

On **Anzac Day** 25 April 2009 Australia and New Zealand will again commemorate the sacrifices of its servicemen and women during wartime. In this issue, **Robert Wuchatsch** writes about soldiers from Westgarthtown who served in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) and the First World War (1914–1918).



Pte C. F. Graff, 3rd Battalion,
pictured kneeling in centre

REMEMBERING WESTGARTHHTOWN'S SERVICEMEN

Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, the Broadmeadows Army Camp was established and its row upon row of tents were clearly visible to the residents of Westgarthtown

only five kilometres to the east. Troops regularly drilled throughout the area, including the Light Horse Regiments. At the Epping Shire Council's December 1914 meeting, it was mentioned that soldiers from the camp had recently 'taken possession' of Thomastown during exercises. When Cr Albert Wuchatsch jokingly posed the question 'Have they bombarded Germantown yet?' the chamber exploded with laughter. Sensitivities, however, were soon to be sorely tested.

As early as February 1915 the loyalty of 'Germans' at Westgarthtown had been brought into question. An anonymous complaint was lodged against Frederick Siebel who was carting supplies with a horse and dray to the Broadmeadows Army Camp. The complainant claimed

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WHITTLESEA SHIRE ELECTIONS.

EPPING RIDING.

TO THE RATEPAYERS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I desire to inform you that I am a Candidate for one of the vacancies in the above Riding. Since you elected me as one of your representatives about three years ago I have always endeavored to carry out my duties in a fair and honorable manner, without fear or favor, and during my term of office have attended every meeting of the Council, and all deputations arising therefrom. Having heard that reports are being circulated that I am a pro-German, viz., a sympathiser with Germany in the present war. I desire to give such reports a most emphatic denial. I have at present three cousins of the same name as myself fighting since the beginning of the war. Two are in France and the other in the Light Horse in Egypt. Their sister's husband is also in France. I am proud to say that my youngest brother has enlisted and would have done so long ago, but he was suffering from appendicitis and was operated on last November. As for the name of Wuchatsch, it has been known in this district since 1850 as an honorable one. My grandfathers and father and mother I am proud of, and try to emulate them as well as I can. If you think that because my name is what it is I am not fit to represent you in the Council, then by all means return some one else. I am simply standing for what I consider the best interests of the Shire. Those who are able to look after their own business are, I think, the most suitable ones to look after that of the district at large.

Yours faithfully,

ALBERT WUCHATSCH.

that the Siebel's were 'well-to-do' and did not try to hide their sympathy for Germany. It was also claimed 'there is a town of Germans called Germantown at Thomastown who are all very pro-German and require attention and that there were many miles of open channels of water leading to the Preston reservoir that may be poisoned by these people.'

Military intelligence authorities correctly, as a matter of policy, checked out all complaints, often through the local police. In this case, Constable Woodhouse of the Epping Police reported 'Siebel...is a native of Thomastown. His father is also but his father was a German. I have never heard of them being disloyal in any way or making disloyal statements.' He went on to repeat that he could find no one who had heard of any disloyal statements uttered by anyone at Thomastown and he added that they had all, with one naturalised exception, been born in Australia and that all had given freely to the Patriotic Fund.

Several more 'German' families at Westgarthtown were also the subject of anonymous accusations over the course of the war. It was not only in private or business dealings that allegations of disloyalty were made. During the Whittlesea Shire Council elections in August 1916, Cr Albert Wuchatsch was accused of being pro-German. Although he took out advertising space in the *Preston Leader* to reaffirm his loyalty to Australia, he lost his seat. While there were other factors involved (a recent amalgamation of the Shires of Epping and Whittlesea necessitated a reduction in the number of councillors) the fact that he was a 'German' was raised.

In general, complaints against those of German descent were sparked by three main sets of circumstances. Some were made in fits of patriotic fervour, often during enlistment or conscription campaigns. Others were made in times of emotional stress, such as death or injury of a relative or friend. Sadly, many were made by individuals seeking personal gain, either financial or political, or those just envious of 'Germans' possessing things they did not.

