

B 3789 no 2; witch 059, Georgeatte femme Colas Herteman, de Brouvelieures

18 September 1615: substitut of PG des Vosges asks prévôt of Bruyeres to take evidence. Reports that she is generally suspected of witchcraft by inhabitants, many of whom have suffered misfortunes after quarrels with her or her husband, and threats by her. 'Et dequoy beaucoup de personnes murmurent et se complaignent sans que toutesfois il s'en trouve aucun qui en veuille faire accusation formelle'.

List of 17 witnesses to be summoned is attached.

22 September 1615; informations préparatoires

(1) Laurence femme Bernard Meline de Brouvelieures, c. 34

Told of an occasion some 2 years earlier when she had been on her way to market at Bruyeres. Georgeatte had asked for payment of 12 gros for time her children had spent guarding animals; witness replied that she had only enough money to buy what she needed. Quarrel ensued, with threats from Georgette; witness replied 'que s'il luy mescheoit, elle scavoit bien qui en seroit la cause' Fortnight later developed violent stomach trouble, which she thought might be fatal, and lasted until next year. Cured after she met Georgette at Bruyeres, and latter spoke to her in friendly terms, touching her on the shoulder.

Some 18 months earlier her husband had been fishing with the Herteman's son Colas; in the course of a dispute over sharing the catch had called him 'genoult'; three weeks later a calf died strangely, having to be put in lime after water and 'grenouilles' were found inside it - thought this might have been Georgette's doing. General reputation.

(2) Jannon femme Nicolas Napuel de Brouvelieures, c. 30

Reputation since her marriage. Some 2 years earlier her husband had quarrelled with witness's brother Mathieu Bocel at the mill; witness subsequently met her and asked her why she had used threat against her brother. Became angry and abusive, having to be restrained by bystanders. Soon afterwards a cow fell ill, died after lingering 8 or 9 weeks, with hide and flesh coming away in pieces, so that 'celui qui la despouilla, oppina que c'estoit ung mal donné'. Then her 5-year-old son came home with his head hanging down on his chest, saying that Georgette's son had pushed him; suspecting that she 'luy auroit pu donner le mal', and unable to cure it by 'fomentations', she told one of Georgette's daughters that her brother had pushed the child and injured him, and asked if her mother could come and see him. She came the same day, spoke 'quelques doulces paroles' to the boy, and promised to send some bread and milk. She soon brought this, and he then recovered

(3) Cathelon femme Claudon Ancel de Brouvelieures, c. 50

Told how shortly before Georgette had come to her house and 'se plaignit a elle, et aultres femmes assistantes, de ce qu'a son dire, son marit avoit induict Thiriot le Duc d'aller chez elle pour la tancer et injurier, qu'on luy en voulloit beaucoups, et que plusieurs desiroient bien de la voir emmenée a Bruyeres, surquoy elle qui parle

luy dist que si elle estoit femme de bien, elle ne se devoit souscier de bruict de ville, et qu'elle repartit que si on la faisoit prisonnier elle maintiendroit que toutes les femmes de la pairie (entendant de la rue de part et d'autres) estoient telles qu'elle, et la deut on mettres en quatre quartiers.' Some 8 years before she had thrashed witness's child, and when reproached with this, on grounds that she should inform mother if child had done her wrong, and leave her to administer punishment, she became furious. Kicked witness in stomach, after which she had such bruising that those who saw it could not believe it was result of a single kick from a woman.

(4) Claudette Ancel de Grantviller, demeurant a Brouvelieures, 24

General reputation. Some 3 weeks earlier had heard Nicolas Mongeot call Georgette witch several times, blaming her for his wife's sickness. A week later heard from Toussaint Musnier and Mengel Demasson that she had said at the mill 'que sy ledit Mongeot ne se fut mené sy mal, elle auroit bien peu fournir quelque chose pour guerir sa femme, mais puis qu'il s'estoit porté sy terrible, elle la laisseroit la.'

(5) George Voiry dit de Bul, demeurant a Brouvelieures, c. 30

Previous spring one of his cows had fallen sick, and been unable to go to fields. Georgette advised his wife two or three times to give it 'vieux regayn' to eat; when he discovered this he was angry she had not done so, and when cow ate some it was cured. Asked if they had any quarrel with her, said they had not.

