

Tropical *news*

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

FEBRUARY 2008



Editorial Ramblings

Welcome to a really bumper edition of our magazine. A record number of pages as well as a new feature that gives you access to 540 of our photographs (and other websites) by clicking on the buttons you will see on some of the pages. It's been something of a Herculean task putting it all together, so we hope you enjoy this extra facility. This month is the 11th anniversary of me living out of the UK. Doesn't time fly when you're enjoying yourself! I wouldn't consider living in the UK permanently again.

The only reason for going there for a while would be to assist Grace obtain British Citizenship; and only that because a British passport sometimes helps when travelling.

We are proud to report that Paul has received a temporary promotion to Sergeant. Although offered an officer's commission when he first applied to join the Royal Marines, he turned it down and started at the bottom. Being promoted to Sergeant is a big step up for him and we are sure he will enjoy the challenge and do a great job. Once again, computer problems have been something of a challenge to overcome this month. Three weeks after having a new motherboard fitted, the laptop failed again and had to have yet another motherboard installed. At least it was done under guarantee - again.

During this month, we've been delighted to entertain Mike and Lourdes and their two children, Benson and Catherine, who live in Hong Kong. We hope they return to see us again soon. Their visit was far too short. Grace and Lourdes have been close friends since they were at school together. We are always very pleased to see our friends from around the world and hope that more of you will come and see us soon - wherever we happen to be in the world! We've also been to visit Al and Josie (sister of Lourdes) and had a great time with them in Agno. Just in case you might be thinking that life in the Philippines is all doom and gloom (especially after last month's report), you will be pleased to know that this isn't the case at all. Have a look at the pages depicting the 16th Annual Barrio Barretto Beach Bash, and you will see a totally different perspective on life in the Philippines. Amazingly, the exceptional level of ridiculous stupidity that is the norm here, reached a new low today when I went to the Banco De Oro, a major bank. This branch is the one I normally go to - the other nearby branch doesn't even have a machine for dealing with plastic cards! Anyway, this bank has copies of all my ID papers - passport, driving license and my plastic card. I presented the original IDs, as usual - and they said they couldn't process my transaction. When I said there had never before been a problem - and presented previous transaction receipts, they said they would carry out the transaction this time, but not in future. Why? Because my plastic card has my name written as Alan J Cook, whereas my passport has the name written as Alan John Cook. I even explained that there is insufficient space on a plastic card to hold all the characters that most people have in their name - my name being exceptionally short. They wouldn't budge! Not even the manager! How stupid is that? *It's time to get out of this place.*



Photograph above: Having lunch at *Dreamland*. L to R: Benson, Michael, Catherine, Lourdes, Grace.

Front Cover photograph: Angeli Raiza Bonilla - 7 years old - Barrio Barretto Beach Bash.

Inside back cover photograph: Little Lad on the swing in the park near our home.

Back cover photograph: Little Lad in the swimming pool at *Dreamland* - a short walk from our home.

Your prayers are needed...

for Paul (Alan's son):

Please continue to pray for Paul in Afghanistan. He will have been very upset by the death of his friend, **Corporal Damian Mulvihill**, killed in action a few days ago. Please also pray for Damien's family and fiancé. More details can be read on another page in this magazine

for David and Ruth, Joseph and his friend, Maribel, Gerry and Sylvia:

We have received no up to date news, but please continue to pray for all these folks.

and thanks.....

letters from Terry:

Hi Folks,

Well I must have made it through (*Ed: the operation*) or I would not be here typing this email. What a performance. I went in on Sunday (3/2/2008) in the ward by 7:10am. I was in the theatre (O.R.) by 7:30am. They finished the operation at 3:00pm then took me back to the ward. Discharged from hospital at 10:00am on Wed 6/2/2008. Now I'm sitting here feeling as if a bloody cart horse has kicked me in the guts! Everything went OK (So I am told). Now very weak and will be for some weeks yet, so they say.

I'll write more as I feel like it.

Hi again folks,

Had your email. You were correct Alan, the hospital was not the cleanest of places. The ward was cleaned by a Filipino lad, but not much life in him, sorry to say. He also used to give out the tea & coffee. I did not drink it. Having said that, I went to town on a Welsh nurse in there. She went to change one of my dressings with no gloves on! I expect you can imagine my reaction to that with my medical background. She never attempted it a second time.

Unfortunately, I do not have anyone in the house to look after me now since my wife left me. But I have two good neighbours each side of me. Plus I have home help for half an hour each morning on top of my usual girls (again home helps - or flying floorcloths as I jokingly call them). Well, you have heard of the flying doctors.

I feel a little better today. Not quite so tired. But my stomach is still very sore and tender. It will be for a few weeks yet.

I have eight, 2 inch, wounds situated in various areas of my stomach where they were using the cameras and various tools inside me. All my insides are bruised to hell and the outside too! I have a community nurse calling on Tuesday morning to take out the 50 odd clips that are holding the wounds together (hope she's got gloves on!).

