

## The Lord Mayor's Show - 11th November 2000



### The Master waving to the Members in the stand opposite St Paul's Cathedral

#### Introduction

What a memorable day it was! 41 people on the Company's float; more than 120 supporters in the South Stand at St Paul's; and others in the crowd elsewhere, all enjoying themselves hugely - despite the weather.

As we now know, a full minute of live coverage on BBC TV enabling those who were watching at home to obtain excellent views of the Company's float and of some of the Teardrop Girls and Water Bearers accompanying it.

Dr Laura Wright, our Honorary Archivist, took a major part in the BBC programme. She has kindly agreed to provide us with a short introduction to the history and background of the Show, together with an account of the significance of water conservators in the long history of the City of London.

#### 800 Years old and still going strong

The Lord Mayor is the democratically-elected representative of the Corporation of London, and hence he is regarded as the Chief Citizen. His show is merely the trip he takes from his residence at the Mansion House in the City to be presented to the monarch (or the monarch's representative) formerly at Westminster, nowadays at the Law Courts on the Strand.

The Lord Mayor's Show consists of the Citizens who accompany him on his trip to meet the monarch, and in particular the trade guilds who have a special role, providing many of the floats. In previous centuries the Lord Mayor made his trip by water, and the trade guilds accompanied him in boats. On land processions he always rode on horseback, but in 1711 he was

pulled off by a drunken flower girl, so now he rides in an enclosed golden coach.



#### The Lord Mayor passing the stands

The processions predate the Lord Mayor's presentation; the main annual celebration in medieval London was Midsummer's Day, when the giants, wild green men and angels were paraded over London Bridge, which was bedecked in garlands and birch branches (the Bridge House hounds wore garlands around their necks). Some of this spectacle was transferred to the Lord Mayor's Show. But the real heyday was during the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, when playwrights such as Middleton and Dekker devised extraordinarily elaborate pageants, consisting of a series of water and land tableaux, with fabulous beasts, fireworks, castles, battles, maidens - and a certain amount of bloodshed. Our present Show is sparse and sedate by comparison.

### *Our Float*

The provision of both a truck and a trailer by the Military Works Force (MWF) allowed us considerable flexibility in the design of the float. The design adopted contrasted two aspects of water - plenty and dearth.

The truck was surmounted by a huge, ever-flowing, "Magic" tap with no visible means of supply, and giant blue "teardrop" bearing the legend - "Every drop is precious". The trailer was dressed up as parched desert, with a dead tree and an ox skeleton, bearing the Company's motto "No life without water". Work started during July on making these various elements at the workshop of Colin Clegg (Sculptor) near Stoke D'Abernon. A rehearsal was held successfully at Chelsea Barracks at the end of September.

In the morning of Friday, 10th November, the two drivers from the MWF collected the finished float from Stoke D'Abernon and drove it to the official assembly point in the City at Smithfield, where it was to be accommodated overnight under secure cover.



**The float at Smithfield Market**

During the early morning of each Lord Mayor's Show the military marshall's have the daunting task of assembling all the floats, carriages, marching units and bands in a predetermined order in various streets north and west of the Guildhall. Motorised elements (A) are assembled separately from carriages (B) and from military units and bands (C). This means that when the procession begins to move off the three types of entry have to be infiltrated together in the right order. It is a complex operation.

The Company's float had been allocated number 18 in the procession. By 10.00hrs on 11th November, when those accompanying the float were due to arrive in London Wall, all the various vehicles had been sorted out and the float was located in its correct position near Wood Street.

### *The Walkers and the Procession*

Three groups of walkers look part in the Show. The first group, Liverymen dressed as medieval Water Bearers each carrying a yoke and two buckets, served as a reminder of the fact that water supply has a long and important history in the City. The second group, young girls dressed in bright blue costumes as "Teardrops", provided a link with the Company's teardrop badge. And in the third group were representatives of the Royal Air Force and Maidstone Sea Cadets to mark the importance that the Company places on its links with all the armed services.



**Past Master Ted Flaxman briefing the walkers**

When the day came and many parts of the country were suffering from severe flooding and disrupted rail services it seemed likely that several of those who had volunteered might not be able to make it in time to the assembly point. But by 10.20 everybody had arrived.



**Teardrop girls before moving off**

The Teardrop Girls donned their costumes, the Water Bearers collected their yokes and buckets, everybody put the finishing touches to their appearance and then, after a short briefing, they were instructed to move off.



**Deputy Master Ted Jackson and a Teardrop girl**

There was a pause for the two-minute silence and then, after an aircraft had passed overhead to mark the end of the silence, the procession proper began.

The Master, distinctive in his gown, waved energetically to the crowd from the cupola of the driver's cab.



### The Walkers

The 14 Water Bearers trudged alongside bearing their buckets, which (mercifully) contained only a coloured plastic replica of water.



### Liveryman Derek Netherton

The Teardrop Girls walked cheerfully beside them, attracting much attention from the spectators. And the four representatives of the Services brought up the rear with a discipline and smartness not evident amongst all the other walkers!

The front of the truck was enlivened by another large teardrop bearing the "every drop is precious" message. And on the back of the truck was a railed enclosure which was useful for accommodating three of the youngest Teardrop Girls and one of the oldest Liverymen.

On the outward route to the Law Courts there were two particularly

memorable moments. The first as the float passed the Mansion House and received a very cheerful welcome from the Lord Mayor and all the assembled dignitaries. The second as the float passed the stand at St Paul's where the large group of supporters from the Company gave a rousing - and encouraging - cheer.



