

MAYOR MAKING CEREMONY

Held at
LEEDS TOWN HALL

On
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MAYOR MAKING CEREMONY

THE LORD MAYOR: Distinguished guests, friends. I feel greatly honoured, extremely proud and deeply humble to be standing before you this evening as the Lord Mayor of this great city of ours. To be representing Leeds and acting as its ambassador on the local, national and possibly on the odd occasion the international stage is more than I ever dreamt of. I must tell you that in this particular week I am rather pleased that my title is to be Lord Mayor and not Speaker! (*laughter and applause*)

One of my abiding memories as a Leeds City Councillor was of my first occasion in the Council Chamber when Councillor Mark Harris proposed the election of the then Lord Mayor. I was amazed when in doing so he used the occasion to publicly acknowledge his appreciation of the help and guidance which he had received from my husband Terry whilst he was at Roundhay School and I was and remain tremendously moved and appreciative and wish Mark to know that.

To Frank and Sheila Robinson a big thank you and congratulations for the way in which they have carried out their roles and represented Leeds during their year as Lord and Lady Mayoress. You have been superb and I know that you have been very ably supported by Councillor Wilkinson and the Deputy Lady Mayoress.

Although it is Judith Elliott who is standing before you this evening as Lord Mayor, I am acutely aware that this would not have been the case without the guidance, confidence and political skills of Robert Finnigan (*applause*) as Leader of the Morley Borough Independents and ably assisted by Lisa Drake (*applause*) who worked to make this happen and I am truly grateful to them as, indeed, I am of all my Councillor colleagues on both the Morley Town Council and Leeds City Council for the help, guidance and support which they have given me in recent years.

I am delighted that our son, Andrew, and daughter, Margot, along with Margot's children, Gabriella and William, are with us tonight. Unfortunately due to school commitments Phyllida and Guy could not be with us and, of course, daddy has to look after them. Those of you who know us will appreciate that their absence is fitting, bearing in mind the important part that education has played in our family's lives over the years. It also pleases me greatly that on what is for me this very special occasion so many of my friends are present including the former Bürgermeister of our twin town Siegen, Ulf and his wife Gisela, who have come over from Germany for this occasion. Unfortunately our Chinese family are unable to be with us today but have sent their good wishes.

Many thanks to Councillor Andrew Carter, Councillor Richard Brett and Robert Finnigan for their support and kind words this evening. I am aware that this is a historic occasion in that, for whatever reason, so much of this event has been held in this Town Hall tonight but the Victoria Hall would take some beating.

I would like to thank this evening musicians Nigel Wears, on the piano and the large big band who came to me via Elaine, a member of the Friends of the Morley Literature Festival. I would like to thank them for being here and being part of this special evening and I do know that all our musicians are thrilled to be playing in our magnificent Victoria Hall tonight.

Many thanks to Councillor Andrew Barker and his wife, Diane, for agreeing to be Deputy Lord Mayor and Deputy Lady Mayoress. We shall be striving during our year of office not only to represent Leeds to the best of our abilities but also to raise as much money as possible for the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal, which this year will

support Riding for the Disabled at the Middleton Park Equestrian Centre, CREATE and the Leeds branch of the Samaritans.

Before I became a member of Leeds City Council I thought I knew how big a city Leeds was. I did not, but I do now. I have thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of my time as a member of this Council. I am delighted, honoured and thrilled to be the Lord Mayor of Leeds and I intend to work hard and really enjoy the coming year, interesting and lively though that may well turn out to be. Thank you. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR F ROBINSON: My Lord Mayor, Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, distinguished guests, colleagues and friends, a great event it is tonight. Looking back on all my experiences – or looking back with considerable experience – I have never known a year go as quickly and as fast. It has been a rollercoaster all the way and I only looking back seem to have been at it a few months but really a year, it has gone like the wind, it has indeed.

In looking back - and now is the time to look back, of course – one has to look and give our many thanks, and particularly to my good wife Sheila here, who has obviously kept me in front of the firing line all year and done it very successfully as well.

The job of being Lord Mayor could not exist unless we have the backing of the Lord Mayor's Office. What with Steven and John, Mark and the others and the office staff – they keep you not only on your toes but make certain you get there, do that, this, that and the other and I thank them indeed because we could not do it without them. Thank you, John and company very much indeed.

Of course, I thank all my colleagues for the support throughout the year. Occasionally we have had our ups and downs, especially in Council, but we have weathered the storm finally and a credit, I must say. I think the last but one I congratulated Council on the fact that we had a most civilised Council meeting and that is how it ought to be, of course. That was great.

I also thank my own party for nominating me in the first place. I would not have been here if it had not been for my Group.

