

Witch 147: B8667 no 9: Laurence femme George Jolbay de Ste Margaree

4 July 1592; informations preparatoires contre Laurence femme George Jolbay du village de Ste Margaree, 'communement notée et réputée pour une sorciere, veneficieuse et empoisoneresse'.

(1) Magdalaine servante au Sr curé de Ste Margarée, c. 40

Had had various quarrels with Laurence, and called her witch, without any reparation being sought. Some 8 years before had been in childbed, and unable to deliver child despite being in labour for 3-4 days. Women around her had decided not to call Laurence, as would have been customary; had to do so, and as soon as she arrived and witness begged her pardon, child was born dead. Had heard that soon after Laurence said of her that she would not die this time; this and common repute made her suspect her. Her master had lost various animals, and had suspected Laurence.

(2) Catherine femme Mengeon Valentin de Ste Margaree, c. 30

Some 9 years before Laurence had asked her husband to cart some hay, but witness had prevented him agreeing unless he was paid as much as he had been the previous year. A few days afterwards their horse sickened and died; she said in public that Laurence had caused this because of the refusal to cart her hay. Child then became very ill, and was unable to eat bread for 3 years. During illness she asked her chambermaid to tell Laurence that they suspected her; she replied that 'sy elle estoit jenauxe, elle feroit mourir ladite deposante'. This was around St. Martin; before Christmas the child began to eat, and was now 'sain et saulf', although still 'maigre et deffaict'.

(3) Mengeon Valentin de Ste Margaree, c. 36

Repeated wife's story. Said he himself had met Laurence's husband after death of horse, and told him his wife was a witch, and he would have her burned; no reparation sought. Long reputation.

(4) Demenge Violle de Ste Margaree, c. 54

At start of marriage to present wife, she had three very difficult childbirths, at end of which child had to be forcibly dragged from her dead. His daughter by earlier marriage told him that Laurence had been heard to say that he had not given her some fish he had promised, and that he would repent. He then began to suspect her, in view of her long reputation and fact that her mother had already been suspected. Some 7 or 8 years before his wife had been pregnant again, and on return from St. Die he had found Laurence by the fire in the house of the Maire Claude le Bailly. Told her she was a witch, that she had caused his wife's troubles, and that if same happened again he would have her burned 'et s'il n'avoit le moyen de fournir aux frais, il le trouvoit.' This time a normal childbirth took place, which he put down to effect of his threats.

(5) Simon Honguey de Ste Margaree, c. 28

During last illness his mother had maintained that Laurence had caused her death. He himself had charged Laurence with this, and she had threatened him that he would repent this, although he wasn't conscious that any ill had actually resulted. Had heard Magdelaine, the curé's servant, tell George Jolbay that his wife was a witch, but he had not sought reparation. Common repute.

(6) Catherine veuve Jean Aulbert de Remeymont, c. 50

Some 7 or 8 years before had lodged in Laurence's house, and had heard a terrible noise in the night, which latter had also heard, but her husband and daughter said they had not. Previous night Laurence and husband had been discussing failure to obtain money from Jean Vanier. Witness went to 'journée' in house of Nicolas Hougney, and Vanier appeared 'se plaignant merveilleusement' that his child had suffocated in its cradle. Reputation more than 20 years.

(7) Colas Demenge Henry de Ste Margaree, c. 30

Around a year before, some of his pigs had got into the accused's garden, and her son-in-law had chased them out, threatening to kill them. His wife heard this, and replied 'qu'on ne leur donne au moings point de pouldre'. Later they had a cow dead, and when this was talked of at the 'couraille' Laurence said 'Que la femme de luy deposant avoit dit des propos, desquelz ils se ressentiroient. et quant bien tous les gens de leur maison les auroient oubliées, sy en auroit elle souvenance.' This caused witness to suspect her; long before he and his father had lost animals, and had some suspicion that she was responsible.

(8) Diez George le Clerc de Sainte Margaree, c. 28

About a year before had warned Laurence and her family about taking firewood from in front of his house (they were neighbours). Soon afterwards lost a fine pig worth 10 francs, and blamed her, in view of common repute. Soon after two fine cows became ill; he went to see her, called her witch, and said that he had 200 francs in his purse with which he would have her taken and burned if she didn't heal his animals. Cows then recovered.

(6 July 1592)

(9) Demenge Simonel de Sainte Margaree, c. 40

Six years before had heard Mengeon Ferry call her a witch and say she should be burned, without her seeking any reputation. His 'serorge', the late Claudon Raquel, had told him 'qu'il avoit grand fantaisie, que pour avoir refusé a ladite soubconnée, du foing ou de la paille, il luy estoit grandement mescheu, en son bestail.'

(10) Le maire Claude le Bailly de Sainte Margaree, c. 50

Reputation as long as he could remember; he himself had called her witch 18 years before, but no reparation ever sought.

