

B 2192 no 1; witch 138, Mengin Mathiotte de Mazerulles

2 July 1612; informations preparatoires

Mengin had sought damages from Barthelemin Humblot, paistre, after he called him witch, but latter had chosen to make himself partie formelle, and Mengin had been arrested.

(1) Thoussainct Bournery, manoeuvrier, 60

13 or 14 years earlier had returned 'joyeux' from Amance, and quarrelled with Mengin, who told him to watch out. Next day herd of horses was attacked by wolves before dawn; one of his was strangled, another bitten. In view of long reputation suspected this was his doing.

(2) Nicolas Berger, dit Tixerand, manoeuvrier de Brin, 27

2 years earlier had been in service of Nicolas Saffrois of Mazerulles; fought with son of Mengin because they were courting same girl, and was told to watch out. A few days later went out courting at night, and passed behind their house. Heard loud noise, and a great black cat came out; rushed towards him making noise as if 'on feroit abattre des chaudirons', then jumped on dung-heap without attacking him. Before dawn next day was in barn with his master when a cat appeared and scratched furiously at doorpost; told master about events of previous evening. In view of long reputation believed this had been Mengin's doing.

(3) Didier Florentin, manoeuvrier, 36

Long reputation only.

(4) Crestaille Thieriet, laboureur, 34

Reputation only.

(5) Bastien Arracourt, manoeuvrier, 55

2 years before Mengin had charge of cattle of village, but refused to pay 'les vins'; job was then taken away from him by Hesselot Saffrois, and given to witness. A few days later one of his cows was lost in the woods, and in view of long reputation suspected this was his doing.

(6) Izabel femme Demange Rougier, laboureur, 32

Long reputation. Some 6 or 7 years before, when Mengin was guarding herd of cattle, she asked husband whether he had paid him what was due at Christmas. He said he had, but she wondered whether it was enough, and shortly afterwards a young ox sickened and died after long illness. Asked him to look at it several times, but he refused angrily. A year later husband had dispute with him over payment for some carting, which had been made but which Mengin denied receiving; followed by death of heifer, and she again suspected him.

(7) Demange Rougier, laboureur, 38

Long reputation. 16 years earlier, when still living with father, was playing with a dog which made as if to attack Mengin's daughter, although it did not actually bite her. Accused then told him off 'furieusement', saying 'que dedans trois jours, il luy donneroit un tel torchon. qu'il s'en donneroit de garde'. Within that time dog started to run about everywhere as if rabid, was shut up, and died. About 12 years earlier had been ploughing for Mengin Bouchier, and followed instructions to put horses to pasture in garden belonging to him, attached to house where accused lived. Heard from him later that accused had been angry, reckoning that grass belonged to him, and soon after one of his best horses died.

Repeated wife's story about payment at Christmas and death of ox. Had quarrel with Mengin, who said if he was not paid on one way he would be in another. Witness replied that he had never used such threats without some damage following, and if it happened again he would say he was not a good man. When Mengin demanded what he meant, answered 'que s'il estoit bon clerc, qu'il tourne le feuillet nonobstant tout ce, et que mesme il luy payera ledit traict pour la seconde fois.' Soon after was feeding animals when a heifer became ill and died under his own eyes - was sure this had been his doing. Last St Jean had met him near Laneuvelotte, and he said to witness they were talking of him and 'luy vouloit faire beaucoup de mal'; replied 'qu'il advise de descharger sa conscience et que sy il estoit homme de bien que l'on le trouveroit.' Mengin then said 'que ce n'estoit pour luy qu'on le vouloit faire prendre, mais que c'estoit pour d'aultres.'

(8) Le maire Anthoine Rougier, laboureur, 43

Long reputation. Some 12 years earlier, as herdsman, Mengin had let animals damage his sown field, and was condemned to give him some grain as compensation. Later heard his wife had given it back, and presumed this was because of reputation, and fear they would suffer losses if she accepted it.

(9) Mengin Dourche, paistre des bestes blanches, 30

Long reputation. Some 18 months earlier had outbid him for herd, but witness was persuaded to match price and keep it. Had heard he resented this, and shortly afterwards went to his house in his absence, after which he lost a cow and 2 calves which died suddenly - believed this had been his doing.

(10) Mengeotte femme du precedent, 24

Repeated husband's evidence.

(11) Nicolas Saffrois, laboureur, 28

Long reputation. When it was time to appoint herdsman in 1610 had said it should be at a certain charge in grain. Within a month lost a horse, then 5 others at fortnightly intervals, and suspected he had caused this. About 5 weeks earlier had allowed animals to stray on his land, and had to chase them off several times. Later met him in woods, and he pretended to be very friendly; soon after he admired horse his servant was leading, and it died in 2 days. Went to see him, told him that he had killed 7 of his horses, 2 more were bewitched, and if they died 'il luy en arriveroit grand accident'. Horses recovered in 3 days, and believed all this had been his doing.

(12) Barbe femme du precedent, 25

Last harvest time had been paying him for some work, and 10 gros remained due, for which it was agreed they should have some straw. His wife took 15 or 16 bundles, then asked for more; witness said she was already well paid, but could take another 3. A few days later she became very ill, and in view of long reputation suspected he had caused this.

(13) Jean Symonin, maire pour le sondrier, 64

Had nothing to depose.

(14) Barbellon femme Demange Malgrais, laboureur, 30

Long reputation. Their cows gave milk when he was herdsman, but none when he was not; suspected this was his doing.

(15) Catherine femme Nicolas Villaume, 28

Long reputation. Previous Christmas were living in same house, and she made remark to his wife about how they were no longer keeping herd; some time later had a cow dead, over which she suspected him.

