

B 8682 no 3; witch 181, Jean Pelisson de Moriviller

12 March 1598; informations préparatoires

(1) Pierre Chrestien, 50

Long reputation, along with wife and daughter. Previous year had been working at house of witness (as 'rouyer'), and found him leaning on post looking at animals, so asked him what he was doing. Afterwards lost finest calf, and if he had caused this he might reveal it if he confessed; 'que s'il est sorcier il a faict beaucoup de mal, et est l'ung des fins et rusez sorciers qui se puisse veoir'.

(2) Thoussaint Gomay, 40

7 years earlier his maid told him that Jean, his nearest neighbour, was claiming he had stolen a rope from him and was using it to harness his horses. Was innocent, so went round to his house with rope, asked him if it was his, and when he claimed it was struck him 3 or 4 blows across back, saying he lied like an evil man. Then lost numerous animals - an ox, 2 cows, 3 horses, 6 calves - all judged to be bewitched, over which he suspected Jean and his daughter Georgeatte.

(3) Clemence fille Parisot Goeury, 25

10 years earlier Jean had twice beaten her brother Didier for no serious reason, and mother went to tell him off. Said she would beat her children if there was cause, that he was 'glorieux et superbe', and that he should beat his own children, some of whom needed this badly. Soon after she fell ill, surgeons and doctors could do nothing, but said she was bewitched, and she died after languishing for 19 weeks. She and witness both suspected him; long reputation. Witness had quarrelled with him 2 years earlier, when she found him beating one of her brothers, and reminded him of mother's death, suggesting he had caused it - afterwards had a fall from hayloft, which she thought might have been his doing.

(4) Dieudonnée femme Pierre Chrestien, 56

Long reputation; same story as husband; suggested he had been looking to see if their calves were finer than his own.

(5) Catherine veuve Demenge Perrise, 50

Previous year her late husband, who had worked a little as rouyer, mainly for their own household, asked to borrow tools from Jean to make yoke for oxen. He agreed, but husband then fell ill and died within a week, believing that he was bewitched by Jean - supposed this was from jealousy because he practised same trade, and believed he had caused them many other losses, which he might reveal if he confessed.

(6) Colas Guezey, 36

Long reputation; had called him witch in public without any reparation being sought.

(7) Anthoinette femme Claudon Poirresson, 70

Long reputation only.

(8) ? Parisot Goeury

Told of wife's death, and how she and neighbours said Jean had bewitched her, but could not affirm this, and had never heard him called witch until then. Would say no more when asked if he did not suspect her.

(9) Catherine fille feu Demengé Perrise, 22

Same story as mother about father's death; illness had come on same night when he had been to ask for loan of tools.

(10) Claudatte femme Thoussaint Gornay

Quarrel with his wife over hen he had killed, during which witness wished devil might kill him as he had the hen - as neighbour heard her tell him about this. Afterwards lost several cattle and horses which died in strange fashion; she and husband were convinced it had been his witchcraft. Long reputation, as had his wife.

(11) Le maire Dieudonné Galand, 56

Long reputation; several of his horses had died as if rabid after quarrel. 6 years earlier had fine horse sick, smoking like a furnace, and sent daughter Sibille to fetch him to see it, on grounds that he had bewitched it (damage here)

(12) Jean Guezey

Long reputation; 6 years earlier had passed Jean in woods without saying anything, and before he got home lost use of an eye in strange fashion - believed this had been his witchcraft.

(13) Jean Masson, 50

10 years before had been guarding his wife when she was on trial, and she said that because of his avarice they had been out at night stealing flax in fields, where the devil found them and made them into witches. General reputation.

(14) Le maire Jean Serainville, de Claeures, 80

12 years before had been harvesting barley when Jean, as tithe collector, approached him. Damage here - some misfortune which he thought had been his doing.

(15) Nicolas Saulnier, 30

3 years earlier, when collecting a tax, had quarrel with Jean. A week later a horse fell ill, and finally had to be killed - had always suspected this was his witchcraft.

(16) Jean Claude Felippé, 50

13 years earlier his wife had been ill for 3 years, and Jean said several times that it was a matter of a resal of oats to obtain healing - did not know what he meant, nor if she suspected him. Long reputation.

(17) Estienne Brouvellant

Mostly missing - seems to involve death of children as if rabid. Long reputation.

12 March 1598; interrogation

Said he was rouyer, aged about 50, native of Moriviller. Married for 17 years to first wife Jennon, executed as witch 10 years earlier, and for 7 years to present wife Catherine.

Asked if he had suspected his first wife was a witch, said that one day he wanted to have intercourse with her in their chamber during the day. Lifted up her skirt and saw that she was all hairy above the knees, so he desisted and had never approached her again after that, not knowing what to think.

