

# News from Alan and Grace

March 2005

Not a lot to chat about this month, so we've put in a few more items of interest about Paul and the Royal Marines - as well as a few photographs of tennis in Qatar. We didn't go to the motorcycle GP this year, or the Tour of Qatar cycle race, or even the Qatar Masters Golf, so only a few photographs of the many sporting events held in Qatar recently.

Firstly, our thoughts and prayers are for our dear friends Jeff and Eunice in Reading, England. Eunice is undergoing surgery for a triple heart by-bass.

heard that she's pulled through the operation and is making a very slow recovery. We thank God. Eunice has been a friend of Alan's mother for about 75 years! Must be one of the longest friendships on record. As a much younger person, Jeff and Eunice introduced us (as a family) to Rhossili Bay (left) on the Gower Peninsula of South Wales, during a caravanning holiday based in Oxwich. Many years later I returned with my own family and took some photographs of this beautiful place, a few of which were reproduced in the *Geographical Magazine* - including one on the front cover. Time passed once more before I returned to Rhossili, this time with Grace in 2003.



No small operation when in your 80's! As I've been writing this, I've been on the telephone and

Secondly, Grace's sister, Nadia (back row, far left in photograph below), is coming to Qatar. We've just obtained her visa, which can be extended up to 6 months. During her stay here, we hope she will find work and make a much more comfortable living than she can in the Philippines, where things are going from bad to worse for ordinary working folk due to huge increases in the cost of living - and no increase in salaries. We hope she will arrive by the end of April. Whilst thinking about the Philippines, one of Grace's cousins has recently married. Congratulations to the happy couple.



# The Wedding Album



*The Avelino family*

*Back row, L to R: Henry, Harry, Harold, Regin, Tita  
Middle row: Carlina (Grace's mother), Pacing, Judy, Virgie, Charles, Hans, ?  
Front row: ?, ?, Servillano, Clavelina (Grace's grandmother), Leonida (Bride's mother), Janet, 'Bong',  
Christine, Chris de Alma, Nadia (Grace's sister).*



*Alexis Daryll - Grace's nephew*



*Michelle (Grace's sister), Carlina (Grace's mother), Lea, Sharoll (Graces  
cousins), Andrea (Grace's niece via cousin).*



*left: Grace's family:  
Uncle Julius with her Dad*

*right: Grace's family:  
Michael, Daryll, Dad,  
Mum,  
Michelle, Nadia*



*left: Grace's family:  
Uncle Servillano with  
Auntie Leonida (Grace's mother's  
brother and sister)*





## 42 COMMANDO



*Paul Alan John Cook*

42 Commando Royal Marines is based at Bickleigh Barracks a few miles outside Plymouth in Devon. The Unit was formed in August 1943 during the Second World War and moved to its present location on 16 September 1971.

### History

A Short History of 42 CDO RM & Bickleigh Barracks

Bickleigh Camp was built by A French & Co. in early 1940. The site was originally designated as a sewage disposal farm, but the Plymouth Emergency Hostels Society needed an evacuee camp; in fact the first occupants were Free French and Polish servicemen.

The following year the camp was taken over by the Canadian Fire Fighting Service until the end 1942 when it was returned to the Civil Defence Organisation for its original purpose of housing

refugees. The camp was called the General Evacuation Centre (South West).

By the end of the war Polish Naval personnel once again occupied the camp but it was empty when the first Royal Marines arrived, namely the advanced elements of 27 (RM) Training Battalion in 1945.

In Burma during January 1945, following the capture of the Myebon Peninsular, 3 Commando Brigade was given the task of making a further landing near Kangaw, with the intention of cutting Japanese lines of withdrawal down the coast.

On 22 January 1945, 42 Royal Marines Commando (Lt Col H H Dales) together with No 1 Commando landed and occupied positions in the mangrove swamp.

Subsequently the Commando was ordered to capture a heavily wooded ridge known as Hill 70. Two days of hand-to-hand fighting were necessary before the Japanese could be driven from the ridge, and no sooner were they dislodged than they subjected it to heavy artillery fire.

After a lull of several days, the Japanese counterattacked at dawn on 31 January 1945. The enemy attacked repeatedly. In spite of heavy casualties to the Commando, the Japanese were finally beaten off and withdrew leaving their dead lying thickly among forward Commando positions.

