

# Was the Shroud in Savoisy?

By Hugh Duncan

## Introduction

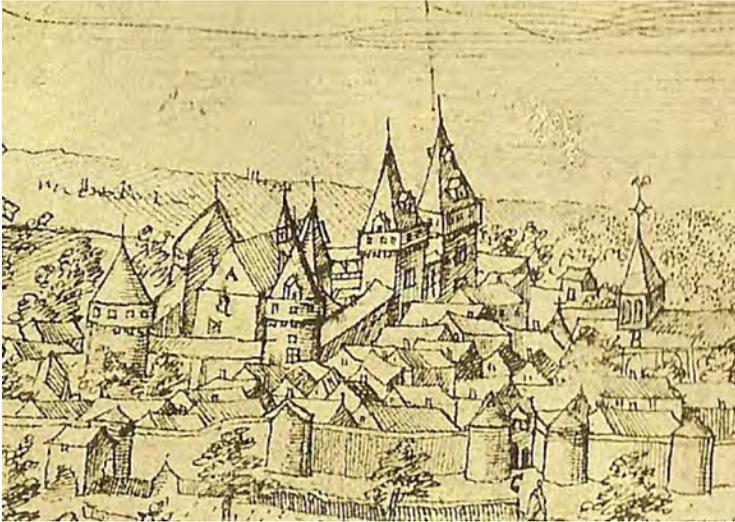


Fig 1. Copy of 1609 engraving of Savoisy by Joachim Duviert, owned by the Lord of Savoisy.

On 23rd August, this summer, I had the opportunity to visit the little known fief of Savoisy, once owned by Geoffroy de Charny I. The original aim was to find out more about the life of this famous knight and, to that end, Laurent Bouzoud, the Lord of Savoisy, kindly invited me on a tour of the grounds. I only found out a few days before the visit there was a story that the Turin Shroud had stayed in the Chateau at least once, if not several times.



Fig 2. Laurent welcomes us!



Fig 3. Present day Chateau de Savoisy (1) 27

My wife, daughter and myself were warmly welcomed by Laurent, his wife and daughter. To greet us, Laurent displayed a weathered Union Jack that had last seen the light of day during the Liberation in 1944. Laurent became the Lord of Savoisy when he took over the Chateau in 1995. It was only then that he discovered the castle's connection to Geoffroy de Charny I and the link to the Turin Shroud. He researched the history of the Chateau and put his findings on a web site (2). He also delved into the history of the Shroud and published his own book on the possible whereabouts of the Shroud between 1204 and 1317, a copy of which he kindly gave to me (5).

## **The History of Savoisy**

I found Laurent to be a charming and delightful host and he gave us an animated visit of the castle and furnished me with stories and related documents. The part of the history that interests us begins around 1250 when Mabilite de Savoisy married Hugues de Mont-Saint-Jean, whose family had inherited the place called Charny. His descendants took on the name of Charny and they inherited the lordship of Savoisy, while the cousins kept the family name of Savoisy. One of the grandsons of Mabilite was Geoffroy de Charny I, who became Lord of Savoisy himself.

The lordship eventually passed on to Geoffroy de Charny I's granddaughter Marguerite. One of the relatives of Humbert de Villersexel (her second husband), François de Palu, became her 'adopted' nephew. Marguerite gave up Savoisy in 1435 to François (3) and in around 1440 he sold it to Pierre de Bauffremont who was none other than the brother of Jean de Bauffremont, the first husband of Marguerite de Charny, both Pierre and Jean being ancestors of the present day Prince Charles-Emmanuel de Bauffremont, who featured in the Joan of Arc article in BSTS No.83. It's a small world! Pierre in turn sold it to Rolin, Chancellor of the Duke of Burgundy and he renovated the castle around 1450, with a new keep and a twin tower to the original strong tower. This made a new 'concealed' entrance (*poterne* in French) between the towers. All this can be seen in the 1609 engraving Fig. 1.

