpath where the compass needle would have done this and still it did it just here, where we were standing. This position shall be referred as from now as the 'compass-crossing'.

Corbett mentions in "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" saying:

"...when at a point a mile from the bungalow, where the road crosses a ridge¹ and goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range..." and later:

"A footpath taking off close to where we had been sitting, went down the hill to the valley below and zigzagged up the opposite pine-clad slope to join the forest road two miles further down."

Now, the view of the landscape which were previously absent in our eyesight, being too focused on either books or compass, was being scrutinized for the first time and the first things we noticed were the pine-clad slopes with sparsely wooded pine trees scattered on both slopes of an adjacent ridge running almost perpendicularly with the western face of the Kala Agar ridge. Here were two descriptions which, we thought back at that time in 2012, would have matched Corbett's writings perfectly. Much to our satisfaction indeed, we stopped under a tree shade for a much deserved smoke, while we did not talk but only two pair of eyes scanning every square metre

¹ This ridge we found was adjacent to the forest road at right angles to it and is hereinafter referred to as the 'adjacent ridge'.

of the landscape which appeared in our view range to resolve our focus to discover other clues.

The footpath paradox – Which was the original footpath Corbett talks about?

What was quite obvious in our immediate view was a footpath junction in front of us. The forest road from where we came continued along the western face of the Kala Agar range but some 100 metres from where we were (compass-crossing), it perpendicularly joins a footpath on the crest of the adjacent ridge and we saw a number of people using it to go down further in the direction of Chamoli. One of these persons coming up and engaging on the road to Kala Agar was questioned and confirmed that the footpath he was coming lead to Chamoli. At the junction, there is a burning 'ghat' (for cremation) on the left of the road. The footpath along the adjacent ridge, determined later when we went further down, meets the forest road a few miles at the point where the adjacent ridge dies out in the valley below and therefore the forest road also lead to Chamoli but on a much longer route.

The footpath along the adjacent ridge is not straight: the crest on which it stands is winding, so it is a 'zigzagged' path along the crest and goes so for about 2-3 km until it reaches the valley below. Compare the previous statement with the fragment of Corbett's description of 'his' footpath as given earlier coupled with the fact that the adjacent ridge is sparsely wooded with pine trees on each side of it and you'll understand why we made a mistake by choosing to go along this way. Obviously, Corbett was talking of another footpath which continued down the Kala Agar range and zigzagged up to the opposite slope to join the main forest road below the valley to Chamoli. This footpath, disused since long and non-existent now, as our guide from Kala Agar village pointed to us in 2014, was mistaken by us (Manfred and I) in 2012 as being the path along the adjacent ridge. In 2012, this cost us half a day of rough dangerous trekking for almost nothing.

A dry nullah is easily observed from the adjacent ridge crossing the forest road. Very close to that junction, if one takes the footpath along the adjacent ridge, the ravine of this first nullah starts. By matching Corbett's description as follows:

"A footpath taking off close to where we had been sitting [near the compass crossing]..."

After 6 hours of hard and rough trekking in 2014, Manfred, very courageously, attempted this steep descent while I followed him reluctantly. The end-result, despite being dissatisfying since we suspected it for being the ravine which Corbett took to collect the eggs and subsequently killing the tigress, helped us to understand that this nullah was very probably and almost a certain possibility that it was an ancient footpath. In fact this nullah has a strange course, its water course, seems to go level at first almost parallel to the forest road and then it goes down steeply. The course of

the water that washes it every monsoon, showed it goes down the valley and connects with the forest road below while the start of its course is not a water course. Although we should not confound the old footpath trace with the actual water path, the start of this nullah could well have been the start of the old footpath connecting Kala Agar to Chamoli without passing through Dharampani.

After April 2014, when now we had full knowledge of the places thanks to a local guide of Kala Agar village, Girdar Singh, the picture comes clear now. The actual route of the forest road is shown in the sketch map (see the sketch). At one point, there is a junction to Saryapani from where our guide Kamal, in 2014, brought us water, then the road continues towards Dharampani before engaging steeply downhill towards the valley below. I strongly suspect Corbett's original footpath to have been the dry nullah parallel to the now-forest road's route and connecting to another footpath which is 100 metres approximately after the Saryapani junction. In 1930, the footpath was, according to me, used by people who wished to go directly to the valley below to Chamoli instead of taking the detour to Dharampani. Such knowledge we did not have in 2012, Manfred and myself.

Dry Nullahs, Pine Trees and the Wrongly Attributed Slate of 2012

Now, on the false track, which we were in 2012, there was another problem; the face (southern) of the adjacent ridge which leads steeply to the valley below, is sparsely wooded with pine but has no undergrowth or jungle-type trees, whereas Corbett suggested the latter (in the form of oak trees where the Chamoli boy was killed on the 25th of February 1930). But positively, it had several dry nullahs running down the valley below. Closer examination reveals that the undergrowth is regularly burned and now the ground supports only turf grass, which regenerates quickly after burning and that the pine trees seems to have been planted by man because they follow a pattern and that they all bear marks of bleeding on them. Some even have cups still attached to them.

For those unacquainted with forest farming, it is useful to tell that trees falling under the needle-leaf family are suppliers of the precious pine oil or resin, a fuel. The bark is peeled one-metre above the root and for approximately half metre higher up and the naked trunk is helicoidally lacerated to form pathways for the pine oil to drip slowly but surely along them and at the base of the helicoids path, tin cans are attached to the trunk to collect the oil. This process is called trunk bleeding and sometimes 'tapping' also.

The first dry nullah encountered near the junction of the adjacent ridge and the forest road, which we said could easily have been the original footpath that Corbett talks of, was only some 10-15 metres from the junction. To negotiate it, would have been easy but for the absence of foothold. This was a big problem for us, because the slope on this side of the ridge deprived of undergrowth provided no support for

engaging downslope along its steep gradient except the scattered pine trunks. It is at that time I regretted for not having told the driver to send for a search party if he sees us taking abnormally longer time to get back. At this point, to concert between myself and Manfred became necessary, for we knew awfully well that we were about to take more risk than we thought before coming here. But without invoking what were the risks, we ultimately decided that there was no point of standing where we were, where no further conclusions can be drawn, and that we needed to go further down.

The first dry nullah we found went too steep down the valley and it was discarded. We therefore selected a more appropriate place for a descent and sometimes walking on all fours; we managed some 50 metres downslope and reached a place where a second dry nullah could be seen. Between the first dry nullah and the second one is the only piece of flat ground we had crossed but it is hardly 30 metres wide. Now we were between two dry nullahs and none of them had steep banks, which would be our next criteria. My bag, containing two books, a heavy purse, a camera and our only bottle of water, whose weight, after two and a half hours, was already beginning to tell on my shoulders, was also very encumbering for this type of descent and I ought to be more careful and a quick look at Manfred following closely, revealed that he was also, at times, in difficulty.

Some hairpins cut through the compact soil presumably by the pine-oil collectors, helped easing the gradients, and yet despite being sometimes only half-foot wide, where one needs to stand legs wide open, they were necessary otherwise we would not have reached even 10 metres down. The second nullah would need to be crossed because we found a flatter patch next to it, and as we approached the nullah's bed, an overhanging rock came into sight. This was at first thought for having been the rock Corbett says he had taken a position when he suddenly became aware the tigress had arrived:

"..I then took up a position on a rock, about four feet high, on the lower edge of the open ground. Beyond the rock the hill fell steeply away to the valley below." and later,

"...while I stood on the rock smoking, with the rifle in the hollow of my left arm, when all at once, I became aware that the man-eater had arrived..."

But because its size was not fitting and absence of other features mentioned by Corbett, we discounted its presence.

Anyway, while going parallel to the path on the crest of the adjacent ridge, while negotiating dangerous downslopes, after crossing the second nullah, we arrived at a third dry nullah, whose bed enters a deep ravine, some 50-60 metres from the footpath and some 100 metres from the small flat ground near the forest footpath junction. This third dry nullah had the steepest bed and its ravine is evocative because it is made up of solid rock walls with many cavities on the walls, ideal for bird nesting (sic!). It is this dry nullah that we decided to devote the most of our attention.

To investigate it in all its proportions, one needed to go all along its bed, which was difficult though because of its steepness at some places, but another option was to go parallel to it and go as close to it wherever possible or permitted by smoother gradients and to cross its sandy bed at the maximum possible places and go along the bed until it is no longer practicable. This we would be able to achieve with much difficulty and a little less than an hour after we had been scanning this third dry nullah, where evocative displays have been found such as the smooth rock glissade, Manfred who was on the opposite bank (the more westerly one) exclaimed “HERE!!!” I was on the nearer bank and was taking pictures of the smooth rock glissade when Manfred called and I had been on a very uncomfortable position, but I managed to scramble through and get Manfred in sight.

“Here, looks like a Giant Slate to me...” Manfred added. Pointing his fingers further down the nullah’s bed, some 15 metres away, but I was out of sight range because I was behind a very high boulder lump some 25 metres high (as measured from the nullah bed). To be able to get a glimpse, it would be necessary to circumvent the boulder pile and get further downslope. But as a matter of necessity, when excitement takes over self-preservation instincts, I cannot explain how I came down to a point where now Manfred was standing clearly in my sight range on the opposite bank and some 15 metres down from where I was standing but could not go any further down was the “Giant Slate”. Therefore I would need to go on the other bank to be able to get further down. Manfred had already started a very risky descent when after some 15 minutes I managed to reach the other bank. While I was taking much time to try different paths to go down, Manfred had already reached the safety of the sandy bank below and sitting near to the Giant Slate, he was once more going through “Man-eaters of Kumaon”. When I finally reached down, we took pictures and approximate measurements. You already know now that it was not the slate of the Chowgarh tigress but at that time in 2012 we were not sure. So we made our auto-criticism and debate.

The 2012 Slate – The debate and why we came back in 2014

A series of points made for and against the validity of the 2012 slate had been originally discussed and is again proposed here so that you know how critical we were about the finding. Of course, there exists the original mistake of the footpath, but it’s just to let you see we did not try to convince anyone.

For’s

1. The place where the compass needle turns from the Forest Bungalow (depending on which route or path you take) is roughly 1400 or 1500 metres, nearly a mile as Corbett describes.
2. From that point, where Corbett met the firewood collecting party, to the oak thicket down the valley is 400 metres, where the Chamoli boy was killed, or 500 yards as Corbett describes.

3. The footpath close to where Corbett was sitting (Compass crossing) zigzags downhill (an original mistake) on the adjacent ridge and roughly 3kms (or 2 miles) below in the valley, joins the forest footpath or forest road, whose in turn had run on the western face of the Kala Agar ridge and approximately 1.5kms (or 1mile) it turns down the valley and continues along the valley bed for another 1.5 to 2 kms to join the other path (The mistake was that Corbett said 'zigzagged up)
4. The forest footpath passes next to a small flat open ground and once it starts sloping down, borders the oak thicket about some 300 metres further downhill.
5. The ravine of the 3rd dry nullah is roughly 100 metres from the small flat open ground. It has a bed some 3-4 metres wide and almost same as deep. It matches Corbett description except that now it is deeper since Corbett mentioned only 4-5 feet deep (1.5 to 2 metres deep)
6. Ravine walls is constituted with rocks having many hollows in the low lying ones, probably caused by swivelling of water and constitute ideal bird nests for the dry season.
7. The ravine steep walls come to an end some 60-70 metres measured from the footpath (of the adjacent ridge) and at this point shiny smooth rocks, at a steep gradient appears in the bed (most likely where Corbett glissades onto and the men jump and land side by side to him)
8. Just after the first steep smooth shiny rocks bed, to the left of it (in relation to going down) there is a remnant of assembled pile of boulders or big rocks now overgrown with weeds and grass, which you hardly see the rocks unless you come very near to it.
9. Along 20 metres after the first glissade (including the second glissade in this distance) lies the flat sandy bed now scattered with broken rocks also everywhere.
10. At the end of the flat sandy bed (after the second glissade), itself some 15 metres long and 3-4 metres wide, there is the Giant Slate on the left bank of the ravine (in relation of going down).
11. A natural boundary with the slate behind it (in relation of going down) is a deeper and steeper fall than the two glissades described above and virtually impossible to negotiate further down.
12. The slate is about fifteen feet high and 2 to a maximum of 2.5 feet thick at some places and is always leaning out as Corbett described.
13. The face of the slate is quite smooth though broken with cracks everywhere.

Against:

1. Just after the first glissade , to its right (in relation of going down), the bank seems eroded and there is not "a wall of rock slightly leaning over the ravine some 15 feet high" which Corbett describes.
2. The sandy bed after the first glissade is very eroded at certain places and some 3-4 metres down, a second glissade appears. This second glissade is non-existent in Corbett's writings. Of course, this could be the darkest point: that second glissade, 3-4 metres after the first glissade (steeper less long one).

3. The slate is on the left side of the bank in relation to going down (!) Now if we refer to Corbett description, he describes the slates to be on the right. Second darkest point, because Corbett could have been describing the slate after having gone round it.
4. Opposite the Slate the bank is no longer "... scoured out steep bank also some 15 feet high..." like Corbett described, not even a remnant.
5. Corbett ends his account by saying that he puts a cross on the Kumaon map "2 miles to the west of the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow" to indicate the position where the Chowgarh tigress is accounted for. Now a bird's eye view (a mental one from me) of roughly 3 kms from the bungalow brings us much further to our proposed spot for the slate, more than a kilometre away, which anyway does not match Corbett's earlier description of how he got there from the bungalow. If Corbett meant road length instead of bird's flight, then the spot is about 2.5 kms now less than the 2 miles.

You should not count the number of for's and compare with the number of against's (less numerous). If you assign ratings (or marks) per comment, depending on your appreciation, you might end up like us for a conclusion we made in 2012: There is a chance that this rock is the Chowgarh slate, but only until we do not find a more suitable candidate. Since we did not publish the 2012 findings, it is good also to read the recommendations we made for it:

Our only certainty lied up to the point where the Kala Agar forest footpath crosses an adjacent ridge. At this point, the footpath goes straight down the western face of the Kala Agar ridge into the valley below and another footpath goes from this junction along the crest of the adjacent ridge where it meets the first footpath down the valley further. It is along this footpath which runs along the crest of the adjacent ridge that our investigation has been carried and that is why we had exchanged views on if we ought to have gone straight or not. Moreover, Manfred advised us when would wish to make further investigation to continue straight along the path and search the presence of a ravine or relics of one along this path, which in 2012, our eyes had carefully scrutinized for and did not see. That was the main reason we did not investigate on this side in 2012 because it seemed in slight controversy with the last italics quote from Corbett's writings because of the lack of the ravine:

"About a hundred yards along the path I came to a ravine. On the far side of this the path entered very heavy undergrowth, and as it was inadvisable to go into thick cover with two men following me, I decided to take to the ravine, follow it down to its junction with the valley, work up the valley and..."

Epilogue of the 2012 Trip – the Forest House Attendant

Returning after a very tiring climb back, we arrived at Kala Agar at the junction near Byrne's rock near the first habitations, when suddenly we met a man who clearly had been searching for us, his sigh of relief on seeing us betrayed him. He presented himself as the Government servant in charge of the Forest bungalow and said two boys

came to fetch him and told him there were visitors expecting him at the bungalow. He added that he came as quickly as possible and after searching to the point at the extreme edge of the Kala Agar ridge had concluded that we had gone down and he had patiently waited for us to return for he knew there was a car waiting for us on the road.

When questioned about the Forest bungalows, he explains that the newest building dates from 1956 (which we saw but was unsure if it was the date of erection or cessation) and surprisingly enough, the one which I suspected to be the old forest bungalow is said by him to have been erected in 1925. He tells me, it is the bungalow which the District Commissioner (Most probably Graham Vivian and his wife Norah) stayed during the Chowgarh tigress hunt. He relates to me that the District Commissioner sat over a human kill roughly at the place where the Byrne's rock is (at least he points in that direction and says almost along the forest road), but they were unsuccessful and according to him Corbett came later and was successful and still today villagers show a rock very near to Peter Byrne's rock where according to them the Chowgarh tigress was shot.

Manfred recalls this place, where four years earlier he had seen and villagers told him that animal bones are still found there, but no Corbett description matches with it. Booth recalls in his book that the Vivians' (both 'Ham' and Norah) unsuccessful attempt as happening on the 21st March 1930 and Jim Corbett arriving on the 23rd when the body had already been removed. Therefore it could not be that place. A visitor's log book dating from the 1930's and seen four years earlier by Manfred shown to him by the predecessor of our kind forest bungalow attendant, had not been brought by him, adding that this book obtained in the old bungalow of 1925 had the names of the district officials who had come on duty to this bungalow. Manfred remembers the name of Stiffe (a deputy commissioner of Garhwal and Almora) and possibly a signature of Ibbotson (not clear because of the fading ink and yellowing paper) inscribed in that log book.

The forest bungalow attendant was thanked for his invaluable help in asserting the date and original spot of the forest bungalow and recalling the Vivians' incident. We reached for our car and after a much sought-after tea break with the girls and our driver at the grocery-tea shop, and an unsuccessful attempt to drive to Chamoli to investigate about the boy killed on the 25th February 1930 (the road was too broken), we decided to drive, although it was quite late, to Dalkhania (7 victims) via Padampur (2 victims) and the Nandhour Valley some 19 kms away to investigate for other protagonists of the Chowgarh tigress story.

April 2014 - The first day

One cannot see a ravine unless you look for one; we had diverging views about where to start from when we came back in April 2014 this time in a group of four comprising myself, Priyvrat, Dr Jordania and Manfred. Despite the fact that we were

now confident that in 2012, we were at the wrong place, I'm not sure what my other friends wanted first: to disprove the 2012 finding or to hope of seeing a better candidate on this side of the adjacent ridge. By the most natural human nature, the majority of the group, seeing plenty of dry nullahs' ravines on the adjacent ridge, proposed to go along that direction first when we started our journey. I followed while muttering to them to look for ravines on the forest road rather.

I will omit details, repetitive of the 2012 trip, which led us to the compass-crossing point, except perhaps to tell you on the eve of the exploration of the Kala Agar area, we had camped near the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. And that, the kind bungalow attendant came to us showing the log book we did not see in 2012 and that I was suffering from a very allergic reaction due to the sting of a nettle plant (which the hill people call 'beechoo' grass meaning scorpion grass) which left my hand very numb and difficult to use a pen to write notes.

However that may be, we were still on the adjacent ridge flank which were searching back in 2012. This time we did not overlook any of the dry nullahs except for the first one for which Manfred duly made amends later in the afternoon. We were on an unsuccessful hunt, triangulating the whole ridge's slope, until we broke in two parties. Priyvrat wanted to look further down and took a villager with him and Dr Jordania, Manfred and I tried to take a nullah and follow its course to the valley below. But we did not succeed to go down because at one point, we tried to estimate the distance from the opposite slope of the valley to where we were because Corbett wrote:

"...by crossing the valley and going up the opposite slope I should be able to overlook the whole hillside on which the buffalo was tethered. The shot if I did get one would be a long one from two to three hundred yards..."

200 to 300 yards from the opposite slope, was the area spot we were searching of now. While being unsure of the method we could achieve of measuring this, because the terrain did not permit it as a gift, we tried to go at a position nearer to the forest road at the point where it meets the valley below and work our way up and try to look for such distance as Corbett mentions. Many times we reached places which would have fit the "open patch of ground" that Corbett describes, but other details did not match. We did arrive at a couple of places also (or rather a line linking places) where the 200-300 yards would correspond but this time we did not find a suitable ravine with a slate.

We had just decided to take our mid-day lunch (at about 14.30) when we saw our other half of the party with Priyvrat signalling us from far ahead. We met at a shady place and Priyvrat told us there was nothing to be found further down as from the 3rd nullah and that now he wanted to see the 2012 slate since they did not see anything further down as per our initial description of 2012. While the cook was warming our lunch, our main guide Kamal Bisth (whom you'll meet many times in the trip diary) tells us that Girdar Singh (the guide from Kala Agar village) has been able to contact

an elderly villager of Kala Agar of over 80 years old who is in New Delhi by phone and has been given the particulars of the place where the Chowgarh tigress was shot by the old man.

That was too good to be true. Even Kamal who is an experienced guide of the Kumaon hills doubted because he said, there are so many such claims now that people who even don't know Corbett or his stories come up with some titbits about places connected to his hunts. But that would not cost us much, since we were already in the area. When I learnt from Girdar, now that he had seated next me for a smoke, that the place's description can only be found from the forest road, I could have said: Bingo! But since Kamal asked to express reserves, I refrained from being overjoyed. But there was one reason from being satisfied; at last we were heading on that very forest road which I wanted to investigate in the first place.

When lunch was over and we followed Girdar to the forest road across two dry nullahs, we still had to climb the forest road uphill until he asks us to enter a footpath following him. What I had on my mind and perhaps my friends too, was to see a giant school slate in the very sense of the meaning. Therefore when Girdar brought us to a rough rock, not rectangular as a slate, and no directly visible details connected such as worn rocks, smooth as glass, sandy bed etc..., I don't think anyone of us even took a photo. Moreover, the rock had an awkward inclination. We even saw a better candidate for a slate behind the rock which Girdar led us to, but here too was the absence of details and it was a stand-alone rock not in the bed of a ravine. Disappointed as we were, we used the location as a starting place to look for candidates of a slate with the dimensions Corbett gave in the book. The rest of the day was spent as such and at our last attempt, Manfred, in solo, then I reluctantly followed, went to investigate the first nullah with the mitigating results which have already been told.

Day 2 - April 2014, how come we did not measure Girdar's rock?

This question we could not answer on the night of the 14th April 2014 while we were at our camp near the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. Dr Jordania agreed with me that we should have this done the next day because else we would not have the opportunity again since we were leaving for Dalkania on the 15th. Manfred, meanwhile with Priyvrat decided to split into a second group and go to the northern face of the adjacent ridge, a region no one of us explored. The reason was that Manfred, I think we did not agree then, thought that this slope was to the west of the Kala Agar range; a discussion we still had the next day when we were again there. However that may be, we split and while Manfred with Priyvrat had a new terrain to explore, Dr Jordania and I had only to take measurements of the rock which Girdar showed us the previous day.

I don't have an account of Manfred and Priyvrat's findings, they said to us they have had a potential candidate, possible but not probable. Anyway, Dr Jordania and I

together with two independent witnesses (Kamal Bisth and Girdar Singh) or should I say two independent measurers because they took the measurements. Here they are:

1. The proposed spot (area around the rock) is approximately some 60 to 65 yards up-ravine (measured by strides not tape) to the origin of the ravine, that is the Kala Agar-Dharampani road. A side ravine dominates this ravine, most probably created by the collapse of the bank wall of the original ravine with the result that the old source of the ravine which it takes at the forest road is dysfunctional, and is overgrown by bushes and not seen from the road.
2. The slate, inclined outwards the bank of the ravine awkwardly, was measured by Dr Jordania and me as being: 14 feet high; 10 feet wide and 2 feet thick at the base. Kamal and Girdar took the measuring tape and they recorded: 14.5 feet high; 10 feet wide and 2 feet thick at the base.
3. To measure the steep bank in front of the slate, which was not possible along its length, a trigonometrical measure was made: At an elevation of approximately 60 degrees, the hypotenuse was 17feet. This gives us a height of approximately 14-15feet.
4. There is a bed of rocks in front of the slate which go deep down – too deep to measure in fact, while from the ravine entrance towards the slate, we encounter a less steep bed of rock before it enters a flat bed, at the end of it and to its right, is the slate. The less steep bed of rock is nearly the same height as the bank we measured, that is 14-15 feet high above the flat bed.
5. The width of the flat bed enclosed by the steep bank, the steep bed of rocks and the slate was measured by Kamal and Girdar to be 11 feet wide and 22 feet long.
6. Again as we were back in 2012, we are not advocating for or against this rock to be presented as an official discovery of the Chowgarh slate. This is for you reader to do, that is to compare what we found with what Corbett wrote in the Chowgarh chapter in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*. So the digression ends here.

What we are certain about – 2012 and 2014

In 2012 we were certain only about the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow and the Forest road till it crosses a ridge where the north face meets the west face of the Kala Agar Range. In 2014, a further advance was made by us in that we managed to confirm that the footpath Corbett tells so much about is NOT on the crest of the adjacent ridge like we suspected back in 2012.

This footpath is not the continuity of the forest road beyond the compass crossing point. The letter of Corbett to Maggie in Booth's 2011 edition page 244 throws some light, in some of its fragments:

“...at three O'clock this afternoon, I set out to tie a katra up at Saryapani where I have been tying up since 31st. On the way out, instead of going to Saryapani turned down the forest track with the intention of tying the katra up where the Chamoli boy was killed on the 25th February...” and later;

“Anyway, the men had heard nothing, so we left the katra, to go up the zig-zag track to Dharampani where the Vivian's and I sat one evening...” and later

“After going a few yards, I came to a deep nala...” followed by “...Anyway I decided to go down the nala and look for tracks where it joined the main ravine...”

We therefore confirm having found the junction at Saryapani (about 450m from the compass crossing along the forest road) and where the forest road leaves this junction, it goes towards Dharampani and Chamoli. We also found a shortcut path (Corbett calls it forest track in the citation above), just some 100 metres after the junction. This goes down the valley to Chamoli without having to pass through Dharampani.

The zig zag track to Dharampani is actually the forest road which leaves the Saryapani junction and goes up the opposite slope in a zig zag (hairpins). This forest road also continues and joins the forest track (footpath) down the valley below and goes to Chamoli.

If Corbett eventually found a nala (nullah) on this zig zag track to Dharampani, which we identified as a ravine entrance then we were there or at least we were close there (within 100 metres). The footpath which Girdar leads us just after leaving the Saryapani junction is to be the forest track to Chamoli since it leads the way to the valley below – there could not have been two of these path or track.

According to our sightings on the terrain there, no other ravine entrance (deep nala) are in the close vicinity of the Saryapani junction. Moreover, not advocating our find, in all impartiality, the only rock fitting the description of the slate and found 60 yards (from Man-Eaters of Kumaon) from the Dharampani road (Booth) in a nullah (or ravine) was Girdar’s rock, which till a better candidate for a slate is discovered, will be the Chowgarh slate². A number of photos and videos are available and two-hand drawn sketches of the region are supplied with this paper. (See the associated sketch and photos.)

² It was told to Priyvrat at a later date that the place referred to As ‘Dharampani’ by Corbett in his letter, as also in this chapter, is infact called ‘Dharapani’ by locals.

Thak tigress killing site

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

I read Jim Corbett's "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" for the first time in my early teenage years, and I was profoundly moved by the stories and by the personality of Corbett. I can say that despite my lifelong love for reading and the large amount of books I've read, I have never been so impressed by any other book. The story of Thak tigress was my favourite. Not because it was the last "man-eater story" of the book that I did not want to end reading, but because of the sheer dramatic tension of the story and because of Corbett's writing style.

Actually, all that Corbett did was to write in rich detail what happened during this hunt, at the Indian-Nepalese border, in October-November 1938. Corbett had never been so close to conceding defeat in his 32-year career of shooting man-eaters, as this. During the whole hunt and pursuit he could not manage to see the man-eater even once. On the contrary, it was the tigress who was stalking Corbett, and he could have easily fallen a victim of the clever tigress on a number of occasions. Exhausted and depressed, on November the 30th, during the last minutes of the daylight Corbett conceded a defeat. He collected his men and his two goats he was using as bait, and started the 3 km walk back to the village Chuka. Dejected, he planned to leave the region early next morning, leaving the task of killing the elusive man-eater to others, for the first time in his life. He was 63 years old and he felt it was time to quit. Still, on the way, Corbett heard the tigress's mating call, and decided to try one last chance: to call up the tigress, mimicking the mating call of a male tiger. Knowing how clever his opponent was, Corbett did not have high hopes that the tigress would respond and come, but the tigress started answering and moving towards Corbett. This scene, that took place in the dying moments of the daylight of the November 30th, 1938, is a masterpiece of Corbett's writing skill. He is able to keep readers on the edge of their seats, describing everything in detail: the expression of horror of his men as they hear the approaching tigress roar, his frantic search for a suitable meeting place, placing the terrorised men and goats, his precarious sitting position behind the rock, the route of the approaching tigress, and finally how he manages to shoot the tigress during the last seconds of the dwindling daylight, falling from the rock on the heads of his men and injuring his jaw from the recoil of the heavy rifle. When Corbett was writing the book "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" in 1943-44, this was the most recent man-eating tiger that he had killed, and he remembered all the details extremely vividly.

In short, I was mesmerized. I liked the story so much, that in the 1980s, when I, as a lecturer in ethnomusicology, was teaching at the Tbilisi State Conservatory, I read the whole story to my conservatory students, musicians who had nothing to do with tigers or with conservation of nature.

At that time I lived in the Soviet Union, in the Republic of Georgia (now an independent state), and the book I read was published in Georgian. While living in the extremely closed Soviet Union, I could not even dream of visiting India in order to see the actual place where this story took place. (By the way, Corbett's books were translated and published in several languages of the former Soviet Union. I had read both Georgian and Russian translations.)

Well, after few years of break-up of Soviet Union, I migrated to Australia. Soon I realized that in my new country traveling was not an unrealistic dream at all. So I started waiting for a convenient occasion to go to India, as I could not afford to organise a holiday trip just to visit Corbett-places. Such occasion occurred when I was invited to an educational congress in Delhi in January 2011. So I secured a free week after the congress, and carefully planned my visit to the villages Chuka and Thak at the Nepalese border (the villages where the whole story took place).

I had the book written by Peter Byrne, who had previously visited Corbett's hunting places before writing popular book entitled "Shikari Sahib" (the book is also known under the name "Gentleman Hunter"). In this book Byrne tells stories of Corbett killing his man-eating tigers and leopards, and shows the photos of these sites. My dream was to go and to spend at least several hours at the place where the dramatic final showdown of the Thak man-eater took place. I actually wanted to read the whole story there, sitting at "the Rock". If you are a Corbett fan, you can probably understand this desire

It was then, in 2010, reading Corbett's Thak story for possibly the hundredth time, and comparing it with Peter Byrne account of this hunt, that I noticed there were some inconsistencies between Corbett and Byrne accounts of this legendary hunt. According to Byrne, Corbett was not sitting on a narrow ledge of the rock, instead he was standing behind the rock. Also, according to Byrne, Corbett did not fall after shooting the tigress, and there was no word of him injuring his jaw from the recoil of the rifle. I also noticed that the rock, represented in Byrne's book, was a different that one can imagine reading Corbett's description. So a doubt emerged in my mind, that something was wrong. Possibly the Byrne's rock was not the real place where the killing of the Thak tigress took place? Was this possible?..

It was also at this time when my tour operator sent me an account of another Corbett fan, Dr Manfred Walzl from Germany, who had a few years before me (in March 2007) been in this region and visited the Thak man-eater killing site. When I read Manfred's vividly written account, my doubts grew even deeper, as on his tour Manfred was shown a different rock (not the Byrne rock) and according to him, none of the two rocks (the Byrne rock, and the new rock he was shown) was coinciding precisely with Corbett's description. I contacted Manfred and before my trip we had an exchange of long emails about the rock with all the details. According to Manfred, Byrne's rock was a much better candidate for the real rock, than the new rock, although

Byrne rock still had many inconsistencies with Corbett's description. Finally, after reading Corbett's story many more times, and re-reading Manfred letters about both rocks he saw, I came to the conclusion, that the real rock was still not found.

So my 2011 trip to India became a trip to find a legendary place of Jim Corbett's last hunt.

I started my trip after the congress to the villages Chuka and Thak with the single aim: to find the place of the last hunt of Jim Corbett³. I had five free days. As getting to this region needs a full day of trekking from the last motorized place (Thulli Gadh), and a day trekking to get back to camp, I had only three days to find the real rock⁴.

Preparing for this task, I approached the task of finding this rock following a certain strategy of scientific inquiry. As I am an academic, this was natural for me. First of all, I worked out the most important methodological points of the search. My central premises were the following:

(1) We must follow Corbett' descriptions in every detail for several important reasons:

(a) Corbett gives an incredibly detailed information about the rock, where it is, how far from the village, where the path is going, how he was sitting on it, how big was the ledge, where he placed his left hand, where he placed his right foot, how he was holding a gun, how he put his gun on the rounded top of the rock, how and why he used handkerchief, etc).

(b) We should also remember that this story was the most recent hunting story he wrote in his book (hunting happened in the end of 1938, and his book "Man-eaters of Kumaon" was published in 1944), so his memories were very fresh.

(c) Corbett also mentions several times in this story (and also in the story about the Talla-Desh man-eater) that he "knew every foot of the path between Chuka and Thak".

(d) As we know, while he was trying to track and kill the Thak tigress, the tigress also tried to track and kill him, following him almost all the time. So Corbett's knowledge of this path was crucial for his own survival. That's why, even when he heard the call of the tigress, and started calling her up, and when he was running down from the ridge to meet the tigress, he ALREADY knew that he was going to meet the tigress at this 4 feet high rock.

³ The readers should note that the term "last hunt" is not literal – Corbett killed at least one more tiger in 1946 (a cattle lifter in Kaladhungi). We also know that Corbett also hunted lions in Africa, but this hunt for the Thak tigress was Corbett's last hunt after a man-eating tiger, described by Corbett.

⁴ Here I must say that for several weeks I was actually trying to find an Indian travel company who could take me to the villages Chuka and Thak by a jeep, as I was told that someone visited these villages by a motorized road. After several failed attempts to find such a company, I understood that the advice was not based on reality, and if I wanted to see these places, I had to walk very much like Corbett walked in the 1930s.

(e) Corbett was known for his honesty, so it was absolutely impossible to accept (at least for me) that he made up some details of the story in order to make them more dramatic for the readers.

So the general conclusion for me was very simple: to find the rock, I had to follow Corbett's description very closely, in all the details.

On the other hand, we must remember that:

(2) Villagers of Thak (or Chuka) should not be considered a fully reliable source of the information about this rock for several reasons:

(a) they were not present at the dramatic scene; the four people who were sitting behind and under Corbett, were Corbett's own people from Nainital, who, according to Corbett words, have never been to these jungles before this trip. So these four people were not Thak (or Chuka) villagers;

(b) Thak villagers were not even in their village (Thak), as after the last victim of the tigress was killed, they left the village, and only came back a couple of days after when the tigress was killed. The only person that was left nearby (in village Chuka) was the Thak headman;

(c) After killing the tigress, Corbett left the region in few hours, early next morning, not even letting Chuka villagers to see the killed tiger in the morning; Thak villagers were, as I mentioned above, in a more distant location; So Corbett did not even have time to go with the people of Thak or Chuka, to show and to tell them the details of the story during the daytime.

(d) And finally, villagers showed Peter Byrne in 1975 one rock, and at least from 2007 till 2011 they were showing Corbett fans (including Manfred and myself) a different rock, so their memory was far from perfect about this place;

So, basically, my conclusion was that we must trust Corbett's description and follow his words as close as possible in every detail. So Corbett's writing was not only my primary source, it was my only source.

I also acknowledged another very important point: we need to take into account, that in the past 73 years (1938-2011) some details of the rock and its surroundings could have changed, and it is important to know what COULD have changed, and what COULD NOT change.

Here is what CANNOT change in the course of time:

1. The place where the rock is -- the distance from the village,
2. the basic rectangular shape of the place,
3. the presence of the rock ridge in the middle of the rectangular field (stretching from south to northern part of the rectangular land),
4. the position of the four foot high rock itself, on the Eastern side of the rectangular field,
5. the shape of the rock,

6. the presence of the ledge on the rock, its size and its orientation (also on the eastern side of the rock), and the way Corbett must have been sitting sideways on a narrow ledge should still be possible.
7. Corbett also described in details where he put his feet, hands and the rifle on the “rounded top of the rock.” All these details are very unlikely to change in the course of time of a few decades or even for centuries.

Now let us discuss what CAN change: first of all,

- (1) The course of path from Thak to Chuka can change, and
- (2) Accumulation of earth and dry leaves could affect the path, or some places around the 4 feet high rock where Corbett killed the tigress.

So, to do the proper investigation of all these details, I took a compass (to be sure of the South and East directions that Corbett amply gives in his stories), and also the measuring tape with me (to measure exact length of different rocks, ledges, falling spaces, etc...). In order to measure big distances, I was counting my steps from Thak village to the ridge, and from the ridge to the beginning of the flat rectangular land; I also counted steps from the beginning of the flat rectangular to the rock ridge on the rectangular land itself, and then from there to the place where the rock must be. I spent three hours on January 20th (one of my guides, Nar Singh was with me on that day, waiting for me some 50 metres away, sleeping near the “Peter Byrne rock”), and then two more hours on January 22nd (another guide, a Chuka villager, Hoshiar Singh, the son of Umaid Singh, was with me there, also waiting). In total I spent 5 hours in the area and made all the detailed measurements of all possible rocks in the vicinity. To be sure of the distances I also counted my steps, and then I measured exactly how many centimetres I was roughly covering with my 10 steps, and made good estimates, so my measurements of the distances from the village to the ridge and to the rectangular piece of land must be quite accurate.

Most importantly, I made a long list of the details (from Corbett writing), that the Corbett rock MUST coincide with:

- (1) Corbett rock must be on a rectangular piece of land, about 800 metres from the Thak village (quarter of mile from Thak village, plus another 400 yards) from Thak village;
- (2) Rectangular land must be about 40 yards wide (East-West direction) and about 80 yards long (South-North direction);
- (3) At the end of the rectangular land (on the North side) there must be a steep rocky descent;

(4) There must be a rock ridge in the middle of the rectangular land, starting in about 25 yards after the path enters the flat ground (when coming from the Southern end, from the village Thak). The ridge must be running from South to North;

(5) The path from the Thak village should be going first from Thak on a steep ridge (400 metres), and then it should go down to the beginning of the flat rectangular land (about 350 metres);

(6) The rock must be on the territory of the rectangular land, at the far right side of the rectangular land (South when looking from Thak);

(7) It is very important to remember that the rock must be on the EASTERN side of the rectangular land;

(8) The path must skirt around the rock and should go steeply down immediately after the rock;

(9) Rock must be about 4 feet high;

(10) Rock must have a ledge;

(11) The ledge must be from the opposite side where from Corbett was expecting the tigress to appear: tigress was coming from the west, so the ridge must be from the eastern side. Corbett obviously did not want to be very exposed to the eyes of the tigress, so he was trying to hide his body behind the rock (Peter Byrne as a professional hunter was absolutely right on this point);

(12) The ledge must be narrow, as Corbett was only able to sit sideways, and he was able to place only a part of his bottom on the ledge;

(13) To keep himself steady, Corbett had to put his left hand on top of the rock;

(14) The rock must have a rounded top where Corbett put his rifle. Corbett even put his handkerchief on the top of the rock to prevent the rifle sliding;

(15) To keep himself more steady, Corbett stretched his right leg and touched the ground with his right foot;

(16) Despite holding himself on three points (sitting sideways on the ledge, placing his left hand on the rock, and touching the ground with his right foot) Corbett was still sitting not very stably seated, and subsequently he was knocked from the ledge by the recoil of the first bullet; The recoil of the second bullet injured his jaw quite badly.

(17) From his position Corbett had a problem of firing his rifle to the right (right from him) direction, as to fire in the right from him direction he would need to raise his heavy 450.400 rifle with his right hand only, aim and fire;

(18) Corbett could not use his left hand to hold his rifle, he needed it to keep himself on the rock;

(19) The path was approaching the rock from the left side (when looking from the rock);

(20) There was a small hump on the path about 20 feet (6 metres) away from the rock, and Corbett was going to fire in the face of the tigress as soon as it appeared above this hump;

(21) Immediately behind the rock there must be a deep space where Corbett fell on top of his four men and two goats;

(22) The space behind the rock for the fall must be about 10-12 feet deep;

(23) The path from Thak should enter the rectangular flat ground from the Southern side;

(24) In 25 yards the path should reach the rock ridge which runs from South to North;

(25) At the rock ridge, the path must bend to the right;

(26) After bending to the right, the path should continue another 25 yards and must leave the rectangular land on the East (long) side, or as Corbett writes, at "far right side", skirting around the 4 foot high rock;

(27) There must be a space for scattered bushes on the left from the rock (Corbett found that if he laid down next to the rock on the path, the tigress could approach him through the scattered bushes without him seeing the tigress, or go around the rock from the right side from him). Corbett obviously wanted to conceal himself as much as he could from the tigress, that's why he wanted to lie down, but after he found this was not effective and safe, he decided to sit behind the rock on the ledge, sitting very uncomfortably;

(28) In his position, sitting on a ledge behind the rock, Corbett was naturally prepared to fire to the left direction only, and he was expecting the tigress to appear from the left side, the side from where the path was approaching the rock. This was the direction his gun was pointing at;

(29) The tigress actually did not come on the path, as Corbett hoped. After going mad for not meeting her mate on the spot she was expecting him to be (she was at this moment behind the low ridge that was between her and Corbett, so Corbett could not see her), after Corbett made his last call (when they called together), she crossed the low ridge in front and bit right of the Corbett rock (Corbett describes her position of "one o'clock"), which meant she was a bit right from Corbett, an awkward direction for him to fire his rifle;

(30) If the tigress continued the same direction, Corbett would be in a trouble, as it would be impossible for him to turn the gun on the top of the rock towards right and fire, or to lift a heavy rifle with one hand and fire, without the support of the rock;

(31) The "half a dozen steps" the tigress made to her right after her last powerful roar that hit Corbett in the face ("and could have carried my hat...") was a great luck for Corbett, as the tigress came more to the left side for Corbett, exactly the place where Corbett's rifle was pointing; Otherwise, as Corbett writes, the story, "if written, would have had a different ending"...

These were the details that I found in Corbett story that could help me to find the "correct rock" where this dramatic scene took place. So I was searching for the Corbett rock with ALL these details in my mind (actually, on the paper). As a scholar, I have

a general principle in my research, that to make a positive identification, there must be no exceptions, no unexplained details.

Now the most interesting part: after researching the place for several hours, which is the correct rock?

The ‘Villager’s rock’ (the one that they were showing to Corbett fans for the last several years, including Manfred in 2007 and myself in 2011) cannot be the correct one. It fits only with couple of details, but does not fit with most of the details. Positive details are that it is about 4 feet high, it is situated at the path, it has a ledge, and there is a deep place behind the ledge where Corbett could fall. There are many more details that the rock does not fit Corbett’s description: this rock is not in the right place to start with, not on the rectangular piece of the flat land, and the distance from the village to this rock is too short. The ledge is not on the opposite side of the rock where Corbett was waiting the tigress to approach from, and above all, the ledge is a way too wide (80 cm), so it is definitely not a “narrow ledge” where Corbett had to “sit sideways to place a part of his bottom on the ledge”. Two people can sit on this ledge side by side. Also, there is no place (and no need) for Corbett to place his left hand to hold himself steady on the rock, because the 80 cm ledge is a perfectly steady place to sit on; Also there is no place and no need for Corbett to put his rifle on the “rounded top of the rock”; also you can not stretch from this ledge your right foot to reach the ground. Possibly most importantly, from the practical point of view of a hunter, who was expecting the appearance of a man-eater, sitting on this rock would have been disastrous, as it was like sitting high on a stage. So on this rock Corbett would have been extremely exposed to the coming tigress, instead of hidden behind the rock as Corbett wanted and described. (Readers can see this rock on the photos and accompanying film-documentary about our trip to Kumaon.)

So from Corbett’s description it is quite obvious that this rock, where tour guides had been taking Corbett fans during the last few years (including Manfred Walzl and myself), cannot be the correct rock which Corbett described in the story about Thak man-eater.

Now let us discuss the rock that Chuka and Thak villagers showed to Peter Byrne on April 20, 1975⁵. For simplicity I will be mentioning this rock as the “Peter Byrne’s rock”. This is the rock that Peter Byrne showed in his books, dedicated to Corbett hunting stories and places, and is known to many Corbett fans. It is important to remember, that Peter did not do a special research for this place, he just believed what Thak and Chuka villagers told him when he was there in 1975. He did not compare the rock to Corbett description either, as he did not have the book with him. By the

⁵ All these details are taken from Peter Byrne personal travel diary from his 1975 trip to Kumaon, the trip when he was shown Thak and Chuka man-eater’s killing sites (he saw both sites on April 20th, 1975). I am very grateful to Peter Byrne for sending me the pages of his diary and agreeing to use them in this chapter. According to Peter Byrne words, in his book “Shikari Sahib” this photo is dated as from 1995, which is a mistake)

way, in the book *Shikari Sahib* this black and white photo is dated as 1995, but Peter Byrne wrote to me this was a mistake (Peter Byrne's letter of June 22, 2011). The correct date, April 20, 1975, comes from Peter Byrne personal diary (courtesy of Peter Byrne). Peter's diary even specifies the name of a Chuka villager, Buloka Singh, who was photographed on the rock. The site was later confirmed by Thak villagers (Thak was well populated in 1975), but still, there are still discrepancies with this rock and Corbett's description.

This rock is partly in a right place. I said "partly" because it is on the correct rectangular piece of the land (the one that is 80 yards long and 40 yards wide, situated about 800 metres from the village). But the rock is on the wrong (northern) side of the rectangular land, not Eastern side, as Corbett described. The rock does have some sort of ledge, but it is totally impossible to sit on this ledge. And there is no need to sit on this ledge in the first place, as you can stand behind the rock. There are many more details which do not fit Corbett's description. Apart from being on a wrong side of the rectangular, it is too far from the beginning of the rectangular flat place (almost at the very end of the rectangular flat land), there is no falling space behind the rock. It is also higher than the one described by Corbett (5 feet, not 4 feet). Also, even if you imagine yourself somehow sitting on the ledge (which is impossible), there is no place to put your rifle on the "rounded top of the rock". Also, the ledge is from the wrong side, not the opposite side where the tigress was approaching from, so if Corbett was sitting there, he would have been directly exposed to the eyes of the tigress which would have had disastrous consequences for Corbett. Regarding Corbett's words that he was sitting on the ledge, this is simply impossible on this rock.

It is interesting, that in Byrne's photos there are two possible positions of how Corbett was positioned on the rock: in one photo a Chuka villager (as mentioned above, Buloka Singh) is sitting on top of the rock (not on the ledge!). On another photo it is Byrne himself, photographed hidden behind the rock. Byrne, himself a professional hunter, chose the best position in case IF Corbett was to meet the tigress at this rock: behind the rock. But if we accept that Corbett was hidden behind the rock, then lots of details that Corbett wrote about his awkward sitting position on the rock must be totally wrong: how he was sitting sideways on the narrow ledge, with his right foot touching the ground, left hand stretched to hold on the top of the rounded rock, his rifle resting on a rounded top of the rock, and also falling after the shots from the ledge straight behind the rock, on the heads of his men and two goats etc. So if we accept that Byrne's rock is the right one, we need to accept that Corbett made up plenty of details of his hunt, which, knowing Corbett's personality, is absolutely impossible. In short, after seeing and examining the place for five hours, measuring all its parts, I became convinced that Byrne's rock could not be the rock where Corbett concluded his hunting career of man-eaters.

So neither of these two rocks can be the rock where Corbett killed the Thak man-eater.

I believe the main reason why villagers showed the wrong rock to Byrne in 1975 was primarily because THE COURSE OF PATH has CHANGED between 1938 (when hunting took place) and 1975 (when Byrne visited Thak). Corbett is very clear in his description that after reaching the rectangular piece of land, and going straight 25 yards on the rectangular land, the path bends RIGHT just before the beginning of the rock ridge.

Today (and in 1975) the path skirts around the rock ridge from the LEFT side and then continues straight to North, leaving the rock ridge on the right side. So the path changed, and today the Corbett rock cannot be seen from the contemporary path between Chuka and Thak. If we accept the idea, that the path has changed (and this is obvious from Corbett's description), then everything falls in its place. So, we need to follow Corbett description to find the right course of the path, and after this, try to find the right rock on a long forgotten path.

Both Manfred and myself agreed in the course of our long email exchange, that the new path that is currently running there has changed since the 1938.

So I followed Corbett's vivid description in every detail, went on the right side from the rock ridge, and I believe I found the rock, where Corbett set when he shot and killed the Thak man-eater on November 30th, 1938. In the photo section you can see the photo of the rock, taken on January 20th 2010, the day when I saw this rock for the first time.

This rock is exactly in the place as Corbett describes, and is coinciding with all the descriptions that Corbett provides in the story. But let us follow the course of events. As I was not rushing anywhere, I was checking directions and measuring everything with compass and with the measure tape.

First of all I made sure that the "rectangular piece of flat land" the where the rock must be placed was the correct one. For this I counted the distance from the village to the ridge, and then from ridge to the rectangular land. I also checked with the compass where are the South-North-East -West sides (I suggest anyone who will be following Corbett footsteps to take compass, as Corbett is usually very specific about the directions). Everything was correct -- short sides of rectangular are the South and North sides, long ones -- East and West sides, and the path enters from the South part. Then I followed his further descriptions. Entering from the South end, and following the path, I counted 25 yards (in my counting, it was about 22 metres, which is about 25 yards), and I came to the beginning of the rock ridge. Today, as I have already mentioned, the path skirts the ridge from the left side, but according to Corbett's words, the old path was bending to the right. So I followed Corbett's words, and at the ridge I turned right, and went around the rock ridge. I went about another 30 metres and after few minutes of the search I found the rock which fitted Corbett description perfectly.

Or, let me say, “almost perfectly”. See more details here:

The rock I found is in the right place (25 yards to the ridge, plus 30 metres right from the ridge to the East side of the rectangular piece of land), it is a right height (115 cm today, or almost precisely 4 feet high, which easily can be a result of accumulation of the earth and dry leaves at the rock). From behind it is much higher (where the villagers and goats were positioned). It has a narrow (18 cm) ledge on the back of the rock (east side of the rock, opposite where the tigress was coming from as Corbett indicated -- tigress was coming from the western side), there is also a fall behind the rock, so the rock is much higher from behind than 4 feet. Corbett fell there after firing his rifle. Also, if you sit on the ledge, the only way to sit on it is to sit sideways, with your left side of your bottom on the ledge, and stretching your right foot to reach the ground to keep yourself steady (this is exactly as Corbett describes how he was sitting on the rock ledge); Also mind, that if you are not about 6 feet tall, you cannot reach the ground with your right foot, and in this case sitting on the ledge becomes virtually impossible. Also, your left hand must be stretched holding on the top of the rock, so you can keep yourself steady; and surely, there is also a “rounded top of the rock” in front of your chest to rest your rifle there, while waiting for the tigress to appear (Corbett placed his handkerchief on the rounded top to prevent slipping of the gun from the top of the rock, so I did as well). You can check these details on the photo of Hoshiar Sings sitting at the rock in Corbett’s position. All these details coincide perfectly with Corbett’s description.

There is also a bump from the rock on the old path 6 metres on the left from the rock (where Corbett was expecting the tigress to appear and to shot her in the face). There is a low ridge about 8-10 metres directly in front of the Corbett rock. It was behind this low ridge the tigress went mad after not finding a mate. And there is also a fall behind the rock, just under the ledge where Corbett was sitting.

So everything fits perfectly, with the only one exception: the fall behind the rock is not as deep as Corbett describes.

Corbett mentions 10-12 feet (about 3 – 3.5 metres), but today the fall is only about 2 metres deep (about 7 feet). I measured the rock from all sides. From the front, from the side where the tigress was coming the rock is 115 cm high, from behind (where the ledge is and where there is a falling space where Corbett fell) the rock is 210 cm high (seven feet). The ledge (measured from behind), is on the height of 110 cm from the bottom). So the only detail that this rock does not coincide with Corbett’s description is that the falling space is not as deep as Corbett writes.

To coincide with Corbett’s description perfectly, all 100%, I proposed that the falling space must have been in Corbett time at least about a meter deeper than it is now. Could this space have been deeper 72 years ago? I believe it could.

The place of the fall is a kind of a nullah, which gradually goes down, and after some distance (about 10 metres) another rising piece of land is starting, and it is very

possible that during the proceeding 72 years seasonal monsoon rains filled up the nullah with the earth, rocks and falling leaves (particularly as the new path was found and this side was left for good), so I proposed that the depth of the fall behind the rock was gradually, during the seven decades, filled up with the earth and falling rocks.

To check this possibility, I checked the ground behind the rock, just under Corbett's sitting place (under the ledge) on January 22. I proposed that in case if it was a solid rock, it would be impossible to imagine that 72 years ago it was a deeper fall there (solid rocks are much more stable than the earth), but in case if it was mostly a soft earth there, then it would be possible to have the deeper fall behind the rock in Corbett's time, and it later decreased by about 1 meter or more during the past 72 years, filled with earth and leaves during several decades.

So, on my second visit on January 22, I dug the earth behind the Corbett rock, under the ledge, in the place where Corbett must have fallen on top of his men and goats. I did the digging with my pocket knife. I managed to dig a hole of about 40 cm deep, and I could clearly see that there was only soft earth, no solid rock. I took video of my initial digging effort. So I came to conclusion that the falling space behind the rock was deeper 72 years ago. My second and third visit to Thak (in 2012 and 2014) convinced me that my suggestion was correct.

If the fall was deeper in Corbett's time (which I believe was the case) then all the Corbett's descriptions are coinciding with this rock: (1) how far it is from the Thak village, (2) where is the rectangular piece of land, (3) where is the rock, (4) where is the ledge, (5) how big is the ledge, (6) how you need to sit on the rock sideways (7) with your right foot touching the ground, (8) with your left hand holding on the top of the rock, and (9) putting the rifle on the top of the rounded rock, (10) with the space for the fall just behind the rock where Corbett placed his four men and two goats, (11) with a bump on the old path 6 metres from the rock, (12) with the low rock ridge in front on a distance to fit the dense bushes and then about 3 metres of more open ground. So everything is coinciding. Also, when you sit there on the narrow ledge, sideways, you also understand why Corbett could not turn his rifle to the right from his side, or to use his left hand to support his rifle: because he was sitting with his chest virtually against the face of rock, and he had no space to change his position. So we can say that absolutely all the details of Corbett descriptions are coinciding with this rock. With so many precise details, I believed this identification was as precise as the identification of somebody's fingerprints.

That's why I became convinced that this rock, which I saw for the first time on January 20th, and around which I spent 5 hours measuring and studying the whole place (even digging the earth under the ledge) during 20th January and 22nd January, is the right one. After my measurements I can say that there is not a single detail that makes it impossible this to be the correct rock. Apart from my own estimate, all the members of our 2012 and 2014 parties had long conversations with detailed analysis

of Corbett's words, and plenty of measuring. All of us came to the firm conclusion that the rock identification is positive.

The rock has couple of deep cracks from the front (western side), and a part of the rock on the right side is partly broken away (not affecting the part where Corbett was sitting). Parts of the rock and the ledge are now covered with green moss, and lots of big red ants lived there in 2011. Possibly the ants lived there 72 years ago as well, but Corbett does not mention them, because (1) it is unlikely that Corbett would pay attention to the ants when a roaring man-eater tiger was coming towards him, and (2) in the beginning of the night (it was already dark when Corbett set there) ants could have been already gone to sleep (and missed the dramatic show!)⁶.

You can also see a photo of our 2012 party members, after we restored the deeper falling space behind the rock. You can see one of our Indian helpers sitting on the rock (like Corbett), and others are sitting behind the rock, like four horrified villagers and two goats were sitting on November 30, 1938.

In 2012, during our group's visit to this rock, we affixed the metal plate, commemorating the site of the last hunt of man-eating tiger of the legendary hunter and conservationist, and dig behind the rock, to reveal the initial falling space behind the rock. Today the falling space is 3 metres deep. Possibly in 1938 it was even deeper, it is hard to tell (Corbett mentions "10-12 feet below me").

After coming back from India in 2011, I informed Jerry Jaleel, the head of the Jim Corbett Foundation (in Edmonton, Canada) about the finding and sent him several photos of the newly found rock that I took. Jerry studied my photos and my description in close detail, compared it with the Corbett story, and was very excited to conclude this was definitely the right rock where Corbett killed the Thak man-eater. He soon released part of my text and couple of my photos in a special issue of the "Tiger Trails", a journal of the Jim Corbett foundation. Jerry also placed two photos of the newly founded rock on Jim Corbett website together with comments. It were these photos, placed on the Jim Corbett website, that brought to me the attention of several other avid Corbett fans (Fernando Oliveira and Priyvrat Gadhvi, while for Kotecha it was a different story, too long to enumerate here), and gave us the idea to organise a new trip to the villages Chuka and Thak in April 2012. The book that you are reading is the result of this trip, and is written by the participants of the trip. You can read the whole story of our trip later in this book.

If you want to visit Kumaon and want to find this rock, it is easier to start from Thak, you need to follow Corbett's description, follow the path to the ridge, then down from the ridge to the rectangular piece of land. On the rectangular piece of land you must turn right before the beginning of the rock ridge (instead of following the path and skirting the ridge from the left, as the path goes today). Then you will need to

⁶ In April 2012, when our group visited the rock to reconstruct the falling space, the red ants were gone, instead, we found a big colony of big black ants living behind the rock, in the Corbett falling space. Most likely the dwellers at this historic rock change quite easily.

go around the rock ridge, and continue about 30 metres. There you will be able to see the Corbett's rock. Of course, today you can recognise the rock also for the metal plate that we affixed on the rock in 2012, in the naturally existing crack. The text on the plate is written in two languages, English and Hindi, and it reads:

"This is the rock where on November 30th, 1938, in the dying seconds of daylight, the tigress known as the "Thak Man-eater" was shot in a dramatic encounter by Jim Corbett - India's Legendary hunter and pioneer conservationist. The tigress became a man-eater after she, still nursing two cubs, was wounded twice by poachers. On the 9th - 12th of April 2012, admirers of Jim Corbett from different parts of the world, paid tribute to this great son of India, dedicated friend of tigers and humble servant of humanity."

When I visited Thak in January 2011 there was one family in residence. Unfortunately, these people are not the old original Thak villagers, they are Chuka villagers. In fact, the head of family is Sundar Singh, Hoshiar Singh's brother, and Umaid Singh's son⁷. As I understand, the Thak villagers abandoned the village for good in the first years of the 21st century, but the village is visited by Chuka villagers, who stay there sometimes for several months. I Believe this is better than to have Thak village completely abandoned. Most of the Thak village is reverting to the jungle and it is not easy to walk the streets of the village today. In 2011 I was not even able to find the main road of the Thak that is clearly visible on Peter Byrne photos from 1975. In 2014, April 23, Manfred and I visited Thak once again, and measured the "rectangular piece of land" to compare it with Corbett's estimates. Its width was about 50 metres (Corbett - "40 yards"), it's length was 105 metres (Corbett - "80 yards"). From the point where the old path was turning right (at this point the rock ridge starts) to the actual rock where the tigress was killed, is 33 metres (Corbett - "25 yards"). Interestingly, all the measurements of larger distances were given in Corbett account in conservative numbers. Smaller distances are very precise. The height of the rock from the front (tigress's view) is 115cm (Corbett - "about four feet), and the falling space today is about 3.20 metres high (Corbett - "10-12 feet"). If you use the GPS for finding the rock, location of the rock on the map is 29° 11'093"N 80°14'132"E.

One additional remark must be discussed about the place where Corbett and his four men heard the tigress calling for a mate. According to Corbett: "The path, as I have already mentioned, joins the ridge that runs down to Chuka a quarter of a mile from Thak, and when I now got to this spot where the ridge is only a few feet wide and from where a view is obtained of the two great ravines that run down to the Ladhya river, I heard the tigress call once and again across the valley on my left." The current path from the Thak village runs on a side of the ridge, so on the left side of the path you can see nothing but the side of the ridge. In order to find the place

⁷ Sundar Singh was 63 years old in 2011, his wife was Durga Devi, 50 years old, and they had three children, a daughter Claoti, she was 30 years old, sons Parvati Singh, 29, and Devsi Singh, 23. They also had another son, Barasi, who died some time ago. We met Sundar Singh in 2014.

Corbett is talking about, the place where Corbett heard the tigress calling, you need to climb the ridge, and from there you can see the “two great ravines that run down to the Ladhya River.” Most likely in 1938 the path from the Thak village was going (at least partially) on the top of the ridge.

And at the very end of this chapter let me say a few words about the crack where we affixed the metal plate. The crack is very deep, and the whole right top section (if looked from the front, as the tigress saw the rock) is actually separated from the rock by this crack, so after some time the large section of the rock might fall off. When and why did this crack appear? If you sit behind the rock, on a narrow ledge, exactly in Corbett’s position, your stretched left hand will naturally be placed on the top of the rock’s rounded head, exactly where the crack starts today. If this crack was there in 1938, Corbett would have definitely used this crack to have a better grip on the rock, and possibly even he would have saved himself from falling off the rock. But Corbett does not mention the existence of this crack. According to his words, his left hand was placed on the “rounded top of the rock”. So, most likely, the crack was not there, and it appeared after the November 30th 1938, during the last seven decades.

We know that rocks can gradually disintegrate, but as a rule, this takes a very long time. Is it possible that there was any other, external factor that contributed to the appearance of the crack? We know that a powerful physical shock, received by a rock, can sometimes break or intensify the natural processes of the rock disintegration. Bearing this idea in mind, I would like to propose that the appearance of the deep crack on the rock could possibly be a result of the dramatic hunting episode on November 30th, 1938. More precisely I suggest that the crack possibly appeared partially as the result of the impact of the heavy rifle discharge, which was placed immediately on the rock top.

It would be very hard to measure exactly the impact of such a shock on the solid rock, but some shock was certainly absorbed by the rock when Corbett fired his heavy rifle, 450/400. We know that the rifle was placed on the top of the rock, some two feet from where the crack starts today. Actually, Corbett made not one, but two shots from the 450/400 rifle, but I am still discussing only the first shot, as the first shot was made when the rifle was placed on the rock, but the second shot was made when Corbett was falling off the rock and the rifle was in the air (the recoil of the second shot hit violently Corbett in the jaw). So most likely only the first shot, made when the rifle was rested on the top of the rock, administered a physical shock to the rock.

Even if we consider that the crack appeared purely following some inner natural processes of rock disintegration, there is no reason to deny that the shock of the heavy rifle discharge could intensify the process of disintegration of the rock. So, there is a possibility that the deep crack, where we placed the metal plate, is the result and the witness of the dramatic hunt that happened on this rock at the sunset on November 30th, 1938.

It is a stunning view of the Sharda river and Nepal from some of the houses of the Thak village. Happy to find someone in Thak village⁸, and following Corbett's advice, I wanted to give a small gift to this family, but in order not to offend them, as Corbett suggested, I left a bit of money under a small stone at the entrance of their house on both occasions when I visited their village and their house. I think it will be nice and symbolic gesture for every Corbett fan, who will be visiting Thak, to leave a bit of money to anyone, living in village Thak at that moment, as if Corbett himself leaves some gift for the simple Indian villagers, whom he loved so dearly.

⁸ In April 2012, when we camped at Thak, Sundar Singh family was not there, although their house condition indicated they still return there for prolonged periods of time. We were also told that last year most of the villagers returned to Thak in order to celebrate a religious festival which takes place in Thak once in every five years. Sundar Singh was accompanying us on our 2014 trip in the Thak village, and allowed us to have our camp next to his house, the only populated house in Thak today.

Historic rock where Thak tigress escaped Corbett, Ibbotson, and Tewari

By JOSEPH JORDANIA, PRIYVRAT GADHVI

Apart from the sites where Corbett killed man-eaters, there are also a few sites, which constitute an integral part of the legacy of Corbett's hunts. These are often sites where Corbett narrowly escaped death from man-eaters, or, in several other cases, sites where Corbett came very close to killing man-eaters. Many of such places are impossible or at least very difficult to identify with some certainty, but there are a few sites that can be identified because of the nature of the site. This chapter is dedicated to one such site.

On October 27th, 1938, Corbett, Ibbotson and Tewari followed the Thak tigress after she killed a man from the village Thak the day before. This was the third victim of the tigress. The pursuit was filled with utmost suspense and culminated at the giant slab of rock in almost killing the man-eater. Let us hear first of all what Corbett has to say about this moment of his hunt for probably the most elusive man-eaters he ever hunted:

"On the morning of the 27th, just as we were finishing breakfast, a party of men led by Tewari, the brother of the Headman of Thak, arrived in camp and reported that a man of their village was missing. They stated that this man had left the village at about noon the previous day, telling his wife before leaving that he was going to see that his cattle did not stray beyond the village boundary, and as he had not returned they feared he had been killed by the man-eater.

"Our preparations were soon made, and at ten o'clock the Ibbotsons and I set off for Thak, accompanied by Tewari and the men he had brought with him. The distance was only about two miles but the climb was considerable, and as we did not want to lose more time than we could possibly help we arrived at the outskirts of the village out of breath, and in a lather of sweat.

"As we approached the village over the scrub-covered flat bit of ground which I have reason to refer to later⁹, we heard a woman crying. The wailing of an Indian woman mourning her dead is unmistakable, and on emerging from the jungle we came on the mourner the wife of the missing man and some ten or fifteen men, who were waiting for us on the edge of the cultivated land. These people informed us that from their houses above they had seen some white object, which looked like part of the missing man's clothing, in a field overgrown with scrub thirty yards from where we were now standing. Ibbotson, Tewari

⁹ Author's note: Corbett mentions this "scrub covered flat bit of ground" as it was here that he later called up and shot the Thak tigress on November 30th, 1938.

and I set off to investigate the white object, while Mrs Ibbotson took the woman and the rest of the men up to the village.

"The field, which had been out of cultivation for some years, was covered with a dense growth of scrub not unlike chrysanthemum, and it was not until we were standing right over the white object that Tewari recognized it as the loin-cloth of the missing man. Near it was the man's cap. A struggle had taken place at this spot, but there was no blood. The absence of blood where the attack had taken place and for some considerable distance along the drag could be accounted for by the tigress having retained her first hold, for no blood would flow in such a case until the hold had been changed.

"Thirty yards on the hill above us there was a clump of bushes roofed over with creepers. This spot would have to be looked at before following up the drag, for it was not advisable to have the tigress behind us. In the soft earth under the bushes we found the pug marks of the tigress, and where she had lain before going forward to attack the man.

"Returning to our starting point we agreed on the following plan of action. Our primary object was to try to stalk the tigress and shoot her on her kill: to achieve this end I was to follow the trail and at the same time keep a lookout in front, with Tewari who was unarmed a yard behind me keeping a sharp lookout to right and left, and Ibbotson a yard behind Tewari to safeguard us against an attack from the rear. In the event of either Ibbotson or I seeing so much as a hair of the tigress, we were to risk a shot.

"Cattle had grazed over this area the previous day, disturbing the ground, and as there was no blood and the only indication of the tigress's passage was an occasional turned-up leaf or crushed blade of grass, progress was slow. After carrying the man for two hundred yards the tigress had killed and left him, and had returned and carried him off several hours later, when the people of Thak had heard several sambur calling in this direction. The reason for the tigress not having carried the man away after she had killed him was possibly due to his cattle having witnessed the attack on him, and driven her away.

"A big pool of blood had formed where the man had been lying, and as the blood from the wound in his throat had stopped flowing by the time the tigress had picked him up again, and further, as she was now holding him by the small of the back, whereas she had previously held him by the neck, tracking became even more difficult. The tigress kept to the contour of the hill, and as the undergrowth here was very dense and visibility only extended to a few yards, our advance was slowed down. In two hours we covered half a mile, and reached a ridge beyond which lay the valley in which, six months previously, we had tracked down and killed the Chuka man-eater. **On this ridge was a**

great slab of rock, which sloped upwards and away from the direction in which we had come. The tigress's tracks went down to the right of the rock and I felt sure she was lying up under the overhanging portion of it, or in the close vicinity.

"Both Ibbotson and I had on light rubber-soled shoes -- Tewari was bare-footed -- and we had reached the rock without making a sound. Signing to my two companions to stand still and keep a careful watch all round, I got a foothold on the rock, and inch by inch went forward. Beyond the rock was a short stretch of flat ground, and as more of this ground came into view, I felt certain my suspicion that the tigress was lying under the projection was correct. I had still a foot or two to go before I could look over, when I saw a movement to my left front. A golden-rod that had been pressed down had sprung erect, and a second later there was a slight movement in the bushes beyond, and a monkey in a tree on the far side of the bushes started calling.

"The tigress had chosen the spot for her after-dinner sleep with great care, but unfortunately for us she was not asleep; and when she saw the top of my head -- I had removed my hat -- appearing over the rock, she had risen and, taking a step sideways, had disappeared under a tangle of blackberry bushes. Had she been lying anywhere but where she was she could not have got away, no matter how quickly she had moved, without my getting a shot at her. Our so-carefully-carried-out stalk had failed at the very last moment, and there was nothing to be done now but find the kill, and see if there was sufficient of it left for us to sit up over."

Suspense, connected to this site, does not finish here. Corbett stayed at the human remains (about 50 yards from this rock, at the ridge nearby), while Ibbotson and Tewari returned to the village to bring necessary equipment for making a Machan to sit in the kill. While Corbett was waiting for Ibbotson and Tewari, the tigress tried to approach the kill, but after seeing Corbett she left unseen. After Ibbotson and Tewari returned and prepared the machan, Corbett made a night-long vigil. Tigress, however, this time abandoned the kill and instead followed Ibbotson and Tewari, in hope to secure another human victim. Luckily Ibbotson and Tewari maintained strict vigilance all the way down to their camp, and avoided the attack. According to tracks, the tigress followed them up to their camp site near Ladhya and Sharda confluence. Corbett spent a night at the kill, witnessing how porcupines and then a Himalayan bear come to investigate the kill, but the elusive tigress did not appear any more. In the morning Ibbotson, Tewari and several men from the village Thak arrived to take care of the deceased man's remains according to their religious practices. Corbett's description is as rich in details as always, giving the reader the fill of being there and experiencing the thrill and danger of a hunter waiting for the whole night for the man-eater to appear.

When tracking from Thak to Kot-Kindri on April 12th 2012, we had slight hope to find the rock, where the tigress escaped Corbett, Ibbotson and Tewari. The good point was that the rock, according to Corbett, was situated between Thak and Kot-Kindri, and we were going from Thak to Kot-Kindri. Also, as rocks can remain unchanged for many thousand years, we knew this would be close-by and hoped to see it. The bad news was that we did not have much time, and we could not organize a special search in the whole area for the rock. We had to be vigilant, and carefully scan the surroundings as we went, hoping that the rock was in the vicinity of the currently existing path.

We had been on the track for more than an hour, when we suddenly heard Priyvrat's voice: "Guys, have a look! This rock looks like the Tewari rock!" We must mention here, that in our conversations we were often referring to this rock as "Tewari rock." Tewari was a brother of Thak headman, and he was accompanying Corbett and Ibbotson on the trail. According to the book *Temple Tiger*, Tewari was also a brother (or a close relative, known sometimes as "brother" in India) of the killed man. We know that "Tewari" is a very common surname for Brahmins in Northern parts of India, and was most likely a family name for several Thak villagers, who were Brahmins. During our visit to Chuka village we found the copy of the "Man-Eaters of Kumaon" left by a certain Mr Armstrong who finds mention elsewhere in this book to the villagers in the 1990s. On the book cover there is a handwritten note, most likely the result of Mr Armstrong asking the Thak villagers additional information about the Thak man-eater and her victims. The writing contains the names of two Tewari brothers – "Hera Bulup (probably Herabullabh) Tewari" and "Mondkrat Tewari," probably one of them is the name of the person who accompanied Corbett and Ibbotson, and the other is the name of the victim of the man-eater.

At the moment when we heard Priyvrat's words, we were approaching the huge slab of rock, which was next to the path: the right side of it. From the side the rock looked as a giant asymmetrical triangle, lying on one of its long sides, with the ascending side starting at the point where we came from (and where from Corbett, Ibbotson, and Tewari were following the tigress). We were naturally very excited, but tried to examine the rock before making any decisions. After a good examination of the rock we all agreed, that the rock suited perfectly the Corbett's description. At the highest side of the triangular shape there is a perpendicular and even overhanging portion of the rock where the tigress could have been resting. Of course, we need to acknowledge, that theoretically there still is a possibility, that the real rock is somewhere else, far from the current path between the Thak and Kot-Kindri, but we can all certify, that Corbett's description of the rock fits perfectly the one we found.

Kotecha climbed the rock, repeating Corbett's ascent, and soon was standing at the top of the rock, above the overhanging part of the rock, where the tigress must have been resting while Corbett was approaching. We asked one of our helpers, Chuka villagers to play the role of the tigress. So we filmed the scene of Corbett's ascent and

tiger's escape, and you can see this scene on the 40-41th minutes of the accompanying film. We visited the rock during our 2014 trip as well. You can also view the photos of this rock. During our 2014 visit the author of this chapter also climbed the rock, and we made precise measurements of the rock. The length of the ascending part is 8 metres, the height at the other, overhanging end (where Corbett wanted to shot the resting tigress) is 3.90 metres.

If a lover of Corbett stories is reading these words (and we believe most of the readers of this book would be certified Corbett fans), and if they decide to visit Chuka and Thak villages to see Corbett's legendary hunting places, we propose to search for this rock as well. It can be relatively easily found on the path between Thak and Kot-Kindri. It is so close from the path that you can touch the rock with your hand without stepping aside from the path. You just need to have your attention on the right side of the path.

Climbing the rock, as Corbett did, is not very easy, but quite possible for a fit person. But climbing the rock with a heavy rifle, and without making any sounds, is quite a feat for even a young trained person. And let us remember, Corbett was 63 years old when he was in the pursuit of a Thak tigress, the last in his celebrated career as a slayer of man-eaters.

PART TWO: PEOPLE

As every Corbett fan knows, Corbett's stories describe real events in real time with real people. The descendants of the people from Corbett's stories live today in contemporary India, many still in the same villages where their ancestors and relatives survived attacks of man-eating tigers, or were killed. During our visits to Kumaon we visited the villages where the relatives and descendants of these people live, talked to them and documented our findings.

In this part of the book the reader will find names and life stories of several characters from Corbett's books as they are remembered among their relatives and friends: the story of the village giant from Dalkania, who wrestled the man-eater and miraculously survived horrific wounds; story of a brave mother who would surely have died from the wounds of the tiger attack if not for the care and treatment received from Corbett; the pitiful story of the last- 436th victim of the Champawat man-eater; the identities of the first and the second victims of the Thak man-eater, and the story of the man who first put Corbett on the dangerous careerpath of hunting of man-eater tigers and leopards.

It was our ambition to put names on the characters that Corbett describes sometimes so vividly in his stories, unsung Heroes in every respect, especially those who have a direct relevance in his stories.

Kulomani: The Gaunt Friend of Corbett

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

'One of the villagers accompanying me was a tall gaunt man with a terribly disfigured face. He had been a constant visitor to my camp, and finding in me a good listener had told and retold his encounter with the man-eater so often that I could, without effort, repeat the whole story in my sleep.'

Corbett in Man-Eaters of Kumaon

This 'tall gaunt man' is known as Kulomani Bhugiyal, the man who fought the Chowgarh man-eating tigress and was from Dalkhania Village. This finding is credited to Joel Lyall in his book 'Jungle Tales'. Not satisfied at just knowing the name, and instructed by Priyvrat, Manfred and I decided to investigate further in Dalkhania village in April 2012. By a good stroke of luck we met Kulomani's grand nephew Mr Tara Dutt Bhugiyal [son of Roop Dev Bhugiyal (1928 - 2004), nephew of Kulomani], who was kind enough to inform us of the existence of Kulomani's only living grandson, Mr Trilochand Bhugiyal. Unfortunately we could not meet the latter since it was getting dark and we had to return to our camp. We came back to Dalkhania in April 2014 with our whole group and met Mr Trilochand. I had conducted both interviews at intervals of two years time with those two separate persons and I am proud to say that these hill-folks gave me separate informations which tally almost perfectly, safe for one or two inaccuracies in birth dates.

Kulomani's descendants tree is therefore as follows:

- Kulomani Bhugiyal (1887¹⁰-1952) – Died at age of 65 years.
- Only Son – (Shri) Hari Krishna Bhugiyal (1918¹¹ – 1985). He was at the scene when the man-eater attacked his father. Died at age of 67 years.
- Two grandsons – Elder is Prem Ballav (1950 – 1994) Died at age of 44 years – no descendant;
- Younger grandson is Trilochand Bhugiyal (Born 1963, still living in the same village Dalkhania, as his grandfather Kulomani).

Trilochand said that he learned about his grandfather Kulomani thanks to his father (Shri) Hari Krishna, who incidentally also appear in the chapter 'Chowgarh Tigers' where Kulomani relates to Corbett that:

¹⁰ While both Trilochand and Tara Dutt gave the year 1952 as Kulomani's death year, they both did not know his birth date. While Tara Dutt said to us Kulomani died at age 85, Trilochand who is more directly related said his grandfather died at age 65, from which we get a better accurate date for Kulomani's birth year. It is also possible to propose that Kulomani looked older because of his disfigured face.

¹¹ This year is deduced from subtracting death year given by Trilochand with death age.

‘The encounter had taken place four years previously and is best told in his own words?... “My son, who was eight years of age at the time, and I had cut grass....”

and later,

“My son had been too frightened to run away, and when the tiger had gone, I took his loincloth from him and wrapped....”

Now, it happens that the age of (Shri) Hari Krishna, the ‘son of Kulomani’ in the above lines almost matches that given by Trilochand. In Corbett’s account, it appears that (Shri) Hari Krishna is born in 1917 – since Corbett quotes the year 1929 at the beginning of the story. But let me remind you that months’ have not been taken into account when Trilochand gave us dates and death age of (Shri) Hari Krishna. So it could be a perfect fit. You can see the photo of Trilochand, Kulomani’s grandson and Hari Krishna’s son. Unfortunately, no photos of Kulomani and Hari Krishna were found.

The date of the attack of the Chowgarh Tigress on Kulomani, based on the ‘Man-Eaters of Kumaon’ lines above, would be 1925, since Corbett said in his writings that he was there in February 1929, though it is a controversial date (See “Controversies” chapter). This year 1925 for the attack would also give Kulomani’s son, (Shri) Hari Krishna’s birth year as 1917 (see footnote also) – born in 1917, he would have been 8 years old in 1925 which seems good.

However, we have showed in the “Controversies” part of this book that the date February 1929 for Corbett’s arrival in Dalkhania is not plausible. Furthermore, the “...four years previously...” in the above quotes seems inaccurate with the text of Man-Eaters of Kumaon itself. If Man-Eaters of Kumaon gives February 1929 for Corbett’s arrival in Kala Agar/Dalkhania, which leads to the attack on Kulomani to have happened early in 1925, it also gives the 15 December 1925 as the date of the first victim of the Chowgarh tigress which seems incoherent now. But such inaccuracies happen and should you like to know more, we have dedicated a whole part of this book on those.

Trilochand remembers well the account of his father on Kulomani, so did his cousin Tara Dutt, both had been at a reasonable age when (Shri) Hari Krishna died in 1985. Tara Dutt even showed us the place where the fight of Kulomani and the tigress took place, but at a distance of 500-600 metres from where we stood, it was difficult to go down that late afternoon. Trilochand gives a good description of Kulomani, says he was ‘very tall’. Taller than me? I asked; [I’m 6 foot tall (183cm)], “surely taller than you” was the reply by extending his arm at least a foot higher than my head.

‘Looking at the great frame of the man, it was easy to picture him as having been a veritable giant.’

Were the words used by Corbett to describe Kulomani. I admit I thought Trilochand was exaggerating his grandfather’s height, but I don’t think Corbett was! And what about his face? I asked. “He has great scars on his right cheek and forehead, my

father told me that people were afraid to look at his face.” I now remember Manfred pressing me to ask him about his eyes. “His right eye was damaged” he instantly replied. I think Kamal, acting as translator, interpreted his answer as a ‘missing right eye’. Trilochand also described Kulomani’s face as being ‘horribly scarred’ in our interview two years earlier without further description.

That day, we had also been on object of finding the girl that Corbett managed to cure following an attack by the Chowgarh man-eater in Dalkhania. From her surname, we initially fell on a distant relative of hers, Mrs Laxmi Bhatt, a former village head-woman (called village ‘pradhan’) of Dalkhania in 2009. This was prior to our meeting with Trilochand. While she offered us buttered milk with ‘jagri’ (sweetened condensed milk like) as a welcome drink, we asked her if she knew about Kulomani. Instantly she made an awful expression on her face, indescribable by me, which stunned Dr Jordania, and she said “Yes I know and saw him, his face looks like this” and she repeated the facial gesture to our amazement. This lady deserves a paragraph in this chapter, later on, for now I question her age, because I already knew from Tara Dutt, two years previously that Kulomani died in 1952. Asking a Kumaoni lady about her age is next to an offence similar like one walking with shoes in a temple. So I circumvented around with silly questions about her ‘pradhan-ship’ and found that she should be between 62 to 67 years.

Assuming she is 67 years old, she must have seen Kulomani when she was 5 years old at most and 62 years later, she could repeat, with facial gesture, an expression on a human face who Kulomani himself confessed, as reported by Corbett:

“And now, sahib, I am as you see me, old and thin, and with white hair, and a face that no man can look on without repulsion.”

And what did Kulomani do for a living apart from rearing animals? Tara Dutt ventured to say that since his family is involved in tree-felling for timber, himself owns a sawing workshop, that Kulomani could well have been the origin of this business, because he was reported to have felled great logs of wood distant away in the forest and tying the log with a rope to his waist, he had hauled it back to the village. “No doubt about his strength, he was over-powerful’ he said. Surely powerful enough for having removed a tigress from her clutches! Trilochand for his part said his father was formerly involved in timber business, but he never got indulged in it. And so lives the legend, in Kumaon, of the man who fought a tigress, and survived the attack ...

At the end let us listen to the scene of the attack, so vividly described in Corbett story:

“Do you see that pine tree, sahib, at the bottom of the grassy slope on the shoulder of the hill? Yes, the pine tree with a big white rock to the east of it. Well, it was at the upper edge of the grassy slope that the man-eater attacked me. The grassy slope is as perpendicular as the wall of a house, and none but a hillman could find foothold on it. My son, who was eight years of age at the time, and I

had cut grass on that slope on the day of my misfortune, carrying the grass up in armfuls to the belt of trees where the ground is level.

"I was stooping down at the very edge of the slope, tying the grass into a big bundle, when the tiger sprang at me and buried its teeth, one under my right eye, one in my chin and the other two here at the back of my neck. The tiger's mouth struck me with a great blow and I fell over on my back, while the tiger lay on top of me chest to chest, with its stomach between my legs. When falling backwards I had flung out my arms and my right hand had come in contact with an oak sapling. As my fingers grasped the sapling, an idea came to me. My legs were free, and if I could draw them up and insert my feet under and against the tiger's belly, I might be able to push the tiger off, and run away. The pain, as the tiger crushed all the bones on the right side of my face, was terrible; but I did not lose consciousness, for you see, sahib, at that time I was a young man, and in all the hills there was no one to compare with me in strength. Very slowly, so as not to anger the tiger I drew my legs up on either side of it, and gently inserted my bare feet against its belly. Then placing my left hand against its chest and pushing and kicking upwards with all my might, I lifted the tiger right off the ground and, we being on the very edge of the perpendicular hillside, the tiger went crashing down and he like would have taken me with him, had my hold on the sapling not been a good one.

"My son had been too frightened to run away, and when the tiger had gone, I took his loincloth from him and wrapped it round my head, and holding his hand I walked back to the village. Arrived at my home I told my wife to call all my friends together, for I wished to see their faces before I died. When my friends were assembled and saw my condition, they wanted to put me on a charpoy and carry me fifty miles to the Almora hospital, but this I would not consent to; for my suffering was great, and being assured that my time had come, I wanted to die where I had been born, and where I had lived all my life. Water was brought, for I was thirsty and my head was on fire, but when it was poured into my mouth, it all flowed out through the holes in my neck. Thereafter, for a period beyond measure, there was great confusion in my mind, and much pain in my head and in my neck, and while I waited and longed for death to end my sufferings my wounds healed of themselves, and I became well."

Incredible! We can truly say the tigress met a match on that day.

Addition: Laxmi Bhatt on other Chowgarh victims

A colourful character she is, contrasting with our unsung heroes of this chapter, in which she does not form part. But we have included her here for a few lines because she has an incredible story to tell about another man who fought with the Chowgarh

tigress and survived the attack. This does not appear in Corbett's story, but according to her, this attack is documented. Kulomani was not the only survivor of an attack of the Chowgarh tigress, just like Corbett says just after returning to his camp in Dalkhania after shooting the Chowgarh cub:

'Every man present had lost one or more relatives, and several (of them) bore tooth and claw marks, inflicted by the man-eater, which they will carry to their graves.'

One of these men attending to Corbett that day, according to Laxmi Bhatt, was her uncle, Khimanand Bhatt (1889 – 1964), son of Lallmani Bhatt (Laxmi's grandfather). The Bhatt family is a big family in Dalkhania, and you'll meet more Bhatt's in this story, so don't lose the thread. Khimanand was very unfortunate because both he and his first wife suffered attacks from the Chowgarh man-eater tigress in an interval of 2 years, fatally though for his wife. Laxmi bhatt does not recall the name of Khimanand's first wife, who was pregnant when killed by the tigress. This mother-to-be originated from Devli village, nearby Kundal and was killed in the forest adjoining Debta Gaon, a small community near Dalkhania in January 1930. Laxmi Bhatt tells us that Khimanand had a broken forearm, resulting from the attack he suffered in 1928 in the same locality and that she is giving precise dates here because she says this tragic story is documented in Nainital's Shirley Hall (in the exhibition room) together with a photo of her grandfather. Unfortunately Nainital was not in our plans, so this will be for another occasion where the facts shall be checked. Khimanand's second wife, Parvati Devi who died in 1948/49 bore him only a son, who died in 1993 with no descendant.

Naruli Devi and Shri Ganga Dutt Bhatt: The brave mother and the “occupant of the basket”

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

When reading ‘Chowgarh Tigers’ in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, one has to admit that before the story’s happy ending, there is yet another dramatic story in the story with a happy ending: This is of the girl of Dalkhania who was believed to be dead after she was severely mauled by the Chowgarh man-eater tigress and who was nursed by Corbett to full recovery. Let us listen to Corbett’s moving account of the events:

...The man had run all the way uphill from the village, and when he regained his breath he informed me that a woman had just been killed by the man-eater, about half a mile on the far side of the village. As we ran down the hillside I saw a crowd of people collected in the courtyard already alluded to. Once again my approach through the narrow lane was not observed, and looking over the heads of the assembled men, I saw a girl sitting on the ground.

