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President Graeme Charles speaking at the picnic tea, 2020

This year it's been the pandemic and the uncertainty of travel, but now it seems we can go ahead on January 3, 2021, at least partially. National Trust houses are still closed as they are prepared for the new Covid normal, but has given permission for us to gather as usual in the gardens for a picnic tea and celebrate the beginning of what we all sincerely hope is going to be a better year. We look forward to seeing many familiar faces and some new ones. All welcome.

1. HHR 's birthday tea at Lake View—Sunday, January 3, 2021

This time last year it was the bushfires on our minds as many sadly decided they could not make it to Chiltern for the 150th anniversary of HHR's birthday and the 50th anniversary of the opening of her childhood home, Lake View.



A smoky sky and an almost empty lake at Lake View, January 3, 2020

Picnic teas can be ordered from Robyn at: teabythree@gmail.com before December 28- details at the end of this newsletter. You can pay for them on January 3 at Lake View.

2. 20/21 HHR Oration—Saturday June 9, 2021 at PLC, Burwood

Our 2020 Oration was also a casualty of the pandemic, but only postponed. PLC have already contacted us to confirm the date in June, 2021. Clive Probyn will speak on: *HHR goes to the movies and comes home with the Pianist*. As the fascinating title suggests the oration will cover both HHR's pleasure and taste in movies and her relationship with Olga Roncoroni, who she met as the pianist for the cinema and restaurant run by her family at Lyme Regis.



The Roncoroni establishment at Lyme Regis

Keep the date free as this promises to be a memorable day at PLC. More details later.

3. Maurice Guest in German—it's arrived!

By Stefan Welz (co-translator with Fabien Dellemann of *Maurice Guest*)

‘Nu grade!’ said Peter Hinke, owner of the bookshop and publishing house - Connewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung in Leipzig - when he was taken by surprise by the rigid measures against the Covid-19 pandemic in March. Only two months before, he was able to assure the financing of the most costly publication in the history of his little enterprise. All of a sudden, the project of re-publishing the newly translated novel *Maurice Guest* by Henry Handel Richardson, a project Hinke has followed up for years, and which had been almost completed, was at stake in face of a severe lockdown and general uncertainty. The publication was meant to be a present the passionate bookseller and publisher wanted to make his customers and himself on occasion of the 30 years jubilee of his bookshop in the heart of the city of Leipzig. But to cut a long story short, he finally surmounted this unexpected obstacle too and brought his project to a fine ending.



Peter Hinke and Graeme Charles, Leipzig 2019

Peter Hinke has entertained the idea of re-editing the voluminous novel début of the Australian author since he founded his Verlagsbuchhandlung at the beginning of the 1990s. He set up his first bookstore in Connewitz, a part of the city with a lively cultural scene and alternative lifestyles. Soon the improvised rooms became a legendary meeting point for mainly East-German readers hungry for literature during the first years after the Berlin Wall had come down. Hinke's engagement as a citizen goes beyond publishing, providing and selling sophisticated literary products. He is always looking for new, interesting publications and promotes young authors in giving them an opportunity to publish their first lines and verses. Repeatedly, he made and makes his voice heard in the debates on communal and political issues – a voice of reason and democratic principles. Renowned German authors, such as Christa Wolf, Martin Walser and Hans Mayer, installed themselves on the worn but comfy sofa of the bookstore to read from their works during the Leipzig Book Fair. Over the years, a community of dedicated readers and book-lovers has formed a loyal circle around this book hub, and annual literary or sports events bring them even closer together.

Although *Maurice Guest* could be claimed as one of the most important and most extensive novels with a Leipzig setting, it had to eke out a rather unknown existence in Leipzig, Saxony and Germany. After a first warm reception, it was largely forgotten due to the Great War and a chaotic aftermath. Its perusal became a true insider tip among a few. Nowadays, the first German edition, which is based on the Heinemann edition from 1908, and which was published at Fischer Verlag Berlin in 1912, is hardly available.

3. *Maurice Guest* in German—continued

However, the publisher opted for a new translation instead of a mere re-edition of the old translation with its numerous shortenings and an air of Nietzschean language. Such an ambitious project required help from several sides in the course of some years: a crew of translators, academics, actors, archivists, book designers and other interested people invested to bring it, step by step, to life. It was more than just riding a hobbyhorse, and most of the time without any financial remuneration. More than once, there were severe doubts whether the endeavour would come to a good end at all.

