

An aerial photograph of a tropical cyclone, showing a dense, bright white eye and a surrounding ring of white clouds. The sky is a deep blue, and the clouds are bright white. In the lower-left quadrant, a formation of nine red aircraft is flying in a circular pattern, leaving thin blue smoke trails. The overall scene is dramatic and captures the power of nature.

Tropical

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

news

SEPTEMBER 2007

Editorial Ramblings



This is a rather special edition, dedicated to my late father, Douglas John Cook, who passed away on 13 September 1996. As September is the month of this anniversary, I thought it would be fitting to include some pages from our family history book about his life, particularly his life in the Royal Air Force during the dark days of World War II - hence the front cover photograph that I took a few years ago, at the Eastbourne Air

Show, of the Red Arrows display team (in their Diamond Nine formation) of whom Douglas was a great fan. September is also the month that my parents were married in 1947. Sadly, Douglas passed away exactly one week before their 50th wedding anniversary.

As a boy, he would often take me to flying displays, mainly to RAF Tangmere, the famous Battle of Britain fighter base, and also to another famous WWII airfield, RAF Biggin Hill. As we lived near Gatwick airport he would also take me to see the aeroplanes there. In those days it was possible to get quite close to them - this being before the days of security paranoia. Douglas loved anything to do with flying.

Despite the horrors of waging war against the Japanese (which gave him an intense hatred of that race of people), he spoke very warmly of his time in the RAF and had a lot of good memories, as well as bad. He also loved Australia and tried to persuade all the family to emigrate there in the 1950's, but it wasn't to be, sadly, as I'm sure we'd have had a great life there. I often wonder how my life might have turned out if I'd been brought up in that wonderful country. One of my grandmother's brothers, William Muggeridge emigrated there in 1928 (we think), so we would have had a family connection there on arrival.

The photograph below was taken on 26 August 1945. Although on this date the Squadron was based in Parafield, Australia, it had initially been split into two sections. The first wave flew to Australia via the Cook Islands; the remainder followed by sea some considerable time afterwards. The photograph looks like it might have been taken in India, in which case, Douglas would have been in the second wave to go to Australia. My father spoke of having had Christmas day 1945 on Bondi Beach, and being given the nickname 'Chunky' due to his love of pineapples! One of the jobs he enjoyed the most was driving road-trains all the way across Australia, from Darwin to the south coast ports - every two weeks. He loved Adelaide in particular. He returned from Australia on board the Athlone Castle (Union Castle Line) and used to tell me stories of how he'd worked on board as a 1st Class Dining Steward - a job that seemed to give him enormous satisfaction and pleasure.

Alan



Photograph above: Douglas John Cook, back row, 3rd from right, with 238(T) Squadron, RAF during WWII.

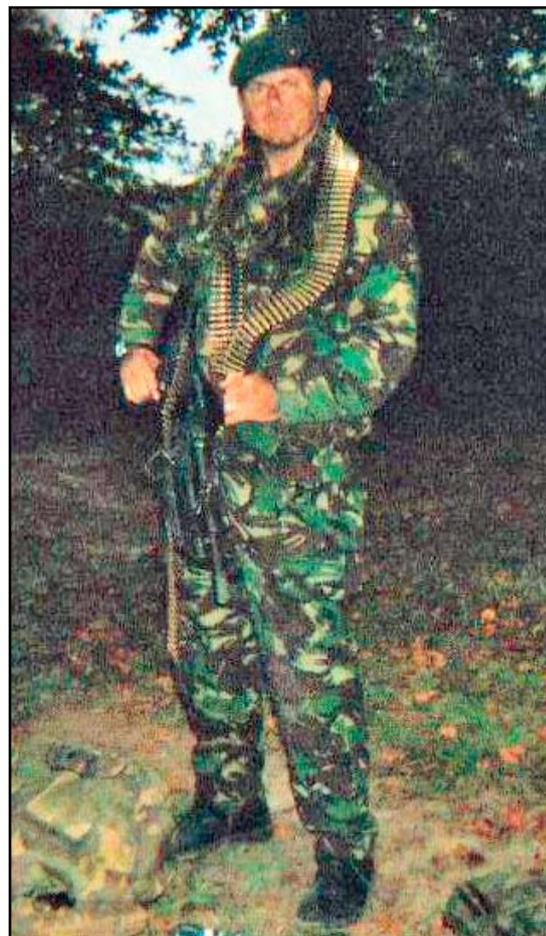
Front Cover photograph: The Red Arrows. The R.A.F. formation flying display team, performing at Eastbourne.

Back cover photograph: Alikupan Beach. We walked to this beach from the family farm near Bani, Pangasinan.

