

B 3789 no 1; witch 058, Fleuratte femme Jean Maurice, de Docelles

17 August 1615; Prévôt of Bruyères has summoned witnesses to testify, after orders given by PG des Vosges on 12 August.

1 October 1615; informations préparatoires

(1) Judith femme Nicolas Huguenin de Docelles, c. 40

12 years earlier, when Fleuratte was already suspected, she had come to witness's house one Sunday asking for some 'semences de pourceaux'; witness refused her these, saying she only had enough for herself. One day next week, returning from Mass, she met Fleuratte, who said something she didn't understand. When she reached house, felt great pain in stomach, which taking a 'bouillie' and some wine did not relieve; became so ill some thought it was mortal. She and her husband suspected Fleuratte, because of refusal of grain, and so she went to see her, taking some grain as a pretext. At first Fleuratte said she could not cure her, but after taking grain she muttered what she said was a prayer, drew a cross on the ground in front of her, and blew several times into her mouth. Told her that she was 'prise de l'air', and that for a complete cure she must pass three times beneath the 'lien ou chenole' of one of their cows, turning around 'baraussons', each time saying a paternoster and an ave maria. Found it necessary to get further advice about performance of 'ce pretendu dernier remede'; a few days later the cow normally tethered in that place died, while witness recovered. 3 or 4 years before, daughters aged about 15 and 10 had been ill; she again sought advice from Fleuratte, who told her to take 'verd' that had grown on an 'aubepine' or a 'corre', steep it in water for 9 days, then give it to sufferers. Did this, but although younger girl recovered, elder one died. On an earlier occasion when a son had been ill, had advised her to 'le ventrer avec ung coffre de chesne, au moyen d'en agiter la couverte contre luy'; he recovered, but she did not know whether Fleuratte's treatment was responsible, or a medicine brought for him from Epinal on following day. Also recounted apparently irrelevant incident previous year when chambermaid had been cured after sending offering to Bel Bernard (see her later testimony at confrontations).

(2) Claudatte femme Mengel Barbay de Docelles, c. 50

Some time before, when Jean Thouvenin's son fell ill, Fleuratte had advised him and wife to make a pilgrimage; child died (before they had done so?) and Fleuratte subsequently remarked to witness that they should have asked her to cure it. When child of one of her own sons, aged about 15 months, also fell ill, she advised them to offer for his health to St. Maurix, and after having a Mass said, make him drink remaining wine 'de la chopinette'. In fact they did this in village church at Docelles, and child recovered. Fleuratte was 'merveilleusement soupconnée' of witchcraft ever since she had come to village 14 years earlier; had also been so before she left Bonmesnil where she had been married.

(3) Jean Thouvelin de Docelles, c. 30

Long reputation. Some 9 years earlier his 2-year-old son had died after three week illness; afterwards Claudatte (2) told him that Fleuratte had said she could have cured the child. Had also been in his house 3 days before child fell ill.

(4) Nicolle veuve Mathieu Aubry de Docelles, c. 32

Some 4 years earlier Fleuratte and her husband Jean Maurice had several times begged witness's husband to mark some trees for them - he was a forester. He refused to do so until they had an assignat from the Sieurs Gruyers et Controleurs d'Arches. Three days later became ill with exceptionally painful foot, so that he became 'comme demoniacle', and died in 8 days, leaving her charged with 4 small children.

(5) Jean Jacat Demenge de Docelles, 43

Shortly after last Easter his wife Jannon had a dispute with Fleuratte; called her a witch, and shortly afterwards a cow died suddenly in fields.

(6) Jacote veuve Mathieu Marion de Docelles, c. 60

Some 5 years before her daughter Mongeote, wife of Jean Jacot Gegoulf, had been in such pain that she cried for three days and nights. Fleuratte then came and sat outside house; passing hand over her head, said that the first shirt she had once made for one of her children was only in one piece. Next day the girl went to fête at Champdray, but became so ill that her mother had to fetch her home. She suspected Fleuratte of having made her ill, and against her late husband's wishes called her to effect a cure. She made girl drink two 'escueilles' of water, after which she recovered 'estant de present dieu mercy en bonne santé'.

