

B 5327 no 2; witch 097, Odile femme Martin Claude, d'Assenoncourt

20 December 1599; informations preparatoires

Taken at request of Jean Blanchar, manouvrier d'Assenoncourt, partie formelle

(1) Le maire Conradt, 50

Reputation 10 or 12 years.

(2) Gaspar Cousturier, serrurier, 60

Had known her for 30 years, but had only heard her reputed witch since she moved from village of Fribourg in bishopric of Metz (next village) 5 years earlier. 3 years earlier she and his wife had dispute over alleged debt of 20 gros, after which husbands were summoned to Dieuze, and judgement went in favour of witness. Since then she had continued to threaten his wife, who had gone out of her mind around last Rogations - suspected she was cause of this.

(3) Didier Chatron, laboureur, 50

2 years before had been in Fribourg, and maire came to ask him how Odille was doing in Assenoncourt. He said she was working very hard, to which maire said 'qu'elle pouvoit bien besogner et qu'elle estoit une femme de nuict, que sy elle ne se fut retirée hors dudit Fribourg, elle fut esté bruslée' - he had called her witch several times without any action following. Witness himself as maire had to go to her house and take security for payment of aides; she was angry, threatening he would repent within 3 days. On 4th day a young horse was killed by wolves, over which he suspected her. Around last Easter his horses went to drink, and she said they were full of oats, but they would not always eat so well, and might even break their necks. Next day one of the horses sickened, and when his wife met Odile she asked how it was doing, then promised to bring a drink to cure it. When she did so said it was too late, and they should have called her in earlier; it duly died, and he suspected her of being the cause.

(4) George Crenelé, manouvrier, 30

Reputation 4 years. Previous year she had been in her garden, and he heard her say 'qu'on disoit qu'elle estoit une sorciere, mais qu'elle vouldroit estre tous les diables et qu'elle en romproit le col à d'aulcuns.'

(5) Hans Grand Bernard, laboureur, 70

Previous Lent had caught her husband carting 4 loads of logs from his woodland; ended up taking him to court at Dieuze. She had threatened his daughter that if he had them fined 'elle leur feroit tant de mal qu'il s'en sauleroit'. About a month later a mare sickened and died strangely, which he suspected had been her doing in view of threats. Reputed a witch since her youth.

(6) Claus Arnolt, laboureur, 30

Had heard of reputation at Fribourg, and of accusations she had disregarded.

(7) Wirych Grand Jean, laboureur, 40

Had heard that if she had stayed longer at Fribourg she would have been burned.

(8) Didier Tixerant, 60

Reputation 12 years. 4 years earlier his children had taken harness as caution for damage done by two horses belonging to her husband. She was very angry, and said that if he used this she hoped wolves would kill his horses. 3 weeks later used harness on 2 of his own horses, and same night they were killed by wolves, so that he suspected her.

(9) Jean Gigoux, jeune fils de Naffroicourt, resident à Assenoncourt, 27

About a year earlier was cutting wood for salines, and left her house where he had been lodging for 18 months; she said he would repent this. Became very ill within 2 weeks, and lost speech for another 2 weeks; when he was convalescent she placed her hand on his head in street, after which he recovered. Suspected she had made him ill, then cured him.

(10) Estienne Garsonnet, 40

Reputation 20 years.

(11) Colas Barron jeune fils de Laffroicourt, fagotteur, demeurant à Assenoncourt

About a year earlier he and two of his companions were lodging with her, and one night heard a great noise on floor above them. One of them said he thought it was the devil come to fetch their hostess (who had bad reputation); made sign of cross, and noise ceased immediately.

