
Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc

July 2010 NEWSLETTER



Secretary: Dr Meg Probyn
158 Oxley Drive
Mittagong, NSW 2575
(02) 4871 3134

Patron: Dame Elisabeth Murdoch
AC DBE

Advanced notice of the Annual General Meeting

The 2010 AGM will be held at Maldon during the October weekend. We will send you further information including nomination papers for the committee in September.

Please Note: 2010 Subscriptions Are Due

It is now time to renew your membership. Some members paid their 2010 subscriptions at the birthday weekend but if you did not, please complete the form at the end of this Newsletter and send it with your cheque to the Treasurer.

Maldon Weekend 15-17 October 2010

The Maldon members of the Society are planning another weekend of HHR celebrations in October. The final program and booking forms for the event will be available in late July/early August, but the following is some information to ensure that you mark the event in your diaries.

The celebration will start with an event in Holy Trinity Church on Friday night, 15 October, and end with an event in the church on Sunday morning, 17 October.

During the Saturday the following activities are currently being planned:

- ❖ The launch of a new booklet on HHR and Maldon. This event will include short talks by Peter Cuffley, Helen McBurney and Janey Runci, accompanied by photographs by Geoff Palmer (as well as sparkling white wine!).
The booklet includes three self-guided walks, maps, photographs, results of research on Maldon life in the 1880s, Post Office life, families involved with the Richardsons, Richardson's reference to Maldon in her writing, Richardson's music, Lillian Richardson and other Richardson towns (Chiltern, Queenscliff and Koroit).

- ❖ Launch of philatelic franking stamp commemorating HHR's link with the Maldon Post Office. This will include a dramatised interview with Mary Richardson about her life as a postmistress in Maldon.
- ❖ Maldon Brass Band at the picnic lunch.
- ❖ Cemetery Tour and Town walk, including results of further research by Helen McBurney and Peter Cuffley.
- ❖ Dinner at historic Penny School with entertainment.

Congratulations to the Maldon members who organised a memorable weekend last year and who are busily engaged in providing another marvellous event. Maldon in springtime is especially attractive and we are all looking forward to this special weekend. We will send out the final program and booking forms as soon as they are available.

ABR Favourite Australian Novels

Of the 290 individual novels that were nominated on the Australian Book Review's FAN Poll, HHR's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* was voted as the second most popular after Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet*. The results were announced in the February 2010 edition. The list of the ten most popular novels is as follows:

<i>Cloudstreet:</i>	Tim Winton
<i>The Fortunes of Richard Mahony:</i>	HHR
<i>Voss:</i>	Patrick White
<i>Breath:</i>	Tim Winton
<i>Oscar and Lucinda:</i>	Peter Carey
<i>My Brother Jack:</i>	George Johnston
<i>The Secret River:</i>	Kate Grenville
<i>Eucalyptus:</i>	Murray Bail
<i>The Man Who Loved Children:</i>	Christina Stead
<i>The Tree of Man:</i>	Patrick White

Hopefully the listing will encourage more Book groups to select *The Fortunes* for their monthly choice.

Maldon Life

Helen McBurney

In *Myself When Young*, Henry Handel Richardson writes about a number of 'the odd figures who stood out for me among Maldon's two thousand inhabitants'. From her descriptions it is not difficult to identify a number of these individuals and find out more about them. One such family is that of 'old Tom'.



Old Tom

The Calder family lived diagonally opposite the post office at the intersection of High and Francis Streets in Maldon. They had seven children at the time the Richardson family arrived in Maldon, including three girls of similar age to Ettie and Lil. There were also four brothers, one younger and three older.

With this family we also spent many a jolly evening around the piano. Like ourselves they were naturally musical; played and sang at sight and some of the elder ones had really fine voices. And when the vocal scores of Pinafore and Patience came out we would take parts and sing the operas through from beginning to end.