(7) Demenge Miche de Docelle, c. 40

Thought Fleuratte had caused him various losses over last 14 years. Told of occasion when her bees had been attacking and killing his (seems to have followed some disagreement over price of a hive); after his mother-in-law had failed to persuade her to do anything, he took a 'gaillot' and went to see her, threatening to kill her if she did not stop her bees attacking his. They did stop, but all his bees subsequently died. 2 years before he had bought a horse for 36 ecus; as he was watering it in pool by his well, Fleuratte passed and said his horse was drinking 'a un beau goublet'. Horse died 2 days later; had also lost other animals, but did not know if she was responsible.

(8) Didier Villaume de Docelles, c. 40

3 years earlier one of his sons, guarding animals, had quarrelled with Jean Maurice's daughter; Fleuratte and the girl later came to house to complain. To satisfy her he beat the boy without enquiring into rights and wrongs of case, but 3 weeks later the boy became ill. Suspecting Fleuratte, he asked her for a remedy; she

told him to kill a 'hutandeau' and spread blood on child's stomach, then take him to Bel Bernard at Vic. She herself took him there, and he was cured.

(9) Nicolas Estienne de Docelles, c. 40

General reput. Loss of various animals, but didn't know cause.

(10) Mongel Barbay de Docelles, c 60

General reput. Some 15 months earlier his grandson, aged about 18 months, fell ill, and a preceding quarrel with Fleuratte made them suspect her. Induced her daughter, who was guarding animals, to fetch salt and ashes from her house, and child recovered after eating them. Some 4 months earlier he, Bartremin Jacquel, and Pierron Biol had been to her house, one Thursday, and after 'quelque discorde' he told her it was a common belief she was a witch. She showed no reaction, but her husband was angry, and made show of attacking them if they did not leave.

(2 Oct 1615)

(11) Honorable Nicolas Demengeon tabellion de Docelles, c. 42

General reput, among all inhabitants. Suspected her of killing horse worth 31 ecus some 5 or 6 years earlier, after he had twice quarrelled with her. So feared 'que personne du village ne fait banquet de nopces ou autre sans luy envoier quelque present de chair ou autre vivres.'

(12) Yolent femme honorable Hilaire Mirpot, tabellion de Docelles, 25

Jean Maurice, who was a carpenter, had done some work for her husband some 5 years earlier, and in part payment had received a loaf valued at 8 gros 8 deniers. A few days later Fleuratte came and asked her for the outstanding money, but she told her her husband was away, and she must either wait or take some more bread. Dispute followed over exact value of loaves, which Fleuratte claimed to be worth only 8 gros; as she left she said 'que pour huit deniers ils se pourroient retrouver ailleurs'. Next day 5-year-old daughter became ill, losing use of limbs and even her speech. Suspecting that Fleuratte was responsible, she tried to persuade her by 'doulces paroles' to heal the child; reluctant at first, but her husband eventually persuaded her. First made an offering to St. Hidoult, but this had no effect; then gave them some grease to apply, once more without success. Finally said it was necessary to make 'une vive offrande d'une poule' to Bel Bernard. Child eventually cured after this, but hen sickened and died as she recovered. Later, when women were in front of a house, Fleuratte saw the child and 'luy fist grande caresse, en disant que les gens n'avoient point de patience, et qu'elle avoit tousiours oppiné qu'il guariroit'. Had also said to witness that she had done right to dissuade husband from eating the hen - had previously told her that if it died she should throw it in the river. Their small shepherdess had quarrelled with Fleuratte's daughter, and told her her mother was a witch; Fleuratte had come to their house to complain, saying the girl could only have got these ideas from common talk in their

house, reminding her of cure of child, and saying 'qu'il faudroit bien les biens de trois pareilles villages que celuy de Docelles pour la faire prendre'. Witness got rid of her as well as she could, being greatly afraid of her; a few days later their dog became rabid and had to be killed.

(13) Anne femme Didier Villaume de Docelles, c. 36

Repeated essential of husband's story about son's illness and cure. Said that he he had called the girl fille de genaxe after she said she knew a herb with which she could, if she wished, render him and the others present quite naked. After pilgrimage Fleuratte had told their servant that it was well they had acted quickly, otherwise it would have been too late to cure the child.

