

# JBMS NEWSLETTER

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## The Hunger, The Quest and The Fulfilment at Mutemwa

As I sat at the top of Mount Chigona, I couldn't help my tears rolling down my cheeks like the River Euphrates flowing down with blessings from Yahweh. I couldn't stop my mind wandering into the deep of a mystery unfolding, my heart sinking into this phenomena of it's own kind. Yes miracles do happen even today. Here my dear brothers and sisters a miracle is happening, a mystery is unfolding, a phenomena is showing itself in our own time and in my presence. It is amazing.

From the mountain top overlooking the compound of the ones outcasted, I tried to imagine how it looked and felt like to John Bradburne in his day and time. I wished if John could come back today and see what became of this once forsakened hell that is now a desired paradise. Yes as I sat on this mountain top I began to listen to people praying freely and spontaneously, I came up with this conclusion, people are hungry, angry and thirsty. It's a thirst for God, a quest for a special blessing, and a hunger for a religious experience. Yes people have tears, fears and

problems. if the song sung by the people could be summed up and written it will have the refrain, "LORD COME TO OUR AID" Marriages are not working, families are not functioning, people are sick (walking dead) the economy is a recipe for disaster, death is the order of the day in every family, unemployment is higher than inflation. With all these soul destroying problems, the cry for divine intervention gets even louder and no wonder we are seeing the rise of the Mutemwa spirituality and the escalation for this untold quest through the search for God up on the mountain.

Apart from this thirst for divine intervention, there is a second pulling factor to this place. The desire for free spontaneous and uninstitutionalised prayer. It should be noted that formal religion, be it main-line or African independent religion is very organised, institutionalised and systematic. It is more about the group not the individual, it is all about how we do it, you either conform, break or pretend. Mutemwa thus gives people this other option of free worship, non

liturgical, prayer without rubrics. As I sat up on the mountain, I saw people crying for more than an hour, singing unstopably and praying freely like a bird, and I liked it. I remember this particular group that asked me to celebrate a special mass for them, but they also asked for a special permission to have an extended time for intercessions. I asked them why, and their answer said it all, "In our parishes there is no time to accommodate our petitions and so we



Fr Naison Manjohva OFM,  
priest in charge at Mutemwa

came this far looking for that opportunity.” So we had an hour of intercessions and it was amazing, people have so much they wanted to say to God. If I was to measure the litres of tears that flowed that day as people tried to empty their measures full of problems and joys. Mutemwa is the place that the Lord has made for such fulfillment.

In John Bradburne's tin hut, there is a box for petitions to God through this servant of God. As the resident Priest it's my responsibility to burn them on behalf of God's people. I thought I could read them one by one but I realized that it was not possible for two reasons. First, the level and intensity of the crises expressed in these letters to God were just too deep for me, I could drop dead of stress, depression or even shock in the degree of honesty written before God. Secondly, just the number of the letters and the size makes

it practically impossible. Thus I decided just to burn them in a ritual concluding mass. I looked at the flame and the eyes of the people around and it touched my heart, an obligation, a sacrifice of the people of God to God in faith. It's so touching as the flame goes up, people singing come Holy Spirit come, children chasing some stray papers all eyes on the fire. I really felt fulfilled and sanctified. It is one such event that is very small yet very significant and fulfilling.

The first weekend of September is our biggest day here. To be honest, it's no longer our biggest day but the biggest day of the Church and Christianity in this part of the world. Yes this was such a big event that it deserves a separate article in the next newsletter, but I was touched by the diversity of the participants. People from all walks of life, the very poor, the middle class and the very rich, the very pious and the unpious, the very

young and the very old, it was amazing. The question is why? There is something unfolding here, I may not be able to name or pin it down but there is something more than I can see or say. More than 6 thousand people invaded this small remote place for what? Time will tell. What is more amazing is that, we don't write invitation letters, we do not send radio or TV adverts or posters, yet thousands throng the place on the day. How come?

If my guess is right, someone is doing the campaign. But who is that secret admirer? It must be the Holy Spirit Himself.

