

Early German Photographer Honoured



Bridge over Plenty River, Morang, taken by Fred Kruger, 1870s (This image is supplied courtesy of the City of Whittlesea Cultural Collection)

Fred Kruger's stunning images of 1870s Whittlesea Shire serve as an invaluable historical record. **Robert Wuchatsch** reports on a new street named in his honour.

I was recently informed by John Waghorn of the Whittlesea Historical Society that 'there is now a Kruger Street in Mernda, only a hop, step and jump from the bridge over the Plenty River he once photographed'. Friedrich, or Fred Kruger (1831-1888) as he was better known in Australia, once lived at Thomastown, quite possibly at Westgarthtown.

Fred Kruger was born in Berlin on 18 April 1831; married there on 10 October 1858 to Auguste Baumann; and was living at Rutherglen in northern Victoria by 1863, working as an upholsterer. Although Auguste Kruger and son Hans travelled to Australia aboard the *Macassar* which arrived in Melbourne in April 1863, there is no record of Fred's arrival, which presumably took place around the same time or shortly before. Fred's brother Bernhard had emigrated to Australia in 1854 and operated a furniture business at Rutherglen, hence Fred's reason for settling there.

Early in 1864 Fred sold off his stock of furniture, bedsteads and mattresses and moved to Taradale, where he briefly worked as a cabinet maker, before moving to Melbourne later that year to commence business as a photographer. How he came to be interested in

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Recognition: Kruger Street, Mernda (Gillian Borrack)

photography is not known.

In 1866 he was living at Carlton; in 1867 at Prahran; and by 1868 at Thomastown, where his son Alfred was born on 2 September. Fred's occupation was then given as 'Photo Artist'. It is not known how long he lived at Thomastown, but by 1869 he had moved to nearby Preston, where he remained until about 1878 when he relocated to Geelong. He lived at Geelong for about 10 years until his death from peritonitis on 15 February 1888 at his son's home in Surrey Hills, aged 56. Auguste died at

Preston on 26 July 1913 aged 75. Sadly, only two of their 11 children survived her, most dying in infancy.

It was while Fred lived at Thomastown and Preston that he began to produce his outstanding photographs of subjects in the area between Preston and the township of Whittlesea, of which about a dozen are known to survive. The National Gallery of Victoria holds over 120 of his photographs, while others are held by the State Library of Victoria, the City of Whittlesea and by private owners. Some of his Plenty Valley photographs of the Yan Yean Reservoir were taken as late as 1885, but most of his local works appear to date from the 1870s.

The City of Whittlesea's photographs were taken by Kruger to promote the Shire of Whittlesea at an international exhibition held in Australia during the late 1870s. The collection of nine photographs are mounted in a large gilt frame with captions in both English and French. Both the frame and photographs were restored by the City of Whittlesea during the early 1990s and now hang proudly in the municipal offices at South Morang.

For further information about Fred Kruger and his photography, see *Fred Kruger 1831-1888*, National Gallery of Victoria Exhibition Programme, 1983 and *Framing the Picturesque: Fred Kruger's Photographs of the Plenty Valley*, by Helen Skuse, in *The Australian Experience in the Plenty Valley*, Plenty Valley Papers Volume 2, 1996.



Friedrich Yann's house, blacksmith and wheelwright works, High Street Preston taken by Fred Kruger, c. 1875. (Yann Family)

Ziebell Farmhouse Tour Report

BY TATIANA JOUKOFF

August and September have been busy months with over 180 visitors to Ziebell's Farmhouse.

The Friends of Westgarthtown hosted several bus groups from the Western suburbs; a delightful group of children from St Luke's Primary School studying 'structures and change'; a group of tourist guides from the Professional Tour Guides Association of Australia; and a visit from the Lyceum Ramblers Club.

The bus groups were a mixture of social and clubs and Probus groups. All expressed wonderment at the survival of what many termed 'this treasure in suburbia'. Members of various ethnic groups spent time remembering with nostalgia their own villages and drawing comparisons to their immigration experiences. Some gentlemen spent time discussing and comparing the building materials, techniques and architecture of the villages of their homelands. The ladies commented that they were not unfamiliar with the daily life Christian and Sophia led, having experienced similar lives themselves before coming to Australia.

As part of their professional development, members of the Professional Tour Guides Association of Australia spent time looking at aspects of German settlement in Victoria in the context of the Westgarthtown settlement. To maintain accreditation as a professional tour guide, ongoing professional development is mandatory. Of the guides who visited us this year, some travel and guide people all over Australia. Some are local site guides like we have at Ziebell's Farmhouse, others deliver walking tours such as the Melbourne Golden Mile and National Trust Walks, just to name a few. The



The Lyceum Club Ramblers Group gather in the reserve adjacent to Ziebell Farmhouse. Author and tour guide Tatiana Joukoff is pictured in the centre at front. (Alan Bell)

general consensus from these professional guides was that Ziebell's Farmhouse, with its garden, buildings and interpretive signage was of an exceptionally high standard and well worth a visit.

