



JBMS NEWSLETTER

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

AUTUMN 2015

John Bradburne writes of his daily tasks at Mutemwa From a letter to his mother in August 1969

For a day or so I will keep for you a little diary and you shall see a bit about the life of this 'Camp Superintendent'.

1.30 a.m. Waked (by my angel personally) for the singing of Our Lady's Mattins and Lauds. Sing these and go back to bed again and sleep from 2.30 a.m. until 5.45 a.m. Get up and wash and sing Prime of Our Lady. Then boil kettle on excellent, Calor Gas cooker and make pot of tea and drink my morning quart. (Lots of sugar, lots of tea leaves, plenty of skimmed milk powder). Sweep room and make bed.

By 7.30 a.m. I have sung Sext of Our Lady too, the day will be quite long and so one gets ahead with the Office. Then open the Ration Store, quite near my room - there are three narrow rooms detached from my house, erstwhile butchery, and they were built and long used as lock-ups for transgressors in the way! I prepare for issuing fourteen days rations of Mealie Meal, beans, nuts, salt, soap, skimmed milk powder for 76 people. (The 77th died last Sunday evening and was buried on Monday afternoon. Jacob Foto, known as Dick, our only Matabele - blind absolutely - a lovely cheerful soul and everyone here loved him.)

8 a.m. My troops of three Orderlies - Phineas, Solomon and Amos - (two Shona, one from Malawi) arrive and report for duty as usual. We load the rations on two wheel-barrows and a wheel-chair, and they are taken to the Compound and the people - about 100 yards away from chez-moi, down the long Jacaranda Avenue. A glorious leper called Joshua has already

blown his bugle to call folk together to the Ration Assembly Place (those who can walk). Joshua is valiant and keeps Muscovy ducks. His legs come only so far as his knees.



8.30 a.m. "Camp Superintendent" goes to the medicine hut in middle of the 80 huts (little square huts with glassless window and tin roof). He greets each person he may pass then or thereabouts until mid-day. He gives out special pills to special cases as directed by the Doctor (Italian Luisa Guidotti) on her last visit three days ago.

(The Italian medical missionaries come twice a week - Dr Guidotti, Sister Caterina Savini and two others. They are absolutely dedicated souls, and a great help to me).

He does also dressings and bandagings of various wounds and sores. Gives pills also for

coughs and headaches to those who come to the medicine hut. The people have their morning-meal between 10 and 11 a.m. 56 can cook for themselves. 20 are cooked for by two Shona ladies in a near-by kitchen of severest simplicity.



12.15 a.m. "The Camp Superintendent" opens his thermos flask for a pint and a half of sweet tea and heats up and eats a whole one pound tin of braised steak and vegetables with much satisfaction. So do not worry about vitamins or diet any more. Upon this Gargantuan repast a goodly measure of raisins follows. Wherefore, be Raisinable and do not worry Needless to say it was The Dove (Thurston) who supplied these delicacies when he visited here first, and my stock is still in grand fettle. As the Raven brought food to Elias, so The Dove brings food to me. *Benedicamus Domine*. Never felt better in my life.

12.45 a.m. I shall now try to mend the rosary of a chap with one wooden leg called Stephano.

1.15 p.m. Stephano's rosary is mended to the best of my ability. Now (since here one never knows what may happen next) I will sing Vespers, and be ahead with Our Lady. For instance, last Friday at midnight one of our holiest old men died, and was buried on Saturday last. A staunch Methodist but, at 2.30 p.m. on the Friday, I baptised him into Rome at his own request. A long agony of ten hours then for him, but he wore the deepest, strangest expression of peace on his face, which was witnessed after his passing. The name is Solomon Panze.

1.45 p.m. Now I am going to our rather ruined little church to do a sweep for Sunday. The little church, built for the R.C.'s here, (they represent about one-third of the village) built I should say fifteen or even twenty years ago - has a sound roof of corrugated iron and timber,

good walls of local home-made mellow brick, windows from which the glass has been stolen or broken, some statues, an altar with a simple little open tabernacle, Stations of the Cross, some Holy Pictures in poor condition. Birds roost in the church and leave their cards in abundance. The floor is good and of smooth concrete. The door is on its hinges still. Mass has not been said here for ages. The monthly Mass and the Mass of Thurston, are said in the hall near the butchery, but I want to see our little church in use again: the Blessed Sacrament in it. There is talk of making me a deacon so that I can administer Holy Communion. No one remembers to whom the little church is dedicated. When I first swept it out a month ago I noticed straw and sticks obtruding from the cardboard backing of a picture of the Sacred Heart. I took the picture down to dust it and to remove the bric-a-brac - a snake about three feet long came out of it - it was hibernating there! It was easy for me to kill it with the broom handle. Earlier that afternoon I had killed a puff adder with someone's crutch and had broken the crutch in the process! That was quickly replaced, however.

