

## Pribislaw's Final Voyage

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

*The remains of the Pribislaw, the 158 year old wooden barque on which over half Westgarthtown's original settlers sailed from Hamburg to Melbourne in 1849/50, are now on their way to Australia for display in the City of Whittlesea. Considerable interest has been aroused in Scotland, with BBC Radio Shetland, two Shetland and two mainland newspapers covering the story.*

Readers of Friends of Westgarthtown News will recall our previous article (Vol. 6, No. 2, September 2002) regarding the discovery of the *Pribislaw's* remains at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. In that issue, I wrote about how the *Pribislaw's* days on the sea ended in 1870 when it ran aground in the Shetland Islands during severe storms in the North Sea. She had been carrying pit props for coal mines from Christiania in Norway to Sunderland in England.

The stranded *Pribislaw* was not badly damaged and no crew were hurt but she was condemned as unseaworthy and sold along with her cargo to local merchants Hay & Co., who towed her off the Bigga rocks and took her to their Freefield Docks at Lerwick. She was placed at the south end of the dock and converted into a store hulk, her masts removed, windows and shutters installed in the sides and a double door cut into her bow for access. There the *Pribislaw* became a familiar landmark to generations of Shetlanders who frequented the Freefield Docks.

For most of her life off the sea, the *Pribislaw* was used as a store for salt and barrels, most barrels filled with pickled herrings. Following the Second World War she was used for storing broken glass. In the 1960s, unused and dilapidated, she was broken up, part of her being in the way of a new fish processing plant. Although most of her timbers were removed, some hull timbers remained, buried in the mud.



In February 2004 construction of a new Shetland Museum commenced at the old dock and remains from the *Pribislaw* were subsequently discovered during excavations for a car park. Ian Tait, Assistant Curator of the Shetland Museum, advised me in October 2004 of this exciting discovery and asked if we were interested in obtaining any timbers for display at Westgarthtown. I had met Ian when my wife Gaye and I visited the Shetland Islands in 2002 and learned of the *Pribislaw's* life off the sea. Until then, people in the Shetland Islands had known nothing of its life prior to running aground there in 1870. At the time, Ian and I had discussed the possibility of shipping to Australia one piece of timber which remained at the dock, but nothing had been done.

Following discussions with Cr John Fry of the City of Whittlesea and the Westfield Group, sufficient funding has been arranged to ship several tonnes of timbers from the *Pribislaw* to Australia for display within the City of Whittlesea. Jon Rawlings, the City of Whittlesea's Sustainability Co-ordinator, has handled negotiations with the Shetland Islands Council and arranged the shipping. After arrival in Melbourne, timbers will be displayed at both Westfield's Mill Park shopping centre and at Ziebell's Farmhouse at Thomastown.

On 27 January 2005, the BBC's Good Evening Shetland program carried a five minute radio story on the *Pribislaw*, which included interviews Carol Anderson, the show's producer, had recorded with Ian Tait and myself. In the radio interview, I spoke of the *Pribislaw's* role as an emigrant ship and its significance to descendants of its

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# Ellen Mitchell Takes a Break

**A**fter nine years of dedicated service, Ellen Mitchell, former President of the Friends of Westgarthtown, has decided to withdraw from committee work for a while to catch up on some of her other interests. We wish her well with them and hope that before too long she will be back with us again. Ellen has worked tirelessly for the Friends of Westgarthtown, particularly since succeeding Rob Wuchatsch as President in February 2003.

Ellen's achievements include the successful promotion of Westgarthtown's unique heritage to Melbourne's German community; the development of close working relationships with Melbourne and Victorian schools; the publication of Maria Karsten's 1999 Cookbook Calendar; the organisation of the Baron von Mueller's German Melbourne conference in April 1999; the introduction of the Westgarthtown German Heritage Fest/Christkindl Markets in 2003 and 2004; and the Three-German Cottages tour brochure, which cover Ziebell's, Schramm's and Schwerkolt's Cottages.

As well as Ellen's hard work behind the scenes, first as Public Relations Officer and later President, she also conducted many tours of Westgarthtown over the years, often in weather far too hot or cold to be comfortable. Ellen has always been strongly supported in her work by her partner Rene Schultz, who like the 'other halves' of all our committee members, has been forced to

endure frequent absences in the cause of Westgarthtown's advancement. Good luck Ellen and Rene.

### Guided Tours

Tatiana Joukoff has been appointed to act as Tour Co-ordinator and be responsible for organising and conducting tours at Westgarthtown. A retired secondary teacher, Tatiana is an experienced Tour Guide who has worked in tourism in both Victoria and interstate. She is particularly interested in social history and has lived in the area for many years. Tatiana's first tour as co-ordinator and tour guide was held on 9 March 2005. There are many tours organised already throughout 2005, and the Friends look forward to working with Tatiana.

