

## A Blessed Decade: 1964 - 1974



'Dr Max Lohe, President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Dr A Wischmann, President of the Kirchliches Aussenamt of the evangelical church of Germany and a very youthful Pastor Ernst Seyler 1968 in Thomastown'

### Ten years of service

BY PASTOR ERNST SEYLER

**B**efore I came to Melbourne Trinity Lutheran Church, I had already worked for 10 years on behalf of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELCA) in Australia, which called me from Germany to care for German speaking post-war migrants. Through this activity the founding of the Martin- Luther Congregation came into existence with its centres in Altona, St. Albans and Pascoe Vale, where also three nice little churches were built, partly in voluntary work. This was my "pioneer time" with wonderful

experiences.

Instead of returning to Germany after ten years to serve in my home church in Bavaria, I accepted the unanimous call to Trinity Lutheran Church at Parliament Place, including the centres in Bayswater and Thomastown. This happened after the sudden death of Pastor Ewald Steiniger. We had been friends with the Pastor and his family for many years.

With this call ten years of great blessing began for me and my family. We experienced wonderful Christian fellowship. As long as I live I am grateful for this enrichment. I would like to mention a few important experiences:

1. Immigration and integration belong together. In Thomastown I had to conduct fortnightly services in German and in English for the "New Australians" as well as for the settled Australians whose forefathers came to

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## A Blessed Decade: 1964 - 1974

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Australia in the middle of the 19th century from places like Mecklenburg in Germany. It was a privilege to hold services in the historic little Church surrounded by this old and unique cemetery. You could 'smell' the pioneer time and spirit! Through the open hearts and minds of the old and new settlers the bilingual young congregation grew together in a fine way. I was thrilled by this experience. I learnt that our differences may not separate us but far more enrich us in our living together. To give and to receive from one another makes life full of encouragement and joy.

2. The importance of children for the first generation of migrants. The children that were born here or those who went to school 'the day after their arrival' were the best helpers to find 'home' in Australia. Their English was so genuine that they became the teachers of the adults. I remember how often they helped their parents to fill in forms or translated newspaper articles. How often I could hear them say: 'Through our children we soon felt at home here'.

3. The working bees. The working bees were a great challenge to get involved and find the Church as the body for which I am responsible and called to help. The reward was always fellowship, joy and growing in faith, love and hope, in our Christian way of life. Let me express it this way: We give a hand in God's vineyard and a bit of time – and God gives us His heart!

Before leaving Australia after almost 20 years, I was asked by a German government official visiting Melbourne – it was just in front of the little church at Thomastown – : "Was it worthwhile to stay such a long time in Australia and miss out on so many opportunities in Germany?" I remember my answer came very quickly: "I am sure I did not miss out at all." But the great reward for my work in Australia was the following two sentences I was privileged to hear again and again:

"Through my Church, through my congregation, I found a home in Australia". "Apparently I had to emigrate to far Australia to find home in my Church." Finally Mrs Seyler and myself, as well as our three Australian-born children, are still in very close contact with 'our Australia' with so many friends who are still a great blessing to us. – In this respect I am also very grateful for the unforgettable evening hour at Westgarthtown last December 2002. What a wonderful 'coming home' through Mrs Ellen Mitchell.

Thank you: God bless you all!

## German Heritage Festival & Christkindl Market

**Presented by the Friends of Westgarthtown**

The German Heritage Festival will present unique features of German culture. Apart from food and drink stalls, there will be German dance and music, but other cultural groups will also participate. A special feature will be the Christkindl Market, consisting of a number of stalls selling gifts suitable for Christmas, including paintings, Christmas tree decorations and other crafts. In Ziebell's Farmhouse, an amateur quintet will perform light classical German music in the evening, and in the Church organist Eric Collyer will give special afternoon performances.

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Saturday, 22nd November 2003</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>1.00pm – 8.00pm</b>
<b>Cost:</b>	<b>Gold coin donation to enter Ziebell's Farmhouse &amp; Thomastown Lutheran Church</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Westgarthtown Reserve, Gardenia Rd, Thomastown (Melway Ref: Map 8 H5)</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917 or Rene Steain on 9217 2377</b>

### Need for volunteers!

Volunteers are urgently needed. A specially formed Festival Committee is working very hard for this Event on Saturday, 22nd November, but we can't perform all the tasks ourselves and really would very much appreciate a hand with the following tasks for a couple of hours or so.

