



# Dressing up for a Wendish wedding

Dressing a bride for a Wendish wedding was demonstrated by Ruth Walter at our History Festival talk. A series of layers of different skirts and other clothing were fitted on a friend's confident, serene and tall daughter, Eliza, producing a beautiful bridal dress from the Upper Lusatian region.

Ruth explained that these outfits were shared between brides of all sizes, so they were attached with pins. Layers of different skirts ended with an elaborate outer white lace skirt plus a blouse adorned with handmade lace. A sleeveless embroidered vest and finally a black top-hat with metallic decorations and green ribbons looked stunning on the model.

Ruth gave an excellent presentation about the costumes of the Wends. It was well researched and illustrated with numerous pictures.

We saw examples of costumes worn by women with felted woollen skirts, embroidered blouses, scarves, and often ribbons down their backs. Headwear could be quite elaborate. Men's suits were also added to with embroidered scarves.

Easy to listen to, Ruth began with a brief mention of the Slavic nature of the Wends, now called Sorbs, who live in an area of Germany called Lusatia.

When Wends migrated to South Australia in the mid-1800s, they included farmers and tradespeople like tailors, carpenters and stonemasons, who were prepared for hard physical work to build new lives.

We heard that one woman, Lisa Teschner, wrote to friends back in Lusatia advising that they didn't need to bring their special Sunday costumes if migrating to Australia. Instead, cloth imported from England was readily available. Hence their clothing became practical, rather than decorative.

Even in Germany, skills of embroidery and lace making became superseded as manufactured cloth became widespread and their costumes became more uniform, largely influenced by the Bavarian style.

However, today in Lusatia, homeland of the Wends, they are working to preserve their language,

traditions and unique costumes, which are still used for important occasions and celebrations.



*Eliza in bridal dress  
and Anna, our mannequin, dressed for dancing*

One last treat was a display of dolls owned by our Society. These were dressed in Wendish costumes, which can vary from village to village, especially their headdress. Only two were of male outfits.

One friend who came to Ruth's talk said that she enjoyed the professionalism of the presenter, the colourful, intricate costumes and the dolls from the regions. The charming young teenager was the perfect model for the costumes. She also found it interesting to learn about the Wendish area with their Slavic roots and was glad she came.

Given on 14 May at Burnside Library, 56 people attended, including costume and dress designers, along with our Society's members and interested friends. The demonstration of the Wendish wedding dress ended the talk.

*Pauline Burger*

# President's AGM Report (given on 18 Aug 2024)

We have had another year with a full program of activities and many people have participated and enjoyed them.

In April we undertook something new with a two-day outing – our Trip to the North. The town of Laura was the base for our visit to the Appila and Booleroo districts, and for some this was their first time in this area. The locals welcomed us, the accommodation at the North Laura Hotel was very good, and the fellowship between participants was enjoyable. And I hope that those in the group also learnt a lot of the history of this area.

Our History Festival talk in May was once again well received. Geoff Saegenschnitter presented an interesting story of the two Biar brothers who emigrated in 1854 – one to South Australia and one to America. His success at reconnecting with the American relatives is fascinating.

In June Garry Eckermann gave us an account of two Pech brothers who served in the Australian Army in World War One. His detailed research of military records was outstanding.

The Saturday lunches we have organised at various hotels have continued to prove popular as people enjoyed meeting socially. In October we met at the Norwood Hotel, in February at the Hyde Park Hotel, and in July at the Parkside Hotel.

In March I attended the unveiling of the plaque on Pastor Kappler's grave at Mt Gambier. A detailed report of this occasion and of Pastor Kappler's life and work can be found in our latest newsletter [No. 68, June 2024]. Our society shared the cost of the plaque with the Wendish Heritage Society and the Lutheran Church at Mt Gambier.

The linden tree we planted at Peters Hill has survived its first summer, thanks to help from the Friends of Peters Hill Church who ensured it had sufficient water as it established itself. Our committee saw that it was fitting to thank them by supporting their current project to rebuild the vestry on the church with a donation. This fits with our society's objective 2d: to assist local communities to identify and preserve significant local sites, structures and artefacts relating to Wend/Sorb history in South Australia.

Our newsletter continues to advertise our meetings and provide information about Wendish history and culture. We always welcome any contributions. Andrew Kollosche continues to maintain our website which contains many interesting items. We thank him for this.

