



# Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia Inc.

Newsletter

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March 2012

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## 2012 - An Eventful Year

During this year we will have the opportunity to take part in a large number of very interesting activities, including hearing two speakers from overseas. Our Society is not organising most of them, but I am sure that many of you will not want to miss them. So I am advertising them through our newsletter for you.

The **Wendish Heritage Society**, our sister society in Melbourne, is holding its annual March long weekend tour in the **Tabor-Tarrington-Penshurst region** of the Western Districts of Victoria. The itinerary, organised by Betty Huf, includes the celebration of the centenary of the present Tabor Lutheran Church building; the Wetland Gardens, the Historical Society and Volcanoes Discovery Centre at Penshurst; Mount Rouse; Lutheran sites in the Gnadenthal, Tarrington and Hamilton areas; site of Herrnhut (Krumnow's settlement), Australia's first utopian commune; and the Ansett Transport Museum. The dates are 10-12 March. Contact details can be found later in the newsletter.

A special overseas visitor in March-April is **Anitta Maksymowicz** from Poland. Anitta is the curator of the Museum in Zielona Gora, which was formerly known as Grünberg when it was part of Germany before 1945. Anitta has been very interested in the topic of German and Polish emigration from this region to South Australia in the period 1838-1860. She organised a migration exhibition in the museum and also organised two conferences in Poland and Germany in recent years. She has gained her PhD on this topic and has authored a book on emigration. She is coming to Adelaide to speak at the Family History Congress (28-31 March). To hear her at the Congress you need to register on the website [www.congress2012.org.au](http://www.congress2012.org.au). But she will also be speaking at a number of other venues after the Congress. The details can be found later in this newsletter.

Our annual **bus trip** will be held on Sat 28 April to the Barossa and Lower North regions. It will visit some small places where early German and Wendish settlers lived: Magdala, Schoenfeld, Bethel, Gomersal and Schoenborn. If you want to come, make sure you book early on the enclosed form, as the bus fills quickly.

In early May a **Wendish Wagon Trek** will retrace the journey undertaken in 1852 by pioneer families from Rosenthal (Rosedale), SA, to Hamilton, Victoria. The families, mostly Wends, were Albert, Blume, Burger, Deutscher, Huf, Hundrack, Mirtschin, Nuske, Petschel and Rentsch. The re-enactment by car (not wagon) will take four days (3-6 May). This sounds exciting for any descendant of these families. More details can be found later in this newsletter.

In July we are privileged to have another overseas visitor, this time from the US. **Cathy Petersen** is one of the Iowa Wendish descendants that Geoff Saegenschnitter met on his trip last year. Cathy is the organiser of the Iowa Wendish Society. Geoff invited her to come to Australia and she will be calling at SA on her way to a reunion in New Guinea. While she is here, on Sunday afternoon 29 July she will give a talk to our Society about the Wends in the US. Don't miss it! More details can be found later in this newsletter.

At our AGM on 9 September **Geoff Saegenschnitter** will entertain us with an account of his US trip last year, when he met every Wendish group there - in Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, and also in Canada. More details can be found later in the newsletter.

Another reunion of early South Australian settlers is the **Solway Reunion**. A gathering will be held of descendants of passengers on the *Solway*, which landed at Kangaroo Island in Oct 1837. The passenger list includes Bagans, Baner, Beyerkoehler, Bremer, Christian, Debus, Diebing, Diese, Fleim, Fortsch, Grampp, Hauser, Kleemann, Kramer, Lage, Milde, Neander, Oelrich, Oppel, Pfeuffer, Pipkorn, Prophet, Schmidt, Sturn, Thielmann, Wallschlager and Zilm. Events are planned for 13-16 October. More details can be found later in the newsletter.

