

Newbury Weekly News

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2004

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That was the year that was
2005 review, pages 19-21

Greenbelt threat from farm plan
Thatcham, page nine

Fears over pub development
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Newbury takes the prize
Sport, back page

Dream wedding turns into a fight for life

"Many people trapped and injured. Four are missing"



Simon Miles and Anna Green had planned their dream wedding for Tuesday

TWO FORMER Newbury school pupils have given a dramatic account of how they survived the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Anna Green, whose parents live in Grovelands Road, Speen, and Simon Miles, whose parents live in Thatcham, were supposed to be preparing for a beachside wedding in Sri Lanka on Tuesday. Instead they were fighting for their lives. A Hermitage couple - Jim and Mary Marsh - have also told the *Newbury Weekly News* how they watched in horror as water rose through the ground floor of their Sri Lankan hotel.

Up to 50 Britons are feared dead in the massive Asian tsunami after Thai authorities sharply raised the number of UK nationals killed in the country's devastated tourist resorts to 43. Thousands of British tourists were holidaying in coastal resorts around the Indian Ocean on Sunday when a giant wave triggered by an underwater earthquake swamped the region, killing around 100,000.

Reports: John Garvey, Simon Lyle and Margaret McDonnell

Anna and Miles described to their distraught families, waiting in Newbury for news, how they were enjoying a rose petal bath when they saw the 25ft wall of water speeding towards them. Anna's father Rob, a dental technician, said yesterday: "It's a miracle they both lived."

The pair were staying at a five-star beachside hotel in Ahungalla on Sri Lanka's east coast. Anna's parents Rob and Rose, a health care assistant at Newbury Hospital, were waiting at their Grovelands Road home in Speen yesterday for more news. With them were Simon's parents - Kennet School caretaker Mike Miles and wife Diane, a care assistant colleague of Mrs Green's. Mr Green said: "The first we knew that something

was wrong was a text from Anna telling us they were okay. Then we watched the news."

Mrs Green revealed that the couple, who now live in Swindon, had stayed at the resort last year in one of the beach huts that were swept away. She said: "If they had stayed there again, they would have been swept out to sea."

Mr Green said: "They were having a rose petal bath on the hotel terrace when they saw it coming. They described a 25ft wall of water. They jumped out and ran for their lives." He added: "It was the concrete and steel of the hotel that saved them. They were able to get to the upper storeys. They saw one girl trapped against the railing by the water but she survived."

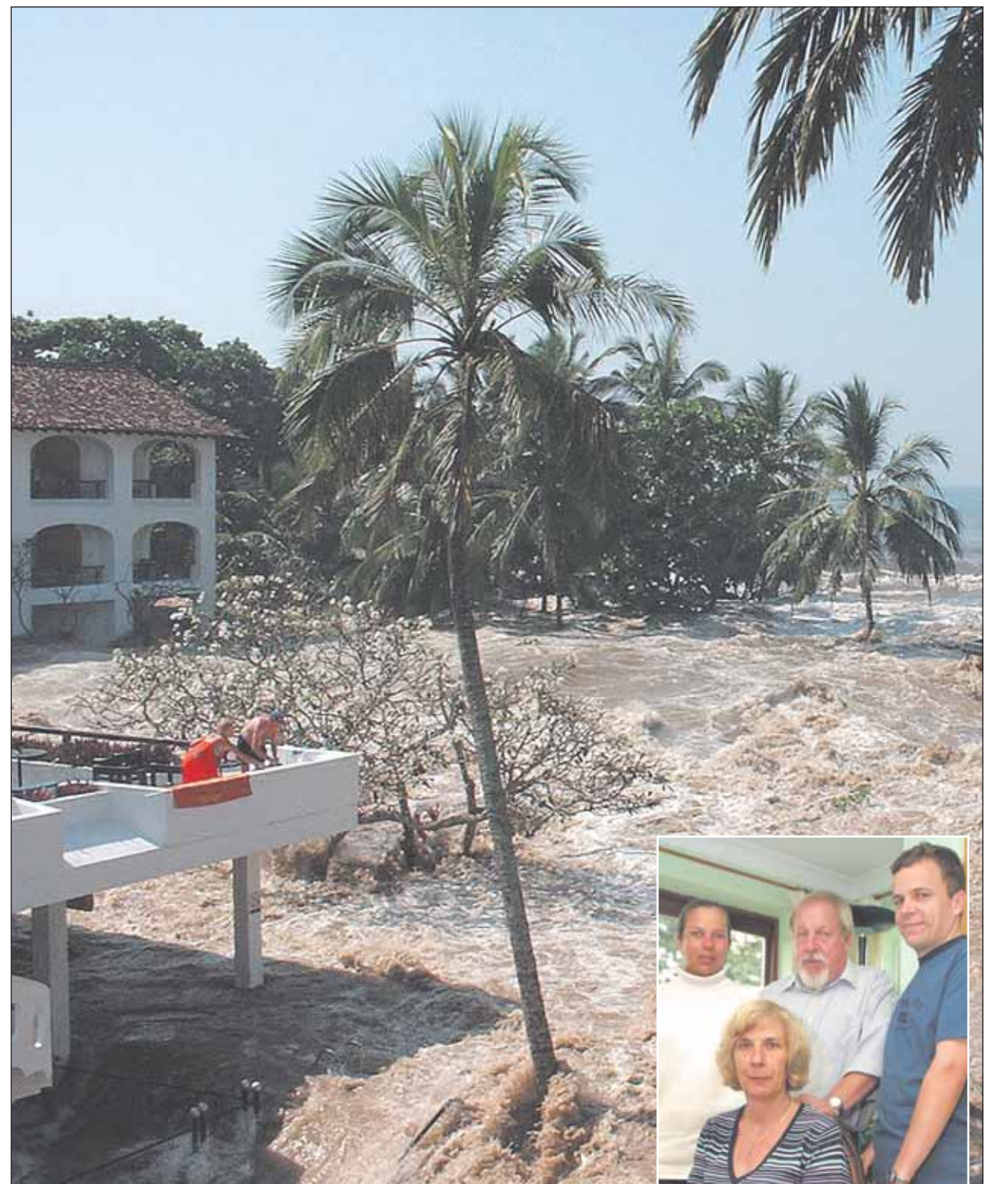
Text messages home from Anna Green on Sunday reveal how the drama unfolded for her and her fiancé

