

## Newsletter January 2020



### HAPPY 150<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY AT THE ANNUAL PICNIC TEA AT LAKE VIEW

Not only was January 3, 2020 HHR's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, it will also be remembered as the year of the fires, or perhaps, sadly, the first year of the fires. Some Society members were unable to attend as they were protecting their own properties in various parts of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland and/or because of closed roads. Those of us who did travel to Chiltern spent a good bit of time checking phones for fire maps and evacuation notices. Those of us staying in the caravan park were aware of the many campers arriving who had evacuated from fire areas to the north and east of Chiltern. The air was full of smoke and the lake was almost empty.



*Smoky and dry in Chiltern*

Being in Chiltern in these conditions certainly gave a taste of what it must have been like for the Richardson family in the little house pre air conditioning days. No wonder that in the summer of 1877 Walter Richardson sent his wife and children to the beach for a couple of months. His letters to his wife reveal some of the conditions:

*We have it awfully hot here also and so continuous a month of it and no change and no rain. The country is being ruined and all will suffer...*

(From Walter in Chiltern to Mary in Blairgowrie, 12 February, 1877)

In 'Ultima Thule', the third volume of 'The Fortunes of Richard Mahony', Mary describes the lake, referred to as the Lagoon:

*Then, the Lagoon itself...this view of which Richard had made so much! After the rains, when there was some water in it, it might be all right; but just now it was more than three parts dry and most unsightly. You saw the bare cracked earth, not to speak of the rubbish, that had been thrown into it when full. And the mosquitoes! She had been obliged to put netting around all their beds; and what it would be like in summer passed imagining.*

Despite the fires a group of about 30 gathered at Lake View for the annual picnic tea. The locals who came from surrounding properties gave sombre reports of fire activity and there was some discussion about whether it might be better to celebrate HHR's time in Chiltern at another time of the year. However the garden and house as always were a haven, thanks to the work of Anne Vyner and Beryl Pickering.



Highlight of the event was the cutting of the cake by Mary Fuge, a special cake for the 150<sup>th</sup>, made and beautifully decorated by Heather Payne, and followed of course by the usual rousing rendition of 'Happy Birthday'.



It is an incomplete list and we'd be grateful to have more detail and photos of those on the list, and of anyone else who was involved. Please send to:

[j.runci@bigpond.com](mailto:j.runci@bigpond.com)

Or: [graemejcharles@gmail.com](mailto:graemejcharles@gmail.com)



*Lake View before it was restored in 1970*



*Mary Fuge cutting the cake*



*Father Stockdale, one of those who worked to save Lake View at the picnic tea in 1976*

### LAKE VIEW HONOUR ROLL

HHR Society President, Graeme Charles thanked everyone for attending. As it was also the fiftieth year since the house was taken under the care of the National Trust, and the fiftieth year HHR's birthday has been celebrated at the house, Graeme read out an Honour Roll of those who have contributed to the preservation of Lake View and to the picnic tea over the years. This list will be posted on the HHR Society website at: [www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au](http://www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au)



*Andrew Gilmour gives a reading at the picnic tea in 1976*



*Anne Vyner, Mary and Rex Fuge, Sir Richard and Lady McGarvie, Charles Oates, Win Hull, Pat O'Connor, Lorna Oates on 8/2/1996*

#### **PROUD CUSTODIANS OF HHR'S BIRTHPLACE**

HHR was born at Blanche Terrace in Fitzroy, on January 3, 1870. She writes of her birth in her memoir, 'Myself When Young':

*Having not long returned from one of their several journeys to England, and the house my father was building for himself at Balaclava not being finished, they took a furnished house for the event. There, at 1 Blanche Terrace, East Melbourne, I was born, on January the third, eighteen hundred and seventy, amid the crashings of a terrific thunderstorm.*

That house is now 179 Victoria Parade and the residence of two of our Society members, John Barkla and Alison Street who have been kind enough to write a piece about the house.



