



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

March 2024

In this newsletter:

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- What's still to be done?
- A foot of footings campaign - leave a lasting legacy.
- Barossa History Fair 2024
- Rechner history and genealogy book still available.
- Have you visited the cottage - we'd love to know.
- New articles from the website - *Ring those bells* and *Barossa wedding traditions*

Conservation update:

The footings are completed!

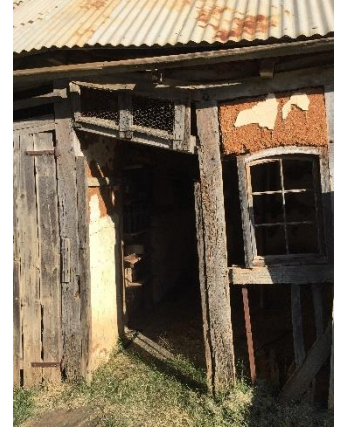
We began last year with the installation of the new roof, and finished it with the completion of the work on the footings. It's been exciting to have these two really major jobs done, as they are both so essential to keeping the structure of the cottage protected from the weather and stopping further damage and deterioration. A big thank you to all who have helped make this possible!



What's next to be done?

We still have a list of things to be done before we can finally say our work is finished – and before we can leave the cottage to once again slumber peacefully in the church yard. So what's next?

- **Pugging the external walls.** We hope to make an event of this and hold a pugging workshop for anyone who'd like to come and be hands on in the conservation and learn a new skill at the same time (or should I say 'an old skill'). The builder will be supervising and making sure it's all done to standard. We are planning to leave a section of the wall unpugged, and covered with glass or similar, so that the original framework can be seen.
- **Repairing windows and doors** where necessary.
- **Landscaping and earthworks** around the cottage
- **Installing signage and photographs** to tell the history of the cottage and explain its features.



The estimates for this work are between \$35–\$45,000. The work required for the previous stages has left the bank account looking pretty empty, although we have managed to stick pretty closely to budget despite unexpected expenses. And so we have had to put a pause on this final stage, whilst we work on raising funds. The builder is ready and waiting, and I'm sure, along with us, that you are also keen to see the work finished.



Join our 'Foot of Footings' campaign! Help raise much-needed funds.

Here is a way you can be part of history and leave a legacy for someone you love, whilst also helping conserve the cottage. For \$100, you can donate to a foot of the wall around the cottage. Donate in your own name, or honour others in your family by making a gift in their name. You'll be able to see on a map of the cottage where your 'foot of footings' is.

The name/s are acknowledged on our website and will also be onsite once the cottage is completed.

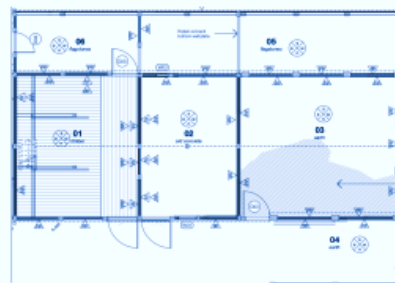
You can donate to the bank details below or securely via the website. (rechnercottage.com). Please confirm via email who you would like to be acknowledged at rechnercottage@gmail.com.

Bank details.

BSB: 704942

Account: 100964214

Name: Rechner Cottage Conservation Association.



Plan of Pastor Rechner's Cottage

List of names.

1. Jon Smith
2. Janet Collins
3. Pearl Lacy
4. Your name here.....



Held every two years, the fair is a celebration of the history and stories, people and places that make the Barossa what it is today.

The fair gets bigger and better every year. Held over two days, there will be speakers, displays and lots of events for all the family, including a family history research hub, a promenade by the Victoriana Society, an exhibition at the Barossa Museum, Church/Organ/Bell Tours, a Biedermeier furniture display, special live music performances, vintage car displays and a spoken history of the Barossa live storytelling event.

