

B 8959 no 1; witch 321, Barbon femme Nicolas Moictrier, de Saint Nicolas

May 1598; request to Procureur Général de Lorraine from Pierre Clement of St Nicolas, asking him to hold over case brought by Nicolas Moictrier on behalf of wife for 'exces et delicts', on grounds that she is strongly suspected of witchcraft. Asks for informations préparatoires to be taken, ends with claim that this would be to do justice and 'obligerez ledit pauvre remonstrant a prier pour l'augmentation de votre continuelle santé.'

26 May 1598; Nicolas Rémy replies in stern terms that case cannot be held over, since it was 'question atroce', and there could be no question of allowing private persons to take vengeance; this was a matter for the magistrate. Nevertheless agrees that proceedings may be taken against Barbon. Husband's complaint made on 23 May.

18 June 1598; in response to Pierre Clement (hostellier), mayor of St Nicolas agrees to taking of depositions.

25 June 1598; clerc juré says that Pierre Clement tixerand has produced list of witnesses and asked, through his procureur Meliant, that they be heard. Nicolas Moictrier's procureur Fournery had claimed nullity, and asked for reparations. Evidently proceeded to take depositions.

(1) Mengin Jacquot retondeur de St Nicolas, 46

Said that Barbon had 'gasté son enfant', which had died some 6 months earlier. His wife had not paid her on time for milk. Did not know if she was witch or held to be such, 'mais que ceux de Harracourt le scavent bien sans vouloir nommer qui ny pourquoy'.

(2) Nicolle femme du précédent, 30

Said she had wanted to make arrangement with Barbon to have milk to feed her child, but could not agree, and she said she would get it cheaper in front of the church. Barbon left saying 'bien bien avant qu'il soit peu de temps tu en acherteras du bien cher'; soon after when bringing milk back from outside church Barbon came up very close to her, and she 'eut deslors quelque mauvaise opinion'. Soon after child fell ill and died after 18 months; 'ne veut dire que ladite Barbon soit sorcière encores qu'elle l'ait ouiy dire et nommer telle par la ville.'

(3) Symon Dellons tixerant de St Nicolas, 40

Barbon was his mother-in-law; 'il ne la tient en estime d'estre sorcière combien qu'il en eut quelque opinion a l'instigation de ses voisins, qu'elle avoit luy causé, une maladie grande, et ung enfant mort, dont auroit emprunte du pain et du sel au logis de ladite Barbon, ne scait toutesfois sy cela luy a fait quelque chose mesme estant en querelle avec ladite belle mere pour ce qu'elle estoit alliée et mariée avec ledit Moictrier son beau pere, telle querelle avoit esté causée par la femme dudit Pierre Clement'.

(4) Anthoine Tixerant de St Nicolas, 38

Had quarrelled with her, and she said 'qu'il s'en resentiroit'. Some days later his son threw a small piece of wood at her stepson; she came running at child's cries, and hit his child on head, so that he fell as if dead on the spot. Carried him home, and he spent three days unable to eat and 'jectant du venin par la bouche', until he found means to get bread and salt from her house. As soon as child ate these he was cured; had subsequently called her witch without any reaction.

(5) Catherine femme au precedent, 46

Repeated essential of husband's deposition; was convinced she was a witch.

(6) Demenge Mathis huillier de St Nicolas, 45

Some 3 years before at season when verjus was being made from wild plums she had brought some for him to crush, and he had put her off to another time; she was angry and said he would repent. Next day his boy was taking horse to drink when she met him and said 'va va ton cheval sera bientost couré'; after return it became ill and died same day. Believed she was a witch on this account.

(7) Denise femme au precedent, 30

Believed she was a witch; her son-in-law called her such, to which she replied 'ouy je suis genaixe et tu es ung larron'. Repeated husband's story, adding that Barbon had been angry with her for not bidding her good day as they passed.

(8) Jehenne Gueriat femme Nicolas Demenge Henry manouvrier de St Nicolas, 45

Did not know whether she was witch or not, although several 'en douttent'. When her daughter Francoise was 13 she had swelling on back, and was thought to be going to die until what was obviously an abscess burst. When they were talking in house about suspicions that Barbon was witch Francoise said she might have given her the illness, because she had touched her when she was with her daughter.

