

chastel xx. escur et fut muissier d'armes  
du roy de france et un grant homme  
de la. luy et tousiours estoit bacon ce be  
grant bien monte de beaulte coustier  
de doublee roneus et de rone paleffon  
et aussi comme comme on conte et de fu  
tres richement et de mouva en ce bon  
estat tant quil deshu

**Q**u' autelle maniere se maintenoi  
on en la du seigneur de bretaigne car  
si fait brigans conqueroient et rone  
noient villes fortrees et bones chas  
teauls et les roboient ou tenoient et  
puis les tenoient acelys d'ung  
bien et richement et y en denoient  
les aucuns qui se faisoient maistres  
de s'ue les autres si riches que cestoit  
merveilles et en ce pouit on entre les  
autres que on appelloit crokart qui  
avoit este en son commencement un  
pouze garçon et long temps parut au  
seigneur d'arles en hollande. **C**est  
est crokart commença aduenu qui  
il out congie si se ala aux guerres  
de bretaigne et se mist au service du  
homme d'armes si se porta si bien que  
a breve contee ou si furent son ma  
tre tue mais par la promesse de  
liu se accompaigne le seigneur a estre  
capitaine ou lieu de son maistre et y  
de mouva de puis un pou de temps il gaa  
gna tant acquist et p'ouffia par le  
ancone par p'ouffes de villes et de chaste  
auls quil deuint si riche que on di  
soit que il avoit bien la finance de l'or  
escur sans ses cheuals dont il avoit  
bien en son estable xx. ou xxx. coust  
ers bons et doublee roneus. Et au che  
ce il avoit le non de sire le plus apert  
homme d'armes qui fust en pays et  
fut esleu pour estre a la bataille de  
xxv. et fut tout le meilleur combat  
de son couste de la partie des anglois  
ou il acquist grant rone et luy fut  
p'ouffes du roy de france que sil bon

loit de venir francors le roy le ferait  
chlo et le marieroit bien richement  
et lui donnoit douze mille livres de re  
nemie par an / mais il ne le voulut  
accorder ne en viene frax et de puis  
luy mesche il a mis comme je bone  
d'ray. Ce crokart de uanchou bre  
for un jeune coustier fort embide  
quil avoit achate trois cens escuz  
et le peronna au couvo si le schauf  
fa tellement que le coustier oult  
sa volente le porta siques au sul  
lu un fosse le coustier trebuscha et  
rompy a son maistre le col. Je ne sa  
scay que son auo de deunt ne qui or  
lame mais je scay bien que crokart  
fina ainsi. Comment le capitaine  
de calais vendy la ville au capitaine  
ne de saint omer et aussi comment  
le roy anglois le scout auant que  
il le prest de luy



**E**n ce temps se tenoit  
en la ville de saint  
omer ce vaillant  
chlo messire g'ueuf  
froy de charroy et  
l'avoit la le roy de  
france enuoye pour garder les fron  
tieres et y estoit et estoit de toutes cho

GEOFFROY DE CHARNY'S SECOND FUNERAL  
PART I

DOROTHY CRISPINO

**The Knights**

Close by the king as he struggled no longer to press forward but now on foot only to defend life and honor, the flower of French nobility flayed with ax and sword and honest valor against the heavy decumen of English knights impetuously impelled by the sudden surprise that the day was theirs. Sir John Chandos, English knight and veteran of Crécy, surveying the field, turned to the Black Prince saying: "Sire, ride forward ... the day is yours. Let us make for the king. I am certain that his valor will not allow him to flee." It was about 3 p.m. on Monday, 19 September 1356, on the fields of Maupertuis near Poitiers. The king's youngest son, 14-year-old Philippe, fought beside him to the end.

Miniatures decorating a late XV<sup>th</sup> century edition of Froissart's *Chroniques* portray Jean II in elegant black armor, a fleur-de-lis atop his royal *mélée* helm.<sup>1</sup> It was the artist's way of singling out the king in his pictures; in reality, nineteen other knights, according to the custom, wore armor similar to the king's. Rather a superfluous precaution, since Jean II rode close behind the Oriflamme, sacred banner of St. Denis, held aloft by Geoffroy de Charny.

When the French realized that the battle was lost, to preserve the kingdom, Charles, the 19-year-old Dauphin, and his brothers Louis and Jean, were ordered to make for safety. Escorted by 800 lance, the three royal sons<sup>2</sup> retreated under the guardianship of Sir Jean de Landas, Sir Thibaud de Vaudenay and the seigneur de Saint-Venant.

