

Witch 264, Marguitte Laurent 1

B 8708 no 3; witch 264, Marguitte veuve Jean Laurent de Brehimont

19 December 1600; confrontation between Jean Thirion of Brehimont and Marguitte, whom he claimed to have seen previous year at sabbat held between 'les gemelz', with Mengeon and Claudon Jean Perrin of Brehimont and Jean Gelyat of Saulceray.

8 April 1611; confrontation between Jennon femme Bertremin de Laval dit la Mouratte of Nompateize and Marguitte; former said she was 'une parfaite sorciere', whom she had seen at sabbats held at la Faigne, les Rochieres, and les gemelz. Had seen Jennon veuve Colas Ydoulx, Jean Marescal hermit of Boullain, Claudon Mathelon of Brehimont. Had danced to sound of viol, eaten 'chair d'oysillons', and made hail, notably previous year when great damage was done on grain at la Pacherie, Brehimont, and parts of Herbaville and Saulceray.

Evidently also accused by Jennon Ydoulx.

14 April 1611; informations preparatoires

(1) Demengeon Claude Girard de Brehimont, laboureur, 70

Some 7 years earlier as animals returned home a bull and a cow became sick; first died next day, cow after 3 or 4 days. All other animals also sick, with holes appearing on backs, and pieces of flesh falling off. These 'pertes et fortunes' left him 'merveilleusement estonné', as were the other villagers, 'et combien que l'on jugeoit assez telles fortunes prouvenir par quelque sorciere, sy esse qu'il ne scavoit a qui les soubconner'. One day Marguitte was in his house, and said to Claudatte Jean Galdrimey of Saulceray that the witness was advising and helping his brother Colas in a lawsuit against her and her children, 'mais qu'elle le mettroit sy bas, qu'il seroit contrainct de demander son pain'. When this was reported to him, in view of her long reputation, he believed she had bewitched his animals.

Then told long story of how he had been in bed same year, and felt as if several people had climbed on bed, holding him down and trying to strangle him. Remembered that he had commended himself to God before retiring and was 'bien muny' with sign of cross, so threw off the bedding. Then thought another person came in, whom at first he thought was his small daughter, but was seized even more strongly, at which he called for his wife. While she was bringing a candle the intruder seemed to leave, making great noise on bench by window. Then found that bench was scorched and covered with red earth like that on village paths; daughter was in kitchen with other children, and he was sure voice he had heard was that of daughter of accused.

(2) Catherine femme Jean Claudon Thierion, 40

Some 5 years before they had a foal which became ill, suddenly refusing to eat from Saturday to Wednesday. Her husband took a stick and drove it out of stable saying the witch who had bewitched it should kill it outright. She followed it into village, and it stopped outside Marguitte's house; she asked witness what was wrong, then fetched some flour which she put down its throat. After this it

promptly began to eat and soon recovered, so that she believed accused was responsible for both the illness and the cure. Common repute as witch.

(3) Didielle femme Colas Claude Girard de Brehimont, 40

Some 8 years earlier children of accused had lawsuit against her husband which lasted 18 months; they eventually lost because they could not prove claim that he had called them witches. During this time they had a foal sick, covered with swellings, and when witness met her son Mengeon she said to him 'Que on les faisoit plaider pour des choses qu'ilz n'en pouvoient, et que sy leur poullain ne guarissoit ilz en feroient brusler, luy donnant assez a entendre qu'elle parloit pour ladite prevenue sa mere, sur quoy il fait responce que sy sadite mere estoit sorciere il la falloit faire brusler'. At same moment foal began to recover, so she firmly believed she had bewitched it, then healed it. Also blamed her for loss of milk by a cow after a quarrel 6 years earlier. During lawsuit one of her sons, Georgeon, had felt as if he was being strangled in the night by something which jumped on him, and she believed this had been the accused.

(4) Halby femme Demenge Colas Girard de Brehimont, 50

Reputation 10 years; had been called 'une faulce sorciere' by Jean Thierion. No personal suspicion.