(9) Mongeatte femme Nicolas Piatte saulnier de St Nicolas, 55

When Barbon came to buy salt witness told her 'vous estes une mauvaise femme' while giving her some; 'ladite Barbon luy frappant sur l'espaule luy dict Mauvaise Mongeatte, mauvaise Mongeatte donnez moy une grosse part dieu.' Did so, but same day was stricken with pain so severe she thought she would die. Recovered after being treated by le maire Fiacre de Chambrehain and Tante Justine of St Nicolas; did not know if Barbon had given her the sickness.

(10) Poirson Poirat boulengier de St Nicolas, 30

One Sunday she had come three times to his house asking to buy bread, although he had none; then came again on pretext of getting fire, and seeing his child kissed it and touched it on head, saying 'voila ung bel enffant'. Child immediately fell ill and died on the Tuesday. Had also been occasion when she wanted to buy a black pig from him, and when they could not agree price she said 'eh bien, tu ne me veux pas vendre ton porcq tu n'en gagneras rien'; next morning found it dead, and threw carcase outside her door saying 'voila ta machandise'. In

addition had other fat pigs dead to value of over 50 ecus, and blamed her, particularly since everyone held that she was a witch.

(11) Nicolas Verbas boulangier de St Nicolas, widower, 30

General reputation. A week earlier had bought a horse, then found her next to it in his stable; took it out through different door to that she had used and sold it for fear of harm coming to it. Had also lost two or three pigs, and suspected her because she had asked how they did before he knew they were ill.

(12) Yzabel femme Simon Tixerant de St Nicolas, 30

She and her husband had always been in dispute with Barbon, her mother-in-law, because witness had told her of common opinion that she was a witch. Occasion when she went to house, and saw her come out of outbuilding followed by black cow; witness asked what she was doing, she replied she was looking for her cow, so she said it was behind her. "Et n'at mauvaise estime autre de sadite belle mere sinon que ce que les voisins en parlent".

(13) Balliat Parmentier manouvrier de St Nicolas, 50

He had been told by wife of Petit Didier of Hault du Mont that Barbon, her sister-in-law, had said of witness and his illness 'mon beau frere menne mon marit boire Il en at pour sa vie' - did not know if this was true.

(14) Nicolas Thierion rouyer de St Nicolas, 40

General belief at Harracourt that she was a witch, but he and his household knew of no harm she had done them. Was supposed to have cured child of Jacques Boulangier of Harracourt by prescribing some kind of bath after making him ill by giving him gooseberries.

(15) Bastienne femme du precedent, 40

Confirmed husband's deposition. Said she had been called witch without showing any emotion.

13 July 1598; additional depositions

(16) Nicolas Barthelemy bouchier de Haraucourt, 50

Some 11 years before his son, aged 18, had been in service at Nancy (evidently with another butcher) and on way to Haraucourt to buy calves for his master, when he met Barbon, who asked why her son was not with him. He replied that he had stayed behind to guard sheep, and she said to him 'qu'il estoit grand boucher d'aller a cheval', coming close to him. Witness did not know if she touched him, but he immediately became ill through whole body, with his limbs paralyzed, so that he had to be taken back to Nancy. Healing later sought from her, and she sent some lard with instructions that he should eat it when it had been cooked, and if he made offering to St Jean he would be healed - immediately recovered. General reputation.

(17) Ysabel femme du precedent, 50

Repeated husband's deposition virtually word for word.

(18) Georgan Humbert de Haraucourt, 40

General reputation only.

(19) Elizabeth femme du precedent, 30

Some 8 years before passed before Barbon's house on way to oven, and was frightened to see her at door because she knew her reputation; fell ill with 'une fenaison' when at oven, which lasted 15 weeks. Believed that she had caused illness because of suspicions, also because witness had delayed a few days before paying her for some spinning. Tried to get remedy from her, but she excused herself on account of arrival of her children; witness was finally cured by le maire Gregoire de Marinviller, who told her 'que c'estoit mal que luy estoit donné pour bien peu de chose.'

(20) Claudon femme Laurent Bassin de Haraucourt, 60

Had spent 18 months with her without taking any harm, but she was commonly reputed a witch.