The Ramblers Group from the Lyceum Club, in spite of the bitter weather, spent several hours enjoying the ambience of Christian and Sophia's house, and the brisk walk around the garden, church and cemetery. They were very pleased to return to the warmth of the house for lunch and a hot cuppa. Many thanks to Alan Bell for the group photo and to Anne Bottomley for leading yet another walk to Westgarthtown.



Members of the Professional Tour Guides Association of Victoria visit Westgarthtown.

PURA MILK: Australia's national brandname began s

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

Dairy farming was the economic mainstay of Westgarthtown for 120 years, finally ceasing with the sale of Ziebell's Farm in 1972. However, not only was dairying important for Westgarthtown, it was also significant for Victoria and Australia, as the birthplace of Pura Milk.

Most of the dairy products produced at Westgarthtown were sold in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs. Initially, butter was produced, but by the early 1860s fresh milk, along with other dairy and farm products, was being retailed in Melbourne by Carl Frahm's Thomastown Dairy in Little Lonsdale Street. Frahm was Christian and Sophia Ziebell's son-in-law. Later, during the 1880s, Andreas Kreitling carted and retailed Westgarthtown's milk through his dairy at Carlton.

By the 1920s most of Westgarthtown's milk was sold to small dairies in Northcote and Preston. In the early 1930s, with Australia in the midst of the Great Depression, farmers' returns were often insufficient to meet their costs, a situation many Victorian dairy farmers can relate to in 2010. At that time, milk producers were in the unhappy position where, with no milk contracts, no price-fixing and no zoning, dairymen or retailers were able to play farmers off against each other and thus reduce wholesale prices.

Albert Siebel decided to take matters into his own hands and retail both his family's milk and that of his neighbours at Westgarthtown. In 1934, he purchased Bill Kruger's Almora Dairy at 403 Murray Road, Preston and renamed it the Pura Dairy. Albert had only one horse drawn cart and delivered to a few adjacent streets. In those days milk, which had been water cooled only, was received from farms in 40

or 50 quart cans then tipped into 8 quart hand cans from which the deliverymen would ladle it into householders' jugs, billies or saucepans. Bottles were a rarity, so scarce that rival dairymen often scoured cemeteries for milk bottles used as vases on graves.

In 1935 the Metropolitan Milk Producers' Association (MMPA), which represented the interests of dairy farmers, decided to process and retail milk itself. After discussions with Albert Siebel, a former MMPA committeeman, a company named Pura Dairy Products Ltd was formed to take over Albert's dairy. He remained as a director and dairy manager. Shortly after, he married Ada Florence Maltzahn, of Moreland.

On 10 May 1935, the *Argus* reported that Pura Dairy Products Ltd had opened at Preston 'the first of a chain of retail dairies' it proposed to establish in Melbourne. As part of its plan 'to create new standards of cleanliness in the distribution of milk' the new company 'has arranged for its employees to wear uniforms. Before beginning their rounds the men will be required to wash and shave. Only men who have certificates showing that they are in good health will be engaged.'

Two milkmen in uniform were said to be already on their rounds at Preston. A photograph of one of them, probably George Vigenser, appeared in the same issue of the *Argus*. The two carts delivered 250 quarts daily, milk mainly being drawn from Thomastown and Epping. Later that year another small dairy, operated by Stuart Thompson, was taken over and then in 1936 further dairies in Preston and Box Hill were acquired. In June 1936 a new company was formed to operate the business — Metropolitan Dairy Farmers



Selling Westgarthtown's milk in 1934

Limited, the directors being Messrs R. A. J. James, R. Farquar, R. F. Parsons, F. M. Dale and Albert Siebel.

In December 1936, the MMPA announced that the first six dairy farmers to pass its farm certification requirements were Messrs R. N. Higgs (Yan Yean), F. Siebel (Thomastown), W. Sampson (Donnybrook), J. D. Wuchatsch (Epping), F. A. Grutzner (Thomastown) and J. Cotchin (Woodstock).

The Pura business grew slowly but steadily and in 1941 the directors were able to announce a profit of 1603 pounds. By this time small butter and cream factories had also been purchased. In 1948 Stock Exchange listing was obtained under the name Metropolitan Dairies Ltd.

