

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 Błazowa

Summer Holidays at the Library 2026

From 6 to 8 July, the Błazowa Library once again invited children to join in some summer fun together. Every year we try to prepare something new and special for the children, taking them to interesting places in our town or organising surprise meetings with interesting guests. This summer was no different.

Sylvia Synoś led Monday's session, running a workshop on making plaster figurines. The children had the chance to make plaster decorations with their own hands: candle holders, small vases, angels and other figurines. During the session, the participants discovered how important mathematics is in everyday life. They weighed, measured, mixed, and coloured the mixtures, and along the way made many discoveries about how colours come about. While the finished decorations dried, the children began painting the candle holders prepared earlier. Small works of art emerged, impressive in their attention to detail. Some of the pieces could easily have found a place among the famous Bolesławiec pottery.

The second day focused on Slavic legends. We talked about what legends are, where they come from and what values they pass on to successive

generations. We wondered what happiness is, when we are happy and whether money is necessary to be happy. The children learned about two legends, „The Fern Flower” and „The Golden Duck”. They are two different stories with different heroes, yet both carry the same message: wealth and material things do not make us happy; family, love, friends, and mutual kindness do.

The last day brought the most excitement. Although the weather had been doing its best since morning to upset our plans, we took a risk and moved the activities to the park. Fortunately, the wind drove away the rain clouds, the sun came out, and our outdoor game went ahead as planned. The teams „Fern Flower” and „Golden Duck” set off in search of the legendary fern flower, which guarded the treasure's secret. Many tasks and riddles awaited our participants: mazes, trials set by the Guardian of the Forest, Magic Runes and Hidden Pictures were just some of the challenges our adventure seekers had to face. Did they manage to find the fern flower and solve the mystery of the treasure? Of course they did, but it would not have happened without the two teams working together. Above all, the game required the children to cooperate and listen carefully. They found the

flower, and the winners were rewarded with a sweet surprise and popcorn, which proved a perfect prelude to a shared film screening at the Błazowa Cultural Centre.

As it turned out, three days of holiday adventures were definitely not enough! We received so many phone calls and enquiries asking whether there would be more, so we decided to organise weekly meetings for the children throughout the summer. That is how „Summer Adventures at the Library” began. The children learned about Polish and Scottish legends through sessions in Polish and English, plus plenty of art projects and interesting workshops. Conversations and games filled the air in a joyful, family atmosphere.

Joanna Bałutowska-Bialic



Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

Błazowa Days 2026 Are Behind Us

This year's Błazowa Days, held on 18–19 July, gave the residents of our municipality many unforgettable experiences. There were two days of concerts, artistic performances, sporting excitement and family attractions, and above all, meeting people and having fun together.

Błazowa Days began on Saturday, 18 July, with the Błazowa Municipality Village Tournament. Organising the event was quite a challenge, as this form of competition between villages was being revived for the first time in 19 years. As many as ten teams, representing localities from across the municipality, took part. The participants showed not only skill and fighting spirit, but also great creativity, a sense of humour and the ability to work together. Seven varied and highly entertaining tasks awaited them. The teams presented their villages, took part in an egg-and-spoon race, threw



From 6 to 8 July, the Błazowa Library once again invited children to join in some summer fun together.

potatoes at a target, spun bottle caps,



Blażowa Days began on Saturday, 18 July, with the Błażowa Municipality Village Tournament.

tackled a wheelbarrow slalom and competed in charades. The rivalry was fierce and lasted until the final seconds. There was no shortage of sporting excitement, inventiveness, loud

Colourful costumes, striking routines and youthful energy were a perfect introduction to the rest of Sunday's programme. All day, the stadium



offered attractions for the whole family. Participants could visit educational, food and promotional stands, and enjoy local

find something for themselves. A particularly spectacular part of the programme was the performance of the Polish Folklore Ensemble „Łowiczanie” from San Francisco. The dancers presented colourful, lively and energetic routines that showed the beauty of Polish folklore. The presence of a group from across the ocean was not only an artistic attraction, but also a moving testament to the Polish diaspora's attachment to their native culture and traditions.

Armed Forces Day



The second day of Błażowa Days.

cheering and enormous commitment from the participants. Yet what mattered most was the excellent fun, which united the competitors and the large audience alike. The Village Tournament was not the end of Saturday's excitement. After the competition, music filled the Błażowa stadium.

The second day of Błażowa Days began with a performance by the STARS Majorettes, who are part of the Municipal Cultural Centre in Błażowa.

dishes, handicrafts, bouncy castles, games, activities, entertainers and a virtual shooting range. Thanks to the variety on offer, everyone could



On Sunday, 23 August 2026, the Municipal Celebrations of Polish Armed Forces Day, combined with the Uniformed Services Fair „Meet the Everyday Heroes”, took place at the parish cemetery and the sports stadium in Błażowa. The ceremony brought together prayer, remembrance



Armed Forces Day

of the fallen, military ceremony and a presentation of today's uniformed services. It was a day full of patriotic

emotion, encounters with history, music and family attractions.

80 Years in the Service of Białka



became the unit's commander, joined the fire brigade as early as 1941.

The 80th anniversary celebrations also had an important spiritual dimension. Fr Henryk Rzeźnik, a native of Białka and the son of Ludwik Rzeźnik, one of the founders of the OSP in Białka, led the solemn Mass for the intentions of firefighters. The shared prayer included the firefighters serving today, previous generations of firefighters, and those

who have already gone to their eternal service. After the Mass, they held a ceremonial roll call. During the roll call, the history of the OSP in Białka was recalled, and a MAN GBA fire and rescue vehicle was solemnly blessed. The most important part of the ceremony, however, concerned the awards for the whole unit and the firefighters who have built its strength over the years. Medals „For Services to Firefighting” were also presented. The anniversary was also an opportunity to thank the people and institutions that have stayed close to the unit over the years. Many people have shaped the history of the OSP in

Białka, not only firefighters, but also residents, local government, and the institutions and organisations that support the local brigade.

Municipal Harvest Festival in Błazowa: A Celebration of Harvest, Tradition and Community

On 6 September 2026, the residents of the Błazowa municipality gave thanks together for this year's harvest. The Municipal Harvest Festival combined the celebration's religious dimension with the traditional ceremony of presenting the bread, a display of wreaths, competitions, folk performances, and an evening dance. It was a day full of colour, music and gratitude for the work of farmers, fruit growers, beekeepers and everyone connected with local agriculture.

The celebrations began with delegations gathering in front of the Town Hall in Błazowa. The participants then went to the parish church, where a solemn thanksgiving Mass for farmers and residents of the municipality was celebrated. During the service, beautiful harvest wreaths were abundant, symbolising the end of the harvest, abundant crops, and respect for everyday bread. Preparing them took the wreath-making groups many weeks of work, patience, ingenuity and



On 6 September 2026, the residents of the Błazowa municipality gave thanks together for this year's harvest.









knowledge of traditional techniques. After the Mass, a harvest procession



A wreath for the Błażowa Library.

formed and set off through the streets of Błażowa towards the sports stadium. The festival hosts, wreath delegations, representatives of community organisations, guests, and residents all took part in the march. The colourful procession created a spectacular picture of a local community rooted in its heritage. The celebrations at the

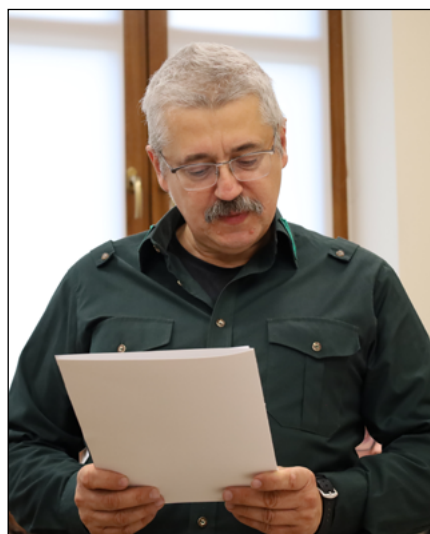
stadium opened with the show „Seeds of Polish Tradition”, performed by the Błażowiaczek Harvest Family. The group includes members of the „Błażowiaczek” Children’s Folk Ensemble and their families. The ensemble itself has been active at the Municipal Cultural Centre in Błażowa since 2021.

