

# Desert

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS  
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
AROUND THE WORLD

*news*

MARCH 2007





# *Editorial Ramblings*

Alan has returned to Kuwait - hence the change in title of our magazine. We first lived in Kuwait from the end of 2000 until 'Bomber Bush' was about to destroy Baghdad in 2003. It's great that he has been able to see so many of our friends who are still there, or who also left and later returned.

We certainly never expected to return, but life, as Alan is fond of saying, is full of surprises. How long Alan will remain in Kuwait is uncertain, as Grace and Little Lad are still stuck in the Philippines until Alan's residency has been processed - which could take many months - in which case Alan won't be staying long! Kuwait has certainly developed in the four years we've been away. The new Marina Mall was being constructed at the time we left (see front cover photograph) and a huge number of blocks have sprung up in areas where there was only sand. There are more Ferraris and Bentley Continental GTs on the streets and shopping malls are everywhere. The people are just the same - the students need just as much encouragement to learn as they did before.

It will be great to be together again. Little Lad needs his Papa - and his Papa needs him too! We are finding this time apart quite difficult and hope to be together again very soon - wherever it will be - Philippines or Kuwait.

This edition of our newsletter will be a much smaller in content than usual. There just hasn't been time to add any more, so we hope to make up for that in future. All the travelling and getting Alan started in his new job has taken its toll of the hours we have available for producing our newsletter. Alan has only just bought a lap-top computer, and without this it would have been impossible to produce at all.

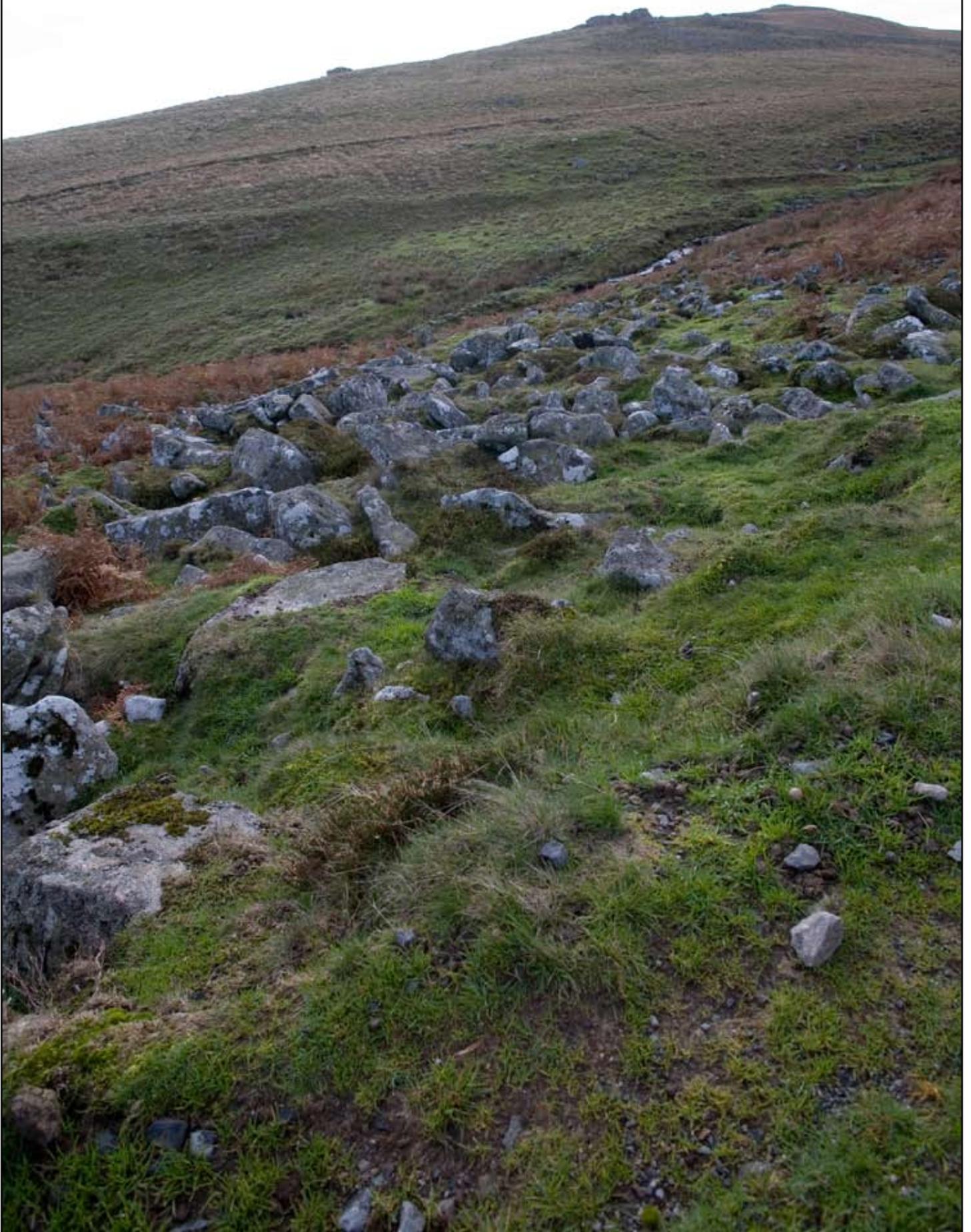
Below, is a photograph of Alan's new flat in Kuwait - none of JP's toys in sight - what a shame we aren't sharing this lovely home.



*Cover photograph:* Independence Tower from Marina Mall, Kuwait.

