



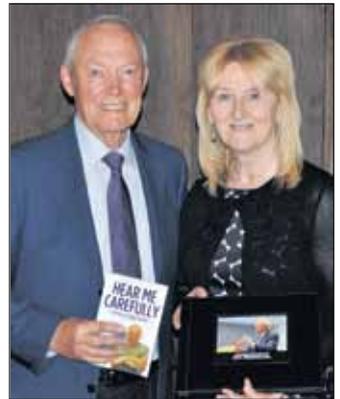
# THE MILESTONE YEAR

2012 has combined several dates that make it what friends have dubbed my 'Milestone Year'. On 5 March 1962 Joyce and I and our (then) three little boys sailed into Weymouth from Guernsey. When my pastor, Dan Green, invited me to preach on 4 March 2012 he was delightfully unaware that this was the final day of my fiftieth year in full-time Christian ministry! It was a unique opportunity to illustrate God's unchanging grace and the message can be heard at [www.bansteadcommunity.org.uk](http://www.bansteadcommunity.org.uk).

It was thirty years ago that Evangelical Press (now EP Books) became my main publisher, and God has graciously blessed our relationship in ways we could never have anticipated. Details of all current EP titles can be found at [www.epbooks.org](http://www.epbooks.org). The company kindly held a celebration dinner in London in March and presented me with a magnificently-produced illustrated *festschrift*, with contributions from friends in many countries. See page 7 for another surprise they sprang on me!

2012 is also the 'silver anniversary' of *Ultimate Questions*, first released in 1987. Even an immediate sell-out of its first print run of 200,000 held no hint it would reach fourteen million copies in over sixty languages and lead to countless people from around the world testifying that they came to faith while reading it.

The fourth milestone is in 10 July when, God willing, I will reach my eightieth birthday. For years I had an irrational idea that I would never make old bones, and this was one of the things that drove my determination to serve the Saviour to the best of my fragile ability. By the baffling grace of God I was wrong! Now, I remain amazed that he has spared me and bewildered that he should ever have used me in his service. My only explanation is 'Grace', and in *Day One's Travel with John Blanchard* Brian Edwards explains exactly what I mean: 'A Sovereign God has chosen to use him well beyond his natural gifts and abilities in such a way that gives no credit to the messenger.'



With biographer Marlene Williams at the London celebration dinner

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



# Lows and highs in Portugal

Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain have inelegantly been dubbed Europe's 'PIGS' as they battle to survive the economic turmoil currently threatening the continent. I am no Europhile, but this is an unfortunate epithet for such friendly nations, in each of which I have had the privilege of preaching.

When Howard Williams and I were in Portugal in early February the danger signals were clear. Taxes on most goods and services raised from 6% to 23% had resulted in abandoned building projects, closed shops and thinly occupied car parks, and significantly lower numbers of tourists in this weather-friendly country.

So much for the lows, but there were also highs. My preaching engagement was a return visit to The International Evangelical Church of the Algarve, where Pastor Mark Loney told me of many encouragements since I was there last year. There have been several conversions, including some among residents in nearby caravan parks, where people from Britain spend the winter. The sites give great opportunities to witness among those whose dream of many retirement years have been wrecked by a spouse's death, leaving them living in devalued property and having to pay for health care.



After-church fellowship in the marquee

It was a joy to see a larger congregation than last year, and to sense the church's heart for God's Word and for missions. Close attention to the preaching (simultaneously translated into Portuguese and German) was very rewarding and it was encouraging to hear of a man who had been addicted to alcohol but had abandoned it completely after I had spoken at a breakfast at Pinheiros Altos Golf Club last year.

Preaching at IECA was my first opportunity to introduce *Major Points from the Minor Prophets* and the copies I was able to squeeze into my luggage were quickly bought. Andrew Jack, CEO of EP Books, was in the congregation, and as extra copies were asked for, he was able to set up an account for the church and to process an immediate order for these and other titles.

If your church would like to ask about making a similar arrangement, get in touch with Graham Hind, EP Books General Manager (01325 380 232 or [graham@llysygroes.com](mailto:graham@llysygroes.com)) — and if you are ever going to the Algarve look at the church's web site [www.iec-algarve.com](http://www.iec-algarve.com), and if possible go along and encourage the believers there.

# A 'CLOSE TO HOME' TOUR

Popular Christian Apologetics tours take Howard Williams and I to parts of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Rarely is one planned reasonably close to my home in Banstead, but one in March ticked that particular box.

