

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter January 2019



Coming events

Exciting news is that Professor Stefan Welz and his family will arrive in Melbourne from Leipzig in Germany at the end of February.



Stefan and Christine Welz with HHR President Graeme Charles in Leipzig, 2017

Stefan is Professor of Australian Literature at the University of Leipzig and he will be working on the introduction to his translation into German of HHR's first novel, 'Maurice Guest'. Those of us who met him in Leipzig in 2017 look forward to meeting him again and returning some of the generous hospitality he showed to us. Those who have not met him will have the chance to do so at two events planned in March.

March 16: Annual HHR Oration at PLC at 2 pm - an afternoon of riches

Professor Welz will deliver our annual oration on the topic: 'On Proud Irish, Clumsy Saxons, and Provincial English: The Cultural Wisdom of Henry Handel Richardson'.

As well we will be treated to a performance of HHR songs by the Little Choir from Trentham who gave such a wonderful performance at Words in Winter last year.

Imbi Neeme, winner of the second HHR/Varuna Fellowship for Short Story Writing will attend and speak briefly of the work she will do on the fellowship.

The PLC Museum will be open for perusal from 1 pm and afternoon tea will be served after the oration.

Bookings required for catering purposes. Contact Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com

March 21: HHR lunch and talk at Circa, Queenscliff at 12 noon

Over a delicious two-course lunch at Circa (formerly Queenscliff Inn), 59 Hesse Street, Queenscliff Professor Welz will speak on: 'The German translation of Henry Handel Richardson's novel, 'Maurice Guest'.

Cost \$30. Bookings essential. Contact Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com



The house in Mercer Street where HHR lived from 1877-8

Other Coming Events

August 18 - Trentham event

After the success of the Words in Winter HHR event in 2018 another event will be held on Sunday afternoon, August 18. More details to come.

September 24 - October 13: HHR trip to England, Wales and Germany

Travellers will gather in London on September 24 and explore areas where HHR lived. From there we will travel to Hastings (HHR's last home and the place where her ashes were scattered), Lyme Regis (where HHR and her husband rented and eventually purchased the house, 'Westfield'), Wales (to find Lil's burial place) and the school, Summerhill founded by Lil and A.S. Neill.

From October 6-13 we will be in Leipzig to enjoy this city where HHR studied music and to attend the launch of the translation of 'Maurice Guest' into German.

All welcome to join us. If you're interested in coming contact Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com

2020: HHR's 150th birthday and 50th celebration in Chiltern

Plans are underway to make this a significant occasion. Any ideas welcome.

Graeme Charles will approach the Shire to see whether HHR and her time in Chiltern can be acknowledged permanently on Chiltern entrance signposting.

The joys and sorrows of reading *Maurice Guest*

What better time to read or re-read HHR's first novel, *Maurice Guest*, with the prospect of Professor Welz's visit bringing us his particular perspective on this great work.

Most of us have read *The Getting of Wisdom* and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, but *Maurice Guest* remains a stumbling block for many. Readers typically comment that they find it difficult to get into the book. Gloria Banks of Chiltern said that on her first attempt she found it too detailed and slow. It was the 2017 HHR trip to Germany that changed that for her: 'Being in Leipzig, everything just clicked,' she said. She read it all and loved it.



Gloria Banks (left) and Carolyn Mooney at the Conservatorium Archive, Leipzig

Not everyone can travel to Leipzig to read this novel. Roslyn Ives studied this book with her book group. 'My heart sank when I went to pick up *Maurice Guest* from the library. It was huge and weighs a lot – no good for reading in bed. It's a 1998 edition with several intros and other explanations, so I decided to just read the text itself as I'm currently pressed for time. Well, her writing is a knockout. She has managed to present, for the reader, a detailed interior of Maurice's thinking/recollections along with the joyous and life-affirming observations of his surroundings. I'm impressed. Could she have been influenced by Proust?'

Melbourne writer, Maureen McCarthy (author of *The Convent*, *Queen Kat*, *Carmel* and *St Jude Get a Life*, *Ganglands* and many more) said, 'It took me a little

while to get into it but before I knew it I was totally hooked. I ended up really loving it. What an extraordinary story.'

For those who haven't read it, the message behind all this seems to be to keep going past those early chapters.

