



# JBMS NEWSLETTER

Published by The John Bradburne Memorial Society  
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UK Registered Charity No. 1046483

**SUMMER 2013**

## **BEHOLD OUR FEET ARE STANDING WITHIN YOUR GATES** **By Fr Nyson Manujova OFM**

**Archbishop Robert Ndlovu of Harare has granted permission for a Franciscan religious presence at Mutemwa. Three Franciscan Brothers have settled happily and have embraced the spirit of the place**

On the 28th December 2012, I found myself singing Psalm 122 I rejoice when I heard them saying "Let us go up to God's House ..." And now my feet are standing within your gates, O Mutemwa. Rarely does scripture come so true, real and fulfilled. This has been particularly true for me as I found myself at the Holy Place of Mutemwa. Indeed, I rejoice and was glad for it is here the Christians come, the people of God pray and praise the Lord's name.

When God finished his great work of creation, he saw that it was good, in other words Holy (Holiness implies, as God intended). Mutemwa was part of that creation which was acclaimed Holy (Good). Yet some places are made holier than others due to some phenomena; Mount Sinai for

example, was made Holier than others because God spoke to his people there; at Horeb, God said to Moses, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is Holy Ground." Holy place therefore reflects the place where John Bradburne met God and a covenant was made. Indeed, it is a place where thousands of Christians do meet God today and daily covenants are made. I met my God here and thus I pen down my experience.

What happens when an individual makes a covenant with God? He/she is changed and will never be the same again. At this place called Mutemwa John was changed and was never to be the same John again. There was a covenant of love and service, love that entails the washing of feet, yet not ordinary feet, but



**Left - Br Nicholas Bnhwa  
Centre - Br Mughelisi Siganda  
Right - Br Nyson Manujova**

the worst feet of all times, feet that were bleeding, bleeding yes but not ordinary blood, blood with leprosy infection. John Bradburne saw himself as the St. Francis of our time, a Christ in the twenty first century, a Saint of our time.

The story of leprosy in the 12th-13th century would not be complete without the mention of Francis of Assisi, likewise, the story of leprosy in the 21st century in Zimbabwe and the whole world without John Bradburne would be incomplete. He completes the story in a truly inspiring fashion, he leaves everything behind and entered a covenant with the abandoned, giving them dignity and purpose. That is why Fr. Dove called him 'The Strange Vagabond', a title that could be fitting for Francis of Assisi and with Christ. There was something strange and unusual about John Bradburne, strange enough to make an impact; strange enough to remind us of Christ; strange enough to make a difference.

It is the contact between John Bradburne and God in this place that has elevated it, or rather made people realise the holiness of this place; and now my feet are standing within your gates O Mutemwa. As a Priest stationed here, I am left humbled and challenged with the numbers that flock here, thousands and thousands come and I am left with questions; what will become of this place? Yet the answer is here, this place will become a meeting place. Meeting place yes, of people from all over the country, of all denominations, a real chance for real ecumenism. It is a meeting place between God and

Humanity. My experience here presents me with the vulnerability of humanity, the intensity of the need and hunger for a holy life in the Christian fold. It is amazing to realize that people drive from the furthest corner of the country searching for a religious experience; it shows how empty the people feel. It is breathtaking to see a man or a woman on crutches trying hard to climb Chigona mountain against all odds, elderly people and five year olds all looking for this glimpse of holiness, a real need of our time.

The most interesting thing about this place is not what it has done / achieved already but rather the vast potential buried in and around this place. Mutemwa is like a newly discovered goldfield. Given a chance who would not want to buy an un-extracted gold field? There are four places in Mutemwa for me that are breathtaking. First is the John Bradburne site; a visible reflection of Holiness and significance. It is as if John Bradburne still moves around the place, you can actually feel his presence somehow. It is not going to become a Holy place because it is already one. The second place for me is the little leper Chapel, possibly the Holiest place for me. This Chapel is my Mount Sinai! Celebrating Mass everyday looking into the eyes of the lepers, preaching everyday to the lepers, and most of all dropping

