

Charles

Charles and Belrupt

Charles de Thysac, was a worker in big glass. Lorrainers called it grand-verre. To us, window glass. He was born about 1490 and was a son of Jehan de Thysac receiving his grant for the Glassworks at Belrupt on 30 April 1524. At the time he lived in the glasshouse near Darney called Glasshouse Thiétry. Many glassworks in this area were built by sons from Glasshouse Thiétry. Charles built the first Belrupt glassworks on the left bank of the Saône, one kilometre south-east of the village of Belrupt, and four kilometres east of Darney. His rental for the lease was eight francs per year. (1)

On 24th April 1539, Erard le Haye, esquire, who shared the Lordship of Martinville, recorded the presence of Charles de Thisac in his return for his possessions made to the King of France. In particular Erard reported "one sub-fief more in the place of Grygnoncourt than in Martinville held by the heirs of Jehan de Thysac. He recorded the heirs as, Nicolas de Thysac alias Legecourt, esquire, Lord of this place, Charles de Thisac, esquire, Lord of Belrupt, Nicolas de Thiétry, esquire, Jehan Bazot, esquire, dwelling at Martinville and His Highness Guillaume Garnier, priest, and vicar of Montdorey. Erard furthermore reported, " the accounts of the sub-fief are meagre because the late Jehan de Thisac created so many and such varied past leases". "However," said Erard," they are all notified here in this, my present account." (2)

Charles inherited his father's trait. He was too quick with his épée! So quick in fact that he killed the local tax man! Most of the stories of these Thysac killings come down to us from the letters of request written to get remission. They all seek the Duke's pardon. Here however we also have a version from the pen of Count Hennezel of Ormoy. He was an historian and also a writer. In his work "*Travels in the Country of my ancestors*" he narrates these facts in a chapter dedicated to Belrupt.

One spring morning in the year 1549, Charles de Thysac, quietly leads the beasts that he will try to sell in the market of the Vittel fair. Happily he muses on the good price that he will get for them. Suddenly, two horsemen emerge who block his path.

1 Arch. Dep. de Meurthe et Moselle, B 16, folio 149-150, and B 5.105

2 Arch. Dep. de Meurthe et Moselle, B 851,
Bibl. Nat. Coll. Lorraine, number 61, folios 14 to 23

Thysac recognises Guillaume, the Receiver from Relanges, (the local tax-man), and his clerk. Maybe he owes a debt to the agents of the tax department? The two riders heckle him rudely. They insult him. They threaten him. This outrages gentleman Charles, who answers back sharply. The argument festers. Sensing a fight, Guillaume and his servant, with swords in hand, lean over Charles. Outnumbered and cowed by his weak position, Thysac twice looks for an escape. He jabs at the two and runs.

But his aggressors jump onto very fine horses. They chase their victim and catch up with him rapidly. As he is overtaken, Thysac cries out: "Sirs, I pray you don't kill me. If I have slighted you, or failed you, attack me in justice. I will comply and obey." Guillaume and his clerk don't want to heed. They set upon the gentleman, hurling themselves with great blows of their swords. In vain their victim looks at some eyewitnesses, who are passing by on their way to Vittel: "Look over here, Sirs," says Thysac to them." Look at these people attacking me. They try to kill me. --- I have done nothing". In full fury, the two horsemen are relentless in pursuit. Though by now in full gallop, Thysac is overtaken. His life is in danger. He stops, turns at bay, and draws as he turns. At the very instant when the weapon of the Receiver is raised to strike him, he makes a great blow with his own sword on the arm of his aggressor. The lifeblood flows in streams. The rider collapses. The injury was deep and badly cared for. The Receiver died some days later. Fearing justice, Charles de Thysac "leaves the Country of His Highness". After a time when he considered it safe, he addressed the regent duchess and graciously paid respect. The drama was easily investigated. Fortunately he had many witnesses. One attested that the victim and his servant had been the aggressors. If the gentleman had drawn his sword, it was to avoid the mortal blow, and was to save his life. The princess, "preferring graciousness to strictness of justice", gave Charles the forgiveness that he solicited (19 October 1549).

Between the years 1545 and 1552, the duchess Chrestienne de Denmark ruled Lorraine. Charles was a lucky man to find a lady who had a soft spot for him. Many Dukes would have made an example of a subject who did away with one of their tax gatherers!



The picture above shows a Thysac house, built by Charles, which still stands close by old furnace remains. It contains pieces of an old ornate lintel engraved with 1597. The coat of arms has been chiselled away.