Your prayers are needed...

for Paul (Alan's son):

We can now confirm that Paul (a Royal Marine Commando) is being sent into one of the most dangerous and hostile areas of Afghanistan within the next few days. Please pray for his safety. Some of you (who aren't British) may not be aware that the Royal Marine Commandos are considered to be the toughest, hardest-trained military unit outside the specialist units such as the SAS or SBS (which you cannot join until you have served for three years or more as a Commando). I understand that 95% of those who start the training to become a RM Commando do not get through the course. The consequence of this is that the RM Commandos are always sent into the most hostile areas to carry out special operations or to sort out problems that other military units cannot cope with.



for David and Ruth:

We would ask your continued prayers for David and Ruth. David's treatment for cancer is continuing. I received the following e-mail from David, just as we were completing this newsletter:

Greetings and thanks for your support.

I have been pretty rough after this last session of Chemo. I find that about half way through, after 10 days, I begin to feel better. I am now a little stronger, after a number of infections, UTI, throat, mouth etc. the antibiotics have now kicked in and I'm feeling better. The lymph nodes have definitely reduced in size which is a good thing. I believe together we shall beat this lymphoma. Please ask people to continue praying for a full recovery in your newsletter.

for Joseph and his friend:

We would also ask your continued prayers for Joseph, who is still looking after a friend who is seriously ill. We ask you to pray for both of them.

and thanks.....

for Leopoldo (Grace's father):

19 September 2007. After 6.5 hours in the Operating Theatre, and 3.5 hours in the recovery room, Leopoldo was returned to his room in St. Luke's Medical Centre, Manila. It seemed a very long day for all of us in the family, as you can imagine. We are pleased to be able to tell you that we were able to bring him to our home in Santa Monica on Monday 24 September 2007, where he will convalesce until he is well enough to return to the farm. Leopoldo wrote the following words and asked me to place them in our newsletter:

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude, first of all to God, then to all the people who prayed for me during my predicament. This only shows that if we show love and compassion towards our fellow man, there is still hope for mankind. From the bottom of our hearts, my family and I thank you all.

*Sincerely yours,
Leopoldo*

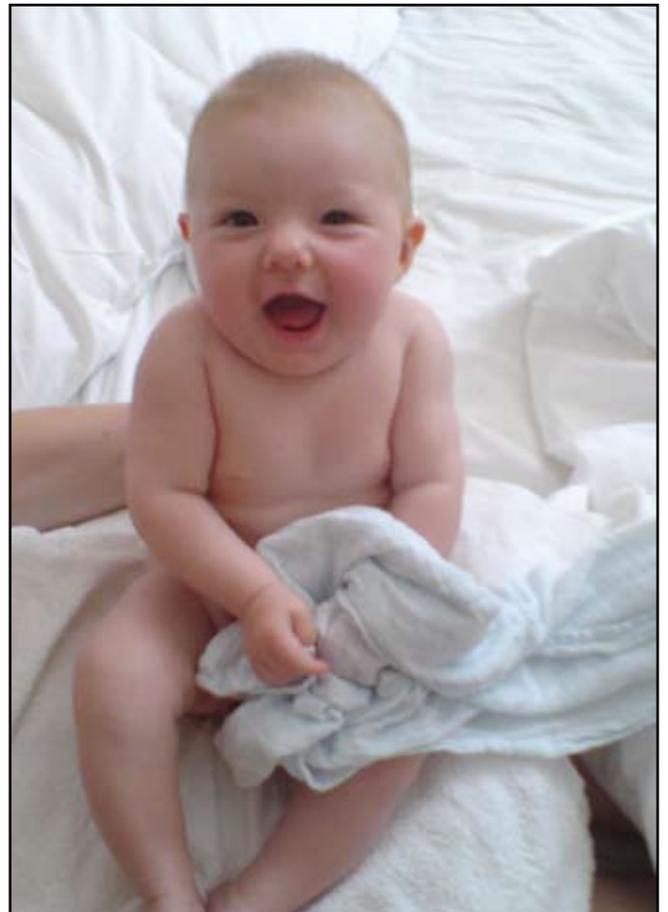
News from Paul and Julie



This wedding photograph was taken last year at Deal castle, where Emily's Godparents were married.



I have attached some photographs of Emily who is sitting on my lap at the moment wriggling about. Its her christening tomorrow (23 September 2007) at the church in 40 Commando's camp.



On Guard!



A couple more of Paul's photographs showing, above, his black Labrador, Sebastian, guarding Emily, in just the same way that my yellow Labrador, Skip, used to guard Paul when he was a baby.

The photograph, left, is another of the wedding photographs taken at Deal Castle in Kent (see also page 4).



Congratulations to Michael



Although we gave mention of it in the *Prayers/Thanks* page last month, we got the news of Michael's success in the Philippine Nursing Board examination so late that we couldn't cover it in the magazine as well as we'd like to have done. The Professional Regulation Commission announced that less than half (31,275 out of 64,909) of the candidates passed the examination.

