

B 3345; witch 047, Jeanne femme Demenge Mercier, d'Autrepierre

22 July 1613; Procureur fiscal of county of Blamont asks prévôt and court at Blamont to take evidence against Jeanne, suspected of causing deaths and illnesses of people and animals. May arrest her if she seems likely to flee, as is rumoured.

24 July 1613; informations préparatoires

Note that she had been made prisoner that day.

(1) Margueritte femme Demenge Bugeat, 30

Reputed witch since she had come to Autrepierre on marriage 6 years earlier. Previous Lent had been row when husband chased goat of accused out of garden, and she told him she would remember this when he had forgotten. A month ago her son Colas (9) had fight with Jeanne's son aged 10, then became ill with 'une maladie presque incognue'; was in bed for 10 days, all yellow. Accused came to see him uninvited, and suggested that they use a 'verre boutonné' she had to see whether it was 'le mal St Marsel' - test was whether it could be pressed into his stomach. This was done by Nicolas Zabel's wife, but glass did not sink in. Jeanne then put hands on his stomach, and said it was not as hard as that of her daughter, who had died of similar illness. Colas than seemed to be out of his mind, saying 'allez au diable' without naming anyone. When she came back 2 hours later he got up with a great effort and attacked her, striking her in the face with his fists, saying 'la voila', after which she quickly left. After this he was so disturbed he did not know what he was saying, and died 2 days later; accused was present with other women. In view of reputation and quarrels firmly believed she had been cause of child's death.

Her husband had lent Jeanne's husband 40 francs, and he then complained he was being overcharged for interest. A horse then sickened and died, which she suspected might also have been her witchcraft.

(2) Anne femme Claude Jean Clerc, 27

Reputation since marriage. 2 years before had brought bread to bake in oven of witness, who was near neighbour, and she suspected that she had taken 8 eggs in a nest, since no-one else had been in house. Jeanne denied this with oaths, and because of reputation witness tried to appease her, but she went off complaining. Within 2 or 3 days a horse became ill as if rabid, dying in 2 or 3 days. During illness she asked Jeanne to come and bake in her oven again, and got her to look at the horse; she touched it in various places, then said she didn't know what was wrong with it, but thought the witness suspected her. 2 weeks later she was angry when witness asked her to remove some flax she was drying in the oven so that another neighbour could bake bread, and they lost another horse. 2 other horses died in similar manner, the 4 over only 3 months, and she believed firmly this had been her witchcraft. At time of death of first horse witness had said a witch had done it, without suggesting a name; later during quarrel called Jeanne witch in hearing of others, but she took no action.

(3) Claude Jean Clerc, 32

Reputation since marriage. Similar story to wife (previous witness). One of the horses fell down outside house of accused, and he started to swear about witches; she heard him and came out asking if he meant her, then tried to strike him, so he knocked her down to the ground. He had later called her witch, and she started court action, but mediation by relatives followed, and he simply agreed 'qu'il la tenoit pour telle qu'elle estoit'. Was advised to sell 2 foals he still had, in case they died too - had heard from purchasers that one later died, other was sick. Believed she had caused all this.

(4) Demenge de Nohegny, 45

After death of Claude Clerc's horses the witness and others had agreed to make contributions of 10 francs or more each towards costs of burning witches who were the cause. A few days later Jeanne's relatives assembled to seek recompense from Clerc for calling her witch; he was passing house and she called out that there was one of those who would give 10 francs to have her burned. He followed them and said it was true he would give 20 francs to have her burned if she were a witch, and she was very angry. Then his wife had dispute with her over some washing, and had been ill for a year with a bad thigh, so that she could not work and had been forced to take to her bed, hoping only for death. Believed she had done this to avenge herself - reputation 9 years.

(5) Jehenne femme du precedent, 40

Repeated story about husband's remarks as he passed house - he had been drunk at time. Illness had started immediately after exchange about washing, and she had lost use of arm as well.

(6) Demenge Bugeat, 36

He had cut off ends of ears of the goat he found in his garden. Reputation since residence (9 years). Told of illness of son, who had woken in night saying he was frightened and felt unwell; witness carried him to bed with himself and his wife. She had said that illness was like that of own daughter who had died, except that his stomach was not as hard. Vivid description of scene when Colas attacked the accused - she was squatting down in kitchen and he hit her on the head. Believed she had been cause of his death, also suspected her over death of horse.

