

Witch 251, Franceatte Charier 1

Witch 251; B 8704 no 1, Franceatte femme Nicolas Charier, de la Neuveville les Raon

Note that she had been accused by Jennon veuve Jean Pieron, executed on 7 January, and that she had been reputed a witch for many years.

3 February 1610; informations preparatoires

(1) Mathiatte femme Demenge Vatin de la Neufville, 40

Some 10 years before, when she was pregnant, Franceatte had come twice to act as midwife, but she had finally called on the official midwife, Jean Gelliat's wife. Nevertheless the accused had assisted her, and after a difficult birth child had to be baptised at home; midwife later told her that Franceatte had put a heated cloth on her stomach, and she thought that if she was a witch, as she had long been reputed, she had brought misfortune on her child. Also believed she had killed her first husband Gerardin 4 years earlier, because of a remark made at his funeral (illegible).

Testified again next day that 2 years ago last jour des rois she had met her (? at Charier's house), where she had complained to witness that she was spinning at too low a price, so that she could make nothing from her own spinning (? for Charier's wife). Told her she would repent, and soon after became very ill, losing use of her limbs for 2 weeks and ill for 6 weeks in all. Believed that if she was a witch as she was reputed she had caused this.

(2) Jean Prevost boulengier de Raon, 28

Some 3 weeks earlier he heard from a Cordelier named Carbon that after she had confessed to him at the convent, she went to another religious, Frere Estienne, and asked 'sy la justice luy demandoit qu'elle fut sorciere, sy elle le vouloit dire, dequoy il respondit qu'ouy, et qu'il falloit dire la verité sy elle estoit telle'. For his part witness had poor opinion of her, and suspected she might have confessed she was a witch.

(3) ? de la Neufville, ?

Was recent resident, and had no personal suspicion of harm, but some 10 weeks earlier, as neighbour, had heard quarrel between her daughters and daughter of Jean Gelliat over an illness latter had had. Gelliat's daughter said 'qu'elle n'estoit cause du scandal de la mauvaise reputation de sa mere, ains que ce bruiet provenoit de ses parens plus proches. Ce qu'entendu dirent qu'elles yroient le demander a un nomme Claudon Charier, dequoy ladite Franceatte respondit qu'elle demeure, que de fait ledit Charier l'avoit appellé au ban d'Estival sorciere, et tant plus on remuoit la boue, tant plus seroit elle puante'.

(4) Nicolle femme Colas Mathiot, 40

Some 3 years before had been quarrels and hatred on the part of Franceatte and her husband because husband of witness would not make concessions when they were building house next to them. 2 years ago at last All Saints her daughter Margueritte, aged 18, became ill suddenly with a lump the size of a fist in her stomach. This lasted until next Easter, and she was still not fully recovered; in view of long reputation she suspected that Franceatte had caused this strange illness.

(5) Colas Mathiot de la Neufville, 50

Husband of previous witness, repeated essentials of story.

(6) Jennon femme Jean Gelliat de la Neufville, 50

Had various disputes with her; had been angry that her daughter Barbeline was in service with Claudon Charier when she had wanted her own daughter to have the place. Girl then became strangely ill, vomiting up stones and lizards with horns and several feet; only recovered after two months when she was taken to Beau Bernard at Vic. Some 10 years earlier her son Jean, aged 16, had died after sudden illness which lasted only 8 days; had also lost various animals. If she were a witch, as she was reputed, believed she had caused all these misfortunes, particularly in view of the various threats she had made, and the hostile remarks she proffered daily.

(7) Barbelline fille Jean Gelliat, 18

Told same story; around last St Remy Franceatte and her daughter were doing day work for Charier, and had some dispute with witness, during which she threatened that she would repent, and in a few days would see what happened. Illness followed within a few days.

(8) Claudon Charier de la Neufville, 40

Said that 8 or 9 years earlier he had beaten her at Etival for some fruit which they held jointly, also calling her witch, and she had always borne him hatred since. Had various disputes, and 2 years earlier his wife had fallen ill with a 'fiebvre quart', which had resisted all attempts at a cure. Last Jour des Rois he had asked her and her husband to supper, then his brother accused her of causing the illness, and demanded that she cure it. She said that it would go away of itself when it had run its course. Still suspected her of causing this and various losses of animals.

(9) Marie femme Claudon Charier, 30

Husband had various quarrels with her; some 8 years before had visited her when she was in childbed, and husband was in town. Baby then died very suddenly. Had also lost 3-year-old son Nicolas a year ago, after illness which only lasted 6 days; before this one of her children had been constantly going to their house, and she had been angry because a child there was beating it and driving it away (not clear which way round this was). Also described strange illness from which she had been suffering for 6 months, which she believed had been caused by Franceatte if she was a witch as she was reputed.

