



Storm Damage at Lutheran Cemetery

Strong northerly winds of over 80 kilometres per hour on the afternoon of Tuesday 30 August 2005 toppled one of the large pine trees in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery. Three historic marble headstones relating to the Schultz, Siebel and Oldenburg families were broken, with the cost of clearing the fallen tree and repairs to damage estimated at up to \$10,000.

The damage to the headstones made front page news in all three local newspapers - the *Whittlesea Leader*; *Whittlesea Weekly*; and *Star*. The photograph on the

front page of the *Whittlesea Weekly* featured Sylvia Schultz, vice-president of the Friends of Westgarthtown, along with her son, Paul Schultz. The Schultz and Siebel headstones damaged in the storm are included in the 2004 Westgarthtown booklet, on the right hand side of page 26.

The huge pine tree, the same one hit by lightning in July 2000 (see our newsletter of September 2000), was blown southwards, the roots on the German Lane side having given way. Several years ago, prior to his death in 2002, Ron Schultz commented that he thought the roots would die from the lightning strike, but as the tree had appeared to be healthy, no action was taken.

Rob Wuchatsch, Friends of Westgarthtown historian, was quoted in the *Whittlesea Leader* as saying 'It's disheartening when you are working so hard to restore the

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STORM DAMAGE

Storm Damage at Lutheran Church

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cemetery as we have done in the past few years ... you go one step forward and now two steps back, but that's life so we have to accept it and move on ... it's very distressing for the families involved who have lost the headstones.'

The *Star* quoted Rob as saying 'It's a bit of a disaster, but it could have been worse.' He added 'Between the descendants and the Friends of Westgarthtown, and perhaps the City of Whittlesea, hopefully we can find some funding' for restoration.

The City of Whittlesea quickly arranged for the branches of the fallen tree to be removed and took the broken headstones to the municipal depot at Epping for safekeeping until restoration can be arranged. At the time of writing, the trunk remains where it fell as silent witness to the storm. The *Whittlesea Weekly* quoted Mayor Sam Alessi as stating that the City of Whittlesea 'would take on the cost' and have the damaged headstones 'examined by experts with the aim of having them restored.' Quotes for repairs are currently being sought.



Spring Garden Report

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

In April 2005, the Friends of Westgarthtown said goodbye to our caretakers, Simon Borrack and Hege Eier. After a busy eighteen months tending the garden with the Friends, and helping with two German Festivals, Simon and Hege have left to live in the country at Colac where they are enjoying their new home and garden. We all wish them a happy future together and know they will enjoy the lifestyle, open spaces and the joy of creating their very own garden.

It proved difficult to find a replacement caretaker, but at the eleventh hour we were fortunate to recruit Nanette Jelleff, who had just returned from working in London. Nanette has been tending the garden for seven months, through late autumn and winter. Now spring is here and suddenly after all the hard work of winter pruning - the orchard by Paul, the roses by Sylvia with Nanette and working bee members helping, everything has taken off. The decision was made to get a truckload of compost soil when the opportunity arose. Many wheelbarrow loads have been spread around the garden, additionally fertilized with blood and bone, plants shifted, weeds removed, lawns mown despite spring rains and winds. The garden continues to delight our many visitors throughout 2005.

The Ziebell Farmhouse garden working bee group have been involved with the garden for 10 years now together with quite a list of caretakers. The caretaker/gardeners who have helped re-establish the garden are David and Virginia, Gabby and Martine, Camilla, Gaye, Simon and Hege, and now Nanette. We have come a long way in that time and Sylvia Schultz our heritage advisor and constant gardener has always been there for us, with advice, energy and enthusiasm. Each of us have come to love the garden too, so that despite the sometimes backbreaking work done by all, we all stop at the end of the day, satisfied and happy to have made a contribution to this wonderful heritage garden. The changing seasons are very obvious in this garden and each one has its own special magic.

We are almost ready to finish the "Self Guided Tour" of the garden, which will contain maps of the various sections, listing the plants, shrubs and trees and background to the garden. We are constantly asked the names of plants and this small publication will be a great resource. Along with the large seasonal plans of the garden, they will provide ongoing information for the gardeners of the future.

The garden working bee day is back to the 1st Saturday of the month, anytime between 10am and 4pm. 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 please bring your own. If you cannot come to the Saturday working bee, but would like to help at another time, please call Nanette.

