

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE2110

Barbalet, Margaret Evelyn

Occupation Author, Historian, Poet, Public servant

Summary

Margaret Barbalet is an award-winning children's author, a novelist, poet and short-story writer, a public servant and a historian

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

Details

Margaret Barbalet was born in Adelaide and raised in Tasmania. She studied history at the University of Adelaide and says she spent much of her youth protesting against the Vietnam war. She taught at Mitchell and Canberra Colleges of Advanced Education, and as a researcher and historian she worked for the Commonwealth Schools Commission, Adelaide City Council and wrote a history of Adelaide Children's Hospital. She has also been an analyst at the Office of National Assessments.

As a children's author she wrote the widely acclaimed *The Wolf*, which won the 1993 Human Rights Award for children's literature, and was shortlisted for the Younger Readers Book of the Year Award. She was honoured in several categories of the Children's Book Council Book of the Year 2004 for *Reggie Queen of the Street*.

Barbalet's published non-fiction includes *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: the forgotten world of state wards, South Australia, 1887-1940* and a chapter in *Canberra Reflects* (2001), which accompanied an exhibition at the Canberra Museum and Gallery.

Her novels include *Blood in the Rain* and *Steel Beach*, which was shortlisted for the 1983 Vogel Award. Her other books include *Lady, Baby, Gypsy, Queen* (1992), *The Presence of Angels* (2001) and *Paradise Hotel*. Of varied genres, her work has been described as 'capturing the territory of loss'. She is also a published poet.

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

Barbalet has been awarded an Australia Council Literature Grant; an Australian National University H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship (1998); an ACT Arts Fellowship (1999); an ACT Literature Fellowship (2001); a National Library of Australia Harold White Fellowship (2001) and an Australia Council Literature Grant for a New Work Fellowship (2002).

During a career at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (1990 – December 2008) Margaret Barbalet was appointed Second Secretary at the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur in 1996. She was posted to Abu Dhabi from 2005-08.

In 2001 she headed the Literature Committee for the ACT Cultural Council. She now lives in Sydney

Published resources

Book

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

Blood in the Rain, Barbalet, Margaret, 1986

Far from a Low Gutter Girl: the forgotten world of state wards, South Australia, 1887-1940, Barbalet, Margaret, 1983

Steel Beach, Barbalet, Margaret, 1988

Lady, Baby, Gypsy, Queen, Barbalet, Margaret, 1992

The Presence of Angels, Barbalet, Margaret, 2001

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

Records of the Seven Writers group, between 1986 and approximately 2000

Papers of Margaret Barbalet, 1974-1993 [manuscript]

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

Created 1 June 2006

Last modified 20 November 2018

Digital resources



Title: Portrait of Margaret Barbalet 1991

Type: Image

Date: 3 May, 2023

