

# Tropical

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

*news*

MARCH 2008



# Editorial Ramblings

On the last day of this month we will submit all the documents required by the British government in order for us to obtain Grace's residency visa. Please pray that the outcome will be successful. Dealing with bureaucracy is always stressful - particularly in the Philippines, where everything is done to make life as difficult as possible - even at the British Embassy.

Earlier this month we gave Little Lad a try-out at a school (*see photograph below*). It wasn't as successful as we'd hoped and we decided not to return - to that school at least. There were two main problems: 1) The boys were, in the main, allowed to roam around the classroom doing whatever they liked - even laying on the floor sleeping. Just as long as they didn't cause too much disturbance to the girls - who were the only pupils actually taking in what was going on and taking an active part in the lesson. I guess this is why, as a generalisation, Filipinas are considered brighter and more hard working than their male counterparts. The other problem 2) was that the teacher flitted from one topic to another so quickly it was almost impossible to keep up with her. No topic was followed for more than a minute or two at a time - sometimes she would change topic after only a few seconds had elapsed from the start of the current topic. The speed of change was just mind-blowing. We'll be trying another school very soon.

This month has seen me expanding my horizons in search of fresh subjects to photograph - as well as old subjects from different angles. I've spent a lot of time walking in the hills, sometimes with Grace, sometimes alone. I hope you like the photographs - especially the double-page panoramas that I've put into this edition (*see pages 6/7 and 22/23*). The big problem has been finding a way into the hills. Walking along the main road looking for routes into the hills has been very time consuming as wherever there is a road, there are people - and their homes. It's difficult to understand that if you're from the civilised world, where access to the countryside is taken for granted in most areas, but here it is real struggle and often involves going across private property and seeking out footpaths through small communities. In most areas there just aren't any paths and that makes walking impossible in some places due to the dense vegetation and steepness of the slopes.



**Photograph above:** Little Lad (with Grace) in school. Not looking very happy!

**Front Cover photograph:** Clouds over Subic Bay, near our home in the Philippines. Taken from Baloy Long Beach.

**Inside Back Cover Photograph:** Little Lad enjoying a shower in the garden of our home.

**Back Cover photograph:** Sunset from Aloleng Beach, Pangasinan

# *Your prayers are needed...*

## *for Paul (Alan's son):*

We can only continue to pray for Paul's safety and for his safe return to England whenever that may be.

## *for Gerry:*

Who undergoes eye surgery on 3 April. Please pray for a successful operation.

*and thanks.....*

## *for David and Ruth:*

Dear All,

Greetings to you all I trust you are all fine and life is treating you well.

Today I went to the Lymphoma Clinic, After the doctor's have reviewed my case they say I need no more treatment for the time being and I have to go back to the clinic on the 11th May 08.

This is good news, They have not said I am in remission, just that at present I don't need further treatment. The Lymph nodes have gone all except some small ones on my neck, however, since we all have these nodes they need to see if they go away naturally or begin to grow.

They Doctor explained that they don't want to give any more Chemo after nine sessions, and they don't want to give radiation treatment at this time. Since I am not sick, and have no pain they want to 'wait and see' this is one of the treatments for non aggressive NH Lymphoma.

We value your prayers as to the exact time of our transfer to Cebu. I will let you know our timetable in a few days

Love and thanks to all for supporting us through this difficult time.

## *for Terry:*

In myself, I am not feeling too badly, as long as I do not go to do anything. If I do, I have to sit in the armchair for a while to recover. But it is getting better week by week and I can feel myself getting a little stronger. It is a long job for recovery, but worth it. So far I have lost three stones. It has not helped me to walk any further, but at least I am walking the little distances I can with less pain. It has also helped my chest but only slightly so far. But I am still keeping my fingers crossed for further improvements. Now I'm off to have half a sandwich. Then I will be full up for an hour or two again..

## *for Joseph and his friend, David:*

I'm very pleased to let you know that I have completely recovered from the deep and dangerous depression which had me in its grip; thanks to the medication, the moral support and prayers of my friends in and out of AA and all the people who have been praying for David and me. God works in wondrous ways.

Back again. The reason I know that I am completely recovered is I have gone from completely inactive and dangerously depressed to my usual cheery self, doing all the things I used to do: play music, listen to music, play golf, swim, draw, translating and studying Thai, and the cherry on the cake, make bread. And has my bread improved! Wow! You should try my banana multi-grain: a meal in itself.

Last time I spoke to David, he was very well, and for a dying man, he sounded great.

# 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.*



Hi Alan & Grace,

Just had a good read of the news for this month and as usual, very good job done again! You must have one hell of a lot of patience to sit and do that every month? The photo's alone take some sorting out. There are some cracking photo's there. Every time I see one of little 'un his look gets cheekier and cheekier. He certainly has the look of mischief about him.

Glad the news on Paul is well and his promotion to three up. Although sad news about his friend to say the least.

It annoys me to see them bloody MP's out there. They travel out there on our money just for a quick and cheap holiday. It is a pity that they weren't made to take part in an operation. Perhaps then they would not want to be so quick to support those cretins Blair and Brown. In fact, it should be compulsory for their sons to be fighting out there. Then we would see which way direction for their support would go?? I do not care what party they belong to. But it is my honest opinion that the only honest MP is a dead one.

Keep well all of you.  
All my best wishes.

Dear Alan and Grace,

Thanks so much for the letter and cd.  
Gary printed off your last news letter for us and is writing this email too.  
Glad Grace is better and her Dad got his op, answer to prayer.  
Thanks for your prayers to us too.  
Sorry to see the state of things around where you live.  
Hope you manage to move soon.  
We are ok, Gerry has an eye op on 3rd April.  
Spring weather here daffs are out in bloom.  
Bye for now,  
Lots of love,

Thanks for the newsletter. I was in Cebu recently. I have just returned from Singapore with a 7 day stop-over in Hong Kong. My savings from Qatar have all gone now and so living on the pickings that are left.

I was residing in Singapore for a while but still not successful with work over the last eight months. I have returned to the UK and am now in West Wales for a while. However, this weekend I will begin an intensive course in Mediumship and clairvoyance course at a famous spiritual retreat near London. I have had this ability for a while and I wish to improve it. Whilst in the Philippines I gave 'readings' for quite a few ordinary working folk. For some reason it worked well there. Whether airport staff or hotel employees, it was productive.

That of course is not popular with everybody's belief and my parents (father, a church minister) have to adjust to it.

However, I would like to point out that I will always see Jesus as the master of the craft.

Regarding your son, Paul, I totally have sympathy with what he is doing. As I mentioned my brother has just returned from a second tour of duty in Kandahar and also had a vital job protecting the airports inside and outside. He had to fly back to Oman then Cyprus then onto a base here in The UK.

