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1. HHR Flagship Fellowship 2021 awarded to Laurie Steed from Western Australia

The HHR Society was happy to receive the following communication from Varuna, the national writers' house and former home of writer, Eleanor Dark:

*We have just completed our fellowship judging process, and are happy to announce that the Henry Handel Richardson Flagship Fellowship has been awarded to **Laurie Steed** for his short story collection, 'Nova – Stories'. Laurie describes Nova as follows: 'In 19 narratives, Nova moves gently amongst the lost, lonely and afraid as they slowly, and sometimes awkwardly, find faith and resilience'. Our assessors were very impressed by Laurie's work, and the potential of this short story collection.*

This is the third HHR Fellowship to be awarded. The first went to Peggy Frew, who has since published her third novel, *Islands*, and the second went to Imbi Neeme, who has since published her first novel, *The Spill*. Recipients of the award receive two weeks residency at Varuna and a contribution to travel expenses.



Laurie Steed

Laurie Steed is a novelist and short story writer. His stories have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and published in *Best Australian Stories*, *Award Winning Australian Writing*, *The Age*, *Meanjin*, *Westerly*, *Island* and elsewhere. He won the 2012 Patricia Hackett Prize for Fiction and was shortlisted for the 2012 Bridport Prize. He is a recipient of fellowships from The University of Iowa, The Baltic Writing Residency, The Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, and The Katharine Susannah Prichard Foundation, and he completed his PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Western Australia in 2015. He is the editor of *Shibboleth and other stories*, published in 2016, and his debut novel, *You Belong Here*, was published in 2018 and was shortlisted for the 2018 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards. He lives in Perth, Western Australia, with his wife and two young sons.



Varuna – The Writers House in Katoomba, NSW

Laurie's thoughts on winning the award

Writing a book can feel like an endless road. You sometimes feel you're mad, and irreparably flawed. You wonder why you so desperately need to share this world, and these words, in such a precise, defined format.

For much of the past three years, I've not been sure where my second book, *Nova - Stories*, was taking me. This week, there was something on the horizon; a reminder to keep going, a voice in the distance, telling me I'd not yet reached my destination.

The voice was Varuna - The National Writers House and The Henry Handel Richardson Society awarding me the 2021 Henry Handel Richardson Flagship Fellowship. I'm grateful for both for giving me the time to write, and for the vote of confidence in my vision. I'm also particularly heartened that the HHR Fellowship exists as a way to assist those writers working in the short form; there is typically not a lot of formal support specifically tailored for short story writers. With that in mind, I'm delighted to have found a safe, welcoming space in which to develop my craft.

I hope in time I get to share *Nova - Stories* with you all. There are no simple answers held within the collection, but instead, a journey shared from hope to home, and back again.

2. Two Significant People in HHR's life – Marie Hansen and George Ivan Smith – new articles by Dr Rachel Solomon



Dr Rachel Solomon delivers the 2018 HHR Oration

Marie Hansen

Many of you will remember the 2018 HHR Society Oration: *Marie Hansen: Musician and Friend of HHR*, given by Dr Rachel Solomon. Fittingly, Rachel delivered this oration at PLC (Presbyterian Ladies College), HHR's old school and the place where HHR and Marie's long friendship began.

Drawing on HHR's letters, fiction and memoir, and accounts from others, as well as extensive research on Marie Hansen, Rachel probed and revealed much of the nature and story of the long friendship that lasted until Marie's death in 1943, and the effect that this friendship had on HHR's fiction, especially *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom*. Rachel explored the ways Marie may have informed the creation of the characters of Madeleine in *Maurice Guest* and Mary Pidwall in *The Getting of Wisdom*.

In the time since the 2018 Oration Rachel has done further research and the resulting article – *Henry Handel Richardson and Marie Hansen: Musical Lives in Fact and Fiction* - will soon be published in *Musicology Australia*.

An added bonus of Rachel's work on HHR for those of us who went on the HHR tour to Britain last year, was meeting Marie Hansen's great niece, Alex Cliff, in Hastings, England. It was Alex who was able to identify Marie Hansen in the following photo of a group at PLC.



Marie Hansen standing 3rd left, HHR seated front left

Alex was also our tireless and gracious hostess in Hastings, even arranging a visit to Green Ridges, HHR's last home and the house where she died.



Dot and Graeme Charles, Alex Cliff, Maureen McCarthy and Helen Macrae enjoying afternoon tea at Green Ridges



Susan Miller and June Marriott, owners of the house that was Green Ridges, and our generous hostesses for the afternoon tea

George Ivan Smith

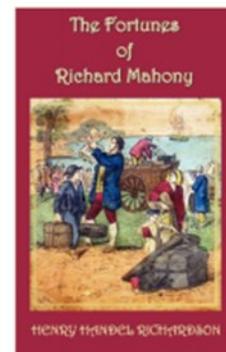


George Ivan Smith

George Charles Ivan Smith (1915-1995) was, over his lifetime, a successful writer, broadcaster, war correspondent, movie producer, United Nations official, and academic. He was also a sensitive and determined man with a deep and abiding empathy with Richard Mahony and his creator, HHR.

