

B 8702 no 1; witch 240, Jean Gregoire Mathis de Bertrimoutier

15 June 1609; Procureur for chapter had received denunciation against him - text damaged, but appears to be for failing to take Easter communion or confess, and being generally regarded as an atheist. Had not attended Mass since previous Easter. Asks for arrest and investigation.

20 June 1609; informations préparatoires

(1) Jean Didier Cunin de Bertrimoutier, 80

As long as he had known him he had made 'fols marchés', then insulted those concerned, and often gone to court. Had heard from brother-in-law Jean Charpentier that he had reproached him about failing to do Easter duty, but when he told him to go and apologize to Grand Prévôt he replied 'que le diable l'emporte sy il y alloit' - not seen in church since. Generally reputed witch - father executed as such, but although witness had lost animals did not impute this to him. When maire Jean Grosmaire went to speak to him about taxes he thought he was going to be arrested, and fled out of back of house.

(2) Claudatte veuve Claude Gregoire, 32

Had been told by several that he had threatened to tire out her and her husband (his brother) by lawsuits until they were poor; this had happened, and now children had to go begging. Had deprived them of inheritance by keeping various pieces of property. Husband had fallen under cart when in his service, risking death, and suspected him of causing this. Then more about Easter duty etc.

(3) Claude Jean George, 40

11 years earlier had been working for accused, and went to house in morning to find him claiming that Jean Maimbourg had tried to kill him in bed previous night. Displayed wounds on head, but since Maimbourg was not bad-tempered, and old and feeble in addition, witness suspected they had been inflicted by his master the devil - reputation and execution of father. When he had to sell a cow to pay a debt, Jean wanted to buy it - damage here. After quarrel over payment for carting manure he lost a mare, and had called him witch in presence of 'doyen de la justice' without reparation being sought. Failure to take communion.

(4) Marguittre femme Jean Claude le Clerc, 40

Quarrel previous year when her animals strayed; called him witch and said she would blame him for any losses. Next week a cow sickened, but finally recovered - suspected that if he was witch as reputed he had caused this.

(5) Colas Maimbourg de Ginfosse

3 years earlier had dispute with him about inheritance of some property. On return home chambermaid told him that 3 hares had been around his horses, and next morning one of them collapsed and died. In view of reputation suspected him.

(6) Didielle femme Hidoult Jean Jacot, 50

About 6 years earlier had struck his son Colas with her hand, after he insulted her - she had found him doing damage with his father's sheep. After this heard that he had made threats against her, and became very ill for 8 weeks. During this period sent to him for money he owed for purchase of cow, and he enquired about her state - did not know if he had healed her, but did recover, apart from virtual loss of an eye. Suspected him in view of threats and reputation.

(7) Jean Demenge Gerardin de Frappelle, 46

2 years ago he and his son, with other young people, were coming back from feast at Raves when accused (who had also been there) hid in garden by road and threw stones at them. Did not know who was target; called him murderer and highway robber, without being taken to court. Was son of an executed witch.

(8) Didier Herry, 46

Damage at start - seems to have had him fined, then sustained damage (to house?) by great wind he suspected him of causing. Some 6 years before accused complained because witness (who sold wine) lodged the tithes - he had been compelled to pay some, and claimed this would not have happened without his help. Said he would repent, and soon lost a bull, a cow, and a horse - suspected him. When told to obey Messieurs, said he would as soon be hanged - and story about Easter.

(9) ?, 26

Was very quarrelsome; had heard him threaten to kill the maire Grosmaire if he found him on property which had once belonged to him. Maire had bought this from others who had obtained it by court action before the bailli. Absence from church.

(10) Claude Trexon, 30

2 months before, when he was threatened with excommunication, heard him say that grand prévôt would be happy to run after him to get him back to church.

(11) Jean Trexon, previously maire de Bertrimoutier, 60

2 years before witness had refused to plough for him, and after this lost 3 cattle, which he thought he had caused if he was witch as reputed. Not only late father, but mother and sister also suspected. Absence from church.

(12) Nicolas Menusier de St Dié, 52

6 years earlier he had handed over 2 or 3 horses to accused as security for payment of tithe, which afterwards sickened in strange way as he was taking them home.

(13) Jean Grosmaire mayeur de Bertrimoustier, 42

For 3 years he had been maire, had to carry out various judgements against him on behalf of others. Accused called him thief and wicked man, and demanded to be allowed to pay his creditors; over this period lost some 7 cattle, which he suspected had been his witchcraft in view of reputation. Had refused to obey various commands, saying he took as much notice of the justice of messieurs as of an animal. Had also heard similar stories from sergents acting for bailli, and he continued to make use of land by force. Absence from church.

(22 June 1609)

(14) Catherine servante à Colas Maimbourg de Ginfosse, 20

Repeated master's story about hares and death of horse.

(15) Nicolas le Clerc, 32

Reputation, execution of father, disobedience to justice. Absence from church.

(16) George la Barre de Raves, 70

Some 15 years earlier his daughter had been married to Claude Alix of Vanifosse, who had to take legal action against accused over a debt. Came back complaining of pain in head, took to bed, and died within 5 days. Believed that if he was witch as reputed, he or his father (later executed) had caused this - Claude had thought so during illness.