Said he knew he had been arrested on charge of witchcraft, and heard that his daughter had accused him, adding 'qu'il cognoist assurement maintenant, estre aussy difficile de cognoistre les hommes de bien, entre les meschans, comme il est difficile de discerner entre cent corbeaux les femelles d'avec les masles.' Agreed he had said previous evening 'qu'il prioit dieu qu'il fut sorcier' - this was because he would have liked to be able to confess.

Otherwise denied all charges.

13 March 1598; confrontations

No reproaches to witnesses, mostly simple denials. Said in response to Catherine fille Demenge Perrise 'qu'il n'y a point de plus dangereuses maladies que celles qui saisissent les personnes au lict ou a l'église'.

16 March; confrontation and interrogation

Confronted with his daughter Georgeatte, who insisted she had seen him at sabats, including one near Gerbeviller. Also said that when prévôt of Chamontoy had been to Moriviller previous summer Jean had warned her she was to be arrested, and begged her not to accuse him. She now begged him to confess, saying he should not let himself be tortured, and would have to confess in the end, even if it was in another 12 years.

Jean asked judges if it was possible to be a witch without knowing it, and whether he would not be damned if he confessed he was such. Reply was that he would save himself if he confessed to being witch when he was, and that it was not possible to be one without knowing. After she had been taken away asked to see her again, and she repeated her claims.

He now said he saw he must tell truth. 7 years earlier his nephew Claudon Ferry had sold 2 fields to Didier Galand for 27 or 28 francs, and as nearest heir he wanted to exercise his rights to 'retraite'. Galand refused to accept this, and threw money on dungheap, where he left it. Next day, passing woods on way back from

market at Gerbeviller, began to think that money might be lost, and to feel great hatred for Galand. Then man in black called Jolibois appeared and persuaded him to renounce God - section missing here. A few days later appeared to him as he worked in vines, dressed in black robe like a priest, and gave him powder - grey/kill, black/languish. Tried black out on a chicken, which remained ill for a year; finally killed it and gave it to his children to eat, who suffered no harm. Asked if he had not feared results, said poison was in head, which he had cut off, but in any case even had they eaten this no harm would have come to them without consent of himself or his master. This was true in general; powder itself did no harm to those it touched without consent of himself and his master.

When he wanted to cause harm to certain people, devil advised him whether he had power to do this or not. Those over whom he had no power were those who feared and served God in their hearts, commended themselves to God every morning and made sign of cross; latter was not enough 'sy ce n'est avec une bonne devotion et ferme foid envers dieu'.

Admitted killing 2 horses belonging to maire Galand, by putting powder in drinking trough; also animals of Thoussaint Gomay and Nicolas Saulnier, after quarrels they had described. Had made Jean Claude Phelippe's wife ill ('pour quelque envie'), then after 3 months felt pity and begged Jolibois to allow him to heal her, which he did with different kind of powder in a pear. At some stage (missing part of doc) admitted killing Demenge Perrise.

Claimd these were all the maléfices he had committed, although Jolibois had tried to persuade him to greater ones; begged not to be tortured to make him confess more.

Had been taken to sabat a week after seduction; Jolibois carried him on neck, up chimney and through the air. 10 or 12 persons present, who danced without music. Was cooked meat on 'un grand plat bigairé', which vanished when they went to eat it. Most of others were masked, had recognised his daughter Georgeatte, Parisot Goeury, and Didielle, who lived in house of Jean Masson. On other occasions made hail. At end of sabbat masters carried them through air until they were close to village, then let them fall to ground and return home on foot. He had been one of those who caused great hailstorm which did much damage around Lunéville 4 years earlier.

Said that damage by hail could be prevented if bells wre rung in time, before cloud was too close. Last time he had seen master he had told him his daughter was in prison, but he would find way to secure her release and return home. Begged chapter to have pity on his poor wife, who had no property of her own, and 4 small children, of whom oldest was not yet 7, other wise they would have to go begging.

Confirmed confessions next day.

20 March 1598; interrogation

Admitted killing son of Colas Cunin. This was because wife told him Cunin had tried to seduce her on way back from market; pretended to help boy water horses, and put some powder on his leg.

Said that when he wanted to harm someone the devil would appear, and incite him to do this; once he gave consent it was enough to throw powder on someone's clothes, or on an animal. Would die or languish according to what he had decided with his master.

Asked if he had not wanted to escape from the power of the devil, said he had wished this a hundred times, but once 'une pauvre creature' was in his power it

was impossible to be released. Particular prohibition on confessing truth of situation to priest. Told to behave like others at Easter, lest they be accused.

Said that once a witch was in the hands of justice, he had no power to do harm, even if he had powder with him. Begged again for something to be done for wife and children, saying that if he knew this would happen 'il en mourroit plus librement'.

24 March 1598; procureur asks for death sentence

28 March 1598; Change de Nancy approves, subject to final confirmation of earlier confessions

4 April 1598; confirmed his confessions

7 April 1598; sentence carried out