



Family Heirlooms – Traditional Wendish Costumes

Are there any Wendish costumes, brought out by families in the 1840s and 1850s, still to be found in Australia? The answer is Yes.

In 1852 seven Wendish families and one German family trekked from the Barossa Valley to Portland in search of more extensive farming land. In May 2012 a re-enactment Wagon Trek followed the same route with descendants of all the eight families being represented. On the final day of the re-enactment (Sunday 7th May 2012) a procession down the streets of Hamilton, Victoria, was a lively sight. A horse-drawn wagon led the parade and descendants of the original pioneers rode in the back dressed in traditional costumes.



In the photo above Juliet Kennett (nee Petschel) on the left is wearing a lace bonnet, lace collar and lace apron over a black dress. The lace items were brought out from Germany in 1851 by her great great grandmother, Maria Rentsch. Maria's daughter Anna married Wilhelm Petschel and these original items have been passed down through the Petschel family, with Juliet now being the proud custodian of these traditional Wendish garments.

On the right of the photo Helen Nielson (nee Huf) is wearing a Wendish bonnet brought out by her

great great grandmother, Agnes Burger, in 1851. The elaborate bonnet of cotton is finely pintucked with fine ropes inside to hold the fanned out shape in place. The apron is of eyelet lace and both would have been worn on festive occasions. These items have stayed within the families who took part in the original trek. Agnes's daughter Magdalene married Johann Rentsch, and their daughter Pauline married Ernst Huf, the Huf family being the German family on the trek. The costumes have been passed down through the Huf family and many Victorians will remember May Huf proudly wearing the bonnet at special events.

The Wendish costumes have been, and still are, a feature of the Wendish culture. When our ancestors came to Australia it appears that few costumes were included in their luggage. Folk lore passed down through the generations is that the women were discouraged from bringing their traditional clothes, as it was stated that in Australia people did not wear national costumes.

If anyone else has stories of garments and Wendish possessions being passed down the generations from the original settlers, this newsletter would be delighted to hear from you.

Ruth Walter (nee Rentsch)



Colin and Betty Huf at Hamilton, V

President's AGM Report (8 Sept 2013)

At the AGM last year I was pleased to report that our Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail signs had been erected at all six locations and that we had officially unveiled them at Hope Valley and Rosedale. On 28th October we unveiled the sign at Peters Hill before a crowd of over 50 people attending the Friends of Peters Hill Church AGM. They were very pleased with it. On 11th November we unveiled the final three signs at Ebenezer, Neukirch and St Kitts. It was wonderful to have a few local people present to share the events.

Since then the committee has been working on a brochure to publicise the Trail and guide people to the six sites. A number of versions have been prepared and revised. The final version will be printed soon. The maps with directions were printed in the last newsletter.

As well we are working on a booklet about the Wends in South Australia. This is an important project, over which we will take great care to get it right.

In April the bus trip took us over part of the Heritage Trail at Rosedale, Ebenezer, Neukirch and St Kitts. Many descendants were delighted to see the signs which marked the presence of their ancestors at these sites. It was an enjoyable day with thanks to Eric and Ruth for their careful organisation.

In May we were able to promote our Society at a seminar at the Burnside Library. Thanks go to Eric & Ruth Fiebig and Geoff Saegenschnitter for their talks, and to Marie Brazier for organising this event with the library staff. Thanks also go to Marie Brazier for organising a Wend/Sorb Society display at the German Cultural Day at Burnside in October last year.

Our meeting in July was rather special with the launch of Dr Norm Habel's book, *Tree Whisperer*. This is the story of his great-grandfather, Wilhelm Habel, who was from a Wendish family. A large crowd attended on the day and enjoyed the presentations.

Recently we purchased a mannequin in order to display the Wendish/Sorbian costumes that we own. It was on display at the July book launch.

We continue to use our newsletter to advertise our meetings and inform about Wendish history and culture. Please send us any interesting articles you write or find so that we can publish them.

Finally, my thanks go to the hard-working committee. A special word of thanks goes to our retiring Treasurer John Longmire, who has carefully managed the financial books over the last 5 years. Dennis and June Jenke have also resigned from the committee and we thank them for their valuable contribution over 20 years: as committee members, Treasurer, President and bus trip organisers. In recognition of this service we have decided to bestow honorary committee membership on them and also give them Life Membership of our Society.

Another long-serving member is the founder of the Society: Bev Hall. The committee also wishes to give her Life Membership of the Society in recognition of her vision and enterprise in promoting the awareness of our Wendish heritage.

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

Lyall Kupke

Coming Events

Sat 8th – Mon 10th March Wendish Heritage Society's Weekend Tour

In the Warrnambool district of western Victoria. Tour leader is Betty Huf.

