

B 8707 no 6; witch 258, Nicolas Pairson of le Vivier

8 April 1611; informations preparatoires

(1) Marguitte femme Jean Guanaire, 50

6 or 7 years earlier quarrels between Nicolas and his wife Dieudonnée caused latter to flee and ask witness to shelter her for a night, which she did. A week later met accused and his late cousin (also Nicolas Pairson) in village; he started to threaten her and say 'qu'il l'auroit avant qu'il fut peu de temps'. In another week a cow died suddenly, which she thought had been his witchcraft - long reputation. Wife had told her, when taking refuge, 'qu'on le pouvoit bien craindre parce qu'il estoit ung sorcier.' In Holy Week previous year had been returning from making confession at Epinal when she met him, and he said 'qu'il se repentoit de ce qu'il n'avoit bruslé la maison d'elle resposante lhors qu'elle avoit losgé sa femme, A quoy elle ne luy fit aulcune responce tant pour le respect de sa confession que du temps ou ilz estoient.' Had also heard Jacquot de la Ruelle of St Rémy claim he had killed his bull by witchcraft.

(2) Jennon femme Jean Jacquot Claude Estienne, du Mesnil, 50

6 years before she had 3 goats, which he had guarding as herdsman, and he told her she should sell them or the wolf would eat them. Did not take much notice, but on following 3 days they were all caried off by wolves, and she blamed this on his witchcraft. General reputation, mother already executed.

(3) Jennon femme Nicolas Girardin Haxo, 45

3 or 4 years earlier Marguitte femme Didier Baudrot, mareschal, had told her she had heard him say the late Mr d'Etival had had him imprisoned, but would repent.

(4) Barbon femme Mengeon Clerc, 25

Previous year he was living in a house belonging to the witness, and owed them 3 thousand 'exandres'; one day he told her that her husband was very frightened he might pay them these, to which she replied that he never spoke about it at all. After this lost a cow and a pig (damage here), which she blamed on his witchcraft; reputation several years, and herdsman had told them that on day cow sickened he had met Pairson on way to pasture, 'et que s'avoit esté bien a la malheur pour eulx'.

(5) Nicolas Didier Michiel le vieulx, 60

4 years before, when Nicolas was herdsman, wolves had carried off a cow belonging to witness, no trace of which was ever found. If he was witch as reputed, thought it was his master who had done this.

(6) Claudon Colas Colin Dentandt, 40

4 years before he had been elected herdsman of cattle at le Vivier, and witness gave him the 'busche' to confirm this. Then became discontented with pay,

thinking he could earn more elsewhere, and uttered various curses against him. Within a few days he lost a sow worth 4 écus, which he blamed on his witchcraft - long reputation.

(7) Barbon veuve Jean Claude, 50

Around previous Carnival his daughter Mengeotte asked her for some 'pateneires', which she gave her, but said they should pay 2 blancs. He sent them back, saying he would not pay, so she finally gave them. Same week a fine foal became ill, and seemed beyond hope, but because of suspicions she decided to send him some more 'pateneires' as a gift, after which it recovered. Thought this had been his doing; long reputation.

(8) Mengeotte femme Mengeon Bandeçay, du Mesnil, 30

Previous year had quarrel with Nicolas, who was her brother-in-law, about a place for soaking flax, and he uttered various threats. Soon afterwards a child aged 2 sickened, and was ill for more than 3 months, becoming emaciated; since she suspected him, she and her husband asked him to visit the child, saying all the neighbours had done so, and that he might be able to suggest some remedy. He refused to come, so she told him that in view of his reputation she thought he had bewitched the child, and within a few days it began to recover.

(9) Jennon femme Fleurent Jacquemin, 50

Previous year he had asked Curienne sister of ? (damage) if he should kill his wife, since she called him witch, to which she replied that he should not. General reputation.

(10) Claudatte femme Claudon Ferry. du Mesnil, 40

Some 10 years earlier his wife Dieudonnée had sought refuge with her after he drove her out of house, and while they were sitting talking about where he could be she looked up kitchen chimney to see him at the top of it, looking down and listening to them. Called him witch, suggesting his master had placed him up so high. Soon after she lost a fine cow, which she believed had been his witchcraft - long reputation.

(11) Didion femme Jean Esclair, 30

18 months earlier was guarding pigs with accused, who started talking about one called Petit Pain of Raon, recently executed as a witch. It was said he had been to sabats on côte de Repy; if witches were there and good people passed they would see nothing at all. Added that various people in the ban d'Etival suspected him of being a witch, and if they knew he was they ought to arrest and burn him for his salvation. Witness replied that all witches ought to be burned, and should not let themselves be tortured, to which he said they should confess without torture or they would be damned. Long reputation. Returned after following witness to add that 4 years earlier she had met him near abbey, and he said that the late Mr d'Etival had had him arrested, but he would repent, soon after which 2 fine horses belonging to abbey died, and she thought he had bewitched them.

