

Witch 162, Jean Blaise Laulney 1

Witch 162; B8677 no 8, Jean Blaise Laulney d'Entre-deux-Eaux

31 October; informations preparatoires taken by procureur d'office for chapter of St. Dié against Jean Blaise Laulney of Entre-deux-Eaux, denounced by Claudatte wife of Estienne Jean de Saulcy.

(1) Jean Gerard d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 29

3 years before at last St. Remy his late father Gerard Jean Don had; been elected by the community to go to Mandray to levy the aid of St. Remy, with the other elus of the mairie of Mandray. Since there were many poor who could not pay, the elus had been forced to surcharge the richer taxpayers a little. Jean was among 'les plus aisez', and when he heard of it said that witness's father 'estoit cause de ce qu'il estoit remonté a ladite ayde Saint Remy, mais qu'il n'y iroit plus pour la tirer'. Father was immediately seized by a strange illness, and died after languishing miserably for 6 weeks. Believed Jean had bewitched him, and was advised to make a soup with pears taken from Jean's garden; when he did this he vomited black sticky matter, but died a few days later. Long reputation. His sister Jehenne, now mortally ill, had heard Jean say about a year earlier in the fields 'que Vincent Jeandey avoit déposé contre luy mais qu'il s'en repentiroit et perdroit son ayde' - his eldest child died a fortnight later.

(2) Vincent Claude Jeandey d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 40

Long reputation. 15 or 16 years before he had been angry because Gerard Jean Colin Gabourel had bought property of his sister, and said 'qu'il auroit la raison dudit Gerard de quelle sorte ce doibt estre' - shortly after Gerard and his wife died.

(3) Demenge Didier Grand Colin jeune fils d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 25

Long reputation. Some 8 years before he and his father had been ploughing when they saw Jean; his father asked him if he had not been going to fair at Bruyeres with Jean Colin Dieudonne. He replied that Dieudonne had promised to call him, but had gone off without doing so, uttering series of threats that he would repent. 3 days later Dieudonne's finest ox fell dead while at work. Same year he heard Jean quarrelling in fields with Colas Demenge le Rouyer, saying he had trespassed on his land while ploughing, but he would not return there with his whole team; next day his finest ox died suddenly. After this witness told Colas of threats, and that Jean had surely killed it. He had also spoken to Jean after threats, saying that 'il avoit mal parlé d'user de telles menaces et que s'il arrivoit quelque fortune audit Colas ce seroit assez pour dire qu'il estoit sorcier'. Jean replied that he knew people wanted to arrest him as a witch 'et qu'on le desromperoit mais il estoit homme de bien'.

(4) Didier Grand Colin d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 50

Long reputation. Repeated son's story about death of ox belonging to Jean Colin Dieudonne.

(5) Demenge Mathieu d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 35

Some 3 years earlier had dispute over a fence he had erected between their land, during which Jean told him he would gain nothing, but lose more than 40 francs, and 'qu'il luy ferolt ung desplaisir avant qu'il fut trois jours'. Next day one of his oxen broke leg while ploughing, and had to be sold at great loss. Shortly afterwards he was taking some grain to mill at St. Margaree when he met Jean, who remarked that his horse was not worth much, and he would not keep it long. Within 2 or 3 days the horse began to sicken, and died some weeks later. After this he called Jean witch, but was taken to court at St. Dié; was advised that he lacked the means to bring case against him, and should make reparation. Jean again threatened to give him 'un desplaisir' within 3 days, and a fine cow died next day. As they returned from St. Dié Jean told him he had 'grand fantaisie' against him over the horse, but if he did not accuse him he would tell him something so that he did not lose. He should not put horses or other animals in a certain stable, or he would have trouble; Jean refused repeated requests to explain why. He had not put horses there again, and had lost none, but had kept some pigs there, some of which died. Believed there might have been some witchcraft placed on the stable. Also told of threats to Gerard Gabourel and his death.

(6) Jean Colin Dieudonne d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 35

Told of incident when he went to fair at Bruyeres without Jean, and of subsequent loss of one of pair of oxen he bought there. After what Didier Grand Colin and his son told him about threats, he suspected Jean, who had a long reputation. Had several times heard Jean say that he had always known when Jean Babey of Mandray (executed 15 years before) had been going to see devil.