We are also delighted to announce that Marita Anders has accepted the position of Catering Co-ordinator. Those who have enjoyed the wonderful cakes prepared by Marita and her mother Klara will know that anyone visiting Westgarthtown and participating in one of the guided tours will be rewarded with an exquisite feast for morning tea or lunch. Marita co-ordinated the Ziebell Café at the 2003 and 2004 German Heritage Fests.

The Friends of Westgarthtown welcome both Tatiana and Marita to their new roles.

## Pribislav's Final Voyage

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passengers here in Australia.

In a lengthy article published on 14 February 2005, the *Shetland News* wrote:

*Several tonnes of timber off the barque Pribislav will travel to the Scottish mainland today (Monday) after being safely placed on a truck on Saturday. The precious remains will then be put in a container ready for shipment from Glasgow to Melbourne. These remains, consisting of a rib section with scarfed ends and fastenings, will be displayed ... in Whittlesea, Australia.*

*It quoted me as saying:*

*The Pribislav ... brought my family and many others here from Germany and for that reason we want to bring as much of it back here as we can, as a reminder and symbol*

*of the difficulties our ancestors faced in establishing their new lives on the other side of the world.*

Ian Tait stated:

*The Pribislav is the only one of these ships which has ever been found. It shows how very emotive and important it is for these communities to trace their history. The shipping of the Pribislav to Australia is vital for the cultural identity of the community out there, and it helps them find out more about who they are.*

The Pribislav's timbers are expected to arrive in Melbourne in April/May 2005. As they will need to clear quarantine before being released to the City of Whittlesea, it will be some time before they are available for display purposes. It is intended that a suitable celebratory function will be arranged by the Friends of Westgarthtown and City of Whittlesea to mark the arrival in Australia of this very historic cargo.

# German Heritage Fest & Christkindl Market

20 NOVEMBER 2004

BY ELLEN MITCHELL & GILLIAN BORRACK

The Friends of Westgarthtown and the City of Whittlesea were delighted to have approximately 1500 visitors from local, metropolitan, regional areas and interstate join them for the recent German Heritage Fest 2004 at the Westgarthtown Reserve and the Ziebell Farmhouse.

While some people were revisiting, others were discovering the Thomastown Pioneer Precinct for the first time. The strolling accordion players, the hurdy-gurdy man and the organist in the Thomastown Lutheran Church were all highly praised for their musicianship. The audience's reaction to the professional and beautifully costumed Oberbayern dance-group was one of delighted appreciation.

The variety of goods provided by the Christkindl Market stall holders were enjoyed by all the visitors, as was the Beer Hall which proved a great success, its larger space providing both seating and shelter close to the Christkindl market and entertainment area. The Ziebell Café with its excellent German cakes enjoyed at the tables and chairs under the protection of marquees, was so successful it had run out of cakes by 2pm. Hundreds of highly appreciative visitors were guided through the Ziebell Farmhouse and strolled through the gardens, observed the Blacksmith at work in the Cart Shed, before moving back to the Reserve. The Friends Marquee was a popular spot, selling both produce and the revised Westgarthtown booklet, with members available to answer a great variety of queries. The response to the Bratwurst stall initially resulted in long

queues until the Friends were able to set up further serving tables and volunteers as quickly as possible. However, those waiting patiently for their turn seemed happy to be entertained by the music and activities. The coachrides around the Reserve were greatly enjoyed by both the children and their parents, the happy smiles and repeat rides bearing testimony to the excitement. Another attraction for children and their parents was the Kid's Colouring Competition which was again successfully coordinated by Felicity Renowden. In response to the second delightful drawing prepared by Cassandra Tieme, the colouring competition brought the 2004 heritage event to more than one hundred primary schools.

The event's success, however, was heavily dependent on the extremely hard work and long hours contributed by Friends of Westgarthtown members and other volunteers, along with funding and officer support from the City of Whittlesea. Without funding from the City of Whittlesea, the event could only have been conducted on a much smaller scale, with attendances perhaps totalling only a third of those visitors who did come. The Friends of Westgarthtown were delighted to make a profit of \$4,254.00, which will greatly benefit the Thomastown Pioneer Precinct.



## New Edition of Westgarthtown Booklet



A revised and enlarged edition of this booklet was launched on 20 November 2004 at the German Heritage Fest at Westgarthtown.

