



JBMS

John Bradburne Memorial Society



JBMS NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

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WELCOME

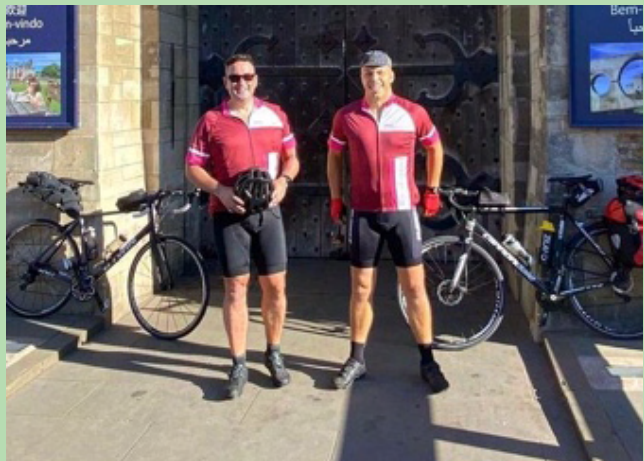
Welcome to the summer JBMS Newsletter. Inside, you will find updates on some of our recent events and work in supporting the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre and on John Bradburne's Beatification process.

It's thanks to supporters like yourselves that JBMS can continue to support those in need at Mutemwa, now and in the years to come.



BIKE FOR LEPROSY

Yet again Alex Macpherson and John Paynter, two teachers from Southern England will be taking to their saddles and biking in the Alps aiming to raise money for the people living at Mutemwa this August 2023. They enjoyed their challenge so much last year around the coast of Wales that they have decided to go a little further and add a lot more climbing to their ride! To help support their 500 mile ride please go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/leprosyride to donate to this worthy cause.



Alex Macpherson & John Paynter

MUTEMWA LEPROSY CARE CENTRE

Currently there are 32 patients being cared for at Mutemwa. Their illnesses range from leprosy, aids and being physically and mentally disabled. Your donations that you send to JBMS go directly into helping those at Mutemwa through being able to buy food, medication, medical equipment and maintain the projects that keep Mutemwa thriving.



The residents living at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre

Below are some of the projects in which your donations have assisted Mutemwa.

292 chickens were sold this year for meat. The proceeds were used to purchase some more layers. Currently, they are producing 12 crates of eggs per day, meaning the patients are getting a great amount of protein from the eggs.

There are a total of 49 pigs of various ages that are used to be eaten by the community or slaughtered and sold to create an income.

From the 70 kg of seeds planted – 5.5 tonnes of maize were harvested. Many vegetables have grown well in the gardens such as tomatoes and okra, a firm favourite with the residents whilst carrots, green beans and water melons have just been planted.



Idah Dumba, resident of Mutemwa



Jane Maengan, resident at Mutemwa who helps in the kitchen

BUCKFAST ABBEY



Buckfast Conference Centre

Buckfast Abbey holds a special place in the story of John Bradburne and thus it was appropriate that JBMS decided to celebrate John's 102 birthday on the 10th June in South Devon and we were very grateful that the Abbot, the Right Rev David Charlesworth O.S.B. graciously agreed to allow us to use their excellent conference facilities.

The gathering started with a Celebratory Mass taken by the Abbot after which we adjourned to the Conference Centre for a buffet lunch followed by talks given by Didier Rance from France who gave us an insight into Bradburne and his love of music. Didier's excellent biography of John is without doubt the most authoritative book on his life and copies are available from our website www.johnbradburne.com Didier was followed by Dr Enrico Solinas who had flown over from Perugia, Italy and gave us an update on the Cause. This was hugely appreciated as it was also Enrico's wedding anniversary! Finally, Professor David Crystal who has done so much along with Didier to promote John's life gave a talk on the power and continuing relevance of his poetry.

The talks were interspersed by short musical pieces based on Bradburne's poems composed by Philip Berthoud, John Bradburne's godson, Daniel Gillingwater and Father Dominic White OP and played by the excellent Haldon String Quartet.

The Zimbabwe Catholic Community England and Wales choir topped and tailed the event bringing a touch of African singing and music to South West England.



Kate Macpherson, David Crystal, Didier Rance, Enrico Solinas and Mattia Iannello

This celebration was very well attended with a number of attendees coming a very long way to be with us and we owe a huge debt to everyone who made it such a magical day, but particular thanks should be given to Kate Macpherson who masterminded the whole event.

To watch the talks and music please go to the John Bradburne Memorial Society YouTube Channel.

