

CONSERVATORS EXAMINE THE SHROUD...

On 7th September the Shroud was taken out of its casket for examination by five specialists invited to Turin by Cardinal Saldarini to advise on just one issue: the Shroud's future conservation. At the specific recommendation of this Society the group included Sheila Landi, retired head of textile conservation at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, who memorably addressed this Society and the New York Symposium on the subject. They also included Dr. Jeanette Cardamone, textile chemist of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia, U.S.A.; Silvio Diana of the Istituto di Restauro, Rome; G. Niccola, owner of an Italian conservation laboratory; and Mme Mechtild Flury-Lemburg of the Abegg Stiftung, Bern, Switzerland.

The proceedings were hosted by Cardinal Saldarini, assisted by his chief adviser on Shroud matters, Prof. Don Giuseppe Ghiberti. Dr. Bruno Barberis represented Turin's Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia. Reminiscent of the secrecy surrounding the taking of samples for carbon dating, the group were asked to make themselves ready at the somewhat ungodly hour of 4.30 a.m. of the 7th, and after more than six hours of direct study of the Shroud itself, spent their remaining time in carefully recorded discussions. They reached broad general agreement on what should be done, the substance of which remains confidential, and they are now preparing their own more individual recommendations.

After the examination, now the fifth known occasion the last two decades that the Shroud has been removed from its reliquary, the cloth was returned to its traditional shrine in the Royal Chapel, which continues locked during long-term repairs. As mentioned in the last Newsletter, a special 'temporary' new housing for the Shroud is being constructed near the High Altar in the main body of Turin Cathedral. Made of thick, shatter-proof transparent glass, the Shroud's silvered reliquary will appear within this as if suspended in mid-air, fully visible to Cathedral visitors. But it may yet take a few months before the Shroud is transferred to this new home.