

The Shroud of Turin and Oxford University

Pam Moon. August 15th 2019

The 2019 International Conference on the Shroud of Turin:

“Science, Theology and the Turin Shroud.”

Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Canada

This paper examines the 1988 radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin and the opinions of Oxford University academics. It looks at the dangers associated with the separation of scientific tools and historical disciplines. Using ^{14}C as an isolated, single test resulted in the determination that the Shroud was medieval. However, that result created a historical vacuum for the Shroud which could not be filled by authentic medieval sources and provenance and it does not compare with the strength of historical evidence that the Shroud of Turin was the burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth.

The core of the paper looks at the most probable reasons why the sample chosen for radiocarbon date was flawed, using Oxford University's own photographs. There is strong evidence that, following the fire of 1532 AD, the sample was disinfected, stitched, repaired (on at least three occasions) and dyed. The paper ends with the good news of 2019 that the Oxford Journal *Archaeometry* has published the paper *Radiocarbon Dating of the Turin Shroud: New Evidence from Raw Data*; T. Casabianca; E Marinelli; G. Pernagallo; B. Torrisi. That paper concludes: ‘A statistical analysis of the Nature article and the raw data strongly suggests that homogeneity is lacking in the data and that the procedure should be reconsidered.’



Oxford University is one of the finest Universities in the world. It has the beautiful motto, Dominus illuminatio mea: The Lord is my Light. This stems from its Catholic foundations in the Middle Ages. In 1988 the University was involved in the radiocarbon date of the Shroud of Turin.¹ Two other laboratories, at Zurich and Arizona, were involved, but the focus of this talk is Oxford University.

Before we look at the radiocarbon date I want to look briefly at the basis of all knowledge. This poem from Rudyard Kipling sums it up:

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who. ²

This understanding of knowledge is also referred to as the 5Ws: What, Who, When, Where, Why. When I studied history in the 1970 it was a very different discipline to today. We learned dates, what happened and attempted to understand the course of history. Now history has become more like a science. You cannot make a historical statement without sources and provenance. You have to assess how reliable the texts are and the motives of the writer.

If we assume, as most people did until 1988, that the Shroud wrapped Jesus of Nazareth, then there are simple answers to the 5 Ws:

What	Burial Shroud
Who	Jesus of Nazareth
When	30-33 AD
Where	Jerusalem
Why	
Why is too complex for this short paper.	

There were multiple sources by 300 AD including Greek and Latin copies of New Testament. For example, the image right is the stunningly beautiful Codex Sinaiticus, a complete New Testament, kept at the British Library. It dates to the middle of the 4th Century.



There are multiple points of congruence between the biblical text and the Shroud of Turin. It is a Visual Gospel.

I created two posters which demonstrate the similarities between the Biblical accounts of Jesus and what is visible on the Shroud (see appendix 1 and 2 for detail).



When the ¹⁴C announcement was made, Oxford professors were pictured. Professor Edward Hall is on the left. Professor Michael Tite who had coordinated the dating from the British Museum is in the middle. He went on to become Professor of Archaeology at Oxford. Dr. Hedges, also of Oxford, is on the right. So how did the academics from Oxford explain the nature of the Shroud? What were their 5 Ws?



Professor Edward Hall said: (Someone) “just got a bit of linen, faked it up and flogged it.”³

There are problems with this hypothesis, notably: there is no who, where, why or how. ‘Faking it up’ suggests a paint technique but STuRP science in 1978 showed there was no paint. Michael Tite backed this up in a 2016 BBC interview⁴ when he said: “There is no real evidence for paint.” Finally, the Shroud has never been sold for money.

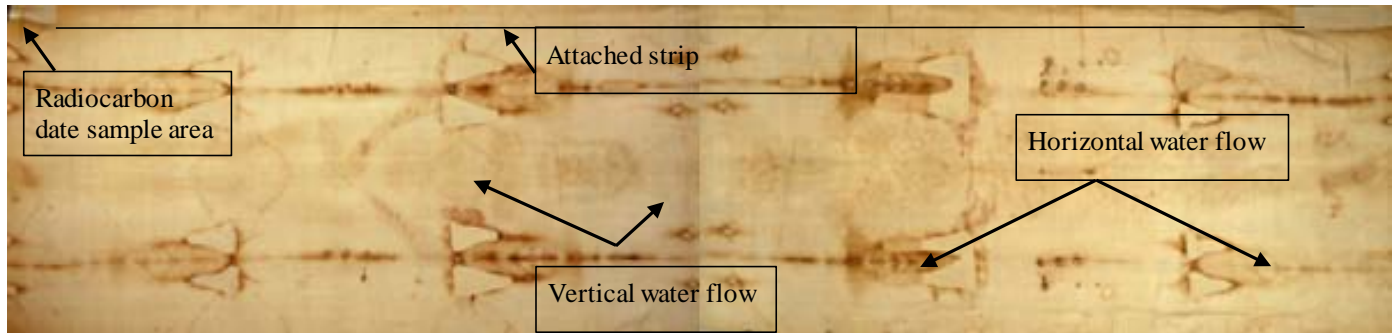
Professor Michael Tite’s own explanation was given in the same BBC Radio interview:

“I don’t believe it’s the Shroud but I think it is highly probable there was a body in there. It was the time of the Crusades. A very appropriate way of humiliating a Christian would be to crucify him, like Christ. I think that is a very real possibility. And then the cloth is put over the body and sort of bodily fluids resulting from the stress of a crucifixion react and cause this dis-colouration and ultimately a certain degree of decay in the Shroud.”⁴

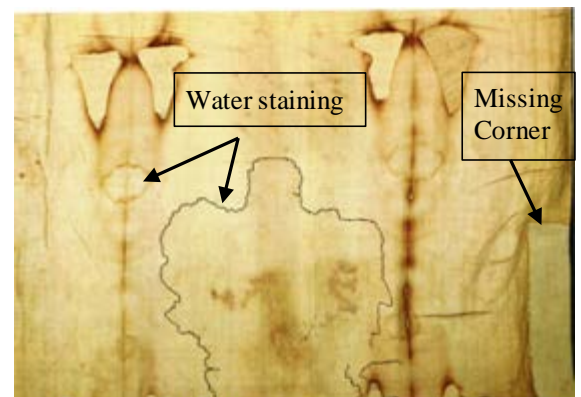
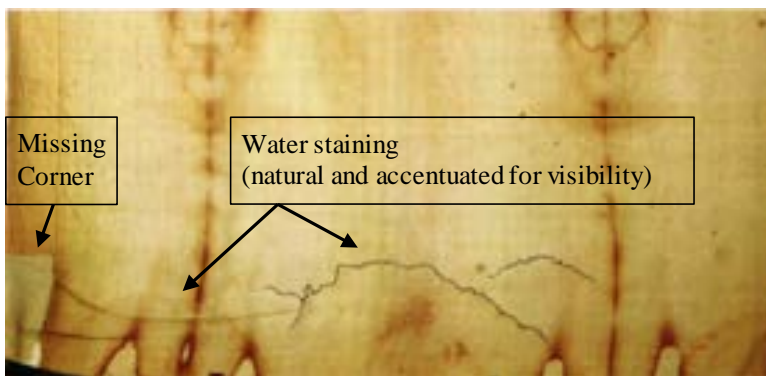
There are problems with this hypothesis too: there is no historical record of the crucifixion of any Crusader. Professor Tite, like Professor Hall, does not supply information for who, when, where, or why. There are no historical sources or provenance for such an event. Finally, there is no evidence that bodily fluids create any image, even under duress.