Hi Alan & Grace,

Well I thought that I had better send an update or a progress report. I am feeling very weak when I go to do something, which is only to be expected for a few more weeks yet. In myself, when I'm not doing anything, I am feeling fine. As if there were nothing wrong with me. I eat very little now as my stomach is only the size of a boiled egg. I cannot eat 2 eggs without feeling very full. I have to eat very slowly and drink very slowly. If I don't, I am in trouble. To date I have lost two stones and 2 lbs. I think my weight loss is now starting to settle and I will start to lose it very gradually. Which will be good. Or so I am told. I cannot eat anything with sugar in it or with fat in it. It makes me feel ill if I do. I'll soon learn I suppose.

Steve my mate has just been to secure the fibre glass ramp that I now have outside my back door so that I can use my electric wheelchair to go into the garage to the freezer when my back is bad. So that's another job done.

Hope you are all keeping well and free from all the bugs that seem to be going around and that the news is good regarding Paul out in Afghanistan

(Ed. This last letter was received 26 February 2008)

Your Letters



We hope that ALL of you will contribute a few words to this page. All letters published will be done so anonymously. Letters may be edited a little, although nothing will be done to change the meaning or context of anything submitted for publication.

The stamp (left) depicts the Hundred Islands National Park which is in Pangasinan, Grace's home province, and near to where used to we live, in Alaminos.

Our letters page looks rather bare this month! Of course, we would welcome more letters and would love to hear from all of you - this magazine goes out to about 100 people. One of the reasons this page is a little empty is because some letters have been published on pages that were more appropriate - such as the prayer request page and in the obituary on the Royal Marines pages.

Hi Alan, hope all's well with you, Grace and Little Lad,

Thanks for the mail and also the newsletter. Without further ado, I'll get right to the point and pick up from the last time I wrote to you. The newsletter was great as ever, but I think it was decisive in putting us off the Philippines as a summer holiday destination. It's a long, long and costly way to come to have to worry about crime and health issues, as I'm sure you'll appreciate. It would have been nice to catch up with you, but we'll play it safe by going to either Goa or Thailand/Malaysia.

Two days ago we had a pleasant surprise meeting with Michelle in Al Khor's food centre. She looked well and didn't seem to be too overworked. I think you did a great thing to help her and Nadia come out here for all the new experience.

Well that's all for now, we hope you all start keeping better health and that your luck starts picking up from now on.

Hi Alan,

The latest newsletter was quite depressing. However, a picture doesn't lie, as a matter of fact it tells a thousand words, doesn't it? Since environmental protection is beyond my control, I do what I should in my little corner of the world. This is the only place that I have control. But my personal discipline toward environmental protection makes me happy and proud.

A fond farewell to Margie

After just over 4 months with us, Margie departed from our home for pastures new on 10 February. We say “*thank you*” and wish her success and happiness in whatever she does in future.



A warm welcome to Helen

Helen arrived at our home, from Mindanao, on 13 February 2008. We hope she will stay with us for as long as she is happy, and help Grace take care of the monster!



Jumping the Waves!



Aloleng Beach, Pangasinan



All of you will know of my concern about the heavily polluted waters around the Philippines; especially in the area where we live.

22 February saw us at Aloleng Beach, Pangasinan. This is about 250km from our home and near the home of Grace's family, and also our dear friends, Al and Josie. The highlight of our trip was a visit to this beach, where, it appeared, the sea was clean and safe enough to swim in. As you will see from the photographs, we had a great time - until we decided to go back to Al and Josie's home, where we were staying, and I couldn't get the car started as the immobiliser couldn't be turned off as the battery in the key fob was flat! I called the car rental company and they suggested a way round the problem, which worked, and off we went once more.

Above and below: Fishing boats (called Banca's) along the beach. These are only a few of the many that were lined up along the beach. Late in the afternoon, some of them were put to sea for the night's fishing trip. No safety or navigation equipment was to be seen - not even a chart and compass - and certainly no life jackets.



