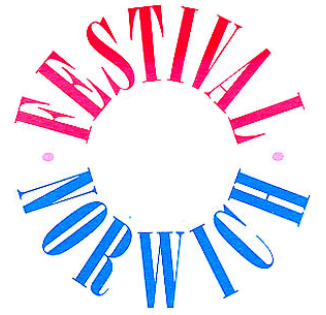


GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH

Christmas 2008



Olympic golden girl inspired by Bible verse

Christine Ohuruogu was the golden girl of the Great Britain Olympic athletic team when she won the 400 metres in 49.62 seconds in Beijing this summer.

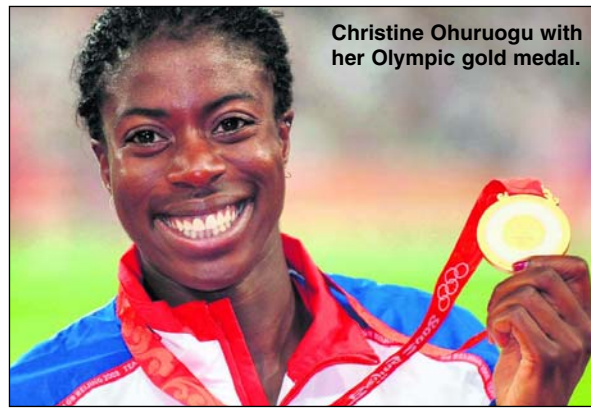
And Christine puts the inspiration for her winning run down to a text message Bible verse which she received before the race.

"The verse said 'I can do anything through him who gives me strength,' explained Christine. "It was good as I did not feel I was at my best or strong enough to do what I needed to do but the first 200 in my head was just awful but I really had to dig deep to stay in the game and my last 60 is my strongest point so I felt if I could get into the home straight within touching distance then it would be alright."

Christine's strength of mind and body, needed to compete for an Olympic medal seems inextricably linked to faith in God.

"It's like an elastic band," she says. "Sometimes our faith will be stretched so much and we may find ourselves flat on our face, but if we remain faithful we will bounce back. We have to trust that, whatever happens, God is in control and do our best to trust him to help us get through that difficult time. I believe the low times in life are a way that God uses to help us to be better people. I do believe I have changed for the better."

"I pray every day for God to guide me through my day. I pray that for whatever happens God will prepare me for it."



Christine Ohuruogu with her Olympic gold medal.

Norfolk-based British Army chief talks of his Christian faith

God saved my life four times

By ANDREW HALLOWAY

The Norfolk-based head of the British Army, General Sir Richard Dannatt, who says soldiers need to be spiritually prepared for death, believes God saved his own life four times.

Sir Richard made headlines last year for saying that death is not the end of life, and soldiers need to be spiritually better prepared for war. His comments about being ready for death are not surprising, considering it was his own brushes with death that brought him to faith in God.

Sir Richard, Chief of the General Staff, said, "In my business, asking people to risk their lives is part of the job, but doing so without giving them the chance to understand that there is a life after death is something of a betrayal."

Sir Richard has been outspoken in many ways, his most controversial statement being his view that the presence of British troops in Iraq exacerbates the country's security problems. That 'tell it how it is' attitude extends to faith in God and his belief that it can help all soldiers.

And it all stems from the four occasions when he came close to death himself, twice while on active duty in Northern Ireland – where his efforts to save the life of one of his men earned him the Military Cross. When the penny dropped that God had been protecting him, this elite soldier became a Christian.

The first occasion was in 1973, amid rioting in Belfast, when he found himself stranded with two of his men in a Loyalist paramilitary area. A hail of gunfire cut down the



British Army chief Sir Richard Dannatt.

Picture courtesy of EDP

other soldiers, fatally injuring one, while Sir Richard emerged completely unscathed.

The second incident took place during a mine-clearing operation in South Armagh in 1975, when an explosion killed his company commander, Major Peter Willis. Sir Richard had been walking alongside

him moments before, but had stopped to study an aerial photograph.

The general's third brush with death came a few months later in Germany when he fell asleep at the wheel of a car but was fortunate to veer off into a field and stop safely, rather than into the steep bank and

wood which bordered the route yards further on.

"On three occasions, God had shown me his love and protection and challenged me to make a complete commitment to him, but each time I failed to make the response that he wanted," says Sir Richard, who is vice-president of the Officers' Christian Union, and President of SASRA (The Soldiers and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association).

"Finally, I had to be stopped so that the lesson could be learned. . . God had no choice but to take a stick and beat me over the head."

That metaphorical beating came when he collapsed while serving in Germany, at only 26 years of age: "For the next three quarters of an hour no one saw me. I was lying on the floor of the cloakroom in Battalion HQ. My right side was paralysed and I couldn't talk sense. When a brother officer finally found me, I was rushed with blue lights flashing to the neurology department of a German hospital.

"Some while later my wife, Pippa, was found, and very gently told that she should not hope for too much. I had no doubt whatsoever that I would make a full recovery, but I did not know why I felt so sure.

"Medically, I had all the symptoms of a classic stroke, supposedly unheard of at 26, and equally strangely there appeared to be no physical cause. Every test that a modern teaching hospital can think of had been tried, and there was no explanation. However, the treatment remained the same – at least four weeks firmly in bed. My mind

■ story continued on page two

in brief

The best things in life are free

You don't have to get into debt in order to enjoy Christmas is the message from the Church of England in Norfolk and Waveney.

"All around us we're hearing about cutbacks and the recession – and many families are worried about getting into debt this Christmas," said the Revd Jan McFarlane, spokesperson for the Diocese of Norwich.