Tim Brigstocke, Chairman of JBMS



Zimbabwe Catholic Community England & Wales performing in Buckfast Abbey



Kate Macpherson, David Crystal and Hilary Crystal

B FOR BUCKFAST



Thanksgiving Mass being celebrated at Buckfast Abbey

Just before the Mass which started the celebration of John's life on 10 June at Buckfast Abbey, I was standing in the cloister waiting for the other concelebrants, and I noticed a small dark object on a windowsill. Closer inspection revealed that it was a bee. I thought it might be dead, but when I touched it with my service booklet it raised

a wing and showed gentle signs of life. When we were all gathered, we processed into the church and celebrated Mass with great dignity and yet uninhibited verve supplied particularly by the Zimbabwean choir. When we got back to the cloister, the bee was still there, sleepy as a dormouse in December.

The correct response to the statement "There was a bee in the cloister when Mass was celebrated in honour of John Bradburne" is "of course". Partly because, I assume, they still keep bees at the Abbey; but mainly because when we recall John there's often a bee (or two or several thousand) reminding us of these wonderful creatures which are dangerously threatened by modern pesticides. They are like a signature, John's signature, in places or on occasions when we are being reminded of him. They are a sign that John was - is in harmony with nature. This is hugely important politically: human beings have got into a mode of thinking where nature is there to be exploited and therefore very often destroyed. We are the ones who will suffer from this folly in the long run.

But it is also important theologically: the new heaven and new earth are a gift from God, but it is our task to prepare ourselves for this beautiful gift. It was through John's communion with the bees that I learned that I don't have to be afraid of them. If I find myself in close contact with them again I shall send him a quick request to be with us so that I don't spoil my relationship with them through fear. For perfect love casts out fear.

Father Colin Carr OP

RIP BHENDEKANI CHITESHI

We are sorry to report that Bhendekani, a patient living with leprosy at Mutemwa for nearly 20 years died peacefully in June. He was buried at Mutemwa. He will be sorely missed by the Mutemwa family. May his soul rest in peace.



WILL IT NEVER END?

You will read on the poetry website: 'As John Bradburne preferred to write in verse, he sent letter-poems to many people, so it is likely that there are more of these lying in drawers and attics around the world'. When I wrote that, several years ago, I expected the JBMS would receive perhaps one or two in the proverbial blue moon. But last November, Teresa Yonge, on a visit to Zimbabwe, met a journalist friend of Heather Benoy who had a sheaf of poems in her possession. 'Did we have all of these?' she asked.

In a word: No. Somehow, that contact had accumulated a gold mine: her collection did contain a few duplicates, but also a remarkable 45 previously unknown poems, and a dozen originals, in John's handwriting, where previously we only

had typed copies. What a find! It trumped the previous big find, in January 2022, when a search through 1960s issues of the Jesuit magazine, *The Shield*, brought to light half a dozen new ones.

To see these latest items, all you have to do is go to the poetry website and click on the heading in the menu bar: 'About the Poetry'. Then scroll right down to the bottom of the page, and there'll you see the list of new items. If you then type the title into the search box, up it will come, along with a scan of the manuscript.

And since then? Just two new items this year. So far!

Professor David Crystal



David Crystal



John Bradburne at his type writer in his tin hut at Mutemwa

MUTEMWA DONATIONS



Elizabeth Matenga, Ros & Guy Peterson



Costa on his new tricycle



Maria



Rodina

Patients and residents at Mutemwa continue to enjoy a peaceful life and they look forward to weekends as pilgrims pass by and spend some time with them.

A very generous donation of two televisions were given to the clinic. These are in a communal area and residents can now watch sports, they especially like football and the news.

The family and friends of Guy and Ros Peterson were so touched by what they heard about Mutemwa that as a family, they put together their savings and bought medication worth \$2000. They raised more money and got customised tricycles made which they donated to the residents who are immobile. This has improved mobility for residents, and they can now travel a distance of two kilometres to the town centre of Mutoko.

Through the recommendation from Ros and Guy Peterson, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in the USA were able to bring water from the Mother of Peace dam to Mutemwa. Solar pumps and panels were placed by the borehole at the dam which had been donated and drilled by Tandamanzi Drilling Company. Thank you so much to the Petersons for their huge generosity in supporting Mutemwa.

Nyarai a regular supporter of Mutemwa and an active member of Friends of Mutemwa donated a huge freezer to the community, meaning the residents can now keep their perishables safe.

The Littlerock International School offered scholarships for two children from Mutemwa. This will set them up to having a brighter future being able to get a good education.

Friends without Boundaries sourced funds to buy prosthetic legs for two residents Maria and Rodina.

Maria was born with an abnormally folded leg. As she grew up the leg was amputated and was given a prosthetic leg. This got damaged and for the last couple of years she was using crutches.