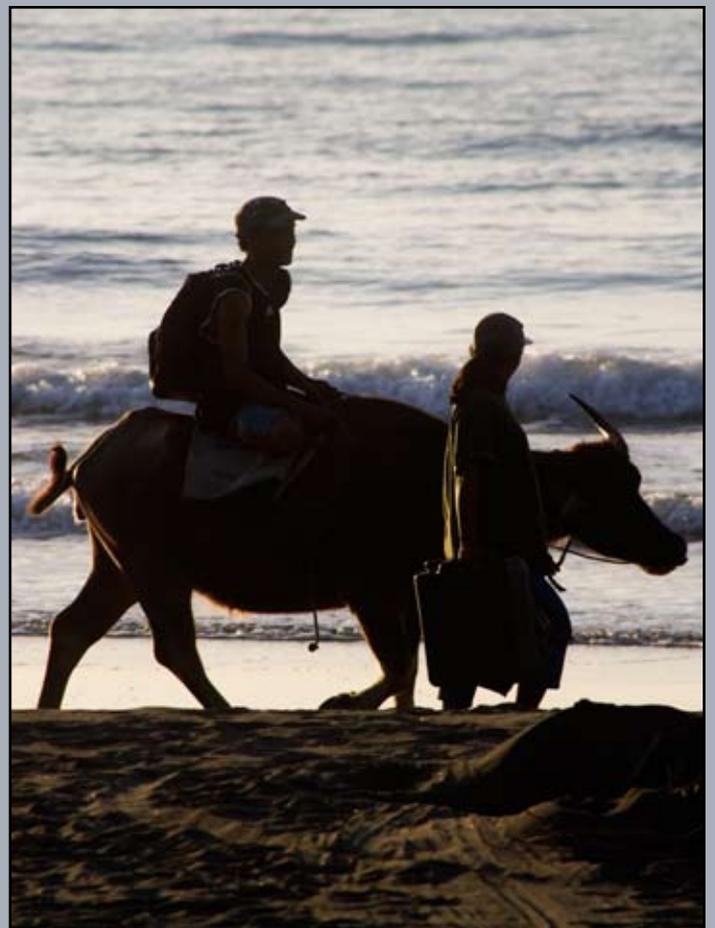
Left: Prawns cooking on the Bar B Q





Above: Josie cooking some pork on the BBQ..

Below: Grace, Al and Josie under our canopy on the beach.



Above: Riding home with the carabao. As the sun was going down, this couple and their carabao (Water Buffalo) walked along the beach on their way home.

Nuts! Whole Coconuts



One of the delights of living in the Philippines is the fresh young coconut (called *Buko*). While at Aloleng beach, we requested some coconuts and the photographs on the left show a young man cutting them down for us - including one falling to the ground. The other photographs show Helen carrying in a couple of the nuts, with JP lending a helping hand, Josie cutting one open, Alan drinking from one of them, then feeding some of the soft flesh to JP. Detail shot shows the nut cut open ready to eat.



Going fishing



Waiting in the shade of the banca, the family of the fisherman wait as he prepares for the night's fishing, before seeing him off - no doubt praying for his safe return.





Sailing into the sunset, a banca sets out for a night's fishing.



Aggressive Marine patrols support Helmand health care



(Courtesy of the UK government website at URL: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/InPictures/AggressiveMarinePatrolsSupportHelmandHealthcare.htm> - 11 February 2008).

Photo: Royal Marines from Fire Support Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines, engaging insurgent positions on the frontline near Kajaki, Northern Helmand
[Picture: LA (Phot) AJ MacLeod].

Royal Marines have provided enough security in parts of Helmand to enable outreach patrols to bring much needed health care and reconstruction to local communities.

The Royal Marines of Charlie Company 40 Commando, supported by RECCE Troop 40 Commando and elements of the Afghan National Army, have been engaging Taliban positions near Kajaki in Northern Helmand as part of Operation GHARTSE SPIKE.

They have patrolled the area aggressively, disrupting the insurgents at a time when a spring offensive is usually expected and denying them any freedom of movement.

The Royal Marines are trained in cold weather warfare and are able to employ their specialist skills in the depths of the Afghan winter. By pushing back the insurgents, they have enabled local people to attend medical facilities that have been set up in their villages and towns.

40 Commando's dentist, Surgeon Lieutenant Mike Hesketh, said:

"The key to all outreach is ensuring security first and then following this with positive activity, helping local people to develop their communities while alienating the insurgents."

The extended period of outreach patrols undertaken by the commandos has involved them meeting with locals, accompanied by engineering, nursing and dental teams. Once an area is secure the commandos set up medical facilities inviting people to attend for checkups. Minor ailments are dealt with on the spot while those requiring further treatment are invited to the Forward Operating Base where they receive specialist care from the nurses and the field dental centre.

Lt Hesketh continued:

"It's important that coalition forces begin to interact with local nationals within their area. Outreach patrols and medical facilities are vital in proving to the Afghan people that we are here for their security and well-being. Once news got out that a medical team were in the area treating Afghans, the local population were more than happy to interact and receive treatment for low level primary health care, including pain relief and dental aid."

The patrols have also brought engineers to an area to work on repairing damaged walls, culverts and irrigation systems. Supplies of winter clothes, blankets and agricultural tools are also being provided.



*A marine from Delta Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines, chats to some children whilst on an Outreach patrol.
[Picture: LA (Phot) AJ MacLeod]*

These latest pictures (4 February) from Afghanistan show Royal Marines visiting local Afghan communities in the Upper Gereshk Valley, Northern Helmand, bringing aid and support where they can.

The Marines from Delta Company, 40 Commando, are halfway through a six month deployment to Afghanistan. They are based at Forward Operating Base Gibraltar in the heart of Northern Helmand's Green zone.

They can be seen here undertaking outreach patrols with a mobile 'MEDCAP', or clinic (consisting of a Nursing Officer and a Dentist) as well as providing engineering support and supplies for locals to repair a culvert.

Surgeon Lt (D) Michael Hesketh, 40 Commando's Dental Officer said:

"Outreach Patrols are ideal to show the intent of ISAF forces in giving aid and support to the local population until the Taliban are gone for good."