The Mayor of Błażowa, Jerzy Kocój, officially opened the Municipal Harvest Festival and welcomed residents, guests, institutional representatives, wreath delegations, exhibitors, and artists. One of the programme’s most spectacular highlights was the presentation of sixteen harvest wreaths. Each was a unique work, made mainly

from ears of grain, cereal seeds, flowers, herbs, fruit and vegetables. The wreath groups showed great ingenuity, precision and knowledge of the meaning of traditional symbols. The wreaths were ceremonially handed over to representatives of institutions and organisations cooperating with our municipality. Also, they took part in the Municipal Harvest Wreath Competition, „The Most Beautiful Harvest Wreath”. Numerous competitions on farming, workplace safety and local traditions complemented the programme. Stands selling handicrafts and regional food lined the stadium. There were also musical performances.

National Reading 2026

On 13 September, another edition of National Reading took place in the Wilczak hamlet in Błażowa. This time the Błażowa library invited the Hunting Club „Bielik Budziwój” to cooperate, and the club was happy



This year’s National Reading text was *Dziady* (Forefathers’ Eve) by Adam Mickiewicz. It is a work that has moved, unsettled and sometimes even irritated readers for generations, but never leaves them indifferent.



to join this lovely event. This year's National Reading text was *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) by Adam Mickiewicz. It is a work that has moved, unsettled and sometimes even irritated readers for generations, but never leaves them indifferent. It is a text about memory, the bond between the living and the dead, freedom, and what lies deepest in us. Mickiewicz wrote it when Poland was absent from maps and alive only in memories and dreams. *Dziady* appeared in Polish school education as early as the period of the partitions, though only to a limited extent at first. After independence was regained in 1918, it entered the official curriculum as a canonical Romantic text. Today we can read it aloud in a free country.

Our library has taken part in this nationwide event for several years now. We do it not because we „have to”, but because we know how important it is to read together. When we read aloud, literature stops being just paper and ink and becomes a voice, an emotion, something that connects those sitting beside one another.

As in previous years, our guiding spirit, our expert and a true enthusiast of literature, was the long-serving educator and wonderful Polish teacher Stefania Dyło, who introduced us to this important work of Polish literature.

Among those reading were: Wojciech Kryda, chairman of the Hunting Club „Bielik Budziwój” and

editor-in-chief of the magazine *ECHA SEZONU*; Anna Gellermann, a library reader; Fr Łukasz Siwec, vice-chairman of the Hunting Club „Bielik Budziwój”; Col. Marek Grabek, secretary of the Hunting Club „Bielik

Municipal Cultural Centre in Błażowa; Janusz Szpala, a councillor of the Błażowa Town Council and village head of Błażowa Dolna; Barbara Rutkowska-Kędzior, a long-serving teacher and library reader; Jadwiga Szermach, chair of the Board of the Municipal Services Company in Błażowa; and Elżbieta Pęcka, deputy chair of the Błażowa Town Council.



History, Culture, Tradition: Project Work Continues

The Informal Historical Group „To Save From Obscurity” is carrying out the project „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists”, Part II. We are gathering and compiling materials.

In the next instalment of the story of the Błażowa region, we wish to bring to life the beautiful Polish traditions connected with the harvest festival. We hope the resulting film will be a valuable lesson in regional history for the younger generation and a sentimental journey into the past for the older one.

Anna, Jakub and Magda

Budziwój”; Augustyn Rybka, owner of the private „Potoki” museum and the „Ostatni Grosz” inn; Rafał Brzęk, a hunter; Agata Domaradzka, a teacher and library reader; Sebastian Tracz, a hunter; Ewelina Szumska, a teacher and library reader; Jacek Mróz, a hunter and treasurer of the City of Rzeszów; Danuta Bator, a teacher and long-serving head of the Primary School in Błażowa; Zuzanna Heller; Kamil Zagórski, director of the

Co-financed from the funds of the „Działaj Lokalnie” („Act Locally”) programme of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, implemented by the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland and the Fundacja Przestrzeń Lokalna, as well as from the funds of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and the municipalities of Błażowa and Chmielnik.

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

Historical Memory as the Foundation of Identity

Awareness of the history of one's family or town underpins identity and self-worth, forms the basis for civic and patriotic attitudes, and provides the material from which a commu-



nity is built.

On 23 August 2026, Błażowa held ceremonies to mark Polish Armed Forces Day, organised by the Błażowa municipal authorities. Those ceremonies are a fine example of cherishing the memory of local heroes and of building respect for the soldiers and officers of the Polish Army. During the event, a concelebrated field Mass was held at the local cemetery, attended, among others, by soldiers of the 21st Logistics Brigade from Rzeszów, as well as standard-bearers and their escorts. Immediately after the Mass, the communal grave of Home Army (AK) soldiers, restored through the efforts of the local authorities, was unveiled and blessed. The ceremony was enhanced by the Roll Call of the Fallen and a gun salute. The occasion reminded those present how many Błażowa residents took part in the independence underground during the German occupation, including the Union of Armed Struggle, the Peasant Battalions, the Home Army, and the Freedom and Independence Association (WiN).

The communal grave holds:

- 24-year-old Marcin Rabczak, codename „Kosa”, born in Błażowa, son of Franciszek and Ewa, née Kuc, who

fell on 24 July 1944 defending Hyżne against an attempt by the Germans to pacify the village.

- 19-year-old Czesław Bialic, codename „Miech”, born in Błażowa, son of Marcin and Zofia, née Rybka, who the Germans killed in Błażowa on 27 July.

The following day, 28 July 1944,

no fewer than five AK soldiers from the local Outpost „Buk” in Błażowa died in a fight with German soldiers retreating from the front. They were:

- 27-year-old Stanisław Jacheć, codename „Jarosław”, cadet platoon sergeant, born in the village of Założce in Podolia, son of Andrzej and Paulina, née Sapyta, before the war an assistant lecturer at Lwów Polytechnic.

- 17-year-old Stanisław Bieniek, codename „Roland”, born in Przemysł, son of Jan and Genowefa, née Radochońska.

- 29-year-old Dominik Kocój, codename „Biały”, corporal, born in Błażowa, son of Michał and Józefa, née Wyskiel.

- 21-year-old Wiesław Jan Nowak, codename „Wiecheć”, born in Pabianice, son of Teodor and Sabina, née Brzęzewska.

- 24-year-old Kazimierz Słaby, codename „Bicz”, born in Błażowa

Dolna, son of Wojciech and Marianna, née Rybka.

Also buried in the shared grave is 16-year-old schoolboy Kazimierz Józef Sawicki, born in Czortków, son of Franciszek and Zofia, née Hałaszyńska, who was killed on 27 August, torn apart by a grenade.

In the crypt of the cemetery chapel lies Fr Michał Pilipiec, codename „Ski”, curate of the Błażowa parish from 1939, an AK soldier, chaplain of AK Outpost „Buk” and, from 1944, chaplain of the AK Rzeszów District. Fr Michał survived the German occupation, but in December 1944 he was arrested by officers of the Security Office (UB) and the Citizens' Militia



(MO), imprisoned and, after a brutal interrogation, murdered on 8 December in the woods near Głogów. Two other men from Błażowa died with him: Dominik Sobczyk, codename „Trop”, the municipal secretary, and Józef Bator, codename „Żyto”. In the 1970s, through the efforts of the parish priest, Fr Adolf Kowal, their bodies were exhumed and buried in the local cemetery.