(21) Anne femme Claudin Caulies de Haraucourt, 28

Some 6 years earlier had been ill for 6 weeks, and hearing that Barbon offered remedies her sister asked if she could visit witness. She replied that Anne 'estoit une badine et qu'elle ne faisoit que se gausser des ungs et des autres', but came to see her and sent her some 'picquatte', after drinking which she immediately recovered. General reputation.

(22) Jacques Houllon boulangier de Haraucourt, 26

About a year before, when he was living next to her at St Nicolas, she had been offering gooseberries from her apron to various neighbours. He refused them, saying 'que ce n'estoit la viande des hommes', but she gave some to his wife, who did not want to eat them because of her reputation. However small child aged three and a half did eat some, and immediately became ill with twisted leg. By means of one Claudatte she obtained bread and salt from Barbon's house, also some herbs given by Barbon to make a bath, and child was soon cured. General reputation.

(23) Blanche femme du precedent, 24

Repeated husband's deposition precisely.

(24) Martin Humbert de Haraucourt, 38

Told of how 8 or 9 years earlier the wife of his brother Gergin Humbert had been ill, and on his way to see her met Barbon, to whom he said 'O sorciere, il y a longtemps que tu debvrois estre bruslée est tu encor au monde', to which she replied 'que ses parolles luy cousteroient'. Next day a wolf killed a horse worth 17 or 18

ecus behind his house, and 3 days later 'ung grand lievre' came out of vines, passed all horses of village until it came to his garden and killed another horse worth 16 ecus. He also lost some cattle over next 6 weeks from very minor causes, and believed she had caused all this.

(25) Hellenix femme du precedent, 40

Said that one day Barbon said to her 'Hellenix votre marit me veut grand mal que sy ne le peut escorcher je luy feray garder le lict longtemps en mal santé'.

(26) Barthelemin Barrois manouvrier de Haraucourt, 30

Some 9 years before had told her that her son owed him 3 sols, and if he did not pay them there would be a real fight. She replied 'garde toy bien qu'il ne t'advienne chose qui t'en puisse garder', and a week later had knee trouble which prevented him walking, so that he had to be tended to a barber of Haraucourt. Meeting him in village she said 'et bien maintenant te voila payé non pas' - did not know if she had given it to him, general repute.

14 July 1598

(27) Nicolas Midon vigneron de Ville en Vermois, 36

General repute only.

(28) Mengeatte servante a Francois Bagard de Creante (?), 20

8 years before had been in house of Claude Pertuis, Barbon's son, at Haraucourt. His pregnant wife had become ill, and asked that Barbon should visit her because she believed she would cause her death. She did die, and child had to be cut out of her in pieces. General reputation.

(29) Claude Rayesouche bouchier de St Nicolas, 30

Told how some 3 years earlier had been to find maire Pasquier at Haraucourt, and on return had seen Barbon, well dressed, sitting alone under a tree.

(30) Nicolas Payotte saulnier de Haraucourt, 40

Repeated story of his wife's illness; added that Barbon had paid two deniers less than she should for salt.

(31) Anne femme Petit Didier le charretier de St Nicolas, 50

Long time before she had been at mill with other women when Barbon had come in with her face all bruised, obviously having been beaten. In response to enquiries, said it was her brother-in-law Balliat who had beaten her, called him 'gourmand' and 'ivrogne' among other things. Women replied that he was very ill; asking why this was, and she said 'Il en a assez pour toute sa vie' or 'pour longtemps' - witness could not remember precisely.

(32) Symonatte fille feu Jean Badelat charretier de St Nicolas, 22

When her small brother had been carrying souchettes for Barbon's husband, and children were playing, she said to him 'escoute tu pourrois bien avoir quelque chose qui ne te sera pas bon et que tu gardera longtemps'. He then had trouble with his leg, and despite various pilgrimages was permanently lame; had heard her father and mother say Barbon had given illness, and also seen her called witch by her son-in-law.

(33) Marguerite femme Nicolas Bigly de St Nicolas, 35

A year ago last Easter when she was at mill Barbon came and asked her for 'des grus', which she refused; three days later became ill, and suspecting her obtained bread and salt from her house. These did no good, and she was cured by other medicines.

(34) Jehanne veuve Jean Marchal de Haraucourt, 40

Had lived close to her for long time without suspecting her of causing any harm, but knew she was suspected as witch.

