

## Celebrating 100 years of cooking

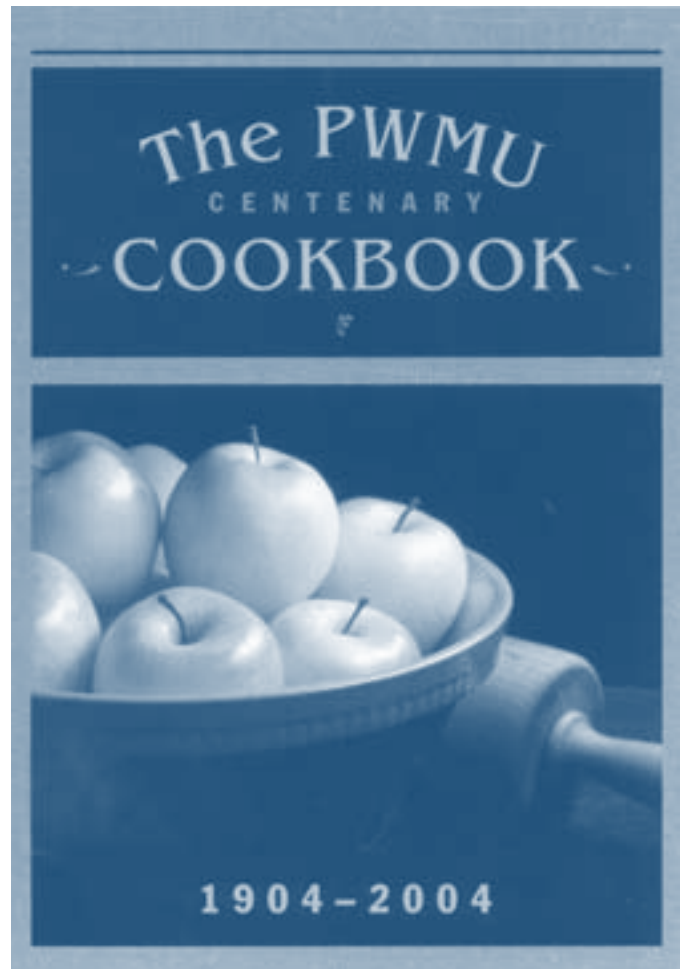
BY GILLIAN BORRACK

Recently Melbourne's Herald Sun and The Age covered the launch of the centenary edition of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union of Victoria's cookbook. Sylvia Schultz is the longest serving member of the committee responsible for the PMWU cookbook. Sylvia, who has been on the committee for 40 years, declared that her original copy had been a great standby all through her 54 years of married life. "It's always had answers for everybody...be it pickles, preserving, corning beef. There was no refrigeration in the early days" she was quoted as saying.

Sylvia spent most of her childhood at Ziebell's Farmhouse, moving there even before her father died tragically in 1936 of a ruptured appendix after riding his horse to the hospital in Griffith, NSW only to find no doctor in attendance. Sylvia's mother, Sylvia Adams (née Ziebell) returned to her parents' home 'The Pines' (Ziebell's Farmhouse) at Thomastown with Sylvia's three younger brothers Joe, Carl and Francis to join Sylvia who had been attending primary school in Melbourne, including Thomastown, since she was six years old.

Sylvia remained at 'The Pines' until she married Ron Schultz in February 1950 and moved to the Schultz farm in Wollert. Growing up as the oldest granddaughter of Dorothea Ziebell, who died in 1969, aged 96, Sylvia is a living link to the preparation of food at the Ziebell Farmhouse and a wonderful resource to us all.

Prior to the launch day on May 5 2004, members of the committee began planning to assemble and display a collection of the PMWU cookbooks to represent all editions printed during the 100 years since the first edition in 1904. Many cookbooks were battered and splattered. As the date drew near two editions were missing, 1906 and 1909. Some years ago I had mentioned to Sylvia that my maternal grandmother, Wilhelmine



Ketels, who was of German descent, had crossed out the title 'German Biscuits' in her PMWU cookbook and written above it with a steel nibbed pen 'Anzac Biscuits'. This was done sometime between April 1915 and her death in 1919 aged 32. The cookbook was passed down to my mother and then to my younger sister, Sue. Sylvia asked me to check the edition date and Sue happily lent our grandmother's 1909 edition PMWU Cookbook to Sylvia for the Centenary celebrations, leaving only one missing edition - 1906. As another member of the PMWU committee said, "cooking is very much a story of history for many people." The 2004 edition is available from most bookshops at \$24.95.

