

BLAZOWA



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BLAZOWA'S

Past and Present

News and Historical Notes

Compiled by the Municipal and Communal Library in Blazowa



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News from Blazowa

On **24 March 2026**, the High School in Błażowa hosted the final of the 5th District Interdisciplinary Competition „Games of Knowledge,” which has become a permanent fixture in the calendar of major educational events in the Rzeszów District. This year’s final brought together as many as 30 students representing 14 pri-

School No. 2 in Chmielnik took second place, while the team from Primary School in Błażowa took third place. All teams received a round of applause, prizes, and congratulations from the organisers and guests. The competition aims not only to test students’ knowledge but also to bring together youth from different schools



On 12 April, the Błażowa parish hall hosted the 10th blood drive.

mary schools from across the region. The young participants competed in categories testing their knowledge of mathematics, Polish, and English, while also putting their logical thinking, teamwork, and time-management skills to the test. After three exciting stages, the winners of this year’s „Games of Knowledge” were announced. First place went to the students from Dynów, who demonstrated top-notch knowledge and excellent teamwork. The team from Primary

and promote learning in an engaging, attractive way. The „Games of Knowledge” are a perfect opportunity for young people to develop their passions, gain new experiences, and build self-confidence.

On **12 April**, the Błażowa parish hall hosted the 10th blood drive organised by the „Kropelka Życia” (Drop of Life) Honorary Blood Donor Club in Błażowa. From early morning, many volunteers arrived, eager to share this precious gift. Every

honorary donor is a true hero. Thanks to them, thousands of families can express their gratitude – often anonymously, but always with immense appreciation. If you have never donated blood before, please consider doing so. It is one of the simplest ways to save a life. Your blood could literally be someone else’s tomorrow.

On Wednesday afternoon, **15 April**, we hosted a special guest at the Library – a writer whose books readers often describe in one sentence:



Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey



On 15 April, we hosted a special guest at the Library - Krystian Stolarz.

„Once I started, I couldn’t put it down until the very last page.” Krystian Stolarz is a law graduate who currently works as a police officer. He runs a popular Instagram account where he promotes reading and shares book reviews. As a highly acclaimed crime fiction author, he draws on the knowledge and experience he gained from his police work in his writing. This makes his novels incredibly authentic, capturing the true atmosphere of police work. The author admits that writing has become a form of therapy for him, helping him process the difficult emotions and topics tied to investigative work.

On **22 April 2026**, the official opening of the new sports hall at the



The official opening of the new sports hall in Kąkolówka.

Primary School in Kąkolówka took place. This hall will become an important hub for our community's



On 24 April, the Błazowa Library hosted Grażyna Bochenek.

physical activity. The investment marks a significant step forward in developing our municipality's sports infrastructure. The newly built sports hall is a modern facility designed for versatile use. The centrepiece of the hall is a multifunctional court that accommodates a range of sports – from volleyball and basketball to recreational activities and general fitness training. The building also features fully equipped locker rooms and sanitary facilities, ensuring student comfort. The new hall will provide even better conditions for training and further developing athletic passions. The opening ceremony included a symbolic ribbon-cutting, artistic performances, sports demonstrations, and speeches by guests.

On **24 April**, the Błazowa Library hosted Grażyna Bochenek, a journalist, film scholar, and one of Subcarpathia's most perceptive borderland

reporters and writers. Her latest book, „San. Rzeka, która łączy. Rzeka, która dzieli” (*San. The River that Connects. The River that Divides*) was recently published. This book is more than just a literary journey along the river. It is a deep dive into the complex iden-



tity of the borderland, into the inherited silences and stories that shape us to this day. Grażyna Bochenek takes the reader on a trek along the entire length of the San River: from its source in the Bieszczady Mountains to its mouth. Here, the river is not just a scenic backdrop but the main character – a witness, a silent narrator, and a symbol of the borderland. The San winds „like a lightning bolt,” connecting and dividing at the same time, both geographically (as it used to be a border) and in human memory. During Grażyna's conversation with Magdalena, the fates of various groups living along the San came to life: Poles, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Boykos, Jews, and Greeks. We are delighted that our readers so eagerly joined the discussion. Neighbourhood relations along the San after 1945 represent one of the

most painful and complex chapters in Poland's post-war history. This scenic and peaceful river became a silent witness to dramatic ethnic, political, and social changes. After the war, the San ceased to be a state border and became a frontline in the fight against the UPA. Under agreements with the USSR, thousands of Ukrainians from the San region were deported to the east. The remaining Ukrainian and Lemko populations were forcibly resettled to the so-called Regained Lands. Many villages along the San, especially in its upper reaches in the Bieszczady and the Przemyśl Foothills, were almost completely deserted. Former neighbours disappeared overnight. History is not just a collection of dates and names, but above all, a powerful laboratory of human behaviour. Although it is often said that „history repeats itself,” the lessons it teaches us are incredibly tangible and timely. History, especially the difficult parts like the relationships along the San, should not be a burden that holds us back, but a foundation on which we build a safer future.

On **26 April**, a unique celebration took place in Lecka. The community marked the 80th anniversary of the Lecka Volunteer Fire Department, combined with the blessing of a new fire truck and Firefighter's Day celebrations. The event began with a Holy Mass. Afterwards, the participants marched to the fire station, where the official report was submitted, the national flag was raised, and the brass band played the Polish national anthem. During the ceremony, the Lecka Volunteer Fire Department was awarded the Gold Medal of Merit for Firefighting, which was ceremonially pinned to their banner. This is an exceptional honour for their long-standing and dedicated service to society. Individual medals and distinctions were also presented.

The Night of Museums in Poland is a magical night when culture comes alive after dark. It is one of the country's most popular and highly anticipated cultural events. Every year in May, hundreds of museums, galleries,



On 26 April, a unique celebration took place in Lecka.

archives, palaces, and cultural institutions open their doors to visitors for free or for a symbolic fee – often until late into the night – offering special exhibitions, guided tours, concerts, workshops, and shows. The first Night

Informal Historical Group „To Save From Obscurity,” associated with the library, organised yet another Night of Museums event. Each time, we try to prepare something different – something that brings our past to life

their daily efforts, book recommendations, research assistance, event organising, and for promoting reading by creating places where knowledge, culture, and people connect. On **12 May**, the library in Błażowa was filled with joyful voices. The municipality's youngest residents – children from the Public Kindergarten – came to visit and extend a special thank-you to the librarians for their daily hard work. The preschoolers' visit was a beautiful proof that a love for reading can be instilled from a very young age. We would like to heartily thank the children and their teachers for the wonderful gift, the song, and the lovely visit. We wish you many fantastic literary adventures!



The Night of Museums in the Library.

of Museums in Poland took place in Poznań (at the National Museum) in

and transports us back in time. This year, we prepared a one-hour film showcasing Błażowa, its people, and its customs in both its original grayscale tones and a colo-



On 29 May 2026, the Błażowa Library hosted the extraordinary writer Joanna Parasiewicz.



On **29 May 2026**, the Błażowa Library hosted the extraordinary writer Joanna Parasiewicz. The author's talk, moderated by Anna Heller, attracted a large crowd of book lovers who filled the library's reading room.

Joanna Parasiewicz – a Warsaw University graduate, international law specialist, Francophile, aviation and history enthusiast, and avid plant lover – won the audience's hearts with her openness, erudition, and warm sense of humour. The author happily spoke about

2003. A year later, Kraków and Warsaw joined in.

For several years now, the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błażowa has taken part in this nationwide European Night of Museums initiative, creating a unique, intimate, and deeply personal version of the event. The library transforms into a hub of local memory and living history. In Błażowa, the Night of Museums is not a massive public event, but an authentic celebration of local identity. The library proves that you do not need a grand building or hundreds of exhibits to create a real museum. All it takes is passion, old photographs, memories, and an open room. On 9 May, the Błażowa

rised version. The film brought smiles and reflection to many faces, evoking memories of youth. Over coffee and sweet treats, visitors enjoyed a truly sentimental historical journey. The gathering continued long into the night.

Librarian and Libraries Day is celebrated every year on **8 May**. This special day was initiated in 1985 by the Polish Librarians Association and has since become an important day to honour librarians and the role libraries play in society. It is a perfect opportunity to thank librarians for



her books, sources of inspiration, and creative process. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about her fascination with the Belle Époque and aviation pioneers, which inspired her novel „Uskrzydleni” (*The Winged Ones*). She also shared how she weaves historical threads with contemporary stories, and why she so frequently

turns to motifs of mystery, mystification, and strong female protagonists. Joanna spoke with great passion about the role of literature in discovering the past and



understanding the present.

