

SEVENTEEN YEARS OF SHROUD NEWS (EDITORIAL)

Back in September 1980 when *Shroud News* Number 1 was printed I did not really expect ever to see issue Number 100 and I doubt that anyone else did. And in retrospect it is remarkable that the whole venture was sparked off by my indignation at the upshot of Waiter McCrone's being allowed to address the British Society for the Turin Shroud in London at the invitation of Ian Wilson and the reporting of McCrone's disputed remarks which followed.

This event led Dr McCrone to begin his worldwide publicity crusade for claims of forgery of the Shroud. What is equally remarkable is that he is still around today and still saying exactly the same things despite almost twenty years of study, research and further examination of the Shroud and exhaustive analysis of the scientific work done on it in 1978, the vast majority of which has tended to support the opposite theory widely held for hundreds of years that the Shroud of Turin is probably an authentic relic of the first century and therefore quite likely to be the burial cloth of Christ.

What McCrone said

In retrospect it is interesting, too, to reflect on what McCrone actually said at that London lecture. I had forgotten and I expect most other people have as well. It is fully reported in *Shroud News* No 1 from a tape recording of the lecture. He said, "I am not saying the Shroud is not authentic. I am saying that the image area has a lot of iron oxide and a lot of artists' pigment associated with it but I do not know whether the amount of iron oxide present is sufficient to explain the entire image."

Throughout his lecture, and the questions which followed, McCrone maintained the position that he was unsure of what he was saying and several times said he was not prepared as a scientist to say that the Shroud was a fake. He also said, "There is no chance at all of there being real blood on the cloth." Unfortunately a press reporter at the meeting, which the Society naively thought would not be reported by simply asking the audience not to report it, wrote up the thing next day claiming McCrone had said the Shroud was a fake.

Guaranteed headlines

From that moment McCrone suddenly realised he was onto something which would guarantee him headlines every time he spoke and would enhance his reputation and his business, so therefore began to say that the Shroud was, indeed, a fake and has never changed his story. This is remarkable in the

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light of the discovery that his denouncing of the Vinland Map as a fake was incorrect and the map was subsequently proved to be genuine.

Exactly coincident with the publication of *Shroud News* No 100 it is an astounding irony that McCrone, who in effect led to its foundation, has again been the subject of world media reports a few weeks ago with his self published hype about a book he has now written. This has led to press stories with headings such as, "Chemist claims he has explained Turin shroud" and "Turin Shroud riddle 'solved' by paint test" and so on but there has been significantly less attention to McCrone this time around than in 1980.

In my view this is because over the last decade the media writers have mainly been replaced since the C14 fiasco of 1988 and they have been taking a more intelligent view about the probability that the C14 dating was wrong either because it is a faulty procedure, or it was not followed correctly, or contamination caused an inaccurate result, or the samples were not of the Shroud, or the original samples were hijacked, or a host of other theories put forward since that time. Indeed there is a caution evident in all the current reportings of McCrone's book. We read "medieval hoaxers could have been responsible", "The mystery of the Turin Shroud *may* have been solved". This shows that many of the media are not sure enough of their ground to be as definitive in their comments as in 1988.

I also note that Dr Timothy Jull of the AMS Lab in the University of Arizona was in Sydney in February lecturing on C14 testing for art works. Even he makes popular use of his slides and background about the Shroud to promote himself and his laboratory and giving rise to naive reporters writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, for example, that C14 had "proved conclusively that the Shroud came from the period 1260 AD to 1390 AD"

Shroud Odyssey

My own Shroud Odyssey, as I have presumed to call it before, which began twenty years ago in Turin in August 1978, the day before the public were admitted to the Cathedral, became more and more intense as the years went on. It became a commitment to continue to bring out *Shroud News* for the several hundred who appreciated it and I watched the "subscription" list grow and widen to embrace people in countries all over the world.

I suppose it has to be a matter of rejoicing, if I may say so, that it is now the

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most frequently produced Shroud related publication in the English Language and a number of people have claimed, if I may also say so, that it is the best.

One reason for this is that I have no real editorial policy, no mission statement of any significance, no editorial board with individuals forcing their opinions on the publication, no requirement for peer-review (and therefore out of date, teeth-drawn publication), no deadline to meet other than the approximate voluntary bi-monthly production, and no pretensions about being a scholarly or scientific or prestigious publication. I more or less type it myself, sometimes print it myself, and pay for it myself. Those who pay the subscription offset some of the postage.

I have applied the same criteria to *Shroud News* as to most other things I have done in my life. I do not find being answerable to equals or inferiors attractive. A committee of one is the most successful body to control any enterprise and a benevolent dictatorship is the most successful form of government if one has to employ or deal with other people. (I cannot immediately discern a truly happy and successful commune, republic, representative democracy, or any other such contrived system relying on multiple opinions, in the contemporary world.)

