

OBITUARIES

Molly Drew – Discoverer of the Templecombe ‘Shroud’ Panel

From BSTS member Audrey Dymock-Herdsman of Templecombe, Somerset, has come news of the death of Mrs. Molly Drew, discoverer of the Templar panel painting that is thought to be a depiction of the Shroud from the time of its still hypothetical ownership by the Knights Templar.

During World War II Molly was a tenant in a terraced cottage in Templecombe, on the site of what had once been the house of the chaplain to the Knights Templar based in Templecombe. One day towards the end of the war she happened to go out to the cottage’s outhouse, and looking up at the ceiling saw that a piece of plaster had fallen away and a face was looking down at her. It was the first glimpse, in possibly six centuries, of the panel painting, this having seemingly been fastened to the outhouse’s ceiling, then covered over with plaster. After removal from the ceiling, the painting then underwent many adventures, including ruinous scrubbing by a local bishop, before being installed in the Church at Templecombe, where during the 1960s researcher on the Templars Vivien Godfrey-White spotted it, and unhesitatingly associated it with the Knights Templar. Thanks to the intermediacy of Fr. Maurus Green, ultimately this led to wide recognition of the panel’s likely association with the Shroud, it probably having been made as a copy of the face for those Templars based in Britain.

Unfortunately, because of the bishop’s inept cleaning, much of the panel’s original vivid colours were ruined. Also, the very likely historic outhouse in which it had been hidden underwent total demolition during the 1950s without any proper record being kept. Indeed, it was only thanks to some diligent sleuthing during the late 1980s by Rex Morgan, editor of Australia’s *Shroud News*, that Molly Drew was located at Burnham-on-Sea, to which she had moved, and interviewed to tell the story of the discovery (*see BSTS Newsletter 17, Sept.87*). This was all the more valuable because details had become distorted through being passed down through successive vicars of Templecombe. Rex Morgan’s publication of what he learned quickly led to others seeking out Molly Drew, including your Editor. To all such enquiries the ever-affable Molly responded with most admirable patience and good humour, always doing her very best to retrieve memories from forty years before. The last access to those memories is now lost to us.

Rodger Apple – Founder of ACTUS (Albany Center, Turin Shroud)

Rodger J. Apple, founder of the Albany Center Turin Shroud, ACTUS, died at his home in Albany, New York, on March 4th 1999, after a long illness.

Rodger was born and lived in Albany for most of his life. He retired from the Albany Fire Department in 1982, after having held the rank of Captain for thirty years. His interest in the Shroud began in the 1940’s, fired by receiving as a gift a 1902 copy of *The Shroud of Christ* by Paul Vignon. His enthusiasm for the subject grew and in 1979 he founded ACTUS, becoming its Executive Director. He then created a mobile exhibit of Shroud materials, and travelled widely with this throughout New York State, speaking to many civil and religious groups. He and his wife Connie were keen attendees at many Shroud conferences throughout both the States and Europe, and he was present at the First Symposium and International Congress on the Sudarium of Oviedo, in Spain.

Rodger's popularity was reflected by the truly ecumenical funeral service, led by an Episcopalian priest, assisted by a Catholic priest and a female Hospice Chaplain. The Fraternal Order of Elks performed a remembrance ritual, and representatives of the Albany Fire Department stood honour guard at the head of his coffin. As most beautifully expressed by the Revd. Kim Dreisbach: 'Rodger's devotion and dedication to the apostolate of the Holy Shroud were noted and admired. He was a brave soul and at last, together with his heroes Fr. Peter (Rinaldi) and Fr. Adam (Otterbein), he now sees the Man of the Shroud, "face to face and not as a stranger."

Rodger will be greatly missed by the "Shroud Crowd", and our sympathies go out to Connie, his children and grandchildren, who were a great source of comfort to him during his long illness.