

Witch 209; B 8689 no 1, Chrétien Pierre, Moriviller

13 December 1601; informations préparatoires against Chrestien Pierre of Moriviller. Denounced by his mother, burned previous summer, and by Jean Gerard of Franconville, convicted of witchcraft. Arrested at Franconville as he was trying to flee and take away his possessions; local judges had begun trial, but then handed him over to officials of Chapter of St. Dié, whose subject he was.

(1) Didier Claude Ferry de Moriviller, c. 36

Had heard rumour for several years that Chrestien was a witch, and that he should be burned with his mother. Had no personal suspicion against him, except that at previous Whitsun they and others had been on a pilgrimage to St. Claude; Chrestien started to speak of witches, and asked witness if he had any suspicion against him. He replied that he did not, but had suspected his mother; had not been aware of any misfortune following this.

(2) Adrian Jacot de Moriviller, c. 60

About a fortnight before had gone to Chrestien's barn some 2 hours before dawn to thresh; dog had started to make continuous howling, and a strange blue light or fire was visible through house and barn. These phenomena ceased about 15 minutes later when Chrestien came into the barn. Was commonly reputed a witch, notably since mother's execution.

(3) George Rosselat de Moriviller, c. 34

Told of quarrel and threats some 2 years earlier arising from sharing of hay between himself and accused. Shortly afterwards a fine horse he was riding, worth at least 100 francs, mysteriously broke its leg on level ground and had to be killed. Believed Chrestien to have been responsible; reputed a witch, notably since mother's execution.

(4) Didier Galland de Moriviller, c. 40

Reputation some 2 years, and much increased since mother's death. Had nothing to accuse him of personally, but some 4 weeks before, on way back from Lunéville, had met Nicolas de Velacourt from Franconville, who told him he had just been to Nancy to 'solliciter le proces' of a suspected witch of Franconville. The executioner, Mme Poiresson, told him that Chrestien had been to see him at Nancy previous summer, when his mother had been on trial; had given him six silver francs, with promise of more, so that he should 'tienne la bonne main' that if his mother accused him she should discharge him before her death.

(5) Lienard Jean Lienard échevin de Moriviller, c. 40

Over previous year had several disputes with Chrestien and his late mother over some fruit trees behind their house, to which they both had rights; Chrestien refused to sell him his share, and bore him 'grande inimitié' on this account. Around last Easter, when his wife had just had a baby, Crestien came to house asking to see details of a 'traicté' they had made together, as commis appointed for purpose.

Approached his wife, who was setting by fire holding baby, and gave her an 'espadin'; she tried to refuse, but he insisted. Child became ill same hour, so thin it was skin and bones, resembling 'plus une anatomie que ung enfant vivant'; although it was eating normally, it continued in this state 10-12 weeks, and no remedy could be found. 'En fin il commenca a dire haultement qu'on luy ensorcelloit son enfant et des bestials, Mais sy l'on ny mestoit remede et guerison, il en feroit prendre et brusler, et desquelz propos ledit Chrestien en fut assez adverty' - 2 days later child recovered. Believed illness had been given by accused, who was long reputed a witch. Around last St. Remy a horse had become nearly blind, and was still not cured; believed that this was also his doing, in vengeance for earlier disputes - had also sometimes blamed witness for his mother's death.

(6) Nicolas Thomas, currently servant in house of Pierre Chrestien, father of accused, c. 18

Had been living in house since previous Christmas, but had seen nothing to suggest that Chrestien was a witch. Asked about flight of accused, said that he had certainly heard of accusation by Jean Gerard at Franconville, and had left house a fortnight before next Monday. Last Saturday, day of Notre Dame, had come into house from back while Mass was being celebrated, and had remained hidden there that day, leaving at night.

Asked whether he had helped to carry off goods, was silent for long time, then agreed that last Monday had taken a cart of grain to market of Lunéville, which they had discharged at house of someone he didn't know. Had left house two hours after dark, and returned around midnight; had been helped by accused's cousin Chrestien. Judges objected that gates of Lunéville would have been closed, and certainly not opened without better reason; witness admitted that he had lied, and that grain had been taken to village of Mesnil, but would say no more.

(7) Jean Gerardat, c. 36

Reputation for some time, but no personal suspicion.

(8) Jean Grand Jean, c. 40

Reputation some 18 months; no personal suspicion, although he had lost some animals.

(9) Jean Huillier de Moriviller, c. 50

A few days after last St. Remy, 'luy et aultres bourgeois de Moriviller devisioient des sorciers qui font tant de maulx jurnellement et sur ce le depositant prenans la parole ramena en jeu ledit Chrestien prevenu du bruict qu'il avoit d'estre sorcier, et que l'apparence en estoit bien grande veu que sa propre mere l'avoit accusé de ce crime avec aultres propos.' Accused had been Informed of this, and two days later one of his oxen was wounded in stomach when with common herd, and he had to sell it cheaply. Believed this had been witchcraft by Chrestien, and nearly spoke to him about it when they met, but then desisted for fear of worse misfortunes.

