

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN
edited by REX MORGAN
Author of PERPETUAL MIRACLE and SHROUD GUIDE

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THE TEMPLECOMBE PANEL PAINTING COPIED IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE FACE OF THE MAN OF THE IMAGE ON THE HOLY SHROUD AS
REPORTED BY IAN WILSON IN 1978.

IN THIS ISSUE REX MORGAN UNCOVERS FASCINATING NEW EVIDENCE TO
SUGGEST THAT THE HOLY SHROUD WAS ONCE IN ENGLAND

[Photo: Rex Morgan 1979]

EDITORIAL

Having recently returned from a brief visit to Europe I have much material to share with SHROUD NEWS readers.

I have devoted most of this issue to my article about the Templecombe panel painting which has arisen from what I believe is new evidence about that extraordinary artifact. I was able to interview people closely associated with the discovery more than forty years ago and a Somerset researcher into the matter and its association with the Knights Templar.

Another interesting piece of research was to visit the basilica in France which houses the Tunic of Argenteuil. As Shroud students will be aware there has been much speculation about this piece of cloth and its bloodstains which are said to match those on the image on the Shroud. Further work on this could determine whether they both apply to the same man and have obvious implications about the authenticity or otherwise of both items. I shall report on this exercise in the next issue.

It was refreshing to meet with Remi Van Haelst again in Belgium and together we went to see and photograph another newly discovered artist's copy of the Shroud hitherto unrecorded by Fossati. When Father Fossati (of Turin) was told about it he immediately dated it (sight unseen) from the description under it and he will now have photographs of it for his extensive catalogue of all known artistic copies of the Shroud through the ages.

There has been an interesting comment by the Holy Shroud Guild of New York about the present state of play in the Carbon dating programme for 1987 / 1988 which I will bring to you in October.

My desk is groaning with the weight of the usual heap of Shroud-related correspondence, publications and the like and I propose to give my readers a digest of all the latest information in the October issue.

REX MORGAN

WAS THE HOLY SHROUD IN ENGLAND?

By REX MORGAN

*And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?*

-William Blake

Many have speculated upon whether those feet did, in ancient time, walk upon England's mountains green. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to support the tradition that the boy Jesus was in England with his peat-uncle Joseph of Arimathea, many of whose tribe from Israel settled in tin-rich Cornwall in Roman Britain, but no-one, I think, has yet suggested that the Holy Shroud of Turin might also have been in England some thirteen hundred years after the crucifixion.

The history and whereabouts of this extraordinary piece of 2,000 year old Palestinian linen have been well chronicled according to documentary, artistic and circumstantial evidence, particularly by British historian, and doyen of Shroud writers, Ian Wilson of Bristol. Through his writings and the research of others, most recently by Noel Curren-Briggs in his remarkable book *The Shroud and the Grail* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), there is a growing body of evidence and argument to show exactly where the Shroud has been since the time of Christ and particularly in the period before the middle ages when from 1357 we have virtually incontrovertible evidence of its location to the present day.

During a visit to Somerset in August 1987 I came across additional information which suggests to me the strong possibility that the Shroud was actually kept on English soil for a time during the fourteenth century.

The village of Templecombe in Somerset was, in early times, two parishes, one either side of the River Cale. On the eastern side was Abbots-Combe or Abbas-Combe where one finds the restored church of St Mary, founded by a daughter of King Alfred, thus placing it in the first millennium. Remains of its earliest architectural features are extant and it retains its complete Norman font.

On the western side of the combe or valley was, and is, the village of Templecombe which was owned in its entirety from about 1185 by the Order of Knights Templar to whom it had been given by Serb o Fitz-Odo, as we are told in Collinson's *History and Antiquities of Somerset* (1791). Upon this donation being made, Templecombe

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became a preceptory or commandery of the Order thus establishing the village as a principal domain of the Templars. A number of original buildings can still be found in the village, particularly those which were used as the preceptory itself and dwelling quarters for the religious knights. These buildings were subsequently used by the Hospitaller Knights of St John of Jerusalem after the suppression of the Templars. In due course the Hospitallers were also suppressed by Parliament and in 1540 the buildings passed into private hands, a circumstance which obtains to the present day.

