



Two Pech brothers in the Great War

Garry Eckermann told this interesting story at our meeting in June 2024. He has researched their war service records, Red Cross records, and a history of the 3rd Battalion.

Gustav **Eduard Pech** (Eddie) and August **Friedrich Pech** (Fred) were the youngest of 9 children of Johann Ernst and Maria Louise Pech, nee Lindner. They lived at Henty, NSW.

Eddie and Fred enlisted in the Australian army in October 1916 with the surname "Peck", no doubt using a different name because of the anti-German sentiment at the time. Fred also listed his religion as "Church of England" instead of "Lutheran". At their farewell at Henty they each received a wrist watch.



Just six days later they embarked on a ship for England, where they underwent training over the next 3 months. They were both allocated to No. 10 Platoon of C Company in the 3rd Infantry Battalion.

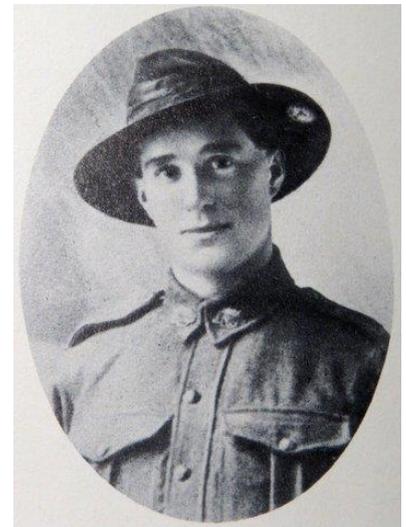
Photo: *Eddie Pech*

In May they joined their battalion in northern France and waited to go to the front line of battle. Because the 3rd Battalion had just been involved in a major battle, they were on an extended rest, well behind the lines for the next 2½ months.

Accommodation varied between dugouts, bivouacs, billets (whether civilian-occupied or abandoned), tents, and camps with permanent structures. This was a typical day's routine: 7am reveille; 7.30am breakfast; 8am sick parade, followed by morning lectures or training; 12.30pm dinner, followed by afternoon recreational training (ranging from scratch football matches to formalised inter-unit sports carnivals – to improve both fitness and morale); 5pm tea; 8.45pm tattoo; and 9pm lights out. Sundays were usually different though, with 'church parade' in the morning and rest time in the afternoon.

When near the Front, working parties were formed to advance the Allies' cause, in such activities as digging or repairing trenches, laying communication wires or barbed wire defences, moving equipment to 'dumps', installing 'duckboards' (to counter the muddy, shell-holed terrain), wood cutting, etc.

Mail received from home always lifted their spirits, and parcels from the Comforts Fund in Australia (typically containing tobacco, newspapers, chocolates, cakes, and knitted items, especially socks) were most appreciated.



Fred Pech

At the end of July 1917 it was time for the 3rd battalion to return to the Front at Ypres (in Flanders, Belgium) where they were in the trenches for 3 days, in the *Battle of Menin Road*. The Battalion suffered 110 casualties, but the boys escaped unscathed.

Life in the trenches was horrendous! The troops had to do everything there – eating, sleeping, toileting, ablutions, and repairing damage done by artillery shells. They had to put up with the cold and rain, mud (often leading to 'trench foot'), rats, fleas, lice, and even corpses in the trenches, all while being fired upon by the enemy, and having to return fire.

Following that battle, the 3rd Battalion had a much longer time away from the Front. But it was still a busy time – working parties were assigned to assist the 9th Canadian Railway Company in building, repairing, loading and unloading duties on the light railways used extensively during the war. But just as that work was finishing, on 21st October, Eddie was admitted to hospital with problems with his ear and knee.

Continued on next page

Two Pech brothers (cont.)

A typical day's diet for C Company was noted in the Battalion diary: Breakfast: porridge, bacon, tea, bread, butter & jam; Dinner: fish, beef & vegetable stew (curry & rice the next week), tea, bread & cheese; Tea: boiled rice & custard, bread, butter & jam, tea. Water was supplied from wells, chlorinated for drinking.

