

The Maltzahn Family

BY PAULINE ATKINS AND HEATHER PURDY

Johann Heinrich Daniel Maltzahn (born 13 May 1814) and Sophia Magdalena Frederike Schlunz (14 February 1821) were married on 22 August 1849, the day before they embarked on the Pribislaw from Hamburg, bound for Port Phillip, Australia. Johann was from Heucken Dorf and Sophia from Malken Dorf, villages in Mecklenburg, a province in eastern Germany.

The Pribislaw's voyage was evidently not a pleasant one. The captain seemed to care little for his passengers' welfare, and the food was of sub-standard quality. The ship sailed via Rio de Janeiro, arriving there on 27 October 1849. The ship was inspected, and the food was found to be inedible. New provisions had to be purchased. A petition signed by most of the passengers on the Pribislaw (including Johann) was sent back to Hamburg. Eventually, the ship sailed again for Australia on 2 December 1849 and finally arrived in Melbourne on 2 February 1850.

Johann and Sophia Maltzahn were one of sixteen original families to settle at Westgarthtown. Although they moved there in March 1850, the land could not be legally transferred to them until May/June 1851, following Johann's naturalisation on 20 March 1851. Soon after they built a bluestone house with walls about 60 cm. thick in what is now Gardenia Road, Lalor. The house was recently restored by the Victorian Government and is currently being used to house people with learning difficulties.

Although they lived in this house for only a few years it is still referred to as Maltzahn's Farmhouse. The Maltzahn family retained ownership of it until about 1900, but by 1860 Johann and Sophia had moved about three kilometres south-west, to another farm on the Merri Creek.

Westgarthtown has been known by many names over



Johann Christian and Sophia Maltzahn

the years. One of them was Neu Mecklenburg or just Mecklenburg. Here is the description from the Victorian Balliere's Gazetteer of both 1865 and 1878.

Mecklenburg (Co. Bourke) is a German Settlement, situated in the electoral district of E. Bourke, and in the parish of Keelbundora, about 1 mile N.E. of the nearest post town, Thomastown, and 2_ miles S.W. of Epping. There is no communication except by dray track. It contains about 30 dwellings and a population of 150 souls. Basaltic Lava.

Johann and Sophia had five children:

Ludwig (Louis) – born 6 June 1852

Carl (Charles) – born 27 December 1853

Bertha – born 28 February 1856

Heinrich (Henry) – born 28 September 1857

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The Maltzahn Family

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Alwina – born 28 November 1860

Alwina died at the age of 10 years.

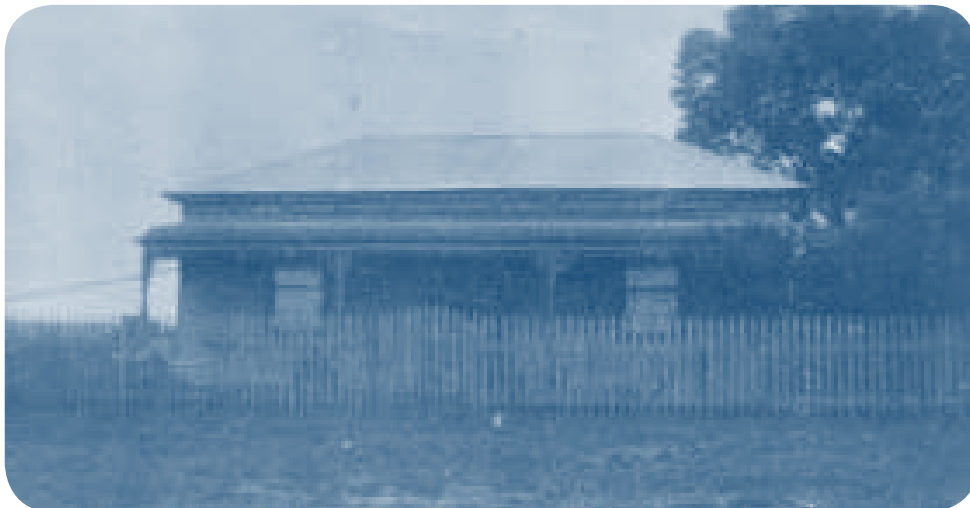
Charles married Anna Elizabeth Schultz (daughter of Gottlieb Ernst Schultz and Henrietta Siebel, who had come to Australia with their parents, and married some years later). Charles and Elizabeth's wedding was on 11 October 1893. They were married in a double wedding ceremony with Elizabeth's sister Annie and Otto Muller. Elizabeth wore a brown silk dress with white lace trimming and Annie a maroon one. Their marriage certificates record they were married at the Lutheran Church in East Melbourne, but I have recently been told that they were actually married at the Westgarthtown Church. This event caused a great deal of excitement in the community, particularly as they apparently had rather splendid carriages drawn by white horses.