My journey to discover more about the radiocarbon date began when the great Shroud film maker David Rolfe said in 2012: ‘The radiocarbon date is like a “dead hand” on people’s interest in the Shroud.

I started to examine the folding patterns evident from the damage to the cloth. There are two major water stain patterns. The one above the head and on the centre of the chest was created when the cloth was folded and then stored vertically and water came from the bottom up.



The water stains surrounding the burn marks were created when the cloth was stored horizontally in Chambéry in 1532 AD. Douse water came from the top to extinguish the fire. The carbon date sample was taken from material adjacent to the missing corner on the top left-hand side. So why are two corners missing from the Shroud? If it was fire damage all the corners would be missing. The usual explanations given are not convincing. It was unlikely to be wind damage from an exposition or the work relic hunters. Why would someone want a relic from the strip attached and not the real thing? It is likely that douse water and then subsequent bacterial damage to the cloth led to the cut corners. You can see in the images below that the water stain patterns at the ends of the cloth match the height of the missing corners. Chambéry in December was swampy with very high humidity levels raising the likelihood of bacteria. If a disinfectant were used in the corner, the radiocarbon date would be null and void because a disinfected cloth cannot be carbon dated.



The Lier Shroud, (below left) created in 1516 AD, shows feet very clearly drawn. They are not visible today on the Shroud (below right). This further points to water damage as a casual factor for the missing corners.



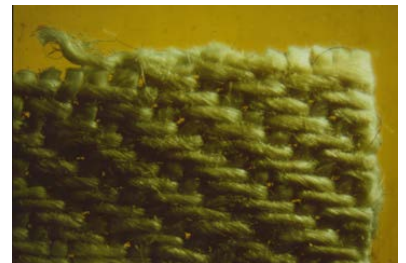
I began an email correspondence in 2013 with Professor Christopher Bronk Ramsey, head of Oxford University's Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit. The first question was: In the light of water damage, why wasn't the Shroud sample autoclaved to remove endospores? Endospores are some of the oldest bacteria in the world and have been found on Mummy linen. They have a very hard calcium carbonate exterior and can regenerate from a hibernation state. In hospitals, all linens are autoclaved or heat treated at very high temperatures before a surgical procedure as it is the only way to ensure the removal of endospores. No-one would have an operation without the autoclaving of the theatre linens. Professor Ramsey's response was 'This would be removed by the processes used for routine dating.' I would disagree with that.

It became clear in the correspondence that Oxford University had photographs, so when a friend suggested the Freedom of Information route, I submitted a FOI request for data and photographs on May 1st 2014. I heard back from the compliance officer Max Tod:

'I am writing to confirm that we are processing your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act and that we shall reply no later than the statutory deadline of 30 May.'

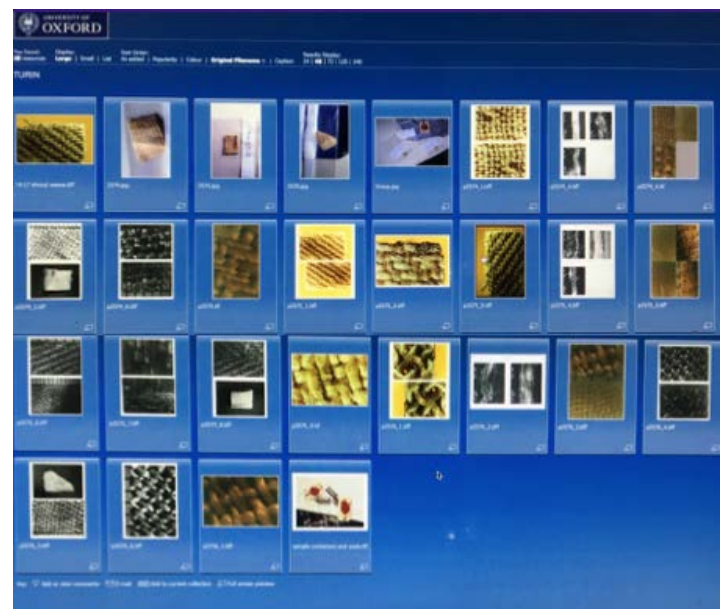
On 30 May I had the following e-mail:

'The Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit has started to publish this data on their website. The unit has not had time to scan all the photographs. We will let you know when the remaining data is published'

