



wendish news

WENDISH HERITAGE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

NUMBER 50 MARCH 2013



Clockwise from top left: Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden (see p.3); Matiss Schubert performs at the Nieder-Weisel Memorial Event (see p.4); Women in period costume from the local Woody Yaloak Historical Society at the Nieder-Weisel Memorial Event (see p.4).

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Calendar of upcoming events

Labour Day Weekend Tour, 9-10 March 2013

Our tour destination will be the Grovedale and Freshwater Creek area, near Geelong, Victoria. The proposed itinerary, organised by June Winter, is as follows:

On Saturday 9th March at 11.30 am we will meet in the church hall at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, cnr Torquay Rd and Heyers Rd, Grovedale. (Enter from Heyers Rd.) Please join us for lunch at "Brunch on Peter Street", a short distance from the church, or BYO lunch if you wish. We will then tour the local area, including historic Cobbin Farm (originally a Hartwich property). Afternoon tea will be at "Brunch on Peter Street." The evening meal will be at the Mount Moriac Hotel.

Accommodation options include the *Golden Palms Motel* (234 Torquay Rd, Grovedale) Ph. (03) 5243 1077; *Waurn Ponds Hotel Motel* (Princes Hwy, Waurn Ponds) Ph. (03) 5243 1154 or the *Aristocrat Waurnvale Motel* (90 Princes Hwy, Waurn Ponds) Ph. (03) 5241 8211. Please make your own bookings.

On Sunday 10th, we will have the opportunity to attend a church service at St. Pauls, Grovedale at

9.30 am. This church was built in 1870. The church service will be followed by morning tea and lunch in the church hall. We will then tour the Grovedale (Germantown) Cemetery and the heritage-listed church and cemetery at Freshwater Creek.

For those who wish to stay, there will be an opportunity on Monday to visit Geelong's Wool Museum and the Botanical Gardens near the waterfront.

Please book by Sunday 3rd March with June Winter (03) 5266 1383.

Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, Sunday 7 April 2013

We will begin with a community lunch at 12.30 pm followed by a brief AGM before hearing our guest speaker at 2.00 pm. As this year marks the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Ludwig Leichhardt, we will hear about this famous German explorer and naturalist whose 1848 disappearance in inland Australia remains a mystery.

The venue is the Ivanhoe Lutheran Church, 27 Livingstone St, Ivanhoe, Vic. (Melway 31 E7). Please bring some finger food for lunch. All are welcome.



Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden and St David's Lutheran Church, Freshwater Creek.



Past events



Guest speaker Helen Petschel at the Wagon Treks Luncheon; John Noack speaking at the Wagon Treks Luncheon.

Wagon Treks Commemorative Luncheon, Saturday 13 October 2012

Our Wendish Heritage Society's 2012 Trek Luncheon was held on Saturday 13 October 2012 at 12.30 pm at Melbourne's picturesque Austrian Club and Cultural Centre, located at 90 Sheehan Road in Heidelberg West. About 45 people attended.

This Trek Luncheon enabled the participants, including descendants of the many wagon-trekking families back in the 1800s, to recall and to commemorate the many slow and often very long Wagon Treks from one area of Australia to another. Their transport was by covered wagons drawn by horses or bullocks. The 1852 Wagon Trek from Rosenthal/Rosedale (S.A.) to Portland (Victoria) and the 1868-69 Wagon Trek from Ebenezer (S.A.) to Walla Walla (NSW) have been deservedly commemorated, fully or partially re-enacted and also recorded in history books.

Pioneers involved in Wagon Treks include the ALBERT, BURGER, DEUTSCHER, GERSCH, HUF, HANDRECK, HUNDRACK, LIESCHKE, MATUSCHKA, MIRTSCHIN, NOACK, PETSCHEL, PUMPA, RENTSCH, SCHEETZ, STARICK, STEPHAN, TOWK, WENKE and various other families.

