

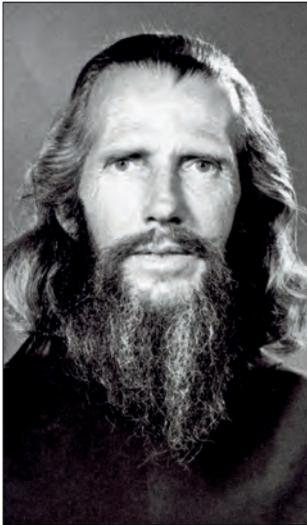


# JBMS NEWSLETTER

Published by The John Bradburne Memorial Society  
PO Box 32, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0YB, UK  
Tel: 01568 760632 e-mail: info@johnbradburne.com  
website www.johnbradburne.com  
UK Registered Charity No. 1046483

SUMMER 2014

## Pope Francis blesses “a life marked for sanctity”



‘His Holiness Pope Francis received your letter and he has asked me to reply in his name. The Holy Father will remember your intentions in his prayers. He invokes upon you God’s abundant blessings’.

The letter from Pope Francis via the Vatican Chief of Staff, Mgr Peter Wells, Assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State for the Vatican is a clear sign that the Pope read the letter which he received from Celia Brigstocke, niece of John Bradburne,

who was killed in 1979 for his devotion to a group of lepers during Zimbabwe’s war for independence from Britain. Celia has worked tirelessly, telling all who will listen of the greatness of her uncle’s self-sacrifice, through the John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS), established as a registered charity in 1995. There is a real possibility that the cause recognising John Bradburne’s death as martyrdom will move forward in this country in the near future.

Celia explained, “I wrote to the Pope because he loves the poor and marginalised. He has taken the name ‘Francis’ because of his love of St Francis. Being Franciscan in nature, I felt he would have a great affinity with the life of John Bradburne, who was a Secular Franciscan. He spent his life searching to find God’s will and finally, in Zimbabwe, spent his last ten years in Mutemwa, serving a community of people who had contracted leprosy. In this he was very similar to St Francis himself. That community still remains today, caring for people with leprosy, handi-

capped and the marginalised destitute.”

She continued, “I hoped for Pope Francis’ blessing in order for the work to continue well, and for the Cause of John Bradburne to be properly investigated and introduced in England. His support would be a great blessing. I was also prompted by letters from people, both laity and Religious, many who have been praying for years for some formal recognition by the Church.”

Why is John Bradburne important? Who was John Bradburne? Perhaps his story is best summarised by his supporter and internationally renowned Professor of Linguistics, David Crystal. Professor Crystal has spent many years compiling an anthology of the thousands of poems written by Bradburne. “Bradburne turns out to be the most prolific poet the English language has ever had. That is quite a claim, but it is easily justified. If we define prolificness by the number of poetic lines, then among the front runners are Wordsworth, with

about 54,000 lines, and Shakespeare (combining the poetic lines in the plays with the poems) with just under 88,000. Bradburne produced 170,000 lines - at least - for not everything he wrote has yet been found. His longest manuscript is over 10,800 lines. That's just a little longer than Milton's *Paradise Lost*."

Poets are not canonised for their writing. There was more to Bradburne than his writing. Reflecting on Bradburne's murder by his guerrilla captors, Prof Crystal comments: "Soon after his arrival in Rhodesia, in 1962, he confided to a Franciscan priest that he had three wishes: to serve lepers, to die a martyr, and to be buried in the habit of St Francis. His first two wishes had evidently been granted. As for the third, at his Requiem Mass, eyewitnesses saw three drops of blood fall from the bottom of the coffin, forming a little pool on the ground. The coffin was re-opened, but no sign of blood was found. However, it was noticed that he had been buried in a shirt. It was replaced by the Franciscan habit."

"Since his death, many unusual events have been reported in relation to his name. Mutemwa is now a place of pilgrimage, a local Fatima, and there is a growing movement in support of his cause for sainthood. Around 15,000 pilgrims visited Mutemwa for the twentieth anniversary of his death in 1999, and they continue to do so, even in the currently difficult times in Zimbabwe. Each month, some 300-400 pilgrims make their way to the village.