In 1549 the founder of Belrupt died and so Cathin de Hennezel his wife, made a return for part of Belrupt on the 13 December 1549. Her return just preceded the return made by Christophe de Hennezel who was her son-in-law.

The heirs of Charles were pioneers like their father. They worked hard to increase the useful area of the glassworks and its land and holdings around. Immediately after Charles died, a Jehan de Thisacs of Lichécourt took control, but only for a while. There is a record of the 18th August 1549, which says that the glassworks of Belrupt, built by Charles de Thyzal, is now in the hands of Jehan de Lichécourt. This continual change of ownership of these glassworks seems surprising but Count Nicolas Vosgein, receiver of Darney, confirmed it in 1549. He reported that Jehan de Lichécourt, was actually living in the glassworks of Belrupt(1).

A lot happened in 1549 because in that year Catherine de Thisac, is recorded as daughter of the "late" Jean de Thisac. As the daughter of Jehan, she took over part of Lichécourt, as her due through the death of her father, sharing with Nicolas de Thisac her brother. This Catherine was the second wife of Christophe de Hennezel, esquire, Lord of Bonvelet, Belruz. (2)

By 2nd January 1550 Christophe de Hennezel controlled at least part of Belrupt. He made the return for it on that date. Then immediately following that on the 5th February 1550 he similarly returned for his part of Lichécourt because of his marriage to Catherine. Christophe in this short time had got many new titles. He was now lord of Bonvillet, Belrupt, Lichécourt and Hastrey. But what comes by chance can, just as quickly, go by chance, and so we find that on 3rd October 1552 Christophe departed this life. That of course was not sufficient for the records to cease to contain any more references to Christophe de Hennezel. There was another of the same name who was probably his son.

Charles II de Thisac the son of the founder, was a worker. Not content with what he already owned he now sought a grant for another glassworks. Besides the glassworks of Belrupt, Charles asked for the lease of a new glassworks, called la Bataille. It was about one and a half miles to the east of Belrupt, not a long way to walk to work! Again it had good access to water being on the Saône. It was about one and a half miles to the east of Belrupt, not a long way to walk to work! Again it had good access to water being on the Saône.

1 Arch. Dep. de Meurthe et Moselle, B 5070
2 Dufourny, page 11, 832 and 921



When I visited the site, shown in the picture above with Raymond George, in 1994, there was still evidence of a rectangular oven there and many fragments of green and of a beautiful blue glass. I found pieces of two crucibles, one about eight inches, the other about twenty-two inches in diameter. In 1994 the furnace was in a small copse, which probably preserved it. The small river, a tributary of the Saône, ran by, thirty yards or so from the furnace. In that part of France, well off the tourist trail, it remained remote.

The rectangular shape of this old Lorraine furnace is good evidence that furnaces of such a shape in England were of Lorrainer origin. Furnaces, used by the glassmakers of Germany and the Low Countries, were round.

On the 15th April 1556, Nicolas of Lorraine⁽¹⁾, granted a lease for the glassworks of la Bataille to Charles de Tisac, esquire, Lord of Belrupt. The location was described as "la Fontaine sur la Saône du Rue de la Bataille", an area that at the time was an "indeterminate waste, sterile and fruitless". Today it is lush and green but is still isolated and desolate. So we find another repeat of the leasing conditions of the property at Lichecourt and of several others. Glassworks were built on wasteland. The glassworkers always took on these ruins and there built their businesses. Nicolas Vaudémont granted the lease for a yearly royalty of twenty francs. He also demanded an entry fee of thirty ecus, payable once only.

¹ Presumably this was Nicolas Vaudémont, husband of the former duchess.

Currencies in these old documents are various and a great variety of coinage from other countries was used. The commonest of course was the denier, sou, livre system. The old franc was worth about the same as the livre. These were all the same type of coinage. Twelve deniers equalled one sou. Twenty sous equalled one livre, as in the old English system. Money changers, operating with their little scales at the main markets would have set the rate of exchange for many other foreign coins. Their scales would weigh each coin and check for clipping or other forms of defacing.