*179 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy*



*Plaque at 179 Victoria Parade*

#### **Celebrating 150 years** by John Barkla and Alison Street AO

When John purchased 179 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy in 1996, the most eastern of the six houses of Blanche Terrace, he was intrigued by a plaque on the colonnade by the front door. The plaque had been commissioned by the Fellowship of Australian Writers to commemorate the birthplace of Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1870.

Blanche Terrace, now sadly without those words on its frieze, was built in 1866-7 for Henry Mills, with further additions of stables and a coach house at the rear of 179, erected in the 1880s to support all of the houses.

By the 1990's many of the original features had been neglected, modified or removed by an unsympathetic conversion into multiple medical consulting suites, even with a lead-lined X-ray facility, during the 1980s. Over the next four years, John embraced the opportunity to restore the house, as well as he could, to its former residential status.

Despite HHR and her father's interest in psychic phenomena we have not encountered any ghosts. We do, however, feel immensely privileged to be the proud custodians of her birthplace. We also enjoy learning about the Richardson family history and being active participants in the HHR Society.

We raise a toast to 150 years with our thanks to HHR and to all of you in making her birthplace one to celebrate and conserve.



*John Barkla at the picnic tea in 2016*



*Alison Steel (right) with Jenny Fraser at the picnic tea in 2016 when a storm forced us to take refuge in the stables of the Star Hotel*

#### THE SAVING OF HHR'S BIRTHPLACE

As seen above it was the Fellowship of Australian Writers who commissioned the plaque on the house at 179 Victoria Parade, which is at the eastern end of Blanche Terrace. In Dorothy Green's book about HHR, 'Ulysses Bound', she writes that HHR's birthplace was saved by the actions of the FAW.

Ann Polis, founding editor of 'Melbourne Times' recently contacted us with some information about a time when the house where HHR was born was in danger of demolition. Ann remembers getting a phone call in 1972 to say that the house would soon be demolished, and she and others attended a demonstration outside Blanche Terrace the next day. As a result of the publicity generated by this event the National Trust became involved. Ann sees the saving of the house as the outcome of community action.

Today there is a National Trust plaque on the western end of Blanche Terrace, at numbers 169-171, officially opened on April 2, 1973 by the Premier of Victoria, Sir Rupert Hamer, however there is no mention of the other parts of Blanche Terrace.



*Plaque at 169-171 Victoria Parade*

In the coming weeks we hope to find out more about what happened and the roles of the National Trust and the FAW. Meanwhile if any readers have more information we'd love to hear from you. Please send to:

[j.runci@bigpond.com](mailto:j.runci@bigpond.com)

Or: [graamejcharles@gmail.com](mailto:graamejcharles@gmail.com)

#### HHR GOES DIGITAL!

Over the last few months Brigid Magner, Graeme Charles and Janey Runci have worked to produce an app on HHR in Chiltern which will soon be available through the Apple Store and Google Play Store under the heading 'Henry Handel Richardson Walking Tours'. We will send email notification when the app is available.

Once the app is downloaded you will be able to follow a trail with your phone over seven points: Chiltern Station, Lake View, the mill site, Lake Anderson, the Athenaeum, Star Hotel, Star Theatre. At each stop you can look at photos and listen to information and readings from relevant HHR works.

We plan to make apps for other HHR towns, such as Koroit, Queenscliff and Maldon over the coming months.

## HOMAGE & TWO HENRY'S AT BRIGID MAGNER'S BOOK LAUNCH

*'Brigid Magner's fascinating study sets out the ways in which a nation can build an identity by actively constructing a literary memory, and then using those memories to paper over the deep history of our First Nations and their stories. In doing so she helps us understand both how fragile Australian culture is and also the ways in which literature is a powerful force.'*

Sophie Cunningham

On 12 December 2019, The Royal Historical Society of Victoria played host to the launch of non/fiction Lab member Brigid Magner's new work, [Locating Australian Literary Memory](#)

