

B 8700 no 1; witch 236, Colatte femme Colas Bertrand, du Vic, Ban-le-Duc de Clefcy

12 May 1607; informations preparatoires

(1) Claudon Mourice, 70

Reputation 6 years. Previous year had made contract for her husband to cart manure to his field, where he intended to sow wheat. When they failed to do this warned them he would have to employ others, and finally did so. Soon after she met his wife, and said they should have had more patience, although she did not threaten her. Wife told him they were not content, and next day a foal sickened; died in due course, although he knew remedies and tried to use them. (Some damage here). Suspected her, in view of dispute and strong reputation.

(2) Claudon des Rechez, 50

Had lost various animals, but did not know who to suspect, and had never thought it was the accused. 14 or 15 years before had seen Mengeon Colas Parisat chasing her geese off his land; she was angry and told him he might do this, but another year 'il n'en seroit plus empesché'. Same year he became very ill and finally died, so he suspected she might have been cause, in view of reputation over last 3 years.

(3) Ferry Claudel Ferry, 60

Long reputation; had had many disputes with her, and suspected her over numerous losses of animals. Once when her animals strayed on his land he called her witch without her taking any action. After this, 8 or 9 years earlier, an ox became ill when eating grass (damage here); put other animals in field while ploughing it, suspecting there was 'du venin dans l'herbe'. A cow immediately died, and six animals became ill. If she was witch, as long reputed, believed she had caused this - was told she had said 'qu'elle luy en gardoit une'. 6 years before a cow became sick, unable to get up on its feet for 3 weeks; consulted neighbours, but could find no cure. Meeting her on way back from market at St Dié, told her of situation, and that he suspected her of being witch and causing the illness, in view of their frequent disputes. She said nothing, but next day cow was suddenly better. 3 years earlier she had asked his wife for some salt - damage here, some question of overcharging - then a cow broke its thigh for no good reason. Found her and her husband in fields loading sheaves, accused her of causing this and other misfortunes, and if she did not remedy matters he would take it further. Her husband was 'fort déplaisant', but did not take any action, and she said that if he bathed the thigh frequently it might heal; did this, cow quickly recovered, and he still had it. Also suspected her of causing harm to another cow which lost the use of a leg, and on which he made no profit.

(4) Jean des Rechey, 30

Two years before had dispute with his brother-in-law Claudon over tithe, after which Claudon became ill. remained so for 6 weeks, often telling witness he suspected her; one day she came to house and asked for loan of bread and salt, which was made. Also asked after Claudon, and said he would certainly recover. 2

days later brought back bread and salt in exchange, and after eating some of this Claudon quickly recovered. Bad reputation.

(5) Colas Parisat, de Clefcy, 30

12 years earlier his brother Demenge had quarrel with her because he chased away her geese. One night heard noise in poisle, where they kept milk and other commodities - thought it might be a cat, so got up to look. Saw nothing, but as he returned to bed felt something brush against his legs, was then taken by illness which paralysed legs, and from which he finally died, in belief she had bewitched him. Not only because of quarrel; she was envious and had said that no-one could earn anything on account of him, particularly her husband, and that he was taking away their day labour.

(6) Valentin Colas Parisat, des Grimels, 30

Had heard his late father tell his brother Mengeon, who was ill, that he would have done better not to go to law for 'deniers de frenel' against someone who was suspected; brother replied that he had no suspicion against his opponent, but thought Colatte, who had threatened him, was the cause.

(7) Bastien Colas Parisat, des Grimels, 40

Story of illness and death of his brother Demenge 12 years earlier, after quarrel over geese.

(8) Bastien Bernard, jeune fils des Grimels, 25

2 years earlier had been passing by Vic when she asked him to help her and her husband to unload a cart of hay; refused because he wanted to get home. Fell ill on way, hardly able to use limbs, and remained in this state for 12 weeks until a woman from Clefcy made him a herbal drink and he recovered. Had always suspected her since, in view of reputation.

(9) Jehennon femme Georgeon Colas Holbin

Long reputation. About 2 and a half years earlier had been sharing fruit with Hidoult Jean Melin when Colatte appeared and claimed a share; he told her she had no claim at all, at which she was angry and said they would not share it again. Next spring he became very ill, and finally died, although she could not say for sure this had been Colatte's doing.

(10) Georgeon Claudon Colas Claude, 70

Long reputation. Some years earlier she had dispute with Claudon Jean Remy over theft of some honey, shortly after which a wall fell on him and he was badly injured - had heard him say he suspected her. A year earlier some of the goats his wife was minding strayed into her garden, and she was angry; one belonging to Jean Simon then died, but did not know if she had caused this or not. Some 6 years earlier had lost 10 goats and kids, and called her witch because he suspected her after quarrels, but was no-one present. 7 years before had been storm when they were in fields, and he and his wife took shelter. Saw water rising and falling as high

as top of a great oak in her field, and when this stopped she came out from under it - suspected she had caused this.