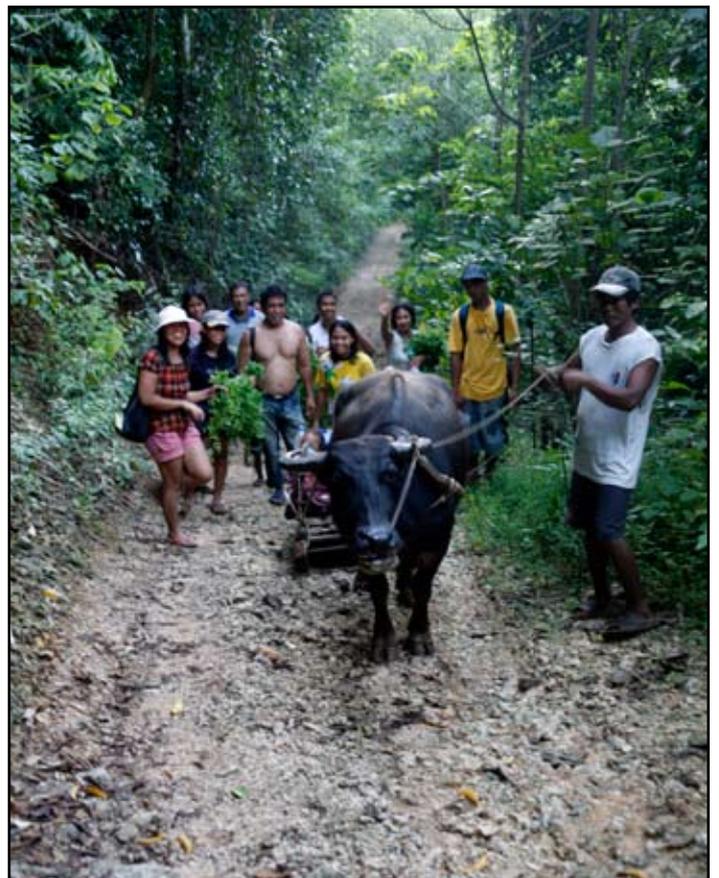
Having succeeded in obtaining his degree (B.Sc. in Nursing), it was necessary for him to take the Nursing Board examination before he could practice. Now he has achieved this, the door is open for Michael to enter this worthwhile profession almost anywhere in the world.

Michael now intends to gain some practical experience (possibly at St. Luke's Medical Centre), before going on to take the NCLEX qualification that would enable him to work in the USA, if he so wishes, at a later date. Alternatively, after gaining this experience, he may go to work abroad, possibly in the Middle East.

Beach Party

On 6 September we decided to have a beach party. As we were staying at the family farm which is somewhat remote, we had several kilometres to walk across fields and unmade roads and tracks. Taking all the children and our food and drink was a daunting prospect - especially as more and more of the family tagged on as we made our way to the beach. At our first stop, we were fortunate enough to have a sledge made for us that could be pulled by a Carabao (Water Buffalo). On this went drums of water and food as well as some of the youngest children.

The photographs show the sledge under construction as well as in use.

