



Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail

(This is the text of the speech given by our President, Lyall Kupke, at each of the launches of the signs.)

The Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia represents the descendants of the Wendish migrants to South Australia in the 19th century.

Who were the Wends? The Wends are a Slavic people, who came from a region in eastern Germany, near the present-day border of Poland and the Czech Republic. In Europe today they are known as Sorbs. They have maintained their own language, culture and customs by living in close communities in small regions of eastern Germany. This area is called Lusatia (Lausitz) and is centred around two cities: Cottbus and Bautzen. Some 60,000 Sorbs in this region still speak their language today.

When German migration to South Australia occurred from the 1840s, many Sorbs from Lusatia also migrated. The Germans called them Wends, and only that name was used in Australia.

On arrival in South Australia they lived in communities and retained their language and customs. The settlements at Ebenezer, Neukirch, St Kitts in the Barossa Valley, and at Peters Hill had many Wendish families, and descendants can still be found there today.



Marie Brazier & Lyall Kupke at Hope Valley

Gradually they spread out to other areas - Victoria (the Western District, near Hamilton; the Wimmera, near Horsham) and New South Wales (the Riverina, north of Albury). A small number also came direct from Germany to Thomastown, north of Melbourne.

All together about 2000 Wends in 400 families came to Australia, mainly between 1848 and 1860. (About 30,000 Germans came in that same period.) So about 7% were Wends.

Some familiar Wendish surnames in South Australia are Altus, Bartsch, Dallwitz, Doecke, Dreckow, Duldig, Dutschke, Huppatz, Jenke, Kleinig, Laucke, Lieschke, Mickan, Modra, Noack, Pech, Schuppan, Wenke and Zwar. Perhaps the most notable descendant is former SA Governor, Sir Donald Dunstan (not the Premier Don Dunstan), whose former family name of Kollosche was Wendish.



Ruth Walter & Pauline Burger at Rosedale

The Wends attempted to keep their distinctive language and culture, especially in their religious worship. But within two generations most of the Wendish language and culture had been abandoned in Australia. As Wendish settlers spread out they found themselves in a minority, and so intermarried and assimilated with the larger German population. Consequently as the years passed by, the knowledge of their Wendish ancestry was frequently forgotten.

In recent years there has been a revival of interest by many people in their Wendish heritage. Wendish Societies have been formed in Adelaide and Melbourne.

Much of this interest has been sparked by the research of two scholars: the Australian Lutheran Pastor Rupert Burger, whose book, *The Coming of the Wends*, was published in 1976; and the American professor, Dr George Nielsen, whose book *In Search of a Home*, was published in 1977.

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One of the aims of the Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia is to make descendants aware of their Wendish heritage.

Another aim is to assist local communities to identify and preserve significant local sites relating to Wendish history in South Australia. That's where this sign comes in.



Ruth Fiebig & Dennis Jenke at Ebenezer

PROJECT

Our project has been to place interpretive signs at 6 sites of Wendish settlement – at Hope Valley, Rosedale, Ebenezer, Neukirch, St Kitts and Peters Hill. We have called this the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail. We believe this will highlight these historic sites for Wendish descendants and tourists alike. We have a brochure which explains it.

We are also preparing a more detailed booklet about the Heritage Trail so that people can get more information about Wendish history in SA.



Eddie Noack at St Kitts

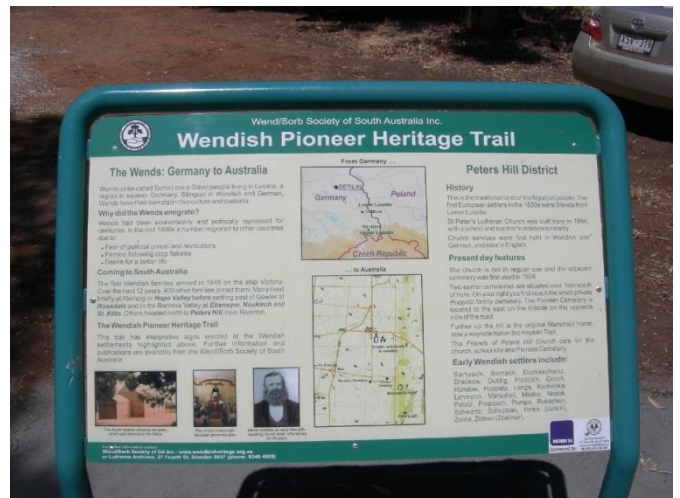


Some committee members at Peters Hill

I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance we have received from the state government departments of Multicultural SA and History SA. This is indicated on the sign. We appreciate their support.

