

B 4126 no 1 Witch 078, François Perin

5 September 1624; PG des Vosges orders investigation in secret, by Prévôt of Charmes, into charges against François Perin paistre de Rugney, accused by several persons of causing loss of beasts and health, and of being responsible for several deaths.

23 November 1624; informations préparatoires.

Note that Perin, knowing himself suspect, had been selling much of his property and talking of fleeing.

(1) Husson Eurat ancien maire de Rugney, c. 50

18 years before, when Perin was already suspected, the witness had bought part of a house after Perin had failed to agree price with owner. Had been angry over this, and threatened that he would repent - lost 3 cows and a horse with 'maladies occultes et inaudites'. Had called him witch several times, but no action followed. Family reputation - brother and two cousins of Sauvigny already executed. Had recently been selling or hiding property, on rumour that he was about to be arrested. (Signed)

(2) Estienne Chastelain laboureur à Rugney, c. 42

Day after last 'foire St. Barnabe' his son had been taking horses to pasture, and crossed field belonging to Perin. Latter came out swearing, and struck one of them with a stick; on way home it was sick, apparently with 'la rage de ventre'. Boy was told by Remy Eurat and wife that horse would die, and that Perin had sworn that those who crossed the field 'en paioient la peagie' died 'd'estrage maladie' on same day. Execution of brother. (Marked)

(3) Claude fils Estienne Chastelain, c. 14

Confirmed essential points of father's testimony.

(4) Thomas Genin dit Phillippe, laboureur de Rugney, c. 63

General reputation. No personal misfortune, but his brother Nicolas Phillippe had died 4 years earlier claiming that his illness, which was unknown to the surgeons, had been given him by Perin in resentment that he had exercised 'retraicte' on garden Perin had bought from Jean Mathieu. Had spoken with Perin recently, who told him he feared both the torture and the 'froidure'.

(5) Remy Philippe laboureur de Rugney, c. 50

Also told story of brother's death after quarrel over garden, of unknown illness, and claiming that Perin had bewitched him. Wives of Perin and of Nicolas (both now dead) had met on way to Charmes, and former had said in anger 'qu'il puisse avoir six vingts bots en son ventre'.

(6) Idatte veuve de Didier Gregy de Rugney, c. 70

General reputation. Believed he had caused death of a cow last Whitsun after being refused milk.

(7) Alix fille d'Idatte veuve Didier Gregy, 26

Repeated story of death of cow (worth 14 ecus); refusal had been of 'cler laict' to Perin's wife, on grounds that they made very little cheese.

(8) Mre Francois Villemin maitre d'escolle moderne de Rugney, c. 50

Told how first Perin's wife and then his daughter had asked him to console Perin over accusations against him. Had found Perin frightened to face torture and prison, and talking of flight. Witness told him he should think of his soul before his body, that if he were innocent God would protect him and give him strength to withstand torture, and that prévôt was 'doux et agreable'. Nevertheless still talked of flight, and said that Husson Eurat was source of evil rumours, on account of a pig that had died in the herd ( this was briefly mentioned in Eurat's deposition). Had been selling property. (Signed).

(26 November 1624)

(9) Margueritte femme de Remy Phillippe de Rugney, c. 40

Repeated story of brother-in-law's death after dispute over garden; sick only 3 days, saying 'le mal jardin, il sera cause de ma mort'. Had also previously called Perin witch, threatening to have him arrested, in belief that he had killed a foal. When going to Savigny with Perin's wife latter had asked whether witches burned there had accused any from Rugney, and was told that her sister-in-law and her husband had been accused.

(10) Anthoine Gerardin jadis maieur de Rugney, c. 50

Previous summer Perin had asked him to plough a field; had neither agreed nor refused, but subsequently had a horse dead, which some blamed on witchcraft by Perin, although for his part he had no suspicion.

(11) Claudatte femme de Laurence Thoussain de Rugney, c. 46

Previous summer had seen Perin go and raise Gerardin's horse, which was lying ill in field and died next day; spoke to his wife, who thought he had bewitched it after refusal to plough.

(12) Jean Grandidier, ancien maire de Rugney, c. 65

Francois Perin was 'de race forte suspecte'; witness had often called him witch without his taking any action. Perhaps in revenge for this, 7 years before a bull he had sent to herd died under Perin's care. Had also called him witch since then.

