

JBMS NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER 2015

FR JOHN DOVE MEMORIAL SERVICE

A group of 50 people travelled to Mutemwa on 25 October 2014, to honour Fr Dove who was so passionate about this special place. People from various parishes paid their final tribute (according to Zimbabwean culture) by attending a memorial service.

We honoured John Bradburne by visiting the place where he was actually shot dead at Mudzonga. Prayers were said and a talk was given.



We proceeded to Mutemwa and climbed Mount Chigona, praying the Stations of the Cross, honouring Fr John Dove for the work he had done marking them on the rockface and

erecting the large cross on top of the mountain.

We then went for Mass in the rondavel Chapel with some seated outside since it has only a seating capacity of 50 people. Fr Konrad Landsberg SJ, our spiritual Director, was the main celebrant. He was assisted by Fr Galvin, a Carmelite. Almost all the lepers and staff at Mutemwa came for Mass. It was so beautiful to see all those lepers in the Chapel honouring Fr John Dove.

We had lunch after Mass. Again we had an opportunity to sit with the lepers and shared stories. Mai Coletta then gave a talk about her recollections.



She was followed by the Administrator, Marge Chigwanda who had much to say. She knew Fr John Dove before she got married, when he used to visit Harare Hospital to talk to nurses. Grant Wakfer, a resident at Mutemwa, also gave a talk about his experiences with Fr John Dove and how he had helped him in his life. Leo Masengura, from Silveira House, gave a talk about his experiences as he used to drive him to Mutemwa almost every month. He also used to move around with Fr Dove giving Holy Communion to people in and around Kamambe.

The talks were followed by a quiz with prizes being given.

The questions asked were all to do with Fr John, his work at Silveira House, at Mutemwa and in general. Those who won the prizes were so happy.

We ended the day's programme by planting trees at the Grotto behind the Chapel, to honour this much loved priest.

May his soul rest in peace.



Fr John Dove SJ was a close friend of John Bradburne and author of his memoir 'Strange Vagabond of God' (available from the JBMS). They met in India during the Second World War. It was Fr Dove's idea to set up a charity in the UK, and JBMS was born in 1995 in order to promote John Bradburne's remarkable life and writing, and help support the continuing work at Mutemwa Care Village in Zimbabwe where Bradburne dedicated the last ten years of his life. Mutemwa is also a medical facility and pilgrimage centre.

This article was written by Robert Kawadza who also provided the photographs.

“John Bradburne at Westminster Cathedral” by Didier Rance

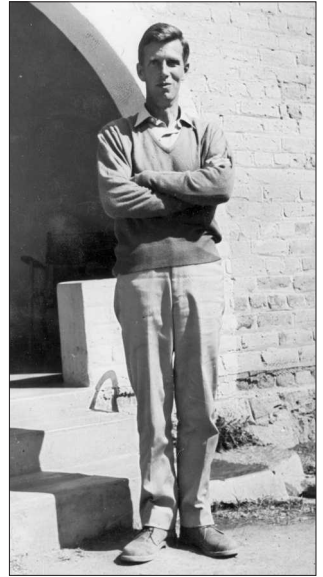
John Bradburne Vagabond of God, hermit, mystic, poet, mentor to Mutemwa lepers who gave his life for them... and sometime “sub-sub-sacristan” at Westminster Cathedral

In September 1956, after having been a street musician in London then as a gofer in St Mary's Abbott's Hospital, John Bradburne (1921-1979) found a job as a salesman at Burns and Oates bookshop, just opposite Westminster Cathedral, where he attended Mass each morning before the shop opened. He would have preferred to spend his days in his “favorite Temple”, as he writes to his mother and, in January 1957, he succeeded in securing a post of fifth assistant sacristan at the Cathedral. Let John the poet tell us his joy:

There Christ Mine Host
Gave to me sub-sub-sacristan for post.
A looming gloaming of the Holy Ghost,
A roaming to Byzantium in brick,
A Campanile carolling Mine Host,
A glory to the gory Catholic
Martyrs... and a high tribute to the thick,
Thicker than water, Precious Blood of One
Who is The Word Incarnate, Mary's Son.

