

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc

Newsletter July 2017



Ten year Anniversary plans: 3 January 2018

Our next HHR birthday celebration at Lake View on 3 January, 2018 will mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of the HHR Society of Australia, around the kitchen table of Rex and Mary Fuge in 2008 – surely the reason for a grand party at Lake View on that day.

As well we plan to publish a special edition of the newsletter for that event, looking back over the last ten years, perhaps with ideas for the next ten years. We'd love to hear from members – comments, stories, photos – about your time in the Society and at Lake View. Send contributions to Janey Runci at j.runci@bigpond.com or Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com



Birthday picnic tea in the garden at Lake View, 2017

The HHRSA trip to Germany in May 2017

We're back from Germany, we seven members of the Society who set off to walk a little in HHR's footsteps there. For a short part of our trip we were joined by Angela and Patrick Neustatter, grandchildren of Lil, and great niece and nephew of HHR.

We had high hopes of this visit and those hopes were more than met, thanks to the generosity, courtesy, hospitality and huge knowledge of our German hosts.

Dr Irmgard Heidler was our guide in Munich, Marquartstein and Dresden. Professor Stefan Welz was our guide in Leipzig and Weimar. Both of them endeavoured to help us see the cities as they would have been for HHR and her sister, Lil.



Dr Irmgard Heidler guiding us through the streets of Munich



Professor Stefan Welz guides us in Leipzig

The Journey

We began our journey with little knowledge of HHR's time in Germany. Readers familiar with HHR's 'Australian' works – 'The Getting of Wisdom' and 'The Fortunes of Richard Mahony' – may be surprised to learn that HHR lived in Germany at all, much less over a period spanning fifteen years. We came to see at least a little of how this crucial period in her young adult life, between her childhood in Australia (1870-88), and her adult life in England (1904-46) had a profound and shaping effect on her life and her work. A brief timeline below gives a very condensed summary of this time.

HHR in Germany Time Line

- 1889: Studies piano at Leipzig Conservatorium of Music
 1892: England
 1895: Munich, marries John George Robertson
 1896: Strasbourg
 1904: England

Of the places above our trip took us to Leipzig, Munich and Strasbourg, with side trips to Marquartstein, Dresden and Weimar.

For this newsletter we'll share our experiences in Leipzig as this was the first German city where HHR lived. More will be covered in subsequent newsletters.

Following HHR's footsteps in Leipzig: A New Life

As our train approached Leipzig we were mindful of HHR's words about this city in her autobiography, 'Myself When Young', in the section significantly titled 'New Life'.

The three years I spent in Leipzig were the happiest I had yet known. They also stood for a definite break with the past. From now on, instead of being merely a member of the family, I became a person in my own right. And a very different one from the aimless, ill-adjusted girl who had begun to feel herself odd-man-out, and to judge people and things from that angle. Now I too was caught up in the swirl.



HHR in 1890

We had come abroad solely for my own sake, and it was imperative on me to make a success of the training. Hence my comfort and convenience were studied as never before, and I was no longer expected to take an interest in home affairs. I mapped out my time as I chose, came and went unquestioned, and had my own friends.

In the beginning I hardly stirred from the piano, gripped by a hitherto unknown passion for work, elementary though this was. For having been accepted as a pupil by Johannes Weidenbach, one of the two leading piano-teachers at the "Con", I was put right back to the rudiments, and for

months played only finger-exercises and scales. I didn't mind, but Mother deeply resented the poor figure I cut, after all the sacrifices made on my behalf.

City of Music

Our small band from Australia arrived in Leipzig late on a cold afternoon, dragging our cases down a lengthy platform at the grand railway station. It had been a long train trip from Munich, sharing our carriage with a number of boisterous German men dressed in football colours and downing huge glasses of beer in preparation for the grand match to be held in Leipzig the next day. We could never have imagined the richness of the few days that would follow.

There at the end of the platform was a man holding a sign reading 'HHR'. This was Professor Stefan Welz.



