



# newsletter

FOUR-MONTHLY NOTES AND NEWS  
OF HIS MINISTRY FROM JOHN BLANCHARD

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## Jura



The Paps of Jura

The Hebridean island of Jura is known as one of Scotland's last wildernesses. Although it measures 142 square miles, only some 180 people live there — hugely outnumbered by 5,000 deer. It is dominated by three mountains, the famous Paps of Jura, the highest of which is Beinn an Oir (the Mountain of Gold). From the Paps the

fabulous view takes in the whole of the Kintyre peninsula on the mainland of Scotland to the east and the Antrim coast in Northern Ireland to the south.

The island has one paved road (the A846) and one small village — Craighouse — that nestles in its south-eastern corner. Off the northern tip of Jura is the notorious Corryvreckan whirlpool, the third largest in the world. The English author George Orwell (real name Eric Blair) nearly drowned there in 1947. A fishing boat rescued him from a small rock and he returned to Barnhill, a cottage on Jura, where he completed the writing of his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which gave the world the 'Big Brother' concept.

As part of a tour of Scotland, Howard Williams and I took the ferry from Port Askaig, on neighbouring Islay, to the tiny landing at Feolin, and were then driven the seven miles across the island to Craighouse, for a Sunday morning service in Jura Parish Church. Built in 1777 it is immaculately kept by members who value its presence. I was shown the private upstairs box, from which in previous years the island's laird was able to look down on the rest of the congregation! Ten minutes before services begin, a bell is rung from outside the building, and I accepted an invitation to do this. Rob Barlow, Minister of Islay's Round Church, led a simple service for about twenty-five people, and I preached on the defining marks of true Christianity. Everyone took a free copy of *Anyone for Heaven?* as they left and I trust that God will graciously use it in the lives of those living on an island I can well understand people calling 'heaven on earth'.

Calling the Faithful!

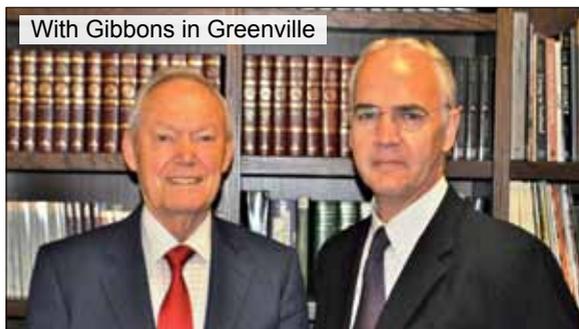


'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

# Back across the ‘pond’

My latest preaching tour in the United States got off to a stuttering start. Howard Williams and I flew from London to Washington, planning to take a connecting flight to Greenville Spartanburg, S. Carolina. But after taking two hours to clear immigration and domestic check-in, Howard was told that the flight was overbooked and he would not be on it. Changing travel plans would be very complicated and expensive, so we were relieved when some time later prayer was answered and Howard was told that he was now booked on the flight — and in seat 1A, while I was much further back!

Our opening Sunday was in **Greenville, S. Carolina**. Many years ago I was of help to a young man called Richard Gibbons as he trained and then took his first steps in full-time Christian service. Today he is the Senior Minister of Greenville’s First Presbyterian Church, which has over sixty on its full-time staff. ‘First’ is a significant Christian influence in the area and it was a privilege to preach at two morning services there, when a combined attendance of 900 was augmented by one being shown on television.

