

B 7279; witch 118, Catherine Claude d'Azelot

29 July 1583; list of witnesses who will depose against her, prepared by partie formelle Jean Magnien, who was schoolmaster at Azelot, and had now been imprisoned alongside her.

Le maire Gergonne would testify that he believed she had killed his son, who had died recently, also that she had caused illness of a daughter.

Wife of Jehan Michellet believed her responsible for death of a child that summer.

Jehenin Dyentrinault and his wife would testify that their daughter, now married at Azelot, had a twisted arm which they suspected was her doing; also believed she had killed their son.

Zebey Renard suspected her of causing death of one child and illnesses of others.

Jehan Gerard le vieux said his late wife had told him Catherine told her he would die before her, and that he knew this well.

Nicolas and his wife had a child ill, and thought this was her doing.

Jehan Tourselle of le Court believed she was a witch, and had caused death of his wife.

Magnien himself (native of Mandre aux quatre tours), said he believed she did wrong to 'tirer la serviette' to establish which illness people had, after which she made pilgrimages for them. When husband had been to St Claude he was very ill; on return she was able to tell him about this.

Same day Magnien was interrogated, and told story of how 2 weeks earlier he had dined with others at house of Didier Tournoy. Then visited the maire Gergonne, who remarked that he had dined well, then said that the young man for whom he had been saying the service of the year (i.e. a year after death) had been carried off very fast, as had his own son. Added that 'une certaine bonne beste', whom he named as Catherine, had killed them both, that he had long feared her, and wished she were expelled from Azelot. Magnien said she ought to be arrested, to which maire said that he would like to find someone to be partie formelle against her, and pressed him to undertake this. Refused at first, but finally agreed when maire said he would cover his costs, even if these amounted to a hundred florins, and promised to give him an overcoat for his trouble. Went off immediately to arrest her; she was not at home but they found her in the street. He was already repenting of his decision to become partie, but maire insisted that he continue, saying he had nothing to fear.

Added that maire had long been trying to persuade Jean Pateltangel to become partie formelle, promising him 6 gros for every inhabitant of Azelot. Had also approached Jean Gerard and Pierrot Hardier. For his part knew she was suspected, but had never seen her commit any act of witchcraft, and repented having accused her.

PG de Lorraine (Maimbourg) ordered that he be confronted with maire Gergonne, then on pain of suitable punishment required to produce witnesses.

30 July 1583; interrogation of accused

Said she was Catherine Jean Claude, widow of Jean Claude, aged about 82. Husband had died about 12 years earlier, and all 9 children were dead. Knew she

had been accused as witch by Jean Magnien. Asked whether she had not experienced some great need of food or other things, which had caused her to despair, she said that although she had seen some very dear years she had never been troubled in her mind.

Asked about maire Gergonne, denied quarrelling with him. Said that 2 weeks earlier his wife had used pretext to get her to house, saying there was a man from Houdemont who wanted to speak with her. When she found this was false she accused her of doing her wrong, and maiesse made excuses, then explained her married son Nicolas was ill with headache. She had already given him remedy made with rosewater, vinegar, and white of egg, but this had done no good; suspected he had been taken by some 'mauvais air', and begged her to see him. After questioning him she thought this was case, and used prayer with which she had cured many others (Delcambre no 5). To her surprise was called back next day, and found him completely out of his mind; asked mother if they had made pilgrimages to St Melain at Vendenieres and to St Blaise, and was told the pilgrims were already on their way. This did not prevent him dying, but maire and his wife did her great wrong to suspect her.

Had learned prayer from old man called Jean Malherbe at Fléville when she was young; he told her not to use it until his death, which was only 6 weeks later. Said she also treated animals for illnesses called 'la vessie, du sang et des barbes'. Then described technique for determining which saint was responsible for illnesses of persons - see Delcambre p. 33 for description of this rather obscure section.

In respect of illnesses of animals, said that on first Friday of May she went out before dawn to a spring and washed her hands in the water, saying version of prayer she later used when healing animals (Delcambre no 27). If they had 'la barbe' also treated them with salt and onions on wound (? which she made). Said that she had learned use of 'serviette' and prayer for animals from an old woman of Azelot named Esdeline, now dead, and had used them for more than 40 years.

Asked about great noise and cries heard by other prisoners earlier that week, denied hearing them or knowing anything about them.