In February-March 1918 the brothers enjoyed a couple of weeks of leave in the UK, before returning to Flanders to prepare for the expected German Spring Offensive. This came on 21 March and the battalion was rushed south by train to the Somme district in France to assist the Allied armies there. However, after a few days they were rushed back to Flanders to support the English army in the *Battle of Hazebrouck*.

About that time an artillery shell landed in the Pech boys' trench, killing a number of soldiers – and Fred was one of them, dying in sight of his brother. Eddie saw to it that Fred was buried in a makeshift grave near where he fell, with a small cross marking the grave. But later, with many shells and bombs leaving large craters in the area, that grave could not be found.

The Allies were eventually able to halt the German advance and gain the offensive. In June Eddie was injured with a gunshot wound to his side and arm. He was invalided back to England where he remained for the remainder of the war. In Jan-Feb 1919 he returned to Australia.

Fred's name is recorded on the Villers-Bretonneux Australian National Memorial, which contains the names of those Australians with no known graves.

The Red Cross files give small glimpses of Fred's character: “a sportsman cyclist and kept a cycle shop”, “had a slight accent in his speech”, “a really well-liked chap”, “was a machine gunner”, “a gallant stretcher bearer”. This is complemented by local newspaper quotes when his death became known back home: “well known”, “respected”, “popular in and around Henty as an athlete”. The files also contain Eddie's hand-written letters to Red Cross.

After Eddie's discharge from the AIF, he resumed working on the family farms, remaining single. He lost his mother Louise when she suffered a stroke while milking her cow in 1934. Eddie himself came to an untimely end on 17th September 1943 while working on a neighbouring property. In an unfortunate accident, he was dragged under a plough when the team of horses he was working took fright and bolted while he was adjusting the plough. When the neighbour reached him, he was conscious, and when asked if he was hurt, Eddie replied, “Not much”. But he died from his extensive head injuries (also had fractured and lacerated legs) before medical help could reach him.

One confusing aspect is that there was another Australian in the 3rd Battalion with the name FA Peck. He also died in battle and his grave is also unknown. His name is recorded on the Menin Gate at Ypres, Belgium. The Australian War Memorial at Canberra has two names inscribed “PECK, F.A.”

Australian Wends in the Great War



In six newsletters from 2016 to 2019 we listed 74 Australians of Wendish descent who served in World War I. We now have two more names to add to the list:

FORSYTH, Samuel Charles, (grandmother's maiden name was POLDRACK), from Dimboola, Vic; 16th Battalion; served on Western Front; Returned to Australia March-April 1919.

PRANGE, Frederick Herbert, (grandmother's maiden name was POLDRACK), from Pimpinio, Vic; 38th Battalion; served on Western Front; Returned to Australia May-June 1919.

You can see the complete list on our website: www.wendsorbsociety.org.au

Coming Events

Sat 10th May German Heritage Seminar

– Finders, Keepers, Storytellers: Exploring SA's German histories

One talk will be given by Ruth Walter and Pauline Burger about the Wendish Heritage Trail.

At Langmeil Lutheran Church, Tanunda (9.30 am – 4.30 pm). Cost: \$50 (includes lunches)

Part of SA History Festival. To register contact Chris Leske (0428 337 132, ejleske@internode.on.net)

Wed 14th May, 2 pm Talk: Wend/Sorb Traditional Costumes

The Wend/Sorb culture of south east Germany has a rich tradition of ceremonial costumes. Wendish emigrants to South Australia in the mid-19th century, brought few of these costumes with them. The reasons will be discussed. Come and see a traditional wedding gown and a dance costume. This is our SA History Festival presentation.

Speaker: Ruth Walter. At the Burnside Library. All welcome.