What about our booklet about the Wends in South Australia, you ask? It is at the final stage, and I am confident you will see it next year.

Finally, I wish to thank all the members of our committee for the time and effort they willingly give. We must especially thank our efficient Secretary Pauline Burger, our reliable Treasurer Leona Coleman, and our book salesperson Ruth Walter, for their extra work. And we are always looking for new members to come onto the committee.

Lyall Kupke

## **ELECTIONS:**

The following office-bearers were elected at the AGM (18 Aug 2024):

President: Lyall Kupke

Vice-President: Brian Hennig

Secretary: Pauline Burger

Assistant Secretary: Ruth Walter

Treasurer: Leona Coleman

Extra members: Marie Brazier, Lorraine Kempf, Heather Watkins, John Zwar.

# Coming Events

## **Sun 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2 pm Talk: Recent Visits to Lusatia**

Lorraine Kempf and Jenny Sorell went on the Easter trip to Germany this year and had a wonderful time. They will tell us about it and show some pictures.

Jane Lutt will also tell of her visit to Lower Lusatia in 2024.

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

## **Sun 10<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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)

# Other Events this year

## **Day trip to the country:**

The details have not been finalised as yet, but it will possibly take place on a Saturday in August or September. One idea that has been proposed is to visit the early German settlement of Light Pass in the Barossa Valley. There are 2 Lutheran churches, 2 cemeteries, and 2 cottages (Luhrs and Rechner) to visit. So there will be plenty of stories to go with them. The Rechner cottage is one of the last of the early German-style half-timbered houses still standing in Australia. It has been undergoing renovations recently by a group of dedicated people, some of whom are Rechner family descendants.

We will inform you when the trip has been organised.

## **Visit by Wendish girls from Werben:**

Earlier this year we were contacted by two Wendish girls from Germany, who are planning to visit Australia once they complete their Year 12 exams mid-year. They are from the Lower Lusatian village of Werben in the Spreewald region and they are keen to share their Wendish culture with us. They would like to find out about the Wends in Australia, so we will be pleased to show them around the Wendish areas of South Australia. Our Victorian friends in the Wendish Heritage Society have agreed to show them around Victoria.

While they are with us in SA, we intend to arrange a meeting (or two) where they can share their Wendish heritage and culture with us. We will let you know when we have finalised the details.

## **Wendish Trail book**

You've been waiting for this for some years; and we've been working on it for years. Finally, the manuscript has gone to the printers. We hope it will be available at the AGM in August.

# SA Historian of the Year: Dr. Heidi Ing

The History Council of South Australia presents various Historian awards each year, acknowledging those who contribute significantly to the preservation, promotion and understanding of South Australia's history.

The award of South Australia's 2025 Historian of the Year has gone to Dr Heidi Ing.

Heidi is a member of the Wend/Sorb Society of SA. Her Wendish heritage is from Christian Gulbin & Anna Elizabeth Lieschka on her mother's side and Peter Zwar & Magdeline Batz-Patzold on her father's side.



In presenting Heidi with her award, History Council President, Matt Fitzpatrick said:

“Heidi Ing has made an outstanding contribution to advancing historical research, collaboration and grassroots engagement over many years. She is a committed member of almost a dozen history organisations, playing a leadership role on a number of them.

“In recent years she has provided research support to not one, but three significant Australian Research Council (ARC) projects across the city's three major universities. In 2024, she supported the state's History Advocate, Dr Kiera Lindsey, to deliver a major survey identifying research activity, gaps and opportunities in our history offering. This year she also co-developed *The House of History*, a seminar series for South Australia's History Festival at Ayers House.

“As Vice President of the Professional Historians Association SA, she created *History at the Historian*, a successful networking series at the iconic city pub. Her longstanding engagement in grassroots history and community outreach spans genealogy, archives, pioneering history, medical heritage and community training.

“Dr Ing represents the very best of what it means to be a historian today. She is a consummate collaborator, bringing people into history and finding fresh ways to make the past accessible and meaningful.”

Congratulations, Heidi!

# Sorbian Monuments

A book on Sorbian (Wendish) monuments by the historian Trudla Malinkowa of Bautzen, Germany, has now been published in English in the US under the title *Sorbian Monuments. A Guide to Memorial Sites in Europe, America and Australia*.