The new edition, which is entitled *Westgarthtown - A History & Guide*,

replaces the very successful but out of print 1998 edition, which was published by the Heritage Council Victoria and City of Whittlesea. The new edition, enlarged to 44 pages, has been published by the Friends of Westgarthtown with funding provided via a \$10,000 loan from the City of Whittlesea.

The new booklet contains updated articles on the history of Westgarthtown and the Lutheran church, cemetery and farmhouses. New to the booklet is an article about Maltzahn's Farmhouse; many historic black and white photographs; and a five-page colour tour of the recently restored memorials in the cemetery. Altogether there are twelve colour pages, which beside the cemetery, feature stunning photographs by David Johns of Westgarthtown's nationally significant heritage buildings and landscape.

*Westgarthtown - A History & Guide*, costs \$7.50, or \$10.00 posted anywhere in Australia. Please forward all orders, along with payment by cheque or money order, to Friends of Westgarthtown, PO Box 95, Thomastown, Victoria 3074.

## Westgarthtown Web Site

The Friends of Westgarthtown is entering the digital age with our own web site coming soon. [www.westgarthtown.org.au](http://www.westgarthtown.org.au) aims to promote the cultural and historical significance of Westgarthtown to a wider audience. The site will contain information on Westgarthtown's history, historical sites and how to visit them. It will also promote the work of the Friends of Westgarthtown, making it easier for the public to access our publications and other sources of information.

Establishing the web site has been a collaborative effort between Robert Wuchatsch and Gillian Borrack who have prepared the content and Léon Borrack who has constructed the site. It will be launched on the web in the next few weeks. For those of our members who have access to the net, we encourage you to visit us online from early April at [www.westgarthtown.org.au](http://www.westgarthtown.org.au)



## 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 5062.

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](mailto: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 [www.calvarychurch.com.au](http://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.

Phone/Fax: (08) 8340 4009.

Email: [lutheran.archives@lca.org.au](mailto:lutheran.archives@lca.org.au)

## ‘A German Church in the Garden of God’ Launch

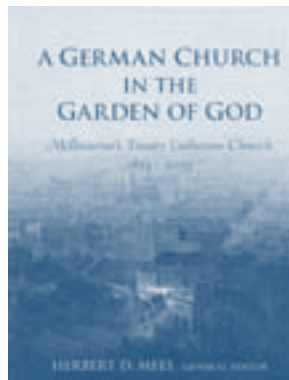
BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

**O**n 10 September 2004, at the State Library of Victoria, a 750 page book on the history of Trinity German Lutheran Church was launched. The book, *A German Church in the Garden of God: Melbourne's Trinity Lutheran Church 1853-2003*, was edited by Herbert Mees and launched by then President of the Lutheran Church in Victoria, Dr David Stolz.

From 1853-1986, Lutheran services at the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church (now Thomastown Lutheran Church), were performed by pastors from Trinity German Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. The histories of the Trinity and Thomastown Lutheran Churches are inextricably linked and the new book includes a 25 page section on Thomastown.

The eminent Australian historian Professor Geoffrey Blainey wrote the Foreword to the book and began by stating ‘This is one of the most comprehensive histories to be written of an Australian church.’ *A German Church in the Garden of God* provides a unique insight into the life of German speaking immigrants to Victoria and other parts of Australia. Profusely illustrated with over 400 photographs, maps and other documents, together with 16 colour plates, it will appeal to those with a general interest in Australian and church history, as well as historians and genealogists. Detailed references and indexes also provide a useful research tool.

As well as Thomastown (Westgarthtown), the book also covers the early Lutheran churches at other rural settlements such as Waldau (Doncaster), Harkaway (Berwick), Scoresby, Grovedale (Germantown) and Freshwater Creek (Waldkirch). Of special relevance to those interested in the Thomastown Lutheran Church are extracts from Pastor Ewald Steiniger's diary which record his first impressions of Thomastown. In his diary, Pastor Steiniger, who



held his first service at Thomastown on 24 March 1935, wrote:

*Beautiful sunshine after a foggy morning. The various farms in Thomastown were bathed in bright sunshine – a picture of peace ...*

*At first we went to the church elder Mr Siebel and organised the hymns. From his farm we went across the fields and over a stream and up a small rise to the church. The dark cypress next to the church was very impressive*

...

