

Elements

OF WESTGARTHTOWN

Water

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Water at Westgarthtown

Water was essential to living and farming at Westgarthtown. The creek that ran through the settlement proved unreliable as the population along it increased and became known as Dry Creek. This made wells, tanks, dams, and a nearby spring, central to the daily life of settlers.



Ziebell's dam 1940.
Photo: Augusta Borrack
(née Ziebell).

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STOP PRESS

Ziebell's Farmhouse gains Museum Accreditation

Museums Australia (Victoria) has awarded the Friends of Westgarthtown Accreditation for Ziebell's Farmhouse museum.

The announcement made on 26 April makes Ziebell's Farmhouse the first and only Accredited museum in the City of Whittlesea.

To become Accredited the committee has spent the past three years developing procedures, policies and practices to meet recognised museum standards.

A professional panel of museum experts made a final assessment and compiled a positive report on the museum's operations. The Friends of Westgarthtown have worked hard to meet set criteria from the National Standards for Australian Museums

and Galleries and joins the 74 other collections Accredited in Victoria.

The Accreditation panel were particularly impressed with the skill level, commitment and achievements of the current committee and volunteers. The panel commended the museum on the high level of presentation in the exhibition spaces and the extensive work done in the heritage garden.

Caroline Wall, Co-Manager, Museum Accreditation Program, Museums Australia (Victoria), said, "We are delighted to recognise the hard work and commitment shown by the team at Friends of Westgarthtown. Caring for our shared heritage is an important task and by becoming Accredited Friends of Westgarthtown has proven to be a leading heritage site in Victoria."



Joan Pettit on horse with cemetery in background

The Pettit Family

The Pettit family farmed the old Maltzahn/Kreitling property at Westgarthtown from 1931-48. During that time, son Stan Pettit married neighbour Bertha Ziebell and daughter Joan Pettit married Maurice Dunn, my mother's brother. Mrs Ruby Pettit also took some very interesting photographs of life on and around the farm, some of which are included here

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

William Henry (Bill) Pettit purchased the 48 acre former Maltzahn/Kreitling farm in 1931 from Norman Underwood. The Kreitling family had owned it until 1919 when they sold it to John Johnson who briefly operated it under the name 'San

Remo Farm'. Underwood purchased it from Johnson in 1921 and worked it himself or leased it to tenant farmers such as Reg Smethurst and James Rawson.

Bill Pettit, along with wife Ruby and two children from his first marriage, Stan (1915) and Joan (1922), moved to Westgarthtown

from Auburn. Bill's first wife, Gladys (née Bedford), who he married at Hawthorn on 10 April 1912, died on 7 September 1922 and is buried at Box Hill. Joan was only six months old when her mother died. Bill and Ruby married at East Kew on 17 October 1925. Bill Pettit was an expert horseman and teamster and had been a carrier at Auburn, but as motor trucks were gradually taking over, he may have decided he needed to change occupations.

The Pettit family dairy farmed at Westgarthtown for 17 years. Stan Pettit's daughter, Pauline Johnston, recalls her father telling her how while milking the cows, he admired Bertha Ziebell as she hurried around the cemetery corner each morning to catch the train to the city. For many years Bertha was employed in the fashion department at Georges, designing and making frocks and evening gowns for Melbourne's society ladies, sometimes even the Governor's wife.

Stan Pettit married Bertha Clarice Ziebell at Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne on 25 January 1947 and in 1949 moved to 'Blossom Park' in Plenty Road, Bundoora where Stan worked as a farm manager. They had one daughter, Pauline, born in 1948.



Bill and Stan Pettit having 'smoko' in the paddock

In retirement they lived at Epping. Stan died in 2001 and Bertha in 2004 and their ashes now lie in the Westgarthtown Cemetery.

Joan Pettit, a keen horsewoman, married Maurice Dunn at All Saints Anglican Church, Preston on 28 August 1948. Joan and Maurice lived for many years in Cooper Street, Epping. They had two children, Hazel (1951) and Reg (1953). Maurice died in 1984 and



Clockwise from main: Maurice Dunn at Wuchatsch's Farm; Pettit house c. 1934; bringing in the harvest; Bill Pettit with cemetery and Ziebell's Farmhouse in background.

