

## The Turin Shroud in Germolles 1452 by Hugh Duncan

One of my aims has been to fill all the gaps in the Shroud's history, in the hope that such links, as it disappearing from Constantinople in 1204 and re-appearing in the 1350's in Lirey, will show its existence to be continuous. Some less important 'gaps', if filled, could also help to dispel those deliberately sensational conspiracy theories that the original shroud was switched with another made by a medieval mastermind such as Leonardo da Vinci.

To this end, I decided to look into the little known exposition of the Shroud in Germolles in 1452. At this time, Margaret de Charny had been travelling around, looking for a suitably secure place and family with which to leave the Shroud. Widowed and childless, she realized there was no one to pass it onto in her direct family. She had already moved with the Shroud from Lirey to St Hippolyte at the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. After 34 yrs there, she was now on the move to find it a new home. In 1449 Margaret went to Belgium and had discussions with the House of Hapsburg, but without success

Next, Margaret brought the Shroud to Germolles in 1452, maybe as an attempt to find a home for the relic. Most publications about the history of the Shroud give only a sentence to the Germolles event; *13<sup>th</sup> September 1452, a public exposition in the castle of Germolles, near Macon*. This is all that is said in all but two of the dozens of books and web sites that are available about the Shroud. It may of course be understandable that little is said as this was a fleeting moment in the Shroud's history that seems to have had little significance.

Firstly I unearthed a slightly more detailed article on a French web site that was dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1998 that no longer seems to exist. It was written by **Michel SARRAZIN** and quoted in the footnote was : *Copyright © 1998 - Jsl Médiathèque- le Journal de Saône et Loire*, which is more of a general magazine but does feature articles of a local historical nature. The relevant French paragraph translates as:

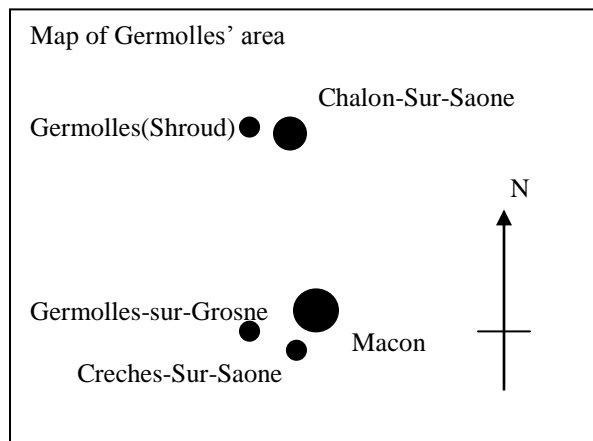
*'So it was then one finds on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1452, [it was] exhibited in Germolles, just before being given to the House of Savoy, whom, encroaching into France, Switerland and Italy, would find it quite normal to put the Shroud in Turin. In the Germolles Castle, according to the chronicle, all the lords, gentlemen and ladies in the neighbourhood, but the unimportant people too, paused to pray with deference in front of this pious relic, from well before dawn until sunset.'*

C'est ainsi qu'on le retrouve le 13 septembre 1452, exposé à Germolles et ce, juste avant d'être cédé à la maison de Savoie qui, empiétant sur la France, la Suisse et l'Italie, trouvera tout normal de déposer le Suaire à Turin. Au château de Germolles, dit la chronique, tous les seigneurs et gentes dames alentours, mais le petit peuple aussi, se succédèrent pour prier avec déférence devant cette pieuse relique, de bien avant l'aube, jusqu'au coucher du soleil.

The quote itself obviously comes from after 1578 as the Shroud did not settle in Turin until then, but the chronicle sounds more contemporary for the period. The other variation on the usual sentence was in Wikipedia, stating without sourcing, that: *the Shroud was exhibited on 13<sup>th</sup> and*

14<sup>th</sup> September in Germolles and shown not only to the Duke, but also his wife Isabel of Portugal. It will soon be seen that this comment is not substantiated with any other evidence.

