

The Polish Museum
and Archives in
Australia Inc.



Muzeum i
Archiwum Polonii
Australijskiej

30 years of The Polish Museum and Archives In Australia



MARCH 2023

“We are the community’s memory – a living collection of images and documents reflecting our Polish Australian history and heritage.”

Community museums are a parallel source of knowledge to the formal education system and large museums and galleries. The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia over the past thirty years has become a trusted source of information for the Polish Australian community, Polish academic circles and the community general. However it sees itself as some more than just a storage of documents and images. It has as a broader role that of being a collective memory of past generations. It has an important role of passing on this legacy to future generations. The organisation continually develops ways of encouraging learning and engagement for people of all ages and generations.

The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia provides information, support and links for historians working on Polish Australian history. The collection acts as a resource for Polish organisations throughout Australia and Poland. It cooperates with museums and institutions across Australia and internationally. We do this through information sharing and advocacy, as well as networking, discussion and learning. We have participated a series of international projects sharing information from our collection.

The Archives are the centre for documentation and research on the history of Poles and Polish Australians. They are considered to be one of the most important sources of information for those interested in the Polish past in the antipodes.



Polish Museum and Archives in Australia
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Our founder
Dr Zdzisław
Andrzej
Derwiński



Dr Zdzisław Andrzej Derwiński, for many was known as simply: Zdziś, Zdzichu or Zdzisiek. His Australian friends and colleagues knew him as Andrew.

Dr Zdzisław Andrzej Derwiński was born in 1956 in Bogatynia, Poland. He studied history at the University of Wrocław. There, too, under the supervision of Professor Wojciech Wrzesiński, he prepared and defended his master's thesis entitled "Biuletyn Informacyjny" and "Rzeczpospolita Polska" in the face of the idea of armed struggle with the occupant (1940–1944).'

In 1981, he began his doctoral studies at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the Second World War department, headed by Professor Czesław Madajczyk. In 1982, he took the position of an assistant at the Department of Contemporary History of the Historical Institute of the University of Wrocław.

In the years 1982–1987 he conducted classes with students in the field of contemporary general and Polish history as well as the history of Polish political thought of the 20th century. In 1987, he completed his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Professor Czesław Madajczyk: "The foreign policy of the

government of the Republic of Poland abroad under the leadership of Stanisław Mikołajczyk (July 14, 1943–November 28, 1944).'

In 1987 he migrated to Australia together with his wife Krystyna and son Krzysztof, to join his mother. From June 1987 he lived and worked in Melbourne. Initially, he was employed as a manual labourer and then as Social Support Coordinator with the Polish Community Council of Victoria. Having noticed the gradual passing of the post-war generation he noted the need to save as much as possible of their history. As a result, he established and was the President of Polish Museum and Archives in Australia and the Editor of its publications and Annual. He edited the 'Chronicle of the Polish Community Council of Victoria (1962–1992)' in 1993. The book summarised the establishment of the organised community in the state. In 1998–2002 he was the editor of 'Tygodnik Polski'. In more recent years, he became an advisor to the Polish Community Council of Australia on historical matters. He was the initiator and curator of many exhibitions on Polish history and the Polish contribution to Australia.

Dr Derwiński possessed an extensive understanding of Polish settlement in Australia and was a walking encyclopedia on this topic, sadly much of this was

undocumented. He published ‘The Government of the Republic of Poland in exile towards the Warsaw Uprising (1944)’, Melbourne 1991.

He was decorated by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, during the President’s visit to Australia in 2018, with the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, for outstanding services in the Polish community and for popularising Polish history.

In his final interview in September 2021 for the ‘Portal Polonii w Wiktorii’, he summarised his own contribution to the Polish community and his hope for the future:

‘I feel unsatisfied that more has not been done or better. Perhaps there was no favourable environment, atmosphere, understanding or support in the Polish community for these things to occur. However, I think that if I got involved in these initiatives, it was clearly meant to be. My greatest dream is that all the initiatives I have started will be successful. I also hope that the new generation of Polish community activists will take over the Polish Museum and Archives in Australia and place it on solid foundations, because it is definitely needed.’