Joan in 2010. Their ashes now lie on the site of their former home at Epping.

My mother, Muriel Wuchatsch, always spoke highly of Mrs Pettit, who took most of the photographs my family holds from the 1930s and 1940s. Mrs Pettit also crocheted woollen baby clothes for my sisters when they were born.

In 1948 Bill and Ruby Pettit gave up dairy farming and retired

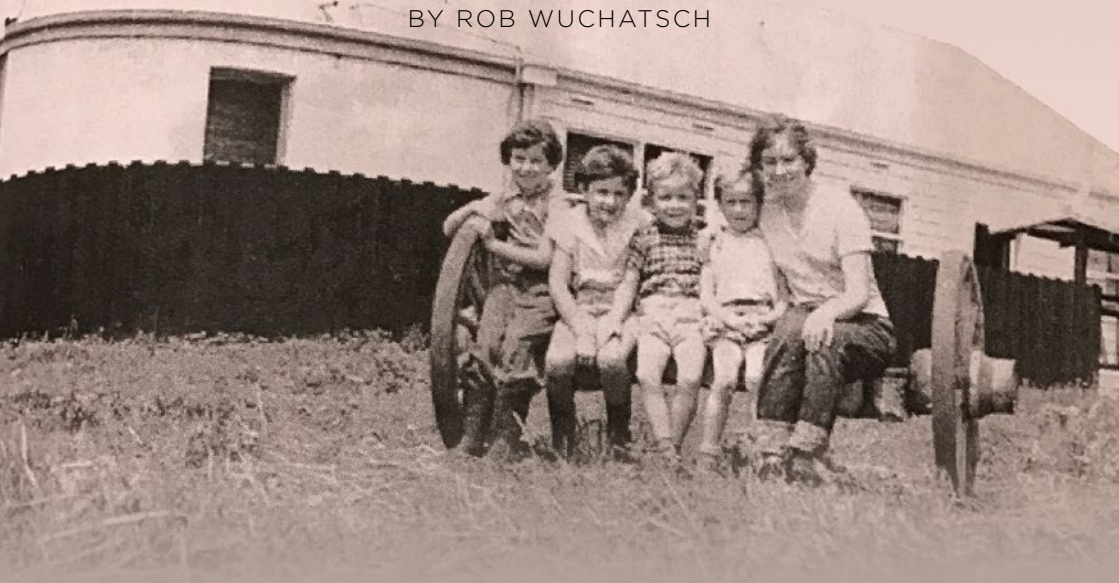


to Queen Street, Regent, swapping homes with the Usher family. In 1949, the Ushers left Westgarthtown and the farm was purchased by John Hughes, who farmed there until 1955, when he sold it to the Wennagel family, which continued dairying until the farm was sold for residential subdivision in 1966.

Ruby died in 1958 and Bill in 1966 and their ashes lie at Fawkner.

The Wennagel Family

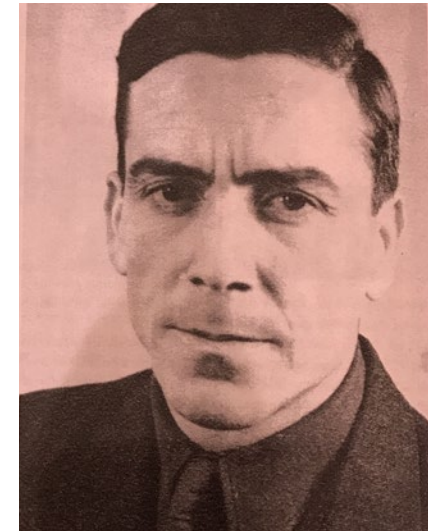
BY ROB WUCHATSCH



In 1955, seven years after the Pettit family sold the former Maltzahn/Kreitling farm, the Wennagel family purchased it and carried on dairying there until 1966. Much of the following information comes from Irene Blaich's book *The Wennagel Story: The Fate of the Wennagel Families of Master Builders from the Black Forest, Germany, the Templer Settlements of the Holy land and onto Australia from 1699–2007*, published in 2007.

