

## **SANDRA HATCH nee CROFTS: TEACHER, 1965 - 1967**



My recollections of teaching at St Albans High School from 1965 to 1967 are a bit random. It's hard to believe it was forty years ago but I remember those three years vividly and fondly (although not necessarily in order). They remain a significant part of my life and I made some lifelong friends. Despite this, there is a certain blurring of what happened when, but this does not invalidate the story.

### **Starting at St Albans High**

St Albans 1965 was my first teaching appointment after completing my tertiary education with a Bachelor of Arts and then a Diploma of Education. First year out from Monash University and being appointed as Head of French was a bit daunting as I was told I had a hard act to follow, and I was not that much older than some of the Year 12 students. I think there were six students in that French class with, from memory, pretty good results, even though we were learning together. I also had junior French and scattered English classes, and one year to my horror, Year 7 History, which I had never offered, and made a lovely botch of. Geography, which I enjoyed, was a much better option.

In the French classes we made a fuss of July 14, (Bastille Day, which commemorates the French Revolution) even dressing up and trying to rustle up "French" food for the occasion, with varying success.

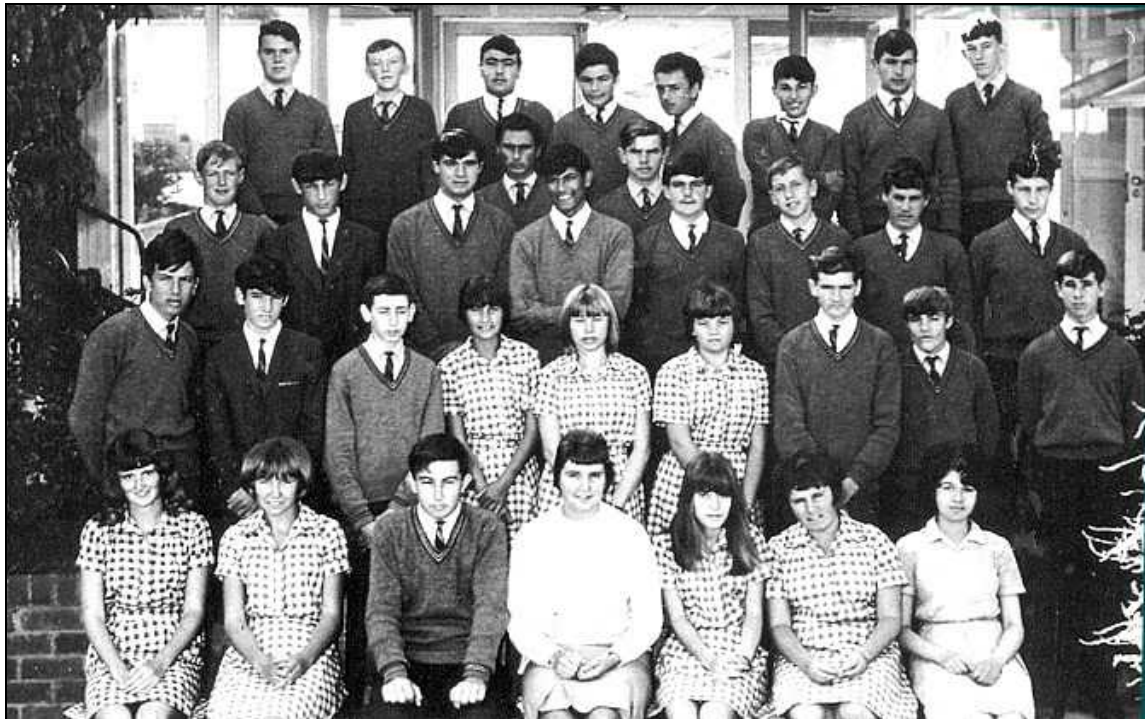


Sandra Crofts and Form 3, 1965.

My 1966 Roll class and I planned for an end of year beach picnic, financed by dribs and drabs of small change, as they could afford it. I kept track of the money, and somehow everyone managed to go. I was overambitious and chose Balnarring beach which was a long way and a long day, and we got back very late after some reassuring phone calls to parents. A good day nevertheless.

We did other things out of school with the kids, unofficially, but offered a few outings not normally available to young people in St Albans. We went canoeing on the Yarra and also met some of the older students in the city for a first experience of live theatre, "Half a Sixpence", I remember.

Looking back at the class photos, I remember the challenge of having forty students in a class. It was also an era of students not knowing your first name, but that didn't stop my Roll class doing some detective work. One morning as I was writing on the board, someone called out "Sandra"! Of course I turned around on reflex, and the class roared.



Sandra Crofts and Form 4, 1966.

### **Staff Interaction**

Half the staff was pretty young and often there was a big turnover each year. The two staff rooms were segregated and quite crowded as there must have been about fifty people on staff in 1967. The men came to our staff room for morning tea as we had the urn. There was a group of older women of varied background - Maltese, Lithuanian, etc. - and we often felt their slightly disapproving looks as we skylarked with the younger male staff. Looking back, it was probably pretty tame. Anyway we provided fuel for gossip as to who was going out with whom. The older European male teachers were generally fairly reserved, and I realise now that we never called the older men and women by their first name, and in many cases I didn't know what it was anyway.

Mrs Kriksciunas and I would sometimes organise theatre visits for students, which was outside of the normal school curriculum and gave students a broader introduction to the arts. Some of the younger, single teachers stayed after school and socialised with each other and senior students. There was even the occasional joint attendance at social events such as the football club ball in 1967.





Morning tea in the staffroom, 1963.



Sandra Crofts (centre) with Eric Youd, John Grieve, Rudi Dobron at St Albans football club ball, 1967.

### **Overseas Travel**

I had always hankered after travel to England and Europe, so after teaching out my three year bond, took off for the UK with Joan Butler (later Rayner) on the Himalaya trail in January 1968.

Before I left, I asked my Roll class if anyone wanted to buy my Austin A30 ... one of the boys became the new owner just before we left the country.



Sandra Hatch nee Crofts  
November 2005

Joan and I travelled extensively in the UK and Europe, even driving as far as Turkey, which was quite an adventure. Another memorable trip was with a small group, camping across East Germany and Russia, and back through Czechoslovakia, not long before Russia invaded. We interspersed our travels with relief teaching in London, doing our best to survive the stress of placement in difficult primary schools.

### **Marriage and Settlement**

Joan returned to Australia, and I followed in June 1969, married to Henry Hatch, an Englishman, who was the housemate of some of those who travelled to Russia with us. We settled in Canberra where we have lived ever since, and where both our daughters Sarah and Kristin went to University.

Retirement has meant a rewarding lifestyle, and catching up on travel, particularly back to the UK and Europe, mostly new to Henry.



Henry and Sandra Hatch, 2012.



Sandra Crofts-Hatch and Stuart Rodda, 2016.



S Kozlowski, Sandra Crofts, N Szwed, J Heymig, B Rayner, Czyz, G Landers, 2016.

Photographs courtesy of Sandra Crofts-Hatch.  
Class photographs courtesy of Nick Szwed.