He had retired in 2020 with the intention of devoting more time to the topic he loved: Polish Australian history. He died suddenly on October 3, 2021 in Melbourne.



Zdzisław Derwiński with Consul General Monika Kończyk



Dr Derwiński sorting archival documents



Polish Museum and Archives Committee 2017

Organisational History

The notion of establishing an institution similar to an archive or museum is integrally connected with the existence of the organised Polish settlement in Australia.

Establishing the Museum and Archives in Australia was not the first initiative of this kind. In the 1950s, one of the leaders of Polish community life in Victoria, Fr. Józef Janus SJ initiated the Polish Australian Archives and collected various materials on the history of Polish settlement in the Antipodes. This archive was initially to be housed at the home of the Resurrection Sisters in Essendon (Vic), eventually its collections were moved to the Polish Jesuit Centre in Richmond, Melbourne.

In South Australia, a similar initiative was presented by Prof. Marian Szczepanowski, the founder and long-term chairman of the Polish Historical Society in Adelaide. Thanks to the support of General Juliusz Kleeberg, President of the National Council of Polish Organisations in Australia. Professor Szczepanowski collected a number of interesting documents covering the first years of the National Council's activities. The Polish community in South Australia also established the Polish Museum which was the home of the first Polish settlement in Polish Hill River (SA). In turn, the Polish House in Ashfield (NSW) oversaw the creation of a Polish Army museum. Mr. Andrzej



Julia Nizioł, volunteer, cataloguing

Kleeberg from Canberra, also created the Polish Historical Institute in Australia which conducted an extensive oral history project in conjunction with the National Library of Australia.

However, these attempts to create a Polish archive for many years led to a very problematic conclusion. Typically, these organisations, created by the founders/pioneers, did not survive beyond the lifetimes of their leaders. People involved in the creation of the Museum and Archives of the Australian Polish Community were hopeful that this time such an organisation would be able to last as long as the Polish community continued in Australia.

The establishment of the Museum and Archives is inextricably linked with the arrival to Melbourne in 1987 of a historian from the University of Wrocław, Dr. Zdzisław Andrzej Derwiński. Initially the situation did not appear optimistic, because there was no active Australia wide institution collecting and storing memorabilia of successive generations of Polish settlers in Australia. For several years, Z. A. Derwiński held talks with various people who were interested in the idea of working with such an organisation. He tried to interest the Polish Community Council of Australia and the Polish Community Council of Victoria with his concept of a national archive and museum.



Archivist from Polish National Archives, Dr Paweł Pietrzyk

The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia was eventually established in 1991 as an initiative of several people who saw the importance of collecting and preserving historical materials that reflected the individual and community life of Polish immigrants living in Australia. Eventually the organisation was incorporated in Victoria in 1992. In 2017 it received tax deductible status.



Committee members – Julia Nizioł, Mon Leśna, Maria Picyk with Zdzisław Derwiński

The Museum and its activities are run entirely by volunteers on a shoestring budget.

The goals of the organisation are to:

- organise, facilitate and operate a museum for the collection and protection of historical items and artefacts relating to the Polish community in Australia.
- provide information and advice regarding Polish and Polish-Australian history.
- research, document, publish and provide information and community contacts regarding the history of Polish settlement in Australia.
- conduct interviews and education programs in regard to Polish history and the history of Polish settlement in Australia;
- develop and conduct programs, public information campaigns, sessions and seminars to promote and preserve Polish history and the history of the Polish community in Australia; and
- maintain and promote Polish heritage and preserve Polish traditions through Museum activities.