Rachel Solomon's fascinating article - *George Ivan Smith and Henry Handel Richardson : The Making of a Reader* - published recently in *Script & Print*, follows this remarkable man's unwavering enthusiasm in promoting HHR and her work in the final years of her life, and his determination to preserve many of her manuscripts, and other special collection items immediately following her death.

Script & Print
Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society
of Australia & New Zealand



VOLUME 43 • NUMBER 2 • 2019

Rachel's article is now available to be read on our website – www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au – under 'Orations and Papers'.

3. A Film Maker (Jane Oehr) and HHR

By Graeme Charles, HHR Society Vice President

Recently the Society was contacted by Jane Oehr, asking us whether we would be interested in acquiring a sign that once adorned Henry Handel Richardson's Lyme Regis home, Westfield.

In the late 1980's, Jane was commissioned by Film Australia to write the screenplay for a proposed film about HHR.

She visited Westfield which was at that time unoccupied and looking rather lonely; she found the sign - "Westfield" - lying in long grass outside the house, and it has been in her possession ever since. The film by the way, was never made, along with several others about HHR and/or her work, that suffered a similar fate over the years, according to Clive Probyn.

Prior to her being asked to write the screenplay, Jane had travelled from Melbourne to London in order to study as an actress before joining BBC TV as a trainee director. She made documentaries about the cinema and eventually returned to Australia to work as an independent director. She was also a project manager with the Australian Film Commission. One of her films, *Tea with Madame Clos*, was screened at the 2009 Melbourne International Film Festival. This film was described as being about an extraordinary woman in her extreme old age living in a small medieval village in South West France.

Back however to the sign. We have told Jane that we would be delighted receive the sign from her, and once in our possession, decide on the most appropriate place for it to reside. Lake View would seem to be an ideal location for it, but there may be other suggestions we should consider.

Jane also has an unfinished novel based on the relationship between HHR and Olga Roncoroni, but sadly it seems destined to remain unfinished. She hopes that we may be able to obtain a copy of her screenplay.



Graeme Charles and Angela Neustatter (great niece of HHR) at Westfield, 2019

Jane Oehr's account of her HHR Research Trip to Lyme Regis



Jane Oehr

On the train journey to Lyme Regis I went through my notes on Henry and her life in Lyme with her husband Professor John Robertson (J.G) and with Olga Roncoroni. Olga was a pianist at the local cinema who later joined their household and remained with them as Henry's companion until Henry's death.

I was commissioned by Film Australia to write a screenplay about the writer. I had read several of her novels including the great trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* which loosely explored the character of her father and his later decline. I was to discover so much of the content of her writing was inspired by her own life and experiences. I really found that was rich material for a film.

The more I read, the more curious I became about her relationship with Olga Roncoroni and that developed into the basis of my screenplay. Their first meeting occurred in the former Pump Rooms at Lyme - at that time, a cinema where Olga played the accompaniment to the movies. Henry loved cinema, particularly Westerns. What Henry did not know, was that Olga suffered from an intense form of agoraphobia.

What I wrote was developed from research and critical evaluations and Olga's own words.

I created a screenplay drawn from their lives in Lyme and London. Henry wrote a novel called *Nick and Sanny*, that may have been about her and Olga. Henry realised that Olga needed treatment for her agoraphobia, which made it impossible for her to go anywhere on her own, so she paid for her to undergo psychoanalysis at the new Tavistock Clinic in London.



Westfield sign found by Jane Oehr

There was an agreement between Henry and Olga that the dreams told to the psychoanalyst could maybe be used later by Henry in a novel. Did Henry use the dreams and her relationship with Olga in a novel? We shall never know, as, according to Henry's instructions, the manuscript was to be destroyed on her death. Was it?

Westfield, the house where she lived, was a short walk from The Cobb. I found it easily. It was unkempt and there was a 'For Lease' sign out front. Nobody answered when I knocked on the door several times. I was curious to see the bay window that looked out across the sea which Henry mentions as the place she often sat to write.

Both Henry and Olga believed the house had a poltergeist. There are accounts of odd appearances of it winding wool around the staircase bannisters, and other mischief. Henry subscribed to a belief in the spirit world, and later, after Professor Robertson's death, she held seances with Olga to communicate with JG.

