

## **BRENDA BENTON – A BSTS Speaker Profile**

I have been a public speaker for over twenty years and have travelled extensively in Britain, and on occasions, America and Canada to give my testimony. For the past seven years my husband Stuart and I have been part of Pam Moon's team travelling to many areas of the country with her Turin Shroud exhibition.



We are now looking to give more talks about our time with the exhibition and share some of the amazing experiences we have had along the way. This paints a vivid picture of the impact the Shroud has on the lives of many people from all walks of life.

Our journey with the Turin Shroud began in February 1978, just three months before our only child died at the age of three. Our daughter Zoe's consultant said he believed she had an inherited brain disease and sent us to see a geneticist. An appointment was made for January of that year and during our time with him we were asked if there was any possibility of us being related. My mind immediately returned to a conversation between my grandmother and Stuart's father at our engagement party. It was at this occasion we realised that they were related through a mutual uncle. At that time we knew nothing about genetics and gave no more thought to it.

The geneticist asked us to look more closely into to how we are related so Stuart paid a visit to our local registry office. He was advised to visit St. Catherine's House in London and begin our search there. We arranged for Zoe to be cared for by our parents and set off for this office, where all the registry records were kept before the use of the internet was available. Shortly after our arrival we realised that this was an impossible task at that time. Because our train home wasn't due to leave until 4pm we decided to go sight-seeing and headed for the tube station.

Whilst on the journey to our planned destination I had a most unusual experience. As I stood on an underground escalator a poster seemed to jump off the wall and stood out in an amazing way. It held a picture of the face on the Turin Shroud and was advertising David Rolfe's film, 'The Silent Witness.' Up until this time I had no knowledge that the Shroud existed. I knew instinctively that we must see this film, so we changed direction and headed for the hotel where it was being shown. We entered the ballroom of the hotel to find it full of priests and nuns and I felt most out of place. As we watched the film and the story began to unfold I experienced a powerful encounter with God. I began to believe this really was the burial cloth of Jesus as I was faced with the horror of His death on the cross. At one point it was as though I was experiencing His pain and He was sharing in mine, we were united through His suffering. Little did I know that this was the beginning of an incredible journey where a whole new world would open up before us.

When Zoe died at hospital in the early hours of May 17<sup>th</sup> 1978 Stuart and I had a wonderful encounter with our Lord. We were wrapped in a warm blanket of love and experienced the peace which passes all understanding. The room was filled with His Presence and we felt Him take her and we need never worry about her again.

For ten years the Shroud faded into the background as I struggled to come to terms with losing Zoe and the fact that we were advised not to have other children as the risk of having another child with the same disease was so high.

It was around the time of Easter in 1988 that the news was full of publicity about the Turin Shroud. The results of a carbon dating test would soon be released and because I knew in my heart it was authentic I became very excited.

I will never forget that October day when the news broke that scientists were claiming the Shroud to be a fake made between 1260 and 1390AD. This came as an awful shock because I was so certain it was genuine. As feelings of numbness, loss, and bereavement swept over me it would be hard to explain my emotions at that time. I had to question my whole faith, if this was not true then what was I to believe?

When our evening newspaper arrived that day I noticed a small mention of the Shroud on the front page. As I read it a ray of hope shone through when it said, "Scientists are now 95% sure the Turin Shroud is a fake." That was not good enough for me, either they were sure or they were not. By the following day I was convinced that the scientists were mistaken. A number of years later I came to a place where my faith was so strong that it no longer mattered whether the Shroud was authentic or not. Over the years we have had encounters that only God could have orchestrated and we no longer have any doubts that the Turin Shroud wrapped our Lord's body. On saying this I must point out that we only ever tell our story, share the facts that we know about the Shroud and leave the rest for each individual to take from our message whatever they wish to believe.

A number of years ago I attended a baptism service for my cousin's daughter at a church in Four Oaks in the West Midlands, which is a twenty minute drive away from our home. A few weeks later in conversation with my cousin she mentioned that the wife of the vicar who conducted the service was staging an exhibition about the Turin Shroud in her

husband's church. I was thrilled to hear this news and was desperate to go. Unfortunately we were on holiday that weekend and couldn't make it. I did try to contact this lady but obviously it wasn't yet the right time for us to meet.

It was four years later that a new gentleman joined our church and in conversation I mentioned the Shroud. He told me that in his previous church he completed the Bishops course and said that the wife of the vicar who led the course owned an exhibition about the Turin Shroud. My heart leapt at this news and I asked if he knew her name and how I could contact her. The following week he gave me the address of Pam Moon and I wrote to her and shared our Shroud story. She emailed me back and asked if we could meet and we arranged to get together a short time later. A month earlier Stuart had retired from work so when Pam asked us to join her team we were free to do so. This was a dream come true for me.

When that first meeting took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011 she mentioned that she was taking the exhibition to Wells Cathedral on the 15<sup>th</sup> April. She asked if there was any possibility that we could help to set up this exhibition as she was on a tight time limit. Amazingly we were already in nearby Bristol that weekend for a friend's birthday party. We loved helping out in this way and met other people who were passionate about the Shroud. This was such a blessing because up until this time I rarely spoke about the Shroud as if I did mention it to anyone they would dismiss it as a fake.

We have travelled with the exhibition to a wide variety of venues, each one is unique and that gives me an inexhaustible supply of stories to tell. There are many wonderful testimonies in the comment books we have used over the years but there is one that stands out and has made our work so worthwhile. It came from a teenager who wrote ~ 'This is better than Netflix!'

I have given my testimony in schools during my years as a speaker and one of my greatest delights is to introduce the Shroud to young people. Their response and questions are fascinating and truly inspiring at times. We have now met many of the people I have read about over the years but could never have imagined we would meet. We recently began working with David Rolfe to distribute the BSTS Newsletter and shortly we will be meeting Ian Wilson when he gives a lecture at our friend's church in Bristol. All that we learn from the many Shroud experts we meet brings its own richness into our ministry.

Four years ago Barrie Schwartz was invited by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to an annual event called the Jalsa Salana, held in Hampshire. The motto of this branch of the Muslim faith is 'Love for all and hatred for none' and they work to bring peace and understanding between all faiths. Barrie asked if Pam could also be invited to bring part of her exhibition for him to use as a visual aid. Barrie sent a powerful message to the world when he was recorded to say how amazing it is that a Jew is taking a Christian relic to a Muslim people. Stuart and I were unable to attend the first year but over the past three years we have seen this become an international conference where Shroud experts from different parts of the world gather to share their knowledge.

Our talks tend to focus on the faith side of the Turin Shroud. Because our message covers a wide range of experiences that our Shroud journey has taken us on we can tailor make our talk to whatever our audience requires. One of our main aims is to introduce people with little or no knowledge of the Shroud to the new information that has come to light since the results of the carbon dating hit the headlines. If anyone wishes to know more about the Shroud we are able to point them in the right direction to discover the information they require. We do not charge a speakers fee for our power point talks.

For more information or to book a talk please contact Brenda by email: [bb.shroud@btinternet.com](mailto:bb.shroud@btinternet.com)



*Brenda and Stuart Benton*