

B 8707 no 3; witch 255, Claude Mengeon Grivel, alias des Feignes, de Sachemont

29 December 1610; procureur for canons records that he has received many denunciations of accused for theft and witchcraft, so 'y voulant deferer, pour en nettoyer et extirper la race, au cas qu'il soit tel et autres d'ou il est descendu', asks for depositions, to be followed if appropriate by arrest and interrogation.

30 December 1610; informations préparatoires

(1) Mengel de la Hault, 56

Reputation 7 years; had been called witch by witness and others without seeking reparation, on daily basis. Had also stolen some wood from him, for which he finally paid 2 écus in reparation. After this lost several animals, and suspected him if he was a witch. His sister had been tried at St Dié, and he had said 'que quant il veoiroit la fumée de sadite soeur, il s'enfuyeroit, et qu'elle accuseroit peult estre des gens de bien.'

(2) Colas Claudon Claude, 40

9 years before found him stealing turnips, but could not catch him, and was told he would repent. Later lost a goat, while other animals became ill; threatened to report him to seigneurs, at which he said they would recover if God wished - and they did. On another occasion had quarrel about who should go first at mill, and when Claude threatened him he told him he had long reputation as witch, and allowed himself to be called witch, so if anything happened he would blame him. Later lost 2 sheep, so suspected this was his doing. Had heard same remarks about sister as previous witness.

(3) Nicolas Heugimont, forestier, 40

Reputation 12 years. About 5 years earlier had cut down hedge, about which he was angry, and made tacit threats reported to witness by friends. Lost 2 cows, and accused him of being cause, but he sought no redress, merely saying that he had been working in Allemagne where there was an epidemic of animal disease, and might have brought it back with him. Had also accused him of stealing pair of breeches.

(4) Mengel Urbain, 60

Had heard him called witch in public without seeking reparation. Could prove that he had stolen a pair of boards he used for making bread.

(5) Colas Charmel, 36

A year earlier, after selling his own property, asked if he could live in house of witness, and had done so until 2 weeks before. When witness spoke to him about reputation, said he need not fear as long as he was living in his house. Had lost cow worth 40 francs and calf worth 12, however, and if he was witch he might have caused this. One morning found him with face scratched, and had heard him groaning in night in his bed - said he had toothache.

(6) Mengeon le Petit Anthoine, 34

3 years earlier refused to let him bake in his oven, after which he lost a ram; told him of suspicions, but he denied being cause.

(7) Fleurant de la Leau, 50

Some years before came to house asking for light, saying he had to go somewhere, and was angry when he refused. Lost an ox immediately afterwards, which he suspected was his doing if he was witch as reputed.

(31 December 1610)

(8) Claudon Colas le Vieux Homme, 27

Often called witch and thief, but never sought reparation that he heard. A year earlier had asked witness to cut his hair, which he was in habit of doing more to please others than to make money. Was too busy on this occasion, but he was angry at refusal; within a week he lost a calf which died suddenly, and suspected that if he was witch as reputed this was his doing.

(9) Mesline femme Adam Thiebault, de Clefcy, 27

Previous year her husband had quarrel with him at village festival, after which her daughter aged 3 became ill, and died 5 weeks later. Tried to get him to come and heal her, and he refused, denying he was cause, but took no action over accusation.

(10) Claude Anthoine, de Venchères, 36

Brother Mengeon was 6th witness - told of refusal to bake bread and loss of ram. He came again to house with unusually 'triste mine . . . faisant le songeard', at which Mengeon told him that if he were 'fils de bien' he would purge himself of accusation that he had killed the ram. He himself had quarrel with him, when he caused trouble in house, and threatened to kill him to keep him away. A heifer then died suddenly, which he suspected of being his witchcraft, in view of reputation.

(11) Mengeon Colas le Vieux Homme, 40

Had quarrel with him 3 years earlier, after which he lost a bullock, which he suspected had been his witchcraft.

(12) Colas Claudon Grivelz, 60

2 or 3 years earlier accused told him he wanted to pass thread around church of Clefcy, then make a pilgrimage; he objected to this, and they quarrelled. Told him he was 'sy fin genax que merveille', and a week later a cow worth 9 écus died, which he suspected was his doing. Had heard him say he would flee if his sister confessed.