Check the Wendish Heritage Society website for the program: www.wendishheritage.org.au

Please book ASAP with Betty Huf (03) 5572 4959; or email bettyhuf@westvic.com.au

Sat 3rd May Bus trip: Carlsruhe and Peters Hill

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

Fri 9th May, 1 - 4pm Explore your Wendish heritage

At City of Burnside Library in the Burnside Civic Centre, 401 Greenhill Rd, Tasmore.

Introductory talk, displays, film about Wendish customs, food to taste, books to read, books for sale.

This is one of the events of the *About Time – SA's History Festival*. See the *About Time 2014* program for booking details. Bookings are essential.

From the President

I wish to highlight a number of items:

We are delighted that one of our members, Leona Coleman, has offered her services for the important position of Treasurer. Leona is a descendant from the Duldig, Eckert and Schuppan families. Thank you, Leona.

Our forthcoming Bus Trip to Carlsruhe and Peters Hill on Saturday 3rd May promises to be very popular as always. Our bus trips are so interesting and enjoyable that many people book their seats as soon as bookings open. We had to turn people away the last two years because there were no seats left. So if you are interested in going, I urge you to book your seats immediately. Don't delay or you may miss out! Check the booking form that is enclosed.

We have obtained copies of the book *Shores of Hope* for sale. Previously this was available from the Lutheran Archives, but they have now run out. However we now have received a few copies to sell at \$30, plus \$10 postage. This book was written by the Sorbian/Wendish author Trudla Malinkowa (Gertrud Mahling) and contains numerous stories of Australian Wends from letters they wrote to friends and relatives in Germany. To obtain your copy see the details on page 8.

From the beginning of February I have been taking leave from my position as Archivist at the Lutheran Archives before going into retirement. Consequently I cannot be contacted at the Archives any longer. Please note my home email address (kupkell@yahoo.com) for any future contact.

Lyall Kupke

ELECTIONS:

The following office-bearers were elected at the AGM (8 Sept 2013):

President: Lyall Kupke
 Vice-President: Eric Fiebig
 Secretary: Pauline Burger
 Assistant Secretary: Ruth Walter
 Treasurer: Leona Coleman
 Extra committee members: Marie Brazier,
 Ruth Fiebig, Brian Hennig, Michael
 McDonnell, Rona McDonnell, Louise
 Thomas.

Bev Hall, Dennis Jenke and June Jenke are Honorary members of the committee.

Life Membership

The Society has bestowed Life Membership on:

Bev Hall – for her vision and enterprise in founding the Society and for her dedication to promoting an awareness of Sorbian/Wendish culture.

Dennis and June Jenke – for their contribution over 20 years as committee members, Treasurer (Dennis), President (Dennis) and bus trip organisers.

Congratulations!

June and Dennis Jenke celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary early in February.

Sympathy

We express our sympathy to

The family of Sally Kollosche, who died in October. Sally and her late husband Ron were members in the early years of the Society. Sally was a committee member in the years 1997-2000.

Long Words in German

The following report appeared in the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 8 June 2013:

Word erased

A tweak in state laws in the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to conform with current EU regulations has caused an unexpected casualty: the longest word in the German language.

The *Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz* is no more.

The “law delegating beef label monitoring” was introduced by the state in 1999 as part of measures against mad cow disease. But the dpa news agency has reported the law was removed from the books last week because the European Union regulations have changed.

German still has words like the very robust *Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitaenswitwe* to fall back on – meaning “widow of a Danube steamboat company captain”.

Dpa reports such words have been so rarely used that they’re not in the dictionary. There the longest word is

KraftfahrzeugHaftpflichtversicherung: automobile liability insurance.

Tree Whisperer, by Dr Norman Habel

(This is the talk given by Lyall Kupke at the launch of the book on 21st July 2013.)

The Wend/Sorb Society of SA is pleased that Dr Norman Habel asked it to hold the launch of his new book, *Tree Whisperer*. He did this because the book tells the story of his great-grandfather, who was Wendish, and he has made his Wendish ancestry a feature of this book.

I thought it may be useful first of all for the audience to get a better understanding of what is a Wend. So I have a short video to show you. It shows the land in Europe where the Wends lived, the land called Lusatia. There is one region called Upper Lusatia in which we see the city of Bautzen, and the other called Lower Lusatia with the city of Cottbus. It talks about the Wends and it also calls them Sorbs. Both of these names refer to the same race of people. They are a Slavic people with their own language, culture and customs. Those who came to Australia have always been called Wends. So we here generally use the term Wends.

