

Myra Watt
1892 - 1974



Myra is clearly recognisable in this photo and looks very familiar! The photo probably dates from about 1903? and was taken at Watermill.

Myra left very little of herself. Her few letters were short and dull. There aren't many photographs of her. She was, however, very proud of her academic achievements: she was Dux of Fraserburgh Academy, took 9th place in the Aberdeen Bursary competition and went to Aberdeen University from 1911-1914.* There she studied French (5th place in Advanced French), Latin, English Lit, History, Moral Philosophy, and Logic and Metaphysics.* Two friends that I remember from this time were Aggie Middleton, a friend from Fraserburgh, who married Hugh Brebner the headmaster of the Gordon Schools, Huntly, and Nellie (Helen) Webster who married Murdo Mackenzie and was my mother's godmother. She kept up with both all her life. We believe that Myra went or was due to go to Caen University as a postgraduate in 1914 but either never went or returned very soon because of the outbreak of the First World War. This was very liberated for a girl from Fraserburgh at the time. Instead she went to Aberdeen Training Centre to train as a teacher from 1914-15. She left lots of glowing testimonials* from her teaching days at Fraserburgh Academy 1915-1917 and Montrose Academy 1920-1922. At some time she also taught in Kintore and Coatbridge.

Mabel, Jessie, Jeannie, Myra, Alan with their mother Jane Rae (Jeannie) at Lumbs



St. George's Girls School was formerly named the Government Girls' School, and was located at **Northam Road** in the early 20th. century.



In 1922, aged 30, Myra went out to Malaya to teach at Government Girls' School, Penang. Her sister Edith was already in Malaya having married Leonard Blackhall in Singapore in 1920. Was she looking for a husband in the colonies? There she met Harry Mutch, who worked on a rubber plantation, and they were married in 1925*. June was born there in 1927. Her colonial lifestyle was very comfortable and she played a lot of bridge. June used to complain that she spent her early years in Malaya under a bridge table.

MW
Taken January 1924
Ipoh



Wedding 1925 - with Edith and Len



Myra and June

Colonial lifestyle!





The family returned to Scotland when June was six in 1933 because of the slump and the fluctuating price of rubber. They lived at Willowbank near Peterhead and ran a chicken farm. The house was quite grand with a ballroom. Lesley was born here in 1934.



June, Granny Mutch and Lesley



Granny Mutch, June and Myra

Harry, Mabel and Myra



Myra and Harry and Lesley went back to Malaya later in 1934 leaving June in Aberdeen with her grandmother. Harry was appointed as manager of the Jeram Kuantan Estate and they lived in a very aspirational bungalow! The bungalow at Jeram Kuantan is still standing and there are some recognisable pieces of furniture in the photos of the interior. Both June and family (1976) and Lesley and family (1988) visited Jeram Kuantan.



Myra



Lesley in Malaya

Myra and Harry and Lesley were in Malaya from 1934-1939 when they returned to Aberdeen for six months' leave. When they went back June and Lesley initially boarded at the Aberdeen High School for Girls but were sent out to Singapore in 1940. June had home schooling at first and her father taught her to drive on the beach. In 1941 they were sent to Perth in Western Australia for schooling at Presbyterian Ladies College. Edith and Len were already in Perth on compassionate leave following their son Lennie's death. Myra joined them in February 1942. Harry stayed in Malaya and Len returned to Malaya to defend their plantations and were both captured by the Japanese. In Perth Myra went out to teach at Perth Boys' School to support the family and Edith kept house.

Myra returned to Aberdeen with June and Lesley in 1945 and rented a house from Aggie Brebner's daughter and son in law at 34 Hamilton Place. While living in Hamilton Place a tall distinguished man knocked on the door. He turned out to be John Murray, Myra's cousin, who became principal of Exeter University. Myra bought 193 Forest Avenue in late 1945 or early 1946 and lived there until her death in 1974.

Harry was very unwell after his years in the prison camp, having had several strokes and he died in 1948. He tried very hard to find work teaching on the Planter's course at Aberdeen University and he taught English to Polish servicemen. Myra found work at a secondary modern school teaching French and worked there until her retirement. She had holidays and frequently stayed with June and Lesley.



