

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter April 2019



The Welz family visit to Australia

The highlight of the last month for the Society has been the visit of Stefan Welz, Professor of English Literature at Leipzig University and translator into German of HHR's novel, *Maurice Guest*. There were a number of opportunities, both formal and informal for members and friends to meet Stefan and his lovely family – wife, Christine Carrot (also a lecturer at Leipzig University) and his delightful children, Elisa and Gabriel.



Gabriel, Elisa and Christine at PLC

After a short stay in Sydney the Welz family visited Clive and Meg Probyn at Mittagong and were treated to the Shoalhaven, Fitzroy Falls, Kangaroo Valley and a German WWI POW camp in Berrima, NSW, before they came to Melbourne. During this time with the Probyns Stefan made a presentation to the Society as reported below.

A special gift from Professor Stefan Welz to the Society (by Clive Probyn)

December 1931 saw the publication of HHR's musical setting of what she described as 'An old German Carol'—*Christkindleins Wiegenlied*. She signed two hundred and fifty copies, fifty copies being kept for private distribution, and each had a unique Javanese style of binding. One of her own copies, inscribed in pencil to her husband, John George Robertson, was inscribed using their nicknames for each other (just

seventeen months before his death in 1933): 'For Nub from Pif.'



Stefan Welz (right) makes the presentation to Clive Probyn for the Society

This copy remained in the HHR estate, passing from Olga Roncoroni to HHR's literary executor Margaret Capon. On 21 May 1992 Margaret Capon of Bexhill-on-Sea presented this copy to the world famous novelist, the Lyme Regis author of *The Collector*, *The Magus*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles (1922-2004). He was the curator of Lyme Regis Museum from 1979-1988, and had moved to an impressive house in the town called Belmont in 1968, where he was evidently compiling an 'archive.'



Christkindleins Wiegenlied

At Leipzig University, Professor Stefan Welz is currently engaged in translating *Maurice Guest* into German. He has most generously presented this fascinating copy of the carol to the Society. It carries the bookplate of John Fowles. As to the carol itself, Margaret Capon, a music teacher for many years in Bexhill, made the following observation in 1992: ‘HHR did all the writing, but the music notation was not done by her, and isn’t always too clear . . . if anyone plays it over they will probably be taken unawares at first playing.’

We too have been (pleasantly) taken unawares—by Stefan’s gift. We wish him and his family a safe return to Leipzig and a successful conclusion to his translation project. I am sure we shall keep in touch.

The Heritage Centre, a Choir, a Fellowship Winner and the HHR Annual Oration at PLC

On March 16 the Society gathered, as we did in 2018, to hear the annual oration at HHR’s old school, PLC, or at least at the newer buildings and site in Burwood of this renowned school, along with friends and staff and old collegians from PLC itself.

The afternoon was a great success, thanks to many people. First and foremost thanks to those at PLC who once again offered such generous and gracious hospitality. Julie Schroeder (Executive Officer of Community Relations) with the resources of the school assisted in organising from the beginning with the design and creation of the invitation, publicity to Old Collegians from PLC, and then with the detailed organisation of the day.



Jane Rogers (Archivist Librarian) and Julie Schroeder

The catering staff had been busy, with tables beautifully set up ready to provide nourishment during the hour before the formal events began. This was especially appreciated by those who had travelled long distances from across Victoria – from Chiltern, Wonthaggi, Trentham and Bendigo, and of course, the Welz family from Germany.

The Heritage Centre

From 1-2 pm we were also able to peruse the display at the Heritage Centre, with particular focus on HHR, prepared by Janet Davies (Heritage Centre Manager) and Jane Rogers. Of particular interest was a collection of PLC *Patchwork* magazines from 1883-6 containing all the records referring to HHR (‘Ettie’ at the time) and her writing.



Elisa Welz and Janet Davies

The Little Choir



The Little Choir at PLC

The first event was a performance by the Little Choir from Trentham who gave such a wonderful rendering of some of HHR's songs at Words in Winter in August, 2018. If anything, the choir's performance seemed even more inspired this time, finishing with a German lullaby.

At the end of this moving performance conductor Val Goodwin introduced each member of the choir and the accompanist. What a fascinating and admirable group of people from this small town in the goldfields of central Victoria, that area where Walter Richardson first came when he arrived in Australia in 1852 and where HHR spent six significant years of her childhood, and where the fictional character of Richard Mahony began his years in Australia.