Charles and Elizabeth had four daughters – Henrietta, Florence (who married her mother's cousin Albert Siebel – founder of Pura Dairies), Minnie (married Herbert Morris) and Elsie (married Leslie Miller). Elsie is the mother of Pauline Atkins and grandmother of Heather Purdy.

Henry (the fourth child of Johann and Sophia) married Elizabeth McPherson on 27 March 1900 at the Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. Henry had two sons – Alan and Louis (or maybe Ludwig), and they each had a son and two daughters. There are boys in the next two generations, so the name lives on.

Both Charles and Henry bought land in Somerton/Campbellfield and farmed there. Charles' farm was about where the Ford factory now stands, but the land went

The Maltzahn House at Somerton



west from Sydney Road and crossed both the railway lines (local and Sydney lines). The farmhouse was between the two railway lines. Charles sold his farm in about 1914 after he had turned 60 and retired to Coburg. The farmhouse at Somerton burned down some time after Charles sold it. The house in Coburg stood at 200 Nicholson Street, near Harding Street. The land behind the house was used for a market garden, let first to Chinese gardeners, then later to Italians. Charles' daughters owned the market garden until the late 1940's. Charles died at Nicholson Street in 1919 as a result of the flu epidemic.

Ludwig (or Louis as he was known) and Bertha Maltzahn remained single. While Bertha's occupation is quoted as 'home duties' on the electoral rolls of her time, she was a farmer like her brother. After their parents' deaths they lived on a farm in Spring Street, Thomastown beside the Edgar's Creek. It was Bertha did not like girls – they were weak and not much use (It's fortunate she did not know that grand niece No. 3 was on the way when she died – that of course was me – Pauline). The Northcote Leader of March 1935 reported on her funeral. Five of the eight pall bearers were quoted as Messrs Miller, Morris and Siebel (the husbands of her nieces) and A. and L. Maltzahn, her nephews.

Henry's farm was near Scots' Church Campbellfield. This farm was sold about 1953. In the 1950's a drive-in theatre was built on part of what had formerly been his land.

Two of Johann Maltzahn's brothers, along with their wives, also migrated to Australia from Mecklenburg in 1852. They arrived together in Sydney on the Caesar Godeffroy on 11 December 1852 and left for Melbourne aboard the Wild Irish Girl on 14 December 1852. They were Ludwig and Christian. Christian had married Sophia Maltzahn's sister, Maria. Christian died at Westgarthtown

in 1869 and is buried in the Maltzahn plot, but the exact location of his grave is unknown, due to records for the cemetery having been lost. Ludwig went back to Germany during the 1860s and did not return to Australia.

An interesting event happened in our family in 1979. My husband Bob, (whom I did not meet until 1953) helped his aunt sell the house which had also been occupied and owned by her parents in Shamrock Street, Brunswick. After the sale, Bob went to the solicitors to complete the transaction. The

solicitor happened to mention that the original owner of the property was Charles Maltzahn – how's that for a coincidence! When Charles married in 1893, he sold the property to his father and following his death, it was owned by Bertha and Ludwig (Charles' siblings) until well into the 20th century. By checking old rate books, we found that Charles must have had the house built in Shamrock Street shortly after he bought the land there in 1888. We believe he also lived there, as he is listed in a post office directory of the time.