30 July 1583; interrogation of maire Gergonne Roussel

Asked about claims made by Magnien, claimed that latter had appeared and asked him to make her prisoner without any prompting from him. He had not agreed at first, offering him a drink and suggesting he think again, but Magnien said he would complain about him if he did not arrest her. Denied that he believed she had killed her son, then protested vehemently that he had done nothing to incite Magnien.

Said that he had sometimes thought ill of the accused, because many called her witch and she took no action, but neither he nor his wife believed she had caused them any harm. Was not willing to become partie formelle against her.

Was then confronted with Magnien, and said he could not reproach him, since he hardly knew him, and he had only been at Azelot since previous Whitsun. Both stuck to their respective stories, and Magnien asked that the maire be obliged to join him as partie formelle, while admitting that there was only his word to prove his alleged incitation.

Followed by further statement from Magnien, in which he repeats charge against maire, claiming that for last year he had been soliciting 3 other men to become parties formelles, offering them money. Said he was a poor man but honest, and had a wife and 2 children.

2 August 1583; informations preparatoires

(1) Claudot Henry, cousturier, de Ville-en-Vermois, 23

Reputation 18 years. 10 years earlier had seen her leave her house at midnight and go out of village, but did not know what she was doing.

(2) Nicolas Guerlot, laboureur, de Ville-en-Vermois, 36

Said that 12 years earlier his mother had seen her disturbing water of a spring, and called out to her to stop this before realizing who it was - then felt rather frightened because of reputation as a witch. Took some water home, but husband fell ill after drinking it and finally died, which she suspected had been her doing.

(3) Mengeon femme Jean de Corbessault, de Loupcourt, 36

Had lived for 6 years at Azelot, and often called her in for sick children. She decided on pilgrimages to beau Bernard, St Blaise, and St George by use of a scarf, and this worked well.

(4) Mengeotte femme Gergonne Roussel, 50

Supported husband's story about Magnien's arrival to demand her arrest, claiming that husband tried to persuade him against this. Said that she was reputed a witch, and she had sometimes suspected her over deaths or illnesses of children and animals, but had never quarrelled with her.

(16 August 1583)

(5) Françoise femme Pierre Bonnet, d'Azelot, 47

General reputation, and use of scarf for divination. Had been neighbour for many years, and had numerous quarrels, so 'tient pour asseuré que si elle fut sorciere, elle qui depose s'en fut ressentuy' over period of more than 30 years. On the contrary had always seen her as a good woman, very Catholic, who gave many alms to the poor, and had always treated everyone who asked her.

(6) Philippe Grand Demenge, laboureur, 50

Did not know if his late wife Françoise had any quarrel with her, but when she was in childbed 6 years earlier Catherine had come and put hand on her stomach, after which she became very fearful and said she was doomed, adding that her hand had been cold as ice. She then lost speech, and died 2 days later. General reputation.

(7) Odille veuve Jean de Beufville, 60

Her son aged 26 had died 2 years earlier. Had very swollen thigh, which first developed when in service at St Nicolas, with various abscesses. Returned home and continued to work despite illness; Catherine asked if she could join them in reaping, but he did not want to agree, saying that she could hardly see any more.

Did not however blame her for his subsequent death, having always known her as a good woman. Said that 6 or 7 years earlier had been with Pierre Bonnet, tisserand, to visit Domp Jean de Xanrey at Niderhoff; Bonnet asked him who had stolen some cloth, but he said he could discover nothing about such a matter. Under pressure, then said to him that the first woman who came into his house on his return would be the one who had caused death of his children, and that 'des bien longtemps l'on avoit envye sur luy'. Catherine was first to come in on his return.

(8) Marguerite femme Vincenot de la Rue, 40

Had been married to one of her sons for 11 months; had never seen harm in her, though like others had called her witch without reparation being sought.

(9) Girard Jean Girard, 40

Reputation only.

(10) Mengin Regnard, laboureur, 36

About 6 years earlier had a sick child, and called her in to diagnose illness; had advised a pilgrimage, which she would make with others. Another neighbour then suggested that she was about to go on pilgrimage for her own sick child, so she might go for them too; Catherine was angry about this and said 'voyla ton enfant gueris le, tu envoye bien loing au St pour le guerir et il est tout pres'. Child died next day, and half of body became grey - thought she might have been cause, but was not certain.

(11) Isabeau femme du precedent, 36

Added story about another small child which would not suckle for 6 days. Sent maid to Catherine, who said that crisis had arived, ordering her to find a priest without any further delay and have a mass said. She did this, and before she returned to the house the baby suddenly began to take milk again. This and instance reported by husband were reasons why she thought she was a witch.