The Fellowship Winner

Next on the program was Imbi Neeme, winner of the second Henry Handel Richardson Fellowship in partnership with the National Writers Centre at Varuna in NSW.

Imbi spoke of the honour of winning this award in the name of such a writer as HHR, and of appreciation for the time it would give her to develop her work. Much of her work over the past years had been done with, as she put it, 'children dangling from me like Christmas baubles.' Imbi will work on a collection of stories titled *Naamah's Ark (and other stories)*, Naamah being the usually unnamed wife of Noah, a collection of stories about women who live in the shadows of other people's narratives.



Jane Rogers (PLC), Imbi Neeme, Faye Berryman (new member) and Graeme Charles (Society president)

Further exciting news since the oration is that Imbi has also been awarded the Penguin Literary Prize. Imbi's novel, *The Spill* was chosen from over 400 manuscripts for the prize and will be published with Penguin mid next year. You can read more about this at www.penguin.com.au/news/2195-penguin-literary-prize-winner-announced

Many congratulations to Imbi from the Society and we look forward to watching the development of this very promising writer.

The Oration

The much anticipated oration commenced at 2 pm when Professor Welz spoke on the topic, 'On Proud Irish, Clumsy Saxons, and Provincial English: The Cultural Wisdom of Henry Handel Richardson' to an attentive and appreciative audience.



Stefan Welz at PLC

Stefan began the oration with a picture of what was in 1884 the New Concert Hall, a place that would have been very familiar to HHR, and is also familiar to readers of *Maurice Guest*, which begins with a description of students spilling from this building as the young Maurice watches. This building is long gone but the building that replaced it is the one where Stefan now works and he spoke of sometimes 'listening for sounds of former times'.



New concert house, Leipzig, 1884

The full text of Stefan's oration will be available later in the year on our website. Suffice to say that he took us on a fascinating journey from his own amazement

when he was in his twenties and first read *Maurice Guest* at how this writer from Down Under could create situations so fascinating and captivating, through a consideration of HHR's unique characteristics as a writer. From her extraordinary range of cultural experiences and knowledge she generated literary truth and destabilised stereotypes. Although inspired by naturalism she was much closer to the later period of modernism in her psychological insight and characterisation.

There was much animated discussion over afternoon tea after the oration. One member of the audience had received news of the oration straight from Germany. Some of you will remember Irmgard Heidler who gave us the 2017 Oration in Maldon on HHR in Munich, and was also our indefatigable guide in Munich, Marquartstein, Dresden and Hellerau in May, 2017.



Irmgard Heidler (second from right) with HHR group outside the building where HHR lived in Munich

Reading of Stefan's visit in the newsletter Irmgard, in Munich, contacted her friend, Walter Struve, a librarian at the Redmond Barry library in Melbourne, who then attended the oration. Such is the wonderful web of connections engendered by HHR events and our shared admiration for this writer.

In an email after the event Walter said: 'I'd just like to thank you again for Saturday afternoon. I think what has stuck in my memory (aside from the friendly atmosphere) were the five songs by HHR, ending with her touching setting of the lullaby, *Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf*, and then Stefan Welz's talk. I do think it intriguing to hear a German perspective on HHR, especially when comparison is made between her perceptions of Germans and Germany compared with such writers as Katherine Mansfield, E.M. Forster and D.H. Lawrence.'

A number of us gathered in the warm evening for an enjoyable meal with the Welz family at the Abbotsford Convent.



Dinner at the Abbotsford Convent

Professor Welz at Queenscliff

On Thursday March 21, about 30 people from both the Queenscliff Historical Museum and the HHR Society met at Circa Hotel in Hesse Street, Queenscliff to hear Stefan Welz speak about, 'Henry Handel Richardson and the German Re-translation of her first novel, *Maurice Guest*'.



Stefan Welz at Queenscliff (thanks to Rosemary Brown from Queenscliff for this photo)

Over a delicious lunch members of the Museum and the Society renewed our friendship before hearing Stefan's fascinating presentation, followed by a lively questions session.

