

B 3728; witch 055, Jeanne veuve Valentin Claude Thihard du Void de Belmont

5 January 1591; informations préparatoires

(1) Jean Didier de Vervezelle, 46, 'principal et partie formelle'

Had made himself partie formelle because he had lost many beasts, and because son Jean, aged 16, had died just before Christmas. She was cause of this, because some 10 to 12 years before he had sold two oxen to her late husband on a year's credit, then withdrawn from deal because his wife and father-in-law were against it. She had told him he would repent, and about a year later his father-in-law died (did not know if she was cause), after which he lost two oxen and a cow; could not have caused him loss before this, as he did not have separate household before inheriting. Later she reproached him because he had not bought two other bulls from them as he had been asked to do, and immediately lost some animals, although they were found again. Also suspected her over death of a cow, which fell and injured itself on level ground immediately after he bought it.

A week before Christmas had been told that her daughter Claudatte had stolen 2 hens from widow of Didier Gynatte; when she went to their house to try and recover them they beat her. His son Jean was herdsman at Void de Belmont, and shortly afterwards he went to ask them for 2 gros they owed him for this, only to be refused and blamed for accusing daughter of stealing hens. They then gave him 'belles parolles' and some apples they said were good; he refused these at first, but finally took them. Bit into one after leaving house, and promptly fell down, crying 'O les mauvaises pommes, j'ay mal fait'. Was so cold when guarding animals that he had to light a fire to warm himself, and that evening returned to house of Jacat du Hault, where he normally stayed, and was unable to eat. Was carried home next day unable to speak, and died following day. Witness reckoned all these 'fortunes' had been caused by Jehenne, who was generally reputed a witch.

(2) Vallentin fils Vallentin Gerard Thihar du Void de Belmont, 12

Told of Jean Didier's illness after eating apple.

(3) Claude Jacat Morel de Vervezelle, 50

Some 16 or 17 years earlier Jean Bedel du Hault of Belmont, his brother-in-law, was chosen as tutor for children of his brother Adam, who had married niece of Jehenne's husband Vallentin. They were angry because they had wanted to act, and she told Bedel he would repent and gain little. Soon after he became ill; when witness visited him told him he believed she had bewitched him, was expecting to die soon, and had sent for priest to give him sacraments. Witness remembered that Vallentin owed him some money, and went angrily to house to ask for it; found him and wife threshing in barn. They asked him where he came from and why he was angry, to which he replied he had been to see his brother-in-law, who was very ill and thought himself bewitched, so he needed his money back to fetch a devin from Nancy, 'le Prevost luy avoit dict que comment ledict devin venoit en un villaige et voyant la fumée d'une cheminée il cognoissoit bien s'il y avoit une genaxe ou non'.

They responded by asking him to have patience, and Jehenne said she was sorry she had not yet visited his brother-in-law, and would go, to which he replied that she should, and all the neighbours had already done so. If he did not recover he would use all his property against those who had caused his death; she then said that he would not die, and they asked to postpone payment, to which he agreed on condition they gave him an ox as security. That evening she took the sick man some white roots, urging him to eat them with assurance he would feel better, and after some resistance he did so; witness visited him next morning and was told he felt much better - was indeed healed and lived another 2 or 3 years. When witness asked for payment at end of agreed time they threatened him, and he lost 8 cattle, 2 pigs, and a mare, which he reckoned was her doing.

(4) Collatte femme Claudon Gerard Thihar du Void de Belmont, 32

Her father-in-law was maire for seigneurs of Void, and 2 years earlier Jehenne had a child dead and this created mortmain, which he put up for sale; she and daughter bought it, but were angry because they felt it was too dear. Came into house to complain, using back door and passing animals; father-in-law replied angrily to her and she said they would pay, but within 2 days had a bull dead, and lost 14 cattle in all over next year. In view of reputation for witchcraft believed she was cause. Quarrel previous summer when their animals strayed into her meadow, after which ox fell ill, and they called her to look at it; she said they should make sign of cross, say prayers, and pass clothing of man or woman over it, while having neuvaine said. Next day brought herbs to put around neck and it was cured.