(5) Claudatte femme Colas Claude Perrin de Brehimont, 30

Long reputation; had heard her father (presumably Jean Thierion) speak of her as witch.

(6) Peccatte femme Demengeon Claude Girard de Brehimont, 40

Repeated husband's story of quarrel and threat, which in her version was 'qu'elle les mettroit sy bas, qu'elle ne leur laisseroit bestes a quatre pieds'. Also believed she had bewitched her daughter some 10 years before, since when she was 'troublée de son esprit', and quiet neither by night or by day. Further suspicion over deaths of three kittens and their mother (which had happened before this); daughters of accused had asked for a kitten, but were refused because they were already promised elsewhere.

(7) Colas Claude Girard de Brehimont, laboureur, 60

14 years before when soldiers were in village, and most of inhabitants had fled into woods, he had lost a pig. Hearing that they had killed several at house of accused, had gone to ask her if she knew anything of it, which she denied. Did not know if she had been angry, but immediately afterwards he had been afflicted with fleas, bigger and more voracious than usual, of which he had been unable to rid himself by any means. Had suddenly obtained relief when she was accused by la Mouratte a week before and arrested, and believed she had caused them to afflict him. Told of lawsuit and threat, which in his version was that they would be

'reduicts jusques a la besasse', and of recovery of sick foal after threat by his wife to her son. Reported incident of son (aged 14) who thought he was being strangled - had felt as if a thumb was being forced down his throat. On another occasion 3 of his daughters cried out that they were being smothered or strangled. He himself had thought two people got on his bed and took him by throat to strangle him; called for servants who came with candles but found no-one, although bed looked as if a dozen people had been on it.

(8) Claudon Demenge Girard de Brehimont, 25

Briefly supported testimony of his father Demenge Claude Girard about lawsuit, threat, and losses of animals.

(9) Georgeon fils Colas Claude Girard de Brehimont, 21

Told story of attempt to strangle him at night, from which he had been rescued when his father got up to ask what was wrong with him.

(10) Jean Berque de Brehimont, 30

Common repute only.

(11) Marguitte femme Symon Jacquot de Brehimont, 27

Had been at spring together previous winter, then witness fell while carrying sheets back home; heard accused make a derogatory remark, but had no suspicion of witchcraft.

(12) Jennon veuve Jean Colin de Laistre (Ban de Sapt), 40

10 years earlier had been living with her uncle Mengeon Claude Perrin at Brehimont; he was accused of witchcraft by Jean Thierion, taken to Etival prisoner, and later executed. Accused had met her, and said she was already accused by Thierion, and if Perrin also named her 'elle seroit contraicte ou bien il luy conviendrait aller apres eulx'. Common repute since then.

(13) Symon Jacquot de Brehimont, 35

At time of execution of Thierion and Perrin 10 years earlier he had been in service in her house. One day had been threshing in barn when she saw Nicolas Ruyr, procureur d'office at Etival, coming into village, and asked witness what his business was. He replied he did not know, but he had surely not come without a reason, at which she hid herself at the end of the stable until she knew procureur had left; believed she was frightened of being arrested as witch, already reputed such.

(14) Jean Claudon Thierion de Brehimont, 40

Reputed wife's story of illness of foal 5 years earlier; thinking it might be dead, had struck it, then driven it out saying it should go and seek the witch who had bewitched it. Said that 'des longtemps elle est en commune bruit d'estre sorciere, mais qu'elle est fine et rusée et se garde de chouser, ny menacer les personnes'.

15 April 1611; interrogation

Said she was Marguitte veuve Jean Laurent, aged about 50, widow for 9 or 10 years. Admitted some called her witch, but said they did her great wrong. La Mouratte had accused her wrongly, and 'il fault estre bonne chrestienne du tout, ou du tout diable'. Jean Thierion had earlier accused her of being at sabbat, but said he had seen her do no harm.

Was then confronted with Jennon veuve Colas Ydoulx of Nompateize, who said she had been at sabbat, wearing same red bonnet as she did now. Marguitte was astonished, but maintained denials.

