

**Evan Wilfred WRIGHT and Elma Helen JOHNSON family history**  
1953-1956 Upper Hutt Borough Council & 1<sup>st</sup> women councillor

**Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT**

B 18 December 1918 Christchurch New Zealand

D 11 May 2007 Canterbury New Zealand

M 1942 Wellington New Zealand

**Elma Helen JOHNSON**

B 13 December 1919 Helensville Auckland New Zealand

D 12 March 2014 Canterbury New Zealand

Children:

1. Male WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand
2. Female WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand
3. Female WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand

Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT was born 18 December 1918 Christchurch New Zealand. His parents were Mary Ann nee Barrett and Sydney Launcelot Wright who married 19 May 1915 in New Zealand.

World War Two 1939-1945

- NZ WW2 Ballot Lists date March 1941 = 003198 Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT university student 49 Hartley Avenue Christchurch

Elma Helen JOHNSON was born 13 December 1919 Helensville Auckland New Zealand. Her parents were Mabel Helen nee Hill and Thomas Daniel Johnson who married 1918 in New Zealand.

Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT married 08 January 1942 Elma Helen JOHNSON

*(Reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1942 folio 00867)*

World War Two 1939-1945

- The undermentioned are granted temporary commissions in the rank of Pilot Officer. Dated 01<sup>st</sup> February 1943 = As Radio Officers - NZ 1789 Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT M SC.
- The undermentioned Pilot Officers to be Flying Officers (temp) = Radar Duties – dated 01<sup>st</sup> February 1944 – Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT

1946 Miramar Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 71 Freyberg Street married
  - Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 71 Freyberg Street biochemist
- (Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

1946 & 1947 Wises New Zealand Post Office Directory

- Evan W WRIGHT physicist [sic] 71 Freyberg Street Wellington

1949 Otaki Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt married
  - Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt biochemist
- (Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

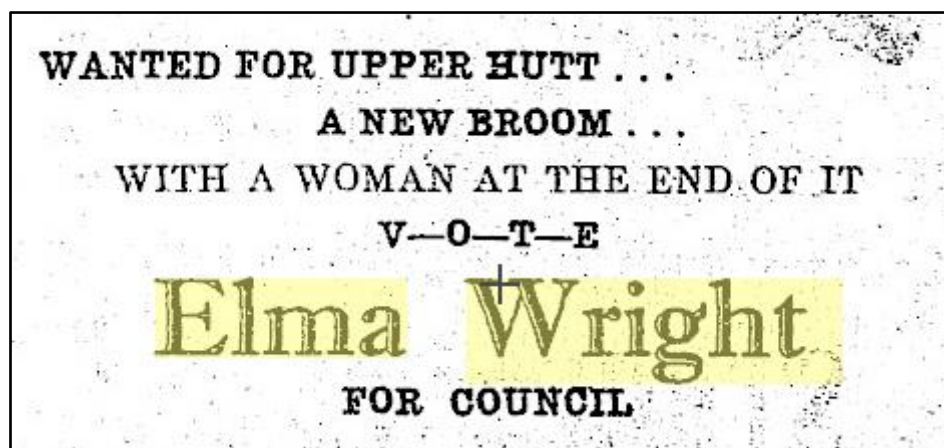
Elma Helen WRIGHT was the first Women Councillor for the Upper Hutt Borough Council and served from 1953 to 1956.

