

## Himalayan Rest Houses

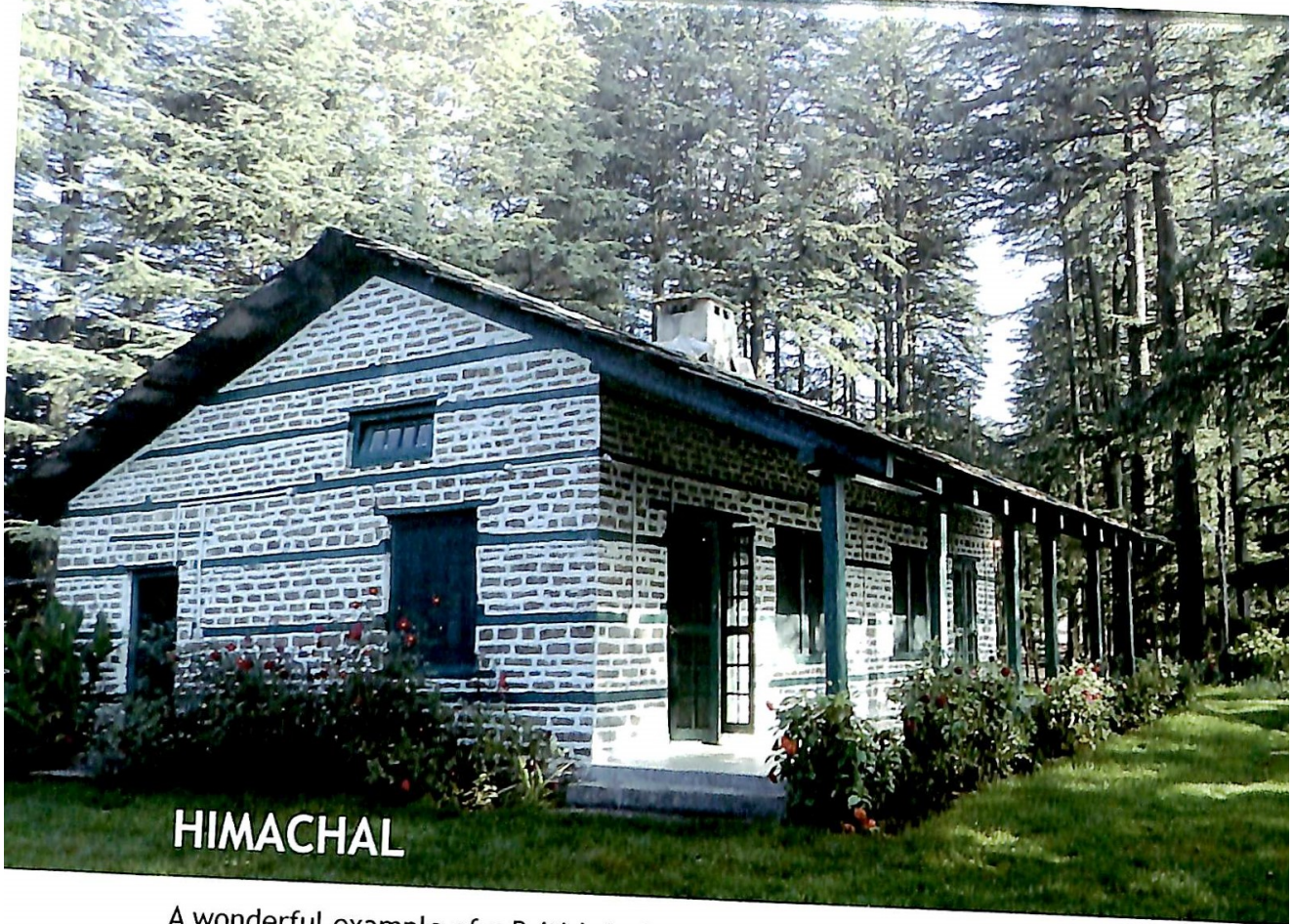
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After a long arduous trek, one of the most welcoming signs are the three words Forest Rest House, nestling amidst beauty that one would treasure, probably for a lifetime! A welcoming chowkidar, basic amenities and *chhota hazri* (high tea of breakfast) awaits a weary traveller here. After a restful night, you gather your wits, refreshed enough to face your journey to the next destination, if lucky, to another rest house. This is how the British era trekkers went about their pleasure treks, and the forest officers looked after magnificent forests by riding horses from one Rest House to another. Once motor roads were constructed deep in the Himalaya, another variety of rest houses namely the Public Works Department Rest Houses were constructed for officers travelling on road. These PWD rest houses, were more spacious and well stocked as there were located on motor roads. Eventually, when important dignitaries started travelling on these roads, Circuit Houses were constructed which were a notch fancier than the PWD Rest Houses.

Today, many rest houses of yesteryear continue to welcome travellers and trekkers in their fold. These rest houses can be booked only through 'Babus' (government officials), and can be occupied by visitors only if they are officially available at that time. In several parts of far flung areas like Arunachal Pradesh, Circuit Houses are only places available to stay for a visitor.

Here are a few of the Himalayan Rest Houses that I have stayed in and would love stay there again to get *bada hazri* (lunch or dinner!)



