

B 4094 no 1 Witch 073, Catherine la Rondelatte

3 October 1607; statement of 9 witnesses who are prepared to testify against Catherine 'la Rondelatte', widow of Guillaume Belruy of Essegney. She had been accused by Jean de Socourt (B 4093), although he had later withdrawn the accusation. Brief indications of nature of charges they would bring. PG des Vosges orders prévôt of Charmes (who had presumably submitted the document) to carry out secret investigation.

23 November 1607; informations préparatoires

(1) Jannon vauve Claude Marchal d'Essegney, c. 74

Told of occasion some 3 years earlier when Catherine had come to house of her son-in-law Jean Grainel; when told he was still in fields she started to say 'il n'a voulu achepter mes preys pour Monsieur Terrel son maitre Il m'en a ja bien souvenu je luy ay garde de bons plaisirs je luy en garderay encore.' Then clapped her hands in menacing fashion, saying 'Je feray tout ce que je pourray'. Her son-in-law had already lost four oxen, and subsequently lost horses. He had several times beaten Catherine, believing her to be the cause of his losses. She was generally suspected, as her mother Nicolle had been before her.

(2) Claudon femme a Jean Grainel d'Essegney, c. 39

Repeated essential of mother's deposition.

(3) Jannon Marchal femme de Claudon Maurice salpetrier d'Essegney, c. 37

She and her late mother had suspected Catherine of causing death of a cow 3 years earlier; no reason apart from general reputation, and fact that animal had been behind her house when it started to cry out - she said it would recover, but it died.

(4) Chesnon femme a Crestaille Gaillard d'Essegney, c. 40

Some 7 years before had been holding poisle for winter in their house, and Catherine had asked that they should admit her daughter. Husband refused to allow this, and subsequently there was a scene when she tried to bring daughter nevertheless, and he turned them out with threats of beating, calling her witch. Soon after their daughter aged 12 went against their will to poisle of their neighbour Bastien Adan, where Catherine was; on return developed strange illness, dying after 10 days. Also believed her to have killed sow which strayed on land, and a cow. General reputation.

(5) Jannon Jannest femme a Bastien Adan d'Essegney, c. 50

Told of death 7 years earlier of Isabel Famel, an orphan lodging in their house. Had bought a 'coffre' from Catherine, but it had not been satisfactory, and she had not paid while waiting either to return it or to negotiate a reduction in price. Had been apprehensive about what might happen as result, and one evening saw a strange black pig rolling on ice of stream; was so frightened that she lost her wits and could not even receive sacraments before her death. During final illness named

Catherine several times as its cause. Witness also said she had heard Catherine blaspheme, saying 'Je dois bien maudir dieu', which she explained when challenged by saying 'qu'il n'avoit rien faict pour elle d'avoir prins ses enfans'. Generally feared at Essegney, and witness was already 's'esbahissant' at thought of meeting her on her return, expecting her to enquire closely into where she had been.

(6) Chrestaille Gaillard d'Essegney, c. 50

Repeated wife's testimony; added that Catherine had brought some eggs to persuade him to admit her daughter, and offered to pay as others did.

(7) Jannon veuve de Colas Adan d'Essegney, c. 40

General reputation. Some 17 years before her late husband had a dispute with her and her late sister Jannon, blaming them for death of an ox after earlier quarrels. Then became ill with 'maladie populaire', which made him frenetic, and died suddenly in fields; had previously blamed them for his illness. Also told of incident when Isabel Fanere (or Famel) had been frightened by black pig - everyone had believed she was bewitched.

(8) Catherine fille de feu Francois Didion, d'Essegney, c. 20

Told how 10 years before, when next to river, she had seen a man with a red bonnet riding a small horse, with his feet almost touching the ground. He rode towards her, and she was so frightened she started crying. Was comforted by Bastien Prevost, then a 'jeune fils'; he then saw Catherine, and calling her 'mauvaise femme' asked if it was she who had frightened the child. She denied it, but said she might have made a noise by banging her spade and hoe together.