(7) Jean André, 60

Reputation about 5 years and a half, and he believed this to be true because about 5 years earlier he had been with Didier Henry (now at Nancy) collecting flax. Henry had previously fined her over straying geese (he was bannard), and witness backed him up when she protested; she turned on him furiously and said 'qu'il ne vouloit estre de son costé, mais que quelque journee il luy donroit son cas'. Soon after one of his horses collapsed so that he had to bring it back on a cart, so he thought of her threats and spoke to her father Jean de Domepvre, then keeping the pigs of Autrepierre, telling him his daughter was a witch. Father asked him to be patient, promising action, and next day he came with the accused and her sister (now living near Raon) to see the horse; they touched it, after which it recovered. Believed she had been cause.

(8) Barbelline veuve Henry André, 40

Reputation 4 or 5 years, had not sought reparation. Various minor quarrels, and around previous carnival her young cow had hind leg broken; it then broke again and animal was slaughtered. Also lost two calves, which had unknown illness and cried constantly for 3 weeks before death. Had quarrelled with Allison, daughter of witness, telling her she had an aunt taken to scaffold at Blamont - was true, but this was not for witchcraft, since she had drowned herself. Accused was 'de telle condition et nature qu'elle ne desire rien moins que de quereller et disputer avec chacun sans aucun subject ny occasion'.

(26 July 1613)

(9) Henry fils Nicolas Zabey, 21

Reputation 5 years. At harvest 2 years earlier was helping her husband, and she told them only to leave a certain amount for tithe. Collectors then wanted to proceed against husband and witness, but he told them what she had said. Did not know if she had resented this, but later that year became very ill for 2 months, having to be force-fed, and not knowing where he was. She did not visit him at all, then his parents decided to seek advice from devin, who said it was witchcraft. Finally made gradual recovery, and believed she might have been cause of all this.

(10) Nicolas Zabel, 60

Reputation since marriage 10 or 12 years earlier. Told same story as son; he had gone to do carting as servant of widow of Jean Tabourin, and accused was angry because he would not swear that he had been responsible for failure to provide tithe properly. Son fell ill 2 weeks later. Finally sent niece of accused's husband to devin, and she came back with some herbs to make drink, and message that they had been very slow to seek his help, and the boy would have died if they had waited another day. She had been angry with the girl who had been to Guethin (?) to see the devin, and told her at the poisle 'qu'elle l'auroit ou le diable l'auroit'. Had heard her called witch by wife of Claude Jean Clerc, who accused her of killing their horses, without seeking reparation by justice.

(11) Dieudon Masson, 50

Reputation 5 years. At that time witness was echevin of the church, and curé told him that her husband had been winnowing in his barn on the feast of St Remy, patron of the parish, so he was to collect a pound of wax for the church from him. He took a small cauldron from her house as caution, after which she tried to tell him the curé was now content with half a pound of wax, then when he denied this she threw the wax on his table, saying 'qu'il y auroit tout plain de petitz laboureurs qui seroient engellés, et que quant a luy deposant il avoit beau travailler s'il devenoit riche'. That winter his grain was damaged by frost, and this made him think of her threats. Had also been called witch without seeking reparation.

(12) Jean Barthe, 60

She and her father reputed witches for 15 years. He had left to become herdsman at Amenoncourt after being accused of killing animals. Previous year

witness had taken over keeping of cattle at Autrepierre from her husband; she was angry and threatened him, after which he lost 2 pigs, and thought this was her doing.

(13) Aulbry Colin, 60

Reputation 18 months. Previous winter he had 7 horses, and she had sold hers; wanted to buy one from him, and although he said he had none to sell she persisted until he offered her one. She wanted another, saying it was gentle and suitable for her small son, but he would not sell it. Soon after it sickened, and trouble spread up legs to whole body so that it soon died - believed this had been her witchcraft. Previous day her husband (his cousin) had told him he had been to see a relative at Halloviller about her arrest, who said 'qu'il ne mette rien allantour d'elle et que ce ne seroit que chose perdue, sachant bien qu'elle ne retourneroit pas'.

(14) Allison femme Demenge Vincent, 26

Reputation one year; this was when she was suspected over horses of Claude Jean Clerc. They were spinning together when one of the last 2 of these got into her garden, and she said 'que le diable les debvroit bien emporter avec les autres' - witness was suspicious that she used such words for so little cause.

