

Louis Braille

Birth: 4 January, 1809 in Coupvray, France

Death: 6 January, 1852 in Paris, France

Occupation: professor and inventor



When Louis was 3 years old, he had a terrible accident in his father's harness workshop, where he grabbed an awl (a sharp tool for making holes) which slid and damaged his eye. The eye got infected and the infection spread to his other eye, blinding him in both of them!

Louis stayed at his school for another 2 years but he couldn't learn everything by just listening. Aged 10, he was granted a scholarship to The Royal Institute for Blind Youth in Paris, where the huge books in the library had raised letters but they were still very hard to read. Louis needed a new way of learning.

An idea came to Louis when a soldier, Charles Barbier, visited his school in 1821 with a new invention called 'night writing'. This was a writing system used by soldiers, made up of 12 raised dots, for sending secret messages.

Louis then worked on making the system simpler and trimmed the 12 dots down to 6. He was only 15 when he did this. He then published his first ever braille book in 1829, when he was 20.

At first, people were not convinced that the system would catch on and schools didn't teach it until after Louis' death. Braille was only taught when a group of men known as the Royal National Institute for the Blind decided to take up the task of introducing braille to the world in 1868.

The braille system is now an international reading and writing system and helps millions of blind people with all parts of their lives, from reading to travelling.

