

Polish Museum & Archives in Australia

296 Nicholson Street, Footscray Vic 3011

www.polishmuseumarchives.org.au



President's report

There were a number of important events we wish to report on in this last year.

Our Heritage Workshops

Three workshops were held this last year at Millennium House and have to a large part contributed to the rise in membership as we have reached out to second generation and have tried to tap into their growing interest in discovering their Polish roots. We received \$500 for the workshops from the Blum Foundation. Thanks to Lucyna Artymiuk for initiating the workshops and organizing the speakers and for committee members Ania Zamecznik and Maria Peszek for their assistance in the smooth running of the workshops on the day.

The three workshops were:

1. *The Forgotten Exiles* held on the 2nd of February 2013. Guest speakers included our own Marzenna Piskozub, Zdzislawa Wasylkowska, Roman Zylinski and Anuradha Bhattacharjee, who had recently published a book about Polish refugees in India, spoke to participants from India via skype. Seventeen participants were in attendance.
2. *The basics in researching Polish family history* held on the 25th of May 2013 with Cecil Wendt Jenson, Director of the Polonica Americana Research Institute as the guest speaker via skype. There were approximately eight participants.
3. *Family History - the art of story* held on the 26th of October 2013 run by the renowned author Arnold Zable with seven participants.

We have also received more inquiries via email and telephone from people wanting information on how to find out more about their parents and grandparents.

A writing group inspired by the workshop with Arnold Zable has been running on a regular basis, every second Saturday of the month. The idea behind the writing group is to provide informal support and encouragement in writing individual family histories.

Visit from Poland

On the 5th of October 2013, Pawel Pietrzyk archivist from the State Archives in Lodz (Archiwum Panstwowego w Lodzi) visited and assessed the museum's collection over a period of 10 days. During this time he gave a very favorable appraisal of the work done thus far and recommended further work with the promise of another archivist coming from Poland for a longer period of time to continue the work of sorting and cataloguing the collection.

At a local level, Ania Zamecznik attended the Victorian Collections Cataloguing Workshop run by Museums Victoria held on the 24th June 2013.

Our Organisation is now a member of the overseas Polish Libraries, Museums and Archives.

Community engagement

On the 10th of August 2013, a small group of about ten students aged 15-17 years, with some of their parents and their teacher Grace Walendzie came from the Polish Saturday School, Albion, to see the Siberian exhibition and hear a first hand account from Sofia Skarbek (president of the Siberian association) tell her family's harrowing ordeal in being exiled to Siberia and their struggle for survival. The students were very much engaged and asked lots of questions regarding the exhibition and the story they had heard.

More recently, MAPA in-conjunction with Kresy-Siberia had a stall at the Polish festival at Federation Square on Sunday 17 November 2013. Lucyna was very busy answering a variety of questions from many people and Zdzislaw was explaining the intricacies of the events depicted the January Uprising of 1863 in the exhibition prepared by the Archiwum Główny Akt Dawnych (AGAD) i Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych (NDAP) Poland.

It was very heartening for a small organization such as ours to receive new memberships and this last year we received 15 new members.

I wish to acknowledge that our industrious committee member Lucyna Artymiuk was awarded the Henryk Slawik Award for her outstanding contribution to Polish-Jewish relations awarded by the Australian Society of Polish Jews & their Descendants at the Annual General Meeting & Ceremony last November 2013.

Further on the 16th of February 2014, as a representative of the Polish Museum and Archives, I was honored to give the key-note address to commemorate the heroic actions of Witold Pilecki, in particular, his assignment to infiltrate Auschwitz as a political prisoner with the assignment to report to the outside world the horrors of the camp, to organize resistance cells within the camp and to provide material and moral support to fellow prisoners. After two years he escaped with two fellow prisoners and wrote a detailed account of life in the camp known as report W. This occasion took place at the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne. Representatives from the Embassy of Israel, Embassy of the Republic of Poland and The National Institute of Remembrance were present and took part in the proceedings. The main focus of the occasion was to hand over translated documents pertaining to report W detailing Pilecki's observations of Auschwitz.

Plans for 2014

- Continue to increase the Museum's profile and membership
- Produce a newsletter & update information on our website
- Ongoing collaboration with other like-minded organisations
- Continue with preservation work, cataloguing and conducting an inventory
- Developing a collections strategy and policy
- Seek additional funding. This last year we received \$1200 from Blum Foundation.
- Mark significant historical anniversaries such as the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising
- Prepare and publish the sixth edition of the Polish Museum and Archives Year Book