

B 3333; witch 042, Chretienne Simon, femme Demenge Fennay, de Domjevin

Case appears to have been brought by maire Jean du Pont, in form of a placet of 15 June 1607, and on 5 July procureur fiscal of comté de Blamont had approved taking of depositions.

10 July 1607; informations préparatoires

(1) Nicolas Nicklauss, 50

Reputation 7 years. Around St Luc previous year was guarding horses of his brother Demenge Nicklauss, half an hour after nightfall, when Chretienne appeared. Could not recognize her because of darkness; she put hand on mane of one horse, and sprinkled something on back of others. Two of these then became ill, refusing to eat, and a week later both died within an hour of time when they had been touched. After touching them came straight to him, saying she was returning 'du bastant' and was very frightened of the dogs. He replied they had all been killed, to which she said 'En voila un noirre qui abbaye par la, on dict que c'est le chien du prevost d'Argeviller (Ogéviller)'. Did then hear it, but it ceased as she moved off.

Asked if he knew of any reason for her to have been hostile to his brother, said that at that time her brother Jean Simon was courting brother's daughter Catherine, and accused hoped for marriage; was disappointed when he married her to another. Horse she held became ill for 2 weeks, but then recovered. During illness her husband had said it would not die, which made him presume he knew what she had done. Had heard from servant of Fennay, Claudon Bennay of Benaumesnil, that early one morning he heard his master telling off his wife over rumour that she had killed the two horses, whereupon she swore she had not done it, but believed it had been work of wife of Thoussaint Henry Toussaint of Domjevin.

(2) Le maire Demenge Nicklauss, 48

More than 2 years earlier met husband in fields, and told him he intended to operate 'retraiete' on some land which Demenge Jean Jean had bought. He replied that he would not dare offend him, knowing they were negotiating for marriage of his daughter with Jean Jean's son. Then suggested marriage for her with his wife's brother Jean Simon, detailing property he would have. She followed this up, but despite 'retraiete' the original marriage quickly took place. She was angry, and shortly afterwards when his young daughter Jeanne was sitting outside house talking she said to her 'Petite rouzeotte ou est ton pere il va querir des beaux poullains a Thiebausmesnil nompas'. Then sent her to look for geese; following day again called her to help her round up her own geese. After this told him that she feared 'la noire Chretienne', and although he told her she should not do so, she then became 'perturbée de son entendement', and this returned with every new moon. Sent her to Ambrosian fathers at St Nicolas, who said she was 'ensorcellée par une femme qui ne demeuroit guiere loing de son logis et qui avoit bien envie de luy faire beaucoup de maulx.' She then recovered, but he was convinced the accused had been responsible, and also suspected her over deaths of 2 horses. Further case of sick horse, as reported by brother; was taking it to Raon to see if he could get it cured, and told her husband, who assured him it would not die. Reputation 7 years.

(3) Lucie veuve Claudon Nicolle, 50

Had never heard her reputed anything but 'femme de bien', except that about a year before had heard of Demenge Nicklauss's suspicions over his 2 horses.

(4) Jehenne fille Demenge Nicklauss, 17 or 18

Same story as father. Was outside house of accused when she spoke to her; had asked her many questions about small things, and she already feared her. Then story of illness, which started next day immediately after she spoke to her again; had made 3 visits to Ambrosians. Story of 2 horses.

(5) Catherine femme Demenge Nicklauss, 50

Mother of accused executed as witch at Blamont 4 or 5 years earlier, since when she had been suspected. Then story of marriage and suspicions about illness of daughter and deaths of 2 horses.

(6) Jean Nicklauss, 25

Reputation 8 years. Story of marriage of his sister, and subsequent illness of Jehenne. On advice of maire Jean du Pont it was witness who took her to Ambrosians. One of them told him to bring her to church 'sur le coup de Vespres', which he did. Made her kneel before him in the choir, 'usa de quelques conjurations sur elle. Ca fait enquist sy elle ne sentoit quelque chose remuer en son corps, laquelle luy feit responce qu'elle sentoit ung morceau que luy montoit de l'estomach vers la gorge. Ce qu'ayant entendu continua sesdites conjurations et s'enquist derechef sy elle sentoit encore quelque chose. Surquoy ladite fille luy respondit que ledict morceau estoit descendu au ventre sur lesquels propos ledit Pere Ambroisien dit audit depposant qu'elle estoit ensorcellée par telle qui avoit intention de leur faire beaucoup de maux et les ruyner s'ils ny mestoient ordre. Et comme il s'enquist plus oultre et luy pria de luy scavoir a dire qui elle estoit il luy feit responce qu'elle ne se tenoit guiere loing de leur logis.' This made him suspect Chretienne, since she lived next to them, and was already reputed a witch. Also story about horses.