A major impetus to growth came in 1949 when Metropolitan Dairies Ltd merged with the Ivy Bank Dairy, owned by the Cayley Brothers, at Jessie Street, Preston. The enlarged company now controlled one of the most modern milk processing plants in Melbourne, enabling it to meet the Victorian Government's proposed milk pasteurisation and aluminium bottle-capping requirements. Albert Siebel retired the same year as Managing Director through ill-health, but remained as a director, a position he held until his death in 1970. Albert's brother Arthur worked for Pura for many years and their other brothers Jack and Ted also worked there at various times, as did Jack's daughter Mavis and Pauline Atkins (nee Miller), Albert's wife's niece, whose mother was Elsie Maltzahn.

A series of dairies and milk rounds were bought in rapid succession until, by 1964, the company was handling 32% of Melbourne's milk as well as a substantial portion of Tasmania's and rural Victoria's milk. In 1965 a new processing plant at Broadmeadows was opened, which included the most modern automated milk-bottling plant in the world. In 1967 the company changed its name to Consolidated Foods Ltd. Further acquisitions and amalgamations saw the company become the largest milk distributor in Melbourne, along with extensive milk and other food interests in Tasmania. In 1977 the company was taken over by J. Gadsden Australia Ltd, at which time my father, Norman Wuchatsch, finally sold the shares he had held in the company since its formation in the 1930s.

In 1991 Pura Dairy combined with other Australian food related brands to form National Foods Limited. Since then Pura has become a national brandname and by 2005 was Australia's favourite milk brand. National



Foods is now Australia's largest dairy food and juice company. In 2005 National Foods was acquired by the San Miguel Corporation, then in 2007 ownership passed to Kirin Holdings Company Limited, of Japan, a member of the Mitsubishi Group. In 2009, when Kirin acquired Lion Nathan, the two companies were merged to create Lion Nathan National Foods.

Albert Siebel could not have imagined the name he coined in 1934 for his tiny newly acquired Preston dairy would one day grow to be so famous.



The development of an Australian icon: An early advertisement, *Argus* 4 March 1936; Albert Siebel on his wedding day, 28 September 1935; the original Pura Milk uniform 1935; and a Pura Milk truck is loaded with milk bottles, Preston 1956.

Mervyn Turner Ziebell

2-12-1927 – 15-8-2009

BY JANET HUBBARD

Mervyn Turner Ziebell was a grandson of Christian Ziebell's son Carl and a proud member of the Ziebell family. He was the third son of Albert Thomas Charles Ziebell and Ellen Emma Turner, who married in 1920.

Mervyn grew up in the family home at 99 Westbourne Grove, Northcote and attended the nearby Helen Street State School and then Essendon Technical School. Mervyn's father would have liked him to follow in the footsteps of his elder brothers Albert and Stan and take up a career in the engineering field, however, he was not interested in this type of work. He commenced accounting, then tried structural engineering, but finally found his niche as a customs agent, studying at night school for several years. In 1958, Mervyn and his wife Audrey set up their own customs agency, known as Mervyn Ziebell Co Pty Ltd and subsequently became involved in a number of other businesses.

Mervyn and Audrey Stemberge married on 14 March 1950 and they had three children — twins Judith and Glenda and, later, Kristina. In time they were blessed with eight grandchildren. They lived in various suburbs of Melbourne, such as Ivanhoe, Eltham and North Balwyn and also spent much of their time at Emerald and Norfolk Island.

Sadly, Audrey died in 1997. Mervyn married June Hopcraft (nee Hunt) in 1999 and found great happiness again in the later years of his life, living at Narre Warren. Mervyn's daughter Judith said at his funeral 'Our Dad was like a rock and an umbrella to us – a person who was immovable in his values and principles and also had the capacity to be everywhere and know everything that was going on ... Dad was someone you could trust, someone who would look you in the eye, talk about what needed doing, and then let you get on with it. He managed his own life the same way. Nothing could have shown it more than the way he dealt with motor neurone disease ...'

Mervyn Ziebell faced death with calm courage. He never complained and he helped his family to come to terms with his illness and incapacity. He was a man his family and friends can remember with great pride.



Ian Alfred Ziebell

30-7-1935 – 31-5-2010

BY JOHN BORRACK

Ian Alfred Ziebell, the elder son of the late Alfred and Jessie Ziebell, died on 31 May 2010. He is survived by his brother Graeme and two sisters, Joan and Betty, together with their children to whom he was a devoted uncle.

Educated at Reservoir Primary School and Northcote High School, Ian was employed for thirty-eight years with the A.M.P Society from 1952 until he retired in 1990. After his retirement Ian enjoyed playing lawn bowls and travelling.