I send my prayers to you all.

Hi again you two - as ever a great work and read. Your photos are stunning too...good to catch up with all your comings and goings. Thank you very much for all that.

It's still freezing cold here...most amazing, really. But maybe only one more week

Sounds like you've been very busy with all your visitors and great you enjoyed the fiesta activities - something really different, I'd say.

I'm just skipping along as ever and thinking, however, one of these days I will have to get serious about making dollars! OK take care

much love as ever

Hi Alan,

Enjoyed your newsletter as always. Last night I was surfing the tv and every so often I watch CSPAN when they have Gordon Brown speaking to the parliament. I always find it interesting how people stand and sit. What was interesting as well, it seems that the British have several of the same issues at the States.

The rising cost and the health care system. The health care in the USA is awful. So many people don't have health care and if they want to buy health care, it is at least \$800 per person per month and that is the minimum in health care. Many people lose everything they have because they don't have health insurance. Then last year we loaned all these people money to buy houses that had no business buying houses. People spent well above their income and now we are all paying the price.

I am going to Ecuador this summer. I like to go there because I can afford it and it is good to be out of the USA for a time period.

I can usually find a place to stay for \$10 to \$15 a night.

Hope that your family is doing well. We don't hear anything about Afghanistan these days except for the prince serving time there. The information system is good but sometimes the input can be overwhelming. Say hi to Grace and John and hopefully all will be well.

Take care,

## FAMILY

I ran into a stranger as he passed by,  
"Oh excuse me please" was my reply.

He said, "Please excuse me too;  
I wasn't watching for you."

We were very polite, this stranger and I.  
We went on our way and we said goodbye.

But at home a different story is told,  
How we treat our loved ones, young and old.

Later that day, cooking the evening meal,  
My son stood beside me very still.

When I turned, I nearly knocked him down.  
"Move out of the way," I said with a frown.

He walked away, his little heart broken.  
I didn't realize how harshly I'd spoken.

While I lay awake in bed,  
God's still small voice came to me and said,

"While dealing with a stranger, common courtesy you use,  
but the family you love, you seem to abuse.

Go and look on the kitchen floor,  
You'll find some flowers there by the door.

Those are the flowers he brought for you.  
He picked them himself: pink, yellow and blue.

He stood very ! quietly not to spoil the surprise,  
you never saw the tears that filled his little eyes."

By this time, I felt very small,  
And now my tears began to fall.

I quietly went and knelt by his bed;  
"Wake up, little one, wake up," I said.

"Are these the flowers you picked for me?"  
He smiled, "I found 'em, out by the tree.

I picked 'em because they're pretty like you.  
I knew you'd like 'em, especially the blue."

I said, "Son, ! I'm very sorry for the way I acted today;  
I shouldn't have yelled at you that way."  
He said, "Oh, Mom, that's okay.  
I love you anyway."

I said, "Son, I love you too,  
and I do like the flowers, especially the blue."

Are you aware that if we died tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days.

**But the family we left behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives.**

Do you know what the word FAMILY means?  
FAMILY=(F)ATHER(A)ND(M)OTHER(I)(L)OVE(Y)OU



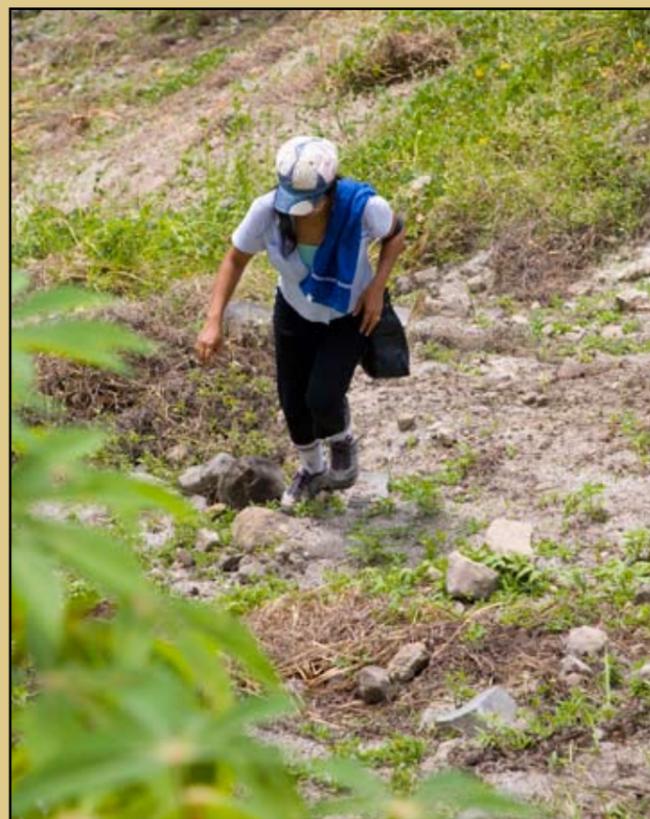
*We went for a walk the other day.....*

It all started a few days ago when I was sitting in a beach-side restaurant having a drink and took the photograph below. The thought occurred to me that I might get an interesting