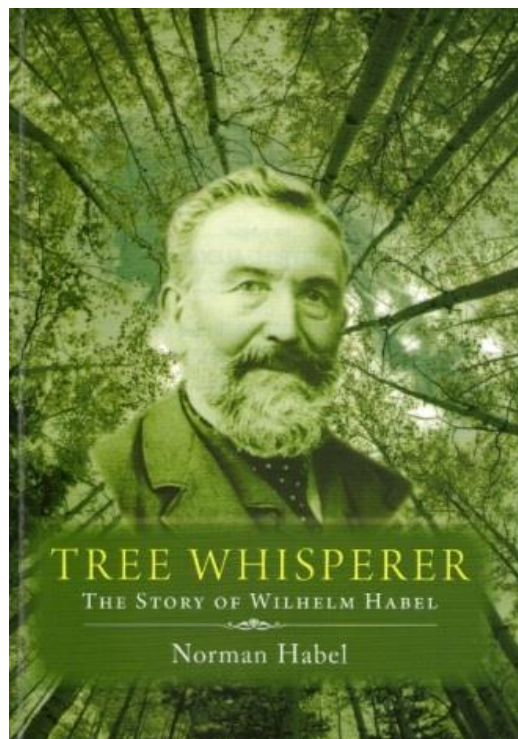
[video was shown]

I hope that you have learnt something from this video. Did you notice the two different languages that were shown on the street signs? One was German and the other was Wendish or Sorbian. The Wendish language is very similar to the Polish and the Czech languages, and that tells you that the Wends or Sorbs were more closely related to the Czechs and the Poles than to the Germans. They are a Slavic people, not a Germanic people.

Around 1500 years ago the people of Europe were moving around. The Germanic people had moved westward to take over the lands of the former Roman Empire (what today is France). Slavic peoples from the east moved in to take the land that the Germans had vacated in central Europe, in the region of central and northern Germany today, between the rivers Elbe and Oder. There are many village names there today with an *-ow* ending, which demonstrate their Slavic origins centuries ago (such as Güstrow and Bützow). This land was occupied by the Wends for centuries and you can see it written as *Wendland* on old maps.

From the 9th century the Germans started moving back to the east and began conquering the Slavic peoples and pushing them back to the east. This continued over many centuries. Many Wends assimilated into the

German population; they gave up their own language and culture and adopted the German language.



But there was one large group who resisted the Germanisation that was happening and they lived in close communities in small regions of eastern Germany, where they were able to maintain their distinctive language, culture and way of life. This area is called Lusatia (Lausitz) and is centred around two cities: Cottbus and Bautzen. This is the region that you saw in the video. These Wendish or Sorb people still live there today - as the video showed.

Pushed back by the Germans, other Wends moved further eastward into the Polish areas. However, in the 18th century the German kingdom of Prussia conquered these regions also and began sending Germans to settle there among the Poles and the Wends. German officials often recorded Polish and Wendish surnames in a German form. Some Poles and Wends decided to change their surnames to have a more German sound in order to fit into the German society and perhaps to advance their job prospects. Sometimes they used both forms of their surnames, depending on which group they were dealing with. So for example, the Wendish surname of Biele has the German equivalent of Weiss (both meaning White); Zerner in Wendish has Schwarz in German (both meaning Black); Starick has Altmann (old man); Nowak has Noack or Neumann (new man); Brindt has Freund; Swore has Zwar; and so on. ►

Now why am I telling you all this? It is because people say: “But Habel is not a Wendish name! Why is Norm talking about having Wendish ancestors? That can’t be true.”

We need to understand that Wilhelm Habel and his family came from Silesia which is further east of Lusatia, that region in the video. He came from a district which had a mix of Polish, Wendish and German peoples. The Habel family previously had a different name. Norm suggests that it could have been spelt Hab’jel. The family tradition is that they were of Wendish descent and probably changed their name to Habel at some stage. But they most likely retained their Wendish beliefs and ideas.

In his book, *Tree Whisperer*, Norm has woven a tale around the stories that were handed down through the generations. He has demonstrated the Wendish ideas and customs that they held; such as putting some dill in the bottom of your bag, or a carved snake on the roof of your house, or nailing a wolf’s tail over your door, or putting special ‘family’ stones in your pockets – all beliefs to ward off evil spirits and to protect you from harm while travelling or while at home. These superstitions and spells were truly believed by many Wends and other folk years ago. Perhaps your families had their own superstitions from long ago.

Norm has developed a story which explains why Wilhelm Habel left his home and family to come to Australia. He describes the long and tedious sea voyage, storms that brought damage to the ship, romance between passengers, religious arguments, sickness and death. As I read this story I realised that this could be the story of my family also. I feel sure that there are elements of this story which can be found in the stories of many other German and Wendish families who came to Australia.

This book is historical fiction. What Norm has done is take the historical facts that are known about his family and he has woven an interesting story around them. He has given personalities to his ancestors, using the biographical details and the family stories that have been handed down today.

