

B 8693 no 5; witch 234, Bernarde femme Demenge Baille, de la Neuveville-les-Raon

11 September 1604; informations preparatoires

(1) Chrestien Brandecq, 38

Reputation 3 years; her mother had been executed at Baccarat previous year as witch.

(2) Jean Colas Peltier, 26

Reputation 6 years. 18 months earlier had joined forces with her husband to cart 'corses' from Vic; unable to sell it, so stored it in a house. A few days later heard that it had been sold without his knowledge, so went to claim his share. Accused was present, told him he would repent, and within a week his horse developed a bad leg, for which no remedy could be found. All those who saw it said it was witchcraft, and he believed it had been her doing if she was a witch as reputed.

(3) Lucas Brandecq, 48

Reputation 10 years, execution of mother. 10 years ago he and brother Chretien were fishing, and house where she then lived was closest to river. Saw great fire, so they thought the house was alight, but when he called out the back door was shut, and everything died down. This made him suspect 'qu'elle faisoit grande meschanceté par ses sortilleges et venefices'. Some years before had started to build house adjoining hers, which had angered her and her husband; over last 3 years had suffered serious losses, which he thought were her doing if she was a witch.

(4) Noel Mayance, 33

Reputation 7 years. If she was witch thought she was responsible for illness of his son Dieudonné, who had been 'bossu et contrefaict' since the spring - she had claimed that he had slipped on a plank which was leaning on dung-heap.

(5) Demenge Mathieu, 34

4 years before had been carting with her husband, but ceased because of quarrels, notably about who should go first on the road. Soon after lost a cow which died of a strange illness, and if she was witch held her responsible.

(6) Didier Chostey, 50

Reputation 4 years. When they were neighbours she was angry about his pig, which went in her house; died after she chased it out, so he suspected her.

(7) Colas Brabant, 50

Quarrel with husband previous year over fine witness levied on horse which damaged crops - threat he would repent followed by illness of an ox, which had to be killed. If she was witch thought this was her doing.

(8) Georgeatte femme Demenge Chopat, 46

A year earlier her husband was carting 'corse' with husband of accused, and when arrangement broke up was threatened that he 'ne chariroit guiere avant'. A few days later his horse was drowned, and they both suspected her - long reputation.

(9) Jean Pieron, 45

Quarrel with husband previous year about fence round field of witness, followed by threat he would repent; 2 weeks later a fine ox sickened and died, after which he suffered further heavy losses, which he suspected she had caused - common repute as witch. She and her husband came uninvited to see ox when it was sick, which astonished him. Also suspected her over loss of a small pig killed by a wolf - herdsman told him his dog would neither bark nor run after it as it normally did.

(10) Demenge Chopat, 60

Story of horse which was drowned - he had gone to cart some 'corse' without telling her husband, who then threatened him.

(13 September 1604)

(11) Mongeon Jacquat, 26

Reputation 10 years.

(12) Barbe femme Didier Coresier, 30

9 months earlier had been returning from visit to Zabel, wife of maire Demenge Ganaire when she met Bernarde, who enquired after the sick woman. Said 'qu'elle desire bien de l'aller veoir, mais sy elle y alloit qu'on pouloit dire qu'elle alloit luy oster le mal', which gave witness poor opinion of her.

(13) Didier Couresier, 36

Reputation 6 years.

(14) Claudatte femme Didier Chostey, 60

6 years earlier husband of witness saw her with scarf over her mouth; she was angry because he kept his distance, and next day he had strange trouble with mouth, which lasted some time - if she was witch as reputed thought she had caused this.

(15) Marie femme Claudon Charier, 25

Around last St Jean saw small creatures swarming around chimney of accused like bees for some half an hour, then fly off and vanish suddenly - witness was frightened. Immediately afterwards she developed headache which lasted some time - believed this was her witchcraft.

(16) Agnon veuve Claudon Barbier, 45

Previous Thursday, 2 days before arrest, Bernarde met her outside house and 'commença a se plaindre du sort qu'on luy imposoit du bruict des sortilleges, disant entre autres propos que sy une femme de bien estoit prinse et qu'elle fut bruslée lors qu'elle auroit confessé qu'elle estoit sorciere, sy elle seroit sauvé'. Added 'qu'elle ne l'estoit point sy elle ne le devenoit, mais qu'elle avoit plus de peure de son marit que d'elle, et qu'on faisoit beaucoup de mal aux personnes lors qu'ils estoient en prison'.

(17) Clemence fille Jean Poulain, 24

In last week of Brandons was spinning with other girls when accused came to ask if she had finished all she had brought; when she said she had, replied 'que le diable luy soit es yeulx, que de sa part elle auroit bien a veiller sy elle en faisoit aultant'. Immediately one of her eyes became blurred, and no remedy could be found; was advised that rubbing with a woman's milk was cure, so went to ask Bernarde for some, since she had a baby. Said that if she gave her some 'on pouroit conjecturer et presumer qu'elle estoit cause de son mal', but eventually yielded and gave her some - when she used it other eye was also affected. Finally recovered slowly 3 months later - if she was witch as reputed suspected this had been her doing.

(18) Jennon femme Jean Pieron, 40

Repeated husband's story about quarrel and losses - claimed they had lost 2 oxen soon afterwards with strange illnesses.

(19) Mongeatte femme Colas Labbé, 23

Around previous Christmas was sending a cow to drink, and saw accused touching its back, and striking it lightly to drive it forward. Within 2 or 3 days lost use of back legs, but eventually found a remedy - if she was witch as reputed thought her responsible.