The upper part of her clothing had been torn off her young body, and with head thrown back and hands resting on the ground behind to support her, she sat without sound or movement, other than the heaving up and down of her breast, in the hollow of which the blood, that was flowing down her face and neck, was collecting in a sticky congealed mass.

My presence was soon detected and a way made for me to approach the girl. While I was examining her wounds, a score of people, all talking at the same time, informed me that the attack on the girl had been made on comparatively open ground in full view of a number of people including the girl’s husband; that alarmed at their combined shouts the tiger had left the girl and gone off in the direction of the forest; that leaving the girl for dead where she had fallen her companions had run back to the village to inform me; that subsequently the girl had regained consciousness and returned to the village; that she would without doubt die of her injuries in a few minutes; and that they would then carry her back to the scene of the attack, and I could sit up over the corpse and shoot the tiger.

While this information was being imparted to me the girl’s eyes never left my face and followed my every movement with the liquid pleading gaze of a wounded and frightened animal. Room to move unhampered, quiet to collect my wits, and clean air for the girl to breathe were necessary, and I am afraid the methods I employed to gain them were not as gentle as they might have been. When the last

of the men had left in a hurry, I set the women, who up to now had remained in the background, to winning water and to tearing my shirt, which was comparatively clean and dry, into bandages, while one girl, who appeared to be on the point of getting hysterics, was bundled off to scour the village for a pair of scissors. The water and bandages were ready before the girl I had sent for the scissors returned with the only pair, she said, the village could produce. They had been found in the house of a tailor, long since dead, and had been used by the widow for digging up potatoes. The rusty blades, some eight inches long, could not be made to meet at any point, and after a vain attempt I decided to leave the thick coils of blood-caked hair alone.

The major wounds consisted of two claw cuts, one starting between the eyes and extending right over the head and down to the nape of the neck, leaving the scalp hanging in two halves, and the other, starting near the first, running across the forehead up to the right ear. In addition to these ugly gaping wounds there were a number of deep scratches on the right breast, right shoulder and neck, and one deep cut on the back of the right hand, evidently inflicted when the girl had put up her hand in a vain attempt to shield her head.

A doctor friend whom I had once taken out tiger-shooting on foot had, on our return after an exciting morning, presented me with a two-ounce bottle of yellow fluid which he advised me to carry whenever I went out shooting. I had carried the bottle in the inner pocket of my shooting jacket for over a year and a portion of the fluid had evaporated; but the bottle was still three-parts full, and after I had washed the girl's head and body I knocked the neck off the bottle and poured the contents, to the last drop, into the wounds. This done I bandaged the head, to try to keep the scalp in position, and then picked up the girl and carried her to her home a single room combining living quarters, kitchen and nursery with the women following behind.

Dependent from a rafter near the door was an **open basket, the occupant of which was now clamouring to be fed.** This was a complication with which I could not deal, so I left the solution of it to the assembled women. Ten days later, when on the eve of my departure I visited the girl for the last time, I found her sitting on the doorstep of her home with the baby asleep in her lap.

Her wounds, except for a sore at the nape of her neck where the tiger's claws had sunk deepest into the flesh, were all healed, and when parting her great wealth of raven-black hair to show me where the scalp had made a perfect join, she said, with a smile, that she was very glad her young sister had quite by mistake borrowed the wrong pair of scissors from the tailor's widow (for a shorn head here is the sign of widowhood). If these lines should ever be read by my friend the doctor I should like him to know that the little bottle of

yellow fluid he so thoughtfully provided for me, saved the life of a very brave young mother.

Joel Lyall had found the mother-girl's name by meeting her living grandson, Keshav Bhatt in year 2000 in Dalkhania and spelled it as Nirla Devi. Again, I was not content with only the name of the brave mother and accordingly we set on the tracks of Keshav Bhatt to find more. As said before, the Bhatt family is an extended one in Dalkhania and heading for Patnaut, we landed on Laxmi Bhatt first. Everybody has everybody's contact details on their cellphone in Dalkhania, I was surprised when Laxmi bhatt's son called upon two of our targets: Trilochand Bhugiyal and Keshav Bahtt on his cellphone.

Meeting with Keshav Bhatt had been arranged in a tea-shop together with a certain Lok Mani Paneru (born 1932) who claimed that his father was accidentally shot by Corbett in an attempt to kill a man-eater. Lok Mani however failed the preliminary questions which had been asked to eliminate the usurpations of usual Corbett folklore of the kind of 'you know...my grandfather knew the sahib...' On the other hand, Keshav Bhatt did not only succeed the tests, but brought something to our attention, which Joel Lyall certainly overlooked: Apart from giving the correct spelling of her grandmother's name as Naruli Devi instead of Nirla Devi, he reveals that his father, (Shri) Ganga Dutt Bhatt, Naruli Devi's first son, died at the age of 84 in 2012. Therefore born in 1928, he was, in early 1929, the OCCUPANT OF THE BASKET Corbett mentions in his story! And Keshav Bahtt has his photo in his home...

We did not lose one second, thanking Lok Mani with some cigarettes, every reason we had to believe that his account was suspicious; we drove to Keshav Bhatt's home for that photo and perhaps more information. The photo, (Shri) Ganga Dutt's only available photo was, to my slight disappointment, a coloured one, taken in 2002, ten years before his death. I would have preferred a b/w one taken in the days of ancient photography.

Regret was to come when Keshav said to us that his father (Shri) Ganga Dutt died in September 2012, we missed the occasion to meet him when we were there in April 2012. It was now time for serious questions about Naruli Devi because we came initially because of her and not her son, the 'occupant of the basket'. Keshav said to us he was born in 1956, so, obviously the first question was: Did you meet Naruli Devi?

"Yes, of course, she died when I was about 25 years old" came the reply. Then Keshav explained that Naruli Devi died at the age of 70 years in 1982, so that in summary, the following information was obtained:

- Naruli Devi (1912 – 1982) – the brave girl, attacked by the man-eater at the age of 17, and cured by Corbett in 1929.
- Naruli's husband – name not known, died in 1948 at the age of 46 – Naruli bore him 5 children.
- First child – (Shri) Ganga Dutt Bhatt (1928 – 2012) and two other sons and 2 daughters, all dead.

- Keshav Bhatt, born 1956, 58 years old in 2014, 1st child of (Shri) Ganga Dutt, 3 daughters, 1 son and 12 grandchildren.

It is traditional that Hindus give their house as inheritance to the first son, so did Naruli Devi to (Shri) Ganga Dutt according to Keshav and he inherited the same house from his father. So, is this house built on the land that Naruli Devi lived after her marriage when she was mauled? No, it isn't according to Keshav, he remembers that they used to live in a wooden house on the opposite slope, nearer to Kundal. We were on the south-eastern face of the Kala Agar Ridge and Keshav was showing his former locality as being on the east face of the ridge, just like Corbett describes in the story:

"A trail ten days old was not worth following up, and after a long discussion with the Headmen I decided to make for Dalkania village on the eastern side of the ridge. Dalkania is ten miles from Kala Agar,..."

So, Dalkhanian is now a village which has expanded in length along the newly built road (15 years ago), and Keshav continued and said to us that it was Naruli Devi who acted as a true matriarch for the family and built this house. He said that she was very hardworking and was still fetching leaves and firewood on the eve of her death. According to Keshav, the whole family is indebted to the efforts of Naruli Devi and, thanks to Joel Lyall who counted them the story; they are also hugely indebted to the Carpet Sahib, Jim Corbett.

The last set of questions now concerned the physical appearance of Naruli Devi: Keshav explained that she had a frail body, was at most 5ft in height and in his distant memories, remember her with dense, long, black hair. "For the last decade of her life, her hair was not so dense and had grown white gradually, but was still long" he said. The moment of truth remained however: Could Keshav describe any particularity about her grandmother? I admit I had been harsh here, because I did not give any hint to Keshav like: Did your grandma have scars on her head? But he instantly replied: "Her forehead had some scars, one on her cheek if I remember correctly, and one at the right collar bone..."

And what about her head? I asked – He humbly replied that this was also Joel Lyall's question in the year 2000. And what did you tell Mr Lyall? – "I'll say the same thing to you, my grandmother had only visible scars on the forehead and on the right collar bone, she might have had other which were not visible and moreover she never told anyone of us about her scars, except that she received them when she was wounded by a tiger near her house when she was young and that a white sahib had healed her wounds."

I was burning for a final last question: What did your grandmother tell you about the sahib who healed her wounds? – "She did not say much except that she did not know who that sahib was until her story was being told by her neighbours each time the sahib came to hunt the tiger who wounded her and after that she learned that

the sahib finally managed to shoot the tiger a year later.” Earlier I spoke about ‘happy endings’, well, the story of the brave mother saved by Jim Corbett and occupant of the cradle could not have had a more beautiful ending than the recalling of Keshav Bhatt about the destiny of his father and grandmother – the former happy ending reading as follows in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*

“If these lines should ever be read by my friend the doctor I should like him to know that the little bottle of yellow fluid he so thoughtfully provided for me, saved the life of a very brave young mother.”

Premka Devi: The last victim of the Champawat Man-eater

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

“Come quickly, sahib, the man-eater has just killed a girl” – were the words that the runner said to Jim Corbett when the Champawat man-eating tigress just made her last staggering 436th kill. I believe here that many of you readers would have wished just like me to know more of this girl. Perhaps it’s because of the following lines in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, which would have moved any weak heart, or was it anything else that induced the persistence of doing further research there after being unsuccessful in our first visit in 2012:

“The spot where the girl had been killed was marked by a pool of blood and near it, and in vivid contrast to the crimson pool, was a broken necklace of brightly coloured blue beads which the girl had been wearing.”

From Peter Byrne’s book, we learn that this girl comes from Gaudi village (see the chapter about the Champawat final spot), but the haunted bungalow which Corbett stayed during the hunt is in Phungar village on the opposite slope to Gaudi. These facts produced by Byrne seemed incoherent with the story; we decided to look for ourselves.

Manfred and I had been in Gaudi village in April 2012 and had questioned many inhabitants of this terraced village about this girl killed by a tigress more than 100 years previously. Not only did Gaudi villagers appear completely strange to our quest, but also none of them could give any information about any tiger victim of the village, though they knew the story of the Champawat man-eater and the spot where it was killed. Further, we made enquiries about any forest bungalow in Gaudi village, which yielded no results. The closest bungalow to the spot where the man-eater was shot is in Phungar just like Byrne mentioned. Manfred and I had visited the Phungar forest bungalow in 2012 and initially we ruled it out.

In April 2014, during our second visit, Manfred suggested that we should again enquire in Phungar village (pronounced foongaar), because he had strong reasons to believe that the famous haunted bungalow which Corbett stayed is in Phungar and not on the slopes overlooking Gaudi village! So, he believed that Peter Byrne had given the wrong village for the last victim and right village for the bungalow. I fell ill during our first day in Champawat in April 2014, so Priyvrat, Dr Jordania and Manfred who had been ‘on reconnaissance’ during the day brought me news about the confirmation of the Phungar bungalow as the one which Corbett experienced a supernatural encounter and further said that they met a man who says he knows about the last victim of the Champawat man-eater.

The second day in Phungar in April 2014 I managed to come over my sickness and at mid-day we sat on the veranda of the forest bungalow to have lunch. Kamal who had done some research in the village previous to our arrival, brought a certain Dev Singh Bohra to our improvised lunch, the man who my friends met the previous day: A frail elderly man he is, a great smoker of cigarettes I observed he was since he managed to finish three of my strong German brand cigarettes in a row without a single cough!

Dev Singh Bohra who was born in Phungar village says he is 78 years old and bears no relation to Gopal Singh Bohra, the man who led us to the spot where the Champawat man-eater was shot. Invited to share some 'chappatis' (unleavened brown bread) with us, he accepted and when he finished, he began his incredible story: "My father had witnessed the beat for the man-eating tiger which Corbett sahib shot there (showing the gorge below) more than 100 years ago". There was no doubt that he was speaking about the Champawat man-eater shot in 1907 by Jim Corbett. So as the ritual was in those cases, it was up to me to ask him questions now to sort him from the fake witness accounts on Corbett.

"Tell us more about your father, his name, birth year, death year and anything else you remember about him" I pleaded to him. He looked at Kamal and said – "He does not believe me, does he?" I reassured him instantly by telling that I wanted the most of information which he could give and in a precise order so I could not forget to ask him about everything. He turned to me, asked for one more cigarette, which I lighted for him, and said: "My father's name is Jhummun Singh, I don't know in which year he was born, but he died in 1983 at the age of 84 or 85 years old".

About his father's account on the beat for the man-eater, he said: "My father said to me he was 10 years old in that year when the tiger whom everybody feared took his elder sister while she was collecting oak leaves there (pointing towards the trees on the brow of the Phungar side of the Champa gorge some 500m or more from us)". Now that was becoming serious, since he was now alleging that his aunt is the LAST victim of the Champawat man-eater. To be double sure, I told him: "I asked you about the beat for the man-eater". The old man, whom I feared about his memory, replied instantly: "I told you it was the beat for that same tiger who took my father's sister" while he looked in Kamal's direction.

Kamal then tells me that Dev Singh Bohra had already told this story to my friends the day before, which I knew but he was not asked too many details. I wanted to know more about the aunt in question especially her name and if she was younger or older than his father: "My father who was the 3rd child of his family told me that his sister who was killed by the tiger was 4 years older than him and her name was PREMKA DEVI, there is also the cadet sister called Soowah Devi, who was present during the tiger incident; his mother and my four younger aunts were at home". Corbett wrote:

"Pointing to some scattered oak trees on a gentle slope a furlong or so from the village, he said a dozen people were collecting dry

sticks under the trees when a tiger suddenly appeared and caught one of their number, a girl sixteen or seventeen years of age"

Now, the spot of the attack as pointed by Dev Singh corresponds to Corbett describing it to be a 'furlong' (200m) from the village. But the age of the girl is of concern now: According to Dev Singh she was 14 years old, Corbett said she was 16 or 17. Dev Singh continued: "Premka Devi, whom my father told me so much about, was married for six months when she was taken. My father had told but I forgot about her husband's name, the latter had married again one or two years after Premka Devi died and had broken ties with our family". I now can offer one explanation for the mismatch of age between Corbett's writing and Dev Singh's recollections – the fact that Premka Devi was married, indicates a high probability that she looked older than her age, hereby explaining Corbett's possible mistake.

Dev Singh then relates the story of those two days just like his father Jhummun Singh had told him: "The attack had taken place early in the morning. Corbett Sahib arrived at the village at about noon (..). The family had refused to believe that Premka Devi was dead, and they hoped that the Sahib would bring her back. They were anxious during the whole afternoon and night waiting to get news of her, in vain, since nobody came back to the village to inform them. The next day more than 250 people had gathered for the beat and in the afternoon, news finally came for the death of both the man-eater and Premka Devi." A fragment of Corbett's writing tells us that Premka Devi was already dead and I duly informed Dev Singh of this fact as reported in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*:

"The track of the tigress was clearly visible. On one side of it were great splashes of blood where the girl's head had hung down, and on the other side the trail of her feet. Half a mile up the hill I found the girl's sari, and on the brow of the hill her skirt. Once again the tigress was carrying a naked woman, but mercifully on this occasion her burden was dead."

Dev Singh faltered when, upon instructions, Kamal translated the above to him. But he did not let his emotions overtake him and continued: "The whole village had gathered around the dead tiger, my grandmother (Jhummun Singh's mother) frayed a way in the crowd and angrily beat the dead body of the tiger; she even reached for the sickle she had hanging on her waist, but some men from the crowd pulled her away. It was Corbett sahib that came to tell my grandmother as why to beat the tiger's body since the death of her daughter has already been avenged. My father then said that the next day he had witnessed the cutting of the tiger's carcass which were distributed among the crowd. The ring which Premka Devi wore in her right hand finger and her earrings had been recovered from the tiger's stomach." We learn from the story that the whole fingers were recovered:

“The fingers of the girl which the tigress had swallowed whole were sent to me in spirits by the Tehsildar, and were buried by me in the Nainital lake close to the Nandadevi temples.”

Telling Dev Singh that Corbett Sahib buried her aunt’s fingers on the shores of Lake Naini near the Nanda Devi temple, I offered him to spread some flowers there on behalf of his family. This I duly obliged when in Nainital while my daughters also asked me to make a “ghenda phool” garland for Jim Corbett which we put round his statue’s neck in Kaladhungi on the date of his death anniversary on the 19th April 2014.

Now, about the funeral of Premka Devi Dev Singh said: “According to my father, her sister was cremated down the gorge there (pointing roughly to the spot we discovered where the tigress was killed) since several body parts were recovered in the vicinity.” In the story we learn that the leg of the victim was recovered by Corbett for that purpose:

“The late owner of the severed leg was a Hindu, and some portion of her would be needed for the cremation, so as I passed the pool I dug a hole in the bank and buried the leg where it would be safe from the tigress, and could be found when wanted.”

And still further we read that the place of the funeral was at the spot where the tigress was shot:

“On the way down the hill the beaters had found the head of the unfortunate girl, and a thin column of smoke rising straight up into the still air from the mouth of the gorge showed where the relations were performing the last rites of the Champawat man-eater’s last victim, on the very spot on which the man-eater had been shot.”

I admit I had been surprised by Dev Singh’s accurate account up to here, including his last revelation of the spot of the funeral. But there was still more to come from Dev Singh. We had been to Phungar village also on object to find the rock where Corbett instructs the man that the tehsildar sent after him to climb upon.

“Half-way down the hill we came on a great pinnacle of rock some thirty feet high, and as the man had by now had all the man-eater hunting he could stand, I told him to climb the rock and remain on it until I returned.”

Dev Singh even comes to our help here. “The rock you are looking for is 3 or 4 times the height of this veranda (of the bungalow under which we were some 9-10ft high) and it is on the Phungar side of the gorge. I feel sorry I cannot guide you there because of my condition, but if Kamal Ji accepts, he can drive me on the opposite gorge and I will show the approximate position from where you can search...”

I was overly thrilled by Dev Singh’s enthusiasm at answering my questions precisely. I felt I would have spent the whole day with him asking him about other people in the Champawat man-eater’s story, but my return flight was due on the next day in Delhi some 400kms away. My friends had to take over at this stage. After lighting a final cigarette for Dev Singh and giving him the best of my wishes, he said to me:

“I will show you where my cadet sister lives. She surely remembers the name of our grandmother (Jhummun Singh’s mother).” I would have loved to conduct a second interview of Premka Devi’s living relative, but I knew that my friends would have taken care of that and you’ll surely read it in the diary. So I bade farewell to him, Kamal and my friends.

And so goes the story of Premka Devi, the last 436th victim of the Champawat man-eating tigress, wearer of the bright blue beads necklace.

Beena: Thak Tigress's First Victim

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

In this section we shall discuss the results of our search for the identity of the twelve-year old girl from the village Kot Kindri (Kot-Kendri), the first victim of the Thak tigress. Corbett saw the future Thak man-eater first in April 1938, when he was sitting concealed to hunt the Chuka man-eater. At that time the tigress was healthy and posed no threat to any humans. But from April to August the tigress was wounded twice (from a muzzle loader), one of the wounds became septic, and her skin was permanently adhered to the body. It was this wound, according to Corbett, that may have made the harmless tigress into a dreaded man-eater. The first victim was killed while she was collecting a windfalls from the mango tree, in late August or early September of 1938.

Corbett does not mention her name, so we tried to search if the event was still in the memory of the villagers, while we were in Kot Kindri during our visit to Kumaon in April 2014. Here is how Corbett describes the killing of the young girl. This is the very beginning of the story about the Thak man-eater, the last hunting of the book *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, and about the last man-eater killed by Corbett:

"PEACE had reigned in the Ladhya valley for many months when in September '38 a report was received in Nainital that a girl, twelve years of age, had been killed by a tiger at Kot Kindri village. The report which reached me through Donald Stewart of the Forest Department gave no details, and it was not until I visited the village some weeks later that I was able to get particulars of the tragedy. It appeared that, about noon one day, this girl was picking up windfalls from a mango tree close to and in full view of the village, when a tiger suddenly appeared. Before the men working nearby were able to render any assistance, it carried her off. No attempt was made to follow up the tiger, and as all signs of drag and blood trail had been obliterated and washed away long before I arrived on the scene, I was unable to find the place where the tiger had taken the body to."

Record of the search

One of us (Manfred Walth) visited Kot Kindri during his 2007 visit of Corbett places, but at that time no attempt was made to inquire about the identity of the girl. I did not visit Kot Kindri during my 2011 visit of Chuka and Thak.

During our 2012 visit members of our group went through Kot-Kindri without stopping there and inquiring about the first victim of the Thak tigress. During our 2014 trip two of us (Manfred Walth, and Joseph Jordania) specially visited Kot Kindri with

the intention to find out the identity of first victim of the Thak man-eater: the young girl, killed under a mango tree, and possibly to see the mango tree where she was taken.

We were lucky to find out that the events of distant 1938 are still alive in the villager's memory. They provided us with the tigress's young victim's name and showed us the mango tree where she was taken. Interestingly, our informants remembered the victim with two names, (1) mostly as Beena, and also (2) as Kiri. Both names are popular in India, The name Beena is of Arabic origin and means "clearsighted." The origin of the name Kiri is Hindu, and the meaning is "Amaranth flower." Both are female names.

It is difficult for us to be sure whether the unfortunate girl was known by both names to the villagers, or only one of these two names is the correct one.

We found out an interesting difference in date of killing of the girl between Corbett story, and the villager's memory. According to the Kot Kindri villagers, the girl was killed in August. Corbett mentions September, but closer reading of Corbett story tells us there is no conflict between these two sources. According to Corbett, "...in September '38 a report was received in Nainital that a girl, twelve years of age, had been killed by a tiger at Kot Kindri village." According to villager, the girl was killed in August. So, as the news of the killing reached Corbett in Nainital in September, the actual killing could have easily happened during the last days of August. This supposition is confirmed by the newly found letter, written by Ibbotson on January 13th 1939 (presented elsewhere in this book), where he mentions that tigress killed two of the first victims in August and September.

In regards of the place of the killing, villagers had a clear memory of that it happened under the mango tree, and that this happened in a densely populated part of the village, although on the edge of the village. Similarly, as the two possible names of the girl (Beena and Kiri), the same villagers told us that to their memory the killing had happened at one of the two places, both close to each other. These two places are:

1. About 30 metres from the village spring (which is still functioning very actively), and
2. About 70 metres from the village spring, next to the houses on the edge of the village, closer to the jungle.

Both of these places could have been the venue of the tragedy as they both fit Corbett's description. Both still have big mango trees. The first one, that is about 30 metres from the spring, has a very old mango tree. This tree was all black and dry during our visit in 2014, indicating that the tree did not have much more time left standing. The second mango tree is closer to the edge of the village, and it is not as old as the first one, and certainly not black and dry. We must remember though that mango trees can live very long, and some specimen still bear fruits when they are 300 years old. As the events from Corbett story took place some 80 years ago, and by the time when the girl was killed, the tree must have been already quite big (probably at least 30-40 years old), the mango tree must be at least 120 years old. As mango trees can live much longer than this, Corbett fans have a good chance to see this (second) mango tree

for many more years to come, although the first tree, already black and dry in 2014, the tree which is clearly visible from the spring, might not remain standing for many more years. It was under one of these mango trees the Thak man-eating tigress made the first kill, initiating the nail-biting story of a hunter and a man-eater stalking each other on the backdrop of the jungle paths and the streets of the deserted Thak village.

The Identity of the Thak Man-Eater's Second Victim

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

In this section we discuss the identity of Sem Headman's mother, the second victim of the Thak tigress, the last man-eater killed by Corbett on November 30th, 1938. There are no names of the people from the village Sem provided in Corbett story.

Here is the Corbett's description of the events of September – November of 1938:

"While my preparations for this long trek were still under way a second report reached Nainital of a kill at Sem, a small village on the left bank of the Ladhya and distant about half a mile from Chuka.

The victim on this occasion was an elderly woman, the mother of the Headman of Sem. This unfortunate woman had been killed while cutting brushwood on a steep bank between two terraced fields. She had started work at the further end of the fifty-yard-long bank, and had cut the brushwood to within a yard of her hut when the tiger sprang on her from the field above. So sudden and unexpected was the attack that the woman only had time to scream once before the tiger killed her, and taking her up the twelve-foot-high bank crossed the upper field and disappeared with her into the dense jungle beyond. Her son, a lad some twenty years of age, was at the time working in a paddy field a few yards away and witnessed the whole occurrence, but was too frightened to try to render any assistance. In response to the lad's urgent summons the Patwari arrived at Sem two days later, accompanied by eighty men he had collected. Following up in the direction the tiger had gone he found the woman's clothes and a few small bits of bone. This kill had taken place at 2 p.m. on a bright sunny day, and the tiger had eaten its victim only sixty yards from the hut where it had killed her."

Record of the search

As author of this chapter I visited Sem during my 2011 trip to Chuka and Thak, but at that time I did not enquire into the identity of the Thak tigress victims. During our 2012 visit to Chuka and Thak we did not visit Sem, but during our 2014 visit we (Manfred Watl and Joseph Jordania) specially visited Sem and tried to find the house near which the second victim of the Thak tigress was killed. We also tried to establish the identity of the victim. Although we were not able to find out the victim's name, we were lucky enough to learn her son's name, little bit of their family background, and identified the house where the tragedy happened.

According to the information received in the village, the victim's son's name was Madho Sing Kaldhunga. In 1938 he was, as we know from Corbett story, a young fellow ("a lad some twenty years of age"), and a village Sem headman. The third name Kaldhunga, according to the received information, was given to their family because the headman's father or grandfather came from the village Kaldhunga, not far from the Chuka Village. (Do not confuse village Kaldhunga with the village Kaladhungi, the village where Corbett lived during the winter months.)

To obtain the information about the 1938 events, we were directed to the 83 years old Prem Singh Rameshwar, the oldest Sem villager at the moment of our visit in 2014. We were able to ask him questions for about half an hour. He was enthusiastically answering our questions from his balcony, and Kamal was serving as a translator. At the beginning of our conversation, he (without our prompting) confirmed our initial guess about the locality of the house where the tragedy happened in 1938. In 1938 Prem was only seven years old, but the impact of the event must have been great on the whole village community. His memory of the event (most probably from hearing the story many times from the villagers) was very clear. On the accompanying photos you can see the house where Madho Singh Kaldhunga's family lived. The house is still occupied. His mother was killed very close to this house (Corbett: "within a yard of her hut"). You can see the photos of the house, where the Thak tigress second victim was killed, and also the photo of 83 years old Praem Singh Rameshwar, the oldest Sem villager at the moment of our visit in 2014, who provide us with this information.

A man who put Corbett on a career of hunting man-eaters

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

Several people played important role in Corbett's life. Berthoud, Deputy Commissioner of Nainital, was definitely one of them. To put it simply, it was Berthoud who got Corbett into the dangerous business of hunting man-eating tigers and leopards. Here is how Corbett mentions Berthoud. This is a passage from the first page of Corbett's arguably the most famous story about a notorious Champawat Man-Eating tigress:

"This is how matters stood, when shortly after my arrival in Nainital I received a visit from Berthoud. Berthoud, who was Deputy Commissioner of Nainital at that time, and who after his tragic death now lies buried in an obscure grave in Haldwani, was a man who was loved and respected by all who knew him, and it is not surprising therefore that when he told me of the trouble the man-eater was giving the people of his district, and the anxiety it was causing him, he took my promise with him that I would start for Champawat immediately on receipt of news of the next human kill.

Two conditions I made, however: one that the Government rewards be cancelled, and the other, that the special shikaris, and regulars from Almora, be withdrawn. My reasons for making these conditions need no explanation for I am sure all sportsmen share my aversion to being classed as a reward-hunter and are as anxious as I am to avoid the risk of being accidentally shot. These conditions were agreed to, and a week later Berthoud paid me an early morning visit and informed me that news had been brought in during the night by runners that a woman had been killed by the man-eater at Pali, a village between Dabidhura and Dhunaghat."

From these paragraphs it is clear, that it was Berthoud who asked Corbett to go after the Champawat man-eater, starting a long chain of Corbett hunts after the man eating tigers and leopards. Also, it was in connection with Berthoud when Corbett formulated his central principle that he followed during his lifetime: asking to cancel the existing government rewards for killing man-eaters and asking that reward hunters be removed from the area.

Berthoud was also involved in Corbett's second man-eating tiger. Here are Corbett words:

"When I returned to my home in Nainital after killing the Champawat tiger I was asked by the Government to undertake the shooting of the Panar leopard. I was working hard for a living at the time and several weeks elapsed before I was able to spare the time to undertake this task, and then just as I was ready to start for the outlying area

of Almora district in which the leopard was operating, I received an urgent request from Berthoud, the Deputy Commissioner of Nainital, to go to the help of the people of Muktesar where a man-eating tiger had established a reign of terror. After hunting down the tiger, an account of which I have given, I went in pursuit of the Panar leopard."

Despite playing such a prominent role in the beginning of Corbett's career, Berthoud's name is only mentioned in the initial three man-eater hunting stories, and we know the reason from Corbett's words: he died tragically. Well, Corbett does not actually mention the date of his death, but we know he died not long after Corbett's first successful hunts.

So what do we know about Berthoud? This is what we were able to learn from various sources:

His full name was Charles Henry Berthoud. His father, Alphonse Henry Berthoud of Basildon House, lived at 7-11 Moorgate Street, in London.

Peter Byrne brought to us an interesting detail: according to Hewett, despite the fact that all Berthoud family appear to have impeccable English backgrounds, there could be some German connections, evidenced by Hewett's statement that after Charlie's death he was given Charlie's Rigby D.B. 400-450 cordite rifle, "by Baron Berthoud, who was, I assume [P.B.], Charlie's father (Hewett, page 118)." We should note here thought that the title Baron was quite widely spread throughout Europe.

We do not know yet Charlie Berthoud precise date of birth, but he was probably born around 1870. He died in 1909, not reaching 40.

It is obvious that Berthoud was born in England, probably in London, and probably at the address where his father lived (Basildon House, 7-11 Moorgate Street, London). His father, Alfonse Henry Berthoud, lived at this address in 1909, when Berthoud died. Charles Berthoud had a younger brother, Edward Henry Berthoud, who followed the same educational institutions, and arrived in India a couple of years later after Charles Berthoud.

Charles Berthoud received a brilliant education. He was educated at Uppingham School, a famous school from small market town Uppingham in Rutland, England. School was established in 1584. Celebrated educator Edward Thring (1821 – 1887) transformed the School from a small, high-quality local grammar school of about 25 students into a large, well-known public school, with 330 pupils. Thring was the headmaster of the school from 1853 until his death in 1887. Berthoud most likely studied there when Thring was a headmaster, and at the height of his fame. Thring won national and trans-Atlantic reputation as an original thinker and writer on education. At a time when Maths and Classics dominated the curriculum he encouraged many 'extra' subjects: French, German, Science, History, Art, Carpentry and Music. In particular Thring was a pioneer in his introduction of Music into the regular system of education. He also opened the first gymnasium in an English school, the forerunner of the present Sports Hall, and later added a heated indoor swimming pool.

The fact that Queen Elizabeth II visited Uppingham school in 1984 (for the 400th anniversary of the school) is another confirmation of the historical importance of the school. List of famous people associate to this school is amazingly long and contains several well-known people from politicians and scholars to sportsmen and adventurers, including, among many others, comedian Rowan Atkinson and folklorist Cecil Sharp. Actor Hugh Jackman famously worked there as a teaching assistant during his gap year.

Although we do not know exactly during which years was Berthoud at the school, it is highly possible that Thring died while Berthoud was a student at his school.

After graduating from school Berthoud received his university education at another prestigious institution, the New College at the Oxford University. Despite the name “New” the college is one of the oldest in Oxford and the world (was opened in 1379). Berthoud had his final exams at Oxford in 1894. (This is the only date from Berthoud early life, available to me at the moment to make estimates about his birth date and school education years).

After finishing his education, Berthoud arrived in India on December 4th, 1895. In India he worked in North-West Province, and in Oudh & Agra (later – United Province). He served as Assistant Magistrate and as a collector city magistrate, in Lucknow, from March 1901 to June 1903. Then he worked as Deputy Commissioner from December 1903 to November 1905 at the same location. From November 1905 until his death in 1909 Berthoud was the Deputy Commissioner of Nainital.

In 1907, while serving as a Deputy Commissioner of Nainital, Berthoud approached Jim Corbett, and asked him to help the region to get rid of the man-eating tiger that killed hundreds of people in Kumaon. Corbett agreed, as, according to his words, Berthoud was loved by everyone, indicating that it was not easy for him or anyone else to reject a request from such a highly regarded and loved person. The mission was obviously extremely dangerous, and almost cost Corbett’s life. Berthoud then asked Corbett also about the Mukteswar man-eater. By his requests Berthoud unwittingly started Corbett’s long and celebrated career as the slayer of the man-eater tigers and leopards.

Berthoud died on December 28, 1909, after a short and severe bout of enteric fever, in Haldwani. By that time he was probably less than 40 years old. I deducted his age roughly from the fact that he passed his exam at Oxford in 1894, when he was probably no more than 24–25. Most of this information was received with the help of British Library reference services, and was from the Newspaper “Times of India” from December 29, 1909 (the day after he died).

According to Corbett (see above the passage of the first story of his “Man-Eaters of Kumaon, “Champawat Man-Eater”), after his tragic death, Berthoud was buried in Haldwani. During his 1975 visit to Haldwani, Peter Byrne photographed what was believed by locals to be Berthoud’s gravestone. Peter also photographed writing on the

gravestone, but it is extremely difficult to read. We know that Corbett mentions that Berthoud was buried in an “obscure grave in Haldwani,” so probably even in Corbett’s time the gravestone was not in a good shape.

According to British Library Reference Services they do not have any records about the burial place of Charles Berthoud, and in fact, there is no direct information that there was a British cemetery anywhere in Haldwani.

So the matter requires further study. But it is clear that Charles Henry Berthoud played an important role in Corbett’s life and should be appreciated by Corbett fans accordingly¹².

¹² Pictures of Charlie Berthoud are published in Sir John Hewett’s book- *Jungle Trails in Northern India- 1938*, which also contains accounts of many Tiger hunts by British officers, including those of some maneaters in the Kumaon and Garhwal areas

Other Characters Alluded to in the Champawat chapter in Man-eaters of Kumaon

By PRIYVRAT GADHVI

“I was shooting with Eddie Knowles in Malani when I first heard of the Tiger which later received official recognition as the ‘Champawat maneater’- thus starts the first chapter in Corbett’s iconic book ‘Maneaters of Kumaon’, 1944.

Corbett ventures to describe Eddie Knowles as a shikari par excellence and an individual who possessed the best of everything in life.

Corbett mentions a brother of Eddie as the ‘best gun shot in India’ and another brother as the best tennis player in the Indian Army

“When therefore Eddie informed me that his brother-in-law, the best shikari in the world, had been deputed by Government to shoot the Champawat man-eater, it was safe to assume that a very definite period had been put to the animal’s activities”, writes Corbett, without further going into the identities of the characters he alluded to in an important part, the opening, of the first chapter of his first official book.

Needless to say, the identities of these characters are of interest to Corbett fans

Information was gleaned about the three Knowles brothers and their brother-in-law. All were proficient hunters. Colonel J.K Knowles would be the ‘best tennis player in the Indian army’, who is pictured having shot a tiger in the book ‘In the grip of the Jungles’ – 1932 by George Hogan Knowles, whom Corbett describes as the ‘best gun shot in India.’ G.H Knowles authored a number of books on exciting jungle trails.

Contained in the aforementioned book by G.H. Knowles, is a picture of B.A. Rokeby, who is said to also be known also as B.A. Rebsch of the Indian Forest Service, Knowles’ brother-in-law. In all probability, B.A. Rebsch’s wife was Nellie Knowles, sister of Col. J.K, Eddie and George. That Rebsch was a famous hunter is beyond doubt, for in addition to Corbett’s lavish testimonial – ‘the best shikari in the world’, references are also found in other books of the period. Sir S. Eardley Wilmot, Inspector-general of Forests, wrote about Rebsch thus in his book ‘Forest life and sport in India’, 1910

“Mr. B. A. Rebsch, who has shot as much big game as any man in India, developed here an interesting form of sport while in charge of these forests, that might still be practised with success. His aim was to circumvent the bears which nightly descend from the hills to feed on the wild fruits and roots in the plains below, and return before dawn to their mountain fastnesses ; and with this object he reached the Nepal boundary, then marked by a cleared ride 30 yards wide, before daylight, and posted sentinels in trees at convenient distances on either side of him. These men could look down towards the forest below, and with coming daylight could detect the bears

moving towards the hills, and thus were able to inform the sportsman of their approach by pre-concerted signals. Accordingly the bear, who was intent on crossing into foreign territory, was met on his arrival by the sportsman, with varying results; at least on one occasion Mr. Rebsch was severely mauled by his opponent, but I suspect that he found satisfaction in giving the bear every opportunity to show fight, for his "shikari" complained in the vernacular idiom that he used to let the bear "climb on his neck" before firing."

Further, two write-ups by B.A. Rebsch were found to have been published in the 'The Indian Forester', one of the oldest surviving journals in the world.

An article was found entitled 'The commutation of privileges in Bahraich', with notes on commuting wood privileges for villagers in the motipur range, Bahraich division, in volume XIX, 1893.

A second write-up by Rebsch, entitled 'The bamboo forests of the Ganges division' was published in the same journal in volume 36, 1910.

It would have been greatly interesting to read Rebsch documented jungle adventures, however, no such literature was found, and such was probably never written. As providence would have it, he was unsuccessful in his pursuit of the Champawat tigress, and this led to Jim Corbett embarking on his famed career of maneater hunting.

PART THREE: MYSTERY AND RESEARCH

In this part of the book authors tackle several moments from Corbett stories and life that remain unanswered sufficiently in the existing Corbett biographies and other Corbett-related publications. The topics discussed in this part of the book are some of the most hotly debated subjects among Corbett fans and biographers: Who made the agonizing human scream from the deserted Thak village? What was behind the strange “ghostly” encounter Corbett experienced at night in a Champawat bungalow when he was hunting the Champawat man-eater? Did Corbett kill the man-eating leopard in Nagpur as this is stated in a letter from villagers that Corbett cites? Did Corbett kill the Ladhya man-eater in 1946? These are some, but not all the topics discussed in this part of the book.

The reader will also find discussions on Corbett rifles and his surviving films, and also an article on our contemporary views on the problem of the big cats that start attacking humans.

When trying to answer these lingering questions, authors of this book used their academic education and practical knowledge of scholarly research. The approach to these problems is purely academic and is based on the scholarly method and the biological and psychological phenomena known to us today.

Mysterious Night Scream from the Deserted Thak Village

By JOSEPH JORDANIA, PREETUM GHEERAWO, PRIYVRAT GADHVI

One of the best known mysterious experiences that Corbett shares with the readers of his classic book “Man-Eaters of Kumaon” was hearing the sound of the agonizing screams of a dying human from the deserted mountain village Thak on the night of November 28th, 1938¹³.

Here is how Corbett describes the event. In this scene Corbett is sitting concealed in a machan up in a tree in the hope of shooting a man-eater, using the carcass of a buffalo as bait. His machan is close to the totally deserted Thak village, where two weeks ago the man-eating tigress killed a villager. As every detail of Corbett’s description is potentially important, here is the full text describing this event from the story “Thak man-eater”:

“There was still sufficient daylight to shoot by when the moon, a day off the full, rose over the Nepal hills behind me and flooded the hillside with brilliant light.”...“The moon had been up two hours, and the sambur had approached to within fifty yards of my tree, when a kakar started barking on the hill just above the village. The kakar had been barking for some minutes when suddenly a scream which I can only very inadequately describe as ‘Ar-Ar-Arr’ dying away on a long-drawn-out note, came from the direction of the village. So sudden and so unexpected had the scream been that I involuntarily stood up with the intention of slipping down from the tree and dashing up to the village, for the thought flashed through my mind that the man-eater was killing one of my men. Then in a second flash of thought I remembered I had counted them one by one as they had passed my tree, and that I had watched them out of sight on their way back to camp to see if they were obeying my instructions to keep close together.”

“The scream had been the despairing cry of a human being in mortal agony, and reason questioned how such a sound could have come from a deserted village. It was not a thing of my imagination, for the kakar had heard it and had abruptly stopped barking, and the sambur had dashed away across the fields closely followed by her young one. Two days previously, when I had escorted the men to the village, I had remarked that they appeared to be very confiding to leave their property behind doors that were not even shut or latched, and the Headman had answered that even if their village remained untenanted

¹³ According to Martin Booth, this happened in “September 1938” (pg. 141), which cannot be correct, as Corbett went to Thak in November. Corbett is very precise with the dates in Thak story, and according to him, the scream was heard two days before killing the tigress, on November 28th, 1938.

for years their property would be quite safe, for they were priests of Purnagiri and no one would dream of robbing them; he added that as long as the tigress lived she was a better guard of their property if guard were needed than any hundred men could be, for no one in all that countryside would dare to approach the village for any purpose, through the dense forests that surrounded it, unless escorted by me as they had been."

"The screams were not repeated, and as there appeared to be nothing that I could do I settled down again on my rope seat. At 10 p.m. a kakar that was feeding on the young wheat crop at the lower end of the fields dashed away barking, and a minute later the tigress called twice. She had now left the village and was on the move, and even if she did not fancy having another meal off the buffalo there was every hope of her coming along the path which she had used twice every day for the past few days. With finger on trigger and eyes straining on the path I sat hour after hour until daylight succeeded moonlight, and when the sun had been up an hour, my men returned. Very thoughtfully they had brought a bundle of dry wood with them, and in a surprisingly short time I was sitting down to a hot cup of tea. The tigress may have been lurking in the bushes close to us, or she may have been miles away, for after she had called at 10 p.m. the jungles had been silent."

"When I got back to camp I found a number of men sitting near my tent. Some of these men had come to inquire what luck I had had the previous night, and others had come to tell me that the tigress had called from midnight to a little before sunrise at the foot of the hill, and that all the labourers engaged in the forests and on the new export road were too frightened to go to work. I had already heard about the tigress from my men, who had informed me that, together with the thousands of men who were camped round Chuka, they had sat up all night to keep big fires going.

"Among the men collected near my tent was the Headman of Thak, and when the others had gone I questioned him about the kill at Thak on the 12th of the month when he so narrowly escaped falling a victim to the man-eater.

"Once again the Headman told me in great detail how he had gone to his fields to dig ginger, taking his grandchild with him, and how on hearing his wife calling he had caught the child's hand and run back to the house where his wife had said a word or two to him about not keeping his ears open and thereby endangering his own and the child's wife and how a few minutes later the tigress had killed a man while he was cutting leaves off a tree in a field above his house.

"All this part of the story I had heard before, and I now asked him if he had actually seen the tigress killing the man. His answer

was, no; and he added that the tree was not visible from where he had been standing. I then asked him how he knew the man had been killed, and he said, because he had heard him. In reply to further questions he said the man had not called for help but had cried out; and when asked if he had cried out once he said, 'No, three times', and then at my request he gave an imitation of the man's cry. It was the same but a very modified rendering as the screams I had heard the previous night."

"I then told him what I had heard and asked him if it was possible for anyone to have arrived at the village accidentally, and his answer was an emphatic negative. There were only two paths leading to Thak, and every man, woman, and child in the villages through which these two paths passed knew that Thak was deserted and the reason for its being so. It was known throughout the district that it was dangerous to go near Thak in daylight, and it was therefore quite impossible for anyone to have been in the village at eight o'clock the previous night.

"When asked if he could give any explanation for screams having come from a village in which there could not according to him have been any human beings, his answer was that he could not. And as I could do no better than the Headman it were best to assume that neither the kakar, the sambur, nor I heard those very real screams, the screams of a human being in mortal agony."

This chapter is devoted to the search of the possible source of this mysterious sound Corbett heard some 75 years ago.

Before we try to explain what could have been the source of the mysterious scream from the deserted village, let us agree on several premises:

(1) We cannot speculate that Corbett did not hear the agonizing scream. Corbett was revered for his legendary honesty, and he has never been known to make up details of his hunts in order to dramatize his stories. Also, as the scream was heard by other animals as well (sambhar, kakar), there is no chance of considering that the scream was a result of Corbett's imagination;

(2) For the purpose of research, let us discount any supernatural explanations for of these screams either;

(3) The scream was a close (or even precise) copy of the agonizing scream produced by a man killed two weeks before (on November 12th) by a man-eating tigress;

(4) The scream was not made by a human being, as not a single human was in the village when the scream was heard;

(4) The scream did not belong to any animal species of Kumaon. Corbett was a brilliant expert in the animal and bird sounds of Kumaon and he could have identified the sound if it resembled any of the usual sounds made by Kumaon animals or birds;

(5) The tiger (the actual man-eater, whose victim made the scream two weeks before) was in the vicinity where the scream came from, as is obvious from the kakar barks and tiger calls from the excerpt cited above.

Analysing all the information provided by Corbett, the only conclusion we can draw is that the scream was made by some animal. The question is which animal, and why Corbett, who was an expert in animal sounds of the region, was unable to identify the sound of the animal?

First let us briefly discuss whether there have been any attempts to explain the source of the mysterious sound heard by Corbett from the deserted village.

We are not aware of any published research into the mysterious scream aiming to explain the source of the scream heard by Corbett, but some ideas have been expressed on associated topics. For example, Kenneth Anderson once suggested, that tigers could sometimes mimic the calls of some of their prey. George Hogan Knowles too, in his book, 'In the grip of the jungles', 1932, credited a tiger with the ability to mimic the sounds of a wild bull to attract other bulls. He cites one of the participants as saying 'I have known a tiger before to imitate perfectly the bell of a sambhur, and even a cheetal to get his mutton easily and lazily, but here, enacted in front of us, is a case of a tiger actually calling out a wild bull, resorting to every trick- even to the raising of dust- to perfect his camouflage!"

As a tiger (the actual man-eater) was present at the scene where the scream was heard, we should discuss this possibility as well. Here is the extract from Kenneth Anderson's story "The Striped Terror of the Chamala Valley" (From the book "Nine Man-eaters and One Rogue", 1954, Allen & Unwin, 1954). Anderson is seated concealed in a tree in South Indian jungles, also at night:

"I will not weary my readers by recounting how the hours dragged by until 6.30pm., when the fowl and day-birds of the forest had gone to roost, and the langurs had long since moved away from the hated presence of their two enemies, tiger and man. I was alone, except for an occasional night-jar that flitted, chirping, around my tree. At 6.45 p.m. it was almost dark. The night-jar had now settled below me, and commenced its squatting call of 'Chuckoo-huckoo-chuckoo', when I met one of the strange experiences that sometimes, but very rarely, fall to the lot of a wanderer in the Indian forests.

"I had been told stories by jungle men, and had also read, that tigers, in particular localities only, imitate sambar and emit the belling call of a stag, presumably to decoy other animals of the same species to them, particularly the does. I had never placed much credence in this story, and never experienced it myself. That evening, shortly after 6.45, the sudden solitary 'Dhank' of a sambar stag rang out from a thicket in the waning light, in the space still visible between the branch against which my rifle rested before me, and that

immediately to the right, and from out of this thicket almost simultaneously stepped the tiger.

"Now there could not have been any sambar stag in that thicket, along with or just in front of the tiger, for I could not have missed its hoof beats as it ran from the spot. No Sambar would have stood there and allowed the tiger practically to touch it in passing. Beyond that one 'Dhank' there was no other sound, when, as I have said, the tiger stepped into the open, and there was no possible doubt that the tiger had made the sound. Why it did so is a mystery, as it was not hunting. It had fed well earlier that morning and was now returning to another repast, so that there could have been no thought in its mind of decoying a sambar by imitating its call. I can only recount what actually happened, and what I experienced, and the fact that, beyond doubt, there was no sambar in that thicket when the tiger stepped out. I leave the rest to your own conjecture and conclusion. For my part, having heard it with my own ears, I have no alternative but to believe the old tales I had read and heard of a tiger's ability to mimic this sound."

To comment on Anderson's proposal, we need to state that thousands of tigers have lived in hundreds of zoos and even in private enclosures, in very close proximity to humans, for many decades (if not centuries), and there is not a single credible case of tigers mimicking animal (or human) sounds. Although tigers have a wide range of sounds to communicate with each other, their vocal apparatus is not flexible to be able to mimic other animal sounds. Later we will discuss where the sound of a sambhar stag could come from, but now let us come back to Corbett's experience.

Peter Byrne, professional hunter and author of books on Corbett, in a response to the letter from one of the authors of this text, wrote that the mysterious sound heard by Corbett could have been made by a Himalayan bear. Here are the excerpts from his letters from June 16th and 18th:

(Letter of June 16th, 2012): "POSSIBLY IT WAS A HIMALAYAN BEAR. FROM TIME TO TIME, FOR REASONS THAT DO NOT SEEM TO BE CLEARLY KNOWN, THESE ANIMALS WILL MAKE POWERFUL ROARING SCREAMS... THE AMERICAN BLACK BEAR DOES THE SAME THING... I HAVE HEARD BOTH.

(From the letter of June 18th: 2012): I AM OF COURSE NOT CERTAIN THAT WHAT CORBETT HEARD WAS A BEAR. IF IT WAS [A BEAR], IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF TWO SPECIES FOUND IN THE TERAJ: THE HIMALAYAN BEAR OR THE SLOTH [BEAR]. OF THE TWO, THE SLOTH IS MORE COMMON IN THE TERAJ FORESTS. THERE ARE A FEW HIMALAYAN ENCOUNTERED FROM TIME TO TIME BUT THEY TEND TO STAY HIGHER.

IN THE HIMALAYA, IN THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES, FROM TIME TO TIME WE HEARD SOME STRANGE CALLS AT NIGHT. OUR SHERPAS SAID THEY WERE MADE BY THE YETI. SO WE DID SOME CAREFUL RESEARCH AND

FOUND OUT THAT THERE WERE TWO ANIMALS UP THERE THAT MADE STRANGE NOCTURNAL CALLS. ONE, WHICH WE HEARD ON A REGULAR BASIS, (MOSTLY ABOVE 10,000 FEET) WAS THE KASTURI – THE MUSK DEER. THE OTHER, HEARD LESS OFTEN (FOR ME THREE TIMES OVER THE YEARS) WAS THE HIMALAYAN BLACK BEAR.

IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST HERE, WHERE I LIVE, BEAR ARE HEARD CALLING FROM TIME TO TIME. I HAVE HEARD THIS SOUND TWICE IN THE TIME I HAVE BEEN HERE AND AT ONE TIME, WITH OTHERS, ATTRIBUTED IT TO THE CREATURE KNOWN HERE AS THE SASQUATCH, OR BIGFOOT. THEN I WAS ABLE TO PINPOINT THE SOUND PRECISELY.

THE SOUND IS BEST DESCRIBED AS A SCREAMING ROAR. STARING OFF AS A DEEP, POWERFUL, GUTTURAL ROAR AND THEN CLIMBING INTO A HIGH PITCHED SHRIEK. EACH SET OF CALLS LAST ABOUT FIVE SECONDS AND THERE SEEM TO BE, USUALLY, TWO TO THREE CALLS IN THE SET, EACH TIME...”

Another expert (who prefers to remain anonymous) of Jim Corbett hunts and life, and an expert in the wildlife of the Kumaon region, independently from Peter Byrne also proposed in an informal communication with one of the authors of this chapter, that that this sound could have been produced by a bear.

The suggestion of bear making the human-like sounds is of course much more serious than a possibility of a tiger making such sounds, but there are still questions remaining with this suggestion. Firstly, same as in the case of tiger, bears have been in close proximity with humans and have never been known to imitate human sounds (or sounds of any other animals). Secondly, it is hard to imagine that Corbett, brilliant expert of the wildlife of Kumaon, did not know about the bear ability to make such sounds, and could not distinguish bear sounds from human sounds. Also, if we read Corbett words carefully it is easy to notice that the scream was not only a sound that sounded like a human scream, but it was the exact rendering of the agonizing scream made by the unfortunate man, killed about two weeks ago, scream made in the moment when he was attacked and killed by the man-eater.

It is understandable that those who try to interpret the loud scream, heard by Corbett, think of some big-bodied animals (tiger, bear), as a big sound should come from a big body. But possibly the animal which made the sound was not big at all?

To interpret the mysterious scream that Corbett heard on November 28th, 1938, we suggest that birds must be our prime suspects. Let us explain.

Of course, birds are very small, compared to humans, tigers or bears, but they are prodigious singers and among the loudest animal species on our planet. Some of their sounds are extremely loud and can be heard miles away. And finally and possibly most importantly for our topic, a number of birds are masters of imitation and can produce novel sounds that are totally alien to the audio repertoire of their species.

We need to take into account in the most serious way the fact that the ability to mimic different sounds is chiefly connected to the ability to sing. Singing needs a very flexible vocal apparatus, and this is the reason why some singing species are able to mimic other species' sounds. Corbett himself killed the man-eating tigress two days after hearing the above-mentioned scream by imitating the mating call of the male tiger. Corbett was able to imitate the sound of other species because he was a human, and humans can sing.

Experts in animal singing and the origins of human musicality somehow neglected the fascinating fact that singing, as a phenomenon, is virtually absent among ground-living species of animals. Out of about 5400 species which are known to sing, most live on tree branches (for example, birds and gibbons), and few of the singing species live in water (seals, whales, dolphins, sea lions). The only species which lives on the ground and sings, is us, humans. Why ground living animals do not sing is a complex issue (mostly it is connected to the differences in security of three-dimensional environment in the trees and the two-dimensional environment of the ground)¹⁴. Basically, tree-living species are much noisier than ground-living species, and the fact that singing occurs in tree-living species makes sense. Therefore, if you need to interpret any unusual sounds coming from a forest, or a jungle, we suggest you should think first of what kind of birds could produce (or copy) such sounds.

So, here are the first tentative conclusions of our research: (1) the most realistic possibility, from the biological point of view is that it was a bird that made a call on November 28th, 1938; and also, (2) the scream was not a natural call for a bird. Instead the bird copied the agonizing scream of the tiger's human victim, heard several days before. (3) This must have been the reason why Corbett, brilliant expert in animal and bird sounds of Kumaon could not identify the source of the scream – this was not a natural sound made by a bird. That was the reason why Corbett was sure that the scream was made by a human in mortal agony.

The next important step of our research is to check if birds can imitate sounds from hearing the original sound only once. Basically this is a question of how fast birds are in learning new sounds.

Let us listen to the German scholar Konrad Lorenz, the winner of a Nobel Prize, and one of the founders of the study of animal communication:

“First of all, birds can learn sounds that are totally unrelated to their species' vocabulary: ‘Mocking’ consists of sounds, learned by imitation, which are not innate and are uttered only while the bird is singing; they have no ‘meaning’ and bear no relation whatsoever to the inborn ‘vocabulary’ of the species”¹⁵.

¹⁴ If the reader is interested in getting more information on this topic, we suggest reading “Why Do People Sing? Music in Human Evolution”, Logos, 2011 (by J. Jordania)

¹⁵ Konrad Lorenz. 1961. *King Solomon's Ring*, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, Apolo Edition, pg 84. The book can be accessed online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/39533656/Konrad-Lorenz-King-Solomon-s-Ring>

After these encouraging words comes some disappointment, as Lorenz writes about the difficulty of teaching birds novel sounds: "Everyone who has tried to drum a new word into the brain of starling or a parrot knows with what patience one must apply oneself to this end, and how untiringly one must again and again repeat the word."

According to these words of the Nobel Laureate, it takes many repetitions and sheer patience to teach a new phrase or a word to a talking bird. This virtually overrules the possibility that a bird could have learned the agonizing human cry, which the bird could hear only once.

Remarkably, the case is not as lost as it might seem after reading these words. Let us continue citing Lorenz's words in the next paragraph:

"Nevertheless, such a bird can, in exceptional case, learn to imitate a word which they have heard seldom, perhaps only once. However this apparently only succeeds when a bird is in an exceptional state of excitement". After these intriguing words the scholar tells the details of two cases when birds learned complex phrases in one (or very few) repetitions, and which, very importantly, he witnessed himself.

In the first case Lorenz tells us a hilarious story of Papagallo, blue-fronted Amazon parrot, who belonged to Konrad's brother.

"As long as he lived with us in Altenberg, Papagallo flew just as freely around as most of my other birds. A talking parrot that flies from tree to tree and at the same time says human words, gives a much more comical effect than one that sits in a cage and does the same thing. When Papagallo, with loud cries "Where is the doc?" flew about the district, sometimes in a genuine search for his master, it was positively irresistible.

"Still funnier, but also remarkable from a scientific point of view, was the following performance of the bird; Papagallo feared nothing and nobody, with the exception of the chimney-sweep. Birds are very apt to fear things that are above. And this tendency, associated with the innate dread of the bird of prey swooping down from the heights. So everything that appears against the sky, has for them something of the meaning of "bird of prey." As the black man, already sinister in his darkness, stood up in the chimney stack and became outlined against the sky, Papagallo fell into a panic of fear and flew, loudly screaming, so far away that we feared he might not come back. Months later, when the chimney-sweep came again, Papagallo was seating on the weathercork, squabbling with the jackdaws who wanted to sit there too. All at once, I saw him grow long and thin and peer down anxiously in the village street; then he flew up and away, shrieking in raucous tones, again and again, "The chimney-sweep is coming! The chimney-sweep is coming!" The next moment, the black man walked through the doorway of the yard!

"Unfortunately, I was unable to find out how often Papagallo had seen the chimney-sweep before and how often he had heard the excited cry of our cook which heralded his approach. It was, without a doubt, the voice and intonation of this lady

which the bird reproduced. But he had not certainly heard it more than three times at the most and, each time, only once and with an interval of months.”

The second case cited in Lorenz’s book “King Solomon’s Ring” is more dramatic. This is a story of a pet hooded crow, known as Hansl. Hansl belonged to another owner, but for some time Lorenz looked after him when the crow was unable to fly. When Hansl was healed and started to fly, the crow found himself attached to the German scholar, so he would often give him “flying visits”. After this background, the actual story line unfolds:

“Once he [Hansl] was missing for several weeks and when returned, I noticed that he had, on one foot, a broken digit which had healed crooked. And this is the whole point of the history of Hansl, the hooded crow. For we know just how he came by this little defect. And from whom do we know it? Believe it or not, Hansl told us himself! When he suddenly reappeared, after his long absence, he knew a new sentence. With the accent of true street urchin, he said, in lower Austrian dialect, a short sentence which, translated in broad Lancashire, would sound like “Got ‘im in t’bloomin’ trap!” There was no doubt about the truth of this statement. Just as in case of Papagallo, a sentence which he had certainly not heard often, had stuck in Hansl’s memory because he had it in a moment of great apprehension that is immediately after he had been caught. How he got away again, unfortunately, Hansl did not tell us”¹⁶.

As we can see, according to Konrad Lorenz, there is credible evidence (witnessed by the scholar himself) that a singing bird can learn a completely new and very complex sentence by hearing it only once. Now, if we compare the two articulated phrases, remembered and flawlessly pronounced with all the details, including personalized voice imitation and the dialect by a parrot and a hooded crow on one side, and the agonizing scream of a tiger victim on the other side, it is obvious that for a talented bird copying a human scream must have been much easier than copying articulated phrases.

Another important detail that must be taken into consideration when discussing this issue is that the scream was heard at night. This suggests that the bird that copied the scream must have been active at night (unless we allow the possibility that daytime birds can vocalize at night, possibly in their dream). This narrows our search for the possible species of the birds that could have produced a copy of the novel sound, as most of the singing birds are active during the day.

There are still a few singing birds active at night in India, including the Kumaon region, and we are going to discuss them next.

One of them is the nightjar. As a night species, the nightjar tries to stay immobile and unnoticed during the day. For this the nightjar is colored in cryptic colors to match

¹⁶ Lorenz, *King Solomon’s Ring*, pg 87-88. See also Edward Armstrong, *A Study of Bird Song*. 1963. Oxford University Press, section “Factors affecting the learning and reproduction of mimics”, pg. 81.

the colors of the tree branches and bushes. It nests on the ground, and prefers dense bushes in which to hide from the possible predators during the daytime.

Could a nightjar have learned the agonizing scream of the tigress victim after just one hearing? According to Lorenz, the birds can learn new sounds immediately if the experience is accompanied by dramatic events, or at least events that seems dramatic to the bird. As we know, the bird was not a victim of the tiger attack, but in the same way we can say that the chimney-sweep was not endangering the life of Papagallo, but nevertheless the parrot was dead scared by the black human figure. The sudden scream and the scene of the violent attack must have been quite shocking for the bird if the bird was only a few metres away from the actual attack site. As we know from Corbett's description, the tiger attack occurred not far from the "dense brushwood bordering the field", and the nightjar, as we know, is a night species which tries to stay unnoticed during the day on tree branches or the ground among bushes. Therefore there is a good chance that the bird could have been concealed very close to the attack scene and was subsequently shocked by the sudden scream and violent attack.

Therefore, here is a preliminary reconstruction of the tiger attack scene and the resulting night scream from the deserted village:

On the 12th November, during the daytime, a nightjar was concealed in the thick bushes near the village lands. The tigress attack on a Thak villager happened very close to the place where the bird was hiding during the daytime. The loud scream and possibly the scene of the fatal violence was a shock for the concealed bird, and as a result, the loud scream was imprinted in the memory of the bird. It is difficult to speculate whether the bird repeated the mortal scream again between November 12th and November 28th. On November 28th, at night, as Corbett was sitting up in the tree, waiting for the tigress, the bird, who, according to its lifestyle, was active at night, most likely saw the tigress (who, from Corbett's words we know was in the village and was on the move), and gave the sound that was associated with the bird's experience of seeing the tiger.

But the "nightjar hypothesis" has one serious problem if it is to be seriously considered as a candidate for the author of the mysterious night scream. According to our current knowledge, nightjars belong to an order of birds known as Caprimulgiformes, and there is no evidence that they can learn novel sounds and imitate other species' sounds. They can sing, but they cannot copy novel sounds.

Therefore, either we should assume that (1) ornithologists are not aware of all the audio abilities of nightjars, or that (2) the scream was made by another bird species.

Is it possible that scholars are not aware of the vocal learning abilities of the nightjar?

That is unlikely. But we still need to remember that according to the information available about this bird, the nightjar is one of the most secretive birds, and many of its behaviours are still shrouded in mystery. No nightjar has been kept as a pet either.

We know for sure that they have a peculiar song, which resembles the sound of a motorbike heard from a distance, and we also know that they can sing using more usual bird-like whistling (and yodelling) sounds. On rare occasions they also sing during the day. Because of their secretive lifestyle the nightjar's identity was connected with superstitions. Ancient Greeks believed that nightjars could milk the goats, and their Latin name "kaprimulgus" means "goat sucker". The Russian name for the nightjar is "kozodoi" – meaning the same "goat sucker". Apart from this erroneous belief, there was also an often-repeated unconfirmed report that nightjars can transport their eggs from their nests to more secure places carrying the eggs in their mouths. For a bird, active in the dark, and not kept in captivity, it should not be surprising that the nightjar has prompted a few superstitions and false beliefs.

So, if we believe that the audio repertoire of the nightjar is exhaustively known to ornithologists, then the scream could not have been made by a nightjar. On the other hand, if we still have some doubts about the behaviour of this secretive bird, there still might a possibility of a nightjar learning novel sounds is exceptional circumstances.

Hardly anyone would disagree that most of the currently available information on the bird's ability to mimic different sounds (particularly human voices) comes from studies of captive birds. Unless nightjars are observed in captivity, in close everyday contact with humans, we should not conclude that we know all the potential repertoire of this secretive bird.

Unfortunately, the advantages of animals mimicking the ability of other species' sounds is often neglected, although it is obvious that well-mimicked sounds can profoundly confuse an intended listener and give a crucial advantage to the mimicking animal. We can all agree that the Thak man-eating tigress was shocked when, following the call of a male tiger, she suddenly found herself facing her mortal enemy – a hunter with a loaded heavy rifle. Unlike the tigress, for which this confusion was the last thing that happened in her short and troubled life, Corbett lived many years after hearing the mysterious night scream from the deserted village and shared his experience with millions of the readers of his books in dozens of languages.

Anyway, we should look at the possibility that a nightjar made the mysterious night scream at best with a great deal of suspicion. And, of course, we should remember that the nightjar is by no means the only candidate for the role of author of the night scream that almost sent Corbett running to the deserted village. There are several other and much more talented singers and mimics from the Himalayan foothills in Kumaon. Let us briefly discuss some of them:

- The Common Hawk-Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), popularly known as the *Brain-fever bird*, is a medium-sized cuckoo resident in South Asia. In India it is called Papiha. It is active during the day, and also in the dark. The species-specific call of this bird, resembling the phrase "brain fever"; can be often heard in India, including the Himalaya foothills. As a matter of fact, one of these birds was so active and so loud at night, that some of the members of our party, camped in the deserted village

Thak (the place where Corbett heard the mysterious scream) in April 8-12, 2012, had problems going to sleep. The downside of this candidate is that cuckoos are not known for learning songs and novel sounds.

- A more realistic suspect for the night scream is the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*). This is a medium-sized beautiful bird, widely spread in Asia. It is particularly important for us that drongos are widely known for their imitative abilities regarding many different species of birds (Corbett also mentions this). They are mostly diurnal but are active well before dawn and late at dusk. Owing to their widespread distribution, they have plenty of variations. Himalayan drongo is known as *grandis*. This is the largest subspecies, with long glossy neck hackles. The downside of this suggestion is that although they are good mimics, they have not been known to scholars for mimicking human speech and human voices¹⁷. Although the agonizing scream would not qualify as speech and would have been easier for the drongo to mimic.
- And finally, the best candidate for the role of the author of the mysterious night scream at Thak seems to be the Common Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa*). This is a very loud bird, able to produce an amazing variety of vocal signals. The bird is most vocal at dawn and dusk when it is found in small groups in forest clearings high in the canopy. According to Wikipedia: “Both sexes can produce an extraordinarily wide range of loud calls – whistles, wails, screeches, and gurgles, sometimes melodious and often very human-like in quality.” They rarely use their imitative abilities in the wild, but in captivity Common Hill Mynas are among the most renowned mimics, challenging even the African Grey Parrot in imitating human speech and human sounds with amazing accuracy and clarity.

In conclusion we can say that the Common Hill Myna seems to be the best candidate as the source of the mysterious night scream from the deserted Thak village that shocked Corbett on November 28th, 1938. Although not everyone might agree on the identity of the bird species (and there can be other candidates), it is almost certain that the scream was made, or more precisely, copied, from the original scream on November 12th, by a mimicking singing bird.

Now we would like to come back once again to the mysterious sambhar stag sound heard by Kenneth Anderson in the South Indian jungles, and propose that the sound that Anderson heard was most likely produced by a singing bird. A nightjar (which, according to Anderson, was present at the scene) would have been perfect, but as nightjars are not known to learn novel sounds, we need to search for the imitator among other bird species. The identity of the actual bird might remain a mystery, but for the possibility that it was a bird, who imitated a sound of a sambhar stag, seems quite strong. Was it Common Hill Mynah? Possibly.

¹⁷ Goodale, E. & Kotagama, S. W. 2006. Context dependent vocal mimicry in a passerine bird. *Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. Ser. B*, 273, 875-880

Therefore we suggest that both cases, described by two of the possibly most famous hunters of the Indian jungles, with Corbett hearing the human scream in mortal agony, and Anderson hearing the call of a stag sambhar, were most likely produced by mimicking birds, active at night (or dusk). We could also speculate that in the same way as the image of the much-feared chimney-sweep prompted Papagallo to produce the human words associated with his fear of the dark figure of the chimney-sweep, the same way seeing a tiger could have prompted the talented mimicking bird to produce the sounds most likely connected to the bird's previous audio experiences. According to Armstrong, "Birds not only learn sounds but also establish associations between them and persons, animals, or contemporaneous events."¹⁸

And finally, we should remember that the night when Corbett heard the scream from a deserted village was brilliantly lit with moonlight: "There was still sufficient daylight to shoot by when the moon, a day off the full, rose over the Nepal hills behind me and flooded the hillside with brilliant light." This fact is also extremely important, as the bright moonlight is well-known to trigger higher bird singing activity (see, for example, Mills, 1986)¹⁹.

And a critical note at the end: it seems that Corbett's memory was not precise about one detail: in November 1938, the full moon was seen on November 8 and then on December 7. So on November 28 the moon could not be full, it was the first quarter. Most likely the moonlight was very bright on that night, and the air was very clear, and gave Corbett the impression of the full moon. Let us one more time remember how Corbett describes the clear air on that evening: "the rain of the previous night had cleared the atmosphere of dust and smoke and after the moon had been up for a few minutes the light was so good I was able to see a sambhar and her young one in a field of wheat a hundred and fifty yards away." Also, apart from the clear air, we should remember that the first quarter moon has its pick time at around 9pm, almost exactly the time when Corbett heard the agonizing scream.

Conclusion

So we can conclude that on the night of 28th November 1938 Corbett heard the perfect copy, the virtual "audio-recording" of the dramatic story of the tiger fatal attack on a Thak villager, that happened on November 12th, more than two weeks before, retold to Corbett by a talented witness to the attack, a singing bird (most likely the Common Hill Myna). The scene of lethal violence, witnessed by the Myna (possibly from a very close range) stayed in the memory of the bird, and later the bird reproduced the loud scream, associated with the appearance of the source of violence – the tiger.

¹⁸ Edward Armstrong, *A Study of Bird Song*. 1963. Oxford University Press, section "Factors affecting the learning and reproduction of mimics", pg. 82.

¹⁹ Mills, A.M. 1986. The influence of moonlight on the behaviour of goatsuckers (*Caprimulgidae*). *Auk* 103:370-378.

It is symbolic that after two days of hearing the mysterious agonizing human scream from the deserted village, most likely produced by a mimicking bird, Corbett himself concluded the last hunt of his illustrious career as a slayer of man-eating tigers and leopards by mimicking himself the mating call of a tiger. And who knows, possibly hearing the deceptive night scream from the deserted village was responsible for the idea that came to Corbett two days later, on the last day of his long hunting career of man-eaters: the idea to lure the clever and elusive tigress by imitating the call of her mate²⁰.

²⁰ Note from the authors: Authors want to express gratitude to Peter Slater, Professor Emeritus from the University of St Andrews, UK, the expert on bird communication, for his professional comments during the work on this chapter.

The Mystery of Champawat Bungalow

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

*"...though I claim I am not superstitious,
I can give no explanation for the experience
I met with at the bungalow while hunting the
Champawat tiger, and the scream I heard
coming from the deserted Thak village."*

Jim Corbett, Temple Tiger

Arguably the best known and most mysterious moment of Corbett writings is his scary and baffling experience that he had in Champawat bungalow. Many Corbett fans know this experience as "Corbett's ghost experience."

In the very first story of his classic book, "Man-Eaters of Kumaon", the story of the Champawat man-eater, Corbett briefly mentions a mysterious experience that he had during one night spent in a Champawat bungalow in 1907. This happened two nights before he killed the Champawat man-eater, the most prolific man-eater in recorded human history, which killed and ate 436 Nepalese and Indians. Let us first of all read what Corbett himself writes about his experience.

During that day Corbett covered many miles to check a report of an alleged tiger kill, but found that it was a leopard which killed and partly ate the calf. So Corbett returned to the bungalow where he was going to spend a night together with his men and with a Tehsildar (an administrative officer in India):

"On returning to the bungalow I found the Tehsildar was back, and as we sat on the verandah I told him of my day's experience. Expressing regret at my having had to go so far on a wild-goose chase, he rose, saying that as he had a long way to go he must start at once. This announcement caused me no little surprise, for twice that day he had said he would stay the night with me. It was not the question of his staying the night that concerned me, but the risk he was taking; however, he was deaf to all my arguments and, as he stepped off the verandah into the dark night, with only one man following him carrying a smoky lantern which gave a mere glimmer of light, to do a walk of four miles in a locality in which men only moved in large parties in daylight, I took off my hat to a very brave man. Having watched him out of sight I turned and entered the bungalow.

"I have a tale to tell of that bungalow but I will not tell it here, for this is a book of jungle stories, and tales 'beyond the laws of nature' do not consort well with such stories."

That's it. These intriguing words are well known to all Corbett fans. Despite his promising words "I have a tale to tell of that bungalow" Corbett never returned to the events of that night in his later writings, leaving the interpretation of his words to the readers.

So what kind of experience 'beyond the laws of nature' could Corbett have had at the Champawat bungalow? Why did the Tehsildar leave? Did the Tehsildar know there was 'something wrong' with this bungalow, and he was so afraid that he preferred to walk at night through the territory of the dreaded man-eater?

This chapter is written to provide a scientific explanation for what kind of experience Corbett could have had at the Champawat bungalow during his hunt for the Champawat man-eating tigress.

First of all, let us try to figure out from the available sources as much as we can about what happened to Corbett that night in the bungalow. Fortunately, although Corbett himself never returned to the topic to describe in his usual candid and precise way what kind of experience he had, we still have some information which came from someone who was sharing the bungalow with Corbett that night.

According to Maurice Nestor, brother of Ray Nestor, Corbett's nephew, Corbett was not alone in the bungalow, for his faithful servant Bahadur Khan was there²¹. Bahadur was in the front part of the bungalow, while Corbett was sleeping alone in the room. The other men from Corbett's party were in the firewood store behind the building. According to the words of Bahadur, the Tehsildar left because he knew that all would not be well in that bungalow, which was why he preferred to walk through the territory of the man-eater than stay at the bungalow. According to Maurice's words, Bahadur later reported to one of Corbett's sisters (either Ray's mother or Maggie) that he heard Corbett being very noisy in his room, and later opened the door suddenly and came running straight to the veranda. Upon joining his master, Bahadur found him shirtless, with heavy drops of sweats everywhere, his hair completely wet with sweat also, breathing heavily. That woke up the other men who came to attend their master and Corbett simply told them he'd rather spend the rest of the night outside with them instead of inside.

According to Maurice's words, the second night (the night before the killing of the man-eating tiger) was also spent by Corbett at the bungalow, but instead of sleeping inside the room, he slept on the veranda, with his men setting up camp with a night-long fire to 'cast away' evil spirits. Bahadur, who was the only Muslim in the party, tried not to believe that something strange or unnatural happened, and did not report it as a supernatural experience to the family.

²¹ We must take into account that the precise source of this information is not clear. According to Kristoff Kotecha, one of the authors of this book, information was provided to him by Jerry Jaleel, the Head of the Corbett Foundation. Jerry Jaleel knew Maurice Nestor in person. Questioned later about this, J. Jaleel did not confirm the story. So the story should be viewed with certain caution.

Importantly, Corbett had at least one more very similar experience during his life. According to this information, provided by all of the major Corbett's biographers, Corbett was on war duty with another governmental officer when they spent the night in the Raja's house. Corbett was told to leave a particular room alone and locked, as it had a "bad reputation," but he insisted on sleeping in it. During the night his companion heard a ruckus in the room, and the next moment Corbett dashed in through the connecting door out of breath ("panting for breath," Kala, 2009:76) and sweating and slept the remainder of the night in his companion's room.

At breakfast next morning, he was asked what happened and this made him very upset and he abruptly left the table and asked never to be reminded of it again²².

One more, not exactly similar, but still strange experience that could have happened to Corbett is mentioned in Jerry Jaleel's and D.C.Kala's biographies. This information comes originally from the book "Leaves from Indian forests" written by Sir S Eardley Wilmot on a ghostly experience that a certain "Mr. C." had. He experienced a whirling dance by a pair of twinkling feet in a room in which he was spending the night. This dance was later identified as a female dance common in mujras (or dance performed by women in kothas- or brothels). Jaleel proposed this to fit with Corbett's experience. However, it must be noted that upon reading the full chapter of the said book, this story has to be discounted vis-a-vis Corbett's experience as it has very different, and dramatic, climax, including the death of one of the characters – this obviously is not related to Corbett's story.

Of these three experiences we will mostly discuss the first two, as they are very close to each other and the identity of Corbett is firmly established (unlike in the third case).

First of all we need to clarify that unlike Corbett's another famous "otherworldly experience" – hearing an agonizing human scream from the deserted Thak village (see the special chapter on this subject in this book) – in the Champawat bungalow and in Raja's house Corbett did not have any witnesses to verify that the experiences themselves were real occurrences. From Corbett's detailed description we know, for example, that the agonizing night scream in the Thak village some 31 years later was heard by the sambhar and her young one, as well as by kakar, who reacted to the sudden scream. None of Corbett's experiences we are discussing in this chapter were shared by anyone else, so the first and most logical explanation would be that Corbett had strong and very vivid nightmares.

We can all agree that hunting man-eating tigers can be a powerful factor in inducing nightmares. I remember myself having a couple of nightmares in my teenage years while reading Corbett's book for the first time, so for a person who was actually

²² Another similar experience is described by Martin Booth in his biography (pg 139-140), although in this case Corbett and his friend were both affected by the experience. Booth cites the words of the third friend, who was allegedly not affected. No other details of the sources are revealed.

following the blood trail of a man-eater and was risking his own life, the occurrence of nightmares would be fully understandable.

But even if we accept that Corbett had nightmares, there are plenty of unclear moments. For example, we know that even after the most awful nightmares people usually wake up and quickly realize that the horrendous visions and sensations were a nightmare, not a reality. Why Corbett did not realize these were just nightmares? Or possibly in Corbett's case this was not a "simple" nightmare, but something else? Possibly there were some other, deeply hidden psychological condition and mechanisms at work?

Searching for possible scientific explanations for Corbett's experiences at the Champawat bungalow and the Raja's house, I came to an extremely (for myself) unexpected conclusion. I am sure that my explanation will sound to most of the Corbett fans totally wrong. I have to say I myself initially laughed at the idea when it entered my mind for the first time. But a few minutes later, after I recalled several unusual facts from Corbett's behaviour and life, I felt that this explanation must be very seriously considered.

So here is the idea I am putting forward:

I propose that at the Champawat bungalow Corbett suffered a claustrophobic panic attack.

The idea that Corbett, one of the bravest humans that ever walked on our planet, a person who was able to follow the bloody trail of a man-eater on foot, alone, a person with steel nerves, could have suffered from panic attacks was as wild as ideas can get.

But let us get over the first reaction and try to have a closer look at the scientifically known facts.

Claustrophobia is a very common condition among humans, connected to the fear of suffocation in closed places. According to widely available information on this condition (readers can consult, for example, Wikipedia), people with a predilection toward claustrophobia are afraid to stay in locked rooms, cars, tunnels, cellars, elevators, subway trains, caves, airplanes and crowded areas. When confined to such an area, claustrophobics begin to fear suffocation, believing that there may be a lack of air in the area in which they are confined. Claustrophobics often hate wearing ties and closely fitting clothes, as constraining clothes induce a feeling of suffocation. Many claustrophobics remove clothing during panic attacks, believing it will relieve the symptoms. Medical examinations through an MRI machine are particularly known to induce severe claustrophobic fears, and it was reported that 13% of patients experienced a panic attack during the procedure²³. The procedure has been linked not only to triggering 'pre-existing' claustrophobia, but also to causing its onset in some people.

²³ Thorpe, Susan, Salkovis, Paul M., & Dittner, Antonia. *Claustrophobia in MRI: the Role of Cognitions. Magnetic Resonance Imaging*. Vol. 26, Issue 8. *Harold B. Lee Library*. 3 June 2008.

As claustrophobia can lead to severe panic attacks with the fear and feel of imminent death from suffocation, most claustrophobics who are aware of their condition do everything in their power to avoid situations that can trigger their claustrophobic fears.

The occurrence of this psychological condition, according to medical research, is mostly connected to some early childhood traumatic memories. For example, a young child left locked in a dark room, or was stuck in a box, and other possible traumatic experiences connected to the fear of suffocation.

We will discuss the possible traumatic experiences that could have triggered, in Corbett's case, the appearance of the closet claustrophobic hallucinations, but let us first discuss the symptoms of claustrophobic panic attacks:

1. fear of imminent death by suffocation,
2. desire to remove clothing in order to alleviate symptoms,
3. desire to be in the open space,
4. heavy sweating,
5. being out of breath

Now, if we read once more the description of Corbett's behaviour on that night in the Champawat bungalow, given by Maurice Nestor, we will notice that the details of Corbett behaviour are very consistent with the symptoms of severe claustrophobic panic attacks: he was (1) very heavily sweating, (2) out of breath, and most importantly (3) he removed his clothing (his shirt) during the attack:

“Upon joining his master, Bahadur found him shirtless, with heavy drops of sweat everywhere, his hair completely wet with sweat also, breathing heavily.”

We do not know if Corbett had a feeling of approaching death by suffocation, as he himself never spoke of his feelings about these experiences, but the fact of removing the clothing strongly suggests that he was experiencing a claustrophobic panic attack, fear of suffocation. We also know that he refused to go into the bungalow again and slept the next night on the verandah.

The account of the similar case in the Raja's house does not provide such vivid details, and although we know that Corbett was covered with sweat, we do not know if his clothing was removed when he dashed out of the room. We only know that (1) he dashed out of his room in panic, (2) he was covered in sweat and panting for breath, (3) he did not want to come back to his room, and that (4) he did not want to talk about his night experience at all.

Apart from these two events from Corbett's life, there are several other very important for our subject indications that Corbett was possibly suffering from closet claustrophobic fears of suffocation in closed places. Let me remind the readers some unusual patterns of Corbett behaviour that the reader might already paid attention:

Corbett was known for his unusual characteristic of not sleeping inside his own house – he slept, as a rule, outside the house, in his tent. This fact is usually interpreted as indication of his love of outdoor living, but even among the people who love

outdoor living this kind of behaviour (sleeping in a tent in his own backyard, not in the bedroom) is still quite unusual. So it is possible to propose that he slept better when he was not confined between solid walls. In other times, when sleeping in his room, he always had all the windows wide opened, without a concern for the weather.

Corbett was also known to opt for sleeping outdoors even when he was in the territory of a man-eater, when sleeping inside a house was a much safer option – for example, he spent his first night under a tree in the territory of a Champawat man-eater, and a couple of years later – on the territory of the Panar man-eating leopard.

Corbett was also known for his hatred of a formal suit and tie. Suits and ties are known as the most constraining clothing for any person with claustrophobic fears. And as a surprisingly large number of our fellow humans are sensitive towards claustrophobic situations, some of the readers of this book might also dislike ties. This brings the question of how correct it is to impose a formal tie and suit on employees at some workplaces, a practice strictly adhered to by some professions and work environments. But we are not going to follow this argument here, so let us go back to Corbett.

Corbett not only hated a formal suit and tie, but generally disliked any constraining cloths. His favorite clothing, as many Corbett fans would remember, was shorts.

As we can see, Corbett's habit of sleeping in his tent instead of his house, his general preference of staying outside of the houses when even on the territory of man-eaters, and his hatred for constraining cloths all give us indications that Corbett might have had deep claustrophobic fears. It is widely believed that any additional stress factors add to the possibility that a person will suffer a claustrophobic panic attack. In the Champawat bungalow Corbett definitely experienced a powerful stress factor, as he was following the trail of a man-eater.

Apart from this powerful stress-inducing factor, at least one of the sources suggested that the Tehsildar left the bungalow and opted to go for a three-mile walk at night because he knew the house had a "bad reputation." In this case if the Tehsildar was told about the fearful experiences during that day (as we know, he initially was going to sleep in the bungalow), he possibly would also have advised Corbett to stay out of the bungalow. If Corbett knew that some other people had a bad experience in this bungalow, this also could have added to the possibility of the appearance of nightmares.

If you warn people before they go to sleep in a new place that the house has a "bad reputation" and that some people have had horrifying experiences there, there is a fair chance that some of them will have frightening experiences (nightmares) from a night spent at a "haunted house".

If this was really the case, and Corbett knew about the reputation of the bungalow, very much in line with his character he probably would have decided to stay in the bungalow. Another similar case (from the Raja's house) strongly suggests that Corbett preferred to face his fears directly – we know that he was strongly advised not to sleep

in a small locked room in the Raja's house with a "bad reputation," but he insisted on spending a night there.

Therefore, Corbett had strong additional factors to induce his deep-seated claustrophobic fears: the stress of following the man-eating tiger who had killed and eaten more than 400 humans, and also, possibly the factor of sleeping alone in a room with an unexplained "bad reputation." During our 2014 trip we visited several times the bungalow where Corbett had his experience we are discussing in this chapter, and we must say the room where Corbett slept is very claustrophobic. It has solid stone walls, has two small doors (going into other rooms), one door going to veranda, and a single small window.

And let us remember a macabre detail (particularly for people with claustrophobic fears), that man-eating cats, tigers, leopards, and lions, kill their victims by suffocation...

Corbett writings provide another evidence of his claustrophobic fears when facing tigers as competitors. According to his words from the story of Mohan tiger the encounter with tigers was affecting his normal breathing. Here are his words:

"I do not know how the close proximity of a tiger reacts on others, but me it always leaves with a breathless feeling due possibly as much to fear as to excitement and a desire for a little rest" (Corbett, 1944: 136)

Now let us address another very important question. Even if Corbett had a nightmare, why he did not realize after waking up that this was just a nightmare, like many of us do after nightmares? Why did he believe what happened to him was real?

To explain this, we need to take into account the phenomenon of the "false awakening."

A severe claustrophobic panic attack can provoke very realistic and vivid hallucinations. Such hallucinations can start during sleep, with so-called "false awakening." In this state a person believes he is awake, but in fact he is still asleep, because "false awakening" often starts in a very realistic way – for example, a person suddenly wakes up in his own bed and sees (or feels) that someone (or something) is also in the same room, or even is sitting on his bed. So the sense of reality is very strong and vivid. According to Jerry Jaleel, Corbett felt the presence of "some unknown force while he spent the night at that bungalow, and it was not the first time he experienced such super natural incidents" (from Jerry Jaleel letter from May 1, 2015. Information was given to J. Jaleel by late Audrey Baylis. I am grateful to J. Jaleel for the information).

