

Brit dies after US knife attack

A British man who was stabbed in the head in a street mugging in the US has died five weeks after the attack. Paul Tam, 44, had been in hospital since the attack in San Francisco on February 18. He was with his niece when he was attacked by two robbers. He died of his injuries in a local hospital on Thursday. Video footage of the murder has been released and a substantial reward is on offer in the hope the public will help track down the two suspects. IT specialist Paul moved to California after 10 years as a web content and digital marketing manager at Manchester University.

BLIGHT OF 1000 EMPTY HOMES

Landlords face big bills

Michael Reynolds

More than a thousand homes owned by businesses are lying empty despite huge housing waiting lists.

We can reveal properties around Scotland are empty while 150,000 families wait for a council or housing association home.

They cost local authorities more than £2million a year in lost council tax.

Hundreds of the empty homes are owned by farmers and crofters and had been used to house workers.

Farmers' union NFU Scotland say the Private Housing Bill, passed by the Scottish Parliament last week, gives members a "direct disincentive" to let empty buildings.

The union's legal and technical policy manager Gemma Thomson said: "There are various reasons as to why farm properties are vacant – this could be due to lack of funds, planning issues or the remoteness of many farms away from schools and shops."

Absentee landlords will



CRISIS Jackie Baillie

be hit with double council tax charges on long-term empty homes in 19 of Scotland's 32 council areas.

A Government spokesman said: "Empty homes are a wasted resource which can be a blight on communities."

That's why the Scottish Government are pleased to support the work of the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership which is delivering real results on the ground and we doubled their funding for 2017-18."

Scottish Labour's public services spokeswoman Jackie Baillie said: "As part of our plan to tackle the housing crisis, we have committed to building 60,000 affordable homes over the next parliament."

Boy, 13, hit by taxi

A boy of 13 has been taken to hospital after being struck by a taxi.

The accident happened on St John's Road in Corstorphine, Edinburgh, at about 12.35pm.

Police said the teenager suffered injuries to his legs, although they are not believed to be life-threatening. He was taken to the city's Royal Infirmary.

CHARITY RUNNER BURNS THROUGH Twenty-seven days, Eddie?

Fiona Russell

Ben Smith runs alongside me on the Forth & Clyde Canal towpath as if we are enjoying a lunchtime jog.

He is light on his feet, chatty, full of energy and not a bit out of breath.

Yet this extraordinary man is 17 miles into today's 26.2-mile run – and by this evening he will have completed his 203rd marathon on 203 consecutive days.

Comedian Eddie Izzard has just raised an incredible £1.35million for Sport Relief after completing 27 marathons in 27 days across South Africa.

But Ben passed that milestone weeks ago and his aim is to run marathons for 401 consecutive days to complete a self-created 401 Challenge for charity.

Ben, 34, said: "I am having the most amazing time. People think I must be mad but running a marathon every day is something I have got used to."

He runs day after day with no rest days. Since September 1, he has clocked up 5318 miles, equivalent to the length of Britain six times over.

Ben has worn out nine pairs of trainers and visited places as far apart in the UK as Land's End and Cumbarnauld.

He has also shed more than 2.5st and settled on eating a massive 6500 calories a day to prevent further weight loss.

When he ran his 53rd marathon on October 23, he broke the Guinness World Record for the most marathons on consecutive days.

Last week, in Glasgow, he reached the halfway mark of his challenge.

Why would a seemingly ordinary account manager from Bristol set himself this mind-boggling goal? Over a lunch of a large pizza and two pints of cola midway through his canal-side run from Anniesland, Glasgow, to Twechar,

Our outdoors guru hits the road with runner as he takes on epic challenge across UK



KING OF THE ROAD Fiona joins Ben on his epic challenge last week Pic Mark Anderson

Dunbartonshire, and back, Ben said: "I wanted to raise awareness of bullying because it's something that affected a large part of my life."

"I was badly bullied at school from the age of 10 and this led to depression in my adulthood, a nervous breakdown and two suicide attempts."

As he travels across the UK, Ben visits schools to talk about the harmful effects of bullying.

He added: "Running is also my release from the stresses of life and it played a big part in my recovery from depression."

"So another part of The 401 Challenge is to promote running as a great way to improve mental and physical health."

