

President's Report AGM, January 3, 2025 – Janev Runci

An HHR Community

As I reflected on the HHR Society in the last year it struck me that it operates as a central hub for a widely spread HHR community - HHR scholars from around the world, HHR family members, local historians at HHR sites and the many readers who appreciate her writing and music. It provides a meeting and exchange point for fellow HHR admirers and creates an archive, all in the service of fulfilling its objective of celebrating and promoting the writing and music of HHR.

Work of the Society in 2024-5

The main event for the HHR calendar is always **the birthday picnic tea** and we appreciate the opportunity to join with the people of Chiltern in that celebration. It was particularly challenging for all of us this year when the National Trust made employment changes that led to the loss of the excellent manager, Vaughn Clarke and then closed the property in early December. The Society would like to acknowledge the outstanding work Vaughn did in the last two years in the caretaking and promoting of the house.

In developing and maintaining connections at other HHR sites our focus for the last few years has been on **creating walking tour** apps for HHR towns in Victoria. Two were completed and we were ready to record the third when it became clear that the cost of the provider service was beyond our means. In 2025 we will convert the existing apps to a form that can be downloaded from our website through a QR code as required. We will continue to develop more tours including such possibilities as a driving tour around Victoria and tours of overseas HHR sites such as Leipzig, Munich, Strasbourg, Lyme Regis and Hastings.

In relation to our **overseas connections** the highlight has been assisting where we can in the work by Sebastian Fink and Stefan Welz in Leipzig to develop the exciting concert to be held in the Gewandhaus on October 19th in honour of HHR. We congratulate Sebastian and Stefan for bringing this imaginative project to fruition. Hopefully this event will be a chance for Society members from a number of countries to meet at an HHR event!

In April 2025 Angela and Patrick Neustatter, great niece and nephew of HHR, Angela from England and Patrick from the US will again visit Australia. We look forward to hosting them at HHR events.

The Society has enjoyed a productive relationship with HHR's alma mater, **PLC**, and the school's 150th anniversary celebrations have offered us some wonderful opportunities. On May 31st the Society will host 'An Afternoon with HHR' and from July 31st to August 2nd the school will hold performances of a specially commissioned play about HHR titled 'Henry' and written by the Melbourne playwright, Christine Croyden.

The Varuna Henry Handel Richardson Fellowship, administered by the national writing house, Varuna and funded by the Society continues to create knowledge and awareness of HHR and her work across the writing community.

In the development of promotional material we produced a new Society all-purpose card **brochure** this year for distribution at HHR events, HHR sites, libraries, schools.

A subcommittee has continued to research and explore the idea of a **statue** for HHR.

The Society produces 4-5 **newsletters** per year, recording matters of interest to HHR admirers, largely made up of an inspiring range of contributions from the HHR community around the world.

We were pleased to ascertain that the Society **website** is available on Trove through the National Library of Australia, ensuring the survival of this valuable archive.

Thanks to committee

To finish tonight I want to thank my outstanding **committee members**. When I think of what I want to say about each of them I can't help but repeat some of what I said about them last year.

Graeme Charles, vice president continues to assist and advise me and maintains international connections and business matters. He took an active role in responding to the National Trust on the loss of their manager and lobbying with the Indigo Shire Council.

Helen Macrae is our diligent secretary who also keeps us all on track re governance matters. She has worked extensively with Di Parsons to further the idea of a statue of HHR.

Carolyn Mooney is our meticulous treasurer who keeps a steady and efficient eye on bills and bank statements and membership

Dot Charles is a quiet person of ideas. She works with Graeme on maintaining our overseas links.

Brigid Magner is our go-to for digital matters and this year designed and produced the new Society brochure

Terri McKenzie keeps us up to date on PLC news and is playing an active role in the school's 150th celebrations

Di Parsons has been researching and exploring the idea of a statue of HHR, including travelling to consider other relevant memorials

Ric Pawsey is always ready at a moment's notice to format newsletters and give me valuable feedback. As a member of the Box Hill Historical Society he will be involved with the PLC anniversary celebrations.

Gloria Banks is our Chiltern champion, mindful of every small detail for the Jan 3 event and links throughout the year. I don't know what we'd do without her, or any of the committee members.

Thanks to you all.