Agreed she had been angry with Demengeon Claude Girard because he helped his brother Colas in lawsuit, but denied doing him any harm. Admitted that threat by Didielle Girard over illness of foal had been reported to her. Agreed she and children had taken Colas Girard to court because he called them witches, but said she did not remember outcome. Denied threatening Girard family, saying 'qu'elle n'a pas fait la moictié du mal que on la charge'.

Then seemed to be on the point of confessing, saying she had committed no murder, nor killed animals that she knew, and 'sy elle n'est pas sorciere comment elle le veult dire et crainct sy elle disoit l'estre qu'elle se dampneroit, que sy elle est sorciere elle viendra encore assez a temps pour le dire.'

16 April 1611; confrontations

No reproaches, but no admissions of any significance.

18 April 1611; procureur d'office asks for question ordinaire

20 April 1611; Change de Nancy agrees

21 April 1611; interrogation under torture

As soon as she felt thumbscrews she began to confess. Some 30 years before had been 'en extreme fascherie et ennuy' because her servants were in fields all day and she was left to cope with household tasks on her own. At dusk man in black named Jolybois appeared, offering to relieve her pains and give her plenty of money; gave her a 'cornet' of paper which he said was full of gold and silver, others with black and grey powder (both apparently to kill). Had intercourse with her - usual details about coldness - money turned out to be dust.

Had tried out powder on one of her own lambs, then on animals of her brother Demenge Martin of Sauceray, which quickly died. Had also killed one of his daughters by putting powder in bowl of milk. Killed one of her own cows because it was troublesome and she was always having to run after it. Some 9 years before

widow of Jean Hannel of St Remy had dispute about inheritance with her husband; killed child with powder in soup.

Some 10 or 12 years earlier her master had forced her to kill one of her own cows to be eaten at sabbat, which was held between 'les Gemelz'. At sabbat had seen Jean Sergaire of Nompatherize, who was an old man, Jennon la Mouratte and Jennon veuve Colas Ydoulx, both recently executed, Asnel wife of Demenge Bourotte of l'Hoste du Bois, and Jean Thirion.

Admitted killing own baby aged a week, because delivery had been so hard. Her husband Jean Laurent beat her with a 'xinnatte' taken from fire, giving her a very painful blow on the head, so she gave him powder in his soup and he died a week later (this was 9 years previously). Also confessed to killing another son of her brother, for which she begged pardon from God; went on 'qu'il est bientemps qu'on la fasse mourrir, considerez tant de maux qu'elle a faict depuis vingt a trente ans'.

Asked if she had done harm to Mengin Claude Girard, said that in anger over lawsuit she had given her master permission to strangle him, his brother, and their children, but he had been unable to do so because they had commended themselves to God and made sign of cross. Had used special powder to afflict Colas Claude Girard with fleas. Had agreed to master making daughter of Demenge Claude Girard ill, but did not know if there was any way to cure her. Had also allowed master to kill his cats.

Denied bewitching foal belonging to Jean Claudon Thierion. Said she had been to sabbat about 3 times a year, usually on Thursdays; in order to be exempted from going more often, made annual gift of a hen or a piece of meat to be eaten at sabbat. Sometimes went on foot, sometimes carried by her master; in order to get out of house without disturbing husband or servants smeared stick with grease given her by her master, put it between legs, and left by the chimney. Found her master on the tiles, got on his back, and was carried off in the air as if by a wind. Added to list of those she saw there Claudon Jean Perrin alais Mathelon of Brehimont; they had made mutual promise some 7 years before not to accuse one another if arrested. Had also seen Mengeon Claude Perrin of Brehimont, already executed.

Said that they had danced, feasted on 'chair d'oysillons' and other meat, with no bread or salt, and made hail.

22 April 1611; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions.

23 April 1611; condemnation

Brought out before inhabitants of seigneurie in front of abbey of Etival; asked to be put to death as soon as possible.

27 April 1611; procureur asks that she be executed; to feel fire sharply before being strangled. Change de Nancy approves same day.

4 May 1611; sentence carried out.