

## RENA STEWART

### 1923 – 2023



The journalist Rena Stewart lived at 56 Meadvale Road between 1991 and 2023

Rena was born in Fife, the second child of Thomas and Andrewina (nee Williamson). Her father, worked in a bank while dreaming of a career as a pianist; her mother a housewife with feminist ideals that Rena inherited. She had a happy childhood full of music, books, and Scottish dancing. After leaving Lundin Mill Public School, she studied French and German at St Andrews University while enjoying a lively social life. On graduating in 1943 she volunteered for the ATS and, after training, signed the Official Secrets Act and was posted to Bletchley Park. Her duties involved interpreting deciphered German forces messages, including those from the Enigma project. At the end of the war, she joined the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre in Germany where she transcribed the interrogations of German Intelligence Officers. She was also one of the team that translated Hitler's Will.

In 1947 Rena left the army to join the BBC Monitoring Service at Caversham listening to Radio Moscow's German and English language broadcasts. Her reports went to the CIA as well as the BBC and was a continuation of her involvement in the intelligence world, although her work in Bletchley remained secret until 1974. Eventually she achieved her ambition to be a journalist and became the first senior woman editor of the World Service. Despite some romantic relationships she chose to focus on her career. She described herself as too ambitious for marriage and thought she 'could do better in a newsroom than as a housewife'. At this time, it was difficult for any woman to be taken seriously as a news journalist, however, Rena was described as having 'a gentle smile but analytical mind, a will of iron and a steely attitude'. She said she would like to be remembered as a good journalist rather than an intelligence officer as she regarded her war time work as 'rather dull'.

After retiring in 1983 she became an Elder of the St Andrews United Reformed Church, where she organised Burns Night suppers, edited the magazine and ran a Scottish country dance group. Rena enjoyed theatre, poetry, and music, particularly German Lieder and was part of the Brentham community. More detailed accounts of her interesting career can be seen via the link below.

[https://brenthamgs.files.wordpress.com/2024/02/rena\\_obits.pdf](https://brenthamgs.files.wordpress.com/2024/02/rena_obits.pdf)