They were the children of a man familiarly dubbed 'Old Tom,' who was something of a character. What originally brought him to Maldon I don't know; but by the time we got there he had swallowed up a goodly number of the town's most lucrative businesses. He owned for instance the biggest hardware store, he hired out horses and traps and was the one and only undertaker. I remember him mainly for his deafness and his

*profanity. So deaf was he that words had to be literally blasted into his ear, and, he replying in kind, his would be private conversations could be heard at the other end of the street. As a driver he stood in ill repute; none but the young and heedless cared to trust their lives to him. (HHR, *Myself When Young*)*

Thomas Calder was born on the 18 May 1832 in the Parish of Bowden, County Cheshire about 10 miles from Manchester. In 1853 he arrived in Victoria. His brother James joined him in February 1854 followed by his sister Elizabeth the following year. They lived in Castlemaine for two years. In an 1856 business listing, Thomas Calder is a carpenter of Moyston Street, whilst T and E Calder appear as Confectioners and pastry cooks in Market Square, Castlemaine.

Thomas Calder moved to Maldon in 1857 and worked with a partner, Edward James, in a building and undertaking business located on the corner between High and Main Streets in Maldon. In June 1859 they sold the site for £310. In May that year Thomas had purchased the land on the corner of Main and Dolphin Streets where he built the Calder Ironmongery. At the same time he acquired the adjoining site on High and Francis Streets on which he later built a home.

In 1860 he met Anna Maria Harvey when she arrived in Maldon with her Aunt and Uncle to visit friends. Anna was born on 9 November 1833 at Helensburgh, Glasgow in Scotland. In 1849, her parents having both died within weeks of each other, she was sent to live with her father's sister Jessie (married to Joseph Bonney) at Woodhall on the Esk River near Perth in Tasmania.

Thomas Calder and Anna Maria Harvey married on 18 July 1861 at St John's Church of England, Launceston. They lived in the rear of the ironmongery establishment whilst the first stage of their new home 'Roseneath' (now known as Calder House) was built.

Between the years 1862 to 1877 Thomas and Anna had nine children: Melville Stuart (1862), Charles Lewis (1863), George Chapman (1865), Ernest Edward (1866), Lillian Mary (1868), Elizabeth Harvey (1870), Thomas Howard (1872), Anna Maria (1873) and Robert Hacking Roy (1877, known as Roy). Two of the boys (Ernest age 5 years 7 months and Thomas age 4 months) died within 6 weeks of each other in 1872.

The Calder home was progressively expanded to fit the growing family, with the two rooms fronting onto High Street being the last addition completed just before a visit by the Governor in 1884. Tom's sister Elizabeth Calder also lived with them for much of the time and helped Anna with the children.

It is likely that the older Calder brothers are "a friends' elder brother" in *Myself When Young* and contributed to the entertainment of their sisters and the Richardson girls. Mrs Calder is remembered by

HHR in *Myself When Young* as ‘fat and elderly, tired out by her many children and by the scorching heat of kitchen fires’ and ‘apparently always cross’.



Anna Calder (before she was ‘fat and elderly’)

Much of what is known about Calder family life is recorded in the diaries of Lillian Calder who lived at Roseneath until her death in 1940. Her diary for 1887 records Ettie and Lil Richardson staying with the Calder family on the night before they left Maldon to live in Richmond. Lillie Calder’s accounts of musical entertainment around the piano, walks, picnics and card games with friends are similar to those reported by Henry Handel Richardson in *Myself When Young*. She also records a love of tennis. *The Tarrangower Times* (Maldon newspaper) in the 1880s has frequent reports of progress in the local mixed doubles round-robin competition, mentioning Lillian and Charles as regular participants. Charles Calder is also regularly mentioned in the paper for his fine singing voice and he often provided entertainment at musical events in the town. *The Tarrangower Times* also reports on the entertainment provided by ‘Mrs Jarley’s Waxworks’ mentioned by HHR. The Calder family attended the Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Whilst the boys were sent to boarding school for their education, all of the girls remained at home and were educated locally.