We began in **Andover**, Hampshire, at a meeting sponsored by Koinonia Independent Evangelical Church, but held in Andover Baptist Church. Ably led by Don Olden, KIEC felt its premises would not be adequate and ABC was glad to accommodate us. The presentation — 'Is God past his sell-by date?' — provoked some excellent questions, one of which led to an email exchange now filed away for future reference. The greatest encouragement came after the meeting, when a man told me that towards the end of his life his father had come to faith reading *Evolution: Fact or Fiction?* and that he himself had been converted after reading *Ultimate Questions*.

Our next meeting was in nearby **Cheam**, hosted by the busy Baptist Church, led by Tim Saunders. Here, the subject was 'Where is God when things go wrong?' The questions that followed were thoughtful and penetrating, underlining the abiding relevance of the question. As at Andover, there was added encouragement after the meeting when a man told me that he had come to Christ during a mission I preached at in Tooting in 1977.

Next came **Haywards Heath**, West Sussex, with a meeting in the superbly redesigned Christ Church. As on a previous visit in the 'old' building, the chairs were set out in café style, creating an informal setting which made a great contribution to the atmosphere. A good attendance, fine questions, and positive feedback to the subject — 'Dealing with Dawkins' — made for a worthwhile evening, and the man who told me that God had used *Ultimate*



*Questions* as a means of bringing him to faith was the perfect 'epilogue'.

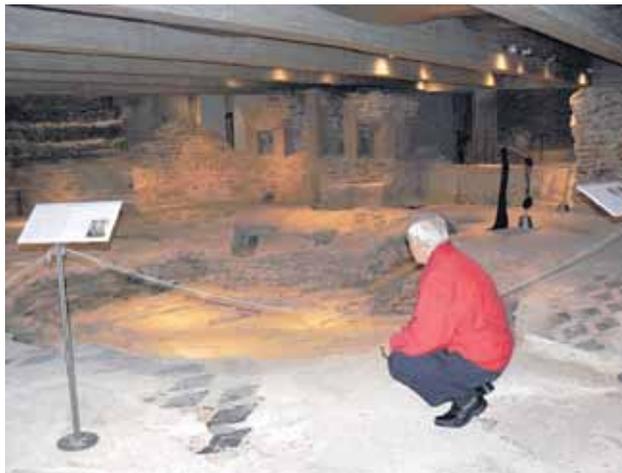
Our last meeting, in my own village of **Banstead**, was sponsored by my local fellowship, Banstead Community Church. There was a suitably serious response

to the chosen subject, 'Where do we go from here?', and some highly relevant questions, several supplied by young people from BCC. It has been encouraging to hear from them since then that they found the evening especially helpful.

# MILAN - MORE THAN RELICS

A third invitation to Italy in six months took me recently to Milan, a city with a remarkable history. With a population of 1.3 million, Milan is a world leader in fashion, design and the arts, houses the famous La Scala, the renowned opera house that dates from 1778, and has a UNESCO World Heritage site (Santa Maria del Grazie).

I was able to take in some of its historic religious sites, including the place where Emperor Constantine the Great is said to have granted the Edict of Milan in AD 313, mandating religious freedom throughout the Roman Empire. My most moving 'tourist' moment came underneath the city's massive cathedral (the world's second largest) which dates from the early seventeenth century and can accommodate 40,000 people. It has a dazzling exterior, but inside there is scarcely a glimmer of gospel light. Yet its huge crypt has the pool in which Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, baptized Augustine of Hippo in AD 387.



Augustine's baptism pool

My invitation to Milan came from Chiesa Evangelica Punto Lode (The Evangelical Church of Punto Lode). Founded by Sam Fiore, an American missionary, its debt-free building seats 350 and is virtually packed for every service. The church supports missionaries in the Philippines, Peru and Pakistan, has training programmes for potential leaders of work within the church, and twenty-five ancillary ministries, including a food bank, that provides food and gospel literature once a month to some 900 needy people.

On the Friday night I spoke on 'Does God exist?' and the church was virtually full, most people being in the under-40 age range, something one rarely sees in the UK. On Saturday the crowd was even bigger, and the younger element even greater. After the service I was bombarded with questions from individuals and small groups of people until after 10pm.

On the Sunday morning 'house full' signs would have been in order and there was a wonderful spirit in the service. The church had obtained 150 copies of three of my evangelistic booklets in Italian; by lunchtime there were none left and people had signed up for more. Pastor Sam Fiore also told me that over the weekend there had been several professions of faith. If they prove genuine they will be the best possible answers to the prayers of *Newsline* readers who upheld me during this visit.