There were not only those of the ‘inner circle’ who came together over the work on *Maurice Guest*. A broader audience could enjoy some of Henry Handel Richardson’s musical compositions and extracts from the new translation of her Leipzig novel at two musical-literary evenings.



Actress Noemi Krausz reads from ‘Maurice Guest’, Graham Welsh on piano, Leipzig 2019

The deeper study of Richardson’s work and biography allowed connections between like-minded and interested readers from all over Germany and beyond. The fruitful exchange with Australian and English friends of the Henry Handel Richardson Society was always encouraging and provided an appreciated impulse. Eventually, a bond was re-established, which had hitherto been torn apart by wars and ideological separation of the 20th century. All this bestows something idealistic on the project and makes it collective in the best sense of the word. What better thing could happen to a work of literature?

Last week, the printer delivered the two volumes. The team at the bookstore is now busy sending out all of the almost eighty subscriptions before Christmas.



‘Maurice Guest’ – finally ready to leave the publishing house

Promotion has started, first reviews have come out, and even the Australian embassy in Berlin showed interest in the event. Alas, the photo-shooting and a glass of champagne for the proof-reader Sabine Franke, the book designer André Göhlich, the two translators Fabian Dellemann and Stefan Welz, and Peter Hinke must be postponed. From Monday onwards, another rigid Covid 19 lockdown is imposed on Saxony.

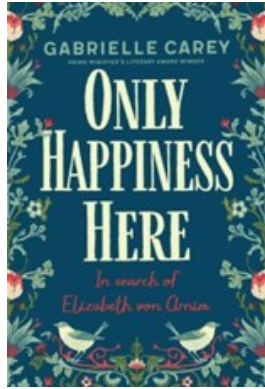
‘Now we’re doing it!’ – This is the title of a poem by Lene Voigt (1891-1962), a popular Leipzig poet of the 1920s and 30s who wrote her mostly humorous texts in Saxon dialect. The meaning of this title is an encouragement to overcome difficulties in one’s life in spite of everything. Her work is published in the Connewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung.



Stefan Welz and Fabien Dellemann, Leipzig, 2019

4. Reading HHR—‘misery from cover to cover’ - one writer’s view

How do you find the experience of reading HHR’s work? Is it a matter of ‘misery from cover to cover’? This is the case for writer Gabrielle Carey as stated in her recent book – *Only Happiness Here: In search of Elizabeth von Arnim*.



Brenda Niall challenges Carey's view in a review that appeared on October 30/31 in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*: 'Appropriately, Carey begins her list of books that dampen the spirits with *Les Miserables*. The others on her blacklist are the works of Thomas Hardy, Zola, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Henry Handel Richardson. As a young woman, Carey loved them all but she now believes that they represent the great majority that failed to teach their readers about happiness. It's true that you don't go to Hardy for joie de vivre, or even a positive view of human life. There can be few more sombre moments than when the black flag is raised for the execution of the heroine of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. "The President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess," is Hardy's final word on a bleak universe.

Of the other naysayers, I think that Zola qualifies. Yes and no for Dostoevsky and Richardson. But surely Tolstoy is in the wrong box. Some of the great moments in *War and Peace* are distillations of pure happiness. Natasha's dance is one of those moments. So is the ending of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. And among other writers whose works give as much light as shade, what about George Eliot's *Middlemarch*?

To read the full review:

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/a-pursuit-of-happiness-more-about-author-than-muse-20201022-p567iu.html>

So what do you think? Send your own thoughts on your experience of reading HHR to j.runci@bigpond.com to include in our next newsletter.

5. A writer's letter to HHR's Laura

Leanne Hall, award-winning Australian author for young adults and children recently wrote a letter to Laura Tweedle Rambotham, protagonist of HHR's novel *The Getting of Wisdom*, as part of a series produced in collaboration with UNESCO City of Literature Office, where Australian authors explore and dissect a book that has had an impact on their life.



Leanne Hall

As a student at PLC Leanne was required to read *The Getting of Wisdom* in Year Seven. She writes about it in a unique and thought-provoking way as a 'problematic' favourite. Here, with her kind permission are a couple of quotes to tantalise:

-Richardson takes girls seriously at what is sometimes seen as their silliest age. She tails you for the entirety of your secondary school years, diving deep into your psyche, treating you as worthy of the sustained consideration a novel entails.

-Far from being paragons of your genteel education, you and your classmates are dishonest, selfish, social climbing and shallow—in short, quite wonderful.