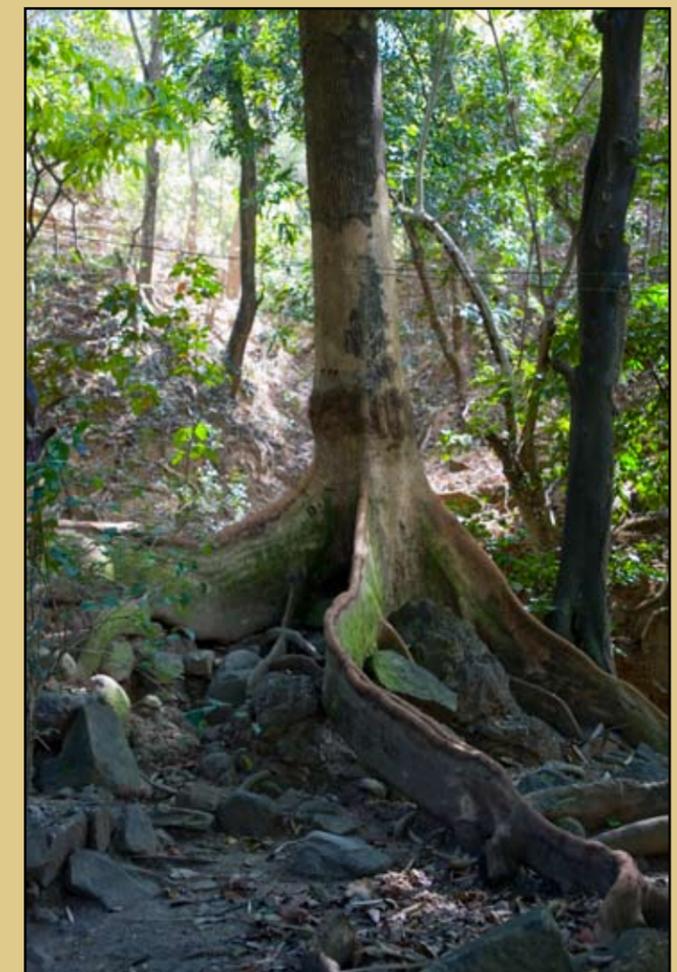
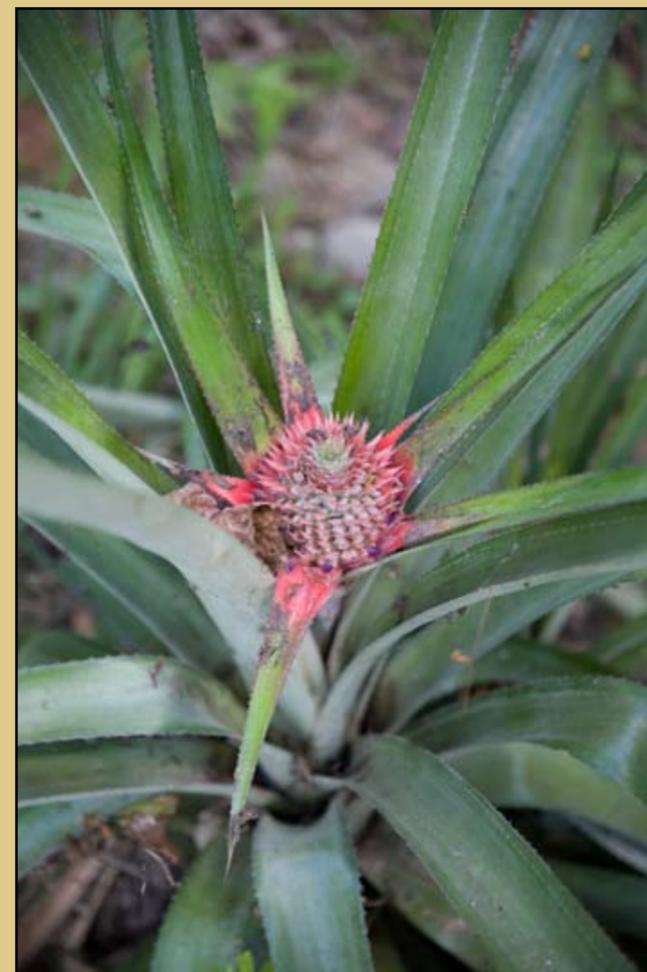
*Below:* The intrepid Grace heading ever onwards, ever upwards. This slope was extremely treacherous, composed of very loose sandy soil and stones.



view of the bay from the top of the hill that you see in the photograph. In fact, you can see the restaurant in the panoramic photograph at the top of the page. Anyway, after watching the qualifying for the Australian Grand Prix and having ate lunch, off we went. We got a Jeepney to a place nearby where we thought the base of the hill was located, then set out on foot. We eventually found some sort of track heading upwards and just kept climbing through the trees. We were given some directions by the locals and just kept walking until we reached the highest point that we could get to from where I took the photograph across Barrio Barretto (*top of page*).



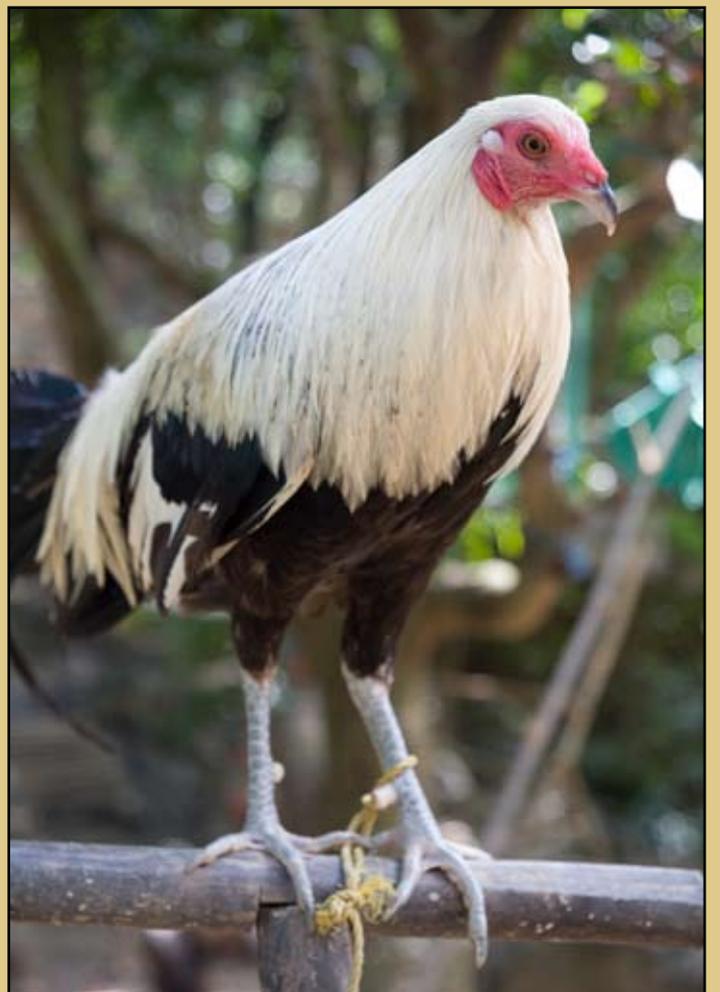
Our walk took us through a grove of pineapples and forests of trees that had spectacular roots.





On our way down, we stopped in this very rural community for our *merienda* (snack). Grace bought some Banana-Qs and other delicacies (*below*), as well as some soft drinks.