(9) Margueritte femme de Marin Humbert d'Essegney, c. 50

5 years earlier their son Humbert, aged 19, had met Catherine on way to cart hay. Promptly felt chilled, and had to return home and go to bed. A day or two later he returned to Mirecourt, where he was in service, but fell ill again and had to be fetched home. Became as if frantic, throwing himself about, so that they judged he was bewitched, and finally died. Had previously had quarrels with her, and forbidden her to frequent their house - she had made threatening remarks to daughter shortly before.

(10) Jead Musnier d'Essegney, c. 46

General reputation; had warned her several times that he would take action if he or his family suffered any harm.

(11) Bastien Prevost d'Essegney, c. 33

General repute; often called witch, and he had called her so himself, without any reaction. Told of incident 24 years earlier, when his father, Thiery Prevost, had dispute with Catherine's husband over division of money they had received for threshing. Shortly afterwards she was passing their house when she saw child in

cradle; said 'voicy un bel infant', whereupon it fell ill and died 2 days later. His father and mother had always blamed her for this.

(12) Didier Cure de Langley, c. 50

Some 20 years before Catherine had brought him 'un fleau' to repair; he had been slow about it, and it was not ready when she came - left muttering words he could not distinguish. A wind then took child out of his wife's arms and into fire, so that it was badly burned. General reputation and fear.

(13) le maire Thiery Prevost d'Essegney, c. 60

Repeated son's story about death of child after dispute with her husband - he said this was 15 or 16 years earlier.

(14) Adam Martin d'Essegney, c. 66

General repute - like her mother and her sister Jannon. Some 20 years before had found his foal dead in field after she passed, and suspected her, although had not quarrelled with her.

(15) Marie femme de Jacquot Thiery d'Essegney, c. 28

Her father had told her that he believed Catherine or her sister Jannon, who was equally suspected, had bewitched her mother and caused her death. This followed incident when Catherine's nephews had beaten her mother's, and latter had called them 'fils de genoches' - this had occasioned a 'plainte' from Catherine. Around same time - about 24 years earlier - Catherine had told witness that her brother Vaultrin was in water calling for help; he drowned before father could reach him. She later said several times to mother that she was not cause of his death, even though her nephews had been called sons of a witch.

(16) Jannon fille de feu Francois Couturier d'Essegney, c. 26

General repute; her father had beaten her when he found her taking fruit behind house, and subsequently lost animals, although she had not heard him blame Catherine for this.

(17) Laurent Forestier alias gregoire, demeurant à Essegney, c. 75

Believed she had caused death of a cow some 25 years before, after incident when he sold a horse to her sister Jannon, then took it back when she failed to pay, calling her witch. Also believed she had caused death of two young oxen, since he had often called her witch, and when another ox was lost accused her of having eaten it at the sabbat. Enraged at these losses, which he blamed on her, had once threatened to cut her throat when he met her on the road. General reputation - with mother and sister.

(26 November 1607)

(18) Poiresson Garat d'Essegney, c. 65

General reputation, like mother and sister. Some 25 years earlier she had been angry when his wife Isabillon refused her some wild pears, which she had sometimes given her before. Came to house when wife was away, and overlooked child in cradle (named Barbe), saying 'Voicy un moult bel enfant, il dors fort bien'. Child promptly stricken with strange illness, and he told his wife to seek remedy from Catherine. She gave her a drink, appearing sympathetic, but it did no good, so witness went to a woman of Velaucourt who gave advice on pilgrimages. She said they had 'une mauvaise voisine', which confirmed his suspicions - child died a week later. Had called her witch on various occasions without any reaction; in his youth she had told him that in some places 'des damoiselles' came out of the earth with whom they danced. The late Mre Claude de Flavigny had often called her witch and forbidden her the house where he was holding the plaids bannaux.

(19) Jacquat Thiery d'Essegney, c. 25

Some 6 years before he and Gregoire Forestier had climbed her roof and thrown stones at a nest of swallows in chimney, for which she had told them off; next day he fell out of a tree and broke his leg. Surgeon had to break it three times before he could set it successfully, and suggested witchcraft, as did other surgeons. Catherine had asked his sister about him a week after injury, and when he was beginning to go about on crutches she told him he would recover.