(14) Nicolas Mairote de Docelles, c. 32

Some 10 or 12 years earlier they had been in habit of cooking their bread in Maurice's oven, since being a carpenter he had a lot of wood and kept it well heated. After a couple of occasions when baking went wrong, had gone elsewhere, but when an ox died they thought it might be result of Fleuratte's annoyance, and returned to her oven. 'Au surplus comme chacun la redoubte, cela fait par consequent qu'a qui mieux on luy donne de la paste outre l'ordinaire'.

(15) Jannon femme Nicolas Estienne de Docelles, c. 40

Said that several, notably Nicolas Demengeon, tabellion, had called her witch in presence of numerous witnesses, but she had never taken action against them. They had lost several animals, notably an ox a year earlier, but when she wanted to blame Fleuratte 'son marit luy persuadoit le contraire, alleguant que puis qu'il y arrivoit des fortunes souvent aux personnes, il ne failloit s'esmerveiller s'il en escheoit sur les bestes. Que ce matin elle luy auroit reproché qu'hier soir elle auroit esté deposer contre elle, et qu'elle auroit fait response qu'elle se trompoit et que l'occasion pourquoi on l'avoit adiournée estoit pour certaines pierres qu'on auroit jecté au cours de l'eau qui la faisoit regorger.'

(16) Claudon Mongin moictrier a Claudon Andreu de Docelles en sa grange de Sebarup, 26

Just after last St. Jacques had met Fleuratte as he was milling his corn at mill; she asked if he would cook his bread at her house as usual, but he said that as he had his horse he would take flour home. Before dawn next day he found Fleuratte near his house, pretending to cut 'de la fouchere' around; she came to the stable as he was preparing to send horse out to pasture, and 'apres l'avoir longtemps consideré' touched it; same day it lost use of its back legs, and he had to have it killed. Went after her and accused her of causing sickness, to which she replied 'que c'estoit un meschant homme et qu'elle luy feroit bien paroistre'. Five weeks before to the day, coming down 'de la montagne' to mill some corn, he met Fleuratte and 16-year-old daughter. She reproached him 'qu'il faisoit courir le bruit qu'elle auroit fait mourir son cheval, et qu'il se pouvoit assurer qu'il s'en repentirot. a laquelle il fist

response que s'il luy misadvenoit, a sa famille, ou bestail qu il se plaindroit d'elle.' Three days later fell sick with illness he still had; body sometimes swelled up, and had to go to bed and warm himself.

(17) Jean Marion de Docelles, c. 70

General reputation; several had reproached her.

(18) Claudate veuve Jean Nancey de Docelles, c. 50

Some 4 years earlier Fleuratte had come into her house for no reason, and asked if their calf had returned from the field. Replied that they had no calf with the herd. Next day a young bull in the stable became ill, blind and trembling. Consulted 'un particulier qui est coustumier de traiter le bestail', who told her it was an unknown illness 'et qu'il tenoit qu'il estoit ensorcelé'. Also showed it to Mongel Barbay's wife, and told her about Fleuratte's visit, on which she advised that they should call her in. She came, and said they had called her very late, but it was necessary to fold some cloth and send it to 'Monsieur St Dele' to see if animal would recover. While she was measuring animal, Barbay's wife noticed that she was making sign of cross with her left hand; animal died 5 or 6 days later, although she did not know if Fleuratte had caused its illness.

(19) Judith veuve Mongeon Jean Jacot de Docelles, c. 30

After death of her husband 10 years ealier, Fleuratte had suggested that she should have burned some candles in church for him - but had not believed her to have caused his death.

6 October 1615; interrogation

George Milot, Prévôt de Bruyères, began by recording curious confession made by accused at château on the 4th (a Saturday). Fleuratte said that on way to woods early in the morning a year before, a strange animal like a hare had crossed her path. During a repeat performance it spoke to her and asked her if she wanted to believe in it. A month earlier it had reappeared in her stable, this time looking like a black cat, as far as she could see in the dark. She said 'tu reviens bien souvent meschante beste, et qu'il repartit pourquoy il ne reviendroit pas, et ell replique va t'en et ne reviens jamais.' Those present assumed she was speaking of Satan; Sr. Pilot, valet de chambre de S.A., asked if the animal 'parloit gros', and she said he 'parloit assez gros.'

