

Wardens, Honoured Guests and Members

Liz, thank you for that most timely reminder that our heritage is rich and nurses everywhere have big boots to fill.

It is traditional at this point for the Master to reflect on the preceding year and perhaps glance at the future. I am in the unique and privileged position to be able to do something a little different. A year ago, the Guild of Nurses was but a twinkle in the eye and about as likely as Leicester City winning the Premiership. But here we are – nurses filling Guildhall and Leicester at the top of the League.

I am humbled by this gathered assembly. So many nurses here this evening, many of whom are at the very top of our profession. We have eminent and most welcome representatives from the Livery world. How amazing is that – to get us all in the same room, at the same time with a shared goal. To help nurses progress our charitable and professional development on our journey to join the other notable professions as a full and lasting Livery Company. With unapologetic plagiarism – this is one small step for eight nurses, one giant leap for our nursing profession.

Our first Declaration Ceremony this evening was profoundly moving. 45 nurses became first Freemen of the Guild and many more wished to but lack of time prevailed. They will be welcomed on another occasion. It was wonderful to have two sisters taking their oath together, and we have a mother and daughter – I only wish that my mother, a wonderful nurse, was still with us – how she would have loved it. There will be many more ceremonies and many more Freemen – the appetite for joining us is unabated and although this has tested our fledgling processes to the limit, with your help and support we will learn and improve, so please bear with us. We are so grateful for the help and efficiency of the Lower Warden's office, and indebted to the Apothecaries as we move our postal address

to their magnificent Apothecaries Hall. Such practical support is so much appreciated and indicative of the fellowship we have found in the City thus far.

I cannot let the moment pass without paying tribute to my 7 colleagues – the Founders, now all Guild Wardens and making such a contribution to our success thus far. They are all busy, successful and industrious trained nurses – a formidable bunch with a common ethos and team spirit. We share a vision for our development and we have ambitious plans to further the work of nurses who have gone before us; offer support to nurses where it is needed; and contribute to the professional development of nurses today and tomorrow. Changes in nurse education make smaller Leagues and Nursing Associations vulnerable to collapse and the Guild of Nurses will offer them a safe repository within the security of this enduring City movement, safeguarding any funds, ring fenced for their original purpose and kept safe within nursing for years to come.

However, a dream is not enough. To make this all possible and for real success you need to identify and know your limitations. We needed more than our enthusiasm and commitment. We needed a sponsoring Alderman and Sir John Chalstry introduced us to Alderman Dr Andrew Parmley. How fortunate are we to have such illustrious and delightful support. We also needed real expertise and a guiding hand. The Clerk to the Chamberlain's Court introduced us to Keith Lawry. An act of kindness and insight, Murray, for which we will be forever grateful. Keith, brave man that he is, took us on, and as our Learned Clerk has been at our side throughout our journey thus far. He has steered us through the complexities of protocol and process. He has discovered countless most delightful ways of saying 'is that entirely prudent Master' and sometimes in desperation 'you can't do that Master' without ever actually using those words. And he has done this with unstinting grace and wisdom. I have no idea how he will tell me tomorrow that this is not the usual order of things but, on this absolutely unique and historic occasion, I ask you all to join me in grateful thanks to the Nurses' Learned Clerk.

Another great joy of being in at the very beginning of something is that we are in the enviable position of setting some of our own customs – we are privileged to join the ancient traditions that have seen the City safely through hundreds of years. We will add to those and hope to enrich our Guild with some customs of our own.

I was somewhat self-consciously making my way with the Beadle and Learned Clerk into our first formal Court Meeting held here at Guildhall. I was wearing my robe for the very first time. In the distance, I saw someone walking towards us and as he got closer, he said ‘blimey – you look just like a nurse’. Job done on our robes I thought!

We hope in the future to have a full Coat of Arms. In the meantime, I hope you have seen our badge/logo. The Nurse’s watch is ticking – and the time starts at 20.16.

We plan to be a wide family – all specialties and the great variety of nurses from up and down the land are welcome to join us. Nurse training badges are hard-earned and to be worn with pride. Those of us who no longer wear a clinical uniform do not often get the opportunity to give them a polish and an airing. We will invite nurse-training badges to be worn at all our events. This has clearly become popular already – it is wonderful to see the wide diversity of badges on show here this evening.

Perhaps one of the best-known traditions of City Livery is passing of The Loving Cup. An ancient and venerable representation of unity, trust and fellowship. All essential factors in the role of the nurse. We have our own interpretation of this custom, unique to our profession. The Nurse’s Lamp is symbolic of our vocation. Not necessarily the Ladybird Book version nor the mighty Nightingale lamp that

proudly lives in Westminster Abbey. Our lamps may look like Chinese lanterns but they are, in fact, exact replicas of the five – and it was only five – working lamps that returned to England from Scutari. Our Chaplain will bless them and we will pass these amongst us whenever we dine together. We hope this will become a lasting tradition – a symbol of nursing unity, trust and fellowship.

There is much to be done to ensure that nurses stand proudly amongst the noble trades and professions within the Livery fraternity. We have started that journey – at 20.16. We will evolve and grow and with your support we will hope to make a valuable contribution and continue to prosper amongst such good friends.

Thank you for coming – enjoy your evening. We look forward to many more.

Brenda Griffiths
12th May 2016