

Witch 054, Noel Raimbault 1

B 3365 no 4; witch 054, Noel Raimbault de Reillon

30 March 1624; procureur fiscal asks for depositions, noting that he has been arrested to prevent possibility of flight.

1 April 1624; informations preparatoires

(1) Barthelemin de Veho, 40

Reputation 8 years. 6 years before, when they were keeping herds/flocks of respective villages, accused asked him to put his dog after a hare; caught it several times but was unable to bring it down, Since then had been useless for hunting, whereas previously it was excellent - several had suggested this was some charm by Noel. Also reported curious remark after occasion 3 years earlier when he had horses strangled in fields by night.

(2) Jean Verger, de Herbeviller, 60

Reputation since execution of father some 20 years earlier. Previous year witness had heard that inhabitants of Barbas wanted someone to keep their cattle, and offered himself, but next day Noel made better bid. Met him next day, and he appeared to be angry about bidding, after which his dog, which was excellent for keeping animals, became all swollen and died in 6 weeks - suspected he had caused this, and would have given illness to witness if he could have done so.

(3) Agnate femme du precedent, 40

Similar testimony; suggested that husband had spoken ill of him at Barbas, so that he did not get the custody of the cattle.

(4) Dieudenon Claude, 60

Reputation 14 years. 2 or 3 years earlier, when communal hedges were shared out, he had cut section belonging to witness, who took wood away; his cousin Aulbry Austette said he would not have done this, and that Noel had said it would be expensive wood for him. Within a week a cow fell sick; he had Noel visit it as herdsman, who said it was not serious, but it died next day - suspected this was his witchcraft.

(5) Noel Geoffroy, 42

Reputation 18 years (at confrontations reduced this to 6 or 7). 3 years earlier had refused to do some ploughing for him, and 2 or 3 weeks later his horses suddenly took fright. One of them died, and others had been affected since. Had remarked to witness that he only had 4 horses now, which increased suspicions. 3 weeks later a cow sickened, but accused did not warn him as he should have done, and it died in fields the next day.

(6) Zabey femme Dieudenon Claude, 40

Reputation 3 or 4 years. 2 years before had asked him, as herdsman, to look at her sick heifer; he said it was not serious, but it died next day, and she suspected him.

(7) Demenge Geoffroy, 37

Reputation 8 years (residence). Had bought a horse at St Dié, which then sickened, and gave him a piece of lard, after which horse recovered.

(8) Aulbry Austette, 70

Reputation 7 or 8 years. Late Aulbertin le Here had warned him that Noel threatened to do him much harm, since when he had lost 4 horses and 3 cattle, without knowing cause, and suspected it was his witchcraft.

(9) Claudatte femme du precedent, 60

Reputation 6 or 7 years. Same suspicions as husband - he was close neighbour.

(10) Nicolas Olry, paistre, 45

Reputation 19 years. After he had outbid him for keeping of herd he had several times wished him 500 wolves among his herd, and his animals became so frightened that they made a strange noise. Had again been angry when he bid successfully that Christmas, and used threats, after which witness told Noel's wife that if misfortune followed he would have him treated as his father had been. 2 weeks later his 3-month-old child sickened and died, then 8 weeks later son aged 5 died after being ill for a week. Also told of occasion 10 years earlier when after threats from Noel he had told him in company that he had heard how as a boy he talked of making hail - had never sought reparation for this. Suspected he was cause of various misfortunes.

(11) Claudon Marchal, 34

Reputation 10 years. Had heard his wife tell his he was son of a witch, while he replied that she was not worth much more - this was when animal fell in ditch.

(12) Chretienne veuve Colas Hachon, 60

Reputation 10 or 12 years. Believed that when he lost keeping of herd previous year he had caused death of her heifer, although she had given him no cause.

(13) Demenge Valtrin, 30

Reputation 3 or 4 years.

(14) Claudon Bastien, 27

Reputation 5 years. His late father had suspected him over 2 horse which died on same day.