I would also like to thank the following organisations which allowed us to erect our signs on their land:

- Tea Tree Gully Council – sign at Hope Valley Cemetery
- Rosedale Lutheran Church
- Ebenezer Lutheran Church
- Neukirch Lutheran Church
- St Petri Cemetery committee at St Kitts
- Friends of Peters Hill Church



The Peters Hill sign

The sign has been designed with 3 parts: on the left side there is the general background information (a summary of what I have just outlined above), in the middle are maps showing where they came from in Germany and where they settled here, and on the right is information on their settlement in this district.

President's AGM Report (23 Sept 2012)

It has certainly been a busy year for members of the Wend/Sorb Society. The bus trip in April attracted a full busload again, while some followed behind in cars. The visits to small relatively unknown places like Buchsfelde, Magdala, Schoenfeld and Bethel was a big attraction and enjoyed by all. Thanks go to Ruth and Eric Fiebig for organising the day.

In July we were privileged to hear Cathy Petersen from America speak to us about what she has discovered about Wendish history worldwide, as well as tell us about her Wendish group in Iowa. It was an interesting talk. Copies of her talk are available on CD. See me if you would like a copy.

Today we look forward to hearing Geoff Saegenschmitter tell us about his trip to America and Canada last year and the different Wendish groups he met.

There were other activities, which we did not organise, but which some of us enjoyed as well. The Wendish Heritage Society in Melbourne held an enjoyable weekend in the Tabor-Penshurst-Hamilton district. My wife and I, as well as Gilbert Materne, represented the South Australian Wends. Next year their weekend in March is in the Geelong area. I would encourage you to join with them for a great time.

The visit by Anitta Maksymowicz from Poland was a wonderful time. Anitta spoke to interested audiences at seven occasions on different topics, like emigration from the Grünberg district to SA, researching family history in Poland today, Polish re-enactments of the German migration to SA, the wine industry in this area of Poland etc. She impressed us with her detailed knowledge of our history.

In May the Wendish Wagon Trek, retracing the journey made 150 years ago from Rosedale to Portland and later to Hamilton, was thoroughly enjoyed by descendants of those Wendish families, including Pauline Burger and Ruth Walter (nee Rentsch).

The major task of our committee this year has been the completion of the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail signs. They have now been erected at the six sites and they have been officially unveiled at Hope Valley and Rosedale. The official unveiling at Peters Hill will occur on Sunday 28th October at 12 noon. This is the Peters Hill day arranged by the Friends of Peters Hill Church. The unveiling of the other 3 signs will occur on Sunday 11th November: at Ebenezer at 11am, at Neukirch at 12 noon, and at St Kitts at 2.30 pm. You are invited to attend these events.

Last year I mentioned that we received a grant of \$2000 from Multicultural SA towards this trail. We were thrilled to receive a grant of \$2000 from History SA as well. A representative from History SA attended our Hope Valley launch and you can read about it on the History SA website.

I wish to thank the committee members for their contributions to preparing the wording on the signs, to Eric Fiebig for doing the layout, and to Brian Hennig for erecting them. A special note of thanks goes to Michael McDonnell for the original idea many years ago. The committee is now preparing a brochure and a booklet to go with the Heritage Trail. A first draft of the brochure is available today.

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

History Month

Once again this year the month of May has been designated as History month in SA. A large number of events have been planned by different organisations around the state. A program will be available in April to give you the opportunity to select the ones you wish to see. You will be able to collect it at your local library. Alternately check the website of History SA, or Google 'About Time 2013'.

Meanwhile here are some events which should interest many of you.

Gilbert Materne's talk on the Wends of Peters Hill is very relevant to many of us. This has been organised by the Germanic & Continental European Special Interest Group of the SA Genealogy & Heraldry Society. See the Coming Events column for details.

An all-day seminar to explore the different reasons for German migration in the 19th century has been organised by the German Heritage Research Group. See the Coming Events column for details. Bookings essential.

Our committee member, Brian Hennig, will tell the story of the Hahndorf Rifle Club, of which he is a member. This has been organised by the Friends of Lutheran Archives. See the Coming Events column for details.

An afternoon about the Wends in Australia and around the world will be presented by our Society members, Eric & Ruth Fiebig, and Geoff Saegenschnitter. This is part of the City of Burnside activities. See the Coming Events column for details.

And in April, don't forget our Bus Trip following the Wendish Heritage Trail in the Barossa on 27th April. You will need to book early to ensure a seat. The booking form is enclosed.

ELECTIONS:

The following office-bearers were elected at the AGM (23 Sept 2012):

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.