In answer to the question why Stefan took on this demanding translation task he replied that as a young man he had heard rumours of a novel about a young Australian woman coming to his city and was eager to find it. The first German translation of *Maurice Guest*

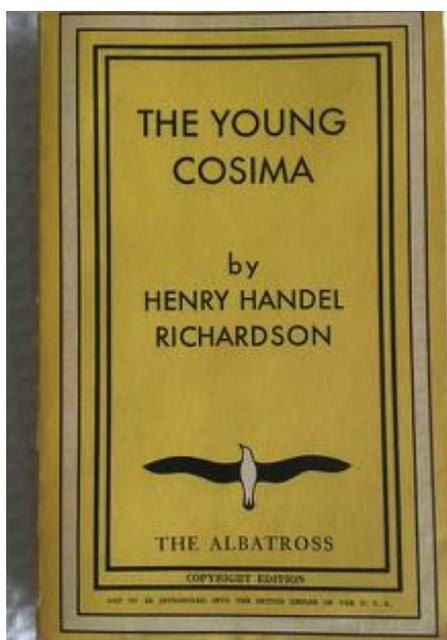
by Otto Neustatter, HHR's brother-in-law, was not available.

Stefan was very impressed when he read it in English, seeing it as among the greatest of English works, including the works of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. He also saw the novel as making a bridge between Germany and Australia.

Stefan gave details of the publisher of the first translation, Samuel Fischer who favoured the European spirit of liberalism and published Neustatter's translation in 1912. Unfortunately the book fell prey to the outbreak of World War I when Germany was not so open minded to English work.

HHR herself described Neustatter's translation as 'a decidedly wooden translation', heavily influenced by Nietzsche, and Stefan felt Neustatter had little interest in HHR's expressiveness, syntax and punctuation.

At the end of the talk Garry Spry, Queenscliff Museum President, made a presentation of a tie pin to Stefan, and Stefan then made a presentation to the Society of a 1939 edition of HHR's last novel, *The Young Cosima*.



Clive Probyn has since provided some fascinating information about this edition.

The following is an extract from the Australian Scholarly Publishing edition of *The Young Cosima*, edited by Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele and published in 2004, and quoted here with kind permission from Clive Probyn:

'A contract for the Albatross-Tauchnitz publication of *the Young Cosima* in June 1939 had been signed by C.S.Evans on Richardson's behalf and H. Holroyd Reece on 22 March 1939, however the promised 30 pounds advance on royalty was not paid until July 1948,

two years after HHR's death. No subsequent royalty (5% on 6000 copies and 7½% thereafter) was ever paid.

The German government took control of Albatross-Tauchnitz and she heard from Robert Hitchens in Berne, on 19 February 1940, that 'the Albatross Edition of *Cosima* is showing in every book-sellers window. Wish I could get hold of it; it's a most neat Format.'

On 15 June 1940 HHR vented her anger once more: 'These brutes of Germans. You will be as wrath as I am to hear that they have "pirated" *Cosima*. That is to say the German Government has taken over the Albatross series and published the book in it, and I shall never get either the advance royalty or a penny on the sales. The British and French co-heads of the firm are powerless to do anything about it. This is really the last straw in the ill-luck that has dogged that unhappy book. And how furious it makes me to think that, even in a small degree, one is helping to pay for German guns and bombs.'

In a recent email Clive adds:

The Albatross-Tauchnitz was the German equivalent of the English Penguin Books, and was in fact a professional product, not rare, but certainly not common either.

This event was organised with the kind help of the Queenscliff Historical Museum, especially David Bayne, Diana Allen and Garry Spry. Many thanks to these and all the members of the Museum and the staff at Circa from the HHR Society.

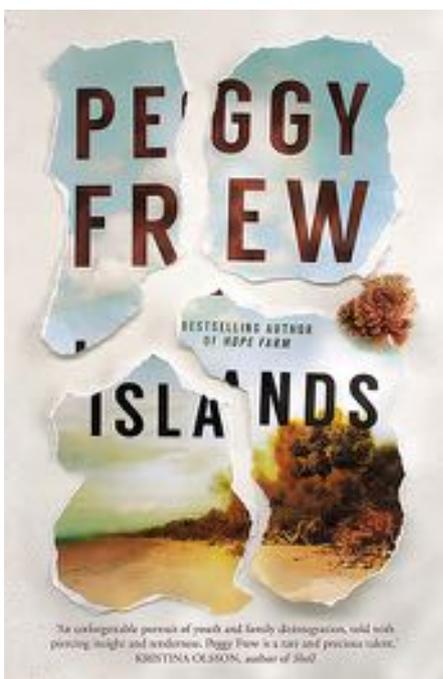
Book published by our first HHR Fellowship winner, Peggy Frew

The first HHR Fellowship was awarded in 2017 to Melbourne writer, Peggy Frew, award-winning author of the novels, *House of Sticks* and *Hope Farm*.