When I found the way around to back of the house into the wide garden, I had my camera ready to photograph the bay windows where Henry once wrote. It was close to midday, warm and sunny. I stared up at the bay window. For a brief instant something moved across it - white, ephemeral - a glimpse. Perhaps I was just dazzled by the sunlight?

4. HHR and Lake View in *Walkabout*, 1970

Society member, Robert Edgar, recently sent the Society a copy of *Walkabout*, January 1970, which includes an article, *House of Fleeting Fame*, by Greeba Jamison on Lake View, HHR's home in Chiltern. Robert shares some of his thoughts on Lake View and HHR.



Robert Edgar

My father, Bob Edgar, lived all his life in Chiltern. Although not a great traveller he was an avid reader of *Walkabout* and subscribed for many years. When we packed up the family house in Chiltern in 1988 I took a box of the magazines, firstly to Frankston and subsequently to my shed in Strathfieldsaye. Then came the pandemic and lockdown, so I had some reading matter, and soon came across the item on Lake View.



Article from 'Walkabout', January 1970

I remember Lake View in the 1960's as a derelict rental property where the tenants had used the front fence as firewood. As a native of Chiltern and a member of the National Trust I was keen to help with the restoration of the property. I had joined the Trust while studying Agriculture at Melbourne University and during that time went to a number of functions including an evening of *Folk Music and Fondue* at Como House.

I then took up a teaching position in Benalla and visited Chiltern most weekends. On one I was able to attend the first working bee where the late Father Stockdale was pushing a motor mower through the overgrown area in front of the house.

Also, about this time Dad and I had a discussion with the then Shire President at the bar of the Telegraph Hotel. He was of the view that the house should be demolished. However, he was on the stage with Professor Manning Clark at the official opening.

5. Finding Treasure

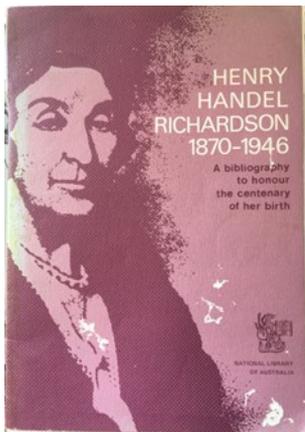
By HHR Society and Committee member, Di Parsons, from Trentham, Victoria.



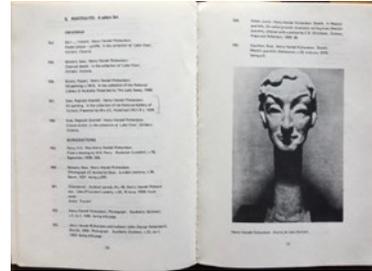
Di Parsons

I've been sorting through my large collection of papers due to moving house and downsizing. One rewarding find is a bibliography about HHR, published by the National Library of Australia in 1970.

Henry Handel Richardson 1870 – 1946 – a bibliography to honour the centenary of her birth was compiled by Gay Howells and published alongside a program of celebrations of HHR's centenary birth year that also included a seminar, public lecture and exhibition in Canberra. Dorothy Green, author of *Ulysses Bound – Henry Handel Richardson & her fiction* (published 1973) was one of the organisers of the seminar programme. I wonder if any of our members attended those events in Canberra?



The bibliography lists 773 items under seven headings: Works by HHR, Works Translated by HHR, Works about HHR, Unpublished Material (manuscripts and theses), Portraits, Bibliographies, and Miscellanea – (this last item includes the MGM film *Rhapsody*, based on *Maurice Guest*.)



Since its publication 50 years ago the bibliography has been a useful source for scholars and others seeking to follow the HHR story and to create new pathways and stories. HHR scholar Rachel Solomon comments that it was 'regularly consulted as a convenient and reliable reference tool' in the early days of the Monash University HHR Project. Many more relevant works have been created since 1970, especially in the Monash Project, including a more extensive and detailed descriptive bibliography by Tracey Caulfield. But the Howells bibliography is still important as Rachel Solomon attests: 'Often, when I try to find a reference using Google, Howells's book is the first item to pop up in the search results, reminding me that it should have been my first port of call'.

Finding treasures like this softens the pain of downsizing. You never quite know what will turn up in the jumble of papers and books. It concerns me that by making Arts degrees more expensive we will further erode the opportunities and knowledge base for librarians, archivists and scholars in the field of Australian literature and the legacy of our great Australian women writers.

6. More on the Saving of HHR's Birthplace - Blanche Terrace, Fitzroy

By Clive Probyn

(The January 2020 issue of the newsletter included an account from Ann Polis on her role in the demonstration to save HHR's birthplace from demolition in 1972. Clive Probyn has kindly written notes on the relevant National Trust newsletter in his possession.)



Plaque at Blanche Terrace

The National Trust *Newsletter* for May 1972, New Series Vol. 1, No.21, announced that Blanche Terrace had been saved, notably 169 and 171 Victoria Parade, for redevelopment as a medical centre.