*After the service I went across the stony paddock to the cemetery. Romantic position, quite a distance from the road [High Street] and surrounded by farms, hills in the background; the cemetery is overgrown, full of cypresses. Interesting old headstones in the German language of Germans from Silesia, Mecklenburg, Wuerttemberg. An idyllic setting in the Australian landscape.*

*Of the formerly thriving German community there are only one or two left who still speak German. A few elderly Wendish people still speak Wendish. Otherwise everything is in English.*

*A German Church in the Garden of God costs \$75, or \$85 posted anywhere in Australia. Orders and payments should be sent to Trinity German Lutheran Church, 22 Parliament Place, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002. Copies can also be obtained from Rob Wuchatsch on 9465 2308. For further details see [www.german-lutherans-melbourne.asn.au/en/book.shtml](http://www.german-lutherans-melbourne.asn.au/en/book.shtml)*

John and Lydia Siebel and family, Thomastown c.1930s



## Bertha Claris Pettit (née Ziebell)

BY SYLVIA SCHULTZ

Bertha was born on 3 December 1909, the eighth child of Dorothea and Alfred Ziebell. The widow of Stan, she departed this life suddenly at home at Epping on 19 June 2004, at the age of ninety-four years. All of the ten children of Dorothea and Alfred Ziebell are now deceased, thus it was the end of an era.



In her working life, Bertha was a professional designer/dressmaker. For many years she was employed in the fashion section at George's, designing and making frocks and evening gowns for Melbourne society ladies, sometimes even the Governor's wife. As a young apprentice, she had delivered finished gowns to client's homes in a hansom cab. Often when she saw photographs of great society balls in newspapers, she would proudly say 'That's one of ours.'

In 1947 Bertha married Stan Pettit, then a farm manager at Blossom Park. When they retired, they moved from Mill Park to Epping. Bertha continued to make dresses until her late seventies.

Bertha is sadly missed by her only child Pauline and her husband Robert, their family and also all her extended family and friends.

## Dorothy Augusta Kilner (née Ziebell)

BY JOYCE ANDERSON

Dorothy died peacefully at the Austin Hospital on 1 July 2004. She was the first child of Theodore (Ted) and Elizabeth Ziebell.

Dorothy was born on 21 March 1907 at the Ziebell family farm at Thomastown, like her father and cousins. Here she spent a happy childhood. At age five her father Ted acquired his own farm - also nearby in Thomastown. Later the family moved to North Preston (Regent) where



she met and later married James Kilner, a piano tuner, player and mechanic. Dorothy had a daughter, Joyce. They built a home a few doors away from the family home in King William Street. 57 years were spent happily together there, until James died in 1988.

Dorothy's interests were her home, sewing and garden and if these were in perfect order, the way she liked them to be, she was contented. Her last two years were spent at Latrobe Hostel at Reservoir.

## Norbert Anders

Norbert, who died in Melbourne on 21 July 2004, was born at Lodz in Poland on 11 January 1936. In 1945, his family moved to Germany where he attended school at Bockhorst and then completed an apprenticeship at Steinhagen, before migrating to Australia in 1960.



After first working on a vehicle assembly line at Port Melbourne for Roote Pty Ltd and then at the Australian Tax Office, Norbert joined Commonwealth Industrial Gases, where he worked for almost thirty years until his retirement in 1995.

On 11 May 1974, Norbert married Marita Drahuszczak, of Howell Street, Lalor. Marita grew up in Lalor and attended the Thomastown Lutheran Church, where she later taught Sunday School. Norbert's brother Peter Anders also married a former Thomastown Lutheran Sunday School teacher, Ruth Fuhlbohm.

Norbert and Marita settled in Lalor and along with their children, Adrian and Fiona, attended Thomastown Lutheran Church until it was vandalised in November 1985. They worshipped at Calvary Lutheran Church, Greensborough while the church at Thomastown was being repaired, then decided to stay at Calvary as it had a Sunday School, Thomastown's having closed.

Both Marita and Norbert have been familiar faces at Ziebell's Farmhouse in recent years, where she has filled the roles of both caterer and cleaner. Norbert assisted her, until his illness prevented him from doing so. After his death, Norbert was buried in the Westgarthtown Cemetery, following a service at the Thomastown Lutheran Church.

## Departure of Pastor Stephen Pietsch

**O**n 8 August 2004, Pastor Stephen Pietsch conducted his final worship service at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, prior to taking up his new position at Ringwood. Pastor Pietsch had served at Calvary Lutheran Church Greensborough and Thomastown since April 1994.

In his Exit Report to the Thomastown congregation, Pastor Pietsch offered his thoughts about the future for this small congregation which worships in what is now Australia's oldest operating Lutheran church. Some excerpts from Pastor Pietsch's report are reproduced below, with his kind permission.