(12) Belotte femme Jean Marchal, 40

When one named Marguerite had a child by Messire Hilaire, curé of Houdreville, Catherine took child to Loupcourt to be baptised. It died on way back, and she hid it under her bed for 3 days, until a child of the maire Gergonne died, when she went out by night and buried it secretly in the same grave. The witness, who then lived in same house as her, reproached her over this; same night found herself in front of the fire in bed, unable to move although she was burning. Then 2 children died within month, one having been struck by Catherine; she suspected she was a witch. Shortly before imprisonment they were reaping together, and she told her she had thought several times of killing herself; had heard that schoolmaster was thinking of having her arrested, and wished it was now. She was willing to suffer in body, provided her soul was saved.

(13) Jean Rouyer, de Loupcourt, 50

Had been her neighbour for 7 years, and seen nothing but good in her - but reputation more than 20 years.

(14) Nicolas Petit Jean, 40

Had seen no harm in her, but had been told she had said his wife would suffer many ills and die dry as wood. About 6 years earlier his wife did become ill, and recovered after pilgrimages advised by Catherine. Recently had fallen ill again, and had become completely paralysed; believed this was her doing, particularly since he had refused to live in her house, fearing that suspicions against her might extend to him as well. Also suspected her over sudden death of a cow the previous year.

(15) François Guerlot, moictrier, de Bedon, 36

Story of mother finding her at spring and quarrelling with her, then death of father 4 months later.

(16) Gerard de Bedon, de Loupcourt, 40

Brother of previous witness; added that when mother asked her what she was doing beating water with a stick she said 'qu'elle escroit et appelloit a son ayde ses enfans qui estoient mortz'.

(17) Jean Michelet, 27

Long reputation.

(18) Clement l'Allemand, de Loupcourt, 30

Long reputation; had heard from his late mother that his uncle Laurent Marchal had died believing she had bewitched him, and ordering that she should not be allowed near his bed.

(19) Jean Voinchelin, 32

His sister, wife of Jean Doctrinal, had been brought to bed early with child and died, claiming to last that Catherine was responsible, after latter touched her on shoulder.

(20) Jean Pastel, de Loupcourt, 55

Reputation 36 years. His wife had died 20 years earlier believing she had been cause of death; heard from other women that she had wished 'que malle chartre la puisse enchartrer dans son lict'. Had threatened to have her arrested, after which she said that if she were a witch he would have been dead 7 years earlier.

(21) Demenge Jenniot, de Burthecourt, 40

Reputation 30 years; had sometimes called her in for sick children, and made pilgrimages she recommended with success.

(22) le maire François Gerard, de Burthecourt, 40

Reputation 25 years. Had heard from late Gros Claude about how he had called her witch after drinking more than usual, and next day he fell ill, to die soon after.

20 August 1583; note that Jean Magnien had been released from prison, under obligation to present himself again when and as required.

26 August 1583; interrogation

Denied series of specific charges, Agreed she had taken bastard child of curé to be baptised at Loupcourt, but claimed it had been buried on day of death. Said that children of Belotte femme Jean Marchal had died of 'la pourpeliere'.

Said that Jean Michelet's wife had ben angry with wife of maire Claudin of Burthecourt, and asked her to kill all his animals; realising that she was believed to be a witch, she had thought of drowning herself in her well. Said she was not a devineresse, although she used scarf as she had previously explained.

27 August 1583; confrontations

Said that Jean Pastel was cause of his wife's death, because he had beaten her. Otherwise no reproaches, but denied all charges.

7 September 1583; PG asks for question extraordinaire

27 September 1583; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews, rack, and tortillons, but denied all charges of witchcraft. Record is rather brief and summary.

8 October 1583; formal sentence from Change de Nancy (which had been trying case). Said she was 'suffisamment attaincte et convaincue d'avoir usé de plusieurs sortz, charmes, prestigistions, et aultres moyens ilicites et prohibez de droict pour descouvrir les especes de maladies et commis plusieurs aultres choses tendantes a abus, superstition et impostures'. Therefore sentenced to banishment from duchy for 10 years, confiscation of a third of goods, and payment of trial costs from remaining two thirds.

First inventory of goods taken on 16 July, presumably immediately after arrest. House seems to have been sold for 210 fr, land for 161 fr, household goods for 55 fr, a total of 426 fr so that the one third share was 142 fr.