Thanks also to Gerald and Pat as Deputy Lord Mayors. They have done a marvellous job and they have filled in on quite a few occasions, thank you, when I was not available. I hope you have enjoyed the year as much as we have.

It is the time when you finish in office that people say to you, "What are the highlights? What have been the highlights for this past year?" I look at them and I say, "Well, if you have got two or three hours to spare I will tell you what the highlights were" because believe me, and Lord Mayors who have experienced it, you just cannot do it in a few minutes at all. You do have to look back at a whole range of activities and again, looking back, what did impress you probably most.

In general the number of voluntary organisations, the number of people in communities who do work for whether it be the disadvantaged, handicapped or whatever or the elderly. There are so many in Leeds, organisations, that you could not possibly get round to thank them all, but those that you do visit, I think that is where the presence of the Lord Mayor - and it quite astounds me sometimes the power of me or the chain, I do not know which – how welcome they make you and how impressed they are. Maybe you are the first person of any authority that has thanked them. I have been to one or two where carers have almost been in tears. They have been at it years and years and years but who has thanked them?

Particularly for the Lord Mayor to come along and say how great they were, I think that is a huge benefit.

In this city we have got more voluntary organisations I would think than anywhere in the world, not only with caring but I could just quickly mention with Leeds in Bloom (*laughter*) and the committees – I thought I had better get that in – and the thousands of people that are involved it is considerable.

Another thing that impressed me is the international relations. The standard in this city for welcoming people from abroad is absolutely fantastic. I do not think I could remember all the visitors and ambassadors that I have welcomed into the City Hall. When they come from as far as obviously China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Thailand and then we get a bit nearer home with Serbia and Germany and wherever, that is the extent of what we have coming into Leeds.

Is it called networking these days that everybody gives you a card, a visiting card. I have got a wad of them somewhere and everyone who has visited, I do not care where they have come from – the USA or India or what – gives me these cards and they say, “You must visit me when you come here, you are invited to come” and I say, “Oh, great, I would love to come, I would love to come. If you will send me an invite I will be there.” So I am waiting! (*laughter*) Probably in vain, of course! I have cards for all sorts of places and I will keep them for a while anyway.

Probably my only disappointment was that when we were lined up to go to China that the recession intervened but I have been to quite a few of these places Europe-wise – Serbia and the like – and as you might guess, amongst all the business contacts and Olympic contacts and that I have always tried to push the green side, the floral side. When I go to Brno and the Mayor there says, “And what do you think of Brno, then?” Not a bad city but if you only put tubs, containers, round the main square (*laughter*) instead of having them filled with litter, that would be great. Put some more trees and that.” They sort of look at you and it does not come in their budget, happen, I don’t know!

Again, you go to Dortmund and I impressed Dortmund, by the way, by asking if I could see their Botanical Garden and nobody ever, a Lord Mayor never from Leeds would want to see the Botanical Gardens, so I was in the very good books and I had the top people taking me round and I learned a lot there about the English influence that they are trying to put to the Germans, so we talked a lot about that.

I also commented on their flower beds. All they had really were pansies. I said, “If you come to Leeds” – and this was a few weeks ago – “you will find polyanthus, masses of colour. You really must visit Leeds and find out how it is all done.” You will not believe this but I go to Belgrade and all their flower beds – I hope you are into flowers – all their flowers were bellis. Do you know bellis, like a daisy, red and white. All their city square and gardens were all bellis. I thought, I have some in my garden but I thought they must have never heard or seen of anything else, so again I tried to explain that if they ever come to Leeds they will find out really what the best way of gardening is.

There are many aspects of visiting and, as I say, apart from impressing them with the chain because they do not seem to wear chains there.

Of course, one of the other obvious questions, have you met anybody important or anybody, really? I look at them and I assess their background and I said, “Well, yes, if you are after royalty, yes, Prince Charles, the Duke of York and quite a number of others.” Then I have another look and say, “Gordon Brown, yes, I met Gordon Brown.” That does not always go down well (*laughter*). Then of course

it could well be sporting celebrities and, of course, when you have been talking to Brian Close and Dickie Bird and Illingworth and a whole host at the cricket or some of the rugby people, you can certainly impress people.

If they are rather younger they may not be interested in what I have just said so I say, "Do you know Girls Aloud, the pop group? I was with Kimberley Walsh and we opened, cut a ribbon and she gave me a kiss!" "You what?" Some of the children I have told that to have even put it in their record that the Lord Mayor was kissed by Kimberley! That is where your fame is, isn't it, really?

You can go on for ever about the people you have met, the things you have done and the places you have visited. A trip on the Ark Royal, a trip up in an aircraft and things like that I will talk to you at some other time later.