(6) Georgel Voiry dit Melynne, demeurant a Grantviller, c. 40

Said that on previous 5th of September he had lodged a poor beggar from Sercoeur, who had told him that he had spent the previous night at the Hertemans. While he was still lying on straw in the barn, and Nicolas Herteman was tending oxen, a woman had arrived to say that there was a rumour they were to be arrested. Went back two or three times to kitchen to speak to wife, saying to her that if they were taken they needed to know 'sy cestoit a la requeste du village, et qui se plaignoit d'eulx.'

(7) Mengeon Roffart de Brouvelieures, c. 45

Previous summer Georgette had suggested to his wife that she should entrust a cow to her children; had excused herself on grounds that they intended to send it elsewhere. Shortly afterwards she entered by back door on pretext of consulting her about some herbs, and after this the cow became ill. Was sometimes very swollen, and several had suggested that this was witchcraft.

(8) Mengel le Duc de Brouvelieures, c. 60

Said that Nicolas Herteman's household had long been suspect, and that his wife had been so since she came to the village 'et qu'elle a ceste mauvaise grace d'estre fort cholerée et d'aymer a disputer, ainsy qu'elle faict avec plusieurs.'

(9) Thiriot le Duc de Brouvelieures, c. 50

Long suspicions. Three years earlier had lost an ox after a quarrel with Hertemans, which behaved so strangely during its illness that several thought it bewitched. Could not however be sure that they had been responsible for its death, or subsequent loss of some cows. Had several times called them witches, as others had; they had never denied it, nor taken action.

(10) Nicolas Gamel de Brouvelieures, c. 80

General repute of Hertemans; Georgette was 'femme vindicative'. Had suspected her, without being certain, over death of several animals 3 years before. Some 14 months earlier his son Mengel, aged about 20, had died; 'ne scait de quelle malheur cest accident arriva', but had previously quarrelled with Colas Hetrtman, and 'au surplus il ne les voioit pas volontairement ny eulx luy.'

(11) Bernard Viry alias Melynne de Brouvelieures, c. 30

Repeated story told by wife (1) of death of young bull calf; had suspected Hertemans' household after the quarrel over sharing catch from fishing. The boy had been too small to take full part, and nevertheless witness had shared catch, then been angry when he found him helping himself.

(12) Thierron frere audit Bernard, de Brouvelieures, c. 46

Told of losses of beasts after quarrel previous year, arising from his involvement in proposal by Nicolas Mongeot, the blacksmith, to build a new forge. General reputation.

(13) Claudon le Roy de Brouvelieures, c. 66

General suspicion, particularly by his wife. After quarrel with Georgette 3 years before had lost some animals; more recently a cow had been sick until entrusted to her children to guard.

(14) Nicolas Mongeot mareschal de Brouvelieures, c. 25

About a year earlier had obtained permission from the community to establish a forge next to Hertemans' house; Georgette had been angry and had uttered various threats, including one 'qu'elle luy envoyeroit des mouches sy chaudes parmy ses oreilles, qu'elles le garderoient bien de dormir' - he made sure that several persons present would act as witnesses to this. She had subsequently been very unfriendly, not replying to his 'bon jour' or 'bon soir'. 'Toutesfois, sachant que beaucoup de personnes frequentoient la forge dudit Mongeot, et que l'on y tenoit propos de certaines sorcieres prises a Sainct Diez, et d'autres accusées de ce crime, elle s'addressa a luy, y a ung mois ou cinq semaines, et luy dist tels propos, qu'est ce Nicolas Mongeot, ne parle on pas de moy en ta forge, a quoy il respondit

qu'on ny disoit aucun mal d'elle (encor que le contraire fust) ains bien asse mal d'Alison sa belle soeur: car il avoit crainte de luy dire en quelle reputation on la tenoit, laquelle repliqua que ladite Alison avoit nagueres esté battue de son marit Humbert, et qu'elle n'en scavoit la cause, neantmoins que ce n'estoit sans occasion.' Some 8 days later Georgette offered his wife a piece of bread made from new wheat, and when she refused it said 'Je crois que tu ne l'oserois manger a cause du mauvais crime qu'on me donne'; frightened of offending her, she then took it. When he heard of this he was angry with his wife, telling her she might soon be sorry; she had indeed fallen ill, 'perclus de ses membres' and with her neck all twisted, so that she was unable to give suck to her 4-month-old child. Georgette had not joined other neighbours in visiting her, and when he had reproached her and asked her if she could not identify and heal the sickness, she replied 'qu'elle ny yroit pas, encore qu'elle sceut bien quelque chose pour guerir gens et bestes, mais qu'elle n'en gueriroitaucuns a cause des parolles des personnes'. Husband strongly suspected, his grandmother having been executed; his wife 'estoit aussy descendue d'une race fort suspecte'.

