



Announcing the winner of the inaugural HHR Flagship Fellowship at Varuna: Peggy Frew



Peggy Frew

Peggy has been awarded the fellowship to develop *Annas* – a collection of linked short stories concerning a family, set on an island off the coast of Victoria. For the HHR Award Peggy will have two weeks at Varuna Writers House in 2017, with travel costs covered.

Peggy's latest novel, *Hope Farm*, was short listed for both the Stella and Miles Franklin prizes this year. Her debut novel, *House of Sticks*, won the 2010 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript and was short listed for the NSW Premier's Literary Award. Her story, *Home Visit*, won *The Age* short story competition. She has been published in *New Australian Stories 2*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *the Big Issue* and *Meanjin*. Peggy is also a member of the critically acclaimed and award-winning Melbourne band Art of Fighting.

Some words from Peggy:

'I'm ashamed to say I have never read any HHR! I do recall seeing copies of *The Getting of Wisdom* and *The Young Cosima* on some bookshelves from my childhood - either belonging to my parents, or to my grandmother, who, while missing out on a good education herself, was very interested in literature and a great reader and student in her later life. I am very much looking forward to discovering HHR myself now, particularly her short stories.

The fellowship will be of great value to me, and I am extremely grateful to the HHRSA for it. To have uninterrupted time in a place set aside especially for writing, away from my everyday life, is an absolute godsend. I was fortunate enough to have had a couple of such opportunities while writing my first and

second books, and these were crucial to the development of those books. It's not just the writing time - it's also about having time to read, to think, to walk and daydream, to have the freedom of thought that allows ideas to come. I look forward to visiting Varuna in March next year, to hopefully have another of these experiences.'

Sydney Event – Honouring Australian Writers

On 20 August close to 200 people gathered at a booked out event at the State Library of NSW for the third in the annual series conducted by the NSW Writers' Centre– 'Honouring Australian Writers' - this time for HHR. Photos of HHR appeared on the screen and a recording of her music played as we made our way in.



Some of the crowd at the State Library, Sydney

In her introduction to the event **Julia Tsalis**, Program Manager at NSW Writers' Centre spoke of the series as providing a tribute to writers who played an important role in Australian culture, giving a chance to revisit or discover such writers.



Julia Tsalis

We listened then to a recording of HHR's own voice in the BBC reading she gave in 1944. The extract is from the opening (Proem) to the second volume of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, with its rousing description of a ship arriving in England and the returning travellers' lifting spirits at the sight.

'There it lay, stretched like an emerald belt against its drab background, and was as grateful to sun-tired eyes as a draught of mountain water to a climber's parched throat.'



Sophie Cunningham

Writer, former editor and publisher, **Sophie Cunningham** chaired a panel of three distinguished guests talking about HHR and her work, with a focus on *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. As Sophie put it 'to shine a light on this remarkable woman and her work.' Significantly Sophie is one of the group who founded the Stella Prize to address the poor representation of books by women in Australia's top literary prize, the Miles Franklin Prize.

Sophie spoke of the personal impact of reading both the trilogy and *The Getting of Wisdom* as a young girl. - 'I didn't know quite how extraordinary she was. This allowed me to think that any girl could be a writer should she put her mind to it.'



Bruce Berresford

Bruce Beresford, film director and patron of the HHR Society spoke of the presence of HHR's trilogy on his parents' bookshelf, though it was unread. He read it

himself at the age of 15 and loved it. He saw it as an epic tale of the gold rush and its outcome. Even at that age Bruce saw the story's potential as a film. Bruce has made a number of attempts to make the film and still hopes to.



Anna Clark

Historian **Anna Clark**, author of *The History Wars* and other works confessed that she had never read HHR's work before this event. She had in fact just completed the last volume of the trilogy in the foyer! The reason for this is that her father, Axel Clark, one of HHR's biographers and son of Manning Clark was obsessed with HHR. Many of her childhood holidays were spent in the car visiting places of significance in HHR's life. Anna vowed never to read HHR. The trilogy offers an alternative view of the time, a woman's view with no myth making or rationalising, compared with the magic of the bushman image in works by the likes of Lawson, or the White Australia mythmaking tale of triumph of Ernest Scott. Anna commented that the Scott narrative is as constructed a narrative as HHR's, but HHR is less blind.



Michael Ackland

HHR biographer, **Michael Ackland** spent part of his own youth in Germany, attending school and University there. Because of this he was especially interested in tracing German influences in HHR's work from her time there.

HHR spoke of the years she spent in Germany with her husband as the happiest years of their lives. She didn't see herself as writing in the English tradition. Her reference points were German as in the Nietzsche epitaphs to the chapters of *The Getting of Wisdom*. She spent her 20s living in a German speaking world where things were happening. England seemed boring after that.

HHR trip to Koroit: Saturday 29 October 2016

For the chance to immerse yourself in a significant source of inspiration for HHR – join us at Koroit on Saturday October 29. Visit the Post Office, the hotel, the cemetery where her father is buried. Hear readings of her work. Get a sense of this town as it was in the 1870s when she lived there. Share a meal together.

If you're interested in coming or hearing more details contact:

Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com or Janey Runci at j.runci@bigpond.com



Koroit Post Office as it was when HHR lived there

HHR trip to Germany, May 2017 – from Graeme Charles

As previously mentioned, some Society members, led in a manner of speaking by Graeme Charles, will be visiting Germany next May.

HHR resided in both Munich and Leipzig and these cities will form the major part of our visit. Other places of interest that we hope to take a look at include beautiful Marquartstein near Munich, where HHR commenced her writing of *The Getting of Wisdom*, and possibly Strasbourg where she also lived for a short time, or the Black Forest spa town Badenweiler. From Leipzig we will certainly include a day trip to Dresden, and no visit to Germany would be complete without spending some time in Berlin, which we will probably do after Leipzig.

The planning of our itinerary is being greatly assisted by two of our German members, Professor Stefan Welz (Leipzig) and Irmgard Heidler (Munich). The tour will commence in Munich on May 8 and

conclude at the end of May. It is envisaged that members wishing to join the tour will make their own travel and accommodation arrangements, but some assistance re accommodation, particularly in Munich and Leipzig, could possibly be arranged. Once we assemble in Munich we should all be able to travel together between locations.

We'd love to have a good number of members sharing the experience, so please contact Graeme on 0411422557 or email: graemejcharles@gmail.com for more information.



Ettie Richardson (HHR) in Leipzig, 1891



Ettie (HHR) and George Robertson in Munich, 1896



Concert hall of Leipzig Conservatorium where HHR studied music

New member

Carolyn Mooney

After receiving a recent HHR newsletter Carolyn said it stimulated her sufficiently to decide to become a member and hopefully participate in some future events. Her reading takes her in many directions now that she has the luxury of retirement time. She has a particular interest in women writers, especially earlier ones, and the HHR Society provides the opportunity to expand her knowledge and revisit HHR after a long absence.

Don't forget 3rd January 2017!

Once again we will celebrate HHR's birthday with a picnic tea in company with the people of Chiltern at Lake View on 3 January 2017. More details to come.



The picnic at Lake View 2016

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 **86/80 Trenery Crescent, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067**.

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

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Gloria Banks, Bronwyn Minifie,
Heather McNeill, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au