"We recognise that many parents feel under pressure to buy expensive presents at Christmas but the message we want to convey is that the best thing you can give your friends and family at

Christmas is yourself – your presence and the knowledge of your love for them. A small gift given with love and hugs is

a million times better than an expensive gift given in an atmosphere of worry and concern about debt, which can lead to arguments and great unhappiness.

"The best things in life – like love – are free and Christmas is the ideal time to reflect on that."

Churches and Christians across the region will be displaying posters and car stickers backing up the message and the Church of England has set up a section on its national website – A Matter of Life and Debt – which contains useful advice for those worried about debt; advice for clergy helping families who are concerned and a prayer for those worried about their financial situation.

www.cofe.anglican.org/debt



Free book for every reader

A free book, which explains the real meaning of Christmas, is being offered to every reader of *Good News for Norwich*.

What's the Point of Christmas? is written by popular author and speaker J John.

Why are people still celebrating the birth of a baby born over 2000 years ago in the Middle East?

If you would like an answer to this and other questions about the Christian faith then, with no strings attached, send an 11cm x 16cm large letter rate SAE to The Editor, Good News for Norwich, 4 Linden Road, New Costessey, Norwich, NR5 OBE.

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH

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 ■ The majority of Norwich churches are solidly behind the aims of Festival Norwich which is to give every person in greater Norwich the opportunity to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ and to bring the message of Christ to bear on the social, cultural, educational, industrial and professional life of the city.
 In order to facilitate the communication of these aims and to improve the exchange of information, the Festival board decided to publish a periodical newspaper to keep the Christian churches, organisations and associations informed.
 Leaders and church members are invited to send information on forthcoming events and short articles (with relevant photographs) relating to the demonstration of the Gospel in social action, community care and evangelism generally.
 This will not only encourage those Christians involved in similar activities but also inform leaders in other churches who are contemplating similar forms of outreach.
 ■ The deadline for material for the Easter 2009 edition is Friday March 6.
 ■ While every care has been taken in compiling this publication and the statements contained within are believed to be correct, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies. Reproduction of any part of this publication without permission is strictly forbidden.

The worst in human nature

■ "All the animals went in fear of the witch. She would go to any lengths of cruelty and deception to ensure that her power over them was never broken.

"Some animals avoided her at all costs: they had seen too many of their friends turned to stone by the witch's frozen stare. Others sought to flatter her in the hope of being in her good books. The cold climate of terror meant that nobody trusted anybody. None of them were happy. The icy wind was as cold as the witch who ruled over Narnia. By her decree, it was always winter but never Christmas."

I have always thought that image from C. S. Lewis' children's story, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is a brilliant depiction of the worst in human nature, and of what happens when it is given the chance to flourish.

Despite their potential for good, human beings have a way of creating misery around them. When legions of very rich bankers put their bonuses above the jobs, homes and pensions of ordinary people, to say nothing of the



Canon Mair Talbot
Magdalene Project

security of the world's financial system, the landscape looks bleak and wintry as we contemplate the moral bankruptcy of human nature.

Why should C. S. Lewis have used Christmas as an illustration of warmth in the midst of coldness? A man who lived as simply as Lewis and his brother Warnie, in an unheated house, can hardly have had our commercial Christmases in mind.

Christmas is traditionally the season of goodwill. Think of the song of the angels on the first Christmas night: "Peace on earth and goodwill amongst all people, with whom God is well pleased!"

The country was occupied by the Roman army. Herod was the King. The chances of peace and goodwill did not look good. What a cold, unwelcoming place for the Son of God to be born! But it was Christmas. God had not given up on his world. He had come into it himself to deal with the evil in human hearts that turns some people into tyrants and others into their lackeys.

What is the answer to the evil in human nature that tears this world apart? God went to the heart of the matter, for it is human hearts that have to change and only he can change them.

The baby in the manger was the Saviour of the human race, the one who brought God into our midst and forgave human sin by dying on the cross. His love can melt even the stoniest hearts.

A thaw set in at the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, when Aslan the Lion intervened. The witch was terrified for she knew that her power had been broken. The sun rose and there was peace.

Wishing you a joyful Christmas.

God saved my life...

■ story continued from page one

cleared first, and my speech returned to normal within hours. My right arm loosened up in a few days and my right leg slowly came back to life.

"The opportunity to step back for four weeks from the normal bustle and business of life is an opportunity that very rarely presents itself. For me, as alarming as the initial circumstances were, four weeks enforced rest as a spectator on life, rather than as a participant, had enabled me to clear my head and allow God to speak to me.

"Although I had been a follower of Christ for several years, I knew that I had only ever given part of my life to him. I'd kept a part for myself. As I lay in bed recovering, I began to reflect that God wanted all of my life, not just part, and that he had challenged me about this in the recent past.

"Obviously the physical discomfort of collapsing and being paralysed was not trivial; neither was the mental anguish an easy burden for Pippa. However, as the years have gone by and the significance of the lessons realised, we are both able to rejoice and praise God for his mysterious and loving ways.

"11th November is the date when we remember Armistice Day - marking the surrender of Germany to end the First World War. A surrender is two things: the end of the fighting and the beginning of peace. On 11 November 1977, I stopped fighting with God - I fully committed myself to him.

"I found on that date a far better way of life. To commit myself wholeheartedly to God was to enjoy that peace and purpose in life that only full commitment to Jesus Christ can bring. It was the beginning of a new life in Christ."