I decided to try and find out more about this exposition of the Shroud, so duly found the web site for the Germolles castle in July this year. However, this Germolles castle was stated as being near (about 10km east of) Chalon-sur-Saone and not near Macon as quoted in previous Shroud publications. As Chalon and Macon are about 60 km apart, then it seemed there might have been a misunderstanding somewhere along the line. I wrote to one of the team working at the Germolles Castle near Chalon-sur-Saone, Mathieu Pinette, who turned out to be the son of the present owners. Mathieu confirmed that the Turin Shroud had indeed been exposed at his family's castle from 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September 1452. At this time, the owner was Philip the Good, third Duke of Burgundy of the Valois Dynasty. Mathieu pointed out that there was another Germolles castle, actually in Creches-Sur-Saone, about 5km south of Macon, often confused with his Germolles near Chalon-sur-Saone. There is also another Germolles in the area called Germolles-sur-Grosne, which also happens to be close to Macon, about 10km south west. No evidence of a castle in Germolles-sur-Grosne during the 1450's has been found.



Mathieu then told me that his uncle, the retired vice-admiral M. Francois Dupont-Nivet had done some research into this exposition and kindly put me in touch with him. The uncle duly contacted me, delighted to be able to share his discoveries with a larger, interested audience. He had done his research back in late 2004 which was published by *Mémoires de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Chalon-sur-Saône* (SHAC (9 rue Philibert GUIDE – 71100 - Chalon-sur-Saône)). It was in volume 72 – 2004 – pages 95 to 101. SHAC has kindly given me permission to use the contents of the article. The aim of Francois' research was to locate documents written by the Canon Chevalier or Canon Lalore about the exposition of September 1452 and to prove it was in fact in Germolles near Chalon-sur-Saone and not the other Germolles near Macon or Grosne. Francois sent me a copy of his article. Here his findings have been paraphrased:

The trace of this exposition of the Shroud is found in a roman missile from the 15th century, in the library Inguimbertaine in Carpentras, Ms91 folio 248. It contains six short texts. The first three are prayers asking Christ to distance the dangers facing the Duchy of Burgundy and to bring

peace. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> texts don't mention the Shroud either, but are witness to the prayers demanded. However, they are of interest to us as the name Symonet Denis mentioned in them links later to the Shroud:

Text 4-*'This was written in Germolles by the hand of sieur [monsieur, an abbreviation] Pourchassot, clerk of said area in the Dioceses of Langres the 18<sup>th</sup> day of July in the year of our Lord 1452 in times of war of said Lord Philip, Duke of Burgundy, with the Ghent.'*

Text 5-*'I, the said sieur Pourchassot at the demand of the honorable man Symonet Denis, chatelaine [manor-owner is the modern meaning but at this time would have meant the local delegate carrying out the lord's justice] of said Germolles, wrote this in praise of God Almighty and for the intention of Lord Philip, Duke of Burgundy and for his descendants and for the reduction of his enemies.'*

Note Ghent was in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium which revolted against the Duke of Burgundy's new taxes. Philip the Good declared war on them on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1452. He lost his own favourite illegitimate son Corneille of Burgundy in the battle of Bazel 14<sup>th</sup> June 1452 and he himself was injured in the final assault on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1452 before achieving victory. This is the backdrop leading up to the exposition of the Shroud just seven weeks later.

The final text refers directly to the Shroud itself:

Text 6-*'Pray for him. The year of the Lord 1452, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of September at the demand of said Symonet Denis the Shroud of the Body of Christ where He was wrapped in the tomb was shown in said castle of Germolles, in front of the people and it stayed in said place during six days and in this place it was shown in private a second time.'*

As for which Germolles castle it was, it is true that there was also that Germolles castle near Macon, but it was destroyed in 1423, nearly 30 yrs before the recorded Shroud exhibition. It was 14<sup>th</sup> September 1423 when the Count of Suffolk with the bailiff of Alencon came to Macon and the next day laid siege to this other castle of Germolles. The Lombards and Armagnacs surrendered and were imprisoned in Macon and the English returned the next day (16<sup>th</sup>) and burnt and demolished the castle.