Even though Charles and Elizabeth's four daughters lived in Melbourne after 1914, they remained country girls at heart. As far as cooking, sewing and knitting were concerned, every last skerrick was used to make all sorts of other items. My Auntie Florrie (who we called Fluff) made kuchen (plain cake with a spicy crumble topping) every week, and always had a coffee pot on the one fire stove. Having a coffee pot was most unusual in Australia in the 1940's. Florrie kept chooks (extremely well looked after) and also had a wonderful vegetable garden and fruit trees.

Charles and Elizabeth's girls attended school at Campbellfield. They had to walk three miles across paddocks. In the winter their shoes became so wet that they had to change them half way to school at the house of a friend. This friend would dry them near the fire so they could be worn the rest of the trip in comfort. Etta, Florrie, Minnie and Elsie were never taught to speak German, the language of their grandparents, but their parents had. Family lore tells us that Charles and Elizabeth spoke German in front of the girls when they did not want them to know what they were talking about.

My mother Elsie was only eleven years old when they left Somerton and was less of a country girl than her two eldest sisters. One example of this was her asking her mother to joint a rabbit for her! However, my mother used to talk of riding her bike from Somerton over to her Auntie Bertha's in Spring Street, Thomastown. A long way bearing in mind Elsie was just eleven when they left Somerton!

Friends of Westgarthtown & City of Whittlesea Heritage Program 2003

Heritage Walking Tour and Ziebell Open House

Date: Sunday 4 May 2003
Time: 2.00pm – 4.00pm (tour)
 1.00pm – 4.30pm (open house)
Assembly: Ziebell's Farmhouse
 100 Gardenia Rd, Thomastown
 (Melway Ref: 8G5)

This walking tour will be conducted by professional guides and take visitors for the first time inside some of the properties of historic German bluestone farmhouses in Thomastown and Lalor that once formed the nucleus of the picturesque village of Westgarthtown. Afternoon tea will be served at Ziebell's Farmhouse.

German Heritage Bus Tour: 'From Church to Farmhouse Cottage'

Date: Saturday 19 July 2003
Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm
Assembly: German Lutheran Trinity Church
 22 Parliament Place, East Melb
 (Melway Ref: 2FK2)
Cost: \$25.00 per person
Bookings: Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917 or
 ellenmitchell@optusnet.com.au

This bus tour will link for the first time Melbourne's significant public buildings of German/Australian heritage. The tour will commence with an inspection and guided tour of the beautiful 1874 German Lutheran Trinity Church, then travel to three further 19th century buildings in Doncaster (Schramm's Cottage); Mitcham (Schwerkolt's Cottage); and Thomastown (Ziebell's Farmhouse). A light lunch will be provided in the extensive grounds and magnificent garden surrounding Schramm's Cottage and afternoon tea refreshments German style will be enjoyed at Ziebell's.

German Fest and Christkindlmarket at Westgarthtown

Date: Saturday 22 November 2003
Time: 2.00pm – 8.00pm
Location: Time: Gardenia Rd., Lalor
 (Melway Ref: 8H5)

This Fest will bring unique features of Germanic culture to the City of Whittlesea. Apart from food and drink stalls there will be dances and music performances. Other ethnic groups will be invited not only to provide colour and variety, but also to underline the City of Whittlesea's great union of people from many lands. A very special feature will be a Christkindlmarket, a traditional market selling gifts suitable for Christmas.

Thomastown Lutheran Church

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

Rob Wuchatsch recently undertook further research into the history of the Thomastown Lutheran Church for an article he prepared for a book on the history of the Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne to be published in October 2003. During the course of Rob's research he discovered some interesting new material in the Trinity Church Archives which adds considerably to our knowledge of the Thomastown Lutheran congregation.

FIRST WORLD WAR

One piece of information was particularly important – the Thomastown Lutheran Church did not close during the First World War – as previously believed. Pastor Gutekunst's Annual Reports reveal that monthly services continued throughout the war, despite the pressures both the Trinity and Thomastown Lutheran congregations found themselves under. Pastor Gutekunst was driven to and from Thomastown by Messrs Schickert and Fliegner. Sometimes 'the weather was so inclement that attendance at the services was poor'. On one occasion in 1916, nobody came, the weather being too unfavourable. In his 1918 Annual Report Pastor Gutekunst commented that 'Thomastown continues in its quiet way'.