He had already been a sacristan five years before in Palma, Campania in Italy, where he lived in the church organ loft, but his job was a lot more demanding in London : he had to open the gates, to prepare for day services, to lay out the vestments, to serve the Mass, and to keep the sacristy clean. His first few weeks of work were hectic, because the Cathedral was preparing for the installation of the new archbishop, William Godfrey, under the leadership of Mgr Wheeler

and Mgr Worlock, Secretary of the new Primate of England and his predecessor. The ceremony took place on February 11th and was broadcast live on BBC Television, a first for a Catholic celebration. Then the routine of the sacristans was made less boring for his colleagues by John's blunders! John scrupulously performed his duties and he was, according to Sam Verrall, the then chief sacristan, "one of the most lovable men I ever knew... a most conscientious worker." But he was the same scatterbrain he had always been, and Edward Moberly, the first assistant sacristan often had to follow him around in order to check the things he may have forgotten, or to take him away from the pews where he was often lost in his prayers when he was supposed to serve a Mass (in fact John prayed whenever possible). The other members of the Cathedral staff were always a little nervous when he was near the altar. What had he forgotten? What error or mistake could he make? But they adopted him, they appreciated him, so "charming, maddeningly charitable and forgiving" (Edward Moberly). And they soon discovered that such a surprisingly ascetic young man was able to drink as much as they did at the nearby pub – good old ale, no chemical fermentation beer, thank you.



John became friends with several of the Cathedral priests, including Fr Harold Winstone, keen on liturgy, and Fr Michael Hollings, another eccentric who always left his door open to anyone, Duke of Norfolk or prostitutes, vagabonds or honorable members of the upper-classes. John called him a "Giant brain, Master of Love's art, God's heart's his gain". John sometimes served many masses on the same morning, and had to swallow what remained in the cruets after the liturgy – with the result that sometimes he finished the work rather tipsy. But let him tell the story :

A roving sacristan employed
In Westminster Cathedral
Small perquisites at first enjoyed
Till thirst became less frugal:
Scant residue in cruets he
Would drink from, say, three masses
But when it came to seventy
Bugled his soul *Alases*.

Troubled about this, he explained the problem in confession to Fr Michael Hollings, but the holy priest told him : "The ox that treads the corn should not be muzzled", and gave him absolution!

His service and his spare time devotions did not prevent John from looking around at people coming in and out the Cathedral. He wrote to his mother: " How I love that place with its scribes and Pharisees (not hypocrites however) and cranks and wise men, and holy women and scrupulous crackpots, and publicans and sinners and saints. You will not find such a thoroughgoing motley in your quiet see of Canterbury, one part of the Stormy Sea of Peter, over which the Lord loves to breathe a great calm whenever the issue seems hopeless".

John moved several times during this year of 1957. He lived first in Tachbrook Street, close to the Cathedral, where his room was so small that one could not stand erect in it. A story was forged from that situation, which was to be told for some time amongst Cathedral staff, and Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue mentioned it years later : a fifth sacristan was supposed to have dwelled in a small cubby-hole no bigger than a broom closet ! In fact, there was a bed and a table in the small room. John was even able to welcome Patrick Hardwicke, his old friend from Devon when he arrived in London (Patrick slept in his sleeping bag on the floor). On the wall John had

pinned a piece of paper with only three letters written on it : G O D... Visitors saw that he lived in such an ascetic fashion, eating only bread and Heinz baked beans. Later, John moved to a larger dwelling where he shared lodgings with Patrick Hardwicke, then moved again when Patrick left London.

As John often prayed at his bench, he was quick to notice that the new Archbishop prayed just as often at his. And Mgr Godfrey was also quick to notice the pious fifth sacristan. One day, when he addressed him on some detail, John, instead of a short answer as it should have been, began a peer-to-peer discussion. Unlike Mgr Wheeler, the Archbishop didn't take offense. And, although William Godfrey who was known for being slow to make judgments about people and things (but also for never changing his mind once set), he soon confided in this fifth assistant sacristan. John had found a new spiritual father, and he would often discuss with him about his search for God, his love of the Virgin Mary, his desire for solitude or on medieval mysticism.

