



Bus Trip - Wendish Heritage Trail

Early on a bright, sunny Saturday (27 April), 57 people gathered for our annual coach trip exploring areas relating to Wendish settlement in South Australia. We had a full bus once again with folk aged from 7 to 70 plus and some people still on a waiting list. This year the focus was on our recently launched Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail with its interpretive signs. Six signs have been erected, with four of them being visited on this trip. The Hope Valley and Peters Hill signs will have to wait for another time, unless members manage to visit them individually.

Tour leaders Ruth and Eric Fiebig again presented all travellers with folders of helpful maps, historical notes and images of the sites to be visited.

From South Terrace we travelled along the northern exit from Adelaide towards the Barossa Valley, admiring the beautiful autumn colours of the area. We saw kangaroos and cockatoos in the green paddocks and numerous grapevines for which the area is world famous. While we journeyed, the committee members who were responsible for a particular Wendish Trail sign spoke about the many years of work involved.

After a welcome morning tea at the historic city of Gawler we headed to the first of the four Trail signs, located at **Rosedale** (Rosenthal), turning north off the road to Lyndoch. After a short drive we noted the ancient fig trees and a shed marking the site where Deutscher's barn had stood. This was where early Wendish settlers worshipped until their first church was built. A few metres on, we stopped to walk around the Pioneer Cemetery.



Rosedale Pioneer Cemetery

The location of the first sun-dried brick Lutheran church built by the Wends, and that of a later church building have been indicated with chain fencing and plaques on cairns. A plaque provides a memorial to a Dr Frederick Lampard who used to walk around the district to visit his patients. The interesting graves include those of other early pioneers, a few later Wendish settlers and even more recent burials. All well maintained.

Finally we continued on to Rosedale's current Trinity Lutheran Church and cemetery. The original manse located opposite the church property is now a private home with an impressive garden. Group photos were taken of members present who are descendants of the Wendish Rosedale pioneers in front of the Trail sign located under a tree at the church property. The sign lists Rosedale's Wendish pioneer family names of: Albert, Burger, Deutscher, Fleischer, Gude, Hundrack, Liebe, Mirtschin, Petschel and Rentsch. These moved to Victoria in 1852.



Descendants of the Rosedale Wends

Next our coach travelled to the second Trail sign near St John's Lutheran Church and cemetery at **Ebenezer**, where we enjoyed investigating the cemetery which is divided into the old and new sections. The renowned leader of the largest group of the Wends to migrate here, Dr Johann Zwar, has a prominent grave which is in good repair. An old school building, built in 1871, also fascinated many of the tour group, although it is not in good condition. Preservation or restoration of this school would be a very worthy project. Eckert and Freund descendants felt a real connection and believe that some of their ancestors may have attended the school. Once again group photos were taken of the descendants of the Ebenezer pioneers. Wendish pioneer

family names identified on the Trail sign are: Dallwitz, Doecke, Freund, Hennersdorf, Jenke, Kleinig, Lieschke, Lowke, Mickan, Pannach, Schneider, Urban, Wenke and Zwar. The Hennersdorf, Lieschke, Mickan and Wenke families trekked overland to Walla Walla in NSW in 1868 and many descendants today live in the Riverina.



Descendants of Ebenezer Wends

We then journeyed onto the third Trail sign in front of nearby **Neukirch** Lutheran Church and cemetery. After a warm welcome we enjoyed a roast chicken and salad lunch followed by fruit salad and ice-cream in the large new multi-purpose building currently under construction. The women of the church were admired for their ingenuity in providing this tasty lunch without access to sinks or stoves. We enjoyed delicious wines from the area (Marcus Schulz and others) as we celebrated good company and food. Descendants of the Neukirch pioneers continued the day's tradition of posing with the Trail sign for photos. Wendish pioneer family names identified here are: Bartsch, Biar, Biele, Doecke, Eckert, Freund, Genser, Gersch, Hempel, Jenke, Kielan, Kleinig, Michalk and Noack.



Descendants of Neukirch Wends

The sunshine continued as we then headed for the fourth and final Trail sign on our tour at **St Kitts**, placed at the entrance to the former St Petri Lutheran Church and cemetery. The church is now well cared for as a private home, and local identity Phil Noack informed us that the area of natural scrub around the area was one of the rare remnants of original vegetation left in the area. More photos were taken of descendants of the St Kitts pioneers with the Wendish Pioneer Heritage sign. Wendish pioneer family names include: Bartsch, Biar, Biele, Britza, Damschke, Doecke, Eckert, Freund, Gersch, Haupt, Jenke, Kleinig, Lehmann, Lieschke, Michalk, Miersch, Noack, Poetschke, Urban and Zwar. Unfortunately the couple responsible for work on the St Kitts sign (and previous bus trips), Dennis and June Jenke, were unavailable to attend the day trip and they were much missed by all.



