

B 8708 no 6; witch 267, Claudon Jean Perrin dit Mathelon, de Brehimont

In 1600 was accused by Jean Thierion, and confronted with him. In 1611 further accusations by Marguittre veuve Jean Laurent (? 23 April) and Jennon la Mourratte. Latter said that he and Jean Seigaire were among leaders 'comme des plus riches, et qu'ilz debouttoient les pauvres'.

22 April 1611; informations préparatoires

(1) Dieudonne Jean Thierion de Brehimont, 70

Some 6 years earlier Claudon had seen pig outside his house, and remarked how fat it was; immediately fell ill, was as if rabid for 10 weeks, then died. Believed he was responsible, because father of witness had accused him of being witch, and because of long reputation.

(2) Demengeon Claude Girard, laboureur de Brehimont, 70

Reputation 10 or 11 years. Last jour de la Magdelaine had been a very damaging hailstorm, and he had lost barley to value of 300 francs; Claudon had mocked him, saying he would not be able to boast about having such a quantity of fine barley, as he had done before. This made him suspect he might have caused the hail. Had also been an occasion when Claudon told him he had seen Jean Thierion steal two sacks of his at market of St Dié; when they went to court he would say nothing, until called back and put under pressure. Believed this had been because he was afraid Thierion would accuse him of being a witch, as he had indeed done. Jean Grand Michiel of La Vacherie had told him he suspected he had bewitched one of his cows.

(3) Halby femme Demenge Colas Girard de Brehimont, 50

Some 14 years before she and her husband had rented a small piece of land and turned it into meadow; heard that Claudon was angry about this and had uttered curses against them. A cow they were leasing then broke its leg going to drink and had to be killed. Did not suspect him at that time, but later when he was formally accused thought that if he was a witch he might have been cause. (Damaged) suggestion that he had avoided quarrels.

(4) Marguittre femme Didier Seigaire de Brehimont, 60

Some 11 years earlier had heard accused quarrelling with Mengeon Claude Perrin, executed as a witch the following year, and they called one another witch; 'n'a aulcun soubcon contre lui parce qu'il se garde de prendre querelle avec les personnes', but was long reputed a witch.

(5) Mengeon Claude Perrin de Brehimont, 40

10 years earlier, when his father (same name) was in prison before execution as a witch, Claudon had told his chambermaid that if his father also accused him he would have to go and die with him and Jean Thierion, who had already named him. Long reputation.

(6) Colas Claude Girard de Brehimont, laboureur, 60

Told story of hailstorm and how accused had mocked him and his brother; common repute.

(7) Jean Symon de Brehimont, 40

Had been his neighbour for 12 years, and had lost various animals, but because Claudon had not threatened him had not suspected him, 'jointc mesme qu'il se sayt bien garder de menacer les personnes ny prendre querelle'. Long reputation.

(8) Colas Symon de Brehimont, 36

Had lost several beasts, but did not suspect him because they had not quarrelled; long reputation.

(9) Jennon femme Laurent Jean Mengenot de La Vacherie, 40

Previous year they had both been at mill of La Vacherie, and she started to talk of damage done by hail, saying how sorry she was for those who would have nothing to harvest, notably Colas Claude Girard who had lost a fine field of barley. He replied in mocking way that Girard would not be able to boast of his fine crop as he had done the previous year; did not know if he had helped to make hail, but he was commonly reputed a witch.

(10) Georgeon fils a Colas Claude , 21

Long reputation, and had heard Dieudonné Jean Thierion claim he had caused death of animals.

(11) Jean Berqua de Brehimont, 30

Had heard his quarrel with Mengeon Claude Perrin some 10 years earlier, when he told Mengeon that if his bull died he would have him taken and burned, but others told him to shut up and that he was a witch himself. Common repute.

(12) Curien fils Colas Ferry de Brehimont, 20

Some 4 years earlier he and their servant Mengeon (now living at Viller) had gone to woods on third day of Christmas, and saw Claudon ahead of them, talking loudly and waving his arms, although there was no-one with him, only a single black bird flying close to him. This continued for a long time, until witness caught up with him and wished him good-day, when he fell silent and bird vanished. After

a little while they went in different directions, and he and servant agreed that it must have been his master talking to him. Long reputation.