(35) Claudon femme Mengin Collesson de Haraucourt, 38

Some 11 years before had been with another woman by spring at Haraucourt, complaining of trouble with leg which needed curing. Barbon heard her and after other woman left, offered to cure her, but only on her own at night. She refused, but thought at same moment that she might have given her the sickness. Later when le Maire Gregoire de Mariviller came to Haraucourt he told her 'que c'estoit mal qu'on luy avoit suppose pour bien peu de chose, qui fut la cause qu'elle ne voulout avoir a faire avec l'ung ny avec l'autre'. Was still not cured; common repute.

(36) Collatte femme Jean Gerard de St Nicolas, 45

Some 7 years before she had come to buy some straw, but left without it because there was some difficulty over payment. 4 or 5 days later their small daughter had trouble with leg, and they obtained bread and salt from her house, after eating which she recovered.

(37) Yolant femme Jean Jacques paticier de St Nicolas, 30

Last carnival time she had wanted to buy a quarter of tart from the witness, and had returned 4 times because they disagreed over price. A week later her child aged 12 months fell ill, and was so still, with limbs paralyzed; suspected Barbon on account of both quarrel and her reputation.

(38) Catherine femme Pierre Clement (denunciateur), 46

A week before Martinmas previous year had bought small 'amendement' in her garden near to them, and she had then complained that they had dug ditch in wrong place, taking more land than she intended. Touched witness on back while calling her 'mauvaise femme', and since then she had been ill, despite obtaining bread and salt from her house. After each time she ate this she had vomited 'des flames comme jaulnes et vertes', which made her believe that Barbon had bewitched

her. Said she was not moved by 'aucune hayne inimitié, vengeance ou envie quelconque Ains en detestation du vice'.

23 July 1598; court at St Nicolas states that following order given by Rémy previous day they have arrested Barbon.

27 July 1598; interrogation

Said she was about 60, wife of Nicolas Moictrier manouvrier of St Nicolas. Was daughter of Vergonne Hermenal of Varangeville and his wife Comtesse, both long dead; had lived in their house until she married. First husband was Nicolas Vepye (?), manouvrier of Haraucourt, with whom she lived for 48 years until his death; widow at Haraucourt 4 years, then remarried with present husband 7 or 8 years earlier. Denied any witchcraft; said she did not know reason for her arrest, unless it was doing of 'l'hostesse de la croix blanche'. A year ago when she had been ill the hostess had been to visit her, and said she should pardon everyone; she replied everyone but her, for having allowed her stepdaughter Ysabel to steal her linen and her money, so that she had only a towel, a sheet, and 9 or 10 francs left. Hostess replied 'qu'il ne luy failloit rien laisser', and this quarrel left 'une hayne et inimitié entre elles'. Recently as she returned from church the husband and chambermaid of the hostess had taken her into their house, beaten her and thrown her on the fire, saying they did so in the name of the comte de Salm.

Denied having heard herself called witch, although adding 'combien que c'est la premiere injure que l'on faict presentement aux vieilles femmes'. Said she had not born hatred to anyone except her son-in-law, on account of the theft already mentioned. Denied having given any remedies for illness. Said that her daughter Barbon, wife of Noel Laurent (?) of Haraucourt, had been all swollen, but had been cured after pilgrimage to St Lienard and attentions from Justine of St Nicolas, a woman who frequented the sick. Claimed that those of Haraucourt 'luy ont tousjours porté envie a cause qu'elle conduisoit bien son mesnage'.

31 July - 1 August 1598; confirmation of depositions

Witnesses confirmed previous statements before court. No changes made.

1 August 1598; confrontations

Nicolle femme Mengin Jacquatte added in disputing with accused that she had not wanted to use milk she had from her for child because of her suspicions, and had only done so when she did not have enough money to buy more - child immediately fell ill. Anthoine Tixerand said dispute had been because he had not wanted to sell her some straw. Barbon said of his wife Catherine that she was a thief, only good to steal grain. She said that Phelippe la Trectade (?) had been to seek bread and salt from house.

