

B 8687 no 6; witch 204, Mengeatte veuve Colas Lienard de la Rochatte

2 May 1601; informations préparatoires

Procureur for canons had been informed of scandal caused at Easter when she spat out host or a part of it, and of long reputation as witch. Maire and judges therefore required to take evidence.

(1) Discrete personne Mme Mansuy Caillon, curé à St Dié, 30

Told how when he gave her the host on Easter Day he saw her put fingers to her mouth, and seized her by the arm to find what she had in hand - was the host, not even damp. Asked her what she was doing, to which she only said 'qu'est ce que j'en voudrois faire'. Told her to leave and talk to him later, but had not been able to do this because she was arrested and imprisoned. Asked if he had seen her do the same in previous years, said he had not.

(2) Honn homme Claude Thiery, eschevin en l'église de St Dié, 30

He had seen her take host out first, and asked her what she was doing, to which she said she was doing nothing; at this point curé also saw, and intervened as described above.

(3) Jean de Sainct Genay, consorcier de ladite église, 30

Had also witnessed the scene in the church.

(4) Nicolas Lavelline, 45

Had been neighbour for 6 or 7 years, and she was often in his house, much to his regret in view of her long reputation. Often said to his wife that they ought to forbid her entry, but did not dare for fear of harm. One evening when wife was fetching animals from fields she came in uninvited and put 6-month old baby to bed. After she left it started to cry strangely and became swollen; she would not come to see it, but said that if swelling went to lower parts it would recover, otherwise it would die. The child died a week later, and they had always suspected this was her witchcraft. At same time wife was bedridden with great pains in legs, and after 2 weeks Mengeatte visited her, took her by the legs, and said she should have courage and she would soon be healed. Went on pilgrimage to chapel of Urtimont, and as soon as she had left his wife began to feel better and slept, which she had not done since start of illness. Was completely cured in a few days, and suspected this too was her witchcraft. On Tuesday after Easter, having heard about host, told her that if this was true they ought to take a stake and burn her without more ado, to which she said nothing.

(5) Claudatte femme du précédent, 36

Same story as husband. Said that during illness her legs were burning, and that they promised to let her off debt of some wheat if she made pilgrimage. Manipulated legs again on return, which was when she was able to walk again.

(6) Bastienne fille feu Gerard Mandray, de St Dié, 21

5 years earlier had been to church of St Dié to receive alms, which were distributed every Friday by 2 commis for the Chapter, following the list of the poor. Sat near altar, but Mengeatte arrived and pushed her, telling her not to sit in her place; she moved readily enough, but accused angrily pinched her behind leg, which was rather painful. When she got home it became very painful, and had to take to her bed; was unable to find relief for 3 or 4 weeks. Finally the late Didielle Colichat, with whom she lived, asked her what cause was, and when she explained suspicions obtained bread, salt, and ashes from house of accused (who soon heard of this). Drank a soup made from these and was recovered next day; had always suspected it had been her witchcraft, reputation as long as she could remember.

(7) Jennon femme Claudon Besson, 50

3 years before had rented room in her house, and as she was sweeping house found a small bag tied up with powder in it. Showed it to husband, who said that in view of her reputation they should throw it away in fields - did this, but she never asked about it. When there was thunderstorm they were crossing themselves, but she mocked them, saying 'qu'ilz avoient bien poeur que le diable ne les emporte, et qu'ilz craindoient bien pour peu de chose'. This confirmed them in belief that she was a 'vraye et parfaicte sorciere' as she had been reputed for several years.

(8) Didier Aymé, 55

A year before she had asked his daughter Annon, who kept house for him because he was widower, for some milk, but she refused because they needed it themselves. Immediately became ill, and soon said she had a toad in her stomach which she could hear calling, which she believed Mengeatte had given her. Then became troubled in mind, and he was still unable to find a cure, despite pilgrimages and other measures. Suspected this was her witchcraft - long reputation.

(9) Claudatte veuve Diey Jacot Simon, de St Dié

Told how 9 years earlier accused had been employed by shoemakers to prepare skins at their 'battant', which was rented from the greffier Didier Bregaire. Latter often told her off, calling her old witch and saying 'qu'elle ne portoit que mal encontre'. One day he struck her and told her to be off or he would throw her in the river; she replied 'en grondant', 'qu'il s'en aille et que peult estre ne seroit il empesché de la jeter dans l'eau'. When he went home he became so ill that he never went out again, and died year later, which caused her to suspect this had been witchcraft of accused; already long reputation.

(10) Jennon fille feu Jacot Simon, 24

Similar deposition to that of her mother; seems to imply that she should not have been at the 'battant', and was constantly being told this by greffier.

(11) Dieudonné veuve Pierron Frampart, 50

Long reputation, no personal suspicion.

(12) Libaire veuve Gerard Mandray, 46

Repeated her daughter Bastienne's story about illness and cure.