2 p.m. Phone District Commissioner about Orderlies' monthly pay. Dragoon my platoon of three for Afternoon duties.

2.15 p.m. Saunter doom to Compound with a wheelbarrow and pick up bits of broken glass and odd jagged tins and pots from along the side of the Jacaranda Avenue which borders the Compound. Absence of these, when they have all been cleared up by degrees, should reduce our leg and foot stump wounds greatly. A leper called Simon sees me doing this and hastens gaily to help me.

3 p.m. Open medicine-hut again and do dressings, pills, etc. until 4 p.m. or so. Soon the kitchen cart (two wheels and pushed by Gertrude) comes with food for the evening meal of those who cannot cook for themselves. Of these 20 there is an old lady (called Marchareeda or Matilda) who has no eyes and no hands, and has until this month been feeding herself with her face in her plate much as an animal might. She cannot use a spoon. Of the food she was given, dogs and hens used to steal at least half, and a quarter further would be either spilled or smeared over her face and dress. So now I either feed her myself with a spoon, slowly, or

if I am too busy with medical matters, I get one of the orderlies to do it. It is great fun feeding her and she thoroughly enjoys it. When she had been fed this evening (3.30 p.m.) she said she was worried that a thief might steal her belongings from her card-board box in the night ! I calmed her fears (I hope) by telling her to ask her Guardian Angel to keep a special watch upon the box. I feel sure that he will do that and that she has asked him to. She never begins her meals without saying grace. Who else would have remembered in her circumstances down the years till now?

5 p.m. About that time I returned home pushing the Wheel Chair which I chain up on my little verandah at night in case it runs away. Then Compline, and a Rosary. Then supper and then the continuation of this terrible scrawl by the light of two candles. By 8 p.m. I shall be in bed and probably asleep! A very happy day. Shalom! (Next day was Sunday, which brought some differences)

7 a.m. John picks flowers which he places in the church.

7.45 a.m. John meets Solomon, tells him to take Francesca (a very Franciscan lady with no feet) to the church in the wheel-chair (Solomon is truly wise and I like him best of my Army of Three).

8 a.m. Go to the Compound (the church is 150 yards due East of it) and am told by Joshua (the half-legged bugler) that Emilia Duo Darwin (who has been having special pills lately) is extra ill this morning. I find her on the floor of her hut very resigned, but very disconsolate and I give her pills and re-make her bed and and put her to bed and tuck her up and tell Solomon (who has just arrived on the scene) to keep an eye on her today. (He is on duty this Sunday until 4 p.m.)

8.15 a.m. Return to church for Sunday Service which includes lots of hymns and lots of prayers from the Canon of the Mass and from the Prayer of the Day. Also the Epistle and Gospel ("Seek ye first..."), and a sermon, all read and done by another Stephano - a very holy man with no fingers; One wooden leg, a wasted other leg, no toes and an angelic countenance — he radiates the peace and still joy of God.

The Sunday morning service lasted an hour and a half at least! The countryside and the

weather are absolutely beautiful. I love this place.

"I would not change my place and situation
For any range of any clime or nation"

10.45 a.m. Return to Compound, open Medicine store, go round with essential special medicines.

11.30 a.m. Return to my Cell - grasp the Bread Basket; and the mosquito pills (Chloroquine to everyone, twice weekly) and go with bread and pills to Joshua's house and he sounds his bugle for everyone to come and take a piece of bread and a mosquito pill. Then I am told that a totally blind man called Charley is extra-ill today and I go to his hut and find him groping his way out of the door. So I give him two aspirins, put him to bed and instruct a neighbour of his called Mattheo Barone to keep an eye on him and ask his (Mattheo's) wife, Elizabetha, to cook Charles some food of a warm kind if he wants it.



Mutemwa Today

The previous article from 1969 shows just how harsh and basic the conditions were at Mutemwa some 45 years ago. Thankfully the situation is now much improved. This is in large part due to the very generous donations to JBMS over the years, so that we have been able to improve the care and quality of life for those patients suffering from leprosy or other physical ailments.

