

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter June 2019



HHR at Trentham again: Sunday August 18, 1.30 - 4pm

(From Di Parsons in Trentham)

Last year the **Richardson Readathon** was held as part of **Trentham's Words in Winter Festival**. On that occasion we read and discussed Henry Handel Richardson's trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. This year we have arranged something equally interesting but with a much less daunting reading challenge, a mere 50-odd pages.

We are reading two stories by HHR which go under the heading **Two Tales of Old Strasbourg**. The stories are: *Life and Death of Peterle Luthy* and *The Professor's Experiment*. HHR scholar Rachel Solomon says these stories 'were always intended to be read as a diptych, variously mirroring and contrasting with each other'.

The stories are not currently in print but they can be downloaded free at

https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/richardson/henry_handel/r52t

Printouts of the download are also available from the Henry Handel Richardson Society by contacting Janey Runci by email—j.runci@bigpond.com The booklets cost \$15, which includes postage and packaging.

For book sleuths who would like to find the stories in secondhand shops, bookshelves, online, op shops, markets et al, keep a look out for *The End of Childhood* by HHR, or *The Adventures of Cuffy Mahony and other stories* (pub. Angus and Robertson Sirius Paperback 1979). The stories appear in both those books. Also check your local library for these books.

Program for Trentham Event: 1.30 - 4pm

- 1.30: Trentham Little Choir: German songs:
music by Henry Handel Richardson
- 1.45: HHR Society tour in 2017 of HHR's Germany:
Janey Runci
- 2.00: The Strasbourg Stories:
Dr Rachel Solomon
- 2.30: German context of the stories:
Dr Richard O'Sullivan
- 3.00: Afternoon tea
- 3.20: Discussion moderated by Helen Macrae

You are warmly invited to attend. Please share this invitation with anyone else you know who might be interested in getting along to the lively and well heated Neighbourhood Centre in Trentham, mid-winter, for an afternoon of talks, discussion and meeting people.

Cost: \$5, payable at door. Space is limited and bookings are essential.

Enquiries/bookings: Di Parsons at
thebookcamel@gmail.com or 0448 760 563



The Tanner's Quarters Strasbourg which feature in 'The Life and death of Peterle Luthy'

A Gift to Australia

The last issue of the newsletter acknowledged the two generous gifts to the Society from Professor Stefan Welz, our visitor from the University of Leipzig in Germany.



National Library of Australia in Canberra

The first of these gifts was a copy of HHR's 1931 private publication, *Christkindleins Wiegenlied*, an old German carol set to music and given by HHR to her husband, Professor John George Robertson as a Christmas gift. The second was a copy of HHR's last

novel, *The Young Cosima* published in Leipzig in 1939, without the writer's permission (see last newsletter).

At a recent meeting of the HHR Society's committee it was agreed that these significant items needed a home where they would be well preserved and available for perusal not only by Society members but by all interested in HHR and her work. After consultation with Clive Probyn the two items have been donated to the National Library in Canberra, delivered by Clive himself, to join the HHR collection there.

Story of a Christmas Card

Enclosed within *Christkindleins Wiegenlied* was a 1992 letter from HHR's literary executrix of the time, Margaret Capon, to its intended owner, the distinguished English novelist, John Fowles in Lyme Regis on the south coast of England. Fowles's bookplate appears in the card.



John Fowles

In her letter Capon lists three HHR items she is donating (presumably to the local museum), as being copies of *Some Personal Impressions of HHR, Myself When Young* and the HHR issue of the *Australian Literature Quarterly* of 1963 which included material by the HHR scholar, Professor G. A. Wilkes. Capon writes to Fowles:

I have several copies of this Christmas card, and in view of all you have done and are doing for Lyme Regis and HHR's memory I would like you to have this as a personal gift if you will accept it.

Fowles had for many years contributed to the building of a collection of local interest for the Lyme Regis museum, first as honorary curator from 1978-88 and after as archivist. He was also later instrumental in saving and rebuilding the deteriorating museum building in the 1990s so that it eventually won the top national museum prize, the Gulbenkian, in 1999.

