Master's 10th Anniversary Speech 26 February 2026

Wardens, Foundation Past Master, Past Masters, Honorary Liverymen and Honorary Learned Clerks Emeriti, Learned Clerk, Assistant Clerk and you, our Liverymen and Freemen, I am delighted to welcome you all here today to this fabulous Hall to celebrate! February is the 10th Anniversary of the recognition that Nursing should take its place amongst the other noble professions within the City of London. Nursing is of course, one of the oldest professions and one of the largest professional workforces in the UK. Some professions granted Livery status since mediaeval times have sadly come and gone, lost in history or put out of trade by others. I cannot foresee a time when nursing and nurses will ever not be needed and valued. 10 years is just the very start of a long Livery history and The Company will be here for perpetuity. I don't think I will be here for the 500th anniversary!

This lunch does indeed mark the month of that pivotal moment in 2016, however it also marks the beginning of a year of celebrations. Let's celebrate today and enjoy the food, wine and more importantly the fellowship, companionship and friendship that this Company is so proud to foster. Please enjoy!

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We have been privileged today to dine in Bakers' Hall. The Worshipful Company of Bakers have owned and occupied this site in Harp Lane for over 500 years. This is the 4th Hall to be built here. The first hall was destroyed by the Great Fire of London. Its replacement yielded to another devastating fire in 1715 and the third hall was razed to the ground during the Blitz in 1940. This splendid hall built in 1963 has these stained glass windows symbolising the three fires and designed by the famous artist, John Piper. I would like to thank the Master Baker and the Worshipful Company of Bakers for allowing us to use their Hall today and allowing us to use their silverware.

Our main speaker today needs little or no introduction to this audience. Brenda has had a distinguished career both within and outside of nursing. She has working at Barts, Guys and the Royal Free and latterly in her career as a non-executive director of Hertfordshire Community Health Trust. She also applied her skills, knowledge and experience as a member of Hertfordshire Police Authority, being a lead for Inspections of Police Custody, and the Strategic Health and Safety Forum of the Association of Police Officers. She also served on the Home Office, Police Advisory Board for England and Wales, Substance Misuse Review Working Party. She served for two years as Foundation Master of the Guild of Nurses from the beginning in 2016 and has been the Chair of the Company of Nurses Charitable Trust since 2017. She has applied herself with vigour as a Trustee of at least three other charities in addition to ours.

Wow! That's her CV but I see Brenda as an all round good egg. Formidable maybe, capable certainly and also a good friend and mentor. The Company is indebted to her for her direction and leadership in the early days and her continued guidance today. Brenda Griffiths

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Thank you Brenda for those wonderful words outlining those very early days before the Guild was even a "thing" and then the progress of those first 10 years.

Thank you to all the Founders for their vision, enthusiasm and determination to make this work. May I be a bit risqué? (We are all members here and we're not entertaining Civic guests). We are all, just so very grateful, that all of you, quite frankly had the balls to do this and that is why we are all here.

There are many other thank yous that I need to make today. First and foremost, to all our members! Many of you here today joined the Guild in its very early days. You have provided the feedback and also the encouragement to those of us on Court and the committees to carry on. We are grateful that you have stuck with the Company for the past 10 years – thank you.

For the last year, Past Master and Founder Fran Davies has led the small 2026 working group covering everything related to celebrating the 10 year anniversary including the Company's new lines of merchandise. Thank you, Fran, to you and your team for everything you have done so far in organising us all to this point. One of Fran's favourite sayings is "Let's have a Task and Finish group". The fact that you lead on many of the Task and Finish Groups within the Company is testament to your organising ability and nurturing leadership style. Please stick to your mantra and continue to the finish!

Particular mention must go to Claire Chitty and Carol Law. Sadly Carol isn't here today. Having been focussed on planning the date for us, she then remembered she had a holiday booked and is currently in the air flying back from South Africa. Claire and Carol secured this venue, along with the outstanding catering abilities of Cook & Butler, organised the spreadsheets, the costings, the advertising, the pour memoires, the seating plan and carrying out so many tasks for the successful running of this lunch – thank you! Talking of Cook and Butler, what a fabulous spread they put on for us? I must thank Mark, Modesta and her team for looking after us today – and the Cake – well that really was the icing on the
Cake! Some of you may know that Mark has especially looked after us since 2016, catering for many of our diners and functions. Mark's mother was a nurse and Mark also gave us one of our first treasures, this beautiful statuette of Florence Nightingale.
As I mentioned at the start of this lunch, this is just the beginning of our 10 year celebrations and also the rest of our Livery history. We, the Court and Committees, are not sitting on our laurels now that we have done 10 years. There are many new initiatives in the planning stages and some that have been in the planning stages might soon be coming to fruition! Please do keep a close eye on the website, on social media and in your email inboxes. We have an exciting future ahead!

Before I wish you a safe journey home, I would like everybody present to raise their glasses and stand if you are able, to propose a toast to the nurses that have gone before us, the working nurses today and the nurses of the future. “To nurses everywhere”