Wedding dress



Dance costume

Sun 6th July, 2 pm Talk: Recent Visits to Lusatia

Some of our members will tell us about their experiences when they visited Lusatia recently (including at Easter).

At the Glynde Lutheran Homes hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde). All welcome.

Sun 10th August, 2 pm Annual General Meeting

Followed by a talk by Ruth Walter and Pauline Burger about the Wendish Heritage Trail.

At the Glynde Lutheran Homes hall (22 Avenue Rd, Glynde). All welcome.

Sun 19th October, Peters Hill day

The Friends of Peters Hill Church have their annual get together and AGM.

Lunch at 12 noon, church service at 1.30 pm, Annual General Meeting at 2.30 pm.

For more information, contact the Secretary, Chris Fisher (mobile 0417 837 709)

Are you looking for the day trip to the country?

Are you wondering where our usual country trip has gone? We haven't ignored it. But we have decided to postpone this to later in the year, for various reasons. Details will be in the next newsletter.

Dennis Jenke – a tribute

It is with great sorrow that we record the death of Dennis Jenke on 3 November 2024 at Lobethal. He was aged 94 years.

Dennis was a long-standing and loyal member of the Wend/Sorb Society and had served it as Treasurer (1995-1998) and President (1998-2006).

Dennis and his wife June are certainly remembered for the enjoyable bus trips that they organised each year in the period 1996-2008. They were well-known for their careful preparation.

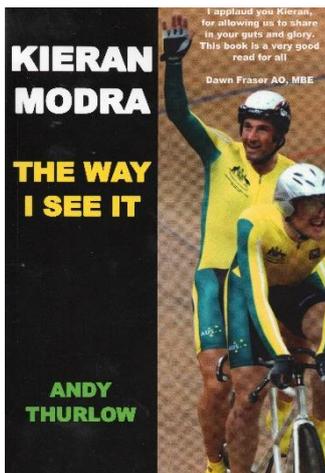
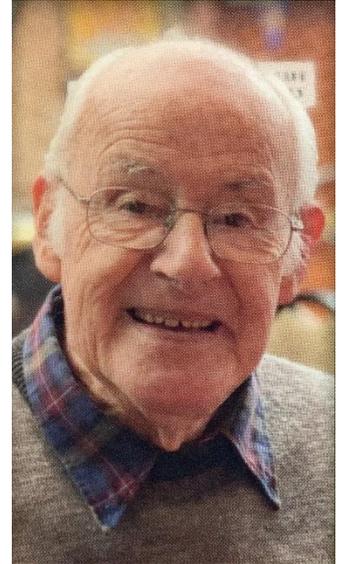
Dennis was proud of his Wendish roots; the Jenke ancestors came to South Australia in 1854 on the ship *Steinwaerder* and they settled at St Kitts. It was not surprising that St Kitts was on the itinerary of a number of bus trips.

Dennis and June produced and published the Jenke family history book in 1975. Over the years they were pleased to travel to Germany to visit the Jenke homeland at Rackel in Upper Lusatia a number of times. They kept in contact with a number of German friends.

In his retirement in the late 1990s he joined his wife June as a volunteer at Lutheran Archives. June had already been an Archives volunteer for over 20 years. His assistance in numerous ways was greatly appreciated.

June and Dennis moved from their home at Plympton to the retirement village at Lobethal, where they enjoyed being involved in the local community over the last 20 or more years.

We send our sympathy to his wife June, son Mark, grandchildren Danielle and Jesse, and great-grandson Nash.



Kieran Modra's story

In 2019 we mourned the sudden tragic death of Kieran Modra, an Australian Paralympic legend. His biography had been published the year before by Andy Thurlow.

Now Andy has added a final chapter to the book with the account of the tragic accident that took his life. It also tells of his induction posthumously into the SA Sporting Hall of Fame in 2020.

The book is available at www.amazon.com.au, or ask for it at any reputable bookshop.