In the Maldon Museum collection there is a photocopy of a handwritten letter from HHR to Lillie Calder dated 7 May 1939. In this letter HHR recalls Lil and herself staying with the Calder family on the night before they left Maldon for Richmond. The

letter from HHR is clearly a reply to one where Lillie Calder is writing that she has recently suffered a stroke. Lillie died in July 1940.

The Calder family are well represented in the Maldon cemetery. The family plot is close to the front gate and has a memorial remembering:

Thomas Calder born 19 May 1832 in Manchester, died 25 December 1906.

Anna Maria Calder née Harvey born 9 November 1833 in Glasgow died 7 December 1913.

Ernest Edward (b. 26 Dec 1866, d. 9 August 1872).

Thomas Howard (b. May 1872, d. 24 Sept 1872).

Charles Lewis (b. 30 May 1863, d. 3 March 1942).

Lillian Mary (b. 28 Dec 1868, d. July 1940) and

Elizabeth Calder (Tom’s sister).

In other plots in the Maldon cemetery you can find memorials to other members of the Calder family. Melville Stuart Calder (b. 19 April 1862, d. 1917 in Geelong) has a plot adjacent to the main road towards the newer part of the cemetery and adjoining his plot is that of Elizabeth Harvey Nankivell (née Calder, b. 9 July 1870, d. 22 June 1930 buried at Maldon with her husband Roger Leonard Nankivell, the son of another well known Maldon family).

Both Calder House (the family home) and Tom Calder’s business premises on the corner of Main and Dolphin streets remain in use in Maldon life today, however they are in private ownership and can only be viewed from the exterior.

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Medicine on the Ballarat Goldfields

Bruce Steele (Adjunct Research Fellow in English at Monash)

[For the past few months, Bruce Steele has been working on a biographical sketch of Henry Handel Richardson’s father, Dr Walter Lindesay Richardson. This is an edited extract from his work in progress.]

For more than 18 months before his marriage in August 1855, Walter had been not only a store-keeper at Mt Pleasant. Although he told Mary ‘I do not practice’, he was to some degree tending patients and providing medicines. His own little pen sketch of his store bore the additional sign ‘Surgeon’ and he was well known at the Post Office and elsewhere as Dr Richardson. What he meant by not practising was that he had not set up in a formal practice. Accidents were common and diseases prevalent on the goldfield and treatment was needed quickly.

There were few doctors for the thousands of settlers and itinerant diggers—though fewer lawyers, Walter observed wryly. Doctors also acted as dentists. ‘Business has been a little better since you left,’ he wrote to Mary in 1856, ‘– I drew a tooth this morning & charged 10/-. I have no objection to as many patients as like to come at that rate.’ He was in touch

with full-time doctors: in certain cases he sought second opinions—as in the case of the serious illness of ‘a friend’ in June 1855. Mary’s brother, William Bailey, an asthma sufferer, had consulted Walter professionally. If there was no improvement after his treatment, Walter wrote, ‘I should make him have some other medical man’s opinion.’ As early as March 1853, shortly after his arrival in Ballarat, he was associated with an American medico, Dr Charles Kenworthy, especially in obstetrical cases in which he even performed surgical procedures. After his official registration on December 1, 1856, he continued to work on cases in the Sebastopol district with Dr Kenworthy.



Dr Walter Lindsay Richardson (aged about 36)

Once Walter finally decided to return to full-time professional practice, medical concerns took over from botanical and other subjects in his letters to papers. In its April 1857 issue, the *Australian Medical Journal* published his long, strongly argued letter to the editor on the subject of the “Medical Reform Bill” currently before the Victorian parliament. His aim was to highlight the weakness of the Bill which was an attempt legally to control unregistered and charlatan medical practitioners. Although it is a contribution to a respected professional journal, Walter signed himself as ‘Medicus’, a pseudonym he usually reserved for letters to newspapers. He, nevertheless, gave his address as Ballarat. Presumably his use of the penname was because, at the time he actually wrote the letter (he dated it 8 December 1856), he was not yet set up as an established

practitioner. That was not made public until March 1857.