Normal interrogation proceeded on 6 October. Said she was about 55; first marriage was to Claudon Houatte of Grandviller, by whom she had 8 children, of whom only two, girls aged 18 and 17, were still alive. Had no children by second marriage to Jean Maurice. Her father, Bernard Rouyer, had come from Essey, her mother Marguerite Alix Thomas, from St Maurice. Her father 'pour n'avoir guieres de moyen' had lived at a 'moictresse dite a Villaume Fontaine', belonging to abbey of Aultrey, and then in woods of Mortagne, where he had died 36 years earlier.

Asked if she had engaged in superstitious healing, agreed that she had healed Judict wife of Nicolas Jean Begel, the daughter of the tabellion Hilaire Mirpot, and Jannon Ancel, who had been 'prises de l'air et mal de teste', with a magical prayer. 'Jehennon de toutes airs que tu as prisne, dieu et la Vierge Marie et Monsieur Saint Desair te puisse guerir de toutes airs, au nom de pere, du fils, et du Saint Esprit.' Denied using any superstitious techniques, which interrogator suggested could only have been idea of Satan.

Asked if she had confessed, said that she did so 3 or 4 times a year; last time was about a month earlier. Under heavy pressure, with her earlier 'confession' and the weight of witness testimony being alleged against her, asked to confess to her pact. 'Apres avoir longtemps varié, se beaucoup contristé, et fait la pleureuse', she said that her husband had been treating her like a servant, sending her to the woods at all hours. A year before, on a dark and misty evening, he had sent her to fetch some 'estelles' from where carpenters were working on the bridge; met a boy who sympathised with her and said he would give her money if she believed in him. 'Franc' he gave her turned out to be only a copper jeton; she met him in meadow a week later, and told him she wanted nothing more to do with him, after which he disappeared on catching sight of cross she wore, saying he would approach her no more as long as she wore it. He had called himself 'Persin ou petit chouchoux'.

9 October 1615; further interrogation

Denied any specific pact with Devil, or going to sabbat. Denied series of specific accusations of maléfice. Claimed that Mengin Barbay and Nicolas Demengeon had called her witch after making a wager, and that it would not have happened if her husband had been willing to defend her.

12 October 1615; PG des Vosges orders confrontations

19 October 1615; confrontations

The first witness, Judith femme a Nicolas Huguenin, made a long supplementary deposition, as follows: 'adjousté que depuis icelle sa chambriere dont y est mention luy auroit dit qu'outre ce qu'y porté ladite personne auroit fait trois tours allentour d'elle pour sa guerison. Pareillement s'estre ressouvenue qu'icelle mal contente de ce qu'a son dire elle qui parle auroit publié qu'elle scavoit des mauvais arts, et avoit esté la premiere qui l'avoit diffamée de son sortilege, elle luy donna pour cela quelques menaces, et que peu apres deux boeufs leur deviendrent malades, de quoy elle se plaignit a une sienne fille, et luy allega que sa mere estoit une mauvaise femme qui avoit fait malade lesdits boeufs, et qu'elle eut a luy dire de les aller guerir, ou que mal luy en prendroit; en dist encore autant a Jean Maurice son marit, que ladite fille au dimanche matin d'apres l'aitant esté trouver en son logis, luy dist que sa mere l'avoit envoié pour l'advertisir qu'apres la messe elle se trouveroit audit logis pour guerir lesdits boeufs, et que sa response fust de dire a sa mere qu'elle s'en aille au diable, et que s'ils mourroient elle se pouvoit bien appareiller, et qu'elle aimoit mieux perdre tout a un coup, qu'a tant de reprinses; Que ladite fille qui s'appelle Jennon chargée de ceste response s'en alla, et retourna derechef bientost apres, laquelle entra en l'estable ou estoient lesdits boeufs, et luy fist cest