For many of us our first reading of *The Getting of Wisdom* and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (or at least the first volume of the trilogy, *Australia Felix*) was as a school text. Perhaps these two are more readily enjoyed because of their familiar Australian setting, however publisher Carmen Callil, in her essay 'The Enigmas of Love' (introduction to the Text Classics edition of *Maurice Guest*), makes an interesting point about this:

'Its inspiration came from a childhood spent in uncharted places unknown to the denizens of Berlin or Vienna, Norway or Russia.'

Callil says of the one Australian character, Louise Dufrayer: 'she is a new woman, living in a new world.'

Callil speaks of the novel as 'a study of erotic obsession and the nature of genius which continues to have a strange effect on all those fortunate enough to read it.'

Callil was first given the book by the British writer, Antonia White, who thought it one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century.

Those readers who have made it to the end will appreciate Callil's final comment in her essay: 'It remains a great novel, one that, once it grasps your imagination is impossible to put down for more than a moment, leading every reader into a dreamtime remembrance of the terrible pain the human heart is heir to.'

('The Enigmas of Love' was originally published in *The Guardian* and is available to read online.)

Birthday celebrations at Lake View, 2019

Temperatures have been soaring in north-eastern Victoria in the last couple of months but this did not deter the fifty or so people from Chiltern and surrounds and members of the HHR Society who gathered under the shady trees at Lake View for the annual HHR birthday celebration.

Once again Anne Vyner had done a sterling job in maintaining and preparing the garden despite the heat. As we arrived at the house we caught a brief glimpse of Anne giving the garden a final watering and skilfully evading our cameras. Although she ensures that she herself is invisible, her work is visible everywhere and we are all especially appreciative of it on January 3.



Thanks also, as always, to Beryl Pickering, who does a wonderful job as manager of Lake View, and thanks to her helpers.



Beryl Pickering

The book stall is becoming a regular feature at our Society gatherings, managed skilfully by member, Di Parsons. Text Classics editions of *Maurice Guest, The Getting of Wisdom* and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* were on sale, as well as *HHR in Maldon* and *The life of Walter Richardson*.



Di Parsons and Helen Macrae at the book stall

(Di also runs a second hand book shop at Trentham – contact her on the bookcamel@gmail.com for opening hours. She has a special interest in HHR books.)

Pleasant background music was provided by Mark Stephens from Beechworth as picnic baskets were unpacked and we settled at the tables, covered with cloths provided by Gloria Banks. Thanks to Gloria for all her help.



Mark Stephens

A few of us were lucky enough to attend Barb Finlayson's talk on HHR and Spiritualism in Bendigo last year and Barb kindly agreed to give a shorter version at the picnic tea.

The longer version of the talk is available on our website www.henryhandelrichardson.org.au under 'Orations and Other Papers'.



Barb Finlayson



Attentive listeners



Barb Finalyson cuts the cake made this year by Heather Payne

An interesting contribution to the evening came from Michelle Price who had just sent a Twitter message about HHR to the publisher, Carmen Callil. Michelle has offered to create a Twitter account for the HHR Society. Many thanks, Michelle.

Varuna Writers House and the HHR Writing Fellowship

Varuna Writers House made a recent Facebook posting about Imbi Neeme, the winner of the second HHR Fellowship for Short Story Writing. Veechi Stuart, executive director of Varuna reported: 'We had a lovely response to the Facebook posting about Imbi and the HHR fellowship, with a whole heap of comments and shares, and over 700 people 'engaging' with the post. It was really great to see.'



Imbi Neeme

Welcome to new member:

Jane Roots from Chiltern



2019 membership of the HHR Society: a message from the treasurer, Helen Macrae

The membership fee is \$15, due on 1st January. However, at the next AGM, due around March this year, the committee will ask for an increase to \$20. In anticipation of this increase you might decide to pay \$20 for your 2019 membership.

You can pay 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 the Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, c/- The Treasurer, HHRSA,

86/80 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067.

New members

If you're not a member and would like to join, you will need to fill out a membership form.

The form can be downloaded from our website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au , or you can email

helen.macrae@bigpond.com and ask for it to be sent to you.

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

HHRSA Committee

President:	Graeme Charles
Vice-President & Editor:	Janey Runci
Treasurer:	Helen Macrae
Secretary:	Heather McNeill
Committee Members:	Gloria Banks, Dot Charles Di Parsons, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au