

Church open on heritage weekend

A HISTORIC parish church will throw open its doors for a long weekend this month.

St Thomas a Becket Church in Warblington will be open for the English Heritage weekend open days from September 10-13. Tea and coffee will be available.

Worshippers will also be opening the historic 'watchman huts' in their churchyard. They were originally built in 1828 to protect new graves from those who wanted to remove bodies for medical dissection.

Opening times are 10am-4pm on Friday, Saturday and Monday, and 1pm-5.30pm on the Sunday.



Damon Wakelin (front) as John in Top Cat's performance of *Exile*

REVIEW

Exile Top Cat Theatre Company

THIS was a brave play that travelled around the diocese over the summer and spoke to the hearts of those who saw it.

Top Cat Theatre Company told the story of John Boswell, a nice bank manager living in Surrey in 2001. But this is not Surrey as we know it.

This is Surrey in a parallel universe, in which Britain is in the grip of a totalitarian government, and those who dare to oppose the regime risk their lives and freedom. Caught up

in his crusading brother's bid to speak out, John is forced to flee in fear of his life.

Audiences are taken through the Kafka-esque experience of John's bid for freedom and dignity in a new country.

They see him subjected to one arbitrary degradation after another until the end of the play - when we discover that everything we have watched is true. It is the experience of one of the actors, John Bosco, who fled Uganda for Britain and whose future is still uncertain.

The courage of this man in allowing his story to be told, and the courage of the actors in

portraying some difficult and unsettling scenes is humbling. The play distills John's experiences into a form which rings of simple, unavoidable truth.

"You people come over here and take our jobs, live in our houses and marry our women. And we are not going to stand for it!" These words, bellowed by an irate Ugandan at an Englishman may sound shocking.

Yet they sum up the worst of British feeling towards those who flee to us for their protection.

BARBARA O'SULLIVAN
Portsmouth Area Refugee Support

Celebration day is latest MU project

COME and help celebrate the international year of the family with the Mother's Union!

Our diocesan branch of the Mother's Union has organised a family fun day on September 18 at Fort Nelson in Fareham. It promises to be an exciting day, including historical re-enactments, a children's band, and the chance for children to make flags.

The idea is to celebrate the United Nations international year of the family in style with flags from all 73 countries around the world where the Mother's Union is active.

The fort will be open to the public from 10am, and the flag-making, historical re-enactments and music from the children's band will be happening throughout the day.

At 2.50pm, everyone will assemble in the parade ground for the firing of the fort's gun at 3pm. The Portsmouth-based Top Cat Theatre Company will then perform a sketch about families before the MU diocesan chaplain, the Rev Bruce Carpenter, rounds off the day with a short act of worship at 3.30pm.

That will include a hymn, a prayer and a procession by the children with the flags they have made during the day. Admission and parking are free and all are welcome. It's the latest in a series of events and projects run by the MU to help families.

"The MU has undergone a great transformation in recent years and it is no longer the same as most people's image of it," said Mr Carpenter. "Many assume it consists of small groups of elderly women who frown on divorces and meet to exchange recipes and gossip.

Families get away from it all

IT was a week that involved everything from racing in sand karts to moonlit walks in the woods.

Children and parents alike enjoyed a week in West Sussex as they took part in one well-established Mothers' Union project over the summer - the 'Away From It All' (AFIA) holiday.

Disadvantaged families from across the diocese - some of whom hadn't a holiday for years - were taken to Lodge Hill near Pulborough.

Volunteer leaders laid on a programme of events for older and younger children that gave parents the chance of a well-deserved break - as well as activities for all the families to do together.

Children enjoyed



Children inspect the sand karts on the AFIA holiday

driving sand karts and exercising on ropes strung between trees. There was a day out in Littlehampton, when families competed in beach games that turned into a water fight.

On two nights older children were taken on

evening walks to look for owls, rabbits and glow worms, something they wouldn't normally do.

Other evenings involved a disco and talent show. The sun shone all week and new friendships formed.

The AFIA holiday is

organised jointly by the Mothers' Union and the Board of Education.

Parishes subsidise the cost of the holiday for individual families who they think deserve a break. A total of 67 people, including an eight-day-old baby took part.

"In fact it is now open to all baptised Christians, including single, separated and divorced women, and there are even 1,000 men members in this country. It also leads the way in social concern and in community service, in this country and abroad.

"The modern MU is working hard to encourage and support all parents, including single parents, and to pro-

mote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.

"It runs parenting programmes, and now has 300 facilitators trained to lead parenting groups. It has volunteers in 48 hospitals, supporting the work of chaplains, and over 1,000 volunteers doing valuable work in 80 prisons."

Many local branches of the MU have regular services in parish churches, and there is a monthly diocesan Communion service in Portsmouth Cathedral at noon on the third Wednesday of each month, attended by an increasing number of members.

For more information, see: <http://freespace.virgin.net/mothersunion.portsmouth>

Pompey Chimes

DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER EDITION: Monday 6 September

AVAILABLE FOR PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO COLLECT FROM DEANERY DEPOTS: Thursday 23 September

AVAILABLE IN YOUR PARISH CHURCH: Sunday 26 September

CONTACTS: EDITORIAL: Neil Pugmire, Cathedral House, St Thomas's Street, Portsmouth, PO1 2HA. (023-9282 5731 or communications@portsmouth.anglican.org)

ADVERTISING: Les Walters/Becky Roper, Cornerstone Vision, 28 Old Park Road, Peverell, Plymouth, PL3 4PY (01752-225623)

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Jane Dobbs, Cathedral House (address as above). (023-9282 5731 or directory@portsmouth.anglican.org)

PHOTOGRAPHY: David Lawrence Neil Pugmire Christian Aid Pete Langdown