

Witch 289, Jennon Mengin 1

B 8717 no 6; witch 289, Jennon femme Claude Mengin de Fouchifol (commune de Coinches)

2 July 1616; procureur d'office asks for arrest and proceedings against Jennon

4 July 1616; informations preparatoires

(1) Mengeon Dion de Fouchifol, 60

His wife Catherine had been executed as witch 12 years earlier; she had told him that Jennon was 'une enherbée sorciere'. Reputation even before she was married. Had heard his daughter Catherine and Beniste daughter of Didier Henry say they had seen her at sabbat. Did not think she had done him any harm, 'ors qu'il aye fait plusieurs pertes de bestiaux qu'il soubconne a d'autres.'

(2) Jehennon femme Claude Mathis de Fouchifol, 26

Accused was her stepmother; until her marriage 3 years earlier she had lived in same house. Had seen no harm in her, except for episode one night when her father had quarrelled with her. Witness was last to go to bed, covering fire, when she heard stepmother get up again, without knowing reason. In morning rose first to light fire, found a broom by chimney which had not been there previous night. Knew she had been suspected since accusation by Catherine 12 years earlier.

(3) Jehennon femme Colas Henry Finance de Mandray, 25

On day of her mother Catherine's execution 12 years before, had met accused, who asked her 'sy elle vouloit pas aller veoir executer sadite mere, qui luy fit responce en pleurant que ouy. Adjoustant a ladite prevenue qu'elle deposante avoit ouy dire que sadite mere avoit nommé entre ses complices Icelle prevenue, qui fit responce qu'il n'y avoit encor heu aucune Sorciere en son parenté, et que s'il en y avoit une, il falloit avoir patience.'

(4) Claude Colin Mengeon de Fouchifol, 30

Some five years earlier, when keeping household with his mother, had a fine sow worth 12 francs which became strangely ill, not eating, jumping to roof of stable, yet not dying. Asked his mother to get some oats from house of accused; pig recovered briefly after eating them, then died a few days later. Blamed Jennon - long reputation. As close neighbour had heard her complaining after confrontation with Marguitte femme Chrestien Colas Thiery, who had accused her; was thinking of flight, but was dissuaded by husband. 'entrouyt aussy que l'on parloit qu'il ne falloit que trois tesmoings pour fournir a une information, le contraire de quoy luy fut maintenu par son Marit, disant qu'il en falloit bien davantage.' Had heard his late father Colin Mengin claim that he had called her witch, and that her husband 'se mesfioit aussy d'elle'. Had heard her husband's son Claudon Mengin attribute an illness he had 4 or 5 years before to her, adding 'qu'il ne vouloit point manger de sa cuisine'.

(5) Valentin Claude Colin of Fouchifol, 32

Some 9 or 10 years before Catherine Dion and Beniste Henry, both fugitives accused of witchcraft, had claimed that they had seen Jennon at sabbat; suspected ever since.

(6) Didier Henry de Fouchifol, 45

5 or 6 years before had a fine foal, which was injured by Jennon's stepson with an iron fork; took her husband to court at Mandray, and he was condemned to pay 15 ecus and take foal, or 2 ecus for the wound. Took latter option; next year his mare was carrying another foal, but was only saved when he and neighbours pulled it from her dead. 'Lequel accident il mescroit aux sortileges de ladite prevenue, sy elle est sorciere, comme elle est en bruict tout commun des bien longtems.' Also suspected her about a sow, which her piglets had been coming to take suck from 3 weeks earlier; after he chased them off the sow lost her milk, so that 2 of her 5 piglets had died.

(7) Jean Bertremin Grand Homme de Fouchifol, 40

During lifetime of his first wife Marion 'elle disoit toujours a luy deposant qu'elle craignoit merueilleusement ladite prevenue, pour lors desja soubconnée Sorciere, tellement qu'en l'absence de luy deposant elle hantoit fort familiarement en leur losgis, et y alloit flatter ladite Marion sa feue femme. Laquelle aussy respectivement contentoit de bons propos ladite prevenue, de paoeur qu'elle ne luy mesfit' - nevertheless none of their four children survived, 3 died very quickly, one lived to be 4 or 5. Wife herself had died suddenly in 24 hours. All these deaths 'il mescroit aux sortileges de ladite prevenue, ad cause de la trop grande familiarité qu'elle avoit en leur maison, ou en desdain de ce que peult estre on ne luy avoit accordé ce qu'elle demandoit.' Added story about accusation by the two suspected girls.

