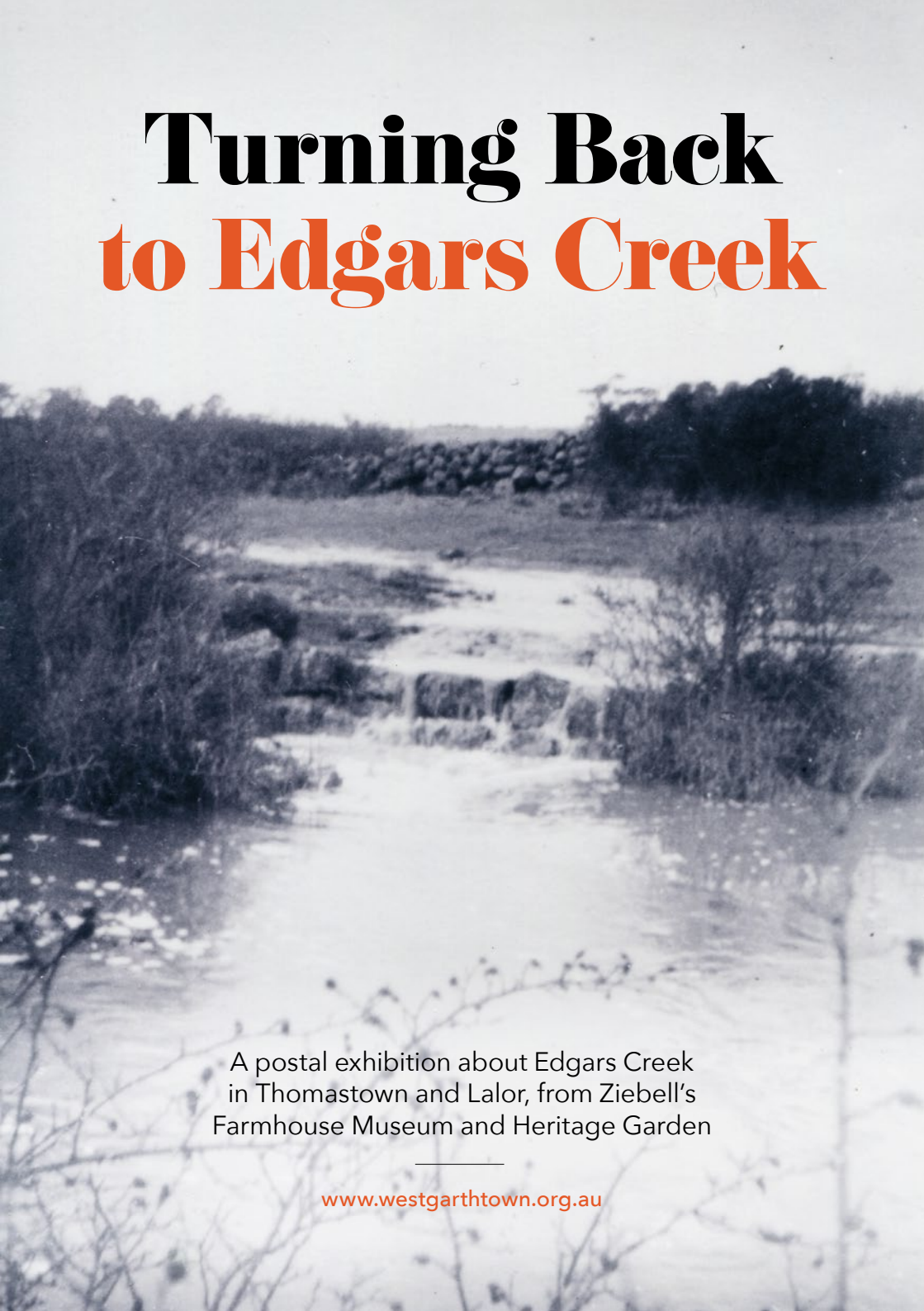


# Turning Back to Edgars Creek



A postal exhibition about Edgars Creek  
in Thomastown and Lalor, from Ziebell's  
Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden

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[www.westgarhtown.org.au](http://www.westgarhtown.org.au)







# A Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Waterway

*Edgars creek flows through the Country of the Wurundjeri Willum clan of the Woi Wurrung language group, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, who are part of the East Kulin nation.*

The waterway that is now called Edgars creek is 16 kilometres long, it begins as puddles in Wollert grasslands, flows through Epping, Lalor and Thomastown, and joins up with the Merri Creek in North Coburg. Merri Creek flows into the Yarra River, and then into Port Phillip Bay.

Edgars creek flows through the Country of the Wurundjeri Willum clan of the Woi Wurrung language group, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, who are part of the East Kulin nation.

