



The completed exterior of the Community Centre, decorated for the Grand Opening Ceremony in July of last year

SPITI PROJECTS WINS LOW CARBON AWARD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

The award was made at The United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Marrakesh in November, 2016.

The focus of the conference was to promote clean energy through solar solutions in order to reduce carbon emissions.

The message of the conference was “together we build a better future as of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015.”



The Spiti masons and labourers after the first year of building



Joan Pollock and Lara Davies, Architect- Co Director from Auroville Earth Institute, receiving the award in Marrakech

Here is my acceptance speech

As founder of the Spiti Projects Charity, I've been working for the last twenty three years with people who live in the Spiti Valley, a remote area high in the Himalayas, situated in India on the border with Tibet. For the 10,000 people who make a living from subsistence farming, life is hard and physically challenging at an altitude of 12,000ft, but they are warm hearted with a strong sense of spirituality. We are delighted to have received this award.

We had already built a hospital and a school, but found that using cement was not suitable for this climate, where winter temperatures fall to minus 25- 30 degrees centigrade. We realized that

cement had no insulating properties as it made the buildings damp and led to respiratory problems and arthritis.

When the local people, Tibetan by culture, asked us to build a Community Centre for their meetings and cultural activities we decided to return to the ancient traditional mud brick method for its thermal qualities, which had been practised in this area for thousands of years.

Living above the tree line, trucks of firewood wood were brought in by the government each winter. Apart from the exorbitant cost to the families, I was horrified to see forests being destroyed in the lower



The Low Carbon award

valleys and felt that an alternative must be found. We also wanted to take advantage of the abundance of solar energy in the valley to give warmth to houses and to save on using combustible fuel.

I approached Satprem Maini, UNESCO Chair for South Asia, at the Auroville Earth Institute with the type of the building we had in mind. Satprem and his team developed this architectural plan for the Kaza Eco-Community Centre.

This innovative exciting structure was developed to our specifications, built with Compressed Stabilized Earth Blocks, in combination and rammed earth blocks. The foundations were re-enforced with steel as protection in this 4.5 Richter scale earthquake zone.

The people of Spiti are proud of this magnificent modern looking, Eco-Community Centre, which is fast becoming their new meeting place and the focus of life in Kaza.

The inhabitants of Spiti are already using this environmental thermal technology for the building of their new homes. This will save on fuel bills and CO₂ carbon emissions.

The building was officially opened in July 2015 and we are encouraged that the government plan to use this technology for their official buildings.

Positive results from our temperature test in the Centre

Last winter I went to Spiti with Swati Negi, our architect and the Project Manager for the building of the Community Centre, 2012 -15. We wanted to test the temperatures inside to the building to see if our technology was working as we planned.

Armed with five thermometers, Swati measured the temperatures in all the rooms in the north, south, east and west aspects over a period of 24 hours. She even spent a night in the building to make sure she had accurate readings.

To our absolute delight, the building temperatures recorded did not go below freezing at any time but remained above zero, even though the night temperature outside was minus 18 - 20 degrees centigrade. This proved to us that this ancient technology that we are trying to re introduce to the valley is really working.

This proves that there is no need to burn wood to keep warm.

Recently, the local Government, as a result of this report, has commissioned Jeet to build a library in New Kaza using the CSEB mud brick method. Also in Keylong, the Government Headquarters for Spiti & Lahoul District, there is talk of building using this eco-environmental technology.



In the winter temperatures in Spiti often reach minus 30 degrees



The current use of wood for heating is ecologically destructive



The effect of drought on subsistence farming



Peas being weighed by Delhi buyers.



Grass being harvested to feed the animals in winter

During my visit to Spiti this July, I realized for the first time just how badly the harshness of drought affects the subsistence farmers. Because there was very little snow last winter, there was very little water in the mountain streams to water the peas, the main cash crop for the Spiti people. This was followed by no rain and very hot temperatures in summer and had a disastrous effect on the crops. It was awful to see dried up fields that should have been green and full of plump peas. The failure of their crops is a serious situation for these remote village farmers. It will mean a lean winter and a struggle to make ends meet.



