

Witch 281, Antoine Didier Valdexey 1

Witch 281; B8715 no 4, Antoine Didier Valdexey of Clemecy

(? June 1615) Extract from trial of Jean Jacquemin of Develines, currently held prisoner at Anould, in which he accuses Antoine Didier Valdexey of Clemecy of having been at sabbat with him. Others accused were Valence femme Jean Cuguin and Jehennon femme Colin Mengin, both of Develine, and Dieudonné Jean Dieudonné of Le Couche, who was one of 'seigneurs du sabat' and sat next to the master.

20 June 1615; procureur d'office for dean and chapter of St. Dié asks for arrest and investigation of Valdexey, since there is a public clamour against him, and it is in the public interest that such crimes should be punished.

23 June 1615; informations preparatoires

(1) Marion femme de Colas de la Maixe de La Pelliére, 30+

Her first husband, Jean Colas, had been disliked by the accused and those like him who were suspected of witchcraft, because he threatened to have them arrested; he eventually died, and during widowhood two of her pigs had suffered strange illness (2 years before). Seemed to be rabid, and she was advised to take herbs from the accused's garden, which immediately cured pigs after they had been given up for dead. Following winter had taken cows with calves past his house; became frightened and disturbed, so that they were no longer willing to feed calves. Next year 3 calves killed by lightning, with no mark on bodies. Long reputation.

(2) Nicolas de la Maixe de La Pellerie, c. 30

Had been in service of previous witness, now his wife. Confirmed stories about cows (which he placed 4-5 years back) and pigs, and reputation of accused.

(3) Jean Jacot Henry de La Pelliére, c. 50

Reputation at least 20 years. 2 years earlier, as doyen, had been collecting taxes, and refused to accept German money from Valdexey; next day his finest cow died suddenly. Said that one Gerard had told him, three days before his death, that accused had given him his deathblow, and that if he were brought to justice he should testify to that effect. His brother Jacquot Henry had refused to work with accused in Allemaigne, and 8 days later his child was killed by fall from cradle; believed this to have been result of threats made by accused.

(4) Claudon Jandelle de La Pelliére, c. 33

Some 5 years earlier his father-in-law Jean Gerard Anthoine had a dispute with accused over rent of a meadow, which belonged to some minors whose 'tuteur' was the accused. Immediately afterwards he fell ill and died in a fortnight, saying that he attributed illness to the accused and his wife, and that he wanted to reveal this when making confession to curé. Also forbade them to ask accused to make his coffin, although he was a carpenter.

(5) Collatte veuve de Jean Claudon Jean Meline de La Pelliére, 30+

Said that at last St. Anthoine her husband had paid the accused 18 gros of the 24 owing for his daughter who had kept their animals with her father's. She saw the accused returning from the mill, and asked if her husband were still there, to which he replied that he was, and that he was 'bien joyeux' - miller's wife then found him dead under wheel. Thought this had been doing of accused, angry that they had been slow to pay remaining 6 gros, and because of long reputation and fact that he was last to speak to her husband. Also believed that after dispute over building a wall he had caused death of a foal belonging to her mother.

(6) Jean le Compain autrement Jean Didier du Souche, 60+

Told story of dispute over wall and death of foal; the widow concerned was that of his brother Mengel le Compain. Also told of death of Jean Claudon Jean Meline. Long reputation.

(7) Pierron Urbain du Souche de Clemecy, c. 34

Some 8 or 9 years earlier had a dispute with accused over lease of meadow belonging to children of Jean de Develnie; insulted one another before church and elsewhere, then went to law. During lawsuit he lost a 'tourasse' which was only ill for a day and a half, which he suspected to have been work of accused and his wife. During lawsuit was incited by one Claude Vincent to allege that accused was 'un fottEUR de vache', but did not wish to do so despite offer of payment.

(8) Epron femme de Claudel Jean le Masson de La Pelliere, 50+

Some 5 years before a blind mare she had, with a foal, strayed on land of accused. She took it out immediately, and did not think it had been seen, but he later accused her. After initial denial she admitted damage, explaining that the mare was blind. He did not seem angry, but later the foal died, and as he was already talked of as a witch she suspected him.

(9) Germaine veuve de Mengel le Compain du Souche de Clemecy, c. 45

Told how some 6 years before he had wanted to build wall on land belonging to her children, and had threatened when she refused 'qu'il ne la plaidoyeroit pour cela, mais qu'il l'auroit bien d'autre facon.' After this lost foal, ox, and cows to total value of 50 ecus.

(10) Jennon veuve Claudon Jean Meline du Souche de Clemecy, 50+

Told of death of her son at mill, and of suspicions of Jean Gerard.

(11) Mengeon Jean Durand de La Pelliere, c. 20

Told of suspicions of his grandfather Jean Gerard.