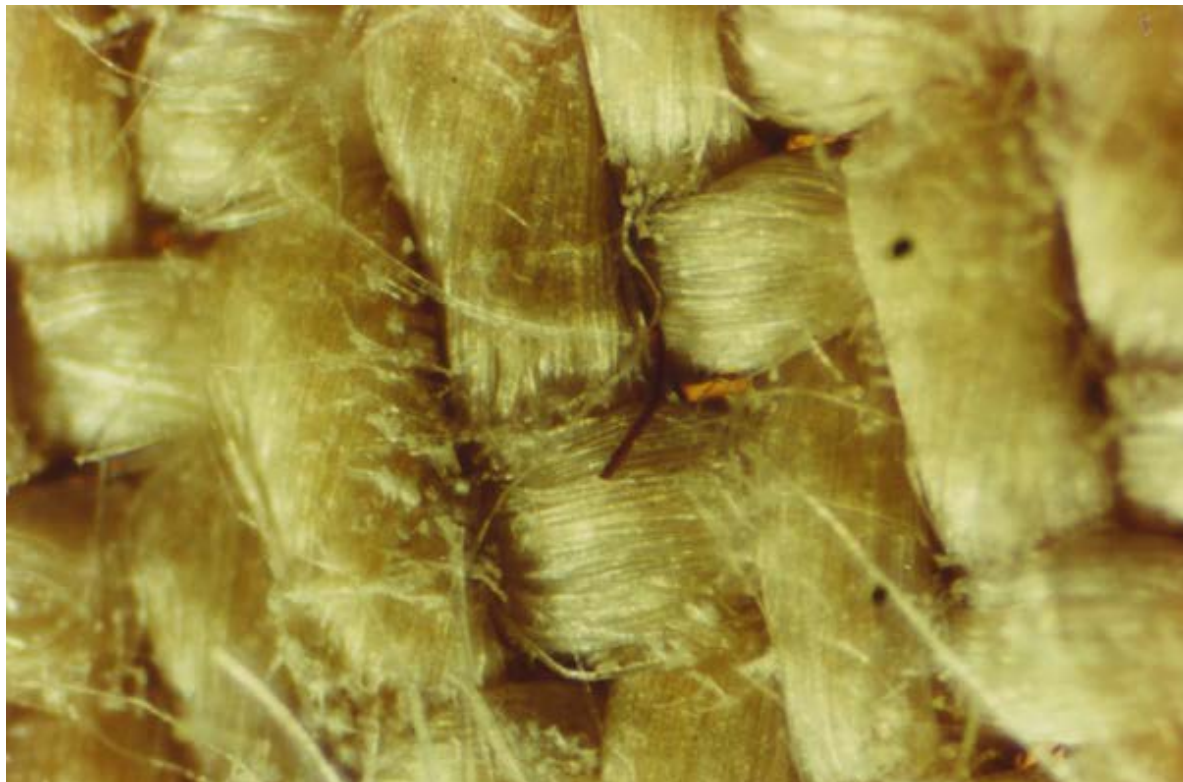


In British law organisations must comply with FOI requests so this non-compliance was very unusual. Two images were published: the image right and a control. With Max Todd, I arranged a week-long extension until June 6th 2014.

On 7th June, the images appeared (right). This was mainly 24 photographs giving eight images each of the Shroud and two controls, Thebes and Nubia. A third control, the medieval fibres of the cope of Louis of Anjou, had been given to the laboratories by Professor Michael Tite at the last moment without the permission of the Catholic church. There were not enough sealed containers so it was sent in paper bags. This fourth sample was not photographed by Oxford University and the fibres were tested non-sequentially with the three main samples. This irregularity puts question marks over the results.



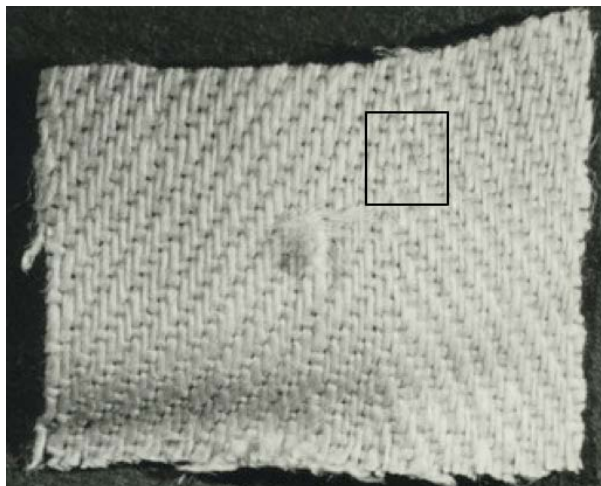
One of the images is of great significance. I didn't realise the importance of this image initially. It was misclassified in the FOI as a control but as this is herringbone weave it must be the Shroud. If you look at the Oxford photographs it is now p2575_9. _8 is the highest number for the controls. Professor Ramsey said he classified it as a control because that is what it said on the back of the photo, but he readily acknowledged it was a Shroud image and changed the classification. We'll come back to that in a bit.



I sent the link of all the photos to Donna Campbell, a textile expert, who works for one of the oldest linen manufacturers and weavers, Thomas Ferguson Irish Linen. Donna Campbell's first question to Professor Ramsey in the course of her research was 'What did the Shroud measure?' In the reply, we discovered the Shroud was weighed but not measured. There didn't appear to be any detailed analysis on the Shroud material published by Oxford University: i.e. chemical or bacterial reports. No samples were retained to examine retrospectively. Donna Campbell wrote a long report entitled: 'Consideration to the Uniformity and Effects of the Fabric in the Shroud of Turin.'⁵

The report concluded: 'There are signs in the Shroud sample that direct the notion of mending or reweaving of the actual woven fabric.' In the days where we would mend a sock, stitches would go in and out of the material, often under the surface, to repair and stabilise the fabric. Donna Campbell went on in her conclusions: 'Consideration to the black thread and its function. The suggestion that the thread could have been used to reinforce the fabric. No such thread is obvious in the control samples.'

Below left is an example of one of the black threads. There is a larger black thread in the centre of the full sample image (below right and with more detail page 8).



Black threads were known to be stitched on to the Shroud by Blessed Sebastian Valfrè in 1694 AD. The image, right, shows him on his knees doing the mending. He had a great devotion to the Shroud and it was noted that he wept as he worked. He said:

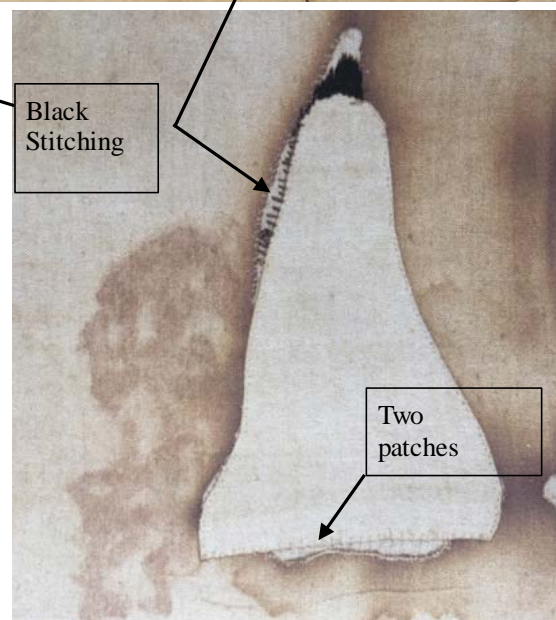
“The Cross received the living Jesus and gave Him back to us dead; the Shroud received the dead Jesus and restored Him to us alive.”⁶



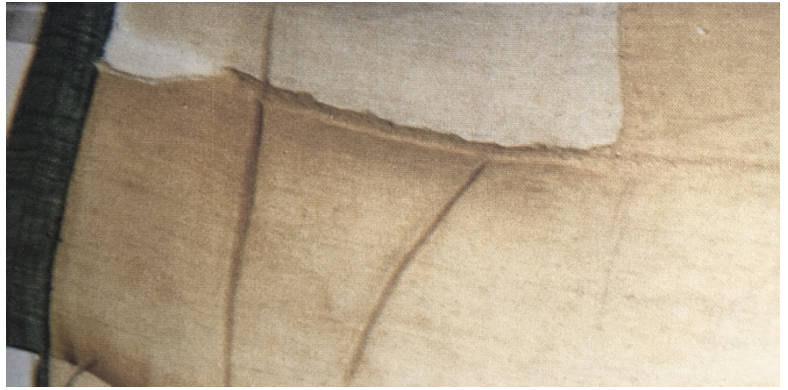
We have evidence of Blessed Sebastian’s workmanship in Barrie Schwartz’s beautiful copies of the Shroud. This is the one I own. The large corner area that is missing (right) was stitched to the Holland cloth with black stitching. Detail below.