We have reported in previous Newsletters our pleasure that the Archbishop of Harare has agreed to the Franciscans taking over the running of Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Centre, and at the same time integrating the Care Centre with the nearby Shrine area where John Bradburne's hut is located which is the focus of the September 5th annual celebrations. This new regime has not been without its challenges and we are pleased to report that

Brother Salicio is now firmly in charge and a new team of volunteers, together with other Franciscans Brothers are running the Settlement.

New bank accounts with new signatories have had to be put in place and this inevitably has taken time. JBMS will continue with our regular monthly donation to pay for staff salaries and some staple food stuffs. We will also continue to help with some project work and indeed have recently given a significant payment for stock feed as it is clear that the pig and poultry enterprises were floundering due to poor animal performance. Meanwhile JBMS will continue to complete the solar project to try and make Mutemwa as self sufficient as possible by harnessing the free energy of the sunshine.

We will update members in the Spring issue.

Interview with Fr Sean Gildea, OFM by Fr Liam McCarthy OFM

Introduction: Fr Sean Gildea, OFM born in 1924 and now in Rosnowlagh, Co Donegal, recalls some memories of John Bradburne. Fr Sean was a missionary in Zimbabwe for over fifty years. He volunteered for Rhodesia soon after his Ordination in 1959.

Here is a transcript of an interview I had with Fr Sean, in Rosnowlagh, in 2014.



1962 Enkeldoorn - Father Sean Gildea, OFM & John

John and I became great friends, because he stayed with me in the house in Enkeldoorn. The chief thing about him was his humanity,

and the kind of gift he had was the gift of joy. There was always laughter there and nothing was really that serious. He was a poet and a musician, and I became very friendly with him. We had things in common, apart from the Franciscan thing. We were both in the army. We chatted about the War and all the rest of it. We had three things in common – to receive people to the house when I was out. The second thing was to fill in baptismal registers. So John put all the baptisms in, and another thing was that we were both managers of schools, and one of the tasks was to go and visit the schools and see how the teaching was going and sit in... There was lady in a school in Badza which is near Enkeldoorn and you had to make out a report when you came back. And John wrote about this particular school. He mentioned the lady teacher there who had a face like Helen of Troy and a voice like a sergeant major!

The other thing about him was his humanity – he liked a drop of brandy at night; we took a drop of brandy to make us sleep. But John was

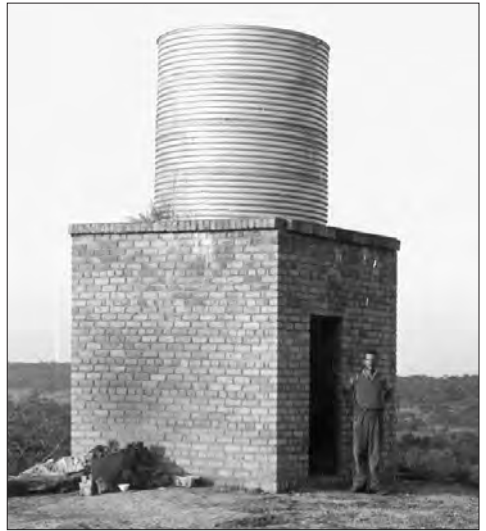
on the move really, and Enkeldoorn was only one stopping-place on his pilgrimage. So he found himself moving towards Harare and he stayed with Fr John Dove. The thing he really wanted was to be a hermit. But people kept on coming, so he invited bees to act as a kind of bodyguard, and I used to go to see him there in Chishawasha in a hut there. After that he got his real vocation, and that was to the lepers in Mutemwa.

“What about the habit?” I gave him a habit – he was a Franciscan- and we had a big ceremony putting it on him and he was making all kinds of promises – there was much laughter as well as prayer. He was delighted to get it. After the war, he used to go around playing the tin whistle in London and places like that. There was a kind of a trait of a vagabond in him – he was a free spirit. But the habit gave him a kind of rooting or identity. He had been wandering, and this put him on a straight path in a sense that he was emulating St Francis. So he used to go around in his bare feet, and he lived very frugally, he had no money or anything else. For me anyway he was St Francis come back to life. He just had nothing and yet he was full of joy and full of life and laughter. We had great times together.

“He went then to Mutemwa?” Oh yes, he found himself there. All his kind of care and love was lavished on the lepers, also on people who used to come in around the place. He was a white man and at that time it was a colonial situation and the whites and the blacks didn’t mix that much. The whites were on their farms and the blacks were on their reserves. John had no kind of barrier or anything else – and he was really caring for them and for anybody else.

