

B 8707 no 4; witch 256, Jean Gerardin de la Voivrelle

21 February 1611; procureur for canons has received denunciation; asks for witnesses to be heard, followed if appropriate by arrest, interrogation, and confrontations.

25 February 1611; informations préparatoires

(1) Colas Demenge Noel, de Remeymont, 34

2 years earlier had been cutting hay in meadow he rented from accused, who arrived and told him he came late, to which he replied that he had been unable to come quicker. No sign of annoyance, and made fuss of small child who was with him; next day child became ill, as it seemed mortally, but recovered some 10 days later. Suspected this was his doing if he was witch as reputed. While cutting hay Jean told him to put down scythe, since he only had time to collect what he had cut before rain came; although sky was clear rain did come, and half meadow was ruined. Suspected him over this, and he had said he had paid too little for the meadow.

(2) Jean Alix, de Coinche, 40

Around last Christmas Jean bought a pig from him, then asked for reduction in price, which he granted because he feared him. After this another pig died, following long illness, and if he was witch as reputed thought he might have caused this

(3) Jacquat Thoussaint, de Coinche, 26

2 years ago had obtained money from him for damage done by his animals; he said no-one had ever done this before, and he would remember it. About a month afterwards a pig died, and suspected he had caused this to avenge himself. Also suspected him over loss of calf previous autumn, following dispute when witness saw his animals on fallow where there was still grain, and called him witch without reparation being sought.

(4) Dieudonné Jean Demenge, de Coinche, 40

Had refused to cart manure for him 4 years earlier, because he was too busy, then lost a mare worth 18 écus and her foal. Thought this might have been his witchcraft - long reputation.

(5) Claude Jean Charpentier, de Coinche, 50

Had heard him say on many occasions 'que l'on ne scauroit rien dire de luy, qu'il ne le scache a la fin' - in view of reputation had always supposed this must be through agency of devil.

(6) Colas Arnould, de Coinche, 30

Previous Sunday, in cemetery of Bertrimoustier, heard him ask someone else whether a man who hanged himself or killed himself was damned; in view of long reputation as witch suspected he was thinking of suicide.

(7) Parise femme Ferry Claude Ferry, des Fosses, 50

2 years before had been visiting sick daughter Margueritte, widow of Jean Maire Claude, at Ste Marguerite. Told her that they had sold him a pig, then he would not pay price agreed; had touched her several times on shoulder, and that was where sickness began. Died after illness lasting 5 days, maintaining to last that he had given her the illness.

(8) Gregoire Vincent Henriat, du Faing, 30

Had visited daughter of previous witness with servant of curé, and heard her blame illness on Jean.

(9) Demenge Babel, du Faing, 40

10 years before had 6 cows, each with a fine calf, and Jean asked to buy some of them. When he refused, said 'que quant lesdits veaux auroient sucez le laict, le diable les emporteroit'; later they all died, and he suspected this had been his witchcraft - long reputation. 8 or 9 years earlier his nephew Jean, guarding animals for brother of witness, took a piece of rounded wood which accused saw and claimed was his, saying that it 'feroit des veaux'. 2 or 3 days later a dead calf had to be dragged from brother's cow, and suspected him over this too.

(10) Beniste femme Claudon Renouard, du Faing, 40

8 or 9 years before, when living at la Voivrelle, had small child in cradle at bottom of bed. Heard bang in the night, and finally found child on floor by door into poisle, then heard something like a wind in next room. Appeared to be stunned, although it seems to have recovered - suspected he had been cause. Was frequent visitor to house, and always asking them to do carting, which they tried not to refuse. 3 years earlier some men of Ste Marguerite and le Faing had taken tithes for Coinche, and hired husband to cart sheaves; Jean saw him and said that since he was doing this carting 'il deviendroit bien lost her, ou grand seigneur'; within 2 days lost a horse worth 11 or 12 écus, and thought this had been his doing, since he was envious of husband's good fortune.

3 weeks earlier he had quarrelled with Pierron Gerdolle, who threatened to complain about threats Jean had made to him. Latter 'en estoit en peine extreme, parlant de cela a par scÿ, et jectant les bras'. Saw witness, and started to talk to her, 'luy decouvrant qu'il eust bien mieulx fait d'aller a St Diez, que de disputer avec ledict Gerdolle, s'informant d'elle a diverses fois, s'il faisoit poursuite de ses plaintes, et entendant que ouÿ, la prioit bien affectueusement d'estre, elle et son mary de son costé, et estant entre autres fois entré au logis d'elle deposante pour ce mesme subject, se jecta, sur ung ban, et se frappant des poings contre l'estomach disoit qu'il avoit ung morceau au coeur, qui luy disoit, tue toy, tue toy, elle deposante le remonstra qu'il ne le debvoit faire et qu'il se dampneroit, adjoustant que s'estoit le diable qui luy suggeroit cela, au contraire iceluy prevenu luy replicqua que c'estoit dieu, importunée enfin des continualles recherches qu'il luy faisoit affin de scavoir sy ledit Gerdolle persistoit à ses plaintes, elle luy dict que non, et s'en

deportoit, de laquelle nouvelle ledict prevenu fut tout resjouy, et montra meilleur visage qu'aparavent.' Had heard him called witch several times without seeking reparation, and when she asked him why, since he had enough means to defend himself, he replied 'ne s'entendre à justice'.