The event featured a lively discussion, reader questions, and the chance to get the author's autograph and take a photo with her. The gathering in Błazowa proved to be not just a literary event, but a true celebration of reading. It confirmed that high-calibre literature can be experienced even in smaller towns.

The past few months have been incredibly intense and successful for the

Music School in Błazowa. Students not only successfully represented the school in competitions but also actively participated in concerts, workshops, and artistic projects. However, these achievements are thanks not only to the



young artists; they also reflect the dedication and professionalism of their teachers, who deserve special recognition.

On **31 May**, the Association of Friends of Wilczak organised its fifth outdoor event in Wilczak, Błazowa. Following the May Devotion and a Holy Mass, Archbishop Adam Szal consecrated the chapel. Afterwards, children performed their specially prepared artistic programs.

There was also a concert by Anika Dąbrowska, a performance by OPA CUPA, a fun zone for kids, and food stands with traditional dishes.

The Błazowa Informal Historical Group „To Save From Obscurity” represented both the library and the „Kurier Błazowski” newspaper. Together with the „Kropelka Życia” Honorary Blood Donor Club, we

also encouraged people to donate blood during one of the upcoming blood drives.

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey



31 May, the Association of Friends of Wilczak organised its fifth outdoor event in Wilczak.



Jakub Heller

The Appeal of Vintage Photographs

There's something magical and captivating about old photographs. When

I hold a yellowed print, it feels as if a window has opened into another world. That world may no longer exist, but it continues to live on within those small squares of photographic paper.

Old photos don't disappoint like our memories; they don't embellish or alter what we recall. They reveal the truth of a moment captured in a single second. You can see the wrinkles on the faces of grandparents who are no longer with us, the dust on a country road from a hundred years ago, and the gaze of a child who has since grown into an old man. In these photographs, time stands still.

A single image, captured by a camera decades ago, is enough to bring entire stories to life. Suddenly, you can see what a street in your town looked like before any buildings were constructed; you can see your

great-grandmother's smile on her wedding day. You notice details like the buttons on a coat, the pattern on the wallpaper, or a bicycle leaning against a fence—details that speak louder than a thousand words. Old photographs possess extraordinary power. They evoke nostalgia, gratitude, joy, and even anger; they stir a wide range of emotions. They remind us that once upon a time, people, much like us today, laughed, worried, fell in love, dreamed, and truly lived.

In this age of widespread digitalisation, where we capture everything with our phones and immediately share it online, old photographs remind us of the true value of a single moment. Not everything needs to be perfect, sharp, and colourful to be beautiful and meaningful. Sometimes, a grainy, faded image of someone gazing directly into the lens is enough to evoke a connection between generations. Old photographs are more than just paper and chemicals; as long as someone looks at them, the



people captured in them continue to live on.

Many old films have been coloured and digitally enhanced, showcasing the marvels of modern technology. The same applies to photographs. I admit that I experiment with this myself. Colourised photos tend to attract a younger audience, while my generation and older ones generally prefer traditional, sepia-toned photography. I understand that we cannot avoid using AI altogether, and when used wisely, it can be very helpful.

In this next instalment of our exploration of old photography, I would like to share photos from the Corpus Christi celebrations in Błażowa that date back to the 1980s. Additionally, I encourage anyone who wishes to share their memories—whether through photographs or oral histories—to reach out to our Informal Historical Group, „To Save From Obscurity.”

I invite you to visit the Błażowa Library.

Jakub Heller



In this next instalment of our exploration of old photography, I would like to share photos from the Corpus Christi celebrations in Błażowa that date back to the 1980s.









The Dedication of the "Akiba" Banner in Błażowa

Scouting ideas have always been close to my heart. I invariably look back on my own scouting adventure with nostalgia and emotion. Some time ago, I became interested in Jewish scouting organisations. The spark that ignited this interest came from an article I discovered in the archival issues of the periodical „Diwrej Akiba,” which described the consecration of the organisation's banner in Błażowa. While my major article is not quite ready yet, I would like to share with you fragments of the report from this pre-war celebration – or pgisha, as the participants called such festive meetings, rallies, or conferences. I must admit, I also harbour a quiet hope that the memory of this event was passed down to some of our Readers by their parents or grandparents, or maybe they even witnessed it themselves as a child. If so, perhaps someone might wish to share that memory as well. You are most warmly invited to get in touch!

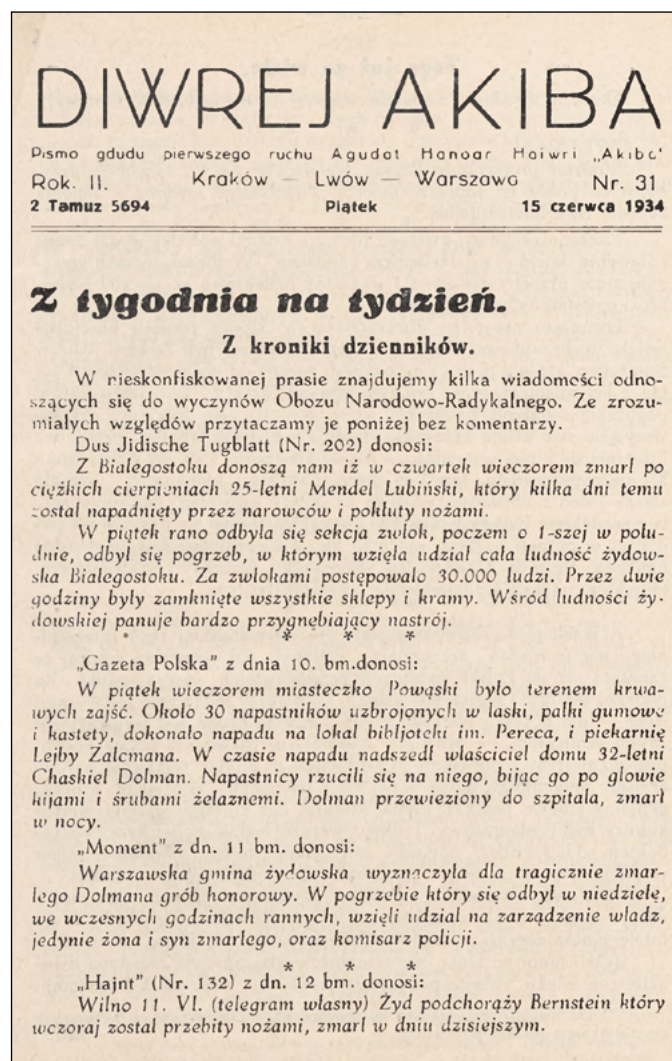
And now, I hand things over to a young correspondent, who will transport us back to a beautiful June day in 1934, when Błażowa briefly became the very heart of „Akiba”:

„We are approaching Błażowa, a small town near Rzeszów.

The bus speeds along. On our way, we pass isolated groups of youth who, just like us, are heading to the celebration being held today by the Zionist organisation in Błażowa. The occasion for this festivity is the consecration of the banner of „Akiba” – an organisation still young in Błażowa, yet already counting about 60 members. And the „mechutanim”

are travelling (or rather, „gathering”) for this holiday. The Akiba brotherhood is drawing in for the pgisha. Older veterans and younger neighbours alike are coming together to celebrate in joy.

The closer we get to Błażowa, the more frequently we encounter groups in grey uniforms, travelling „on foot” or in peasant wagons. „Shalom!



Shalom u'vracha!” echoes ever more frequently.

Błażowa is full of bustle and noise. Within a few hours, this small town has turned into a camp of bivouacking „Akiba” scouts. Ranks of the first, second, and third gdud march by, and the air is pierced by chalutzic songs pulsing with strength, into which the

commanding voices of the platoon leaders merge from time to time. Suddenly, the blast of a trumpet heralds the opening of the pgisha. Henek J. delivers the opening report, and Nachman K. opens the pgisha in Hebrew, giving the floor to the chairman of the chapter's Board of Guardians, Mr Roth, who welcomes the pgisha with heartfelt words and commendably highlights the chapter's intense work in every Zionist field. After singing Techezaknah, the 1st and 2nd gdud depart for a talk with Nachman [...] Lively songs, lunch, and the crowd begin preparing for the solemn moment of consecrating the Zionist organisation's banner.