## **President's Report to the AGM**

### **28 Aug 2011**

Once again we have had some interesting activities this year. The bus trip to the Murray Flats and Strathalbyn was enjoyed by a full busload. For many it was the opportunity to visit places they had never visited before, like Milendella, Punthari, Caloote, Salem and Callington. Having the locals talk about their places is always more interesting. Thanks go to Ruth and Eric Fiebig for a wonderful day full of interest, fellowship and good food, all meticulously organised. Where to next year?

Keith Lokan gave us an interesting talk in July about the Wends in Lusatia and the background of his family. He also showed a very nice set of photos.

Some members accepted the invitation to the SA Genealogy Society to hear Gilbert Materne speak authoritatively about the early Ebenezer settlement. Our presence boosted their numbers.

Today we look forward to hearing Peter Mickan talk about the Wendish language in Australia.

Our committee has continued to work on preparing a Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail in SA. We expect to erect the interpretive signs at six locations later this year - at Hope Valley, Rosedale, Ebenezer, Neukirch, St Kitts and Peters Hill. We are taking much care to get the wording right. The text is being examined and then revised, then re-examined and revised again, and so on. It is important that the wording is clear and concise, as well as accurate.

We were thrilled to receive a grant of \$2000 from Multicultural SA towards this trail. We have also applied for a grant from History SA and we will receive the result of that application later this year.

Our newsletter is an important communication with our members, with the notices of our meetings and also interesting articles. Please send articles for publication. Thanks to all those who wrote articles this year, and thanks to Christine Longmire for setting out the newsletter again.

Finally, my thanks go to the hard-working committee. Our Secretary, Pauline Burger, is always thorough and careful and keeps us on track. Our Treasurer, John Longmire, handles the financial matters with keen attention to detail. Ruth Walter continues to handle the book sales well. The other members are very supportive too. And Rona McDonnell is most willing in organising the afternoon teas and suppers.

On behalf of all our members I thank all committee members for the time and effort you give to our society.

*Lyall Kupke*

### **Sir Donald Dunstan, Former State Governor**

Sir Donald Dunstan, AC, KBE, CB, (1923–2011), served as Governor of South Australia from 1982 to 1991. Before he became Governor, Sir Donald served as an officer in the Australian Army during World War II in the Pacific, and then in Korea. Later he became Commander of the Australian Forces in Vietnam from 1971 to 1972 and was Chief of the General Staff between 1977 and 1982.

Sir Donald was born in Murray Bridge in 1923 and “retained a proud sense of being a South Australian”. Little has been reported of his Sorb/Wend background, although he was quite happy to acknowledge this in a most positive way.

When Sir Donald learned of the visit to South Australia of Alfons Frenzel, a noted Sorb/Wend writer, poet and teacher, he extended an invitation for Alfons to visit Government House for morning tea accompanied by Bev Hall. This meeting took place during the Writers' Festival of 1989 held in Adelaide.

# Coming Events

## **Sat 10<sup>th</sup> - Mon 12<sup>th</sup> March Wendish Heritage Society tour to Tabor, V**

The historical district of Tabor-Tarrington-Penshurst in the Western Districts of Victoria will be explored. If you wish to join the group, contact Betty Huf before Monday 27 Feb. Tel (03) 5572 4959. Email: [bettyhuf@westvic.com.au](mailto:bettyhuf@westvic.com.au)

## **Wed 28<sup>th</sup> - Sat 31<sup>st</sup> March Adelaide Family History Congress**

See website ([www.congress2012.org.au](http://www.congress2012.org.au)) to register and to see the full program. Some topics are:

**Wed 28 March Researching German family history in present-day Poland** (Janette Lange & Lois Zweck)

**Fri 30 March Why Polish Hill River failed to become a 'Little Poland' in Australia** (Anitta Maksymowicz)

**Sat 31 March Old Places, new names - territorial changes of the Middle Oder River** (Anitta Maksymowicz)

**Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 7.30pm Re-enacting the Klemzig story. Talk: Anitta Maksymowicz** Anitta organised two re-enactments of the departure of "Kavel's people" from Klemzig in 1838. She will talk about these events and the remarkable interest by present-day Poles in this topic of our German history. At Concordia College chapel, 45 Cheltenham St, Highgate.