Professor Stefan Welz

As well as the HHR sign Stefan had maps for each of us, marked with the location where we were soon to meet for dinner before we went on to a concert at the contemporary Gewandhaus (the third one built in the city). At the dinner we were joined by Dr Heidler who had travelled up from Munich separately, and HHR members, Susan Schaale, who has done work on HHR in Leipzig, and Sebastian Fink, a keen reader of HHR's work. Susan and Sebastian plan to visit Australia in mid-2018 and we look forward to seeing them again.



Susan Schaale and Sebastian Fink at the Gewandhaus

Shortly after, well fed by now, we were sitting in the beautiful Gewandhaus and listening to works of Wagner, Schumann and Bruckner.



At the Gewandhaus in Leipzig

Thus we were plunged into this city of music!

The most musical of people

Our thoughtful host had arranged for us to attend the weekly performance of the St Thomas Boys' Choir singing Bach Motets with the support of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in St Thomas's Church on the next day.



St Thomas's Church

HHR wrote of the Saxon inhabitants of Leipzig as 'the most musical of people' in 'Myself when Young'. She praised their music venues, including St Thomas Church:

The Germans believed in providing music with its appropriate atmosphere. The Bach Motets were performed in Bach's own Thomaskirche; and after that, any other background seemed incongruous. Nor have the 'Passions' and great Oratorios ever made the impression they did in some dim old Leipzig church. The Gewandhaus had its own special little hall for chamber-music, with acoustics so perfect that not the lightest tone was lost.

A music tour of Leipzig followed the Motets, under the capable hands of Stefan's friend, Monika. We saw

places where the likes of Bach, Mendelssohn, Strauss, Schumann composed, lived, performed. This was the world HHR had come to, had lived and studied for three years after her childhood in Australia.

And it was a literary world as well. Dinner that night was in the opulent surrounds of Auerbachs Keller, site of a scene in Goethe's 'Faust'.



Gloria and Graeme Banks with Susan Schaale at Auerbach's Keller

The Conservatorium

It's hard to say what were highlights of this wonderful tour, but probably the visit to the former Conservatorium was one for all of us.

We began in a grand square in the university precinct, with the Court House to one side and behind that the University Library, both buildings erected in the time HHR was there. In front of us was a modern University building, where once stood the second Gewandhaus, built in 1884, the one HHR attended.

To our delight at this point Fabian Dellemann, the co-translator working on 'Maurice Guest' with Stefan, read to us the opening passage from the novel where the young and newly arrived Maurice watches the audience spilling out after the public rehearsal of the weekly concert.



Gewandhaus, built in 1884



Fabian reading from Maurice Guest

One noon in 189-, a young man stood in front of the new Gewandhaus in Leipzig, and watched the neat, grass-laid square, until then white and silent in the sunshine, grow dark with many figures.

The public rehearsal of the weekly concert was just over, and, from the half light of the warm-coloured hall, which for more than two hours had held them secluded, some hundreds of people hastened, with renewed anticipation, towards sunlight and street sounds. There was a medley of tongues, for many nationalities were represented in the crowd that surged through the ground floor and out of the glass doors, and much noisy ado, for the majority was made up of young people, at an age that enjoys the sound of its own voice. In black, diverging lines they poured through the heavy swinging doors, which flapped ceaselessly to and fro, never quite closing, always opening afresh, and on descending the shallow steps, they told off into groups, where all talked at once, with lively gesticulation. A few faces had the strained look that indicates the conscientious listener; but most of these young musicians were under the influence of a stimulant more potent than wine, which manifested itself in a nervous garrulity and a nervous mirth.

We walked then down Beethovenstrasse between the modern University building on our left and the University Library on our right. After a brief visit to the library we walked on to the Conservatorium in the street behind, conscious all the time that HHR would have walked these streets countless times. We paused opposite the building, watching students and teachers go up and down the steps while Fabian read us another passage from ‘Maurice Guest’.