(11) Collate veuve Hidoult Jean Melin, 35

Long reputation, but had never seen any harm in her. Husband had been so ill he had to be carried about, but never heard him accuse her. Although near neighbours, did not think she had caused them any losses.

(12) Mengeatte femme Claudon Claudel Ferry, 30

12 years before her first husband Mengeon Colas Parisat had been collecting tithe with Claudon, and had dispute with her, during which she threatened they would not do the same next year. Followed by quarrel over geese next spring, and more threats, then he fell ill, losing use of limbs, to die after almost a year. Always maintained she was cause of illness. 4 years earlier her present husband also had dispute with her over tithe, and became ill for a month, having great difficulty in eating. Then business of visit to house, where she saw him in sickbed by fire, said it was not serious and he would recover, loan of bread and salt, and quick recovery after eating what she brought. Did not know if she was witch, but in view of reputation suspected her over all this.

(13) Bastien fils a Claudel des Rechey

2 years earlier was guarding animals with children of accused, and her son Bastien, aged 6, told him that he went up in the sky with his mother, his brother Claudel, and his sister Catherine. Went up in evening and came back by cockcrow, while his father and brother Colas stayed at home and knew nothing. Catherine put a broom against the chimney and they were carried off at great speed; danced, then mother cooked while he turned spit, before they feasted. When mother found out what he had said she beat Bastien so hard it was thought she had killed him.

(1 June 1607)

(14) Colas Claudon Grinel, de Sachment, 50

Reputation more than 12 years, and had always avoided her. Told story of death of brother-in-law Mengeon Colas Parisat and his suspicions. About 4 years before had been dispute between their servants, because those of accused let animals stray on his land; a cow then lost milk for 3 days before he found remedy, and believed this had been her witchcraft.

(15) Jean Colas le Massson, marechal, 32

Was relative, but would still tell what he knew. Reputation 7 years. Previous year had been going to market at St Dié on a mare, and met her just before arriving. She asked him for a ride, but he said distance was so short it was not worth the trouble, at which she was angry. Then came up when he was buying horseshoes and asked for some of them - he again refused, saying that if she brought animals to his forge he would shoe them, and she showed further irritation. Asked him to accompany her home, but he would not wait for her because of reputation. Although he went slowly, mare became more and more difficult on road, and finally

threw him - might have been injured if he had not been prepared for this. Found it had broken bone in leg, and had to sell it to be put down - believed she had caused this. 3 weeks earlier had refused to shoe 2 horses for her husband because he had no money, and he had been angry.

(16) Jean Colin Remy, de Baconcel, 40

Previous spring met her at St Dié, and she asked what people were saying about her. He replied she was reputed a witch, and this was 'mal fait à elle', since she was 'sortie de gens de bien'. She replied that she was a good woman, 'et ne scauroit que faire, qu'elle avoit un homme moltrin sans deffence qui ne le deffendoit aulcunement'.

(17) Lambert Claudel Ferry

Had had various disputes with her, and losses, but did not suspect her. Reputation 7 years; as soon as she heard of action against her, had come to complain to him, saying she was no witch and would defend herself.

(18) Claudon Jean Remy, 50

Reputation 12 years; suspected her strongly over wall which had fallen on him, and various losses of animals, following disputes, but could only claim this as matter of opinion.

(19) Dieudonnée fille du precedent, 12

Story of guarding animals 3 years earlier and hearing account from her son Claudel. Added details that he had been on black horse, and had made hail.

20 June 1607; substitut for PG de Lorraine asks for arrest.

25 June 1607; interrogation

Said she was about 40; father Claude Jean le Masson was still living at Clefcy, mother was long dead. Had been married 20 or 21 years, had 5 children living and 2 dead. Those living were Catherine, 18, Jacotte, 15, Claudel, 12, Bastien, 9, and Colas, 6.

Admitted some disputes with neighbours, since 'il est bien mal aysé de pouvoir vivre en paix avec un chacun', but had not been serious. Believed she had been arrested on suspicion of witchcraft, but was innocent.

Said she knew just how suspicions had begun. 15 years earlier Claudon Jean Remy had lost some honey, and had been to devin at Orbey to find thief; he had identified her, adding that she was a witch, and Remy put this about at Clefcy and elsewhere. She and her husband had wanted to go to court, but those who had heard charges denied having done so.

Said she had never used threats, while she herself had suffered various losses without suspecting anyone. As for deal with Claudon Mourice, he proposed that they should have a third of what they carted, but this was never finally settled. When his mare died they were actually carting some manure for him.

Claimed she had never kept geese before death of Mengeon Colas Parisat. When he was collector of tithe had seen his partner Claudon Jean Remy weighing

sheaves against one another and taking heaviest, but husband dissuaded her from intervening. Mengeon had been ill for a year, and during that time heard from his wife that he had called Mengeon Claude Ferry in and threatened to have him burned if he did not cure him. Had also sent to devin to find out cause, but without success.

