

Witch 111, Claudatte du Val 1

B 7122; witch 111, Claudatte femme Nicolas du Val du Mesnil les Gircourt

4 June 1619; PG du bailliage des Vosges has been informed of strong suspicions against Claudatte and her sister Jeanotte, femme Bastien Laurent dit Balozel, of Vieville near Gircourt. New charges since their first detention mean that 'le peuple en demeure fort esmeu'; receveur at Mirecourt is required to take information against them as secretly as possible.

11 June 1619; informations preparatoires

(1) Claude Jean Potier laboureur de Girecourt, 30

Some 5 years earlier his brother Jean had told him that he was very ill, and that on way back from Avillers he had met Claudatte, who asked him to plough some land for her, which he refused on grounds that he did not have time. Believed that in anger at this she had given him illness from which he was sure to die, asking him to come and sleep in his house so that he could tell him more. Died some 15 days later in same belief; common repute that both Claudatte and Jeannon were witches. (Marked)

(2) Nicolas Cuguin masson de Vieville, 30

Some 10 years earlier Claudatte had asked him to allow his baby daughter to be held by her daughter Jannotte at baptism, but he refused because of her reputation. Child turned out to be deaf-mute, and he believed that this was her witchcraft; common repute against her and her sister. (Marked)

(3) Anne veuve Claudon l'Huillier de Girecourt, 50

A year ago last dimanche gras husband died after illness which had lasted two years, despite search for remedies and many pilgrimages. Believed she had caused illness because he had refused to do some ploughing for her. During this period she had said 'que l'on rechercheoit les remedes bien loing, et qu'ilz estoient peult estre bien pres'. General reputation - both she and sister were feared, and been accused 'jusques au feu' by a woman executed at Savigny some 10 years earlier. (Illiterate)

(4) Demenge Simon paistre des bestes blanches de Girecourt et du Mesnil, 32

Had child aged 18 months which was 'tout sec' and could not stand, having been born 'presque sans forme de creature'; believed this had been done during pregnancy by Claudatte, who gave his wife various soups and small cakes to eat. She and sister both reputed witches. (Illiterate)

(5) Demenge Beurard bouchier de Girecourt, 42

Around last Brandons had contracted with her husband for ploughing and carting wood; towards Whitsun Duval put it around village that he had not carted

wood, then one of his horses sickened and died in 8 days. Believed that this was her doing, because of dispute and because she was 'fort crainte et redoubtée pour sorciere d'ung chacun'. Some days before illness of horse, when he had already delivered 3 loads of wood, she had helped him get cart out of stable. Said he had fine horses, but when he agreed did not add 'que Dieu les veuille garder de mal', as was customary in such exchanges. (Signed)

(6) Nicolas l'Huillier du Mesnil les Girecourt, 46

His wife had great illness of eyes and head since last jour des rois; hearing there was a surgeon at mill of Avillers he took his wife to consult him; said 'qu'infailiblement sadite femme estoit empoisonnée', and he could not cure her. Did not know whether Claudatte was responsible, despite her reputation, but she had recently come to house and told wife that she did her wrong to suspect her, when they had never voiced suspicions, which made them think she had. Told him 'qu'il n'estoit guieres blessé de ce qu'ainsy sadite femme estoit malade, et qu'il auroit moyen de faire faire ses ouvrages sans elle'. (Signed - very clumsily - Nicolas Lolier)

(7) Jannon femme Demenge Simon du Mesnil, 30

Repeated husband's story about illness of child; had said to her several times 'qu'elle gardoit un boucquet a son marit', and believed this had been illness. General fear of her and her sister.

(8) Ysabel veuve Demenge Jean Trop du Mesnil, 60

Some 2 years earlier had been at 'escaigne' with Claudatte, who said that she hated Claudon l'Huillier, making various 'imprecations' against him, saying 'qu'il avoit des petits diables d'enfans, de gros nez grandes bouches et qu'il cherchoit le medecin bien loing et qu'il estoit bien pres'. Had heard Mengeotte femme Bastien de la Ruelle du Mesnil tell Claudatte she was a witch, and that she had killed le Gros Claudon and Jean Potier, 'et que s'il arrivoit quelque infortune a son marit ou sur chose que luy appartienne que cela seroit causé par elle, qu'elle estoit vrayement sorciere, reyterant ces parolles plusieurs fois sans qu'icelle s'en soit aucunement formalisée au contraire elle a depuis ce chery et fait estat de ladite Mengeotte beaucoup davantage qu'elle ne faisoit auparavant'. General reputation and fear of sisters, 'et que lors qu'elles ont menassé quelqu'un de quelque malheur les effects en sont estez tost apres cognus'.

