



JBMS NEWSLETTER

Published by The John Bradburne Memorial Society
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website www.johnbradburne.com
UK Registered Charity No. 1046483

WINTER 2017

Two New Books by Didier Rance and David Crystal

JBMS is delighted to announce the publication of two new books for sale via the Society to help support Mutemwa. The first is a new biography by Didier Rance, which is a gripping read with newly discovered material about Bradburne's life after a three year research, leading to the winning of France's most prestigious prize 'Grand Prix Catholique de Litterature in 2013' Didier writes about this long awaited book, a translation from the French edition by Malachy O'Higgins. The second new book is by Prof. David Crystal who explains John's poetry and puts it into context. A Life Made of Words is the first appraisal of the work as a whole.

Story of a book, story of a life with John by Didier Rance

John Bradburne entered my life nearly 35 years ago. Working then for Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), I was asked: "You have been to Africa. Do you think you could raise money for this project – the rehabilitation of a chapel and houses in a leper centre at Mutemwa (Zimbabwe)?" I accepted all the more readily, having already worked as a volunteer a few years earlier in neighbouring Zambia on a development programme which included a colony of lepers - I had greatly admired their courage. 200,000 French francs was raised and sent to Mutemwa. The letter of thanks I subsequently received was accompanied by a booklet entitled John Bradburne of Mutemwa, 1921-1979, written by Father John Dove, which gave a brief account of the life and death of this English lay Franciscan tertiary. Reading it filled me with enthusiasm for this extraordinary person! Apart from the many reasons for loving John, which I hope will be shared by the readers of my book, there were several points of personal convergence: the lepers; Africa; wanderings; flute; poetry; Franciscan Third Order (Franciscan Secular Order since 1979), even if I was well aware of the gap between this life all given to God and mine.

Ten years later, John was still in my heart when I had a lunch at ACN headquarters in Germany with a missionary from Zimbabwe, Father Tim Peacock. The first thing I asked him was whether he had heard of a man called John Bradburne. By way of reply he said he was organising an annual pilgrimage to Mutemwa! As the conversation continued, he told me Father Dove had published a book of reminiscences about John. A few weeks later The Strange Vagabond of God arrived in the post, and I eagerly read it, resolving to make John known in France. In the meantime, I gave some lectures on John to



John Bradburne

The Vagabond of God

by Didier Rance

Abridged by Linguist David Crystal
author of *A Life Made of Words:
The Poetry of John Bradburne*

Foreword by Jean Vanier

"The story of John's life has touched my heart and soul, and brought me closer to God. It has revealed to me a God wonderfully full of surprises, better, more intelligent, more creative than we could imagine. An extraordinary God who cannot be confined in rational concepts or in an "ordinary" religious life."

groups of Franciscans, and spoke about him to the Pontifical Commission of New Martyrs in Rome, as I was participating in its work. When in 2001 I published *Un Siècle de Temoins* ('A Century of Witnesses'), a compendium of research and publications on the martyrs of our time, John and his friend Luisa Guidotti figured among the names of martyrs on the cover, and received attention in the work itself and, in 2004, I devoted a chapter to John in a book on the prayer of 20th century martyrs.

In 2008 I decided to honour my promise about John, and headed for England to meet Celia and Tim Brigstocke of the John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS). They received me with great courtesy, informing me that since Fr Dove's book, numerous other testimonies and documents relating to John had appeared, including almost all his poems, running into thousands of pages, as well as numerous letters. As a result, the need for a full-scale biography of John made itself felt, which would draw on this rich mine of documentary resources, including of course Fr Dove's own testimony on John. Trained as a historian, and having written some fifteen books on martyrs and witnesses to the faith in our time, I decided to rise to the challenge and write, in French, a full and rounded biography of the real man that people had known.

Supported by the JBMS, I set off in the footsteps of John in England, Italy, Belgium, and also Africa, visiting the places where he lived (using also my own memories of the Holy Land and India), meeting those who knew him, gathering their recollections, or revisiting those they had already written – some 80 people in all – thanks to all of them. I also got in touch with other sources, studied the writings of those close to him, and those who were interested in him, especially Judith Listowel, the archives of the JBMS, and the articles and testimonies in the JBMS Newsletters. I thoroughly studied John's



letters and his many poems, which yield precious and moving biographical data.