SECOND WORLD WAR

The Thomastown Lutheran Church also remained open during the Second World War, despite Pastor Steiniger's internment from Easter 1942 to October 1844. During that time his Trinity and Thomastown Lutheran congregations were cared for by Trinity Secretary Otto Sengstock, who held lay reading services. Occasional visits were also made by UELCA pastors when available, some of whom were retired.

The 1943 Annual Report on the Thomastown Lutheran Church prepared by Sengstock (translated from German to English in 2002 by Herbert Mees), provides very interesting reading, parts of which are reproduced below.

... Despite the enforced absence of our dear Pastor Steiniger the members of the small Thomastown Congregation were not to be dissuaded from continuing to carry on the congregational life in truly Christian faithfulness as before. Every Fourth Sunday the congregation met at 2.30 p.m. for divine service which, owing to the circumstances, had to be [in the form of] lay reading services conducted by Mr O. Sengstock.

Attendance at these services was very pleasing and the

figures showed considerable progress when compared with those of 1942. The 12 services were attended by 106 adult persons which is an average of nearly 9 adults. A very considerable increase in [attendance at] these services was due to the introduction of a brief children's devotion prior to the sermon. In the past year this Sunday School was attended by 80 children which meant an average of 6 – children per divine service. Together with the adults the average Sunday attendance was 15 – persons, an increase of 5 persons per Sunday compared with the year 1942. We owe this increase to God's merciful and gracious guidance and kindness and also to the great faithfulness of the congregation's members who revere our dear Pastor Steiniger with moving loyalty and love and remember him in this way.

A special celebration was conducted at Easter; Pastor Hegelau presided at the celebration of Holy Communion of which 7 persons partook. The most heartfelt thanks for this labour of love in the service of the congregation go herewith to Pastor Hegelau who is well advanced in age. For the younger set probably the most interesting part was the Easter egg hunt after the service with 10 children taking part.

... The culminating point was again the Christmas Service on 26 December which saw 9 adults and 3 children of our Melbourne Congregation take part. Thomastown Congregation very much appreciate this unexpected visit ... A total of 29 persons attended. The children sang a Christmas carol, and W. & M. Peel of the Melbourne Sunday School recited a Christmas poem. Apart from her service as organist Miss E. Grosse performed a solo to the delight of everybody present for which she is owed a debt of sincere gratitude. Father Christmas had not forgotten either young or old.

Sengstock concluded his report by acknowledging the contributions of various people – Mr F. Finger who had driven him to and from services at Thomastown from April 1942 to July 1943 and Miss E. Finger who served as organist for the same period. Miss Grosse then served as organist for until Miss Sylvia Adams was appointed in 1945. From July 1943 trustees Norman Young and Ben Seeber transported Sengstock and Miss Grosse between Reservoir and Thomastown on church Sundays; Albert Wuchatsch looked after the business affairs of the congregation; and Mrs Ziebell and her daughter cleaned and decorated the church.

Leslie Ronald (Ron) Schultz (1912 - 2002)

Ron Schultz was a great grandson of Johann Gottlob and Maria (nee Kluge) Schultz, who arrived in Australia in April 1849 aboard the Dackenhuden from Hamburg.

Leslie Ronald Schultz, known to everyone as Ron, was born on 8 October 1912 at “Pine Grove” Wollert, the fourth generation of his family to farm at Wollert, the Schultz’s having first purchased land there in 1853.

Ron was the third and youngest child of Albert Alexander Schultz and Elizabeth Maree Schultz (nee Ewert). He had an older brother and sister—Edward and Elsie.

He was baptized at the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Westgarthtown, but during the First World War, the Schultz family began a long association with the Epping Presbyterian Church. Church picnics were held in the front paddock of his parent’s farm and at one such picnic Ron gained a scar when he accidentally put his arm in the boiling hot water copper whilst playing with his friends. He went on to serve as both Secretary and Treasurer of the Church for 25 years and led the Sunday School Building Fund. Until the end, he was a Church Elder.

