

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter July 2016



Honouring Henry Handel Richardson: State Library of NSW Saturday 20 August, 2.30-4pm

In its annual **Honouring Australian Writers** series, the NSW Writers' Centre pays tribute to writers who have made an important contribution to our literary culture.

This year the library honours Henry Handel Richardson who they consider to be one of Australia's great foundation novelists. HHR is only the third writer to be acknowledged this way. The last two were Randolph Stow and Thea Astley. Speaking on the significance of Henry Handel Richardson's writing are director and HHR Society patron **Bruce Beresford**, author **Sophie Cunningham**, historian **Anna Clarke**, and **Professor Michael Ackland**, author of *Henry Handel Richardson: A Life*.

The event will take place at the Metcalfe Auditorium at the wonderful old State Library of NSW.



NSW State Library

A number of HHR Society Members are attending the event where we will have an information table and also provide HHR books as prizes. Admission is free but you need to book at events@nswwc.org.au

If you can make it – a great event to attend!

Come and say hullo to committee members Graeme Charles, Heather McNeill, Helen Macrae and Janey Runci.

The HHR Society and Varuna National Writers' Centre

As outlined in our February newsletter the HHR Society in partnership with Varuna offered the Henry Handel Richardson Flagship Fellowship in Short Story writing for the first time this year. The award was established to promote the life and legacy of Henry Handel Richardson as a significant Australian author

and to encourage excellence in Australian short story writing. The winner of the award receives a two week residency at Varuna in the first half of 2017, and \$1000 towards travel and other costs. We hope to offer this award every two years. Entries close on 30 July 2016 and the result will be up on the Varuna website by 30 September 2016.

For the award the HHR Society contributes \$2000 which is donated by Society members who wish to remain anonymous. Varuna administers the award and provides publicity for the Society.

For more details go to Varuna's website www.varuna.com.au and the HHR Society website www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au



One of the lovely writer's rooms at Varuna

About Varuna and the Dark family

Varuna Writers' House is in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, and was previously the home of the distinguished Australian writer Eleanor Dark and her husband Eric, and then of their son, Michael (Mick) Dark, who gifted the house to the public in 1989.



Eric, Eleanor and Mick Dark in the gardens at Varuna in the 1930s

The house operates as a national writer's centre and retreat, offering a range of supportive programs, including the fellowships. Varuna currently offers fellowships for approximately thirty writers a year, including Flagship Fellowships. A team of Varuna's consultants read the entries blind and select the recipients. Currently there are five 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
- The Henry Handel Richardson for Short Story



Varuna House

HHR Koroit tour: Saturday 29 October, 2016 – book now!

This year the HHR Society is going to **Koroit** where Richardson lived two very eventful years of her childhood from 1878-80.

Some of you will remember the enjoyable tour in 2008 to various places of significance in HHR's childhood. These included the house in **Fitzroy** where she was born in 1870, **Queenscliff** where she lived from 1877-8, and **Maldon** where she lived from 1880-86.

Events on Saturday 29 October will include:

- a ceremony at Walter Richardson's grave;
- an HHR tour of the town;
- a lunch and readings at Micky Bourke's pub, which is just over the road from the Post Office where HHR lived;

This event is free apart from the cost of food and accommodation. Lunch at Mickey Bourke's pub is \$16 for a main course and \$8 for dessert.

Accommodation is available at Micky Bourke's pub www.mickeybourkes.com.au at very reasonable rates, and also at nearby Warrnambool. As this is the Cup

Day long weekend you will need to book your accommodation early.

The event is free but bookings are essential.

RSVP to j.runci@bigpond.com

or to graamejcharles@gmail.com



Koroit Post Office

HHR came to live at the Koroit Post Office in September, 1878 when her mother, Mary Richardson took up her first position as postmistress there. HHR's father's health, both physical and mental had been deteriorating in the preceding years at Chiltern and Queenscliff and he had been put into medical care.

Mary Richardson struggled to master her new role in the small house. This became even more difficult when her husband, Walter, a shell of a man by then, came home from the Yarra Bend government asylum to spend the last months of his life.

This was obviously a traumatic time for the family and Richardson depicts it as such in her memoir, *Myself When Young*, seemingly oblivious to the charms of this peaceful and picturesque small town.



Koroit Hotel today

Koroit is recognisable as 'Gymgurra' in *Ultima Thule*, the third volume of HHR's trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Details of the town as mentioned in her memoir and in *Ultima Thule* are readily identifiable, including the Post Office and the Koroit

Hotel (Mickey Bourke's) where the guards stayed when they brought Walter Richardson home from the asylum.

Walter's grave is in the Koroit cemetery and this is the setting for the final stirring scene in *Ultima Thule*.



Walter's Richardson's grave in Koroit cemetery

HHR Leipzig tour in May 2017

Exciting plans are underway for the HHR Leipzig tour with the help of Society members in Germany - Stefan Welz and Irmgard Heidler, both HHR scholars. It was at the Leipzig Conservatorium that HHR studied music. She met her husband, John George Robertson in Leipzig and it is also the setting for her novel, *Maurice Guest*.

It is possible that the tour will extend to Munich and Strassburg where HHR also lived.

The tour will provide a unique opportunity to get an insider's view of these cities and their significance in HHR's life and work. Exact dates will be confirmed in the next month.

If you are interested **please let us know** at j.runci@bigpond.com or graamejcharles@gmail.com

This is only a registering of interest, not a booking. Participants will need to arrange their own accommodation and travel to and from these cities.



Leipzig Conservatorium

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 graamejcharles@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:

Gloria Banks, Bronwyn Minifie,
Heather McNeill, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonssociety.org.au