# ALBANIA:

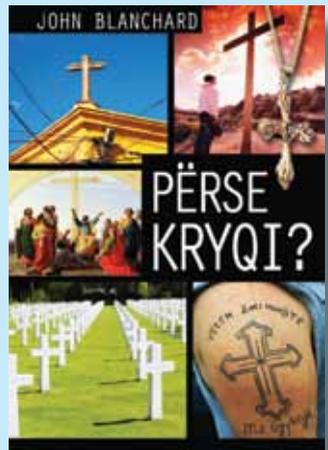
## Preaching, printing & pictures

I recently visited Albania for the fifth time in the last six years and it was again a time of encouragement and blessing. My preaching engagements were in Fier and Tirana. The Way of peace Church in Fier, led by missionary Will Niven, has doubled in size (from twenty to forty) in the past year and at my first engagement, held in conjunction with International Ladies Day, over ninety people came, including quite a number of unconverted husbands. On the following evening an evangelistic preaching event drew about eighty people. At both events, Geoff Townsend, a missionary with Albanian Evangelical Mission, sold over 150 copies of Albanian translations of my titles. Albanians may not be exceptionally avid readers, but he was very encouraged by this response.

For the next two days I preached in Tirana, the country's capital. Albania is becoming rapidly urbanized, and one-third of its population of three million now live in Tirana. Returning to Grace Church is always a privilege and fine attendances added to this. The church now meets in the impressive Lincoln 3 Building, strategically placed within 200 yards of thousands of high-rise flats and giving it massive potential.

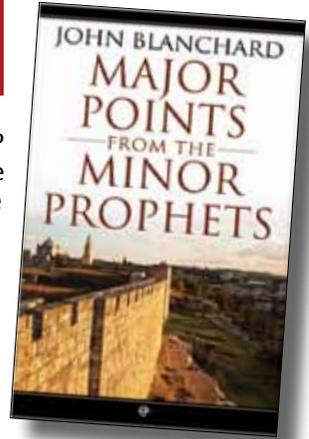
This visit also saw the launch of the Albanian translation of *Why the Cross?*, which means that there are now twelve of my titles available there, ten of them financed in the past five years by readers of *Newsline* under 'Project Albania' following my first visit. Amazingly, Geoff Townsend took orders for one-third of the initial print run within twenty-four hours! The publication of yet another title – *Whatever happened to Hell?* – is only a few months away. All who gave to this project can be assured that their kindness is hugely appreciated in this needy country.

Crawford Telfer of Christian Television Association came with me to do some more filming towards a DVD of my life and ministry that CTA is currently making. He tells me that he is very pleased with the footage he got, which included some good historical material about the country. Crawford had already spent a few days with me in Guernsey, was briefly in the USA with me recently, and plans to visit Islay and elsewhere when I have a Popular Christian Apologetics tour there in June. Please pray for God's gracious help in this production.



## DON'T FORGET THE PROPHETS!

Regular readers of *Newsline* will know that in the last issue EP Books made a special offer for copies of my recent 280-page book *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*. The response to the book has been excellent, but the special offer to *Newsline* readers runs out on 30 June. Just to remind you, the offer is as follows: The book sells at £9.99, but until 30 June you can order single copies at £7.50 + £1.95 postage; 3 copies at £7.00 each, POST FREE; and 5 copies at £6.00 each, POST FREE. Order direct from EP Books, Faverdale North, Darlington DL3 0PH — 01325 380232 — [sales@epbooks.org](mailto:sales@epbooks.org), quoting Offer Code Newsline/012012.



## USA REPORT

Howard Williams and I were grateful for your prayerful support during our recent 26-day preaching tour in the United States. With engagements in Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Michigan (plus the delightful bonus of a visit to the Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia!) we were thankful to have covered over 10,000 miles in safety. The tour marked the USA launch of *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*, and ministry from this part of Scripture featured at one service in most venues.

There was a three-year break in my transatlantic ministry during Joyce's illness, but this latest visit means that I have now crossed the 'pond' 156 times. As in previous visits there was much encouragement and I look forward to sharing some of this with you in the next issue of *Newsline*.



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.

# STOPPED IN MY TRACKS!

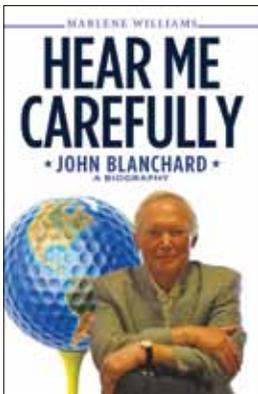
One of the delightful surprises sprung on me at the dinner EP Books recently held in my honour in London to mark fifty years in full-time Christian service came when Graham Hind, the publisher's General Manager, suddenly produced (literally from under the table) the first copies of a biography stealthily written during the past year by Marlene Williams.

