



The Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

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Newsletter November 2008

Membership continues to grow

We now have 127 members of the Society: seven reside in NSW, five in Queensland, three in the ACT, one in South Australia, two in England, one in New Zealand, one in the USA, and the majority (107) in Victoria.

The Society's Web-site

More work is currently underway on the new web-site. Those of you with internet will be able to visit it at www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.net

The Henry Handel Richardson Discovery Tour Report: 9 –11 October 2008

Twenty-two Society members joined together for a tour visiting several of HHR's childhood residences. Our bus left Chiltern early on the morning of Thursday October 9, bound for HHR's birthplace, Blanche Terrace, Victoria Parade, Fitzroy. Two members had joined the bus en route at Benalla, and upon arriving in Melbourne we were joined by four more members, thus completing our complement of twenty-two.

Our host at Blanche Terrace was the home's current owner and Society member, John Barkla. John had very kindly invited us into his home as well as providing a most welcome and delicious lunch. It is a lovely home—one can understand why Dr Richardson chose to live in this 'gentleman's residence'—and has been beautifully restored over the last few years by John. We are most grateful to John for his hospitality and generosity. Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele gave us some background to the Richardson family's time spent at Blanche Terrace.

Unfortunately, whilst we were all enjoying ourselves inside Blanche Terrace, some thieves were also enjoying themselves ransacking our bus, which was parked just around the corner. Unbeknown to any of us at the time, any would-be thief worth his or her salt is able to force open the particular type of door this bus had, despite it being locked. Several bags were missing, but some good detective work by Clive (an avid watcher of *Inspector Morse*) led to the discovery of most of them in a nearby dumpster. The thieves had taken items such as cameras and mobile phones, and Gordon Campbell, who had only just joined the tour, lost all his possessions. These, minus phone and camera, were subsequently recovered by Gordon, but not in time to enable him to continue the tour. So sadly, we had to say goodbye to him as we set off for Queenscliff.

Naturally this unfortunate event did put somewhat of a dampener on the next part of the trip, but we were cheered up when later on that evening news was received that the rest of our missing baggage had been found.



The members of the tour enjoying Laura's Avenue after lunch at her birthplace

At Queenscliff we had had the privilege of an address by Jocelyn Grant from the Queenscliff Historical Society at their excellent local museum. Jocelyn had gone to a lot of trouble preparing notes for us as well as painting a picture for us of Queenscliff during the time of the Richardson family residency. She also accompanied us to the Church and 26 Mercer St, the former home of the Richardsons where they moved after their departure from Chiltern. Upon returning to our overnight accommodation at nearby Point Lonsdale, we spent a short time together enjoying some readings and discussion led by Clive and Meg Probyn.

Friday morning we set off for Maldon where Mary Richardson and her two daughters had moved following the death of Dr Walter Lindesay Richardson at Koroit. Koroit will have to wait for the next tour, as it was impossible to include it this time within our timeframe. Janey Runci had done a wonderful job organizing a variety of activities for us in Maldon, including lunch and two interesting talks at Calder House. During the afternoon we wandered around Maldon's delightful main street looking at several notable buildings including the Post Office where Mary Richardson was postmistress for several years and from whence HHR left to attend the Presbyterian Ladies College in Melbourne as a boarder. After dinner Bruce Steele gave us a wonderful organ recital in the Holy Trinity Anglican church. He played some beautiful music for us and also brought with him the only known recording of HHR speaking.

There is a group of keen HHR devotees and Society members in Maldon who are planning an HHR event sometime next year which we anticipate attending. Indeed, this event could be the basis of our next organized tour.

We returned to Chiltern on Saturday October 11, arriving at Lake View in the early afternoon to enjoy yet another lovely meal (organized for us on this occasion by Maureen Burrowes, National Trust property manager at Lake View).

One of the happy outcomes of the tour was the camaraderie enjoyed between Society members who had not previously met one another. Despite the loss of some cameras and mobile phones,

there was plenty of fun and laughter. The tour was a great success and we look forward eagerly to the next one in 2009.

Birthday Celebrations on 3 January 2009

We are planning a special weekend for HHR's birthday when HHR's great-niece and nephew, Angela and Patrick Neustatter, and family members will be coming to Chiltern. The picnic tea at Lake View will commence at 5 pm on Saturday 3 January 2009 and the following morning Angela has also agreed to give the Inaugural Oration (Sunday 4 January) at 11 a.m. During the weekend Rex Fuge, the President of the HHRSA, is planning to conduct a walking tour of sites mentioned by Dr Walter Richardson in his letters from Chiltern. We hope that many of you will be able to attend and we look forward to seeing you.

Don't forget to book your accommodation as soon as possible. If you can't find accommodation in Chiltern, both Beechworth and Rutherglen are not far away, and have plenty of accommodation alternatives.

The Return of *Maurice Guest*, again!