According to Peter Byrne, he had a similar dream-like but very realistic experience during his hunting days. Here are his words from the letter of 23 June, 2012:

"I TOO HAD AN EXPERIENCE LIKE THIS IN AN OLD DAK BUNGALOW... VERY STRANGE... WAKING UP AT NIGHT AND SEEING, VERY BRIEFLY, A YOUNG ENGLISH GIRL STANDING BY THE FIREPLACE, LIT BY THE GLOW OF A DYING FIRE... TO BE HONEST, I COULD HAVE BEEN DREAMING... I

HAD WALKED A LONG WAY THAT DAY AND WAS TIRED AND COLD WHEN I SETTLED DOWN FOR THE NIGHT; THE BUNGALOW WAS COLD AND SO I PUT MY SLEEPING BAG ON THE FLOOR IN THE LIVING-DINING ROOM, WHICH HAD A SMALL FIRE GOING, LAID MY RIFLE BESIDE ME-THERE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DACOITS IN THAT AREA – AND SLEPT THERE. AS I SAY, I COULD HAVE BEEN JUST COMING OUT OF A DREAM. OR ... WHAT MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED ME AND MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON MY MIND THEN ... WAS FINDING, NOT LONG BEFORE THAT, IN THE INDIAN FOREST, FAR AWAY FROM ANYWHERE, THE SAD AND LONELY GRAVE OF A YOUNG ENGLISH GIRL.

SHE FADED AWAY WITHIN SECONDS. BUT I COULD NOT GO BACK TO SLEEP. IT MAY HAVE BEEN ONLY A DREAM. BUT WHEN I SAW HER, OR THOUGHT I SAW HER, STANDING BY THE FIREPLACE, I WAS JERKED RIGHT UP INTO A SITTING POSITION... TO WATCH AS SHE FADED. I THEN GOT UP AND STOKED UP THE FIRE AND WRAPPED MY COVERS AROUND ME AND SAT UP FOR A WHILE. WONDERING NOT SO MUCH AT THE APPEARANCE, BUT AT WHO SHE WAS. IN THE MORNING I ASKED THE DAK BUNGALOW CHOWKIDAR IF HE KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT A YOUNG WOMAN. A DEATH MAYBE. HE SAID NO.”

Some might ask if it is really possible for a normal person to have such vivid hallucinations that a person cannot understand this was not real.

Yes, this is possible and many such cases are well-documented. We know that people can suffer from such irrational things as severe pain in amputated limbs. This is a so called “phantom pain.” In such cases the pain is very real, although the subject of the pain (for example, a painful leg) is absent and the patients can see that they do not have the part of the body that gives them such excruciating pain. Most of such irrational feelings are brain-induced experiences, and these feelings are very realistic. Let me mention another very interesting topic, UFO sightings. Scholars suggest that at least some cases of “alien abduction” are connected to hallucinations experienced as absolute reality by people during “false awakening”. As a result, at least some people who tell stories of alien abductions are absolutely honest and convinced that they experienced these events for real. Some people, in a desperate attempt to prove to others that their experiences are real, even damage their bodies (very much like a police officer, who fabricates evidence to convict the suspect because the policeman is absolutely sure that the suspect IS the culprit).

The so-called Blackmore-Cox study of the University of the West of England supports the suggestion that reports of at least some alien abductions are likely to relate to so-called sleep paralysis (very vivid nightmares with a feel of reality).²⁴

²⁴ Susan Blackmore and Marcus Cox. Alien Abductions, Sleep Paralysis and the Temporal Lobe. *European Journal of UFO and Abduction Studies*, 2000, 1, 113-118. Available on the internet: <http://www.susanblackmore.co.uk/Articles/ejufoas00.html>

Even if we accept that Corbett's experiences could have been a result of his condition (most probably a closet condition) of claustrophobic fears, and that Corbett's hallucinations were very realistic because of the mechanisms of the "false awakening", we still need to find out if there was any kind of powerful negative experience that could trigger such a condition in such exceptionally brave human as Corbett.

According to medical research, such powerful fears are mostly a result of traumatic childhood memories. We do not know many details of Corbett's childhood, and we will never know such details if he ever got stuck in a box, or was locked in a room. But we probably do not need such details of Corbett's early life, as most Corbett fans know very well about probably the most traumatic event of Corbett's early life that could have triggered his claustrophobic fears.

Nainital, a town where Corbett was born and spent most of the summer months, suffered a devastating tragedy on Saturday, 18 September, 1880. This was a horrific landslide, burying alive 151 Nainital citizens in a muddy grave. Corbett was that time five years old, and together with his family, he witnessed this unimaginable tragedy.

Here is the second half of the poem by poet Hannah Battersby in 1887, written after seven years of the Nainital tragedy:

"For scarcely had they timely refuge found,
 Than a huge limb of the great mountain fell,
 Sweeping the fair hill-side of house and land,
 And burying dozens of their fellow men
 In one uncompromising, living tomb!..
 Strong men in the proud glory of life's prime,
 Women in joyful trustfulness of love
 With little children in full bloom of life;
 All in the twinkling of an eye cut down,
 In that rude harvest of the tyrant Death! ...
 Now the late lovely valley, Nainital
 Stands as a witness of the frailty
 Of human strength against the overwhelming might..."

It is important to know if the Corbetts could really see the unfolding disaster. For this we would need to know where the Corbett family lived during the disaster. On their arrival in Nainital, the Corbetts rented and lived in a property situated opposite the "Treasury" building, in a region called 'Mallital'. This was exactly the region that was swamped by the landslide and would have killed the Corbett family if they had still lived there in 1880. Fortunately for them, in 1875, before Jim's birth in July, the family moved to one of their purchased plots in a two-storeyed house below the Alma Hill. Alma Hill was the second lowest of the hills around the town, very close to ill-fated "Mallital". This region is on the lakeside is situated next to Mallital, the region swamped by the landslide. According to Martin Booth's words:

“The landslip was terrifying and catastrophic. From where the Corbetts lived they could see quite clearly what was happening and they must have thought they too would soon be cannoned into the valley below for their houses were but two to three hundred yards or so to the west of the slip.”

Therefore, the Corbetts had a dubious privilege of having the best possible view of the landslide disaster of 1880. So the psychological impact must have been extremely strong particularly on five year old Jim. Even more, just a few years before the disaster the Corbetts lived in the very region which was wiped out by the landslide, so they certainly knew in person most, if not all, the unfortunate members of the Nainital society who were swept together inside the “living tomb”. In her famous notes, Maggie mentioned one of their former neighbours, their friend, who died in the landslide, squashed between the walls in the collapsed house.

There are the two historic photographs stored at the British Library, showing the magnitude of the 1880 landslide of Nainital. The first photograph was taken before the landslide, and the second one was taken after the landslide.

(1) The first photo shows Nainital in 1875, 5 years before the tragedy (and incidentally the year when Jim Corbett was born).

(2) The next photo was taken by the same photographer shortly after the devastating 1880 landslide. To show the damage, the photographer probably chose the same view as in the photo taken by the same person five years before.

Therefore, the Corbett family members clearly saw the houses disappearing under the mountain of mud, leading to suffocation and death of more than a hundred people. This tragic scene, most likely accompanied by the terrifying screams of family members and distant scream of the doomed victims of the landslide, must have been a horrendously stressful experience for a five years old Jim.

The Corbetts were in total shock, as well as the whole of Nainital. After this tragedy the Corbetts sold in panic the house where they watched the landslide from, as residents feared more landslides. And they had reasons for fear - the first known landslide in Nainital occurred in 1866 in Alma Hill, and then in 1879, the year before the tragedy, there was a larger one, again in Alma Hill, exactly the region where the Corbetts lived during the catastrophic 1880 landslide.

Talks about the 1880 landslide and the terrible deaths of their neighbors were certainly a topic of conversation for Corbett's and for the whole town for many years. After the 1880 landslide an effective drainage system was constructed, and the tragedy has never been repeated for the last 130 years. But Nainital residents lived in fear for many years in the wake of the disaster.

So I suggest that it was mostly because of this traumatic childhood experience that Jim Corbett developed a closet claustrophobic fear of suffocation, a condition that could manifest itself rarely, only under strong stress, and in closed buildings. Most likely Corbett himself was unaware of his condition, and that's why his love of

outdoor sleeping on one hand, and his dislike of the formal tight neck clothing with a tie on the other hand, was as a rule attributed to his love of nature and outdoor living.

With the recognition of this condition that probably troubled Jim Corbett on occasions, we can gain a fresh insight into why he preferred sleeping in the tent even in his own house in Kaladhungi²⁵, why he preferred to stay outdoors even when he was on the territory of man-eating tigers and leopards. We can also understand why he preferred wearing shorts instead of trousers, and why he disliked formal clothing and tie.

Of course, on rare occasion Corbett had to wear claustrophobic clothing, including the much hated tie and suit (very much like some of our fellow humans, who hate ties but have to wear it at their jobs, sometimes five days a week). This was a natural requirement when James Edward Corbett was meeting members of high British society, and we know that he did meet very high-ranking people, including members of the British Royal family. Despite his wearing on rare occasions tight claustrophobic clothing, his love of outdoor living and free casual clothing was obvious.

By the way, Corbett fans might also remember that he did not actually sleep inside the Tree Top Hotel rooms either when he accompanied the Royal couple in Kenya on 5-6 February 1952. Instead of sleeping inside the hotel, the 76-year-old Corbett preferred to spend the night outside, sitting on the staircase, watching over the safety of the 26-year-old Elizabeth. As we know, this was the historical night when the young princess became the Queen of the British Empire, Elizabeth II.

Corbett's traumatic childhood experience and psychological state possibly also can explain why Corbett was so dedicated to hunting man-eating tigers and leopards. On one hand, this was a psychological remedy for his own condition, as man-eating tigers and leopards kill their victims by suffocation, and Corbett was facing his biggest subconscious fear by eliminating these powerful animals in direct confrontation.

On the other hand, as a deeply compassionate person, Corbett wanted to do all in his power to end the human suffering and death that was brought to humans by the man-eating tigers and leopards: death in the form of suffocation, his biggest personal fear instilled from his horrific childhood memory.

True bravery is not the absence of fear. It is facing your fears and defeating them. We know champion mountain climbers who were afraid of heights in their childhood; we know physically sick children who reached Olympic glory; we know young stuttering men who were afraid of public speeches but became brilliant orators and politicians. Jim Corbett is another classic example of a true hero, a hero who was stronger than the most powerful unconscious fears instilled in the deepest corners of his psyche by the most traumatic childhood memories²⁶.

²⁵ See, for example: "When at Kaladhungi, he preferred to sleep in his tent rather than his bedroom and, in Nainital, he slept in the house but with the windows wide open regardless of the temperature outside" (Booth, *Carpet Sahib*, pg. 158)

²⁶ Author's note: I am very grateful to Kristoff Kotecha and Priyvrat Gadhvi for their helpful comments

The Mysterious Nagpur Man-Eater And Other Unknown Man-Eaters

By PRIYVRAT GADHVI

One of the most ubiquitously discussed and debated questions amongst the multitudes of Jim Corbett's fans, is whether there were man-eaters shot by Corbett that remained undocumented, and thus unknown. Were there man-eaters shot by Corbett that he did not write about in any of his famous books? Do we know every chapter of his career as a slayer of man-eaters?

In the 6 available books of the 7 written by Corbett, we encounter a documented 13 man-eaters:

- The Champawat Tigress
- The Panar Leopard
- The Mukhtesar Tigress
- The Rudraprayag Leopard
- The Chowgarh Tigers (Mother & cub)
- The Tallades Tigers (Mother & 2 cubs)
- The Mohan Tiger
- The Kanda Tiger
- The Chuka Tiger
- The Thak Tigress

A simple chronological study of Corbett's stories on his man-eater hunts presents a curious question: At the start of his literary career, did he have a preference for stories he wanted to tell? Or did he pick stories in a random fashion from his memory and pen them down? This question bears relation to the possibility of there being man-eater hunts that Jim Corbett never wrote about.

It would appear that although the stories included in "Man-eaters of Kumaon" are largely chronological in order of their narration, they were chosen by Corbett quite randomly from the treasure-trove of his experiences. Certainly, the man-eater stories of "Temple Tiger and more man-eaters of Kumaon" (OUP, 1954) lacked nothing in drama & intrigue, and save the case of the Talla Des man-eater, which Corbett purposely withheld from narrating till his other stories had been read and accepted by his audience, he does not assign any particular reason for choosing some stories over others in his earlier writings.

It is a known fact that his self-published "Jungle Stories" (1935) was meant to be distributed to a close circle of his friends and that 'Man-eaters of Kumaon' (OUP, 1944) was an extension and enlargement of 'Jungle Stories'. Corbett, a modest & self-effacing man was certainly not intending to document every single exploit of his in the form of

and information provided while writing this chapter.

these books – his only impetus in writing these had been the insistence of his friends. It would thus be fair to assume he did not envision a readership for his initial literary works nearly as large as they actually achieved.

Extracts from “My Kumaon – Uncollected writings: Jim Corbett” published in 2012 by OUP as a mark of celebration of 100 years of publishing in India, further strengthen this argument. In an extract from an early undated telegram by Corbett entitled ‘How I came to write’, he writes “...On arrival at Government House that evening, the pleasure my hostess expressed, when in answer to her question I told her I had made a start, so shamed me that I, there and then, resolved to write up some of my experiences, even if no one ever took the trouble to read them...”

In another chapter in the same book, entitled “The Nightjar’s egg”, he writes about his book thus: “Reverting to the book, and my relief on realizing that possibly only one person would trouble to read it, I turned over the pages in my memory and, selecting a few scenes covering a long period of years, started to put a description of them down on paper.”

Possibly, not foreseeing the enormous readership “Man-eaters of Kumaon” would gain and expecting limited circulation, Corbett inadvertently exposes his readers to some unknown and un-introduced experiences. As a case in point, take the mention of the ‘Muktesar Tigress’ he makes in the ‘author’s note’ in ‘Man-eaters of Kumaon’- a man-eater which does not find mention anywhere else in the book and which came to light only 10 years later in “Temple Tiger.” (1954). Another example from the same book would be his repeated mention and casual indication of another tiger in the story of the Thak Tigress, which, as another chapter of this book demonstrates, is in-fact the Chuka man-eater- which again got written about only ten years later!

Now, to the core question of whether there were other man-eaters that Corbett did not write about, we must first address the most obvious and apparent references to such ‘mystery man-eaters’. Foremost among such unresolved mysteries would be the case of the “Nagpur man-eater”. A reference was made to the Nagpur man-eater in the petition sent by villagers of Kanda area to Jim Corbett requesting him to come to their rescue by shooting the man-eater. A copy of the petition was reproduced in “Man-eaters of Kumaon” and reads as follows:

COPY OF PETITION SENT TO THE AUTHOR BY THE PEOPLE OF GARHWAL

The promise mentioned on page 112, was made after receiving
this petition

From The Public of patty Painaun, Bungi and Bickla Badalpur
District Garhwal

To Captain J. E. Carbitt, Esq., I.A.R.O., Kaladhungi

Distt. Nainital

Respected Sir

We all the public (of the above 3 Patties) most humbly and respectfully beg to lay the following few lines for your kind consideration and doing needful.

That in this vicinity a tiger has turned out man-eater since December last. Up to this date he has killed 5 men and wounded 2. So we the public are in a great distress. By the fear of this tiger we cannot watch our wheat crop at night so the deers have nearly ruined it. We cannot go in the forest for fodder grass nor we can enter our cattles in the forest to graze so many of our cattle are to die. Under the circumstances we are nearly to be ruined. The Forest Officials are doing every possible arrangement to kill this tiger but there is no hope of any success. 2 shikari gentlemen also tried to shoot it but unfortunately they could not get it. Our kind District Magistrate has notified Rs. 150 reward for killing this tiger, so every one is trying to kill it but no success. We have heard that your kind self have killed many man-eater tigers and leopards. For this you have earned a good name specially in Kumaon revenue Division. The famous man-eater leopard of Nagpur has been shoot by you. This is the voice of all the public here that this tiger also will be killed only by you. So we the public venture to request that you very kindly take trouble to come to this place and shoot this tiger (our enemy) and save the public from this calamity. For this act of kindness we the public will be highly obliged and will pray for your long life and prosperity. Hope you will surely consider on our condition and take trouble to come here for saving us from this calamity. The route to this place is as follows Ramnagar to Sultan, Sultan to Lahachaur, Lahachaur to Kanda. If your honour kindly inform us the date of your arrival at Ramnagar we will send our men and cart to Ramnagar to meet you and accompany you. We beg to remain

Sir

Your most sincerely

Dated Jharat Signed Govind Singh Negi

The 18th February 1933 Headman Village Jharat

followed by 40 signatures and 4 thumb impressions of inhabitants of Painaunf Bungi and Bickla Badalpur Patties.

Address

The Govind Singh Negi

Village Jharat Patty

Painaun, P.O.

Badialgaon Dist., Garhwal, U.P.

The mention of the Nagpur man-eating leopard in this petition convinced many-a-Corbett fan about the existence of a man-eating leopard that operated around the Maharashtrian city of Nagpur (central-western India), and that Corbett would have at some point before 1933 travelled to Nagpur to rid the place of the man-eater.

The authenticity of this possible hunt by Jim Corbett was alluded to by at least 2 of his biographers.

Martin Booth, author of the Corbett biography "Carpet Sahib" (1986) wrote the following in connection with the Nagpur man-eater in his book

"Quite possibly, Jim shot other man-eaters as well as these which were his renowned kills. In 1933, local Indians believed that he had shot a man-eating leopard at Nagpur and used this act to try and persuade him to rid them of their own local enemy" (Booth, 1986:202).

A later Biography by Jerry Jaleel, entitled "Under the Shadow of Man-eaters: the Life & Legend of Jim Corbett", (1997) had the following lines on the Nagpur man-eater

"Then there were other man-eaters Corbett did not write about. One in particular, the Nagpur man-eater, was mentioned in the petition Corbett received from the village headman" (Jaleel, 1997:37)

Clearly, the Nagpur man-eater had established itself in the minds of many Corbett fans as a man-eater left out by Corbett from his stories, and one they certainly wanted to know more about!

Several forums on the internet had questions by readers of Corbett on the identity of this animal and quite a few attempts were made to unearth information on this man-eater. If the depredations of the creature had given it a degree of fame that made it known in distant Kumaon, a thousand mile away from the city of Nagpur, and if Jim Corbett had travelled all the way to Nagpur to shoot it, surely, there must be a mention somewhere of this event, surely a note of this supposedly famous hunt must be lying up buried in some archived government file!

There emerge however, several inconsistencies with the possible occurrence of this Jim Corbett hunt in the Nagpur area and at the same time several aspects point to an entirely different possibility!

The inconsistencies are the following:

- Jim Corbett is of course, the most reliable source of information on Jim Corbett. Corbett mentioned in his writings that he had shot 2 man-eater Leopards. We know these are the Panar Leopard & the Rudraprayag Leopard.
- If the case of the Nagpur Leopard was that of a 'famous man-eater' as mentioned in the villagers' petition, then it positively must have found mention, at least in passing sense, in some of Corbett's writings, or writings from other authors of Jungle stories. No mention, however, exists.
- There must have been a note in the Forest department records of such a man-eater & its elimination by Jim Corbett. No such evidence has been found.

And yet, we cannot suspect the villagers of being mistaken or indiscreet in their SOS to Corbett, so what really is the answer to the mystery of the Nagpur man-eater?

The answer is very simply this: The mysterious 'man-eater Leopard of Nagpur' was none other than the man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag.

An important point to keep in mind is that Corbett wrote his stories several years after they had occurred & named the man-eaters according to the locality in which they operated. However, in some cases – like the Rudraprayag Leopard, the Chowgarh Tigers, the Panar Leopard etc the range of the animal's activities extended over several hundred square miles, across which dozens of human settlements & villages existed. Thus it is safe to believe that these man-eaters could have had different identities at the time of their depredations, and could have been associated with the name of any of the several places they operated in.

For example, had Corbett named the Panar leopard, which got its name from the Panar river that flowed through the region it operated in, as the 'Sanouli man-eater' after the village near which it was shot, any mention of a 'Panar man-eater' would have resulted in much the same reaction as the Nagpur man-eater. The same holds true for several of his man-eaters, as none was probably known just with one specific name at the time it was alive.

Ironically, it was the Rudraprayag leopard that had to some degree uniformity and singularity in its identity. Geoffrey Cumberlege, head of the Oxford University Press, had pointed to Corbett after reviewing the manuscripts of "The man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag" that the name 'Rudraprayag' would be difficult for people outside India to pronounce. In a letter sent by Corbett to Cumberlege on June 20, 1947, an extract of which was reproduced in "My Kumaon" (OUP, 2012), Corbett address this concern:

"I agree with you that the title I have chosen is over-long and that people outside India will find it difficult to pronounce the word 'Rudraprayag'. To avoid this difficulty I thought of calling the book "The Man-eater of Garhwal", but finally decided that this would not be an appropriate title for a book dealing with an animal that had for many years been known throughout India as the Rudraprayag man-eater..."

This uniform identity however, as the Rudraprayag man-eater, was established towards the later years of the man-eater's activities and certainly was reinforced after it had been shot, through extensive press coverage and more importantly through local tales and folklore.

Another important contributing factor in making Corbett fans believe in the possibility of a Nagpur man-eater was the name of a well-known and prominent Indian city – Nagpur. Some cities and places in India are synonymous with much lesser known other places. The mention of Udaipur, for example, immediately brings to mind the beautiful city in the state of Rajasthan. Yet, places named Udaipur exist in no less than 4 different states in India: in the states of Tripura, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh & Rajasthan.

The crucial piece of evidence however, establishing the Nagpur man-eater and the Rudraprayag man-eater as one and the same animal, came through D.C. Kala's pioneering work on Jim Corbett in the form of his biography "Jim Corbett of Kuma-

on” (1979). Kala pointed out that such was the terror of the man-eater in the region, that it entered folklore and even was the subject of an annual fair at Rudraprayag for many years. There were several ballads sung during the festivities. At least 4 of these, according to Kala, were in Circulation in 1972. Kala presents an English rendering of one of these songs in his book, an extract of which is presented below:

Poem of the Panther (a transcreation by Col. S.N . Dhondiyal of Bag Ki Kavita, a Garhwali ballad printed in Bir Garhwal (1972), published by Shri Vishalmani Sharma Upadhyaya of Narayan Kothi, Garhwal

“It was terror, not the usual fun and banter
That forged a fair - this time to catch a panther.
In Patti Nagpur, year nineteen twenty-five
Plans were launched, and then a concerted drive,
To trap the killer once the harvest was done:
Now rejoice, good folk! Happy times have come.”

.....

“Patwaris gathered there three hundred goats, as bait;
But we didn’t see the panther, despite a long wait.
Came Captain Saurat to Rudraprayag: he fired his gun
Near the bridge; the panther now wounded,
Was made to run”...

The poem clearly establishes the “Nagpur Patti” as the center stage of the action. A ‘Patti’ is a term that signifies a group of villages known by a collective name.

The Nagpur ‘Patti’ is indeed a well known area near and north of the Alaknanda River in Garhwal and this was one of the core-areas of the range of the Rudraprayag Leopard. The famous place of ‘Agatsyamuni’ is close to the Nagpur patti.

A simple search of Nagpur in Garhwal on the internet also presents several link-ages to the area.

Further, the villagers’ petition mention a ‘famous leopard’ and is sent in 1933, when memories of the famous hunt of the Rudraprayag leopard would still be fresh in the minds of the people of the region.

This author first presented this explanation on the Jim Corbett page on Facebook, which is administered by Jerry Jaleel, earlier introduced and also has several experts on Corbett as members along with hundreds of fans. The writing received unchallenged and positive reviews that validated its theory which was subsequently published in the official “Tiger Trails” Journal and newsletter of the Jim Corbett Foundation, Canada sent to its members (Vol. 18, Number 69 01/2012) under the title “The Nagpur man-eater mystery is solved” and directed readers to the original discussion on the Facebook page.

The finding is obviously a tad disappointing for Corbett fans hoping to unearth an unknown story on a man-eater shot in Nagpur, as the hunger to more on the life and exploits of Jim Corbett remains as alive and strong today amongst his admirer as it ever was.

Other unknown man-eaters?

The fact that the Nagpur man-eater turned out to be the Rudraprayag Leopard is certainly not an indication of there being no other unknown man-eaters shot by Corbett which did not get published as stories in his books.

None of Jim Corbett's authentic biographers - Marjorie Clough (Current Biography, 1946), Malcolm Hailey (Introduction to Tree Tops 1955 and A life well-lived -undated), Geoffrey Cumberlege (Introduction to World Classic Series 1960), Roy Hawkins (introduction to Jim Corbett's India, 1978), D.C. Kala (Jim Corbett of Kumaon, 1979), Martin Booth (Carpet Sahib-A life of Jim Corbett, 1986), Jerry Jaleel (Under the shadow of man-eaters: Life and legend of Jim Corbett, 1997) and Peter Byrne (Shikari Sahib, 2002) present an unequivocal and unambiguous account of an unknown man-eater hunt not described by Corbett in his books, although, as has been stated earlier, some did point to the possibility of there being other man-eaters.

Jerry Jaleel in his book 'Under the Shadow of man-eaters: The Life & Legend of Jim Corbett' did present a story of 'The Chirgudi man-eater', about a man-eater leopard supposedly shot by Corbett in 1912. The story does not however, unequivocally establish this man-eater as having been killed by Corbett - as it uses a pseudonym, is written by a different person than Corbett and is slightly vague in some places. Corbett himself mentions in his later writings having shot no more than two man-eating leopards. Hence the story, as concerning Corbett's role in it, may or may not be true. Jaleel, however, makes an effort at addressing the question of other man-eaters shot by Corbett through this story.

There is an apparent absence of any man-eater hunt by Corbett between the years 1910 and 1926 - between the Panar Leopard (1910) and the Rudraprayag Leopard (1926). This would mean 16 years, or 50% of his career of 32 years as a hunter of man-eaters saw no action - yet Corbett himself describes his experiences with man-eaters as "32 years of hunting man-eaters." It is quite certain, that the honest and modest Jim would certainly have alluded to this long period of recess - had it occurred, and would not have claimed a clean "32 years of hunting man-eaters" as career experience.

A very reliable source of information on Jim Corbett, none less than his publishers - Oxford University Press, tell us in at least one instance - The introduction of "My Kumaon", 2012 that Jim Corbett shot 19 man-eater Tigers and 14 man-eater Leopards! These figures regularly surface in many forum discussions and articles on Corbett, yet no source as reliable as his publishers!

This information however, leaves 8 man-eater Tigers and 12 man-eater Leopards, supposedly shot by Corbett, unaccounted for! This is certainly an error committed by OUP and could be the result of hearsay. Certainly, the information on 14 man-eater leopards is definitely wrong as Corbett himself describes having shot only two man-eater leopards.

Another very reliable allusion to the number of man-eaters shot by Jim Corbett was found in a letter lying buried at the National Archives of India. The letter, unearthed in late 2012 by this author, was written by none other than Sir William Ibbotson, the only person Corbett ever hunted man-eaters with! Ibbotson wrote this letter on January 13th, 1939 to a certain 'John' - a senior official posted at the time with the Viceroy's staff in New Delhi, exploring a possible medal or decoration for Jim Corbett for saving hundreds of human lives through his hunts of man-eaters. In the letter, while referring to the Thak tigress, which Corbett had just killed, Ibbotson mentions of her possibly being his 'twentieth man-eater'! (The Ibbotson letter is published in another chapter of this book). However, Ibbotson's word "possibly" gives the idea that he was not claiming to be precise in his estimate.

The answer to the question of other man-eaters, thus, continues to evade us – or does it?

The answer is, in fact, offered by Corbett himself, in a subtle and unassuming way, through his writings. YES – there were indeed other man-eaters shot by Corbett apart from the 13 alluded to. The answer emerges in at least two instances in Corbett's own books, although it requires careful reading and analysis to diagnose it.

Firstly, in his chapter 'The Queen of the Village' in 'My India' (OUP, 1952), Corbett starts the chapter by narrating the tale of a man-eating Tiger that has terrorised the inhabitants of the village – who send urgent summons to Corbett to help them who arrives 'hot-foot from Mokhameh Ghat' to shoot the Tiger.

The incident involved another Sportsman from Nainital, who made an attempt to shoot the Tiger which ended in a terrible failure and a forest fire!

Corbett concludes the story of this Tiger by saying "Five people lost their lives between the accidental arrival of the sportsman at the machan, and the shooting of the Tiger"

The sportsman in question arrived at the site after 2 victims had already been killed by the tiger – a 12 year-old girl and another woman. With the 5 subsequent victims, this takes the toll up to 7 human kills.

The story thus, is unique and bears no resemblance to any other documented Corbett hunt. Although the chapter, being dedicated to a different subject than the man-eater offers no great details, it could be safe to assume this village is about 20 miles from either Kaladhungi or Nainital, from where Corbett begins his foot-march.

It could also be assumed that Corbett did not shoot this Tiger in his first visit; it possibly took him repeated attempts to bring him to bag, as 5 people lost their lives after Corbett too, made his first attempt to go after the Tiger. The fact that he took leave from Mokhameh Ghat to come to the rescue of the villagers also would mean he could not be on the man-eater's trail for several days or weeks – the typical time it took Corbett with his great skills to bring man-eaters to bag. It is unlikely Corbett could have let 5 human kills take place while he was on the man-eater's trail and it

is equally unlikely he would have left the panic stricken population to the mercies of the man-eater for good!

It is obvious that this hunt would have taken place between 1907, the year of his first hunt and 1919 – the year he left Mokameh Ghat. Further, it is most likely that this hunt occurred after the killing of the Panar leopard, which we know was in 1910. Corbett writes of his occupation with work and inability to devote too much time to the pursuit of man-eaters in the chapter ‘The Panar man-eater’ (Temple Tiger and more man-eaters of Kumaon, OUP 1954).

“When I returned to my home in Nainital after killing the Champawat Tiger I was asked by the Government to undertake the shooting of the Panar leopard. I was working hard for a living at the time and several weeks elapsed before I was able to spare the time to undertake this task, and then just as I was ready to start for the outlying area of the Almora district in which the leopard was operating, I received an urgent request from Berthoud, the deputy commissioner of Nainital, to go to the help of the people of Mukhtesar where a man-eating tiger had established a reign of terror. After hunting down the tiger, an account of which I have given, I went in pursuit of the Panar leopard.”

It is hence difficult to create a space for the Tiger mentioned in the ‘Queen of the Village’ chapter in the short span of 3 years in which Corbett eliminated 3 man-eaters despite being hard-pressed at work. Further, we know that in the second half of World War 1 (1914-1918) he was occupied in war service in France & North Waziristan. Thus, the most likely time period for this particular hunt was in the period 1910-1915. This fills out some of the long gap of 16 years. Another longish period without any known hunt was 1920 to 1925. Corbett travelled to Africa in this period and possibly there didn’t occur any man-eater in the Kumaon region during this time. The Rudraprayag leopard was certain active in this period, and it emerges from a congratulatory letter written by Mukandi Lal, Member of Legislative council, Landsdowne, Garhwal on 9th May, 1926 and published in “My Kumaon” (OUP, 2012) that Corbett had been asked by Mukandi Lal in 1924 to go after the leopard. An extract of the letter goes as follows:

“...I know how difficult it was to shoot the most cunning and sly beast. Perhaps you will remember that I had a talk with you about this beast at Nainital in 1924. I asked you to write to me your willingness to go to Rudraprayag to shoot him under the conditions you thought most suitable for the expedition, and I handed over your letter to the Finance member to utilize your services, but unfortunately, the then deputy commissioner of Garhwal did not accept your proposals, and took other means to get the leopard killed.”

Corbett thus certainly appeared ready to undertake expeditions in pursuit of man-eaters and in the gap years there could have been man-eaters shot that did not get written about.

The second instance where allusion is made to an undocumented man-eater in Corbett's writings bears great relation to the Villagers' letter that mentioned the Nagpur man-eater – for it is in this petition that we discover another curious case (see a special chapter on this subject).

It is to be noted that Corbett writes in “Man-eaters of Kumaon” of a ‘District conference’ where a discussion takes place on man-eaters operating in Nainital, Almora and Garhwal regions and during which Corbett committed himself to attempting a pursuit of 3 man-eaters active in that period.

The date of the district conference is February, 1929. The 3 man-eaters discussed therein are:

1. The Chowgarh man-eater; 2. The Mohan man-eater; 3. The Kanda man-eater

Corbett goes after the Chowgarh man-eater first as it is causing the maximum trouble and then sequentially, according to his book, eliminates the Mohan man-eater and the Kanda man-eater.

In reproducing a copy of the villagers' petition to him requesting his urgent assistance in getting rid of the Kanda man-eater, Corbett writes “The promise mentioned on page 112, was made after receiving this petition” (Man-eaters of Kumaon, OUP 1944).

The promise he is referring to is one made by him in the Feb, 1929 conference to district officials to get rid of man-eaters operating in areas of their jurisdiction. Obviously, it is an error on the part of the author, or his publishers in connecting the petition with the promise made in the conference as the date of the petition is February 18, 1933. Certainly, a promise cannot be made in 1929 in response to a letter received in 1933!

Furthermore, the petition mentions that the Tiger has emerged in their area since ‘December last’, meaning December, 1932 – killing 5 men and wounding 2. This then is inconsistent with the published story of the Kanda man-eater, which had as its most recent victims before Corbett shot it, killed 2 women and a man. The man was possibly the son of the brave father Corbett talks of at the end of his chapter- freshly recruited in the army who was killed by the tiger.

This points to a possibility of there being ‘2 Kanda Tigers’ that were shot by Jim Corbett. A detailed account of this mystery is made in another chapter of this book.

A separate chapter is also dedicated to a so-called Ladhya man-eater, allegedly killed by Corbett in 1946, and mentioned by D.C. Kala and Martin Booth.

Hence, in conclusion – it is logical to believe Jim Corbett experienced hunts beyond the knowledge of his admirers around the world, and that unfortunately – unless his publishers or another reliable source are able to offer us a rare and unexpectedly detailed description of such unknown hunts, the Corbett universe will have to remain content with the stories the great man told in his lifetime, and there certainly wouldn't be a Nagpur man-eater to add twist to the tales!

From the National Archives of India: Ibbotson's Unknown letter (January 13th, 1939)

By JOSEPH JORDANIA, PRIYVRAT GADHVI

One of the authors of this book (Priyvrat Gadhvi), while working at the National Archives of India, found an hitherto an unknown letter, hand-written by Ibbotson on January 13th, 1939.

Here is the full text of the letter:

Subject

MAJOR JIM CORBETT

Question of granting an award to in acknowledgement of his having saved many lives as a result of his shooting several man-eating tigers in the U.P. forests

Camp Via haldwani

13/1/39

Dear John,

Jim Corbett has taken a frightful toss, [he] got up a tree 30 ft to photograph a tiger, caught hold of a dead branch and fell. He hit a branch of the tree when nearly down and that probably saved his life, but he is bruised externally and internally all over the back, spine & heart and has been in frightful pain for a couple of days. But he was distinctly better though still in a very bad way last night and we hope he will now recover quickly, fall Jan 10.

Poor old Mary Doyle his half sister has been gradually losing her reason for the last month or so, and is now in a condition which can only be dealt with by Ranchi, they have practically made up their mind, with great difficulty as you may imagine, to send her there. I am perfectly convinced it is the only thing to do.

So there is great trouble at Kaladhungi and I am sure the viceroy as well as yourself, & his family, would wish to know.

I had been intending already to write to you about Jim and ask your advice,

You perhaps heard that he killed a maneating tiger, along with me, at Chuka where the Ladhiya joins the Sharda last April.

Human killing happened again in august & September but we thought it might be due to bear, or the chances of the jungle, and I took Jim along there in October intending to try clear the matter up together and if necessary leave him behind while I went on to Askot to do a job there.

There was a human kill the night after we got to Chuka, which put it beyond doubt that the tigress had carved on the habits of the old tiger.

We stayed ten days, and had a hairy and interesting time but didn't get the tigress and then I had to go on, & he to return to see his sisters down to Kaladhungi

On Nov 12 the tigress pulled another man out of a tree & killed & ate him

Jim was . . . (illegible) to, set off at once and the enclosed will tell you how he killed the tigress.

This must be about the twentieth of these really dangerous man-eaters that he has killed, and the advice I want from you is how to acknowledge & reward it.

It is a magnificent show & you have to know the jungle there to appreciate how magnificent it is.

He received many years ago the freedom of the forests, when he had killed the Rudraprayag leopard, about 1926-7.

There is the Albert medal at home for life saving, _____ but he has saved hundreds, probably many hundreds.

What do you think can best be done, and can you tell me what His Excellency would support or grant when it comes "through proper channels."

Clearly we must put something through, - __ I am going in April.

The best from us both, ___ the boys & we flourish

Yours ever,

Ibby

= = = = =

There is a typed reply from John, who says the Viceroy suggested presenting Jim a memento signed by all his friends including the viceroy for his work. They also seem disinclined to award Jim the Albert medal saying something like that it has specific criteria for awarding it.

The letter also says that their excellences, family and all staff have read Jim's letter with great interest, 'many thanks for it' ...I enclose it'

This letter is important for several reasons:

It discusses several important moments:

1. The letter mostly discusses the hunt for Thak tigress. This hunt was finished on November 30, 1938, 44 days before writing this letter by Ibbotson on January 13th 1939);
2. The letter mentions the fall that Corbett suffered while he was filming tigers in his "studio" in Kaladhungi, and gives the precise date of the fall: January 10, 1939. As a matter of fact, the letter was written by Ibbotson to support Corbett's family in difficult times after Jim's injury. In his book Booth expressed suspicion that such an event ever happened when Maggie told Ruby Beyts about the accident (Booth, 1986:175). Maggie did not remember the date of the accident, and it is pity that Booth did not know about the existence of this letter at the New Delhi archive;
3. The letter verifies the correct date of killing the Chuka man-eater, April, 1938, and verifies the date of killing of the fourth (the last) victim of the Thak man-eater, given in Corbett story – November 12th 1938. It was the agonizing cry of this victim that Corbett heard on November 28th from the deserted Thak village (see the special chapter discussing this event).

4. The letter also verifies another detail of Corbett story, describing that on the next morning after their arrival to Chuka village in October, the man from Thak was killed;
5. The letter mentions the initial thought that Corbett had about the reasons of Thak tigress becoming the man-eater – that she followed the habit of her mate, the Chuka man-eater. As Corbett found out at the end, his initial idea was wrong, as the tigress was herself shot twice, and one of the wounds went septic, pushing her to man-eating. In addition, at this period she was raising cubs. Most likely Ibbotson did not know the real reason behind the tigress becoming a man-eater while writing this letter on January 13th 1939.
6. The letter (and the response) both mentions another letter that was enclosed in this letter, written by Corbett himself, with the description of his hunt of the Thak tigress. This letter might still be in the archive;
7. Interestingly, Ibbotson gives a different date for the Thak tigress first kill, as “August.” According to Corbett this was September. Although we must take into account that Corbett mentions that in September the “report was received” and Ibbotson mentions that the kill was made in August, which does not necessarily contradict each other. On our 2014 trip to Kot Kindri, we were also told by Kot-Kindri villagers that the twelve year old girl, Beena, who was collecting mango windfall, was killed by a tiger in the view of villagers in late August (see the special section about the first victim of the Thak man-eater).

This letter also might suggest for more:

8. That Corbett decided to put an end to his career as man-eater hunt also because he could no longer afford to leave his sister Maggie alone during his long trips (he states the hunt of the Chowgarh tigers and the Rudraprayag leopard as instances of long absences from home in the Thak man-eater chapter) since they had decided to put Mary Doyle in an asylum for mental ailment, as mentioned in the letter. Booth also mentions about this decision in his book.
9. That the ‘John’ that Ibbotson is writing about is almost certainly (Later ‘Lord Wavell’) John Hope, the son of the penultimate viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow (Viceroy from 1936 to 1943) who was friends with the sons of Ibbotson.

As we can see, Ibbotson’s letter is a treasure trove for Corbett universe, providing many details on various Corbett related topics.

This letter reminds us one more times that in the state archives and various private archives new exciting documents concerning Jim Corbett life and hunts might be awaiting for the Corbett life researchers.

We are sure Corbett researchers and fans will be happy to read this letter.

Another letter was found at the National Archives of India, handwritten by the man himself – Jim Corbett, to a Colonel Currie in the Viceroy’s staff in Delhi from Bundi in Bhopal state on the 19th of February, 1945 with a request to see the viceroy on his transit via Delhi. The meeting request is accepted and arrangements for receiving and housing him are conveyed via a reply to Jim 4 days later. Corbett’s cursive handwriting was extremely neat, yet tiny.

Mystery of “War Fever” that gave India Rudraprayag Man-Eater

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

In the introduction of his book “Man-eaters of Kumaon,” dedicated to the reasons why the tigers and leopards becoming man-eater, Corbett mentions a severe infectious disease that killed many people in India in 1918. According to his words this was a “mysterious disease which swept through India in 1918 and was called ‘war fever.’” The most infamous man-eating leopard in the history of India, and possibly the world, the Rudraprayag man-eating leopard, who claimed 125 human victims and terrorised densely populated huge territory for long eight years, according to Corbett, started hunting humans for food as a result of the “war fever.” It was because of the “War fever” that plenty of human corpses were left unburied, providing easy meals for scavenging leopards. As soon as the epidemic disease was over and the leopard could not find any more free corpses, leopard starting hunting humans for food.

Let us try to find out what kind of disease could the mysterious “war fever” be. Was it a specific infectious disease of India, or a part of a wider problem?

Most probably, the term “war fever” in Corbett writing refers to the biggest known to human history pandemic that swept through the world in 1918. The pandemic is generally known as “Spanish Flu.”

Spanish Flu hit the world in January 1918, and the last signs of the pandemic were seen in December 1920. The deadly phase of the pandemic took place in second half of the 1918. It was this time that most of the people died. Up today the Spanish flu remains the biggest known in human history pandemic. The Spanish Flu affected about 500 million people, and from 50 to 100 million people died. These numbers sound big even today, when the world population is over 7 billion, but in 1918-1920, when the world population was under 2 billions, the range of devastation was much bigger. 27% of world population was affected, and 3-6% of the world population died as a result of the Spanish Flu. John Barry, a scholar who studied the Spanish Flu²⁷, noted, that it killed more people in 24 weeks than AIDS has killed in 24 years, and killed more people in a year than the Black Death killed in a century. 17 millions were killed in India alone. The situation that Corbett describes, when corpses were left unburied because of their sheer numbers, was not unique to India, as in some other communities (for example, in some Pacific Island communities) the devastation was even bigger.

Against usual medical expectations, the deadly influenza was particularly severe on young adults, killing them in masse and leaving weaker population of elders and

²⁷ Barry, John. 2004. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. London: Penguin Books.

children alive. Scholars believe that this was a result of a severe form of so called "cytokine storm," a medical term for a strong reaction of a body immune system on a disease. The stronger the immune system, the deadlier is the "storm" of the immune system reaction, leading to the fatal end. Therefore, strong immune system is most likely to be blamed for many millions of the deaths in 1918 influenza pandemic.

The sudden end of the deadly second phase of the Spanish Flu in late 1918 also sparked debates of the reason of the sudden disappearance of the deadly virus. Some scholars believe, that the virus itself mutated into a less deadly form, as the killing spree of the deadly virus was decreasing the number of host human bodies (Barry, 2004).

The name of the pandemic "Spanish Flu" is deceptive, as Spain was not the country where the disease started, or the one that was affected the most. There are several countries considered as a possible place of the initial appearance of the Spanish flu, but Kansas in the USA seems to be the prime candidate. The flu soon spread from the USA to France and then to other countries of the Europe and the world. The World War I (1914-1918) that was still going on assisted greatly in quick spreading of the disease on different continents. The widely used name "Spanish Flu" was the result of the fact, that the pandemic received the greatest publicity in Spain but not in other countries. What was the reason of such a strange behaviour of American and French news agencies, which did not report the pandemic? To answer this question we must remember that USA and France were participating in the World War I and had the usual for the wartime censorship on negative internal news. Spain, unlike USA and France, did not participate in the war, and did not have such censorship bans on negative internal news.

The symptoms of the Spanish Flu (most importantly, severe fever), and the time of the pandemic (1918) confirms that the "mysterious disease which swept through India in 1918 and was called 'war fever'" was in fact Spanish Flu, the deadliest pandemic in recorded human history. Here we should also mention, that at least one of the authors, D.C.Kala, was sure that the "war fever" mentioned in Corbett writings, was the notorious pandemic Spanish Flu.

It is symbolic, that the appearance of the most infamous man eating leopard in human history was connected to the deadliest killer disease ever to hit humanity, Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918. The leopard was killed in 1926, after eight long years of killing spree.

Did Corbett kill a Ladhya man-eater in 1946?

By JOSEPH JORDANIA & PRIYVRAT GADHVI

The Thak man-eater is widely acknowledged as being the last man-eater killed by Corbett on 30th November 1938. Fairness to say, there are several published sources who mention that Corbett killed at least one more man-eater after killing the Thak man-eater. In most of the sources this man-eater is known as Ladhya Valley man-eater (or Ladhya man-eater).

D.C. Kala, the author of the first (and one of the best) biographies of Jim Corbett, mentions the Ladhya man-eater on couple of occasions in his 1979 book "Jim Corbett of Kumaon":

"Corbett shot his first man-eater in 1907, when he was thirty one. The last, the marauder of Ladhya River, was shot in 1946. Corbett was then over seventy." (D.C. Kala, Jim Corbett of Kumaon, 2009 Penguin Books edition, pg. 86)

... "[After killing the Thak man-eater] he [Corbett] returned later to the same valley to kill his last man-eater" (ibid, pg. 87)

Martin Booth, most likely following in his book "Carpet Sahib" (1986) the lead from D.C. Kala (1979), also mentioned Ladhya man-eater on several occasions, sometimes with details:

"Certainly, after the Second World War, aged 71, he [Corbett] shot his last man-eater in the Ladhya Valley. This was an easy kill, but for a man of his age some feat" (Booth, Carpet Sahib, 2010 edition, pg. 202);

"Now into retirement - for he had withdrawn almost entirely from business holdings in Nainitall by the end of 1941 - Jim was called upon, for the last time, to shoot a man-eater. It was taking human life in the Ladhya Valley, not far from Thak where Jim had successfully called to task the Thak man-Eater in 1938. Maggie was most anxious that he should not go but Jim felt obliged to do so. He went and killed the animal, which was in a sorry state and required little of his earlier experience to stalk and track; or so he claimed" (pg.231).

"...It is interesting to remember that, whilst writing the book [on Rudraprayag leopard] Jim had to break off to deal with the pitiful specimen of a man-eater in the Ladhya Valley" (pg. 234).

Apart from the information provided in the books of D.C. Kala, Martin Booth and OUP's My Kumaon (see below), during our visit to Kumaon in 2012, we saw the mention of Ladhya man-eater at least in two other places in India:

1. Ladhya man-eater was among other kills on the poster of the KMVN of Champawat. The poster was created by “The Champawat Tourist Office” (KMVN means Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, lit.: “Kumaon Regional Development Corporation”)

2. Another mention of the Ladhya man-eater we saw at the Dabhidura Forest House, on the poster of The State of Uttarakhand Forest Office.

Other Corbett biographers do not mention Ladhya man-eater in their books.

As we can see, at least D.C. Kala and Martin Booth had no doubts that Corbett did kill the last man-eater in 1946, when he was 71 years old. This chapter has been written to discuss the possibility whether Corbett actually went to Ladhya Valley in 1946 in order to kill his last man-eater.

Reminder for the readers: Ladhya Valley is the valley in Eastern Kumaon, at the very border of Nepal. The valley runs between the villages Chuka, Thak, Kot-Kindri and Sem, where Corbett killed two of his last man-eaters: Chuka and Thak man-eaters, both in 1938 (see the special chapters dedicated to these hunts).

After examining the existing information on the matter, the authors of this chapter came to the conclusion, that the so called Ladhya man-eater, allegedly killed by Corbett in 1946, is the same man-eating tiger that was killed by Corbett in April 1938, and known to all Corbett fans as Chuka man-eater.

Here are the main arguments for this point of view:

1. Corbett has never mentioned in any of his writings or letters that he had killed another man-eater after he killed the Thak tigress in November 1938. The rumour about the additional man-eater only started circulating long after Jim's death, after D.C. Kala biography on Corbett was published in 1979;
2. Maggie also has never mentioned about the existence of another man-eater, killed in 1946 either. With her pride for her brother, it is hard to believe that she would not have mentioned that Jim killed another man-eater when he was already over 70 years old;
3. Very importantly, we know that in 1946 Corbett's health was in a very bad state; he almost died during 1944 and 1945 long illness, and it was his sister who nursed him “back from the heavens,” as Corbett mentioned (see D.C. Kala, pg 130, 111). Corbett never fully recovered after this illness. These are his own words from his letter to Philip Vaudrin, OUP, New York, written on 16th October, 1947: “Yes, I am trying to get out to Kenya. I served in low-lying jungles both here and in Burma during the war and collected every known type of malaria and tick typhus. Three times I have – much to the surprise of doctors and nurses – walked out of hospitals, but I have been told very definitely that if there is ever a fourth time, I will be carried out feet first. So I am going to Kenya to try and regain my health...”
4. Even when Corbett went to kill the cattle-lifter tiger in Kaladhungi (in 1946), near his winter house, Maggie did not want him to go after the tiger, as his hands were trembling and she did not believe he could hold and take a good aim with a rifle (see D.C. Kala, pg 100). It is extremely hard to believe that during the same year Corbett went to Chuka and Thak village to hunt a man-eater;

5. Even if Corbett would want to go and kill a man-eating tiger in 1946, being in a very fragile state after his illness, there is no chance that Maggie would have allowed him to do that in the state he was;
6. As the reader might remember, in 1938, at the age of 63, Jim gave his word to Maggie that Thak tigress would be his last man-eater, and we know that Jim was a man of his word. There is a good reason to believe that he would not have even asked Maggie to let him go after another man-eater, even if there was one and he was asked to go after it;
7. Those, who believe in the existence of Ladhya man-eater in 1946, explain Corbett's silence about this man-eater by suggestion that it was a "very easy kill," not worthy of mention in one of his books (see Martin Booth words above). This explanation raises some question: firstly, even killing a frail man-eating tiger for 71 year old hunter is a great achievement (Booth is right on that account), and secondly, if this was such an easy kill, why there was a need to involve Corbett in the first place? Jim was not the only hunter in North India, and he was usually asked to help when other hunters failed to kill the man-eater;
8. Very importantly, neither D.C. Kala, nor Martin Booth do not give any references to any sources where the information about killing the man-eater in 1946 came from. Promising words from Booth "as he [Corbett] claimed" is not supported by any evidence;
9. Another interesting source, related to the topic of our discussion, is the mounted head of the Chuka man-eater, with his broken right upper canine. Interestingly for the subject of our discussion, the writing on the mounted head clearly mentions connection between Chuka man-eater and Ladhya Valley: "Chuka man-eater shot by Jim Corbett in Ladhya Valley, India, 1937."
10. Authors of this book visited all the villages of Ladhya River Valley (Chuka, Thak, Sem and Kit-Kindri), individually and together, several times – in 2007, 2011, 2012, and 2014. They talked to the villagers on many occasions, and asked them what villagers remembered about Jim Corbett. The presence of any additional man-eater, apart from Chuka and Thak man-eaters, has never been mentioned. This fact becomes more striking if we remember that Ladhya Valley man-eater (in case if it really existed) would have been the most recent one – eight years after the Thak tigress) and better remembered;
11. And last, but probably the most potent point: Corbett himself starts the story of Chuka man-eater with the words that directly proves that **Chuka man-eater and the Ladhya man-eater are the same tiger**. Read the first words of the story: "CHUKA – which gave its name to the man-eating tiger of the Ladhya valley – is a small village of some ten ploughs on the right bank of the Sharda River near its junction with the Ladhya."

And at the very end of this chapter we would like to discuss the old newspaper source that we believe gave rise to the speculations that 71 years old Corbett went to the Ladhya valley to kill a man-eating tiger in 1946. We did not discuss this source earlier as it does not mention Ladhya Valley man-eater, but the date of publication

(1946) and the mention of the “another man-eater” most likely became the source of later speculations about the Ladhya man-eater.

The article was published in a newspaper in the NY Daily Times (USA), as a publicity material for the book *Man-eaters of Kumaon* which was published in the USA in 1946 and was a great success. Here is the excerpt from this text (the article appeared in June 11th issue of NY Daily Times): “But now it seems that the 74 years-old stalker of wild beasts has gone out after another man-eater. Every admirer of Jim Corbett will wish him well, and pray for a safe return to the writing of his second book, *The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*.”

The tiger that is mentioned in this article, is most likely the cattle lifter from Kaladhungi. We have already mentioned Corbett killing this tiger earlier in this chapter. This happened in 1946. Corbett generally did not like killing cattle-lifter tigers. He preferred to compensate for the killed animal to the villagers, but in this case he decided to kill the tiger. Apart from the requests from the Kaladhungi villagers, Jim was afraid for Maggie’s safety, who had a habit of walking around Kaladhungi. Let us also remember, that cattle-lifting for a tiger is the dangerous path that might lead to the confrontation with humans and killing them as well. As we remember, Maggie was against his brother going after the cattle-killer, as in 1946 Jim was after a life-threatening illness and was still very weak.

There is a big difference between killing a cattle-lifter in the vicinity of his home place (Kaladhungi), and killing a man-eater in Ladhya Valley, hundreds of kilometres from his home, reaching of which needed a long hours of tracking in the mountainous terrain.

The mentioned article from the NY Times is important as it was clearly written before Jim killed the cattle-lifter. Unfortunately, the article contained not very precise information (for example, the article announces that Corbett was at that moment 74 years old, whereas in the moment of writing of the article he was turning 71). Presenting a cattle-lifter into a “man-eater” was most likely another mistake that gave rise to the legend of Jim Corbett killing the man-eating tiger when he was over 70.

So after the detailed analyses of all the available sources on the subject it seems logical to conclude that the Chuka and the Ladhya valley man-eaters are in fact the same tiger, killed by Jim Corbett in April 1938. In 1946 Corbett killed in Kaladhungi his last tiger, a cattle lifter, which was most likely mistaken by two of the Corbett biographers as another man-eater. Jim Corbett’s long and illustrious career of the slayer of man-eating tigers ended when he called up and shot the Thak man-eater on the dying second of daylight on 30th November, 1938.

Search for Corbett Cartridges

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

This chapter is dedicated to any those of you readers who may one day decide to follow our footsteps in trying to find spent cartridges fired by Jim Corbett on the 30th of November 1938 early night at Thak Village. Since our group formed by Dr Joseph Jordania, Manfred Waltl, Priyvrat Gadhvi, Fernando Oliveira (on phone from Brazil) and Kristoff Kotecha together with some hardworking Chuka villagers and our guides especially Mr Kamal Bisth and Bhim Singh (also of Chuka), have failed due to time constraint and more specifically lack of logistics, we therefore expect one to be more equipped and have more time flexibility to try to locate those old spent cartridges. The sooner the better, since the latter, if they are still there and in rather dying conditions are more liable not to stand too much the test of time and weather. Here are your chances exposed in this paper along with a little part also dedicated to two of Corbett's rifles.

How many cartridges were there?

“When I had freed myself from the tangle of human and goat legs I took the .275 rifle from the man who was holding it, rammed a clip of cartridges into the magazine and sent a stream of five bullets singing over the valley and across the Sarda into Nepal. Two shots, to the thousands of men in the valley and in the surrounding villages who were anxiously listening for the sound of my rifle, might mean anything, but two shots followed by five more, spaced at regular intervals of five seconds, could only be interpreted as conveying one message and that was that the man-eater was dead.”

Such is the conclusion to the hunt of the man-eating tigress of Thak as described by Jim Corbett in MEOK, seven shots fired, two from the Double Barreled 450/400 (these two shots killed the tigress) and five from the .275 Rigby-Mausser bolt action rifle. The spot from where these shots are fired are behind the rock which we describe in the killing place of the Thak man-eater.

If a doubt persists about the shots fired from the 450/400 rifle whose spent cartridges could have been removed at a later time and distant place by Corbett (though we have reasons to doubt that as you'll discover), one thing is for sure as for the shots fired from the .275 bolt action rifle in that the shots were fired from where the men and the goats were, that is immediately behind the rock. To fire successively from such a rifle mean that you have to eject the spent cartridge each time you intent to fire a next one, until the cartridge clip magazine which can contain a maximum of five cartridges is empty.

The fifth cartridge normally would remain in the firing chamber and may have not been ejected at all. Therefore on the night of the 30th November 1938, there were at least four empty cartridges of the .275 caliber lying on the ground behind the rock at Thak. Since it was night we wouldn't bet our houses that Corbett lit up torches and went looking after those spent ejected cartridges, how ecologically conscious as he might have been. We would like also to remind the reader that in the moment when Corbett shot the tigress, he was knocked out from his precarious seat on the rock ledge, and if not his four men, he could have broken his neck falling down. Corbett had his jaw injured and badly swollen from the recoil of the second shot of the 450/400 rifle.

So there is a good chance that Corbett, a bit shocked from his fall, and happy for the sudden positive end of his last hunt did not think to retrieve the cartridges in the dark. There is more possibility that the empty cartridges were collected by villagers or their children as they were passing through the same path during the December 1938, than Corbett to collect them in a total dark, after the shock of injured jaw and falling down from the rock.

What about the 450-400 cartridges?

To answer this question, let us first look at what these cartridges were and how many of them could possibly be lying there. To do so, we must be familiar with the rifle, the 450-400 rifle, as explained in the Corbett's Rifle chapter in this book. The spent cartridges which were 3inch rimmed at .450 are ejected by levering the butt which hinges from the breechblock, that is manually after firing. Jim Corbett has kept this rifle in perfect condition throughout his lifetime, and tagged "faithful old friend" by him throughout his hunting career.

We shall stop for one second to refute rumours by people of Naini Tal appearing in the 1960's documentary "Perspective Jim Corbett" who mention that this rifle and others have been buried by Jim Corbett in the Gurney House courtyard before departing to Africa and would have been retrieved by him when he intended to return. The truth is that many people appearing in the documentary did certainly not know that Corbett died in 1955 in Kenya and his guns had been auctioned by the executors of his Will in February 1956 at the Standard Bank of South Africa, Nyeri Branch, Kenya and acquirers from over the globe had been attending this auction sale.

Since the cartridges of the 450/400 DBNE have to be removed manually one would say that there is no chance that any of them would still be lying there in Thak. But Jim Corbett was extremely dedicated to his rifle. We do not know that if his three stints in the Army had made him into loving his rifle, the first two of them caused him being involved at the heart of the conflict. It will take an in-depth psychologist to analyse that fact with other people who have been known to sleep with their rifle, sing to them or give a name to them. But the fact is that and the longer a cartridge remains in the firing chamber, there is more chance that the spent cartridge's rim gets stuck to the

cylindrical wall of the chamber because of the combined effect of heat and chemicals produced on firing.

Corbett kept this gun in very good condition during his ownership. George Neary who acquired this rifle from his friend in Vancouver, Canada, wrote that the rifle "... is in very good condition, almost kept as new by the former owner (Corbett), except for a few scratchings on the butt and outside the barrels." The firing chamber and the barrels condition, he wrote, "... apart from cordite leaks in the grooves, seems to have just come out from the gunsmith workshop with no primer-powder leaking marks on the walls of the chamber..." followed by "Apart from few scratchings on the butt and outside the barrels, the stock is immaculate."

This was among the notes he gave along with the rifle to Late Elmer Keith in 1963 when the latter acquired the rifle. Therefore it is most probable that Corbett had removed the spent cartridges of the 450/400 and cleaned its chamber during the minutes or at latest an hour after firing all throughout its career. Could he have removed them while smoking or just after, behind the rock and thrown them away on the ground that night? Take your chance. This could be the only explanation as to why this gun had a perfectly clean firing chamber when auctioned in 1956.

The appearance of the "few scratches" on the butt and outside of the barrels is also interesting for our discussion. Corbett was so dedicated to his rifle that it is impossible to consider these scratching were a result of his negligence. So how could they appear? Of course we do not know all the different situations where Corbett and his rifle had been during their long and successful career as a hunter and a soldier, but we know at least one such moment when the rifle could have received the serious scratches. We suggest these scratches appeared on the rifle during the hunt of the Thak man-eater. We know that after shooting the tigress, Corbett fell head over heels, and as he wrote "Once again I take my hat off to these four men for, not knowing but what the tigress was going to land on them next, they caught me as I fell and saved me from injury and my rifle from being broken." So we suggest these scratches are the witnesses of the last hunt of Jim Corbett for the man eating tiger.

Primer-powder marks are very difficult to remove after because they are the result of a chemical reaction caused by the by-product gases emitted during firing with the steel of the chamber rather than a mere 'stain.' These gases upon condensation on the colder firing chamber, can cause permanent stains to the latter. Jim Corbett would have known that and for this reason along with the perfect condition of the firing chamber, we would go for Jim Corbett removing his cartridges and cleaning the rifle very soon following the shots. The only question remaining is whether the removal of the cartridges was done on the site of the rock or on the way to or at the camp, more probably at the site where himself and the rifle fell "head over heels over the men and goat", that is behind the rock or if it is the case, did he throw them on the

ground. At least we know from Corbett writing that when descending to the Chuka, he was unarmed.

Do metal casing of spent cartridges survive weather and time?

Cartridge casing were normally made of nickel or brass or alloys of them containing zinc during the early rifle days. Post 1900's some cartridge casings were also made with bronze. Usually a brass casing of the cartridge withstands between 10 to 50 years of normal wearing depending on the conditions of temperature and humidity but some cartridges have been known to have 'survived' more than 70-80 years, the only explanation would be that one of the two requirements of normal wearing had been restrained or suppressed (either air or water).

For example, during World War 1 at the French-German border and during World War 2 especially the French-Belgian border (the Ardennes) have witnessed intense battles and cartridges were still being found there some 10 years back. A very fine textured soil mostly granitic type and snowy winters, could explain that air and to a lesser extent water was restricted to allow a slower decomposition. Why we also back the chance of discovering a cartridge in Thak is that this region is known as the TA-RAI (or TERA) belt, and its name suggest that the soil type is of the fine alluvial type very close to the granitic structure, with under-layers being both impermeable to air and water (on the contrary of the coarse soil structure of the Bhabar.) Therefore more likely a type of soil to preserve metallic objects a longer time necessary for their loss by rusting. So your chance might still be there but not for too long.

The Better Chance – The .275 spent cartridges

The .275 Rigby-Mausser uses the M98 action (Mauser 1898 action), in reference to the bolt action patented by Paul Von Mauser in 1898 and used by many English rifle manufacturers such as Westley Richards, John Rigby, W. Jeffery, Holland & Holland, Lee Enfield etc... After each shot fired, the bolting handle have to be lifted and slid backwards to (1) eject the spent cartridge; and pushed forward and down to (2) ram a fresh one from the cartridge clip in the firing chamber. Both Corbett rifles had right-hand bolts, and the cartridge gets expelled by this action to the right of the marksman.

The cartridge model is a 7x57mm rimless which is nowadays basically the same casing compared to the brass casings of the 1800's. Bronze stands better the test of time than brass, and it would really take a gamble if Corbett used bronze casing cartridges instead of the brass ones, which we think he didn't. Therefore there must have been at least 4 spent cartridges there at the bottom of the rock, assuming the fifth has remained in the firing chamber, at least when they were still celebrating but we wouldn't be surprised at all if any of you find five there. Corbett sure of keeping his rifle in prime condition would have pulled the bolting pin backwards for a fifth time.

The spent cartridge as ejected takes a random path each time and may at most land some 4 feet to your right. Nearly seventy five monsoons rains have washed the soils around and deposited all kinds of matter on and around the spot. So basically you have a sixteen to twenty feet square of ground to move up to a depth of, let us allow for some more, six feet. At most a hundred and twenty cubic feet of earth to be dug and removed, about 2.5 to 3.5 tons supposedly. You'll argue with us that you'll need an excavator for that, but we reassure you that two men digging without a hoe only a spade alternatively but consecutively for two hours removed some two and a half feet of ground over some sixteen square metres. So if you're quite quick to respond to this possibility of finding any cartridge, you'll experience perhaps only two monsoons worth of mud and deposits having filled the space we had already started to dig for you. Bring a pointer-device metal detector with you, one with a short range will suffice.

If you ever find something...

Authentication is easy according to John Rigby and Co, because the cartridges rims used in the early 20th Century are coined with any of the "7x57 PN" or "7x57RN" or "7x57M – S&B" mark meaning 7mm x 57mm Mauser-Sellier & Bellot and PN means pointed nose and RN (sometimes SN for soft nose) means round nose while for the 450/400 caliber cartridges we have not been able to know who were the main manufacturers of its cartridges at that time (perhaps 'Kynoch' ones as Elmer Keith used for it).

But we also advise to you to have your findings documented and authenticated by a third party authority namely one of those, the Forest Office Division of Champawat, office in Tanakpur or Champawat, the museum director of Kaladhungi, or the Champawat Tourist office. Our appeal to you would consist of your promise that the first cartridge you find is to be donated to the Kaladhungi museum and any other subsequent may be disposed of at your convenience either to be sold or donated to other museums. Your chances are definitely more than one percent that you find something there belonging to the past most precisely the 30th of November 1938.

Corbett's rifles

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

This chapter has every reason to be of its own, owing to the recent developments in 2015 concerning two most famous rifles owned by Jim Corbett. This chapter sheds light on how Corbett fans can have access to at least one of their hero's legendary rifles and gives thorough description in some cases of other rifles or guns which can or cannot be traced and seen. While Corbett never pictured any of his rifles, a few actual photos are given to you here.

The Early Years (1907 - 1910)

In Corbett's first hunting encounters (1907 to 1910), the Champawat man-eater being the very first, there are some rifles described by him which we find in the books *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* and *Temple Tiger*. One is his double-barrelled (DB) .500 express rifle (using modified cordite) which he uses on the Champawat man-eater and the Muktesar man-eater successfully. Alternatively he uses an old .450 Martini-Henry DB rifle, using black powder, in the ghooral hunt (Champawat chapter in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*). This rifle, Corbett explains elsewhere to have been an old army one, acquired from a seafarer who had converted it in a sporting rifle. However we learn in *Booth, Carpet Sahib* (OUP2011) that this .450 rifle was given to Corbett during his St Petersfield days, but this is a fact we cannot ascertain.

We also find Corbett with a DB 12-bore shotgun used on the Panar Leopard and a brand-new Westley-Richards Bolt Action in .275 with a 5-cartridge clip magazine tested unsuccessfully on the Temple tiger. This rifle Corbett says he bought from Manton's, the gunsmith in Calcutta, the same year, that is 1909 – a newly proven date as per this book (see *Controversies* chapter). But in the later years, as from 1925 (Rudraprayag leopard), apart from the 12-bore shotgun, we see Corbett hunting with other rifles, which would acquire more fame than the previously cited ones.

The active man-eater hunting years (1925 to 1938)

One of the two Corbett's best known rifles, the M98 bolt-action Rigby-Mausier in .275 with a 5-cartridge clip magazine, very similar to the Westley-Richards, which he was to use for his subsequent hunts, had been a gift from the British Administration in 1910. This was on the occasion of the visit of King George V in India, when John Prescott Hewett, the Governor of the United Provinces, also master of ceremony of the celebrations in Nainital presented Corbett the rifle with a steel plate engraving on the left butt, recognising the merit of the hunter for bringing the Champawat man-eater

to bag in 1907. Many Corbett fans believe Corbett received the gift in 1907, but we cannot find any reason why he bought a similar one in 1909.

We may never know what happened subsequently to the Westley-Richards, once the Rigby-Mausser obtained. Anyway we strongly suspect that as from the Leopard of Rudraprayag (killed in 1926), any mention made by Corbett in his books concerning ‘...the light .275 I was carrying...’ was made to the Rigby-Mausser. We find him using it successfully on the Rudraprayag Leopard, the Talla-Des man-eater and cubs, and the Chowgarh man-eater. It was always accompanying Corbett as a light rifle for hill shooting. Corbett says the light .275 saved his life in the Chowgarh tigress final encounter while he had eggs in his left hand and earlier in Talla Des, we should like to imagine him playing the likes of ‘Lucky Luke’ when he dispatched three tigers in a row, and one of them falling in air a little later, though missed.

The other famous Corbett rifle is his ‘faithful old friend’ the 450/400 express rifle, which in correct description is the 450-400 DB Nitro Express made by Jeffery & Co, which we find him using on the Rudraprayag leopard unsuccessfully and successfully on the Chowgarh cub, the Bachelor of Powalgarh, the Mohan man-eater, Kanda man-eater, the Chuka man-eater and the Thak man-eater. Corbett fans will debate whether he preferred the 450-400 or the Rigby-Mausser, but in Corbett’s words, both these rifles complement the other, that is true as from 1925 when he was carrying both on his hunts. When did Corbett acquire the 450-400 is a mystery. On 15 March 2015, James Julia, an Auctioneer in the USA, displayed Corbett’s faithful friend for auction and he assigns a date of manufacture as London 1909 on its catalogue but we cannot find a date or a place of purchase by Corbett.

Other Guns – The Pipal Pani tiger wound

In Jungle Lore Corbett says he use a 28-bore light shotgun for Dansay’s banshee (Churail), but we do not find any trace of it. We owe Late Mr D.C. Kala an unpublished information about Corbett’s shotguns (thanks to Mr Akshay Shah): Mr Verma, husband of Mrs Kalawatee Verma (both Late), to whom Gurney house was sold when the Corbetts left India, said that Corbett proposed him one of his two shotguns as gift before leaving. These were in the still-standing gun-rack of Gurney house. These shotguns could only have been the 28-bore and the D.B. 12-bore, but Mr Verma who never used guns declined the offer but accepted other attics left in the house like various deer horns, head trophies and skulls.

There is also his very first gun, given to him by his cousin Stephen Dease, a DB muzzle-loading shotgun which had only one barrel functioning, but this gun was used when Corbett was still a kid and had already vanished during his first man-eater days.

In Kaladhungi, Choti Haldwani village, there is Corbett’s single barreled muzzle loading (SBML) gun in the possession of Trilock Singh, who’s father Sher Singh had been responsible for the ‘chaupal’, the stone-built guarding tower for shooting ma-

rauding pig or deer. It happens that it was the only gun in Kaladhungi at that time and Corbett writes of this fact that he gave this gun to protect crops in MY INDIA.

In Pipal Pani Tiger chapter of *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* Corbett writes:

“One November evening a villager, armed with a single-barrel muzzle-loading gun set out to try to bag a pig...”

That villager only succeeded to wound the Pipal Pani tiger mistaken for a pig. Sher Singh's father who was responsible for the 'chaupal' at that time, in his much later years said to his grandson, whom we met in 2012 that he did once shoot a tiger with the SBML but did not kill it and that Corbett sahib then killed the tiger after a few days. We strongly suspect that it was the Pipal Pani tiger that was wounded with the SBML which is still there and can be viewed and handled for free by Corbett fans who visit Kaladhungi museum and subsequently Choti Haldwani village.

The 450-400 “Faithful Old Friend”

The rifle better known as the Grade 2 – 450-400 Double Barrel Nitro Express (D.B.N.E) manufactured by W. Jeffery & Co. has a box-lock ejector action with an internal cocking mechanism, using a 3 inch Nitro Express cartridge rimmed at .450 of an inch. More description were furnished to potential buyers by James Julia, but the main ones are that its serial number is SN20176 and the barrels are engraved as follows: Right barrel engraved “W.J. JEFFERY & Co LTD” and left barrel “13 KING STREET St JAMES'S St”. The serial number gives one further information: It traces the owner as Col. James Edward Corbett sold to a certain Mr Davis. There is a letter dated February 1956 in the original canvas and leather outer case, attesting the sale. This will also be in possession of the new owner. For Corbett fans, who would have dreamed of handling or touching Corbett's faithful old friend, we have a sad ending to this saga: A private collector who has wished to remain anonymous has acquired the rifle for USD230,000 during the auction and has intended not to display the rifle publicly. We respect his choice and we've sent him a request for a one-time or one-hour free public display to which he has not responded yet.

The path followed by the 450-400 since it was auctioned in Kenya in February 1956 and acquired by a Mr Davis takes it to Canada first in Vancouver city. Rumours have it that George Neary had persuaded this Mr Davis to sell him the rifle using mal-practice, but it is hard to believe since Elmer Keith described his friend George Neary as a good man.

It is better that Elmer Keith explains you how he got the rifle from Neary: “I own the late Jim Corbett's tiger rifle-the best quality box-lock .450-400(3”inch cartridge) double rifle by W.J. Jeffery & Co., with which he killed so many man-eating tigers for the Indian government. He also used it in Africa. The brass-cornered oak and leather case is in fine shape, while the rifle shows more use and less abuse than any old rifle I have ever seen. The metal is as bright as a silver dollar. The action is that good No. 2

Jeffery is sound and tight as a rat trap. Engraving shows up even better on the bright steel. Only traces of checkering are left. The stock ears are actually worn away from the frame, as is the butt of the stock from the engraved heel and toe plates. The bores are grey in the grooves from cordite, and the lands are worn down about halfway, but there are no pits from neglect. With Corbett lying out in tree crotches and machans in the rain waiting for tigers, this rifle was exposed to all kinds of weather. Jim Corbett had no Hoppes No. 9, or Rice's X-10 solvent, but I would bet he poured many gallons of water through these tubes. In spite of external wear, this .450-400 is as effective and accurate a hunting rifle as when turned out by W.J. Jeffery & Co.. I fired both barrels at a six inch bull's eye at 80 yards, shooting from a car window. The bullets (Kynoch 400 grain softnose) landed one inch apart, one directly over the other, both cutting the centerline of the target. Jim sold this rifle to a man from Vancouver, and my friend George Neary got it from him. I swapped a perfect .350 Elliot caliber Danial Frazer double ejector for it. I would like to have known Jim Corbett. His book, *Man-eaters of Kumoan*, is a masterpiece on the Indian tiger and proves he knew more about life and habits, of that beast than any living man. I treasure his old rifle. You can judge a man by the condition of his rifle."

Elmer Keith, among the first American Corbett fans, was a big-game hunter and gun collector. He had also been a writer of books and publisher of "Gun Notes" a monthly newsletter in the USA and his words quoted above come from the April 1967 issue of the newsletter. Keith, who admitted reading all Corbett's hunting books many times, had used the 450-400 on elks, reindeers and grizzlies for four hunting seasons in the forests and mountains of North America, British Columbia (Canada) and Alaska before he decided to give the 450-400 a well deserved retirement in his gun collection museum in Idaho. Keith had also written many hunting books and our faithful old friend the 450-400 has had its last moment of glory when pictured in Keith's last book "Hell, I was There". A smoking gun pose for it next to an elk with antlers of gigantic proportions which Keith had just dropped on the snow. It is rare for the hunter to give a solitary pose to his rifle next to the game shot by him, but it just shows you how Elmer was proud of it.

The .275 Rigby-Mauser for Corbett fans in the UK

News broke in May 2015 from the facebook page of John Rigby & Co, manufacturer of Corbett's rifle that they had acquired this famous rifle, back to the source as they said (see the photo).

The title made headlines in British newspapers as: "Rigby & Co. acquires revered hunter Jim Corbett's legendary .275 Rigby rifle" – the caption beneath the photos said: "The world's third oldest gun-maker, John Rigby & Co., has acquired one of the most famous sporting rifles of all time: the .275 Rigby bolt-action rifle that was presented

to Jim Corbett for killing the dreaded 'man-eating tigress of Champawat' in 1907 by Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, Sir John Hewitt KCSI."

Marc Newton, Managing Director of Rigby, commented: "The Corbett gun is a real piece of Rigby history. Every gun that leaves our workshop has a piece of this rifle's DNA in it. It's fantastic to have it back with the firm and we'd encourage as many people as possible to come and see it for themselves."

A real opportunity for Corbett fans to see the rifle for themselves. The visiting time, day and address are as follows:

"Please visit our showroom and workshop, 9:30AM – 6:00PM, Monday through Friday. JOHN RIGBY & CO., 13-19 PENSURY PLACE, LONDON, ENGLAND, SW8 4TP – Please phone: +44 207 720 0757."

The rifle, most famous since it is associated with the Leopard of Rudraprayag has a letter from Corbett accompanying it. It says Corbett is giving the rifle for the Oxford University Press via Geoffrey Cumberlege, the then director for display in their then location, Amen House, London, UK. We had already seen a letter in MY KUMAON (2012OUP) page 82 from Cumberlege to Corbett and it seems it was a reply to this letter here in the photo:

The reply from Cumberlege is as follows (Courtesy OUP, MY KUMAON (2012) pg 82). Extract:

"My dear Corbett ...within an hour or two, there arrived your letter of the 24th offering us the .275 rifle presented to you by Sir Hewett. Naturally we should love to have this, not for shooting refractory authors but for display with your books as opportunity occur! Will there be any difficulty about getting the rifle sent over? If you let me know when it has been shipped, I shall be glad as there may be certain formalities with the custom to be get over" Dated: 30 October 1953.

Now the puzzle is complete for Corbett fans who were wondering where the rifle had been during all these decades. Originally it has been donated to OUP London, and then it had been stowed away, surely by one of OUP staff, to their archives or elsewhere away from the public since they moved from Amen House. Then came John Rigby & Co, at a certain moment in time they had it in their collection (in the 1990's, long enough for a Corbett biographer to get a glimpse of it), then it disappeared again to re-appear in May 2015. You can appreciate its full story in Marc Newton's chapter in this book entitled: "Corbett Magic: Rigby re-connects with Corbett."

Corbett Magic: Rigby Re-Connects with Corbett

BY MARC NEWTON

One of the great pleasures of working at the helm of a London gun-maker is the access the job provides to the histories and adventures of the guns we made in the past and the personalities who carried them afield.

The ledgers of John Rigby & Co. are brimming with famous names and curt entries indicating the shorthand summaries of conversations held between customers and managers; each one the beginning of a series of thrills, misadventure, success or tragedy. The kind of escapades in which the carriage of a rifle is part of the plan often involves notable action at some point along the way.

We are fortunate that some of our customers are well known by their wider exploits as politicians, army officers, explorers or writers. While looking up a serial number, one can't help but smile when the order turns out to have been made by a person of note. Vintage photographs sometimes give a clue; a familiar face in khaki, smiling through the decades and gasping the distinctive shape of a Rigby Mauser. Among those familiar faces popular ones are Karamoja Bell, Denys Finch Hatton, J.A. Hunter or even Queen Elizabeth II, to cite a few.

Rigby also made shotguns; plenty of shotguns, as well as double rifles. Particularly notable are the classic doubles built on Rigby & Bissel's 'Rising Bite' or, more properly, 'Vertical Bolt' action, patented in 1878 and still available from Rigby as our signature double rifle. However, for many sportsmen hunting in the first third of the twentieth century, the rifle of choice was a light, accurate, dependable and 'modern' addition to the battery: The .275 calibre Rigby Mauser bolt action.

This rifle was a collaboration between Rigby and the great German arms manufacturer which saw these rifles, built on the famous Mauser '98 action, sold in London by Rigby and thereby reaching sportsmen of the British Empire worldwide. This was a partnership that would prove to be both profitable for the company and beneficial to the colonial hunter, for the bolt-action rifle was a good deal cheaper than a hand-made double and a very versatile and effective companion.

Among the colonial celebrities to have shouldered a Rigby Mauser, we can count the revered hunter of man-eating big-cats, author and humanitarian Jim Corbett, who resided at the time in Kumaon, a district in India's United Provinces. The area was thickly forested and home to large populations of both tigers and leopards. Unfortunately for the local inhabitants, on occasion one of these animals would become a man-eater and in those days of peasant villages, existing un-lit and un-armed on the fringes of the jungle, these errant cats could account for many hundreds of victims over a period of years. When all else failed, the authorities and sometimes simple villagers

would send a letter to Corbett, asking him to consider undertaking the dangerous task of stalking the problematic beast and bring about its demise.

When he undertook these missions, Corbett stipulated that no other hunters be allowed in the area and that any reward money offered for the slaying of the man-eater be withdrawn. Corbett risked his life for the service he was able to provide to his fellow man. He was no bounty hunter.

On one memorable occasion, Corbett succeeded in laying to rest a particularly troublesome man-eating tigress, which had been tormenting the villagers in a large area of forest around Champawat. This tigress had come to Champawat from Nepal after killing some two hundred people there and in the subsequent years had added over two hundred other victims in India. For bagging this tigress, Corbett was awarded a gift from Sir John Prescott Hewett, then Lt. Governor of the United Provinces. This gift was no mere ornament or medal, but something Corbett would find plenty of use for in the years to come. It was a Rigby Mauser .275 rifle, with a simple oval in-let into the butt and inscribed:

"Presented to Mr. J.G. Corbett by Sir J.P. Hewett KCSI, Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces in recognition of his having killed a man-eating tigress at Champawat in 1907".

We know a good deal about Jim Corbett because he had the rare gift of being able to write with the passion, attention to detail and clarity with which he applied himself to hunting. His best known book *'Man-eaters of Kumaon'* was an instant classic. First published in 1944 by Oxford University Press (Bombay), for 1000 copies only, the book went on to sell more than 536,000 copies worldwide at its third reprint in 1946. Subsequently translated in more than three-dozen languages, it has remained in print ever after and some ten million copies have been sold to date.

Further books followed, thrilling readers with more exploits in search of dangerous quarry in dense jungles, but also recounting his life and observations of India, its flora, fauna and people. These beautifully written homages to a world long since disappeared rank among the best available memoirs of the Raj in its last decades, told from the boondocks, rather than the palaces of power.

Among other Corbett's adventures was the pursuit of an almost mythical leopard, which had killed so many people and avoided concerted attempts to trap, shoot and poison it, that locals considered it to be an evil spirit, rather than a beast of the jungle. This leopard was arguably the most publicised man-eater that ever existed for he was mentioned in the press of numerous countries worldwide including other parts of India, as Corbett himself mentions:

"However, be the number of human kills what they may, Garhwal can claim that this leopard was the most publicised animal that has ever lived, for he was mentioned – to my knowledge – in the press of the United Kingdom, America, Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Malaya, Hong

Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and in most of the dailies and weeklies in India.

Nobody thought Corbett would have any more success in his efforts than the numerous other hunters who had tried before.

However, true to form, Corbett did shoot what became known as the 'Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag'. He used his Rigby .275. This was the only hunt for which Corbett dedicated a whole book.

Following his accomplishment in Rudraprayag, three years later Corbett would also be credited for yet another exploit with the .275. This was when Corbett encountered the man-eating tigress of Talla-Des and her two grown cubs for the first time. This tigress had established a reign of terror of eight long years in the small locality of Talla-Des in Eastern Kumaon accounting for more than 150 lives during that period. It appears from Corbett's writing that he shot all these three tigers in a row in what can be qualified as a terrific show of marksmanship. Any sportsman who has known or used the M98 Bolt action would be amazed in learning that Corbett managed this feat with the .275 Rigby despite the chaos that followed the smack of the 173grain bullet on the first tiger (at a range of 120 yards) causing the rest to flee in opposite directions and at varying ranges while reloading and aligning the sights on them successively in turn before they went out of range.

These stories are some of those on which I grew up. They passed into folklore and stayed with me as I grew to adulthood with a love of hunting and the sporting guns that go hand-in hand with our sport.

The coincidence of this, now grown-up, boy and the famous rifle meeting in a London gun room, more than a century after it was handed to the much-loved slayer of man-eaters, is a complex one. Before finding its way into the Rigby Collection, Corbett's .275 was to have more than a few adventures.

Originally supplied to Calcutta outlet Manton & Co, the rifle was selected by Lt. Governor Hewett as a presentation gift to Corbett. It was handed over to him in 1910. Having led a fruitful life in his hands for almost half a century, Corbett, facing retirement in Kenya, wrote to his old friend and publisher at Oxford University Press, Mr Geoffrey Cumberlege and suggested his trusted Rigby might find an appropriate resting place at their headquarters at Amen House in London. This was the same publishing house that had done so much to spread his stories to eager readers all over the globe, making him a household name and no doubt, a degree more financially comfortable than he would otherwise have been. Corbett's letter to Cumberlege in 1953 reads:

' One of our most valued possessions is the .275 rifle ... This rifle has accounted for many man-eaters, and its exploits are mentioned a hundred times in my books. My shooting days are now over and I am wondering if you could find a corner... where this faithful old friend,

who has saved my life on many occasions, could pass his well earned retirement in peace and comfort.' (Readers can see the photo of this letter.)

Cumberlege found the idea agreeable and the Rigby was duly delivered and resided there happily until 1978, when it became a rather unfortunate headline in the local newspaper. By this time, ownership of firearms was being taken more seriously by the police than had previously been the case and the presence of a rifle in a publishing house was noticed by the constabulary, who seemed less than impressed. The story hit the press as '*Tiger Killer Gun Seized*' (see the photos of the articles). For a while it appeared possible that Corbett's beloved relic would be scrapped or de-activated but somehow negotiations achieved an agreeable compromise and the rifle was sent to Rigby in London for secure storage, while a long term resolution to the problem was being considered.

Months turned to years. In 1997 Rigby moved from London to the USA when it passed from the ownership of Paul Roberts to some American investors. But Corbett's rifle was kept in London, almost forgotten. But not quite...

When the L & O group took control of Rigby in 2013, I found myself in charge of the firm, which returned once again in London, once again building Rigby Mauser rifles and then, one day Corbett's .275 surfaced. My co-director Patricia Pugh and I were in place to try to make a plan about what might be done about it. My feelings about the rifle were clear from the outset. If Corbett's Rigby belonged anywhere, it belonged here, in Pensbury Place, home of Rigby, where it could act as a beacon to lovers of hunting history and as a manifestation of the classic Rigby bolt-action rifle: one we have resurrected as a production model, decades after it last appeared in Rigby catalogues. The past could represent the present and Jim Corbett's rifle embodied everything we now stand for as a company.

In March 2015, we agreed terms with Oxford University Press and secured the Corbett rifle for our collection. Immediately it attracted attention, as sportsmen and women gathered at every opportunity to hold in their hands the very rifle they had read about all those years ago, in the days when Corbett's stories thrilled their young minds and helped cement the love of hunting that they still hold dear.