If you look at the area by the chest wound there are two patches, one on top of the other and beautiful, neat stitching, alongside Blessed Sebastian’s handiwork. He was not good at sewing. It is believed that the nuns were very embarrassed by his workmanship, thinking people might assume they were responsible. It is logical to assume, given the Oxford photographic evidence of black threads that he had a go at mending the Shroud sample corner too.

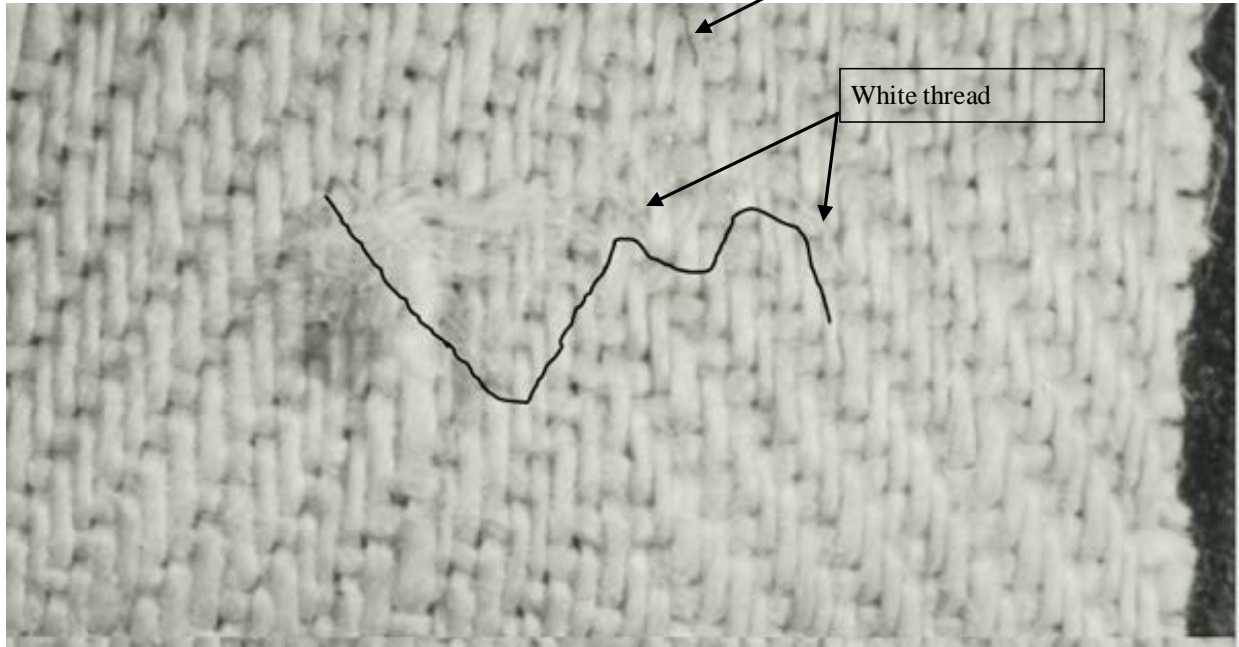


However, other than a few threads, there is very little evidence of Blessed Sebastian's handwork in the corner taken for radiocarbon date, so this corner was probably re-repaired at a date later than 1694 AD. In fact, the Oxford photos show evidence of much less visible stitching; for example, the long off-white thread (below) runs across the surface of the sample. I have traced its course with the dark line. This cannot be original to the cloth.

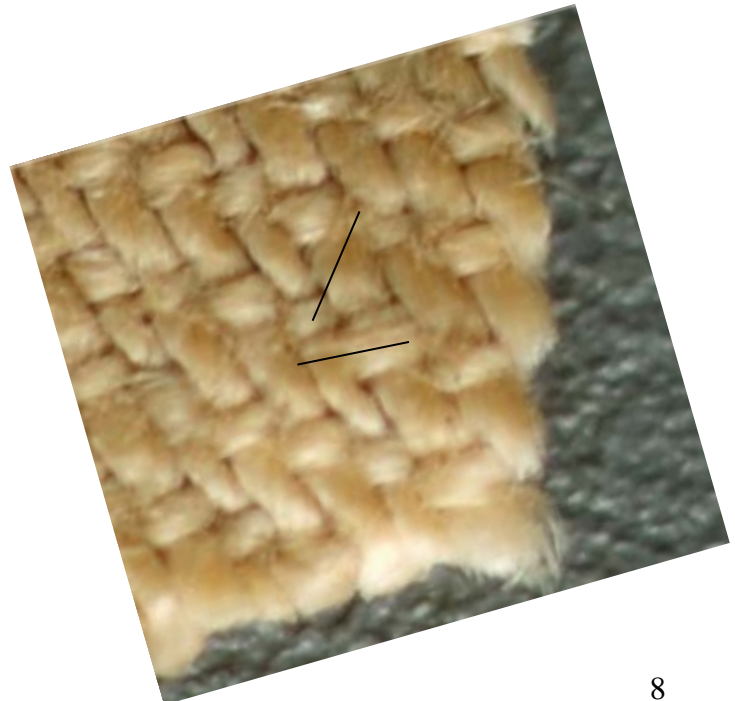
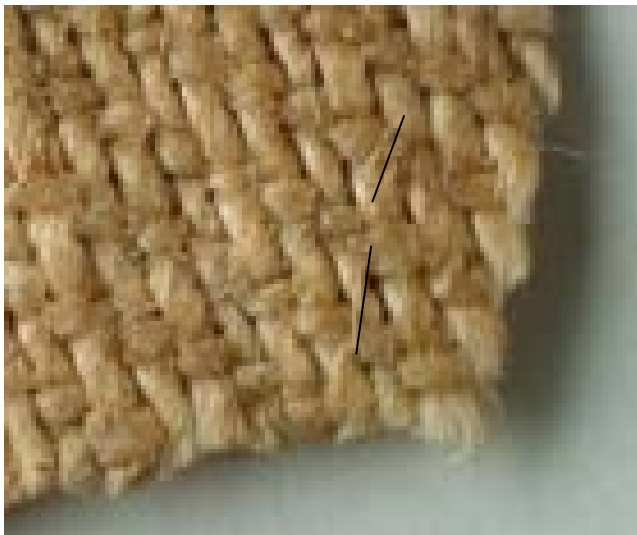


