

The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.

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The role of the Company. By Bruce Hewett Past Master (Master 1997-98)

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Introduction

In medieval times guilds and livery companies had three important functions, namely **Craft & Trade, Charity and Fraternity**. In the modern world what role should our Livery Company play in these areas?

This brief Perspective summarises my thoughts. They are based on experience gained during thirty years as a liveryman. Having been admitted to the Worshipful Company of Carmen (No.77) as a liveryman in 1984, in the late eighties I joined the Water Conservators (No.102) and became Master in 1997/98. On invitation I joined the Worshipful Company of Plumbers (No.31) in 1991.

Craft & Trade

Until Victorian times there were no regulatory bodies, no government agencies, professional institutions, British Standards or EU rules to govern industry. Although some older livery companies still retain specific powers e.g. the Goldsmiths, most companies such as the Water Conservators do not have any residual obligations.

Nevertheless I believe we can play a useful role in this complex area. However we must resist the urge to emulate other bodies or get to close to any one of them. We must stay, and be seen to stay, completely independent.

Our role must be to try and bridge the gap between official bodies and our industry and use our knowledge and experience for the common good. Examples of how we can bridge the gap are joint meetings and sponsored lectures; bursaries and scholarships; finance for research; prizes and rewards. Some of this is well in hand. *That effort must continue and increase, always exercising tact and diplomacy.*

Charity

Our charitable funds have made great progress in recent years, mainly in education. Substantial industry donations have helped but much more needs to come from Company members. On admittance to the Carmen in 1984 I was obliged to enter into a covenant with the benevolent fund to pay a minimum of £25 per year for 7 years, repeated thereafter at a higher level.

Every member of our Company should be obliged to make a similar commitment, preferably with Gift Aid. Charitable giving should be honoured and rewarded, with total contributions greater than £1000 recognised by a clasp to the Tear Badge.

Fraternity

Friendship and networking is important and beneficial. Our luncheons and dinners in Hall are successful and must continue, as should initiatives such as the Wet 10.

For all three functions above, it is important to maintain regular communications of a high standard to our membership and others, using the printed word, the internet and social media.

Bruce Hewett
Past Master