

## TEMPLECOMBE REVISITED

For the purposes of a Dutch television documentary (of which more details in a later Newsletter), your Editor recently revisited Templecombe, home of the famous panel painting associated with the Knights Templar, thought to have been copied from the Shroud. There it was a pleasure to renew acquaintance both with Audrey Dymock Herdsman, Templecombe's parish secretary and the greatest authority on the painting, and a still sprightly Mrs. Molly Drew, the original discoverer of the painting back around 1944, who had specially travelled from her present home in Burnham-on-Sea.

Due to some instances of mis-information, Mrs Herdsman has asked for it to be made clear that the idea that the Templecombe painting may have been the lid of a box that once contained the Shroud originated with her. Shroud studies also owe to Audrey the gathering from Mrs. Drew (back in 1982) of a first-hand description of the painting's discovery. Not least because of inadvertently incorrect information given my own *The Turin Shroud*, this is reproduced below. Mrs. Drew's own words:

I would like to give you an account of how I found the painting. The cottage was the middle one of three in High Street, Templecombe. The outhouse was at the back of the house, and built into it. You had to step down into it - to get inside. The floor was just earth. I would think it would hold about ten people. Also on one of the walls a big round stone with a hole in the middle had been set in the walls. I cannot remember what Bishop Wright [then rector of Templecombe] said it was.

I had been in the shed many times before, but this day I looked up, and saw part of a face looking down. I just stood there in amazement, looking up. Then on pulling down more of the plaster I could see all the face. It was covered in a thick layer of plaster, and very firmly wired to the ceiling. Then I called Mrs. Topp [owner of the cottage in which Mrs. Drew lived while at Templecombe] as I could see it was something of great interest. I asked Bishop Wright to come and look at it. He said at once it should come down, and be placed in the Church where it belonged. He thought it was part of a celure or tester originally from a High Altar.

A workman had to be called to remove it, as it was very heavy and much bigger than it looked up in the ceiling. It was very dirty and covered with cobwebs. But one thing I must point out, the colours were very vivid then, with bright blues and reds. Much more colourful than it is now. It stayed in my house for a while, and was then taken to the Rectory, where it stayed for about fifteen years. After being restored, it was unveiled in Templecombe Church on Easter Sunday, 1956. I was at the service with the late Mrs. Topp, when she unveiled it. I have always taken a great interest in the history of this painting, and will always do so.

[Editor's note: There remains much mystery concerning the original function of the now-demolished outhouse described by Mrs. Drew, also that of the 'big round stone with a hole in the middle', which is still extant, built into a garden wall at 4, West Court, Templecombe, neighbouring Mrs. Drew's old cottage.]