Richardson's first, and many might say her best, novel, was published one hundred years ago, on 27 October 1908. Set in 1890s Leipzig, it is crammed with current ideas about music, philosophy, sexual identity, genius and the erotic. It maps the consuming obsession of a middle-class Englishman for an enigmatic Australian, Louise, a woman born ahead of her time.

In the UK *Guardian* newspaper (23 August), and to coincide with this centenary, Carmen Cahill, the founding publisher of Virago Modern Classics, announced another reprint, this time published by Bertrams, at £16.90. Callil asserts that this novel is 'doomed to recurrent oblivion. But 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.'

There is no oblivion for this novel in 2008. Sydney University Press has also just launched the book as one of its first offerings in the new Australian Classics Library (see info@sup.usyd.edu.au) at a little under \$40.00, paperback.

The SUP version of the novel is the complete and uncut text based on Richardson's own surviving typescripts on deposit in the National Library of Australia in Canberra, and reproduces the text established by Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele for their Academy Edition of 1998. It has a brief, new Introduction. Your bookseller will find it for you if you supply its ISBN number, which is 978-1-920899-04-2. And if you would like to read Carmen Callil's full review, it is at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/aug/23/fiction10/print>

Vale Margaret Capon

The survival of so many of Richardson's manuscripts, diaries, annotated books and associated papers in the National Library of Australia (collectively known as NLA MSS 133) was no accident. Graeme Powell was the NLA Manuscripts Librarian until his recent retirement, and he it was who made it possible for Richardson's literary executrix, Olga Roncoroni (1893-1982) to transfer most of the HHR material to Canberra. Roncoroni had been Richardson's secretary and companion for many years, and after Richardson's death in 1946 she also became her memoirist and executrix.

Roncoroni was the keeper of the flame, yet her abiding purpose was to make the study and enjoyment of Richardson's works the overriding purpose of her donation of so much material to the Australian archives.

Miss Margaret Anne Capon, a Hastings music teacher and close friend and carer of Olga Roncoroni until her death, became HHR's literary executrix in 1982. Although she never met Richardson, Miss Capon was a mine of information about HHR, and was of enormous help to Richardson scholars over many years. She entertained many of us in her house in Bexhill-on-Sea where she lived with her beloved cat, Queenie. It was through Margaret Capon that Richardson's typewriter found its way to the State Library of Victoria, and it was Margaret Capon who carefully preserved Richardson's musical manuscripts, so that they could be published for the first time in two volumes in 1999.

Sadly, Margaret Capon died on Wednesday 15 October 2008. Before her final illness she had arranged for the new executor, Clive Probyn, to take over the responsibilities of the literary estate.

Answers to Quiz 1 from the last Newsletter

1. In *The Getting of Wisdom*, what was Laura's full name? **Laura Tweedle Rambotham**
2. What was the name of the 'very finest violinist' in *Maurice Guest*? **Eugen Schilsky**
3. Barambogie was HHR's fictional name for Chiltern in *Ultima Thule*, but what did she call Barnawartha? **Mittagunda**
4. Even though we supposedly proof-read the Newsletter, an error was printed in this question which should have read: 'What was the middle name of Polly's brother John in *Australia Felix*?' **Millibank**
5. In which town were the fictional Mary Turnham and the real Mary Bailey (HHR's mother) born? **Leicester**
6. What position did 'Alphabetical Foster' hold in the Colony of Victoria? **John Leslie Fitzgerald Vesey Foster was the Colonial Secretary under Lieut. Governor La Trobe until 1854, and then administrator of the colony until La Trobe's replacement (Hotham) arrived in June.**
7. What were Cuffy's full name and the names of his twin sisters? **Cuthbert Hamilton Townshend-Mahony: the 'Dumplings' were called Lucie and Lallie**
8. Who wrote the first book on HHR in 1950? **Nettie Palmer**
9. Who acted the role of Louise in the 1954 film version of *Maurice Guest (Rhapsody)*? **Elizabeth Taylor**
10. Who directed and who produced the 1977 film of *The Getting of Wisdom*? **Bruce Beresford, Philip Adams**
11. Of which famous musician did HHR say he would soon be forgotten? **Schubert**
12. What was HHR's favourite brand of cigarettes? **Abdullah**
13. HHR wrote to Mary Kernot in 1932, 'Life is only half a life without an animal'. Can you name one of her pets? **(cats) Monkey, Punkah, Archibald, Pasha, Noodles; (dogs) Chin Foo, Peko Sing**
14. Which seaside resort did HHR and Jane Austen have in common? **Lyme Regis**
15. Where was HHR's father born? **Malahide near Dublin**

Contributions to Future Newsletters

We would be very pleased to receive any articles, comments or quiz questions for the HHRSA's newsletter, which we hope to send out three times a year.

Please send them to Meg Probyn's new address by mail or email: 158c Oxley Drive, Mittagong, NSW 2575 or probyn44@bigpond.com

New Members

If you know anyone who would like to join our society, please contact Meg Probyn (see above).