According to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung tradition, Bunjil the wedge-tailed eagle formed the land of the Woi Wurrung people, and is the creation ancestor of men. Pallian the bat formed the oceans, rivers and creeks, and is the creation ancestor of women.



The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung have lived in the area for millenia, living near creeks and rivers, hunting fish, eels, and shellfish, as well as birds and animals, and harvesting plants. The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung managed their Country according to their six seasons, and met with neighbouring clans for trade and ceremonies.

When Europeans began settling in the Melbourne area in 1835, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people were forced off their land, and many died from introduced diseases, and frontier conflict. After 1863, many of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung survivors moved to Coranderrk, near Healesville. Today the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people maintain strong cultural connections to their lands and waterways.

Whittlesea is now home to First Nation people from throughout Victoria and Australia. The Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre is based in Thomastown, near the banks of Edgars Creek.

**Above and left:** Musk Lorikeets on Edgars Creek, Nakiah and Sienna May, Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre.

**Front cover:** Edgars Creek – weir below Siebel’s House 1949, courtesy Ian Robertson.

**Inside cover:** Edgar’s Creek, Stephen N, Wurunderi. This artwork was commissioned through The Torch.

# New settlers turn to the creek

*Farming families used creek water for vegetable gardens, orchards and dairy herds.*

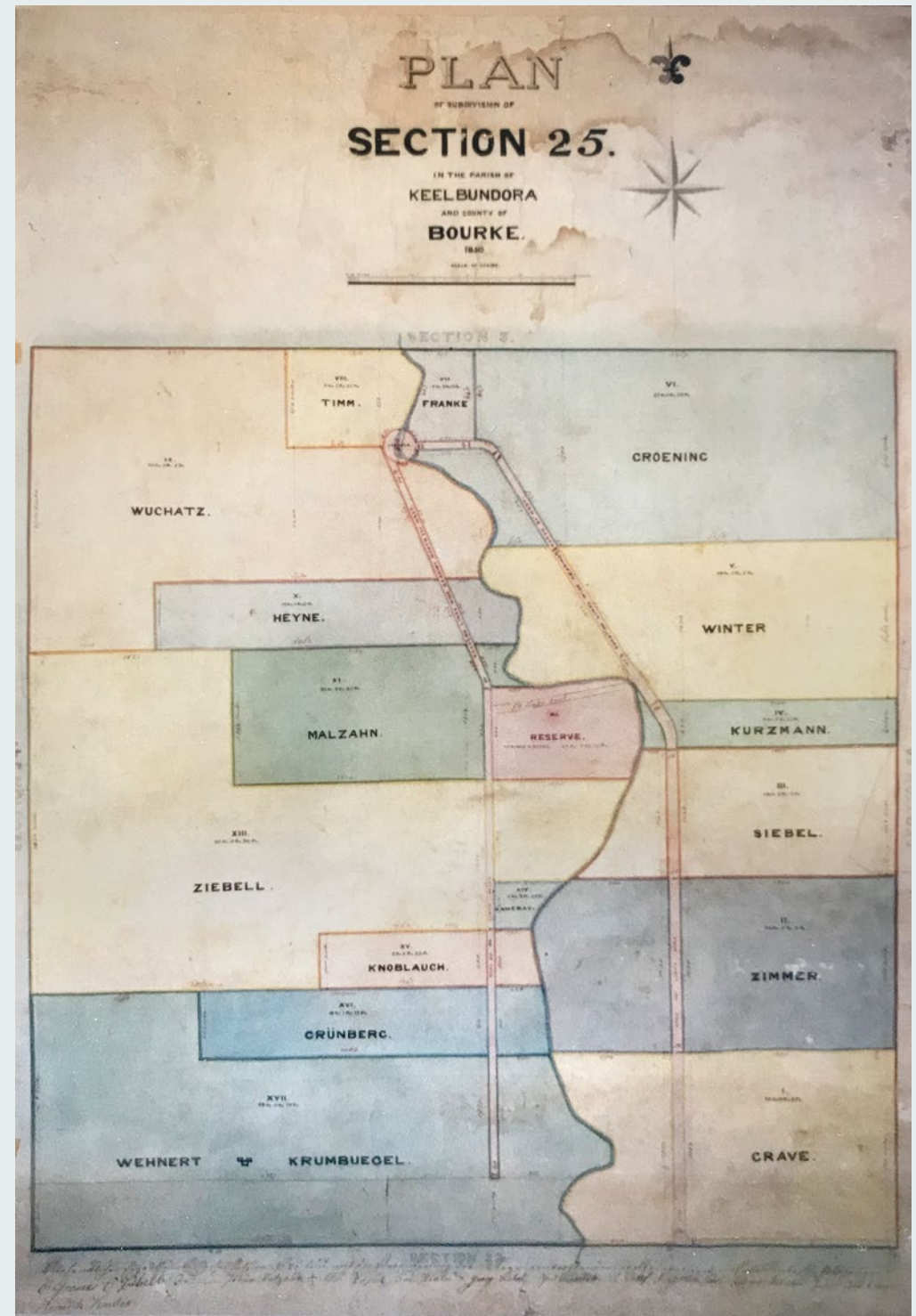
**Below from left:** Quarry Wuchatsch farm Epping; dairy cows at Siebel's farm 1926.