(13) Bastien Colas Grivelz, 26

Had quarrel with him 2 or 3 years earlier over water for fields; was afraid of him because of loss of cow by father (previous witness). Some time later his father-in-law told him to do some carting from woods, and he took 2 fine oxen to draw cart driven by accused. Suddenly became wild, so that no-one could control them, and finally had to sell them. Believed this had been his witchcraft, in view of quarrel and reputation.

(14) Vincent Jardelle, 50

Accused had previously given him his property, on condition he would feed and shelter him, which he had done for some 3 years, but accused was not contented, and finally deal was broken off, with many disputes. Had then lost 2 pigs and other animals, which in view of reputation he suspected was his witchcraft; accused him but he denied being responsible. (They were brothers-in-law).

(15) Adam Thiebault, de Clefcy

Previous year had been dispute at festival, which as doyen de maire he interposed to settle, but Claude was angry, and spoke disrespectfully of his office, so he took him before maire. After this daughter Dieudonné sickened and died, which he thought was his doing, and of which he had accused him directly.

3 January 1611; interrogation

Said he was about 45, 'cubelaire de son estat', and had always lived at Sachemont. Father Mengeon des Feignes had died natural death about 8 years earlier, mother Jehenne came from Venchères, and had died much earlier of dysentery. 2 of his 3 brothers had died natural deaths, while the third, Fleurant, had thrown himself in lake and little property he had was confiscated. Thought this had been because he had fathered a bastard child. Two sisters were still living in Sachemont, Jacotte femme Vincent Jardelle and Agathe femme Claude Dotrain. Agreed that Agathe had reputation as witch, and had been arrested, also that he had been called witch himself.

Admitted that he had stolen wood from Mengel de la Hault, and paid him 8 francs in reparation. Said he had been arrested because he had not made people pay reparation when they called him witch and thief.

Agreed to various quarrels and small details, but constantly denied doing any harm.

5 January 1611; confrontations

No reproaches to witnesses, but maintained position firmly. Agreed that he had passed thread round church, then 'le fait revestir de cire, qu'il fut demander par les maisons pour l'honneur de Dieu, et de la belle Vierge, et ce en neuf paroisses, a l'instruction des prebsters de madame Saincte Reyne, ou il rapporta ledit lenement'.

5 January 1611; procureur asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

8 January 1611; Change de Nancy approves

11 January 1611; interrogation under torture

Withstood thumbscrews, but started to confess when racked. Seduced by Mre Napnel 18 years earlier, who promised he would never want. Gave him money (oak leaves) and powder to avenge himself on those who quarrelled with him. Could not remember first use of powder, but listed series of maléfices; animals of Colas Hengimont and Colas Charmelle, and daughter of Adam Thiebault.

Had been to sabat 6 days after temptation, where there were about 12 people; danced and feasted. Had recognized Colas de la Leau, Didier de la Maize (dead, and arrested as witch), and Claudette Colin. Had made hail once, striking earthenware pots containing poison with black sticks. Napnel had visited him in prison previous night, urging him not to confess.

At this point interrogation broke off, because maire and others had to attend to business on market day.

12 January 1611; interrogation under torture

Would not confess any more maléfices, so racked again, and made some further admissions, as charged by witnesses. Then admitted that one cold rainy day he had taken refuge in a barn, and committed bestiality with a cow, some 20 years earlier.

Added to names of accomplices la femme Lambert du Vic, his sister Agathe, and someone named Colatte (damage here). said that on 2 or 3 occasions he had given his master part of host he received at Easter, by keeping it in mouth then putting it in handkerchief.

Confirmed confessions that afternoon, adding names of la femme Mengel Colas des Rozes du Souche, Mengeon Claude Ferry du Vic and Ferry Claude Ferry to list of accomplices.

13 January 1611; again confirmed his confessions.

13 January 1611; procureur asks for death sentence

17 January 1611; Change de Nancy approves

1 February 1611; sentence carried out