Bradburne imitated Jesus in laying down his life for his friends, the community of the leprosy settlement at Mutemwa. The guerrilla leader offered to spare his life if he would care for his wounded fighters in Mozambique. John refused because there would be nobody to tend the lepers. His captors said that he could return to Mutemwa but, instead, shot him in the back as he made his way to the road. Celia continued, "John's desire for 'martyrdom' merely reflected his own absolute wish to give the ultimate sacrifice of giving himself fully to God." "The importance of him being recognised as a martyr shows in a definite way that John would never have deserted his friends, the lepers at Mutemwa. He could not and would not do that. Mutemwa was where God had led him, and he knew it was God's will to remain there serving those considered least in the world. The Kingdom of God was already theirs in their suffering. They were his 'family' and it took death to deny him returning there. He would never have considered any other option."

What support has John Bradburne's cause received in this country? His niece continued, "We have received a great deal of support in Britain, from many people who have made contact with us during the past twenty years, since the John Bradburne Memorial Society has been operating. The charity is set up to help raise funds for the Mutemwa Community in Zimbabwe and to help spread word of John's life via newsletters and booklets and

prayer leaflets, and other publications."

"We are in regular contact with a broad spectrum of thousands of people who have come to learn about his life. Many Secular Franciscan Fraternities support our work with prayer and fundraising. We also have the support of the Zimbabwean Community based in England as well as that of many priests, bishops and lay people, past and present who have been inspired one way or another through the life and death of John Bradburne."

"We had very well attended anniversary celebrations at Westminster Cathedral with exhibitions to mark the 25th and 30th anniversaries of John's death on 5th September 1979. Cardinal Basil Hume and Bishop George Stack were the main Celebrants for these two celebrations."

"There are groups of people who meet for prayer on a regular basis, as well as individuals who call on Bradburne to intercede for various intentions. Many answers to prayers are published in the twice yearly newsletters published by JBMS. There are also groups of people who organise their own events, such as poetry readings and talks with slide presentations."

"As Bradburne had connections all over England there are pockets of people doing their own thing, simply out of respect for a man whose life speaks volumes in our secular and materialistic world today. For them John is very approachable, and a man of humour too. In John's typical self-deprecating words, 'Pray

on for my sanctification because it would encourage so many souls if such a wreckage might come to canonisation...” What is the next step in the process? The cause of canonisation is generally slow, painstaking and complicated. It involves a wide collaboration with many different people, often in many countries. For John Bradburne, whose feet trod the soil of many lands, the

consideration of his Holiness could be compared to the complexity and beauty of a patchwork quilt. As Celia remarked, “The next step in the process is to approach Rome via the Secular Franciscans to enquire if a Cause for the process of Beatification can commence. This process is now underway.”

“His is a beautiful life, a life marked for sanctity.”



Article by Sister Janet Fearn

## FR JOHN THURSTON PERCY DOVE SJ - RIP 1922-2014

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Fr Dove SJ on June 20th. Fr Dove was John Bradburne's closest friend and confidante. Their friendship spanned a lifetime since their meeting in India during the Second World War. Bradburne had already seen intense action in Malaya, had been trapped behind Japanese lines and made a dramatic escape back to India. The two immediately took to each other and the friendship was to last until Bradburne's death in 1979 near Mutemwa.

It was to Fr Dove that John in the early sixties wrote to ask if there was a cave in Africa where he could stay. Dove's welcome invitation to come out to Rhodesia saw Bradburne making the journey out to Africa in 1964, and was subsequently introduced to Mutemwa.

Recent work on Bradburne has highlighted the influence John Dove had on him though John Dove would say the influence was the other way round. What is certain is that each had a great impact on the other even though they could not have been more different: Dove the

practical organised man who became a priest and founder of Silveira House, a centre totally dedicated to leadership and development training that to this day 'carries weight', and Bradburne, a mystic and a poet, who tried his vocation in four different religious communities, became a wanderer and ended up expelled from a settlement for leprosy patients for whom he cared.