the body of Christ on to their tongues because they have no hands to receive, is more than fulfilling to me as a Priest. Mass in this great Chapel is like Mass in Heaven for me, it is a dream coming true; it is the holy of holies for me. My third place is the wood path. From the John Bradburne site to the foot of the mountain is a path - an avenue of jacaranda trees with the Chapel on one side and the Clinic on the other. You will not miss the beautiful sound from the Clinic of one crying or singing, not forgetting the unique smell of flowers that takes your heart into another world. My final place of priceless value is Mount Chigona. The most inspiring thing of the Mutemwa experience is that the way you will use to climb Chigona was used before by John Bradburne. Exploring the way on the mountain, you need to be conscious and feeling alive at what you are doing. You cannot sleep and move, every push you make climbing the hill reminds you of John Bradburne and your personal intention. Up the mountain is the giant cross dedicated to our brother John Bradburne. A deep pool of water cannot be missed as you reach the top near to where an Altar has been built to the KNOWN God, Yahweh.

This is Mutemwa for me, a goldfield ready to be mined for the betterment of our souls and for the glory of our great God. Amen.

## Didier Wins !

**You may recall that in the last Summer Newsletter we announced a new book on John Bradburne by Didier Rance. Now read on...**

I'm glad to inform you that John's biography in French, on John Bradburne, 'Le Vagabond de Dieu', has been awarded the Grand Prix Catholique de Littérature 2013. This prestigious Prize in the French Catholic world is awarded by the Association des Ecrivains Catholiques, which has included among its members famous writers such as Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Jean Guitton, Daniel-Rops and Jacques Maritain.

This Prize was a complete surprise to me. I was peregrinating along St James Way, passing through Laredo when my wife sent me a text message. My first reaction was of disbelief, and I typed on my phone to her : "It's a joke ?". But well before receiving her answer, I knew it wasn't: in minutes, the rain stopped suddenly, the sky cleared, and the sun shone for the first time for almost a week. A synchronicity which will not surprise John's friends ! But when I believed the news, I really panicked. It was too big for me! And where I was, I could call upon the services of a special psychological support unit to help me to cope with it ... But after a few moments, I was released from my anguish, by General Jaruselzki, the former Number 1 of Communist Poland, or rather by the sudden memory of his

reaction after the first Presidential Election in Poland following the collapse of Communism, when he said: "Even a donkey, provided that he wore a headband with 'Solidarnosc' written on it, could have won". I burst out laughing: "Of course! This Prize is not mine but John's! And it is not too big for him. His personality was such that even a learned donkey would have earned the Prize if wearing a headband with 'John Bradburne' on it." I alone have been the first ass wearing this headband". This thought liberated me, and if I have sometimes forgotten it, when saying to



people that I have received this Prize, it's only simple vainglory of a tired pilgrim. Forgive me, John...

I left St James Way for four days, two to Paris by train and two to return to Northern Spain, and a few hours in Paris in between in order to receive the Prize, a beautiful bronze medal. The ceremony took place on the

22nd of April in the Town Hall of the 7th arrondissement of Paris, presided by the President of the Catholic Writers Association, Mr. Paulot, and by the Mayor. A Jury member gave an interesting lecture. He found new analogies between John and saints such as Godric of Finchale, St Bernard, St John of the Cross, St Francis-Xavier, St Therese of Lisieux, Blessed Mother Teresa, the Russian Lurodivi, and Mother Marie Skobsova. In my response I told the Laredo story mentioned above, and thanked the Jury for this Prize which will certainly allow John to enter into the lives of more people in France, for their good, and which will allow these new readers to discover this wonderful disciple of St Francis, deep and sometimes wacky, completely given to God and to the poor lepers, this wonderful companion in faith. The Editor declared that he would present the book to book-sellers, with a headband about the Prize.

Of course, this Prize encourages me to continue with my commitment to make John known and loved in my country. John, about whom Jean Vanier wrote in the preface of the book so beautifully and accurately that his life "has revealed a surprisingly wonderful, good, smarter and more creative God than we can imagine".

