

B 4500 no 1 Witch 083, Jean et Claudin Aulbry

6 May 1586; informations préparatoires taken by Claude Borduet, prévôt of Chastenoy, at the request of the PG des Vosges, against Jean and Claudin les Aulbry of St. Prancher, commonly reputed to be 'sorciers et empoisonneurs'.

(1) Didier Pierrot laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 43

Said that they had both been reputed witches as long as he could remember, as had their father Bastien Aulbry. On account of a children's quarrel Bastien had bewitched his mother, who had been ill for a year before being cured after consulting a devin at Blainville who made a pilgrimage on her behalf to St. Genot. Some 12 years before he and Jean Aulbry had quarrelled when Jean wanted to attack some soldiers who were in the village (billed); Jean had thrown himself against the dagger he was holding, and been wounded in the body. Afterwards he threatened the witness, saying he would make him as poor as himself, and indeed he had lost 10 horses since that date by sudden deaths, as well as other animals.

(2) Jean Collon laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 35

Long reputation of brothers and father. Previous summer Claudin had approached him and the son of Jean Petit Jean his associé as they were ploughing, and touched one of the horses. When they returned to village the other horse sickened and died 2 days later; several people thought he had bewitched it. Asked if Jean Petit Jean (whose horse it was) had quarrelled with Claudin, said he didn't know.

(3) Perrin Boulengier laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 50

General reputation of father and brothers only.

(4) Claude femme de Jean Marsellot de St. Prancher, c. 40

General reputation of brothers and father, 'fort craings et doubté d'un chacun'. Told of occasion 2 years earlier when as she took horse to pasture she met Claudin, who asked to buy 2 pigs from her; she refused, saying she wanted to fatten them more herself. Same day horse became ill, and when she took it to Mengin Viriot, who specialised in curing horses, he told her the case was hopeless; it died same day, and she believed this had been Claudin's doing.

(5) Claudin Didillot laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers, and even more of father. After a quarrel 3 years before Claudin had told him 'qu'il se donneroit de garde bientost'; one of his cows then became sick, so he went to Claudin's house and told him he would pursue the matter if this cow or any other of his animals came to harm. Cow immediately began to recover, so he believed that he had bewitched it, then cured it.

(6) Gerard Pierrot laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers and father.

(7) Colas Thouvenin laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 32

General reputation. Some 5 years earlier he had withdrawn 2 cows belonging to his wife which Jean Aulbry had leased, because he lacked means to feed them; this involved him in paying a few pence and some wine, over which there was a dispute, and Jean told him he would not keep them long, or make a profit on them. They soon died, and he believed them to have been bewitched by Jean; also believed Claudin to have caused death of a horse.

(8) Jean Petit Jean laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 50

General reputation of brothers and father. Told of death of horse previous year, which he attributed to Claudin, though giving no reason. Also told of a cow which had returned limping from the herd which Claudin was keeping, but recovered after Claudin had been to see it.

(9) Izabellon femme à Jean Petit Jean, c. 36

Repeated husband's deposition about horse and cow etc. Also claimed that when her husband had lent a horse to Jean for his ploughing the previous year it had returned sick, and died.

(10) Marie veuve de Clement Behel de St. Prancher, 60

General reputation of brothers and father. 3 weeks before one of her cows had returned lame from herd; had recovered after Claudin Aulbry came and felt all along its leg, so she believed he had given the illness and taken it away.

(11) Mongin Variot laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 35

Reputation for all 12 years he had lived in village. Some 6 years earlier he had bought 'le poil' of some meadows belonging to Jean Petit Jean for 4 francs; when he had heard of this Claudin went to offer 6 francs. When witness tried to insist on his rights, Petit Jean wanted him to match this, and he objected that he didn't want to buy something twice. Claudin was angry, and witness heard from his chambermaid that he had been threatening that he would repent of this hay (which was finally bought by someone else). A fortnight later he lost a foal, while another became ill, so he went and declared loudly outside Claudin's house that he was a witch, who had killed his foal, and if the second did not recover he would find ways 'd'avoir sa raison' of Claudin. Latter was in his house, and said nothing, but foal soon recovered. Some 5 years earlier Aulbry had been at Delaucourt when a witch named Jean Braconnier had been executed; on his return 'ledit Aulbry vient trouver luy deposant avec aultres qui vuidoint en un puix devant le logis de luy deposant. L'ung d'entre eux dict audit Aulbry qu'il vouldroit que ledit braconnier eust accusez tout les sorciers affin que ledit Aulbry soit du compte pour estre traicté comme ledit braconnier. Dequoy ledit Claudin Aulbry se faulchist et en montra bien les mines en son visage Regardant luy deposant qui estoit au fond du puix d'une veue mauvais comme ledit deposant veit bien'. Immediately became ill and had to return home; sent for Aulbry, and asked him 'a quelle occasion qu'il l'avoit print hayne contre luy'. Aulbry denied having any hatred for him, but witness considered that he had