(12) Claude Vincent du Souche de Clemecy, c. 50

Told how more than 30 years before, guarding animals with accused and Mengeon des Rozes, saw him approach a cow which was lying down with vagina open, and place his penis against it, saying that it ought to be fucked. Didn't believe

he had actually done so (he was 16 or 17 at time). Reputation more than 20 years. After quarrel with him and his wife over a trespassing horse, the animal had become as if rabid, and had to be killed.

Had been talk of having them arrested some 7 years before, on account of losses of animals suffered by Jean Colas du Vic and Germaine le Compain. Had heard wife tell accused to hold his tongue if they were taken, saying she was sure to do so herself; had also indoctrinated children about what to say if questioned. Also claimed to have heard that he had stolen a cow.

(13) Mengel des Rozes du Souche de Clemecy, c. 45

Told of incident with cow - in rather more restrained terms.

(26 June 1615)

(14) Humbert Jardelle de La Pelliére, c. 30

Some 4 or 5 years earlier, when keeping mill, accused had wanted to jump queue, so that he had to prevent him. Threatened him, and afterwards he lost a cow, then Jean Claudon Jean Meline was killed at mill. Long reputation.

(15) Laurence femme de Claude Holbry de Ban le Duc, c. 40

Reputation more than 15 years; he had admitted when threshing at her house that he was called witch, but said people did him wrong. Had worked as day labourer for them, but during this time she and her husband kept quarrelling; decided to dispense with his services, after which they lived in concord. Suspected that accused had been angry, and had caused loss of various animals.

25 June 1615; interrogation

Said he was Anthoine Didier Valdezey, aged over 50, carpenter, of le Souche de Clemecy. Agreed he was accused of witchcraft, but said he was innocent.

Said that Pierron Urbain had called him and his wife witches, but they had obtained reparation by justice. Also said that his wife and his cousin Vincent Jardel had warned him he was to be arrested previous Saturday. Otherwise denied all accusations.

26 June 1615; interrogation and confrontations

No progress made; simple denials. Claude Vincent claimed to have heard accused's wife say 'qu'elle luy avoit caché beaucoup de ses meschancetés, mais qu'elle ne luy en sascherait plus tant, et voudroit que desià il fut mort et enterré.' He said that this had been reported to him by Mengel des Rozes, but he had taken no notice.

27 June 1615; procureur d'office asks for question ordinaire

30 June 1615; Change de Nancy approves

2 July 1615; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews on hands and feet, then racked. Continued to deny, but when brought back after lunch and threatened with further torture, said he saw he would have to tell the truth. Confessed to being seduced 10 years earlier, with promises to make him rich. Then confessed to series of malefices much as alleged by witnesses, including turning himself into a cat and overturning cradle to kill child of Jacot Henry. In general had carried out malefices with powder to avenge wrongs cited by witnesses. Had been to sabbat in guise of cat, and had seen Claudatte Lambert, Epron widow of Jean Chesne of Sachment, and Colas Jean Jacquemin (who had accused him). Asked to be given until next day to think over further confessions.

3 July 1615; interrogation

Said he could not remember any more malefices, but gave additional names of accomplices. Ferry Gerard du Vic, Collatte femme a Mengel des Rozes, Dieudonné Jean Dieudonné du Souche, Pierron Jean Pierrat of Develnie, Didier de la Levee of Hernafain, Claudatte femme Colas Claudon Goinel of Sachment.

At second interrogation that afternoon, added more names of accomplices who had helped to make hail: Germaine veuve Mengel le Compain, Claude Vincent du Souche, and Jean Jacot Henry of La Palliere.

4 July 1615; procureur of Chapter asks for death sentence.

6 July 1615; Change de Nancy agrees.

14 July 1615; interrogation

Antoine had asked to be brought before judges; began by saying this was to 'crier mercy' to God and them, since he was truly repentant. Asked if he had not wanted to deny earlier confessions, said 'que ce fut une mauvaise pensée qui luy vint en teste, et luy faisoit croire qu'il estoit bon chrestien, et avoit trop dit.'

Then agreed that he had committed the malefices to which he had previously confessed, but when asked about accusations against others replied 'qu'il n'a veu personne au sabat, et n'y fut jamais, et n'est sorcier, et le maintiendra tousjours, et du reste que l'on face de luy ce que l'on voudra.'

15 July 1615. The prévôt of Saint-Dié, Jean Lamance, and the maire for the Canons, Jean Claude Blaise, go before a tabellion. The prévôt explains that in view of the retraction made by Antoine the previous day he cannot proceed to his execution without a formal order from the duke or the Change de Nancy. Maire protested, and threatened to try and make him liable for any costs arising.

18 July 1615; Change de Nancy declares that execution should go ahead despite the retraction. Signed by 5 judges, but not by Bourgeois or Maimbourg, two of the four signatories to the judgement of 6 July.

28 July 1615; execution carried out.