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# Tour activities and visitors

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

**F**rom April to June 2004, a further 300 visitors made their way to Westgarthtown, bringing the total for the first half of 2004 to an impressive 600. The increased size of bus tour groups has certainly contributed to the growth of visitors, but heritage events, a spectacularly large German Saturday Morning School group and the 'Open Sundays' on the second Sunday each month have all contributed to increased visitor numbers.

### CLUBS

Quince's Bus and Coach Travel Specialists brought a number of clubs such as the McKinnon/Ormond Gas Association and the Malvern Probus Club for a guided tour with morning tea and light lunch. Gillian and Margaret Borrack assisted with the catering, introducing many improvements and Tatiana Joukoff capably assisted with guiding. Other Probus Clubs from Moonee Valley and St. Kilda also enjoyed their discovery of Westgarthtown and departed enriched with new impressions.

### SCHOOLS

It is always gratifying when schools make return visits, such as the Catholic Ladies College, Eltham. Nineteen year 11 girls learning German under the tutelage of their teacher Andrea Henderson revisited on 25 May. The day had been set aside for a total German immersion, first at Schwerkolts, then Café Egon in Lower Templestowe and finally an intense German language experience at Ziebell's Farmhouse. The girls posed lots of imaginative questions and their linguistic skills might even take them to Germany next year.

On the morning of 15 May 2004, a veritable 'Völkerwanderung' descended upon Westgarthtown from the German Saturday School, led by their principal Elise Beilharz. Among the crowd of over eighty were fifty-two children, plus parents and teachers. It was a sunny, beautiful morning. Groups were formed under the leadership of Gaye, Robert, Hege and Ellen and each progressed with an extraordinary level of excitement and curiosity from Ziebell's Farmhouse to the church.

To fit eighty children and adults into the Thomastown Lutheran Church required much manipulation and unusual seating arrangements. But it was finally accomplished and Irma Hatty's childhood recollections about the Church elicited warm applause. Later our visitors – young and old - relaxed with a colourful picnic on the Reserve. From my viewpoint this was one of the most edifying groups of visitors: children learning German with dedicated teachers and enthusiastic parents in an historically relevant 'live' environment.

School children visit the church at Westgarthtown



## Man made visions

BY ELLEN MITCHELL

As part of 'MAN MADE VISIONS', the City of Whittlesea's 2004 Heritage Program, the Friends of Westgarthtown is presenting three events. The first was an Organ Recital in May, the second a Bus Tour of German Sites on Saturday 17 July and the third, the German Heritage Festival & Christkindl Market on Saturday, 20 November 2004, from 10am to 4pm. All events presented by the Friends of Westgarthtown are sponsored by the City of Whittlesea.

The program was officially launched by Cr Lara Carli, Mayor of the City of Whittlesea, at the Whittlesea Showground Administration Building on Sunday, 16 May 2004 and all participating groups had the opportunity to display and promote their events in a celebratory atmosphere with music, dance and good fellowship.

### I. GERMAN ORGAN RECITAL – SUNDAY, 23 MAY 2004

On Sunday, 23 May, the Friends of Westgarthtown presented a German Organ Recital by John Noack in the Thomastown Lutheran Church. To the great astonishment of the many visitors, John extracted the most rousing tones from the American Estey harmonium, purchased by the Westgarthtown Lutheran congregation in 1924 to replace a much smaller one.

John covered an impressive spectrum of German

composers from classical, baroque and romantic periods including Bach, Beethoven, Haendel, Mozart, Brahms, Mendelsohn and Schubert. The applause after each composition attested to John's intimate familiarity with the music and to the range of unimaginable musical expressiveness from the harmonium. Some favourites were Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', Haydn's 'Emperor's Hymn', Mozart's 'March of the Priests; from the Magic Flute, Mendelsohn's well known oratorium 'Here comes the Bride' and Schubert's 'Ave Maria'. All pieces had been specially adapted to suit the limited range of the harmonium.