Gewandhaus and Conservatorium lay close together, in a new quarter of the town. The Conservatorium, a handsome, stone-faced building, three lofty storeys high was just now all the more imposing in appearance as it stood alone in an unfinished street-block, and as, opposite, hoardings still shut in all that had yet been raised of the great library, which would eventually overshadow it. The severe plainness of its long front, with the unbroken lines of windows, did not fail to impress the unused beholder, who had not for very long gone daily out and in; it suggested to him the earnest, unswerving efforts, imperative on his pursuit of the ideal; an ideal, which, to many was as it were personified by the concert-house in the adjoining square: it was hither, towards this clear-limned goal, that bore him, like a magic carpet, the young enthusiast's most ambitious dream.-But in the life that swarmed about the Conservatorium, there was nothing of a tedious austerity. It was one of the briskest times of day, and the short street and the steps of the building were alive with young people of both sexes. Young men sauntered to and from the café at the corner, or stood gesticulating in animated groups. All alike were conspicuous for a rather wilful slovenliness, for smooth faces and bushy hair, while the numerous girls, with whom they paused to laugh and trifle, were for the most part showy in dress and loudly vivacious in manner.

At the conclusion of the reading we crossed the road and moved past milling students up the steps and inside, all the time thinking of Maurice Guest . . .

Inside, classes were filing out of various rooms, other classes were going in; there was a noisy flocking up and down the broad, central staircase, a crowding about the notice-board, a going and coming in the long stone corridors. The concert-hall was being lighted.

Maurice slowly made his way through the midst of all these people, while Dove loitered, or stepped out of hearing, with one friend after another. In a side corridor, off which, cell-like, opened a line of rooms, they pushed a pair of double-doors, and went in to take their lesson.



Stefan led us up ‘the broad, central staircase’ and off to a side room where we met Ingrid Jach, the archivist who would show us some material relevant to HHR.

We sat in a narrow room with a long table down the middle, and floor to ceiling shelves behind us on each side. The shelves held the records of musicians in alphabetical order. From my position, I could see such names as Grieg, Handel, Janacek, Lubeck, Liszt, Mahler, Mandel. It felt as though we were in the inner

sanctum as documents mentioning HHR were passed on cushions down the table for our perusal. The archivist had also kindly done photo copies that we could handle and study further.

An oddity noted by one of our members was that HHR's birth date was recorded as 1871 rather than 1870. Was this a mistake? If so, why hadn't it been picked up?

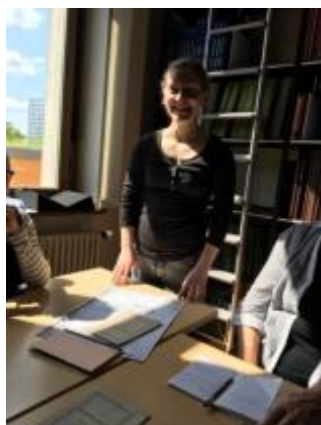


Another oddity was the statement that Dr Walter Richardson of Melbourne had approved HHR's enrolment in 1889 even though he had died ten years before in 1879 when HHR was nine. The archivist had no explanation for these anomalies, but promised to investigate.



Examining the documents

We also viewed a program for HHR's Harptprüfung (a performance examination) in March 1892 where 'Fraulein Richardson' from Melbourne played Beethoven's concerto in C Major for Pianoforte. Her final certificate reports HHR as 'diligent, gifted and ambitious'. The archivist also commented that HHR was one of the few women who studied Theory at the time, and that she was respected for that.



Ingrid Jach, archivist

Our final destination in the Conservatorium was one of the rooms downstairs where classes were held, and students practised. Fittingly we had to wait while Stefan went in and asked a practising student if we could come in briefly. The young woman put down her violin and sat in one of the seats arranged in rows while we crept in. Once again Maurice Guest came to mind as he and Dove stepped into the classroom:

The room they entered was light and high, and contained, besides a couple of grand pianos, a small table and a row of wooden chairs. Schwarz stood with his back to the window, biting his nails. He was a short, thickset man, with keen eyes, and a hard, prominent mouth, which was rather emphasised than concealed, by the fair, scanty tuft of hair that hung from his chin. Upon the two new-comers, he bent a cold, deliberate gaze, which, for some instants, he allowed to rest chillingly on them, then as deliberately withdrew, having - so at least it seemed to those who were its object - having, without the tremor of an eyelid, scanned them like an open page: it was the look, impenetrable, all-seeing, of the physician for his patient.



