



One of the most popular features in *This England* is the poem by Patience Strong, which has appeared on our back-cover for over 30 years. Her association with the magazine began in 1970 when a reader sent in the poem *If You Stand Very Still*, having discovered it among her late husband's papers under the title "Silence". The reader believed that her husband had written the verse, but once the identity of the real poet had been established Patience's poetry became a regular feature in the magazine.

Over the years readers across the world have found comfort, hope and inspiration in her verses, which focus on human emotions, aspects of everyday life, and the beauties of Nature. Through all of her poems Patience Strong demonstrated an ability to reassure and restore faith during times of doubt, stress and unhappiness. The heartfelt sentiments that she expresses send out a positive message, offering encouragement, solace and strength.

Despite the affinity and warmth, which Patience communicates to her readers, she remains something of an enigma. Indeed people frequently contact *This England* wanting to know more about the lady and her work.

Patience Strong was born Winifred Emma May on June 4th, 1907, in Catford, London. Her father, Alfred — a postal worker — and her mother, Nell, already had one daughter, Connie, and they were later joined by a son who was always called "Boy".

Winifred's childhood was centred around Sunday school and the public library. Both she and Connie adored reading and poetry, and when they shared a bedroom they would stay up until the early hours reciting verses to each other. Winifred loved Shakespeare and her favourite play was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Family holidays in the Sussex resort of Brighton were a particular highlight for her and in later life she came to live in the county.

Music was another vital element of her youth. The Mays were regular visitors to the Music Halls and their home always echoed to the strains of whistling

and singing. Out of the three children, Winifred displayed a natural aptitude for the piano, being able to play by ear from an early age. As she grew up she became a popular and much-sought-after accompanist for local amateur singing groups.

After finishing school she enrolled on a secretarial course before getting her first job with a patent agency. She also

she also wrote lyrics and gave him a piece she'd been working on entitled *To Sing Awhile*. Drummond subsequently set her words to music and the song was published by Keith Prowse. Not surprisingly, when the offer of a full-time job with a music publisher came up, Winifred jumped at the chance.

By the age of 21 more than 100 of her songs had been published and during her career as a lyricist she worked with the likes of Lawrence Wright, Maude Craske Day and Jay Whidden. One of her most famous compositions was *Jealousy*, which was recorded by artistes including Hutch, Gracie Fields, Vera Lynn and Richard Tauber.

Winifred said that it took her just 15 minutes to write the lyrics after hearing Jacob Gade's memorable tango music played down the telephone by Lawrence Wright! Out of all her songs *The Dream of Olwen* (1948) was her favourite, and in this, the Golden Jubilee year, it is worth remembering that she also wrote the lyrics to *Princess Elizabeth*, a song composed especially for Her Majesty The Queen's fourth birthday in April 1930 and recorded by Webster Booth (see "The Editor's Letter", page 31).

However, it was to be through her poetry, and under another name, that Winifred would reach her widest audience. Spurred on by the successful publication of her poems she contacted the *Daily Mirror* in 1935 proposing a regular poetry feature every day.

The features editor was impressed with her work but told her to go home, write another 18 poems, and think up a suitable pseudonym before coming back to him the next day for a final decision.

With her customary dedication and flair, Winifred met his poetic challenge and decided upon the name *Patience Strong*, which was the title of a 19th-century book, written by the American author Adeline D.T. Whitney.

The following morning, in Fleet Street, her efforts were well received and so began Patience Strong's "Quiet Corner" feature which appeared in the paper on a daily basis until 1946 when it moved to the *Sunday Pictorial* (later the *Sunday Mirror*). Her poems were also



Patience Strong
Poet of the Quiet Corner

began contributing poetry to newspapers and magazines. Her first poem — for which she was paid one guinea — was published in *Nash's* magazine in 1922 and others soon followed appearing in publications including *The Strand* and *Good Housekeeping*.

Meanwhile, her musical talents continued to get her noticed and led to an engagement as a pianist with a dance band at the Manor Mount Club in Forest Hill, London. While playing there she was spotted by the composer Frederick Drummond. When she was introduced to him Winifred happened to mention that

published in *Woman's Illustrated*, *Woman's Own* and the *Christian Herald*.

Numerous anthologies of Patience Strong's poetry have been published including *Sunlit Byways* (1940), *Golden Hours* (1952), *The Tapestry of Time* (1965), and *Poems from the Fighting Forties* (1982).

For many years Patience's verses were incorporated on picture calendars and greeting cards. Her prolific output — it is estimated that she wrote a phenomenal 20,000 poems — led to her being awarded the Freedom of the City of London in 1970.

In addition to her poetry Patience also wrote a column for *Tit Bits* magazine under the name of Faith Forsyte. Her books included *God's in His Heaven* (1964), a defence of the traditional Christian viewpoint; *Life is for Living* (1971), a study of practical psychology; and *Dr. Anonymous* (1967), the story of a natural healer and surgeon.

She married her first husband, Frederick Williams, affectionately known as Paddy, in 1931. They had no children, but enjoyed a happy marriage until Paddy's death in 1965. Two years later, she married Guy Cushing, the son of her dear friend Amanda who had given her the prophetic book *Patience Strong*. Sadly, Guy died in 1979.

Throughout her life, Patience Strong held a deep faith and was interested in many different aspects of Christianity. She was a very spiritual person who believed that the only true source of happiness was to be found within a

▷ A peaceful bluebell wood near to Patience Strong's cottage home at Sedlescombe in Sussex.

JOHN TREMAINE



If You Stand Very Still . . .

If you stand very still in the heart of a wood
you will hear many wonderful things —
the snap of a twig, the wind in the trees,
and the whirr of invisible wings.

If you stand very still in the turmoil of life
and you wait for the voice from within —
you'll be led down the quiet ways of wisdom and peace
in a mad world of chaos and din.

If you stand very still and you hold to your faith
you will get all the help that you ask.
You will draw from the silence the things that you need
— hope and courage, and strength for your task.

PATIENCE STRONG

As well as being a committed Chris- over the world Her style of writing they faced She would always take the