

MIRABEL COBBOLD, Thrice married adventuress and writer

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Mirabel (#496 on the family tree) had talent combined with an adventurous spirit not gifted to many of us. Despite graduating from Oxford with a BA in Music, and being an excellent swimmer and golfer, she settled on being a writer. In marrying **Fl. Lt. Campbell Mackenzie-Richards** at Aldeburgh, Suffolk in 1927 she chose a man to fully match her spirit. We wrote about him in April 2013, http://cobboldfht.com/cms_news/news/cobbwebsNewsAndViews/page:10 so will not dwell on his extraordinary bravery but the pain suffered by Mirabel when he was killed in a flying accident only three months into the marriage was unimaginable. The crumb of compensation was her pregnancy, **Gillian** being born the following year. Long days and nights while Gillian slept upstairs gave Mirabel the chance to complete her first novel, *Deborah Lee*, published in the autumn of 1930. In a subsequent publication her first book was somewhat damned with faint praise when it was said it 'established the author clearly in the front rank of those writers who put into their work not only enthusiasm and vigour, but also a subtle atmosphere of spiritual mystery, which cannot fail to hold the reader's attention whatever his sympathy with the actual tale may be'.



Mirabel Cobbold

Undismayed she produced her second novel, *Sea-Tangle* the next year to the rather more encouraging criticism that it 'is a book that will live. Through all time there will be those who "go down to the sea in ships" to whom it will come as a breath of the life they love'. Also in 1931, she married **Charles Robert Orr-Simpson** and three children followed, **Shirley, Patrick and Carole**. Her writing genes are in good shape as her granddaughter's recently published book is dedicated to 'my maternal grandmother, **Mirabel Cobbold Rogers**, whose love of writing inspired me from childhood to dream that I, too, might become that magical being: a writer'.

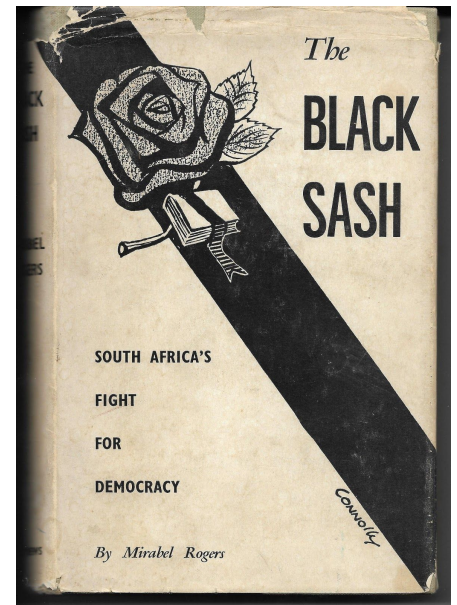
Although the year 1933 saw the publication of a short story, *The Incredible* in a collection of uneasy tales titled *Quakes*, it seems that her restless and adventurous spirit took hold. Now, as a journalist, she became a prodigious traveller, lived for three years in the wilds of British Columbia, free-lanced in China and Japan and even crossed Macedonia on horseback.



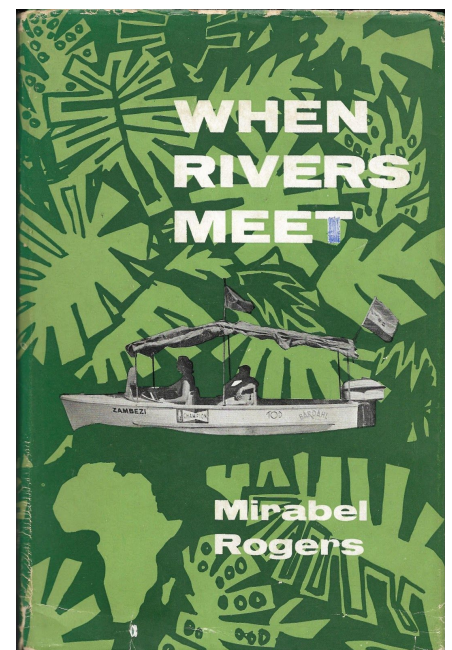
Sea-Tangle

Having settled in South Africa in 1937 she married **Dudley Rogers** in 1944 and continued her demanding life as a journalist. Her next book, *The Black Sash* was the story of the birth of the Black Sash movement between May 1955 and its re-dedication ceremony in May 1956. Because of her respected position as a South African journalist; because of her early training as an impartial observer and because of her passionate devotion to the truth, Mirabel Rogers was the author of choice for this record of the founding of the white female resistance movement to the apartheid system.

Her next and last book was quite different. Africa is a continent of great rivers. Why not use the rivers as a waterway linking West and East coasts? This idea was the motivating force behind the first Trans-African Waterway Expedition, and who better to record the trials and tribulations of such an ambitious project? However, *When Rivers Meet* is not a factual record, though it includes an enormous amount of detail, but rather one intrepid participant's light-hearted and lively observations personally and delightfully written. And a very good read it is too!



The Black Sash



When Rivers Meet