(15) Colas Guerard, 26

Had only been in village a year, living in house of accused. Had heard of suspicions of Claude Jean Clerc, and also knew about incident with Demenge Bugeat and the goat - he gave it such a blow that he thought it was dead, then it started to cry out when he cut its ear.

(16) Nicolas Gerardin, 30

Only resident 2 years since marriage; had always heard her reputed witch, and previous year heard Jean Didier Aulbry call her witch without any reparation being sought.

(29 July 1613)

(17) Demenge Pierson, 40

Reputation 7 years, no reparation sought. 7 years earlier had killed some of her geese trespassing in his garden, then a horse died; his servant told him she had said they would be dear geese for him, but he did not know more - suspected she might have been cause.

(18) Margueritte femme Claudon Jean Thiriot, 40

Reputation 4 years, but no personal suspicion. Had heard her remark to husband's niece about visit to devin (made at poisle of witness), and warned her that if anything happened to the girl she would be blamed; as far as she knew nothing had followed.

(19) Margueritte femme Remy Heuzellin, 40

Reputation 2 or 3 years, but no quarrels or personal suspicions.

(20) Chrestienne femme Claude Bastien, 40

5 years earlier, when husband of accused was keeping pigs of village, her husband lost a pig and they had a quarrel; she made threat which was followed by miscarriage, which she suspected was her doing. No reparation sought when she was called witch.

(21) Didie femme Aulbry Colin, 50

Reputation 2 years; called witch by Claude Jean Clerc and his wife without seeking reparation. Thought she might have killed 2 horses which husband of witness would not agree to sell them.,,

(22) Demenge Aulbry Colin, 25

Had been away in service, and only heard of reputation since accusation by Claude Jean Clerc 18 months earlier. Suspicion over father's horses. Had heard husband say she had told him not to use any money for her after arrest, but keep it to feed himself and their child.

6 August 1613; procureur fiscal asks for interrogation and confrontations

12 August 1613; interrogation

Said she was about 30, native of Halloville; father was Jean de Domepvre, mother was dead.

Agreed to having given advice about using glass to test stomach of sick child, but said she was not present when this was done. Agreed she had touched his stomach and found it was soft, and that he had struck her, although she had not heard him say anything - he was very ill and desperate at this time. Denied having killed horse of Bugeat, saying he had 3 dead of 'fresin'.

Admitted to quarrel with Claude Jean Clerc's wife over eggs, when she had said 'que le diable luy puisse rompre le coup et le puisse emporter qui les avoit prins'. Admitted visiting sick horse, and saying that its ears were very warm; Anne said 'qu'ils yroient voire en quelque lieu', to which she replied 'qu'ils allassent voire ou il leur plaira, mais que c'estoit ung grande peché de mescroire des besongnes ou on ne scayt la vérité'. Agreed that she had called her witch during quarrel, but there were no witnesses. Also agreed to occasion when she had attacked Claude after he made remark about burning witches, but he was too quick for her and pushed her to the ground. Admitted that Anne had accused her over death of horses; had thought of throwing stones at her, and still regretted not doing so.

Had heard that Nicolas Zabel had sent to devineresse near Guethin (?), but husband's niece told her she did not name anyone.

Said that Jean Didier Aulbry had called her and husband thieves, and they had made an accord before tabellion to pardon one another.

In respect of niece, said she had told her she did ill to go to devineresses, and if the curé knew about it that would be enough reason to chase her out of the village.

Claimed that Claude Jean Clerc had said to her father 'que c'estoient des mauvaises sarrasins et que des mauvaises sarrasins portoient des mauvais rejettons'; had made accord before maire, and Claude begged father's pardon.

Agreed she had told her husband not to spend money for her, saying she trusted in good justice.

13 August 1613; confrontations

Demenge Bageat added that when the maire Jean Parmentier refused to keep her horse with his, because it was too young, she told witness that 'elle avoit tant dit de mal qu'il n'estoit pas possible que le diable eust puissance sans luy venir tant de maulx qu'elle luy avoit souhaitte et dit'. He himself often told her that he would have her taken and burned, to which she replied 'qu'elle ne le craignoit guiere et qu'il n'avoit beaucoups de puissance ny credit de ce faire'. In reply she admitted having used 'des maudissons' against the maire, 'mais que pour cela elle n'y pensoit mal'.