The recital was given a particularly enriching dimension by a short announcement of each piece by John and a brief biographical account of the composer and his setting. This was preceded by information on the idiosyncracies of the harmonium, with its pedals, stops and dummy pipes. Altogether an enormously enjoyable experience for the audience which included St. John's Walking Group from Bently, headed by Margaret Ruddell. For afternoon tea refreshments with 'Apfel und Mohnkuchen' visitors gathered at the Ziebell Farmhouse.

### II. BUS TOUR OF GERMAN SITES – SATURDAY 17 JULY 2004

As in 2003, this tour included three historic buildings and sites - Schwerkolt's Cottage and Museum Complex at Mitcham; Schramm's Cottage Complex, Doncaster; and the Thomastown Lutheran Church and Ziebell's Farmhouse. For this exciting excursion, three historical societies worked together to provide professional guiding, an introduction to manifold displays and collections, and of course plenty of sustaining refreshments.

### III. GERMAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL & CHRISTKINDL MARKET – SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2004

Please put this date into your diary. We will have an expanded Christkindl Market with up to 22 stalls selling beautiful wares suitable for Christmas gifts. A variety of Bratwursts and delicious cake will satisfy gastronomes and German beer and wine in the decorated beer tent will appeal to all. Music will be everywhere: in the beer tent, the house and in the Church. All we need is fair weather and of course, you.

*Below is an extract from an exquisite thank-you:*

Dear Ellen,

Our school had a thoroughly enjoyable day at Westgarthtown. The sun was shining, the guides were excellent, Irma's reminiscences in the Church added such a personal touch and even the biscuits were of the best quality! (Much appreciated by the children).

Wunderbar! 'Tausend Dank' for organizing everything so superbly.

Elise Beilharz  
Principal  
German Saturday School.

# Johann Christian Ludwig Seeber

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

Johann Seeber lived in a house which stood in High Street, Lalor facing the railway station. He and his wife Johanna (nee Wuchatsch) were married at the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church on 1 November 1864 in a double wedding with Johann Wuchatsch jun. and Johanna Graff.



Johann Seeber, born at Rossach, Neckarsulm, Wurttemberg, arrived in Australia on 1 October 1857 aboard the 1427 ton ship John Linn. A qualified shoemaker, he was issued with his passport on 10 June 1857 and travelled to Australia from his home at Eichach near Oehringen via Heilbronn, Mannheim, Rotterdam and Liverpool with his sister Rosine and brother Gottlieb.

Three brothers - Phillip, Ludwig and Christian Seeber - had arrived in September 1856 aboard the Ellen, and his widowed mother Rosine and another sister Caroline followed in August 1861, on the Empress of the Seas.

Johann was naturalised as a Victorian citizen on 21 March 1861. On 8 October 1863 he borrowed 90 pounds from David Henry and the following day completed the purchase of three acres of land at Westgarthtown (part Lot 11, Section 25, Parish of Keelbundora) from Georg Nebel, for 116 pounds.

In 1864, Johann built a bluestone and brick house on part of his land which faced the Epping Road. Here he relocated his shoemaking business, which he had previously operated with Friedrich Vockensohn in Johann Rosel's former cottage near the east bank of Edgar's Creek, opposite the Lutheran Church.

By 7 April 1865 Johann had repaid his mortgage and taken title to his land. In 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, he donated 5 shillings towards an appeal for wounded German soldiers and their dependents and shortly after contributed one pound towards the construction of the new 1874 Trinity Lutheran Church at East Melbourne.

Johann and Johanna Seeber raised

a family of eight children – Lizzie, Marie, Harry, Gus, Annie, Minnie, Ben and Agnes. Two others died in infancy. Unfortunately, Johanna herself died prematurely of pneumonia on 12 May 1886, aged 40. Her obituary, which appeared in the Lutheran monthly *Der Australische Christenbote*, recorded that:

Her husband, her nine children, her numerous other relatives and the whole congregation mourn the loss of one going home so early, although they sincerely do not begrudge her rest in the Lord.

Johanna's headstone includes the words 'Asleep in Jesus' and the inscription:

Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to the Cross I cling.

Johann carried on his shoemaking business and small farm until his death from 'acute cystitis exhaustion' at home in 1904. He was aged 70. He had been particularly helped with the upbringing of the younger children by his two eldest daughters, Elizabeth (Lizzie) and Marie,

who remained at home and did not marry. Johann and Johanna Seeber are buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery.