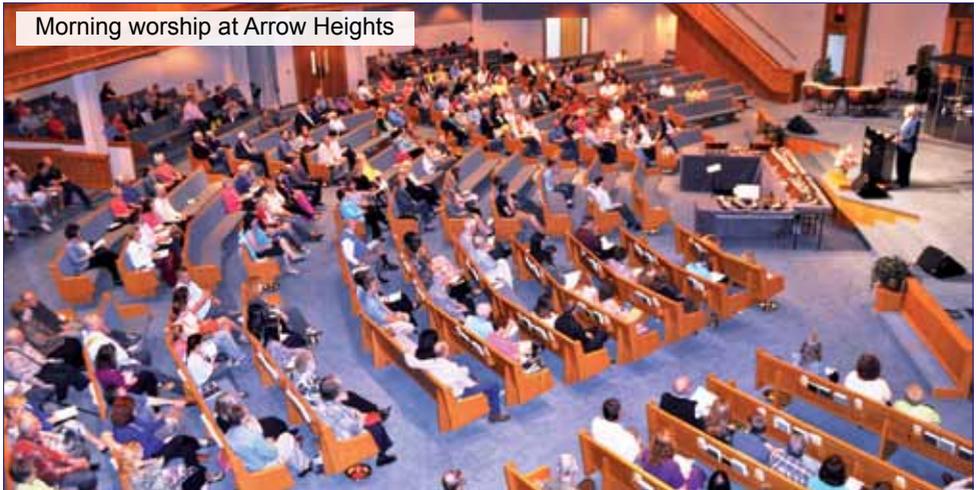


We then moved to The Reserve at Lake Keowee, in **Sunset, S. Carolina** for a few days’ break to prepare us for the rest of the tour. With no holiday plans for this year, having time to recharge batteries was especially welcome. Long-time friends Trey and Cynda Lee were wonderful hosts — and a superb golf course we already knew well was a major feature while we were there! There was also time to keep up with e-mail traffic, which included requests to publish *Where is God when things go wrong?* in Polish and *Ultimate Questions* in Tamil. There was a hair-raising episode when Howard noticed that churches in two different states were expecting me on the following Sunday. A flurry of phone calls and e-mails resolved the problem — but only after more than a little concern!

Next came an 800-mile drive in a hire car, stopping overnight with a friend in Birmingham, Alabama, and lunch the following day with another friend in Memphis, Tennessee, before going on to **Little Rock, Arkansas**. Little Rock is said to be the most ‘churched’ city in the nation, though we can be sure that this is a numerical fact and not a spiritual one. I first preached there in 1977, but had not done so for ten years. Our engagements for the next few days were at Redeemer Community Church, a thriving fellowship that meets in a room in a shopping centre, but is shortly to move to a nearby facility it has recently bought. All the services were streamed on the internet, and the final one was led by Bob Lepine, who is the co-host of Alistair Begg’s ‘Truth for Life’ radio programme. Curtis and Betty Thomas, close friends since the seventies, helped to make all the arrangements for the visit, and have also had helpful input into an upcoming book of mine. The response to the ministry at all the services was exceptionally warm and positive.



Two flights helped us on our way to **Broken Arrow, Oklahoma**. Bob Green was pastor of Arrow Heights Baptist Church when I preached there in the seventies, eighties and nineties, so it was a special joy to serve him again, this time in the church's superb new premises, set in ten acres of land. We began with a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting



(the only one on the tour) when I spoke on the evidence within human life for the existence of God. This approach was greatly appreciated and opened up new lines of thought for many people. It was also encouraging to be told of someone who had come to faith in Christ while reading *Ultimate Questions*. The next engagement was at Tulakogee Conference Centre, on Lake Fort Gibson, in **Wagoner, Oklahoma**, an outstanding facility (it can accommodate 600) that was built entirely by voluntary labour. It is a real eye-opener, and it was a privilege to minister to pastors and other church leaders from the Tulsa Metro Baptist Network. On the following day we took part in a golf tournament at White Hawk Golf Club, **Bixby, Oklahoma**, followed by lunch and the prizegiving. The fact that Howard and I were in the winning team helped to get the men's attention as I brought a gospel message to them!

