

PATIENCE STRONG



Patience Strong was not actually *Patience Strong*. She was born Winifred Emma May in 1907, and her father was a postman at Catford near Lewisham. She started writing when young, and her first poem was published when she was only 15.



Like that of so many others, the work of Patience Strong is not now appreciated. No-one who wrote daily poems for the weekday editions of the *Daily Mirror* and then for the *Daily Pictorial*, from 1935 to 1946 could possibly maintain a consistent standard, and the editors of those papers did not assume an advanced interest in intellectual matters among their readers. Strong's poems are as far from (say) T S Eliot as one can find while still remaining poems. Nevertheless she was competent; she was no McGonagall. She was a good wordsmith; her lines scan and rhyme. Some lines are pithy if often expressing mere truisms rather than encouraging intellectual curiosity. One might today

<https://oddbooks.co.uk/oddbooks/other-side-coin>

compare her today with Pam Ayres as a poet of the people but her verse lacks the humour that lifts Ayres's out of the sentimental rut in which Strong's readers wallowed.

Perhaps a good example of her verse is this:

Today is the beginning
In the years that lie ahead
may you always share the love you have
this day as you are wed
I pray you'll each be one on whom
the other can depend
and may you share not only love,
but be each others friend
some hopes may not be realised
some dreams may not come true
but many of them will I know
to bless the two of you
within the home that you will have
I pray you'll always find
contentment, joy, security
good health and peace of mind.

Strong was also musically talented and wrote lyrics.

Strong had interests outside ordinary poetry. She was not perhaps the strongest progressive in thought, offering in *The other side of the coin* (1976) a strong defence of South African apartheid and the white domination of what was then (Southern) Rhodesia, and complaining that the UK was falling apart under Harold Wilson's premiership.

She married Frederick Williams at Lewisham in 1931 and as their income rose they moved to the countryside at Four Throws near Hawkhurst. When he died in 1965 she married (Sherlock) Guy Cushing who died in 1979. She died at Barrack Cottage, Sedlescombe in 1990, one of the oldest houses in the village. Her books have a strong religious flavour; up to 1962 she had been a Sunday school teacher at Whatlington parish church when she lived at Woodmans, an attractive house close to the (now) A21 and the Royal Oak pub. Both her houses are listed buildings.

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Sources

The Times, 31 August 1990

ancestry.co.uk

www.sussex-opc.org/ParishDetails/EastSussex/Whatlington/Whatlington-St-Mary-Magdalene.htm