

CHURCH leaders say they will not lock their doors despite a criminal snatching an 81-year-old woman's handbag as she prayed.

Two men crept into St Gregory the Great Catholic Church, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, to swipe the bag. Police are still looking for the culprits, who came in through the unlocked church door. Parish priest, Canon Bosco MacDonald, said it was important the church remained accessible to the public.

Biker dies in road crash

A MOTORCYCLIST has died after a smash on a Midland road.

The biker was confirmed dead at the scene after the collision with a car on the A51 at Weston, near Stafford, on Friday morning. Other motorists battled to save him before paramedics and air ambulance crews arrived.

A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said he died at the scene and added the driver of the car did not require hospital treatment.

crazy world

OPOCZNO, Poland: A naughty couple were caught having sex at the top of a waterpark slide. The pair were spotted on CCTV as the girl straddled her partner before the entwined lovers went down the flume. Security guards threw them out at the bottom.

Council fine for gas leak

A COUNCIL has been fined £20,000 after carbon monoxide leaked at a community centre where OAPs were playing cards.

Members of a bridge club were evacuated from the Westlands Community Centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme after firefighters found extremely high levels of carbon monoxide escaping from a flue in the loft.

The fumes were traced to a faulty gas boiler after worried players called 999.

Huge bomb sparks alert

MORE than 45,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes as officials in Koblenz, Germany, tried to defuse a Second World War bomb.

The giant 1.8-ton British bomb was discovered in the Rhine river, leading to all residents within a radius of 1.2 miles from the bomb site being forced to leave their homes for the day.

Officials said seven nursing homes, two hospitals and a prison were also evacuated while the bomb was defused.

REAL LIVES



FUN-LOVING: Little Tom messes about with dad Andy and opposite, in his padded helmet to protect him from injury.

He'll just drop like a puppet whose strings have been cut

NEW HOPE FOR BOY IN A HELMET WHO SUFFERS UP TO 45 FITS A DAY

Little Tom Morley, six, has to wear a padded helmet after suffering up to FORTY-FIVE epileptic seizures a day. But dad Andy, 30, and from Ilkeston, Derbyshire, tells ZOE CHAMBERLAIN that a breakthrough could have arrived.

WE first noticed a problem when Tom was just eight-months-old.

He was lying in bed with me and his mum, Holly, when he made a terrible croaking noise.

His whole body went rigid, then he curled up into a little ball. His eyes rolled back and his mouth was wide open.

He then started to turn blue, as he couldn't breathe.

It was terrifying.

Holly started screaming and then called an ambulance. But, by the time the paramedics arrived, it was over.

At hospital the doctors thought it was just a bug that had caused a

febrile seizure, which can be quite common in babies.

But they warned that if it happened again, we would have to have further tests.

My granddad suffered from epilepsy, as did Holly's cousins. So when it did happen again two months later, we had a good idea what the doctors were going to say.

When they confirmed that Tom had epilepsy we expected the worse.

Yet we weren't given much information so we Googled 'epilepsy' and found good advice from the Epilepsy Action and Young Epilepsy groups.

But Tom's seizures continued

and began increasing. They started coming every three to four months, each one the same as the first. Then as soon as he started nursery and his brain became more active, he began to have five or six a week.

By the time he was two-and-a-half, he was having up to 45 seizures a day.

The type of seizure he had often changed too.

He has had myoclonic seizures, where part of his body jerks; absence seizures, where he stares into space; and tonic-clonic seizures, which is what we describe as the 'big shaky' ones.

It was so difficult to deal with because we couldn't leave him on his own at all.

falls to the ground because every muscle in his body relaxes.

This can cause nasty injuries which are heartbreaking to deal with.

The worst was when Tom split his chin on stone steps when he was four. He had to go to hospital to have it put together again. He has a massive scar there now.

Tom has also suffered other injuries, including countless bruises and black eyes.

When he comes out of the fits, Tom starts crying and we just have to pick him up, give him a cuddle and treat any wounds.

It was so difficult to deal with because we couldn't leave him on his own at all.



GROWING UP: Tom and Andy on days out together.

factfile

There are around 112,000 people across the UK aged 25 or younger with epilepsy - and epilepsy is the most common serious childhood neurological condition. To find out more call the Young Epilepsy Helpline on 01342 831 342, or visit www.youngepilepsy.org.uk. To read Andy's blog go to www.ukepilepsy.com

YOUR STORIES OF COURAGE...