Said that Denise femme Demenge Mathis was one of her best friends, but witness alleged that after death of horse she had blamed her and called her witch in the street - Barbon pretended not to hear and retreated into house. Accused said of Yolande femme Jean Jacques that if she were 'femme de bien elle n'eut abandonné ses enfans pour aller chez le pretre'. Witness replied that her child had been bleding from nose from 4 in morning to noon, 'pendant lequel temps la detenue se presenta deux fois sur la porte pour entrer dedans mais elle n'ausa Toutesfois avisée d'y entrer par la femme de Nicolas Tapin serrurier, feit response que l'enfant portoit

presentement pour le plus long de son lignage.' Barbon replied that she lied, and if 'elle eust bien gardé son enfant peult estre que cela ne fut avenu, en fin dit, la belle hostesse (qu'est la femme du denonciateur) t'a bien donne du lart pour dire ce que tu dis, sans autrement s'excuser et descharger de l'accusation.'

In reply to Anne femme Petit Didier, said that 'mon marit ne me batit oncques' - claim was that her brother-in-law had beaten her, and that she had blamed him because 'il luy faisoit manger son bien'. Said that Demenge Mathis was one of her best friends, although he was 'ung larron de navetes, et coupeur d'espis de bled.'

Jehenne Gueriat claimed that she had said to her daughter 'ha de par le diable sois tu venu avec ma fille', Barbon repeated accusation that wife of accuser 'vous donne bien du lard et a boire pour dire cela'. Mengeotte femme Nicolas Payatte claimed that when Barbon touched her she had said 'Vous me touches, s'il m'advint quelque mal je feray eschauffer vostre chemise, occasion que vous vous retraiiectes en tremblant'. Claimed she had obtained brad and salt through Barbon's brother-in-law Balliat, but could get no more because she shut it away - by then was cured.

Became angry with Martin Humbert, telling him that he lied, that his horses had died of 'frezain', adding 'tu ne vaulx rien, sy je t'eusse donne une quarte des biens que tu me demandois, tu ne fusse venu deposer contre moy.' Also angry with Blanche femme Jacques Houllon, saying she was 'faulsaire et fille de faux dismeur'. Blanche had added to deposition that Barbon knew well she had advised her to cook fennel and onions in honey in order to make a bath for her child, and that le Rouyer's wife had warned her of suspicions that she had caused illness.

Said of Nicolas Barthelemin that he was a thief, and 'tu es sur le papier rouge pour avoir desrobé des montres et paulzes'. As for Anne femme Claudin Caulies, she was 'larronesse et diffameusse'; Anne claimed that when she was convalescing Barbon had come and told her she must go in, and should not be at door after an illness - had relapse for a fortnight.

Angry exchanges with Poirson Poirat. He emphasised how she had come several times to house on different pretexts on day she kissed child, asking for different kinds of bread, fire, and finally salt. Added claim that she had made his sow swell up as big as an ox; she was so furious she jumped up and tried to strangle him, calling him 'meschant larron'. He then said they should hear Demenge Broulard, alias le petit Geatz, who had sold the grass in his garden to Mengin Piedmontois; she had put powder on grass so that his cow died the first time it grazed there. His wife then sold grass to Claudin Gadelas (now dead), but same happened to his cow. 'Affirme ledit Poirat le faict estre vray, et qu'il veit ladite Barbon accompagné d'ung grand homme noire qui avoit les lepvres grosses et longues comme ung dromedaire jecter et parsemer quelque chose sur ladite herbe.' She insisted he was a liar, and that his child died of plague.

Claudon femme Mengin Collesson said to accused 'vous scavez bien que la femme Epnon bruys estoit malade et pensée par une femme de dehors, vous enchrachantz quels moyens elle usoit, et respondu par moy qu'elle praticquoit des estuves, feictes response qu'en scaviez bien des autres et meilleurs mais qu'il falloit que ce fut de nuict, occasion qu'elle deposante n'ausa s'y fier puis qu'il failloit besogner de nuict.'

Hellenix femme Martin Humbert said it had not been a hare but a wolf which killed horse; a large hare which was limping also came into garden and left when wolf did.

Additional witness produced, Yzabillon femme Claudon Mourat de St Nicolas, 40. Said her first husband, Nicolas Bastien dit Daret, had died in belief that Barbon had bewitched him, because he refused to sell her some corn. She had asked witness how he did, to which she replied by asking if she knew some remedy to prevent him languishing so long. Barbon told her to take the heart of a live hare, with holy water and bread, and give him this as soon as he walked, when he would die without languishing - at this witness was so troubled she did not know what to say, but was bold enough to call her witch. Also told how when husband was out trying to net larks a hare came across his nets three times, then Barbon appeared, so that he caught nothing, and after returning home fell mortally ill. Had always suspected her of causing this, and Barbon had complained to Jean Perrin, lieutenant to the mayor, as his widow could testify.