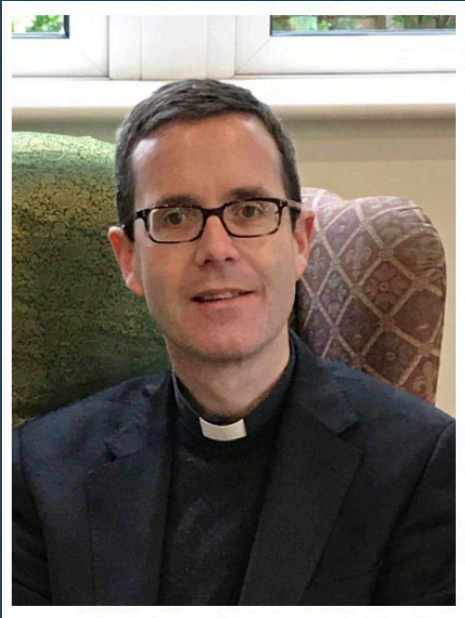
Rodina lost her leg in a bus accident, where she also lost her husband in the same accident. She had travelled from Mozambique in search of a better life in Zimbabwe. She did not speak English or the local language and could not remember where she came from in Mozambique because they had travelled so far on foot. After being discharged from the hospital she was placed at Mutemwa by Social services nearly 20 years ago. Her prosthetic leg had worn down so much, that she needed a new one.

Thanks to Friends without Boundaries, Rodina and Maria have now been measured for their prosthetic legs by Jairos Jiri. The two ladies are very excited to get their mobility and independence back.



Children of Mutemwa

NEW JBMS TRUSTEE, FATHER DANIEL HUMPHREYS



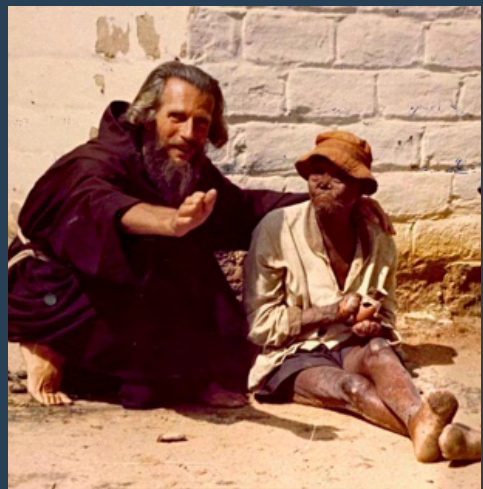
I am delighted to be involved in JBMS. I am Parish Priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel & St George, Enfield, in the Diocese of Westminster. My first real awareness of John came when I was Sub-Administrator of Westminster Cathedral. In September 2019, a Mass was held there to promote John's cause and I was privileged to celebrate that Mass. Monsignor Robert Mercer (of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham) was the preacher and gave such a lively sermon. He met and knew John, of course. It was a wonderful occasion, full of joy and faith. This exposure to John's remarkable life and also to those who were so energetically promoting his cause sowed something of a seed in me. I began to read about him and to make regular purchases from the online gift shop - especially the excellent greetings cards.

Like John, I converted to Roman Catholicism in my adult life. In my Anglican days (I was in parish ministry in the dioceses of York and London) I was

privileged to visit Zimbabwe on one occasion. There I was conscious of the faith and fortitude of the people, who were facing then, as now, considerable suffering. I have never forgotten the people I met over those three weeks travelling around the country. It was a real time of blessing. I very much hope to return there one day - perhaps a pilgrimage with JBMS?

The other day I went to see some friends who live near Saffron Walden in Essex. I decided to take a different route home, so as to avoid the dreaded motorways. My route to Enfield took me through Hare Street. Once again, John Bradburne was making himself present, I realised. He spent time there looking after the country house of the Archbishops of Westminster, as you probably are well aware.

So, John is alive and active today, and a wonderful example of lived faith. Please forgive these personal reflections and anecdotes. They are merely intended to illustrate how I sense John's presence and example at work. I sincerely hope that I can contribute a little something to the work of JBMS and to his cause. May he pray for us all and, in his inimitable way, continue to both surprise and inspire us always.



CHARITY RUN

Gordon Celender, who visited Mutemwa for 6 weeks in 2006, will be running the Antrim Coast Half Marathon on 27 Aug 2023 to raise funds for the Leprosy Centre. He ran his first marathon in Newport, RI (Oct 1985) under three hours, and his personal best of 2hr:55 in Boston back in April 1988.

Since then he's successfully run 46 full marathons all over the world, including twelve times in Dublin, London (3x), New York, Berlin, Chicago, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Athens, Moscow and many other cities. He's used his endurance and fitness to raise money for the needy, sick, handicapped and disabled, unborn and expectant mothers, and the persecuted Church.