Black thread

White thread



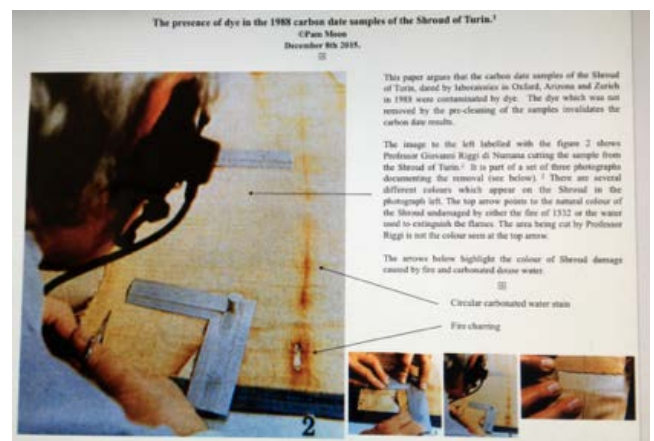
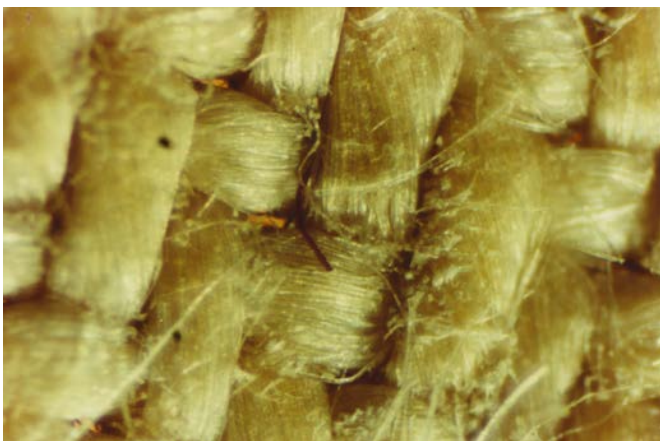
Barrie Schwartz's photographs of the Arizona sample⁷ identify the same type of thread. It is too thin to be part of the natural yarn. One thread rotated as Barrie moved the sample as he photographed (see black lines indicating the position of the white thread below).



Invisible reweave.

Joe Marino and Sue Benford discovered evidence of invisible reweave in the radiocarbon corner of the Shroud in 2000 AD.⁸ The Oxford photographs certainly suggest mending. If we can see stitches on the surface how many more are underneath the surface? And was their role to stabilise the corner?

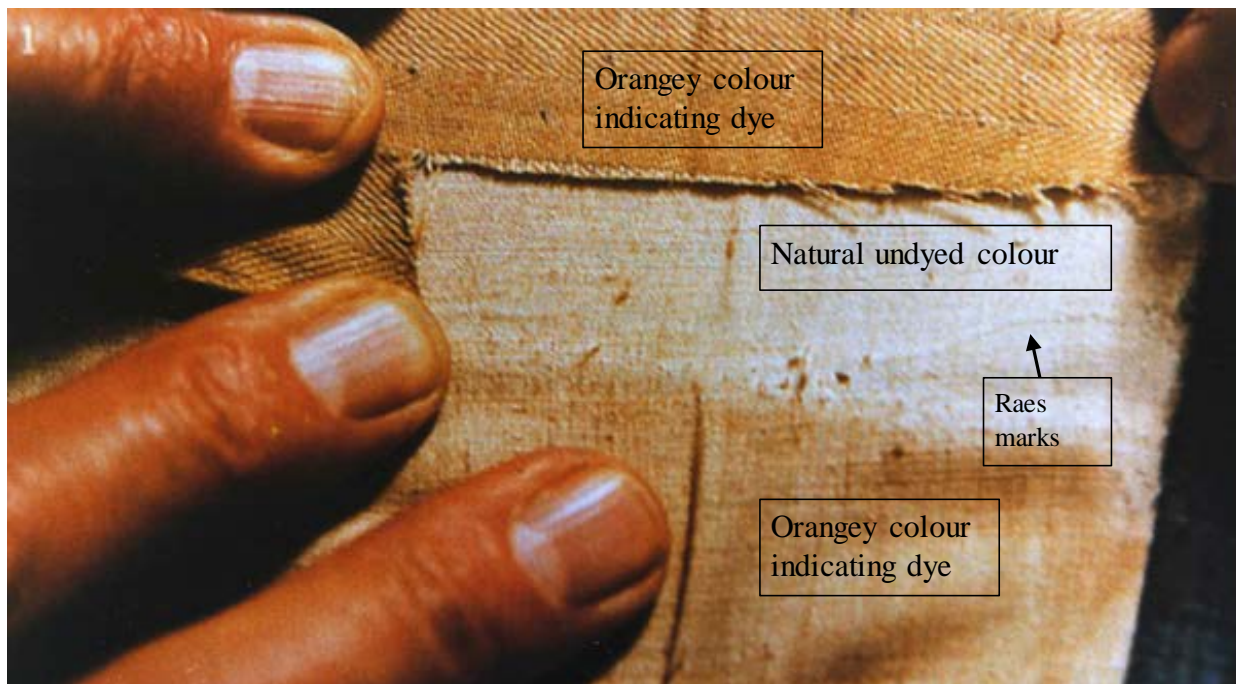
Returning to the image p2575_9. There is a black thread visible but there is also a lot of gluey looking contaminants. What were they? I researched this further and was helped by some amazing Shroud scholars: Joe Marino, Barrie Schwartz, William Meacham, the archaeologist who helped devise the protocols for the radiocarbon date, and Paul Maloney.⁹ From the resulting article, I would like to look next at the idea that the gluey substance visible on p2575_9 is dye and gum.



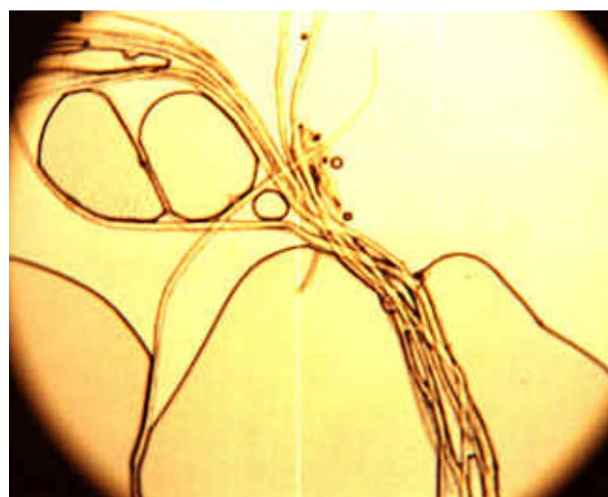
The image below shows Professor Riggi cutting the sample from the Shroud in 1988 (image © Lino Salatino). Notice that the sample is not the same colour as the cloth near his ear. It is much nearer in colour to the burn marks, seen to his right, although we know the Shroud wasn't burnt in the corner because only two corners are missing. Here (below right) you can see a stiffness to the material and an orange colour.