The Marines can also be seen hosting a 'Shura' or meeting with village leaders to discuss various issues. During the Shura, Major Tony Chattin RM, Officer Commanding Delta

Company discussed repairing a bridge and a local mosque, he said:

"Through the Shura, it enables us to empower the village elders to take responsibility for solutions for the problems that they are facing."

The pictures here also show the Marines conducting an 'advance to contact', or overtly patrolling into Helmand's 'Green Zone' to known Taliban positions.

(Courtesy of the UK government website at URL: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/InPicturesMarinesMeetAfghanCommunities.htm>)

MPs praise commando spirit during Afghan visit



MPs from the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme meet the men of 40 Commando Royal Marines in Afghanistan

[Picture: Cpl Steve Dove]

A group of MPs have been learning about military operations during a visit to British troops currently serving in southern Afghanistan.

Royal Marines from 40 Commando shared their evening meal with the MPs, from the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, and told them about life on the front line in Helmand Province. James Gray, MP for North Wiltshire, spoke to men from 40 Commando's Alpha Company based at Forward Operating Base Inkerman, which is notorious for seeing action against enemy forces almost every day. He said:

"The lads from Inkerman were very professional and I was struck by how intelligent they were. I had a stereotype in my mind of Royal Marines as rough, tough and not particularly smart, but I could not have been more wrong. These men had lived, worked and fought in incredibly difficult conditions and could not have been older than their early 20s, but they were not fazed at all. I was incredibly impressed."

The marines recounted stories of their lives over the past four months, since arriving in Afghanistan, including how they had made the best of the basic conditions at Inkerman and maintained morale with the Corps' famous sense of humour in adversity.

The MPs were speaking to them after the men had come back to Camp Bastion, the UK's main base in Helmand Province, in order to fly home to their families for two weeks of well-

earned rest before returning to their colleagues on the front line:

"They described being in fire fights where they were attacked from three sides simultaneously," James Gray continued. "But they didn't brag or glorify anything - they were just calm, collected and extremely professional. Less than 24 hours earlier these men had been on the front line fighting."

The Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme seeks to provide MPs with a knowledge of the Services and their roles, attaching them to units so they can understand military life and be better informed for their work in Parliament. James Gray explained the reason for the visit:

"We want to take part in debates about the Armed Forces, learn about work going on in our Forward Operating Bases in Afghanistan and understand what it is like to live in an operational theatre."

"Talking to the Royal Marines of 40 Commando was the closest I'll ever come to action but it was very informative. I can't praise these men enough." James Gray MP

(Courtesy of the UK government website at URL: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/MpsPraiseCommandoSpiritDuringAfghanVisit.htm>)

New solid build Field Hospital at Bastion



Above: *The Clinical Director of the 243 (Wessex) Field Hospital (Volunteers), Pediatric Consultant Colonel Mike Maquire, and TA Nursing Officer Major Sarah Price tend to a young patient at Camp Bastion's new field hospital [Picture: Corporal Rich Denton]*

Right: *Radiographer Corporal Catherine Lee uses Camp Bastion's CT scanning equipment [Picture: Corporal Rich Denton]*

A new solid build field hospital at Camp Bastion which will increase the capabilities of the British military medical team in Helmand has been opened by Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth today, 6 February 2008.

The Medical Treatment Facility (MTF), which is housed in one of the few solid buildings at Bastion replaces the tented field hospital that has been used since 2003. The temperature-controlled building allows the medics to better avoid the heat, cold or dust that come with the Helmand territory.

With a fully equipped operating theatre supporting two operating tables, the MTF also supports up to six beds for the most critically injured in an Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU). Two general wards handle patients with recovery needs and there are an additional two separate, private rooms, supplying a total capacity of 37 beds, with room for expansion.

Mr Ainsworth, who opened the new hospital while on a tour of Helmand, said:

"I have always had the highest regard for the medical treatment received by our servicemen and women, but this new hospital is simply outstanding. I have seen for myself the quality of the building and equipment and I have met the staff, who are consummate professionals dedicated to treating everyone who comes through the doors to the highest standard. "Our Armed Forces are engaged in a dangerous mission here and we owe it to them to provide them with the ... very best of care from the moment they are picked up in the field."

Bob Ainsworth MP, said:

"Our Armed Forces are engaged in a dangerous mission here and we owe it to them to provide them with the



confidence that if they are injured, they will receive the very best of care from the moment they are picked up in the field, through their immediate treatment and any subsequent rehabilitation. This new facility and the staff who perform under such difficult conditions are helping to save lives and they should be extremely proud of the work they do and the contribution they are making to help bring stability to this country."

The new facility has state-of-the-art medical technology. The Radiography Department has a CT scanner, allowing high-quality imaging of complex injuries, ensuring swift and accurate clinical decision-making.

Two mobile digital DRAGON X-Ray machines, worth £150,000 each have also been installed in the MTF which allow imaging within five seconds and, being portable, remove the need to move a patient from the ward, speeding the diagnostic process. The digital scans can be enhanced as well as being instantly shareable with medical staff back in the UK.

