

B 3743; witch 055A, Claudon Jean Gerardin dit le Plomb, de Girecourt

13 June 1597; letter from M. d'Haraucourt at Parroy to prévôt of Bruyères, saying he is sending an old male witch and a new female one, whose mother had maintained she was such when she herself was burned at Epinal. He is writing to the duke, M. de Vaudemont, and the comte de Salm about them.

16 June 1597; informations preparatoires

After receiving letter cited above, with charge from M. d'Haraucourt that accused had killed two of his horses, evidence has been taken against him at Girecourt.

(1) Claudatte femme Jean Prebtre, 35

On way back from Ramberviller 6 years earlier Jean had asked her to carry some beans for him; as she took them she noticed that his breath stank, and next day she became ill. Was bedridden for 6 weeks, and suspected this was his doing in view of his reputation.

(2) Quirienne veuve Jean de Charmois, 40

Husband had often quarrelled with him, and had horses and cows dead, which had caused him to be very angry with Claudon in view of reputation. Also claimed that previous year he had taken 11 francs in expenses from Bastien Begel, although her late husband had already paid them on his behalf.

(3) Alix veuve Dieudonné d'Omecourt, 40, et son fils Didier, 16

Reputation only.

(4) Demenge Anthoine 60, et Jean Colin, 50, tous deux de Dompierre

Said accused was native of Dompierre, and that many relatives were suspected of witchcraft. These included grandmother, mother, and daughter - believed some of these had been arrested, but did not know where. Sister Maurice had been married at Padoux, and had fled back to Dompierre when prévôt of Epinal wanted to arrest her. He himself was reputed witch like his brothers and sisters, also an evil living man who harmed his neighbours 'tant par abus que tromperie qu'il usoit journellement a l'entour d'eulx'.

(5) Anthoine Jean Virion, de Dompierre, 60

Reputation of grandmother, mother, and siblings. 22 years earlier Georgeon Poirat's son had neck twisted and became deaf; Bastien Jean Gerardin, brother of accused, was suspected. Witness and late Nicolas Chabay were sent to ask him to heal the child, while sister of witness obtained salt and ashes from Bastien's house, which were used to make drink for child. Bastien claimed to have prayed on his knees all night for him to be healed, and after some further incidents he finally recovered - still living in good health. A few days earlier Claudon had said he had been caused to lose his property, and others would lose theirs; after this the 2 horses of M. d'Haraucourt had died of strange illness, as witness knew because he was

smith and had treated them - was sure it had been witchcraft. Called witch by many, including his nephew Jean fils Bastien Gerardin, without taking action. 10 or 12 years earlier had brought him ironwork from cross of La Chapelle to work, but he refused to take it. 5 or 6 years earlier had stolen ploughshare of Jean Marie, which latter recognized - died a few days after ensuing quarrel. Also general reputation for theft and fraud.

(6) Demenge Jacot Collé, de Dompierre, 60

Father and mother had told him of reputation of mother and grandmother, whom they believed to have caused losses of animals worth more than 100 écus.

(7) Jean Ferry, de Dompierre, 50

General reputation for witchcraft and fraud.

(8) Anthoine Toussaincts, de Dompierre, 50

Some 40 years earlier he was living with his uncle Nicolas Ozelle, who had numerous horses and cows dead - called mother of accused witch, claiming she had caused these losses. General suspicion; 2 years ago had dispute over payment for wine, and wife of witness persuaded him not to pursue matter.

(9) Nicolas Goery, de Dompierre

General reputation of family; tendency for accused to get others fined inappropriately.

(10) 4 women of Girecourt - reputation only

(11) Mengeatte veuve Bastien Thiriat, 36

Reputation only.

(12) Nicolas Mourel, marchal, 30

General reputation, remark about goods of others.

(13) Jannon veuve Colas Jean Belat

General reputation; had not paid back some wheat she had loaned him 3 years earlier.

(14) Jean Prebtre, 46

Story of wife's illness after he blew on her.

(15) Mengeon Dideron, 30

8 years earlier he and others were speaking German as they cleaned village well; Claudon told them to keep their German for when they needed it, and witness told him it was no business of his. Accused told him that within 3 days he would

not be so proud and would repent. 2 days later there was a thunderstorm, and as was customary he went outside 'pour rescrier' with sister and brother-in-law. Suddenly felt unwell and fell down, after which he was ill for 14 weeks - in view of threats thought this was his doing.

(16) Jean Richard dit Pouaux, 50

Quarrel 2 years earlier when accused tried to steal some of his hay; called him witch, and he retorted with threat 'que avant qu'il soit nuict qu'il auroit sur le né'. Same hour his horse fell three times into river, and was unwell for a year after, so he reckoned this was his doing.

(17) Claudon Frouart, 30, et Georgeatte sa femme, 32

A few days after marriage 8 years earlier one of daughters of accused was living in their house; they lost a sheet, and when wife saw it in their house she tried to take it back. 3 daughters chased her out with sticks, and he then beat one of them named Claudatte. She told him he had beaten her, but would not beat his own children, a threat which Claudon himself repeated next day to Georgeatte and her mother. Witness told him several times that he would hold him responsible if wife had no children, since she had some by first husband; since then had 5 or 6 stillbirths, so thought he was witch, and had called him so without action following.