Dr Helen Evert

Presidents

Dr Zdzisław Derwiński

Dr Helen Evert

Lucyna Artymiuk



Committee meeting 2017

Committee Members have included:

Stanisław Bragiel	Alicja Michalska
Barbara Capewell	Julia Nizioł
Barbara Czech	Maria Picyk
Krystyna Dusznik	Maria Peszek
Irena Grażewska	Dariusz von Guttner
Ryszard Grażewski	Sporzyński
Aniela Kociuba	Aleks Terech
Bogusław Kot	Jola Wolska
Włodzimierz Kowalik	Magdalena Wysoczańska
Joanna Lang	Ania Zamecznik
Mon Leśna	

Premises

The continual issue for the Polish Museum and Archives has been a home base for the organisation including storage space for the collection, library as well as exhibition space. Exhibitions have been largely temporary displays around Australia, while the collection found its home for several years at Millennium House in Footscray. Since 2021 Millennium House ceased being the base for our organisation and various options are being explored to construct a building to



Our new temporary home.



Packing the archive at Millenium House

Acknowledgement

In 2022 the Polish Museum and Archives in Australia was conferred the “Witness of History” (Świadek Historii) Award by the Polish Institute of Memory (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej). This annual award honours people and institutions from abroad particularly active in commemorating Polish history.



Lucyna Artymiuk receiving the Polish Senate gift on behalf of the Museum from Polish Senators, Bogdan Zdrojewski and Waław Rusiecki and Consul General Monika Kończyk

How can the community help?

- By taking part in the oral history project and talking about your experiences.
- By volunteering to record interviews with interested Polish migrants or members of subsequent generations.
- By being an active volunteer.
- Contacting us if you have memorabilia, documents or photographs of historical significance.
- By becoming a member of the Association; or
- By making a financial contribution

For more information contact
Lucyna Artymiuk or Barbara Capewell at
polishmuseumarchivesaustralia@gmail.com

About our activities

CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia is the hidden “crown jewel” of the Polish Australian community. It has preserved and exhibited the history and culture of the Polish Australian community and our ancestral homeland – Poland. The exhibits and collection are both educational and entertaining. Its Library and extensive Archives have rendered invaluable services to historians, researchers, students and genealogists.

Despite not having its own premises as yet, It offers a range of touring exhibits, resources and activities related to Polish history, culture and heritage, as well as Polish Australian history. Our volunteers assist visitors and provide additional information.

In our collection, you will find a permanent display (currently in storage):

- Polish artefacts, books and photographs
- Polish militaria and memorabilia from World War II
- An extensive collection of photographs of Polish settlement in Australia
- Polish publications in Australia
- Documents and archival material of community organisations
- Exhibits on famous Poles including Strzelecki
- Exhibits on specific historical events including the Warsaw Uprising, Polish independence after World War I, and post war migration
- An extensive academic library with historical information for researchers
- Special temporary exhibits, which change periodically, are also on view around Australia.



Our Collection

Though based in the Melbourne, the Polish Museum and Archives seeks objects, documents and photographs that relate to the story of Polish migration experiences from around Australia. It seeks to document our segment of the multicultural mosaic of Australia

The Polish Museum and Archives continually seeks significant objects, documents and photographs that relate to the story of Polish post war migration experiences. It would be a lost opportunity to make our mark on Australia and for our own sense of cultural identify, if we were to lose these treasures, just because their true significance was not recognised at the time.



Exhibitions

Mazurka under the Southern Cross



An exhibition of artefacts, photographs and historical material focusing on the legacy of the de Tarczyński family in the artistic circles and Polonia of Australia

The Exhibition was held at the Melbourne Town Hall during the Polart Festival in December 2015.

Stanislaw Victor de Tarczyński (1882–1952), violinist, was born on 7 April 1882 in Warsaw, son of Józef de Tarczyński, professor of the Warsaw Conservatorium, and his wife Bronisława, née Bobińska. Brought up a Catholic, he was educated at a local high school and the Warsaw Conservatorium where he received his diploma with distinction and a gold medal. At the age of 20 he was engaged for a year as leading violinist with the Moscow Grand Opera. Returning to Poland, he joined the staff of a musical and literary periodical, *Młoda Muzyka* (Young Music). He later studied in Berlin and gave concerts in Dresden and Prague before being elected to lead the famous Ysaÿe Symphony Orchestra in Brussels.