(20) Pieron Bocatte d'Essegney, c. 60

Some 5 or 6 years before had been obtaining goods for marriage of daughter; Catherine had offered to sell them a pan, and at last minute demanded some fish in addition to arranged price, which they never gave her. Later his wife became ill, feeling that there was an animal which was eating her body; died after 3 year illness. Also told of previous occasion when wife went to Catherine's house to buy some seeds, and found her lying face down in some kind of trance. On another occasion, when going to fields at dawn, there was a great cloud, and they saw Catherine 'tout foudroyée' - believed she had been returning from sabbat. General reputation, and also believed her to have killed numerous animals.

(21) Claude Jean Andreu d'Essegney, c. 60

Had accused her of being a witch and killing his animals; she had denied this but taken no further action.

(22) Demenge Caille alias Fanel, d'Essegney, c. 48

A year before his cow had licked wall outside her house, and then died 'comme enragée'; man who cut it up said it had worst smell he had ever known. Believed this had been in revenge for his forbidding her access to a small garden he rented next to her house. His daughter had seen her at well, and told her he was angry with her, blaming her for cow's death, to which she said that many others died, and that if she were a witch she 'en feroit bien mourir de ceulx qu'elle haissoit'. Shortly afterwards his neighbour lost a calf, and when he met her witness told her that if he lost any more he would kill her; she replied 'qu'elle estoit bien assurée et que tous ceulx qui

la menassoient ne luy feroient rien'. Also confirmed Pierre Bocatte's story of seeing her supposedly returning from sabbat.

(23) Catherine femme a Laurent Forestier alias Gregoire, d'Essegney, c. 50

Repeated husband's account of loss of animals, adding that they had cured a sick cow they believed her to have bewitched by obtaining bread, salt, and ashes from her house.

(24) Le maire Claudon Courturieux d'Essegney, c. 26

Previous year had decided to improve his land, and had enclosed a field, but had left side he shared with Catherine open, since she would not pay half cost of enclosing. Had heard from one of his servants that she was angry and had said she would be avenged; then lost a fat pig which had trespassed on her land - it wasted away despite eating normally. Soon afterwards a horse died after Catherine had passed it, and another became ill. He went to her house, threatening to beat her and calling her witch, after which he himself recovered from stomach trouble. (Signed)

(25) Jean Grainel laboureur d'Essegney, c. 30

Repeated story told by wife and mother-in-law; had been angry because he would not buy meadow on behalf of Sieur Terrel for whom he was moictrier, and had expressed her resentment in threatening fashion before the women. He had lost many animals, to total value of 500 francs, and believed this to have been her doing. Had beaten her more than once, and was surprised she had not died from blows he gave her, notably on an occasion when he met her alone outside village. When she saw him approaching in a fury she cried 'Jean Grainel dieu vous garde vous est moult eschauffé', to which he replied 'Jenoche, je viens maintenant pour te tuer tu as fait mourir mes chevaux et mon bestail, maintenant tu mourras aussy par mes mains', and beat her until she said 'Jean Grainel je vous crie mercy Jamais je ne vous feray mal ny desplaisir ny a ce que vous touche.' Not satisfied with this, he beat her again on a later occasion, so that she complained to prévôt, and he was sentenced to 16 francs compensation, and made to promise not to molest her again. Had not in fact paid the 16 francs to her, although she had asked that he should give her two deniers so that she could swear she had received something from him; from this point had suffered no more misfortunes.

(26) Nicolas Perinan d'Essegney, demurant à Charmes, c. 65

When he lived at Essegney, 30 years before, the accused and her mother and sister had already been much suspected.

(27) Isabillon femme de Poirson Garat d'Essegney, c. 55

25 years before child had died in circumstances already described by husband; she had refused pears saying she had no time to go to the loft. Had also heard from Alison Gerard that she had seen accused praying in fields two years before with an animal like a cat beside her.