(11) Colas Henriot du Fain, c. 40

5 or 6 years before had been living with father-in-law Nicolas Demenge Henry at Ste Margaree, and had quarrelled with accused. Soon after his father-in-law had a bull dead, while his 'belle petite fille' aged 6 became ill and died after languishing for a year. They had both attributed their losses to Laurence.

(12) Colas Andreu de Sainte Margaree, c. 35

Reputation as long as could remember.

(13) Jeniste, femme Didier George le Clerc de Sainte Margaree, c. 26

General reputation. Her husband had lost several beasts after quarrelling with her, as had her late father; imputed these losses to her.

(14) Didielle femme au jeune Colas Demenge Henry de Sainte Margaree, c. 30

Previous September their pigs had escaped in Laurence's garden; she had threatened them that they would repent, and soon they lost a fine cow. Blamed her, in view of common repute, and also suspected her in connection with other losses of animals.

(15) Demenge fils Demenge Pecry de Sainte Margaree, c. 22

Told of escape of pigs as reported by witnesses 7 and 14, threat by son-in-law, and remark about powder. Then of remarks of accused at 'Cairaille' in front of his father's house, heard by his mother and himself, exactly as reported by witness 7. Common fame was such that members of his own household suspected her of causing various losses.

(16) Colas Henry de Sainte Margaree, c. 50

About 3 years before his wife had quarrelled with accused's niece (daughter of her brother); died suddenly the following night. Suspected Laurence of being cause of this.

(17) Le maire Nicolas Hougney, demeurant a Saint Dié, c. 50

Some 6 years before Laurence had asked to borrow bread from his wife, who had refused. Soon after she sickened and died, claiming that Laurence had given her the illness. Some two years before had been invited to wedding feast for one of her daughters on a Monday; had not gone, and on same day suddenly lost a fine cow.

(18) Le maire Jean le Clerc de Sainte Margaree, c. 40

Reputation more than 20 years. He himself had reproached her husband 'que l'on avoit grande opinion et soubcon contre sa femme, pour plusieurs malefices, que l'on pretend qu'elle commettoit, et qu'il feroit bien d'y faire mettre ordre, autrement que l'on seroit contrainct de la faire prendre et luy faire faire son droict, desquels propos ledit marit, ne s'esmeut autrement, que de dire qu'il voudroit qu'elle fut ja bruslée sy elle est telle, et n'en demanda oncques reparation.'

Then told how previous June the miller Jean Musnier had been afflicted with leg trouble, and had suspected Laurence. Witness had then spoken to her and told her of

this suspicion 'et l'advisa d'y donner ordre, et y apporter quelque remede, aultrement qu'il avoit charge d'informer de cest act contre elle.' Soon met miller quite recovered, and heard that she had sent him a plate of 'milleses' and two glasses of wine.

(8 July 1592)

(19) Jean Bourguignon musnier demeurant a Sainte Margaree, c. 30

At previous Saint Valentin had taken lease of mill, for which Laurence's son-in-law had hoped; heard that she had made hostile remarks about this. Then developed serious leg trouble, so that he couldn't stand, for which no remedy could be found. So 'il envoya querir le devin d'Anould, pour entendre de luy la cause de sadite maladie, Qui luy dit que c'estoit ung mal donné par une sorciere et luy nomma la soubconnée, disant que savoit elle fait, et luy enseigna de trouver moyen d'avoir de trois sortes d'herbes de son meix, les battre, et appliquer sur sa jambe malade, et qu'il en gueroit. Ce qu'ayant luy deposant fait, il s'en trouva quelque peu rafreschy. Touttesfois sur le grand bruict qui couroit, que ladite soubconnée estoit cause de son mal, il advint, que le jour de la feste dudit Sainte Margaree, elle ladite soubconnée luy envoya des milleses, ung peu de vin et ung peu de tartes.' Recovered in two days.

20) Colas Gros Didier de Remommeix, c. 30

When companies of regiment of Marquis de Baden had been billeted in Remommeix and other villages, he had been unable to provide for soldiers in his house, and had fled to Sainte Margaree with his wife to lodge with his aunt, the accused. Believed that after a dispute she had caused his wife to miscarry.

(21) Catherine veuve Claude Malremmeix de Sainte Margaree, c. 50

Knew nothing against Laurence.

10 July 1592; interrogation

Said she was 55, wife of George Jolbay, laboureur. Had been married since May after Monsieur de Polleviller had burned Ramberviller. Agreed that she had sometimes had mild quarrels with her neighbours. After hesitation, admitted to having been called a witch, but declared that she was not such.

Asked about 'la tante du curé', said she had sometimes quarrelled with her, 'mais que quant elle n'est courroucée a la personne, elle est une tres bonne chrestienne de femme, et qu'elle at receu beaucoup de biensfaits d'elle.'

Admitted that Demenge Violle had called her witch.

Said she had not sought reparation on occasions when she was called a witch because she lacked the means to go to law; if she had used the little she had, afterwards she would have been a 'cocquine'.

