



DARWIN *the missionary donor!*

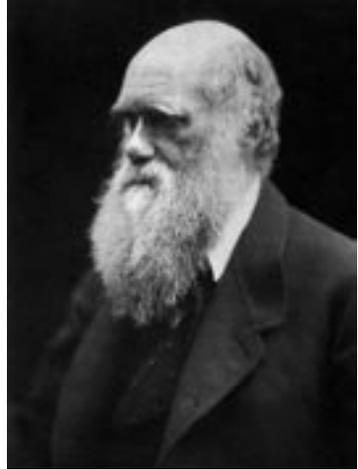
As the media never tires of telling us, 2009 marks two notable anniversaries in connection with Charles Darwin. He was born on 12 February 1809, while his seminal book *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (mercifully known now as *The Origin of Species!*) was published on 24 November 1859.

We are being deluged with radio and television programmes, DVDs, books, magazine features and newspaper articles telling us of Darwin's work, often concentrated on 'evidence' that all species of life have evolved over time from common ancestors, and sometimes airbrushing God out of the picture.

What few if any of the media outlets will report is that from 1867 until his death in 1882 Darwin made an annual contribution to the work of the South American Missionary Society. Sir James Sullivan, a vice-president of SAMS, had sailed with Darwin on the *Beagle* in 1831 and was so shocked by the state of the natives of Tierra del Fuego that he considered it the lowest in the world. Darwin agreed and told Sullivan that it would be utterly useless to send missionaries there.

Years later, when a Christian church had been founded, training in various disciplines instituted and a Yaghan dictionary compiled, Darwin called the progress 'most wonderful' and told Sullivan that 'it charms (or shames) me ... It is a grand success'. He then added that he would be proud if the committee concerned thought fit 'to elect me an honorary member of your society'!

None of this (nor his burial in Westminster Abbey) proves that Darwin ever became a Christian, but his anniversaries this year provide a great opportunity to underline the power of the gospel to transform the least and the lowest in any society.



'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

Tale of four counties

With county boundaries repeatedly being shuffled, it is sometimes difficult to know where one is when travelling in rural England — but on the latest Popular Christian Apologetics tour with Howard Williams our minds were locked into the traditional divisions.

We began in Wiltshire, with a meeting in the village hall of **West Lavington**. Arranged by a small local church (a recurring theme on this tour) it nevertheless attracted about eighty people, one man having come all the way from Gloucester. The Q and A session barely got off the ground, but the general spirit of the meeting was excellent — with a final encouragement afterwards when a man told me of his conversion under my ministry some years ago.

The next day began with a ninety-minute drive into Devon, for a morning service at Newhouse Chapel, **Smeatharpe**, where John Woollam exercises a faithful ministry in a fellowship founded in 1652. A heartwarming time was again followed by encouraging news, this time from a man who had used

St Mary's Church, Upottery



Right with God in his personal evangelism while studying at Oxford University and knew of a fellow student who had subsequently come to faith.

St Mary's Church, **Upottery**, may date from Saxon times, as its parish came under the new diocese of Sherborne in AD 705. In 1288, a survey of church properties valued 'Up-Otri' at £10, while the Vicar's stipend was 26s.8d (about £1.33 in today's currency!). The present Vicar is Nick Wall, a rare evangelical surrounded by liberals and high church clergy. St Mary's does not normally have an evening service, but the Vicar was keen that we hold a meeting. Attendance was predictably small, but I was kept busy long afterwards answering questions and helping people to align their thinking biblically.

Monday saw us on the south coast for a meeting in the town hall, **Torquay**. Driving there was a journey down 'memory lane' for me, passing what in 1962 was Charterhouse Christian Guest House, venue of my first-ever message in full-time ministry, and Teignmouth Baptist Church, the first church in which I preached after arriving in England. As with other meetings on this tour, the Torquay event was not arranged by large churches but by smaller ones, this time led by Galmpton Congregational EC, with John Young and others carrying an extra load because of the illness of

their pastor, Colin Thompson. Town-centre meetings on Monday nights can be very problematical, but 250 people came and an excellent Q and A time helped to make this a very worthwhile event.