And it's his belief that this life is only the beginning that has led Sir Richard to be so outspoken on behalf of his troops. Speaking of the responsibility he feels to bring in the spiritual dimension when preparing soldiers for war, he says: "Qualities and core values are fine as a universally acceptable moral baseline for leadership, but the unique life, death, resurrection and promises of Christ provide that spiritual opportunity that I believe takes the privilege of leadership to another level."

Sir Richard has emphasised his concerns over falling moral standards in Britain ever since taking over as head of the Army. He says, "What I would hate is for the Army to be maintaining a set of values that were not reflected in our society at large - courage, loyalty, integrity, respect for others; these are critical things."



Picture courtesy of EDP

Olympic gold medallist and world record holder Usain Bolt hits the tape in Beijing.

Lightning Bolt

Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt is the fastest man on the planet. He proved it beyond doubt by spectacularly winning both the 100 and 200 metres finals at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games this summer in blistering world record-breaking times.

The Jamaican sprint giant entered the final of the men's 200m as favorite after leaving the world in awe with his phenomenal 9.69 seconds world record triumph in the Men's 100m on August 16.

Usain set a second new world record of 19.30 seconds in the

men's 200m final to also take the gold medal in this event on August 20. His elegant and relaxed performance captivated the world of athletics.

Predominantly renowned for his 200m talent, Bolt made headlines earlier this year when he stormed onto the 100m scene, clocking 9.72 seconds to break the world record in New York in May. Initially, Bolt was using the 100m for "speed work" to improve on his more favored 200m.

The youthful and exuberant champion could barely contain his joy, "I never expected this. I

knew the track was a fast track but I didn't think this was possible."

"I'm shocked, I am still shocked. I have been aspiring to the world record for so long."

But Usain did not just rely on his physical strength during his world-record beating performances. He says that his Christian faith has kept him going during the Games.

"I was brought up in a Christian home so I definitely try to follow my best. I pray to God each night to keep me strong and I work hard and he says he helps those who help themselves."



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NEWS

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Couple's miracle baby

By HELEN BALDRY

When Norwich couple Adam and Rebecca Griffiths flew to New Zealand for a holiday, their world was turned upside down when their tiny baby was born prematurely and 50km from the nearest hospital.

The couple had been living in Norwich for the last three years and were regular members of Norwich Central Baptist Church.

Rebecca was 28 weeks pregnant when they flew to New Zealand, where they both came from, to catch up with family and friends before the birth and stay with Rebecca's parents on a farm in Oxford.

Rebecca takes up the story: "Early one morning I woke with pains in my lower abdomen. I thought it was just my body getting ready for labour and I went back to sleep

"Minutes later I felt a sharp pain in my abdomen and said to Adam, 'we need to do something about this pain, it's really bad!' In a matter of seconds my waters broke and then we knew this was the real deal.

"Mum quickly phoned the emergency services but with



Rebecca Griffiths with baby Harrison in the New Zealand hospital.

the sound of Adam and mum saying, 'don't push, don't push' and me saying, 'I can't stop' a small head crowned. Minutes from when my waters broke Adam delivered his first child with my mum as his adviser and nurse. Immediately our wee 2lb baby of 29 weeks was placed on my stomach and

covered in towels. We heard a small reassuring squawk and felt a strong heartbeat but the adventure was not nearly over.

"The nearest hospital was 50 km away and when a nurse arrived, our boy was blue, limp and not breathing. I cried out to God, 'Lord, let your will be done but please let him live!'"

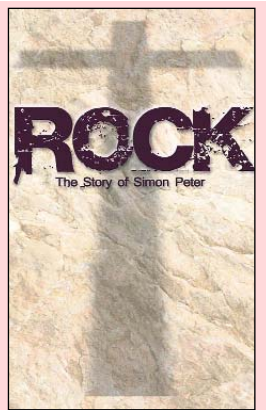
After a few miraculous breaths on an oxygen mask he started breathing on his own. Amidst all of this, emotions of fear, panic and confusion would be expected but all that I felt was a sense of peace and serenity. I knew that my God and creator had all things in his hands including my tiny first-born

son. I also knew I had the support of numerous family members and friends that had been contacted and were praying for our little boy.

"That day we knew that right before our very eyes we had witnessed the miracle of God breathing life into our little boy. Harrison is a blessing from God that we will treasure for the rest of our lives.

Adam said: "Harrison was in hospital for eight weeks, and during that time it seemed like every day we had to face a new challenge and let go of something else in our lives. First it looked like I would lose my job, then there was the possibility of having to sell our house, then the possibility of not coming back to the UK at all. Each time something like this came up we struggled with it for a day or two then once we realised we had no way out, we let go and gave it to God and just asked Him to look after us, and every time - without fail - we saw his provision.

"My employer suddenly had a change of heart and decided to keep my job open for me, I was offered part-time work in NZ to help cover mortgage payments and then our travel insurance agreed to support us and escort us home."



Rock on at musical

■ The East Anglian premier of Roger Jones' new musical *Rock: The Story of Simon Peter*, will be presented on March 28, at the Salvation Army Citadel in St Giles Street, Norwich.

Rock promises to be every bit as inspiring and enjoyable as all the many other musicals, with wonderful new songs sung by Roger's singers and actors, accompanied by a Norwich-based choir.

Tickets will be on sale from February from Cards 'n' Things on the Bull Roundabout in Hellesdon (01603 442165) or from the Citadel Office.

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FEATURES



Victor Gillon with African orphans.

Victor gives up six months to work with HIV orphans

By GAIL HALLEY

■ Norwich care worker Victor Gillon is giving up six months of his life to work with HIV/Aids orphans in Mozambique in February.