BAROSSA
History
FAIR

Sunday 5 May
10am-4pm
Tanunda



We will have a display table in the hall on Sunday 5th, with the Luhrs Cottage table right next to us, so do come and say hello! This event is a great way to share what we are doing with the wider community. Other

ways we share the story of the cottage are through the website and social media, the Barossa Heritage Trails App, being part of the Barossa Heritage Association, working with Luhrs Cottage to document Light Pass history, and preserving stories through oral recordings.

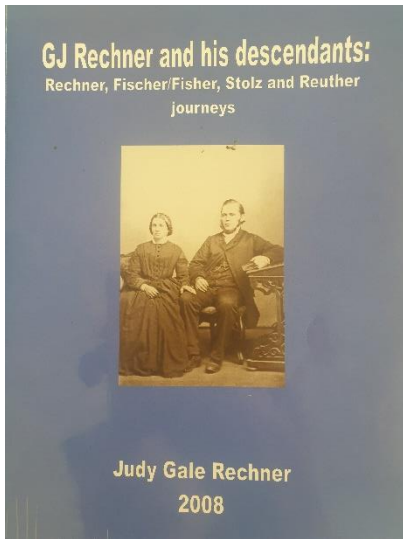


Pat Mullen and husband came from WA and visited the cottage with their son. Thanks for sharing it with us, Pat!

Have you visited the cottage? We'd love to know!

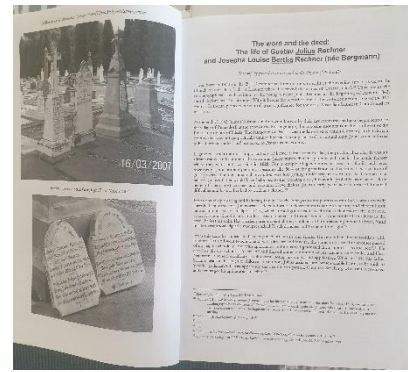
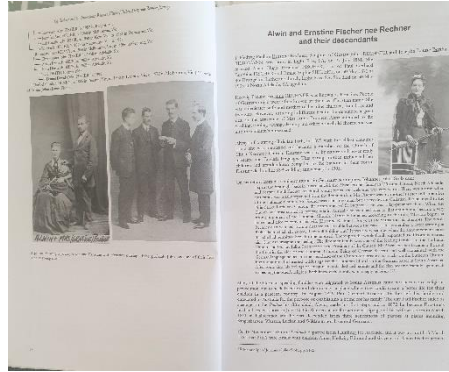
In our last newsletter, we shared the story of Stephen Reuther visiting the old Bethesda Mission site, where his great-grandfather lived and worked. Visiting the places where our ancestors lived is meaningful for many of us. Perhaps it's just fanciful, but whenever I visit the cottage, I feel a deep sense of connection with the place. Perhaps that comes from being taken there by my mother to see my grandparent's graves, and the graves of generations before them, and the house where my grandfather grew up. Perhaps it's the stories she told us. Or perhaps there is something of their spirit imbued into the land. What do you think? What builds connection to these places for us? Have you been to the cottage? What was your experience?

We'd love you to email us and let us know. (It was great to hear from Pat Mullen when she visited the cottage earlier this year). It was at the 2018 family reunion that the decision was made for the wider Rechner family to conserve the cottage, and we'd love to know that members of the family are able to come and visit.



Rechner history and genealogy book - available until sold out.

Judy Gale's family has generously donated the remaining copies of the Rechner book for us to sell, with proceeds going towards the cottage. They are \$35 a copy (postage included). If you haven't got a copy, don't miss out!



And from the website, here's a few of our recent articles: (if you haven't yet had a browse through the website, visit it at rechnergottage.com. There's lots of interesting information and articles to enjoy. You can also keep up with us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rechnercottage), and please give our page a 'like' while you're there!



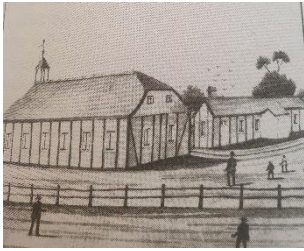
Ring those bells! Surely one of the most iconic sounds of the Barossa must be the sound of bells ringing out over the countryside.