This can only be the work of God revealing something for the salvation of his people. God is not writing a new story but simply a new page of the same story using a different language but saying the same story. What is this story. Answering the cry of His people.

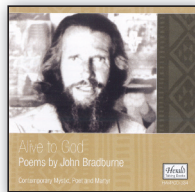
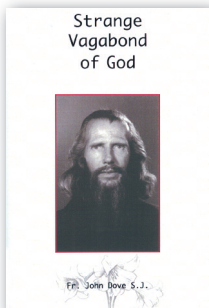
*Article by Fr Naision Manjohwa OFM*

## SPECIAL OFFER UNTIL END OF DECEMBER 2014

### Strange Vagabond of God.

Memoir of John Bradburne  
by Fr John Dove SJ.

**£9.50** 289 pages  
plus £3.00 postage



### Alive to God

Poems & chants by  
John Bradburne

**£7.00 CD**  
plus £3.00 postage

## Gift Aid

We very much appreciate the fact that many of our friends have already signed Gift Aid forms, but, if you have not, and you are a UK taxpayer, please do consider doing so. Gift Aid enables us to reclaim from HMRC the income tax that a donor has paid on their donation. It involves no additional cost whatsoever to the donor, and increases the value of your donation to the charity by 25%. A form can be downloaded from the charity website on [www.johnbradburne.com](http://www.johnbradburne.com), or contact the charity by phone or email.

## Commemoration of the Thirty-fifth Anniversary of John Bradburne's Death Mutemwa, nr. Mutoko, Zimbabwe 6th – 7th September, 2014

John Bradburne of Mutemwa was found shot by the side of the road to the north of Mutoko on Wednesday, 5th September, 1979. Each year the communities at Mutemwa are joined by those who make the journey from across Zimbabwe and beyond to commemorate his death.

The photographs that follow were taken by Samson Phiri late on the afternoon of Saturday, 6th September, 2014, both atop Chigona Hill and at John Bradburne's shrine, just outside Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement.



The focus of a twelve-hour night long vigil of prayer and devotion is Midnight Mass atop Chigona Hill. Proceedings conclude with a Mass of Thanksgiving at John Bradburne's shrine at dawn on Sunday. Participants in the commemoration, who numbered in the thousands, seemed for the most part to be Catholic and were with one exception black African. It should be mentioned here for the record that when the author last attended Midnight Mass atop Chigona Hill, in celebration of the New Year, white-robed members of the 'independent' churches (known in Malawi as the Church of Samson) were a substantial presence. They did not attend on this occasion. The cause for John Bradburne's



canonization is well advanced and has attracted the attention of Pope Francis. It will be abundantly clear from this brief photographic record that John Bradburne is already regarded as a saint by the faithful who make the pilgrimage to Mutemwa. It has been a great privilege to witness his cult in the making and it would be work of real interest to return with more leisure and a little Shona to attempt the study of how it has developed. People begin to gather at John Bradburne's shrine, just outside Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement.



The shrine comprises the three huts that John Bradburne built when he was compelled to resign as Warden. A temporary pavilion has been constructed to offer shelter to the clergy. The photograph is taken on Chigona Hill, which stands over Mutemwa.

Steps mark the beginning of the ascent to the summit of Chigona Hill.



A family and a group of friends are photographed on the ascent to the summit.





The path is marked with the Stations of the Cross, at which people stop for prayer and devotion.

People kneel in prayer before the cross that stands on the summit overlooking Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement.



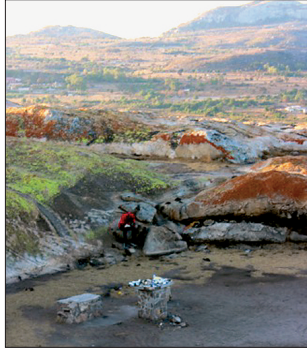
The final Station of the Cross is placed at the edge of the flat space on the summit to which John Bradburne would climb daily in order to pray.



A church group walks around the prayer circle in devotion.



