

OBITUARY

British Society for the Turin Shroud

Chairman Rodney Hoare

1927-1997

No individual more gave the lie to caricature portrayals of the BSTS (*pace* the Picknett/Prince book) as some relic-obsessed Catholic mafia than the Society's Chairman, **Rodney Hoare**, who died on Friday 21 February, after a long illness. In terms of his personal standpoint on the Shroud Rodney was (a) a trained scientist; (b) an Anglican, and (c) very much his own man.

In his first book on the subject *The Testimony of the Shroud* published by Quartet in 1978 he described his having consulted with pathologists of the East Midlands Forensic Science Laboratory who persuaded him that the Shroud, although genuinely of someone crucified in the exact manner of Christ, showed the individual it once wrapped to have been still alive at the time he was laid in it. As a result, while Rodney upheld the Shroud's authenticity as the burial cloth of Jesus, he argued that neither the crucifixion nor the lance-thrust actually killed Jesus. He also argued for the exoneration of Judas Iscariot as Jesus's betrayer, Jesus himself having allegedly been party to Judas's approach to the Temple authorities.

While in other Shroud groups around the world such views might have caused Rodney's outright rejection, if not as a heretic, certainly as a *persona non grata*, it was characteristic of him never to try to impose his opinions, and his objectivity, common sense and sound grasp of constitutional niceties made him the natural choice first as the Society's deputy chairman, then as full Chairman from October 1989. When in the early 1990s the Society came under serious threat from the 'infiltrate, discredit and destroy' tactics of the Leonardo da Vinci cult it was Rodney who took the lead on the appropriate responses, both by letter and in person at the confrontational meeting of April 28, 1993. His leadership at this time was all the more heroic as he had already begun suffering from the debilitating 'ME' type symptoms that stayed with him until his death from what was diagnosed as acute viral encephalitis.

Rodney was born in Newport (Gwent) to a Royal Navy family in 1927. After education at Haileybury School he served four years with the British Army as part of the then compulsory national service, the later part of this time in India with the 1st KGV's own Gurkha Rifles, in which he attained the rank of Captain. He then won a place at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he gained his MA in Natural Sciences, and on graduating taught physics at Shrewsbury School for twenty years. Part of this time included a one year exchange in California and two years in Freetown, Sierra Leone training science teachers to develop techniques to teach science via television. On his returning to the UK he became a lecturer at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, training future teachers in educational technology.

On his retirement in 1985 he and his wife Jennifer moved to Salisbury where he quickly became involved in the Civic Society, reviving it from its previously moribund state, and

much raising its public profile on matters of the preservation of Salisbury's historical heritage, including its incomparable Cathedral. He was also a former chairman of the Salisbury Talking Newspaper Association for the Blind and Partially Sighted, and did voluntary work for the Salisbury Citizens Advice Bureau.

Besides *Testimony of the Shroud* published in 1978, Rodney's Shroud publications include *A Piece of Cloth* in 1984, *The Turin Shroud is Genuine* published by Souvenir in 1994, and a historical novel, *The Final Witness*, self-published from his home in Salisbury in 1989. His funeral was at St. Thomas's Church, Salisbury on Wednesday March 5. At the service the Society was represented by General Secretary Dr. Michael Clift and Committee member Miss Gresham Wells, and in lieu of floral tributes a donation of £30 was made on the Society's behalf to the St. Thomas's Restoration Fund. Rodney is survived by his widow Jennifer, three grown-up children and eight grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.