

B 4103; witch 076, Didelon l'Huillier et sa femme Bietrix, de Gripport

5 February 1615; Claude Liebault, prévôt of Charmes, informs PG des Vosges that Didelon is reputed witch in Gripport and surrounding villages

informations preparatoires

(1) Demenge Cairierencin, maire de Gripport, 44

Always reputed witch, and took no action when called such. 4 years earlier refused to lend him horse to move some wood (they were neighbours), because one had just been gelded and another was in foal, at which he grumbled. He took the gelding to pasture, and became suspicious when he saw Didelon and his wife on a rock among some vines which did not belong to them, so he put it in an enclosed meadow, and sent his son aged 12 to guard it. He found it had gone, then saw it fall 40 feet from the rock. Asked to come and see it, Didelon recommended the smith of Xarounel, 'mais le deposant qui forcenait de rage de veoir son dit cheval ainsi malade, luy dit il vous faudroit faire venir le grand diable pour l'achever', and it soon died. Also believed he had been cause of death of cow 12 years earlier, because he had not invited him to drink after buying house at Gripport. Another cow went blind, and Didelon showed him how to blow mixture of pepper and ginger into its eyes, which cured it. (Signed)

(2) Aulbry Aulbry, ancien maire de Gripport, 60

General reputation, and father Jean was already much suspected. 4 years earlier had agreed, more from fear than anything, to fetch wood for them, and sent his son Nicolas to do the job. He used a good team of horses and charged 3 gros rather than 10 blancs, but when witness heard of this he told his son 'tu t'en repentiras, les deux blancs de plus que tu luy a fait payer nous cousteront'; shortly after this 2 horses died after being frightened by wolf. One remained sick longer, so he asked Didelon to come and do a day's haymaking, during which he asked him to suggest a remedy, 'mais jugeant assez le soubson que luy deposant avoit de luy ne fait nulle response'. When horse died 'de rage estant gros et enflé' he accused Didelon (evidently a neighbour) of being a witch, but no reaction despite repetition. (Marked)

(3) Laurent Simonin, ancien maire de Gripport, 50

Believed he had caused death of his first wife Margueritte 10 years earlier, after he had (out of fear) allowed him to use a barn opposite his house to thresh grain on a day when he was absent. Didelon had tried to seduce his wife, and was then refused further use of barn; soon after wife sickened and died, believing herself bewitched by him. Had often heard him called witch without taking any action. 5 years earlier a cow had suddenly lost its milk, and in a fury he shouted out so that accused could hear him 'le sorcier qu'il est a fait perdre le lait a ma vache, elle est ensorcellée', then next day milk returned. His father Jean had a dispute with Didelon, and died after 6 month illness which he believed had been his witchcraft. General fear of him, and belief that his wife and children were also witches. (Signed)

(4) Claudon Renauldin, ancien maire de Gripport, 60

They had been neighbours of Didelon and his wife, and had numerous quarrels with them, after which 'ils furent longues espaces de temps sans pouvoir garder du bestail qui mouroit tousjours comme aussi leurs enfants, entre lesquels aucuns mouroient de maladie estrange, comme aussi leurs vaches et chevaux qui mouroient comme enragés.' During quarrel after death of a mare Didelon's wife had said to his wife 'grande lieuriere tu nous a osté ceste maison. Je t'advise que tu en sortiras devant nous'. After this they moved to a house across the street, where they had fewer troubles, but wife had fallen sick and died 4 years earlier, believing herself bewitched. Witness also believed this, and shortly before, when returning from Charmes with Didelon and his wife, he remembered all the harm done to him, which moved him to seize him with the intention of beating him. Didelon was frightened, and 'luy cria mercy et luy dit que jamais il ne l'offenseroit, ny ne luy causeroit plus de perte ny dommage.' (Marked)

(5) François Renauldin, maire moderne de Gripport, 40

He and his wife had numerous quarrels with them as neighbours, and had lost animals to value of more than 100 écus; particular suspicions over deaths of a bull and a cow 2 years earlier. Latter died 'comme enragée, dont la femme dudit Didelon dit a l'instant que la femme du deposant en enrageroit'. Around same time his brother-in-law Thiebault Chadat outbid Didelon for a bichet of wheat, and rejected advice of witness that he forego the purchase, or he would repent. He suffered long illness, and spent much seeking remedies before he finally recovered, believing it had been caused by Didelon. (Signed)