An altar is placed to one side of the prayer circle. It is here that Midnight Mass will be celebrated.



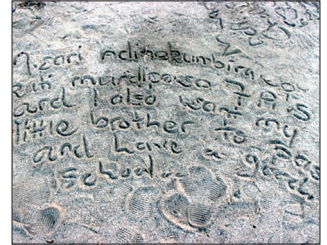
The altar is covered with intercessions to John Bradburne. A similar practice is to be observed at John Bradburne's grave at Chishawasha Mission, just outside Harare.



Many hundreds of intercessions are also scratched into the dust of the prayer circle.



Dust from the prayer circle is collected by the faithful to be taken home. It is common at all times of year to find the faithful encamped around about the prayer circle.



As night falls vehicles continue to bring people to John Bradburne's shrine.



*This article was written by Richard Hewitt who is a lecturer at Kamuzu Academy, Malawi. He has been a follower and member of JBMS for a few years, during his work in Oxford and then in Malawi.*

## YOUR LETTERS

Long time since we were in correspondence. I still keep John in my daily prayers.

This year I have repeated my request for Holy Mass to be offered for John's Cause at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne, on his anniversary, but with it being on the same date as St Theresa of Calcutta, the offering is still on the "reserve list."

It might interest you to learn that I opened the drawer of my bureau on Friday, September 4 and the drawer for some reason fell into bits. There lying on the floor on the top of the contents was the disc that I copied from E.W.T.N.'s programme showing John's home in Africa. I had not seen the plastic for years and I honestly thought that I had lost it. With the date being what it was, it made me pull myself together and take some action. I returned to John's birthplace in Skirwith, Cumbria on Sunday, September 6th to offer a prayer for him in the graveyard surrounding the church where the remains of two members of his family are buried. The flower casks were empty. Having two Palm Sunday crosses in my car, I took them and put them in each of the vases, whilst I prayed. I thought this to be a gift to/from John to his relations.

On leaving the grounds I looked up into the sky. Three huge birds flew high overhead, turned and flew off. They seemed to have found their destination.

Tuesday, September 8th was the day when I visited my friend Father Malcolm Cairns at his church, The Sacred Heart and St Cuthbert at Amble in

Northumberland. I repeated the incident to him, as like me, he has had a visit of bees after visiting and praying at Skirwith, a number of years ago. He listened to my report with very great interest. Being a "bird watcher," he was able to supply me with profiles of birds for identification of the three that I had seen. Believe it or not they were "Golden Eagles."

I know that can be described as coincidental, but to me their majesty and number, three seem too close to John's personal life.

After his own experience with bees, Father Malcolm has had his own interest rejuvenated and has asked me to request from you a small supply of leaflets etc. that he can distribute among his parishioners and he can offer a Mass and prayers for John's Cause. With this evidence, the people of his parish will have material information and prayer cards to which they can regularly refer.

In anticipation of my request for the priest, may I thank you and please continue your excellent actions for John's Cause.

**Bob Errington.- Gateshead**

I am pleased to be able to inform you that John Randal Bradburne 'visited' me here in Durban, South Africa. I mean his spirit. I was in my parish church in my usual place at the back when this tall man with a red band on his head came to visit. He went over to the stain glass window and then looked at me directly. I felt I needed a walk so went to a garden nearby and he was with me there. He then stayed for Mass by my side in the bench

and afterwards came back to my place and my prayer room, where he knelt down and seemed to be encouraging me to pray too. Then he left me. I had heard before about him visiting a girl who went missing... he had stayed with her keeping her company, praying with her and helping her not to get stressed.

I am sorry I didn't write earlier. I have savoured his visit ever since. I have been going through a stressful period and even thought my life was at risk. I am from Zimbabwe - Bulawayo and my brother still lives there. May this great saintly man continue to work miracles on earth while in Heaven. May God be glorified by his life.

**Rosemary Sullivan- South Africa**

I wanted to tell you about some prayers that have been answered after asking for John's intervention.