The CLA Game Fair, held at Harrogate in the UK, later in July 2015 gave us an opportunity to display the .275 on our stand and members of the public were drawn in good numbers, as too were representatives of the press. This time the publicity was all positive.

When the public gets involved, more light is often shed on any subject and this proved to be the case for us when we exhibited the rifle at the Game Fair. Book dealer Paul Morgan, of Coch-y-Bonddu Books came forward with a Corbett story of his own.

He had in his possession an old copy of Jim Corbett's original foray into print and explained little about its history. Apparently, back in 1935, living in a remote part of northern India, accessing a printer was no easy task for a man like Jim Corbett. He

had written a collection that he called 'Jungle Stories' and sent it to a local company called The London Press, in Naini Tal.

This was a small concern, since they had never printed a whole book before. The story is taken up by Corbett's biographer Martin Booth in 'Carpet Sahib' (Constable 1986):

"...the printer was faced with quite a problem but agreed to do the job a page at a time which was all his font of type could run to: page by page, Jim and Maggie (Jim's sister) proof-read and corrected or changed the text before it was finally run off. The print was re-used for the next page. After four months, Jim had his first book... it was 104 pages long and was bound in a brown manilla paperback-type cover of the paper more usually used to wrap parcels and was stitched with twine at the spine. One hundred copies were printed."

Corbett later wrote:

"Retaining one copy I started to distribute the other copies among friends, but owing to demand for additional copies for relatives in other parts of the world I was only able to give 75 friends copies. Those copies drifted from hand to hand until the majority had been read to death..."

Paul told me he saw a copy of this book listed for sale in another dealer's catalogue, "about twenty five years ago". Knowing of its rarity, he called immediately and bought it before anyone else noticed. He continued:

"Rather than offer it for sale I have kept it in my own collection ever since, having a fine clam-shell book-box made for it by my book-binder. I had told my friend Robert Bucknell of its existence, but it was only when Rigby held the exhibition of Corbett memorabilia at the 2015 CLA Game Fair that I was tempted to bring it out of hiding".

How strange fate can be? I thought. The maker of Corbett's famous rifle, in 2015 holding a rare copy of his very first attempt to distribute written accounts of his adventures to an audience outside his immediate vicinity.

We now had Jim Corbett's Rigby, we had collected some interesting and insightful correspondence between Corbett and Oxford University Press including his signature, we even had newspaper cuttings from the 'dark days of the seventies' when the rifle's fate was in the balance. How wonderful would it be to re-unite the book, so painstakingly created in Naini Tal, with the Rigby, which rested in the gun rack of Corbett's modest home while production of that very book was taking place? If only we could find a way.

The book was for sale, with a suitably hefty price tag and, much as I wanted it, the budget could not stretch that far so I was resigned to bidding it farewell at the end of the show. Little did I suspect that a kind benefactor was about to amaze me with an unbelievable generous act of kindness.

Robert Bucknell will be known to some readers as a prolific contributor to publications on rifle shooting and fox control and as the author of *'Foxing with Lamp & Rifle'*. Robert took me totally by surprise when he walked onto our stand clutching the rare copy of *'Jungle Stories'*, handed it to me and offered it to me on long-term loan with the words;

"I am a passionate Rigby and Corbett fan. I bought the book to prevent it disappearing into a private collection overseas where no-one would see it - this way every Corbett admirer can enjoy his work."

How can one respond to such an action? My immediate words to Robert were "*You restored my faith in humanity!*" This was what I called "Corbett Magic". We and all Corbett fans are extremely grateful to Robert for his generosity and will ensure that it is available to be appreciated for years to come.

This is the story so far, as the Rigby collection gathers momentum and another fascinating artefact joins those on display in our London showroom. I'm delighted to extend an open invitation to sportsmen who appreciate such things to visit us and share a cup of coffee, discuss the old days and perhaps even take a peek at the new rifles we are making on-site.

We have also undertaken a special exhibition-quality presentation rifle in .275, to be sold as a fund-raiser for Safari Club International, inspired by Jim Corbett and engraved with scenes from his books, as originally drawn by Raymond Sheppard. Following hot on its heels will be our new Rigby medium game rifle in the same, classic, calibre. It will be very close to replicating the Corbett rifle and we hope it will inspire a new generation of hunters to shoulder a Rigby as they set out on their hunting adventures.

Looking at this .275 Rigby rifle that Jim Corbett, an immensely talented and humble human called "my old trusted friend," brings thoughts and memories of a man who showed us an ample example of how to be humble, unselfish, how to serve humanity, how to fight against the destruction of nature, and basically, how to "...make the world a better place to for others to live in."

Jim Corbett's films

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

This is a modest attempt to describe what can still be deciphered from the remaining twenty or so²⁸ reels of 16mm films that have been put on magnetic tapes (video) and kept by the British National Film Archive – BNFA - in London, UK. They are thought to be the surviving remains of the thousands of feet of cine-films which Jim Corbett is claimed to have produced during his cine-photography years ranging from 1928 to just prior of his death which he donated to the British Natural History Museum – BNHM – possibly in 1953 during Corbett's last visit to England, two years after a public screening at the Amen House in 1951, former Oxford University Press headquarters in London and who have stood the test of time. For more than half a century Corbett fans have longed to see them, in vain. Only when a small fraction now remain that the chance is being given to the fans to contemplate a little of what the eyes of their very hero had witnessed during the last quarter of a century of his life. An appeal is hereby forwarded by the authors of this book to the authorities concerned, the United Nations and UNESCO to declare these remaining Corbett films, a cinematographic treasure as a World Cultural Heritage.

A trip to the UK in July to August 2011 for family affairs had arranged my long thought research for the Corbett films. I must admit that I knew that my chances were next to none of finding anything because in Kala's book itself published in 1979, he had stated that the films were in very fragile and bad shape as at the 1950's, but I comforted myself to finding at least the record that such films were kept and hoped to see a frame or two that might have survived. At that time, London was under public riot and it was not easy circulating, some underground stations had been closed and taxis (London Cabs) were not operating normally. However, thanks to Martin Booth and D.C. Kala, I knew that I had to head to South Kensington at the BNHM since it was at this museum that Corbett had been known to have donated his films. There, the museum curator informed me after two days of my original quest that the films had been deposited at the BNFA since the late 1960's. A first visit at the BNFA that very afternoon revealed that it was next to impossible to be able to retrace films that had been kept at the archives some forty years ago unless I knew the title, because the archives reference the title and the director of photography, director, producer etc... I knew only two titles from Kala's book: *Seven Tigers* and *African Wildlife* and of course the director, author, producer etc... as Jim Corbett. Once the search query

²⁸ twenty or so means that officially the BNHM has deposited 16 reels to the BNFA prior to 1968, these are certified authentic Corbett ones and four or five remaining ones have been deposited by private donors from 1984 to 1992, who have not revealed their identity. Though the private donors have stated them being by Jim Corbett, we cannot unfortunately be sure of the fact.

form filled, found me returning to the guest room where I was staying. I remember that night watching the BBC TV announcing that the match between Tottenham Hotspur and Everton had been called off. My dream of ever watching a live English game in the stadium vanished as the guest room owner Mrs Audrey had a spare ticket for the game which she agreed to give to me, the White Hart Lane stadium, house of Tottenham Hotspur FC, was only half an hour by cab away.

The next day, however, success called in at early morning. Not for the football, but the BNFA, whose archives curator from the curatorial team of the BFI National Archive (British Film Industry National Archive, or simply BNFA) announced that there is a good and a bad news. As per the usual protocol, I wanted the bad one first, it was that there were no titles such as 'Seven Tigers' or 'African Wildlife' but half a good news, 'Wildlife Africa' existed and the good news was that the latter is by a certain "Jim Corbett" and the possibility of video viewing exist. I could not believe my ears: A film called "Wildlife Africa by Jim Corbett". Now how many Jim Corbett have made a film on wildlife in Africa? Not five I supposed, so I literally flew to the address: 21 Stephen Street to investigate more. To cut a long story short, the archive curator had found "not quite 20" films who have been directed by Jim Corbett, or Director of Photography, and that Jim Corbett of whom no much information was given except that he was born on 25 July 1875(in India) and died on the 19th of April 1955 (in the Cayman Isles???) and that he was the "first ever to make moving films of tigers". These information on the author were supplied by the BNHM when the latter donated the films to the BNFA prior to 1968 and had been on the old files in the archives of the BNFA. An institution such as the BNHM who held treasures from Ancient Egypt, paleontological fossils and other historic or pre-historic vestiges, cannot be taken lightheartedly on the matter of "the first person..." If they had supplied this information with the film reels, then it must have been. A second appeal from us would be that any reader knowing tiger films made prior to 1928 is requested to contact the publishers of this book.

Here are in descriptive form, what can still be seen from the remaining films. I also admit that I was too busy contemplating the all black and white silent films and trying to fix in my mobile phone camera at the same time, that most of the information supplied here comes from the curator team of the BNFA having screened them many times also afterwards, of which I made notes and are now available on their website, and now the films have been properly tagged and archived so that it is available for any Corbett fan to go and arrange for a scheduled viewing.

As a guide: 400 feet of 16mm film run through approximately 12 minutes.

KENYA WILDLIFE - PERSONAL FILM - 1953 (by Jim Corbett as Director of Photography 1953)

Donated by the Natural History Museum (1966)

16mm 135ft - video viewing copy available

It appears clearly to be an African Savannah, probably Kenyan landscapes and wildlife, most probably the exact location is just off the Aberdare range near Nyeri. Quick zooms in succession through trees, hills and lake, medium shot of elephants, herd of elephants on plain with car (a big 2HP Citroen like model) in middle, gazelle, birds, medium shot of giraffe, gazelle, zebra and medium shot of rhino by lake. Severely broken images though, it appears to have been part of a longer running film. This is shot on ground and not from the Tree Tops hotel as a friend of mine suggested later when described to him (..)

INDIAN ELEPHANTS IN THE SERVICE OF MAN (1938)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 405ft - video viewing copy available

The processing box of this one has a clear tag marked the year 1938. It is among the longest of all the others, some 12 minutes, hence benchmarking the relation between feet and minutes. This is clearly in India, seen by the villagers' appearance, and the land topography showing some quite tall hills in the background seems indicating Kaladhungi at the foot of the hills. It shows the washing of the elephants by the master (mahout) and their use in the fields and for hauling felled logs. The elephants (at most three of them perhaps four) are then fixed with a seat, lashed under the shoulders of the animals. Clearly a rifle is sent to the mahout. A man (clearly cannot be Corbett, as not quite tall, could be a woman) then a second, Indian this time climb on the animal. Seems that they are going out for a hunting trip, the film ends as the elephants charged with men are seen in a plain opening with trees to the far left side. Lights were not very good for the film though.

HONEY HARVEST IN INDIA (1936)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 237ft - video viewing copy available

There is an original old tag on the processing box of the film, it is written "No.28, 1936", hence I get the date, but God only knows what the No.28 stands for. This one shows Indians gathering honey from trees. On the left, a man in top branches of a tree lowers a basket of honey to the ground. An Indian, at the foot of the tree, throws a rope into the branches. The honey gatherer climbs up the rope. Wearing some protective clothing, he clammers towards a hive (could only be that); he clears away the swarm of bees (seen as black smoke) with a bundle of smoking twigs (these smokes are whiter than the 'bee smoke'), then lowers lumps of honey in a basket. The process is repeated at another hive. The bees dispersing before the smoking twigs, I guess that what can be interpreted when the 'black smoke' vanishes when the white smoke comes. The gatherer slices up the honey and lowers it to the ground. The gatherer then climbs down the rope. The Indian at the foot of the tree places chunks of honey in a box. Then the film is cut and opens on a group of Indians; the honey is being heated

in large pots standing on long ovens in the ground. End. A treasure of film showing traditional honey collection in Indian jungles. What a masterpiece Jim!

JIM CORBETT PERSONAL FILM WANDERING TIGERS IN NORTH INDIA
(Circa1935)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 409ft - video viewing copy available

The title of this film was handwritten possibly by the BNHM and the date is preceded by 'circa' meaning approximate. This could be anytime between 1928 to 1938. What we see next is surprising. We see men (Indian origin) cutting branches from a tree then we are shown a dead tiger with crowd of Indians surrounding it on the ground, a big male, from my point of view. We then get a shot of countryside which give us a hint of the location where it is shot. The background has the snow covered Himalayas unmistakably. This suggest that the location might be either North of Nainital behind the Cheena peak or might as well be near the Ramganga river, in the Patli Dun valley. The next shot shows a tiger wandering through a river bed then joined by another tiger. This could well have been in the Kaladhungi 'jungle studio' at the Boar river tributary since it appears that the camera was high up in a tree. The first tiger drinks at the stream. Then it cuts to two tigers with their kill - a bullock or water buffalo. This shot reminds me of a plate in Man-Eaters of Kumaon where we see a tiger dragging a kill while a second watches. It cuts again. We then see a group of tigers eating from a kill (unidentifiable) in the forest. This film is very strange as it appears to have joined several bits from several films. That is why certainly that the date is not exact. The last extract of the film we see a group of tigers eating together, appears to have come from the film "Seven Tigers" as it is the only film where Corbett manages to draw a group of tigers together around a kill. Certainly it must be. A pity that this films has several joins, so that we might never know their exact origin and location of shooting except for the first part.

CHITAL DEER - FOOTHILLS OF THE HIMALAYAS (1933)

Donor not listed, probably Natural History Museum

16mm 209ft - video viewing copy available

This film comes from the same batch of 'prior to 1968' and it carries a number too "No.30". Now for this one I'm dead sure that it is the film that Corbett takes on the 21st of May 1933 at Maldhan, a terai village between Kashipur and Ramnagar. We see chital deer grazing and drinking in the foothills of the Himalayas (in the background). A large herd of deer (unidentifiable species mixed with chitals, Corbett called them 'Gond' in his letter to Maggie) grazing in the open. Several deer are seen in a forest clearing. Then we see deer grazing in the open. Then a close up of a deer, not a chital, but a 'gond' seemingly. Then a magnificent chital stag, which looks at the camera, Corbett has been discovered! Then several chital stags and females standing on hind legs to eat from low branches . Then a herd in a clearing numbering some

fifteen. Next up are deer drinking from a stream then one of them seen bathing in a the muddy stream. Magnificent film by Corbett!

LIFE AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE HIMALAYAS (1932)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 408ft - video viewing copy available

This film has no tags for a title, only a date. This could be village scenery shot by Corbett in 1932 after killing the Kanda man-eater near the Dhikala range, seems like terai villages. Shots of crops being harvested, women sitting on the ground cutting wheat or rice stalks not sure which. The forest surrounding is thickly undergrown. Another village, women carrying water pots "It was the duty of the women" I said to myself when lost in my thoughts. The waterfall is then shown "where the water is" I quickly imagined. Men ploughing fields then three children, I thought they were playing, no they are sowing seeds, could be in Choti Haldwani also, I became wise after the event of seeing however. Good film though Corbett seems very tatty with his equipment.

TIGER WITH KILL (1931)

Private donor - 1992

16mm 37ft - video viewing copy available

This film is given by a private donor who is not listed by the BNFA. I doubt if it is Corbett but I clearly see the Cheena peak where Manfred and myself had photographed in April 2012. It is however taken behind the peak opposite of Nainital where there is a beautiful dense forest. This film lasts less than a minute and it ultimately shows a tiger with a kill and cuts abruptly to its end. Was it a Jim Corbett film afterall?

JIM CORBETT PERSONAL FILM WILDLIFE, AFRICA (1930)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 241ft - video viewing copy available

Let's pay homage to this title as this was the one film which put the BNFA team on the track of finding others. A good four and a half minute film showing the African savannah. This one is warranted to have been shot in 1930, when Corbett used to travel annually to Tanganyika. So this is today's Tanzania and since Corbett was staying near the Kikafu estate, twelve miles of Moshi, to the north of the Moshi to Arusha road. A big mountain appears in the very far background, pity we do not distinguish its snow-covered peak or not, for it is either Mount Kilimanjaro(only one with snow peak), Mount Meru or the Ngorongoro crater. The film shows good footage of wildlife at a waterhole, certainly a bed of a river during the dry season, wildebeests for a majority then perhaps a few impalas or waterbucks. This film has perhaps only one join and the longest one concentrates on the water hole and a tree hide nearby seeing lots of wildebeests and waterbucks moving about. We are able to guess that Corbett

rested his focus on the waterhole long enough in hope to capture on reel the attack of a crocodile which unfortunately did not happen.

JIM CORBETT PERSONAL FILM INDIAN WOMEN (Circa 1930)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 56ft - video viewing copy available

This film quite short less than two minutes has a puzzling scribble on the processing box: It is written quite indecipherably "Viceroy's garden, Delhi + Nainital". We see young Indian women posing for camera, then older Indian man (now reminds me of Mothi Singh's grandson we saw in Choti Haldwani) and family. Then it cuts to some sort of plantation, the scribble helps us to visualize it more a garden than a plantation, could be the viceroy's garden in New Delhi, but since Linlithgow came to office in 1935, we have serious doubts on the date although it is said to be approximate. But it is definitely in Delhi as the film cuts to end on some sort of buildings which cannot be rural.

TIGERS IN STREAM (1930)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 155ft - video viewing copy available

I refer here to a note written when actually viewing this film. I wrote: Date not correct, must be in 1938. It certainly has to be 1938 in the 'jungle studio' since this is unmistakably shot from a machan or from a tree at most eight feet above the ground. We see two tigers prowl along a river bed, a male and a female and lie down in the water, three and a half minutes of pure beauty! I did not go to see Corbett's jungle studio despite a very accurate plan given to Manfred by late Omi Anand, so I cannot ascertain that.

TIGER HUNTING IN NORTH INDIA (1930)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 377ft - video viewing copy available

This would be one of the filming of the hunting with a governor or a viceroy, the date suggest that it was the 'bundobast' (meaning large input of beaters and white hunters) organized for Sir Malcolm Hailey in 1930 at the Bijrani range of the to-be Ramganga NP. This film actually shows the shooting of animals. Please don't read this paragraph further if that hurts your feelings. We see hunters travelling on elephants to a meeting place where other elephants and people are waiting and from which the elephants then advance in a line. All of a sudden, the film cuts and opens on a leopard which is being shot (you see the animal clearly), then a tiger [actual shooting is not seen, we see only a dead body of it on the ground). Both dead animals are hauled by Indians and lashed on top of an elephant. The film of the shooting then cuts and we see the elephants are washed in a river and then proceed back to the camp where the catch, that is the two animals are laid down and are examined. The tiger is given

to the Indians who lift and lash it to another elephant. Next we see the dead tiger on the ground surrounded by villagers. About the last thirty seconds the focus is left on the animal. If Corbett was filming, surely Hailey was the shooter unless it was Percy Wyndham and his beaters and elephants.

INDIA: HUNTING WITH ELEPHANTS (1930)

Donated by the Natural History Museum

16mm 256ft - video viewing copy available

This film seems to be part of the previous one but here no shooting occurs. It shows a seven minutes or so of the arrangement of hunting on elephant back. Some thirty or maybe more beaters are seen, cutting in two groups, moving each group in opposite directions, then the elephants are made to stand in an arrangement, forming roughly a straight line and advancing at a lesser pace than the beaters till the latter disappear in tall grass. You can appreciate the immensity of such arrangement for big game hunting in India by the 'bundobast-wallas' (those who tie-up loose ends by spreading mats of money on the jungle floor). This film together with the previous one above is proof of the sheer indiscriminate slaughter of the Indian fauna during the colonial period.

LIFE IN DELHI (Circa 1930)

Donor not listed – Possibly BRITISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

16mm 390ft - video viewing copy available

This is a very early film of Jim Corbett which has the particularity of not depicting any wildlife or natural forest. It shows the urban forest rather and that in Delhi. I would have wish I had known some of the buildings in Old Delhi, but unfortunately I don't so I cannot recognize any of them. I leave the comment to the curator's team: "Amateur film about aspects of colonial life in Delhi, India." A good old archive of life in Delhi though not certain to be a Jim Corbett film.

BIRDS AND BEASTS (Circa 1930)

Donor not listed, probably Natural History Museum

16mm 290ft - video viewing copy available

I have to avow that I am not familiar with all bird species particularly in North India. Therefore I'm not much of a help here to describe the birds seen in this film. All I can tell is that we see shots of various birds and reptiles in a bhabar forest. Then we see a flock of birds flying in circles. Two white stork-like birds swimming and fishing in a pond. Then a succession of birds of various species feeding on a patch of grass. They are joined by two squirrels or chipmunks(?). A peacock (this one I know) walking along a stone-covered ground. A dog brings a dead bird towards the camera (That good old Robin). Robin then circles round a stationary lizard or chameleon, which disappears down a hole in the ground as a second dog attacks it (this one is unknown, could be Rosina). The next shot shows a hooded snake crawling alongside a wall (a cobra or hamadryad as called in North India). It is killed by stones thrown at it by

unseen person (most probably by the cameraman himself!). Another shot at a large snake which is disturbed from a scrub and crawls along the ground. Later afterwards I came to know from Martin Booth's book that all of this film have probably been shot in Naya Gaon near Kaladhungi possibly late April or early May 1933.

JIM CORBETT PERSONAL FILM INDIA WILDLIFE HUNT (1929)

No donor listed, 16mm

This film is tagged by the BNFA for not being certain to be a Jim Corbett film. But I see some snaps in it which reminds me of the elephant back hunting that Corbett took part in Bindhukera in February 1929 when a gun incident caused serious injury to his ear. We see Indian and European men and women on back of elephant, elephants advancing in line with the Europeans having rifles at their shoulders ready to fire then we directly see a dead stag (with decent antlers) being tied onto an elephant. Then it cuts back to the camp, a group photograph is taken of the European hunter (most probably Malcolm Hailey or Percy Wyndham) and family (two European women, one could be a daughter and the other the mother) pose in front of elephants and mahouts. Next frame show party setting out again this time a dead leopard is hauled over to the elephant then another leopard loaded onto another elephant. Some seven minutes of that famous hunt described in prelude of the story of the Talla-Desh man-eater in the book Temple Tiger.

That was all for the time being, I hope there are more others waiting to be 'unearthed' from the archives of the BNFA or maybe the BNHM too. I would advise you to who want to see these films to book early in London, London, the area code is W1T 1LN the address, 21 Stephen street and the telephone number of the BNFA is Switchboard: +44 (0)20 7255 1444. Stay two weeks at most. Apply at the Research Viewing Service on the very first day you reach there. It might take sometimes up to ten days to be able to view a group of archives. I must tell you to bring a good over 25MP video camera. Please also be reminded that the BNFA is a self-financed institution, so it requires a fee for viewing, ask their fee by phoning.

It now becomes more than serious to move the issue to the UNESCO of the United Nations for scholars of such institutions affiliated to it to bring about a motion at the said organization to declare the films of Jim Corbett as a World Cultural Heritage Treasure. By films we mean the original ones in their original processing boxes, not the magnetic tapes who are also with the BNFA. This is our plea, backed by the hundreds of thousands of Indians, direct descendants of those whose lives have been in a way or the other been affected in the positive way through contact, direct or indirect with the domiciled Anglo-Indian Jim Corbett, of North India particularly of the Kumaon region and whose legacy has been carried across the five continents through his books and his second to none mastery of jungle craft, who has helped the poor, the invalid soldier, the Indian civil servants, the widows, orphans, and men, women and children

of India even after his death and of course the domestic and wild animals of North India of the Kumaon-Garhwal region.

That his films and particularly the surviving ones proved that he was the first who had taken moving photography of tigers and animals of North India, that his love for the simple hardy hill folks was not forsaken from his books and that his knowledge and understanding of the jungle was above than average for a person who had not taken a biology course, being also among the first municipal counsellors of the world to have declared a rest day for animals involved in domestic work and last but not least, among the very first person to have created environmental awareness among his counterparts and could be well the first person to have fought in defence of wildlife and for the establishment of a wildlife reserve in India and perhaps one of the first in the world also. The authors of this book are ready to draft a formal plea if being requested, contact the publisher.

“Through Wounds and old age”: man-eating in Corbett’s time and in a recent perspective as a multi causal phenomenon

By MANFRED WATTL

1. Corbett’s view about man-eating

“A man-eating tiger is a tiger that has been compelled, through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it. The stress of circumstances is, in nine out of ten cases, wounds, and in the tenth case old age... Human beings are not the natural prey of tigers, and it is only when tigers have been incapacitated through wounds or old age that, in order to live, they are compelled to take a diet of human flesh” (Corbett vii). This statement in “author’s note”, the introductory chapter of “Man-eaters of Kumaon”, shows Corbett’s general view upon such an in his eyes rare and aberrant behaviour. Actually he confirmed wounds or old age in the post mortems of almost all man-eating tigers he had shot. With the Chowgarh tigress, the claws and one of her canine teeth were broken and the front teeth worn down to the bone. Such defects, a combination of old age and injuries, he considered more than sufficient to explain her man-eating behaviour. A broken canine and several pellets of buck-shot embedded in different parts of the body could be found in the case of the Chuka man-eater whereas in the right and the left shoulder of the Thak tigress, according to Corbett otherwise a comparative young animal in perfect condition, there were two old gunshot wounds, one of them gone septic. This he suspected to be the cause for her man-eating behaviour thought he had to admit, it was difficult to say to what extent the wounds had incapacitated her. Heavy injuries caused by porcupine quills could be found in other tigers, for example the Mohan man-eater, who had more than twenty five quills up to five inches long embedded in his left foreleg. This had given the animal such of a pain, that it made low moaning sounds while walking through the village. The Muktesar tigress had lost an eye in the encounter with a porcupine and got fifty quills embedded in the arm and under the pad of her right foreleg. And from the right foreleg and shoulder of the Tala Des tigress Corbett took some twenty porcupine quills which he considered to be the cause for the tigress’ becoming a man-eater.

But Corbett’s view was not confined to wounds and old age. Though referring to them as the main causes, he in fact had a considerably wider view taking in account other causes too – at least in combination with wounds or old age. In “authors note” he mentions scarcity of natural prey as well as the nature of the disability or whether it is a male or a female with cubs, as having an effect at least on the frequency of human

kills. In this context he also blames human responsibilities for prey scarcity when - defending the tiger from being branded as cruel and bloodthirsty - he states, that only "on rare occasions when driven by dire necessity, he kills a human being or when his natural food has been ruthlessly exterminated by men he kills two percent of the cattle he is alleged to have killed..." (Corbett xi-xii).

Another point is shown in his detailed description of the Muktesar tigress becoming a man-eater (Corbett vii-viii). Here - only to serve as an example for many other cases - the changeover from animal to human flesh is claimed to be "accidental". The tigress' unfortunate encounter with a porcupine was followed by several accidental coincidences. While "she was lying up in a thick patch of grass, starving and licking her wounds, a woman selected this particular patch of grass to cut as fodder for her cattle." The tigress killed her and without taking much notice of the body, limped off for a distance of over a mile to a little hollow under a fallen tree. Here another accidental coincidence happened: A man came to chip firewood exactly off this fallen tree and the tigress, which was lying on the far side, killed him. Now, perhaps from the trickling blood out of the claw wounds of the victim, she got the idea that here was something that she could satisfy her hunger with. She ate a small portion from his back and a day after she killed her third victim deliberately without provocation: The man-eater of Muktesar was born. In the growing tendency of the tigress to take notice of their victims as something she could possibly eat, Corbett observed something that is part of a phenomenon we now call: Habituation.

Another cause for becoming a man-eater Corbett mentions for the two man-eating leopards of Kumaon, he had to deal with. One of them, the Panar leopard "followed on the heels of a very severe outbreak of cholera, while the other (Rudraprayag) followed the mysterious disease which swept through India in 1918 and was called 'war fever'" (Corbett xiii). During epidemic forms of diseases when cremation rites cannot be carried out properly these animals can acquire a taste for human flesh by scavenging human bodies. Though in "authors note" he restricts this possibility to leopards, in two other cases he refers to carrion eating by a tiger. While hunting the Thak tigress he found, that she had partly eaten a buffalo that had died from a snake bite. He concluded that "tigers as a rule are not carrion eaters but they do on occasions eat animals they themselves have not killed" (Corbett, 192). In the same chapter he mentions another case when he had killed and skinned a leopard, and coming back next day in search of his forgotten knife, he found that a tiger had eaten most of the carrion. Though in more modern times observations in some parts of India show, that scavenging can be quite normal for tigers too, what Corbett then already knew and acknowledges is the fact, that scavenging from human bodies is a serious cause for predators becoming man-eaters.

Though Corbett probably was the keenest observer of Indian wildlife of his time, some of his theories of course need adjustment with reference to new observations and

modern scientific knowledge. This doesn't mean his observations were wrong. They were admirably accurate indeed and in many ways far ahead of his time, but naturally restricted to his experiences in his India and in his time, what was the district of Kumaon in the beginning of the 19th century. Corbett cannot be blamed for not being able to compare data from tiger habitats all over the world and not having used radio collar methods as we do today. So before reviewing some of his theories and bringing them into a newer and wider context, we first have to acknowledge and to admire the insights he already had so many years ago. What he did was probably the first serious attempt to explain man-eating behaviour and his observations are valuable up to this day. Hunger, old age, wounds, scavenging of human bodies combined with accidental coincidence is not far away from a recent view of such a habit, as we will see. Even more up to date is his general perspective of the tiger as a "large hearted gentleman with boundless courage"(Corbett xii), which is way ahead of the attitude of many of his contemporaries who thought of the tiger nothing more than of a "blood-thirsty" and "cruel" animal that has to be destroyed by any means. But of course, as it has to be expected, more than half a century of research in tiger populations all over the world brings additional views and new perspectives. Besides, the "World of the tiger" has changed too. It is no more the largely intact habitat with plenty of game, where only the disabled creatures were facing hunger and desperation. Habitat destruction and fragmentation now can bring a quite normal tiger in similar desperate situations, so that priorities in the causes of man-eating might shift from "wounds and old age" in new directions.

2. Why man is not the natural prey

Corbett's basic observation, that human beings are not the natural prey of tigers or leopards and only stress of circumstances can compel them to adopt such a diet alien to it, was definitely true in Corbett's time and is in most cases still true today. Under normal conditions tigers like other big cats usually avoid people and seem to have a natural reluctance to prey upon them. There is obviously some kind inhibition on the side of the animal that prevents human beings from being attacked. But the question is: Was it always the case in human history and what are the reasons for this inhibition?

When talking about man-eating, one first has to acknowledge that at least since the second half of the nineteenth century it is a comparatively rare phenomenon. This doesn't deny the threat and the pressure man-eaters can inflict to the people of a certain region, but even in problem areas as are the Sundarbans, the Central Provinces or the Himalayan foothills, they still were astonishing rare facing the fact, that for a big cat a lone and unarmed human being is a much easier kill than any of its so called natural prey species. If for a moment we let aside the anthropocentric perspective, it is indeed surprising, that people are not attacked and killed much more often. From this fact, some scientists very rightly state, that the basic question is not why

individual animals become man-eaters, but why not all of them do regularly feed on human beings (Kerbis-Peterhans in Caputo, 2002:131). Tigers according to Stephen Mills, can and do kill almost anything they meet in the jungle, so “why, in fact, are so few tigers man-eaters” (Mills, 2004: 102). But it is an obvious fact that they aren’t and so I do not agree with Bruce D. Patterson, a colleague of Kerbis-Peterhans at Chicago Field Museum, who referring to lions considers “opportunity” as the primary cause of man-eating. For him all apex predators at the peak of the food pyramid can’t afford to be too choosy and have to be great opportunists and to rely on whatever acceptable prey species around (Patterson, 2004:63, 78). There is some truth in his argument and - as we will see later - opportunity is indeed part of the explanation. However, it should not be the main one as there are much more opportunities for big predators to prey on humans than they make use of.

Let us first have a look at the past. Was fear of men always part of the big cat’s behaviour? Are they born with a natural fear of human beings or has it been learned maybe following the development of the deadly firearms? For General Burton this fear is more an acquired than an inherited characteristic. He concluded this from the observation, that in places where man has been hitherto unknown, his presence is no more productive of fear than any other living thing (Burton, 1931:35). This corresponds with observations in established Indian National Parks, that wild animals including tigers are much more easily approached where they not have been hunted and tigers roam freely even in daytime hours. For Peter Boomgard who collected historical material from Indonesia, the tiger has learned to avoid people not more than 150 years ago. In earlier times (before 1870) he calls the animal an opportunistic predator “who made a ‘rational’ choice between easy and difficult, unarmed and armed, weak and strong” (Boomgaard, 2001:86). Tigers, so his conclusion, do learn and adapt their behaviour to changing circumstances and the tigresses transmit what they have learned to their offspring. Modern observers who talk about natural fear have, according to Boomgard, never known the tiger before he learned to avoid humans.

There is no doubt, that tigers do learn and that growing hunting pressure in the midst of the nineteenth century has influenced their behaviour. Avoiding people became of growing importance for their survival and their genetic fitness and as a consequence, the inhibition to attack and prey on them has grown. But even if we assume, that tigers and other predators were more opportunistic in earlier times when confrontation with man induced less danger, I would assume that there has always been a certain amount of basic inhibition to attack as a result of the unorthodox and sometimes intimidating behaviour of human beings compared to other animals, even other primates. Yes, we are primates and big cats prey on primates, as KerbisPeterhans states (Caputo, 2002:131), but from a certain point in Evolution we were primates that behaved very different from other primates. The upright walk, the loud talk, unfamiliar clothes and diurnal activity, was not in common with other prey species. As a cooper-

ating group even with primitive arms like stones, men were able to confront predators aggressively. So from a certain and perhaps rather early point in human evolution, it looks like we were no more "normal prey" but serious competitors. There was of course always opportunistic predation but presumably also a fear from a creature that was not like any other species. This view is supported by Charles McDougal who claims, that the "normal tiger exhibits a deep-rooted aversion to man, with whom he avoids contact." And this is because "at some stage during the prehistorical interaction with humans, avoidance of bipedal man became an adaptive behavioural strategy" (McDougal 1987:435).

An interesting scenario of possible prehistoric interactions between humans and predatory animals has been developed by Joseph Jordania of Melbourne University. For him, the human ancestors used very different strategies compared to many other animals. Instead of concealing their presence to avoid predators (crypsis), "they tried to intimidate them with their confident look, their behaviour and by making noise" (Jordania, 2011:97). For Jordania this "aposematic behaviour" is similar to the signals and colorations of animals like wasps or skunks that warn potential predators of the existence of defensive mechanisms and tell them better to stay away. Being an evolutionary musicologist he focuses also on the development of loud rhythmically singing, that in combination with threatening movements and throwing objects can work as a defence system against predators. It could have been used in scaring away other predators not only in self-defence but also aggressively while scavenging on their prey. Such an "Audio-Visual Intimidating Display" was strengthened by morphological changes like long legs (looking bigger), head hair (looking taller), cloths (intimidation through unusual appearance) and of course by the use of stones, that could be used as deadly weapons even on big predators in close combat situations (Jordania, 2011:96-114, 182-186). Though there is some speculation in his approach, as a whole it sounds very convincing and might well explain the basic "wall of inhibition" between humans and their co-predators that can be supposed to exist from the very beginning. During the writing of this article, a new book of Joseph Jordania has extended this approach and deepened the understanding of the connection of aposematic behaviour and human evolution in close proximity to big predators (Jordania, 2014).

Things have changed since, and what Boomgaard found for Indonesia is also true in other parts of the world. Growing hunting pressure from modern firearms strongly increased the tendency in the big cats to restrain from human beings because avoiding people now was essential for their survival. The tiger learned to live a secret live and the inhibition to attack one of this potential dangerous creatures was high. The tigress passed it to her cubs, that it was wiser to give man and even a small boy a wide berth. This was the situation in Corbett's time when tiger hunting was popular sport. Under such conditions he even as "a small boy armed with a small muzzle-loading gun" could wander through the jungles knowing that a tiger, unless molested, would do him no

harm. These were the days, when a man-eater usually was an individual that had been “compelled, through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it”, as Corbett said. But things can change, new forms of conflict can arise, acquired fear can be reduced under specific conditions and traditional causes of man-eating have to be seen in a wider context.

3. Hunger caused by no access to natural prey – Traditional causes of man-eating in a wider context

Martin Booth, biographer of Corbett, adds a liner note to Corbett’s view that man-eating in nine cases out of ten is the result of wounds, and in the tenth case of old age. Booth states that since Corbett wrote this, there has been established an eleventh case: “It is that of the tiger dispossessed of his natural environment either by human habitation or, in the case of successful tiger reserves, increasing numbers of tigers in an inadequate territorial area and which, forced to exist in a locality in which natural food is in very short supply (or totally absent) takes to killing domestic stock or humans” (Booth, 1990:253, Note 1). Similarly Billy Arjan Singh - who met Corbett when he was a boy and admired him deeply - writes, that in the early days in the last century, when Jim Corbett was active in Kumaon, “man-eating assumed what might now be called its traditional form: most tigers behaved normally and avoided humans, but the few that became man-eaters were forced to it – in Corbett’s view – by the fact that they had been partially incapacitated by injuries or old age, or a combination of both” (Singh, 1984:140). Singh shares Corbett’s view, that man-eaters are made and not born, but emphasizes the importance of prey shortages as a deeper-lying cause. Prey scarcity could have forced half-starved individuals to seize porcupines only to get their paws and mouths stuck full of quills - wounds that later made them man-eaters.

For Carrington-Turner, a forest officer who was in duty in Kumaon during and somewhat after Corbett’s time, the word “Hunger” is the summarization of all considered reasons for man-eating. Hunger can be caused by wounds or old age, Corbett’s “classic” reasons. But this does not explain the fact that sometimes tigers in pretty normal condition turn to this habit. The underlying reason for Carrington-Turner is “Hunger” too, but not for any disability but simply for scarcity of prey in unfavorable terrain. This explains for him also the remarkable fact, that during his time (1912-1955) there were always man-eaters in Kumaon, in a country where the higher altitudes with their scarcity of game are bordering prime tiger habitat in the lowlands and the adjoining richly forested gentle slopes. Tigers driven out of the prime habitat by the expanding population find refuge in the hilly zone, where life is hard and normal food too scarce to sustain them (Carrington Turner, 1959:103-107). In many cases the outcasts will be the old and disabled, giving Corbett’s theory credits again, but also quite normal tigers can find themselves stranded in unsuitable terrain: Young ones in search of new territories, tigers that for any reason cannot stand the competition with

rivals and individuals following the movements of the herds of domestic livestock to higher altitudes in spring and being left without food supply when the herds later in the year return to their respective villages in lower territories, meanwhile occupied by other tigers.

Carrington-Turners observation is supported by modern scientists like Charles McDougal. In most cases of man-eating he sees a common factor in "the scarcity or difficulty in obtaining natural prey, either due to the disturbance of tiger habitats by humans or the dispersal by tigers into areas of peripheral habitat" (McDougal 1987:443). Many outbreaks of man-eating in former peaceful areas can be attributed to a sudden scarcity of natural prey caused by diseases or human encroachment with habitat loss and therefore loss of natural food by building activities and growing settlements. In a recent study, Philip J. Nyhus and Ronald Tilson in Sumatra found support of the hypothesis, "that the majority of tiger-human conflicts ... occurred in high and intermediate disturbance areas, and in edge' habitat, between forests and agricultural areas and plantations" (Nyhus & Tilson, 2010: 132). This growing problem is not restricted to Sumatra. Nature reserves often are surrounded by much less favorable land, even in the so called buffer zones. Charles McDougal has shown for the Chitwan area that contrary to former times 78% of the fatalities occurred in the buffer zone and far fewer (22%) in the park itself. Besides the more numerous contacts between tigers and humans - a statistic factor we will discuss later-the problem is that of "a lower prey base in the buffer zone relative to the park, perhaps making a tiger more likely to search for alternative prey, especially a tigress with dependent young" (McDougal et al. 2004, 3).

Charles McDougal was not the first to mention, that a tigress with cubs has an additional problem of feeding her offspring, what might explain the fact, that most of Corbett's man-eaters were females. According to Richard Perry, this was not only the case in Kumaon but all over India (Perry, 1964:201). For General R.G. Burton the famous case of the notorious Mandali tigress, who hunted the Chakrata rage in the Dehra Dun district between 1876 and 1889, was the result of the difficulty experienced by a tigress with cubs combined with the scarcity of prey in unfavorable terrain. This tigress turned to man-eating in 1880 when she had three cubs. Her territory was a ridge nearly 3000 metres in elevation where natural prey was scarce and difficult to hunt (Burton, 1931:142-146). This is not so different from many of Corbett's man-eaters in the foothills of Kumaon, who hunted in not much more favorable terrain as for example the Kala Agar ridge rises up to 8500 feet and Muktesar around 7500 feet.

Hunger caused by prey scarcity is also a reasonable explanation for many outbreaks of man eating concerning African lions. One of the worst recorded cases was in the Njombe district of southern Tanzania were in the 1930's dozens of lions killed about 1500 people over a period of 15 years. According to Peterhans and Gnoske this can be attributed to the establishment of a large game-free zone to prevent the spread

of rinderpest to livestock, therefore providing prey scarceness for the lions (Kerbis-Peterhans & Gnoske, 2001:18). The destruction of their natural prey base by an epidemic of rinderpest in the 1890's might also be one of the major causes for the Man-eaters of Tsavo, finally destroyed by Patterson.

Accepting "extraordinary Hunger" as a basic cause for man-eating widens the perspective and helps to integrate "classic man-eating" (wounds and old age) with cases of apparently undischabled creatures, which nevertheless suffered from hunger caused by unfavorable terrain or human introduced prey scarceness. But even such an extended view does not explain all cases. So, most of the man-eating tigers in the Sunderbans suffer neither from wounds or old age nor from extraordinary prey scarcity. The same is with the so called "sugarcane tigers" around Dudhwa national park. Also for the Njombe lions game scarcity might have been the trigger but does not explain the long run of the conflict. So the perspective is not wide enough yet and we still have to look for additional causes.

4. Additional causes of man-eating

4.1 Man-eating traditions – Do cubs of man-eaters become man-eaters themselves?

Corbett states quite generally, that the cubs of a man-eater do not become man-eaters themselves, simply because human beings are not the natural prey: "A cub", to Corbett, "will eat whatever its mother provides, and I have even known of tiger cubs assisting their mother to kill human beings: but I do not know of a single instance of a cub, after it had left the protection of its parent, or after that parent had been killed, taking to killing human beings" (Corbett ix). I don't doubt Corbett's statement that cubs of man-eaters do not "automatically" become man-eaters, but I doubt the generalization of his words and I even feel some kind of doubt in Corbett himself. At the beginning of his hunt, the Chowgarh tigers were actually two: The mother and her full-grown cub. The latter was killed by Corbett in his first attempt and to solve his feelings of disappointment of having shot the "wrong" tiger, he called the animal at least a "potential man-eater". Later he found, "that the old tigress had depended, to a very great extent, on her cub to kill the human beings she attacked" (Corbett 57). If the cub would have given up this diet after the death of her mother is a matter of guess, but I think the villagers who had no regrets about her killing doubted this for good reason. In the story of the Thak tigress Corbett's first thought was, she had acquired the taste for human flesh by assisting to eat the victims of the Chuka tiger when they were together the previous mating season. Even if this proved to be incorrect later, it shows that at least at the time of hunting this tigress (his latest man-eater) Corbett did not at all exclude the possibility, that tigers do learn such a habit from each other. So we can agree that human flesh provided by the mother will not affect man-eating tendencies in her cubs. But things can be different when cubs actively join in the hunting or when

adult animals are actively hunting and feeding together. Prey preferences are for no small amount learned by watching and assisting the mother or during other social interactions and so it can be assumed, that animals that have assisted in hunting or eating human beings have less inhibition to attack and to see them as a possible part of their natural prey. Not automatically, but with higher probability when opportunity arises. Despite of his generalization in his first book, Corbett at least in his later years did not seem to be reluctant to this view.

The duration of conflicts can suggest the idea of some kind of heredity or tradition- and this indeed may be one of the causes of the age-old history of man-tiger conflict in the Sundarbans. Within the memory of men this place always had a bad reputation for man-eaters. According to Gertrud Neumann-Denzau and Helmut Denzau the earliest written document can be found in the letters of Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in 1598 and 1599 (Neumann-Denzau/Denzau, 2010, No 2, 4-7). R.G. Burton describes two incidents of Europeans who had fallen victims to tigers on Sagar Island, published in the Annual Register for 1787 and 1793 (Burton, 1931:124-127). The human-tiger conflict in the Sundarbans is still a recent one as everyone will realize when reading the many scary incidents reported by Kalyan Chakrabarti, former Field Director of Sundarbans Tiger Project. It is not easy to calculate the exact numbers of actual victims because many people enter the forest without permission and registration and therefore don't show up in the official statistics. To obtain real world numbers, Mr. and Mrs. Denzau made an extrapolation by comparing registered cases of the Forest Department with reports in local newspapers. As a result for the year 2004 they came to the astonishing high number of 175 victims alone for the Bangladeshi part of the Sundarbans, compared to only 15 officially recorded victims (Neumann-Denzau & Denzau 2010, No 2, 4-7). The prevalence of man-eaters in certain localities over long periods can be a strong pointer to the possibility of traditions (Perry, 1964:202). Some might speculate also about scarcity of natural prey, but in the case of the Sundarbans this is ruled out by Chakrabarti, who insists in an abundance of pigs and deer as the main prey animals (Chakrabarti, 1992:17). We will later see that different factors might mix here into a fatal combination, but tradition by education is most likely one of them. Obviously tradition can be the neither the only nor the original reason because a behaviour first has to be established before it can be traded, but tradition can extend the conflict and it can be an important piece in the puzzle of the mysterious Sundarban man-eaters.

For predators like lions that live in prides and have much more social interaction and cooperative education, the influence of tradition should be even stronger than in the more solitary living tiger or leopard, where the learning of prey preferences is generally restricted to the mother-cub relationship. With lions it has been observed, that prey preferences were passed along in prides and from one generation to another. As a result similar prides under similar conditions can develop and trade different preferences, as Chris Harvey and Peter Kat found out in Botswana (Frump, 2006:94).

If for some reason a preference for man has developed, this can spread on whole prides and onto following generations likewise. Such cases are reported by Guggisberg from Uganda, Tanganyika and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), where man-eating behaviour spread from individuals to prides and into whole populations over decades (Guggisberg, 1960:223-226). John Taylor, a former ivory hunter in Portuguese East Africa, recalls the fact that there are several districts that have been notorious for man-eating since Livingstone's time and are still today. He could not give a satisfying explanation but was very sure, that no shortage of natural prey could be blamed for it (Taylor, 1959: 15). In Njombe in a remote region of South Tanganyika between 1932 and 1947 at least three generations of lions killed more than 1000 people until they were stopped by George Rushby, who had no doubts, that "most of these lions were born and brought up to man-eating" (Kerbis-Peterhans & Gnoske, 2001:18). Peterhans and Gnoske suggest tradition also with the lions of Tsavo, as man-eating occurred at this place before Patterson arrived and continued after he had left the scene and having shot the two primary culprits (18-20). That such traditions do exist still today is shown in a study on an outbreak of man-eating in the Rufiji district in South Tanzania that went to its peak between 2002 and 2004, when at least 35 persons were killed in all probability by one individual male, called "Osama". It was shot on 21th April 2004 and according to a post mortem by Craig Packer was 3 1/2 years old, well fed and in good health, not previously wounded and with all adult teeth in place. It might have been introduced to man-eating by other members of the pride operating here since 1991 (Baldus, 2004).

4.2 Scavenging on human corpses – man eating as a result of ecological crises

Protein is a valuable resource and many predators do not hesitate to get it the easy way. Not always they do the hunting by their own but take over kills from others. Even if it is not a fresh kill, many predators will make a profit out of it. If there are human corpses, for example provided by epidemic forms of diseases, then they can acquire a taste for human flesh by scavenging on them. Corbett describes this in details with the two man-eating leopards he had to deal with. One of them, the Panar leopard "followed on the heels of a very severe outbreak of cholera, while the other (Rudraprayag) followed the mysterious disease which swept through India in 1918 and was called 'war fever'" (Corbett, xiii). Though tigers in general seem to be more discriminating than other predators, there have been many observations, that they readily take carrion when opportunity arrives. During a study of food habits by George B. Schaller in the year of 1964 in Kanha, several cattle and buffalo succumbed from disease or infection by unsuccessful tiger attacks. Schaller placed all such animals on a meadow and usually they were discovered and eaten by tigers within two or three days (Schaller, 1998: 280). Recent studies by Neumann-Denzau support these findings (Neumann-Denzau, 2006: 1-9). So if a tiger comes across a dead human being as a result of diseases or disasters

such as floods, cyclones or war, he possibly will feed on them, especially when natural prey is scarce. Observations suggest this can cause habituation to human flesh and subsequently a deliberate killing. There once was a local outbreak of man-eating in the Arakan region in Burma, where it always had been only sporadic and almost absent. It was during the Second World War in January 1942, when one hundred thousand Indians were evacuated from Burma through the wilderness of the Taungup pass and four thousands of them died in the mountains and bamboo jungles. Tigers fed upon their bodies and became man-eaters. As a consequence, fourteen West African troops, when the army reentered Burma along the same route in February 1946, were seized by them. (Perry, 1964:197) Similar events were reported during the Vietnamese war (Neuman-Denzau, 2006: 6). All these cases follow basically the same mechanism, described by Corbett in behalf of the man-eating leopards of Panar and Rudraprayag. The only thing we have to add is that in places and under conditions where such corpses are regularly provided, tigers can become man-eaters in a very similar way.

Scavenging on dead human bodies, provided by slave trade, epidemics and burial practices that gave easy access to human corpses could have contributed to the man-eating habit of the Tsavo lions (Kerbis-Peterhans and Gnoske, 2001:9-12) and it can also be another part in the puzzle of the man-tiger conflict in the Sundarbans. The mangrove forest in the Gangetic delta is apart from predators like tigers, sharks or crocodiles a high risk zone for human life. There always have been cyclones and other natural disasters that cause a high number of human deaths, many of them not properly buried but floating down the channels with easy access to tigers. Chakrabarti tells of a cyclone in the year of 1585 that has killed 200 thousand people and of another one in 1688 who killed 60 thousand on Sagar island (Chakrabarti, 1992:10). In addition to natural disasters in past and present times, Gertrud Neumann-Denzau mentions the tradition of a floating burial of snakebite victims in the surroundings of the Sundarbans. Bengal has the highest annual number of snakebite victims in India and a person who dies from a snake here is set adrift on a raft for the age-old belief that the person this way might come back to life. Stranded in the mud banks inside the forest these human carcasses are easily accessible for tigers and may be another factor for the frequency and the persistence of the man-eating problem in this region (Neumann-Denzau, 2006, 6-8).

Joseph Jordania, evolutionary musicologist of Melbourne University and expert of Corbett, adds another interesting aspect with reference to the evolutionary history of man: For our human ancestors it was therefore important to make sure, that no human corpses were available for scavenging predators. They solved the problem by reclaiming dead bodies of victims so that a predator even if he had been successful in killing was not able to make profit out of it. For Jordania this can be seen as an "evolutionary strategy of predator control" to prevent them from becoming habitual man-eaters. Even cannibalism – besides its ritualistic character of acquiring the strength of the

eaten person – could serve as a similar strategy. Before mankind obtained the tools to dig the ground (and could afford to waist the protein), when a person died, cannibalism might have been the best option to prevent corpses from being eaten by predators. Reclaiming dead bodies and cannibalism resulted in an effective ‘predator education’ and over millions of years “this was an important survival strategy that paid dividends in the attitude of predators towards our ancestors” (Jordania, 2011: 120).

4.3 The “Sugarcane Tiger” and other forms of habituation to human presence

Beer Singh, a Sikh farmer was ploughing his field with a harrow attached to his tractor. It was early morning in the Terai area of Uttar Pradesh near a patch of sugarcane when “he saw a tigress leisurely emerge out of it at the far end of the field. A pair of cubs trailed behind her. At the sight of the tractor the tigress stopped in her tracks, but the little furry balls took a fancy to the foreign object and turned playful. They were completely unafraid of its awkward sounds. Canterng gingerly, they came near the machine. At first they ran along with it and then began to bound around it. ... They started jumping over the spinning harrow disc to have their thrills. While all this was going on, the mother arrived near the field. She sat down on the elevated edge and curiously watched the cubs performing the trick...” (Shukla, 1995: 149f, 147-186). The frightened farmer tried to stay calm and mumbling supplications continued to drive his tractor at uniform speed until after more than half an hour the tigress and the cubs left. Shukla claims, that this scene was not an isolated one and “such events keep occurring every now and then in the whole Terai area of Uttar Pradesh and lately it has acquired magnified proportions” At first sight one might smile about such a bizarre encounter and regret not having witnessed or even photographed the tigress and her playful cubs, nevertheless such events have a serious background in what according to Shukla can be called the phenomenon of the “Sugarcane tiger”.

While the forests and grasslands of the Terai, once a traditional stronghold of the tiger population, succumbed heavily to ploughers and harvesters, tigers adapted themselves to the changing situation and managed to survive in the now extensive sugarcane crop, adjoining the forest almost without any buffer zone. Tigers seemed to be not really unhappy with sugarcane as it provides thick and shady cover and herbivores of all kind were attracted to these fields. Alas a very unpleasant situation of conflict was created as the chances of confrontation between tiger and man increased considerably. The growing familiarity with man and the experience of his limitations caused indifference to human activities and disregard to his presence. According to Shukla the basic fear of man, evolved over millions of years, has considerably diluted. Tigers entered cattle sheds, walked through villages in search for food, killed goats and dogs then cattle and then – in some cases – man became the next target. Shukla attributes the outbreak of man-eating in the Kheri district near Dudhwa National Park from 1976 to 1987 to these “Sugarcane tigers”, habituated to human presence. Con-

sequently the hotspots of the conflict were not the jungles but the fringe area. There was no shortage of natural food for the tigers and apparently no traditional causes like wounds or old age to explain the man-eating. In most of the cases females were involved, perhaps for reasons already discussed.

After the first outbreak in the early eightieth when five sugarcane tigresses were identified as man-eaters, the following years showed a conspicuous increase in the number of man-eating tigers in this area. One can only guess if this was the result of growing habituation or a custom taken up by the cubs from their mother. Within the span of a decade 120 persons had been killed by cane-dwelling tigers, but unofficial statistics more than double this number. In spite of such events, Shukla still keeps saying that "under normal circumstances, the tiger is a gentleman and a noble natured beast." Like Corbett he adds: "No tiger strikes a man by choice. In the general course of things, tigers are extraordinarily retiring beasts; they display greater tolerance for human beings than the latter do for them. They are actually the pressing conditions that create the wicked characters" (Shukla, 1995: 178, 181). Though Corbett never used the word "wicked" concerning tigers, half a century before he came to very similar conclusions. Now the phenomenon of the sugarcane tiger is a new example of the "pressing conditions" or as Corbett would have had said "stress of circumstances beyond its control" that can compel a tiger "to adopt a diet alien to it".

An important factor that encourages the habituation of big predators to human presence is reduced or non-existing hunting pressure as it can be found in and around nature reserves. Wild animals will sooner or later learn their lesson that there is nothing more to fear from man. An interesting example that has led to an only partially documented but presumably extremely destructive man-eating in Kruger National park, South Africa, has been recorded by Robert R. Frump in "The man-eaters of Eden". Frump studied the consequences of the migration of poor and desperate Mozambicans, who hoped to find work and a better life in South Africa. The weak and starving refugees while crossing Kruger came across lions that from 1926 onwards when the National Park was established and hunting has stopped had nothing more to fear from man. Generation of lions had grown up in the park that had no association of men with spears or guns and knew mankind as a mostly passive force. Being a first class tourist draw, the lions got comfortable with the presence of cars and men and were used to them. Even so, at first there were almost no problems as the Mozambicans who began the migration were tribesmen who for decades had travelled across the park to the mines and fields of South Africa. They went by day and knew how to deal with lions. But things changed with the demolition of political stability in Mozambique and political changes in South Africa. Immigration became illegal and the immigrants were no more "bush smart" people but weak and starving refugees from war, poverty and famine, forced to walk at night to escape detection by the rangers. However in the night they met lions who were most active then and had no fear of human beings

any more. There are no exact numbers of men killed and eaten by lions, but a very reasonable guess by Robert Frump is, that they exceed by far the numbers killed by the famous lions of Tsavo or even by the prides in Njombe which are said to have eaten up to 1500 people. Many lions of Kruger might not have been man-eaters in the classic sense that they actively sought out humans but simply took them opportunistically when the refugees walked into their turf and triggered their predatory behaviour. But the steady supply of a large number of weak and starving refugees could also have turned large populations of lions into true man-eaters (Frump, 2006:109).

4.4 Cases of mistaken identity – humans resembling prey species

There is a widespread theory about big white sharks that attacks on surfers might be cases of mistaken identity as - from the shark's perspective - surfers paddling on their boards resemble their favorite prey, the sea lion. True or not, similar cases of mistaken identity are easily imagined with big cats too. Situations or silhouettes assumed by human beings that do resemble that of a four-legged prey species can indeed provoke an accidental and for the first time perhaps unintended attack which in the case of success can be followed by deliberate man-killing. Many fatal incidents with tigers have taken place when the victim was in a bent or squatting position while cutting grass or following the "call of nature." For Richard Perry it is significant, that stooping women and children are often a man-eaters victim and he tells of several instances in Burma, when hunters had been stalked and seized by tigers when themselves crawling after pig and deer (Perry, 1964:180). Such positions do resemble much more the silhouette of a four footed animal than of an upright human being. Kailash Sankhala, founder director of Project Tiger performed an interesting experiment in Dehli Zoo where he found, "that tigers start stalking as soon as they find a man in a bent position, but loose interest when he stands up" (Sankhala, 1993: 122). Similar cases are reported by Stephen Mills, who referring to a popular Indian National Park humorously assumed that "if every tourist who visited Bandhavgarh was expected to crawl through the bushes on all-fours, a lot would get eaten" (Mills, 2004: 112). Mills adds an unusual but interesting idea in assuming, that the tigers fear of an upright human being could lay more in the moment of the actual contact than in some inherited fear. A 3 feet tall tiger is about 9 feet long. When he encounters a 6 feet human being it might not unreasonable for him – being accustomed to four-footed animals - to assume, it would be 18 feet long, like an enormous deer of unknown kind. Even if the tiger nevertheless would think of leaping on his back, he would find that there is no back of the usual kind to leap upon. Mills guess is that a comparatively huge silhouette from the front which nearly disappears from the side could be very disconcerting for the tiger therefore making him loose his confidence and withhold his attack if no additional trigger is given. In contrast, a squatting human being is half the size of a standing one and presents twice the spread of back (Mills, 2004: 102-106.).

Resembling the size and silhouette of a medium-sized deer, the attack very well could follow a case of mistaken identity.

Attacks on cyclists or people on horseback can be cases of mistaken identity too. Peter Byrne reports that tigers sometimes chase cyclists and tells of a frightening experience of a postman in North Bengal to whom, for his growing age, a bike was given. Soon while riding through the forest he was chased by a tiger, what never had happened while he was delivering letters afoot. The postman survived by stopping his bike, getting off and facing the tiger. Then, so the postman told, the tiger "saw that I was a man and not an animal and stopped and looked at me and then walked away" (Byrne, 2002: 292). Byrne assumes, that what a tiger sees when a man approaches on a bicycle is an entity that is quite different from the usual shape of man. In addition, the speed of this entity - much in excess of the normal walking pace of a man or an animal - might give the tiger the idea of someone trying to flee, therefore being regarded as a quarry and as something to be chased and brought down (Byrne, 2002: 291-294). Similar things have been reported with persons riding on horses. In 1902 Harry Wolhuter a ranger at the place that later became Kruger National Park was alone on horseback looking for poachers. When he came across two lions, he spurred his horse but one of the lions sprang onto its back throwing Wolhuter to the ground. He survived by massive luck, cold blood, the help of his hunting knife and the interference of his dog (Frump, 2006:31-37). In North America there are recent reports of mountain lions attacking people riding on horseback, what gives additional support to this theory (Deurbrouck & Miller, 2001: 190f.).

Such observations suggest that it is not only the shape but also the behaviour- especially the kind of behaviour that resembles a fleeing animal - that triggers aggressive reactions. It is widely accepted, that people who flee from a big cat are much more likely to be chased and killed. The first and best general advice to survive a close encounter is: Do not run! Running and fast movements trigger inherited predatory behaviour as everyone will know that has ever thrown a ball of wool in front of a domestic cat. An instinctive evolutionary defence strategy for human beings to overcome the urge to flee when meeting a predator is "Freezing of fear". Robert Frump describes this reaction in a personal experience when hearing the roar of a lion even in a safe enclosure in Kruger: "The wave of sound reverberates first in my breastbone, then locks up some part of my brain and freezes me midstep like a lizard caught in the open on a flat rock. I am not frightened - just frozen. I have no clear idea how that happened" (Frump, 2006, prologue). He explained this instant freezing later as an "automatic antipredatory measure hardwired into our systems". For Frump it is part of a defence mechanism known as "crypsis" but in regard to Jordania's theory mentioned in chapter two, it might also and maybe better work as "aposematic" behaviour, sending a strong signal to the predator that his opponent is not afraid, will stand its ground and may be a dangerous enemy. To trigger aggressive behaviour, it is not necessary to make a

deliberate escape. Joggers who are not even aware of any danger are more likely to be attacked than people who walk at slower paces. This has been observed in the United States, where mountain lions take a strong interest in joggers running through the forest. Michael Bright has collected several cases where attacks and even killings have taken place. One of the fatal accidents was that of a woman jogger in April 1994 at Auburn Lakes Trail, a popular hiking trail in a recreational area in California (Bright, 2000; 109; also: Deurbrouck & Miller, 2001: 1-23).

Following the advice: 'Do not look and behave like a prey animal' one could add: 'Do not behave like a sick or wounded animal', as predators tend to look at them as easy prey. Abnormal behaviour in humans as well as in prey species can give such signals to a potential predator and according to Peterhans and Gnoske this includes also deranged and inebriated human beings. To prove this, they report a man-eating outbreak in Zambia that began with the killing of the 'village idiot' and a similar one in Uganda near Queen Elizabeth National Park, where intoxicated persons stepping out of a bar late at night were taken by a lioness (Kerbis-Peterhans & Gnoske, 2001:20). Michael Bright recounts a similar incident near Lake Manyara National Park in Tanzania where a lion, accustomed to human presence by regular visits of a village's rubbish dump, grabbed and ate a drunken man, staggering about in the road (Bright, 2000: 66).

4.5 Unusual high aggression – the mystery of the Sundarban tigers

In the mangrove forest of the Sundarbans according to Gertrud Neumann-Denzau and Helmut Denzau, human-tiger conflicts are more frequent than in any other tiger area of the world (Neumann-Denzau & Denzau, 2010, No 3, 1-21). This said, man-eating patterns here don't seem to follow traditional causes like wounds or old age and also prey scarcity cannot be blamed as a major cause, at least there are no reliable data for this. Besides commonly accepted causes as scavenging on human corpses and tradition, Hubert Hendrichs, a German biologist in the early 1970s was the first to notice, that there was a positive correlation between the degree of salinity in different forest ranges and the number of tiger attacks: The higher the salinity, the more attacks. From this it was assumed, that high degrees of salinity affect the liver and the kidney of the animals making them extraordinary aggressive (McDougal, 1987: 443). There is no scientific prove for this theory, as the inner organs never had been investigated histologically by pathologists to confirm any affection. More so, although recent studies from Siddiqi and Choudhury confirmed Hendrichs data for the time of his research, they found no similar correlation in later years. Between 1975 and 1983 for example casualties were highest in the medium salinity zone. Even if there is no solid evidence, Neumann-Denzau and Denzau won't rule out the possibility of health problems caused by high salinity. They find it still possible that Sundarban tigers under such conditions could suffer from hypertonicity, causing increased activity and

aggressiveness and suggest further investigations on this topic (Neumann.-Denzau & Denzau, 2010 No 3, 5).

But there is another often overlooked and in my opinion much more convincing factor for the enhanced aggressiveness of tigers in the Sundarbans. Tigers use to mark their range either with permanent marks pulling their claws down the trunk of a tree or by scent marks up to 5 feet above the ground (Mills, 2004:79). In the environment of the Sundarbans with usually lacking appropriate trees and a tidal system that makes scent marking often ineffective, it can well be imagined that hereby reduced intra-specific communication can lead to more overt and aggressive forms of confrontations between individual tigers. As far as I can see, only Charles McDougal refers to this possibility calling it "highly speculative" (McDougal 1987: 444). But I think that it is much less speculative at least than Hendrichs salinity theory to explain the aggressiveness of tigers in this environment. This is supported by the observation, that unlike in most parts of India, man-eating tigers in the Sundarbans are mostly males (Kruuk, 2002: 57), the sex, usually more involved in aggressive territorial conflicts.

4.6. The "accidental changeover" – A statistical approach

As doubtful as the correlation between salinity and human casualties might be, another correlation is much more obvious: The correlation between the number of attacks and the number of people entering specific areas of the Sundarbans. Referring to a study of Salter, Mr. and Mrs. Denzau found clear indications, that "the frequency of man-eating is highest in areas and at times of heaviest concentration of people, suggesting that the man killing and the frequency of man-tiger contacts are directly correlated" (Neumann-Denzau & Denzau, 2010 No 3, 5). The same is with the distribution of casualties during the year. As it had to be expected the highest number of victims occurred in winter and in the month of honey collecting, the times of the most intensive use of the forest.

As already observed by Corbett and illustrated with the example of the Muktesar tigress, the changeover from animal to human flesh is in most cases accidental and it is evident, that the probability of such accidental meetings depend on the numbers of tigers and the number of people entering tiger habitat. This is indeed a bit of an oversimplification, because there are other factors that also have an influence in the chance of an accidental meeting, for example the degree of habituation that can lead tigers to give human beings either a wide berth or feel rather comfortable in his presence. But just for the comparison, let us assume identical conditions and a given number of tigers and focus only on the statistical effect of human intrusion. It is not surprising: The more human intrusion, the more accidental human-predator interactions occur and the more chances are for a fatal accident and a perhaps following deliberate man-eating. To give an example: Let us assume that in a defined zone of a tiger habitat there are 1000 close encounters of tiger and man during one year. Let us

further assume that 1 out of 100 accidental meetings results in a fatal “accident” and let us speculate even further, that 1 out of 10 unintended killings might teach the tiger that man can be easy prey and therefore leads him to deliberate man-eating, then one man-eater is the result of a given number - in our example one thousand - interactions. Of course these numbers are pure speculation and only a very rough guess. I would assume the real life numbers to be even less. But anyway, the obvious conclusion is that in any tiger habitat with high human intrusion there will be an accordingly higher numbers of man-eaters and human victims. Ten times more human intrusion – under otherwise identical conditions – will result in ten times more man-eaters and tiger victims. The statistical effect alone could perhaps be sufficient to explain the proverbial man-eating habits of the Sundarbans tigers. However, I don’t think that the explanation is so simple and would still call it a mix of different causes, but I just wanted to show, that the statistical effect concerning the probability of an “accidental meeting” is a really serious one.

5. Man-eating as a “multi-causal phenomenon” within the bounds of Inhibition and Motivation

5.1 Inhibition, Motivation and Statistics – a comprehensive and systematical view

Was Corbett wrong, when he wrote about wounds and old age as the main causes for tigers turning to man-eating? He was not, at least under the conditions of his time. Regarding the additional factors he - at least as side effects - took in account like scarcity of natural prey, the difficulty a tigress faces in feeding their cubs, the effects of scavenging on human corpses and the accidentalness of a behaviour change, he was not far away from a modern multi-causal perspective. This said, there is of course a wider understanding of the phenomenon today. We can look at the “stress of circumstances” more comprehensively than Corbett could in his time. But to put it in perspective: In a recent study concerning man-eating tigers and their victims in and around Chitwan National Park by Dr. Bhim Gurung, 18 of these tigers were physically examined in the past thirty years: 10 of them were impaired with wounds, 3 with old age and only 5 had no abnormalities (Mishra, 2010: 147). Things might be different in places with specific conditions like the Sunderbans, but the figures show, that even in our time Corbett’s “classic theory” can still explain more than two thirds of the cases.

Man-eating in a recent perspective can be described as a multi-causal phenomenon, a view, shared by many experts. One of them is Charles McDougal who mentions a variety of causes, but does not bring them into a comprehensive and systematical view (McDougal, 1987). The same can be said of Julian Kerbis-Peterhans and Thomas P. Gnoske, who have discussed the circumstances contributing to the habits of the notorious “Man-eaters of Tsavo”. Besides the injury of a broken canine in the first (and probably the main) man-eater, they mention prey scarcity from an outbreak of rinder-

pest, habitat factors and man-eating traditions resulting from scavenging corpses of dead slaves along old caravan routes. They rightly conclude, that "not a single cause will guarantee, that a lion will turn into a 'man-eater', but it is clear that a variety of causes will increase the likelihood" (Kerbis-Peterhans & Gnoske, 2001:35). Similarly Bruce D. Patterson considers man-eating amongst lions a complex behaviour pattern and calls it obvious, that no single hypothesis can explain all different scenarios (Patterson, 2004:97). The same can be said with tigers. There is no single explanation like wounds or old age, as there are many old or injured tigers that never will turn to man eating. If they would, as Ajan Singh ironically states, "there would be man-eaters everywhere, eking out their last years on a diet of human flesh" (Singh, 1984:140). So, though many scientists agree in man-eating as a multi-causal phenomenon, as far as I can see, no one has ever tried, to bring it into a systematical and comprehensive context. This I will try to do now.

For this, I suggest to classify the causes for man-eating in two mayor categories that reflect antagonistic forces affecting the behaviour of a specific animal. The first category concerns the MOTIVATION to attack, the aggressiveness of a predator. In this category mainly falls "Hunger", be it by wounds, old age or prey scarcity. But other causes too might influence the amount of aggressiveness, like salinity or more probably enhanced intraspecific conflicts as mentioned in the case of the Sunderban tigers. The second category is the INHIBITION to attack. There are factors that strengthen this inhibition like hunting pressure and special human habits (upright position, noisy groups, clothes, use of weapons etc.). Other factors like habituation, scavenging on human corpses or learned traditions can lead to a decline of inhibition. And what might be seen as a third category but might be better described as beyond these categories is the STATISTICAL EFFECT, the opportunity that arises when the objects of a possible conflict come to meet each other. For a better understanding and a comprehensive view, have a look at the following graphic (Drawing: Claudia Mückstein):

Looking at the graphic, you will see a tiger, a human being and a "wall" between them. Instead of a tiger you can imagine any other carnivore big enough to prey on humans. The vector on the side of the predator indicates the Motivation to attack (Vector M). The height of the separating wall symbolizes the Inhibition to attack (Vector I). There are factors, that will increase the height of the wall, and others, that will reduce it. Facing a high wall, a predator will need extraordinary motivation and aggression to "jump over," if he is able to do so anyway. The human being on the other side will be quite safe under such conditions. But if for some reason the wall shrinks down, a medium or even low motivation can be sufficient. And of course there is the Statistical factor (Vector S) that reflects the chance of a meeting on a given time and at a given place. With these three factors in mind you can assess the likeliness of an attack and this is in my opinion the quintessence of man-eating as a multi causal phenomenon. Here is the explanation of the otherwise mysterious observation, that

very often old, disabled and hungry tigers won't become man-eaters (inhibition too high) while sometimes quite normal individuals turn to this notorious habit (conditions favor lower inhibition). When focusing on motivation, the amount of hunger and aggressiveness decides if a given inhibition can be overcome. Within these bounds of motivation and inhibition, under different conditions different causes prevail. Two contrasting examples shall illustrate this:

a) High inhibition requiring extraordinary high motivation. This is the "Classical man-eater", described by Corbett. High inhibition caused by the high hunting pressure of this time could only be overcome by very high motivation. This usually was induced by extraordinary hunger mostly caused by wounds or old age that made effective hunting difficult. Unfavorable terrain sometimes added to such difficulties. But even so, only in rare cases the motivation was high enough to overcome the high inhibition. Sometimes accidental habituation lowered the inhibition (Muktesar tigris). But tigers that did not suffer under life threatening situations because of the strong inhibition were usually quite harmless to humans.

b) Low inhibition requiring only low to medium motivation. This seems to be the case with the Sundarban tigers, where the motivation might be called "medium". No extraordinary "hunger" seems to enhance it, but perhaps other factors like salinity or – more probably – increased intraspecific conflicts. But a medium motivation coincides here with a reduced inhibition because of man-eating traditions and scavenging on human corpses, so this level of aggressiveness can sometimes be sufficient to overcome the lowered "Wall". Other examples show that in some cases even a low motivation not exceeding the totally normal level can be sufficient if the inhibition is accordingly small. The "sugarcane tigers" or the man-eating lions of Kruger may not have had any extraordinary motivation and aggression at all. They can be quite normal animals under this respect. But because of the effects of habituation, the inhibition to attack is extraordinarily low here – in the case of the Kruger lions maybe near zero – so that man-eating can occur for rather small reason or even just if opportunity arises.

5.2 Possible answers for specific questions in the perspective of Inhibition and Motivation

5.2.1 Why tigers usually attack in daylight and leopards at nighttime?

Man-eating as a phenomenon within the bounds of motivation and inhibition can throw light on some previously unanswered or overlooked questions, for example the observation, that tigers kill their human prey mostly during daytime and leopards at night. Corbett calls it a general rule to which he had seen no exceptions that "tigers are responsible for all kills that take place in daylight, and leopards are responsible for all kills that take place in the dark." As both animals being semi-nocturnal forest dwellers and having much the same habits, it had to be expected, they would hunt at the same hours. That they do not do so, for Corbett "is due to the difference in

courage of the two animals. When a tiger becomes a man-eater it loses all fear of human beings and, as human beings move about more freely in the day than they do at night, it is able to secure its victims during daylight hours and there is no necessity for it to visit their habitations at night. A leopard on the other hand, ... never loses its fear of man; and, as it is unwilling to face up to human beings in daylight, it secures its victims when they are moving about at night, or by breaking into their houses at night." (Corbett, 1946, ix-x).

Corbett's observation cannot be taken in an absolute sense. Tigers have on some occasions killed at night when people leave their houses to follow the "call of nature". Locke tells of rubber tappers in Malaya that went out before daybreak and got eaten by tigers (Locke, 1993: 124). On the other side, leopards - though on very rare occasions - have killed in bright daylight. J.C. Daniel mentions for India at least one case with the Mulher Valley man-eater, killed by Osmaston (Daniel 200). For Africa, John Taylor expresses his opinion that the leopard contrary to the same animal in India "will kill just as readily by day as by night" (Taylor, 1959: 175). But as Taylors experience with man-eating leopards is more or less restricted to one animal, this must not be generalized too. At least for India Corbett's observation as a general rule is true and this indeed should be expected according to differences in inhibition for both animals. To understand why, we have to divide our question into two separate questions:

a) Why tigers (usually) kill human beings at daytime?

It should be expected, that a man-eating tiger will kill a human being in any time of the day when opportunity arises, given he is sufficiently hungry. However opportunity arises usually during daytime hours, when humans go out to cultivate their land, guard the livestock, go for water or walk along forest paths to neighboring villages. All these activities provide the man-eater with rich opportunities to secure its victim. At night - especially when a man-eater is around - no one will leave his home without very good reason. Nevertheless, if one does for example to follow the "call of nature", a lurking tiger probably won't miss the chance. But even if a tiger, as Corbett said, has lost "all fear of human beings" or as we can say now, has a low inhibition to attack when coming across a lone person on a forest path (low Vector I), he apart from recent forms of habituation (sugarcane tiger), still has a strong inhibition to enter villages or huts (high Vector I), what would be necessary to secure human prey at night. I would predict that if humans would move around at night as freely as they do during daytime, at least as much and perhaps more of them would get eaten at night as are eaten by day. So it is the statistical factor (Vector S), that is used actively by the tiger in his favor by seeking human prey during daytime, having learned, that this is the time he has the best chance to meet them. No animal is able to hunt for 24 hours a day. It has to get some sleep and must make the decision to shift its activity either more in the daytime or in the night-time hours. It is not possible to choose both options at the same time. The "rational choice" for the animal will be the option which provides

the best chance to meet its prey under circumstances where the inhibition is smallest. For the tiger this is the daytime.

b) Why leopards (usually) kill human beings at nighttime?

Leopards are much more than tigers accustomed to live in close vicinity to human settlements. They are smaller, masters of hiding themselves in small patches of grass and forest and as a side effect, escape the pressure of the bigger predator by living close to human settlements. Because of constant habituation to human activity, the inhibition to enter human dwellings at night is quite low (low Vector I) and a man-eating leopard therefore is able to follow his human prey to the place where it spends the night, right into small villages, sometimes even entering shags and huts. But when the leopard is so bold at night, why there are so few daytime killings? We have to consider, that the leopard is a much smaller animal compared to the tiger. More than its bigger cousin he depends on an unseen and unexpected attack that makes it impossible for the victim to defend himself. When the enemy is a tiger, for a lone and unarmed person it is almost always impossible to fight back and there is no significant risk for the aggressor of being injured, even in a frontal attack. For the much smaller leopard there is a considerable higher risk of getting hurt in an open attack, even if its victim is armed only with a stick or knife.

So very “rationally”, the inhibition to attack during daylight for the leopard is higher than for the tiger (high vector I). As a rare exception, extraordinary big and confident male leopards might shift their behaviour to a certain extent in the direction of the bigger predator. This could have been the case with the Ankwazi leopard, which according to Taylor sought his human prey as readily by day as by night. Taylor described it as a very big male with pugs nearly as big as a lioness – the biggest pugs he had ever seen in a leopard. A similar case is reported by South Indian Kenneth Anderson with the man-eating panther of the Yellagiri hills which he describes as a large male with a “heavy body, nearly equaling that of a tigress in dimension” (Anderson. 2000:23). While all other man-eating leopards mentioned by Anderson killed only at night or dusk, this very big male killed a mail-carrier who carried the post from Jalarpet railway station to the villages in the surrounding hills during the early hours of the day. But for normal seized individuals, the “rational” choice is, to kill their human prey at night..

5.2.2 Why man-eating tigers are more often females and leopards more often males?

It has already been said that female tigers become man-eaters more often because of the additional difficulty of a tigress in feeding their offspring. Growing hunger in a female with cubs increases the motivation to attack (high Vector M). Concerning the inhibition (Vector I) differences in male and female tigers seem to be negligible, as an unarmed human being is no match for either sex. So with nearly constant inhibition, it is the motivation that rules and makes the difference. As a result female tigers be-

come man-eaters more often. Although the female leopard faces the same difficulties in feeding their offspring, in contrast to the tiger it is the male leopard that becomes a man-eater more often. As size difference between male and female tigers being of no real importance when compared to the relative weakness of its human prey, for the smaller leopard it is another story. Here the inhibition to attack for the even smaller female is considerably higher, heading it mainly to smaller and weaker victims like children. With the leopard, the inhibition rules and makes the difference (high Vector I), in most cases overcompensating the effect of an increased motivation in the female.

5.2.3 Why do seasonal changes exist concerning man-eating or its frequency?

The attacks of the Ankwazi leopard occurred only during the rainy seasons when the county was covered by high buffalo grass allowing the animal to come close and unseen to his human prey. In the dry season, when the grass was burnt, it was his custom to clear out of the district and the killing stopped. If, as we have seen, the night reduces the inhibition by allowing an unseen attack, it would not be far-fetched to assume, that buffalo grass could cause a similar effect: Camouflage for an undetected approach. This might be an explanation why man-eaters sometimes mysteriously disappear from the scenery and why this often seems to be connected with the dry and the wet season. This was also the case for the lions of Njombe and of the Rufiji district in Tanzania. For the Njombe prides, man-eating happened mainly during the wet season and stopped or was low level during the dry season when the annual fires went through (Baldus, 2004:25). The same was with the Rufiji man-eaters where the majority of cases occurred between November and January (short rains) and April and May (main rainy season). No deaths were reported in July and September and only few in August and October (Baldus, 2004:31). I don't see anyone who has by now given a scientific explanation for this phenomenon but on the base of inhibition and motivation, I at least can give an assumption.

As far as I can see, there are two factors that could induce seasonal changes in man-eating. The first is connected with Vector I, the inhibition to attack. When in the rainy season the grass is high, there is much more cover for the predator that can come close and unseen to places where man lives and goes after his daily work. This encourages habituation and enables unexpected attacks. As a result in the rainy season the amount of inhibition decreases (low vector I). In the dry season, when there is less cover, there is also less habituation and less opportunity for an unseen attack. As a result the inhibition increases (high vector I) and the man eating stops or declines. The second factor concerns Vector M, the motivation to attack. It can be imagined that in the dry season for the predator it is easier to hunt its natural prey, as the animals regularly have to visit waterholes where the carnivores can lay in wait. In the rainy season, there is water and cover everywhere, so the prey species are dispersed all over the plains and well hidden in cover. So at least under African conditions the rainy

season could be the more difficult time for predators, enhancing hunger and aggressive motivation (high vector M) resulting in enhanced man-eating activity.

Summary

Why does a certain tiger or leopard adopt the habit of man-eating, while the vast majority of the same species, if not provoked, never will pose a threat to human beings? Corbett's general view as outlined in "Man-eaters of Kumaon" is, that the cause is "in nine out of ten cases, wounds, and in the tenth case old age..." But a closer look at his position reveals that he had a considerably wider view and was taking in account other causes too, like scarcity of natural prey and scavenging on human bodies. Though Corbett had a remarkable deep insight as for his time, more than half a century of research and a changing world of the tiger has brought additional information and new perspectives.

In sketching a contemporary picture of this phenomenon, I point out first, that the basic question is not why individual animals become man-eaters, but why not all of them do regularly feed on human beings because for a big cat a lone and unarmed human being is a much easier kill than any of its so called natural prey species. It is argued, that avoidance of men has become an adaptive behavioural strategy that was not only enhanced by the development of modern arms, but has its roots deep in the past of human evolution and is the result of the unorthodox and sometimes intimidating behaviour of human beings.

Hereafter we discuss different theories concerning man-eating in big predators given in old hunting books and by modern time researchers. Man-eating, as a result, can be described as a "multi-causal-phenomenon" with often not only one cause responsible. Up to this point it is more or less a summarization and evaluation of what you will find in literature about this topic. But as far as I can see, we will break new ground by accomplishing an instructive systematization in the causes of man-eating. The argument is here, that all causes can be subsumed under two major terms: Motivation and Inhibition who work in combination with the statistical factor that reflects the chance of meeting the possible victim.

The "Motivation to attack", the aggressiveness of a big predator often reflects, what can simply be called "hunger". This can be caused by "wounds and old age" as well as by prey scarcity out of different reasons. Cases of non-hunger induced aggressiveness may exist too as discussed with the Sundarban tigers. But on the other side there is practically always also an "inhibition to attack". The amount of this inhibition depends for example in a predator's habituation to human presence, learned behaviour, experiences in scavenging on human corpses or the degree of hunting pressure. If an attack occurs depends on the relation of motivation and inhibition in combination with the statistical factor. With an appropriate high motivation it can occur even with high inhibition. When inhibition is low it can happen even with medium motivation. This

is the explanation that sometimes totally “normal” individuals without obvious “stress of circumstances” will turn to this habit. Describing man-eating as a “multi-causal phenomenon within the bounds of Inhibition and Motivation” can furthermore throw light on sometimes overlooked questions: Why tigers usually attack in daylight and leopards at nighttime? Why man-eating tigers are more often females while leopards are mostly males? And why do seasonal changes exist in the frequency of man-eating?

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PART FOUR: CONTROVERSIES

In this part of the book we discuss a few details of Corbett's published stories which do not match with his own writings, or when there are clear contradictions between Corbett stories with other existing sources. We can group these contradictions into three main types:

1. Contradictions between Corbett himself mentioning the same event differently in his two or more published stories from his six books;
2. Contradictions between Corbett's writings from his books and his private letters (primarily written to his sister Maggie);
3. Contradictions between Corbett's accounts of the events with the accounts of the same events by other witnesses.

Various authors of the books on Corbett displayed various attitudes to such controversies. D.C. Kala and particularly Jerry Jaleel did not pay attention to such moments. Peter Byrne discussed some of them. The biggest attention to such details was arguably devoted by Martin Booth in his biography, "Carpet Sahib." Booth came to a conclusion that Corbett was deliberately changing the real events in order to make his stories more appealing to the reader. Big part of the Corbett readers, who had a firm belief in Corbett's integrity, met Booth comments with disbelief and hostility. To others, those who were already critical to Corbett writings for various reasons, this was an open invitation to criticise Corbett.

All five authors of this book share immense respect for Corbett, but at the same we are open to various interpretations of the existing controversies. So we will do our best to present every dubious case from various points of the view. It is highly possible that dedicated Corbett fans will be able to notice some other controversies in Corbett writings in the future.

Not all of these controversies are equally well known to Corbett fans. Some of them had been already discussed in other Corbett related publications, but others will be raised and discussed for the first time by the authors of this book.

Killing of the Chowgarh Man-Eater

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

In this chapter we are going to discuss one of the most widely known and discussed events, the dramatic final scene of killing the man-eater of Chowgarh. This scene is probably central in the dispute between different opinions about Corbett as a hunter and about his integrity as a writer.

Corbett killed the Chowgarh man-eater tigress on April 11th, 1930. This is one of the three precise killing dates that we know from Corbett books (other two are the killing of Rudraprayag leopard, and the Thak tigress). This date must have survived because while hunting the tigress, Corbett used the map of Kumaon to map the villages frequented by the tigress, and after killing her, Corbett put the place and the date of killing on the same map.

There are three main sources of this dramatic showdown and our text mostly discusses the details that do not match in these three sources:

Corbett's story "Chowgarh Tigers" is the first source;

Corbett's letter to his sister Maggie, where Corbett describes how the elusive tigress was finally put to rest, is the second source;

The original 'Chowgarh tigers' chapter published in Corbett's self-published 'Jungle stories', 1935 is our third source.

