

B 4569 no 1 Witch 088, Huguette Couroyeur

3 August 1609; informations préparatoires taken by substitut of PG des Vosges against Huguette, veuve Jean Couroyeur, de Neufchateau. This at request of maire et échevins, who alleged that she was notoriously accused of numerous acts of witchcraft.

(1) Honorable homme Claude Meurot, bouchier de Neufchateau, c. 29

Told how some 3 years earlier his servant had been carrying his son Claude, then aged 18 months, into church of St. Nicolas, when Huguette had come up, admired him, and touched him on the shoulder. Had promptly fallen ill, so that witness and his wife Clairon believed he was bewitched. Wife and late mother-in-law had then got Huguette to come to house, and begged her to cure the child; she said she knew no remedies, but would pray for him. Then came and spent several days looking after him, but he became worse, and at one point seemed to be dying, so that they held a 'chandelle benoiste' for him. Recovered a little, but during another crisis his brother-in-law Mengel Hacoet accused her of being a witch and threatened to beat her if she did not cure the child properly. Then gave him nuts, but he still seemed worse, so she advised a pilgrimage (child had limbs twisted, and was making noise like a dog barking). He went expecting to find it dead on his return; instead found it well on the way to a complete cure. (Signed)

(2) Honorable Jean Francois, l'un des jurés en ladite justice, c. 45

Some two and a half years earlier his late wife had been very ill, and he consulted his aunt, the late Idotte wife of Jean Thellegrain, in the belief that she was bewitched, and that Idotte might persuade Huguette (who had already cured the son of his nephew Hacoet) to bring her some relief. Two or three days later he and his aunt went to see her, with a choppine of wine for her, asking that she should come and see his wife. She objected that she knew no remedies, and that if she gave her something she would be called 'mechanté'; she had not given her the illness, and only the person who had given it could remove it. Was obviously afraid, looking one way then another; finally said she would come, but then as quickly changed her mind. (Signed)

(3) Honorable Homme Claude Daguanel, tisserand de Neufchateau, c. 30

4 years ago at next St. Martin had been living next to Huguette, and had been giving her charity in form of soup and meat. One day he had only given her soup, and she saw him hand a piece of meat to his dog, at which she said 'tu ne m'a envoyé que la soupe et tu donne de la chair à ton chien, tu t'en repentiras'. At this he remembered that he had been ill for four months, as if bewitched and unable to move limbs, the previous winter, after driving her out of his house which she was haunting too often. Some 5 or 6 days later found the dog with its legs strangely twisted, so that he had to drown it; did not know by what spell she might have effected this. Showed dog to passers-by, and when she saw it she told him he should thank God he was not struck by the same illness that the dog had. Also told how he had later seen one Florentin Druot, alias Badot, afflicted with a similar illness, so that he had to go on crutches. After some 6 months he went on crutches to Huguette's door, calling on her as a witch, that she should heal him or kill him. She came to

door and told him he was a 'mauvais garçon', who always spoke 'mauvaises parolles', and that he could walk if he really wished to. She struck him on the shoulder, and Badot was immediately healed, put his crutches on his shoulder, and called out to his wife that he was cured and she should get him his dinner. (Could not sign)

4) Jeanne femme à honorable homme Demengel Hacoet, c. 25

Some 5 years before she had been in butcher's shop when Huguette had asked her for some meat as alms; hed refused because she was too occupied. Some days later her son Jean, aged 2, became ill and as if possessed, crying out 'foutre mort dieu putain ja vous devez foutre', and fighting off anyone who approached him. After some 10 months their servant succeeded in persuading Huguette to come and see him, although she demurred at first, saying that she had nothing to do with them. Eventually gave child food, and he gradually became more tractable - witness seems to have paid her, until eventual cure. Also use of nuts, with little ceremony naming them for various saints before giving them to be eaten (first witness reported similar practice). (Signed)

3 August 1609; maire, as substitut for PG des Vosges, having seen these depositions, orders that Huguette be arrested and held in prison, so that she should not have communication with anyone.

