

B 4077 no 3 Witch 071, Chesnon la Triffatte

9 August 1596; informations préparatoires against Chesnon named la Triffatte, of Charmes, accused by la Mallebarbe up to time of execution, and generally suspected.

(1) Marguerite Nicolas Cuyr vouve Jacques de Cuyr de Charmes, 70

Had long believed her a witch; was in habit of undertaking 'neufiesmes' on behalf of sick children, who recovered as soon as she did so. About 10 years before had been told by la Badellatte (now dead) of incident when a toad had been making a frightful noise in house she shared with accused; Triffatte had made some incantations, and toad had emerged and fallen dead. Also told of occasion some 7 years before when a cat had mysteriously appeared at poisle of Jean Poiffroy, between 10 and 11 at night, and accused seemed angry when someone claimed to have seen it. Subsequently Marguerite Merciere, near whom cat passed, fell ill; believed that Triffatte had given her sickness, after occasion when Marguerite had agreed to cook millet for a group of women. Triffatte had brought none, and therefore received none - this had been complained of by her 'en pleine poisle'. When Marguerite asked witness to help her with 'fomentations et estubes', Triffatte was angry, saying that she was her relative, and why had she not been asked. When she did undertake cure, victim recovered, believing afterwards that Triffatte had given and taken away sickness. Said that her mother before her had been a healer, and had been employed as 'une devineresse'; Triffatte had a book left by her mother which she would show to no-one. Also told of occasion at poisle when it was said that Nicaise Bordon's wife was at point of death; Triffatte said it was not yet time, and she had not 'encor assez enduré'. Jacquat Corriere told her she had said enough to get herself burned.

(2) Marguerite femme de Thierat Fournier boucher de Charmes, 30

Some 20 years before Triffatte had asked for a place in their poisle, which had been refused by her mother Catherine Pouffroy because of her bad reputation as witch and prostitute. Had been angry, and witness suspected she had then caused her mother's death. During illness accused had been offering to make neufiesme and pilgrimage on her behalf, but mother said she did not want to be cured by a prostitute. Finally agreed when in extremis, but was too late; victim had already received sacraments, 'et que l'opinion du vulgaire est que cela estant le remede n'a plus de force'. Some 10 or 12 days earlier her child had been ill, and she was afraid it had received 'quelque mauvais regard' from accused. At first she refused to make neufiesme, but then agreed to do so with Marguerite Colas Cuyr; child recovered while they were still on way to chapel. Also told of cat at poisle and sickness of Marguerite Mercier.

(3) Dieudonne Jean, mre boulenger de Charmes, c. 57

Said he had always believed she was a witch; had lost numerous animals, and had called her witch, telling her she could take him to court if she liked. Believed she had killed his son, after finding him in her porch and making hostile remarks to him; soon afterwards strange dog had followed cart driven by boy and his mother. Son later died 'sec comme un bois', either from fright or 'mal donné'. She had told him about book her mother had left her, and that she had been born on a Good Friday.

She had something from his house almost every day, for fear she might do them some harm. Had been seen going out of house around 11 at night on several occasions.

(4) Jennon femme de Dieudonné Jean, 50+

Told of son's death after incident with dog; he had often quarrelled with Triffette, who was 'une rusée larronnesse' and often stole their wood.

(5) Mongeatte veuve de Aulbry Jean Aulbry de Charmes, 54

Told of an incident 7 years earlier, when she had been nourrice of child of cleric juré. During wedding festivities Triffatte had looked at baby in cot, and said 'Jesus voila un bel enfant'; later witness was worried it was sleeping so long, and called her mistress. Found face all black and swollen, and another servant going out to look for 'escarlatte' said in street 'qu'il falloit brusler des sorcieres'; accused got up off bench on which she was sitting, and child promptly recovered. After this cleric juré had forbidden them to let her in the house.

(6) Claudon femme à Jean de Besange de Charmes, c. 30

Some 10 or 12 days before had been talking with neighbour about accusation against Triffatte, and had been overheard by her granddaughter. Triffatte had later come to house and upbraided her; when husband came in he argued with her and said that if she were a witch he would give a faggot to burn her. Fell ill soon after she had left, and was so for 8 days, when on seeing her in garden he told her he was very ill - she told him he would soon recover, and he did.

(7) Jean Morel serrurier de Charmes, c. 30

Told how some 9 months earlier his late wife had seen accused leaving house at about 11 at night.

(8) George gros Jean drappier à Charmes, 58

Believed his late wife Anne had died by witchcraft, but didn't know who was responsible. She had had a great quarrel with accused, and called her witch a dozen times. Had also seen accused measure a 'liziere' superstitiously to identify an illness.

(9) Jannon femme de George Gouvernat le jeune de Charmes, c. 27

Told how Triffatte had been called in by her mother-in-law to see one of her children who was very ill; had made various offerings, after which the child had recovered. Thought she was not 'trop bonne'.

(10) Mongeatte femme de Jean Jacquat hostelain à Charmes, 40

Said she always gave Triffatte what she asked for, for fear of harm. 4 years earlier her small daughter had died from what was generally thought to be witchcraft, wasting away despite eating normally, but did not know who had caused this.

