



Travelling in Switzerland recently, my train stopped at the little village of Les Avants, perched just above Montreux. For most passengers it was a few moments' halt on a journey to Interlaken or elsewhere, but for me it was otherwise. As the station came into view my mind jumped back to the late nineteen-sixties and the first of several delightful house-parties I helped to lead in the village's prestigious Chatelard School. To say that those were memorable days is an understatement and during our brief halt two particular things came to mind.

*Join the team!*



Chatelard School

The first was the power of God's Word. The twelve-day house-parties included trips taking in glorious scenery in that part of Switzerland, but they were also laced with many hours of Bible study, which had a profound effect among the 120+ guests. Some came to faith in Christ, many recovered lost spiritual ground, lives were transformed, doctrines clarified, problems solved, friendships formed, marriages enriched (and more than one initiated!) during those wonderful days together — and all in the context of biblical teaching.

The second was the power of prayer. It is now over forty years since my first time at Chatelard, yet friends who pledged to pray for my ministry still do so today and are kept regularly in touch three times a year by receiving *Newsline*. It would be impossible for me to say how much their part in my ministry means to me.

If this is the first time you have seen *Newsline* would you like to join them? It would be a privilege to have you 'on the team' and your prayerful interest would be a great encouragement. In receiving *Newsline* you will be able to read illustrated reports of the work and details of my coming schedule *and there will never be any appeal for financial support*. If you would like to be a part of what God is graciously doing through this ministry, go to the back page and 'join the team'!

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

# Food for the Far North

Shetland is truly remarkable — not least because although part of the United Kingdom it is closer to the Arctic Circle than it is to London. Its remoteness is well illustrated by the tiny island of Foula (population 30) which makes use of the Julian calendar, celebrating Christmas (Yule) on 6 January and New Year (Newerday) a week later!

Other Shetland facts are equally fascinating. Its original name was Hjaltland. In Old Norse a *hjalt* was the hilt or crossguard of a sword and it is not difficult to see why the word was used to describe this place. It has over 100 islands, providing 1,697 miles of coastline, though its population of some 22,000 lives on just fifteen of them.

Shetland offers the best wildlife-watching in Scotland, with a million breeding seabirds (including 200,000 puffins), the highest density of otters in Europe and regular sightings of killer whales. By contrast, wealth from oil and gas has enabled it to have many superb sports centres and some of the finest roads to be found anywhere in the UK.

My first visit to Shetland, five years ago, was a ‘hit and run’ affair: a local radio broadcast, a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting in Lerwick and the earliest flight to the Scottish mainland the next morning, but I had been longing to return and an invitation to speak at this year’s Shetland Bible week opened the door.

Shetland has long been known as having ‘the church that prays’ and without ever having experienced overwhelming revival there have been times of significant spiritual advance. Twice a year most of the evangelical churches sponsor a united event. One is Pentecost, a weekend



focussed on the birth and early growth of the church; the other is Shetland Bible Week, the first of which was held in 1991 and majors on expository teaching. Meetings are now held in Lerwick’s beautifully appointed Adam Clarke Methodist Church, revamped after a tremendous storm lifted the roof eighteen inches.

A pastoral conference, a men’s breakfast and a Sunday morning service in a Baptist church were included in my schedule, but five well-attended evening meetings formed the focal point. Impressively close attention and lively interaction marked them all and a packed church on the final night brought a memorable second visit to a close. I would love to return!

# The Emerald Isle – South & North

Opportunities in Ireland are always warmly welcomed and my latest visit to the Emerald Isle took in both north and south of the now-peaceful border.

Howard Williams and I headed first for **Kilkenny** for a weekend at Kilkenny Presbyterian Church. The Saturday night meeting was well attended and marked by excellent questions which opened up some profitable feedback, while preaching on Sunday morning was a delightful break from the cut and thrust of apologetics.

Two hours' driving in the afternoon took us to **Drogheda**, where John Woodside is leading such a remarkable work. In three years, attendance at the Presbyterian Church has risen from about twenty to over 120. There is not normally an evening service, so I was something of a guinea pig, but we were all hugely encouraged when over 120 came and even more so by the great spirit in the meeting and in the fellowship time afterwards.

A late night drive took us across the border to **Enniskillen** where on the next day we had a packed house at The Stables, a remarkable development in which Brendan Jones has transformed a broken-down set of buildings into a superb centre for Christian activities. Renewing this link (we were there last year) was delightful and rewarding.