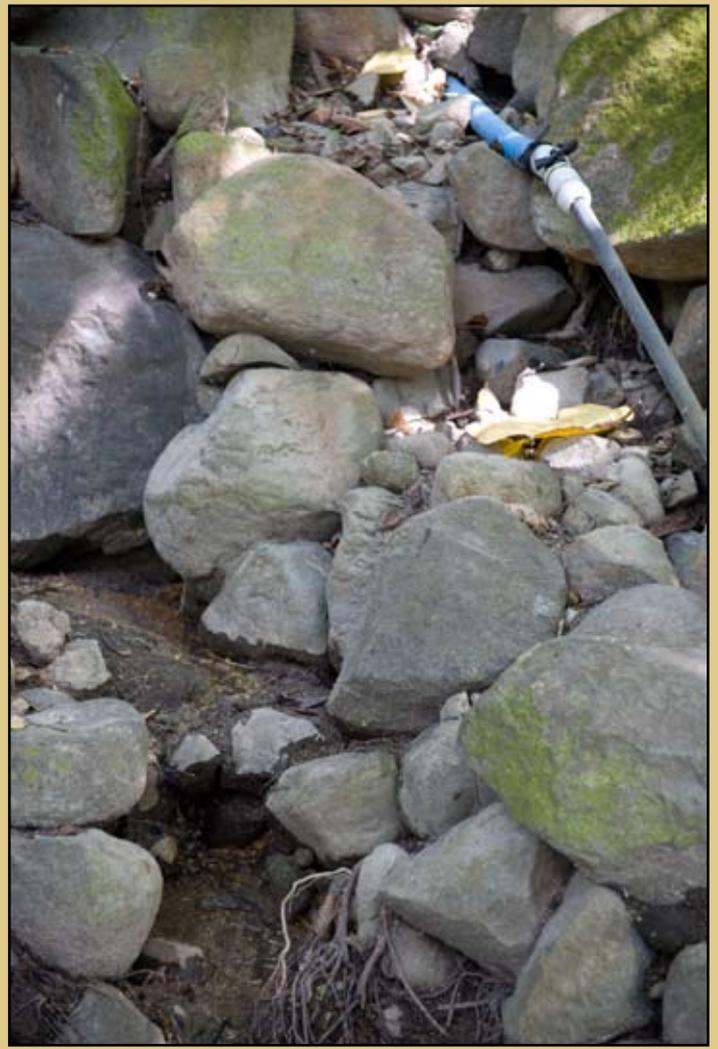
*Below*: My least favourite critter in the Philippines. There are probably more fighting cocks than there are people, and they NEVER stop crowing!





*Right:* The hose in the top right corner of the photograph goes into a spring and from this, supplies the community with their only source of water.

*Below:* A man and his wife making their own gym equipment. The idea being that the man can do his weight training using the barbell seen in the top right hand corner of the lower of the two photographs.





*Above and Bottom left:* Lower down the hill there were other homes where, as usual, sanitation is always a major problem.  
*Bottom right:* One of the children from the community we stopped at further up the hill.





The Three Wise Monkey's attending to the gardening.  
The 'shrine' is not ours - it came with the house.



The Leather N' Lace Bike Show and Beauty Pageant was held at Dreamland Resort on 16 March and proved to be very popular. This was the first of what will become an annual event.

*Come here next year and join in the fun!*



*This Trike had a very much modified Toyota engine.*

*It was great to see old bikes, such as this 1971 Norton Commando (above left), as well as more modern bikes like the Honda Fireblade (below centre).*



*Some guys have all the luck!*







*Little Lad couldn't believe his luck. Bikes, Pretty Girls, Swimming (and his Mum) - all in one day - WOW!*





## Royal Marines to the Rescue



*Marine Will Charters of 40 Commando's Bravo Company Group, based at Sangin carrying a wounded girl to the First Aid Post (above left) as his colleagues provide medical assistance to other wounded Afghan children.*

Unlike the Yanks, who just go into other countries to *Kick Ass*, (i.e. Bomb the place to total destruction), British military forces work alongside the people of the country where they are stationed; carrying out serious work to aid the people in their survival and in re-building what the Yanks have destroyed. Often termed a *Hearts and Minds* operation it is something the Yanks seem incapable of doing properly.

Just as an aside, I was talking to a young American friend here, who'd just arrived in the Philippines on leave from his base in Iraq, where he works as a fire-fighter. He said how much the Americans admired the UK military forces. He went on to tell me a short story that occurred just a few days before he arrived here. He said that a group of US personnel had been waiting for several hours for their transport aircraft to show up. While they were sitting around waiting, a British military truck arrived on their base, carrying personnel that were to be airlifted out. Just as the truck arrived at the base, a large helicopter landed, the truck drove to meet it, the guys boarded the helicopter and it was on its way again. He said the operation was all over in a matter of a few minutes and everybody around it commented on what a slick operation it was.

*(The following article comprises two articles courtesy of the UK government website at URL: [http://www.royalmarines.mod.uk/units-and-deployments/3-commando-brigade/40-commando-royal-marines/news/news-article.php?article\\_id=162](http://www.royalmarines.mod.uk/units-and-deployments/3-commando-brigade/40-commando-royal-marines/news/news-article.php?article_id=162) and: [\*commando-brigade/40-commando-royal-marines/news/news-article.php?article\\_id=168\*](http://www.royalmarines.mod.uk/units-and-deployments/3-</a></i></p>
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Royal Marines of 40 Commando helped save the lives of two Sangin children injured in a callous Taliban attack.

The commandos of Bravo Company were called upon when a local man brought his two nieces to the gate of the marines' patrol base in the Sangin District Centre. They had been badly wounded after the Taliban fired two rockets indiscriminately following another successful patrol by the Taunton-based Royal Marines.

First on the scene was Marine Will Charters, who is 19 and from Exeter. He carried one of the injured children to the Bravo Company sickbay. He said: *"I've seen casualties before but it's horrible when children are involved."*

Marine Martin McCaffrey, the Company Medic, said: *"I gave fluids to both children and was able to stabilize them and dress their wounds while the Medical Emergency Response Team was called in."*

The Chinook helicopter arrived within thirty minutes and the girls were taken back to the hospital at Camp Bastion, the main base in Helmand Province. One lost her left arm and the other is still in a serious condition with major head wounds.

## Local Children Picture Life in Afghanistan

Marine McCaffrey, who is 24 and from Runcorn, said: *“What happened to these girls is tragic but it’s the reality of fighting against people who don’t care who they attack.”*

Speaking through an interpreter, the girls’ uncle said that the Royal Marines made local people feel more secure and that Sangin now is a vast improvement on Taliban days, in stark contrast to the insurgents’ utter disregard for life.

Aggressive patrolling and interaction with the Sangin community by Bravo Company has gained the trust of local people and pushed the Taliban away from the town. The attack was almost certainly due to Taliban frustration at being unable to contain the marines or have any influence on their achievements in the area.

Marine Will Charters has since been amazed by the reaction at home to his efforts in helping to save two young girls.