(19 February 1615)

(6) Jean Dirand, laboureur, 48

Had lost numerous animals, notably a cow as if rabid, and a donkey which slipped on the ice; latter became worse despite eating normally, then recovered as soon as he sold it. This was 2 years earlier, after incident when some people came from Nancy to inquire about Didelon's character, because of a proposed marriage for daughter in Nancy, and witness told him they were disliked in Gripport. Didelon had heard of this, since when he had shown him 'mauvaises mines'. (Marked)

(7) Nicolas Conte, 80

Reputation 50 years (and wife), 'non qu'il ait suspicion qu'il luy ait fait extortion ny a aultres, sinon qu'il y peult avoir trois mois que devisant ensembles de leur pauvreté ledit Gaignet luy dit au diable soient deux hommes de ce lieu de Gripport Ilz me coustent cent francs, et luy demandant qui estoient ces hommes fait responce que c'estoit Cuguin Maillard tesmoin suivant pour l'un, ne voulant decler l'autre, mais adjousta et dit Il a aussy heu deux vaches mortes. Ce qu'il disoit par une volonté desireuse de son mal qui meut au deposant a cause du mauvais bruit qui est de luy demander sy elles moururent toutes deux en un instant, dit que non mais bien tost l'une apres l'autre. Soubçonna que c'estoit de ses oeuvres diabolicques raison dequoy Il luy dit Je ne te crains nullement pour mes vaches car je n'en ai point ny pour mon corps semblablement d'aultant que je sers un meilleur maitre que toy, dequoy il ne fait que rire, bien qu'en le chosant il luy dist tu es un

beau cocquin Il ny a rien a prendre a l'entour de toy. A quoy repliquant le deposant dit je suis plus homme de bien que toy encore que je suis pauvre.' (Marked)

(8) Cuguin Maillard, laboureur, 48

Didelon had been angry when he bought a small patch of vines from his relative Colas Henriette, which he expected to get; after this he lost a horse and 2 cows, and suspected this was his witchcraft.

(9) Pierson Rouyer, manouvrier, 27

About 3 months earlier had been drinking, and went to Didelon's house where he told those present 'Chacun dit que vous estes sorciers, il vous fault tous brusler' without receiving any reply. A week later a fine calf died as if rabid, so he returned and accused them of killing it because of his words, saying he would go to prévôt at Charmes to accuse them and have them burned. 8 years earlier Remy Grand Remy told him how Didelon had disappeared when they were sleeping in fields during haymaking at Nancy, and others accused him of going to sabat when he returned towards dawn; he did not reply, but later caused Remy's scythe to break.

(10) Husson Aulbry, ancien maire de Gripport, 70

Reputation 40 years. Believed he had caused death of cow out of hatred because witness had caused him to be fined for not enclosing his vines according to local custom. His daughter told daughter of witness that he would repent of his action. (Signed)

(11) Symonin le Roy, 42

General reputation. (Marked)

(12) Claudon Maillard, jadis maire de Gripport, 37

General reputation.

(13) Jean Vaultier, 37

Had lost animals worth 500 francs since marriage, but did not generally blame Didelon. On occasion when he refused to sell him a cow, however, it became ill, and he called him in to visit it. he said there was little wrong, and repeated his offer to buy it; it was eventually killed, but he did not want to accuse him despite his reputation. (Signed)

(14) Vienard Moyrie, ancien maire de Gripport, 40

General reputation, and believed he had caused death of a horse after witness refused to sell him a pig. (Signed)

(15) Didier Aulbry, paistre des brebis, 55

8 years earlier the inhabitants had decided to replace Didelon as herdsman for cattle, and witness was appointed at salary of 33 réseaux of wheat and 33 silver francs. As he left house of maire (Claudon Renauldin) Didelon touched him on the shoulder; was not afraid, but then became seriously ill with dysentery. Made pilgrimages which were recommended, but given up for dead and told to make confession. Also advised to get bread and salt from house of accused, which were brought by one of latter's daughters, but was so ill he did not remember eating them, although he recovered. On occasion when another cow fell ill, his wife took 6 eggs to Didelon and asked him to visit it, after which it improved but had not recovered its milk. Had often heard him called witch, but only reaction was to say 'que Dieu estoit juste et qu'Il scavoit tout'. (Marked)