Another return visit the next day took us to **Ballymoney**, where we were hosted at the Baptist Church by The Rev. Steven Curry. As with last year's meeting, the

church was full and the evening was enriched by hearing of significant and lasting fruit from a previous mission at which I spoke in the town some years ago.

The Baptist Church in **Portstewart** meets in outstanding premises, but Howard and I both felt that the evening was disappointingly 'flat' — though meeting a husband and wife both converted during a previous visit was a lovely 'bonus'.

Our final night was in **Magherafelt**, where three churches combined to produce a very large audience. The evening was a splendid climax to the tour, with a great hearing, excellent questions and news of a person recently coming to faith through reading one of my books. A few minutes' driving took us to the home of Eric and Lorraine Watterson, who were our hosts for three nights on this tour and whose superb hospitality we are always glad to accept whenever we are in commuting distance within the Province.



JB; the Wattersons; HG

# BACK TO ALBANIA

In the last issue of *Newsline* I carelessly missed out notice of a return visit to Albania, but just before leaving I enlisted the prayer support of the 150 or so readers who receive *Newsline* by email. Two days before leaving I developed a very sore throat, but throughout the trip I felt wonderfully upheld and full of energy.

My first engagement was in Tirana, an hour after touchdown from London. Grace Church and the local Campus Crusade group pulled a good number together, mainly teens and twenties, and it was a privilege to be there. A Q and A session went very well and nearly forty copies of *Ultimate Questions* were taken.

Staying in Tirana, I met with key Christians in the area and in the evening spoke to a fine crowd, mostly students, at Emanuel Church. A barrage of excellent questions extended the session to nearly two hours. Near the end of the main talk the lights failed (power cuts happen every day in Albania) but we pressed on, the room glowing with dozens of mobile phone LCDs. It was an interesting experience to savour during the late night drive over Albania's notoriously appalling roads to Fier and the home of missionaries Will and Doreta Niven.

Saturday began with a lively student gathering in the coastal town of Vlora. It was a special joy to link up with missionary Graham Sansom, brother of Paul, a long-time friend now living in Wales. The close interest and torrent of questions extended the session to nearly 2 ½ hours. A 4.00pm evening meeting (trying to dodge the effect of the inevitable power cut) had its attendance severely affected by torrential rain, with road conditions making it difficult for some people to leave home, let alone walk to a meeting.



With students in Vlora

A bumpy ride took me to Lushnje for a Sunday morning service. With neither heat nor light, groping for Scripture references before the service was a test, but the lights came on just in time and I felt great liberty in preaching the gospel. While the service continued, the pastor drove me the ninety minutes to Tirana to catch my flight home.

It had been hoped that the first three titles in Operation Albania would have been released while I was there, but a slight hitch delayed them for a few weeks. Nevertheless, this visit implanted Albania even deeper in my heart and as BA 2649 took off from Mother Teresa Airport my prayer was, 'Lord, please bring me back again — soon!'

# Touching Bases — and Lives

During a recent visit to the USA, Joyce and I were in one-sixth of the nation's forty-eight contiguous states, combining a variety of ministry with visits to friends. Ministry highlights began in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, where Christ Community Fellowship is making such good progress under the leadership of a long-time friend Bob Brown. Our last day there ended with a flight to **Jackson, Mississippi**, just in time to preach that night in the city's First Presbyterian Church, superbly extended and renovated at a cost of \$12 million. Much smaller, but no less warm-hearted, was Grace Church of Gwinnett, in **Sugar Hill, Georgia**, while a Sunday afternoon dash from there took us to South Carolina for an evening service at The Reserve, an exclusive development on the magnificent **Lake Keowee**, where Trey Lee had arranged a special service in the beautiful Founder's Hall. Our trip ended in North Carolina where ministry at Durham Memorial Baptist Church, **Charlotte**, drew twice the expected number of worshippers — a rewarding end to a very fruitful trip.



Founder's Hall, The Reserve

*Joyce and I received a very large number of greeting cards and letters from 'Newline' readers to mark our Golden Wedding Anniversary in August and we do want to express our warmest thanks to all who wrote. We greatly appreciate your love and the assurance of your continued prayers.*

# UK – UKRAINE – OK

As flight BA 883 took off from Kiev's Boryspil International Airport, my last glimpses of Ukraine triggered a crowded host of memories. In what had been my first visit to the country I had been one of the speakers at a conference organized by Evangelical Press, held in Village Kozin, about an hour's drive from Kiev and originally built as a Soviet sanatorium.