- Helping to manage Ziebell's Farmhouse between 1.00pm and 6.00pm.
- Assisting with the serving of afternoon tea refreshments in Ziebell's garden.
- Giving a hand to sell German books at one of the gift stalls.
- Helping with the sale of German sausages etc.
- Greeting and caring for some of the performing artists.
- Helping with children's games.
- Assisting with parking.
- Setting up gazebos, tables and chairs in Ziebell's garden.

**Please contact Ellen on 9836 2917 if you can help**

# Celebrating her 90th Birthday

BY JOHN BORRACK

**D**ecima Prott, (nee Ziebell) as her name so aptly explains is the tenth child of the late Carl Alfred and Dorothea Ziebell. Born at the Ziebell Farmhouse on the 6th September 1913, Decima is the youngest of eight daughters and two sons.

She attended Thomastown State School and apart from early farm duties she worked as a shop assistant in a variety of bakeries, cake and confectionary shops across Melbourne. She was a station assistant for the Victorian Railways during the Second World War years. She met and married the late Frank Prott in the early 1940's and they had one son, Henry. Decima has resided in Thomastown for many years.

Decima's ninetieth birthday was celebrated at the Ziebell Farmhouse with which she has such significant links. It was a most happy occasion with the attendance of over fifty members of her immediate family. Present were her elder sisters, Esther who celebrated her one hundredth birthday in January this year and Bertha who is aged ninety three years. Like all her seven sisters who reached their ninetieth year, Decima keeps well and she is an exemplary reflection of the stoic and healthy upbringing her forebears, the first Westgarthtown pioneers, bestowed on her.

Her generosity of spirit and happy disposition has always been acclaimed by all who have known her.

During the 1970's and 1980's, her work as an organising member of the Thomastown Lutheran Church is legendary. She is to be congratulated on achieving a remarkable age, and we wish her many more happy healthy years.

Decima Prott celebrates her birthday at Ziebell Farmhouse



Group outside Thomastown Lutheran Church after the marriage of Robert Wuchatsch and Gaye Lohse on 16/8/2003



# William Albert Wuchatsch (1868 - 1948)

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

**A**lbert was Johann and Johanna (née Graff) Wuchatsch's second child. The grandson of Johann Wuchatsch, who arrived in Australia in 1850, Albert was born at Epping on 28 January 1868 and baptised by Pastor Hermann Herlitz on 29 March 1868. Sponsors were Carl Lehmann, Michael Zimmer, Augusta Bernhardt and Agnes Vockensohn.

## EARLY DAYS

Albert was educated at Epping State School, before leaving school at twelve, to work on the family farm. His movements after confirmation in 1882 until 1898 are unclear, although in 1918 he wrote a poem entitled 'Roaming' which if autobiographical, refers to several years spent carrying his swag over the 'wide Loddon plains'; ploughing for 'a cockey at Pannoomilloo'; breaking stones 'for old Davy Munro' (a construction contractor) at the time of the first Jubilee; working at Burra on the railway to the mine; and labouring at Laverton, when Melbourne's sewerage system was under construction. In April 1891 he was paid 3 pounds 14 shillings and one penny by the Thomastown State School for construction of an open brick drain.

## DAIRYING

In his later writings, Albert claimed he had milked his first cow as a boy of only eight years old. After taking over management of the family farm on the death of his elder brother Henry in 1898, Albert became actively involved in the dairy industry. As well as dairy farming, he was for many years Manager of the Epping Dairy Company, a co-operative venture formed to carry local milk to Melbourne. He was also Vice-President and Auditor of the Victorian Wholesale Milk Distributors Association and President of the Epping branch of the Victorian Farmer's Union.

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

Albert continued his Grandfather Johann Wuchatsch's interest in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church and was a long time member and later trustee of the congregation. Ownership of the Lutheran Church and Cemetery Reserve was transferred to him and three other trustees, including his cousin Ben Seeber, on 27 February 1931. As late as the 1940s, when aged in his seventies, he could still be seen riding his wooden handled bicycle to and from

Thomastown on Sundays to attend church. When not riding his bicycle, he travelled about in a horse drawn jinker.