5 August 1609

(5) Nicolle vauve Blaise Voiry de Neufchateau, c. 58

Told how some 4 years earlier she had been asked by Demenge Hacoet and his wife to help them persuade Huguette to cure their son, whom they believed her to have bewitched after refusal of alms. Confirmed story of previous witness in general outline. Some days after visiting Hacoet's house, Huguette had come to her room and complained 'Nicolle Nicolle voicy ung beau bruict que Demenge me baille de dire que je suis une sorciere'. Witness said that if she was she must be burned; Huguette said that Symon Sallet had offered to lend her money for her to leave, but she did not wish to do so because she was 'enfant de la ville et de gros sang'. Had always believed her to be a witch. (Signed)

(6) Clairon femme à Claude Mourut bouchier, c. 24

Very full account of child's illness, generally tallying with that given by husband. Added that when she thought child was dying she called Huguette 'vieille sorciere, vieille genauche', and threatened to have her burned. (signed)

(7) Honneste homme Demenge Hacoet bouchier de Neufchateau, et juré de la justice, c. 36

Told of how some 4 years before he had stopped alms he normally gave Huguette on a Sunday because of her reputation as a witch. His wife then warned him that she had overlooked their son. Told how she had healed child, then added that he had given her a half-ecu; when she tried to return it he refused to take it, but called her witch and warned her not to cause any harm to his household in future, or he would

have her burned. Then told of further illness of child of his brother-in-law Claude Mourut, and how he had threatened to beat her if she did not cure him. (Signed)

7 August 1609 - more informations

(8) Florentin Drouot, tisserand de Medonville, c. 25

Told of incident 4 years earlier, when he and wife lived at Neufville. Huguette used to spin in house with wife and girl named Alix who lived with them; one day was asked by Alix not to sit on the bed where she slept. Got up and said 'qu'elle s'y couche et que jamais n'en puisse elle relever', while telling witness and wife that they would repent. When girl lay down on couch she felt something prick her, and was in great misery for 4 days, until on his advice she went to see Huguette, after which she recovered. A week or two later the witness told Huguette she was no longer welcome in his house, and she said he would repent; soon after she gave him 'un mauvais regard', and he developed a great pain in his knee, so that he could only get about with crutches. After 3 months in this state went and knocked on her door, calling her witch, and demanding that she heal him or he would take her to court; she told him he could walk if he wished, and he immediately began to feel much better, being completely cured in 4 days.

(8 August 1609)

(9) Alix fille de deffunt Claudin Regnault de Rebeufville, c. 25

Told story of quarrel over bed. Illness had lasted 15 days, and had been cured when Huguette gave her an apple to eat - but still returned periodically, with severe pains in stomach and legs. Believed her to be a witch.

(10 August 1609)

(10) Barbe fille de feu Jean de Bitel de Neufchateau, c. 20

Just over a week earlier had been distributing alms to poor on instructions of her master (sr. Debaucourt). when she came to Huguette, whom she only knew as one of the poor, and gave her one too. Immediately fell ill, and had only just returned to work, although still not fully recovered. Her master's daughter had told her that during her absence they had decided that she was bewitched by Huguette, who had called her 'une mauvaise garce' after she had gone.

12 August 1609; interrogation

Said she was Huguette, daughter of Liegier Gerard, who had come from Vignevalx in France, but she had been born in Neufchateau, and was now aged about 70. Had been married to Jean Courgyeur and had 8 children, all now dead.

Agreed to essentials of story about Claude Meurot's child, and having cared for him for some 5 days. Claimed he had not been as ill as suggested, although at one point he had seemed near death; agreed that Demenge Hacoet had threatened to beat her if she did not cure him. Agreed that she had used little ceremony with nuts when she cured Hacoet's child, but denied using it for the other. Judges asked if

it were not a kind of witchcraft designed to communicate with devils; she denied this, saying she had learned it from good women and from nuns, and that her father had used such words when she was young.

