

Witch 039, Margueritte Francois 1

B 3327 no 3; witch 039, Margueritte Francois, veuve Dieudonné du Banc de Reillon

1 April 1604; informations préparatoires

(1) Dieudegnon Claude de Reillon, c. 36

Reputation 20 years. Some time before had exchanged a share in accused's house (belonging to wife) for a garden. When his wife went to collect fruits from garden, Margueritte prevented her by force, and during quarrel said 'qu'elle s'en donroit bien de garde'; three months later wife had stillborn child.

(2) Zabey femme a Dieudegnon Claude, de Reillon, c, 24

Long reputation. Repeated husband's account of quarrel and stillbirth.

(3) Jean du Bois de Reillon, 26

Reputation as long as could remember. About two and a half years before had negotiated to hire daughter of accused as servant, then had decided she was too small; eventually taken on by his brother-in-law Aubertin, who shared house with them. Some months later accused came to house, ostensibly to see her daughter; his wife was 'en couches', and 15 days later her child died - suspected Margueritte.

(4) Jean Vaultrin le jeune de Reillon, 32

Reputation 6 or 7 years. Soon after that, being her neighbour, had quarrel about his hens - they had got into her barn and eaten some grain, then he found one killed behind her house. Followed by an illness of his, which was cured when Margueritte brought him an 'escuelle de lait'; believed her to have both given and cured illness.

(5) Zabey femme Jean du Bois de Reillon, c. 24

Reputation three or four years. Repeated husband's story about refusal to hire her daughter, and subsequent death of baby.

(6) Bastien Mariatte de Reillon, c. 40

Reputation more than 10 years. Some 5 years before his little son had been beaten by Margueritte's son; he ran after the latter and struck him, and she cried 'Hola c'est assez'. Two weeks later this boy and a younger son became ill, and were feared to be dying - elder child ill for month 'comme perturbé d'esprit', younger had internal illness, which lasted fortnight. In fact both recovered 'par permission divine', but he blamed accused for their illnesses.

(7) Jean Febuay de Reillon, c. 30

Long reputation. Some 2 years before he had hired her daughter Jehenne, and had agreed as part of price to thresh some oats. Didn't do this in time, and she came to fields to reproach him; promptly developed knee trouble, which lasted a year. Had to give her money to pay for threshing; suspected her of giving him his sickness.

(8) Vaultrin Henry Colas de Reillon, c. 26

Reputation only two years. Just before last harvest had wanted to set off 2 blancs she owed him against money he owed her - she had been unwilling to agree to this, and he had been angry. A few days later one of his horses became ill, languished for 8 days, and died - suspected her.

(9) Hellenix femme Dieudonné Marchal de Reillon, 68

Reputation 8 years. Some 6 years before the accused saw a fine 2 year old ox of theirs returning from fields, and said 'Voila ung beau boeuf dieu le sauve' - next morning it was found dead in stable. Around same time her husband lost an 'empasteur' from front of house; when Margueritte realised she was suspected of stealing it she came and beat the witness's servant. Subsequently witness became ill with a fever, and still felt herself much enfeebled - suspected Margueritte.

(10) Claude Dieudegnon, maire de Reillon, c. 40

Reputation only 7 years. Around that time he had a rather wild horse, which ran after those of the accused, and struck her daughter Zabey who was guarding them. That evening Margueritte lay in 'embuscade' for his sister, who was guarding his horses, and jumped on her, seizing her by the neck and trying to force her to the ground. Frustrated by some boys who came on scene. Next day his wife met Margueritte at well, and asked why she had done this; replied 'que sy elle l'eust tenue de bonne facon, elle s'en eust senty longtemps'. Wife then fell seriously ill, and remained so for 9 or 10 weeks, being thought likely to die; on becoming a little better went to accused's house and asked for some white cheese. After eating this became quite better, but at same time he had a sick horse which died. His sister went to fetch water from well behind house, which had previously belonged to brother of accused, and mysteriously fell in - he was quick enough to save her with a ladder. Suspected Margueritte in connexion with all this 'combien que lors de ses desastres il ne luy soupconnoit point pour qu'il n'entendoit pas encore son mauvais bruiet, ce qui l'a mis depuis en ceste oppinion.'

(11) Zabey femme a Claude Dieudegnon, c. 30

Repeated essential of husband's deposition.

(14 April 1604)

(12) Claudatte veuve de Demenge le Banc de Reillon, 50

Reputation 12 years. Around that time had dispute, and accused forced her to ground, saying she would strangle her, but didn't do so. Then told story of dispute over fruits three years before, after which her daughter Zabey had stillborn child.

6 April 1604; interrogation

Said she was native of Veho, daughter of Francois Gerard and Allison Thomas - both had died when she was small, after moving to Reillon. Was aged about 40; late husband had been a laboureur. Generally denied all charges, or said she didn't remember. Agreed she had beaten Hellenix's servant, who had called her daughter a thief, but denied assault on Claude Dieudegnon's sister.