Although the complaints against 'Germans' at Westgarthtown did not in any way prove disloyalty, these unfortunate incidents equally did not confirm loyalty. Australian 'Germans' undoubtedly had misgivings at being at war with the land of their ancestors, but most gave freely to patriotic funds and many enlisted. The stories of some of those servicemen with links to Westgarthtown, along with another who fought in the Boer War, are included in this newsletter.

More soldiers will be included in future newsletters.

Advertisement from *Preston Leader* 12 August 1916

Fred Graff (1894–1917)

Private Carl Frederick (Fred) Graff was born at Westgarthtown in 1894, the son of Charles and Catherine (nee Storey) Graff. Fred was the great-grandson of Johann and Johanna Graff, who settled at Westgarthtown in 1850 (see *Friends of Westgarthtown News* Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1998).

Fred attended Thomastown State School from 1900–1907 and then helped on the family farm, before training as a blacksmith with a neighbour, Johann Kreitling. Sometime before the start of the First World War, Fred's father Charles moved the family to Queenstown in Tasmania, where he found work at the Comstock Mine. It is not known whether Fred lived there, but the family was still there when Fred enlisted with the 3rd Infantry Battalion at Sydney on 26 August 1914. His Regt. No. was 1124. He was then aged 20 and had previously spent three months training as a cadet.

After training at Randwick, Fred embarked at Sydney aboard the *Euripides* for Albany in Western Australia, where twenty-eight transport ships from Australia and ten from New Zealand were to assemble to travel in convoy to Egypt, escorted by cruisers to protect them from German raiders. On 1 November 1914, the convoy departed Albany, safely reaching Egypt early in December.

After further training over the next few months, the 3rd Battalion embarked at Alexandria on 5 April 1915, on their way to the epic landing at Gallipoli on 25 April. Fred landed at Anzac Cove that morning and remained at Gallipoli until September when he was evacuated to Imbros with diarrhoea, then Lemnos and Malta with lumbago and finally England where he was admitted to hospital at Bristol. He finally rejoined the 3rd Battalion in Egypt in March 1916, just in time to sail for France, where he served until he was killed in action at Pozieres on the Somme between 22–27 July 1916.

Fred was buried close to the road from Contalmaison to Pozieres, just south-east of Pozieres, three and three-quarter miles north-east of Albert. Unfortunately, the location of his grave is no longer known, but his name is commemorated on the memorial in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery and also on panel 36 in the commemorative area at the Australian War Memorial.

Arnold Graff (1896–?)

One of Fred's brother's, Arnold Heinrich Graff, also served in the First World War, but with the New Zealand Army. Arnold, born at Westgarthtown, attended Thomastown State School from 1900–1908 but was working as a miner in New Zealand early in the war and enlisted there on 9 October 1915. After initial training there, Sapper Graff Regt. No. 4/1507 of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company sailed in December 1915 for England via Montevideo and Dakar aboard the *Ruapehu*. After arrival at Plymouth in February 1916, his unit camped at Falmouth for training and leave purposes, then embarked for France the following month.

Arnold was admitted to hospital on 31 March 1918 with wounds to the right leg, head, left thigh and left buttock, probably caused by shrapnel. After recovering, he is believed to have rejoined his unit, which embarked for Auckland in March 1919 aboard the *Ionic* and arrived there on 23 April.

Arnold Graff was honourably discharged on 15 May 1919 as 'no longer physically fit for War Service', having served three years and 82 days overseas. He later returned to Australia and lived in Melbourne. On 29 July 1940, during the Second World War, he enlisted in the Australian Army but served only briefly and was discharged on 3 January 1941.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.
CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.

No. 4/1507 Rank: Sapper Unit: N.Z. Tunnellers (Lun Coy)
Name: Arnold Heinrich Graff

is discharged in consequence of being no longer physically fit for War Service
on account of wounds received in action

Service about 3 years 82 days

DESCRIPTION OF SOLDIER ON ENLISTMENT.

