

Rogue fibres found in the Shroud

Start at a Derbyshire laboratory have been working on one of their most unusual and fascinating problems ever to help unravel a second mystery concerning the world-famous Turin Shroud. The true age of the Shroud was announced recently following exhaustive and hopefully conclusive tests by laboratories in Britain, Switzerland, and the USA. Precision Processes (Textiles) Ltd, in Ambergate, Derbyshire, earned the distinction of being the only lab in the UK to assist Oxford University with the prestigious assignment, their task bring to identify "foreign" bodies found in the cloth. Managing director Peter South explains: "It was while the sample was undergoing tests at the radiocarbon acceleration unit in Oxford that Professor Edward Hall noticed two or three fibers which looked out of place. He mentioned this to his friend Sir James Spooner, chairman of Coats Viyella, to which our firm belongs. Consequently, after several telephone calls, the minute samples, which looked like human hair, were sent to us."

The strange fibres were magnified 200 times under a microscope and were immediately identified as cotton:

"The cotton is a fine, dark yellow strand, possibly of Egyptian origin and quite old. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say how it ended up in the Shroud, which is basically made from linen," said Mr South. "It may have been used for repairs at some time in the past, or simply became bound in when the linen fabric was woven. It may not have taken; us long to identify the strange material, but it was unique amongst the many and varied jobs we undertake."

New Rieter training centre founded

The foundation stone of the new Rieter Training Centre was officially laid in September, when twenty senior representatives of major textile colleges from all over the world took part. This was symbolic of the firm's commitment to the promotion of education, of particular significance being the close cooperation between the colleges and the industry itself, ie Rieter's customers.

The purpose of the new Training Centre is to meet efficiently the increasing demand for customer training. Rieter's sales and construction staff, will also be trained there, in even greater depth, so that Rieter's

comprehensive consultancy services can be maintained with the new advanced spinning systems. Facilities for visitors are also provided.

The five-storey Training Centre will be annexed to the existing canteen, and include instruction rooms for all machine types from blowroom to ring and rotor spinning machines. A lecture hall, a visitors' snack bar, and offices for the instructors complete the Centre. The high-tech look of the building contrasts with the annexed canteen, while the multi-storey construction saves land and allows the beautiful park along the river. Töss to be preserved. Opening is scheduled for the beginning of 1990.

Cotton at risk, but wool buoyant

In 1967, UK consumption of cotton, wool and man-made fibres reached nearly 519 million kg compared to 464 million kg in 1983 according to a new report just published by market analysis Key Note. However, the report stresses that while consumption is up, the rise in import penetration is causing concern.

Cotton is pinpointed as one of the areas particularly hard hit by imports. Although production of yarn has increased from a low 47.3 million kg in 1984 to 50.9 million kg in 1987, imports have also increased from 54% of home consumption to 61%. Although the report regards Far East countries as the main source of competition, it stresses that the recent contributions from Spain and Portugal cannot be ignored.

Key Note state that despite the worst being over for cotton, the trade imbalance is currently too high to sustain output and employment at present levels.

Wool accounts for 20% of the fibre market and, according to Key Note, the sector is performing well, benefiting from its high quality image. While home consumption of yarn has risen from 68.1 million kg in 1982 to 89.9 million kg in 1987, imports have remained steady at 14%.

Exports in the wool manufacturers sector have also been performing well with a 36.1% increase in value between 1983 and 1986 for woven fabrics and a 19% increase for yarn.

In conclusion, Key Note state that although the recession has streamlined the industry, an enormous challenge remains - whether the industry is capable of reversing the flow of imports and improving domestic market share.

The report; fibres, is published by Key Note Publications Ltd, 28-42 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8QE, UK; price £ 135.



Mr Peter South seen here with Mr Colin Cheatham, the Technologist, in the foreground