Guest speakers included Helen Petschel, one of the tour organisers for the Retracing of the 1852 Wagon Trek on 3-6 May 2012. She spoke about the wonderful experience, especially for descendants of the

original wagoners, of following in their footsteps and re-living their journey. Stories or accounts known by descendants about the various treks were welcomed at this Luncheon, which also featured displays of early family memorabilia and posters.

Highlights of "Retracing the 1852 Wagon Trek" on dual DVD & Video Pack are available for \$18.00 (including postage), from Clay Kruger. See contact details in the Directory on page 12. Please make cheques payable to "Wendish Heritage Soc. Aust. Inc."

JOHN NOACK, PRESIDENT

Ziebell's Farmhouse Open Garden, 17 & 18 November 2012

The historic Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden was included in Australia's Open Garden Scheme for the first time last year. The Garden was open from 10 am to 4.30 pm on both Sat. 17 and Sun. 18 November. This event was a resounding success, with 270 visitors, most of whom had never been to Ziebell's Farmhouse before. There are plans for this to become a regular event. The next Open Garden Australia weekend at Ziebell's will be held on Sat. 16 and Sun. 17 November 2013.

Ziebell's Farmhouse (c. 1850-51) is Victoria's oldest German immigrant building. It is located at 100 Gardenia Rd, Thomastown, (Melway 8 H5) and is open on the second Sunday of each month, from 1.00-4.00 pm.

ROBERT WUCHATSCH, RESEARCHER



Research



Melbourne General Cemetery Stories Project

A Cemetery Stories Project is at present being planned in relation to the Melbourne General Cemetery. Research will involve the locating and recording of personal information about the Cemetery's more than 1,600 persons with Germanic and Wendish ancestry, in order to recreate their life stories and to shed more light on life in Victoria in the pioneering days of the 1800s. The Organiser is Herbert Mees and these plans are at present being put to history-related groups in Victoria for their consideration and future involvement in this historically valuable task.

If you can assist in any way, please contact Herbert Mees; email: herbertmees@bigpond.com or John Noack on email.johnnoack@yahoo.com.au.

For more information, see our website under Publications / Cemetery Stories Project.

JOHN NOACK, PRESIDENT

Below: A Section of the gathering at Smythesdale for the Nieder-Weisel Memorial Celebrations; opposite page: Pastor Kevin Zwar and the Nieder Weisel Plaque.



Nieder-Weisel Plaque for Victorian Goldfields

The largest number of people to emigrate to Australia from any town in what is now Germany came to Victoria from Nieder Weisel in the 1800's, a Lutheran village in the Country called Hesse. The village had 2,300 inhabitants in the 1800's, until over one thousand made their way to Victoria, mainly in the gold rush years.

Nieder Weisel was mainly a fabric producing cottage industry village, however, the English production of steam engines and factories put the cottage industries out of business. In desperate efforts to survive, some of the Nieder Weisel folk went to England to work in the linen-producing factories. To avoid the costs of looking after and feeding the poor families in Nieder Weisel, the local government refused young couples a licence to marry unless they were financially well off! So couples naturally had children anyway, and poverty became worse.

When news of the gold rushes came, those who had gone to England headed for Victoria, and were soon joined by relatives and friends from Nieder Weisel. Many made their way to England to catch 37 different ships to Melbourne in the 1850's. Others left on eight different ships from Hamburg. From Melbourne they walked to the goldfields, where they suffered difficulties and tragedies trying to survive and buy land. For example, when Phillip Hildebrand returned home from working away and met with his wife Margaret, who was pregnant, he learnt she had buried their daughter Ethel, her younger sister Lotta and their brother Philip during an epidemic of diphtheria. About a quarter of those who went to Australia returned to Nieder Weisel, a few as wealthy people.



In 2010 the Lutheran Pastor in Nieder Weisel dedicated a plaque in the Lutheran Church grounds in Germany in memory of those who had gone to Australia in the 1800's. This was due to the work of Kevin Williams in Australia who had researched and written up the history of each person and family in both Victoria and in Nieder Weisel. After his death his work was downloaded to the internet by the Hauser family and you can visit it at

<http://www.niederweisel.com/>

A number of Australians went to Nieder Weisel for the unveiling of the plaque in 2010 and to visit the village of their ancestors.