John Bradburne, the Vagabond of God has emerged from this vast corpus (tens of thousands of pages), and allows us to follow with a degree of accuracy, sometimes even from day to day, the life of John Bradburne. I presented the book to a French publisher and he quickly fell in love with John's story, and so did the proof-reader... and so many since. Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, insisted on writing a preface as he holds John in great esteem

The more I learned about John in writing this book, the more I got enthusiastic about him. His life is so peculiar, so original and at the same time so deeply and humbly human that it may speak to anyone and give reason to believe in man as well as in God. Youth in the trees, reluctant hero of Second World War, pilgrim, vagabond, hermit, "fool skilled in fiasco", poet, musician, theologian, mystic, disciple of St Francis, father of the poor lepers of Mutemwa, for whom he gave his life : so many events and anecdotes of this extraordinary life seem to arise from medieval legends but did happen in our time! I fully share what Jean Vanier writes in the Preface of the book: "The story of John's life has touched me heart and soul, and brought me closer to God. It has revealed to me a God wonderfully full of surprises, better, more intelligent, more creative than we could imagine. An extraordinary God who cannot be confined in rational concepts or in an "ordinary" religious life."

John Bradburne, le Vagabond de Dieu, was published in 2012. John made the cover of several magazines, and the book won a few months later the prestigious Grand Prix Catholique de Litterature attributed by the Association des Ecrivains Catholiques, which has included among its members writers such as Paul Claudel, François Mauriac or Jacques Maritain. I gave lots of conferences about him, and presented a copy of the book to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome.

The English translation of the book was another adventure, with Malachy O'Higgins as translator, a valiant Irish Academic who had learned about John while teaching in Zimbabwe. Of course, I gave Malachy the original English

text of some 1200 quotes from John or about John which I had translated for the French book. Malachy made a brilliant translation, showing great literary qualities. David Crystal, who helped me so much on the French book, was also a great support for the translation and abridged it a little.

My personal adventure with John is still ongoing. I published a book of translation in French of his poems, I'm still giving interviews and talks about him (the next one in a Benedictine Abbey – the book has been read out loud during meals

in several monasteries in France - according to St Benedict Rule 38) and I do my best to support John's cause. The enthusiasm which John stirs in me is not the same as when I heard first about him – it is far greater. And not only mine but the enthusiasm of a growing number of people, as the recent international conference in Italy and elsewhere shows.

Deacon Didier Rance

Author of John Bradburne, the Vagabond of God.

The book is available from JBMS, priced at £15.00 (inclusive of postage)

A Life Made of Words by Professor David Crystal

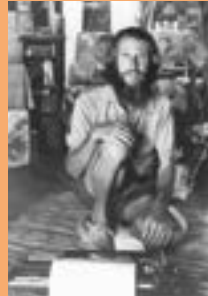
David Crystal describes his new book on John's poetry and how it came to publication

How do you write a book about the poetry of someone who wrote so much? With over 5000 poems and nearly 170,000 lines of poetry to choose from, where do you begin? How big should the book be? How to make a selection? And then you reflect: publishers are very wary of poetry books, because they just don't sell well. So if they are wary of poetry, they are likely to be even more wary of books about poetry. Even if you wrote it, would it ever get published?

These were the thoughts buzzing through my mind, in the middle of 2016, when I decided it was time to answer the question I am repeatedly asked, whenever I give a talk about John Bradburne and his poetry: Is it any good? Simply to say 'yes' doesn't satisfy. You have to be able to demonstrate it, by illustration and commentary, just as you would have to do if asked such a question about any other poet. Only a book-length project would suffice, for such a large oeuvre.

Why 2016? Why not earlier? Mainly technical reasons. The online database of all the poems has been steadily growing over the years, and is now complete - though a new poem occasionally still comes to light, as friends and contacts of John discover one in an old box of correspondence. I first began jotting down some thoughts about the book as early as 2006, but it wasn't easy, because the management system that allowed me to search and select bits of text from the database wasn't very friendly. It was also very slow.

David Crystal is best known for his many books on linguistics and the English language. In 2016 he completed the online database of John Bradburne's poetry (www.johnbradburnepoems.com), and *A Life Made of Words* is his first appraisal of the work as a whole.



John Bradburne at his typewriter in his hut at Mutemwa, Zimbabwe

ISBN 978-1-909459-25-0

£10.00 plus postage within the UK is £3 Outside UK £7.50.

