

OBITUARY:

LORD CHESHIRE, VC, OM

Group Captain Lord Cheshire, VC, OM, DSO, DFC, this Society's President and Patron since its inception, died on July 31, age 74. During World War II Leonard Cheshire became one of the most legendary of RAF pilots, at 25 the youngest group captain in the service. Among his most daring missions were to fly at low level over enemy targets, dropping marker flares so that they could be pinpointed with great precision, at the same time reducing civilian casualties. In 1944 he was awarded the Victoria Cross for a record 'second to none in Bomber Command ... placing himself invariably in the forefront of the battle', and on August 15 of the following year he was official British observer of the dropping of the world's second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

After the war he devoted himself equally single-mindedly to peace. His nursing of an old ex-airman dying of cancer led to his seeking instruction in, and conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, and the founding of his first Cheshire Home, from which the present world-wide mission sprung. In the 1950s he became fascinated in, and convinced by the Shroud, writing a classic illustrated article for the then *Picture Post*, published 9 April 1955. For many in the U.K. this was their first, and lasting introduction to the Shroud. He also toured the country with a Shroud exhibition rigged-up in a converted bus, and took a crippled Scottish girl, Josie Wollam, on a special visit to Turin in the hope of the authorities granting her wish to see the Shroud. In the event she was allowed to hold the Shroud, though it was not unrolled for her. Subsequently Leonard Cheshire wrote the story of this adventure, *Pilgrimage to the Shroud*, published in 1956.

With the inception of the BSTS, Leonard Cheshire kindly agreed to be the Society's honorary President and Patron, and in his typical unassuming manner, quietly kept in touch with the happenings on the Shroud. The carbon dating failed to shake his belief in the Shroud's authenticity, and with this editor he took part in a radio programme defending this. Even in the last few weeks of his life, while suffering from motor neurone disease, he found interest in Norma Weller's latest findings on the Shroud image.