The first source, the story of Chowgarh tigers, was written in the first half of the 1930s, as the story was included Corbett's first, self-published book "Jungle Stories" (printed in 1935). The story became a part of the book "Man-Eaters of Kumaon." The letter was written on the day of killing, on the April 11th, 1930, only couple of hours after the hunt. It is obvious that when writing his story several years later, Corbett did not use his letter to Maggie. Possibly he did not use the letter to Maggie because he was confident he remembered every detail of the hunt extremely well. Otherwise it is difficult to believe that Corbett did not remember writing such a letter. Anyway, these two texts were written in different times, and there are several big and small discrepancies if we compare them.

Let us first of all listen what Corbett says in his published account of the event, and then have a look at his own description of the events from his own letter written on a fresher memory. We will pay a special attention to the contradicting information between these two sources. The following is an excerpt from the story "Chowgarh Tigers." We hope that Corbett fans do not mind reading this famous excerpt from his book "Man-eaters of Kumaon." Contradicting details are given in bold for the readers to see and compare easily:

"I had gone out that day at **2 p.m.** with the intention of tying up my three buffaloes at selected places along the forest road, when at

a point a mile from the bungalow, where the road crosses a ridge and goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range, I came on a large party of men who had been out collecting firewood. In the party was an old man who, pointing down the hill to a thicket of young oak trees some five hundred yards from where we were standing, said it was in that thicket where the man-eater, a month previously, had killed his only son, a lad eighteen years of age. I had not heard the father's version of the killing of his son, so, while we sat on the edge of the road smoking, he told his story, pointing out the spot where the lad had been killed, and where all that was left of him had been found the following day.

The old man blamed the twenty-five men who had been out collecting firewood on that day for the death of his son, saying, very bitterly, that they had run away and left him to be killed by the tiger. Some of the men sitting near me had been in that party of twenty-five and they hotly repudiated responsibility for the lad's death, accusing him of having been responsible for the stampede by screaming out that he had heard the tiger growling and telling everyone to run for their lives. This did not satisfy the old man. He shook his head and said, "You are grown men and he was only a boy, and you ran away and left him to be killed". I was sorry for having asked the questions that had led to this heated discussion, and more to placate the old man than for any good it would do, I said I would tie up one of my buffaloes near the spot where he said his son had been killed. So, handing two of the buffaloes over to the party to take back to the bungalow, I set off followed by **two of my men** leading the remaining buffalo.

A footpath, taking off close to where we had been sitting, went down the hill to the valley below and zigzagged up the opposite pine-clad slope to join the forest road two miles further on. The path passed close to an open patch of ground which bordered the oak thicket in which the lad had been killed. On this patch of ground, which was about thirty yards square, there was a solitary pine sapling. This I cut down. I tied the buffalo to the stump, set one man to cutting a supply of grass for it, and sent the other man, Madho Singh, who served in the Garhwalis during the Great War and is now serving in the United Provinces Civil Pioneer Force, up an oak tree with instructions to strike a dry branch with the head of his axe and call at the top of his voice as hill people do when cutting leaves for their cattle. I then took up a position on a rock, about four feet high, on the lower edge of the open ground. Beyond the rock the hill fell steeply away to the valley below and was densely clothed with tree and scrub jungle.

The man on the ground had made several trips with the grass he had cut, and Madho Singh on the tree was alternately shouting and singing lustily, while I stood on the rock smoking, with the rifle in

the hollow of my left arm, when, all at once, I became aware that the man-eater had arrived. Beckoning urgently to the man on the ground to come to me, I whistled to attract Madho Singh's attention and signaled to him to remain quiet. The ground on three sides was comparatively open. Madho Singh on the tree was to my left front, the man cutting grass had been in front of me, while the buffalo now showing signs of uneasiness was to my right front. In this area the tigress could not have approached without my seeing her; and as she had approached, there was only one place where she could now be, and that was behind and immediately below me.

When taking up my position I had noticed that the further side of the rock was steep and smooth, that it extended down the hill for eight or ten feet, and that the lower portion of it was masked by thick undergrowth and young pine saplings. It would have been a little difficult, but quite possible, for the tigress to have climbed the rock, and I relied for my safety on hearing her in the undergrowth should she make the attempt.

I have no doubt that the tigress, attracted, as I had intended she should be, by the noise Madho Singh was making, had come to the rock, and that it was while she was looking up at me and planning her next move that I had become aware of her presence. My change of front, coupled with the silence of the men, may have made her suspicious; anyway, after a lapse of a few minutes, I heard a dry twig snap a little way down the hill; thereafter the feeling of unease left me, and the tension relaxed. An opportunity lost; but there was still a very good chance of my getting a shot, for she would undoubtedly return before long, and when she found us gone would probably content herself with killing the buffalo. There were still four or five hours of daylight, and by crossing the valley and going up the opposite slope I should be able to overlook the whole of the hillside on which the buffalo was tethered. The shot, if I did get one, would be a long one of from two to three hundred yards, but the .275 rifle I was carrying was accurate, and even if I only wounded the tigress I should have a blood trail to follow, which would be better than feeling about for her in hundreds of square miles of jungle, as I had been doing these many months.

The men were a difficulty. To have sent them back to the bungalow alone would have been nothing short of murder, so of necessity I kept them with me.

Tying the buffalo to the stump in such a manner as to make it impossible for the tigress to carry it away, I left the open ground and rejoined the path to carry out the plan I have outlined, of trying to get a shot from the opposite hill.

About a hundred yards along the path I came to a ravine. On the far side of this the path entered very heavy undergrowth, and as it

was inadvisable to go into thick cover with two men following me, I decided to take to the ravine, follow it down to its junction with the valley, work up the valley and pick up the path on the far side of the undergrowth.

The ravine was about ten yards wide and four or five feet deep, and as I stepped down into it a nightjar fluttered off a rock on which I had put my hand. On looking at the spot from which the bird had risen, I saw two eggs. These eggs, straw-coloured, with rich brown markings, were of a most unusual shape, one being long and very pointed, while the other was as round as a marble; and as my collection lacked nightjar eggs I decided to add this odd clutch to it. I had no receptacle of any kind in which to carry the eggs, so cupping my left hand I placed the eggs in it and packed them round with a little moss. As I went down the ravine the banks became higher, and sixty yards from where I had entered it I came on a deep drop of some twelve to fourteen feet. The water that rushes down all these hill ravines in the rains had worn the rock as smooth as glass, and as it was too steep to offer a foothold I handed the rifle to the men and, sitting on the edge, proceeded to slide down. My feet had hardly touched the sandy bottom when the **two men**, with a flying leap, landed one on either side of me, and thrusting the rifle into my hand asked in a very agitated manner if I had **heard the tiger**. As a matter of fact I had heard nothing, possibly due to the scraping of my clothes on the rocks, and when questioned, the men said that what they had heard was a deep-throated growl from somewhere close at hand, but exactly from which direction the sound had come, they were unable to say. Tigers do not betray their presence by growling when looking for their dinner and the only, and very unsatisfactory, explanation I can offer is that the tigress followed us after we left the open ground, and on seeing that we were going down the ravine had gone ahead and taken up a position where the ravine narrowed to half its width; and that when she was on the point of springing out on me, I had disappeared out of sight down the slide and she had involuntarily given vent to her disappointment with a low growl. Not a satisfactory reason, unless one assumes without any reason that she had selected me for her dinner, and therefore had no interest in the **two men**. Where the three of us now stood in a bunch we had the smooth steep rock behind us, to our right a wall of rock slightly leaning over the ravine and fifteen feet high, and to our left a tumbled bank of big rocks thirty or forty feet high. The sandy bed of the ravine, on which we were standing, was roughly forty feet long and ten feet wide. At the lower end of this sandy bed a great pine tree had fallen across, damming the ravine, and the collection of the sand was due to this dam. The wall of overhanging rock came to an end twelve or fifteen feet from the fallen tree, and as I approached the end of the rock, my feet making

no sound on the sand, I very fortunately noticed that the sandy bed continued round to the back of the rock.

This rock about which I have said so much I can best describe as a giant school slate, two feet thick at its lower end, and standing up not quite perpendicularly on one of its long sides.

As I stepped clear of the giant slate, I looked behind me over my right shoulder and looked straight into the tigress's face.

I would like you to have a clear picture of the situation.

The sandy bed behind the rock was quite flat. To the right of it was the smooth slate fifteen feet high and leaning slightly outwards, to the left of it was a scoured-out steep bank also some fifteen feet high overhung by a dense tangle of thorn bushes, while at the far end was a slick similar to, but a little higher than the one I had glissaded down. The sandy bed, enclosed by these three natural walls, was about twenty feet long and half as wide, and lying on it, with her fore-paws stretched out and her hind legs well tucked under her, was the tigress. Her head, which was raised a few inches off her paws, was eight feet (measured later) from me, and on her face was a smile, similar to that one sees on the face of a dog welcoming his master home after a long absence.

Two thoughts flashed through my mind, one, that it was up to me to make the first move, and the other, that the move would have to be made in such a manner as not to alarm the tigress or make her nervous.

The rifle was in my right hand held diagonally across my chest, **with the safety-catch off**, and in order to get it to bear on the tigress the muzzle would have to be swung round three-quarters of a circle.

The movement of swinging round the rifle, with one hand, was begun **very slowly, and hardly perceptibly**, and when a quarter of a circle had been made, the stock came in contact with my right side. It was now necessary to extend my arm, and as the stock cleared my side, the swing was very slowly continued. My arm was now at full stretch and the weight of the rifle was beginning to tell. Only a little further now for the muzzle to go, and the tigress who had not once taken her eyes off mine was still looking up at me, with the pleased expression still on her face.

How long it took the rifle to make the three-quarter circle, I am not in a position to say. To me, looking into the tigress's eyes and unable therefore to follow the movement of the barrel, it appeared that my arm was paralyzed, and that the swing would never be completed. However, the movement was completed at last, and as soon as the rifle was pointing at the tigress's body, I pressed the trigger.

I heard the report, exaggerated in that restricted space, and felt the jar of the recoil, and but for these tangible proofs that the rifle had gone off, I might, for all the immediate result the shot

produced, have been in the grip of one of those awful nightmares in which triggers are vainly pulled of rifles that refuse to be discharged at the critical moment.

For a perceptible fraction of time the tigress remained perfectly still, and then, very slowly, her head sank on to her outstretched paws, while at the same time a jet of blood issued from the bullet-hole. The bullet had injured her spine and shattered the upper portion of her heart.

The **two men** who were following a few yards behind me, and who were separated from the tigress by the thickness of the rock, came to a halt when they saw me stop and turn my head. They knew instinctively that I had seen the tigress and judged from my behaviour that she was close at hand, and Madho Singh said afterwards that he wanted to call out and tell me to drop the eggs and get both hands on the rifle. When I had fired my shot and lowered the point of the rifle on to my toes, Madho Singh, at a sign, came forward to relieve me of it, for very suddenly my legs appeared to be unable to support me, so I made for the fallen tree and sat down. Even before looking at the pads of her feet I knew it was the Chowgarh tigress I had sent to the Happy Hunting Grounds, and that the shears that had assisted her to cut the threads of sixty-four human lives the people of the district put the number at twice that figure had, while the game was in her hands, turned, and cut the thread of her own life."

I hope the inquisitive readers will not be bored to read the same fascinating hunting scene one more times. This time the account is much shorter, with much less details, but most importantly, it was written on the day it happened, April 11th, 1930. The letter was written for Maggie, the lifelong companion and the only family member for the second half of Corbett's life:

"...at three o'clock this afternoon I set out to tie a katra [buffalo] up at Saryapani where I have been tying up since the 31st. On the way out I changed my mind and instead of going to Saryapani turned down the forest track with the intention of trying the katra up where the Chamoli boy was killed on the 25th February. Most of the jungle had been burnt but I came on a nice bit of green grass on which several sambhar were feeding. It looked as good a place as any so I made the men (I had three with me) collect a few bindles of oak trees, and before leaving the katra I made a man go up a tree growing at the edge of the Khud and call as they do here when out with cattle. I, in the meantime, stood on a projecting rock nearby and once I thought I heard a movement down below me but could not be sure. Anyway the men had heard nothing so we left the katra, to go up the zig zag track to Dharompani where the Vivians and I had sat one evening looking down to valley. After going a few yards I came to a deep nala. As it looked a likely place for tracks I climbed down into it and found the tracks of the man-eater. The tracks were old, possibly made by the

tiger when going away after eating out Vivian's katra. Anyway I decided to go down the nala and look for tracks where it joined the main ravine. The going was bad over huge rocks and in one place I wanted a free hand. By the way, I have forgotten to mention that I picked up two nightjar's eggs close to where the katra was tied so I handed the rifle over to Madho Singh. I got down alright and as Madho Singh joined me he put the rifle into my hand, I had eggs in the other, and whispered that some animal had growled like a pig or a bear, he was not sure which. The nala was very narrow just here, and to our right and overhanging us was an enormous rock the top of which was about 8 feet above our heads. As the lower end of the rock the bed of the nala was on a level with the banks. I tip toed forward without making a sound and as I cleared the rock, I looked over my right shoulder and - looked straight into the tiger's face. She flattered down her ears and barred her teeth and slipped forward but by then I had slipped the safety over and the bullet went through her heart. It was all over in a heart beat and the tiger was dead as a nail. I am glad I got her like this - no sitting up and no fuss. She was just what I expected her to be - old and thin; cracked pads and teeth worn down to the gums, but her coat, on the whole, is not bad. I told Vivian last year that she was 8-4. I might be an inch out - not more. I did not break the eggs and the nightjar was glad to get them back.

There are a few conflicting details in these two sources, as indicated in bold in both texts. These details are:

1. In story Corbett mentions starting his hunt at 2pm, in the letter - at 3pm;
2. In story Corbett mentions two accompanying men, in the letter - three men;
3. In story Corbett does not mention the presence of sambars, in the letter he does;
4. In story Corbett does not mention seeing the old tracks of the man-eater, in the letter he does mention seeing them;
5. In story the men whispered to Corbett that they heard a tiger growl, in the letter his men whispered him that they were not sure if the sound was from a pig or a bear;
6. In story Corbett mentions his rifle's safety catch was off when he saw the tigress, in the letter - he slipped the safety over after seeing the tigress;
7. In story, after seeing the tigress, Corbett moved his rifle agonisingly slowly, in order not to alert the tigress, in the letter the tigress made a move but he beat her and it was "over in a heartbeat";

It is clear that that both of these sources cannot be true, and that there could be various reasons they do not coincide. There are several things we should take into account before we start discussing these discrepancies.

Firstly: Corbett wrote the letter on the same day, only couple of hours later after killing the tigress, so the letter was written with a much fresher memory than the

story. The story was written some 3-5 years later (it appeared in the first self-published Corbett book, "Jungle Stories". So basically, we need to trust the letter more than to the story, as the loss of memory during several years is quite probable.

Secondly: Corbett wrote the letter to Maggie in order to let her to know that the hunt was over, how it went, and that he was safe. In the story, on the other hand, Corbett tried to give his readers as many details as he remembered. Therefore although the letter is written on a fresher memory, it does not contain many details that were not important for Corbett (or better to say – for Maggie) that moment. The story, although written much later, was written with the intention to provide as many details as possible. Compare: this episode in the published story version contains 2585 words, and the same episode in the letter version contains only 548 words. So the story version is more than five times longer, with many more details.

So, on one hand, we need to trust the letter as the primary source, but we should remember as well that Corbett might have omitted some secondary details in his letter. For example, meeting villagers, and the dispute between the father of the killed Chamoli boy with other villagers, is completely absent in the letter to Maggie. Corbett only mentions "On the way out I changed my mind and instead of going to Saryapani turned down the forest track with the intention of trying the katra up where the Chamoli boy was killed on the 25th February," without mentioning the reason of changing his mind – talking to the villagers and the father of the Chamoli boy.

Most of the differences mentioned above must be attributed to the gradual memory failure and should be resolved in favour of the letter. There can be no other explanation, as these details (2pm instead of 3pm two men instead of three men etc.) do not make the story more exciting. Also, failure to mention of old tiger tracks in the story must be attributed to the memory failure, as the presence of the tiger tracks (even the old ones) would have given the reader some additional thrill.

What Corbett's men told him about the growl they heard is also different in these sources: tiger (in the story) vs. pig or the bear (in the letter). This contradiction most likely is the result of a combination of the memory failure and sub-conscious sublimation: after forgetting to mention the presence of the old tiger tracks, Corbett's memory possibly compensated this miss by mentioning the "tiger growl" which is absent in the letter.

The most important difference is the last moment of the hunt: how did Corbett turned hit rifle and fired after he saw the tigress ready to attack him from behind. This is something he would never forget, so we cannot explain this difference with a memory failure.

According to the letter (which was written straight after the hunt), the tigress made the move ("slipped forward"), but he was faster and it was "over in a heartbeat." According to the story, the tigress did not make any moves, and in order to bring his

rifle in a position to fire at the tigress, Corbett had to turn of the rifle agonisingly slowly, in order not to alert the tigress.

Which of these descriptions should be considered correct, and why Corbett's description of the ending of the episode are so different?

Martin Booth believed that the true course of the events was given in the letter, and that Corbett dramatized the story in order to make it a better read. If we want to accept this point of view, we have one problem to overcome: was this **physically possible**? I mean was it possible that Corbett beat the tigress in speed in this situation?

Let us remember, that when Corbett saw the tigress, according to both the letter and story,

he was standing with his back to the tigress,
his rifle was facing towards the totally wrong direction from the tigress,
he had the nightjar eggs in his left hand, and finally,
the tigress was only eight feet from Corbett (less than 2.5 metres).

So Corbett was in the worst possible situation to shot the tigress. He was facing the other way, unlike the tigress that was facing him; Corbett was not ready to shoot, unlike the tigress that was well prepared to jump. Even if Corbett's both hands were free, the quick reaction and momentous shot at the tigress without grave consequences for Corbett would have been quite impossible.

Let us listen to Peter Byrne, professional hunter from Nepal, one of the first researchers of Corbett legacy, who dedicated a book to Corbett hunting exploits. In his book Byrne specially analysed the Chowgarh tigress killing scene and discussed exactly this situation, namely, what would have happened if Corbett did not have eggs in his left hand. This is what Peter Byrne writes: "in this case he would almost certainly have been carrying the rifle in both hands, and would probably have attempted to swing around and draw down on the tigress the instant he saw her. My guess is that he would have got a bullet into her because Corbett was very quick, and a first class shot. But the sudden action would almost certainly have provoked an instantaneous reaction on the part of the tigress, which in this case would have been an attack. And an attack from a big cat, at close range, a cat that is fully prepared, with its back legs tucked under it, tensed, ready to hurl itself forward, would not have been stopped by a .275 bullet. Squarely shot, even in mid air, the cat might have been mortally wounded. But the impetus of its spring, plus the fact that it had Corbett squarely on its path, with its eyes targeted on him, plus the minimal distance involved – eight feet – would have had the cat on top of him, biting, tearing, even in its dying throes. And even a single bite from a big cat can well be fatal, certainly, in the case of man, if it is in the head and neck area of its victim."

So in the view of a professional hunter, **even if Corbett had both of his hands free**, the instantaneous action on his side, mentioned in Corbett's letter to Maggie, would not have been possible without grave consequences for Corbett. But as we

know, Corbett did not even have both hands free, so the “instant turn and quick fire” scenario becomes truly impossible. By the way, Corbett himself mentions (as a positive factor) that the eggs in his left hand forced him to act very slowly and thus saved him.

What about the scene described in the story? Is it possible to come to the conclusion that the true course of event of the final scene of hunting are faithfully described in the story? I will now try to explain the possible psychological factors behind the human-tiger behaviour in such a close encounter.

Psychology of close encounter

When humans, like many other living beings, are suddenly finding themselves in a deadly situation, they as a rule resort to instinctive actions. The stimulus of danger is too strong to allow a well thought and logical behaviour. So what our powerful instincts tell us? There is a famous “flight or fight instinct” for most of the living organisms. According to the story, Corbett did not resort to any of them although the danger was more than deadly. Was this possible? Yes, even very likely. Scholars found that fight and flight are not the only instinctive responses to such deadly situations in humans and some animals. There is a third extremely important but often neglected action – freezing. Therefore, the instinctive response to critical situation actually has three versions: “fight, flight or freeze.” And it is a well known fact that in the most critical situations, like sudden attack or the imminent strong violence, humans often freeze. Despite the popular misconception that freezing in a critical situation is a deadly mistake and will surely lead to the death, freezing is actually a life-saving instinctive response, particularly **when a human is facing a predator**.

Why is this so? Animal psychologists unanimously declare that if you suddenly find yourself facing a deadly predator, under no circumstances you should try to run. Long evolutionary interaction between our ancestors and the predators taught our ancestors that predators attack as soon as you start running for your life. There is a fascinating book, written by a professional safari guide from Botswana Peter Allison. The title of his book tells it all: “Whatever You Do, Don’t Run: True Tales of a Botswana Safari Guide.” The idea of the book and title is very simple: only food runs! So your best option for survival if you meet a big cat or other dangerous predator is to stay still and not to try to run away.

Of course, tigers, lions and other stealth predators attack not only the running prey. As a matter of fact, they much prefer to attack their prey while the prey is unaware of the presence of the predator. But if the prey sees the predator, predator either abandons the hunt, or stops and expects the prey to behave like a prey – to run. The situation at the giant slate was a classic example of the psychological duel between a human and a big cat.

The tigress saw Corbett first, and most likely if Corbett did not have a glance above his right shoulder, in a second or two the tigress would have made a jump, leaving

Corbett no chance or time to respond. But Corbett looked back, and the imminent attack was arrested. As her cover was blown away, the tigress most likely anticipated the human to start running away, but Corbett froze, and he quickly realized that the first move was up to him. This thought was absolutely correct. According to Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (*The Old Way*, 2006), Bushmen, living in close interaction with the lions, taught her and her family members that if they meet a lion in close proximity (and Elizabeth together with her brother had such a close meeting with a male lion), they should not to run, but to stop for a while and then start walking away in an oblique line. In this situation, facing the tigress from less than two and half metres, any sharp movement would have been interpreted either as an attack, or the desire to run away, both inevitably triggering the immediate tiger response. Peter Byrne is very clear about the chances of a hunter trying to stop a tiger from such a short range with a not so heavy rifle. So the very slow movement, without any rush, and without taking eyes from the eyes of the tiger, was probably the only correct way to behave. Hard to imagine what was going on in Corbett's head while he was turning his rifle for 280 degrees with one hand, but we know that after he fired the shot, he was unable to remain on his feet.

Therefore, I maintain, that the behaviour of both Corbett and the tigress in this extremely tense episode, as it is described in the story, is absolutely natural. So although the scene might seem to readers far-fetched and over-dramatised, the behaviour of a human and a predator is quite natural.

By the way, Corbett, a first-class naturalist with a keen eye, noticed the instinctive freezing behaviour of humans during the danger earlier in his life. In a story, written about his trusted hunting friend Robin, Corbett specially mentioned this feature of human behaviour. When responding to the all-out attack of a wounded leopard, Robin run away for his life, but Corbett remained frozen where he was, and later Corbett remarked:

"Our reactions to the sudden and quite unexpected danger that had confronted us were typical of how a canine and a human being act in an emergency... in Robin's case it had impelled him to seek safety in silent and rapid retreat; whereas in my case it had the effect of gluing my feet to the ground and making retreat rapid or otherwise impossible."

So if we compare these two accounts, describing the details of the dramatic encounter with the Chowgarh tigress, one from the written story, and another from the letter, we must come to a conclusion, that the events described in the letter, implying turning around in a split second and killing a man eating tigress which was ready to jump, without provoking her to jump, is virtually impossible. On the other hand, the events described in the story are much more realistic, both from physical as well as psychological point of view in reference of human and big cat behaviour.

If we accept that Corbett told the truth in the story, we are automatically coming to the conclusion that **he did not tell his sister the true course of event** of hunting on the day when it happened. This is a serious problem. We need to find a good reason why did Corbett tell his sister something different, instead of describing thing as they were in reality? Loss of memory is out of question, as Corbett was writing his letter to Maggie just a couple of hours later after the hunt, possibly even still feeling the inner tremor from the near-fatal encounter. So what was the reason for Corbett to change the details of the final encounter with the tigress?

Is it possible to propose that Corbett wanted to impress his sister, and invented a story that from this impossible situation, with his back to the tiger, and with only one free hand, he managed to beat the tiger in speed, instead of admitting candidly that he was on a mercy of a man-eater? Readers might agree this explanation is extremely unlikely.

But there is another and much simpler explanation why Corbett did not tell the full truth to his sister. When a family member loves another family member very strongly, the loving family member is often consciously spared of any negative or scary events that happened to the loved family member. Corbett and Maggie were the two most dedicated people for each other. As the older and caring sister, Maggie nursed Jim on several occasions after doctors were losing hope for his revival. None of them married and they both were completely dedicated to each other. From Corbett letters we know that Maggie was sending her brother cakes while Jim was after man-eaters. We also know that Maggie sometimes tried to stop her brother from going after man-eaters. We know it was Maggie who made Corbett to give a word that his hunt for the Thak tigress would be his last hunt for a man-eater. And it was Maggie who asked her brother to be back by December 1st 1938 whatever the result of the hunt was. And we certainly know how diligent Corbett was in keeping his word to Maggie from the Thak man-eater story. Loving someone and knowing that your loved family member is hunting a man eating tiger, is already a nerve-wrecking experience. Therefore, it seems very natural to think that Corbett wanted to spare his sister from realising how close her brother came to his own death on April 11th 1930. Therefore, I suggest that when writing a letter, Corbett consciously restrained himself from mentioning the scariest detail of the hunt. And the scariest detail of this hunt was that Corbett's life was entirely in the mercy of the dreaded man-eater.

We do not know for how long did this situation actually last, as Corbett was not in a position to tell accurately the time elapsed. For him the tense moment was definitely stretched in time, as it is for many people in a grave danger. But any stretch of time, from a few seconds to possibly a minute or two, while Corbett was slowly turning his rifle, he was balancing on the edge of his death. For Corbett this was the scariest fact of this dramatic hunting event, and to me it is natural that he did not reveal this detail to his caring sister. It is also symptomatic that Corbett did not mention in the

letter that after shooting the tigress, he found his legs were failing him. Instead, his words are downplaying the danger he underwent, and describe how happy he was that he got the tigress so easily: "I am glad I got her like this – no sitting up and no fuss."

According to our current medical knowledge, such extremely stressful moments leave unwanted legacy on the heart. If this is true, Corbett's heart must have been definitely affected with such stressful events. And who know whether Corbett's death in 1955 from a massive heart attack was partly corroborated by the accumulation of the negative effects of the most stressful events from his hunting career. Killing of the Chowgarh tigress was possibly one of the most stressful events of Corbett's long career of a man-eating tiger and leopard hunting.

The important methodological lesson of this story for Corbett researchers is that when discussing controversies in Corbett writings, apart from such a factor as gradual memory corruption, **we should also take into account the psychological factor. More precisely, we should treat Corbett's letters written to Maggie with a great care, as in his letters to Maggie Corbett could have omitted or changed the scariest details of the hunt in order to downplay the danger he was experiencing.**

Martin Booth was very sceptical about other elements of the story as well. For example, the possibility that Corbett had nightjar eggs in his left hand sounded to him totally unbelievable. "This really is a good deal to believe," wrote Booth, "To accept the tale one has to believe that Jim was stupid enough to collect the eggs (why not to get them later?) when stalking a man-eater he knew to be in the vicinity..." It is after this accusation that Booth cites Corbett's letter to Maggie, in order prove that Corbett does have discrepancies between his story and his letter to Maggie. Unfortunately, Booth fails to acknowledge, that the fact of holding eggs (and even returning the eggs back to the nest) are clearly present both in the story and in the letter.

To understand why Corbett picked up the unusually shaped eggs, we should remember that when he was going down the nala, he was not expecting the man-eater to be that close. Yes, there were pugmarks, as this is mentioned in the letter, but they were old. Yes, his men whispered that they possible heard the growl of a pig or bear, but he knew tigers do not betray their position when they are stalking someone. On the other hand, let us remember that Corbett was a born naturalist, and for him seeing a couple of uniquely shaped nightjar eggs was quite a thrilling experience. And above all, we should remember when Corbett was going down the nala, his goal was to go up the other side of the deep ravine and from the distance of about 200-300 metres watch the tethered buffalo. Corbett would have definitely followed Martin Booth advice and collected the uniquely shaped eggs later if he could have known that his meeting with the man-eater was only seconds away. Let us remember that Corbett was following the Chowgarh tigress for many months, and he had no idea the dramatic showdown was so close.

In a way, the climactic scenes of killing of the Chowgarh and Thak man-eaters are complete opposites to each other: in Thak story the climax is gradually building up for the long and messy half an hour, after Corbett hears the tigresses call and starts calling her up. This build up consists of Corbett and his men running down in a desperate search for a suitable place to meet the tigress, gradually approaching and calling tigress, fading light, Corbett sitting in an awkward position on a narrow ledge, and terrorised people and goats sitting under Corbett... All these elements create an unforgettable dynamic climax. On the other hand, in the Chowgarh story the climax hits the reader in an instant, with Corbett's words "I looked around and looked straight into Tigresses eyes..." Seeing the tigress was clearly unexpected for Corbett, and that was the chief reason he was so badly prepared for the encounter, with eggs in his left hand, rifle across the chest, and with his back to the tigress.

We need also to discuss briefly the difference between the story and the letter about the safety catch of the .275 rifle. In story Corbett clearly mentions that the safety catch was off, and in the letter to Maggie he mentions that he "slipped the safety over." So which is correct?

As a great Corbett fan Noel Maxx, who owns a replica of Corbett's .275 rifle explained to me, Rigby Mauser .275 has three positions of the safety catch: (1) on, (2) intermediate, and (3) off. Two of them block the fire, and only the "off" position allows firing the rifle. Most importantly, if you are holding this rifle with one hand, it is impossible to put the rifle into the firing position ("off") from the closed ("on") position, but it is possible to change the safety catch from the intermediate position to the firing position using the thumb of the right hand. So it is clear that when Corbett looked in the eyes of the tigress, the rifle was either in full "off" position (ready to fire), or in intermediate position (where Corbett could slip the safety off) using his only free hand. We do not know exactly if the safety catch position was "intermediate" or "off" for sure, but we know this could not be "on" position.

Even more interesting is why the rifle was not fully "on" position (not allowing shooting). Hunters open the safety catch only when they know the situation is very tense and that they might not have an extra second to change the safety catch from "on" to "off." Let us remember, Corbett and his men needed to go to the other side of the gorge. Corbett was so sure that there was no urgent need to fire in the next few minutes that he even picked up the eggs, and a minute later he gave his rifle to one of his men. There is no way to think that Corbett was expecting to see the tigress is a few seconds and he was behaving so irresponsibly. So Corbett was not expecting the need of urgent fire in the next few minutes at least. This brings us to the conclusion that when they were walking down the ravine, and when Corbett glided down the smooth rock face, the rifle was still in "on" position. But in the moment when Corbett's men gave the rifle to him, the rifle was clearly in firing state. What has happened in these couple of seconds and who could change the safety catch position?

As we know, while Corbett was gliding down, his men heard a growl (tiger? pig? Bear?), so they know the danger could be very close. Corbett did not hear the growl probably because of the noise his cloth was making while he was gliding down (he mentions this himself). So before his men gave Corbett the rifle back, they most likely put the safety catch in “off” (or “intermediary”) position. They definitely knew Corbett had eggs in his left hand (that’s why he gave them the rifle in the first place), and they correctly assumed he might need the rifle quite soon.

Why they did not take eggs from him? Most likely Corbett did not believe the growl could come from the tiger (he writes that tigers do not betray their presence when hunting), so they behaved according to their understanding of the danger: his men knew tiger could be close and put the safety off before giving the rifle to Corbett. On the other hand Corbett did not think giving the eggs to them as he did not believe the level of alert was so high.

So the sequence of events with the safety catch was most likely the following:

- (1) When Corbett glided down the smooth rock the safety catch was on (otherwise he would not have given the rifle to anyone, creating a potential disastrous situation);
- (2) The couple of seconds while Corbett was gliding down, something important has happened - his men heard growling sound and they knew the tiger could be very close;
- (3) So they gave Corbett the rifle with already switched safety catch on firing position, and told him his they heard tiger growl;
- (4) Corbett took the rifle with safety catch off (his good luck!), but did not think of giving his men the eggs to free his hand, as he did not believe the tiger could be so close.
- (5) the fact that in the critical moment Corbett had the rifle diagonally across his chest also tells us that he did not believe the danger was so imminent: if he knew the tigress was so close, instead of having the rifle across his chest (which is the “walking with gun” position), he would have had the rifle pointing forward (“expecting the danger” position).

Martin Booth questioned also the possibility of Corbett managing to turn his rifle very slowly with his right hand alone. He even did an experiment to check if this was physically possible, and reported that he himself was not able to do this movement (despite him being a trained sportsman with strong hands). We must give a credit to him though when he reports that one of his hunting friends was able to repeat Corbett’s movements.

Overall, it is very strange that Booth did not question how manageable was for Corbett to kill the tigress as he wrote in his letter to Maggie – from standing with his back to the tigress, turning and shooting, beating the tigress in speed, with only one free hand, and even switching the safety catch while he was doing his impossible feat.

So in discussing the Chowgarh killing scene, we have to agree that Martin Booth was very inconsistent in his beliefs and doubts.

To conclude this discussion, I would like to say that yes, there are clear contradictions between Corbett's description of the hunting the Chowgarh tigress in his book and his letter to his sister. Most of these contradictions were the result of a memory failure, and the information provided in a letter should be considered correct. But in his description of the most dramatic moment of the hunt, when he was facing the tigress, Corbett's written account of the hunt in a story is a more precise description of real events than his letter to Maggie. This discrepancy most likely arose because Corbett deliberately changed the sequence of events in his letter in order to conceal from his sister how close he came to his death on that day. Here we can also add that the third source of the event (story from the 1935 self-published "Jungle Stories") is confirming all the details discussed above, including the slow movement of the rifle and the safety catch being off.

How long the slow turning of the rifle took? Corbett did not know how much time did the turning of the rifle took, but for sure, in such situations this would seem like an eternity. People caught in critical situations (for example, in earthquake or a road accident) often report that time slows down and each second seemed like minutes. And as this moment is so nerve wrecking as it is for millions of the readers of Corbett books, would be even more for Jim's sister, for whom Jim was the only person she lived for. Therefore, Jim's desire to spare her from this experience is quite natural to understand.

I do not know what you think of my argument, dear reader, but even from the factual point of view, is much more realistic to believe that Corbett did not describe his nerve-wrecking slow turning in a letter to his sister in order to spare her from negative emotions, than to believe that he did a totally unbelievable split second turn with a rifle in one hand and eggs in the other hand, and shot tigress without even dropping the eggs. It would be also extremely difficult to believe that Corbett concealed doing this unbelievable feat in his book in order to make his reading more thrilling.

Yes, we can all agree that the situation in which the Chowgarh tigress was killed was extraordinary. However, the detailed comparison between Jim's story and his letter, written for his sister, and the psychological analyses of the close encounter of a human with a lethal predator (from both sides) strongly suggests that in his story Jim Corbett simply described the events of the actual hunt. Most of the contradicting details of the hunt, described in his letter to Maggie and in the story, were the result of gradual corruption of his memory. And most importantly, we came to the conclusion that Corbett most likely tried to spare his sister's nerves by concealing the scariest moment of his hunt, when his life was at mercy of a dreaded man-eater.

In the conclusion we can say with a confidence that we can criticise Jim Corbett for occasional memory failures and we should be careful when deciding which of the

sources is to be trusted when there are discrepancies. Several such cases are analysed in this book. But we cannot accuse him of deliberate changing of the real events in order to make his stories a better read. Following his usual writing style, in the story of the Chowgarh tigress, Corbett only gave a detailed description of this extraordinary hunt at best as he remembered it²⁹.

²⁹ Author is very grateful to Kristoff Kotecha, Manfred Waltl, and Noel Maxx for helpful comments and advice during the final stage of writing of this chapter.

The Rudraprayag goat controversy

By PRIYVRAT GADHVI

While precise date-related inconsistencies are typically encountered more often in Corbett's stories, as are enumerated in this book, 'situational inconsistencies', the more serious consideration, are found in but two occasions. The first, with the climax of the Chowgarh hunt, has already been discussed.

A second such discrepancy arises in Corbett's 1948 'Maneating leopard of Rudraprayag', published in Oxford University Press. The Rudraprayag story, despite told in Corbett's typical narrative, is nevertheless more upfront, fluid in many places, albeit in a nuanced way. In moments where the tension is at its zenith, where Corbett's life and sometimes that of his companions literally hangs by a very fine thread & where the notorious leopard has him at his complete mercy, Corbett is more forthcoming in expressing his fear and distress.

At no point in the entire book is this unease and tension more pronounced for the reader than during the part where Corbett, Ibbotson and another man are 'teased' by the leopard who has them at his mercy. Below is the extract:

"It was too good a calling goat to abandon - it had attracted the leopard once, and might do so again. Moreover, we had only a few hours previously paid good money for it, so we in turn ran up the track in hot pursuit. At the bend, the goat turned to the left, and we lost sight of it. Keeping to the track, as the goat had done, we went to the shoulder of the hill where a considerable extent of the hill, clothed in short grass, was visible, and as the goat was nowhere in sight we decided it had taken a short cut back to the village, and started to retrace our steps. I was leading, and as we got half-way along the hundred yards of track, bordered on the upper side by scattered bushes and on the steep lower side by short grass, I saw something white on the track in front of me. The light had nearly gone, and on cautiously approaching the white object I found it was the goat laid head and tail on the narrow track, in the only position in which it could have been laid to prevent it from rolling down the steep hillside Blood was oozing from its throat, and when I placed my hand on it the muscles were still twitching.

It was as though the man-eater - for no other leopard would have killed the goat and laid it on the track - had said, 'Here, if you want your goat so badly, take it; and as it is now dark and you have a long way to go, we will see which of you lives to reach the village...'

OUP released a book, 'My Kumaon' in 2012, which contains a collection of unpublished letters and articles on Corbett, and where a full chapter is dedicated to letters

Corbett wrote home, presumably to Maggie, during the Rudraprayag hunt. Corbett wrote consistently, explaining events as they unfolded.

In one of the letters, dated 4th April 1926, he touches upon the incident mentioned above as follows:

"The goat was above us on the hill and, at my second call, it jumped up and took great interest in something further up the hill where we could not see. Nothing further happened, so we untied the goat and started for the village. The goat kept getting between our legs, so we let it loose and it dashed up the hill. As it would not allow itself to be caught, we left it behind and found, two days later, that it has been killed just where we gave up trying to catch it. Just killed and left...."

Now here, a major inconsistency is observed. While the greatest drama is experienced in the book when Corbett approaches the 'white object' and touches the still-alive goat, with muscles 'twitching' and laid perfectly across the track, the letter to Maggie only points in passing, how the goat was found two days later where the team gave up trying to catch it.

While in the case of inconsistencies with dates of Corbett's hunts, it is easy to attribute the same to the wholly human, likely and common possibility of inaccurate memory for such detail, in this case, the inconsistency is stark!

While in his letter home, Corbett mentions encountering the dead goat two days later, leaving no room for second-guessing. In the chapter of the book, the three men dramatically are making a cautious retreat and encounter the goat, in its death throes, in a condition where the leopard is menacingly toying with them. The 'white object' is encountered, observed, touched and it's twitching felt, with the peril of the helpless situation put forth in plain detail.

Hence, any reconciliation between the two very-different scenarios is impossible.

With Corbett's unimpeachable integrity in recounting his experiences, the only possible explanation, if one is to discount the improbable and near-impossible action of editors of the book making insertions to allow for better reading, and out of the possibilities discussed in the previous chapter, is that Corbett wanted to avoid live-telling Maggie the true course of the events. Such running commentary, which evidently would demonstrate the grave danger Corbett was exposed to on a daily basis while on the pursuit of the leopard, would have strained his family's nerves further and further added to their anxiety.

Corbett's memory:

It is also important to consider, while analyzing inconsistencies in the dates, situations and scenarios in Corbett's stories discussed in this book, the famed memory of the man, and how the categories and compartments of classification of human memory may factor into such analysis.

It is well known that Corbett had a razor-sharp memory, of what is commonly known as 'photographic' type. In the making of this book, the phenomenal accuracy of Corbett's memory in recalling and describing the precise locations, difficult for us even after a couple of years of being at the same site, was experienced by this group and Corbett's integrity for the same, gloriously validated.

Despite this, occasional errors with dates are found, as also conflicting situations in a couple of places, as discussed in this book.

What could be the reason why someone who could describe the contours, details and constitutions of obscure places in mountainous jungles with awe-inspiring precision, who err in more banal recollections of aspects such as dates?

Corbett has at times himself alluded to his memory of scenes, as in the paragraphs reproduced below.

The answer could lie in briefly discussing the compartmentalization and categories of human memory. Literature aplenty is available online to allow us to understand this in a concise manner.

A popular model for studying memory, called the Atkinson-Shiffrin model, developed by Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin in 1968, categorises long term human memory into the following

- Explicit memory, further categorized into declarative memory, which has two components- episodic memory and semantic memory. These deal with events, facts, experiences and concepts
- Implicit memory, which is further categorized into procedural memory deals with performance of particular tasks or actions

If we look at categories of exceptional memory, these include

- **Eidetic memory**, in which a person has an enhanced capability to images, sounds or objects after only a few instances of exposure
- **A Mnemonist**, alludes to the situation where a person is able to recall numbers, names and other small detail with exceptional accuracy
- **Emotional or flashbulb memory** is described as the case where a person vividly remembers detailed information on a personal experience of significance, often pictorial and shocking. This would be a common occurrence in many people

James McGaugh, an American neurobiologist, has coined the term *Hyperthymia*, or superior autobiographical memory, to describe the condition of individuals with an extremely enhanced type of episodic memory.

However, in relation to Corbett's impressively accurate recollections of his experiences in his book, the above categories of exceptional memory alluding to a neurological medical condition can be discounted, as people with these condition exhibit tell-tale symptoms, such as constantly talking about their past and other features of unique behaviour, which were obviously absent in Corbett's case.

From the two categories of declarative memory: Episodic memory and Semantic memory, the former represents memory of specific events and experiences in a serial form, including places, times and other contextual matter, which enables us to recon-

struct an event that took place at a specific moment of time. This would include a pictorial reproduction of oneself experiencing the event.

It is thus this category- Episodic memory, that we must focus on while analyzing Corbett's unique capability to recall events, and how errors of dates etc would still be found in his stories.

We know from available literature that the above categories of memory, are physically stored & even processed in different parts of the brain. For example, Episodic memory activity is concentrated in the hippocampus initially, then stored in the neocortex. Semantic memory on the other hand, activates the frontal and temporal cortexes.

If we look at Corbett's recollections, we can broadly categorize his recalling of an event into two parts- The first, pictorial- depicting what he saw, such as the physical features of a location, the event itself, the action of the man eater etc and the second category would be recalling based on numeric data- dates, numbers etc. Although broadly speaking, both would fall into the same scientifically defined category of Declarative memory (Episodic and Semantic), the latter does not specifically involve recollection of a mental 'picture', and being so, is decidedly different to the physical and pictorial recollection of a place.

It is common for people to expect an individual who is declared as having a 'good' or 'sharp' memory as having the ability to recall everything accurately, from experiences to dates, numbers and other things. However, reading literature on the specifics of human memory would explain that it is quite possible for an individual to have a brilliant ability to recall dates, while being unable to recall experiences with the same alacrity, and vice-versa.

For Jim Corbett, recalling an experience as it happened, including his interactions with people, observation of locations etc was never a problem, nor could we detect any significant variation between his description of a physical location and its actual form, since these are pictorial entities that would have remained in the most brilliantly high-powered part of his memory- his episodic memory. The various discrepancies in dates and the few others, which could be generally compartmentalized as being 'data-oriented', were another story. Here, he was more ordinary, like the majority of us, with a good, yet unremarkable memory of the type we could assign to a different sub-category of declarative memory.

The Kanda man-eating tigers

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

This chapter is set to throw some light on one of the most enigmatic man-eater hunts of Jim Corbett detailed in the book *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* OUP (Oxford University Press) 1944. Unashamedly I must reveal to the reader I was reluctant to research on it until convinced by Dr Joseph Jordania, Priyvrat Gadhvi and especially Manfred Walzl since he spared a few hours of his sleep to search in Booth's book for elements. The paper however does not offer any solution for the polemics surrounding this particular hunt, but it does offer enough material either for simple thought or thorough research to unveil the mystery over the question of: Were there more than one man-eater operating in the region of Kanda near the Dhikala range of the now-Corbett National Park between the years 1925 to 1935? Elements are however given to at least prove that there existed some mix-ups in the story of the Kanda Man-eater as written by Jim Corbett and published in his first book by the OUP.

Kanda - The first published man-eater story of Corbett

The story of the Kanda man-eater appearing in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* is in all probability the very first man-eater story put to pen by Corbett and appearing later unedited in regular published form. The story was then called "The Terror That Walks By Night – An episode of the Indian Jungles" which first appeared in Corbett's privately published 'Jungle Stories' in 1935 (100 copies only) and later in July 1936 in a magazine called "Indian Wild Life" published by the 'All India Conference for the Preservation of Wild Life'. A photo with the caption "The father of the last victim with the tiger" is said to appear next to the page of the story (Booth, *Carpet Sahib* OUP Ed. 2011 pg 182). The editor of the magazine was Indian barrister Hasan Abid Jafry in collaboration with Randolph Morris.

Ten years earlier, however, an edited piece of material written by Corbett appeared in a newspaper. This was when Corbett was asked to report on the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag. This report sent to a newspaper, the *Pioneer*, based in Dehra Dun (now state capital of Uttarakhand) but having an office in Nainital, was edited and published in its 'Saturday 15 May 1926' issue. A copy of this is published in the book *MY KUMAON* (2012, OUP).

Corbett and his writings – The first critics

One often questions how Corbett could relate of people, places, dates and events while relating stories sometimes three or four decades old. Some think that he had a very good memory, but now it seem more likely that he relied on the letters he was

writing to Maggie while he was engaged in those hunts. But then how can it be possible that Corbett made mistakes (see Corbett Controversies chapter) later when the stories were put in published book form? There exists the possibility that his stories were edited, but R.E. Hawkins had always refuted these (Hawkins, *Jim Corbett's India*, OUP 1978, Editor's note). Be it as it is, the Kanda man-eater story as it appears in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* is nothing compared with the 'same' story published in 1936, '...not a long story but it is exciting and unembellished unlike some of the other tales Jim was to write in his later years' as criticized by Martin Booth in his book 'Carpet Sahib'. A long letter sent by Corbett to Maggie from Dhikala dated 19 July 1932 published in Booth's book, which describes the account of the Kanda man-eater seems more fitting with "The Terror that Walks by Night" published earlier (unedited) than the Kanda man-eater published in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*.

The Kanda Man-Eater Chapter in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* –An overview

Unlike other Corbett hunts described in his three man-eater hunting books, the story of the Kanda man-eater is the only one which lacks names of officials, villages, any people; the usual thorough description of the hunting in terms of direction, rivers, ridges or hills, distances from landmarks or neighbouring physical features, number of victims, nature and description of disability of the animal or even its gender (plainly stated as 'tiger') and appearance whether it was young or large or average size, the list is not exhaustive. Moreover the only indication of a date (in the core story, not the attached letter) is the month of 'May' no year and only two references are made to names of places, Lansdowne and Dhikala. The Mohan man-eater story is also one of the category of absence of date, but is very much more detailed, and finally of the thirteen pages composing the story of Kanda, one is dedicated to a letter sent by villagers, two on a hamadryad hunt and four on the story of the last victim and if you count one a half for the pale introduction of the story, you are left with only four and a half pages for the effective hunting of the tiger.

Controversy in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* – Two Kanda Tigers

"This was the last of the three man-eaters that I had promised the District Officials of Kumaon, and later the people of Garhwal, that I would do my best to rid them of."

These were the last lines of the Kanda man-eater chapter in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*. Two deductions can be made from this above quote:

The 'promise' to the District Officials was made in February 1929 as asserted by Corbett in the chapter 'Mohan man-eater' in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*

'later to the people of Garhwal' refers to the letter the villagers sent to Corbett dated 18 February 1933 (published in 'Kanda Chapter' in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*).

All appears to be fine except that the controversy appears in the letter of the people of Garhwal as follows:

“That in this vicinity a tiger has turned out man-eater since December last [December 1932 as per date of letter]. Up to this date he has killed 5 men and wounded 2.”

This cannot be the tiger mentioned in the District Conference of February 1929.

Fortunately we have a date for the killing of the Kanda man-eater. This is provided in Booth's book where he publishes the letter sent by Corbett to Maggie on the 19th July 1932. The date the Kanda man-eater is killed is the 16th of July 1932. Therefore the Garhwal villagers appeal to Corbett for another tiger in 1933.

Corbett's letter to Maggie (19 July 1932)

The OUP edition of 2011 of Martin Booth's book ('Carpet Sahib') has published this letter on page 203, and for the sake of fairness, it shall not be published here, but the essence will however be given to you. The story of the killing of the man-eater detailed in the letter is about 90% similar to the four and a half pages dedicated to the hunting of the tiger in the chapter of the Kanda man-eater in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, except that more details are given and these are: Dates, times and names are given and tiger details too:

The tiger killed a bullock on the 13th of July 1932.

The next day (14th) on visiting the kill, Corbett manages to get a shot at the tiger.

The next day (15th) Corbett tries to call the tiger and at 4pm he selects a tree and sits on it.

The tiger gets killed on the following morning around 6 am, the 16th of July 1932.

When investigating the bullock killed, two people accompanied Corbett and one of them is named Bakhtar.

The tiger was carried to the nearest village some ¼ mile away and Corbett took some 40feet of film of it, then skinned it.

The tiger's mouth, and both forepaws and forearms were full of porcupine quills, and had an old wound of a broken foot, not quite a disability.

The tiger was between 9ft08 and 9ft10 over curves, a large one.

The story in the letter was published in narration form entitled "The Terror That Walks By Night" in 1935 and 1936 as said before. In *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, published in 1944, the story has additions of the hamadryad hunt, letter of villagers and last victim account.

Were there really TWO Kanda man-eating tigers?

A quote of a paragraph of the letter sent by Jim Corbett to Maggie on the 19th of July 1932 reads as follows:

"If the tiger that kept on visiting me at night was the same animal that I shot, then the addition of the porcupine quills makes it almost certain that I have accounted for the man-eater. The last two

human kills on the 23rd and 26th of March [1932] took place in the ravines on either side of the one in which I shot the tiger. There may, of course, have been two tigers in the ravine that night, possible but not probable."

Corbett was himself wondering if he had shot the right tiger that is, the Kanda man-eater. This fragment of the letter makes us think that Corbett was trying to convince himself that he shot the ONLY tiger, the correct man-eater of Kanda. But later the villagers of Garhwal would prove him wrong by telling him that since December 1932, a tiger has turned out man-eater in their vicinity, a second tiger.

We have to discount the possibility here that the villagers might have been of a far locality than Kanda since in their letter 'Kanda' is made mention of at the last sentence. Some research had to be done to confirm the fact.

"From The Public of patty Painaun, Bungi and Bickla Badalpur District Garhwal"

This is mentioned in the letter sent by the villagers requesting him to come to their help as published in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* (Kanda man-eater chapter). Research of these locations reveals nothing on a standard district map, but the main clues of where these are located is given in the letter itself where it mentions "Kanda" and by the signatory of the letter Mr Govind Singh Negi, who includes "Badialgaon district" in his address. An old map of the United Provinces reveals that this is south of Lansdowne and west of Dhikala, by some 5 miles. Therefore, the letter indeed refers to ANOTHER man-eater which has been operating in the assembly of patties (small villages) known as KANDA as at 18 February 1933, date of the letter, a second Kanda man-eater.

Co-existence of Tigers – A theory

The Kanda man-eater had been killed on the 16th of July 1932 and it had killed a bullock on the 13th of July, then by subtraction from the date of the last human kill (26th March) we see that the man-eater had not made a single human kill for about three and a half months. This is quite normal, since if the man-eater manages to kill normal prey or cattle, he could have survived, but can a tiger with a broken foot although not too serious, but with porcupine quills in mouth, forepaws and forearms manage to kill normal prey for subsistence for three and a half months? Since not much is said about how many cattle he killed, not too much I am inclined to believe as these were not mentioned either in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* or "Terror that Walks by Night", we can only answer this question by putting forward a theory.

The theory is that there could have been a second tiger which was assisting him in making kills or providing left-over from kills to him for that period, an assumption for which Jim Corbett himself made, as seen in the previous sub-section's quote, but was very unsure of it, or didn't he?

We cannot but answer this new question while basing ourselves on a fact. This idea came to me when seeing a documentary on the old male tiger 'Charger' after being

driven out by his grandson 'B1' in Bhandavgarh NP. Charger then came to occupy Bakshi's territory, a daughter of his and mother of B1. Bakshi tolerated Charger to a certain extent and the latter announced its presence by calling when it had detected that Bakshi and her cubs were feeding. Then Bakshi would urge her cubs back to safety and Charger would be left to eat at his convenience. The reverse also happened when Bakshi fed on a left-over by Charger who had found a carcass. This strange symbiosis which on some circumstances benefit both party as the narrator of the documentary points out is more recurrent now as the forest territory is limited and sometimes, we can see an older male and a quite younger male on the same territory; perhaps, but not necessarily, his son. Generally to avoid confrontation, as the older one knows he's weaker or the younger does not know that he's stronger, they communicate their presence by a characteristic growl especially when approaching a kill whether killed by him or the other.

Here is an extract of the Kanda story from *Man-eaters of Kumaon*:

"There were no suitable trees within convenient distance of the kill, and the very unpleasant experience I had had on a former occasion had effectively cured me of sitting at night on the ground for a man-eater. While still undecided where to sit I heard the tiger call, some distance down the valley up which I had climbed the previous day."

Man-eaters and tigers in general do not announce their coming towards a kill by a growl or call. Corbett then tries to call the tiger but the latter refused to come:

"On the present occasion, however, though the tiger answered me, call for call, for upwards of an hour, he refused to come any nearer..."

Why? Because if there were two tigers in the vicinity, the old wounded tiger would not come if he's being answered as he would thought the other is reluctant to leave the kill. This is an assumption contrary to what Corbett explains why the tiger would not come nearer –

"...and I attributed my failure to the fact that I was calling from a spot where the previous day the tiger had met with an unfortunate experience [first shot]."

But Corbett is not convincing here, since he himself admits earlier in the story the day after the tiger was first shot and wounded that:

"On visiting the kill the following morning, I was very pleased and not a little surprised to find that the tiger had returned to it during the night and taken a light meal"

This cannot be the same tiger that returns to the kill during the night while it was shot there during the day. At least this is a supposition since Corbett admits of having been 'not a little surprised'.

The fact that the tiger announces its coming by a growl and does not come when answered by a growl is the same situation as the story of Charger and Bakshi. Therefore it is more probable than not that there were TWO tigers in Kanda in July 1932, one

man-eater (wounded) and (most probably) an ordinary one. Why this ordinary tiger or any other tiger turning out man-eater in the same locality some months after the man-eater is shot is a question that can be answered by numerous theories but not relevant here for our discussion. Food for your thought is somewhat given to you. December is the mating season for tigers, imagine the second tiger being a female and deprived of the only possible mate.

Final Controversy – Garhwal or Kumaon

Kanda is an assembly of villages found in the Garhwal revenue division, no question about that. In the Chowgarh Tigers story in Man-eaters of Kumaon, an allusion is made to a district conference as follows:

“It was at a District Conference in February 1929 that I found myself committed to have a try for this tiger [Chowgarh]. There were at that time three man-eaters in the Kumaon [sic] division, and as the Chowgarh tiger had done most damage I promised to go in pursuit of it first.”

In British Colonial India, Provinces were fragmented in Revenue Divisions which comprised of districts. Such an example for the United Provinces which among its numerous revenue divisions had the Garhwal revenue division and the Kumaon revenue division as separate divisions. The Garhwal revenue division is a district of its own, while Kumaon comprised two districts, Almora and Nainital.

So, when Corbett writes there were 3 man-eaters in the Kumaon division, they could only be from districts Nainital and Almora only. The Kanda man-eater who is in Garhwal could not form part of the 3 man-eaters described in the District Conference of February 1929.

Where Man-eaters of Kumaon’s publishers (can’t think it was Corbett) write in the Mohan man-eater chapter that:

“At the District Conference, to which reference has been made in a previous story, the three man-eating tigers operating at that time in the Kumaon Division [sic] were classed, as follows in their order of importance:

- 1st – Chowgarh, Nainital District
- 2nd – Mohan, Almora District
- 3rd – Kanda, Garhwal District”

We find highly controversial that the Kanda man-eater appear in the list, since Garhwal is a district and a revenue division of its own, which is not in Kumaon. In an opinion, one is inclined to think that it is the publishers of Man-eaters of Kumaon that chose to include Kanda as the 3rd man-eater of the District Conference of Kumaon. A reason for that is given here in the following sub-chapter.

District Conference of 1929 – The Real List!

The Deputy Commissioners of Almora district in February 1929 was William Henry 'Bill' Baines (or Baynes) and that of Nainital district was Graham 'Ham' Vivian. The Man-eaters of Kumaon publishers write in separate instances in two separate books – again it is inclined to believe that it was not Corbett – two different renderings on the now-famous District Conference of 1929. These are, firstly in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* (Chapter: Mohan Man-eater):

"After the Chowgarh tiger had been accounted for, I was reminded by Baines, Deputy Commissioner, Almora, that only a part of my promise made at the [district] conference had been fulfilled, and that the Mohan tiger was next on the list"

then in *Temple Tiger* (Chapter: Talla Des man-eater) it is written that:

"Bill Baynes and Ham Vivian were Deputy Commissioners of, respectively, Almora and Nainital in the year 1929, and both were suffering from man-eaters, the former from the Talla Des man-eating tiger, and the latter from the Chowgarh man-eating tiger. I had promised Vivian that I would try to shoot his tiger first, but as it had been less active during the winter months than Baynes's, I decided, with Vivian's approval, to try for the other [Talla Des] first."

It now becomes clear especially after consideration that Baynes (spelled differently in the two books) had at that time two man-eaters in his district of Almora (Talla Des and Mohan) and that the Kanda man-eater, which is not from Kumaon revenue division, was not in the 'list'. Further since Baynes was at the District Conference of 1929 to mention about the Mohan Tiger, it is hard to conceive that he did not mention the Talla Des man-eater who had operated for 8 years in his district and done over 150 people, as calamitous as the leopard of Rudraprayag.

The correct list should therefore have read as follows:

- 1st – The Talla Des man-eater – Almora district
- 2nd – The Chowgarh man-eater – Nainital district
- 3rd – The Mohan man-eater – Almora district

The order may have classed Chowgarh first and Talla Des as second. Elsewhere in this book, we have proved that Corbett had a try after the Chowgarh man-eater first in 1928 before the conference, but this is not important here. What is important is that the Kanda man-eater would not have been in 'that list' in 1929, but requested later by villagers of Garhwal. This is evident from the ending of the Kanda story in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* which we shall quote again here:

"This was the last of the three man-eaters that I had promised the District Officials of Kumaon, and later the people of Garhwal, that I would do my best to rid them of."

Elsewhere in this book, we have mentioned to you readers that we had gained access to a copy of *Jungle Stories* thanks to our guest author Marc Newton. We have

read the story of “The Terror that walks by night” in it and found it to be 99.9% similar to the FIRST NINE pages of the chapter Kanda man-eater in Man-Eaters of Kumaon. What does not follow is the addition of the story of the boy-recruit of the Garhwal Regiment and his brave father, which is an additional 4 pages in the Kanda chapter. Of course nothing is mentioned of the District Conference at its end or the promise to villagers like in the Kanda man-eater chapter.

It looks as though the publishers of Man-eaters of Kumaon were doing their best to put their eggs in the same basket, but why?

To venture to answer this question, consider this quote from Temple Tiger (Chapter: Talla Des man-eater):

“My story concerns the Talla Des tiger, and I have refrained from telling it until I had written Jungle Lore”

Elsewhere in this book (Corbett Controversies Chapter), you are told at best, why Talla Des had to be kept for another book while it should have appeared in Man-eaters of Kumaon quite logically.

Therefore as a conclusion, it incurred to the publishers of Man-eaters of Kumaon to have had to edit some facts so that the “Terror that Walks by Night” story could have been included in the book (Man-eaters of Kumaon) as the Kanda man-eater.

As you have seen, the possibility that the Kanda Man-eater was not mentioned at the district conference of February 1929 does exist, and that little manipulation by the publishers and editors that would have resulted in trying to fit it in, in place of the Talla-Des man-eater, which was to be saved for another book could have caused prejudice to Jim Corbett’s reputation of a man of extreme precision and accuracy of reporting facts and actual happenings. Luckily it didn’t, the ten years elapsed between the publication of Man-eaters of Kumaon and Temple Tiger saved it.

The Kanda Man-Eater was shot by Jim Corbett on 19 July 1932 as attested by both a letter written to Maggie by Corbett on that same date detailing the killing of the tiger (Courtesy: Martin Booth – Carpet Sahib , 2011 Edition, pg. 203) and a telegram sent by him from Ramnagar to “Corbett, Gurney House, Nainital” postmarked 20 July 1932 famously saying: “All Well Home Tomorrow Tiger is Dead Jim” – The Photostat is courtesy of Constable publications where Booth published his first edition of “Carpet Sahib, A life of Jim Corbett” in 1986. I hope now that detractors of Martin Booth can satisfy themselves that the man did not cheat. He made mistakes out of interpretation I think, we shall see later, but his sources are very reliable.

Of course, this tiger cited in the telegram has nothing to do with the ‘tiger who turned out man-eater December last’ in the appeal letter (Dated 18 February 1933) sent by villagers of Kanda patties requesting Corbett to come and shoot the Kanda man-eater which Corbett tells us of.

P.S. Year 1932 is in the date stamp, the original differs slightly from this Photostat where it appears clearly 20 JLY 32 – This material is still subject to copyright and pending approval from Constable, cannot be published.

Chowgarh Tigress Cub killing Date

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

Corbett first arrives in Kala Agar in April 1929 to go after the Chowgarh Tigers. He was already aware that the man-eater was accompanied by a fully grown cub: In *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* we find that:

"... Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. This bungalow was my objective, and after a four days' march, culminating in a still climb of 4000 feet, I arrived at it one evening in April 1929."

And

"This statement, that there were two tigers, confirmed the reports I had already received that the man-eater was accompanied by a full-grown cub."

Four days after his arrival, Corbett shot the full grown female cub after mistaking it for its mother, the man-eating tigress of Chowgarh. But there are evidence from his other writings that – Corbett was not there in April 1929 – this we obtain from the story of the Talla-Des Man-eater.

Before continuing, I would however wish to discount effects of fading memory of Corbett when citing him from the book 'Temple Tiger' published in 1954 because there are still evidence that the story of the Talla Des Man-eater was 'ready' long before the publication of the book and he was accurately giving dates of this story, as we shall see here while in the Chowgarh story, there is only one accurate date (11 April 1930, date of shooting of the man-eater).

Evidence that the story of the Talla-Des man-eater was ready 'long ago' are given in *Man-eaters of Kumaon* and *Temple Tiger*.

In *Man-eaters of Kumaon* we find that in the Champawat man-eater chapter:

"It is a popular belief that man-eaters do not eat the head, hands, and feet of the human victims. This is incorrect. Man-eaters, if not disturbed, eat everything – including the blood-soaked clothes, as I found on one occasion; however, that is another story and will be told some other time."

This 'occasion' was of course the Talla-Des man-eater cubs as cited in *Temple Tiger*:

"...vultures alighted on the trees fringing the open ground on which my tent is pitched. It was these that brought to light the missing clothes of the man-eater's victim, for the cubs had torn the blood-soaked garments into strips and swallowed them."

Later in *Temple Tiger* we get further evidence that the story of the Talla-Des man-eater had been withheld for years since Corbett writes in the epilogue that:

"The story of the Talla-Des Man-eater – which I refrained from telling until I had written *Jungle Lore* – has now been told."

Previously in the chapter itself in *Temple Tiger*, Corbett writes:

"My story concerns the Talla Des tiger, and I have refrained from telling it until I had written *Jungle Lore*. For without first reading *Jungle Lore*, and knowing that I had learnt - when a boy and later - how to walk in a jungle and use a rifle, and the credulity of all who were not present in Kumaon at that time would have been strained and this, after my previous stories had been accepted at face value, was the last thing I desired."

This digression was necessary about telling you that perhaps the Talla-Des Man-eater story was nearly as fresh in Corbett's memories as the Chowgarh Tigers published ten years earlier, because the story with more accurate dates had been deliberately withheld.

Further in the chapter in *Temple Tiger*, Corbett himself admits:

"...and the events of the five days I spent hunting the man-eating tiger of Talla-Des are as clear-cut and fresh in my memory today as they were 25 years ago."

If you're satisfied that memory won't play part in this controversy I'm about of telling you, then we proceed.

I've already set out to you that the killing of the Chowgarh cub could not have been in April 1929, at least Corbett could not have been in Kala Agar in April 1929 when he claims he first arrived after four days walk to go after the tigers. The following time-line, from the chapter in *Temple Tiger*, will help you to see why.

April 4 - Corbett leaves Nainital for Tanakpur.

April 7 - Terrific show of marksmanship by Corbett and he shoots 3 tigers in a row

April 12 - Kills man-eating tigress of Talla-Des

April 13 - Spends day in partly drying the skin

April 16 - '3 days later I was safely back in my home'

April 23 - 'A week after my return to Nainital, Sir Malcolm Hailey gave me an introduction to Colonel Dick, an ear specialist, who treated me for 3 months in his hospital in Lahore...'

Now, notwithstanding the 3 months, Lahore which was in the former North West Frontier Province, is still some ten days away from Nainital, but there is still a possibility that after April 23 of the year 1929, when Hailey gave Corbett the introduction to the ear doctor that Corbett went immediately after the Chowgarh Tigers instead of Lahore!!! But would you believe that?

If you don't then adding the Lahore trip (to and from) and the 3 months, that gives you the possibility of Corbett going after the Chowgarh cub at the end of August of 1929 or early September 1929, a monsoon month, which would not have been possible for a hunt, then later the winter months arrive, still no possibility of a hunt. In fact, the only man-eater hunted in a September month was the Panar Leopard, and he also hunted Thak tigress in October-November. All other Corbett hunts were held from March to July.

So when was the Chowgarh cub hunted and killed? Certainly not in early 1930 (January and February are winter months) as Corbett himself writes in *Temple Tiger*:

"I had promised Vivian that I would try to shoot his tiger [Chowgarh] first, but as it had been less active in the winter months than Baynes's [Talla-Des], I decided, with Vivian's approval to try for the other first [Talla Des]"

There is yet another controversy about those two man-eaters operating in two separate districts, this is treated in the chapter "The two Kanda man-eaters" of this book, but would be too lengthy to include here. So since the first trip to Chowgarh by Corbett lasts one month, the cub was definitely not shot in March 1930 because Corbett arrived in Kala Agar for the man-eating mother tigress in end of March 1930.

There is also the possibility that Corbett shoots the cub of the Chowgarh tigress in January or early February 1929, which are again winter months, so they get eliminated. Could it be March 1929? Again No because Corbett himself writes that in *Temple Tiger*:

"For Me the rest of February [1929] was torture."

And later he writes:

"The doctor at Kaladhungi, a keen young man who had recently completed his medical training, confirmed my fears that my eardrum had been destroyed. A month later we moved up to our summer home in Nainital..."

This leaves the possibility that the cub of the Chowgarh tigress was killed prior to 1929, then Martin Booth, in his book "Carpet Sahib" OUP 2011 Edition page 203 reveals a very interesting letter which Corbett writes to Maggie dated 17 May 1928, describing that he was still on the hunting scene of the Chowgarh tigress as follows in this extract of the letter:

"The remaining man-eater does not appear to be able to kill without the help of her companion. Two women she has caught lately both got away with terribly wounded heads, I am doctoring them and think one will live..."

The letter continues as Corbett describes he had an unsuccessful attempt at the man-eating tigress. Therefore it is safe to assume that Corbett shot the cub of the Chowgarh tigress in April 1928 or at most in early May 1928, but not in the year 1929 as he has mentioned in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, presumably, by mistake.

This cub of the Chowgarh man-eater could have been at most aged twenty-four months when she was assisting her mother to make kills. Therefore she was born in a possible period April/May 1926. Considering the mating season of tigers (November to February) and the gestation period of a little above three months, this is perfectly plausible.

I admit of being a too keen Corbett fan to think that hunting man-eaters was his main pre-occupation, but on many occasions, I have seen that he had not had the time or the inclination to go after man-eaters immediately after he was notified of them.

Sometimes this took up to 3 years for him to have taken a try. But the years 1928 (Chowgarh cub), 1929 (Talla Des & cubs), 1930 (Chowgarh), 1931 (Mohan), 1932 (First Kanda) and 1933 (possibly second Kanda) were busy years for him because during the good seasons (March to July) he managed to go after 5 man-eaters and their cubs. If we add the years 1925 and 1926 for the Rudraprayag leopard, this leaves only the year 1927 for him to have had a rest during the good seasons in a span of 9 years. A truly amazing feat for a man of over 55 years old at that time.

As an ending of this chapter, I should like to share yet another controversial date with Corbett fans, for which I am unable up to now to give an exact solution. It is given in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* that the Chowgarh man-eater career started on the 15 December 1925: Corbett writes about a map of Eastern Kumaon on which the victims of the man-eater is denoted by crosses:

"The first cross is dated 15 December 1925..."

Now that we have known that Corbett had killed the Chowgarh cub in April/May 1928, a day after this feat, there is a sentence in the book about which Corbett writes of 'his gaunt friend' (see elsewhere in the book for a chapter on this) who in an encounter with the Chowgarh man-eater, is badly mauled but survives:

"The encounter had taken place four years previously..."

Subtracting years give the year 1924 as the Chowgarh man-eater attacking Corbett's 'gaunt friend'. Even if you assume that Corbett killed the Chowgarh cub in April 1929 as stated in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, you would arrive at early in 1925 as the attack on Corbett's gaunt friend, many months before the first alleged victim's date of 15 December 1925.

Therefore in the 'Chowgarh Tigers' chapter in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, there should be also at least one more inaccurate date or period: either the 15 December 1925 given as the start of the man-eating career of the Chowgarh tigress or the 'four years previously' as the period since the attack on the 'gaunt friend' of Corbett till they meet. Most probably, it is reasonable to believe that the Chowgarh man-eater attacked Corbett's 'gaunt friend' just after the start of its man-eating career and the most probable year would have been 1924.

What tends towards this belief is that Corbett himself admits in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* that:

"There are sixty four crosses on the map. I do not claim this as being a correct tally, for the map was posted up by for two years and during this period all kills were not reported to me; further, victims who were only mauled, and who died subsequently, have not been awarded a cross and a date."

Therefore there is a strong suspicion that the map was inaccurate and that possibly there were kills earlier than 15 December 1925 that were not reported. How much earlier? We are not in a position to tell, but it could be well in 1924.

The Muktesar Man-Eater killing Date

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

Before revealing you this controversy, an admission of gigantic proportions has to be made here: It is difficult to go against a famous citing Corbett made in Temple Tiger in the chapter of the Panar man-eater:

“No matter how full of happiness our life may have been, there are periods in it that we look back to with special pleasure. Such a period for me was the year 1910, for in that year I shot the Muktesar man-eating tigress and the Panar Man-eating leopard, and in between these two...”

However that may be, it is the only instance of assigning a year to the killing of the Muktesar man-eater by Corbett in the book Temple Tiger and it appears in the chapter of the Panar Man-eater. But some other references help us to get some insight into about what period of time the Muktesar man-eater was operating. Our benchmark lies on the year of killing of the Champawat man-eater which is unquestionably 1907, as it appears on the metal plate on the butt of the .275 Rigby Mauser which Corbett earned in recognition of this achievement. Corbett too gives this year in the starting line of the chapter of the Panar man-eater.

A very worthy paragraph has to be cited here from the chapter of Panar man-eater in Temple Tiger:

“When I returned home in Nainital after killing the Champawat tiger I was asked by the Government to undertake the shooting of the Panar leopard. I was working hard for a living at the time and several weeks elapsed before I was able to spare the time to undertake this task, and then just as I was ready to start for the outlying area of the Almora district in which the leopard was operating, I received an urgent request from Berthoud, the Deputy Commissioner of Nainital, to go to the help of the people of Muktesar where a man-eating tiger had established a reign of terror. After hunting down the tiger, an account of which I have given, I went in pursuit of the Panar leopard.”

What we learn in this paragraph was that both the Panar and the Muktesar man-eaters were already operating in 1907 and that most possibly in that same year, Corbett set after the Muktesar man-eater.

Corbett previously says in the chapter of Muktesar man-eater in Temple Tiger:

“I heard of the tigress shortly before she started killing human beings...” and a little later:

“When the toll of human victims had risen to 24, however...[] ... the veterinary officer in charge of the institute requested the Government to solicit my help.”

These two citing link perfectly and they indicate us that in 1907, the Muktesar man-eater had already killed 24 people till Berthoud upon request of the veterinary officers in Muktesar, called upon Corbett to go after the man-eater of Muktesar. What would have tallied perfectly with the famous citing quoted at the start of this paper would have been Corbett saying (hypothetically of course): Three years elapsed before I could undertake this task; instead of: Several weeks elapsed. A huge difference one will agree: Could several weeks mean Hundred-and-fifty weeks for Corbett? Of course No! Oxford Current English Dictionary of 1964 Edition gives the meaning of 'several' as 'more than two but not too many; few...'

Therefore, according to my theory, it is more likely that Corbett had heard of the tigress 'several weeks' after the Champawat man-eater, a question of interpretation which sounds more plausible. No question of memory lapse, even if the story of the Panar leopard was written four decades later, several weeks cannot mean several years!

Another revelation in the citing of the Muktesar man-eater chapter above is that Corbett learnt about the man-eater shortly after it started killing human beings and goes after it when the toll reaches 24. Here, shortly can only mean from what we had learnt in the Author's note of Man-Eaters of Kumaon, the story of the tigress till it killed its fourth victim without provocation. This paragraph is reproduced almost word for word in Temple Tiger's Muktesar man-eater chapter. A confirmation of the theory that Corbett hears about the Muktesar man-eater after shooting Champawat tigress, not goes out after the Muktesar man-eater.

We can come to the following conclusions: Corbett hears about the tigress before he starts for the Champawat man-eater, then does go after it when it had killed 24 people. Strange as it is, a controversy occurs here when he is done with the latter, he still chooses the former over a leopard credited with over 400 human kills, following an 'urgent' request from Berthoud. Which one was most urgent? I think that the Muktesar tigress was not killed in 1910. It was killed before. Here are the reasons why.

A man-eating tigress without cubs like the Muktesar tigress who lived partly on a diet of cattle, would have killed 20 people (remember she killed the first 4 in the space of a week) in the space of 20 months at most. This would count from mid-1907 when the tigress started its toll to February/March 1909.

Therefore according to my theory dated April 2012, the Muktesar man-eater was shot by Corbett in 1909. At that time in 2012, I had expressed doubts on this issue because Corbett claimed he was after the Panar man-eater in April 1910, was also after the Dabhidura Temple Tiger in April 1910 while in the latter story Corbett said in Temple Tiger:

"When two years previously I had been hunting the Champawat man-eater, I had made friends with this frail old man [Dabhidura Temple priest]..."

This gives us the quoting of the year 1910 being reduced to 1909, and I had already attracted my 'Corbett-brother' Manfred Walt's attention while we were attending the

Dabhidura Forest office that a note painted on the wall of the office stated (in Hindi) that as per records, Corbett stayed at this (then) Forest Bungalow, in 1909 and had gone after the Dabhidura Temple guarded tiger.

My doubts and therefore my theory had been confirmed in October 2012 when OUP published a collection of unpublished writings on/of Corbett called MY KUMARON in which a newspaper clip had been reproduced under the Chapter "Reactions in the Press" on page 127 of the only edition to date of that book. A news reporter for "The Lake Zephyr - A Social Weekly" dated 21 April 1909 reports the story of the killing of the Muktesar man-eater.

A line or two is worth to quote from the article:

"...Mr James Corbett has just again rid the district of a man-eating tigress which, during the past four or five months, had killed several natives..." and

"...had at last appealed to the Deputy Commissioner to make some arrangement for its destruction. On the news reaching Mr Corbett, he at once started off and..."

These last citing were made to help you note that Corbett was not informed in 1907 (several weeks after Champawat) but in 1909 itself, as I had doubted and that indeed that tigress was making an average of approximately 1 human being per month.

Further, and this one is a damning evidence as would have been called by a lawyer: Charles Berthoud who asks Corbett to go after the Muktesar man-eater died on the 28th December 1909. Therefore he could not have been there in 1910 to instruct Corbett to go after the Muktesar man-eater as Corbett claimed by mistake (see the chapter dedicated to Berthoud in this book).

The Muktesar man-eater is therefore shot and killed during the period March/April 1909.

The Panar Leopard killing date

By PREETUM GHEERAWO

Martin Booth had not only thrown a cold shower on Corbett fans in 2011 OUP Edition of his book (1st edition Constable 1986) but also fed water towards the water-wheel of Corbett detractors not to say fuel to their fire of hatred towards what they called a 'fully-paid-up imperialist of Corbett'. On page 147 we read:

"The truth is that Jim got his dates wrong. He did shoot the Champawat man-eater in 1907 and he was asked if he would immediately go after the other two creatures [Panar and Muktesar]. In fact, he did not or - he did go after the Muktesar man-eater in 1907 - he was unsuccessful and did not care to remember his failure (sic). It was not until the early spring of 1910 that he finally went after the two other beasts; in the intervening years they claimed many more victims. Jim tended to overlook this fact in later years and it seems that his love for the hill folk did not always take precedence over his pressing business affairs."

The fact that Corbett fans and legacy went booming on the Internet after Booth's death (2004) did not arrange what he had wrongly interpreted and written in his book. The previous controversy of Muktesar has, at least in my mind, been cleared of and Booth may have regretted not to have seen it in this way (presented above) if he was still with us today.

But an e-paper published by the environmental portal of India whose authors I do not even dare to cite had dug even deeper in Booth and had quoted this paragraph (or part of). According to Martin Booth, Corbett's first attempt at the Panar man-eater had been interrupted because:

"Unsuccessful in this attempt, Jim left the area, though not without spending some time attempting to shoot - for sport - a tiger reputed to be protected by the gods and therefore immortal..."

On the same context, Booth rubs salt on the wound several times writing amongst others:

"One has to ask questions here which throw some doubts upon Jim's character, suggesting that he was not as unblemished as his future legendary reputation was to make it appear."

"He had possibly waited 3 years to go after the Muktesar and Panar man-eaters..." and "...he seemingly did not seek to follow up the trail [of the leopard]..." or "...he obviously had enough time on leaving the area to indulge in a bit of would-be-sport hunting..."

"Obviously his anguish at hearing the farmer's young wife die did not affect him too deeply."

Martin Booth made extensive research on Corbett retracing many letters from his surviving relatives and friends, but also relied a lot on D.C. Kala especially on the latter's pioneer research works. But what Martin Booth failed to do when winding up his book was to make the necessary interpretations as when Corbett was writing.

The generally accepted idea that 'Corbett had a fresher memory when writing *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* than *Temple Tiger* though not a generality, as we have seen earlier, would have helped him. He would not have written such insanities if he had considered for an instant that Corbett was writing *Temple Tiger* four and a half decades after his first man-eater experiences. In fact, what is general about Corbett's accuracy is not when he's giving just a month or a year as dates. We can rely on Corbett when he gives precise dates such as 11 April 1930 (Chowgarh Tigress) or 30 November 1938 (Thak Tigress).

In the case of the Panar man-eater when he comes for the second attempt, apart from giving elsewhere in the story the year 1910, he writes in *Temple Tiger*:

"Accompanied by a servant and four men carrying my camp kit and provisions, I set out from Nainital on 10 September on my second attempt to shoot the Panar leopard. The sky was overcast when we left home at 4 a.m. ..."

He even gives the time. Such precise information would have been possible only if he kept a diary (or record) of the days. This was not the case for the story of the Muktesar man-eater. There was no precise date given. Martin Booth was neither a charlatan nor a Corbett wanna-be-writer. He was just a great admirer of the man like we are, accepting his flaws, praising his prowess. But thanks to the environmental portal of India paper titled "Corbett – A fully-paid-up-imperialist" who quotes Booth criticizing Corbett on the Panar leopard, Booth had earned a bad name on the Internet.

This is not an attempt to restore Booth's reputation, it's the duty of his publisher to do so. But to his discharge, let's put things straight: We have established that the Muktesar man-eater was shot in 1909, Corbett stayed in Dabhidura Forest Bungalow in 1909 and the Panar Leopard was shot in September 1910. Now comes only the question of Corbett's first attempt towards the Panar leopard.

We learn in the first part of the Panar man-eater story in *Temple Tiger*, where no precise dates are given, that:

"After hunting down the tiger [Muktesar man-eater], an account of which I had given, I went in pursuit of the Panar leopard."

The only indication of a date is given a little later when Corbett comes to the rescue of the farmer near the Dol Dak Bungalow (now Dhaul village, 28 kms from Dabhidura) whose wife had been mauled by the man-eater as:

"...single room that comprised the house, with the door open for it was April and very hot..."

The month April corroborates also in the story of the *Temple Tiger*, again 'hot' is mentioned but this time in Dabhidura:

"After panting up this road on a hot afternoon in April, I was sitting on the veranda of the Rest house [Dabhidura forest bungalow] drinking gallons of tea..."

These two scenarios are connected since Corbett exits the scene of the first attempt of the Panar leopard when informed by the Road Overseer to come to Dabhidura for a supposed kill of the leopard. In both stories (Temple Tiger and Panar man-eater), Corbett admits leaving the Dhaul area for the 18mile (28kms) to Dabhidura, but not for indulging in sports hunting as Booth says but to investigate a possible kill of the man-eater at Dabhidura. This is in 1909, we had already concluded, April 1909 to be more precise as per Corbett's writings.

The correct time-line would therefore be as follows:

March-April 1909 – Muktesar Man-Eater

April 1909 – Panar man-eater first attempt

April 1909 – Dabhidura Temple tiger

September 1910 – Panar Leopard second attempt

Corbett did go after the Muktesar and Panar man-eater immediately after being summoned by Berthoud and Stiffe respectively in 1909, this is not only an opinion, but strengthened by the confirmation of the Muktesar date. At least here Booth was wrong and for this one mistake, he made up several others to cover this one and this resulted with the buzz we have known from Corbett detractors, who if ever reading these lines, I think, would not dare or care to make the necessary amends.



Our research group before starting the trek to Chuka and Thak along the Sarda gorge in on April 8th, 2012. Left to Right: Manfred, Joseph, Kotecha, Rushika, Reyna and Priyvat.



Manfred leads the way. Some parts of the trek to Chuka and Thak are quite narrow and barely affords foothold.



Crossing the Ladhya River between the villages Sem and Chuka at the place where the Thak man-eater and her cub crossed the river several times.



Our group's camping ground in Thak village in April 2012.



Place where Corbett was filming tigers in the wild. Corbett referred to this place as his “jungle studio.” Corbett was arguably the first who made moving cine-photography of wild tigers in their natural habitat.



Jim Corbett fishing on Naini Lake with Maggie in the late Colonial-India days.



Untold picture of Corbett and the Bachelor of Powalgarh in another angle with Kaladhungi villagers.



TullaKot village where Corbett hunted the Talla Des man-eating tigress with two grown up cubs. You can clearly see the narrow “saddle” that Corbett mentioned many times in his story.



Muktesar (now Mukhteshwar) village, you can see in the centre of the photo a house, which stands today on the place where the Badri Shah’s orchard was situated.



Going down to the Champa River gorge, towards the 'Champawat amphitheatre'. April 14th 2012.



A narrow angle view of the Champa Gorge with the river bed in middle.



A wide angle view of the Champawat amphitheatre. The three features forming it are clearly shown.



The river bed on the Champa gorge. The most likely place where a relatively safe descent is achievable to go to the mouth of the amphitheatre and to the place where the Champawat man-eater met its end.



The 'great flat projecting rock' on the face of the precipitous hill, which overhangs above the river. This is the place where Corbett started his successful career as hunter of man-eaters in 1907.



The overhanging rock on the precipitous rock face, where the Champawat tigress met its end. Observe the ledge to its left which is the only way to get to the rock. The photo is taken from the opposite side of the gorge, from approximately where the Tehsildar was waiting, and where Corbett had to rush to get the latter's old gun, after he was out of ammunition.



Dr Jordania on the overhanging rock where the Champawat tigress laid its final step. The rock's upper surface is 6 metres long, about three metres wide and is covered with a green moss (April 19th, 2014).



Manfred and Joseph on the top of the overhanging rock where Champawat tigress made her last stand. You may notice two burning candles on the rock. As the day was April 19th (Jim Corbett's passing away anniversary) these two candles were lit one for Jim Corbett, and another for the tigress who was turned into a dreaded man-eater by human-inflicted wounds. You can see how close the Champa River is to the rock.



Priyvrat and Joseph measuring the Champawat man-eater's rock upper surface. April 19th, 2014.



This is a 2012 photo of 10 year old Jayalukshmi Reyna, the youngest member of our party, sitting on a rock which Chuka and Thak villagers showed to Peter Byrne (on April 20, 1975) as the rock where Corbett killed the Thak man-eater. Photo of this rock with a Chuka villager, Buloka Singh, sitting in this position showing which side the tigress approached Corbett was published in Peter Byrne's book "Shikari Sahib" and was the inspiration behind Dr Jordania's will to explore this place.



Rock that was shown by guides in 2007 to Manfred and 2011 to Dr Jordania as the rock where Corbett killed the Thak man-eater. This rock has more inconsistencies with Corbett 's description than the rock shown in Peter Byrne's book.



The historic rock with a narrow ledge where Corbett called up and shot the Thak man-eater on November 30th, 1938. Corbett's successful career as hunter of man-eaters ended and our idea of writing this book germinated at this rock. Photo of 20th January 2011, the day when the rock was found.



Hoshiar Singh, Dr Jordania's guide in 2011, is sitting awkwardly on the narrow ledge of the rock near village Thak, exactly in a position as Corbett describes: right foot reaching the ground, left hand stretched and holding on top of the top of the rock, and his "rifle" placed on a rounded top of the rock (on a handkerchief). Photo was taken on January 22, 2011.



