

Future Directions

A five year plan for Westgarthtown
2013–2018

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Document History

This table records releases of this document that have been approved by the Friends of Westgarthtown Committee of Management.

Issue No.	Notes	Authors	Date Approved*
1	Initial release — 5 year plan for 2013–2018	Robert Wuchatsch, John Fry, Gillian Borrack, Léon Borrack	4 Feb 2013

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Brief History of Westgarthtown

William Westgarth and Westgarthtown

William Westgarth (1815-1889), a prominent Melbourne merchant, actively promoted German migration to Victoria, having observed the 'industry, frugality, sobriety and general good conduct' of Germans in South Australia. While on a visit to Europe during 1847/48 he travelled to Germany where he encouraged prospective emigrants to consider Melbourne as a destination. While in London he persuaded the British Government to offer a bounty to assist them to travel here.

Westgarth also provided assistance to German immigrants to Victoria after their arrival. An enduring achievement was the establishment of a German settlement near Melbourne which came to be known as Westgarthtown.

Establishment of Westgarthtown

In March 1850, William Westgarth and Captain John Stanley Carr, a Scotsman of 25 years residence in Germany, purchased Section 25, Parish of Keelbundora, 16 kilometres north of Melbourne on behalf of the Germans. The 640 acre section, which now forms part of the suburbs of Thomastown and Lalor, cost £1 per acre.

Ten acres were reserved for a church, cemetery and school. In the sale of lots, each settler received a creek frontage, to ensure availability of water. As the creek was not always reliable – it was known then as the Dry Creek – legal access to a spring in the north of the section was provided.

As well as those Germans and Wends who settled at Westgarthtown, others who arrived from 1849-51 settled at Germantown (Grovedale) near Geelong, at Hawthorn, Richmond, Collingwood, Northcote, Brunswick, Mill Park and Greensborough, or dispersed about the Port Phillip District among the Anglo-Celtic population. In 1853, German settlements were also established at Doncaster, Harkaway and in the Western District near Hamilton.

Establishment of Lutheran Church, School and Cemetery

In 1855, a Lutheran school was established in the newly constructed bluestone building which was dedicated in 1856 as a Lutheran Church. For over 100 years, the church served as a unifying force and focal point for Westgarthtown's activities. All major social events were centred around the Lutheran Church. As well as religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival, celebrations and feasts associated with baptisms, confirmations and weddings were frequent, particularly in the early days, when there were many young families.

The Lutheran school operated from 1855-76. It was officially known as New Mecklenburg, reflecting the origin of many of the settlers. Another building to house the school and teacher was erected nearby in 1865/66 but demolished during the 1950s.

When the settlement was established in 1850, the area was known as Keelbundora, after the parish in which it was located. From 1851 the name Dry Creek came into use and predominated for several years. The school's name, New Mecklenburg, was also used to describe the area for a few years, but by 1860 the name Westgarthtown, in use from about 1856, was finally adopted. To further confuse the matter, the name Germantown was also used at times, but mainly by outsiders.

From about 1900, the church was known as Thomastown Lutheran Church, partly to avoid confusion with the area of Northcote around the Westgarth Railway Station. Thomastown is now Australia's oldest operating Lutheran church. The only older Lutheran church building is at Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills. Dedicated in 1845, Lobethal's original brick church now only serves as a chapel beside a larger, more modern building.

The cemetery, in which about 200 people have been buried, remains open for members of the congregation and descendants of original settlers.

Farmhouses

Five of Westgarthtown's historic bluestone farmhouses survive - Graff's, Maltzahn's, Siebel's, Wuchatsch's and Ziebell's. Maltzahn's Farmhouse is owned by the Victorian Government and Ziebell's Farmhouse by the City of Whittlesea. The remaining three are privately owned. Like the Lutheran Church and cemetery, all farmhouses are protected by inclusion on Victoria's Heritage Register.

Recent History: Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct

The Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct, formerly known as the Thomastown Pioneer Precinct, was established following the acquisition in 1993 of Ziebell's Farmhouse and the southern half of the adjoining Lutheran Reserve by the City of Whittlesea. Ziebell's Farmhouse was purchased from the Adams/Schultz families (Ziebell descendants) and the Lutheran Reserve land from the Lutheran Church of Australia. When it acquired the Lutheran section, the City of Whittlesea and Lutheran Church of Australia signed a contractual agreement for the subsequent purchase of the remaining Lutheran land, upon which the church and cemetery are located, but this sale has not yet been executed. Under its purchase agreement with the Lutheran Church of Australia, the City of Whittlesea is responsible for maintenance of the Lutheran Reserve.

Following its 1993 purchase, Ziebell's Farmhouse was restored by the City of Whittlesea and is managed by the Friends of Westgarthtown, who have also restored and maintain the garden, which was recently included in Australia's Open Garden Scheme. The Friends of Westgarthtown have managed the research, design and production of all the interpretive panels and displays in Ziebell's Farmhouse and outbuildings, as well as the cataloguing of all the heritage items on display. Some heritage items are on loan while others have been purchased with grant funding from a variety of sources. Funding sources include the City of Whittlesea, Heritage Victoria, Museums Australia and private donors.