## **The Theory of the Shroud's stay**

Laurent believes the Shroud stayed at Savoisy during its voyages to or from Lirey. The first time was when Geoffroy de Charny I travelled back from Greece to Lirey (5) and again after the c.1355 showing. Another was with Geoffroy de Charny II and the final with Marguerite de Charny. I asked Laurent if there was any evidence that it stayed there and he told me what he heard when he took over the lordship some twenty years ago. He also wrote a summary in an e-mail, the important part is translated below:

*There is in effect an oral tradition, still alive today, according to which the Holy Shroud passed by our house. We gathered it from a woman from Savoisy, who had recorded the voice of Jeanne Corot, a great niece from a liaison with the painter Camille Corot. She lived hereby, but had died several years before our arrival in 1995. This is word for word what I heard on the tape recording (with the Burgundy accent of course!)*

*“We’re not sure, but we would like to think that the Holy Shroud stayed at the Château of Savoisy, at least one night.”*

*This tradition is coherent with the route of the Shroud mentioned in the famous receipt given by Humbert de Villersexel to the Canons of Lirey on 6th July 1418: the route from Lirey to Montfort passes through Savoisy and the Charnys (Geoffroy I, II and Marguerite) were the lords of these three places. It is therefore quite feasible that the journeys taking the Shroud from Lirey to Montfort stopped for a break at Savoisy, at least for one night.*

*This stop in Savoisy in July 1418 is one of those that I have proposed. The first was in the autumn of 1317 and explained in the book ‘Le Clan des Achaïens’ and the others will appear in the second book that is in the process of being written.*

### **Travelling Times in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century**

Savoisy is not far from some other Charny-owned property of the time. The Chateau of Montfort (Montbard) is only 22km (13 miles) from Savoisy, while the Chateau de Charny in Cote d’Or is 57km (34 miles) from Savoisy (and 35km from Montbard-24 miles). The other distance of interest is from Lirey to Savoisy, which is 62km (37 miles), so we can now consider travelling times between these places. The Mediaeval World building Information website (4) gives some travelling speeds for various types of travelling parties:

*A 13<sup>th</sup> century countess (that of Leicester) (Margaret Wade Labarge's book **Mistress, Maids and Men**) averaged some 15 miles a day (24km) for three days during February when she moved house but that rose to 30 miles a day (50km) during June when hurrying for safety.*

Peter Spufford in his book ‘Power and Profit - the Merchant in Medieval Europe’ said:

*The normal distance travelled by any type of carrier in one day seems to have been in the region of 30 to 40 km (18 to 24miles). The stages for pack animals over the Simplon pass were a little more than 30 km apart (18miles). ... Further along the route north, heavy four-wheeled carts on the roads between Salins and Paris also covered 30 or 40 km a day, although*

*the lighter, shorter-distance, two-wheeled carts seem only to have been capable of covering under 30 km a day. If moderately loaded packhorses were used on these easier roads between Salins and Paris, as they sometimes were for special loads, they were able to travel longer distances, over 40 km a day. Indeed a convoy of four men and six horses did the journey from Dijon to Paris in six days in January 1412, averaging 50 km (30 miles) a day. ... The distances covered by non-commercial travellers were not very different from the normal speeds of carriers. Archbishop Eudes Rigaud and his retinue averaged 33 km (20 miles) a day between Paris and Dijon in 1254. In practice their day's journey varied in length between 20 and 45 km (12 and 27 miles), but the archbishop was taking it slowly, visiting friends and acquaintances all along the way.*

If the above values are accepted as reasonable travel speeds for a party during the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century then one can evaluate the likelihood of a 'stop-over' in Savoisy in any of these scenarios. Laurent Bouzoud suggests that the Shroud was taken from Lirey to Montfort (Montbard) in c.1355 due to the Inquest by Henri de Poitiers, stopping off at Savoisy for at least one night. As the distance from Lirey to Savoisy is 62km and one takes a mean speed of 30km a day means that two days of travel would be required. The party coming from Lirey would have had to stop off already for a night before arriving at Savoisy, to then stay at Savoisy for the second night of the journey. From Savoisy to Montfort the journey is 22km so it would take a little less than a day.