(12) Jacquot de la Ruelle, de St Remy, 35

3 years earlier had gone to mill when his wife was in childbed, and expected to go first according to custom, but accused did not want to allow this, and threatened him during quarrel which followed. Next day a bull sickened and died as if rabid, which he thought had been his witchcraft. Also thought he had bewitched a cow which died after being sick for a year, while when he was servant at Etival 4 years earlier 2 fine horses died strangely, and he was generally thought to have caused this. Had heard him say that when present M d'Etival, then coadjuteur, had been returning from Rambervillier one evening, passing by Void des Dames, he had wanted to kill him with his cudgel. Had not acted on that occasion, but still intended to do it when he had a chance.

(13) Claudatte femme Claudon de la Ruelle, du Mesnil, 37

8 or 9 years earlier had allowed herd to damage their field, and damage evaluated at a bichot of oats. He told her husband that he would repent, and within a few days they lost 2 calves, 2 cows, and 3 horses, which died in a strange fashion. Believed this was his doing, in view of threats and long reputation; her husband told him of suspicion, and he threatened to seek reparation, but failed to do so.

(14) Curienne veuve Jean Aulbry, 40

Previous year had been living with her, and asked her one day if he should kill his wife, who had called him witch. Told him to do no such thing, and not to cause any scandal in her house. General reputation.

(15) Jean Esclaire, 35

On Easter Day previous year had told witness that he intended to burn the house of Mengeotte veuve Colas Chambliey, and when he told him he must not he continued with threats, so he warned her to be on her guard.

(16) Claudon de la Ruelle, du Mesnil, 50

Same story as wife about losses of animals following herd doing damage.

(17) Nicolas Berquey, 42

9 years earlier had told him that previous witness would repent - followed by losses of animals. Also story of saying 4 years earlier that Mr d'Etival would repent, and death of horses. General reputation.

(18) Jennon femme Bastien Cuvelier, de St Remy, 32

Also told story of Claudon de la Ruelle's losses; had heard Nicolas say 'par la mort Nre Seigneur iceluy de la Ruelle avoit fait visiter le dommage de son avoine, mais qu'il l'attraperoit deans peu de jours de fasson qu'il ne s'en donneroit de garde'. Believed losses had been his witchcraft - long reputation. Also thought he had caused death of 2 goats belonging to her.

(19) Mongeatte femme Didier Michiel, 25

2 years earlier the pigs of Colas Jeandon had done some damage in garden of accused, and she was asked to go and visit this. As she entered garden a wind threw her to the ground, and she lay like a dead person for some time, before being helped home, where she was ill for a week. Believed this had been his witchcraft, since he was not agreeable to her inspecting damage.

(20) Jean George, de Pajaille, 70

14 years earlier was renting garden from his as guardian of his brother, and delayed paying rent after catching him stealing beans. This led to quarrel, and within a few days his wife sickened, dying after a week. Believed this had been his witchcraft, and had heard he asked wife of Colas Piers how his wife was, than said 'qu'il estoit bien employé et qu'il n'y avoit pas trop de danger, sy elle languissoit une bonne espace de temps'. After this he several times told him he was a witch and had killed his wife, but no reparation had been sought.

(21) Mathiatte femme Jean Hanzo, 40

When guarding pigs with him 4 years earlier he said he was very angry with Mr d'Etival for imprisoning him 'et que sans doute s'il estoit sorcier il le feroit mourrir' - repeated this when she remonstrated with him. Had also heard him say that if present Mr d'Etival did not pay him what he had promised he would kill him the first time he met him.

(22) Catherine femme Colas Menuzier, 55

After he had been imprisoned for thefts 4 years earlier heard him say 'que monsieur d'Etival avoit faict sa volonté de luy et le faict mettre en prison, mais qu'il s'en repentiroit, et que s'il estoit sorcier il la feroit mourrir'. She replied that she prayed no such thing would happen to such a good prelate, and that he did not have the power to do it, to which he said 'qu'il ne disoit pas absolument qu'il fut sorcier, n'estoit pas mort qui vivoit encore, et qu'avant il fut ung an passé l'on entendroit d'autres nouvelles, et surtout qu'il estoit en volonté faire mourrir ledit seigneur.' Soon after these threats the abbot did die, and she believed this had been his witchcraft. On day of funeral her daughter Barbe, now at la Fosse, was returning from church when she met accused with herd, who asked her how the abbot was; on hearing he had been buried he put hands together and said 'que loué soit dieu, puis qu'il estoit venu au bout de ses entreprinses, et que ledit Sr ne le feroit plus mettre en prison'. 2 years earlier, when his wife was in childbed, had asked her to permit that her daughter should ask moictriere of Mallemaison for some milk for her, which she agreed; next day told her moictriere had refused to give any and would repent, after which she lost an ox as if rabid a week later.

(23) Marguitte femme Didier Baudrot, mareschal, 27

Story of threat that abbot would repent within a year and his death, which she believed had been his witchcraft - general reputation.

(24) Aley femme Claudon Thiriot, 35

Believed he had caused losses of beasts, because she had not made him customary Easter present as herdsman; general reputation.