The pathology lab can conduct blood and sample testing as well as having the capacity to supply blood products for transfusion. Equipment normally only found in the National Blood Service, used to gather the blood platelets much needed in trauma recovery, is currently on trial.

Mr Ainsworth was also shown the primary health care facilities which provide a general practice surgery, two dental surgeries, a welfare department, a mental health care team and a dedicated Hospital Chaplain. There are plans to develop the site further to include physiotherapy treatment and recovery rooms.

Staffed by around 100 personnel, the temperature-controlled building is capable of dealing with the most serious trauma injuries. Patients injured in mine-strikes, with blast, fragmentation or gunshot wounds, benefit from a team of on-site clinicians and consultants who can perform the immediate surgery which will save limbs and lives, before swift repatriation to continue care back in the UK.

The Officer Commanding of the Hospital Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Wallbridge, said:

“The hospital treats personnel from across the ISAF coalition nations and we have also helped many from the Afghan National Army, Police and also local nationals for a whole range of complaints, from children suffering malnutrition or burns to those suffering traumatic amputations due to anti-personnel mines.”

The hospital is currently staffed by 243 Field Hospital (Volunteers), from the south west of England, mainly Territorial Army personnel who have been given leave by their employers to deploy to Afghanistan. TA medics have a diverse range of medical and clerical posts back in the UK and in addition to trauma and intensive care experience they bring together a wealth of skills that might not otherwise be seen in a military setting. This has been particularly true with those trained as paediatricians, who have proved extremely valuable when dealing with local children.

Lt Col Wallbridge, said on meeting Mr Ainsworth:

“This new facility is simply fantastic, capable of bringing together the skills of experts in trauma surgery and recovery, intensive care and nursing with state of the art equipment. While we were always able to provide high standards of care in the tented hospital, we were always fighting a bit of a battle with the environment, the heat, cold or dust. Here, our outstanding staff and equipment also enjoy excellent working conditions.”

Corporal Damian Mulvihill

***Killed in Afghanistan
21 February 2008***

Hello Alan,

I thought you may have heard the news that a Royal Marine from 40 Commando was sadly killed yesterday. I just wanted to put your mind at ease and let you and Grace know that Paul is fine. A little sad and reflective because it was one of his friends that he played rugby with. Our prayers are with the family of the Marine and the rest of the Commando Unit.

Love to you and the family

Julie and Emily

(Courtesy of the UK government website at URL: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/CorporalDamianMulvihillKilledInAfghanistan.htm>)

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Corporal Damian Mulvihill of 40 Commando Royal Marines yesterday, Wednesday 20 February 2008, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Shortly before 1215 hrs local time Corporal Mulvihill was taking part in a joint ISAF – ANA patrol engaged in



Corporal Damian Mulvihill

operations near Sangin. The marines of Alpha Company were conducting a clearance patrol to deter Taliban intimidation of local Afghans. It was during this action that an Improvised Explosive Device was detonated, which sadly killed Corporal Mulvihill instantly. He died leading his section and the Company from the front.

Corporal Damian ‘Dee’ Mulvihill was born on 5 June 1975 and was from Plymouth. He joined the Royal Marines on 20 September 1998 and completed commando training despite contracting septicemia towards the end. After passing out of recruit training, ‘Dee’ joined 42 Commando Royal Marines where he took part in numerous deployments around the world as well as taking part in OP PALLISER and OP SILKMAN in Sierra Leone and OP BANNER in Northern Ireland.

During his time at 42 Commando he was promoted to Lance Corporal. He then joined Air Defence Troop in 2002 and completed his specialist training before being promoted to Corporal in December 2003. On completion of his service with the United Kingdom Landing Force Command Support Group, based at Stonehouse Barracks in his home town of Plymouth, he joined Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines in April 2006.

‘Dee’ was a giant of a man who impressed all who met him. Ever cheerful, he would never allow problems to get him down. He always had a friendly word for anyone he met and his fantastic personality filled any room he walked into. He was an excellent listener and would always make time for others.

‘Dee’ loved his boxing and rugby and represented the Royal Marines at rugby union. He was also a keen water polo player and represented the Royal Navy and the Combined Services team at the sport. ‘Dee’ was a true character who will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege to serve with him. Humorous, caring and a true friend, he will be sadly missed by all his comrades in 40 Commando Royal Marines and the wider Corps family.

‘Dee’ leaves behind a loving fiancée and family of whom he talked about to anybody and everybody. He and his fiancée Lisa were planning to get married in the near future, and our deepest sympathies are extended to Lisa, his parents and all family and friends.

from the past.....

It was such a delightful surprise to receive the following 2 e-mails recently, from friends I haven't seen for more than 25 years. I managed to track down Colin and Ruth, and they, in turn, passed on my e-mail address to Paul. Great to have contact again after all these years. We all shared many fun times many years ago.

Alan, Grace, and John and all,

Where do I begin! Absolutely flabbergasting to hear from you - incredible! I will send a more considered reply in due course, but for now to say thank you for all you've sent, which we are in the process of digesting (it seems your globe trotting days have not yet come to a halt).