## A Report on my Pilgrimage to Mutemwa 2013

By Ben Bradshaw

At the start of 2013 I was blessed with the opportunity to visit Mutemwa for the third time in my life. I owe a huge amount of gratitude to the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, who generously helped to fund my airfare to Zimbabwe. On my last visit to the country I had been at Mutemwa for the annual John Bradburne celebrations in September 2011, however, on this occasion my visit would be a much quieter and more peaceful experience.



**Ben standing by  
John Bradburne's tin hut**

On my arrival at Harare airport I was kindly collected by Fr Liam McCarthy OFM and taken to stay at the nearby Friary to get some rest and sleep before heading down to Mutemwa the following morning.

The next day I met up with Marge Chigwanda, the manager of Mutemwa, who had driven up to

Harare to conduct some business and to kindly collect me and take me back to the village. Marge does a wonderful job in managing the centre at Mutemwa; she sees it as her vocation. She has an extremely difficult and time demanding job to care for the residents at the centre, but she does this work extremely well, and always with a smile on her face. I was most impressed and humbled by how much she gives of herself to care for the residents, she has extensive knowledge of every single patient and you can tell she is much loved.

Marge has many dreams of making improvements at Mutemwa, all focussed on improving the welfare of the residents and developing the centre, but of course this all comes at a cost. Lack of funds holds back so many of the improvements that Marge would like to install at Mutemwa. I have personally pledged to Marge that I will try my best to help raise funds for the JBMS so that Mutemwa can continue to develop.

Mutemwa is a deeply spiritual place, it has an atmosphere like I have never previously experienced; the presence of God is simply all around

the village. Before I arrived at Mutemwa I had been going through a period where my prayer life was a struggle, I was feeling spiritually empty, something I am sure most of us can relate to at one time or another; by the time I left Mutemwa, my prayer life had been transformed!

During my stay at Mutemwa I was able to say the daily offices in John's hut, which is an incredibly moving experience, almost overwhelming. It was a tremendous privilege for me to pray to God in the hut of someone I firmly believe is a saint. While I was at Mutemwa I also prayed the Rosary as I walked up Chigona; the mountain beside the village that John would climb on a daily basis. The views at the top of Chigona are simply breathtaking, miles and miles of African countryside stretching out, priceless beauty.

On the last day of my stay I was collected by Fr Nicolas Stebbing CR, my Zimbabwean friend who is a long standing member of the Community of the Resurrection back in England but still visits his home country twice a year to work on various charity projects. It was the first time Fr Nicolas had visited Mutemwa since he last went in 1975 to see John! It was quite a moving experience for him to stand



in John's hut for the first time since he last saw him alive some 38 years ago.

Everyone at Mutemwa made me feel extremely welcome; I was given my own guest room for my stay at the centre. I shared my meals with the three Franciscan brothers who have recently moved to Mutemwa and who are currently trialling the possibility of a permanent religious presence at the village.

I would encourage anyone who ever gets the chance to make a pilgrimage to Mutemwa. It is a truly unique and spiritual place that gives all who visit the chance to deepen their relationship to God. You are guaranteed a



warm welcome from staff and residents alike who always enjoy meeting John Bradburne enthusiasts.

As for myself, I am already missing being at Mutemwa. Put simply, I love being in Zimbabwe and I love being at

Mutemwa. For the time being I will concentrate on my ministry here to the people of Braunton, North Devon, but who knows what God has got planned for me after my time in Devon is complete.

**Ben is happy to come and talk to Church groups and organisations about life at Mutemwa and the JBMS and show some photos in a bid to raise funds. Guaranteed entertainment as he tells some funny stories as well.**

**Call 01568 760632 if you are interested.**

## MUTEMWA LEPROSY AND CARE CENTRE

### PATIENTS' PROFILES



#### SAIROS SARUWAYI 91 YEARS

Sairos was born in Malawi in 1921 and he suffered from Leprosy in 1983. He left his country looking for a job in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, in 1953. He got employed in Chiendambuya, Rusape as a farm worker. He worked for T. J. VenMerwe at the tobacco farm for more than 10 years and left the farm when he became seriously sick.

Sairos was then admitted here at Mutemwa Leprosy

and Care Centre on July 28 1998. He was married to Elizabeth but then separated and by the time he left his own country his wife was six months pregnant.