## MARRIAGE

On 18 August 1909, Albert was married by Pastor Herlitz to Emma Maltzahn of Thomastown at the Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. Witnesses were Emma's brother Ernie Maltzahn and Albert's sister Molly. Emma, then aged 41, had been born in Campbellfield on 18 September 1867, the youngest child of Christian and Maria Sophia Schluntz. Christian, one of three Maltzahn brothers to emigrate to Australia, arrived in Sydney from Hamburg with his wife Maria, brother Ludwig and sister-in-law Sophia aboard the Caesar Godeffroy on 11 December 1852. They travelled on to Melbourne on 14 December, aboard the Wild Irish Girl, and arrived on 30 December. He died in 1869 of hepatitis. Maria died in 1891. Both are buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery.

Albert and Emma moved into a newly erected timber house, located in Cemetery Lane (now O'Herns Road Epping) just west of the old stone home, in which his mother Johanna, sister Molly, and several brothers remained.

## EPPING AND WHITTLESEA SHIRE COUNCILS

In January 1914, after several unsuccessful attempts, Albert was elected to the Epping Shire Council. He served on it until August 1916, when he was defeated. Although his seat was in jeopardy following the 1915 amalgamation of the Epping and Whittlesea Shires, which necessitated a reduction in the number of councillors from 18 to 12, his cause was not helped by the strong anti-German sentiment which prevailed during the First World War. During the election campaign, in an attempt to refute accusations of disloyalty, he took out advertising space in the local newspaper, the Preston Leader. He pointed out that his family had lived in the district since 1850, and highlighted the fact that his brother Jim had enlisted, and three cousins of the same name were fighting for Australia in Europe and the Middle East. It was all to no avail however and he was defeated. Ironically, in March 1916 the Preston Leader had reported Albert's support for the Warragul Council's move for the introduction of

conscription. It noted Albert's comments at a monthly Shire of Whittlesea meeting that

*He knew any amount of young men who wanted to enlist, but could not do so on account of family objections. Under conscription these men would be available to the country.*

#### **KOOKABURRA**

From 1916-26 Albert contributed poetry to and acted as occasional correspondent and commentator on agricultural and council matters for the Evelyn Observer. He wrote under the pen name Kookaburra. He was also a regular contributor of poetry to the Farmers' Advocate, the weekly journal of the Victorian Farmer's Union. On 6 July 1917 he sought and was granted copyright on his patriotic poem entitled 'Our Noble Sons'.

Albert's poems and articles reveal a man of humorous but conservative nature, thoroughly approving of farmers, but critical of the Labor Party, Chinese Australians, the Victorian Railways, unions, public servants and daylight saving.

Albert advised and assisted many of his relatives, neighbours and friends with their financial affairs, and his signature appears on a multitude of old wills and probate documents. Ironically, he died intestate, having never prepared a will of his own.

#### **PATENT MAIZE AND PEA SOWER**

Albert also dabbled in inventions. On 3 November 1913, he lodged a patent application for his seeding and fertilising attachment for ploughs, and letters patent were subsequently sealed on 26 August 1914. The Preston Leader of 10 October 1914 reported

*A highly successful field trial of Cr. A. Wuchatsch's patent plough attachment for sowing maize, peas or beans in rows, with or without fertiliser, was given at the patentee's farm, Cemetery Road, on Tuesday afternoon. There was a large attendance of farmers and others interested. The attachment was fitted to a mould board double furrowed plough with governor steerage, and performed the work of ploughing, sowing maize in rows and fertilising in one operation, the seed being sown regularly with an even*

*distribution of manure. All present expressed themselves as very favourably impressed with Mr. Wuchatsch's invention. The seed is sown by a pea distributor and can be varied by a change of sprocket wheels on the grain shaft. Larger or smaller quantities of manure may also be distributed in the same manner. The attachment has also a handy and efficient clutch for putting the machine in or out of gear. A practical demonstration of the work performed by the machine was in evidence in the shape of a field of peas sown recently and now well up out of the ground.*

The commercial success of Albert's maize and pea sowing attachment, which apparently sold under the name Epping Star, is not known. The outbreak of war would not have helped sales. Records show he renewed his patent in 1920 for a further seven years, the maximum possible.

Albert was also a life member of, and exhibitor, at the Royal Melbourne Show for many years. From 1918 to 1934 he was a regular prizewinner in the mangles, sugar beet and chicory root categories and also supplied green fodder for the Whittlesea District Exhibit.