At 2:00 PM, Comrade A. Hofstätter, General Secretary of the Zionist Organisation of Western Lesser Poland, arrives warmly welcomed. The Local Committee immediately meets to discuss the challenges of Zionist work. [...] Meanwhile, compact ranks of youth, platoon after platoon, march through the town's streets toward the main synagogue, where the consecration of the banner is to take place. Comrades from the Rzeszów chapter of „Hanoar Hatzioni” have also arrived with their banner. The streets empty out as every living soul – young and old, men and women – hurries to the synagogue, which closes its doors to latecomers due to a total lack of space. Promptly at 3:00 PM – right on schedule –

the Chairman of the Local Committee, Dr Beier, opens the assembly and welcomes those in attendance.

A solemn silence falls over the synagogue. Next to the Ark of the Covenant, the youth stand in ranks on one side. At the same time, representatives of the administrative authorities have gathered on the other

side. Opposite the Ark of the Covenant, right by the entrance, the colour bearer waits, flanked by the honour guard. Comrade Hofstätter takes the floor. After greeting the authorities in Polish, he continues his speech in Yiddish. He speaks of the fortunes and misfortunes of the Jewish people, of their longings and dreams. [...] The colour bearer steps forward. Slowly, Comrade Hofstätter unfurls the banner, calling upon the youth to carry it high and proud, through hardships all the way to victory. Amid the deep silence enveloping the synagogue, the powerful words of the oath ring out: „Im eshkachech Yerushalayim,” and the youth repeat the words of the vow in a whisper. The colour bearer receives the banner. A brief command, „Hachen,” is issued. With extraordinary power, Hatikvah resounds from the synagogue, revealing the profound faith shared by those gathered,

as the new banner dips for the very first time.

Later, Mr Habich, the school director – a Christian and a primary school teacher – takes the floor, calling for continued efforts and assuring everyone that despite the venom of antisemitism, there are still people who stand firmly on the ground of ethics and culture. Next, Mr Rosenstock speaks [...].

The ceremony in the synagogue concludes. The synagogue empties quickly, and everyone heads toward the main street, where the parade of youth detachments is to take place before the new banner.

The parade before the banner goes smoothly. Platoon after platoon marches briskly, paying homage to the banners. The parade leaves a lasting impression. The marching youth detachments are watched with absolute admiration. The people of Błazowa

will not forget this for a long time. [...]

The entire town was deeply impressed by the Zionist work. Even opponents were swept up in the enthusiasm. When the youth, arm in arm, surrounded those who were departing – especially Comrade Hofstätter – preventing the bus from moving, the elders joined in dancing the hora. And what a fascinating sight it was: old and young Jews alike caught up in a whirlwind of dance right in the street. As the participants of the *pgisha* left Błazowa amidst shouts of „Tehi Eretz Yisrael! Tehi Eretz Yisrael!”, a tear glistened in the eyes of many an old Jew, realising that he, unfortunately, could only gaze upon the joy of youth, which is being shaped into creative action.

E.S.” („Diwrej Akiba”, No. 31, 15 June 1934)

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey



Zdzisław Chlebek

The History of Education in Futoma, 1888–2025: Part IV

In 1990, religious education returned to schools. Father Stanisław Rogala began his pastoral work as a fully-fledged member of the teaching staff. Polish history textbooks and recent history curricula underwent massive transformations. School principals were selected through democratically conducted competitions rather than party appointments.

From 1992 to 1997, the school was led by Kazimiera Wyskiel, the first principal chosen through a democratic competition. When discussing the school's future patron, Principal Kazimiera Wyskiel, Father Stanisław Rogala, and the teachers favoured restoring the name Saint John Cantius – a title the school had been stripped of in 1952.

In 1993, the school welcomed its first missionary visit: Father Zdzisław Kruczek, a Futoma native serving in remote Papua New Guinea. We also celebrated the 15th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's pontificate. Four years later, Bishops Stefan Moskwa of the Przemyśl Diocese and Edward Białogłowski of the Rzeszów Diocese visited the school. Between 2007 and 2010, we hosted more missionaries: Dariusz Bakałarz from Cameroon and Zdzisław Olejko from Rwanda. Before 1989, such visits and pastoral inspections were impossible. The Church, the school, and families finally began to speak with one voice regarding the upbringing of the younger generation.

As a history teacher, I began inviting notable local figures to meet with the students. These included Home Army soldiers – Ferdynand Rybka, Michał Kryczka, Wincenty Maciołek, Marian Hamerla, and

Edward Kruczek; Corporal Adolf Mierzwa, who represented the Polish Armed Forces in the West as a member of General Stanisław Maczek's Armoured Division; Sybiraks (Siberian exiles) Henryka Otolińska and Jan Turczyński; former forced labourers in Germany, Amelia Rząsa and Kazimierz Kleczyński; and representatives of the Katyn Families, Stanisława Soja and Anatolia Gazda.

Corporal Adolf Mierzwa, who lived right next to the school, was deeply moved when he was invited to visit between 1994 and 1997. This courageous veteran of the September Campaign, a Siberian exile, and a soldier of both Anders' Army and Stanisław Maczek's Armoured Division, spent nine years fighting for his Homeland's freedom. Upon returning home from his wartime exile, he was treated as an enemy of the People's Republic of Poland, the so-called „spit-drenched dwarf

of reaction” who deserved no honours or financial compensation. Despite his combat service and sacrifice, he was denied veteran status. When I invited him to meet with the schoolchildren, he finally felt appreciated and happy. With tears in his eyes, he reminisced about his struggles, proudly displaying medals and decorations that, until that moment, had only been seen by his immediate family and close friends.

Nowadays, as we no longer have anyone left to invite, we rely on articles published in *Kurier Błazowski* over the last twenty-plus years. We also use biographies of our heroes prepared by the school administration and teachers, alongside books published during various EU, national, and local government projects. We present our students with the profiles of the „Cursed Soldiers” who fought in the Home Army and the „Freedom and Independence” (WiN) organisation. These include Stanisława Kruczek, Danuta Socha-Jakubczyk, Lieutenant Colonel Józef Maciołek, Father Michał Pilipiec,

Second Lieutenant Aleksander Gruba, Sergeant Stanisław Rybka, Captain Józef Lutak, Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński and his companions from the 4th WiN Command who were murdered by the Communist Secret Police, and many others.

Between 1992 and 1994, my students participated in a popular regional competition titled ‚People of Merit for Rzeszów and the Surrounding Area,’ organised by the Society of Friends of Rzeszów. In 1992, student Monika Wielgos won second prize for her essay ‚In the Fight for an Independent Poland,’ which focused on Lieutenant Colonel Józef Maciołek – a Futoma native who fought in the Polish-Soviet War, the September Campaign, the Home Army, and the „No” and WiN organisations. In 1994, student Anna Maciołek claimed first prize for her work ‚Second Lieutenant Aleksander Gruba – Soldier and Poet.’ Her essay depicted a heroic diversion officer of the Home Army’s Rzeszów-South District, who became a prisoner of the Soviet gulag in Yegolsk and a member of the WiN

organisation. He had been sentenced to death – a penalty later commuted to long-term imprisonment in Wronki – and was a self-taught poet who yearned and dreamed of a truly free and independent Homeland. Halina Hus wrote a third essay about Father Michał Pilipiec, the chaplain of the Home Army’s Rzeszów-South District, who was murdered on 8 December 1944 in the Głogów forests by the Rzeszów Secret Police (UB) and the Citizens’ Militia. In 1995, a memorial plaque dedicated to Lt. Col. Józef Maciołek was unveiled at the school to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the „Freedom and Independence” organisation.

Between 1994 and 1996, student Małgorzata Kustra twice won the regional stage of the history competition organised by the Board of Education. She represented our school at the voivodeship level, coming very close to becoming a finalist. As a history teacher, I was her mentor.

T.B.C.