(15) Jean Vaultrin le jeune, 32

Reputation 6 years. Suspected him over death of 2 animals, although no reason given, other that he came to see them and in one case said illness was not serious.

(16) Nicolas François, 33

Reputation 8 years (residence). After witness had lost 2 chickens Noel had remarked to another that he was angry with him and suspected him of being cause, mentioning his pig - this then died, and he suspected this was his doing.

(17) Jean Valtrin le vieux, maire de Reillon, 60

Reputation since execution of father 20 years earlier. Witness had been imbalt at time, and taken part in case, since when he had always born him particular hatred. Suspected he had been responsible for death of a horse 5 years earlier.

16 and 17 April 1624; interrogation

Said he was weaver, aged about 39, father executed as a witch some 25 years earlier, mother Alison still alive. Had heard he was suspected of witchcraft himself. Had been 14 or 15 at time of father's execution. Denied all the charges, and the various remarks he was supposed to have made. Did say that had been angry because Nicolas Olry called him witch, and had said he ought to beat him until he left him on the place, or he remained there himself.

29 April 1624; additional witness

(18) Margueritte veuve Aubertin Leher, 43

Reputation 7 or 8 years. Her late husband had been charged by community with taking muskets to Badonviller for cleaning, in company with accused; on way back accused latter of stealing purse with 16 francs, and was beaten across back. Later was taken to court and this was expensive. 3 or 4 years later became ill, bedridden for 15 months, with flesh dropping off to expose bones, and finally died. During this time accused had asked her several times if husband was going to die soon, which increased her suspicions.

Noel was then questioned about this deposition, and agreed about charge of stealing purse; had eventually made accord before justice.

Confrontations followed. No reproaches to any witnesses, but continued to deny charges. Jean Vaultrin added story that when Noel was drunk he had said to witness 'si c'est vray ce que les prêtres dise, nre loy estoit faubce'; when witness asked what he was saying he replied 'ne crains pas je ne te fera rien'. In case of late Aubertin Leher, agreed he had asked after him during illness, saying this was because they were both poor, and the rich took no notice.

29 April 1624; procureur fiscal asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

2 May 1624; Change de Nancy approves

4 May 1624; interrogation under torture

Starts with formal sentence to torture from court at Blamont, which states that Curien Marchal of Reillon was 'partie plaindante' in case.

Resisted thumbscrews, but started to confess when racked. Had been seduced 4 years earlier by Persin, who promised him money (oak leaves). Asked why he had not returned to God, said 'qu'il ne peut, et qu'il estime que ce que le malin l'avoit touché au front l'en empeschoit'.

Asked about sabat, said he had been a few days after seduction, and did not know how he was carried there; when he saw large numbers of people said 'Jesus Maria', and everything disappeared. Did not go again because he made pact with master in return for an animal every Good Friday. Claimed this also exempted him from using diabolical powder.

Admitted that master had come to him in form of an ox, giving him great fright, and forced him to agree to doing some harm to property of curé. He had been angry with curé's servants, but did not want to do this because of benefits he had had from curé; agreed to master breaking the thigh of a cow.

Threatened with more torture, admitted to being at other sabats. Said he had seen Jean Vuartin le vieux, Jean Febuay, Michiel Mongeatte of Leintrey, la veuve Claudon Jean Zabey and Jean de Benamesnil of Gondrexon, Claudatte Vaultrin femme Nicolas de Barbac of Domjevin and her sister Claudatte femme Colas Mariatte of Reillon, also la grande Chretienne veuve Petit Colas of Reillon. Confessed to making hail and wind to spoil crops.

Asked about number of specific maléfices, denied most of them. Admitted killing 2 horses of Aulbry Astette, but nothing else. Said that 3 years earlier his master had asked for his consent to kill Nicolas Olry, saying he would be herdsman for the rest of his life, but he would not agree.

5 May 1624; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence

6 May 1624; Change de Nancy approves, subject to reiteration of confessions

8 May 1624; he renewed his confessions, but withdrew all his accusations, saying he did those concerned wrong.

11 May 1624; formal death sentence from court at Blamont