This glassworks of la Bataille was situated at the confluence of two streams, one the origin of the Saône. La Bataille had already been partly in de Thysac hands by the time of Charles's lease. Cathin de Tizal obtained a lease on the 28th December 1554 for a watercourse and a reservoir of water to provide a fishpond at la Bataille. She could introduce and rear suitable fish there and plant a white willow meadow in the Concession of Saint Pierre. (The original French uses the word Saulnoie. The white willow, *Salix alba*, is a favourite European tree for waterways and wet woodlands.) She was permitted to rear fish and eels in this pond and to fish the pond. (1)

It is not surprising that Cathin won the appellation Grande Catherine because she was very active and appears frequently in the records. The fishpond at la Bataille was not the only one she developed. About 1554 she seemed to have a craving for fish. Of course the necessity for water for these outlying locations for domestic use and glassmaking was the driving force. The additional permission to develop fish farming was an added incentive that, with a dovecote would provide desirable protein in the winter.

Catherine was not alone in the fish farming and pond construction business. Son Charles added a piece of land in 1555, rated as twenty-four days. This period may define the size of the land by the servitude owed to the lord for its lease. It is quite likely that by this time such service was commutable into money payment. An alternate and more likely explanation is that the number of days defined the time it took to plough. In England, an acre was originally the amount of land that a yoke of oxen ploughed in a day. Areas of the four clearings at glassworks Torchon, held in 1555 by Cathin de Tizal and her partners are recorded. She had 129 days of cleared land. There were four pieces of land, which together, when converted from rods to metres, amount to almost 300,000 square metres. Converting this to the acre standardised by Edward I, which is 4,840 square yards, gives 74 acres. The measures were not always precise in those days. Also, some of the cleared land could possibly have been missed. So a relationship of 74 acres equal to 129 days is probably fair but approximate.

1 Arch. Dep. de Meurthe et Moselle, B 28, folio 247-248

Charles the son also developed a pond rated at twenty-one days. Some references talk of stocking these ponds with fish to raise for food. This was not the only or the principal use. Glassworks needed potash as an ingredient for their materials for making glass. Burning wood or green bracken and then leaching it out from the ashes with water produced the potash. Clearly this produced a solution of potassium carbonate that then had to be dried. What is amazing is the size of these ponds. Even if our ratio of 74 acres to 129 days is correct, and it may be an underestimate, creating a pond of 12 acres, (21 days), is an enormous pond. Who says fish farming is a modern pursuit?

In 1556, the Receiver of Darney wrote that Charles de Tizac had just created "three estates of which the one was previously judged a ruin by order of district attorney of the Vosges". By 1557 ownership of the glasshouse called Charles de Tizal (Belrupt), was in the hands of a Jean Lichecourt and partners.(1)

The revenue collector, Count Jean Chevalier of Darney, made listings in 1560 of who owned what. He found that the glasshouse of Fay de Belrupt, also called le Torchon, was then in the hands of Cathin de Tysac and of the widow of Aubertin de Hennezel and their partners. The glasshouse Charles de Tisac, at the back of the parish of Belrupt, was by then in the hands of Nicolas de Tisac, (son of Jehan), Claude de Tisac, and Christophe de Hennezel. The glasshouse of la Bataille, was granted to Charles de Tysac, Lord of Belrupt in part. (2) There were three more visitations by the tax collector and on each visit he listed who owned what. Perhaps he was confused too!

Summarising these statements shows a complicated pattern of ownership, with many persons holding each glassworks. See chapter five. This was ultimately the result of the inheritance laws that did not favour one principal heir.

But what was happening at Belrupt at this time? Because of his religion, Charles de Hennezel, who was the principal partner of Charles de Tisal, sought asylum outside Lorraine. In 1570 he ran the estate of Essouaivre, near to Montbéliard that is in Franche-Comté and about 40 miles west of Basle. From there he went right up to Picardie and then to the Duchy of Deux-Ponts, which he left in 1572. He got a new grant at Essouaivre in 1573 and there built the mill of Essouaivre. Charles de Hennezel had quite a roving career. His was typical of those who chose the new religion.

1 Rose-Villequey, Page 771

2 Arch. Dep. de Meurthe et Moselle, B 5075

George de Hennezel, Sire of a glassworks called Houdrichapelle, was given a grant in the estate of Essouivre in 1574, with his nephew Charles de Hennezel, of Belrupt, but died before 1590. That year, the Community of Granges prosecuted his widow, Moingeon Massey and her young children Ananias and Israel de Hennezel. They departed for England and the prosecution clearly contributed to their leaving. According to E.G. Clark in his " Glassmaking in Lorraine"(1) -, Ananias de Hennezel, a younger son and an ardent Huguenot, made his way to England, and was the first to establish broadglass-making at Stourbridge. His son Joshua continued and extended the business,....