Age: 22 years Height: 5 feet 7 inches
Complexion: Fair Eyes: Grey
Hair: Fair Trade or occupation: Miner

Signature: P. H. ... Capt.
For Major General,
Commanding New Zealand Military Forces.

15 May 1919

Arnold Graff's Discharge Certificate, 1919

Ernie Lehmann (1896–1983)

Ernest Henry (Ernie) Lehmann was born at Epping on 6 October 1896, the second child of Alfred Augustus Lehmann and Drusilla Andrews. Ernie's father was the son of Johann and Magdalena (nee Graff) Lehmann, who in 1853 had been married at the Westgarthtown home of her parents, Johann and Johanna Graff. The Lehmann farm was located on the north side of Cemetery Lane (now O'Hern's Road) Epping, just past the Zimmer and Wuchatsch properties.

Ernie attended Wollert State School, then later began a fitting and turning apprenticeship with the Victorian Railways. He enlisted on 17 August 1914, less than two weeks after the First World War began, despite not being 18 years old. It was probably for this reason he was 'Discharged Unsuitable' from the 8th Battalion on 10 September after almost a month at Broadmeadows Army Camp, although in another section of his service file, it states he was 'Discharged Med Unfit'. In his Attestation Paper he had raised his age to 19 years.

Ernie re-enlisted on 8 July 1915, this time successfully, and was allocated Regt. No. 3580 and assigned to the 8th Battalion's 22nd Reinforcements. Following training at Broadmeadows, he embarked for Egypt on 5 January 1916 and was taken on strength of the newly formed 57th Battalion of the 15th Brigade at Tel-el-Kebir on 23 February. In March he was admitted to hospital with a blood disorder and boils and not released until mid April. On 17 June, he left Alexandria for France, reaching Marseille on 23 June 1916. On 8 December he was promoted to Acting Corporal and soon after, on 9 January 1917, granted leave to England. However, he became ill shortly after arrival there and spent

almost a month in hospital, before returning to his unit in early March.

On 26 March 1917, he was wounded in action, when the 15th Brigade was advancing on Lagnicourt. He suffered a severe gunshot wound in the left leg and was evacuated to England on 17 April, where he remained in hospitals at Netley and Dartford until late July. He was then granted two weeks furlough, before spending the next nine months in various training units, including Signal School at Codford. On 18 April 1918, he finally returned to France and rejoined the 57th Battalion, serving there until January 1919, when he returned to England on leave.

After three weeks there, Ernie rejoined his unit, until he left France for the last time on 1 April. On 12 April 1919, he married May Cecilia Horne at West Hampstead, London and on 15 May 1919, embarked on the *Orontes* and arrived back in Melbourne on 28 June 1919 after three and a half years away from Australia. He was discharged from the AIF on 22 August 1919, following which Ernie and his new wife went on to raise a family of four children at Reservoir before his death in 1983, aged 86.



Ernie Lehmann at Wollert School 1908, seated second row fifth from left (photo from book *Centenary History of the Wollert State School No. 1861 1877-1977* by J.W.Payne)

Jim Wuchatsch (1885–1968)

Joseph David George Samuel (Jim) Wuchatsch was born at Epping, the tenth and last child of Johann and Johanna (nee Graff) Wuchatsch and grandson of Johann and Magdalene Wuchatsch, of Westgarthtown. Registered at birth as Joseph David, he was baptised as George Samuel, but soon became known as George, the name in which he was confirmed in 1900. It wasn't until the First World War that he acquired his last and best known name, Jim.

Jim attended Epping State School prior to working on the family farm in Cemetery Lane (now O'Herns Road), Epping. A keen music student, he went on to become a popular social pianist and church organist throughout the district. He enlisted for active service on 7 September 1916, his entry into the army delayed by a former ban on those whose fathers had been born in Germany. He was allotted Regt. No. 17818, the rank of Driver and entered camp two weeks later. The *Preston Leader* of 11 November 1916 noted that all recent Epping volunteers had been presented with money belts and wallets by the local community. On 25 November 1916 the same paper reported:

The many friends of Drivers J. Wuchatsch and T. Bower of the Engineers will be interested to learn that both expect to entrain at Seymour this week for Sydney, where they expect to be in camp for a few weeks before leaving for the Front. A party of relatives and friends paid them a visit last Sunday and all had an enjoyable time.