(7) Henry Mulnier dit le Clerc, 30

Reputation 4 years, since execution of mother. As 'Imbault' of village had disputes with husband, who delayed paying some communal fines, and also alleged that witness had overcharged him for some wood. Were arguing when she intervened and told him 'qu'il estoit trop haultain et qu'il ne fauldroit courrir trop fort pour le rattaindre'. Suspected that after this she caused death of a horse, which became as if rabid; was making great disturbance in stable at night, so he and his wife went to see what was trouble. Knocked against wife with its head, so that she dropped light and fell over - she was then in bed for 5 or 6 weeks, so ill she was expected to die. On advice of brother-in-law he was about to go to 'devineresse'. because he suspected Chretienne, when wife told him she had brought five eggs, one of which was cracked. He said she should eat them, hoping that she intended to cure illness she had caused, and she did so, one at a time for 5 days, after which she quickly recovered. Previous summer had been rebuilding house when she went right in as far as stable - fearing some misfortune he struck his chest and commended himself to God. Next morning had a horse ill, and suspected her; made this public, and knew she had heard of it, which he thought was reason why it recovered after a week.

(8) Jean le Clerc, 36

Reputation 6 years. About that time her husband's horses damaged his field of oats, and he was condemned to repay him 5 quarterons; she told him 'qu'il vauldroit mieulx qu'il ne les eust gagés que ce seroit de la cherre avoine pour luy et qu'avant qu'il fust un peu de temps il se donneroit de garde.' Although he accepted a half resal of oats from husband, a horse then sickened; was leading it past her house when she wished that it might never return home. Soon it became so ill he had to return, but it died before reaching house. Suspected her over this, also over death of a cow some 6 weeks later, which had chewed some straw outside her house.

(9) Annon femme Henry Mulnier, 30

Same story as husband. During illness accused brought her 5 eggs, saying that as it was Lent and she knew they had no chicken she might like to eat them. Was particularly suspicious because one was broken, but other women advised her to eat them, and she had one each day cooked in butter - immediately began to feel better. Also story of visit to building; several people came to see it, but she went further than others, into stable where they were not rebuilding. Knew she had heard of their suspicions, since her husband had complained to husband of witness.

(10) Pierson Nicolle, 30

Reputation 5 or 6 years. Suspected she had caused death of foal belonging to his mother around last Chandeleur, after telling her 'qu'elle l'avoit hay cent et cent fois pour ce qu'elle hantoit et frequentoit au logis de Demenge Nicklauss'. His brother, now married in Nancy, had been visiting before this, and after drinking heavily called Claudon fils Claudon Marchal 'fils de sorciere' - his mother had been executed at Blamont. Her husband Demenge Fennay then intervened, calling brother 'un garçon qui ne valoit rien', at which he became more abusive about witches. Fennay then said his wife was a good woman, and finally tore collar off brother's shirt and punched him. Witness told him to stop, saying brother had not been talking to him, but he continued insisting she was a good woman, at which witness replied 'que sy elle estoit telle qu'il l'enduroit bien mais qu'ilz passent oultre'. Since they they had both wished him ill, and she said she would remember it when he had forgotten.

(11) Demenge de Chesnoy, dit Marchal, jeune homme non marié

Reputation 4 or 5 years; no personal suspicion, although he had quarrelled with her husband and other relatives.

(12) Jennon, femme au maire Jean Deditat, 50

Reputation 3 years (since residence); had heard from husband of some suspicions, but no personal ones.

