

A moment with: Grahame Nelson, Head of KSA office

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The youngest of six children, Grahame was born and raised in the north of England. A keen football and rugby player, Grahame's childhood dream was that of one of many young boys – to play football for Manchester United. “That dream didn't last too long and then I began to toy with the idea of becoming a history teacher,” he laughs.

By the time he was due to start university, Grahame had given serious thought to his future and had his sights firmly fixed on a career in Law. He studied at Liverpool University, all the while continuing to play sports, and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Law. On completion of his studies, he immediately entered the world of work and began a training contract, or articles as they were then known, at a law firm in Manchester.

“I emerged from articles mostly unscathed, which as I look back is even more surprising to me now than it was then,” Grahame says. He remained at the firm for another year after qualifying, before moving to London to take up an in-house position at UAC International, a company looking after the interests of global company Unilever in African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. That's also when he got his first exposure to Middle Eastern law: “I recall looking at the Iraqi Commercial Agency Law for a Unilever company that wanted to appoint a distributor there. From memory the law was called “The Law on Middlemen”. It was a model of brevity with only two articles. Article 1 said that there were to be no middlemen in Iraq and Article 2 prescribed the penalty: death. The company I was advising decided against appointing a distributor in Iraq”.

“Living in London and working for UAC was a great experience but I don't miss the daily commute into the city!” says Grahame. “I spent two years at UAC before seeking a move further afield”.

Further afield indeed – Grahame and his wife, Barbara and then infant son, Paul, moved to Perth, Western Australia. Grahame worked for a large Australian law firm there and was later made a partner, heading the Corporate Commercial practice. He worked in Perth for over 20 years, mostly on large corporate and privatisation projects as well as banking & finance and intellectual property matters. By the mid-2000s and with three grown-up children, Grahame was seeking a new challenge and considering another move.

In 2004, Grahame and his wife moved to Bahrain when he joined a Bahraini law firm, becoming a partner in the firm a year later. “I loved Bahrain and the Middle East as a whole,” he says. “There are so many opportunities here, it is a great place to live and very easy to travel to and from”. A claim to fame not many other corporate lawyers can share is that whilst in Bahrain, Grahame represented the late Michael Jackson on many business and personal matters including the refinancing of his Beatles music catalogue and Neverland ranch. “I still have the photos and an autographed rugby shirt which I planned to auction for my rugby club in Perth. The shirt is still unsold and the last time I saw it, was in a toolbox,” he says. When work slowed in Bahrain due to the country's political instability and effects of the Arab Spring, Grahame, like many others, felt it was perhaps time to leave Bahrain. “I wanted to stay in the Middle East and so when the opportunity arose to join Al Tamimi & Company, it was perfect timing.” notes Grahame.

Grahame heads Al Tamimi's Saudi office and is now based in Riyadh. Whilst this comes with expected (and some unexpected) challenges, he is revelling in the role and ‘thoroughly enjoying’ the experience. He splits his time between management matters and advising corporate clients, as well as advising on

litigation matters and says that 'tomorrow is always another day'.

Grahame regularly travels back to Australia to visit his children - his daughter, a lawyer, his youngest son, a mining investment analyst and his eldest son, a winemaker who manages the family's winery and cidery on the southwestern coast of Australia. Grahame plans to one day retire back to Australia and laughs as he says he looks forward to spending his days "mowing the lawns."

That, however, is quite a way off as Grahame is enjoying life and work in the Middle East and is 'immensely proud' to be a part of a firm as successful as Al Tamimi & Company. Looking to the future, Grahame says he is looking forward to being involved in the firm's expansion into other cities in Saudi Arabia and helping to continue to strengthen the firm's position as the leading law firm in the Middle East.