uttered 'parolles assez suffisantes pour luy donner ample recognoissance qu'il luy avoit donné la maladie'; immediately started to recover. At last St. Jean the witness had been charged with levying a special subsidy, and had charged Claudin at about 30 gros; he 'murmuroit par derriere contre ledit deposant', and soon after a fine foal became ill. He said in public that if the foal died it would be 'un cher poulain . . . pour quelcun'; intended this to reach Aulbry, and he was indeed told of it by Claude Husson. Aulbry then came to his house saying he had heard his foal was ill, and 'se seroit grand dommaige s'il mourroit'. Went and saw foal, which was in very bad state, and not eating; immediately afterwards witness offered it some oats, which it began to eat, and soon it made a complete recovery.

(12) Isabel femme de Mengin Viriot de St. Prancher, c. 33

Reputation of brothers and father. Repeated husband's story about subsidy and foal; Aulbry evidently considered that as village herdsman he should not have to pay. Also told of earlier incident after execution of Jean Braconnier; in her account her husband asked if he had denounced anyone of St. Prancher. About 15 days after he became ill Claudin came to house asking to borrow 'un bichot', and she 'estante joyeuse en sa venue estimans qu'il donneroit quelque guarison à son marit' told him to wait by the fire, where her husband was sitting, while she fetched it. Husband then began to recover. She also said that when he came to see foal it had been on pretext of repaying some 'chenevieux' he owed her husband, although he had been alerted by Claude Husson; he tried at first to get into the stable without being seen.

(13) Claudin Husson boulengier de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of Claudin. Told his side of story over foal. He had warned Mongin Viriot that Claudin was angry over subsidy, and would do what he could against him. Mengin told him to inform Claudin that if the foal died he would kill him; when he saw Claudin he actually told him that Mengin suspected him of making the foal ill, and if it died he would make him answer for it. Claudin said he did him wrong in suspecting him, but that he was going to see him to repay him 4 sols.

(14) Margueritte femme à Claudio Didelot de St. Prancher, c. 40

General suspicion and fear of Claudin. Previous winter when he had been in their house he had said 'que l'on parloit de luy et qu'on en dict ce qu'on vouldroit qu'il estoit homme le plus mauvais qui fut jamais sur terre et l'ung des bon aussy s'il le vouloit faire'.

(15) Ydeline femme de Colas Thouvenin de St. Prancher, c. 24

General reputation of brothers. Repeated husband's story of quarrel over withdrawal of cows from herd, threats, and subsequent loss of 3 horses and 3 cows.

(16) Clement Behel de St. Prancher, laboureur, c. 24

General reputation of brothers.

(17) Mengeon veuve de Bartremin Collin de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers.

(18) Mre Jean Vincenot chirurgien de St. Prancher, 45

General reputation of brothers. Had some dispute with Claudin about 4 months earlier over his son, after which he lost a calf; man who cut it up told him he had never seen one with a side so 'guasté', which caused him to think Claudin might have caused its death.

(19) Claude femme de Jean Vincenot, c. 44

General reputation. Said that recent quarrel had been because her children had called those of Claudin 'genots'.

(20) Symon Baltaire laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 40

Told of reputation of brothers and their father - he had been commonly called witch. Himself had lost several animals, but did not know cause.

(21) Claudin Petit laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers and father.

(22) Claudon femme de Perrin Boulengier de St. Prancher, c. 26

Reputation of brothers and father. Believed that the father had killed her own father. As for brother:, feared them so much that if they asked her for anything she could give 'elle se garde bien de les reffuser'.