At Chauvigny, a few miles to the east and across the river Vienne, Landas and Vaudenay entrusted the Dauphin and his brothers to the seigneur de Saint-Venant and they turned back, rejoining the army of the Duke d'Orleans, then pressing ahead to where the Oriflamme signaled the presence of their king.

At the council of war before the battle, the two marshals, Arnoul d'Audrehem and Jean de Clermont, had argued over the military strategy to be followed. Who can say whether Clermont's advice might have averted disaster? Chroniclers narrate a piquant episode in which Clermont, reconnoitering the English forces, came upon Sir John Chandos and hasty words were exchanged when they saw that they were both wearing the same device; a Virgin azure with a

sunbeam on the sinister side. Some reports say that when the battle was engaged, it was Chandos who slew Clermont. But Audrehem, seriously wounded, had already been taken prisoner.

Many times, the knights now defending this target position signaled by the Oriflamme had fought the battles of France; for many of them, Poitiers was their last. Many of them had been companions-in-arms with Geoffroy de Charny. It is well to remember a few of them.

Jean de Landas and Eustace de Ribemont were killed. Both of them, in 1346, were part of the garrison defending Bethune, under the command of Geoffroy de Charny. In 1347, Philippe VI sent Geoffroy, Ribemont, and Eduard, sire of Beaujeu and marshal of France, to parley with Edward III, king of England, asking him where the armies might meet for a battle; but Pope Clement VI sent two legates to sue for peace, and the plenipotentiaries for the French were: Geoffroy de Charny; Pierre, Duke of Bourbon; and the Duke of Athens, constable of France. Both dukes died at Poitiers. Athens was Gautier VI de Brienne, related to Geoffroy on his mother's side.

In 1348, Geoffroy was named governor of St. Omer with all the military powers of the king: Landas and Ribemont were with him. These and others, after furious resistance, were taken prisoner by Edward III at Calais, in the night between 31 December 1349 and New Year's Day 1350.

After his release, in 1351, Geoffroy, as captain-general of the king, was installed at Ardres with Jean de Clermont, sire of Chantilly, at that time master of the crossbowmen; Eduard de Beaujeu, marshal of France, and his brother, Guichard; and Arnoul d'Audrehem. In an ensuing battle, the marshal Beaujeu was killed, after which Audrehem was named marshal.

Audrehem rose steadily to prominence as a valiant, chivalrous knight, named to important military responsibilities. In 1353, he was lieutenant of the king in the embattled province of Normandy and the marches of Brittany. In 1368, Charles V entrusted to him the Oriflamme. Audrehem died in December of 1370—but more about him later.

In 1343, Guichard de Beaujeu, sire of Chateauvillain, had married Marguerite de Poitiers, daughter of Louis de Poitiers, Count of Valentinois, and Marguerite de Vergy. Now Marguerite de Vergy and Geoffroy's wife, Jeanne de Vergy, were sisters, both daughters of Guillaume; making the Beaujeu brothers nephews to Geoffroy. Eduard de Beaujeu had married Marie de Thil-en-Auxois (1332), through Thil and Frolois forming another family relationship with Geoffroy; and their daughter, Marguerite de Beaujeu, married Jacques de Savoy, prince of Achaia and the Moree.

Henri de Bar, Count of Vendome, another who met death on this day, was the husband of Isabeau de Vergy, half-sister to Jeanne and Marguerite.

These were some of the knights whose destiny was tied to the Oriflamme and to the knight who had sworn never to retreat with the sacred banner in his hands. Listen to Froissart:

Messire Geoffroi de Charny fought valiantly close to the king; and all the clamor and thickest fighting pressed around him because he carried the sovereign banner of the king; and he had his own banner on the field, too<sup>3</sup>—gules three escutcheons argent. So many English and Gascons came up from all sides that they forced open the ranks of the king's battalion ... and there messire Geoffroi de Charny was slain, the banner of France in his hands.... There was a great shock and pushing around King Jean from those who were disputing his capture, and those who knew him and were nearest to him kept crying, "Surrender yourself, surrender yourself, or you are a dead man."

### **The Monks**

Fields strewn with the dead and dying; fields red with the blood and gore of men and horses; the endless, ruthless, useless harvest sown by Cain. To bury the dead is an act of piety. The task of giving Christian burial to these two-thousand four-hundred and twenty-six piteous remains fell to the town of Poitiers.

After the action, monks from the Franciscan and Dominican convents gathered in the corpses of the lords, identified by their shields or armor. The names of many knights were not known; still unidentified was one who carried a shield *gules a chevron or*.

The bodies of Geoffroy de Charny and Guichard de Beaujeu, with 57 other knights and princes as well as 37 equerries, were carried to the convent of the Minor Friars. Eighteen lords were buried in the Dominican church, 51 more in the cloisters. Jean de Clermont was buried near the main altar of the church.