We had only the kindly Stefan in front of us. Behind us, the young violin student, a child of her time, studied her mobile phone while she waited.

Why no Aussie friends in Leipzig? – a question from Graeme Charles after the visit to the archives

As others have mentioned, our visit to what was known in HHR's time as the Royal Conservatorium of Music, Leipzig, was a real highlight of our recent German tour. Crowded into a small room surrounded by archival material I began to wonder (aloud) how many other Australians, if any, were at the Conservatorium contemporaneously with HHR. Subsequently, archivist Ingrid Jach, advised me that during 1889-92 when HHR was studying in Leipzig there were 20 Australians and 15 New Zealanders also enrolled at the Conservatorium.

One or two of them, I now know, had significant musical careers after graduating with their Diplomas. Possibly the best known of these was Alfred Hill. Hill was born in Richmond, just down the road from the Richardsons, two weeks before HHR entered this world. He had a long, distinguished musical career, both in New Zealand and Australia. Indeed, in his later years he was known as 'The Grand Old Man of Australian Music.'

In her unfinished autobiography, *Myself When Young*, there is no mention of any of these people, either individually or collectively. She does mention that the flat she lived in in Mozartstrasse with her mother and sister ...*was sometimes as full as it would hold. Of English and Americans. Foreigners were not encouraged, for we'd found them bad mixers. Nor did we fraternise to any extent with our fellow-pupils, of whom the same could be said.* Whoever it actually was filling the flat, the favoured species seemed to be American males. *They seemed more like ourselves, were frank and informal, and considerably easier to get on with than the staid English.*

Over 250 new students alone were enrolled at the Conservatorium in 1890 for example, so the 35 from 'down under' would to some extent have been a rather insignificant number among so many. But surely not so insignificant to one another. Even now when large numbers of Australians travel to Europe and other parts of the world, another Australian voice always makes one's ears prick up, and the opportunity for a chat is seldom ignored. Perhaps HHR did 'chat' with her fellow Australians from time to time, but by her own word they never formed part of the Mozartstrasse *Salon*. Eight of the Australians were actually from Melbourne; I find it a little surprising that not one of them or any other Aussie for that matter formed part of the Richardson circle.

Did HHR deliberately avoid them? Did she perhaps not want to be particularly recognised as an Australian? Am I the only one to find her failure to even mention them in passing in her autobiography, unusual? I would be interested to see what others make of this, and look forward to reading their thoughts in future newsletters.

An account of our time in Leipzig from Professor Stefan Welz

This was not an everyday encounter for librarian Ingrid Jach: welcoming a group of Australian members of the Henry Handel Richardson Society to the archives of Leipzig's renowned College of Music 'Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy'. However, with a good command of English she presented original documents of Henry Handel Richardson who, from April 1889 until March 1892, studied music at this former Royal Conservatory in Leipzig. The scrutinizing eyes of the Australian visitors soon discovered some inconsistency about HHR's birthdate on the enrolment list. Is there still a story to reveal? And were there any other students from Down Under studying at this institution? Ingrid promised to check it out. After much discussing, weighing, and marveling at the old volumes and documents the visitors and the librarian agreed to stay in contact.

The visit to the Conservatory was part of the program of an extended European tour which Graeme Charles, the spiritual father of this endeavour, together with seven members of the Henry Handel Richardson Society made in May this year. Tracing the lives of Henry Handel Richardson and her family the itinerary brought them from Australia to Munich, Leipzig, Berlin, and Strasbourg.

It was my pleasure to host this group of warmhearted and open-minded women and men for five days in the city of Leipzig. Arriving by fast train from the Bavarian capital Munich I could have easily done without the placard in my hands showing the letters H.H.R. It did not take much to spot the group of relaxed and good-humored globetrotters within the crowds at the platform of Leipzig's Central Station.

