

B 8592; witch 104, Nicolas David dit Mulnier de Bainville

He had been accused by Didiere veuve Estienne Pelletier, and on 17 April 1596 the procureur général des Vosges ordered prévôt of Valfroicourt to take depositions against him.

23 April 1596; informations préparatoires

(1) Jean Dizard, mulnier, 50

Always heard him reputed witch, feared and held in horror by people. Witness had several times called him witch in public; had once been forced to make reparation before previous prévôt, but since then when he accused him he said he was a good man and promised not to cause him any harm.

(2) Didier Phorm, 60

General reputation, although no personal suspicion. Much feared; mother already reputed a witch, and she had absented herself when Jannon Blaise was arrested for witchcraft (although she was not executed).

(3) Jean Georgeot, 50

He was native of Bainville, and had always been reputed witch; witness had called him such without reparation being sought. Believed he had given him illness from which he had now suffered for 12 years after a quarrel. Around that time rented a house from him, and among some flax found a sack containing red powder; showed this to neighbour Marguerite veuve Didier Valentin, and they thought it was poison. David then returned from Vosges with a big grey dog, which did damage in her house. She put some of the powder on a piece of bread and butter; dog refused it at first, but when more butter was added ate it. He went away again, then returned without the dog; on enquiry said it had become ill and died.

14 May 1596; interrogation

Said he was native of Bainville, aged about 80; had been miller in his youth, now laboureur. Remembered his parents Jean David and Jannette, both long dead; all siblings also dead. Asked why he had been arrested, replied 'Monsieur, c'est parce qu'on dict que je suis sorcier'. Knew of accusation by Didiere, and that he had been called witch by several in his absence; if it had been openly he would have sought reparation. Judges then raised question of accusation by Jean Dirand. He explained that he had started procedure with Thierosme de Vault, then prévôt at Valfroicourt, but it had lapsed when he was arrested and taken to Mirecourt. Pointed out to him that this had been a year later; he insisted that he had tried to get written statement from him. Then made settlement with Dirand through private mediation of Claude Martin of Remoncourt and Jean Saigeot miller of Valfroicourt.

Said he had always lived at Bainville, except that 6 years before had gone to run mill at Emblemeler near La Forge, where he had stayed 3 years. Wife still alive, and they lived with two marriageable daughters.

(15 May 1596) Denied that Jean Georgeot had called him witch; knew he had been ill, complaining of his stomach. Denied being cause, and said he might have become

ill when he was at the wars. Asked about powder in house he rented him (during his absence at Emblemeler), said he had made it from burned leather and oak powder, on advice of blacksmith of Dompaire, to treat ulcer on leg of his horse. Told story about dog, he said this was false; dog had not been ill, but he had been ordered to kill it because of plague at La Forge.

Reproached that he knew he was feared by people, threatening those who crossed him, with effects normally following. Suddenly said he was feared 'pour avoit ehu paction et fait promesse a diables qui est la cause qu'il est sorcier, qu'il est mal advisé'. Knew he was witch because he had been 6 times to sabbat. His master took him when this was far off, walked when it was near; just watched those present dancing and talking. Seduced less than 10 years before, on road between Valfroicourt and Bainville, when angry because he could not find money to pay debts. Approached by tall man in black, with black beard, who offered to give him money for debts if he would serve him - but money he put in his pocket turned out to be oak leaves. At first denied that Persin had given him anything but the 'money', but then said first time he went to sabbat he gave him black powder to kill people with whom he quarrelled. Asked if this was the only colour, finally said he also had grey to cure.

Asked why he had not taken action against Margueritte veuve Didier Valentin, who had told him in public 'qu'il valloit pis que le poillet de Jensonville', and when he asked her to explain said he was a witch. Denied this. Then asked whether in March of previous year she had not refused to join their horses for ploughing, after which he told Agnes Hurcier 'que le fils d'icelle Marguerite courroit bien fort mais qu'il n'y avoit guiere affaire de la reste.' Immediately afterwards she had a horse which died, shaking strangely, while at same time Martin Valentin, with whom she had agreed to plough, fell ill and died. He denied all this except for her refusal to plough together, saying that her horse had died of cold and hunger.

Similar accusation with regard to Nicolas Ballot, lieutenant de maire, who had refused to lend him a horse, then sent it to plough with those of Thiebault Vincent. He showed anger, then horse died. Again agreed there had been refusal, but said Ballot's father-in-law had told him the horse had been overloaded.

Also asked about incident 12 years before, when he was selling wine, and there had been a dispute about payment, during which he touched Ballot on shoulder. He promptly became ill and remained so for 6 weeks, with a little animal like a spider or fly which entered his throat as soon as it was touched. Ballot had always declared that accused was cause of this. He said that if he confessed this was true he would damn himself, and asked for 'une heure de conseil'.

Interrogation resumed 3 hours later, and he repeated earlier denials. Asked about incident when he was miller at Heucholoup, and he made threats because son of Didier veuve Francois Bernard was pasturing horse in meadow next to his, and he claimed it was trespassing, after which a foal died after passing him on way home. He denied all this.

Then asked about another dispute over horses and ploughing, this time with Agnes femme Jean Valentin Ballot, after which a foal died, he denied quarrel during which she had said he and his wife were 'du mestier' - meaning witchcraft. Said he was glad she took horses away, because one of them would not pull properly.

After some more remonstrances, said he had used powder on horse of Nicolas Ballot, because 'au pais de Bourgogne' he had accused him of being a witch without having cause to do so.

Asked about illness of Didier Gros Bay, who had bought a piece of land from him, after which accused failed to deliver documents as promised. When Didier

took action to secure them he fell ill for 2 or 3 weeks, but recovered immediately they were handed over. He denied being cause of illness.

Allegation of yet another ploughing dispute, this time with son of Claude veuve Nicolas Vincent; had told Agnes Hurcier that he would repent, and two horses then died. Again denied this.

Asked about death of Demenge Rocant, who had maintained that he was cause of illness, said he had not visited him, but would have done so had he known of accusations, in order to deny them.

Another ploughing dispute with Demenge Demengeot brought forward; claimed he had later killed one of his horses by working it too hard. It was alleged that a second had died, shaking as if poisoned, but he denied knowing of this. Similar charge in relation to Noel Franquin, which he denied.

Askd about grandfather of Nicolas Gerard Pierre, said he was 'bon homme' who ended life with 'belle mort' - would say no more although had evidently been accused of causing death.

Accused of killing horse belonging to Jean Demenge, which had leg full of little white worms, and died as if rabid. This followed dispute over tax being collected in village, when Jean refused to accept an assignation against some others in payment, and he said he would repent. After some hesitation admitted he had used powder to kill the horse, as he had those of Noel Franquin, who had called him 'ung parfait sorcier'. Refused to admit any other malefices, and said he had burned rest of powder 2 months earlier.

Said that at sabbat he had recognised Didiere la Pelletiere Deslye, and Nicolas Thouvenin l'Huillier of Valfroicourt. Asked to be given until next day to think about it, and was sent back to prison.

17 May 1596; interrogation

Said he had killed Ballot's horse because when he was in Burgundy he had accused him of being a witch in front of soldier called Guillaume Peu de Pain, saying he had fled from Bainville because of reputation. Also agreed he had killed horse of Demenge Demengeot, because he and his household spoke ill of everyone. Would confess nothing else, and withdrew accusation against Nicolas Thouvenin l'Huillier; Didiere was only person he had recognised, and his sight was now poor.

6 June 1596; procureur général des Vosges asks for death sentence

12 June 1596; confirmation of sentence by 'habitans jugeans' of Valfroicourt