Sympathy

We express our sympathy to the family and friends of these members who died recently:

- Doris Kupke, aged 103 years (mother of Lyall)
- Ron Oxley (from Mildura, Vic)
- Donald Marrett (husband of Joan) (from Cobdogla)
- Reg Butler (Hahndorf historian)
- Nancy Kurtz (wife of Geoff) (from Tanunda)

The Chaff-Mill Kleinig family

by Heather Watkins (nee Kleinig)

As the daughter of Les (& Hazel) Kleinig, granddaughter of Johann Bernard (& Hilda) Kleinig, I was born at Victor Harbor, where my grandfather, JB (Ben), had set up a chaff and timber mill at Victor Harbor in 1914, and where my dad, Les, and later his brothers Harold and Aubrey, worked when they left school a few years after it was established. We lived across the road from the large chaff mill building at Victor Harbor. I was born into a chaff mill family!!! and along with many of my family had played in the sheds, the bins of chaff and clambered over the bags of chaff and grain; and also later worked there.

BUT there's more to the story. Around 2007 I thought it was time to see where the Kleinig family had lived at Ebenezer; it was suggested I contact Ruth (nee Roehr) & Royce Kleinig (both families early settlers of Ebenezer), now living at Neukirch. I called Ruth and after filling in some details, she said, 'Oh, you're a chaff mill Kleinig!' (Well, yes, I'm a chaff mill Kleinig, but what did that have to do with the Ebenezer families?) Ruth went on to elaborate that most of the sons of one of the Kleinig families at Ebenezer were involved in one way or another with the chaff industry. So they were locally referred to as the 'chaff mill Kleinigs'. They lived on the western side of Research Road at Ebenezer. I asked what the other family were called and Ruth replied 'The others!'. We arranged to meet Ruth and Royce, and were taken to the property, where still standing was a huge shed – a chaff shed.

A little of the back story:

In 1851 my Wend forebears, Johann Kleinig & Magdalena (nee Wenke), left the Cortnitz area in Upper Lusatia and with three daughters were part of the group of 98 fellow Wends who came to Australia on the 'Helene'. In January 1852 many of these new arrivals travelled to Ebenezer where a new Wendish settlement was formed.

In 1853 Johann Kleinig (junior) was born at Ebenezer; he was the first Australian-born Kleinig, the only son in the family of Johann & Magdalena to survive. In 1878 Johann married Bertha Schrapel. 13 children were born at Ebenezer between 1879 and 1901; nine were sons.

The Kleinig's Chaff Milling enterprises spanned large areas of the grain growing districts in South Australia and NSW. It began at Ebenezer, then on to Freeling, Roseworthy, then into NSW: Temora, Walla Walla and many other sites; back to Lyndoch, Victor Harbor, Laura and Gulnare. Quite a journey...The Chaff Mill Kleinigs!

This is part of their story...

Ebenezer: 1853 - 1920s at home property on western side of Research Road, Ebenezer.

It is not known if it was Johann, the original settler, who first established a chaff business, but it is highly probable both he and his son, Johann, were involved in the commencement of the family venture at Ebenezer. Many of the 9 sons became connected to Chaff Mills in one way or another.

Freeling: 1902 – 1912 (23km Ebenezer to Freeling)
In 1903 father Johann went into partnership with Mr George Branson at Freeling. Johann died just months after and Johannes ERNST, Johann's eldest son, took over his father's role.

Roseworthy: 1902 – ? (12km West of Freeling)
Friedrich NATHANIEL born 1881, second son, divided his time between Freeling and Roseworthy and later, to Lyndoch around 1912 with Thomas Arthur and possibly Theodore Walter.

