

Master's Speech Anniversary Banquet May 2018

Helen Pickstone

Wardens, honoured guests, freemen ladies and gentlemen

It is wonderful to see so many of you here. Thank you for coming,. A huge thank you Paul for your most excellent and thoroughly entertaining speech. Quite an act to follow. (Please accept this small token of our appreciation) GIVE the Umbrella.

Well, here we are, the Guild of Nurses, two years old. I can hardly believe it. We have come a long way. I sometimes wake up in the morning feeling rather surprised by it all.

It puts me in mind of the time, as a health visitor, I visited a family in order to carry out a 2-year development assessment on a little girl. Let us call her Chloe. I found that her gross and fine motor skills were within normal limits. Chloe quickly left the room, probably being rather shy. I discussed with Chloe's mother other aspects of her development such as speech. The mother was clearly concerned "she doesn't say anything" she told me.

"Do you mean she is not putting 2 words together such as 'want drink'? No was the reply.

What about single words "Mum" "Dad" "shoes"? No, she has never uttered a word. "Do you think she understands what you say to her" I then asked, as this is the most important aspect of communication at that age. The mother hesitated while considering this. At that point Chloe returned carrying something. Then, without hesitation, repetition or deviation, she looked me in the eye and in a clear voice said "These are my new Wellingtons"

Two year olds have the ability to surprise!

Research indicates that before children can acquire the tools of speech and language they have to have a sense of being and belonging.

When it comes to the Guild I would say we pass our two year development check, and yes I think we can speak in sentences. To have reached this stage, as with two-year-old children, we must have achieved a sense of being and belonging. This has come especially thanks to the support we have received in abundance from the city of London, our clerks, friends and freemen. Thank you all.

But of course we are not yet fully grown. This will be the work of the years to come. We will build on these solid foundations; increasing our diverse membership; continuing to grow the company of nurses charitable trust to make a difference; to continue to contribute to the Cavell Trust and to further develop our benevolence to those in need and provide financial support for educational purposes through scholarships and bursaries including the Florence Nightingale foundation. Our Educational arm is proving popular and is expanding. We are to have a half day study day in September in the magnificent surrounding of the Apothecaries' hall. Nurse education and development, to improve and maintain standards in nursing is of great importance to the Guild. And of course having fun and fellowship goes side by side. Our programme of social events is many and varied. Look out for next year's calendar. It's going to be very exciting. I think all this can be summed up in the word CARE. Charity, altruism, recreation and education.

We have taken to ourselves many of the city's traditions, some of which you have witnessed this evening. It was lovely to have amongst us the dismounted troop of the light cavalry forming a guard of honour. How splendid they looked.

We are beginning to have some customs and artefacts of our own. Florence Nightingale statue. A beautiful book which is our register of freemen in addition a memorial for those Guild members we lose. Both generous gifts. We passed amongst us this evening the nurses lamp, unique to the Guild. Neil McGregor, former director of the British Museum, describes, and I quote " the Charisma of things". I am sure that our lamps will gain this charisma as they are passed from hand to hand, from generation to generation.

Finally, I cannot end without mentioning someone who had the initial vision to set up a Guild of Nurses. She has been the foundation Master for the last 2 years which I would suggest

must be the hardest term of being Master when most people around you are novices. Her tireless work, enthusiasm and encouragement has been quite extraordinary. She has guided us all through the fine details while maintaining the larger picture in order to arrive at what we see today and all without previous experience. Brenda, you are amazing. We can never thank you enough. Please accept this a token of our love and esteem that we all share.