Victor, who works at Cromwell House in Norwich, has been to Zimbabwe three times, Malawi once and Mozambique once, mostly with teams from New Hope Christian Centre, where he is a member.

Earlier this year he went for three weeks to Mozambique and made frequent visits to Nhamatanda where the House of the Sparrow orphanage is based. He was struck with how poor Mozambique is and the orphans won his heart, so much so that he is now sponsoring two of them – both called Antonio.

Victor has studied theology from home for the last seven years and last year graduated at a ceremony in Cheltenham. "After seven years of studying, I can now put it to good use teaching in Africa," he said. Victor expects the work to be a mixture of practical tasks such as helping improve some of the buildings, and teaching, as well as befriending the children and spending time with them.

"Last time, I took them a football which went down extremely well," he said. "This time I want to take some board games and material to help them with their English." Mozambique is of course Portuguese-speaking, though some of the older boys speak reasonable English and they are keen to learn more. "The older ones can act as interpreters for the younger ones," said Victor.

Victor is a trustee of Norwich-based development charity Word, headed by Everjoice Makuve, and in both Zimbabwe and Malawi Victor was able to visit food aid projects run by Word.

"In Malawi, we saw this line of little children queuing up with plastic plates for their weekly high-protein meal. We were able to add some support which meant the children got more than one of these meals a week to supplement their very basic diet."

For more information on the trip or Word ring New Hope on 01603 617905.

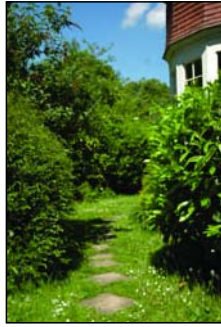
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People ■ Lowestoft family copes with

Highway

In the early hours of Saturday 1 July 2006, Phil and Heather Stoddart got the kind of phone call that every parent dreads. Their daughters Claire (18) and Jenny (15) had been in an horrific car crash on their way home to Lowestoft after a rock concert at Ipswich Town's football ground. Rosemary Dawson reports.

The accident happened on the A12 near Blythburgh in Suffolk, notorious for its long, unlit stretches of road and hazardous bends.

Claire, Jenny, their friend Carla and two passengers in the other car died as a result of their injuries. Claire had just finished her A levels and was looking forward to studying pharmacy at Nottingham University. Jenny was shortly to be baptised at her church.

Two years on Phil and Heather are rebuilding family life with their two younger children, Amy and Tom. Their Christian faith has sustained them as they have dealt with their grief and loss. Phil recalls that dreadful night.

"We got a phone message from Ipswich Hospital, telling us that our daughter Jenny had been taken there after a crash and that our other daughter Claire had been airlifted to the James Paget Hospital in Great Yarmouth.

"A scan confirmed our worst fears: Jenny was brain-dead. Soon afterwards we learnt from the Yarmouth hospital that Claire had also died.

"At such crisis moments you are faced with the crux of the matter: Is your faith merely head knowledge – beliefs that you've built up over time – or do you have a real relationship with God?"

"There was so much to think about in those moments, but my mind was absolutely clear about what I had to do. It was miraculous."

Phil says that God directed him as he made decisions about donating his daughters' organs to help others and about what to do in those hours.

"Our first priority was to get home for our two younger children, then aged 12 and 6. We drove back to Lowestoft – passing the diversion for the crash site – and called in at the home of our church leaders, where lots of people had gathered. We cried and prayed together, very aware of their great love and support.

"As Christians, Heather and I strongly believe that there is life after death, that it's not the end, and that our daughters are with God in Heaven. That was – and still is – a great comfort to us.

"When we got home there were people everywhere. The shock was beginning to



hit me. I felt very weak and helpless, and went into the garden to be alone. I didn't have the strength to stand up any longer, and just collapsed on the ground.

"I can't really explain what happened next, except to say that it was some kind of vision – a brilliant light shone round me, and a man in shining garments appeared. At such times of deep sorrow and shock, the spirit seems to go beyond the human senses and I knew without a doubt that it was Jesus, that he was angry about what had happened and the situation we were in. He seemed like a warrior-captain come to protect me, and the feeling of inner strength I gained from that experience was amazing.

"I realised that I had to be the one to take charge of the family. My wife was very quiet and withdrawn. She had her faith too, but also a mother's grief to cope with. I just knew that I would have to be the one to deal with the immediate practical matters."

Phil and Heather have since learnt how the accident happened. As Claire's

Norwich pastor talks of

■ Norwich church pastor Tom Chapman says that faith in Christ has given him help, hope and a sense of humour through his recent brain cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Tom, leader of Surrey Chapel, first felt symptoms in summer 2003. "I had become the pastor of a large church at the age of 30 and was bringing up a young family," he said. "It was easy to dismiss my occasional odd mental episodes as symptoms of tiredness and stress.

"But when I collapsed in the shower on Christmas Eve 2006, then we really did worry, and so did my GP. But six months later, when I had the MRI scan, I was feeling much better and fully expected to be sent home as the pathetic malingeringer I considered myself to be.

"When the surgeon said that I had a large brain tumour it came, shall we say, as rather a blow. It was

inoperable and growing at an unknown rate.

"It affected the part that thinks, reads and speaks," said Tom, "which as a pastor, I rather need!"

"Being told at the age of 35 with three young children that your time is numbered on the fingers of one hand is as unpleasant as you imagine. The effect is visceral, a physical kick in the guts and it is still easy to feel gloomy," says Pastor Tom. "But because of Christ we don't face these things alone, we don't face these things for nothing and we don't face these things for ever."