There is considerable reason for the Templars to have chosen this part of Somerset for their preceptory since, as religious knights sworn to the upholding of Christianity and protectors of the route to Jerusalem, they knew of the tradition of the connections between Joseph of Arimathea and the constant quest of the Knights of King Arthur for the Holy Grail, whatever that might have been, in the district where, as it happens, is the site with the greatest claim to being Arthur's Camelot, South Cadbury Hill, a mere six miles from Templecombe village.

There is also considerable evidence that the Templars owned the Holy Shroud for some two hundred and fifty years from the sack of Constantinople in 1204 until, and well beyond, their suppression in Paris in 1307 when it passed into the hands of members of several European families tightly interconnected and, indeed, associated with all the travels, known and surmised, of the Shroud until the descendant of one of those Templar families, Margaret de Charny, ultimately handed it to her kinsfolk, the Savoyes, in 1453 who, as we know, owned it until the death of Umberto II in 1984.

It has been reported by Wilson, and by others like myself who have based their information on Wilson's account, that a painting of the head of Christ was discovered by accident in an outbuilding in Templecombe in the 1950s. This remarkable artifact has been on display in the Templecombe parish church since 1956 but attracted little special attention until Wilson, in 1978, published his important theory that the painting was a direct copy from the face of the image of the man on the Holy Shroud, one of many such copies made by the Templars to be kept in their various preceptories throughout Europe to remind them of their most precious possession, the Holy Shroud, and to be used as an object of veneration. There are some inaccuracies in the information given to Wilson concerning the discovery of the Templecombe painting where he reports (in *The Turin Shroud*, Gollancz, 1978):

"During a severe gale in Somerset, England, in 1951, the ceiling plaster collapsed in the outhouse of a cottage belonging to Mrs A. Topp in the village of Templecombe. It revealed in the roof, covered with coal dust, a curious panel painting. The presence of a keyhole and hinge marks indicated that at one time it had been used as a door to the cottage coal house."

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In my recent researches I was led by the indefatigable Belgian Shroud scholar, Remi Van Haelst, to Audrey Dymock, Parish Secretary of Templecombe, and herself an artist. Mrs Dymock related to me the true story of the finding of the Templecombe painting and, in turn, sent me to the woman who actually made the discovery, Mrs Molly Drew, now of Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset.

The facts are that the cottage alluded to above is one of a terrace of three, once used as one building and, in Templar times, according to the extensive research undertaken by Audrey Dymock, the dwelling house of the Templar chaplain, a hundred yards or so from the building which was the actual preceptory.

Attached to (or forming part of) what is today one of the cottages was a semi-outbuilding whose original purpose can now only be speculated upon as it was regrettably demolished after the 1950s. This chamber had no windows and was reached from the back of the cottage through a single door and a step down to an earth floor. It was used by Mrs Drew, then a tenant of the late Mrs Topp, as a wood-shed, never a coal-house. Although Molly Drew cannot remember exactly which year it was that she discovered the painting it was in the latter part of the Second War (rather than 1951), perhaps 1944, and she describes in detail that she entered the wood-room one day to get some firewood and happened to look up at the ceiling. A piece of plaster had fallen away from it and she found herself looking at a face of Christ peering at her through the hole.

She attributes the falling of the plaster to the possibility of a bomb-blast nearby during German air-raids on Britain but not to a gale, as there had not been one. She also states that there was no coal-dust on the painting but a build-up of ordinary dust and cobwebs over the very long period the panel must have been in the ceiling.

Some reports of this panel have suggested that it might have been used as part of the structure of the room and had at some time even been used as a door. In response to careful questioning, Molly Drew is sure that the panel is most unlikely to have been so used as it was carefully wired into the ceiling, suspended as it were, and then covered with the plaster and laths. Had it been used for any practical purpose at all since its original concealment, for the evidence strongly suggests concealment rather than structural usage, then it is odd that no awareness of its curious painting had ever been reported before and it seems equally unlikely that, at any time in history, someone coming across such a large and heavy wooden panel bearing an obviously very old painting, whatever they might have thought it to be, would blithely use it as a coalhouse door, or for any other purpose.

Mrs Drew and others who examined the painting at the time of her discovery of it and helped her to remove it were quite convinced that it had been in the ceiling for

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hundreds of years which is quite consistent with its being an object of -such importance that its owners would have concealed it if their activities were being questioned or suppressed.