The Ziebell farm and farmhouse settled and built by his great great grandfather Christian, was for Ian a place of deep affection which he retained up to the time of his death. He was a most generous member of the Friends of Westgarthtown as well as a valuable, hard working and dedicated member of the gardening group from the beginning of the restoration of the Ziebell farmhouse garden. He probably inherited his gardening prowess from his father, Alf, who like many members of the Ziebell family, loved his vegetable garden and took great pride in producing vegetables for his family. Nothing gave Ian more pleasure than being able to work on the restoration and maintenance of the old Ziebell farmhouse garden. To all who knew him, Ian was of a sensitive and quiet disposition, with many fine qualities indeed. A helpful, warm hearted and thoughtful man, we were all saddened to see his failing health over the last years.

He showed remarkable courage in his illness, never complaining but adopting a stoic attitude to life by being able to look fate firmly in the face.

Ian is sadly missed by his family, relatives and all who had the good fortune to know him. The Friends of Westgarthtown offer our sincere condolences to his siblings and all of their families.



Westgarthtown's 160th Anniversary

This year is Westgarthtown's 160th Anniversary and celebrations are planned for Sunday 21 November 2010 as part of the City of Whittlesea's Cultural Heritage Program 2010.

The Friends of Westgarthtown and the City of Whittlesea will host an afternoon of celebrations, commencing at Ziebell's Farmhouse at 1.00 pm. After the launch of the 160th celebrations, the updated Heritage Trail Brochure, the Ziebell Farmhouse Garden Guide and the Westgarthtown precinct farm buildings exhibit, guided heritage trail tours will start at Ziebell's Farmhouse at 2.00 pm and 3.00 pm. Afternoon tea will be provided.

Further details are available on the flyer posted with this newsletter, in the City of Whittlesea's Cultural Heritage Program 2010 booklet posted to members in May and at www.westgarthtown.org.au.



Visitors to 2008's Cultural Heritage Program enjoyed the tours

Wendish Heritage Society Australia

Do you have Wendish ancestry? The Wends (also known as Sorbs) are a Slavic people who spoke a Slavic language — Wendish or Sorbian. The Wends live in Lusatia, an area in eastern Germany which during the mid-nineteenth century was divided between Saxony and Prussia. Five families who settled at Westgarthtown were Wendish — Graff, Grutzner, Rosel, Wuchatsch and Zimmer.

The Wendish Heritage Society Australia researches and promotes the Wendish/Sorbian and Germanic heritage and family history in Australia. Its meeting room and research centre is located at the Ivanhoe Lutheran Church's meeting room, 27 Livingstone Street, Ivanhoe, Victoria and is open on the first Sunday each month from February–November from 1.30 – 5.30 pm. The Wendish Heritage Society Australia's postal address is PO Box 307, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084. For further details see www.wendishheritage.org.au

Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on the second and fourth Sunday of the month at 2.30 pm 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

Visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month, 1–4 pm. For enquiries, call 03 9464 1805 or enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au

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

Friends of Lutheran Archives

Do you have Lutheran ancestors? Have you checked with the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide to see whether they hold information about your relatives? Would you like to join the Friends of Lutheran Archives and help support the collection and preservation of important Australian and New Zealand Lutheran archival material.

For further details, contact Lutheran Archives

27 Fourth Street, Bowden South Australia 5007.

Tel/Fax: 08 8340 4009.

Email: lutheran.archives@lca.org.au

New Caretakers at Ziebell's Farmhouse

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

In January of this year the Friends of Westgarthtown said a sad farewell to the caretakers of the Ziebell Farmhouse Precinct, Adam Ziebell and Aaron Swanson. We would like to sincerely thank them for the contribution they made during their time as caretakers and wish them every success in the future.

In early May the City of Whittlesea appointed Jordan and Ellen Mitchell to the caretaker position. Jordan and Ellen, together with their young family of boys (Zander 9 years, Saxon 2 years and Cohen 1 year), moved into the caretaker's house on the 22 May 2010.

We are delighted to once again have caretakers keeping an eye on the precinct, helping in the garden and managing our Open Days. In the past four months Ellen has enjoyed the open days, 'meeting people who have come with a genuine interest in the history of the area and farmhouse, from local families and couples to descendants of the Ziebell family. Our routine daily inspections of the farmhouse are quite often a family affair and the children and I are really enjoying watching the garden change and bloom.'

The Friends of Westgarthtown are delighted to welcome the Mitchell family to the Ziebell Farmhouse Precinct and hope that their stay here is a long and happy period in their lives.



Cohen, Zander and Saxon Mitchell enjoying the spring sunshine in Ziebell's Farmhouse garden.

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

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