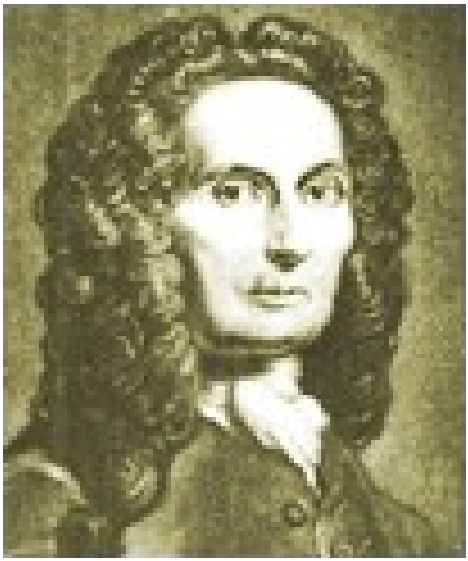
First True Stories

Abraham De Moivre
A Huguenot

(1667 - 1754)



Written by Christina Eastwood

Abraham de Moivre

If you were able to take a stroll through the streets of London around three hundred years ago, you might bump into a Huguenot gentleman. Literally bump into him that is!

Abraham De Moivre, who was born in France on 26th May, had a habit of reading as he walked from the home of one pupil to another. He was a poor man and could only earn enough money to live by working all the time. He taught either in private houses or in the popular London coffee-houses – where he also earned money by playing chess. His walks from house to house were the only spare time for reading that he had. But Abraham De Moivre was a very good mathematician and is still known today for his dis-cov-er-ies.

When the French King, Louis XIV, was pers-e-cu-ting Huguenot Christians many of them fled to England. The Huguenots arrived in our country with very few belongings and so they were very poor. However, although they had had to leave their possessions behind, the king could not make them leave their talents behind! The Huguenots brought with them their skills and abilities. Abraham was already a brill-i-ant mathematician when he arrived in England.

He especially liked studying the work of Sir Isaac Newton. It was a book by Newton that he read as walked from house to house. He would pull out pages at a time to read as he could not carry the whole book. Abraham even wrote his own book and became a friend of Isaac Newton. Abraham De Moivre even had a theorem named after him: De Moivre's Theorem.

Maybe one day you will be a brilliant mathematician and learn about De Moivre's theorem.

For now, you could try a little theorem for yourself. Supposing I said to you: "There is no number that we can say is the BIGGEST." Would I be right? Have a think what do you think is the biggest number?

Well, I don't know what number you said, but lets imagine you said 'a thousand'. Now ask somebody, "Is there a number bigger than a thousand?" I hope they will tell you "Yes, one thousand and one!" You see, we can always add one more! There is no end to counting. You might run out of words to call the numbers, but we can't run out of numbers! We can always add another one!