

B 8708 no 4: witch 265; Jean Marechal, ermite de l'ermitage de Boulain

14 April 1611; informations préparatoires

Had been accused by Jennon femme Bertremin de Laval dit la Mouratte, and Jennon veuve Colas Ydoulx.

(1) Claudatte femme Symon de Besmont of Nompatelize, 24

Some 3 years earlier her husband and the accused had a dispute over the water from the village sewer, to which both laid claim. Eventually her husband installed a wooden dam to direct it on his land; same day an ox fell ill, and died two days later. Had always believed this was his witchcraft - had long reputation. Didier Claudon Noel had blamed him for loss of a cow.

(2) Alizon femme Georgeon Claudon Noel moictrier a la grange du haut ban, 20

Had heard from Catherine veuve of Colas Gelyat of l'Hoste du Bois that she had been told by one Mathiatte, then servant to accused, that he had taken her out fishing at night for crayfish under instructions not to take alarm at anything she saw or heard. Something mysterious had jumped between his legs in stream; had bought her a red bonnet as recompense. Common reput.

(3) Jacquot Claudon Noel de Nompatelize, 55

Reputed witch since conviction of his mother 18 or 19 years before. 12 years earlier had heard him say that when he went fishing he knew if he would catch anything before he put his foot in the water. Some 4 years before had sent officer to collect debt from Jean Noel of Nompatelize, who had said to him that his mother had begun to ruin him through her witchcraft, and now he wanted to finish the job; he had not sought reparation although others present had heard this.

Some 7 years before, when living in house of accused at Nompatelize, his wife or children had fed three cows on grass Jean had cut, and they promptly lost their milk. Witness was angry with household for using grass, in view of Jean's reputation, but cows slowly recovered - he and wife had always blamed Jean.

(4) Symon de Besmont de Nompatelize, 35

Some 3 years earlier he and the accused had contracted to cart some planks at Valdechamps, and put them in river at La Voivre for merchants of Raon; by accident he had carted a load instead of accused, who had told him he would repent, and would scarcely cart any more. A fine ox then sickened and died in 3 days, which he attributed to his witchcraft - long reputation.

(5) Jean de Besmont de Nompatelize, 55

Reputation some 20 years, since conviction of mother. Dispute over ploughing at boundary of field some 6 years earlier, in which accused threatened

him; within a few days he became ill, and was in bed for 2 weeks. At end of this time wife of accused brought him some boiled fish, saying her husband had caught it, and thought it might help him recover; started to feel better as soon as he ate a little, and soon recovered. Had heard him say he knew whether he would catch any fish as soon as he put his foot in the water. 9 years earlier had agreed to do ploughing in common, but had dispute because they both wanted to go to market at Raon on same Saturday morning - lost a foal the same day, which he blamed on witchcraft by Jean.

(6) Jean Regnauldin de Nompatelize, 36

20 years earlier, when they were both youths, went fishing together at night. Thunder and lightning began, at which he was so frightened that he wanted to go home; then heard loud voices, but only word he could make out was name of devil. He thought it was witches at sabbat, but accused told him it was only a quarrel at St Remy over theft of some beans in a garden. He thought they were too far off, and that voices came from wrong direction, but did not dare go home unless accused went with him; never wanted to keep company with him again - already reputed a witch. 8 years before, when he was officer at Nompatelize, had to collect debt from Jean Noel for accused; latter called accused witch, saying 'que sa sorciere de mere avoit commencé le ruyner et qu'il le voulloit achever'. As they left witness said to accused that he was 'un pauvre homme d'endurer telles injures, et en debvoit poursuyvre la reparation, a quoy il ne feit autres responses sinon dire tout froidement qu'il n'y scauroit que faire, et laisseroit ledit Jean Noel pour le diable'.

(7) Didier Claudon Noel de Nompatelize, 35

Some 9 or 10 years before, when accused refused to compensate him for damage done by his animals, called him witch several times, at which he said he would soon repent. Within a fortnight a fine cow sickened and died next day; was sure this was his witchcraft. Long reputation.

(8) Anthoine Doridant de Nompatelize, 35

Dispute some 5 years earlier because accused did not feed village herdsman as witness and other inhabitants had done by turns; told him he would repent 'et que peult estre Dieu ne luy feroit la grace d'avoir des bestiaulx pour les chasser devant ledit paistre'. 3 or 4 days later, while he was in woods, accused went and sat by his fire at home, asking his wife what animals they had, and if they had any cows in milk. She told him that only one of their cows was giving milk; next day it sickened and died in 24 hours, as also subsequently did a bull and a calf. Was sure this had been his witchcraft; long reputation. Some 16 years before a young boy named Colas Mourizat, then living in village, told how he had gone to fish for crayfish with accused, and seen a large black animal jump into water in front of him. Boy was frightened and wanted to cry for help, but Jean quickly told him it was a wolf, then got out of water saying that they would catch nothing that night.

(9) Jean Noel de Nompatelize, 52

Told of argument 4 years before over collection of debt when he called accused witch, saying that his witch of a mother had already begun to ruin him. Accused was very angry, and when he met wife of witness told her 'que tant plus le deposant penseroit amasser que de tant plus s'en yroit il a neant'. Had then lost 4 fine cows and other animals, so that he was reduced to great poverty, which he blamed on witchcraft by accused - long reputation.

(10) Mengeon Gelyat de la Bourgonce, 30

Some 5 years before he and accused had contracted with merchants of Raon to cart planks from Val de Champ to river at Bormont; accused was angry because witness had good horses and could cart half as much again in a load. Then lost 3 horses in a week and had to give up contract; suspected this was his witchcraft.

