

Sign unveiled at Rosedale

A small group of Wendish descendants met outside the Rosedale Lutheran Church on Saturday afternoon September 1 to unveil the new interpretive sign on the Wendish Pioneer Heritage Trail. In beautiful sunny weather Ruth Walter and Pauline Burger, two descendants of the Wends who settled at Rosedale in the years 1848-1852, unveiled the sign.

The sign explains who the Wends were, where they came from and what happened to them. It has been prepared by members of the Wend/Sorb Society of SA with financial assistance from Multicultural SA and History SA.

However, the Wendish families did not stay in the Rosedale district for long. Attracted by the promise of larger landholdings, in 1852 they trekked overland to Portland in Victoria, and then later moved to the Hamilton district.

The Wends on this trek were Albert, Burger, Deutscher, Hundrack, Mirtschin, Petschel and Rentsch, together with a German family Huf. These are very familiar names in the Hamilton district today. This trek was re-enacted by a large group of their descendants in May earlier this year.

The Wends are a Slavic people, who came from a region in eastern Germany, near the present-day border of Poland and the Czech Republic. In Europe today they are known as Sorbs, the smallest of the Slavic races which inhabited Eastern Europe in past centuries.

They have maintained their own language, culture and customs by living in close communities in small regions of eastern Germany. This area is called Lusatia (Lausitz) and is centred around two cities: Cottbus and Bautzen. Some 60,000 Sorbs in this region still speak their language.

When German migration to South Australia occurred from the 1840s, many Sorbs from Lusatia also migrated. The Germans called them Wends, and only that name was used in Australia.

Some familiar Wendish surnames in South Australia are Altus, Burger, Dallwitz, Duldig, Dutschke, Huppertz, Jenke, Kleinig, Laucke,

Lieschke, Mickan, Modra, Noack, Pech, Schuppan, Wenke and Zwar.

On arrival in South Australia they lived briefly at Hope Valley and Rosedale, before moving into the Barossa Valley. The settlements at Ebenezer, Neukirch, St Kitts and Peters Hill had many Wendish families, and descendants can still be found there today. Signs are being erected at these significant sites of Wendish settlement.

On October 29 the sign will be unveiled at the Peters Hill Church at 12 noon. On Sunday November 11 the signs will be unveiled at the Ebenezer Lutheran Church at 11am, at Neukirch Lutheran Church at 12 noon, and at St Kitts St Petri Cemetery at 2.30 pm.



Ruth Walter and Pauline Burger unveiling the Wendish Pioneer interpretive sign outside the Rosedale Lutheran Church. Photo by June Jenke, Lobethal