

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc

Newsletter February 2018



Society Gathering and AGM at Queenscliff: March 24, 11am-4pm

The 2018 AGM will be held in Queenscliff as part of our endeavour to visit and learn more about the various towns where HHR spent her childhood.

In the fine Society tradition of combining pleasure with our more earnest activities we will meet at Circa, 59 Hesse Street (formerly the Queenscliff Inn) at 11 am to hold the meeting and partake of food and drink and merriment. Then onto the Queenscliff Museum at 49 Hesse Street around 1.30 pm for a guided tour of the collection by a member of the Queenscliff Historical Society followed by a walking tour of relevant sites.

Please come and join us in exploring the world that HHR inhabited for a short but very significant time, and wrote about in *Myself When Young*, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* and in short stories.

HHR in Queenscliff

HHR lived at 26 Mercer Street, Queenscliff from 1877-8 when her father worked briefly in the town as the Health Officer.



26 Mercer Street

While there Ettie and Lil went as often as possible to the sea baths where they were known as 'the little fishes'. By June 1878 their father was relieved of all his duties because of the severe decline in his health. Subsequently their mother, Mary trained as a postmistress at the Telegraph Office in Queenscliff and the family moved to Koroit where Mary took her first position in September 1878.



Health Officer's boat



Sea baths Queenscliff



Ozone Hotel, Queenscliff

HHR returned to Queenscliff in 1912 on her only return trip to Australia to do research for *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. This time she stayed at the Ozone Hotel on Gellibrand Street.

10-year Celebration Event at Hub 62

Celebration of the HHR Society's 10th anniversary (2008-2018) began when a very happy group gathered at 'Hub 62' in Chiltern on 3 January 2018 at 3 pm to enjoy lively company, interesting talks, champagne and fine food.



Some of the crowd at Hub 62

A highlight of the afternoon was the first 'showing' of the Society's new banner and A-Frame which were much admired by all who attended.



New HHR Society banner



The new A-frame

The A-Frame was put to excellent use on the pavement, providing a clear direction for those attending the event, and to our great pleasure to some passers-by who decided to join us. The tall banner was a central feature inside.



Diane Mayhew, Helen Macrae, Frances Newbound and Kevin Mayhew under the watchful eye of HHR on the brand new banner

Many thanks to Fiona Larkings of WWWART Design Services in Beechworth who created the designs for the banner and the A-Frame and managed every part of the process right up to the delivery of the finished product in her usual efficient manner. Fiona also looks after the HHR website.

Society President, Graeme Charles opened proceedings with a warm welcome and an account of the famed meeting when the Society was formed around the kitchen table of Rex and Mary Fuge in January, 2008. It was noted that of the pioneer group of six—Rex and Mary, Clive and Meg Probyn, and Graeme and Dot Charles—all were present in 2018 except sadly for Rex who died in 2014.

Graeme also commented on the dual strands that led to the formation of the Society. One strand was the devotion of the people of Chiltern firstly to save *Lake View* and then to care for it, and the other was the Monash Richardson Project.

Andrew Gilmour and Beryl Pickering spoke about the first aspect and Clive Probyn spoke about the Richardson Project.

The Saving of *Lake View* – HHR's childhood home



Andrew Gilmour speaking at Hub 62

Andrew Gilmour's family have a long association with Chiltern and the Richardson family. Members of the Gilmour family are mentioned in the letters between Richardson's parents (see *Marriage Lines* by Meg Probyn), and one of his aunts was named Florence after HHR, whose name was Ethel Florence Richardson.

Andrew spoke of the building of *Lake View* with handmade bricks on the typical sub-soil clay of Chiltern and the cracks that developed over the years so that by the 1960s the empty house was in a state of sorry disrepair. Andrew was part of an active group working for the preservation of the house, at one point needing to establish that the house was actually the one the Richardsons had lived in. This information was obtained from Olga Roncoroni, HHR's long term

companion, who produced a photo of *Lake View* taken by HHR on her return trip to Australia in 1912.

When the house was condemned for demolition the owner donated it to the National Trust in 1966 and the Trust undertook a very expensive refurbishing before the opening on HHR's birthday, 3 January 1970. That day became the first of an unbroken line of celebrating HHR's birthday with a picnic tea at *Lake View*.



Lake View

From the manager of *Lake View*, Beryl Pickering



Beryl Pickering speaking at Hub 62

Beryl Pickering is the devoted manager of *Lake View*, renowned for many things, including the morning and afternoon teas she rustles up for various occasions at the house. In her work she has the pleasure of welcoming a range of fascinating visitors. In a recent email she told me of a 91 year old Anglican priest who just fancied coming to Chiltern for the day on the train. He spent two hours at *Lake View* and then took the afternoon train back!

Occasionally a visitor comes with knowledge of the house. In her talk at Hub 62 on 3rd January, Beryl spoke about one such recent visitor, John Gray.