(8) Claude Mathis de Fouchifol, 50

5 or 6 years earlier had leased a cow to Claudatte veuve Colin Mengin; Jennon had said to him that Claudatte had 'une bien belle vache', and it died in 8 days. His first wife Claudatte had feared her greatly, and had suspected her of causing her fatal illness. He had refused to join her husband in collecting tithes, which latter feared would be at a loss, although his first wife advised him to do so, after accused had told her 'qu'il ne leur yroit pas bien' if he failed to do so. Then lost a mare, which he had to sell for 2 francs for the leather.

(9) Mengeon Henry de Fouchifol, 30

Said 'qu'il avoit epousé une femme laquelle pour son indiscretion il estoit contrainct de battre, afin de l'enseigner, laquelle fut conseillée par ladite prevenue, le cas semblable escheant, de s'en fuyr hors de la maison, et crier alarme, prendre ses

habitz, et se refugier chez ladite prevenue, ce que sadite femme fit a fois reiterées, et ou ledit deposant la fut chercher et ramener en son losgis a coups de baston, en fin dieu voulut que sadite femme se corrigea de ses mauvaises facon de faire, et devint tellement mesnagere qu'ils vivoyent en paix et amytié faisant bon mesnage, Ce fut alors que sadite femme luy confessa qu'elle estimoit que parmy les conseils d'icelle prevenue, elle avoit envye de la seduire, et rendre sorciere comme elle'. His wife had later died; did not know if Jennon was responsible, but wife had great fear and horror of her. Had heard from Dieudonné fils Claude Dieudonné, who was absent at present, about occasion when she left house saying 'qu'elle s'en alloit au diable', and her husband had to fetch her back.

(10) Claudatte veuve Colin Mengin de Fouchifol, 48

More than 7 years earlier her husband had called Jennon witch one evening, threatening to have her burned; she had also called her witch, and she had taken no action to secure reparation. Believed this was reason she had killed cow (see witness 8). Also repeated story of illness of her son's pig, giving it oats after accused had suggested this, and its death. Accusations by the two suspected girls.

(6 July 1616)

(11) Claudon Simonel de la Fosse, 60

When he wanted to marry 'on luy enseigna a femme ladite prevenue', and went to see her, but was dissuaded by Demenge Ferry, doyen of Ayemont, who told him she had already sworn falsely in court at St. Dié against another who wanted to marry her.

(12) Mengette femme Didier Henry de Fouchifol, 40

Had been lawsuit some 2 years before between her husband and husband of accused about a hedge between their fields. After settlement she took her small son with her when she went to Jennon's house to ask if she could dry some oats in their oven after they had finished cooking bread. She agreed, then remarked that it was a novelty to see the boy in her house. As he left he was shaking his head as if he had lost his wits, then went home singing and shouting in street. Another day soon afterwards when he was near her house he fell and got a splinter driven into his hand, and was ill for 8 days until he died, his hand clenched and twisted. Since then witness had always had suspicion in her heart that accused had caused his death.

Added that Dieudonne, late wife of Mengeon Henry, had told her that she suspected Jennon of making her young son mad, and had gone to her house to tell her so. Witness herself later told Jennon of this suspicion when they were guarding animals together; she replied 'qu'elle le scavoit bien et qu'on le disoit partout', also agreed that Dieudonné had called her witch 'adjoustant qu'il falloit laisser parler les gens, et qui vivroit verroit'.

6 July 1616; interrogation

Said she was Jennon Masson, wife of Claude Mengin of Fouchifol, laboureur, aged about 50. Daughter of Colas Masson of Anozel and his wife Jennon of Sarux. Agreed that she had been to church court at St. Dié over promise of marriage to Jeandel d'Anould, and been released when she swore that her parents had not given consent; denied she had lied. Also agreed that Claude Simonel had been to visit her, but she had not wanted to marry him. First husband was Colas du Paire, of Le Paire de Sainte Margaré.