Agreed that Nicolas Hougney's wife had sometimes given her bread, although she had never asked for it as a loan; claimed she had visited her several times during her illness, and there had been no suggestion that she was blamed.

Admitted that she had been suspected of causing Jean Musnier's bad leg, but said that this did her great wrong. Agreed that maire had threatened her; food and wine had been given by her son-in-law, not by her.

11 July 1592; confrontations

Admitted some disputes and threats, although still maintaining innocence; agreed to threat described by witness 7, and to menacing remark about Jean Vanier when he had not paid money due. In response to witness 2, said 'qu'il advient beaucoup de maladies aux personnes, Qu'eulx mesmes en ont heu de tres grandes comme chacun scait.'

Agreed to three encounters with a 'bon ange', the first in the cemetery on way to church. Had told her to have 'bon courage' and he would not abandon her. On another occasion met him at croix de Perrechamps on way to market at St. Dié, when she was hungry, as 'ils sont pauvres gens, et que sans son gendre elle eut heu bien faim'. Judges pressed her - wasn't it an evil spirit? Persisted that it was an angel 'ou peult estre l'ame de son pere, ou de quelque aultre trespasé qui la venoit reconforter.'

Said in response to witness 14 'Qu'il y a longtemps qu'on luy impose ce faict, et il y a plus que vingt ans pense elle bien, qu'on la soubconne pour une sorciere.'

Subsequently admitted that Diaz George le Clerc had threatened to have her arrested, but insisted that he had done her wrong.

16 July 1592; Change de Nancy orders that she be tortured 'mediocrement'.

20 July 1592; interrogation under torture

Unusually long preliminary interrogation - did judges sense that she was weakening? Now agreed that Demerge Violle had charged her with causing his wife's problems in childbirth. First apparition of 'bon ange' had been near chapel where bones of dead were assembled.

After being shaven and shown apparatus of torture, admitted that the angel had given her some powder, but claimed she had thrown it away. Placed on rack and tied, but not yet stretched, begged not to be tortured; powder had been 'pour faire des soupes aux pauvres gens'. Was promptly stretched, begged to be released, and started on extensive confessions. Angel had been Persin, who had seduced her in a time of dearth by promising to ensure she always had bread. She admitted a series of malefices, corresponding to the accusations against her. Persin had visited her in prison to encourage her; having said that she could do no harm because she had no powder with her, then changed position and said there was some in the 'costillon' which had been taken from her that day. Judges examined it and found nothing, although they claimed to have found a special place to hold the powder.

Asked about her accomplices, produced a long list, starting with Catherine veuve Didier Maremmeix, Colas her son, Grande Marguitte femme de Jean Martin de la ville du Pray, Colas Cunin and his wife from Fain les Ste Margaree, Margo veuve Mengeon Hidoult du Chippal de Ramommeix, Claude Bertrain de Remaymont. Only named Catherine at first, then others when she was threatened with further torture.

Conventional description of sabbat; dancing, unsalted meat. While they ate, 'ils devoisoient de faire du mal aux pauvres gens'. Made hail, notably great hailstorm of St. Jean some 3-4 years before which had devastated grain crops. Also described way in which Mre Persin made 'chenilles' [caterpillars] by mixing something in pot and throwing it in the air; they were forced to comply, or they would be beaten. Mentioned that Barbeline, wife of Demenge Milan le viel of Remomeix was another accomplice - now dead.

In respect of malefices, said 'qu'elle faisoit beaucoup de choses a son tres grand regret, mais elle y estoit contrainte par la cruauté de son Mre Persin, qui les tourmentoit de battre quant on ne voulait faire a sa guise.'

Given another quick turn on rack to ask about accomplices, added Mathieu Blaise of Ste Margaree, wife of Jean peu de Cuyr of Remomeix, and la femme Stablo de Haillieulle.

Brought back to be interrogated again in afternoon, repeated all confessions (according to judges, although details not given). Also repeated list of accomplices very accurately.

Agreed, on suggestion of judges, that witches had no power against those who crossed themselves in the morning. Also said that Mre Persin knew when she was angry, and would then appear with powder for her to avenge herself. Beat her every time she used white powder to cure.

Asked if her daughter was not also one of her accomplices, she declared that she was, and described scene some 4 or 5 years before when she had been seduced in her presence. Since then she had shared in all the malefices. Pressed further on the details of seduction, said that Persin had forced her to persuade her daughter to take him for master; had marked her and had intercourse with her in mother's presence. Now said this was 15 or 16 years back, when she herself had already been a witch for 7 years.

21 July 1592; interrogation

Confirmed all earlier confessions, but now put back date of daughter's seduction to 20 years before, her own still 7 years before that. Also repeated accusations against accomplices.

24 July 1592; Change de Nancy passes death sentence.

30 July 1592; Laurence confirms confessions, but discharges her daughter of all accusations against her.

18 August 1592; note that sentence has been carried out.