Peggy Frew

In March this year Peggy's third novel, *Islands*, was published by Allen and Unwin. This work has been described as 'in the tradition of the novels of Helen Garner, Georgia Blain and Ashley Hay. *Islands* is a riveting portrait of a family coping with loss.'



The Society congratulates Peggy on this publication and takes pleasure in her reference to the Society on the acknowledgements page.

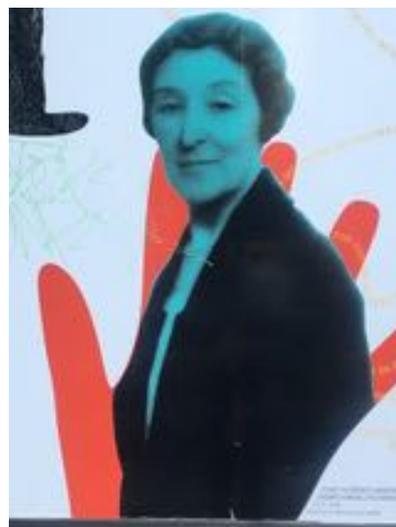
HHR at State Library, Victoria

If you've visited the State Library, Victoria, recently you will know about the temporary barricade erected around the Swanston Street entrance while rebuilding takes place behind it. What you may not have noticed is that this barricade is an artwork called *Here for You* created by artist Vivian Lim in a collaboration between State Library Victoria and RMIT, and that it includes the figure of HHR.



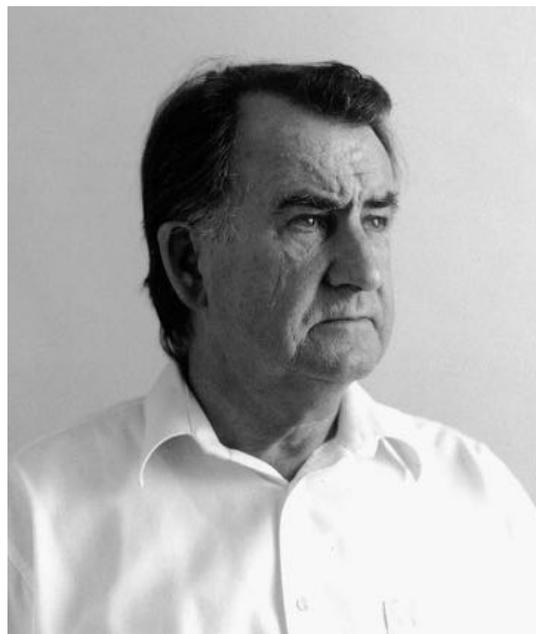
A plaque explaining the work states: 'The State Library's philosophy has always been to provide a place universally accessible for all. The forecourt has been the backdrop for 163 years of social change as a place of gathering to protest or connect in harmony, and—even today—a place that belongs to the public.'

In this artwork, figures of influential people who've driven change sit alongside symbolic hand gestures that reveal lines of text.'



HHR at State Library, Victoria

Gerald Murnane



Gerald Murnane

Internationally recognised fiction writer, Gerald Murnane, now in his eightieth year, has produced a collection of poetry, *Green Shadows and other poems*, mostly written since he moved to the small town of Goroke in northwestern Victoria after the death of his wife. A *Sydney Morning Herald* review of this new work noted that 'especially moving are his poems dedicated to authors who have influenced him—Lesbia Harford and Thomas Hardy, William Carlos Williams, Henry Handel Richardson, Marcel Proust, and with particular force, the nineteenth-century poet, John Clare, who gives the collection its title.'

HHR Society member, Di Parsons gives us an idea of the poem about HHR.

A Poet Visits Lake View by Di Parsons

Gerald Murnane is the most grounded of writers. He could be said to have an obsession with place: the ground beneath our feet, places of origin and return, the rocks that form the substance of the earth.

It is no surprise then that his poem concerning Henry Handel Richardson and her great creation – *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* – never even mentions her name but centres instead on ‘Lake View’, the house, and Chiltern, the town.

Murnane is also well known as a reluctant tourist (*...never been in an aeroplane/or travelled far beyond Adelaide/or Sydney...*). Not for him the tramping feet of tourism, even within the State of Victoria where he lives. But the chance to visit ‘Lake View’ is something not to be missed, even if Chiltern town bores the poet not given to *gawking at stuff*.