'John Gray from Wagga came to *Lake View* a few months ago. Since then he has sent me the family histories of the Hancock and Tanner families of which he is a descendant.

John and Maryanne Kinnear married in England and migrated to Australia with Maryanne's mother who was on her own.

Lake View was built from money given to Maryanne by Charles Hancock, John's brother who lived in Yackandahah.

Maryanne and John had seven children when they moved into *Lake View* and in 1875 George, their eighth child was born and Maryanne died giving birth to him.

After this the house we all know was let to the Richardsons. It's not clear why John and family and his mother-in-law left *Lake View*, whether it was economic or emotional reasons.

George thrived and became a coach builder and lived in High Street and Oxford Street in Chiltern.

Some years later John moved back to *Lake View* and his eldest child, Mary Bennett Hancock, who was born in Richmond in 1865 married James Tanner in 1894 and they made *Lake View* their home. Her father John lived at the back of the house in a shed which was possibly converted stables. This Mary was the grandmother of John Gray who has given me all this information.

Lake View has been leased to many families, doctors and clergy and teachers. There is a period of six years when the Education Department held the lease and let the house to new teachers in Chiltern.

The painted white wall outside the dining room had a lean to with shower and small laundry. Three different families have said what is now the kitchen used to be the garage when they lived there and there was a wood stove in one of the fireplaces with the flue going up the chimney.

Obviously when the Trust took over *Lake View* they converted it back to a proper kitchen in keeping with when the Richardsons lived there.

We just never know who will walk through the door next, each with a story to tell and memories to share.'

The Book Stall

A successful innovation at our various events over the last couple of years has been the book stall where we are able to sell some of HHR's books *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, *The Getting of Wisdom* and *Maurice Guest*—provided at a very reasonable rate by Text Publishing from their Classic series. The books are \$10 each and make a wonderful gift. Also on sale are copies of the booklet 'Henry Handel Richardson in Maldon' (\$15), the 'HHR in Maldon' calico bags (\$5), HHR postcards (\$1), and the HHR DVD (\$10).

Di Parsons, new Society member and herself a bookseller from Trentham, took charge of the table at Hub 62 on 3rd January.



Di Parsons at the book stall

HHR birthday picnic tea at *Lake View*

HHR Society President Graeme Charles welcomed all to the 48th annual celebration of HHR's birthday at *Lake View* on January 3, with a special mention of Ian Fraser who was unable to attend last year because of ill health.



Ian Fraser



Picnic in the gardens

We were entertained by bush poet, Lazy Harry, otherwise known as Mark Stephens from Beechworth who gave a rousing performance, with enthusiastic audience participation, followed by an informative talk from Helen Allen, president off those sterling supporters of *Lake View* - the North-East Auxiliary of the National Trust.



Bush poet, Lazy Harry



Helen Allen

Helen Allen's address

I'm delighted to be here and to tell you about the North East Auxiliary of the National Trust, which has been

operative for many, many years. Our members are mature age women, some of whom remember their mothers attending meetings.

We hold a lunch and meeting 4 times a year, usually with a guest speaker, have one main fund-raiser and a 3-day trip away each October. The venues for our meetings are spread across the northeast as our members are from Beechworth, Albury, Corowa, Rutherglen, Yarrawonga and Shepparton and smaller places in between.

At the beginning of the year our secretary issues a newsletter outlining the year's programme and the attendance notification dates for each meeting.

Our main fundraiser is a film day at Swanpool Theatre; members cater for a basket lunch with wine and nibbles on arrival and several raffles. At the completion of the film surplus sandwiches and slices are sold. Attendance is close to 200 and last year we were worried that we'd have to start turning people away.

All money goes directly to the upkeep of Lakeview; since 2011 we have spent \$36,880 – a figure that surprised our treasurer and myself. We've been able to give money for repairs and maintenance, restoration of the summer house roof, replastering, replacement of guttering and veranda floor boards as well as a vacuum cleaner and lawn mower to assist Beryl Pickering and her helpers.

HHR members in the area please come along. You'd be most welcome.

Morning after breakfast and committee meeting

Once again an enthusiastic group sat around a table as happened in 2008, and this time we discussed what would be our goals for the next 10 years. Here they are below.



Nine good ideas for the next ten years:

1. 2020 will be the 150 anniversary of the birth of HHR. This will offer the opportunity for special celebrations and promotions

2. The creation of 5 minute film interviews with key persons
3. Building a pictorial archive for the Society, including all birthday party photos that can be collected.
4. Building an oral history archive for the Society. Brigid Magner offered to train as an interviewer and train others to work with her. Next year's birthday would be an opportunity to record interviews.
5. Production of brochures for all HHR towns to hand out to visitors
6. Lobby for the production of a TV mini-series and/or feature film and/or performance of Michael Gow's play of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*
7. 'A gift to Victoria' – Clive Probyn pointed out that all of HHR's residences in Victoria still stand and would be a great basis for something—a documentary, a Richardson Tour/pilgrimage, an app and so forth. Brigid will investigate whether RMIT students could develop an app along these lines.
8. Di Parsons hopes it will be possible to include a Richardson component in the 2018 central Victoria *Words in Winter* festival. Focus would be on Trentham and Daylesford. It could take the form of a talk/a district wide book group discussion, the creation of a read version available free online, and so forth.
9. We may be able to collaborate with the North Eastern National Trust Women's Auxiliary on initiatives (above) that involve a partnership with *Lake View*.

