

Witch 098, Synnel Stumpff 1

B 5344 no 1; witch 098, Synnel, femme Hans Stumpff, mulnier d'Amange (this is the modern Insming, 17 km east of Morhange)

12 November 1608; informations preparatoires

(1) Bingel femme Kutz Nickel, 21

Long reputation.

(2) Odille femme Schwaben Mathis, 40

General reputation; had heard that when schoolmaster had a cow dead he suspected her, and she asked him why he had not sought a drink from her earlier, which might have healed it.

(3) Sybille femme Stoffel Schmidt, 30

Long reputation; had heard from neighbours that she had made la grosse Anne ill.

(4) Bette veuve Hans Duscher, 40

During illness of her sister-in-law, la grosse Anne, she told witness Synnelle had made her ill, and that she should fetch her so that she could tell her so. Witness refused, saying perhaps she would come to see her anyway. Had also heard that sons of Frantz and Thomas Colas had seen her riding a fork. Long reputation.

(5) Apelonne femme Stoffel Portier, 46

Story of how la grosse Anne was sitting by spring when accused arrived, there was a great wind, and she fell ill.

(6) Stoffel Marchal, 30

Reputation 12 years (residence). Story about grosse Anne, another that 6 years before she had been seen high in the air.

(7) Dimenche Schweitzer, 56

General reputation. Some 10 years earlier had seen her jumping and falling from one hedge to another, as if rabid, with hair all wild; within an hour there was a great storm, which did much damage to crops at Bocknom, as he had heard. When he was bangard had to have her fined over trespassing animals, since when he had lost about 12 horses and 6 cows - had always suspected Synnelle of being cause. About a year earlier had a young mare dead, and while it was being cut up outside his house a lame girl who lived with accused came to look at it. 3 months later lost another horse. His late wife Mayette had seen Synnelle in front of her as she went to pick cherries, then a wind took her, she became ill for 16 weeks and died; always believed, as he did, that accused was responsible. Every man, woman, and child feared her.

(8) François Oudat, maire du prieur, 28

Had heard that Synnelle told servant to bring a pot to her in the fields, but she broke it against an oak, and her grenier was full of oak leaves afterwards. His wife had suffered from a great illness he thought had been witchcraft, although he did not know who was responsible; mother had been ill for 18 years, and thought she was cause.

(9) Stephen Schwab, 40

Previous carnival his wife (la grosse Anne) had been so ill she was unconscious and unable to speak for several days. Told him Synnelle had approached her by the spring, and she had then been struck by a wind which blew her hair around, and fell ill immediately. Was advised to consult a woman healer at Riche, who had cured many; took her sample of urine, on which basis she said his wife had been afflicted by 'un mauvais vent'. Gave some water for her to drink, saying that she should have no other treatment for 9 days, after 8 of which he should return to say if she was better. Did recover, and was sure Synnel had made her ill. General reputation, and his servant Hanns fils Diebelt (presently absent) had seen her by his bed one night - could not speak.

(10) La grosse Anne, femme du precedent, 60

Story about servant who saw her and another woman by bed; vanished when he put his right thumb in his hand. Then told of own illness, which started when she was doing washing; priest had visited her often, but not confessed her. Same story as husband; added that Synnelle would have liked to have a barn which they had bought. Her niece Odille had married Senelle's son Hanns Mulnier; when spinning one night hens started to make a noise, and mother-in-law said 'va, va en l'estable de la grosse Anne sur la noire vache' - had lost many animals, which she suspected was her doing.

(11) Jean Cordonnier, 40

Long reputation. His sister-in-law Marie claimed to have been frightened by seeing her at foot of bed - put covers over her head, but was still there when she looked again.

(12) Denys Tourneur, 66

2 years earlier sent his 2 daughters out to guard animals; saw a large woman in the air, arms and legs spread, riding a distaff and seeming to be led by something black. Called on God, and as she passed the distaff fell to the ground; they did not dare touch it, but pushed it into the water. Synnelle then appeared saying it was hers, and that her grandson had taken it there. Since she 'ne faisoit feste ne dimenche', was publicly reputed a witch in village.

(13) Jean Caillat, 28

Story of pot and oak leaves - in this version servant met a man who told her to put pot under an oak tree, instead of fields her mistress intended, and house was filled with leaves. Also story about hens being sent to stable, this time with instructions to kill the black cow.

(14) Fleische Hanns, 60

Story of pot; according to him man looked into it and saw it was full of 'choses sales et vilaines', after which it was thrown against tree and broke. Took a day and a half to clean leaves out of house.

(15) Jean Tixerant, 40

Long reputation. Had heard from one named Nickel from Kigner that she had been seen up a tree using birds to take grain to her loft.