We owe a very great deal to Fr Dove for writing the memoir on John Bradburne 'Strange Vagabond of God' which has introduced John's life and poetry to the world, and shows clearly the understanding these two had for one another. It was Fr Dove's request that a charity be set up in England to help raise funds for Mutemwa, and to disseminate information about his life and writings which started the work of JBMS. Without his initiative and involvement there would be no such organisation which continues the work and legacy of John Bradburne.

And so a great man has died a month short of his ninety second birthday. Always a person of great courtesy and

humour who inspired people and formed warm friendships with those who supported him in many ways. A man of imagination and tenacity and dedicated to his vocation.

To his family he was always Thurston, and so to them we would like to express our sympathy and our gratitude.

For a fuller obituary please request this from JBMS.



Fr John Dove and John Bradburne

**Letter from Fr John Dove to John Bradburne, dated 13th April 1973,  
when John was expelled from Mutemwa by the Leprosy Association.  
It came like soothing balm to him.**

**My dear John,**

I was quite sick at heart about the whole business yesterday. I complained to the Lord in my prayer.

When you came to the Lepers they had no heart, no spirit. They had been down-trodden and neglected. You came and you put a new heart, a new spirit into them. You did this by loving them, and bringing them by love back to God. Before, they had no love, they died in squalor. Now they have love through your love, and they are a happy Community. This is why there have been fewer deaths.

This Committee wants these people to die so that they may

close the camp and claim that there are no more lepers. To remove love is a good way to bring along death for it is the meaning of death. They will bind up their limbs, limbs which are destined only for eternal life. They preserve the useless material body in their eagerness to prove to mankind (not to God) what good humanitarians they are, while all the while denying the spirit, the love for which it is made.

May God have mercy upon the Committee whose sin is very great.

This all means that it is imperative for you to remain near to continue to show forth love

and to nourish these poor folk on the Bread of Love.

Fr Ennis has agreed to look into the writing of an official Archdiocesan letter to this Committee simply stating that you will give out Communion every day.

In the end love will conquer. It is because you achieved so much that satan has been aroused to attempt to destroy it all. He cannot win because Christ has already won.

You will always be welcomed home here, but I know you will want to stay there near them to continue to show love,

Great will be your reward.

**All love in Christ  
Critch**



## JOHN BRADBURNE'S POETRY

John Bradburne did not write poetry, he “breathed poetry, it came out of him like water from a tap - and the tap was always on...He is the most prolific poet in English literature”, as David Crystal puts it, adding that he wrote three times as many lines as Wordsworth (I may add, and even more than the prolific French Victor Hugo who also breathed poetry – in a span of time of writing twice shorter than Hugo). More than four thousand poems have been collected so far – and the search has not ended.

John's poetry is not yet taught at University, but several academic scholars have already worked on the originality and on the importance of it. The first one is of course David Crystal, the wellknown British academic and linguist, who edited several books of John's poetry and took the extraordinary task of transcribing and entering the whole corpus of poems onto an electronic data base, which anyone may access on the website <http://www.johnbradburnepoems.com>. If you go this site, and press on the button “About the Poetry” you'll access “A brief introduction to the poetry of John Bradburne”, which is excellent, notwithstanding its brevity. David Crystal, who is a world recognized specialist on Linguistics, English Language and William Shakespeare, shows that beyond unusual features of John's poetry (not only poems but also letters, and the way John often wrote them) it displays a profound originality, both on form and of content. John is “a great formalist”, using a variety of different kinds of verses and rhymes, but nearly always a traditional one, using the tradition of English poetry. He is a great creator of metaphors, sometimes exuberant or extraordinarily original, onomatopoeia, assonances, verbal allusions, acrostics, and rhyme alliterations, neologisms.

John's poetry is playful, and it is prevented from becoming pompous or self-indulgent. John is at the same time the poet of everyday life and an extraordinary religious poet : “He has only one theme, and it is the most profound of themes: the nature of the triune God, as manifested in Jesus, as born of Mary. From this theme come all others - God's plan in human history, salvation, love, mission ...” After reading this introduction, you will grasp the definitively “incarnational” and so Christian nature of John's poetry – the faith is never for him just in the mind, it takes the whole of him, body and soul, intellect and imagination, flesh and heart – because Jesus took the whole of our human nature.

