

B 3327 no 4; Witch 040, Nicolas Raimbault de Reillon

1 April 1604; informations préparatoires

(1) Dieudegnon Claude de Reillon, 36

Told how some 4 years before Raimbault's son Noel had borrowed one of his horses to round up their own; had somehow managed to blind it in one eye. Going to house to remonstrate, had violent dispute with Raimbault's wife, at the end of which he smacked her face. Followed by sharp words with accused, who told him it would be 'un cher coup' and that 'il s'en donroit bien tôt de garde.' A year or so later lost a horse worth 15 ecus, and a young cow - blamed the accused, because of quarrel and evil reputation.

(2) Jean Dieudon de Reillon, c. 36

Reputation more than 20 years. Some three years before had hired Raimbault's daughter Barbelline as servant; at end of service at next St. Martin accused asked him to buy her a new pair of shoes. Refusal led to quarrel, and Raimbault struck him - but denied it when they got out into street and he called on bystanders to witness incident. Then said 'que se seroient chers souliers pour luy et qu'il les payeroit bien cher.' Next year four of his horses died suddenly within six-month period.

(3) Nicolas Hachon de Reillon, c. 50

Reputation more than 20 years. Around that time he suspected accused of stealing some pears; this led to a court case. Shortly afterwards his wife fell mortally ill. During illness accused - their neighbour - disturbed her with loud singing, and continued this despite request via his wife that he stop.

(4) Nicolas Mariatte le jeune de Reillon, c. 50

Reputation more than 20 years. Some 8 years earlier, accused had wanted him to hire one of his sons as servant, but he had refused, and hired when he passed witness and his wife who were on way back from reaping. Shortly afterwards set out with cart to collect some 'lin', and was eating piece of bread; suddenly lost appetite as he passed place where they had encountered accused. This was followed by a serious illness - couldn't eat for 5 days, ill for 15.

(5) Claudatte femme Aulbry Austett de Reillon, c. 30

Reputation 4-5 years. Some three years before Raimbault's son, in service of one Vaultrin, had let master's horses stray into oats of her father, Didier Hachon. He had sought reparation, but accused said he could pay rather than Vaultrin - then failed to do so, and her father blamed him for death of a horse 2 or 3 days later.

(6) Urbain Jean Colin de Reillon, c. 32

Reputation 6 years - since he had married and come to village. Some 4 - 6 years before Raimbault had lost keeping of 'bestes a cornes' to Waltin of Blesmerey, when witness's father-in-law Jean Quirien was 'Imballé'. Same year he had a cow ill, and called Raimbault in to heal it, as an expert in such animals - he failed to do so, although he did cure another cow belonging to brother-in-law Quirien Marchal, which had gone blind. Same year witness's brother Claudon was hired by curé to thresh for him - Raimbault was angry because he had previously done this, and told him 'qu'il luy ostoit son pain.' Next day, jumping down on some oats, brother broke his leg. Also believed both Demenge Jabellot and Waltin to have become ill after ousting accused from keeping troupeau - latter had died.

(7) George Guirien de Reillon, 30

Long reputation. Some 2 or 3 years before had lost 2 cows and a horse, and blamed Raimbault - although no quarrel, only 'pour son mauvais bruict'.

(8) Chrestienne femme a Nicolas Hachon de Reillon, c. 40

18 years before her late aunt Claudatte had told her that the accused was a witch - believed this the more because Claudatte was herself suspected. As a result 'cy donna telle apprehension qu'elle craindoit tousjours ledit prevenu, et taschoit de l'entretenir et ne le point fascher craindant d'en recevoir incommodité'.

(9) Dieudonné Marchal de Reillon, c. 60

Long reputation. Some 15 or 16 years before, the soldiers billeted on village had broken witness's oven, and Raimbault offered him some 'pots' from one of his own to remake it, on understanding that he would return the service when necessary. Some 3 or 4 years later asked him for 5 dozen pots, whereas he had only provided 18 himself; refusal was followed by quarrel. Shortly after lost two horses.

(10) Jehenne femme Jean Dieudegnon de Reillon, c. 34

Long reputation. Repeated husband's story of quarrel over provision of shoes for accused's daughter.

(11) Claudon Crolbesnier de Reillon, c. 40

Long reputation. Had quarrelled with him 9 years before, and lost a cow 'et ne scavoit sy cela procedoit de son sortilege, ou bien pour les demerites dudit depposant'.

(12) Zabel femme George Quirien, de Reillon, 30

Reputation 3 years. Since then they had lost a horse and several cows; suspected Raimbault, on account of his ill fame.

(13) Henry Houlatte de Reillon, c. 50

Knew him a long time, but reputation as witch only 3 years. Two years ago he and his daughter quarrelled with Rimbault; subsequently his son-in-law lost several cows.

(14) Virion Cherrier homme non marié de Chazelle, c. 34

Some 12 years before, when serving Claudon de Vauernot at Reillon, heard accused reputed a witch. While in fields he beat Rimbault's daughter, Barbelline, and her father came and struck him on head with an 'escourge'; a week later became ill, and had to leave his employment. Various people said he had been paid out for beating the girl - suspected father of causing illness.

