

B 6760. Witch 109; Mengeatte veuve Grand Jacques de Rehainviller

22 April 1624. Order from substitut du procureur général de Lorraine for depositions to be taken against her, since Guillaume Wilaume, canonier and garonnier de S.A. of Rehainviller has made himself partie formelle, also for her arrest, since it has been reported that she is trying to flee.

23 April 1624; informations preparatoires

(1) Le sieur Estienne Grevel chevaulcheur des sallines, de Viller, 39

Common reputation. Believed she had made his wife ill, then taken off illness after learning of his suspicions; wife feared her, and did not like seeing her begging at their door. Although he told her not to come there, she continued to do so; one day his 7-year-old daughter Marie came saying 'ma mere, voila la genaxe qui est a la porte'. Mother told her to tell her to come again later, but girl gave her some bread. Same night fell ill, stomach became all swollen, and she died in 4 days, with doctors and apothecary saying they could do nothing while she endured great pain. Around time of death accused was outside house for several hours, and a creature like a scorpion was found in child's bedding after death. When he showed this to apothecary he said it was 'un sort'; when she came to house a week later he beat her, accusing her of causing illness of wife and death of daughter. She denied former, said nothing about latter. (Signed)

(2) Didier Liebault, 60

General reputation. Had heard his late son Claude and late Jean Rosselat say that as 'banwards' they had found her beating water on the river; asked what she was doing, at which she said she was lost and thought she was on road to Rehainviller. They called her witch and spread word of what they had seen; then both fell ill and died after lingering for 2 years or more. During this time they accused her, but she denied having caused illness, while saying his son would recover.

(3) Susanne veuve Jean Rosselat, 50

Told story of how she was found by river; said she was looking for 'manchon' she had lost, but they said she had one - she replied that she had two, and one had fallen in river. Believed she caused his subsequent death.

(4) Jehenne femme Jean Demenge, 50

About 4 years before had admired a foal on way to fields, and touched its neck - started to limp later, and died in 3 days. Thought this might have been because she refused her alms.

(5) Catherine femme Claude Martez de la Maixe, and previously at Rehainviller, 56

General reputation. Thought she had killed a fine cow after being forced to pay rent of a house. Witness had called her witch and beaten her, after which she sought reparation, but abandoned case after she told her she would rather risk 50 ecus to have her burned than make it.

(6) Claude Martez (husband of above), 50

Story of death of cow. When the late curé of Rehainviller, Messire Maurin, called her witch and told her off, she said she was as innocent as Virgin Mary, and he was very angry. Her late husband Grand Jacques Masson had also called her witch and threatened to have her burned.

(7) Remy Barthelemin de Chanteheu, 37

About 12 years earlier she had asked him to ferry her across river, but he refused because he was unsure of ability to manage the boat. Within days a fine cow died suddenly.

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(8) Jacques Boisleant, 50

She lived in a room of same house as him. General reputation, believed she had been responsible for death of his first wife Libaire, who was completely emaciated after 2 year illness, and said that the accused had given her the sickness. Knew no rason for this.

(9) Margueritte femme du precedent, 46

Said she often cried in the night as if being beaten; when asked about it said she sometimes dreamed she was being beaten.

(10) Bastien Wampel, 34

Said that after episode by river she had promised the two men 2 francs if they would remain silent, but never paid it. On death of Anthoine, brother of Claude Libault, who had earlier caught her stealing flax in his garden, she said 'en voila desja un des mort qui ne me fera plus de mal'. Believed she had given all 3 their fatal illnesses.

(11) Francoise femme Thierry Jean, 40

General reputation (16 years residence)

(12) Gerard de Vicherey, 60

General reputation

(13) Toussaint Thierry, 30

Some 6 or 7 years ago, in the fields, his wife had told her that she had killed her first husband; in same week a cow and a calf died in his stable, and in view of her reputation believed her responsible.

(14) Jean Mathieu le jeune, 25

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Had called her old witch after a quarrel.