Herbert Kurt Wennagel and his family arrived in Melbourne aboard the *Ugolino Vivaldi* on 23 November 1950. Herbert had been born at the German Settlement at Haifa, Palestine on 29 February 1912, the son of Josef Martin Wennagel, a master builder, whose parents had migrated there from Dornstetten in Württemberg, Germany in 1870. In Germany, the Wennagels had been members of the Friends of Jerusalem, which became the German Temple Society in 1861. The aim of the Templers was to establish a spiritual temple for God's Kingdom on earth. They chose the Holy Land as the best place to establish communities where members could become living building blocks for the temple, leading exemplary lives according to Christian teachings.

During the closing stages of the First World War the Wennagel family was interned in Egypt by the British. After the war Herbert finished his schooling and joined the Temple Bank in Jaffa. He later moved to the trading firm of Paul Aberle, where he met his first wife Hertha, who he married in Jerusalem in 1938. The following year, he travelled to Germany and when war broke out, he was pressed into the war effort. After working for a company which manufactured aircraft parts, he joined the German



Above: Herbert Wennagel. Left: Five Wennagel children at their farm, 1960

army and fought on the Russian front. In 1945, he was caught in Soviet shrapnel fire and received critical head wounds, but survived.

At Stuttgart in 1946, he married Hedwig Aberle, a cousin of his first wife who died in 1943. Herbert had a daughter Krista (1940) by his first marriage and then four more children — Elisabeth (1949), Anne (1951), Kay (1954) and Paul (1955) — the last three of whom were born in Melbourne. Herbert's older brother Hugo and his family had previously arrived in 1941 as German internees and had been held at Tatura for five years. Other Wennagel family members followed during the late 1940s.

Herbert and his family lived at Kew and he worked at a saw

mill at Box Hill until 1955 when they purchased the farm at Westgarthtown. They were joined by his mother Mamäle and sister-in-law Lisa Aberle who assisted with the running of the farm. Mamäle prepared the meals and cared for the children while the others looked after and milked the cows, tended the vegetable garden and did other necessary jobs. Each family member had allotted tasks.

Wennagels and it was my job each night for ten years, except when away on holidays, to walk there and collect a billy of milk. When my father and I robbed our bees each year, usually in February, we sold them honey.

Herbert made substantial improvements to the farm at Westgarthtown, renovating and extending the house, including having additional bedrooms built

In 1959, Herbert's brother Hugo Wennagel and his Dutch wife Hanno bought the old Wuchatsch farm in O'Herns Road, Epping. Their daughter Trudi also attended Merrilands High School. Hugo and Hanno Wennagel and his sister Olga and her husband Hermann Hoersch dairy farmed at Epping until 1969 when they sold it. While at Epping Hugo found an old Wuchatsch family bible in the attic which he

land, the remaining 47 acres having been sold by the Wennagels for residential subdivision. Annie died in 1985 and Henry in 1988. Soon after, the house was purchased by the Ministry of Housing, which planned to demolish it. A ten-year community campaign to save the house, by then known as Maltzahn's Farmhouse, was successful and it was restored to its original condition externally in 2001/02.



Wennagel's farm looking south-west, 1956; Wennagel's farm looking north from cemetery, c. 1964; Maltzahn's Farmhouse, 1983.

The younger children attended Thomastown Primary School and later Merrilands High School until the family moved to Mooroolbark in 1967.

As Wennagel's farm was only 48 acres, Herbert leased most of my father Norman Wuchatsch's adjoining 92 acres for grazing and haymaking purposes. Our family purchased our milk from the

upstairs which were lit by a row of windows on each side. He also erected a large equipment shed and installed a concrete pit and pump to provide liquid manure which he spread on the paddocks. In 1966, he paid to have electricity brought across the creek from Mount View Road to his farm, which also enabled our farmhouse further north to be connected.

kindly passed to my father and we still have it.