(7) Vincent Demenge Laurent d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 30

Same story about Jean Babey. When Jean had been courting his sister, now dead, he had told her that if anyone spoke ill of him, even to a stone, he knew of it however far distant he was. Had also heard him speak of Demenge Mathieu's stable, in which he would be unable to put animals without losing them. Reputation more than 12 years.

(8) Demenge Claude Colnot d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 60

Some 7 or 8 years earlier, when 3 witches from Mandray had been taken to St. Dié, Jean's wife had told him Jean was 'tout esperdu' with fear he would be arrested. Had stayed for 3 days with his cousin Jean George, and had only to hear a dog bark or a door move to think it was the officers come to arrest him. Had already been reputed a witch before his marriage, since time when he was in service of Jean Babey.

(9) Colas Gabourel d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 70 (also called le Rouyer)

Some 9 years earlier had quarrelled with Jean, who accused him of encroaching on field with plough; told him he lied like a witch, and Jean replied he would repent. Next morning a fine ox sickened and died within an hour. Reputation from before his marriage.

(10) Claude Colas le Rouyer d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 25

Repeated father's testimony, as above.

(11) Jean Menginot d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 40

He had heard story of Jean hiding with his cousin Jean George from the latter, and of his trembling when he thought he was to be arrested. Also heard him boast of knowing when anyone spoke ill of him, even if he was absent. Long reputation.

(12) Jehenne fille de Jean George d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 24

He had several times told her of knowing when people spoke ill of him, even in his absence.

(13) Claude Colas Henry d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 40

Some 10 years before Jean had been angry because he had crossed his field, and during subsequent quarrel he had called him a witch, but he had taken no action. Had sometimes asked him where he acquired his reputation as a witch, and he replied it had been when he served Jean Babey.

(14) Jean Clement de Remeymont, c. 50

Told how some 24 years before he and Jean had both been in service at village of Lesseux, to the brothers Jacques and Jean Aulbert respectively. Had heard from latter's son how when they had been together before dawn to put water into meadows a black man had appeared, then he had fled. Next day asked Jean about this, who said the man had appeared, asked him what he was doing, then disappeared. Witness had also asked him about Jean Babey, and whether he had not seen anything suspicious when in his service; he said no, except that he had sometimes left through a window next to the chimney. Long reputation.

(i5) Gregoire Jean Don d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 48

Some 10 years before his pigs had strayed into Jean's garden; he had been angry and told witness's wife it should not happen again or they would repent; they then lost a fine sow. Also told of threats against his brother Gerard Jean Don 3 years earlier, and his death. Long reputation.

(16) Jean Viole d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 40

Had called Jean witch some 9 years earlier, when quarrelling over straying animals belonging to witness - no reaction. Long reputation.

(17) Jean George Laulney d'Entre-deux-Eaux, c. 41

Some 18 years before Jean Colin Blaise of St. Margaree had been prisoner, charged with witchcraft, and witness had met Jean at twilight. Hearing a dog barking, had been frightened that he was about to be arrested. Long reputation.

2 November 1596; Jean is confronted with Claudatte, who maintains her accusation that she had seen him at sabbat 22 years before, despite his denials.

2 November 1596; interrogation

Said he was Jean Blaise Laulney of Entre-deux-Eaux (native), son of Blaise and Jehenne Laulney, aged about 44. Had been in service with Bartremin of Remeymont, Jean Aulbert of Lesseu, Jean Babey of Mandray, and Claude le Bailly of St. Margaree. Had married a wife from last village 13 years before. Asked about the man in black who had passed by him 20 years earlier, said he had been from village of Frappel, but he could not remember his name. Agreed that he knew he had been suspected of witchcraft since he had been in Jean Bahey's service, but said he was no witch for all that. Denied all other points in accusation. Asked about witches, said they were supposed to kill men and animals. As for Claudatte, she had lied 'comme une meschante femme, et que sy nous luy faisons dire, nous le ferons dampner'.

4 November 1596; interrogation and confrontations

Agreed to some quarrels, but denied all threats. Also agreed that he had heard rumours that he would be arrested. Claude Colas Henry had called him witch, but there were no witnesses. After hesitating, admitted that he and Claudatte had spoken about threat to arrest them, but said he had merely asserted that he could confess nothing, since he was no witch.

