



The Worshipful Company of Distillers

---

## The Master's Speech – 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet

*Guildhall, London – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022*

---

Wardens, My Lord Mayor, Mr. Sheriff, Visiting Masters, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Worshipful Company of Distillers, I bid you the warmest of welcomes to this evening's Banquet marking 350 years since our Company was granted the Livery by the Aldermen of the Corporation of London in 1672.

It really is fantastic to see so many of you here tonight, thank you all for supporting our Livery so well through your attendance.

Thank you, too, to my wonderful sub-committee who helped organise this evening: Liverymen Jonathan Orr Ewing and Paul Varney; our Learned Clerk Ed Macey-Dare; and, of course, the indomitable Kim Lyons - without whom this event just would not have happened

In addition, I should like to thank our Beadle, John Cash and the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers from the Honourable Artillery Company, for keeping us all in order throughout the evening! Thank you gentlemen

Our grateful thanks also to the following:

to the wonderfully talented musicians from the Guildhall School of Music – the jazz quartet and the baroque ensemble – who have kept us so well entertained with a wonderful selection of music from the last 350 years;

to David Parrott, our Honorary Chaplain for agreeing to conduct our special church service and his usual inimitable grace

to Mark Grove and his team from The Cook & The Butler - and especially their chef, our very own Liveryman Jean Deillon - for the fabulous food that we have enjoyed tonight;

to our Spirit & Wine Committee (made up of Past Masters Allan Cheeseman and Terry Barr, together with Honorary Steward David Hunter) for their help in selecting - and matching - all the magnificent wines and spirits for tonight's menu;

to Diageo – and, in particular, Corporate Freeman Dan Mobley and Liveryman Karen Bennett - for very generously supplying the Pimm's and that we enjoyed at the Reception, and the Johnnie Walker Royal Warrant Holder Platinum Jubilee special label whisky at the dinner itself.

In your menu cards, you will have read a short history of the founding of the WCoD. It is a source of some regret that our founder, Sir Theodore de Mayerne, died in 1655 and thus did not live to witness the granting of the Livery in 1672. We owe him and his colleagues a huge debt of gratitude for their vision for quality control in the production of spirits and for the purpose of a Distillers' Livery Company. That foresight has enabled us to be where we are today.

1672 - War in Europe, increasing levels of taxation on the alcohol industry, political unrest, social deprivation and poverty ... sound familiar? Goodness me, how depressing it is that these issues still plague our society, our businesses, and our relationships with our European neighbours, today. "Togetherness" was required in 1672; and "unity" of spirit is required in 2022 in order to face up to adversity and needless aggression.

We have every reason to be proud of our past achievements, especially those of the last 30 years, which include: mentoring young people at the start of their careers in the distilling industry; supporting educational bodies such as International Centre for Brewing & Distilling and the Wine & Spirit Education Trust with awards and scholarships. Running our own industry-related events, such as the City Debate and the Business of Spirits. and I'm very proud to announce that, starting next year, we will be the first drinks Livery Company to join 7 existing Livery Companies and key industry sponsors to support The City Food Lecture, which will be rebranded as The City Food & Drink Lecture as a result of our participation.

We are very proud and greatly value our association with our military affiliates, HMS MONTROSE, 825 Naval Air Squadron, A (London Scottish) Company, The London Regiment (recently redesignated as "G (Messines) Company Scots Guards, 1st Battalion The London Guards") and 603 Sqn.

Commander Claire Thompson took over command of HMS Montrose in October 2021 and, since that time, has overseen four interceptions in the Middle East, seizing illegal narcotics amounting to £97m and thus keeping roughly 18 tonnes of drugs off the streets of the UK - which would otherwise have ended up for illegal use here. Commander Thompson, you are most welcome.

825 Naval Air Squadron were the lead aircraft in a Lynx Wildcat helicopter in the first wave of flypast at the Platinum Jubilee. It's an honour for us to be associated with such a distinguished responsibility and we're delighted that Commander Hugh Saltonstall from NAS 825 joins us tonight. Commander Saltonstall, you are most welcome.

Our Liveryman, Major Jamie Barklem, received the Chief of General Staff Commendation in this year's New Year's Honours in recognition of his work as Officer Commanding A (London Scottish) Company The London Regiment, prior to its redesignation as "G (Messines) Company Scots Guards, 1st Battalion The London Guards" Jamie is just back from a six month operational deployment in Iraq, where he was a senior military advisor within NATO Mission Iraq's professional security education division. He and his colleague Major Monty D'Inverno, the current Officer Commanding

of G Company (pre and post the recent re-designation, are both here tonight and both most warmly welcome.

And to cap a truly outstanding year so far for our military affiliates, Sq Ldr Derek Read at the age of 60, was commander of 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron in the Platinum Jubilee parade. 603 is the only squadron with the Queen as it's honorary air commodore, so, as he noted, a huge privilege for him and us by association.

These key roles are the very definition of why our association with our military affiliates is so important. Keeping trade lanes to and from the UK safe, enabling free and open business with our industry partners abroad.

Yes, we can be very proud of our past and present achievements. but what does the future hold? What must we do to make sure none of the hard work going in now and gets lost in future .?

