

Worshipful Company of Water Conservators  
Plaque Ceremony  
Tuesday, 14th December 2010

Master, Wardens, Members of the Court and Livery, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have this opportunity of saying a few words on this notable occasion. For many years the role of the “Conduits” in providing good quality fresh water in the City had largely been forgotten until the Water Conservators Company in 2004 produced their excellent book “Sweet and Wholesome Water”. This book relates the history of the Water Tankard Bearers in the City over a period of more than 500 years and shows how vital had been the “Conduits” where water was made available at several key points in the city.

We are commemorating just one of those Conduits today and it must have been a very significant one for the Corporation as it supplied the Guildhall area. It was constructed on the initiative of Sir William Estfield, who was Lord Mayor in both 1429 and 1437. He had been involved with the water supply to the city during his lifetime and, when he died, left funds to allow augmentation of the lead pipes 3 ½ miles long conveying water to the city from Tyburn. And in a codicil to his Will he specifically directed the provision of the Conduit in Aldemanbury.

The process of bringing water in lead pipes to the city from streams and springs in the west had started as early as 1245. These were major, and very advanced, engineering works at that time and correspondingly expensive. But they were clearly regarded as being essential for the public benefit and were invariably financed either by the Corporation or by generous benefactors like Sir William Estfield. As a result, the water was always available free of charge to the citizens. This is one of those rare occasions when we can, justifiably perhaps, refer to what happened in “the good old days”!

Master, ladies and gentlemen, I must congratulate the Company on its initiative in promoting this commemoration of an important part of the City’s long history and it now gives me great pleasure to unveil the plaque.