(23 September)

(15) Laurent Voiry de Brouvelieures, c. 50

Told of incident 20 years earlier, when he had refused to allow Nicolas Herteman to take a tree he was cutting down, and subsequently lost a cow. In view of general suspicions against family, he had thought he might have been the cause - but this had been before Herteman's marriage.

(16) Nicolas Coignin demeurant a Brouvelieures, c. 65

Two years before had crossed Herteman's land when carting manure, and Georgette in anger told him 'que ce luy seroit une chere passée'; however, 'par la grace de Dieu' no misfortune had followed.

(17) Toussaint Blason de Sercueur, musnier a Brouvelieures, 26

Some 3 weeks earlier Georgette had come to mill, where he was alone, and started talking 'du bruit qu'on avoit fait courir contre elle, et s'en contristoit fort'. Said that Nicolas Mongeot and his wife Mathiatte were responsible; she was determined not to visit the latter, although she could have done something for her.

(18) Berthremin Philippe de Brouvelieures, c. 50

A close neighbour, he had sometimes quarrelled with the Hertemans, but was not aware of having suffered any harm. Knew their reputation, but could say nothing certain.

(24 September)

(19) Jacques Henrys paistre des bestes a cornes a Brouvelieures, c. 50

Previous Monday, feast of St. Mathieu, had been with Jean Herteman, who lived at Cugniecourt, and asked him 'ne veulx tu pas courir au secours de ta belle soeur, laquelle on veult brusler'. He replied that he wished she had already been burned, and told how previous year, following a quarrel when carting manure, two horses had died; he could only believe her responsible.

(25 September)

(20) Jean Duc de Brouvelieures, c. 70

Had called her witch without any reparation being sought. Knew that her husband's brother-in-law Humbert Gagat, paistre des porcs, had 'un gros bos' on his back, which often discharged, and which he attributed to her.

3 October 1615; PG des Vosges orders her arrest

16 October; additional depositions

(21) Jacot Boinesson de Brouvelieures, c. 60

Long reputation. He had two young calves which were not doing well with common herd, and he knew that Georgette, who kept another herd of young animals nearby, was hostile to those who kept common herd. Asked her to take his animals, since they were getting thinner by the day; soon began to fatten up satisfactorily.

(22) Mansuy Tiriot de Brouvelieures, c. 25

On two mornings, on way to work on edge of woods at dawn, had seen Georgette leaving woods, but carrying nothing; this had made him suspect that she was returning from sabbat.

(23) Claudate femme Mongeon Valentin de Brouvelieures, c. 48

Previous summer Georgette had asked her for a loan of 3 francs; when she said she had not got it, she was threatened she would repent, and replied that this was how Georgette had acquired reputation as a witch. On previous Monday her son, aged 7, had died after being ill only two days. Had been an incident previously when Georgette had been to school and thrown mud at him, which had made him reluctant to go to school. She had also threatened him after some piglets strayed on her land.

(23 October)

(24) Jean Voiry dit de Bul, demeurant a Brouvelieures, c. 34

Bernard Meline had fallen ill on day he made his deposition, and had told witness that Georgette had come to visit him when there was no-one in the house, saying some words he did not understand, and touching him as he lay on the bed. Since then he felt there was something in the bed, and could not rest; had become demented, so that witness had to guard him. Accused had returned pretending to want to visit him, but witness had beaten her and driven her away, having heard from Bernard that she had given him the sickness.

(25) Laurence femme Bernard Meline (witness 1)

Repeated above story, saying that she had blown on husband's face.

19 October 1615; interrogation

Said she was 48, daughter of Aubert le Vaude des Heutes (dead some 9 years) and of Jennon du Boulay (dead before she was married). Had three children living, one dead in childbirth.