*Alan & Grace*

# *Beautiful Dartmoor*





*Friends in  
Kuwait*





When we came to live in Kuwait in 2000, we were very privileged to make so many good friends. Alan has been catching up with many of them and has enjoyed many a good meal in doing so - a big thank you to you all. Shown on these two pages are:

- Steven & Eun Sil Jacques
  - Don Prades
  - The Heath Family
  - Franza von Horsten
  - John & Sharina Batchelor
- (Please forgive any spelling mistakes)*







Touareg

OFF



*This page and Back Cover photographs: At Bolo Beach near our home in Alaminos, Philippines - just before we left for Kuwait.*



# Alan's Reflections

Having spent 40 years of my life, and a serious percentage of my income, carrying out my passion for photography, it's sometimes interesting to look back and make a few comparisons. I might add, that despite all these years of study and practice, my photography hasn't improved a great deal. I just don't have that artistic or creative flair for making pictures. That however, is by the way. The main thing is that I've enjoyed my hobby a great deal and will continue to do so for the rest of my days. I might add that my photography encompasses both still and movie making. I was telling Grace, just the other day, that when I first started movie making in about 1970, using Super 8 film, it used to cost me £1 per **minute** in film and processing costs. Now, using video (Mini DV), it costs me about £2 per HOUR! As a bonus, the camera now records sound as well as the picture - something one could only dream of back in the early '70's. And £2 now is worth a lot less than £1 was in 1970. The picture quality is also much better than 8mm film. In those days as an apprentice, then student (from 1965 - 1972), I spent almost all my income on photography. Although I'd been interested in photography since a child, it wasn't until I was earning a salary (we called them *wages* at the time - I started on £4.25 per week equivalent in those pre-decimal days!) that I could afford to buy my own camera. Until then, I'd used my fathers' plastic box camera. My first adjustable camera was a second-hand Halina 35x Super that I bought for about £9 if my memory serves me correctly - in about 1967. I had to pay for it in installments of 4/6d a week (£0.22½) and that was more enough for me to pay even though my wages had increased a little by the time I bought it. In those days a roll of Agfa CT18 slide film (process paid) was almost £1.50 (29/11d) - about 25% of my weekly wage at that time. An equivalent roll of film is now about £8 including processing - a tiny percentage of a weeks income now. Photography certainly made (and kept) me a poor man in those days.

You may remember that I bought my first digital still camera about 8 months ago. In terms of film and processing costs, it's about half-paid for itself during that time. Of course it's true that I wouldn't have taken as many photographs (over 5000) had I been using film, but the freedom not to count the cost of each photograph is one of the many attractions of digital photography (married men take note; the no-nag factor is another!). I expect that the cost of the camera will be fully recovered in the first year of ownership. Not a bad investment for a camera that I hope to be using for many years. Surprisingly perhaps; I actually hate changing my camera! I much prefer to use a camera for many years and get to know it so well that I don't need to think about setting it up for a photograph. Of *Photographs on previous 4 pages: Shopping in Salmiya, Kuwait.*

course, one camera isn't the answer for every photographic situation and I do have several cameras and a very wide range of lenses that I have collected over many years - I like to keep them for a long time. The last camera I bought was in Kuwait early in 2001. I bought it to replace the nearly-new camera that I had stolen in the Philippines (almost certainly stolen by a security guard!).

It's interesting ( and comforting, perhaps) to note that despite all the changes (not *improvements*) in technology that have taken place in the last 40 years, photography is still the same! It's still about the **person** using the camera. For example, the *pictures* of the great American landscape photographer, Ansel Adams (1902 - 1984) would still be the same now, and in the future (if he were still alive), as they were then, as the person (the photographer) doesn't change - only the technology. He said "*A photograph is not an accident, it is a concept. It exists at, or before, the moment of exposure of the negative. From that point on to the final print, the process is chiefly one of craft.*" Note the word *concept*. Composition would be another suitable word. That's what made him a great photographer and makes me a mediocre photographer. The *craft* has changed in so many ways, but the *concept* of a good photograph hasn't changed at all. I would also question whether or not technology has improved our photographs in technical terms. I really do believe that the technical quality of our images is pretty much unchanged except in one area - that of colour rendition. To me, lenses haven't improved, in terms of resolution, in the last 35+ years. I still remember a friend of mine showing me some photographs he'd taken with a Mamiya C330 (in 1971) with its standard 80mm lens. The prints were so sharp they almost leapt off the paper to cut you! To this day I've never seen any improvement on that. In 1972 I had a print made that was 8'6" wide (and several of 6'6") from a 35mm negative from a secondhand Pentax Spotmatic and 50mm f1.4 lens I'd bought in 1972 for £95; which I still have! I doubt you'd see any improvement if you printed from the same size original today.

The more things change, the more they stay the same!

*Alan*

Ansel Adams published more than two dozen books, including *My Camera in the National Parks* (1950), *Ansel Adams: Images 1923-1974* (1974), *Photographs of the Southwest* (1976), and *Yosemite and the Range of Light* (1979). Shortly after his death *Ansel Adams: An Autobiography* was published in 1985.

In 1984 the United States Congress established the Ansel Adams Wilderness Area, between Yosemite National Park and the John Muir Wilderness Area in California. Mount Ansel Adams, at the head of the Lyell Fork of the Merced River on the southeast boundary of Yosemite National Park, was named after him in 1985. The Ansel Adams Centre in San Francisco opened in 1989 to exhibit and promote his work along with that of other photographers.

*Photograph overleaf: By the Corniche, Kuwait.*