Gustav REINHOLD, a younger brother, told the story, when he was in his teens, of the beautiful grey horse, the leader in a tandem team of eight he used to haul eight tons of chaff, which he drove 60 km to Port Adelaide. It was Ernst & Reinhold who later headed to NSW

NSW: 1910 – 1930s

NSW was the site of many chaff mills listing both Ernst and Reinhold Kleinig as owners in partnership with Arthur Hermann Stockmann; Nathaniel or Roseworthy was also sometimes listed as a partner. 'The mill at Temora, run by Stockmann and Kleinig, possesses the largest plant of the kind in the State. Located in the centre of our finest hay-growing districts, its output is very large.'

Ernst, and Reinhold were also at Milthorpe, Millbank, and other mills at Burrumbuttock, Culcairn, Gerogery, Sydney, Walla Walla and Gilgandra.

At the height of its activity the firm had 40 travelling chaffcutters operating throughout New South Wales and parts of Victoria. About 600 men and 600 horses were employed.

Many challenges were experienced during World War I (1914-1918), and during the Depression of the 1930s. Around 1920 Ernst left the chaff industry after more than 20 years and undertook a variety of business ventures in NSW.

Continued on next page

Chaff Mill Kleinig family (cont.)

In 1950 it was reported 'Mr. Kleinig (Reinhold) has not been able to get the chaff business out of his blood and, as a sideline, he has built up a flourishing trade. He reserves 900 tons of his crop for hay, which is cut into chaff. Allan and Eric, his two returned soldier sons from World War 2 now work with him on his rice farm'.

Back to South Australia, where we're reminded of workers' strikes for better conditions, accidents at the worksite or on the road involving machines and horses – and fires occurring in many of the mills at one time or another. And how did they organise shipment, delivery of chaff – no phones, no motorised vehicles? A good question to ponder.

Lyndoch: 1913 – 1923

The mill at Lyndoch was originally a flour mill; in 1913 when Nathaniel, Thomas Arthur and possibly Theodore Walter Kleinig took it over. They remodelled the existing Flour Mill, adding a large chaff mill.

Some years later, around 1918/19, Thomas Arthur (TA) left to take over the Laura Mill.

Nathaniel died suddenly in 1923, and the mill was eventually put on the market. However, with no immediate buyer a company was formed and continued trading under the name of Kleinig Bros Ltd for around another 30 years until 1956 when the mill was closed. A fire destroyed the mill in 1959.

Victor Harbor: 1914 – 1950s

Johann Bernard Kleinig, with wife Hilda and 2 young sons, moved from Angaston to Victor Harbor in 1911 and established the Hayborough Chaff Mill in 1914, a purpose-built mill. My dad Leslie began working there when he left Primary School, and was later joined by his brothers Harold and Aubrey.

In 1928 JB (Ben) received significant injuries in an accident at the adjoining timber mill; he put the business, the property, and the homestead, on the market, twice!! It did not sell – how my family's story could have been very different. For Ben's grandsons, Eric and Ted, this was where they spent much of their working life with contract hay cutting, baling, carting and a bulk fuel depot. Many locals worked in the business over the years, including grandchildren of Ben and Hilda. The property remained in the family for around 90 years from 1914 to 2004.

Laura: c.1918 – 1950s

Thomas Arthur moved to Laura from Lyndoch and an extensive chaff business was built up. In 1953 four Kleinig brothers, TA's sons, were still involved in running the business of which their father was one of the founders.

Gulnare: 1921 – 1938

April 16, 1921, Frederick Nathaniel Kleinig become the owner of the Gulnare garage, He demolished the blacksmith shop and erected an up-to-date chaff mill. A mobile steam engine provided the power to drive the equipment. Standing crops, bought from the farmers would be cut and made into haystacks and when required taken to the mill. Here it would be chaffed and sent to its destination by railway trucks. Ten men were employed. Following Nathaniel's death in May 1923, the business was transferred to Mr. Kleinig's widow and later, to the Laura Milling Co of Thomas Arthur Kleinig.

1910 – 1950s,

Joseph Carl (Charlie), blacksmithed at Sandy Creek, near Lyndoch and later moved to Laura but as far as we can ascertain he was not directly connected to either chaff mill; the family moved to Port Elliot in the 1950s.