He would be most grateful if you would make a generous donation to JBMS on his behalf as he runs his 33rd competitive half marathon on the scenic coast of Co. Antrim in Ireland at the end of August. Our sincere thanks to him and all who support the excellent work of JBMS and the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, where Servant of God John Bradburne worked so selflessly for over a decade before he was martyred for the Church and the poor whom he loved and served so humbly.

To donate go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/jbmsrace



†SFLG ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD

JBMS is hugely grateful to have yet again received a further grant from the St Francis Leprosy Guild to help us buy some water storage tanks for the Mutemwa Care Centre and to be able to build a house over the solar panel pump and water pumps and keep them secure.



Solar panel house



4 Water tanks at Mutemwa

JOHN BRADBURNE AND MUSIC

John Bradburne was a man who not only liked music, but breathed music through singing, playing, listening, reading, writing music, reflecting and meditating on music. If we look at his poetry there are more than 4000 occurrences of words concerning music, some are related to vocal music and others instrumental music.



Didier Rance

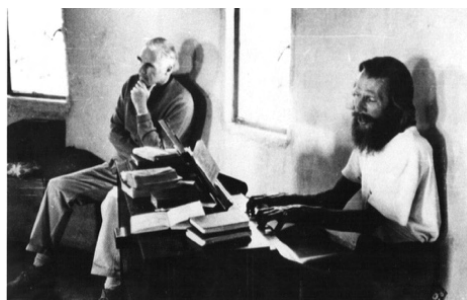
The Bradburnes were a musical family, singing, playing and committed to encouraging their children according to their musical talents. John inherited his father's singing voice. His sister Mary taught him to read scores, and they spent hours singing together. At Gresham's School, he sang as a tenor in the school choir, whilst also learning to play several wind instruments, the bugle, clarinet, and the alto recorder – the latter to become a lifelong companion.



John playing the recorder in Italy

John's image is often linked to his famous recorder, many of those who knew him during the war recollect John on top of a tree playing his instrument in the battlefields of Malaya and Burma in World

War Two. In Palma Campana, Italy he played in the streets, and we have a photo on which he looks like the Pied Piper of Hamelin leading bewitched Italian matrons to who-knows-where. Whilst in London, he played the recorder "to entertain the birds and the angels" and the Elizabethan madrigals in the streets for pleasure, helping the poor, and to aid restoration of churches.



Fr John Dove & John Bradburne in the Chapel at Mutemwa

When living in Africa he played the recorder everywhere he went including on top of a tree to entertain a couple of eagles and their newborn eaglets. When he was killed, the Rhodesia Herald wrote of his death "Friend of the lepers, lay missionary, street musician and recorder player".

Every time John came across an organ or harmonium, he put his hands on the keyboard to play. The three most important times showing his passion for this instrument was, first, when he lived in Palma Campana, Italy where he spent hours night after night playing the organ in the gallery with bats as listeners; then, at Hare Street House, Hertfordshire, where he had two house organs at his disposal, and then finally in Zimbabwe at Mutemwa in the chapel. He played it for prayer and pleasure, and during the masses of offices and especially when the priest was hearing confessions of the people with leprosy in order to ensure privacy.

John listened to gramophone records of his favourite musicians. He writes about 30 composers in his poetry writings. He quoted Brahms and

English composers Delius, Vaughan Williams and Elgar but his love was for English and Flemish medieval and Renaissance composers, Byrd, Tallis, Dufay and the European baroque Purcell, Buxtehude, Handel, Couperin, Cimarosa or Corelli. And above, far above, Johann Sebastian Bach. He was obsessed with Bach and was delighted to believe that the word “bach” in German was akin to the name of his family in English. The song, ‘Jesu joy of Man’s desiring’ played a decisive role in his spiritual odyssey towards Christian faith during the war. Later, he deepened his understanding of Bach’s spiritual and even mystical sense as music which builds in us longing and in the same time supernatural hope of the Heaven. His poems offer a lot of insights not only on Bach the musician but also on Bach as God inspired representative.



Chapel at Mutemwa

John was gifted with a beautiful voice, however his problem was the volume: he wrote to his mother from India: “I have been asked to join the Dehra Dun Church Choir - and congratulated on having the voice of a professional”, but added he was asked “not to blow the roof off the church!”, in singing too loud. He had similar problems in Prinknash Abbey, with his “booming voice” which drew unwelcome attention in the choir. In Hare Street House, he had plenty of time to recite aloud the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Latin to the slow rhythm he had learnt at Parkminster accompanying himself on the harmonium. He also used to pray with a beautiful copy of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer which had once belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward Benson, then to his son Robert Hugh, who became a Catholic priest; John wrote to his mother: “I like to sing them thus

(hymns and prayers), so near Hugh Benson’s body, and feel it is in some inexplicable way another move towards the Union of Canterbury with Rome.” Whilst at Silveira House, singing was the cement of several great friendships John formed. With Heather Benoy where they composed Masses together and adapted Gregorian chants into Shona. Another friendship was with Agnes Mapfumo, a devout and sensitive woman, who with John formed a vocal quartet that shared a joy of singing together for God. In Mutemwa, he created a choir with the leprosy patients. He gave them lessons, and soon they were able to sing, for mass, for prayer and for pleasure. Gordon Read, a young doctor visiting Mutemwa, was impressed by John directing a Gloria Patri for four voices in Shona.