We are probably in the last 14 months of what will have been a 9 years stint in Pembrokeshire, remote SW Wales, now looking after 3 x URC churches and 1 Methodist. One small Methodist chapel closed due to building problems - it was the members' own decision. Combined membership of the 4 is no more than 130, and dropping slightly year on year. It is quite a hard task in this area of unemployment and remoteness, and consequent hard independence and reluctance to change. Two of my churches are in Milford Haven (pop 15000) and ought to unite - but they both have huge plant and lifelong associations with the buildings (one is Grade 2 Listed). However, they are used extensively by the local people for various organisations which help the community, and they both have a good name in and around the town. Maybe after I've left they will unite - I guess it'll be when one collapses. Ruth, myself, 2 URC leaders and a couple of leaders from a nearby evangelical Baptist Church run a Friday night youth club (FNYC = "Effnic") - we get 20-28 young people aged 11-15 each week. We are taking some to Greenbelt this August - a few more than last year. Joanna our daughter, 20, is now doing a nursing degree at UCE (Univ of Central England) - she would have made it to Birmingham Univ but missed by 10 marks in her maths GCSE. She got B,C,D at A Level - better than her parents. She shares a house with 2 others in Handsworth - a very interesting location - especially since one of the 3, Christine, who owns the house, is a (quietish) Mormon! Joanna has been diagnosed as having dyslexia - she is getting some help, but it slows her down and impedes her sequencing skills - a problem when nursing is all about method - but we hope and pray she'll get through. Jonathan our son (15) is a super-fit, football and badminton playing, swimming, girlfriend attracting typical teenager - he's very keen on "Parkour" (free running) - kind of running up walls, jumping off heights. I think he may end up a stunt man! Our Manse here - an extended 3 bed detached Superintendent's house - has 4 bedrooms, the equivalent of 2 studies, 3 loos and 2 showers! Much cleaning etc. Our back garden and the neighbouring yard behind the (Methodist) church is frequented by Jonathan and his friends - and sometimes quite noisy!

Ruth works as an LSA (Learning Support Assistant) at the local Infants School (the head is one of my church Elders). She is very fulfilled there and does an excellent job I think. We nip off to one of the lovely local beaches whenever we can in the summer. Good swimming. I have managed the BT/Butlins Swimathon with others over the years - did it myself 3 years running - each time 200 lengths in 2 1/2 hours or less! Our (second) dog Toby, now 11 1/2, a Labrador/Terrier mix, is a real softie, authorised to visit old people's residential homes with me as therapy.

My Mum died in 1992 (age 78) and my Dad died in 1999 (age 89) - just a few months before our move here - a kind of confirmation. Ruth's dad died 3 years ago, her Mum now lives independently in Bolton near to her two sons and daughter in law. Ruth's sister Heather, an Anglican priest, works in Leeds. We see each other a few times a year.

Jean Wyatt (John died a few years ago aged 74) still lives in Wendover by herself. The Wyatts are widespread - Liz in the London area, Jonathan in Yeovil, Mark in Shropshire, Paul in Barbados (and other places according to his water engineer job. They're all married, quite a few grandchildren for Jean.

We are now looking to move somewhere - north, south, wherever - for the last 5 years ministry before retiring, probably, back to Kent. We have no property, but some cash saved, enough to buy a place jointly with the URC - that is provided the prices don't go up too much further. I continue to enjoy my preaching, my guitar, my piano playing (res homes etc). And my garden - much fruit in it. Still in touch with Andy and Sally Russell.

I suppose that's about it for now - if you have an address I can add to my Christmas Letter List, I would be very pleased to have it. For now it's au revoir (and yes, I do still play the Peter Jackson LP - I would take it to a desert island!)

Our love and best wishes to you and all yours - are you still in touch with Fiona? - I see Paul is happily sorted with partner and child. Be in touch again, and look forward whenever you've news to share. God bless you all,

Ruth, Colin (Joanna, Jonathan and dog Toby).



Hi Alan

I've been tracking down old, and some VERY old friends lately with some success. So, found you at last, not quite as close as some that I have found living only a few miles away.

I gather a lot has happened in your life since we were last in touch - I really can't remember when that was! I seem to remember dropping you off on a tanker, I think at Tilbury, when I was on my way to Harwich, but that was years ago.

The incident with your dog at the bottom of Langdon Cliffs is still a vivid and bizarre memory together with the rescue in a very old Mini with only 2 forward gears. Whenever I return to the UK on the ferry, I can clearly see the cliff path that we ill advisedly decided to take the dog down!

My news is not so international as you but at long last I quit the bank and now work for a firm in Canterbury. Whilst it is much smaller than NatWest, 15 staff rather than 60,000, we are an independent part of a large group so we have a certain amount of security but almost unlimited autonomy over what we do. Suits me fine.

I have 2 girls, Emma 17 and Jenny 14. Both at Dover Grammar and heading for uni rather faster than I imagined. Penny works for Barnardos, the charity in their shop in Deal.

I am still into my music and the collection of guitars continually grows. So I am now an aging rocker and still going to far too many concerts which is beginning to deteriorate my hearing - I'll never learn!