Sunday at Arrow Heights Baptist Church was Senior Adult Recognition Day. I spoke at a service for over 150 of my fellow seniors before preaching to a much larger congregation at the church's regular morning service, which was streamed on the internet. A two-hour drive then took us to **Enid, Oklahoma**, for an evening service, the opening event in a three-day conference based on the Minor Prophets. Emmanuel Baptist Church normally meets in house groups on Sunday evening, but the hall was packed to the doors for this united event led by Pastor Wade Burleson, who has been a valued friend since I first preached in Enid in 1993. On one night his parents, Paul and Mary Burleson, travelled to Enid for the service, and as I had preached for Paul in 1978 and several times since it was a delightful reunion. Each of the three services included a searching Q and A session which opened up a wide series of subjects and gave an extra dimension to the ministry.

Two more flights took us to **Jackson, Mississippi**, and to my tenth visit to First Presbyterian Church in the last twenty years. Ligon Duncan, Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church, led the service in which I testified to ways in which God had demonstrated his

faithfulness to me in over fifty years in full-time Christian ministry. An early morning engagement later in the week saw me with an eclectic group of surgeons and lawyers. These men have been meeting for Bible study at 7.00am every



Q and A with Wade Burleson

Friday for the last twenty years. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with them last year, but this time I was bombarded with so many questions for the entire hour that there was no time left in which to share the message I had prepared. This is a unique and delightful group and it is always a special privilege to join it.

Yet another two flights saw us much further north for weekend engagements at Cornerstone Bible Church, **Xenia, Ohio**. Although just beginning to recover from hip surgery, Pastor Bill Vine gamely led the services on Saturday night and Sunday morning, when the ministry was very warmly received, as it was when we were there last year. After the morning service we flew from Dayton, Ohio, to Washington to catch the overnight plane to London. We arrived at Heathrow right on time the following morning — but minus our luggage! It was only the third time in thousands of flights that this had happened to me, and within forty-eight hours ‘all was safely gathered in’ — the final chapter in the story of a stimulating and encouraging tour ‘across the pond’.

# JUNE – so it must be Scotland

For several years now, Howard Williams and I have conducted Popular Christian Apologetics tours in Scotland, and in June we were there again — once more at a time when daylight seems to stretch on for ever. We began in **Glasgow**, with a fine meeting in Sandyford Henderson Memorial Church. The church is in the heart of university halls of residence and there were many students among the several hundred people who attended. A big response to the books that Howard made available and searching personal sessions with students and others afterwards helped to make up an excellent opening to the tour.



'World premiere' at Bruichladdich!

On the following day we flew to the **Isle of Islay** in the Inner Hebrides. Ever since my time there as a war-time evacuee Islay has had a very special place in my heart and visiting the island again tugged strongly at my emotions. Our hosts were Rob Barlow, Minister of Islay's famous Round Church, and his wife Gwen, whose generous hospitality and fellowship were greatly appreciated. Our first meeting was in a hall in **Bruichladdich**, a tiny village on the west side of Lochindaal, where we had the first public showing of *Going strongly for the Summit*, Christian Television Association's film of my life and ministry. There were only about thirty people there, but it was a great privilege to preach the gospel to them after the showing and to share evangelistic literature. As well as the Sunday morning service on **Jura** (see page 1) we returned to Islay for an evening service at the Baptist Church in **Bowmore**, when I preached on God's call to men and women to be saved, to be sanctified and to serve. The warm-hearted fellowship we enjoyed afterwards was a delightful way to end our time on Islay.

A day spent flying and driving took us east and north to **Dingwall**, and a return visit to Castle Street Church. The Minister, Dr Bruce Ritchie, is nearing retirement, but there was nothing retiring about his welcome, and we had a very good meeting there. On the following night we were in nearby **Inverness**, where a long-time friend, Dr Andrew McGowan,

is the Minister of East Church. The crowd was smaller than when we were there two years ago, but there was a fine hearing for the message and a good Q and A session.

