

B 8961 no 1. Witch 323, Claudon veuve Mengin Wannier, de St Nicolas

Note that she had come forward saying she was a witch, and asking to be heard in confession by curé of St Nicolas, which had now been done.

13 May 1599; Rémy orders that she be kept under guard and interrogated.

13 May 1599; informations (very illegible)

(1) Gabriel Mulnier hostelain, 32

Had seen no harm in her, but she had said she was a witch and wished she were dead.

(2) Colichon Chrestaille, recouvreur, 40

Had been in his house for 14 weeks, and saw no harm in her, except that she talked to herself. Had also heard her say 'au diable les cloches' when church bells rang, but she begged pardon when his wife reprimanded her. A week before, during his absence, his wife found his son George, aged 7, saying in the street that the devil was his father - accused had apparently taught him this, also said she was a witch and wanted to die. Asked if she had talked of killing anyone, said no, but he thought that if 'on luy seroit le doigt' she would recount marvels.

(3) Catherine femme du precedent, 36

Repeated husband's story about son, who said he had seen something like a horse with horns and cloven feet behind her.

(4) Hanry la Bar, drappier, 46

Told about how she called herself witch in presence of many. Added that widow of Waultrin Hanry Maire suspected her of killing her late husband. (Possibly similar suspicion by widow of Bastien Potier?)

(5) Gergonne Guenaire, 60

Had declared herself witch, and named as accomplices la belle Agnes, Barbon veuve qui se tient a la val, and Bastien Gardens alias André.

(6) Claudon veuve Bastien potier de terre, 36

She had said she was a witch, and had confessed that she had killed husband of witness, despite giving him herbs in a bath to cure him, these had no force because he had made Easter communion. Also suspected her of causing death of a child to which she had given mildewed apples, after eating which it sickened and died. Said that 'feu le mre des sorcieres de Chambrelain l'avoit asseuré, que la mort de son marit et de son enfant avoit esté procuré par ladite suspecte'.

(7) Phelipe femme Hanry la Bar, 41

Repeated essential of husband's deposition.

- (8) Catherine femme Demenge Vian cordonnier, 30

General reputation

- (9) Mre Jean Guy chirurgien, 42

She had told him that a widow called Barbin had 'gasté' his horse.

- (10) Wautrin Fenestrier, chaussetier, 28

Had heard her say she had been witch since time of Bouillon's army, also talk of using herb called morvelle for stomach ailments.

- (11) Georgine veuve Nicolas Giefs boulangier, 60

General reputation and confession.

- (12) Margueritte femme Comtin Petit Jean cordonnier, 46

A week before she had confessed that she had given illness to her previous husband Claudin Michiel - did not know if this was true or not.

- (13) Marguerite femme Jean Thouvenat dit Lallemand, boulanger, 55

Had heard her confess she was witch. Had made 'estuve' with herbs when witness had bad leg, which cured her. She had alleged that her previous husband Wautrin le boulangier had been given sickness by the widow Barbin, and night before death told servants they should watch him that night.

- (14) Didier Jacquat cordonnier, 45

Had heard about her confession.

- (15) Marguerite femme du precedent, 44

Ditto

- (16) Jehannon femme Humbert Maillet chaussetier, 30

Ditto

- (17) Demenge Waultrin boulangier, 36

Confession that she was a witch had made him suspect that she had killed one of his children.

22 May 1599; substitut for PG orders interrogation and confrontations

27 May 1599; interrogation

Said she was Claudon veuve Mengin Wannier, aged about 80. Native of Caumont near Bournon, where she had lived with her father and mother, Mongeat de la Val, laboureur, and Symonnatte. Left at time of army of Marquis of Brandenburg 48 years before, when she married; husband was from Challigny, where they lived until they moved to St Nicolas. Married for 21 years, widow since then.

Agreed that she was said to be a witch, and that she had confessed herself such, but she had done no harm. Wife of Bastien potier de la terre had accused her of killing her husband. Did not know if she had done this, but they said so.

Asked what a witch was, said 'que c'est ung maling qui court les champs et fait du mal aux pauvres gens, comme elle'. During the dearth 2 years before the arrival of the 'compagnies wallonnes' had been unable to afford grain, and bought 'waxels', but when soaked and cooked she could not eat them. Went in despair to woods, where she met a big man who offered her money, which turned out to be leaves. Asked if he had touched her, said no, but then said, while crying, that he had intercourse with her. After this knew she had been abused and refused to do what he wanted, so he beat her. Had not instructed her to do harm.

Interrogated further, she said she had not killed anyone, but then admitted she had killed Bastien potier de terre - asked how, said 'comme Dieu le vouloit', but then said she had used powder her master gave her in her room.

Asked about accomplices, named la belle Agnes, Babin, and Cadors; Persin had once taken them to sabbat, long ago, after finding them gleaning one evening. Unable to describe anything, except that he gave them powder.

31 May 1599; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions, crying bitterly and begging not to be tortured. Said that after argument about paying for repairs to shoes she had used powder to kill a cobbler called Claudin Mirjolet, and his wife had suspected her. As for potier de terre, he and wife had beaten her when she complained that 23 francs earned by her daughter in service had been taken from her. Said that daughter was now dead, crying and saying 'à la griefve mort pour moy'.