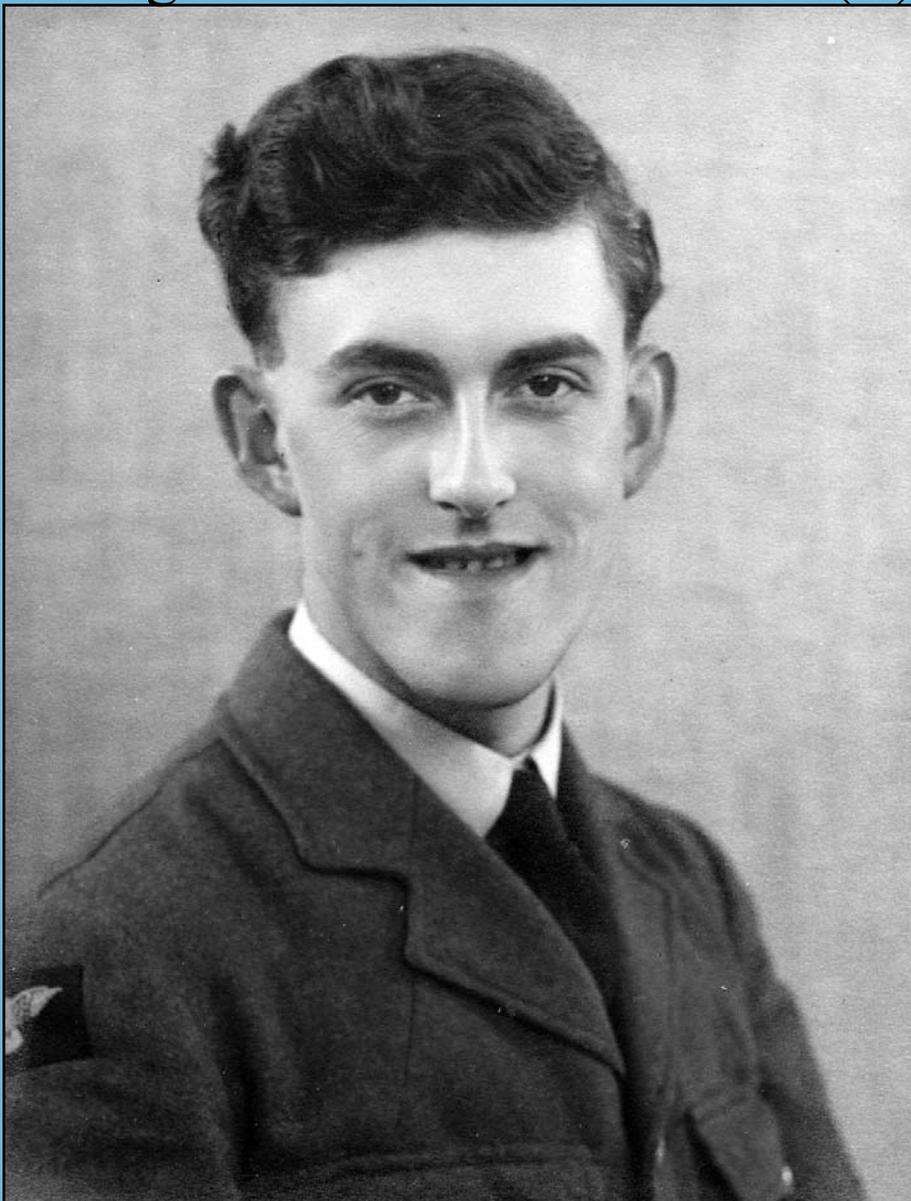




Alikupan Beach. Below right: Vangie washing rice in the sea. Bottom: Our little family enjoying the sea (photo. Michael)



Douglas John Cook LAC 238(T) Squadron (RAF)



The **Burma Star Medal** was awarded for entry into operational service in the Burma campaign between 11 December 1941 and 2 September 1945 as follows:

- Air Force - air crew service in operations against the enemy (one operational sortie qualifies).

Douglas wore his Burma Star with clasp/rosette (as shown below), signifying he also earned the Pacific Star, but was awarded the Burma Star first.



The **1939-45 Star** was awarded for service as follows:

- Air Force - awarded to all air crew who have taken part in operations against the enemy, subject to at least two months in an operational unit and to all non-air crew who served six months in the area of an Army operational command.

A gold rosette worn on the ribbon signifies participation in the Battle of Britain, 1 July 1940 to 31 October 1940.





The **Defence Medal** was awarded to personnel:

- serving for six months in specified non-operational areas subjected to enemy air attack or closely threatened.



Photograph above: I don't know the details of this photograph, but I would suggest that it was taken around 1960/61 when on holiday or when having a day out by the seaside.



The **War Medal 1939-1945** was awarded to all full time personnel of the armed forces wherever they were serving, as long as they had served for at least 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. It was granted in addition to the campaign stars and the Defence Medal.

History of No. 238 Squadron.

Motto: Ad finem - 'To the end'



Badge: A three headed hydra. Hydras, in Greek mythology, were most difficult creatures to destroy.

No 238 Squadron was formed in August 1918 from Nos 347, 348 and 349 Flights at the seaplane station at Cattewater, Plymouth, and flew anti-submarine patrols until the end of the war, being reduced to a cadre on 15 May 1919. It remained as a storage unit until disbanded on 20 March 1922.

On 16 May 1940, No. 238 reformed at Tangmere as a fighter squadron with Spitfires but in June these were replaced with Hurricanes. It became operational on 2 July and spent the period of the Battle of Britain in the Middle Wallop sector, apart from four weeks in Cornwall. In May 1941 the squadron left for the Middle East, its aircraft being flown off HMS 'Victorious' to Malta while the ground echelon sailed round

the Cape of Good Hope. After refuelling in Malta the Hurricanes flew on to the Western Desert where they were attached to No. 274 Squadron, pending the arrival of the squadron's own ground crews. By the end of July, No. 238 was again operating as a complete unit, flying escort missions and fighter patrols throughout the campaign in the desert until after the battle of El Alamein. It was then withdrawn to Egypt for air defence duties and converted to Spitfires in September 1943. In March 1944, the squadron moved to Corsica for sweeps over northern Italy and in August covered the Allied landings in southern France. After moving there for two months, it was withdrawn to Naples and disbanded on 31 October 1944.

Douglas John Cook's connection with this squadron began when it was re-formed as 238(T) Squadron

238(T) Squadron existed as a transport squadron during WWII for little more than a year. It was formed at RAF Merryfield on 23 November 1944, and was originally intended to fly Albemarle. It received no aircraft until January 1945 when it received Douglas Dakotas. Many of you will know that this aeroplane was my father's favourite aircraft and he had a painting of one hanging in our home for many years.

On 14 February 1945, the first wave of ten aircraft flew to India where the squadron began operations, flying supplies into forward airfields and bringing out casualties from Burma. Douglas was a 'dropper' on board these aircraft when supply dropping over Burma. During the last two weeks of March, the squadron flew 331 sorties, losing three aircraft, one due to enemy shell fire at Meiktela. In April, 659 sorties were flown, supplying the troops fighting around Mandalay. In May, the squadron concentrated on supplying Toungoo and evacuating casualties from Akyab and Ramree - also releasing prisoners of war and bringing them back to Comilla.