(3 January 1600)

(12) Jacquot Colas le Maire, maire de Fribourg, 52

Had dispute with her and her husband 15 years earlier over price of cartload of hay; ended up not selling it to them. Same day had trouble in right arm, which then spread to left, as if a knife had been put through them; so ill he ended up being carried in a sheet for 5 months. Finally accused told his wife he was bewitched, and they should make a pilgrimage to Bel Bernard - her mother, previously executed as a witch, had recommended this for such illnesses. He had not wanted to do this, but had hoped God would send healing - still had pain in arms, and could not use them for work. Thought in view of curse she had given him at time, as others reported to him, she was responsible. 12 years earlier had told her husband in public she was a witch, to which he replied 'S'il vous semble qu'elle soit telle faicte la brusler', but took no action for redress.

(13) Didier Colas le Maire, manouvrier de Fribourg, frère du precedent, 40

Some 11 years earlier, when garrison left Sarrebourg and lodged overnight at Fribourg, he was away from home. Odile sent soldiers to fetch some flour she knew was in his house; later his wife went to complain about this, and same day had such a bad pain in her side she thought she would die. Odile then visited her and told her she would soon recover. Later he several times accused her of being a witch and having made his wife ill, without any redress being sought. At same time had 3 animals dead; she told him to sweep out the stable and the animals would flourish. 7 years earlier, when his wife was pregnant, Odile gave her something to eat, after which she went into labour and had stillborn child - suspected her over this too.

(14) Warin Manouvrier, de Fribourg, 36

10 years before his wife had planted beans in her garden, and piglets belonging to Odile got in. Told her husband they should keep them securely, and Odile said 'que le diable luy ouisse arracher la teste du corps du deposant et qu'il en avoit menty' - he called her witch and said he would kill her. On another occasion a horse belonging to Odile's husband knocked over a shelf, breaking some pots, for which she had to pay. 3 months later his wife became very ill, and died after 7 weeks; a neighbour asked Odile why she did not visit her and make her a soup, to which she replied that she had taken the money for her pots and could use that to buy a soup. Suspected that death had been her doing.

(15) Thiebault Parmentier, de Fribourg, 40

10 years before his wife had beaten her niece, who went to her crying; immediately afterwards his wife lost use of arms and hands, and had only recovered gradually - still unable to work properly. He had called her witch, and been taken before justice at Fribourg, but her husband withdrew case, saying costs would be too great.

(7 January 1600)

(16) Jean Blanchar, manouvrier, 40

Was also in prison, as partie formelle. 2 weeks before St Rémy had been behind 'maison metairière' belonging to castelain of Dieuze, where accused and husband lived. Was loading dung to put on fields of George Creneillé when she leaned on hedge and said to him in 'langage lorrain'; 'pauvre compaignon, tu as bien de mal de ce que tu ne peulx recouvrir d'ung cher, nous estions dernièrement en telle peine, car nous avons affaire d'une rouée pour mettre à l'un de noz chers, et cerchions par tout le village mais nou n'en sceurons recouvrir sy tu ne nous en eusse prestee une des tiennes. L'on dict que je suis genoxe, je voudrois estre diable tout à fait, j'en ferois tant que d'aucuns s'en repentiroient longtemps.' 3 days later found one of his horses was ill, and it died 4 or 5 days later. In view of bad reputation believed she had caused this, which led him to make himself partie formelle.

3 January 1600; interrogation

Said she was about 40, native of Assenoncourt, daughter of Schrempen Nickel and his wife Guele (?).

Admitted that maire of Fribourg had called her witch to husband in public meeting, and again when he was ploughing, 'mais que la femme n'est pas maitre et qu'il appartient au marit de s'en venger.'

Said that she had seen Didier Chatron's wife passing in a great hurry; asked where she was going, and she said to the smith because they had a horse ill. Offered her what was left of a drink she and her husband had prepared for their own sick horse - was made of mixture of 'frezillon', alum, and honey, boiled up in water. Did not go to house with her.

Admitted that she had gone out into garden and said she wished she were a witch for a quarter of an hour so that she could break neck of Grand Hanns, because of things he had said about her. Had told his daughter Alizon that her father treated them very roughly, and if they had a chance to fine him they would take full advantage. His mare had died when being delivered of a foal.

