

## 150th Anniversary Celebrations at Thomastown Lutheran Church



**O**n 17 November 2006, the Thomastown Lutheran Church will celebrate its 150th Anniversary. A weekend of thanksgiving and celebrations are planned, commencing with a dinner on Friday evening 10 November 2006 and concluding on Sunday 12 November 2006 with a special worship service at the church and displays

at Ziebell's Farmhouse.

The cost of the 150th thanksgiving dinner, which will be held at the Calvary Lutheran Church Hall at Greensborough, has not yet been determined but is expected to be around \$25 per head. As only about 100 people will be able to attend, pre-paid bookings will be required. Further details will be provided to Friends of Westgarthtown members and other interested people over the next few months.

Thomastown Lutheran Church is now the second oldest Lutheran Church building in Australia, after Lobethal in South Australia. However, Thomastown is Australia's oldest operating Lutheran Church, as Lobethal's 1845 church is now used only as a chapel, having been replaced by a larger church nearby.

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# Donation of Historic Clothing

BY JANET HUBBARD

Recently the Friends of Westgarthtown was very pleased to receive a generous donation of various historic items of women's clothing. Gladys Knight (née Thiele) of Gruyere, a descendant of the Finger family, which like many Westgarthtown families also emigrated to Australia aboard the *Pribislaw*, kindly donated the clothing.

After initial discussions with the Friends of Westgarthtown Management Committee, a meeting was arranged at Ziebell's Farmhouse, where Geoff Borrack, Friends of Westgarthtown President, accepted Gladys' mother's wedding dress and her paternal grandmother's wedding set of camisole, bloomers and nightdress.

Gladys' mother was Minna Baum and she was married in 1910 to Godfrey Thiele. Gladys' parents were first cousins, as her maternal and paternal grandmothers were twins, Anna and Emma Finger. Her paternal grandmother was Emma, who married Johann Thiele on 15 April 1880. An interesting feature



Geoff Borrack with Gladys Knight and some of the donated clothing

of Emma's lace trimmed bloomers is that they basically consist of two separate legs, only joined together back and front at the top. Modest but essentially practical.

## Ziebell Family Exhibit

The Friends of Westgarthtown has applied to the City of Whittlesea for funding to mount an exhibit at Ziebell's Farmhouse featuring photo images of Ziebell family members and aspects of life on the farm.

As well as photographs, the exhibit will also include a reproduction of the Ziebell family tree, commencing with original settlers Christian and Sophia Ziebell.

It is hoped the Ziebell Family Exhibit, along with the Pribislaw Exhibit, can be completed by late 2006.

## Australian Heritage Magazine

Westgarthtown was featured recently in the Autumn 2006 edition of Australian Heritage, a new quarterly Australian magazine.

The excellent three page article included colour photos of Ziebell's Farmhouse and the Lutheran Church and Cemetery.

Australian Heritage Magazine can be purchased at newsagents or by subscription through the publisher on 1800 201 983 or (03) 8534 5050. Further information is available at [www.heritageaustralia.com.au](http://www.heritageaustralia.com.au).

## Restoration of Damaged Headstones

Readers of the November 2005 edition of Friends of Westgarthtown News will recall the front page article about the disastrous storm in August 2005 which felled a large pine tree in the Thomastown Lutheran Cemetery damaging several historic headstones. Thankfully, we can now report that the damaged Schultz, Siebel and Oldenburg headstones have now been successfully reinstated.

Immediately after the storm, the City of Whittlesea removed the broken headstones to their Epping Depot for safe keeping. The council then arranged and paid for the headstones to be reinstated, the work being completed early in March 2006. The Friends of Westgarthtown wishes to place on record its sincere appreciation for the City of Whittlesea's prompt action in first protecting, then restoring and reinstating these very significant headstones. The council has also removed the fallen tree.

## James Ziebell (1948 - 2005)

James Arthur Ziebell, the son of late Henry and Annie (née Zimmer) Ziebell of Thomastown, died at Alexandra on 19 December 2005 following a heart attack, aged 57. He was born at Preston on 13 July 1948.