The aim of his letter is to present his argument against the shortcomings of the Bill. However, his supporting evidence gives a vivid description of Walter’s medical experience since arriving on the goldfields. It acts also as a corrective to his disclaimer ‘I do not practice. . .’

MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

To the Editor of the *AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL*.

Sir,

I have perused with much interest the ‘New Bill,’ and am convinced that it will not accomplish the desired end—that of cleansing the Augean stable of medicine. Those who framed the Bill may have been conversant with the empiricism of Melbourne and vicinity; but from the tenor of the Bill, I am convinced that they have no idea of the wants of the profession on the diggings. Such being the fact, I shall take the liberty of making a few statements, and offering a few suggestions.

In order to protect the community from the host of swindlers in the shape of druggists and unqualified practitioners, who infest the diggings, the Ballarat Medico-Chirurgical Society have kept a standing advertisement in the local papers, of the names and residences of all the legally qualified practitioners of the district. Yet in the face of this public advertisement, a venerable old empiric placed in large letters over his door, ‘Legalized Physician and Surgeon.’ A druggist without a vestige of a medical education commenced practice, and erected a large sign, with the following inscription:— ‘Surgeon from the Melbourne Hospital.’ An act that would prevent honest men from prescribing, and deceiving the unsuspecting public, would not keep such unprincipled impostors as those alluded to, from obtaining money under false pretences, sacrificing human life, and robbing educated men of that which legally and justly belongs to them. Nothing but a stringent law will prevent such empiries from imposing upon the ignorant and unsuspecting. If prevented from obtaining fees for services rendered, they will prescribe gratuitously, and ‘pile on the agony’ for vile drugs prescribed.

The legal profession, that to a great extent merely deals with a man’s pocket and liberty, is protected from quacks and quackery. Yet a profession whose office is to save or sacrifice life, has no protective laws. The human machine is exceedingly complicated, and liable to a multiplicity of derangements, the successful treatment of which requires years of study and observation. Such being the fact, it is not honest or just that a host of unprincipled pretenders to medical science should be allowed to tamper with human life, and injure and

deceive the unsuspecting. If a person picks a pocket, or steals a horse, he receives a severe and merited punishment. Yet, strange to say, a quacking druggist can keep what was at first a simple case under treatment until it becomes incurable, or maltreats a patient, and does it with perfect impunity. Strange justice! a strange government that acknowledges that a man's life is of less value or importance than his purse or his horse!

In order to illustrate the extent to which quackery is carried in the goldfields, I shall merely refer to a few of the cases that have come under my notice within a limited period. A child was attacked with pneumonia, and the mother carried it to the shop of one of these scientific druggists for advice. The soi-disant physician was absent, and his wife, concluding that the 'grey mare was the better horse', tried her skill, and ordered rhubarb and magnesia. The prescription of the druggist's wife was continued for several days; and as the child became rapidly worse, one of my medical friends was called, and on examination found that there was no hope for the child. Twelve hours closed the scene, and the physician received the blame of destroying its life. A few weeks since I was consulted by a party who has lost an arm through the ignorance of a practising druggist. The case is briefly as follows:— The man had an attack of disease, and called in a druggist who assumes the name of 'Doctor.' Our empiric pulled out his lancet, and plunged it into his victim's arm. The result was puncture of the artery. Discovering his error, he applied a compress, and a very tight figure of eight. This was retained for days; mortification supervened, and the man's arm was amputated. This new-fledged son of Esculapius kept out of the way for a few weeks, but has recently appeared, and has again resumed the duties of the profession. I had a man under my care recently, who received an injury of the leg. He was treated by a doctoring druggist, and six months after he came under my hands. On examination I found that there had been fracture of middle of femur, and that the fragments overlapped about three inches. The inner condyle had been broken from the shaft, much displaced, and entirely overlooked in the treatment. The consequence is, the man is a cripple for life. I was consulted by a female with staphyloma of both eyes, and upon inquiry, found that she had been using an 'eye lotion' for over four months. Upon examination I found it to be a weak solution of acetate of lead. She informed me that when she commenced with the 'Dispensary doctor,' she had a 'slight attack of sore eyes,' but that she had been 'gradually getting worse.' In this instance a woman lost her sense of sight through the cupidity of an unprincipled druggist. This veritable doctoring druggist, finding that starvation was staring him in the face at Mount Blackwood, migrated to this locality. Soon after his arrival he found business dull, and erected a bovine sign, with the following