You can find the full text at: <https://lithub.com/leanne-hall-examines-her-problematic-childhood-fave/>

More about Leanne Hall from her publisher: Her debut novel, *This Is Shyness*, was the winner of the Text Prize for Children's and Young Adult Writing and was followed by a sequel *Queen of the Night*.

Her novel for younger readers, *Iris and the Tiger*, won The Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Leanne started her career in the world of short stories and has had stories published in *Meanjin*, *Age*, *Best Australian Stories* and the anthology *Growing Up Asian In Australia*. She hopes to publish a short story collection (one day!) She was an Asialink Artist in Residence at Peking University in 2013 and participated in Australian Writers Week in China in 2014.

6. HHR and a house called Thule

Alex Cliff, HHR Society member from Hastings, England recently drew to our attention an advertisement for a house called Thule in Brighton, Victoria.



This house belonged to Alex's great grandfather, Robert Coutts and it is believed that HHR visited it as a child and again in 1912 when she returned to Australia to do research for what became the trilogy - *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*.

Alex has kindly provided us with some pages from her mother, Marjorie Coutt's extensive notes on the family's links with HHR. The following is an excerpt:

My father had a phone call from the Brighton Historical Association in Victoria asking him about his old family home 'Thule' in Brighton. They wanted a National Trust protection order put on it in case it was pulled down or the extensive garden built on – they thought that HHR (by now a famous writer) had a connection with it or maybe lived there, as it was certainly the house she wrote about in great detail where Richard Mahony and his wife had lived in 'The Fortunes of Richard Mahony'.

This led to more interest and investigation. My father, Donald Coutts, remembered that HHR had visited his mother there in 1914 [editor's note – this must have been 1912] when she was writing the book, and spent a whole day there measuring up rooms etc and making notes. However later it was found that HHR had never lived there, but used to spend holidays with a school friend who lived there. (Excerpt from Marjorie Coutt's notes)



The house has since sold but you can find it on Google by entering *6 Thule Court, Brighton*, and take your own walk through the rooms in the photos provided..

7. A.S. Neill, Lil Neustatter and Summerhill

by Faye O'Carroll



Faye O'Carroll

To those readers of this newsletter, who were involved in education in the 70s, the pairing of A.S. Neill with Summerhill will be familiar.

But who, before reading the last HHR newsletter, or before reading Brenda Niall's biography "Friends and Rivals" had heard of Lil Neustatter, Henry Handel Richardson's sister, and of the central role she played in establishing Summerhill? Very few, I believe.



A.S. Neill

The 1960s and 1970s were years of intellectual ferment. They were years when long-accepted traditional values and traditional ways of doing things were constantly debated. Education was in the thick of these debates. In a book group with other young mothers I had my first encounter with Neill and *Summerhill*. A growing number had begun to worry that many young people emerged from our education system ill-prepared for adult life - whether judged by emotional or intellectual standards. Too many people were living on drugs, in anxiety, in discord, alienated, negative and living unhappy lives. Even in the 'better' schools with more facilities or more dedicated teachers, often the deep-seated problems of schooling were not being addressed. Children spend 13 of their formative years in school. What was the chance of breaking the long-established, traditional pattern of schooling? Would anyone dare to leave the safety-net of the tried, even if not true? *Summerhill* became the seminal text on alternative education. It inspired people to look hard at our education system; it passionately put forward an alternative way.

My husband Philip O'Carroll and I were among those who believed that a more enlightened education model was possible - and indeed essential for a healthy society. At this point we had three children coming up to school age. *Summerhill* gave us courage. If Neill could do it, why couldn't we? So we did.

Fitzroy Community School was born in 1976. Such was the credit we gave to Neill for his inspiration, that when we wrote our own book a year or so back, we copied him, and simply called our book the name of the school - *Fitzroy Community School*. Although we believe we have important things to say, sadly we have not had the same success as Neill with *Summerhill*. (Anyone who is interested can buy a copy online from either the Fitzroy Community School website, or the Fitzroy Readers website.)



Faye and Philip's book

Philip and I are in no doubt that starting a school on one's own, without the emotional and intellectual companionship of another, would be almost impossible. We now discover that this is what Neill had. He had Lil Neustatter, HHR's sister, an Australian, educated at PLC in Melbourne, as was Henry. Not only did he have Lil's emotional and intellectual support right from the beginning - and for twenty years - but she provided the necessary financial support to buy the property. If all this is so, it seems a terrible omission that Lil is barely mentioned. Why would Neill blot her out? What was his issue? Do his descendants who are running Summerhill, know this history?

