

## Restorations Completed at Maltzahn's Farmhouse



**M**altzahn's Farmhouse at Lalor, threatened for over a decade from demolition by the Ministry of Housing, was finally re-opened on 1 February 2002 following major restoration works by Heritage Victoria.

At a ceremony attended by over 60 people, Maltzahn's Farmhouse was officially re-opened by the Acting Victorian Planning Minister Justin Madden, who praised Heritage Victoria for its restoration work and the City of Whittlesea and its residents for the determined fight they had made to save this historic building.

Speakers included Ms Catherine Heggen, Chair of Heritage Victoria, Cr John Fry, Mayor of the City of Whittlesea and Justin Madden MLC. In all speeches, references were made to the completion of restoration work at Maltzahn's Farmhouse as being the reinstatement of a major missing piece of the Westgarthtown jigsaw.

The re-opening of Maltzahn's farmhouse was also attended by the German Consul-General Hans-Michael Schwandt, who since his arrival in Melbourne in November 1998 has taken a close interest in Westgarthtown. Mr Schwandt, who in 1999 wrote to the then Planning Minister Mr Robert McLellan urging him to preserve the house, said Maltzahn's Farmhouse was important in reminding people of their varied roots, as so much of Victoria's German heritage was denied or renamed because of anti-German sentiment during World War 1.

It was particularly pleasing to see so many Maltzahn

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# Restoration Work in Westgarthtown Cemetery

**R**estoration of the most badly damaged monuments in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery will commence shortly. The most urgent work is expected to be completed by mid 2002, utilising Federal Government grant funding.

During 2001 the City of Whittlesea commissioned a study by Lodge Bros Pty Ltd into restoration work required at the cemetery. The Friends of Westgarthtown was invited to comment on priorities and submitted its response in February 2002.

The City of Whittlesea will shortly seek approval from representatives of descendants whose monuments are to

be restored. At the same time these restorations are being undertaken it is also planned to reinstate the main gates to German Lane and the east and west pedestrian gates. Completion of this work will substantially improve this very historic and unique cemetery.

Completion of the new booklet on the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery, details of which were advised in previous newsletters, has been deferred pending receipt of essential burials information from the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and completion of the major restoration works mentioned above.

## Restoration's Completed at Mattzahn's Farmhouse

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descendants at the opening, one of whom, Dianne Maltzahn, a Great Grand daughter of Johann Maltzahn, unveiled a commemorative plaque.

The rear section of Maltzahn's Farmhouse is believed to have been built during the early 1850s and the larger front section some time later, possibly during the early Kreitling period of occupation. During the early 1860s Johann Maltzahn and his family moved several kilometres west to the Merri Creek near Campbellfield and let the house to other Germans, including Carl Ewert. By the mid 1860s Johann Andreas Kreitling and his wife Alwina (nee Karsten) had moved in and the Kreitling family was to remain there for almost sixty years, purchasing it from the Maltzahn family during the early 1900s. Subsequent owners

or occupants have included the Pettit, Hughes, Wennagel and Ziebell families.

Maltzahn's Farmhouse will not now be sold, as previously advised. The Ministry of Planning has made the house available to Plenty Valley Community Health Services which will accommodate people with learning difficulties.

Celebrations at the re-opening of Maltzahn's Farmhouse



### Westgarthtown Open Day

**O**n Sunday 14 April 2002, the Friends of Westgarthtown, along with the City of Whittlesea and Thomastown Lutheran Church, will again combine to present Westgarthtown's unique heritage to members, residents and the general public.

The day will commence with a church service at 11.15 am. As seating is limited, those people wishing to attend should arrive early. Following the service, Ziebell's Farmhouse will be open for inspection until 5.00 pm.

Those attending the church service or wishing to

arrive early are invited to have their lunch (BYO) in or around Ziebell's Farmhouse and garden. Hot water will be available.

A guided walking tour of Westgarthtown will commence at Ziebell's at 2.00 pm visiting the Lutheran Church, the remaining bluestone buildings including the recently restored Maltzahn farmhouse and concluding the walk with a tour of the Lutheran pioneer cemetery. Afternoon tea refreshments will be served at the Ziebell farmhouse.

### Dry Stone Walls Forum and Bus Tour

**P**lenty Valley Arts and the Friends of Westgarthtown, in association with the City of Whittlesea, will hold a Dry Stone Walls Forum and Bus Tour on Saturday 13 April 2002.