inscription, 'Horse and Cattle Medicines'. Horses and cattle proving distressingly healthy, he put up on each side of his shop in large letters, 'Medical Dispensary', and made a charge of '10s. 6d. for office prescriptions.'

I was requested to visit a party who had been thrown from a spring cart. On entering the place into which he had been carried, I was surprised to find a doctoring druggist in attendance. This second Sir Astley Cooper informed me that 'the man had fracture of both bones of the forearm, and that he had fixed them all right.' Curiosity led me to watch Sangrado's movements. He applied two narrow splints to each aspect of the arm, and bound it up tightly, with an eight-inch bandage. Comment would be superfluous. Within six months, I have been consulted by two parties who have been injured at the windlass. In both instances there had been fracture and displacement of the nasal bones. These parties had been treated by doctoring druggists, and the result was disgusting deformity. A few weeks since I was consulted by a young man with sub-acute articular rheumatism. I found on inquiry that he had been treated for six weeks by a druggist, and that the last advice was, 'Wait until fine weather comes, and you will get better.' The patient informed me that he had been suffering for a number of weeks from a severe pain in the left side, and that when he mentioned it, the druggist remarked that 'it was nothing.' Upon examination, I found organic disease of heart. In this instance, if proper treatment had been instituted, this victim would have been saved a lifetime of suffering.

The above are but a few of the cases that have come under my notice within a limited period. Many unprincipled druggists upon the gold-fields will stoop to any unjustifiable act to make a few shillings. In short, they deceive the community, obtain money under false pretences, rob the profession, and last, though not least, do an incalculable amount of injury.

Midwifery, on the gold-fields, is to a great extent in the hands of illiterate women, and a large proportion of them are drunkards. Their charge is about one-third of that of medical men, and the consequence is, that the Registrar-General will never become enlightened on the subject of still-born children. To illustrate this portion of my subject, I will cite a recent case. At 4 a.m. on the morning of the 26th of October, I was requested to visit a woman in labour. I found a midwife in attendance, and ascertained that on the preceding day, at 4 p.m. the head was nearly born, the pains suddenly ceased, and the head receded. Upon examination I found that the child was dead. I at once called in two medical men, and the patient was delivered by instruments. The mother died soon after delivery, and I found upon examination that the uterus had sustained a rupture about eight inches in length. If a practitioner of medicine had been in attendance, the life of the child, and that of the mother, might have been saved. Upon inquiry I found that this feminine

accoucheur keeps a sly grog shop, and sells nobblers when not obstetrically employed. She has made it a business to visit pregnant females, praise her success, refer to her extensive business, and finish her harangue by stating that 'she never required a doctor to be called in, for she was competent for any case;' and that she had 'a letter from a Melbourne doctor, certifying that she understood her business.'

Now, Mr. Editor, lives are still to be sacrificed, and such impostors as the one above alluded to are to go unpunished. The Act should prevent any person or persons from practising midwifery, or attending females during the progress of parturition, unless such person be a legally qualified medical practitioner, or possess a certificate of obstetrical competency from the Medical Board.

