

Trophies and Awards Dinner Speech 2016.

Fellow Masters, Principal and Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my privilege to welcome you to the Trophies and Awards Dinner and to this opportunity to congratulate our outstanding award winners for all that they have achieved.

In this time of significant change for our country, it is particularly appropriate to have as one of our Principal Guests Brigadier General Howden, representing the Chief of the Canadian Air Staff.

Canada has a commercial, political and diplomatic history from which we can learn much here in the UK as we face a new future as a wholly independent trading nation. It is also particularly appropriate because the Master's Lady, Christina, is a proud Canadian Citizen!

Brigadier General Howden is a maritime air specialist, and who has served at the Canadian Embassy to the United States, and in the most senior staff roles. General Howden, you are most welcome.

Air Marshall Sean Reynolds, representing the Chief of the Air Staff, is our other Principal Guest. Air Marshal Reynolds professional career began flying the Chinook helicopter. He has commanded its home base, RAF Odiham, and then held a series of senior staff appointments, but his **most important attribute** is to be President of the RAF Sailing Association, and so he is of course a sailor at heart! Air Marshall Reynolds, you are most welcome.

Representing Livery Companies from this Great City of London are; The Master Coachmaker, Martin Payne; The Master Playing Card Maker, Charles Fowler; and the Master Security Professional, Ian Mayes, all of whom are accompanied by their Ladies. You are all most welcome this evening.

The Master Maker of Playing Cards is also a member of the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers, who have had to cope without him in forming the splendid Honour Guard this evening, and for which we all thank them.

Also among us are representatives from our affiliated military units from all three armed services, who we are so proud to support.

We have been superbly looked after by the staff here, and I know we all extend our thanks to them, and in the gallery above us are the office staff; Ruth, Angie and James who we thank for their dedication and service to this Honourable Company, as we do our Clerk, Paul Tacon.

Our Country has chosen a new course to steer in this Twenty First Century, and in doing so has posed some fundamental questions as to who we are, and how we will relate to the world in the future.

If the City of London is to continue to excel as a banking and services centre, and if we are to succeed as a truly independent trading nation, then we need this new century to be what might be called 'The Aviation Century'.

No significant investment decision or commercial dispute has ever been made or successfully resolved without human contact. The development of trust that goes with that contact it is elemental to business success, and it is business success that Great Britain will need in the years to come.

If we are to unite people more closely, and to repair a global economy characterised by perhaps the biggest trade imbalance between nations in economic history, then it is aviation that will bring our decision makers and business executives together to achieve that contact and trust, and aviation which will bring to the UK the high value-added, high-technology jobs that will sustain our economic future.

Aviation energises the world economy, and, in the 'Aviation Century', success will go to those countries who recognise that elemental truth. We must be amongst them.

How can it be then, that aviation has become the UK's metaphorical neglected Step Child, that is currently either ignored at best or resented at worst?

It has taken an astonishing ten years and an independent commission for the government to even get to the point of recommending a third runway in the South East of the UK, with its construction still being years away, and there are of course no major civilian airliners built here now, whilst military aviation numbers have, until very recently, fallen year on year.

Things are very different in Canada, which has a thriving civil airliner manufacturing business in the Bombardier Group.

Things are very different in Hong Kong, where I had the privilege to learn first-hand that a new runway for Chep Lap Kok airport was approved within two years.

And of course, things are very different amongst those who might do us harm, who are developing new threats against us and raising their aircraft, submarine, ship and troop numbers once more.

Politicians seem to have forgotten an essential truth, for as John F Kennedy put it:

“Things do not happen. Things are made to happen.”

Pierre Trudeau, the father of the current Canadian Prime Minister, put it rather more drily by saying:

“Luck: that’s when preparation and opportunity meet”.

It is past time our politicians did some preparing and set the conditions to meet the challenge of the aviation century in which we must live. They might consider that:

We must repeal air passenger departure tax, which is akin to forcing UK aviation to run the Global Race, as it is called, with its metaphorical shoelaces being tied together by its own government.

We need to plan now for an increase in airport capacity throughout the UK, and not just in the South East, for this post Brexit era.

We need to protect and preserve the general aviation airfields we have and to support our superb flight training industry.

And we also a need defence settlement that respects the world as it is, and not the world as certain government accountants might prefer to see it, and so expand the numbers of military aircraft we operate. The modest increases we are seeing from a low baseline are excellent, but more should be done.

On a positive note, the nation is fortunate indeed to anticipate the arrival of the two new, national, tri-service assets represented by QUEEN ELIZABETH class aircraft carriers, and their F35B Lightning 2 Strike Jets, to be operated by the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Air Force, and which will in combination provide engagement in world affairs at a time and place of our choosing.

Above all, to meet the demands of this new 'Aviation Century', we also need what might be called a new 'Aviation Generation' to join our profession at every level: designers, engineers, technicians, and flight crew.

Aviation has a unique power to instil a sense of purpose and teamwork, of mission and accomplishment, into our young people, as those who have had the privilege of seeing graduates of the flying and gliding courses that we sponsor for young people will know.

We must use it to inspire many more young people to enter the fields where the future creation of economic value lies: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

It is also time British Industry reached out to create the employees of the future that it wants by investing directly in the organisations that exist in this country who use aviation to ignite that enthusiasm in our young people, and who will only step up to enter these demanding professions when they have been inspired to do so whilst still at school.

And so I thank all of our award winners for the inspiration that they have brought to all of us in the aviation world to do our part, to commit more, and to work harder to deliver the aviation century that we so badly need, and I thank our award winners also for inspiring the young people who will follow us as the next aviation generation and inherit the aviation legacy that we must all create for them.

I ask all the members of this Honourable Company to rise and join me in a toast to:

“Our Award Winners and Guests”.