As a child Ron attended the Wollert Primary School, continuing a long association with the school by the Schultz family. His grandfather, Gottlieb contributed to its purchase and establishment at the current location. He was known as a very fast runner and when teased at school, he would outrun everyone. School made him into an excellent speller and he knew the names of all the capital cities of the world. He was also very good at geography. He attended school until Grade 8, leaving school the day he turned 14, to help with the harvest that year—he did not return to school. He was an active member of the school council when his own children were at the school. However, when the school was closed in 1993 and 2 of his grandchildren were attending, he was very sad to see another era concluded.

His days were occupied with milking twice a day and farm work. He rarely missed the routine. He was a self-sufficient farmer, relying on his own astute skills to feed cows and produce fresh cream, milk and meat for Melbournians. Of particular interest were chickens and ducks and there are photos of him with his hens. In fact there were seven very new chickens under his care last Thursday. He volunteered for the war effort, but his health assessment was not AI, so he remained



behind to produce milk. After his father’s death in 1943, he continued with his mother on the farm. He worked with draft horses a lot but was so pleased to get his first car and tractor, in 1934. As cars were scarce, he provided a taxi service for church gatherings. He hated blowflies, Paterson’s Curse, thistles and weeds in general, spending long hours trying to keep them all under control. We will have to keep the thistles cut now as he will be able to see them as he watches over us.

Music was a great part of his life. He was an accomplished piano player and loved to hear people playing the piano. Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata was one of his favourites. He experienced great joy when Megan, his eldest grandchild, performed this piece on a grand piano in public recently. He also sang in the district combined choir as a tenor.

In 1950, Ron married Sylvia Adams (a Ziebell

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Ian Charles Robertson (1936 - 2002)

Ian, the youngest son of Alexander (Bruce) and Dora (nee Oldenburg) Robertson, passed away on the 22 October 2002 aged 66 years.

In his early school days, Ian spent a period in Thomastown, when his parents stayed for a short while in Fred Siebel's home. During this time he attended the Thomastown State School along with Henry Ziebell and other children from the settlement.

It was then that he first gained an interest in dairying and his family roots.

Ian became an Apprentice Welder/Boilermaker and after completing his training, worked for a number of civil engineering companies. It was then that he met his future wife Beverley Wissell and they were married in Reservoir, where their four children - Denise, Carl, Alexander and Robert - were born.

There was always a slumbering desire within Ian to have a 'Dairy Farm', and in the 1976 the family decided 'it was now or never' and bought an 100 acre property and 100 Friesian Cows in Timboon. After about four years they then brought their present property at Simpson of 417 acres, then increased the size to 560 acres supporting 300 to 320 cows. Alexander and Robert remained on the property.

Ian along with brother Carl had a strong interest in their German and Scottish origins and the sound of "Oompah"

German bands and the bagpipes always aroused his spirits.

He was a grandson of Carl and Wilhelmina (nee Karsten) Oldenburg; a great grandson of Heinrich and Maria [nee Ziebell] Karsten; and a great



great grandson of Christian and Sophia Ziebell. Ian enjoyed attending various family functions and historical gatherings, always seeking more information on his Ziebell, Karsten and Oldenburg connections. He was a member of the Friends of Westgarthtown.

Following a Service on 28 October 2002 conducted by Pastor Pietsch in the Thomastown Lutheran Church, Ian was laid to rest with his sister Olive and forbears in the adjacent Westgarthtown Cemetery. A Memorial Service was also held later the same day at Scots Presbyterian Church, Colac near Ian's home.

Leslie Ronald Schultz (1919 - 2002)

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descendant), at the Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne, the same church in which his parents were married. Three children were born—Sylvia, Doretta and Paul. This began 53 years of marriage and a true partnership on the farm, in the church and with the family.

Like poultry keeping, gardening was another of his hobbies. We often felt that his flair was in horticulture as he had a green thumb. So he always had eggs and vegetables/fruit for family and friends, even in his later years. He loved dancing and annually would attend the Presidential Ball for the Shire of Whittlesea.

Sunday was Dad's day of rest as much a day could be restful for a farmer. Church in the morning, followed by Sunday School, an afternoon drive (to keep in touch with the relatives) after he had counted the church collection

and home by 3.00 p.m. to milk and then catch the milk wagon by 7.00 p.m. Some rest!!!

