



February 2025

In this newsletter:

- Conservation news: A-a-a-nd (drum roll) the pugging is done!
- Photos from the pugging workshops.
- Fundraising – 4 simple ways you can help.
- Latest from the website: *The Journey* is a new book by Lee Boehm, recounting the story of the pioneers from Light Pass who made the journey to Walla Walla and settled there. And do you know the story of Barossa Deutsch, the main language of many locals until the mid-20th century? Complement this by listening to Pastor Tom Reuther's reminisces of Barossa Deutsch in Light Pass in the 1930's.

Conservation News



We'd like to say a big
Thank You to the *Peter
Lehmann Arts and
Education Trust* for
funding the workshops and
making them possible.

The pugging workshops were a success! Lots of hard work, but also so much fun. Everybody who came had a great time and put in such a magnificent effort that, by the end of the four days of workshops, the pugging was almost completed. The pug was then left to dry, and a week later a second coat was applied, filling in the cracks and smoothing the surface. It's now finished and ready to be limewashed.



The participants came from near (locals from next door) and far (the Yorke Peninsula and even Brisbane), with people from the Barossa, the Hills and Adelaide as well. There was an interesting mix of people, (partly thanks to

Heritage SA putting it up on their FB page). There were members from Strait Gate church, and locals who'd been watching it fall into disrepair and were pleased to help save local history. There were people who wanted to learn the process so they could build their own pug dwellings, and others who just have a passion for the history of South Australian buildings. There were farmers,



teachers, museum curators and conservers, a soil scientist and someone doing a PhD in early SA buildings. And there were people of all ages, from retired people to – encouragingly - keen young people as well. As you can imagine, there was a lot of chat that went on, as people worked together and over morning teas (thank you, Catherine, for the French press coffee!)

Andrew, our heritage builder, guided us expertly through the process, and everybody learnt and developed our techniques as we went along. We were able to re-use bits of the original pug, and clay that came from a huge hole dug right next to the cottage (you can't get more local than that!). This was mixed with straw (to bind the mixture) and water. Then it was formed by hand into 'pugs' which were pressed in between the beams and vertical lathes. This was a two-person job, with one person pressing it in, and someone on the other side holding everything in place and smoothing out the inside. Where there were still areas of the original pug, we dampened them down and then melded them with the new.



Softening up the original pug.

It was hard physical work but so satisfying. What made it so special? I guess it was seeing the walls rise up as we put in the hard yards, the working together as a community of people, just as they did when the cottage was originally built, and using our hands to build something that should last for at least another 150

years. A wonderful thing to have been part of! And a HUGE THANK YOU to all the participants – you did a fantastic job!



Pugging is a two-person job!



And the final result...



From left to right: **The East wall.** Note the hatch to the loft is now uncovered, and the middle section is covered by a sheet of polycarbonate, so that the construction technique is visible. **The West wall.** The rooms are so much darker inside now that the walls are filled in! And **the cottage from the front.** Did you notice it has a new door, made to match the other one?



The interior wall of the stable still has large areas of limewash remaining.

What's next to be done?

Now that the pugging is completed, the next step is the **limewashing**. The cottage was originally limewashed, and you can still see this on the interior walls, where it has been sheltered. Limewash was commonly used to protect the pug from the weather, helping it last a lot longer. The builder is ready to proceed with this step but limewashing is best done in either humid or damp weather. Neither of which SA has at the moment!

After that we turn our attention to:

- **Landscaping and earthworks** around the cottage. We need to move surrounding soil so that it is sloping away from the cottage and towards the vineyard. This will aid drainage, so that the footings are not sitting in damp soil. We will also be laying bricks in the front of the cottage.
- **Installing signage and photographs** to tell the history of the cottage and explain its features.

Fundraising: We are getting close to the end, but we're still not there yet! Here's four easy way you can help...

1/ **Donate** whatever amount you can spare. Large or small, it all helps. You can donate securely [on the website](#), or via bank transfer – you'll find our bank details at the end of this email.

2/ **Be part of our special campaign - 'A foot of Footings'**. It's a way supporters just like you are helping Rechner Cottage keep its feet on the ground.



Before conservation, the footings were rotting away. Thanks to supporters like you, they will now keep the cottage standing.

Being part of this campaign is a great way to be part of history, too. 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. All the name/s are acknowledged on the website. Check out the campaign, and the names on the [Supporter's Page](#) – and while you're there, find out who is the 'supporter of the month' – maybe it's someone you know!