CONTACTS

Gillian Borrack - Working Bee Coordinator 9717 3559
Nanette Jelleff - Caretaker 9464 1805



Agnes Vockensohn (August 1849 - 22 August 1870)

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

Heritage Victoria recently included an article on the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery in its quarterly magazine *Inherit*. Featured on the front cover of the March 2005 edition of *Inherit* was a photograph of Agnes Vockensohn's simple redgum memorial, which has survived remarkably well, considering it is now 135 years since Agnes died.

Wooden memorials were relatively common in Australia during the nineteenth century, but today few remain, almost all having succumbed to the ravages of time. Many were destroyed in bush or grass fires, while others would have gradually split, fallen and rotted away, or been carried off by scavengers seeking firewood. While only one now remains at Westgarthtown, old timers recall another, which stood in the east end of the cemetery until about fifty years ago. Agnes' memorial only survived because Henry Ziebell, the cemetery caretaker, securely reinstated it during the 1970s after it became detached from its bluestone base.

Who was Agnes Vockensohn? A clue lies in the location of her grave. She was buried in the Wuchatsch plot, next to her parents, Johann and Magdalena Wuchatsch. Agnes was born at Hamburg, while the Wuchatsch family and many others who settled at Westgarthtown were waiting to board the *Pribislaw*, for their long journey to Australia.

Agnes was Johann and Magdalene Wuchatsch's third child. Shortly after her birth, the Wendish newspaper *Tydzenske Nowiny* reported on 8 September 1849 that she had been baptised in Hamburg, just prior to the *Pribislaw's* departure.

Agnes attended the Neu Mecklenburg Lutheran School at Westgarthtown. Nothing more is known about her until her marriage on 15 November 1866 at the Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne to Friedrich Vockensohn of Epping. She was then aged 17. Witnesses to the marriage were Johanna and Johann Seeber, her sister and brother-in-law.

Friedrich, a shoemaker, was born at Eichach, near Ohringen in Wurttemberg. The son of Christian Vockensohn, farmer and Rosine (nee Kneller), he embarked at Liverpool on 27 May 1861 aboard the ship *Empress of the Seas* which arrived in Melbourne on 11 August 1861. He travelled to Australia with several members of

the Seeber family and Johann Seeber, his brother-in-law, was also a shoemaker from Eichach. During the early 1860s, Friedrich and Johann carried on shoemaking at Westgarthtown, in a small bluestone cottage formerly occupied by the Rosel family.

Friedrich was naturalised as a Victorian citizen on 27 November 1865. Shortly before, on 12 October 1865, he had purchased the Excelsior Hotel at Epping from Berend Zeven for 160 pounds. However, the contract of sale was not completed without recourse to legal action, as Zeven repudiated the deal and resold the hotel on 25 October to James and Catherine Mooney, for 180 pounds. Friedrich sued and in May 1866 the Supreme Court found in his favour and decreed Zeven's sale to the Mooneys to be null and void. An appeal by Zeven was dismissed in September 1866. On 1 November 1866, Friedrich mortgaged the hotel for 100 pounds, to Robert Anderson.

The 1866 Epping Roads Board rate book duly records Friedrich as owner/occupier of the Excelsior Hotel, which had been described in the *Argus* at the time of its sale by Zeven as being of weatherboard and containing two parlours, four bedrooms, a concert room, bar, kitchen, five stall stable, shed, tank and waterhole.

On 11 February 1867 the stable, along with a horse and ton of hay, was destroyed by fire. Friedrich had been at the blacksmith's shop over the road when the fire broke out. At the official inquiry into the fire, Agnes testified

"I was at home on the day the fire took place. It was on Monday the 11th of this month. About a quarter past 10 o'clock in the morning I was in the bar and the servant girl told me the stable was on fire. I looked out and the flames were then coming out of the corner of the stable next to the garden. The fire had only been going on a short time then. There was a man in the bar at the time. He had been there for half an hour..".

The inquiry concluded the fire 'was probably accidentally caused by the horse treading on a match which Vockensohn overlooked'. The stable and contents were not insured. As Friedrich leased the hotel to William Dunne later that year, and sold it to Dunne on 23 September 1868, the fire may have contributed to his short lived term as a publican. In 1869, he was recorded as the owner of Gottlieb Seeber's butcher shop, which stood nearby.

Agnes and Friedrich had one child, George Frederick Christian, born 12 January 1868. Sadly, Agnes died at Epping of phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis) on 22 August 1870, just days after her 21st birthday. She had been ill for two years.

In 1870, like many other Victorian Germans during the Franco-Prussian War, Friedrich donated 10 shillings for the benefit of wounded German soldiers and their suffering families. Shortly after he also contributed one pound five shillings towards construction of a new Lutheran Trinity Church at East Melbourne.