The program started with a bird's eye view from the restaurant of the 120 m high Panorama Tower over the Saxon city of more than half a million inhabitants. Next to its long history as a leading trading centre of Germany, Leipzig prides itself on being a city of music. To get the taste of it we were about to attend the *Grosses Concert* after having supper. Down again on the central *Augustusplatz*, we found ourselves in front of the *Gewandhaus*, a great concert hall and home of the orchestra of the same difficult name. Under its newly elected conductor, Andris Nelsons, the *Gewandhausorchester* performed works by Wagner, Schubert and Bruckner. Hypothetically speaking, Henry Handel Richardson could have known all of these works from her Leipzig times.

More music was announced for the next day since visiting Leipzig without paying homage to Johann Sebastian Bach seems impossible. St Thomas Church, where Bach has been choirmaster and composer for 28 years, seemed to be the right place to begin with. We were attending one of the weekly motets, presented by the *Thomaner* boys' choir, which sang in a rather lively manner given its eight centuries of choir history.

Afterwards, Monika, our knowledgeable city guide, showed us around explaining the wonders of musical history the city has to offer: the museum of Bach and a first monument of his, sponsored by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, the old Coffee House where Robert Schumann used to gather with his friends, Wagner's birthplace...

The evening united the Australian group and all the German members of the Henry Handel Richardson Society—four in number— at the historical restaurant *Auerbach's Cellar*. The meeting allowed joyful conversations, which resisted the noisy but harmless singing of beer-drinking soccer supporters from Munich who celebrated victory over the Leipzig team.

Sunday was no day of rest. Irmgard Heidler, our helpful support from Munich with much insider

knowledge, took the group to Dresden where they were roaming the surroundings on the traces of the Neustätter family. Despite the grand scale destruction during the Second World War, Dresden—former capital of the Kingdom of Saxony—is still nowadays an architectural beauty.

No doubt, that Henry Handel Richardson knew the once glamorous city that can be reached from Leipzig by train within an hour. Back to Leipzig in the evening, we witnessed the effects of globalization first hand. Our waiter at the restaurant surprised us with his knowledge of Australian slang words. He had picked them up when serving on a cruising ship *Down Under*.

On Monday, Fabian, a former student of mine and German co-translator of *Maurice Guest*, read out some scenes from the novel while we were on our tour through the so-called *Musikviertel*. Henry Handel Richardson, together with her mother and sister, used to live in this elegant quarter of Leipzig. Unfortunately, their former residential building no longer exists. It gave way to a tower block erected in the later years of the socialist GDR.

Nevertheless, the quarter with its old tree-lined streets, some still with cobblestones, has largely preserved its original character thanks to dominant buildings of the former Royal Conservatory, the University Library, and the first German Supreme Court built under the Kaiser. The Department of English of Leipzig University provided us with a room in the faculty building nearby.

It was an occasion for me to show some historical pictures and maps, and to say some words about my project of re-translating and re-publishing Henry Handel Richardson's novel *Maurice Guest*. Only once, in 1912, the novel was published in Germany, in a translation based on an incomplete text version.

On Tuesday, a change of scenery brought us to Weimar. This small city in the hilly countryside of Thuringia is a cultural centre of national importance. Great poets such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller as well as other renowned scholars, composers and philosophers lived and worked there.

The picturesque place with its narrow lanes and historical buildings was a welcome break from urban hurly-burly of the previous days. We had much time to talk about the world in general and Henry Handel Richardson in particular. It made us aware of how close we are—thanks to our human resources and our shared interests. At the end of the day, when it was time to say good-bye, we assured each other that there will be a *Wiedersehen*—in Leipzig or in Australia.

Words from the travellers: some reflections made on the last night of the trip



From left: Graeme Banks, Helen Macrae, Graeme Charles, Dot Charles, Carolyn Mooney, Gloria Bank and Janey Runci at 33 Thorwaldstrenstrasse, Munich - the building where HHR lived as a newlywed with her husband John George Robertson in 1896



Patrick and Angela in the Arabian Coffee Tree Café in Leipzig, haunt of writers and artists in HHR's time there.

Gloria Banks: The trip was absolutely fascinating. It brought it alive for me, what HHR wrote about. Now I want to re-read everything. A highlight for me was looking at her graduation certificate in the Leipzig Conservatorium.