Available from JBMS,
PO Box 32, Leominster, HR6 0VB.
www.johnbradburne.com

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Anyone who uses a computer routinely knows just how much things have speeded up over the past decade. And, as readers of this Newsletter will remember, in early 2016 the online poetry database received a blow that at the time we thought was a disaster, but which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It was hacked. Our wonderful website designer, Matous Havranek, used this as an opportunity to upgrade the software, as well as modernise the visual appearance of the site. If you've used it recently, you will have experienced how user-friendly it is. And from my point of view, it made it greatly easier to start collecting examples of the poetry and grouping them into themes.

I went through the entire database, poem by poem. I had to do this anyway, to check that the new software hadn't caused any unexpected problems. (There were a few, but they were easily solved.) And as I went through, I pulled out instances of the things I knew I wanted to write about. They were of two kinds, familiar to anyone who has ever had to study poetry (which I suppose means everyone, for this is the kind of thing one does in school): the structure of the poems, and their content. Under the first heading, one talks about such things as verse structure, metre, alliteration, rhyme, and so on - the form of the poems. Under the second heading, what the poems are actually about.

Which to write about first? I decided to deal with the structure first, because Bradburne himself spends so much time talking about them. He was fascinated by poetic form, and repeatedly comments on how he found prose such an unattractive medium of communication, even when writing letters home. And his poems use a form that is very different from the fashions of twentieth century poetry - ballades with their fixed verse structure, lines with regular metres, rhymes (no free verse for John), acrostics, lots of alliteration and assonance, and the whole embedded in a waterfall of mad cascading words that can be summed up in a simple phrase: language play. Few poets have punned and played with words so ubiquitously as John Bradburne. And none have dared to do this with the range of serious themes that make up his subject-matter.

The second half of my book deals with that content. Separate chapters take the reader through his major themes - his theological thinking (the Trinity, pastoral care, the sacraments, liturgy, and the place of Mary in Christian thought), his fascination with the world of nature (detailed descriptions of the landscape of the places he visited, especially their birds and beasts), his accounts of those in his care (no poet has ever written about lepers with such loving kindness), and much more. And I spend quite a bit of space discussing the most intriguing question of all: how on earth did he manage to do all this, given the hugely difficult circumstances in which he wrote, ranging from enormous daily political and human constraints

to such practical issues as a lack of means. Even getting hold of paper was at times a challenge.

By the middle of 2016 I felt I was ready to tackle the book. And there was an extra motivation to get it done: 2017 would see the publication of Didier Rance's new biography. There would also be a conference on John in Perugia. And these events (we hoped) would give the cause for his beatification a fresh impetus. If that happened, I reasoned, those involved in examining the case would want to have as much information as possible available, and their task would be greatly helped if there was an account of the poetry to read.

I began Chapter 1 at the beginning of September, and - thanks to my preliminary collection of poetic extracts - I finished the final chapter 50 days later, on All Saints Day. It turned out to be one of the smoothest writing experiences I have ever had, with the sequence of topics unfolding in an unanticipated logical order, and the extracts falling neatly into place. When it was done, there was just one problem left: what to call it? I chose a remark he made in a letter to his mother: 'My life seems made of words'.

I was right in my initial suspicions about publishers. I asked two of the editors with whom I've published many of my books if they were interested, but neither wanted to know. As one put it: 'it's difficult enough getting people to buy a book about a well known poet, and here's a book about a poet nobody has ever heard of'. I could see their point. I then tried a couple of religious publishing houses, including the one that was publishing Didier's book, but again: poetry? no thank you. So in the end, I decided the only way forward was to publish it via my website. It's something I've been increasingly doing over the past few years for books that mainstream publishers have no interest in. And that's where you'll find this one. You can order it through the website (www.davidcrystal.com), and read it either as a hard copy (which is sent to you directly from the printers) or as an electronic copy for a Kindle or other device). If you don't have that option, you can get one from the JBMS. Either way, I hope you enjoy it.

David Crystal
Author of A Life Made of Words

Canoeing for John and Mutemwa July 2017

Teresa Yonge

Setting off on my sponsored paddling adventure on July ninth I was seen off by family and friends. It was a clear day and I was ready and keen to get going as I paddled off into the shallow waters of the young Thames at Cricklade. I was happy to be on my way and excited as to what lay ahead not knowing where I would camp and sleep the night or who I would meet along the way, living and totally being in each moment. Sometimes silent and sometimes chatting away with each paddling stroke I felt that I was not alone. I was certainly on this trip with my dear uncle John as my guide and companion, two intrepid Spirits in one while holding Mutemwa in prayer, he made his presence felt in many extraordinary ways like on day two when it was time to stop and find a place to pitch my small pop up tent.