James and his elder brother Henry were raised in Karsten's old cottage at Thomastown. At that time their parents ran dairy cows on the old Ziebell farm. James attended Thomastown Primary School, Merrilands High School and La Trobe University, where he received a Bachelor of Economics and Diploma of Education. Following his graduation, he taught at Frankston High School for several years, before his marriage in 1975 to Lyn Wallace, at the Thomastown Lutheran Church.

After travelling around Australia during 1975, James and Lyn settled in Alexandra, where they raised three children - Jade, Sam and Tegan. James taught at the Alexandra High School for many years until his retirement from the Education Department several years ago. James and Lyn first lived in Alexandra, but later purchased a farm a few kilometres out of town, where he utilised the farming skills learned in his youth at Thomastown to breed beef cattle. He also continued his lifelong interest in cricket, football, fishing and horseriding, having played cricket and football at



James Ziebell at Ziebell's Farmhouse c. 1964 with Patsy the horse and L-R, Geoffrey Adams, Paul Schultz and Peter Adams

primary and secondary school and for Lalor and Epping, and having learned to ride on the farm at Thomastown and fish in the nearby Merri Creek.

James was buried at the Alexandra Cemetery on 23 December 2005. The Friends of Westgarthtown, of which James and Lyn were long-time members, extends its sincere sympathy to Lyn and her family; also Henry and Shirley, Carl and Adam.

### Pribislaw Timbers

Plans are currently being prepared for a display of the *Pribislaw* timbers at Ziebell's Farmhouse. As well as several interesting pieces of timber, an additional panel will also be added to the existing historical display, to cover the story of the *Pribislaw's* remains and show visitors which part of the hull the timbers came from. The City of Whittlesea has agreed to fund the display.

### Visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month between 1-4 pm. For enquiries, call 03 9464 1805 or nmj1@bigpond.com.

Tours can be organised for groups of ten or more people. For information and bookings contact Tatiana Joukoff on 03 9464 5062 or tatianajoukoff@hotmail.com

### Friends of Lutheran Archives

Do you have Lutheran ancestors? Have you checked with the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide to see whether they hold information about your relatives? Would you like to join the Friends of Lutheran Archives and help support the collection and preservation of important Australian and New Zealand Lutheran archival material. For further details, contact Lutheran Archives, 27 Fourth Street, Bowden South Australia 5007. Phone/Fax: 08 8340 4009. Email: [lutheran.archives@lca.org.au](mailto:lutheran.archives@lca.org.au)

### Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on the second and fourth Sunday of the month at 11.15 am 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.com.au](http://www.calvarychurch.com.au)



# 1956 Centenary Celebrations at

In November 2006, Thomastown Lutheran Church will celebrate its 150th Anniversary, with a special dinner and church service. As we thought readers might like to know more about the church's 1956 Centenary Celebrations, Sylvia Schultz and Gillian Borrack have written the following article.

In November 1956, the Thomastown Lutheran Church celebrated its Centenary. The *Whittlesea Post* of 15 November 1956 gave it front-page news in its 'Special Olympic Games Issue'.

There were two parts to the 1956 Centenary Celebrations. The first was held on Friday 9 November at 8 pm, at the Mechanics Institute, Spring Street Thomastown. A large gathering of the congregation and invited visitors attended. Pastors and ministers from other churches were made welcome along with the Whittlesea Shire Council, which was represented by the President, Secretary and council members. In the speeches that followed it was noted that the early settlers built the 'Little Church on the Hill' even before completing their own homes. In his address the Shire President, Cr. J A Balharrie, stated 'his admiration for the early settlers and their descendants.' Visiting pastors and ministers 'also spoke highly of the early settlers, their Christian works and their thankfulness to God.'