Asked if she knew Claude Dagueneil, described him as a worthless man, who had wished his mother to 500,000 devils; said his illness must have been caused by the crime he committed against his mother. (Had already suggested that the Meurot child's illness was punishment for his parents, who had allowed some sheep they had on lease to die).

Agreed to main story about visiting Hacoet's child, but denied more incriminating details. As for Florentin Drouot, said he was 'ung ivrogne et ung sac a vin.' However, she agreed to disputes with him and Alix, although giving them a less dramatic tone, and denying giving Alix an apple, or having made him ill.

Asked about various small items found in her possession, including pieces of bread, powders etc, sought to give natural explanations, and denied suggestions from judges that they had anything to do with witchcraft.

Was evidently sobbing and distressed during various stages of interrogation - judges at one point suggested (in written record) that Devil might be obstructing her from saying more.

18 August 1609; confrontations

Repeated attacks on Florentin Drouot as drunkard and 'renyeur de Dieu', and on Claude Dagueneil. Said that Demenge Hacoet was 'ung meschant homme et un menteur'. Also said that Alix was worthless girl (in final confrontations on 20 August). Otherwise accepted witnesses, but made no avowals.

30 August 1609; PG des Vosges asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire, to extent her strength would allow.

4 September 1609; Change de Nancy agrees, with moderation appropriate to her age.

14 September 1609; interrogation and confession

As soon as she was questioned, admitted that she was a witch; had been seduced 6 years before, when she was being persecuted by Dagueneil and Drouot, who threw stones against her door, broke her window, and scattered her store of firewood. A 'belle et honneste demoiselle' all in white appeared to her at night and promised to protect her; was called esprit. Asked about accomplices, accused Marguerite veuve Nicolas Francois, surnamed Jeandosme, whom she claimed to have killed her husband. Judges evidently suspected her of some hostility towards Marguerite.

After this confused and uncertain confession, was lightly racked. Added name of la Cuissotte to her accomplices, and now said she had been to sabbat. Said her master had visited her in prison and had intercourse with her. Gave name of la mere d'Anne du Pasnier as having also been at sabbat. Agreed to having made Drouot ill, but denied killing wife of Jean Francois; this had been done by another woman, and she would have cured her if it had been her doing. Said her master had not given her

anything to kill with, but had told her that she could make them ill and cure them by means of 'un mauvais regard' between their eyes. Then added name of another accomplice; Barbe veuve Nicolas le Foulx

15 September 1609; interrogation

Confirmed confessions of previous day, and maintained accusations, except that against Barbe, which she attributed to the pains of the torture. Notable that interrogation was very inadequate, and failed to follow up main points alleged against her; also that Dagueneil and Meurot were present, and among signatories of document.

16 September 1609; PG des Vosges asks for death sentence, and orders confrontation with three women she had accused.

17 September; Change de Nancy approves death sentence

When confronted with Huguette on 19 September, Margueritte claimed she accused her out of hatred; she had refused to give her alms, saying that she was young enough to earn her living, and was in better health than she was herself. Afterwards Huguette told judges that she had endured torture in order to avoid accusing Margueritte and Cuissotte, who were really witches. On 20th discharged Mere Anne, but was confronted with Cuissotte and maintained accusation. Later said she had accused Mere Anne because she heard she was in prison, and there were some at sabbat who wore a black coiffe like hers, but could not be sure she had seen her. Was finally confronted with her, and Mere Anne claimed that she only knew Huguette by sight, as another of the poor, and that she bore her envy because she thought she received more alms than herself.

Later on 20 September she was seen by curés of Neufchateau and Rouceu, and admonished to tell the truth about the women she had accused; after giving confession she said that she had falsely accused them all, and had seen none of them at sabbat. Then was taken to market-place and executed.

On 23 September the executioner (Nicolas Maulingot) testified that in her last words Huguette had said that Margueritte and Cuissotte were witches. Nevertheless on September 25 the PG des Vosges (Dumenil) ordered the release of the three women who were being held, on grounds that none of the judges had heard the last-minute accusation reported by the executioner. It was, however, open to the judges to seek evidence against them in the normal fashion.