

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE2755

## Clift, Charmian

(1923 - 1969)

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<b>Born</b>	1 January, 1923, Kiama New South Wales Australia
<b>Died</b>	31 December, 1969, Mosman Sydney New South Wales
<b>Occupation</b>	Author, Journalist, Print journalist

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### Summary

Journalist Charmian Clift wrote a popular weekly column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Melbourne Herald* from 1964 to 1969. She is the author of several novels including *Mermaid Singing* (1956), *Peel me a Lotus* (1959), *Walk to the Paradise Gardens* (1960), and *Honour's Mimic* (1964).

### Details

Raised in regional New South Wales, Charmian Clift moved to Sydney in 1941 after winning the New South Wales title in *Pix* magazine's Beach Girl Quest. In 1943 she enlisted in the Australian Women's Army Service, and served with the 15th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, before moving to Melbourne to take up the position of orderly officer at Land Headquarters. There she edited an army magazine and published a number of short stories.

Clift joined the *Argus* in 1946, where she met war correspondent George Henry Johnston. Johnston was a married man, but the pair moved to Sydney and were married in 1947, following his divorce. They had a son and a daughter. The family moved to London in 1951 and later, in 1954, to the Greek island of Kalimnos. Between 1956 and 1964, Clift wrote several novels to great acclaim in Britain and the United States of America.

In 1964, Clift returned to Sydney with her family and began a weekly column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Melbourne Herald*. The topical column became immensely popular, and she continued to meet her weekly deadline until her untimely death in July 1969. Depressed and under enormous strain, Clift took an overdose of sleeping tablets.

A collection of Clift's essays, *The World of Charmian Clift*, was published posthumously by her husband and illustrated by her son. *Trouble in Lotus Land* (1990) and *Being Alone with Oneself* (1991) were also published posthumously.

### Events

**1940 - 1969**

## Published resources

### Book

Shameless Scribblers: Australian Women's Journalism 1880-1995, Pearce, Sharyn, 1998

Mermaid Singing, Clift, Charmian, 1992

Honour's Mimic, Clift, Charmian, 1964

Being Alone with Oneself, Clift, Charmian, 1991

Peel Me a Lotus, Clift, Charmian, 1989

Walk to the Paradise Gardens, Clift, Charmian, 1960

The World of Charmian Clift, Clift, Charmian, 1970

The Life and Myth of Charmian Clift, Wheatley, Nadia, 2001

The Sponge Divers, Clift, Charmian and George Johnston, 1992

High Valley, Clift, Charmian and George Johnston, 1950

The Big Chariot, Clift, Charmian and George Johnston, 1953

Images in Aspic, Clift, Charmian, 1992

### Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

### Resource Section

Clift, Charmian (1923 - 1969), Wheatley, Nadia, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A130488b.htm>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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