"All through this awful experience, we've never once had to ask the question 'why?'" says Tom's wife Suzanne. "Jesus never said that we should expect an easy life. We know that God has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives. This last year has really tested out whether we really believe what we say we believe, helped us to put our faith in him

Norwich Christian volunteer opportunities at www.networknorwich.co.uk

the tragic death of their two teenage daughters

to heaven



Phil and Heather Stoddart with their children Tom, Claire, Amy and Jenny. A12 to Heaven is published by Last Word Communications, priced £7.99. It is available from bookshops and at www.lastwordcommunications.com. This article is reproduced courtesy of *The War Cry*

car was climbing a hill, it was hit by a car travelling the other way, overtaking on their side of the road. The 22-year-old driver lost control and crashed into them head-on, suffering multiple injuries. He was convicted of causing death by careless driving while unfit through the effects of alcohol, and is serving a prison sentence.

What does Phil feel about the person who caused the death of his two daughters? "Right at the very beginning, while we were still waiting for news at the hospital, God gave me some crystal-clear instructions: I was not to blame the driver or God or Claire or myself for the accident. For my own good, and peace of mind, it was imperative that I was obedient to this instruction."

At one time, obeying God would have been the last thing on Phil's mind. "I became a Christian when I was 21," he says. "I moved from Birmingham to Lowestoft in 1984, and was looking for answers to life's big questions: Is there a God? Is there any meaning to life? What

happens when I die?" "I hitch-hiked round Europe and kept a diary of my inner struggles. I passed myself off as an atheist, but deep down I wasn't that at all. When I was angry or frustrated, I had no trouble in blaming the God I didn't believe in, and when I was desperate – guess who I turned to!"

"In Lowestoft I met a man who'd been converted during a Billy Graham meeting. I was sceptical about what had happened to him, but I was also crying out for God. We started to chat a lot. "I also met my wife Heather around that time. She was part of a church group I used to discuss things with, and was already a Christian. One Halloween night my intellectual fight with God turned into a spiritual experience, and I became a member of his family."

Phil feels deeply for people going through bereavement who do not have a personal faith. "I just can't imagine how we would have coped without it. People say: 'How can a loving God allow such things to happen? How can you forgive

the person who caused the accident?" "My reply is that God knows exactly how I feel – he lost his own Son when Jesus died on the cross. For me to forgive someone who has caused so much pain might seem a massive ask, but it's not, because I obeyed God by not blaming anyone right from the start.

"This has also proven so important for my own recovery. If I had chosen to ignore God, then there would have been a real danger of becoming consumed by bitterness or revenge. Instead, I have just had the loss of my daughters to deal with – and that is where the real battle lies."

He admits that 'letting go' is far from easy. "You don't want to lose your memory of the ones you've lost, but after two years we're finding that some things are already fading. The Bible tells us that 'to be with God is far better'. We've found comfort and reassurance in God's promise that we shall meet Claire and Jenny again, in Heaven, when all our precious memories will be restored."

How have his other children coped with the loss of their sisters? "Amy was 12 at the time, but she had to grow up fast. When we had to return to the hospital for formal identification, she came with us to say her goodbyes. She has moments of questioning, but she's doing very well. Tom was really too young to understand."

Phil worked for a local government research agency until six years ago, when he began a new career as a secondary school business studies teacher. He has written a book about the accident and the family's struggles to come to terms with their loss. He says A12 to Heaven is a testimony to God's goodness.

"I want people to look at God because of it. I want to tell them not to walk away from bad things but to use them as a means of walking towards God."

"I want people who are going through a similar experience to know that God isn't anyone's enemy. He longs to help us in our sufferings. The Bible tells us that, because he loved the world so much, he gave his only Son to die on the cross for our sins – and knowing that can only bring us relief and comfort."

New meaning in life for Ash

■ Former Hindu businessman, Ash Kotecha, told a Norwich audience how his search for meaning in life ended when he came to faith in Jesus, despite fierce opposition from his family.

Ash, who is a UK university graduate, said: "Perhaps it was my family background, but even as a student I was also seriously searching for truth. I wanted to know if God was real."

He often asked himself the question: "Is anyone up there?"

Eventually, he came to faith in Jesus Christ, but soon faced tough opposition from his family in the UK.

"My Hindu family were deeply upset with me 'for bringing unthinkable shame on the family name'. Jesus, they said, was the white man's God."

But their anger turned to amazement when several sick family members were healed when he prayed for them "in the name of Jesus".

This was a life-changing experience for Ash Kotecha, too, because he had only been a believer for a few months.

Ash had visited his perplexed Hindu parents, who had moved here from Malawi, in south-east Africa. He found his father sick in bed with a slipped disk and much pain.

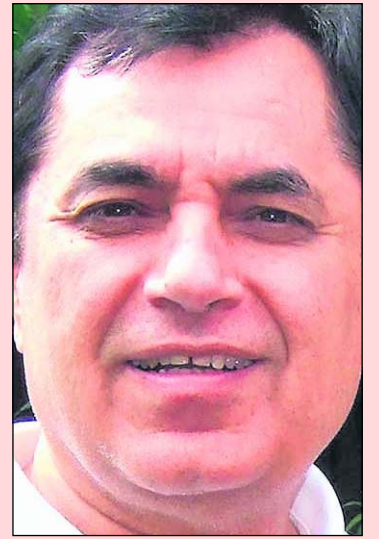
"My mother, a devout Hindu, shouted in frustration: 'Why don't you ask your Jesus to help your father?'"