8.21am:
Don't panic: our hotel has been hit by a wave. We're safe.

12pm:
We're okay, don't panic. Plenty of food and water. Staying at hotel until roads are cleared. Could be quite a wait. Are there any more quakes due?

7pm:
25ft wave hit hotel. Ran to higher floor for safety. Many people trapped and injured. Four are missing. We were very lucky not to be hurt. No running water, no electricity - difficult to get signal for mobile. Please tell us what you know; all we have are rumours.

The couple later reveal they have been evacuated to higher ground inland and are safe.



Tourists watch horrified from a balcony as seawater surges through the luxury Neptune Hotel in Beruwela, Sri Lanka. The picture was taken by the Marsh family from Hermitage (inset) who were holidaying at the resort



Cynthia Milton on her motorcycle when she embarked on her journey

Motorcyclist halts round-the-world trip to give aid

A THATCHAM woman on a 60,000-mile round-the-world motorcycle trip has joined the desperate efforts to help Thailand's victims.

Cynthia Milton, who set off in August and has ridden 11,000 miles to Bangkok, is among hundreds of people who have answered the plea for English, French or German speakers to help in hospitals. She also joined queues of hundreds of Thais, ex-pat westerners and tourists to give blood.

She said: "I've watched the BBC World Service with growing horror. On Boxing Day I felt nothing here in Bangkok, although those in the high-rise blocks certainly felt the earthquake. I turned on the BBC and was horrified, and it's become worse hour on hour. It's good to be able to help out, if only on a rather trivial basis. If I were in the UK I could throw a credit card at it and feel good. Here, one needs to be able to do a bit more than that, and I'm fortunate that I can."

Miss Milton said the local aid effort was terrific and urged people in the UK to dig deep to help the victims. She said: "This is an unprecedented catastrophe affecting some of the poorest countries in the world. Every pound people give will be used where it's needed, and it'll be needed for a long while yet."

Struggling parents watch helpless as their children were swept away

A RELAXED morning in paradise turned to sheer panic in a matter of minutes for two Frlsham parents who had to watch helplessly as their two children were washed out of their hotel by Sunday's massive tsunami.

Brendan and Kimberley Goldstein and their two children were enjoying a dream surfing holiday near

Unawantuna in Sri Lanka when disaster struck. When the waves began the family laughed then off, but within minutes they were crashing over the hotel wall. The family turned and ran. As the water began to run like a torrent around the hotel, they tried to escape through a ground floor room but their children Paige, aged 10, and Mason, aged eight, were swept

through the door out of sight of their panic-stricken parents. The force of the water then forced the door shut leaving Mr Goldstein, a builder, and Mrs Goldstein, a hairdresser, trapped in a room rapidly filling with water and debris. Mr Goldstein said: "Finally, the pressure burst the door open and we flew out through the gap like in a movie."

"Now I had lost my wife and I was under the water. I could feel other bodies in the water trying to grab me, fighting and struggling." Mr Goldstein finally grabbed onto a car floating by. He said: "As the water dragged back out you could hear screams and shouting and I saw that my kids had been rescued and were standing on a high wall. I left them safe and went to look for my wife and heard her screaming, 'Where are my kids'. It was pandemonium."