The picture below shows the cloth after the removal of the sample. Look carefully at the Holland backing cloth. You can see the indent where the Raes sample was removed in 1973. You can also see that the backing cloth is two colours; one the colour of undyed material, the other a more orangey stain. This can only be dye. What is significant is that the Shroud above the cut is the same colour as the dye. So that corner was dyed.



What was the purpose of the dye? Perhaps it was to make this area match the colour created by fire and douse water damage? That would create a consistent colour around the patches and missing areas of the cloth. What was the dye? Following the work of Joe Marino and Sue Benford, the great STuRP Shroud scholar Dr Ray Rogers discovered dye in the radiocarbon date corner and Raes sample. He widely published his results before he sadly died in 2005. The dye he discovered in the fibres was madder root seen in its raw form (right). Below are images of thread 14 from the Raes sample taken by Rogers. They show the fibres before (left), and after (right), the application of 6N of hydrochloric acid.¹⁰ The laboratories preparing the Shroud samples in 1988 did not know dye was present and did not use anywhere near that concentration. They used around 1M HCl.



This is thread 1 from the Raes sample showing a splice of linen and cotton. The cotton (the more orangey left end) has absorbed the dye better than the linen on the right. I was blessed at the conference at St Lewis to sit by Robert Villarreal who discovered the two ends of the thread were different materials bound together by a gum.¹¹

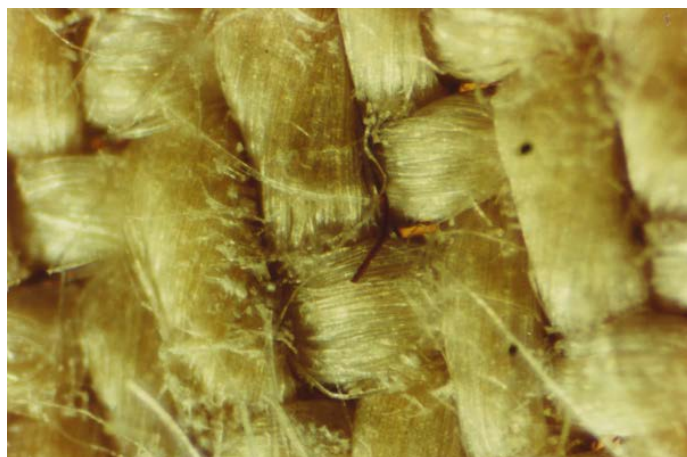


What was the gum? Ray Rogers suggested several alternatives. I went to see Teresinha Roberts,¹² a world-wide expert on plant dyes and she explained that linen is very hard to dye. First, it needs to have a mordent of alum to make the fibres receptive to dye. A combination of madder root dye and gum tragacanth (right), is then used to bind the dye to the mordant. Other less adherent gums do not work with linen very effectively. Ray Rogers had suggested tragacanth.¹³



Gum Tragacanth is made up of two different chemical components. The first is tragacanthin which is soluble in water. Rogers noted that some of the gum was water soluble. It also contains bassorin which is insoluble in water and swells to form a gel. Is this the gel that is so clearly visible on the surface of the Oxford photograph of the Shroud sample? Gum tragacanth is only removed from material with concentrated hydrochloric acid.

Oxford University photographs appear to endorse Ray Roger's research. This means the sample from original Shroud material was tested alongside mending repairs done in 1532, 1694 and later, spliced cotton fibres, and a stiffening concoction of dye and gum which had not been identified and was not removed.



Dr Ray Roger's conclusions said 'If the Raes/radiocarbon sample was stained with a well-known coloring composition (and no other part of the Shroud is), the radiocarbon sample cannot be valid for dating the time at which the cloth was produced.'¹⁴

David Rolfe and I made a film on the matter entitled *A Grave Injustice*.¹⁵ David wrote to Professor Ramsey and Professor Tite with the film and received a reply along the lines: There are not enough contaminants to make a 1,000-year difference.



Returning to the basis of historical knowledge and the poem of Rudyard Kipling, I had a letter printed in the Catholic Herald in August 2017 (appendix 3). It asked the question – where are the sources and provenance for a Medieval Shroud? On the back of the letter, I wrote to the head of Archaeology at Oxford, Professor Julia Lee-Thorp. She is the head of one of the top-ranking Schools of Archaeology in the world. I asked the following: ‘If you continue to endorse the carbon-14 results for the Shroud perhaps your department could supply me with the historical sources which underpin a medieval date for this extraordinary cloth. Similarly, as Professor Tite argues the image on the Shroud was created by “bodily fluids,” please could you tell me if you are aware of any other archaeological examples of this process?’ I received a reply below:

‘Radiocarbon dating is based on radioactive decay of ^{14}C as you probably know; it’s based on a pure physics phenomenon. The amount of ^{14}C decays over time and we measure the remaining ^{14}C by accelerator mass spectrometry to calculate age. I should also add that samples undergo rigorous cleaning to eliminate any carbon-containing contaminants, nothing else matters. There is no ambiguity about this particular result and it is not a “position” as you suggest in your letter.

If you are unhappy with the radiocarbon date, you should consider commissioning another dating programme; there are several excellent radiocarbon units in this country and round the world. We have never pretended to be resolving all the possible problems related to the shroud; we have merely analysed it for ^{14}C and provided the result. I consider the matter closed.’

I appreciate Oxford academics are frustrated by Shroudies like me. However, she didn’t answer any of the 5 Ws or provide any sources or provenance to underpin a medieval Shroud. So where is the history? Has historical study been completely overtaken by science? I tried again and wrote to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson, asking the following: ‘If the Shroud is medieval as the University claims, what is it? Where is the history? Where are your reliable sources? Secondly, how trustworthy is your methodology and physics? How can you claim to understand the sample tested when no textile, chemical, microscopic or bacterial reports were undertaken?’ I received an answer from the Senior Executive officer Dr Bethan Williams:

‘I am writing in response to your recent letter to the Vice-Chancellor. I have also spoken with Professor Lee-Thorp, (with whom you have already communicated) about the matters you raise in regard to the Shroud of Turin.

As Professor Lee-Thorp made clear in her letter, we do not claim to have answers to all the questions which the Shroud and its study may raise. However, the results of the radiocarbon dated undertaken by the Oxford Accelerator Radiocarbon Unit are not ones we can refute. This being the case we have no further comments to make at this time, and consider our correspondence in this matter closed.'