*During the last ten years I have enjoyed tremendously my fortnightly trips to Thomastown to conduct worship for this little flock of God's people, who gather faithfully to receive His Word and Sacraments. I have also enjoyed the warm friendship and hospitality of members when*

*I have been welcomed into your homes, to minister to you. It has been a welcome change of pace in many cases, and a delight to experience the pastoral office much as it may have been for my predecessors in much earlier times! What a joy it has been. I will certainly miss you all.*

*... I have watched the fortunes of Thomastown congregation change as we have farewelled longstanding members and friends of the church who have left this life, and as we have welcomed new faces to the fellowship.*

*When I first arrived in this parish, over ten years ago now, I expected that the Thomastown*

*congregation would have limited prospects for the future, with a small, faithful membership, but mostly quite aged, and with few visible prospects for mission outreach into the local community, because of the limitations on what could be done to improve our facilities.*

*I wondered if I might be the unhappy pastor who presided over the necessary closure of Thomastown. But God's grace always surprises us. Despite the loss of 12 active members over the ten years of my ministry, Thomastown continues, with the addition of new and energetic members, to carry the life of this little Christian community forward.*

*In the tradition of the long history of this church, persistence, commitment and determination are still the distinguishing marks of Thomastown Lutheran Church. It now seems likely, as quite a number of new faces appear at our door, that Thomastown does have a future, and the possibility of being a light to its community – small maybe, but consistent and faithful.*

*... the lion's share of the work in co-ordinating and managing the life of the congregation has been willingly and faithfully done by Irma Hatty. We all owe her a debt of thanks.*

*... In recent years the congregation has found itself relating in many ways to the local council's redevelopment of the historical precinct surrounding the church. The City of Whittlesea has done much to improve and upgrade the cemetery, land and now the church too. Many new contacts and visitors (from all around Victoria) have been brought to the church through this work – people who come to see and experience the living history of the church, through its worship, as well as the other historical places in the area.*

*I believe this new direction offers Thomastown congregation an opportunity to welcome these visitors in our midst as those who may come for history's sake, but hear the Word of God and feel the fellowship of his people when they get here.*

*I would suggest therefore that the congregation, within the limits of the time and energy of its members, continue to open itself to the ongoing development of the historical precinct. To be sure, our church is a place of worship first and foremost, and not a museum, however the potential numbers of new visitors and contacts that have come since the redevelopment shows that this is an avenue for*

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## Pastor Stephen Pietsch

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*Thomastown to have an important mission outreach, in welcoming those who do come.*

*Since 2003, the option has existed for Thomastown to sell the remaining property it owns, along with the church building, to the City of Whittlesea. The foreshadowed plan running parallel with this idea has been that the Thomastown Lutheran congregation would, by legally drawn contract, continue to use the church regularly for worship, weddings, funerals and other functions, just as it does now. This would, on the face of it, result in the congregation losing nothing in practical terms, and gaining a significant amount of capital, to use as it desires ... it is not for me to push one point of view or another in this report ... the legal possibilities of what rights and access could be secured along with the sale of the church, should be explored. This may uncover advantages and directions that we are unaware of. It may also show that there are problems with the plan and that it should not be considered. Either way, such research would place the congregation in a much better position to consider the options, without committing it to anything. In any future decision the congregation will of course need to be completely sure and certain that its rights and access to the church are not compromised in any way.*

*I encourage Thomastown congregation to continue in its faithful worship of God, who protected and guided its forefathers to this place and led them to build and found a Lutheran community in this place. We stand in their place today, still shining the light of grace as they did over many years. As in the past, so in the future, this grace is what will sustain and bless this congregation. For God is still present among us with creating Word and life-giving Sacraments. I pray that Thomastown Lutheran Church will receive its new pastor joyfully and graciously, and enjoy many years of worshipping and fellowshiping together, as God's people in Christ.*

**Fear not, little flock, for the Father has been pleased to give you His kingdom. Luke 12:32**

Pastor Stephen Pietsch  
June 2004

On 8 May 2005, Pastor Brett Kennett will be installed at Calvary Lutheran Church, Greensborough as Calvary and Thomastown's new pastor. The Friends of Westgarthtown look forward to Pastor Kennett's arrival and to continuing the strong working relationship which has developed between the Friends of Westgarthtown and the Thomastown Lutheran Church over the last ten 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 **Ellen Mitchell**  
Vice-President **Geoff Borrack**  
Secretary **Pauline Atkins**  
Treasurer **Gillian Borrack**  
Committee Members **Rob Wuchatsch**  
**Lorraine Flanders**

Historian **Rob Wuchatsch**  
Heritage Architect **Geoff Borrack**  
Tours Coordinator **Tatiana Joukoff**  
Membership Sec. **Gaye Wuchatsch**

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

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.