(17) Honneste homme Jean Doien de Combrimont, 55

Had heard him say that one night when he and his father were looking for their animals his father was tempted by the devil. Damage here - seems to be story of sabbat in field, with grass all damaged, which looked perfectly normal next day. When he told him not to defy Messieurs, he said they wanted to take his property, but he would prevent them, 'et feroit bien trotter a Nancy comme desia il avoit faict.' Father, sister, and male and female cousin already executed as witches.

(18) Demenge Jean Gerardin de Layegoutte, 54

6 weeks before had refused to sell him a horse, which promptly fell ill and had to be killed. In view of reputation believed this had been his doing.

(19) Jean Charpentier, 28

Was his son-in-law, and had tried to persuade him to make peace with authorities, but he always refused. As marlier had tried to make him go and be absolved, to avoid excommunication, but again he would not do so.

(20) Demenge du Molin de Neufviller, 60

10 or 11 years before witness had lease of tithes, which he sold on to accused - he did not pay Messieurs, so had to distrain on his goods. A horse which was taken promptly died - could not remember which of them bore the loss. Previous

year took his daughter into service, but had to send her away again - then lost animals worth 140 livres, which he attributed to his witchcraft if reputation was true.

(21) Claudatte femme Pierre Mesure de Neufviller, 30

Previous year her husband had made cloth for him and his son-in-law, but refused to hand it over until he was paid. Accused said they would repent, and same night she developed sickness between shoulders, from which she was still suffering. If he was witch as reputed believed this was his doing.

(22) Bastien Claude Jeandel de Houville, 55

Previous year had been making 'fontaine' at Bertrimoutier, to which each bourgeois was to contribute; had dispute with witness over cost of transport. Horse died next day, which he thought had been his doing.

(23) Jean George doyen en la justice de Bertrimoutier, 56

More evidence about his contempt for justice. Also claim that previous year chickens of accused had eaten seeds of plants growing near his house, after which 3 died, others became sick. Suspicions by late Mme Arnould, fourier de la ville, over losses of animals. Absence from church.

(24) Mengeatte femme Demenge Jacquemin de Raves, 36

Told story of death of first husband Claude Alix, as above.

23 June 1609; interrogation

Said he was laboureur aged about 48, living at Bertrimoutier. Had abandoned status of bourgeois because maire Grosmaire had beaten him, but had not taken it out elsewhere because his wife did not want to leave. Father had been Gregoire Mathis, mother Barbeline from Lesseux; father executed 11 years earlier, mother died 10 years ago. Agreed he had not taken easter communion - said he did not have money to pay those who had taken action against him.

Asked if substitut had not called him witch, said he did not know. Also asked about remark that rather than demand pardon from the Canons he would be dragged out of his chimney - evidently interpreted as suggestion that devil might take him to sabbat. Now said absence from church was because 'il estoit tout deschiré, et n'osoit y aller.' Denied that Jean Maimbourg had attacked him and tried to kill him.

Asked questions about alleged maléfices, also if he had not been to sabbat, received powders to harm men and animals, and made hail. Denied having hidden for several days after conviction of his father, in fear of arrest. Asked whether cousins had been executed, and a sister accused at Taintrux, said he did not know. Also said he did not know that his father had accused him during trial.

26 June 1609; confrontations

No reproaches to witnesses, but said repeatedly that they had lied, sometimes that they had made a gallows from which they would hang themselves.

27 June 1609; procureur d'office asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. If he does not confess to witchcraft, is to be questioned about his contempt for authority of the canons.

29 June 1609; Change de Nancy approves

3 July 1609; interrogation under torture

Agreed that he had not made Easter confession; said he did not have enough money to pay his creditors, although he could have obtained delay for only 20 gros. Was given thumbscrews, then racked. Eventually confessed some of the disrespectful remarks attributed to him, and begged for mercy. Finally given tortillons, he asked to be released, promising to tell the truth. Admitted he had told late curé 'qu'il s'en aille dire sa messe au diable', because he defended Didier Henry who had called him son of a witch. Also agreed he had told Jean Doien about being out with his father, who had told him to stay with animals while he went off to see the devil. Added 'que sondit pere luy a enseigné de ne prendre querelle à ses voisins demeurans en villaiges ou il y auroit des sorcieres, parce qu'ils feroient mourir des bestes de ceulx avec lesquels il disputeroit pour couvrir leur meschanceté et faire croire que s'estoit esté luy.'

Pressed to admit that he had been seduced, finally agreed that Persin had approached him when he was in fields 'fasché et mutiné'. Gave him something in a cloth, which turned out to be horse dung. Pinched him on shoulder, told him to renounce God, and when he refused compelled him to do so by beating him. 3 kinds of powder - black/kill, red/languish, grey/heal. Had only been to sabbat once, then gave chicken annually to be exempt. Usual description of dancing and feasting.

Interrogated again later, confirmed earlier confessions. Said he had been angry with brother, and made him fall with hayfork, but meant to do him no harm. Confessed to series of maléfices, much as alleged; sometimes stated he had used powder, in other cases no means given. Had been witch for 9 or 10 years.

Asked about accomplices, named Jehennon veuve Jean Peltreman de Raves, Claudatte femme Jean Maimbourg de Raves, mother in law of Jean Jacot Simon (dead from plague), wife of Jean des Preys of Frappelle, wife of Andreu Gabardin of Combrimont, and Claude Jean George of Bertrimoustier.

Confirmed all confessions and accusations next day (? - date missing), and on a subsequent occasion.

7 July 1609; procureur asks for death sentence

9 July 1609; Change de Nancy agrees.

21 July 1609; note that sentence has been carried out.