(9) Anne femme Claude Aulbry de Girecourt, 25

General reputation of sisters, but had suffered no damage she knew of from them; reported remark about Claudon l'Huillier seeking remedies.

(10) Jean Trop rouyer de Girecourt, 32

General reputation of sisters. Some 3 or 4 years before, returning from fair at Bouzemont, saw her lying face down on a path in the woods, and asked if she were

drunk, at which she quickly got up. Later she met him and asked if he had said this, said no more when he replied that he had. (Marked)

(11) Idatte femme Claude Didier Aulbry du Mesnil, 30

General reputation of sisters. Had called Claudatte witch several times with no reaction. As for Jeannatte, after picking pears together some 7 or 8 years before from wild pear tree, she gave some to child of witness. Immediately became ill and remained so for 6 months; on advice of several others, with much difficulty obtained bread, salt, and ashes from her house by means of a neighbour, made drink for child, and also pilgrimage to Goherey, after which child recovered. Believed this had been revenge, because when she was released from prison at Mirecourt a girl who was godmother of child said 'Le diable soit qui te ramene', and she might have thought it was witness who said this.

(12) Jean Febuatte laboureur de Vieville, 50

Some two and a half years before wife had fallen ill, and died after more than a year; said several times that this was work of Claudatte, who had stood on her feet in the church, which was where illness had begun immediately afterwards. Resulted from dispute over seating in church; general reputation of sisters.

(13) Jeannon femme Jean Barnardin du Mesnil, 25

Two years before last Easter had recovered from illness of more than a year, which she believed Claudatte had caused, who 'sans subject luy vouloit toute sorte de desplaisir'; was healed by her when she saw witness passing house and offerd her some of her bread - recovered immediately. Had several times heard Claudatte say that she did not go to 'l'ouvroir' with her and feared her, which was true - general reputation of sisters.

(18 June 1619)

(14) Barbe femme Jean Robert de Girecourt, 38

General reputation of sisters; told story of death of Jean Potier in belief Claudatte had bewitched him.

(15) Martinotte femme Claude Potier de Girecourt, 30

Similar deposition; added that Jean Potier was troubled in mind as well as body.

(16) Jean Robert de Girecourt, laboureur, 30

Similar deposition.

(17) Demenge Aulbry laboureur de Mesnil, 36

Some 4 or 5 years earlier he and others had seen Claudatte behind her house, with hands, feet and head on ground, and bottom in the air, moving and shaking all her body. Had heard that several accused witches had confessed to doing this when they believed they were at sabbat. General reputation of sisters. Around same time had made 'escraigne' on 'fumier' in front of house, but had refused her request to participate because of suspicions. Went to neighbouring escraigne, where she said that he had made his only for his own children, and wanted no-one else, 'mais qu'on ne les y porteroit guieres'; two weeks later small son aged 12 months died hardly having been ill, but did not know if this was her doing.

(18) Jeannette fille Jean Febuatte de la Vieville, 25

Told story of mother's illness, 'sec et percluee de ses membres', and belief that Claudatte had caused this after scene in church. Also said that some 9 years earlier father had refused to allow her in escraigne, at which she was angry; later had horse dead, which neighbours attributed to her hatred.

(19) Alix soeur de la precedente, 27

Repeated sister's deposition.

12 June 1619; order for arrest of Claudatte, carried out same day.

21 June 1619; interrogation

Said she was Claudatte Moinel fille Colas Jean Moinel of Vaubexey, wife of Nicolas du Val, aged 70. Agreed she had been accused of witchcraft. Said of Nicolas Cuguin 'O le mechant homme, larron, et un coupeur de jambe de vache'; suggestion about daughter being godparent had come from his wife when they were sewing together. As for Claudon l'Huillier, she knew him 'pour un larron et pour un meschant homme qu'il luy a ja heu faict grande extortion.' When he was ill she had said 'qu'ilz ne debvoient aller au devin', and when at escraigne 'la Cheviere' had told her he had said he was ill 'd'une eschaffeure ou d'un fardeau trop gros levé'. Then said she had not wished him ill, nor had any quarrel with him, so judges asked her to explain previous remarks about extortion. She explained this by saying that he or his wife had told her brother-in-law that she had given him the illness.