Said she did not know why she was arrested, so judges pointed out that she had been confronted with Marguitte femme Chrestien Colas Thiery and with Demenge Mathis. She agreed, but maintained she was innocent of witchcraft.

Asked about episode with broomstick, repeated several times 'Jesus Maria, n'est ce que je ne scay'. Agreed that after confrontations with Marguitte she and 'toutes les autres qui furent confrontées, prenoient resolution, en s'en retournant, de s'en aller.'

Generally denied all charges. Said that Mengeon Henry had no sons.

8 July 1616; confrontations

Claimed only accusation had been by Marguitte, who had later cleared her. Made no objections to witnesses; towards end judges thought she wanted to confess. Later threatened her that she would be placed in a more obscure prison; she begged to be left where she was, and said she would respond to questions next day. They felt she was on point of confession, but she would not actually yield.

9 July 1616; procureur asks for question ordinaire

11 July 1616; Change de Nancy approves question ordinaire et extraordinaire, although latter not asked for.

13 July 1616; interrogation

After being shaved and prepared for torture, she started to confess. 26 years before had been living at Fouchifol with her second husband, with a small daughter from first marriage; only had one cow whose milk was for her daughter. The maire of Mandray, Claude Gabourel, later executed for robbery, was levying 'gros rancons', and seized the cow, which she could not recover despite desperate pleas. On way in despair to Le Paire, where her husband was ploughing land from her dowry, met a tall black man, with paws and claws, who promised to give her sufficient money after she had explained her woes. She did not believe him and went her way. Scene was repeated on same spot 2 or 3 days later, and this time she yielded, but 'money' he gave her wrapped in leaves turned out to be 'fiente de cheval'. Had intercourse with her, and had done so often since, more times than she could count, but was not as pleasurable as with her husband, because his genitals were so cold. Gave her 3 kinds of powder; black to kill animals, red and grey to kill people or make them ill. Tried it out on a calf and a pig of her own, which both died. Had killed Marion femme Jean Berthremin, by making poisoned soup with her accomplices, solely on orders of their master. Went up chimney on broom to go

to sabbat. Had killed cow belonging to Claude Mathis because Claudatte Mengin, to whom it was leased, often came to house and stole things.

Briefly racked to secure full confession about death of small son of Didier Henry - not clear whether she was refusing to make this. No motive given - some suggestion that this was again her master's doing.

Told of hailmaking at sabbat; ringing of church bells prevented harm, and greatly angered her master. Had only been twice, making offering of black chicken at Martinmas in lieu.

Named a number of those already executed as accomplices, then went on with Beniste fille Didier Henry, Catherine fille Mengeon Dion, Magdelaine femme Dieudonné Demenge Colnat, alias (?) Bon Didier of Entre-deux-Eaux.

Confirmed confessions later same day. Added more names to those seen at sabbat; Berbeline femme au maire Estienne de Coinche (who was cook), Colas Gabourel le vieux of Entre-deux-eaux (now too old and infirm to attend), the wife of Mengeon Masson of Contramolin, and Nicolas Laurent of the same place. Was frightened to return to prison where she might be beaten by her master; had previously been beaten for taking sacraments and refusing to bring host to him.

14 July 1616; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions. Added to list of accomplices Claudatte femme Claude Aulbert of Fouchifol, but now said she was very uncertain about identifying wife of Mengeon Masson, and did not wish to accuse her wrongly. Her master had pressed her to bring her daughter Clemence to sabbat, promising to make her rich, but she had always refused. Said that 'depuis l'heure de sa tentation, elle n'a jamais eu bien, et toutes les fois qu'elle voioit mener a l'execution d'autres ses semblables ou oyoit parler de telle crime, elle avoit ung grand remort de conscience.'

15 July 1616; procureur asks for death sentence

16 July 1616; Change de Nancy approves

20 July 1616; execution carried out