Did not remember dispute with Ferry Claudel Ferry about straying animals, but had a great quarrel because their sons were always beating one another. As for Georgeon Claudon Colas Claude, had disputes with him because he borrowed tools and then failed to return them, also a sword he borrowed to go to St Marie, and failed to pay for some bread he had bought.

As for her cousin Jean Colas le Masson, when she had asked for ride on horse it had been as a joke, in company with some other women - had wanted a ride as much as she presently wanted a bath. Denied having seen him again that day.

Agreed she had asked Jean Colin Remy to tell her what people were saying about her, but he had said nothing about witchcraft. Admitted some minor quarrels with Claudon Jean Remy, but said that when wall fell on him it was because he was building it in his house, and it was not properly supported.

Very long and thorough interrogation, conducted in a mildly hostile but reasonable manner; full and coherent replies from accused recorded.

28 June 1607; confrontations

Said that Claudon des Rehey had given a false oath over some wood he had stolen. Told Bastien Colas Parisat that he had been to the devin to find out about brother's illness, and had blamed her when he could discover nothing.

Suggested that Bastien Bernard was said to have been a highway robber. As for Mengeatte femme Claudon Claudel Ferry, said she had stolen a scarf and a hat. Bastien fils Claudel des Rehey was a little liar, and had claimed to have found the Virgin Mary.

Claimed that Jean Colas Masson had killed one of his brother's children, and his uncles had to purchase pardon for him.

Jean Colin Remy added that she had said 'que sy on la prenoit, qu'elle en feroit encor bien suivre des autres'; she denied this.

Claudon Jean Remy added that when he and Mengeon Colas Parisat were collecting tithe she and husband had put sheaves aside for them, but they realised they were attempting to defraud them, and took others from different place in field. Threatened they would not collect them again. When his honey was stolen he went to devin at Orbey, who asked him 's'il n'avoit pas soubcon contre quelques personnes, et il luy respondit que non aucunement, sur ce il luy fut replique par ledit devin, qu'il deposant le scavoit aussy bien que luy, ou elle pouvoit estre, et a l'instant luy declaira que ladite Colatte l'avoit prinse et desrobé.' Since her husband was his wife's brother he did not want to cause then 'aucune vergogne ny deshonneur', so decided to bear his loss. Later the devin came to his house to visit his father, who had already been ill for 3 years, and to look at witness who also had troublesome illness. It was Georgeon Colas Claude, who had accompanied him to Orbey, who put the story about.

No record of any confrontation here, which is rather odd. Final witness was Claudon's daughter Dieudonnée, of whom she said she was a little liar, and was 'fille de bourdel, parce que sa mere se laissoit avoir, et jouir d'elle par aucunes de leur village.'

Additional witness

(20) Jean George de Foinzé, ban le duc, 60

Had come from prévôté of Bruyères 4 years earlier, since when had always heard her reputed a witch. Her daughter Catherine had come to do some day labour for him, and refused to do as he said when unloading hay. Wanted to send her away on spot, but his wife persuaded him to let her finish the day. After she had eaten with the others gave her 7 gros for 2 days' work, and she threatened he would repent. Next Easter Saturday his wife went to Colatte's house, where they had left a chest of clothes because it was too difficult to get it up the mountains, to get a dress. Colatte and Catherine started violent quarrel with her about previous incident, after which she went to drink from a spring opposite, and they sent her some bread, although he did not know if she ate this.

After she had done Easter duty at Clefcy next day he sent a horse for her to ride back, but on way it threw her, and she struck her head against a rock. When she got back told him about quarrel, and said that after drinking at spring she felt ill; when she spent night at Clefcy was very thirsty. Later became very swollen, and finally died 4 months later, saying that Colatte and her daughter had given her the illness. Wanted him to get cabbage from her garden, but he did not do this. About a month earlier had taken his chest from their house, and had since been very ill for a fortnight, still not fully recovered - could not taste food properly. If she was witch thought she had caused this.

Confronted with her, she said 'qu'il avoit cui son pain en chez elle l'espace de trois ans et qu'elle estimoit qu'il fusse un de leurs plus grand amis, toutesfois que c'est un malheureux et voit bien du contraire.'

2 July 1607; C.M. Rémy asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Change de Nancy approves.

4 July 1607; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews, then racked. Released, racked more strongly, still denied. Said she was as clear of witchcraft as the fish in the water. Was racked 'fort rigoureusement' and released another 4 times, but still insisted God was her only master. Finally released, threatened with renewed torture later, she would say no more.

Later same day was interrogated and threatened again; was said to be 'non beaucoup estonnée mais fort triste' when prepared for torture. Executioner tied her to rack, but judges recognised she had been sufficiently tortured, released her, and sent her back to prison.

13 July 1607; Rémy asks for banishment, but Change de Nancy recommends that she be renvoyée.

17 July 1607; released from prison with usual warnings about future conduct