First, my brother John, who went missing some time back, was assessed by the authorities and found to be no longer suitable for his care home, which is supposed to allow residents to come and go. They assessed his road navigating skills and to our horror they were found to be practically nil - it's a wonder he wasn't run over in the last couple of years. They showed him round one care home, with 24-hour support, but he didn't like it and it sounded as if there would be problems with him accepting a move; we feared they might eventually move him miles away from us, making it very difficult to visit. They showed him another home run by the same organisation, and he said he would be moving in very

shortly. He likes it very much and its 'grounds' (a biggish garden really) but he seems delighted with it. This was something of a miracle in view of his reluctance to try anything new. I have contacted the local church and they have sent a member of the Legion of Mary to visit my brother. I have been able to go and see him once, my daughter took me with three of our grandchildren and John and the other residents were delighted to see three little children. My sister, who lives further away, has seen him twice.

Also in answer to prayer, a member of our family has decided to give up alcohol, something he never did up until now because he was convinced he could 'handle it'. Also my husband had an all-clear on his post-op scan for prostate cancer, so another cause to be thankful.

**A. Farmer**

Thank God for (blessed) John Bradburne. Since praying to John for many years now, I have found him to be a wonderful friend and support in everyday problems. I have no doubt that he will be listed

among our future known Saints.

If you could send a few prayer cards and leaflets as I like to leave them in churches and give out to friends. I always read the newsletter with interest.

**E. Thomaides, Middlesex**

I picked up a booklet on John Bradburne in Leeds Cathedral whilst on holiday. I am not a religious person but found his life story a tribute to humanity. One can't fail to be moved by his actions in helping his fellow men. An inspiring person.

**Chris Marshall, Essex**

## **John Bradburne entry for Guinness Book of Records**

*After a period of negotiation - not least about how to define poetry - Professor David Crystal has liaised with the Guinness World Records and they have agreed to include John Bradburne as the most prolific poet in the English language. It is listed below as follows:*

### **Most prolific poet**

Measured in terms of lines of poetry alone, John Bradburne (UK, 1921–1979) is the most prolific poet in the English language. Comprising a total of 169,925 individual lines, Bradburne's output almost doubles that of William Shakespeare, whose Oxford Complete Works includes 87,668 lines of poetry.

#### **Further information:**

For the purposes of this record, each line of poetry must be linguistically meaningful and computer-generated poetry is excluded. The output of the following prolific poets provides useful context (totals rounded to the nearest thousand): Wordsworth: 54,000 lines; Chaucer: 45,000 lines; Milton: 20,000 lines.

Bradburne completed about 6,000 poems in total, mostly written during the period 1968–79 and covering a wide range of spiritual, natural, elegiac and narrative subject matter. As he wrote his domestic letters largely in verse, new poems from the recipients are still occasionally found.

Bradburne was born in Skirwith, Cumbria, UK, the son of an Anglican clergyman. He fought in World War II and later became a Roman Catholic, travelling widely in Europe and the Middle East. He worked to protect leprosy patients at Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement in Zimbabwe, but was shot during the Zimbabwean civil war after being kidnapped and interrogated by guerillas. Pilgrims now visit Mutemwa in recognition of Bradburne's life and work, and there is a call for him to be recognized as a saint.



## RESIDENTS' PROFILES

### Finola Kamoko



Finola was admitted to Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre in January 2014. Finola and her husband Petulo were staying with a non relative Judith Chikandira who lives in Mudzi district. Due to the couple being elderly she could not look after them anymore and referred them to Social Welfare who then referred them to Mutemwa.

Born on 29.11.1930, Finola's original home town was in Maputo in Mozambique. She came to Zimbabwe in her childhood. She came accompanied by her distant cousin's sister Arimera. This was because she was neglected and uncared for when both her parents died. When they arrived in Zimbabwe they stayed working on farms in Norton, and later Arimera died and was buried on the farm. After her death, life became increasingly hard and difficult for Finola so she decided to enter into marriage at an early age to Petulo. They stayed together happily. Due to

old age, they decided to go to rural areas to live since they were no longer able to do hard working jobs on farms. They went to Mudzi and found Judith Chikandira who suggested staying with them at her homestead. They stayed for many years before going to Mutemwa.

