

Witch 151, Mengeotte Le Compaing 1

B 8669 no 4; witch 151, Mengeotte fille Didier Le Compaing, of Develine, ban d'Avould

29 October 1593; informations preparatoires.

Said that she is commonly reputed a witch.

(1) Mengeon Didier Noel du Paire d'Avould, 30

Some 5 or 6 years earlier had both been in service with Nicolas Petit Didier, and he was angry with her one morning because his meal was not ready when he wanted to go to the woods. Gave him plate of beans for dinner, after eating which he became ill for a week. Told his mistress of his suspicions, which Mengeotte overheard, and then recovered.

Another day he was with another servant, Valentin Colas Humbert, when she brought Valentin a plate of 'joutte de choulx', in which there was an object the size of a large nut red like a crayfish. He told Valentin, who could not see it, then Mengeotte said 'Mangez, mangez, vous doutez bien de mourir'; no harm that he knew came of this.

(2) Valentin Jean Claude Estienne du Paire, 34

Told of occasion 7 or 8 years earlier at nightfall on a Sunday, when young men were playing throwing water at one another from a bucket outside house of Colin Jean Clement. His brother-in-law Jean, son of maire Bastien, told of going into kitchen to avoid a wetting and finding Mengeotte, who was then in Colin's service, on her own. Hair spread over shoulders, and was rubbing something on her face, then fire seemed to flare up out of the chimney – he thought it might be on fire. General reputation.

(3) Catherine femme Colas Petit Didier d'Avould, 40

Told of how 6 or 7 years earlier her servants, including first witness, had called her witch, blaming her for making her ill. Was also occasion when she made soup, and her daughter Laurence found an object in it which seemed to be made of compacted hairs - threw it out and made replacement. On another occasion her daughter aged 3 asked Mengeotte to rock her in cradle, but that night started crying and asking for drink; accused complained when she was sent to fetch this. Child then cried more than ever, and died next day. Witness then called Mengeotte witch, accusing her of killing the child, but she only cried in response. After this called her witch when she was angry with her; sometimes cried, sometimes said 'qu'elle faisoit de son doeuil joye, et qu'on luy faisoit tort'. Had heard from another servant, Mengeon Didier Noel, that as they went out to plough on morning of child's sickness she had said 'nous ne reverrons plus notre petite Jehennon elle sera morte et enterrée a notre retour'.

(4) Jean Valdechamps d'Avould, 30

Had been in service with her in house of Colas Petit Didier for 2 years; one night injured leg slightly, but it then became swollen and very painful. Told master and mistress in her hearing that he suspected her; she denied this, and after treating it as best he could he recovered. Another servant, Valentin Colas Humbert des

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Gouttes, found an object the size of a nut in his soup, and would not eat the rest - witness ate his own and came to no harm.

(5) Pieron Jean Pierat de Develine, 40

Reputation 6 or 7 years; no personal suspicion, although he had lost animals worth 100 ecus over last 10 or 12 years.

(6) Jean Bastien Jehandel de Develine, 29

Some 5 years ago, when he was looking for a wife and frequented fêtes, she had said 'que si elle avoit ung homme a marit la voulant croire et qu'elle phut avoir deux vaches ilz se nourriroient sans danger d'aultruy'. After his marriage wife had two children born 6 or 7 weeks prematurely, which died; during third pregnancy he said openly that if this happened again he would go to the devin to discover the reason. This time child was born normally and was still alive. After second pregnancy he had fever, and wanted an apple - took one from her tree, and she wished 'que le diable luy fust ez mains'. He then had a bad hand for 3 weeks, followed by bad neck - teeth were clenched so tightly he had to be fed on milk. Wanted to go and accuse her, but fell down when he tried to get out of bed.

On another occasion had a bull sick and expected to die; said in public that he thought she had bewitched it, and her brother heard this. Next day animal began to eat and get better. She knew of suspicions, because one day she told his mother 'que son fils avoit bien des escus pour la faire brusler, mais que de luy ne d'autres n'en viendroit au bout et qu'il payast ses debtes'. Her brother had said he would eat his words, but never took any action. Her late mother had also been suspected.

(7) Toussaint Didier Pierat de Develine, 33

She and her mother always reputed witches. 3 years earlier he had quarrelled with her, after which his wife lost her milk. Went to house to buy two cheeses, also to seek aid covertly, and spoke of wife's problem, to which she said milk would soon return, as it did. Believed she had been responsible, but for himself had seen no harm in her and did not believe she had harmed him.

(8) Nicolas Petit Didier d'Avould, 46

Mother's reputation as long as he could remember. Mengeotte had been in his service for 3 or 4 years, and he had seen no harm in her, although his servants sometimes complained she was a witch, and did not want her to give them their soup. Then told story of daughter's illness in same terms as wife. When latter reproached her she said 'qu'elle auroit eust ung meschant coeur au ventre de faire mourir ung si plaisant enfant', but for his part in view of her words and reputation he believed she had done so.

(9) Claude Mabrey de Develine, 50

During mother's lifetime he had several times called her witch without any action being taken, and 5 years ago had done same to accused. His son-in-law came back ill from war, all swollen, and consulted 'devineresse de Bourgogne' at Gerbepal. She told him he had been bewitched by hostess while at the war; intended target was his companion, but he had been 'trop habille'. He said he feared there were

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witches at Develine who had caused him many losses, to which she replied there was one who had long pursued him, and four others helping to try and kill him. Implied that main witch was unmarried, which made him think it was Mengeotte.