(10) Barbon femme Lienard Jean Lienard, c. 30

Repeated husband's story almost precisely, adding that Chrestien had been told of

threat against witches by his mother.

(11) Le maire Nicolas George de Moriviller, c. 45

Reputation since mother's death; no personal suspicion. Some 12 years before he and accused's father had been tithe collectors, and had placed 27 resals of wheat in latter's barn. Later 7 of them were missing, and he had always suspected Chrestien, but as father was his friend had taken no action, and borne his share of the loss - about 60 francs.

(12) Thienon Brouvellant de Moriviller, c. 50

Around last St. Remy had taken lease of small plot of land belonging to his brother-in-law of le Mont, but Chrestien, who had previously leased it, was furious, and persuaded brother-in-law to change mind and leave it to him. Was supposed tp pay him a franc for work already done, but would not give more than 6 gros. A few days later his son aged 8 became ill, saying he felt something in his stomach; died within 6 days after refusing all food. Believed this to have been witchcraft by accused; several persons had told him he had been very rash to seek lease, in view of Chrestien's reputation.

(13) Jean Bergier serviteur a Nicolas Brouvellart, c. 22

Last Eastertime he had taken his master's beasts across a field of oats belonging to accused on way to pasture, since crop was hardly showing. Was seen, although he could not tell what accused had said, and at once a sheep became sick; he had difficulty getting it back home, and it died 2 days later as if rabid. Believed this had been witchcraft by Chrestien, not least because of his reputation.

(14) Le maire Jean Chadat de Moriviller, c. 40

A year before last August one of his pigs became sick, after being behind Chrestien's house, and had to be killed after 6 weeks. Everyone judged it to be bewitched, and he did not know whom to suspect, other than Chrestien and his mother.

(15) Jean Masson de Moriviller, c. 36

Told of pilgrimage to St. Claude at last Assumptiontide. After some days, when Chrestien had been lagging behind, witness had argument with him, Chrestien asking them to slow down, witness saying that everyone must keep up. At same hour witness suddenly became weak, and had greatest difficulty in finishing his journey. Believed this had been witchcraft by accused, both on account of argument and his great reputation.

(16) Colas Thoussaint de Gerbeviller, c. 50

Reputation only.

(17) Jean Grand Jean, c. 28

Around last St. George he had been at market of Gerberviller, when the Prevost

told him he had some ‘cordes appartenantes audit Chrestien’, and they should go and drink some wine over them. Chrestien was angry at this, and followed him on way back, murmuring something he could not hear between his teeth. Fell off horse as they were passing through woods, and had always thought this was accused’s doing.

(18) Le maire Nicolas Philippe, demeurant a la moictresse de Faviere, c. 40

At last St. George had left Moriviller to take on lease of present property, but had left behind 3 cattle for which there was inadequate fodder. Chreatien repeatedly asked to buy them, but witness refused, saying he had no need to sell them. Chrestien was angry, and within a few days two of them died in a strange manner, witness had imputed this to his witchcraft, in view also of his reputation.

15 December 1601; interrogation

Said he was Chrestien Pierre, laboureur and native of Moriviller, aged about 32. Had always lived with parents working for them. Had been married some 13 years to Alison, daughter of late maire Jean Mengin of Beranville; had two daughters living.

Asked why he had tried to flee, he hesitated a long time, then said he had intended to go and live elsewhere. This had been because his mother accused him of ‘cette pauvreté des sortilleges’.

Asked if he had feared he would be tried, agreed, and added ‘et prevoyant que sur telle accusation ung chacun fuyroit sa conversation, sa resolution estoit avant qu'il fut esté quinze jours (s'il ne fut esté apprehendé) de vendre tout son bien à demeure claire, et se rendre en quelque religion si on luy eut voulu recepvoir.’

Judges pointed out that his mother had been executed previous summer, so that there must be another cause for his recent decision. Agreed that he had been informed by relatives of new accusation by Jean Gerard. He had been keeping out of the way, in one place or another, waiting to see if Gerard would stick to the accusation at his execution. If he did so his intention was to leave duchy and finish his days elsewhere.

Denied being a witch, and denied most allegations of quarrels, also of knowing of some misfortunes imputed to him. Agreed that he had been to see Mre Poiesson at Nancy, on advice of his brother-in-law le maire Claudon de Serainville and others, and that they were thus the cause of his death. Had given executioner 8 francs, and promised him more if he could secure his mother's return as ‘femme de bien’, but denied asking that his own name be cleared. Did agree that he had a dispute with Thienon Brouvellant over lease of field, because latter had been trying to cut short his existing lease, but denied doing him any harm.

