

A 1984 TESTING: THE GOOD NEWS...

Although much remains as yet tentative and unofficial, the good news is of a strong likelihood of a new opportunity for scientific examination and testing of the Shroud during the autumn of 1984. For the first time ever it is envisaged that there should be British involvement in this exercise, sponsored by the British Society for the Turin Shroud. A British team would work alongside, and in partnership with, a fresh STURP contingent, and one being formed by a new U.S. group, ASSIST (see this *Newsletter*, page 6). Proposals for the precise personnel to be included in a British team are to be formulated by the end of February, and members with suggestions and possible useful contacts should submit these briefly to the Society Secretary not later than January 31, 1984. The accent will be on individuals professionally experienced in early textiles, in forensic analysis, and in the scientific analysis of archaeological and art objects, together with, of course, those experienced in the latest techniques of radiocarbon dating. A full summary, of British proposals will be published in the next issue of this *Newsletter*, due at the end of March.

RADIOCARBON DATING

In respect of radiocarbon dating, although there can as yet be no guarantee that this would be included in any autumn 1984 testing, members may be interested to know of current progress at the Oxford Research Laboratory. An excellent article explaining this is to be found in the *New Scientist* of 21 July 1983 under the title "Radiocarbon comes of age at Oxford", by Christopher Chippindale. According to Chippindale, by mid-May of this year Oxford was dating 90 per cent of samples of a known age to an accuracy of around 3 per cent, with only one in ten measurements in serious error. In order to improve reliability still further, the British Museum Research Laboratory is at this very time co-ordinating an exercise in parallel dating of ancient linen samples. No less than six carbon-dating laboratories - Brookhaven, Tucson and Rochester in the U.S.A., Oxford and Harwell here in England, and Bern in Switzerland - are each dating fragments from the same 3rd. Millennium B.C. piece of Egyptian linen. The object of the exercise is to determine the extent to which their datings will diverge one from the other. Results are due at the beginning of January 1984, and should provide an excellent guide to the reliability or otherwise that may be expected from the dating of Shroud samples.