

B 8707 no 1; witch 253, Claudette femme George Mengin, de la Bolle

13 October 1610 (?) Record of confrontation with Laurence femme Mengeon Demenge Benay, of la Fosse, who was being held at château of Taintrux. She had said that a tall woman of la Bolle, whose name she thought was Catherine, had been at sabat. Was confronted with Claudette, and after some thought said she believed she was the woman she had seen - latter objected that she had got her name wrong, and denied having been there.

17 January 1611; procureur for canons asks court at St Dié to investigate, and arrest and interrogate her if evidence is sufficient.

19 January 1611; informations préparatoires

(1) Mengeon Demenge de Mortaigne, 60

3 years earlier his sow got into her garden, and she chased it out, striking it on back with broom. Then lost milk, and some piglets died, until neighbours advised his wife to get something from her garden. After sow ate this, milk returned; believed this had been her doing, in view of reputation and accusation. On another occasion his bull, which was in mountains with animals of her husband, got neck stuck between some rocks; she told him where to find it, although she had not been out that day - suspected her of causing this, in view of a recent quarrel. Also occasion when a lamb which his children were guarding was trampled on and killed by some horses, and he had to pay her a franc, then lost 2 of his own, which he thought she had killed to avenge loss of her own.

(2) Anthoine Bergier, 35

4 years earlier had heard previous witness quarrelling with her, and saying 'qu'il luy feroit razer le poil du cul' - meaning he would have her arrested. She sought no reparation; general reputation.

(3) Jean Colin le jeune, 40

3 or 4 years earlier had heard Pierron Anthoine and others call her witch, but neither she nor husband sought reparation. General reputation.

(4) Pierron Anthoine, 50

7 or 8 years before had quarrel with her, after he broke the leg of her goat which continually damaged his garden, despite repeated warnings. She said to him 'qu'il ne seroit tousjours sy gros, et viendroit quelque fois avec eulx, voulant dire qu'il deviendroit pauvre'. After this 'menace tacite' he lost at least 6 horses and more cattle than he could count; believed that if she was a witch as reputed this had been her doing. Had called her witch without reparation being sought, and had been preparing to have her arrested and risk all his property, because of great harm he thought she had done him.

(20 January 1611)

(5) Jean Jeandel, 32

When living previously with father-in-law Jean Colin le vieux often heard him quarrel with Claudette, and call her witch without any reparation being sought. Had many losses of animals, notably horses, around that time, which he suspected had been her doing. For his own part, previous year his wife had been angry when accused chased pigs out of her garden, which was very easy of access; later Claudatte asked her if she was still angry, to which she replied she was the devil. Later lost a fine bull, and thought that this might have been her witchcraft; long reputation.

(6) Jean Colin le vieux, 76

12 years earlier had leased 'moictresse' from Nicolas Miette, tabellion. This included a garden where she had previously been servant, and where she put geese to graze. Despite several warnings she repeatedly let them get in there; he finally killed several of them, and when she called him 'meschant homme' he called her witch. She complained to Bastien la Hiere, but obtained no redress, since it had been her fault for letting birds stray. In revenge believed that she had killed 9 bullocks and 2 horses; every time they quarrelled he lost animals, to total value of more than 1000 francs. Believed this had all been her witchcraft; long reputation, and had called her witch without reparation being sought. She had told him she had been at moictresse before him, and would be again after him.

(7) Claudatte femme Jean Jeandel, 25

Repeated essential of husband's deposition, also some of accusations by father (previous witness).

(8) Jehennon femme Demenge Foelix, 30

8 years earlier had called her to childbed of first child - she was then helping to feed their animals - and had suggested she be godmother, but had to withdraw this because it had already been promised to another. Then lost a cow worth 9 écus, which they suspected was her witchcraft. When second child was born tried to make amends by asking her husband to be godfather, but she wanted her son to act, and was angry when 'basle' said he was too young. Child immediately fell ill, and died after 19 weeks - also suspected her over this. Similar suspicions over death of cow worth 7 écus, after husbands quarrelled about damage to field of wheat. 2 weeks earlier her husband, on behalf of his brother, rented some land she had previously rented; next day a bullock suddenly died, which they again suspected was her witchcraft.