Agreed that she had used herbs to make baths and estuves - had learned this from several 'bonnes gens'. Gave rather confused account of sabbat - had not been able to go recently, because 'elle ne pouvoit cheminer'.

3 June 1599; Rémy asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire, and confrontations

7 June 1599; Change de Nancy approves, with note that torture should not be too harsh

8 June 1599; interrogation

Did no more than reiterate previous responses, although she was pressed hard on various points.

8 June 1599; interrogation under torture

Was only given thumbscrews, and made no new admissions.

15 June 1599; Rémy asks that she be interrogated further, with particular attention to specific accusations, and that further evidence be sought about the death of Claudin Mirjolet, to see if he died of 'quelque maladie estrange'.

18 June 1599; interrogation

Repeated admissions. Seduction had been 12 years earlier, when 'compagnies d'ordonnance du pais bas' were quartered in town on passage of Bouillon's army. During great dearth could not eat bread she made from flour of 'waxels', and was seduced by Persin. Asked if he had any deformity, notably in hands and feet, said only that his hands were very black. Agreed she had given Bastien potier de terre's child 'une pomme moutée', but denied causing his death, saying they did her great wrong - 'fondant en larmes, Dit hélas je n'ay personne pour me revenger ny soubstenir. Toutesfois je pardonne ma mort et suis preste a la recevoir quant il plaira a justice et le plustost le meilleur.'

Account of sabbat concentrated on making hail - had only been there twice. Others present were Babin veuve Martin Mathieu Lepreux, la belle Agnes, and one named Cudoré, who was charged with taking them to place.

Had been beaten by Bastien Potier de terre and his wife until she was black - revenged herself with powder, but then repented. Used herbs to try and cure him, but without success. Had also killed Claudin Michel dit Mirjolet, but no other malefices.

Judges suggested that her accounts of various activities and of nightly noises she said she heard around prison were implausible, and that she had given no reasons to believe they really happened, 'que plustost que ce sont illusions suggerées par le malin esprit en la debilité des forces du cerveau melancolicque comme le sien'. She merely replied that they were true, and was not pressed further.

After confirming two deaths she had caused, judges remonstrated 'que mal aysément pouvons nous adjouster foid a cecy, parce qu'il n'y at nulle apparence de ceste pouldre, ains que plustost ennuiée de vivre par se veoir rendue vieille et caducque pauvre et necessiteuse sans parents ny amys pour la soustenir elle tasche de venir a ce but de mort, au moyen de se declairer non seulement genoiche et subornée du diable, mais davantaige veneficque et empoisonneuse en quoy si ses confessions ne sont veritables, elle sera cause de sa mort par consequent homicide de soy mesme, rendue partent indigne du Royaulme de paradis.' Replied by saying she had told truth and did not fear offending God by doing so.

Said master had not been with them when they made hail, and orders were given by Cudoré; prospects for grain crop looked good, and she would not agree - in fact the cloud went another way.

22 June 1599; judges now set out to investigate deaths of those she had admitted bewitching, 'et comme la verité ne se peult en fait semblable que cestuy estre mieulx recognue que par s'enquerir diligemment de la maladie desdits decedez et si telle maladie et mort en ensuivye sont estez estranges et autres que sont celles que naturellement adviennent aux hommes', they were seeking further evidence.

Claudon, veuve Bastien potier de terre, described how husband's illness had begun with severe headaches, so that he could get no rest and could not work. Had then lost use of his limbs, so that he could hardly walk even when supported, and became emaciated. Died on pilgrimage to St Reyne. They had shared house with accused, who was 'femme vindicatifve', and had demanded that they share their small means with her; if refused she cursed them, and she did not know if such curses had power to cause illness like that of her husband. After she had tried to

heal him with herbal baths without success, neighbours advised them to treat her harshly and to beat her with 'bois de la vigne', which they did.

Margueritte femme Cointin Petit Jean cordonnier, and widow of Claudin Michiel dit Mirjolet. described husband's illness. Again began with headaches, and was bedridden for 2 years, then made partial recovery, but had to rest 2 or 3 days after every day he worked. Declined over period of 7 years before death; neighbours agreed this was not a natural illness, but one given by supernatural means, in view of length and way in which it came and went. Claudon had rented room in their house, but at end of lease they took a different lodger; she made difficulties about leaving, so they put her goods out in the street, over which she was angry. Also had quarrel with husband over charge for mending her shoes, shortly after which he fell ill.

The accused was then confronted with Babin veuve Martin Mathieu Lepreux, who was about 50; she confirmed her accusation, and the other denied it.

Confronted with la belle Agnes, femme Chrestofle Marcossen manouvrier, again maintained charges. Agnes was indignant, pointing out that she had already been tried 'mais la justice qui donne a ung chacun selon son merite l'avoit renvoyée'. Claudon persisted, saying 'Agnes vous avez une bonne langue pour vous deffendre contre moy, qui n'a personne pour me deffendre'.

24 June 1599; Rémy asks for death sentence

25 June 1599; Change de Nancy approves

26 June 1599; formal death sentence from court at St Nicolas