Oxford University is one of the finest academic institutions in the world but personally I felt the lack of answers did not do justice to its reputation. Let's return then to the one hypothesis from Oxford University staff that we have; Michael Tite's. "It wrapped a Medieval Crusader." And "bodily fluids resulting from the stress of a crucifixion react and cause this discolouration and ultimately a certain degree of decay in the Shroud." We have already looked at some of the problems with this hypothesis but there is another problem. The hypothesis is very similar to the Freemasonry teaching about the Shroud. Professor Tite denied he is a Freemason in the BBC interview⁴ but the similarities deserve some examination. The Freemasonry understanding of the Shroud is explained in the books by Robert Lomas, a physicist at Bradford University and Christopher Knight: *The Hiram Key; The Second Messiah*. A brief synopsis of the argument given by Lomas was reported in The New Scotsman:

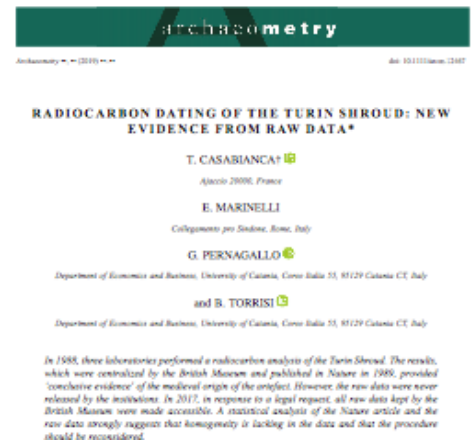
"The cloth was used to wrap Jacques de Molay, the leader of a monastic order known as the Knights Templar." "The image on the Shroud was created through a process known as the Volckringer effect, where heat, sweat, acids and oxygen-free radicals scorch the cloth."¹⁶

So, who was Jacques de Molay and is there any historical credibility in this hypothesis? Jacques de Molay was a Crusader; head of the Knights Templar, who are believed to have been custodians of the Shroud of Jesus. He was arrested on 13th October 1307 AD in France and tortured about the secrets of the Knights Templar. Freemasons believe that he was crucified on the night of his arrest and, surviving the crucifixion, created the Shroud of Turin with sweat and other bodily fluids. Jacques de Molay was burnt at the stake in 1314.

However, was he the creator of the Shroud? There is no historical evidence Jacques de Molay was crucified. There are no reliable sources. Secondly, if humans create images on cloth why aren't there millions of examples? Finally, here is a contemporary picture of de Molay being burnt at the stake. He had short hair and a tonsure. He does not look anything like the Man of the Shroud.



Oxford University deserves respect, so this research been disappointing. However, there is now huge cause for hope. In 2019 the very eminent Oxford University journal, *Archaeometry*, published the article: *Radiocarbon dating of the Turin Shroud: New Evidence from Raw Data* (see right). The authors of the paper are: Dr Tristan Casabianca; Prof. Emanuela Marinelli, Dr. Giuseppe Pernagallo, Prof. Benedetto Torrisi. Tristan will be speaking on his findings at this very conference.



The results are as follows:

‘The statistical analysis of the raw data shows the Shroud sample was not homogenous’ and ‘The radiocarbon dating needs to be re-done.’¹⁷

For me it is highly significant that Oxford University Archaeology Department chose to publish this research. A new dawn may be opening for Shroud research. However, a few questions remain. The logical next step would be to entrust the Shroud to another radiocarbon dating. But is it wise to rush headlong into a second test? The leader of STuRP John Jackson said at the St Lewis conference that if we had another erroneous test on the Shroud no-one would take it seriously again. If we do not understand the mechanism for image creation how can we be sure we know the cloth’s other secrets?

In my opinion, there are a few other points to consider. The involvement of Freemasonry in the events of 1988 had been raised by Cardinal Ballestrero, the former Archbishop of Turin, in a newspaper article: ‘At this point, Father Cavaglia asked Cardinal Ballestrero whether Freemasonry had not played a certain role in all this campaign. "Without question," came the Cardinal's reply.¹⁷ Freemasonry is less powerful than it was in 1988, but it has not yet disappeared.

Second, is there currently a level playing field in academia? Any future test would depend on the neutrality of the scientists involved. University departments are increasingly liberal and anti-Christian. Would they want to appear to validate Resurrection?

Finally, turning the whole debate on its head, there is a final question: Why did God allow the radiocarbon date results? In other words, were there any benefits to the Shroud from the results? There are a few advantages. First, Jesus usually rejected the need for proof and asked for faith from his followers. Ultimately many people see radiocarbon date as the means of proof for the Shroud. Second, the results allowed restoration of the cloth to take place in 2002 AD. This restoration was controversial, but it had the advantage that the old backing cloth which was darkening was removed. This has made the image clearer to

see. Finally, the results allow the Shroud to hide in plain sight. Jesus said “Seek and you will find.” Anyone can find this image today with a quick internet search. At the same time, the Shroud is, to some extent, protected from those who would wish to destroy it. The paper, Treasures of Constantinople, considers the history of the Shroud in Constantinople where it was often in danger of destruction.

To conclude, may Oxford University continue to be an outstanding University on the world stage. I hope, at some point, the University will completely distance itself from the events of 1988 in relationship to the Shroud of Turin.

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:27-28

One of the officials nearby slapped him in the face.
John 18:22

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Mark 15:16-17

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. John 9:1

I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Isaiah 50:6

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull. John 19:17

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.' Luke 23:26

They took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." John 19:23-24

Pam Moon. Shroud images ©1978
Barrie M. Schwartz Collection,
STERA, Inc.

The Passion of Jesus Christ

Facial injuries, Mocking, Crown of thorns,
Flogging, Shoulder injuries, Dislocation,
Nakedness, Nails to Hands and Feet, Dehydration,
Agony, Spear wound.

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are
out of joint.
My heart has turned
to wax;
it has melted within me.
My mouth is dried up
like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to
the roof of my mouth'
Psalm 22: 14-15
Jesus said, "I am thirsty."
John 19:28

Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains
encircles me;
they pierce my hands
and my feet.
Psalm 22: 14-16

My bones suffer mortal
agony as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"
Psalm 42:10

Jesus called out with a
loud voice, "Father, into
your hands I commit my
spirit." When he had said
this, he breathed his last.
Luke 23:46

Now it was the day of
Preparation, and the next day
was to be a special Sabbath.
Because the Jewish leaders
did not want the bodies left
on the crosses during the
Sabbath, they asked Pilate to
have the legs broken and the
bodies taken down.
But when they came to Jesus
and found that he was already
dead, they did not break his
legs. Instead, one of the
soldiers pierced Jesus' side
with a spear, bringing a
sudden flow of blood and
water.' John 19:33-34.

'When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left.' Luke 23:33.

'It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: 'The King of the Jews.'
Mark 15: 25-26

'They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.'
Zachariah 12:10.

Light, Love and the Temple of God

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Genesis 1:3

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:4-5

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:4

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the Face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

Jesus answered them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 3:19

Jesus said, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37-38

One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. John 19:34

The water flowed out toward the right side of the temple to the south of the altar. Ezekiel 47:1

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Revelation 22:1

Pam Moon. Stroud Images © 1978 Barrie M Schwartz Collection. SIERA Inc

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. Every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Extracts Isaiah 9: 2-6

The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment Psalm 104:2

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. 1 Corinthians 13: 12

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3: 16

Letters emails

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Due to space constraints, please keep correspondence below 250 words, longer letters may be published online



Kipling and the Turin Shroud mystery

SIR – Thank you for your excellent cover story on the Shroud of Turin by Fr Dwight Longenecker (August 4).