After Molly Drew and her landlady, the late Mrs Topp, and a workman called in on account of its size and weight, had removed the panel and brought it into Mrs Drew's house it was apparent to them immediately that it was a representation of Christ or some other biblical figure. They had called in the then local rector, a retired Bishop George Wright, to see it in the ceiling who thought, at the time, that it might have been part of a celure or tester originally from a high altar and therefore obviously of some religious significance. About three weeks later the good bishop had it removed to his rectory for security where it remained without public attention until after the war and where, in his zeal, Bishop Wright also scrubbed it and in the process removed much of the original paint. Mrs Drew describes it as having been very much brighter in colour when she first found it and lightly dusted it off than after the bishop had all but destroyed the unique painting. "The colours were very vivid then, with bright blues and reds," says Molly Drew.

Later local commentators have suggested that the panel might have been the lid of a vestment box for religious observances and here, I believe, we might be getting closer to the truth about this mysterious object.

I had not seen the panel since 1979 and, although I photographed it at that time, had not clearly remembered its size. When I saw it again in August 1987 I was struck by the largeness of it. It measures some 4'9" wide by 2'9" high and is believed to be about 2" thick. It is thus a substantial box lid such as might be part of a heavy trunk which might contain a metal container with something very precious inside it. It was "restored" in the 1950s and then placed in the Templecombe church on Easter Day 1956 where it has been an object of curiosity ever since.

It was Audrey Dymock who said she thought it might have been a casket used to contain the Holy Shroud, somewhere in Europe during the ownership of the Templars. But there is, in the Shroud's history, a period from 1307 when the Templars were all arrested in Paris on 13th October, to about the mid 1350s when there is almost no evidence to suggest where the Holy Shroud was kept.

It is clear from the evidence of Noel Curren-Briggs that the Templars of France became aware of the plot by King Philip IV to destroy them during 1307 and obvious efforts were made to remove as much of their treasure as possible from the Paris treasury before the purge of October 1307. As Audrey Dymock points out, Templecombe was a very important Templar preceptory at that time and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that if they were trying to conceal their most precious

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possession, the Holy Shroud, they could relatively easily have taken it to the French coast, shipped it across the Channel to Poole in Dorset, and taken it the few miles into Somerset to the Templecombe preceptory. Thus it seems quite possible that the Templecombe panel is not merely a copied painting of the face on the Shroud, nor, indeed, only the lid of a box which might have housed it in Europe, but the very box it was in **whilst it was in England**. If it were then recalled to France in 1357, where we have evidence that it was, after the death of Geoffrey de Charny at the Battle of Poitiers, it could well be that the box itself was left at, or returned to, Templecombe, as an object of veneration, having contained the very Shroud, for the Templars there, and in all England.

There are many reasons for this supposition. The Templar connection with the district is very strong. Besides being the nearest preceptory off the continent of Europe, where the search for Templars and their treasure was most intense after 1307, Templecombe was also very close to the site of Camelot, so closely related to the search for the Holy Grail, which Curren-Briggs and others believe was the Shroud itself rather than any cup or dish or container, as he so ably demonstrates in his most recent book. That the painting itself shows the head adorned with a surrounding frame incorporating the fleur-de-lys emblem suggests strongly that what it depicts, or what it contained, had come from France. When the Templars were persecuted in England it would again be an obvious decision to conceal such a damning but highly important piece of evidence and where more likely to conceal it than the priest's house?

According to Curren-Briggs, Geoffrey de Charny was captured at the battle of Crecy in 1349 and spent the next eighteen months as a prisoner in England during which time it is thought he made his plans to build his church at Lirey, France to house the Shroud, which he probably then owned. Who better, then, to take charge of the recovery and return of the relic from Templecombe to France?

I questioned Molly Drew as to the disposition of the panel in the ceiling to see whether there was a possibility that it had been suspended there for ritual purposes before it had been concealed. The room itself (Mrs Drew's wood-room) would have held, she says, about ten people. It had no windows but contained, set into the wall, a mysterious circular stone (something like a millstone) with a hole in its centre. Audrey Dymock advances several theories about this. One is that the room was a "priest's hole", a place of hiding, and food might have been passed through the hole in the stone. Another is that the circular stone could have had some ritual significance to the Templars, particularly as she has located another such stone in at least one church in the West Country, known to have been a Templar church in the Middle Ages. I was trying to ascertain from Mrs Drew's description whether the room itself could have been used for some part of Templar ritual and then, when the practice had

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been abandoned, the panel was simply plastered over. On balance I would at the moment favour the idea that, whatever the room might have been used for, the panel was simply concealed in the ceiling and had, in fact, been there since, say, at least Cromwell's time, until its discovery by Molly Drew in 1944.