It is essentially a translation of a handbook published by the Sorbian/Wendish publishing house Domowina-Verlag in Bautzen in 2019 in Sorbian and in 2022 in German.

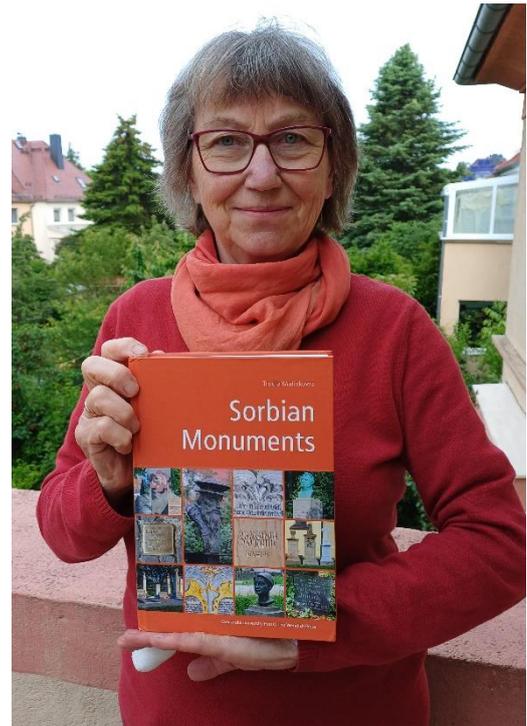


*The three books – in German, English and Sorbian*

In addition, several other Sorbian/Wendish memorial sites in Texas, located in the vicinity of the Wendish colony of Serbin, founded by immigrants from Lusatia in the 19th century, have been included in the English version.

**Australia** is represented with the memorials (gravestones) of three important immigrants to South Australia. They are:

1. The Moravian preacher Christoph Samuel Daniel Schondorf (1814–1898), who also preached in Wendish, and whose grave is at Bethel.
2. Johann Zwar (1821–1912), the leader of the Wendish Lutheran Societies in Lusatia and of the largest Wendish immigration group to Australia in 1851 on the sailing ship *Helene*, is buried in Ebenezer.
3. The only Wendish pastor to ever immigrate to Australia, Andreas Kappler (1802–1877), was honoured with a bronze plaque on his grave at Mount Gambier in 2024 by the Wendish Heritage Society Australia and the Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia.



*The author, Trudla Malinkowa*

The text of the book was translated from Sorbian by the renowned Slavic historian, Gerald Stone from Oxford University, who worked on it almost until his death in 2021.

The translations from German were provided by David Zersen, President Emeritus of Concordia University Texas in Austin, Texas.

The 332-page, hardcover book is richly illustrated with photographs and two geographical maps of Sorbian memorial sites in Upper and Lower Lusatia in Germany.

It was published through the cooperation of two publishing houses, the Concordia University Press in Austin, Texas, and The Wendish Press in Serbin, Texas.

The book is available and can be ordered at the Texas Wendish Heritage Museum in Serbin, Texas.

Here is a link:

<https://texaswendish.org/product/sorbian-monuments/>

*Trudla Malinkowa*

# Wedding customs

Here are some extracts from Edmund Schneeweis's book, *Festivals and Folk Customs of the Sorbs (Wends)*. The customs can vary in different villages and regions. Some of them may even sound familiar to you.



Edmund Schneeweis  
Festivals and Folk Customs  
of the Sorbs (Wends)

Texas Wendish Heritage Society  
Serbin, Texas  
2022

While dressing, the bride would stand in the baking vat (*Backfass*). The magic power of the sourdough would go into her and cause the blessing of conception and easy birth. When she is dressed, she must jump out of the *Backfass*. If she jumps out easily, it foretells that she will not need a midwife at the time of the birth of her children. If it was difficult to jump out, she will have a difficult time at the birth of her children.

Before the wedding, the groom's party will ride around the church three times. This draws a magic circle to provide protection and strength against damaging demons. At the church after the wedding vow, the groom is circled three times by his groomsmen.

The groom wears a small wreath of dried flowers at the side of his hat with a green silk ribbon attached. On the left side of his coat he has a small bouquet of rosemary with green ribbons.

If the bride dreams of wearing a white wedding dress, she will die. This relates to the Slavic idea that white is the colour of mourning and the belief that a white horse brings death.