Friedrich Vockensohn remarried on 10 March 1874, to Ernestine Siebel, of Westgarthtown. A further eight children were born and raised at Epping. During the 1870s Friedrich operated the butcher shop after Seeber moved to Preston and he also ran the post office at Epping, until dismissed on 21 July 1881. Shortly after his dismissal, he was arrested on charges of embezzlement and misappropriation of stamps. He had illegally advanced himself some funds from the till, and then been unable to repay it, resulting in a deficiency of over £13. Friedrich was tried at Melbourne's Central Criminal Court on 18 August 1881, convicted and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, which he served at Pentridge and Maryborough Gaols.

Following his release on 10 July 1882, Friedrich resumed his old trade of shoemaking. He died on 12 October 1918, aged 75, two weeks after Ernestine. Both are buried in the Epping Cemetery.



Maria Kaiser's 1857 letter to Germany

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

In January 1857, Maria Kaiser, a young Wendish girl working at Johann and Annie Zimmer's farm at Westgarthtown, wrote a letter to her parents at Drehsa in Saxony. Her letter was published in the Bautzen Wendish newspaper *Serbske Nowiny* on 9 May 1857.

Maria, who arrived in Australia in 1855 aboard the *Bielefeld*, was a sister of Andreas Kaiser. Andreas had arrived in 1850 aboard the *Pribislaw* with his good friend Michael Zwar, who in 1854 married Johann and Annie Zimmer's daughter Agnes. Andreas and Maria were followed to Australia in 1858 by their sister Anna and brother Johann. Anna also worked for the Zimmer family at Westgarthtown for over a year after her arrival from Germany.

In 1859 Maria married Johann Hirt, a Ballarat shoemaker and miner.

Germantown [Westgarthtown], January 5, 1857.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Dearly beloved father,

I received your lovely letter here on November 23, 1856, and shed tears of joy over it. Thank God, I am healthy and well. If you, dear father, are worrying about me, put it out of your mind, as things are going well for me. I have no longing for Germany, because my life here is a better one than at home. I'm in service with Mr Zimmer of Weissig near Bautzen and earn 128 thaler per annum. For that I'd have to work all my life at home!

Dear father, I'm very sorry that my sister Anna isn't interested in migrating. I had hoped that she'd be coming out already this year, and now brother George writes that she won't be coming. God grant that she'll become interested in it again. The journey to Australia is not as dangerous as people claim. I wasn't afraid on the way and the Lord brought everyone here in good health. No one died except a little child which, however, was quite ill when it came aboard.

On the day that we arrived in Australia George Doecke and Falant of Weicha went to Hempel who lives on 20 acres of land an hour's distance from Melbourne [Brunswick]. When they returned they told me that my

brother couldn't fetch me because he was 70 miles away from Melbourne on the goldfields. I therefore stayed in Melbourne on my own, as Zieschang went to Portland Bay where he has 40 acres of land, as also Schlemmer who owns the same amount. Falant, Albinus and Doecke went to Adelaide and have there bought themselves properties.

I left the ship on November 27, 1855, and arrived at Hempels that evening, as Hempel had come to Melbourne to pick me up. I stayed there for 3 days and then went to Zimmers where I am in service to this day.

You want to know what the countryside here is like. I can't say much just about that. All I can say is that we are harvesting now and everything looks good. I am doing the kind of work which I did at home, farm work. We have 8 cows, 6 calves, and two pigs. I milk the cows twice a day, mornings and evenings. The rest of the time they are out in the pasture and fend for themselves.

The fruit in the garden is ripe now too, and we have so much that we are feeding some to the pigs. We have growing apricots, peaches, cherries, plums, pears, melons, onions, lettuce, cucumbers, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, figs, grapes, gooseberries, and strawberries. Saffron is also growing in our garden.

Here the heat is not extreme; it is much like it is with you, either warm or cold. When the hot winds blow from the north it is very hot, but that doesn't persist for long. If the wind comes from the south, it is soon much cooler. Winter begins in April and lasts 3 months. We have no snow, but much rain. That's what our winter is like.

My employer has 50 shocks of wheat, 8 shocks of oats, and 3 shocks of barley. The oats are also winnowed green and is good feed for the horses.

This summer there was very little rain and the grass all dried up. There are fires almost every day, as the dry grass, which is as thick as straw, catches alight easily and then a whole section of land is burnt off.

My one desire is that my sister and brother were here with me, and especially that my sister Anna would visit me. For that reason I'm sending a cheque for 120 thaler (actually only just over 108 thaler because I had to pay the agent Neuhaus 12 thaler to cover charges). I've stipulated

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“My one desire is that my sister and brother were here with me, and especially that my sister Anna would visit me.”

