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A Guide to tracing your poor Huguenot ancestors in London Huguenot records

It is assumed that you have already searched the relevant Quarto Series (QS) volumes available in book form at the Huguenot Library and other libraries and archives, or as purchasable CD-ROM, especially volumes 52, 53 and 55. A list of the QS volumes and CD-ROM can be found on our website at www.huguenotsociety.org.uk/publications.

The two principal repositories of Huguenot records are the [Huguenot Library](#) and the [French Protestant Church of London](#) (FPCL) in Soho Square. In many ways the two archives complement each other and no search would be complete without searching both. The records are hand written in French but once you have mastered the key words, you should be able to manage. A [leaflet](#) listing many of these key words is available on the website.

The most influential and the most successful families are fairly easy to trace, assisted by published books and the will extracts compiled by Henry Wagner in the 19th century. QS 60, published in 2007, contains indexed transcripts of these will extracts. The most difficult ancestors to track down are those who, though not influential, nevertheless managed to keep themselves out of poverty, and those who assimilated quickly into English society.

If your ancestor was poor and remained so, and stayed in London, there is a good chance that he or she appears in the documents in one or both of the repositories named above. Many tradesmen, especially the numerous silk weavers, had spells of no employment and partial employment on a low wage. Their names appear in many lists such as those of poor relief (cash, clothing and bread), pensions, charity schools and apprenticeships. A few lists have been transcribed, as you will see below.

Most, if not all, of the Huguenot and Walloon churches kept a fund out of which they supported their poor members. In addition, there was a fund known as the Royal Bounty. This was funded from the Privy Purse and distributed by a body called the French Committee. Its organisation and the many lists of those it assisted, are outlined in a [separate leaflet](#).

Poor relief records of the Threadneedle Street archive

By far the largest Huguenot church in London was Threadneedle Street, including its daughter church of L'Eglise Neuve in Spitalfields. Their combined archive is kept at their present day successor, The French Protestant Church of London (FPCL) in Soho Square.¹ See QS 50 for a handlist to this collection.² Many of its archives have been filmed and a full set of the microfilm, kept at the Huguenot Library office at Gower Street, are available for Fellows to view on Fridays, by appointment.

Grants of cash at Threadneedle Street

This developed into quite a sophisticated system from 1721. The deacons decided who of its members should have relief, how much and how frequently. At the first confirmed sign of need the subject would receive a 'passade' or 'extraordinaire'. This was a one-off payment to cover an emergency such as a doctor's visit and/or medical necessities. If there was a need for temporary assistance, a 'billet du mois' (monthly sum) or 'ordinaire' would be paid, and if there seemed little prospect of an improvement in the fortunes of a family, it went onto the regular list (pauvres réglés or pauvres ordinaires). These were paid weekly and usually doubled at Christmas time.

Manuscripts to search:

All relief 1721-90	mss 81,82,83,84
Reglés 1768-1845	mss 75,76,77
Extraordinaires 1761-1844	mss 84,113,107,89A,76,79,65A,78.

Clothing allocations at Threadneedle Street

Shoes and made to measure garments were supplied to poor members at Christmas time.

Manuscripts to search:

1687-1721	mss 74,68
1756-65	miscellaneous paper 73
1758-72	mss 146,147
1791-1810	Huguenot Library ms H/C2/5*
1811-24	ms 72
1825-60	ms 219

*Somehow this ms has ended up in the wrong repository.

The surviving records of the churches which amalgamated with Threadneedle Street are also in the FPCL archive. These include the **Poor relief records of the Church of The Artillery:**

Manuscripts to search:

1720-29	ms 185A	1769-84	ms 305
1729-46	ms 182	1781-86	ms 259
1746-84	ms 181		

¹ To consult records at the FPCL it is necessary to make an appointment with the archivist. Please contact the Church at: 020 7437 5311

² R. Smith, *Archives of the French Protestant Church of London: a Handlist*, Huguenot Society Quarto Series, 50 (1972). The handlist is arranged by schedule, but Appendices 2 and 3 give numerical lists of the manuscripts, enabling the entry for them to be found.

Poor relief records held in the Huguenot Library

The Huguenot Library is the repository for a number of Huguenot archive collections, including that of the French Protestant Hospital and the Westminster French Protestant School.

Westminster and Spitalfields poor relief records

Manuscripts to search:

Chapel Royal, St James, Westminster poor lists 1738-1809: Burn Donation ms J7.

Church of Le Quarré, Westminster bread charity 1810-36: Burn Donation ms J23.

La Soupe de Spitalfields (QS 55):

This was converted to a bread charity in 1741 and then operated by the French Hospital. It gave help from November to April.