John blended his talent for poetry and music into one, in some poems when he asked them to be read or rather sung– A Ballade of a Belated National Anthem on the Melody of Last Movement of Beethoven’s Ninth, the famous Ode to Joy or, in his poem The Orchestra - A Fugue, its meter based on the tune in Bach’s G. Minor fugue, progressing at its pace. John’s poetry is “music written for the human voice”. In his poetry he gives also spiritual meaning to pieces of music, he sees the saints as orchestra conductors for us.

Didier Rance



Heather Benoy and John performing together

BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE



Hwange parishioners who visited Mutemwa

Whilst JBMS were hosting an event at Buckfast Abbey in South Devon on the 10th June, Fr Newman and his parishioners from Hwange some 10 hours drive away had their first visit to Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre. It was a touching experience and reminded me of my first visit to Mutemwa many years ago. You do not know what to expect, as everyone has a different experience to tell.

These parishioners were overwhelmed by the people of Mutemwa. The experience in the tin hut had some of the group members in tears and you could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. As we walked around greeting the community living there, you could see many of them did not want to leave Mutemwa and they had got attached to the place. One parishioner described it as “a trip of a lifetime.”

It was an honour to share the experience with these parishioners and reminded me why Mutemwa feels like home.

Alvina Werrett



Ploughing the fields at Mutemwa



Gift sweeping the grounds at Mutemwa

JOHN BRADBURNE'S CAUSE



Elizabeth Matenga (JBMS Trustee) & Enrico Solinas

Dear friends of the Servant of God John Bradburne, it's been only 5 years since 2018, the year I was appointed postulator, but a lot has already happened. How can we not remember our dear Celia, who deeply wanted and prayed for this Cause of beatification and canonisation of John to be opened, and who decided to trust an Italian postulator who speaks and understands English just a little bit, but who was so touched by the Sainthood of this man. Yes, I was deeply touched by John, who offered his life for the leprosy patients, until murdered on September 5th 1979, because he didn't want to leave Rhodesia, today Zimbabwe.

Before updating you about the progress of the cause, I want to tell you a story connected to the postulation. Few of us know that when Celia appointed me postulator on May 2018, I immediately looked for a way to open the cause in England for two reasons: the first, because I thought that here in England I could find more expertise regarding Canon Law; the second reason was that John was an Englishman and it would have been much easier for me to reach

England rather than Zimbabwe for any reason related to Cause.

But, as we say, "man proposes and God disposes". So, I did my best to start the Cause of John in London, but for a series of reasons it did not work. At that time, I didn't know that the Saint chooses not only the postulator but also the place where the Cause has to start. Time was going by, and I could not see the way for this cause to be opened. One day, I was driving to Verona, famous for Shakespeare's story of Romeo and Juliet, as I was postulator of the cause for another Venerable Servant of God, Dr Alessandro Nottegar. I told the Lord that if within a couple of days, he had not given me a clear sign of His Will to open the Cause of John, I would have put the mandate back in Kate's hands.

That same night, in Verona, the wife of the Venerable Nottegar told me that one of her friends wanted to talk to me about the nullity of her marriage, because my job is related to marriage nullity, at the Ecclesiastical Court in Perugia. I accepted to meet that woman, and at the very end of our conversation, I felt something in my heart, so I asked her if there was a priest who could help her in that difficult moment, since I felt she was really suffering with the failure of her marriage, both physically and spiritually. She told me there was a priest who was like a brother to her, but he was living too far away. When I asked her where he was, I could have never imagined her answer: her friend was the Secretary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Zimbabwe. I started laughing, leaving that woman bewildered! Then I explained to her that the cause of my joy was that she gave me the answer I was waiting from the Lord for a matter I really cared about. So, she asked me more about John and she fell in love with his life, and she immediately put me in touch with her friend, Mons. Gabriele Pesce, who in a very short time, set up a meeting with the bishops of the Bishops' Conference of Zimbabwe.

At this point, it was clearer than ever that the place where John wanted the Cause to be opened was that African Country, with those people he loved so much, especially the people living with leprosy for whom he gave his life. I had the grace to see, once again in my life, how the Lord works and how, when He wants, he provides limitless ways.

