



Darjeeling Railway Community Support

by Val and David Mead  
(on behalf of the DRCS Trustees)

We departed from our home in Malvern with a full car plus our cosy caravan laden with various Station signs, Tibetan prayer flags, tuk-tuks, 20 x 6ft bamboo poles with prayer flags attached

and some of our beautiful woven items from Hayden Hall, Darjeeling for our DRCS stall situated in the newly refurbished Waiting Room.

### The DRCS at North Queensferry!

We spent Friday evening – along with other enthusiastic DHRS members – weaving the Prayer Flags around and under the fencing, flower pots and sign boards on North Queensferry Station. (so not really surprising when we received some strange looks from people waiting for the train for Edinburgh!)

We were delighted to meet Neil Aitken who contacted us after seeing the Darjeeling Station Sign featured in the last issue of The Mail. (Our thanks go to Keith & Mary Strickland who donated the sign to DRCS) Neil lives in Dunblane but came along to NQF to meet us – and collect his DHRS Sign! He brought along his father-in-law Charlie Lorimer (aged 88) who had worked in the jute industry in Calcutta in his younger days. He had also spent some time in Darjeeling and was delighted to share his memories of his time in India with us. Charlie enjoyed the day immensely and according to Neil he hasn't stopped talking about it since!



Charlie with Neil and Val. We raised £335 with our stall over the Weekend - plus £1,500, which is the DRCS share from the NQF Trust who organised the trips to the top of the Forth Bridge! Our thanks go to everyone who helped to make such an amazing total possible!

*"I went to Darjeeling with my wife Alison as part of a holiday to India in 2010. Alison had been born in Kolkata during the period that her father Charlie was an assistant manager at Auckland Mill, up river at Jagatdal on the banks of the Hooghly. She had not been back to India since the family returned home when she was a toddler, and both Alison and Neil were keen to include Kolkata and Darjeeling on their trip to the country. The Darjeeling part of the story goes back to the time when Charlie worked in the jute industry in Bengal, like so many others from the Dundee area who were in mainly overseer and manager positions. He had left Dundee in 1951 aged 24 to work for Birds, managing agents for several jute mills in the Kolkata area. For those of you familiar with the mills, he worked in Northbrook, Naihati, Kinnison, Lansdowne and finally Auckland, before returning home with his family in 1961.*

*In April 1957, Charlie took influenza, and was recommended to go to the hills or the coast to recover. The Lansdowne mill clerk had a friend who owned Jalpaiguri Airlines (he had bought two DC3 Dakotas after the war, accommodating both passengers and cargo). Arriving at Jalpaiguri, he was too late to catch the DHR train so had to take a taxi up the hill. He stayed in the Bellevue Hotel above the Mall. He was meant to be in Darjeeling only for a week, but it was extended to two weeks to ensure his full recovery, so had to be sent more money by the mill! Whilst there, he travelled on the train part way down the line, trekked on ponies with a chokra visiting local sights including the racecourse, tea gardens, Tiger Hill and Tensing's House. Joining the locals in the evening promenading on the Mall was another interesting pastime! The different air and lower temperature did its work, and at the end of his fortnight, he took the DHR down to Siliguri and then flew back to Kolkata.*

*So Darjeeling came highly recommended "you simply have to go there"! So Alison and I duly visited and had a marvellous time – highlights included the DHR of course, especially for me because I have a "passing interest" in steam trains! Once we returned from holiday, signing up as a member of DHRS became a priority. And the chance a few months ago to buy the Darjeeling sign, supporting the work of the DRCS as a result, was just simply too much of a temptation!"*

Neil Aitken.

David and I were also delighted to meet Sudan Dewan (DHRS member 1438) and his wife. Sudan is a Gurka from Kurseong - although he now lives in Glasgow!

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Val Mead, Peter Barnes, David Mead and Mrs Dewan. Mr Sudan Dewan (DHRS member 1438) is a Gurka from Kurseong – although he now lives in Glasgow! Picture by Sudan Dewan