Herbert Wennagel died at Bayswater on 19 June 1993 aged 81 and his wife Hedwig on 21 January 2008 aged 93. Both were cremated at Springvale.

In 1967 Henry and Annie Ziebell purchased the old but renovated house from the Wennagel family. It then stood on about an acre of

For further details regarding the farm's previous owners, see Friends of Westgarthtown News Vol. 10, No. 2 of November 2006 regarding Ernst Heyne; Vol. 7, No. 1 of March 2003 regarding the Maltzahn family; Vol. 18, No. 2 of October 2014 regarding the Kreitling family; and Vol. 6, No. 1 of March 2002 regarding restoration of Maltzahn's Farmhouse. All newsletters available at www.westgarthtown.org.au/archives

Ziebell's and Grassman's Gardens 1851

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

The *Melbourne Daily News* of 8 January 1851 carried the following very interesting report about a visit to Westgarthtown. It noted the considerable progress made since the Germans settled there in March 1850, less than a year before, including Christian Ziebell's garden and his 'high and substantial stone wall.'

THE GERMAN IMMIGRANTS

— Parties desiring a delightful excursion about ten miles from town, will be amply repaid by a visit to the German settlement at the Dry Creek...The settlement comprises a section of six hundred and forty acres, upon which ten domiciles have been erected. One of the residents Mr Ziebell has upwards of a hundred acres surrounded by

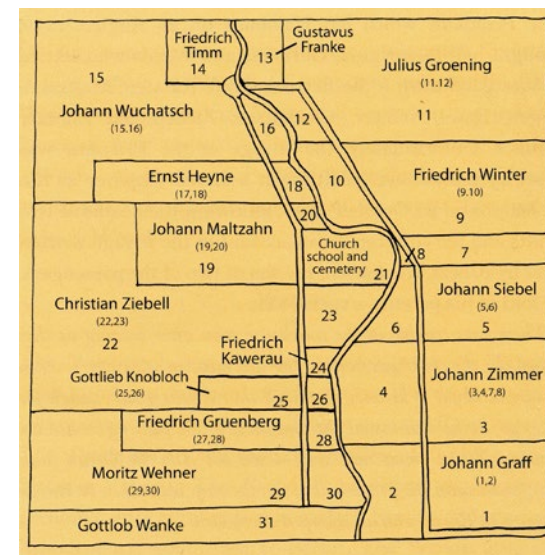
a high and substantial stone wall. A portion he has devoted to a garden, which is laid out in such a manner as to stamp the occupant as a man of considerable taste in such matters, whilst the very considerable portion of the land which has been brought into a state of cultivation, equally indicates considerable industry. The most surprising instance however of what may be accomplished single handed by diligence, is to be found in the allotment of Mr Grassman, who has really got a beautiful garden well stocked with vegetables and fruits of every description. The other settlers have evidently not been idle, and have had considerable difficulties to overcome, the land being on the whole stony, and the settlement founded only about ten months. It is gratifying to observe

that a site has been reserved for the erection of a schoolhouse and a church.

A similar but shorter report also appeared in the *Argus* on the same day.

On 9 January 1851 the *Melbourne Daily News* further reported:

THE GERMAN UNION — At a meeting of this body held at the Bull and Mouth Hotel, on Monday 6th January, Mr Markert in the chair, the sub-committee appointed to inquire into the agricultural condition of this colony reported about the meeting held at the German Settlement of 640 acres on the Dry Creek. Twenty-nine Germans, the most part settlers on the Dry Creek, some farmers from Plauen (river Plenty, Mr Miller's place) and a few visitors from Melbourne were present. For want of room the meeting was held on the ground in the open air and the assembly sheltered from the parching rays of the sun by Mr Ziebell's kindness who had provided a tent-cloth. The first object of the conference was the Victoria Industrial Society, and the list of prizes, with the new Geelong additions translated into German having been read, the settlers mentioned that their short sojourn in this colony (only ten months) prevented them from taking so



Original settlement plan showing the vast perimeter Christian Ziebell fenced with a stone wall in just ten months; Ziebell's Farmhouse garden today.

active part in the proceedings of this influential Society as they wished; that for preparing cheese to be exhibited, it was now too late, but that some of them intended to send in butter for the ensuing exhibition...This rural meeting opened at half-past three o'clock pm and broke up at 6 o'clock.