Upper Hutt Leader 22 October 1953

Candidate for Borough Council

Mrs Elma Wright who is the only woman candidate for the Borough Council has lived in the district for four and a half years and is the mother of three children. She graduated as a Master of Arts from Victoria University College where she was secretary of the College Students Association and also of the New Zealand University Students Association. For several years she was a lecturer in English at Victoria University College and later at Canterbury University College. Mrs Wright is an enthusiastic supporter of the Upper Hutt Public Library. As a co-opted member of the Council Library Committee she has organised the team of voluntary workers whose assistance has meant a considerable saving in the running costs of the library. Keenly interested in education Mrs Wright is an active member of the Upper Hutt School Parents Teacher Association. She was also a member of a sub-committee set up to report on the school accommodation requirements of the district. Mrs Wright is President of the Upper Hutt Repertory Society and produced one of the plays presented in the Society's 'Tripe Bill'. She is also taking part in the Society's forthcoming production 'An Inspector Calls'. She feels that the women of the Borough many of whom after all spend more time in the district than their husbands do should be represented on the Council by someone who understands their needs and problems. A women's experience in providing for the all-round well-being of a family on a limited budget should be of value to a Local Body whose task is fundamentally the same. Attention must be given to health and comfort and this includes a good water supply, sewerage and well-kept streets. As resources permit provision should also be made for the non-material side without which a full community life is no possible. The establishment of the Public Library is a good step in this direction. If she is elected Mrs Wright thinks that she will be able to bring a fresh point of view to Council deliberations. As the mother of young children she has a vital interest in the future of Upper Hutt. She believes in the future.

(Reference Upper Hutt Leader 22 October 1953)



(Reference Upper Hutt Leader 22 October 1953)

Upper Hutt Leader newspaper 05 November 1953

Borough of Upper Hutt – Declaration of Poll On Election of Councillors

Pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Elections and Polls Act 1953 I hereby give notice that the numbers of votes received by each candidate for the office of Councillor for the Borough of Upper Hutt is as follows

James Brandon BUCHANAN	1423
George Alan CHAPMAN	1830
Thomas CLYMA	1420
Francis Edward FOSTER	1414
Thomas HARTE	1522
Albert Frederick W JACKSON	872
Francis Percy KEYS	1716
Clarence MCALISTER	1146
Eric Robinson NEAL	1476
John Ashmole TAYLOR	1221
Anthony WALL	1438

James Francis WALSH	1134
Melvin HART WELLINGTON	1598
<u>Elma Helen WRIGHT</u>	<u>1625</u>
Informal Votes	41

And there being only eight vacancies I declare the said James Brandon Buchanan, George Alan Chapman, Thomas Harte, Francis Percy Keys, Eric Robinson Neal, Anthony Rehill Wall, Melvin Hart Wellington and Elma Helen Wright to be duly elected to that office.

Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of November 1953

R G Cox Returning Officer for the Borough of Upper Hutt

*(Reference Upper Hutt Leader newspaper 05 November 1953)*

#### 1954 Heretaunga Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt married
- Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt biochemist

*(Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

#### 1957 Heretaunga Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt teacher
- Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt biochemist

*(Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

#### 1963 Heretaunga Electoral Roll

- Elma H WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt School teacher
- Evan W WRIGHT 26 Brown Street Upper Hutt biochemist

*(Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

#### 1969 & 1972 & 1978 Heretaunga Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 74c Heretaunga Square lecturer
- Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 74c Heretaunga Square public servant

*(Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

#### 1981 Heretaunga Electoral Roll

- Elma Helen WRIGHT 74c Heretaunga Square lecturer
- Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT 74c Heretaunga Square retired

*(Reference Ancestry website New Zealand Electoral Roll)*

Evan Wilfrid WRIGHT age 88 years died 11 May 2007 Christchurch New Zealand

*(Reference RGO NZ death registration 2007 folio website 2007/11500 born 18 December 1918)*

Elma Helen WRIGHT died 12 March 2014 Canterbury New Zealand

*(Reference RGO NZ death registration 2014 folio website 2014/6392 born 13 December 1919)*