Will, who is 19 and from Exeter, had been on guard duty in a sangar at the Royal Marines base in Sangin, Afghanistan, when Nazaya and Roseva were brought in after being injured in a Taliban rocket attack. He called for assistance to get Nazaya, 6, to the Commandos medical centre but took matter into his own hands when it came to Roseva, 7: *“I grabbed little Nazaya and put her on the quad bike, which we use to move casualties. It didn’t come back fast enough so I ran to the medical centre with Roseva in my arms.”*

Will thought nothing more of it until he phoned home and found out that word had reached the UK: *“I talked to my mother and she told me that a swarm of media had been outside her house, asking what it felt like to have a son who’s a hero. I couldn’t believe it.”*

Asked what he thought of being labeled a hero, Will insisted that *“any Royal Marine would have done exactly the same thing”*. He has since been asked to lead out his home team Exeter City and been the subject of articles across the national and local press.

Will hopes that the attention will be worthwhile and increase awareness of what the Royal Marine Commandos are going through and achieving in Afghanistan: *“I reckon 90% of people in the UK don’t know what’s going on. It’s good that we’re getting some positive press coverage back home at last because every day blokes are endangering their lives out here.”*

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Schoolchildren in Taunton have been helping their new friends in Sangin, Afghanistan.

The junior school pupils from Queen’s College Junior School in Taunton have been using their art classes to create images that will be used to decorate the newly-opened school in what was one of the most dangerous places in Helmand Province. They hope to show the children, many of whom are orphaned due to decades of fighting or have been denied the opportunity to go to school by the former Taleban regime and its recent insurgency, that they have support in Somerset.

Tour Jan is 10 and one of the new pupils, who travels two kilometres to the school every day. He says writing is his favourite lesson and wants to go to university.

Mohammad Qadir, who is 12, is another student. His family had been paying for him to have private tuition until the school reopened. He loves learning Pashtu and English and also wants to go to university and become a doctor.

Royal Marines from Taunton-based 40 Commando have been in Afghanistan since October last year and the men of Bravo Company have been patrolling the streets of Sangin. Thanks to their efforts and the security they have provided, the once-empty bazaar now teems with people and the local school has been re-opened.

Bahaudin is the school’s Headmaster. He has been teaching in Sangin for 7 years, although he was without work whilst the school was closed. He said:

*“I am very happy now that there is enough security for the school to be open. I have around 50 students attending daily lessons now, including girls. I am also looking for another teacher.”*

Marines from 40 Commando’s specialist Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) team worked with their colleagues from the 69 Royal Gurkha Engineers Regiment to rebuild the school, left damaged by the Taleban, and to involve local people in the project. Teachers have come forward to offer their skills and now both boys and girls can look forward to the chance of an education. Some 65 children have already enrolled.

Lieutenant Pete Ryan, part of the CIMIC team, said: *“We can’t underestimate the effect it has to hear the sound of children playing in the school again. Many of them have never been to school but now they can pursue an education with confidence.”*

Now parents and children in Sangin will be able to view the artwork produced by Taunton children and the pupils aim to send pictures of their own back to Somerset to show what



***Pupils and staff from the newly reopened school in Sangin, Northern Helmand.***

*Below right: Captain Andy Goldsmith of Bravo Company inside the school in Sangin [Picture: LA(Phot) AJ Macleod]*



life is like for them. Headmaster of Queen’s College Junior School, Justin Backhouse, hopes the liaison will develop and continue for years to come:

*“Queen’s College is delighted to be able to support this excellent initiative from 40 Commando – it is very important that children in this country understand and appreciate what is happening in Afghanistan and we at Queen’s hope that providing some of our art work, teaching and sports equipment, might make the lives of the children of Sangin seem a little more normal and enjoyable.”*

One Queen’s College pupil in Year 8 with a special interest in Afghanistan is Daniel Moss, whose father Kevin is 40 Commando’s Regimental Sergeant Major. He said:

*“I’m glad that Queen’s are going to help orphaned Afghan children, who don’t get many opportunities compared to us. I hope that our artwork and sports equipment will help their education.”*

Former Queen’s College student Mark Elliott, who is now the Adjutant of 40 Commando, said that:

*“It’s fantastic that the pupils have taken this opportunity to exchange some of their artwork with the children of Sangin. This adds a great new dimension to all the efforts that have been put into the area over the last 4 months of our tour.”*

40 Commando are five months into their tour of duty on Operation Herrick 7.

*This article courtesy of the UK government website at URL: [http://www.royalmarines.mod.uk/units-and-deployments/3-commando-brigade/40-commando-royal-marines/news/news-article.php?article\\_id=177](http://www.royalmarines.mod.uk/units-and-deployments/3-commando-brigade/40-commando-royal-marines/news/news-article.php?article_id=177) and: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/TauntonChildrenPaintPicturesForKidsInHelmand.htm>*

# Military Medics Save Life of Local Child in Afghanistan

*This article courtesy of the UK government website at URL: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/PeopleInDefence/MedicsWhoTreatedAfghanKnifeVictimReceiveMedals.htm>*

Major Stephen Gallacher, aged 49, of 208 Field Hospital, was carrying out his handover duties as the senior Accident and Emergency nurse at Camp Bastion, with his counterpart in 212 Field Hospital, when a boy, who was still conscious and able to walk, entered the field hospital, accompanied by his father. Recalling the incident, he said:

*“The ten-year-old boy had been in his father’s shop. His father had had an argument with a customer who left the*



*shop and came back with a knife. The customer tried to stab the father; then the child tried to get in the way and he got stabbed.”*

*After the operation, the father visiting his son in Camp Bastion’s field hospital [Picture: British Army]*

The knife became embedded in the boy’s head and his father brought him to the military base in Kandahar at about 1400 hrs, pleading for help. The Canadian medical facility on camp took an X-ray, and the father and son were then flown to Camp Bastion where the British military field hospital had the capability and specialists to be able to deal with neurosurgery.

Major Gallacher continued:

*“When the child reached us, he walked in. He was still conscious and talking. He was sedated and that night he was operated on. We knew how the knife was sitting because we had the X-ray.*

*“The knife had come in at an angle and gone down behind his eye and had penetrated the front of his brain. To have simply pulled the knife out would have been a disaster because you wouldn’t have known what damage was behind it.”*

Surgeons of 212 Field Hospital operated on the boy - their last operation before handing over to 208 Field Hospital, who administered the aftercare. The facilities and skills of the British medics saved this boy’s life. Within days he was back on his feet and well enough to return home with his father.