Additional and equally interesting introductions to John's poems by David Crystal may be found at the front of the five anthologies which has been selected and edited by him : *The Songs of the Vagabond* (1996), *John Bradburne's Mutemwa* (2000), *John Bradburne's Book of Days* (2004), *Birds, Bees and Beasts* (2007), and *John Bradburne on Love* (2009).

### *A quarry for beauty and prayer*

To know John's poetry, the best way is always to read and enjoy it, either in the already published books or on the Internet data base (<http://www.johnbradburnepoems.com>), or to hear John (and others) reading them in the magnificent CD prepared by Anne Lander, *Alive to God, Poems by John Bradburne, contemporary Mystic, Poet and Martyr* (2008).

In his introduction to *John Bradburne on Love*, David Crystal proposes a very simple exercise: “We can search for any word, or string of words, and find which ones he used most frequently. It's a very simple exercise, but it can provide considerable insight into the nature of his thought; for the more we study his use of words, the more we will come to understand him and learn from him”. Try it!

*Part of a longer article by  
Didier Rance.*

## RESIDENTS' PROFILES

### BEVEN PFENDE



Date of Birth 9th November 1967. Nationality - Zimbabwean. Position in family: 5 out of 8. Leprosy patient diagnosed in 2006.

Mr Pfende went to Chidziya Primary School from 1971-1977. He did grades 1-7. He worked at Mutual in Marondera. He is also a builder by profession. In 1998, he was affected by leprosy, and started going to the Mutemwa clinic for treatment. He was not able to walk at all, and his family and friends had lost all hope that he would survive.

Beven was admitted to Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre on 28th February 2006. His cousin Sabastin Kahuni introduced him to Mutemwa Settlement and he went to address his health problems. The Mutemwa administration found him very suitable to admit him for care there, and he has stayed ever since.

He is married to Tellmore Chibanda, who is trained as a

Nurse Aid and they married in 2006 and they have two children, both girls. He likes Gardening and listening to music.

### MARIA KAMUFURENI



Date of Birth 18th November 1919. Nationality - Zimbabwean. Position in family: 1 out of 6. Post leprosy, destitute and partially blind.

Maria Kamufureni was once married and gave birth to 10 children. Both her parents died some years ago. Later she was affected by leprosy and her husband divorced her because of her illness. She started living with her young sister, Catherine Kambudzi in Gozi. In early 2014 her young sister referred her to Social Welfare, who in turn referred her to Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre for leprosy treatment.

### DOUGLAS KADIRA

Date of Birth 20 February 1961. Nationality - Zimbabwean. Position in family: 3 out of 5. Blind and destitute.

Douglas Kadira grew up in poor and very miserable conditions, the third of four siblings, who all died. After the death of his parents he was staying with an aunt Serenia Kadira, but in 2010 his aunt had to leave her home to stay with her children in Harare because of old age. This brought double trouble for Douglas because he was left with no one to take care of him, and at the same time he was struck down with blindness. He found it difficult to get any work. From then on he lived at Murewa Bus Station as a street beggar. The major challenge was during the nights when he sheltered under a shop verandah without blankets or warm clothes. The Murewa Centre Councillor Gilbert Mukasa took pity on him and registered him with Social Welfare. The Social Welfare then referred him to Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre in January 2014. He is now happily living at Mutemwa where he is fed, clothed and given a new home, and is well looked after.



## YOUR LETTERS

Dear Friends of John Bradburne.

I would like to share with you some bee stories about John. I'm a retired school chaplain, and used some material you kindly sent in my work at school. I came across John again in a visit to a church in the Lancaster diocese where I was given a prayer card. So I found out more and included the material you kindly sent as a prayer resource for the school chapel. Well, events moved on and I retired in 2006. Just recently my wife was tidying my desk and discovered that very striking picture of John and placed it by my computer. Quite a surprise. So I said "Hello John, haven't seen you for a while. Send me a bee". 30 mins later our 3yr old came to me with a picture of the Passion story to which he had fixed a bee sticker (Kids just love stickers!). The next day we found a bee in the dining room and the next day, while walking through the park, one of the staff drew our attention to a bees nest in the trunk of an old tree. So, what do we say to this? Well, thanks Lord for the signs of your providence and help us open our eyes and ears to all you wish to say. Heaven wants to be heard. Let's listen and respond.