(16) Jean Coniat, ancien maire de Gripport, 40

General reputation, and incident 24 years earlier when Didelon showed village children how he could gather whole herd together by clapping his hands. (Marked)

(17) Claude Coniat, 30

Believed he had caused death of a mare 3 years earlier after witness refused to do some carting. (Signed)

(20 February 1615)

(18) Hannix fille Husson Bourguignon, 30

General reputation, and suspected by Claudon Renauldin.

(19) Claude fille Thierry Maillard, 30

12 years earlier, when she was guarding horses, Didelon touched her back with a stick, saying 'qui est ce gros dos que je touche', after which she became ill for a week and most of her hair fell out, but she recovered without any remedy being sought. Believed illness was revenge for recent incident, because her mother feared Didelon so much 'que tout ce qu'il demandoit de leur logis elle ne le refusoit'. When his wife came to ask for some wine and was given it by her mother witness said 'qu'il falloit bien mieulx le garder a son pere qui lors estoit a la charrue que de le donner a telles gens', and was overheard. Also suggested that 10 years earlier her sister had been made ill after wishing to be unwell so she would miss feast-day, when annoyed because she had no new clothes for the festival..

(20) Françoise veuve Demenge Maillard, 48

She had become ill on a pilgrimage to Vic after Didelon gave her the last of his soup, and believed he had done this by witchcraft to avenge himself for her husband having taken keeping of animals from him.

(21) Nicolas fils Claude Noel, 11

2 years earlier had taken horses of his grandfather Husson Aulbry to mill, and Didelon put hand on one of them, which later died. Also said that 'comme il va

a l'escole un enfant battard que Claudon fille dudit Didelon, ne fait que raconter que bien souvent il vient un grand homme noir le soir en leur logis qui leur apporte des millasses bien dure.'

(22) Thiebault Bernard, 27

3 years earlier was ill for 3 months after he made Didelon angry by buying a bichet of wheat the latter had wanted, and belief it was his witchcraft confirmed by fact that Didelon's wife visited him during the illness. (Marked)

(23) Nicolas Henriotte, manouvrier, 40

2 of his children had died miserably, and his wife had often quarrelled with Didelon's household; also thought he had caused death of a cow witness refused to sell him. (Marked)

(24) Denis Barbel, ancien maire de Gripport, 47

General reputation, but although he had lost animals, and they had often quarrelled with Didelon and his wife, he did not want to accuse him over any losses.

(23 February 1615)

(25) Jean Moyne, jadis maire de Gripport, 60

Another villager, now dead, had told him that Didelon bewitched his cow after he refused to sell it to him.

(26) Jeannatte femme Didier Aulbry, 50

Story of husband's illness. 15 years before had given Didelon 6 eggs to look at a cow whose milk was so poor that she was afraid to give it to her child; he assured her the milk was good, and from that evening it became perfect. Thought he had bewitched the cow because of previous refusal to sell him a pig. 17 years earlier her son Aulbry (aged about 15) had been ill, and she believed Didelon had bewitched him; was cured after he and his wife sent him a soup.

(27) Nicolas Jean Nicolas, ancien maire de Gripport, 60

About 7 years earlier was going to sell cow at fair of Vezelise when Didelon offered to buy it, but would only give 2 francs less than price he named, and was 'fort mal content' when he did not agree. Cow became ill on way to fair and died. 2 weeks later Didelon told his wife that one of their calves was not well enough fed, and would only ever give milk from 2 teats - this turned out to be true, and he attributed it to his ill-will. (Marked)

(28) Jean Masson, de Rebeufville, 47

9 or 10 years earlier when haymaking at Naxau near Nancy Didelon had behaved strangely on waking, as if in a dream. Witness also claimed he had become ill after a quarrel with accused.

5 March 1615; PG des Vosges, at Mirecourt, approves arrest of Didelon and his wife Beatrix. Prévôt then records verbal order from PG to hear other witnesses whom he understands to be ready to depose.