When he was approaching international fame, one finger of Tarczyński's left hand became paralysed. Broken in health and spirit, he went to Egypt where he slowly recovered under the care of his sister and a Polish friend, Jadwiga Kilbach (d.1950), who accompanied him on a visit to Australia. Arriving

in 1912, they were married on 16 March 1913 at the Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. Prevented by the outbreak of war from returning to Europe, Tarczyński reluctantly changed his status from tourist to immigrant and began playing the violin in Melbourne theatres. His wife taught languages in several private girls' schools and at the university; she was later a foundation member of the International Club of Victoria and a national vice-president.

Although Tarczyński's fingers never regained their previous flexibility, his achievements in Australia were remarkable. His composition *Mazourka Melancolique* was published in 1915 and he edited *Kayser Studies for Violin*, opus 20. In 1922–36 he taught at the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music and at the Albert Street Conservatorium. He was regarded as one of the best teachers in Australia; many of his pupils were to achieve distinguished positions in the world of music. Tarczyński became the leader of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and virtually permanent leader of all touring opera companies in Australia and New Zealand which were associated with J. C. Williamson Ltd. For five years from 1936 he was leader of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. He was naturalized in 1940.



Polish community in Melbourne, mid 1930s

At his Mont Albert home, which he had designed in the style of a Polish landed gentleman's residence, with a spacious music room, Tarczyński entertained musicians, writers and painters. He had ability in drawing and his closest friend was Max Meldrum. Tarczyński loved to tell a story – clean and otherwise – and was well-known for his sense of humour and practical jokes. In his prime he had striking, blonde, shoulder-length hair, blue eyes, classical features and refined manners. He was 163 cm tall, but stood erect and was well-proportioned. His English pronunciation was never perfect.

During the two wars the de Tarczyński family was involved in fund raising for the Polish war effort. The de Tarczyński family home was where the Polish Association in Victoria was formed in 1949.

Survived by two sons and a daughter, Tarczyński died in Melbourne on 18 June 1952 and was cremated with Unitarian forms. A portrait by Max Meldrum is held by the family; another, by Norma Bull, was held by the artist. Meldrum's portrait of Jadwiga is in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Halinka de Tarczyńska was a leading opera singer on the Australian stage in the 1950s.

Portrait

In 2021 the Polish Museum and Archives unveiled a portrait of Stanisław de Tarczyński. The original portrait by Colin Colahan, which had been painted for the 1932 Archibald Prize, was destroyed during the London Blitz. At the initiative of Dr Zdzisław Derwiński, Ms Joanna Lang, a professional art conservator, reconstructed the painting from black and white pictures. The official unveiling occurred at the Albion Polish club in February in the presence of descendants of Stanisław de Tarczyński.

Right: Peter de Tarczynski and Joanna Lang
Below: Photo of Stanisław de Tarczynski next to his portrait by Colin Colahan



Descendants of Stanisław de Tarczyński with the reconstructed portrait

Warsaw Uprising Exhibition



This exhibition was prepared for the 70th Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising and presented at Federation Square in November 2014.

The Polish Soldier Migrants



Polish soldier migrants from the Strathnaver arriving in Hobart, August 1948

In 1947 and 1948 Australia accepted a very specific Polish migrant. Over 1,500 former members of the Polish military based in the United Kingdom arrived in Australia aboard the “Asturias” and the “Strathnaver”. These men represented various military services including the Carpathian Brigade, the Air Force, Armoured Division and the Second Corps. A sizeable number worked on the Hydro-Electric Scheme in Tasmania; but many were sent to various parts of Australia. These men were vital to the establishment of Polish community

structures in the following decades. They also represent a significant prelude to the massive post-war Polish migration from the displaced persons camps scattered throughout Western Europe. The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia documented this unique group of Polish soldier migrants in the form of an exhibition in 2017 and a publication in 2018 and is currently conducting further research. The exhibition has been displayed in Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Oral History Collection

The post-war Polish immigrants are today our senior citizens. It is therefore important to document the experiences of these early pioneers.

