

**ADDRESS FOR ANTON BANTOCK'S FUNERAL, 29th April, 2015**  
**In the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, UK**  
**by Gavin Bantock**

Good afternoon. I would like to express my warm greetings from the Bantock family and other relatives to everyone gathered here in this holy place for the funeral of my late elder brother Anton Bantock, and I would like to thank the many good people who have made all the arrangements for this occasion, and for their many kind condolences. I am sure that Anton is happy that we meet here in this beautiful church St. Mary Redcliffe that he so much loved and admired. Perhaps his interest in art, architecture and history began during our childhood years when we used to build huge sandcastles and sand churches, real hollow ones with doorways and windows, out of wet sand on Harlech beach in Wales. And I think Anton's love for the dramatic and the sensational began with the crazy family shows we used to perform together at Christmas. My late father Raymond Bantock took us for trips abroad when we were children. Perhaps Anton's love of travel began there.

Recently Anton wrote: '40 Countries in 40 Years'. Actually, I think he travelled to many more than forty countries and certainly for more than forty years. He said several times said to me that 'what I do is just a small drop in the ocean', but we all know that this 'small drop' was not small at all, it was a very big one indeed, shining brightly and full of thousands of good works, of acts of kindness, and efforts for education in almost every corner of the world. I always felt his unspoken message was like that of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah: '*O, earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.*'

Now, we all know Anton, and we know very well that he doesn't wish this occasion to be a mournful one. He has always had a positive, cheerful, humorous and forward-looking outlook and believed that life should be good fun.

He came to Japan six times, quite often at the end of a long journey across Europe and Asia, and usually when he arrived in Japan he was a sight to behold. He himself looked clean and healthy enough, but his travel-stained clothes were almost falling off him in rags and tatters. There was only one thing to do – burn them, and give him a completely new set of garments. I guess this kind of thing was quite common in other countries he visited.

He was famous in Japan for imitating the sound and behaviour of *cicadas*. Once in 1970's during his first visit at a mountain shrine he heard this extraordinarily agonized sound emitted by one particular cicada, something like 'Mee-mee-mee-mee-meeeeeee!' – and he never forgot it, and would cry it out loudly everywhere in Japan, on trains, on buses, on ferries, in temples and in people's houses – 'Mee-mee-mee-mee-meeeeeee!' Two of my former Japanese students recently emailed me about Anton; one of them wrote, 'His cicada sound still rings in my ears. It was unforgettable when he screamed till he was red in the face. That was 38 years ago.' On another occasion a *cicada* came in at the window in the evening, hit the opposite wall and fell to the floor wriggling on its back. And so of course Anton frequently did his

imitation of this – lying on his back and kicking his legs in the air, and doing his 'mee-meeee' all the while. It always brought the house down.

Anton's words were often unforgettable. Once in Japan, one of my students asked him 'Why did you come to Japan?' and his immediate answer was 'To meet YOU'. This had such an extraordinarily happy effect that I myself have always used the same answer when people ask me why I have come to a certain country, or city or place. 'To meet you.' It always works. It always makes people laugh, fills them with joy. Anton will always be alive in these words whenever we say them to someone. 'To meet you.'

Although Anton's passing was very sudden, I think it was something we were prepared for, and we somehow feel that he would not have been unhappy about the way it was. He was a lifelong traveller and had many friends in the Middle East especially, and all over the world, and though his last journey was to Jordan, one can imagine that he will go on travelling forever. Here are some of the lines of an American Gospel song that might be fitting in this Christian house today:

*I am a poor wayfaring stranger  
A-travling through this world of woe.  
Yet there's no sickness, toil or danger  
In that bright world to which I go.*

*I'm going home to see my brother,  
I'm going there no more to roam.  
I'm just a-going over Jordan,  
I'm just a-going over home.*

But – see there! – his soul goes marching on.  
So all we can say is, 'Bon Voyage, Anton!'

Thank you.