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A wonderful example of a British-built Forest Rest House (FRH), at Takrasi, below Jalori pass in Kullu

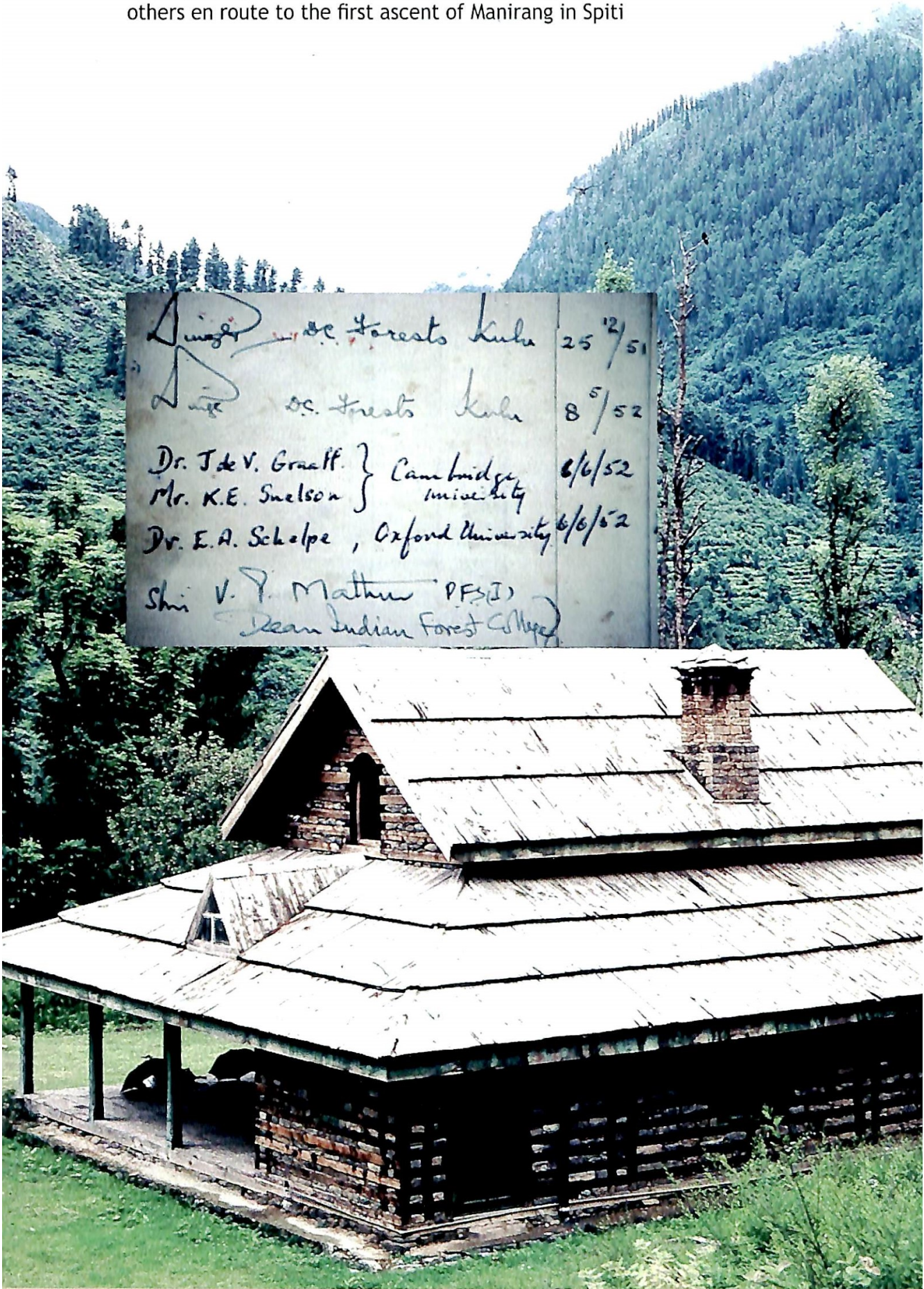
PWD R.H. Across Jalori pass at Shoja



A photograph of a rustic log cabin with a corrugated metal roof, situated in a lush forest of tall evergreen trees. In the background, a steep, rocky mountain peak rises against a clear sky. The foreground is filled with large rocks and green vegetation. A large tree trunk is visible on the right side of the frame.

A classic FRH after entering  
Bara Bangahal valley  
across a high pass

Pulga FRH is on the way from Manikaran to Pin-Parvati pass. This FRH was used by many climbers. (Inset) Entry in the log by Dr J. de. V. Graaff and others en route to the first ascent of Manirang in Spiti



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Mr. K.E. Snelson } Cambridge University  
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Shri V. P. Mathur PFS(I)  
Dean Indian Forest College



Newly constructed bungalow at Kalpa,  
Kinnaur. (Inset) Outside the old  
bungalow at Kalpa, with Kinner Kailash  
range in the background.



Public Works Department (PWD) rest house at Khanag, below Jalori pass, Kullu. (Inset) Travel writer Penelope Chetwode died in these hills and a memorial plaque is erected here



Rest House at Vijaynagar, at head of Noa Dthing valley. Perhaps the most distant RH in India as it can be approached by a seven day trek or by helicopter!