

Mrs Evelyn Soutar of Lisdon / and Westmuir WRI

Some people leave an **indelible impression** on their peers, enough to last a life time and **Mrs Soutar** was just such a person. To so affect one's peers is one thing but to leave a favourable lasting impression with youngsters thirty or forty years younger requires considerable personable and worthy talents. Mrs Soutar had these in abundance.



Whilst some of the dates can only be approximate we can be reasonably certain that it was during the 1930s that Mr and Mrs William Soutar moved into **Lisdon, Low Road, Westmuir**. Along with a fairly substantial house came a hefty acreage of **raspberry fields**. By all accounts both Mr and Mrs Soutar applied themselves to the challenge of having a **successful soft fruit business** and this can be verified (later) by one of their young fruit pickers in the 1950s.

This diversification into small time fruit farming was almost certainly a big life change for Mrs Soutar. Her **love of music** always seemed paramount and greatly affected the lives of those around her. It was often thought that Mrs Soutar had been a singer with a **D'Oyley Carte Opera Company** and certainly it was always apparent that she could **sing, entertain and direct, remarkably well**. By the **1940s** her greatest talent was to **build confidence in others** and **encourage those with real ability** to achieve all they could. She herself avoided being 'over officious' and thereby retained the **enthusiasm of her young performers**.

One such performer was **Mrs Davina Farquharson** (Davina Weighton in the **1950/60s** when she knew Mrs Soutar). **Davina** has written the following about **Mrs Soutar** and the **Westmuir Concert Party**.

"Mrs Soutar asked me to come along and help out with the singing. We did a lot of choruses. I remember we sang 'the Hiking Song.' Chorus was 'Val da Ree Val da Rah' – never forgotten that one. Mrs Soutar directed us with movement etc. We rehearsed quite a lot. The accompanist was Mabel McLean (Mrs Miller) of Glengate, Kirriemuir. Mrs Soutar (we all called her that) a lovely lady and very kind. She paid for singing lessons with Mrs Ann Nicol in Forfar, for which I am eternally grateful. I'm sure she would be very happy to know I still go out to entertain at the age of 68 yrs. * Mrs Ann Nicol who led the "Linnets Choir" and the "Starlings Choir", Dundee.*



Northmuir WRI – Salad Days 1960s

Davina



Now 2012 and Davina is still a leading light and with a much wider repertoire as can be appreciated in her recent CD ...**"If there were no Flowers"**.



Left to Right – Back Row: Mrs Wilkie/ Miss Crighton / Mrs Hampton (in white coat) / Mrs Gillespie/ Mrs Horner (Police) / Mrs Duncan/ Mrs Coutts (Police)/ Mrs Alexander (Blue Dress)/ Miss Wilkie (Striped Apron)/ Mrs Gracie/ Miss Waters.
Left to Right - Front Row: Mrs Nicol/ Mrs Cruickshanks/ Mrs Duncan/ Mrs Mitchell/ Mrs Julie Birse
Front Centre: Mona Milne (Red Gown) and Davina Farquharson



Westmuir WRI Concert Party 1940s/1950s

(Left to right) *Margaret Norrie (later Mrs Gray) website friend - now in Australia , with Jessie Smith of Graddonfield , Westmuir and accompanist Mable McLean (later Mrs Miller of Garlowbank Smiddie).*

Former performers remembered are: **Ella Grant** whose sister **Cathie Munro** is a prominent member of our WRI even now. Ella was **singer** and **costume maker**. There was **Margaret Milne**, **Davina**, **Margaret McIntosh** , **Mrs Scott** and last but not least **Eila Webster**, mainstay and **Honorary Member of Westmuir WRI**. Eila, has a **grand collection of memorabilia** from the **WRI**, and **Burns Anniversary Suppers** and a great store of **her own poetry** which we hope to feature on the Website with Eila's help. She even has a **song about Mrs Soutar**

The Sweet Gracious Lady of Lisdon Words and Music by Mrs Eila Webster of Viewbank, Westmuir Written in the late 1960s on the occasion of the retiral of Mrs Soutar from the Westmuir WRI



Eila Webster



Somewhere in Westmuir a Lady doth stay and living
for others is always her way

So far and near you'll hear folk say she's the Sweet
Gracious Lady of Lisdon

Children love her it is plain... No one seeks her help
in vain

And that is why she gets this name The Sweet
Gracious Lady of Lisdon.

She thinks of us all the young and the old. To each
one in turn her love would unfold

She is a treasure far greater than gold the Sweet
Gracious Lady of Lisdon

May there still be joys in store for the one we all adore

the Lord Bless her for ever more The Sweet Gracious
Lady of Lisdon .



Mr & Mrs Soutar at Davina and Frank Farquharson's wedding in June 1969.



Mrs Soutar at Scottish Country Dancing.



Mr & Mrs Soutar at Bill & Christine Pate's wedding in July 1969.

A great **friend** of Mrs Soutar was **Mrs Isa Pate of Reddie Farm**. They formed an inspirational partnership for '**voluntary work**' in the area and **worked hard to maintain the village hall** and especially to strengthen the **local WRI**. Mrs Soutar's favoured forte was always the **musical input** whether it be **Scottish Country Dancing, Modern Dancing and Concerts, Musical Productions** and - **lots of singing**.

Her husband **Willie Soutar** became a **Trustee of the village Hall in 1942** and continued in that role **until 1975**. He enjoyed being a '**Berry Farmer**' and clearly adored his wife Evie. They settled well into village life but sadly **had no children** of their own.

Their young 'berry picker' Bill Pate and his wife Christine have **good memories** too of **Willie and Evie Soutar**. Quite apart from Bill being carefully trained in the art of careful berry picking both Bill and Christine learned a lot about the **game of Bridge**. They recall **numerous visits to Lisdon** when their **knowledge of the game progressed gradually** with the **ever patient Soutars**.

In the words of **Christine** *"Evie was a charming lady with a kind word for everyone and Willie was immensely proud of her many accomplishments. Any visitors to Lisdon were shown her many beautiful pieces of handwork and told of her musical prowess... praise well deserved. Bill remembers going to their berries and they were very strict with the youngsters on how they liked their top class berries picked. A delightful couple remembered by us with great fondness"*.



Belle Beaton, Mrs Soutar, Mrs McIntosh, Carmen Munro, and Mrs McGregor at 50th Anniversary of Westmuir WRI, 40 years ago in the Airlie Arms Hotel in Kirriemuir.



Alan Robertson

We are grateful to **Mr Alan Robertson**, whose wife **Mary** worked at **Lisdon** for many years, and who advised us that **Mr Soutar** worked for the **Jute Industries Ltd at Camperdown, Dundee**. His **health** had been adversely affected at some time in his youth and there were ongoing lung problems as a result. Mr Robertson believes it was due either to the **dreadful Flu epidemic of 1918** or that Mr Soutar may have **served in WW1**.

Thanks to Eila Webster and later a most helpful young Librarian (Phil) in Kirriemuir Library, we have obtained an article from the Kirriemuir Herald and Strathmore Advertiser from 1973.

Founder member of Operatic Group.

Mrs Evelyn Soutar, Lisdon, Westmuir died last week (26 April 1973) in Stracathro Hospital. She was 78. Mrs Soutar was well known in Dundee and Angus. She was born in Forfar and worked for many years as a private secretary for a Dundee Firm.

She was a founder member of Dundee Amateur Operatic Society and took part in many of their original productions. Mrs Soutar was closely connected with the W.R.I. and was president of the Westmuir branch for 26 years and made an honorary president. Mrs Soutar who had been in ill health for the last six months is survived by her husband.