Our third county was Somerset, where the venue was **Taunton**. Once again, small fellowships put the meeting together, this time in Octagon Chapel. Normal Sunday attendance there barely reaches double figures, but nearly 150 packed in for as



lively an apologetics meeting as I can remember for a long time. The organizers were hugely encouraged – and so were we, not least when a man told us that my ministry was instrumental in his entering the full-time ministry some time ago.

Back to Devon the next day, this time for an evening held in a motel in **Honiton**. The comfortable room was comfortably filled

— and on his way in one man told me he was an atheist and the Messiah! The Q and A session flowed as freely as the rest of the evening and helped to make the event very rewarding.

On to Dorset, and Chardsmead Baptist Church, **Bridport**. Without a pastor for three years, the going is tough, and it was my first visit to the town. The meeting could have been low-key, but it was enlivened by two vocal atheists, one of whom stormed out when things were not going their way!

One of our longest drives took us finally to North Devon for a meeting held in Roundswell Community Centre, **Barnstaple**. Pastor David Kay introduced me as the leader of a North Devon Crusade held in 1966! I spoke at well over 100 meetings in North Devon in the 1960s and 1970s and it was a great joy to meet one after another who dated their conversion from those times. Extra chairs had to be brought in, and the audience was one of the most alert Howard and I could remember. It all made for a grand ending to the tour's evening meetings — though it was followed by a Men's Breakfast the next morning at Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church.

It was a special delight for me to be back in the West Country, and the whole tour was enriched by the superb hospitality shown by John and Val Woollam throughout the week. They were the *perfect* hosts, cheerfully coping with our ragged schedule and a succession of late nights. It would be impossible to overstate their contribution to the tour.

John had also been responsible for pulling the entire tour together. Part of the preparation had been a series of prayer meetings held in several churches and prayer was certainly answered during the eight days of the tour. May God graciously give all the churches concerned even greater encouragement in the days to come!

Joyce



Regular readers of *Newsline* wife Joyce is in an extensive programme following an op-
removal of a malignant colorectal

There has been some progress
tases in her liver and lungs, but she
side effects in her hands and feet.

These became so serious
that towards the end of January a

Hospital advised that the chemotherapy should be suspended for three months to give
her body time to adjust to the treatment and to see whether the painful side effects
would be reduced. Her next appointment at the Marsden was then set for 27 April,
when she would be given another CT scan to assess the situation.

This timing made it difficult to give an up-to-date report in this issue of *Newsline*,
which needed to be in the printer's hands by the middle of April — and there was
the added complication that plans called for me to be in South Africa at the time of
the scan. However, if you are on the internet, you will be able to access a blog on
the Home Page of my website — www.johnblanchard.org — which is updated more
frequently than *Newsline* will allow. I expect to post a report there during the first
week in May.

Joyce and I continue to be encouraged by the many letters, cards, emails and tele-
phone calls we receive from friends concerned about her health, and even more by
the assurance of their prayerful support as we go through this difficult time together.
I know you will understand why we are not able to respond directly to all of the mes-
sages, but those who send them can be assured of our gratitude. We continue to look
to the Lord for his gracious care, knowing that our times are securely in his sovereign
hands.

will know that my
chemotherapy
eration for the re-
tumour last June.

in treating metas-
has had very painful

These became so seri-
ous doctor at the Royal Marsden

THANK YOU!

My warmest thanks once again to friends
who have recently sent ministry gifts
through the CM Trust. Your fellowship
is greatly appreciated.
Gifts sent directly to my home address
are always acknowledged personally
at the time.



THE DELIGHTFUL DESERT

Early in the year Howard Williams became concerned that I needed a brief but complete break from the ministry. Helping to take care of Joyce's needs, months of research for Brian Edwards as he wrote the Day One Travel Guide, and preparing the manuscript of *JESUS: Dead or Alive?* had all been added to the normal pressures and commitments and meant a very heavy

workload. Coincidentally, he was under considerable stress in his own work, and early in March we suddenly agreed that we should take a break together.

With 100% approval from Joyce and from Howard's wife Marlene, we flew to southern Spain and holed up in La Cala de Mijas for four days. The weather was perfect, the setting was blissfully quiet — and the golf courses excellent! We played golf, relaxed, did a lot of reading — and never spent ten minutes talking about 'the work'. It was all that we had hoped for both of us — though interestingly we agreed that four days was sufficient.