(16) Mengeotte, veuve François Jean Maire, 30

Long reputation. Some 10 years earlier, when he was herdsman, one of her cows returned limping; they had quarrel about this, and he said he did not want it in herd any longer. Went to fetch it next day, and he tried to attack her, but she ran away, and he threatened 'qu'il la retrouveroit bien en un aultre lieu'. A few days later a calf died, and she suspected he had caused this.

(17) Odille femme Jean Hangney, 50

Believed that he had born them ill will because he blamed them for helping to deprive him of position as herdsman, and that he had caused death of 2 heifers and a cow.

(18) Mathis Florentin, lieutenant du prévôt, 40

Long reputation. 2 years earlier had asked him (as echevin of the church) about renewing position as herdsman, and he eventually promised he should have it. Next Sunday the community assembled to appoint herdsmen, and he was chosen on basis that he would pay fines of woodland. Said to witness and cleric juré that they should have supper and drink together on the deal, but then refused to pay the franc which fell to his part. Witness said that if he did not pay he would not have the herd, at which he angrily said he did not care. After this herd was given to another who paid the franc and other charges. but next day Mengin came back offering to pay them all if he could keep herd, to be told it was too late. Was angry and told witness he would see what he gained by it; lost 2 horses which became ill with unknown malady a week later, and suspected this was his doing. Had also had other losses he did not remember precisely.

(3 July 1612)

(19) Jean Hangney, laboureur, 55

Long reputation. 10 years earlier had dispute over payment for keeping herd, and lost a cow. Previous year had blamed him and maire for loss of herd, and 2 heifers died suddenly - suspected this was his doing.

(20) Demange Malgrais, laboureur, 40

Reputation 10-12 years (residence). Had heard that since he had lost guard of cattle he was suspected of causing them to lose their milk. He himself had lost numerous horses, but did not suspect him since they had not quarrelled.

7 July 1612; PG (C.M. Rémy) orders interrogation and confrontations

11 July 1612; interrogation

Said he was native of Bey, aged about 70; father was Nicolas Estienne, with whom he lived until he was 20, then was forced to go into service for 10 years. Married for 40 years, 18 or 20 to present wife who was still living.

Said he had only been told that witnesses were being heard against him after his detention - heard this from his children, who had come to speak to him in prison.

Admitted some minor disputes, but denied charges firmly. Said that when heifer of Demenge Rougier died many others did, but he was not cause. Admitted remark to him about reasons for possible arrest, which had been that 'ce n'estoit pour luy, ains affin qu'il en accuse des aultres.' Agreed that he had heard from Nicolas Pierson that he was likely to be arrested.

Said he knew that the laboureurs of the village had given guard of herd to Mengin Dourche instead of him, but had not killed his cattle. Admitted that Nicolas Saffrois had found him in fields and told him he had a horse dead, then said 'que sy il luy arriveroit encor un tel accident, il feroit des choses, que l'on en parleroit encor d'icy a cent ans, et qu'il vouloit faire prendre des femmes soupconnez pour sorciers audit Mazerulles'. During illness of his wife had sent for herbs and other things to cure her, but did not know if they had them.

Long and careful interrogation following claims made by witnesses produced no more results of note. Finally said he would rather die than remain in prison as he was.

12 July 1612; confrontations

No reproaches to any witnesses, but continued to deny all charges against him, and various details about alleged quarrels and threats. Said that if herd gave more milk when he was in charge, this might have been because he looked after it better.

16 July 1612; PG asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

17 July 1612; Change de Nancy approves torture, but only with moderation in view of his age.

19 July 1612; interrogation under torture

Court at Amance confirmed 'question mediocre', then he was given thumbscrews and rack. Asked about scratch on head, which judges thought might be work of devil, said he had been injured by a horse.

Confessed series of thefts; 2 loaves at Vic 18 years earlier, a sheep he had on lease from late Pieron George of Champenoux, which he had killed 5 years before, a pair of shoes for 12-year-old daughter at Vic 3 years before. Denied he was witch, so replaced on rack and tortured again.

Now said he was a witch, and had been seduced by Persy 6 years earlier. Was guarding cattle in wood, lamenting his poverty, and Persy said he was a merchant; would give him money if he believed in him. Pricked his forehead, but was not very painful; money turned out to be pieces of glass. Powder was black/kill and yellow/languish, to use against those who did not pay him for keeping animals.

Had killed cow belonging to Demange Rougier, with whom he had quarrelled. Subsequently given some grey powder, but lost it after putting it in his pocket.

Had been to sabbat several times; everyone wore black masks, so did not know them. He did not dance, but others did, holding hands and singing, with Persy leading them. Food and drink had no taste.

Had killed calf of Nicolas Saffrois, because he had given him bad grain in payment.

Claimed he had seen Mengeotte femme Didier Guerard, of Mazerulles, when mask slipped while they were trying (unsuccessfully) to make hail previous year. Denied absolutely that his wife had been an accomplice.

Added some more maléfices when brought back after dinner, and said he had been witch for 10 years rather than 6. Still denied some other charges - all obviously on basis of witnesses' testimony.

Aske whether he had met Persy while living at Dompmartin or Laneuvelotte, where he had also been herdsman, said he had not.

20 July 1612; interrogation

Confirmed previous confessions. Asked about powder, since he had only confessed to using black, said he had no more of that; yellow and grey were in the earth in the woods.

20 July 1612; PG asks for death sentence

21 July 1612; Change de Nancy agrees. Sentence passed by Amance court same day.

25 July 1612; note that at execution he was confronted with Mengeotte femme Didier Guerard; said he thought he had seen her at sabat, but could say no more than that.

Same day PG asked for investigation into her reputation.