



The giant Jesus puppet, worn by Madlan Al-Habel leads the procession of samba drummers

Samba drums draw crowd

EASTER shoppers were left gazing in amazement as a giant puppet of Jesus led a samba procession into the centre of Portsmouth.

The carnival procession recreated the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and also included dozens of worshippers waving streamers and carrying banners.

It was the annual re-

telling of 'The Easter Story' by Churches Together in Central Portsmouth, an ecumenical group of 11 churches.

This year, Top Cat Theatre Company worked with performing arts students from St Luke's C of E School to create drama based on the events of Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. And Portsmouth Music Service taught the

same students how to play samba drums.

The vicar of St Mary's Church, Fratton, Canon Bob White, said: "With the noise of the drums and the size of the giant puppet, we certainly made an impact. Then there was quite a crowd to watch the drama performances.

"It's great to be able to remind crowds of people in Commercial Road what Easter is actually about."

Awards for our good neighbours

VOLUNTEERS and care groups from our diocese won 12 awards at a Hampshire ceremony.

Care groups in Emsworth, Lee-on-Solent and Denmead won Good Neighbour Awards at the Winchester reception.

Co-ordinators from groups in Rowlands Castle, Purbrook and Waterlooville, and Bramshott and Liphook won individual prizes.

Volunteers from Gosport, Wickham, Fareham, Sarisbury Green, Locks Heath and Emsworth groups also won individual awards after being nominated as good neighbours.

The awards were developed by Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Voluntary Care Group Advisory Service. Care groups adviser Jackie Paterson, who is based at our Council for Social Responsibility, was one of the judges for the awards.

Football stars try China challenge

WORSHIPPERS from two of our parishes will join Premiership footballers walking along the Great Wall of China this month.

Paul Hickman, a Reader at St John's, Rowlands Castle, and Graham Farr, from St Simon's, Southsea, will join Pompey's Linvoy Primus, West Brom's Darren Moore and nine others on the sponsored walk from May 21-29.

They will be working with the charity Faith and Football to raise money for a children's school in Nigeria and a medical centre and orphanage in India.

The group have set themselves the challenge of raising £100,000 by hiking along the 15th century wall, and plan to descend daily into villages in the Hebei province to camp and meet locals.

Paul, who works for the Learning Skills Council, said: "I think it's fantastic that Linvoy and Darren are showing another side to professional footballers, who are often seen as overpaid prima donnas. I'm in training for the Iron Man competition, so I should be able to keep up with them!"

And Graham, who is an acting postal manager, said: "I'm looking forward to the challenge, but I'm terrified of heights, so I don't know what it will be like.

"It will be good to go away with a bunch of Christians, but we're walking on more remote parts of the wall, rather than the tourist bits."

Faith and Football was launched in 2002 by ex-Pompey player Mick Mellows when Linvoy and Darren were both playing for Portsmouth FC.

Most of its work involves establishing and running six-a-side football leagues in Paulsgrove, Somers Town and Buckland.

The idea is to give youngsters the chance to enjoy their

favourite sport in a safe environment, with some positive encouragement from Christian role models. Police officers act as referees, and at the end of the season there are family fun days.

WBA defender Darren Moore has now helped to establish a similar league in the inner-city of Birmingham.

Graham Farr is one of those



Above: Graham Farr; left: Pompey defender Linvoy Primus

involved with the Somers Town league, helping to organise fortnightly football sessions on Thursday evenings for seven to 10-year-olds and 11 to 13-year-olds at St Luke's sports centre. Between 50-60 youngsters are regulars.

Part of the Faith and Football vision also includes supporting vulnerable children overseas. The Prospect Children's School in Ibaden, Nigeria, helps those who have forced into child labour, prostitution or begging. The sponsorship money raised by the China challenge will provide them with education, food and water, medical care and housing.

And the new medical school Faith and Football wants to build in the village of Brittona in the Goa region of India will help rescue children who are living on the streets, abandoned, homeless or disabled.

Before the group leave, supporters will hold a '2000 Minutes of Praise' Pentecost celebration, aiming to worship God continuously from 9am on May 14 to 6.30pm on May 15.

This event, at Springfield School, Drayton, will also be sponsored, and the proceeds given to the projects in Indian and Nigeria. Linvoy Primus will play the last note at the end of the worship session and talk about his recent visit to India.

For details of the China Challenge, see: www.chinachallenge.org.uk or ring Mick Mellows on 023-9238 2789. To sponsor Paul, contact him on 023 9247 2717, and to sponsor Graham, call him on 023-9282 0418, or donate via the website.



Now-retired Bishop French Chang Him with Joan and Derick Stevenson in the Seychelles

Seychelles icon painted on loW

AN icon for worshippers in the Seychelles will be painted on the Isle of Wight.

Diocesan iconographer the Rev Derick Stevenson will create an icon of St Paul for the new cathedral in Mahe.

He and his wife Joan spent two months in the Seychelles at the invitation of Bishop French Chang Him, with sponsorship from mission agency USPG. They led management seminars and encour-

aging PCC members and clergy in this isolated diocese.

The new icon will be Derick's largest commission so far and will take nearly a year to complete. The icon board will be made at Exeter Cathedral, and the painting and gilding will be done in Derick's studio on the Isle of Wight.

Derick will also paint and exhibit some of his icons at St John's Church, Newport, this July.