Pastor Ewald Steiniger, Thomastown Lutheran Church's pastor since 1935, who had researched the stories of the early settlers, presented a black and white strip film he had made and provided a running commentary. He spoke of the ships in which the early settlers made their way to Australia, along with William Westgarth and Governor La Trobe, who were responsible for the intake of these early German and Wendish settlers to Australia. Although built as a place of worship, the Thomastown Lutheran Church was also the centre of the settlers' community. If there was a need for help or a message bringing good or bad news, the church bell would ring and the community would gather and thus everyone would be informed. Skills and food were

bartered between the settlers and at harvest time, if a family had their stooks finished, they would help those who had not, until all the harvests were safely stored.

The live entertainment which followed the speeches that Friday evening included many names today associated with the Thomastown Lutheran Church and Friends of Westgarthtown. Miss Constance Ziebell (violinist); Miss K Campbell (accompanist); Mr. Ron Schultz, poem by Mr. A Wuchatsch; Miss Irma Young, poem 'The Little Church' by Elsie Grosse. Children and younger members of the congregation performed folk dances and sang songs accompanied by a piano accordion.

The chairs in the centre of the hall, which had provided audience seating for the speeches and performances on the stage, were then removed to the trestle tables at the sides of the hall ready for the sit-down supper that followed. Sylvia Schulz and Miss E Maltzahn, who were responsible for the floral decorations, also provided the catering. A large 3-tier iced cake, featuring a 'true replica of The Little Church upon the Hill' with 100 candles surrounding the base, had been made by Sylvia Adams and Miss E Maltzahn and beautifully decorated by Bertha Pettit. The oldest member of the congregation present, Dorothea Ziebell, cut the cake. 'A vote of thanks was extended to all who assisted, and a special vote of thanks to Messrs. Norman Young, Henry Ziebell and Ron Schultz for their outstanding work and assistance given.'

A Jubilee Service to celebrate the Centenary was held at the Thomastown Lutheran Church on the following Sunday, 11 November 1956, at the then usual service



# Thomastown Lutheran Church

time of 2.30 pm. Until recent times, church services were held in the afternoon to enable the pastor to conduct the morning service at East Melbourne German Lutheran Trinity Church before setting out for Thomastown, but still allow time for him to return to East Melbourne for the evening service.

Pastor Steiniger conducted the service from the church doorway, with the church windows open to enable the many people who could not fit into the church to hear. The church was overflowing and even a large tarpaulin tent at the entrance was not big enough to hold the large crowd which attended. Pastor Steiniger dedicated the new furnishings and silver crucifix to the glory of God. The choir and the Sunday school children singing added to the impressive service. The Sunday school superintendent and organist was Miss Ruth Fuhlbohm. All the churches in the area were invited to attend the service. As the Thomastown Lutheran Church was the first church built in the area it was the first church to celebrate its centenary.

Four generations of the Ziebell family were present at the centenary service. Dorothea Ziebell, daughter of an original settler, Caroline Unmack; her daughter, Sylvia Adams; followed by her daughter, Sylvia Schultz; and her daughter Sylvia Elizabeth Schultz, then a one-year-old baby.

A temporary kitchen, with a relocated copper, was erected after the service and a willing band of helpers, again led by Sylvia Schultz and Miss E Maltzahn, provided boiling water for tea and coffee. Serving such a

large number of people with afternoon tea did not daunt these resourceful people, and their bountiful provisions were laid out on the trestle tables on the north side of the church. Tea leaves were placed in muslin bags tied with cotton string before the boiling water was poured into the large teapots. These bags removed the need to strain the tea and were the precursors of today's tea bags.

Afternoon tea was followed by a pilgrimage to the nearby cemetery and the graves of the early settlers, where a short remembrance service was held. Many of the old members of the church returned for the celebrations while several of the Lutheran Clergy participated.

Today, in 2006, there are many parallels with 1956. Many of the same families, organisations and wider community are still involved with the Thomastown Lutheran Church and Friends of Westgarthtown. In November 1956, Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games and in March 2006, Melbourne hosted the Commonwealth Games, when once again Melbourne celebrated. In November 2006 the Thomastown Lutheran Church will celebrate one hundred and fifty years. Preparations are now underway to ensure that the early German and Wendish settlers who built the Thomastown Lutheran Church, who left their homeland to travel to Australia with little more than their faith in God and a dream for a better life for their families and their descendants, are never forgotten.