(13) Nicolas Marchal laboureur de Rugney, c. 50

Some 5 or 6 years before the inhabitants of Rugney had wanted a different herdsman, and had called in one from Brantigny; Perin had subsequently made threatening remark in his hearing, and he had lost a fine sow. (Marked)

Note by prévôt that there are still more witnesses to be heard, who are currently away in town, but in view of fears that Perin would escape he was being guarded in his house.

27 November 1624; PG des Vosges orders arrest and interrogation.

4 December 1624; additional depositions

(14) Didier Husson laboureur de Rugney, c. 40

General reputation. Believed he had caused death of three pigs from a strange disease around last harvest time, because he had refused to plough a field for him - after this 'il luy porta mauvais visage' as he had not done before. (Signed)

(15) Remy Eurat vigneron de Rugney, c. 26

General reputation. Believed him to have killed three pigs around last St. Jean; this followed incident when he said to witness that they ought to be with the herd 'ou', which he thought had been a threat. Died after strange illness, during which they jumped in the air and cried for 8 days. Also bore witness to incident with horse reported by witness (2). (Signed)

(5 December 1624)

(16) Didier Guoguette de Florement, c. 51

Reputation 25 years. Witness had refused invitations to become herdsman at Rugney out of fear that Perin would bear him ill-will and cause him harm. Mentioned other witches in family, and how Perin had told him previous summer that Husson Eurat was accusing him of causing death of a pig; had been angry and blaspheming, and said that he did not want to use his property in bringing a case against Eurat when witness suggested that this would be way to save his honour. (Signed)

(17) Toussaint Redoutte laboureur de Xugney, c. 50

General repute; execution of brother. (Marked).

7 December 1624; interrogation

Said he was François Perrin, native of Rugney, aged 72, and son of Claudon Perin and his wife Mongeotte. Was manouvrier and vigneron, and recently paistre in alternate years. Had been married 3 times; one married daughter by first marriage, 2 unmarried sons in service by second marriage, and a daughter who now lived with him and third wife Isabel (widow of Nicolas Bel Jean of Charmes).

Admitted that he knew he was accused of witchcraft; prévôt reminded him that a day or two before he had made partial admission. Then said that he was a witch; had been seduced around previous St. Jean when keeping the troop of pigs. Had been irritated with them because they were trying to eat some 'carnage'; man in black appeared and offered to make him rich. Had afterwards used powder to kill pig belonging to 'le grand Husson'.

Pressed to say he had been witch for much longer, stuck to story. Said he had been taken to sabbat, where he had seen Jean de Giraucourt, Claudon Gossel of Rugney, Claudon femme Poirson Perier de Rugney, Claudon du Puy de Brantigny, Claude Rossel paistre à Floremont, Demenge qu'est masson de Floremont, Gerard Mathis marechal at Charmes, who led the dance holding his blacksmith's hammer, and two women of Charmes whose names he did not know, one of them a beggarwoman.

Called back later, said he was not sure about Claudon Gossel, who had been masked, and only identified by his accomplice Claude Rossel. Despite much pressure, did not change rest of story. Prévôt noted that he seemed very robust, far less than 72, and that he did not believe his denials of earlier witchcraft.

9 December 1624; PG des Vosges asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

12 December 1624; Change de Nancy orders question ordinaire only.

14 December 1624; interrogation under torture.

Long preliminary interrogation, during which he said he had been a witch for some 2 years, and had been to sabbat 4 times. Repeated earlier accusations, including that against Claudon Gossel. Also said (when prompted) that he had intercourse twice with his master in the form of a woman.

Given thumbscrews, eventually said he had been seduced 21 or 22 years earlier. Had been in field where there was good wheat in some areas, but in others only 'chardons'; this caused him to say 'Le diable a part de tant de chardons, sy c'estoit bonne marchandise, elle n'y viendroit pas sy tost.' Devil then appeared and persuaded him to give his allegiance on promise that he would make his wheat grow as well as that of others.

Added name of Pierot Vaultrier of Bouxereulles to his accomplices. Said he could tell no more, and was not placed on rack.

15 December 1624; confirmed earlier confessions.

Same day; PG des Vosges asks for death sentence, and that he should be confronted with Gerard Mathis, Jean de Giraucourt, Claudon femme de Poirson Parin, Claudon Gosel, and Claudon du Puy.

18 December 1624; Change de Nancy confirms death sentence.