The Best Film I Never Made - a review of Bruce Beresford's book by Di Parsons

The Best Film I Never Made is a recent book by HHR Society Patron, the film director, Bruce Beresford. Published in 2017, the book contains essays, short memoirs, recollections, stories, yarns and anecdotes relating to Beresford's 'life in the arts'.

Like other masters of their arts, Beresford woke very early to his lifetime ambition. His passion grew from his regular childhood visits to 'the pictures' in the 1940s, in the suburbs west of Sydney where he grew up. His home life was far from idyllic or encouraging of his interests, but he loved the cinema, recognising the central role of directors like the American John Ford in creating stories 'told with warmth and charm...that would move and entertain people'.

The book traces Beresford's 'apprenticeship' in the business of film with stories about his first few years in the theatre at Sydney University and his entry into the arts in London where he landed a job with the British Film Institute. That job took him to Nigeria where he worked as a film editor.

Luckily he made *The Getting of Wisdom* in 1978 and therefore contributed significantly to HHR's legacy to Australia. Beresford has maintained his enthusiasm for our beloved author, ending his collection with the 'hope' that *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* might yet find its way onto Australian screens, perhaps as a television miniseries. As Society members we might ask ourselves: what can we do to make this happen?



The cover

The book is full of tales of friendships and working partnerships. Barry Humphries falls into both categories, collaborating with Beresford to make his first feature *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* in 1976. It was not until *Breaker Morant* in 1979 that Beresford gained the critical recognition so important to a film director's career.

Bruce Beresford, *The Best Film I Never Made & other stories about a life in the arts*, Text Publishing, 2107 (paperback)

Letter to the Press – Richard Mahony on a screen near you?

Hot on the trail Di Parsons followed her review with a letter to *The Age*, seeing it as part of 'our long campaign to get Mahony on a screen near you.' Unfortunately *The Age* chose not to publish it:

Dear Editor

These sad tales of sexual misconduct keep on exploding along the fissures of our society, now into Ballarat and the 'Dr Blake' TV series. ('McLauchlan show allegations emerge', *The Age*, 13/1/2018)

If the series dies, as seems likely, there is something much better for Ballarat, the industry, and viewers, waiting in the wings.

It is time investors (governments included) got behind a TV miniseries of that great Australian novel *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* written by Henry Handel

Richardson. The story starts on the Ballarat goldfields at the time of Eureka and explores pressing, ever-present matters of human frailty and social change.

The eminent Australian film director, Bruce Beresford has been pushing *The Fortunes* for years, and he has a script in hand. It is now forty years since Beresford made *The Getting of Wisdom*, also based on a novel by HHR. Other countries celebrate their great literary masterpieces (think *War and Peace*, Jane Austen, Dickens et al); why should Australia hide its light?

Can this black cloud yield a silver lining?

Yours faithfully,

Dianne Parsons

A letter from our Treasurer, Helen Macrae

Dear HHRSA Society newsletter recipient

Thank you for your interest in the Henry Handel Richardson Society and we hope you enjoy reading our newsletters. Our newsletter email list is not a membership list. We have about 60 members but send the newsletter to around 120 individuals.

Membership is an expression of support for our objectives, and entitles you to vote at AGMs. If you'd like a copy of the rules where membership entitlements are set out, please let us know and we'll email you a copy.

Our objectives: to stimulate the enjoyment, study and general interest in the works of Henry Handel Richardson.

The cost of membership is \$15 per person per year, and 2018 membership subscriptions are now due. Our annual cash flow is small, so membership fees are really welcome. They enable us to do more.

Overseas members don't pay a membership fee.

A membership fee paid by new members after 30th June 2017, lasts to the end of 2018

We prefer subscriptions to be paid into our account by direct debit.

But make sure your name appears on the deposit.

BSB 803 070

A/c No 77605

Otherwise a cheque can be mailed to:

HHRSA

Unit 86/80 Trenerry Crescent

Abbotsford 3067

We won't post a receipt unless you ask for one.

Helen Macrae

Coming in our next issue . . .

Read about our truly international Society with a letter from the translators into German of *Maurice Guest*, Stefan Welz and Fabian Dellemann in Leipzig, and an article by English member, Roger Buckley about the Leipzig of Delius and HHR.

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President: Janey Runci

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Heather McNeill

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsociety.org.au