Have YOU got a story you would like to share? Contact the Sunday Mercury Newsdesk on 0121 234 5567, or write to: Newsdesk, Sunday Mercury, Fort Dunlop, Fort Parkway, Birmingham B24 9FF, or e-mail sundaymercury@sundaymercury.net

In the end, we had a special padded helmet with a chin support made to protect his head.

It is vital as Tom can be running around but then he'll just drop - like a puppet that has had all of its strings cut.

Fortunately, my employer has been very supportive.

Fantastic

I'm a web designer and some days I'd go in and wouldn't be able to keep my eyes open. Other times, I'd be called home after a seizure.

The nursery Tom attended was also fantastic and he carried on to a mainstream school, where he now has a one-to-one carer.

After a while, we saw a reduction in most of the seizures, possibly due to drug control or Tom growing out of them. Yet it was still hard to control the atonic seizures.

In March last year, Tom had an operation to have a Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) implanted under his skin, leading up to the vagus vein in his neck.

This device acts in much the same way as a pacemaker, and is supposed to regulate the electrical activity in his brain, reducing seizures and in some cases preventing them from occurring.

The VNS had little effect to start with, which left us disheartened because we had read such good

things about it. But after 18 months we have now started to see a real improvement - and Tom has been seizure-free for the last three months.

To go from 45 a day to zero is absolutely fantastic.

Tom calls his VNS his magic battery.

He still wears his helmet just to be safe, but we've finally been able to take the stairgates down from the stairs.

People have asked how have we coped but you just have to deal with it, you have no choice.

Unfortunately, Holly and I split up when Tom was two, which made things more difficult.

I have a new partner now and Tom gets on really well with her and his step-sisters because they're a similar age.

I've always talked to Tom about his epilepsy but he's still at an age

where he doesn't fully understand.

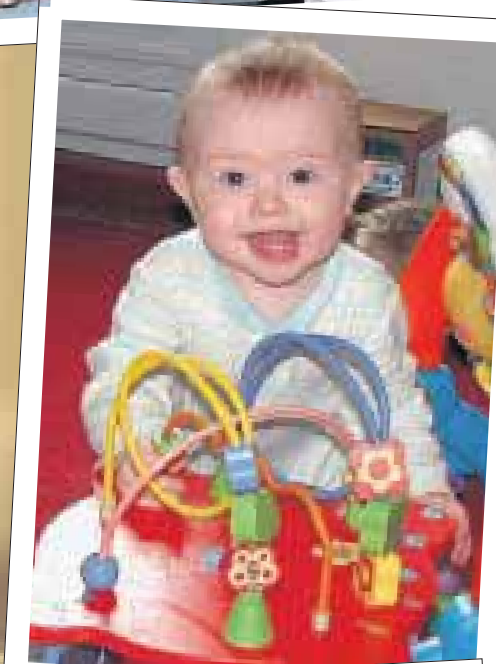
I've also made a website and a blog to help other parents, as I felt there wasn't enough information out there about epilepsy in young people. What was available was also full of medical jargon that was difficult to understand.

I've made videos of Tom and myself chatting about it all, his helmet, his VNS and why he can't play on the playground with his schoolfriends.

It used to bother him but in the last few months he has been able to do much more.

There was a time where he would come home and say people were picking on him. It wouldn't just be the children, sometimes we'd hear parents sniggering on the playground too.

Few people seem to care about or really understand epilepsy and I



Robin Hood wed plans

COUPLES who want to recreate the love story of Robin Hood and Maid Marian can say "I do" in their natural surroundings.

A plan from Nottinghamshire County Council means lovebirds can marry in Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve. Mike Harrison and Sarah Bairstow, from Derby, will be the first to tie the knot at the purported home of the legendary Robin Hood on May 12 next year.

Honour for footy hero

FORMER England and Wolves goalkeeper Bert Williams, above, opened a multi-million pound leisure centre named in his honour yesterday.

The Bert Williams Leisure Centre in Bilston has a health and fitness suite, 25m swimming pool, dance studio, squash courts and a sports hall. Williams, 91, from Shifnal, played in the 1950 World Cup and was made an MBE last year.

Life of music

THE world's oldest performing musician has died at the age of 103.

Ukulele player Bill Tapia started his career entertaining troops in the First World War before going on to play alongside Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Bing Crosby.

He was still performing at 100, and completed his final live tour last year.

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