

## EDITORIAL

By Ian Wilson

When Everything Seems Against You...

As at the first week of April of this year, **Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini** and all those others in Turin most closely associated with the Shroud might have thought their plans for next year's exposition to be very well advanced. Their expensive seven year programme of restoration work on the Royal Chapel was well towards completion, with the dome finished (the Cardinal had been shown this on Christmas Day), and a special elevator installed for taking visitors up to view Guarino Guarini's architectural virtuosity at first hand . The state-of-the-art bullet-proof display case made for the Shroud in 1993, and set up just behind the high altar, was a subject of international admiration. Tourist leaflets had been printed and circulated, and the city's hotels and transport facilities alerted to expect a huge influx of visitors. An excellent full-colour guide book to the Shroud, produced by **Gino Moretto** of the Centro Internazionale had just been written, printed and published.

Then, in the hour before the midnight of April 11, came the highly publicised fire. Although the Shroud itself was saved, all that had been its environs during the last four hundred years lay a tangled, blackened and water-drenched mess. The once gleaming bullet-proof display case had had to be most energetically smashed in order for the Shroud to be rescued. Where once there had been a three hundred year old wall of glass separating the Royal Chapel from the main body of the Cathedral there was now empty space. The Royal Chapel's dome was now in a far more dangerous state than before the restoration work began. Worst affected of all was the actual lining of the walls of the Royal Chapel. Likewise, the adjoining part of the Royal Palace where STURP did its testing work in 1978, much of its splendid baroque ornament and valuable paintings having been ruined beyond repair. And behind the whole episode lay the dark spectre of arson and sabotage on the part of as yet unidentified enemies of the Shroud, the Church and all that these represent.

Small wonder that Turin's so amiable Cardinal Saldarini, to whose residence the Shroud was temporarily moved for safe-keeping, was seen very publicly, on news bulletins screened around the world, to have been moved to tears by the ruination of so many well-laid plans

Yet however great have been the problems for those in Turin, they have not been alone. Since the publication of the last Newsletter the BSTS has suffered more than its usual number of hard knocks. As many members are aware, in recent years the British Society's chairman, **Rodney Hoare**, has been suffering from a mysterious debilitating M.E.-type illness from which it had always been hoped that he would make a full recovery. That was not to be. He died on February 21, and our hearts have gone out to his widow Jennifer.

Then, almost at the very moment that plans had been finalised for American historian **Professor Dan Scavone** to give the Society's Spring Lecture in Oxford, our normally indefatigable Secretary/Treasurer **Dr. Michael Clift** suffered such a serious health breakdown that the holding this meeting had to be abandoned. Although Dr. Clift has partly recovered, he himself is seriously concerned about his being able to cope as before.

Amidst all this the BSTS member **Ian Dickinson**, who earlier this decade affiliated himself with Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, has written of myself in this Newsletter's Australian equivalent, *Shroud News*, in a way sufficiently defamatory to call for legal action - maliciously (and ludicrously!) promising to expose me as 'one of the greatest scandals to appear in the history of the Shroud'.

In the wake of the last Newsletter, with its **Kouznetsov** revelations, grounds for feeling that you want to give it all up? That the Shroud and everything and everyone that becomes associates with it is plague-ridden and jinxed? It would be other than human *not* to go through such pessimism. And of course that is precisely what those who are against us (and let there be no misunderstanding, there are people very actively intent on discrediting everything and everyone associated with the Shroud), *want* us to feel.

But just as Cardinal Saldarini, with the fire to his Cathedral hardly cooled, took it upon himself to say that the Shroud exposition of 1998 would go ahead come what may, so likewise this Newsletter, as your Society's prime expression of its existence, will continue while there are people both in the UK and around the world who find it useful. In which regard it is a strange but reassuring fact that while the Society does no active promotion of itself, and those lapsing in their subscriptions are regularly culled from the membership list, our membership numbers have remained if anything slightly higher than before the radiocarbon dating.

Accordingly, later in this Newsletter will be found set out the contingency plans for the Society's continuance. But first, there is obviously much news to impart...