

Vote of Thanks

Stationers' Hall Wednesday 2 October 2013

Mr Anthony Bailey, OBE, GCSS

YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, YOUR
EMINENCE, MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

As someone active in European–Arab affairs for over twenty years, it gives me great pleasure as your joint proposer to the Freedom of this City to respond with a vote of thanks to you Mr Auchi for your kind words delivered a few moments ago.

The presence in this historic and beautiful Stationers' Hall of your wife and family, so many leading members of the British-Arab community, two past Lord Mayor's, a former President of the European Commission, a former Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Ambassadors from across the Arab world, parliamentarians from both Houses of Parliament, businessmen as well as religious and cultural leaders illustrate so well the reason why we are all gathered here tonight - the high regard for the contribution which you have tirelessly given to enhancing the centuries old bonds between London, the United Kingdom, Europe and the Arab world.

You are, I believe, Mr Auchi one of a handful of British Arab leaders to receive the centuries old Freedom of the City of London and, I would like everybody present to join me in congratulating you once again on this distinction.

This evening's celebration mark not only the recognition of your personal merits, but also serves as a fitting moment for us all to celebrate the hard work which the Anglo Arab Organisation does and who generously host us all tonight. To the Board members here present – thank you.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Some years ago I attended a very special occasion when His Holiness Pope John Paul II knighted Mr Auchi for his contribution to charitable endeavour and inter-religious understanding. On that occasion I learnt from the Vatican Ambassador that one of the remaining privileges of a Papal Knight was the right to ride on horseback into the great Basilica of St Peter's in the Vatican City State.

Much more closer to home I am pleased to inform you, Mr Auchi, that with your Freedom come privileges here too.

You may wander through the City of London with your sword drawn at any time you like; and you have the right, when drunk and disorderly, to be escorted back by the watches – although whether back to your home in Surrey I am not clear. And there used to be a right that allowed Freemen to bring sheep across London Bridge.

I am reliably informed that Mr Auchi has yet to take up either privilege but as we all prepare to depart home after a most enjoyable and congenial evening have a thought for this City's youngest freeman, Nadhmi Auchi, had he chose to do so!

Thank you, Good Night and God Bless.