Please email us at rechnercottage@gmail.com to let us know who you would like to be acknowledged. Our bank details are at the end of the email, or you can donate securely [on the website](#).

3/ Buy some wine! (But be quick – they've almost sold out).

Once again our wines have proved very popular – probably because they are delicious, and such great value! Generously donated by David Lehmann of *davidFranz* winery, they come from grapes grown on local Barossa vines. David produces unique small batch parcels of Barossa wine, hand wrought with passion. Like his parents, Peter and Margaret Lehmann, he is passionate about both wine-making and Barossa history. Thank you to David, and to all who have helped by purchasing the wine.

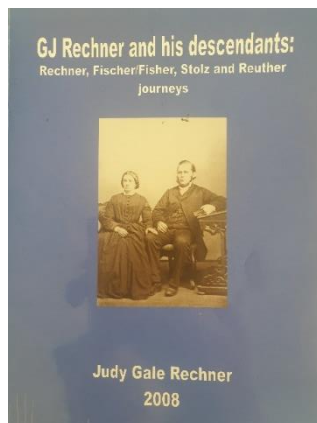
We have almost sold out, but there are a few dozen of the light and fruity Rosè left. There's still plenty of summer to enjoy them in, so contact us to check availability and to order the last ones.



4/ Buy some books.

Are these on your bookshelf yet? We still have copies of both the Rechner history/genealogy book and the Rechner Recipe book available. Contact us if you'd like to place an order.

Both books are now just \$20 each, plus \$15 postage.



Rechner history/genealogy book.

This book is a fascinating read, and is full of information about life in Silesia, GJ Rechner, and the early days in Light Pass, as well as the Rechner family. It gives a great sense of who we are as a family, and where we've come from. The book also has wonderful family photos.



Rechner Recipe book.

A beautifully produced collection of family recipes from the Rechner family, illustrated with lovely old photographs of the family and the cottage. Buy it in February/March for the special price of \$20.



A huge thank you to all who have supported the conservation so far – you’ve helped achieve so much!

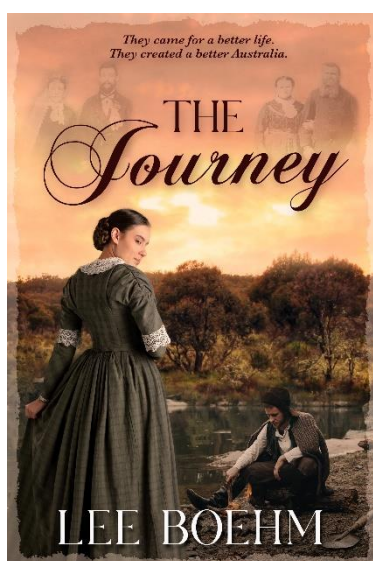
And from the website, here’s our most recent articles:

1/Journeying to a new land – author **Lee Boehm** has researched the Boehm and Luhrs families of Light Pass. She’s written a book about their subsequent journey to Walla Walla in NSW.

2/ Barossa Deutsch – German was the main language spoken in the Barossa for its first 100 years of settlement. We look at its use over the years, and the efforts being made to preserve it.

3/ Listen to Pastor Tom Reuther, as he reminisces about the use of Barossa Deutsch in the 30’s in LightPass.

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.



Journeying to a new land.

Lee Boehm’s new book, *The Journey*, tells about the decision of some of the German pioneers to relocate from SA to Walla Walla in NSW, and the journey they took to get there. While researching the family history of her husband Christopher Boehm, she delved into the stories of the Boehm and Luhr’s families of Light Pass. Along the way she learnt about the Rechners, the Scholzs and others in the early Light Pass community. She’s written the following account for us.

“Fritz Boehm and his wife Ilse, aged 30 and 26, with their 4-week-old son Traugott, travelled from Silesia in Prussia on the ship *Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee Patel* in 1845 and settled at Light Pass in South Australia.

Also on the ship was Rosina Scholz who was 25 and her Uncle and Aunt, Gottfried and Christiane with their seven children. Gottfried Scholz had served in the Prussian Army and was skilled at bone setting and remedial massage, setting up a clinic that became very popular after he or his eldest son Henry (stories vary) reset George Fife Angus’ broken leg.



