

B 8736; witch 314, Sebille fille Didier Pescheur de la Neufville les Raon

11 August 1626; Sebille has been arrested after an absence of over 10 years, at point when an earlier set of proceedings had started.

Same day; informations préparatoires

(1) Tiriot Mathieu cordonnier de la Neufville, 40

Some 14 or 15 years before the wife of Jean Morisot had been ill, and had told him she greatly suspected Sebille, because she had spoken ill of her before other women and she had been angry. Subsequently went to help her winnowing 'millet', and came back with some which she cooked and ate; immediately fell ill and died within week, blaming witchcraft by Sebille. Shortly afterwards was sent to arrest her by maire, but could not find her, and she had been absent since. General reputation, mother executed as witch.

(2) Jean Morisot de la Neufville, 50

Some 14 years before a regular cleric at convent had told him that Sebille had made confession to him that she was a witch; he had not absolved her, but told her to return again. Believed she had caused an illness from which he was suffering, and 'sy on vouloit bien faire on la debvoit apprehender pour luy faire et parfaire son proces.' Told his wife of this with warning to tell no-one else, but she 'ne se peut contenir d'en parler a ses voisines', and Sebille then threatened her. Subsequently she often came to house to ask for milk. Then episode with millet; wife cooked it but after taking second spoonful fell backwards, saying 'qu'elle estoit frappée a mort et que cela provenoit des sortileges de ladite prevenue'. Next day he went to see Sebille, but her father told him she was not there. When he told him of suspicions, he replied 'qu'il s'en doutoit aucunement, et que sa mere cy devant executée l'avoit ja trompé de la sorte.' Had several times accused her of being cause of his wife's death without any reaction, then had been one of those sent to arrest her when she hid herself.

(3) Rose veuve Didier Chotel de la Neufville, 60

Jean Morisot's wife had been her sister, and during illness had told her of her suspicions. Around same time Sebille had been going to house of the late Nicolas Maurice to learn to read, and he had told his wife angrily he did not want such persons coming to his house, for she was a witch and had killed Morisot's wife. Sebille was angry when she heard of this, and said 'qu'un plaisir n'estoit jamais perdu'; shortly after Maurice fell ill suddenly and died in 3 days. If she was a witch believed she had caused his death - general reputation, and accused by other convicted witches, including her mother.

(4) Jean Bandeca de la Neufville, 40

Some 13 or 14 years before had seen Sebille embracing a young man, and had told of this in village. She was angry, and he fell very ill for 14 weeks, unable to eat or rest. Made it public that he suspected her, and she came to house to reproach him; he threatened to attack her with an axe unless she left. During illness 'il luy print en volonté' to eat fish obtained from her; dragged himself to her house, and with great difficulty obtained cooked fish from her (had asked that it should be cooked). After eating this he began to recover. General repute.

(5) Demenge Jacquot de la Neufville, 50

Reputation 27 years.

(6) Chrestien Brabant de la Neufville, 50

Some 29 years before his young sister Claudette had been keeping oxen which did some damage in field belonging to Sebille's father, and she beat her severely. After return complained of her legs, and died within a week. After death Sebille had come to sprinkle holy water on body, and he had accused her and her mother of causing death without their taking any action. Also suspected her over death of her father, who had often reproached her that she was 'sy volage et addonnée aux jeunes hommes', as he had told witness.

(7) Didier Mengin de la Neufville, 50

Some 13 years before, as sergeant of local justice, had commission to arrest Sebille, but could not find her.

(8) Demenge Mathieu cordonnier de la Neufville, 60

Also told of attempt to arrest her, which he placed 11 years earlier; she had been in river behind father's house up to her neck, then had escaped.

(9) Chrestien Brandec de la Neufville, 60

Reputation 15 or 16 years.

(13 August 1626)

(10) Nicolas Blaisotte de la Neufville, 65

Long reputation. One day he had been near bridge at la Neufville 'auquel lieu on avoit de coustume pour lors de faire lecture des proces criminelz', and had heard that she was accused of witchcraft.

(11) Catherine femme Nicolas Blaisotte, 56

Some 14 years earlier she and other women had been talking while working in fields about death of Fleurette fille Jean Musnier of Bertrichamp, when Sebille

said 'que c'estoit bien peu de cas, qu'elle avoit heu tousjours cela en passant'. This made her suspicious that Sebille might have caused Fleurette's death, particularly because she already had a reputation. Jehenne Badelle had told her she firmly believed she had caused her milk to stop after giving birth, so that she thought she would die, because she had not been invited to be godmother.