As to the date of the Templecombe panel, vital to this whole conjecture of mine, it is interesting to note that an expert opinion by an art historian quite recently commissioned by the parish, was that the painting was possibly fourteenth century and probably fifteenth. Early in 1987 a local television company made a documentary film about the Knights Templar and rightly showed interest in the Templecombe painting. Besides the fact that during the making of the film Dr Malcolm Barber of Reading University is reported to have described the panel as "one of most important pieces of art in Britain," the television company also commissioned a laboratory to carbon date the item. The official details and report of the dating laboratory have not yet been made available but it has been reliably reported that the panel was dated to 1280. Allowing for the several years plus or minus error which can occur in the C14 dating process, this places the panel precisely into the period during which I speculate that the Shroud was in Templecombe. The wood of the panel is English oak which suggests that it was made in England at the time but it could just as easily, of course, have been made in France for the transportation of the Shroud across the Channel either in its reliquary casket or otherwise packed.

In summary, then, we know that the Shroud "disappeared" in 1307 and there is no real evidence as to where it had been hidden but was obviously held by connections of the Templar network of families. It is highly likely that it would have been taken out of France; Currer-Briggs makes a case for its having been in Germany at this time, but it could as easily have been in England. We have extant a panel dating to 1280 bearing a painting of the head of Christ almost certainly copied from the Holy Shroud as pointed out by Wilson, and as not challenged by any other scholar. Alan Whanger of Duke University has pointed out that under his method of polarising overlay technique which he applies to any supposed copy of the Shroud, the Templecombe panel has 125 points of congruence with the Shroud face. The painting is on a panel with hinge and lock facilities and yet it is painted with the panel horizontal which would not have been done on, or for, an upright door.

The panel is clearly then, the lid of a great box. The dimensions are almost exactly those one would choose to contain the Holy Shroud as we know it when folded into eight as it usually was during the middle ages. The fleur-de-lys decoration of the painting strongly suggests French influence and the quatrefoil design is recurrent in Templar (and other) decorative motifs. Templecombe is six miles from the probable site of the centre of Arthurian activity and the quest for the Holy Grail, now shown by strong evidence actually to have been the Holy Shroud, and is therefore a most likely



A HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED PHOTOGRAPH OF THE TEMPLECOMBE PANEL PAINTING. THIS WAS TAKEN A FEW DAYS AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF THE PANEL IN PART OF HOUSE IN TEMPLECOMBE, SOMERSET IN 1944 AND BEFORE THE PANEL HAD BEEN "CLEANED" OR "RESTORED". IT SHOWS FAR GREATER DETAIL THAN CAN BE DISCERNED TODAY.



ST MARY'S CHURCH, TEMPLECOMBE, SOMERSET, WHICH HOUSES THE PANEL
[Photo: Rex Morgan 1987]