Zdzisław Chlebek





Anna Gellermann

Tales From Years Gone By - Part VIII: Mother's Day, Three Annas, and the Final Part of This Story



May has arrived, bringing with it the sweet scent of lilacs and lilies of the valley, the delicate blue blooms of forget-me-nots, and above all, the stunning orchards of apple trees, adorned with beautiful white and pink blossoms. For me, as a mother, this time is filled with emotional tension, as one of my sons is taking his matura exams, while my youngest recently completed his eighth-grade exam. On the other hand, apart from the pleasant moments associated with Mother's Day this month, it is a time for reflection and parental assessment, as my children stand at a crossroads in their lives, making their first major decisions that will impact their future. I raised four children. One by one, they are leaving the nest for the wide world, and their visits home are becoming fewer and briefer. That's how it must be, and it's a good thing - they should have their own lives and their own affairs. My role is always to be there when they need me, but never to hold them back or interfere in their life choices. To help when asked, but not to step in uninvited. I am neither the first nor the last mother to face an empty nest as her children grow up; women in every generation go through this.

So today, in the spirit of May and to mark Mother's Day, here is the story of another Anna who was here before me - Anna Kwiatkowska, née Stafińska, mother of Father Leon. Her

life can be divided into three stages: childhood in Rajtarowice, marriage and motherhood in Humniska, and her mature years and widowhood in Błażowa.

Anna Kornelia Stafińska was born over 200 years ago, on 22 July 1823, in Rajtarowice, now known as Verkhivtsi in Ukraine. She was the daughter



of estate manager Konstanty Stafiński and Maria née Bielakiewicz. Together with her three siblings - Amalia, Władysław, and Antoni - she grew up in the estate's manager's house. The village, whose coat of arms depicts a golden sheaf of wheat, is a mere two-and-a-half-hour drive from Błażowa, by modern car, of course. Surrounded by fertile fields and a forest that shields it from the view of the first fort of the Przemyśl Fortress, the village seems to doze, preserving traces of past eras far from the main roads. On Google Maps, we can see the preserved remnants of a grand park landscape, featuring three ponds - one with a charming little island in the middle. Nearby stands the Greek Catholic Church of Saint Basil the

Great and the remains of the old manor buildings, likely seized by a collective farm during the unlamented Soviet era.

Whether the Stafiński home still stands is hard to say; the war discourages travel to those parts and conversations with the locals, and as time flies, there will soon be no one left to ask. What the years of childhood and youth spent there looked like is difficult for us to imagine today, but they were surely filled with work and learning everything that was required of a future wife and mother. How did it happen that she was given away in marriage in Humniska - a place quite far away - and became the wife of the miller

Wincenty Kwiatkowski, and the mother of four sons and five daughters? This marriage was likely arranged, as was common in those days. Moving to Humniska, far from her own relatives and into the unfamiliar home of her husband's family, must have been a difficult experience for the young woman.

Twins are born twice - first, the eldest son, Leon, and his twin sister, Zofia Anna, who dies shortly after birth. Later, the two youngest sons, Piotr and Stanisław, are born in the year the January Uprising breaks out. Difficult times are unfolding then; just over the hill in Falejówka, her husband's sister - and my great-great-grandmother - Franciszka is left alone with three small children

when her husband, Jakub, leaves to join the fight.

As the children grow up, they all need to be provided for: the daughters must be married off well, and there is help needed with raising the grandchildren, especially since Józefa, married to the organist Michał Dobrowolski, dies young. In keeping with the old Polish proverb, 'marry your equal - a miller with a miller's daughter,' Antonina marries Felix Stępkowski, a miller from Blizne. The godfather of her children is her brother Piotr, the manager of the Blizne estate of the Przemyśl bishops, and later the church estate in Błazowa, where he serves until the arrival of his parents. Stanisław pursues a career in the civil service in Kraków and marries an Englishwoman. Franciszek marries Bronisława Dulęba, taking over his parents' farm and mill. Another daughter, also named Zofia, marries Bronisława's brother, Władysław Dulęba. Leon, after completing his military service, enters the service of God; upon graduating from the seminary in Przemyśl and being ordained a priest, he is assigned to Błazowa.

Here begins the next stage of Anna Kwiatkowska's life, when she must leave behind everything she knows, is comfortable with, and is familiar with once again. She must leave the village she has grown attached to, along with all her close friends and neighbours.

She has to enter a completely new environment and surroundings to support her son, a young priest who is building a house of God. Sometimes life, like an unruly horse, takes a sudden turn, and a person unexpectedly finds themselves in a place where they must make unforeseen decisions.

Anna and Wincenty lifted the burden of managing the church property from

tomb. Yet, there is not a single plaque dedicated to Anna Kwiatkowska, who also found her final resting place there after a long and industrious life - as if she had never even been here.

Because she was not in the registry, I began researching her fate. One of her great-great-granddaughters, Alina Dulęba, sent me a link to the Jagiellonian University Digital Library, which contained an incredibly valuable source of knowledge about

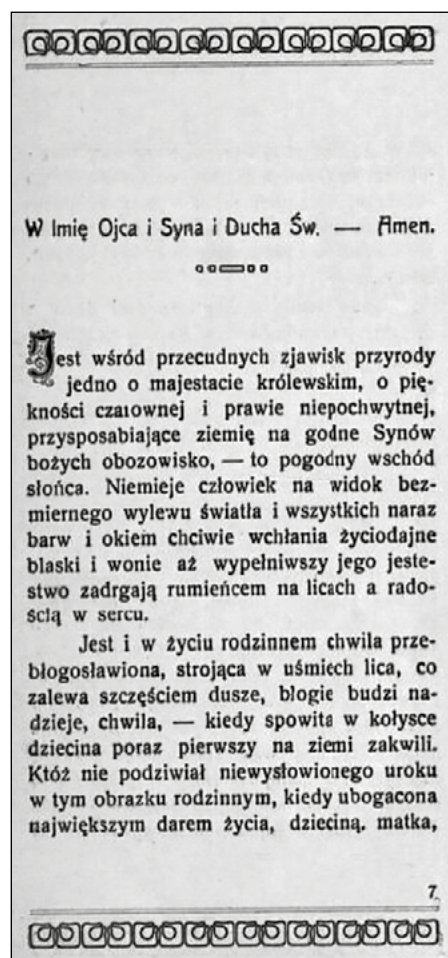
her life: a funeral eulogy for Anna Kwiatkowska, published as a booklet intended for sale to raise funds for charitable purposes. It was the sole testimony of where she was buried, containing her biography and a description of her industrious and pious life. It was written in a highly ornate style by someone who knew the deceased personally, as the author, Father

Józef Dziedzic, was one of the curates in Błazowa at the time she lived there.

The warm, affectionate words of remembrance are truly touching, noting how she miraculously acted as a mother to all the Błazowa curates, how caring she was, and how she knew how to dry their tears and soothe their heartaches. Father Dziedzic recalls pleasant, family-like evenings - how the young priests would call her „grandmother” as they sat together around a shared table, resting after the day's hardships, alongside Anna's sister, Amalia Wronowska.



their son's shoulders, allowing him to focus solely on his great work, which already brought enough trouble and worry. The church estate was sizable, and his parents were advanced in years. Unfortunately, before the church was completed, Wincenty passed away in 1899. In the Błazowa cemetery, just above Father Leon's grave, lies a beautiful tomb featuring a smiling statue of the Virgin Mary and a long, though difficult to read, epitaph from his wife and all his children. Wincenty and Anna's grandson, Adaś Dobrowolski, who died while staying with his grandparents in Błazowa, also rests in this



Amalia also spent her final days at the Błażowa rectory and was named in the „Golden Book” as the very first benefactress of the church. Let this text, therefore, serve as a tombstone epitaph for Anna Kwiatkowska, so that her memory does not completely vanish; though her name was never carved into the headstone, she lived, and „like a busy bee,” she served her family and the local community.

There is yet another woman in my family named Anna who also lived in Błażowa before me, and whom I would like to commemorate, as so little remains of her here. Just a few words, but they were good words. Anusia Dobrowolska, the beloved granddaughter of Anna Kwiatkowska, was cared for by her grandmother after her mother's early death, and later moved from Humniska to Błażowa to look after her grandmother in her old age.

Father Dziedzic calls Anusia a guardian angel, noting that her presence at the Błażowa rectory brightened the grey days of both elderly women and all the residents. A photograph of her also survived, found in the depths of the internet, showing her sweet face as she sits with her grandmother, her aunt, Father Leon, and the curates, likely against the backdrop of the rectory. Following Father Leon's death in 1915, Anusia was wed to Stanisław Mazurek, a widower from Tyczyn. She was already 34, which was a considerable age for a bride in those days. She gave birth to a daughter, Aleksandra. Anusia passed away in 1951 in Sanok, the town where I come from. May the memory of this „guardian angel” also be preserved, if only through this article.

