



Huguenots - www.huguenotsociety.org.uk

Who were the Huguenots?

The name given in the 16th century to the Protestants in France, particularly by their enemies.

The Protestant Reformation in the early 16th Century: its greatest protagonists were the German Martin Luther and the Frenchman Jean Calvin. In France Calvinism penetrated all ranks of society, especially those of the literate craftsmen in the towns and of the nobility.

The charter of Edward VI (1547-53) enabled the first French Protestant church to be set up in England. Descended from this church is the one in Soho Square, London.

In 1589 the Protestant Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, inherited the French throne and in 1593 converted to Catholicism to try to end civil war. He issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598 which gave the Huguenots widespread religious liberty.

However, under his grandson, Louis XIV, the Huguenots' privileges were gradually eroded. In 1685 Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes, exiled all Protestant pastors but forbade the laity to leave France. However, about 200,000 Huguenots left France, settling in non-Catholic Europe - the Netherlands, Germany, especially Prussia, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and even as far as Russia. The Dutch East India Company sent a few hundred to the Cape to develop the vineyards in southern Africa. About 50,000 came to England, and perhaps about 10,000 moving on to Ireland. So many inhabitants of these islands have Huguenot blood in their veins.

The Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland was created (1885) to promote the publication and spread of knowledge about the history of French Protestant migration. There is an Irish Section with its own website.

Is My Family Huguenot?

You may use the Huguenot Library to do your own research.

The Huguenot Library is currently housed with UCL Special Collections at The National Archives. The Library is open to Huguenot Library readers on Tuesdays from 9.00 to 19.00 and on Wednesdays from 9.00 to 17.00.

The collections are accessible by appointment only. Appointments should be made **at least two weeks in advance** of the planned visit by contacting the Librarian:

By e-mail (recommended): library@huguenotsociety.org.uk

By phone: 020 7679 2046. (Please note that the office is only staffed part-time, so you may need to leave a message on the answerphone).

By post: The Huguenot Library, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

There is little information in the Library records after 1800 as most of the Huguenot churches had closed by then.

It is essential therefore before making an enquiry to work back to the early nineteenth century using civil registration, parish records or other sources.

Family History

The Huguenot Society provides a variety of resources that can help those searching for their ancestors: its own publications, substantial collections of family history material in the Huguenot Library and leaflets providing guidance. Further support and information is available for the Society's members.

Publications

Most volumes of genealogical interest have been digitized on fully searchable CD-ROM, which can be purchased from the Society.

Postal enquiries should be addressed to:

The Huguenot Society, PO Box 444, Ruislip, HA4 4GU.