The descendants in Australia had never met up.

Don Hauser was the energetic leader who thoroughly organised the first reunion of Nieder Weisel folk in Australia. In a weekend of reunions and many events including a Dinner and a Luncheon at Ballarat and Smythesdale on 19th and 20th January, nearly 300 folk met up for their first reunion. About 20 joined in from Nieder Weisel in Germany.

A focal point was the unveiling of a bronze plaque identical to the one unveiled in Germany – except this one is in English – and Lutheran Pastor, Kevin Zwar, made the dedication with a blessing in the same words – but this time in English – as used in the dedication in Germany in 2010:

“May this commemorative plaque keep alive our memories of those who were forced by hardship to leave their homes in search of a better future in a distant land.

May this commemorative plaque be a sign of the bond between the people here in Australia and those in faraway Nieder-Weisel.

May this bond nurture responsibility for one another and interest in each other.

May God’s Spirit continue to breathe a new life of love and peace between people.

May peace grow between nations, as people of different cultures come to meet and understand each other.

May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, abide with us today and for evermore.”

KEVIN P. ZWAR, RESEARCHER

Reunions and Tours

Reunion of Descendants of *Solway* Passengers, 13–16 October, 2012

Pauline Cockrill reported in *The Islander*, Kangaroo Island’s local newspaper, that a very successful Reunion was held for the descendants of German pioneers who arrived at Kangaroo Island, South Australia aboard the *Solway*, 175 years ago in October 1837.

The 70 passengers aboard the *Solway* were some of the first German settlers to arrive and remain in South Australia. Surnames included BAUER, BREMER, CHRISTIAN, DEBUS, DIESE, DREBING, DRESE, FLEIM, FORTSCH, GRAMP, GRUNHAGEN, HANSON, HAUSER, HUTSCH, KLEEMAN, KOEHLER, KRAMER, LAGE, MILDE, NEANDER, OPPEL, OELRICH, PFEIFFER, PIPKORN, PROPHET, SCHAEFFER, SCHMIDT, STURN, THEILMANN, WALLSCHLAGER and ZILM.

This very successful event was organized by Rev. David Christian and Jan Heppner. Jan reported that

attendees came from all over S.A. and the eastern states. A commemorative plaque was unveiled at Reeves Point, Kingscote on Kangaroo Island.

Contacts: Jan Heppner (08) 8541 2820; email janhch@bigpond.com or Rev. David Christian (08) 8391 0063; email davjoyxian@adam.com.au

Touring the Land of the Wends

Chris Elmore, the writer of this report, is a great-great-grandson of Johann Samuel Rohr (1810–1890) and Anna Dorothea Petras (1822–1911). In this report he describes the experience of visiting the homeland of his Wendish ancestors. A more detailed version of this report, with photos, is available on our website.

As part of an extended trip to Europe from August to October, 2010, my wife and I visited some of the areas from which my Wendish ancestors originated. We left Berlin and drove to Cottbus, which, in former times, was situated in the centre of the Wendish cultural area.

Continued overleaf >



Clockwise from Above: The façade of the Wendish Museum; Display of Wendish dress, Wendish Museum; Cottbus old town; City Square, Cottbus; A view of the exterior of the church in Klepsk; The player's console of the smaller Silbermann organ in Freiberg Cathedral; Portrait of a group of Wendish Weavers, Wendish Museum.

Pottery and Spinning in the Spreewald

When we arrived at Cottbus there was a pottery festival in progress. Pottery is one of the traditional crafts of the Wends and it was good to see such ancient skills continuing into the present day. The Wends were also famous for their spinning and weaving and this too was clearly in evidence as part of the festival. We wandered around looking at the pottery displays and then took a stroll around the town.

