

B 8275 no 1; witch 128, Chrestaille femme Jean Wathot, de Preny

Had been denounced by Cathin, previously wife of Laurent Woirion, now wife of Michiel Perrin of Limeix, who claimed she had killed her child. Since then several villages had refused to let her come and reside, and her husbands had done little to challenge this.

10 January 1597; informations preparatoires

(1) Cathin femme Michiel Perrin, de Limeux

Said that when Chrestaille was her neighbour at Preny she had come into house one day and touched her small child, admiring the 'couralz' he had on his arms. He fell ill same evening and died next day, but she did not want to charge anyone over this.

(2) Jeanne femme Bastien Claudin

Said that when Tante Parrotte of Preny was imprisoned on charge of witchcraft, and on another occasion la Trougnotte of Paigny, Chrestaille had been sadder than usual. Asked her the reason, to which she said 'je ne m'ayme point avec mon marit', adding that he had not had any masses said for her father and mother. Witness replied that she sold grain, and could afford to have them said at Ste Marie. When one from Champel was brought for the same reason Chrestaille told witness 'par la nom dieu sy l'on me prenoit j'en accuserois de sy grosses que l'on me lascheroit pour l'amour d'elles'. Had told Barbe Wathot (once her servant, now married) that she would repent after a quarrel, and she had a pig taken by a wolf, and 2 others dead, although she did not suspect anyone.

(3) Barbe Wathot

Had been her servant for 5 years, and seen no harm in her. Had sometimes been 'parmy les autres qui parloient d'elle en mal en cachette toutesfois et luy a souvent dict qu'on la presumoit sorciere et que plusieurs gens en tenoient propos, se donnant garde d'elle qui parle, laquelle sans ce donner autre peine respondoit laisse le dire ne t'en donne point de peine je me soucye bien que l'on dict je ne seray jamais fille de prebtre sy je ne le suys et ne s'enqueroit aultrement d'ou venoit tels propos.' Agreed that she had heard some of conversation reported by previous witness, but was too far off to hear it all; Jeanne had told Chrestaille she only had one soul to save. Agreed there had been quarrel followed by loss of pigs, but made no accusation over this.

(4) Lambert Jean Lambert

Asked about quarrel when one of his sons was ill. Said that 10 years earlier le vieux Colas Golsey had died at Easter, and on way to sprinkle holy water on him Chrestaille had touched his son Claude lightly on his hat. Was taken with sudden pain in stomach, so that he could hardly get home; said he was dying and begged father to fetch her. Took no notice at first, but when he threw himself to floor and said he was dying he went to find her at the deathbed, and drew her aside. When she denied having done son any harm he said he would have her burned whatever it

cost, to which she replied that he should keep quiet and his son would not die. Went home to find the boy had recovered.

(5) Magot, jeune fille, 18 to 20

Had become ill after quarrel with her, and was advised to seek healing from her, in view of general suspicions. Recovered after taking milk she gave her, but did not know if she was cause. (Was niece of accused).

(6) Claudotte femme Laurent Mathiot

3 years earlier had refused to lend her some salt, and same evening her child aged 6 became ill. Chrestaille often asked after him, saying he would do well, and she suspected her in view of reputation.

(7) François Vieville, d'Onville

Damage here; sounds as if when he was young man at Preny he had been involved in some slander directed against accused. Later had bad leg, and went to devineresse who advised him to get bread and salt from house of person he suspected, then make a pilgrimage. Obtained these from Chrestaille's servant, and made full recovery.

(8) Jeanne veuve Claudin Millot dit Champel

Asked about death of child of first witness, said she was living in same house, and heard child crying on night it died. Cathin had supposed it was bewitched by Tante Parrotte, to whom she had refused alms, or by accused, to whom she had not given bracelet worn by child. Witness suggested that she might have overlaid child in her sleep, which she denied, saying he had been in his cot, but after inspecting body she still thought death might have been mother's fault. (This deposition followed by date of 6 April 1597)

12 April 1597; interrogation

Said she was about 33, native of Preny, daughter of Fleurent Harmant le Cuyr and his wife Margueritte. Had married Jean Wathot some 20 years earlier, and lived with him at Preny.

Deposition of Cathin femme Michiel Perrin was read to her, and she said that Jeanne veuve Claudin Millet should be heard; she had seen body of child, and a mark on thigh which suggested that Cathin had put elbow on it during sleep.