Descendants of St Kitts Wends

Although there are no Wendish links, we called into the historic township of Dutton. It has lovely old buildings and the 1871 St John's Lutheran church has a rustic bell tower. People searched the cemetery for familiar names. A brief stop at Truro enabled many of us to enjoy ice-creams and other snacks.

Finally, we visited the old Gomersal (Schoenborn) cemetery with its historic school/church building and well preserved graves.

We arrived back in Adelaide at 5.30 pm. With perfect weather, good company, lots of talking, safe travel and wonderful sights, it had been a most enjoyable and informative day. There was much history to ponder and we are grateful that a small group of committed descendants have honoured their Wendish ancestors by producing a highly commended series of Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail signs. Special thanks go to the Fiebigs for their excellent planning for the whole day.

Marie Brazier, Pauline Burger, Ruth Walter
(Wend/Sorb Society committee members)

President's Report

Did you enjoy the bus trip in April? Or were you one of the people who missed out because you left it too late to book seats? I warned you! We already have people on the list for next year's trip to Peters Hill. We certainly had a good time on the bus trip: nice weather, good company, well-organised, interesting places, and lovely meal. No wonder the seats sell quickly. So make sure you book early next year.

Once again the Wendish Heritage Society in Melbourne held an enjoyable event on the March long weekend. This year they visited the Grovedale district in Geelong. My wife and I, as well as Gilbert Materne, represented the South Australian Wends. We were shown the historic sites of Grovedale and Freshwater Creek. If you want an interesting historical weekend, then join them next year. It may be in the Natimuk district, just over the border from Bordertown.

Our next meeting coming up will be different from what we advertised in the last newsletter. Since then Dr Norman Habel approached me and asked if we would like to hold the launch of his new book about his Wendish great-grandfather. We willingly accepted, so you are in for a treat on 21st July. See the publicity in the newsletter.

Don't forget our AGM on 8th September. This will be an important one as we need to elect a new Treasurer. Our current Treasurer, John Longmire, has served us willingly and well for five years. Can you help us find a replacement? Two of our other committee members have also retired. So there are places for anyone willing to get involved.

Lyll Kupke

Coming Events

Sun 21st July, 2pm Book launch

Dr Norm Habel's book, *Tree Whisperer*, is the story of his Wendish great-grandfather.
At St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde). (see article below)

Sun 8th September, 2pm Annual General Meeting

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

Tree Whisperer, by Norman Habel

Norm has written a story about Wilhelm Habel, his great grandfather. In his research Norm found that his Habel ancestors were not Germans, but Wends who lived in Silesia. The Wends were of Slavic origin and for centuries lived in the forests, making their living from honey and wax, furs and timber. Many became established members of farming communities or country villages.

This story traces Wilhelm's journey to Australia and tells how his forest wisdom guided his spirit. It is the story of a tree whisperer in tune with nature and the mysteries of creation.

The book will be launched at St Andrew's Lutheran Church Hall, 22 Avenue Rd, Glynde, on Sunday 21st July at 2pm. All welcome.

Wends at Burnside

The Burnside Library hosted a sell-out event for History SA month in the Burnside Library on 21st May when it held a seminar by the Wend/Sorb Society of SA 'The Coming of the Wends to Australia' with Eric and Ruth Fiebig and 'Wends around the World' with Geoff Saegenschnitter.

There is an upsurge of interest in Australia about the 400 Wendish families who migrated from Eastern Germany to South Australia and Victoria from 1848. There is now a Wendish Pioneer Heritage Interpretative Trail commemorating the major settlement sites in SA. Information brochures were distributed to the audience.

72 people attended the seminar organised by committee member Marie Brazier. Many in the audience had Wendish heritage and were keen to know more. Everyone enjoyed the knowledgeable power point presentations.

The extensive artefacts display including Wendish dolls gained much attention. The Wend flags and all the Wendish items were impressive and an indicator of how proud the Wend Society is of their Wendish heritage. There was also a large collection of calendars with beautiful photos of the homeland. Many books were sold and we even had to go home to get more!

Members of the Wend/Sorb Society Committee worked hard to make the event a great success.