Along the cemetery paths, we find many other graves where veterans of the fight against the occupiers in the Second World War are laid to rest: soldiers of the AK and the Peasant Battalions, soldiers of Anders' Army, soldiers of General Stanisław Maczek, and soldiers of the Polish People's Army. Near the main avenue, almost opposite the communal grave, lies Stanisław Jakubczyk of Błażowa, codename „Chrobry”, who, from

1943, commanded the AK Outpost in Błażowa. It was his soldiers who fell in July 1944. Stanisław Jakubczyk survived the war and, in 1945, fearing for his life, made his way to Italy, where he joined the Polish 2nd Corps, and then went via England to Canada. He died there in 1976. Buried with him is his wife, Danuta, née Sochówna, codenames „Rad” and „Zakopiańska”. During the occupation, she was a liaison officer and field nurse, and after the war she was active in the WiN Association. In 1948, she was arrested by the UB and brutally interrogated. She betrayed no one and spent seven years in prison. A few graves lower, also by the main avenue, is the grave of Władysław Kozubek, a Polish Army non-commissioned officer and a soldier of the September 1939 campaign. During the German occupation, he was involved in underground activity, serving as commander of the Peasant Battalions’ Brzozów District, codename „Zagroda”. After the Peasant Battalions were merged with the AK in 1944, „Zagroda” became deputy commander of the AK Brzozów District. After the war, he worked for several years in Błażowa as head of the local primary school. Off the main avenue is the grave of Aleksander Gruba, codename „Sęp”. Aleksander fought in the September 1939 campaign and, during the occupation, served as an AK soldier and a student in the secret course at the Infantry Officer Cadet School. In the underground, he served as commander of a platoon in the village of Lecka, and later as a diversion officer in the AK Rzeszów

District. In autumn 1944, „Sęp” was arrested by the NKVD and deported deep into the USSR. After returning to Poland, he took up activity in WiN, was arrested again, this time by the UB, and imprisoned a second time. He was initially sentenced to death, which



Two soldiers in conversation.

was commuted to a long prison term.

Among the gravestones we find the grave of Stanisława Kruczek, codenames „Rak” and „Anna”, an AK liaison officer and, after the war, a student at the Jagiellonian University. In Kraków, she became active in WiN and, in the autumn of 1946, the UB arrested her. During the brutal investigation, she betrayed no one, but paid for it with her mental health. Because of her poor health, she was released from Fordon prison after a few years, before her sentence had expired. For the rest of her life she depended on the help and care of her family.

Among the graves we also come upon that of Roman Gawryś, who for many years ran the only barber’s shop in Błażowa together with his wife, Stanisława. Born in Warsaw, Roman was, before the war, a senior constable in the State Police, and his last station

before the war was Bukowsko, in the Sanok commune. After the outbreak of the Second World War and the Soviet attack on Poland, he fell into Soviet captivity and was deported deep into the USSR. Released after the signing of the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement, he joined the Anders’ Army and served through its entire combat route, fighting at Monte Cassino. I remember that a photograph of him in the uniform of a soldier of the Polish 2nd Corps hung on the wall of the barber’s shop.

The heroes mentioned here are only part of the local pantheon of soldiers and veterans; among the paths of our local necropolis we will find many more. The graves of heroes and veterans lie in cemeteries all across Poland and on almost every continent where Poles shed their blood. Their courage, their sense of responsibility for the tasks entrusted to them, and their readiness to make sacrifices for others and for the freedom of the homeland are worthy of emulation. Our task is to pass on the memory of their deeds and of the people themselves, because this is how a community of aware citizens, and pride in and love of one’s country, are built. Patriotism is not declaring love for one’s homeland; it is action, and ultimately the conviction that the future of our homeland and future generations of Poles depends on whether we are able and willing to work for it with dedication and, should the need arise, to fight for it too.

Dr Małgorzata Kutrzeba



On 23 August 2026, Błażowa held ceremonies to mark Polish Armed Forces Day.

The Informals at the Municipal Polish Armed Forces Day

„I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swift-ness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend: the city of the Men of Númenor; and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom...”

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Two Towers

Polish Armed Forces Day is celebra-



ted in our country on 15 August, in memory of the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, and it falls on the day when the Church celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On that day, however, the people of our region make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Borek, to give thanks for her protection and to ask for further graces. That is why in our municipality Sunday 23 August was chosen to pay particular respect to all who have served Poland, fighting for her sovereignty, and who continue to serve her: guarding the borders, actively taking part in activities that bring local communities together, and educating new generations in the spirit of sacrifice and service. On this day, the Polish Armed Forces and other uniformed services were at the centre of our celebrations.

The ceremonies began at 2 p.m. at our parish cemetery, where Dean Fr Jacek Rawski celebrated Mass. After the Eucharist, the renovated tomb of the fallen soldiers of the Home Army was unveiled and blessed, and the congregation then marched together to the town stadium, where the rest of the ceremonies took place. The Military Orchestra of Rzeszów led the

ceremonial procession. Soldiers joined it, along with representatives of



the uniformed services, firefighters, the Eaglets and Riflemen of the Riflemen's Association, numerous banner parties, representatives of authorities at various levels, guests, and residents. Even members of the Szabelska Brac (Sabre Brotherhood) group, colourfully dressed in old noble costume, were present.

Preparations for the ceremonies had been under way on the stadium pitch since the early hours of the morning. Our Municipal Polish Armed

Forces Day was combined with the Uniformed Services Fair, so residents could look forward to many educational stands, each of which, of course, had to be set up. We were no exception. The invitation to take part in this special day allowed our Informal Historical Group to build a kind of historical bridge, linking those who



fought for the freedom of our Homeland in the past with those who today continue the traditions of their units in the modern Polish Armed Forces, while not forgetting, of course, the education of the youngest members of our local community.

Our educational stand focused on the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in Exile. Stanley Cheffey and Hubert Synoś lent exhibits from their collections, allowing us to display



Preparations for the ceremonies had been under way on the stadium pitch since the early hours of the morning.

in the exhibition area uniforms and equipment from, among others, the



a forage cap or a helmet, see what was kept in a soldier's backpack, and test themselves against the weight of the equipment, which, even considerably reduced, was still heavy. This part of our stand remained popular throughout the afternoon. The young-

being a soldier has always required strength, discipline, and sacrifice. The brave could test their knowledge of the Polish Armed Forces in Exile, and the children could choose from colouring sheets featuring Wojtek the bear. Visitors could also read back issues of



Stan is a veteran himself, with over twenty years of service in Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

2nd Polish Corps, the 1st Independent Commando Company, the 1st Armoured Division, and the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade. Several of us wore the historical uniforms of different units to show how they were worn. Yet simply looking at exhibits, without being able to touch them, isn't very appealing. So we also prepared a hands-on educational corner, where visitors could put on a uniform,

gest visitors were adorable, bravely struggling not only with the weight of the uniform and helmet but, above all, with the equipment. Almost every one of them claimed they could walk „hardly itches”, that the helmet „isn't really heavy”, and that if we gave them a parachute, they would carry that too. Through this, they also realised that

Kurier Błazowski.

Before we plunged into the educational whirlwind, my husband and I went to see the stands set up around the stadium. Stan is a veteran himself, with over twenty years of service in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. He looked at each stand with great interest, talked with the soldiers, and exchanged views on equipment and



training methods. Accompanying him as an interpreter, I could, in a sense, see everything through his eyes and share his sincere admiration for the level of training and commitment on show, all the more so because every stand offered something unique. At the Military Recruitment Centre stand, young Riflemen from the Riflemen's Association made a fine impression, speaking passionately about the Association's history and their stand...



and the very look of their camp, and above all the knowledge and kindness of the group's members, made it an exceptional encounter with living history.

The stadium also hosted stands of, among others, the Land Forces, the 3rd Subcarpathian Territorial Defence Brigade, the 21st Podhale Rifles Brigade, the Police, the Border Guard, the Fire Service, the military medical services and the Military Recruitment Centre, each of them extremely interesting and



units from our municipality. This sector remained popular throughout. Military pea soup was also on offer for everyone, and nobody left the field kitchen hungry.

The celebration's musical setting deserves mention. The Military Orchestra of Rzeszów, led by bandmaster and commander Captain Marcin Bąba, along with soloists Małgorzata Boć and Krzysztof Chruściel, gave us unforgettable musical experiences that Sunday afternoon. They were followed on stage by the band HARNASIE, which performs



in English.