**Wed 11<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm Where our ancestors lie: German cemeteries in the middle Oder region. Talk: Anitta Maksymowicz** Hosted by the SA Genealogy Society. Ring 8272 4222 to book and find out where it will be held.

**Wed 18<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30 pm Rural life & wine-growing in old Prussia. Talk: Anitta Maksymowicz**

With images from the Ochla Village Museum near Zielona Gora, Anitta will show the life and work of the region and highlight its wine-growing tradition. At Langmeil Lutheran church hall, Maria St, Tanunda.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April Bus trip to the Barossa & Lower North**

Book early! See enclosed booking sheet.

**Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sun 6<sup>th</sup> May Wendish Wagon Trek**

Retrace the journey from Rosedale, SA, to Hamilton, V. See <http://wendishwagontrek.com.au/> or contact one of the organisers: Helen Petschel (03) 5024 1229, Chris Cook Email: [chris@redcliffs.net](mailto:chris@redcliffs.net) , or Colin & Betty Huf 0417 503 265, Email: [colinhuf@westvic.com.au](mailto:colinhuf@westvic.com.au) .

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2pm Talk: Cathy Petersen**

Cathy will talk about the Iowa Wends Society that she organises and other Wends in the US. At St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde).

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2pm Annual General Meeting**

Speaker: Geoff Saegenschnitter. Geoff tells of his visit to the Wendish groups in the US and Canada. At St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde).

**Sat 13<sup>th</sup> - Tues 16<sup>th</sup> October Solway Reunion on Kangaroo Island**

Contact Jan Heppner 8541 2820, Email: [janch@bigpond.com](mailto:janch@bigpond.com) , or Pastor David Christian 8391 0063, Email: [davjoyxian@adam.com.au](mailto:davjoyxian@adam.com.au)

# The Poldrack and Zieschang families and the Rentsch connection

This is a story of a Wendish family that first came to Australia, but after a few years returned to Saxony. They then migrated to Texas.

## The Family

Adam **Rentsch** was born 17 Jan 1790, and died 25 Oct 1850 at Hochkirch, Saxony. He was a gardener and on 21 Feb 1815 at St Michael's Lutheran Church, Hochkirch in Saxony, married Maria Lockin, born 15 Oct 1788 at Lehn and died 02 Feb 1851 at Hochkirch.

The third known child of Adam & Maria Rentsch was Anna was born 25 Oct 1819 at Hochkirch and died in Saxony, date unknown. She married on 29 Jan 1843 at St Michael's, Johann **Poldrack**, born 08 May 1819 at Purschwitz, son of Andreas Poldrack and Maria Jannasch (second son of first marriage). They had 9 known children including first, Maria Magdalena Poldrack, born 19 May 1841 at Hochkirch (always known as just Magdalena), who died on 30 April 1902 at home near Wail Victoria, buried at Pimpinio. Second child, Johann Ernst Poldrack, was born 07 Feb 1843 at Hochkirch and died 14 May 1928 at Coupland in Texas, buried in Mager Cemetery. Fourth child, Andreas Poldrack, was born 30 Apr 1848 at Hochkirch, died 12 Mar 1931 at Coupland in Texas, buried in Mager Cemetery.

The fourth known child of Adam and Maria Rentsch was Magdalena, born 06 Mar 1824 at Hochkirch and died 10 Nov 1898 at Noack in Texas, buried at Noack. Magdalena married about Oct 1851 at Hochkirch to Peter **Zieschang** (PZ), who was born 13 Oct 1827 at Kreckwitz and died 12 Mar 1910 at Noack in Texas, buried at Noack. Peter married second Bertha Sakewitz nee Sakewitz (1852 – 1917) who had first married her first cousin Friedrich Sakewitz.

