

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter February 2016



HHR Society at National Trust Heritage Festival – exciting events in Chiltern

In partnership with the National Trust the HHR Society is preparing a program of events to take place in Chiltern on **Saturday April 16** as part of the Trust's Heritage Festival.

This festival draws visitors from across the state who are keen to visit National Trust properties such as Lake View, one of HHR's childhood homes, and it gives us the opportunity to promote knowledge and interest in HHR and her work, as well as get together for a good time! So put this date down in your diaries now. The Society AGM will also be held on this weekend.

At **Lake View** there will be readings of HHR's work throughout the day. As well there will be a Society display and members available to provide information on HHR and the Society, including brochures offering self-guided HHR walks around Chiltern.

What better way to achieve our goal than the annual celebration of Richardson's birthday with a picnic tea at Lake View, her home in Chiltern.



'Lake View' garden - fresh and beautiful after the rain in January

At the stylish **Elvery Gallery** (another of Chiltern's heritage buildings, originally a Masonic hall) guest speaker, Dr Sylvia Martin, winner of the HHR Society Essay Prize in 2014 and award-winning biographer will deliver the titled *Aileen Palmer's Getting of Wisdom* at 4pm. Sylvia's book on Aileen Palmer, *Ink in her Veins* will be released by UWA Publishing in March and will be available for purchase on April 16.

This will be a catered event, with finger food and wine provided by the excellent Hub 62 café at the Gallery. Tickets are \$20 for HHR Society members, \$25 for

non-members. Numbers are limited so you will need to book. Payment can be made by direct deposit into our bank account or by posting your cheque to the Society at PO Box 35, Chiltern 3683.

Bank account details are: Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, BSB 803 070, Account number 77605. Please make sure your name appears on the deposit.

Enquiries to the secretary, Janey Runci at j.runci@bigpond.com, or the President, Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com

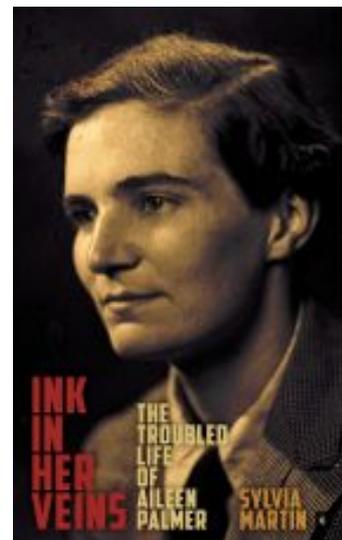


Elvery Gallery, 62 Main Street, Chiltern

Release of Sylvia Martin's book on Aileen Palmer

Ink in her Veins: The Troubled Life of Aileen Palmer will be released in March, 2016 and is now up on UWA Publishing website. The book can be pre-ordered, or you might like to buy it at the Elvery Gallery event in Chiltern and have the chance to hear and meet the author.

The Society congratulates Sylvia on this publication of her work.



The cover

Some details from the UWA Publishing website:

Aileen Palmer – poet, translator, political activist, adventurer – was the daughter of two writers prominent in Australian literature in the first half of the twentieth century. Vance and Nettie Palmer were well known as novelists, poets, critics and journalists, and Nettie suspected that their eldest would grow up with ‘ink in her veins’.

Aileen certainly inherited her parents’ talents, publishing poetry, translating the work of Ho Chi Minh, and recording what she referred to as ‘semi fictional bits of egocentric writing’. She also absorbed their interest in leftist politics, joining the Communist Party at university. This, combined with her bravery, led to participation in the Spanish Civil War and the ambulance service in London during World War II. The return to Australia was not easy, and Aileen never successfully reintegrated into civilian life. In *Ink in Her Veins* Sylvia Martin paints an honest and moving portrait in which we see a talented woman slowly brought down by war, family expectations, and psychiatric illness and the sometimes cruel ‘treatments’ common in the 20th century.



Sylvia Martin

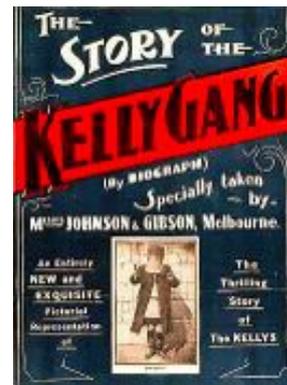
A bbq and film at The Stables and the Star Theatre

Following the oration event at 6.45 there will be one of Chiltern’s Classic Australian Movie Nights with a double feature:

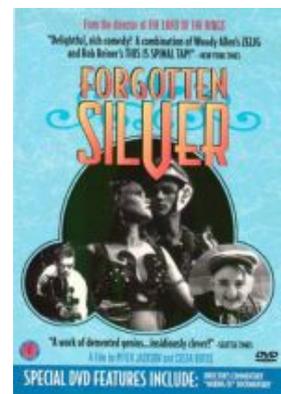
‘The story of the Kelly Gang’ (1906) G, and ‘Forgotten Silver’ (1995) PG.