(23) Claudotte fille de feu Claudon Didellot de St. Prancher, c. 24

Reputation of brothers. Jean had owed her 11 francs for some corn and for rent, but she could obtain no payment. Some 9 months before she had been to his house, on a day when he had promised to pay, but he had said that he could not, since he needed to feed his children, and he might see her begging for her livelihood. She became angry and said 'que c'estoit trop la faire aller en la maison d'un genot', but when she left he called her back. He begged her to allow him another brief delay, then he would be sure to pay; he had made her sit next to the fire, and after several refusals on her part persuaded her to take some bread. Same day she became ill, as if demented, and wandered around fields - this lasted 23 weeks, until she found herself in the house of her uncle Didier Didellot at Genaincourt. He decided that they must take her back to St. Prancher and let Jean Aulbry see the state she was in. He did not want to come (pretext was over his debt), so they went to find him where he was threshing in tithe barn. He now promised to pay next day, and then stood on her left foot and touched her side. Whereas on outward journey she had great difficulty, returning to Genaincourt went too fast for her uncles; then became very ill with heavy bleeding for 2 days. Those who saw her said it was the witchcraft and poison given her by Jean which was leaving her body, and indeed she then recovered.

(12 May 1586)

(24) Didier Marselot laboureur de St. Prancher, 50

Reputation of brothers and father. Some 6 years before Jean Aulbry had met his daughter Sebille in the fields and beaten her; although there was no wound visible she had been ill for 2 years afterwards, and told him she still felt pain sometimes.

(25) Sebille fille de Didier Marselot, c. 20

Told of beating; she had refused to show Jean Aulbry pears she had been gathering, and he had struck her three times with a grey stick. Could not judge whether her illness had resulted simply from these blows, or from some witchcraft, in view of general suspicion against the Aulbry.

(26) Didier Messe laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 40

General reputation of brothers.

(27) Jacquot du Prey de St. Prancher, c. 50

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Reputation of brothers and father; commonly called witches. He had been another of those with whom Claudin had been angry over the subsidy, and had threatened 'qu'il l'en feroit respondre'. 2 or 3 months later he had a horse in an enclosure behind his house, and Claudin passed by with the village herd. Later he and his wife found the horse lying as if dead; it didn't move even when he struck it. Went through village street saying furiously that he would have Claudin burned as a witch, and that he had certainly killed his horse - but found him absent when he reached his house. On return found that horse had mysteriously recovered, and believed that Aulbry had returned unseen to heal it. Also told of an occasion 8 years before when he had bought two oxen at fair at Vitel, and a friend had then asked him to go and drink a pint of wine. Claudin and his wife were there, but he did not ask him to join them; next day one of the oxen fell ill, and died after 6 weeks, as he believed of a sickness given by Claudin.

(28) Claudon Talleron laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers.

(29) Toussaints Licaire de St. Prancher, c. 60

General reputation of brothers and father. Told how 3 years earlier Claudin Aulbry had been complaining that he did not have enough people to help him with the herd; witness replied that he should be content, since his predecessors had had no more. Said nothing, but gave him a furious look; next day one of his horses fell ill, dying a month later as nothing but skin and bones. Believed Claudin had killed it.

(30) Andreu Jacquinot laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

Reputation of brothers.

(31) Jean Georgeon laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 30

Reputation of brothers.

(32) Claudon Gobel laboureur de St. Prancher, c. 40

Reputation of brothers.

(33) Le maire Pancras Vincenot de St. Prancher, c. 60

General reputation of brothers, feared in village.

(34) Viriot Petit Jean de St. Prancher, c. 30

General reputation of brothers. Some 4 years earlier he had stood guarantor for a loan of 72 francs to Jean from Demenge Guenot of Giecourt; when Jean failed to repay this he had to do so, then constrain Jean to reimburse him. Jean had been angry and threatened him several times, saying he would not gain from it. Since then he had lost some horses and cows, which he believed to have been killed by Jean, ‘toutesfois n'en peult parler certainement sinon que par opinion’.

(35) Claudin de Tresmont de St. Prancher, c. 40

General reputation and fear of brothers.

