

## Margaret Barns 1915 – 2020

### Taught at Wellesley 1941 – 1972

Margaret passed away at the Rita Angus Retirement Village in Kilbirnie, Wellington on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2020, age 105 years. Margaret is survived by daughters Jenny and Libby, and younger sister Mary.

Margaret was raised with her sister Shirley in Bramerton in the Wairarapa. Sadly, her father died in World War I during the battle of the Somme, and she then lost her fiancé Harry during World War II.

Margaret trained to be a physical education teacher in Christchurch. In the late 1930s she travelled solo to Sweden to study for her diploma in gymnastics but with the onset of war, she then made her way to London.

She returned to NZ in the early 1940s after the sudden death of her sister Shirley who had two young daughters. As recalled in an article with Stuff, Margaret tells how she “fell in love with (Shirley’s daughters) and they fell in love with me so I ended up marrying their father.” The marriage didn't last long but she and Arthur Barns divorced amicably, and Margaret raised the children in Masterton and later Eastbourne.

Margaret taught at Wellesley over a period of more than 30 years and recalls taking the boarders, whose parents couldn't come and fetch them, for weekend tramps mothering them as if they were her own. Margaret was a standard three teacher along with teaching physical education and coaching the school tennis and hockey teams. According to her daughters “Margaret loved the Wellesley family passionately which was reflected into all the energy and love she put into teaching at Wellesley for so many years. The years at Wellesley were some of the happiest she remembered.”

Wellesley enjoyed staying in close touch with Margaret. In 2011, she was filmed as part of the School’s Centenary legacy project. In 2020, daughter Jenny kept us up to date with how Margaret was coping with the Covid lockdown process. “That Wellesley continued to encourage Margaret as she became more and more fragile was greatly appreciated. The Wellesley Teddy was with her day and night over recent weeks. I even carefully washed the uniform. Teddy has now gone to my mother’s younger sister, whose son Marcus Klein also attended Wellesley a long time ago” says Jenny.

Margaret was an incredible lady who gave so much to Wellesley and many of our old boys have fond memories of their tennis and tramping days with a much-loved member of staff.

*Image: Margaret is pictured with her beloved Wellesley teddy on her 105th birthday, 2 October 2020.*

