



# Ambassador's Activities

2014

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- Press and Communications Services -  
58 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7JT London  
E-Mail: [press@ambafrance-uk.org](mailto:press@ambafrance-uk.org)  
Web: [www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org)

Welcoming remarks by HE Bernard Emié,  
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

Award of the insignia of  
*Officier* in the *Légion d'Honneur* to Sir Philip Craven  
and *Officier* in the *Ordre National du Mérite* to Mr Ian Reed and M. Yvan  
Besnard

by General Jean-Louis Georgelin,  
*Grand Chancelier de la Légion d'Honneur*,  
*Chancelier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*

28 March 2014

*Mon Général, Grand Chancelier de la Légion d'Honneur, Chancelier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*

*Cher Sir Philip, cher Ian Reed, cher Yvan Besnard,*

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to welcome the *Grand Chancelier*, General Georgelin, and all of you to the French Residence this evening.

I say “a great pleasure” not only because I will happily let the General do all the work for once! But also because it is very rare to have the Order’s *Grand Chancelier* himself with us for a ceremony.

The *Légion d'Honneur* and the *Ordre National du Mérite* are France’s only two national orders. These very high distinctions reward exceptional services rendered to France. The first one was created in 1802 by Napoleon and the second in 1963 by General de Gaulle, two great French historical figures who have gained tremendous respect among our British friends.

The President of the French Republic, François Hollande, is the *Grand Maître*, the Master of these Orders, and it is him alone who is entitled to appoint and promote their members. The *Grand Chancelier* is, as it were, the “Keeper” of the Orders, and also one of the most senior generals in the French military. General Georgelin was President Chirac’s personal chief of staff, after which he served as chief of staff of the entire French military.

Tonight, we are honouring three exceptional figures:

- My dear friend Sir Philip Craven, President of the International Paralympic Committee, who will receive the insignia of *Officier* in the *Légion d'Honneur*. Sir Philip was instrumental in the outstanding success of the London 2012 Paralympic Games and is a great friend of France
- Ian Reed, Director of the Yorkshire Air Museum, who does so much to keep alive the memory of the French servicemen who fought in the RAF during World War Two.

- And Yvan Besnard, French Honorary Consul of Chester, who has devoted much of his time over the last few decades to helping our compatriots in Cheshire.

*Chers amis*, thank you all for being here for this exceptional evening.

*Mon Général*, the floor is yours!/.