12 May 1586; account of what had happened previous Saturday night, when brothers were being guarded in house of Andreu Jacquinot by five men. Three loud knocks were heard on door around midnight, and Claudin Husson went to see what it was. No-one replied, but felt something pass by him, although door was barred. Could find nothing in house or outbuildings when light was fetched, but thought it had been some spirit or the devil come to visit the accused.

13 May 1586; interrogation

Claudin said he was about 30, native of St. Prancher. Some 15 years before he had spent 2 years in household of Francois Verrier of Mirecourt to learn trade of retondeur, but had then abandoned this because he thought it was unprofitable, returning instead to weaving, which he had learned in his youth from his mother. Some 10 and a half years earlier had married Ysabel daughter of Mongenot Gerel of Dompmartin near St. Prancher; since then had sometimes been laboureur when he had horses, otherwise weaver and herdsman. Said he had abandoned being laboureur because he could not pay rent for land he was working, and had become herdsman some 3 years earlier. Asked why he had been arrested, alongside his brother, and brought to castle of Chatenoy, said he did not know. Prévôt objected that they had been told perfectly clearly about accusations while still under arrest in village, and warned him to answer further questions truthfully. Admitted this was true, but said they were 'gens de bien'.

Claimed his father had been equally worthy, and said that he had only once been called a witch, more than 20 years before, by the late wife of Pancras Vincenot. Said he had never heard himself or his brother called witch - but in denying attending sabbat then said he was 'bien joyeux de ce qu'il est entre nos mains prisonnier affin que l'on n'aisse plus de suspitions sur luy et qu'on ne le regard plus de travers.'

Admitted that he had challenged assessment of 5 francs for subsidy, on ground that shepherds were not liable, but had found that those who still held land had to pay. Denied threatening Jacquot du Prey or injuring his horse.

Generally denied all other accusations, suggestions of threats etc. Did agree that he had been to see a couple of sick animals, but denied having done anything to cure them. Also agreed that he had been to Mongeon Virion's house during his sickness, although disagreed over details of visit.

19 May 1586; interrogation

Jean Aulbry said he was about 34, and was a weaver. Had learned this from his mother Claude Lucaire. At age of about 23 had gone to Metz, where he had worked for two years as weaver, one of them while living with another brother, Toussaint. Then returned home, to marry a few months later Alix Goyon of Repel. Since then had lived by weaving and by doing agricultural work by which the poor normally earned their living.

Agreed that he had been arrested on suspicion of witchcraft, but denied having ever been called witch. Admitted quarrelling with Didier Pierrot some 12 years before, when some gendarmes had taken bread from his house to Pierrot's, and latter gave him knife wound in side when he went to recover it. Denied all charges of witchcraft, threats etc., although admitting one or two quarrels over payment of debts.

20 May 1586; confrontations

Claudin made no serious objections to witnesses, except for alleging that Claudin Didellot had been fined for woodland offences, but denied all charges.

21 May 1586; confrontations

Jean alleged that Nicolas Thouvenin and his wife had been convicted of selling bad meat, and also that he was a thief. Otherwise no result.

1 June 1586; PG des Vosges records that he has received a statement recording the violent death of Jean Aulbry, which he had inflicted on himself at the instigation of the devil. Requests that his body should be hung, and his goods confiscated. Also asks for question extraordinaire for Claudin Aulbry.

3 June 1586; Change de Nancy agrees (Remy among signatories).

4 July 1586; interrogation under torture

Was racked for half an hour, and also given water on several occasions, then given a quarter of an hour on the strappado, with 40 pound weight. Stuck to denials, calling on patron saint, and protesting that they were going to cripple him so that he would be unable to work. Finally released and sent back to prison.

26 July 1586; PG des Vosges (Maimbourg) asks that his denials be disregarded, and that although he cannot be subjected to ordinary penalties, he be banished from duchy and his goods confiscated.

9 August 1586; Change de Nancy (Remy not present this time) orders that he be renvoyé jusqu'au rappel, and told to conduct himself so modestly in future that the people had no cause to complain of him.

Undated order from court of Chatenoy is nevertheless for perpetual banishment and confiscation of goods.

On 26 July Claudin's wife Ysabeau was interrogated about a calf her husband was supposed to have killed previous year. Agreed that the family had eaten meat from a dead calf, after she and her husband had agreed that it seemed safe to do so, but she did not believe he had killed it, having never seen him have anything to do with witchcraft.