

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4083

Adams, Christine

(1946 -)

Born 6 September, 1946, Broken Hill New South Wales Australia

Occupation Historian

Summary

Local historian Christine Adams was born and raised in Broken Hill, New South Wales. After living in South Australia and Queensland, she returned to Broken Hill with her husband Paul in 2003.

Details

Christine Adams was the third child and only daughter of Vincent James Leonard and Beryl Helene (Helen) Leonard, nee Matthewson. Both sides of her family were well established in Broken Hill. The Matthewsons had migrated from Scotland and settled in the town by 1918. The Leonards – descended from James Leonard, once a convict stationed at Van Diemen's Land – were living there from 1907. The marriage of Helen (a Presbyterian) and Vince (a Catholic) in 1935 caused some controversy within the two families. Their first son Desmond Vincent was born in July 1936, followed by Malcolm Thomas in May 1942. Christine was born four years later. Vince was a mine worker and the family lived first at Railwaytown before moving in early 1955 to a home in Queen Street, South Broken Hill, following the establishment of the Zinc mine housing co-op. Within months, Vince had been hospitalised with pneumonia. He passed away at the age of 42 in September 1955, when Christine was nine years old. His wife found work cleaning the mine-operated kindergarten before being appointed hostess of the Zinc Guest House, a temporary residence for dignitaries visiting the mine.

Christine Leonard was educated at St Joseph's Convent School in Broken Hill. A bright student, she developed a strong and lasting respect for the nuns who taught and cared for her there. Despite ambitions to study medicine, she left school at the age of sixteen following her mother's first heart attack in 1961 and took on administrative work at the mines in order to supplement the family income. She became involved with the Young Christian Workers group, serving as secretary and treasurer and attending Sunday night dances.

At 17, Christine met Paul Adams at a local party and they courted for eighteen months before she called off the union: she was Catholic; he was Church of England. In 1967 she married Barry John Midgley in the Sacred Heart Cathedral at Broken Hill. Ten years her senior and hailing from South Australia, Barry was working for International Computers Limited. The newlyweds moved to Adelaide, where Christine gave birth to two daughters: Anne-Louise (1969) and Kathryn (1971).

Christine's mother was remarried, to Norman Rawling, in 1963. In 1974, she passed away. By then, Christine was undertaking a childcare course in Adelaide and attempting to save her struggling marriage. In 1980 she and Barry moved with their two children and Barry's mother to the Gold Coast, where Christine began work for Telstra, but the marriage was all but over. Several years later, by a curious set of circumstances, Christine found herself once again in contact with her former sweetheart, Paul Adams. Paul was then working at the University of New South Wales Arid Zone Research Station in Fowler's Gap. He too was at the end of an unsalvageable marriage. After some years of phone contact Christine and Paul were reunited and finally married at Fowler's Gap in 1991. They celebrated with a four-day wedding.

Christine completed an Advanced Diploma in Applied and Local History at the University of New England, Armidale, in 2002. The following year, she and Paul returned to live in Broken Hill. For many years, Christine has undertaken research in local history and has several publications to her name including *Way Out West: Pastoral Stories of Western New South Wales* (2008) and *Sharing the Lode: The Broken Hill Migrant Story* (2004). Family history compilations include *Shamrocks, Scythes and Silver* (1998) and *Goodnight My Son* (1998). Christine assisted with the creation of the Broken Hill Migrant Museum and co-convened *All Fired Up: The Broken Hill Fire Brigade Exhibition* as well as the Broken Hill Sacred Heart Cathedral Centenary Photographic Exhibition.

Published resources

Book

Sharing the Lode: The Broken Hill Migrant Story, Adams, Christine, 2004

Way Out West: Pastoral Stories of Western New South Wales, Adams, Christine, 2008

Site Exhibition

Unbroken Spirit: Women in Broken Hill, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/bh/bh-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Private hands (These records may not be readily available)

[Interview with Christine Adams](#)

Author Details

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