John was still playing the recorder, and during the hot and rainy summer of 1957, he returned to the London streets from time to time to play but just for pleasure, but accepting coins when they were given to him, and putting them straight in to the Society of St Vincent de Paul box when returning to the Cathedral. One day he played on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral (just for his own pleasure. The previous year he had played there in order to raise funds for St Paul's repairs, a precursor gesture of ecumenical importance), but a Catholic passerby recognized him and hurried back to tell the story to Mgr Wheeler, who was afraid of a potential scandal, and we may suppose, angry too. Poor John had to give an explanation : No, he was not begging. Yes, he was playing, playing Marian hymns, only Marian hymns, and the money given to him had already be given for the poor.

During his free time, John loved just to walk along the London streets and in the parks. One day, he went in to a Museum and there... let him tell us the rest of the story :



I saw a brainy head inside a glass
Jar and it jars upon me even now..
Perhaps a pauper from the bottom class
Carried that head as high as he knew how
And so perhaps it was not such a brain
As Bertrand-Russell had, but just a plain.
I begged a Priest to pray for all the folk
Whose bygone brains stand pickled on the benches
And neither did he think it was a joke
But took me seriously...¹

On August 24th, Mgr Ronald Knox, the famous convert, theologian and translator of the Bible, had his funeral Mass which was celebrated in the Cathedral. John spent the night locked in the Cathedral near the coffin, and piped *Greensleeves* and improvisations for the deceased priest. A few days later, Archbishop Godfrey, with whom John had spiritual discussions now almost every day, approached him with an offer : he was looking for a caretaker at Hare Street House, the country residence of the Westminster Archbishops, bequeathed to them by Robert Hugh Benson. John was invited



to live there as a hermit, except for the times when the Archbishop visited the house for some rest. John accepted gladly. He would carry on working at the Cathedral until mid-January 1958, then he would become the jealous caretaker of Hare Street House, but that is another story ...²

¹ Maybe this episode took place at the Science Museum, two miles from Westminster Cathedral, where half of the famous scientist, Charles Babbage's brain was on display, the other half being preserved at the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons.

² An exhibition on John's life was displayed at Westminster Cathedral in 2009, for the 30th anniversary of John's death on September 5th 1979.

Thank You to Benefactors, Friends and Trustees

A big thank you to all our benefactors and friends of JBMS. It is very much appreciated when we hear from you either by email, letter or telephone. Without your prayerful and continuing financial support we can do nothing.

As there is ever increasing pressure to find funding, we are so grateful to those loyal friends who continue to help keep the work going, many of whom have supported JBMS over many years.

You have been so kind in filling in the Gift Aid forms in order to reclaim tax back from the Government, it has made a huge difference to us.

We also wish to thank our Trustees who ensure the smooth running of the charity under the regulation and compliance of the Charity Commission.

YOUR LETTERS

Dear Friends of John Bradburne, Recently I was at weekday Mass when a friend and parishioner approached me and said how moved she was after reading the life of John Bradburne booklet which she had picked up from the back of church where I had left them. She gave me a twenty pound note to pass on to you in support of your charity. She went on to repeat how wonderful she had found his life story.

I pray that John is very soon to bring the order of saints.

Bernadette Daly

Please accept enclosed donation in thanksgiving for prayers answered again through John's intercession.

I prayed to John for my daughter Janet and her husband Ian to be able to sell their house in Surrey, and for them to find a new home. They have now found a house near Knutsford to buy. They managed to rent a house in the meantime, and their house sale was completed two weeks ago. As always John has helped again. Also, John heard my prayers for two of my grandsons who have both found work. Yet again John has helped me and I am so grateful.

Margaret Murray

As a journalist with the then Rhodesia Herald I and a photographer met John Bradburne at Mutemwa and wrote a story about him. To my great regret I never kept a copy of the story or photographs. The year must have been between 1969 and 1971. He was living in a little hut within the leper colony and I never forget he had a pump organ which he played for us, which seemed so incongruous at

the time. He was so proud of his leper colony friends and took great delight in showing us around the neat compound and introducing us by name to the residents. I never forget each hut had a neat garden, including vegetables. At the time I marvelled at Bradburne's obvious love for the patients. And my abiding memory of him was this huge aura of peace and serenity which surrounded him like a cocoon. If only I had known then that I was in the presence of a saint!

