Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1095

Clark, Mavis Thorpe

(1909 - 1999)

Born	19090626, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Died	19990708, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Author

Summary

Mavis Thorpe Clark was a prolific writer of children's fiction who, in late life, also wrote for adults. In the process of researching her first adult book, *Pastor Doug*, the biography of Sir Douglas Nicholls, she created a large archive of letters and correspondence of relevance to indigenous scholarship.

Details

Mavis Thorpe Clark was born in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1909. Her writing career began at the age of 14, when the *Australasian* published, as a children's serial, her work *The Red School*, by no means a masterpiece, but her first literary endeavour. Her first published book, written when she was 18 and sold to Whitcombe and Tombs in 1930 for the then handsome sum of £30, was *Hatherley's First Fifteen*, a boy's adventure story about Rugby football.

Her first book for adults, *Pastor Doug*, the biography of Sir Douglas Nicholls, Aboriginal pastor later appointed Governor of South Australia, was published in 1965 and re-issued in 1973 in a revised second edition. In 1979, she published another Doug Nicholls's biographical account under the title *The Boy from Cumeroogunga*. In order to complete this task, she researched Aboriginal archives and associated with Aboriginal people, and has left a large amount of personal notes, correspondence, research files, etc. of relevance to Aboriginal scholarship.

Unlike most authors, Clark did not suffer rejection of any book submitted for publication. She became an extremely prolific writer and published 32 books, mostly for children, five of which were broadcast as serials by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Her book *The Min Min* won the 1967 Australian Children's Book of the Year award, and film rights to *The Sky Is Free* were bought by the Walt Disney organisation. Clark died in Melbourne in 1999, at the age of 90. She has been honoured by having the national Fellowship of Australian Writers Mavis Thorpe Clark Award named after her.

Published resources

Book
No mean destiny : the story of the War Widows' Guild of Australia 1945-85, Clark, Mavis Thorpe, 1986

Trust the Dream: an autobiography, Clark, Mavis Thorpe, 2004

Journal Article
Aborigines in society: the man from Cummeragunja, Clark, Mavis Thorpe, 1968

Resource
Guide to the Papers of Mavis Thorpe Clark, National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-300407611/findingaid

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of Victoria
Manuscript and research files, 1894-1997 [manuscript].

Papers, 1973-1986] [manuscript].

Letters : to Grade Fives, Blackburn South Primary School 1974 Aug. 2. [manuscript].

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Mavis Thorpe Clark, 1920-1999 [manuscript]

Author Details
Leonarda Kovacic and Nikki Henningham

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