Opposite page: Extract from *Whittlesea Post* dated November 15, 1956. This page: Congregation and Sunday school outside the church, c. 1950s



# Summer/Autumn Garden Report

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

**M**elbourne has just been through a long hot summer, which has necessitated a great deal of careful watering to preserve plants, shrubs and trees in the Ziebell Farmhouse Garden.

In November 2005, the Friends of Westgarthtown approached the City of Whittlesea with a view to having the irrigation system in the garden updated and extended. It is now almost nine years since the first watering system was installed and almost five years since it was automated to enable watering in the cool of the evening when optimum benefits can be gained. In the early days of our gardening group, we provided all the labour for the installation of the original irrigation system, then again when the system was automated, while the City of Whittlesea paid for the materials.

In extending and upgrading the irrigation system this time, our partnership with the City of Whittlesea continued. The Friends provided for the labour, while the Council paid for the materials. Batescape Gardening was engaged by the Friends to carry out the job and by early February a very efficient and extended system was operating. The layout of the system is now marked on our large plan of the garden, so there will be no confusion about where the pipes are now located, or where the stop taps can be found. After completion of the new system, the garden looks very healthy, the plants vigorous and weeds much easier to remove. The new roses planted last winter are already twice their size

and blooming profusely and the herb gardens have been replenished. The whole garden is a delight to the many visitors to our historic precinct.

We owe a sincere thank you to Nanette Jelleff who was there to help Peter from Batescape, advising him on-site where particular attention needed to be taken, while at the same time learning the intricacies of the new system. Thank you too to Sue Davies and Bruce Schroeder from the City of Whittlesea who helped facilitate this wonderful result.

Nanette has now been caretaker at Ziebell's Farmhouse for twelve months. Samantha Green joined her in February, so once again we have two people to look after the precinct buildings and garden as we get ready for the remainder of Autumn and many bulb plantings plus the winter pruning. A big welcome is extended to Samantha.

For any new members, the Friends of Westgarthtown Garden Group holds a working bee on the 1st Saturday of the month, anytime between 10 am and 4 pm. Bring your own lunch and gardening gloves – we supply tea, coffee and friendship. We also supply gardening tools, but if you have a favourite 'weeder', seat or kneeler, bring your own. If you cannot come to the Saturday working bee, but would like to help at another time, please call Nanette or Samantha.

### CONTACTS

Gillian Borrack - Working Bee Coordinator 9717 3559  
Nanette Jelleff or Sam Green - Caretakers 9464 1805





# Christian & Johanna Kurtzmann

## Forgotten Westgarthtown Pioneers

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

Much is known about Westgarthtown's early German and Wendish families, many of whose descendants still live in Thomastown, Lalor or Epping today, over 150 years later. However, some of Westgarthtown's original settlers stayed only a few years, before moving on, generally to farm elsewhere in Victoria. The Kurtzmann family, which left Westgarthtown in about 1859, is one such case.

Most of the following information on the Kurtzmann family was kindly provided by Chas Ryall of Cowan, New South Wales, a great-great grandson of Christian & Johanna Kurtzmann. Chas' great grandmother, Holda Klarchen (Hilda Clara) Kurtzmann, was born at Westgarthtown in 1853.



Christian and Johanna Kurtzmann, along with four children - Friedrich, Pauline, Heinrich and Emanuel Robert (Emil) - arrived in Australia aboard the Emmy in December 1849, from Grünberg, Silesia. Christian and Johanna had been married in 1838. While the name Kurtzmann is German, Johanna's maiden name appears to have been Wendish, variously spelt as Zarrotzke and Zerichskey.

