

The text of the Speech of the Master of the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators at the Annual Livery Banquet at Mansion House on Thursday 5 February 2009

Wardens

Members of the Court

My Lord Mayor

Mr Sheriff

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It was thirty six years ago this very month that I arrived in the City for the first time to sign my articles of clerkship – there were no training contracts in those days – and I have practised here ever since. Little did I imagine then that I would one day have the great honour and privilege, as I do tonight, of standing up in this splendid building to extend a very warm welcome to all of you and to propose the Civic Toast. And for that honour and privilege I thank the Lord Mayor for generously making available the Mansion House to this Company for its Annual Livery Banquet.

My task has been made much easier by the guidance of our Clerk, Mrs Gaye Duffy. She advised me not to propose a Rolls Royce of a toast. Slightly puzzled I asked her why. She responded by saying that it should not be well-lubricated or seemingly run on for ever. I assured her that I would be guided by what Henry VIII is reputed to have said to the majority of his wives: “I won’t keep you long”.

I am also most grateful to Gaye and her team, to Mr Roy Warman (our Beadle), to Mr Ken Tappenden (our Toastmaster) and to all the staff here at Mansion House for their efforts in making this evening a special and enjoyable one for us all. They have had to deal with particularly trying circumstances behind the scenes as a result of the weather conditions. I think them for doing so so well.

Much has, of course, changed in the City since that fateful day in 1973 which I mentioned a minute ago. Most immediately, this Company and indeed twenty or so others did not exist. The newspaper industry was in Fleet Street; screens on desks were rarities; blackberries were only eaten; foreign exchange controls were in place; money laundering regulations were non-existent; the bowler, the rolled umbrella and the pin stripe suit were prevalent. “Dressing down” had a completely different meaning.

Not only have the businesses and working practices of the City changed but so, too, have the buildings within it. Paternoster Square, which had been constructed only a few years before I started working there, has been demolished and has risen again. Indeed, walking from the west of the City to the Mansion House, it is striking how few buildings on the main highways are the same as those which existed thirty six years ago. St Paul’s Cathedral and St Mary-le- Bow, the Company’s church, are almost lone exceptions. Even though the buildings at the heart of the City - the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange and the Mansion House – appear to be beacons of constancy, they, too, have undergone substantial refurbishments.

Change, of course, is part of life. To maintain its status as a world-class city, the Square Mile can never stand still - and it is plain, my Lord Mayor, that you and your colleagues never do.

It was my good fortune to receive as a Christmas present the book which was written by one of your predecessors, Sir John Stuttard, who was Lord Mayor in 2006-7. He records that he honoured 1844 invitations during his year in office. This involved attendance at 466 formal meals, making 764 speeches and giving 130 media interviews. He spent over one hundred days abroad as the City's ambassador and, when he was in London, he entertained a large number of foreign dignitaries. I have no doubt that your workload, my Lord Mayor, is similar.

We respect and admire the enormous amount of hard work which is put in by the civic team each year to seek to maintain London as one of the world's leading international business centres. I am sure that everyone here tonight will agree that such service, freely given, is a considerable force for good in an age where problems are global, not local, and the solution to those problems requires world-wide vision, effort and, above all, communication.

It is against this background that I offer to the City of London the wholehearted support of this Company, the dispute resolution company in the Livery.

As a member of the Financial Services Group of Modern Livery Companies, this Company welcomes, in particular, the Lord Mayor's highly appropriate initiative on improving financial literacy – teaching people to understand and manage the financial basics. Indeed, we have set up a task force led by our Junior Warden Kay Linnell, herself an accountant, to see how we might make a positive contribution to it.

This Company also wholeheartedly supports the Lord Mayor's Appeal this year in support of St John Ambulance London (Prince of Wales's) District and the Lord's Taverners.

St John Ambulance was founded in the 19th century by those keen to revive the work of the original Hospitallers of Saint John which had been absent in England since the reformation of the Monasteries. Its work was immediately successful and recognised by the award of a Royal Charter. One hundred years ago this year the Prince of Wales allowed his title to be added to the St John Ambulance London District. It now has over 4500 members providing half a million hours of service annually including attendance at over 2500 events. It has one of the country's largest youth development organisations, with half its membership being under 25. It boasts of helping 15000 schoolchildren to develop citizenship skills. It wishes to use the money raised through the Appeal to combat the high incidence of heart disease in London through education, through prevention and through the placement of 1000 defibrillators in the City of London, with associated training.

The Lord's Taverners charity was founded in the year of my birth by a group of actors in the Tavern bar at Lord's Cricket Ground who wanted to give something back to the game which they loved. Half the funds which the Lord's Taverners raise go to cricket projects – equipment, coaching and competitions for children playing the game, either at school or in clubs. The other half goes to supporting special needs schools or organisations which encourage young people to participate in recreational facilities and a wide range of disabled sports.

The Lord's Taverners plan to use the money raised through the Lord Mayor's Appeal in five ways:

first, to encourage thousands of disadvantaged children to play cricket through a major new coaching scheme linking schools and clubs in the inner boroughs;
secondly, to continue to provide minibuses to those who would otherwise be denied access to sports areas. At present they do so at nearly one minibus a week;
thirdly, to make available cricket bags with kit to clubs and schools;
fourthly, to install more artificial pitches; and
lastly, to give away additional sports wheelchairs.

What is striking about the work of the both the charities which the Lord Mayor has chosen to support is that they provide extremely valuable opportunities for young people to make use of their time profitably and to contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. His Appeal resonates well with this Company whose charitable trust supports young people at King Edward's School Witley and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (amongst others). It therefore gives me much pleasure to present to the Lord Mayor a cheque on behalf of this Company by way of a contribution to his Appeal.

The Master at this point hands over to the Lord Mayor a cheque for £2000 on behalf of the Company.

I mentioned earlier that the Lord Mayor attends many functions in his year in office. The speeches he hears will often have a similar content. May I be permitted to put a personal touch to this one in the hope that he will remember the Arbitrators with particular fondness? The Lord Mayor's surname is Luder - L U D E R. It is of course an acronym for what should be a guiding principle for all that the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators does:

Let Us Do Everything Right.

May I ask you all to stand?

It is my honour to propose the Civic Toast:

The Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs and the City of London Corporation.