(27 April 1615)

(29) George Vauthier, laboureur, ci-devant maire de Gripport, 50

No personal suspicions, but long reputation, and had heard Aulbry Aulbry lamenting several times that Didelon had killed his animals. (Marked)

(30) Cesar Maillard, 37

Reputation 20 years.

(31) Magdelaine, femme Demenge Barbel, 70

Reputation 18 years.

(32) Nicolas George, 80

General reputation.

(33) Jean Aulbry le vieux, 70

Reputation 20 years.

(34) Claude Chastelain, 60

On one occasion when they were working together he told Didelon he was a witch, and everyone said so at Gripport; he merely threw a piece of bread at his head. Another time, when they were digging a ditch together, Didelon complained that Demenge Jean Moyne had not asked him to his wedding feast, although it was customary to ask the herdsman, and said he would repent. Asked what he meant, replied that witness would see, and soon after one of Demenge's cows died, which he suspected had been his witchcraft. (Marked)

(35) Demenge Jean Moyne, 35

Repeated story told by previous witness, which he had evidently learned from him. 2 cows had died, and after selling hide of one at Charmes he lost the purse containing his money. (Marked)

(36) Marie veuve Colas Moyne, 56

General reputation, but no quarrels or personal suspicions.

(37) Pentecoste veuve Estienne Moyne, 70

General reputation.

(38) Jacquat Jacquat, laboureur, 40

6 or 7 years earlier, when Jean Goinel was maire and witness was sergent de maire, the guard of the cattle was given to Mengeotte Richard, veuve Urbain Perin, for 3 gros, since Didelon had asked for 3 gros 8 deniers. Told witness that the 3 gros would cost him 50, to which he replied that he had no fear of him. Remembered threat when he had a fine cow dead, followed by a 'bonnelet'; met Didelon and said 'la façon de mes veaux est bien payée', to which he replied 'tu me tiens donc pour genot'. (Signed)

(39) Nicolas Aulbry, 30

General reputation.

(40) Jean Symonin dit Renaud, 28

2 years earlier said jokingly to Didelon in fields 'Estes-vous bon pour estre avec nous', at which he saw he was angry; witness then mounted horse which was drawing cart, and fell off for no reason, breaking bone in shoulder. (Signed)

11 April 1615; interrogation (Didelon)

Said he was about 70, native of Gripport, married for some 40 years. had spent most of his life in charge of animals, and had earlier been in service at La Neufville-devant-Raon, Socourt, and Lebeufville. Father was Jean Lhuillier, mother Hannix Didelon.

Admitted that Jean Lhuillier dit Anthoine de Socourt, executed as a witch some 7 years earlier, had been his cousin. Had 3 daughters living with him, a fourth serving at Hôtel dieu in Nancy. Denied knowing reason for arrest, then admitted that daughters had told him a few days before. Rejected suggestion that he had often been called a witch and failed to react.

(13 April 1615) Denied almost every charge, and even circumstantial details. Did admit having told Nicolas Comte that Cuguin Maillard had cost him 100 francs by preventing him having the guard of the cattle. Also agreed that Pierson Rouyer had entered his house and called him a witch, and 'fait plusieurs autres harangues nuictamment'.

Agreed he had learned some prayers from his father, with which he had cured some animals. Prayer was:

Beste cornue de tous les maux qui te tiennent que tu en puisse estre guarie au nom de Dieu et du fils de Dieu et de la Vierge Marie, au nom de St Blaise qui est fitcien et gardien sur toutes bestes cornues, qu'il luy plaise de te preserver et garder de tous les maux qui te tiennent.' This was said 3 times with 3 paternosters and 3 ave marias. Could give no explanation of word 'fitcien', which was presumably 'physicien'.

(16 April 1615) Was reproached 'qu'il invocquoit le diable par oraison fait a sa fantaisie, lors qu'il donnoit du mal'; replied that he knew a second prayer. This was a very long one (although in same style as first) to protect animals against wolves and bears; believed that when he said it it prevented any harm coming to his animals.

24 April 1615; confrontations

Nicolas Comte told additional story of how some 30 years earlier Didelon was herding animals when there was a great storm, and his wife Beatrix was found kneeling in a puddle. Didelon explained that she had been ill in bed, had rushed out to help him, and had felt weak.