(15) Claude Dieudegnon maire de Reillon, c. 40

Hadn't paid much attention to Rimbault's reputation until 2 or 3 years before, when he heard that his sister had been executed at St. Clement, and had accused him. Told of two occasions, one 9 years before, other six, when he had lent horses rather unwillingly to Rimbault for carting jobs, and one subsequently died. Had lost a fine cow a year before from communal herd of which accused was paistre, and believed this was in revenge for failure of his wife to continue her habitual gifts of lard, meat, and other items, given 'plus par crainte que par amytié'. General comment that 'lors desdits desastres il ne pensoit point audit prevenu, que depuis qu'il a entendu sa mauvaise renommée qui la mis en ceste oppinion'.

(16) Didier Hachon de Royde, c. 50

Native of Reillon, had moved away previous year. Reputation 6 years. Retold story of straying horses as told by his daughter (witness 5). Also said that 6 years before had seen Rimbault carrying sheaves of wheat home before dawn - subsequently heard of theft of some of that left for tithe.

(17) Claudon Hachon, son of previous witness, of Royde, c. 20

Reputation 9 or 10 years. Told story of dispute over damage; horse had died day after accused passed close by it.

(18) Claudon Jean Robin natif de Phelin, c. 23

Had come to live with brother in Reillon (witness 6) some 5 years before, and heard Rimbault reputed a witch. Two years before reported incident of breaking leg after dispute over threshing for curé.

Costs for preliminary enquiries in this case and that of Marguerite Francois came to 55 francs.

Said he was about 50, native of Reillon, son of Nicolas de Domjevin and his wife Barbelline. Generally agreed circumstantial detail, or said he couldn't remember; admitted stealing wheat on occasion described by Didier Hachon, when he had taken 4 sheaves, not knowing whose they were.

13 April 1604; confrontations

Jean Dieudegnon added to his testimony that some 12 years before he had found the accused on his land charged with 'paalisades' - he admitted this, saying that he was poor and had needed wood, which he had stolen from garden of the curé of Reillon.

Accused and Urbain Jean Colin agreed that former had not in fact sought to continue as paistre, and that Waltin had already been ill when he arrived. During confrontation with 12th witness began to 'se douloir sans jettter aucunes larmes' - was reproached that this was 'ung signe de sorcier et qui faisoit grande presomption contre luy'.

No reproach against any of witnesses, but denied harming any person or animal, as well as making threats attributed to him.

21 April 1604; procureur fiscal asks for ordinary and extraordinary torture

Same day; Change de Nancy agrees

29 April 1604; interrogation under torture

At start made some difficulty when executioner asked him to renounce Devil - eventually said 'que le diable emporte le diable, et que le diable puisse cheoire sur les sorciers et sorcieres'. Resisted thumbscrews and rack - confessed nothing.

Next day given further torture, including tourtillons and strappado, after Margueritte Francois had been brought in to repeat her accusation that she had seen him at Sabbat. Judges evidently consulted together before deciding that he could be given strappado 'veu sa pertinacité et force' - had 50 pound weight attached to legs during this, after judges had decided it was reasonable to test him in this way.

Despite half an hour without weight, and quarter of an hour with, remained obstinate in denials. Judges urged on him the strength of the indices, the denunciation by Margueritte Francois, his failure to produce any tears, and even his appearance - 'joint la mauvaise mine qu'il porte et ses yeux fort enfoncé dans la teste avec ung hideux regard.'

1 May 1604; voluntary confession

As soon as he was brought in for further interrogation declared that he 'estoit sorcier et content de mourir'. Some 12 years before had bought a horse at fair at St. Dié which turned out to be 'morceux' - soon afterwards tried to sell it at fair at St. Nicolas, but horse 'luy fut osté par les courtiers ad cause de sa defectuosité'. Only received 2 francs, when he had paid 24 - very upset by this loss, given his poverty. Seduced by 'malin esprit' on way back (although all he did was to say he gave

himself to the stranger, and receive some money which then disappeared). Didn't see him again for 6 or 7 years, until he was going to see a sister accused of witchcraft at St. Clement. Was now given money with which to buy her release, but this again turned out to be an illusion; met Mre Parsin again on way back, and this time was induced to renounce God. Shortly afterwards was met in village at evening, and mounted behind master on black horse, which took them to a meadow near Veho 'auquel lieu il y trouva beaucoups de personnes qui y dansoient avec un hautboy Lequel fit de mesme et choisit une jeune femme ou fille et la mena danser avec les autres et pour qu'elle estoit brave Il ne dansoit poinct avec d'autres qu'avec elle pour ceste fois; puis se mirent a banquetter et firent fort bonne chere N'ayant toutesfois que de la chair bouillie et y avoit du vin qu'il ne trouvoit pas trop bonne, et dit qu'il y avoit de ses complices qui estoient plus qualifiés les ungs que les autres et estoient les Groz plus cheris et favorisés que les petits, et luy sembloit que c estoit des Gentilzhommes, et en banquettant les ungs proposoient de faire de la gresle pour gaster les bled et les autres de faire venir des Bonattes et moucherons sur les legumes, Mais les pauvres s'y opposoient, principalement que lesdits bledz ne soient gastés Mais plustost les avoines Et neanmoins les riches furent maitres, et ayans tous battu l'eave d'une fontaine et d'un ruisseau joindant avec des verges qui estoient par petits morceaux, Sy leva ung grand brouillard avec une nuée et Gresle qui gasta quelque peu les bledz de derriere Leintrey; et quant ung des Complices ne battoit l'eave comme les autres leurs maitres frappoit dessus comme ung sergent de Garde.'