### The Float passing the Members

The lunch break proved to be distinctly uncomfortable. The float was parked close to the Embankment for nearly hours in a very wet and windy spot devoid of any vestige of cover. One resourceful Water Bearer went and stood close to the Pavior's steam engine, which was parked nearby, in the hope of picking up a little radiant heat. Most sheltered as best they could, many of the girls appreciating the helpfulness of the World Traders who allowed them into their bus so that they could escape the worst of the weather. But it was a great relief for all concerned when the time came for the return procession to start.

The procession traditionally returns to the Mansion House by a different route, which is lined, on one side, for much of its length, with parked coaches containing elderly and handicapped spectators. The whole event had a wonderfully happy atmosphere, but several of those who accompanied the float remarked afterwards on the particular pleasure obviously given to many of those in these coaches - the happiness on their faces was a tonic.



### The message on the front

### *Conservators in the City*

The Water Conservators have two ancient links to the Lord Mayor's Show. The Water Conservator was one of the medieval officials of the Corporation of the City of London, appointed by the Lord Mayor. With his deputies, the Subconservators, it was his task to ensure that the rivers were unencumbered by encroachments, and that Citizens had access to the river water.

The first Water Conservator to be mentioned as such, in English, dates from the 1370s but there is mention of his post in earlier Latin documents.

The City was always concerned about the state of the rivers and we find mention of rules and regulations pertaining to the waterways from the 1200s. Its jurisdiction extended from Yantlet Creek to Staines Bridge, and Yantlet formed an important frontier for visiting merchants. For example, in the early 1200s the Lorraine wine merchants travelling up the Thames had to observe customs such as singing their Kyrie Eleison at Yantlet, before proceeding up to their berth at the mouth of the Walbrook, where they had to wait for two ebbs and a flood.

During this time the Sheriff and the King's Chamberlain boarded to take customs duty, and thereafter merchants could begin to trade.

In September 1421 an official scrutiny of the Thames was performed by the Water Conservator and his deputies, where he listed every illegal device he found in the Thames from Staines Bridge to Yantlet Creek. The terminology for the various kinds of upstream fishweirs differs from those found downstream. Upstream weirs of considerable size were found to be blocking the stream at places such as Chiswick (extending for 380 feet and more, directly across to the southern bank), Brentford and Petersham. Downstream individual fish traps are listed. Offenders were found to be not only private citizens, but also the large religious institutions so powerful in medieval society.

The other link that the Water Conservators have with the Lord Mayor's Show is via the Guild of St Christopher. A trade guild of water carriers which is thought to have been operative in the fifteenth century, and which provided inspiration for this year's float.

### *Acknowledgements*

Central to the Company's entry in the Lord Mayor's Show was the participation of the Military Works Force. The enthusiastic and wholehearted support of Col Mike Reynolds, together with that of his successor at Chilwell - Col Tony Carruth - proved invaluable. Two Liverymen made particularly notable contributions. Kevin Clancy provided both financial and practical help towards the construction and decoration of the Float. And Ian Stanniforth took personal responsibility for the design and construction of the giant "Magic

Tap" which featured prominently. The Company is also indebted to Thames Water who financed the provision of the tap.

Mention must also be made of Chris Binnie, Colin Clegg, Tony Milburn, Ralph Riley and Richard West who served on the Working Party overseeing our entry. Others who helped at various times included Colin Bland, Roy Harris, Alan Maskell, Mike Plunkett, Geoff Rasbash and Gerald Noone. The Company also received helpful advice from the Pageantmaster, Dominic Read: and at Chilwell there was notable help from Captain Cooper and Sergeant Gilbert.

On the day, foremost among those who accompanied the Float were the 17 "Teardrop Girls" - Lucy Angier, Emily Benbow, Alison Binns, Victoria Binns, Laura Flaxman, Isabel Fletcher, Sally Fletcher, Jessica French, Samantha Harris, Zara Hayward, Laura Higgins, Alexandra Marchant, Victoria Marchant, Jenny McDowell, Kim Norfolk, Kelly Robertson and Vivienne Shirley. They did remarkably well - even continuing cheerful throughout that cold and wet lunch break, and for the return procession. Their two mentors, Judy Paul and Sue Owen, similarly clad as "Teardrop-Ladies-in-Charge" did a stalwart job of shepherding the girls and keeping up morale, despite the weather.

The 14 Liverymen who accompanied the Float dressed as Medieval Water Bearers also deserve a mention - Ken Clarke, Colin Drummond, John Hills, Adrian Hopwood, Ted Jackson, Mike McDowell, Stephen Myers, Derek Netherton, Ken Piddington, Tom Pine, Mike Reynolds, Ralph Riley, Ian Stanniforth and Roger White - some of them looked amazingly authentic!

The armed forces were all represented. Corporal Austin and Lance Corporal Maw from the Royal Engineers were the drivers and, bringing up the rear of the walkers, were Sergeant Pickett RAF from AIDU Northolt and from the Maidstone Sea Cadets Petty Officer Samantha Ford and Able Cadets Clare Christey and Greg Dawe.

Members of the Court were strongly supportive of the initiative, none more so than the Master, Nick Paul, and a great many others supported our entry. Altogether, it was a great team effort by the Company which nicely marked both our attainment of full Livery status and our keenness to play a full part in the life of the City of London.

### *Footnote*

Everyone enjoyed themselves, despite the weather, and we received many complementary remarks about our entry from spectators. A few days after the Show, Ralph Riley received an appreciative personal letter from the Lord Mayor, Alderman David Howard. He said that both he and the Lady Mayoress "much appreciated all the effort and work, over many months, put into making our day so exciting and special. It was obvious that not even the rain could dampen the enthusiasm and enjoyment of all the people participating and lining the streets". He thanked the Company for a very illustrative float and made particular mention of the Teardrop Girls, hoping that all concerned had as much fun and enjoyment as he did. "All your support and enthusiasm is hugely appreciated".

**Ted Flaxman**

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001