

Your Royal Highness

My Lord

Mr Recorder

Sheriffs

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good evening to you all! I want to add my welcome to that of the new Warden, to this our first Livery dinner as the Honourable Company of Air Pilots!

When we last dined together in all our white tie finery at Guildhall three months ago, it was a very special and historic occasion as we celebrated the grant of our Royal Charter and change of name. Tonight is also a very special and historic occasion, as it is a first for several reasons, which will become apparent as I continue, so it is very appropriate that we are graced by the presence of our Patron, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, who has the tremendous distinction of being our first and therefore our longest-serving Liveryman. We are delighted that you could join us again tonight Sir. You are most welcome.

We are also joined by Alderman and Sheriff Sir Paul Judge, who is here representing the Lord Mayor, Alderman Fiona Woolf, who is unable to be with us, because of an overseas visit. Welcome to you.

Firsts are extremely significant - the word first has connotations of "leading", "top", "best", **excellent**. The Livery movement has long sought to embrace excellence and uphold high standards.

Aviators have long been associated with the City and with the name of Honourable. Our company is 85 years old this year and yet the first ever aerial passenger voyage in England took place here right in the City of London from the grounds of the Honourable Artillery Company. It was in a balloon 230 years ago in September 1784. Why was there not a Guild of Aeronauts long before 1929?

We are all aware of that passion for flight and the strong bond between aviators, whatever craft you fly, be it balloon, light aircraft, military jet, heavy transport or helicopter. Centuries before our Company was founded, Leonardo da Vinci expressed this passion so eloquently:

"For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you long to return."

The fellowship of a Livery dinner enhances that bond and reminds us of our purpose. No doubt you have all been enjoying the camaraderie and sharing of hangar stories during dinner? Those early aviators who founded our Company had an enormous sense of purpose and a passion for excellence. When the Company was formed in 1929, more or less exactly half way between the two world wars, concern for safety was a driving force. The early air pilots of the then Guild sought to enhance safety and raise standards and standardisation in flying training. The development of many more and bigger aircraft types between the wars and the commensurate increase in military and commercial uses for aircraft, necessitated an organised and cohesive structure. Our fledgling company had the responsibility for the issue of flying instructor licences for over 30 years until the regulator took on the role, and the Panel of Examiners was also administered by the company. The enhancing of safety and raising of standards underpins everything that we continue to strive for - excellence within our profession and excellence in education.

We can, as a Livery Company, do much to assist those on the path to excellence by the provision of our scholarships and bursaries for gliding experiences, then for initial licences and later, instructor and jet orientation courses. It is my personal dream to be able to provide at least one more scholarship this year to enable another would-be aviator to move forward towards achieving their dream, so please be as generous this year as you were last year, in contributing to our charity, the Air Pilots Trust, to create our first new scholarship for the Honourable Company.

Our technical committees and overseas regions are all united by a common sense of purpose and driven by the desire to raise standards of safety through education and to encourage new pilots to achieve excellence. We are hopeful, that through the better use of new communications technology, members from overseas regions will be able to make positive and regular contributions to the important work of the technical committees. A central theme of all of this is education of our next generation of pilots.

I believe that Excellence in Education has an enduring and everlasting effect. Education opens doors. When faced with so much mediocrity around us, our goal should always be to raise the bar at whatever level of training we are operating.

Our new name is definitely giving us a higher profile in the City and everyone everywhere is extremely positive towards us as a Company. The packed lecture theatre at our Cobham lecture, where 36 other Livery companies were represented, shows the esteem in which our events are held within the City. A benefit of our new Honourable Company is that we can go forwards into the future with our new name and a renewed sense of purpose. As part of that progress, let's forge further links with other Companies and try to create more opportunities for our young members to gain wider skills and experience with internships or trainee positions in City organisations; from experience, it is clear that this type of exposure to the City and the knowledge gained is invaluable in the process of applying for permanent jobs later. Youngsters can also take part in the City Business Traineeship programme and we should encourage our young members to take these opportunities to enhance their employment prospects and to achieve excellence in their education.

Already we are gaining more links with the City and we are hoping to have another first very soon. The City Livery Companies Skills Council is supporting our first ever Higher Apprenticeship for a flying instructor qualification. This Company scheme will enable a young person to become qualified and to be employed by the sponsoring flying school for at least a year. During the rest of my year, I hope to use my links with the City gained whilst working as an aviation lawyer, by coincidence, in the same firm as our Lord Mayor, to continue to strengthen our Honourable Company's connections.

Before I propose the toast, I have several very important thank yous. I have deliberately left them till last, as any good flying instructor does, on the basis of the learning law of recency – you will remember best that which you have most recently heard!

My first thank you on behalf of the whole of the Honourable Company, is to Liveryman Peter Benmax, for his very generous gift of a magnificent loving cup to commemorate our Royal Charter and change of name. Such a gift is an everlasting memento of the special occasion.

My second thank you must go to all of the office staff, Ruth, Pat, Julie and James, without whose excellent efforts we would be stuck at the holding point unable to take off.

Thirdly, I must thank our extremely energetic and devoted clerk, Liveryman Paul Tacon whose enduring commitment to our Company is an example to us all and through whose efforts the Honourable Company stays airborne.

Next, I feel that we really should acknowledge the excellent support of one of our overseas members who has attended the Livery dinner every year for 25 years without a break, all the way from the Middle East, Yvonne Trueman! Congratulations on that superb achievement!

I must not forget our musicians, The London Banqueting Ensemble, and for their wonderful rendition of the Post Horn Gallop; and all of the Mansion House staff, who have looked after us so well this evening – thank you to you all.

Finally, I'd just like to mention that The Lord Mayor's chosen charities this year include Beating Bowel Cancer, which is a somewhat topical choice, in the light of the recent tragic death of 19 –year old Stephen Sutton from the disease. His magnificent fund-raising efforts give us inspiration and I am sure that you will endorse the Company's donation to the Lord Mayor's charity.

It just remains for me to thank you all for being here tonight to share our FIRST Livery dinner as the Honourable Company. I also thank you for giving me such incredible support and enabling me to represent you this year as your Master. After so long in the holding pattern, it was a relief to be cleared to land!

Before I propose the toast, I would just like to remind you that the effect of excellence in education is everlasting.

Please rise to drink a toast:

The toast is Everlasting Excellence

Dorothy Saul-Pooley

21.05.2014