

Master's Speech Annual Assembly May 2018

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Wardens, Court Assistants, Freemen and Guests

Welcome to the Guild of Nurses first Annual Assembly. Thank you for coming for what is, in non-livery terms, our Annual General Meeting. In common with all Livery Companies, our Ordinances dictate that the Livery and the Freedom shall meet in Annual Assembly once a year. When we achieve Company status and we will indeed have our own Liverymen, this will become our Common Hall.

In the wider livery world, there are two Common Halls each year – one principally to elect the two Sheriffs held on Midsummer Day, the other to elect the Lord Mayor each Michaelmas Day. All Masters (but NOT their spouses or other guests) of *livery* companies, (*not* of guilds or Companies without livery) process at both and most would consider these elections to be a three line whip occasion for every Master.

All liverymen are entitled to attend. To vote, a liveryman must have been clothed prior to May in the preceding year. The reason for the requirement to have been a liveryman since the previous May is, like most livery tradition, steeped in history. Back in the day when there was a real election for Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, it was not unknown for Companies to pack their livery with new members at the last minute, who would then vote for their preferred candidate. The May rule effectively prevented this practice, and it lives on today. But I digress.....our gathering today is to affirm the election of our new Master, Upper and Middle Wardens. We also need to receive the annual financial statements and consider any matters on which fourteen days notice in writing has been given to the Clerk. We have received questions from a Freeman, which I intend to take after the Renter Warden has presented the Annual Accounts. Our Ordinances also require us to read out the names of members who have died during the previous 12 months. The Court has determined that this is more appropriately done at our Annual Service and this act of remembrance, in the safe hands of our Honorary Chaplain, The Rev'd Canon Charles Pickstone, has become a sad tradition since our inception.

So my role today is to give a brief summary of where we are and where we are going. This year has been a busy one for the Guild. We have had the great good fortune to welcome our Honorary Clerk, John Allen, who has brought with him a wealth of Livery expertise and experience and has rapidly become indispensable. John has been invaluable to the Guild and to me personally and I take this opportunity to thank him for his support and wise counsel. John is ably assisted by Kerry whose assistance has also been so important to us. Our Beadle, Martin Whitehead has been with us from the start and I am delighted to see that his robes are now reflective of his contribution, courtesy of Liz Turnbull's needlework abilities.

We are in the midst of our renewal process so I am unable to give exact numbers but we have to date: 7 Lifetime Foundation Freemen; 35 10 year Foundation Freemen; 6 Quinquennial Freemen; 190 Annual Freemen. They have all trained at 134 different places of nurse education. In addition we have 4 Apprentices who have yet to qualify. We have two Honorary Freemen – our Sponsoring Alderman Dr Sir Andrew Parmley and our previous Honorary Clerk, Keith Lawrey.

The Membership Committee has met on three formal occasions but this does not reflect the enormous amount of work on-going from day to day that ensures that all membership enquiries have a speedy response and that our membership records are accurate and stored safely. This Committee is fully populated and we owe its members a great debt of gratitude.

The Social Committee has recently co-opted two newcomers to the Committee so are currently also at capacity with 10 members. This Committee has organised two formal dinners – our Banquet last year, which entertained the Lord Mayor and the entire Civic party and a very successful dinner at the Palace of Westminster. We have also had regular receptions for our new Freemen to make their Declarations and there also been a full programme of less formal, varied social events including trips to Norwich Cathedral, two tours of Palace of Westminster, Sir John Soane’s Museum, The Poppy Factory and 3 City Walks. Feedback from these events has been very positive. Next years calendar is equally varied and inviting to suit all tastes and pockets. In addition, the Committee has ensured that the Guild has now started to make a little profit from these informal social events by including for a small donation included in the ticket price from members who apply for places.

The Education and Professional Development Committee have had 4 meetings this year one of which was virtual). There are 8 members on the Committee, 2 members recently joined. Two very successful events were held this year and the first Guild conference is scheduled for September to be held at Apothecaries Hall. Topics explored this year were recommended by attendees at previous meetings and included Clinical Governance and Inspection of Healthcare provision and Nursing Associates and the evolving profiles of the modern nursing workforce. The conference programme will include the development of Safety Critical Roles and hearing from nurses working in challenging, novel and complex situations. Evaluation of events to date are positive, participants enjoy the networking opportunities and registered nurses can utilise attendance at the events for their required re-validation with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The Communications Committee has managed the production of the Guild Events calendar, two editions of The Lamp and several informative mail-chimp messages. This Committee also oversees the content of our website and ensures that both Forthcoming Events and Post Event Reports are timely and well publicised. I must at this point thank our web-master Col Stephen Oxlade of New Valley Web Design for all his work on our behalf. He is endlessly patient, highly efficient and much valued. Our website hits fluctuate but show a healthy bottom line with Forthcoming Events and the Membership Application forms showing the most traffic. It is interesting to note that visits to our site seem to increase after a Mailchimp or Newsletter is distributed to Freemen and this would be worthy of further analysis to see if we can increase interest from outside our membership. It is excellent to report that our site is now top hit if you Google Guild of Nurses.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee comprises of the Founder Wardens and has met on 4 occasions to discuss Guild strategy, matters of finance and to make recommendations for discussion at the Court. As we know, The Court is the governing body of the Guild and is comprised of Court Assistants who have all served or are serving on one or more of our Committees. In addition to the quarterly meetings, the Court met for an Away Day to discuss our next goals and devise a business plan to reach them. This was an excellent strategic planning day and it was decided to repeat this activity every year to ensure that our plans remain relevant and on target. The Members of our Court are all busy people and the Guild is exceptionally fortunate to have a gathering of such

talent. They all give of their time freely and without question. We must be enormously grateful to each and very one of them.

The Company of Nurses Charitable Trust is up and running. This is the benevolent arm of the Guild, a charity registered with the Charities Commission, which aims to make a difference. As you know we have ambitious plans to build on the work of our 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. Our Honorary Clerk is the Secretary to the Board of Trustees of which I am the Chair. The creation of the Chantry Robinson Fund, a generous anonymous donation and other contributions mean that we have made good progress in the past year. The next stage on our Guild's journey has challenging targets, which must be met in order for nurses to achieve the next rung up the Livery ladder. This should be a focus for the coming year. We need substantial charitable funds in the bank before we can apply to the Court of Aldermen for Company without Livery status. However, we have a way to go and for this coming year we must turn our minds to how we can swell our coffers – and, most importantly, put them to good use.

The Guild of Nurses is still very new and initially it was important to judge our reception both in the City and within our profession. I think it is fair to say that this year had brought us to the end of the beginning. We have a growing membership – and the City has been welcoming and receptive to our inclusion. We are increasingly involved in City events and we need to develop this further in the year ahead. Our credibility and awareness amongst nurses is increasing and other bodies who share our desire for long term charitable, benevolent and educational sustainability are approaching us in growing numbers, seeking the security that the inclusion of our profession in the livery movement can offer. Looking back it really quite a remarkable story. We have come a very long way in a very short time. From twinkle in the eye to credible City Guild. A Worshipful Company of Nurses is now well within sight. This is due largely to the huge commitment of my fellow Wardens, Court Assistants, Committee members and our Freemen. As this is my last Master's Report, I take the opportunity to thank you all.