In 1906 Australia produced ‘The Story of the Kelly Gang’, arguably the world’s first commercial feature length film. The film traces the life of the legendary Australian bushranger Ned Kelly. Much of the original film has been lost, however thanks to some fortunate discoveries & meticulous restoration, nearly

a quarter of the film has been pieced together and digitally restored thus bringing to life a unique piece of Australian film history.



‘Forgotten Silver’ is a documentary which details the life of “lost” NZ film maker Colin McKenzie and his incredible advances that were lost to history - until now. Supposedly making a talkie in 1908 & using colour film in 1911. Presented by NZ film maker Peter Jackson who is best known as the director and producer of ‘The Lord of the Rings’ and ‘The Hobbit’ Trilogies.



There will also be a **guest speaker, Claudy Op Den Kamp** who was involved in the restoration of the film ‘The story of the Kelly Gang’.

Cost: \$28 (pay on night but bookings essential by Wednesday April 13 for catering purposes) - includes BBQ tea, film showing, discussion and supper or come along at 8 pm for film showing etc. Without BBQ tea - \$15. Children half price.

Take advantage of the \$25 Early-bird concession price if booking and payment is received by Wednesday April 13 by Direct Debit or payment at the Chiltern Post Office.

Direct Debit to BSB 063 744 CBA Acct no 10029531. Chiltern Rutherglen Continuing Education.

Please include your name & ‘April 16 Film night’ in reference line.

Bookings & enquiries to: Lois Hotson – Ph (03) 57 261 358 Email: hotson@westnet.com.au Or contact : Emma & Matt at Chiltern Post Office.

HHR Society Partnership with Varuna Writers' House

In another exciting development the HHR Society, in partnership with Varuna, the national writers' house at Katoomba, NSW will offer assistance to a writer in the form of one of Varuna's awards, to be called the Henry Handel Richardson Flagship Fellowship for Short Story Writing. The recipient of the award will receive a prize of \$1000 and a two week residency to develop their manuscript. The HHR Society will donate \$2000 for this purpose and Varuna will promote the Society through the award and its website.

This award will replace the writing competition. Our personnel resources were stretched to the limit with the previous competitions and this new award gives the Society the opportunity to support an Australian writer and to promote the Society. Members of the Society, who wish to remain anonymous, have donated the \$2000.

About Varuna and the Fellowships



Varuna Writers' House

Varuna Writers' House was previously the home of the writer Eleanor Dark and her husband, Eric, and then of their son, Michael (Mick) Dark, who gifted the house to the public in 1989. The house operates as a national writers' centre and retreat, offering a range of supportive programs, including the fellowships. Varuna currently offers fellowships for approximately 30 writers a year, including Flagship Fellowships. A team of Varuna's consultants read the entries blind and select the recipients. Currently there are 4 Flagship Fellowships offered:

- The Dorothy Hewett Fellowship for Poetry
- The Eleanor Dark Fellowship for Fiction
- The Mick Dark Fellowship for Writing on the environment
- The Eric Dark Fellowship for Social History and Essays

You can read more about Varuna on their website: varuna.com.au

January 3, 2016 - with a difference!

A hardy few gathered early at Lake View for the General Meeting and huddled on the front veranda as the rain came down.



The meeting in the pouring rain!

We did have time to admire the wonderful state of the garden (many thanks to Ann Vyner and Beryl Pickering for all their work at the house), but clearly the annual garden party to celebrate HHR's birthday could not go ahead at Lake View.

But thanks to the generosity of Charlie and Rhonda Summerfield from the Star Theatre we all decamped to The Stables behind the theatre. What an atmospheric setting for the oration from Brigid Magner on the notion of haunting in literary tourism!



Brigid Magner



Carmel Lillas and Tony Nicholson celebrate with friends among the treasures and bric a brac in The Stables.



A happy group, including John Barkla, front right, owner of the house in Victoria Parade, Melbourne where HHR was born.

We came in to the Stables dripping from the rain and sat with our picnics at tables among the bric-a-brac of earlier years – old saddles, bellows, lamps, pots, tools, even a vintage car – while the rain drummed down on the tin roof. Somehow Charlie and Rhonda and other helpers had cleared tables, set up tea and coffee and made us all comfortable. Good cheer reigned.



Mary Fuge celebrates with a cup of tea



Orator Brigid Magner cuts HHR's birthday cake

Brigid's Magner's Oration – 'Looking through time itself': Henry Handel Richardson and the haunting of Lake View'

Dr Brigid Magner is a lecturer in Literary Studies in the School of Media & Communication at RMIT University. She has done work and published articles on a range of topics, including literary tourism. At present she has an honorary fellowship with the State Library of Victoria to develop a book manuscript and interactive map: *On the trail: Reading literary places in Australia*.

Brigid began by saying she was a tourist herself in the area of HHR studies. In the book she's working on one chapter involves a discussion of sites associated with HHR.

In her talk she considered the notion of haunting in relation to a number of literary tourism sites in America, Britain and Australia, and the ways in which 'ghosts, as readily imagined embodiments of the past, can help visitors to connect with the layers of history existing in a particular heritage site.'

