

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS

BY MERETE SMITH

THIS YEAR'S FRIENDS OF THE BAILLIEU LIBRARY'S program is the first to reflect the affiliation between the Friends of Melbourne University Press and the Friends of the Baillieu Library. Judging from the events held so far, the affiliation is a great success. Several of the books discussed at events are very recently published; we have even been lucky to hear two of the authors speak before the official book launch.

The Friends of the Baillieu Library AGM was the year's first event held on 15 March. Guest speakers were Ray Parkin and Mark Davis "in conversation". Ray's *Wartime Trilogy*, originally published in the 1960s and out of print for many years, has now been published in one volume by MUP. The conversational format between Ray and Mark worked well to draw out the special qualities of Ray, who spent 18 years in the Royal Australian Navy, including three years as a Japanese prisoner of war during World War 2. After the war he became a waterfront tally clerk and wrote of his wartime experiences in *Out of the Smoke*, *Into the Smother* and *The Sword and the Blossom*, published in London in the 1960s.

The Friends were totally charmed by Ray Parkin's talk, which generated so much interest that it was difficult to concentrate on holding a formal AGM afterwards. Consequently business was conducted as swiftly as possible; it included the election to the Friends committee of Associate Professor David Marshall from the University's School of Fine Arts. Two members of the Committee unfortunately had to resign due to work pressure, Michael Adcock and Alison Inglis. Both will be much missed.

The next event, held on 18 April, had another Melbourne University Press author, Andrea Inglis as a guest speaker. Andrea talked about her book, *Beside the Seaside: Victorian resorts in the nineteenth century* and showed delightful slides of Victorian seaside paintings and photographs. Hers is the first book to investigate the social life of Victorian seaside resorts — Queenscliff, Sorrento, Lorne and Mornington — in the 19th century and early 20th century.

A Members' Night was held on 16 May. Friends were invited to bring one of their own books. It is a fascinating opportunity to view many different books and hear about various book collecting interests. These included an early 20th century "coffee table book" of the sort displayed in the offices of P & O shipping lines, with glorious colour illustrations enticing prospective voyagers.



Editors Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele with Jean Dunn of MUP and *The Correspondence of Henry Handel Richardson*.

On 20 June John Pigot talked about his very recent book *Hilda Rix Nicholas: her life and art*. This had only just been published by MUP. The book features many colour illustrations of the paintings of Australian artist Hilda Rix Nicholas (1884–1961). John Pigot has researched the painter's art and life in great detail and spoke with passion about the artist and his research leading to this book.

On 18 July the Friends were again treated to a talk about a brand new MUP publication as Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele discussed their joint edition of *The Correspondence of Henry Handel Richardson*. Professor Probyn and Associate Professor Steele are both from the English Department at Monash University, where they have set up the Henry Handel Richardson Project, the largest research project undertaken on an Australian author. It currently involves five elements of research: the correspondence; new editions of the novels *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom*; an edition of the short stories; and a performance edition of 66 unpublished songs by Henry Handel Richardson which are also illuminated by her letters. It was exciting to hear about the discoveries of many letters and of contacts made on the way to publication of this book. Many of Richardson's letters are in the National Library, where they have only recently been released from an embargo — caused by the inclusion of often lively and unrestrained letters to, from and discussing still living people.

The Friends of the Baillieu Library events for the rest of the year will be just as varied and exciting as those already held; Friends and others are warmly encouraged to attend. ♦

For information about forthcoming events, please contact the Executive Secretary, Merete Smith, on telephone 8344 6636 or e-mail m.smith@lib.unimelb.edu.au