Respect and kindness, a joint sense of purpose, a true culture of embracing and reflecting everyone who works in our industry within this Livery is essential if we are to remain relevant and vibrant. Our industry has a huge and diverse pool of talent, ranging from distillery owners, bar tenders, business owners, young distillers,, marketeers, , sales people and others in key industry roles all of whom have a hand in delivering products that we as The Worshipful Company of Distillers celebrate and promote. Our stated aim is to be at the very heart of this industry.

In order to deliver against this , we have a responsibility to deliver a Livery that reflects our industry demographic. To help achieve that with the pace that is required, we have recently created a new Diversity & Inclusion working group. This group has been tasked with some immediate deliverables. A Diversity & Inclusion policy, and a Conduct Protocol both of which will provide the template of the behaviours that we would expect from all Liverymen, setting out 21st Century values. However, this isn't just about a statement on our website, but action. The group will be looking at a wide number of areas - including governance, how we recruit and retain members, and our programme of events. We recognize that we need to change with the times and are 100% committed to the implementation of that change, so that we are fit for purpose, not only in 2022, our 350th Anniversary year, but in the decades to come. All of us across the Livery have a duty to deliver this

To be clear, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social and cultural backgrounds are no barriers to progression. those who share our stated aims and values are welcome and will be able to achieve whatever they wish in our great Company.

Three Liverymen are worthy of particular mention tonight Michael Urquart, Karen Betts and Sarah Dickson. Michael, the Chairman of our Scottish Committee, and his brother, Ian, were both awarded CBEs in Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Birthday Honours for services to the Scotch whisky industry and for their charitable work in the Moray region of Scotland; Karen as former CEO of the SWA, awarded an OBE for outstanding leadership to the Scotch whisky industry and for being a powerful personal advocate of trade opportunities and technical support in trade negotiations.

And Sarah , former Int Director at the SWA and since Aug 2019, British High Commissioner to The Bahamas, awarded an OBE for services to bilateral relations between the UK and The Bahamas and to British Nationals in The Bahamas. We offer them all our warmest and heartiest congratulations

With the celebration of 350 years of our Livery, comes the need for charitable message to be heard and acted upon more than ever.

I'm proud that our Special Appeal for Ukraine, benefiting the Disasters Emergency Committee, raised £40,000, once our donations were matched through the Big Give. Thank you to all Livery members who supported this important cause, especially helping the Ukrainian refugees in their ongoing time of need.

My 350th Appeal is for all Liverymen to donate to it, to help our charitable partners. These are The Drinks Trust, who offer vital help to those in the drinks industry in urgent need, people who have worked in our industry who now, without our support, just won't be able to make ends meet. The Alcohol Education Trust partnering with schools, parents, local community groups and police forces across the country, teaching young people to have a healthy, safe and responsible relationship around alcohol as they begin their adult lives.

And , Future Youth Zone in Barking & Dagenham, one of London's most deprived areas, where 50% of young adults live in poverty, a safe environment and space which delivers opportunity and time for young people to meet, socialize and learn skills that perhaps they didn't even realize they had. We help fund the work of this charity through the Lord Mayor's Appeal, and his charitable aims which so mirror our own.

The aim of my 350th Anniversary Appeal, is that every Livery member supports of our charitable work making a difference to young people, including those within our industry, as well as our vocational training & education. My plea to you tonight, if you have not already done so, is to please donate to The Distillers' Charity.

All funds that you donate will go to our wonderful grantees, helping their beneficiaries to thrive. Standing together we can be proud as a Livery of our charitable work, especially during this our 350th Anniversary. Thank you.

This leads me nicely onto one final thing that I have to do before I finish. For some time now, myself, Past Master Martin Riley, Middle Warden Lorne MacKillop and the Learned Clerk have been working on a very special secret project for this evening (John / Kim to pass me the bottle)

This bottle is from a cask very generously donated to us by Irish Distillers specifically for this event, which produced 187 bottles of Jameson Black Barrel Whiskey.

The WCoD owe a huge debt of thanks to Irish Distillers, especially their marketing director, Brendan Buckley and his team of Kevin O'Neill and Anna Kelly for enabling us to make this happen by not only agreeing to produce and donate the cask, but also to fund the cost of shipping and UK duty on it

as well also David Howarth at Jameson's UK agents Pernod Ricard UK and Tom Heard and Tony Enoch from NUDE Brand Creation all helped – so thank you all !

It therefore gives me great pleasure, my Lord Mayor, to present to you this special commemorative bottle of single malt Irish Whiskey..The label states, “bottled by Irish Distillers for The Worshipful Company of Distillers to present to its Honorary Liveryman, the Rt. Hon. Vincent Keaveny, 693rd Lord Mayor of London, on the occasion of the Company's Banquet at Guildhall on 15th June 2022 celebrating 350 years since the enrolment of its Livery”.

It is intended for fund-raising for however you and your Lord Mayor's Appeal Team may see fit, during the remainder of your Mayoral year, to help boost and fulfil your Charitable ambition. Please therefore accept this sample bottle from us tonight – the rest is - the rest is safely secured in our cellars and remains at your disposal.

I feel certain that our founder, Sir Theodore de Mayerne, would be very proud of where the Company is today.

I am also so very proud to be leading our Livery at this time, with such great support from our Wardens, Court and the Livery, continuing the work of the many, many committed and visionary Masters before me - some of whose names we recognise in tribute tonight, with our table planning.

Thank you, once again, to you all for coming tonight and celebrating this very significant milestone in the Company's history. Here's to the next 350 years!

Chris Porter

*Master*

*2021 - 2022*