Since the early days of German settlement, the bells in the Barossa have been busy - calling the faithful to worship on Sundays, announcing weddings, funerals and other important events. ringing in the New Year and joyously proclaiming Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. In early Barossa days bells were also rung to let labourers in the field know it was the end of the working day. When cyclists from the Tour Down Under cycled through the Barossa in January this year, bells from 5 Lutheran churches

pealed out to welcome them. And during the Covid pandemic, when the churches had to be empty, the bells still rang out at Easter, reminding people of the hope we can share. (Listen to them with the links at the end of the article).

Do you love the sound of bells? (I have it on good authority that many dogs howl along, so they no doubt are bell-lovers, too). If you do, the Barossa is the place for you, as with its 24 bells, it has the greatest concentration per capita in Australia.

For the early settlers, the bells provided a special link to their homeland. On 24th June 1883, the dedication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church "Herberge Christi," was held at Bethany. A new bell was brought from Germany. Pastor E Hamon wrote afterwards "From far and wide, the gathering began arriving, already at 9am, as the lovely tone of the bell rang out from the tower of the newly built church. Yes! It was real German bell tones and reminded one of the old homeland"



The first church built at Light Pass in 1850 had a small bell-tower and weathervane on the roof.

A bell, of course, has to be hung somewhere. Originally many bells were hung from simple wooden structures, and more substantial bell-towers were built as funds allowed. Noris Ioannou, in *Barossa Journeys*, notes that in the earliest Lutheran churches, a small open bell-tower was usually installed on one side of the roof, or else the bell tower followed an ancient tradition and was constructed as a separate feature." Later Lutheran churches in the valley



The 'new' Immanuel church had a simple wooden structure, until the stone bell-tower was built.

"are based around the traditional plan of a towered belfry which soars above the entrance portal, located at one end of the rectangular nave." Although there are variations in the style of the tower, most are finished with a metal spire.



The oldest bell still peals out from the 1887 bell-tower at Strait Gate. The tower was incorporated into the design of the new church.

The bell at Strait Gate Lutheran Church Light Pass.

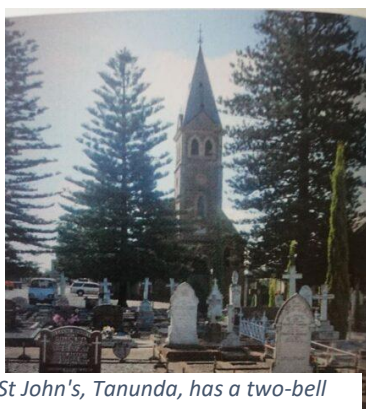
The oldest bell in the district is the Strait Gate church bell. It is a single bronze bell cast by Fr. Gruhl at the Kleinwelka foundry, Germany. Made in 1872, it weighs 456 kg and the mouth diameter is 915mm, ringing out the tone of G#. In addition, it has the decorative band in high relief and cherub heads on the crown, typical of bells from that foundry¹. The purchase of the bell was made possible by the generous donation of 50 pounds by a member of the congregation. The church put in another 42 pounds, and the bell was ordered from Germany. It originally hung from a

simple wooden structure on a platform on the ground, and we are told that, on the occasion of the marriage of Br. Carl Obst, "it sounded its first clear peals across the village of Light Pass and beyond". In 1887 the church was given money to pay for a fine stone bell-tower. Read the lovely story of 'Father Kruger' - the man who donated the money for the belltower - and why - in [this newspaper article](#) from 1905. In 1960 the old church was demolished, but the tower was kept and incorporated into the new church.



Immanuel Church, Light Pass, has one of the largest bells.

The largest and heaviest bells are in St Petri Lutheran Church, Nuriootpa (1,098 centimetres and 532 kilograms), and Immanuel Lutheran Church, Light Pass (1095 centimetres and 515 kilograms).