Johann's three acre farm and six roomed brick and stone house was valued for probate at 300 pounds. His personal estate, which consisted mainly of stock (nine cows, three heifers and fowls), was valued at 102 pounds, 12 shillings and fourpence. That times were difficult financially for Johann in his later years is evidenced by the fact he applied in 1895 to the Shire of Epping for his rates to be reduced, claiming it was very difficult with the low prices ruling for all produce to make ends meet. It was at this time that several of Johann's children left home, including Harry and Gus, who moved to Western Australia.

NOTE: Johann Seeber's mother, his brother Christian Seeber and sister Rosine (Mrs. Borrmann/Falk) all settled nearby at Epping; Gottlieb Seeber operated a butchery, first at Epping, then later in Preston; Phillip Seeber settled in Bendigo, where like Gottlieb, he also operated a butchery; Ludwig Seeber farmed near Violet Town; and Caroline (Mrs Jurgen Rechter) lived at Bendigo.

## 2004 German Heritage Festival & Christkindl Market

presented by the Friends of Westgarthtown and City of Whittlesea

The German Heritage Festival offers unique cultural features of German origin on the Westgarthtown Reserve, close to the historic Ziebell Farmhouse and Thomastown Lutheran Church of 1856. On the Reserve a great variety of stalls will sell beautiful wares suitable for Christmas gifts and fabulous food, and German beer and wine will be available while itinerant musicians entertain you with traditional tunes.

**Date:** Saturday 20 November 2004  
**Time:** 11am – 4pm  
**Cost:** \$2 to enter Festival Site with gold coin donation to enter Ziebell Farmhouse (displays) and Thomastown Lutheran Church (organ recital).  
**Location:** Westgarthtown Reserve, Gardenia Road, Thomastown (Melway Ref: Map 8 H5)  
**Contact:** Ellen Mitchell on 9836 2917, [Ellen.Mitchell@optusnet.com.au](mailto:Ellen.Mitchell@optusnet.com.au) or Brooke Wilson on 9217 2333, [brooke.wilson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:brooke.wilson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au)  
Event day: 0409 859 241

### Ziebell Family Reunion

All descendants of Christian and Sophia Ziebell please note that the 2004 reunion will take place on the third Saturday of November - 20 November 2004. After discussion with many descendants the organiser, Sylvia Schultz, felt that as many descendants missed last years reunion because it was scheduled so close to the German Heritage Festival, it would be better to declare the German Heritage Festival as the reunion date and celebrate their heritage at the same time. Spread the word to all descendants please.

If you register with Sylvia by the end of October there will be a special ZIEBELL DESCENDANT badge available with your name printed on it. These can be collected on the day from the Friends of Westgarthtown's Marquee.

If you have any queries, contact Sylvia Schultz at:

Pine Grove  
65 Lehmann's Road  
WOLLERT  
VIC 3750  
Phone: 9408 1302

### Unmack Reunion

As usual the Unmack descendants reunion will take place on the first Sunday in March 2005, between 11am and 3pm. Please bring your own picnic lunch and/or afternoon tea. Tea and coffee making facilities are available. Some seating will be available. Spread the word to all descendants please so that you can again enjoy

meeting up once again.

If you have any queries please contact Sylvia Schultz - details above.

### Received with Thanks

Special thanks to Lorraine Flanders who recently provided on long term loan to Ziebell's Farmhouse some old farm tools and a milk/cream separator from the former Nebel Farm at Lalor. Lorraine's mother was a Nebel. The separator had been in Lorraine's closet for over 40 years. If you have any old items of historic significance re Westgarthtown which are taking up valuable space, we would be happy to receive them too (within limits!).

### 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 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.

### 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.

## London calling...

Even in the information technology age, you may be surprised to learn that the layout and design for Friends of Westgarthtown News is completed in London. Ley Ley designs is in fact a very part time hobby for Léon Borrack, a Ziebell family descendant. Editor Rob Wuchatsch e-mails the completed articles to Léon, who assembles the Newsletter in Quark before e-mailing the final proof to Kwik Kopy in Thomastown for printing. Léon and his partner Tammy are returning to Melbourne at the end of this year, but not before 3 months of full time travel around Europe (including Germany).