(18) Mengeon le maire, 36

Had quarrel with him 10 or 12 years earlier about who should go first at mill, after which Claudon threatened him he would repent. 6 weeks later a foal developed bad legs - all swollen and joints decayed so that they were only held together by skin, and it had to be killed. In view of reputation thought he had caused this.

(19) Georgeon Poirat, 60

Long reputation of family; he had been called witch without reacting. Witness and family had various quarrels with his household; 4 years earlier had lost 2 young oxen which were being guarded by Claudon's daughter Claudatte in herd. One died in fields, other became emaciated despite eating normally and had to be killed. Previous summer took action against him for debt of 2 francs, and he uttered such threats that witness complained to maire saying he had received threats 'sy cruelles qu'il n'en estoit point a son aise et que sy dedans quarante jours il luy advenoit mal ou a sa famille qu'il luy advertissoit'. Later went on trip to Allemagne, and horse threw him several times - had not been well since, and suspected this was his witchcraft.

(20) Margueritte femme Jean l'Hoste, 30

Previous year her husband, as maire, took cauldron as caution from him for payment of taxes. He made threats, and horse then sickened, so she returned cauldron - but it still died. General reputation.

19 June 1597; interrogation

He had originally been imprisoned on 11 November 1596, at request of PG des Vosges, accused of having with his accomplices Claudon Jean du Prey and Mongeon Dideron stolen some animals from a barn. Had been condemned to pay fine of 100 écus to duke, costs of justice, and to make restitution for the animals to those concerned. This sentence confirmed by Change de Nancy on 26 November; he was to stay in prison until he paid, but on 6 December he had broken his irons and fled. Had not answered summons until arrest at Girecourt on orders of M d'Haraucourt previous Friday.

Said he was about 60; parents were Jean Gerardin and his wife Mongeotte of Dompierre, both long dead. Said he had fled because he was alarmed by his long imprisonment, and because no-one was active to secure his release - had used carpenter's tool he had found to break irons.

Asked if he had not told du Prey he was frightened of being questioned about other crimes, and of being tortured, denied this. Agreed that grandmother and mother were reputed witches, and often called so.

Asked when he had last confessed, said he did his duty every Easter. Asked if he had not been 'solicité du malin par songe, ou autrement', described occasion 40 years earlier when he had been in service, and took load of peas on horse to Val de Moustier around midnight. Passing by woods of la Voivre near Girecourt saw a wolf, which he could hear grinding its teeth as it followed him - mounted horse to escape, and saw no more of it.

Gave different account of debt of 11 francs paid by Jean de Charmois, claiming he had only paid 3 of them.

Asled about his sister Maurice, said she had married Claudon Tardu of Padoux; she had not been imprisoned, but was reputed a witch, 'et des incontinant qu'il y mouroit quelque bestail l'on disoit que c'estoit par elle'.

Asked about Didon fils Georgeon Poirat, said his brother Bastien had beaten him because he had beaten Bastien's son at school. Nicolas Chabay had acted as mediator, and took Bastien to Girecourt, where Georgeon asked him to heal the boy; he said all he could do was to pray to God and St Nicolas.

Asked if he knew that since his return from Ste Marie M. d'Haraucourt had 2 horses dead, said one had died before his return, the other since.

Asked if his nephew had called him witch, said he did not know this, but he had been angry with him for making him take a wife against his will.

Denied stealing ironwork or ploughshare; Jean Marie was his 'compere et bon amy'; knew he had been ill for a year before death, but not of what illness. As for loan of wheat from Jennon veuve Colas Jean Belat, had done carting and other services for her, worth at least 2 of the 3 francs he owed.

Admitted telling Mongeon Didieron to keep his German for when he needed it, but not to making threats. Did admit making threat to Jean Richard, but knew nothing about trouble with his horse.

Agreed that Claudon Feriart had several times called him witch, but there had been no-one present, otherwise he would have taken action. Had also been called witch by Georgeon Poirot, but told him he was more of a witch himself, and that the defendant was of better race than him. Asked how he knew this, claimed Jean Boulengier of Girecourt had told him that Georgeon's mother Cathelon was reputed a witch.

20 June 1597; report that accused had hung himself from bolt of door in château of Bruyères, using a small cord.

22 June 1597; PG des Vosges orders, with agreement of Change de Nancy, that his body be hung by neck from a forked tree, with face downwards, at normal place of execution. Goods to be confiscated.

25 June 1597; short investigation into suicide. Established that he had not seemed ill, nor given any indication of intentions. A fellow prisoner, Claude Marie, said he had not talked much, and had been angry when Marie suggested he should say his paternoster. Bastienne femme Jean Goery of Girecourt, another prisoner, said he had taken some bread back to prison with him.

Costs of trial and execution were some 45 francs.