Willows Hospital c. 1920’s

Mr Angus was the wealthy Englishman who was the benefactor of the German immigrants and helped Pastor Kavel lead his flock out of poverty in Prussia. Although Mr Angus’ two sons had been in South Australia since the early 1840’s attending to his interests, Mr Angus did not come out until 1851, by which time the German villages in the Barossa Valley were thriving. Mr Angus gave the Scholz’s 500 pounds in gratitude for healing his leg, which allowed Henry to build what became the successful Willows Hospital at Light Pass.

(editors note: read more about the Willows hospital [here](#))

On arrival at Light Pass in 1845 the new settlers met Heinrich Luhrs, aged 37, who had already been in the village for a short time. Heinrich and Rosina Sholtz were married on 6 April 1846 by Pastor Kavel.

Heinrich had come to South Australia in 1841, from London. He was on the same ship, the *Augustus* as George French Angus, their benefactor's eldest son. Heinrich was the only German on the ship and his French horn became quite a novelty during the journey.

Heinrich had left his home in Hannover, Germany, in his early 20's and went to work as a gardener on the estate of a duke. Within seven years he became head gardener and departed the estate with excellent references. He was restless and had become involved with the Dresden Missionary Society mainly so that he could adventure across the seas to the new colony of South Australia. His quest to become a missionary took him from Germany to London and back several times before he managed to gain passage from London. During his time in London, he worked as a German tutor at Oxford. After coming to Australia, he spent some time on Aboriginal missions on the southern coast of South Australia. But rather than for religious reasons, Henry had wanted to impart his agricultural knowledge to the natives. He was told that they did not have an understanding of growing crops or maintaining beautiful gardens, which were a necessity of life in Europe.

But Heinrich found that the natives had been doing very well by themselves, travelling from place to place depending on where the fish, animals and native fruits and plants were naturally plentiful. They knew what time of year to go to what place and welcomed the change in scenery. Trying to harness them to one place and try to tame nature was not something that they wanted to do. They also had their own 'Gods,' and sacred beings, that were related to the stars and to nature and were not very interested in learning about what other men thought it was best to worship.

Heinrich soon became disillusioned at the mission at Victor Harbour and decided to follow Pastor Kavel to the Barossa Valley and take up his own land to farm. Then, once he got there, and met his beloved Rosina his quest for adventure had stopped, as the new adventure of running a farm and raising a family had begun.

However, before he was able to get too settled into the farming life the village started becoming populated with more and more families from Germany. The Germans held education in great regard and required all children to attend school until at least the age of 14, well before the South Australian government mandated school attendance. Pastor Kavel asked Heinrich if he would be the first school teacher at Light Pass.



Luhrs Cottage

It seemed like the best choice in the village due to his previous experience at Oxford. It is unknown how Heinrich went in his duties, however, it seems that he ran the school for at least some time from his own house, which has now been restored as a museum, Luhrs Cottage, near Rechner's cottage, that the public can visit.

In 1850 the village was blessed with the arrival of the youthful and exuberant 19-year-old Julius Rechner, who came highly recommended by both the Lutheran Pastors, Kavel and Fritzsche, who at the time were embroiled in religious conflict and were both vying for popularity amongst the growing congregations in the Barossa Valley. This eventually led to a split in the Light Pass Immanuel congregation, and the formation of the Strait Gate Congregation – hence why there are two churches at Light Pass. Both Pastors offered him the job of schoolteacher at Light Pass and after some discussion about the terms he moved to Light Pass in mid-1850 to take over from Heinrich Luhrs. He held the position for 10 years. (editors note: read more about GJ Rechner [here](#))

Julius was surprised not long afterwards when his sweetheart Bertha arrived at Port Adelaide and the couple were married on the 23rd of October 1850. It can be assumed that the community of Light Pass rallied around and became their family, and the Boehm's and Luhrs' would have been good friends to the Rechner's. Julius had an affinity with music, which he would have had in common with Heinrich Luhrs and his French Horn.

In my research I found out so many interesting stories about these families and having already published two books about my own convict ancestors, I decided to tackle the story of the Boehm's, finding the connection with the Luhrs' and so many other families at Light Pass.