Another story that only few would know is connected with the day of the opening of the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of John in Mutenwa, September 5th 2019, the day of the 40th anniversary of his murder. The TV screen was split in two: on one side, the news of the death of the former dictator, Mugabe and on the other side the mass of the opening of the Cause of Canonisation of John Bradburne with over 15,000 devotees. On one side they were talking about a death, and on the other you could really “breathe” the Resurrection, with a great celebration full of joy, singing and dancing in front of all the Bishops of Zimbabwe and 480 priests and deacons, almost half the priests of all that nation.

Most of the witnesses have already been interrogated by the Ecclesiastical Court of Harare. Unfortunately, Covid-19 and the lockdown have slowed down the work of the deputy judge. A

few witnesses are yet to be interrogated but they all live in Great Britain and other non-African countries. We hope that 2024 will be the year of the end of the first part of the process, the diocesan informative part on life, virtues and reputation of holiness of the Servant of God John Bradburne, to make further steps ahead so that John could be appointed by the Holy Father, Venerable Servant of God. This will mean that the Catholic Church will have said everything about the heroism of the Christian virtues of John. After that, we will need the recognition of a miracle in order to declare John “Blessed”. Then, we will need another miracle in order to get to the canonisation and to extend his name to the universal church. God bless us all, and may John intercede for the needs of each one of us.

Dr Enrico Solinas



Archbishop & Bishops at Opening of Cause Ceremony



The many visitors who were present at the Cause ceremony

SPONSORED 82KM WALK AT 82 YEARS OLD!

Father Colin Carr OP will be doing a sponsored 82 kilometres walk for his 82nd birthday in October 2023, to raise money for those living at Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre.

Fr Colin was born in India during WWII, his father was in the Gurkhas, like John. Colin came to England in 1946 and converted to Catholicism in 1967. He went out to then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and taught in a Jesuit school near where John was living. He met John several times, once in the company of a hive of bees in his little room at Silveira House! Colin joined the Dominicans in 1976 and resides at Blackfriars in Cambridge.

Fr Colin is going to commit to walking 8km per day, and in his words, "it's not going to kill me, hopefully!"

To donate to Fr Colin sponsored walk please go to:
www.justgiving.com/campaign/jbmswalk



MUTEMWA OFFERINGS

The wonderful Patricia Murambinda visited Mutemwa bringing many offerings. The community were thrilled when Patricia arrived bringing linen from Melfort Old People's home and drinks from Delta and Schweppes. Thank you to all involved in helping boost the residents spirits.



Patricia Murambinda with donations



Maria receiving her donation



Jessie with her drinks donations

NEW ITEMS

JBMS are launching these two new packs of cards which are photographs taken of two mosaics which were created by John Bradburne's dear friend, Anne Lander.



The ArchAngel Gabriel, made by Anne Lander
Pack of 6 cards, blank inside
£6.00 per pack



The Three-in-One: A tribute to John
Pack of 6 cards, blank inside
£6.00 per pack

The first card is a mosaic based on the Archangel Gabriel as seen in the Basilica of St Mark in Ravenna. Anne created this mosaic piece in 1991.

The second mosaic was created in 1985 by Anne as a tribute to her much loved friend John Bradburne.

These can be purchased online at www.johnbradburne.com or by post from our items list enclosed.

THANK YOU

JBMS would like to thank you all for your continuing support and prayers for the work we do. Without your generous donations we couldn't continue to support Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre and promote John's Saintly life.

If you would like to continue to support us through a donation please do so by:

POST: payable to JBMS and posted to JBMS, PO Box 32, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0YB.

BACS: Account Name: John Bradburne Memorial Society, Account number: 64153428, Sort Code: 60-05-30

ONLINE: Via paypal www.johnbradburne.com

PHONE: 07979 187498

JOHN BRADBURNE PILGRIMAGE

We had a wonderful turnout for John's Pilgrimage in Cumbria on Saturday 15th July. With over 70 pilgrims joining us to brave the Cumbrian weather in the beautiful countryside surrounding Cross Fell, where John spent his youth.

Thank you to all who came from all over the UK and a special thanks to Father Daniel Etienne who celebrated Mass and Christine and Vera who supplied refreshments and a huge thank you to Gavin Young for leading us on a brilliant Cross Fell contingency walk in the foothills.

It was a memorable day of coming together with great Christian spirit to celebrate, walk, talk and pray for any personal intentions and for the Cause of John Bradburne.

We look forward to seeing you all next year in June 2024 where we will hopefully be able to climb Cross Fell.



TESTIMONIES

I have been doing a Novena to John asking for 4 things, none of them for myself, but one was to do with the future of The Faith Companion. I received healing. I am immuno suppressed due to medication and have been fighting off viral infections one after the other for over two months. After the first couple of nights, I felt miraculously better. I will continue to pray for his canonisation of this blessed man.

