

HOME NEWS

Dr. Allan Mills to be the Society's New Honorary Chairman

Following the death of **Rodney Hoare** a year ago the Society was left without an obvious candidate as Chairman. The ideal successor needed to be someone with at least equivalent scientific stature to Rodney's, but those members still active in academic life tend to be too busy to be willing to deal with day-to-day minutiae of Society business.

After much discussion it was therefore agreed by the Steering Committee that **Dr. Allan Mills** of Leicester University, already well-known for at least two fascinating lectures to the Society, should be invited to be the Society's Honorary Chairman, with a mandate particularly to represent the Society, in addition to Dr. Michael Clift, specially with regard to media enquiries of a scientific and technical nature. Dr. Mills has very kindly agreed to fill this rôle.

Dr. Mills is senior lecturer in Planetary Science at the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Leicester University, a joint appointment between the University's departments of Geology and Physics with Astronomy. A major research interest of his is the pH of the Martian regolith, its bearing on the possible emergence of microbial life on that planet, and how to measure this property using the comparatively simple landing vehicles now favoured by space agencies. His most recent scientific paper on the Shroud 'Image formation on the Shroud of Turin: The reactive oxygen intermediates hypothesis' was published in *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, a journal of the Institute of Materials, in December 1995. He will be presenting a paper at the International Congress on the Shroud being held in Turin in June.

Ancient Skull or modern-day murder victim?

Another gaffe for radiocarbon dating?

When in 1983 three laboratories independently radiocarbon-dated the remains of Lindow Man, the early British sacrificial victim whose body was found in a peatbog at Lindow Moss, near Wilmslow, Cheshire, their datings were embarrassingly at variance with each other. Thus AERE Harwell dated him to the 5th century AD, the Oxford laboratory to the 1st century AD, and the British Museum to the 3rd century BC, with each lab claiming its result to be accurate to within a hundred years. Throughout all the years since, there never has been any proper explanation for such wide discrepancies.

Now, however, fresh controversy and confusion has broken out concerning the Oxford laboratory's dating of a female skull that shortly before Lindow Man's discovery was unearthed in the same area. This was in fact the find that directly led to the discovery of the Lindow Man body. When the female skull first came to light during peat-cutting, the police were called in (as law requires), and their first reaction was to identify it as that of

local woman Mrs. Malika Reyn-Bardt, who had disappeared from the Lindow Moss area back around 1960. At that time the police had suspected that Mrs. Reyn-Bardt's husband Peter (photo opposite, with his wife), had killed her and hidden her body, and the skull's discovery, close to where he and Malika had lived at Lindow Moss, was the first positive evidence of this. Furthermore, when Peter Reyn-Bardt was told of the finding of the skull, he quickly confessed that he had indeed murdered his wife and buried her body in the locality.

Despite this confession, however, when the skull was radiocarbon dated at Oxford University the scientists there positively insisted that it was not modern, but ancient, dating back to as early as c.400 AD. They therefore duly labelled it 'Lindow Woman' and deposited it in the British Museum, in the basement of which it remains to this day.

Now, however, fresh findings by **Professor Peter Vanezis**, a Glasgow University expert on facial reconstruction, have suggested that the skull may genuinely be that of Malika Reyn-Bardt after all. According to a report in *Manchester Metro News* dated March 27 there are two unusual features of the skull, a broad area of bone between the eyes, and a pronounced inner rim of the right eye, both of which specifically match Malika's physiognomy. Additionally, **Robert Connelly**, senior lecturer in physical anthropology at Liverpool University, has argued that the skull's appearance does not correspond to what is now known about ancient bog bodies.

With characteristic ebullience **Professor Edward Hall**, now retired, but Director of the Oxford radiocarbon laboratory at the time of the original Lindow Woman investigation, has kept insisting that every radiocarbon dating that the laboratory has produced, including that of the Shroud, has been not been found to be wrong yet. The dossier of doubt, however, steadfastly continues to grow.

[The Editor acknowledges his indebtedness to BSTS member Gwen Tyrer, widow of Manchester textile expert the late John Tyrer, for very kindly sending the report from the *Manchester Metro News* on which this is based]