Marie Brazier
Committee member

More Bus Trips

Blue Wattle Bus Trips do monthly bus trips to various areas around the country near Adelaide. In June this year the Blue Wattle Bus Trips chose the Wendish Barossa region and did numerous trips to view the Wendish Trail Signs in the Barossa Valley. Allen, the driver, did much research to give information to the participants. Wendish signs covered were Ebenezer, Neukirch, Rosedale and St Kitts. The groups had lunch at the Stockwell Hotel and all enjoyed the Wendish focus on the Barossa.

Marie Brazier
Committee member

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.

Heritage Trial signs

After countless hours of research, meetings, prototypes, discussions and final agreement the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail signs are now in place. They are the only ones in Australia.

I was involved in the final chapter of this exercise with the erection of the signs at the six sites: Hope Valley, Rosedale, Ebenezer, Neukirch, St Kitts and Peters Hill. This meant meeting people from bureaucrats to battlers and discovering that placing a sign on the advice to miss the underground irrigation system does not guarantee you will not strike water.

My journey of discovery as I travelled the country areas led me to meet and talk to people of immense character and consideration, where the principal object of the location of the sign is to benefit their church or cemetery and the tourists who visit them.

I wish to thank the following: Kate Paterson, Bob Ahrens, Dudley Ruediger, Adrian Hoffmann, Phil Noack, Chris Fisher and all the good people who stopped to give me advice and encouragement.

While I was working at St Kitts a man stopped to see what I was doing. When I told him about our project, he said he was a tourist bus driver and he would arrange to stop at these signs on his future tours.

Brian Hennig
Committee member

WHO ARE THE WENDS?

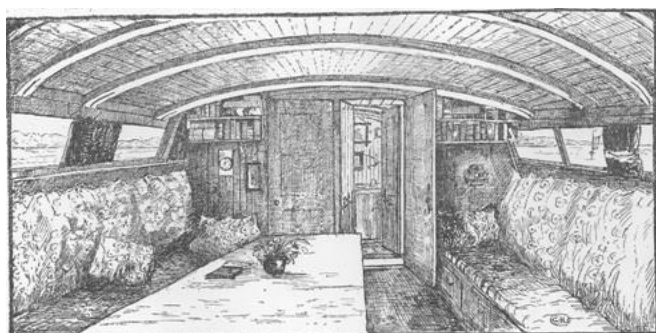
by Keith Lokan

Most of us nowadays identify the Wends as the Slav group living along the Cottbus–Bautzen axis (Lusatia or Lausitz), some of whom still speak their own Slav language, which overlaps with Polish and Czech. We know too that in the present day these Wends much prefer to be known as Sorbs, although the rest of Germany refers to them as Wends.

Some months ago Lyall Kupke lent me a book, written in the 1890s, entitled *'Our Wherry in Wendish Lands. From Friesland through the Mecklenburg Lakes to Bohemia'*, by HM Doughty. A wherry is a large shallow-draft barge-like sailboat, once common in the flat canal country of Norfolk, and in this case comfortably fitted out with bedrooms, toilets, kitchen and a large common saloon to accommodate eight or so passengers and several crew.



The wherry



The saloon of the wherry

With his two daughters, the author had in previous years travelled across the North Sea to explore the waterways of Friesland in the northern Netherlands. In 1889 they had laid up their wherry in Leeunwarden, fairly close to the German border, and returned in the following year to begin a journey, over two summers, which would take them through north-western and eastern Germany from the Baltic border down to Bohemia.

In the course of their adventure Doughty and his family travelled by way of canals, rivers and lakes across

Schleswig Holstein (Hamburg), Mecklenburg (Schwerin) and then south through Brandenburg (Berlin, Potsdam), Sachsen Anhalt (Magdeburg), Saxony (Dresden) and along the upper reaches of the River Elbe, all the way to Prague. From time to time they left their wherry to travel by railway on side excursions to towns and cities of interest.

The author was clearly well educated – his account is replete with classical quotations in the somewhat florid style of the time – and seems to have had a good command of German, although he had to depend on his Dutch crewman to interpret the related Platt Deutsch spoken in the far north-west.

Similar to the northern Netherlands, the Baltic north of Germany was criss-crossed with canals, rivers and lakes, which had until this time provided a very important regional transport pathway. This was now entering a decline as the growing railway network was undermining its commercial survival. Nevertheless, it was still mostly navigable, although the party found difficulties from time to time with stretches which were not well maintained and sometimes they had to backtrack to find alternative ways through.

The account of their voyage is interesting, and full of detail, but my interest lay mostly with the author's references to the Wends, which stimulated me to look further into Wendish history.