In reply to Dieuderon Masson, said that many others had crops damaged by frost that year, which he agreed was true.

Agreed she had been angry with husband's niece, but denied using words attributed to her, repeating instead remark about danger that curé would drive her out of village.

Colas Gerard alleged that while he was living in her house she tried several times to persuade him to steal grain at night from fields at harvest time, as she did herself. She claimed she had merely said the night was very clear and it would be easy to do this.

Had heard it said in village that Demenge de Nohegny's wife had gout.

No serious reproaches to witnesses, and admitted being called witch on some occasions, although claiming she had always lacked witnesses. Denied all charges.

18 August 1613; procureur fiscal asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

20 August 1613; Change de Nancy agrees

2 September 1613; interrogation under torture

Was told that after her arrest her father had fled from village of Montreux, where he was living; she denied that she had seen anything suspicious in him, saying he was not the first to have been wronged by rumours.

On accusation of witchcraft against herself, said 'toutesfois qu'elle n'a faict ne bien ny mal touchant ces affaires la, et qu'une pauvre femme comme elle n'a l'esprit comme beaucoups ont et qu'on luy faict grand tort, que dieu le scayt bien.'

Questioned about occasion when prévôt had visited her in prison, and she seemed to be in a trance, denied having any memory of this.

Was given thumbscrews on hands and feet, then racked, while questioned extensively, but would confess nothing. Finally judges noted that she was strong and robust, suggesting that this was why she resisted torture. Only at this point was she shaved all over, then sent back to prison. Next day was feast day of St Mansuy, bishop of Toul, so further questioning to wait until second day.

4 September 1613; interrogation under torture

Racked again, she still denied, but began to confess when given tortillons on right arm. Said she had been witch for a year, but was immediately told this could not be true, at which she revised time to 2 years. Had been very angry with husband one hot morning, because he beat her for refusing to go to fields - she had not finished housework. Went out into the garden calling on devil, and man in black appeared. Offered to make her happy if she would believe in him, and in her anger she agreed fairly readily. Gave her 'money' in paper, which proved to be dust and filth.

With some prodding from judges (more leading questions than usual), said that she had gone into garden one evening to get parsley to make soup; her master appeared, said he was Parsin, and gave her white powder with which to kill horses of Claude Jean Clerc and avenge herself for their quarrels. Had only killed 2, and not the others. Asked if she had not been given two kinds of powder, one to kill and one to cure, denied this.

On another occasion earlier in present year, when grain was in flower, had been by fire at home before dawn, husband having already left to keep animals. Was carried though air to place where various masked men and women were, and they beat water to make hail and spoil crops, but heavy rain was all that resulted. Only recognised Anne femme Claude Jean Clerc and Jean Didier Aulbry. After return saw Anne outside her house, and asked her if she had recognized anyone at the sabat. She replied that she had not, but that she was going to kill the child of Demenge Bageat.

Denied she had committed any other maléfices. Warned not to charge anyone wrongly, threw herself on her knees and begged pardon for false accusations against two she had named. Charge against Clerc's wife was because she was responsible for her imprisonment.

Because she would say no more, and was hesitating, was placed on rack again. This threat finally induced her to confess killing Demenge Bageat's son, because he had beaten her son; used a herb which Parsin gave her on some bread which she gave him to eat. This made him ill, but Parsin told her he would not die of this, and death came after she had pinched his stomach, pretending to try and cure him.

Parsin had told her they must break the neck of Jean André's son, but they did not have power to do this, and so injured his horse instead. Had also killed horse of Aulbry Colin with a herb her master gave her to put in water when it drank.

Finally agreed she had been a second time to sabat, and described dancing and feasting in fairly conventional terms. Also said that Parsin had intercourse with her at second meeting.

Asked whether the two she had denounced were not really her accomplices, insisted she had named them wrongly. Asked to be allowed to make confession, and to see her husband and child.

7 September 1613; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence. Change de Nancy approves, subject to repetition of confessions. Also note that torture should not be repeated without advice being sought. Same day Blamont court records that she had killed herself in prison, by throwing herself down from top of room where she was held; body is to be dragged through town on a sledge then burned.