(15) Claudon femme au maire Pieron George, 40

Had sometimes beaten her for being too importunate in demanding alms, but despite reputation did not think she had suffered any harm.

(16) Mengeatte femme Demenge Renard Masson, 30

Did not suspect her over death of her first husband Anthoine Liebault, because he was already ill 7 weeks before their quarrel.

(17) Jean Mathieu le viel, tisserand, 50

Some 26 or 27 years earlier had baby aged 6 months, and wife was obtaining milk from her. Dissatisfied with it, so went elsewhere, but child died 2 days after they told her of the change. Already reputed witch then, as she still was.

(18) Anne femme du precedent, 60

Same story, but said she did not suspect her.

(19) Georgeatte femme Jean Mathieu le jeune, 26

General reputation

(20) Mengeatte veuve Nicolas Chrestien, 60

She had uttered curses against several neighbours, and witness reproached her, saying that if something happened to her after such curses she would think they were the cause. Accused called her 'grande ravaderesse de gens', and within days her daughter Agnes became ill, losing use of legs for 6 months. When she came to house witness called her witch, blaming her for illness and threatening to beat her if it had not been so close to Easter. After this slowly recovered, but only completely cured after making pilgrimages on advice of a woman at Mont (later executed as a witch).

(21) Bastienne femme Didier Aubertin, 50

Was called witch without reacting, and suspected her over death of a horse (but unsure).

(22) Margueritte femme Claudon Gasel, 28

General reputation

(23) George des Boeufs, 54

Reputation more than 20 years; had seen no harm in her, although she had lived in their house.

(24) Demenge Anthoine, 40

Often called witch.

(25) Mathieu Trompette, 40

Knew nothing against her.

(26) Mengeatte femme du precedent, 40

Her children had sometimes called her witch, and when she complained to witness she warned she would complain of her if any harm came to them - did not think any had.

(27) Jean Demenge, 60

Did not think she had done him any harm, although he had sometimes spoken roughly to her when she came to door begging.

(28) Mengeatte femme Gerard Carel, 40

Had no suspicion against her.

(29) Claude Blaise, 40

Had quarrel over washing as neighbours previous year, after which their child became ill. Beat her with a small stick while calling her witch, telling her to cure his child or he would kill her. Cure was not immediate, but had eventually recovered.

(30) Didiere femme du precedent, 30

Same deposition as husband - had not invited her to share washtub she prepared. Several people had said illness could only be 'mal donné'.

(31) Claudon femme Jacquot Vannier, 60

12 years before, on way back from Lunéville, accused told her 'qu'elle voudroit estre sorciere deux heures pour faire sa volonté'; when she protested, said it was just to harm those who called her witch. Told of subsequent quarrel when husband of accused was doing stonework for them, and she was angry because he was drinking wine from tavern. Witness pushed her out of house, and accused knocked off her bonnet. Some 3 years later Jean Mengeat, first husband of witness, became fatally ill, and when accused came to sprinkle holy water on body said 'il scait bien maintenant s'il a bien faict, ou non' - but did not wish to blame her for his death. Commonly called witch.

(32) Claudon Gasel, 37

He was neighbour, and said she often declared she wished she was a witch to do harm to people. Had told him he would repent after quarrels, and his wife fell ill; recovered, but when accused had seen she was blamed as witch his wife became ill again and died. Believed she might have caused this - long reputation.

(33) Alison femme Toussaint Thiebel, 40

When she married her first husband Jean Sarmant she borrowed 3 francs off accused, and until she could repay it gave her some cloth each year. After 3 years repaid money, but they quarrelled because Mengeatte wanted some cloth as well; made threats she would repent, for which she took witnesses, warning her she would take action if anything happened to her or family. 3 weeks later husband became ill, and died 10 weeks later, alleging she had made him ill. Witness did not suspect her, however, except so far as people made her by calling her witch.

(34) Jennon veuve Poirson Henry, 37

Often called witch without avenging herself; had heard her say 'que si son marit alloit en paradis, tout le monde y yroit'.

