

Shroud Exhibition in Wells and Alrewas by Brenda Benton

When I attended the christening of my cousin's daughter in February 2008 I could never have imagined the blessings my visit to this Church would bring. After years of wanting to meet someone as passionate about the Shroud as myself, I was unaware that the vicar's wife was planning to set up a Shroud exhibition a little later in the year. When my cousin told me about this event I was so excited and longed to be there. Unfortunately we were away on holiday so it was not possible for us to be there.

For months I tried to find out more about this lady but without success. Eventually I gave up and had forgotten about her until I was chatting to a gentleman, who joined our Church last autumn. During a conversation earlier this year he told me that he had studied the Shroud. He met the lady who sets up the Shroud exhibitions, whilst doing a Bishops Course in his previous Church. When I asked if her husband is the vicar at St. Peter's Church in Little Aston he said that he is, his name is Philip Moon and his wife's name is Pam. I enquired if he knew how I could contact her and the following Sunday he gave me her address and telephone number. I wrote a long letter to Pam explaining who I am and shared my Shroud story. I had an immediate response and we arranged to meet a short while later.

On my arrival at the vicarage on April 4th I told Pam that I had waited thirty-three years to meet her. Though I have had written contact with Ian Wilson over the years and that has encouraged me greatly. What a joyous time I had listening to Pam share her Shroud story of the powerful impact a Leonard Cheshire Shroud exhibition had upon her mother whilst on holiday many years ago. When Pam was 15 years old her mother took her to see David Rolfe's film 'The silent Witness.' The fact that it had such a powerful impact on both our lives served to form a strong spiritual tie between us, despite having only just met.

For Pam's fiftieth birthday she received a gift of money from her mother and used it to purchase a life sized photograph of the Shroud from Barrie Schwartz. At the beginning of the exhibition Pam pays tribute to both Ian Wilson and Barrie for their insight and dedication. Without people like them there would be no exhibition, an exhibition that is truly amazing to see!

During our conversation Pam mentioned that on Friday 16th April she was setting up an exhibition in Wells Cathedral. She shared her great need for helpers as she only had a three-hour slot in which to set up. Excitement welled up inside me as we were staying with a friend in Bristol on that weekend, surely this was no coincidence!

Stuart and I were privileged to be a part of Pam's team and I learned many new skills that day. I was in awe of the hard work Pam puts into the exhibitions and her attention to detail. This opened my eyes to see just how much effort is put into setting up an exhibition and in future I will never view them in the same way. It was very satisfying to see the exhibition completed in the allotted time.

The only uncompleted task was to take photographs that were needed for publicity purposes. Stuart is a keen photographer and offered to return on Sunday afternoon and take the photographs. On our return to Wells we met Juliet Faith, who had the original vision of staging this event and found out about Pam's exhibition through Barrie Schwartz. Juliet suggested we read the comment book she had placed at the end of the display boards and we were really encouraged by what was written there. The comment that touched me the most was written in what looked like a child's handwriting, it said, "Now I know what Jesus looks like."

Up to date Pam has set up 18 exhibitions, many of them in Cathedrals, such as Liverpool Metropolitan and Coventry. Her most ambitious project was undertaking two exhibitions in Portugal, where she travelled alone.

At the end of June we were involved in the next Shroud exhibition which was held at All Saints Church in Alrewas. It was a truly amazing experience. The Church is in an idyllic setting and the fact that there were twenty-two open gardens on display attracted many people that would not normally attend such an exhibition. The very warm weather was an added asset because people came into the Church to cool down.

On our arrival to set up the exhibition on the Friday I was very aware of how different this venue would be. The Chapter House at Wells Cathedral was a very large empty space but this exhibition had to fit into an area that would need to be used for worship. Pam had obviously prepared very well and managed to achieve this beautifully.

The experience we gained at Wells Cathedral meant Stuart and I found it much easier to help Pam set up the exhibition this time. Philip was able to join us, along with Pam's other two helpers and we worked very well together as a team. As we stood to take a final look at our work we realised that a couple of extra notices would be useful. Stuart offered to print them and we volunteered to put them in place before people began to arrive on Saturday morning. I also suggested to Pam that we stay for a while to answer questions and point people in the right direction. We enjoyed doing this so much that we stayed until 6pm, then returned at 11-15am on Sunday and stayed until 6-15pm, when the last visitors left. There was a constant flow of people during the whole of this time and we felt our presence there was an asset to the exhibition.

The blessings we received are beyond measure. One of our greatest joys was to listen to Shroud stories from people who had been 'closet Shroudies' for many years. One lady told me that she wasn't a believer and only came to bring her friend. As she stood before the Barrie Schwartz photograph of the Shroud she had a deeply spiritual experience that she found difficult to put into words. It was quite obvious that she had been deeply moved and this was so encouraging.