The third Anna of this title is, of course, myself. Whether I will remain

here forever, or whether my life, like a headstrong horse, will once again make an unpredictable about-face, landing me in a place I never expected to find myself, remains to be seen. But I hope that with this series of articles, I have brought you, dear Readers, closer to the people who once lived here and contributed something to our community before they were gone forever. As the Scripture says: „As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” Therefore, may these „Tales From Years Gone By” forever preserve in our collective mind the memory of those who have already departed. With that, I bid you farewell and thank you for your attention. Is it forever? Who can say? Perhaps I will write something else, who knows?

Anna Gellermann

The History of the Lecka Volunteer Fire Department



The Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka was originally organised back in 1943. However, based on the current statute governing the operations of Volunteer Fire Departments, the unit was officially established in 1946. The founders of the Lecka VFD were the villagers themselves, including Piotr Gwazdacz, Karol Ślęczka, and Franciszek Bieszczad. The department's board at the time consisted of Piotr Gwazdacz, Karol Ślęczka, Franciszek

Bieszczad, Jan Gruba, Tadeusz Czapla, Antoni Stec, and Konstanty Gruba. Once the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka was established, members began raising funds to purchase necessary firefighting equipment. They bought a hand pump along with a few sections of delivery and suction hoses. The equipment they owned was stored in Druh (fellow firefighter) Jan Gruba's barn, and they travelled to firefighting calls on horseback.

In 1960, in recognition of its active fire prevention and firefighting efforts, the Volunteer Fire Department (OSP) in Lecka received a new M-800 motor pump from the District Fire Department Headquarters in Rzeszów. The construction of the Firefighter's House began in 1966. At that time, the unit was led by its president, Druh Tadeusz Czapla. It is important to acknowledge the individuals who contributed to the construction of the building: Piotr



Ceremonial dedication and blessing of the banner, May 1993.



Gwazdacz, Karol Ślęczka, Franciszek Bieszczad, Stanisław Ślęczka, Jan Gruba, Antoni Stec, and Konstanty Gruba. Once construction was complete, a proper storage space for the firefighting equipment was established. This building also hosted various meetings and gatherings. In later years, it even housed a social club where people could do some shopping or sit down for a coffee.

In 1990, following an evaluation of the firefighters' work, the Regional Fire Department Headquarters in Rzeszów decided to award the unit a Żuk A-15 fire engine. At that time, Jan Bartoń served as the unit's president, and Mieczysław Biśto was the fire chief. In 1992, the firefighters built a covered outdoor floor next to the fire station, renovated the main hall, and painted the station's roof. During this period, the unit was led by president Andrzej Cygan, chief Mieczysław Biśto, and property steward Marcin Rzeźnik.

On 26 March 1992, the Provincial Board in Rzeszów awarded the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka a Commemorative Banner 'as a symbol of dedicated and faithful firefighting service to the Republic of Poland and its citizens.' The banner's ceremonial dedication and blessing took place in May 1993.

On 8 April 1995, the Praesidium of the Main Board of the Association of Volunteer Fire Departments of the Republic of Poland awarded the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka the

Silver Medal of Merit for Firefighting. Another major milestone for OSP Lecka was 16 June 1996, when the unit celebrated its 50th anniversary. That same year, a new OSP Board was elected: Druh Stanisław Cag became president, Druh Mieczysław Biśto chief, Druh Tadeusz Wolański deputy chief, Druh Jan Groszek secretary, Antoni Wróbel treasurer, and Druh Marcin Rzeźnik steward. It is worth highlighting that Druh Stanisław Cag served as president until this year (2026). He held this role for 30 years, and his deep commitment was instrumental in strengthening the unit.

In the following years, the firefighters focused on renovation and construction, building a gazebo-style pavilion and a dance floor next to the fire station. In 2006, the composition of the OSP Lecka board changed slightly. It was structured as follows: president Stanisław Cag, vice president Eugeniusz Jamioł, chief Mieczysław Biśto, deputy chief Roman Bieszczad, steward Roman Rzeźnik, treasurer Krzysztof Wójcik, and secretary and chronicler Wioletta Rzeźnik. A significant milestone recorded in the OSP chronicle was 4 November 2006, when a new Iveco Magirus vehicle was purchased; its dedication and solemn blessing took place on 29 July 2007. In subsequent years, extensive work was once again carried out on the fire station building, including renovating the kitchen, hallway, and restrooms, installing new floors and windows in the main hall, and installing a fireplace to heat the hall.

In February 2015, construction began on a facility adjoining the OSP fire station hall. The grand opening and solemn blessing of the newly built Cultural Centre took place on 17 October 2015. A highly significant date for OSP Lecka was 18 September 2016, when the firefighters celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka. This ceremony provided an occasion to thank distinguished firefighters for their many years of service and to present medals and decorations. In the following years, the firefighters actively worked for the benefit of their unit, engaging in various activities and initiatives aimed at its development and improved functioning. In 2021, a new board was elected. Stanisław Cag was re-elected as president, Jacek Bator became vice president, Rafał Jakubczyk became fire chief, Sebastian Rzeźnik became deputy chief, Krzysztof Wójcik became treasurer, Wioletta Rzeźnik became secretary and chronicler, and Roman Rzeźnik became property steward.

In 2022, when the war in Ukraine broke out, the firefighters from the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka actively joined relief efforts to support refugees. In 2024, the firefighters took part in a relief mission in Lewin Brzeski and the surrounding areas, providing aid to those affected by the floods. In 2025, the unit achieved numerous successes. It was honoured with the title of the best unit in the district, the province, and in all of Poland – a tremendous distinction and a source of great pride for the entire local community.

Another major milestone was 9 August 2025, when the OSP Lecka firefighters welcomed a new Renault D16 fire engine to their unit. Shortly before its arrival, they had managed to build a garage for it in a remarkably short time, thanks to the support of the municipal authorities.

Currently, the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka consists of 56 firefighters, including 14 female firefighters and 3 retired members. The unit's operations are directed by the board, which is composed of: president Rafał Jakubczyk, vice president and chief Sebastian



Rzeźnik, deputy chief Dawid Ustrzycki, treasurer Grażyna Turczyk, secre-

records are complemented by photo albums containing photographs of

to everyone who has built this unit over the past 80 years. Many volunteer firefighters have already departed from us to their eternal service. There are 19 graves of our fellow firefighters in our cemetery, and they will always remain in our grateful memory.

We extend our thanks to all the individuals, institutions, and friends



tary and chronicler Wioletta Rzeźnik, steward Roman Rzeźnik, and board member Dariusz Turczyk.

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of its founding, the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka can look back with pride on its rich and dedicated history. Throughout its years of operation, the firefighters have continuously served the local community, providing aid in situations that threatened life, health, and property. Their work extends beyond firefighting and rescue operations, encompassing deep involvement in the community's social, cultural, and religious life. The unit's entire history over the years has been documented in chronicles, which serve as a valuable testament to its heritage. These

the most important events, celebrations, and operations, showcasing their dedication and daily work.

This year's anniversary is not only an opportunity for reflection but also an expression of gratitude

who have supported OSP Lecka's operations over the years, showing kindness, assistance, and understanding for our unit's

needs. In particular, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jerzy Kocój, the Mayor of Błazowa, and Wojciech Kruczek, the Chairman of the Błazowa Town Council, for their ongoing support, assistance, and commitment to the development and operation of our unit. The OSP



Lecka Board expresses its sincere thanks to all the firefighters for their selfless service, dedication, and readiness to help. Thanks to your commitment, courage, and community work, the unit can continue to grow and fulfil its duties effectively. Thank you for your hard work, the heart you put into every operation, and for the fact that together, we are building the history of the Volunteer Fire Department in Lecka.

Wioletta Rzeźnik

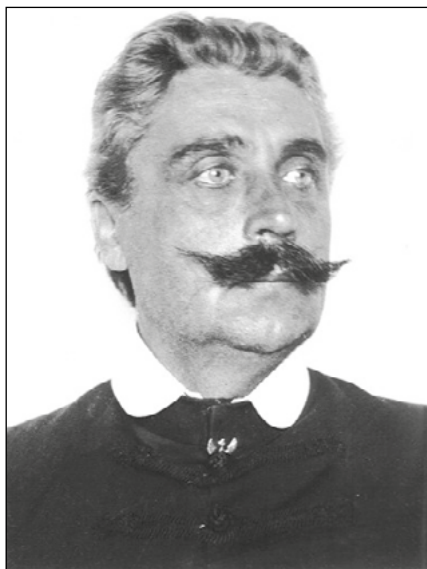


Jan Sas-Zubrzycki, the Architect of the Parish Church in Błażowa



Jan Sas-Zubrzycki was born in the town of Tluste in Podolia, into a large family with deep patriotic traditions. He graduated from the Real School in Stanisławów and studied architecture at the Lviv Polytechnic between 1878 and 1884.