*“It was a horrendous sight. I just didn’t think he would survive,” said Major Gallacher. “But he was soon off the life-support machine and was up and about within days. It was just amazing.”*

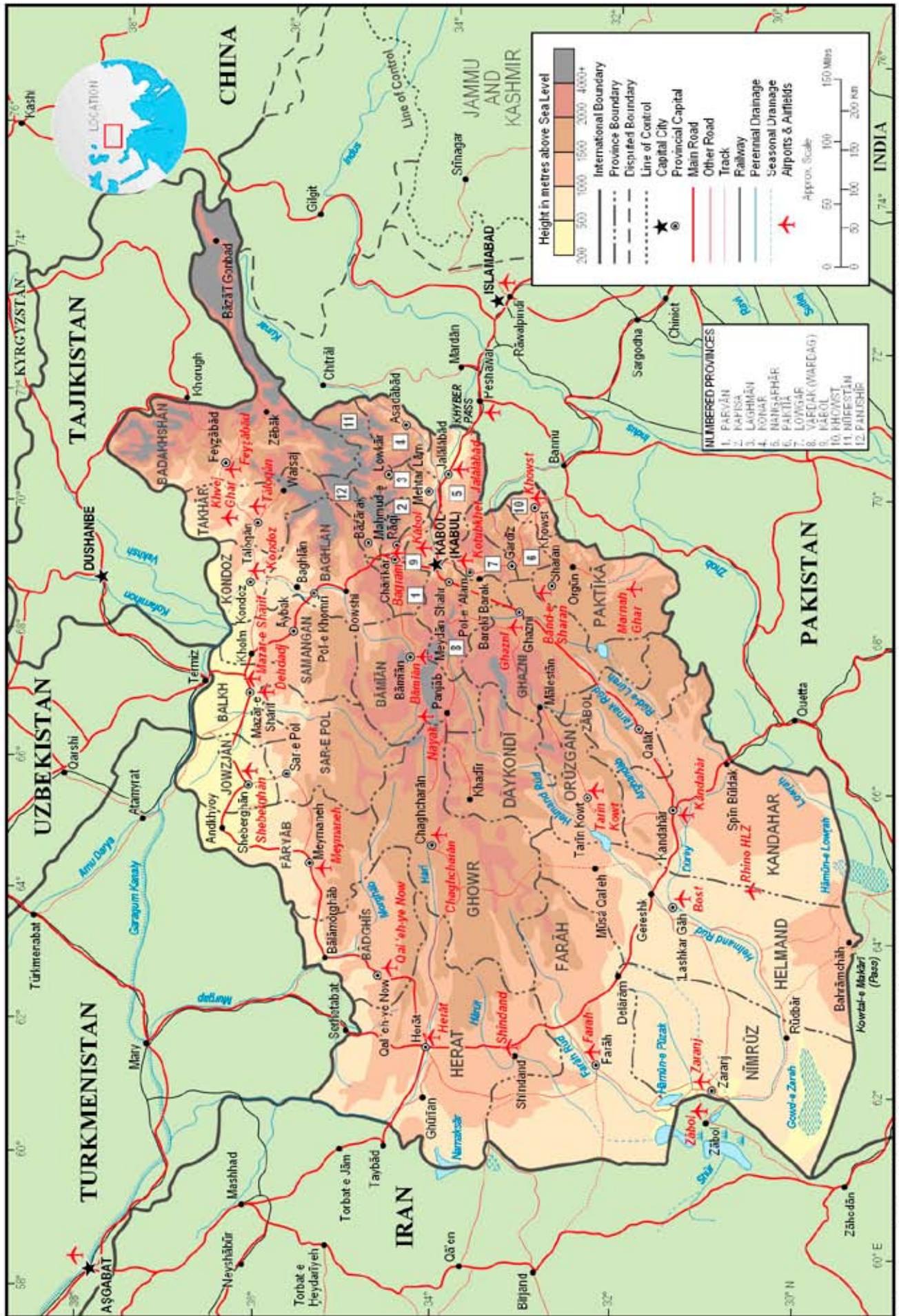
Major Gallacher, a father-of-four from Caernarfon, North Wales, added:

*“Our three-month tour in Afghanistan was extremely hard, but very successful. The tempo of operations had increased dramatically while we were there and as a result the workload for us in the field hospital increased dramatically. It was quite relentless.*

*“We saw a wide variety of injuries and, overall, we did very well. Some of the equipment out there is well ahead of the game. For example, we were using instant digital X-rays - portable machines which meant we could see X-rays in two minutes, which in a UK hospital might take 30 minutes. Don’t forget, that’s in a tent in the desert!”*

The field hospital which during 208’s deployment was sited in a tent has since been moved to a solid build facility.

