

## **Ludwig Leichhardt**

Mark Shelton

The historical data on Ludwig Leichhardt is very extensive and it's very well documented, so I feel no need to list any of his vast accomplishments here. What I can offer instead is to show how he influenced his family, or at least my branch of it.

My grandfather, Keith Leichhardt, was incredibly proud of Ludwig and his exploits. He was constantly spreading the knowledge and history of Ludwig Leichhardt to all of the family members he was in contact with. In fact, so proud of Ludwig was he that he even ventured from America to Australia to follow some of Ludwig's footsteps. Keith instilled in all of us a deep awe at the history of Ludwig and his expeditions.

As for me, Ludwig was a huge inspiration and a gigantic factor in my inner belief that if you try hard enough with faith in yourself then your dreams can be achieved. It was like having historical proof within my own family that with persistence, dedication and belief in ones capabilities I could not only aspire to greatness myself but actually attain it as well.

I am a professional musician; guitarist, singer, composer, lyricist and founder of the Epic Metal band Manilla Road. I have been striving to make my own mark in the world with this band and my music for over 35 years now. After many ups and downs in my career I have finally, through perseverance, been fairly successful with my music, and for the last 13 years I've been touring the world and enjoying the life of a rock star. I feel I owe much of the inspiration for my dedication to my vision to two things. The first is a philosophy that I adopted from my time in the United States Marine Corps in the 1970s. That philosophy is to approach all things in life with an attitude to adapt, to improvise and to overcome. The other major inspiration would have to be the tenacity and exploits of Ludwig Leichhardt.

I'm not a geneticist so I can't tell you whether or not Ludwig's traits could have been passed on to me through the family lineage. But I can tell you that I have seen many parallels between Ludwig and myself. He was a semi-educated and semi-self-taught botanist, as I am also a partially educated and most assuredly self-taught musician, lyricist and composer. He and I both attended schools to learn our trade but most of the really important career information both of us acquired was a result of personal experience and work in the field. Ludwig was tenacious and stubborn, he had to be in order to mount and endure the hardships of his expeditions. I too have ploughed through my career with the same type of tenacity and stubbornness, though I'm

sure that his exploits were more adventurous, seeing that he was heading off into strange lands that European humans had not set foot in. Another trait that I might have picked up from Ludwig was that he approached the unknown without fear but with curiosity. Even knowing that there was imminent danger in his chosen course in life, he still pursued a path of enlightenment. I even have somewhat of a facial resemblance to Ludwig.

So as you might see, I've felt a deep connection to Ludwig because of family pride in his achievements, family history lessons from my grandfather Keith and the fact that he is a revered historical figure that accomplished many of his life's dreams in the face of hardship and danger. So enamoured with Ludwig am I that I wrote the title track on my most recent release with Manilla Road in dedication to him. The song and the album are called "Mysterium". Of course I put liner notes on the release explaining my connection to Ludwig. When it comes to song writing this sort of topic is actually right up my alley, because most of the songs I create are based in history, legend, folklore, mythology, fantasy and adventure. Heroic exploits are a typical topic that I touch on in my lyrics, and so this particular tale of adventure fits perfectly well into the categories that I normally write about. I also love a good mystery and the fact that nobody really knows for sure what happened to Ludwig's famous lost patrol of 1847/1848 makes for a fantastic tale of heroics and mystery. The album was released in February of 2013, and "Mysterium" is one of the most popular songs on the project, even though it is of epic length and clocks in at eleven plus minutes. I have chosen to share the lyrics of the song with you here:

For the sea of dreams he sailed  
As the fair winds turned to gales  
Come to search the lands outback  
Seeking knowledge that we lacked

The sea of dreams

Ludwig Liechhardt was his name  
Explorer destined for fame  
He would find his quest to be  
Across the sea of dreams

The sea of dreams

With compass and journal  
He set out cross the land  
To seek Australia's truth  
For science and for man

From east to northern coast  
He charted lands unseen  
Received a hero's name  
For all his honored deeds  
Then came the final quest  
To trek from coast to coast  
It proved to be his last  
And turned him to a ghost

Into the Outback's unknown  
Venturing from coast to coast  
His expedition lost  
Vanished with no trace

Except for L's carved in trees  
A burnt gun sling near Sturt Creek  
Bearing his name plate stamped  
Eighteen forty eight

We may never really know  
What fate befell our heroes'?  
Australia's lost patrol  
Still a mystery

For science and adventure  
His work a valued treasure  
Into the great unknown  
His life's destiny  
Following his dreams  
Into history

Thank the Gods for men like Ludwig Leichhardt, for without their courage and vision we might still be living in the dark ages and believing that the earth was flat.

Mark Shelton was born December 03, 1957 in Wichita, Kansas USA. He is a distant great nephew of Ludwig Leichhardt. Mark is a professional recording musician as well as composer, author, recording producer / engineer, lyricist and touring musician with his primary band of forty years Manilla Road. He has appeared on more than twenty albums since 1980 and has

composed over 150 published songs including the song *Mysterium* which he wrote in honor of Ludwig Leichhardt.