After some difficulty, agreed that he had deposited his grain with his brother-in-law Claudon Gerard at Serainville, and left his horse at the mill of Monthagne. Had been on way to get it and sell it when he was arrested near Franconville by the sergent of the chapter.

15 December 1601; confrontations

Continued denials; no additions to evidence, or serious objections to witnesses.

15 December 1601; procureur d'office asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

18 December 1601; Change de Nancy agrees that he should be shown instruments of torture, but says that these should only be applied if he shows signs of being ready to enter into confession.

28 December 1601; interrogation and confession

Shown apparatus of torture. Began by saying he was 'homme de bien'; judges then said that if he did not tell the truth they would have to proceed to torture, which he could only avoid by confessing. He then asked them several times 'sy confessant estre sorcier, il dampne la poinct son ame'. They replied very fairly that he had sworn to tell the truth 'sur le peril et dampnation de son ame', so that he would be damned if he confessed to being a witch when he was not, or if he denied it when he was (put in this order). Was some time before replying, uttering loud sighs and beating his breast with his fist; then said he had no memory of being tempted by the Devil, 'et fault que as feue mere en soit esté cause'.

Executioner then brought in, and he was told he would be tortured. Again made reply that if he had been tempted it was in his youth, he could not remember well, and his mother had been responsible. Judges ordered thumbscrews to be applied, but not tightened; at this he begged that they should not torture him, and offered to make a full confession.

Said that some 17 or 18 years before his mother had started asking him to accompany her to the sabbat, claiming that she had given him to the devil in his infancy. Had resisted her efforts for some 6 years, but about a year after his marriage was persuaded that he should obey his mother, and that he should not go against the promise she had made on his behalf. Devil immediately appeared, caused him to renounce God, and gave him powder. Suggested that he should in particular use it against Colas George, who had accused him of stealing 7 resals of wheat. He and his mother then carried through air to a place in the woods where they met Jean Pelisson of Moriviller (already executed), Jean Varrey of the same (a fugitive several years earlier), and Jean Rouyer of Franconville (already executed). Planned to make hail, but they were too few, and he did not want to consent.

At next visit to sabbat, 3 weeks later, also saw Colas George, Jean Pelisson's wife, Jean l'Huillier of Moriviller, le maire Jean Chadat and le maire Simon Saulnier, and Claudatte wife of Thoussaint Gomay, all of Moriviller, as well as those mentioned before. Were many others he did not recognise. Said that having seen Colas George, and realised he was a witch too, he no longer felt inclined to use powder against him.

Admitted trying powder on his own foal. Some 3 years earlier, angry at being made to pay for damage caused by horses from village herd, which he was then taking his turn to guard, he had killed a cow belonging to Thoussaint Gomay. Then asked to be allowed to resume confessions next day.

29 December 1601; confessions

Confirmed earlier confessions. Said that some 5 years earlier he had consented that his master should kill Poiresson Grand Jean, in anger that the latter had insisted he pay a fine for damage caused by his horse straying, when others whose horses had done more damage were let off. His master had incited him to take vengeance, suggesting also that the victim had lived long enough. Also confessed to having killed a cow belonging to Colas George, because of the accusation of theft, although George had not accused him of this. Also agreed that he had permitted his master to kill two of the three cattle which Nicolas Philippe had refused to sell him.

Admitted that on the pilgrimage previous Whitsun he had been angry with Jean Masson, who had vaunted that he was among the leaders, and had mocked Chrestien for lagging behind when he was having difficulty walking. Had used powder to make him ill, so that he had to bear cost of hiring horses in order to complete journey; used healing powder just as they were returning to village, with immediate effect.

Asked about a number of the other accusations against him, denied them. Said that there was no-one in the village he wished better than George Rosselat, and that he had not caused his horse's misfortune.

Said he had been to sabbat many times. Added to list of those he had seen there Claudon Chadat, and Nicolas Philippe. At this point judges warned him not to make false accusations, pointing out that he had admitted hostility to Colas George and Claudon Chadat, notably former. He stuck to his claims. Said that apart from dancing, they had discussed damaging crops, and that he and Jean Chadat had never consented to this, but had left early. They had danced round a cauldron, with Claudon Chadat as cook, but he had never eaten contents.

Asked 's'il ne s'a jamais confessé a son curé comme il estoit ainsi tenté et abusé du diable': 'Dit que non et n'en avoit garde estimant que dirant a son curé qu'il estoit pescheur, et se confessoit de tous les péchés qu'il avoit commis cela suffisait, sans autrement particulariser quelz estoient ses péchés.' Asked if his father had known anything of his activities, said he had not, and if his master had come to fetch him when he was working with his father he had refused to go.

Gave final confirmation of all his accusations.

29 December 1601; procureur d'office for canons of St. Dié asks for death sentence.

2 January 1602; Change de Nancy agrees.