"What was I to do? I laid a hand on my father's head and prayed for a few seconds," said Ash. "Then I heard an inner voice telling me he was healed."

"Dad," I said, "I think you are healed." To his surprise, Ash's father jumped out of bed and then rushed his son to a sick nephew's home "to do his 'magic' again".

This time the nephew was healed too, said Ash, who was speaking at a dinner organised by the Norwich Chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship.

By Mike Wiltshire



Ash Kotecha.

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cancer fight

and talk about him more freely."

After a good response to a six-week course of radiotherapy, and a great deal of prayer, Tom is now symptom-free and fully back in action. Although the future remains unclear for him, it is simply a more intense form of the mortality we all face

"To be diagnosed with a brain tumour was pretty bad. But it is not the worst thing that could happen to me. And to be cured of this tumour would be wonderful. But that is not the best thing that could happen to me.

"I have already encountered the worse and the best things in life! The worst thing is to be excluded from the love of God; to face the horrible prospect of forever without him and every good thing he provides. And the best thing is to know the love of God, knowing that Jesus died for my sins, share my sorrows and secure my future."



Tom and Suzanne Chapman.

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Gary's life of adventure

A real delight with angels

By KEVIN GOTTS

Gary Moore, Norwich taxi-driver and YMCA Norfolk furniture project worker, has always had a sense of adventure. At the age of 8 he ran away from home, heading for Africa. His mum caught up with him complete with suitcase, at the bus stop.

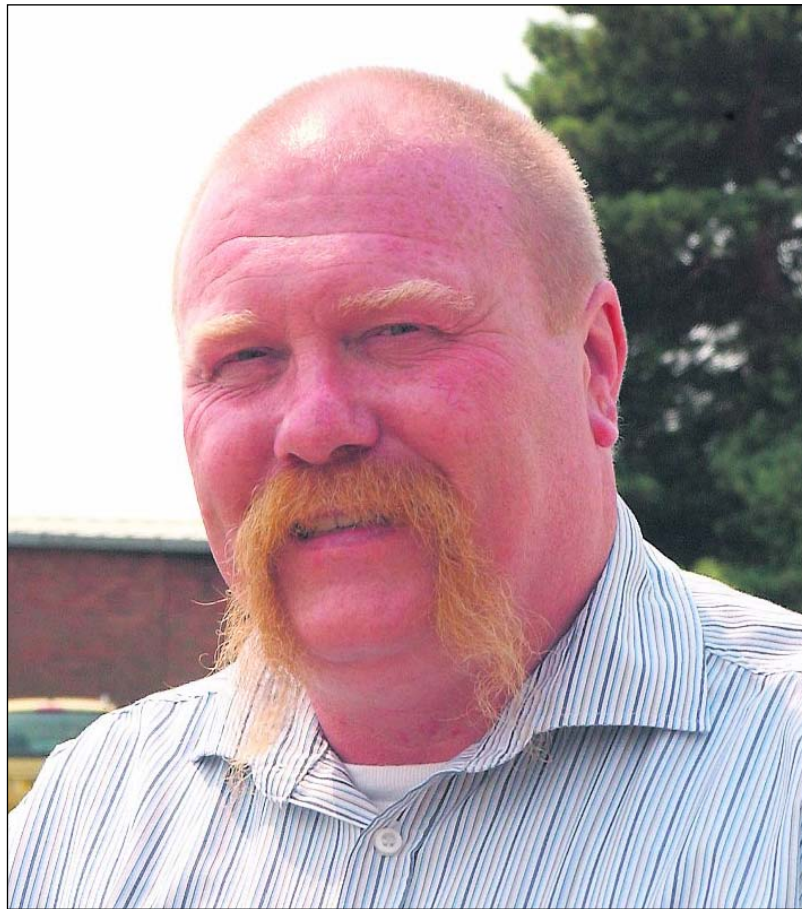
His love for adventure has never diminished. As a younger man he served with the Royal Military Police and, after a rather poor career due to the demon drink, he joined the French Foreign Legion. After a brief spell he was discharged and eventually returned home where, finding himself homeless he moved into the Norwich YMCA, and there came under the influence of Christians for the first time.

After a soul-searching time, he decided to take the plunge himself and follow Jesus.

"The change in my life was both immediate and, in some ways, dramatic," he said. "I stopped almost straight away for one thing.

"As the first few days after my conversion to Jesus Christ moved along, I saw for myself first-hand evidence of my new life, of the fact that I had been born again of the spirit of God and was in fact, what the Bible called 'a new creation'.

"One day I had my usual walk and



Life of adventure: Gary Moore.

was passing through the crowded market place in Norwich when a man barged into me, nearly knocking me

over. Just a few short days before I would've attacked him; instead, I asked him if he was all right! He was

the most surprised man in Norwich that day, the more so when I began to talk to him about my Jesus. He was amazed, shaking his head as he left me. A small crowd had gathered and I told them as well about my Jesus!

"I began to smile at everybody I met; the joy of knowing Jesus loved me just overflowing from deep inside of me, from heart to face muscles. 23 years later I'm still smiling."

Since that time Gary has travelled to more countries than he ever dreamed of as a young boy, with adventure after glorious adventure. Gary has been to Russia and the Siberian Far East and preached in the Gulag camps.

He's made trips to Africa deep in the bush to take church services, visited South American prisons and travelled in Eastern Europe. In the last few years, he's been involved in Bible smuggling into China and meeting with the underground church there. He has also been into that most secretive of nations, North Korea.

Married for all that time to Tracey, he has two children and two grandchildren.

