

## **Master's Speech Anniversary Banquet May 2017**

### **Brenda Griffiths**

Wardens, my Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress, Sheriffs, Freemen, Ladies and Gentlemen. A huge welcome to everyone on this our second anniversary held again on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, International Nurses Day, here at Guildhall – such a perfect blend of the nursing profession with the City of London. I am humbled by this gathered assembly. Such honoured guests – in addition to our City's Civic party, we have amongst us a past Masters and Mistresses from the Barbers Company and also the Patternmakers. We have Liverymen and women from the breadth of the Livery fraternity who also happen to be nurses – or are attached to one. They bring us an insight and experience that has been invaluable to those Freemen who are new to this sometimes complex and mysterious world. And now we have a place nurses can call their own – this, our Guild of Nurses. We are the newbies and still learning the ropes but our enthusiasm and willingness to learn is undiluted and we are very much here to stay.

In such knowledgeable and eminent company I would not presume to talk further about the Livery world – something about grandmothers and sucking eggs – and so Freemen please forgive me, I am going to talk to our guests about something I do know about – nurses, nursing, our profession and our Guild.

Last year I called us a twinkle in the eye – this year I am able to report that we have progressed up the evolutionary scale to a membership of nearing 200 from an amazing 103 different places of nurse education. As with other modern Liveries, we are profession based. We are open to all trained nurses who are or ever have been on the UK Register. We are a wide family – including those in front-line practice, those who have retired, those who are currently in employment outside nursing, and students who have not yet qualified. Our membership is such that we, probably uniquely, amongst nursing organisations, have membership from every specialty and at every level – clinical practitioners, educators, providers, commissioners, health regulators, managers, leaders and politicians are all nurses within our membership.

This year has seen us progress with our plans to support and fund charitable and benevolent causes. To this end, we have worked with The Cavell Trust, Edith Cavell's legacy, a charity set up in her name in 1917 that supports nurses suffering personal or financial hardship. The Guild is delighted to be associated with an organisation that shares our desire to offer assistance to nurses in difficulty and we look forward to developing our links with the Cavell Trust as we go forward. Our own charity - The Company of Nurses Charitable Trust Fund is now registered with the Charities Commission and we have ambitious plans to build on the work of the profession's rich history; offer benevolent support to nurses when and where it is needed; and contribute to the professional development of nurses today and tomorrow through scholarship and bursary. I am delighted to report that our first major donation has been received and will be protected forever to ensure it can always 'make a difference'.

Ongoing education and professional development is critical going forward and we have had two excellent Guild events one at Kings College London and another at South Bank University. We now have a rolling programme of events of professional relevance, including very positive association with the Royal Society of Medicine. In addition, we have forged academic links with the Florence Nightingale Foundation and I was honoured to present the first Guild of Nurses Award to a worthy winner at their recent Gala dinner.

On the social side, our social programme not only offers the opportunity to network with colleagues but also allows time for fun!

We have enjoyed many delightful evenings here at Guildhall to welcome our new Freeman as they make their Declaration. We have iced biscuits and escorted London walks have seen us follow in the footsteps of suffragettes around Westminster and also to track saints and sinners around the square mile. Our first annual service last October led by our Chaplain included a re-dedication to our vocation for all the nurses in attendance. We will meet again this year in St Lawrence Jewry Church as we enjoy another of the great City traditions. This our annual banquet will be supplemented by a formal dinner at the Palace of Westminster in the autumn.

We are privileged to join the ancient traditions that have seen the City safely through hundreds of years and we are in the enviable position of setting some of our own customs. All our members become Freeman of the Guild of Nurses and, our Declaration incorporates the original Nightingale Pledge with the more current Code of Ethics from the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Our robes are modelled on a traditional nurse's cape. We hope in the future to have a full Coat of Arms. In the meantime, our logo incorporates a Nurse's fob watch - which is ticking and the time started at 20.16. 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 invite nurse-training badges to be worn at all our events and this has 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. You have seen our own interpretation of this venerable custom already this evening, unique to our profession. The Nurse's Lamp is symbolic of our vocation. Our lamps are, in fact, exact replicas of the five – and it was only five – working lamps that returned to England from Scutari. A symbol of nursing unity, trust and fellowship and we will get better at it I promise.....

And so my Lord Mayor and honoured guests, I could go on but I hope that gives you a snapshot of our Guild and how we are faring on our journey towards a Worshipful Company of Nurses. We are very mindful of the very great privilege it is to have you dine with us this evening. We are grateful for all your support and wise counsel and with your ongoing patronage the Guild will get there – we are doing our very best and we will not let you down.

As nurses we tend to be very practical people and so my Lord Mayor we offer you a small gift, which we hope you will never have to use. To be candid, we have a vested interest in keeping you safe not only as the leader of the Livery Movement we wish to join but also as our Sponsoring Alderman who will see us through to the Worshipful Company of Nurses. Please keep this to hand for those unexpected moments and I am obliged to say that the Guild does not endorse the individual products within, but do remember the nurses are always with you!

**Presented a First Aid kit**

In addition, the Guild of Nurses is honoured by the presence of the Lady Mayoress and our City Sheriffs – we would like to present you with our special Guild umbrellas – a gift of practical purpose to remind you of our profession, but again one which we hope you will need only infrequently.

**Presented Umbrellas**

My Lord Mayor, we are honoured to have the opportunity to support your Lord Mayor's Appeal. I have little doubt that everyone in this room has enjoyed the LSO at some time or another and perhaps now is the time to confess that as a student nurse all those years

ago, free tickets to our local Hall - the Barbican Centre - were much prized. As nurses, we are of course, absolutely delighted that your appeal will aid Music in Hospitals – a partnership that provides the therapeutic benefits of live music in hospitals, hospices, care homes and day centres. Very much our home territory. And so, and I do have to have to say it, My Lord Mayor, your presence here with us this evening has been *music to our ears* so the Guild of Nurses is more than delighted to present you with this contribution to your appeal.

**Presented a Cheque**

And now finally Wardens, Freemen, Ladies and Gentlemen please be upstanding for our final toast ‘

***“The Lord Mayor, the City of London Corporation and the Sheriffs***