Timm v Timm

In 1873 widow Maria Timm, a foundation Westgarthtown settler, successfully sought an injunction to prevent her son Frederick Timm from felling trees and destroying timber fences on her 240 acre farm on the east side of Bindt's Road, Wollert. Was she one of the Plenty Valley's first environmentalists, or was she just protecting her financial interests?

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

IN her affidavit dated 18 February 1873, she stated:

I Maria Timm, of the Parish of Morang, County of Bourke in the Colony of Victoria, the above named Plaintiff make oath and say:

1. That the Defendant Frederick Timm has already wrongfully

felled and sold for firewood at least two hundred trees growing on my land part of Section Sixteen in the Parish of Morang and County of Bourke occupied by him as my tenant taking the finest trees on the land and leaving the least valuable standing.

2. That the said Defendant has already destroyed about Sixty chains of brush fences and sold and removed or allowed to be removed for firewood the best pieces of wood of which such fences were composed.
3. That I have repeatedly remonstrated with the Defendant and requested him to desist from ruining the said land as aforesaid, but that the Defendant still continues to devastate the said land by cutting down and removing trees and fences.

On 19 February 1873 the Victorian Supreme Court made an order to restrain Frederick Timm from destroying the timber and fences on Maria's Wollert farm.

This was not the first time Frederick Timm had been involved in legal action. Public Record Office Victoria files show that in 1863, Frederick and his father Frederick Sr. had been involved in a dispute over £851 monies owing and in 1864, John Wese (Weser?) sued him for £500 damages for slander. No further details of these cases are known.

For further details about the Timm family see Friends of Westgarthtown News, Vol. 13, No. 2 of December 2009.

Thomastown Lutheran Church services

SERVICES are held on the second and fourth Sunday of the month at 2.30 pm at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor.

For further details, contact Irma Hatty on 03 9338 9064 or see the Calvary Lutheran Church website at www.calvarychurch.org.au

Visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse

ZIEBELL'S Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month, 1–4 pm. For enquiries, call 03 9464 1805 or enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au

Tours can be organised for groups of ten or more people. For information and bookings contact John Fry on 03 9464 5062 or johnsdfry@gmail.com

Johann Graff's 1849 Farewell Note

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

Weldon Mersiovsky of the Texas Wendish Heritage Society has advised that digitised copies of the Wendish newspaper *Tydzenske Nowiny* from 1847–53 will soon be available online. Digitised copies of Wendish newspapers and journals currently available can be viewed at serbske-institut.de then click on 'library & archive' then 'journals'.

Wendish newspapers are valuable sources of information. In the issue of 4 August 1849 there is a very interesting farewell notice inserted by Jan Grofa (Johann Graff) on the eve of his emigration to Australia. It reads as follows:

Owing to all kinds of restraints and being very busy with the distant journey to Australia I was unable to say goodnight to all my brothers and sisters or to my other friends and acquaintances. So I call to you from here my hearty

best wishes and thank you for all the brotherly, sisterly and otherwise Wendish friendship and love.

The Lord God be with you and with us — and with that I leave the Wendish land, which even in foreign parts will always remain dear to me.

Jan Grofe, formerly of Preske.

Johann Graff, his wife Hanna (née Hobrack) and five children — Carl, Magdalena, Maria, Johanna and Johann — travelled to Australia aboard the *Pribislaw*. They arrived in Melbourne on 2 February 1850 and settled at Westgarthtown the following month. Hanna died in 1887 aged 83 and Johann in 1888 aged 86.

My thanks to Weldon Mersiovsky for advising me the *Tydzenske Nowiny* is now available online and Dr Gerald Stone of Oxford for translating Johann Graff's notice.