It is thought Rudolph SAMUEL remained at Ebenezer on the home property, possibly until property sold in 1920s following death of their mother, Bertha.

It has been my great pleasure to gather, and share this story of Johann Kleinig, the 1st Australian born Kleinig, and his sons, with you. The story has had many unexpected twists and turns. Dates, and details were at times difficult to be sure of, and so I made some 'Guesstimates'. Information has come from Family History books and Local History Records, from Trove, with often very brief news items to carry the story forward, or sideways! And many personal stories passed down. I'm very grateful for the support & encouragement received from various Wend/Sorb members, thank you.

Underlying all this as I've prepared has been the thought – how was it for the wives, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters? Their personal lives, the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs. We have no records of these; one can only imagine the challenges they faced and endured.

Visitors from Cottbus bring Wendish doll

At our fellowship lunch in November we were delighted to welcome two visitors from Cottbus, Germany. Reinhard and Sybille Noack are retired teachers and were staying with Geoff Saegenschnitter while in South Australia. Geoff had met them in Germany on his previous trips.

By prior arrangement they brought with them a doll dressed in Wendish costume for Gemma Hennig. Gemma's daughter Teresa had made all the arrangements for her mother. Gemma was thrilled to receive it.

The doll's dress is from the Lower Lusatian region, from which Brian's Fladrich ancestors came.



Sybille hands the doll to Gemma (on right)



Sybille and Reinhard Noack



Gemma's doll



Kathy Hennig, Reinhard & Sybille Noack, Gemma & Brian Hennig, Teresa Hennig

For Sale

Books from Germany - in English:

- *The Sorbs of Germany* - \$10, plus \$3 postage
- *Upper Lusatia* - \$15, plus \$3 postage
- *Bautzen* - \$12, plus \$3 postage
- Korall & Schwikart, *Journey through the Spree Forest* (with lovely pictures) - \$35, plus \$10 postage
- *Five Centuries: The Wends and the Reformation* - \$40, plus \$10 postage

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) - **Sold out!!**

Also: Trudla Malinkowa, *Wendish Keepers* - \$30, plus \$10 postage
 [The story of the four Wendish societies in Australia and America]
 Trudla Malinkowa, *Ufer der Hoffnung* - \$20, plus \$10 postage
 [This is the German version of *Shores of Hope*]

NEW books:

Schulenburg, *Wendish Folklore. Its Legends, Traditions and Customs* - \$50, plus \$10 postage
 Schneewis, *Festivals and Folk Customs of the Sorbs (Wends)* - \$50, plus \$10 postage

CDs:

- *From Wendish to German to English (A Journey into Wendish Culture, History & Language)*
 Cost = \$30, plus \$3 postage

Music CDs:

Cost \$10 each, plus \$3 postage

- Kocor, *Naleco* (Spring). [Majestic oratorio, with memorable, joyful and folk-like themes]
- Zahraj nam rejiku (*Sorbische Folklore mit Sprjewjan*) [Lively folk music, instrumental and vocal work]

Wendish/Sorbian Flags (small, on a stick) \$5, plus \$3 postage

Contact Ruth Walter, 43 Clifton St, Prospect SA 5082, (tel. 08 8269 7168, mobile 0435 211 606),
 email: ruth.walter43@gmail.com

Please make cheques or money orders to Wend Sorb Society of South Australia,
 or email Ruth for Direct Debit (EFT) details.

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.**

President: Lyall Kupke Secretary: Pauline Burger Treasurer: Leona Coleman

Editor: Lyall Kupke.

Website: www.wendsorbsociety.org.au

Correspondence to the President: Lyall Kupke, at 6 Emes Court, Athelstone SA 5076

email: kupkell@yahoo.com

tel: (08) 8365 2572 mobile 0431 991 385