Our next stop was Gilcomston Church in the heart of **Aberdeen**, in which Dominic Smart has such an effective expository ministry. It was great to link up with him again and to spend time talking about ministry matters, including the massive issues convulsing the Church of Scotland in these days, before speaking to a large crowd in the splendidly refurbished building. There were very good questions, and much time spent with individuals afterwards, including helping a Bulgarian man to gain assurance of his standing in Christ.

Back north again, this time to **Elgin**, where Graham Swanson pastors the local Baptist Church. As on a previous visit, the church was packed for the meeting and the gathering in the upstairs hall afterwards went noisily on for ages — always a good sign! One man told me that he was converted in 1966 and that the first Christian book given to him was *Read Mark Learn* (which was first published in that year).

We then headed south, taking a brief diversion to visit **St Andrew's**, where thanks to Howard's position in golf club management we were given a private tour of the iconic Royal & Ancient Clubhouse, recognizable to golfers all over the world. The club's 'Royal' title was granted by King George IV in 1836 and it was fascinating to tour the trophy room, the north room, the big room, the library and elsewhere, and to see artefacts and memorabilia dating back to the earliest recorded playing of the game. We two humble hackers were suitably awed!

This set us up for an evening meeting in Letham Mark's Church, **Perth**, a debt-free, user-friendly facility built with the local council's full approval in the middle of a large housing scheme. It hosts some ninety events every week, many helping to meet social needs in the area. The Minister, Jim Stewart, told me that on the day of his conversion he was given a Bible and a copy of *Read Mark Learn*, which led him into his lasting practice of daily Bible reading. The meeting was excellent and I don't remember when I last spent more time after such an evening counselling individual people who shared important issues in their lives.

Our closing weekend was spent in **Dunbar** and **Musselburgh**. Grace Church in Dunbar was planted last year by Musselburgh Baptist Church and (as it did last year) filled a room in a local leisure centre for our meeting. Our final service in Musselburgh was ably led by our good friend James Lang and closed with the Lord's Supper, the perfect way to end another hugely encouraging tour north of the border. We already have thoughts about next June!

At the home of golf



# Notes from the north-east

**Tuesday:** Flew London-Newcastle, where Howard Williams met me. Evening meeting in The Dolphin Centre, **Darlington**, hosted by Geneva Road Evangelical Baptist Church, Darlington and Aycliffe Evangelical Church. Very good crowd in the Sports Hall, close interest in the presentation and very good conversations afterwards.

**Wednesday:** Morning at Evangelical Press. Good to spend time with the staff and with Andrew Jack, the company's CEO, discussing future plans. On to **Doncaster**, where Bessacar Evangelical Church had planned the meeting at Doncaster Golf Club. Having my back turned to the golf course while I spoke took iron discipline! The superb room was packed and the informal setting (with people seated at large round tables) helped to create a fine atmosphere. A raft of questions on many different subjects was a significant feature.



**Thursday:** On to **Ripon**, where we enjoyed the hospitality of EP's Chairman, Roger Fay, and his wife Rachael. Evening meeting at Ripon Grammar School. Long Q and A session notable for lively input by two young men who were practising homosexuals — and atheists. Tragic to see men rejecting God and being convinced of their own ability to judge moral issues. Several Christians contributed helpfully to the discussion.

**Friday:** North again to **Sunderland**, where I have seldom spoken. Sunderland Free Church has only ten people at its Sunday services, but had worked hard in preparing for the event; about sixty at the meeting. Felt greatly helped during presentation and questions. SFC to be wound down in September and replaced by Trinity Church, part of a church planting scheme. It will begin with thirty members and a full-time pastor.

**Saturday:** Back south, this time to **Guisborough**, North Yorkshire. Premises remind me of Dr Who's Tardis; a small shop front hiding three storeys of rooms and a sports hall. Church warmly led by Dave Taylor and nearly full for the meeting. People there from ten different churches. Dispensed with Q and A session, but helpful conversations with people afterwards.