(5) Francoise femme Mengeon Jean Jacat du Void de Belmont, 30

Bad reputation. Some 9 years earlier her son had been herdsman for pigs of village, and was fed in turn by households; did not warn them when it was their turn, and came when they had already had dejeuner. She told him off, but gave him food none the less; at poisle that evening there was talk about way pigs were damaging gardens, and Claudette asked her what they were saying about the porchier. Witness said it was nothing, but he should warn them when it was their turn to feed him. 3 or 4 days later had a sow ill, foaming at the mouth as if rabid; fed it oats which had been blessed before St Humbert at Aultrey, and it recovered after six weeks. Later was lost, and porchier denied having seen it in herd, although he previously agreed he had. Had a quarrel with Jehenne when she refused to sell her some chickens, after which they lost 4 or 5 goats. Day the sow disappeared Jehenne drank water from 'brochie' in their house, and witness forgot to empty rest as she intended; husband drank from it when he returned, and had to remove a hair from his mouth. At same time witness fell ill, having been working near Jehenne and her daughter that day; accused came to visit her and made up fire, but left without saying anything. Later recovered, but was brought to bed of dead girl twins 5 weeks early; Jehenne told her that a woman was 'bien plus malade' when pregnant with a girl than with a boy, and should not say she was bewitched.

(7) Laurence femme Mengeon Colas Jaicat de Belmont, 30

Some 9 or 10 years earlier her previous husband Colas Jacat had quarrelled with her over a path leading to the water which she used, and he had blocked off. A few days later he fell ill, and died after 3 weeks, saying she had given him illness, and 'o le mauvais passage pour moy'. Before this they had 2 cows ill, and she asked Jehenne to look at them, but when she did she said she did not know how to cure them; blamed this and other 'fortunes' on her in view of reputation.

(8) Claudette veuve Jacat Didier Gynatte de Belmont, 40

Strong suspicions she was a witch. Told how Claudatte came asking to buy two chickens, which she refused to sell, then two were stolen, and Jean Didier told her he had seen two like them at house of accused. Went and recognised them, asked for them back, but she refused, saying Claudatte had bought them at Bruyeres. Tried to take one of them, and there was a struggle which ended with Jehenne hitting her on head with wooden bar which closed door.

(9) Gerard Thihar maire du Void de Belmont, 56

Some 2 years earlier had quarrelled with her son Jean, who wanted to have mortmain of a brother killed in the war at too low a price; then told story as before of dispute with her and death of bull, after she and Claudette agreed to pay 10 francs for mortmain. After loss of 14 or 15 other animals consulted a devin at Aultrey, who said 'qu'il y avoit des mauvaises gens proches de luy et que c'estoit de son parentages'; when he said he suspected his cousin's wife devin said it was her, and if she came around house they should chase her away. Before dispute over mortmain whole household had been ill for 10 weeks, and she had been called witch in presence of her late husband.

(10) Claudon fils de precedent, 34

Repeated some of father's story, also wife's account of sick ox which she had treated. When asked to do so had said 'Vous ne me faictes poict de bien, tous les autres me vont querir du bois, synon vous'.

(11) Vallentin Gerard Thihar du Void de Belmont, 50

Occasion 18 years before when she told him his goats were trespassing in her hedge, and one of them died same night. When her husband was alive sold them some grain; asked for payment, and husband said money was in house, so he sent son to collect the 5 francs. She gave it him saying 'Va, va, en mal santé le puisse manger ton pere', and same evening witness became strangely ill, sometimes unable to use limbs, sometimes blind. After 3 months wife had taken him out into fields, where Jehenne came up and said 'O mon bel Vallentin tu as esté bien malade'; next day brought him bowl of bread and milk, which he was reluctant to eat, but finally 'prins courrage et mangea'. Found it good, and then recovered, reckoning she had made him ill. Had been another occasion when he took two of their cows which were trespassing, in order to secure reparation; her husband then came back with one of them which was ill, claiming this had happened in his house so compensation

was due. He replied 'Va meschant gens et genax que vous estez la vache n'a faict qu'entrer et sortir en ma maison Sa faict ta genaxe de femme que luy a donné le mal', and cow later recovered.

(12) Jean Thomas de Domfaing, 50

General reputation, but no personal suspicion, although he had been in dispute with them for over 50 ecus.

(13) Mengeon Jacat Morel de Domfaing, 55

General reputation; he had suffered some 'fortunes', but did not know who was responsible.

