

Lord Mayor, Sheriff, Aldermen, Wardens, Baroness, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The importance of looking someone in the eye and shaking hands, is immeasurable. Connection and Communication often lead to understanding or at least tolerance and alliances. Considerations that are needed in our world now more than ever.

In notable circumstances these simple gestures lead to friendships. To each of you from Belgium, Canada, Cayman Islands, China, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Majorca, Romania, Switzerland the UAE, Ukraine and the United States as well as the United Kingdom thank you for sharing this wonderful annual banquet at the Lord Mayor's residence with me and thank you to the fantastic Mansion House Caterers and behind the scenes team!

The icing on the cake so to speak is to have the Lord Mayor deliver his remarks in person. No one who has not served in this role can truly comprehend the boundless energy, constant smile and inexhaustible amount of knowledge about the most esoteric subjects that is essential in his day to day life. He enhances the City of London, his charities and this evening our Banquet. The Lord Mayor's 27 foreign trips, which complement his 10 visits to UK cities outside of London, 60 Livery dinners, 30 private dinners here in Mansion House and innumerable meetings and meals within the City, clearly illustrates how significant engagement really is. Thank you Lord Mayor for your tireless efforts raising awareness and funds for so many worthy causes and initiatives, thus enabling London to truly be a Better City for all. Please accept this check and church Warden's Pipe as a token of my appreciation.

When David O'Reilly and I began our journey with the Global Tobacco Nicotine Forum (GTNF), the purpose was to elicit dialogue and discussion between a group of disparate stakeholders. Our hope was to enrich understanding and promote harm reduction. As the King himself said in a speech from this very podium, which I was privileged to hear first hand: To listen to their views and, if we do not agree, to remind ourselves to engage in a way which is passionate, but not pugnacious. Throughout David's career at British American Tobacco, he spearheaded the science behind innovations that are changing the world. He had the support of many, including some of you; but, as Jessica Livingston said Innovations (and I include the GTNF in this) seem inevitable in retrospect, but at the time it's an uphill battle. My thanks to you for being a visionary whose passion and commitment garnered the support of valuable partners, illustrating that our only limitations are what we impose upon ourselves. Please accept this church warden pipe as a small gift from the Company to you!

Special thanks to the first Woman Master of our company and my exceptional mentor, Fiona Adler for accepting the **Her/que** Lee an task of introducing our esteemed guests. I wouldn't be standing before you today if it were not for Fiona. Please don't hold that against her! Coincidentally 40 years this month, another remarkable woman, Dame Mary Donaldson became the **first female** Lord Mayor.

Sacrifice, loyalty and Commitment are words that are bandied about too frequently these days. However, to our affiliation No 15 (Loos) Company London Guards, represented here today by Major Oliver Bambrick, Company Commander, these words reflect a way of life and an acknowledgment of an obligation. Thank you for your service! On behalf of the Company it is my Honour to present to you this check. I would, however, be remiss if I did not bring to everyone's attention the Sirrah Cup trophy, which is proudly displayed on the head table having been engraved with the Winners of the 2023 battle of the Clays: The Pipe Makers. I trust you will see that it is safely returned to the trophy cabinet in Camberwell. My thanks to the victorious team, Smoking Barrels: **Laurent Charbonnier-Shar-bon-ee-ay**, Patrick Lambert, Adam Philips, Colin Richie, and David Smith.

I don't know if you have looked at the boxes on your place setting, it is not chocolates don't be disappointed. We had those with the loving cup, it is something much more exciting: A Coronation Pipe made by Apprentice Pipe Maker, Oliver Meeson, who is here with us this evening. Please stand up Oliver. Oliver made 275 of these unique pipes, which took 140 hours to render, without taking into consideration the design time- with and without me peering over his work bench!

Music and laughter are not exclusive to the Cocacabana . At least not when Thomas Rudd and the London Fanfare Trumpets are in the house. Their music in conjunction with the Carpet Guard, made possible by the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers and organised by Chris Huxtable, Clerk and Adjutant is creating the special atmosphere that is following us throughout this evening. Thank you all.

Not very far from my side is the renown toastmaster, Jamie Wallis, as well as my Beadle, Wayne Glynn. My thanks to you both as well as our treasurer, Ian Venters, Clerk's Assistant, Bill Curran and my most heartfelt thanks to my Clerk, Sandra Stocker. There is no part of this evening that has escaped Sandra's scrutiny.

Finally, a warm welcome to Father Jack, who has graciously agreed to be our new Honorary Chaplain beginning with the January dinner. This means of course that tonight is the last Livery Banquet that will be complemented by David's grace. In his honour I would like to close with one of my own.

Dear Lord,

I thank thee dearly for this man

For each repast he had a plan.

His rhyme indeed was quite sublime.

We awaited with glee

The words he'd set free,

The master to roast

Without toast, without boast.

We rue his departure!

He will nobly retire

Leaving wit but no ire

Puns still will accrue

Though directed to Sue

Whose tolerance thereof

Reflects undying love.

Thank you, David for your many years of service to the Pipemakers Company. We wish you and Sue nothing but the best!

May I ask everyone to be upstanding, if you are able, for the toast to the Lord Mayor, the Sheriff's and the City of London Corporation.

Toast: the Lord Mayor, the Sheriff's and the City of London Corporation.