Please share this, if that's what you feel is the right thing to do in promoting John's cause.

In faith and thanksgiving,

*Mike Collins*

In 2010 I felt sick and I was rushed to the hospital with a continuous cough which would not go away. This cough persisted for more than 6

months, non-stop. The doctor said that my blood was too thick. I received a course of treatment but there was no change in my condition. I went for a second opinion to another doctor who diagnosed that because I had a lung infection he recommended that that lung be removed and by this time I was having a lot of pain in my left lung. I then saw several doctors afterwards but there was neither a change in my condition nor could the doctors pin-point what was really wrong with me. I had several CT scans which still could not determine what was wrong with me. I even went for treatment to South Africa but without success.

One day I happened to go to Braeside Parish where I met my Aunt Kathy who said that she had heard I was not well. She then mentioned a friend called Robert whom we could ask to take us to John Bradburne's grave in Chishawasha where they would pray for me. It was the first time hearing about John Bradburne and through his intercession many miracles had been performed. By this time I was ready to try anything and felt that I had nothing to lose. So Robert, Aunty Kathy, my wife, my son and myself made the trip. We prayed by John's grave and I asked for healing through his intercession.

When we returned home that day I felt different somehow - still in pain but somewhat slightly relieved.

Then Robert suggested that we travel to Mutemwa where John worked among lepers for 10 years. He stressed that this was a holy place where a lot of miracles took place.

On arrival at Mutemwa we went into John's "tin hut" where he lived and prayed; said short prayers and climbed the mountain whilst saying "the Stations of the Cross".

When we climbed down the mountain Robert then took us to visit the lepers who were being taken care of by John. What I saw was hard to believe; I did not know that such people existed - leprosy had claimed quite a few of their limbs e.g. feet, legs, hands and arms. I was so touched by this sight that I prayed with great faith for healing through John's intercession, asking for his help and promising that should I be healed I would try to help the lepers in any way I possibly could. From that moment I felt a great change in my health.

The doctors were able to diagnose my illness and with the help of the appropriate medication as well as continued prayer for John's help I started feeling better.

One night my wife dreamt that John was speaking to her, telling her that he would heal me and my health has improved so much for the better; even the doctors are happy with my progress.

Ever since I try to keep my promise of helping the lepers and the people of Mutemwa by trying to make their lives as comfortable as I possibly can.

My family and I would definitely testify that this was indeed a miracle by John Bradburne and trust that it will help to get him canonised.

*Jason Williams*

## MUTEMWA UNDER FRANCISCANS

Mutemwa is now under the auspices of the Franciscans. A permanent priest resides there now and with the help of donors the place continues to do well with a number of projects having been completed which JBMS has initiated.

Solar lighting has been introduced to the Centre so the demand on electricity is far less and cuts down the costs there. The animal husbandry continues to develop and thus Mutemwa is gradually becoming more self sufficient in food. The new poultry buildings have seen a growth area in poultry

production and efficiency which also enhances income from the sale of eggs to markets both local and further afield.

We embark on a new irrigation project to develop a larger area for crop and vegetable production. Water engineers are in the process of developing the site and residents are employed in working the fields around them.

Under the Manager Margaret Chigwanda life at Mutemwa is kept on an even keel, and the residents seem very content in their surroundings. Visitors

and pilgrims are encouraged to bring donations of whatever they can, special treats such as sweets are always welcomed.

We continue to send out a monthly donation to help the Centre survive, but it is never enough, and our funds have seen a vast drop in the last few years due to the worldwide recession.

Despite this we are so thankful to have the loyal support of our regular members who continue to support our work, and we do thank you all so much for this kindness.



5000L water tank with solar pump installation

Stand for the 2000L tank being built



Solar panels on the poultry House