(11) Claudon Renouard, du Faing, 50

After having wife's deposition read to him, said he agreed totally with it. Previous year had bought a new mare, and Jean had been envious, saying he would do as he liked and would make a lot of money. Within less than 2 months lost both the mare and a bullock, which he suspected was his doing.

(12) Mengeon Thiehay, de la Voivrelle, 32

3 or 4 years earlier his pigs damaged a garden belonging to Jean, and he paid a fine, but Jean warned him to control them better or he would repent. Soon afterwards lost an ox worth more than 17 écus, and suspected him if he was witch as reputed. Had heard him called witch, and done so himself - no reparation sought.

(13) Pierron Jardelle, du Faing, 40

2 weeks before Christmas he was doing building work at house of late Didier Renouard for guardian of his children, and saw Jean taking straw several times. Reported this, and he had to pay 8 francs, over which he was angry; a mare then became ill, and would neither die nor recover, so he suspected his witchcraft. 2 weeks earlier he and his wife were going to market at St Dié, met Jean, and asked him if he was coming. Said he was not, and told him that he had not wanted to rent his fields, and would repent. After he had repeated threats the witness had 'prins occasion d'en faire plaincte, pour dequoy le destourner, il jecta la pierre au prey, donnant assez a cognoistre qu'il donneroit argent mais ne specifia la somme, aussi envoya il plusieurs particuliers apres luy, pour le divertir de sa volonté qu'estoit de le vouloir faire brusler comme il l'en menaça, l'appellant sorcier'. No reparation sought for this, and did not think he had suffered any harm, execpt that one teat of a cow had ceased giving milk.

(14) Agnes veuve Jean Demenge Babel, 50

Had heard him say, after Demenge Babel refused to sell him calves, 'que peult estre ayans lesdits veillons taicté le laict de ses vaches, il n'en feroit guieres de proffict', after which they all died. Thought this had been his witchcraft.

(15) Jacquat Didier Renouard, jeune fils de Coinchemont, 27

3 years earlier his brother Colas, who lived at Gemaingoutte, decided to move to father's house, which Jean was renting. He was angry at having to move out, and within 6 months brother and wife died within a week of one another - heard brother say he suspected him over wife's death.

(16) Catherine servante à Mengeon Renouard, de la Voivrelle, 22

A year earlier at Christmas had engaged herself for a year to maire Jean Simon; Jean was present, and did not know if he was envious, but during year had

illness which made her all swollen, and had always suspected this was his witchcraft. Had asked to borrow her master's cart and horses; one of latter was a difficult mare, which knocked him down; he said 'que le diable puisse rompre le col et les jambes des chevaux, et des servans et servantes' (master and mistress were absent). The mare immediately sickened, having something wrong with back legs which even an expert smith called in by her master could do nothing for.

(17) Barbeline femme Jean Jacques Gerardin, de la Voivrelle, 50

8 or 9 years earlier suspected him of causing loss of a cow, if he was witch as reputed. Had been angry because husband transferred his part of lease on some animals to Nicolas Cointzelin rather than to him.

(18) Bastienne femme Claude Gerardin, 'presentement hors du pays', 50

20 years earlier her husband had leased a garden from accused, who was his uncle, and despite protests Jean broke down the fence. Husband complained to Mengeon Henryat of le Faing, then maire of Ste Marguerite, and Jean told him he would repent. Soon after a cow died suddenly, and executioner said it was by poison, so she suspected this had been his doing.

(19) Jean Cointzelin, jeune fils de Raves, 15

2 weeks before, when he was ploughing with Claude Renouard, Jean had come up and said he had 'ung morceau au coeur' which was telling him to hang himself. Also talked about drowning himself, but was persuaded not to do this on being told he would damn himself.

(20) Jean fils feu Jean Babel, du Faing, 18

Story of piece of wood and remark about calves; suspected stillborn calf had been his witchcraft, if reputation was correct.

(21) Margueritte femme Pierron Jardolle, 38

Confirmed husband's deposition, which was read to her.