My son Tim, who is the current principal of Fitzroy Community School, has contact with Summerhill and has visited. He plans to go to the festivities next year celebrating Summerhill's 100th birthday. And, of course, they know that he is Australian. He has never heard of Lil's involvement. It would be wonderful if the record could be put straight by next year. Perhaps PLC can do something. Perhaps the HHR Society can do something. Perhaps Angela Neustatter (Lil's granddaughter and HHR Society member) can do something.

Many of us have had a shock about Neill, but I would like to remind that words of truth are words of truth whoever says them. Neill equates happiness and goodness. I agree. This is Aristotelian. Further Neill says: a parent's anxiety is a poor prognosis for the emotional health of a child. I agree. Neill believes that it is important for children to feel that they are contributors to the school they attend, not just receivers. I agree. Although there are some of Summerhill's ways that I do not agree with, it is important to recognize that Neill's book is scattered with gems. In our rude awakening about Neill's personal choices, we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater. "Summerhill" was, and is, inspirational.

8. Summerhill Revisited (full article on website)

By Angela Neustatter



Angela Neustatter at Westfield, HHR's home in Lyme Regis

If it hadn't been for Wendy Morley I might never have gone to Summerhill, even though it might seem an obvious choice. After all it was my grandmother Lil, sister of Henry Handel Richardson, who had met the progressive pedagogue A.S. Neill, and been captivated by his ideas for starting a school where children could have enormous freedom. The ideas so captured Lil's imagination and passion to work towards human rights and freedoms, that she left her husband, Otto Neustatter, to share Neill's vision, and to help him make Summerhill a reality. Neill joined her in Germany where - very generously on Otto's part - the two men became friends.

Neill and Lil were able to find a property in Hellerau, Germany in 1921 and began advertising for people who wanted for their children an alternative from the very authoritarian, traditional education methods being used at the time.

When the school had to leave Germany, and after that Austria, it was Henry who found them a place called 'Summerhill' in Lyme Regis in Dorset.



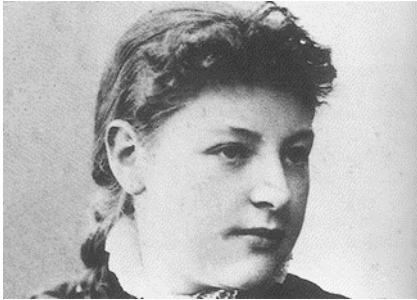
Summerhill in Lyme Regis

Later the school shifted to larger premises in Suffolk, retaining the name, Summerhill, until they had to evacuate temporarily to Wales during WWII, where Lil died in 1943.

As Neill remained running Summerhill, and my father saw it as an extension of his family home, our family made regular visits there. It was on one such visit, when I was eleven, that I decided I wanted to go to the school. We had parked in front of the red-brick Victorian house with its shawl of ivy festooned over the façade and were making our way up the path towards Neill's small private house, away from the main school building, when a very pretty girl, clearly a couple of years older than me, asked where I was going, and suggested I should let her show me the school.

Wendy marched me through the huge oak-panelled main room, pointing out the platform built near the ceiling, where the musical kids and formalised jazz bands would spend Saturday nights jamming. We climbed stairs winding up to the bedrooms, popped into the art room where people came and went as they pleased, working at whichever easel was free. Wendy showed me the hockey field - not that anyone played hockey - where pupils were allowed to camp in summer, and the best sport was chasing the bed-times officer, the person in charge of making sure the campers were in their tents by bedtime, until they collapsed exhausted and let us run wild.

All the while Wendy informed me what a wonderful place it was to be at school. And to think this place was the legacy of my grandmother. How proud of Lil I felt.



Lil as a young woman

It did not take long at Summerhill to learn that you could have more or less as much time as you wanted doing what you wanted. Neill's idea, supported with the huge energy Lil put into making the school work in the early days, was that given as much free time as they wished, children might well choose formal learning as something they wanted. And when, and if that time came, there would be someone qualified and ready to teach them. The theory was fine but not always the actuality. Neill's choice of teacher was constrained by the fact that Summerhill kept the fees very low because he was determined that people of all classes and economic situations should be able to send their children to him.