For the first week of June 1945, operations continued, but then the squadron began moving to South Australia, setting up base at Parafield in July 1945. It began transport schedules within Australia and then began a shuttle Momote-Leyte-Guam-Eniwetok in August, supporting the British Pacific Fleet and a high rate of flying was continued until the end of the war. The squadron then stayed in Australia until disbanding on 4 January 1946 (some records state 27 December 1945). My father returned to England aboard the Union Castle Liner "Athlone Castle."

On 1 December 1946, No.525 Squadron at Abingdon was renumbered 238 Squadron and flew Dakotas until renumbered 10 Squadron on 4 October 1948, during the Berlin airlift.

Bases of 238(T) Squadron

Merryfield (UK)	23 November 1944 - February 1945
Raipur (India)	February 1945 - March 1945
Comilla (India)	March 1945 - July 1945
Parafield (Australia)	July 1945 - 4 January 1946

Commanding Officers

W/Cdr R.E. Bailey DSO DFC	December 1944 - January 1945
W/Cdr H. Burton	January 1945 - January 1946



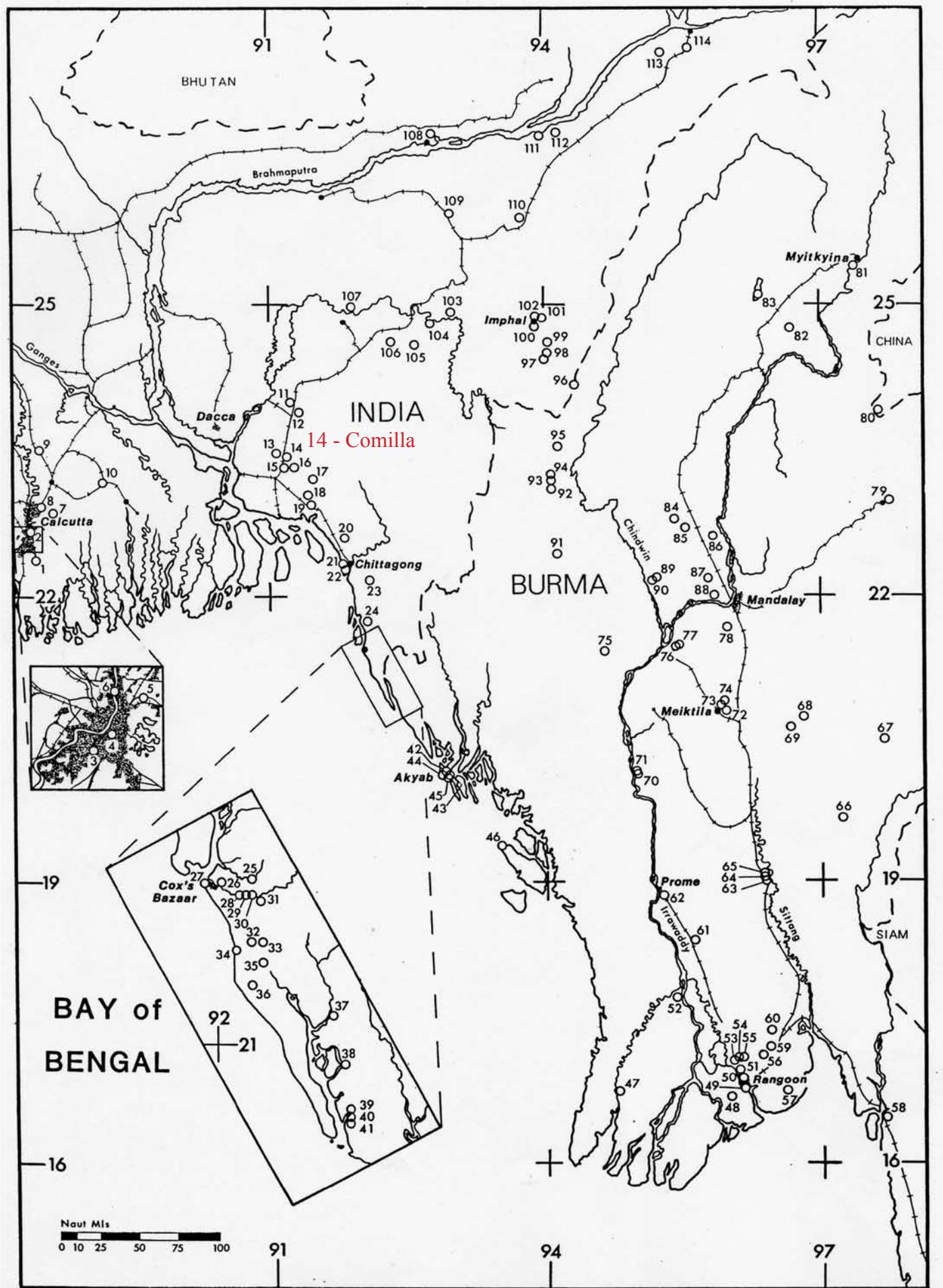
above: Dakota over Burma.