Harsh drought conditions in the summer have a disastrous effect on villagers crops

Once again, as anywhere in the world, we are reminded about the importance of education, so that future generations will not become victims of climate change and suffer the economic consequences.

HAND KNITTED SOCKS FROM SPITI



Spiti women follow the style brought to the valley by the Moravian missionaries in 1853. This is the continental method of passing wool over the needle with the left hand rather than the right hand, as is the custom here. The patterns are colourful and intricate.

£10 a pair plus postage from:
joanswinnerton@gmail.com



Spiti at The Royal Geographical Society

In the spring, as many of you know, we showed a film *Saving Spiti* at the Royal Geographical Society of a journey we made with many faithful supporters to Spiti in July 2015 for the grand opening of the Community Centre. The film was expertly produced and generously funded by Hugh Purcell, a BBC documentary film producer. Zena, our photographer, did a marvellous job capturing the life and atmosphere of the Tibetan culture of the people who live in the valley.

This was a wonderful evening to which over 400 people attended, many of whom had travelled to

Spiti with us in the past. We invited Jeet, our project manager, and his wife Samtan to London especially to attend the event. They arrived in their magnificent traditional Spiti costumes that added a wonderful atmosphere to the evening.

The evening event was generously sponsored by **Indus Experiences**, the company we use for all our travel arrangements to Spiti

THE EVENING MADE JUST OVER £10,000 TOWARDS THE FITTING OUT OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE.



Guests arrive for the screening of the film *Saving Spiti*



A scene from the film, women dancing in Spiti traditional dress

Woodstock School raise funds for a dental chair in Kaza

Woodstock School is an international boarding school located in Landour, near Mussoorie, in the foothills of the Himalaya.

A group of teenagers from the school cycled from Kaza to Manali, with the intention of raising enough

funds to support the Spiti projects and provide a dental chair for the people of Kaza.

We need to recognise The Woodstock Pizzeria Club, a group of students who gave up their time to prepare pizzas for the community. The profit from sales

was generously donated towards the purchase of the dental chair.

The students raised £1400.00. A Big Thank you to all the students who took part. This is a fantastic achievement and will give the local people the dental facility they so badly need.



Jeet with the cyclists on the roof of the Centre



Enthusiastic pizza chefs



Spiti - A Himalayan Story

A photographic exhibition by Joan Pollock
at The Royal Geographical Society



Photographic panels in the exhibition that 3,883 people visited

At the same time as the showing of the film, I held a Photographic Exhibition in the Gallery in April. We had more than 3,880 visitors over a period

of a month and made many new contacts. People visited the craft stall and purchased Spiti socks, shawls, photographs and postcards.



Grandfather with his children and ploughing yaks



Young Tibetan nuns



Spiti schoolgirl



Women taking a break from the pea harvesting

The Maynes Eye Clinic for the Community Centre

During my Photographic Exhibition in April, one of our visitors approached me with a suggestion for our Eye clinic. She worked at The Chartered Standard Bank and through her kind contacts we were introduced to Mr Raheem Ramathullah of **The International Eye Foundation** who lives in Washington DC and is the Eye Health Global Leader for sustainability programming for many countries including India.

Raheem invited us to visit **The Rotary Eye Hospital in Palampur, Himachel Pradesh** to meet the staff and discuss how we could work together. This amazing hospital is tucked just outside the town, only an hour's drive from Dharamsala. Jeet and I travelled to Palampur to meet the surgeons Dr Sharma, Dr Rohit and Dr Sudir.

We had an excellent day being

In September this year Raheem and his team of doctors made the arduous journey to Spiti and spent three days in Kaza in discussion with the Spiti Projects Society about the options available.

Raheem sent us this report after his visit.

Since there is no such previous experience or centre we can plan on a very conservative level. We have priced in the latest technology equipment and the best for this centre. So even though the capital investment is high it's still worth it in the long run and would advise going with the high end equipment for which we have planned.

We have estimated that the population who would have access to this centre would be as many as 60,000 to start with and would cover the whole of Lahoul & Spiti and beyond. The goal is that by the 3rd year the locals should be running this on their own with guidance from us.



