

## Bevir Fund Report – Adelaide Goodeve

*Adelaide Goodeve was awarded a grant from the OW Charitable Trust's Bevir Memorial Fund for her expedition to Ladakh in 2015.*

As I unpacked, the stench of Yak dung fires emanated from my 65 litre purple Osprey bag. Suddenly my memories of the 5-week expedition spent exploring the Zaskar Valley, Ladakh with the British Exploring Society flooded back. It is an experience that will remain with me forever.

Ladakh emits an aura of mystery that entices travellers from all over the world. Isolated from the rest of India, it contains a corner of the Buddhist world and is prized with complex mountain ranges of outstanding beauty, creating the unique qualities of Ladakhiness. Unfortunately, as tourists seek to discover its treasures and the modern world encroaches, Ladakh's unique culture and characteristics are gradually being eroded in favour for the Western lifestyle and ideals.

The Zaskar Valley is a remote part of Ladakh, cut off from Leh during the winter. The valley is spectacular, with immense mountains dusted with snow, magnificent glaciers, intricately braided rivers and diverse flora and fauna. You can hear marmots screech across the U-shaped valley and observe the weather developing along the horizon. Fortunately, it was our playground for 5-weeks.

Our expedition comprised of 82 like-minded people with differing backgrounds and we established our base camp at the Pensi La (4400m), nestled among dazzling blue lakes and over shadowed by P7 (5600m). We were divided into groups of approximately 15 people, including a medic, science and adventure leader. I lived, camped and embarked on various epic excursions with my group, 'Zaskar', including exploring the impressive Durang Durung glacier.



The glacier is a 24.2km powerful ice blue tongue, which snakes through towering steel grey craggy mountains that pierce the sky and its snout protrudes into a desolate valley. Brown dust sprinkles the white ice and the sides are littered with jagged boulders. Fierce blue streams weave across the surface and a maze of crevasses make trekking hazardous. We are attached to each other with ropes and armed with ice axes and crampons; we step purposefully on the ice, careful not to slip, but bubbling with excitement. A highlight was climbing down a moulin hole and hearing the life of the glacier: deep vibrations of ice creaking and water gushing.



Gathering scientific data was a significant element of the expedition. Subsequently, we placed ablation stakes along the glacier to understand present melt rate. To our astonishment, some areas melted 15cm in 24 hours!

I was privileged to experience the quintessential Ladakhi culture, because my newly acquainted friends invited me to spend my final night at their yak camp.



The grandmother, her four grandchildren, aged between 18 and 26, and their 50 dzos (hybrid between a yak and domestic cow) lived in a simple camp, comprising of two small stone structures. While the sun sank behind the mountains and a snow blizzard grew, we herded their dzo and observed the 3-hour milking ritual with fascination. Late into the night, we all sat in a dark

cosy room chatting through sign language and pictures, laughing, singing and drinking yak butter and sweet chai tea, with a smoky yak dung fire for warmth.

To immerse myself in the Himalayan wilderness and unplug from Western society was a wonderful experience. I am excited to develop the specialist mountaineering, science and media skills I learnt to my next adventure: traversing 75-miles of the Juneau Icefield while conducting scientific research for my dissertation!



*Adelaide Goodeve*