From 1886 to 1912, he lived in Kraków while maintaining close ties with the Lviv academic and artistic community, where he became a lecturer in 1912 and a full professor at the Department of History of Architecture and Aesthetics in 1919. Concurrently, from 1900 to 1912, he served as the Municipal Construction Inspector in Kraków and was a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences.



Jan Sas-Zubrzycki

He truly deserved the title of a 'Renaissance man,' pursuing extensive research and architectural work. He authored dozens of books and hundreds of articles on an extraordinarily wide range of subjects.

In 1898, while residing in Kraków, he and his sister Jadwiga co-founded the 'Gwiazda' (The Star) Association of Polish Handicraftsmen, which was relocated to Lviv in 1912. There, in 1916, he spearheaded the establishment of the Society for the Protection of Monuments of Art and Culture in Lviv. In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

He published numerous works that included, among other things, reflections on the Polish national style, emphasising the original, vernacular

features of Polish architecture. As an architect, he worked primarily in the Neo-Gothic style, and his structures were deeply rooted in historicism. He distanced himself programmatically from the then-fashionable modernism and Art Nouveau, which earned him numerous opponents and critics, not only within architectural circles.

Characterised by an extraordinary work ethic, he left behind 129 churches, located primarily in Lesser Poland, Podolia, and the Kielce region. He also

developed designs for the construction and remodelling of secular public buildings, including the town halls in Zator, Jordanów, and Niepołomice.

Additionally, he designed public utility structures (such as guest houses and sports halls), as well as palaces and residences for private commissions. He was an outstanding draftsman, painter, and photographer. He passed away shortly before the outbreak of World War II and was buried at the Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv.

Sas-Zubrzycki is recognised as a representative of historicism. This conservative architectural movement drew inspiration from a particular fondness for Romanesque and Gothic styles. This aligned perfectly with the architect's views, who believed throughout his life that these two schools were the best suited for religious buildings, allowing architects and builders to most fully express religious

ideals and reach the hearts and minds of the faithful. As one of the few architects of his time, he consistently put his theory of form into practice. He coined the term 'Vistula Gothic' (Styl Nadwiślański) for this form, aspiring for it to become the definitive national style in Polish architecture.

He educated a cohort of devoted students and gained a following of imitators. Throughout his life, he remained faithful to traditional Christian values and the romantic ideals of the struggle for independence. He was sincerely dedicated to his work, serving Poland and numerous religious orders. Witnessing the frequently difficult financial situations of those funding new churches, he often waived his rightful fees. Furthermore, his concern was rarely limited to the exterior structure of the church; whenever possible, he also oversaw the interior furnishings, ensuring that the appointments reflected medieval styles.

He attached great importance to the symbolism of crosses and hearts, which became a defining hallmark of his architectural style. He understood this as an emotional resonance with the faithful through a rhythm of hearts and crosses, evoking love and suffering – the very essence of Christianity. Such frequent use of the heart motif further emphasised Polish hospitality and warmth, while also serving as a nod to folk art. Sas-Zubrzycki always strove to bridge high art with folk art. As art historian Krzysztof Stefański points out: „Throughout his life, Jan Sas-Zubrzycki was deeply engaged in national affairs, manifesting his attachment to the idea of an independent Polish Republic even through elements of his attire – he always wore a badge of a crowned eagle pinned to his clothing.”

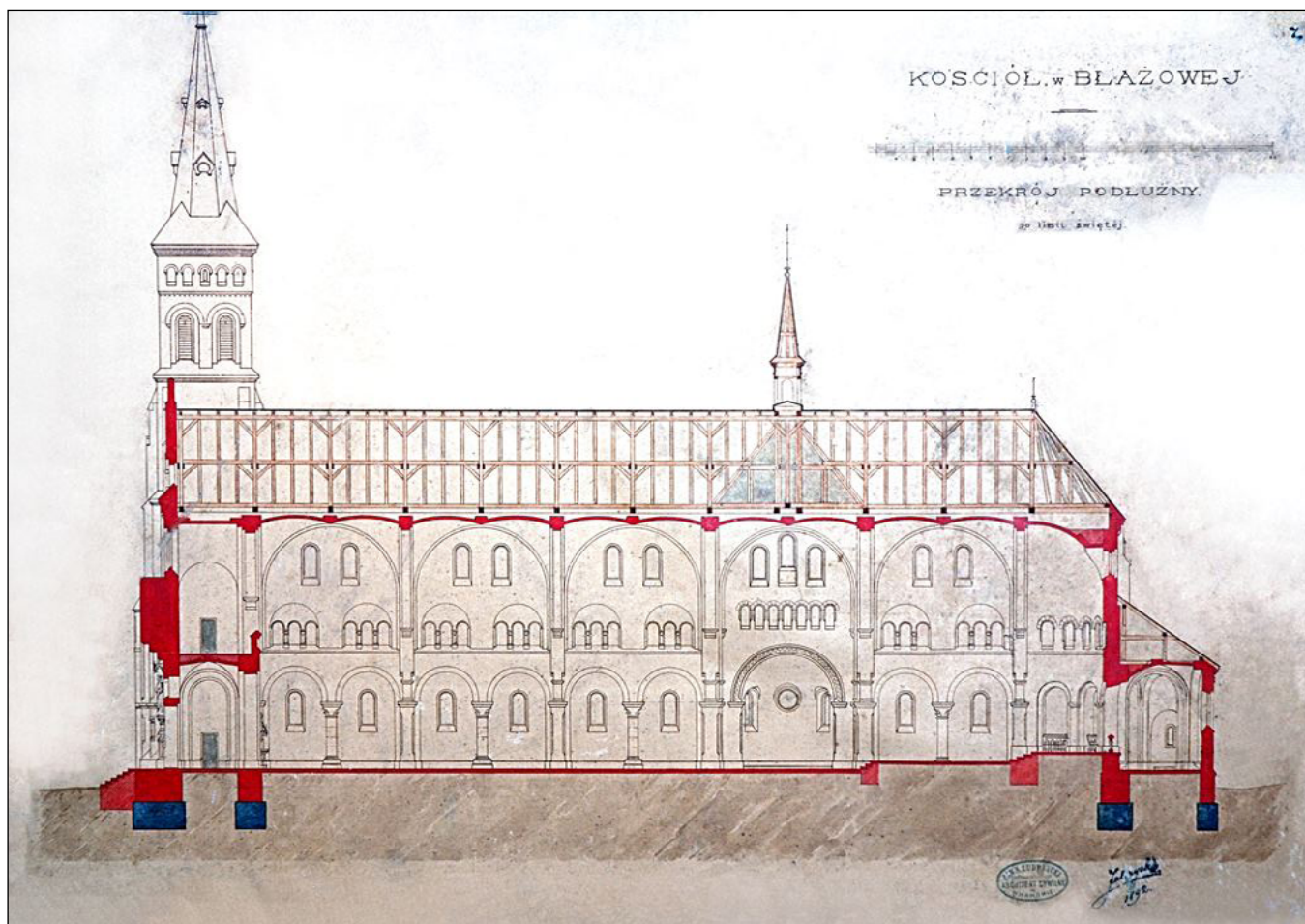
Major completed architectural works designed by Sas-Zubrzycki: Churches (year of completion in parentheses):

- Szczurowa (1893)
- Trześniów (1898)
- Lubcza (1899)
- Błazowa (1900)
- Cieklin (1903)
- Ciężkowice (1903)
- Bruśnik (1904)
- Nowy Sącz-Biegonice (1904)
- Zaleszany (1905)
- Poręba Radlna (1905)
- Tarnów (1906)
- Piotrkowice (1907)
- Kraków-Podgórze – Redemptorist Church (1907)
- Bielcza (1908)
- Kraków-Podgórze – St. Joseph's Church (1909)
- Grobla (1909)
- Jadowniki Podgórne (1910)
- Trzebinia – Salvatorian Church (1911)
- Siedliska-Bogusz (1912)
- Górno (1913)