(10) Jean Colas Peltier de la Neufville, 30

Reputation 8 or 9 years. At that time some executions took place, and when he met her on the bridge she asked if he had heard of any accusations against her. He said he had not, but suspected her after that,

(4 February 1610)

(11) Mongeon Jacat de la Neufville, 32

Was brother of Claudon Charier; described supper when he accused her of causing illness of his sister-in-law. She had said 'que ce n'estoit a elle qu'il parloit, qu'il le failloit laisser dire', and neither she nor her husband took any action. Firmly believed that of she were a witch as reputed she had killed one of his brother's cows 12 years earlier; had been around the house, the illness was clearly witchcraft, and as soon as it died she came to ask for some of the meat.

(12) Mathiatte Vatin testified again (see 1)

(13) Chrestien Brabant de la Neufville, 33

Told of strange episode around last St Remy when she knocked on his door at night, accompanied by what he thought was a black pig, but turned out to be a white one when he got close - this then ran off. In view of her reputation had been afraid that she meant him some harm. Also believed that she was responsible for limp which had afflicted his daughter Margueritte, now aged 18, for 4 years. Had previously been very upstanding; limp had come after quarrel with Franceatte at spring, when latter had said she would not walk straight again as long as she lived in her father's house.

(14) Jean Gelliat de la Neufville, 50

Long reputation among whole village. If she were witch suspected she had killed a cow and 2 calves over last 3 years, one each year. Also believed her responsible for daughter's illness over same period.

(15) Margo veuve Claudon Estienne, 40

Some 10 years earlier, after they had watched a man being executed on the wheel, her late husband and Franceatte's quarrelled, because one said to the other in jest that he had the same build as the executioner. Ended up in court case, and Franceatte's husband had to pay 40 francs, which obliged him to sell his house, since when she had always been very hostile and threatening, saying he was 'cause de leur ruine, de mode qu'il a esté plus de sept ans extremement affligé de maladie, diminuant de jour en jour de ses moyens'. Had died two and a half years earlier, and if she were witch then she believed she ws responsible.

(16) Jehenne femme Didier Xoudel de la Neufville, 35

Some 3 years earlier, when she had been in childbed, Franceatte came to see her in absence of the midwife, and as soon as she touched her she felt a great pain, and also that she had 'crevé le coeur de son enfant' - baby died after being baptised on the spot. After burial a hole appeared over grave, to general astonishment, and had to be filled in. She made some remarks about the accused having done herself and her child harm, then fell gravely ill for 18 weeks. When in bed she heard Franceatte talking to others near her, and was saying paternoster to try and protect herself. Believed that if she was a witch as reputed she had caused this.

(17) Jenatte femme Didier Ganat de la Neufville, 40

Told of quarrel between her husband and Franceatte's last harvest time, when they were both working for Claudon Charier. Afterwards at dinner accused said to husband 'qu'on disoit qu'il ne scavoit chosser, mais qu'il scavoit bien picquer ses gens'. Since then her husband had had no rest, and he, daughter Claudatte, and grandson Jean were still very ill, all swollen and unable to find any relief. Suspected that if she was a witch as reputed she was cause.

(18) Georgeatte veuve Colas Charpentier de la Neufville, 40

A year before she had quarrel with daughter of accused, and three days later her son Bernard, aged about 10, became ill and died very suddenly. Then she herself had a strange illness which lasted 12 weeks and was very hard to cure. Suspected that if she was a witch as reputed she was responsible.

7 February 1610; Change de Nancy approves arrest, interrogation, and confrontations.

16 February 1610; interrogation

Said she was Franceatte femme Nicolas Charier de la Neufville, aged about 50; native of la Chapelle, father Jean Franceatte, mother Odille. Married some 25 years. Said she had had disputes with her brother-in-law Claudon Charier and with Jean Prevost's wife, but had done no harm. Had learned of her reputation from her brother-in-law around last St Remy; agreed to conversation with daughter, whom she told not to go and speak with him, but denied remark about mud being stirred. Admitted he had called her witch when they were in ban d'Etival.

Agreed that she had been accused by Jennon veuve Jean Pieron Joliat, who said she had seen her several times at the sabbat, but said this must have been out of hatred, whose cause she did not know. Asked about business with confession, was 'effrontée' for long time, then started to laugh and said she had confessed a month earlier, and told confessor that some were after her life, but that she was innocent. Agreed to discussion over supper with Claudon Charier when he and his brother suggested she had bewitched his wife, but she had denied this.

Brought back in the afternoon and pressed by judges to make confession, she said that she had tried to resist 'la force de la justice', but now saw she would have to confess the truth. God had given her this grace and she wanted to save her soul. Had been seduced by Maitre Parsin some 7 years earlier, at time 'que l'on faisoit desja executions en ce lieu, estant extremement faschée et contristée de ce que son marit luy faisoit beaucoup de mal, et de se veoir reduicte en pauvreté, desolée qu'elle estoit de cest estat, un jour estant au derrier de leur logis, elle fut saisye de plusieurs mauvaises pensées qui luy souffloient aux aureilles, et a l'instant elle veoit descendre d'un arbre ung homme de moyen stature habillé de noir . . .' Said to her she was 'bien desolée' and offered to make her rich, but this time she refused and he disappeared, 3 days later as she was on her way to woods he reappeared, renewing his offers with 'propos amiells'; was on point of conceding, but 's'estans remort de dieu' he vanished again. Third appearance in similar circumstances a few days later, and this time she yielded - normal seduction scene. Money was grass and leaves; powder was black/kill, red/languish, white/cure.