Reconstruction of the Thak man-eater's finale showing how Corbett was sitting on the rock on November 30, 1938, with his men and goats under his sitting place. Photo was taken on April 11th, 2012.



View from the eyes of the Thak man-eater as she approaches the rock with Corbett (here acted by Hoshiar Singh) ready with a heavy rifle. Photo of January 22nd, 2011.



The rock where Jim Corbett killed the Thak man-eater and finished his career of hunting man-eaters, with our affixed Memorial Plate and a candle.



In April 2015 Dr Jordania visited the USA and spent two unforgettable days in the company of the Thak tigress's full head mount with skin in Texas. On this photo he is reading the story of Thak man-eater.



Rock at the end of the open glade, where Corbett felt the approach of the Chowgarh tigress, while he was trying to use loudly calling villagers to attract her. On the same day, April 11th, 1930, Corbett shot the tigress during a dramatic encounter.



Joseph and Kotecha in front of the rock we called the “Girdar’s rock,” arguably the best candidate for the “Chowgarh slate” where Corbett killed the Chowgarh tigress on April 11, 1930. The photo is taken from the bank of the ravine (14th April 2014).



Right behind the Girdar’s rock, on the same right side of the ravine, there is another huge rock, mentioned by Corbett as the “wall of rock.” Corbett and his men silently passed this rock, only seconds before meeting the crouching tigress.



“Tewari rock,” where the Thak tigress narrowly escaped Corbett, Ibbotson and Tewari. Kotecha is climbing the “great slab of rock, which sloped upwards and away from the direction in which we had come” as Corbett was climbing on October 27th 1938. The ascending part of the rock, going upwards by about 30-40 degrees, is well visible.



Overhanging side of the rock, where the Thak tigress was resting while Corbett was climbing the ascending side of the rock, trying to stalk her from the top of the rock. (April 24, 2014).



This is the side of the ‘Tewari’ rock you see first when you are following the path from Thak to KotKindri. You can clearly see the ascending part of the rock next to the path, where Corbett climbed in order to stalk the tigress. At that same moment the latter was resting on the other side of rock, under the overhanging part of the rock – see the previous photo (April 24, 2014)



Tara Dutt Bhugiyal, Kulomani’s grand-nephew, showing the place (small hillock) down the Nandhour valley where his grand-uncle was attacked by the Chowgarh man-eating tigress. Kulomani was Corbett’s tall gaunt friend in the “Chowgarh Tigers” Chapter in Man-Eaters of Kumaon.



Keshav Bhatt of Dalkhania, Naruli Devi's grandson, holding a newspaper article by Joel Lyall reporting the attack of the Chowgarh man-eater on his grand-mother.



Shri Ganga Dutt Bhatt, Naruli Devi's son, the occupant of the basket in the room where Corbett was attending to her injured mother who fully recovered thereafter.



Dev Singh Bohra, nephew of the Champawat man-eater's last victim, Premka Devi. Photo was taken at Champawat bungalow, where Corbett spent the eerie 'night of fright', the night that accidentally was the last night in a short life of Premka Devi (April 18th, 2014).



Dev Singh Bohra's elder sister (April 19th, 2014)



Gopal Singh Bohra, the man who led us to the Champawat final spot in front of his shop in Gaudi village. He is the grandson of Dunghar Singh, who as a young boy had assisted the beat for the Champawat man-eater.



The Common Hill Mynah, dweller of the Kumaon hills, is famous for its mimicking ability, including mimicking human voice.



Grave of Charles Berthoud in Haldwani, the man who put Corbett on a career of hunting man-eating tigers and leopards. Berthoud had a short life and died in Haldwani on Christmas day in 1909. Photo courtesy of Peter Byrne from his 1975 photo archives.



Photo of the full head-mounts with skin of the first four man-eaters shot by Corbett. Photo was taken in yard of Gurney house, probably by Jean Ibbotson, an avid photographer. From Left to Right: the Champawat and Muktesar man-eating tigresses, followed by the Panar and Rudraprayag man-eating leopards. Photo dated (circa) 1926 is courtesy of Will Ibbotson, grand-son of Sir William (Ibby) Ibbotson, from his family archives.



Dr Jordania on Corbett's parents' graves behind St-John-in-the-Wilderness church in the place called Sukha Tal cemetery in Naini Tal. Left is Christopher William, the father and right is Mary Jane. Vandalised and abandoned, such is the state of this British colonial cemetery as at April 2014.



The house at the end of Sem village, where the second victim of the Thak man-eater, mother of the headman lived. She was killed few feet from the house. Her son watched the attack in horror, unable to assist in any way (April 23, 2014).



Phungar Bungalow in Champawat. Corbett had a mysterious and frightening experience in this bungalow in 1907, two days before he shot the Champawat man-eater. In the middle of the night he dashed out from the door you can see in the middle of the photo, and spent the rest of the night, and the next night, on this veranda. In a similar room, on the right side of the picture (you can see our party members on the veranda there) Corbett's servant and friend Bahadur was staying.



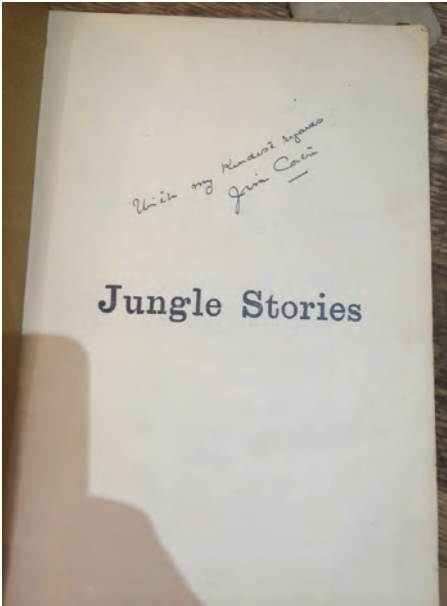
Inside the Phungar bungalow in Champawat. It was in this room where Bahadur heard noises coming from Corbett's room. On the right wall of this room there is an internal door to Corbett's room. Bahadur came to the veranda through the door you see on the picture.



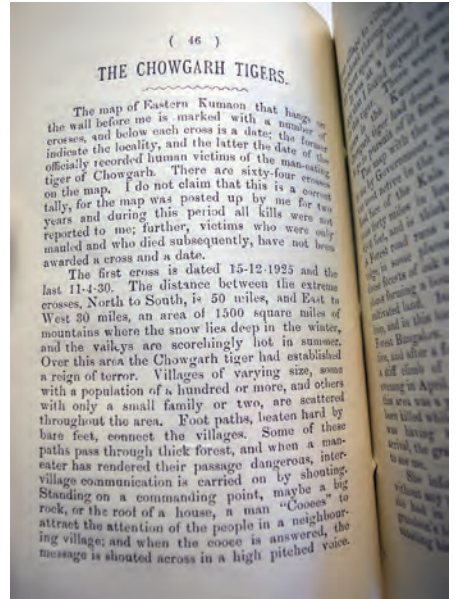
This is the view of the village from the Phungar bungalow some 500 metres away. Today the view of the village is mostly obscured because of the newly planted trees, although you can still see the village. Pay attention to the straight lines of the trees, indicating the late artificial planting of these trees. It was here that Corbett saw a runner from the village, bringing to him the news of the attack on the last victim of the Champawat man-eater, Premka Devi.



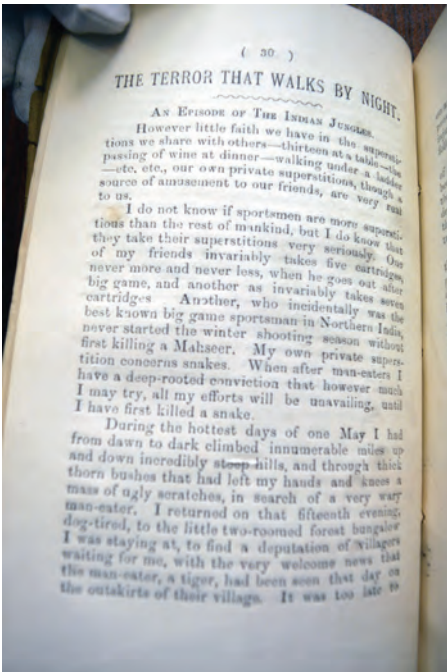
Corbett's famous Rigby-Mauser .275 in its original case, resting next to several Corbett books. Several of the man-eaters, described in these books, were shot by this rifle. One of the books, shown here, is "Jungle Stories," the first book Corbett self-published in 1935.



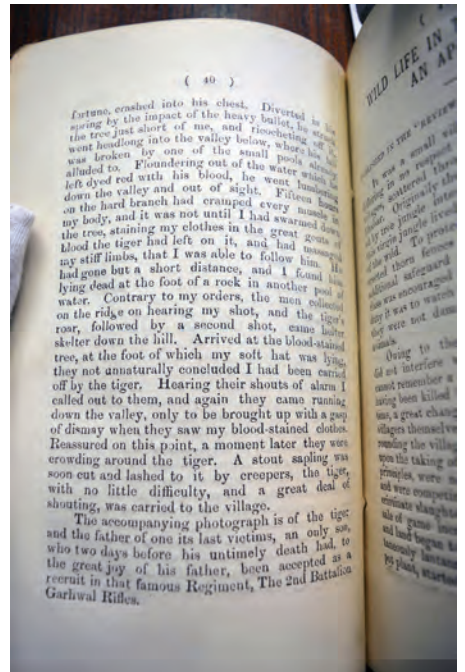
Title page of possibly the last surviving copy of *Jungle Stories*, with Corbett's autograph on it.



First page of the *Chowgarh Tigers* chapter of *Jungle Stories*.



First page of chapter "Terror that walks by night" (known to Corbett fans from the book "Man-eaters of Kumaon" as "Kanda man-eater") in *Jungle Stories*.



The last page of the story "Terror that walks by night." As you can see, there is no story of the brave father, and the presence of the photo of the brave father with the man-eater is indicated but however missing from this copy.



On the 19th April 2014 the youngest members of our group, Rushika (R) and Reyna Jayalukshmi (L) put a 'ghendaphool' garland round the neck of the bust of Jim Corbett in front of the Kaladhungi museum.



Representative of our group, Shobha Oree with Marc Newton, Managing Director of Rigby and Co and guest author of this book, in the latter's office in Pensbury Place, London S.W. on October 2nd 2015.



Shobha Oree with Corbett's legendary Rigby-Mausier .275.



You can clearly see the commemorative silver plate affixed to the butt of the rifle, with writings from Sir John Prescott Hewett, the Governor of the United Provinces.

Tiger-killer gun seized

A prize gun, kept by the Oxford University Press for more than 20 years, has been seized by police.

The rifle belonged to the renowned white hunter the late Col. Jim Corbett, who had close links with the OUP.

On his death in 1955, aged 79, he left it to the Press who had published several books on his Indian adventures with man-eaters. "I know it will be with friends," he wrote shortly before his death.

It was given to him after he killed the Champawat man-eating tiger, which had killed 416 people, by Sir John Hewett, Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces.

But the gun got into trouble when it

came in the notice of Oxford police, following an application for renewal of a firearms licence.

It was kept at the OUP's London office until two years ago when it was brought to Oxford. Recently its licence needed renewal, and this week it was taken into custody.

"We got a licence from Scotland Yard with no trouble, but the police at Oxford took a rather dim view of its being kept here," said OUP group controller Mr Don Webster.

And although Mr Webster said it was kept under strict security, the police are not keen to release it.

"We are rather sad about this," he said.

Mr Webster had made two suggestions to try and get the gun released; have the gun rendered useless;

Have the gun rendered useless;

Return it to its makers John Rigby and Co. of Pall Mall for their museum.

"We just don't want to see the gun destroyed," he said. "I hope they will release it to the museum. I think that would satisfy everyone's wishes."

In all the 0.275 calibre lightweight rifle accounted for a dozen man-eaters — tigers and leopards — which had killed more than 1,500 people.

Col. Corbett's knowledge of the jungle and its animals earned him the name "Sherlock Holmes of the Forests."

A new collection of Jim Corbett's stories (including two previously unpublished) called Jim Corbett's India is being published at the end of October by the OUP.

Oxford Times 6/10/78

Police seize historic prize gun

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Oxford Mail 30/9/78



Jungle Stories in its original brown manila jacket typeset in 'Letter Press' quality printing – possibly the last surviving copy.

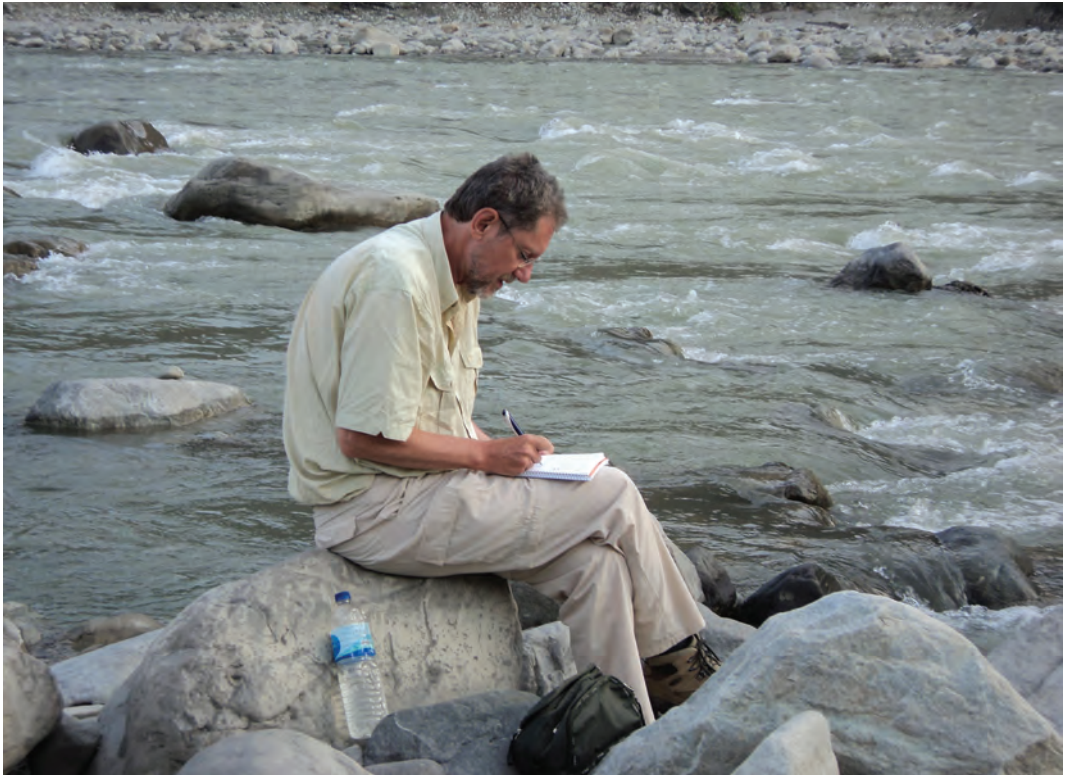
Newspaper clips from the Oxford Mail and Oxford Times (Sep. 30 & Oct. 6, 1978), the dark days for Corbett's legendary .275 Rigby-Mausier as its fate was uncertain.



The last of Corbetts' guns in India (Choti Haldwani). This single barrellled muzzle loader (SBML) was given by Corbett to the villagers to protect their crops against marauding pigs and deer. It's this same SBML that inflicted wounds to the Pipal Pani tiger. The last custodian of the fields guarding tower (and the gun) when Corbett left India was Sher Singh, whose son, Trilock Singh is pictured here (Right).



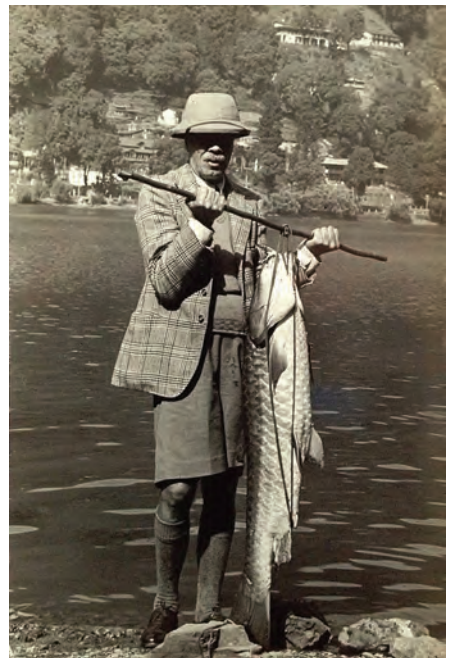
The old Kala Agar Forest Bungalow (erected 1925), where Corbett and the Vivians stayed (at different times) during the hunt of the Chowgarh man-eater. These two boys graciously guided us to this historic building in April 2012.



Manfred making notes of our trip, sitting next to the Sarda (Sharda) River (now called Maha Kali).



Rushika (L) and Reyna Jayalukshmi (R) with the 10-pound mahseer caught at the confluence of the Ladhya and Sarda during the dying hours of sunlight on April 14th 2012. This fish was Corbett's favourite and he caught many of them at almost the same place as ours when hunting the Chuka man-eater.



Corbett holding the record 50 -pound mahseer caught on fly in Lake Naini. (Photo from Jerry Marshall, grand-nephew of Corbett)



14 April 2014, Meeting with Akshay Shah (Centre), the custodian of Late D.C. Kala's manuscript of the book "Jim Corbett of Kumaon", the first biography of Jim Corbett. Kamal Bisth (Right) was our tour operator for both 2012 and 2014 trips in Kumaon.



Peter Byrne, among the first who investigated about Corbett's hunting sites, is still strong and full of adventure in his 90's. Here he is pictured with Dr Jordania, one of the authors of this book (April 4, 2015, Pacific City, Oregon).



The house that Jim Corbett built for his close friend 'Old' Mothi Singh in Choti Haldwani. It still stands to date. (09 April 2012)



Archival photo: "General view of the north end of Naini Tal." Photo was taken in 1875, the year when Corbett was born.



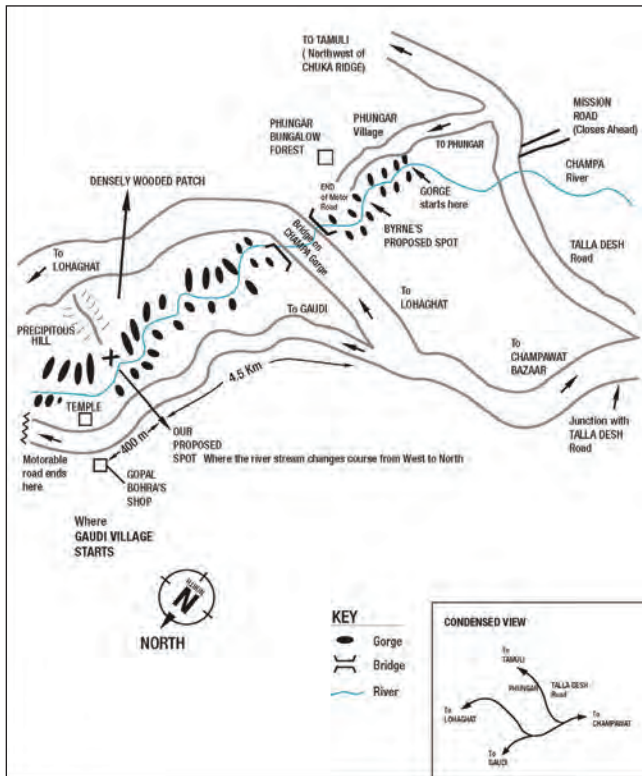
Archival photo: "Naini Tal, Landslip in 1880." This photo was taken in the wake of the devastating landslide of September 18th, 1880. On the right side of the landslide you can clearly see the trace of 1879 landslide in Alma Hills (where Corbett family lived during the 1880 landslide). Both of these photos are from Macnabb Collection (photo by Col James Henry Erskine Reid): Album of views of 'Naini Tal' From "Oriental and India Office Collection," British Library. Both photos are from Wikipedia, article "Nainital."



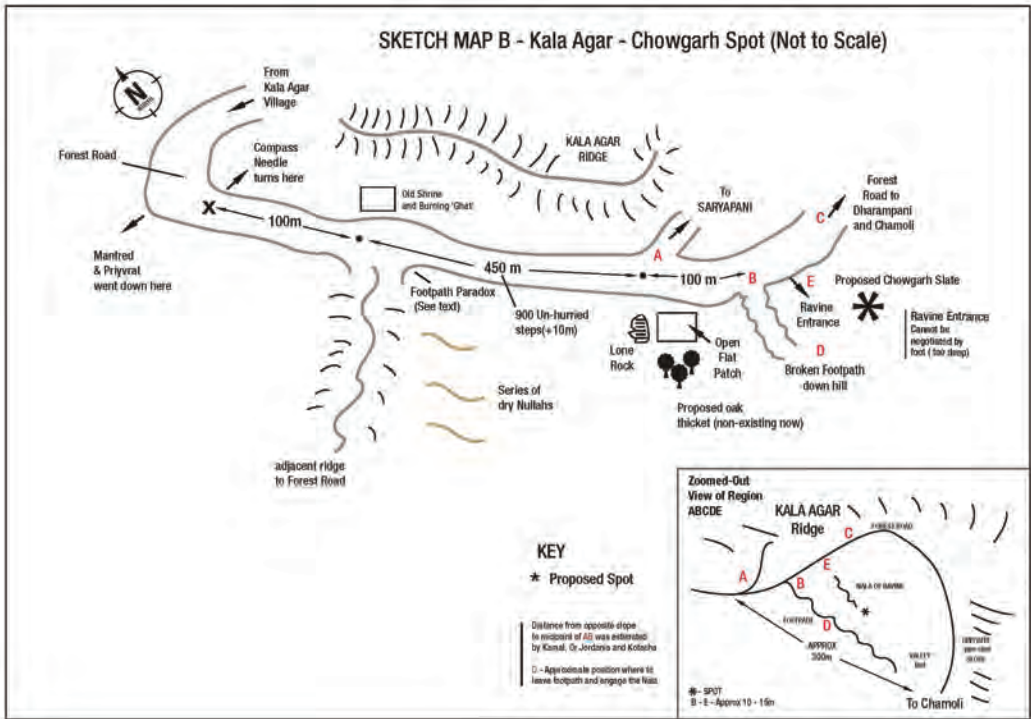
The attendant of the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow in April 2014 showing us the old guestbook retrieved from the 1925-built building.



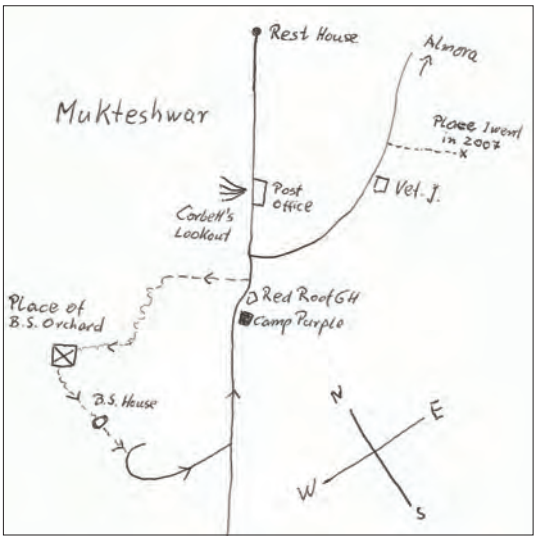
Surviving page of guestbook from Corbett times showing entry made by "Stiffe", deputy commissioner of Almora in 1905-10 who asked Corbett to go after the Panar leopard and later deputy commissioner of Naini Tal.



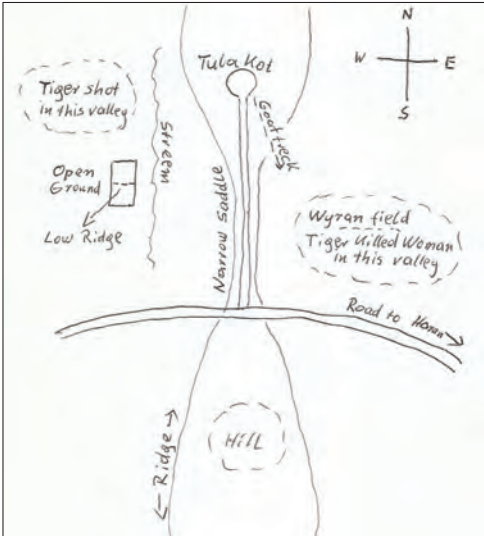
Sketch map of Champa Gorge, Champawat man-eater killing site. The hunt took place in 1907. The rock where the tigress died is marked by X.



Sketch map of Kala-Agar, the Chowgarh man-eater's last abode on earth. Girdar's rock, arguably the most convincing candidate for the "school slate," where Corbett killed the tigress, is on the right side of the map, indicated by the six-point star.



Sketch map of Muktesar man-eater hunting region.



Sketch map of the village Tula Kot, where Corbett, blinded in one eye and deaf in one ear, plus suffering from excruciating pain from the huge hematoma in his ear and head, was hunting the Talla Des man-eater.

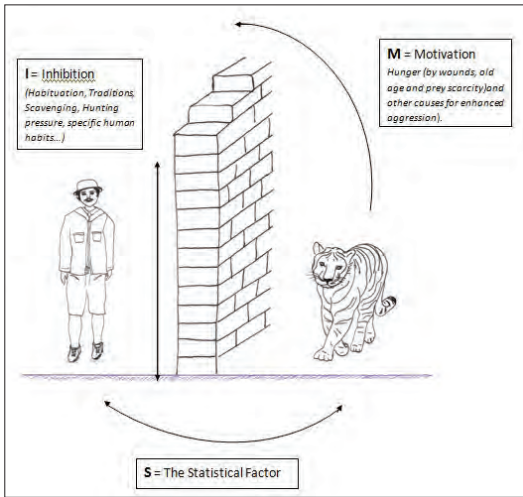


Figure for Manfred Walt's article "Through Wounds and old age": man-eating in Corbett's time and in a recent perspective as a multi causal phenomenon."

My dear Cumberlege

One of our most valued possessions is the .275 rifle that Sir John Hewell, Governor of the United Provinces, presented to me when I shot the Champawat man-eating tiger. This rifle has accounted for many man-eaters, and its exploits are mentioned a hundred times in my books.

My shooting days are now over and I am wondering if you could find a corner in Amen House where this faithful old friend, who has saved my life on many occasions, could pass his well-earned retirement in peace and comfort. He would not feel lonely at Amen House, for he would know that he was among friends.

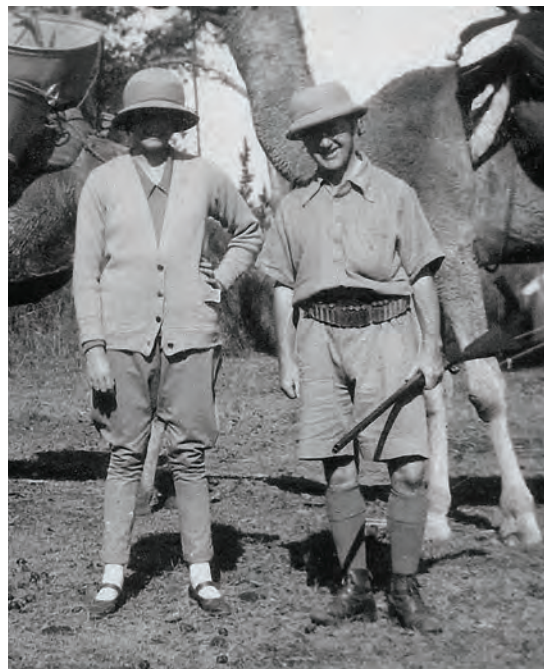
Our kindest regards to all at Amen House.

Yours sincerely
Jim Corbett

Jim Corbett's letter to Cumberlege, his publisher at OUP, offering them the .275 Rigby-Mausier to be displayed at their headquarters in London.



Sir William Ibbotson (Left) and Lady Jean, his wife and their younger son (engaged with the Royal Air Force) after they moved to Kenya.



The Ibbotson couple in their younger days in India. Here pictured during a hunting trip with camels in the North West Province (nowadays border between Pakistan and Afghanistan) – Photos from the Ibbotson family archive, courtesy of Will Ibbotson.



Lakeshore of lake Naini in Naini Tal where the original (but renovated) Nanda Devi temple stands. It is at this place that Corbett buried the fingers of the unfortunate girl, Premka Devi, the last victim (436th) of the Champawat man-eater. On 19 April 2014, flowers were spread on the lake at this area after a promise made to Dev Singh Bohra, Premka's nephew.



Nanda Devi Temple as photographed by Corbett from opposite shore. Photo is courtesy of Jerry Marshall, grand-nephew of Corbett.

Chuka Man-Eater Killing Date

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

There is a well known controversy about the date of the penultimate man-eater killed by Jim Corbett – so called “Chuka man-eater”. Some sources claim that Corbett killed the tiger in 1937, and other sources claim that killing happened in 1938. D.C. Kala does not mention the killing date of Chuka man-eater at all. Martin Booth mentions the date 1938 without explaining any of the controversies in Corbett dates. Jerry Jaleel claimed Chuka tiger was killed in 1937, as it is indicated in the beginning of Corbett story on this hunt. Peter Byrne also took for granted Corbett’s writing that the Chuka tiger was killed in 1937. Peter Byrne was actually the only author who noticed discrepancy in the dates. We can all agree, that the tiger could not kill two boys in June 1937, if he was killed by Corbett in April 1937.

Most importantly for all the biographers of Corbett, there is an obvious confusion in Corbett’s writings about the Chuka killing date. This chapter has been written to analyze these confusions, to settle the question when was the Chuka man-eater killed, and more widely, to raise a question about reliability of Corbett’s dates and his memory.

For the beginning let us all agree that out of these two of Corbett’s sentences one must be wrong:

(1) “It was early afternoon on a sweltering hot day in April 1937 that Ibbi, his wife Jane, and I...” (this citation comes from the Chuka man-eater story from the book “Temple Tiger and the More Man-eaters of Kumaon”, OUP, 1954. With this phrase Corbett starts describing his successful hunt for Chuka tiger).

And here is the second phrase:

(2) “...it was in this valley that six months earlier [in 1938] the Chuka man-eater had been shot.” This phrase comes from the Thak man-eater story from the book “Man-eaters of Kumaon” (OUP, 1944).

We all have to agree, that these sentences cannot be both correct. So Chuka tiger was killed either in 1937, or in 1938. It is obvious, that Corbett made at least one mistake (most likely, accidentally, because of memory failure) in dating his hunt. The problem is to find out which of them was the mistake. Many things of the Corbett stories change with the change of this single date. For example, the question when Chuka tiger started attacking humans, how old was the surviving cub during the Thak man-eater hunt, or who was the “big tiger” Corbett fired at in April 1938, mentioned in Thak story.

Possibly the surest way to come to the solution of this contradiction is to analyze both possible versions of the Chuka killing date, 1937 and 1938, and see which of them fits better the existing facts.

So, what happens if the Chuka tiger was killed in 1937.

If the real date of the kill is 1937, then we must accept that Corbett made several serious mistakes in his writings. These mistakes are:

His writing that the Chuka tiger's first unsuccessful attack was in winter 1936 must be wrong (and the correct date must be winter of 1935),

His writing that the tiger killed two boys in June 1937 must be another mistake (must be June 1936),

His writing that the Thak tigress killed Corbett's buffalo in April in 1938 must be wrong (must be April 1937),

His writing (just after killing the Thak tigress) that during his three visits in this region during the last eight months he walked many times on the Thak-Chuka path, always in fear and with loaded gun (for the fear of man-eaters) must be wrong.

Corbett words in Thak story "...it was in this valley that six months earlier [in 1938] the Chuka man-eater had been shot" must be wrong, instead must be '18 months' earlier.

So, in case if we assume that Corbett killed Chuka tiger in 1937, there are plenty of serious mistakes in his stories.

What happens if the Chuka tiger was killed in 1938

If we assume that the tiger was killed in 1938, there will be only one contradiction in Corbett's writings. This is Corbett mentioning "sweltering hot day was April of 1937" at the beginning of the Chuka story. So if this date is corrected into 1938, not a single other contradictions will be found in Corbett's stories. Let me address the details:

- (1) All the dates of the Chuka tiger attack (including unsuccessful attacks in 1936, and then killing two boys in June 1937), will be correct.
- (2) Corbett mentioning killing the Chuka tiger "six month before" the October 1938 will be correct,
- (3) Corbett mentioning several times about his hunt in April will be correct, and him mentioning after killing the Thak tigress that he was during the last 8 months three times in this path, always with loaded gun and the feel of fear, will be correct,
- (4) Corbett writing that tigress killed a buffalo in April 1938 will be correct.

So the only contradiction in Corbett writings to the date 1938, as the Chuka man-eater killing date, is the mentioning in the beginning of the Chuka story the April of 1937. I suggest and will try to prove that mentioning of "April of 1937" was a single mechanical mistake that Corbett made in writings about two related stories: Chuka and Thak man-eaters.

Possibly the most important factor for us to believe that Corbett was more likely to make mistake in his Chuka story (than in Thak story) is that these two stories were written in very different periods of Corbett's life. According to D.C.Kala, Corbett wrote

Thak story in 1942, when he was 67. He was still in India and had fresh memories of the hunt that happened only 4 years before (when he was 63). As we may remember, Thak story was a concluding story of his first book "Man-eaters of Kumaon" (was submitted to publisher in August 1943, and was published in August 1944).

Chuka story was written in 1953, ten years later of writing of the first book, and fifteen years after his last hunt of a man-eater. By this time Corbett was 78 years old. His health was shaken particularly after suffering a very serious bout of malaria in the jungles (which almost killed him). In 1942 Corbett spent three months with serious bout of tick typhus, and in 1945-46 he was so ill with malaria (plus pneumonia) that according to Jim's dedicated sister Maggie, doctors were seriously afraid for his life. Although Jim recovered, his health was seriously broken after this illness. The story about Chuka tiger appeared in the book "Temple Tiger and More Man-eaters of Kumaon" (1954). It would be natural to assume that Corbett was more likely to make mistakes in 1953, after serious illness, and only two years before his death, than in 1942, when he was a still strong man, who was preparing military corps for jungle warfare during the Second World War.

Another important detail, often missed by Corbett biographers, is the startling difference in the number of precise dates mentioned in Corbett 1944 and 1953 books. For example, have a look how many precise dates are provided in Thak man-eater story:

- October 12, 1938, the date when the Ibbotson and Jane Ibbotsons started their trip;
 - October 13th, Corbett joined Ibbotsons;
 - October 23rd, Corbett and Ibbotsons arrived in village Sem.
 - October 26th, a men from the village Thak is killed by the tigress,
 - October 27th, Corbett, Ibbotson and Tewari follow the tigress but she escapes;
 - October 28th, two mail runners escape tigress attack;
 - October 29th, tigress killed a bullock from village Thak;
 - November 1st, tigress escapes Corbett when drinking a water at the pool;
 - November 2rd, Corbett and Ibbotson follow the tigress, and then in the dark the tigress follows them back to camp;
 - November 3nd, Ibbotson's party leaves;
 - November 7th, Corbett leaves his camp for a break;
 - November 12th, tigress kills a man in Thak (the last victim);
 - November 22nd, Corbett leaves Kaladhungi for the second hunting trip;
 - November 24th, in the morning Corbett arrives to Chuka for second hunting trip.
- Thak is deserted and tigress follows Corbett unseen;
- November 25h, Corbett ties two buffaloes to bait the tigress;
 - November 26th, Thak villagers ask Corbett to accompany them to the deserted village;
 - November 28th, while sitting on a kill at a killed and partially eaten caw, Corbett hears mysterious human scream from the deserted Thak village;

November 29th, Corbett asks Thak headman about the scream of the tigress human victim on November 12th; Tigress comes to worker's place roaring and coves them into silence;

November 30th, Corbett calls up and shoots the tigress about 6.00 pm. (This was the last day of Corbett's last hunt after a man-eater.)

As we can see, the whole story is filled with precise dates. Now let us have a look to see how many precise dates are mentioned in the Chuka man-eater story. The answer is very precise: none. There is not a single event that is precisely dated by Corbett. Even the date of killing the Chuka man-eater from the ficus tree is not precisely dated.

Chuka and Thak tigers were killed very close to each other, so it might seem hard to explain why Corbett remembered Thak dates so well, and had no memory of any dates of Chuka tiger hunt. The obvious explanation is that Corbett wrote these two storied 11 years apart, and his memory was most likely failing two years before his death, when he was writing a Chuka story. Of course, when writing Chuka story, Corbett could have easily make a guess and write that the tiger was killed, for example, the April 25, and no one would have ever find out if this was not correct. But for a person with such integrity as Corbett this was totally unacceptable. As he did not remember the precise date by the time he was writing a story in 1953, he did not start guessing and making up the date of killing of his penultimate man-eater. Unfortunately, unlike some of fellow humans, Corbett never had a habit of writing diaries.

We know that Corbett received some criticism from fellow tiger hunters who were accusing him of dramatizing details of his hunt, but most likely this accusation came from a general belief that hunters always make up details to dramatize the stories of their hunts. Corbett was very different from most of hunters, and did not possess the "hunter virus" of dramatizing of hunting stories. There are many indications that Corbett was writing his stories without a slightest dramatization of the real events, and not a single person was able to prove without any reasonable doubt that something was obviously made up by Corbett.

Corbett had another problem. Some of the details of his hunts were so incredible that he was reluctant to tell them as he knew he would be accused of dramatizing. Instead of taking away the details that could have caused suspicion of the readers, he was delaying the release of these stories. Story of Tala Desh tiger is one of such incredible stories, when sick, partly deafened and half blinded Corbett, instead of being in a hospital, was following a man-eater tiger at night.

Sorry for this deviation. I mentioned this just to propose, that all the possible mistakes that a readers might find in Corbett stories, are there not from his desire to cover the truth, or dramatize the real events, but because of his memory failings. The mistake with the Chuka killing year (1937 instead of correct 1938) was such a mistake. It is quite evident that Corbett memory was not as sharp in 1953, as it was in 1943.

As a matter of fact, Corbett has very few precise dates of his hunts in his books, even the dates some of his most memorable hunts are not clear, like the date of killing of the Champawat tigress, the most prolific man-eater in recorded human history. Actually, only killing of three of his man-eaters are dated precisely in his books: (1) Thak tigress, (3) Rudraprayag leopard, and (3) Chowgarh tigress.

Thak tigress, killed on November 30th, 1938, was the most recent kill by the time of writing a story about it and the story is undoubtedly the by far the most detailed story out of all Corbett writings.

Rudraprayag leopard was killed on the night of May 1st -2nd, 1926. This was by far the best known man-eater killed by Corbett. It was granted an unprecedented media coverage and was even discussed in British Parliament. This was the only man-eater that merited a separate book from Corbett.

Chowgarh tigress killing date is April 11th, 1930. How could this date survive so well in Corbett memory? From the story we know that Corbett had a map of the region with the precise dates and the names of villages of all reported kills on it. After killing the tigress, Corbett added a final note on the map, indicating the place and date of killing.

Another reason for remembering Rudraprayag and Chowgarh man-eater hunts was that they were the most difficult hunts that lasted many months, and the dates stayed in Corbett memory better than many other hunts.

Taking into attention the incredibly detailed descriptions of the many hunting scenes it might seem unbelievable that Corbett could remember such vivid details of the hunt and not remember the dates of the kills of the man-eaters, but in fact this is quite natural for human memory. Many of us might have incredibly detailed memory of some emotional moments of our lives without the memory of the precise dates. It is certainly pity that a person with such an incredible life and adventures did not have a diary³⁰.

Apart from the dates, there are some other details of Chuka and Thak story that must be clarified as well.

Who was the “big tiger”?

Corbett mentions in Thak story that he shot at a “big tiger” in April 1938. Was the “big tiger” Corbett mentions the Chuka tiger? Or it was another, normal (non-man-eater) tiger that Corbett hunted for trophy in 1938?

Let us read Corbett precise words on this account (from Thak story):

“ . . . into the ravine in which I had fired at and missed the big tiger in April.”

³⁰ For another confirmation that Chuka tiger was killed in 1938, see the letter written by Ibbotson on January 13th, 1939. The letter text is presented to the wider audience for the first time in this book. The original of the letter is kept in the National Archives of India.

I believe Corbett was referring to Chuka man-eater, but there can be a doubt that Corbett could not had been referring to the Chuka tiger as he was only referring to the tigers as “big” if the tiger was more than 10 feet long. Also, he could have simply mentioned that it was a Chuka man-eater.

Now, if we check the end of the Chuka tiger story, when Corbett speaks about the size of Chuka tiger, he refers to Chuka man-eater as “big male”. His precise words are “he was a fine big male in the prime of his life and in perfect condition, and would have measured – if we had had anything to measure him with – nine feet six inches between pegs, or nine feet ten over the curves”. Not quite 10 feet, I agree, but close, and most importantly, the word “big male” to the Chuka tiger was used by Corbett himself.

Apart from the size, let us pay attention, that when Corbett mentions “big tiger” in the story, he mentions him firing and missing his shot to this “big tiger” in April in a ravine. If we check the story of Chuka man-eater, we will easily find the place where Corbett writes about shooting at the man-eater in April in a ravine, and describes how his bullet missed the tiger. According to Corbett words, bullet “went through the ruff on his [Chuka man-eater’s] neck and striking a rock splintered back, making him spring straight up into the air . . .” Later he examined the place and confirmed he missed the tiger and that there was no blood, and that he only found tiger hair shaved from his neck. So, everything is pointing that Corbett mentioning of the “big tiger” was the Chuka tiger: the name “big tiger” used by Corbett, time – in April, place – in ravine, and the occasion – missing his shot.

So I believe there is no need to suggest that Corbett went to this region specially to hunt a normal, non-man-eater “big” tiger as a trophy, in April 1938. Besides, we know that Corbett completely abandoned trophy hunting of tigers in the 1930s.

HOW OLD WAS THE YOUNG MALE TIGER?

Another important topic of Chuka and Thak stories is how old was the living cub Corbett mentions in Thak story – about 9-10 month old (if born in 1938), or about 20-21 month old (of born in 1937). We know that Corbett saw two cubs of the future Thak man-eating tigress (who was the mate of the Chuka tiger) first time when hunting the Chuka tiger, and later he saw the pugmarks of one of the surviving cubs when hunting the Thak tigress.

If Chuka tiger was killed in 1937 and Corbett saw the tigress with her cubs in April 1937, in November 1938 the young male tiger must have been about 21-22 months old.

If Chuka tiger was killed in 1938 and Corbett saw the tigress with cubs in April 1938, in November 1938 the young male tiger must be about 9-10 months old.

Now, let us pay attention how Corbett refers to the young tiger. In one place he refers to the cub as “young male tiger”, but most importantly, in another place he writes “small male tiger crossed and recrossed the Ladhya many times during the past week...” I think the word “small male tiger” can not be said about a male tiger

that is 21-22 months old. At this age male tigers are larger than fully grown female tigers. Corbett would never proposed this was a “small male tiger” if this was 21-22 months old male tiger.

So the words “small male tiger” also indicates that the Chuka killing date was 1938 and the abandoned cub was about 9-10 months old.

Possibly more difficult problem is why the tigress was in heat, and was calling for a mate in October-November 1938, if she still had a 9-10 months old cub.

We know that tigresses sometimes abandon their cubs, so possibly the Thak tigress was another “bad mother”, who abandoned her cub? I believe there is a strong possibility that the Thak tigress undergone a character change from April to October. We know that the tigress was a good mother when Corbett saw her with cubs for the first time in April. She was teaching her cubs a proper behaviour of tigers in the wild. After April the tigress undergone life-changing stresses: she was twice wounded, one of her cubs died (possibly while she was incapacitated from hunting her natural prey), and finally she became a man-eater, totally fearless of humans, cowing into silence even thousands of workers shouting at her. So I believe it would be natural to conclude that under these stresses the tigress behaviour changed and she actually abandoned her cub.

Could the cub survive? According to George Schaller³¹, tiger cubs show first elements of independence at 6.5 months old. Males start hunting earlier than females. 11 month male cub “became semi-independent and occasionally begun to hunt on his own” (Schaller, 1984:270). Schaller also cites Sanderson (1912) who mentions two cubs, born in 1875 November. They started hunting in June 1876, 7 months old, although stayed with mother (Schaller, 1984:270). Schaller (1984:234) also writes that males become independent earlier and are often killed as they are not very skilled hunters yet.

Most likely the 10 months old cub of the Thak tigress, left on his own, was surviving by scavenging, and there is a very little chance he would survive after November 30th when the troubled tigress was finally put at rest by Corbett.

So after studying the problem of Chuka tiger killing date in detail, I came to the following conclusions:

killing of Chuka tiger happened in April of 1938,
 the “big tiger” Corbett mentions in Thak story was the Chuka man-eater,
 the young male cub was most likely the 9-10 months old cub, one of the cubs that Corbett saw with the future Thak man-eater in April 1938 when he was hunting Chuka tiger.

Because of Corbett mentioning of the “sweltering hot day in April 1937”, the other mistake came out, like the writing under the Chuka mounted head of the date “1937”,

³¹ Schaller, George B. (1984). *The Deer and the Tiger (Midway Reprint)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The existing writing in Forest department documents in 1937 must be more about killing two boys by the Chuka man-eater rather than Corbett killing the man-eater,

The idea that Corbett was killing other tigers just for trophy in 1938, after establishing the first protected areas for the tigers (that became later Corbett Park) is wrong.

At the end, let us have a look at Corbett writing at the end of Thak story. After killing the Thak tigress on November 30th, 1938, unarmed Corbett, very happy because of the sudden cease of the fear connected to the man-eater, writes:

"In my three visits to Chuka during the past eight months I had been along this path many times by day and always with a loaded rifle in my hands, and now I was stumbling down in the dark, unarmed, my only anxiety being to avoid a fall. If the greatest happiness one can experience is the sudden cessation of great pain, then the second greatest happiness is undoubtedly the sudden cessation of great fear."

What does these words mean? I think from these words we can conclude that:

- Corbett's three visits (in eight months, all in 1938) that he mentions was to kill the two of his last man-eaters, Chuka and Thak tigers. Chuka needed one visit (in April), and Thak needed two visits (October and November, together three visits). It was because of the presence of the man-eaters that he had the "feel of fear" until this moment, and that's why he had to walk with the "loaded gun" all the time.
- In case if the first of these three visits, mentioned by Corbett, was for another, non-man-eater tiger, mentioned as "big tiger", then it is impossible to understand his referring to the feeling of fear during all these three visits, as Corbett was never afraid to walk jungles if there were only "normal" tigers, as he knew non-man-eaters do not stalk and attack people.

One additional point. There is another, very small contradiction between Chuka and Thak stories. Corbett wrote in a Thak story about the tigress killing one of his buffaloes in April (the one that she fed to her small cubs as Corbett watched them from a tree). In Chuka story he mentions the same kill not as "buffalo" but as a "cow". Of course, this is not an important mistake, but this still confirms that Corbett's memory was not 100% in his later years. I believe buffalo must be correct, as Thak story was written only 3-4 years later after the events described, and Chuka story was written 13-14 years later.

And finally one methodologically important claim: I would suggest, that if there are any contradictions found between the details of the two Corbett books, "Man-eater of Kumaon" (1944), and the "Temple Tiger and More Man-eaters of Kumaon" (1954), we should assume that it is most likely that the mistakes were made by Corbett in his book "Temple Tiger and More Man-eaters of Kumaon", as this book was written much later, and after his devastating illness, so in his later years Corbett's memory most likely was not as sharp as before.

So I am coming to the conclusion that the biggest mistake Corbett made in his writings about the Chuka man-eater was that he wrote about a “sweltering hot day in April 1937”, as the start of his hunt for Chuka man-eater. If we correct this one single date, 1937 into 1938, everything falls on its place.

Therefore, we can finally correct the existing controversy in the text of the book “Temple Tiger and More Man-eater of Kumaon:” Chuka man-eater was killed in April 1938.

According to the currently published text by the Oxford University Press, although the man-eater was killed in April of 1937, the tiger still miraculously managed to kill two boys in June of 1937. I suggest it will be a sensible idea for the Oxford University Press to add a note from an editor about the correct killing date of the Chuka man-eating tiger in the continuing new publications of Corbett’s classic books.

The bear or the tiger? Norah Vivian controversy

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

Corbett biographers, although sharing deep admiration towards Jim Corbett, still display quite different attitudes towards him. D.C. Kala had a full admiration for Corbett. He is not indicating any doubts in the credibility of Corbett writings, although he did mention some possible mistakes in the writings. Jerry Jaleel went even further in unconditionally trusting Corbett, not doubting even when the facts were clearly contradicting Corbett writings (for example, the date of killing of Chuka man-eater). Peter Byrne, who visited probably more Corbett hunting sites than any other Corbett biographer, expressed profound admiration for his integrity. Even in those cases when Byrne presented different versions of the events in his book (for example, killing of the Thak tigress), he does not expressly accuse Corbett of dramatising events.

Arguably the most direct criticisms towards the credibility of Corbett writings (and even his character) came from Martin Booth, who criticised Corbett for many discrepancies in his writings, and in some cases accused Corbett for deliberately changing details of his stories in order to make them more interesting to the readers. Here we are going to discuss one of such cases, when Booth used the memoir from Norah Vivian, Jim Corbett's good friend and fellow shikari (hunter), about the details of chasing the Chowgarh man-eater.

These are Norah Vivian's words told to Martin Booth in 1984 (from Booth, 1986: 246):

'We got there (Kala Agar) and were resting in camp – my husband was shaving – when there were great shouts outside. A woman had just been taken from a party of grasscutters a few hundred yards up the hill. She was up a rhododendron tree, cutting fodder branches, about six feet up. The tigress crept up and swept her legs from under her, knocking her down and crushed her skull. She was a young girl or woman, and was lying in grass in the open. My husband got permission – religious reasons – to sit up over the kill. He sat in a nearby tree for the rest of that day and night. Nothing. At 5am down, I walked to him with a cocked rifle. Got him down. We sent a note to Jim. The next night we sat up again over a young bullock – the woman was taken for her funeral. We saw a bear, not the tiger – we were not mistaken in this as Jim writes' She added, 'He was wrong in the story – it makes a better tale, doesn't it?'

Booth comment follows: "Norah Vivian was a good friend of both Jim and Maggie and her comments are not malicious. Indeed, when Jim finally shot the tigress on the afternoon of 11 April, he cut out from the tigress's neck, when skinning her, one of the 'lucky' floating bones that Indians regard as the ultimate talisman against tiger attack and, having this mounted in gold, gave it to Norah some time later as a scarf pin" . . . "What was more, Norah Vivian was an expert shikari herself and a crack shot who

certainly knew a bear from a tiger. But Jim wrote in his story: “There was no moon, and just as daylight was fading out and nearby objects becoming indistinct, they first heard, and then saw, an animal coming up to the kill which in the uncertain light, they mistook for a bear.” Booth gives one more comment to put a fair dose of suspicion in Corbett’s words: “Jim did not arrive until forty-eight hours later so how could he have assessed accurately the spoor marks of a bear on such ground?”

Norah Vivian continued: “The details and dates in his stories are sometimes questionable. Even the Chowgarh tigress story is not exactly as it was. He was not careful over some details.”

This is a quite big statement that goes not only against of Corbett writings, but his integrity as well. We have already discussed in detail the controversy that surrounds the final meeting scene with the Chowgarh man-eater (see a separate chapter on this topic in this book). We came to the conclusion that the central difference between the Corbett’s letter to Maggie (which is considered the true description of events), written on the same day of the hunt, and the story, written several years later, was the shooting scene. According to letter, Corbett shot the tigress “in a heartbeat”, and according to the story, Corbett turned extremely slowly in order not to alert the tigress. Booth (and generally Corbett critics) fail to take into account, that when writing a letter to his sister, Corbett might not wanted to reveal to his only living family member the scariest detail of the hunt, that he was at a full mercy of a man-eater. Critics are ready to believe that in that critical moment Corbett, who found himself standing with his back to the tigress, with his rifle pointing to the other direction, managed in a split second turn around (do not forget – without using his left hand!), and shoot the tigress who was ready to jump and was less than three metres away. And above all, according to Booth and other Corbett critics, for some reason, Corbett decided to conceal his amazing hunting feat from the readers. But let us go back to “bear vs. tiger” controversy.

Booth’s comment, where he tries to clear up Corbett’s name, sounds possibly even more offensive than the initial allegations: “Jim was not a charlatan. He did not seek glory nor to be what he was not. He was simply an expert and courageous hunter turned conservator turned popular author who, determined to give his readers their money’s worth with a modicum of conservationist evangelising, twisted just a few little facts that his memory had already partially corrupted. His books are none the worse for it and, as they imply, he was undoubtedly regarded by many, from humble villagers to District Commissioners like Ham Vivian, as the Authority on the hunting of Indian big game in the mountains of the north.”

The words “Jim was not a charlatan” to Jim Corbett fans might sound as offensive, as the statement that he “twisted just a few little facts” in order “to give his readers their money’s worth.” It is true, that Corbett said that he tried to give the readers their money’s worth, but he said these words not to seek indulgencies for “twisting a few little facts” but to explain why he was always so “maddeningly detailed” (D.C. Kala)

in all his descriptions. Yes, as a human, Corbett did have memory failures, and there are clear facts for this claim. Besides, we should not forget that in his private letter to Maggie he most likely tried to spare his sister from some of the scariest moments of his hunting, but this by no means gives us grounds to claim that he was deliberately changing the true and known to him facts in order to make his stories a better read.

So what can we say in the case of Norah Vivian controversy?

According to Vivian's words, Jim was wrong in asserting that that night, in a fading light, they mistook a tiger for a bear. Vivian was sure they made no mistake and the animal that appeared in darkness was indeed a bear. Jim, after examination the scene (two days later), came to conclusion that not bear, but tiger came that night to the kill.

Of course, we will never know for 100% whether it was a bear or a tiger. I can accept that Corbett might make a mistake, when he examined the scene two days later. But it is certainly very difficult to accept that Corbett knew it was a bear, and in order to "make a better story" he deliberately twisted facts. Let us make no mistake, that kind of "twisting facts" would not be a simple and harmless "hunter's tale" that we know too well from many hunters. Changing such a detail, particularly a deliberate change, would require some degree of internal corruption on Jim's side, and for sure, he would know that with this lie he would make his dear friends quite upset.

What most likely happened was that Vivians were sure the animal they saw was a bear. Jim, after examined the scene, came to the conclusion that the animal was a tiger. Jim and Vivians probably did not talk about this, but if they did, they probably did not agree with each other (Booth does not mention if Vivians discussed this disagreement with Jim). Who was right, Vivians in the fading light seeing a bear, or Corbett, finding tiger pugmarks at the scene 48 hours later, is difficult to say. Booth is absolutely right when he claims, that Vivian's were great hunters and crack shots, and Corbett also mentions this fact several times. But at the same time it is also an undeniable fact, that Corbett's expertise as a hunter was a notch higher. This was the reason Vivians send a note for Corbett after the unsuccessful night vigil above the human kill. Corbett arrived, and in about two weeks the man-eater was dead.

As the readers might have already guessed, it was not our intention to judge, who was right and who was wrong in recognising the animal that appeared in the fading light in Kala Agar on March 22, 1930. We have no conclusion for that question. But we do have a conclusion we can propose with full certainty, that Jim Corbett, as we know him, and as millions of readers and simple Indians know him, would have never twisted the details of his hunt deliberately in order to make it a better tale, and particularly on the expense of showing his dear friends in a bad light.

Meeting with Jungle Stories – The Holy Grail for Corbett fans

BY PREETUM GHEERAWO

Now for you, my reader, assiduous Corbett fan that you are, let me count you the story of how a representative of our group (not a group member though) made contact with Jungle Stories, the very first book by Corbett, published privately for a hundred copies only. What is thought to be one of the very last surviving copies of this book is under the care of Marc Newton now, and the story of its acquisition by a great Corbett fan like Marc is already given to you in this book.

I had established contact with Marc Newton just before the CLA game fair in July 2015 in connection with the re-surfacing of Corbett's .275 Rigby Mauser rifle. At that time, he did not have the book yet. It's only when he returned to London after a week that he, perhaps not realising what shock he was about to bring to me, dropped me in a single line: "We have also been able to obtain a copy of Jungle Stories by Jim Corbett" in an email where he was telling me that the Corbett rifle is back in his London office and that it is available for inspection.

I would just like to give an account for the reason of my being greatly shocked at that news before proceeding with how I handled the news. I became aware of the book "Jungle Stories" late in the 1990's when I read D.C. Kala's and Martin Booth's Corbett biography in an attempt to reconcile information in both of them. This was at the start of my career as researcher in 'Corbett Studies', a term which had not been coined yet at that time. I always thought that if this book would have been accessed, then many discrepancies concerning Corbett's stories, a list of which I had already made at that time, would have been solved. My reason for that is I always thought that Jungle Stories contained materials that are written just the way they were by Corbett and that Man-Eaters of Kumaon following it nine years later had some editions made by the publishers. In 2005, I wrote to both Booth and Kala through their respective publishers to enquire them about their source in quoting Jungle Stories in their books. Only Kala responded and the reason why Booth (who gave much more information on Jungle Stories) did not was that he was dead in 2004.

I owe Kala very much for the knowledge I have of Corbett Studies nowadays and he was kind enough to disclose that even searching in many countries and meeting direct and indirect relatives of Corbett, yielded null results for finding the book. All that he had been able to obtain was a photographic plate of the inside front page of one such copy where it is autographed by Corbett in this legendary phrase: "Don't be critical. A jungli can only tell his stories in jungle language" ('Jungli' means a denizen of the jungles, to whom Corbett was alluding himself to.)

Kala had obtained this photograph with the permission of the Forest Department of Uttarakhand (formerly part of Uttar Pradesh state) who manages the Corbett museum in his former house of Kaladhungi. According to Kala, it came from the collection of the late Jagat Singh Negi's family who donated personal letters from Corbett as well to the museum. Therefore, most probably, Negi received that autographed copy of *Jungle Stories* from Corbett in 1935 and forty years later during the celebration of Corbett's centenary (1975), his family only gave a photo of the inside front page to the museum.

Therefore there is still the probability that a copy of *Jungle Stories* is in India, but even Jagat Singh's son who Kala met in the 1970's is no more and the remaining family was not in Naini Tal in 2012. So, the last resort was that Corbett left a copy in his other house in Naini Tal. Gurney house as it is called was visited in 2012 and what Manfred and I suspected to be a copy of *Jungle Stories* in Corbett's original book collection given to the Verma couple turned out to be a Jack London hardback with the J and L only remaining on the spine of the jacket. This was a huge disappointment for us and I won't give you too many other instances of disappointment perhaps one that could have caused us to travel to the USA in search of a mythical copy!

Therefore, when Marc Newton subsequently phoned me to tell that indeed that copy is lying a few feet from him while he was talking to me. The shock subsequent from Marc's email and phone call earned me several sleepless nights! I imagined, during those nights, already flying there and meeting Marc and the book and discovering for example: the extreme rarest photos of the Kanda man-eater and the Chowgarh tigress. But when our morning arrived on the second or 3rd day, I came down to earth in a sudden drop. My students were at a crucial phase just before taking their end of year exams; I could not let them down.

I duly informed the other members of our Corbett group about the situation. Dr Jordania then asked Manfred who lives closest to London (from Munich, Germany) to have a go at it, but even Manfred couldn't. But there was a last resort, I thought of my niece Rebecca who lives with my mum in the UK at Leicester in the Midlands (some 300 km to London) and who had in the past done some research for me on Corbett in the UK. She could at least go there on my behalf and make photo scans for me.

Marc and my Corbett group were then informed about the possible meeting of Rebecca with *Jungle Stories*. Marc, though very busy, proposed to host that meeting in his London office. But at times, things do not turn out so well. After a couple of re-scheduling, there arrived a final date of the 2nd of October 2015. Not a simple meeting, but one with Corbett's treasured .275 rifle and the probably last surviving copy of his very first book. But fate wanted to have it on its own way. Rebecca fell very ill on the eve of the meeting and it was not easy to shoulder the responsibility of yet another failure towards my Corbett group members or towards my now good friend

Marc Newton. But there was to be last saviours...my mum and her heroic elderly friends. That's how exactly "Corbett Magic" operated in its own way:

First of all, let me introduce you to my mum: 'Shobha OREE' a simple Indian woman but who knows my love for Corbett and who bought me my first Corbett book, ever since I liked the Chowgarh tigers chapter from my English school text book nearly four decades earlier.

When Rebecca fell ill on the 1st October evening (eve of the meeting) she did not tell me (because she did not want to worry me) and took the courageous decision to go by herself, driving to London from Leicester on the 4hour route. She herself does not have a sound health and to accompany her she told an elderly friend of hers, Josephine Spain (affectionately called Jo by her friends) and her husband Harry Spain (aged over 80 years) to accompany her to "help accomplish the boyhood dream of my son". Elderly Harry had to take over the driving on the highway because Shobha was panicking on the highway when big trucks were overtaking her.

On that very hectic journey Harry, who had, in his younger days, worked in London, brought the party safely to South West London at Pensbury place. Struggling to find a parking place, he suggested Jo and Shobha to alight on the street where the Rigby office is due to be found and said to them: "Don't miss the 1pm appointment, I'll see you in a few moments". Shobha and Jo, struggled to find their way, but managed after some minutes to reach the Rigby office. Having met, Miss Sacha Wadey (she is an important part of the story) an office manager at Rigby, she settled them comfortably while they waited for Harry to arrive. Harry managed his way after a quarter of an hour and Sacha finding him catching his breath with difficulty offered him a cup of coffee. While Jo also was offered similar treat, the elderly couple was invited to relax in Rigby's comfortable office lounge while Shobha would have her meeting with Marc and the Corbett treasures.

Shobha and Sacha first went to visit the workshop. It was during this visit that Shobha told Sacha that Rebecca who was due to come and take photos. But as she was not there now she was worried if she could use the camera with the same prowess than Rebecca. Sacha immediately re-assured her telling that she knows the kind of apparatus shown and she will do the required photos, very commendable indeed on her part.

Then they met Marc who guided them through the workshop and visited the Rigby archives. In a particular room there was an old rifle case and a few books in front of it. One of these books was *Jungle Stories* and three others were original versions of *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, *My India* and *the Temple Tiger*. The rifle was Corbett's famous .275, given to him for killing his first man-eater, the famous Champawat man-eating tiger. Marc helped them with the rifle case and removed the Corbett's .275 rifle and several pictures of it were taken by Sacha. There was even a leopard skull there, not a man-eater though, but a model.

Marc then told them to continue the photo session while he attended other urgent work. Then they proceeded with *Jungle Stories*. The eleven pages of the Chapter “The Terror that walks by Night” was photographed in good light, but immediately, a problem appeared since the *Jungle Stories* copy was an old one and it was opening with difficulty since the old stitched binding of the book started to make cracking sounds when further pages were turned.

I had asked to find photos in the book – there were none, though the ending of the “Terror that Walks by Night” ending suggested a photo. Marc then appeared when Sacha was taking photos of the Chowgarh Tigers chapter. Seeing that the book might get irreversible damage in the process, Marc told Sacha to stop because the book was not his property and had been bought at a very high price by a friend of his. In all 16 pages of the book had been photographed excluding its cover.

Marc advised that other means which were out of reach at that time should be employed to safeguard the book while undergoing a page by page photo session. Sacha felt sorry that she could not have found a better method to proceed further but what she could not know at that time is that all Corbett fans would understand. Sacha’s very commendable efforts would have gone in vain did she not manage to get good readable photos - she did however (readers can see the title paper with Corbett writing on it and two pages from the book – the first and the last pages of the story “Terror that Walks by Night” – to Corbett fans this story is known as “Kanda Man-Eater”).

Shobha then said to Sacha that she was sure her son would understand why they could not have proceeded further. Marc then gave a book as gift to my mum. This book is about history of Rigby rifles but the detailed particulars of which I have not yet obtained. My mum who video-called with me that afternoon said that it contains photos of Corbett and some text about him in a chapter of the book called ‘Carpet Sahib’.

Sacha then accepted a photo with Shobha and took pictures of her holding Corbett’s .275 Rigby Mauser and one with Marc Newton as well. Both Shobha and Sacha thought that I would have been deceived by what would have looked like a half-hearted attempt, but it would not be the case. I have already read the 16 pages of the two chapters, and I’ve seen that there’s not much a difference with Man-Eaters of Kumaon. The only difference it contained is that the ending of “The Terror that walks by Night” chapter does not contain the story of the brave father and his son, a new recruit in the Garhwal Regiment, victim of the man-eater nor the promise made by Corbett to Garhwal villagers nor the petition letter sent to Corbett by the latter, in comparison with the Kanda man-eater chapter in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*.

I would have loved to have all photo scans of the *Jungle Stories* book, but I remain confident that Marc will sort it out sooner or later for Corbett fans around the world to feast their eyes on it. In all the trio had spent some 45 minutes in the Rigby office in London and it was with good feelings that Shobha left Sacha good-bye, a very warm person and kind lady indeed. A world of good done to Corbett fans thanks to Harry, Jo, Sacha, Shobha and Marc Newton.

Was a tiger subspecies really named after Jim Corbett?

By JOSEPH JORDANIA

It is a well-known fact among Corbett fans and biographers that a tiger subspecies was named after him in 1968. Most of the available sources mention this fact, and there had never been any suspicion in the reality of this claim.

However, according to the available information, coming from students of the Tejpur University of Assam (India), during the lectures they are taught that the name “*panthera tigris corbetti*,” attributed to the Indochinese subspecies of the tiger, refers not to the hunter/author Jim Corbett, but to a researcher from the Natural History division of the British Museum, G.B. Corbet, a colleague of Dr Vratislav Mazak. It was Mazak who is credited with the research and naming of the new subspecies of the tiger. Tejpur University lecturers apparently teach that Corbett’s first biographer, D.C. Kala made a big mistake attributing the naming of the “*panther tigris corbetti*” to Jim Corbett, and after this the same mistake was later repeated without checking facts by all the other sources. This small chapter is written to clear up this controversy.

Let us first of all find out, who is G.B. Corbet, and could the tiger subspecies be named after him?

His full Name is Gordon Barclay Corbet (not Corbett with two “t”). He is an expert on mammals, had been working for a long time at the British Museum of Natural History. He has written number of books, both popular-science and scholarly publications. Among his books are:

“Finding and identifying mammals in Britain,” Natural History Museum Publications. Revised edition came out in December 1975.

“The Mammals of the Palaearctic Region: A Taxonomic Review,” published again by the British Museum (Natural History), on 1st January 1978 (314 pages), publishers is Cornell University Press.

“A World List of Mammalian Species” British Museum (Natural History), 1991 - Mammals (243 pages), Publisher: Oxford University Press; 3 edition came out in April 4, 1991. This is by far not the full list of the publications of Gordon Barclay Corbet.

As we can see, Gordon Corbet “fits the profile” of a scholar, who contributed to the research of the sphere of the mammalia, and as a matter of fact, the famous 1968 article of Mazak makes one of the first references to the publication of Gordon Corbet. Therefore, Gordon Corbet was a professional biologist, unlike Jim Corbett, who has never gone to the University, never obtained any scholarly degrees (including famed PhD), and has never published any scholarly articles in any of the peer-reviewed biological journals. At least to some readers a professional biologist Gordon Corbet

might seem a more convincing candidate for the highest honour of naming an animal species after him, that Jim Corbett, who obtained his knowledge from simply spending decades in Indian jungles, without any formal education.

So which of these two Corbett's was honoured by naming one of the most charismatic animal subspecies after him, professional expert of mammalian species Gordon Corbet, or a hunter-turned-conservationist-turned-author Jim Corbett?

To clear doubts on this subject I searched for the original 1968 article where the new tiger subspecies was introduced to the scholarly world by Dr Vratislav Mazak. This article is not easy to find for the English speaker, as it appeared in French. Its title is "Nouvelle sous-espece de tigre provenant de l'Asie du Sud-Est."

Even if you do not read French, there are plenty of similarities between French and English words, so it should not too difficult for the English speakers to understand what is written in the article. Topic of our particular interest was found on the pages 105-106, where there is a special small section about the naming of the suggested new tiger subspecies. Here is the entire French text from the article - read it slowly:

"Derivatio Nominis:

"Le tigre de la Peninsule Indochinese et de l'extreme sud de la Chine est nomme d'apres feu Jim Corbett, excellent naturaliste, qui a consacre sa vie a l'etude et a la protection de la nature indienne, et notamment des tigres."

As we can see, there can be no doubts, the name "Jim Corbett" is very clearly written in Mazak's 1968 article.

If you access the article it is also easy to see that one of the first references in this article is made to a work by G.B. Corbet. Most likely this was the foundation for the suspicions that the naming was referring not to Jim Corbett, but to Gordon Corbet.

Another interesting question connected to the naming of the tiger subspecies after Jim Corbett is how Doctor Vratislav Mazak, ethnically Czech, could learn about Jim Corbett? Although for most of the people in the Western World Jim Corbett books are freely available, Dr Mazak did not belong to the Western world. Mazak was born in 1937 and grew up in Socialist Czechoslovakia. And as we know, for the people from socialist countries most of the western publications were out of reach. And still, it is most likely that Dr Mazak was fascinated by Corbett books and personality most probably from his teenage years. How was this possible? According to the common knowledge of Corbett lovers (see also all the published Corbett biographies), no Corbett book has ever been translated to any of the languages of any of the socialist countries.

Well, Corbett fans and scholars need to change this opinion drastically. We need to know that in Soviet Union (and in other socialist countries under the Soviet guidance) publishers were totally negligent towards the copyright rules of the Western Society, and they were freely translating and publishing any works of Western authors if these works (and authors) were considered appropriate for the socialist morale and socialist readers. Jim Corbett, with his explicit love and sympathy for the poor of India, was

one of the few authors that were widely known throughout Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The author of this chapter himself comes from the former Soviet Union, and I can say, that in my teenage years I have read Jim Corbett “Man-eaters of Kumaon” both in Georgian and Russian languages. There is more. I am sure, that apart from Russian and Georgian translations, there were many more translations made in most (or possibly all) fifteen official languages of the former Soviet Union. I mean languages like Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Kazakh, etc. Unfortunately, these translations are not known to the most of the Western Corbett fans, and even to Corbett biographers.

As a socialist country at the time, Czechoslovakia most likely had at least some of Corbett books translated, and most likely Mazak became a lifelong fan of Corbett from his teenage years. Mazak grew up to be a prominent paleoanthropologist and biologist. As paleoanthropologist, he is credited (together with Colin Groves) as the describer of *Homo ergaster*, one of the most important direct human ancestors, and as biologist, he is known for proving that Indochinese tiger was in fact a separate subspecies of the tiger. Other indications of Mazak’s deep reverence for Jim Corbett can be found his other publications. For example, in his later article “*Panthera Tigris*” (in journal “Mammalian Species”, 1981, No 152, May 8, pages 1-8) Mazak cites Jim Corbett works ten times. Unfortunately, Vratislav Mazak, brilliant scholar, died in 1987 at the young age of 50.

After seeing the French original, we have to acknowledge the good work that D.C. Kala did in presenting the original French text in his biography: “World recognition from brother naturalists came in 1968 with the naming of a subspecies of tiger after Corbett. This is *Panthera tigris corbetti*, found in Indo-China and extreme South China. It is slightly shorter than the Indian tiger and characterized by a ‘darker ground coloration and more numerous, rather short, narrow and rarely doubled stripes.’ It was named after Corbett by Dr Vratislav Mazak to honour “the excellent naturalist who devoted his life to the study and protection of Indian wild-life, particularly the tigers.”

And finally, those who would like to see the original Mazak 1968 article for themselves in order to make sure there are no mistakes made by the author of this chapter, please search the internet with the original French title of the article (Nouvelle sous-espece de tigre provenant de l’Asie du Sud-Est), or go directly to this address:

[http://www.degruyter.com/dg/viewarticle/j\\$002fmamm.1968.32.issue-1\\$002fmm.1968.32.1.104\\$002fmamm.1968.32.1.104.xml;jsessionid=F3D5EF14A8F463B3E-4FE48FA66C56795](http://www.degruyter.com/dg/viewarticle/j$002fmamm.1968.32.issue-1$002fmm.1968.32.1.104$002fmamm.1968.32.1.104.xml;jsessionid=F3D5EF14A8F463B3E-4FE48FA66C56795)

PART FIVE: MAKING OF THE BOOK: KUMAON 2012 AND 2014 TRIP DIARIES

The reader will find here the detailed account of two trips that authors of this book undertook together in Kumaon, India: (1) in April of 2012 and (2) in April of 2014. These trips were crucial for our first-hand knowledge of the places where Jim Corbett hunted man-eating tigers, and for finding the descendants and relatives of the people from Corbett stories.

Readers need also to remember that individual authors of this book also had individual trips to Kumaon. In April 2007 Manfred Walzl, and in January 2011 Joseph Jordania visited Corbett places before forming our group, which we often refer to as “Corbett Brothers,” in late 2011.

These trips were also crucial for our research of virtually all topics you will find in this. Extended discussions, particularly in the evenings, at our camping sites during the dinner, or at the man-eater’s killing sites, usually with several copies of Corbett books and published Corbett biographies in our hands, were crucial for sharing facts, ideas and doubts on various Corbett-related topics.

Diaries are illustrated with the photos from our trip, particularly on the topics that are not discussed in special chapters of this book. Naturally, many hundreds of other photos from these trips and many hours of video footage are in our archives, and besides, there is a film-documentary about our 2012 and 2014 trips to Kumaon.

For all the authors of this book these trips were fulfilling not only for the sake of search, but for the admiration and thrill of following the footsteps of our shared hero, for seeing the beauty of Kumaon hills and hill villages, for meeting the wonderfully hospitable people from the Kumaon, for seeing and hearing animal the same way as Corbett did – ghorals running up the face of cliffs, leopard and tiger footprints, sambar calls, the nighttime concerts of the jungles. Although the trip sometimes posed serious problems for us, and we had occasional minor injuries and scratches on our hands, feet and heads, these minor inconveniences just added the feel of adventure to the thrill of following Jim Corbett footsteps.

If you are a Jim Corbett fan, we hope that reading these diaries will provoke you not only to re-read Corbett stories once again, but also to visit India and see for yourself the places where the events described in your favorite Corbett stories occurred.

Corbett Trip Diary Kumaon, 2012

By MANFRED WALT

6th April, 6pm, Delhi railway station!

This was the plan: To arrive in Delhi from different countries all over the world on 6th April 2012 and meet at 6 o'clock at the Old Delhi railway station. We had sent photos to each other, so we could recognize each other at the platform of the Ranikhet Express. We, that is, first, Dr. Joseph Jordania, long-term Jim Corbett fan, expert in choral singing, evolutionary musicologist from the Melbourne University, Australia, author of books such as "Who asked the first question" and "Why do people sing" and initiator of our trip; Kristoff Kotecha (Indian name Preetum Gheerawo), born in India who had a farm in South Africa before moving over to Mauritius, where he now lives with his two daughters Reyna and Rushika, who were also part of our team. Then there is Priyvratt Gadhvi, a 29-year-old Indian biologist from Gujarat, who worked hard on the search for a reliable and reasonably priced tour operator for our trip. When he at last suggested Anup Kandari, a taxi operator in Nainital and his cousin and guide Kamal Bisht, he made a good choice and we had no reason to regret it. And finally there was me. My name is Manfred Walt, I am 58 years old, live in Munich, Germany, have studied biology, chemistry and theology and did my Promotion about the significance of Sociobiology for Theology and Ethics. I have read Corbett's books over and over again since when, at the age of twelve, I found a copy of *Man-eaters of Kumaon* in an old magazine in one of the libraries I raided on my bicycle at that time in search of books about animals, adventure and natural history.

It was the second trip to Corbett country for Dr. Jordania and me. My first was in 2007, Dr. Jordania's in 2011. We both did it with the help of Sid Anand from Camp Corbett and we came in contact with each other when Dr. Jordania, before going to India, asked me some questions concerning the Thak man-eater killing site. Two more people also planned to come with us: Priyvratt's brother-in-law Rajdeep and especially Fernando Quevedo de Oliveira, who did all the preparation and planning with us, but had to cancel the trip only some weeks before we were due to leave. Fernando, a 57-year-old Brazilian photo journalist from the newspaper "O Globo," was a very important part of our group during planning and discussion. In his first email he wrote to me: "I keep imagining myself being in all of these Corbett locations since I read *Man-eaters of Kumaon* 45 years ago." He felt deeply sorry that he couldn't join us due to very serious problems with his employer. We were very sorry too and considered Fernando as still an important member of our group, though forced to stay with his work in Brazil. Fernando kindly offered his help in editing the video material we wanted to film on our trip to make into a trip documentary.

April 6, 6pm, Delhi railway station! I liked the idea and thought it to be very cool to tell my friends and workmates when they would ask me about my travel: "I have to meet some friends at Delhi railway station." It was like saying: "Let's meet at 8 o'clock in front of the cinema." We did not know each other personally, but because of many emails concerning our trip and Corbett-related topics, we were already familiar with each other. We were all great fans of Jim Corbett and had shared ideas and questions with each other. And there was much to think about and to discuss before our trip. One of the most important matters was the question of which tour operator we should rely for the trip. Last time Joseph and I went with Sid Anand from Camp Corbett. Sid was a very knowledgeable and prudent guide and the trip was fine but he charged "western" prices and so we searched for alternatives. Priyvrat's experience as an Indian proved to be very important in this regard: it was on his recommendation that we finally found Anup and Kamal. There were other questions: Do we need ponies to carry our luggage? How many ponies? What about permits, as the region where we wanted to go was a sensible one because of its vicinity to the Nepalese border? Different time budgets had to be taken into account: Dr. Jordania and Priyvrat had to fly back in the early morning of 15th April, while Kotecha and I had a few more days to spend and wanted to add the Chowgarh man-eater killing site to the list of places to see.

There were also questions about the metal plaque we wanted to affix to the rock at Thak. There were different suggestions concerning the text, but Dr. Jordania finally managed to create out of several suggestions a final version that we could all agree to. Then there were technical questions about the material of the plaque and the way to fix it on the rock and about the metal detectors we wanted to take, because we had a very faint hope that Corbett's cartridges might still be around deeply covered by the soil. There were so many questions and so many topics to discuss, but finally everything fell into place, we had made the necessary decisions and boarded our flights to meet on 6th April at 6 pm at Delhi railway station.

5th April, Delhi Airport: I had arrived in Delhi a day before our meeting, at 7.30am, with a direct Lufthansa flight from Munich. Much had changed in Delhi since my last visit. There was no more "third world feeling" when passing through the gates of the new international terminal. I went straight to the prepaid taxi counter that was hidden in the furthest corner of the departure (!) part of the terminal. Maybe the taxi drivers' union managed to put it as far away as possible from the other taxis waiting at the exit. Anyway it was a good choice. I had to pay 250 RS (about 5 USD) for a small car, which was very good value for the 30 minutes' ride to the Hotel Iris Park, located in South Delhi roughly half-way between the airport and the city center. Kotecha and the girls had arrived on the same day two hours earlier, and as we decided before the trip, they were booked in this hotel too. We had arranged to meet at 1pm in the hotel lobby so everyone could have a rest after the flight. I had only a short rest and soon went out to explore the surroundings. There were seven historical cities of Delhi be-

fore the foundation of New Delhi in 1911 and within walking distance, roughly one mile away, was the "Hauz-Khas-Komplex". Besides having some exclusive boutique shopping facilities now, it contains the ruins of "Siri fort", the second city of the seven cities that made up medieval Delhi. The tomb of Feroz Shah Tughlaq and some other monuments are picturesque, situated beneath an artificial lake, which was built as a water supply in the beginning of the 14th century. After walking around and taking photos, I went back to the hotel on a nice shortcut through a peaceful deer park.

Shortly after 1pm, Kotecha and his girls came down to the lobby. We shook hands and were happy to make personal contact finally after so many emails. The girls at first were quiet and shy, but after a short time they opened up, as Kotecha said they "came out of their shells". They made me a present of a charming drawing by way of a welcome gift. Kotecha gave me a table set and T-shirt from his homeland of Mauritius and - to my utmost surprise and excitement - 6 cans of a Mauritian Beer, called "Phoenix". As I would find out not much later, Kotecha was very right in describing it as one of the best beers in the world. I think he even said "the very best beer", but my Bavarian ears could not hear this without adding the words "one of..." But now was not the time for tasting beer. We hired a motor rickshaw to the metro station and went to Conaught Place where we changed money, and where Kotecha bought an Indian SIM card for his mobile. Then we did a rickshaw ride through Old Delhi and Chandni Chowk. In a side road Kotecha bought two silver necklaces at a small jeweler's shop, one for Reyna and one for Rushika.

Back in the hotel, we took a can of Mauritian beer out of the refrigerator and I had to admit, "Phoenix" was indeed an excellent beer with a full-rounded taste and very refreshing too. After a delicious dinner at the hotel restaurant -the only downside being it was not licensed which meant "No beer", we went to Kotecha's room for another can. Soon we had some very interesting discussions concerning Corbett and Kenneth Anderson. Good to talk to someone with the same interests!.. It grew later and one more can of beer had to be opened before going to sleep.

6th April, Delhi: After breakfast, we went with a "tuck tuck" to the National Railway Museum. I had wanted to visit it for a long time, but had never had the occasion to do so. I thought it was a good idea now, since it was not far from the hotel and it might also be an attraction for Reyna and Rushika with the possibility of a toy train ride and the impressive sight of old steam engines. At the entrance a disappointment, at least for me: no photos were allowed! I asked for a permit but they denied me one because of "strict governmental regulations". We took the toy train ride first to get an overview and to take some discreet photos out of the rolling train. Then we strolled between historic steam locomotives and carriages built for maharajas, princes and viceroys. Some of them were in very good condition, but some at more remote places were romantically covered with rust, awaiting restoration. The girls, as did Kotecha and I, enjoyed climbing up the steam locomotives and feeling like old-time engine

drivers. My disappointment concerning “no photos!” had quickly disappeared. At least at the outside displays, nobody cared about it. Many people were taking photos and we gladly joined in feeling as though we were back in a time near when Jim Corbett lived. We felt even closer to him when we came across a loco of the Bengal and North Western Railways BNWR for whom Corbett worked for many years – but this was at the inner displays where the ban on photos was still taken seriously.

Lunch at McDonald’s in Connaught place. At the desk, Kotecha’s mobile started ringing. Priyvrat was calling. He was at the airport waiting for Dr. Jordania to arrive from Ahmadabad, where he had spent several days researching the famous Indian lions in Gir forest. The flight was late and Priyvrat said he would call again when the arrival time was confirmed. We were already at the hotel when the next call came. Priyvrat and Dr. Jordania had decided to come to us and meet us at our hotel lobby. No more 6th April, 6pm, Delhi railway station. What a pity! But it was much easier this way. Big greetings when our friends arrived. We were so glad to meet each other after months of electronic contact. There was an immediate harmony and understanding between us, as we had known each other already for a much longer time. Dr. Jordania gave us beautiful baseball caps on which he had printed the words: “Jim Corbett of Kumaon 2012”. With such strengthened corporal Identity we went for dinner in a nearby (licensed!) restaurant and then, in the hotel manager’s car, we went to the Old Delhi railway station, where we boarded the Ranikhet Express.

Camp Corbett and a peaceful little village

I immediately felt something was wrong when we boarded the train. Kotecha and the girls were not in our carriage. To explain this, we have to go back in time. Priyvrat had booked the railway tickets to Ramnagar two month ago, when Fernando and Rajdeep were still supposed to be with us, and when Kotecha’s girls had not confirmed they were coming on the trip. In the Indian Railway booking system, a seat or a bed is booked in the name of a particular person, whose passport number is also mentioned on the ticket. If the person whose name is on the reservation list does not arrive, another person can take the seat only if no one is ahead of him in the priority list. That was the question for Kotecha, whose girls had replaced Fernando and Rajdeep. So to be on the safe side, they made their own booking for Kathgodam (!), which, as Priyvrat told them, was the nearest railway station to Camp Corbett. A taxi transfer from the station was already booked. The problem was: Priyvrat thought Kathgodam would be on the same railway line, only one station before Ramnagar – a mistake that can easily be made due to the somewhat inefficient train schedule. But that was not at all the case. The train in fact divided halfway between Delhi and our destination with one part going to Ramnagar and the other to Kathgodam. Kotecha’s reservation was on the other end of the train, so it had to be assumed he would arrive at a different place. What could we do? Should we ask him to come on our end of the train? This

would mean trading the comfort of the first class compartment he had booked to our 3Ac sleeper with uncertainty about receiving the seats anyway. But besides this, how could we tell him? Kotecha had switched off his mobile as it was late and walking from one part of the train to the other was not possible either. So Priyvrat did the only thing possible. He called Anup Kandari, our guide, who organized taxis for us, and ordered two taxis: one for Ramnagar and the other for Kathgodam. Both stations were about the same distance from Camp Corbett in Kaladhungi where we were going. We described to Anup our friends (“a man with two girls, 10 and 8 years old”) the driver had to look for and went to sleep thinking that the problem had been solved. Kotecha, so we thought, would not be in trouble when found by the taxi driver who could tell him of our whereabouts. But as Kotecha told me later, it was not so easy at all. There was no driver looking for them and he was very unsure what to do. Just as he wanted to call a taxi for himself by an incredible stroke of luck, the first person he contacted for a taxi to Camp Corbett was indeed the man waiting for them, not at the platform but sitting in his SUV at the parking lot. Sorry Kotecha for this inconvenience!

7th April: At 5.00 am in the morning the train arrived at Ramnagar station and we entered the waiting taxi for the 45-minute drive to Camp Corbett. For this early time of the day, there were an amazing number of people walking along the road on the outskirts of the village. Our driver told us that morning walks were very popular now. There was also wildlife on the road to Kaladhungi. A spotted deer did not find its way off the road until we faded our headlights and soon after we crashed into a wild boar, which sprang out of the scrubs and suddenly crossed the road in front of us. The boar seemed not to be seriously injured and ran off, but a big dent appeared in the front of the car which made the driver look very sorry. Without further accidents we reached Camp Corbett where we were invited for tea by Mrs. Sumi Anand, mother of Sid Anand. We were sorry to hear that her husband, Omi, the dedicated Corbett fan and a knowledgeable person in all Corbett-related topics, had passed away the previous year, but many photos of him in the living room kept his memory alive. Mrs Anand told us that she was thinking about retiring from managing Camp Corbett to have time to write a biography about her husband, who was so dedicated to the legacy of Jim Corbett.