Farewell to Prue McColl

BY GILLIAN BORRACK



Gillian Borrack (left) and Prue McColl with Friends in Ziebell's Farmhouse garden

ON Monday 18 December 2017 the Ziebell's Farmhouse garden team had a morning tea to farewell Prue after 9 years of dedication to Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden. The Friends of Westgarthtown first met Prue in 2008 when we were invited to participate in Heritage Victoria's Hands on Heritage and Community Stewardship Project.

As a horticultural student Prue knew of the stone walls at Ziebell's Farmhouse. Her class had built a drystone wall in the garden they designed and erected for the Melbourne International

Flower Garden Show. Prue subsequently volunteered for Conservation Volunteers Australia. That took Prue to many beautiful heritage gardens both public and private. When Ziebell's Farmhouse was one of the month's gardens she accepted the opportunity to see the stone walls. Erin Schroeder, who was managing the Hands-on Heritage Program at Ziebell's Farmhouse, asked if Prue would like to continue to volunteer at Ziebell's Farmhouse. She stayed for nine years, hardly missing a gardening day. We miss her assistance with everything in the garden, especially documenting the plant lists and updating the lists as things change over time. Her cheery presence and wonderful homemade contributions to our morning teas are also missed, as is the washing up! We all wish Prue well in her new volunteering role nearer her home in Kew and look forward to seeing her from time to time.

Curios from yesteryear

On Sunday 19 November 2017 the Friends of Westgarthtown presented 'Curios from yesteryear' at Ziebell's Farmhouse as their 2017 Cultural Heritage Program Event.

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

The day was forecast to be hot and windy, and cooking scones in the wood fire stove was a challenge. We had predicted that it would be difficult to produce enough scones to cater for large numbers in the time-frame, so we started preparation much earlier. Apart from a small problem with getting the required heat into the oven, Sue Gravenall, Doretta Belot and Gillian Borrack managed a continuous provision of free scones, jam and cream to hungry visitors throughout the

afternoon. They proved to be very popular, as was the German sausage sizzle at the entrance manned by Léon, Marcel and Milly Borrack. I imagine that many people would not have been very hungry at their evening meal that night.

Meanwhile guides were available to explain tools used by the Ziebell family from the 1850s through to approximately the 1950s. Paul Schultz presented farm tools in the cart shed, while John Fry and Doretta provided explanations for the domestic tools and utensils used



Milly Borrack, Léon Borrack and Marcel Borrack worked the sausage sizzle

in the kitchen and pantry. Books and seeds were sold and although the attendance was noticeably less than past CHP events, we suspect some people were put off by the weather forecast, although it did not turn out to be as hot and windy as forecast. However, our members worked very hard to make the day informative and entertaining.

Open Garden 2018

OUR 2018 CHP event will again be in November, when we open the farmhouse and gardens as part of Open Gardens Victoria on Saturday 17 November and Sunday 18 November.

If you are interested in attending, helping or passing it on to friends and families — the OGV website will contain full details when they

post their Spring listing. We will also email members where we have email addresses.

The Friends of Westgarthtown and the City of Whittlesea have been working together to improve the entrance to the farmhouse from the Westgarthtown Reserve as well as for all the walkers and local community who use the granitic footpath through the Reserve. There are many new plantings adjacent to the house in the agave bed, plus indigenous plants scattered through the floater rocks on both sides of the path nearest to Gardenia Road. The Duck Pond and peppercorn trees have carefully placed rock seating for visitors who like to sit outdoors, enjoy the views and watch the world go by.

*Open Gardens Victoria website:
www.opengardensvictoria.org.au*

Descendants' Day 2018

BY DAVID ADAMS

This year's annual Westgarthtown Descendants' Day was held on Sunday 4 March 2018 at Ziebell's Farmhouse. Once again we were treated to a lovely warm day which allowed everyone to gather on the lawn to enjoy a picnic lunch and socialise.

There was a good attendance of regulars with some new faces. Several Siebel family descendants attended including one from Western Australia.