(20) Colas Blasat, 47

Some 4 years earlier was driving herd of pigs back to village when one of hers escaped; went after it and threw club at it, which mysteriously disappeared - believed this had been witchcraft by her or her master. 2 years earlier had a sick horse, and hearing she gave remedies took it to her. She 'signed' it, touching it with her foot and saying something he could not hear - died later, and if she was witch thought she had been cause.

(14 September 1604)

(21) Marguitte femme Colas Brabant, 40

Had suffered great losses of animals over last year, and still had some ill, while other laboureurs in village had not been affected. Thought her responsible if she were witch as reputed, because of threats after fine on trespassing horse.

(22) Jennon femme Lucas Brandecq, 40

Followed husband in claiming that Bernarde and husband had been angered by building behind their house, since when they had many losses, 'veoir du tout leur change ostée', despite working hard. If she was witch as reputed, believed she had caused this. Had heard her say she was not a witch, 'mais qu'elle craindroit que par les parolles des gens qu'elle le deviendroit'.

(23) Honn. homme Demenge Ganaire, maire a la Neufville, 30

Some years earlier her husband had been very angry when he pressed him for payment of a debt; 9 months later his wife struck one of Bernarde's children a slight blow after he had beaten their son Adam. She was angry about this, and immediately the child lost the use of his limbs for 6 weeks; wife also fell ill for same period, and both were expected to die, but finally recovered. They suspected her, in view of reputation, and because she told neighbours she would go and see them, but was afraid it would be said she went to take off the illness, since they suspected her.

15 September 1604; interrogation

Said she was native of Bertrichamp, aged 34. Father, Colas de la Court, was dead, and mother Jennon had been executed as witch at Baccarat some 18 months earlier. Had lived at la Neuveville since marriage 12 years earlier.

Said the fire had been real, caused when Colas Godelet had been delivering salt, and had a torch to illuminate what he and three others were doing. Admitted she knew she was suspected over illness of Zabel femme Demenge Ganaire, because rumour had gone round. Prayer she used for horse had been taught her by her father; had to be barefoot, and take horse by bad leg, then say 'auté sur pey, auté té, paroistre tu estre' 3 times. Judges suggested it was 'une superstition et oeuvres diaboliques'. Otherwise she denied all charges, insisting she was not a witch.

18 September 1604; confrontations

No reproaches to witnesses, and no serious points discussed. When it was getting late judges exhorted her again to tell truth, and she said she wished to save her soul, but was not a witch, and if she said she was, then was executed, she would not save soul. Seemed to be on point of confession, but then said 'que ce fut comme en songeant qu'elle fut abusée, qu'estant couchée aupres de son marit y peult avoir deux ans, qu'elle pensoit estre en ung bois et que ledit maitre Navel parloit a elle et luy dit son nom, et lors qu'elle fut esveillée de son someille, elle fut fort esmerveillée de telle rencontre et d'un sy mauvais songe qu'elle avoit faict, qu'au rest de la rechercher plus avant qu'elle ne nous scauroit dire autre chose, comme plusieurs autres qui sont estez executez pour le mesme crime ont heu dit par leur proces, ainsi qu'elle entendoit, d'avoir renoncé dieu, user de pouldres, aller au sabat, et faire plusieurs malefices, que de sa part elle n'a commis telle chose.'

24 September 1604; Change de Nancy approves question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

27 September 1604; interrogation under torture

Withstood thumbscrews, but started to confess when racked. had been seduced 4 years earlier by Mre Navel, when angry about some flour which was too thick. Usual details; money was straw, powder was black/kill, white/cure.

Shortly after this was very angry with Marguitte fille Lucas Brandecq over lies she told, and wanted to harm her; master suggested she consent to his killing her, which she did, and she died soon after. Used powder to kill ox of Jean Pieron, which she regretted, but had gone too late with white powder to effect a cure. Her master made Zabel femme Demenge Ganaire ill, with her consent, then she healed her with white powder.

Had caused fall by son of Noel Mayance with powder, because he was 'trop mignarde', but he would recover from effects as he grew older. Admitted various other maléfices as suggested by witnesses, including eye trouble of Clemence fille Jean Poulain - could not remember why she had been angry with her. Had made cow of Colas Labbé ill because he mocked her and others.

Had only been to sabbat 3 times, carried like a wind on her master's shoulders. Paid him a rent to be exempt; last year used powder to kill a calf, which he then appeared and carried off. Had danced 'a rebours' and stirred black mixture in pots to make a fog, but did not know purpose because she arrived too late. Had seen four women already executed; Jennon femme Nicolas Bresson dit Neuxat of St Blaise, Marguitte femme Mongeon Jacquat, Zabel femme Didier Pescheur, and Marguitte femme Dieudonné Maronde, all of la Neuveville. All were masked - Navel put mask in front of her face.

Said she had prayed God constantly for pardon, and Navel was only able to approach her when she had forgotten to cross herself. He had hoofs for feet, claws on hands, and did not speak 'sy proprement' as a man. Had been in her body preventing her confessing until executioner laid hands on her, when he left her like a wind; showed that justice was stronger than him and his 'tromperie'.

Confirmed confessions next day, adding that she had agreed that her master should do harm to Demenge Chopat, and that he had found his horse stopped and would not move, but master told her he had protected himself so well that morning he had no power over him.

29 September 1604; death sentence from Change de Nancy

4 October 1604; sentence carried out at la Neuveville