And as further confirmation, in the records AD Cote d'Or B1083 a *chatelaine*, Simonet Denis, the same name as that mentioned in the 1452 exhibition of the Shroud in Germolles near Chalon-Sur-Saone was referred to in 1449 and 1451. Firstly in 1449 as 'an honourable man, both chatelaine and farmer in Germolles and Montagu for the Duke of Burgundy' (Montagu is the neighbouring castle to the Germolles castle near Chalon-Sur-Saone) and secondly in 1451 as 'Simonet Denis, chatelaine and receiver of said Germolles and Montagu'. It seems reasonable to accept that the Simonet mentioned in 1449 and 1451 are one in the same as the Symonet who

wrote about the Shroud in 1452 (ignoring the spelling variation), further strengthening the Shroud's link with this castle.

Having now become convinced that the Shroud was exhibited in the Germolles castle near Chalon-Sur-Saone, I was curious to visit the castle in the hope of seeing where or how exactly the Shroud was presented. Germolles near Chalon-Sur-Saone is only ten minutes drive outside Chalon, though poorly signposted (use your sat nav if visiting!).

We know that Margaret de Charny had been looking for a secure place in which to leave the Shroud and that this was probably her reason for visiting the Germolles castle, though we will see, it wasn't necessarily for the Duke of Burgundy. The castle, which had been a ruined fortress in 1390 was probably confiscated by Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and he turned it into a 'country home' castle for his wife Margaret of Flanders. The castle was built as a rectangle with towers at each corner and an inner courtyard, with sumptuous sleeping rooms for his family and guests. Towers flanked the drawbridge entrance and the castle was a style more Renaissance than Medieval. Philip had a 'double-decker' chapel built, the lower chapel for the local people (farming was a passion of the duchess), while the upper chapel was a private one for Margaret of Flanders herself. Apart from one of the towers that housed part of the upper chapel, there was little external evidence of the religious nature of that part of the castle. An aquarelle made in c.1780 (a copy is owned by the castle) shows what the castle must have looked like in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as extensive records of the castle business showed that little had changed in that time. A later sketch in c.1830 also shows the castle with the same appearance. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a fire destroyed a section of the castle next to the chapels, plus destroying most of the upper chapel too, taking away the roof and most of the three sides of the upper chapel, leaving only the side which joined onto the tower at that corner of the castle. Now the castle is a listed building and the owners are renovating the upper chapel, so when I came, it was in an unsuitable state for visitors. However, Mathieu Pinete kindly let me see inside the upper chapel as it is there he believes the Shroud must have been exhibited.

By 1452, it was the grandson of Philip the Bold, Philip the Good, who was Duke and who owned the castle. Philip the Good is probably remembered more for his handing over of Joan of Arc to the British in 1430. He was very wealthy and powerful and for him to have accepted the Shroud and have it exhibited in his castle shows he must have had some understanding of its value, or perhaps because Margaret was a respected close friend. The documents stated it was shown to the lords, ladies, gentlemen and ordinary people and then there was a private showing some days later. For the ordinary people to see it, it would have to have been either in the lower chapel or perhaps hung from the walls of the castle for them to see, either from the inner courtyard or from the outer walls.

The lower chapel was not very large, some 5 x 8m, so not many people would have fitted inside. Not even a hundred. The inner courtyard was much bigger and could have easily entertained hundreds of guests in one go. And of course if the Shroud was hung from the outer walls overlooking the farm buildings and fields between the castle and the moat, then an even larger crowd could have gathered. Though perhaps, as the chronicle suggests, people came throughout the day rather than all at the same time, so it could have been housed in the small chapel and the local dignitaries and farmers filed past in reverence.

Just where it was exhibited in the castle is speculation. Being a religious relic, one would have expected it to be in or around the chapel. The outcome of the Shroud's visit was that Margaret did not pass the Shroud on to the Duke of Burgundy but instead handed it over to the Dukes of Savoy six months later in 1453.