Brigid concluded her fascinating talk with a reference to the birthday tea:

'This annual birthday celebration implicitly recognises the importance of acknowledging the past in the present. Despite the fact that HHR has been dead since 1946, we are all here to honour her life and work. Through the rituals enacted here this evening, the spirit of HHR is summoned up to engage with the living once again.'

You can read the full text of Brigid's talk on our website: www.henryhandelrichardsonociety.org.au

General Meeting – January 3, 2016

A general Meeting was held at Lake View and the following changes to our rules were accepted:

The purposes of the Society are to stimulate enjoyment and study of, and general interest in, the works of Henry Handel Richardson.

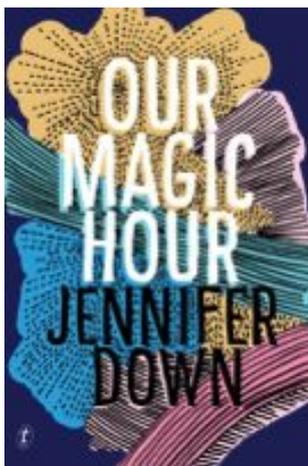
The financial year is from 1 January to December 31.

Funds will be deposited in our accounts no later than 21 working days after they are received.

HHR Prize winner's novel

Jennifer Down, winner of the 2014 HHR Writing Competition has her first novel coming out. *Our Magic Hour* will be released in March this year by Text Publishing.

The book was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Award for an unpublished manuscript in 2013.



The book is described as an 'evocative and exquisitely written' account 'of love, loss and discovery', and the writer, Carrie Tiffany speaks of Jennifer as 'a writer of rare insight and heart.' You may remember the words the judge of the 2014 competition, Helen Garner, used about Jennifer's work to end her address at the prize-giving:

'It's a long time since I have tried to write a short story; but being as I am very interested in compression, I learnt a great deal from these works.

The whole experience of reading them has been a joy to me. I thank the writers for the pleasure they've given me, and the example they've set. The bar is high and I read their work with respect and admiration.

If I may, I'd like to end with a single sentence from Jennifer Down's winning entry, *Pressure OK*, to describe the mood I was in after I had read the stories. She's talking about a widower who's just been to the theatre with his grown-up daughter to see a great Australian play. They've parted with an awkward affection, and he's walking back to the station. The sentence consists of only ten words. It seems so simple, but it leaps with poetic energy. It's modern, it feels like now, yet it might also have been describing one of poor Richard Mahony's rare moments of tranquillity and hope. I would kill to have written it. Here it is:

His veins were warm and all the stars were out.'
(Helen Garner, 2014)

The Society extends its congratulations to Jennifer. We look forward to reading her novel and also her short story collection which will come out in 2017.

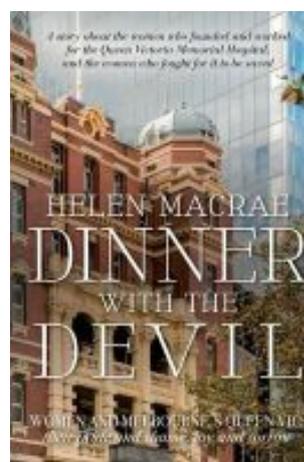


Jennifer Down at the prize giving in 2014

From the same world as HHR

Helen Macrae, Treasurer of the HHR Society, recently published a book, *Dinner with the Devil*, which recounts the story of the founding in 1896 of Melbourne's iconic Queen Victoria Hospital, affectionately known as 'the Queen Vic' to generations of Melburnians. The book follows the hospital from its founding as a women's hospital, 'by women and for women', to the battle to save it for the women of Victoria in 1986.

Some HHR Society members who've read the book have remarked that in some respects those women who founded and supported the hospital shared the same background as the young Henry Handel Richardson. More information is on Helen's website, www.helenmacrae.com.au



The book can be ordered through any Australian bookshop, and is also available as an eBook, from print on demand suppliers such as Amazon. Helen will bring copies for sale at the HHR April event on April 16.



Helen Macrae on the right celebrating at the HHR birthday event with Lesley Donelan, Carol Gillman and Margaret Kull

New Members:

Bob Morgan, Lesley Donelan and Carol Gillman



Bob Morgan and Lesley Donelan

AGM

The AGM will be held at Hub 62 Café, 62 Main Street, Chiltern on Saturday, April 16 at 3.30pm.

Membership of the HHR Society

If you're not a member and would like to join, please contact the secretary, Janey Runci or the president, Graeme Charles:

j.runci@bigpond.com or graemejcharles@gmail.com

Subscriptions are \$15 per year.

If you are a member subscriptions for 2016 are now due and can be paid by direct deposit into our bank account or by posting your cheque to the Society at PO Box 35, Chiltern 3683.

Bank account details are: Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, BSB 803 070, Account number 77605. Please make sure your name appears on the deposit.

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President: Bill Steele

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Janey Runci

Committee Members:

Clive Probyn, Bronwyn Minifie

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsonline.org.au