Really we are getting to the end of my little speech and I would like to say about my charity, Andrea's Gift. We have had some very successful events but I must say just occasionally the recession or lack of money from somewhere has affected the amount we would normally raise. Again, I have been so impressed by the ordinary people that have come up to me and said what a valuable charity it is, "I know somebody who has suffered from a brain tumour or the like" and they are very, very grateful that the Lord Mayor in actual fact has raised the profile of the whole charity. Friends – they are good friends but I did not really expect them to be sending me cheques towards the charity. I am hoping that over £40,000 will be raised when it is all counted up but I think the profile has been brought up, we have had publicity everywhere and it has certainly a very good cause.

I wish the Lord Mayor every success but I think what I would wish most of all is good health because you will need it! (*laughter*) It is stamina and I know a few of them out there will certainly agree with me.

So I finish and finally, it could not have been a better last engagement yesterday when we were at Chelsea. That just now inspires me to spend the next many weeks in trying to bring my garden up to the standard of Chelsea. I thank you all. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, distinguished guests, members of Council, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure for me to stand here this evening to be able to thank the Lord Mayoral team for their outstanding year of office. Before I do could I just extend an apology? As you probably know, those of you who were not at the Civic Hall, we had I think what is described as a little local difficulty. All I can say to you is imagine – I am sure you can imagine – what it is like when you are about to go out in the evening and the kids kick off. (*laughter*) It takes a little while to calm them down, sort them out, get the toys back in the pram and after you have sorted all that out you can get on with the real purpose of the evening, so here we are.

The good thing is that we are all absolutely united in our support for Judith and her team in this coming civic year and I know it will be an excellent one as, indeed, was the one that we have just been through which gives me the opportunity to thank the civic team of last year for all the efforts that they have made to serve the city and the people of Leeds. It is a team effort. Frank mentioned – and I can call him Frank now instead of referring to him as Lord Mayor all the time, so there you are – it is a team effort and, as Frank has said, good health is very important. I want to pay tribute to the Lady Mayoress, Sheila Robinson, and the Deputy Lady Mayoress, Pat Small, who have both endured periods of poor health. You would not think so to look at them both tonight but they have, as many people know, but they have nevertheless carried out many engagements and done so with great style and charm

and for that we should be extremely grateful and I would like to extend my personal thanks to both of them for all they have done for the city in this past year and hope that in the coming year and the coming years they will enjoy better health. *(applause)*

Frank and I have been friends for many years and he is a good friend of mine and he has done a great job. He has had my difficulties with my colleagues and me and the other lot and our partner the joint administration, but we are not an easy lot to manage and, as Frank said earlier on in the Civic Hall, the final meeting peace broke out and we all behaved ourselves very well but Judith, let me tell you, that is only a very rare occurrence, as you know. I am sure that you have learned a lot from how things have been handled in this last year.

There is a whole list of engagements that the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and Deputy Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress have undertaken throughout the year but Frank has mentioned most of them to you. I did think, however, for a while that Frank had become some sort of roving international Britain in Bloom Judge. Perhaps that is going to be the next step in his career progression if he has kept all the cards and invitations that he has received.

There is something very special about making places, cities, towns, attractive to visitors and residents alike, and actually it is very important. I think that in that respect having a civic team committed to places being attractive is a very, very good thing. I also think that we should not under-estimate the importance that people attach not just in this city but wherever Lord Mayors go to the Lord Mayoralty and what that brings with it. We should never forget that. I know that next year's civic team will carry on in the same tradition.

One of the things Frank did not mention was that he has attended 9 100th birthday parties and one 105th birthday party. Somebody told me a couple of weeks ago that people who are 60 now could live to 120. I should tell you that I was 60 this year, Richard's and my PA, Brenda – not down there – was also 60 this year. She has a lot more chance of reaching 120 than I have and she will probably still be keeping Leeds City Council under control as well, and organising events like this. One day perhaps the Lord Mayor will be visiting somebody who is having a 120th birthday party, which will be quite something.

It says here I have particularly to mention something but you have already mentioned it, Frank, and that is that you visited 10 Downing Street and you met Gordon Brown, so I will not mention that again. *(laughter)*

I think something we should mention is the fact that you were there at Old Trafford when the Rhinos clinched the championship. I am extremely jealous of that because I am a great supporter of Leeds Rhinos but it seems whenever I go to something they lose. Also, you were able to visit Yorkshire County Cricket Club on a number of occasions and I know you were at the Test Match last year and that is a treat indeed, Lord Mayor, because this year of course, it is the Ashes. Clearly cricket has not extended to Morley! *(laughter)*

Can I conclude by saying the last Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress have worked extremely hard throughout the year. We are very proud of the team of the four of them. They have served our city extremely well and they have left a lasting good impression wherever they have been and for that we must be very thankful indeed. Can I wish them a very happy retirement from these particular jobs and make sure you turn up at the next meeting. Thank you very much. *(applause)*