Graeme Charles: I enjoyed the Conservatorium very much. I was intrigued by the birth certificate discrepancy. It was recorded as 1871 instead of 1870 on some documents there. A place that affected me deeply, where I felt I got closest to HHR, was the house in Strasbourg, and the conversation with the woman next door who told us about the history of the building, past and present. Also the visit to Mary Richardson's grave in Munich was affecting – to think it's so lonely, so seldom visited.

Dot Charles: For me the overwhelming feeling was of the contrast it must have been for HHR and Lil to come from the worlds of Maldon and Melbourne and then to be suddenly in Leipzig. How mind-boggling it must have been, how different. To be surrounded by the history, present in every building. A real culture shock.

Graeme Banks: I had no idea what an academic HHR was. Both sisters seemed destined for something else and I can imagine the attraction of Europe. It was where they were meant to be. I was impressed that Irmgard, Stefan and Fabian had each read Richardson's work in English, not their first language and had all been hooked straightaway. The trip felt almost like reading someone's diary.

Helen Macrae: I finished reading *Maurice Guest* in the plane on the way and I was so impressed at its quality. In Leipzig we stayed in Gottschedstrasse, where HHR lived for a while, and as I went up and down the dark wooden stairs of the old apartment block I was reminded of Madeleine's house in *Maurice Guest* and the students coming and going.

To see where the woods were, the geography, to be in the Conservatorium, to see the enrolment and performance documents was wonderful—to see where she'd drawn that store for her writing. Those great scholars who assisted us—Irmgard and Stefan—their intelligence, generosity and warmth was outstanding.

Carolyn Mooney: I joined the group fairly late, having heard of the Society from my fellow book group member, Helen Macrae. I took the trip as an opportunity to learn something firsthand about a significant writer I admired so much. As an academic myself I was bowled over by the scholastic rigour of Irmgard and Stefan. They reflected a real collegiality of scholars and treated we amateurs with so much respect—acknowledging our commitment.

Janey Runci: Like Dot Charles I was hit strongly by a sense of what a different world the two sisters came to. How wonderful, demanding, challenging it must have been. There were so many amazing moments, but one of them for me was when Fabian read the opening passage of *Maurice Guest* as we stood in the University and Conservatorium precinct, in front of what had been the old Gewandhaus. There were wonderful times when we sat talking animatedly in trains, trams, cafes, squares—we people from different countries, different backgrounds, different connections to HHR—all there because of her work

Angela (and Patrick Neustatter): I feel hugely grateful to the HHR society for organising the trip to Germany which did so much to bring Henry, my great aunt, and my grandmother, Lil to life. Patrick and I were delighted to hear the learned and fascinating observations of Professor Stefan Welz on Henry. Also about the way he is including material that was deemed inadmissible in the first translation of *Maurice Guest*, as he brings to life a new translation in German.

We met with Dr Irmgard Heidler to be shown the Hygiene Museum in Dresden founded by our grandfather Dr Otto Neustatter. As well there were the

rich days we spent in Munich where Irmgard showed us the homes where Lil and Otto lived. We went to Hellerau to see the building where Lil and A.S. Neill founded Summerhill School.

What a delight it was to have such a rewarding time and now I can't wait to get to Australia again for more of the sisters' early life.

Next issue: Munich, Marquartstein and Dresden with Dr Irmgard Heidler

If there is space we will cover Strasbourg. If not, that will be covered in the following issue..

Anne Fenn

Sincere apologies to Anne Fenn of Maldon whose name was inadvertently misspelt in the last issue. Once again, Anne—welcome to the Society!



2017 Membership of the HHR Society

The membership fee is \$15, due on 1st January each year. Renewals can be paid by a direct deposit into our bank account: BSB 803070 Account number 77605.

Please make sure your name appears on the deposit.

Or you can send a cheque made out to:

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia,
c/- The Treasurer, HHRSA,
86/80 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford,
Victoria 3067.

If you have any questions about membership call Helen Macrae on 0401 901 558.

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles
Vice-President: Janey Runci
Treasurer: Helen Macrae
Secretary: Heather McNeill

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Bronwyn Minifie, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au