(11) Humbert Hanriat Mathieu de Villairville, 40

Some 12 years before, just after marriage, accused sought joint ploughing arrangement, to which witness would only agree for limited period, since he felt he had enough animals to do his own ploughing. Accused was furious, telling him he would repent, and he then lost 2 horses within a few days. Imputed losses to his witchcraft, long reputation.

(12) Claudatte femme Jean Berquey du Vivier, 29

Told how 15 years earlier, when living in stepfather's house, accused asked her to go crayfishing at night. Frightened when she heard something large fall into water in front of him, but he told her it was nothing, and she should not fear. Told parents who prohibited her from going again; he was already reputed a witch.

(13) Marion femme George Noel de Nompatelize, 30

Previous year he had wanted to rent a field near Boullain, offering to do their sowing in return, but their neighbour Jean Regnauldin also wanted it, and husband preferred to let him have it. His children told other children guarding animals that he was very angry; when grain grew it looked fine, but two thirds were lost to caterpillars, so they had to plant afresh. In view of reputation believed he had been cause.

(14) Annon femme Jean Regnauldin de Nompatelize, 30

Previous year her brother-in-law Claudon Malley of Le Mesnil had planned to sell field near Boullain to her husband for 40 ecus, and when accused said he wanted to buy it husband spread report that he would use 'retraite' if necessary. About 3 weeks after signing contract husband became ill, and was bedridden for 5 weeks in great danger. Believed this had been his doing, especially since Didier Claudon Noel had told her of threats he had made against her husband one day when carting, and because of common repute.

(15) Floratte femme Anthoine Doridant de Nompathelize, 30

Told of dispute with husband 2 years earlier over keeping of sheep, and visit to house when accused asked about their cows, with subsequent strange death of only one which gave milk. Imputed this to his witchcraft; long reputation.

(16) Barbeline veuve Georgeon Choppat de Nompatelize, 40

No presonal suspicion, but had heard son-in-law Symon de Besmont blame him for death of an ox which died strangely about 2 years earlier; long reputation.

(17) Marguite femme Colas Gariolle de Nompatelize, 30

Long reputation.

(18) Jennon femme Jacquot Claudon Noel de Nompatelize, 50

Told same story as husband about cows losing milk temporarily after being given grass from behind his house. The best of the calves had died, and although she did not know if he was responsible, if he began to confess he might tell truth about this. Long reputation.

14 April 1611; interrogation

Said he was Jean Mareschal, aged about 40, laboureur living at hermitage of Boullain, where he had been 'hermitte' for 18 years. Father had been Colas Bidat alias le Mareschal of la Bourgonce, who had died when he was only 12 weeks old; his mother Claudatte alias la Gabouratte, who had died in prison after confessing she was a witch some 20 years earlier. Agreed he had been identified as accomplice by La Mouratte; was then told he had also been named that day by Jennon veuve Colas Ydoux.

Denied all charges, not making even circumstantial admissions. Towards end said 'que sy notre seigneur estoit encore sur terre, l'on pourroit trouver des personnes qui deposeroient telles choses contre de luy aussy bien que Judas'. Was finally confronted with Jennon who maintained accusation, calling him 'un parfait sorcier'.

15 April 1611; confrontations

Said that if he confessed to being a witch he would damn himself. No reproaches, but no admissions either.

18 April 1611; procureur d'office asks for torture

20 April 1611; Change de Nancy approves

22 April 1611; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews and racked, but would confess nothing. Said he wished he was a witch, so that he could confess and be released from torment, but he was a good Christian.

27 April 1611; procureur suggests he be renvoyé, unless he finds reason to take further evidence against him. Approved same day by Change de Nancy.

5 May 1611; Claudon Jean Perrin of Brehimont repeats confessions, including accusation against Jean Mareschal, who was then confronted with him. Said he was one of those who made hail which did much damage in seigneurie of Etival at last la Magdelaine. Judges pointed out to Jean that he had also been accused by Jean Seigaire since his torture, then confronted with him.

At this point Jean started to confess. Had been seduced some 10 years previously, when very upset because during hay harvest one of his horses, maddened by the flies, had been killed when jumping a fence. Maitre Persin appeared to him, promising him plenty of money to buy other horses, so that he should never want. Gave him money which turned into leaves, and black powder. Tried this out on one of his pigs, which died next day. Had also killed ox belonging to Symon de Besmont, but otherwise had resisted master's demands that he kill men and animals, and been beaten for this.

Had been to sabbat 3 weeks after temptation, at les gemelz, taken on master's shoulders as by a wind. 30 or 40 people there, including several of those already executed (Jean Seigaire, Jennon la Mouratte, widow of Colas Ydoulx, Marguitte Laurent), Didier Choppat of Nompatelize, wife of Mengeon Jean Dieudonné de la Bourgonce, Claudon Jean Perrin and Dieudonné Jean Thierion of Brehimont. Had danced to sound of flute and eaten unsalted meat, then made hail.

Said he had resisted torture because of concern for his 7 children, who needed to be fed and brought up, but when accused by others had finally decided to confess, recommending his wife and children to Monsieur d'Etival and all those of the seigneurie.

6 May 1611; interrogation

Confirmed confessions in two separate sessions, but now discharged Didier Choppat, whom he was not sure he had seen. Again begged for good treatment of wife and children.

Same day procureur asked for death sentence.

7 May 1611; Change de Nancy approves

18 May 1611; sentence carried out