# AFGHANISTAN

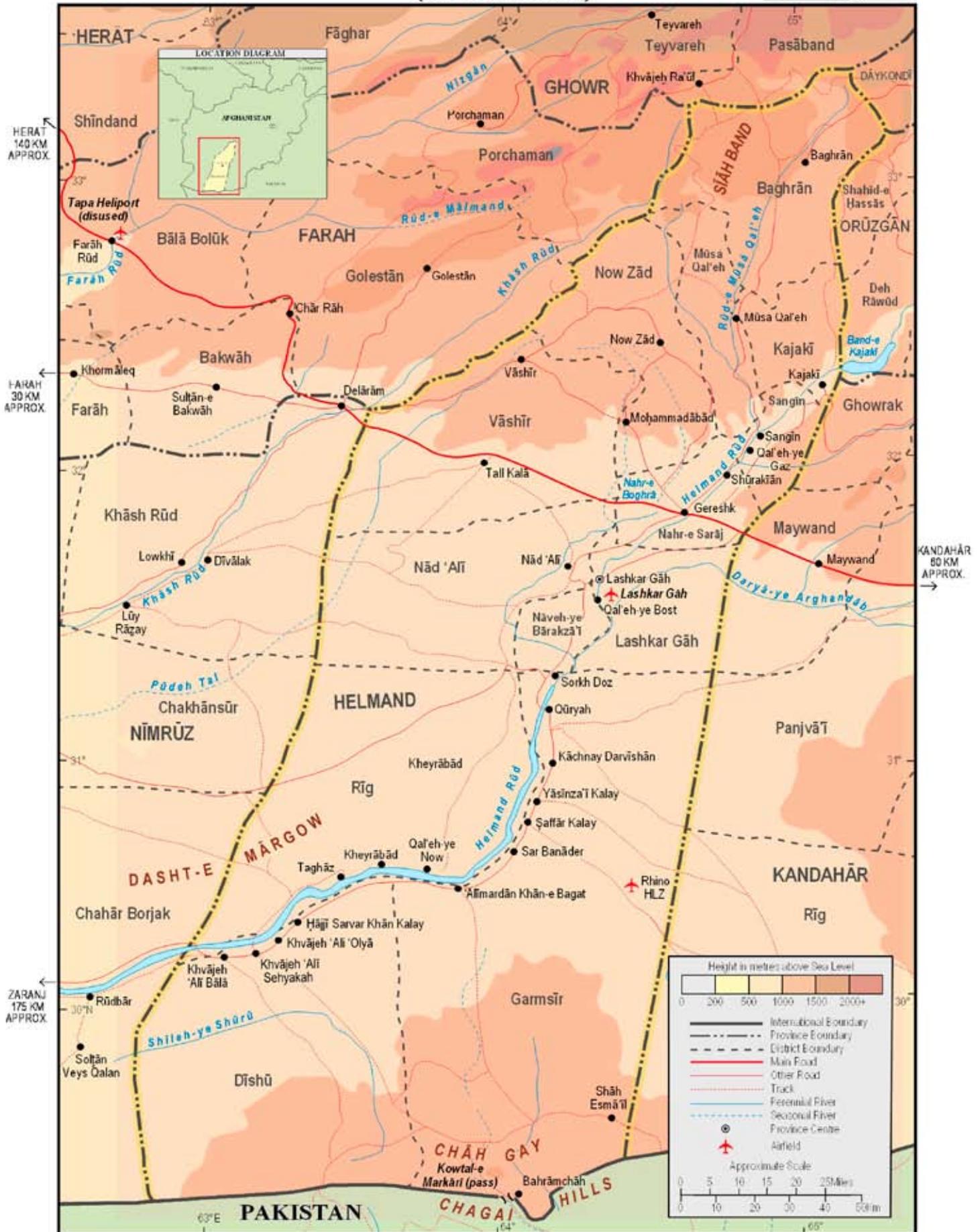


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# HELMAND PROVINCE (AFGHANISTAN)

Series GSGS 5866  
 Sheet Helmand Province  
 Edition 2-GSGS



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## Climbing every mountain .....

to try and get some good panoramic photographs has not been an easy task in 35°C or so, especially when they are so steep and provide so little grip for my boots. Maybe it really is a case of only mad dogs and Englishmen!

The photograph at the top of these two pages was compiled from 17 separate images and presents a view of about 300° showing a large area of Subic Bay, near our home. The photograph below was made from 15 different images to those used in the top photograph but shows the same area as depicted in the right hand side of the top picture. The ship is a common reference point. The ship is named “Sarsen” and was originally built for polar expeditions. Not much chance of doing any ice-breaking round here! The file size of these panoramas is huge - even after merging and flattening the layers they are about 500MB - much smaller than the 1.5+GB original size.



These smaller photographs were also taken during my walks in the hills. I'd be delighted to learn what the insects (*left*) are.

The sun going down through the trees (*right*), shows the bay near the area shown in the photograph above.



The photograph at the bottom of the page was compiled from 6 separate images and shows a view of the City of Olongapo. This is the largest city in the area near our home. Towards the far right of the photograph, on the far side of the bay, is Subic Bay International Airport. This is where Grace was working when we met.

During this walk, I also took the photograph of the two young boys with their fire (*page 24*). As I walked round a bend in the track I'd discovered along the top of the ridge of hills I'd climbed, the boys came into view and I just grabbed the picture. Fortunately, I had my camera ready and captured this scene before it disappeared or changed too much to be worth photographing. It's one of my favourite photographs and I hope you like it too.



During my walk along the ridge overlooking Olongapo (*below*), this family came out to see this crazy Englishman pass by. They lived in a small hovel with none of the utilities that we take for granted. Imagine life without electricity, running water, drainage and sanitation.





# Alan's Reflections

## Alan's Reflections

*Parents feel something is fundamentally wrong with modern childhood and want to see big changes, research suggests. (refer to URL: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/7271051.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7271051.stm))*

*A study into children's wellbeing for the Department for Children, Schools and Families found people most wanted the lack of family time to be tackled.*

*They felt they must work long hours because the UK was so expensive, and they worried about bad teachers and keeping their children safe.*

You may remember (last month) that I bemoaned the changes in our country with respect to changing from a fairly devout Christian country, to a secular state (and now, fast becoming an Islamic state). This is one very important factor why parents now feel the way they do about modern childhood. Without the very firm guidelines laid down by the church and a strong belief in God, backed up by an appropriate legal system and good leadership there is nothing for parents (or any other adult) or their children to hang on to in order for them to keep on the straight and narrow. In a society where young thugs wander the streets causing terror, as well as material damage, and collect ASBOs like trophies in a society where **discipline, responsibility** and **respect** are bad words, what else can be expected?

Another factor must also be the ever increasing obsession with materialism. More and more people **want** to buy the latest car or gadget even if they don't **need** it. To buy this latest toy often means they go into debt - and pay the ridiculously high rates of interest charged by credit card or loan companies. To pay the debt as well as survive in the crazily expensive UK means that both parents must work - and work lots of hours to bring in the required cash they need to maintain a standard of living that is beyond their **real** means. Of course, this means that there are some fantastic buys on the second-hand market for sensible people to live much more cheaply, but I digress.

When I was a child in the 1950's and early 1960's life was much different to life in the 21st Century. Working class families such as I was brought up in were, materially, quite poor, but kids were secure and safe, and much more disciplined than they are now - and happier as a result! We KNEW what was right and what was wrong, and EXPECTED to be punished when we

did something wrong. We didn't expect to be appeased or mollycoddled when we misbehaved. "*Spare the rod and spoil the child*" was the way things were and we respected that. In a society where parents (let alone teachers) aren't able to discipline a child without facing the threat of court action and the possible removal of their child, what are they to do? In a society where thugs are protected instead of punished, what do we expect other than a reign of terror and crime? In a society that has abandoned God and the church (and now suffers from the consequent drop in moral standards), why should we expect our children to do everything right? In a society that values material things above all else - even to the extent of abandoning one's children for almost every waking hour in order to pay for this materialism, is it any wonder that children feel insecure and turn to wrong-doing to get the attention of their parents who are only worried about paying off their credit card debt - and buying the next new model of their toy? In short, why should we expect our children to be safe, secure and happy when we have removed all the foundations of a safe, secure and happy society?

Compare this to the Philippines where most people are considered materially poor; where family ties are strong (and, sadly, often abused) and where children are brought up (often in large family groups comprising several generations) to respect others and where young people are generally polite and well behaved. An example of this was shown to Grace and I only this morning when we visited a local school. When we entered a classroom, all the children stood and greeted us with a smile and the words "*Good morning, visitors*". How often would that happen in the UK?

Of course, crime is a problem here, as it is in the UK, but I certainly feel less threatened by violence here in the Philippines (or in Qatar) than in the UK. I feel safe when out at night and I have no qualms about Grace and Little Lad being out alone at any time of the day or night. I know I wouldn't feel that way in the UK. In fact I wouldn't let them go out alone at night in the UK and wouldn't even go anywhere at night myself without being in a locked car.