The attachment, if I have managed to press the right buttons, is me and the girls on holiday in Italy a couple of years ago.

So, lets hear your news. I hope you are well and happy.

Best wishes

Paul



VFW Post 11447
PAUL P. BUSEK

"Bataan Memor

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST 11447, SUBIC BAY, PHILIPPINES

WELCOME TO THE 16TH ANNUAL BARRIO BARRETTO BEACH BASH

Organised by the *Veterans of Foreign Wars* (VFW), also known as *Victims of Filipino Wives*, the 16th annual beach bash was held on 17 February and attended by hundreds of people. Here is a small selection of the almost 500 photographs I took at this event.

Come here next year and join in the fun!



Roll up! Roll Up! Get your tee shirts here



Now listen here young lady. When we wuz in Viet Nam we....

Contenders in the Slimmer of the Year Competition - or was it for the Fattest American in Barretto Competition!



I reckon I'm in with a good chance.



What's he got that I ain't?



Gee, I got no chance.

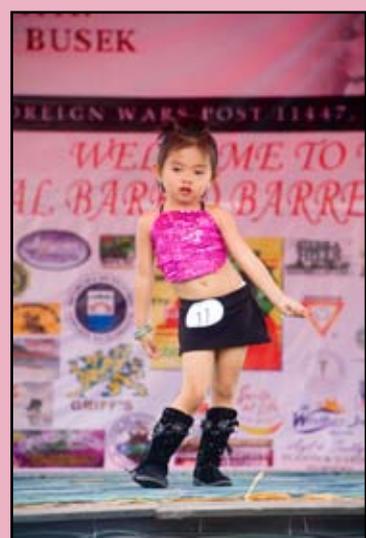


Charter Date
07 06 07

Let's dance!



This little girl stole the show with her dance routine. You can see her picture on page 27 after being awarded First Prize in her competition category. I understand that she is only 4 years old.



Lots of Pretty Girls





Lots of Mestizos





THE MS. BEACH BASH 2008
2ND RUNNER-UP

3

THE MS. BEACH BASH 2008
RUNNER-UP

THE MS. BEACH BASH 2008
CHAMPION

11

First Prize awarded to the little girl with the stunning dance routine shown on pages 22 and 23.



Filipinas always love to get their clothes off!



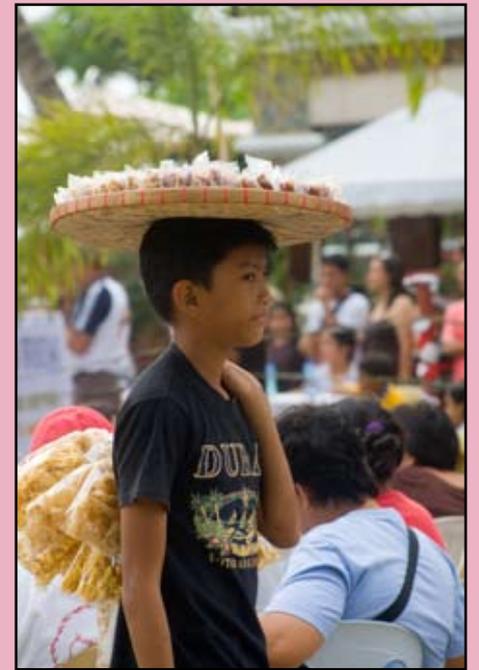






Going hungry is not an option!







One of the many sophisticated Yanks here. The tattoo reads: *Born to Raise Hell!* No doubt good old all American boy, George W. Bush, has the same tattoo.