Agreed to committing various maléfices with powder which his master gave him. One day went to kill a cow for Jean Dieudenon 'parce qu'il se mesloit ung peu de bouchier' - remembered dispute, and put powder in 'cresche des chevaux'. Intended to kill one horse which was there, but might well have caused death of all four which subsequently died. Had also killed a cow belonging to Jean Febuay, after a quarrel over Febuay's alleged failure to feed Raimbault's daughter, who was in his service, properly.

Previous year had been told by master to give a herb to the herd of cows he was minding - this made them butt one another and damage themselves with their horns 'dequoy se faschant par apres estimant que cela estoit plus a son advantage qu'a son proffit, et qu'il perdoit sa garde Trouva une Invention de son art, et advertit a chacun des bourgeoys dudit Reillon qu'il falloit faire scyer les cornes de leurs vaches Ce qu'ilz firent de maniere qu'elles ne se hurtarent plus.'

Some 3 or 4 years before his master had found him in the woods, and told him others had almost finished - gave him a blow, and he found himself by 'la fontaine St. Martin proche de Gondrexon, auquel lieu y avoit peu de Gens et plus d'hommes que de femmes qui battoient l'eave dans ladite fontaine lequel trouvant sa verge toute preste un peu plus grosse qu'auparavent et de bois rouge, battit l'eave comme les autres. Mais incontinent sesdits complices s'en allerent en l'aer a cheval la nuée estant incontinent faicte et tombée aussy tost, qui cause quelque gresle qui tomba quelque peu sur les bledz d'Autrepierre et d'Amenoncourt Mais la pluspart tomba sur les sommarts, et comme Il vit que sesdits complices s'en alloient en l'aeir Il en fut estonné et dit Jesus Maria qui fut cause qu'il se trouva seul et contraint de retourner a pied en son logis.'

Confessed he had killed the old horse that the maire Dieudegnon had lent him to go to the mill with 'et fut pour cause que ledit maire n'estoit jamais de son costé et estoit tousjours contre luy'.

'Qu'il y a environ trois ans que sondit Mre Parsin le print en ung lieu dit au hault des Loyes qui decoupoit ung troncq de poirier pour avoir des estelles dans sa hotte et l'emporta en crouppe sur son cheval au bois de St. Martin au lieu la ou Il l'avoit desja trouvé auparavant et y trouva quelques personnes hommes et femmes, et plus de femmes que d'hommes qui courroient parmy ledit bois rompans les Cerisses des chesnes, Cependant se fit ung grand tourbillon de vent puis sondit Maitre luy cria Touche dedans qui luy donna intelligence de faire comme les autres, scavoir d'arracher les chasnes (comme il leur sembloit), et cy estoit admis de sa part que quant il pousoit ung chasne qu'il tomboit en bas, et que sondit Maitre faisoit sauter son cheval par sur le sommet des chasnes lesquels il renversoit par terre comme il luy sembloit aussy et se fit tout cela a intention de faire perdre la glandée Tant dudit bois que des bois dit le Grattes et arrabois, Et de fait n'y en eust poinct ou bien peu) pour ceste année, tellement que l'esglandée dudit arrabois fut donné ceste année pour cinq francs.'

Did not want to name any accomplices, so was placed back on rack. Now accused Claudon de Benaumesnil of Gondrexon, and Claude Marchal de Veho - had known them by their bearing, since everyone wore masks, green, yellow, or red. Didn't know if he wore one himself, or had 'le visage fardé'.

Marginal note shows that he later withdrew these accusations, saying he had only made them from fear of torture, and because these two had 'ung mauvais bruict'. Asked again when attached to stake, he persisted that he discharged them, and had done them wrong.

3 May 1604; confirmation of confessions

Reaffirmed his previous confessions, and asked judges to forgive him 'ce qu'il les a tant travaillé' - they did so, and asked him 'de leur pardonner et prier dieu pour eux quant il sera en l'autre monde'.

May 1604; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence

Same day; Change de Nancy approves

Notable how convincingly accused told story once he decided to confess - distinct hint of village storyteller here. Was this something of a masculine preserve? Confessions like this must have encouraged judges in their beliefs, although they seem to have disregarded the embarrassing references to gentlemen in account of first sabbat.