

B 8721 no 3; Witch 295, Catherine femme Bertremin Claude de Wisembach

12 July 1618; substitut for procureur général de Lorraine at St Dié says that Mathis Chemenel of Gemaingoutte, executed as a witch, had denounced Catherine as one of his accomplices, claiming to have seen her at several sabbats. Also has very bad reputation, so he asks prévôt to take evidence, and if serious charges result to arrest and interrogate her.

19 July 1618; informations preparatoires

(1) Demenge Jean Didier le tixerand, 42

General repute only.

(2) Claude femme du precedent, 40

Only knew of accusation by Mathis.

(3) Catherine femme Colas Gaixotte mareschal, 40

Some 5 years earlier had heard late Nicolas le Maimbour accuse her of being cause of his fatal illness.

(4) Nicolas Gros Didier, 70

Reputation 4 or 5 years.

(5) Didier du Prey, 34

The late le Clerc had often reproached her with being a witch; witness feared her and made sign of cross when he met her.

(6) Demenge Bertrand, 33

Reputation more than 7 years; had heard Claude Griffon's wife accuse her of causing great trouble to her leg.

(7) Collatte femme du precedent, 40

Same deposition.

(8) Jehennon femme Demenge Mandray, 30

Had heard wife of Claude du Sal, alias Griffon, say that she believed the accused had given her leg trouble as she passed her cleaning fruits and herbs outside her house, because she had given some hay she wanted to someone else.

(9) Beniste femme Martiolle Francois, 35

Said she had been accused by Mathis, whose execution he witness had specifically gone to see.

(10) Jean Thoussaint Colin Michiel, 31

Some 8 years earlier, around 11 at night, a big dog went to stable door of her house; witness and others tried to drive it off with stones, but saw it go in and then shut door again. They were all so frightened that they did not dare to do any more, thinking it was not a normal dog, in view of her reputation. When his brother's 3-month old child was very ill, his brother was advised to put a broom above the door, so that the person who had caused the sickness would not be able to leave until it was removed. Accused came to visit sick child, and stayed a long time, until broom was removed, when she left.

(11) Elizabetz, veuve Jean du Prez, 40

Was neighbour, but knew no ill of her other than reputation.

(12) Mathiatte veuve Dion François Gaixotte, over 50

Believed she had caused loss of 4 or 5 horses and three fine cows; was nearest neighbour, but gave no indication that she was sorry, and witness claimed to have seen her smiling as she passed. Admitted that this claim was based primarily on her reputation.

(13) Colas Sibille, 40

Had heard story about dog by door at night.

(14) Jehennon, veuve Jean Didier Gaixotte, 45

Believed her to be witch and feared her, but no claim of loss.

(15) Alizon femme Demenge Chottey, 44

Reputation 21 years. Had heard from a young boy who had been chased out of Wisembach that he had seen her at assemblies of old women where they feasted on unsalted meat and danced dressed in purple, warming themselves before a fire.

(16) Jean Bertrand, 40

Lived near her, and sometimes 's'ayant esté esgayer en compagnie et prins de son vin' remembered her bad reputation and called her witch. Believed she had caused deaths of several animals, including a horse which died as if rabid, so 'comme pour l'inthimider il la menaca d'en faire prendre et d'en informer par justice affin d'eviter pertes plus grandes'. She replied 'qu'elle luy en feroit mordre les doigts jusques a l'os', since when he had lost more animals, specifically pigs and a fine goat worth 9 francs. 'Et ayant ainsy fantaisie que ladite prevenue luy avoit procuré les susdites pertes . . il estoit quelquefois en deliberation de l'exterminer luy mesme la rencontrant a l'escart, s'il n'eust jugé qu'il valloit mieux que ce fut par l'expedient de la justice.'

(17) Demenge Jacot Colas Jacot, 48

Reputation more than 12 years; no personal suspicion.

(18) Catherine femme Claudel Jacquelin, 30

Had been dispute between husbands over a small stream which flowed by garden belonging to the Claudes, and accused had arrived as this was going on, but withdrew again. They had lost numerous animals 'mais pour ce n'impute elle la faulte a personne de pheur de faire tort a aultruy.'

(19) Claudel Jacquelin, 50

Same story; suggested she had withdrawn because she knew he would accuse her of being a witch. If she were convicted, he was sure she had caused his losses. Had heard story about the big black dog.

(20) Jehennon femme Jean Bontemps, 30

Some 6 years earlier her late father had quarrelled with her, after he had talked about the boy expelled from the village who had told of seeing her at the assembly, saying that some of them ought to be arrested. Then became ill and died, saying he had been bewitched, by her or others.

(21) Catherine veuve Thoussainct Colin Michiel Bejalley, 60

Accused was her aunt by marriage. Her husband had used small piece of land he had inherited to enlarge his house, but accused had been angry at this, and threatened him, saying the house was not yet built or finished. As last load of stone was being brought up one of their horses broke a leg; at same time following year another horse died suddenly, and they also lost a bull. Believed she had caused this, since she had been accused as witch by woman executed at Val de Lusse 8 years earlier.

(22) Claude Jean Gaixotte, 36

Had heard from neighbours that they had suffered losses which they attributed to her witchcraft.