## Their Story

On 25 Nov 1855 the ship *Bielefeld* arrived in Melbourne, ex Hamburg. On board were Peter and Magdalena (nee Rentsch) **Zieschang** and their daughter Maria Magdalena (born about 1854) and “Magdalena” Poldrack (niece of Magdalena Zieschang). Some days later Peter and some other passengers (44 in all) embarked 02 Dec 1855 on the ship *Alice Brooks* for Adelaide. The movements of Peter and family are unknown, but he was farming near Hamilton in Victoria by 04 January 1857, when he is mentioned in a letter from the Wend, Michael Deutscher, to Pastor Schürmann.

On 12 March 1857 his daughter Maria died and was buried 14 March “near Hamilton”.

On 13 Sept 1857, “near Hamilton” his son Johann Traugott was born, died 11 Apr 1917 at Noack in Texas, buried at Noack. He married 21 Jan 1879 at Serbin in Texas, Maria Theresia Jannasch (1859 – 1951, - may be a maternal cousin) and had 9 children.

On 06 April 1861, near Hamilton, second son Carl (Charlie) Gotthelf was born, died 03 Jan 1933 at Noack, Texas, buried Noack. He married 21 Oct 1884 at Richland Texas to Sophie “Augusta” Margaret Sakewitz (1866 – 1928), niece of Friedrich Sakewitz.

On 23 Nov 1860 “Magdalena” Poldrack married Carl Anton Prange (1825 – 1887) a German from Oiste, a village in Hanover, at St Michael's Lutheran Church at Hochkirch (now Tarrington), Victoria, Pastor Schürmann presiding and Peter gave permission as guardian. They went on to have 10 children at Hochkirch (Vic), Yahl Paddock (SA), Penola (SA) and Pimpinio (Vic). Both are buried at Pimpinio.

Peter Zieschang had land near Hamilton and also in outlying areas that he farmed or leased. In 1867 he advertised his land for sale and appears to have sold up all his holdings. Peter, Magdalena and their 2 Victorian born sons left Victoria on 02 Apr 1868 from Melbourne per the ship *Suffolk* bound for London. From London they must have made their way back to their origins in Saxony.

On 15 Nov 1870 at New Orleans, per *SS Frankfurt* from Bremen, were Peter (miller), Magdalena, Johann and Carl Zieschang; Johann Poldrack – PZ's nephew (farmer); August, Magdalene & Hermann Zieschang (PZ's brother, wife & nephew); John, Gertrand and Agnes Protze (brother-in-law, sister and niece); Carl, Theresia and Anna Keiling (brother-in-law, sister and niece). They settled at Fiskville, Travis County, Texas and later Peter and family went to Noack and settled there. Noack was originally called Hochkirch.

Johann Ernst Poldrack had a son out of wedlock in Germany called John Spank, who came to Texas also, but eventually went back to Germany where he married and stayed. Johann married a Danish born widow (with one daughter), Johanna (nee Christianson) Swanson (1846 – 1924). They had 6 children. Ernst and Johanna separated about 1901. Ernst had a trip back to Germany, probably to see his son John Spank there. He left a share of his farm at death to John.

About 1881 Andreas Poldrack, brother of Magdalena and Johann Ernst migrated to Texas. He had married about 1873 in Germany Johanna Sophia Lotzmann (1845 – 1912). They had 5 known children.

Noack, Texas, is 36 miles north east of Austin (capital of Texas). It was established as a Wendish settlement called Hochkirch in early 1870s by Peter Zieschang. It was re-named Noack in 1902 when a John Ernest Noack became Postmaster. Peter's farm was on land owned by the Olive family who were ranchers. Peter Zieschang and Ernst Poldrack had a run in with "Print" Olive when they were pistol whipped etc and then Olive took them to court for assault. Peter was known to take pot shots at Olive family members who took a short cut across a corner of his property where an old trail had been. Print was shot to death in Colorado in 1886.