Said that Demenge Simon's wife might have eaten when in her house, but she had not made her do so. Had been present when Demenge Beurard took cart out, but had not helped him, except for telling him he would have difficulty because his horse had no 'colet de limont'. Had reproached wife of Nicolas l'Huillier with blaming her for her illness, asking if she wanted to drive her out of her mind. When at escraigne women had been talking about her illness, and how he would have difficulties with his work, so she had said 'qu'il avoit bien les moyens de les faire faire', which was reported to him. Agreed that she had been called witch, but only by the wife of Demenge Simon; asked why she had not taken her to court, said 'qu'elle radresse il fault avoir patience'. In case of Jannon femme Jean Bernardin she

had given her bread several times from charity, and otherwise lent her some; she had a fever.

4 July 1619; confrontations

Said of Claude Jean Potier that he was a thief, and 'de race de sorcier', alleging that his mother's uncle Bouzeval had been burned; he denied this strongly, saying that Bouzeval had died as 'homme de bien' and been buried in consecrated ground at Charmes. Accused Jean Robert of having stolen sheaves for tithe at Avillers, which he denied. Said Alix fille Jean Febuotte had stolen garderobe of Nicolas Belot's wife and a couvrechef from Claude Amatte's house; again this was denied. Jean Trop was also called a thief, who among other things had stolen 'ceinture' of the curé of Girecourt. Anne veuve Claudon l'Huillier had allegedly stolen wood with her husband; accused had also been present at Mirecourt when pot of butter she had sold was broken, and proved to contain more 'ordure' than butter. After reading of deposition Claudatte claimed to have said 'qu'elle avoit recherché plustost des remedes au diable'. Also called Demenge Aulbry a thief, as she did Jannotte fille Jean Febuotte, while Jannon femme Demenge Simon was 'une sorciere et une putain'. As for Nicolas l'Huillier, he had helped to break door of house of Jean de Rapey's wife, had stolen wood, and was 'de race de sorcier'. Demenge Beurard was 'un larron, un faulx dismeur et un arracheur de bornes', and Demenge Simon had stolen wheat, oats and barley. Nicolas Cugin was also a thief, who had stolen a scarf and some stakes, and Jean Febuotte a 'faulx dismeur'.

All witnesses denied these charges. Claudatte maintained innocence on all their accusations against her.

9 July 1619; PG des Vosges, who described her reproaches to witnesses as 'peux considerables et frivols', asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

16 July 1619; Change de Nancy approves

24 July 1619; interrogation

Now said she was about 50. Her daughter had told her that la Bourguignotte and Mengeotte la Ruelle had called her witch; she herself had heard former crying out 'Va te faire donner la question' after they had quarrelled. Would have taken her to court if she had had witnesses. Asked if all those of Mesnil and nearby villages held her for a witch, replied 'que la plus grande partie luy tient mais que quelques gens de bien ne l'y tiennent pas.' Agreed that she and her sister had been accused 9 years before by Ysabel Guerin, who was burned at Savigny; as she was going to stake Claudatte had taken her hand to see if she would maintain the accusation, but she had turned her head away and refused to reply.

Asked if she had committed apostacy, heresy, sacrilege, or blasphemy, replied 'non pour les trois premieres, et que pour la derniere quand elle asseuroit quelque chose c'estoit par sa foid, et quelque fois plus fashée dist le diable emporte qui en ment et que l'on luy a voulu faire croire lors qu'elle fut faicte la premiere fois prisonniere, qu'elle s'avoit dite aussy femme de bien que la Vierge Marie mais

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qu'elle ne croit point l'avoir dit.' Had been arrested after accusation by Ysabel, and been subjected to question.

Denied all the charges against her as before.

5 August 1619; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews and racked, also shown the strappado, but made no admissions at all

17 August 1619; order from prevot of Mirecourt that she be renvoyée jusqu'a rappel

Costs of trial came to just under 30 francs