13 April 1604; confrontations

Jean Vultrin added to his deposition that a little before her imprisonment she had asked him 'de l'assister d'un homme pour aller a Nancy, lequel respondit qu'il ne pouvoit et que sy elle s'en alloit, elle seroit de son droict tort, laquelle repliqua qu'elle y vouloit aller a ce de trouver ung certain religieux venu d'Italye qu'ilz appelloient ung St homme pour savoir de luy sy elle estoit bonne ou mauvaise C'est a dire Sorciere ou non, et qu'il y avoit une nouvelle venue a Reillon qui trouveroit bien moyen de vivre et qu'elle pouroit aussy faire ce mesme en autre part aussy bien qu'audit Reillon. Surquoy luy avons dit que puisqu'elle avoit la volonte de s'absenter et de s'informer sy elle estoit sorciere ou non que c'est ung vray signe qu'elle est telle . . '

Generally admitted circumstantial detail (apart from assault on Claude Dieudegnon's sister), but denied causing any evil.

21 April 1604; procureur fiscal asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

Same day; Change de Nancy approves

28 April 1604; interrogation under torture

Withstood thumbscrews and rack for long time, but at end of session made brief statement that she had been a witch for three years. Released until after dinner - to be shaven and have her clothes changed, on presumption of 'pacte taciturne'. After dinner confessed she had been seduced some 7 years before. Her husband had just died as a result of a fight with Nicolas Hachon of Reillon, over a bull which her husband had wanted to buy. Hachon had struck him and knocked him against a heap of manure, in presence of various other persons. 'Et comme elle desiroit de poursuyvre la vindicte de ceste homicide, l'ayant prinse merueilleusement a contrecoeur et estant de ce fort troublée et fashée s'en alla a Donnepvre y querir le feu Maire Demenge marchal procureur pour l'assister' - on way was met by Mre Parsin. Agreed that she had given illness to Claude Dieudegnon's wife; had taken form of cat and put powder in her soup; later used cheese to cure her. Judges questioned last point - sick woman had asked for cheese herself, and accused had shown no wish to cure her. She replied that she would have found some other

means if she hadn't been asked for the cheese. Confessed that - again in form of cat - she had made Jean Vaultrin ill, then cured him on reflecting that he was her neighbour and she shouldn't kill him.

Had given sickness to children of Bastien Mariatte - had been to poise in his house, and had sprinkled powder near door, saying it was for the sickness of the children. Later did same thing with white powder to heal them. Didn't affect anyone else who walked over it, because her specific intent was against children. Told of going twice to sabbat. There she had seen the witches already executed at Domjevin. Had made hailstorm, although she 'ne vouloit consentir pour sa pauvreté', and had to be compelled to do so.

(29 April) Told of two more sabbats, at one of which they had arranged to destroy the flowers on the oak trees so that there would be no acorns. Unusual description of sabbat as follows:

'il y a environ deux ans qu'elles furent au sabbat audit bois de Genouy pour la dernière fois auquel lieu elles y banquetteroiént ayant du roti comme d'une espaulle de mouton ou couchon. Que le malling esprit mit par piece et leur donna chacun sa part, et leur sembloit qu'elle beuvoient de l'eau avec un bocq d'estain ne sachant bonnement toutesfois sy c'estoit estain plomb, ny autrement, et avoient des chandelles que ledit esprit malling leur mettoit en la main, jettant un feu rouge et n'appercevant rien autre chose que ledit feu Combien qu'elles pensent tenir une mesme chandelle, et cependant le mesme esprit se met en guyse d'ung gros cheval noir entr'eulx et se fait adorer leur disant Vous me suivrez en despit de vous puis disparoient tous, et fut reporte au lieu ou il l'avoit prins.'

Pressed on subject of accomplices, and placed on rack to frighten her into naming them. Eventually named Glaude Marchal of Veho, and her co-accused Nicolas Rimbault. Said that she had heard some others name Jean Goudot, but she did not want to maintain this herself.

Said she had been unwilling to reveal their names until she was placed on rack because the 'Malling esprit' had prevented her, and they had sworn at Sabbat not to accuse one another. Faint note of worry creeps into record - 'et considéré que nonobstant l'apprehension qu'elle a eu de la question elle n'en a voulu accuser autres et maintenu en saine conscience n'en scavoit davantage, l'avons fait mettre en bas . . '

3 May 1604; interrogation

Confirmed essential of earlier confessions. Was more specific about identification of accomplices. Thought she had recognised Claude Marchal because 'il jette un peu les jambes de travers, et qu'il bretonne en parlant', but he had been masked, and she couldn't be sure, any more than she could about identification of Rimbault.

5 May 1604; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence

6 May 1604; Change de Nancy approves