The Terrace had a 'B' classification "as one of the best examples of an arcaded terrace remaining in Melbourne. In addition to its architectural merit, it is also of great historical significance as the birthplace of one of Australia's greatest writers, Henry Handel Richardson, authoress [sic] of the epic novel of Victoria's early gold days, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* [sic]". On pages 6-7 there is a plan of the proposed medical centre, described as "A fine example of preservation being linked with progress." Credit is given to: "the Fitzroy City Council, the local residents' association, and the unions all played a major part in this preservation."

The final para is as follows: "Demolition action was started by Vicpar on No.189 without the necessary council permit, and this immediately brought a strong protest from the local citizens' association, the Fitzroy Council and the unions.

Demolition work was stopped, and a permit was applied for by a demolition contractor acting on behalf of Vicpar, the company still preferring to remain in hiding."

A fire occurred in April in number 171 - "the owners have already informed the Trust that this will make no difference to their preservation and restoration plans."

7. PLC and the HHR Society

By Janey Runci

(The Society was pleased to be asked by PLC to write an article for their newsletter. The following is that article.)

One of the most pleasurable aspects of the Henry Handel Richardson Society's recent experience has been the expanding and fruitful relationship with HHR's old school – PLC. Only twelve months ago the school graciously hosted our annual oration, delivered by Professor Stefan Welz from Leipzig.



Stefan Welz delivers oration 2019

Since then a Society tour to HHR sites in Britain and Germany in September 2019 revealed two matters of particular significance to PLC. One of these was to do with HHR's sister, Lil Neustatter, who also attended the school and was in many ways as notable as her sister. Lil was a gifted musician, a suffragette who endured a jail term, and an educationist who, along with A.S.Neill, founded the progressive school, Summerhill.

As a result of the sleuth work of our President, Graeme Charles, we were able to find her previously unidentified grave and have a plaque erected in Llanfairfechan, in Wales.



Lil with A.S. Neill at Summerhill

In Leipzig we were privileged to attend a celebration of the completion of the translation into German of HHR's first novel, *Maurice Guest*. The novel is set in the world of music students at the end of the nineteenth century in Leipzig, where HHR and Lil and other PLC students, notably Marie Hansen, also studied.

(For detailed accounts of these events read newsletters for January 2020 and April 2020 on our website:

www.henryhanderichardsonociety.org)

2020 is a landmark year for the Society – the sesquicentenary of HHR's birth in Melbourne in 1870. Unfortunately, the pandemic forced the postponement of the annual oration that PLC had once again generously agreed to host. We look forward to the time when we are able to meet again at PLC for this event.

8. Welcome to new members – Kerry Willis and Claudia Milani

Kerry writes:

I am reading the last few chapters of *The Young Cosima* and am overwhelmed by HHR's wonderful ability to capture the subtlest of emotional frailties, so when I saw there was an HHR Society, I just felt I must join.

The copy I am reading is a 1939 reprint and inscribed in 1940.



Kerry Willis from Kallista, Victoria

It has been languishing in my collection of books since at least 1966 or thereabouts when I first read *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, which I still count as one of my favourite books, while studying Australian Literature at the Australian National University.

As you may guess I am now a senior citizen, living in the Dandenong Ranges, far from Chiltern, but maybe can attend one of your meetings en route to Canberra.

I didn't continue in the literary field, my last position being the Manager of Environmental Services for VicRoads, many years ago. Nowadays I do occasional neighbourhood mediations for the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, and am hopeful that this service will continue once Covid is eradicated, managed or otherwise dealt with, but at this stage who knows?

Claudia Milani writes, from Italy (email):

My name is Claudia Milani and I am an English teacher. I live 20 km far from Milan, Lombardy, Northern Italy. In 1999, I had the chance to write my thesis - *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: analisi dello spazio fisico e psicologico nella trilogia*; I also added to my thesis a translation into Italian of *The End of a Childhood*. It was absolutely great to find about the existence of your society on the website.

I started to study HH Richardson because of my interest in literature while I was a high school and university student; what is more, at university, I had the chance to meet Professor Richard Sadleir (who was born in Australia) who introduced me to the literature of Australia and H.H. Richardson in particular.



Claudia Milani from Milan, Italy

While writing my thesis I was supported by him and Professor Geoffrey Charles Hutchings, two brilliant intellectuals, and I will always be very grateful to them both for their help.

I based my analysis of the trilogy on a structuralist approach after reading *Story and Discourse* by Seymour Chatman. I added to my thesis a translation into Italian of *The End of a Childhood*. At present, and just for my pleasure, I'm planning to start a translation of another short story - *The Coat*. I do hope I'll be able to do it!

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