(13) Franceatte femme Didier Estienne

Reputation a little over a year. At that time she was hoeing among some lentils, and wife of Nicolas Gossat was working nearby; heard her singing loudly as

she worked some way off, and said to one another that she had 'bonne courage' to sing in that way in view of rumours in village. Was sure she could not have heard, yet next Sunday the father of the witness, Jean Henry, came to warn her that she had complained to him about her and her sister Sebille femme Nicolas Estienne, saying they had spoken much ill of her, and latter's children had called one of hers son of a witch. Said witness had spoken of her while hoeing, although witness knew they had spoken no ill of her. Gossat's wife later said to her that if she knew what they had said the devil her master must have told her. After this lost 2 horses and a foal; suspected her in view of reputation as witch, and fact that such people normally avenged themselves on those they bore 'hayne et inimitié'.

(11 July 1607)

(14) Jean Henry, 80

Long reputation, especially since execution of mother. Suspicion over death of 3 horses, as recounted by daughter, which occurred within 2 days. Just before this had been to complain of son being called 'fils de sorciere' by his grandchildren, whom he promised to have punished, and of remarks by Franceatte, saying of latter that she 'se mesloit fort de ses affaires et avoit mesdit d'elle qu'il seroit plus expedient qu'elle se mesle des siennes qu'elle en estoit assez empeschée'. Also suspected she might have caused him losses of some cattle.

(15) Laurent Bouzenotte, de Benamesnil, 33

His wife's son Claudon Benay, aged 16, had been in service in her house previous year, and claimed he had seen such things in her that he believed she was a true witch. Her husband often spoke to her about rumours she was to be arrested; once when she was pregnant he said they were only waiting until she had given birth. She had often cried over this, shutting herself up in her room. Her eldest son, aged 7 or 8, had told Claudon that his mother wanted to take him with her; when she overheard this she beat him. Claudon therefore decided to leave service when year was up, and went to house of maire Pierron Courrexier (?). One day was returning from Nancy with master's cart when he met her in plain of Lunéville, and said loudly so that she heard 'en voicy une des genaxes'. About a month later was guarding master's horses, in time of floods, and one of them escaped towards Fréménil; he mounted another and tried to follow, but horse ran away with him and threw him in river, where he drowned. Suspected she had caused this in revenge for what he had said to her.

(16) Didier Hocquarre, marguillier, 28

Reputation 4 years (residence).

(17) Bastienne femme Nicolas Simonatte, 40

Reputation since execution of mother 4 years earlier. Year earlier had a cow which tended to go to her house (only separated from theirs by one other); did not know if this annoyed her, but it had died, and suspected her. Also told how before dawn on feast day of St Mathias she had come knocking on door, asking her to accompany her to spin in poisle of maire Jean Dediot, where they were to keep vigil. Pretended to be frightened, although witness told her from her bed that other

women had already gone. Finally had to open door, without having any light, so could not see if she threw something over her. That evening eyes started to stream, so that she could not see to sew, then whole body became swollen. Had to go to bed, suspecting it was 'ung mauvais air' and that accused was responsible. Had brought her some lard, after eating which she started to recover, but was still suffering back pains. Did not know how she had displeased her, unless she had said something she had forgotten.

(18) Vaultrin Louy, 51

Reputation 10 years. Knew of quarrel with Demenge Nicklauss, after which they had been before procureur fiscal at Blamont, who made accord, with those who broke it being liable to pay 'boisson' (he had gone with Nicklauss). She had decided not to keep it, but to pay, and she and husband had gone to Lunéville to inform procureur. He was bringing back cart back after taking grain to Nancy, and was with Claudon de Benamesnil, who had said 'en voila une des plus parfaites sorcieres de Domjevin' as they passed her.

They asked him how he knew this, and he described how her husband had returned from tavern, called her 'carogne', and told her of accusation over horses of Demenge Nicklauss. When she insisted she was not responsible he told her of claim by servant that she had been with them in field at night; she denied this, and he then said he would go and beat the servant next day 'tant qu'il le feroit enrager'. She begged him not to do this 'de peur que d'ung mal il n'en vienne deux', and that if he did go it should be quietly, so that rumours would not be increased. Shortly after this incident Claudon was found drowned, and he suspected she had been cause.

(19) Jean Dediat, 50

Reputation 3 years, but did not believe she had caused him any harm, nor had he had any quarrels with her to give her reason for this. Was closely interrogated on charges against her, but would say no more.