Next to our soldiers' camp, the „Drop of Life” Honorary Blood Donors' Club prepared a highly interactive stand where, thanks to Family manikins, whole families could not only watch a resuscitation demonstration but also learn how to respond correctly to choking, breathing difficulties or sudden cardiac arrest. Further along, the Szabelska Brać (Sabre Brotherhood) group from Szklary transported us to the days of the nobility. The beautiful costumes, weapons

attention-grabbing. Visitors could look at the equipment and weapons of each unit, talk about the realities of service, and even try their hand at the airsoft range or „try out” a sniper's position. Not to mention the sector displaying combat vehicles, among them Rosomak wheeled armoured personnel carriers, including a version with modern ZSSW-30 remotely controlled turrets, as well as military lorries, alongside which stood vehicles and equipment of the Volunteer Fire Brigade

at the Club of the 5th Podhale Rifles Battalion in Przemyśl, and we all enjoyed the songs they sang. Finally, the band SAPER BAND from Nisko performed.

The scenes of this special day flash by like a kaleidoscope, too fast for any one of them to be held for long. It was certainly an exceptional day, one that will remain in the memory of the residents of Błazowa and the guests for a long time.

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey



Błazowa celebrates Polish Armed Forces Day.







Jakub Heller

Old Photos Tell Their Story



The tradition of making harvest wreaths in Poland is one of the oldest, most beautiful and most living elements of folk culture. The harvest wreath, also called *plon* („the yield”), is the main symbol of *dożynki*, the harvest festival that crowns the grain harvest, gives thanks for a bountiful crop and carries a prayer for plenty in the year to come.

Origins and history

The roots of this lovely tradition reach back to pre-Christian times. The Slavs believed in grain spirits and fertility deities, including those associated with *Mokosz* and *Jaryła*. The last handful of ears left standing in the field, called the quail, the navel, the goat or the beard, was meant to preserve the strength of the harvest for the coming year and so ensure the continuity of growth. Cutting it was a ritual of magical significance, and only the best reaper in the village could do it. The wreath took its present form around the 16th century, in early modern Poland, as the manorial farming economy developed. At first these were modest bundles of grain: wheat, rye, barley or oats. In time, however, they grew into magnificent, rich and beautiful compositions.

Harvest processions

In the Christian tradition, the wreath came to be carried or driven in

a colourful procession to church for blessing. Very often this took place on 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as the Feast of Our Lady of the Herbs (*Matki Boskiej Zielnej*). *Dożynki*, once also called *wyżynki*, *obrzynki*, *wieńcowe*, or *okrężne*, brought the whole village together to thank God for his abundant gifts. The place of honour at the festival went to the *starostowie dożynek*, the festival's hosts. They were usually working farmers, often a couple, who represented the local farming community.

Symbolism

The harvest wreath symbolises abundance and prosperity, and all the fruits of the earth. The circle or crown, as a sign of nature's unbroken cycle, stands for the continuity of life. It also expresses the community of reapers' thanks for the crops gathered, and a plea for those to come. The decorations carry further meanings: flowers

stand for joy and the beauty of nature; fruit and vegetables for plenty; rowan berries for protection; and ribbons, often in the national colours, for freedom and identity. Sometimes live or artificial birds (usually a rooster, hens or ducks) represent healthy livestock on the farm. Grain from the wreath was very often added to the first sowing.

How was a harvest wreath made? Traditionally, the wreath was made exclusively from natural materials. No wire, plastic or metal structures were used, simply because there was nowhere to buy them. Today, large wreaths are reinforced with internal frames.

Preparing the materials

Ears of grain, ideally still unripe and greenish for a better appearance, were cut by hand and dried. Wheat, rye, barley and oats were used. The framework was made of willow, flexible twigs or even straw, and bound



with linen cord or thread. The ears were woven around the framework, with herbs, flowers such as chamomile, cornflowers and strawflowers, fruit, rowan berries or even vegetables added. Religious symbols, such as a cross or a host, were then added, along with ribbon decorations. Wreaths came in many shapes: crowns, circles, cones, chalices, hearts, and even more fanciful forms such as churches or maps of Poland. In the past, the „harvest queen” wore smaller wreaths on her head.

In the past, work on the land, and especially at harvest time, was very hard. Everything was done by hand, but despite the exhausting physical effort, the scorching sun and the toilsome bending of the neck over the sickle, people did not lose heart. They smiled and even sang as they worked. Singing eased the pain in their backs. Folk songs carried across the fields, giving strength and uniting the reapers. The sweat running down their faces and the shared labour became an occasion for neighbourly kindness, jokes and a sense of community. In *Nad Niemnem* (On the Niemen), Eliza Orzeszkowa stresses that this harmony between people and nature,

and the rhythm of the seasons, held a deep, almost poetic value in village life, and that even the hardest work could bring joy when accompanied by tradition, human kindness, and solidarity. Over time, advances in civilisation made farm work easier. The tractor replaced ploughs drawn by oxen and cows, the mechanical threshing machine driven by a so-called *esiok* (a stationary engine) replaced threshing with the flail, and the combine harvester replaced sickles and scythes.

Today *dożynki* remain a living tradition, especially in the countryside and in smaller towns, but they have taken on a more folkloric and cultural character. Organisers hold colourful processions, concerts, performances by folk ensembles, craft demonstrations, and tastings of regional dishes. The tradition of making harvest wreaths usually survives thanks to the Rural Women's Circles (*Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich*). Modern wreaths tend to be more impressive and artistic. Competitions are held at municipal, regional and national levels, for example at Jasna Góra. *Dożynki* are not only folklore but also a living expression of respect for the farmer's work and his bond with the land. The

harvest wreath is a true work of folk art, a symbol of pride, gratitude and hope. Its beauty still delights and recalls the roots of Polish rural culture.

Our Informal History Group is continuing the project „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa land, Which No Longer Exists”, in which we wish to present this beautiful Polish tradition of *dożynki*. I think the film we will present this autumn will be a lovely lesson in regional history for the younger generation and, for older people, a sentimental journey into the past.

The project was co-funded by the „Działaj Lokalnie” („Act Locally”) programme of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, implemented by the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland and the *Przestrzeń Lokalna* Foundation, as well as by funds from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and the municipalities of Błażowa and Chmielnik.

In this instalment of „Old Photos Tell Their Story”, I would like to present the beauty of *dożynki*. If anyone would like to share their own photographs or stories from years gone by, please get in touch.

Jakub Heller



Procession around Błażowa's parish church.



In the Christian tradition, the wreath came to be carried or driven in a colourful procession to church for blessing.



Procession around Błażowa's parish church.



Wreaths come in a variety of shapes and forms.

Paideia – Project Incubator in Stockholm

I walk through my small town accompanied by the ghosts of those who are gone, whose traces time and political upheaval tried to erase almost entirely. Nothing is left of Błażowa's synagogues, no Jewish shops line the market square any longer, and only the most determined visitors make their way to the cemetery, where earth and moss greedily wrap themselves around one more matzevah after another.

We try to recover the names and

No Jewish community exists in Błażowa today. None of the members of our informal historical group is Jewish. We sit at the Shabbat tables of our friends whenever the opportunity arises; we understand how important chevra is, and we learn it whenever we can. We try to restore memory, yet we are constantly accompanied by one question: how do we show that Jewish communities are alive and present throughout the world? Full of energy and diversity, and although imperfect, the threads connecting many of their members to the places where their Polish

Jewish life and culture in Europe. The Institute was founded in 2000 on the initiative of the Swedish government and the Wallenberg Foundation. For more than twenty-five years, it has educated and supported future community leaders, scholars, activists and cultural figures.

Stockholm's Paideia focuses on educational and academic programmes, leadership training, and supporting activists in developing original, innovative projects in their local communities. Intercultural dialogue is also an important pillar of the institution. Affiliated with the Institute

is also the Paideia Folkhögskola (Paideia Folk High School), Sweden's first institute of higher education with a Jewish profile, known, among other things, for its close cooperation with other minority communities.