The book, launched by John Arnold, book historian and former editor of the La Trobe Journal, explores sites explicitly connected with Australian authors through material forms of commemoration such as writers' houses, graves, statues and trails via focus on a selected group of notable 'heritage' authors including Adam Lindsay Gordon, A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson, Katharine Susannah Pritchard, Eleanor Dark, P. L. Travers (of Mary Poppins fame), and at least two Henrys, each of whom made an appearance on the night. Henry Lawson appeared as himself to give a stellar recitation of *The Loaded Dog*, while a second Henry arrived in the form of a reading from Henry Handel-Richardson's memoir by Janey Runci, Vice-President of the HHR Society.



*Janey Runci*



*Brigid Magner*



*James Howard as Henry Lawson*

Brigid's book is timely, with significant birthdays looming in 2020 for [Adam Lindsay Gordon](#) and [Henry Handel Richardson](#). It draws attention to how inherited traditions have shaped local forms of literary memorialisation, while also reminding us of many additional, sometimes idiosyncratic rituals that have evolved here in Australia. The book, published by Anthem press, was launched in convivial company, with Brigid's family, friends and colleagues in attendance. A *waiata* performed by members of Brigid's family from Aotearoa (New Zealand) brought the event to a suitably ceremonial close.

## ANZ Litlovers Litblog at Brigid's launch

Also attending the launch was Lisa Hill, of the ANZ Litlovers Litblog. In a blog written after the event Lisa commented:

*It's always lovely to be in a room full of readers, but the conversations were especially interesting because there were representatives from various author societies. Readers of long standing will remember [my post about a weekend in Maldon to celebrate Henry Handel Richardson](#) and it was really nice to meet people from the [HHR Society](#) and be prompted to check out forthcoming events for HHR's 150th anniversary birthday....*

*I suspect that there were many years of literary scholarship assembled in the room, united by a love of Australian literature.*

## SECOND INSTALMENT OF HHR TRIP TO BRITAIN AND GERMANY

by Janey Runci

### Leipzig Calendar

It would take many pages to cover even briefly the range of experiences we enjoyed in our 6 days in Leipzig and its surrounds. The newsletter will feature a few highlights more directly related to HHR and her work, but a brief calendar will indicate some of what we were treated to:

**8 October:** arrival in Leipzig

**9 October:** many events for the 30 year anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, culminating in the evening Lichtfest, a Festival of Lights where thousands gathered in the Augustplatz with candles, and then walked around the ring road where around 70,00 people demonstrated in support of peace and democracy in 1989

**10 October:** guided walk with Stefan Welz to the Leipzig woods; evening at the Literaturhaus for celebration of the translation of 'Maurice Guest' (covered in the last newsletter)

**11 October:** car trip through Saxony to Rocken (Nietzsche's birthplace), Freyburg, Max Klinger's atelier and Naumburg; evening concert at the Gewandhaus

**12 October:** train trip to Dessau, home of the Bauhaus movement

**13 October:** car trip to Rocklitzer Berg, place

This timetable enabled us to immerse ourselves in the contemporary and historical life of this amazing city where HHR spent such a formative period of her own life. It was made possible thanks to the generous hospitality of our Leipzig members, Stefan Welz and Susan and Sebastian Fink who devised and organised a program down to the finest detail, provided transport on a number of occasions and generally provided assistance, information and much enjoyment. As well a number of others assisted: Irmgard Heidler and her daughter Alice Nelsons provided a car and driving for our day in the Saxon countryside; Stefan's colleague, Joachim, also provided a car and driving for that day; Fabian Dellemann, co-translator of 'Maurice Guest' into German, gave us a very warm welcome at the Literaturhaus, Stefan's friend and curator of the Nietzsche museum, Sebastian Mandla, gave us an in depth account of Nietzsche's childhood as we walked through the churchyard where Nietzsche played in the small village of Rocken; visited a startling memorial statue, and then the real grave of Nietzsche; sat in the same pews of the church where the small Nietzsche sat looking fearfully up at his preacher father in the pulpit; and finally got out of the cold wind and into the warmth of the house where Nietzsche lived, sipping hot coffee while Sebastian (who is also an actor) spoke eloquently in German of Nietzsche's early life and its effect on his later work, with Stefan translating for us.