- Jordanów (1913)
 - Kasinka Mała (1913)
 - Sokołów Małopolski (1914)
 - Szczepanów (1914)
 - Porąbka Uszewska (1918)
 - Czortków – Dominican Church (1918)
 - Lubatowa (1921)
 - Łężkowice (1921)
 - Żeleźnikowa (1921)
 - Niewodna (1923)
 - Wietrzychowice (1924)
 - Jedlicze (1925)
 - Otfinów (1929)
 - Lviv – Capuchin Church (1930)
 - Łapczyca (1933)
 - Tłuste (1934)
 - Miejsce Piastowe – Michaelite Church „Na Górcę” (1935)
 - Suków (1937)
 - Masłów Pierwszy (1938)
 - Ryglice (1940)
- Remodelled Churches (year of completion in parentheses):
- Bochnia (1905)

- Borzęcin – Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1905)
 - Szczucin (1905)
 - Trzciana near Bochnia (1907)
 - Tarnobrzeg, Dominican Church (1909)
 - Cieklin – Church of St. Michael the Archangel (1903)
- Secular Buildings (year of completion in parentheses):
- Rymanów – „Pod Matką Boską” Guest House, Sas-Zubrzycki's first design (1884)
 - Myślenice – Town Hall (1889)
 - Kraków – Three tenement houses: 3 Kurniki Street (1892), 7 Słowackiego Avenue (1895), 25 Św. Filipa Street (1898)
 - Niepołomice – Town Hall (1903)
 - Zator – Town Hall (1903)
 - Brzozów – „Sokół” Gymnastic Society Hall (1910)
 - Jordanów – Town Hall (1911)
 - Jedlicze – Stawiarski Family Residence (1925)
- Source: www.michalici.pl

Jakub Heller



Design of the church in Błazowa.

Local Life of Wilczak

Spring is already in full bloom on Wilczak; the trees are turning green, and the meadows are yellow with dandelions and marsh marigolds. As soon as the last snow melted, work on the chapel began immediately. Paving stones have been laid, the ground has been levelled, and grass seed has been sown. The bank along the stream has been reinforced with concrete slab blocks, and an abutment has been constructed next to the bridge. Inside the chapel, new pews have already been installed, and the altar will be set up in the near future. It will feature a painted image of Our Lady, Help of Christians – the patroness of our chapel. Work is still underway at full speed, as the blessing of the chapel by Archbishop Adam Szal will take place on 31 May.

We want to thank all donors, sponsors, people of goodwill, and everyone who supports us with a kind word or deed. It is thanks to you that we have achieved so much in such a short time.

President of the Association of Friends of Wilczak, Stanisław Cag

In connection with the dedication ceremony of the Wilczak chapel, we would like to share an article by Magdalena Pałka, published in „Kurier Błazowski”, Issue No 194/2023, that looks back at the history of the chapel and reasons for its rebuilding. Let's take this walk down memory lane together.

The Construction of the Mass Chapel on Wilczak in Błazowa

In May 1949, the construction of the Mass chapel on Wilczak began. The chapel was completed in 1950 and blessed during the summer. In the early 1960s, due to structural cracking caused by neighbouring linden trees and the subsequent threat of

collapse, the chapel was rebuilt and expanded. However, proper damp-proofing insulation was not installed at that time. It remained in this state until modern times.

Back in the 1980s, the residents of Wilczak attempted to save the chapel, as the marshy ground was causing it to deteriorate slowly. They carried



out a superficial renovation, painting the walls and refreshing the facade. Unfortunately, the waterlogged soil continued to take its toll, and the chapel continued to degrade. In the early 2000s, the residents decided once again to save it. The interior was repainted, the flooring replaced, the exterior facade repainted, and paving stones laid around the perimeter. Due to the faulty insulation, the chapel is still deteriorating and infested with mould twenty years later. Rising groundwater caused the paving stones to buckle, posing a safety hazard to visitors, prompting their eventual removal. Today, plaster is crumbling from the walls, the facade is peeling away, the structure is covered in black mould, and water continues to undermine the chapel from beneath its foundations.

After many years, the idea emerged once again to reconstruct this

forgotten yet remarkably beautiful architectural pearl – a place meant for whispered prayers, religious gatherings, or simply a quiet resting spot for tourists. A group of admirers of this charming corner, made up of both long-time locals and newer residents, decided to turn this thought into action. They officially registered the Association of Friends of Wilczak, whose primary mission is to restore the beauty and splendour of the Chapel of Our Lady, Help of Christians.

The association began its work with a fundraising campaign to rebuild the chapel. To this end, an outdoor event called 'May Picnic on Wilczak' was organised in May 2022. During a solemn Holy Mass, an icon of the Madonna del Ghisallo, the patroness of cyclists, was blessed, drawing a crowd of around 1,000 people. This milestone marked the beginning of an administrative battle that lasted an entire year. Once all the necessary administrative permits were secured, the demolition of the old chapel commenced.

In May 2023, another outdoor event was organised, generating significant interest and attracting around 2,000 attendees. This picnic was particularly engaging as it featured a forest theme. Once again, we managed to raise a portion of the funds needed for the reconstruction, for which we extend our heartfelt thanks.

The reconstruction of the chapel structure began with a solid, thoroughly insulated foundation. A foundation is defined as 'the lower part of a building or other structure set in the ground' as well as 'something that gives rise to something else or forms the basis of its existence and continuation.' The Bible also uses the term 'cornerstone', which originally held structural significance, serving as a support. Today, a cornerstone refers to anything that serves as a basis or foundation for something (Dictionary of the Polish Language).

Magdalena Pałka

„It's a horse, of course!”

Species-specific behaviour.

Part 2

Under natural conditions, horses function in family groups called bands, as well as bachelor herds. These bachelor herds have a variable composition and are very large, frequently gathering over 100 individuals. A band is relatively small, with no more than 20 individuals. The backbone of the family group consists of mares with their offspring and a stallion, sometimes multiple stallions. However, one of them clearly dominates over the others. The highest-ranking mare in the hierarchy guides the band. The role of the stallion is mainly limited to keeping the group together and protecting it from outside dangers.

Young mares leave the band of their own free will, whereas the dominant male chases away maturing stallions. Few stallions manage to found their own harem. The others spend the rest of their lives in bachelor herds. It happens even less frequently that adult mares leave the herd themselves. A lack of food primarily decides this.

The family group operates on a rather strict hierarchy. The strongest individual is the dominant stallion. Next in line is an older, experienced mare who leads. Many factors decide a horse's place in the herd, and one of the most important is personality. Thus, we see ponies among large horses acting as a sort of leader. Unquestionably, age also determines position, as do family connections. Nursing foals always gain the same status as their mother. As a fun fact,

in mixed-species herds, horses always dominate mules, donkeys, and cattle. High-ranking individuals have priority at feeding sites, watering places, and resting areas.

Fights and skirmishes often take a ritualised form. Although this may look quite dangerous to us, it rarely results in serious injuries. A horse



uses the same threat displays toward humans as it does toward members of its own species. These include the characteristic pinning of the ears, wrinkling of the nostrils, tightening of the lips, head tossing, turning the hindquarters away, and feigning kicks or bites. Submissive displays involve lowering the head, avoiding eye contact, and moving the hindquarters away. In this state, the muzzle is tight, and the ears are spread uniquely to the sides, back, and slightly downward. Young horses exhibit a distinct submissive signal characterised by snapping or chewing with the head extended toward another individual. Stallions engage in skirmishes during the breeding season to guard or win over mares. These spectacular male wrestling matches are ultimately meant to bring down opponents through



teeth and physical strength. It looks somewhat different among mares, involving a series of kicks accompanied by loud squeals.

We now arrive at a highly critical topic, one that allows horses to form extraordinary relationships with humans. As social animals, they are linked by deep, mutual bonds that are often described as friendship. They cope very poorly with separation,

giving rise to a phenomenon known as 'herd-bounding'. Isolation initially triggers intense reactivity, which sometimes transitions into apathy. Socio-positive interactions predominate within herd behaviour. They are most strongly pronounced between a mare and her foal. Stallions often have their favourite mares, and horses kept by humans – including

geldings, which are castrated stallions – display similar preferences. Friendly horses enjoy staying in close proximity to one another. They play, eat, rest, and mutual-groom together. However, just as mutual attachments exist, so do equine antipathies. Such individuals maintain a large personal distance from one another, and any reduction in this space results in aggressive posturing, flight, or withdrawal. Consequently, horses should be kept in even-numbered groups. In larger herds, they must be provided with conditions that allow them to maintain an optimal personal distance. For the proper development of foals, rearing within a herd is essential. It should take place in a mixed group that absolutely includes their peers. Here, geldings often prove to be the perfect solution, as they willingly

engage in play even well into maturity. Only this method of management allows social skills to develop properly. A lack of such experiences can never be compensated for later in the animal's adult life.