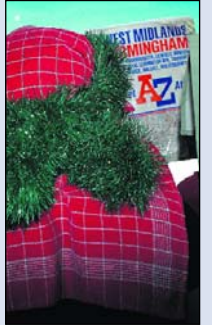
Gary has written a book about his experiences, entitled "Gary's Story", published by Booksurge, and is available online at £9.78 from www.amazon.co.uk or £7 from the newly opened Norwich Christian Resource Centre.

■ An Angel's Delight is the latest Christmas production by the Saltmine Theatre Company, written by David Robinson and a sequel to his hilarious Christmas comedy, Three Wise Men and a Baby.

With An Angels Delight, St Mary's Literary Society is at it again! This time their over-ambitious director, Marjory Lockwood, is convinced the journey of the shepherds is in need of some Broadway razzamatazz. Not the

natural place you might think to find Eric, the vicar, his wife Doreen and faithful church treasurer, Brian Shepherd. But they don their tea towels, grab a shepherds' crook, put on their tap shoes and head for the hills. The result is a mixture of seasonal fun, festive music and unbelievable routines.

It will be performed on Saturday January 3, at Norwich Central Baptist Church, Duke Street, beginning at 7pm. Tickets from Cards 'N' Things on 01603 485832, the Norwich Christian Resource Centre on 01603 619731 or at norwichcrc@btconnect.com, or from Peter Barnes on 01603 743786, priced £6; cons £3.50.



YMCA Norfolk is opening a new accommodation facility for young homeless men and women in January 2009 next to the Norwich bus station. The existing hostel on St Giles will remain open until a further new 40-apartment move-on unit opens. Please contact us at the St Giles Hostel on 01603 620269, or visit our website at:

www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk

Christmas sandcastles in the TV lounge

Christmas can be a very lonely time for the homeless, however, staff at the YMCA hostel in St Giles do their best to make it more enjoyable.

Worker Gus Hawes says he spent one Christmas Day with a group of young men, building sandcastles in the TV lounge, the entire floor covered with sand.

"Christmas Day is a hugely significant time for our young men," Gus says. "They are missing their families, their kids. Many become extremely morose, sitting alone in their rooms, so we try to provide activities to stretch them, make them think about something else, something not Christmas."

"When they walk through the sand and leave footprints, it's a symbol of the marks that we leave as we walk through life. One of the residents read aloud the 'Footprints' story of Jesus and the sets of prints in the sand. 'Some of them began to question why we were doing all this, and put together their own answers.'



Julie Oakes, operations manager, outside the YMCA hostel on St Giles in Norwich.

"We had a resident with significant mental health problems, on huge amounts of prescription drugs. He had a great time building sandcastles at Christmas; it was the first time he'd ever made one."

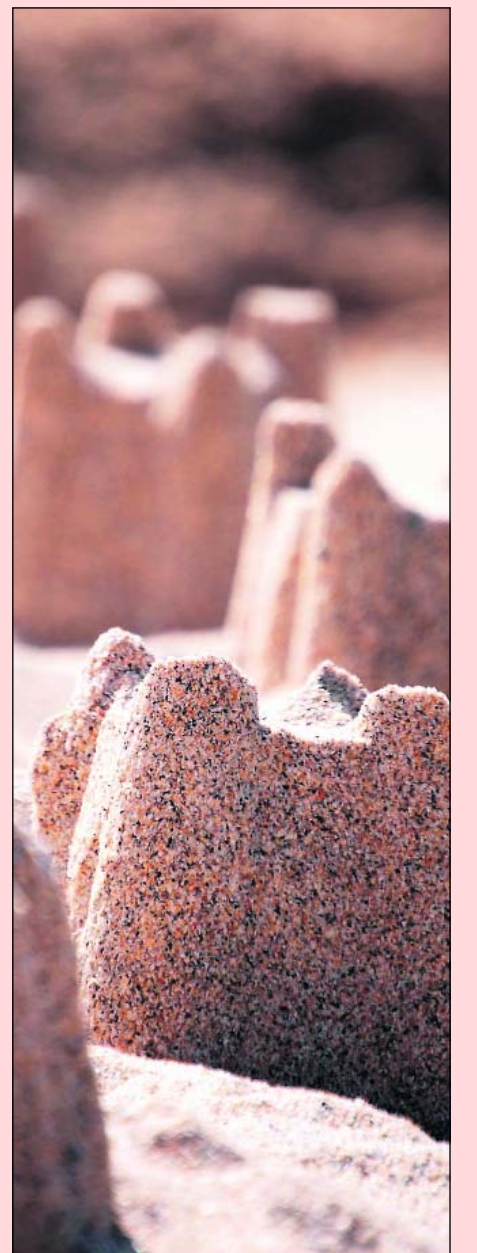
Gus is keen to demonstrate the truths behind the Bible in ways that impact visually and physically on these young men. Putting moats in the castles was important, watching the water: "It's important to see something flow," says Gus.

"Another young man began to cry. His parents had both died that year, and he was reminded of family holidays at Felixstowe. His family was part of his life that he'd tried not to think about; the tears were liberating, a part of healing."

Millennium eve, 31st December 1999, was also memorable for Gus.

"We got a load of helium balloons for the Millennium," he explains, "and released them at midnight. Attached to each balloon were the names of three people important to each YMCA resident: the person they liked the most, a person they felt responsible for and a person they hate."

"Releasing those people, those feelings, that night, was important. They needed to let it go."



