The 31st Water Conservators Annual Banquet saw a change of venue from last year’s Banquet, with this prominent black-tie event being hosted at Painters’ Hall - a lovely Hall which combines unique art and valued heritage. The earliest reference to “Paynters” dates back to 1283 and the Painters’ Livery Hall boasts art scenes dating back the 16th century. Like Drapers’ Hall, the original building was also destroyed in the Great Fire of London, subsequently re-built but destroyed by enemy action in 1941.

The evening commenced with a Drink’s Reception in the Court Room before we were called to dinner by the Beadle. Guests made their way upstairs to The Livery Hall which is the largest and grandest of the three rooms at Painters’ Hall.

As soon as guests were seated, students from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama performed the song “Food Glorious Food” which went down very well indeed, as did the delicious three course dinner which followed!

Sung Grace was followed by the traditional Loving Cup Ceremony. Following the Toasts, the Guests welcomed back on stage the highly talented musicians, Nancy Holt, Jonathan Eyers and Collin Shay as they performed an exceptional musical interlude enjoyed by all.

The Master then addressed the room, welcoming Honorary Freeman John Hobson, Honorary Freeman Tony Parker and the excellent attendance from the Company’s Corporate Members, Aecom, Atkins, Hydraulic Analysis and Thames Water. After thanking the caterers for the delicious food and wine, the Master extended warm thanks to the students from Guildhall School of Music and Drama for their wonderful performance. The Master then went on to explain the hand soap gift emblazoned with the crest of The Water Conservators given to all Guests at the table. This was in effect part of the Plastic Free City Campaign and hopefully would remind guests of the importance of reducing plastic soap dispensers in the home!
The Master described to the Guests how he and Sir David Wootton met. Contemporaries from Cambridge, they also studied at The College of Law at Guildford. Sir David has led an enormously distinguished career. Following his term of office as Lord Mayor, he remains a leading player in the governance and running of the City of London. At the same time, he has managed to find time, amongst many other activities undertaken and distinguished posts held, to be Past Master of four Livery Companies and of the Guild of Freemen, plus a Liveryman of no less than 9 Companies! The Master closed his speech proposing a toast in water to “The Guests”.

Sir David Wootton responded by thanking the Master for his generous toast, warm words of welcome, and hospitality. He then described working in the City of London in the early 1970s where he and Mark began their careers. City law offices featured electric typewriters, Xerox machines, tea and coffee delivered only twice a day on a trolley, and saw the introduction of the FAX machine which was regarded as a mixed blessing by lawyers due to its instant communications! Sir David recalled that he and the Master were social pioneers breaking tradition by living South of the River, when the custom at that time was to live North of the River. Having followed separate career paths in the law, they were only recently reunited through the Livery movement, 42 years later. Sir David then spoke of the importance of promoting and supporting innovation and smart technologies within the water sector. He concluded by proposing a toast to the Water Conservators Company.

The Master then responded with thanks to Sir David for his thoroughly entertaining speech, and gave a summary of recent and prospective Company events.

Following the traditional “Stirrup Cup “, the Guests bade their farewells and departed. It was a fantastic evening thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

Andrew Williamson, Master’s Bailiff