As he declined in health, he still had a great interest in farming and current affairs. He always read The Age and Weekly Times newspapers and listened to the news to keep up to date. He even became interested in football when his grandsons came along.

Last Thursday [17 October 2002] Ron died at home in the room in which he was born, as he wished. This was nine days after his 90th birthday. Following a service held at the Epping Presbyterian Church, Ron was buried in the Thomastown (Westgarthtown) Lutheran Cemetery. This ended the earthly life of a man dedicated to his God, family, church and community. In all areas he gave freely of his time and God given gifts.

This tribute was prepared by Ron's family and delivered by Rev. John Wilson, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

Ziebell Farmhouse Garden

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

The gardening group continues to meet on the first Saturday of each month between 10am and 4pm and really enjoy working together to enhance the appearance and health of the Ziebell garden. We have been very fortunate to have 'workable' weather throughout the autumn, winter, spring and summer months over the past year. The July working bee was particularly cold with intermittent showers, however, at the end of the day we realised we had achieved even more than usual. Keeping warm and busy obviously helped.



Wisteria in full bloom

During the winter we shifted some of the plants to alternative and more appropriate sites as well as weeding all the various beds thoroughly. Simon Borrack pruned the roses, wisteria, tecoma, fuchsias and hydrangeas while the bulbs were blooming. By the end of August the garden was looking very well cared for and organised for the coming spring.

Spring saw the garden in full bloom with bulbs, wisteria and perennials making a spectacular show. The orchard trees appear to have doubled in height since the previous year and most were looking extremely healthy and full of blooms as they responded to the pruning and fertiliser. In December Léon and Marcel Borrack worked throughout our working bee with assistance from other members to

connect and wire our irrigation system onto an automatic system to allow the garden to be watered at night from 11pm ensuring we get optimum retention of water, not only in times of drought conditions and water shortages. It has allowed us to use less water with maximum benefits indicated by the colourful and healthy garden throughout summer. We have enjoyed the roses, fuchsias, tecoma and hydrangeas all responding to the winter pruning with masses of flowers and a reblooming of the wisteria. The herb gardens are flourishing and our next major task is to extend the watering system to the north to the two herb gardens, fruit trees and planting's around the well.

The Friends of Westgarthtown have volunteered to nominate a site for "Clean Up Australia Day" on Sunday March 2nd at Edgars Creek, in the area south of the German Lane bridge. We hope to maintain our ongoing interest in improving this area of Edgars Creek and encourage any members who are interested and willing to help to contact Gillian.

Likewise anyone interested in joining our gardening group at the Ziebell Farmhouse is most welcome. All you will need are a pair of gardening gloves, your lunch and a spare hour or two. All tools are provided unless you have your own favourite weeder. For more information ring Gillian on 9717 3559.

Simon Borrack checks one of the flourishing rose bushes



Celebrating her Centenary: Mrs Esther Usher (nee Ziebell)

On Sunday 26 January 2003, Mrs Esther Zillah Usher of Kyabram celebrated her 100th Birthday, surrounded by 160 relatives and friends.

Born at the family farm at Thomastown, Esther was the fourth of Alfred and Doretta Ziebell's ten children – eight sisters and two boys. Three sisters still survive – Esther, Bertha (Pettit), aged 92 and Decima (Prott), aged

89 – to confirm the family's longevity, their mother Doretta Ziebell (nee Unmack) having lived to the great age of 96.

In 1926, Esther married Leslie Usher and they had seven children – Dorothy (Baker), Margaret (Duckworth), Keith, Robert, Julie (Munro), Lynette (McArdle) and Lorraine (Bolitho). For many years they operated a dairy farm at Tongala before retiring to

Kyabram in 1971. A widow since 1976, Esther retains an active mind and keeps good health apart from poor hearing and arthritis, which restricts her mobility.



Most of Esther's seven children, 27 grandchildren, 44 great-grandchildren and nine great-great grandchildren attended the memorable occasion, the birthday party being held at the Kyabram Club.

New Baby Boy

To Julie & Frank – 'Congratulations on the birth of your baby boy'.