I soon discovered that the term 'Wend' in Germany was virtually synonymous with 'Western Slav', and describes the descendants of the Slav tribes who moved into the area east of Saxony and as far south as Slovakia, towards the end of the first millennium. In the period 300–500 AD, the Germanic peoples had moved westwards as the Roman Empire weakened, and, as the Franks, became the nucleus of the future France and Germany. They were replaced by the Western Slavs, initially as fairly major migratory groups, but soon dividing into smaller tribes separated by large tracts of woodland. In the north-west, the Polabian Slavs (Veleti-Lutici-Pomeranian and others, evolving later into the Obotrites), were known collectively as Wends. They were a pagan people whose land was gradually re-colonised and Christianised during the German Ostsiedlung (eastern settlement) in the 12th to 14th centuries. They were culturally assimilated by the Germans over time, though their Polabian language was still spoken in northern Germany (Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg–Vorpommern) until the early 1800s.

Continued on next page

There are vestiges still of the Polabian language in the names of many towns and villages in these former Wendish lands of northern Germany. Just as many place names in Lusatia end in 'ow', so too is the 'ow' ending commonly found in the north (for example, Hagenow, Jesow, Marsow, Tüschow, Badekow, Schwetow.... all east of Boizenburg).



The map shows the spread of Western Slavs by the end of the 10th century. For present-day orientation, Wrocław was formerly Breslau in Prussia; Lubusz = Lebus, on the Oder River - the present border between Germany and Poland; Szczecin (north of Berlin and formerly Stettin in Prussia), also on the Oder River; Praha = Prague; and Nitra in the far south is a major ancient city in Slovakia, about 100 km east of the present Austrian border.



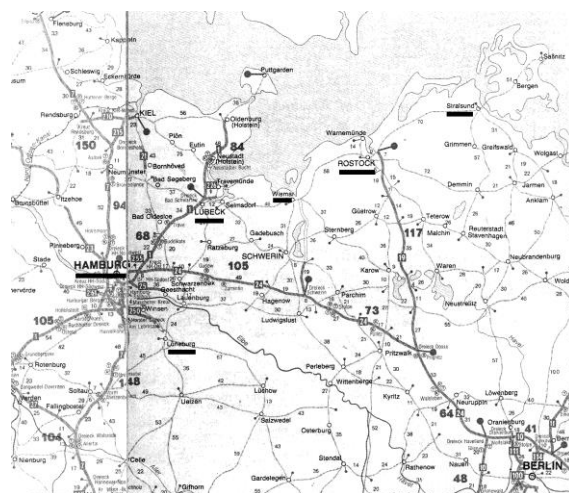
There is a small region southeast of Lüneburg, on the borders of Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg–Vorpommern and Brandenburg, known today as Wendland. This is not however an ancient regional name. It was first used by a priest from Wustrow in the eighteenth century, when writing about the language, customs and habits of the Polabian people who lived in this region. He considered them to be Wends, and so named the region Wendland.

As mentioned earlier, there is still a related spoken language further south in Lusatia. Indeed, in 2005 my wife and I attended the dedication of a new fire station in the village of Heinesbrück, north-east of Cottbus,

where the mayor of the regional municipal centre (Peitz) spoke in brief paragraphs in German, interspersed with the same paragraphs delivered by a Sorbian interpreter. This type of occasion is, however, more symbolic than necessary and illustrates a determined effort to sustain the Sorb identity in an environment where the language and culture are in significant decline. Street signs in this area all have their names in Sorbian as well as German.

In the eleventh century, Prince Niklot, leader of the Obotrites, became 'King of the Wends', establishing a dynasty which ruled the region for eight centuries until 1918, when the Grand Duchy was abolished to become the Free State of Mecklenburg–Schwerin in the Weimar Republic. The abdicating duke and his predecessors were known as the 'Princes of the Wends'. Interestingly, H M Doughty points out that the present English royal family enjoys the same Wendish ancestry, as Queen Victoria's grandmother, Queen Charlotte, a Mecklenburg princess and direct descendant of Niklot, married George III of England.

Strung across the southern shores of the Baltic Sea and inland along the navigable rivers are the ports of Lüneburg, Hamburg, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock and Stralsund, identified by Doughty as 'the six Wendish towns'. These were important trading centres, which lay at the core of the mediaeval Hansa, a sort of 'common market' which, at its zenith, stretched from Belgium to Estonia.