Such experiences include:

- Pre-war life.
- War-time experiences.
- Early life in Australia – life in migrant hostels, the two-year work contracts.
- Establishing homes, community structures and cultural life.
- Reflections on Polish migrants' lives today.

Our collection includes over a hundred audio and video recordings of testimonies.

It is vital that these stories be recorded and passed down to future generations of Polish Australians. They should also be documented as part of the greater multicultural Australian experience.



Aleksandra Krzywokuska



Interview with Mieczysław Gozka, Sydney 2017



Interview with Władysław Krzysica, Hobart 2017



Genealogy and Polish Heritage Workshops:

These workshops are an initiative to assist second and third generation people discover their Polish ancestry through offering practical skills and knowledge in the area of family history.

The organisation wishes to develop support structures to share experiences, skills and technical advice. These workshops aim to increase people's understanding of the cultural and historical issues relating to immigrants from Poland and the Polish territories.

This series of workshops, lectures, and seminars focuses on various aspects of Polish history as well as Polish diaspora history and culture. The programs are designed for individuals interested in their own family's Polish heritage, migration and settlement as well as genealogy. The seminars intend to provide background and context for further personal research.

We have developed generic genealogy programs as well as one specifically designed for children, youth as well as teachers.

Workshops have been conducted in Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and Brisbane.

Genealogy Support group in Sydney

For a couple of years we had an active genealogy support group which met on a quarterly basis at the Polish Club in Ashfield. The meetings had discussions on specific issues relating to people searching for their heritage

Right: Genealogy Workshops in Melbourne



Polish Australian Writers Group (PAW)

The group was created over ten years ago in Melbourne for people intending to write their Polish family histories.

In monthly meeting they receive support and critique. With likeminded people also documenting their family histories, people receive guidance in further research.

Many writers find support and assistance from being part of a writers' group. You may benefit from the

company of people who understand what you're experiencing as a writer and many groups operate as critique groups where you can get detailed feedback on your writing.

Our Mission: to bring together people connected to Poland or Polish culture, who love to create and write and, together, to foster the art and polish their craft.

The group have met every second Saturday of the month at Albion Polish Club as well as on Zoom.



Website

<http://www.polishmuseumarchives.org.au/>

Social Media

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/190871917601431/>

We have an active face book group with over 3,600 members, largely from Australia but with also a significant international presence who display an interest in Polish Australian history.

Publications

“From Poland to Wherever in the world”

“Wherever in the world” was what Polish airman Jan Artymiuk answered when asked where he wanted to settle after the war.

This biography, written by his daughter, Lucyna Artymiuk, traces the life of the farmer’s son from near Radzyń Podlaski, to his career in the pre-war Polish air force, his escape through Rumania to England in 1939, his experiences in POW camps and his eventual migration and life in Australia. The book details the rich and sometimes harrowing life journey of one man, within the context of major historical events that shaped his life and decisions.

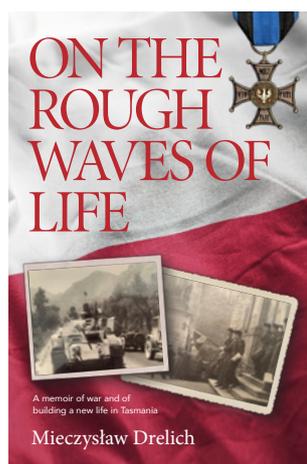


implemented by Australia in 1947 and 1948. Over 750 members of the Polish military based in the United Kingdom arrived in Tasmania aboard the ships, the “Asturias” and the “Strathnaver” to work on the Hydro Electric Commission and the settled in Hobart and Launceston, building the local Polish community.

