

My visit to Lusatia

In September-October 2016 my wife Lois and I took a trip to Europe and spent one week in Upper and Lower Lusatia.

In Bautzen we visited the Sorb Museum (SerbskiMuzej) with its wonderful collection of items about Sorb (Wendish) history, culture and way of life. An English audio guide was useful in understanding everything on display. A large collection of models illustrated the different costumes worn in the different regions.

At the Sorbisches Restaurant Wjelbik we tasted a delicious meal of Sorb dishes.

On our visit to the Sorb Institute we met GertudMahling (TrudlaMalinkowa), the author of the book *Shores of Hope* about Wendish migration to Australia and America. She explained her project of recording Sorb monuments and Wendish matters. We invited her to come to Australia one day to see what happened to the Wendish migrants here. We also presented their library with some books about the Barossa Valley and Australia.



Gertrud, Lois & Lyall, Annerose (Director of Sorb Institute)

A contrasting museum was the infamous prison used in turn by the Nazis, the Russians, and finally the Stasi. There were many harrowing stories told.

The nearby village of Hochkirch was interesting as many Australian Wends came from this district. Here we met Pastor Thomas Hänchen who had visited Australia in 2003 and given a talk to our society. This was also the site of a terrible battle in 1758 when 8000 Austrians and 9000 Prussians were killed.

Close by was the town of Herrnhut, the centre of the Moravian Brethren Church. The light and simple interior of their church contrasted dramatically with the elaborate decorations in most other churches throughout Europe. The Völkerkundemuseum (ethnographic museum) was

a highlight of the town with exhibits from around the world, sent home by Moravian missionaries in the 19th century, including some Aboriginal items from Australia.

To the west of Bautzen we visited Rosenthal, the hometown of the late Alfons Frenzel. This Catholic area was noticeable for the many shrines along the country roads.

We travelled north to Lower Lusatia and stayed near Burg in the Spreewald. Here the River Spree divides into numerous canals which pass through forest areas. Taking a punt (*Kahn*) trip along the canals, being poled along by the ferryman is a special experience. The ride is gentle and relaxing along shady streams, through locks, meeting other punts and canoes.



At Jänschwalde we visited the Heimatmuseum and were excited to see a school register from the 19th century with names of people who came to Australia, including my Hondow ancestors.

At Langengrassau we went to the Freiland Museum Höllberghof, an open-air museum, which was celebrating the harvest festival. It was here that a Sorbian dancing group performed, with the women wearing the same dress as we have in our society's collection. Then they exhibited their wedding dress, which again was identical to the one in our collection (see March 2016 newsletter).

On the Sunday morning we attended the harvest thanksgiving service in the church at Burg. Here we met a lady in traditional costume, who was keen to tell us that in this district they call themselves Wends, not Sorbs.

These are some of the highlights of our visit. I can't wait to go there again.

Lyall Kupke