**Sunday:** A welcome opportunity to preach the Word, rather than to be engaged in apologetics. Exceptionally warm reception, extended over a delightful church lunch. Long drive back to Newcastle Airport. Flight delayed two hours. Got home seven hours after leaving my hosts in Guisborough. Could have flown to the States in that time — but grateful for God's great goodness and enabling on this rare tour in the needy north-east.

# COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2013

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For news of any additional meetings, visit [www.johnblanchard.org](http://www.johnblanchard.org). Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

## SEPTEMBER

- 1 NAILSEA, Somerset: Nailsea Baptist Church, 79 Silver Street, Nailsea, BS48 2DS [Info: 01275 859339 or 01275 854596 or [ctnailsea@gmail.com](mailto:ctnailsea@gmail.com)]
- 6 GUERNSEY: Holy Trinity Church — showing of 'Going Strongly for the Summit' [Info: 01481 or [john@langlois.com](mailto:john@langlois.com)]
- 7 JERSEY: The Jersey College for Girls, Mont Millais, St Helier, JE2 7BY [Info: 01534 735260 or [Syvret@trinityjersey.com](mailto:Syvret@trinityjersey.com)]
- 8 JERSEY: Quennevais Evangelical Church, Le Clos de Carrel, St Brelade, JE3 8CT [Info: 01534 744984]
- 14\* BRIGHTON, E. Sussex: Ebenezer Baptist Church, Richmond Parade, Brighton, BN2 9QD [Info: 01273 674453 or [timothydenning10@gmail.com](mailto:timothydenning10@gmail.com)]
- 23\* N. IRELAND: Armagh Baptist Church, 2 Ardmore Road, Armagh, BT60 1AH [Info: 028 3751 0418 or [ian@armaghbaptist.org](mailto:ian@armaghbaptist.org)]
- 24\* N. IRELAND: Ballymena Baptist Church, Mount Street, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, BT43 6BW [Info: 028 2563 7872 or [ken.poston@talktalk.net](mailto:ken.poston@talktalk.net) or [info@ballymenabaptist.org](mailto:info@ballymenabaptist.org)]
- 25\* N. IRELAND: Crumlin Integrated College, 10 Glenavy Road, Crumlin, BT29 4LA. [Info: 07740 798572 or [barrieclingen@yahoo.com](mailto:barrieclingen@yahoo.com)]
- 26\* N. IRELAND: Newtownards Baptist Church Frances Street, Newtownards, Co. Down [Info: 028 9181 8599 or [tom531@btinternet.com](mailto:tom531@btinternet.com)]
- 27\* N. IRELAND: First Dromara Presbyterian Church, Rathfriland Road, Dromara, Co. Down [Info: 02897 533023 or [info@firstdromara.org](mailto:info@firstdromara.org) or [shaw.thompson@btinternet.com](mailto:shaw.thompson@btinternet.com)]
- 28\* N. IRELAND: 'The Stables', Derrygore, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, BT74 4FJ [Info: 077986 60050 or [brendan@mizpahproperties.com](mailto:brendan@mizpahproperties.com)]
- 29 N. IRELAND: Magherafelt Baptist Church, 6 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, Co. Londonderry BY45 6BP [Info: 028 7964 5822 or 028 7939 7094]

## OCTOBER

- 8\* LLANELLI, Carmarthenshire: Y Ffwrnes, Park Street, Llannelli, SA15 3YE [Info: 01554 746230 or 0845 2263510 or [philswann3@gmail.com](mailto:philswann3@gmail.com)]
- 9\* PONTARDAWE, Carmarthenshire: Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe, SA8 4ED [Info: 01792 863722 or [steff.jones1@btopenworld.com](mailto:steff.jones1@btopenworld.com)]
- 10 BRIDGEND: Preaching service at WEST (Wales Evangelical School of Theology), 1pm. Bryntirion House, Bridgend, CG31 4DX [Info: 01656 645411]
- 10\* CARDIFF: Heath Evangelical Church, 122 Whitchurch Road, Cardiff, CF14 3LZ [Info: 02920 759695 or [pastor@heath-church.org](mailto:pastor@heath-church.org) or [rhate@btconnect.com](mailto:rhate@btconnect.com)]
- 11\* NEWPORT, Gwent: Bethesda Baptist Church, Cefn Road, Rogerstone, Newport, NP10 9AQ [Info: 01633 891247 or 01633 891421 or [huwstephens@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:huwstephens@hotmail.co.uk)]