Sairos could not return to his country because of the war and therefore never saw his child. He believes that his family might be thinking that he is dead because it has been so long since he left them. Sairos was born in to a family of four and he was the third child. His parents were very hardworking peasant

farmers who survived through farming.

It can however be noted that this could also be the reason why Sairos liked farming so much that he even helped at Mutemwa during the rain season.

**Likes:** Smoking (tobacco)

**Challenges:**

Walking is a big issue.

He does not see very well

He has a problem of dizziness "Dzungu"

Sairos gives thanks to all the administration staff who continue to take care of him and the job they are doing at Mutemwa leprosy.

### JESSIE BROWN 74 YEARS



Jessie Brown was born in 1939 and she came from Mozambique and was married to the late Petros Sukiri. She never went to school and was a housewife for the rest of her life.

Jessie was affected by leprosy in her teens and she believes that this was as a re-

sult of a curse from one of the headmen from her area in Mozambique who she refused to marry.

It was later realised that she had leprosy when she was pregnant with her first child and her husband divorced her when he found out.

Jessie Brown was living with her grandmother when she got affected. Her grandmother then sent her to Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, where she received her medication in Harare. She was later transferred to Mutemwa in 1970 a year after John Bradburne arrived.

Jessie was re-married to one of the patients at Mutemwa who had also been affected by leprosy and they had four children together.

Three of her children have now died and she is left with one who lives in Macheke. She often comes to visit. Jessie has seven grandchildren.

Jessie was discharged from Mutemwa at one time, but due to the poor living conditions at her daughter's place she was re-admitted to the Centre in June 2011.

**Likes:** She likes talking to people but she is quite reserved. She also likes going to church.

**Challenges:** Cannot see very well.

### GOLIATH MUBAYA 89 YEARS

Goliath Mubaya was born in 1924 in Machikumba,



Malawi and is a leprosy patient. He was born in a family of two.

Goliath went to school in Malawi and left when he was still a young boy.

Goliath came to Zimbabwe before Independence and worked in mines. He worked at Mazoe, Mhangura, Jomo and Mutorashanga mines.

He got married at Jomo mine to his wife, Patience, and they had one daughter named Miriam.

Goliath was diagnosed with leprosy in 1982 but continued working until 1995 when the disease had heightened and was treated in Harare before he was transferred to Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre. He had also become destitute and was admitted to the Centre where he is now being looked after.

**Likes:** Drinking beer

**Challenges:** He has some difficulties in walking.

## TO MUTEMWA AGAIN

To be able to travel out to Zimbabwe each year is such a privilege and so I found myself once more on the road from Harare heading for Mutoko at the end of January. I escaped from a cold and very wet UK winter to a hot and very wet summer in Zimbabwe. Between Christmas and mid January there had been unprecedented heavy rainfalls so the countryside was looking very beautiful and lush. The downside to so much heavy rain was flooding and damage to the dirt roads and the one leading from Mutoko Centre to Mutemwa was no exception!

There is a very happy atmosphere amongst all who live at Mutemwa both residents and staff. The residents all support and help each other in many different ways. If one has difficulty in seeing someone who can see will help, if another has difficulty in holding a spade or hoe etc, someone who can will help with that. Near each house is a patch of mealies growing and many are also growing sweet potatoes, tomatoes, sunflowers and rape. Most have chickens and there is an increasing flock of turkeys who roam around and are very noisy, particularly so during Sunday Mass! The Security Guards now have dogs to help them

which has also helped to keep the monkeys from stealing mealies!

Over the past year there has been development of their Income Generating Projects. A new five pen piggery has been built in addition to the existing one so the piggery project is beginning to take off. At present most of the meat goes to local outlets but some does make its way to Harare! The egg layers number 926 and are producing five to six crates per day. There seems to be a huge demand for eggs in the area so there is no problem in selling them. 250 day old broiler chicks have also just been bought and there is a very good market for them. The cattle now number 7 and are being reared for meat to help supplement the residents' diets and the settlement is now self sufficient in green vegetables. Maize production at Mutemwa remains inadequate, mainly due to the difficulty in getting the fields irrigated sufficiently well.