He was a man of God with a real authenticity about him in the sense that he was a man who loved God and believed in Him and loved people.

Fr Sean Gildea OFM was a close friend of John Bradburne whom he helped to find work on the Franciscan Missions as a lay helper whilst in Rhodesia. John lived for some time with the Franciscans. Fr Sean used to say: ‘John was more Franciscan than the whole lot of us put together!’. There would be much debate and discussion on spiritual matters, and also a great amount of humour. This respect for living the Franciscan way, and adhering to all that St Francis joyfully lived himself, a life of simplicity and poverty, this was fundamental to Bradburne’s own spiritual formation during those days on the Missions.



John’s first hermitage in Africa in Gandachibuva



1963 John at Gandachibuva



Gandachibuva Mission

YOUR LETTERS

Please send 100 booklets. I have been praying for John's beatification every day for several years, maybe 10 years.

John Bradburne's life story fell at my feet when a door blew open in church. I picked up the leaflet and it would not leave my hands. I decided that his cause had merit and was with God's favour. Ever since then I have prayed for his cause. I am most certain that this British Army Officer who was a Gurkha was indeed a martyr and a holy man.

Kindly keep us informed here at St Mary's.

Kinga Grzeczynska LL.B

Thank you for the newsletter. It is always a joy to receive this. I smiled at all the antics that made John such a wonderful person. It must have brought so much joy to everyone who knew him and spent time with him. How they must treasure those memories.

It is as one person said, like being in the company of a Saint.

I pray for his beatification each night and always feel that whatever I ask him to obtain for me, he is listening. I don't seem to have had a memoir of John's life by Fr John Dove, but I would love a copy.

Thank you.

Catherine Roe, Lancs

I have recently been introduced to the life, work and writing of John Bradburne and I am fascinated by him in so many ways. I have been reading his devotional writing on your website and it is truly remarkable. From the simple but beautiful

poems of nature to the more deeply theological reflections and insights, it shows a man of deep reflection with the skill of a genius, and well up to the standard of many of our greatest poets. John's great love of the Holy Trinity and Our Lady are deeply affecting. We need to get this work out to our schools and Universities. How that can be done I don't know but with Bradburne we have a hidden treasure who is still relatively unknown.

Please can you send me some booklets so I can give to others to read and digest in order to help spread the word.

Sarah Meath, Nottingham

For several years now I have been praying for the strength to return to my faith. When I heard and read about John Bradburne, his words struck my heart and I prayed to him. Over the past years when worried about this and that, I asked him for the sign of a bee to acknowledge that he was listening to me, and I have always been given one. In the dead of winter I would open a magazine and a picture of a bee would be there, or on a billboard. The strangest places my bee would appear.

Still not being able to return to my faith the struggles continued. I lived in an abyss of shame, and stopped praying, but still hoped.

John Bradburne did not stop though. A Franciscan Friar has given me absolution and now my heart and soul are at peace after 45 years.

M.A.L

I am a schoolboy and I found a booklet about John Brad-

burne at the back of our church. I just wanted to say that I have chosen to give a talk on him in class as part of our RE lesson. I think he is an amazing cool person who was such a 'free spirit'. My parents have a copy of the CD with his voice on it and it really brings him alive. The story would make a great film, and if I was a film maker I would love to do that. May be one day I will!

Sean, Birmingham

I am sending my support for Mutemwa Care Centre in Zimbabwe in honour of John's life and work there. I am a Zimbabwean living in England and some of my family have just celebrated the anniversary of John's death which takes place each year around September 5th, in Zimbabwe. Many people gathered there over the weekend and there are confessions, rosary and singing and dancing and an overnight vigil with a special Mass in the morning to give thanks to God for his life. Please accept this small token from me.

Goliath Tabindwa

God's Love lives in Mutemwa. I just wanted to thank God for the life of John Bradburne. I was at Mutemwa recently, it is a very special place. We went for prayers on the mountain Chigona, and it is very holy. I am so grateful for the deeds and works John did there. May God's love through his son Jesus Christ bless those who come to Mutemwa. Miracles are shown to us who need God's Mercy through John Bradburne's love that he gave to the lepers.

Thank you and God bless.

John Makaya, Zimbabwe

John Reid RIP

It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of John Reid on August 14th 2015. John served as Treasurer for JBMS since 1995 when he set up the JBMS as a registered charity in order to help raise funds for Mutemwa at the request of Fr Dove SJ.

