

## A Hard Act to Follow

I'm sure readers will recall that in the previous newsletter, David Rolfe revealed his decision to stand down as editor. It is both an honour and a privilege to have been asked to succeed him in this role but it's also extremely daunting. David has been an active member of the BSTS since its foundation and throughout these years he has contributed immensely to the raising of public awareness of the Shroud. His various Shroud-related films and documentaries, from *The Silent Witness* in 1978 to this year's *Who Can He Be?* have brought evidence of its authenticity to a worldwide audience and have undoubtedly helped to strengthen the faith of many of those who watched these films. The newsletter circulation has also grown consistently over the five years of David's editorship, largely as a result of his decision to give the BSTS an online presence through our [bstsnewsletter.com](http://bstsnewsletter.com) website and BSTS Facebook page. He is, without doubt, a hard act to follow but thankfully the experienced management team that David has built remains in place and I'm confident that with their help, and the support of members worldwide, we can maintain the upward trajectory of our society.

One of the principle aims of the British Society for the Turin Shroud when it was founded in 1976 was '*The encouragement of, and support for, research into the Shroud of Turin in all aspects*'. This was of course a period when there was widespread interest in the Shroud and when its custodians were willing to allow scientific studies of this remarkable cloth. The BSTS played its part in supporting the STURP examinations of 1978 and was a persuasive voice calling for a C-14 dating test. However, the selection and removal of the radiocarbon sample in April 1988 was the last occasion when scientists have been able to examine the Shroud directly. Since then, scientific research has relied heavily on the data and photographs obtained during previous examinations, as well as tiny fragments of authorised Shroud material that were also removed during the course of those investigations. Despite the lack of access to the Shroud in recent years, scientists have made some remarkable discoveries which have improved our knowledge of this enigmatic cloth. Historians have also continued to look for new evidence that may improve our understanding of the Shroud's journey between first century Judea and fourteenth century France. There is no doubt that this scientific and historical research will continue in the years ahead and we look forward to covering details of any new findings or insights that emerge from this work in future editions of this newsletter.

I am delighted that this edition of the newsletter features contributions from members living outside the UK, which is a reflection of the global membership of the BSTS. The subject of future research into the Shroud is taken up in an article by another of our distinguished former editors, Australia-based Ian Wilson. As Ian explains, this is a time to consider some 'out of the square' approaches to scientific and historical studies of the Shroud and he shares some of his ideas of how we might open up new research opportunities. César Barta from Spain has contributed a paper covering some of the important findings revealed by research into the Sudarium of Oviedo, in which he

describes several features that are common to both the Shroud and the Sudarium, reinforcing claims for the authenticity of both these sacred cloths. We also have two articles from members based in the USA, Russ Breault and Jim Bertrand, both of whom are vastly experienced Shroud speakers who have delivered hundreds of presentations to diverse audiences.

The BSTS is now approaching its fiftieth year as an organisation and its continued existence is largely due to the dedication of various members over the years who have willingly contributed their time and energy to ensure the smooth operation of the society and the timely production of our six-monthly newsletter. Today we have a devoted management team consisting of Phil and Pam Moon, Stuart and Brenda Benton, Andrew Willie, Philippa Foster and my wife, Lynne, and I am deeply grateful for their efforts on behalf of the BSTS. However, we are on the lookout for anyone who is able to contribute to our work, particularly in the following areas:

- Social media promotion of the BSTS
- Maintenance of the BSTS Newsletter website

If you feel you can make a contribution and would be interested in joining our team, we would be delighted to hear from you.

*Michael Kowalski, December 2022*

## **Footnote**

Whilst writing this editorial, my attention was drawn to a news headline that read *UK Christians in minority for first time since the Dark Ages*. The report revealed that the 2021 Census shows that just 47.6% of people across the UK are now Christian, down from 60% in 2011. Of the rest, 37% claim to have no religion. There can be little doubt that the Shroud C-14 test verdict that this sacred cloth is not a relic but a forgery has been a major factor in this drift towards atheism. The work of the BSTS clearly is as relevant today as ever.

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The BSTS welcomes suitable articles and papers for publication. Submissions, *ideally*, should be formatted on Word. Please use A5 paper size with narrow margins all round. Typeface: Times New Roman 10pt.

Submit to:

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