

Forty-eight Years and Counting

Michael Kowalski

Doesn't time fly? It seems only a few weeks since I was sat at my computer writing the editorial for the Christmas 2023 edition of the newsletter and already the month of June is very nearly upon us. Likewise, I'm sure that David Rolfe's contribution to this edition of the newsletter '*In the beginning...*' will evoke similar feelings from those of you who followed developments in Shroud scholarship during the late 1970s. There are, after all, several current BSTS members who joined the organisation soon after it was established in 1976 with the aim of helping to support research and spread reliable information about the Shroud. I'm sure that these members will find it hard to believe that two years from now, the BSTS will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary!

Those early years of the BSTS coincided with a particularly important and exciting period in the history of the Shroud, not least due to the findings revealed by specialists who were given permission to make the first examinations. Initial studies by a commission of experts in 1969 and 1973 were followed by the pivotal 120-hour examination by scientists from the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) in 1978. That was also the year when two founder members and former editors of the BSTS Newsletter made major contributions to raising worldwide awareness of the Shroud. There are many current Shroud scholars and devotees who readily acknowledge that their passion for this remarkable cloth resulted from either reading Ian Wilson's best-selling book *The Turin Shroud*, or visiting the cinema to see David Rolfe's award-winning film *The Silent Witness*.

Those three highly successful endeavours of 1978 made it a momentous year for the Shroud and the cover photo provided by David Rolfe, which was taken at a Shroud conference just one year earlier, features many of the people who contributed to this success. Sadly, general attitudes towards the Shroud have changed significantly in the years since then, mainly due to the publicity generated by the 'medieval origin' conclusion of the 1988 radiocarbon test. This verdict has of course been widely accepted by most people today who are largely unaware of the large amount of evidence that indicates that the Shroud is much older than the carbon-14 test result suggests.

The refusal to allow any official examinations of the Shroud since removing the small sample needed for that carbon dating test in April 1988 has severely hampered scientific efforts to obtain information and evidence that will help to resolve the many questions that still remain unanswered concerning this enigmatic cloth. It hasn't however prevented scientists from continuing their investigations using photographs, data and tiny fragments of material removed from the Shroud during those previous investigations and I'm sure readers will be fascinated by Bill Meacham's article in this edition of the newsletter, outlining his recent research which has revealed new evidence concerning the origin of the linen used to make the Shroud. One can only imagine the discoveries that could be made following a new examination of the Shroud using the latest scientific

instruments. However, the considerable amount of evidence which already exists is usually sufficient to persuade those with little previous awareness of the Shroud that it is the true burial cloth of Jesus. It's therefore important that we continue our efforts to bring this evidence to a wider audience.



Paris Match Cover

On a positive note, there are encouraging signs of a general increase in interest in the Shroud. You may recall that the previous edition of the newsletter featured an interview with Myra Adams¹ in which she mentioned that there was clear evidence of an upsurge in interest in the Shroud in the United States. There are also signs of a similar growth in interest in France, where during Holy Week this year, the weekly news magazine *Paris Match* included an article about the Shroud which featured on the front cover. I learned about this in April when I had the honour of giving a talk about my recent book² at the Annual General Meeting of *Montre Nous Ton Visage*, a French organisation with similar aims to the BSTS which, like the BSTS, publishes booklets containing articles about the Shroud twice a year.

My wife Lynne and I also had the pleasure of joining the MNTV management team for lunch the following day, which was a valuable opportunity to get to know some of the people who are leading that organisation. This included Louis Cadour, President of MNTV, and Laurent Bouzoud, Editor of their twice-yearly *Cahier* magazine, both of whom I'd like to thank for their kind invitation and warm hospitality throughout our visit. It became clear from our discussions that there is a lot to be gained from a closer working relationship between our two organisations. For example, some MNTV members have made notable contributions to Shroud studies but due to the lack of English language



Left to Right: Laurent Bouzoud, Michael Kowalski and Louis Cadour

¹ *Sign from God and the National Shroud of Turin Exhibit*, BSTS Newsletter Issue No. 98, pp 40-45

² *The Shroud of Christ: Evidence of a 2,000 Year Antiquity*. Available from Routledge: <https://www.routledge.com/The-Shroud-of-Christ-Evidence-of-a-2000-Year-Antiquity/Kowalski/p/book/9789814968805>

versions of their work, I was unfamiliar with their research, as no doubt are many English-speaking Shroud scholars. I'm therefore looking forward to including articles contributed by MNTV researchers in future editions of our newsletter.

As mentioned above, the year 2026 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the BSTS. The management team and I are keen to mark this notable milestone with an event which we hope will appeal both to our existing members and to people who currently know little about the Shroud but who would wish to learn more. We'll be developing plans for this event in the coming weeks and I'm delighted to announce that we'll be aided in this endeavour by a new management team member, Justin Robinson, who many of you will already know from his Shroud-related presentations and podcast appearances, as well as his articles on the topic of the Shroud. We expect to be able to provide more details about this 2026 event in the next issue of the BSTS Newsletter. In the meantime, I'm keen that we help to support the efforts being made by our members to raise awareness of the Shroud. The BSTS has a very active Facebook page which can be used to promote your talks, podcasts or books and content posted to that page regularly reaches thousands of online Facebook users who share our interest. If you wish to promote your work on our Facebook page, please contact Lynne Kowalski or Paul Bishop, using the email addresses listed on the rear cover of the newsletter.

As I'm sure we are all aware, the past few years have seen significant price increases, particularly in postage charges, which have caused an increase in the cost of producing and mailing our six-monthly newsletters. We're currently able to absorb these cost increases without needing to raise our subscription charges but should this inflationary trend continue, we may need to increase the price of our postal subscriptions in future. Should this prove to be necessary, we will provide you with plenty of notice of any forthcoming change to the subscription pricing.

I'm sorry to end on a sad note but we've just received news that after twenty-eight years as editor of shroud.com, Barrie Schwartz has decided to step down and hand over his editorial duties to Joe Marino. As some of you may already know, Barrie is seriously ill and is currently undergoing dialysis and chemotherapy and so clearly his priority is to focus on his treatment and future health. I'm sure many of you will wish to include Barrie and his family in your prayers. For those who would also like to help Barrie deal with the financial burden of this treatment, you can contribute by visiting:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-ease-barries-medical-burden>.

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