I had found a nice clear river bank two miles up river from Radcot which had the Thames path next to it. I stepped out and found it to be

rather muddy for off loading and so carried on to find a better place only 20 yards down river. Yes, this was perfect and felt right. I unpacked my kit onto the bank of the river. Ten minutes later while I was standing on my choice spot to pitch, I was suddenly surrounded by bees buzzing around me. They were not there when I arrived and I wondered what John was talking about, was this not a good place to stop? I soon realised that it was just John making contact the way he sometimes does using bees. I have never experienced being completely surrounded by bees before, I had asked John to give me some signs that he was with me but if he was to send bees please do not let the bees sting me for I have a serious allergy to bee stings and carry an epipen - so what did he do? He sent bumble bees and LOTS of them and I never once got stung. Standing amongst these bees I filmed them while thinking what to do, I then realised that I had put all my kit down right next to their



underground home so I made a pact, “OK, I’ll move over here six feet away.” I pitched my tent and within another twenty minutes or so they had all disappeared and gone underground for the night and we slept side by side quite happily and I had had my sign that John was truly with me.

The first seven miles were quite a challenge in places with around four big trees down across the river yet only once did I have to go over the top of the trunk, emptying all my kit into the tree beforehand, what an adventure I was having. I was very happy for I love climbing about in trees too! I was in my element. Once past Lechlade the river is wider and deeper and is the start of the locks and bigger boats and canal barges.

I was also accompanied by the wonderful river birds, particularly the comical Canadians, the chattiest, noisiest geese on the river, the last and first to make their presence known. I saw many trout and fish as I paddled and enjoyed the wide variety of plants and reeds as well as an abundance of berries, plums and apples hanging over the river edge. I once saw an otter and also two black mink sitting close together while looking at me as I paddled by, we were intrigued with each other. Birds of prey called out, the red kites and buzzards which reminded me of John and brought me back to chatting with him again, “Hello John” I’d call back! Kingfishers in all their turquoise flash of beauty and swallows swooping down to drink in mid flight who had come all the way up from Africa where I come from. Pairs of swans and their signets were wonderful to watch and so beautiful to observe. Fascinating to see how they use their wings as sails. I picked up their discarded feathers from their continuous grooming.

My camp fires were a joy while I sat in blissful silence and took in each sound around me

while resting in my cut off garden chair as the light faded and the river birds paddled slowly past going home where ever for the night occasionally talking to each other. Sometimes lambs were bleating nearby, while cows chewed their cud. Spiders webs in the early morning dew made for sparkling jewels in a line while glinting in the rising sun while the spiders slept on. The weather was kind most of the time and when it was wet and windy I found refuge somewhere, I loved the challenge and adventure of setting up camp in the evening.

I was on the river for 23 days and travelled 134 miles ending at Teddington Tidal lock. I made 17 different camp sites all different, a good spot appeared at just the right time of day or evening. I met so many wonderful people on and off the river. Everyone was so supportive and generous and interested to hear all about John and Mutemwa, I gave out booklets and leaflets and information and made many new friends. I never had to ask for sponsorship for the writing on the side of my canoe was enough to draw interest.

So a huge thank you to all for coming along with me in prayer and thought and for all your generous sponsorship and support. On the river I was given £958.39 which was amazing and then online through the JBMS donations and personal cheques a further £1426.00, so in total a wonderful £2504.39 has been donated towards the rain water situation at Mutemwa. A brick rain water tank needs re plastering and the gutters need replacing on the roofs so I would like to thank you all for your kindness and your generosity in making this happen, the JBMS have all this progress in hand. I am sure that all at Mutemwa will be most grateful to you all as well.

Thank you too to John for being with me all the way, didn’t we have fun!



Message from Fr Patience Tigere OFM at Mutemwa

I would like to take this opportunity to thank JBMS for the continuing support they always give Mutemwa Leprosy and Catholic Care Centre, where John Bradburne resided and gave all his love to the marginalised people of his time. It is always good to see progress in what John had already started and to see it going on and giving life to our people. It is also important to express our gratitude for our self sustaining projects which help the centre so much. In this regard I would like to let you know that we have sent Tinashe, one of the residents's sons, to do a short course on how to care for the pigs, and he managed to get a 'B' class. We have used the money from the poultry project to pay for this, which is our only money making project at the moment. We also managed to service our ambulance from the profits of the poultry egg production as well. We have 467 layers and they are producing 12 to 18 crates of eggs a day. We sell to our local market and still cannot meet the local demand. So, we are asking if we can get a little bit of extra capital so that there will be 1000 layers, and with this we should see a brighter future for the Centre.