#### **LATER LIFE**

Although Albert and Emma wished to raise a family, they were unsuccessful, their only two children being stillborn, in 1911 and 1913. They were buried in the Fawkner Cemetery.

Albert died at Pine Grove, as the property was known, on 29 August 1948, aged 80, and was buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery. His obituary, in the Whittlesea Post, noted among other things that he had retained to his death a particular interest in sporting bodies, having been a Vice-President and patron of the Epping Football and Cricket Clubs for innumerable years, and also a Vice-President of the Tennis Club since inception.

Emma died on 27 May 1957, at Prestonia Private Hospital, Preston, aged 89. She was buried with Albert on 29 May 1957. Her obituary in the Whittlesea Post stated 'Mrs Wuchatsch was a district pioneer, and was well known and respected'. After her death Pine Grove, then 108 acres, was sold, ending over 100 years ownership by the Wuchatsch family.



### Works Report

It is anticipated that production work on the historic wall display at Ziebell's Farmhouse will commence in the next week. Council has approved the funding for this work, and subject to no further unforeseen delays, the installation will be completed within the next six weeks.

All draft layouts for the finished work have been completed ready for computerised graphic layout, printing and wall mounting.

Other work completed at the farmhouse in recent weeks has included the installation of stair carpet, overflow drain from verandah gutter, internal painting, plaster repair and repainting of the bathhouse.

### Annual General Meeting

The Friends of Westgarthtown AGM will be held at Ziebell's Farmhouse on Saturday 25 October 2003 at 2.00 pm.

### Trinity Lutheran Church Book

The launch of East Melbourne Trinity Lutheran Church's forthcoming history has been briefly postponed from 24 October 2003 to a yet to be announced date shortly before Christmas. The change has been caused by the great volume of additional material received this year which has led to an expansion of the book, which is now expected to be between 500-600 pages.

### Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on alternate Sundays (second and fourth Sunday of the month) at 11.15 am at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor.

For further details, contact Pastor Stephen Pietsch at Calvary Lutheran Church, Greensborough on 03 9435 6846.

### Ziebell's Farmhouse Open Days & Tours

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month between 1-4 pm. For enquiries contact Simon Borrack and Hege Eier on 9464 1805.

Tours can be organised for groups of 10 or more people. For information and bookings contact Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917.

## Ziebell's Garden

BY GILLIAN BORRACK

**T**he weather, although cold, has continued to be kind to the garden group volunteers on the first Saturday of each month throughout the autumn and winter months. Already the late winter and early spring flowers and blossoms have made these seasons seem somewhat brighter. The pruning of all the roses, shrubs and fruit trees was again expertly carried out by Simon Borrack.

In late autumn Rob Wuchatsch, Paul Schultz and Ian Ziebell cleaned up the tangled and unsightly rubbish in the rocky south west corner of the paddock near the stone wall in Gardenia Road. It was back breaking work, but the result achieved has made a great difference to that former rather unsightly area.

Sixteen new roses were planted in winter and we are looking forward to seeing these and all our other roses in bloom for the German Fest on November 22nd along with our assorted annuals, perennials, bulbs, fuschias, hydrangeas and tecoma's.

Mid September will see the changeover of our current caretaker/gardener, Gaye Wuchatsch (Lohse) to our new caretaker/gardeners Simon Borrack and his wife Hege Eier who will take over for the next 18 months. We welcome Simon and Hege and look forward to working with them both. We bid a fond farewell to Gaye and say a big thank you to her for all the dedicated work over the past two years.

### Tours & Visits

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people attended, some bringing their kids (o.k.) and dogs (not o.k.). At Wuchatsch's Farmhouse, Robert led the large group through the property commenting on all of its remaining outbuildings and features. A delicious array of cakes and cookies baked by Marita Anders and her mother Klara provided sustenance at the end of the invigorating and stimulating tour. Many thanks go to Irma Hatty and her husband Ted for their preparedness to open the Church on many occasions and share their devotion with our visitors.

