

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter June 2018



The Society at PLC: June 2, 2018

Excitement reigned on June 2 as Society members and others gathered at Presbyterian Ladies College in Burwood for our annual oration.

Our warm and generous hosts at the school had prepared a feast for us, both culinary and cultural. The work began a few months before the event when HHR Society Committee members met with three tireless workers from PLC. Julie Schroeder (Executive Officer, Community Relations), Janet Davies (Heritage Centre Manager), and Jane Dyer (Archivist Librarian) joined enthusiastically with us to plan the event, offering all kinds of assistance, including the design and creation of the invitation that went out to members.



Society member, Andrew Gilmour with Janet Davies who curated the HHR exhibition

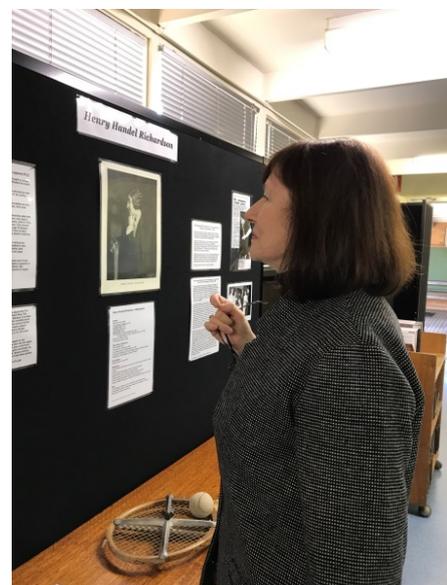
On the day of the event signage was provided by the school at the various entrances, as well as PLC students to guide us, and even a buggy car to transport Andrew Gilmour in style from the front gate to the Museum and the Betty Caldwell hall where the events were held.

PLC Museum and Archives

The day began at 1.30 in the Museum where Janet Davies had done amazing work in transforming the space to include an extensive exhibition of Richardson memorabilia. For an hour we were able to wander and peruse the material spread in display cases and on boards and tables in the three large rooms, and to absorb some of the history and spirit and achievements of this school that so shaped HHR. There were photos, lists of Richardson's own compositions in *Patchwork* (the PLC student magazine that is still produced today), as well as reference to her achievements in a range of subjects, including music, and in tennis.



A window from the old PLC in East Melbourne that HHR attended, now at the Burwood school



Society member, Anne Vines studying one of the display boards. Notice the old tennis racket on the table

The display also included various projects undertaken by PLC students as a tribute to HHR, including a re-enactment of *The Getting of Wisdom*, and a cd of her music to mark the school's 130th anniversary celebration.



The rooms were humming with animated conversations.



PLC archivist, Jane Dyer with Society members, Dot Charles and Gloria Banks

A number of members had travelled some distance to come to the event. Graeme and Gloria Banks, Rhonda Summerfield and Mary Fuge made the trip from Chiltern, Barbara Findlayson from Bendigo, Dorothy Johnston from Point Lonsdale, Di Parsons from Trentham, and Graeme and Dot Charles from Wonthaggi.



Barbara Findlayson, HHR scholar, Society member and past student of PLC with the uniform she wore as a girl

Musical Performance and the HHR Annual Oration

At 2.30 we gathered for the oration in the splendid Betty Caldwell Hall where we were welcomed by PLC principal, Dawn Clements. Dawn spoke of the school's pleasure at the link with the HHR Society and referred to HHR as a 'celebrated old collegian, author and musician'.

After this we were treated to a performance of one of HHR's songs by a PLC student, accompanied by a member of the school music staff.



PLC music student, Jane, singing the HHR song

Society president, Graeme Charles addressed the gathering next and spoke of the foundation of the Society in 2008 and its activities since, and our gratitude and pleasure at the relationship with HHR's old school in the promotion of her work. He emphasised that PLC could take credit for two people from the Richardson family, outlining Lil's achievements as well.



Graeme Charles, HHR Society president

In his introduction to Dr Rachel Solomon's oration Graeme Charles told the story of the Society's visit to the archives of the Leipzig Conservatorium in 2017 and the question that arose about other Australian students who were there at the same time as HHR in the 1880s. You may remember Graeme's article 'Why no Aussie friends in Leipzig?' in the HHR Society newsletter of July 2017.

(Past newsletters can be read on our website www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au under 'News and Events'.)

Rachel Solomon took up the challenge of researching this matter, focussing especially on HHR's fellow PLC student, Marie Hansen.

In a fascinating analysis of the friendship and lives of HHR and Marie Hansen and their musical study and careers Rachel drew out a number of similarities and also significant differences. With a quote from *Patchwork* (the PLC student magazine we'd seen in the museum) in 1887, we were plunged into the schoolgirl world, both actual and fictional, where HHR and Marie's long friendship began. Drawing on HHR's letters, fiction and memoir, and accounts from others such as HHR's Leipzig housemate, Matilda Main, as well as extensive research on Marie Hansen, Rachel

probed and revealed much of the nature and story of the long friendship that lasted until Marie's death in 1943, and the effect that this friendship had on HHR's fiction, especially *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom*. Rachel explored the ways Marie may have informed the creation of the characters of Madeleine in *Maurice Guest* and Mary Pidwall in *The Getting of Wisdom*.