Developments

With the help, inspiration and support of Fr Liam McCarthy OFM we have managed to

find an artist Mr Arthur Avavedo to make metal Stations of the Cross to place up Chigona mountain. The Stations of the Cross have been donated by families, individuals and parishes, and they are paying for these slowly as our economy is not all that good at the moment.

On the weekend of the 1st- 3rd September 2017 we held the 38th Anniversary celebration to mark the death of John Bradburne. Multitudes gathered to pray and climb Chigona Mountain as is the custom. It was a beautiful night with red candles lit for the procession up to the summit of Chigona, a beautiful and moving sight to see. We are so grateful for the kindness and support we receive, both locally and abroad. Only the good Lord knows how to reward all those hands helping Mutemwa.

It is also our pleasure to inform people that our lease had expired, and we thank God that an anonymous donor was found to renew it this year for the sum of \$3,840.00. We are currently in the process of applying for Title Deeds, and will keep you informed of progress.

We also have a new Funeral Policy now in place to ensure that residents are graciously catered for at the end of their lives.

Remain blessed always.

Introducing two new pilgrimage sites for John Bradburne in Zimbabwe

Robert Kawadza who is working for John Bradburne's Cause in Zimbabwe has initiated the setting up of two new pilgrimage sites connected to John Bradburne. Already people flock to Mutemwa, to pray at Bradburne's little tin hut and the little thatched Chapel, and climb Mount Chigona where the huge cross stands overlooking the scene below. Now Robert, who was close to Fr Dove, Bradburne's closest friend, has encouraged people to pray at Gwaze Cave site where John underwent a three day bush trial before being killed. The other site is where John was actually killed in a culvert off the main road at Mudzonga at 'the thee crosses site'.

Recently Robert organised pilgrims to visit these two sites to pray and attend Mass there.

At Mudzonga, the Secretary to the Papal

Nuncio, Fr Gabriel Pesce was in attendance, with Father Konrad Landsberg SJ, and others.



YOUR LETTERS

I would like to acknowledge the answer to my prayers through John Bradburne.

My grandson was wasting his life, drinking and drugs. I never gave up hope, and have made many novenas. I got to know John through reading his life story which I got in the Franciscan Friary in Clonmel.

David had a good education and he has started work and has got a permanent position in the same company he started with.

I will continue the novena, and please God that John's life will be recognised by the Church.

Mary Clancy

I have a great admiration for John and often turn to him for his help, he has never let me down.

Thank you for bringing his life to others.

Sheila Randerson

Thank you kindly for sending the JBMS newsletter always so well produced.

In your own way the work of JBMS goes along quietly but with determination in John's memory. The First International Conference in Italy shows that.

The Society and the number of good kind hearted people that I have heard about over the past number of years (within the JBMS newsletter), plus the JBMS supporters that stay quietly in the background will ensure that both John and Mutemwa continue to grow.

It is all Good!

Michael Jack

John Bradburne has made me a better person, more compassionate towards other people, especially those who are not too impressive in this world of ours! He has brought me closer to Jesus and Our Lady and all the Saints in Heaven

P.J Gallagher

I have two letters from John which I would like to send you. I am now 88 years old and want to send the letters to a good home.

The first letter we had was written in 1963 when he was living under a water tank. He kept four hens and a cockrel. They had aristocratic names, and their leader was called 'the Earl of Salisbury'.

John's parents lived in Norfolk which was where many of my family lived. I was born in King's Lynn. My father, like John's, was an Anglican vicar, so we had a common background.

I gave him my treble recorder which he used to play while sitting on the riverbank. He said the baboons came out to listen, 'they thought I was the missing link!'

The recorder is among the few effects of John's now kept safely in the JBMS archive of his relics.

Pamela Fenwick

Here is a gift for Mutemwa and in thanksgiving to John's answer to my prayers.

I prayed to him for my grandson who wanted an apprenticeship in mechanical engineering. He was really past the age of being considered for an apprenticeship.

There were 200 applicants, gradually he got through to the final 20. There were three young men needed and he was one of the chosen applicants.

