

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE2113

Halligan, Marion Mildred

(1940 - 2024)

Born 16 April, 1940, Newcastle New South Wales Australia

Died 19 February, 2024, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia

Occupation Author

Summary

Marion Halligan was an acclaimed author of novels, short stories, reviews, essays and gastronomic writing.

(This entry is sponsored by generous donation from Christine Foley.)

Details

Marion Halligan was born and educated in Newcastle, New South Wales, and worked as a school teacher and freelance journalist before becoming a prolific writer in her forties. She moved to Canberra in the 1960s and her first published short story appeared in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1969. She married Graham Halligan and they had two children, Lucy and James.

Her fiction books include: *Self Possession* (1987), *The Living Hothouse* (1988), *The Hanged Man in the Garden* (1989), *Spider Cup* (1990), *Lovers' Knots: A Hundred-Year Novel* (1992), *The Worry Box* (1993), *Wishbone* (1994), *The Midwife's Daughters* (1997), *The Golden Dress* (1998), *The Fog Garden: A Novel* (2001), *The Point* (2003), *The Apricot Colonel* (2006), *Murder on the Apricot Coast* (2008), *Valley of Grace* (2009), and *Goodbye Sweetheart* (2015).

Halligan has published numerous short stories, including those in her *Collected Stories* (1997) and *Shooting the Fox* (2011), in *Best Australian Stories 2003*, and those in *Out of the Picture* (1995), commissioned by the National Library of Australia and structured around works in the library's Pictorial Collection. Her food and travel writing includes *Eat My Words* (1990), *Cockles of the Heart* (1996) and *Taste of Memory* (2004). She co-authored *Those Women Who Go to Hotels* with Lucy Frost in 1997.

Her work is inspired by personal experiences and the places in which she has lived. Her novel *The Fog Garden* draws on the experience of losing her husband to cancer and *Words for Lucy* (2022) is about her daughter's death in 2004.

She contributed writing on life in the 1970s for a Canberra Museum and Gallery exhibition, and also developed a play, *Elastics* (performed in 1987). She has curated a permanent exhibition for Newcastle Regional Museum, *How shall we live?*, and has written a series of restaurant performances entitled *Gastronomica* for the Melbourne Festival.

She was a member of Seven Writers – a group of seven Canberra-based writers whose work vividly portrayed life 'beneath the surface of Canberra' – and as part of this collective she contributed to *Canberra Tales* (1988), later reissued as *The Division of Love* (1996), an anthology of short stories about life in Canberra. The work received an ACT Bicentennial Award.

A chronology of Halligan's other awards includes:

Patricia Hackett Prize (1985)
H.M. Butterley-F. Earle Hooper Memorial Award (1986)
ABC Bicentennial Literary Awards (finalist 1988)
Steele Rudd Award (1989)
Geraldine Pascall Prize for Critical Writing (1990)
NBC Banjo Award for Fiction (shortlisted 1990)
Prize for Gastronomic Writing (1991)
Age Book of the Year Award (1992) & Age Book of the Year Award, Imaginative Writing Prize (1992)
ACT Book of the Year Award (1993)
NBC Banjo Award for Fiction (shortlisted 1993)
Nita Kibble Literary Award (1994, shortlisted 2002)
Newcastle University Newton John Award, for creative and innovative work (1994)
ACT Book Reviewer of the Year (1997 joint with Sara Dowse)
Age Book of the Year Award, Fiction Prize (shortlisted 1998)
Miles Franklin Award (shortlisted 1999)
The IMPAC Dublin Award (shortlisted 1999)
Queensland Premier's Literary Award (shortlisted 2002)
Commonwealth Writers Prize, Best Book Sth East Asia and South Pacific (shortlisted 2004)
ACT Book of the Year Award (2004) for *The Point*
ACT Book of the Year Award (2010) for *Valley of Grace*
ACT Book of the Year (shortlisted 2023) for *Words for Lucy*

Halligan was Writer-in-Residence at Charles Sturt University in 1990 and a prolific writer of literature reviews and essays published in numerous major Australian newspapers and journals. She was chairperson of the Literature Board of the Australia Council (1992-1995) and has been chairperson of the Australian Word Festival.

In June 2006, Halligan was awarded with an AM – General Division, 'for service to literature as an author, to the promotion of Australian writers and to support for literary events and professional organisations.' The ACT Writers Centre was renamed Marion in 2022 in joint honour of Halligan and Marion Mahony Griffin.

Published resources

Book

The Fog Garden: A Novel, Halligan, Marion, 2001

The Division of Love: Stories, Barbalet, Margaret et al, 1995

The Apricot Colonel, Halligan, Marion, 2006

Cockles of the Heart, Halligan, Marion, 1996

Collected Stories, Halligan, Marion, 1997

Eat My Words, Halligan, Marion, 1990

The Golden Dress, Halligan, Marion, 1998

The Hanged Man in the Garden, Halligan, Marion, 1989

The Living Hothouse, Halligan, Marion, 1988

Lovers' Knots: a hundred-year novel, Halligan, Marion, 1993

Out of the Picture, Halligan, Marion, 1996

Self Possession, Halligan, Marion, 1987

Spidercup, Halligan, Marion, 1990

The Taste of Memory, Halligan, Marion, 2004

Wishbone, Halligan, Marion, 1995

The Worry Box, Halligan, Marion, 1993

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Records of the Seven Writers group, between 1986 and approximately 2000](#)

[Records of Curtis Brown \(Australia\) Pty Ltd., 1962-2002 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Marion Halligan, circa 1970-circa 2003 \[manuscript\]](#)

State Library of New South Wales

[Dale Spender - papers, 1972-1995](#)

National Library of Australia, Oral History Collection

[Oral history interview with Marion Halligan, 1995](#)

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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