Dr Rachel Solomon delivers the 2018 oration: 'Marie Hansen: Musician and Friend of HHR'

The text of Rachel's oration will eventually be available on the website for all to pore over the intriguing details of the outcomes of her investigations and analysis.

The oration was greeted with great applause and the room was abuzz as we sipped champagne and partook of the wonderful food provided by PLC.

We can't thank PLC enough for their support and hospitality, and we look forward to continuing productive relations with HHR's old school.

Talk on HHR and Spiritualism— July 2nd in Bendigo

Barbara Findlayson, Society member and HHR scholar will be addressing a philosophy group on July 2 at 5.30 pm in the Old Church on the Hill at 36 Russell Street, Quarry Hill.

Her topic is: 'Henry Handel Richardson, a Secret Life.'

Barbara's introduction: 'It is widely known that Dr Walter Richardson, father of Henry Handel Richardson, was an active Spiritualist. What is less well known is

that HHR was also an ardent Spiritualist and that she went to great lengths to conceal this from the public. I question why this is so and where the knowledge about her deep belief comes from.'

Philosophy group members will gather for drinks/dinner afterwards at the nearby Queen's Arms Hotel. All welcome to join them.

German members visit Australia in July

Only a few weeks now until our German members, Susan Schaale and Sebastian Finke arrive in Australia. Susan studied under Professor Stefan Welz in Leipzig and completed her Masters' thesis on HHR's use of Leipzig in *Maurice Guest*. A visit to Maldon is planned for July 24th to show the visitors one of the towns where HHR lived as a child. Anyone who would like to meet Susan and Sebastian is welcome to join us in Maldon for lunch on that day. RSVP to Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com



Maldon Post Office where HHR lived from 1880-86

Susan and Sebastian will be in Melbourne from July 21-27. If you'd like to meet them or offer hospitality but can't make it to Maldon on July 24 contact Janey Runci at j.runci@bigpond.com

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

Plans are progressing well for this unique event taking place in Victorian goldfields country, the setting that HHR used for *Australia Felix*, the first volume of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. This is a great opportunity for you and/or your book group to read or reread *Australia Felix*, or even the whole trilogy and come along for the discussion. Or perhaps you'll come along to be **inspired** to read this wonderful work. What better way to spend a winter's day than in a warm room with friends watching a film and hearing and talking about HHR and her work?

The program is as follows:

10 am: Viewing of Bruce Beresford's film, *The Getting of Wisdom*, introduced by film historian, Ina Bertrand, and followed by discussion

1 pm: Lunch (Tea and coffee will be provided and you can either BYO lunch or order it from a local caterer. Details available soon.)

2 pm: Panel talks by Ballarat historian, Richard Trembath, and literary tourism scholar, Brigid Magner offering different perspectives on the reading of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. This will be followed by questions and discussion.

The event is part of the Words in Winter program.

For enquiries or to register interest contact Di Parsons on thebookcamel@gmail.com or 0448760563.

HHR's great niece in Australia - January 3, 2019

We are thrilled to hear that Angela Neustatter, HHR's great niece and granddaughter of HHR's sister, Lil, will be joining us from London at our HHR birthday celebration on January 3 at Lake View in Chiltern in 2019. Angela is presently working on a book about the two sisters and we look forward to hearing more about this.



Patrick and Angela Neustatter, great nephew and niece of HHR

Lil's grave – plans for the England/Wales trip in late 2019

Patrick and Angela Neustatter went on a journey to find their grandmother Lil's grave in Wales and Patrick's article about this appeared in our newsletter of November 2017. (See 'News and Events' section on our website.) Graeme Charles has continued with the search and been successful. Andy Clayton from Conwy Council has provided a plan of Rhandir Head cemetery with Lil's grave marked. He has also offered to meet us

on the proposed trip to England and Wales at the end of next year.

You may remember Graeme's article about the Richardson family graves in the newsletter of September 2017.



Lil as a young girl

Welcome to our new members – Jane Moodie, Kym Tyzack, Jenny Thompson

Jane Moodie from Carlton, Victoria

Kym Tyzack from Wallington, Victoria



Kym Tyzack

Kym read about HHR on the Varuna website. She lives in Wallington on the Bellarine Peninsula and works as an English teacher. She enjoys writing and has an interest in Australian writers, especially women. She

hasn't read HHR's work for a long time but is heading towards semi-retirement and sees the Society as a great way to rekindle her appreciation when she has more time to please herself.

Jenny Thompson from Largs Bay in South Australia

Jenny is a cricket journalist who feels a special link with HHR as she shares her nickname, as well as a love of writing. Jenny's nickname is derived from playing in a men's cricket team in England, called the Celeriacs. She became Celerietta and over time became Etta. Hopefully Jenny will be able to join us for events in Victoria, or maybe create some in South Australia?

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President: Janey Runci

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Heather McNeill

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonssociety.org.au