

JOAN POMFRET - Poet

1913 - 1993

Joan Pomfret was born on 23 May **1913** in Darwen, Lancs. At the age of fifteen, her family moved to Preston, where she eventually joined the Preston Poets' Society. Two years later, at age 17, she joined the Lancashire Author's Association. Soon after, she started winning poetry cups and became one of the first winners of the association's *Batty Cup*.



THE CHURCH'S HEART

At every time of year, I think,
The Sanctuary a blessed place -
The lilies there at Easter time,
The candle glow, the precious lace...
Or then, again, on Christmas Day,
A carol ringing through the Choir,
The painted Angels, and the Peace,
The glad bells and the guarding spire...
On Lenten Days, and days of Saints
It seems to hold the years of prayer,
The worship and the hymns that have
So constantly ascended there...
Still beauty, and a sense of God,
His endless mercy, love and grace
Are there the whole year through to make
The Sanctuary a blessed place.

IN WORSLEY CHURCH ON CHRISTMAS DAY

In Worsley Church on Christmas Day
The tree will gleam again,
Once more through that wide open door
Will ring the glad refrain
Of "Hark! the Herald Angels sing
Glory to the New-Born King."
In Worsley Church on Christmas Day
The faithful and the true
Will meet to share in tuneful praise
Just as they used to do,
Whilst absent friends in spirit share
With all the joyous worship there!

Joan spent a short while in Worsley at some point in the 1930's. Here she met Douglas Townsend, a young architect, and together they went back to Preston, where they married at the Church of St. Jude with St. Paul on 28 July **1937**. After their marriage, they returned to Worsley to live at 2 Rycroft Lane. Over the years, she became better known as a dialect poet, helping to bring back the Lancashire dialect at a time when it was slowly disappearing. Peter Jones in his brief biography of Joan wrote:

"It is indeed as someone who helped to bring back the popularity of Lancashire Dialect at a time that it was waning that Joan will go down in Lancashire history and that is a wonderful legacy but by no means the whole story."

THE WORSLEY BELLS

The church bells of Worsley
Are summoning now
The girls from the village,
The lads from the plough.
O'er coppice and farmland.
'Oh, hurry!' they say,
'We want your thanksgiving
On this Easter Day!'



The church bells of Worsley
As if for a bride
Ring out down the mosslands
With triumph and pride.
'Oh, come, Friends of Worsley,
Oh, hurry!' they say -
'The Lord He is risen
This glad Easter Day!'

The church bells of Worsley,
How gladly they ring
For His Resurrection
This Sunday in Spring!
Come ye who have wandered,
'Oh, hurry!' they say -
'And join in our worship
On this Easter Day!'

Peter Jones then says that in **1950** Joan and her husband found a derelict farm in Great Harwood and decided to renovate it, along with another family, into two large cottages. The result was a stunning home with a wonderful view and a fitting place for a writer to live. Stoops Farm is its name and it is situated off Whalley Road, next to Great Harwood Golf Club.

Her husband, Douglas, died in **1981**, but Joan remained in her cottage where she died on 29 September **1993**, aged 80.

OUR SPIRE IN WINTER

An etching now they are, in black and grey,
The spire - the trees' bare arms - the wintry sun;
But still our clock moves on towards the day
When we shall wake and know the Spring begun!
And Nature, with her palette of new green,
Paints buds and blossom with a reckless pride,
Transforming once again the well-known scene
In time for yet another Eastertide.

The seasons change - and so, alas, do we -
Autumn must come when precious Spring is past,
But though the frost of winter strips the tree.
The House of God beneath was built to last.
The snowdrops sleep, and all the leaves are gone,
But straight and sure to Heav'n the spire points on!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

The Wise Men brought Him gifts -
Myrrh, frankincense and gold -
Adored Him and went hence
And of His glad birth told.
And all the joy they knew
We can experience, too!

Not frankincense and myrrh -
Other gifts we can bring,
Pure lives and loving hearts
To offer to our King,
Not earthly pounds and pence,
But joy and innocence.

These, the best gifts we have,
Freely and gladly given
Will ring this Christmastide,
All the bright bells of heaven!
And all the wise men knew,
We can experience too.

NO ROOM AT THE INN

Do you remember, this Christmas season,
Just how it was for them? -
A dark December, a long, long journey,
The road to Bethlehem . . .
And all they sought was a modest lodging,
Four humble walls to win;
And all they found was the surly answer:
No - no room at the inn.

Will you remember, this Christmas season,
Just how it was for them? -
Turned tired and footsore from every doorway
In sleeping Bethlehem?
And stretch out a hand towards the lonely;
Far from their kith and kin;
And think what they missed, who gave the answer
No - no room at the inn!



The Manchester Guardian had held a competition to write a poem, lamenting the passing of the barrel-organ. In its edition of 2 March 1938, the results were announced. The first prize of two guineas went to Dr. F. R. C. Casson of St. Albans, and the second prize was awarded to Joan Pomfret of 2 Ryecroft Lane, Worsley. She won one guinea for this piece:

*Now Harlem blues with drugged insensate beat
Blare from the wireless store across the street...
Where once, with gay red cap and wistful glance
A monkey watched the feet of slumland dance
In alley after leaving play,
To all the lilting tunes of yesterday.
Urchins with merry eyes and tumbled hair
Still pirouetting in the gas lamps' glare*

*As, gaily left to right and up and down,
They ran that other time in Hamelin Town. ...
He sees no children now, nor pennies shine,
The 'Zuider Zee' has turned to 'Auld Lang Syne.'
They join the other phantoms and are gone,
Monkey and organ-grinder - moving on.*