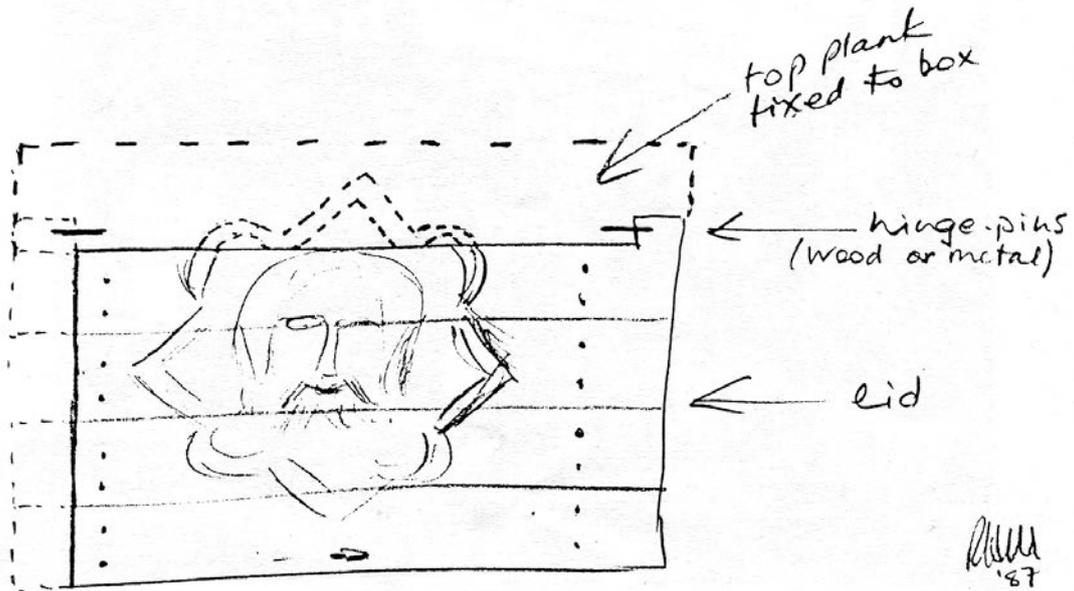
MRS AUDREY DYMCK OF TEMPLECOMBE BESIDE THE PANEL MOUNTED IN
THE TEMPLECOMBE PARISH CHURCH
[Photo: Rex Morgan 1987]



THE TERRACE OF THREE COTTAGES IN TEMPLECOMBE, SOMERSET, IN THE REAR OF WHICH (THE ONE ON THE RIGHT) MRS MOLLY DREW MADE THE STARTLING DISCOVERY IN 1944 OF THE PANEL PAINTING COPIED FROM THE SHROUD
[Photo Rex Morgan 1987]

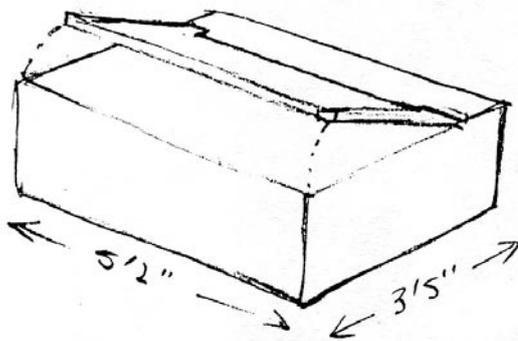


MRS MOLLY DREW, NOW OF BURNHAM-ON-SEA, SOMERSET, WHO DISCOVERED THE TEMPLECOMBE PANEL PAINTING
[Photo Rex Morgan 1987]



ROUGH SKETCH SHOWING COMPLETE LID

ROUGH SKETCH SHOWING COMPLETE LID



ROUGH SKETCH OF COMPLETE BOX

SPECULATIVE ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS

Bill '87

ROUGH SKETCH OF COMPLETE BOX.

SPECULATIVE ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS

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place for this most precious of Christian relics to have been taken by its owners, the Knights Templar, until Europe was considered safe for its return where, indeed, it finally appeared again fifty or so years later, coincident with the return from England to France of its then owner, Geoffrey de Charny.

But this is not all: As a final bonus to my fascinating enquiry for more information about the Templecombe panel I sought to find out whether any photograph existed of the panel, taken at the time of its discovery. The photographs in current circulation and publication have all been taken since the panel's installation in the church in 1956 and those available at the church, or taken by oneself, are obviously contemporary. They show what markings there are, such markings being very much less clear than when Molly Drew first saw the painting and before the bishop scrubbed the paint off it. Was there, I wondered, any chance of an early photograph?

My hopes were rewarded when Molly Drew produced the only copy she has, postcard size, of a black and white picture taken of the painting during the three weeks she had it in her house. She gave permission for me to borrow this unique print and to have copy negatives made so that one can now study the details of the artifact from greatly enlarged black and white photoprints which have far greater resolution than any of the more recent coloured pictures I have seen (or taken myself) of the panel in its present state. The great value of this discovery is that scholars can now examine the panel as it was originally at any size they wish.

This fortuitous photograph, never before published I believe, reveals hitherto unrecorded information that the panel originally had a protrusion or nib on the right-hand top corner, which has since been sawn off to allow the present new plank to be placed where one is missing. My speculation is that there could well have been another such protrusion on the opposite corner and that the missing part of the painting above the head was, in fact, painted on a fixed plank on top of the box allowing a pivot hinge arrangement for lifting the lid, as on the diagram.

