

The New River

Long ago, people in London got all their water out of the River Thames. They drank the river water. They washed in the river water. It was not very clean water. Only the big houses had wells of their own.

The water from the river was carried by pipe to storage tanks called cisterns. The cisterns had taps fitted on them. The cisterns were often open to the sky. Dust and dirt could get into them. Bad boys threw rubbish into them.

People had to fetch their own water from the cisterns. They could also buy water. Water-carriers carried the water through the streets in big wooden containers. They sold water to people.

Hugh Myddleton owned a firm in London. He thought London should have clean water. In Hertfordshire there were good springs of clean water. But they were thirty-eight miles away from London. Hugh thought a river could be made just to bring water from the springs to London. He got the great men of the City of London to agree to his idea. The king helped with some money.



In those days there were no big diggers. All the digging was done by hand with spades. It took the men who worked on Hugh's plan five years to dig the New River. They made a new lake called a *reservoir* to hold the water. What a lot of digging!

When the work was finished London had clean water. Hugh's New River still brings water to London today. Beside it is a long path. Today you can take a walk beside the New River.

Where does *your* water come from? Do you know where your nearest *reservoir* is?