(23) Demenge Toussainct Colin Michiel, 28

Some 7 years earlier, when wife had been in childbed, and baby was very ill, accused came to visit with other women. Had put broom above door as test, and she stayed, despite saying she must go, until he had removed it. Believed she had caused illness of child and loss of several animals; general reputation.

(24) Valentine femme Jean Michiel, 35

Had heard 'des personnes qui ont heu praticqué certaine recepte pour faire essay, si ladite prevenue estoit sorciere', about test with broom. Also general repute.

(25) Colatte femme Claude le maire, 44

10 years earlier one of her pigs had damaged Catherine's garden, and had been a row over compensation - her husband would not pay because they did not

make a proper claim. She was angry and threatened them, calling them 'freilleux et pouilleux'; shortly afterwards husband fell ill and died, and she believed this was her witchcraft. At Christmas went to confession, and told Messire Valentin, then the curé, that among other sins she had attributed her husband's death to Catherine. Latter confessed after her, and did not know what curé might have said to her, but she sent a loaf to his house for the witness; did not know whether this was for a debt of 11 gros she owed her, or to stop her talking any further about her husband's death.

(26) Jehennon femme Claude de Sal, dit le Griffon, 28

Told how after accused had been refused straw by a neighbour she had asked same person, who was a close friend, for some straw. Told she could have it, but must come secretly early in the morning to take it, since friend was frightened that if Catherine knew she might suffer some harm from her, given her reputation. Despite precautions she reproached the neighbour, and witness said she must have learned of it by the devil. Shortly afterwards, when in company, saw Catherine approaching, and became so terrified that she fell into a frenzy. Then had a 'grand mal' in her neck, which spread to her whole body, so that she lost use of limbs for some 9 months. Believed this to be her doing, and she was greatly feared.

(27) Laurence femme Demenge Grand Benay, de Repas, 44

One day had been outside house working, when accused came by, and went to fetch her daughter without being asked. Girl had been told to stay by her father, who was ill, but finally yielded to repeated statements that her mother wanted her. When she came witness was angry and told her to go back, but first she wanted to pick some plums, despite being discouraged. When she got up tree an apparently strong branch broke, and she had a broken arm from fall. Sometimes witness had openly accused her of being cause of the accident, but she took no notice - did not come to visit her with other neighbours, although she was closest.

? July 1618; interrogation

Said she was about 60, native of Quebrux. Believed she had been arrested because of wrongful accusation by Mathis, who had also done great wrong to a poor man named Hanzo Alexis, whom he had falsely accused. Judges asked how she could know this, and she said that since he had done her wrong he might have done it to others. Over story of dog, said she had been out in the fields collecting hay dispersed by the storm, as many others could testify, and had only heard of it through others. Said it had gone in by stable door, not that of barn, causing judges to ask how she knew this if she had not seen it. Went methodically through charges against her, to be met by series of denials.

28 July 1618; confrontations

No reproaches, but no admissions of any significance.

2 August; procureur général de Lorraine (C-M. Remy) asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Change de Nancy agrees.

7 August 1618; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews, then rack, and finally strappado; in later stages seems to have become semi-conscious, and failed to respond to some questions. Maintained denials throughout session.

Brought back after lunch, she now said she was sorry she had allowed herself to be tortured, and started to confess. Said that 12 years earlier she had been working in a garden when a man dressed in red appeared, who said they did her great wrong to call her witch (as they already did); if she would believe in him he would defend her and protect her from any wrong, and he was a greater master than God. Name was Joly; gave her money which proved to be leaves, and black powder to kill animals, grey to kill people. Tried these out by killing a hen, a cat, and a horse which was not worth feeding, all her own.

Denied causing death of Nicolas Maimbour alias le Clerc, but said she had given Jehennon femme Claude de Sal her bad leg, using powder. Black dog had been her master come to seek her; had found her in fields and taken her to sabbat on his back. Had killed a horse belonging to the late Dion Gaixotte after a quarrel. Denied most of losses alleged by Jean Bertrand, but had killed a goat. Had killed a horse belonging to Claudel Jacquelin because of quarrels over stream. Her master, with her consent, had broken leg of horse belonging to Catherine veuve Colin Michiel Bejollé, but had not caused her other losses. Said these were all her maléfices.

Asked about sabbat, gave fairly standard account. Had paid a black hen every year to be exempted from going more often. Helped in hail-making, but had prevented it as far as she could for fear of a dearth; church bells had also been effective. Had seen Beniste le Housse femme Pierron de Norbepaire, Hantzo Alexis, who had only one leg, Dion Bejollé, his sister Marion, Claude Rayebois, Claude Babelon, all of Wissembach, Colas de dessus le rain of Gemaingotte, and Mathis Chamenel (already executed). Many other were present, but had been masked.

8 August 1618; interrogation

Confirmed confessions, but discharged 3 of those she had accused - Hanzo Alexis, Beniste le Housse, and Marion Bejollé - saying in each case that she had held a grudge against them.

12 August 1618; Remy asks for death sentence.

13 August 1618; Change de Nancy agrees

15 August 1618; execution carried out