Since the preceding was written, I have prescribed for a man whose case is as follows. —He had an attack of retention of urine, the result of spasmodic stricture, and consulted a barber, who claims to be 'a doctor.' The knight of the razor made his victim lie upon his abdomen, and in this position attempted to pass a metallic catheter. He met with an obstruction, applied great force, and the instrument suddenly passed inwards; and he exultingly told his patient 'that the water would run away.' The instrument was 'retained for half an hour,' and instead of water about eight ounces of blood flowed. The soapy doctor withdrew the instrument, and rubbed powdered chocolate over the patient's abdomen. At the present moment the patient has an extensive abscess, involving the perineum and scrotum, the sequence of false passage and urinary infiltration.

Your new Medical Bill may be adequate to regulate the practice of medicine and surgery in Melbourne and vicinity, but it will not prevent from practising the herd of unprincipled quacks who infest the gold-fields. To accomplish the desired end, the Act should read, that 'any person who shall, after the expiration of three months after the first election of the Medical Board as aforesaid, practise as physician, surgeon, or apothecary, or prescribe for, or treat any case of disease or injury, or attend any female during her confinement, not having a certificate or letters testimonial from the Medical Board as a legally-qualified medical practitioner, as hereinbefore provided,' &c.

As framed, the Bill is too lax. Let us have a useful law, or none at all. If the Bill passes under its present form, druggists and midwives will practise as usual.

Instead of pecuniary penalty for the second and any after offence, I would suggest imprisonment; for I candidly believe that a few lessons in practical mineralogy would have a beneficial tendency in converting these impostors into honest men. I am confident that it would prove beneficial to have the following as a part of the Act That in any case where a person dies under the care or treatment of an

unqualified practitioner, that such practitioner shall be considered guilty of manslaughter, and tried for such offence.

If the present effort of the Victoria Medical Society should fail, I would respectfully suggest that the Society call a Medical Convention, to be holden at such time and place as the Society may designate, and request the profession in each city, town, and diggings to organize and send delegates to such convention. Let the convention discuss the subject, draft a memorial to the Legislature, praying for the passage of an Act to protect the community and profession. Let the executive appointed by the convention forward to each legally-qualified medical practitioner of this colony one or more copies of the memorial, with a request to obtain as many signatures as possible; and likewise instruct them to transmit their copy or copies of memorial, with names appended, to the executive committee, within a given period. By some such proceeding, a memorial, with at least 20,000 signatures attached, could be laid before the Legislature, and would have weight and be noticed by the Government. No profession, or set of men, can exert the same amount of influence as the medical; and if unity of action could be obtained, wholesome laws might be enacted, protective of human life and the rights of an honourable profession.

I trust, Mr. Editor, that you will forgive me for the amount of space I have occupied; but I have been induced to pen the preceding, from the fact that am convinced that the metropolitan medical men are not conversant with the wants of the community and profession on the gold- fields.

I remain, &c.
MEDICUS

Ballarat, Dec. 8th, 1856.

If this is to any degree typical of Walter's experience of medicine on the goldfields, it must have acted as a strong incentive, given his ability and experience, to take up the challenge of medical practice. It is also typical of his accomplished rhetorical style in controversy and also, no doubt, of his public oratory, for which he gained such a positive reputation.

THE COMMITTEE

<u>President:</u>	Rex Fuge	(03) 5726 1467
<u>Vice President:</u>	Graeme Charles	(03) 5726 1173
<u>Secretary:</u>	Meg Probyn	(02) 4871 3134
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Dot Charles	(03) 5726 1173
<u>Committee members</u>		
	Clive Probyn	(02) 4871 3134
	Mary Fuge	(03) 5726 1467
	Janey Runci	0438573022

Many Apologies

This newsletter should have been sent in April but many things conspired against the deadline. I hope we will be on track for the rest of the year.

Meg Probyn (Editor)

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP – 2010

Thank you to those of you who have already paid your subscription for 2010. If you have not already done so, it is now time to renew your HHRSA membership. The amount due is \$5.00 for each person this year. Please complete this form and return it with your cheque to:

The Hon. Treasurer
69 Conness St
CHILTERN
Victoria 3683

Name/s:

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