Our flight home was late on a Sunday afternoon, and this enabled me to accept an invitation to preach in a morning service at Torre del March Church, about fifty miles away. Planted by Presbyterian Church Ireland some twenty-five years ago, it is the only English-speaking church in the Presbytery of Andalucia and the Spanish Evangelical Church. Its programme includes education, outreach and special services, and there is a great need for pastoral work among the lonely, the sick and the bereaved. It is about to open a satellite church in Torrox Park.

Church life in Spain is dominated by Roman Catholicism, with its more than 21,000 congregations. Over 13,000,000 people live in towns, villages and districts with no evangelical church, while of the nation's fifty-two provinces, nearly thirty have fewer than 1,000 evangelical believers.

We were just off the Costa del Sol, an annual playground for millions, yet we discovered that it was a spiritual desert, with scattered, mainly small, groups of evangelicals trying to maintain a biblical witness. A relatively short flight from England, Spain is yet another mission field on our doorstep.

Torre del Mar, Spain



ALBANIAN UPDATE

Readers who kindly contributed to Project Albania will be pleased to know that progress continues to be made. The mammoth task of translating and editing *Does God believe in Atheists?* has now been successfully completed and there are plans to have it published this year. *Has science got rid of God?* has also been translated and is to be edited quite soon.

Will Niven, my missionary contact who is in charge of seeing Project Albania through, recently sent me the following message, which will interest *Newsline* readers: ‘Sales [of the four titles already printed] have been steady, people buying in small quantities but regularly, and we are pleased that things are coming on there, but more needs to be done. There has been a very good response from Albanians in the United States, but there is the difficulty that Albanians there and in Kosovo are a long way off in terms of transporting the literature. If I fit in a trip to Kosovo this year I will take some to Femi Cakolli, who has a number of bookshops there and is a fine man of God. Now we are looking at what to do next.’

Will and I are now working towards the possibility of my returning to Albania, perhaps in September, but in any event to coincide with the official launch of *Does God believe in Atheists?* in Albanian. This was something of a dream when it came to mind on my first visit to Albania: please pray that in the providence of God it might soon become a reality and that the book might be greatly used in universities and elsewhere, where there is an encouraging interest in some of the major issues that the book covers.

Pray for Will, too, as he seeks to spearhead missionary work in Fier, Patos and elsewhere. The great desire of his heart is that native Albanians will become effective leaders in the ongoing work of the churches.

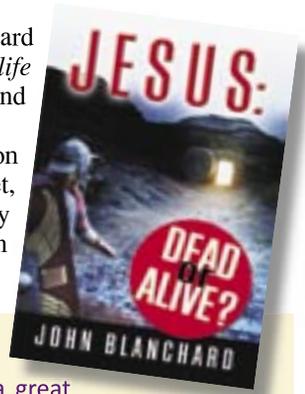


Will and Doreta Niven
with Ester, Lidia
and Samuel

EASTER for every day of the year!

The credibility of Christianity hangs on one straightforward yet stupendous question: *did Jesus Christ come back to life after he died and was buried?* His character, his claims and his relevance for today all hinge on this one issue.

Regular readers of *Newslines* will know that this question lies behind the writing of my latest evangelistic booklet, *JESUS: Dead or Alive?*, which was published in February and which has attracted many encouraging comments from respected Christian leaders, including the following:



'A magisterial evangelistic tool, *Jesus: Dead or Alive* is the most persuasive and succinct case for the resurrection of Christ that I have ever read. This is a great booklet, indeed, perhaps the best yet from Blanchard. It was a joy to read.'

— **Joel R. Beeke, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan**

'A goldmine of a resource for Christians and a wonderfully logical presentation of the heart of the Christian faith for those exploring it. Brilliantly summarises what happened at the resurrection of Christ, why it matters, who opposes it, what they say and how to respond to them.'

— **Rico Tice, Associate Minister, All Souls, Langham Place, London, and author of *Christianity Explored***

'John Blanchard has for many years enabled committed Christians not only to find strength for their own faith and witness but also provide tools for them to use in sharing the gospel with others. Nothing can be more important to the cause of the Kingdom of God than constantly to ratify that we serve a Saviour who is alive today.'