(9) Mengeatte femme Urbain Sagaire, de Rougiville, 30

2 or 3 years before Claudette's son Mengin had complained that her goats were eating their hedges; her husband retorted that they were doing little damage, and it was better to have goats than to lease cows and a large moictresse. Soon after goats died one after another, and suspected this was her doing - long reputation.

(10) Humbert Bergier, 40

More than two years before her son Mengin had struck one of his cows across the back with a stick, making it fall, and his wife struck Mengin. Claudette was angry and threatened her; during following winter lost 3 cattle, and if she was witch as reputed suspected this had been her doing.

(11) Demenge Foelix, 40

Same story as wife about godparenting and losses. When cow died the executioner found an abscess on its neck, with red hair and powder in it, but this vanished while he was finishing his work. Also story of other losses as told by wife.

(12) Jehennon veuve Anthoine Alexey, 55

Some years before her son had been guarding animals in field when Claudette passed and struck cow with a stick, so that it could not walk properly. Advised to get something from her house or garden, gave cow some herbs from garden to eat, after which it recovered (but died a year later). Suspected that if she was witch as reputed she had made it ill.

(13) Urbain Sagaire, 26

Same story as wife about 6 goats (for which he paid 22 francs). Said that as small boy he had been sent to get milk from aunt at Viller near St Dié one evening, and on return met Claudette, who was all scratched around face and seemed ill, followed by a black and white dog which bit him and threw him to the ground. She told him she had been scratched getting wood from hedges. After loss of goats he was cursing witches and wishing they were burned; she overheard this and asked if he was charging her, to which he said he was not unless she was a witch. Mother had also suspected her of causing death of a goat; she had remarked what a good milker it was, after which it immediately lost milk, and died 2 weeks later as if rabid.

24 January 1611; interrogation

Said she was Claudette Guillematte, aged about 45, wife of George Mengin, laboureur and manouvrier. Daughter of Colas Guillematte of ban de Taintrux and Marguitte fille Pierrat Colas Schenal of Saulcy, both dead of natural causes. Had come to la Bolle as servant of late maire Gregoire Miette at his moitresse.

Called on to renounce all devils of hell, including Persin and Napnel, renounced all except Napnel. Subjected to very full questioning, but simply denied everything, or said she could not remember.

26 January 1611; confrontations

Mengeon Demenge de Mortaigne added that late Jean Mengin had called her witch and believed she would cause his death, having given illness from which he and his daughter died.

No reproaches to witnesses; simply maintained denials and said that they lied in some cases.

27 January 1611; procureur for canons asks for question ordinaire

1 February 1611; Change de Nancy approves

3 February 1611; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews, then racked. At this stage had difficulty breathing, so thought to have devil in throat, and given holy water, which seemed to help her. Then began to confess; seduced some 20 years earlier at la Gotte Morel by Persin, who promised to make her rich, and as there was great dearth at time she consented. Usual seduction; money was black dust, powder black/kill, red/languish, white/cure. Tried powder out on one of own cattle, which died, then killed series of animals much as accused. Also child of Demenge Foelix, because of refusal to have her son as godparent. Asked about occasion when she had been scratched, this had been by Persin because she would not go to sabat, and he had been in form of the dog seen by witness.

Had been many times to sabat, where many people were present, but were masked; she herself had mask of black paper. Brief standard description of sabat. Had seen Bastien Stablo of la Bolle, Bernard and Clement Cheneviere of Chaulmont, and la Regnarde of Haillieule.

Brought back that afternoon, confirmed earlier confessions. Added some more maléfices against animals, also killing her brother-in-law Jean Mengin, with whom she was in dispute over property, and who had called her witch - put powder in soup.

4 February 1611; further confirmation of confessions

10 February 1611; procureur asks for death sentence

18 February 1611; Change de Nancy approves

22 February 1611; execution carried out