(28) Barbion Garat veuve de Colas Granier de Bainville, demeurant à Essegney, c. 50

Believed her to have been responsible for death of brother's child 25 years before, although in her version Catherine had come to house to seek fire, and looked into cot.

(29) Pellerin Couturioux d'Essegney, c. 36

Believed Catherine had caused his daughter aged 2 to fall into a shallow ditch outside her house, in which she had nearly drowned - this because he had several times forbidden her his house on belief that she was a witch. Had also been involved in his brother's dispute with her over enclosure of field, and thought she had caused deaths of two oxen and a horse. General reputation and fear of her.

21 January 1608

(30) Isabel femme à Demenge Gaillot de Poursieux, c. 42

General reputation, when she had been in service at Essegney 20 years before, although witness had not feared her nor suffered any harm. Had once gone with her to visit sister at Magnieres, and been frightened on seeing a black animal near them; Catherine reassured her, saying it was a wolf and would do them no harm (she had immediately thought of her companion's reputation).

(31) Mathiotte fille de Claudon Gregoire d'Essegney, demeurant à Poursieux, c. 30

General reputation only.

(32) Chrestienne Chabrouillat native d'Essegney, femme de Gaspard Terrel de Poursieux, c. 37

5 years earlier, when living at Essegney, she and her companions had been unhappy that Catherine was always around house; finally she told her that she did not want her company, and that she should come less often. After this dispute she was in her room with all entries closed, when a large cat jumped on bed and frightened her; she nevertheless had faith in the lord, whom she had prayed to guard her as she got into bed, and she suffered no harm, but cat had vanished in morning, leaving scratch marks. Believed it had been accused.

(33) Barbe fille de feu Claudon Musnier d'Essegney, demt. à Poursieux, c. 22

General repute; had heard her called witch without reacting.

(34) Pierre Grand Jean bouchier de Charmes, c. 31

Had heard from his late father that when living at Essegney some 16 to 18 years earlier he had quarrelled with Catherine, then fallen from a pear tree breaking both arms, although he was standing on a branch strong enough to bear several people. When acting as herdsman he had taken calf to which one of her cows had given birth

back to her house - a whirlwind he encountered on the way nearly broke his neck, and on arrival he called her witch, blaming her for his misfortunes.

(35) Jannon femme de Nicolas Masson de Vencey, demt. à Charmes, c. 28

Some 12 or 13 years before had been living with her grandparents at Essegney (grandfather was Gerardin Claudon Gerardin). Catherine's daughter Barbe took some apples from her, and she replied by calling her 'daughter of a witch'. When Catherine heard of this she went to complain to grandparents, while witness hid under bed in neighbour's house; was afterwards whipped by her grandmother, and accused said that if she were a witch 'elle ne mourroit jamais d'autres mains que des siennes'. She remembered these words vividly; some 2 or 3 years later was drawing water from well near Catherine's house when a piece of bread fell between her clothing and her body, and pricked her. Saw Catherine watching, although she did nothing; on return home her legs and thighs became blackened and twisted, so that she could not move. Remained in this state for one or two weeks, despite various attempts at cure; Catherine came to see her and said that best hope was to make her walk. She and another woman took her under arms and walked her around room, after which she was able to support herself, and soon made complete recovery. Grandparents and others believed this had been witchcraft by Catherine.

7 February 1608; PG des Vosges orders arrest and interrogation of la Rondelatte.

21 February 1608; interrogation

Said she was about 63, widow for 18 years since death of husband Guillaume Belmy. Had always lived at Essegney, where she supported herself on the little land she owned, keeping a few animals, and spinning. Had married husband when they were both in service at Poursieux, and had then gone back to Essegney. He had died 15 years later from stomach ailment; of their two children, daughter had died aged 19 and son aged 16 a year later. Asked if she had not killed them all, in view of her reputation as a witch, said 'Ho le bel Jesus', started to mutter, and said she would say nothing whatever they did to her.

Agreed after hesitation that she had been arrested on suspicion of witchcraft, but denied she was a witch. Was then reproached that she did not cry, a sure sign of a witch; she said she could not cry 'ayant tant pleure par cy devant la mort et perte de son marit et de ses enfans que maintenant elle avoit le coeur sy endurcy qu'en fin elle ne pouvoit pleurer.'

