

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter April 2018



2018 Annual Oration:

'Marie Hansen: Musician and Friend of HHR' – by Rachel Solomon at Presbyterian Ladies College, Burwood – Saturday, June 2 at 2pm

For the first time the HHR Society will hold its oration at HHR's old school, Presbyterian Ladies College. The old and original PLC building that HHR attended in East Melbourne is long gone, demolished and replaced by the Dallas Brooks Hall, a Masonic Hall and scene of many concerts and speech nights for schools across Melbourne, which is itself being replaced by apartments presently. Interestingly the old building was diagonally opposite HHR's birthplace in Blanche Terrace.



PLC in East Melbourne as it was when HHR attended

HHR wrote enigmatically about her time at PLC in her memoir, *Myself When Young*:

I cannot remember ever being really happy at school. None the less I should have been sorry to miss a day of the four to five years I spent there.

The education provided was a very sound one, and in many ways ahead of its time; this I realised when I came to England and saw what was still considered good enough for the majority of English girls.

In 2001 *The Sun-Herald* named PLC as the best girls' school in Australia on the basis of the number of its alumni mentioned in *Who's Who in Australia*. Among these are HHR, Dame Nellie Melba and Vida Goldstein. Although PLC's original building is gone, their tradition lives on in their present situation in Burwood.

On the afternoon of Saturday June 2 in the Society's annual oration, Rachel Solomon will speak about another past student of PLC in her talk, 'Marie Hansen:

Musician and Friend of HHR'. Marie Hansen also studied music in Leipzig.

Rachel Solomon worked with Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele on the Richardson Project at Monash University and Richardson's short fiction was the subject of her PH D. Rachel is also a committee member for the HHRSA.



Rachel Solomon

The oration will be held in the Betty Caldwell Hall at PLC and the afternoon will include a visit to PLC's Heritage Centre. Light refreshments will be provided.

Parking will be available. An invitation will be sent shortly with further details of the parking.

Tram 75 leaves from Southern Cross and stops right outside PLC at Stop 61. The trip takes between 50-60 minutes, depending on traffic.

Visit of German members in July

Susan Schaale and Sebastien Fink will be in Australia in July. We plan to have a gathering in Melbourne near the end of July for all who would like to meet them, or to renew the acquaintance for those who went to Germany last year. More details to come.

Richardson's Readathon in Trentham – Sunday August 19 from 10-4

This unique event at the Trentham Neighbourhood Centre, in the heart of the historic village is shaping up very well under the guidance of HHR Committee

member and Trentham resident, Di Parsons. Di has been approaching libraries and book groups in the area encouraging them to read *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* in preparation. This is an opportunity for all of us to read this great work again, especially the first volume, *Australia Felix* which is largely set in the Ballarat goldfields.



*Janey Runci, Helen Macrae and Di Parsons enjoy a café discussion on *The Fortunes**

The day will begin at 10 am with a public screening of Bruce Beresford's film version of 'The Getting of Wisdom', introduced by film historian, Ina Bertrand and followed by discussion. Lunch will follow at 1pm with tea and coffee provided. Lunch options will be further advised.

At 2pm Delia Bradshaw will chair a panel of two speakers offering different perspectives on *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, followed by questions and discussion.

The day will conclude with afternoon tea.

There will be a bookstall including books by speakers and HHR members as well as HHR's books.

Any enquiries, or to register your interest, please contact Di - thebookcamel@gmail.com or 0448760563.

HHR Society in Queenscliff - Saturday March 24

An amazing day was had by all on our visit to Queenscliff in March, largely made possible by the preparatory work and coordination of Di Allen, a Queenscliff Museum member and also HHR Society member.

AGM at Circa, Queenscliff

The day began with a gathering at Circa (the former Queenscliff Inn), where proprietors Sally and Chris made us very welcome in our own meeting room looking out to Hesse Street, the main thoroughfare in the lovely old town of Queenscliff. An unexpected outcome from this happy occasion was that Sally and Chris are keen to promote and honour HHR and suggested that one room of the inn be called the HHR

room and include pictures, quotes etc. The Society looks forward to working with them to achieve this goal.

The AGM passed swiftly and painlessly. Below is the President's Report given at the meeting by Graeme Charles.



Graeme Charles, President

President's Report to AGM – March 24, 2018

2017 was yet another highly successful year for the Society. The undoubted highlight for the group of members who were fortunate enough to be able to travel, was the Society tour to Germany in May. Its success was due in no small part to the wonderful effort put in by two of our German members, Irmgard Heidler in Munich and Stefan Welz in Leipzig. Irmgard had just a month or so earlier been here in Australia, where she delivered our annual oration in Maldon during March. Stefan (and his family) will be visiting us next February when he spends about five weeks in Melbourne conducting further research on HHR at Monash University. This will be a great opportunity for us to repay in some small way, the wonderful hospitality we enjoyed in Leipzig under Stefan's care. Already we have been able to facilitate a house exchange in Melbourne for Stefan and his family.