Wendish Museum at Cottbus

I spent the afternoon looking through the Wendish Museum. It is situated in the historic part of Cottbus in a beautifully restored two-storey former residence. It has displays of Wendish national costumes, embroidery, literature, music and art. It also has displays showing aspects of village life, housing construction, pottery, fabric crafts and the archaeological record of the Wends dating from the earliest times.

The displays have been thoughtfully prepared and were of a high standard. They included mannequins in traditional Sorb dress, old tools and implements, examples of pottery and weaving, old photographs, display text (little of which I could read), and some artefacts from archaeological digs going back to the period of first settlement. By spending a good half day in the museum, I learned a tremendous amount

about the Wends, mainly through the photographs, models and various objects on display.

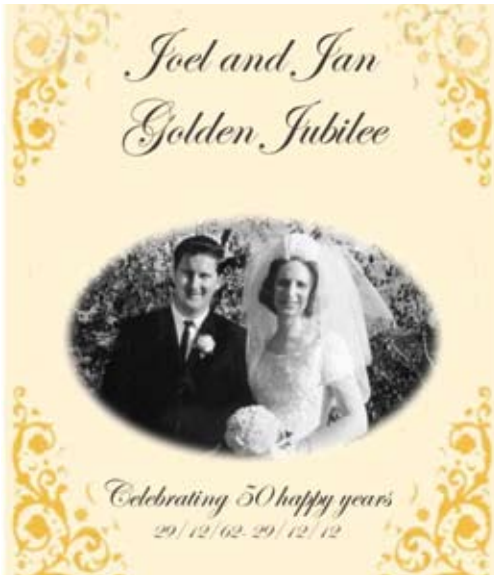
Klemzig in Brandenburg (now Klepsk in Poland)

From Cottbus we travelled across the border into Poland. We visited the largish town of Sulechow, which is the birthplace of my great-great-grandmother, and the much smaller village of Klepsk, just a short distance from Sulechow, which is the birthplace of my great-great-grandfather.

In Klepsk we saw the very famous and magnificent wooden church which, in the time of my ancestor, was used by the local Lutherans. The exterior was clad in wood and brick, and the roof was made of wooden shingles. The interior was panelled in wood, both walls and ceiling, and each panel had been painted with a biblically-themed picture, including various angels, Adam and Eve, the apostles, and so on.

To Berlin via Hungary, the Czech Republic and Leipzig

After leaving the land of the Wends, we travelled south to Hungary and Czechia (the Czech Republic), before completing the loop and returning to Berlin. On the way back to Berlin we passed



Golden Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations to Janice and Joel Blackburn, who recently celebrated 50 happy years of marriage.

Janice is our Librarian and Joel is our Vice-President and Computer and Website Manager. We are very grateful for their dedication and efficiency in fulfilling these roles. Janice and Joel celebrated this very special Anniversary with a tour of Tasmania with their family. Their tour included Port Arthur, where they first met. We wish them many more happy years together.

Wendish Library

All are welcome to visit our Wendish Library at 27 Livingstone St, Ivanhoe. It is open on the first Sunday of each month Feb.–Nov., from 1.30–5.30 pm.

Directory

Aims: The Wendish Heritage Society Australia Inc., researches and promotes the Wendish/Sorbian and Germanic heritage and family history in Australia.

Postal Address: PO Box 307, Heidelberg, Vic, 3084.

Meeting Room and Research Centre: Ivanhoe Lutheran Church Meeting Room, 27 Livingstone Street, Ivanhoe, Victoria. (Melways 31 E7)

Hours: Open the first Sunday of each month from February – November, 1.30pm–5.30pm for research, working bees and socialising.

Our Society Logo: The logo, an Australian gum leaf and a Lusatian linden leaf, represent the connection between the Wendish descendants in Australia and the Sorbs in Lusatia.

Membership & Newsletter Subscription: \$25 for single membership and \$30 for joint membership for one calendar year due at the start of each year. The form is included in our August Newsletter for the following year. Additional donations can also be made for the expanding work of the Society and we thank most sincerely those of you who have made such generous donations.

Publicity: We welcome any publicity which you can give about our Society and its planned events.

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