The gathering opened with a welcome to all from the Descendants' Day committee, followed by an update from John Fry, President of the Friends of Westgarthtown, regarding progress with the Ziebell's Farmhouse museum accreditation.

The tradition of acknowledging the youngest and oldest descendant present on the day continued. This year's youngest descendant was Sebastian Ross (1 year old — née Adams) and the oldest descendant

was Stanley Ziebell. Both took out the honours last year as well.

As usual the Descendants' Day committee convened earlier in the day to discuss the day's format and consider the best means of keeping everyone up to date and informed about Descendants Day.

It was decided that as not everyone had email, text messages by phone would be the next best thing. We would also use the Annual Guest Book as a register of everyone's details.

As part of a rotation of committee members, Megan Belot and Rebekah Vagg will carry the mantle as joint convenors for the next couple of years. We thank them for their input and look forward to hearing



Sebastian Ross with his prize as the youngest descendant present.

from them about Descendants' Day 2019 over the course of time.

The day concluded with everyone having enjoyed a relaxing time catching up with family and friends.

Don't forget next year's Descendants' Day date — Sunday 3 March 2019. Mark it in your diary now. Hope to see you then.



Thomastown & Epping 1930s-1950s

Few people today would recall the practical or social correlation, and indeed the landscape, as they were between Thomastown and Epping up until the 1950s.

BY JOHN BORRACK

Of Thomastown and Westgarthtown much has been written, but the significance of its link to Epping via the lonely northern Epping Road or the single-track railway line to Whittlesea has aroused little curiosity.

During my childhood that small rather ramshackle town of Epping presented an image from a Russell Drysdale painting or a copy of an old cowboy town in a Hollywood western. However, it supplied many of the necessities of life. The baker I recall was Mr Thomas O'Toole and the adjacent butcher, Mr Bell who delivered a few times weekly to Thomastown. On Epping road, interspersed between now Robert Street and Cooper Street were the Nebel and Callaghan farms. Callaghan's had become a thistle wasteland, and adjoined an

immense quarrying industry, later a rubbish tip and now Pacific Epping shopping centre.

The Epping General Store was run by a kindly Mr Dea. He stocked most farming necessities including bags of bran and pollard for the cows. On visits from Westgarthtown as a passenger in my grandfather's (Alfred Ziebell) dray, I was often the lucky recipient of a penny striped peppermint stick. Mr Shallard stocked fruit, vegetables and confectionery in his Epping shop.

Les Smith who had married one of my mother's younger sisters, Linda Ziebell, operated his motor garage on the northern corner of Cooper Street, for so long simply a dusty stony track to the western plains. His skills were in constant demand by the increasing number of motorised vehicle owners between Thomastown and a distant



Whittlesea. Reg Smith, his relative, was another Epping engineering wizard who sunk bores and supplied windmills to district farmers. Like Les Smith, his services were in constant demand.

To the east of the present Epping railway station, on a low sunny hillside, was the property of Mrs Zimmer of German descent. She later remarried and was well known in the district as the sometimes formidable but always kind Mrs Slater. The property ran north east to the old railway crossing at McDonalds Road, South Morang now the entrance to the Civic Centre. It abounded in a forest of ancient specimens of red gums of which some remnants can be seen today around the Westfield Shopping Complex. Here my Uncle Henry Ziebell, married to Annie Zimmer, would collect wood in his

horse drawn wagon, or later in his Bedford and Chevrolet motor trucks. What a bonanza those occasions were when we journeyed there with him for a picnic lunch to watch the sawing and felling of a forest giant — usually a dead or dying one! He skilfully employed dynamite from which we would recoil with trepidation and warnings to take shelter before the big bang when the air became suffused in a pall of blue smoke. The thudding crash of the trunk and the disintegration of a hundred branches followed.

What this landscape offered was a contrast to the semi bare plains between Thomastown and Epping or further to the bald Wollert hills. Such are memories; the better ones, devoid sometimes of a crass sentimentality, can always bring consolation to one's life.

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