She was covertly helped by my son Stephen and several other people, all of whom somehow managed to prevent me having even the slightest inkling that anything was afoot. As close friends will know, I have taken great delight over the years in engineering pleasant surprises for people (not least for my late wife Joyce) but this was a classic case of role reversal, and left me struggling to respond.

Marlene's research has unearthed numerous details about my birth, childhood, wartime evacuation, return to Guernsey, sterile religion, conversion and call to full-time evangelism. She has then traced my fifty years of preaching, teaching and writing ministry, laced with quotations and comments that I had long since forgotten and illustrated with twenty photographs taken in seven different countries.

Several recognized Christian leaders have kindly prefaced the book with their comments. Californian pastor John MacArthur kindly says,

'John Blanchard has a wonderful gift for communicating even the hardest biblical truths in simple terms. Evangelistic zeal is delightfully contagious, and no one is more infectious than John Blanchard. The story of his life is an upbeat and uplifting celebration of God's work in a sinner's life, to the praise of his glorious grace.'



Ligon Duncan, Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, comments:

'I want to commend this brief record of John's rich and long ministry to you. It is the story of our great God choosing a humble gospel servant, giving him a wide ministry, and going before him every step of the way.'

*Hear Me Carefully* retails at £6.99, but EP Books is making a special offer to readers of *Newsline*, who can receive it for £5.95 post free. Any number of copies can be ordered at this price. To take advantage of this unique offer, order direct from EP Books, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH — Tel: 01325 380 232 (ask for Sales) — or e-mail: [sales@epbooks.org](mailto:sales@epbooks.org).

# COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2012

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.

## MAY

- 11-13 CZECH REPUBLIC: Shepherds Conference [Info: [lancesandy@gmail.com](mailto:lancesandy@gmail.com)]  
*The rest of May is reserved for study, preparation and writing*

## JUNE

- 3 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 07854 863618 or [dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk](mailto:dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk)]  
8-10 ISLE OF ISLAY: The Round Church, Bowmore [Info: 01496 810271 or [rob@theroundchurch.org.uk](mailto:rob@theroundchurch.org.uk)]  
11\* DALRY, Ayrshire: Trinity Church, Courthill Street, Dalry, KA24 5BN [Info: 01294 832363 or [martin@thomsonm40.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:martin@thomsonm40.freereserve.co.uk)]  
12\* INVERNESS, Highlands: Inshes Church of Scotland, Sir Walter Scott Drive, Inverness, IV2 3TW [Info: 01463 226727 or 01463 772402 or [ali.inshes@btinternet.com](mailto:ali.inshes@btinternet.com)]  
13\* INVERNESS, Highlands: Smithton-Culloden Free Church, Murray Road, Smithton, Inverness, IV2 7YU [Info: 01463 793191 or [dcmeredith@gmail.com](mailto:dcmeredith@gmail.com)]  
14\* ELGIN, Moray: Elgin Baptist Church, Reidhaven Street, Elgin, IV30 [Info: 01343 548309 or [rev.graham@btinternet.com](mailto:rev.graham@btinternet.com)]  
15\* DUNBAR, East Lothian: Details to be arranged [Info: 07971 029222 or [jslang@talktalk.net](mailto:jslang@talktalk.net)]  
16\* EDINBURGH: New Restalrig Church, 1a Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7EZ [Info: 0131 661 4045 or [davidcourt@zoho.com](mailto:davidcourt@zoho.com)]  
17(am) EDINBURGH: New Restalrig Church, 1a Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7EZ [Info: 0131 661 4045 or [davidcourt@zoho.com](mailto:davidcourt@zoho.com)]  
25 GATESHEAD: Grindon Hall Christian School Awards Evening at The Sage, St Mary's Square.

## JULY

- 1 BANSTEAD, Surrey: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe [Info: 07854 863618 or [dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk](mailto:dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk)]  
2\* WELWYN, Herts: Welwyn Evangelical Church, Fulling Mill Lane, AL6 9NH [Info: 01438 715372 or [pastor@welwyn-evangelical.org.uk](mailto:pastor@welwyn-evangelical.org.uk)]  
*The rest of July is reserved for study, preparation and writing.*

## AUGUST

*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:  
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