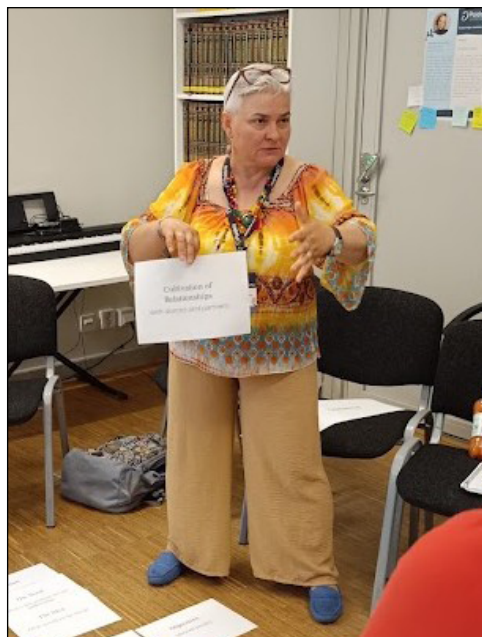
Paideia's headquarters is located in Östermalm, a central district of Stockholm. For centuries, the Swedish crown owned this area. In the second half of the nineteenth

century, its rural character gave way to an elegant grid of wide streets and multi-storey stone townhouses. This new urban layout made Östermalm one of Stockholm's most elegant districts.

I travelled to Stockholm as a participant in the Project Incubator, an intensive, ten-day training programme organised by Paideia. The Incubator's main aim is to support and develop new social, cultural, and educational initiatives dedicated to reviving Jewish life in Europe. The programme functions like a classic incubator, helping leaders and activists turn a raw



Being among the participants selected for this year's edition of the project was a great honour.



stories of the Jewish families from our town, and to share the customs and culture of our former neighbours. We want to show that the heritage which was simply everyday life for our grandparents and great-grandparents belongs to all of us. Every September, when we stress the need to remember the six million Polish citizens murdered during the Second World War, it is exceptionally important to remember that more than three million of them were Polish Jews, citizens of that same Republic. This remembrance matters especially now, when antisemitism is raising its ugly head across Europe and the world.

ancestors once lived remain remarkably strong and heartfelt.

At the turn of June and July, I found myself in a truly special place, one that not only deepened my understanding of contemporary Jewish life but, above all, allowed me to meet a group of wonderful people who, through their work, strive to revive, support and develop that life in various places, in Europe and beyond.

Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, is a pan-European, non-denominational academic and educational centre dedicated to reviving and promoting

idea into a project ready for implementation. Participants are activists, educators, community leaders, artists, and cultural creators from across Europe (and Israel) who have an idea for a project related to Jewish culture, education, art, or the commemoration of history.

The Incubator programme is remarkably intensive. Every day is filled with workshops, lectures and practical exercises. The individual support of mentors and the exchange of experience among the participants themselves proves invaluable. Daily discussions and mutual review of each other's ideas allow one to view one's own project from a variety of perspectives. The Incubator truly opens the door to a pan-European network of social innovators and Institute alumni.

Being among the participants selected for this year's edition of the project was a great honour for me, not least because I was the only participant from Poland. The other project authors came from, among other places, Spain, Hungary, North Macedonia, Germany, Estonia, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Serbia, Scotland, as

well as from Israel, the United States and Russia.

I travelled to Stockholm with a dream dressed in the outline of an idea. I named it „They Sat on the Same School Bench” and dedicated it to the memory of the Polish Jewish pupils of the pre-war primary school in Błazowa. Thanks to archival documents, we know the names of many of them; their parents' names, and what they did for a living. Their everyday lives were part of the history of the places that surround us; remembering them shouldn't require defending.

The very busy days spent in Stockholm allowed me to turn a dream into a plan, clear, transparent and workable. The workshops, meetings, and mentoring gave me the skills and tools to turn that plan into action. Thanks to the people I had the chance to meet through Paideia, something immeasurably more valuable also became mine. I saw the beating hearts of living Jewish communities scattered across the world, and the threads connecting them, threads that have nothing to do with geography.

I remember a Friday evening, the moment just before I lit the Shabbat

candles and sang the blessing, when my gaze wandered across the people gathered around the tables. I remember being wrapped in acceptance and a sense of community, that absolute certainty that, in that place and time, we were together, Jews and non-Jews alike, above divisions and prejudices, consciously striving to build a slightly better world. Not ignoring the reality, the conflicts and the complexity of the places in which we live, but rather choosing, anew each day, not to remain indifferent, and awkwardly swimming against the current.

In truth, we are all merely wanderers, building the mosaic of our today from fragments of yesterday's experiences and tomorrow's hope, seeking fellow travellers who will walk alongside us, supporting, lifting, and sharing the weight of the road. Paideia is one of those places that, like an oasis in the desert or a library hidden in a rocky cave, offers wanderers not only the chance to rest and catch their breath, but also the knowledge they seek, the tools they need, and companions for the journey. I am grateful that this summer, it became my oasis too.

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey



Zdzisław Chlebek

The History of Education in Futoma from 1888 to 2025. Part VI

In the calendar of school and community events and celebrations, the solemnly observed anniversaries of the September Campaign, Independence Day, the Day of the Cursed Soldiers, April as National Remembrance Month, Flag Day, the Third of May Constitution Day, and the annual Futoma Days hold a very important place. For 15 years we have taken part in the Festival of Patriotic and Military Song organised by the Primary School named after the Home Army in Błazowa Dolna. As part of the anniversary and community celebrations, Krystyna

Krywiczanie, Iwona Bocek, Ewelina Szumska, Karolina Litwin and Marta Błach prepared, together with pupils in the drama club and the vocal and instrumental ensemble, many unforgettable theatrical and musical shows and patriotic, independence-themed stagings. The teachers of the younger classes, Małgorzata Kawa-Chlebek, Dominika Sieńko-Domin, Joanna Pępek, Dorota Pociask, Ewa Skawińska, Iwona Bocek and Agnieszka Socha, prepared with their pupils a medley of national dances, the polonaise, krakowiak and trojak, within the dance, arts and regional clubs. The teaching staff, inspired by the school director who was also a historian, presented

many exhibitions and wall displays on patriotic, independence-themed and regional subjects, connected with the 100th anniversary of Independence, the Day of Remembrance of the Cursed Soldiers, the Warsaw Uprising, the Home Army, the Freedom and Independence organisation, September 1939, and Futoma Days. Our pupils, prepared by Iwona Bocek, Małgorzata Kawa-Chlebek and Dominika Sieńko-Domin, won many prizes and distinctions at festivals and competitions on patriotic and independence themes at county and voivodeship level.

As a regionalist and historian, I was invited many times to give talks about

the local Cursed Soldiers, including to primary schools in Lecka and Białka, Anna Jenke Middle School and St Queen Jadwiga General Secondary School in Błażowa, and Stanisław Konarski 1st Secondary School in Rzeszów. I also spoke three times at meetings with Rzeszów scouts at „Boska Dolina” in Dylągówka and in Błażowa, on the occasion of the annual „Run of the Unbroken” (a commemorative run honouring the Cursed Soldiers) from 2017 to 2019. I presented the profiles of 2nd Lieutenant Aleksander Gruba, Fr. Michał Pilipiec, Lieutenant Colonel Józef Maciołek, Sergeant Stanisław Rybka, the liaison officer and nurse Stanisława Kruczek, Danuta Socha-Jakubczyk, and Corporal Adolf Mierzwa.

First prize in the Voivodeship Art Competition „Poets and Writers for Children”, in the art category, went to the pupil Małgorzata Panek in 1999, with Ewa Skawińska as supervisor. The pupils Magdalena Rybka and Agata Kleczyńska took part in the Voivodeship Ecology Competition organised by the League for Nature Conservation in Rzeszów in 1999, with Krystyna Lach as supervisor. In 2000, at the opening of the new, functional sports hall with sanitary and kitchen facilities, our teachers Iwona Bocek, Krystyna Krywiczani, and Małgorzata Kawa, supported by Anieła Wielgos, prepared, with the school's pupils, a rich programme of dance, theatre, and regional performance. It consisted of folk and national dances, the *krakowiak* and the *polonaise*; regional shows „Zachciało się Zosi jagódek” („Zosia Wanted Some Berries”) and „Trzy córki” („Three Daughters”); and the songs „Nie załamuj się” („Don't Lose Heart”) and „Gdyby tak wróżką być” („If Only I Could Be a Fairy”). Together with representatives of the local community, we organised exhibitions of sculpture, blacksmithing, and artistic handicrafts, showcasing the achievements of local sculptors, blacksmiths, carpenters, embroiderers, and craftspeople from Futoma. They also included sculpture by Bogdan Kędzierski of Dynów, a pupil and

protégé of Antoni Rząsa, and stage performances by the Futomianie Folk Ensemble and the Futoma folk band. Zbigniew Nowak, Director of the Municipal Cultural Centre, hosted the programme.