The Forum will commence at 10.00 am at the Fountain View Room, City of Whittlesea Civic Centre, Ferres Boulevard, South Morang. Speakers, including Friends of Westgarthtown committee members Rob Wuchatsch and Geoff Borrack, will discuss the history of dry stone walling in Victoria and the City of Whittlesea and also the use of stone for other construction purposes. Friends of Westgarthtown's Ellen Mitchell is the convenor for this event, and she is happy to answer any enquiries at 9836 2917.

At 12.00 noon lunch will be provided, then from 1.00 – 4.30 pm a bus tour will be conducted to inspect various significant dry stone walls in the City of Whittlesea. Afternoon tea will be taken at St John's Anglican Church, Epping. The cost is \$25 per person. For further details, see the enclosed flyer – bookings essential.

From Tuesday 16 April to Sunday 21 April 2002 (1.30 – 4.30 pm), the Friends of Westgarthtown will host the travelling exhibition A Stone Upon a Stone at Ziebell's Farmhouse. This dry stone walls exhibition, prepared by

Melbourne resident Raelene Marshall, will consist of 24 display panels, one of which will relate to dry stone walls in the City of Whittlesea. Volunteers are needed to man the exhibition on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons for an hour or two. Please contact Ellen at 9836 2917 if you can help.

One of the magnificent stone walls at Fenwick Park



## Trinity Lutheran Church Archives East Melbourne

**T**rinity German Lutheran Church has established a substantial archives at the rear of its manse at East Melbourne and are happy to assist researchers with enquiries.

Amongst the holdings at the Trinity Archives is a full set from 1860-1917 of *Der Australische Christenbote*, the monthly Lutheran Church journal established first by Pastor Goethe and then continued on for about 40 years by Pastor Herlitz.

### Maria Karsten

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sent a present of jewellery to Mrs von Oertzen via her father Christian Ziebell on one of his return visits to Mecklenburg. – Carl von Oertzen sent a very moving letter of thanks to Maria telling her that Mrs von Oertzen has passed away before receiving the gift.

The journey to Australia from Hamburg is described in the notes on Heinrich Karsten, and it must have been horrendous for Maria who had two small children, Alwine and Rudolph, the latter probably dying on the trip out. Maria was also pregnant with the baby Christian, who was born just after their arrival in Port Phillip in March 1850. – It would also appear that Maria followed her husband Heinrich to the ‘Goldfields’ where she lost three children, Christian Herman, Johanna Christa and a twin Heinrich in the Sandhurst (Bendigo) area.

Living conditions on the Goldfields must have been extreme. Efforts have been made to locate the graves of the three children, but despite extensive research by Dorothy Strauch, of the ‘Bendigo German Historical Society’, no trace of their burial place can be found.

Maria, Heinrich and family returned to Neu Mecklenburg (Westgarthtown), apparently unsuccessful in finding their fortune in ‘Gold’. They built a ‘Blue-Stone’ home on two acres of Christian Ziebell’s land where they raised their family of six daughters. No sons survived to carry on the Karsten name through Heinrich’s lineage in Australia. The ‘Karsten’ home was pulled down in the

*Der Australische Christenbote* was printed in German, but is worth researching for family history purposes as most issues from the 1870s onward contains a list of births, deaths and marriages which are well worth reading, as they sometimes contain information not available elsewhere.

For further information, contact Trinity Archives on 9654 5743 or fax 9650 6937.

1980’s.

Maria lived to the great age of 96 years, apparently spending her last years with her youngest daughter ‘Minnie’ Anna Maria Wilhelmina and son-in-law Carl Oldenburg in Preston Victoria.

Heinrich and Maria Karsten are buried together next to their grandson Carl Oldenburg in the German Cemetery at Thomastown. - Their names are recorded on the Victorian ‘Pioneers Wall’ No 12563 at the Immigration Museum (‘old Customs House’) Flinders St. Melbourne.

New information from the ‘Individual Summary for Heinrich Friedrich Jacob Karsten’ or ‘Notes’ by Carl Stewart Robertson.

- In 1853 Heinrich and Maria Karsten were amongst many signatories along with a number of the Ziebells and their extended families when presenting a petition to the Lieutenant Governor by the Congregation requesting that half an acre of land be provided near St. Peter’s Church, East Melbourne for building their own church.