*Memorial statue of Nietzsche, not his real grave*

This amazing visit to Rocken was just one of the many enriching experiences packed into our time in Leipzig.



*Sebastian at the real grave – Nietzsche's mother and brother on the right, his sister in the middle and Nietzsche on the left*

**The World of Maurice Guest** - two highlights of the trip: the Leipzig woods and Rocklitzer Berg

### **The Leipzig woods**

Early on the morning of October 10 the five Australian travellers met outside the Leipzig Conservatorium, as arranged with Professor Stefan Welz, to begin our walk towards 'the woods' that are so often mentioned in HHR's first novel, 'Maurice Guest'.



*Leipzig Conservatorium in Grassistrasse*

We set off along Grassistrasse and from the windows of the buildings on each side came the sounds of students practising various instruments. It was not hard to imagine HHR walking here, or the fictional Maurice Guest in the first chapter of the novel making off 'not for the town, with its prosaic suggestion of work and confinement, but for the freedom of the woods.'

As he walks along Maurice enjoys what he calls 'a twofold intoxication: great music and a day rich in promise.' We certainly felt the rich promise of our day in Leipzig, and the next evening we also heard great music in the Gewandhaus.

At the end of Grassistrasse we came to an extensive park and in the park a small bridge over the lake, a gathering point for music students of the late nineteenth century, and now a thoroughfare for present day music students whizzing past on their bikes, laden with music instruments on their way to the Con, their ears plugged with earbuds.



*Dot and Graeme Charles, Helen Macrae, Stefan Welz and Maureen McCarthy on the bridge in the park*

As it did for Maurice Guest, our walk brought us to 'a broad stream which flashed through the wood like a line of light.'



*Walking beside the river*

We walked along quietly after this, mulling over different scenes that occur beside the river in 'Maurice Guest', not all of them suggestive of the freedom that Maurice experiences in the opening section of the novel. A character who came to my mind is the distraught Ephie running from the room where Maurice has brought her to satisfy Louise's desire to see the younger woman who has been with Schilsky.

*She sobbed to herself as she walked. Everything was bleak, and black, and cheerless. She would perhaps die of the cold, and then all of them, Joan in particular, would be filled with remorse. She stood and looked at the inky water of the river between its stone walls. She had read of people drowning themselves; what if she went down the steps and threw herself in?*

(from 'Maurice Guest', Part 2, Chapter 4)

This small taste of the woods expanded our view of the city of Leipzig as it is today, and, to some extent, as it was for HHR and her fictional characters.

### **Our Day at Rocklitz Berg**

Our day at Rocklitz Berg was organised by Susan and Sebastian Fink. Some readers will remember that Susan has completed research work on the sites in 'Maurice Guest'. Sebastian and Stefan provided cars and we headed south to this peaceful picnic site in the hills. Lesley Buckley, a Society member from England who had joined us in Leipzig with her husband, Roger, had just finished reading 'Maurice Guest' that very morning. She was devastated by Maurice's ending and found the epilogue unnecessary which resulted in a lively discussion on the way to Rocklitz Berg. (You can read more of Lesley's thoughts in the last newsletter in the section about new members.)