*Finding out any information about the activities of 238(T) squadron has proved extremely difficult, as very little documentation appears to exist. I am grateful to a number of people who have contacted me to inform me about a book entitled **Coastal Support and Special Squadrons of the RAF** by the late Rev. J.D.R. Rawlings, published by Jane's in 1982.*

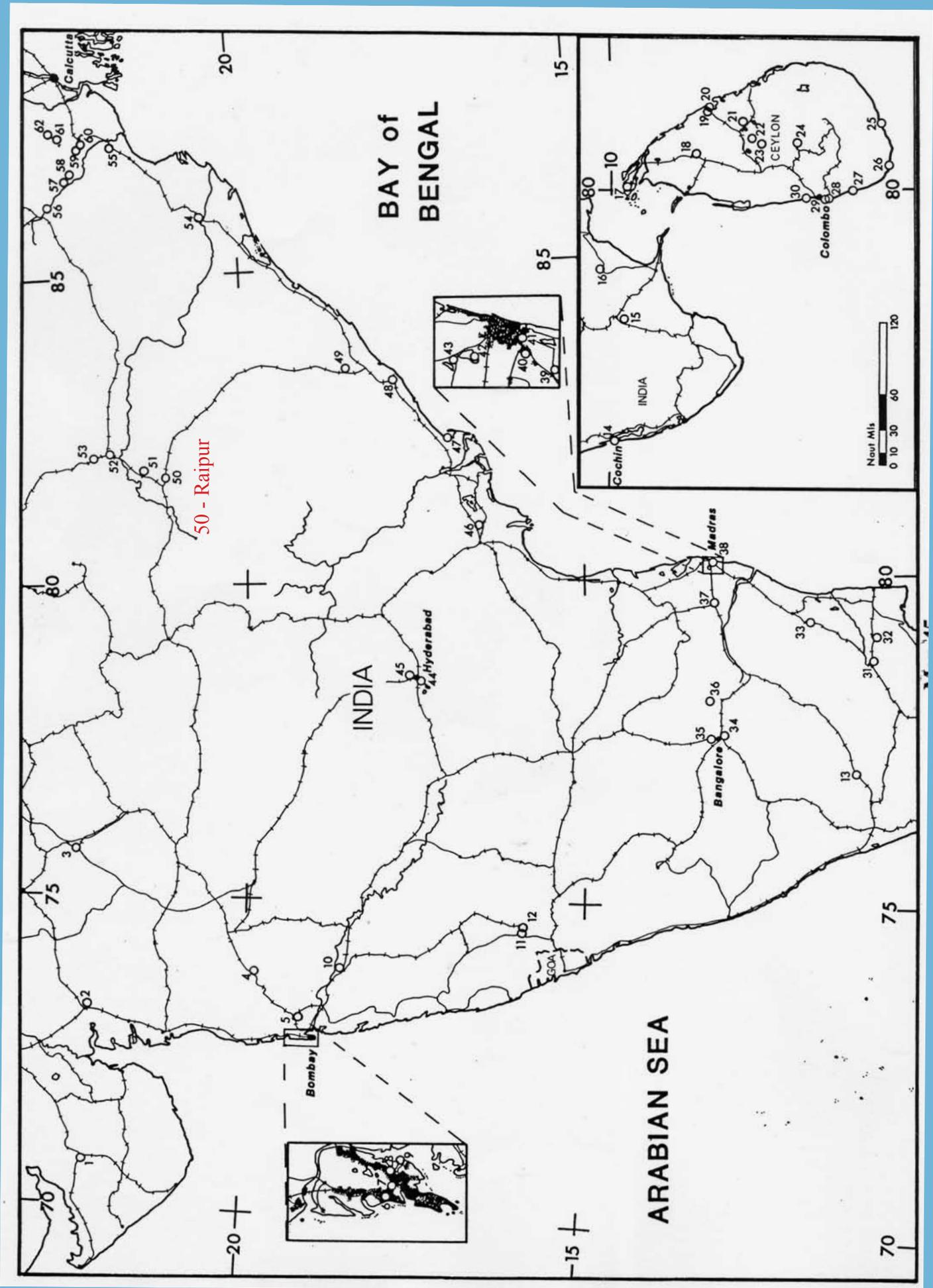
I would particularly like to thank Mike Hooks of Aeroplane Magazine for sending me a copy of the relevant page from the aforementioned book, and for making mention of the squadron and my search for information in the Information Exchange pages of the July 2005 edition of Aeroplane Monthly magazine.

I am also indebted to Cpl. Paul Bennett of RAF Cosford who has been of immeasurable assistance and has supplied me with many photographs, maps and other information.

I would also like to thank Nicholas Ladbrooke (whose father served with 238(T) Squadron) for the large amount of archived material he sent me.



MAP 46



MAP 45



Wedding Day, 20 September 1947 at St. Matthew's Church, Preston, Lancashire.