- On the 10 August 1852 the Miners of Bendigo despairing of the conditions drew up a Petition to Lieutenant Governor Latrobe titled: ‘1852 Goldfields Petition of Bendigo Diggers’. It was signed by 1989 Diggers including Heinrich Karsten and it was a plea to the Lt. Governor and the Executive Council requesting urgent attention to the bad conditions of the Geelong, Melbourne to Bendigo roads and crossings. These conditions were so bad it made it difficult to get provisions through and forced food and goods prices up to ‘famine prices’. (Carl Robertson has a copy of the Petition)

## Reference to Mrs Annie Zimmer

Recently whilst reading the December 2001 edition of *Ancestor*, the quarterly journal of the Genealogical Society of Victoria, I came across an 1863 reference to an elderly unnamed German woman who had taken a coach from Brunswick to Broadford to see her daughter. Thinking this could only be Mrs Annie Zimmer of Westgarthtown, I immediately set about to hopefully confirm my suspicions. Fortunately I was right, Mrs Zimmer having travelled to Broadford to visit her daughter Agnes Zwar who had just given birth to a son, Albert Michael Zwar, on Friday 17 July 1863.

The reference to Mrs Zimmer was contained in a letter written at Savernake, NSW on 28 July 1863 by Janet Gibson. The relevant extract is as follows

From Melbourne to Kilmore the coach was full. We took in at Brunswick an old German woman who was going to Broadford to see 'dater' who had one little 'shilde' on Friday and was 'very bad'. She had been in

this country for a long time, evidently she had sojourned amongst her own people more than others as her English was very imperfect. I took at least one half on credit.

The lady passenger was the Wesleyan Minister's wife at Kilmore a very pleasant person. I shared my sandwiches with her & the German and she did her buns ... all the passengers except the German & Swiss digger left at Kilmore and the German stopped at Broadford.

This letter gives us a wonderful glimpse into the life of Mrs Zimmer. Staying amongst her own people at Westgarthtown, her English was understandably 'imperfect'. Her Wendish/German accent would not have helped either. She probably caught the coach at Brunswick to ensure a seat, having possibly visited or stayed at the home of the Hempel family, fellow Wends and Pribislaw passengers who lived in Glen Lyon Road. Despite the distance from Westgarthtown to Broadford, Mrs Zimmer probably visited Agnes regularly, especially during confinements or after she had given birth.

## Death of John Schuster at Ziebell's Farm

Research through Victorian inquest records by Rob Wuchatsch during 2001 has revealed the tragic death of a farmhand at Ziebell's farm during the 1870s.

On 18 December 1871, an inquest was held into the death of John Schuster, who was thrown from a horse the previous day. Jurors on the inquest included fellow Westgarthtown residents John Seeber, George Nebel, August Wuchatsch and Julius Feistel, along with residents of the nearby Wesleyan/Methodist settlement at Thomastown.

Giving evidence into the death, Edward Holton, a labourer 'residing at German Town' stated that

I knew the deceased John Schuster by sight. I was present yesterday afternoon when he was injured. Deceased took a horse out of the stable, mounted it, and it bolted with him. Before he had gone many yards he was thrown from the saddle and his head came across a stone. The horse

was not frightened by any person. I do not know what made him bolt. Deceased was sober. Two other men were present but they did nothing to frighten the horse. So far as I could see it was purely accidental.

Adolph Groning, another labourer working for Mr. Ziebell, added

I knew the deceased John Schuster. He was a German about 29 years old. He was a labourer in Mr Ziebels (sic) employ. Yesterday I saw deceased mounting a horse by the stable. He had one foot in the stirrup and was throwing his other leg over the saddle when the horse bolted and after he had gone a very short way he was thrown off and killed at once. The horse was quite quiet apparently. I do not know what made the horse start.

The jury found that the death was accidental. Schuster was probably buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery but this has not yet been confirmed.

### **Ziebell's Farmhouse Now Open Second Sunday of Each Month**

Since September 2001, Ziebell's Farmhouse has been open to visitors on one day each month, in addition to regular booked tours. These improved access arrangements are part of the Friends of Westgarthtown's agreement with the City of Whittlesea to manage and operate Ziebell's Farmhouse for tourism purposes.