#### Dominion Post newspaper 05 April 2014

Champion of Upper Hutt Library - Elma Helen Wright Upper Hutt councillor born Helensville 13 December 1919 married Evan Wright 1942 Wellington 1 daughter 2 sons died Christchurch 12 March 2014 aged 94. Elma WRIGHT Upper Hutt's first female councillor in the early 1950s was a driving force behind the establishment of the city's first library. In the Post World War II years, after shifting to Upper Hutt from Lyall Bay, Wright was involved in the library campaign alongside her biochemist husband Evan and people like Julia Bradley who worked for the Upper Hutt Times. Historian and librarian Jock McEldowney recalls how the library was opened with considerable backing from Wright and her supporters on 04 July 1952. In October 1951 the Upper Hutt Times reported that a small temporary building had been offered to the Council by a local businessman for use as a public library but the offer had been refused. Behind the scenes Wright battled this decision. She was quietly supported by hundreds of Upper Hutt Locals in her endeavours to see the library opened. None was more influential in this campaign than National Library Service director and Upper Hutt resident Geoffrey Alley. The library was so popular that over 1000 people registered as members in the first week of its existence. With a shortage of paid staff available to handle such a workload Wright helped organise a roster of volunteers. Upper Hutt became a borough in February 1926 and a city in May 1966. After her success with

the library Wright was elected to the borough in 1953 serving for three years under Mayor Dick Slake and Irishman. She was an automatic choice to chair the library committee. The female trailblazer often spoke to family and friends about an incident which confronted her at her first borough council meeting. It involved the vexatious issue of who would pour the tea when the meeting ended. The male bureaucrat previously entrusted with this task hesitated in the knowledge Wright was present. Because Wright was a woman he didn't immediately pour the tea but instead waited for the borough's first female councillor to perform the task. She along with her fellow councillors waited and waited before the bureaucrat finally relented and poured the tea. With husband Evan an empowering presence she was a member of the Heretaunga Players Theatre Group from 1953 through to the 1960s. She taught at Heretaunga College from 1957 till the end of the first term in 1960. Her husband a biochemist at the Wallaceville Animal Research Centre then took up a fellowship in England for two year. On the family's return to New Zealand in 1962 Wright resumed teaching at Heretaunga College until 1968. Her subjects included Mathematics, English, Latin and social studies. On top of her fulltime teaching load she found time to help develop a drama club at the school inspiring budding actors to present annual performances. Among the college productions she helped put on were Our Town and Pygmalion as well as full-cast productions of Gilbert and Sullivan's Pirates of Penzance, The Mikado, HMS Pinafore and Ruddigore. From the late 1960s until 1985 Wright was a senior lecturer at Wellington Teachers College in Kelburn Parade. She retired to Upper Hutt when she turned 65. Wright spent her first 10 years in Helensville, north of Auckland before her family moved to Lyall Bay in Wellington in 1929. Her father Tom Johnson was a plumber and her mother Mabel (nee Hill) was a teacher before her marriage. Throughout her long life Wright never lost interest in the Upper Hutt Library she had helped develop. In June 1990 as convener of the Friends of the Upper Hutt Library she successfully initiated a petition to Upper Hutt City Council advocating the urgent computerisation of the library "to prevent its inevitable decline". When Evan Wright became ill the couple moved to West Melton in Canterbury to be near family who would be available to help look after him. When he died in 2007 Wright began spreading her wings again. Her activities included tubing down the Clutha River. In 2008 a hernia problem required her to be admitted to hospital. As she was wheeled into an operating theatre the surgeon asked her if she knew what procedure she was having. Looking up from the operating theatre's gurney she responded matter of factly to her surgeon "well if you don't know god help me". Throughout her life Wright loved traveling at home and overseas. Her last trip away from her Canterbury home to Napier's February 2014 Art Deco Weekend was affected by fog at Wellington Airport. The prospect of being grounded with her bags with no overnight accommodation immediately available in Wellington did not deter the determined 94 year old. She and her travelling companions hired a van and completed the journey to Hawkes Bay by road. This action spoke volumes about a women who never gave up on undertaking she embarked upon in her long life. She liked to read a library book a day travel as much as she could write satirical poetry on social events and even embrace modern technology by conducting her personal banking online. This fiercely independent women lived alone until shortly before her death

*(Reference the Dominion Post newspaper 05 April 2014)*

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### **Evan Wilfrid and Elma Helen WRIGHT their children and descendants**

- 1- Male WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand
  - 2- Female WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand
  - 3- Female WRIGHT (private) born New Zealand
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