## German Heritage Bus Tour

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

As part of the City of Whittlesea's 2003 Heritage Program, the Friends of Westgarthtown organized a very successful bus tour, which took 51 visitors to four sites of German origin - Trinity German Lutheran Church (East Melbourne), Schwerkolt's Cottage and Historical Museum (Mitcham), Schramm's Cottage Complex (Doncaster) and Ziebell's Farmhouse. To view four different heritage buildings during one excursion, hear introductory historical presentations at each site and enjoy culinary refreshments etc. required the effective collaboration of municipal councils, historical societies, bus companies and the support of various individuals.

At East Melbourne Pastor J. von Mitzlaff welcomed the tour to his Church, followed by a highly informative talk by Herbert Mees, Chairman of Trinity German Lutheran Church's historical society. Organist Genie Fiebig enhanced the experience in this beautiful building and two helpful brochures invited visitors on an 'Inspection Tour' of the most noteworthy features of the Church, including stained glass windows and the 1874 organ.

At Schwerkolt's we were enthusiastically received by Judith Fry, President of the Whitehorse Historical Society and several committee members. Valda Arrowsmith gave an in depth presentation on the colourful past of August Schwerkolt and his family, preceded by very welcome morning tea refreshments in the new extension to the Pioneer Museum. The time available hardly sufficed to view all attractions on the grounds such as the Schwerkolt smoke house and wine cellar.

At Schramm's it was Judith Leaney, long standing President of the Doncaster and Templestowe Historical Society who greeted and informed the 'crowd' on the building's history and its learned occupant, Max von Schramm. With the most capable assistance of volunteers, an ample lunch was enjoyed both inside the hall of the former schoolhouse and also in the attractive garden area which surrounds the buildings of the complex.

Several treats awaited us at Westgarthtown: Irma Hatty and Robert Wuchatsch presented their succinct talks to a rather crowded Church; John Noack extracted rousing chords from the organ; and at Ziebell's Farmhouse an unbelievably sumptuous spread of cakes by Marita Anders and her mother Klara awaited us on the decorated kitchen table. Many had never witnessed, let alone tasted such a



Inside Ziebell's enjoying Kaffee und Kuchen variety of cakes from 'Apfelkuchen' over cheesecake to delicious macaroons.

As there were 13 people on the waiting list and we have received many thank-you notes (such as the one below), another tour is almost certain. The tour unified in a brand new way those Melbourne organizations and councils with a deep regard for the preservation of our 19th century German/Australian architectural gems.

*A letter from Patricia Heywood who encouraged seven of her friends to participate in the tour!*

21 July 2003

Dear Ellen,

We would like to thank you most sincerely for the wonderful day we had on the bus tour of historic German sites last Saturday. – Your organisation skills are terrific!! And your speeches on our behalf were excellent. All my friends and I really enjoyed the day and are most grateful to you personally and to the Friends of Westgarthtown and City of Whittlesea – What a marvellous idea it was. We learnt a great deal also and feel proud of each section of our communal and Victorian heritage...

Patricia Heywood and friends

## Tours & Visits

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

Since the end of March over 500 visitors, mostly on organized tours, have enjoyed visting Ziebell's Farmhouse and, often, greater Westgarthtown.

A memorable gathering, but of the disturbing kind, happened when the Melbourne Bicycle Touring Club visited in June. Unexpectedly and repeatedly the alarm kept going off, startling visitors and tour leader alike during the lunch and talks. My ears kept ringing for a very long time – and I felt like returning all excursion fees to Fred Surr and his very shaken group.

Among schools that came to Westgarthtown were tourism students from RMIT; German students from the Catholic College in Eltham; with local schools represented by Bundoora Secondary College, Lalor Park Primary and St.Luke's Primary Schools. Kids from primary schools aged 7 to 9 are particularly inquisitive and notice everything, like the 'glass-eye' cemented into the eastern stone wall at the Ziebell's; the two nails sticking out of Siebel's backdoor; the marks on the exercise booklets in the display cabinet etc.

We have now made contact with two bus companies - Mee's and Quince's. The former visited with 51 people on board from the Probus Club, Reservoir, and Quince's will send a group from Brighton in November. Further enthusiastic Probus groups came from Doncaster and Coburg, but the Port Phillip Probus Walking Club comprised remarkably fit members from everywhere.

On Sunday 4 May 2003 the Friends of Westgarthtown presented a 'Walking Tour of Westgarthtown' and 'Open House' as part of the City of Whittlesea's 2003 Heritage Program. Close to 60  
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Five boys from Lalor Park Primary School in natural poses



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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.