In my communications with Francois, he pointed out that the Duke of Burgundy wasn't actually present for the Shroud exhibition. The three main historians, two from Chalon (Father Perry and an anonymous writer who was the author of 'Illustre Orbandale') and Dom Plancher (dom is a religious title of honour) who wrote the story of Burgundy do not speak of Duke Philip the Good passing through the south of Burgundy at this time. It is not really surprising as from 1451 to 1453 he had to sort out the problems caused by the revolt in Ghent (three large battles and two town sieges). Thus the earlier Wikipedia quote is wrong-unless a more credible source can be found to verify the Duke's presence.

It is the opinion of Francois Dupont-Nivet that Margaret de Charny did not come to Germolles to see the Duke of Burgundy about the Turin Shroud. If Margaret was coming from the Jura to see the Duke, then she could have more easily met up with him in a castle much closer to home, for example in Rouvieres. From what is known about Philip the Good, between 1425 and 1452 he had given up the castle in Germolles and all its revenue to a friend (though not the Symonet Denis mentioned earlier). As Margaret was in Hainault in 1449, then Margaret could have arranged a more convenient meeting with the Duke of Burgundy as Hainault is closer to Savoy territory if it really was Philip the Good she wanted to see.

The territory of Savoy at this time came very close to Germolles. The border actually started on the eastern bank of the river Saone, which is only about 10km to the east and Chalon was known as a frontier town. So, Francois suggests, Germolles was an ideal meeting place for Margaret de Charny and a prospective new owner of the shroud, the Duke of Savoy and not the Duke of Burgundy. While there is at present no proof that the Duke of Savoy was in Germolles for the arrival of the Shroud, it is not hard to imagine that Savoy could have sent a delegation in place of the Duke to finalise the deal of the handing over of the Shroud.

### **Conclusion-the facts**

The one sentence that covered this moment in the Shroud's history has now been extended to half a dozen:

1. The Turin Shroud was kept in the castle of Germolles near Chalon-Sur-Saone (not the Germolles castle near Macon, nor the Germolles-sur-Grosne).
2. It stayed in the castle from at least 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September 1452.
3. The Shroud was publicly exhibited on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September to people from all around (the day of the week was found from the online Julian calendar).

4. The people paused to pray with deference in front of the relic from before dawn until long after dusk.
5. There was a private showing of the Shroud on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> September, the last day of its stay.
6. The Duke of Burgundy, Philip was not present for the exhibition and his wife's whereabouts, Isabel, has yet to be determined.

### **The Speculation**

-The Shroud was shown to all the lords, ladies and gentlemen and ordinary people.

-It has not yet been proved that the shroud exposed in Germolles was the same one as that which became the Turin Shroud, but the chances seem very high that it is.

-It has not yet been proved that Margaret de Charny was in Germolles, though if the shroud was the Turin Shroud, then the chances are high that she was there. She was known to accompany the relic on previous voyages.

-Margaret de Charny had gone to Germolles to discuss the possible handing over of the Shroud to the Duke of Savoy.

-She would have arrived at least a day or two before the 13<sup>th</sup> in order to 'recover' from journeying and get settled in.

-With the Duke Philip the Good most likely still at war, his son Charles would probably have been with him-otherwise he would have been seen as a coward.

-There might have been a delegation from Savoy, finalising the passing of the Shroud, from Margaret, which eventually took place six months later in 1453.

-The public showing of the Shroud was from inside the lower chapel, or displayed in view of the inner court or front courtyard.

-The private viewing of the Shroud took place in the private upper chapel.

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I would like to thank Francois Dupont-Nivet for his help and cooperation in making this article as accurate as possible and to SHAC for kindly allowing me to reproduce the information in their magazine. Finally I would also like to thank Mathieu Pinete for his enthusiastic and fascinating guided tour of Germolles castle, especially the private viewing of the upper chapel.