Our guests included the late Bishop Stefan Moskwa, who, together with his fellow countryman Fr Jan Pepek, the former parish priests Fr Marian Homa and Fr Stanisław Rogala, and the Błażowa dean Fr Michał Drabicki, concelebrated Holy Mass. Fr Jan Czaja welcomed the distinguished guests in the church. Those who came to Futoma included the regional education superintendent Władysław Rusin; the Members of Parliament Józef Górny, Zbigniew Rynasiewicz and Zdzisław Pupa; the head of the Marshal's Office Józef Mądry; the Rzeszów county head Stanisław Ożóg; the chairman of the County Council Stanisław Obara; the mayor Józef Wyskiel; the previous mayor Stanisława Bęben; and the chairman of the Błażowa Town Council Gustaw Mazur.

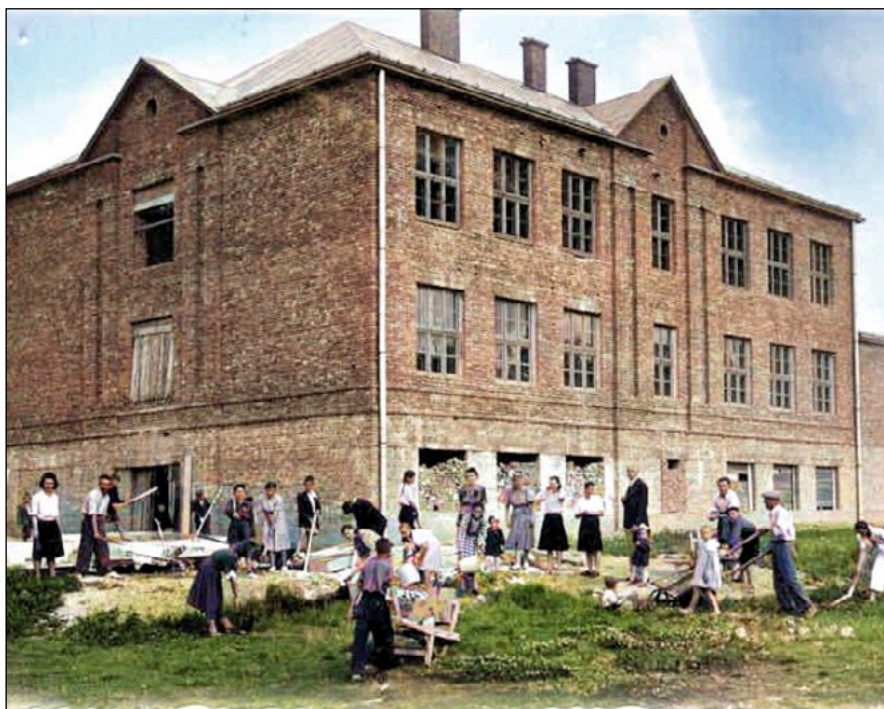
In welcoming the guests, I stressed as school director that this was the most beautiful gift on the eve of the school's approaching golden jubilee, and that the local community had seen the need for this building a quarter of a century earlier and taken numerous initiatives. The sports hall

and its facilities would serve not only the school but also the local community. I thanked the Social Building Committee, headed by Stanisław Kruczek; the local councillors Stanisław Pecka, Ryszard Gibała and Eugeniusz Dziepak; the former mayor Stanisława Bęben and the current head of the municipality, Józef Wyskiel; and the Parents' Council, headed by Małgorzata Drewniak.

In 2000, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Futomianie Folk Ensemble, we opened the Regional Room of Memory and Tradition at the school. We published the school guides „Moja mała Ojczyzna, Futoma” („My Little Homeland, Futoma”) and „Śladem futomskich kapliczek” („In the Footsteps of Futoma's Wayside Shrines”). Our guests were local government officials, representatives of the Education Superintendent's Office in Rzeszów, directors of schools and other institutions in the Błażowa municipality, and journalists from the Rzeszów newspaper *Nowiny*. In 2000, we also founded the Parish Sports Club „Bobry” Futoma, registered as an association. Its members received sports kits and balls and began competing in football for the Mayor of Błażowa Municipality Cup.

To be continued.

Zdzisław Chlebek



Dad's Soldiering Days



The image of my father is imprinted very vividly in my mind from the times when he spoke about his years of soldiering. Unfortunately, he did so very rarely, usually at festivals and holidays, when we had guests who had also lived through the war, such as Władysław Osip, our nearest neighbour.

The First World War

Dad has bad luck. His coming of age, his eighteenth year, arrives just as the Great War, the First World War, breaks out in 1914. Nobody knew then that it would be a world war, or that it would be the first. The spark that set it off was, as I would remind you, the assassination in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in 1914 belonged to the Habsburg Empire. Germany and Austria stood against Russia. Before Dad knew it, he was at the front. An inhabitant of Galicia and an Austrian subject, he became one of the thousands of Poles who had to shed blood, in the uniform of the partitioning power, for the interests of the state in which they happened to live. Often they had to fight against each other.

Given his age, he was probably drafted into the partitioning power's army as a conscript (through the conscription board), and most likely went to the front as an active-duty soldier. And again, bad luck! He was to fight on the Alpine front. It was a world completely different from his native Subcarpathian region – not only utterly foreign but, above all, dangerous: enormous mountains, steep rocks, treacherous precipices. For men like him, even moving about became a problem.

Dad took part in the battles at Monte Belluno and Monte Lupo (in the Italian Alps). They were bloody fights. The dead fell thick, and not only from enemy bullets. More victims, according to Dad, were claimed by transporting cannon and other equipment to the combat positions set at great altitudes. Although the guns were carried up, or hauled on ropes in parts after being dismantled,

death still reaped a rich harvest. Soldiers slipped off those steep, narrow mountain paths and tumbled down, falling into deep chasms. Some died on the spot; others, wounded and broken, died for lack of help.

There was one more cause of this deadly harvest, Dad would say mysteriously, probably to embellish his story. Many soldiers could not endure it, broke down, and decided to end it all. Suicides multiplied. But even blowing their brains out gave some of them trouble. The Austrian rifles, the „Mannlichers“, are long. For men of short stature, they were too long for the muzzle to land directly under the chin once the butt was set on the ground. Yet only in this way could one take one's own life with one's own weapon, effectively and without suffering. Fortunately, someone hurried along with a simple piece of advice: stand on a stone of just the right height so that the muzzle ends up where it should. „And how do you fire the rifle?“ someone would ask now and then. „Kick off your boots and foot wraps, press the trigger with your big toe, and... that's it.“

For Dad, the Alpine soldiering was linked with one more episode, an event that took place during the journey to the front. For Dad, I suppose, it was a first lesson in growing accustomed to death, and that is why it was etched so deeply in his memory.

I do not know the troop train's starting station when Dad set off for the front. Nor did I ask him what kind of troops it was carrying. I suppose it was mountain artillery plus an infantry unit supporting it. The train was long and crawled along slowly, with frequent stops. At one of them, in open country, the men began to

get nervous, because one day passed, then a second, and the train did not move. The ban on leaving the carriages increased the agitation. At last it became known that they were stuck on the Hungarian plain, and that the break in the journey was caused by an outbreak of a very dangerous infectious disease, probably the so-called Spanish flu (I do not remember exactly). „Even now, after all these years,“ Dad recalled, „I can still see before my eyes the little mounds of graves that sprang up every day along the carriages. Every morning we counted them through the carriage windows.“ The train set off again only after more than ten days.

The Second Soldiering: Against the Bolsheviks

Dad enjoyed his happy return from the Alpine hell only briefly. The Homeland, regained after years of partitions (in 1918), was invaded by the Bolsheviks (in 1920). Every able-bodied man was called to the ranks! A mobilisation card, and back to the front.

It began in the Borderlands

In August 1920 the fate of the state hung by a thread. Kyiv, Minsk and Vilnius had fallen. Budyonny's Russian cavalry army reached Lviv, and Tukhachevsky reached the approaches to Warsaw. When it seemed that everything was lost, Tukhachevsky was routed in the „Miracle on the Vistula“. At the same time, Budyonny's cavalry army was broken against Polish and Ukrainian bayonets near Zamość and Komarów.