In a Special Order of the Day to 3 Commando Brigade, Lt Gen Sir Philip Christison, Commander of XV Corps, concluded. "The Battle of Kangaw has been the decisive battle of the whole Arakan campaign, and that it was won was very largely due to your magnificent defence of Hill 70".

On 1 April 1946 an Infantry Training Cadre was established, part of the Royal Marines Training Group (Devon), and the camp soon developed into the Infantry Training School with Officer Cadet Training Wing, a Commando School and Cliff Assault Wing (base at St. Ives).

In 1950 Bickleigh was redesignated the Commando School Royal Marines, which it remained until 1960 when the school moved to Lymptstone.

The value of Bickleigh as a military training area lies in its close proximity to Dartmoor, with its ideal training areas and ranges, coupled with its proximity to Plymouth for easy maritime access. However, during the 1950's, despite continuing as the Royal Marines Commando School, a number of operational tasks fell to its occupants.

The government decided to send a small Commando Force when the Korean War broke out. 41 (Independent) Commando Royal Marines, which formed up at Bickleigh on 16 August 1950, included many members of the staff. This unit disbanded at the Royal Marines Barracks Stonehouse on 22 February 1952.

In September 1954, 42 Commando returned to the UK after the draw-down of the British forces in Malta, and remained there as an operational nucleus till they were reactivated to become the first commando to embark in a Commando Carrier, HMS Bulwark in March 1960.

During the intervening years, the unit was brought up to strength for the Suez crisis, rejoining 3 Commando Brigade in Malta and was the initial landing force across the beaches of Port Said in November 1958 for the Lebanon crisis.

It was during this time that the decision was taken to move the Commando School to the newly developed Lymptstone and in early 1960 the school redeployed there, just in time to allow Bickleigh to be used for the deactivation of 41 Commando. This unit formed on 31 March 1960 and remained there as part of the UK Strategic Reserve, taking part in exercises as far away as Norway and the West Indies. It was operationally deployed to Tanganyika and Kenya in February 1964 returning to Bickleigh on 7 April.

A large redevelopment programme got under way that year; the wooden and nissen huts were replaced by a permanent brick barracks, which was finally completed in 1971. By this time 41 Commando, having carried out two operational tours in Northern Ireland, moved to Malta as garrison troops on 3 September 1971. This coincided with the withdrawal of 3 Commando Brigade from the Far East and 42 Commando once again took over occupation of Bickleigh, where they have remained until this day.

During the initial landings on the Falkland Islands on 21 May 1982, 42 Commando RM (Lt Col N F Vaux RM) were Brigade Reserve at Port San Carlos, before seizing Mount Kent in a night move by helicopter. By 4 June the unit had moved forward, mostly under cover of darkness, to positions west of high ground overlooking Stanley and the last Argentine stronghold. After days of probing reconnaissance, a Brigade assault took place on the night of 11/12 June in which the Commando's task was to secure Mount Harriet on the Brigade right flank.

By moonlight and in freezing temperatures, 42 Commando moved undetected through enemy minefields in a 9 kilometre right-flanking movement to surprise the enemy in their rear. Consecutive assaults by "K" and "L" Companies followed, up steep slopes onto company positions amongst the crags at either end of the feature. Careful planning, resolute leadership and the boldness and determination of marines against initially strong resistance and continuous artillery bombardment, eventually prevailed. By first light more than 30 enemy had been killed and over 300 prisoners taken as 42 Commando consolidated on Mount Harriet.

Apart from many operational deployments to Northern Ireland, deploying troops to the New Hebrides in 1980 and exercising regularly overseas, the commando has recently seen operational service in South Georgia, Montserrat in 1995 and South Armagh in 1998/99

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Thanks to the website of the Royal Marines for this information - see last newsletter for the URL.

Once again it has been a privilege for us to attend the Ladies Qatar Open tennis tournament. Here are a few photographs of this prestigious event. This year was blighted by quite a lot of rain which delayed many matches.