Tried powder out on a hen, which died. A year ago had killed calf belonging to Jean Gelliat, because of quarrels she had with his people. After quarrel with wife of Jean Prevost of Raon over some towels 2 or 3 years earlier had been very angry,

and used powder to kill her small child (? - damaged document here). Had made Claudon Charier's wife ill. Said she had committed no other maléfices; when judges objected that this was impossible said that she had often refused her master's demands and been beaten for this. She had 'un sy grand regret de repentir d'estre ainsy sy pauvrement abusée et trompée, joinct qu'elle craindoit d'estre descouvert par le village et notamment par sondict marit, enfin elle jecta tous ses poudres au feu.'

Asked about specific charges, denied doing Mathiatte Vatin any harm in childbed, but agreed that when she was angry with her 2 years before her master had told her to avenge herself by killing her; refused to do this, but had consented to her illness. Had not killed her first husband Gerardin, and indeed 'eust bien du regret de sa mort parce que c'estoit un bon homme'. Agreed that she had been angry with Jean Gelliat's daughter Barbelline after quarrel, and had consented to her master making her ill for a time. At last St Remy Chrestien Brabant's wife told her there would be work for her that day, but he turned her away; went to his door with her master in form of a black pig. Intention was that he should do harm to his animals, especially his pigs, but she became frightened 'd'estre descouvert et qu'on luy imposeroit cela', so made him leave; he gave a jump and vanished.

Said she had only been to sabbat about 6 times, carried in the air by her master, and only person she had recognised was Jennon veuve Jean Pieron Gelliat, already executed. Were many there, but they were all masked. Danced to sound of minstrels and ate small birds. Did not want to make hail because of her poverty, but once on way back she and Gelliat's wife resolved to make hail, only to be frustrated by ringing of bells. Had made arrangement to pay annual due to be exempted from attendance at sabbat, but because of her poverty had to give him a piece of meat or whatever she could manage.

'A confessé que pendant qu'elle a esté en prison que sondit mre Parsin avoit entré deans elle, et ne faisoit que gronder incessamment. Adjoustant de plus qu'elle n'estoit aymée de luy, parce qu'elle ne voiloit consantir a faire beaucoup de mal et a cause de sa pauvreté ne faisoit sy grand estat d'elle qu'il faisoit des riches.'

17 February 1610; interrogation

Now denied confessions she had made previous day, saying 'qu'elle craind bien que son ame sera damnée, parce qu'elle a dit des choses que ne sont veritables que ceste commis par songe et enchanteries et sy elle disoit qu'elle fut sorciere que son ame seroit en grand danger, et qu'elle ne fut jamais seduicte ny tantée du maling esprit'. Judges thought she was several times on point of confessing again, but thought her master was in her, since it appeared she could hardly speak.

19 February 1610; Change de Nancy orders torture

26 February 1610; interrogation under torture

When threatened with torture, she renewed her confessions. Added some further details; had made Claudon Charier's wife ill by putting powder in soup when angry because she had been late serving dinner. At supper when she was accused had felt sorry to see her in such misery, and had used white powder, which she still hoped would heal her. Had given her consent for her master to make Didier Ganat and his son Jean ill for 9 months, so was sure they would duly recover. Had tried to kill Claudon Charier, in anger at things he had said about her; sprinkled powder on his seat, but her master told her this failed because he was 'en bon estat',

so that she had no power over him, having recommended himself to God that morning 'ainsy que tous bons chretiens doibvent faire pour eviter les meschans'. Explained attempt to retract as work of her master who had been with her, after beating her so hard she did not know where she was.

Given thumbscrews and asked about accomplices, stuck to earlier account.

27 February 1610; interrogation

Confirmed previous confessions, and added some more details. Had been angry with Chrestien Brabant's wife, who did not willingly see her work in their house, and wanted to make her ill, which she did with yellow powder. When she was about to be given last rites she took round some flowers sprinkled with white powder, so that she was cured. Had killed a cow belonging to the late Claudon Estienne, and one belonging to her brother, whose wife had given her nothing after she had helped them. Some 4 years before had been very angry with her brother Dieudonné because he gave her no help, and decided to kill him, his wife, and their child. Went to visit them for this purpose, but when brother 'commença a luy donner des beau propos, cela la retira de sa mauvaise volonté', so she did not carry out plan.

1 March 1610; Change de Nancy orders execution

5 March 1610; execution carried out

Costs came to 117 fr 9 gr., shared between abbot of Etival and duke.