While in Sydney Jim and Tom were involved in an incident which almost ended in tragedy for them. A newspaper report (name and date unknown) reported that 'a madman intent on hurling himself to death on the rocks' at South Head had been saved by 'Thomas Bower and Joseph Wuckatsh, two soldiers attached to the Engineers Camp at Moore Park'. After a struggle lasting almost half an hour in which all three men almost fell off the cliff, they subdued the man and he was taken to Watson's Bay Police Station.

Jim and Tom sailed for Europe on 10 May 1917 with the March Reinforcements Field Company Engineers and arrived at Devonport, England on 20 July 1917. After six months training at Brightlingsea, Jim was sent to France in January 1918 and soon after was taken on strength of the 15th Field Company Engineers at Spy Farm, Wytchaete near Messines in Belgium. His unit, whose main function was to build or repair roads, bridges and trenches for the



Jim Wuchatsch, Brightlingsea, 1917

15th Brigade, saw active service in several decisive battles in Flanders and on the Somme during 1918. Altogether he served 284 days in the firing line, in both Belgium and France.

On 8 November 1918, three days before the war ended, Jim was granted two weeks leave, which he spent in England and Scotland. On his return to France he wrote home to Beatrice Zimmer (now Beatrice Vearing) in a postcard dated 22 November 1918 stating 'We are expecting to go on a long march towards Germany soon'. His unit did not reach Germany, however, returning only to Belgium where it stayed for several months.

On 25 March 1919, Jim commenced two weeks sightseeing in Paris, then in April his unit left Belgium for England. He arrived back in Melbourne via Cape Town in August and was discharged on 11 September 1919. On 21 April 1920, he and many other local returned servicemen were presented with certificates of appreciation by the Shire of Whittlesea.

In 1921, Jim married Marion Cook of Rochford and together they established a small farm in Rockfield Road (now Harvest Home Lane West), Epping. Jim was also a foundation member and Vice-President of the Epping sub-branch of the RSSAILA (now RSL), which was formed in 1920. Jim and Marion remained at Epping until 1967, just prior to their deaths in 1968.

Adolph Schmutsch (1881-?)

Adolph (Dolph) Schmutsch was one of two great-grandsons of Christian and Sophia Ziebell to serve Australia in the Boer War. He also enlisted and fought in the First World War, serving at both Gallipoli and the Western Front. According to his nephew Herb Shaw, Dolph later 'screamed blue murder at being refused re-enlistment' for the Second World War, although two of his sons – Arthur and Ronald - served and were taken prisoner at Crete.

Dolph was the son of Adolph Schmutsch, a sea captain from Holstein and Ernestine Karsten, the daughter of Heinrich and Marie Karsten (nee Ziebell) of Westgarthtown. Ernestine, who had been born at Westgarthtown in 1859, apparently met Adolph when his ship visited Melbourne and they married there in 1879, after which they moved to Germany to live. Adolph and Ernestine had four children before his early death, although two had died by the time she returned to Australia in 1887. In 1888 she married another German, Fritz Riebeling. Dolph's 1881 birthplace was Germany according to most reports, however, he gave London as his place of birth on his First World War enlistment form, possibly to avoid problems relating to service by non-British subjects.

Along with his brother Frederick (Friedrich Wilhelm Schmutsch), Dolph attended Thomastown State School from 1887–1890, but the family then left Westgarthtown, later settling at Albany in Western Australia. Little is known of Dolph's Boer War service, but according to his First World War enlistment form, he served in South Africa with both the Scottish Horse's 2nd Regiment and the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse's 2nd Battalion.