(16) Françoise femme Colas le Petit Masson, de la tuillerie d'Alstorff, 36

5 years earlier had been servant in prévôté of Amange. In bed one night felt someone grasp her arm; saw figure of Synnelle, with strange light between hands, moving away - made sign of cross and she disappeared. Since then arm had been painful, making it difficult to work. Same night a sow was taken out of stable, and found dead next day as if roasted; thought this was done because the visitor was unable to attack life of the witness. Long reputation, and had been talk of arresting her.

(17) Marie, veuve demeurant a Wantzweiller, 36

Previous year had been guarding cattle at Amange, and one evening saw her before bed with blue candle; disappeared when she made sign of the cross. Ill for 9 weeks, and head still started spinning when she had to cross bridges. In view of reputation believed her responsible for illness.

(18) Jeanne femme Stro Hanns, 42

Story of sending hens to stable at night.

(19) Bonnen Petter, 29

Always reputed a witch. In youth had met her carrying a stick as weather threatened, and said to her 'O Jesus tente Synnelle que sera ce de ce temps', to which she replied 'rien de bon'. Later heard from sergent that she had been seen jumping among hedges and bushes.

(20) Schu Thiebault sergent en la justice d'Amange, 40

9 years earlier had been on way to mill when he saw great storm coming up; also saw accused jumping over hedges, with clouds following her. Ran as fast as he could, but she kept up, and when he hid in a bush stood before him without saying anything, but smiling a little. He went back towards Albe, where hail did much damage. 3 days later met her and asked what she had been doing; she said she had been looking for her sister, to which he replied she had been looking for her witch. Said she would take action if she had witnesses, adding 'qu'il luy feroit volontier perdre son bien d'aultant qu'il n'avoit rien a perdre'.

(21) Fritsche Cordonnier, 29

Long reputation; had heard from son of Schu Thiebault (absent at present) that he had seen her at foot of his bed by night.

(22) Humbert Bousendorff, maitre d'école à Amange, 38

Commonly reputed witch; when he was taking holy water round village she said she wanted none, and could fetch it herself if necessary.

(23) Jean fils Schu Adam, in service at Weitzem, 19

Had been in her service, and when he asked her why la grosse Anne had so many animals dead she replied there had been a spirit in her barn which had told hens to go to black cow.

(24) Barthelemin Cousturier, 57

Story of her night-time visit to son of Thiebault Cordonnier, who had heard that putting right thumb in hand enabled one to speak in such cases. When he did this was able to say to her 'O sorciere que vous estéz, que faictes vous icy', to which she replied 'Que parle tu, ton pere s'en ressentira'.

(25) Jean fils Jacques Woitsch, 20

3 years earlier, when serving la grosse Anne, developed bad arm - still had open place he had been unable to get healed. When he went to mill of Hanns Stumpff he told him he would suffer from it for his life; another time suggested there was a woman at St Nabor who might be able to heal it, but Sennelle said it was too long ago, and the woman might be dead. At this suspected she might have been the cause of his affliction.

(26) Bignelle femme Frantz Man, 39

Had heard from Odille, daughter-in-law of accused, that when she was alone in the house she heard a noise in the kitchen which frightened her - thought it might be Senelle trying to do her harm, since she hated her.

(27) Schur Adam, 50

Some 12 years earlier had cows on lease from her, which she took back before term - he was angry and called her witch, but when her servant pointed this out to her she said he did not know what he was saying, and took no action.

29 November 1608; C.M. Rémy asks for arrest, interrogation, and confrontations

8 December 1608; court at Dieuze approves this action

12 December 1608; interrogation

Said she was about 56, native of Kerche in Luxembourg; father was Bernhard and mother Marie. Went into service at Albe, where she was married to Hanns Stumpff, then lived 5 years at Puttelange, since when had been resident at Amange.

Asked if she had made la grosse Anne ill, said no, but Anne 'ne luy avoit jamais point voullu de bien.' Denied series of other charges completely. Agreed she had told a valet of la grosse Anne that he might come to harm if he remained there; this was because his master often beat him on suspicion that he was having affair with his mistress.

17 December 1608; confrontations

Stoffel Marchal added that when he was appointed to be one of those taking her to Dieuze she said 'Mon dieu est ce maintenant a moy, il ne demoura long temps qu'il n'en vienne encor d'aultres.'

After originally stating that la grosse Anne was her 'bonne voisine', heard her testimony and said 'qu'elle avoit menty comme une cocquine, sorciere, et larronnesse, que l'escorcheur luy avoit bien dict que ce faisoit elle mesme qui faisoit mourir ses bestes et qu'elle avoit quatre fois mieulx meritée d'estre en prison qu'elle'.

Denys Tourneur said his daughters had not given evidence because the eldest was only 12. She said her grandson might well have taken distaff, since he took everything he could find out of the house, but denied rest of story.

Over story of pot and leaves, asked that they produce the maid who had carried the pot. As for the widow Marie, said she was a vagabond.