*The contestants of the Ladies Final - Qatar Open*



*Sharapova serving the first ball of the final*

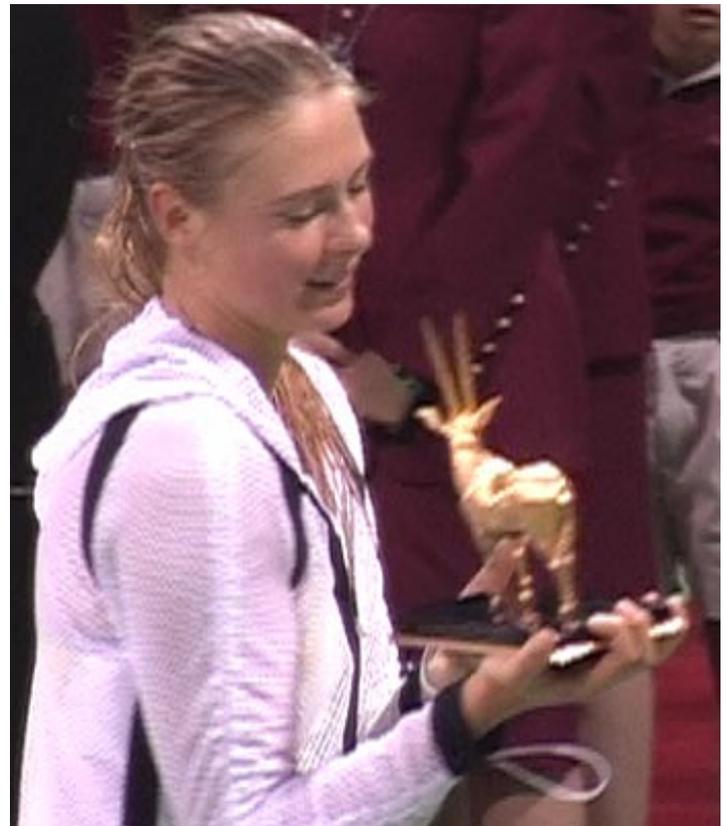
## *Qatar Open 2005*



*Sharapova holding the still yet to be won, diamond studded tennis ball which will be presented to the first lady to win this tournament three times*



*Sharapova and Molik shaking hands at the start of this year's competition final*



*Sharapova with her prize for winning this year; the Golden Oryx trophy*

## QP launches Power English course

DOHA: 'Power English', the new Elementary English course at Qatar Petroleum's Corporate Training Department, was launched at the Al-Ghazal Club yesterday.

The introduction of this competency-based training programme marks an important step for QP's English Curriculum Development Project, in which new English language training materials are being implemented at all levels of the Corporate Training portfolio, said a news release.

The initiative was included in the recommendations made by the Strategic Qatarisation Plan's English Competence Team towards quality Qatarisation in the energy and indus-



Picture: SALIM MATRAMKOT

Speakers at the launch of the Power English course.

try sector. The launch was attended by senior representatives of QP departments and subsidiaries as well as other training institutions such as the

British Council.

Meanwhile, the QP's English Competence Team announced the launch of a website dedicated to English

language issues in the Qatarisation of the country's energy and industry sector at [www.ec.com.qa](http://www.ec.com.qa).

- THE PENINSULA

*The newspaper article above, shows some of the team members from the English Curriculum Development Project, with whom Alan works.*

*From left to right: Vonnice, Brian, Yousef (big boss!), Julian, Gabi (team leader), Antony, Tim, Chris.*

### Paul

We've just learned that Alan's son, Paul, now with 42 Commando, has completed a mountaineering course in snowy Scotland. The Commando was accompanied by a reporter from the *Evening Herald*, a Scottish newspaper, who wrote an account, and took some photographs, of the training. We received the article (from Paul) as a couple of scans (two halves) of the feature today (14<sup>th</sup> March) and it will be available to read on our website by the time you get this (Yes, I did join the two halves together!). If you don't have web access and receive your newsletter by post, you will find it enclosed with this newsletter. The article is headlined:

*So, have you got what it takes to be a marine?*

### Baby Boom!

Alan works in quite a small department - less than 20 people, several of whom are ladies. There are now FOUR men who have pregnant wives - all about 1 month apart - the forecast is for babies to be born in the months of June, July, August and September 2005. That must be something of a record.

Grace is now bulging very considerably, passing the five months mark recently. She was pleased to receive a parcel from the Philippines, containing several items of maternity wear. Being so petite means that it is very difficult for her to find clothes that fit her, here in Doha.