'The six Wendish Towns' (underlined)

The Hansa or Hanseatic League originated in Lübeck in the mid-1300s and developed as a loose confederation of mercantile cities. Its purpose was to develop, manage and physically protect trade between ports and cities in northern Europe. Its members jointly pulled together military or naval resources when needed to preserve its interests, for example against piracy or intermittent attack against its members by

feudal kingdoms. It faded out about three hundred years later as the centre of European trade moved southwards and the chaotic collection of independent European dukedoms and kingdoms gave way to nation states. Its memory survives today in the name of the German airline Lufthansa.

What emerges from this brief summary is that the Wends, who were one of the ancestors of the Germanic people, played a much more significant role in German

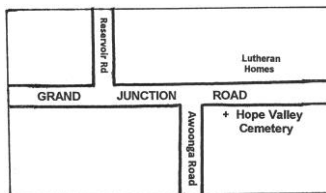
history than is apparent from the surviving enclave in Lusatia.

Bibliographic note:

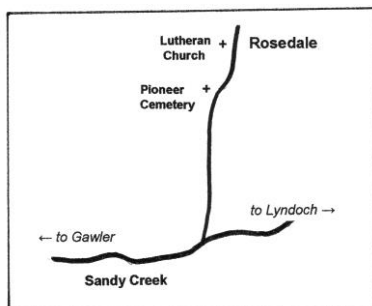
Apart from the book by H M Doughty, much of the remaining material, including the map showing the 10th century distribution of the Slavic tribes, has been drawn from a number of sources within Wikipedia.

How to find the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail

The **Hope Valley** sign has been erected in the Hope Valley Cemetery at 430 Grand Junction Road (south side), about 100m east of the intersection with Awoonga Road, and alongside the Early Learning Centre.

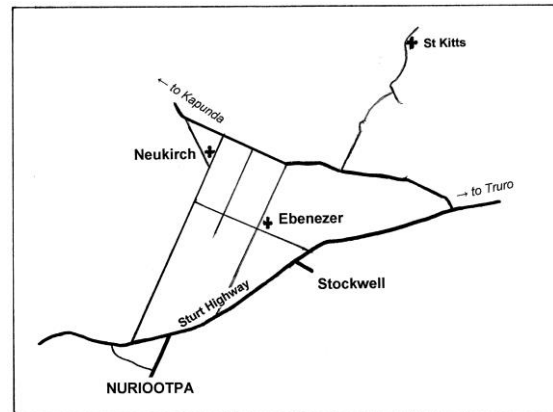


To get to **Rosedale**: From Gawler take the road to Lyndoch. 1km past Sandy Creek, turn left for Rosedale, which is 5km to the north. The Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign has been erected at the Lutheran church. The Pioneer Cemetery is 2km south of Rosedale.

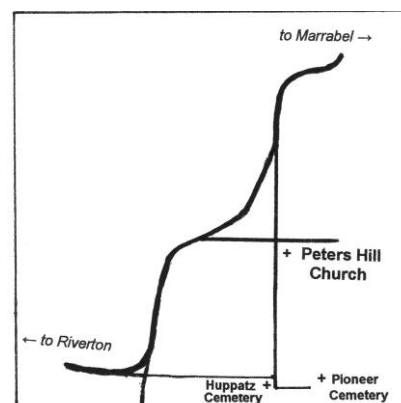


To get to **Ebenezer**: Take the Sturt Highway (A20) towards Truro. After the sign for Nuriootpa watch for the Stockwell sign and shortly turn left onto Ebenezer Road. After 2km you reach the Ebenezer church on the right; the Ebenezer Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign is at the corner of Ebenezer and Research Roads in front of the old school building.

To get to **Neukirch**: From Ebenezer keep going westward on Ebenezer Road. It is now an unsealed road. When you meet the bitumen road, turn right towards Kapunda. After 1km you reach the Neukirch church with the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign at the front. You can return to Nuriootpa by going southwards along the bitumen road (Belvidere Road) to the highway.



To get to **St Kitts**: From Neukirch continue northward to the Kapunda–Truro road. Turn right and after 4 km turn left at the sign to St Kitts West Road. Follow the signs to St Kitts. This is an unsealed road. The Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign has been erected at the entrance to the cemetery of the former St Petri Lutheran Church.



The **Peters Hill** area is east of Riverton. Take the road to Marrabel. It is first a bitumen road and then an unsealed road. After 7km, turn right to Peters Hill. The Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail sign is located near the church at the next intersection.

The Huppertz family cemetery and the Pioneer Cemetery are situated over 1km south of the church, via a dry weather track.

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

Calendars:

I will take orders for Calendars for 2014 – with scenes from Lusatia

These are really beautiful, and they make great Christmas presents. You must order *straight away*, so that we can get them from Germany before the end of the year.

Cost = \$25, plus \$10 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.

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

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