This old German wagon is at Luhrs Cottage

Heinrich Luhrs eldest son Henry was employed in 1868 on a trek to Walla Walla in New South Wales (near Albury) with a group of families from Light Pass and Ebenezer. He returned to Light Pass to marry his sweetheart, Maria Joppich, and not long afterwards Maria's sister Eleanore Joppich married Traugott Boehm (who was the 4-week-old baby on the journey out from Prussia in 1845). Henry and Maria Luhrs eventually moved to New South Wales, settling in the areas around Walla Walla where the German Lutheran communities were thriving. The Boehm's later followed them and a few years later the two families moved to Parkes where they started the Lutheran church there.

My husband's father was born in Parkes many years later in the 1940's."

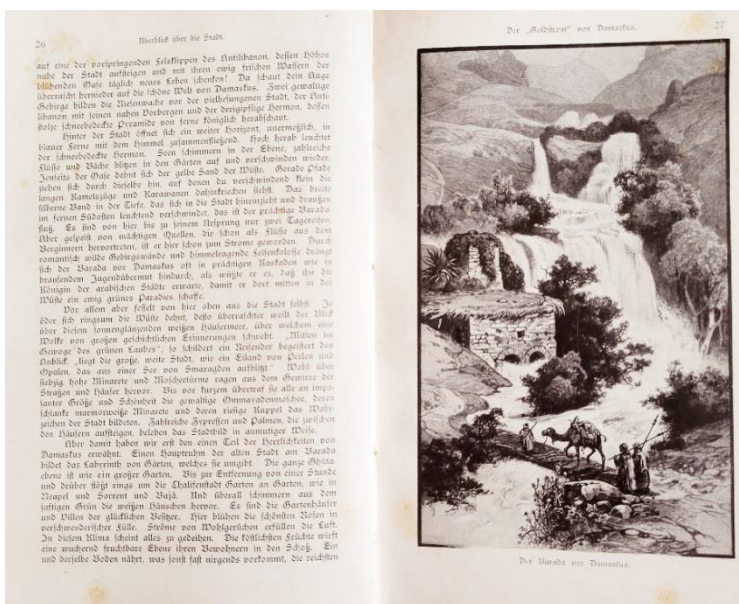
Thanks, Lee, for sharing that interesting account with us. Lee's book, *The Journey*, a generational story of the Boehm's and Luhrs', and including many other families from that time period, has just been released and is available on Amazon. (I'm halfway through, and it's a great read!)

You can follow Lee on Facebook **Lee Boehm – Author** or Instagram **lee_boehm_author** for information about her books.

2/ Barossa Deutsch – an Aussie sprachinsel.

Sprechen Sie Deutsch? Sprechen Sie Barossa-Deutsch? In fact, what exactly IS Barossa-Deutsch?

When the early settlers came to the Barossa from Prussia and Silesia in the 1800's, they kept their own language and culture. Often we are critical of people who come to Australia and stay in their own enclaves, "They should assimilate" we declare! But it must be very comforting, in a strange land, to keep what is familiar and to be able to communicate in your native tongue. And for many years, in the Barossa, everybody who settled there was from the same area. So it's only natural they kept their own language. This resulted in a dialect of German known as Barossa Deutsch. According to Wikipedia, it is classed as a Central German dialect, relatively close to Standard German. Colin Thiele (author of 'Sun on the Stubble', and whose grandparents were German immigrants), describes it as "that quaintly inbred and hybrid language evolved from a century of linguistic isolation".

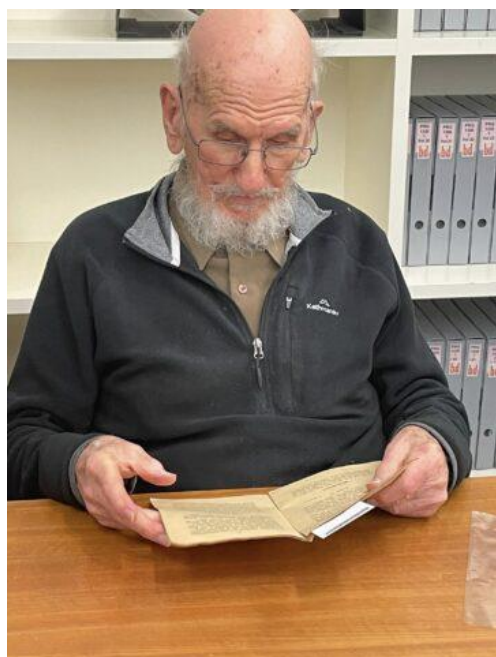


Linguistic professor Peter Mican gives the technical term, a *sprachinsel* – a little island in a dominant language group where a language is spoken and maintained over a long period of time. Barossa Deutsch lasted in the Barossa for over 100 years. Right up until the mid-late 20th century, for many in the Barossa it was the main language spoken at home, although the World Wars led to English being used in schools and in public places.