This might also explain why the top beam was not kept with, and as part of, the main panel and, as I said to Audrey Dymock, someone now needs to turn up the rest of the box.

It is also interesting to record that the bottom plank, which had obviously deteriorated to some extent when Molly Drew discovered it, has been chamfered off in the "restoration" of the fifties to make a clean edge for the frame in which it still resides. And, as Audrey Dymock tantalisingly says in her article "Knights Templars of Templecombe" in the journal *Somerset and West* (September 1982):

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"An aspect of the Templars' life at Templecombe which has not really been explored is their connection with the Arthurian legend. Only six miles away, as a horse could canter, stands a hill which holds greatest claim to be Camelot."

Let me summarise the evidence and then comment on the future:

1. The top board of the panel, which included part of the painting, is missing.
2. It is said that there are marks on the top edge of what is, in fact, the second plank of the panel and it is said that these are consistent with holes for hinges (of a door).
3. If they are hinge-marks then the panel must have been used as a door in its present state, i.e. minus the top plank and after the painting was executed, otherwise such marks would be in the missing plank.
4. Who, I ask, but a madman, upon discovering such a panel bearing an obviously very old painting, equally obviously representing Christ, would then use it as a door at all, let alone a door with a painting of Christ which would appear sideways?
5. Even if such a madman had existed and had used the panel as a door, it is beyond belief that the discovery of such a painting, at whatever period in history, would have gone unnoticed and unrecorded.
6. From my discovery of the original photograph we now know of the existence of the protuberance or nib on the right-hand of the currently top, but originally second, plank which strongly suggests to me that it formed part of a wood-and-pin pivot hinge of a lid rather than the absurd suggestion of a door of some lean-to coal shed.
7. From the description by Molly Drew, the only surviving witness to the actual discovery in 1944, we now know that it was not found in a coal shed but rather in an integral semi-basement chamber of what was originally the Templar chaplain's house (although we cannot be sure of the purpose of that room).
8. It is equally obvious that the painting, having horizontal orientation, was therefore designed to be seen from that orientation and, other than being a wall-painting, could only have been the lid of a box.
9. If, indeed, someone had made a painting of the head of Christ intended for horizontal suspension in order to be viewed, it seems highly unlikely that the artist would have chosen as his medium a massive panel of five long, thick and heavy boards.

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10. Clearly, then, the only use for a panel so constructed and decorated is the lid of a heavy wooden casket.

11. Thus the wooden protrusion on the right-hand (present) top board was matched with a similar one on the left to provide a simple but effective hinge system for such a heavy lid and this explains why the original top plank is missing: it was a fixed part of the top of the box.

12. I believe the likely and logical scenario is this: The original box was constructed some time shortly after 1280 to contain the Holy Shroud (the Holy Grail?), "doubled in four", and flat, precisely in the manner of its folding and exposition as recorded over many hundreds of years in the first and early second millennium. The cloth might have been in a reliquary within this box or simply inside the box on its own.

The box might have been made in France in order to transport the Shroud from the Templar treasury in Paris just before the arrest and execution of all the Templars by Philip IV or it might have been made in England as a receptacle for the Shroud after it arrived in Templecombe in 1307. It was then kept in Templecombe preceptory until perhaps Geoffrey de Charny, who had been kept prisoner in England after the battle of Crecy in 1349, and who was heir to the cloth, took it back to France in order to install it in the chapel we know he built for the purpose in Lirey by 1357. This large wooden box which bore a copy of the face painted on its lid on the external side (not the internal or it would have been upside-down on opening the lid) (and the position of the lock-marks is consistent with this) would have been retained in Templecombe at the preceptory as a reminder that the most precious of all Christian relics had been there and as an object for Templar veneration (consistent with the charges against them of idolatry).

Then, when the Templars were suppressed in England, this damning piece of evidence (the lid of the box) that the Shroud (or Grail) itself had been in Templecombe and that the knights "worshipped idols" would have been removed from the box and itself concealed. If my theory of the construction of the box is correct then the simplest way to disengage the lid from the box itself, particularly if done in haste, would be to cut off one of the wooden nibs (the missing left-hand one) and draw the lid sideways off the rod connecting it to the other nib, hence the absence of one nib and the existence (as shown in the 1944 photograph) of the other. The lid, now simply a panel bearing the portrait, was then concealed in the ceiling of the chaplain's house, secured with wire, as found by Molly Drew, and plastered over. There it remained until Molly Drew discovered it in 1944, perhaps six hundred years later.