WANTED

- **A new Treasurer.** Our current treasurer, John Longmire, has indicated that this is his last year in this position. So we need to elect a replacement at our next AGM in September. Please help us find someone who will do this job. Pass on suggestions to any committee member.
- **New & younger members.** Are you passing on your Wendish heritage to your children and relatives? Make sure they know all about it. We would like the Society to continue after we are gone, but that will depend on younger people joining it now. Talk to your children about their Wendish ancestors. Get them interested.

Coming Events

Sat 9th – Sun 10th March Wendish Heritage Society's Weekend Tour

In the Grovedale & Freshwater Creek district near Geelong, Victoria.

Contact the Wendish Heritage Society Secretary, Glenys Wollermann (tel. 03 9891 6652), or wendsociety1@optusnet.com.au or PO Box 307, Heidelberg V 3084.

Sat 27th April Bus trip: Following the Wendish Heritage Trail in the Barossa

Details on the booking form with this newsletter. ***BOOK EARLY***

Wed 8th May, 7.30pm Talk: Wends of Peters Hill

Speaker: Gilbert Materne. Organised by the Germanic & Continental European Special Interest Group of the SA Genealogy & Heraldry Society. At the Society Library, 201 Unley Rd, Unley. Contact Aileen Preiss (tel. 8264 6552) to tell her you are coming.

Sat 11th May, 9.30am – 4.30pm Seminar on Migration to SA

A number of speakers will explore the different reasons for German migration in the 19th century. Organised by the German Heritage Research Group. At the Ira Raymond Room, Barr-Smith Library, University of Adelaide. Cost \$35, includes lunch, morning and afternoon teas. Bookings: Lutheran Archives (tel. 8340 4009) before 6th May.

Mon 20th May, 7.30pm Talk: Hahndorf Rifle Club

Speaker: Brian Hennig. At Bethlehem House, Sudholz Place, Adelaide.
Organised by the Friends of Lutheran Archives.

Tues 21st May, 1pm-3pm Talks: The Wends in Australia and around the world

Speakers: Eric & Ruth Fiebig, and Geoff Saegenschnitter
At City of Burnside Library in the Burnside Civic Centre, 401 Greenhill Rd, Tasmore.

Sun 21st July, 2pm Wendish films

A variety of short films (in English) about the Wends and Lusatia will be shown.
At St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde).

Sun 8th September, 2pm Annual General Meeting

Followed by another selection of Wendish films (in English).
At St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde).

Dear Ancestor,

Your tombstone stands among the rest
Neglected and alone
The name and date are chiselled out
On polished marble stone.
It reaches out to all who care
It is too late to mourn
You did not know that I exist
You died and I was born.
Yet each of us are cells of you
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse
Entirely not our own.

Dear Ancestor,

The place you filled
One hundred years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
Who would have loved you so.
I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot
And come to visit you.

Anon.

The Protestant Sorbs (Wends)

Article by Trudla Malinkowa, Wendish historian at Bautzen, Germany, and translated by Martin Strauch

The Sorbs (Wends) are the smallest Slavonic nation. They are descendants of the Slavonic tribes who around 600 AD, during the migration of peoples, settled in the territory between the Rivers Oder/Neiße and Elbe/Saale, and between the Baltic Sea and the East German secondary mountain chains. These tribes were not able to establish state structures of their own. Their territories became part of the Roman Empire during the High Middle Ages. For hundreds of years the Sorbs have lived under German statehood. There is no "Mother State" beyond the German borders.

Sorbian territory has been shrinking for about 1,000 years. As the Industrial Age began, the remainder of the Sorbian territory in Lusatia began to break up. The growing domination of the German language and culture in all spheres of life, often aided by the suppression of all Sorbian activities in the church, schools, and in public life, led to the loss of the language and the culture of the Sorbs. They became a minority in their own country. Only a small area populated by Catholic Sorbs has managed to survive as a result of being a kind of "religious island" and because of its extended agricultural structure. Here, the Sorbian language and culture have been preserved into the 21st Century. At the end of the 19th Century there were approximately 160,000 Sorbs. Today they number about 30,000.

The terms "Wends" or "Sorbs" are, generally speaking, interchangeable. For centuries the term "Wends" was widely used. The term "Sorbs" is derived from the Sorbian word "Serbja" and became the official term after World War II. In Lower Lusatia the term "Lower Sorbs/Wends" is preferred.

The Lower Sorbian and Upper Sorbian languages are of Slavonic origin and in them quite a number of Old Slavonic characteristics are found. In Lower Lusatia, in the southern parts of Brandenburg, the people speak Lower Sorbian, which is quite closely related to Polish. In Saxony, in Upper Lusatia, the people speak Upper Sorbian, a language quite similar to Czech. There are some regional dialects along the border line in the Hoyerswerda and Weißwasser areas.

