

Editorial

Michael Kowalski

On 22nd June this year, shortly after taking delivery of the printed copies of the summer BSTS Newsletter, we heard the sad news that Barrie Schwartz had passed away. He was without doubt one of the most highly-regarded and well-known figures in the field of sindonology who worked tirelessly to raise public awareness of the Shroud.

Last year, I wrote to Barrie asking if he would write an article for the BSTS Newsletter about what it was like to be a member of the STURP team, working alongside distinguished and highly professional scientists who in 1978 were at the top of their game. Barrie was delighted to be asked and indeed he mentioned that he'd been itching to respond in some form or other to some disrespectful and negative comments that had been made by people appearing in podcasts or writing blogs when referring to the STURP scientists and their work.

Barrie's article was the cover story of the December 2023 edition of the newsletter and shortly after it was published, BSTS management team member Paul Bishop wrote to Barrie to tell him how much he'd enjoyed reading his article. Barrie wrote in reply:

"Writing that article was really helpful and it gave me the opportunity to get it off my chest and on the record before my time is up. I was very happy when Michael liked my topic and agreed to publish it in the BSTS Newsletter. I found out recently he made it the cover story! Awesome!"

Two things struck me about that email when Paul showed it to me. The first was Barrie's sincere gratitude that we had published his article, which considering everything that he has done to publicise and promote research papers, books, video links and podcasts through shroud.com over the years, perfectly illustrated his generous and humble nature. But it was the words *'it gave me the opportunity to get it off my chest and on the record before my time is up'* that gave me goosebumps. When that article was published, I assumed, as I'm sure we all did, that Barrie still had many years ahead of him...

A remarkable week

In my editorial for the Summer 2024 edition of the BSTS Newsletter, I mentioned that there had been encouraging signs of an upsurge in interest in the Shroud in both the United States and in France, where *Paris Match* featured an article about the Shroud as the cover story during Easter. Sadly, there wasn't at that time any tangible evidence of a similar pattern here in the UK but it did cause me to wonder whether that upturn in interest might one day reach these shores.

A couple of months later, on the morning of Tuesday 20th August, my wife Lynne received an email message from one of our members, Tony Cunliffe, letting us know that there was an article about the Shroud in *MailOnline*, the online version of the UK's Daily Mail newspaper. I immediately checked it out and was delighted to see the headline:

Is this proof the Turin Shroud IS real? Scientists make startling discovery after analysing cloth 'Jesus was buried in'. The article was reporting the X-Ray dating research undertaken by Liberato de Caro's team of Italian scientists that had been published in 2022 which had concluded that the fabric of the Shroud was much older than indicated by the C-14 test and instead dated to the first century ¹.



Within hours, this story had been picked up by several other media outlets, including online versions of all UK tabloid newspapers, Fox News and The New York Post, all of which published their own versions of this article. Meanwhile, the Daily Mail was running another two articles about the Shroud which appeared on Wednesday 21st August, including one with the headline, '*Atheist who set out to prove the Shroud of Turin was fake reveals why he's now 'convinced' it's the cloth Jesus was buried in*' which was about our former editor David Rolfe. By the end of that week, MailOnline, which is claimed to be the most visited English-language newspaper website ², had published a total of six articles about the Shroud, all of which gave a positive account of evidence that supported claims that the Shroud is authentic and many of which also subsequently appeared in other media outlets. After decades in which news of Shroud-related research that contradicted the 'medieval fake' conclusion have barely produced a ripple of coverage in the UK media, we were suddenly engulfed by a tsunami of stories and articles which gave support to the view that the Shroud was authentic.

This unprecedented attention given to the Shroud by news media clearly had an impact on many of those who read these articles. During the week ending 27th August, Google registered a huge number of search requests for information relating to the Shroud of Turin. Over 100,000 such requests were made from the UK alone; Italy and Australia each registered more than 20,000 whilst the USA recorded over 200,000 similar search requests.



Yet more positive news stories about the Shroud appeared in UK newspapers just six weeks later, including a three-page article covering the X-ray dating research in the Features section of the Daily Telegraph that was replicated the following day in the MailOnline and Daily Express.

This turnaround in coverage of the Shroud here in the UK

¹. An article covering this research, *A remarkable, new Shroud dating measurement*, was published in the BSTS Newsletter Issue No. 95.

². See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MailOnline>

is simply astonishing and far exceeds anything that I dared to hope or pray for when I wrote about the upturn in interest overseas for my summer 2024 editorial.

A new website

One of the objectives of the BSTS is to provide reliable information about the Shroud, a goal which has mainly been addressed through articles published in our regular newsletter. Of course, our newsletter readers are much better informed than most people about the Shroud and so most of the articles accepted for publication in the newsletter are selected with that in mind. As a result, we don't usually provide the type of basic information about the Shroud which people who know little or nothing about this remarkable cloth will want to read, including those who turned to the internet for information after reading the recent news media coverage outlined above.

We are therefore in the process of creating another website to run alongside www.bstsnewsletter.com which will address this need. Our intention is to make this website a valuable online resource that will not only be helpful to visitors with little knowledge of the Shroud but will also provide details of the range and depth of evidence that has been revealed by studies of this ancient cloth. We expect that it will be completed by Easter 2025 and we will of course notify members once this new website has been launched.

April 2026 Symposium

I'm delighted to announce that we are currently finalising arrangements for a Symposium on the Shroud to mark the 50th anniversary of the British Society for the Turin Shroud. This will be held on Friday 10th and Saturday 11th April 2026 in conference facilities at Blackburn Cathedral, alongside Pam Moon's mobile Shroud exhibition which is scheduled to be installed for several weeks in the cathedral's Jesus Chapel .

The event will cover details of the latest research findings and will include presentations given by leading Shroud scholars and researchers. It will also celebrate some of the remarkable contributions to our understanding of the Shroud that have been made by BSTS members since its foundation in 1976. This has of course been a period which has revealed many fascinating new discoveries and these have in turn spawned numerous books, documentaries and films about the Shroud that have taken details of these important findings to millions of people around the world. The BSTS can be justifiably proud that some of our past and present members have contributed significantly to this work and their example continues to be an inspiration to those of us who follow in their footsteps.

We look forward to providing more information about this event, including details of how to book tickets, in the next edition of this newsletter.

Michael Kowalski
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