

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS FOR MAN WHO COULD BE ENGLAND'S NEXT SAINT

A major celebration is to take place this year to mark the 100th birthday of the man who could become the next English Saint to be canonised.

John Bradburne was born at Skirwith in Cumbria on June 14 1921 and was the son of an Anglican vicar. He served with the Gurkhas and Chindits in the Second World War and after a conversion experience in Malaya, he became a Catholic in 1947.

After many years wandering England, Italy and the Middle East, he finally found his calling as a lay Franciscan missionary in Zimbabwe and he devoted the latter part of his life to helping forgotten leprosy patients at the Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement.

He refused to leave the leprosy settlement during the Zimbabwean civil war and was abducted and shot dead on September 5 1979.

Since Bradburne's death, the settlement has become a major pilgrimage centre, with thousands gathering for Mass each year on the anniversary of his death.

In 2019, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome formally began the cause of his beatification. St John Henry Newman became the first English saint in almost 50 years when he was canonised in 2019.

Bradburne is also in *the Guinness Book of Records* as the most prolific poet ever, having written in verse throughout his life.

"John has been nominated for sainthood because of his amazing selfless work at Mutemwa with leprosy patients". said Kate Macpherson, secretary of the John Bradburne Memorial Society. *"John was the pilgrim who eventually found the meaning of his life not in the solitude he had long searched for, but in living alongside, and trying his best to achieve justice so that people living with leprosy – amongst the world's most marginalised people of his day, like the migrants and asylum seekers of our world today – could, like us, live enriching and meaningful lives. And praising God as he did."*

The centenary celebrations, will take place at the Holy Name of Jesus Church, Oxford Road, Manchester, from 2pm on Saturday September 25 2021. Bradburne's poems are being put to music by world-class composers to be performed at the event, while poems commissioned for his birthday will also be read. There will be performances by the Bury Choral Society, Zimbabwean Community Choir England and Wales and the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

An icon, specially commissioned by a private sponsor and created by the renowned artist, James Blackstone, will be unveiled and Bradburne's relics will be exhibited.

Admission will be by ticket only. For more details and to find out more about Bradburne's remarkable life, visit www.johnbradburne.com
NOTES FOR EDITORS

John Bradburne was born in Skirwith, Cumbria, in 1921, a third-order Franciscan, was killed in Rhodesia in 1979 for refusing to abandon the leprosy patients he had looked after for many years. Since his death, Mutemwa, the leprosy settlement where he worked, has become a major pilgrimage centre. Each year, on the anniversary of his death, 5 September, thousands gather to hear Mass and process up the mountain where he walked and prayed.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society was established in 1995 John's niece by Celia Brigstocke to continue his legacy by providing perpetual financial support for the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre and to promote his cause for beatification, given the widespread belief in his sanctity expressed by all who met him.

On March 6 the society launched a 100-day poetry project, with prominent figures and supporters reading out poems on a special YouTube each day in the lead up to his 100th birthday on June 14 2021. Search John Bradburne Memorial Society or visit: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcGjYYMDHb4vQStf63_PKDg

Professor David Crystal has compiled an online database of Bradburne's poetry at johnbradburnepoems.com.

For more information please contact Kate Macpherson by emailing info@johnbradburne.com.