NEWS

latest Norwich Christian events at www.networknorwich.co.uk

Detective pastor unearths £128k will

■ An undiscovered £128,000 legacy from a Norwich woman was unearthed when a city church minister spoke at her funeral about her strong Christian faith and simple lifestyle. Surrey Chapel minister Derek Haylock was paying tribute to church member Margaret Woodward and mentioned that she had left no will, had no known family, and had accumulated little treasure on earth –

but that her treasure was in heaven. In these circumstances her estate would simply go to the Crown. "After the service, a lady told me how kind Margaret had been to her mother, who lived in a neighbouring flat," said Derek. "She also said she was sure that her mother had said that Margaret had in fact written a will." Derek tracked down an advert on the local Sainsbury's supermarket

noticeboard for a local will writer who happily informed him that Margaret had indeed made a will with them. "Margaret left all her books to the church, plus an amazing £128,000 to the Dohnavur Fellowship, of which Derek is a trustee as the charity had strong links to Surrey Chapel. Margaret's legacy will now enable hundreds of youngsters in southern India to receive good healthcare and a Christian education.

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Death crash hit football legend

By **MIKE WILTSHIRE**

Football legend and former England international Cyrille Regis told a Norwich audience recently how the death, in a car crash, of his great friend and fellow international Laurie Cunningham, came as a dramatic wake up call about the purpose and meaning of life.

Cyrille, who spoke candidly about his former indulgent lifestyle, also told of his deep questions following the road crash, 20 years ago. He sought out friends in the Christians in Sport group – and eventually resolved to leave his "old ways" and to become a convinced Christian.

In November, the 50-year-old received an MBE from the Queen for services to the voluntary sector, international aid and football.

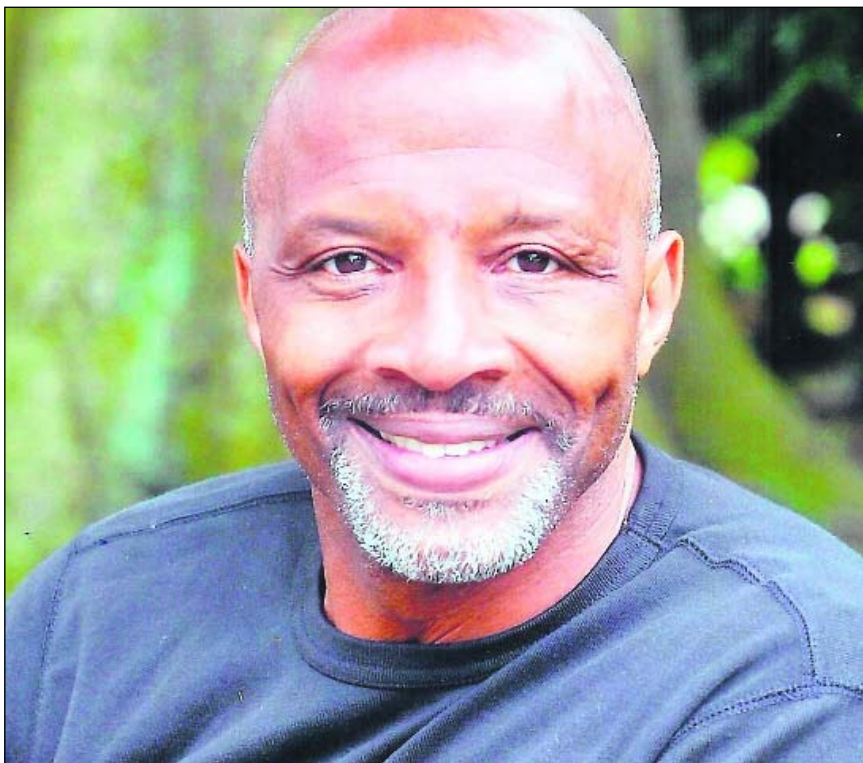
Cyrille was one of the first black players to achieve stardom in the English game. The former West Bromwich Albion striker said: "History will say that we broke barriers but at the time you just want to play football and stay in the side. Looking back on it there was a whole sea change."

"You understand the impact that your status has and how you can change lives and inspire people purely because of your position."

Born in French Guiana, Cyrille's parents brought him to London at the age of five. In his teens he showed exceptional ability as a football striker as a part-time professional, and was spotted by famous Albion scout, Ronnie Allen. He joined West Bromwich Albion at the age of 19, which launched his professional playing career where he made 610 league appearances and scored 159 league goals over a 19-year period.

After he joined Albion, his career blossomed as he resolutely fought to eventually become an English international – this in the face of considerable taunting and abuse from football crowds when there were only three black players in the first division, and all at WBA.

With his powerful physique and displaying great mental



Football legend Cyrille Regis.

determination, he earned many titles, including "Smoking Joe." Chants from the fans singing "Nice one, Cyrille" resounded around the stadiums of Albion, Coventry City, Aston Villa and Wolves.

Speaking in Norwich at a "First Sunday" meeting at the Salvation Army Citadel, Cyrille told of his early friendship with Graham Daniels in the Christians in Sport organisation, and how he came to personal faith in Jesus Christ. "Today, this is the foundation of my life," he said. "In day-to-day challenges, I am energised by Bible reading and prayer.

"The death of my dear friend Laurie Cunningham, when he was playing for Real Madrid in Spain, acted as a real 'wake-up' call for me. Especially as two years before Laurie died, he and I were in a very similar incident in Spain, but we walked away with our lives.

"By developing my relationship with Jesus through prayer, meditation and application, my faith grows deeper. My spiritual journey continues daily and I'm forever thankful for God's provision and faithfulness."

www.cyrilleregis.com

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