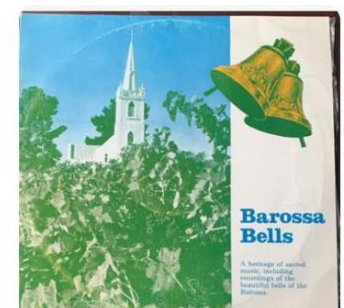
St John's, Tanunda, has a two-bell peal

The only churches in the valley with a two-bell peal are St John's, Tanunda and St John's Dutton (to the north).

If you want to know about the bells of the Barossa, Hervey Bagot is your man. He was the bell master for Australia from 1977 (hands up all those who knew we even have such a thing!). A keen bell-ringer from his teenage years, he designed, built and maintained bells throughout Australia. According to 'AdelaideAZ' "Bagot wrote several publications extolling the 24 church bells in South Australia's Barossa Valley, revealing a treasured collection unequalled in Australia. For each bell, Hervey listed the city where the bell was cast, the date of casting, the weight, the diameter, the age and the main frequency".²

A big "thank you" to all those bell-ringers in the valley, who bring the valley alive with the sound of the bells!

Listen to the bells:

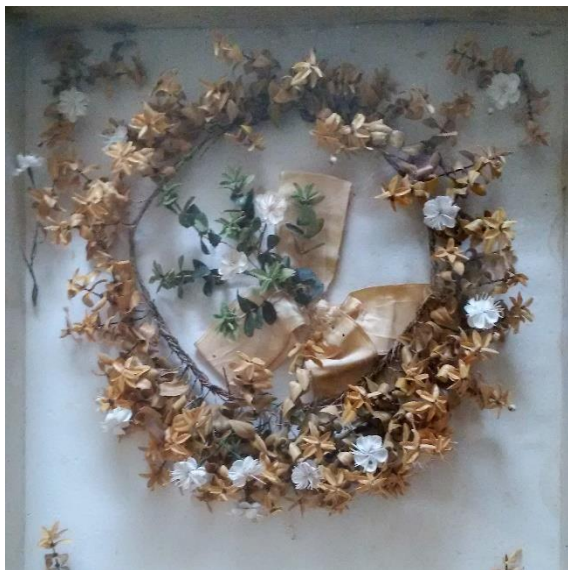


[Strait Gate bell - Sunday morning](#)

[Langmeil Lutheran Church, Barossa Valley Easter 2020](#)

[Gnadenfrei church. Barossa Valley Easter 2020](#)

Or borrow the *Barossa Bells* CD (authors L. Grope et al) through [Barossa public libraries](#)



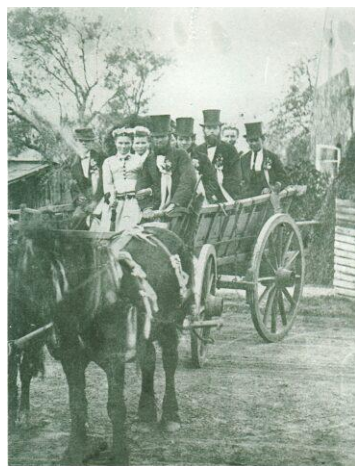
Barossa Wedding Traditions

Who doesn't love a wedding?

We all love a happy event, and a reason to celebrate. And the Barossa Germans certainly loved to celebrate a wedding. Back in the 1800's, weddings were usually held on a Thursday to allow for three days of celebrations to be held (what an excellent idea!). It was a great time for gathering, for feasting, for merriment and parties and general high jinks.

Weddings were great family and community affairs. Naturally in the lead-up, the family would be cleaning and cooking for days. In the days before the wedding, the women held a bridal shower, with cake and refreshments. Meanwhile the men would gather at night and hold a noisy and rambunctious tin-kettling. Often people played pranks on the groom, for example they set his horse loose or something

similarly inconvenient. Another common tradition before the wedding was called *Federschleiben*; the friends and relatives of the betrothed couple gathered to make feather beds for the young couple from goose down.