On the same weekend that we held our annual oration in Maldon, the Castlemaine State Festival had organised an event focusing on HHR's writing, also in Maldon. Several members were able to attend that event as well as the oration on the following day.

Of course, earlier in the year on January 3 the HHR Birthday picnic tea was held at *Lake View* in Chiltern. This event is always well attended by Society members and others. The Society now generally makes a significant contribution in one way or another to the success of the picnic tea.

During the year, Janey Runci, continued her fine work producing our regular newsletters which seem to be getting better and better every time. She also continued to work with Varuna Writer's Centre thereby ensuring

that our HHR Writing Fellowship will be offered again in 2018.

Your committee takes every opportunity to develop and strengthen, whenever possible, our ties with all four Victorian country towns that the Richardsons once lived in—Chiltern, Queenscliff, Koroit and Maldon. Hence, we find ourselves today in Queenscliff sharing our HHR knowledge with the Queenscliffe Historical Museum.

As previously mentioned in our newsletters, we have commenced planning for our 2018 annual oration, which significantly this year, will be held at Presbyterian Ladies College in Burwood on Saturday June 2. I am delighted that we have been able to arrange for this event to take place at HHR's old school. It will be a special occasion. Later this year HHR will also be featured in Trentham as part of their annual Words in Winter festival.

I want to recognise the efforts made by all my fellow committee members, who meet regularly, in some cases travelling long distances to attend, and who all, bringing their particular skills with them, make a significant contribution to the running of the Society.

Graeme Charles (President), March 2018

Round the table brainstorming at Queenscliff

After the report we had round the table introductions of new members and old, and two people representing Queenscliff—Di Allen and the novelist, Dorothy Johnston who wrote and directed a re-enactment of the Richardson's family experience at the house in Mercer Street in 2016.



Dorothy Johnston at the Richardson re-enactment in 2016

Ideas flew thick and fast for ways to develop our connection with Queenscliff, but perhaps the most exciting thing that emerged is that Dorothy Johnston is presently writing a mystery novel set in Queenscliff and the victim is an HHR researcher! That should certainly generate interest in HHR. The next most exciting thing is that Dorothy has agreed to be the Queenscliff Historical Museum liaison person for the HHR Society.

Museum visit

After a cheerful lunch we went two doors down to the Museum and were treated to an impressive talk given by Maureen O'Neill. With the aid of carefully selected images Maureen brought to life the Richardson family's experience and the life of Queenscliff at the time.



Diana Allen and Maureen O'Neill

We saw the steamer that brought Walter to Queenscliff, Admans Hotel where he stayed at first, and Simpson's chemist that he frequented. We saw Dr Williams whose medical practice Walter took on, and whose house in Mercer Street the Richardson family inhabited. Of particular interest were the musings in 'Early Memories of Queenscliff' of Henry Dod from the family who supported Mary in her training as a postmistress after Walter could no longer work. Dod was pleased to identify himself as the character, young Mr Spence in the HHR novel, *Ultima Thule*. He wrote of HHR who'd he known as a child as 'the great star in the literary firmament'.

Maureen's talk was further enhanced by a tour of the Museum under the guidance of Lindsay Chatterton. We learnt more about the Dod family and also the Baillieu family who built the Ozone Hotel where HHR stayed on her only return visit to Australia in 1912.



Lindsay Chatterton

It was a great thrill to see HHR's photo in the cabinet about Dr Williams and the Mercer Street house.



HHR's photo and book beside the Mercer Street house

Our day concluded with Bill Brown's highly informative guided walk around the town where we saw among many things Adman's Hotel, Dod's farmhouse in Learmonth Street, St George's Church attended by the Richardson family, the house in Mercer Street and the Ozone Hotel.



Bill Brown guiding our group

Bill went to some trouble to help us imagine Queenscliff as it was in the 1870s when the land was clear behind the Mercer Street house mostly down to Swan Bay.



Back of the Mercer Street house at an earlier time

Many thanks to Di, Dorothy, Maureen, Lindsay and Bill and others at the Museum who made it such a special visit and the beginning of a wonderful connection between the HHR Society and the QHM.

As one of our members said at the end of the day, 'Apart from HHR I feel I've learnt more about Queenscliff today than all the times I've come here. I just want to keep coming back.'