13 July 1607; procureur fiscal orders arrest, interrogation, and confrontations.

20 July 1607; interrogation

Said she was about 32, daughter of le maire Simon and his wife Chretienne, of Domjevin. Father had died about 20 years earlier, mother been executed 4 or 5 years before. Asked if mother had not taken her to sabat, or evil one appeared to try and seduce her, she denied this; had never seen any sign mother was witch until trial, and had been brought up to fear God.

At first denied knowing reason for imprisonment, then said she knew some had suspected her as witch. Denied absolutely that she was such, saying that God knew the truth.

Asked about hatreds against others in village, said there was one she would not name who was 'ung meschant homme', 'estimant que ladite haine est cause de son malheur et de son apprehention qu'il ne tasche qu'a luy faire deshonneur et la rendre meschante.' Said he should keep quiet in view of own family; his cousin had been burned and his aunt accused as witches. Finally said she spoke of Demenge Nicklauss, claiming he had used false mesure and that he had stolen some wood at Ognieviller.

Said hostility had begun when he blamed her for death of 2 horses, some 2 years earlier. Had not been able to take him to court because they could not prove what he had said; finally went before procureur fiscal where he swore and gave himself to devil that he had not used such words.

Agreed that about 10 days before death of horses had been returning from 'bastand' at Manonviller, and had passed by numerous horses in fields, saying good evening to the servants who were guarding them. Denied having gone among them or touched them - had simply followed her path home. Had only spoken of dogs to servant of Mengin Caba, who had a small red dog he said belonged to prévôt of Ogéville.

Denied that she had wanted her brother to seek marriage with daughter of Nicklauss; had tried to discourage him, saying he could find 'des plus paisibles' and that her father was 'ung vray mocqueur'. Denied absolutely that she had anything to do with his younger daughter, saying 'que le papier se laissoit escrire et qu'elle recognoisisoit bien que l'on y mestoit aussy bien des menteries qu'autres choses.' Knew girl had been disturbed, and that they had made pilgrimages, including taking her to Vargaville. Said 's'ils estoient en oppinion que ce fut de sorcellerie qu'ils n'en debvoient aller en pelerinage comme ils ont fait les appellants tousjours meschantes gens et traistres qu'ils taschant bien de luy causer ung malheur, toutesfois qu'elle esperoit qu'ils n'y adviendroient et qu'ils faisoient en cela leurs damnations.'

Said it was only Nicklauss and his relatives who thought she was a witch, while others thought well of her. Also denied making any threat to Henry Mulnier, but said he was among 'parens et alliés' of Nicklauss, and was reputed a witch. Knew his wife had been ill, but denied visiting her or taking her eggs; put under pressure here, finally said she might have visited her, but had no memory of it.

Denied saying she hated Lucie veuve Claudon Nicolle, although admitted she did not associate with those who frequented house of Nicklauss. Agreed she had been to complain about insults to children to Jean Henry, but this was in friendship, because he was her 'bon amy'.

Said her husband had never told her she would be arrested once child was born; he did not believe she was a witch, and she knew 'qu'il se feroit quasy fort pour elle'. Denied she had heard Claudon Bennay call her witch, and when he was drowned she was in her house with her husband, putting bread in oven. Said she might well have knocked on door to get wife of Nicolas Simonatte to go with her, since they often did this, but denied causing her any harm. Knew she had been ill, and indeed had named to accused and wife of Jean Deditat the woman she thought responsible. Agreed she had taken her some lard.

Agreed that she had not been satisfied with accord her husband had made, and they had gone back to say they would not keep it - she did not think it would be to her advantage, since she did not believe Nicklauss would cease speaking ill of her. Procureur fiscal had finally persuaded her not to break it.

Made some difficulty about renouncing devil, saying he had never been her master and she had never seen him, but finally did so.

9 August 1607; confrontations

Said of Laurent Bougenotte that she did not know him well, but had heard he had a bad reputation, and several, including his own son, had called him a witch. Called Nicolas Nicklauss 'une vielle charogne et un viel dampné', said that it was before sunset when she passed horses, and that he had originally suspected wife of Thoussaint Henry Thoussaint over deaths. Repeated earlier accusations against

Demenge Nicklauss, saying he had been fined for theft of wood; he denied them. Claimed that he had given his daughter instructions in writing about what she should depose. Said his wife Catherine had been reputed a witch for 16 years. Jean Nicklauss kept company with Mre Jean du Pont who had been hung in effigy and 'luy apprend toute meschanceté'.