*Oktoberfest in Munich: Léon, Tammy & friends conduct research for the Friends' German Festival*



# The Autumn garden

BY SIMON BORRACK

*Caretaker Ziebell Farmhouse*

Autumn in the Ziebell garden brings fresh bulb growth and farewells deciduous foliage. The creepers, like the Chinese Trumpet Flower, Wisteria and the Tecoma have shed their many leaves to reveal bare skeletal forms. So too have the Roses moved off into dormancy and await their annual pruning, which due to the relatively warm and wet weather will be brought forward several weeks on the garden schedule. No doubt as always with the 'Olde' fashioned varieties of rose, owing to their characteristically long and multitudinous amounts of sharp thorns, this will prove to be a tender task. Oddly, the weather has induced the Mulberry tree near the drying sheds to begin to shoot and fruit out of season - perhaps a charmed omen.

Bountiful assemblies of Jonquils, Nerines and Daffodils now take pride of place in the garden beds. Winter can be a barren time in the beds, particularly as the pruning and clipping back of annual overgrowth reorganizes the layout and form, often leaving the beds unrecognizable. This unfamiliarity can be lessened by the sporadic placement

of clumped bulbs striking a vertical green ascent in an otherwise lifeless garden bed, providing stepping stones for the eye to move through the forms, textures and colours and in some instances, framing the presentations of feature shrubs and bushes. But of course the heady scents of massed Jonquils underpin this winter occupant's rightful place.

Of course the weeds, with the application of water, grow at a cracking pace wherever they can, keeping the Working Bee group bending backwards in an effort to keep control of this eternal and mammoth chore. As always, many thanks goes to all supporters of the Saturday monthly Working Bee. Of course we extend a warm welcome to all who might feel the urge to drop by and spend an hour or two immersing themselves in the needs of a garden and in fine company.

On a more archeological note, a recent discovery by the stone well was made. The lowering of a soil bed revealed a small white porcelain doll, roughly 4-5cm long, minus the head. Theories so far suggest the doll to be part of a tea-

cocoy. The doll may be seen in the display cabinet inside the farmhouse. If you have any other ideas as to its origin or how it came to be there, please let us know.

Again, many thanks to those who have participated in recent Working Bees. Your efforts and company are appreciated greatly! Hege and I look forward to seeing you on future occasions.

Gardening Working Bee now held on the second Saturday of the month - 10am - 4pm.



## Esther Zillah Usher (née Ziebell)

(26 January 1903 - 10 March 2004)

BY SYLVIA SCHULTZ

**E**sther passed away peacefully at Kyabram Hospital on 10 March 2004, aged 101 years. The fourth of Alfred and Dorothea Ziebell's ten children, Esther was born at the Ziebell family farm at Thomastown. Esther married Leslie Usher and for many years they operated a dairy farm in Tongala, before moving to Kyabram in 1971. Leslie died in 1976 and Esther continued to reside in Kyabram, living in her own home until she died.

As far as we know Esther is the first Ziebell descendant in Australia to have celebrated her 100th birthday. She will be greatly missed by her large family of seven children, twenty-seven grandchildren, forty-four great-grand children and nine great-great grand children.

Esther will also be sorely missed by the wider Ziebell family. She attended every major function held at the Ziebell Farmhouse since the Friends of Westgarthtown became responsible for the management of the precinct. We were surprised and delighted to see her last year at the German Heritage Fest when the weather was appalling and deterred all but the most hardy. Her interest in returning to her family home was most rewarding to all her family and gave everyone an opportunity to see and converse with her over the years.



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

**T**he Thomastown Lutheran Church at Westgarthtown is the second oldest surviving Lutheran Church building in Australia and the oldest still used as the principal worship centre of a Lutheran congregation.

**H**eritage Victoria has included the Lutheran Church, Cemetery and Reserve; and Graff's, Siebel's, Wuchatsch's and Ziebell's houses on its Heritage Register, recognising their outstanding heritage value and providing legislative protection for the future.

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

**S**iebel's Farmhouse, erected in 1860, is the birthplace of Albert Siebel, who in 1934 established the Pura Dairy at Preston, to retail Westgarthtown's milk. Pura has now developed into a leading national Australian brandname.

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