"I went to look for my wife. I heard her screaming 'where are my kids?' It was pandemonium"



The Goldstein family, relieved to be back home in Frlsham

Hungerford family loses 15 relatives in tsunami disaster

A SRI Lankan family based in Hungerford are bracing themselves for more bad news, after learning that 15 members of their extended family have already died in the recent floods caused by a tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Ratnam Thavajothy, who has run the Costcutter store in Charnham Street for three years, told how his wife Uthayanalini, from Batticaloa in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka, had learned of the deaths of 15 relatives, and how he was waiting to hear what was happening in his village.

"Very close relations are OK as the water didn't come up to the house, but the next layer of relations are in terrible trouble," he said. "It's going to take at least three or four weeks before we know how many people have gone." His wife had telephoned her sister three or four times a day, but that he heard the

news on the radio while driving to work on Boxing Day. He said: "My wife spoke to her sister and she said the smell of rotting flesh is so bad."

"The biggest problem at the moment is food and aid getting there, as well as the smell." Although surrounded by newspapers in his shop, he said that he could not bear to look at the pictures in the national press, and added that he had stopped watching the 24-hour news channel Tamil TV.

"We have not looked at the pictures, it makes you feel sick, but I have come to the shop, so I have something else to think about." "A lot of customers have said that they are praying and thinking about us." Mr Thavajothy added that he had been unable to make contact with his home village, Point Pedro, which is only half a mile from the sea.

He said: "It's flooded, but we have no idea what happened. A close friend is there, he is due back in January, so we will know then."

"About 22,000 people have died in Sri Lanka, but I reckon it's going to rise well past that. Heaven knows how many more are to come. The temples are gathering clothes and money, but how they are going to get it there is a big question."

He had intended to take his two young children back to Sri Lanka in the summer as they had never visited but said that following the events he now could not bear to go back. He said: "Some friends have flown back, as they are so distraught, but we are not going. There's no point in going, it will be more depressing. It's more of despair than of anything else. If I wanted to send food, what could I do?"

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Newbury Weekly News New Year opening times

The next issue of the *Newbury Weekly News* will be published on Thursday, January 6. *Thatcham News* will be published on Friday, January 7 and the *Advertiser* on Tuesday, January 11.

The Northbrook Street and Faraday Road offices in Newbury and the Broadway office in Thatcham will be open at the following times:

Friday, December 31	9am to 2pm
Saturday, January 1 and Sunday, January 2	Monday, January 3 - closed
Tuesday, January 4 onwards	open as normal

Correspondents, advertisers and contributors are urged to submit copy as soon as possible over the holiday period.

The *Newbury Weekly News* wishes all its readers, contributors and advertisers a happy and prosperous New Year

Donations pour into Newbury Oxfam

OXFAM in Newbury has been visited by a steady stream of people anxious to help the victims of Boxing Day's tsunami.

The shop in Northbrook Street opened for the first time since the disaster struck yesterday (Wednesday) and staff had already collected hundreds of pounds in cash donations by lunch time.

The money will go towards the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal, an umbrella organisation which coordinates the UK's national appeal in response to major disasters overseas. It combines some of the country's largest charity organisations, including Oxfam and Save the Children.

The manager of Oxfam's Newbury shop Janet Bates said: "We opened at 11am and we must have collected several hundred pounds from a steady flow of people all morning."

"We will be open between 11am and 3pm and will continue collecting on Thursday and Friday."

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Village store raided a second time

POLICE are hunting a man who tied up the deputy manager of the Co-op shop in High Street, Lambourn yesterday morning (Wednesday) before stealing cash from the safe.

The staff member was thought to have been followed in by a robber as he was unlocking the store at 5.45am, before being tied up and left in the shop's store room.

He was later discovered uninjured but extremely distressed at about 6am. He was treated for stress at the scene by paramedics.

Police are anxious to speak to a white man seen in the area at the time carrying a rucksack. He is described as about six feet tall, of medium build and has dark hair. He should contact police as soon as possible.

The shop re-opened at about 1pm. A spokesman for Southern Co-operative said that the employee was unhurt, and was now recovering at home.

Last year, the store was equipped with security shutters following a raid on the store, and in November 1999, the Dillons shop across the road was ram-raided in an attempt to steal a new cash machine.

District councillor Gordon Lundie said that the possibility of CCTV cameras in the village should be explored again after the idea had been discussed earlier in the year.

He said: "I wouldn't call Lambourn a place that is riddled with crime, but we should discuss what we are doing to make this place safer."

Lambourn people have been shocked by the incident. The manager of the Dillons store in the High Street, Steve Pearson described the incident as "concerning".

He said: "We are out on a limb, and the motorway is just up the road. I imagine everybody is going to be shocked by this incident. People just can't believe it."

Anyone with information should contact Newbury CID on (08458) 505505, or leave a message with Crimestoppers on (0800) 555 111.

The Co-op in Lambourn High Street, raided yesterday morning (Wednesday)