**Opposite page:** The subdivision map shows the German and Wendish farm land which became known as Westgarthtown, now Thomastown and Lalor. Each farm had access to Edgars Creek, which can be seen running through the centre of the image. (J. Ziebell).

European settlement in Thomastown and Lalor began in the late 1840s and 1850s. British, German and Wendish farming families settled along Edgars Creek, in the parish of Keelbundora, which was named after a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung boy.

The settlers called the creek Dry Creek or Blind Creek. The name 'Edgars Creek' comes from further downstream, in the North Coburg area, where Abel Thorpe had a farm and may have named the creek after his son Edgar. By around 1900 Edgars Creek became the name of the creek in Thomastown and Lalor as well.

In addition to using creek water, German and Wendish farmers collected water from a natural spring, located on the creek's east bank near today's Balmain Court reserve. They later built water tanks, dams, windmills, and let quarries fill, so as to collect extra water.





*"I milk cows twice a day, morning and evenings. ... This summer there was very little rain".*

– Maria Kaiser 1857

"The creek was a child's wonderland. Our swimming hole had been deepened and walled with stones, probably by my great-grandfather, Johann Wuchatsch.

The best spot for catching yabbies, using meat on a string, was beside today's Thomas Street Reserve."  
– Robert Wuchatsch

"In my memory, the creek appears as a lovely babbling brook with lots of overhanging trees and small rocks conveniently placed for skipping across. What I don't remember was the creek bank being muddily churned up by dairy cows which it no doubt was."

– Liz Kelly

"I remember times when mail was tied to a stone and thrown across the flooded creek to someone waiting on the other side.

The creek brought the community together."  
– Sylvia Schultz

"There was a paddock called the night paddock, near the Church, they would put the cows in it over night to drink from the creek.

Edgars Creek is fed by a spring. Once in a blue moon, it would dry up for a couple of months over summer. Then even without rain, it would be flowing again.

The creek used to flood after heavy rain, water would lap at the wooden bridge."  
– Henry Ziebell

**Opposite page, clockwise from top left:**

Edgars Creek with Robert Wuchatsch on a raft c. 1956, Photo Wuchatsch family collection; German Lutheran Church Thomastown, drawing by John Borrack; Edgars Creek with Lutheran church and cemetery in the background 1956, Photo Pastor Ewald Steiniger, Trinity German Lutheran Church, East Melbourne, courtesy Robert Wuchatsch; Edgars Creek south of Spring Street in flood 1930, Photo Vida May Hall; Edgar's Creek near Wuchatsch's Farm 1943, Photo Ruby Pettit.





# Turning our back to the creek

*"Many beautiful trees were cut down when the land was subdivided for new houses, and the creek was dredged, straightened and eventually concreted."*

- Robert Wuchatsch

The subdivision of farms along Edgars Creek in Thomastown and Lalor commenced in the 1960s. Houses were built with their backs to the creek, though children continued to play down by the creek.

*"My sister and I used to pick rosehip berries for our grandmother, she made jam from them. The rosehip bushes grew along the creek edge in front of the Lutheran church"*

- Anna Totino

The Board of Works concreted sections of Edgars Creek in Thomastown in the 1980s. At the time this was considered the best way to stop flooding and protect the banks of the creek.



**Above:** Robert Wuchatsch at Edgar's Creek c. 1985, Photo Ernest Raetz, courtesy La Trobe University.

**Left:** Aerial photographs taken in 1946, 1958 and 1978.

**Right:** Bridge over Edgar's Creek c. 1970s, Photo City of Whittlesea.





# Turning back to the creek

*"I love the creek itself, watching it flow, it changes all the time. I sit by the creek and listen".*

- Janene Pickering

**Opposite page, clockwise from top left:** The Edgars Creek walking and cycling path became a popular place during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020; childrens' lockdown activity on the banks of Edgars Creek Thomastown 2020, viewed from the path; restoration activity along the creek; Thomastown Primary School testing water quality at Edgars Creek, 2019, Photo Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC); White Faced Heron on Edgars Creek, Photo Paul Gleeson; SkinArt activity, painting by Angela Foley, Photo MCMC.

