

NORWICH SCENES

Strangers' Hall

With the coming of Elizabeth I to the throne in 1558, England became a Protestant country for good, but the battle between Protestantism and Catholicism continued in Europe.

During her reign the French monarchy made determined efforts to defeat Protestantism, and instigated a massacre of Protestants on St Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1572, an event regarded by Brother Thomas and other expositors of Revelation as the termination of the 1,260 years of witness of Revelation 11:3. In the Netherlands, the northern provinces adopted Protestantism and struggled for freedom against the rule of the Spanish King Philip II, declaring their independence in 1581 and successfully fighting off all efforts to subdue them.

During Elizabeth's reign

England became a place of refuge for Protestants from France and the Netherlands. In 1565 the civic leaders of Norwich invited cloth manufacturers from the Netherlands to settle in Norwich and ply their trade there. By 1579 no fewer than 6,000 Protestants from Europe had settled in Norwich, making up a third of the population, open spaces behind existing houses being developed for housing and workplaces. As a reminder of the influx from Holland, many of the old houses have Dutch-style gables, and squares are called 'plains' rather than 'squares', from the Dutch *plein*. Our picture shows the entrance to Stranger's Hall, a magnificent medieval merchant's house, now a museum owned by the City Council. Its name commemorates the fact that, during the reign of Elizabeth, its owner, Sir Thomas Southerton, a rich wool and clothing merchant, used part of the premises as a kind of reception centre for Dutch refugees, whom he arranged to settle in Norwich with a view to improving the local weaving industry. This move was very successful; the city prospered, and in the seventeenth century Norwich was second only in importance to London amongst the cities of England.—*Tony Benson*

