

Letters to the Editor

From BSTS member Hugh Farey, Saint Richard's School, Bredenbury Court, Bromyard, Herefordshire

In the 49th issue of your excellent Shroud Newsletter you discussed the question of how the bloodstains on the back of the wrist can be so clear if the back of the body was nailed to the cross, or how traces of oak could be found at the back of the head if the body was nailed face downwards.

You briefly mention a possible solution to this problem, which I have not seen before (not having access to the shroud website), although curiously enough I came across it in a monologue called *Jesus My Boy*, which was performed recently on the London Stage by (I think) Tom Conti (or possibly Courtenay). I forget who it's by. Anyway, you suggest that while the body was facing outwards, the arms may have been stretched back over the back of the cross-piece, and then nailed forwards.

Not only does this seem, an eminently sensible way of helping the cross to take the load off the body, but I myself, acting as Jesus in a couple of passion plays, have held myself on in a very similar way. I was standing quite comfortably on a suppedaneum, of course, but the cross was almost vertical, and I would have fallen off if not clinging on. For the sake of convention, my hands (with nail-heads glued on) came forwards again, but my elbows were hooked over the back. Also, it's a very natural pose should you ever find yourself standing with your back to a five-barred gate and your arms outstretched!

No doubt there are objections, one of which seems to be how manoeuvrable the arms are in this position, in order to produce those elegant blood-flow angles. Another is the graffiti. I have never seen a photograph of these, and wonder if they were specifically drawn, or scratched?

A quick scribble might easily draw the cross first and then put the body on it, and if engraved, it wouldn't be possible to rub out the first marks. The 'Pozzuoli one is too peculiar to interpret at all, it seems to me, without some more context. It could easily be a rear view. Finally (re: the oak tubules discussed on page 43), I don't know what sort of oak trees grow in Jerusalem, but if the uprights of crosses were to stay in place for some time (years?), only the cross-bars being renewed, then two ideas come to mind. Firstly, oak would be a good choice from a weatherability point of view, and maybe pine could be used for the cross-bar for ease of production and nailing. But secondly, the nails in the upright would be very difficult to extract, and leave increasingly inconvenient holes for future use. In view of all the extra bits of wood that have been found attached to heel-bones, has anyone considered that holes in the upright (or some permanent attachment to it) might have been pre-drilled, as it were, so that new fastenings (nails? ropes? pegs?) would simply pass through the upright, for ease of detachment later?

Hugh Farey

Forthcoming Events

12 August –22 October. Daily Expositions of the Shroud, Turin Cathedral.

As in 1998, the Shroud will be displayed in Turin Cathedral, and visiting it, inclusive of an instructive introductory tour, will be free, but it is 'obligatory' that reservations should be made in advance. In Italy this can be done by calling the toll-free number 800-329-329. For the UK the toll-free number is 0800 9679511; for France 0800 907674; for Germany 0130819457; for Spain 900 993943; for Switzerland 0800 551129. Other countries should dial 39 115 118900

27-29 August 2000. Worldwide Congress Sindone 2000, Palazzo del Popolo, Piazza del Popolo, Orvieto.

A registration fee of 250 Euros or 485,000 Italian lire per person is payable in advance, not including 20% VAT. Hotel bookings are also required in advance, accompanied by deposits of between 305,000 lire and 85,000 lire depending on the hotel category (4 star to 'Other') required. Registrations should have been received by June 15, but no doubt some indulgence will be allowed for latecomers. Further information can be obtained from the Organizing Secretariat, Prometing, Vicolo del Popolo 1, 20 - 05018, Orvieto(TR) Italy, tel +39 0763 344890; fax +39 0763 344880; e-mail: pro@orvietnet.it.