

Witch 297, Beniste le Houff 1

B 8721 no 5; Witch 297, Beniste le Houff de Norbepaire (Wisembach)

25 August 1618; substitute for procureur general asks for investigation in view of common repute, with her arrest if serious charges result.

29 August 1618; informations preparatoires

(1) Didier du Prey, 34

General reputation; 16 years earlier his father had suspected her of causing his fatal illness.

(2) Demenge Chotté, 48

His wife had told him that one day she was at execution at Lusse, and saw Beniste among press of people trying to get close to victim, seeking to discover whether she had maintained accusation against her. Was prevented by an officer, but then the other did maintain firmly that she was a witch,

(3) Alizon femme du precedent, 44

Same story.

(4) Margueritte femme Jacot le Seigneur, 36

Had heard her called witch by her brother Colas Pierron.

(5) Jehennon femme Jean du Biehay, 48

Had heard her called witch by her neighbours without any reaction.

(6) Marie veuve Jacot Colas, 24

Told story about how Mathis Henry had been going to St Dié on horseback, and seen Beniste with her animals going in other direction - then saw her in Norbepaire as he passed, and could not understand how.

(7) Valençaine femme Didier du Prey, 50

Same story.

(8) Claude Jehu, 50

Reputation more than 30 years.

(9) Valentine femme Jean Michiel, 35

Had heard various people say that if she was a witch she had caused them many losses.

(10) Jean Bertrand, 40

Story about Mathieu Henry again.

(30 August 1618)

(11) Colas Jean Jaclin, 60

2 years earlier he had finished ploughing, and lay down to rest, when accused passed by him. Did not see her do anything, but later that day taken by pains in legs and thighs which lasted 3 weeks, during which he was so tormented that he could not stay anywhere. Finally went and called her witch, accusing her of causing illness and saying he would proceed against her unless she cured him - soon began to recover.

(12) Mengeatte femme du precedent, 46

Repeated husband's story, adding that she had heard from some who visited Beniste's house that she had spoken ill of them - suggestion of envy.

(13) Demenge Grand Martin, 46

Long before Beniste had been at veillée in her house, and told company than returning one night from Wisembach she met something like a black cloud the size of a cart, and was so frightened she went back way she had come.

(14) Catherine femme du precedent, 40

'A disposé, que comme elle a receu plusieurs pertes et fortunes en ses biens, qu'ayant ouy soubçonner ladite prevenue sorciere, elle presume que si elle est telle, qu'elle en auroit possible esté la cause, ne l'en chargeant aucunement, toutesfois que voyant ladite prevenue par fois elle maudisoit les sorcieres et mauvaises gens, sans que ladite prevenue en face aulcun semblant pour tirer le fardeau a elle.'

(15) Demenge Jean Didier le tixerant, 42

They had had various disputes over fruits, and he sought damages from her after finding him picking his plums at dawn one day about 3 years earlier. A few days later his wife fell out of the same tree. She had various quarrels with accused, and witness said 'qu'il ne vouloit pas estre menacé de celles qui portoient la renommée de sorciere, ains de gens de bien', but she took no action to secure reparation 'd'injures sy atroces'.

(16) Claudatte femme du precedent, 40

Repeated husband's story. Also told of confrontation between accused and Colas Jaclin; he said 'O sorciere rend moy ma santé, ou autrement je te feray brusler', to which she replied 'Meschant homme et sorcier toy mesme, c'est toy qui est ung genax, et non moy.' However he told witness that she had touched him on shoulder with a stick and he had recovered.

5 September 1618; interrogation

Said she was Beniste Claudon Jean Martin, aged 40. Said she had been accused of witchcraft by Nicolas Napuel's wife, executed at Lusse, but this had been from anger and hatred. Agreed to quarrel with Colas Jaclin, who called her witch, but she had no witnesses.

Agreed that she had heard Catherine femme Demenge Martin curse witches and the harm they caused, but had not seen any personal application in this, and she herself had cursed them.

'Luy avons demandé sy elle n'a pas ferme creance qu'il soit des sorciers ou sorcieres,

A repondu qu'elle ne scait s'il y en a ou non.'

No comment on this exchange. No further admissions.

7 September 1618; confrontations

Only admissions were that she had sometimes been called witch, usually when there were no witnesses. Colas Jaclin had been drunk when he accused her. No reproaches.

11 September 1618; procureur general (Remy) asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Change de Nancy approves thumbscrews only.

13 September 1618; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews, but would confess nothing, and finally sent back to prison.

22 September 1618; Remy says that she should be renvoyée. Released on 26 September.