(14 August 1626)

(12) Jehenne Barbier veuve Mathis Abel de St. Marie, 40

14 years before when she was pregnant Sebille had often told her that she wanted to hold child at font, but she did not even invite her to be present at birth in view of her evil reputation, not only for witchcraft but for 'luxure et paillardise'. Later she passed in front of witness and her child, saying nothing but making angry gesture, and as witness returned to house she was taken by an illness which made her think she and her child would die. Had great difficulty in breastfeeding, her milk became 'toute jaulnatte', and child too. Her sister was complaining of illness, and that she might have to feed child, when Sebille said 'qu'elle ne s'en mette pas en peine qu'elle n'en mourroit mais qu'elle avoit du mal assez'. Later accused sent some soup in an earthenware pot, with instruction that she should drink it all; as soon as she tasted it her appetite returned and she drank it all, then entered into convalescence. This lasted a year, and she was still conscious of illness. Had several times blamed her without any reaction.

13 August 1626; interrogation

Said she was Sebille daughter of the late Didier Pescheur of la Neufville, aged about 40. Agreed that she was accused of witchcraft, but said they did her wrong. Had lived at la Neufville until she was 27, then for 6 months at Donipaire, subsequently in service at Mirecourt and Epinal, finally serving as 'tante' for a curé at Epinal. Claimed she did not know that informations had previously been taken against her. Admitted that she had hidden in river when she heard she was to be arrested, then found a cloth under which she made her way to Epinal. That night slept outside gate/door at village of Brut.

Generally denied all accusations. Agreed that she had given Jean Blandeca cooked fish 'for charity'. Denied she knew anything about Jehenne Badelle's pregnancy, to which judges replied that this was incredible when she was neighbour.

Confrontations (same day)

No reproaches or admissions, although she did get up from desk and wave finger angrily at Jean Morisot.

18 August 1626; Change de Nancy approves question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

20 August 1626; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews on hands and feet, then racked. Finally asked to be taken down and she would tell truth, but then said she had no master but God, closing eyes and 'quasi comme en extase'. Given tortillons, cried out they were killing her, then admitted her master was called Parsin. Had been seduced some 30 years earlier when out gathering raspberries with her mother. Man in black promised they would never want, then usual renunciation. Gave 3 kinds of powder, black to kill, yellow to make languish, white to cure. Had thrown powder away after trying it on a hen; master then came to ask her what she had done with it, beat her for not killing men or animals. She threw this lot of powder away again, and when he reappeared a month later made sign of cross, at which he vanished. Then said she had been many times to sabbat, 3 or 4 a year. Standard description - was on Côte de Repy, in spot called la basse des moulotz, and she was taken on master's shoulders. All those present were masked, they danced to sound of oboe, flute, and drum played by other devils, ate horrible food, then Parsin had intercourse with her and took her home. Often distributed powders; she gave him 4 or 5 hens a year to be dispensed from attending. Asked about causing storms, said she had not done so, and not consented. Unable to recognize any participants because of masks. Had continued to attend sabbat during absence, unknown to her masters.

Agreed that after Jean Morisot's wife had told story about confession, so that she was 'grandement scandalisée parmy le village', she had used powder placed in millet to kill her. For similar reasons placed yellow powder in spot where she knew Jean Bandeca would pass, and made him ill; later felt sorry for him and used white powder in fish to cure him. Denied causing death of Nicolas Maurice. Agreed she had used black powder to kill Claudette after quarrel over damage to field. Denied causing illnesses or deaths of Fleuratte fille Jean Musnier, Jehenne Barbier, and Nicolas Brabant. Said she could not remember committing any other maléfices.

Later same day confirmed her confessions freely.

21 August 1626; interrogation

Interviewed twice, confirmed previous confessions. On second occasion said 'que quant il plaira a dieu elle est preste d'endurer la mort, suppliantz qu'on luy soit doulx et misericordieux, et luy envoyer un bon confesseur (en pleurant tres amerement)'.

25 August 1626; Change de Nancy approves execution

29 August 1626; final sentence read in her presence