By Kathy Bishop

Let me begin by saying that Rhodesia, had many fine and high born families scattered amongst its farms and towns. Amongst these was Lord Acton, a Catholic farmer with a huge family and wide connections. For a short time, as I understand it, Baron 'Charles' Krug von Nidda und von Falkenstein was working for him. He was a cousin of the King of Saxony and nearly penniless, having lost almost everything he owned to either the Russians or the British during World War Two.

The Baron and his wife were my parents' dearest friends and through them I first met John one afternoon. It was perhaps 1971 and the Von Niddas had met him through Lord Acton. He had not long been in Rhodesia and I believe he was temporarily on Lord Acton's farm.

We were all having tea on our veranda. John then was very different to the monk he later became. He looked classically well born English, good shoes, a tweed jacket and Rupert Brooke style hair. His jacket had leather patches on the sleeves. He had a touch of ex-military. We were all Catholics, but I carry no memory of any religious discussion taking place. I remember his beautifully articulated voice, deepish and measured like a stage actor. Unlike actors though, he showed no showy pretension. I recall that day we spoke of Silveira House, the mission training centre near Salisbury (now called Harare) that was run by Fr John Dove, a Jesuit who like John Bradburne had been a Gurkha officer during the war. The Von Nidda's younger son was also a Jesuit connected to the training centre. I gained a very positive impression of John but nothing to allow me any insight of his inner spiritual life.

John Dove told me once that an event in the war had compelled him into the priesthood like Paul struck speechless on the road to Tarsus. And he later told me that John had experienced a heroic war and that Orde Wingate had shaken John's hand and told him that he deserved the Military Cross. I suspect that John had witnessed great Japanese savagery whilst he served in Burma. I have read that he also survived cerebral malaria and a nervous breakdown whilst seeking escape from Japanese forces earlier in the war. We know John converted to Catholicism shortly after the war and I personally believe he was a man driven to love and service to others as a profound reaction to evil and suffering that he had witnessed and possibly experienced himself.

I knew Silveira House well and saw John Dove as an inspirational priest who was dedicated to improving the lives of rural African people. I frequently visited there to talk or to hunt guinea fowl in woodlands surrounding the training centre. Very soon, I found John Bradburne in residence, sporting a beard and burned mahogany

brown from the sun. He almost always wore khaki shirts and shorts and thong sandals in those days. It was only later that he donned Franciscan robes. John appeared to be a support worker to the priests at that time. He played music (organ) in the chapel and was busy everywhere although he didn't seem to have found any specific role for himself. I think he was finding himself and settling in after his post war years of wandering. He lived in a simple room with a hive of bees. There was an image of the Virgin Mary and endless poems that he would read to me. He was always in high good spirits, almost to the point of elation but not absurdly or offensively so. The most powerful thing about him was an aura of pure and simple holiness inhabiting a mature and sane man. He was self-sacrificing, physically almost nothing but strong bone and muscular sinew.

In December 1972 the phony liberation war that followed Ian Smith's UDI ended with guerilla attacks on two white Rhodesian farms and thereafter ambush dangers and the like made my visits to Silveira House less frequent. John Dove and missionary Dr Luisa Guidotti told me that John had made his dramatic move to Mutemwa leper colony and in his final years I only saw him once or twice. Now he was robed as a Franciscan and with his hair and beard rather Christlike. Friends worried for his safety and several people saw his devotion to his lepers as over-excessive. His friends saw him as a driven and holy man.

In the last years of the independence war John was in great personal danger, defending his lepers interests against all comers, be they black or white. I'm told that a local farmer had provided the metal hut in which he lived his last years, without water or electricity. He was warned of the dangers to himself and Fr Dove told me that in John's writings he had asked that if death came it should come on a Wednesday. Apparently he also asked his leper flock to pray that when death came he would have the courage to face it. And apparently John did die on a Wednesday in a death that seems very Christ like to me. Seized by guerilla sympathisers he was taken to a local Commissar who, like Pontius Pilate, found no fault in him and instructed those who had arrested him to return him unharmed. They were displeased

at this and shot him numerous times, leaving his body by the roadside where yet another friend of mine, Fr David Gibbs, found his corpse and carried it to the mission.

John had a possible totemic association with eagles according to Fr Dove and he and Martha, a helper at Silveira House both say that near to the time of John's death a Bateleur Eagle landed outside John's old room, where eagles were never seen, and Martha said "Oh look, Father, John has come to visit us."

When I heard of his death in 1979, I was immediately most profoundly shocked. It was the destruction of someone of great inner beauty and horrifying like the killing of a mockingbird or a swan. It felt as though a further darkness had settled on the land. Many who had known John shared my feeling and priests and friends from many quarters assembled for his Requiem Mass. A choir from St George's College school sang and I believe 17 priests celebrated the service. Amongst these was Fr Michael O'Halloran SJ, Rector of the College and later head of the Jesuits in England. He had conducted my own marriage service that very year. Also, there was Fr Reiderer, the cathedral parish priest. I knew both extremely well. The undertaker was Michael Hamer-Nel who had buried my own father a few years earlier.