Patients at Palampur are treated with the latest equipment



shown round the hospital. The equipment, mostly from Switzerland, was most impressive and very up to date. The surgical team treats over 500 patients a day who come from as far away as Ladakh. I explained that we had allocated rooms for an Eye Clinic in the Community Centre and that this was part of our original plan. The doctors were delighted and said they had wanted to work in this remote area of Spiti for a long time.



The Rotary Hospital, Palampur

This will save eye patients from travelling 300K to Shimla or a 12-15 hour bus journey to Manali, to find eye treatment.



Raheem and the surgeons with Jeet at The Community Centre in Kaza

The budget we are looking for to set up the following is approximately

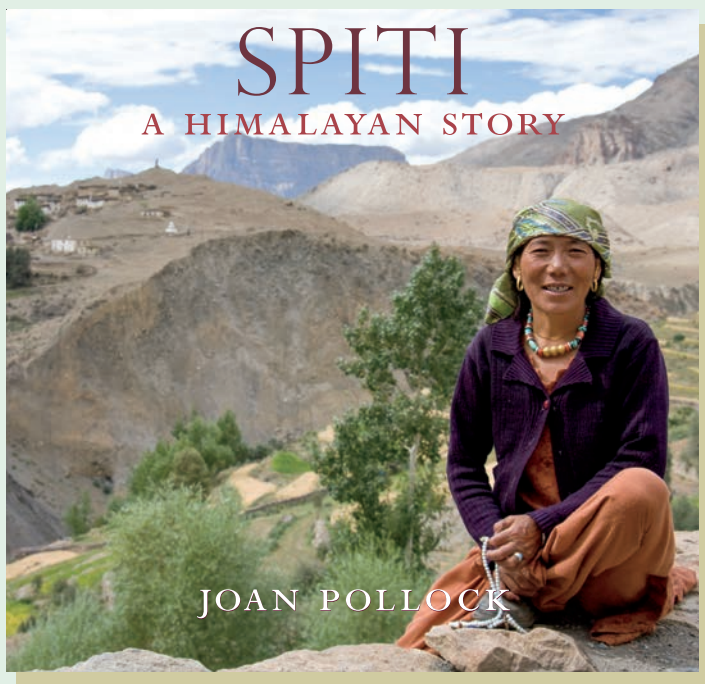
1) An Eye Clinic to be staffed throughout the year. (by two Spiti trainees)

2) Operating theatre at the Community Centre for surgical teams to visit 3-4 times a year.

3) The training of 2 students from Spiti on a two year course at the at the LV Prasad Eye Institute at Hyderabad

£50,000/- in year 1 and £15,000/- in the 2nd year.

BOOK AND DVD OFFER



SPITI A HIMALAYAN STORY

To coincide with the exhibition held earlier this year in April we published **SPITI A Himalayan Story**, a photographic essay which explores the many aspects of the life and culture in the Spiti Valley.

Joan Pollock's wonderful photographs follow the landscape, the people and their customs through the seasons and give an extraordinarily vivid insight into this traditional society trying to come to terms with the modern world.

Paperback, 262 x 255mm, 122 pages
£20.00 plus postage

Available from: joanswinnerton@gmail.com



Saving Spiti

On the border between India and Tibet lies the Spiti Valley. Hemmed in by the Himalayas and at a height of 4,500 metres, it is remote and inaccessible. It is the last enclave of the Tibetan Buddhist where some monasteries are over 4000 years old. It was, until recently, a politically restricted area, shut off from the rest of the world.

For the last 25 years, retired British nurse, Joan Pollock, has made it her quest to bring health and education to the valley while respecting the old traditions. The press has dubbed her 'the angel of Spiti.' This documentary, filmed in 2016, is about her work and the people of Spiti who she has grown to love.

Producer: Hugh Purcell, formerly BBC Documentaries Department

Director: Zena Merton, winner of One World Documentary Award, 2012

£15 plus postage

Available from: joanswinnerton@gmail.com

Saving Spiti



Working to improve the quality of life of the people of the Spiti Valley

Trustees; Joan Pollock, Jean Rivington, Tony Swinnerton
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