This was the message written on a card found with about ten dead flower arrangements, complete with plastic bases, cellophane, boxes etc which were dumped recently in the old duck pond just north of Ziebell's Farmhouse.

Hopefully Julie and Frank's little boy will grow up caring a little more about his neighbourhood than his parents obviously do. The same goes for the household which continually throws its rubbish over the back fence onto the reserve near Ziebell's Farmhouse.

Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on alternate Sundays (second and last Sunday of the month) at 11.15 am at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor.

For further details, contact Pastor Stephen Pietsch at Calvary Lutheran Church, Greensborough on 03 9435 6846.

Ziebell's Farmhouse Open Days & Tours

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month between 1-4 pm. For enquiries contact Gaye Lohse on 9464 0140.

Tours can be organised for groups of 10 or more people. For information and bookings contact Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917.

Trinity German Lutheran Church East Melbourne

Trinity celebrates its 150th Anniversary in 2003. Matthias Goethe was installed as Melbourne's first resident Lutheran pastor on 25 March 1853 and construction of the first Lutheran church commenced later that year. The present church, built in 1874, replaced the first one, which had been consecrated on 11 June 1854.

Prior to 1986, services at the Thomastown Lutheran Church were conducted by pastors from Trinity German Lutheran Church. Many of Westgarthtown's residents also attended services there, some having even been married at Trinity. An extensive archive, open Tuesdays from 10.00 am – 4.00 pm (22 Parliament Place – 9639 8137) holds copies of baptism, marriage and confirmation records, along with a full set of Der Australische Christenbote, the Lutheran monthly journal which was published in Melbourne from 1860-1910. This journal (in German) contains a wealth of information, including many birth, marriage and death notices.

A book on Trinity's history will be published in October 2003. Other 150th birthday activities include an Ecumenical Service and Sesquicentenary plaque unveiling on 9 March 2003 at 2.00 pm; a talk by Walter Phillips on 'The History of Trinity Congregation' on 18 June 2003 at 7.30 pm; and a 150th Dedication Anniversary Day (service, lunch, talks and exhibitions) on 26 October 2003. A souvenir any-year Trinity Calender is now available from Trinity for \$15.

Tours and Visitors Report

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

Completing the 2002 tour program, the following groups visited Westgarthtown during October and November:

Life Activities Club, Moonee Valley; City of Whitehorse and Nunawading and District Historical Society; Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre; German language students from Glenvale Community School and Benalla College; Balwyn Central Probus Club; and on Sunday 24 November 2002 a group from the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (Vic. Chapter) - better known as the ISAA.

The ISAA visited for the first time and proved an exceptionally stimulating and inquisitive group. Among the 'scholars' were authors, botanists, historians, priests and philosophers, and all enjoyed our walking tour that led us to the Wuchatsch farmhouse and Robert's detailed historical address, complemented by a display of valuable documents. Lunch was German style with a variety of rye breads, smoked cheeses and meats.

The ISAA was formed in 1995 and displays the Boab Tree as symbol for flourishing 'against the grain' upside down on its membership form. No wonder then, that one of the ISAA's goals is 'to give voice to dissent and independent opinion' and achieve a collective profile as a valued national resource. The ISAA welcomes new members and friends who can participate in conferences, attend interesting meetings with speakers at the State Library of Victoria and also receive a newsletter with thought provoking articles.

In December two other distinguished guests visited Westgarthtown: Dieter Steiniger from the German Lutheran Trinity Church at East Melbourne and Ernst Seyler, a pastor visiting from Germany who preached from 1964-1973 at both the East Melbourne and Thomastown Lutheran churches. For him it proved a sheer pleasure to revisit a familiar site and at Ziebell's Farmhouse he greeted several of his past parishioners such as Marita Anders and her mother Klara Drahuszczak with great warmth and a flourish of memories.