The report goes on to say: ***The government aims to make England the best place in the world to grow up.*** (*Ed: their poor English, not mine!*)

When I was a child, England **was** the best place in the world in which to grow up! It is largely due to the constant meddling of governments and poor church leadership that England has deteriorated to the point where it can now be considered as being one of the worst countries in the world in which to grow up.

*Alan*

# Britain's broken heart

**Daily Mail, 10 March 2008 - by Melanie Phillips.**

Britain currently seems to be in a state of permanent uproar about its national identity.

Home-grown Brits don't seem to know what it is any more, while immigrants flock to these shores in vast numbers to claim it for themselves.

The Prime Minister frets about recreating a sense of national solidarity which he thinks has been lost. Accordingly, he has proposed erecting hurdles for immigrants to jump before they can join the British national project.

Meanwhile, he was forced to slap down the so-called Culture Minister, Margaret Hodge, for wanting to junk that quintessential British institution, the Promenade Concerts, because they are a symbol of a Britain she would clearly like to abolish altogether.

Tomorrow, Lord Goldsmith will publish his review of citizenship which Gordon Brown commissioned to find ways of increasing a shared sense of belonging. According to weekend leaks, this will suggest that schoolchildren should swear an oath to the Queen and promise to obey the law in ceremonies similar to those for new immigrants.

We don't yet know whether the review will in fact say this. But it sits with the view often expressed by ministers—who look enviously at the way every American pledges allegiance to the Stars and Stripes—that similar loyalty oaths to our own national symbols will make people identify with Britishness.

This, I'm afraid, gets the argument totally back to front. Their flag doesn't make Americans patriotic. They rally to it so emotionally because they have enormous pride and belief in their country.

That's because they believe that America's defining characteristics of freedom and equality, based on Judeo-Christian ethics, are simply superior to anything else. So they love their country for what it represents and, accordingly, are prepared to fight and to die for it. That is the essence of a shared sense of national purpose.

Just to state this about America is to realise the depth of the problem in this once-great United Kingdom. This country has simply lost belief in itself.

This is now a Britain where people hurl abuse at soldiers in uniform in the streets, incited by voices of appeasement to believe that the desperate war currently being waged to defend the British and Western way of life is somehow illegitimate.

Many have reacted with undiluted horror at such abuse of the military, and have displayed their own support for the Armed Forces.

That is because there are now two Britains. There is the Britain that loves and would defend to the death its own historic national identity—and the Britain that either wants to destroy it or refuses to acknowledge that it is under such threat. And it is the latter which currently wields the levers of power.

The decades-long onslaught against Britain's identity has taken many forms. Mass immigration—the single most important but unacknowledged source of Mr Brown's concerns—has transformed the country beyond recognition.

This came about through an alliance between those who wanted to stop Britain from being—in the words of a former BBC director-general—'hideously white', and those who, looking again at America, thought mass immigration was the route to national prosperity.

Once more, this failed to compare like with like. Unlike America, many immigrants come to Britain not to make money but because they are attracted by the welfare state upon which they become instantly dependent.

Indeed, the welfare state has itself eroded the bonds of duty that underpin true citizenship. The essence of citizenship, after all, is your duty towards your country. The welfare state redefined it to become 'what the country must do for me'.

What made this totally unmanageable, however, was the pernicious doctrine of multiculturalism. Instead of expecting new immigrants to adapt to British ways, the country's identity has been reshaped to adapt to them.

By asserting that all cultures were equal, multiculturalism did not merely encourage society to fragment into separate enclaves. Even worse, it made asserting a majority culture at all illegitimate and 'racist'.

As a result, the elites progressively unpicked British

national identity. Schoolchildren were deliberately left in ignorance of Britain's national story. To call attention to the nation's great past was said to be jingoistic and xenophobic. Instead, the correct posture for any prudent teacher came to be national self-loathing.

Deeper even than all that lay an attack on the very idea of the nation itself. To much Western liberal thinking, the nation is the source of all the ills in the world, from prejudice to war. So patriotism became a dirty word; and national institutions like Parliament were trumped by trans-national bodies such as the UN, EU or European Court of Human Rights.

As a result, the English common law — the very fount of liberty and the keystone of British national identity — has been superseded through human rights law by a codified system of rights that is more familiar in Europe.

As for the EU, with what shared values are we now supposed to identify, since — as last week's shameful parliamentary passage of the EU constitutional treaty so graphically underlined — we are now merely citizens of the province of Euroland West, in the banana republic of Bureaucratia?

Who would fight or die for that?

Mr Brown is certainly right to worry that the bonds of Britishness are fraying. But he is actually helping snap them still further, not least in his refusal to hold the cultural line against radical Islamism.

It is astounding, for example, that the state now pays welfare benefits to the multiple wives of polygamous Muslim men. In thus effectively recognising polygamy, Britain is creating parallel legal jurisdictions.

Law is the fundamental expression of a national culture. How can we create a sense of shared citizenship when the Government is not even prepared to uphold the core principle of one law for all?

The result of all this has been a double whammy. With the best will in the world, immigrants find there is no British national identity into which they can assimilate. And indigenous Brits have been forced to become strangers in their own country — and are then vilified as racists if they dare protest.

Even the BBC, through its current 'white working-class' season, has finally grasped that a section of the community has been effectively shut out of the national

conversation.

But welcome as this recognition is, the season itself also encapsulates the problem. For it regards the white working class as a kind of vanishing primitive tribe towards whom disdain is only temporarily suspended in the interests of anthropological curiosity.

But these people are the indigenous people of England, whose cultural heart has been broken.

So what is the remedy? Not the Government's citizenship hurdles or loyalty oaths, to be sure. If Humpty is to be put back together again, fundamentals need to be addressed across the board.

Things like mass immigration which must be stopped; multiculturalism which must be abandoned; human rights law which must be abolished; the welfare state which must be remodelled; and membership of the EU which must be renegotiated.

There are growing signs that David Cameron recognises at least some of this. If he can summon up the courage to take this agenda and run with it, he will find not only that he speaks for the nation — he may save it.

*Courtesy of: <http://www.melaniephillips.com/articles-new/?p=572>*

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*I'm sure many of you would enjoy reading more articles by Melanie Phillips. They may be found at URL: <http://www.melaniephillips.com>*

*The diary of Melanie Phillips may be read at URL: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/>*

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# Thailand



We were delighted to receive these pictures from our close friends Marc, Tessa and their son, Jason. The photographs were all taken on their recent holiday in Thailand (hence the Thai tour guide in the picture on the left). It seems that Tessa was doing all the picture taking, as she has been left out of all of them!