After a while, Kotecha, Reyna and Rushika arrived from Kathgodam and after breakfast and a short rest, we did a walk to Choti Haldwani, the village Jim Corbett had acquired in 1915 and had kept under his protection until his departure to Africa. Guided by Trilok Sing, son of Sher Sing who was an old friend of Corbett, we went down to the Boar River, following the water canal in the direction of Kaladhungi. There we went right, passed the Corbett museum and came to the village of Choti Haldwani on the western end of Kaladhungi. Today it is still a prosperous and well-maintained village with green fields, fertile soil and healthy and happy looking people. It looks as though everyone can make a living here. Still to be seen is the once 9 km long and

6 feet high wall Corbett built to protect the crops from wild boar and other animals. The first house we stopped at was the house of Bauwan Singh, grandson of Moti Singh and son of Baan Singh (Banua Singh or Punwaas Corbett called him in "My India"). It was interesting to see that the grandson still had "the delicate, finely chiseled features", with which Corbett describes Mothi in "My India". We were invited into the "masonry house with three rooms and a wide veranda on a four-foot plinth", Corbett had built for his hunting companion Mothi. Even today it was in good condition and well maintained and still had the wooden roof in its original shape. We thanked Bauwan Singh for his kindness and went further on to Sher Singh's Chaupal which Corbett had built as a common meeting place for the villagers. We sat down for tea and Trilok Singh showed us the pride of his family: a gun given by Jim Corbett to his father Sher Singh to protect the village against wild boar and other animals eating the crops. It was a single-barreled-muzzle-loader with a smooth bore of 12-caliber and hammer action. We were invited to take the gun and we took many photos posing as Jim Corbett with and without the owner. Trilok Singh even asked us if he should load the gun for us to take live shots. We declined, not wanting to spoil the peacefulness of the location with gunshots. Maybe we were lucky to do so, because when going back we came across a car with some official people preparing a ministry visit to Choti Haldwani. Who knows, if we were firing shots, we might have been arrested for trying to shoot the minister...

On the way back we stopped at the Corbett Museum, once the winter home of the Corbett family after moving from Arundale in 1922. Before Corbett left for Kenya, he sold the house to a friend who later gave it to the Forest Department to be converted into a museum. We went through its memorabilia, soaked up the atmosphere of the peaceful court and before leaving had a look at the museum shop. It was erected at one of the ancient gates and next to the tree which is still there, where the bachelor of Powalgarh was positioned for a photograph in 1930. Besides Corbett's well known books, there was also some clothing and Dr. Jordania bought a "Save the tiger" jungle vest. I found an interesting (though as I discovered at home Hindi-speaking) DVD about a man-eating tiger who last year claimed 5 victims at the Sundarkhal settlement near the Dhangarhi gate of Corbett NP. Back in Camp Corbett we had a tasty but for some of us a bit hot Kumaoni lunch, till at 4pm we went for a "jungle walk". Walking up the Boar River for one mile, we then turned right and went over the "glade", where Jim for the first time saw the magnificent "Bachelor of Powalgarh," one of the biggest tigers ever killed in India. Passing a Hindu temple, we came to Corbett's so-called "film studio". Here, between December 1938 and April 1939, in a tributary of the Boar River, he blocked the water creating small artificial waterfalls to hide the sounds of his movie camera. Back in camp, we packed our bags for an early start and enjoyed dinner and the last cold beer for some days. On the next day there was an important walk

ahead – the walk to the villages Chuka and Thak, the sites of Jim Corbett's two last hunts after man-eating tigers, the most important destinations of our trip to Kumaon!

Walking to Chuka

Saturday 8th April: Wake-up call at 4 o'clock in the morning! Our drive to Thuligad (Thuli Gadh) – the furthestmost village that can be reached by car - should start at 5 o'clock, but the driver is late and after one more cup of tea and some biscuits, we were on the road at about 5.45. The night was short and we were sleepy during the drive. After a tea stop in Tanakpur we reached Thuligad at 9.30. Kamal Bisht, Anup's cousin and our guide for the next 5 days, was already waiting for us. The road towards the end of Thuligad was closed for the last 1-2kms due to the Purnagiri festival, a pilgrimage in honor of the goddess Saraswatee to the Purnagiri temple. Kamal's men grabbed our baggage and loaded up the waiting ponies, which carried all the equipment including tents, sleeping bags and food. Shortly after 10pm when we started the 20 km trek, it had already warmed up considerably. For the first kilometre, there were many people joining the road with us because of the festival. But soon the road to Purnagiri went steeply up to the left and we walked down some steps to the right side, following for the next 5 kilometres the gorge of the Sharda. In earlier times, this footpath was difficult and dangerous, but it has been much improved in recent years. It still has some steep and muddy sections that can be slippery under wet conditions, but as a whole it is a beautiful, scenic and safe walk.

The path along the gorge follows the alignment of an old tramway line, built by J.V. Collier to haul out the million cubic feet of Sal timber, which was gifted by Nepal to the Government of India after the First World War. There is nothing left of the tramway line now, and it is hard to imagine anyway, how Collier could have built it under the difficult conditions of the steep gorge. We passed a small temple just below the famous Purnagiri temple, which rears up around 400 metres on top of the mountain. It was around here where Corbett saw the mysterious lights, when on his way to Tala Des he had to camp in the gorge. Corbett describes the lights as two feet in diameter, burning steadily without flicker or smoke. He first thought of men with lanterns in search of something lost, but in the morning he found that the hillside, where the lights appeared, was perpendicular rock, where no human being could walk or stand. Corbett did not find a satisfying explanation for the lights, but on his way back after the successful hunt, the priests of Purnagiri provided him with the following story: "You know, there is near the sacred shrine of Purnagiri a pinnacle of rock, the climbing of which is forbidden by the goddess. In the days of long ago, a Sadhu, more ambitious than his fellows, climbed the pinnacle with the object of putting himself on an equal footing with the Goddess. Incensed, the Goddess hurled the Sadhu from the pinnacle to the hill on the far side of the river. There the Sadhu, banished for ever from Purnagiri, worships the Goddess by lighting lamps to her."

The lights, according to the priests' story, appear only at certain times and were only visible to favoured people. This favour was accorded to Corbett, because he was on a mission for the hillfolk over whom the Goddess watches. Today there was no priest at the temple, but when I passed the place five years ago, Sid, my then-guide had talked with him. The priest confirmed the story about the lights, but had never seen them personally. Sid, however, told me he once had seen them and described the lights as moving very quickly on the mountain side. He had no really satisfying explanation either, but thought it might be some geological phenomenon.

At the end of the gorge, there is some sort of bottleneck between the river on the right side and steep hills on the left. At this place, not easily bypassed by smugglers or poachers, we had to stop at the first of three checkpoints of the border police on the way to Chuka. It did not exist five years ago, but this time we had to show passports and permits. Soon it turned out that we had a problem. We had a permit, but it was only issued by the Forest Department. What we did not know was that we needed a second one from the border police. But the police men were kind and helpful. They let us sit down in the station and refreshed us with a very welcome cup of cool water while they communicated with their headquarters in Kaldhunga (not to be confused with Kaladhungi, Corbett's home town). Fortunately the officer at headquarters said: "Let them come". So after taking a photo with the friendly officers, we shook hands and went on. From here, the path runs mainly through forest crossing some minor ravines and watercourses. It was after midday and hot, but fortunately the walk was mostly shaded by trees. A thunderstorm passed and a few raindrops created some coolness, but when we reached the second checkpoint near the Kaldhunga Forest Rest House, we were in dire need of an extended break. Astoundingly Kotecha's girls did not seem to have any problems on the long walk. Before our trip we thought it might be too stressful for them and wondered whether there should be ponies on which they could have a ride. But in reality, they went in front most of the time and had less problems than most of us. So had great respect for Reyna and Rushika who fitted perfectly into our group on other occasions and gave our trip a very welcome family touch.

The very hospitable officer at the Kaldhunga checkpoint gave us water and tea and we unwrapped our lunch packets and relaxed for a while. The old forest rest house here was also built by Collier, the British timber contractor. It is now occupied by the Indian Army and the border police. Corbett raves about this place and claims that "the view from the veranda as the morning sun rises over the distant hills and the mist is lifting is one of the most pleasing prospects it is possible to imagine." Meanwhile trees and bushes have grown and obstruct the view. Before going on, I thought of tipping the officer for his hospitality, but he firmly refused. This caused Priyvrata to say to me: "I am so proud of the lower ranks of the Forest Department. These are the people who are responsible for the fact that there is still any wildlife here." After two more hours we passed the last checkpoint one kilometre in front of Chuka. Once again the border

police turned out to be a real blessing for the local people. The officer was very concerned about supporting them in this remote area by improving footpaths, providing communication and of course security. He invited us into the enclosure, offered us seats and refreshments and talked with us about the basic needs of the people: education, communication and electricity. Priyvrat was so moved by their care he offered to send solar panels to the police station, to be distributed to the people of Chuka. We proceeded with the comfortable feeling that there would be someone to look after us if something unexpected happened. Before entering Chuka we passed Sid's campground, where Dr. Joseph and I had our tents respectively one and five years ago. The house Sid had begun to build on this site was still not finished, but at least had its roof now.

We passed the village on our left side and reached the bank on the Sarada, where we wanted to make camp for the night. The ponies with the baggage were not yet there, so we used the last light of the day for a walk over the stony river bed to the Ladhya-Sarada confluence, 300 metres in front of us. When we came back, it was nearly dark and we began to worry about the still-missing ponies. We had not met them during the trek because they went another way, a longer way but easier to negotiate for ponies. Kamal, our guide, seemed to be worried too and tried to phone his men, but got no mobile connection. It was now completely dark and some small lights were to be seen in the village of Sem on the other side of the Ladhya. Chuka on our side seemed to be in complete darkness. No village had electricity, but in Sem there were obviously some people with solar panels. Our men collected wood and lit a fire, while we thought about alternatives, if the ponies for some reason didn't arrive at all. To sleep in the open at the river bank was not a desirable option because Priyvrat had found leopard pugmarks probably from the previous night that went straight through our camp ground in the direction of the river. By retracing its steps, we observed that it came from behind some stone walls fairly close to where later that night Kamal would pitch our mobile toilet. Then the leopard appeared to have made a stealthy approach weaving through the bushes scattered here and there and avoiding the open space where we were camped. It followed a cattle path between two bushes and wandered through the open sandy bank of the Sharda in the direction of the river, just where we bathed the next morning. We did not take photos of the pugmarks as we found them in the evening, but it was very likely the same resident leopard that Joseph saw and photographed its pugmarks in January 2011.

As we were sitting in pitch darkness around the fire, surrounded by jungle on three sides, and considering the possibility that the resident leopard was watching us from the bushes, Dr Jordania suggested we should do what some African tribes and even chimpanzees do when they have to sleep in the forest where there are predators around: he suggested we should stomp together rhythmically, and sing loudly and shout. After a few minutes of wild concert we started discussing what to do. Maybe we could sleep on the veranda of a house in Chuka or go back to the police station.

I would have opted for the last, but shortly after nine, we finally heard the welcome noise of the arriving ponies. We all were relieved and happy and so was Kamal.

The party of carriers and ponies had gone from Thuligad to Chalti where they crossed the Ladhya River with a ferry boat. Because of the festival at Purnagiri they had a very long wait at the crossing and that was the reason for the delay. With the light of torches our men finally set up the tents. So our adventure started a bit unexpectedly, but finally everyone was well and happy. After emptying the last cans of Mauritian beer, we went to sleep. Kotetcha and his elder daughter Rushika took the orange tent, Joseph Jordania, who was selected as a roommate by Kotetcha's youngest daughter Reyna, chose the purple one and I shared the blue tent with Priyvat.

Kotecha, with the pugmarks in mind, was concerned when taking the girls out to the "toilet" at night and he kept a sharp lookout in the bushes for the least suspicious movement, because he had the ugly feeling of being watched and felt that we could have been visited at night. Indeed his tent, which was closest to the toilet and to the bushes from where the pugmarks came was constantly visited at night by some animal. He heard its movements but no other sounds from it and as he told me he hardly slept that night. The soil was hard around the tent and revealed no pugmarks the next morning. When we returned from Thak on the fourth day and camped at the same spot again, no new pugmarks were seen, as if we had really disturbed the animal which had apparently left the place.

A new "Man-eater of Kumaon"

I don't know if I would have slept so peacefully in my tent or even had discussed for a moment the possibility of sleeping on an open veranda, if I had known what we learned a few months later after our trip. Shivasangkar, a friend of Kotecha living in Assam, north-east India, phoned Kotecha in the early morning on November 16th, 2012, announcing that he was going to Nepal because a reward has been posted on the head of an animal, a leopard, which was alleged to have killed 15 people in a little less than a year. Most interestingly, this new man-eater was operating next to the Sharda River on the left bank, exactly opposite Chuka where we had camped in April. The district on the Nepalese side of the river is called the Baitadi district, which forms part of the former princely district of Rupal. Corbett fans might remember that Rupal is the district, where the man-eating tigress of Champawat (known in Nepal, according to Peter Byrne, as the Rupal man-eater) originated in the early 1900's. Here in Nepal, according to Corbett's writing in his Champawat chapter, the tigress had killed two hundred human beings before been driven out by a body of armed Nepalese. Before Corbett could kill her and during the four years she operated in Kumaon, the tigress added two hundred and thirty four to this tally. The Baitadi district was a historical part of Kumaon and was ruled by the Chand kings of Kumaon before 1791 when it

became part of Nepal. This was the place Shivsangkar was going. An animal lover as he is, he hoped the leopard would be captured alive rather than killed.

We did not know about the new man-eater of Kumaon when we camped exactly on the other river bank of leopard's territory. Actually, Kotecha did receive a warning from Shivsangkar before our trip to look after his girls well, because in many parts of India it is not uncommon for leopards to carry off children. He told him also about some cases on the opposite bank of the Sarda, but at this time they seemed random and isolated, spread over different regions and believed to be the work of different leopards. But by the November 2012 the death toll was 15 including grown up persons and it was confirmed by pugmarks and forensic investigation, that it was the action of a single man-eating leopard. Normally, as Shivsangkar told Kotecha, when an animal is declared a man-eater in Nepal (as a rule, after 6 human kills), it is accounted for within two or three weeks at a maximum, either shot or captured. Now this one has escaped numerous traps, forest ranger shots, and poisoned baits for more than 6 months, so the government has no alternative but to put a reward on his head, turning back to a practice of more than three quarters of a century ago, and used by people like Baines, Vivian or Ibbotson. The reward shows how seriously the problem of this man-eater was taken by the government, because it has occurred only twice in Nepal during the last 50 years.

Looking back now to this evening on the banks of the Sharda it can be said that there was no real danger from the man-eater and even if we had known about it, we probably wouldn't have changed anything. We knew of the danger of child-taking even by "normal" leopards and were prepared to use proper precautions for the girls but had no special concern as would have been the case in the presence of a man-eater. Knowing that a confirmed man-eating leopard was operating on the other side of the Sharda would have made things somewhat different, but not to the extent of real danger. Of course leopards can swim, but are much more reluctant to cross rivers than tigers and so it would be very unlikely for the animal to visit us on our side of the river. If you think about the story of the Rudraprayag leopard you may remember, that this animal always used the bridge for crossing the Alkananda River and Corbett was sure, if he blocked the only bridge in the region, he could restrict the operation of the animal to one side of the river. Moreover – as you read in another part of the Rudraprayag story, even if the leopard had crossed the Sarda, he would still have had to deal with the resident leopard, the one that left pugmarks at our campground. But still, even if we were in fact safe on our side of the river, knowing now that another "Man-eater of Kumaon" possibly watched us from a distance of only a few hundred metres added some spooky feeling to our experiences of Kumaon.

Of course we are curious how the story of the leopard will end up and hope Shivsangkar will be successful in finishing the career of the animal. I admit that I have no special concern if the animal is trapped or shot. I worry much more about

the people living under such pressure and about the danger of the uncontrolled killing of all leopards in the region by bounty hunters, who will probably start shooting any leopard that they find. But let's hope for the best for Shivsangkar and that he will tell us the whole story sometime soon. Hopefully we will know the end of the story of the 2011-2012 man-eater of Kumaon before too long.

Thak and the “rectangular piece of ground”

Monday, 9th April. Without having any second thoughts about the man-eaters lurking on the other side of the river or having heard anything outside the tent, I woke up early on a warm and sunny morning with the others still sleeping.

Only Kamal and his men were already up and busy. Breakfast should be at nine and I had time to go down to the Sharda and to see if I could find a nice place for a relaxed bath. After spending some time searching and being still undecided whether to go into the river or not, I found something like a natural pool with a big boulder on the right and a little rapid on the left side. It looked nice, clean and safe and so I cautiously went in. The temperature of the water was fresh and cool but not too chilly. It turned out to be a really pleasant experience to relax in my “bathtub”, where the cool water flowed through, but without the strong torrents that might have made bathing dangerous as it was only one or two metres further out into the deep river. I even could wash my hair under the rapid river flow and left wonderfully refreshed.

It was still 10.30 o'clock, when we started our walk up to Thak. It was a bit late because the heat already had increased. As we passed the school ground on our way, Mr. Prakash Chand, the teacher, came to the fence and invited us to have a cup of coffee with him. Originally from Pithoragarh, he had come here from Tanakpur three years ago. While drinking coffee with us, he complained of not having the necessary resources to do his job here. We handed him some sweets for the children, which were distributed by him with strictness and accuracy. It must have been the hottest time of the day now, when we finally started our climb. The village of Thak is on the northeastern slope some 500 metres above Chuka. As we found out later, the exact height is 835 metres above sea level with Chuka being a bit more than 300 metres. The path up to Thak was very steep and went through beautiful mixed forest that looked as though it had not changed much since Corbett's time. It took us two exhausting hours and many breaks to reach the “rectangular piece of ground forty yards wide and eighty yards long” in front of the village, so vividly described by Corbett. Here during his last visit Dr. Jordania had identified the rock where Jim Corbett in 1938 had met the man-eating tigress of Thak in a dramatic encounter.

Five years ago, I had already stood on this “rectangular piece of ground” but did not succeed in finding the right place, though I tried to accurately follow Corbett's description. In addition to not having enough time, my main difficulty was to restrict my search to the actual footpath and not take into account that there could have been

changes over the years. I had found two possible rocks in 2007: the first one was 400 metres further up the ridge and it was the one that my guides showed me as the site of Corbett's encounter with the tigress. The second one was just here, on this "flat bit of ground" on the side of the actual footpath. It was the rock that Indian villagers showed to Peter Byrne in 1975 which he described and photographed in his book (the date shown in his book, 1995, according to Peter Byrne himself, is wrong). The first one I soon ruled out because its location definitely did not fit Corbett's description. The rock Peter Byrne had found was better and I gave it some chance, but I still had my doubts as some important details did not coincide with Corbett's description. Before Dr. Jordania's visit in January 2011, I had an email exchange with him and told him about these doubts. After his return I was happy to hear that my thoughts helped him to discover a much more appropriate rock only about 40-50 metres away from the Peter Byrne rock. Because of a low rocky ridge it is not to be seen from where the footpath is now. I don't want to go into details of the pro's and con's of the different rocks here and leave this task to Dr Jordania, who writes an account about this topic in a separate chapter of this book.

After reaching the flat ground, Dr. Jordania showed us the place. It was a very special moment for us when we finally saw it: a big rock about four feet high at the eastern end of the area, just as Corbett had written. Clearly visible was a narrow ledge suitable for a precarious seat supported by a stretched-out leg and also the rounded top to hold on to and - with the support of a handkerchief - to put the rifle upon. Though detailed examinations still had to be done, our spontaneous impression was that Dr. Jordania had found the right place. Gathering round the rock full of excitement, we took photos from different angles, sat down on the ledge and posed as Jim Corbett with a walking stick serving as a rifle. Then we tried to imagine as clearly as possible what had happened here in the fading light on the 30th of November 1938. We discussed the way the tiger approached, talked about the site of the "hump", Corbett mentions in his account, till after one hour we had to tear ourselves away from this remarkable place. There were still about 800 metres to go to the village of Thak, where we intended to make camp for the night. But we would definitely come back tomorrow.

There are two ways to reach Thak from here: the first, let's call it the "upper path", runs along the same ridge Corbett went down on the 30th of November. It goes continuously uphill and after 400 metres passes two big longish rocks on the left. The last of them my former guides showed me as the one where Corbett met the tigress, but as I already said this cannot be true. After passing it and near a small ravine, the way to Thak turns off left while another footpath continues straight on to Kot Kindri. Going to Thak, the path soon reaches open ground and has good views down to the ravine and the Ladhya valley below. If you take - as we did today - the "lower path", you continue on more or less level with the flat ground along the ravine you looked down on from the "upper path", till it reaches the cold spring of clear water under a

mango tree. Corbett often mentioned this spring in his story. Here he had refreshed himself during the hunt and here he found the tigress's pug marks superimposed on his footprints, realizing that the man-eater was stalking him in return. The spring is still there and we quenched our thirst with the cool, clear water we had to rely on for the next several days. It had a wonderful natural taste and we very much appreciated it after the long and hot climb. The "giant mango tree" from Corbett's time does not exist anymore, but there are still roots in the ground from where the water is running and on top of it, a young mango tree was starting to grow. Behind the spring the path leaves the ravine and climbs steeply up. Ten minutes later we entered the deserted village of Thak. The ponies had passed us on our way and the camp was already set up in front of the first house. Tents were placed at the veranda, which was surrounded by a two-foot-high wall. Our men slept inside the house and we stored most of our baggage there too. The house was built in 1980, a time when Thak was still populated. It seemed to be a kind of public house and was used also for the "Puja", a holy ceremony held by the former inhabitants every five years in November (last time they were here was in November 2011).

Thak today is deserted as it was in Corbett's time. However the cause is not a threat from a man-eating tiger, but money, comfort and water. As it was in former times and is still now, the village belongs to the people of Kot Kindri, who are priests of the Purnagiri Temple. As Corbett had already mentioned, the Thak village was gifted from the Chand Rajas who once ruled Kumaon to the forefathers of the present owners in return for their services at the temples. In the last decades, the temple had grown remarkably, so it did not make sense for them to live in such a remote place and farm for a living. Living closer to the temple meant better business. To a lesser degree, this is also the case in Kot Kindri. Though still populated, the numbers of inhabitants are declining. In Thak, water seemed also to be a big problem as all fresh sources have dried up and only the one at the old mango tree survives. We had been told by the teacher that the last few families left because of a lack of water and now the village is only used as a cattle station during the movement of cattle by the last Thak dwellers.

After a late lunch and a cup of tea, we walked through the deserted village. Thak is quite small and probably no more than 20 families ever lived there constantly. Most of the houses have almost completely fallen to the ground, while the others standing in ruins are covered with weeds and bushes. We went up the main road of the village, which conveyed an eerie impression with its remaining walls and wooden structures like skeletons behind dense vegetation. As we know from Corbett, a tigress was walking on these roads and was entering empty houses after the tigress killed her last victim on the terraced fields above the village on November 12th 1938. The villagers fled in panic, leaving even the house doors open. The village lies on the northern slope and was already in shadow, so it was not hard to imagine the scene of the tiger walking through the village in search of a victim or following Corbett's traces and lying in

wait for him. If I had been alone, my imagination surely would cause me some slight panic, but with my friends present the sense of reality prevailed. We passed a rather well maintained house with a cattle shelter that was the property of Hoshiar Singh's brother from Chuka, the only person that still lives here from time to time. Further up along terraced fields and passing an old water tank at the upper end of the village, we found two school buildings, both in ruins. Could the elder one be from Corbett's time? Probably not, but maybe the school teacher of Chuka could find out. He had met us here again, coming after us to see what we might be doing. He was constantly talking and asking questions about our jobs and at every occasion, he tried to make contact with us. At least he promised to organize some digging tools for us when going down to Chuka tomorrow morning. Back in camp and waiting for dinner, we had some discussions about the content and the title of the book, Dr. Jordania had suggested we write about our trip and different Corbett-related topics. "Mysterious cry from a deserted village": the title sounded attractive, but there should also be a more scientific subtitle to make clear that we did not intend to write a collection of horror stories. After lunch we went to sleep, not before we had tasted "wild water", a vodka-like homemade spirit from Chuka, mixed with water. The taste was surprisingly good, but nothing would have matched a cold beer.

Restoring the rock

Tuesday 10. April: The morning ritual for the next days was to go down to the spring under the mango tree and have a wash and brush our teeth. From time to time we enjoyed pouring plastic bottles of water over each other to clean hair, heads and backs. Back in camp we had breakfast and then went down to the rock. Besides a close examination of the surroundings, our main aim for this day was to fix the metal plaque we had brought with us. After some discussion about different versions, we all finally agreed to the text which was written on the plaque in English and Hindi, followed by our names, including Fernando's:

"THIS IS THE ROCK WHERE ON NOVEMBER 30TH, 1938, IN THE DYING SECONDS OF DAYLIGHT, THE TIGRESS KNOWN AS THE "THAK MAN-EATER" WAS SHOT IN A DRAMATIC ENCOUNTER BY JIM CORBETT – INDIA'S LEGENDARY HUNTER AND PIONEER CONSERVATIONIST. THE TIGRESS BECAME A MAN-EATER AFTER SHE, STILL NURSING TWO CUBS, WAS WOUNDED TWICE BY POACHERS. ON THE 9TH – 12TH OF APRIL 2012, ADMIRERS OF JIM CORBETT FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD, PAID TRIBUTE TO THIS GREAT SON OF INDIA, DEDICATED FRIEND OF TIGERS AND HUMBLE SERVANT OF HUMANITY."

On the way down, we double-checked directions, distances and the site of the rock, studying the account of Corbett while slowly going down. In "Man-eaters of Kumaon" he writes: "The path (Corbett speaks about what I had called the "upper path") joins the ridge that runs down to Chuka a quarter of a mile from Thak....

. Four hundred yards down the ridge the path runs for fifty yards across a flat bit of ground.” Up to here it was comparatively easy, but because of the many big rocks in the surrounding area, we now had to look closer. Let’s continue with Jim: “I want you now to have a clear picture of the ground in your mind, to enable you to follow the subsequent events. Imagine then a rectangular piece of ground forty yards wide and eighty yards long, ending in a more or less perpendicular rock face. The path coming down from Thak runs on this ground at its short or south end, and after continuing down the centre for twenty-five yards bends to the right and leaves the rectangle on its long or east side.” Following his description exactly, we entered the flat bit of ground on the south side and continued for twenty-five yards straight on. This was the place where on my first visit I had made the mistake of not turning to the right – this might be excused because the actual path does not turn either – but continues straight on. So fifty yards later, after passing “Peter Byrne’s rock”, the path indeed leaves the flat ground but not on the east as it should according to Corbett’s description, but on the north side. This time we were more careful with the directions and instead of continuing straight, we now went to the right. There was no clearly visible path: maybe some faint traces could be assumed. But as we did so, everything fell in place with Corbett’s writing: “From a little beyond where the path bends to the right, a ridge of rock, three or four feet high, rises and extends to the north side of the rectangle...” We indeed went around this ridge that, when coming from the south, divides the flat ground in two parts, a left (western) one where the actual path runs today and where I in 2007 (and also Peter Byrne in 1975) were shown a rock, and a right (eastern) one where, as Corbett says “at the far right-hand side of this flat ground the path skirts a big rock and then drops steeply...” Following the direction of the supposed old footpath, you cannot avoid running straight into the rock, as Dr. Jordania discovered in 2011. So everything fitted Corbett’s description perfectly and when looking from the side of the rock you even can imagine the “hump” in which direction Corbett’s gun was pointing, and also the “line of bushes” between the ridge and the rock, though not as dense as in former times.

Convinced we were in the right place, we looked for possible places to fix the metal plaque. There was a deep crack in the rock on the side of the ridge – the side from which the tigress approached – and this looked like the best place, where the foot of the plaque could be fixed with a concrete mix. Our men had brought cement from Chuka. They mixed it with water and our guide Kamal turned out to be not only an excellent guide but also an expert concrete worker. To the right of the plaque we fixed a candle holder, generously given to us by Mrs. Anand of Camp Corbett. We put a candle on it and lit it. It was a spiritual moment and we stayed silent for a while. We thought of Mrs. Anand’s husband Omi, who was so dedicated to the heritage of Jim Corbett and had passed away last year. I am sure Kotecha thought of his wife, the mother of Reyna and Rushika, who tragically and unexpectedly died of a heart attack not much more

than one year ago. Then of course we all thought of Jim Corbett himself, who led us together to this remote place on the Indian-Nepalese border and without whom we would have never met each other. And although it might sound strange, some of us may even have thought about the tigress. It was the place where she died and though being a man-eater, it was Corbett himself who said that this “is a tiger that has been compelled through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it”. She was also a victim of circumstances and her man-inflicted wounds caused her not to be able to keep to her natural prey.

After taking photos, we went back to Thak. This time we went by the “upper path” along the ridge, because we wanted to have a look at the rock that was shown to Joseph and me by our former guides. It was an impressive rock indeed on which Rushika and Reyna had fun posing for photos with Dr. Jordania, but we all agreed that neither the location nor the shape of the rock fitted Corbett’s description. Back in Thak we relaxed and enjoyed our lunch: pasta with two different sauces and rice with dal and chips. Before going to sleep, we celebrated our success with some sips from a whiskey bottle I had bought at the airport’s duty free shop. It had been a really very special day.

Wednesday, 11th April: We went down to the rock again, this time loaded with digging tools. Our plan was to dig on the rear of the rock and to restore the surrounds to what we thought was the original state in Corbett’s time. Maybe – if we were very lucky – we could even find some of the cartridges Corbett had fired during the encounter. For this purpose, Dr. Jordania had brought with him a small metal detector. The reason why we thought the rock was not in its original state was that the “falling” height behind the rock was considerably less than that described by Corbett (2 metres’ falling height instead of at least 3 metres). Corbett tells of having placed the men and goats immediately behind and 10-12 feet below him. After firing, and due to the recoil, he had lost his hold on the rock and had fallen down this space to be caught by his men who saved him from injuries. The lower falling height was the only thing that did not fit the description in the book. What Joseph assumed – and we agreed – was that the falling height once was deeper and had been filled up with soil and washed-down earth and stones over a period of more than seventy years. But this assumption could only be true, if during the digging, we didn’t come across solid rock. So we started digging. To be honest, most of this work was done by our men. They were much better, faster and stronger in this job and our contribution was more of showing “good will” than doing substantial work. We were happy to find no solid rock in the ground. Instead it was humus mixed with stones of different sizes. Our impression was that the falling area was not only filled up with humus but also with minor slides of soil and rocks coming down from the ridge in the rainy season. Maybe such slides were responsible for the relocation of the footpath from the right to the left side of the ridge, but one cannot know for sure. We did not find any cartridges during the digging, but when we stopped, there was a really good falling space behind the rock, quite similar to

Corbett's description. Also, while there was digging going on Kotecha and I checked and videoed once more the new paths, leading to the Peter Byrne rock, and the old path, leading to the real Corbett rock. Satisfied with the results of our digging, we turned to taking photos and a video reconstruction of the dramatic meeting between Corbett and the tigress.

For this video Kotecha had to play the role of the tiger. We briefed him about which way to go and put our workers and some of our trip members in the excavated space behind the rock (they were impersonating four scared villagers, and the girls were impersonating two goats). There they had to await the arrival of the "tiger", trembling with fear. It took two "takes" until the tiger went the right way and was caught properly by the video cameras. Then we took photos. When everything was done and filmed we went up to Thak again. There was still some whiskey in the bottle and even Joseph, who usually does not drink any kind of alcohol, joined in for a few sips honoring this special event.

Back to Chuka and another rock

Thursday, 12th April: This was kind of a buffer day for us. If necessary, we could have stayed one day longer in Thak, but as we were already satisfied with our results, we decided to walk down to Chuka, but not by the direct route we had come up, but on a detour via Kot Kindri and Kumaya Chak. It was the last time I went down to the spring for a morning wash, when suddenly the overcast sky opened up and the sun threw beautiful rays of light on the Tala Des ridge at the opposite side of the Ladhya valley. I hadn't expected this and had to run back to my tent to grab a camera and run down again to record the beautiful scenery. Light fell on some small villages below the top of the Tala Des ridge that had not been visible in the dull light of the last few days. I thought about the story of Corbett hunting the Tala Des tigers where he writes of a very steep ascent and that he spent the night in the only hamlet 1000 feet below the top on the southern side of the 4000-foot-high ridge. From here we could see this side of the ridge where now were at least three hamlets, whose roofs reflected the shining rays of the morning sun. Later, when we stood at the verandah of Hoshiar Singh's brother's house in the village of Thak, our guide even showed us the footpath which Corbett probably used. Following some slight contours of smaller ridges in front of the main ridge, it was not strictly horizontal, but was indeed very steep and without any hairpin bends just as Corbett described it.

After breakfast our men packed up the tents and loaded the waiting ponies. I told you yet that "ponies" here in India are not a special breed of small horses as in other countries. It was a kind of common name for every animal resembling a horse that could carry a load – be it donkey, mule or something in between. While the so-called "ponies" went the direct route to Chuka, we made a detour which meant going up the ridge above Thak, than slightly down to Kot Kindri and from there further and

steeper down to Chuka. I heavily underestimated the climbing time because I had done it on my last visit in the opposite direction. What was less than half an hour downhill on a cool afternoon was now two hours of climbing up a steep gradient on a hot and sunny day. But of course the steep ascent included longer stops and a very interesting discovery!

Since the time of our arrival in Thak, I had thought about the location of the events surrounding the third victim of the Thak Man-eater. You may remember Corbett's account of the 27th October when he and Ibbotson entering Thak "at the edge of the cultivated land" came to the place where a man had fallen victim to the tigress. According to Corbett's description, it was at the border of Thak when coming up from Chuka. I imagined it to be not far from where the path (the so-called "upper path") before entering Thak bends to the left, while the path to Kot Kindri goes straight on. There is a hillside to the right which could be the one where the tigress waited concealed, before attacking the man on the field. As Corbett wrote, she carried the man (still alive) for 200 yards, then she killed him but was attacked by buffaloes and for several hours she left the body on the ground. Later she picked up the body and continued for half a mile more, keeping "to the contours of the hill", till she reached the ridge "beyond which lay the valley in which, 6 month previously, we had tracked down and killed the Chuka man-eater. On this ridge was a great slab of rock, which sloped upwards and away from the direction in which we had come". Corbett was sure that the tigress "was lying up under the over-hanging portion of it, or in the close vicinity." The ridge Corbett was writing about, was the same ridge we had just struggled up and beyond which lay Kot Kindri and the valley, where Corbett had killed the Chuka man-eater. I shared these thoughts with my friends and during our climb we looked out for a rock that might fit this description. We could not believe our luck when, on the immediate right side of the path and just in the expected distance from Thak, we saw a rock that fitted Corbett's description very well. It was Priyvrat who noticed the rock first. The rock was 4-5 metres high and sloped away from the footpath that passed the rock uphill. As Kotecha's effort proved, the sloping rock was not difficult to climb from this side. Very much like Jim Corbett, he went up and looked over the top. From the other side the rock was nearly perpendicular with a slight caving near the ground that could well be interpreted as an overhanging space. It would have been sufficient space for a tiger and also the flat ground behind the rock could serve as a good resting place. You would not expect to find a tiger resting here today because of the vicinity of a seldom frequented footpath, but things surely were different in Corbett's time. If this was the rock - and it might well be so - then Corbett had to circle around and come from the upper side where the footpath now is, while the tiger have rested on the valley side of the rock. If this scenario is right, then Kotecha's video-documented experiment proves that the tiger, if looking in the right direction, was able to see Corbett's head, before he in turn could see the resting tigress. This indeed happened and Corbett's attempt

was unsuccessful this time. But was this the rock where Corbett tried to stalk the tigress? I cannot tell for sure, because we did not search the surroundings for other and maybe better alternatives. But the rock we saw fits surprisingly well with Corbett's description, and I would rate it a really good probability. You can see the photo of this rock, together with many other places, in the book. And of course, you can see also this rock and Kotecha climbing it in our documentary DVD of the trip...

After crossing the top of the ridge approximately 500 metres above Thak, we continued towards Kot Kindri. The footpath was now mostly level or even sloping slightly downwards, dropping steeper before Kot Kindri. We saw leopard droppings on the path and Kamal collected a porcupine quill, a beautiful ornament, of a milky colour with a few black contours, thick as a pencil, hard as mica glass and sharp as a needle. As we know, such porcupine quills had been responsible for turning several tigers into man-eaters. Roughly halfway between Thak and Kot Kindri we stood on top of the large ravine in which Corbett finally managed to kill the Chuka man-eater. The big ficus tree, where he sat in wait, is no longer there – according to a letter from Peter Byrne, it fell in 2001, but you can well imagine the whole scenery in this deep and dark green ravine overgrown with bushes and trees. Where the footpath crosses the ravine, there is a spring and a small pool of water. The water trickles down into the valley, providing humidity to the lush green vegetation. In Kot Kindri we had our lunch in front of the school building and were offered cool and fresh water. The school was a secondary school. After five years of primary school in Chuka, children had to travel here daily for five more years. We enjoyed the scenic outlooks over the village and down into the Ladhya valley before going steeply down to Chuka. On the way passed the only spring of Kot Kindri village overlying the supposed old mango plantation of 1938 where the first victim of the Thak tigress was carried when gathering windfalls. It was somewhere on the path we now went down that the Chuka man-eater appeared for the first time when he attacked two men returning from the Tanakpur market. Fortunately the man the tiger sprang upon was saved by a sack of sugar on his back. Two thirds down, we passed the open ground of Kumaya Chak on our right side, where the labour camps stood. We looked up the ridge the tigress went over to meet her fate while being called up by Corbett.

Shortly before Chuka, the footpath from Kot Kindri joins the one from Thak and we reached our campground in the late afternoon. We were too exhausted to make use of the very modern and sophisticated angling equipment our guide had provided for us. But nonetheless we had “anglers’ luck” while resting, because our men caught a big fish, trapped in a net at Sem. It was a big 10-pound mahseer – big of course only by our standards as a mahseer can weigh up to 50 pounds and more. Joseph asked: “Shall we eat or release it?” My spontaneous reply: “Eat it, of course!” All agreed and we had a wonderful dinner with Corbett's favorite fish: one part grilled with a basting of cucurma or Indian saffron and a little red chili powder and mashed onions, the

other as fish curry. While enjoying the tasty fish, we had a discussion about the quality of different sweet water fish. Priyvrat remembered a very special fish in Assam called “Ruha”. I mentioned the similar-tasting barramundi very highly ranked in northern Australia, but we all agreed that the Indian mahseer is at least one of the best tasting sweet water fishes in the world.

Walking back and a cold night in Champawat

Friday, 13th April: The last day of our trekking! I woke up at 6 o'clock and went down to the Sharda for a bath, and then sat on a stone beside the river, making notes for my diary. Because of some rain in the last days, the water was cooler, and not as pleasant as on the day of our arrival (Joseph told me later that Ladhya would have been a better choice, as it was warmer). Back at the tent I woke Priyvrat, who was still sleeping. After breakfast and tipping our men – each one got 1000 Rs for the excellent service – we packed our tents. Shortly after 9 o'clock we were on our way back to Thuligad. Young Reyna was not well this morning, so Kotecha engaged a man from the village to carry her on his back from time to time. After two hours, we made a short break at the Kaldhunga Rest House. When continuing our walk, I felt a growing weakness and started falling behind. I might have run out of my glucose reserves because after drinking some mouthfuls of a Glucon-D mixture, which Kamal prepared for me at the next stop, I felt much better. Instead of trotting behind, I now went in front feeling like some sort of a trekking robot. In a big ravine not far ahead of the Sharda gorge, we had lunch, washed it down with a refreshing grapefruit juice mixture, observed a goral on the hillside and dozed away for 30 minutes before continuing the walk. Shortly before 4pm we arrived at Thuligad, where taxies to Tanakpur were already waiting for us. Here we stopped at the KMWN Rest House for a cold drink and to discuss our further plans. On the wall of the rest house there was a big plaque showing all the Corbett man-eaters in the Champawat district and the year Corbett had killed them. We discussed what we thought to be a false entry of a Ladhya valley man-eater. We thought it to be the same tiger, the Chuka man-eater, but there was another opinion from Kotecha as well.

The discussion about the next part of the trip was a bit annoying as it became apparent that Anup, the tour operator, had not organized anything besides providing cars and drivers. Perhaps he thought there would always be a room left in a KMWN Rest House. For the night in Champawat this was all right, but for the following nights it turned out that a KMWN Rest House in the Chowgarh area did not exist. The best available option seemed to be to stay at Kamal's Camp near Mukhteshwar. This was no really satisfying solution because of the great distance to Kala Agar, but it was Friday evening and bookings for the weekend were no longer possible in the much better placed Okhalkanda Forest Rest House. Kamal said he would try for it on Monday. Not

wanting to lose more time we agreed and at 5.30pm started with two cars and drivers for the 70 km drive to Champawat.

Behind Tanakpur, the road went steeply up before descending again into the valley of the Ladhya. We crossed the river in Chalti in the last light of day. The road wound over mountains and through valleys and was very rough with potholes and unpaved sections but the scenery was truly spectacular. The going was slow and it was after 8 pm, when we entered the rest house at Champawat. There we found the room for Kotecha and the girls fine and ready, while the other one which Dr. Jordania, Priyvrat and I were to share, was still closed and nobody could find the key for the big lock, hanging in front of the door. Equipped with a hammer and brute force the housekeeper tried to solve the problem, but still it was not so easy. When a few minutes later the key was found, there was now the problem of a damaged lock... Fortunately, after several tries the key worked and we could finally enter the room. We put our baggage inside and I went with the drivers to the town center, to organize food and some bottles of beer for the evening. At the local "wine shop" I was very impressed by the big iron bars, which fenced the shop from the waiting people – looking like the Bank of England. Priyvrat who was not very fond of beer suggested we should bring a bottle of red wine from the so called "wine shop", but when I asked for it, the shop keeper did not even know what I was talking about. The only bottle he could show me when I asked for "red wine" was dark brandy. It turned out that "wine" here was a synonym for any kind of spirit and I had to disappoint Priyvrat in this respect. I bought some bottles of the only brand of beer that was available, a rather strong one with up to 8% alcohol. The beer was not chilled because of a broken refrigerator, but because of the low temperatures in Champawat this was no real problem. Due to the height of nearly 2000 metres above sea level and also due to unusual cold weather conditions the temperature was down to an estimated 8-10 degrees. It was hard to imagine that only a few hours earlier we were suffering in the heat. We put the beer on the balcony where it soon reached drinking temperature and had a late dinner at 9.30 o'clock. The chicken curry tasted fine and it was more than we could eat. The first beer since several days was a pleasure, though strong and rather heavy it was definitely no match for Kingfisher. After discussing the plan for the next day, we went to our rooms and wrapped ourselves in thick woolen blankets for the cold night ahead.

Champawat and saying good bye to Joseph and Priyvrat

Saturday, 14th April: In the morning we unwrapped ourselves from the double layer of thick blankets that had prevented us from being cold and enjoyed a pot of hot chai to warm up. Shortly before nine, we got into our cars for the Champa gorge, where in 1907 Jim Corbett had killed the notorious Champawat man-eater, responsible for 436 human victims. Champawat is now a busy provincial capital and its name means "temple of the goddess Champa", that is the eldest sister of Purnagiri. After passing

the main bazaar, we wanted to turn right at the Tala Des road, from where on my last visit I had looked down to the gorge and thought I had also found the bungalow where Corbett stayed during the hunt. That we missed the crossing and went further on turned out to be a very lucky mistake, because it brought us much nearer to the site of the dramatic events. Following the main road and at the end of the village we passed the bridge over the Champa and immediately afterwards it turned right. At a fork some hundred metres later we took the right one slightly downhill. The small road now followed the Champa gorge on the far side of the town. On my last visit I went down into the gorge from here. But this time we went a bit further on and we were lucky to do so. Just as we were thinking about turning around we saw ahead of us the end of the gorge and at a distance of one mile a little village. Thinking we might have driven too far, we asked the keeper of a small shop we just had passed, if he knew something about Jim Corbett. He told us the village's name as Gaudi, the place where (according to Peter Byrne) the tigress took its last victim and from where Corbett's hunt started. And of course he did know Jim Corbett. The old Dak bungalow where Corbett stayed during the hunt had been on top of a hill above the village. But it no longer existed. I was a bit confused, because I thought of Gaudi as being on the other side of the gorge and I was also convinced that I had seen the Dak bungalow there in 2007. But the shopkeeper gave us the impression that he knew what he was talking about very well and so my former interpretations might have been wrong. We had to find out.

When we asked about the place the man-eater was shot he said, we had driven too far and accompanied us back for 400 metres to show the way. Here he advised us to leave the car and to go in the direction of the gorge. While he went back to his shop, we followed a small and scarcely visible footpath down an approximately 300-metres on the ridge, stretching itself like a big nose in one of the bends of the Champa River, flowing some 100 metres below us. The footpath was steep only in parts and when halfway down, we suddenly realized that we were just entering the big natural amphitheatre, probably the one of which Corbett gave such an impressive description. We stopped for a careful study of his words. While pondering about organizing the beat, Corbett was sitting "on the south edge of a great amphitheatre of hills, without a habitation of any kind in sight. A stream entering from the west had fretted its way down, cutting a deep valley right across the amphitheatre. To the east the stream had struck solid rock, and turning north had left the amphitheatre by a narrow gorge." Looking around and with the help of Joseph's compass checking the given directions, everything fell in place. We were going down the southern slope and on the opposite side of the gorge was the high ridge, where the beaters then stood. But where was the "projecting rock" on which the tigress made her last stand? We had to go deeper. It was not possible to reach the bottom safely from here - though Corbett had done it in a run - and so we stopped some 30 metres above the river, perhaps near the place where the Tehsildar

stopped. Now we could clearly see the flat black projecting rock and even the ledge on its left side by which the wounded animal walked up. The rock - roughly 7-8 metres long and three metres high - was on the opposite side of the river and approximately 7 metres above the river (see the photo of the rock in a special chapter dedicated to Champawat tigress killing site). The dark colored upper side corresponded with the brighter color of the lower side that was probably washed clean by the high waters of the Champa River in the countless monsoon seasons. So at last we stood in front of the dramatic scenery of Corbett's last encounter with the Champawat man-eater in 1907. We took photos and sat down for a while, to get familiar with the place and to connect with events that happened here more than 100 years ago.

Going up the ridge again, we discussed some other moments of Corbett's 1907 hunt: where was the blasted pine tree, where Corbett wanted to give the signal for starting the beat? Which way did Corbett go the day before when following the tigress who was carrying her last victim? Let us try to imagine: The kill must have been near Gaudi on our side of the gorge. Corbett followed the tigress "round the shoulder of a hill" (maybe near the place where we met the shopkeeper) and later "straight down the very steep hill" and following a "steep watercourse" (maybe near to where we walked now, because we had passed an old and empty watercourse). Then he passed a "great pinnacle of rock some thirty feet high" where Corbett advised the following man to climb and wait for him (we didn't see anything like this as we did not follow the watercourse of course) and went down to a small pool at the junction with a big ravine, where he found the severed leg of the victim. Here, after making the grisly find, Corbett for a few seconds forgot about the tigress and was nearly killed by the man-eater. He was only saved by his superb jungle feel and the heightened sense for danger. The "big ravine" must have been the Champa gorge the man-eater had crossed with its victim, the place where Corbett left the animal and where the beat begun was on the other side.

Let me add here a story of the girl that was probably this last victim. I cannot guarantee its truth but I had heard it five years ago from a herdsman who is one of the priests of Purnagiri and who knew the story of Corbett well. Before showing us the way to the gorge he told us that the young girl was only a few days married when she accompanied her mother collecting leaves. Her mother did not want her to come along. "Stay at home", she said, "you are just married". But the girl insisted on coming. She did not want the mother to go alone because of the danger of the lurking man-eater. While collecting the leaves, the tiger suddenly sprang upon the girl. Her mother was clinging to the girl and did not want to let her go, but the tiger managed to get her free and disappeared with the girl. A really sad story that Corbett doesn't mention in his book, but very probably this was the girl whose corpse he followed the day before shooting the tiger.

Back on the forest road, noon had already passed and we had to return to the rest house. Dr. Jordania and Priyvrat had to start their 7-9 hour drive to Delhi Airport to catch their flights the following morning. So at the rest house Kotecha, Reyna, Rushika and I sadly said goodbye to our friends. We agreed to stay in touch and that we would try to arrange another adventure on Corbett's (or maybe Anderson's) footsteps for our newly formed "MAGI-Group" (not exactly Corbett's Maggie, but symbolizing: Mauritius-Australia-Germany-India, our homelands). The next time of course fortified with our friend Fernando from Brazil! We waved at the departing car and wished we could have stayed together for the rest of our trip. But it had not been possible and Kotecha, the girls and I were now on our own, to investigate some more questions in Champawat and also in Chowgarh.

There were still questions concerning Champawat – at least for me. Not that I was in doubt about the place we had found, but if this was true, then something was wrong with my imagination about places and rest houses in 2007. I felt I could only be fully satisfied after having checked the places I had seen. Impatiently I suggested looking for some new information during the remainder of the afternoon, but Kotecha was right: we needed rest after our strenuous days. So we retired to our rooms and met again at 6pm to go out for dinner and then home again to kill the last three bottles of beer that had been left from the previous evening.

Answering the last questions in Champawat and going to Chowgarh

Sunday 15th April: Heavy rains fell in the night and morning was still wet, cool and cloudy. After a cup of tea we packed our baggage in the car and went off to answer some more questions around the Champawat story before proceeding to Okhalkanda. Yes indeed, Okhalkanda! Mr. Shankar Singh Bakhuni, our very kind driver of the second leg, and Kamal the trekking guide were using the phone all during our stay in Champawat till they got it right. Maybe our drivers' acquaintance with the Chief Medical Officer of Nainital was helpful too for they finally could confirm the booking. We only had to bring our own food because there was no restaurant at Okhalkanda, but someone would be there to do the cooking for us. We were happy to hear this because now we could stay much closer to the Chowgarh site. I think this is the right place to praise the qualities of Kamal Bisht. Not only an excellent and prudent guide, he was always perfectly equipped for anything that might happen (remember the Loperamid for Reyna and the Glucon-B for me), and everything he organized was to be relied on 100%. In this case, together with the driver, he had solved a problem overnight and even on a weekend, that Anup should have done much earlier. When we said good bye to him in Thuligad we wanted to tip him for his excellent service, but he very determinedly refused, thinking it not to be appropriate for the responsible man of the trek. Not to be unjust to Anup, he is mainly a taxi operator and the transport

services he provided were fine and reliable, and were fairly priced. But for organizing the rest, Kamal was definitely the right person.

Back to Champawat: Five years ago I looked down into the Champa gorge from the other side from where we did yesterday and I was convinced of having seen the Dak bungalow there and also the village of Gaudi. But taking into account our findings the day before, there was something wrong with this assumption. It had to be checked before going on. This time we did not miss the Tala Des road 500 metres behind the main bazaar where we turned right at the blue road sign to Tamuli, 50 kilometres ahead. This road at first follows roughly the direction of the Champa gorge on the near side of Champawat. There was much building activity around, so it was not easy to stay on the main road. At a distance of a bit more than five kilometres the bungalow above the Champa gorge was still there. It is the one Peter Byrne shows in his book as the bungalow where Corbett had stayed. But this was not the case. It turned out to be the wrong side of the gorge indeed. The village here was not Gaudi but was called Fungar. This also explained his name as the “Fungar bungalow”, as Byrne correctly called it. Despite being not the right one, it was worth the detour anyway. The bungalow was a very old building and might well have existed in the days of the hunt and probably was very similar in shape to the one above Gaudi, which is no longer there. No one knows how long this one will still exist. Much had changed in the last years. A new house had been built on the ground and the bungalow seemed to serve as a cattle shed now. A new two-meter-high stone wall encircled the house and the bungalow, obviously private property now. But we were lucky again. The metal door stood wide open, so we could go in and walk around to take some photos.

Satisfied with our findings we went back to Champawat, crossed the bridge over the Champa again and as yesterday turned right onto the small forest road to Gaudi. We hoped to get some more information about the location of the Dak bungalow, where Corbett had stayed. Entering the forest road, we looked at our meter for the exact distances. If someone wishes to find the places by himself, here is some advice. After entering the forest road, look at your meter and follow the road for exact 4.4 kilometres. Just before the road bends to the left, on the right side there is a small space sufficient for one or two cars. Leave your car here and go down the ridge to your right for about 300 metres or a bit more. If you miss the right place on the road, 400 metres later you will come to a place with a small shop on the left and a temple on the right side. You can drink chai and ask the shopkeeper as we did, or simply turn around and drive back for 400 metres where the amphitheatre and the hunting place is now to your left.

When we reached the shop we realized that the unpaved road descended rather steeply down to Gaudi. Because of the rains the conditions were slippery and it seemed too risky to proceed without four-wheel Drive. So Kotecha and I went out to check the surroundings. In front of us was the valley in which roughly one mile ahead and some

200 metres deeper lay the small village of Gaudi. To our left was a ridge approximately 200 metres higher than us and sloping in the direction of Gaudi. Somewhere on this ridge had to be the location of the Dak bungalow, where Corbett stayed during the hunt. We were sure this was the “long sloping hill”, from where Corbett saw the man running up to him and telling him about the last victim of the tigress, the young girl. From where we stood now, a footpath led in the direction of the ridge. Leaving Reyna and Rushika with the driver, Kotecha and I followed this path, hoping to get a clearer view of the situation. After 15 minutes of walking the path reached the yards of two houses. Stopping for a moment, we were soon invited in by the owners. In the courtyard, surrounded by blooming and delicate smelling citrus trees, Kotecha had a talk with the house inhabitants but brought no news about Corbett and the Dak bungalow. After having a smoke together, we were invited to follow two men on a shortcut down to the forest road, from where we could easily return to our car. This slippery track passed a shack from where our companions took a goat to accompany us on the way up. Going up and looking at the ridge, we speculated about the former position of the Dak bungalow. It had to be on this ridge and in clear view of the village. Even though Corbett tells about looking down a long sloping hill, it is hard to imagine - be it only for practical reasons - that a governmental bungalow was built on top of a ridge nearly 400 metres high. I imagined it to be on a small hilltop on the lower part of the ridge not more than 100 metres above the village, but this is only a guess of course. Kotecha thought it could be anywhere. Back at the car we said goodbye to the villagers and had a last chai with the shopkeeper who had meanwhile arrived. His name was Gopal Singh Bahra, grandson of Dhungar Singh who, as a boy of seven years, had assisted in the beat and later told the story to his son and grandson. We considered ourselves lucky having met him and thanked him for all his useful information. After saying goodbye, we went into our car and drove back along the forest road to Champawat – probably the same road the Tehsildar went when he left Corbett for the night in the haunted Dak bungalow – and from there we continued in the direction of Lohargat and Debidura.

An interesting encounter in Pali and well informed boys in Debidura

The road went steeply up to Lohaghat. It was around noon and we stopped at a small food stall for some pakoras and a cold drink. We tried to buy food that could be cooked in the evening, but did not find a shop to our taste. The driver told us of a better one in Pahrapani and so we went on after buying a supply of beer at a local wine shop. To our delight, they sold Kingfisher, but it was not the refreshing regular one but some strong brand with 8% alcohol. Maybe for the low temperatures in the mountains or for the remote and isolated location the people here seemed to prefer very strong and - as we felt - slightly depressing beers, but “Kingfisher Strong” was a comparatively good one.

From Lohaghat the small road wound its way through picturesque villages, though the snow-crested mountains of the big Himalayans I had admired on my last visit were hidden behind clouds. The road went downhill when the village of Pati came into view. Pati, or Pali as it was called in Corbett's time, is situated on top of a long mountain ridge whose left side is covered with terraced fields and open grounds while on the right there is a steep descent. Pati has grown and not much reminds of the small village of about 50 inhabitants through which Corbett passed on his way to Champawat where he mounted guard while the wheat crop was being cut and where he had a very dangerous night watch on the first day of his career as a hunter of man-eating tigers and leopards. It was time for a break and a cup of chai and so we stopped at the crossing where the village road forked to the left and went upwards through the centre of Pati. After finishing the chai, I went up there to take some photos, while Kotecha and the girls stayed with the car. Coming back 20 minutes later, Kotecha told me of a very interesting talk he had with an old man at the bus stop. As usual Kotecha asked if he knew Jim Corbett and the old man really did. He told him that Corbett and his men often took water from the old well at the crossing that was still in use and constantly frequented by the villagers. He was told by his father that Corbett and his men camped behind that well on beside the village road and that the tiger had killed the woman in the terraced fields on the left side behind the houses. He also confirmed that the village had been called "Pali" in earlier times and showed Kotecha the place where Corbett shot the mountain goat to get food for his men and impressed the villagers with his shooting mastery.

It was on the right side of the village and the main road – right behind the bus stop – where the ridge descends very steeply for some hundreds of metres. Today the valley was covered in clouds, but there were some brief moments when the clouds opened up and the hillside came in view. It was there where Corbett went down a "very steep ridge" and where at a range of 200 yards, he fired at three "ghorals" that rolled down the hill nearly to Jim's feet. This caused the villagers to exclaim that Corbett had used "magic bullets" that "had not only killed the animals ... but had also drawn them to the shahib's feet." It was a pity, that at the moment before I returned, the old man had to say goodbye because his bus had arrived. He had a big black goat with him which was meant to be sacrificed in Dhunaghat to remove an evil curse. Kotecha was interested in whether he had to pay the bus driver for the very big goat "No sir", the man called back, "goat comes as goods and does not pay!"

The road now climbed up through the former territory of the "Temple tiger" till we reached Devidhura, "the mountain of the goddess". The village and the temples are situated on the pointed top of a forest-covered mountain. Behind a colourful new temple, the old one - playing a part in the story of the temple tiger - clings itself to a rock niche in the form of a human ear. In front of this temple we met three young men who were well accustomed to the story of Jim Corbett. The lads were cousins and one of

them was working for the Devidhura Forest Office, while another younger lad's father is from the Divisional Forest Office of Champawat, the main one. With them we went to a viewpoint from where we had spectacular views over the valley below. I thought this to be the Panar valley, where Corbett hunted the notorious man-eating leopard, whose hunting grounds reached up to this place. When I asked them about Panar, the young men to my astonishment claimed not having heard anything about it. But soon it turned out to be only my mispronunciation. It had occurred to me before that those slightly different pronunciations could cause complete incomprehension. Once on the Tala Des road I had asked for the village of "Tala Kote", the place where Corbett shot the Tala Des tigers. Nobody seemed to know it. But when I later said "Tula Kot", they understood immediately and showed it to me at once. Same here: nobody had ever heard of "Panar". But when pronounced on the second syllable as "Panar", things were completely different: "Of course sir, it is here, his very valley you are looking at." When talking about the Panar leopard, the lad who worked for the forest department said that it was killed near the "Bhanouli" village, and showed us the direction. Surely that's also a deviation from Corbett's spelling of "Sanouli" in *Temple Tiger*.

Leaving the viewing point, we went to the Forest Rest House where the same metal plaque as in Champawat showed the man-eaters killed by Corbett in this district. Again there was that mysterious Ladhya Valley man-eater we thought to be only a confusion with the Chuka tiger. Kotecha talked with them about this topic and because I was not able to keep up with their debate and it is an important subject for Kotecha, I let him tell it in his own words: "Manfred is right. This is an interesting subject for me, but all our group members may not agree and we've already had disagreements about it. The three lads we had met translated for us the Hindi written on the wall and said that it was found in the records of the Devidhura Forest Office archives that Jim Corbett stayed at this Dak bungalow (they said dak mean postal services) in 1909. The building is a newer one, but built on the ruins of the old one, only some 50 metres behind the temple. The exact date in 1909 is inscribed on the wall. But here there is already a contradiction with the book *Temple Tiger* which says 1910! The most interesting part of the story comes from the lad whose father is at the Divisional office in Champawat. He says his father works with a project of the Champawat Tourism Authority, an undertaking of the Uttarakhand State Government, for making the district's forest areas a tourist attraction and that the KMVNs created all around Uttarakhand is part of the project Wildlife and forest conservation is the second aim and restoring Corbett's legacy in the area is the third. He says that the divisional forest office of Champawat was the first to dig through old records of all the ancient imperial forest offices of their division and has made a booklet on Corbett's legacy out of it, available for tourists in the rest-houses. The condensed information of the booklets is also painted in all forest offices walls of the Champawat districts and their respective KMVNs. When I questioned them about the Ladhya valley man-eater whose date is

shown on the painting, they told me that five man-eaters were found to have been shot by Jim Corbett in this division, namely, the Champawat tigress in 1907, the talladesh tigress with two sub-adults in 1929, the chukka tiger in April 1938 (while the Jim Corbett book says April 1937), the Thak tigress in November 1938, and finally the Ladhya valley man-eater in May 1946. The man working at the forest office then intervened to say that the last man-eater had been recorded in the books without a mention of the place where it was shot, adding that it was a male tiger and “we can get the same information with more details at the Divisional Forest Office at Champawat, perhaps with the archives also.”

Our next stop was Paharpani. At a shop the driver knew we bought everything we needed for the cook to prepare our dinner: bread, rice, dal, flour, spices, vegetables and snacks for the night. I remembered Paharpani from my last visit. The old rest house was on top of a low hill above the village. It was built in 1914 under the surveillance of J.E. Carrington Turner, at this time an officer of the district’s forest department. In his book “Man-eaters and Memories”, he tells the thrilling story of how, during the construction, he stayed as a guard because of the threat of a man eating tiger in the vicinity. Carrington-Turner killed the beast not far away from the shop, where we had bought the food. But this is another story. At Dhanachuli we turned left for Okhalkanda which we reached half an hour and 18 kilometres later at the last light of the day. There were two large and comfortable rooms, one for Kotecha, Rushika and Reyna and the other for me. The caretaker lit them very romantically with candles, but the real reason was an electricity failure. Soon the electric light came back and the caretaker, who did also the job of a cook, provided us after a long waiting period, during which we had to satisfy the worst of our hunger with beer and crisps, with a fine and filling meal of fried vegetables and rice. It was after 11pm when we went to sleep, Kotecha and I thinking of the place we hoped to find tomorrow – the big rock formed like a giant school slate, where Corbett met the man-eating tigress of Chowgarh.

Kala Agar and the “giant school slate”

“The rock about which I have said so much I can best describe as a giant school slate, two feet thick at its lower end, and standing up – not quite perpendicularly – on one of its long sides. As I stepped clear out of the giant slate, I looked behind me over my right shoulder and – looked straight into the tigress’s face...”

I thought it would be easy. Kotecha had asked me earlier if one and a half days would be enough to reach the place we wanted to find: the “giant school slate” where Corbett had his thrilling encounter with the tigress in the afternoon of the 11th April 1930. I replied that probably half a day would be enough, because I was so sure that I had been very near it five years ago. Following Corbett’s description, I had looked down into a ravine in a valley below the forest road, which I was sure to be the right one. The only question for me was whether the “giant school slate” was still to be seen.

Unlike mountainous Thak region, the location here was a ravine with waters running through it every year. Since the time I looked down from above I felt sorry about not having gone down for an inspection. It was late afternoon then and we still had to go the long way to Mukteswar, but nevertheless I wouldn't have missed the opportunity. This was unfinished business for me and an important reason for coming back to this place. This time Kotecha would accompany me and we would look and find the right place, whether the "school slate" was there or not. But of the actual location I was very sure, maybe a bit too sure. But let us start at the beginning.

Monday, 16th April: When we woke up at the rest house, it was a beautiful morning and a bright sunny day. Going outside, Kotecha warned me of some aggressive monkeys in the garden, but when I arrived they had already gone. On the side of the house there was a big leopard trap. A longish cage with two compartments: one for the bait, a goat maybe, and the other one for the leopard to enter. I had seen such traps in documentaries on how to remove problem leopards, but it was a strange feeling to have one in front of your own doorstep. But no goat was inside and the trap had only been left there for occasional use by the forest department. Okhalkanda is very scenically located at the plateau of a hill that from here slopes steeply down to the river Gola. On the other side of the valley, 20 kilometres away is a Kala Agar ridge, which raises more than 2000 metres high.

We started at 9.30am. The small road descends with many bends through forests and terraced fields down to the river Gola. There are small villages on the way, some of them like the village of Pakhari, mentioned in Corbett's story as some victims of the Chowgarh tigress came from these villages. Even in Okhalkanda (then called Ukhaldhunga) and in the still more distant Pahárpani the tigress claimed one victim each in the official reports. It is really hard to imagine that the territory of this tigress could be so big. Compared to tiger territories of today this would be very unusual even if you take into account that in the mountains the territories would be somewhat bigger than in the plains because of lower prey density. Was there another man-eater at the same time operating on the northern side of the Goula? I would like to think so, but without the details and the exact dates of the kills, this can only be groundless speculation.

After crossing the Gola on a metalled bridge at Khansio, the road climbs up the Kala Aga ridge. After a 10-minute drive with nice views back to Khansio and the Goula valley, there is a turn-off to the right for Kala Agar, while the road straight on continues to Dalkania. We first went in the direction of Kala Agar, some 15 kilometres away and 5 kilometres in front of Chamoli, where the motor road ends. Kala Agar is a small village with scattered houses on both sides of the road. It is located on the northern face and around 300 yards below the top of the ridge it gave its name to. The girls stayed with the driver and Kotecha and I left the car for the 20-minute walk up to the old rest house, where Corbett and the Ibbotsons stayed during the hunt. The bungalow is situated between terraced fields and an old and partly overgrown wall

encloses the compound. There must have been some changes to the building, because compared to the photos Peter Byrne took some decades ago there are two chimneys now and a closed veranda. On my first visit, I had a look at the visitors' book with the clearly visible entries of Mr. and Mrs Ibbotson (1937) and Stiffle (1940). Another one from March 1930 which might have been Corbett's, was no longer readable. Today there was no caretaker present to show us the book, only two boys had accompanied us on our way. Talking to them, Kotecha discovered that this bungalow was not the original one where Corbett had stayed. It had not been built before 1954, while the old one was right behind, but in decay and obviously used as a goat shed.

It was from this bungalow Corbett went out in the afternoon of the 11th April 1930 with the intention of tying three buffaloes on selected places along the forest road. At a point "a mile from the bungalow, where the road crosses a ridge, and goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range" he met some men collecting firewood. After talking with a man whose son had been killed here a month before, he followed a footpath leaving the forest road in a downhill direction close to where they had been sitting. After an interlude tying a buffalo to a stump and staying guard on a rock while sensing the approach of the tigress, he went further down the footpath. After passing a ten-yards wide ravine, the path entered heavy undergrowth. Corbett decided not to enter the bushes, but to follow the more open ground of the ravine down to its junction with the valley. So he stepped into the ravine and 60 yards later he came to a deep drop of 12-14 feet. After sliding down the smooth rock, he stood in the sandy bed of the ravine and to his right was the 15-foot slate of rock, where Corbett met the tigress and the story came to an end in a dramatic showdown.

With Corbett's description in mind, we started our search. The forest road runs along the north side of the ridge and passes the bungalow at a distance of 150 yards on the uphill side. The connecting footpaths to the bungalow can be described using Corbett's words as a "loop" around the bungalow. The "road" is between one and two yards wide, not built for motor vehicles, but has a solid construction with stone walls on the side and sometimes plaster stones on the ground. After we had proceeded for 400 yards, on the right side and 15 yards next of the road an impressive big boulder came in view. It was more than 10 feet high and a closer look immediately revealed it as the one Peter Byrne had photographed for his book. But we could definitely not share his opinion that this was the one where Corbett met the tigress. We must admit that the shape of the rock indeed resembled Corbett's description, but there is an obvious contradiction in the location. In "Shikari Sahib", Byrne describes it with the following words: "About four hundred yards west of the bungalow is the ravine down which Corbett went to avoid the possibility of an ambush by the man-eater in the heavy scrub that bordered the road in those days. About a hundred feet down into the ravine itself is the big, smooth rock down which he and his men slid and down which I and my guides also slid to get into the little glade that is walled on the right

by the huge leaning rock slab, from behind which the tigress stalked them.” (S.316) But this does not coincide with the description Corbett gives us. The most obvious difference is the distance to the bungalow (compare 400 yards by Peter Byrne to a mile by Corbett, a distance of four times greater), but the “Byrne’s rock” is also much nearer to the forest road than it should be according to Corbett’s words. It can be seen easily from the road and you can reach it with a detour through light undergrowth. There is no ravine nearby and you don’t have to slide down to reach the rock, the composition of which is rough and not the smooth kind Corbett describes. But the size and the shape of the rock are indeed similar to Corbett’s description, so maybe Peter Byrne or the people who showed him the rock were misled by that and did not check the other aspects, such as, most importantly, the location.

We continued our search. Following the forest road in a western direction we passed cultivated land and terraced fields on the right side, while the slope left of the forest road is rough and uncultivated terrain with scrub, bushes and boulders up to the top of the ridge some 200 yards above. It very much resembled the kind of terrain I always had imagined in which Corbett’s close encounter with the tigress a few days before the successful hunt had occurred. Coming back from visiting an abandoned village on the other (south) side of the ridge, he made his way down to the forest road. Following a cattle track and approaching a pile of rocks between the ridge top and the road, he suddenly felt there was danger ahead. The tigress had indeed tried an ambush in the rough terrain, but failed due to Jim’s acute sixth sense and the warning call of a kakar. Looking up the bushy and rocky slope criss-crossed with cattle tracks, I thought of Jim’s thrilling experience.

One mile from the bungalow - the exact distance, Corbett mentions - we came to the bend where the road “goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range”. Up to this point I had made it five years ago, before the advanced afternoon forced our return. Looking down into the valley in front of me I made sure to look in the direction Corbett went downhill. Halfway down a ravine was visible and I had not much doubt that I saw the right place from above. But today looking carefully with Kotecha, the doubts concerning my former interpretation were growing. One thing was for certain: we were following the right trail and were close, because Corbett mentioned this bend. He wrote of the road crossing a ridge. Where was this ridge? On my first visit, I had identified it with the slope the path bends around when going from the north to the west face of the range (the “point X” in Kotecha’s account). But having a closer look now, we thought this might have been wrong because around 200 yards in front of us the forest road crossed a formation much more resembling a “ridge”. It was the crest of a longish hillside, slightly sloping to the right in the direction of Chamoli, a village having then paid the heavy toll of six victims to the man-eater. I had first imagined this formation as the opposite side of the valley where Corbett, after crossing it, wanted to rejoin the forest road. But now I realized – and Kotecha seconded this view – that

it was not the opposite hill but the ridge that Corbett mentioned and that all the important events occurred not in front of it, but behind. Moreover, the forest road did not follow this ridge - which would be necessary for my former interpretation to be right - but went straight across. Only a small footpath followed the contour of the ridge probably heading for Chamoli. So I had to admit it was not only Peter Byrne who had not gone far enough, the same applied to me. To ensure this interpretation was correct, we went a few paces along the ridge in the direction of Chamoli and looked down on both sides. It was a hot day and we would probably not have the energy to inspect both sides because the slopes were high and steep. There were also Kotecha's girls waiting for us. They were safe with the driver but might be afraid if our return was delayed too much. After discussing the situation once more, we agreed to rate the valley on the far side a much better probability and went down.

There was no clearly visible path and we went down more or less directly, for some parts used faint traces of cattle tracks. Around 150 yards deeper we approached the entrance of a ravine. Our tension rose. The ravine was just as Corbett described "ten yards wide and four or five feet deep". And as we went down the ravine, "the banks became higher" and just like Corbett told, sixty yards after we had entered it we came "on a deep drop of some twelve to fourteen feet". Everything was absolutely right! When we arrived at the drop, we were convinced that soon we would stand in front of the "giant school slate". To have a look at the bottom of the drop we had to undertake some difficult climbing down a very steep slope, trying to avoid an involuntary slide. The drop looked somewhat higher than described by Corbett, but decades of monsoon rains might well have washed it out deeper. But when we finally stood at the place from where we could see the bottom and then at last reached the ground, we did not really know what to think. Up to this point, everything had fallen in place perfectly, but now at first view: disappointment. No "wall of rock slightly leaning over the ravine" to our right and no "tumbled bank of big rocks thirty of forty feet high" to our left. The given height was fitting and also the sandy (and stony) bed of the ravine "roughly forty feet long and ten feet wide". And, yes, there was a rock that could fit the description of a "giant school slate" and at first glance I really thought it to be so. But at a second glance, its position on the left side of the ravine and shortly before a bigger drop soon dampened my hopes that it could be the right one. But who knows. There were two interpretations possible: the first was we were simply at the wrong place, at a ravine, that only for parts of it resembled the right one. But there was also a second interpretation possible: This was indeed the right place. The location was just where it should be. On the upper side of the drop, everything fitted perfectly to Corbett's description. And: How could we hope to find a ravine with monsoon waters running through every year unchanged for more than 80 years. It could affect even the size and the location of a big rock. There can be expected human induced changes too. The slopes were criss-crossed with cattle tracks and villages like Kala Agar and

Chamoli were not much more than one mile away. Rocks and stones were collected for building houses and the construction of roads. At the whole, this was a surrounding where changes should be expected to occur and we could not hope to find everything as it was in the 1930th.

Kotecha in his account has very deliberately summarized all the pro's and con's of this place and I fully agree with him. He was disappointed too, but to a lesser degree than me. Maybe his expectations were more realistic, but there seemed to be also a kind of internal certainty that never left him, that in spite of all the changes and the given uncertainty, he really stood at the right place. I admit, I needed more time to come to the same conclusion. I was really disappointed not to find things as imagined them from the book. But with a second thought, I agree with Kotecha. We very probably were at the right place, but some things simply had changed during the years.

When we went back, we had mixed feelings. We were happy that we were at or at least very near the place of the "giant school slate", but of course we were sorry that things had changed. The climb up to the forest road was steep and exhausting. We both thought of the "herculean task", Corbett and his men took upon themselves, when carrying the tigress "with frequent halts to regain breath and readjust pads to prevent the pole (on which the tigress had been lashed) biting too deep into shoulder muscles".

Before closing this chapter, let me give some advice to anyone, who might not believe us being at the right place and who wants to look for himself: Go along the forest road in the western direction and you will have no difficulties to get to the bend, where the forest road goes from the north to the western side of the Kala Agar range, one mile to the west of the Kala Agar forest bungalow. On the way you will pass "Peter Byrne's rock" right hand and you can make your own judgement about it. At the bend, you can ponder about the location and if you share our view about the ridge, go ahead for roughly 200 yards, where the road crosses it. If you don't, you can go down the slope on the near side of the ridge and though Kotecha doesn't remember a dry nullah here, I think there is one halfway down and five years ago it looked promising to me. You can inspect it, but we both think now, it will be a loss of time. At the ridge, you can go a few paces to the right and look down into the valley at the far side. This is the place where we went down. If you have seen it and you still have doubts, the best advice I can give to you is to go still further around. I think if there is any real chance to find a more suiting ravine – and I think it might be a small one—you have to look still more distant to the bungalow than we did. Climbing up from the ravine to the forest road, we saw to our right a flat piece of ground covered with small to medium sized pine trees. Was there the "oak thicket" in Corbett's time? I am talking about the place where Kotecha (and me) think the Chamoli boy was killed. See his sketch map for this. And in the bushes behind, could there be another ravine hidden from above? Of course this is only speculation without serious foundation, but if I would be on your place and still had time and energy to spare, I would try my luck

here. But today, though not carrying a man-eating tigress on a pile, my and to a lesser degree I think also Kotecha's energy was running out and we had to mobilise our last power, to reach the forest road.

On the way back, I thought of Peter Byrne. We criticise some of his findings, but we definitely do this on the background of a great respect for his work. Without his book in our bag, we would have had a much harder time to get even near the right places. I think we improved some of Byrnes findings, as Peter was basically accepting the places that his Indian guides were showing to him, obviously without much questions and without checking these places sufficiently against Corbett descriptions. On our side, we mainly tried to follow the description that Corbett gave in his writings, and discussed all the details with the Corbett books in our hands. But looking back at the false interpretations that I did on my first visit for example in Chowgarh and Champawat, I now know how difficult it is, to get things right, especially if you are alone and without friends to discuss your findings. This time it was easier with a group, throwing ideas and discussing theories together, and also with Kotecha and Priyvrat having Hindi and even Kumaoni speaking guys with us. Not to forget: Most of Byrne's research work in the 1970's was done prior to the publication of the first two biographies of Corbett by Kala and Booth, books we could refer to while he could not. Peter Byrne did the pioneer work for us, on which we could build our investigations and sometimes – as we think – were able to improve his findings. According to a letter exchange with Joseph Jordania, Byrne is still interested and enthusiastic about Corbett and even shared some pages of his diaries to clarify some of the details of his trips to Kumaon. So we all hope that Peter will appreciate our enthusiasm and does not have any hard feelings concerning the fact, that on some occasions we came to different conclusions. Once again: Big respect to his work!

Dalkania and the story of "The Gaunt"

Back at the car and before turning around we went the short distance to Chamoli, where the road ends and only a rough track continues. Construction work was being carried out and maybe in future years it will continue to Ranibagh and Kathgodam. Chamoli is only a few houses, not even a tea stall and so we soon returned. It was 5pm and we had to decide what to do now. Should we go for Dalkania in spite of it being late afternoon or go back to Okhalkanda and return tomorrow. I voted for the latter to get a clear impression of Dalkania and photos in the light of the day, but there were two reasons against this. If we did so, we had to go there and back all the way again, with Reyna and Rushika already stressed by long drives along small and winding roads. The other reason was a well-known problem: Due to Anup's relaxed attitude, we had no bookings in Nainital and our driver was nervous about finding problems if we arrived late. So we thought that a short look at Dalkania at dawn would be better than nothing and as it turned out, we did not regret it. After the decision

was made, we went back where we had come from. At the crossing we did not turn in the direction of the Gola valley but went right for 15 kilometres more to Dalkania.

When we reached Dalkania it was already twilight and we were in a hurry to make use of the last light of day. Kotecha speaks Hindi and a bit of Kumaoni, the language of the region. As usual he went out and asked the first possible person he came across whether he knew anything about Jim Corbett. The villager had heard about him, but only knew that Corbett once came to this place but did not find the tiger. He told us instead that two days ago a leopard had killed one of his sheep and wanted to show us the spot of the kill some 1 km away. But soon another villager arrived and Kotecha asked him the same question, and also asked if he knew a man with a disfigured face? "You mean Kul", the villager replied, "the man who was fighting the tiger?". He called to a person in front of a shop 50 yards ahead of us. To our big surprise, it turned out to be Tara Dutt Bugial, the grand-nephew of Kulomani Bugial, called "Kul". In Corbett's story he was called "gaunt", because of his thin shape and his disfigured face. He apparently passed away in 1952 and left a son, Hare Krishna Bugial, who died in 2004. There is a living grandson named Trilochun Bugial five kilometres from here, who has two young sons.

Kulomani was a woodcutter - a terrific one! They boasted about him saying that he was hauling logs of 15 metres long tied to his waist along sloping distances of many miles through forest, this after having spent a few hours felling the log. The business of woodcutting is carried out by the heirs now and they showed us a workshop nearby belonging to the family.

There is a dramatic story about Kulomani told in the Chowgarh account that reveals the reason for the disfigured face of "The Gaunt". While working, he was attacked by the man-eater. By the force of the attack, he fell on his back with the tiger being on top of him. The beast had buried his teeth in the right side of his face and in the back of its neck. Kulomani was a very strong young man at this time and so he had the idea that he might be able to push the tiger off and run away. Very slowly so as not to anger the tiger, he drew his legs up on either side of the tiger and inserted his bare feet against its belly. With hands and feet pushing and kicking upwards, he lifted the tiger right off the ground and being on the very edge of a nearly perpendicular hillside, the tiger went crashing down while Kulomani with his fingers firmly clutched a sapling, succeeded in staying where he was. The tiger was gone and Kul, assisted by his son, went home. He was terribly wounded for the falling tigress had taken half of his face with her. His relatives wanted to carry him to the next hospital at Kathgodam 40 kilometres away, but Kul refused. He wanted to die where he had been born and he was very sure, he would die soon. When he tried to drink water, he could not, as the water came out from his neck wound left by the tiger canine. Amazingly, being a very strong man at the time, his wounds healed and he was able to accompany Corbett during the Dalkania days of the hunt.

Talking with Tara Dutt and looking down into the Nandhour valley we asked him about the place where his grand uncle had experienced the attack. "Just down this hill and behind the white house," he answered without hesitating. Dalkania lies very scenically at the eastern end of the Kala Agar ridge sloping from here in steep terraced fields down to the river Nandhour. The house he mentioned was at the end of terraced fields in front of a big fall and around 500 yards away from where we stood. He also showed us the site of the bear hunt at a hillside to the left, where Corbett managed to kill a bear with Kul's axe. I thought it was a very interesting fact, that a verbal tradition at a remote place without much distraction by modern media was so amazingly reliable over a period of more than 80 years. As a theologian I could not but think about the verbal tradition of the bible too. Between the death of Jesus Christ and the last written gospel (John around 100 CE) not more than 70 years passed – less than between Corbett's hunt and today. I was surprised how reliable verbal tradition could preserve events that were memorable to people for a remarkably long time. What we experienced here with Corbett's tradition might also be true for the gospel. Maybe sometime I should write an article about this topic.

Meanwhile his wife had brought chai and also his children had arrived. They wore so-called "lockets" around their necks, small talismans containing the ashes of their grandfather to drive evil spirits away. Such lockets are passed from generation to generation along the male line and to wear one with ashes of a very strong and courageous man will give the child his strength and intelligence. There was also mention that some years back the heirs of Kulomani had to regretfully part with a coat made of bear hide which was his property. Seemingly it was made from the hide of the bear that Corbett killed and gave to Kulomani. Part of it was sewn with the skin of the Chowgarh tigress's cub. But now it was nearly completely dark and it was time to go back. We took a last photo, shook hands and congratulated ourselves on this very special acquaintance. Then we got into our car, said goodbye and went back to Okhalkanda for the night.

A grave in Nainital and a warm welcome in Gurney House

Tuesday, 17th April: Kotecha had realized it. I was really annoyed about the widespread practice in India of charging foreign visitors exorbitantly more than Indian inhabitants. I had experienced this before and it hit me again with the bill at Okhalkanda. As he looked like an Indian, they charged Kotecha only a nominal fee, but it was twenty times more for me. What added to my annoyance was that the water did not run in my room and I had to go to Kotecha's and his daughter's bathroom to take a shower and brush my teeth. It was not the money alone, but the feeling of unfair treatment. Imagine what an Indian tourist would think if, when travelling through Germany, he had to pay ten times more than a German guy to enter a museum or castle. He would call it discrimination and he would be right to do so. I certainly understand that the

government sometimes has to reduce prices to give local people a chance to make use of their local natural or cultural treasures, but if they exaggerate this practice, this produces feelings of discrimination and unfair treatment. Thanks to the good words of Kotecha I did not make a pointless attempt to express my feelings towards the officer. He also offered to share the costs with me, no matter what the bill was. Much more than for the amount of money, I was thankful for his sensibility concerning my feelings and his spirit of fairness. It was a big help in settling my annoyance.

During the drive to Nainital we talked about Kenneth Anderson. Kotecha knows a lot about this South Indian hunter and late contemporary of Jim Corbett. We both liked his books and had interesting discussions about the sometimes disputed reliability of his accounts. A friend of Kotecha was able to look inside the books of the Kerala Forest Office Department, where they now keep the files from the former four departments of Madras, Chennai, Karnataka and Mysore states, the last including Andhra Pradesh and the Western Ghats. He found seven of Anderson's man-eaters confirmed by the Forest Department: Segur-, Jowlagiri-, Chamalavalley-, Pegepalayam-, Kempekarai man-eater (Mundachipallam man-eater in the files), the panther of Gummlapur and the panther that killed a policeman at Jalahalli. But according to the stories in Anderson's books, he must have dealt with more than 50 man-eaters and we were not sure what to think about the fact that there were only seven officially confirmed ones. In his favor, it has to be said that a declared man-eater in the official files had to have at least five victims. Many of the animals in Anderson's later books had fewer, so it should not be expected to find them in the files anyway. But doubts remain about the mere number alone. We cannot decide the question here and it is also not the topic of this book, but at the end of our discussion we agreed that Anderson was a great story teller anyway who could create a very special feeling for the reader of being in the middle of the jungle with all its sounds, smells, dangers and all of its beauty. Facts aside, if he made up some of his later stories to make a better story, we certainly will continue to cherish reading them.

Reaching Nainital in the early afternoon, in spite of the fears of our driver, we had no problem in getting a reservation at the KMVN Rest House. It was in Tallital on the southern end of the lake and from its terrace and balconies there were nice views across the lake. After a rest, we took a relaxing walk around the lake with beautiful views of Naina Peak in the background. At Mallital on the opposite end of lake we looked out for a statue of Corbett that according to Kotecha should be around. But there was none and nobody knew anything about it. So if there once was such a statue it must have gone a long time ago. Going back to the hotel along the other side of the lake, we passed the old Pashan Devi Temple. Jim Corbett had a lifelong friendship with the priest and also donated a bell for this temple. The new temple on the roadside is freshly colored in rather loud pink, obviously trying to achieve a modern appearance.

But the old one is still on the lakeshore. The access being closed, we could see through the fencing the statue of lord Hanuman, the ape-faced god among other Hindu idols.