ISAA group in front of the Church, 24 Nov 2002



L to R: Pastor Ernst Seyler, Klara Drahuszczak, Ellen Michell and Dieter Steiniger, 7 Dec 2002

Just a few days ago, Ellen received a thank-you letter from Ernst Seyler, which is reprinted here

Gunzenhausen
7 February 2003

Dear Mrs Mitchell
Dear Friends of Westgarthtown

I'll never forget the most pleasant evening-hour on the 7th December last year, when you welcomed my grand-daughter Corinna, my friend Dieter Steiniger and myself at Thomastown resp. Westgarthtown. I would like to thank you very, very much for your kindness! I know Westgarthtown in good hands. The evening with you, walking over the paddocks and the cemetery, the time in the old (chapel) church as well as in the Ziebell homestead let me feel the exciting history of our pioneers in Australia - and brought many memories back to me - as I was from 1964 - 1974 the last German Pastor who served the Lutherans out there.

Yes, I love Westgarthtown! I wish you furthermore much joy to look after it. Let me thank you also for the very nice booklet 'Westgarthtown' you presented to me. It is a good addition to R. Wuchatsch's book I have.

With best wishes
Your very grateful
Ernst Seyler

Works Report

BY GEOFFREY BORRACK

CHURCH

The external mortar joints have been cleaned and refaced. A new set of wooden fascias has been installed, along with bird proofing. New entry doors have been fitted, together with coloured glass panels to the semi-circular highlight window and the side windows have been repaired, to permit partial opening.

Internally, the west wall has been repaired by removal of old crumbling plaster and replastering with the traditional mix of fine sand and lime putty. This wall has been left unpainted to maintain the original appearance. Cracks have been repaired in the side walls and repainted. The windows, fascias and doors have been repainted in off white/grey to match the original colour.

CEMETERY

New central vehicle and side pedestrian gates have been installed and painted white. Some modifications to the side gates are required to improve access. Work continues on restoration of selected tombstones and a quotation has been sought for rebuilding of the dry stone wall which abuts the east side gate.

LUTHERAN RESERVE

Removal of some boxthorns will commence shortly. Some clumps will be retained as planted (windbreaks for cattle) as they have been an integral part of the Westgarthtown landscape since settlement and complete removal would also expose the church directly to the surrounding urban landscape.

A substantial part of the original quarry from which bluestone was extracted during the 1850s to construct the church and school buildings is to be excavated to reveal the now hidden impressive rock-faced stratas. The quarry was filled in with surplus rock and soil during the 1970s when the old Ziebell farm was being subdivided by the Urban Land Authority.

ZIEBELL FARMHOUSE HISTORICAL DISPLAY

Design work continues on the final layout and composition of the permanent displays to be installed in Ziebell's Farmhouse. The displays should be completed by September 2003.

FRIENDS OF WESTGARTHTOWN INC.

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Tours Coordinator **Ellen Mitchell**
Editor **Rob Wuchatsch**
Design **Léon Borrack**

CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2003

The four Friends of Westgarthtown committee members who will attend the City of Whittlesea's Thomastown Pioneer Precinct Committee meetings this year will be Ellen Mitchell, Geoff Borrack, Paul Schultz and Gillian Borrack. I decided that after over seven years as President it was time for a change and have resigned as President effective 5 February 2003. Ellen Mitchell who was previously Vice-President has agreed to step into the position of President until the next AGM. Geoff Borrack is now Vice-President and I am the Newsletter Editor/Historian. RW

Westgarthtown is the oldest and most intact German/Wendish settlement in Victoria. Established in March 1850, it celebrated its 150th Anniversary in the year 2000.

The Thomastown Lutheran Church at Westgarthtown is the second oldest surviving Lutheran Church building in Australia and the oldest still used as the principal worship centre of a Lutheran congregation.

Heritage Victoria has included the Lutheran Church, Cemetery and Reserve; and Graff's, Siebel's, Wuchatsch's and Ziebell's houses on its Heritage Register, recognising their outstanding heritage value and providing legislative protection for the future.

Ziebell's Farmhouse is Victoria's oldest German immigrant building.

Siebel's Farmhouse, erected in 1860, is the birthplace of Albert Siebel, who in 1934 established the Pura Dairy at Preston, to retail Westgarthtown's milk. Pura has now developed into a leading national Australian brandname.

Wuchatsch's Farmhouse is believed to be the oldest house in Melbourne to have been constructed, owned and continually occupied by the same family.