Claimed Henry Mulnier, his brother, and his sister were all reputed witches. In case of Pierson Nicolle, said he had threatened to chase rats out of a house belonging to her cousin, which had been burned down 2 weeks later; had been reproached with setting it alight without seeking reparation. Jean le Clerc had long reputation as witch and thief. Annel femme Henry Mulnier was a thief. Franceotte femme Didier Estienne was a whore, having had a child by a German soldier, who had been given some cloth to hush it up, and was commonly called allemande as a result.

Said Jean Henry was supposed to have drowned a man named Didier Pierson in the river when returning from drinking in tavern at Ogéviller, also to have tried to kill someone on the road and steal his purse. Bastienne femme Nicolas Simonatte was a whore, who had had a child by another man, which was why husband now did not see her willingly. Vaultrin Louy had committed theft in mill at Blemerey.

10 August 1607; procureur fiscal asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

11 August 1607; Change de Nancy approves

20 August 1607; interrogation under torture

Was given thumbscrews, then racked twice, but would confess nothing. Threatened with more severe torture later if she persisted in concealing the truth, and returned to prison.

21 August 1607; interrogation under torture

Continued her denials, so was racked again (not very severely); asked to be released, promising to tell the truth. Said she had been a witch for 2 years, seduced behind her house by Parsin, who had promised to make her rich. Gave her money (nothing), and powder, yellow/kill, white/heal. Had tried it out on one of her own cows, which died. At this point was released from rack.

Confessed killing calf of her brother Jean, who had quarrelled with her. Denied that Parsin had intercourse with her. Had been seduced when 'toute desolée' about accusations by Demenge Nicklauss; but denied that she had done him any harm, or been pressed to this by her master. Parsin had wanted her to harm Mengin Saba, who had quarrelled with her husband, but she refused because he was a relative. Now agreed that her master had intercourse with her on another occasion; asked if she had any pleasure, said no. Same evening went to sabat - did not know how she was transported, but found herself by river, where about 12 people danced and made hail.

Said husband had no idea about absence, and could recognize no-one since they were all masked. Master gave her a red mask; asked what she had done with it, said she had left it on willow-tree near place where they met. Had not been to sabat again; had seen master once, when he gave her red powder to harm animals. Used it to kill cow belonging to Jennon veuve le Gal, who had been breaking her garden

fence. Claimed she had put white powder under some wood behind house, where it was still.

Judges were very anxious to get her to confess to more, but she resisted, claiming that other charges against her were lies. They said it was incredible, in view of her youth, that Parsin had not had intercourse with her more than once; she persisted. Placed on rack again, but not actually tortured, she would still say no more.

22 August 1607; procureur fiscal asks for question extraordinaire to obtain full confessions, also for death sentence.

Change de Nancy approves, subject to prior confirmation of confessions away from torture chamber.

28 August 1607; interrogation

Now said she had been seduced 4 years earlier, after quarrel with husband. Admitted killing cow belonging to mother of Pierson Nicolle, and that she had given her master, in form of a black dog, permission to kill horses of Demenge Nicklauss. Had not killed animals she mentioned in her previous confessions.

Admitted taking eggs to wife of Henry le Clerc, but had not made her ill nor cured her. When interrogated before had something in body which prevented her telling truth, and made her lie.

Still said she had only been to sabat once, and 3 or 4 of the 12 people present were men. Could not recognize anyone.

Asked about attempt to escape on the 24th, when at 4 in the morning she had guards in her room, and bolted door at bottom of stairs - said it was something inside her which incited her to do this, so she pretended she needed to pee, and had hoped to escape and go somewhere where she was unknown.

30 August 1607; procureur fiscal reiterates requests of 22 August, and Change de Nancy approves; rather obscure whether they agreed to further torture, since they seemed to want another unforced confession.

4 September 1607; interrogation

Confirmed previous confessions, and was left with a priest to console her.

Undated death sentence from court at Blamont follows