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13. Regrettably we can never inspect the semi-outbuilding, now that it has been demolished, to discover other clues to the lid's placement in the ceiling nor, for that matter, can we other than speculate on the purpose of that room. There is, however, one ray of hope: since one stepped down into the room, as Mrs Drew did every time she went there to deposit or recover firewood, it is highly likely that whoever demolished it simply left the demolished material (including, perhaps, the mysterious circular stone) in the cavity to fill it up to ground level. It is, then, feasible for a skilled archaeologist to excavate the site and tell us much more about it. Such an excavation might even reveal fragments of the iron "wire" used to secure the painting in the ceiling which could be dated to indicate at least the period of concealment.

14. If this whole speculation is regarded as sufficiently important and interesting then much can be learnt from the Templecombe painting. I believe it should be thoroughly inspected and documented, measured and weighed; a complete sectional photo-mosaic should be taken of it in colour, black-and-white, and infra-red of both front and back (about which nothing seems to be known). It should have its residual pollens analysed (particularly from crevices in the back where Bishop Wright is unlikely to have scrubbed the evidence away) and such analysis might reveal whether the box was ever in France thus strengthening the case for its having contained the Holy Shroud itself and a re-appraisal should be made, in the light of the speculations herein, of the marks regarded as hinge-marks.

15. The removal of the wooden nib which survived until at least 1944, the scrubbing of some (if not most) of the pigment from the painting, and the demolition of the room in which the panel was found all demonstrate the absolute necessity for the meticulous preservation of anything remotely connected with what could be a discovery of historical importance.

16. As it is now, we have in Templecombe a remarkable and curious painting, unrecognised as an important link in the connection between the Templars and the Holy Shroud until Ian Wilson's unchallenged theory published in 1978. I believe it is of even greater significance in that it could be the link which provides the evidence for a journey of the Shroud to England during the "missing years", one of the most difficult periods of the Shroud's history.

17. Such evidence, however, can be studied only if people of the perception, intelligence and interest of Audrey Dymock continue their crusade for preservation. We have already lost the wooden nib from the panel; much of the paint from the picture; and that part of the building in which it was found. I understand also that some of the Templar buildings in Templecombe are, even now, not under any preservation order!

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18. It is greatly to be hoped that the singular importance of the nature of Molly Drew's discovery; of the panel painting itself; and of the village of Templecombe in this continuing and great mystery of the Holy Shroud and of the Templars and of the Holy Grail, will be properly appreciated in the future and that further study and opinion may one day prove or disprove my speculation that the Holy Shroud was once in England.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR from HAROLD NELSON, CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

Although long-time subscribers to Shroud News are familiar with the historical facts, please permit a repeat of certain clarifications, for new readers, to many inaccuracies in Ms Barbara Smoker's letter (SN June 1987). The "President, National Secular Society, London" is ill-acquainted with "13th Century" documents to which she refers; on the contrary, it is the 14th Century, even though the "forger of relics" never existed; and, the entire matter was a fabrication of a disgruntled bishop (Henri of Troyes in 1357) who was caught up in a political web of his own contrivance. The successor, Bishop Pierre D'Arcis, perpetuating the deception that the Holy Shroud had been painted, was censured and silenced by the reigning pontiff, Clement VII in 1389. These historical names and dates are taken from existing records, something obviously lacking in Ms Smoker's letter (originally included in the BBC publication *The Listener*, 3 July 1986).

"Traces of paint" detected on the Holy Shroud was answered effectively by Bruno Bonnet-Eymard ("CRC", No 171, September 1984, St Parres-Les-Vaudes, France): "... it was a usual pious practice to touch the Holy Shroud with all sorts of painted canvases. That is the obvious explanation for such a visibly accidental contamination." The student has only to refer to the 16th and 17th century artists' renditions of the Holy Shroud -- for example the effort of the famous German painter and engraver, Albrecht Dürer -- to realise that all of the painters were in the presence of the ancient relic, copying the image quite inadequately (see *Shroud Spectrum*, December 1984). At least, the scientists who know it is not a painting speak truthfully when they admit they cannot give a positive answer as to how the image became impressed upon the Holy Shroud. Yet, British secularist (Barbara Smoker) and American humanist (Joe Nickell) pompously proclaim "fraud". Suddenly one hears the echoing sounds coming from the Sanhedrin, following Christ's Resurrection, insisting by lies and alibis that the Disciples had removed the body from the sepulchre!