„To this day I remember the fear of Budyonny's cavalry,“ Dad recalled. „It sowed panic. We had enormous respect for the lancers of the red marshal. It was the most terrible of terrible cavalry. God forbid you should meet it, clash with it in open country. We did not look for a quarrel with it, but we had to face it.“

Where, and in which clashes with the notorious Cossack lancers Dad took part, I do not remember. But I remember he was on a reconnaissance patrol that reached Kyiv and stayed briefly on its streets.

Then Vilnius

The next stage of Dad's soldiering in the Polish uniform was taking part in the recovery of Vilnius, then a city within Lithuania's borders. He served under the orders of General Lucjan Żeligowski, and always remembered his commander with great sentiment. „We liked him, he looked after his soldiers, and he enjoyed our trust.”

What did this recovery of Vilnius look like? „General Żeligowski,” Dad would tell, „wanted to give Marshal Piłsudski a surprise for his birthday. He wanted to present him with his beloved city on that occasion. That is what everyone in our regiment said. We took the city without a shot. By trickery, so they say.”

Note:

As is known from history textbooks, on 8 October 1920 the units of Gen. Lucjan Żeligowski began a march of about 50 kilometres to Vilnius. They occupied the city on 9 October 1920, two days after the signing of the Polish-Lithuanian peace agreement in Suwałki. The Lithuanians afterwards accused us of breaking the treaty.

At the time it was believed that, for Piłsudski, a Poland without Lithuania would have been almost unimaginable, a crippled and artificial entity.

In the interwar period, right-wing circles in Lithuania demanded that Poland condemn in a treaty the „aggression of Żeligowski” and the „occupation of Vilnius and the Vilnius region”. Although Vilnius became Polish in the interwar period, it never ceased to be Lithuania's heart and symbol.

The Last Stage: In Warsaw

The final stage of Father's soldiering became Warsaw. Specifically? Barracks near the Belvedere, on the edge of Łazienki Park, formerly tsarist barracks. How long did he stay there? One thing seems certain: that he was demobilised in winter, because

he came home in a winter uniform. Whether this happened in 1920/21 or 1921/22, I do not know. How did Dad remember that Warsaw time?

Most often he talked about Józef Piłsudski's chestnut mare. She was quartered in his unit's stables. Józef Piłsudski, living in the Belvedere, presumably wanted her close at hand. Dad's detachment was responsible for „polishing the mare,” galloping her daily, and providing veterinary care.

Dad returns from the war not only „alive and whole”, as people used to say then. He also returns with capital that would pay dividends to the end of his life. He returns with a deep love of horses and enormous knowledge of them, along with the practical skill to treat their illnesses, vices, and other ailments.

No Miracle at All!

In the 1930s, under the Sanation government, the Legion veterans of Marshal Piłsudski didn't dwindle; they kept multiplying. „It must be some miracle!” the peasant activists protested. „No miracle at all,” Dad explained to a neighbour. „It's those who WANT TO PASS FOR MERITORIOUS, to stick out their chests for medals, push their way into offices, and line up in the queue for estates. I know one such man. He's angling for an estate in the Borderlands. He claims he donated a horse to one of the Legion units. But he doesn't admit that he pinched that horse from another Legion unit.”

Militaria: Pro Domo Sua

In the kitchen of our house in Mokłuczka, a tall cupboard is built into the wall. Only Dad, standing on a stool, can reach its top. And there, on top of that tall cupboard, he hides his treasures: war souvenirs. I learn of their existence gradually, as I grow up.

First I discover the PUTTEES. I am in my third year at the elementary school in Błażowa. It is a hard winter, with frost and big snowdrifts. One day, when the blizzards are heavy, Wikta advises Dad not to send me to school. It is nearly three kilometres. Admittedly, it can be done along the forest paths, but the clearings are drifted

over. What does Dad say to that? He jumps onto the stool and takes military puttees from the hiding place on top of the cupboard. They are a little too long for my boyish legs, but Dad makes them work. And from then on the puttees protect my legs every following winter, until I finish my education in Błażowa. Dad always takes the trouble of wrapping them. And I am proud as a peacock. They impress me because they are something soldierly, military.

The next discovery is the CARTRIDGES. Rifle ammunition, still in their pouches, as in the war. I learn of their existence on the first Easter after that harsh winter. On Easter Sunday I go with Dad to the Resurrection Mass, and when we get back we share an egg and eat the blessed Easter food, our breakfast. Right after, Dad jumps on the stool and reaches into the hiding place in the cupboard. What does he take out this time? He does not show me. He leads me behind the house, to the rock. Wooded today, but back then it was pasture. We stop by one of the steep slopes, at a sizeable hollow carved into it by water. And only now does he show me the treasure he took from the hiding place. A few cartridges, rifle rounds. And he says that in a moment Mokłuczka, too, will welcome the Risen Lord. He adds that he is leaving me for a short while, as he must light a bonfire. He forbids me to lean out of that clay hollow until he returns. He comes back at a full run, jumps into the hollow, grabs me by the shoulders, and we press ourselves right up against the slope. And suddenly, a bang. The forest echo answers it – a ringing in my ears. I cannot get a word out. An enormous experience. For the whole of Mokłuczka.

Dad's third „treasure” in the hiding place on the cupboard is the SOLDIER'S BELT. A thick, wide leather strap. With pouches, also leather. I learned of its existence rather late, only as a fifth-year pupil of the elementary school, when I deserved, in Dad's opinion, a thrashing. And

he gave me one. What grave thing had I done? I had not watched the cows while they were grazing. They damaged the neighbours' crops, and we had to compensate them with a dozen or so heads of cabbage. It was evidently an effective lesson, because from then on Dad never had to reach for his soldier's belt.

Finally, the last souvenir, the ALUMINIUM SPOON. It does not lie in the hiding place. Dad uses it every day. It is something of a sensation for us, because it is the only

metal spoon in the house. We all use wooden ones. It arouses our interest. The metal is bright, as if noble, with chips on one side, as if Dad had used the spoon from the very beginning of his soldiering against the Bolsheviks. He must have grown very fond of it, because after his marriage he brought it with him to Mokłuczka. It served him a long time, almost 28 years after his soldiering (until the house fire).

The second, „iron” spoon, as people then called it, appeared in the

Mokłuczka kitchen only in 1935, when I began my studies at the gymnasium. It was meant for me. I reach for it unwillingly – bluish metal, as if from the blacksmith.

The Second World War

Dad is 43 when Hitler attacks Poland. Mobilisation passes him by. Later, during the Occupation, he works in the underground. He joins the Home Army. He serves in the Uprising Protection Service (SOP) under the codename „Gazda”.

Andrzej Kazimierowicz



German troops shelling Błazowa. Photograph from the library archive.

„It's a horse, of course!"

Part 4: Behavioural disorders in horses as a result of improper keeping conditions



Equestrian circles use terms like vices and bad habits for these kinds of behavioural disorders. Their classification is complex, and I won't dwell on that here. My main aim is to illustrate the subject so that everyone, even to a small extent, will notice, once they step through the stable gates, the si-



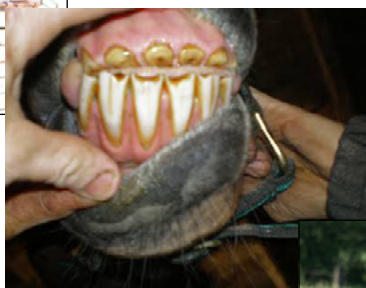
gnals an animal sends when it tries to cope with deficiencies in how it is kept.

These problems mostly stem from horses' unmet needs for movement and access to forage, and from their great sensitivity. Anyone who has read the earlier articles about horses' natural environment and needs already knows just how much stable conditions restrict their species-typical behaviour.

A few words about vices, that is, undesirable behaviours. These reactions can reveal pain or gaps in training. Reluctance to have the bridle put on, or head tossing, can, for example, indicate an ill-fitting bit. Bucking under the rider may point to spinal pain or to an unsuitable, sometimes even damaged, saddle. Nervousness, skittishness, and reluctance to load, in a horse not accustomed to this activity, can reflect factors that run against its natural way of being, characterised by an avoidance of dark, narrow passages. The so-called vices, or undesirable behaviours, include pawing with a limb, scattering feed, snatching food, bolting, „sticking" to the herd, weaving against the wall, kicking out,

and problems with grooming, farriery, or being led on a halter, among many others. I will, however, focus on those caused by unsuitable keeping conditions.