A truly international society

In the last newsletter Clive Probyn said about the Society: 'Like HHR herself, the Society has enjoyed an international audience from the very beginning. The recent tour of Germany shows the depth of this.'

One of the many outcomes of the 2017 tour of Germany was the friendship established between our German members.

Letter from Leipzig

The following is a letter received from Stefan Welz, Professor of English Literature at Leipzig University, and Fabian Dellemann, co-translator with Stefan of HHR's novel, *Maurice Guest* into German. The letter is a response to a donation made on behalf of the HHR Society by a member who wishes to remain anonymous.



Stefan Welz on the left and Fabian Dellemann reading from 'Maurice Guest' to Society members from Australia in Leipzig

Dear President Graeme Charles,

With deeply felt gratitude Fabian Delleman and I would like to thank you and all the members of the Henry Handel Richardson Society for the generous donation we received. The money will support our project of a new German translation and publication of Henry Handel Richardson's first novel Maurice Guest. Your donation is not only a welcome financial contribution to a challenging project but also a moral obligation to complete it in best quality and to promote it with all our strength. Last but not least it is a proof of the power of shared ideas and ideals no matter how great the geographical distance might be that separates us.

The visit of a group of members of the Henry Handel Richardson Society in Leipzig in May 2017 was a particular pleasure for us. We saw it as an

encouragement of our efforts of making HHR's Leipzig heritage known and keeping it alive. We enjoyed the group's interest in HHR's Leipzig as well as in the city of today, and we, too, have profited a great deal from the enthusiasm and knowledge of our Australian friends. Out of this shared experience resulted the idea of a direct support for the translation project. We are very glad that it did materialize, and we are looking forward to presenting, hopefully, the publication to you and the HHR Society in 2019.

Once more we say thank you for your generosity.

With all our best wishes for the success of your further activities –

Stefan Welz and Fabian Dellemann

Leipzig, then and now

For another angle on Leipzig – an article by HHR Society member in England, Roger Buckley who travelled with his wife to Leipzig to follow in the footsteps of the composer, Delius and HHR.



Roger Buckley

'Had it not been that there were great opportunities for hearing music and talking music, and that I met Grieg, my studies at Leipzig were a complete waste of time' – so remarked the composer Frederick Delius (1862-1934) of his time at the Conservatorium of Music in Leipzig. Delius—then still known by his baptismal name of Fritz—enrolled at the Conservatorium in October 1886 and left in April 1888, which was a whole year before HHR's enrolment at Leipzig in April 1889; she left in April 1892. There was therefore no overlap between the two, who probably never met. Nevertheless, in HHR's *Maurice Guest*, set in the Leipzig that they both knew so well, we can learn much about the city itself and about musical and student life at Mendelssohn's renowned Conservatorium, which was at that time the most prestigious musical academy in Europe.

Despite Delius's withering conclusion on the value of his 18 months in Leipzig, his notebooks and reports indicate that he was for the most part a hard-working

student. As he admits, his meeting with Grieg, who became a sort of musical father to him, and being steeped in music for every minute of every day, were benefits; and we can now see that they were priceless.



Delius in Leipzig

Much has changed in Leipzig since the time of the studies of Delius and HHR. The city was severely damaged by Allied bombing towards the end of World War II; also, some important buildings were neglected or destroyed during the Soviet occupation that maintained power from the end of the war until the 'peaceful revolution' overthrew it, heralding the reunification of Germany in 1990. These included the university church, the Paulinerkirche, a beautiful 13th century building that survived the bombing, only to be dynamited by the communist administration in 1968. Post-war Soviet-style utilitarian architecture is to be seen in fewer parts of the city centre nowadays but it persists in the dour housing blocks of some of the outer suburbs. Imaginative new buildings, such as the glass-fronted University, situated between the Gewandhaus and the Opera House on Augustusplatz, the main square, have lent the city a new vibrancy.



*5 Harkortstrasse, Leipzig, December 2013
(Photo © Roger Buckley)*

Delius's lodgings for most of his stay in Leipzig were centrally placed at 5 Harkortstrasse, one of the main arterial roads of the city. The house is substantial and remains in good condition. It is in largely commercial use now (2014), though the bell plate indicates that there are six private apartments on the top floor, where the young Englishman resided.

The riotous 1887 Christmas Eve party at which Edvard and Nina Grieg, Christian Sinding, Johan Halvorsen and Fritz Delius entertained themselves with music and a hamper of food and strong drink provided by Max Abraham, Grieg's publisher, took place at Grieg's lodgings in 'Hertelstrasse', according to Delius's account of the event dictated years later to Percy Grainger. My wife and I looked for, but could not find, Hertelstrasse, though Härtelstrasse (which could sound similar when dictated) offered itself as an alternative. This street is situated quite close to the centre of town, being near to Harkortstrasse and the sites of the old Conservatorium and the Panorama Restaurant, so it would fit the perception we have that Delius and Grieg had lodgings in quite close proximity.