(13) Demenge Colas Girard de Brehimont, 60

Told story of anger over piece of land witness had rented, which was next to Claudon's land, and on which he had been gradually encroaching while it was disused; repeated wife's account of cow which broke its leg.

(27 April 1611)

(14) Mengeon fils Colas Jean Ferry de la Vacherie, 23

Repeated story of his strange behaviour and black bird on way to woods.

(15) Jean Michiel Ratonge de la Vacherie, 47

Some 10 years before they had a quarrel; Claudon's horses were regularly straying into his meadow, and he told him that next time he would make them jump the fence, so that if any were injured it would be his business. Claudon tried to strike him, but was prevented by others present, and witness called him an accused witch. Claudon was very angry, and within a day or two one of his cows became sick, remaining so for a month. Suspecting him of bewitching it, he went to see him and told him one of his cows had long been sick, and he wished he could heal it. In reply he assured witness it would recover, which it soon did, increasing his conviction that he had bewitched it, then cured it. Long reputation.

(16) Jean Gerardin de la Vacherie, ?

10 years earlier, as the prisoners convicted of witchcraft, who had accused Claudon, were being taken from Etival to St Dié for execution, he and Claudon were going to market at St Dié. Told Claudon 'que c'estoit ung pauvre homme et qu'il debveroit bien suyvre lesdits prisonniers pour veoir s'ils le deschargeroient, et en demander ung instrument, a quoy il feist responce qu'il ny voulloit aller, et les laisseroit courrir a tous les diables.' Long reputation.

23 April 1611; interrogation

Said he was Claudon Jean Perrin alias Mathelon, laboureur of Brehimont, aged about 60. Was native of village, father had been Jean Perrin, mother Mathelon; he had been married about 40 years earlier. Knew of accusations - had indeed been confronted with Marguittre Laurent that morning - but claimed he was innocent.

Said that hailstorm previous year had caused much damage to his own crops. Otherwise denied all charges, including all circumstantial detail.

27 April 1611; confrontations

No results; he continued to deny all the accusations, but failed to reproach any of the witnesses.

27 April 1611; procureur d'office asks for torture; Change de Nancy approves on same day.

5 May 1611; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews, then racked, maintained denials. Then told he would be racked harder, he started to confess. Some 14 years earlier he had been on way to buy grain at market of Raon, which he hoped to sell at a profit at St Dié. While in woods an hour before dawn became angry at thought that his son Claudon beat his horses inappropriately; a man in black appeared to him, asking if he had enough money to buy grain at Raon, offering to give him all he needed if he would renounce God and take him for master. He agreed 'tres legierement', and master then named himself as Persin, gave him money (horse-dung) and black powder to kill men and beasts.

Tried powder on a dog, but it ran off and did not know what became of it. Then used it on a cow and a pig of his own, which both died. Continually solicited to kill animals by Persin, then killed one of his horses, preferring to cause loss of his own animals than those 'des pauvres gens'. Had been angry because of accusation by Jean Thierion, and consented to master killing pig of Dieudonné Jean Thierion. Had used powder to cause broken leg of cow in resentment at hiring of field by Demenge Colas Girard. These were all the malefices he could remember.

Had helped to make hail previous year, at sabbat held between 'les gemelz'. Those present included la Mourratte, Marguittre Laurent, and Jean Seigaire, already executed; also Colas Claude Perrin and Dieudonné Jean Thierion of Brehimont, Jean Marechal hermit of Boullain, Didier Claudon Noel dit Choppat of Nompatelize, and Demenge Thieriot of Saulceray (a mason). Marguittre, his 'commere', told him Jean Claude Mathieu of La Bourgonce was there, but did not see him personally. More than 30 present, but did not recognize others.

Persin made hail in an earthen pot, by their consent, then threw contents into the air (this detail came from denunciation by Marguittre). At end of sabbat they all filed past Persin, who sat on a stone; women bowed to him, men lifted hats.

Said that Persin had come to him in prison, and assured him that he would prevent his feeling pain during torture; would stifle him and kill him if he did feel pain, provided he gave his consent - which he did. Had been in his throat, so that he felt no pain during torture, but finally left him saying he could protect him no longer.

Interrogated again same day, confirmed his confessions. Repeated list of accomplices.

6 May 1611; interrogation

Further repetition of earlier confessions. Procureur then asks for death sentence.

7 May 1611; Change de Nancy approves

18 May 1611; sentence carried out