Asked if she were not 'fort vindicative', replied 'a convenu d'estre bientost transportée de colere, mais que tout aussy tôt elle est appaisée et preste de donner de son bien'.

Pressed to confess that she had been seduced by Satan, she made two inconsequential statements; approached in fields by a 'tourbillon de vent', which went away when she crossed herself, and had been angry with her brother-in-law Hubert who had damaged a little bridge. Asked if she could return home and if these were enough to damn her.

Claimed that she had only said at Claudon Ancel's house that if they came to arrest her she would call all the neighbours. Said that threat about 'mouches' had been from Nicolas Mongeot to her, and that piece of bread had been taken from her hand by child who then gave it to mother. Cried without tears, and prayed 'que pour l'honneur de Dieu on la fasse rebaptiser si elle est telle.'

As she was being taken back to prison, said that when she found bridge broken she had said two or three times of the person responsible 'que le malgrief feu lui puisse manger les mains, et que si elle a este trompée du mauvais elle ne scait que ce soit d'autre facon que de celle la.'

When back in prison, cried 'alarme' and begged to be allowed to tell more about her witchcraft. Brought back, said that her 'variations' had proceeded from 'L'ennemy', who had prevented her speaking by holding her throat. When she had decided to confess, on her return to prison, he had come out of her throat like a strong whistling wind, and wanted to punish her.

Started by saying that enemy had appeared to her three weeks earlier, when she was upset over allegations against her, and she had driven him away by crossing herself. Reproached by judges, then confessed to being seduced 9 years earlier, around St. Jean during a thunderstorm. Had promised her to make her life easier, and provide her with 'beaucoup de biens'. Gave her what appeared to be 100 francs, but proved to be leaves.

Subsequently forced her to have intercourse with him, which was very painful. Seeing she was pregnant, asked her how long it was until she expected

child, and she told him three weeks. Labour proved very painful, and she was thought by some to have ruptured herself. Seeing herself to have been deceived, wanted no more to do with him, since 'loin d'en avoir receu quelque courtoisie, tous malheurs et pauvreté luy sont advenues depuis qu'elle s'est donnée a luy'; had not seen him again until episode three weeks earlier. Said she had not been to sabbat, because after first deception 'elle pratiqua les sacrements et pelerinages'.

23 October; interrogation

Pressed on subject of sabbat, now agreed that Persin had taken her once at time of first temptation, but she had called on God and the Virgin, and gone home; had only been out of the house for a quarter of an hour, and husband had suspected nothing. Subsequently confessed to using grease given by Persin to perform maléfices when she had grievances, and to other attendances at Sabbat. She had refused to eat there, and had been beaten - was sometimes ill, and always returned famished. Asked about accomplices, persisted that she had recognised no-one.

26 October 1615; interrogation

Added nothing to earlier confessions; still identified no accomplices.

30 October 1615; procureur general des Vosges asks for death sentence

3 November 1615; Chambre de Nancy approves.

10 November 1615; prévôt de Bruyères records that he has assembled the 'bons hommes jugeants', who have sentenced Georgette to be 'brûlée toute vive'.

9 November; interrogation under torture.

Before torture claimed that enemy had appeared to her two nights before in prison, in form of a great rat, accompanied by Tiriot le Duc; had seemed to be weaving rope of straw, perhaps to strangle her, but disappeared when she invoked the Holy Ghost.

After being racked, said that she had been seduced by her husband, and that he had normally accompanied her to sabbat (no sign that judges suggested this to her). Had also seen those recently convicted at Nouzeville.

Then said that her temptation had actually been 19 years earlier, when she had been 12 (!) and guarding mother's sheep. Further admitted to having caused illness of Bernard Meline, as it had been alleged, and to having made Hubert Gagat hunchbacked because of incident with bridge.

10 November; interrogation

Now changed story again, and seemed to withdraw direct accusation against husband. Added that witches had caused hailstorm which damaged crops 18 months earlier, but that she had refused to participate. Finally renewed accusation against husband.

Repeated charge against husband at stake, but refused to accuse anyone else, saying that if she was willing to accuse the person nearest to her they should not suspect her of concealing the truth about others.

Order for enquiry into husband follows.