Bonnen Petter added story of horse which drowned in shallow stream 12 years earlier; she came on scene and said he should leave it where it was. The owner, Britz de Nelling, suspected her because he had ceased to use her mill.

In reply to Humbert Bousendorff, said she was so poor she could not give him the normal quarter of a loaf for holy water, and had obtained it from the church on Sundays. On deposition of Jean fils Jacques Woitscher, repeated suggestion that he was beaten by master because of relationship with mistress.

(22 December 1608)

(28) René de Villiers, demeurant à Alstorff, 32

Reputation 20 years; had called her witch himself without any action following. One day he and the late Capitaine Melon were returning from hunting, when they saw her carrying a pot near Kigniers; she put it down and went to a hedge. Asked what she was doing, said she was looking for her horses; found pot, which contained oak leaves and something black and smelly. He threw it to the ground, breaking it, and called her witch, without any reaction. On another occasion saw her near a willow tree which was surrounded by smoke - later asked if there was a fire, and she said there was nothing. Had heard from frère Pierre, now curé at Munster, that when he was at priory of Amange he had seen her and Odille femme Henry Cousturier by his bed, with their heads together; they vanished when he called out. Curé also thought she had killed his horse, worth 50 écus.

In reply to this admitted he had met her as he returned from hunting, but denied the rest.

30 December 1608; C.M. Rémy asks for question ordinaire

31 December 1608; Change de Nancy approves

2 January 1609; interrogation under torture

Was lifted up on strappado six times, but would not confess. Judges suggested that she should tell truth so that she did not die in her sins, offering her time to reflect. Asked to be allowed a relapse, and was taken down overnight.

3 January; interrogation under torture

As executioner started to lift her up, offered to confess. Marginal note here from Rémy: 'Seront adverties les sieurs gens de justice ceste parte qu'il n'est permis d'iterer la question par interval de jour a autre et qui s'en debvront abstenir a l'advenir a peine d'en estre poursuivies en leurs pure et privé nom par le procureur general de quoy il proteste.'

Said she had been seduced 18 years earlier. Husband often beat her, and had gone out one autumn night when a man approached her offering good advice if she would serve him. Refused this time, but yielded on second occasion when he offered to make her rich so that she would never want. Usual seduction scene. Gave her horsedung. His name was Pennette or Trousseau de Plume.

Had been told to go to place between Lining and Wirming, where she and her accomplices had body of an unbaptised child, which they had kept for 3 days and nights, then burned to make powder. Those present were la Grosse Mairesse, Synnelle femme Schur Adam, Odille femme Henry Cousturier, and la grosse Anne, all of Amange. Master told them to go and waste crops at Kinguier, but grain was too ripe and no longer in flower, so they failed.

10 years before had been to destroy acorns at molin de hault. Had also killed a horse of Jaqhanns at instigation of devil, who would not leave them at rest; he himself was present, with one named Schect, whose daughter Else was holding its head, while la Grosse Mairesse and Sennelle gave it drink.

Had made la grosse Anne ill, because she took her linen when her house burned down. As for her cow, her master had made her and her accomplices kill this, with la Grosse Mairesse and the wife of Nickel Marchal. Had killed wife of Demenge Schwitzer as she slept while husband was away; the daughter of Hanns Schneider, wife of Nicklas Marchal, held her while drink was given by wife of Schur Adam and wife of Henry Cousturier.

Asked about candles, said they used them, and they gave little light, but had not seen them made, so did not know what they were. Asked about other crimes, said they had killed a child of the prévôt of Amange; the wife of Hanns Schneider (now executed) gave the drink, while other accomplices as listed above were present.

Said she had been at a wedding feast on mountain near Heyliguer; bride was Nickel Marchal's wife, and others she had listed were present, also Mayette daughter of Woitsche Thiebault of Nelling, and others she did not know. Was wine and meat, but little bread and no salt.

Asked about communion, said she had never been able to swallow it since she became witch; had taken host home and given it to children. Said she had been at a 'noce de saba' near Nelling, where grand-daughter of la Grosse Mairesse, aged about 10, was given to 'un beau jeune diable'. Usual accomplices present. Danced back to back, travelled on forks or brooms anointed with special grease; put a fork next to husbands in their place in the name of the devil.

Had met between Alstorff and Munster to destroy pears and acorns, but had been chased away; killed a mare belonging to Colmans Nickel. Had been towards Grening, where her master took form of wolf to kill a sheep, but were prevented

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from spoiling the crops. Said she had helped to make hail six times - usual technique.

5 January 1609; interrogation

Repeated earlier confessions, and insisted that all those she had named were witches. Confronted with Synnelle femme Schur Adam, also under arrest, and maintained charges against her - the other said she lied like a witch, and tried to attack her, but was prevented.

7 January 1609; C.M. Rémy asks for execution, after confrontation with all those she had accused.

8 January 1609; Change de Nancy reiterates objections to misuse of torture, and requires further free confession before sentence is confirmed.