Geoff Bird

Thank you for the newsletter.

I love to read of the things that John has done for people.

We have all been so blessed by him, but must never take him for granted. A small donation for his continuing work herewith.

W.G Campbell-Guion

Our daughter produced twins last year and about a week after birth one of them started to have breathing problems. Our family prayed to John Bradburne for his intercession to heal the baby, and within a very short time the little boy was getting better and able to leave the baby unit in the hospital. We were all so relieved and would like to tell others, do please ask John in all your needs, he really does work, and you may get a sign of a bee to give you confidence that he is with you!

Please may I have some more prayer cards to pass around to my friends.

Eleanor Bush

Please may I leave a message to ask in faith that people call on John Bradburne for his intercession from Heaven in any matter whatsoever. I have been doing this for very many years since his death and he has never

once let me down. The things I have asked help with have been varied, for example in helping find a parking space, to healing for members of my family. My family also call on John when they need help. After all this is what the saints are for, to help us when we need support on this earth. I wish that more people would believe that Heaven is so close to us, and we can be reassured that help is at hand.

Praised be Jesus for John Bradburne's example in courageously living in complete trust in God, and wanting only through the Holy Spirit to do His will.

Suzanna Birtram

Please would you send more free booklets for my parish. They are going like hotcakes and I think this is because they find John's story such an inspiring one. These days everything seems to be about celebrity and fashion and very transient trends, and material gain. John counteracts that and gives us something really worth thinking about. How to live simply and honestly, and caring for those around us and trying to do good for others however useless we may feel ourselves to be! John was openhearted enough to respond to the call of the Spirit within him, and by giving so much of himself he lead such an exemplary life. One can identify closely to him because he had such a very warm human disposition. He wasn't afraid to show his emotions.

John encourages us to try to do the same, however difficult in this modern life full of so much distraction and superficiality.

Ed Baines

John Bradburne - a reminiscence by Dr. Wayne Perry

It was 1970 and I was finding my feet at Harare Hospital when my new friend Alec Israel cajoled me into visiting JB. Fresh from England at 25 a leper colony was as far from my imagination as a visit to the Pole. I spoke to colleagues "O yes Mtemwa near Mtoko, the health resort of Rhodesia". Of course what that meant in the sardonic language of doctors was that the place was rife with typhoid and malaria, indeed later one could almost differentiate them from the expression on the patient's face. As doctors we never bothered to take the anti-malarial tablets and I don't think John did either. He would typically remark in a letter to me later;

"The basket-man who bears the pills. That never wear away our ills". As young doctors we would harangue him over this with great glee. He loved an argument. We hit it off right away and after a few visits I saw that John having looked for somewhere at the end of the earth was now plagued by more visitors than if he stayed at Buckfast Abbey. He seemed ebullient and content, there was not an ounce of religiosity in him. Sometimes we would shin up a baobab tree and sing hymns much to the astonished delight of the lepers. Being agnostic at that time we had long discussions on evolution, God, and uncle Tom Cobley but though fun we resolved little. The Jacaranda trees were in bloom and the whole atmosphere had a Galilean ambience. The landscape of rock sand and scrub must be similar to the Holy Land and the appearance of an angel would have settled the argument.

The lepers and John were as one and he was totally immersed in their well-being. Of course materially they had nothing and neither did John. This also made a unique bond for I realised later that their only possession was their feeling and suffering i.e. their souls. John was there for them.

He was fun and very far from the conception of a devoted missionary that one imagined.

We continued our debates by letter later and he

would be advising me as here;

*"For subject of your deep research, why not
Take Breath-too long neglected and forgot;
Myself I'd back no heresy, and yet
I think our Breath is God whom we forget.
We call him Oxygen and Nitrogen
And one part other gases when we deem
We scientists know everything, and then
Into thin air goes Fact: so make your theme
Untheological as well you may
But prove that Breath is God, in some odd way."*

If I had succeeded, the Nobel Prize would not have been enough! Naturally I didn't follow his advice.

