

EDITORIAL

Welcome to my last edition of the Newsletter of the British Society for the Turin Shroud. I am delighted to be able to report that David Rolfe, the celebrated film-maker and long time investigator of the Shroud, has found himself with more time on his hands recently, and offered to take on the burden of editorship himself, which out of deep respect for the generosity of his approach and his skills at communication, I have willingly accepted. I wish him every success.

Since I first took on the job, I was keen to make this publication a window onto all aspects of current Shroud research, and not simply the sunlit uplands of the conventional acceptance of authenticity. I also wanted to represent the Shroud as an icon of the suffering of Christ, as various popes have described it, as well as to review new scientific discoveries. As the first scientist to represent the BSTS here myself, my own researches have necessarily focussed on forensic aspects of its history, but I hope I have represented its theological and spiritual value as best I could. The Shroud is far more than an archaeological curiosity.

With that in mind I have enjoyed reading and reviewing Canon Andrew Willie's "The Turin Shroud and the Mystery of Faith", which honestly uses an uncritical faith in the various archaeological investigations as a springboard for a much more valuable, and almost unique, contemplative meditation on the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ. On the other hand Mark Antonacci's monumental "Test the Shroud", which has finally reached the UK, was something of a disappointment, and, as you will read, profoundly flawed from start to finish. There are also reviews of Emanuela Marinelli's new book, Joe Marino's scrupulously detailed account of the shenanigans surrounding to the radiocarbon dating of 1988, and several recent scientific papers.

In the last issue I mentioned Professor Gérard Lucotte's ongoing examination of a tiny sliver of sticky-tape given him by Riggi di Numana,

from a sample taken in 1978. Although it is only just over a millimetre long, at a magnification of x20,000 his work is akin to the close examination of every pebble on a 20m stretch of shingle. I am delighted that he has asked us to publish an overview of his researches, and have also reviewed his paper on the most recent discovery, a fragment of hair.

Anybody who thinks the Shroud is medieval soon finds himself up against the problem of its apparent lack of context. As Thomas de Wesselow neatly expressed it in his book, *'The Sign'*, the Shroud is "technically, conceptually and stylistically" far removed from the *mores* of conventional medieval forgery, a fact which convinced him, a professional medieval art historian, that it must be the genuine burial cloth of Jesus. However, there was a context which he did not investigate, but which was first considered by Ian Wilson and explored further by Charles Freeman, which I think may explain its provenance. My studies are far from complete, but I present an account of my progress, and an overview of the problems which still remain. However, I do not think one need get overexcited by the fact that the Shroud has not been exactly reproduced, nor that an exact method of construction has yet been demonstrated. The same is equally true of Stonehenge, and, of course, is also as true of an authentic Shroud as of a medieval one.

One of the most exciting events since the last issue for me was the receipt of as authentic a copy of a sample of the weave of the Shroud as two years research by one of Britain's most respected historical weavers could produce. It is only a small sample, so now I have to decide very carefully how to investigate it, the best to help understand the real thing.

My best wishes to all the members of the British Society for the Turin Shroud, as it embarks on the next phase of its existence with David Rolfe at the helm.