(35) Catherine femme Joseph Charpentier, 47

19 years earlier had lived in same house for a year, during which her husband died. After this was sometimes heard crying strangely in the night, and when her mother-in-law went to see she seemed to be still asleep - said in morning she had been dreaming. During husband's lifetime he sometimes quarrelled with her, called her witch, and beat her.

(36) Bietrix femme Didier Brouard, 70

Reputation more than 20 years, children regularly called her witch, but although she had suffered numerous losses did not blame her for them.

(37) Jean Simonin, 34

General reputation

(38) Nicolle femme Fleurat Bruslé, 34

Her fathr had refused to sell her something, on advice of witness, and then became all swollen and died within 2 weeks. Did not visit him during illness or after death, although previously she was often in house. Often called witch without seeking reparation.

(39) François Martin, 22

General reputation, had no personal suspicion, except that mother had become fatally ill after quarrel with her coming back from vines - others had remarked on this, but his mother had said nothing to him.

(40) Jean Carriere, 60

Reputation more than 30 years. Did not seek redress when called witch, and was often beaten so hard that anyone else would have been badly hurt, 'mais qu'elle sembloit estre endurcie aux coups, et qu'ilz ne luy faisoient rien non plus que si on eust touché sur du bois'.

(41) Guillaume Villaume, plaidant

For some time he had suspected that she had caused broken leg of one of his children, after he had threatened to have her burned. Ceased to suspect her over this, but when he saw how she let herself be beaten and accused he decided to make himself partie formelle to avoid greater evils. (Signed)

(2 May 1624)

(42) Jean de Fontaine, cordonnier, 30

Told of occasion previous year when he and his wife were on way to Remiremont and met her 2 hours before dawn; asked where she was going, and she said to market at Lunéville, at which they said she would not find the gates open. Also saw small black dog which barked at them. (Signed)

(43) Elizabeth femme du precedent, 24

Same story as husband, added that when she made sign of cross the dog disappeared.

(44) Jean Robert charrettier, 37

5 weeks earlier was out before dawn with cart when he heard noise of people other side of stream; afraid they might be robbers, but continued, then saw accused. Asked what she was doing, and she said she was lost - saw no-one else.

27 April; confrontations

Denied all charges of witchcraft, but admitted various quarrels. Admitted that husband had called her witch first, and said that he had not been willing to defend her honour - he was 'un mal gouverné'. Also agreed to reprimand by curé, saying 'qu'on n'est pas tousjours bien sage a jeter les parolles en avant'. Admitted that she had made remark about wishing to be witch for an hour. No reproaches to any witnesses.

6 May 1624; C.M. Rémy asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Change de Nancy agrees.

7 May 1624; interrogation under torture

As soon as she was given thumbscrews offered to confess. Had been approached by Persin when she was still in service at Haigneviller, and had been sent out to gather wild pears. Offered to buy her a skirt and make her rich, but on that occasion she refused. Appeared a second time in form of gentleman, and she yielded. Money was glass; he visited her often during 12 years she was in service, taking form of dog, cat, and hare, but she did no harm.

Was then racked, and offered to tell truth. Said that third husband Grand Jacques was 'un desbauché gourmand', who spent money she had earned by cleaning houses afflicted with plague, and often beat her, sometimes driving her out of house. Master found her one night, and gave her yellow powder to kill him, which she did

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by putting it in his soup. Denied any other malefices, but when racked a little more and asked about Estienne Grevel's daughter admitted she had killed her because she had refused her a drink - her master had given her the creature found in her bed. Had also killed his wife, the two 'banyards', and some animals. Denied killing child of Jean Mathieu, and various other crimes attributed to her.

Said she had been to sabbat almost every Thursday, where they danced and feasted - some brought meat, others millet, but she did not because of her poverty. Could not recognize those present because they were masked. Master led dance. sometimes in form of gentleman, at other times in form of dog or cat.

8 May 1624; reiterated earlier confessions

10 May 1624; Rémy calls for death sentence. Change de Nancy approves.

11 May 1624; formal death sentence from court at Lunéville, carried out same day.