

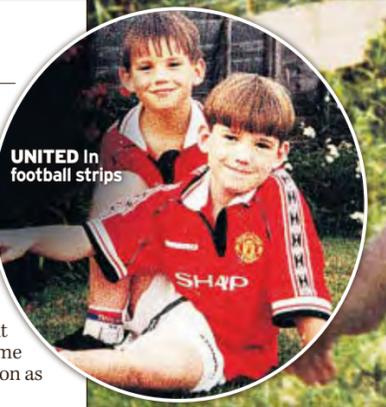
MAKING OF A JIHADIST KILLER.. BY HIS MUM



YOUNG BROTHERS
Micheal & Thomas

EXCLUSIVE
BY TOM PARRY
Senior Feature Writer

On Sally Evans's bedroom wall is a framed collage of photos showing her son Thomas as the contented child she still adores. He can be seen as a smiling toddler in a field; and posing with little brother Micheal in Manchester United kits. The photographs are the first thing Sally sees every morning. But then the unavoidable images come rushing through her mind of her son as a murdering terrorist.



UNITED IN
football strips

Terrified villagers on the Kenya-Somalia border who saw him beheading their neighbours called him the White Beast. Clutching a tear-soaked tissue as she talks at the High Wycombe semi where she brought up her two boys, Sally admits she loathed the man Thomas became when he fled to Somalia in 2011.

She says: "I absolutely hated him for what he'd done. But when I think back to when he was my Thomas, of course I love him as his mum. Not what he became." Al-Shabaab terrorist Thomas, who changed his name to Abdul Hakim, was shot dead aged 25 by Kenyan troops in June. Sally says: "I'm mourning the loss of my son Thomas, but not Hakim."

A documentary called My Son the Jihadi, which details her harrowing story, is being broadcast on Channel 4 on Thursday.

Former teaching assistant Sally, 57, believes Thomas's first misguided steps towards becoming a brutal murderer were taken at a gym near the edge of High Wycombe where the family have lived for more than 20 years.

The Buckinghamshire town has become a recruiting ground for those pushing the ideology of al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

"He had a break-up with a girl and that really did knock him for six," Sally says, recalling the circumstances that preceded Thomas's conversion to Islam. "He and the girl had been together for over a year, and it was very intense. He was devastated."

"I think he was looking for something. He started going to the Muslim sessions at the gym. Maybe that's when they got their hooks into him. He was 19."

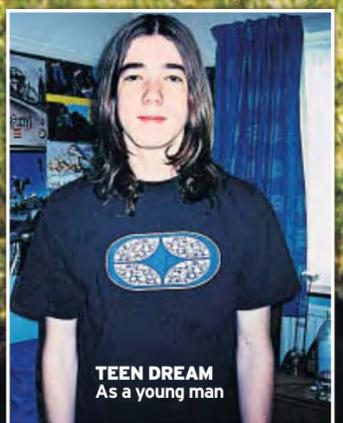
After her husband Tony, the boys' father,



MOURNING
Mum Sally and Micheal



WHITE WIDOW Our report yesterday



TEEN DREAM
As a young man

walked out in 2003, Sally did her best to give her children freedom.

She allowed Thomas to smoke and drink in the garage with his mates, and indulged his passion for heavy metal.

Thomas and Micheal, now 23, would go out for hours on their BMX bikes. One of Sally's photos shows the lads repairing a bike in the garden. Thomas's transformation was rapid once the former teenage tearaway became a Muslim.

"By 2010 there were a lot of changes," Sally says. "He wouldn't eat my food. On a Saturday morning it always used to be bacon sandwiches - that would drive him mad. He would throw open all the windows, saying: 'It stinks of pig in here.' "We had the Christmas tree up and



TODDLER
Smiling Thomas Evans plays in a field

he would only stand in the doorway. He wouldn't come in the room with the tree in here. He became stricter with prayers. He didn't really mix with us at that point.

"He would come in from work, get changed and then go to the gym and the mosque. He'd probably be back about 11 o'clock at night.

"He didn't like the television on... He wouldn't listen to music at all. He took down all his posters."

Sally nods at a photo on the mantelpiece taken in New York in 2009, after Thomas's first visits to the mosque.

The mum says: "We went around the 9/11 anniversary and we were in the tiny chapel with the memorials to the victims and he wouldn't come in there with us. He just said, 'I'm not interested.'"

Sally had encouraged her son's new religious views, believing it "straightened him out". Initially, Thomas went to the

Wycombe Islamic Society mosque, but then drew towards the Muslim Education Centre in the town.

This is the inconspicuous building that was attended by one of the British men convicted over the 2006 plot to detonate liquid bombs on airliners.

Sally had reservations, but didn't intervene. "Was I stupid?" she asks. "Looking back I don't think I was because he never gave me anything that could have made me think what was coming."

"I don't think any one person did it on their own, I think there were several people and they all do a little bit. They're cowards because they're still here. They get other people to do their dirty work. I feel a lot of anger towards them."

Sally remembers heated rows in which her son, who previously never used to walk out of the front door without saying he loved her, would fume that she was

How my sweet football-loving little Thomas became the White Beast, capable of beheading innocents...



TERRORIST
Thomas became Islamist Abdul Hakim



FIRE FIGHT On Kenyan border

"We had the Christmas tree up - he wouldn't come in the room"

SALLY EVANS ON HOW HER SON THOMAS CHANGED

needed anyone else to stop him - I would have stopped him myself. I'd have taken his passport.

"When they stopped him that time I wish they had come and spoken to us as his family."

Contact over the following four years was sporadic. Thomas would not be in touch for months on end.

Now Sally knows the awful truth - that was when her son was prowling through Kenya beheading Christians and torching their churches.

Yesterday we revealed claims that British terror suspect White Widow Samantha Lewthwaite was with Thomas

when he beheaded victims in a Kenyan village in 2014.

All that is left of Thomas, whose body was not repatriated, is the wardrobe in his old bedroom filled with clothes he left behind.

Still raw with grief, Sally clutches the favourite T-shirt her boy could not take with him because it was in the wash.

Somewhere between High Wycombe and Somalia, she lost the son who wore it.

My Son the Jihadi is on Channel 4 on Thursday at 9pm.

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'SUICIDE' BRIT BELIEVED SHE WAS ON ISIS MURDER LIST: PAGE 21

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