Manuscripts to search:

Recipients in 1827 ms C1/4 pp 17-18

Recipients in 1833 ms C1/4 at the end.

The Boislin Charity (The bequest of Colonel de Boislin):

This charity was administered from 1753 to 1884 by the French Committee for the distribution of the Royal Bounty. By the latter date the Committee officially no longer existed, so the charity was taken over by the French Hospital Directors. All lists of recipients, residents of Soho or Spitalfields, are in the Huguenot Library.

Manuscripts to search:

1753-1805 Royal Bounty archive ms 47 (listed among the minutes)

1811-21 Royal Bounty archive ms 93

1808-14 French Hospital archive ms H/L 3/1

1819-74 French Hospital archive ms H/L 3/2

1875-84 French Hospital archive ms H/L 3/3

Records to be found across both repositories

All French Hospital records, referenced ms H/ are to be found at the Huguenot Library; those referenced FPCL, at the French Protestant Church of London.

Pensions

The Coqueau and the Basse charities:

Spinster Ester Coqueau left money both to the Threadneedle Street church and to the French Hospital, each bequest being to finance pensions to 10 poor maids or widows over 50 years old. Later her cousin Jane Basse made a similar bequest just to Threadneedle Street.

Manuscripts to search:

FPCL Coqueau, applicants 1752-1864	mss 65 and 248
FPCL Coqueau, recipients 1745-1867	mss 65,213,228
FPCL Coqueau, recipients 1883-86	ms 227
FPCL Coqueau, recipients 1907-21	miscellaneous paper 70
FPCL Basse 1753-1869	mss 65, 213, 228
French Hospital Coqueau, applicants 1745-1801	ms H/L2/2
French Hospital Coqueau, recipients 1745-1898 and H/J36	mss H/L2/1, H/C1-4,H/C3/1-2

Charity Schools

There were at least four of these.

The Threadneedle Street school:

Usually referred to as two schools, one for boys and one for girls, it was run by the deacons and paid for out of Church funds. They functioned from 1719 to 1802, though from then to 1852 the deacons paid for their poor children to attend other local schools. For lists of names, see:

K. Le May, 'The Pupils of the Threadneedle Street Church's Charity School 1719–1802, Part 1', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 29 (2008), pp. 107-121. [girls]

K. Le May, 'The Pupils of the Threadneedle Street Church's Charity School 1719–1802, Part 2a', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 29 (2009), pp. 245-254. [boys, 1719-1749]

K. Le May, 'The Pupils of the Threadneedle Street Church's Charity School 1719–1802, Part 2b', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 29 (2010), pp. 421-429. [boys, 1749-1802]

The Westminster French Protestant School (WFPS):

Housed in Windmill Street off Tottenham Court Road, this opened in 1747. This institution was financed by Huguenot subscribers and the pupils boarded. It took boys and girls until 1812, then just girls until its closure in 1924. For lists of names, see:

W.M. Beaufort, 'Records of the French Protestant School, Founded by Huguenot Refugees, 1747', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 4 (1891-1893), pp. 355-403.

S. Minet, 'École de Charité française de Westminster', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 12 (1918-1919), pp. 91-117.

The lists include the names of a few applicants who were past the age of entry before a vacancy occurred. Nevertheless, the family details may show a connection with a family you are investigating. Some notes on parents are in QS 56, pp. 110-115.

Two schools were funded from Royal Bounty money but sadly no lists of pupils are known to have survived

Apprenticeships

Both the Consistory of the Threadneedle Street church and the Directors of the WFPS paid apprenticeship fees for the pupils of their schools, both boys and girls.

For **Threadneedle Street** see K. Le May, 'The Threadneedle Street Church's Charity Schools: Apprenticeships of Former Pupils', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 28 (2007), 695-708

For the **WFPS** see K. Le May, 'The Westminster French Protestant Charity School: Apprenticeships of Former Pupils, 1750-1815', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 27 (2001), 561-582

Additionally, several bequests were made to finance apprenticeships for the poor. Records of these are in the **Huguenot Library**.

The Seignoret Bequest 1720-1793: Apprentices were chosen by the directors of the French Hospital and names appear in the Minutes of the Court of Governors.

Manuscripts to search: mss H/A/1/1 and 2

The Mounier Bequest 1776 to the present day: Apprentices were chosen in the same way.

Manuscripts to search: mss H/A/1/1 and 2, H/L/4/1, 4/2 and 4/3.

The Delaigle Bequest 1741 to c1877: Applicants were selected by officials of the Society of Saintonge and Angoumois, which still exists today.

Manuscripts to search: SS A1 to A7.

The Huguenot Library is unable to produce records of living persons without their consent, in keeping with the terms of the Data Protection Act.