

The Ballad of the Ballad of 'The Bryde of Melksham Woode'

Richard Temple

13th September 2025

I wrote a ballad of romance,
In antiquated style —
A tale of love's confusing dance —
It took me quite a while.

We printed it with lovely art,
In limited edition —
A short run, made collectable —
Or that was my ambition.

The printing, it was sore delayed,
By issues technical.
The deadline was approaching fast
For Morecambe Festival.

The critique academical
Called it a 'tour de force'.
Delivery by 10am —
Assured by ParcelForce.

Well, 10am, it came and went,
And I received a text
To say it went to Belfast first,
And Coventry was next —

But it should be arriving by
Four thirty at the latest,
And so, I waited in all day —
My plans were all frustrated.

Yet, when it came to five o'clock,
Of books, there was no sign,
And so, I called the ParcelForce
Customer helpline.

‘Apologies for this delay’,
Said a recorded voice,
‘We’ll answer your enquiry soon’.
I waited — had no choice.

They played a looping jazz refrain,
Its rhythm syncopated,
And every twelve bars on the dot
The voice re-iterated.

‘Apologies for this delay’ —
She sounded rather jolly —
‘We’ll answer your enquiry soon’.
I sat there, like a wally.

On and on, the message ran,
Apologies each time —
And hour, and another half,
Of parcels, still no sign.

Until, at last, the time had come
At half past six PM:
‘Our offices are closing now,
But you should call again’.

‘We open up at 9AM,
On Saturday included.
If you should ring back after that
Your case can be concluded’.

Overnight, at 2AM,
there were developments:
It reached the Preston mailing hub,
And that seemed relevant,

For now, the volumes we await
Are half an hour's drive,
So, though I missed the Friday sales,
They surely will arrive

By 10AM, as guaranteed,
Though later by a day,
So, on the doorstep I stood guard,
In tedious dismay —

For 10AM, it came and went,
And still there was no sign,
So, once again, I called unto
The ParcelForce helpline.

'Apologies for this delay',
The voice reiterated,
'We'll answer your enquiry soon'.
With no more choice, I waited.

The morning faded, by and by,
With looping jazz once more.
I watched the hours fade away,
Just waiting at the door.

To cling onto my sanity,
I made of it a game,
By writing lyrics to the notes
And dancing in the rain.

‘Apologies for this delay’ —
The words becoming abstract —
‘We’ll answer your enquiry soon’,
Stated like a true fact...

And yet, in truth, she never would,
For when twelve thirty came:
‘Our offices are closing now,
But you should call again’.

This book I made, of which I’m proud,
Is called ‘The Bryde of Melksham’.
I would so love to show it here,
But it’s still stuck in Preston.

From Milton Keynes to old Belfast

The book did wend its way,

Then back to Coventry, at last —

For why, I couldn't say.

And now it waits, just out of reach,

By ParcelForce held hostage,

And, checking out that guarantee,

They should refund my postage.

So, as my tale is at an end,

A moral is concluded:

The ParcelForce, by 10AM

Guarantee is bullshit!

The ParcelForce, by 10AM

Guarantee is bullshit!