

## **MRS KATH WRIGHT: BURSAR, 1963 - 1984**

I was born in Sunshine where my father had a business. When he went to World War One he already was a Sunshine resident, so that's how long the family has been in the area. I grew up in Sunshine and was conscious of the arrival of the English migrants who came to work in places like Nettlefolds; some of these built their homes near the railway lines in North Sunshine and St Albans.

When I was 17 or 18 I was involved with the Brownies. Shirley Webb from Victoria Crescent and I were running the Brownies club for many years, which included girls from the St Albans area, because that half of St Albans on the southern side of Main Road was all part of Sunshine.

St Albans in the 'forties had a population of about 800 people, so it wasn't a big place, and it wasn't until the mid 'fifties that the town really started to go ahead as the migrants started to come to live in the area.

I married Don Wright, an English ex-serviceman who came out to Australia in 1948. When he first arrived he worked as a painter in Yallourn. That was dominated by the construction of the coal power stations so there was plenty of work there. Later he moved to Sunshine.

When Don and I married we first rented a house in St Albans near the Police Youth Club on Errington Reserve in Main Road East. The Police were looking after the evening activities at the club and at times you could certainly hear the noise. Originally it was just a boys club but later they took in girls as well.

About 1951 we moved to a half-house in Bent Street. It was a proper half-house with a hip roof, not like some of the one-room skillions that were being built in St Albans for the migrants. The area around Furlong Road had been designated a green belt, but a few houses were starting to be built. Ours was one of three homes there at the time, so we were amongst the pioneer homes in that neighbourhood. Now of course the area is fully built up.

Don was a painter and decorator. Cars were few and far between so transport was a bit of a problem. If you couldn't get there by train you just had to walk. Don would sometimes walk to places like Altona for work. Then he had a cart built by Lynches garage in Sunshine so that he could get around with his gear.

I started working in the office at the High School in 1963, the same year as Barry Rayner started there as a teacher. At that time it was still the case that no married woman could ever become a permanent employee of the public service, including office work positions, which usually meant that unmarried women were given preference to married women for job applications. I was pleased when Mr Torpey asked me to take on the job.

I started in the office in 1963 and then spent 21 years working at the High School, up to 1984, when I retired from the position.

When I started at the school the administrative positions were called typists and clerical assistants. Later the senior position became known as Bursar, but is probably now known as the office manager or business manager. Your responsibilities were mainly to do with the bookkeeping and the finances for the school. When the school formed the cooperative to raise money for the assembly hall I was helping with the bookkeeping for that as well. Ron Crosby, who lived in Main Road West and had a business in Sunshine, was the auditor for the cooperative and he was very helpful.

Our typing duties included typing of the examination questions, printing them, and then collating the pages. The staff would often help in the collating of the exam papers, which was a real help.

At the start it was like working in a friendly family atmosphere. Apart from my regular work I would also help out with some of the student's efforts such as getting their school newsletters typed. Later as the school got much bigger, between 1,200 to 1,300 students, it was a bit too big and therefore became a bit more impersonal.

There were some very good teachers at the school, probably too many to mention in detail.

Brian Torpey was the headmaster when I started. He was the nicest fellow to work for. Mr Shaw was also a very hard working man for whom I developed a lot of respect.

Mr Erast Ziemelis was a teacher of German background who was a good photographer. He was taking the school photographs in the early years and did a very good job with that, and was assisted at one stage by one of the Costa boys. Mr Ziemelis also encouraged students to take an interest in photography, which a number did. There was gap in the school photographic records after he died, until they appointed a professional service to take over this responsibility.

Mr Youd was a delightful person and a good artist. Every time you walked past the art room you'd see this wonderful drawing on the board that he'd do to encourage his students. Next week it would be something else.

Renata Goebetz was also working in the office for a while; she married George Gunton, who was a teacher there in the 'sixties.

The early migrants to St Albans were very well educated and this was reflected in the children coming through the high school. The different waves of migration brought people with different educational achievements, and again this was reflected in the educational aspirations and achievement of the children.

Unfortunately the school was not able to maintain the very high levels of educational achievement set by the earliest students. Later on when Stewart Homer was the principal he brought up the standard of the school again.

After I stopped working in the office the Deputy Principal asked me to assist with the holding of examinations, which I did for a quite a few years. The role included organising the exam rooms, arranging tables, sending the papers away for correction, and so on.