The mayor of Poitiers gave instructions for the common men-at-arms to be brought into the town in carts and buried in ditches in the convent cemeteries.

An English gentleman visiting Poitiers about 1730 wrote this description:<sup>4</sup>

In the Church belonging to the *Freres Precheurs*, where the Bodies of most of the French Princes and Lords slain at the Battle of Poitiers, were deposited; I was shewn an old Record hung up against the outside of the Choir, on which the Names of those illustrious Patriots were written, but most of them scarce legible at that Time through the Decay of the Parchment. This memorable Battle was fought within a little League of *Poitiers*, between the *Vienne* and the *Clein*; at a Place called *Maupertuis*, where *Prince Edward* had intrenched his Handful of *English* among Hedges and Vineyards. He did not judge it adviseable to enter the Town after his Victory, but marched with his royal Prisoner directly for *Bourdeaux*.

And in a footnote:

Some were buried at the *Freres Mineurs*; the Fathers of these two Convents went out with Carts after the Action, and fetched the Dead into the Town very charitably; the meaner Sort were scattered up and down in the Church-yards, but the Noblemen were distributed between these Cloysters. Among those who lie at the *Mineurs*, are the Duke of *Athens*, constable of *France*.... At the *Precheurs* are the Duke of *Bourbon*, the Marshal of *Clermont* ... some of the Princes were afterwards removed to the *Grands Jacobins* in Paris: Some of their *Coats of Arms* are painted on the Stalls of the Friars.

Gauthier de Brienne, duke of Athens, was buried at the Franciscan church, but later his body was transferred to the Abbey of Beaulieu (now in ruins):

Cy gist tres excellent prince monseigneur Gauthier duc d'Athenes comte de Brienne, seigneur de Liche et connetable de France, qui trepassa MCCCLVI en la bataille devant Poitiers quand le roi Jean fut pris.

Honorable obsequies were celebrated in all the churches, convents and monasteries, at the expense of the "good bourgeois" of the town. And the arms of all the princes and knights buried in the convents were painted and placed above the choir stalls for "perpetual memory".

There is no longer any trace in Poitiers of the burials of 1356. The convent of the Minor Friars no longer exists. The church still stands, although today occupied by offices. It is on the *rue des Cordeliers*, across from the palace of the counts of Poitou.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## NOTES

1. In Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*, on color plate 35, "The Battle of Poitiers", from Louis de Bruges' copy of Froissart's *Chroniques* (c.1460), King Jean can be distinguished. Neither the Oriflamme nor Geoffroy de Charny's banner are represented. The standard in the foreground, "France Ancient", *azure semy-de-lis or*, carries the royal arms of France before Charles V reduced the fleur-de-lis to three.
2. *Currenti calamo*, in the Sept./Dec. 1988 *Spectrum*, p. 34, under Charles V, I wrote: "Charles ... leaving the king his father and his three younger brothers to be captured...." The youngest, Philippe, later Duke of Burgundy, was taken prisoner with his father. But Louis, later Duke d'Anjou, and Jean, later of Berry, returned to Paris with Charles. However, by a treaty of 1360, Louis and Jean were among other important persons living in London as hostages.
3. The right to lead troops in battle under one's own banner was normally reserved for the highest nobility. It was because of his outstanding service to the Crown, and incidentally because he had the financial means to equip himself and his troops, that Geoffroy de Charny, as knight banneret, had earned the privilege of taking the field under his own personal banner. Sir John Chandos was not knight banneret until 1367.
4. JOHN BREVAL, Esq: *Remarks on Several Parts of Europe ... Collected upon the Spot in Several Tours since the Year 1723....* Vol. II, London, 1738, page 252.

Facing page 9:

The entire page, from Froissart's *Fragments*, on which is found the miniature reproduced on the cover of this issue. The chapter heading, above the picture, reads: *Comment le cappitaine de Calais rendy la ville au cappitayne de Saint Omer et aussi comment le roy angloys le scout....* (How the captain of Calais delivered the town to the captain of Saint-Omer and also how the English king knew about it....)

The text below the picture begins: *En ce temps se tenoit en la vine de Saint Omer ce vaillant chevallier messire Gieuffroy de Chargny et l'avoit la le roy de france envoye pour garder les frontieres....* (At this time, this valiant knight, Geoffroy de Charny, was quartered in the town of Saint-Omer, where the king of France had sent him to guard the frontiers....) Chapt. CCCXXVI. *Bruxelles, Bibliotheque Royale Albert I<sup>er</sup> ms.6941, fol. 13 verso.*