Off to church in the wagon

On the day of the wedding, the relatives and friend of the bride would gather at the bride's home before the ceremony, and as the bride and her family left for the church in the horse and buggy, all the rest would follow on behind in a long procession. As was the case in Germany, in the 19th century, many German brides in Australia did not wear a white wedding dress, but a black one, with a white veil. Dark colours were much more serviceable and able to be worn again! However, some brides wore white - a colour which received royal approval when worn by Queen Victoria at her wedding in 1840.

After the ceremony, as the bride & groom left the church the church

bells would ring. At this signal, the schoolchildren were allowed out of the classroom to see the happy couple and would hold a rope across the roadway to stop the buggy. The groom would toss out 'conversation lollies', and there was a mad scramble to find them all by the children. Wine was concealed in the buggy to be handed out to adults (usually the young couple's friends) when they stopped the buggy in the same manner, further down the road. This tradition was still carried out in the late 1900's.



Anna Luhrs wore white for her marriage to Alexander Mill in 1900



One of the Sporn family brides wore a black dress

Many onlookers would gather at the church to see the bridal couple, and after the young pair had departed the family of the bride would hand around drinks and kuchen outside the church for the many onlookers. A big reception was then held for the guests back at the house. A 3-course meal was provided, followed by supper and then further refreshments early in the morning. There were many speeches, and the feasting and dancing often went all night. A wonderful beginning to married life!



The double wedding of Louisa Dittrich to Arthur Herman Liebich & Elizabeth Pauline Dittrich to Johann Carl Christian Goesch in 1895

Given the cost of the celebrations, double weddings must have seemed like a good idea, and were not uncommon at Light Pass. On 13th May 1852, Gottfried Schilling married Louise Klemm and his sister Rosina married Louise's brother, Samuel. Gottfried was a farmer at Light Pass and later at Melrose. Samuel Klemm was a framer and carrier in the district and later went prospecting to the Victorian Goldfields. In 1895, two sisters had a double wedding. - Louisa Dittrich to Arthur Herman Liebich & Elizabeth Pauline Dittrich to Johann Carl Christian Goesch.

Another double wedding was celebrated in the 1920's when two brides from Germany arrived to meet their grooms at the Mission Home prior to accompanying them back to the New Guinea Mission Field. For this occasion, a youth was given a £5 note to buy 5lbs of 'Streusel-Kuchen' to supplement the supply. That's a lot of kuchen! The kuchen had to be sourced from various bakers around the area, but he succeeded in returning with the 5 lbs of kuchen. How must it have been for these young brides, so far from home and in a very different landscape, about to embark on married life in an even more foreign land, with husbands they had only just met. The traditions of the German marriage customs and ceremonies must have provided a comforting and familiar link with home.

The Barossa Germans maintained their traditions over a long period. Take a quick listen to Tom Reuther's memories of Light Pass weddings in the 1930's – very similar to the traditions of the 1800's.

[Tom Reuther recordings - Light Pass in the 30's and 40's - Rechner Cottage Conservation Association](#)



Marriage certificate of Paul Friedrich Bartsch and Estha Frieda Hilsenitz

Pipes of Para - a short film made by the ABC in 1963.

Have you seen "The Pipes of Para"? It's a short b&w film made by the ABC in 1963.

It gives a picture of the Barossa in the 60's, and also takes you back to the Barossa at the turn of the century. A number of scenes for this movie were filmed at Light Pass, Moculta and Gruenberg Churches. It features the churches and pipe organs, and shows farming, viticulture, and weddings. At the very end it re-enacts a wedding from 1890. And it has glorious organ music. All done in the charming manner of 1960's films! Watch it here. [\(3\) The Pipes of Para \(1963\) - YouTube](#)



Once again, thank you for your interest, encouragement, and support.

Wishing you and your families a very happy Easter.

Jo

(on behalf of the *Rechner Cottage Conservation Committee*)



Colouring easter eggs is another European tradition the early German settlers enjoyed. Many of you might remember coloured eggs – still warm – on Easter Sunday morning. (photo courtesy of Bee Felten-Leidel -Unsplash)



Email: rechnercottage@gmail.com

Website: rechnercottage.com

FB: www.facebook.com/rechnercottage/