

# Development of the Linen Trade in Lisburn

Strangely enough the Lisburn textile industries are indebted in no small measure to Louis XIV of France, for in 1685 that monarch began a campaign of persecution against the French Protestants, or Huguenots. These refugees who fled from France enriched many parts of Europe, but perhaps none as much as the Lagan Valley.



In 1762, over 300 weavers paraded through Lisburn waving blackthorn sticks as a protest against the threat of unemployment, though it is worth noting in this respect that the better off citizens of Lisburn have a long tradition of generosity. The Barbour's provided 350 houses for their employees, and the outbreak of cholera in 1830 was followed by the building of a fever hospital on the Dublin Road by private subscription. By such means the worst effects of nineteenth century capitalism were softened in Lisburn.

In 1764, full scale production of linen began, aided by the opening of the Lagan Navigation in 1765.

1784 saw the beginning of spinning linen thread and in 1831 the works moved to Hilden creating over one and a half thousand jobs.

1789 brought the creation of the steam engine and in 1839 a railway was built connecting Lisburn with Belfast.