Inevitably, the horses we keep cannot choose their own herd mates, which is where we must exercise prudence. With size comes power in the horse world, so a youngster will not thrive in a group composed entirely of adult horses. We must strictly adhere to the 'rule of pairs' so that every individual has a partner. Lone individuals in a herd often become the proverbial scapegoats, driven out by the rest of the herd. The issue of coat colour also warrants attention, as 'misfits' with unusual markings face greater difficulty being accepted by the rest of the herd. Following this line of reasoning, when dealing with

a larger number of horses, it is beneficial to establish single-sex herds; groups where mares predominate always exhibit greater harmony. Keeping stallions poses a major logistical challenge due to their aggressive behaviour. Occasionally, they can be introduced to a herd of geldings or paired with a single companion. Unfortunately, this is not always successful.

To safely integrate a new individual into the herd, we use a transitional stall or enclosure. The horses must be able to see and sniff each other while having limited physical contact. This introduction must take place in a calm and friendly atmosphere. For this purpose, we select a steady, calm representative from the herd. The next step is to turn these two horses out together, allowing the newcomer to explore the new environment in their company. In doing so, the new horse

will gain familiarity with the space and absorb the herd's scent. We then gradually introduce another horse to the group.

The introduction must take place in an open space large enough for the new horse to maintain a safe distance and have a clear escape route. Introducing a new horse shifts the herd hierarchy; for the safety and peace of mind of our horses, such changes should be made as infrequently as possible. Horses that lack friendly companionship will live in a state of permanent stress, continuously manifesting a series of worrying symptoms. Keeping a horse in total isolation is completely contrary to their natural needs. Neither a human nor an animal of another species can guarantee their well-being. Many horses suffer in silence, and we only notice the consequences when it is too late.

Dagmara Wichłacz



Dariusz Ziobro

Through the Eyes of a Hunter

A FEW THOUGHTS ON PASSION, NATURE, HUNTING ETHICS, AND TRADITION.

Darz Bór!

Happy hunting!

Spring and early summer are times when life awakens with renewed vigour. The days grow longer, lush greenery blankets the landscape, and birds begin their mating songs. This is also the season when wildlife brings

its young into the world. It marks one of the most challenging and demanding times of the year for deer, roe deer, wild boars, hares, and birds alike.

From a hunter's perspective, spring and early summer are times when even the slightest human interference in the natural environment can



decide the fate of young wild animals. The arrival of offspring is an exceptionally difficult period for wildlife. Some of you might ask: why? As early as March, the first young European hares are born, colloquially known in Poland as 'marczaki' (March hares). A female hare typically gives birth to between two and five young. She nurses them for a relatively short time, and the young quickly begin to forage on their own. The problem is that

during the early spring period, vegetation in the hares' habitat is exceptionally scarce. Additionally, spring rains, low temperatures, and pressure from predators mean the young's survival rate is very low. Most often, only one – at most two – individuals from a litter survive to adulthood.

The situation is very similar for pheasants and songbirds. In their case, weather conditions have an immense impact on the survival rate of the young.

The period from March to May is also the time when young wild boars are born. A sow gives birth to between three and ten piglets, colloquially known as 'stripers' due to their distinctive striped coats. For the first few days, they remain in a wallow—a secure nesting site. The sow nurses them, and after about two weeks, the young begin to follow her and root around for food. The wild boar



The common pheasant is a distinctive resident of fields and meadows.

sow defends her offspring fiercely and without hesitation. She will try to scare off an intruder by huffing and snorting at them, but she will attack if necessary. An encounter between a dog and such a sow very often ends tragically for the pet, especially if, despite her warnings, the dog does not move out of the sow's sight.

The next period marks the birth of young cervids—specifically roe deer and red deer. Their young arrive between May and June. A roe deer doe usually gives birth to one or two fawns. To produce enough milk to feed them, she must forage

intensively, leaving her young alone for hours at a time. The fawns are completely odourless, and their coats provide natural camouflage. Despite this, they remain entirely defenceless during this time. The situation is very similar for red deer hinds.

Around the same time, they give birth to calves, which are most often hidden away in dense forest undergrowth. Their spotted coats provide excellent camouflage. Hinds, much like wild boar sows, are exceptionally vigilant during this period and will defend their offspring fiercely if threatened.

Why am I writing about this? As humans, we are encroaching more and more on the natural environment.

We build our properties closer to, and often directly within, wildlife habitats. We must be aware of the dangers that can arise in situations that seem comple-

tely safe to us. We must also realise how deeply—and perhaps even unconsciously—we disrupt wildlife environments, especially during this critical period. This includes walking dogs off-leash on agricultural land, dirt roads, or in forests. A dog can roam within a radius of several hundred meters of its owner, often without its owner being aware of its exact position. What will happen if it

encounters a sow with piglets? What will happen in a confrontation with a wolf, which is becoming increasingly common? Furthermore, we cannot ignore the fact that a dog flushes wildlife out of its cover—the very places where animals rest and seek shelter.



Free-roaming domestic cats also pose a significant problem, causing immense environmental devastation. It is estimated that they annually reduce bird populations by several million individuals, mainly by preying on fledglings and young birds. The mere presence of cats in a hunting ground causes severe stress to adult birds, which in extreme cases leads them to abandon nests containing eggs or nestlings. In short, our cats significantly contribute to the decline of the songbirds whose melodies we so greatly admire in the spring and early summer. Can we really not refrain from letting them out of the house for entire days, especially during this critical period?

Another problem is our own behaviour. I am not talking about family trips into nature – I highly encourage those and am a strong advocate for them. I am referring to off-road enthusiasts riding cross-country motorcycles and ATVs through forest areas. By driving into sanctuaries – the 'homes' of

wild animals – you flush and drive them away at a time when they have young and especially need peace. Is it really not possible, at least during this period, to visit a purpose-built track instead of heading into the forest? Imagine a beautiful May day. The daytime temperature already reaches



The thrush nightingale is one of the most beautifully singing birds.

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Imagine a beautiful May day. The daytime temperature already reaches

21 degrees, the sun is shining, and the forest shimmers with green. Within an area of about ten hectares, there is a sanctuary harbouring two hinds with their young; nearby, a sounder of wild boars with their stripers is rooting through the wetlands, while three roe deer with five fawns rest in a forest clearing. At 9:00 a.m., a couple appears with their beloved dog. The animal runs through the forest, happy and full of energy, before disappearing from the owners' view, who are captivated by the surroundings. During this time, the dog bursts into the thicket, where it encounters a red deer hind. Barking and the sound of snapping branches can be heard. The dog returns, and the walk continues. A few minutes later, the situation repeats itself—this time, the dog bursts onto a forest meadow.

Around 11:00 a.m., a convoy of off-road vehicles appears among the fields, moving along the dirt tracks. Startled pheasants flush from the fields. A dozen or so minutes later, two dirt bikes roar into the forest with full force. The roar of engines echoes, and a sounder of wild boars bursts out of the thicket with stripers barely keeping up with the sows. Moments later, ATVs appear. A hind flees the forest, and roe deer scurry down a side path. What happens to the young? That can no longer be seen. I observed all of this from a hunting blind, which I had reached on foot, covering over two kilometres in silence at 5:30 a.m. Along the way, I encountered hares on the field ridges, roe deer foraging in rapeseed fields, and red deer returning from their feeding grounds

to the sanctuary. Do you see the difference?

The spring and summer weekends are still ahead of us, which means crowds will soon be heading out into the hunting grounds. The question remains: must our visits to the habitats of the wildlife we admire so much disrupt their lives quite so deeply? Whether we act merely as silent observers or as oblivious intruders in nature during spring and early summer depends entirely on our daily choices. I will conclude this article, as I always do, by inviting you to join me in wandering the forest paths—with mindfulness, respect, and an openness to what the forest has to tell us. Let us listen to the wilderness together.

Darż Bór!

Dariusz Ziobro



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