*...they went out of the sight of other people, into the friendly screening woods.*

*'I thought you would never come.'*

*'Why didn't you wake me? Oh, gently, Maurice! You forget that I've just done my hair.'*

*'Today I shall forget everything. Let me look at you again...right into your eyes.'*

*'Today you believe I'm real, don't you? Are you satisfied?'*

*'And you, Louise, you? – Say you're happy too!'*

*They came upon the Friedrich August Trum, a stone tower, standing on the highest point of the hill, beside a large quarry; and, too idly happy to refuse, climbed the stone steps, led by a persuasive old pensioner, who, on the platform at the top, adjusted the telescope, and pointed out the distant landmarks, with something of an owner's pride. On this morning, Maurice would not have been greatly surprised to hear that the streaky headline of the Dover coast was visible: he had eyes for her alone, as, with assumed interest, she followed the old man's hand, learned where Leipzig lay, and how, on a clear day, its many spires could be distinguished.'*

(From 'Maurice Guest', Part 2, Chapter 13)



*Walking the path that Louise and Maurice walked*

Some of our party did as Maurice and Louise did and climbed the inside of the tower and maybe remembered the furtive kiss that Maurice gave Louise on the way down.



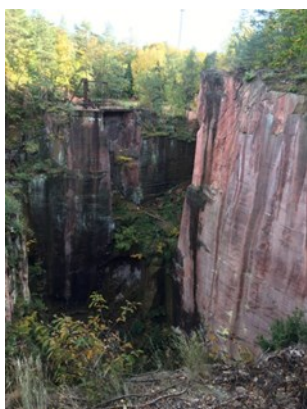
*Friedrich August Tower*

Susan and Sebastian had arranged for us to eat at the chalet-like building beside the tower, and we enjoyed another joyful sharing of our passion for HHR and her work.



*Dot Charles, Maureen McCarthy, Sebastian Fink, Graeme Charles, Susan Fink and Roger Buckley*

At the conclusion of the lunch we walked through the beautiful autumn woods towards the now abandoned porphyry quarry with its distinctive pink stone before our drive back to Leipzig.



*Porphyry Quarry*

Perhaps the most obvious outcome of our time in Leipzig was the desire to re-read 'Maurice Guest', to reflect more on its power. This desire emerged from many things: the location, the people, the talking, the events. Many thanks to those who made this visit so enriching and memorable.

### HHR ON THE RADIO

Readers of the newsletter might like to listen to podcasts of two programs that mentioned HHR's work in the last couple of months:

- Philip Adams on 'Late Night Live' on 11 November 2019 in an interview with the writer, Di Morrissey
- Amanda Vanstone on 'Counterpoint' in an interview with Ian Macfarlane on his book, 'Ten Remarkable Australians'.

### NEW MEMBER – ALICE NELSONS



*Alice Nelsons (front right)*

Alice is pictured at the lunch held in Freyburg, about 50 kms west of Leipzig on October 11. Alice kindly provided transport with her car on that day. She is the daughter of Irmgard Heidler (pictured next to Alice), a member from Munich who many will remember from her oration in Maldon in 2017. Alice is also the wife of Andris Nelsons, the music director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS  
FOR 2020 ARE NOW DUE**

Membership renewals of \$20 are due on or after January 1 each year.

The bulk of the Society's activities rely on these annual membership fees. They matter to us!

Large individual donations cover the Henry Handel Richardson Fellowship every two years, and a few smaller donations also provide valuable income, but it is the membership fees that keep us going and allow us to branch out in the ways we promote the reading and enjoyment of HHR's work.

You don't need to be a member to get the newsletter.

Pay by direct deposit into our bank account and remember to identify yourself on the deposit by name.

**BSB: 803070      Account no: 77605**

If necessary you can pay by cheque made out to Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, c/o Treasurer, 86/80 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, Vic, 3067.

Please be patient. The cheque may not be deposited for several weeks.

Or you can pay in cash at a HHRSA event. Pay before the AGM in March if you want to vote at the AGM.

### **New members**

If you'd like to become a member you need to fill out a membership application. This is a standard process for all organisations incorporated in the state of Victoria, as we are.

You can find a membership form on the website:

[www.henryhandelrichardsonsciety.org.au](http://www.henryhandelrichardsonsciety.org.au)

or email the membership secretary:

[helen.macrae@bigpond.com](mailto:helen.macrae@bigpond.com) and have one posted to you. If you have any questions about membership call Helen on 0401 901 558