

TRIUMPH 1621 – SOME BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE LORD MAYOR'S SHOW?

The Lord Mayor's Show is the longest surviving civic street procession in the world. It takes place today, as it always has, to celebrate the inauguration of the new Lord Mayor of the City of London (not to be confused with the Mayor of London, a much more recent invention). It was traditionally held on 29th October, the day after the feast of St Simon and St Jude, and was composed of a mixture of pageant devices designed around classical and/or historical themes, a procession, and a waterborne flotilla escorting the Lord Mayor up the Thames to Westminster to swear his oath of loyalty to the monarch. Although the date has changed (it is now held in November), as has the route, in its essence it remains the same – lavish, noisy, and colourful free street theatre for Londoners and visitors to the City alike.

WHO WAS THOMAS MIDDLETON?

Thomas Middleton, b. 1580, d. 1627, was a Londoner and one of the most important dramatists of the period who from early in his career wrote theatrical pieces for both the playhouses and for civic entertainments such as the Lord Mayor's Show. His first mayoral show was a collaboration with fellow dramatist Anthony Munday, in 1613. By 1621 he had such a strong reputation in City circles that he was given the salaried post of City Chronologer, a kind of PR role. That same year, with his creative partner and artificer Garrett Christmas, he won the commission to produce the Show for Edward Barkham of the Drapers' Company, which was printed with the title *The Sunne in Aries*.