Härtelstrasse is a street of fine large houses, typically with four or five floors, similar in appearance to those in Harkortstrasse. The even numbers are on the north side and numbers 4 and 12 are still there, but there is a yawning gap between them which is currently (in January 2014) being filled by much less distinguished modern buildings; of number 8 (where the Griegs had their apartment) there is now no trace.

The Panorama Restaurant, to which Delius and the Griegs repaired after their first introduction, accompanied by Christian Sinding, and which they were to visit again many times, has also, sadly, disappeared. The 1884 city map establishes where it stood, and the area can still be identified as a clearing south of the Ross Platz (still so-named, and part of the Martin-Luther-Ring). It is impossible to say, merely by looking, whether its disappearance resulted from Allied bombing or whether it happened during the construction of the Martin-Luther-Ring. The name 'Panorama' has been perpetuated, however, in the 'Panorama Tower', a high-rise building on Augustusplatz, near the University, Gewandhaus and Opera, which has a restaurant on the 29th floor from which there is a splendid view over the city.

Leipzig is a fine city with a long history. It is home to the oldest trade fair in Europe. The foundation of its university in 1409 led in time to the city becoming a centre of printing, publishing and book selling, and the Imperial Court of Justice was located here. In the 19th century, rapid industrialization resulted in a building boom, which explains the wealth of buildings in art nouveau, neo-classical and other historical styles, both private and official, that are a defining feature of the city. Cotton spinning was formerly a major industry.

'Gewandhaus', which could be translated as 'cloth hall', is the name now associated with the city's world-famous symphony orchestra which dates back to 1743.

Music is perhaps, to those outside the city, Leipzig's best-known claim to fame. Johann Sebastian Bach was cantor here for 27 years and is buried beneath the altar of the Thomaskirche. In 1840 the newly married Robert and Clara Schumann made their home in an elegant house in Inselstrasse and Felix Mendelssohn lived not far away with his family from 1835 until his death in 1847. Richard Wagner was born in the city in 1813 and later attended Leipzig University. The city's most durable and exportable musical credential, however, must be the Conservatorium of Music that Mendelssohn founded in 1843. It was originally situated in the courtyard of the Altes Gewandhaus, the concert hall on the top floor of the trading hall and guildhall of Leipzig's cloth merchants that had opened in 1781. There the concert hall remained until the inauguration of the Neues Gewandhaus on Beethovenstrasse in 1884. The Conservatorium moved to a new location on Grassstrasse in December 1887, where it remains to this day, now named the 'Hochschule für Musik und Theater Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy' (the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy College of Music and Theatre). It seems reasonable to assume that its old building was pulled down, along with the Altes Gewandhaus, in 1894. The Neues Gewandhaus was destroyed in the bombing of 1944 and the orchestra performed in a number of alternative venues until the current, *second* Neues Gewandhaus was opened on Augustusplatz in 1981.

As mentioned above, Delius enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatorium (then rejoicing in the name 'Königliches Konservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig', the Royal Conservatory of Music of Leipzig) in October 1886. He left in April 1888, and so he would have attended both the old and the new buildings. The move must have been an unwelcome distraction for students and staff alike; perhaps this disruption contributed to the disillusionment with the institution that he often expressed.

Though HHR's *Maurice Guest* is a work of fiction, one of the main characters, a musician of genius and the hero's arch-rival, is named 'Eugene Schilsky'. Philip Heseltine, in one of the earliest biographies of Delius, informs us that a fellow-student of Delius's, 'regarded everywhere as the rising genius', was one Édouard Schilsky. Janey Runci, in her article in the HHRSA Newsletter (September 2017, page 4) tells us that the Robertsons' neighbour in the flat adjoining theirs on Thorwaldsenstrasse in Munich was 'a composer named Edward Schilsky'. Were they, I wonder, one and the same person, and what became of this 'rising genius'?

(adapted from an article by Roger Buckley in *The Delius Society Journal*, 155 (2014), 66-68)

Is this you? - Message from our Treasurer, Helen Macrae

The HHR Society is looking for someone who paid their 2018 membership subscription on January 30 from a Bendigo Bank account by electronic transfer but did not include their name.

Contact Helen Macrae at helen.macrae@bigpond.com

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President: Janey Runci

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Heather McNeill

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au