Excessive chewing of wooden elements of the box or fencing is common. It is almost always the result of a lack of access to forage, which leads not only to damaged teeth and gum infections but also to stomach ulcers and, consequently, colic. A similar behaviour is grinding the teeth against the bars of the box, accompanied by a rather unpleasant sound.



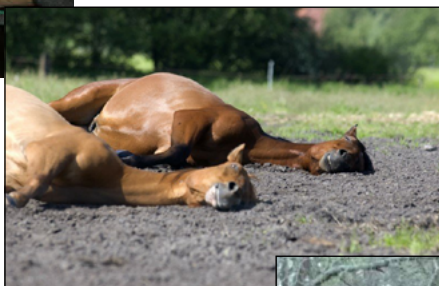
While this is sometimes simply a bid for attention, if it becomes constant, it can develop into a stereotypy. And here I should explain the meaning of that word: it is the continuous, rhythmic repetition of the same purposeless movements and gestures. Horses kept in boxes display quite several such behaviours: they walk in circles, toss their heads, lick fittings in the box, characteristically play with their tongue, and weave, which involves rhythmically shifting body weight from one front leg to the other, combined with a swaying motion of the head and neck.

Wind-sucking is another disorder, involving the sucking in and swallowing of air, accompanied by a characteristic belching sound. Digestive illnesses may underlie it, but most often it results from improper

keeping conditions. In recreational stables, apathetic horses are often seen: their gaze fixed dully on a single point, and they themselves remain entirely indifferent to the presence of people. This is an extremely sad picture, and a testament to a lack of understanding of these wonderful animals. Occasionally, most often in stallions, self-harm occurs in the form of biting, usually around the flank area.

Horses kept singly suffer from a lack of proper rest. A sense of insecurity arising from not belonging to a herd means they do not lie down. While a horse is adapted to sleeping standing up, thanks to the so-called stay apparatus, deep sleep is only possible lying down, and only on its side.

Likewise, a box that is too small, or being tied up, prevents the full rest essential for health. Scientific literature reports that as



many as 15% of the horse population suffers from the disorders described here. Prevalence depends on breed and is closely linked to how the animals are kept and used. Hot-blooded horses display them more often, while ponies and cold-blooded horses display them less often.

These disorders do not appear suddenly, and often carry serious consequences. When the environment we

create fails to meet horses' needs, it predisposes them to the disorders described, often because of ignorance and anthropomorphisation on our part. A lack of social contact with fellow members of their species, restricted movement, insufficient access

to forage, and an environment poor in stimuli contribute to the onset of such disorders. The way a horse is used also plays a significant role: racehorses and dressage horses show these disorders more often, and genetic factors have also been shown to play a part.

Finally, to give a sense of the scale of the problem and point to the real culprit, I will note that no such behaviours have been observed among wild horses in their natural environment.

Dagmara Wichłacz



Dariusz Ziobro

Through the Eyes of a Hunter

A few thoughts on passion, nature, hunting ethics, and tradition.

During our recent meetings in the pages of Kurier Błażowski, we talked about hunting culture, the tasks hunters carry out, and the impact of human behaviour on the well-being of game in the hunting grounds. Today, I would like to draw your attention to another remarkably interesting element of hunting culture: hunting language.

I admit that discovering it, entirely by chance, surprised me more than almost anything else at the start of my journey into hunting. During one of my outings with my hunting „godfather”, we were talking about our passion, and he was also trying to show me the places where game crosses. At one point he said, „Darek, look, a cat is coming.” Puzzled, I looked in the direction he had indicated. I couldn't see a cat, but I did notice a hare bounding across the road from a field boundary.

„Andrzej,” I said, „I think you've got something mixed up; that's a hare, not a cat.” Andrzej just smiled.

„But I'm telling you, it's a cat. In hunting language, ‚cat' means hare.” That's how I first encountered the language of the hunt.



For centuries, having its own language, developed over generations, has marked the identity of a group or community. Nobody is surprised by the Silesian dialect or the Highlanders' language. Hunters also have their own language, and it is one of the pillars of our identity. The hunting dialect goes back to the very beginnings of hunting, and it arose to describe the natural world precisely, in a way understood chiefly by the initiated. Its heyday fell between the 15th and 17th centuries, when hunting language became a permanent part of hunting tradition.

Another use of the dialect was in describing events, such as accounts of a hunt or the details of how game was taken. At noble courts, the dialect made it possible to speak about hunting more gently, without graphic detail. It is also remarkable that using ordinary language instead of the dialect could bring penalties, especially for young hunters, commonly known as Frycs. This was, however, part of their upbringing and of learning the tradition, not repression.

In hunting language, then, we find kozy (does), łanie (hinds), odyńce (mature boars) and wycinki.



This game lives, among other places, in chmary (herds of deer) or rudle (groups of wild boar). Their young are born in barłogi (lair), and they bathe in babrzyska (wallows). Wild boar also leave characteristic marks on tree trunks, namely zaciosy (tusk gashes) and traces of „painting”. The anatomy of the roe deer is described just as precisely: cewki are the legs, parostki the buck's antlers, łyżki („spoons”) the ears, świece („candles”) the eyes, and suknia („dress”) the coat, which changes colour with the season. This is, of course, only a small sample of the hunt's rich vocabulary. Stanisław Hoppe's Słownik języka łowieckiego (Dictionary of Hunting Language) describes all these terms.

Returning for a moment to the Frycs: in the past there were also harsher forms of „punishment” for language mistakes, which today are purely historical. They were symbolic, ritual attempts to make a novice look foolish, often combined with an obligation to treat the older colleagues to refreshments. There are also known examples of much harsher punishments. A description of one appears as early as the 1595 poem Flis by Sebastian Klonowic. These practices showed how much importance was attached to knowing the tradition and the language, which signalled belonging to the hunting brotherhood. Today they should be treated merely as a curiosity from times gone by.

Nowadays, hunting language still plays an extremely important role. It is not just a collection of words, nor folklore for folklore's sake. It is a way of looking at nature that is attentive, precise and full of respect. This language is deeply rooted in the history of hunting traditions and in hunting prose, and it took shape over hundreds of years. Nobody today questions the identity of groups such as the Highlanders, the Silesians or the Kashubians. By the same token, it is impossible to dispute the legacy of several centuries contained in hunting language. It is one of the elements that link today's hunters with their predecessors and set our community apart from others.

I would also like to add, jokingly, that hunting language can cause marital misunderstandings. My own case was no exception. One Sunday afternoon, I was watching a hind with her calf through binoculars from the terrace and began commenting aloud on what I saw. „Turn round and show me your candles and spoons.” My wife, who was bringing dinner to the table, stopped and asked, puzzled, „What do you want spoons for, with the sausages? And candles? Well, we can have a romantic dinner; just put those binoculars down at last.” I had to explain deftly what I had really meant. We laughed a good deal, then turned our attention to dinner. And the binoculars? Well,

as a precaution, they went into the corner.

In raising the subject of hunting language, I wanted to point out that hunting itself has very deep roots. Re-



ducing it to the mere act of hunting therefore marginalises it severely. In hunting, you will find ethics, culture, tradition, and a language characteristic of this social group. These elements have been passed down through the centuries and cultivated by successive generations of hunters. They form the

foundations of our identity. I would add that we hunters believe future generations will respect, practise, cultivate, and hand down all these traditions to their successors in just the same way. And we need not worry that those successors will appear, because hunting is a wonderful adventure amid beautiful nature and, I must add, in excellent company, among people who share the same passion.

As I bring this article to a close, I encourage you to take a closer look at this fascinating dialect. What is more, I encourage you to talk to a hunter you know and try using the words I have mentioned here. Do not be afraid to ask about other words and to request an explanation of their meaning. I am convinced that this will be the beginning of fascinating hunting tales, in which hunters, not without reason, are considered true masters.

Darz Bór!

Dariusz Ziobro