(22) Mengeon Renouard, de la Voivrelle, 40

7 or 8 years earlier Jean had been envious of a horse he had had for several years, saying he had got a good bargain. Was with other horses which did damage, for which he had witness fined by banyard; this led to fight in which he threw Jean to the ground. 3 years later the horse became furious, as if rabid, and died; suspected that if he was witch he had caused this.

(23) Claudon fils Jean Simon, de la Voivrelle, 23

Story about how previous May he wanted to borrow horses and cart to manure field, and young nervous mare knocked him down - was on ground for some minutes. Followed by threats, and illness of mare, which was now in such a state that they would be glad to take one écu for her, whereas previously worth 19. If he was witch as reputed believed this was his doing.

(28 February 1611)

(24) Le maire Jean Simonin, de la Voivrelle, 50

Previous year Jean had begged him several times to advise him on how to made donation of his goods, and to accompany him to St Dié for this purpose. Asked him reason, and he said 'qu'il y avoit bien quelques choses qu'on ne scavoit et qui pouvoit arriver, qu'il craindoit.' On another occasion witness talked to him about reputation as witch, saying he himself suspected him, to which he replied 'qu'il y avoit bien quelque chose', begging him to say nothing, which made him believe he was a witch.

26 February 1611; interrogation

Said he was about 60, manouvrier, had lived at le Faing for 20 years, since then at la Voivrelle. Father had lived at la Voivrelle, having come from Remomeix, and mother was from Rennegoutte in val de Champ. Father died when he was 10, and mother remarried at Raves, where she later died, while he went into service at Entre-deux-Eaux, Ginfosse, and other places. He had been married twice, first time 40 years earlier; first wife from Raves, second from St Jean d'Ormont, both now dead.

Admitted he had various quarrels, notably with le maire Jean Simon, the seigneur of la Faing (Didier Jean Colin), Demenge Thiehay, Jean Demenge Babel, Demenge Renouard, and Claude Renouard. Agreed he had wanted to be avenged on them, but said he lacked the means for this. Asked if any spirit had appeared to him, said that after quarrel with late Demenge Babel some 20 years earlier a figure like a man, dressed in yellow, had come to his house and suggested he should avenge himself. Also said that if he would believe in him he would make him rich, and gave him bag, but it contained something like rotten wood or leather, which became powder. Had renounced God, and begged mercy for this; name of seducer was Persin.

Later gave him powder - black/kill, grey/languish, white/heal. Tried it out on a cat, which he did not see again. Judges exhorted him to make full confession, since God had given him grace to make voluntary confession, and he would obtain mercy from God and good treatment from justice. Admitted series of maléfices against animals, and also killing Marguitte wife of late Jean Maire Claude, but said these were all he had done.

Denied various other charges which were made to him, although did admit remark about knowing what was said about him. Quarrel with Pierron Jardolle was because latter had offered to rent his land, then decided not to do so. Denied that he had talked of killing himself, or wanted to do so; later admitted he had thought of drowning himself. Asked about sabat, said he had only been once, and it was just him and Persin, who merely talked.

28 February 1611; confrontations

Confirmed earlier confessions, but did not want to add to them. Was then confronted with witnesses, except those whose charges he had already admitted. No reproaches, but in nearly all cases said they lied, and continued to deny charges.

Was on point of being taken back to prison, but exhorted to think of saving his soul by admitting all his faults, since he was placing himself in danger of eternal damnation. At this offered to make full confession.

Repeated story of temptation 20 years earlier much as before, save that now it was in fields, when he was angry because Demenge Babel's animals had damaged his crops. Had been to sabat, where there was beef and mutton, which was good to eat, but not as tasty as at home because unsalted. Had been more than 20 people there, of both sexes, all masked; danced to sound of flute and violins. Gave his master a hen every year. Master sometimes made them kiss his behind, sometimes his face; felt he was offending God, but could not do otherwise.

Master had wanted him to kill animals of his neighbours Claudon Jean Simon - in whose case he killed 2 sheep - Demenge Renouard and Jean Simon, but in latter cases he did not 'pour ce qu'il est pauvre, et estoient ses amis'. Had wanted him to kill Colas Renoud and his wife with powder, but he refused, saying he should do it himself if he wanted, for which he was beaten by Persin, who said he would do it himself. Did confess some additional maléfices, but still well short of full list - seems to have been making confession spontaneously, with very little prompting, and was not questioned about the others again.

Said that he had seen Jehenne gros Jean, Gregoire Mathieu, and Dieudonné Rohay (who were dead) and Colas Malgendre of Neufviller at sabat.

1 March 1611; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions.

2 March 1611; further repetition of confessions.

3 March 1611; procureur asks for death sentence

5 March 1611; Change de Nancy approves

15 March 1611; sentence carried out