If Walter McCrone had never accidentally led the anti Shroud crusade and then encouraged lesser lights than himself of the ilk of Nickell and Mueller of the Society of Skeptics to put up their absurd theories and if the world media, ever keen for a scandal and for negative reporting, had not taken up the forgery story and continued to beat it up for the entire period, then perhaps the intensity with which those of us who had read all the other research and who understand the implications of the enormous preponderance of evidence for probable authenticity would not have occurred.

It is always the continual challenge of the absurdity and frustration of heavily subsidised and publicised minorities which has spurred on those who seek more avidly for the truth in any subject or to preserve the status quo against the self seeking reformers and publicly funded merchants of the beat-up and other forces of evil which today abound in our society.

Self evident truth

I have said many times in this journal and elsewhere that I have no personal reason for wanting the Shroud to be genuine. My religious beliefs or

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practices, such as they are, do not depend on its existence or its authenticity. What I do know is that when I first saw the Shroud in 1978 it became immediately apparent to me, like any other self evident truth, that it must surely be genuine although I could not then, cannot now and do not expect in the future to, prove such a statement. It was certainly a purely subjective attitude formed in my mind by the evidence of my eyes, my other senses and, above all, my third eye. And yet I have always been ready to be convinced that it is a fake. No-one has yet been able so to convince me by outweighing that vast body of evidence to the contrary.

It has been a fascinating twenty years delving into the numerous areas of research and interest. I have been able to meet and befriend many of the world's great sindonologists and then to pay tribute to the large number of them who have died during the period. The first great generation of twentieth century Shroudies has, then, almost disappeared. I belong to the second and am no longer young. My earnest hope, shared by many, is that we shall find enough of the third wave of sindonologists to persist with the work and carry into the next millennium the continuing quest for more information, investigation and discussion about the most fascinating mystery in the world.

The third millennium Shroud Crowd will have the advantage of the opportunity of taking part in two exhibitions of the Shroud itself in 1998 and 2000 which may or may not make any difference to the research but will certainly generate further interest in the matter.

Friendships

When I think back over the previous 99 issues of *Shroud News* perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the exercise has been those friendships and collaborations which I have shared with the worldwide Shroud circle. There is, as with most fields of study, a special affinity which is manifest amongst those of the same mindset. There are also to be observed the less noble human failings of academic jealousies, backbiting, personal vendettas and, in some cases, near criminal activity which attends all intense and passionate human behaviour. I have tried to keep clear of these and hope I have been successful apart from the occasional frustration or annoyance.

Brooks Exhibit

I have had the great privilege of attending and giving papers at many international Shroud conferences. I have managed to write several books on the subject and be involved in one way or another with the production of

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others. I have given countless lectures on the Shroud to public groups. / have, since 1982, controlled the original Brooks Institute Photographic Exhibition based on the 1978 research work in Turin and have added to and enhanced that exhibit. It has been seen by nearly three quarters of a million people in many countries since that time. I have enjoyed the challenge of doing several pieces of original research and have been a member of a number of expeditionary teams undertaking research in the field of one kind or another.

Above all, I suppose, I have produced this little newsletter. Early this year I was tempted to consider making Number 100 the last one for the purely selfish reason, even in the winter of my life, of an increasing amount of other agenda. When I started to read the letters of greeting which began to come through the mail, the fax and the e-mail, and to realise that so many people find the *SN* useful and they made so many kind and generous remarks (which you will read in this issue) about my meagre efforts, I came to the conclusion quite swiftly, and almost in an euphoria, that to give it up would hardly be a welcome decision, nor would it be a proper thing to do.

Indeed I accept the fact that for as long as I am able I must continue to do this work for the cause of Shroud study. I am happier about it believing that my son, Christopher, having been initiated into the world of sindonology will, almost certainly, take it over if I become incapable of doing it or when I step off the planet.

Special issue

So this hundredth issue contains several special articles written by leading Shroud writers which range over some of the major areas of study: scientific, historical, religious, artistic. Not least is the new front page banner contributed, as have been the previous ones, by artist and priest, Fr John Conliss of Japan. This issue contains a number of letters and greetings which I greatly appreciate. There are also significant articles from various disciplines in sindonology. Professor Daniel Scavone of the USA and Ian Dickinson of UK write from the historical aspect; Professor Mario Moroni of Italy, Remi van Haelst of Belgium and Paul Maloney of USA write from the scientific point of view; Father John Conliss of Japan contributes a religious reflection and Father Joe Marino writes from both a religious and a wide ranging general point of view; Professor Eberhard Lindner of Germany combines religion and science; Dr Eugenia Nitowski of USA returns to our pages with an archeological piece and Christopher Morgan of Australia writes

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a reflective item drawing together the threads of the past, the present and the prospect before us. And I have much more material on my desk to provide the forthcoming issues with a variety of interest.