He arrived in Australia as a member of the Polish military on 22 September 1947 and was formally demobilised upon reaching Australian soil. He was part of the vanguard of the post-war migrants who were instrumental to the growth of Tasmania during the crucial period of Australia’s post-war reconstruction. In the post war period, they were the backbone of the Tasmanian Hydro Commission with 25% of the Hydro Commission workforce being Polish. It is unfortunate that with time men like Mieczyslaw Drelich have been forgotten despite their contribution to both Australian and Polish Australian community.”

“On the Rough Waves of Life”

In 1991 The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia published “On the Rough Waves of Life”, documenting the history and legacy of Mieczyslaw Drelich, Polish Rat of Tobruk, who arrived in Tasmania in 1947 and was a prominent member of the local community. The memoir, written by Mieczysław Drelich, a veteran of the Siege of Tobruk, Battle of Monte Cassino and the Italian Campaign. The book was initially published in Polish in 1995, and then was translated into English by his son Leszek Drelich.



What is significant is the connection that men had with Australia prior to their arrival. Mieczyslaw Drelich’s road to Tasmania lead him through the Middle East, North Africa, Italy and Britain. The first transport of Polish soldiers who reached Australia on 22 September 1947 aboard the “Asturias” were all Rats of Tobruk and they established close and lasting links with their Australian counterparts during the battle. It was the Australian Rats of Tobruk Association which conducted a strong lobbying campaign, encouraging the Australians to accept the Polish Rats of Tobruk as prospective migrants.

Mr Leszek Drelich, who initially translated the book for immediate family members, confirmed the maintenance and promotion of memory is vital for the second and third generations. “There are many of us who are descendants of these brave men who found themselves displaced after having battled in Tobruk and Monte Cassino. Tasmania gave them a home when they found themselves homeless. We have inherited a very special migrant narrative and

The book is part of the Polish migration story which is central to Tasmania’s multicultural past. Mieczyslaw Drelich was part of the Polish soldier migrant scheme

our family is proud to share it with the broader Tasmanian community”.

Migrant Soldier book

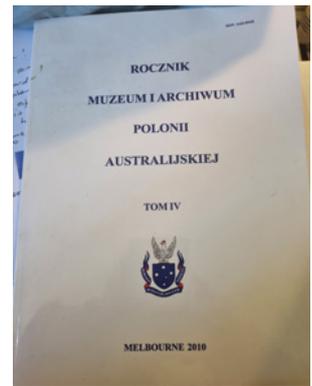
This booklet is the companion publication with the exhibition.

Our Historical Annual – Rocznik

Articles on Polish Australian history in Polish and English. Since 1996 the Museum and Archives has

published an annual with historical articles in English and Polish.

Subject matter has covered a wide range of topics including Polish Australian history and Polish history. Contributors have included professional and community historians.



Information Stalls and Community Outreach

The Museum endeavours to have portable exhibitions and information stalls at major community events throughout the year so as to make contact with various generations within the community and with individuals who do not habitually visit institutions like ours. Through information stalls we are able to promote heritage programs and stir some interest in their Polish Australian heritage.



Above: Soldier Migrant Exhibition, Tobruk House 2019
Right: Exhibition at Federation Square



OUR FUTURE

As the Polish community in Australia is moving on to a new era, with a greater dependency on the descendants of Polish migrants, it is vital for our organisation to maintain the history and memories of those who came before us. Time gradually erases these memories and the role of community institutions such as the Polish Museum and Archives in Australia becomes central to the community structures themselves. Not only do we exist as part of the Polish diaspora, but also our role is to remind the Australian community of the Polish contribution to the development of Australian multicultural society. Not only do we maintain documents and artefacts, but we also conduct extensive activities to educate and expand community knowledge.

For the Polish Museum and Archives to fulfil this mission, we require a proper premises with exhibition and archival space, along with resources to support our activities. Our future will be cemented with community, academic and organisational support. In this way the legacy of past generations, will be inherited by the future Polish Australia community and the Australia society as a whole.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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