

Witch 043, Jennon Zabey 1

B 3335 no 1; witch 043, Jennon veuve Jean Zabey, de Leintrey

20 March 1608; substitut for procureur fiscal orders enquiry into Jennon, suspected and feared as a witch.

Informations preparatoires

(1) Nicolas Laube, laboureur, 40

Reputation 7 years. After quarrels caused by animals straying, 2 piglets became ill 4 years before, and one died. At same time her son had taken a horse which strayed into field back to house; witness recovered it and called her witch. A similar incident previous year led to his being fined, and horse was ill when it returned, unable to urinate for a week and almost blind; only made partial recovery after he paid fine of 6 gros.

(2) Clemence femme du precedent, 40

Repeated story of piglets and straying horse which sickened. 2 years earlier accused had sent son to ask for some cooked meat, but refused as they had none. Next day she came to house and overlooked child aged 6 months, which fell ill within 2 days, languished for 2 weeks, then died on same day and at same time as illness had begun.

(3) Jean Hellenix, laboureur, 30

Reputation 15 years, and as neighbour had called her witch at least 30 times, threatening that if she caused him any harm he would have her burned. 12 years earlier had seen her moving around suspiciously during a heavy storm. Around time of previous harvest his wife had given birth to a son, and he rejected her suggestion that Jennon be asked to pay normal neighbourly visit. The wife of Michel Hellenix, who was aunt to both witness and accused, told Jennon of this; when he was in field she came and asked for some milk, which was refused. Witness then went and spoke angrily to her, accusing her of being witch in presence of her late husband and her son, but no reparation was sought. Baby immediately stopped feeding and died within a few days.

(4) Chrestienne femme du precedent, 26

Reputation 5 years (residence). Repeated husband's story about death of baby.

(5) Mesenne femme Demenge Vannier, 25

Reputation 7 years (residence). 6 years earlier, on way to harvesting, heard her talking behind a hedge, after which she was surrounded by a whirlwind and ill for 3 weeks. At about 10 on a clear morning, as she lay in bed, 3 cats appeared and talked, their voices identifying them as Jennon, the widow of Rudepoil, and the wife of Claudon Marchal. They discussed whether they should cause her death; said no, because she was young and recently married. There was no reason for Jennon to have given her the illness, since neither she nor her husband had quarrelled with

her. Claimed that when earlier witches from Leintrey were executed at Blamont Jennon had said she did not fear la Jobarde.

(6) Remy Grand Demenge, 38

Jennon's late husband was his uncle. Previous year she was much disturbed by trial of wife of Demenge Sernay of Domjevin; came to ask him about her own reputation, and he told her it was said that if the accused was executed she would be taken to Blamont. He advised her that if she was a witch she should confess it freely, like Seville Pierson, recently executed at Blamont, rather than permit that they should 'la rompre ny appliquer a la question'. She said she would confess if she were a witch, but later when execution had taken place and she was no longer frightened she was angry with him, and he believed she had caused deaths of a pig and a horse (she was entering house when he brought latter back from Blamont). His late father had quarrelled with Jean Zabey and Jennon over share of a house, because he was not willing to take price offered for his half. Then became too ill to work, and remained in this state for 14 years - several times voiced suspicions of Jennon.

(7) Seville veuve Nicolas Bourdemont, de Blamont, 48

Had resided with son-in-law Demenge le Petit Didier and her daughter at Leintrey for 3 years. Sitting outside with grandson aged 2 previous Easter when Jennon passed and gave piece of tart to child - he became ill same day and died 2 weeks later. Later heard that shortly before her son-in-law had refused to take some grain to the mill for her.

(8) Jennon femme Jean Goudel, 24

Described quarrel between her father and Jennon and husband over share of house, after which he was ill for 16 years. Jennon visited him daily during final stages of illness, but did not attend when his body was put in shroud. Did not suspect her at that stage. Also suggested that she had killed a pig 4 years earlier, after calling it 'perouquet' as she passed.

(9) Jennon veuve Grand Demenge, 60

Reputed witch since execution of la Jobarde 6 or 7 years earlier. Same story as previous witness about quarrel followed by long illness - this time 12 years - and absence on day of death. Suspicion only arose later.

(10) Jennon veuve Demenge Vannier, 70

Had long frequented the accused, and seen no harm in her. On way to celebrate Jubilee Jennon had been asked if she was a witch, and denied it.

(11) Henry Claudon, 32

Previous year was collector of lesser tithes, and had caught her taking some linen away in early morning to avoid payment; angry exchange followed, during which he said she had 'ung mauvais bruit d'estre meschante'. Shortly after believed she had killed a foal, while when wife took daughter aged 18 months to Vespers

Jennon touched her on the arm, after which she fell ill, as did another foal. Wife finally found Jennon and told her that her husband was furious and suspected her; he would denounce her to procureur fiscal if she did not cure the illnesses. She replied that she had not harmed anyone, after which foal died, but child slowly recovered.