My acquaintance with John was short and we corresponded for a few years after I left Rhodesia. He gave advice on reading e.g. Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* which I never did read. His letters were a delight, always in verse, he knew no other way. I think he flattered his correspondents. Here's an example 3rd of June 1972;

*"Dear Wayne, your letter was profound;
With wisdom hidden to abound
By Love Divine you surely are
And Medicine prevents no bar
In you to heavensent respect
Even for bods you may dissect."*

I expect others received these unanswerable generousities. Still this is not the place to go into his poetry or psychology. I remember his kindness and smiling countenance. Though we are torn between the bleakness of 'King Lear' and the reanimation of the statue in 'The Winters Tale', he knew his 'Swan of Avon' backwards. The poetic drama continues in the minds of our great poets now, and the nightmare of the 20th century has only sharpened our cosmological search. John by his poetry, his life and death has made a unique contribution. Those of us who knew him feel his lasting effect "for these are our metamorphoses, these are our myths."

www.waynemedicineandpoetry.co.uk

We are always delighted to hear from people who personally knew and remember John Bradburne, especially to have their memories in writing so that the material can be added to the archive towards John's Cause for Beatification.

Facts about Leprosy

JBMS is often asked about leprosy, so we have set down a few facts about the disease. This is an abridged piece from the 2015 Annual Review of the St. Francis Leprosy Guild.

Leprosy (also known as Hansen's Disease) is a chronic disease caused by a slow multiplying bacillus: *Mycobacterium leprae*.

The bacillus multiplies slowly and the incubation period of the disease is about 5 years. Symptoms can take as long as 20 years to appear.

The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes. There is no need to isolate patients because contact and living with

those affected only very rarely results in transference with development of the disease. Leprosy is not hereditary.

Leprosy is curable. Early diagnosis and treatment with multi-drug therapy (MDT), available free from the World Health Organisation, remain key in eliminating the disease as a public health concern.

Although not highly infectious, it is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases. The first sign is a discoloured insensitive patch on the skin. Untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes. Due to loss of feeling in the affected

areas, there is a diminished awareness of harm from trauma or heat. Without treatment, this can lead to permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes.

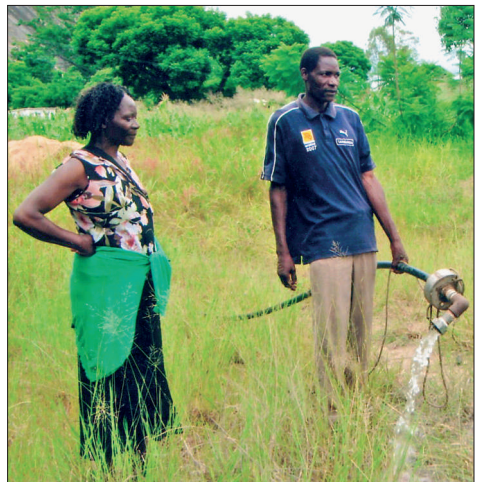
At present it is hard to say that it will be eradicated due to the persistence of poverty, poor hygiene and overcrowding in large areas of the world. Long delays in diagnosis due to fear of rejection, shortage of health service staff familiar with leprosy, and a lack of a simple and reliable test to confirm diagnosis, are all impediments. JBMS provides support, treatment and rehabilitation to those living at Mutemwa with the disease, in a caring village community environment served by its medical centre.

Farewell to Marge Chigwanda

It is with great sadness we say farewell to Mrs Marge Chigwanda, the Manager at Mutemwa who has been our reliable and constant contact over many years. Marge is destined for pastures new and has accepted a post at the Mother of Peace Orphanage near to Mutemwa, where her talents and professionalism will be very much appreciated.

This news came as a shock to us because we found her dedication quite exceptional, and Mutemwa residents will miss her very much. She managed to create an atmosphere of confidence and trust for us, and it was a partnership we very much valued, where openness and transparency is essential in order for us to participate in the many projects which are undertaken at the Centre.

We do however look forward to a new future at Mutemwa as a Mission under the care of the Franciscans. In the next issue we hope to bring news of the continued work under their authority, and with JBMS continuing to support the Centre.



Marge overseeing new borehole project