Laurent Bouzoud sees the Shroud returning back along the same route to Lirey when the Shroud was displayed by Geoffrey de Charny II in 1389. Again it would have taken a day to travel from Montford to Savoisy, allowing the Shroud to spend a night there. The final time the Shroud might have passed through Savoisy was when it was moved in 1418 for safety reasons. Again it would have stayed a night on its way to Montfort, after which it was later transferred to St Hippolyte.

### **Where would the Shroud have been kept in the Chateau de Savoisy?**

The keep (*donjon* in French) is where important items such as the Shroud might have been stored. At that time (1450), this was found in the middle of the court in front of the twin strong towers shown in the engraving Fig 1. Sadly this was not the original keep and even this one no longer exists. One has to imagine that the keep would have occupied what is now the air space at the height of the third floor! The base of the original tower is shown in Fig. 4 while the approximate position of the final keep is shown in Fig. 5. (Opposite.)

The grounds were full of interesting historical remains of the castle, such as sculptured stones, iron crosses and statue niches, but I want to mention just one example shown in Fig 6. A stone cross, whose foundation stone is dated 1656, is cemented into the wall along with a finial (a roof spike), that had apparently fallen off the roof at some moment in the past. The style of the Christ figure on the cross suggests it could be from a much earlier, more primitive time than the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig 4. Base of the original strong tower



Fig 5. The keep was to the left.



Fig 6. Finial and cross 1656?

## Conclusion

So, what do we have as evidence for the Shroud's stay in Savoisy? Local folklore, that speaks of the Shroud staying at the Chateau of Savoisy for a night. The logical deduction that a party travelling under normal conditions more than about 30km would have to stop off for the night and Savoisy, a property of the Charny family at the time is suitably placed for such a stay coming from Lirey before continuing on to Montfort for a historically recorded event.

The exact whereabouts of the Shroud is still not completely fixed for several periods of time between c.1356 and 1437, let alone those before 1356, though if it was transported to and from Lirey to Montfort near Montbard then it's an almost certainty that it stopped off at Savoisy. Unless a document is uncovered stating categorically that it stayed specifically at Savoisy, then for now we may have to accept it is just a reasonable likelihood that it did. I do look forward to finding further evidence.

Laurent Bouzoud believes that the Shroud could have stopped off at Savoisy at least three times in its journeying back and forth between the Charny owned properties. In fact, in his book 'La Clan des Achaiens-scenario pour l'histoire du Linceul de Turin (1204-1317) (5), he suggests its first sojourn could have happened when it was brought to France in 1317. This, however, would be the topic of a future article. I would like to thank Laurent for his help in shedding a little bit more light on the possible whereabouts of the Turin Shroud during these missing times.

## Sources

Any uncredited photos were taken by Hugh Duncan

(1) Image supplied by Laurent Bouzoud.

(2) Savoisy: Histoire d'un ancien chateau de Bourgogne

[http://www.savoisy.com/histoire\\_locale/histoire\\_ancien\\_chateau\\_savoisy.htm](http://www.savoisy.com/histoire_locale/histoire_ancien_chateau_savoisy.htm)

(3) By coincidence Ian Wilson had just got hold of the original document of the exchange of castles dated 24<sup>th</sup> nov 1435 from Cote d'Or Archives B751. Many thanks for sharing this!

(4) Travelling times in the 13-15<sup>th</sup> century <https://writemedieval.livejournal.com/4706.html>

(5) Le Clan des Achaiens scenario pour l'histoire du Linceul de Turin 1204-1317 by Laurent Bouzoud (limited edition)