- 12\* GLOUCESTER: Trinity Baptist Church, Finlay Road, Gloucester, GL4 6SE [Info: 01452 416532 or 01452 610964 or 07854647894 or [alan@gilmore77.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:alan@gilmore77.freeserve.co.uk)]
- 13 GLOUCESTER: Trinity Baptist Church, Finlay Road, Gloucester, GL4 6SE [Info: 01452 416532 or 01452 610964 or 07854647894 or [alan@gilmore77.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:alan@gilmore77.freeserve.co.uk)]
- 16 UNITED STATES: First Presbyterian Church, 1390 North State Street, Jackson, Mississippi 39202 [Info: (601) 353 8316 or [jhyde@fpcjackson.org](mailto:jhyde@fpcjackson.org)]
- 19-20am UNITED STATES: Second Presbyterian Church, 1926 Grand Avenue, Yazoo City, Mississippi 39194 [Info: (6623) 746 8852 or [2ndpres@cablone.net](http://2ndpres@cablone.net)]
- 20pm-21 UNITED STATES: Redeemer Community Church, 9108 North Rodney Parham Road, Little Rock, Arkansas 72212 [Info: (501) 225 4636 or [Redeemer@redeemerlr.org](mailto:Redeemer@redeemerlr.org)]
- 22 UNITED STATES: Arrow Heights Baptist Church, 3201 S. Elm Place, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012 [Info: (918) 455 5020 or [hgreen@arrowheights.org](mailto:hgreen@arrowheights.org)]
- 26-27 UNITED STATES: Briarwood Presbyterian Church, 2200 Briarwood Way, Birmingham, Alabama 35243 [Info: (205) 776 5200 or [info@briarwood.org](mailto:info@briarwood.org)]

## NOVEMBER

- 3 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618]
- 5\* TWICKENHAM, Middx: Amyand Park Chapel, 174 Amyand Park Road, Twickenham, TW1 3HY [Info: 020 8891 3938 or [ghemmings160@btinternet.com](mailto:ghemmings160@btinternet.com)]
- 6\* SURBITON, Surrey: Hook Evangelical Church, Brook Road, Surbiton, KT6 5DB [Info: 0181 397 8909 or 020 8397 8909 or [rpaulpease@aol.com](mailto:rpaulpease@aol.com)]
- 7\* BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Hall, Park Road, Banstead, SM7 3AJ [Info: 01737300903 or 01737 363636 or [malcolm@cunnings.co.uk](mailto:malcolm@cunnings.co.uk)]
- 8\* CRAWLEY, W. Sussex: Maidenbower Baptist Church, Maidenbower Square, Maidenbower, Crawley, RH10 7QH [Info: 01293 536882 or 01293 522489 or [j.walker@mabach.org](mailto:j.walker@mabach.org)]
- 10 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618]

## DECEMBER

- 1 EPSOM, Surrey: Epsom Baptist Church, 6 Church Street, Epsom, KT17 4NY [Info: 07821 691770 or [handleyhammon@uwclub.net](mailto:handleyhammon@uwclub.net)]
- 8 EPSOM, Surrey: Epsom Baptist Church, 6 Church Street, Epsom, KT17 4NY [Info: 07821 691770 or [handleyhammon@uwclub.net](mailto:handleyhammon@uwclub.net)]

\* 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. E-mail: [jbsarnia@gmail.com](mailto:jbsarnia@gmail.com)