In December 2012 two Franciscan Priests and one Franciscan Brother came to live at Mutemwa. Their arrival has been welcomed with great joy and celebration by everyone in the area. There is daily Mass either in the Chapel at Mutemwa or the

one at Mother of Peace Community. The Franciscans are also helping the Priest at All Souls Mission who told me he has 135 stations in his parish and it takes him a whole month to visit them all!

I was horrified to find how expensive everything is in Zimbabwe (e.g. filling up my little Mazda 323 with petrol cost me \$45!) The Administrator at Mutemwa, Marge Chigwanda and her Project staff are aware that they cannot rely on donor funding indefinitely and are committed to developing their Income Generating Projects. Electricity and water bills are very high and JBMS UK is looking for funding to upgrade the water system at Mutemwa plus replacing the out-of-date Solar panels. If these two areas are covered there will be a sustainable supply of electricity and water plus no need to have further bills from Zesa and Zinwa!

All at Mutemwa continue to offer prayers and praise for the donors who support them and are aware that without JBMS the settlement would close. Thank you so much for all you do to help.

God Bless you all,

Christine Pratt.



## YOURS LETTERS

I thought you would like to know that John has been very busy helping Ellen our granddaughter (who has special needs and is in care). The flat she was in was suitable for her, but the girl who lived beneath was very noisy and liked to set the Fire Alarm off which upset Ellen. Last week they moved her to a house, within the same complex, which she shares with two boys. The house suits her much better because apart from her own en-suite bedroom she has her own little lounge and dining room with access to her little garden. There are also large windows in every room and because she is so interested she will soon be enticed to explore the garden. Ellen is reasonably well and still eating very well now. Her carers are pleased with her progress and I'm certain that John will continue to watch over her.

We are well even though the years are beginning to take their toll. Again John keeps an eye on us. God bless you and all the work in Mutemwa.

*Margaret and Derek Parks*

I have had so many ups and downs in 2012, terrible struggles in my life but I never gave up and always continued my novena to John. He is my personal friend in Heaven and does ask God to answer my prayers.

*Mr P. M.*

It would be wonderful to have an up to date documen-

tary on John for television. I had just switched on the television and felt compelled to watch the old documentary on John on EWTN some years back.

John Bradburne continues to be an inspiration to many people that I have spoken to, a man of many talents, but despite this he is so very down to earth in all his matters, giving us an example that we are all destined for Sainthood, but someone to whom we can relate closely in our everyday existence.

*Edna Sampson*

I gave John the Franciscan habit because he was living a Franciscan life, was committed to St Francis and made the values of St Francis present- prayer, love, poverty, generosity, joy, deep faith... I could go on...

When I visited him at Mutemwa I found him caring for the lepers with great compassion, deep service and love. He was for me an icon of St Francis and I would have liked to live as he did. And now what joyous news, John has been working overtime! "At the request of the Archbishop of Harare three Friars have accepted responsibility for the Mission at Mutemwa and the township of Mutoko".

*Fr Sean Gildea OFM.*

About the same time that I discovered John Bradburne, my partner was diagnosed with advanced cancer. I began praying to John, talking

really, asking him to intercede in gaining whatever comfort and assistance he could procure on our behalf.

I am a pianist by trade. (John would approve). The day after I began praying, I had a gig with a local jazz quartet. Just before we started, the bandleader announced that all the tunes we were going to play that day would begin with the letter "B". He said, "It is all B's today- I don't know why, it just came in to my head!" Strangely, it wasn't until the break, when he made the same announcement to the audience, that it suddenly struck me what was happening. In the middle of winter, this was John Bradburne's way of sending a message. All the bees! I had a quiet chuckle. Saints are reputed to have an impish sense of humour. There have been many other, similar occurrences, often quite subtle.

Skeptics like to offer banal explanations, but I know better. The universe is a far stranger place than we can possibly imagine.

Meanwhile we live in hope, and try every treatment that's going. I do believe in miracles, but I also believe that our coming and departing are fixed. This leaves us free to concentrate on the only thing that really matters, living the best life we possibly can- every second it lasts, just like John did. Whatever happens, I know John will be there to help.

*Nicholas Capocci*