Pribislaw timbers arrive in Australia

Jon Rawlings of the City of Whittlesea recently advised that the *Pribislaw* timbers have now arrived at the municipal depot at Epping. Readers will recall they were being shipped from the Shetland Islands following excavations there for a new museum (see our newsletter of March 2005). The City of Whittlesea and Friends of Westgarthtown are currently determining the best way to interpret and display the timbers. Further details in our March 2006 newsletter.

2005 Friends of Westgarthtown AGM

The Friends of Westgarthtown held its Annual General Meeting at Ziebell's Farmhouse on 28 August 2005. The Friends were pleased to welcome back Geoff Borrack after his devastating accident in April when his leg was badly broken. Although still on crutches, Geoff manages to get around very well, having lost none of his enthusiasm for the remaining restoration of the Ziebell Farmhouse precinct. A big thank you to Vice President, Sylvia Schultz, who very ably filled the breach in the first few months after the accident.

Following the AGM, in which all previous office bearers were re-elected (see page 8 for details), John Borrack showed slides of Ziebell's Farm as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, prior to subdivision for housing. Pauline Atkins, Heather Purdy and Sylvia Schultz also brought along old black and white photographs. The 1986 Westgarthtown video, made by the Education Department, was also shown and enjoyed by all present.

If you have or know of any old slides, films or videos of Westgarthtown or surrounding areas, the Friends of Westgarthtown would love to hear about them, for possible duplication at our expense.

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 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

Tours of Westgarthtown

BY TATIANA JOUKOFF (TOURS COORDINATOR)

Visits to Ziebell's Farmhouse during 2005 have been consistently pleasing with at least one tour each month. The total number of visitors, excluding Sunday Open Days, from January to August was 597, with a further 115 people booked in for tours during the September to November period. This will make a total of over 700 visitors for the 2005 calendar year.

Public feedback on the tours and catering for morning teas and lunches, very ably supplied by Marita Anders and her small band of helpers, has been very positive.

The sale of seeds, jams and preserves, as well as the revised Westgarthtown booklet, has been an added bonus, although a little chaotic owing to the lack of space in the pantry. This problem will be overcome when stocks and sales of these items are moved to the smokehouse in the near future.

We have had some enquiries for 2006, including two tentative bookings for February. Now that our website is up and running, combined with the forthcoming publication of our new three-fold brochure and self guided tour leaflet, it is hoped that we will be able to target a wider range of potential visitors.

Maria Kaiser's 1957 letter to Germany

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this money to be used for her journey to Australia. Dear father, you will be paid this money in Berlin. It will probably be best if Mr Magnus tells you how this will be done. Write to me as soon as you have received this money, as I'll be quite unsettled until I've received your reply. If, however, my sister doesn't want to come out here, then, dear father, give her 50 thaler of the money and my brother also 50 thaler, and what is left over is for you, so that you will receive 8 thaler. I want to be as helpful as possible and never forget you so long as I live. In case someone comes here, would he be good enough to bring the symbolical books in Sorb [Wendish] and Arndt's four books regarding true Christianity for Mr Zimmer. He will gladly pay three times the value of the books and would he bring the Church history and the Herzbuechlein for me.

All the best to dear mother. The Lord will recompense her in the life to come for the kindness she showed to my grandmother.

All the best to my dear sister Magdalena and brother-in-law Andreas, brother Georg, sister Anna, and little Christel.

All the best also to Maria Stosch and her parents, Anna Lehmann (or Witschas) and her sisters, the teacher in Wurschen and his family, and my sponsor Mrs Lange. Every time I pick up her dear present, I think of her.

Finally, I wish you all the best, dear father, from my heart. I remain in love and respect.

Your daughter
Maria Kaiser

STOP PRESS

Harmonium Recital

On 13 November 2005, the Friends of Westgarthtown, in association with the Thomastown Lutheran Church and City of Whittlesea, held a very enjoyable harmonium recital. As previously, John Noack displayed his great knowledge and mastery of the harmonium, much to the pleasure of the audience. The theme of John's recital, on the Estey harmonium at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, was bringing the classics into the home and church. The mass production of harmoniums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, combined with specially written music, enabled the classics to be brought to the public in an era long before gramophones, record players, stereos etc.

John was ably supported by Carol Appelt (flute) and Igor Pelka (guitar), members of the Calvary Lutheran Church, Greensborough. Afternoon tea was provided by the Friends of Westgarthtown at Ziebell's Farmhouse.

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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.