The monthly Sunday openings are the responsibility of Friends of Westgarthtown member and Ziebell's Farmhouse caretaker Gaye Lohse, who has been resident in the adjoining caretaker's house since July 2001. Gaye's address is 2A Ainwick Crescent, Thomastown, Vic 3074 and her telephone number is 9464 0140. She can be contacted for enquiries regarding access to Ziebell's Farmhouse at other times, including wedding photos. For enquiries regarding group tours, contact Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917.

### **Gardening Working Bees at Ziebell's Farmhouse**

Regular monthly working bees in the garden at Ziebell's Farmhouse continue to be held under the guidance of Sylvia Schultz and co-ordinated by Gillian Borrack.

More volunteers are always welcome. Working bees run from 10.00 am – 4.00 pm on the first Saturday of each month. Bring your own lunch, hat and gloves! Tea, coffee and gardening tools provided. A wonderful way to increase your gardening skills and knowledge. The small heritage orchard planted last winter continues to flourish along with the two herb gardens located near the Smokehouse and the Drying sheds. The enclosed courtyard garden and larger main gardens continued to bloom throughout the summer and made spectacular backgrounds to two sets of wedding photographs in recent weeks.

### **Guided Tours of Westgarthtown**

Ellen Mitchell continues to be busy arranging and conducting tours to Westgarthtown. During the February/March period a number of very large and enthusiastic groups from different metropolitan areas visited Westgarthtown.

The Doncaster Probus Club, led by their chairman David Cook, brought 46 members to the precinct on 21 February. I engaged a university friend, Alison Banay, to assist me with guiding and serving refreshments to this group. The Port Phillip Pioneers Group followed on Sunday 24 February and expert guiding was provided by Robert Wuchatsch, aided by Gaye Lohse.

Last Wednesday, 20 March, 39 members of the Brighton Antique Club made an excursion to the Ziebells led by Val Thomson. While Elizabeth Trenerry and Ellen Mitchell introduced the group to the house and the farm buildings, Irma Hatty, Secretary of the Lutheran Church of Thomastown, opened the church and presented an account of her recollections associated with the church to a highly appreciative audience.

A booking enquiry has been received from a secondary School in Canberra for their German year 10 students for September 2002. Westgarthtown's 'fame' is spreading... As tours are becoming larger and more frequent, assistance is sought from volunteers for various tasks associated with tours, from preparing the rooms to helping with serving of refreshments to guiding. Please direct enquiries and offers of interest to Ellen on 9836 2917.

### **Search for Photographs, Films and Videos**

Rob Wuchatsch would be very interested to hear from anyone who has old photographs, films (ordinary or Super 8) or videos relating to the Westgarthtown area. He would like to hear of any material which might exist, particularly movies from the 1950-1980 period.

### **Thomastown Pioneer Precinct Committee**

Further meetings of this committee, which oversees preservation and promotion at Westgarthtown, have been held since the last newsletter in September 2001.

Improvement works approved over the last six months include the re-alignment of German Lane to accommodate further car and bus parking; restoration works at the Lutheran Church and Cemetery; drainage works at Ziebell's Farmhouse; and erection of promotional signage on High Street and Edgar's Road.

## Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on the second and last Sunday each month at 11.15 am at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor. For further details contact Pastor Stephen Pietsch on 03 9435 6846 (Fax: 03 432 9222).

## 2001 AGM

The Friends of Westgarthtown's 5th AGM was held on Sunday 14 October 2001 at Ziebell's Farmhouse at 4.00 pm.

Committee and executive members elected were as follows:

President:	Rob Wuchatsch
Vice-President:	Geoff Borrack
Treasurer:	Paul Schultz
Secretary:	Gillian Borrack
Public Relations Officer & Tours Coordinator:	Ellen Mitchell

Membership subscriptions for the 2001/2002 year are now due. If you are not paid up, you can complete the renewal form with this newsletter and return by mail or in person at the Westgarthtown Open Day on 14 April

2002.

If you are not a member, but wish to join the Friends of Westgarthtown, please write to PO Box 95, Thomastown, Vic. 3074. Fees \$10 per annum for individual members; \$15 for families. Concession rates \$5 individual; \$10 family.