With the Reformation the Sorbian people became Protestant, though some communities near Kamenz and Bautzen remained Catholic. The mother-tongue principle of Luther led to the development of the Lower Sorbian and Upper Sorbian literary languages. As early as 1548 Luther's version of the New Testament was translated into Lower Sorbian, but remained in manuscript. It was followed by Luther's catechism, which was printed first in Lower Lusatian in 1574 and later in 1595 in Upper Sorbian. By educating and training priests as well as teachers, the Sorbian people for the first time acquired an intellectual leadership.

The Church history of the Protestant Sorbs was influenced by two essential and interregional movements: (1) in the mid-18th Century by the development of the "Brüdergemeine" ("Moravian Brethren") of Baron Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf at Herrnhut, and (2) in the mid-19th Century by the separatist movement of Old Lutherans in Prussia. Today's "Brüdergemeine" at Kleinwelka, founded in 1751 as a Sorbian colony, and certain parishes in Upper and Lower Lusatia belonging to the independent Protestant-Lutheran church are evidence of this process. They left the united state church as independent Lutheran parishes in the 1840s.

Emigration affected the Protestant Sorbs from the 1850s till the end of the 19th Century. The US and Australia were the main countries of interest, followed by Canada, South Africa, and South America. The largest group of emigrants was that which in 1855 founded the town of Serbin in Texas. Here, the settlers most clearly showed their intention to preserve Protestant Sorbian traditions. Here, and in Australia, you can still find societies and parishes today that keep alive the cultural and religious heritage of their ancestors.

Continued on next page

The cultural development of the Sorbian people was, until the end of the 19th Century, mainly in the hands of the Protestant educated class. The birth of Sorbian middle-class culture was more or less the fruit of their work. The achievements of the Sorbian people in the arts, in culture, and in the sciences can scarcely be paralleled among other nations of comparable size. Owing to the intensified assimilation process among the Protestant Sorbs, the intellectual leadership of the Sorbian people was taken over in the 20th Century by the Catholics.

The Bible and hymn-books have existed in both Sorbian languages since the 18th Century. The New Testament was first published in Lower Sorbian in 1709, the Old Testament in 1796, and the complete Bible in 1824 and 1868. The first Lower Sorbian hymn-book appeared in 1574, the latest in 1915. An Upper Sorbian version of the New Testament came out in 1706, followed by the whole Bible in 1728. The latest of its eleven editions appeared in 1905. The Upper Sorbian hymn-book of 1710 appeared in its most recent edition in 1955. At present, new editions of hymn-books in both languages are being prepared. Since 1854, there has also been an Upper Sorbian edition of the Lutheran confessions.

"Pomhaj Bóh" and "Pomagaj Bog" are journals published for the Sorbian Protestants and named after the Protestant greeting (in German: "Gott helfe dir"; English equivalent: "God speed"). Founded in 1891, the Upper Sorbian "Pomhaj Bóh" is an independent monthly, whereas "Pomagaj Bog", first published in 1988, is a part of the Lower Sorbian weekly newspaper.

The national costumes of the Sorbian people are of an astonishing variety and beauty. They are still worn today in the regions of Hoyerswerda, Weißwasser (Central Lusatia) and Cottbus (Lower Lusatia) by women of the older generation. The younger generation wear them for special occasions and festivals. More and more "Costume Societies" have been founded in recent years.

Sorbian customs are widely followed in all regions of Lusatia. Among them are the winter and spring customs of "Birds' Wedding", the "Wendish Carnival", "Witch Burning", "Felling the May Pole", and "Mid-Summer Day's Riding". Around harvest-time there are "Plucking the Cock", "Beating the Cock", "Stubble Riding", and "Moving the Frog on a Wheelbarrow." Important church festivals are sometimes combined with special customs. At Christmas, there is the Žišetko (Child of God) and at Easter there are Easter Fires, girls fetch "Easter water," eggs are decorated and Easter hymns are sung in the night. Often you can also see the colourful national costumes.

Sympathy

We express our sympathy to

Ruth, John and Ashley Schilling at the death of their daughter and sister, Pauline Drewitt.

Audrey Burger and family at the death of her husband, Ray Burger. Ray is pictured on the cover of the book, *The Coming of the Wends*, standing in front of the Burger cottage at Penshurst in Victoria. He had a great interest in preserving this historic cottage, which his Wendish family had built in 1853. It was also pictured in the last newsletter.

The family of Eddie Noack, who died recently. In November Eddie unveiled the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign at St Kitts (see page 2 of the newsletter).

For Sale

A new book from Germany!

- Korall & Schwikart, *Journey through the Spree Forest* (in English with lovely pictures) - \$35, plus \$10 postage

Booklets from Germany - in English:

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

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

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

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