Alan's Reflections

My simple statements of fact about the general decline of the UK and the huge number of people leaving to obtain a better quality of life elsewhere (in the June edition), followed by the comments I made about being criticised for reporting these facts, have brought about some interesting and thoughtful comments from some of you. Although I am very touched by your support, I still make the point that the figures are facts - not opinion, and therefore cannot be argued with - they speak for themselves. Anyway, here are some of your comments:

The August edition is short but still has great pictures. Keep on with your newsletter and don't mind the criticism. It is your opinion that counts, in after all, your very own newsletter.

Top marks for standing up to those 'friends' of yours. The right to health care is easy to deal with, but denying you the right to criticise the country you come from runs into the knee-jerk blind patriotism of the Little Englanders. As you pointed out, you'd have to hail from a cosseted market town in the Home Counties not to notice that much of England is in moral and cultural melt-down. And ironically it's those people who were the bedrock of support for 18 years of Thatcherism (hardly reversed at all by that Blair charlatan) - the governance responsible for attacking state provision, civic and collective ethos ('there's no such thing as society'), running down schools, selling off all public parks for property development, and generally promoting an aggressive individualism and materialism over living in harmony with your neighbours. All of this in the wrong-headed and paranoid pursuit of destroying socialism; as if there was any real possibility of that in 1979 in the face of the global and national economic forces. But the rabid ideologues had their day and now, a full generation on, we're seeing the results - the kids of the 1980's are now the parents of the teenage thugs that murder their elders in cold blood on suburban streets (did I ever tell you of my ugly incident in Nottingham in December by the way?). Some folk who never have to encounter the city streets just don't have a clue, they're still living in the 1950s actually.

No, good for you Alan, for responding so well to that claptrap.

Hi Alan, I have just come back from 3 weeks in the UK, I brought a few news clippings back with me, to send on to my brother in Australia. Every time I go to the UK I see what uncontrolled immigration is doing, always more begging, people wanting to sell you trinkets when you stop anywhere and so on. Your figures are also correct;

at the moment there are at least 700 people PER DAY arriving from Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland. At the same time there is 385,000 per year leaving for greener pastures.

The thing I find baffling, the average Englishman is not at all happy with what's happening, but nothing is forthcoming from the politicians, except that as we are part of the EU, we can't do anything about it. I guess the people are voting with their feet.

Of course, I'm certainly no politician and don't wish to become one, or to write anything that makes this newsletter anything other than a centre for family and friends news. However, I do recommend anyone interested in the decline of the UK into rapidly becoming a third world country, to read some of the articles published by journalist Melanie Phillips at URL: <http://www.melaniephillips.com> - enough said!

The UK's National Health Service has deteriorated, as we know, but it is still a lot better than none at all. Sadly, there are still many countries without this service - even in this day and age. Wouldn't it be great if a big organisation, such as the United Nations, provided poor people with free medical care throughout the world? I'm sure it could be done. There is so much money and resources wasted in so many ways - particularly in the west, that with careful management and a return to the days where good custody of resources, and thrift, were the norm, we should be able to provide free medical care to all those who need it. In so many places you have to pay - or DIE! This happens all too often in the Philippines, where I am at present. Of course, if there wasn't the corruption here, and if the people really wanted things to change here, this country could be a tropical paradise with a great Health Service. This lack of both good facilities and free service has certainly been brought home to me during these last few months that we have been looking after Grace's father who has a variety of health problems. Not only are many of the facilities sub-standard, but the staff are too, in many cases - so many of the good medical people having gone abroad to earn a sensible salary. This was certainly apparent in the hospital where Grace's father had his operation. Most of the medical staff were very young and were there gaining experience prior to going for a well paid job abroad - the older one's having left the country already. We sent Grace's father (Leopoldo) to St. Luke's Medical Centre in Manila, which is probably the best hospital in the Philippines. It is certainly costing our family a great deal of money to do so, but at least he's got some chance of getting reasonable treatment, and coming through it alive - something that doesn't always happen here. Life here depends on how much you can pay for it! Now where have I heard that before?

Alan

Stop Press!