Dr Mickan goes on to explain how language evolves in a *sprachinsel*. For example, some of the grammar will change, and the language will incorporate some of the dominant language (and vice-versa – some words from Barossa Deutsch are in common use in South Australia). Also, as technologies develop, the language must find new names for it, and these are often particular to the new ‘bubble’ language.

Barossa Deutsch in Light Pass.

In the early days of German settlement, Barossa Deutsch was the main language used in the homes, churches and schools. Many settlers were content to speak only German. However, GJ Rechner, school-teacher and then pastor, recognized the advantages for immigrants of understanding English. “By 1853 he had organised evening classes in English on Monday, Thursday and Saturday evenings... and on Wednesday he went to Angaston to improve his own English”. This fluency allowed him to act as an agent for the German newspaper and as a scribe for the community in both German and English, for remittances home and any kind of official, legal or commercial dealings”. Whilst he – and the community – benefitted from him learning English, it seems not many of his fellow-immigrants took the opportunity to do so.



Pastor Tom Reuther reading an old German book from GJ Rechner's library.

Pastor Tom Reuther, who grew up in Light Pass, says his family moved there from Queensland in 1936, when his father became the pastor of Strait Gate church. He recalls it being a very different social and cultural environment, where everybody spoke German – at church, at social events, in the school, in the home. It was difficult at first for both him and his mother, who did not speak it. He remembers there being 4 church services a year in English (not at all well-attended) – all the rest were in German.

When it came to school, Tom recalls that many children began school having spoken only German at home. As he remembers it, the Lutheran school re-opened a year before he began school (all Lutheran schools having been closed in 1917, due to the war). He said at that time the entire programme was taught in German – later they taught all secular subjects in English and only Scripture Knowledge in German. (You can listen to Tom's fascinating recollections [here](#))

This bilingual approach is in line with the early days of schooling in the valley. Professor Peter Mickan writes “in the 19th Century German settlers in the Barossa Valley had the advantage of schooling in both German and English”. And Venetta Leib tells us “In 1856 a resolution was passed by Synod that English be taught in Lutheran schools. During the 1880's half a day was taught in English and the other half in German. By the 1900's all lessons were in English with approximately one hour per day of religion in the German language.” (Can anyone clarify this for us? Perhaps, on re-opening the schools in the early 1930's, there was a move back to teaching only in German for some years??).

The demise of Barossa Deutsch – effects of war and immigration.

The two world wars, and resulting anti-German sentiment, affected the use of Barossa Deutsch. While still spoken in many homes, in public places it was often banned, with schools being required to teach in English. Many people were understandably reluctant to use it in public. Although devotions in the home were often still in German, in public church services during WW2 many ministers decided to change over to English. Tom Reuther says his father, Pastor Bert Reuther at Light Pass, was one of the first to do so. Tom recalls being very amused, as many of the lay-readers struggled to pronounce the English words.

Up until post WW2, the Barossa had remained a stable German population. After the war, more immigrants from other parts of Europe came into the Barossa, and the area became more multi-lingual. This, coupled with people's reluctance to speak German in public, meant that Barossa Deutsch was used less and less. Today there are not many people left who can still speak it.



The Barossa German Language Association.

It would be a shame to lose this language which has been such a part of the Barossa's history. Language dies unless it is spoken, and with this in mind, the *Barossa German Language Association* meets once a month at the Langmeil church in Tanunda to speak German over *kaffee* and *kuchen*. They have



interesting speakers and run classes and events for adults and children to keep the language alive. They have also set up *The Barossa German Language Project*, which is concerned with the documentation, maintenance and revival of the German language in the Barossa Valley. You can read more at their website [here](#). If you're interested in learning more about Barossa Deutsch, or helping keep it alive, definitely get in touch with them.

3/ Listen to Pastor Tom Reuther, as he shares his memories of the use of Barossa Deutsch in the 30's in LightPass. Click [here](#).

As always, thank you for your interest, encouragement, and support.

Jo

(on behalf of the *Rechner Cottage Conservation Association* committee)



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