However the first Hennezel record in the Oldswinford Parish Register is of Paule Henzie being baptised on 9th December 1615, sonne of Jacob Henzie. A further record can also be found in the Kingswinford Registers of St. Mary's. This says that Joshua Hensee, a glassmaker and Ann his wife baptised Ananias their son on 5th October 1618. This was clearly the Joshua, son of the Ananias, who departed from Lorraine and named his son after his father. E.G. Clark's claim for Ananias, therefore seems unlikely to be correct. Paul Tysack baptised his son John three years before the earlier date and would have been operating his Stourbridge glassworks by then.

Today the church at Belrupt is a small unassuming parochial church, without decoration and in need of loving care. The foundations and lower walls are the oldest remaining part. The windows are all of a rectangular shape at the bottom with a semicircular upper side, and taller than they are wide. It is a plain and simple church but it was considerably refurbished about two hundred years ago. Then the floor contained engraved tombstones that the refurbishers removed or covered. These stones recorded the burials of the Lords of Belrupt in the sixteenth century. As always for important people, a place was found for them near the altar.

The oldest, of which we have record, is that of Christophe de Hennezel. We were told that on 3rd October 1552, in the parochial church of Belrupt, in front of the small altar, on the side of the Epistle, (i.e. the south side), was a tomb with an inscription in Gothic contrived in these words: "Here is Christophe Hennezel, Lord of Bonvillet and of Belrupt, who intruded the 3rd day of October 1552, pray to God for him ". Below this epitaph are arms of Hennezel. (2)

1 Journal of Society of Glass Technology -1931 Page 114
2 Rose-Villequey, Pages 151 and 636

Some years later, on the 17th June 1574, we read elsewhere, " Death of Charles de Tisac, buried in the church of Belrupt. A tomb in front of the small altar on the side of the Gospel, (i.e. the north side), on which is the figure of a Lord carrying arms with the following pieces, a sabre and a gauntlet on the right side and, on the left, the figure of a helmet with five grids. Around these figures one reads this inscription: " This one is the foremost Charles de Tisac esquire, and Lord in this place, who deceased the year N.S. 1574, in the month of June the 17, at eight o'clock in the morning" ". (1)

Today Belrupt church although simply decorated, is Catholic. It has many stained glass windows dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Yet both Charles de Tisac and Christophe de Hennezel were both buried close to the altar. This surely conflicts with any notion that either of these two espoused the reformed religion.

In spite of that, because of their descendants' close dedication to the reformed religion, the glassmakers of Belrupt failed to keep up their manufacturing methods and the glassworks ceased to produce grand-verre. Charles II de Tysac, who had married Françoise de Bouzey, was the last worker in window glass at Belrupt. He quit Lorraine rather than give up his new religion. By the 1570's all the experts in making window glass by the muff method had stopped or gone away. We read that the errors of the glassworkers of grand verre had a bad effect on the glasshouse of Belrupt. It was "reduced to do small glasses". Writers of the time imply this was a step down. Guillaume du Houx was a skilled glassworker but his expertise was limited to small glasses. He bought the glassworks from Charles and was without strong religious convictions. He was either not a convert or was prepared to abjure. He remained in Belrupt. (2)

By 1575, Belrupt belonged half to Guillaume de Houx of the glassworks of Hubert, and half to the children of the late Nicolas de Lichécourt. Even the reputation of Nicolas de Lichécourt was not enough to keep grand-verre on the production schedule. The share of Nicolas's heirs was then worked by a glassworker of small glasses called Gallard Bongard.

In 1621, François du Houx, and Elye and Claude des Bigots paid the tithes of the glassworks of Belrupt. Guillaume du Houx had at least one son, Humbert du Houx of Senenne, who married Claudine de Hennezel. On 12th January 1598, Humbert and Claudine sold their part of Belrupt, at Henricé, to Francis Bigots, esquire, living at Henricé and his wife Françoise du Houx. The contract was passed in the presence of Jacques Finance, dwelling at Clairey. (3)

1 Rose--Villequey, Pages 151 and 636

2 mss Lorraine 60 folio 219 to 223

3 V. Minutes of F. Pernot. Official scrivener to Darney

By 1614, Françoise du Houx, the widow of Isaac du Houx and François des Bigots controlled Belrupt. After this time there seems to be no references to glassworking at Belrupt. In the days following the Thirty Years War, the estate of Belrupt became a baronetcy: it belonged to Éric de Thysac, colonel of light horse, in the service of Charles IV. (1)