Not only that, he has placed the Habel family into the Australian scene of that day. We find the Habel brothers (Wilhelm and Carl) at Hoffnungsthal when the valley was flooded in 1853. We follow them to the Victorian goldfields where they join thousands of others who have come from all over the world to seek their fortunes. From there we follow them to the Western Districts of Victoria where they settle on land beside the entrancing scene of Lake Linlithgow. They

find friends nearby in the settlement of Hochkirch (today called Tarrington) where many Wendish families had earlier settled.

Throughout the book there are many references to the Australian Lutheran scene: Pastor Kavel’s people at their settlement at Klemzig, the Dresden missionaries to the Kurna Aborigines, and the Barossa settlements in SA. We meet Pastor Kappler (a Wendish Lutheran pastor) who performs the marriage of Wilhelm’s brother in Adelaide. We hear of the dissensions in the Lutheran community between pastors Kavel and Fritzsche and their followers.

In Victoria we find Pastor Schürmann again at Hochkirch. Also there is Carl Kruger, the renowned organ builder.

As we read this story we get to know Wilhelm quite well. He appears as one of the early conservationists at a time when this is a strange idea for most people. His appreciation of nature comes from his Wendish background in Germany. At times this seems to conflict with Lutheran teachings. But he is comfortable with a ‘double faith’ as a Lutheran Wend. And he becomes a legend for his tree planting around the lake.

At frequent times throughout the book Norm has included his reflections on his great-grandfather and his view of the world. He makes comments on nature, creation, violence and warfare, the treatment of the Aborigines, Biblical interpretation, German customs and traditions. Norm has concluded that there are many parallels in his own life and beliefs which cause him to call Wilhelm his Wendish spiritual father. This book, *Tree Whisperer*, is a fitting memorial to him.

I congratulate Norm for his book and I wish him success with it.

The book is available from

Mosaic Resources

508 High St

Preston VIC 3072

Website: <https://mosaicresources.com.au>

Email: contact@mosaicresources.com.au

Tel: 03 9470 6650

Recipes from Lusatia

These recipes have been translated from the book, *Lausitzer Küche*.

***Lausitzer Kartoffelpuffer* (Lusatian Potato Pancakes)**

2 kg potatoes, 2 small onions, 2 level tsp. salt, 2-4 eggs, 40-60 g wheat flour or potato flour

Peel, wash and grate potatoes and onions and mix well with salt, eggs and flour. Linseed oil is used for frying. Heat oil, add spoonfuls or ladlefuls of mixture and flatten. Turn down heat and cook until brown and crisp on both sides. Lightly butter, sprinkle with sugar and roll up. Keep hot. Apple puree can be served with these.

***Buttermilchplinze* (Buttermilk Pancakes)**

½ Litre buttermilk, 2-3 eggs, 80-100 g flour, 50 g sugar, pinch salt, ½ sachet baking powder.

Mix all ingredients well, adding baking powder last. Cook in an iron pan. Grease pan with either linseed oil or bacon fat between each frying. Lightly butter and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar before rolling up.

***Stampfkartoffeln mit Speck, Zwiebeln und Gurkensalat* (Mashed Potatoes with bacon, onions and cucumber salad)**

Mash cooked potatoes. Stir in some hot milk, salt, pepper, pinch nutmeg, sauteed bacon, chopped onions that have been fried until brown, and stir until smooth. Make cucumber salad, flavoured with sour cream, salt sugar, vinegar, dill and chives. Serve with Bratwurst or fried eggs. Sometimes the cucumber salad is served in a nest of mashed potatoes.

***Beliebte Suppeneinlagen* (Favourite soup garnishes)**

1) Egg

2 eggs, 4 dessertspoons milk or broth, pinch salt and nutmeg. Beat egg whites, milk or broth and seasoning with a whisk and pour into a container that has been greased with 5 g butter. Tightly close the container and place in a water bath. Cook until the mixture sets. Can be cut into cubes or strips and used to garnish any soup.

2) Little Dumplings

½ bread roll, 2 dessertspoons breadcrumbs, 1 egg, 20 g butter, salt, nutmeg.

Melt butter in a saucepan, add breadcrumbs, bread roll that has been softened in water, salt, nutmeg and lightly beaten egg. Make 20 little dumplings out of this mix and put on a damp board. Place on top of simmering soup and allow to cook for a short time.

3) Markklößchen (Beef Marrow Dumplings)

50 g beef marrow, 3 dessertspoons milk, 30 g butter, 190 g breadcrumbs, 3 eggs, pinch nutmeg, ½ tsp salt.

Finely chop the beef marrow that has been soaked for about 2 hours in cold water. Cook butter, milk and marrow in saucepan. Add breadcrumbs, salt and nutmeg. Beat eggs lightly and add. Allow to cool. Form little dumplings and simmer for 3-4 mins in salted water or broth.

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
- Malinkowa, *Shores of Hope* - \$30, 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.

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

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