Myra and Harry, Len and Edith at Laurel Bank probably soon after the war. Edith and Len rented Laurel Bank in Banchory before buying Howeburn.

On holiday in Austria



193 Forest Avenue



193 Forest Avenue

Myra died very suddenly in 1974 from a heart attack, aged 81, after having her hair done ready for a bridge evening and having cooked a chicken. This is how we would all like to die.

owers only.
MUTCH.—Suddenly, at Foresterhill, on May 19, 1974, Myra Mutch (nee Watt), 193 Forest Avenue, Aberdeen, widow of Harry Mutch, formerly of Malaya. Funeral private.
PILLEY.—On Monday, May 20

Other gross estates lodged with the sheriff clerk at Aberdeen include:—

James Edwards, solicitor, 481 North Deeside Road, Cults ...	£107,979
William Hay, retired cashier, 91 Craigton Road, Aberdeen	£35,955
Alexander Hadden farmer, Cryla Maud ...	£36,558
Mrs Myra Mutch, 173 Forest Avenue, Aberdeen	£19,831
Mrs Elizabeth MacDonald, 86 Bedford Road, Aberdeen	£16,681
Harry Geddes, 4 Hunter Place, Aberdeen	£13,998
Henry Craig, retired dental mechanic, 155 Great Western Road, Aberdeen	£13,248
Mrs Mary Pearson, 20 Kingsford Road, Alford	£12,337
George Tarras, retired doctor, Mavisbank, Old Deer	£12,284
James Mundie, retired baker, 68 High Street, Old Aberdeen	£8,146
John Cooney, master mariner, 55 Lawsondale Drive, Westhill, Skene	£9,115
Isobella Williams, Civil Servant, 27 Hopetoun Drive, Bucksburn	£7,455
Grace Grant, teacher, Old Schoolhouse, Keig, Alford	£7,133
William Gibb, retired clerk of works, 162 Union Grove, Aberdeen	£6,296
Charles Coult, building labourer, Rosslyn, Daviot, Inverurie ...	£5,551

**193 FOREST AVENUE
 ABERDEEN**

This is a spacious Upper FLAT on two floors, in a two-flatted property, located in a pleasant street in the West End of the City. It is well situated for proximity to schools and bus routes. The accommodation comprises:—
 First floor: lounge, dining-room, two double bedrooms, kitchenette, cloakroom/W.C.; upper floor (which is suitable for use as a separate flat or boarding accommodation): Bedroom/sitting room, bedroom/utility room/kitchen, bathroom. Small area of garden ground.

Rateable Value, £111.
 Feu-duty, £3.07.
 Entry 30th June.

For further particulars apply to **CHRISTIE, BUTHLAY and RUTHERFORD**, Advocates, 70 Queen's Road, Aberdeen, AB9 1PS. Tel. 30101.



Alison's memories of Myra

This is how I remember Myra- I think this dress was later made into a dress for me. She always was very proper in her appearance if a little conventional. I remember a ghastly fox fur (head and all) which ended up in our dressing up box.

Myra had a reputation for being difficult even as a child (this from Edith) and quarrelled with lots of people. I never witnessed them but I heard about temper tantrums. She was very driven herself and often frustrated and disappointed. I do remember that she used to mutter under her breath. She certainly lacked affection, social skills and a sense of humour. As a child I spent a lot of time with her and felt very comfortable with her. She was always good to me: for example, when I was obsessive about collecting stamps she went out and bought all the first day cover stamps and posted them to me. She never forgot and always got the right day. I still have them. She didn't mind that I thought Latin was boring and wore weird clothes. She gave her daughters quite a hard time but my father, for example, could do no wrong. Later I found her to respond well to teasing. Once when I was a student she arrived at my flat at 9am on a Sunday morning after a friend's 21st birthday party because Auntie Mabel was ill. The place stank of alcohol and tobacco and there were bodies sleeping it off everywhere. She sat with her handbag on her lap, typically, amongst all this while I hurriedly dressed. I thought 'I'm in big trouble' but she never said a word to anyone. I think she was very shy. Many of the photographs reinforce this. It also seems likely that Harry had genuine affection for Myra. I think he was a very nice man.