Locals have developed a stronger connection to Edgars Creek since Whittlesea Council built a walking and cycling path along the creek.

Keeping Edgars Creek clean is a challenge, as litter flows into the creek from street drains, and other waste ends up in the creek.

Community efforts have restored and transformed sections of Edgars Creek. In North Coburg, the Friends of Edgars Creek and Merri Creek Management Committee have done extensive indigenous planting, and in Epping and Wollert, sections of the creek have been restored by developers and state government.

Local schools, groups plus Whittlesea, Darebin and Moreland Councils have also undertaken or funded restoration work along the length of Edgars Creek with wildlife returning to some areas.

In 1997 Gillian Borrack successfully applied for a Parks Victoria grant, on behalf of the Friends of Westgarthtown and Plenty Valley Arts, and hundreds of trees were planted along Edgars Creek south of German Lane. In recent years Melbourne Water have also planted indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses along Edgars Creek.

The Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) works to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities. Their website has information and activities including webinars, community events and education programs.


Edgars Creek is an important part of the neighbourhood for many residents, as a place to connect with nature.




# Bringing Edgars Creek back to life

## HELP THE CREEK

 Throw rubbish in the bin

 Report water pollution to the EPA 1300 372 842

 Grow indigenous plants to help wildlife



## Plant

Download the Indigenous Garden guide from Whittlesea Council at [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/living-green/gardening-guides](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/living-green/gardening-guides).

## Listen

Parts of Edgars Creek are habitat for the endangered Growling Grass Frog. Learn to recognise frogs calls, using the Melbourne Water guide to frog calls app. Visit [www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/get-involved/be-citizen-scientist/frog-census](http://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/get-involved/be-citizen-scientist/frog-census).

## Learn more about Edgars Creek

*Knowing Our Creek* by Stephen Northey. Visit [www.foec.org.au/our-edgars-creek](http://www.foec.org.au/our-edgars-creek).

## Share this exhibition

Download or share the link:  
[www.westgarthtown.org.au/edgarscreek](http://www.westgarthtown.org.au/edgarscreek)

## Get involved

Friends of Westgarthtown: [www.westgarthtown.org.au](http://www.westgarthtown.org.au)  
Merri Creek Management Committee: [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au)  
Friends of Edgars Creek: [www.foec.org.au](http://www.foec.org.au)  
Friends of Merri Creek: [www.friendsofmerricreek.org.au](http://www.friendsofmerricreek.org.au)  
Friends of Edwardes Lake: [www.fb.me/friendsofEdwardeslake](http://www.fb.me/friendsofEdwardeslake)

**A New Friends Group?** If you are interested in hearing about the possibility of establishing a local Friends group for the creek email [enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au](mailto:enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au).

## Thanks!

Postal exhibition Curator Kitty Owens, Project Manager Gordon Johnston and designer Léon Borrack. Unattributed colour photos Kitty Owens.

Thanks for help with research and illustrations: Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Friends of Edgars Creek, City of Whittlesea, Melbourne Water, Merri Creek Management Committee, The Torch, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Thanks to Robert Wuchatsch, for supplying the black and white photographs, and as the main source of research about Edgars creek in Thomastown and Lalor. The title of this exhibition comes from Robert's 1993 poem *The Edgar's Creek*:

*Why did we turn our backs  
On this life giving source?*



Discover the stories that lie within...

Discover your local backyard by experiencing Yarra Plenty Regional Library's Story Trails. Thomastown Library, in collaboration with Ziebells Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden, will be installing an interactive story trail along Edgars Creek and around the farmhouse. Featured will be pages from stories that can be read together by families or individuals while enjoying a walk in nature.

For more information, visit Thomastown Library or go to [www.yprl.vic.gov.au](http://www.yprl.vic.gov.au)



# Look out for

Some of the wildlife you might see along the creek.



New Holland Honey Glider,  
Photo Paul Gleeson



Spotted Pardalote, Photo MCMC



Musk Lorikeet, Photo Paul Gleeson



Silvereye, Photo Paul Gleeson



Water skink, Photo MCMC



Chestnut Teal, Photo MCMC

## VISIT OUR MUSEUM



### Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden

*Corner Gardenia Rd and  
Ainwick Cres, Thomastown*

The museum and heritage listed garden is your local museum that tells the story of the establishment of Westgarthtown in the 1850s, now modern-day Thomastown and Lalor. With the earliest buildings in the area and a stunning heritage garden, it is well worth visiting.

#### Free Entry

Bring this booklet for free entry. Visit [westgarthtown.org.au/edgarscreek](http://westgarthtown.org.au/edgarscreek) for all conditions. Offer expires August 29, 2021.

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