In respect of Demenge Carrier said he was a good neighbour, and he had often worked for him and his late father. Now denied that Pierson Rouyer had called him a witch, although he agreed he had come to disturb him in his house. In general denied all substantial points, while admitting some disputes and other events. Became more and more vehement, calling his accusers liars and insisting he was innocent.

8 April; interrogation (Beatrix)

Said she was about 72, native of Vaudeville, daughter of Claudon Gaignel and his wife Claudon. Asked if she had any relatives who had been convicted or suspected of witchcraft, mentioned Simonin, her brother-in-law of Vaudeville, executed 15 or 16 years earlier at Harouet. Also Jean de Socourt, cousin of her husband, executed at Charmes 7 years earlier. Under further pressure said she had a brother at St Germain, but didn't know that he had been called witch.

Was asked whether she and her husband had not been asked to 'banqueter' in order to see a sick child, and returned home to prepare a soup which cured him.

Said it was the maire François Renauldin, their neighbour, who was cause of their arrest. Asked why they had not been to court to seek reparation when called witches, said this was because of their poverty, 'remettant la radresse a sa volonté et Dieu'.

(11 April 1615)

Asked if she knew meaning of word 'Jenoche', said 'que celles qu'on avoit bruslé a Bainville disoient que les Jenoches s'estoient donné au Diable, et ne pouvoit autrement interpreter ce mot, elle qui n'estoit de ce maudit secte.'

Asked why she and her husband were feared, said they were envied 'a raison qu'on les voyoit accumuler quelques biens'. Admitted that their neighbour the maire Aulbry had called them witches and accused them over deaths of horses, but this had been untrue. Asked again why they had not sought reparation, said 'que les pauvres gens demeuroient tousjours en leur pauvreté et qu'ilz ont mieulx aymé souffrir des injures que de se plaindre, s'en ayans laissé la vengeance a notre Seigneur.'

27 April 1615; confrontations

In response to Claude fille Thierry Maillard, agreed she had sometimes taken wine from her house. said she had wanted her husband to go to court about accusations of witchcraft by Demenge Carrier, but he had said they must bear them.

Said that Thiebault Bernard's wife had several times called her 'haulte biche'.

Jean Simonin dit Renault, 28, was now produced as additional witness.

4 years earlier his wife had been very ill, and since he suspected accused he said to her 'Tante Bietrix vous estes une genoche, vous avez donné le mal a ma femme, il vous fault brusler.' She said he would repent, and later he became so ill that he was given up for dead by the doctors, and obliged to implore Bietrix for help. She told him to fold up two offerings to unknown saints whose names he had

forgotten; he gave them to a small boy called Dieudonné, bastard of one of her daughters, who then made the necessary prayers in places indicated, after which he recovered.

She denied the healing, but admitted he had called her witch, and that wife had sent for her during his illness.

2 May 1615; Change de Nancy approves torture

Interrogation under torture (Bietrix)

Confessed as soon as she felt thumbscrews. At first said she had been seduced 6 years earlier, then when thumbscrews were reapplied said it was 10 years. Had given herself to devil when she was jealous because her husband had intercourse with other women; went to look for him when she discovered this, but met man in black on way.

At first denied using powder to kill people or animals, but when racked admitted killing baby of Claudon Renauldin, and a girl aged 14. Had also killed son of a beggar-woman, aged 10, because she came to stay with her often and was importunate. At sabat she had seen her husband and Nicolas Sermemont.

5 May 1615; interrogation under torture (Didelon)

Told that wife had confessed, but he persisted in denials, resisting thumbscrews and rack. He asked to see his wife, saying that she could not possibly have confessed, but this was refused. Judges thought a mark had been found on his forehead, where he did not feel a pin which was inserted.

That night Didelon was found dead on his bed, with his head hanging down and a wound on it; judges suggested that his devil had killed him.

7 May 1615; PG asks for execution of Bietrix, after confrontation with Nicolas George (dit Sermemont), whom she had accused.

8 May 1615; Change de Nancy approves, subject to confirmation of her confession. Didelon's body was to be handed over to family for burial in consecrated ground - PG had suggested that it should be buried in some remote spot.

12 May 1615; final death sentence on Bietrix