

Witch 333, Jeanne Humbert 1

B 9554 no 3; witch 333, Jeanne femme Alois Humbert du Grand Rombach

24 January 1581; interrogation

Jeanne insisted that she was femme de bien, innocent of any witchcraft, even when confronted with Denisatte (wife of brother-in-law), who had accused her.

26 January 1581; informations preparatoires

(1) Francois Farrant du Grand Rombach, 50

Some 2 or 3 years before his wife, who was sister to their husbands, was going to market at Ste Marie with them, and reproached them with their reputations, suggesting they should behave differently. Jeanne was angry, and after return wife's legs became swollen, so that she could not walk. Was cured after making an offering to God and St Genais a week later. Same technique used when his daughter Bablo lost use of her limbs, and she too was cured; this followed occasion when she told him Jeanne, her godmother, was angry because she had not wished her goodnight, calling her 'belle beste'. Had also been given some bread by Jeanne, and he believed she had caused both illnesses.

(2) Jean de Barrois bourgeois du Grand Rombach, 40

Claimed that 3 years before sisters had passed his garden, where he was working, without seeing him. Overheard them talking about ways of killing cattle, and of other ways of damaging those they hated. Had himself lost several animals, and thought they were responsible. Some 4 years before she had been lodging 'ung barlier' in her house, who left without paying costs; about 3 weeks later saw him passing and said he would repent, whereupon horse had broken leg when he was only stone's throw away. Husband tried to restrain her, but she said she had already done it to others.

(3) Catherine fille Georgeon le Masson, 30

Told of seeing them out in field spinning late in the evening some 18 months earlier, with faces very close to one another.

(4) Goury Maigrat le viel du Grand Rombach, 64

Some 6 years before had dispute with her and husband when they walked through his meadow, and he gave them both a beating, whereupon she said he would repent. Shortly afterwards became ill for a year, and one leg was still as if asleep - suspected her of causing this. Since then his cows had not done well, and had brought him little profit, and here too he suspected her.

(5) Nicolas Jean Jacob du Grand Rombach, 30

Some 4 years before son of Allois had accused his son of stealing shoelace (?), and had beaten him. Witness went to complain, saying that if child was to be beaten that was for him to do. Jeanne told him 'que sy Dieu luy faisoit la grace de vivre qu'elle le verroit sy bas qu'il ne scauroit que mectre avec son eaue'. Since then had lost animals worth 100 francs within 3 months, over which he suspected her.

(6) Marie femme Jean Joliat de Sainte Croix, 40

Meeting her on road some 5 or 6 years before, said to her that now her father was dead he would find out if he had done well; had been to law together, and it had cost him more than 40 gros.

(7) Jennon femme Anthoine Gros Pierre du Grand Rombach, 27

On way to market at Ste Marie passed house where wife of late Jean Joliat was very ill; she called out 'Jeanne, Jeanne, ne me veult tu point mectre hors de ce tourment', to which accused replied 'Lainguy diable, lainguy par ta langue est tu ainsy'.

(8) Magdelaine femme Francois Farrant du Grand Rombach, 40

Repeated husband's story about her own illness.

26 January 1581; interrogation

Still denied any crime, although threatened with torture. Then confronted again with Denisatte, who told her she knew very well that they had planned to kill Joliat's wife. Continued denials.

27 January 1581; interrogation

Now started to confess. Had been seduced since marriage to Allois, when returning from visiting sick daughter-in-law at Staimbach, with whom she had watched all night. No motive suggested. Master was called Ricqua; gave her herbs which she threw away. Had been to visit her again one Sunday when husband was away at Sainte Croix eating and drinking, and failed to return by night. Agreed that she and Denisatte had plotted to kill Joliat's wife, but it was Denisatte who had given her bread to this end. Would not make any other confessions.

3 February 1581; taken before justices of valley, now said that her confessions were untrue, and had been made from fear of torture. (Not clear whether she was tortured on earlier occasion or not). Now sentenced to be tortured.

4 February 1581; interrogation under torture

Said that previous day on way to Liepvre with other accused, la Grande Barbelline had said they must confess nothing, so she had revoked previous confessions. Now repeated story of seduction, but still unwilling to admit anything

more, so was racked. This had to be repeated before she admitted any maléfices. Said she hated her neighbour Colas Jean Jacob on account of la Joliatte; had placed herbs where his animals must pass over them and he lost two cows.

Again said this was all she had done, so racked once again, then fed leading questions. Agreed she had made Goury Maigrat ill with powder given her by her master. Also general admission of calling her master when angry with anyone; had no herbs and powder left because she had given it to him on these occasions.

10 February 1581; formal death sentence, by burning alive.