I believe that as Stuart and I shared our Shroud story it gave much more meaning to the exhibition. Rather like a trip to a stately home where a good guide can bring to life the history of its inhabitants. Many told us that the exhibition brought the reality of what

our Lord suffered on the cross into sharp focus. This reminded me of how David Rolfe's film had the same effect on Stuart and I in 1978.

Many none Christians viewed the exhibition and there were several sceptics, most of whom who were touched by Zoe's story and how the Lord has used the Shroud in our lives. At times I felt led to pray for certain people as they observed the Shroud story. The most memorable experience for me was a young girl, aged about twelve, who came in with her grandma. She appeared to be bored and unhappy at first but then took an interest in the display boards. The following day she returned alone and asked to speak to me. She said, "If I want to pray do I have to do it at a special time?" I assured her she could pray at 'any' time. Then she asked "If I come to Church where am I allowed to sit?" Again I assured her that she could sit wherever she felt most comfortable. What a privilege it is to be part of these events!

One couple I met remembered there being another Shroud exhibition held in this Church in the early 1980's and I was intrigued. When I mentioned it to several older members of the Church they had no recollection of this event. However, on Sunday afternoon we met a man who clearly remembered it and the impact it had upon his life. The vicar at the time was named John Colston and he made his own version of the Shroud using red ochre. He used it to bring the reality of what the Lord did for us on the cross to the confirmation class he was leading. Interestingly I also discovered that there is a Leonard Cheshire Home quite near to the village, so maybe there is some connection here.

One of the big advantages of this exhibition was the fact that people could sit in a pew and absorb the information at their own pace. Many sat for well over an hour.

The following are a selection of extracts from the comment's book we placed at the end of the exhibition ~

It was a privilege to view the exhibition and read about the latest research on the Shroud ~ Amazing exhibition. Very thought provoking, our God is an Awesome God ~ Fabulous to see, very moving and thought provoking. I would love to see the real thing and this has spurred me to plan a trip to Turin. ~ A very clear explanation and display of the mystery of the Shroud. ~ **Our favourite** ~ (An exhibition worthy of its subject, Thought provoking) ~ I am amazed ~ Wonderful, beautiful and awe-inspiring. Thank you so much. Thanks be to God. ~ The spirit within me recognises the Lord. I feel really blessed to be here today. ~ Very moving experience. Brings home the enormity of what Jesus did for us. ~ What a marvellous exhibition. Beautifully presented and very well researched. Thought provoking and enlightening. God bless you for bringing it to Alrewas.

Shroud Exhibition Wells Cathedral ~ Easter 2011 ~ Juliet Faith.

After over a year of planning, the 'Shroud Exhibition' became a reality for me in April this year.

After months of correspondence by e-mail I was very excited to at last meet lovely Pam Moon, the lady who put together this incredible Shroud exhibition, and without whom none of this would have been possible. Along with her came a team of dedicated helpers who worked tirelessly to help assemble the exhibition.

The sun was shining, and Wells cathedral looked stunning, as on 15th of the month we transported the $\frac{3}{4}$ ton of exhibition (with the help of a few worried vergers!) up the ancient and worn steps of the octagonal chapter house, which was to be its home for the next two weeks.

My closest friend Fi and I had never met any of Pam's trusty crew before, but we felt there was an immediate bond between us. My sons Tristan and Tobias turned up to help us, and within a few hours the exhibition was complete.

As we all stood back to look at our hard work, the sun came shining through the windows of the ancient building, and fell on the large image of the sepulchre. It was a very moving moment, and amidst tears of joy and exhaustion we all hugged each other, experiencing a true gift and oneness, each of us knowing that if we never met again on this earth, we had all been part of something very special. Pam's sister found some spikenard oil in her handbag, and we were able to smell the very oil that Mary Magdalene had anointed Jesus' feet with. It was an extremely humbling moment.

The exhibition itself was a huge success. The visitor's book contained some of the most illuminating responses, ranging from the visiting French students "superbe, wonderful, merveilleux", to "how my Saviour suffered for me", "spiritually moving", "Incredible exhibition", to "I can't believe that there are still people who believe the Shroud is a fake".

Their reactions were, without exception, positive and thought provoking. How delighted people were to be able to see this story of the Shroud in words and pictures, and each to learn in his own way, the Mystery of Easter. I received numerous e-mails and phone calls, many people with their own stories to tell about how the knowledge and experience of the Shroud had changed their lives. It was as if the very exhibition had somehow given them permission to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings. I found their openness very moving.

Pam and her husband are wonderful people, and I think the work that she is doing with the creation and loan of this exhibition is a true reflection of her commitment and faith. It is an honour to have met such a hardworking, dedicated and lovely lady. If the Exhibition in Wells has made just one person stop and think about the truth revealed by Jesus Christ, then all the hard work has been worth it, and judging by the responses I have had, it did just that.