— **Frank Retief, Presiding Bishop, The Church of England in South Africa**

'It is a treat that another John Blanchard offering is published. His books have always been of great assistance in evangelistic ministry. It is only sensible to buy multiple copies of this new one. It is the kind of book that should be given away as soon as it is purchased.'

— **Philip Jensen, Dean of Sydney, Australia**

The publishers, EP Books, report a remarkable response. The first large printing was sold out within two weeks and a reprint of 20,000 copies did not last much longer.

Encouraged by this, EP Books has extended the exclusive *Newslines* offer, which will now expire on **31 July**. The booklet retails at £1.50, but the following rates apply to *Newslines* readers: 1-9 copies 98p (+ £1.45 postage); 10-49 copies 65p (+ £2.50 postage); 50-99 copies 64p (+ £4.10 postage); 100-499 copies 63p (POST FREE). Order direct from EP Books, Faverdale North, Darlington DL3 0PH – 01325 380 232 – sales@evangelicalpress.org.

COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2009

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For up-to-date news of any additional meetings, visit www.johnblanchard.org. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and if possible plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

Please note that because of Joyce's illness I may have to withdraw from a scheduled engagement at short notice, though hopefully this will not be the case. If you plan to attend I suggest you contact the organizers shortly before the date concerned.

May

- 1-3* SOUTH AFRICA: Engagements in the Western Cape, including Cape Town [Info: Peter Temple – peter@christianbooks.co.za]
9 MIRFIELD, W. Yorks: Annual Thanksgiving Service of Pilgrim Homes, at the Salvation Army Centre, 106 Huddersfield, Mirfield, WF14 8AF [Info: 0300 303 1400 or info@pilgrimhomes.org.uk]
10 LEEDS: City Evangelical Church, Cemetery Road, Beeston LS11 8SX [Info: 0113 270 8568 or mike.wildsmith@ntlworld.com]
The remainder of May is reserved for study, preparation and writing.

June

- 4 KIRKMUIRHILL, Lanarkshire: Kirkmuirhill Parish Church [Info: 01555 892409 or lan.Watson21@btopenworld.com]
5 CHRYSTON: Chryston Parish Church [Info: 0141 779 4188 or DMcA29@aol.com]
6 INVERNESS: Inshes Church of Scotland, Sir Walter Scott Drive, Inverness [Info: 01463 772 402 or ali.inshes@btinternet.com]
7-8 ABERDEEN: Deeside Christian Fellowship Church, Binghill Drive, Milltimber, AB13 0JE [Info: 01224 733979 or jeremy.mcquoid@dcfchurch.com]
9 PETERHEAD: Peterhead Baptist Church, King Street, AB42 1TA [Info: 01779 477040 or ffg@puseyplace.fsnet.co.uk]
10 DUNDEE: Logie & St John's (Cross) Church, Blackness Avenue, DD2 1HJ [Info: 01382 668514 or david@logies.org]
11 STEVENSTON, North Ayrshire: Stevenston High Kirk, Schoolwell Street KA20 3DL [Info: 01294 463356 or revhighkirk@btinternet.com]
27-28 GUERNSEY: La Villiaze Evangelical Congregational Church [Info: 01481 236371 or wrc@cwgsy.com]
The remainder of June is reserved for study, preparation and writing.

July

- 2 YATTON, North Somerset: United Bible ministry at Horscastle Chapel, Horsecastle Farm Road, BS49 4QQ [Info: 01934 834 330 or ianhilder52@hotmail.co.uk]
5 LONDON: Amyand Park Chapel, Twickenham [Info: 020 8891 3938 or info@amyandparkchapel.org]
The remainder of July is reserved for study, preparation and writing.

August

- 25 DORKING, Surrey: Grace Baptist Mission Youth Camp at Root Hill Farm.
The remainder of August is reserved for study, preparation and writing.

* *Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting*

JOIN THE TEAM!

Thank you for reading *Newsline*. If you have not seen it before and would like to receive future copies (by post or e-mail) please let me know at 'Sarnia', 81 Lambert Road, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2QU. Telephone 01737 357501 E-mail: jbsarnia@gmail.com