

My Lords, Masters, Liverymen, Air Pilots, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen all.

30 years ago, in 1991, David Mauleverer, our Master of the day used considerable charm and persuasion to enable the then Guild to use this great hall for our banquet, the first livery company to do so and we have been able to celebrate success, bravery and achievement in aviation in this spectacular and hallowed hall ever since...the envy of many other Livery Companies.

And we celebrate again tonight after the hiatus of last year and honour those who were recipients of our trophies and awards both for last year and for this. It is truly wonderful to welcome you all here tonight and may I say, fellow Air Pilots, Liveryman and guests what an absolute delight it is to be here dining together again.

It has, perhaps, never been more important to be able to recognise achievement and success in aviation.

Aviation has been challenged as never before, with widespread concerns about business, careers, employment, and health. When challenged you see the real strength in both people and organisations, and we should be very proud of the way Air Pilots have met such recent challenges.

We have lost good friends, colleagues and distinguished Past Masters but we have found new stars and there has been a great deal of positive change, inspired by the Immediate Past Master through his year and, for example, exemplified by our young members development group and recognised by the Cobham Trophy award to the Young Member group leaders Will Wright and Becky Kwo. Our young members are much more involved, in many ways they are showing us the way forward.

There has been a great deal of positive change delivered by so many of our Company, improved mentoring, the introduction of peer support and interview skills training, website development and our journal has been enhanced with a team of two experienced editors.

Earlier in my year, I spoke of the need for resilience and re-generation. While we continue to emerge from this pandemic and from its impact and effect on so much of our industry, we can take this opportunity tonight to focus on that essential and fundamental element that is the core of aviation.....the people.....Pilots, Navigators, Rear Crew and their like who's dedication, application and bravery leave all of us in awe and appreciation and who exemplify what is great and good in our profession. Thank you to all who have nominated others for awards, we are very proud that the Air Pilots awards have an outstanding reputation worldwide.

To all our winners and recipients, we salute you.

May I also take this moment to thank the Air Pilots Trophies and Awards Committee and our Learned Clerk and all our office team, Eloise, Angie, Anna and James for all their hard work in making this event and banquet happen and to those who have

made this evening in so special and who have looked after us so well, the guard of honour from the HAC, the musicians from the London Banqueting ensemble and the Guildhall catering and staff.

And one other thank you....this last year has been like no other and my predecessor as Master, Captain John Towell and his consort Linda, gave so much of themselves in supporting and leading our Company in the most challenging of circumstances. With sincere gratitude, we thank you both for your year as Master of the Air Pilots and we would like to make a presentation to you of our appreciation.

(A Rene Lalique Fleurons coupe plate introduced in 1935)

Our principle guest tonight is Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew CBE, Deputy Commander Operations.

I first met Gerry at the RAF selection centre Biggin Hill and we arrived at the RAF College Cranwell together, on the 28th March 1988, both on the same flight of 'A' Sqn, No 110 I.O.T. and we graduated together on the Queens Parade on 28 July. It was clear from the very start that one of us was destined to have an outstanding career in the RAF. And it was clear who that was.....Gerry's talent and natural ability as an outstanding officer and leader and coupled with such a warm and engaging personality was immediately recognisable. His career has been stellar.

After a tour as an Air Traffic Control Officer in RAF Germany, he re-mustered as a pilot and was posted to the Jaguar. He became a Qualified Weapons Instructor and completed an operational exchange tour with the United States Air Force flying the F16C before returning to the Jaguar as a Flight Commander. After a short ground-based tour in central Iraq, he assumed command of XIII Squadron (the finest RAF Squadron I may add) flying the Tornado GR4 and later, as Air Officer Scotland, took command of RAF Leuchars, flying the Typhoon. Air Marshal Mayhew has amassed nearly 3000 flying hours and logged over 200 operational sorties.

He has completed numerous senior staff tours. He was the Deputy Principal Staff Officer to the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir David Richards, and worked in the Cabinet Office as the Deputy Director responsible for the Defence and Homeland Security aspects of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

As an Air Vice-Marshal (2*), Gerry commanded the RAF's No 1 Group, responsible for the force generation of all RAF Combat Air, ISTAR and Battlespace Management capabilities, as well as the UK JFAC. He subsequently joined the Air Force Board as the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff. Promoted to Air Marshal (3*), he took up his current post as Deputy Commander (Operations) in April 2019.

Aside, Gerry is currently President of RAF Rugby Union and is also a freeman of the Haberdashers Company making the circuit back to the city and the livery complete.

Before I ask Gerry to respond, on behalf of the winners, may I ask all Air Pilots to stand with me and toast

THE AWARD WINNERS AND OUR GUESTS