There does not appear to be a relationship between my Rentsch family and the other Rentschs that came to Australia (so far).

**Malcolm Sears**, the author of the above is son of Joan Eliza nee Forsyth, daughter of John Henry Forsyth, son of Louisa Wilhelmina nee Prange, daughter of Magdalena nee Poldrack. He has visited his Texas cousins of the Poldrack and Zieschang families in 1998 and 2001, but has yet to visit his Victorian Prange (Poldrack) family. He is retired, lives in Perth with wife Joy and daughter Ellin. A son Brodie married last year.

## 75<sup>th</sup> Birthdays

On Wed 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011 we attended the Grand Birthday Gourmet Afternoon tea, which was presented to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of people who were born in South Australia in 1936. This wonderful event was held in the Adelaide Convention Centre on North Terrace.

Several hundred people enjoyed the superb afternoon tea. We met people whom we hadn't seen for years, as well as others whom we see more often, including several members of the Wend/Sorb Society of SA (see photo). It was a very enjoyable occasion for so many people, especially the 1936ers who have survived the past 75 years, plus those whose birthdays were ahead in November and December 2011.

*June and Dennis Jenke*



*Theo & Sylvia Modra, Ruth & Eric Fiebig, June & Dennis Jenke,  
Olga Radke.*

## Sir Donald Dunstan, Former State Governor

*Continued from page 2*

A grant was awarded to enable Alfons to come to South Australia, a visit warmly welcomed by the state's Sorb/Wend community.

Sir Donald was especially appreciative of the books and materials that Alfons presented to him and our book, *The Unknown Immigrants*, plus the information Alfons provided him about the homeland of his forebears. Sir Donald explained he was very interested to follow up his forebears' history and this is why he was very interested to meet Alfons. His Sorb/Wend forebears had the name Kollosche.

Sir Donald died last year in Adelaide at the age of 88, a Sorb/Wend to be proud of, having achieved such a high office.

*Bev Hall*

# For Sale

## Booklets from Germany - in English:

*Customs and Traditions of the Sorbs in Lower Lusatia* - \$1, plus postage

*The Winter Season among the Sorbs* - \$1, plus postage

*Easter with the Sorbs* - \$1, plus postage

*Sorbian Customs and Traditions in the course of the year* - \$1, plus postage

(Postage: \$1 for one book, \$3 for 2-6 books)

## Also the best books about the Wends in Australia:

Burger, *The Coming of the Wends* - \$12, plus \$3 postage

Nielsen, *In Search of a Home* (second edition, hard cover) - \$40, plus \$10 postage

## CDs:

*From Wendish to German to English (A Journey into Wendish Culture, History & Language)*

This marvellous CD has been produced by the Texas Wendish Heritage Society. It contains English narration, German and Wendish singing by a German choir performing at Texas in 2002, talks by noted Wendish (Sorbian) historians Dr George Nielsen and Gertrud Mahling (Trudla Malinkowa). George Nielsen talks about Wendish migration to Australia. *A real treat!*

Cost = \$30, plus \$3 postage

**Contact** Ruth Walter, 43 Clifton St, Prospect SA 5082, (tel. 08 8269 7168),  
email: [ruthwalter@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ruthwalter@optusnet.com.au)

Please make cheques or money orders to Wend Sorb Society of South Australia.

**ELECTIONS:** The following office-bearers were elected at the AGM (28 Aug 2011):

President: Lyall Kupke

Vice-President: Eric Fiebig

Secretary: Pauline Burger

Assistant Secretary: Ruth Walter

Treasurer: John Longmire

Extra committee members: Marie Brazier, Ruth Fiebig, Brian Hennig, Dennis Jenke, June Jenke, Michael McDonnell, Rona McDonnell.

Bev Hall remains an Honorary member of the committee.

*We welcome any contributions to this newsletter. Please send them to the Editor at the address below.*

This newsletter was published by the **Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia Inc.**

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