rescharge que sa mere arriveroit si tost apres la messe, ne scait ce qu'elle peut faire allentour, tant y a qu'aussitost ils se porterent bien. De plus sont environ douze mois une sienne fille ja mariée nommée Jacote tomba malade, laquelle elle tira chez eux pour la mieux soulager, qui fust visitée de plusieurs voisines, et non de ladite Fleurate, quoy que plus prochaine, sinon une fois qu'estante entrée, elle demnda comme elle se portoit et l'alla voir, laquelle introduite en la chambre ou elle gisoit, apres luy avoir parlé un long temps elle tomba inopinement a la renverse, et fust par quelques temps en cest extase, a laquelle revenue on luy donna a boire un escuelle de vin, et du pain et du fromage qu'elle mangea, puis allega a ladite malade qu'elle avoit du bon miel et si elle en vouloit manger qui aiant ce faire plustost pour moiennier sa guerison, que d'aucun appetit, elle luy en fit une rotie sur du pain, ou elle qui parle ne scait laquelle des deux, et qu'elle la mangea, et cela fait se partit et en sortant vit qu'elle toucha sur l'espaule ladite chambrière, en luy disant la grosse demersale, laquelle vint aussytost indisposée de la maladie mentionnée en sadite deposition, qu'au surplus sadite fille mourut la dimanche d'apres, ores que tous eussent auparavant jugé qu'elle estoit touchée d'une longue et grande maladie, pour n'avoir qu'une debilité de membres, ce qui les fit croire que ladite detenue luy auroit advancé la fin de ses jours par le miel qu'elle luy donna.'

Fleuratte generally denied all serious points, although she admitted asking for money from Jean Thouvenin, but it had been 'paisiblement'. Jean Jacot Demenge had added that 9 or 10 years before a small child of his had died; shortly before death, as he lay in the kitchen, Fleuratte had come in and walked around the fire, saying nothing but that she had a bad finger. 'aient aussi un soupçon que comme difficile à contenter pendant que l'on cuisoit à son four comme il faisoit alors, que luy ou sa femme l'ait pris peu fascher elle luy auroit donné le mal'. Agreed to having taken Demenge Villaume's child on pilgrimage to Bel Bernard, and that she had advised spreading the blood of a 'hutandieu' on his stomach - had seen this done before. Agreed to testimony of Yolente femme Hilaire Mirpot, except that she had not made child ill, and had not advised throwing hen in the river.

19 October 1615; confessions

After confrontations, weeping and contrite, she confessed that she had been a witch for 14 years, since she had married and come to Docelles. Seduction had taken place when she was taking cart to woods before dawn; implication is that she was victim of some joking by others, and devil then told her to stay with him, and persuaded her to renounce God. Had been to sabbat on numerous occasions, sometimes taken by devil, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a whirlwind. Many people there, but had recognised none, since they were all masked. Admitted various maléfices against Huguenin household, after refusal of 'semences'. Had killed daughter by putting powder made from herbs the devil had shown her in wine. Before end of session pressed again on accomplices, but named none.

20 October 1615; further confessions

Denied having committed any other maléfices, nor being able to identify those present at sabbat.

26 October 1615; interrogation

Still unable to name accomplices; claimed this was 'pour ce qu'elle n'auroit guieres frequenté le sabat, et que comme elle vit y aiant esté qu'elle estoit trompée, elle eut recours aux prieres et a dire son chapellet.' Also said Devil had never given her any grease or powder; had cured Hilaire Mirpot's child with some gathered 'le soir de caresme entrant.'

9 October 1615; PG des Vosges calls for death sentence, but for torture to elicit names of accomplices.

3 November 1615; Change de Nancy approves

10 November 1615; prévôt de Bruyères records that he has assembled the 'bons hommes de la prévôté', who have passed sentence; this includes order that Fleuratte should be burned alive, and was apparently carried out that day.

On the 9th of November she had been tortured to obtain names of accomplices. She started out by saying that she was not a witch, had done no harm, and had never been to sabbat. Was given thumbscrews and racked; finally when racked harder she said that her confessions had been true. She identified Curien Simonin of the bois de Mortagne, who was of 'haulte stature', as having been at sabbat, and maintained this at her execution.

23 November; order from PG des Vosges for investigation of Curien Simonin.