Shortly after their arrival in Melbourne, the Kurtzmann's moved to Westgarthtown, then known as Keelbundora or Dry Creek. In an 1850 subdivisional map, Christian Kurtzmann appears as occupier and intended buyer of Lots 7 & 8, Section 25, Parish of Keelbundora (9 acres covering the area of today's Tramoo and Hurtle Streets). For whatever reason, Christian did not buy this land, instead purchasing 67 acres (Lots 11 & 12) on 1 June 1853 from Julius Groening for £255.

In order to purchase his land, Christian had been naturalised as a Victorian citizen on 2 March 1853. Three weeks later, on 20 March 1853, Holda Klarchen Kurtzmann, born at Westgarthtown on 7 January 1853, was baptised by Pastor Matthias Goethe. Other Kurtzmann children known to have been born at Westgarthtown were Christine (1855) and Johann Christian Reinhold (1856). A further daughter, Rose Minnie, was later born on the Caledonian Goldfields (formerly Queenstown, now St Andrews) in 1859.

The Neu Mecklenburg (Westgarthtown) Lutheran School records show that Christian Kurtzmann had three children of school age in 1855 – Pauline, Heinrich and Emil. The same year he donated £10 towards the erection of the schoolhouse.

Mrs Johanna Kurtzmann served as the midwife at many births at Westgarthtown and was also a godparent to Emma Bertha Winter (1859), Johann Carl Wuchatsch (1860), Emilie Caroline Winter (1860) and Johanna Christine Wuchatsch (1862). The Winter and Wuchatsch families were neighbours of the Kurtzmann's, their properties adjoining the Kurtzmann farm. By 1859, however, the Kurtzmann's appear to have left Westgarthtown, so must have made periodic visits back for special events.

On 5 July 1858, Christian had sold his farm to

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## Christian & Johanna Kurtzmann

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Georg Nebel for £700. Included in the sale were all the farm's improvements, plus two cows, two heifers, one plough, one harrow and a roller. Under the terms of the contract, the Kurtzmann's retained possession until 1 April 1859, but when Rose Minnie was born at the Caledonian Diggings in March 1859, Christian's occupation was given as miner, so he and Johanna appear to have already left by then.

Why Christian sold his farm and left Westgarthtown is not known, but as he was at the Caledonian Diggings in 1859 and Jamieson by 1860, he appears to have had a continuing interest in either goldmining or goldfields life. One report states that when Christian first moved to Jamieson, he worked as a carpenter, before later returning to farming. A son, Henry, along with two miners named Shaw and Marrow, subsequently discovered the Blue Ribbon reef on Purdy Creek in June 1890, from which they are said to have won nearly 4000 ounces of gold between 1890 – 1894.

Christian died at Jamieson on 24 December 1887 aged 74 and was buried on Christmas Day in the Jamieson Cemetery. His wife Johanna died on 23 October 1898 aged 81 and was buried with Christian. Interestingly, her name on her headstone is given as Honora, no doubt a variation of Hanna, by which she was probably known.

Most of Christian and Johanna's children also lived in north-eastern Victoria, although their descendants have now spread all over Australia. John Christian (Johann Christian Reinhold) Kurtzmann ran the Australian Hotel at Benalla for many years and claimed to have sheltered Ned Kelly more than once. One of Henry (Heinrich, born 1845) Kurtzmann's sons, William (Bill), had no children of his own, but (according to Chas Ryall) 'more or less adopted a three year old who played near the Barellan Tennis Club of which he was President. Her name was Evonne Goolagong and it was Bill who arranged the (legal) adoption of Evonne by Vic Edwards and paid Vic for Evonne's tuition and her board out of his own pocket. Later when Evonne's fame spread, other Barellan people assisted and contributed towards Evonne's expenses. When Bill died in 1973, Evonne was abroad, but wrote to the editor of the local newspaper, concluding with the following:

He has given me a lot in life, so I thought up these few words,

To the most wonderful man I know  
 He gave me a racquet  
 He gave me hope  
 He gave me direction  
 And most of all he gave me  
 A life of happiness  
 May he rest in peace.

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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.