

Speech given by the Master, Captain Colin Cox at the Trophies and Awards Banquet 2018

Principal guests, Baroness, Members of our Company, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a real and genuine pleasure to welcome you all to this, our annual Trophies and Awards Dinner held, as is now the custom, here in these magnificent and historic surroundings of Guildhall.

As ever, none of this would have been possible without the considerable efforts of a multitude of agencies, too numerous for me to thank each and every one. I will however single out the staff here in Guildhall this evening for thanks, in particular the caterers and your serving staff who have looked after us all so diligently. Another special mention must also go to our very own unsung heroes and heroines, principally behind the scenes, but who work so hard each year in bringing this event, and 'us', all together: Paul Tacon, our learned *and gallant* Clerk, Ruth, Eloise, Anna, Angie and James. Thank you.

I don't think I need to remind you that we are met here principally to honour the recipients of awards, for either their longevity or innovation in their respective field of aviation; or spectacular feats of prowess, either in their chosen aeronautical calling or in the face of adversity. The scrutinising Committee are tasked with an ever more difficult challenge each year as the candidates put forward for consideration become more equal in deserving of recognition. Once again, I would like to call upon you one more time for a collective round of applause for all our winners.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention those members of ours who have travelled across the miles from North America and the Caribbean, from as far away as New Zealand and Australia – and, how can we forget the ever growing contingent from Hong Kong! It is timely to remind ourselves that the City Livery movement has no other Livery Company with overseas regions such as ours – and no other livery company has as many members!

Conversely, I must remind our members, that is the City to which we have our strongest affiliation. We exist as a group to further the historic aspirations of the Livery Guilds, to promote excellence in our chosen craft and, amongst other things, to nurture and develop apprenticeships. And it is on that very subject that I take advantage of the fact that we have with us as our principal guest this evening the Minister of Aviation, Baroness Sugg.

Our own Past Master Roger Gault has worked tirelessly with colleagues on the Aviation Industry Skills Board with a view to establishing a First Officer pilot apprenticeship programme. The main challenge is that the Institute for Apprenticeships has proposed a funding band of just £4000 which goes nowhere near the full cost of pilot apprentice training which is upwards of £150,000 per individual. The current apprenticeship funding rules do not allow for individuals to make a financial contribution to their training and therefore employers would be expected to foot the remaining bill. In reality employers will not be able to cover these costs alone and therefore take-up of the new first officer pilot apprenticeship will be minimal at best. I wonder Baroness if you might take another look at the paper presented for consideration back in July which highlights the problem.

Now that's the serious bit over with!

Not to make light of it.....but this evening is primarily an evening of celebration.

This whole year has been one of celebration – some reflective obviously, being the 100th Anniversary of the cessation of hostilities after the First World War but mostly one of real celebration. The start to the RAF100 programme earlier this year at St Clement Danes was followed by a spectacular event here at Guildhall as the City's Tribute to the Royal Air Force. This was co-hosted by us along with the Worshipful Company of Engineers and Worshipful Company of Coachmakers, whose Master is here tonight with his wife.

It is often asked of me why we are not a Worshipful Company, but an Honourable Company like the Master Mariners, again the Master of which Company and his wife we welcome here with us tonight.

In answering the question, I borrow an anecdote with grateful thanks to Past Master Tudor Owen. At our Royal Charter Banquet held in this very hall over four years ago now, in acknowledging our name change our Patron, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, said that he was very happy that we be called Honourable since he had never met a Worshipful Pilot.

Now let us not forget the contribution of our Polish friends during the *Second* World War. It is their 100th Anniversary too and, as Master, I was generously invited to their Centenary Celebration, again at St Clement Danes Church, and afterwards at our own 'spiritual home', that of the RAF Club.

I say 'spiritual home' because, for a little while now we have been without a 'home' of our own. This, as members have recently been advised, has been addressed through our purchase of a certain property, for the time being called, Talbert House.

A trawl of the internet reveals that there has been no aviator of note named 'Talbert' or, for that matter, I could find no reference to any pilot of note called 'House' so there will be a name change, to be agreed, ready for when we move in early next year.

And that Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear, wraps it up from me. I do hope that those who have never been here before have enjoyed (and perhaps are still enjoying) our little soirée, as well as those who *have* been here before and might have had a clue as to what to expect. I would now ask members of our Company, and members of our Company only, to stand and join with me in a toast to the 'Award Winners and our guests.'

Ladies and gentlemen - the "Award Winners and Our Guests".