On the day of his visit the old house is locked. He can’t believe a man could go crazy, like Mahony, in such a *pleasant setting*. When he *presses* his hand on a brick and feels the residual warmth within, he is released into the memory of his wife’s death when, *arrived too late in the palliative care ward*, he touches her hands and finds them *disconcertingly warm*. Her one-time madness, and his memory of her *reading the book* come back to him in a rush of meaning.

The poem is a tribute to ‘Lake View’ as a powerful site of literary pilgrimage, a house that can speak to another’s deepest feelings now shared with this poet’s readers.

Gerald Murnane, *Green Shadows and Other Poems*, Giramondo Publishing, 2019



Lake View, Chiltern

Coming Events

August: HHR in Trentham again!

On Sunday August 18, 2019 from 1.30-4pm HHR will feature again in the *Words in Winter* program at Trentham. Exciting events planned, continuing with the German theme arising from the visit of Stefan Welz this

year. In August we will be considering the Strasbourg stories, *Two Tales of Old Strasbourg*, two short stories HHR wrote about in her time in that lovely city.

You may have a copy of HHR’s short stories, but if not the two stories, *Life and Death of Peterle Luthy* and *The Professor’s Experiment* are available online at https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/richardson/henry_handel/r52tt

September/October: HHR in Britain and Germany Society trip

Plans are firming up for our trip to HHR sites. The trip begins in London on September 24. From London we will visit Hastings, where HHR lived for the last part of her life and from where her ashes were scattered. We will then visit Lyme Regis where she lived before Hastings, and from there to Wales to visit her sister Lil’s burial site.

On October 6 we will travel to Leipzig to visit again this lovely city where HHR studied at the Conservatorium, and the place where she set her first novel, *Maurice Guest*, and of course to renew our acquaintance with our Leipzig members, Stefan Welz, Susan Schaale and Sebastien Fink.

The highlight of this stay will be the launch on October 10 of Stefan’s translation of *Maurice Guest* into German.

The tour will conclude on October 11.

All welcome to join us on this trip. If you have any questions contact President Graeme Charles on graemejcharles@gmail.com

November: Dorothy Johnston’s novel launch

Exciting news is that Dorothy Johnston’s novel featuring an HHR academic in Queenscliff is to be launched in Queenscliff in early November.

To read more about this fascinating book go to:

<http://dorothyjohnston.com.au/more-ghosts-at-the-royal-hotel/>

2020 – the big 150!

Next year brings the 150th anniversary of HHR’s birthday on January 3, 1870, and the 50th anniversary of the annual birthday tea at Lake View in Chiltern, first held in 1970 and held in an unbroken line since then. Plans are under way for events in Chiltern, Queenscliff and at PLC. More details in coming newsletters, and if you have any ideas about ways we might celebrate, please let us know. Contact Graeme Charles at graemejcharles@gmail.com

**New Member:
Faye Berryman-O'Carroll
A happy coincidence!**



Faye Berryman O'Carroll from Fitzroy

Faye writes: "It was only last year that I discovered that there was a HHR society. Since then I had been thinking about making contact, but done nothing about it. When recently Professor Doctor Stefan Weltz and his wife Christine invited me to attend the annual oration, I was delighted to do so, both to hear Stefan's presentation, and, as well, to have the opportunity to make contact with you all. (Stefan's and Christine's son, Gabriel, and later his sister, Elisa, attended Fitzroy Community School, the school of which I am co-founder, during the time the family was in Melbourne.)

I have long been interested in Henry Handel Richardson's writing, just when this began I can't really remember - probably around university days in the 1960s.

HHR depicts, what certainly feels like, an authentic sense of place character and time. *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* is a rich record of the times, the struggles and aspirations of the motley population of the era. Australia came alive to me.

I loved *The Getting of Wisdom*. It rang true and resonated with me. I too have been an innocent boarding school girl who learnt much from my more sophisticated contemporaries. This novel gives a different picture of early Australian society. I have not read *Maurice Guest* but now my appetite is whetted."

2019 membership of the HHR Society: a message from the treasurer, Helen Macrae

You can pay your annual subscription (\$20) 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 the Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, c/- The Treasurer, HHRSA,

86/80 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067.

New members

If you're not a member and would like to join, you will need to fill out a membership form.

The form can be downloaded from our website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au , or you can email

helen.macrae@bigpond.com and ask for it to be sent to you.

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

HHRSA Committee

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Vice-President & Editor:	Janey Runci
Treasurer:	Helen Macrae
Secretary:	Heather McNeill
Committee Members:	Gloria Banks, Dot Charles Di Parsons, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au