I mention all these names to emphasise the truth of what followed as directly told to me afterwards by both John Dove and Michael O'Halloran. I was in Salisbury on the day but was unable to attend the funeral myself through work commitments in my legal practice.

I understand that John's coffin was on a trolley in the cathedral centre aisle and that towards the end of the service a friend of Anne Lander left her seat and placed three lilies on to the coffin lid to signify John's love of the Holy Trinity. She genuflected and returned to her seat.

Fr O'Halloran told me that he then saw drops of blood fall to the floor beneath the coffin and that he then took an altar cloth and lifted the blood from the floor. He spoke to Fr Reiderer and they both agreed that the intended burial ceremony could not take place. They spoke to Hamer-Nel funeral director and it was decided to return the coffin

to the undertaker's premises so that it could be opened in an effort to explain what had occurred. This was done. When the coffin was opened the body and linings were clean and bloodless. However, John was not dressed in his Franciscan robes and Fr Dove jokingly said that the blood was a message from John to cause them to open the coffin and dress him correctly. A sample of John's blood was taken and was sent with the altar cloth blood to the Government Analyst's Laboratory. I knew the analyst personally, Mr Hylton Kobus, and he tested the samples. They were both human blood but not from the same person. I have never been able to explain away the appearance of the blood despite pondering the event for more than 40 years.

Since John's death I have endlessly reflected upon its mystery. Occasionally I even wondered if Christ had returned to the world through him, small, invisible to most of the world. There to be found if searched for yet not revealing himself. I never doubted from the first news of his death that someone exquisitely good and beautiful had come into this world and gone.

By Philip Alcock

I must now relate how John came onto the edge of my own life in a quite unexpected way. Some years back on an Ash Wednesday I attended a service at my children's school to be marked with ashes. In the homily the priest had, with a smile, suggested to the children that this year they might consider taking on an extra task during Lent rather than the usual abandonment of chocolate. On the way out without thinking I picked up a handout leaflet and reading it when I got home I found that it was from the John Bradburne Memorial Society. The leaflet gave a brief resumé of John's life along with three novena prayers in support of his cause which was then still in its earliest stages. As a fairly recent convert I am not sure if I understood much about novenas, but I decided to adopt these three novenas during Lent as the 'extra task' that the priest had earlier recommended to the children. Many years later I can still clearly remember what I was thinking that Ash Wednesday morning. I

considered the novena an agreeable Lenten piety, but the idea that anything positive might result from such prayers seemed quite unlikely to the sort of 'sensible' person I then believed myself to be. Anyway, three Novenas meant three requests, so it was to be one for my children, one for my wife and of course one for myself. Shortly afterwards the requests for my children followed by that for my wife both happened, but perhaps not quite in the way I had expected, so I allowed myself the comfort of concluding that they were probably just coincidences. Meanwhile, what I had asked for myself was larger, more serious and certainly much less likely to happen.

Towards the end of Lent I attended a three day retreat being run by the community at a local Benedictine Abbey. During the final day one of the monks came to me and said my wife had phoned asking for a message to be passed to me about something unexpected that had happened in my absence. You will already have guessed that this something was of course the third thing I had asked for John to help with. So far so good, but here's the tricky bit: I had thus far not told my wife, who is not a Catholic, anything about this matter, or what I was doing about it, as I feared she would likely have thought I had gone a bit crazy. By this stage, chastened, I was now admitting to myself that novenas perhaps did need to be taken seriously. But then something even stranger happened. About an hour later just after the lunch

break, a member of my retreat group came up to me. She said that something I had said in the discussion group that morning had reminded her of a conversation she had had with a friend in Africa many years previous. You cannot imagine my shock when she then added: "My friend was a very holy man. You may well hear of him one day: his name was John Bradburne".

I have since then been obliged to completely rethink my views on petitionary prayer. I have never dared to ask John for anything further since then for fear of being tempted to misuse such a grace for my own selfish ends. John's cause has however remained with me. At one stage John's niece the late Celia Brigstocke, who was a friend of this lady I met on the retreat, asked me if I would be willing to share the above story, but I am ashamed to admit that at the time my academic vanity fell short of wanting to disclose such a story in public. Well anyway Celia, here it is at last, albeit somewhat late in the day. Better late than never.

Having at last managed to bring myself to relate my own tiny thread in what is now a growing tapestry, I will conclude by saying that John's story has continued to be a truly enriching spiritual experience for me. I hope that this may be so for many others in the future.

By Roddy Campbell Guion

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