Agreed to deposition of Barbe Wathot about their discussions of her reputation, insisting that she was not a witch. Admitted conversation with Jeanne Claudin, but claimed to have said 'par la mort dieu sy je l'estois et j'en scavois je les accuserois fussent mes pere et mere'.

Agreed she had been threatened by Lambert Jean Lambert; unable to take action since she had no witnesses. As for Magot, she had taken her 'laitage' at request of Jeanne Claudin, but had not quarrelled with her. Denied all other charges.

15 April 1597; confrontations

Asked why she had feared being taken as a witch, said she had been warned that the 'sieur capitaine' had long been threatening to do this. Otherwise nothing new.

17 April 1597; interrogation

Said that 3 years earlier she had been returning from veillée when she found man in black outside her door, who said she was sad, but if she would serve him he would make her rich. Sat down next to him, and he gave her a 'verge', saying this was to avenge herself on her enemies, but she cried out 'Jesus Maria' and he left. She kept the 'verge', however, and 2 weeks later used it on 2 animals of Sieur de Bonnigny which later died.

Saw the man again a year later in fields, when he told her his name was Mre Hanry. Gave her money, which later vanished, and powders which she threw on fire. 6 months later found herself on côte de Chatillon at 6 in the morning, where there were many others who were masked, but she was a little distance from them.

Some months later found herself on côte de Pagny 2 hours before dawn; were many present, but did not eat or drink, and after short time there were two cries, at which they separated and made off in different directions. Saw around 5 going to Preny, but could not recognize them. Asked how she could leave house unnoticed, said this was easy if her master took them.

Was asked about her neighbour Jeannotte, wife of Didier Pierron marchal, whose mother had been chased out of Jaulny on suspicion of witchcraft. Said she knew nothing about this, but after sieur de Bonnigny beat her husband for not shoeing his horses properly she heard her wish his horses were in the belly of a wolf. When a woman from his house was being buried and some said it was 'grand dommaige', Jeannotte wished it were 'ung plus gros', meaning the sieur himself.

Then told how at Whitsun previous year had been returning from pilgrimage to St Cesar, and had stayed at St Nicolas, where she and her daughter shared a bed with Jeannotte. Latter was very insistent they should not touch her, and got up 2 hours before dawn. Claimed she had been going to make water, pretending to empty pot - but there was nothing in it.

21 April 1597; Rémy asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

26 April 1597; Change de Nancy approves

29 April 1597; interrogation

Now agreed she had made Lambert Jean Lambert's son ill with powder, then cured him. Had made Magot ill after quarrel over an inheritance, putting powder on some bread, then cured her 3 weeks later. Denied causing death of Claudotte Mathiot's child, which she ascribed (as others did) to St Cunin.

Asked about illness of François Vieville, said that seduction had actually been 10 years earlier, when husband wanted to beat her. Event was much as described before, except that Hanry gave her 'money' and powders on first occasion. François had put about story that she had slept with Claude Landreville and Jean de Maye, after which she touched him on the leg with her 'verge'.

Visited her a second time when she was in fields cutting thistles and other weeds among grain. Gave her another verge, which she was to rub in yellow powder to commit maléfices. Said that at assemblies the others ate, drank, and danced, but knowing herself abused she had no desire to join them. Asked about

accomplices, said that on way back to Preny she had seen Babon dite Mantonsotte, wife of Willaume laboureur, who had let her mask slip.

Babon was then confronted with her, and she maintained her charge despite vigorous denials by the other. She also claimed that Babon was so frightened of being arrested that she would have killed herself but for intervention by her husband.

Also accused la Bonne, femme Mengeot Bricholat, of being at sabat - had recognised her by her clothing. Again maintained this at confrontation.

Asked how they could go the assemblies unnoticed, said that Hanry came for them before dawn at time when husbands and servants were threshing in the barn, and was able to make them pass over the gates of Preny. He then carried the old ones, and made the young walk.

Was then tortured (unspecified), and repeated earlier statements about Jeannotte Pierron, without claiming definitely that she was a witch. After release admitted that she had caused deaths of Chrestaille femme Anthoine Fournier, her daughter Margueritte, who was wife of Gerard Molleur, and Catherine femme Martin Melnie, echevin in the justice of Preny. These were all result of minor quarrels over fruit, milling, and so forth. Asked about 2 other deaths over which she was suspected, denied these.

5 May 1597; Rémy asks for death sentence, and Change de Nancy approves.