(25) Jacquotte femme Claudon Phullepin, 34

2 years earlier had heard him say that Nicolas Didier Michiel had refused to lend him his cart, but would repent; did not know if any misfortune had followed. General reputation.

(26) Jennon veuve Claudon Aulbry, 50

Previous year had quarrel with accused when their animals bumped into one another at spring, and he uttered various threats. She then became ill with strange malady throughout body, and after 2 weeks he sent his daughter to ask for payment of 5 blancs she owed him. She told the girl to send her witch of a father, and when he came she seized him by the collar and threatened him with a knife she had by her, saying she had sent for him to give back the health he had taken from her, and unless he healed her she would stab him in the stomach. Called him witch several times; he only replied that he had not caused her misfortune, and she let him go, saying that if she did not recover soon she would send to Mr d'Etival to have him arrested as a witch.

(27) Jennon femme Estienne Carriot, 46

2 years before had heard him say 'que sy on le faisoit mourir de quelle mort se doibt estre, il adjourneroit devant le Grand Juge trois personnes du village du Vivier pour y comparoir au bout d'ung an, neanmoings ne nomma personne'.

9 April 1611; interrogation and confrontations

Said he was about 40, son of Jean Pairson of le Menil and his wife Jeannon, the latter having been executed as a witch some 25 years earlier. Had lived in Pajaille, le Mesnil, and le Vivier, as herdsman of cattle or pigs at different times. Claimed that because his wife had 'une mauvaise teste ordinairement elle prenoit dispute contre ses voisins et aultres personnes'; when he returned in evening 'elle luy racomptoit les querelles et disputes qu'elle avoit heu, l'incitant d'en prendre la vengeance'. Quarrels had been with his neighbour Didier Baudrot and others. Agreed wife had called him witch, but he called her witch and whore.

After initial denial admitted saying that if he knew who had sheltered his wife he would burn their house down. Asked about threats to Mr d'Etival, was silent for long time, then said that when people were angry they said many things, but even if he was to have head cut off could not remember saying this. Agreed that he had been suspected of bewitching child of Mengeon Bandeçay, but had not done this. Asked about threats to kill his wife, said he had beaten her very hard when she called him witch, and might have killed her but for intervention of Jean Marquis. Admitted that on previous occasion he had looked down chimney of Claudon Ferry's house, having climbed a ladder.

Agreed to remark about how those who thought he was a witch ought to have him burned, and that witches should confess before torture on pain of damnation. Said he accepted he should be treated appropriately, but same should be true of all others accused of witchcraft 'affin de faire la loy esgal'. Denied various other threats and comments, but did admit that when he heard of death of abbot he

said 'que ledit Sr l'avoit faict mettre en prison, et qu'il sçavoit lhors s'il luy avoit faict tort ou non, que ledit Sr n'estoit plus, et que luy prevenu estoit encor'.

Agreed to quarrel with Jennon veuve Claudon Aulbry, and her threat to kill him with knife, but remembered nothing else about this episode. Admitted remark about taking three villagers before Great Judge, but when asked to name them could only remember one Berquey, who had called him witch.

Brought back that afternoon and confronted with witnesses. No reproaches to any of them, and simply denied committing any of the maléfices alleged.

9 April 1611; procureur for abbot asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

12 April 1611; Change de Nancy approves

21 April 1611; interrogation

Was shaved and prepared for torture, then given last chance to confess; now said he had decided to do so. Had been seduced 12 years earlier by Persin, when angry because his aunt Curienne Poison and her children accused him wrongly of stealing fruit from a garden. Promised to give him the right in this matter, and to give him a lot of money. Gave him money (oak leaves) and powder - black/kill, grey/languish. Tried this out on one of his hens, which died. had also killed one horse belonging to Claudon de la Ruelle, but not his other animals he had been accused of killing.

Confessed he had killed late Mr d'Etival, because he had imprisoned him; found him walking by bridge, and asked him for load of straw, which gave him opportunity to throw powder over him. Said he regretted this very much, since he had been 'ung sy bon seigneur'. Also admitted making Mengeon Bandedçay's child ill, then curing it with white powder. Had killed wife of Jean George, but denied having committed other maléfices.

Had been to sabat on côte de Repy about 3 times a year, having made pact to give Persin a chicken or a kid each year so that he did not have to go as often as others. Payed this at Martinmas 'comme on paye les autres rentes des seigneurs'. Other witches at sabat were masked, but had seen Jennon femme Claudon Girardin of St Remy, Laurence femme Vincent Bandedça and Marie femme Colas Perrin (now dead) of Pajaille, Jennon la Mourratte (just executed) and Jean Sagaire of Nompateize.

Repeated confessions and accusations that afternoon.

22 April 1611; reiterated confessions, adding that he had committed various small thefts of food from gardens etc.

23 April 1611; brought before inhabitants of Etival, who heard his confessions read out, and handed him over to duke for execution.

27 April 1611; procureur for abbot asks for execution in normal form. Change de Nancy approves.

4 May 1611; sentence carried out