11 August 1598; Remy asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

12 August 1598; Change de Nancy agrees

14 August 1598; interrogation under torture

Asked series of questions about use of bread and salt from her house, offering remedies, threats, and so forth, consistently denied any wrongdoing, although she did not always answer questions very directly. While she was being prepared for torture urged 'de ne se laisser tourmenter rompre et briser a la force de la gehenne, pour craincte d'aucung danger de sa vie qu'elle puisse s'en proposer'.

Given thumbscrews on hands and feet, she cried out but continued to deny. When racked called out 'femme de bien', then said she was a witch, but had done no harm. Claimed to have been approached by devil, but to have refused to let him touch her. Tension was relaxed after she promised to tell truth; she then said she was femme de bien and had done no harm. Racking was repeated, and she continued to deny; then a small piece of wood broke and she was accidentally relieved of torture. At this point she said that she was willing to be put to death, but not to be made to confess untruths. Was then racked again with wooden triangle under back, and cried out that she was a witch.

Told how she had been accosted by large black man 3 or 4 years before near vines; told him she was on way back to feed her children, but he trapped her against hedge, kissing and caressing her, saying he was Parsin. Gave her what she thought was money, but turned out to be leaves. Asked whether he had given her powder, agreed that he had, but she had thrown it away in fields. Herd of Haraucourt then went to pasture there, and cow belonging to Barthelemin Hemery died. Claimed she had been to confess her fault to Messire George, curé of Haraucourt, asking him to absolve her, and had not seen devil again.

Although she was racked a fourth time, she only confessed to having killed two pigs. Said she would confess anything they wanted, but replies were said to be 'incertaine et extravagante'. When finally released after two hours said 'faictes moy mourir pour l'honneur de dieu, menez moy au poicteau et me faictes brusler je suis femme de bien.'

17 August 1598; Rémy suggests that she be tortured again

Interrogated again, started to add to her confessions. Had killed son of a herdsman at Haraucourt, named Jacques, whose mother hated her, then three other children at St Nicolas, after their parents had offended her - none of them appeared in testimonies. Had given them powder under pretext that they had smallpox. Asked if she had any powder, said she had kept it hidden under stones by a tree, but knowing she would be arrested had thrown it in river.

Had killed 3 horses and 2 cows at Haraucourt because they damaged her property. Asked about Pierre Clement's wife, said she had born her no ill will, but she had accused her to excuse herself for having burned her. Repeated in more detail story of how they had asked her into house, then closed door and attacked her. Wanted her to confess she had made wife ill, and restore her to health; was held down on ground with skirt over her head, then put before 'ung brasier de charbon allumé et la rotirent comme on feroit une espaule de mouton'. When they were tired of beating and roasting her they put her out by back of house; wounds could still be seen. Claimed that Parsin had pursued her but she had always refused to have any more to do with him. Then agreed she had been to sabbat, but claimed she had always sat at rear and refused to join in, so that she had been called 'la criarde'. Only one she had recognized was 'la belle Agnes' of St Nicolas, who would know others because 'elle y estoit des plus avancés en credit et a la danse, mesme a l'occasion qu'elle detenue pleuroit ladite belle Agnes en rondiant luy donnoit du pied'. Admitted that she had helped to make hail, although she was uncertain where it had fallen.

Asked again about deaths of other children, continued to insist she had not harmed them. As for fact that it was 13 or 14 years since inhabitants of Haraucourt had suspected her, she said that 'en ce temps la les officiers du lieu estoient assez prenents, et que s'ilz recognu en elle tant peu soit de malversation, ils ne l'eussent laissé eschapper pour avoir son bien'.

19 August 1598; confirmed her confessions

23 August 1598; Remy asks for execution, after confrontation with 'la belle Agnes'.

24 August 1598; Change de Nancy agrees, while specifying that she should be strangled once she had felt the fire.

26 August 1598; court at St Nicolas issues definitive death sentence