Early in 1901 Dolph, then a tramway trackman of Fitzroy, travelled to South Africa and enlisted in the Scottish Horse at Cape Town on 15 February. He is believed to have served with the 2nd Regiment for eight months, being discharged on 25 October 1901. He then joined the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse, which was raised in Australia early in 1902. By the end of March, the first battalions had arrived at Durban and moved to northern Natal. In April 1902, they fought the Boers at Roodeval Farm, Brak Spruit in western Transvaal, before the 1st and 2nd Battalions were attached to Col. A.W. Thornycroft's column to drive the Boers towards the western railway. Not long after, on 31 May 1902, the depleted Boers surrendered and the war ended. As

a result of his service, Dolph received the Queens South Africa Medal with clasps Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Transvaal, South Africa 1901 and South Africa 1902.

In the First World War, Gunner Dolph Schmutsch Regt. No. 1495 commenced service with the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade Ammunition Column. Then a ship's fireman, he enlisted on 18 August 1914, just two weeks after the outbreak of war. He embarked for Egypt via Albany on 20 October 1914 aged 31, leaving his wife Mary at their home in Charles Street, Northcote. His service record reveals several periods of detention for minor absences without leave before arriving at Gallipoli, where he received a bullet wound to the buttocks on 11 August 1915. He was evacuated first to Malta, then England, before being posted to France in May 1916. After service there, interspersed with more detentions, he was granted leave to England in August 1917. After that he was transferred to the 1st Field Artillery Brigade and returned to France where he received shell concussion in October 1917. On recovery, he was posted to Belgium, where he served until June 1918, when he was transferred to England. He remained there until August when he departed for Australia. He finally arrived back in Melbourne on 4 October 1918.

It is not known when or where Dolph died. Interestingly, his brother Frederick changed his name by deed poll from Schmutsch to Shaw, presumably to avoid the anti-German sentiment aroused by the First World War. One of his sons, Stanley Shaw, won a scholarship to Oxford University and later became a Professor of Structural Engineering while another, Herbert Shaw, created a very successful engineering business. Dolph and Frederick's half-brother, Frederick Riebeling, also contributed two sons — Edwyn and Fred — who fought for Australia in World War Two, one at Tobruk and the other in New Guinea.



Adolph Schmutsch's mother Ernestine standing at left.

J.J. Peters (1879–1967)

John Julius Peters (J.J.Peters) was born at Westgarthtown on 25 July 1879. The son of Julius and Alice (nee Wilson) Peters and grandson of Daniel and Louisa (nee Ziebell) Peters, he was a great-grandson of Christian and Sophia Ziebell.

Daniel Peters, along with the Ziebell family, arrived in Australia from Mecklenburg aboard the *Pribislaw* in February 1850. He and Louisa married at Scots Church, Melbourne in about 1851 and had three children — Julius (c.1852), Louis (c.1854) and Henry (1856) — before Louisa's death on 14 March 1856 aged 28, shortly after Henry's birth.

The Peters family lived in a small stone cottage on two acres purchased from Christian Ziebell in October 1856, but they had probably built the cottage and been there for several years before that. Some time after Daniel's death on 20 August 1876, aged about 55, Julius moved back there. In 1877, he married Alice Wilson, of Epping.

J.J.Peters was born in 1879 while his parents were living at Westgarthtown and appears to have remained there until about 1891, after which no more Peters children are recorded as having attended the Thomastown State School. His mother Alice died of typhoid in 1889, having borne six children and his father Julius remarried soon after, eventually increasing the number of children to eleven.

On enlistment with the Victorian Mounted Rifles in January 1901, J.J.Peters was living at Clifton Hill. He was then aged 21 and according to a grand daughter, Bev Reid of Auckland, had worked at droving and other jobs in various parts of Australia, including Albury, Mildura, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. He is also said to have had a good tenor voice and been coached at one time by Nellie Melba.

