

## **Gilly Beton**

Diverse individuals, we met - at dawn! - at Stansted, but during the trip we became an invisibly linked group. Our pilgrimage to Turin had a perfect shape. The foundations were laid by a guided tour of the city - a broad look from the coach and then a more detailed look at the historical centre on foot. A sharper focus came with each one of us visiting the Shroud Museum at some time during the first two days with our editor, Mark Guscini, who has an intimate knowledge of every single exhibit there. Our preparations were completed by two spell-binding evenings spent listening to Mark - one of the world's leading authorities on the Shroud and the Sudarium of Oviedo - joined on the first evening by Aldo Guerreschi, the administrator of the 1931 Enrie negatives, who has perfected an established photographic enhancement technique to clearly visualize the three-dimensional characteristics actually encoded in the Shroud image. Aldo also talked of his theory that the folds in the cloth indicate its storage in a jar as used at Qumran in the first century.

We sat watching the two experts explaining and sharing their research with us, their laptops balanced on their knees for us all to see, all questions answered so fully and generously - a Shroud conference specially for us! It was given it transpired by two individuals both of whom had left their respective hospital beds after operations an incredibly short time before - bless them both. On the second of these two amazing evenings, amongst other things we learnt from Mark more details about his research into the Sudarium of Oviedo and its connection with the Shroud; a further bonus was that during that day Mark had visited the Shroud (he had to return home before us), so that evening he also shared the complete experience with us, thus enabling us to be fully prepared for our visit the following day.

Thanks to Mark, we were ready with our 'deflashed' cameras to obtain our own personal record of the moment and then to have the space to experience those moments of time, out of time, as we stood before the image. We dined together each night, pursued our own objects during the days and enjoyed it all; most of us I suspect surprised and enchanted by Turin, not at all 'industrial' but graceful, clean and above all so green, with such kind people to help us on our way, not to mention the Turin trademark of the bercerin chocolate drink!. The enormous task of organising it all had been down to our membership secretary - thanks to him we were able to have the experience of a lifetime and we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for all his work, for bringing us Mark and Aldo, and his perseverance through thick, thin and volcano crises; bless you Reggie.

Our grateful thanks too to Tony Camilleri of Leisure Travel who led our group so gracefully and unobtrusively but very clearly and with great sensitivity. Thank you everyone and thank you all the new friends we made for such a wonderful time, with that ever-ever-to-be-present moment of complete stillness at its centre.