

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter January 2017



Another picnic tea on January 3



Meg Probyn, Clive Probyn and Janey Runci

In the fine tradition established by the citizens of Chiltern back in 1970, HHR's birthday was once again celebrated with a picnic tea on a balmy evening at Lake View. About 40 of us, old and new members, gathered in the gardens to eat, drink, be merry, and to celebrate HHR.

In a change of format, this year the meal was followed by a lively Q and A session with our president Graeme Charles putting the audience's questions to Clive and Meg Probyn and Janey Runci, who shared their ideas and thoughts about HHR with a very engaged and knowledgeable audience.

Then followed the traditional cutting of the birthday cake. Mary Fuge, wife of our first president, the late Rex Fuge, made the cake for many years, but this year the magnificent cake was kindly made by Heather Payne. A big thank you to Heather from the Society.

HHR books were sold and membership fees paid. After the lively discussion of 'The Fortunes of Richard Mahony' and 'Maurice Guest' many were keen to get a copy and start reading asap!



Graeme Charles brings in the cake . . .



. . . and Mary Fuge cuts it



Members lining up to pay subscriptions

The state of Lake View – good and bad news

The new section of verandah looked wonderful, but the old house is in sad need of repair. Beryl Pickering, the manager of Lake View, drew attention to parts of the walls that are crumbling. The good work of the National Trust North East Ladies Auxiliary continues.



The cracks in the wall

Those who came to the 2015 birthday celebrations will remember the fallen tree, one of the two large ones near the kitchen outbuilding. The area was roped off for that gathering as the huge branch rested precariously on the roof of the kitchen, the outcome of a fierce storm a couple of days before. Most of the tree was removed but what was left has sprouted. It's not quite the canopy of past times, but it's still thick and green!



The remaining old tree



The new floor of the verandah

The woman behind the garden – Anne Vyner



Picnic at Lake View under the canopy of trees

If you've ever wondered (as I have) if it's worth packing up to go to Chiltern so soon after all the fuss of Christmas, and also wondered if it will be too hot, you may also have found that such thoughts disappear when you arrive.

Each year as we gather in the garden on January 3, set up the tables and chairs, unpack picnic baskets as we greet old friends and new, there's a collective sigh of relief and pleasure to be back in the peaceful garden of the house where HHR spent a short but significant part of her childhood.

Under the cool canopies of the grand old trees the garden beds are freshly watered, flowers blooming everywhere, the grass green, newly mown and soft under our feet, paths carefully raked like a Japanese garden, the still water of the lake glimpsed through the trees, birds singing.

The woman behind this garden is Anne Vyner



Anne Vyner

For over 20 years Anne has tended the garden she loves so much. In preparation for the birthday celebrations Anne does two full days of lawn mowing as well as all the obvious care of garden beds and pots. Even when she went to live for a time in Melbourne Anne worked on the garden each time she came to Chiltern. Now that she is living full time in Chiltern the garden at Lake View gets the benefit of her undivided attention. As she says wryly – her own garden is neglected as a result!

However she loves her time in the Lake View garden. When she arrives in the early morning she is often greeted by families of ducks from the lake over the road. In earlier years when there were swans in the lake they would visit as well. As soon as she turns on a sprinkler the garden fills with the sounds of small birds. She loves the fact that many people visit and use the garden at different times and in different ways. She found a paint brush in the gazebo and imagined the artist working there. She knows of one woman in Chiltern who regularly brings her toddler to wander in the peace.



Anne takes trouble to maintain the garden in a manner as close as possible to the house's period and she is paid for 14 hours a month for this work. I would estimate she spends more like 14 hours a week to provide the idyllic setting for our annual gathering.

The Society thanks Anne for her continued and valuable work!



Rex Fuge's bridge

In one of the views through the garden to Lake Anderson can now be seen the replacement of the old bridge, erected by the Indigo Shire Council and dedicated to the late Rex Fuge, the HHR Society's first President, who worked hard to ensure the new bridge would replicate the old bridge's unique character.





The bridge at Lake Anderson

HHR Feast at Maldon – March 25-26, 2017

Saturday, March 25:

At **3 pm** as part of the Castlemaine Festival an event will be held at the Athenaeum Library in Maldon, right next door to the Post Office where HHR lived from 1880-86. Noted literary figures, Robyn Davidson (author of ‘Tracks’), and Angela Meyer, reviewer and literary blogger will consider the topic: ‘HHR – Great Australian Novelist?’



Robyn Davidson



Angela Meyer

You need to book with the Festival for this at castlemainefestival.com.au

N.B!!! Book early as there is limited space in the Athenaeum Library.

At **7 pm** the Society will gather at the Maldon Hotel for dinner. Please let us know if you’d like to join in so we can book a large enough table. Contact Janey Runci on j.runci@bigpond.com

Sunday, March 26:

At **10.30 am** the HHR Society AGM will be held in the Maldon Community Hall

At **11 am** German scholar, Irmgard Heidler (see below) will deliver the Society’s annual oration following the AGM. Irmgard will consider HHR’s connections to German culture and music at the turn of the century. This will be of particular interest to those of us who plan to go on the trip to Germany in May.