(14) Fleurance Mongeolle du Void de Belmont, 40

Had dispute with her 20 years earlier when guarding animals, and became ill; mother had been to see her and he was cured. Around same time accused his sister Fleuratte of letting animals damage her crops; she denied this, and a bull became ill, although it did not die. 2 years earlier had enclosed their millet, leaving hers outside; a bullock died, and his wife lost her milk. She sent a cheese to Jehenne and refused offer of payment, after which milk returned. Suspected of being a witch.

(15) Le maire Michiel Jean Michiel de Belmont, 60

Reputation 12 years.

(16) Laurent Thihar de Belmont, 50

General reputation; he was neighbour and had lost various animals, but did not know reason.

(17) Claudon Gerardin de Belmont, 30

General reputation for 10 years he had been resident.

(18) Adam Ganiel du Void de Belmont, 46

Some 12 years before had quarrel for damage accused and husband alleged had been done in their field; took a pig and held it for 3 days in attempt to get resal of wheat as compensation. Jehenne told his wife he would repent, and later he lost an ox. Later quarrelled with Vallentin over some land, and was told 'qu'il estoit bien hault et qu'il rabasseroit'; a few days later his wife became ill, saying she was bewitched and that she feared Jehenne. She died, and he believed that in view of long reputation accused was responsible.

(19) Nicolas Bresson de Belmont, 50

Some 5 years earlier chased her geese out of his field and injured one; some days later she met him returning from church, told him he had killed one of her geese and would repent. Wife of maire Michiel told her she should not threaten people, and he told her that if he suffered any loss he would teach her not to do so. Had a cow dead 3 or 4 weeks later. Some 3 months later met her and her husband at mill, and she again spoke about geese with threats, but was told off by husband. Another cow became ill 6 months later, and he sent for Jehenne to see if she could cure it, but she said she had seen others like it, and it would die, as it did. 2 bullocks also died within a few days. A year later she passed by his animals carting dung, and an ox died a day later, followed by a bullock 2 days later. 3 or 4 weeks later a cow died, and he saw illness had begun around ears. Around same time a sow became lame, and herdsman was reluctant to explain; finally said that Jehenne had been helping him and had struck it with a stick. Had 2 more bullocks dead some 6 months earlier, and in view of reputation and threats believed her responsible for all these losses.

(20) Jean Michiel de Belmont, 29

Bad reputation; when he had been ill had visited him at request of his wife, assured him he would not die, and sent herbs he had not wanted to use. Had heard that she had threatened him over a florin she had demanded from him.

(21) Dieudonne Gergoyne de Belmont, 50

Some 20 years before threw a stick at her sow which was eating his beans; animal cried loudly and ran off, but this was seen by Jehenne who was doing washing. Told him he would repent before nightfall; had difficulty eating that evening, then went to collect pears high in tree, suddenly felt ill and fell to ground, after which he had to stay in bed for 6 or 7 weeks. About 4 year earlier she and her husband had sold a garden to Nicolas de Champs, but then asked witness to buy it back, after which they would sell him part. Did this, and rented it to them for a time, but then wanted to use it himself, and they were angry. Soon after lost 2 bullocks, but did not know cause; general reputation.

(22) Jacat Andreu Mesnil de Belmont, 40

Had quarrelled with her and husband - they had owed him money, and she still owed a little, but knew of no threats. Had lost numerous animals, although he did not know reason. Had called her witch several times, thinking that in view of reputation she might be responsible, but losses continued. His son Claudon, aged 8, had told him about the apples and illness of Jean Didier.

(23) Nicolas Veucey de Belmont, 40

General reputation. A year earlier his wife had died, and Jehenne asked to buy a pair of her shoes, but he refused on grounds that he wanted them for his

daughter. When latter wore them she became ill, and remained so as long as she wore them.

(24) Pierrel des Mallades de Belmont, 25

General reputation.

(8 January 1591)

(25) Mathieu Jacat Morel de Vervezelle, 60

Some 6 or 7 years before she and her husband were looking at his cattle, particularly 2 young bulls, and asked children guarding them whose they were. A few days later asked to buy them, but he refused, saying he intended to use them for ploughing; husband reiterated request when they met in Bruyeres, he asked him not to raise matter again, and next day one of the animals died. Later met accused on way to Bruyeres, who said she was told he was angry with her and thought she had killed his bull, to which he replied 'On le dict, je le dis encor', but she said he wronged her. General reputation.