On the eve of the wedding day, girls would sing religious and other songs in front of the bride's home. They would then be given cake, beer and brandy. Similarly, young men would make a terrible noise in front of the bride's home by shooting their guns and throwing bowls against the door. The idea was they were chasing away the demons. They also expected to share in the treats that were handed out.

The Protestant custom was that the pastor gave the married couple a Bible on behalf of the congregation.

After the wedding ceremony a rope was stretched across the path in front of the church to stop the wedding party. They had to pay money to enable them to continue.

At the wedding reception in Upper Lusatia, the married couple would sit on chairs in the centre of the hall. The bridesmaid then removed the wedding wreath and veil from the bride and placed a cap on her head. On the groom's head was placed a sleeping cap which had very small dolls, a stork and a cradle attached. The bridesmaids then formed a circle around the bride and covered her eyes. The bride then placed her wedding wreath on one of the bridesmaids. It was expected that she would be the next to be married. Similarly with the men: the young men sang and danced around the groom. He took his bouquet and pinned it to the jacket of one of the men.

At the reception in Lower Lusatia, the groomsmen and bridesmaids made a circle around the seated couple. After a brief speech the wreath was removed and thrown into the air. The girl who caught it was expected to be the next to be married.

## Sympathy

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

Ruth Kleinig (Neukirch historian)  
Keith Lokan

## On the traces of the past: unforgettable memories of the Barossa Valley and beyond

*Last newsletter we reported on the visit of Sibylle and Reinhard Noack from Cottbus in Germany. Here is their account of their visit.*



It was planned for years, and finally we were followed by good luck when we had the chance to make our dream come true: on the invitation of Enis and Geoff Saegenschnitter we had the opportunity to go to Greenock to experience the beauty of a unique area with a long Sorb/Wendish history.

On November 11<sup>th</sup> 2024 our trip started in Adelaide where we, Sibylle and Reinhard Noack from Cottbus, Germany, arrived early in the morning. We experienced a warm welcome by the Saegenschnitters and really felt at home in Greenock.

During the following days, we together with Geoff followed the traces of Sorb/Wendish ancestors who came from Upper and Lower Lusatia in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We were very impressed to see the little churches, the still-existing (eternal) cemeteries, and old houses in Ebenezer, St. Kitts and Neukirch. On the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail signs with information about the past, we could easily find out where former immigrants came from. Yes, we were very surprised to read about Cottbus, our hometown, repeatedly! In the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide, we were welcomed by Lyall Kupke and there we found even more astonishing things: we never knew that people from the Schleife area (Middle Lusatia where Reinhard grew up) went to Australia to start a new life.

We are very grateful that our host Geoff took us to many places of interest to us.

One of the highlights of our stay definitely was meeting some of the Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia members in Adelaide, when we could hand a traditionally-dressed doll to Gemma Hennig. What an event!

We enjoyed the great atmosphere among the members of the Society, even had interesting talks to people who could still remember their German language. Very impressive! We talked in English and in German.



Other great events and wonderful experiences for us were the Sunday church service at Nain Lutheran Church with Enis and Geoff, the Barossa Museum, Kapunda, Seppeltsfield, the Cudlee Creek Wildlife Park and, of course, the famous village of Hahndorf.

Finally we can say that we are very grateful for the opportunity offered to us by the Saegenschnitters. In that way we could have an extraordinary insight into many typically Australian things shown by insiders: with important information a tourist normally would not gain when visiting a foreign country. We returned home with many, many pictures as well as great memories in our travel journal to share with family, friends and former colleagues at the Sorbian High School in Cottbus.

We will always appreciate Australian hospitality. Thanks to everyone who made our holidays a very special experience!

*Sibylle and Reinhard Noack, Cottbus, Germany*

# 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  
 Schneeweis, *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]

## Calendars for 2026:

With scenes from Lusatia, these are really beautiful. There is a new photo every 2 weeks!  
 Please order *straight away*, so that we can get them from Germany before the end of the year.  
 Cost = \$25, plus \$10 postage

**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](mailto: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](http://www.wendsorbsociety.org.au)

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

email: [kupkell@yahoo.com](mailto:kupkell@yahoo.com)                      tel: (08) 8365 2572                      mobile 0431 991 385