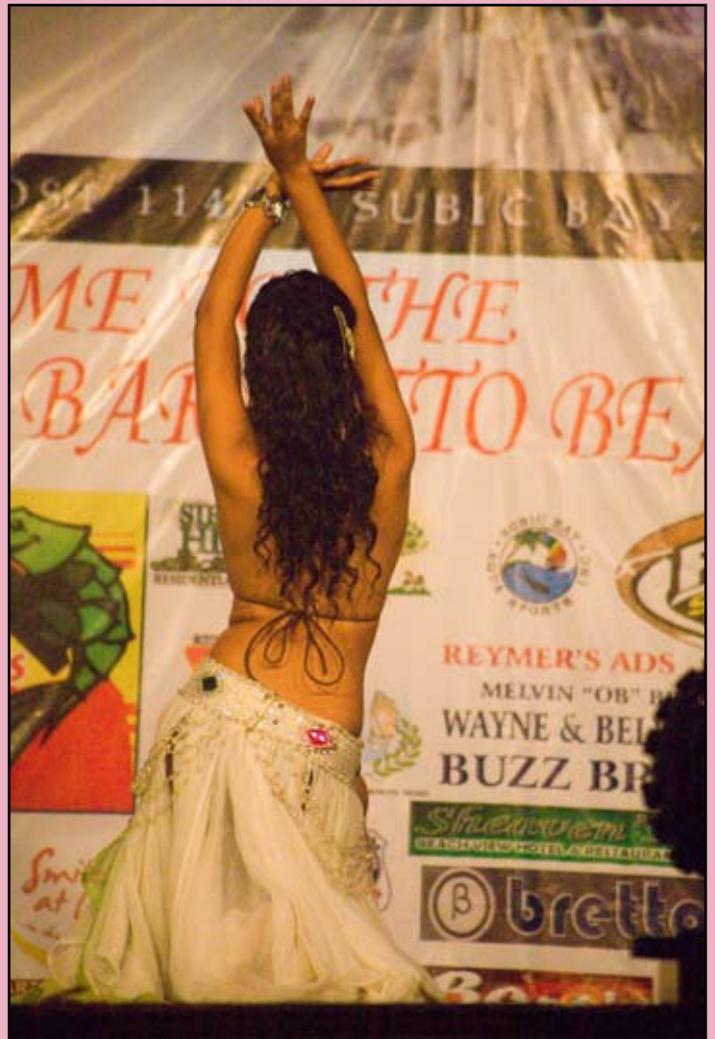
and into the night



the show continued.....

The party went on for two days and nights. Unfortunately, I only found out that it was on during the afternoon of the second day, so I wasn't able to cover all the events that took place. However, I hope you enjoy seeing life in the Philippines from a different perspective than I usually show you.







ME TO BAR... BE...



EYMER'S ADS
MELVIN "OB" BR...
WAYNE & BEL...
BUZZ BR...

Smile at Life

Westb... Inc

Leaven...
RESTAURANT

brette



Alan's Reflections

Alan's Reflections

Having been born, brought up and lived for many years in an island country, the United Kingdom, it is inevitable that when one lives in another island country, in this case the Philippines, that comparisons will be made. Even looking at statistics can be very thought provoking, boring as it might seem.

Land area of the Philippines is approx. 300 000 sq. km.
Land area of the UK is approx. UK 245 000 sq. km.
so the Philippines is about 22% larger in area.

Now it gets interesting:

In 1995, the population of the Philippines was approx. 68.617 Million people.
That of the UK was about 58 Million

So the population density was 228.7 / sq. km. in the Philippines and in the UK it was 236.73 / sq km. Not too different. Just a slightly lower density in the Philippines than in the UK.

According to the latest figures I have, the population of the UK is now about 61 Million - an increase of only 3 Million (+5%) whereas the Philippine population has gone to 88.7 Million - an increase of about 20 Million people - a huge jump of 29.27%



Now compare the density figures: 295.6 in Philippines compared to 248.98 in UK

(Source of population figures in the Philippines from <http://www.philippines.hvu.nl/facts2.htm> (University of Utrecht in Holland and http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popn.asp (National Statistical Coordination Board))

Left: Filipinas keep breeding!

No one cares at all, not the government (despite making noises to the contrary) and especially not the Roman Catholic church who count every person born as being a potential donor to the Vatican (about 85% of the population being Roman Catholic). Seeing the collection box being passed around FOUR times during a one hour service in Manila seemed to me to be somewhat greedy - even for the Vatican which (like most religious organisations) isn't known for its generosity. No wonder they don't want to promote contraception - think of the increase in funds a 30% increase in the population can bring. However, religion does play an important role in any society as it imposes rules, such as the Ten Commandments that provided a very good guide as to how we should live our lives. Regrettably, these rules seem to have been forgotten when it comes to educating our children - just as Sunday School at church seems to have fallen by the wayside. Sadly, during my lifetime, I've seen my country deteriorate in so many ways. From being a fairly devout Christian country, it then became a secular state and is now fast becoming an Islamic state and will undoubtedly be governed by Sharia law in the not too distant future. **The Archbishop of Canterbury says the adoption of certain aspects of Sharia law in the UK "seems unavoidable". Dr. Rowan Williams told Radio 4's World at One that the UK has to "face up to the fact" that some of its citizens do not relate to the British legal system (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7232661.stm>).** How absurd! If people don't like the laws in the UK, they should go back to where they came from or go somewhere else that has a legal system they can *relate* to. Just imagine if Grace and I, who have lived in two Gulf state countries, tried to challenge the law in those countries. We'd either be put in jail, or on the next 'plane out! The UK has gone crazy trying to meet the demands of all the minority groups, immigrants and the EEC, and in so doing has completely lost its way, and its identity - all due to a succession of weak governments (and now, a senior religious leader) who waste their time (and a lot of tax payers money) trying to appease and pander to the whims of everyone under the sun (literally), instead of setting the standards and the laws to maintain the national identity, and the principles, ideals and standards of integrity and justice that the vast majority of BRITISH people so desire - and for which we were so highly respected throughout the world. Is it any wonder that the Church of England has lost the respect of the British people? Is it any wonder that so many "true Brits" are voting with their feet and getting out? Studies by the Institute for Public Policy Research, indicate that at least 5.5m British-born people live abroad - a number that rises to six million (or about 10% of the population) if those who live or work part of the year abroad are included. Figures suggest the rate of departure has been so great that population falls are only masked by immigration (one reason why so many people are choosing to get out of the UK). How soon will it be before the UK is known as the Islamic State of Britain?