As we look ahead to the future of Shroud study I still believe there is much to be done. The emphasis from many quarters is now upon the conservation of the Shroud. But, as with all aspects of Shroud study, few agree as to the best means of achieving this. Some there are who insist that the image will shortly disappear altogether and they may be right. I can see little likelihood of the experts and the custodians agreeing on protocols. Further tests on the Shroud itself have been suspended by the authorities in view of the acrimonious exchanges amongst the experts since the last round. There are still many political mysteries surrounding the Shroud, many intrigues and plots, cover-ups and scandals.

I wrote in Issue number 60 (August 1990):

"I do promise, though, if I'm able, to make the 100th issue very special. Indeed I idly said at dinner the other night, 'I wonder what the Shroud situation will be when I produce the hundredth *Shroud News*?' My good wife, for many years a tolerant Shroud listener, said with considerable prescience, I should think, 'Don't worry, dear, they'll all still be squabbling.' and I expect she'll be proved right. After all, the hundredth issue is due only six and a half years from now."

Dear readers, that good woman is still a tolerant Shroud listener and this week, on the subject of the possible disappearance of the Shroud image she made another classic comment: "If the image disappears they won't be able to argue about it anymore." I add no comment...

Greatest single mystery

But what is positive and challenging and exciting is that this extraordinary piece of linen has not only survived the last twenty years of malicious controversy, criticism, lampooning, ignorance, personal grandstanding and sensationalism but it has survived, perhaps, two thousand years of abuse, damage, attack and often negligence. Yet it remains the greatest single mystery on earth and attracts more attention than any other artefact in existence.

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And still, we are unable to state what is the nature of the image, what process formed it, why it has the properties of a photographic negative, three-dimensional and other singular phenomena associated with it, or how it comes to have anatomical and other data encoded in it unknown at the time of Christ or, for that matter, in the middle ages when some would claim it might have been created. It cannot be reproduced by any known method even now in these last three years of the twentieth century despite having witnessed the most spectacular advances in science and technology of all history.

Its existence has been recorded in words and images since the First Century in all forms of art. It has generally been preserved and cared for in one way or another for two thousand years and has at least been thought of as the Shroud of Christ. This alone is not an unreasonable argument for assuming that it probably is. And still it continues to inspire and amaze those who look at photographs of its image just as it will again when millions will line up for hours to see it in its barely discernible reality in Turin next year and in the year 2000. It needs to be said that my photograph of the image which I took in 1978 and reproduced on the front cover of this issue has had the colour enhanced.

On these next occasions, then, as the Roman Church has rightly determined, there will be far greater resource and historical material available for those who will journey to Italy for the event. The great cathedral of St John is being refurbished, the museum of the Holy Shroud is being completely re-created and re-housed. Many (of us) will produce new literature and information for dissemination to the throngs which I forecast will be enormous and hungry for that information.

Over these next few years I hope I might be spared to complete some of the Shroud books I already have on the drawing board or in my head. I hope to see the publication of my work with collaborators Sylvia Bogdanescu, Isabel Piczek and Christopher Morgan on the research we have done in the catacombs of Rome and where I believe we have found and identified the earliest painting of Christ. I believe it is probably 1st Century and that it indicates a relationship with the image on the Shroud thus suggesting that both are representations of the same person thereby adding to the evidence for possible authenticity of the Turin Shroud.

It is hoped that we can pursue further the theory, on which I have written papers and lectured, that I developed from the work of Ian Wilson and Audrey Dymock that the Shroud was once in England, taken there by French

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or English Templars in the Middle Ages in a great box, the lid of which is the famous medieval "Templecombe Panel" bearing an image of Christ with Shroudlike characteristics. With the assistance of Christopher Morgan we made a reconstruction of this box to assist in demonstrating our research.

I hope also to facilitate the publication of a number of manuscripts which have been sent to me by other writers around the world.

Your editor, then, is one who has seen the Shroud itself. He has assembled a large library of books, journals, pictures; slides, photographs, memorabilia, videos, press cuttings and other resource materials concerning it. He has parleyed and corresponded with many of the world's great names in its study and authorship. He has discussed the Shroud on hundreds of radio and television programmes in many countries - the "Sputnik of the Shroud" as Professor Emanuela Marinelli has called him. He has had the opportunity to act as a kind of Shroud ambassador amongst individuals and factions in several countries. He has pursued certain lines of original investigation.

Indeed, he once held in his hand a piece of the Shroud.

And, as if it were a terminal disease, he is *unable* to discard his interest in the Shroud of Turin.

And, as a challenge to his intellect, his sense of adventure and mystery, his continuing astonishment at this phenomenon, he is also *unwilling* to discard his interest in the Shroud of Turin.

Thank you all for your support.

REX MORGAN

STOP PRESS: As this was in the hands of the printer on 14 March 1997 the Sydney Morning Herald reported a sensational lecture given at a radio carbon conference by Dr Jull in Sydney this week in which he seems to say that carbon dating can easily be incorrect through the presence of intrusive carbon (*from fires, etc*) The item is reproduced near the end of this issue!!