Confronted with witnesses, reproached some of them with minor thefts etc. Said that Jean Colin Dieudonne had tried to rape his wife; he had not prosecuted him because he felt pity for his children. Demenge Claude Colnot had threatened to burn him in his house. Agreed that 10 years before he had been frightened of being arrested, when Jean Colin Blaise was on trial.

4 November 1596; procureur d'office for chapter asks for question extraordinaire

5 November 1596; Change de Nancy agrees

8 November 1596; interrogation under torture

When he was racked, he shut his eyes and mouth, and would say nothing. Released temporarily, said he would not confess what was not true, and he was ready to die rather than confess. Judges told him to say his Confiteor to recommend his soul to God, to which he replied 'qu'il ne le sauroit dire per ce qu'il ne l'a jamais sceu ny apprin et n'en scait que deux ou trois motz, qu'ung sien petit fls qu'il a mis a l'escolle, luy a apprin'.

Luy avons demandé ce qu'il disoit lors qu'il s'alloit confesser aupres de son Curé.

A respondu qu'il disoit son pater noster et ung peux du Credo, qu'est tout ce qu'il scait.

Surquoy luy avons replicqué que comme il n'a eu soing d'apprendre a prier dieu, ce sera esté la cause qu'il l'aura aussy delaissé, et que le diable l'aura plus facilement tenté et abusé.

A respondu que le diable ne l'a jamais tenté ny abusé disant par plusieurs et reysterés fois pour l'honneur de dieu qu'on le tue sur le champ.'

Racked again, he seemed to lose consciousness. On release said he thought he had been dead, and that an angel in white had come to lead him to paradise. When executioner started to apply tourtillons, he asked to be released so that he could confess his malefices. Judges asked him to begin with his temptation; he said this

had been some 21 years earlier, when he had been living with his brother-in-law Didier du Treux of Fourchifol, and had been ill in bed. Mre Persin appeared and promised to make him rich if he renounced God, which he did. Gave him powder and took him to sabbat, where he only recognised Claudatte, and 'ils feirent bonne chere'. Admitted using powder to kill ox belonging to Colas Gabourel, and also some oxen belonging to his late brother Colas Blaise Laisney, who had insulted him. Asked to be allowed to think over other malefices that night, and judges agreed, since it was too late to finish.

9 November 1596; confessions

Repeated earlier confessions. Added deaths of various animals, usually when debts had not been paid to him. Also said that at wedding feast of Claude Mengin at Fourchifol 4 years earlier he had put powder in wine of Didier du Treux and Demenge Andreu; both became ill and died a few weeks later. First had not paid debt, second had fined him for straying animals.

Said that during torture the devil had at first been with him, preventing him from feeling pain or speaking; only after he had been abandoned by him was he obliged to confess. Gave standard account of sabbat; bad meat without bread or aalt, dancing, making hail or thunder. Gave long list of accomplices: Dieudonne le Faye (or Dieudonne Jean Laurent), of Entre-deux-Eaux, Colas Gabourel, the wife of Didier Anthoine, Jean Gerard and Mengin Grand Colin, young men of the same place. Claude Martin of Mandray, and Jehenne wife of the maire Claude Martin of Mandray, daughter of Jean Babey. Judges then told him not to accuse anyone wrongly, or he would damn himself.

Asked to be put to death as quickly as possible, as he had merited, but that since he had confessed fully he should be strangled before feeling the fire.

11 November 1596; interrogation

Confirmed all earlier confessions. Repeated names of those he had seen at sabbat, adding Demenge Mathis of his village.

11 November 1596; procureur asks for death sentence (he should be strangled after feeling the fire).

13 November 1596; Change de Nancy approves, subject to another free confession in a different place from that where he had been tortured.

19 November 1596; interrogation

Confirmed his confessions and accusations. Then asked why over previous days he had been telling doyen that Virgin Mary had appeared to him in prison, telling him he had been wrong to confess that he was a witch. Agreed that he had said this; he had been regretting above all that his goods would be confiscated, and his son deprived of them, and had hoped that he might escape from justice and be placed at liberty. Now cried mercy, repeated confessions, and begged judges 'd'avoir pitié de sa femme et enfans'.

21 November 1596; interrogation

Final confirmation of confessions.

Witch 162, Jean Blaise Laulney 6

26 November 1596; execution carried out.