Mr Chairman, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is an enormous privilege to be here tonight as Master of the Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Tobacco Blenders. Thank you, Colonel Farrell, for extending your legendary hospitality to me and to my husband Simon.

As Master of the Pipe Makers, I always feel a sense of relief at your events. In our trade, we're used to things going up in smoke. So it's refreshing to spend an evening with a Regiment renowned for precision, where everything goes to plan — and everyone knows where the fire extinguishers are kept!

Our Company's relationship with the Irish Guards' Association, and our proud affiliation with Number 15 (Loos) Company London Guards, is one of our most cherished connections. We don't regard our support as a mere civic obligation; we wear it as a badge of honour and we are very proud to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant exactly one year ago.

To outsiders, the Irish Guards represent the flawless public face of British ceremonial tradition. But we know that the true character of the Regiment is forged in the grit of operational deployments, tested in demanding training exercises and demonstrated through an unwavering commitment to excellence - not to mention enduring the freezing rain on the Aldershot parade ground!

What truly sets the Micks apart is character: fierce professional discipline, unyielding resilience and, of course, that legendary charm.

That character is perfectly embodied by your famous mascot, Seamus. He commands every room he strolls into with effortless dignity and patience. I am told he enjoys the privileged position of parading in front of royalty with long hair and wearing a silver collar, while completely ignoring the Sergeant Major's orders and sleeping through morning inspection.

It sounds to me like he has the best job in the British Army!

Of course, when we speak of the character of the Irish Guards, my thoughts also turn to Major Robbie Wilmont MBE. Robbie was a man of honour, duty and legendary warmth. His loss is still deeply felt, and we miss him.

Robbie represented the very best of what it means to be an Irish Guardsman, and I was privileged to have known him — despite his attempts to empty my bank account on several occasions. All in a good cause, of course!

Speaking of good causes, we were delighted to donate £2,000 this year to Colonel Ben Farrell's remarkable Blackthorn Rally. Although, judging by the video that arrived in my inbox this morning, it looks rather as though we simply handed a group of Micks two grand to thrash buggies and bikes across the desert, before settling down in a hotel spa to drink beer!

In all seriousness, what the Rally achieves in combining support for veterans with wildlife conservation, is remarkable. It perfectly embodies the spirit of the Irish Guards: taking on some of the toughest terrain on earth and somehow leaving it better than you found it - while having an extraordinary amount of fun along the way.

As a Livery Company, our gratitude is expressed not just in words, but through our tangible support for the Irish Guards' Charity. I am delighted also to report that our Benevolent Fund Trustees have recently agreed to a one-off grant for Wings for Warriors, underlining our support for the wider armed services.

You help to safeguard the freedoms that allow our City and our communities to thrive. We are grateful for your service and the proud legacy you uphold and it is not to be forgotten.

And now I invite the **guests only** please to rise and join me in a toast …

The Regiment.