(12 January 1591)

(26) Demenge Grand Didier de Laveline, 27

Some 13 years before her daughter Jehennon had been in his service, and had gone back home, but returned after he had dispute with accused, and remained for another year. 6 weeks after quarrel his wife became ill after giving birth, and remained so for a long time; when he met Jehenne at market in Bruyeres she asked whether wife was better, and when he said no told him she would recover, as she finally did. Wife strongly suspected she had made her ill.

(27) Claudel Remy du Void de Belmont, 36

Day before her arrest she asked him what was being said about her, after seeing several people together; he told her they wanted to take her for a witch, and named several, to which she replied that Dieudonné Gergoyne and his wife were 'peult estre aussy genax ou plus qu'elle'. Long reputation.

(28) Mengeon Colas Jacat de Neusne demeurant a Belmont, 32

Some 2 years earlier had been carting hay for her when he had trouble with cart, and took it back to his house. 3 days later 'le mal luy print en ung pied', and he complained to neighbours. Claudon de Vervezelle told him she had bewitched him for failing to take her hay to her, and others told him it came from la Rebaynne, which was name for her. Later met her daughter-in-law Claudynne, and told her that if Jehenne did not heal him he would have her arrested and burned; next day, a Sunday, accused came to his house to look at foot, saying that if he had showed her before she 'l'eut signé', after which he recovered. Earlier he had quarrel with her son

Didier, after which his small daughter, who had passed near her as she was washing, became ill for 3 years. Sent to Bel Bernard, and several times called Jehenne witch because he suspected her; finally she told him child would recover, as she did.

(29) Amprolle fille Mengel Jacquel Hellebix du Void de Belmont, 20

Some 13 years earlier she had quarrel with late father of witness, over apple tree on boundary of their properties, and told him he would repent. Then had an ox which became as if rabid, and had to be killed and buried. General reputation.

(30) Claudatte fille feu Jean Parmentier de Belmont, 16

In week before Christmas had been helping Jean fils Jean Didier to herd sheep, and he told her about apples and his illness; later saw him die in his father's house.

(31) Annel fille Didier Gynatte de Belmont, 9

Previous winter Jehenne's daughter Claudatte offered her 3 sols to bring her 2 of her mother's hens, and Jehenne later did give her 2 sols at Bruyeres, when Claudatte again told her to bring them a hen.

7 January 1591; interrogation

Recorded that she had been arrested on 2 January. She said she was about 60, and lived by cultivating land and making cloth. Was daughter of Didier Estienne le Maire of the ban d'Estinay and his wife Jehennon. Had married Valentin Claude Thihar of Void de Belmont some 30 years before, and he had been dead 3 years. Children still alive were son Jean, married to Claudine le Gentilhomme of Creu vers Nancy, and three daughters, Claudatte who was unmarried, and Toussainte and Jehennon, married at la Houltraye. Had always been a good catholic; knew she had been arrested as witch on accusation by Jean Didier.

Said Jean fils Jean Didier had never asked her for 2 gros, which she did not owe him; might have been given apples on day when it was her turn to feed him. Knew he was dead because she had heard bells, but what they were saying was 'catrolbelles'. Denied having known that Jean Bedel was ill, or having taken roots to him. Had been in house of Claudio Gerard Thihar to get keys of mill; knew nothing of illness if animals, and many others had lost them. Recited prayer she had used to cure ox (printed in Delcambre, p. 229).

(8 January 1591) Asked again about 3 apples, said she did not remeber giving them, but 2 guards testified that when taking her food that day she had admitted giving them. She denied series of other charges. Said that she had refused to give Claudette Gynatte hens because she had bought them from her daughter for 3 sols. Otherwise denied virtually everything that was suggested, including most incidental details, all claims of quarrels.

12 January 1591; confrontations

Now admitted that she had taken roots - which were dried ones from her garden - to Jean Bedel. Discussing cure of ox, said she had used 'une herbe grande blanche' around its neck for trouble with eyes, which she had learned from la Picquatte of Belmont; Claudon Gerard Thihar's wife objected she had told her remedy was taught her by apothecaries, to which she said that la Picquatte had also told her about it, and use of clothing to fan sick animals. Also admitted taking Valentin Gerard Thihar a bowl of bread and milk; after this remained 'longtemps pensive, ne voullans dire aultre chose'. Also agreed that wife of Fleurance Mongeolle had taken her a cheese and told her she had lost her milk; had taken her to see 'la fille Jobert', who had had same trouble.