As for noise in attic, might have been a dog chasing a cat - boards were not nailed down, and made a great noise when animals went over them.

Asked about disturbance in prison on day after Christmas, said that in the morning 'il luy advint une vision, qu'il luy sembloit estre en son losgis aupres du feu, et Messire Cathin curé dudit Assenoncourt accompagné de Conradt Boutler et Jean Tixerand dudit lieu estoient aupres d'elle. Lequel faisoit des serviettes (comme il luy sembloit) d'aultant qu'il y a ung tixerand qui faict l'amour a sa fille, et comme ledit Sr curé vient souventesfois en leur losgis, il se mocque tousjours volontier de sadite fille, disant qu'elle faisoit des serviettes.'

(7 January 1600)

Continued to deny virtually all accusations. Agreed that she had made remarks about wife of Warin Manouvrier, suggesting she use money she had paid for broken pots. Added that she had become ill after eating pears before Mass.

13 January 1600; confrontations

No reproaches, maintained denials of many circumstantial details, apart from those already admitted.

30 January 1600; Rémy asks for torture

1 February 1600; Change de Nancy approves

5 February 1600; interrogation under torture

When racked was finally induced to say she had made use of some curses, but continued to deny she was a witch. Then asked to be released so she could reconsider; allowed until Vespers. At that time still said she was no witch, but gave way when she was prepared for fresh torture. Said she had been returning from fields 3 years earlier in company of Neze, femme Erhard Schneyder (now dead). Said to latter that she wished her late mother had accused all those who were witches, to which he replied 'tay toy, car tu vois bien qu'Austien Thiebault le daintre de la saline a beaucoup de biens et est bien en telle compagnie'. After supper Neze came and asked her to a meeting in the fields; brought a young man to be her partner in the dance. Did not yield to him on this occasion, but next day Neze persuaded her to go again, saying 'qu'il falloit qu'elle fut de leur compagnie et qu'elle viroit des choses qu'elle n'avoit jamais veue'. This was in garden behind Neze's

house, and this time she gave in to young man who showed her a purse full of money; he scratched her head, made her renounce God, and had intercourse with her - cold as ice.

(7 February 1600) Confirmed earlier confessions. Money had been leaves, master's name was Federwüsch. Saw a labourer from Fribourg named Caspars Hanns; were some 20 of them at feast and dance, where there was plenty of roast meat but no bread or salt, and drink was like 'pisset de cheval'. Others present included Jenon femme Klein Hennsels Hanns of Azoudange, and la Noire Magdelaine, sister of Didier Chatron.

Attended other meetings at greater distance, to reach which she sat on a fork in the name of the devil - went through stable door, others said they went up chimney. On one occasion when going to beat water and cause frost was surprised to see number of others, said Jesus, and master allowed her to all to the ground, but she was not hurt. Attempts to make frost or storms were frustrated by ringing of church bells on several occasions.

Also accounts of nightly meetings with intention of using drinks to kill individuals or their animals; generally unsuccessful because they had crossed themselves and committed themselves to God's protection. Sometimes went round trying several houses, then dispersed when they heard the cock crow. Asked how they could see at night, said they had three candles made from fingers of stillborn child, which burned with a blue light. Named same accomplices, with addition of Maiette femme Braittschwert of Assenoncourt. Burned body of child to make powder, which they mixed with urine of horses or cows to make drink with which to kill. Had killed 3 horses of Bauren Michiel, and 3 more of Didier Chatron. On 2 occasions when they were frustrated her master forced her to give unused drink to one of her own horses, which died.

Agreed that they had sent Caspar Cousturier's wife out of her mind with a drink made from brains of cats and cow's urine. This had been given to her by a big man she did not know, and two women in white pelisses, all of whom were masked. Asked how she had managed with the host, said she put it in a handkerchief and hid it in her stable. Also confessed they had killed 2 horses belonging to Jean Blanchar..

10 February 1600; Rémy asks for death sentence. Change de Nancy agrees.