

B 8675 no 1; witch 154, Gregoire Mathiel de Bertrimoutier

[8677 no.1

26 May 1593; Claudatte wife of Simon Colas Toussaint Chailley of Lesseux, who had evidently confessed to being a witch previous day, now confessed that she had been seduced through action of her father, Gregoire Mathiel of Bertrimoustier, who had taken her to the sabbat.

Standard account of sabbat, where she had seen Jehenne Napuel of Combrimont, the widow of Demenge Collatte, also of Combrimont, her uncle Jean Gomel and Mengeatte his wife, both of Bertrimoutier, and Catherine wife of Claude Didier Laisne of Frouencheres.

1 June 1595; Claudatte confronted with her father, who had now been arrested. Warned of dangers of perjury, and severe punishment for it, but maintained accusation. Father warned her she would damn herself, but she did not waver, and he fell silent.]

29 May 1595; informations préparatoires

(1) Jean Thiebauld Michiel de Quebrux, 30

Some 2 years before last Carnival, was working as servant to salpetrier in the prévôté, working in cellar of Gregoire's house, at which they were none too pleased. Wife promised him a cheese, then made excuses for delay, until on mardi gras son brought him a piece of cheese, with promise of a larger one later. As soon as he ate it became very ill, especially in legs, and had to be carried back to father's house. Was advised to send to 'la devineresse de Tanviller', who said 'qu'il avoit bien courroucé une femme, laquelle luy avoit causé ceste maladie'; gave him 'contrepoison' made with herbs and roots, after taking which he immediately felt better. Believed that either Gregoire or his wife had bewitched him, since both were long reputed witches.

(2) Jean Didier le Marchal de Bertrimoutier, 50

Some 4 years earlier his son had quarrelled with Gregoire's son, who was much bigger and gave him good beating; went to complain to Gregoire, and called him an old witch, without any reparation being demanded. Subsequently lost several animals, which he believed had been his doing. About a year later Gregoire's daughter was sought in marriage by Simon Chailley of Lesseux; at first he refused, but witness acted as intermediary, and marriage was eventually concluded. After this they had another quarrel, however, and witness again called him witch, later suffering great losses, which he thought were his doing. Long reputation.

(3) Honneste homme Claude le Clerc, maire de Bertrimoutier, 46

Some years before had been returning from market with Gregoire, and had a dispute, during which witness was provoked by him and gave him several punches, to point where he bled. Next day he took to his bed and pretended to be very ill; witness lost a number of valuable beasts, which he blamed on his witchcraft. Long reputation.

(4) George Napuel de Neufviller, 40

At time of arrest of Gregoire's daughter he had kept company with him on way to market at Saincte-Marie, and he told witness he had been to her house at Lesseux to know from her if she was innocent, which she had assured him she was; he told her 'que sy le faict arrivoit sy avant qu'elle fut desmembrée par la justice, sy son marit ne vouloit la recepvoir, il la nourriroit luy mesme'.

(5) Jean Didier Cunin de Bertrimoutier, 60

There was a fine oak tree near Gregoire's garden, whose shade prevented him growing fruit trees, and he had wanted to buy it and cut it down; when he spoke to other members of the community did not get answer he wanted, because acorns were so valuable to all. Later it was struck by lightning and split down the centre, when none of the other trees was touched, and all the inhabitants thought that in view of his reputation he was responsible.

(6) Jean Didier le Marchal de Bertrimoutier, 50

Repeated story about oak tree.

(7) Jean George le jeune, doyen du maire a Bertrimoutier, 40

Also told story of oak tree.

8 June 1595; interrogation

Stated that he had been denounced by his daughter Claudatte, imprisoned at Lusse. He said he was Gregoire Mathiel, laboureur of Bertrimoutier, aged over 50, resident for some 30 years since his marriage.

Reproached with evidence from his daughter, that he had taken her to sabbat and given her as wife to devil, he admitted this was true. Then however said he could not remember when it was; he might have said she could go to the devil when he was angry. Judges pressed him again, but he would only say he could not remember. Sent back to prison, as it was getting late, with exhortations to think it over before next morning.

9 June 1595; interrogation and confrontations

Now said his daughter had been 'malsage et maladvisée', and claimed he was a good christian. Asked to be allowed to take advice from substitut of procureur général de Lorraine and from Jean Serrier praticien, but was told he must defend himself without any aid, and that he should consult his own conscience.

Agreed he had had quarrels with Claudon le Clerc, but not to point where they bore one another hatred. Agreed to beating on road, but they had been alone, and Claudon later denied it. Did not know he had lost animals, and 'luy mesme a perdu plusieurs bestialz, et ne scait comme telle perte peult arriver'.

Admitted remarks to his daughter, although did not remember telling anyone else about them. Agreed about what had happened to tree, but denied he had previously tried to buy it, since he knew village would not agree.

Made no reproaches to witnesses, but denied specific charges.

9 June 1595; procureur d'office for Chapter asks for torture

12 June 1595; Change de Nancy agrees

14 June 1595; interrogation under torture

Judges asked if it was not true that until now he had always said 'qu'il ne se vouloit laisser tourmenter, et que plutost diroit il ce dont il seroit enquis'; said nothing 'et nous a faict veoir qu'il estoit fort bourrelé en sa conscience'. Persisted in denials, when given thumbscrews to hands and feet; judges suggested it was evident he did not feel these much. Started to confess when racked; had taken daughter to sabbat as she said. Had seen Jehenne Napuel and another of Combrimont named by his daughter; master had been called Napnel. Had met Napnel 6 months earlier, and told him he was angry because he had lost his animals; suggested that if he renounced God and took him for master he would help him to find them. Refused at first, but was beaten, and then consented - later found animals where Napnel told him he would. When he returned latter asked him to keep his promise, then reminded him that he had wished his daughter to the devil when in a temper. Gave account of sabbat in fairly standard form; might have seen Jean Gounel there.

Had been given black powder, started by trying it on his cat and one of his horses. Had later used it to kill ox of Claude le Clerc, and cow of his neighbour Jean Didier Cunin, after quarrels. Also killed calf belonging to his son Jean, who was not content with what he had given him. His master had destroyed the oak tree, and had suggested this to him.

Seduction had been 10 years earlier, had given daughter 8 years ago. At sabbat had seen Jehanne Napuel and wife of Colas Collatte, both of Combrimont, and his serorge Jean Gounel. Also la vieille Oursatte de Frappelle, Jehenne du Fain de Bonipaire, and la Petrematte of Lusse, wife of Jean le Maire, all now dead. Admitted killing a couple more animals, and

making salpetrier ill, then curing him with another powder his master had given him. Added to list of accomplices the daughter of Jean Aulbert of Lesseux, now dead; others present had been masked.

14 June 1595; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions. Said that 'Son intention fut plusieurs fois, ensuivent de grande repentance, qu'il avoit d'estre ainsy abusé, de le delaisser et se retirer de sa puissance, mesmes fut en pelerinage sans parler, a Saint Claude de Coniche. Mais rien n'y valut, et sy jamais ne peult s'en detrapper.'

15 June 1595; interrogation

Repeated earlier confessions. Was then confronted with Jean Goniel, who was himself in prison, and maintained accusation despite denials by latter.

15 June 1595; procureur d'office asks for death sentence

17 June 1595; Change de Nancy approves

26 June 1595; formal death sentence from court at St Dié

4 July 1595; execution carried out