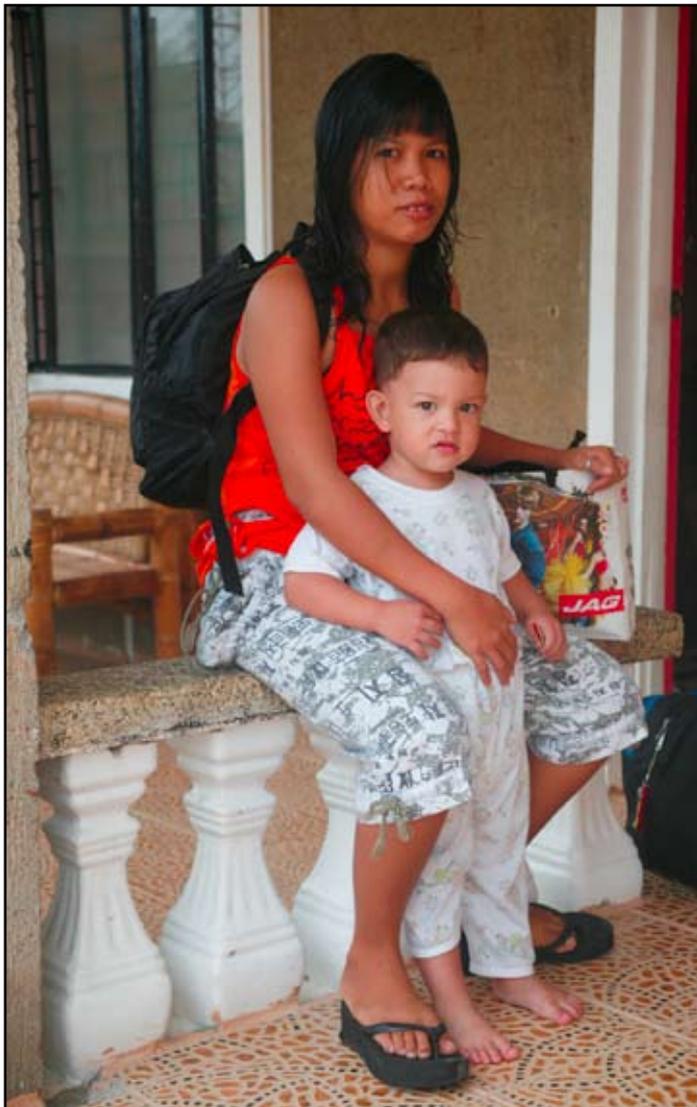
We have just received this letter from a friend in the USA that I thought might be of interest to you all - and highly relevant to the *Reflections* page.

Glad to see that all is well. Grace and John Paul look great so life must be good. In your newsletter you always talk about the sick. One of the things that I notice about living in the States is that so many people have sickness. Both my niece and nephew have been diagnosed with cancer and have had chemo and radiation. Every time I turn around someone has been diagnosed with cancer. I don't know if it is because now we have early detection or are there other reasons for this.

I hear that it is our life style. It is the environment, the water we drink etc. You and I have both travelled a lot but I see these diseases all around the world. Is it because we hear about it more these days but every other commercial on TV is some drug to take for a variety of illnesses.

Work is good. I like my new position, it is just more work but more money which is good. I am not thoroughly satisfied with my life. Maybe it is what you were discussing in your newsletter. We need to question ourselves constantly if we are just sitting on the fence or are we preparing ourselves for the future; whatever comes.

Is it human nature to question. I hope so, I will never forget the sermon I heard once that we all tend to stay in the comfort zone and do not move forward because we are afraid of what will happen once out of the comfort zone.



A fond farewell

On 25 September we bade farewell to Juanita.

After being with us for about 9 months, Juanita (Ne-Ne) has decided to leave. Ne-Ne has been like a second mother to our little lad and he, perhaps more than anyone, will miss her greatly.

We wish her happiness and success in whatever she chooses to do in her life.

May God bless her - as she has blessed our family.

Dan and Mary-Anne

On 19 and 21 September 2007, we were delighted to receive a visit from Dan and Mary-Anne. We met Dan when he was studying on the same course as Grace in Bangkok in 2004, and this was the first time we've seen him since then. Dan is now working in the US Merchant Navy and his ship made a visit to Subic Bay near where we live. We hope it will call into port here again soon.

The photograph, right, shows some of the folks in their class in 2004. Grace, right, on front row, and Dan standing, 2nd from right, in their classroom.



The photograph, right, is of Mary-Anne and Dan enjoying a meal in our home on 19 September.



Just after a celebratory meal in Johan's Restaurant (21 September) on Baloy Beach, the photograph below, shows, left to right: John, Mary-Anne, Dan, Alan, Grace and Juanita (Ne-Ne) (photograph from Dan's camera).



News from Vonnie

I'd just pressed the **SEND** button to send out this edition, when I noticed I had an e-mail from our dear friend, Vonnie, in Hong Kong. So, I cancelled sending it and have added this page to our magazine. I'm sure you will agree that is a worthwhile addition to our magazine this month. Thank you, Vonnie.



Vonnie writes: I was lucky enough to get involved with an event last weekend (22.09.07) here in Hong Kong, when the Tree Walker (Paul Coleman) – such a spiritual one that – he really IS and doesn't even TALK about it, just lives the life – see for yourself on <http://www.earthwalker.com>
Read his log and you'll see what we we're all up to in the rural part of Hong Kong where I co-exist with trees, spiders and the odd caribao that ambles through..

Helping plant the tree which signifies the start of his 10 month Hong Kong – Beijing walk - he plans to be there in time for the Olympics. Inset - with his Japanese wife who is walking with him. He's been walking for some 17 years and so far instigated the planting of 6 million trees on the planet. He has no big sponsors or fancy names behind him – he just gets out there and does it and trusts to providence for a bite and a bed.