Oversight of the Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct is the responsibility of the Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee, which consists of councillors and staff from the City of Whittlesea and members of the Friends of Westgarthtown and Lutheran Church of Australia. The Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee meets quarterly.

Our Aims

Vision Statement

To preserve and present Westgarthtown's heritage for future generations.

Statement of Purpose

- To bring together those who care for the German/Wendish settlement of Westgarthtown, founded in March 1850, and its architectural, historical, landscape and environment assets.
- To promote awareness of Westgarthtown's architectural, historical, archaeological, cultural, landscape and environmental assets to both members of the Friends of Westgarthtown Inc. and the community at large through:
 - the accreditation of a Community Museum at the Ziebell Farmhouse.
 - ongoing research into Westgarthtown's heritage and production of related publications.
 - establishment of targeted educational programs.
 - further development of cultural tourism opportunities.
- To promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of Westgarthtown's German/Wendish heritage sites of National and State significance at Thomastown and Lalor.
- To liaise with other interested bodies and groups on architectural, historical, archaeological, cultural, landscape and environmental related matters.
- To encourage, initiate or undertake programs which will assist with the restoration and maintenance of the bluestone buildings, structures and landscape at Westgarthtown, particularly those in public ownership.
- To utilize the Friends of Westgarthtown Inc.'s expertise and resources to provide input into planning for the Westgarthtown Precinct and other related issues.
- To act as a body to apply for funding and support from appropriate sources for research, publications, educational programs, cultural tourism, restoration, maintenance and conservation related activities.
- To promote the restoration of Edgars Creek by the removal of the concrete drain to a living, natural waterway.

Five Year Goals

- Ziebell's Farmhouse to become a Community Museum accredited by Museums Australia.
- Transition to a sustainable long-term structure for the management of Ziebell's Farmhouse and garden ie from traditional mainly volunteer basis to mainly paid employee basis.
- Increase awareness of Westgarthtown to local residents, council employees & relevant groups/organisations.
- Increase funding to support our five year goals.
- Secure ongoing inclusion in Australia's Open Garden program.
- Secure improvements to Edgars Creek.
- Improve cemetery interpretation (history, burials & headstone translations) via website and signage.
- Increase community involvement and interaction with Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct activities eg. community kitchen garden, schoolhouse excavation etc.
- Increase the number of visitors to Westgarthtown.
- Excavate/expose school house foundations for public viewing with interpretive signage.

Planning For The Future

Roles & Responsibilities at Westgarthtown

Current Responsibilities

The tables in this section lists ongoing activities that are relevant to the vision and purpose of the Friends of Westgarthtown. Current responsibilities are listed for each activity.

The current roles of stakeholders are formalised in various agreements made with the Whittlesea City Council. These agreements include:

- Operational Arrangements: Whittlesea City Council & Friends of Westgarthtown
- Operational Arrangements: Whittlesea City Council & Caretakers agreement for usage of Residence

Future Responsibilities

Over the next five years, it is expected that there will be changes in the way Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct is administered. Any changes would be agreed between the Whittlesea City Council and the Friends of Westgarthtown via the Thomastown Pioneer Precinct Committee (TPPC). The agreements listed above should be reviewed and updated regularly to make sure they are kept up to date. Additional documents may also be required. For example, it is one of our goals to reduce the administrative burden on the Friends of Westgarthtown Committee of Management through the transition of some tasks to Museum Staff. In this case a new agreement may be needed to define the role of Museum Staff.

To assist with any transition of roles, a plan for future responsibilities has been included in the tables below. The plan allows the Friends of Westgarthtown to relinquish many of the day-to-day tasks whilst continuing to oversee activities at the Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct.

Note: The term *Museum Staff* has been used to represent a funded position or position(s) that have responsibility for Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum. Which organisation will have ultimate responsibility for the employment and hours of work of such Museum Staff will need to be negotiated. The Friends of Westgarthtown will be part of the organisation and management of such a development. Museum Staff should be qualified to a level appropriate for running a community museum and have a degree of autonomy to make decisions about the running of the museum. They would spend a considerable portion of their available time at Ziebell's Farmhouse and be present when the museum is open for visitors or activities are taking place.