Agreed to quarrels with Adam Ganiel, and to having taken dried raisins to his first wife during her illness. He added that when present wife was ill others suggested Jehenne was cause, and she decided to offer candles in church. One evening met Jehenne on her way, who was digging field for oats, and told her it was too late, she should return home and she would recover; also offered her dried pears, which she refused. She agreed to this statement, except that she had not said she would recover. Also agreed to exchange with Nicolas Bresson and wife of maire Michiel on way from church. Over death of his animals, said she herself had lost many. He added that when he had a bad leg she advised sending a pilgrim to St Anthoine, which he did and recovered completely.

Agreed to various other points of detail, and to deposition of Claudel Remy. Also agreed to Mengeon Jacat's account of trouble with his foot, but had not said that his daughter would recover.

#### 12 January 1591; interrogation

After some questioning she began to confess. Her master's name was Firtonton, and she had first met him when looking for a horse one evening, when he gave her money which proved to be nothing when she got home. Met him again another evening, when she renounced God and declared faith in her new master, and he promised to make her rich, but money again deceptive. Now confessed she had put white powder on apples she gave to Jean fils Jean Didier, knowing it would make him ill and might kill him - did this because he accused her over the hens. Also confessed to making hail on last St James' day.

Had made Vallentin Gerard Thihar ill by touching clothes after son asked for money, then cured him by putting white sugar given her by her master in milk she took him. Same techniques used in case of Jean Bedel. Had made ox belonging to maire du Void ill before she cured it, using powder.

#### 13 January 1591; interrogation

Now denied business with apples, but when reproached with previous confessions became confused, contradicting herself, sometimes confessing, sometimes denying. Finally said she had been seduced 5 years earlier. Repeated story of making hail; master had carried her and others she did not know to rock, saying they were making hail for the plain; afterwards was 'perdue, bien mouillée et tourmentée et mallade'. Had only been to sabbat once, by day, where there were

about 20 others, men and women, and only roasted meat to eat, which she did not try. Confirmed earlier confessions, then said she had been several times to sabbat. Danced while someone played 'la bombarde', and Mre Persin was in charge, assisted by other devils Jolly and Firtousy - latter was cook. Master always gave her powder. Did not know others present, but some were well dressed, and these women had 'corroyes d'argent'.

28 January 1591; procureur general des Vosges asks that she be executed by burning.

30 January 1591; Change de Nancy approves

3 February 1591; interrogation

Called on to confirm previous confessions, she now denied them. Recorded as having laughed sometimes as she did so, saying 'qu'on luy avoit faict dire beaucoups de choses, et qu'elle n'estoit souvenante les avoir dict'.

5 February 1591; interrogation

Renewed denials, sometimes saying she had not made previous confessions, sometimes saying she could not remember.

7 February 1591; interrogation

Visited at her request by prévôt, he asked her about her previous confessions. Went on knees with hands together, saying it was true she had made them, and she begged mercy of God, prince and justice, 'mais que scavoit esté a l'occasion qu'elle estoit sy inthimidée qu'elle ne scavoit ce qu'elle disoit et que sy on luy eut demandé encores d'autres choses qu'elle l'euct dict'.

9 February 1591; P.G. asks for question extraordinaire

11 February 1591; Change de Nancy approves

21 February 1591; interrogation under torture

Would not make any admissions, so was racked. After first asking to be released so that she could tell truth, repeated that she was innocent. Racked again, and after long silence began to confess; repeated essential of previous statements.

22 February 1591; interrogation

Now made more admissions, including killing her own son Didier by putting powder in soup, because he wanted to put her out of the house. Said she had been given grease to put on broomhandle when she wanted to go to sabbat; first time she went her master had intercourse with her (had not previously confessed to any sexual link). When she was moved to another prison he had visited her in form of a cat and beaten her because she had confessed.

When prévôt visited her to secure futher confirmation on 23 February found her 'comme transsyé', and could get no response from her.

24 February 1591; P.G. (Maimbourg) asks again for execution, with branding in four places on arms, and breasts to be cut off, before burning, as punishment for having killed her own son 'contre tous droictz de nature'.

26 February 1591; Change de Nancy approves death by burning alive, without mention of other refinements

2 March 1591; formal sentence of death, including extras, passed and carried out at Bruyères

Costs of trial came to 65 francs 10 gros