



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about the brothers,
THOMAS and HUGH MYDDELTON

Two brothers born in north Wales in the 16th century have significant links with The Hundred Parishes. Thomas and Hugh Myddelton were younger sons of Richard, governor of Denbigh Castle. Both came to London to seek their fortune.

Thomas Myddelton was born in 1550, the fourth son of the family. He did indeed make his fortune in trade and became Lord Mayor of London in 1613.

In 1595, Thomas Myddelton bought Chirk Castle in north Wales; it passed down through his descendants until it was acquired by the National Trust in 1981.

In 1615, despite having a castle in Wales, Thomas bought the manor of Stansted Mountfitchet as his country seat and began the erection of a new Stansted Hall. That building was itself replaced in the 19th century by the present Stansted Hall.

Thomas died in 1631 and was buried at St Mary's Church, Stansted. His funeral was lavish; the family even paid for the mourners to be suitably dressed. His fine memorial inside the church, shown above, has a life-size effigy under a decorated arch with an extensive inscription in Latin.



The original family home, Denbigh Castle, was badly damaged in the Civil War and is now a ruin, looked after by the Welsh heritage agency, Cadw (pronounced Kadu).

Thomas's younger brother, Hugh Myddelton, was born in 1560, the sixth son. After coming to London, he was apprenticed to a goldsmith and later became Royal Jeweller to King James I.

Hugh became a self-taught engineer. He was largely responsible for construction of The New River which ran for some 20 miles, taking fresh water from springs near Great Amwell into London. He helped fund the project and also secured financial help from the king. On the right, we show a stretch of the New River at Great Amwell, above the level of the adjacent road.



The photo below shows one of the springs that fed the New River: this is Emma's Well, apparently named after the wife of King Canute.



The New River was opened in 1613. It followed the land contours so that gravity carried the water all the way to the Clerkenwell area of London. In 1620 a half mile extension was dug to supplement the supply by taking water from the nearby River Lea. After 400 years, the man-made New River, now operated by Thames Water, still takes fresh water to the citizens of London.

Hugh Myddelton died in London in 1631. A memorial stone, pictured on the right, was erected on an island in the river at Great Amwell and various roads and properties along the route bear his name.



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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.