Precinct & museum operations

Role	Current Responsibility	Future Responsibility
Oversee management of the Westgarthtown Precinct	Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown and Pioneer Precinct Committee
Management of Ziebell's Farmhouse Precinct	Friends of Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee	Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Manage relevant projects and events	Friends of Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee Whittlesea City Council	Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Oversee/manage caretakers	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Pioneer Precinct Committee Whittlesea City Council Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Oversee/manage volunteers	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Cleaning	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Cleaners overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Cleaners overseen by Museum Staff
Garden maintenance	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Contracted specialist horticulturalists, volunteers, caretakers, and Council contractors. Coordinated by Friends of Westgarthtown garden coordinator	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Contracted specialist horticulturalist, volunteers, caretakers, and Council contractors. Coordinated by Friends of Westgarthtown garden coordinator and specialist horticulturalist
General maintenance	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Uncoordinated combination of Council, caretakers, Friends of Westgarthtown and Heritage Architect	Whittlesea City Council Pioneer Precinct Committee Overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown, Heritage Architect caretakers and Museum Staff
Security	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee, Council security contractors, caretakers, and Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee, Council security contractors, caretakers, Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Manage asset and loan register	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee, Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee, Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Manage museum collection database	Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee, Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Coordinate Friends of Westgarthtown's public liability insurance for Ziebell's Farmhouse site.	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown

Marketing, promotion and visitor services

Role	Current Responsibility	Future Responsibility
Oversee promotion of Ziebell's Farmhouse Precinct	Friends of Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown
Manage promotion and marketing activities	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Develop printed promotional material (eg brochures)	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Interpretation of precinct via publications and signage (incl. printed guides, museum panels, etc.)	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Friends of Westgarthtown Website	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Future website development relevant to Westgarthtown (eg Ziebell's Museum website)	—	Whittlesea City Council Museum staff
Face to face interpretation of precinct for visitors	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Organise and manage community events	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Coordination and operation of open days (at present these are monthly).	Caretakers overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Guided tours of Ziebell's Farmhouse, garden and Westgarthtown precinct.	Tour guides overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown	Tour guides overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Education visit by schools	Tour guides overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown	Tour guides overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Develop publications and other merchandise for sale	Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Sales (publications, merchandise, etc.)	Tour guides, caretakers and volunteers overseen by Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff

Friends of Westgarthtown Member services

Role	Current Responsibility	Future Responsibility
Friends memberships and subscriptions	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Collection of donations	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Westgarthtown Newsletter	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Friends committee governance	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown

Research, preservation and development

Role	Current Responsibility	Future Responsibility
Ongoing research	Friends of Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Committee	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Oversee the preservation, restoration and development of the precinct	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Provide architectural oversight of all activities affecting the precinct's heritage assets	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown Heritage Architect	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown Heritage Architect
Initiate projects and apply for project funding	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown and Museum Staff
Cemetery preservation and documentation - non legal	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Heritage Architect and Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Heritage Architect and Friends of Westgarthtown
Environmental conservation	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown	Whittlesea City Council, Pioneer Precinct Committee Friends of Westgarthtown

Liaison: Friends of Westgarthtown only

Role	Current Responsibility	Future Responsibility
Liaison with Council	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Provide representative(s) on the City of Whittlesea's Pioneer Precinct Committee	Friends of Westgarthtown,	Friends of Westgarthtown,
Provide representative(s) on the City of Whittlesea's Cultural & Heritage Committee.	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown,
Provide representative(s) on the Whittlesea Plenty Valley Tourism Association Inc.	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Liaise with other government and non-government bodies: Heritage Victoria, Museums Australia, Garden History Society, Friends of Edgars Creek Inc and the Wendish Society of Australia Inc.	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Create partnerships/links with other community groups (networking).	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown
Local community interaction	Friends of Westgarthtown	Friends of Westgarthtown

Projects

All projects undertaken by the Friends of Westgarthtown should align with the Vision, Statement of Purpose or Five Year Goals identified as Our Aims above. Current, Future and Completed projects should be included in the Projects List on the intranet.

Environmental Scan

External factors likely to have an effect over the next five years are:

Westgarthtown Precinct Administration

- The number of visitors and activities at Ziebell's Farmhouse and the Westgarthtown Pioneer Reserve are expected to increase, thereby increasing the amount of administrative effort required.
- Maintenance is an ongoing issue requiring coordination of various stakeholders within and outside the Whittlesea City Council.
- Maintenance is expected to increase, particularly as the entire site becomes the property of Whittlesea City Council and the usage of the precinct increases
- The Friends of Westgarthtown Committee's capacity to provide administrative support to the day to day running of Ziebell's Farmhouse is expected to reduce.

Legislative Changes

- Insurance
- Increases/decreases or changes to funding formulas

Land Ownership

- Lutheran Church: The Council has a legal contract with the Lutheran Church to buy the site and this is likely to take place within the 5 year period.

Environmental Changes

- Melbourne Water: Their attitude to concrete drains in waterways as per the central section of Edgars Creek. Mahoneys Road to Cooper Street. Liaise with Friends of Edgars Creek who are currently active within the City of Darebin. Suggest focus on residents who front the creek and nearby areas to form a Friends group in the City of Whittlesea.
- La Trobe University and Heritage Victoria: Archaeological and heritage advice and assistance to expose the school house foundations.
- Museums Australia: accreditation
- Open Gardens Australia: ongoing selection

Volunteers

- The Friends of Westgarthtown's existing community of volunteers is ageing and not able to provide the same level of support as it once did.