



The Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

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December 2011 Newsletter

Annual HHR Birthday Picnic Tea at Lake View

On January 3, as has been the case for forty-two years now, people will be gathering at Lake View, Chiltern, one of HHR's childhood homes, to celebrate her birthday and enjoy a picnic tea.

A highlight of the 2012 celebration will be an address by Clive Probyn - 'The Return of the Native: HHR in Australia again (1912)'. This will be most appropriate, because the observant among you will have noticed that 2012 is the one hundredth anniversary of HHR's one and only visit back to the country of her birth.

In recent years the birthday celebration has also included the Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Annual Oration. The first three orators have been HHR's great-niece Angela Neustatter, Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele. However, the 2012 Oration will be delivered in October next year, at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, by the eminent historian and Society member Brenda Niall. Brenda will speak about HHR and her first biographer, Nettie Palmer. Keep this date free - Friday, October 12 at 5.30 in the Red Rotunda at the State Library.

The Picnic Tea will commence in the Lake View grounds at 6.30pm on January 3. If you haven't visited Lake View for a year or two now, you will be delighted to know that the nearby Lake Anderson is full to overflowing and providing a lovely backdrop to Lake View.

If you don't want to bring your own picnic tea, you can order one by contacting Rex Fuge on 03 57261280. The teas cost \$27.50 and must be ordered before Christmas.



Remembering HHR in Leipzig – Graeme and Dot Charles spread the word

Earlier this year one of our sons was married in France. As proud parents we travelled to France for the wedding and took the opportunity to visit a number of places in Europe we had not previously seen. Some of these places happened to be in Germany, and principally because of the Henry Handel Richardson connection, we included Leipzig in the itinerary.

HHR wrote that “the three years spent in Leipzig were the happiest I had yet known” so on our brief visit we were eager to see if we could get a sense of what contribution the city had made to that great happiness. Of course much of the physical nature of Leipzig has changed since HHR's days there. “Leipzig was then a pleasant, old-world town, with little resemblance to the bustling, commercial city it afterwards became” she wrote in *Myself When Young*. However, we were able to see many buildings she would have known, such as the gorgeous Nikolaikirche (St Nicholas Church), and Thomaskirche (St Thomas Church) neither of which presumably have changed much at all since HHR's time.

Whilst at the very interesting GDR Museum in Leipzig, we struck up a conversation with Susan Schaale, a German university student majoring in English literature, and hoping eventually to become a teacher of English Literature in her homeland. We took the opportunity to spread the 'HHR Gospel' and began quizzing Susan about her knowledge of Australian literature. She cheerfully, but respectfully confessed that the sum total of her knowledge of Australian literature and authors was, not surprisingly, nil. This confession opened the door, allowing us to introduce her to the life and writings of HHR. She was amazed to discover that not only had HHR spent some years living and studying in Leipzig, but furthermore she had used that city as the setting for her first novel *Maurice Guest*.

Susan was very interested to hear about HHR and happily exchanged contact details with us. That contact has continued since we returned home. We have introduced Susan to both *Myself When Young* and *Maurice Guest*. My long-term strategy is the development of a Leipzig chapter of the HHR Society. This of course may be some time coming to fruition, it may never happen, but in the meantime at least one resident of Leipzig knows more about HHR than she did before the chance meeting with us. We'll keep you posted should there be any developments worthy of reporting.



Ettie Richardson in Leipzig, 1891

HHR Book Wins Award

Many of you will have read on the HHR website about the success of the booklet, *Henry Handel Richardson in Maldon* in this year's Victorian Community History Award. To the great pleasure of all concerned the book won a prize of \$2000 in the category 'Best Walk or Tour'. The awards, presented by the Public Records Office Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, aim to raise awareness of community history throughout Victoria, and promote excellence in historical method.

Four Maldon residents – local social historian Peter Cuffley, researcher Helen McBurney, graphic artist/photographer Geoff Palmer and writer Janey Runci – wrote, researched and self-published the book.

Geoff Palmer travelled to Parliament House in Melbourne to accept the award on 20 October, 2011 as Peter, Helen and Janey were unavailable at the time. Geoff said those who knew would have been amused to see him. 'Here was I in Queens Hall in Parliament House and our book was announced as one of the winners. Queen Victoria's marble statue looking down on me, obviously not amused, and the portraits of all Victoria's past Premiers listening to each word, I was asked to give a speech. I was definitely out of my comfort zone, and not helped by the immaculate penguin suit I was wearing.'

Geoff also spoke of his work as the photographer for the book. 'As a photographer, one of the things I took great delight in was matching old photographs with the new so we could create a then-and-now look and it is amazing to see how many of the buildings have hardly changed.'

The following is an extract from the awards announcement:

BEST WALK/TOUR Category Winner *Henry Handel Richardson in Maldon* by Peter Cuffley, Helen McBurney, Geoff Palmer & Janey Runci Published by the Authors, Maldon, 2010

Mary Richardson, accompanied by her two young daughters, Ethel and Lil, arrived in the small gold mining town of Maldon in 1880 to take up the position of postmistress. Here the family found a haven after the trauma of the decline and death of their husband and father, Walter Richardson. Maldon nourished the imagination of Ethel, later famous as Henry Handel Richardson.

The authors, assisted by the Maldon community, have produced a well-illustrated and carefully researched booklet that contains 3 walks: the first, which has a clear map, describes 16 buildings that would have been familiar to the Richardsons; the second focuses on significant cemetery graves from the 1880s period; and the last records places fictionalised in Richardson's *The Getting of Wisdom*.

If you don't have a copy of the book it will be available for sale at the Chiltern birthday celebrations in January for \$15 or by mail (see website for details).

Don't forget also, if you are visiting Maldon you can have your mail franked with the HHR in Maldon stamp. Just ask at the Post Office.



To read about the HHR Celebration day in Maldon on October 8 this year go to the website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au