(12) Catherine femme du precedent, 30

Repeated husband's story about illness of child and interview with Jennon.

(13) Jennon femme Didier Jobard, 60

Reputation 12 years. 3 years before she was angry because husband of witness had climbed a pear tree on boundary between their properties to pick the pears. When he fell and injured himself she saw Jennon in garden trying to keep out of sight. Shortly afterwards saw her coming back all wet from fields on several early mornings; talked to her, and she gave unconvincing explanation. Also thought she had killed some cows.

(14) Margueritte femme Michel Hellenix, 40

Reputation 6 years.

(15) Demenge Breton, 28

Reputation 12 years. Suspected her of causing death of child aged 21 months because he had refused to take grain to mill previous Easter week (this was child which had eaten piece of tart).

(16) Jehenne femme Henry de Frusmesnil, 40

Incident 13 years earlier when she became ill during night when husband was absent, and Jennon came into house and helped her.

(17) Jean Barbe, laboureur, 50

Reputation 10 years. 3 years earlier Jennon was angry with him because he made 'fumier' which blocked path she used, although it was on his property. Lost a foal, then had 2 or 3 week illness himself, with great weakness in limbs; encountered Jennon on most days, and she appeared very sympathetic, but she still suspected her.

(13 May 1608)

(18) Demenge Mongeat Vergier, d'Imbersmesnil, 34

Reputation 13 years. As close neighbour had various minor quarrels with her; 6 years earlier she had brought an apple for his children, and gave it to younger brother rather than daughter. Child then became very ill, and 'ne pouvant plus patienter' he told Jennon he would break the head of any witch who was responsible; she responded by urging patience. Soon after she told his wife that he

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had been too vehement in claiming she had made the child ill, and would repent; later made threat over his sheep, and he lost a number worth 100 francs in all.

12 and 13 May 1608; interrogation

Said she was about 90; her father had been Henry Mongeat, laboureur of Leintrey, her mother Jehenne. Father had died when she was 5 or 6, mother 2 years before she married. 70 years earlier had married Jean Zabey of Leintrey, who had died 9 or 10 weeks earlier. Finally agreed that she had been arrested on suspicion of witchcraft, but insisted she was a good woman from a good family. Said reputation went back 3 or 4 years, and that Henry Claudon of Leintrey was responsible; he had 'desrobé son honneur'. Also said that a small son of Nicolas Babey had called her witch, saying that his father called her that. Took no action over accusations because she had no witnesses.

Denied virtually everything during long interrogation, except for some quarrels over animals, the giving of a piece of tart to a child, and such circumstantial detail.

16 May 1608; confrontations

No reproaches to witnesses, but no admissions.

16 May 1608; procureur fiscal asks for torture

17 May 1608; Change de Nancy approves, with moderation for age

23 May 1608; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews and rack, but would admit nothing.

30 May 1608; report by procureur that Jennon had been pressed by the goalers to tell the truth, and had said she was tired of being in prison, and had not told whole truth. The new evidence, however, only consisted of admission that she knew a prayer to heal sick animals.

2 June 1608; depositions of goalers

(19) Jean Loys, bourgeois de Blamont

Told how they had tried to persuade her to confess, saying that she should not allow herself to be tormented and broken, and that she risked the eternal damnation of her soul. Told her 'que ce n'estoit encore rien le question qu'elle avoit soufferte que sy elle estoit condampnée a l'extraordinaire que c'estoit pour l'endurer trois fois le jour, ou bien trois jours durantz'. She only responded with vague suggestions that she had not told whole truth, and wishing she was by a warm fire.

(20) Francois Charier, sergent en la justice de Blamont

Said that she had declared herself ready to confess, but by the time he returned with ink and paper had changed her mind.

2 June 1608; interrogation

Denied the conversations reported, or said she had forgotten them. Then said she had wanted ink and paper to make a gift of grain to the sergent, in gratitude for her good treatment in prison. Admitted she did know a prayer for healing animals, taught her by her mother in her youth, which she had sometimes used. Some animals had recovered, others died just the same. Simple prayer saying she put hand on animal in name of Christ to remove illness. Held horns while saying prayer if animal had any, otherwise held neck. Had used prayer about 6 months earlier on cow of Michel Hellenix, which still died. Rejected suggestion that devil had taught her the prayer 'pour aveugler ceux auxquels elle auroit causé desplaisir sortilegiquement sur leurs bestiaux', and said it was used by others in Leintrey - Catherine le Renard, Anthoine Barthelemy, and Catherine Claudon.

Was asked why, if she was really 90, she was so robust and had almost no white hairs. Agreed she was only some 20 years older than Margueritte femme Michel Hellenix, who had given her age as 40, so may have been no more than 60.

4 June 1608; Change de Nancy rejects request for further torture, on grounds that indices were not sufficient, and recommended that she be renvoyée.

18 June 1608; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews only, and continued denials.

20 June 1608; finally released