Dickie, Blanchard, Schmidt, Viazovski

Over 100 pastors, preachers, missionaries, church leaders and their wives were present, from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and Moldova (a return bus journey of twenty-six hours). The conference chairman was Jaroslav ('Slava') Viazovski, an assistant pastor from Minsk, Belarus, and manager of the Russian office of Evangelical Press. He told me that conferences like this (Evangelical Press's fourth in Ukraine) were the only ones held in the previous Soviet Union that were committed to Reformed teaching and that as such their influence was particularly significant.

Sharing the ministry with me was Bob Dickie, senior pastor of Berean Baptist Church, Grand Blanc, Michigan. It was a special joy to link up with him again and his spirited teaching on evangelism, church growth and revival was warmly received. My own assignments were 'Does creation make more sense than evolution?', 'Does creation matter for morality?' and 'Does creation matter for the gospel?' and there was a close interest in all three. The first session provoked so many questions that the session ran for nearly two hours.

Alexandr Schmidt, a pastor from St Petersburg, did most of the translation and his superb work made a huge contribution to the success of the conference, which gave so many opportunities for fellowship and discussion that I never set foot outside of the building until leaving for the journey home. Slava told me that the evangelical cause in Ukraine is growing fast, with many new churches being founded. May God graciously grant them increasing blessing in the coming days!

# SPECIAL NEWSLINE OFFER

Two particular concerns lie behind my latest book. The first is that for many mature Christians daily Bible reading has become a chore, something to be endured rather than enjoyed. The second is that countless new (or newer) Christians have only a slender grasp of the riches the Bible contains. *How to enjoy your Bible* explains its history, authority and integrity. Whole chapters outline numerous methods of Bible reading and study and there is an Appendix listing Bible study software now available. The following reviewers have already given it an enthusiastic endorsement:

'Do you want a lifetime of rich, delightful study of the Bible? Is there a simple, reliable, clear yet substantial resource that provides a superb background and framework? Yes! John Blanchard's *How to enjoy your Bible*.' **J. Ligon Duncan III, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, USA.**

'Simple, vivid, warm, practical and searching, it is all that we have come to expect of its author.' **Dr J. I. Packer, Professor of Theology, Regent College, Vancouver, Canada.**

'This book by John Blanchard goes beyond merely being helpful. I would put it on the "must read" list of every believer. It will be an enormous help, encouragement and motivator for all who read it.' **Frank Retief, Presiding Bishop, Church of England in South Africa.**

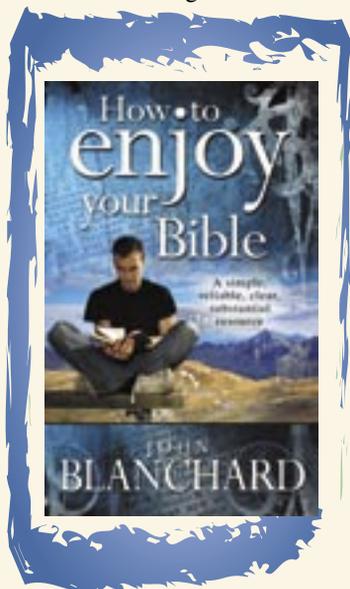
'No Christian will fail to be thrilled, stirred and challenged by this timely reminder of the divine source, steadfast preservation and timeless relevance of the book of books, which alone *transforms* lives.' **The Rev. Jonathan Wood, Whittlesey Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire, England.**

'Writing with his usual clarity John Blanchard enthuses about the Bible, giving the reader a hunger to plumb its depths and delight in its riches. I will be warmly and enthusiastically commending it to my own people.' **The Rev. Philip Hair, Holyrood Abbey Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.**

'We are all indebted to John Blanchard for such a profound presentation. I regard this as the best introduction to the Scriptures and their companionship that a Christian could first read.' **The Rev. Geoff Thomas, Albert Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales.**

'Superb! Packed full of helpful information and useful tips, this accessible little volume will give you an appreciation of, and deepen your delight in, the Bible as the Word of God.' **The Rev. Steven Curry, Ballymoney Baptist Church, Ballymoney, N.Ireland.**

Evangelical Press is kindly offering *How to enjoy your Bible* to *Newsline* readers at the special discounted price of **£5.95 post free** (**\$12.99 post free** in the USA). To take advantage of this offer, contact Evangelical Press by post at Faverdale North, Darlington DL3 0PH, by phone at 01325 380232 or by email on [sales@evangelicalpress.org](mailto:sales@evangelicalpress.org) — telling EP that you are a *Newsline* reader.



# COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2008

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](http://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.

- Jan** 28 MIDDLESBROUGH: Teesside School of Christian Studies, Cannon Park Church  
[Info: [graham.hilton@evangelicalpress.org](mailto:graham.hilton@evangelicalpress.org)]  
29 DARLINGTON: Business meeting at Evangelical Press.

*The rest of January is reserved for research, study and writing.*

- Feb** 1-27 *Reserved for research, study and writing.*  
28 RAMSEY, Cambs: Salem Baptist Church. [Info: 01487 815568 or [rjeremybrooks@btinternet.com](mailto:rjeremybrooks@btinternet.com)]  
29\* COVENTRY: Lower Ford Street Baptist Church [Info: 024 764 19416 or [pastor@lfsbc.org.uk](mailto:pastor@lfsbc.org.uk)]

- March** 1\* LIVERPOOL: Bridge Chapel, Heath Road [Info: 0151 281 9716 or [info@bridgechapel.com](mailto:info@bridgechapel.com)]  
2(am) LIVERPOOL: Bridge Chapel, Heath Road [Info: 0151 281 9716 or [info@bridgechapel.com](mailto:info@bridgechapel.com)]  
2(pm) WIGAN: Cave-Browne Evangelical Church, Ashton-in- Makerfield  
[Info: 10942 723762 or [hgandm@the-hollows.co.uk](mailto:hgandm@the-hollows.co.uk)]  
3\* SOUTHPORT, Merseyside: Grace Baptist Church, Princes Street [Info:01704 531751]  
4\* MOLD, Clwyd: Ebenezer Baptist Church [Info: 01978 760649 or [HugDw@aol.com](mailto:HugDw@aol.com)]  
5\* KENDAL, Cumbria: [Info: 01539 722121 or [Edwin.addison@gmail.com](mailto:Edwin.addison@gmail.com)]  
6\* BIRMINGHAM: University of Birmingham [Info: [buecu\\_secretary@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:buecu_secretary@hotmail.co.uk)]  
15-16 PETERBOROUGH, Cambs: Whittlesey Baptist Church, Whittlesey  
Anniversary services [Info: 01733 204139 or [jonathan.paul.wood@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.paul.wood@gmail.com)]  
29\* TAUNTON, Somerset: Village Hall, Smeatharpe [Info: 01404 861313]

- April** 14\* NEWCASTLE, Tyne & Wear: St Stephen's Church, Low Elswick  
[Info: 0191 285 4895 or [john.rubens@evangelicalpress.org](mailto:john.rubens@evangelicalpress.org)]  
5(am) MIDDLESBROUGH: Teesside Ministers' Fraternal [Info: 01325 310530  
or [john.rubens@evangelicalpress.org](mailto:john.rubens@evangelicalpress.org)]  
15\* LEEDS, W. Yorks: City Evangelical Church, Cemetery Road [Info: 0113  
270 8568 or [mike.wildsmith@ntlworld.com](mailto:mike.wildsmith@ntlworld.com)]  
16\* DEWSBURY, W. Yorks: Royal Suite, Dewsbury Rams Stadium, Owl Lane  
[Info: 0870 321 1795 or [Daniel.grimwade@bigfoot.com](mailto:Daniel.grimwade@bigfoot.com)]  
17\* RIPON, N.Yorks: Ripon Grammar School, Clothierholme Road  
[Info: 01765 604753 or 01765 604912  
or [chrisripontalktalk.net](mailto:chrisripontalktalk.net) or [roger.fay@evangelicalpress.org](mailto:roger.fay@evangelicalpress.org)]  
18\* SHEFFIELD, S.Yorks: Wycliffe Independent Church [Info: 0114 251 7673 or  
[Cunnah@talktalk.net](mailto:Cunnah@talktalk.net)]  
24 CRANLEIGH, Surrey: Cranleigh Baptist Church [Info: 01483 275371 or  
[suresh@cranleigh.org.uk](mailto:suresh@cranleigh.org.uk)]  
25 CRANLEIGH, Surrey: Evangelistic Golf Tournament [Info: 01483 275371 or  
[suresh@cranleigh.org.uk](mailto:suresh@cranleigh.org.uk)]

\* *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](mailto:jbsarnia@gmail.com)