(13) Jacotte femme Jacot Simon, 50

Reputation 15 years, had called her witch without reparation being sought. 4 years earlier had called her in to castrate her pigs, at cost of a sol each, but next time decided to do it herself. Mongeatte was angry and asked why she had not called her in; she replied that she charged too much, to which she answered 'qu'elle ne les chattreroit guiere avant'. Since then had never been able to keep pigs successfully, since they always died, which she had always imputed to her witchcraft. Had heard her say that there was no bread to eat at sabats, but plenty of meat, 'et qu'on y menoit bonne vie'. Replied that she spoke like someone who had been to sabat, at which she said 'qu'il estoit vray, et qu'elle en parloit comme une qui le scavoit a la verité'. 18 months earlier had illness which lasted 9 months, during which 2 cats came into her room before dawn and tried to strangle her, but were driven off when husband came in. One had been changed into a woman she recognized, but the other remained a cat. Since she had often quarrelled with accused suspected she had been this second cat.

(14) Jacques Simon, 24

On Monday after last Whitsun he had married daughter of Nicolas de Laveline, and accused wanted to have 'l'escuelle de la nouvelle mariée', which was given to a poor widow, but it went to another who was in greater need. 2 days later she met him on way to woods, and say 'qu'il demeureroit bien a la ville, et faire encor la feste, et qu'il la feroit ung aultre jour, qu'il ne s'en donneroit de garde'. Next day fell so ill he was in bed for 3 weeks, expected to die, and finally talked of his suspicions that she had bewitched him. She heard of this, then he suddenly recovered. Long reputation.

14 May 1601; interrogation

Said she was about 70, widow of Colas Lienard; no other personal details. Asked why she had been arrested, said that she had failed to swallow the whole host, and curé had been so quick to see this that she did not have chance to take the small amount that was left - claimed it was no bigger than a pinhead. Denied all charges of witchcraft, saying at one point that they should search her home for signs of 'drogues, ou aultre chose'. Asked if she had caused illness of Jacques Simon, said she was no more the cause of this than the plank under her feet.

15 May 1601; confrontations

Continued to claim that she had intended to put remainder of host back in her mouth. Admitted touching legs of Nicolas Lavelline's wife, which she had denied previous day - could offer no explanation for this change of mind. Said it was necessary to do this to make a good pilgrimage. Also admitted being chased out and called witch by Didier Bregaire day before he fell ill; this too she had previously denied.

No reproaches to any witness. Denied she was a witch, but said she was ready to be punished for fault she had committed at Easter. Would endure burning

patiently if necessary, but asked to be whipped and banished, saying they would never see her again.

15 May 1601; procureur for canons asks for torture

16 May 1601; Change de Nancy approves

18 May 1601; interrogation under torture

Began to confess when she was racked. Persin had ordered her to keep host, and had beaten her with his 'grosses diables de pattes' for failure to obtain it; she had been seduced 36 years earlier. Had taken piece of host once before, 3 years earlier, and given it to Persin. Now said seduction had been 26 years earlier; husband had gone off to play drum at wedding feast, as he was accustomed to do, leaving her with no bread to feed herself and 2 children. Went off to work on some skins, lamenting her poverty, and Persin appeared to her on the way. Promised her enough money to ensure she should never want; money was leaves, also gave her black powder.

Tried it out on a cat and a dog (not her own). Also a calf. Then killed child of Colas de Lavelline, and later made wife ill, finally curing her with white powder also given her by Persin. Had made Bastienne fille Gerard Mandray ill, also Annon fille Didier Aymé - knew no way to cure latter, since she had given consent to her master to afflict her further. Admitted making Didier Bregaire ill; regretted this, and would have gone to heal him if she had been asked - frightened to go otherwise, in case she was beaten, or blamed for illness.

Told story of how she and her accomplice Penthecoste had been angry with Jacotte femme Georgeon, who was always calling them witches, and wanted to try and strangle her or cause her some other great harm. Persin sent an unnamed devil to assist them, who gave them grey cat skins, but they found they had no power over victim, who must have protected herself well with sign of the cross, and when husband came with an axe they fled.

Had been to sabat more times than she could remember, where she had seen Penthecoste, Marguittre femme Lodovic Thoussaint, and Jennon femme Didier Pernot of St Dié, who had fled some years earlier. Also a number already executed; la maison Masson (principal mistress at sabat), Jennon femme Guillaume le bouchier (and Jennon her daughter, who had fled), Melline veuve Martin Gentilhomme, l'hospitalliere du Vieux Marché, and Jacotte fille Michiel Hault Rue of Vieux Marché, who had fled. Also Mengeatte femme Jacot Blaise, of Vieux Marché, and Claudon le grand Masson and his wife, of Moliney - latter two had fled several years earlier. Also many from Nayemont and les Fosses, whom she did not recognize.

Usual description of dancing, feasting, and hailmaking - very short.

19 May 1601; interrogation

Added that she had made Jacques Simon ill as he had said, since he refused her some wood. Confirmed other confessions. Said she sometimes went to sabat on foot, sometimes carried in air by her master on black horse, sometimes given grease she put on hands and feet, then said 'hault de par le diable' and left by chimney.

23 May 1601; further confirmation of her confessions

24 May 1601; procureur asks for death sentence

25 May 1601; Change de Nancy agrees