



Worshipful Company of Distillers 350th Anniversary Banquet

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WEDNESDAY 15TH JUNE 2022
THE RT HON THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON
ALDERMAN VINCENT KEAVENY

(EDITED VERSION)

Master, Wardens, Aldermen, Sheriff, Liverymen, Ladies and Gentlemen...

Good evening.

As Lord Mayor and as a proud Distiller myself, I am very excited to be able to join you all for this banquet to celebrate the 350th anniversary of our Company.

I should almost say, di-still my beating heart.

Thank you very much to the Master for your kind toast.

I would like to congratulate, you, the Wardens and the whole company: -

...Not just on reaching this milestone of 350 years,

but on how throughout that 350 years you have contributed to the phenomenal success of the beverages trade,

as well as on your own extraordinary successes in fundraising and charitable giving.

Your 'One of One' Auction at Barnbogle Castle in Edinburgh before Christmas exceeded all expectations and managed to raise over two and a half million pounds for charity.

The 10% which went to the Distillers' Charity's investment fund was the single largest donation to our charity in its history.

This was a great achievement – well done!

It was wonderful to be able to celebrate the 350 years in the service at St Vedast Church, and good to see Canon David Parrott back in the City again.

We have all missed you greatly!

It is appropriate that this Company was granted its Livery during the reign of the Merry Monarch, Charles II.

Although the origins of the Company go back a little further, to Theodore de Mayerne from Geneva, a Royal Physician to James I and Charles I.

He turned his attention from distilling herbs to cure minor ailments to distilling spirits for general consumption – and earned the wrath of the Apothecaries in doing so.

De Mayerne would surely have been amazed to see the boom in distilling which followed in the years ahead.

Distilled beverages are one of the UK's most important exports.

This is something which I observe on all my international travels.

The global reach and reputation of British spirits is extraordinary.

You see Scotch whisky and London gins everywhere – even in countries where you may not expect it.

The value of that connection back to the UK, and the reputation for quality, should not be underestimated.

I am aware of one past Lord Mayor who was also a Master Distiller:

George Scholey, who was Lord Mayor from 1812 to 1813.

Appropriately, he was the son of an innkeeper and was born at the Cock and Bottle Inn in Wakefield.

He later worked for a hop merchant.

During his mayoralty, with the Napoleonic Wars raging, there was a cost-of-living crisis.

It was reported that during his mayoralty he attracted "the resentment of the wealthy" as he regulated the price of grain and bread "to the advantage of the working classes".

You may not be surprised to hear that Lord Mayors no longer have the power to fix prices – and let me say I am rather relieved that is the case!

But we do have the enormous privilege of taking part in truly historic occasions.

We also have all the fun and festivities surrounding the Lord Mayor's Appeal, and its charity partners: The Samaritans, OnSide, Place2Be, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and National Numeracy.

I would like to thank you, Master, and all your Liverymen for your generous donation to the Appeal.

And to show my appreciation, I have some gifts to present.
On behalf of the Lady Mayoress and myself - thank you all for your hospitality, your support, and all you do for the City of London.

And congratulations on 350 years.

This is a fine example of a company with fantastic links to its trade, which makes a great contribution to charity...

...and which remains as relevant and active today as it was 350 years ago, and of which I am proud to be a member.

This is a Company which is distilled to perfection – and I hope we can all drink to that.

“And so, I give you the health of the Worshipful Company of Distillers, root and branch. May it continue to flourish forever and good health to the Master.”