

JOHN W LINDT

by JOAN ANDERSON

The following account was written by Joan Anderson who is the Joan referred to in the account.

J.W. Lindt was born in 1844 and died in 1926. His parents lived in Frankfurt.

In 1862, aged 18, J.W. Lindt landed in Melbourne – one report said he had run away from Germany's Navy in New Guinea.

In 1863 he went to Grafton and associated himself with a Mr Wagner who had a photo business. Later, having learned photography from him, he bought the business out in 1868.

In 1868, he went in a Dutch sailing ship at a cost of 1/- per day. He went via Java to Holland to see his parents. Took 11 months off seeing Java and met his parents in Holland to avoid being conscripted in Germany. September 20th – he took an oath of allegiance to Queen Victoria. Later he was removed from Prussian Civil List.

Early 1870's, lived for 3 years in Grafton and photographed many Clarence aborigines and local scenes. He was devoted to music and was prominent in local musical circles.

He took infinite pains to secure best light for his subject and he returned many times to chosen subjects.

1877-1894 – was a fashionable photographer in Melbourne and had a studio at 7 Collins Street. (Lindt visited Healesville-Marysville area during this period.)

He married Eva Cousins who was a re-toucher of photographs. (2nd wife)

He paid a visit to New Guinea as photographer to Sir Percy Scratchley 1884.

Visited Europe 1880, Fiji 1890.

The early 1890's depression reduced his income as there were no subjects for portraits.

In 1895 he persuaded Sir John McIntyre and Mr Callanan, Surveyor General, to have land on the North East side of Black Spur opened for selection. He knew the area from photographic expeditions. About 20 other people and J.W. Lindt took up the 71 acres above the frost line and below the usual mist – land very steep but wonderful views and soil and two permanent springs. Most others forfeited selection.

No 1 Anderson. Joan's uncle had land immediately below J.W. Lindt. J.W. Lindt set about clearing enormous Mountain Ash and Messmate to make room for house and garden. He left 2 stumps for tree houses and built one 80 feet up a Mountain Ash same as he had seen in New Guinea in his travels. Wonderful views over house and garden and mountains.

He had 173 acres on opposite side of road to the Hermitage reserved for Public Purposes running steeply down Sassafras Gully so allowing unspoilt view of Dom Dom from Hermitage.

Guilfoyle who laid out the Botanical Gardens was a regular visitor and probably gave advice.

When J.W. Lindt showed Joan around his garden in 1924 or 1925, he had shaded the north side of the house with Grafton grape. He had grown it over a pergola which was a perfect dining place on hot days and evenings. Various Wisterias from China were flourishing. These and other plants were brought to him by a friend who was a Sea Captain. Included was a Polygonum from Szechwan which J.W. Lindt thought would be good stock feed and oust bracken. This was quite wrong and it was unpalatable to stock and had no effect on bracken and became a dreadful weed when the Hermitage was empty for long periods from 1929 to 1933.

Joan bought it from Mrs Lindt and most plants at all movable had been taken. Vandals had also broken all windows and light fittings and had gone through remaining negatives. Some of these negatives Mrs Lindt said J.W. Lindt wanted destroyed (perhaps they didn't reach his high standards!).

Others were destroyed by water. Joan used two to repair bathroom window. There were two family groups – one of which was Stanley Bruce outside family mansion in Toorak. Joan kept good photo of J.W. Lindt posed in gully by the house.

It showed Mrs Lindt's skirt. Quote - "She spoiled the picture so I cut her out".

Mrs Lindt was always in background except for her efficient running of Hermitage Guesthouse. She might not have existed. She fell down one day on the steep front steps and injured her spine. She was on her back for 3 months.

Guests at the Hermitage included many from overseas and before 1914 it was one of the showplaces of the Commonwealth – J.W. Lindt always had great dignity and set a great example of culture. He dominated the conversation at his table and was a complete autocrat.

During the 1914-18 war his clientele fell off and ridiculous rumours were broadcast and with staff difficulties Lindt's Hermitage never regained its former favour.

The fires in 1926 went all round the Hermitage but, as in 1939, it was saved. Lindt was ill at the time and died not long after aged 81. As he wished to be buried in his garden, his ashes were scattered there.

After J.W. Lindt L died his widow and her sister carried on. In 1927 they let the Hermitage to a Miss Scott who had the misfortune to have the kitchen burned just before Christmas. By the time the insurance replaced the kitchen Miss Scott had found other employment.

With the depression Mrs Lindt failed to find anyone interested for any length of time to keep the guesthouse running and in the gaps between tenants vandals broke in.

Returning from England Joan found garden and house in a sad way – one more tenant came but it was soon abandoned. By 1933 Mrs Lindt had probably received insufficient rent to cover rates. Joan offered to caretake with option of purchase but Mrs Lindt said it would have to be purchased and sold outright. At auction Joan was the only bidder and probably paid ten pounds more than required to pay what was willed by J.W. Lindt to a cousin living in Germany.

Added notes from Mary Kenealy:

Joan was a contemporary of Edna Walling, another earlier female horticulturalist. Joan design the garden at Mount Macedon once owned by Kevin O'Neill – famous for it's Greek Temple.

Joan later married Worrall Jones Snr. And moved to Yarck – another beautiful garden was established.

Dinah & Worrall Jones Jnr.(deceased) continued the garden – named 'Brilliant' in the Alexandra Open Garden Scheme.