None of the skeptics dares raise the issue of blood discovered on the Holy Shroud, although verified by several medical scientists, Americans: Dr Gilbert Lavoie, clinical instructor at Tufts College; Dr John Heller, biophysicist; and, Dr Alan Adler, physical chemist and thermodynamicist; but, also, Europeans: Dr A. Gaglio, anatomical pathologist and Dr P. Baima-Bollone, juridical expert in forensic medicine. (Incidentally, it is merely irony that the microspectrophotometry tests for blood from the Holy Shroud, undertaken by Drs Adler and

Letter from Harold Nelson, Texas (cont'd)

Heller, took place at Yale University (scene of the "Vinland Map" of McCrone fame)? Even now Dr Walter McCrone, the leading skeptic, is being challenged by physicists at the University of California (Davis) who have applied new cyclotron techniques to the Vinland Map (which McCrone denounced as "counterfeit") and who "feel that the question of the map's authenticity is once again open" ("Time" magazine, 10 March 1986). The scientific paper reporting the findings of Dr Thomas Cahill, et al, is documented in *Analytical Chemistry* (Washington, DC, 15 March 1987).

The comment "absurd American stunt" made by Ms Smoker about the "connection" of "post mortem fever ... with the Turin relic" is far more significant than any of the present day researchers realize. In the least-studied field of mystic-stigmatists (perhaps dating back to St Paul the Apostle), even those "chosen souls" in our own 20th century, there is an entire course of study which is associated with the Holy Shroud. It was again brought to light by author Noel Currer-Briggs (see *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, May 1987) in his reference to the "incendia amoris". The "burning furnace" experienced by those victim-souls who bear the stigmata (wounds of Christ) and the excessively heated bodily temperatures are thoroughly and accurately documented. Books may be found in libraries throughout the world, where most of them will be listed in the category of "Saints".

Consequently, the shroud tests of April 1986, conducted in the ancient tombs of Jerusalem (dating to the time of Isaias, 700 B.C.), followed the post-mortem fever of the Crucified, with a heated manikin used throughout the scientific experiments. As a witness to the unique event, I can testify to image obtained, and, by the Grace of God, I saw and believed!

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SHROUD NEWS began in 1980 when Rex Morgan, author of three books on the subject of the Holy Shroud (PERPETUAL MIRACLE -SECRETS OF THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN, SHROUD GUIDE and THE HOLY SHROUD AND THE EARLIEST PAINTINGS OF CHRIST) started putting together a few notes about current developments in sindonology (the study of the Shroud of Turin) for a small circle of interested people in his home country of Australia. He didn't expect it to go beyond a few issues.

The bulletin now reaches subscribers all over the world and because of its relatively simple method of production it can be written and produced and the information disseminated more quickly than most news-sheets of a similar kind or the more prestigious journals. It contains information, news, articles and illustrations gathered from sources of Shroud study worldwide through Rex Morgan's extensive personal connections with what has been described as the "Shroud Crowd".

Rex Morgan is a frequent traveller overseas and thus has the opportunity to keep abreast of latest developments in Shroud study and research. He was present at the world media preview of the Shroud itself in August 1978 in Turin, Italy and has met with numerous Shroud researchers in many countries. His quest for information about the Shroud has become, as he describes it, a "passionate hobby". He brought the world-famous Photographic Exhibition created by Brooks Institute, California, to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Macau and during its tour it attracted more than half a million visitors. The exhibit has now been given to the non-profit making organisation, The South East Asia Research Centre for the Holy Shroud (SEARCH) of which Morgan is President. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the USA based Association of Scientists and Scholars International for the Shroud of Turin (ASSIST) and was a member of the scientific team which conducted environmental experiments in a Jerusalem tomb in 1986 (The Environmental Study of the Shroud in Jerusalem).

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