Lorraine's army in the month of June 1632 was 8,000 men and 3,500 horses, altogether some 11,500 men. These numbers are above those of 4,000 men of foot and 2,000 horses, fixed in the treaty of Vic. The argument given by the duke of Lorraine, Charles IV, for his new arming was the approaching menace of the Swedes at the border. Towns like Saverne and Haguenau in Alsace, were received from the emperor, by transfer, at the beginning of the year. By now the Swedes were in Alsace but the neutrality that Charles IV got for his cities of Alsace from the Swedish marshal Count de Horn was a very weak guarantee. France owed aid to the duke, so in a pleading letter of June 24 Charles IV protested, the devastations, and depredations perpetrated near Saint-Hippolyte, Saint-Dié and Bitche by 3,000 or 4,000 Swedish horse troops. But it was useless, France sat on its weapons so Charles intervened himself militarily and delivered Haguenau, by now besieged by the Swedes.

So the army of Lorraine recovered some of its territory. They retook Darney on August 8.

Éric de Thysac of Belrupt was sergeant of battle, that is an officer who organizes the troops and a colonel of dragons, and he commanded an army corps of 880 men including 200 horses.

He gave up his Thysac name, although he was grandson to the Charles II de Thysac who had murdered the Receiver of Relanges! Did he give up his name because he was ashamed his grandfather had murdered the tax man? Not so! A quick slash with the épée was an inherited trait because Éric obviously had a high regard for his grandfather. Éric murdered his cousin.

Éric de Thysac had joined the army to make a career of it. We find him in a rank below major in 1613 when Duke Henry II granted him letters of remission for the murder. Henry granted remission for a murder committed by Éric at Belrupt on his cousin's person. Such a trifling incident as murdering his cousin, apparently did not greatly affect Éric's career because later we find him promoted to colonel.

At his own request he changed his name from Thysac to Belrupt. He took the coat of arms of the ancient Lords of Belrupt, a lion of silver on azure. Then he became a baron. Duke Charles IV created the baronetcy especially for him in 1633, the baronetcy of Belrupt. Colonel of a regiment of Lorraine in 1635, he took part in the defence of Vaudémont where he was named general of battle in the army of Lorraine. Éric had a son called Charles-Rémy de Belrupt. Charles de Thysac, became baron Belrupt. On the death of his second wife he married Catherine Gabriel of Choiseul. The Thysacs abandoned their family name and their coat of arms and took the name and the arms of the ancient house of chivalry of Belrupt. Catherine Choiseul descended from the very old nobility. Their children, who were born in the castle of Belrupt (1685-1697-1701) had, as godparents, some representatives of the highest aristocracy of Lorraine. These included the Prince of Vaudémont and the Princess Anne of Lorraine. (1)

Their children remained faithful to the dukes and accompanied them into exile. These included Marc Antoine, Richard Léopold, Erich, and Maria Anna. All of these were raised to the rank of Count or Countess by Duke Francis Farnese at Parma on 24th December, 1700.

Marc-Antoine, grandson of Eric, and officer of cavalry in the service of the duke of Parma, received the title of Count with his brothers and sister and originated the Austrian branch of the family, whose members served the emperor traditionally as officers and chamberlains. His lineage was continued by Joseph-Ignace (1724-1810), officer of cuirassiers(2). Joseph (1771-1863), his son, officer of cavalry and chamberlain of the emperor, became established at Brünn and was recognized count in Bohemia in 1825. He was father of several children whose posterity died out more than twenty years ago. The last was one of his grand sons, Frédéric Joseph Henri (1879-1970). This Frédéric, first officer, was admitted to the order of the Teutonic knights in 1909 and was named commander of the bailiwick of Austria. Ordained priest in 1950, he became prior of the bailiwick of Austria and rector of the church of the Order of Vienna. Deceased in 1970, he was buried in the crypt of this church. Under the porch is affixed the epitaph of the last of the Teutonic knights, whose family came from Lorraine.

One child of Charles de Tisal, is of considerable interest. He was "Jean de Tisac, Sire of Béru". He managed the glassworks built at a location between Fourmies and Hirson. These are two towns that exist today, in Thiérache. The glassworks was in the smaller town, between the two, called Mondrepuis that also still exists today. It is on the D753 and is two and a half miles from the Belgian border.

1 Raymond George, Lichécourt 1993.

2 Horse soldiers armed with a leather breast and back plate

Maps mark the remains of a feudal motte but do not show any remains of a glassworks.

After working for a time in Mondrepuis, Jean made his way to England. In England Jean de Thysac of Belrupt became John Tysack, (alias Burre).