Finola is blind, and she has a most pleasant character, very much liked by all the residents.

### Petulo Kamoko



Petulo is the fourth out of nine siblings. He is partially blind. He came to Zimbabwe from Zambia in 1940 seeking employment. In 1941 he was employed by the municipality of Harare digging electricity trenches. In 1960 he took his leave going back to Zambia for a short period and came back again. He got a job at Karerina Farm in Norton, and it was there that he met and married Finola. They have stayed happily married and enjoy being cared for at Mutemwa.

### Moses Chaitika



Moses is an epileptic and destitute resident who was staying with an abusive father and step mother. He was admitted to Mutemwa in 2008, referred there by Fr David Harold - Barry SJ, who rescued him from a terrible situation, when he was rejected by his parents. He was born in 1973 and is married to Maria Nyadawa and they met in Mutemwa. They have one child.

He attended Ardborn Primary School from Grade 1 to 7. Then he went to Prince Edward Secondary School where he completed both O and A levels. He worked at Olivine and Tragers Industries. In 1995 he stopped work due to the problem of his epileptic and mental illness. Previously he suffered physical and sexual abuse from his father and step mother. When he tried to report his problems to his father that he was sexually abused by his step mother, the father did not believe him. He now has a good life living in the community at Mutemwa.

## MUTEMWA UNDER FRANCISCANS

The Franciscans have taken over the administration of Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre but Margaret Chigwanda will be continuing her work at the Centre to help combine both the Shrine and the Settlement into one entity, working with the Franciscans to develop the place as a whole entity.

We would like to thank Marge as we call her, for her remarkable and dedicated work over many years and for her forthcoming support to help bring about the changes needed to make it a fully integrated establishment.

Her unstinting support for the residents and the workers through all the ups and downs has been remarkable and

courageous. Always dignified and with her patient and gentle demeanour, she has lifted the spirits of those around her through the most difficult of times.

She will help with the Franciscan management team to develop the spiritual and practical side of life at Mutemwa in the spirit of John Bradburne and St Francis himself.

This does not mean that our JBMS fundraising can slow down, far from it! We rely heavily on the support of benefactors to keep a monthly donation of £2,000 going direct to Mutemwa to support the running of the place, buying food and medicines, and particularly payment of staff.

We hope we may also be able to continue to support projects such as solar, and resourcing a more reliable and clean water supply for the community. These are basic needs but they need addressing, as well as the general upkeep of the place.

We thank all our JBMS friends for their kindness in giving. Please do not stop! Whatever you can give is very much appreciated.

*Donations gratefully received:  
Online via PayPal at  
[www.johnbradburne.com](http://www.johnbradburne.com)  
Cheques by post to  
**JBMS, PO Box 32,  
Leominster, Herefordshire  
HR6 0YB***

## JOHN BRADBURNE LEAFLETS

Please ask us for copies if you are able to use them to help make known the message of John Bradburne and our work at Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre, by giving them to friends, relatives or any others who may be interested. Do consider asking your parish priest if he is agreeable to some leaflets being left at the back of the church.

Call 01568 760632 or send an email to [info@johnbradburne.com](mailto:info@johnbradburne.com)

## Remember the John Bradburne Memorial Society in your Will

A legacy for JBMS is a very generous way to help support our work for the continuing benefit of Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre, and for the mission of making John Bradburne's life known in order to establish a greater groundswell of support for his Cause for Beatification. The form of Bequest to the John Bradburne Memorial Society may be incorporated in your Will, signed and witnessed:

### Form of Bequest to the John Bradburne Memorial Society

I ..... give the sum of £.....

free of duty to the charitable organisation called the John Bradburne Memorial Society, PO Box 32, Leominster, HR6 0YB (charity registration no. 1046483), to be applied for its general charitable purposes, and I declare that the receipt of the Chairman or other authorised officer for the time being of such Organisation shall be a full and sufficient discharge for my Executor.