Lyme Regis has many literary connections. It features in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and of course, HHR's *The Way Home* (volume 2 of the trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*). Each writer spent time in Lyme

Regis. Jane Austen visited the town on a holiday in 1804, HHR lived there from 1915-33 in a house called Westfield, and John Fowles lived there from 1965 until his death in 2005.



Belmont – John Fowles' house in Lyme Regis

At this stage we do not know how *Christkindleins Wiegenlied* came to be for sale. Did it remain in Fowles's estate to be sold later? Was it ever donated to the Lyme Regis Museum? Are the three other items specified in Capon's letter still in the Museum? Is there more HHR material there?

In September this year some members of the HHR Society will visit Lyme Regis as part of our tour of HHR's Britain. We look forward to visiting the Museum and exploring these questions further.

Another Lyme Regis connection

Lyme Regis is also the site for the establishment of A. S. Neill's school, Summerhill, in England. Neill's school began in Hellerau, a suburb of Dresden, with the assistance of HHR's sister, Lil Neustatter.



Neill and Lil at Summerhill

Together with Lil, who was to become his first wife, Neill moved the school to the idyllic setting of a castle

on a hill in Sonntagsberg in Austria but encountered hostility from local people. It was HHR herself who found the house called Summerhill for Neill and Lil in 1923. In 1927 the school moved to its present location in Leiston in the county of Suffolk, taking the name of Summerhill with it.

The original Summerhill building still stands in Lyme Regis—another destination for the HHR literary tourists!

A light-hearted look at HHR in Maldon

In an entertaining project in Maldon, aimed at engaging local and emerging artists, promoting visitation and making more of the town's lesser known history accessible, students from Castlemaine Secondary College were invited by Maldon Incorporated to create a series of *Ephemeral Works*. These were faux historical plaques displayed on buildings for six weeks.



One of the plaques featured HHR with these words:

In 1910 former Maldon resident Ethel Richardson wrote the book 'The Getting of Wisdom' using the pseudonym Henry Handel Richardson. Eventually men realised that women can write as goodly as men.

(Thanks to Di Parsons for finding this article)

Four Writers on HHR: Gerald Murnane, Judith Brett, Susanna de Vries, Dorothy Johnston

Gerald Murnane's card

We were thrilled to receive a card from Gerald Murnane to our president, Graeme Charles, thanking him for the last newsletter and for HHR Society member, Di Parsons' 'perceptive piece' about his poem on *Lake View*.

Judith Brett's favourite book

In the May 2019 issue of *Australian Book Review*, Dr Judith Brett, Emeritus Professor of Politics at La Trobe University, and author of such works as *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, and more recently *From Secret Ballot to democracy sausage: How Australia got compulsory voting*, was featured in the 'Open Page' section.



Judith Brett

When asked in the interview to name her favourite book she replied: 'Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, the great Australian novel of emigration.'

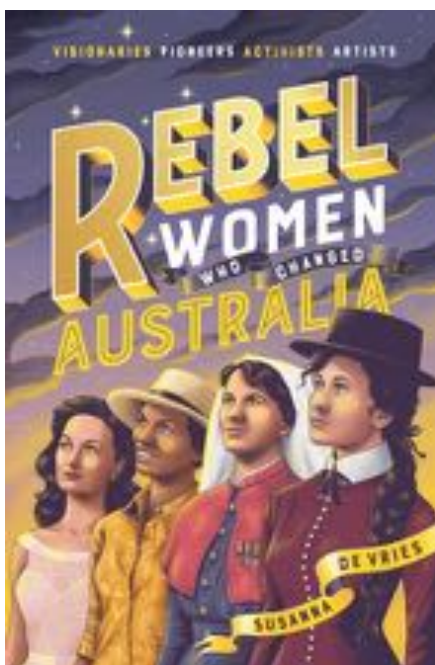
(Thanks to Rachel Solomon for spotting this)

Susanna de Vries on HHR as a rebel woman who changed Australia

HarperCollins have recently published *Rebel Women who Changed Australia*, by Susanna de Vries, an updated and condensed edition of *Great Australian Women* and featuring HHR as 'Australia's first internationally acclaimed writer'.

