

## Speech given by the Master, Dorothy Saul – Pooley, at the Trophies and Awards Banquet 2014

Your Royal Highness, Visiting Masters, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Welcome to you all this evening in this ancient Guildhall for the **first** Trophies and Awards Banquet since we gained our Royal Charter and our new name of Honourable Company of Air Pilots.

This year, 2014, has been a memorable year for our Company and the change of status and change of name have had the consequence of raising our profile dramatically in the City.

Ever since the formation of the then Guild, 85 years ago, the Company has sought to share the underlying purposes and ideals which led to the establishment of the ancient companies on which it was modelled. As befits a Company whose principal trade activity involves travelling quickly, our Company progressed rapidly in City terms, gaining the Livery in a little over 25 years and now, 58 years on has achieved the Royal Charter, of which we are immensely proud.

Against a background of rapid advances in civil and military aviation our Company has grown to represent a unique body of **professional authoritative opinion** engaged in an increasing variety of duties in order to maintain the **highest** standards of air safety. We have sought constantly to **improve** standards of operational skill and to inspire and encourage legislation and regulation compatible with the growth in technical advancements.

Compared with the ancient trades and guilds of this City and the 825 years of the Lord Mayoralty, the 800 years since Magna Carta and the almost 800 years of this magnificent Guildhall, our **85** year history is a mere blip on the radar screen. But within that short time span, we have acquired a huge range of trophies and awards commensurate with the vast range of aircraft types now flying. With these we are able to recognise, globally, aviation achievements and milestones, whether of individuals, teams or organisations.

Without these awards, many notable examples of EXCELLENCE might go unrecognised. In conferring these awards tonight, which we consider to be the most prestigious awards in the aviation world, we are acknowledging the **honour and distinction** brought to our profession by the winners, and also highlighting to the City and to the rest of the world, **the highest standards of integrity, devotion to duty and bravery** achieved.

Some of our awards date back to the early days of the Guild, but 50 years ago we still only had five in total! The **first** ever trophy was the Johnston Memorial Trophy, to commemorate Sqn Ldr EL Johnston, who was our **first** Deputy Master and Chief Navigator of the R101 Airship. He was sadly killed with other senior figures of the first Court of the Guild in the crash in 1930. That **first** presentation was made to Sir Francis Chichester, for his extraordinary solo flight across the Tasman Sea in a Gypsy Moth, with only a sextant for navigation! We also have some very new trophies and this year sees the **first** presentation of the Myles Bickerton trophy in its new guise.

One of the themes of this whole year has been that of commemoration. The Cobham Lecture in April given by Liveryman David Rowlands on the subject of the early pilots of the Royal Flying Corps was a fitting tribute to the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

The lecture was well received by all including 38 Masters of other Livery Companies. Similarly, just last month, we commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Second World War with an inspirational talk by Liveryman Clare Walker on the Wonderful Men and Women of the Air Transport Auxiliary. Forgive me for quoting again the remarks of the Commandant at Sandhurst at the August graduation this year, but I feel they are extremely apt. He said that the most important thing learned by the Army in the last decade is **“that there is nothing so significant as the importance of the act of commemoration”**.

This is, an underlying theme tonight. It gives me enormous pleasure to acknowledge the incredible 50 flying display seasons of the Red Arrows, with both the presentation of their certificate earlier this evening and also the **first** airing of the specially commissioned piece of music, the Diamond Nine, in their honour! We are immensely proud of our affiliation with the Red Arrows.

'Furthermore', it is a great honour to be announcing the presentation of a Loving Cup commissioned by the members of the Court and presented to the Company as a tribute to Past Master Duncan Simpson, the test pilot who **first** flew the iconic Hawk aircraft, that enduring symbol of the Red Arrows, 40 years ago this year. Tonight is the first time that the Loving Cup has been used.

This evening has focussed on congratulation and commemoration, but we must not forget what happens behind the scenes to keep the cogs turning. Day by day there is an enormous amount of hard graft and effort that goes on at Cobham House and across the world in our regions.

The ever-increasing regulatory complexity as the influence of the European Aviation Safety Agency makes its presence felt, the spiralling costs of training, and worldwide fuel prices create daily challenges for those seeking to gain and maintain qualifications and for those providing such training. Attempts to obtain simplification of these complexities are frustrating and can often detract from the initial excitement of joining the flying profession. Our committees here in the UK and overseas do all they can to engage with and convince the regulator to simplify the processes. The aim is to achieve more transparency, easier, more streamlined, procedures and more appropriate training and testing at all levels, and I am happy to say that we heard only a few days ago that the requirement for small flying clubs to convert to Authorised Training Organisations has been postponed until at least 2018.

We need to continue to strip off the gold plating and tear aside the red tape, which is so beloved of our bureaucrats all over the world. In addition our aim must be to achieve more proportionate charging and commensurate reductions in the costs burden currently applied to training organisations. The work is ongoing to convince the powers that be that "complexity does **not** improve safety"!

Before I turn to our Guest of Honour, it is my pleasant duty to convey thanks to our loyal clerk, Paul Tacon for his work in making this Banquet successful. Further thanks are due to our stalwarts in the office: Ruth, Pat, James and Julie for their unstinting and uncomplaining efforts throughout the year.

Thanks are also due to the London Banqueting Ensemble for their exceptional entertainment and especially the wondrous post horn gallop – it just gets better and better!! Then there is the veritable army of Guildhall staff who have ensured that all 700 of you were superbly fed and watered with a military precision befitting a major campaign and enabling our awards ceremony to run on time.

Now, our principal guest tonight, His Royal Highness, Prince Michael of Kent, who is no stranger here. A Liveryman of our Company since 1997, a keen pilot of both fixed wing and rotary aircraft, His Royal Highness is one of four members of the Royal family currently Liverymen of our Company. Prince Michael has many and diverse interests and in addition to all of his charitable works and distinguished military career, he has represented Great Britain as a bobsleigh driver and also been a competitive rally driver, he enjoys scuba diving, carriage driving and squash.

It was the late Duke of Kent, Prince Michael's father, who was the **first** Grand Master of the Company and who presented this Master's badge to the Company in 1936. We acknowledge with great pride and gratitude, the ongoing support, interest and enthusiasm for our Company shown by our Patron, the Duke of Edinburgh, our Grand Master, The Duke of York, the present Duke of Kent, and you, Sir. You are especially welcome and we look forward with anticipation to your remarks.

But first I would like to propose the toast ---

**To the Award Winners and to our Guests!!**