Wednesday, 18th April: There were two things remaining before going back: the search of the family grave of Jim Corbett at St. Johns Church and a visit to Gurney House, the summer home of the family. St. John in the Wilderness, where Corbett was christened and his parents are buried, was established in 1844 and is at the north end of the town. The cemetery where over 150 victims of the big landslide of 1880 also lay buried has been closed for a long time and is overgrown with weeds and bushes. We started the search for the graves of Christopher William Corbett (Jim's father who died in 1881) and Mary Jane Corbett (Jim's mother who died in 1924) from different sides. I was not sure if we would succeed in finding them because of the many crumbled gravestones with inscriptions nearly impossible to read. I walked over stones and through bushes and stood for a short while in front of a gravestone of a Florence Katherine Elizabeth Moad and her brother George Henry Camden Moad, who according to the inscription "was killed helping in the landslip September 18th 1880 aged 32 years". I thought of the many unknown personal stories of the past under each gravestone, some still readable, some completely incomprehensible and nearly all of them long forgotten. After an interesting and thoughtful but, concerning our subject, unsuccessful search I went over to Kotecha and saw him and the girls standing on some kind of plateau deliberately looking at the ground. It was indeed the grave of Corbett's parents and Kotecha had found it by chance when going to see the people living in the nearby houses, to borrow tools from them. (They were afraid, however, because they thought he was some sort of a witch doctor, and they were puzzled why he was kneeling down and cleaning the grave of British people). So it was a very lucky finding and we all stood silent for a moment in front of the old gravestones with the weathered but still visible words: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away", a verse also engraved on Jim's grave in Nyeri (Kenya). The location of the grave is on the upper left side of the cemetery (when looking from the church) with Christopher William and Mary Jane lying side by side. Although the graves were not in good condition, we took photos and talked about the need for restoration. There is the danger of the cemetery being cleared out and taken over by the human settlements on the border. For the future, it might be better to relocate the gravestones and to mount them in the wall of the church. Kotecha even thought of transferring the mortal remains of Jim from Nyeri to Nani Tal to make a memorial here. Anyway, something had to be done to preserve the memory of Jim and his parents here. Symbolically, we were at the Nainital cemetery on April 18th, only a day short of the 57th anniversary of Jim Corbett's passing away from a massive heart attack in Kenya, without seeing his beloved India for the last nine years of his life.

Having left the graveyard, we went up Ayarpatta Hill to the summer house of the Corbett family. Gurney House was built in 1880 and is private property now. After

some changes in ownership, it now belongs to Mrs. Nilanjana Dalmia. She bought it in 2010 and has done a lot of work on it, because it is in much better condition than some years ago. There is a new wall around the property, a well-kept garden and servants to look after it. Kotecha had sent a message via Facebook to Lady Dalmia, who kindly invited us to come around when staying in Nainital. That very kind lady said that Gurney House would be opened to Corbett fans whenever they wished to visit it. So we rang the bell at the entrance gate and a female attendant opened the door and led us in. Mrs. Dalmia, who lived here only in the hot summer seasons, was still in Delhi as it was still cold in Nainital, but had made arrangement for her staff to be present to welcome us. After passing through the garden we went along the old wooden verandah with its authentic chairs and tables and then entered the house itself. In the corridor on a cupboard were books of Jim Corbett and a photo of the Champawat man-eater. On the wall was a photo of Corbett's grave in Nyeri. Though the furniture in the living room almost certainly dated back to Corbett's time, it was in very good condition, clean and obviously still in use and part of everyday life. We also could see Corbett's old writing table and imagined Jim still sitting there writing his classic "Man-eaters of Kumaon". Many old trophies were on the walls, no tigers but different types of deer, mostly African antelopes, bucks and deer, trophies hunted by Corbett during his repeated visits to Tanganyika from 1918 to 1936. On the board of a wooden mantled fireplace was a leopard skull with the left canine broken. The broken canine let us think immediately of the Rudraprayag leopard, but since it was not a very big skull, it most likely could not have been the skull of such a big and old male. This was confirmed later by Jerry Jaleel, head of the Jim Corbett Foundation, who told Kotecha that this leopard skull is indeed from one of Jim Corbett's kills, but according to the previous owners (the Verma) the canine had fallen out not so long ago. There were some old books from a still older vintage. Kotecha was hoping to find one of the rare copies of Corbett's first writings - *Jungle Stories*. This was a sort of precursor to *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, privately printed in 1935 and given only to some friends. I soaked up the atmosphere of this old house, trying to imagine Corbett living here, writing the first sketches of his books and his mother or his sister Maggie playing on the old piano amidst the dark furniture. It was not easy to let go. When we went, we did so with gratitude to Mrs. Dalmia and her servants and with the comfortable feeling that this treasure was in good and sensible hands. Though not a Corbett museum but a living property, the best is being done to preserve the very special character of this place of heritage for the future.

What more can be said? We bought a few good books, drank a world-class Budweiser (5%!) and left Nainital in the early afternoon. In Kathgodam we met Anup and after a snack and a cold drink changed drivers and cars and went to Delhi. This is a big road now already resembling a motorway in parts. Thanks to our experienced driver we had a safe ride, although it must have been a demanding job for him on

this crowded street amongst lorries, buses, tractors, motorbikes and bicycles. When darkness fell it got even worse and this road was probably the most dangerous “jungle” we met on our journey. But due to our driver we reached Delhi safely and it was after 9 pm, when we arrived at Saket bed and breakfast at the southern end of Delhi and not far away from Delhi International Airport. For their early flight Kotecha, Reyna and Rushika had to start around 2 am and so the girls went to sleep at once only eating pieces of a sandwich the manager provided. Kotecha and I sat down at the lounge for a last beer, saying goodbye to each other and looking back on the many wonderful experiences we had shared in the last weeks. We were both sorry to have to leave but it was no use worrying and so we wished each other a safe journey and finally went to sleep. When I woke up the next day, Kotecha and the girls were already up in the air. I had a whole day left to consider the events and did it by relaxing strolls through the Lodi garden and the Mehrauli Archaeological Park neat the Qutb Minar. I had dinner in a nice restaurant in the Hauz Khas Deer Park where I had already been on the first day. So finally the circle had closed and after picking up my luggage at Saket bed and breakfast, I took a taxi to the airport. Next morning I was in Munich again, my hometown in Germany. I hope to come back again to Corbett country with my friends Kotecha, Reyna, Rushika, Joseph, Priyvrat, and this time, we all hope, together with Fernando.

Corbett Trip Diary Kumaon, 2014

BY MANFRED WALTL

Friday, 11th April, Delhi: Back again!

This time it was not the railway station as we had planned two years ago. We wanted to meet at the Delhi National Archives to do some research there before starting our journey to Corbett country. We, that again were Joseph Jordania from Australia, Priyvrat Gadhvi from India, Kristoff Kotecha from Mauritius, his lovely daughters Reyna and Rushika and me, Manfred Walzl from Germany. Kotecha, the girls and I had met four days earlier at Mumbai airport at the gate of our connecting flight to Nagpur. We had arranged a tiger safari at Tadoba NP prior to our Corbett trip and we did not regret it. Tadoba, the biggest National Park in Maharashtra, turned out to be a very scenic spot, with good chances of seeing tigers in the wild. In four game drives, we had two tiger sightings, one big male from a rather big distance and a beautiful young tigress at very close range, literally just aside of the road. After three nights in Tadoba we took the night train from Chandrapur to Delhi and now, at 9 o'clock in the morning of the 11th of April, we had stored away our luggage at the station and were ready for adventure. After shopping and changing money at Connaught place, we got a call from Priyvrat that he and Joseph had already arrived at the National archives at Janpath road.

At first sight, it sounded like a good idea to meet at the archives, but when we got more information, complicating details emerged. Foreigners, we were told, needed a recommendation from their embassy to be allowed to enter the National archives of India. Kotecha actually tried this but did not even get an answer from his embassy. Joseph brought all the necessary papers from his University, then he went through the official channels, including going to the Australian High Commission in Delhi, and obtained the required papers, losing only about half of the day and only a few dozens of dollars. To me, it sounded much too complicated and I did nothing at all, thinking about substituting the research work in the archives with some touristic sightseeing in Delhi. Kotecha was rather sympathetic to this idea and we only went to the Archives for the purpose, to meet our friends there. But "this is India", as Priyvrat later said. The officer at the reception simply asked us, if our purpose was research. We tried to look as serious as possible and nodded "Yes, research!" Now we only had to fill our name with the purpose of "research" in some sort of a guest book and... we were in. Yes indeed, this is India!

We went into the library where Joseph and Priyvrat were already busy at the PC and it was a big "Hallo". At the small seating area in the corner we couldn't help talking so much to each other, that the caretaker of the library urged us twice, to keep silent. The research itself turned out to be no big success, as the computers were dead slow. I don't exaggerate when I claim, that it took at least 10 minutes to open just

one page. Our scientific success therefore was negligible, but at least we had tried and it was an interesting experience.

After dinner with Tandoori Chicken and some beers – I was shocked when Priyvrat wanted to order only small ones - we boarded the night train to Kathgodam leaving Old Delhi station at 10.30pm. As we had only three confirmed berths, we had to share them two by two, But as the berths in the first class compartment were quite spacious, we could manage it. Before going to sleep, we chatted with two very nice and friendly young women that had also reservations in our compartment. We told them with all our enthusiasm about Jim Corbett and the purpose of our trip. They were polite and tried to look interested, but I am afraid, they thought of us as some rather weird people. No problem with the train division this time as we at least all travelled in the same carriage. The only minor nuisance was that all six of us had to sleep on three beds. At 5am in the early morning we arrived save and most notably all together at Kathgodam railway station, where the car of Wildrift Adventures with our guide Kamal was already waiting for us. It took me only one step out of the train to feel the contrast to a big and crowded town like Delhi. The air here was cool and clean and while breathing it, we were pumping new energy and the spirit of the oncoming adventure in our bodies.

On this new trip, our first aim was, to revisit some of the places, we had seen in 2012. Questions had aroused the last two years and we felt, we could not give proper answers without doing some additional research. But of course we also wanted to see something new. From Kathgodam railway station we first wanted to drive to Ranikhet for a meeting with Akhsay Shah, who had worked with DC Kala on “Jim Corbett of Kumaon”. Then after one night in Mukteshwar our plan was to camp in Kala Agar and Dalkhania and from there reach Champawat and Tala Des. From here we planned to walk down to Sem and Chuka, just as Jim Corbett did but in the opposite direction. After revisiting Thak we intended to be back in civilization in Nainital and from there reach Delhi for our return flights. Priyvrat, Kotecha and the girls could only share the trip up to Champawat April 19th. The last days it would only be Joseph and me.

Saturday 12th April, Ranikhet, a friendly meeting and an evening in Mukteshwar

It was a very pleasant drive deep into the foothills of the Himalayans to reach the town of Ranikhet. Here we had arranged a meeting with Akhsay Shah there. He lives in a spacious bungalow with a nice garden in a remote and quiet spot in the outskirts of the town, bordering the forest. Akhsay Shah had worked with DC Kala on his “Jim Corbett of Kumaon” and we hoped, we could get some new information or even new material for our research. Mr. Shah is a very kind and noble person with an impressive V-shaped black and grey beard. We sat down in his living room, were served with tea and for about two hours could discuss with him a multitude of topics. I do not recall

most of them – but I remember that we were able to see the Maggie's notes and saw some of the rare editions of Corbett books. I also clearly remember the question that I asked Mr. Shah almost at the end of our discussion. It was about the discrepancy of Corbett's description of the final meeting with the Chowgarh tigress that is much more dramatic in the book than in a letter to Maggie written only a couple of hours later after the real event. Did he think that Corbett did over-dramatize the real event in the book to make a better reading or did he rather downplay the situation in a letter to his always worried sister? Akhsay Shah thought the latter of it, that Corbett downplayed it to settle the mind of his sister.

The drive from Ranikhet to Mukteshwar on small and winding roads took considerably more time than expected and so it was already near sunset when we arrived at Camp Purple, Kamal's property. Driving up Mukteshwar ridge we wondered about the location of Badri Shah's Orchard, where in the vicinity of it the Mukteshwar tigress was shot by Corbett. As we came from the direction of Almora, we entered the Mukteshwar from the northern side. On the way up, we passed the old veterinary institute. I remembered this road from my first visit in 2007 with Sid Anand from Camp Corbett. The caretaker of the Mukteshwar dak bungalow had led us then to a place nearby.

Around one kilometer north (downhill) of the buildings of the veterinary institute we then had left our car and descended on a small footpath into a valley, with a small stream in it. This place - approximately 150 meters below the level of the road - was shown to me as the one, where Corbett shot the tigress. It was the north-eastern side of the Mukteshwar ridge. At this time I had no doubts about it, especially as where we left the car there still was an orchard which I attributed without much questioning to Badri Shah. But was this really true? Questioning other people and especially an old man in Camp Purple suggested the assumption, that the real place where Badri Shah's orchard once stood was nearly 10 kilometers south to here and on the south or south-western face of the ridge. The old man who had told us so went with us for an exciting evening walk to show us the location.

I can only give rough directions but it might help, if someone will try to follow our footsteps. From Camp Purple we went on the main road in the northern direction and passed the Red Roof Guest house to our right. Not much more than 100 meters later and in front of a property with a red wall topped by a fence of white painted wrought iron and a big white entrance door, we turned left and followed a well-constructed footpath in the downhill direction. Roughly 300 meters later we went left again on a much smaller one that soon turned out to be no more than a trodden path between terraced fields. The evening walk meanwhile was almost a night walk and we needed the help of our torches for walking safely. At the deepest point of our walk the terrain now was nearly on level and a small stream was running in a distance of

some 30 meters to the right and almost parallel to us. In front and on top of a small hilltop of about 50 meters height was a big two storied and quite new building.

Badri Shah's orchard didn't exist anymore, we were told, but here was the place where it once stood. It was dark now and there was no time for a thorough investigation. I have no coordinates of this place but I would estimate it to be about one kilometer - in a linear distance- south-west of the main Mukteshwar road, a few hundred meters more southern than Camp Purple and around 200-300 meters below. On the way up, we passed an old building that was said to be Badri Shah's house. When we reached the main road 500 meters south of Camp Purple, we nearly had done a full circle with the place where the tigress was shot halfway. At home I realized that you can see the building that now is on Badri Shah's place on Google Earth. If you like too, then first search for Camp Purple and from there scroll to the west (left). A tiny bit more than 1000 meters west and very slightly south (down) to it, you will see a big roof in a pale purplish red color on top of a small hill. This is the rooftop of the new building. And though without direct proof, I have the very good feeling that this really is the right place.

This feeling was strengthened when having a closer look at Corbett's account again. Rethinking our experience I for the first time took notice of a passage in his writing were shortly after his arrival and standing near the Mukteshwar post office he describes the location with this words: "Where the road (the one that Corbett went up) comes out on a saddle of the hill there is a small area of flat ground flanked on the far side by the Muktesar Post Office, and a small bazaar. ... The dak bungalow ... was half a mile away on the northern face of the hill. ... From the flat ground in front of the post office and the bazaar the southern face of the Muktesar hill falls steeply away, and is cut up by ridges and ravines..." What Corbett calls "southern face" and "northern face" is compared with a map not completely south or north orientated. The southern face as Corbett calls it to distinguish it from the northern face extends more in the western or south western direction while latter is more north-east orientated. Still looking down the south face (that means Corbett was looking exactly in a west to south west direction) he continues with two very important sentences about the location of Badri Shah's orchard: "In a fold of the hill to our left front and about two miles away and a thousand feet below us, was a patch of cultivation. This I was informed was Badri Shah's apple orchard." As you will see on my sketch map, the post office, where Corbett stood is nearly one mile uphill from Camp Purple, where we stayed and started our walk.

The Dak bungalow or the rest house is still half a mile further uphill. The view from the bungalow is down to the northern face where there is the veterinary institute and the place I was shown in 2007. But reading Corbett's account properly, this could not be true as Corbett looked down in the opposite direction to describe the location

of Badri Shah's orchard. The real place where the tigress was shot therefore had to be on the southern face of the Mukteshwar ridge. Just on this side we had been yesterday. Also further details support the assumption that we really were at or at least very near to the real place. To see the cultivated land of Badri Shah when looking down the south face from the post office, Corbett had to look to the left. This is exactly what you have to do if you want to look in the direction of the two stored house that was said to be at the place where Badri Shah's guest house should have been. The distance that I estimated "a tiny bit more than 1000 meters" from Camp Purple matches the two miles from the post office in Corbett's description very well. Even the height difference I roughly estimated 200-300 meters is quite near to Corbett's thousand feet. Also his description of the guest house being "on a little knoll overlooking the orchard" matches our observation.

Over thinking this, I am very sure now we stood at the right place and not too far from where the tigress had been shot. I don't think that on our way we had passed the exact spot, but this of course is a matter of guess. Yes, there was a small stream as in Corbett's account, but Corbett tells of "a deep and densely wooded ravine which extended down the face of a very steep hill, for a mile or more..." This sounds like still being in quite a distance to the place we had been. But as it had been nearly dark when we were there, I cannot tell for sure.

Monday 14th April, "All the crazy people ..."

"All the crazy people are now together, so no one will stop them." For me this was the "word of the day," spoken by Vratika in a telephone call with her husband Priyvratt, who was lingering with some friends in a remote part of India. None of us was offended by her assessment. She was totally right and we were proud of it. Yesterday we had left Camp Purple and after a three to four hour's drive on winding roads downhill, uphill, downhill and uphill again we had finally reached Kala Agar, a village of scattered houses on the north face of the ridge, the village had given its name to. Kala Agar is situated about 1600 meters above sea level and roughly 250 meters below the top of the ridge. We had left the cars here and after a 20 minutes climb we had reached Kala Agar Forest Rest House, no more in use now but surrounded by terraced fields, where in one of them just below the surrounding walls of the rest house we had made our camp.

This time we wanted to spend two nights here, so we would have the advantage of having one full and another half day, not only a few hours as two years ago. Back then, Kotecha and I were not really convinced by our findings and now we wished to have more time for a closer look - this time also "with a little help of our friends". My confident optimism of 2012 was no more that prominent. Of course it would be easy, to reach the point, "where the road crosses a ridge", but we now knew that from here it was a vast number of ravines and countless rocks. But now, "all the crazy people were together" and we were in good spirits and convinced that behind some hidden

bend the “*giant school slate*” would wait for us. Yesterday we only had done a short informal walk up to the adjacent ridge and had pondered about the sites we wanted to explore the next day. Then it was already time for dinner. The cook had prepared tomato soup with coriander, chicken curry with rice, dal and fried vegetables and as desert: Sweet rice pudding with nuts and spices and of course Indian Chai. After we were stuffed with a delicious meal, we sat around a cozy log fire and looked forward to the next day.

Now this next day had come and after an invigorating breakfast “all the crazy people” on a warm and sunny morning began with their search. We swiftly proceeded on the forest road to the adjacent ridge. There we turned right and followed the footpath in the direction of Chamoli for some 100-200 meters. At a place where the descent did not look too steep, we turned left and went down. We now were on the far side of the adjacent ridge. Soon we came across a footpath - we had not noticed in 2012 - which seemed to lead in the direction of an “open patch of ground,” we had seen from above and thought it was the same, Kotecha and I had sighted on our way back in 2012. We then thought this was the place where the Chamoli boy had been killed. We now decided to split into two groups. Priyvrat wanted to go deeper down into the valley and Kotecha, Joseph and I stayed on the path that went down in a rather slight gradient in the direction of the “open patch of ground”. If my internal map was right, both parties of us – ours for sure, but I think also Priyvrat’s – were further around the mountainside as we were in 2012. When our party reached the open patch of ground, we first felt the possibility that it could be the right one and made photos of an impressive boulder on the edge of it. Joseph, as I remember, took even some measurements. But a closer look revealed, that this possibility was only a very slight one, as the ground was much wider than Corbett had described it and the boulder, as impressively as he did look, matched his description only remotely. The hillside behind the rock did not fall as steep into the valley as it should and a person standing on top of the rock could easily be reached by a tiger with one big jump.

Now we also went deeper into the valley. On the way we passed more than one big rock (“do you think it looks like a school slate?”) and began to follow a big and overgrown ravine in the downhill direction. The ravine was filled with a plenty of rocks, especially when we came closer to the bottom of the valley. It can be assumed, that they all were washed down by decades of monsoon rains. Maybe among them was “our school slate” but this was impossible to decide. Standing on the lower end of the ravine, we remembered, that Corbett mentioned a distance of “two to three hundred yards” between the hillside where the ravine and the tigress were and the opposite slope, he wished to climb to get an overview and maybe take a distant shot. Where we stood now, the distance was far too big to match his description, so we turned around and went more or less parallel to the ravine uphill again. Half way up we met Priyvrat. He too had not found anything remarkable and we decided to have

lunch, before continuing with our research. As for me, my mind was full of rocks and ravines and it was very difficult, not to get confused about this.

While having lunch, Kamal and Girdar Singh, a guy from Kala Agar who accompanied us, had a phone call to an 80 years old villager of Kala Agar, now living in Delhi, who gave them instructions regarding the right place. So there was a new chance and after finishing lunch we continued our ascent in the direction of the forest road, as the place should be in the vicinity of it. We passed one or two dry nullahs, went up along the right side of another ravine which we crossed and walked up the hillside to the left. I would estimate the forest road now being 50 meters above and in a straight line distance 300 meters in front us (Joseph and Kotecha made measurements the next day, so they might be able to tell the facts more accurate. See the special chapter on this topic). Here some big rocks came in view. To be honest, at first glance, I would not have paid more attention to them as to many other rocks we had passed on our way, but then I saw my friends and our guides stopping and discussing. Obviously they talked about this place as the one, the 80 years old guy from Delhi had mentioned to them.

What should we think about this place? First I have to tell you, if your benchmark is what you imagine while reading Corbett's thrilling account, I suppose, you will be slightly disappointed, and so I was too. The rock, they were talking about, was indeed a big one with a high and comparatively even side, not as flat as a school slate, but with some indulgence it might be interpreted this way. Instead of a glide on its right side there was a slope of earth, grass and gravel. Assumed we were on the right place then time must have filled the glide up with soil. The left side seemed more accurate to me. There was a patch of grass nearly one meter wide leading down between the "school slate" and some smaller rocks and bushes on the other side. It can well be imagined, that the tigress went down here and lied in wait for Corbett's party. The distance to the opposite hill was also not speaking against. I still felt it a bit too long, but not really impossible. The best argument of course was the testimony of the 80 years old villager. Without this, I think no one of us would have really been convinced. However, there was no objective fact that would have ruled this place out. But you have to admit, that other places and rocks could have been interpreted in a similar way. Again with mixed feelings we left and after a 10 minutes climb reached the forest road near Saryapani junction.

On the way back and about halfway to the adjacent ridge which was some 400 meters off, I went downhill again. There was a small footpath, Kotecha in his account brings in connection with the path Corbett went down. He may be right, but at this moment, I did not think about this and only had in mind to look either for a school slate or an open glade with a big rock on the side. It was more out of desperation than following a deliberate plan. It was the only patch of land on the far side of the adjacent ridge we had not examined yet and there was always a slight hope, we suddenly would stand in front of the unexpected.

I think I had persuaded Kotecha to follow me by promising, we would just go a few meters to have a look, as we were already exhausted by the continuous up and down of this day. But after passing one rock, there was another one somewhat deeper in the valley and after that: "Oh look there, this ravine looks promising too" and finally we were nearly half way down into the valley and quite near to the big open ground that had been our first aim in the morning. So again there was a considerable climb uphill - at least 150 meters in height - until we reached the forest road at the place where it crossed the adjacent ridge. It was time to go back to the camp and have dinner. The cook had made pasta with an excellent white caper sauce. My friends later attended a village fair in an upper part of Kala Agar, only 15 minutes away. I didn't feel the urge for any more activity and stayed back with Rushika. I made notes in my diary, had some sips of "Wild Water" (whiskey mixed with water) and fell asleep with the distant sounds of the village fair.

Tuesday, 15th April, an interesting finding and a scenic walk to Dalkania

We still had a half day more in the surroundings of Kala Agar. Kotecha and Joseph wanted to have a closer look at Girdar's rock, as we called the place we had found yesterday with the help of Girdar Singh and the 80 years old villager. They wanted to do measurements to get a more precise assessment. Priyvratt and I had another idea. The only terrain, we had not yet investigated, was the valley in front of the adjacent ridge. You will remember, that we had more or less ruled out the possibility that the action could have happened there. Corbett had written that he went down into the valley "*after the road crosses a ridge*" and we were quite sure, that he spoke of the adjacent ridge. But could there be any possibility that what he meant was not the adjacent ridge but the hillside, the forest road crossed at the place where the compass turned? Given that, the valley in front of the adjacent ridge would be the right one. This was my first idea, when I looked down into the valley in 2007. Now for good reasons we had another view of the terrain, but even if there was only a bare possibility, we decided to investigate it. Maybe otherwise we would always blame ourselves of missing an even a slight chance. And what was the alternative for the time left? We could of course have accompanied our friends in doing measurements of a rock we had already seen and haven't been overly impressed with, or trying to find something new in the only place we had not visited yet. So Priyvratt and I choose the unknown and said: "Let's go!" A villager, who told us, that other expeditions too went down here, came with us. And it really turned out to be much more promising, than expected. Did we find the "school slate"? Sorry no, but...

Soon after the bend, where the road "*goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range*" and the compass turns, we went down into the valley in front of the adjacent ridge. From above we had seen a ravine which we followed downhill. The ravine was compared to Corbett's description a bit less than "*ten yards wide*" but

“four or five feet deep”. I followed the ravine with some tension, but no suitable rock or even something resembling a “school slate” was there to be found. I went on the bottom of the ravine while Priyvrat and the villager stayed above to keep an eye on the surrounding. When we were already in the vicinity of Chamoli we turned around and went back. Soon we realized that another ravine branched off left in the uphill direction. This we followed. At a certain point in the ravine was a comparatively big rock and we took some photos in default of a better alternative, although it clearly was too small and did not look like a “school slate” at all.

On the other hand we realized that the distance to the opposite slope was very well fitting to the 200-300 yards, mentioned by Corbett. Of course you have to swallow the idea, that this opposite slope could be the adjacent ridge ever. But the really surprise was still coming. A few dozen meters above the end of this ravine, we suddenly stood on the perfect *“open patch of ground”*! We had no tapeline to measure it exactly but Corbett did not have it either and his estimation of “thirty yards square” was the same as ours. There also was “a rock about four feet high, on the lower edge of the open ground. As we said, we had no measure tape, but with Priyvrat in front, it was somewhat higher than its hips. The whole rock was much bigger, but projected the open ground by this size. On the downhill side where with Corbett’s words *“the hill fell steeply away to the valley below”*, the rock extended down the hill, just as Corbett had written. The only difference between his and our description is, that his estimation was eight to ten feet while we felt it somewhat bigger, around five meters what would be the equivalent of 14 feet. There was of course no scrub jungle and no undergrowth or pine saplings as in Corbett’s account. There is none such today in all the vicinity.

So let us resume, what we had found in front of the adjacent ridge: An exactly fitting open patch of ground with a very appropriate rock on it in the perfect distance to the opposite slope, two ravines in the vicinity and – as we should realize later – the place could be seen from above (not exactly from the forest road but you have to go only ten meters to the right of it), just as Corbett had written. What we had not found was “the school slate”, we have to admit nothing even faintly resembling a school slate. And of course, the location in front of the adjacent ridge can be doubted for good reasons. I am afraid I will have to leave you, the kind reader, with assumptions and possibilities and no really clear facts. I now really think, that it will be no more possible, to find a spot exactly fitting to Corbett’s description. In such a terrain, 80 years are probably too much to leave a place unchanged. But anyway, it was a thrilling and touching experience to be so close to the place of this famous hunt.

When we met Kotecha and Dr Jordania, they told us that measurements were coinciding to the ones that Corbett gave in the story. But as I have not been there, I suggest you to read the special chapter on this topic, with the accompanying pictures. We had to leave Kala Agar now, but were not jet finished with Chowgarh territory. In

the early afternoon we started our walk on the forest road to Dalkania, a walk, Corbett often did during the hunt.

Thirteen kilometers mostly downwards, so Kamal said. This sounded like a relaxed afternoon walk, what was not completely true. He should have added, that “mostly downhill” in this case meant five kilometers uphill and after crossing a ridge eight kilometers downhill. Of course mathematically he was right: Mostly downhill! After the strenuous up and down in the last days I was not in my best condition and in the first uphill part of the walk I went behind for the most time and had to pause quite often. After we had crossed the ridge on the highest point the walking was more relaxed, I now was able to value this real fine trek.

There were no villages on the way. We walked through beautiful forest sometimes with rhododendron trees that had blossomed not long ago. In some parts, the path was covered with red petals and I thought of the spectacular impression it might have given about two weeks earlier. There were also good views down into the valley. Before the forest road descended steeply downhill at the end of the Kala Agar ridge, the footpath to Dalkania, just as Corbett has written, branches off to the right. For the first part, the path went up again. When we left the forest, the village of Dalkania came in view, very scenically situated and spread out on the eastern slope of the Kala Agar ridge.

The footpath to Dalkania went in a big band around a deep valley until it reached its destination after roughly 5 kilometers. Soon we realized that the path was used very infrequently as it was overgrown with weed that reached up to our waist. It was a rough walking and no one could tell if got worse further on. So Kamal very wisely suggested to return to the forest road and follow it down into the valley where it met the sealed road at the village Patlot, eight kilometers in front of Dalkania. Here we could enter our cars and drive the rest of the distance. We did so and it was late afternoon, when we passed through Dalkania, where shortly after the lower end of the village on the way to Kundal our men had already prepared our tents on a harvested terraced field just aside of the road. Kamal and our men were in good spirits, so after dinner we could enjoy their singing and dancing and storytelling (Joseph was very happy as they sung some traditional songs in harmony), while we were sitting altogether around a big bonfire.

Wednesday, 16th April, Dalkania, the gaunt and some other stories

Most of the day past in the search and talking to the relatives of two of Corbett story heroes, both survivors of the Chowgarh man-eater: the brave girl who survived thanks to medical help from Corbett, and the gaunt strongman who wrestled the tigress and survived with a horribly disfigured face.

We visited a small village, where we were served an excellent lassi and a colorful character, the headwomen of the village, told us Corbett-related stories. The reader can read about her and her stories in a chapter related to Kulomani, the giant villager

from Dalkania who survived the tigress attack with horrible scars. At the local tee shop in Patlot we also met Trilochand, Kulomani's grandson. Later we were invited into Trilochand's house where we were shown a framed page of a newspaper about his grandfather. There was a Joel Lyall article "Man VS. Man-Eater: Taming the tigress." We also saw the photo of Kulomani's son, who as an eight year old boy, was present during the tigress attack on Kulomani. On the same day we also had a meeting related to the Naruli Dev, the lucky girl that survived the Chowgarh tigress attack thanks to Corbett. I suggest readers for more details to read a special chapter about Naruli Dev.

Questions and findings in Champawat

In 2012 we were able to locate the amphitheatre and the place, where the tigress had been shot. But back home, we felt a growing uncertainty about the location of the bungalow where Corbett had stayed and also about his movements while following the tigress. Peter Byrne had written in his book, that the last victim was from Gaudi and that the hunt had started from there, what means - as seen from Champawat - on the far (=northern) side of the gorge. But to align this possibility with the following movements of Corbett and the tigress was not really convincing. Besides, we had found no traces of a bungalow on the far side of the gorge. If you still need more arguments, read Kotecha's account on this matter.

We came closer to a solution when we realized that Peter Byrne not only did write that the last victim was from Gaudi, but also that Corbett had stayed at the Phungar bungalow. As we now knew for sure, that Gaudi was on the far side of the gorge and the Phungar bungalow on the near side of the gorge, one of these two assessments inevitably had to be wrong: Either the bungalow where Corbett had stayed, or the village where the girl had been taken. In 2012 we only followed the assumption that Byrne was right with the killing place Gaudi and were consequently looking for a bungalow on this side of the gorge (as we know. the bungalow *MUST* be overlooking the village where the last victim was killed). But wasn't it just as possible, that Peter had been right with the bungalow and wrong with the name of the village? Let us remember, Corbett only spoke of a village without giving it a name. It was Peter Byrne, who introduced the name of Gaudi (or Gouri, as he called it).

Thinking about the controversy, I suddenly felt sure, that Peter Byrne was wrong with the name of the village and right with the bungalow, not conversely as we had thought in 2012. At least one big advantage of the Phungar bungalow is that no one could deny that it really exists. On the other hand, we had found no traces of a similar one on the other side, next to Gaudi. If this assumption was true and Corbett stayed in the Phungar bungalow then the girl must have been killed in the village of Phungar on the near (=southern) side of the gorge and it was there, where the hunt had started and where on the following day the beaters stood on the crest of the hill. (More details on this can be found in a special chapter about the Champawat tigress). This would

explain much better the movements of Corbett and the tigress. But of course this had to be confirmed on location and so was our plan in 2014.

Thursday, 17th April, We had arrived in Champawat the evening before. After three days rather basic camping in Chowgarh, it was a pleasure to have the opportunity of an extensive shower in the local hotel where we were staying. Feeling like newborn in the morning we first went to the DFO (Department Forest Officer) at the edge of the city. He was not in duty at the moment, but one of his subordinates provided us with the information, that there was no Forest bungalow near Gaudi. There was only one Dak bungalow in Champawat itself, which we had already seen and where now the police station is located. Most probably this was the one, where Corbett stayed for the first night before moving on to another place. The officer told us of another Forest Rest house roughly 15 kilometers in a totally different direction that definitely did not fit in the framework of the hunt. So the possibility of a bungalow above Gaudi more and more turned out to be pure fiction. Apart from asking about the bungalows, at DFO we also inquired about the name of a Champawat Tehsildar, a brave man from Corbett's story who accompanied Corbett on his hunt for the tigress, and was awarded a knife from the government. Unfortunately, no information on brave Tehsildar was obtained.

We now went in the direction of Gaudi where we found out, that our friendly shopkeeper Mr. Gopal Singh Bohra was no more in his shop. We heard that he had fallen from a roof and had hurt his back seriously. In 2012 he had told us, that there must have been a bungalow on the top of nearby mountain, which formed an upper part of Gaudi some 100 meters in height above his shop. Following these words we decided to visit this part of the village. It took about 20 minutes of walking mostly upwards. During our walk the sky grew darker and darker and we were happy to reach the house of the oldest man of the village, where we were going, just before the thunderstorm started. With heavy rains and wind, it was an impressive spectacle to enjoy, being in the safety of the house and drinking hot chai. The old head of the family was resting on a sofa in the living room and he also told us, that there was no bungalow nearby nor has been in the past. After having talked for a while the storm settled. We thanked him for his hospitality and left for our cars on the road below. On the way down after the storm and the rain the sun came out again and threw a beautiful clear and warm light on the lush green fields surrounding the small village. In Champawat we appreciated the strength of a storm, when we saw a four wheel drive crushed under a big tree trunk, evidently uprooted by the storm.

Now finally being convinced, that there was no bungalow close to Gaudi, we went back to Champawat, crossed the bridge once more and from the main bazar went left into the Tala Des Road in order to have an extensive look at the Phungar bungalow. As already told, it was an old building that could well date back to Corbett's times. We went around, took photos and tried to look beyond the white concrete wall that

surrounded the building since some years, obviously being private property now. Outside of the enclosure there were some houses in a distance of 500 meters downhill. We imagined them to be part of the village, from where the runner came to Corbett and informed him about the tiger having taken its last victim.

On the way back to Champawat, we stopped at a bend and started a talk about the man-eater that roamed around more than 100 years ago with some people hanging around there. Kamal told us an exciting information that the last victim of the Champawat tigress was believed to be from Phungar village. We were understandably eager to see any relatives of the killed young woman, the staggering 436th victim of the tigress.

We were invited onto the veranda of a house where six old men were sitting next to a fireplace, talking, drinking tea and smoking tobacco or some kind of cannabis. One of them was Dev Singh Bohra, 78 years old son of Jhummun Singh, the brother of the last victim of the Champawat tigress. Jhummun Singh had been the youngest of eight siblings, seven sisters and he was the only son. The girl that had been killed was married and lived with her husband in Caeikuni village, four kilometers away. She had come to Champawat to visit her parents. The place where she had been killed was called Titlikanli by the villagers. It was a bit more than 500 meters from the Phungar bungalow in an eastern direction and around 200 meters left of the road and somewhat downhill. Before saying Goodbye to Dev Singh, we arranged a meeting for the next morning. He promised he would show us the exact spots.

Friday, 18th April, (Good Friday), I was surprised to find the Good Friday an official holiday in Hindu India and I attributed it to the respect Indian culture has for the religious persuasion of other people and even minorities. The weather of today did fit to the grave sentiment of the Good Friday: Cold, rainy and dull. Notwithstanding, we left our cars at the Phungar bungalow and went down a wide footpath to the left in the direction of the gorge. Kotecha, who was not feeling well on the previous day, was with us. Not Dev Singh but another less informed person was with us this morning, as Dev Singh apparently thought the walk would be too long and strenuous for him.

We followed the footpath for about one kilometer when we reached the place where the hill steeply descended into the gorge with the Champa flowing roughly 300 meters below. The view we had from here was very similar to the one Peter Byrne had as it is shown in his book with his photo of the opposite hill. Now we turned right and went in eastern direction above the gorge. From here the hillside descended somewhat less steep down into the gorge. I imagine this to be more or less the direction the tigress must have gone carrying her victim. I thought about the ravine where she went down and even imagined to come across the “pinnacle of rock” where Corbett advised the following man to climb and wait for him to return. Don't be disturbed after reading the 2012 account, as in 2012 we were looking at the scene from the other

side of the amphitheater. Remember, we now had a different concept concerning the starting point of the hunt: It had to be Phungar on this side of the gorge, not Gaudi on the opposite side. So the “pinnacle of rock” also had to be on the Phungar side.

On some less steep places, we tried to descend slightly down into the gorge. But still fairly steep and slippery because of a slight but returning drizzle, most of us thought it to be too dangerous to proceed, especially in the company of children. But as I was still obsessed with the idea of the pinnacle of rock, I went ahead for one or two hundred meters in the downhill direction, where two gorges seemed to meet each other, the one to the right came from above and I imagined it to be the watercourse Corbett went down in persecution of the tigress. The other was below me and came from the left. It met the “watercourse” approximately in a right angle and I hoped – if my assumption was right - I might get a glimpse of a pinnacle shaped rock and I also thought of the small pool Corbett mentions at the junction of two ravines, where he found the severed leg of the victim and had his close shave with the tigress.

The walking under wet and slippery conditions was not easy but I accomplished the task and when I stood at the place where the ravines met, I had not seen anything similar to a “pinnacle of rock” and there was no pool either but humid soil at the bottom of the ravines overgrown with tall weed. The walls of the ravines were between 2 and 3 meters high what was not so different to what Corbett relates. So it is just a matter of guess if it might be the place, where he found the leg of the victim. As there were no clear signs, there probably are many similar places in the vicinity and to be honest, I imagine the right place somehow deeper into the gorge and nearer the bottom of the hillside. But who knows. Finally I turned around, went up again, met my friends and we all went back to Phungar bungalow and had our lunch there.

In the afternoon we met Dev Singh again and went with him to his elder sister who lived in the outskirts of Phungar village. She could tell us the name of the girl who was the last victim of the Champawat man-eater. It was Premka Devi. She had been married very young and was accompanying her mother, when the tigress killed her.

Saturday, 19th April (Corbett passing away day). After morning tea, breakfast and a hot shower we formulated our task for today: we wanted to go down into the gorge and climb onto the rock where the tigress had her last stand. Joseph wanted to do some measurements there to be sure we were at the right place. As in 2012 we went down from the northern (Gaudi) side, where the road is closer to the gorge and closer to the bottom. We left our cars at the place, which we already were familiar with and went down in the direction of the amphitheatre. Two years ago we had stopped our descent 30 meters above the bottom because we had the impression reaching the bottom from there safely was difficult. But this time, determined as we were, we went down all the way and were quite surprised that it did not turn out to be too difficult and could be done carefully but without serious problems by each

one of us. On the other hand, Corbett, as readers might remember, went down this last part of the descent running. In his words doing this was “very difficult” but to us running down this terrain was too scary even to think about.

Big boulders of rock covering vast parts of the riverbed mainly on the other side were also dangerous. Pale green bushes grew between them partly covering the cracks and gaps. It reminded me of the “wilderness of rocks” through which Corbett followed the tigress carrying her victim. Most probably it was not the same wilderness that Corbett had crossed because otherwise he surely would have mentioned the proximity of the riverbed, but it gave us a slight impression of what Corbett might have experienced while following the tigress. An involuntary bigger impression of the perils of a false step in such a tricky terrain was experienced by Priyvratt firsthand. He stumbled in a crack and while bracing himself with his arm injured his wrist, but thankfully without serious consequences. Corbett himself had warned about such dangers and we learned to take his advices seriously.

While Priyvratt and me were still struggling through the “wilderness of rocks” and adjacent bushes, Joseph, who went from the other side, was already on top of the flat projecting rock, we were already sure to be the place of the dramatic encounter between Corbett and the Champawat man-eater in 1907. When we reached the place some minutes later, Joseph had already lit two candles on top of the rock as it was the 59th anniversary of Corbett’s death. Silently having commemorated Corbett and the dramatic events that happened on this place more than hundred years ago, we began with our measurements. The results showed great accordance to Corbett’s description who gave a height of 12-14 feet of the overhanging rock. We measured exactly 12 feet on the lower side and 15 1/2 feet on the upper side. On the top the rock was 20 feet long and 12 feet wide. There was no rock in the surrounding area that would have fitted the description nowhere near as good.

After being fully convinced that we really were on the right place, we had to decide what to do now. Should we go back the way we had come from or try to climb the other side of the gorge, the same side from where the beaters came down and the tigress was moved up after being shot by some sort of a “human rope”. For Priyvratt with his injured hand, the decision was clear. He had to go back to the cars. But Joseph and I were tempted to go steeply up. After a moment of hesitation while looking up the steep and pathless hillside we decided to give it a try. The cars would go around and wait for us, where we were supposed to reach the road on the other side. Then, with Kamal in front looking for the easiest way, we started the climb.

The first part, which was about 100 meters in height, was extremely steep and Kamal was kicking steps in the soil on the most difficult parts of the ascent. But having negotiated this part, the toughest section was behind and from there the goat tracks could be followed. Soon it was no more crawling on all fours but an upright climb on zigzagging paths. While going uphill, the precipitous hill was on our left side and

on every occasion we came around a ravine, I had a look again for the “pinnacle of rock”, but we did not see anything like it. A bit more than halfway uphill, we followed the ravine, which I had described yesterday as the possible “watercourse”, this time on the other (eastern) side of the ravine. I should mention, no pinnacle of rock was to be seen from this side either.

Not far from the top we crossed a watercourse with a little creek of water in it. Near the crossing there indeed was a little pool, but much too high near the top of the gorge to be the one in Corbett’s description. In a slight bend we followed the watercourse to the right, but as he went downhill our path forked in the uphill direction and in some minutes we had reached the crest where some houses and the road soon appeared. The small village was called Bardholi and it must have been from here, where the runner started his way up to Corbett. The Phungar bungalow was in view from this point, roughly 500-800 meters away. In the last part of our climb we must have passed very close the place called Titlikanli, where the last victim was killed by the tigress and Corbett started his pursuit. It might be somewhere near the watercourse we had crossed.

We didn’t have to wait for long till the cars with our friends appeared and we went back together to the hotel. Back home there was a nice guy from the local press who wanted to do an interview with us. I forgot to mention that before our arrival we placed a note in a local newspaper that we were interested to meet Corbett-related people, and the local press took big interest for our trip. There were at least two publications at the local newspaper with the photos of our group. The reporter obviously imagined us to be very important people and was proud to get the opportunity to talk to us. I felt bad for him as he obviously was overwhelmed with the amount of information we gave to him. Poor guy! Priyvrat had sent us the article later and, as I was afraid, he really did not understand most of the things we tried to explain to him.

Sunday, 20th April (Holy Easter): A visit in Tala Des

Now just Joseph and me! Priyvrat had to leave in the middle of the last night to catch his plane at Delhi airport. Kotecha and the girls had already left a day earlier, on 18th as school holidays in Mauritius were about to end and they had to be back. Joseph and I could spend a few days more and so we decided to have a look at Thak and Chuka again. But this time we would take a different route. In Corbett’s Tala Des account he went up to here in a very hot and steep climb from Chuka and Sem. Why not do the same, but in the less strenuous downhill direction with the additional benefit of a visit in Tala Des? We thought this was a good idea – and indeed it was – and so we left Champawat on the Tala Des Road.

The distance from Champawat to Tamli, where the road ends is nearly 50 kilometres. The Tala Des road is small and winding, but it is paved, so the driving was slow but not really difficult. The road winds itself up the northern flank of the Tala

Des ridge and as it had gained height, there were spectacular views of the white Himalayans including Nanda Devi peak. When the road on its highest point changed to the southern side of the ridge, we could see the whole Tala Des region. It was a beautiful mixed landscape with terraced fields, forest and spread out villages between hills that reached up to 2500 meters. The climate was very pleasant, much cooler than down in the valley with daytime temperatures of about 25 degrees and fresh but not cold evenings. We passed Haran from where a small unpaved road branches off to Tula Kot, the “TalaKote” from Corbett’s story. But today we went straight in the direction of Tamli (the “Tamali” in Corbett’s account) where we reached Leti after a few kilometres, a small hamlet of only two houses and a shop, situated in a bend of the road. Here, in an intersection of hills, nowadays – probably not in Corbett’s time as I will explain later -the footpath down to Sem and Chuka starts. On the side of this footpath around 200 meters off the road, Kamal had chosen a really nice place for our camp underneath some big old oak trees.

Monday, 21th April: Tamli and Tula Kot

Next morning, the first we did was to continue on the Tala Des road up to its end in Tamli. The first village on the way was Simia where the road turned to the right and continued on the side of a steep drop to the left. Vultures were making circles in the sky and after five kilometers we reached Tamli, a village spread out on a distance of at least two kilometers. Shortly behind the village we left the car below a small white temple that seemed to mark the end of the ridge. From here it sloped with a growing gradient down into the Sarada valley. There were footpaths downhill but no roads. We turned around and went back, passed Leti again and continued on the main road to Haram, from where a small side road branches off to the right in the direction of Tula Kot. The road follows the side of a protracted ridge that leads from Haram to Tula Kot and further down into the valley. The distance from Haram to Tula Kot is around three kilometers with the latter being around 200 meters below. The road crosses the ridge around one hundred meters in front of Tula Kot on the side of one of the two hills, Corbett mentions in his account.

Here we left the car and went in the direction of the other hill, shaped like a cylindrical knob of around 50 meters height, where on top above some terraced fields Tula Kot is located quite spectacularly. Between these hills is the “*narrow saddle some fifty yards long*” where Corbett went with the “*lad of about seventeen*” – Dungal Singh as Corbett learned later – who showed him from here the place where his mother had been killed by the tigress. On this saddle the crowd of men stood to point out in the Wyran field below “*something read lying in the sun*” and from the same saddle - though looking at the opposite direction - they were able to observe the last stages of the hunt with Corbett following the wounded tigress. This saddle in Corbett’s words “was the apex of two great valleys. The one on the left, or western side, swept down towards the Ladhya River; the one on the right fell steeply away and down ten or fifteen miles to the Kali

river. Halting on the saddle the lad turned and faced the valley on the right..."

At this point one might easily get confused about the directions and so, for the first moment, me as well. With Corbett coming from the village the right side of the saddle would not be the eastern but the western side and conversely the left side would be the eastern side. But when Corbett and the lad halted on the saddle, the lad, as Corbett wrote "turned" and it would be natural to assume, that Corbett before giving the directions had turned too and now looked back in the direction of the village. From this position his description makes completely sense: The western side is now the left one and the eastern side the right one. It was the right side Corbett puts his attention first as on this side the mother of the lad had been killed. Also today there is no way down the steep hillside from the saddle and, as Corbett did with the lad, you would have to go back to the village from where there is a goat track leading down.

When we stood on the saddle and tried to get an impression of the whole situation, we knew we had to choose which side we would try to investigate as we knew, we were not able to go down on both sides. When I had read the Tala Des story in "Temple tiger," I did not really imagine the difference of height Corbett had to negotiate when he simply tells that he went down with the lad to where the tiger had eaten his mother. Only when standing on the saddle and looking down you realize and appreciate the real meaning of his words especially with the sun burning down onto your head. Then you feel a great admiration for what Corbett carried out day after day. We stood on the saddle for a while and absorbed the scenery. There was a small flat patch of land on the ground that some villagers pointed out as the Wyran field, but I think this was just a matter of guess. We then proceeded to the village where from you have spectacular views of the surroundings. It is a real nice place with friendly people. We learned that Sundar Singh had passed away in 2011. Sundar Singh was the grandson of Dungar Singh Boral, the lad that had accompanied Corbett. We could talk with Bachi Singh, a neighbor to Sundar Singh whose father was a little child when Corbett had stayed in the village.

After a full circle around the village we stood again on the saddle and after a short discussion, we decided to go down on the left (western) side, where the man-eater had been shot. This side was less steep and below some terraced fields that were out of cultivation the ridge was covered with pine trees. 250 meters below the saddle was some flat ground that once had been cultivated and was now covered with scattered trees. The villagers of Tula Kot called this place "Field of Tak" and were convinced that the tigress had been shot here. According to Corbett's description this seemed quite unlikely to me, but anyway, this was the slope where the hunt had ended and so I wanted to go down for a closer view. Joseph, who wasn't feeling very well this day, stayed on the saddle and I went down with three men.

The path we went down after we had left the cultivated land zigzagged through an area covered with bushes and pine trees. Shortly before we reached the comparatively

flat and open ground we crossed a dry stream and on its left side turned right in the downhill direction. Comparing it with Corbett's description, we now stood on the place, where the six goats had been killed. In Chapter nine he writes, that the "*other valley, the one to the left, was less steep and from the saddle a goat track ran down into it. It was this valley, where the goats had been killed... After winding down over steep and broken ground for five or six hundred yards, the track crossed a stream and then continued down the valley on the left bank. Close to where the track crossed the stream there was an open bit of comparatively flat ground. Running from left to right across this open ground was a low ridge of rock, in the far side of which was a little hollow, and lying in the hollow were three goats.*" I did not look for the mentioned hollow, but we stood on a structure that resembled a low ridge. While I went ahead, my companions sat down for a rest. Behind the ridge, the flat ground began to slope down gently with some old remnants of terraced fields. After around 150 meters, the gradient went steeper and I stopped and had a look around. The flat ground obviously had come to an end and to the left the terrain fell steeply down into a deep valley. On the right side in an incision of some 50 to 80 meters was the stream which seemed to flow down into the same valley. On the far side of the stream was the ridge upon which the village of Tula Kot was situated and the saddle where Joseph was waiting for me and where during Corbett's hunt the villagers observed the scenery.

Standing at the end of the flat ground, I tried to imagine the progress of the hunt. If I am right with the position of the low ridge, then this was also the place, from where Corbett had his shot at the tigress that went through her without hitting a hard part of her body. But which was her escape route after the shot? The tigress must have fled straight on or even more probably somewhat to the left as in this direction the terrain drops more steeply. After the drop the animal met a footpath on which Corbett followed her and "...to the right of the path was a boulder-strewn stream, the one that Dungar Singh and I had crossed farther up, and flanking the stream was a small grassy hill". The stream must have been the one, we had crossed before reaching the flat ground and the grassy hill on the other side of the stream could be nothing else than the slope upon which Tula Kot was situated.

According to Corbett's account the tigress did not cross the stream and went straight ahead. So the place where Corbett went over the edge of the path and nearly fell down a sheer drop and the place where he met the tigress must have been considerably beyond the place where I stood on the end of the flat ground and out of view from here. Anyway it was great being here but now it was time to turn around and go back. The way up was not as strenuous as I had expected, as the walk through beautiful pinewood with twittering birds and a pleasant cool breeze in the late afternoon was entertaining and enjoyable, at least for the first two thirds. The last third in the still blazing 4pm sun was somewhat more challenging and I was relieved, when I finally stood on the saddle again. After my troubles of climbing hundreds of metres of the steep hillsides I recalled the amazing fact that when following the tigress, Corbett

was feeling horribly ill. He had a huge abscess in his ear inside his head, his one eye and one ear were not functioning, and he had excruciating pain in his ear. Only the night before killing the tigress, during the pursuit a tigress at night, his abscess burst. No wonder that Corbett did not want to tell the details of this story, as he was sure the readers would not believe him. This was the reason this extraordinary hunt was not included in his classic "Man-Eaters of Kumaon," and instead was published in Corbett's book "Temple Tiger," published ten years later in 1954.

Tuesday, 22th April, From Tala Des to Sem: Jim Corbett writes about his ascent to Tala Des on a hot April afternoon as "*one of the steepest an most exhausting climbs*" he and his men had ever done. They followed a rough track "*which went straight up the face of the mountain without a single hairpin bend to ease the gradient*". Now it was an April day too, but we had two advantages in comparison to Corbett. The first one was that we could start in the morning while Corbett, coming from the foot of the Purnagiri mountain (the night when he saw the famous lights) reached the climb in the early afternoon, the hottest time of the day. The second and even more important advantage was that, judging our fitness realistically, we had decided to go in the opposite direction, downhill, not uphill as Corbett did.

Upon the Tala Des ridge it was considerably cooler than in the valley below with very pleasant and even refreshing morning temperatures. The night before I had an uneasy sleep because of some stomach problems and had to leave the tent three times. Though the toilet-tent being only 30 meters away I had to force myself a bit to leave the safety feeling of the tent while imagining glowing eyes of hungry leopards waiting for me in the outside. Of course this was only silly fantasy and the small beam of the flashlight never fell on anything else than slowly moving branches of bushes. Luckily my problems had gone in the morning and after breakfast we started the descent.

The footpath from the Tala Des ridge down to the Sarda starts from the hamlet of Leti where our camp was and where the ridge has a small notch. On the way down there were spectacular views of the Ladhya flowing more than 1000 meters below and also Kot Kindri village could be seen in a distance aside a lower ridge on the other side of the valley. The descent was very steep and rocky with dozens of hairpin bends. But as Corbett did not mention hairpin bends in his account, we assumed, it had not been exactly the same path that Corbett had walked. My imagination is that the actual path from Leti starts its descent some 1-2 kilometers west (i.e. nearer to Haram) of the old one. Going down it does a slight bend to the left (east) easing the gradient a bit and approaches the Sarda roughly at the same place as the former one. It took us around four hours to reach the bottom of the valley with shaky knees and aching muscles. We registered at the post of the border police and showed our permits while being offered some cool water and chai. After a bit of small chat and a few photos, we continued the short distance to the village of Sem, where we put up our camp.

Here we could finally relax and refresh. I took soap, towel and fresh clothing with me and went to the Sarda River looking for a place to have a bath. I had to go several hundred meters upstream to find a reasonably clean place not being used to soak cattle. The Ladhya coming more directly from the mountains would have been a much better choice, as I realized later. Joseph still having energy went along the banks of the Ladhya to have a look into the ravine, where Corbett first had seen the tigress with her cubs that should later become the Thak man-eater. But I felt I had done enough walking for the day. So I stayed in the camp to have a bit more time to relax and to regenerate. At dinner time we were together again and enjoyed Corbett's favorite grilled fish (mahseer) and also fish curry, our staff had provided.

Wednesday, 23th April, Going up to Thak: After breakfast, we did a small stroll through the village of Sem, trying to locate the place, where the mother of the Headman became the second victim of the Thak man-eater while cutting brushwood on a steep bank between two terraced fields near to her house. We already suspected a certain building on the end of the village near the hillside, but were not sure. In the village we were directed to the oldest inhabitant of the Sem village, 83 years old Prem Singh Rameshwar, sitting on the balcony of his house. He showed us the place where the woman had lived and where she was killed virtually in front of the doorsteps. It was indeed the house, we had suspected. You can see the photo of the house in a chapter dedicated to the second victim of the Thak tigress.

Back at the camp we were awaited by Sundar Singh, villager of Chuka and occasionally the sole resident of Thak. Chuka and Thak were on the other side of the Ladhya and Sundar Singh guided us to a place, where we could cross. The river here was not more than knee deep, but with his stony and uneven ground, it was not easy crossing anyway. With the help of our men we did it with more or less grace. Directly on the other side of the river was a small and for parts nearly indiscernible path that went steeply uphill in the direction of Thak. It was not the same path we went up from Chuka last time. The one we did now started some 500 meters upstream of Chuka and with very few bends it went almost directly up the ridge. Obviously it was used by animals, to get from the jungle to the water of the river, as we saw the pugmarks of a big cat – either tigress or big leopard – very near to the spot where the path entered the jungle. Because of the long walk the day before my “batteries” were empty, the going became slower and slower and we had to make more than usual stops on the way. But finally we reached the famous “rectangular piece of ground” where our path met the one from Chuka at the exact place, where “Byrne’s rock” stood. Joseph nearly immediately started with some measurements with the help of our guides, but the only thing I could think for the moment was to lay down and have a rest.

Thursday, 24th April, Thak and Kot Kindri

The day in Thak had more to do with refreshing our memories than to bring us new insights. The plaque with our names was still there. The letters were a bit faded but were still clearly readable. There was no reason to doubt our conclusions about the rock and the only substantial change in the last two years seemed to be the well under the mango tree. Two years ago we had taken our shower here, but this time it was much more scarcely flowing. To fill his one liter water bottle, it took Joseph nearly five minutes and he had to look carefully for a spot, to get the water clear in his bottle. The taste of the water was as delicious and refreshing as ever, but what we had heard on our last visit, that the village was abandoned because of water scarcity, seemed to have a good foundation in reality.

This time our camp ground was on the upper end of the village, behind the only partially inhabited house of Thak. Though the air was a bit misty, there were still beautiful sights from the terrace of the house and a cool and refreshing wind was blowing. Near sunset, the wind was so intense, that our tents swayed and faltered and as I was afraid, that they would break down, I asked Kamal to fix them. He and his men did so, but only to calm my worries as after sunset, when the winds came to rest, everything was spontaneously fine, quiet and peaceful.

We had only one night in Thak, as Joseph got the news that his return flight with China Airways had been cancelled and he had to go back one day earlier. So we shortened our stay in Thak and had an early start to Kot Kindri next morning, to avoid the heat of the day at least for the first steep part uphill. I felt much better than yesterday wisely walking with a very light daypack with only one extra lens for the camera in it. We passed “the rock of a missed chance,” or “Tewari rock” as we had called it and took photos there. After Joseph had climbed the rock as Corbett did in his attempt to kill the tigress, I persuaded him to pose for a photo on the backside of this rock where, if our assumption is right, the tigress was lying. Then I asked him to depart, leaving behind his cap, backpack and shoes for a second photo. This was the final prove, the man-eater had struck again. Sorry for the bad joke!

After many stops we reached Kot Kindri shortly after noon. We had a rest at the old schoolyard, closed our eyes and were dozing on some quickly put down mattress until late afternoon. Fairly recovered, we had a walk through the village. Joseph wished to see the mango tree, where the Thak tigress had killed a woman. I was more interested in the village itself, where not more than three families were still living. A very nice place was the cool, peaceful and shady water well of the village. But peacefulness was depending on time and situation as the mango tree, where the woman was killed was only 50 meters away from the village spring. On the way back, Kamal had bought some fresh eggs for dinner. The sun was setting. Time for a sip of whiskey as a sundowner. Just for preventative health care – of course.

Friday, 25th April, Back to civilization

We started at 7.30 in the morning from Kot Kindri. This time, we did not take the usual path down to Chuka and along the Sarda. There was another foot path from Kot Kindri to Thuligad – more direct and somewhat shorter – and we wanted to give it a try. We had to climb a roughly 300 meters high ridge behind the village and afterwards the path should be on level or downhill. While passing Kot Kindri we were accompanied by a villager named Rattan Singh, who had remembered us from our 2012 visit. After half an hour of steep uphill walking, we reached the small hamlet of Haire halfway between Kot Kindri and the top of the ridge. Here we meet Haiet Singh and sat down for a tee in the front yard of his house. We talked about the situation of the people of Kot Kindri. People earn more money elsewhere, he said. Many would live now in Tanakpur or still farther away as in Delhi or Mumbai. No, there were no more tigers in the surroundings of Kot Kindri, but of course there were leopards. Five days ago a calf was taken by one of them. In every second village around here, in the last few weeks a dog or a calf had been taken or attacked. When saying Good Bye, Haiet Singh gave us lemons from his own orchard to take with us, which was a very welcome gift, as water with fresh lemon juice is wonderful refreshment on a hot April day in the Indian foothills.

The way back turned out as it was said: After the steep ascend the path went rather comfortably on level or slightly down. On the way we met Laxman Singh, son of Haiet Singh, the villager, we just had a visit. He was on the return from Dubai for a visit at home. Laxman Singh had also had a lookout for the rock, where Corbett had shot the Thak tigress. We had heard that he doubted our findings and were curious about the reasons of it. He said that a year ago he had to accompany a visitor, an avid Corbett fan from Singapore, and the guy from Singapore was sure it was impossible to sit on the ledge of the rock that we believe was the one where Corbett sat and shot the tigress. Joseph proposed that probably the guest from Singapore was shorter than Corbett, as it is clear from many of our photographs and videos that sitting on the ledge is definitely possible, exactly as Corbett described it, by reaching the right foot down to the ground, and holding with left hand on the top of the rock. Laxman Singh said the guest from Singapore could not present a better candidate for the rock where Corbett killed the tigress.

With Purnagiri already in view the path now went steeply downhill and was covered with coarse gravel and slippery slabs of rocks partially sheeted with fallen leaves. It now was no more easy to negotiate and one had to be careful not to slip and fall. This happened to me once, but I was lucky of not seriously hurting myself. However one lens of my beloved Olympus camera that was hanging over my neck got a dent in the front blocking the aperture ring. But things could have been worse. This little accident reminded me of Sid Anan's words on my first visit, were we also talked about this alternative trek for the return journey. But we cancelled it because of some rain

that would have made the rocks even more slippery. Now I know he was right. This trek can only be recommended in good weather conditions. But it has the advantage, that you can take a taxi from Purnagiri to Thuligad, which shaves 8 kilometers off the return journey.

On the way back I was thinking about the possibility of a short visit in Purnagiri and of going “some steps” up to the temple. But seeing it already from afar did put everything in the right perspective. Purnagiri is an imposing conical peak with the temple on its top about 500 meters in height above the road. It is really awesome to see thousands of people - from a distance looking like an endless column of ants - climbing not “some” but thousands of steps in countless hairpin bends up to the temple. Definitely this would be no short detour but a several hours of demanding walk. So I had no second thought of a possible visit and went straightly to the taxi that would bring us to Thuligad where our men were waiting for us. It was 1pm now. Joseph and I said good bye to all but Kamal, who went ahead with us. There was no more use for ponies, tents, cook and porters as from here we had entered civilization again. A car brought us now to Nainital, where we stayed for two more nights, before going back home.

Saturday, 26th April/Sunday 27th April, Naini Tal and back home

Kamal had booked an excellent hotel for us in Naini Tal - excellent not for luxury but for its spectacular view. It was 5-8 kilometers outside of the city center on Kilbury road and around 300 meters above the lake that was in full view from the terrace and our balcony. This day our first aim was a visit in Gurney House, where Corbett had stayed during the summer month. Though it is private property now, we could come into the garden through the backdoor and then were invited to enter the house. Though at the time of our visit the interior was under renovation with furniture partly covered with tarpaulin, old trophies were still to be seen and Joseph was very impressed by old editions of Corbett's and other wildlife books behind the glass of aged but well maintained cabinets. In the outside he was interested to see where Corbett would pitch his tent, as we knew he often preferred to sleep in a tent and not inside the house. After Gurney House, we looked for the place, where the famous 1880 landslip had occurred and tried to imagine from where Corbett might have watched it. We also went to the graveyard of St. John in the Wilderness, where many victims of this landslip had been buried and where we stood in front of the gravestone of Corbett's mother. The graveyard is an overgrown place that probably no one had looked after since many years. We wondered about its future and the years it might still be there and not being annexed by the slum-like plane covered huts that already began to spread in the immediate vicinity.

But there was not only Corbett related activity. We did a very pleasant boat ride across the lake from Tallital to Mallital and strolled around town to buy some souvenirs for children and friends at home. One of the shops we sold completely out of

its nice yellow “Corbett – Save the tiger” T-shirts. We took them all. On the road we had a brief accidental meeting with Akshai Shah who we had met on our first day in Ranikhet and who was now in Naini Tal for an environmental talk.

On Sunday morning we said goodbye to Kamal who went back to his camp in Mukteshwar and entered the car that should bring us to Delhi. Dr. Jordania had his flight back home on the evening of 27th April, while mine was one day later. We parted at the airport and then the driver brought me to the office of Kamals Wildrift Adventures in Saket, South Delhi. It worked also as a small guest house with 2-3 rooms, where I could spend the night. Next day I did some relaxing walks through Mehrauli Village and its old Archeological Park, where I could think about the adventure of the last weeks. In the afternoon I went to the HauzKhas complex with the Tomb of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, had my dinner and two ice cold beers at Park Balluchi in the deer Park of HauzKhas and after that went back to the guest house to fetch my baggage. A taxi took me to the airport for the Emirates flight back to Munich, Germany, with many thoughts back in India and in the world of Jim Corbett.

Corbett's Timeline

BY PREETUM GHEERAWO

Only the main events in Corbett's life are presented here, pertaining to his: home and family, hunting, professional life, love for the people, engagement in war and politics, health, his books and publications, and conservationism. Several new corrected dates are clearly marked, and the pages from this book where the new dates are discussed and established are indicated. The future Corbett scholar is expected to use this timeline as a guide and to add further lines and make necessary amendments where and when required, just as we have done here based on the previously known publications and new field and archive research materials.

- 1875, July 25 – Birth of Edward James (Jim) Corbett, in their family house below Alma Hill in Naini Tal.
- 1880, September 18th – 5 years old Jim with his family watches in horror the catastrophic landslide that took 151 lives next to their residence in Naini Tal
- 1881, April 21 – Christopher William Corbett, Jim's father dies at the age of 58
- 1882 – Gurney House, the family home is built with materials dismantled from the Alma Hill cottage. It would become the last residence of Corbett in Naini Tal
- 1883 – Eight and a half year old Corbett is gifted his first firearm, a double-barreled muzzle-loader by Stephen Dease, his cousin. Among his first dogs, 'Magog' helped him to stalk birds in first instance
- 1886 – Eleven year old Corbett shoots his first leopard near Kaladhungi. His last shot in India would also take place around the same location 60 years later, in 1946
- 1894 – Corbett joins the Bengal/North Western Railways (BNWR) as railway fuel inspector at Mokameh Gat/Samastipur
- 1896 – Corbett gets the contract as trans-shipment inspector at Samaria Ghat for luggage transfer of the ferry crossing over the banks of the Ganges river. He remains there till 1919
- 1901 – Archibald D'Arcy Corbett, Jim's younger brother dies at the age of 21
- 1906, December 15 – Corbett acquires the hardware business and speculation agency of F.E.G. Matthews after the latter's death in Naini Tal
- 1907, May – Corbett sends his first man-eater, the Champawat tigress, to the Happy Hunting Grounds
- 1907, July 01– Corbett's first term of office as Municipal councilor of Naini Tal

- 1909, March-April – Corbett shot Muktesar Man-Eater [**New corrected date, see pg.: 219-221**]
- 1909, April – First attempt at the Panar man-eating leopard [**New corrected date, see pg.: 222-224**]
- 1909, April – Corbett's unsuccessful hunt for the Dabhidura Temple tiger [**New corrected date, see pg.: 222-224**]
- 1909, July – Corbett resigns as Municipal Councilor of Naini Tal
- 1909, 25 December – Charles Berthoud, the man who set Corbett on a career of man-eater hunting, dies after a short bout of enteric fever
- 1910, September – Corbett shoots the Panar man-eating leopard
- 1910 – Corbett is gifted a .275 Rigby-Mausser rifle by Sir J.P. Hewett, Governor of the UP at a 'Durbar' in Naini Tal commemorating the accession of the Prince of Wales, George V, to the throne. The present is given as recognition by the Government for Corbett's successful bringing to account of the Champawat man-eater
- 1915 – Corbett buys land (221 acres) from the Government and sets up the stone wall around what will later be called Corbett's village of Choti Halwani, for whose tenants will be freed from rent and land tax by Corbett during his lifetime and till his sister Maggie's death
- 1917, July – Corbett engages as 'Captain' of a troop of Labour Corps from Garhwal /Kumaon (70th Kumaon Labour Corps) and gets commissioned for Flanders (Belgium) during the First Great War (The 'Kaiser's War' according to Corbett)
- 1919, March – Corbett donates Rs7,300 to the Municipal Council of Naini Tal, money which is used to complete the bandstand on the 'flats' on the upper shore of the lake at Mallital and for the construction of a soldiers' reading room
- 1919, Summer – Corbett, freshly retired from the railways goes for 'Tahr' Shooting with Robert Bellairs and Bala Singh on Mount Trishul. The latter, unfortunately, died few months after the expedition after being convinced that he had swallowed the demon of Trishul
- 1919, Autumn – Corbett gets again commissioned as Captain, this time for the North West Border with Afghanistan (Waziristan) conflict
- 1919, December 22 – Corbett begins 2nd term of office as Municipal Councilor of Naini Tal
- 1922 – Corbett and Percy Wyndham (then District Commissioner of Naini Tal) buy land for the Kikafu coffee estate on the slopes of Mount Meru in Tanganyika (Tanzania). Robert Bellairs is appointed as manager of the estate. Annual visits to this country till 1936 give Corbett the idea to live in Africa one day if he happens to leave India
- 1919/22 – (Uncertain period) Corbett helps Percy Wyndham and chief of Police Freddie Young to track the 'Indian Robin Hood' Sultana
- 1923 – Year marking the first undertones of conservationism of Corbett as he proposes by-laws to prohibit fishing in lake Naini just before sunset till after sunrise – the same year

- Corbett is appointed chairperson of the Public Works Committee of Naini Tal. In later years Corbett also presided over the Toll and Tax Committee and Finance Committee
- 1923 to 1926 – By-laws concerning conservation of Nature are proposed to the Municipal Board of Naini Tal by Corbett. These concerned mainly measures to protect the surrounding forests from pack-goats grazing and prevention of felling of trees around the town and in domestic compounds
- 1924, May 16 – Death of Mary Jane Corbett, Jim mother at the age of 87 years – Both Corbett parents are buried in the Sukha Tal cemetery behind the St John in the Wilderness church in Naini Tal
- 1926, May 1/2 – Corbett shoots the Rudraprayag man-eating leopard, arguably the most notorious man-eating leopard in the recent human history
- 1926, Corbett was awarded the “Freedom of the forest” privilege
- 1928, April/May – Corbett shoots the grown cub of the Chowgarh man-eater [**New corrected date, see pg.: 215-218**]
- 1928 – Corbett is awarded the Kaiser-I-Hind medal, a decoration given for services rendered to the Indian Empire. The ‘service’ here refers to no less than laying to rest India’s (or perhaps the world’s) most feared man-eater, the Rudraprayag Leopard
- 1928 – Corbett gets his first movie camera, a 16-mm Bell & Howell model as a gift from his friend Lord Strathcona. Idea germinates in Corbett’s mind, as inspired by F.W. Champion, a pioneer in wildlife photography, to swap the gun for the camera, or the hunting trophy for the wildlife photo
- 1929, February – Corbett attends the District conference for the discussion on man-eaters placed on the hit list: 1. The Chowgarh man-eater; 2. The Mohan man-eater; 3. The Kanda man-eater. It is highly probable that instead of Kanda man-eater, the third tiger on the original list was the Talla man-eater [**New corrected information, see pg.: 207-214**]
- 1929, April – Corbett lays to rest the Talla-Des man-eater and her two grown cubs, while himself being incapacitated by an ear injury sustained in Bindhukera two months earlier. The hunt of this man-eater is one of the most epic Corbett hunts
- 1930, April 11 – Corbett finally kills the Chowgarh man-eating tigress in very dramatic circumstances after many unsuccessful stalking attempts during a period of two years
- 1930, November – The Bachelor of Powalgarh, a tiger with record proportions is shot by Corbett near Kaladhungi. The shooting of this tiger begins the end of Corbett’s career as a trophy-seeker hunter
- 1931, March – A Kaladhungi villager protecting his crops wounds the Pipal Pani tiger with Corbett’s muzzle-loader, mistaking him for a pig. Corbett later shoots the tiger under the misapprehension that it would become a man-eater. Later in August, the story of this tiger would become the published first piece of writing by Corbett (Hoghunters Annual, Vol. 4, Aug., 1931)

- 1931, May – Corbett kills the Mohan man-eater in his sleep, regretting later for not having given him a sporting chance to defend itself
- 1931, July – Corbett is promoted as ‘Major’ in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers (IARO)
- 1932, July 19th – Corbett kills the Kanda man-eating tiger after the wounded tiger attempts a charge on him up a tree
- 1932, August 31 – Corbett second published piece appears in the ‘Review of the Week’ a government publication. The piece entitled “Wildlife in the Village – An Appeal” definitely marks Corbett’s stand as a conservationist, sounding the first alarm regarding the decimation of wildlife around villages
- 1933, April 12 – Corbett’s Conservationism principles gather momentum as his resolution for the restriction on bird shooting and creation of a bird sanctuary around Naini Tal is approved by the Municipal Board, the first of its kind
- 1933, April and May – Extensive moving-photography sessions by Corbett in and around Kaladhungi (Naya Gaon and Maldhan) and around the Ramganga basin (Dhikala and Patli Dun) – some of these cine-shoots still survive at the British National Film Archive
- 1934 – Corbett, Malcolm Hailey and E.A. Smythies’ plea for the creation of India’s first National Park around the Ramganga River basin leads to the creation of a wildlife sanctuary around the area. The park followed later
- 1935 – Corbett’s self-publishes 100 copies of his first book “Jungle Stories.” Virtually all the copies were “read to death”. Currently only one surviving copy is in possession of London based gun maker John Rigby and Co **[see the fate of the copy on pg. 144-149]**
- 1935 – The Sanctuary around the Ramganga basin area (South Patli Dun, Malani, Bijrani and Dhikala) is upgraded as a National Park called Hailey National Park (renamed in 1957 as “Corbett National Park”) as per decree of the Legislative Council of the UP
- 1935, August – Second blast by Corbett towards irresponsible and indiscriminate exploitation of Nature entitled: “A Lost Paradise: Forest Fires in the Foothills” is published in the ‘Review of the Week’
- 1938, April – Corbett kills a man-eating tiger in Ladhya Valley, later named as “Chuka man-eater” (the giant tree from where Corbett shot the tiger, fell around year 2000). **[New corrected date, see pg.: 225-233]**
- 1938, November 30 – Corbett kills his last man-eater – the Thak man-eating tigress after luring her with a tiger mating call
- 1938, December – Corbett sets his ‘jungle studio’ in Kaladhungi and shoots his first wild tiger cine-photography, arguably the first to do so
- 1939, January 10 – Corbett suffers a serious fall from a tree while filming tigers **[previously unknown precise date, see pg.: 125-127]**
- 1940, August 27 – Corbett’s attends last meeting as Municipal Councilor of Naini Tal, his resignation took effect on October 4th

- 1940, September – 64-year old Corbett, as Major in the IARO seeks engagement for the Second World War ('Hitler's land collecting tour' according to Corbett) but agrees to become vice-president of the District Soldiers' Board (DSB) to look after the needs of the families of serving men and helping in recruitment of a pioneer corps
- 1942 – Corbett is awarded the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) for services rendered to the British Empire through his lifetime military engagements
- 1942, October – Severe sickness resulting from an attack of tick-typus assigns Corbett to three-months in hospital bed at Agra. This ends his previous engagement with the DSB
- 1943, January – Corbett in his hospital bed nearing recovery lays the foundation of his manuscript by writing the chapter 'Robin' for his extended version of 'Jungle Stories' which would later be called 'Man-Eaters of Kumaon' by the OUP
- 1944, February – Corbett is appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the British-Indian Army with special commission as senior instructor in Jungle Lore for the Cadet Corps engaged in Burma. The training camp at Chindwara (Central Provinces) had to be interrupted after 3 months due to Corbett suffering his perhaps worst attack of malaria, confining him to the care of his sister Maggie for eighteen months
- 1944, August – Corbett's first official book, *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, is published by OUP (Bombay) for 1000 copies
- 1945, September – Back in Kaladhungi, and nearing rehabilitation from the malaria attack, Corbett learns about the success of the first and second print (OUP Madras) of *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*. The itch to write more causes him to ink the first lines of the 'Leopard of Rudraprayag'
- 1946, May – '*Man-eaters of Kumaon*' becomes a worldwide best-seller after published by OUP (New York). It edges just above 536,000 copies sold as at May. Translated in 16 more languages, this book has remained in print ever after
- 1946 - Corbett is awarded the CIE (Companion of the Indian Empire) for his services rendered to the welfare of the people of India particularly veteran and blind soldiers, soldiers' families and to the Civil and Military authorities of the Empire
- 1946, Late Winter – Corbett reluctantly shoots his last tiger, a cattle-lifter at Kaladhungi at the insistence of a pertinent villager
- 1947, November 21 – Corbett and Maggie sold Gurney House and left Naini Tal for good on November 30th taking with them only the guns, fishing rods, man-eater skins, portraits, photos and medals.
- 1947, December 9 – Jim and Maggie Corbett boarded on the SS Aronda for their final goodbye to India and their last servant Ram Singh. The previous days, they had a hectic voyage from Kaladhungi to Bareilly by road and then Bareilly to Bombay via Lucknow by train. The ship reached Mombasa on December 15th
- 1948, March – '*The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*', Corbett's second published book sees daylight in India while a little later in Kenya, Corbett attends the projection of a

- poor rendering of 'Man-Eaters of Kumaon' as a movie produced by Hollywood, "the best actor was the tiger" as commented by him
- 1948, August – Corbett inks the first lines of the book 'My India' starting with the chapter "Sultana, India's Robin-Hood". The book finally saw light in January 1952 and is the third published book of Corbett
- 1948, October – Corbett, Ibbotson and two other friends invest in a wildlife tourism company called 'Safariland' with the only object avowed by Corbett as "to discourage shooting and encouraging photography". The company becomes famous since its association with the filming of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's blockbuster "King Solomon's Mines" starring Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr
- 1951, January – Corbett sets the typewriter for his fourth book "Jungle Lore". This book, with some auto-biographical material, gets delayed in publication and finally comes out in October 1953
- 1951, October 10 – Corbett's first public screening of his 'wild tiger' cine-movies, shot in India and of his African wildlife movies at Amen House, headquarters of the OUP in London, UK
- 1952, February 5th-6th, during their visit to Kenya, Princess Elisabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, Philip spent a night in Tree Tops Hotel next to Corbett's residence, the Baden-Powell cottage of the Outspan hotel. Corbett was called upon to act as a local guide and to watch over the safety of the Royal couple. It was the night when the King George died and the Princess Elisabeth became the Queen Elizabeth II
- 1953, October – While 'Jungle Lore' is released in India by OUP (Bombay), Corbett is in London, UK, for a successful eye operation. Later in Kenya, Corbett releases the manuscript of the second volume of 'Man-Eaters of Kumaon' initially known as "The Temple Tiger" to his editor Roy Hawkins in Bombay. Corbett admits having deliberately withheld this manuscript because according to him "Jungle Lore has to be read first" to understand the story of the Talla Des man-eater
- 1954, July and August –The penultimate Corbett's book, 'Temple Tiger and More Man-Eaters of Kumaon' is published in India and reprinted in the UK within one month only. This book, after Man-Eaters of Kumaon, has also remained in print ever after
- 1955, April 19th, Corbett dies after a massive heart attack in Nyeri, Kenya. He is buried the next day at St Peter's Anglican cemetery in Nyeri. His final words were: "Live today as if it was your very last" to a youthful visitor and "Stay brave and try to make the world a better place for others to live in" to his sister Maggie. His final book 'Tree Tops', whose manuscript is completed only a few days before his death, is published posthumously later in the year
- 1957 – Renaming of the Ramganga National Park (Formerly Hailey National Park) into Corbett National Park. The action was initiated by Corbett's close friend, Pandit G.B. Pant, Prime Minister of the UP

- 1963, December – Death of Maggie at the age of 89. Her ashes, as she was cremated, were interred in her brother’s grave. Brother and sister are united in the Happy Hunting Grounds like they were during their passage on Earth
- 1968 – A new sub-species of tiger is identified, known as the Indochinese (formerly ‘Annamese’) tiger and V. Mazak, the Czech biologist, making the discovery gives the Latin name “*Panthera Tigris Corbetti*” to it in recognition of the life and dedication of the ‘excellent naturalist’ Jim Corbett [**details see on pg.: 241-243**]
- 1972 – Corbett’s dearest project as to protect the tiger is initiated by Shrimati Indira Gandhi – A year earlier, a general ban was imposed on tiger shooting and the year 1972 was dedicated to assess the population. That same year, the tiger dislodged the lion (protected since 1958) as the National Indian Animal
- 1973, April 1st – ‘Project Tiger’ (a project to save the tiger from extinction) is launched at the Corbett NP, in memory of the person who became their first advocate
- 1975 – The Government of the UP buys back the Kaladhungi house from Chiranji Lal, to whom it was sold by Corbett, and converts it into the Corbett Museum. Later that year in July, Corbett’s Centenary celebration is launched and a stamp (showing a tiger) is issued to commemorate the event
- 1985 – Golden Jubilee of Corbett NP. The park celebrates also the first inversion of the declining number of tigers, twelve years after the shooting ban, as per the tiger census. This census held every five years, however controversial it may have been in later years, shows that in 2015 that the number of tigers has nearly doubled their 1985 number

IN FOND REMEMBRANCE OF NALINA TIRVENGADUM GHEERAWO



(05 December 1972 – 11 February 2011)

This dedication is a humble attempt to portray your life, in reconnaissance and gratitude for having illuminated our lives during the short period of time that you blessed us with your presence and devoted attention. From your dearest daughters Rushika and Jayalukshmi Reyna; and husband Preetum.

“A dedicated teacher, titular of a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History, with a fifteen year career in high schools, a tutor for her students competing for the state bursaries, a team leader for the Students’ Model United Nations conference for seven years in a row, a free-tuition giver to needy hardship afflicted students who would affectionately call her ‘Maa’ (Mother in Hindi), a secretary of the Parent Teachers Association during four years, an accomplished ‘Veena’ player, ‘Bharat Natyam’ dancer, ‘Karnatic’ singer, a pious and religious adept, exemplary daughter for the proudest of parents; a fan of Jim Corbett, Thor Heyerdahl, Fennimore Cooper amongst others, adoring John Keats, William Wordsworth and William Shakespeare; and above all, a wife and mother of two lovely daughters who miss her deeply forever. “

Now in the Happy Hunting Grounds, we hope you are illuminating others too, who have and have not known you during your passage here. And before we forget, regarding the letter we were reading last from Dr Jordania: He did send us what he promised to Jayalukshmi though we missed the holy lake sessions we had arranged for him. Both of your daughters have good patrons now, and that, in all the continents of the globe.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THIS BOOK

Priyvat Gadhvi, is a Biotechnologist from Gujarat, India- the youngest member of the group. Priyvat was a co-author on the ground-breaking project that conducted the world's first whole genome sequencing (total DNA mapping) of the Amur Tiger, African Lion and Snow Leopard published in Nature communications in September, 2013. He is a member of the State Board for Wildlife, Gujarat and also heads a plant tissue culture unit in Gujarat'



Joseph Jordania, PhD, is an award winning ethnomusicologist and evolutionary musicologist from the University of Melbourne, Australia. He published over hundred scholarly articles and several books on the origins of human choral singing, intelligence, and morphology. His latest book "Tiger, Lions and Humans: History of Rivalry, Conflict, Reverence and Love" (Logos, 2014) discusses evolutionary interaction between humans and big cats.



Manfred Waltl, PhD, biologist and theologian from Munich, Germany. He studied biology, chemistry and theology and finished his studies with a PhD on the significance of Sociobiology for Theology and Ethics (published as a book in German). Manfred is a dedicated photographer and took most of the trip photos.



Preetum Gheerawo (Indian name: Kotecha Kristoff) - Known throughout the book as 'Kotecha', is a Theoretical Physicist (specialised in Radio-Astronomy and in Cosmology), and works in Mauritius as High School educator in Physics. A Former scholar in Evolutionary Biology and self-learned Naturalist. Lover of big cats and dedicated to their conservation. A Keen Corbett fan since nearly four decades.




Fernando Quevedo de Oliveira is a photojournalist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He has been working from 1988 at the newspaper O Globo. Published articles in O Globo, Geographic Universal Magazine, Manchete Magazine, Terra Magazine, Nature Magazine. Fernando is an avid nature enthusiast and visited the African savannah several times, countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. He went to India to watch tigers in Nagarhole Park in Karnataka estate.



Marc Newton is Managing Director of London gunmaker John Rigby & Co. (Gunmakers) Ltd. He is a passionate sportsman and began hunting at a young age. Having spent six years studying under and working with Paul Roberts, a previous owner of the company, Marc has dedicated himself to revitalising the Rigby name in the modern gunmaking world with the help of his talented young team, and to helping the public find out more about the fascinating history of the firm, its guns, and the extraordinary men and women who used them, including Jim Corbett.



A lit white candle stands on a mossy forest floor. The candle is partially melted, with a bright flame at the top. The background is a dense forest floor covered in green moss and fallen leaves.

"Behind Jim Corbett's Stories: An Analytical Journey to 'Corbett's Places' and Unanswered Questions" attempts to answer some of the lingering questions of Corbett's legacy based on rigorous scholarly study of the existing evidence and archival documents. The book is written by a group of authors from different continents, passionate fans of nature conservation and researchers of Jim Corbett's legacy. The reader will find scholarly explanations of some of the mysterious encounters, described in Corbett stories, as well as details of his hunts, including case studies of the places, people, dates and controversies surrounding some of the Corbett stories. The book is the result of multiple trips of the authors to Kumaon, the backdrop of Jim Corbett's stories.

"Many people have expressed an eagerness to go on the trail of Jim Corbett. They will be curious and have questions, doubts and imagination about the legendary hunter-writer-conservationist. This book will answer their questions and lay to rest their doubts."

Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh

Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore and WWF-India

"'Behind Jim Corbett's stories' is a rich reward for true Corbett aficionados. An invaluable guide to anyone with the will to make a trip to Corbett country and second only to Corbett's own words."

Keith McCafferty

award-winning author and survival and outdoors skills editor of Field & Stream magazine, USA

LOGOS