The book, in the words of the publisher is *a celebration of women who broke the mould, crashed through the ceilings, and shaped the nation in the fields of medicine, law, the arts and politics*. It is a fascinating study of many women who have made a difference. They are the women who helped forge the Australia we know today.

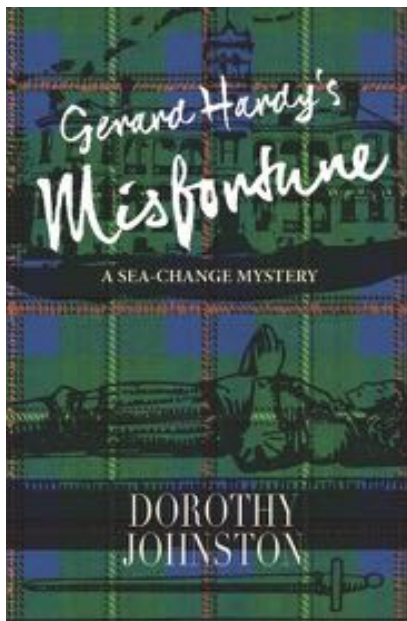
(Thanks to Rachel Solomon for spotting this in a bookshop.)



If you discover anything to do with HHR please let us know so we can all share it in the newsletter. Send to Janey Runci at j.runci@bigpond.com

Dorothy Johnston's novel about the murder of an HHR academic

Dorothy Johnston's mystery novel, *Gerard Hardy's Misfortune*—about the murder of an HHR academic in the basement of the Royal Hotel in Queenscliff—is complete. The book will be launched by Janey Runci on Saturday, October 26 at 4 pm in the Bay Room of the Uniting Church in Queenscliff.



Overseas trip to HHR's Britain and Leipzig

On September 21 five Australian members of the HHR Society will meet in London to begin our 2019 tour of

HHR's Britain. We will be joined on this exciting journey by English members, Roger Buckley and Angela Neustatter (HHR's great-niece), and American member Patrick Neustatter (HHR's great-nephew).

We look forward to visiting HHR's London haunts, her last home at Fairlight near Hastings, her home in Lyme Regis, and her sister Lil's burial site in Llanfairfechan in Wales.

On October 8 the group will travel to Leipzig to spend some days in the city where HHR studied music for three years. On October 10 we will attend the launch of the translation into German of *Maurice Guest* by Professor Stefan Welz and Fabian Dellemann. We look forward to renewing our acquaintance with Stefan and Fabien and our other Leipzig Society members, Susan Schaale and Sebastian Fink, who visited us in Australia last year.

150th Anniversary Plans

January 3, 2020 is HHR's 150th birthday and the 50th year that residents of Chiltern and other admirers of HHR and her work have gathered at Lake View to celebrate her birthday with a picnic tea. If you've never made it before, this is the year to come. Planning for celebrations is underway. More details in coming newsletters.



A happy group at a picnic tea

HHR Society Annual Oration

In 2020 Professor Clive Probyn will deliver the annual oration on June 20 on the topic, *HHR goes to the Movies and comes home with the pianist*. This promises to be a fascinating talk for both HHR fans and film buffs alike.

The event will be held at Presbyterian Ladies College in Burwood who have kindly offered to host the event. PLC is the school HHR attended, though she attended at the original site in East Melbourne.

Keep the date free.

Welcome to new members:

Mary Cooper from Glen Waverley, Victoria

Rosalyn Muir from Shepparton, Victoria

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/o 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, please call Helen Macrae on 0401 901 558.

HHRSA Committee

President: Graeme Charles

Vice-President & Janey Runci

Editor:

Treasurer: Helen Macrae

Secretary: Heather McNeill

Committee Members:

Gloria Banks, Dot Charles

Di Parsons, Rachel Solomon

Website: www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au