I have often wondered how significant Lil's role in Summerhill was. After all she was 'just the wife'. As research for a book I am working on about Lil and Henry, I interviewed several old Summerhillians who had been there in her time. I was told repeatedly that 'Mrs Lins', as she was known (Lindesay was our middle family name), was charming, cultivated, a mover and shaker, and the powerhouse needed for Summerhill to survive and succeed. It was important to hear that, because in my time at the school nobody seemed to know who she had been, nor care much. Summerhill was Neill's school, he was the one who had the original ideas, wrote the books and made his gruff, grumpy, endearingly kind self available to us all as he potted around the school, always dressed in a corduroy jacket and pants and the square-toed shoes he had made for his overlarge feet.



Lil and Neill at Summerhill in Suffolk

But those who knew Lil vouched *alto voce* for her powers as a mover and shaker - the perfect pairing for Neill's ideology and philosophical thinking.

I remember being hugely protective of Summerhill, when one of the many academics who came to have a look made a judgement that this was a place where children might have a Utopian experience, but none would be able to fit into the world outside. However, many Summerhillians have done pretty damned well by conventional academic and career standards. That said, I share with a number of ex-Summerhillians, regret at not having had a more challenging and demanding level of formal education. I was wanting to learn and that is a precious state to be in, but instead I marked time too often sitting in badly taught lessons, or lessons that were clearly hastily cobbled together by whoever Neill had taken on for the subject. I remain convinced that this kind of progressive education needs top quality teaching as much as any other, and Lil, an intellectual with a profound interest in academics, would, I am sure, have agreed. The school is still going strong with Neill's daughter, Zoe Redhead, now running the educational experiment she inherited from Neill, and my grandmother, Lil Neustatter.

9. HHR and Marie Hansen: Musical Lives in Fact and Fiction



Rachel Solomon

Rachel Solomon's article on HHR and Marie Hansen has recently been published online in *Musicology Australia*. The following extract from her introduction gives a taste of the fascinating material in this engrossing account: *-Richardson's accounts of her talents and achievements in music performance during her school days in Melbourne, and then at the Leipzig Conservatorium of Music, have been at best vague and at worst misleading. This article seeks to address the issues relating to Richardson's musical training, competence, and reasons for abandoning a career of performance, through a comparative analysis with her friend and rival, Marie Hansen. An assessment of their shared and separate musical development in Melbourne and Leipzig calls for a re-evaluation of Richardson's versions of events and, connectedly, the biographical interpretations that have followed.*

You can access the article through the State Library of Victoria (or other subscribing institution's) website. You need to be a member of the Library. Luckily it's free and easy to join. Go to the library's website - www.slv.vic.gov.au – fill out the form and get access to a multitude of resources.

If you are unable to access the article in this way contact Rachel Solomon at - solomonr@bigpond.net.au and she may be able to help.

10. New member—Laurie Steed



Laurie is an award-winning fiction writer living in Western Australia. He has not read Henry Handel Richardson but is looking forward to doing so now that he has won the Henry Handel Richardson Fellowship for 2021. You can read more about him in the October 2020 edition of this newsletter.

Picnic tea orders for the HHR Birthday Event January 3, 2021, at Lake View

SAVOURY

- Bacon, lettuce, tomato and aioli sliders x2
- Cucumber and herbed cream cheese finger sandwiches x4
- Ham, vintage cheese and tomato relish finger sandwiches x4
- Tomato, ricotta and chive tarts x4
- Pumpkin, feta and thyme tarts x4
- Cheese, kabana and crackers to share.

SWEET

- Vanilla cupcakes x2
- Fruit salad in share jar
- Apple crumble in share jar

People who would like a couple's picnic box, can choose 4 of the savoury items, and 2 of the sweet items. People who would like a singles picnic box, can also choose 4 savouries, and 2 sweets, but the quantity of each product will be less.

Box will include 2 bottles of water, or 1.

Price is \$30.00 per box for couple. \$15.00 for single

Boxes will include disposable cutlery and napkins.

Email questions and orders to:

teabythree@gmail.com

Final orders will need to be in by

December 28, 2020

Membership

If you would like to join the HHR Society or you seek to renew your membership, please pay us via direct deposit to our bank account.

BSB: 803070 Account No: 77605

Be sure to identify yourself by name when you make the payment.

If you'd like to become a member for the first time you need to fill out a membership application.

You can find a membership application form on the website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsciety.org.au

Or you can email the membership secretary: helen.macrae@bigpond.com

She'll send a form to your email address. Any questions about membership call Helen on 0401 901 558

Due on 1 January, 2021