## Neighbourhood Watch

In August 2001, the Friends of Westgarthtown approached the local Neighbourhood Watch group seeking to have Ziebell's farmhouse and the adjoining Church and Cemetery Reserve included in the Neighbourhood Watch area WH1 4. Our negotiations, carried out by Gaye Lohse, were successful and both Ainwick Crescent and Midholm Court have now been added to the existing area.

Gaye now attends each monthly Neighbourhood Watch meeting on the Friends of Westgarthtown's behalf, with the result that community awareness of the need for improved surveillance to protect Westgarthtown's heritage assets, particularly the church and cemetery, has been greatly increased. On 19 February 2002 Neighbourhood Watch held its monthly meeting at Ziebell's Farmhouse, with Rob Wuchatsch as guest speaker.

## Bequest

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

Lesley Barnes, Emeritus Councillor and Chairman of Activities of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) who has brought groups to Westgarthtown on several occasions, made a magnificent donation of her German great grandfather's bible to the Friends of Westgarthtown last year. It dates back to 1896 and will be referred to as the BALLHAUSEN BIBEL. The following is an extract of my letter to Lesley:

*The bible with its attractive design of a gilded and ornamented cross on its leatherbound black cover will be treasured and displayed as very special exhibit and equally valued as occasional reference work... In particular it will act as reminder that Luther's bible constituted the very source of ethical teaching, irradiating and affecting all early German Lutheran communities such as Westgarthtown in worship, work and life. As such its specific relevance to this pioneering settlement is really immense.*

*As the bible played such an important part in your ancestor's existence in Ballarat, we doubly value your decision to part from this heirloom and the sentiments it must evoke. But please be assured that the Ballhausen Bibel will live on at the Ziebell Heritage Precinct Museum (my name) and continue to tell the story of Lutheranism's centrality in German culture however distanced from the homeland, and thus making a contribution to the German/Australian history of immigration.*

P.S. Lesley has written a very appreciative letter back together with documented material on the Ballhausens in Ballarat. A summary will be published in the next newsletter.

## Maria Karsten

BY CARL STEWART ROBERTSON

*Carl Stewart Robertson, G G Grandson of Christian and Sophia Ziebell, and G Grandson of Heinrich Karsten and Maria (nee Ziebell) has recently recorded his findings on his G G Parents. In his genealogical research Carl has adopted the methodology of the 'P.A.F.' [Mormon] Family History Programme which includes 'Individual Summaries with Notes', 'Family Group Records' with Photographs and 'Pedigree Charts' with ordinances and photographs in a pre-designed format. Carl has consulted many sources and possesses a number of valuable documents. In this Newsletter we are publishing his 'Notes' on Maria Karsten and some highlights from Carl's findings on Heinrich which will be fully published in the September Newsletter, together with details on his source material.*

**M**aria was born in 1823 in Neubuckow, Mecklenburg Prussia, the second of ten children of Christian and Sophia (nee Oldach) Ziebell. Maria married Heinrich Karsten on 10 August 1848 also at Neubuckow just prior to leaving for Australia.

The most notable surviving item of Maria's is her Cookery or Recipe Book, which would be approximately 160 year old. The Recipe Book was probably written a number of years prior to coming to Australia. It is hand written in the German Gothic Script with more than 200 recipes written on 292 pages of hand made laid paper in an octavo bound volume.

Prior to emigrating to Australia, Maria was employed until August 1848 in the household of Karl von Oertzen, a Royal Prussian Chamberlain in Alt Poorsdorf. It appears that Maria was in charge of the 'Kitchen'. Her recipe book probably evolved during that period. – As Maria's father Christian Ziebell was a Master Butcher in Neubuckow at that time, probably many of the recipes had their inspiration from the family background.

As a member of the 'Friends of Westgarthtown' Committee, Ellen Mitchell produced in 1999 a calendar titled 'Maria Karsten's (nee Ziebell) Culinary Calendar'. This calendar featured some of the recipes from the book as well as photos of the Karsten family. Dora Buckley (nee Robertston) has possession of the 'Recipe Book'.

From letters in the hands of Carl Robertson it was clear that Maria was held in high esteem by Mr. And Mrs. K. von Oerstzen and likewise Maria must have respected them highly, as Maria

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

**T**he 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.

**H**eritage 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.

**Z**iebell's Farmhouse is Victoria's oldest German immigrant building.

**S**iebel'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.

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