The main problem, if we trust the carbon-14 dating of the Shroud of Turin, is that we need to find a sensible medieval solution for what it is. A starting place is the suggestions put forward by the carbon-14 scientists themselves. Professor Edward Hall from Oxford said someone “got a bit of linen, faked it up and flogged it”. As we can’t make a Shroud today, with all the technology available to us in the 21st century, it is unlikely it is a work of art.

Professor Michael Tite, then of the British Museum, said in a BBC interview that “there is no real evidence for paint” and “there was a body in there”. He continued: “It was the time of the Crusades. A very appropriate way of humiliating a Christian would be to crucify him, like Christ ... then the cloth is put over the body and ... bodily fluids resulting from the stress of a crucifixion react and cause this discolouration and ultimately a certain degree of decay in the Shroud.”

A problem with this explanation is that it is difficult to find any historical evidence that Crusaders were crucified, apart from the Freemasonry legend of the alleged crucifixion and survival of Jacques de Molay, grandmaster of the Knight’s Templar, on October 13, 1307. In an interesting quirk of history the carbon-14 results were announced on October 13, 1988.

Rudyard Kipling wrote: “I keep six honest serving-men / (They taught me all I knew); / Their names are What and Why and When / And How and Where and Who.” It is wise advice. If we believe that the Shroud wrapped Jesus of Nazareth, there are extensive answers to all Kipling’s questions except “how”, because we still don’t know scientifically how the image was created. If it wrapped a medieval Crusader, we have no

COMMENT OF THE WEEK

What we lose when Holy Days are moved

SIR – Fr Matthew Pittam’s article on Marian devotion (August 18) makes an interesting point, namely that abandoning traditional devotions to Our Lady did nothing to advance Christian unity, and resulted in a whole generation having little or no experience of the power of praying to Our Lady.

I think the same argument also applies to the liturgical calendar. I find it incredible that local bishops decide whether crucial feast days such as the Epiphany, the Ascension, Corpus Christi, the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception should be Holy Days of Obligation. Presumably, this change was made in order to encourage a greater turnout on the nearest Sundays. In fact, it has done nothing of the sort and resulted in many of these great feasts being devalued. It has also left a whole generation of Catholics with no real sense of why and when these feast days are celebrated.

Let’s support the rededication of England as Mary’s Dowry, and the return of celebrating our great feast days on their proper dates.

James J McDevitt
Edinburgh

historically reliable answers to any of Kipling’s questions. The short film *A Grave Injustice* by David Rolfe, available on YouTube, examines some of the reasons why we should question the carbon-14 results.

October 13, 1917 was the date of the apparition of Our Lady at Fatima. I am praying that Our Lady will intercede to shed light on the origins of the Shroud of Turin.

Pam Moon
By email

Uniting Ireland

SIR – I may have missed something, but nowhere have I seen explored the ancient and obvious solution to the ex-EU borders problem of the establishment of a single (presumably federal) national government for the whole island of Ireland.

The old Unionist slogan of “Home Rule means Rome Rule” surely no longer applies, given the state of Catholicism in Ireland for a start, and the benefits of scrapping this nonsensical border on a permanent basis would be this generation’s historic contribution to peace and justice in a troubled world.

A proudly united Ireland, perhaps with a new capital at

St Patrick’s city of Armagh, could decide for itself whether or not to be a member of the EU, ending the ridiculous debate over hard and soft borders which is taking so much of our politicians’ time.

J T Miller
By email

Dunkirk’s mistake

SIR – I shared Ed West’s return to his 14-year old self when I saw *Dunkirk* (Arts & Books, August 4). The stunning aerial sequences brought to mind the film *Battle of Britain*, made between showers in the rainy summer of 1968; by contrast, 1940 was a magnificent summer, weather-wise.

Personally, my only disappointment with *Dunkirk* was the sequence when our weary troops all flop asleep on the train, having been delivered from the beaches over the Channel. This film had great attention to detail, until our heroes are seen in a late 1960s/70s British Railways carriage with bright blue seating. The irony is that a more authentic-looking carriage can be seen outside when the 1940s schoolboys are pushing a newspaper and bottles of beer to the soldiers through the windows. Surely anyone knows what a Southern

Railway corridor or compartment coach looked like in 1940 – all leather straps, moquette and dark brown panelling, maybe with the odd carriage print. It is unfortunate when they go to such pains and then cut corners. I can just see some researcher, maybe someone under 40, thinking “Oh, this looks old enough!”

My only other slight misgiving was the presence of some suspiciously modern warehouse-type buildings by the Dunkirk beaches. Sorry to appear nitpicking about this, but in 2017 there really is no excuse when trying to achieve authenticity and, no, one does not need CGI ad infinitum.

However, it is still a magnificent film and will go down in the annals of great British war movies.

John Roberts
Wakefield, West Yorkshire

A ‘saint’ in action

SIR – I was very interested in the article about Leonard Cheshire (Home news, August 4). Not only did he have an eventful career in the RAF, as you mentioned, but he also represented the UK as an observer with the American bomber force when the Atomic bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

His life after his retirement is well known and I count myself so very fortunate to have known him after being appointed architect for a new form of residential complex in Bournemouth where, for the first time in the UK, a Cheshire Home for the disabled, social housing and special needs accommodation for the disabled were built on one site.

Leonard Cheshire attended several of the site planning and construction meetings and he was always clear, thoughtful and positive in his contributions to the design and construction processes. I count myself fortunate in having met someone who through his faith showed a love for people and their welfare through actions which – as the saying goes – speak louder than words.

Colin Morrell
Poole, Dorset

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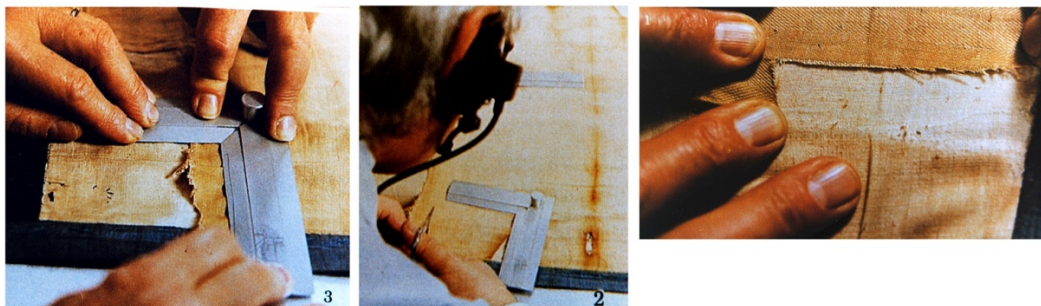
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