*A tribute to him follows by Fr David Harold Barry SJ
who worked with John out in Rhodesia in the 1970's.*



John Reid on a visit to Mutemwa

I first met John when he took me to the Copenhagen Inn in down town Toronto in October 1976. He was soon to leave for Rhodesia to join Fr John Dove, his former teacher from Stonyhurst in the mid-1950s, and he had a number of probing questions. I must have satisfied him with my answers for he left for Silveira House, Chishawasha, working with Fr John in “developing systems” for our Training Centre. I found him when I returned in 1977 so he must have spent many months there and all the time he was working for free. He was a freelance consultant in those days advising governments from Finland to Thailand on forestry management and the like. Silveira was small fry compared to what he was used to.

We got to know each other quite well and went for long walks around the Chishawasha hills. One detail remains in my mind. I was all for keeping to well-trodden paths which meant you do not have to think where you were going. But John was all for hiving off the path and exploring new places. Perhaps this was a hint as to his general attitude to life. I understood that he had tried many things. He owned a farm in Western Australia for a time. I forget the details but it took some courage to

leave that and go for the uncertain world of consultancy.

He thought about a religious vocation at one time and made a retreat at St Beuno's in Wales with Fr Hugh Thwaites, I believe. The retreat confirmed him in a decision to marry and settle down in one place and I think from that day forth his marriage and his family dominated his life. I used to visit him and Alanna whenever I came on home leave and I watched his family grow. He was happy in those years even if the job that he devised for himself was not as exciting as it was in his earlier life.

He came out to Zimbabwe at least twice after Independence and continued to ask challenging and helpful questions. He was never one for “beating about the bush” and one incident is seared in my memory. John Dove, for all his gifts, was perhaps overly cautious about money and when John first came to Rhodesia he found John (Dove) had 26 savings accounts – one for each of our donor partners. John thought this absurd and suggested he consolidate them into two or three but John (Dove) resisted the suggestion! A fairly heated exchange developed and I happened to call at the office at just the moment when John (Reid) was raising his voice and shouting, “John, you're not listening to me!” It was said with some force and conviction. It was game, set and match to John (Reid) for the other John crumbled and changed his method! And, believe me, that did not often happen!

John also threw himself into some of the other activities of Silveira in those days and especially into the work of Mutemwa, a settlement devoted to the care of people living with leprosy. John Bradburne (all these Johns!) was still alive then and our John would often join John Dove on his visits to his old friend, from Gurkha days in the war in India, who was the warden of

Mutemwa. John (Bradburne) was one who sought God in an intense but joyful way and spent the last ten years of his life – he was murdered on the 5th September 1979 – at Mutemwa. There were many laughs and some tough moments during those years and John was part of it all together with Pauline and Tony Hutchings, Anne and Roy Lander, and Celia and Tim Brigstocke. After John's death all these worked for Mutemwa both in Zimbabwe and in the UK together with a number of others.

John was a person of warm and enduring friendships. He had a deep faith and always considered himself so blessed by his immediate

family – Alanna, Hamish, Harry and Sophia – as well as his wider family of whom he would often speak. It is sad that he is no longer with us, but Alanna has shared with us how much he suffered in these final years. So it is a release for him now that he has attained the goal he always hoped for – in his conversations with the other Johns and others.

I am so grateful to have known him and while being with you in spirit at the time of his funeral I will also offer Mass for him here in Zambia.

All love and sympathy

Fr David Harold Barry SJ

A Talk on John Bradburne and life at Mutemwa today

My name is Ben Bradshaw and I have a huge passion and admiration for the life of John Bradburne and the work that goes on at Mutemwa today. I visit Zimbabwe once a year and have previously undertaken various activities to raise funds for charity work in the country.

I am always happy to come and do a talk to any group, organization or parish that is interested in John Bradburne and what is going on at Mutemwa today. I have some heart-wrenching as well as some quite bizarre and light-hearted stories to tell about my travels and work in Zimbabwe and Mutemwa; it certainly makes for an interesting listen!

I do not mind if it is just a small group of 5 or a big group of 500! There is no charge for a talk, my only aim is to spread the incredible story of John's life and to help raise funds to improve the life of residents at Mutemwa today. Praised be Christ.

Rev Ben Bradshaw

Please do get in touch. 01568 760632. Email: info@johnbradburne.com.



The Chapel



The Priests House



The Clinic