(10) George Ferry de Develine, 30

18 months earlier quarrelled with her over a field, after which cow lost milk, but recovered after he took 'joutte' from her garden at night and gave it to cow. Had heard her called witch by Claude Mabrey, and he had also called her witch after goat strayed into her garden - she was angry and it died next day.

(11) Claudette veuve Bastien Jehandel de Develine, 50

General reputation of accused and mother. Witness had had 'une infinité d'affaires', but did not know who could be cause. Then repeated virtually all of son's deposition (witness 6).

(12) Claudette femme Colas Mathieu de Develine, 40

Said that 10 years earlier Mengeotte had given her some cooked 'joutte', which was so good she ate 3 plates, but then lost her milk. This happened 4 times in all, and her baby died; suspected Mengeotte because the child 'estoit tant aymé de ladite Mengeotte que lors qu'elle le trouvoit, elle le prenoit tousjours sur son bras'. 3 years ago husband had a foal sick, and she went to devin, who told her to give it drink made of holy water and 'croix blanche', then see where it went. Did this, and foal made straight for Mengeotte's house; she led it back home, but it died as if rabid. In view of this, and reputation of both accused and mother, she and her husband suspected her of being cause.

(13) Claude Finance de Develine, 30

Had been drinking one day with devin from Avould, and asked him if she was a witch; replied that she had tried more than 50 times to kill his wife.

10 November 1593; interrogation

Said she was about 34, daughter of late Didier le Compain of Develine. After his death she had lived with mother and brother some 6 years, then was in service with series of masters for total of 10 years. Had then lived with brother for last 9 years, looking after children since he was widower.

Denied all the accusations from fellow-servants, saying they had not been ill to her knowledge. Child which died had already been ill. Asked if Jean Bastien Jeandel had pursued her in marriage, denied this. Asked if she had said that Bastien's wife went to dances too often, said she had not, but had heard it from Pierat Jean Pierat's wife. Also denied all other charges, although she did admit she had quarrelled with George Ferry and he called her witch.

12 - 13 November 1593; confrontations

George Ferry added story about how at St Jean previous year he and his wife were returning from marriage feast when they saw Mengeotte in front of their house with others - wife was frightened by this. Next night as his wife tried to get up and

leave bedchamber she stepped on a cat, and called him to aid her. This was followed by premature birth of child and illness which lasted 7 weeks - felt she had animals in stomach, and said Mengeotte had done this because she hated them.

She admitted making remark to mother of Jean Bastien Jeandel about his having money to prosecute her. Otherwise denied all the charges; no specific reproaches, but said she took them for what they were, then said they had lied.

13 November 1593; additional witnesses

(14) Jennon femme Colas Finance d'Avould, 30

Some 2 years ago had bought some hay; asked 3 gros for it, said it was too much, but vendor then said Mengeotte had already offered this, and would pay more. Then bought it for 3 gros and a small cheese; calf she fed it to died within 3 or 4 days, and in view of reputation and fact that she had outbid her suspected accused of being the cause.

(15) Poline femme Jean Bastien Jeandel de Develine, 25

6 or 7 years before had taken her place in service of Colas Petit Didier at Christmas, and she complained about this. At sowing time witness became very ill, all swollen for 7 weeks and judged to be dying; finally went to sister at Clemecy. When her brother-in-law was about to set out to devin in search of remedy she suddenly voided 'beaucoup de mal et putrefaction', and was cured. In view of Mengeotte's reputation and hostility she suspected her. Then told story of husband's illness previous year after he threw stone at apple, and own loss of premature baby. More details of husband's sickness - after being bathed swelling in throat burst in his mouth.

(16) Marguitte femme George Ferry de Develline, 23

Essentially the same story as told by her husband; death of calf, cat in room, illness and miscarriage, death of goat.

(17) Mengeotte femme Pierat Jean Pierat de Develline, 40

2 years before she had come to ask if husband of witness had found a sharpening stone and its box in his field, which belonged to her brother. Husband later told witness he had found it under cherry-tree, showing they had taken his cherries, and did not return it - after this one of their cows died suddenly. Also occasion when she had a sow with 14 piglets, and agreed that Mengeotte should have 2 of them. When others were going to neighbours she sent for her to collect them, but since she did not come sold them elsewhere; a few weeks later the sow sickened and died. In view of reputation suspected her over these losses.

(18) Colas Finance le Vieux d'Anould, 60

Reputation - mother also.

(19) Anthoine Claude Anthoine d'Anould, 40

3 years earlier her brother's animals had strayed into his field, and his wife chased them out, telling off his children for not keeping them properly. Mengeotte later told his daughter that if this happened again 'elle leur monstreroit ung tour qu'ilz ne savoient pas'. Within the week three bullocks sickened and later died; suspected her in view of her reputation and that of her mother.

(20) Lienard Jean Jacquemin de Develline, 22

Had heard her say that she would hate George Ferry as long as she lived.

(21) Colin Mengin d'Anould, 25

General reputation. One day when he was working in her house as tailor she was making butter, and told him this came from her cow, and she was able to make 15 pounds in a fortnight. He thought it was a remarkable cow, since he had one he thought good, and could only produce 2 pounds in same time.

She was then confronted with witnesses - marginal note that she should have been interrogated first on basis of their depositions. No reproaches; admitted she had said she hated George Ferry.

17 November 1593; Rémy asks for torture

18 November 1593; Change de Nancy approves

15 December 1593; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews and rack, latter twice during first session, then again after lunch. Also had cords twisted round arms and legs while being racked. Continued to deny throughout.

23 December 1593; Rémy proposes that she be renvoyée.

24 December 1593; Change de Nancy agrees

Followed by list of executions carried out by prevot in 1593 - several soldiers involved in homicides.