(11) Idatte femme de Jean Bourcy de Charmes, c. 24

Had advised offerings on behalf of her sick child.

(12) Mongatte femme de Cuevrin Dieudonne, de Charmes, c. 40

Told how her daughter had been cured when on point of death after visit from accused.

(13) Cuevrin Dieudonne de Charmes, c. 45

Had never seen any evil in accused, who was his neighbour.

12 August 1596; interrogation

Said she was about 79, native of Charmes where she had always lived. Father had been Nicolas Ferry of Bralleville, cousturier, and mother Adeline Petit Maire of Charmes. Had lived with mother until marriage. Had three husbands; Linard Grand Didier, Jean Thierat, Damine Brulland, last of whom had died 23 years earlier. Admitted that after death of second husband she had been a prostitute, preferring this to stealing. More recently had lived on charity. Agreed that she had been accused by la Mallebarbe.

Said she cured illnesses by grace of God; had a book left her by her mother, who 'se mesloit de mediciner ainsy les malades'. Described how she identified illnesses by technique of naming saints and folding 'liziere de drap', then measuring arm. When saint whose illness it was had been identified, prayers, offerings, and pilgrimages could be made.

Agreed that she had been born on Good Friday, as her mother had before her; claimed that those born on this day were specially gifted for curing illnesses. Claimed that la Mallebarbe had been hostile towards her because she served God so well. Prevot objected to her that earlier in the prison she had made a different claim, that she had refused to take a sack of clothes to cheat the heirs of Mallebarbe's moribund husband. Said that both were true.

Said that Jean Regal had told her of accusation by Mallebarbe, and that if she were a witch she should flee, otherwise trust in God; he was not a relative, but had been friend of husband at school.

14 August 1596; interrogation

Prévôt heard from sergeant that accused was ready to confess, and came to hear her. Said that when she had decided the devil had appeared, torn off her chains and beaten her - sergeant apparently said he had found her in this state. Seduction had been 12 years before, when she had been gathering pears, and had to climb down from tree because of high wind; mre Percy offered to make her rich. Had wanted to withdraw from service when she saw herself cheated, but he had beaten her whenever she refused his orders. First malefice had been about a year later, when she used powder on a boy who was impertinent to her - didn't know effect.

Said that at sabbat banquet 'n'estoit compose' que de charognes comme de cuise de chevaux et de beste morte que le diable apportoit et qu'il n'y avoit pain ne vin, que Lucifer voiant quelques desdaigneuses qui ne vouloit point manger de telles charognes disoit qu'elles estoient encore bien heureuse et que c'estoient viandes des plus delicates et des plus cheres qu'il avoit peu trouver.'

16 August 1596; interrogation

Asked about further malefices, said that she had used powder on a soldier who tried to rape her some 8 years before; he had then left her alone, but did not know result of this. Next year her master told her to kill children in fields, but she did not do so because when she approached two who were gathering pears they were friendly, and one shared his bread and cheese with her. On leaving she did use powder on a horse, which fell down.

Six years earlier she had killed Claudette wife of Jean Marchal, who had been rude to her when they were both young. No more malefices, but 3 weeks before her master had told her to kill the receveur, or daughters of Petit Pain or Tailleur - she had not done this because they all normally gave her alms.

Had often been to sabbat, and at last one some 2 months earlier the rich who had grain to sell had wanted to send hail against crops, but poor had prevented them - this had been occasion when la Mallebarbe had been kicked an enormous distance by the devil.

Produced enormous list of accomplices; la Romaine, Jean de Socourt and his wife Claudon, the wife of Poirat Gallemange de Charmes, Annon wife of Demenge Chenrey, Hellenix widow of Claude Tarrillon, Catherine Rossel de Florement, Catherine wife of Jacquat Caillet, le marechal de Chamagne, Chesnon veuve de Pieron Thierat, Barbon Marlier veuve de Nicolas Sellier, and Jacquemin Mongin. She was afraid that they would come and beat her in prison, and they intended to kill the principal people in the town, notably those of justice and some of Nancy she did not know, because of the heavy tailles imposed.

After telling of conversation between herself and la Romaine, was confronted with latter, and accused her of various malefices - she replied that she lied.

Said she had killed toad with herbs, as she had not been a witch then, and she had never done harm to Marguerite Merciere or her family.

17 August 1596; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions.

21 August 1596; PG des Vosges asks for question extraordinaire to obtain more complete confessions.

23 August 1596; Change de Nancy agrees, but torture to be very moderate in view of her age and health.

26 August 1596; interrogation with torture

Confirmed all her accusations against accomplices, and added list of further malefices against people and animals - said she had killed 40 animals at Charmes. Some of these because people spoke ill of her, others when she was refused alms. When she used her 'liziere' mre Percy was usually there, unseen by others present, to tell her what to say. Finally said that devil feared children, and when she wanted to avoid him she kept company with them - was often beaten afterwards. Was finally placed on rack, but not drawn because of age.

27 August 1596; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions.

30 August 1596; PG des Vosges asks for death sentence

31 August 1596; Change de Nancy agrees

3 September 1596; sentence carried out