I am now putting Alexander in John's care asking him to bring my grandchildren in to the faith, if it be the Lord's wish.

I am praying for John's beatification each day. Such a wonderful person.

A friend of mine is having a Mass said for him today, unfortunately I am not able to be present as I have joint problems, but I shall be there in spirit.

God bless your work.

Winifred Ross

My son has quite severe autism and since knowing about John Bradburne we have put our son in his care, and have kept all our family in prayers to him over the years.

It is quite extraordinary how we have been given little signs from John that he is listening to us, and we have absolutely no doubt that he is a powerful intercessor in Heaven.

We also believe that John will be raised to the High Altars of the Catholic Church, and will be formally made a saint one day.

We pray daily for this intention, along with the many others who feel the same.

Simon Kingston



JBMS ITEMS LIST 2017/18

Published by The John Bradburne Memorial Society
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website: www.johnbradburne.com

UK Registered Charity No. 1046483

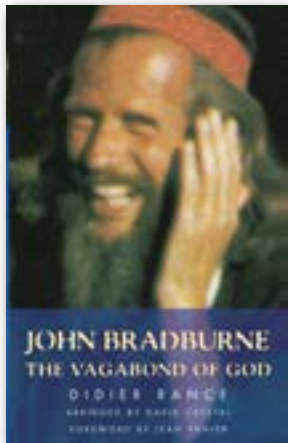


ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM THE JOHN BRADBURNE MEMORIAL SOCIETY

John Bradburne Vagabond of God

by Didier Rance

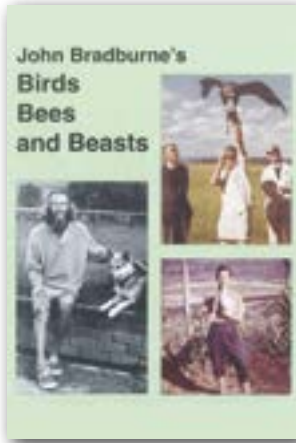
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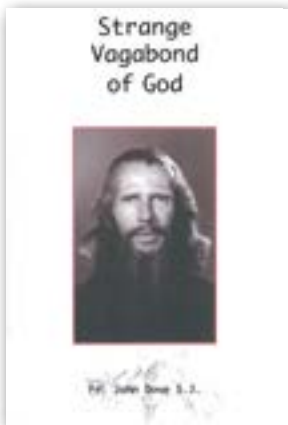


Strange Vagabond of God.

Memoir of John Bradburne

by Fr John Dove S.J.

£12.00 289 pages



A Life Made of Words

by David Crystal

£10.00 416 pages



John Bradburne's Mutemwa

In poems and pictures
edited by David and Hilary Crystal.

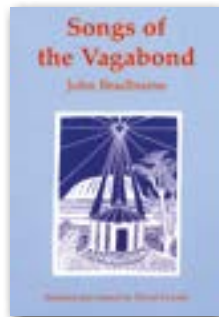
£7.00 38 pages



Songs of the Vagabond

Book of poems
by John Bradburne
selected by
Professor David Crystal.

£10.00 84 pages



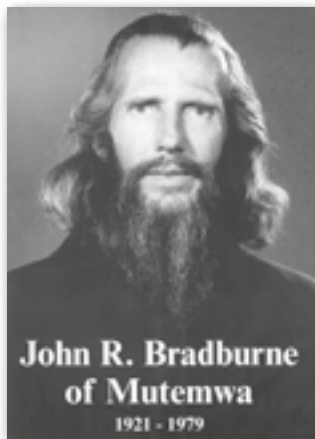
John R. Bradburne of Mutemwa 1921 - 1979

£2.50 24 page booklet

Alive to God

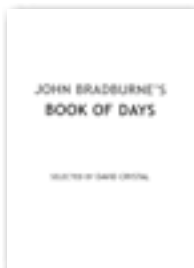
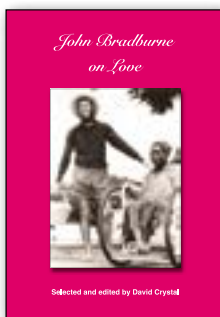
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Theme on the Life of John Bradburne

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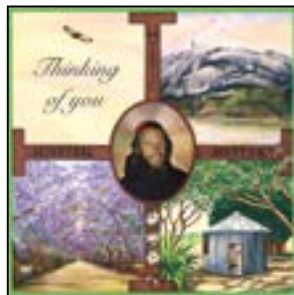
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