"As I run each day in the UK, I want to inspire people to run more. And I wanted to do something to push my own limits."

When Ben embarked on the 401 Challenge in his home city, he had only been running for three years.

He said: "I didn't run at all until 2012. I wasn't a kid who did sport and by my late 20s I weighed 17st and was very unfit."

"But I found running was great therapy and it has seen me lose around 6st."

Having watched the London marathon on TV many times before, Ben wondered if it was something he could achieve.

He said: "I started a bit at a time by running a few miles and building it up. I completed a few 10K races and then my first half-marathon."

"The feeling I got from running was a sense of accomplishment I had never

TRAINERS AS HE ATTEMPTS 401 26-MILERS IN 401 DAYS

marathons in 27 That's a warm-up

known before and I was hooked." In 2013, Ben, who has also found the courage to come out as gay, completed his first two marathons.

During the following year, he ran 18 marathons across the world.

His next challenge was to run seven marathons on seven consecutive days, which he did in 2015.

Ben said: "I knew I was ready for something much bigger. I thought about running 365 marathons – one for each day of the year – but then I decided to round that up to 400. The extra one is like a victory run for me."

Ben recognises he still has a long way to go to run his 401st marathon, back in Bristol, on October 5 this year. But he said: "I am positive I'll do this. I passed the halfway mark in my 201st marathon in Glasgow and it felt amazing knowing I had less to run than I had already run."

Despite Ben's enthusiasm, the challenge so far has not been all plain sailing. He has suffered multiple injuries and niggles, including severe tendonitis and a fractured toe.

And he has

been forced to keep running through colds and a chest infection.

The weather has also made progress hard on some days. Ben said: "There were all those storms including Abigail, Desmond, Gertrude and Imogen."

"By the time Abigail had reached south Wales where I was running, it had been upgraded to a hurricane. That was bonkers and made for very challenging running."

But Ben says that most of the 200-plus marathons have been enjoyable and he's met many "amazing and inspiring" people.

He added: "I felt very emotional when I was piped through the English-Scottish border on the Union Chain Suspension Bridge in Berwickshire on day 192. On one of the days I ran in Edinburgh earlier this month, I was blown away by the views."

"I've loved Glasgow, too. Not only because it marked my halfway point but the people have been fantastic."

"The support of runners and people on social media is overwhelming."

"I am also thrilled Dame Kelly Holmes and Olympians Steve Cram and Daley Thompson have spoken publicly of their support for me."

"I hope all this builds momentum so I can raise the £250,000 for the anti-bullying charities so poignant to me."

Ben sold his home to finance his charity fundraiser. He sleeps in a motorhome when he is not offered a free bed for the night.

He relies on the goodwill of others to offer courtesy sports massages, meals, drinks, a place to park, route planning and even a beard trim.

To help or donate, see www.the401challenge.co.uk

RECORD BREAKER

Ben has smashed the Guinness World Record for running marathons on consecutive days Pic Phil Dye



MARATHON MAN Comedian Eddie finishes his challenge at the Nelson Mandela statue in Pretoria

Eddie Izzard After 27 marathons, I am going to run for office

PAIN Eddie in Cape Town

He's just spent nearly a month running a marathon a day but now Eddie Izzard has his eyes on a different kind of race – running for office as a politician.

The 54-year-old comic and actor raised more than £1.6million for Sport Relief completing 27 marathons across South Africa in 27 days.

But Eddie has no time for a breather – because it's the heat of a political battle in June he's preparing for next. Eddie, whose gruelling runs are featured in a BBC2 documentary tomorrow, said: "I'm campaigning strongly on the EU referendum. It's crazy to think we could be leaving. You have to be inside it to change it."

Eddie takes the same view of parliament – and is confident of becoming an MP.

He said: "As an activist, you have 30 per cent of the potential to get something done. But as a politician, you have 100 per cent. I want Labour to win. I'm a fighter."

His next target is to help get the party into office in 2020.

He added: "I will come back to acting and comedy but I will be 58 and I'll need to go into politics by then. I want to see what I can do."

Ben said: "What he has done is amazing. He is 54 and had to endure high temperatures."

"He should be very proud of all he has done for charity." Support Eddie at sportrelief.com/sponsoredie



Now check out Fiona Outdoors in Seven Days mag and www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk