

Witch 306, Margueritte le Charpentier 1

B 8726 no 1; witch 306, Margueritte femme Cesar le Charpentier, de la Bourgonce

28 February 1620; informations preparatoires

(1) Margueritte veuve Colas Thiebault, 80

Reputation more than 20 years, and had been called witch by several, including Job le maire, without seeking reparation.

(2) Henryat Mathieu le jeune, 45

General reputation. His wife believed she had caused illness of their daughter Mathiotte; 4 years earlier was attending school with son of accused, who one day tried to give her 'quelque niche de force', after which she shut herself up in the house. Next day witness went to punish the boy, but accused saw him and was angry, telling son not to touch her again. Girl then fell ill with cold and breathing trouble, which she still had, and his wife believed this was her witchcraft. Girl had told them that the son of the accused told her that he went to woods with his mother, where they ate plenty of unsalted meat, and that mother had a little black dog which carried her bundle of wood home.

(3) Bergel Gros Girard, 70

General reputation, and had heard Job le maire complain that she had killed his pigs.

(4) Margueritte femme Nicolas Geliat, 30

2 or 3 years earlier her husband had bought some butter from accused, but was unable to give her 'vuydange' when she asked for it. After this 4 cows all lost their milk, and she suspected accused of being cause, because she was 'fort envieuse de nature' and had shown by various acts and words that she wished them ill. Reputation several years.

(5) Jennon femme René Ganard, 39

Had little to do with her, but had heard her reputed witch for several years, and had been called such by Job le maire. On way back from school her son had told two of her children that he and his mother ate from same plate with a little black dog, which then took them to a place where they danced and 'faisoient merveilles'. When another child at school did something to him, the boy threatened to give him some powder.

(6) Catherine femme Jean Perry

General reputation, which had become stronger because of stories from school. Own son aged 8 had told of how son of accused, called Cesar, had told of how little black dog took him and his mother on its back somewhere.

(7) Mengeatte femme Job le Maire, 34

Was nearest neighbour, and 4 years before Margueritte objected that her 'couvée de poussin' was doing damage; in ensuing dispute added 'qu'elle gaigneroit plus avec ses bras, qu'elle qui depose avec tous ses moiens', so she feared some misfortune in view of reputation. Within a few weeks lost 5 cattle, which died strangely over only 3 weeks; husband made suspicions plain to accused, who merely said that it was the turn of the witness to have losses, and another time it would be someone else.

(29 February 1620)

(8) Claudon de Champ, 40

General reputation, although he had not quarrelled with her or thought she caused him losses. 3 years earlier his valet Jean Jeannotte had questioned her son Cesar, on way back from woods, about the little black dog; he said it came and ate with them when his father was away, then vanished up chimney, but only he and his mother could see it.

(9) Bastienne veuve Jean Mathieu, 40

Reputation several years. 3 years earlier had refused request to plough a field for her, and a few weeks later a fine ox died suddenly; servants told her that same day 3 magpies settled on its back as it was grazing, which increased her suspicions. Some months later had been called to give evidence against le grand mulnier, then accused of same crime, and had some sharp words with Margueritte. She was evidently hostile to prosecution, and said that many were damning themselves. Next day went into house (as neighbour) and was given plate of 'millot', after which she fell strangely ill. At first seemed out of her mind, then had fever which lasted 2 years. Just before recovery called out so that accused could hear that she wished those who had given the illness would have mercy and kill her. Suspected all this had been her doing if she was a witch.

(10) Nicolas Geliat, 40

Reputation 7 to 9 years. Husband had helped one day as carpenter with alterations to house, and had not required to be paid, since it had been in return for other favours, and he had been well fed. Accused was angry, however, and said they would repent, so that he suspected her over loss of several animals in following weeks, when no others died in village. A cow was sickening, so he decided to drive it out of stable to die, at which point she and other women came to visit and sympathize over losses - told her he would have her taken and burned if the cow died, after which it started to recover. Feared what might happen, so then sold it for 9 écus. Repeated wife's story about butter and loss of milk by cows. The late Jean Claude Stevenay had told of seeing a crow flying round her chimney, going in and then coming out again. Went into kitchen and found her all dishevelled and complaining. Also story about two masons who had been staying with her, and heard noise from her room one night when husband was away, with voice saying 'ho ho'; when they asked her about it in morning face was all scratched, and she claimed his tools had fallen off the wall.

(11) Demenge Renadin, de Nompateize, 35

Reputation over 20 years.

(12) Claudon Marion, 55

Reputation 5 or 6 years. Stories about her son Cesar, who had claimed that the black dog carried them up chimney and to a fine room where they ate as much meat as they wanted. Also prevented other children at school from catching bird which came to window, saying it was his master and that of his mother.

(13) Blaisotte femme Henryat Mathieu le jeune, 50

Reputation 20 years. Knew of husband's suspicions over losses of animals, but had not suspected her personally, since she avoided her and hardly knew her. Did suspect her over illness of daughter, which had lasted more than 6 months before she recovered.

(14) Demenge fils de feu Demenge Charpentier (less than 13, so not sworn in)

Said that 4 years earlier had gone to woods with her son Cesar, to fetch a bundle of wood, but latter found it too heavy for him and said he needed his black dog. Went off into woods as if to fetch it, at which witness fled home - Cesar had told him how the dog took him and his mother to place behind a rock where they ate unsalted meat, and on return to village went to house of Jean Claude (later executed).

(15) Claudon fils du maire Nicolas Besio, de Blairville, 13 (not sworn)

2 years earlier had been school companion of her son Cesar, who was same age as him; told story about dog which took him and mother to place where they ate meat and danced. Said it went so fast they would have gone through a person without being noticed, and used to threaten other children 'qu'il appelleroit son noir chien et les feroit mordre ou faire mal.'

(4 March 1620)

(16) Nicolas Charpentier, de la Vacherie, 26

Had gone to work at la Bourgonce 9 years earlier, and was warned that in view of reputation 'il auroit beau a faire si ladite prevenue ne luy donnoit de ses esguillettes', since she would be envious that he was taking away trade from her husband. Confided his worries to his servant, and as they were passing found her in middle of road; went on to woods, where in cutting wood he gave himself a bad wound in the hand - thought this had been her witchcraft if she was as reputed, although he had never quarrelled with her.

(17) Job le Maire, 40

Reputation some 20 years. Suspected her over death of 2 fine pigs, following occasion when he met her and her son as he returned from sawmill of sieur Moiron. Asked where they were going, she said to the sawmill, but he suggested she was going somewhere else, meaning the sabat. Was angry because he had contract to turn all tree-trunks into planks, but her husband had managed to get separate deal

for himself. Accused her over deaths, and then lost a cow and a heifer; she called him before Mr d'Etival, but neither she nor her husband came for hearing.

(18) Collotte veuve Paulus George, 56

Reputation nearly 40 years. More than 2 years earlier story went round that some lard had been stolen from her, and following Lent her husband sickened and died after 5 weeks. Had heard that her son Blaise said loudly on hearing news that the person who had eaten their lard would eat no more, meaning the dead man. Although he had not committed the theft, thought she might have caused his death, and a few days later asked her why she and her son used such words, adding that she would suspect her over any losses - no reparation sought.

(19) Claudatte veuve Jean de Champ, 60

Reputation more than 24 years. Around 20 years earlier her late husband had been building house, which was almost complete when it was thrown down and ruined by a sudden gust of wind. They believed this had been her witchcraft, after dispute over their son who was apprenticed to her husband, and had been paid a franc for some work he had done. Wind had come from nowhere on a fine day.

(20) Margueritte femme Colin Chipot, 54

Reputation more than 20 years. Previous year had heard Colas Geliat call her son Blaise fils de sorciere, adding that his sister (already executed) had named her - no reparation sought.

(21) Nicolas fils du precedent, 16

Further story about what her son Cesar had said at school.

5 March 1620; interrogation

Said she was 50 to 55, daughter of Jean Tanneur and his wife Bietrix, of Housseray, where she had lived all her youth. Had been in service at Ramberviller and Champmesnil, then married Cesar Charpentier at Housseray more than 30 years earlier. Soon after that moved to la Bourgonce, where they had been ever since.

Supposed she had been arrested because of false reputation she was given as witch; only person she could think was cause was Colas Geliat, after quarrel with her son. Asked why she had not sought reparation when called witch, said only case was that of Job le Maire, and husband had been too soft, excusing him because he had been drunk.

Agreed that she had been accused by Margueritte femme Louis Chappon, who discharged her on confrontation, and by another woman of La Bourgonce. Said her father had married a second wife at Brux, who had been burned as a witch. She had accused one of her own daughters by another husband, who was married at St Dié and still alive, and rumour had suggested wrongly that it was her.

Denied whole series of other charges and suggestions. In relation to stories about her son Cesar, said it was the other children who had caused him to tell them. At this point was told that he had been interrogated previous day, and had told how he had been taken up chimney with her by a black man at least two times, with other

details. At this said 'le mal enfant il veut bien estre cause de ma damnation', then agreed she had once been carried up chimney with him.

Obviously becoming hesitant, she was urged to confess, and said she had been tempted 20 years earlier by a man in black called Mre Taizin, who gave her money. Would not admit to having renounced God at first, then in fear of being sent back to prison did admit that she had done so.

6 March 1620; interrogation and confrontations

Said he had offered her something like salt in paper, to harm animals, but she refused to take this. Had only been twice to sabat, where there were 3 or 4 people she did not know; danced, but did not eat or do any harm. Since she was patently unwilling to confess any thing more, was then confronted with the witnesses.

Said that Nicolas Geliat and his wife were always taunting them with fact that they had better land, whereas nothing grew in that worked by her and her husband. No reproaches to witnesses, and simple denials of all serious charges.

At end was again exhorted to make proper confession. Now admitted that she had used white powder to kill animals of Colas Geliat and pigs of Job le Maire. Also added that she had given Taizin a hen each year to be let off attendance at sabat.

7 March 1620; procureur for ban d'Etival asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

9 March 1620; Change de Nancy approves

11 March 1620; interrogation

Was given thumbscrews, and then started to make additional confessions. At time of seduction had been angry and distressed because husband had beaten her for delaying going to woods to fetch firewood. Black man had been Persin; first time he gave her money which was real, second time (proper seduction) it proved to be dust. Asked her to be his 'vasselle', gave her powder - white/kill, red/languish.

Admitted same maléfices against animals as before, then added making Bastienne veuve Jean Mathieu ill, because she was always imputing witchcraft to her. Had caused fall of Jean le Champ's building, by giving consent to her master. Had only been so sabat 3 times; dancing without music, no feasting. To be exempted had not only given annual hen; she used a chapelet, blessed bread, and 'quelque devotion' which she carried round neck and in pocket.

Had taken son Cesar twice, at instigation of master, but he was not masked or blackened like others; but knew that he was not 'guatté', since she had prevented him entering service of her master.

Asked about accomplices, only named 3 who were dead; wife of Colas Guyné, Mengeatte femme Mengeon Girard, and Mengeatte Pierre femme Job le Maire. Since she was hesitant about this, was racked to see if she would denounce any of the living; she finally named two from Saulceray, Jean de Paire and la Galmaude, veuve Claudon Villaume.

12 March 1620; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions, except that she said she could not be sure in identification of the two from Saulceray; they had said they were from the village, but she was not certain about them.

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Same day procureur asks for death sentence.

14 March 1620; Change de Nancy approves