Asked why one chapelet was missing cross completely, and other only had half of it - agreed that this was the case, offering no explanation. Denied that anyone had called her witch to her face.

22 February 1608; interrogation

Agreed that she had been beaten by Jean Grainel, but did not know why - thought he had been drunk. Also agreed that Crestaille Gaillard had beaten her, and that she had made formal complaint after which he had begged pardon; again didn't know reason. Also agreed that Margueritte Humbert had called her witch, but she had obtained reparation for this through maire.

Asked if she had killed animals of Laurent Gregoire, she said they were always thin and sickly for lack of fodder. Admitted that he had called her witch one day as she was herding animals, but said that if he had approached her to beat her she would have had her revenge on the spot, since she was as strong as he was. If she had really been a witch she would have avenged herself, but by God's grace she had always borne what was said about her in patience. Said that Marienne wife of Pierron Bocatte had died of illness caused by great blows her husband had given her, although he had looked after her well when she was sick

Agreed that Claudon Couturieux had threatened her, but said he had never beaten her.

23 February 1608; interrogation

In view of her obstinacy she was shaved on head and body, then pressed hard by prévôt, who pointed out weight of evidence against her; she continued to insist that she was no witch. Said that Jean Grainel was a 'cortier' who bought poor horses and drove them when he was drunk, although admitting he had beaten her in belief she had killed one of them.

Asked about lack of body hair at armpits and genitals, which it was suggested was somehow diabolical because unnatural, she said she had scratched herself so much that it had finally disappeared. Prévôt noted her demeanour as suspect; was constantly muttering as if saying prayers, eyes were red and haggard, and was 'fort prompte' in replies as if she had 'un protocole diabolique'.

Exhorted to think of her soul as last step before returning her to prison, suddenly threw herself on her knees, with hand on Bible, and said she wanted to save her soul by telling the truth. Seduction had been 10 years earlier, when returning from visiting her sister Barbon at Magnieres; had been upset at thought of long widowhood, lack of children, and fact that her family did not want her to remarry, though she herself would have liked to. Mre Percy had appeared to her by round oak in middle of woods, raped her, and made her renounce God. Although she had realised he was the Devil, promises she had made to him prevented her retracting. Gave her a stick, with which she killed animals, including those of Jean Grainel, Laurent Gregoire, and Jacquat Gaillot, all of whom had called her witch.

Later same evening prevot went to prison to continue interrogations, and she now confessed to having killed Jacquat Gaillat's wife in childbed because her cow had trespassed and eaten her cabbages. Also said that she had killed son of her neighbour Claude la Vefue, aged 12, but this had been without ill-will; he had been ill for a long time, with ulcerated legs, and no cure had worked. Illness had not been her doing, but finally she used powder given by her master on him, and he died same evening. Had also accidentally killed year-old daughter of Claudel Mathieu; had recently been handling powder, and a little was left on her fingers when she touched child in cradle.

24 February 1608; interrogation

Confirmed previous confession. Added that since seduction she had several times thought of throwing herself in river, but every time she had gone towards



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it she thought that in this way she would lose her soul. Note that she had been gently treated in prison; had not been tied up or chained because of her age and the current cold weather.

27 February 1608; PG des Vosges asks for question extraordinaire, in view of charges as yet unaccounted for, and discrepancies over time she had been a witch.

2 March 1608; Change de Nancy agrees, with moderation suitable to her age.

(Interrogation under torture not microfilmed)

11 March 1608; Catherine withdraws accusations against 4 other women; la Grande Rousse ( la femme Willaume) and the wife of Jacquot Caillet, of Charmes, la Loriade of Essegney, and la femme Le Dez of Langley. But maintained that la Grande Lucye of Charmes was a witch, and had been at sabbats with her. She maintained this up to point when she was about to be executed at stake.

Goods recorded as being worth over 120 F, including a cow, a calf, and 'un petit naxon'. House and small plot of land worth 519 F.