Some students who came back as teachers include Philip Gambin, Peter Plain, Lou Trainou, and Kathy ...

School council members who put in many years of support for the school included Councillor Eddie, Johns, and Mr and Mrs Stewart who lived opposite the school.

In am now retired. My husband and I keep ourselves active with a routine of visiting people in the aged hostels. We sometimes come across Maria Dobes, who used to work as a physical education teacher at the high school, because she also visits some of the hostels to entertain people.



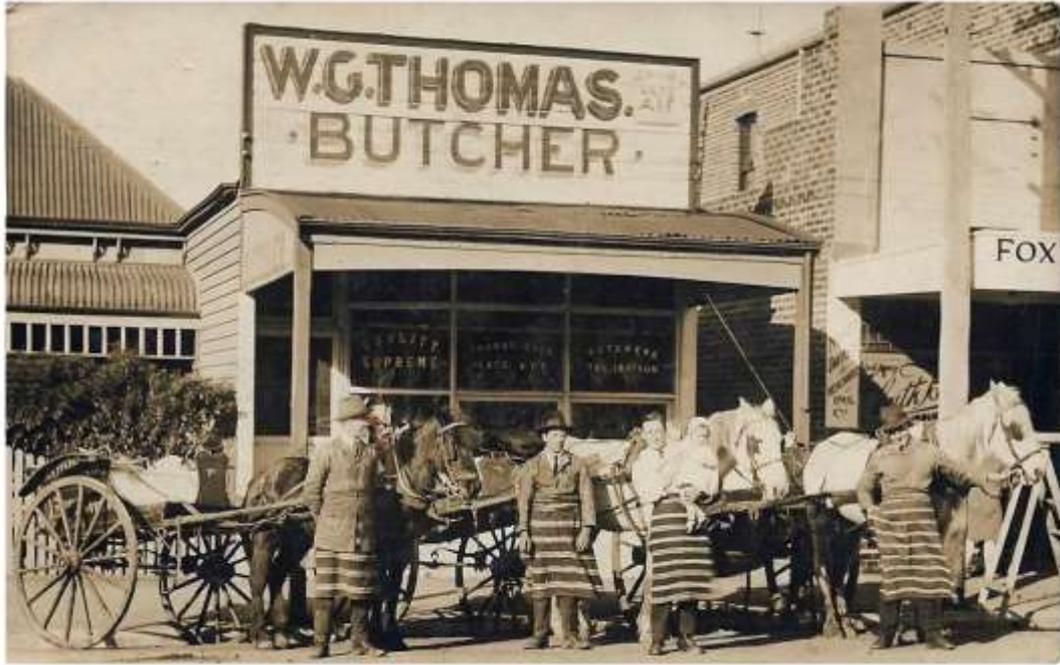
Francis & Eliza Cox - Lynette's great-grandparents



Albert Edwin Thomas



L>R Back Annie (Judy), Kath, Auntie Edna, Front Willian (Bill), Kathleen, Albert



G W Thomas of Sunshine - Thomas Bros late AIF - Hampshire Rd Sunshine - the Bros could be William George and Albert Edwin - might there have been 4 bros?

Hi Geoff - I refer to the unidentified photo you have re "W G Thomas Butcher". I believe the photo was taken in the 1920s and its location is 266 Hampshire Road, Sunshine (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia). W G Thomas started advertising his business in the local paper "The Sunshine Advocate" in 1924 and the ads continue until 1929. Your photos give some clues to support this; eg the store was next door to Andrew Fox the real estate agent (at #264 Hampshire Road) and you can see part of his name on the front of the building next door. Also, the writing on the window reads "Phone 191? Sun" - the "Sun" part refers to "Sunshine" which is consistent with the earlier advertising where they include "Phone Sunshine 19". W G Thomas probably left those premises in the early 1930s when W H Cherry was listed as the new butcher in 1935. In 1935 W G Thomas was reported as working for M H Giles, a butcher in King Edward Avenue, Sunshine. Thank you for the wonderful photos on your site. Cheers from Joe Ribarow.



(L-R) Jean, William, Kathleen who was bursar at St Albans High from c.1963 - photo at St Mark's Church Sunshine 23 March 1974



Jean Cox nee Thomas - Lynette's mother