Private J.J.Peters Regt. No. 1266 sailed for South Africa with the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles on 15 February 1901. Little is known of his service, other than a brief mention in relation to the disastrous Wilmansrust incident in the Transvaal on the evening of 12 June 1901 when the Boers ambushed the Victorian Mounted Rifles camp and killed the Regiment's surgeon and 18 non-commissioned officers and men. A further five officers and 36 NCOs and men were wounded. The Victorians were then attached to the column of Major-General S.B.Beatson, a distinguished Indian Army cavalry officer and under the command of Major C.J.N.Morris, of the Royal Field Artillery.

Bendigo German Heritage Society

If you had German ancestors in the Bendigo district, the German Heritage Society, Bendigo may be able to help you. In 2008 this society celebrated its 20th Anniversary, having been established in 1988 to promote research into and recognition of the German presence in Bendigo.

A notable advance in the awareness of Bendigo's German heritage was the publication in 1998 of the book *Bendigo the German Chapter* by Frank Cusack, author and historian and foundation member of the German Heritage Society, Bendigo.

The German Heritage Society, Bendigo can be contacted via the Secretary at 154 Barnard Street, Bendigo Vic. 3550. Tel: 5441 5955

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

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

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.
Tel/Fax: 08 8340 4009.
Email: lutheran.archives@lca.org.au

BOER WAR



J.J.Peters in uniform and the Peters' family cottage at Westgarthtown

R.L.Wallace, in his book *The Australians at the Boer War*, writes:

“Kitchener mentioned the wounded veterinary officer, Captain Samuel Sherlock, in his despatches of 8 July 1901. Trooper J.J.Peters ably supported Sherlock. The despatch read: ‘When the doctor was killed Captain Sherlock took charge of 40 wounded, and by his skill and attention, much alleviated suffering and danger.

The blame for the disaster, caused by insufficient and wrongly placed picquets (sentries), was mainly placed on Major Morris or the Victorians, depending on whether it was looked at through Australian or British eyes. However, in March 1902, shortly before the Regiment’s return to Australia, Kitchener sent a telegram thanking the Victorians for their ‘gallant and arduous service in this country’. As well as Wilmansrust, the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles had also been engaged at Rhenoster Kop, Klippan, Kornfontein, Drivelfontein, Kambuladraai, H’Lobane, Luchiel’s Nek, Loch’s Kraal, Vryheid, Onverwacht and Johnston Hoek.

On his discharge in Melbourne, after 1 year and 102 days service, J.J.Peters was described as aged 23, height 5 ft 6 in, complexion dark, eyes hazel, hair brown, trade labourer and conduct very good. For his service he received the South African Medal.

J.J.Peters’ descendants say his father Julius strongly disapproved of him having gone to fight the Boers. For whatever reason, J.J.Peters had by 1905 moved to the Waikato district of New Zealand. In 1906 at Te Awamutu he married Lydia Caroline Clark and proceeded to raise a family of ten children, including three sons who later served with the NZ Army in the Second World War. During the First World War he is said to have joined the NZ Army and trained mounted recruits. His peacetime jobs included well digging, working on the railway extension from Hamilton to Wellington and as a worker in a freezing plant.

On his wife’s early death in 1925, he was left to raise the six youngest children, which he did with hired help. A quiet man who did not talk to his family about his war service, John Julius Peters died at Hamilton, New Zealand on 20 June 1967 aged 88 years.

FRIENDS OF WESTGARTHTOWN INC.

ABN 74 674 258 165 Inc. Reg No. A0032721Y

Enquiries (03) 9464 5062
PO Box 95 Thomastown VIC 3074
enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au
www.westgarthtown.org.au

President **Sylvia Schultz**
Vice-President **Geoff Borrack**
Secretary **Gillian Borrack**
Treasurer **Léon Borrack**
Committee **Rob Wuchatsch**
Pauline Atkins

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Tours Coordinator **Tatiana Joukoff**
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Caretakers **Nanette Jelleff**
Duncan Steele

Editor **Rob Wuchatsch**
Design **Léon Borrack**

Westgarthtown is the oldest and most intact German/ Wendish settlement in Victoria. Established in March 1850, it will celebrate its 160th Anniversary in the year 2010.

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.