Irmgard has an MA and PhD in the History of Publishing, German Literature and Musicology. She studied at Munich and Leipzig and has lived and studied in Alexandria, Melbourne and Lisbon.



Maldon Community Hall

HHR Society tour in Germany – May 2017

Excitement is building as our tour in Germany begins to take shape. It will commence on May 8 in Munich then move on to Leipzig on May 12, Berlin May 17 and Strasbourg (France) May 21 where it will officially conclude on May 23. Some participants are taking the opportunity to explore other places in Europe both before and after the HHR tour.

In all these cities, with the exception of Berlin, we hope to see where possible the places that HHR resided in: Leipzig for a number of years from 1889; Munich 1895/1896; Strasbourg 1896 for several years before moving to London in 1903.



HHR and her husband George Robertson in Munich 1896

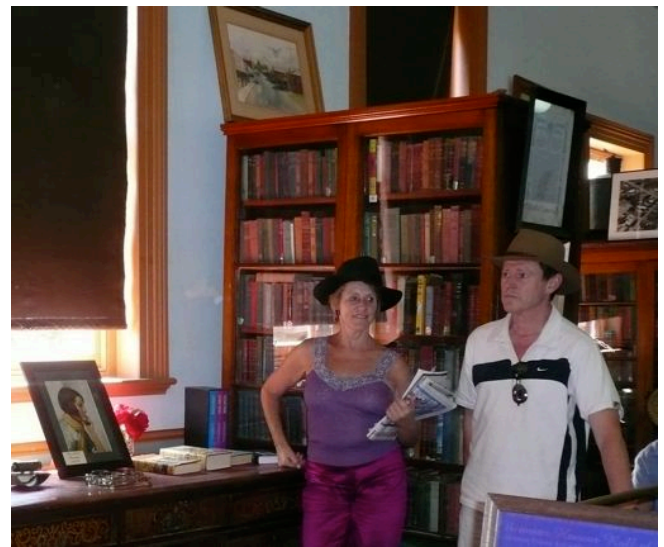
We will also include day trips from Munich and Leipzig to other places that HHR visited and/or spent time in. These include Marquartstein and Lake Starnberg near Munich. From Leipzig we intend visiting Dresden where in 1921 HHR's sister Lil and A S Neill established what was to become Summerhill school, now located in Leiston, Suffolk, UK.



Lil and A S Neill at Summerhill

Weimar and Wittenberg (Martin Luther) are also on the radar. If time permits whilst in Strasbourg we hope to visit the absolutely stunning French medieval village, Riquewihir.

Music events, particularly in Leipzig, will be another attraction for us, as well as places such as the Music Conservatory and Gewandhaus that HHR frequented. We will enjoy meeting our German members, Irmgard Heidler in Munich and Stefan Welz along with Susan Schaale in Leipzig. And, in Leipzig we will be joined by Angela and Patrick Neustatter, whom we last met when they visited Australia in January 2009. Angela (from England) and Patrick (from America) are the great-niece and great-nephew of HHR, and Lil's grandchildren.



Angela and Patrick Neustatter present HHR's desk to Chiltern Athenaeum in January 2009

If you are tempted to join us it's not too late, but you probably need to get organised soon.

Contact Graeme Charles if you would like to discuss any aspect of the tour (0411 422 557) or email: graemejcharles@gmail.com for more information.

Good news for one of our prize winners - Rebekah Clarkson's new book

Rebekah Clarkson, a prize winner in our 2014 Writing Competition will have a novel-in-stories, 'Barking Dogs', published by Affirm Press in February 2017.

Through stories following individual characters, Rebekah creates a portrait of a town in the midst of major change as it makes the painful transformation from rural idyll to aspirational suburbia. Behind the moving and sometimes quirky stories lies an unspeakable crime.

The writer Eva Hornung says of the book, 'Great art without flamboyance or ego, 'Barking Dogs' is an extraordinary first work of fiction.'



About Rebekah Clarkson:



Rebekah's short stories have been published widely and a number of her stories have been recognized in major awards in Australia and overseas. She has a BA in Aboriginal Studies and an MA and PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Adelaide, South Australia, where she works as a sessional academic and tutor in the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme. She has taught Fiction Writing at the University of Texas at Austin and runs creative writing workshops for adults and children at Writers' Centres and libraries.

The Society sends warm congratulations to Rebekah!

2017 Membership of the HHR Society

The membership fee is \$15, due on 1st January each year. Renewals can be paid 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:

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia,
c/- The Treasurer, HHRSA,
86/80 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford,
Victoria 3067.

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

AGM for the Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia – 26 March 2017 at 10.30 in the Maldon Community Centre 6 Francis Street, Maldon.

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President: Bill Steele

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Janey Runci

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Bronwyn Minifie,
Heather McNeill, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au