



PUBLISHED BY THE POLISH HILL RIVER CHURCH MUSEUM COMMITTEE.

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ON THE COVER: THE BARQUE "AUGUST", ARRIVED 17 AUGUST 1856

150 YEARS of POLISH SETTLEMENT
in SOUTH AUSTRALIA

1856-2006

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Introduction

2006 marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival in South Australia of the first larger group of Polish migrants. They arrived in 1856 but the first individual Polish people to arrive in this state were in Pastor Kavel's group who got here in 1839. They settled in the Adelaide suburb of Klemzig.

Individual Poles also arrived in the 1840s and settled near Clare.

In this brochure we present stories of three "waves" of Polish migrants to this state:

1. The 1856 group
2. The very large post-World War II wave in late 1940s and in the 1950s
3. The Solidarity migration of the 1980s.

A brief history of Poland

Poland is located in Central Europe, just east of Germany.

The Polish state was established around the middle of the 10th century. It accepted western Christianity in 966 and emerged as a kingdom.

Under the Jagiellonian dynasty (1386-1572) Poland was united with Lithuania and became a great power stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Poland's tolerant attitude to different customs and religions attracted large numbers of settlers including Germans, Scots, Jews and Armenians.

1683 — Polish king Jan Sobieski defeated the Turks at the gates of Vienna and was given the title "The saviour of Vienna and of Western European civilisation".

For various reasons Poland declined in the next century and in 1772 Austria, Prussia and Russia carried out the first partition of Poland, annexing large parts of the country to themselves.

1791 — Poland's parliament passed the 3rd of May Constitution, the second modern constitution in the world (the American one being the first) and the first on European soil. It was followed later by the French constitution.

The partitioning powers couldn't accept such turn of events and two more partitions followed. After the third partition, in 1795, Poland was erased from the map of Europe.

1918 — after World War I, Poland has regained her independence.

1920 — The Polish Army under the leadership of Józef Piłsudski defeated the Soviet Red Army in the Battle of Warsaw and prevented its intended march westwards to spread the Communist rule to the whole of Europe.

1939 — World War II. On 1 September the German army invaded Poland and 17 days later followed the Soviet army invasion. Polish armed forces, although inflicting heavy casualties on the invaders, were unable to withstand them. Polish Government went into exile and large sections of the armed forces escaped to the west where they fought with the Allies distinguishing themselves in the Battle of Britain, on the seas and in military campaigns in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany. A Polish army also fought alongside the Red Army in the east. In occupied Poland an underground army (AK) was established as early as 1939 and became the largest underground force in Europe. During the war Poland suffered appalling casualties and destruction. Millions of Poles were put into concentration camps during the Soviet and German occupation. Statistics show that Poland's population was 36 million in 1939, including 3 million Jews, and was reduced to 24 million in 1946, immediately after the war. Some Poles found themselves in neighbouring countries, but many millions perished.

1945 — The tragedy of Poland continued after the Allied victory. At the infamous Yalta conference Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin placed Poland in the Soviet "sphere of influence" and so it was ruled by the Communist party for the next 44 years.

1989 — A bloodless Solidarity revolution returns Poland to full independence and to a democratic rule.

Present day Poland has a population of 38.5 million. The country is a success story among transition economies from Communism to market economy. A liberal law on establishing new firms has encouraged the development of the private business sector, but there are some problems with legal and bureaucratic obstacles, corruption and unemployment. Poland has natural resources of coal, sulphur, copper, natural gas, silver, lead, salt, amber and arable land.

The nation's industries include machine building, iron and steel, coal mining, chemicals, shipbuilding, food processing, glass, beverages and textiles. Poland joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. With its transformation to a democratic, market-oriented country largely completed, Poland is an increasingly active member of Euro-Atlantic organizations.

The first wave

THE IMMIGRANTS OF POLISH HILL RIVER

In 1836 a bill had been passed by parliament in London to establish South Australia.

Pastor Kavel in Hamburg, hearing about the proposed settlement there, journeyed to London in 1836 to seek assistance in the movement of emigrants out of the territories under Prussian domination. Difficulties were encountered, however, when the Prussian government refused to issue passports and it was two years before all obstacles were overcome. In November 1838 the "Prince George", the first ship bringing predominantly German migrants and several people with Polish names, arrived at Port Misery, now Port Adelaide.

On 11 September 1844, the ship "George Washington" arrived with 164 passengers, among them four Polish families from the Prussian province



A traditional trunk brought by the Rucioch family in 1856.

town of Gross Dammer (now Dąbrówka Wielkopolska in Poland): Młodystach, Wallent, Krollig and Stanitzki. They settled in the Barossa Valley near Tanunda.

It is hard to imagine having to spend from May to September in a small ship, on rough seas, with sea sickness, basic rations and the needs of the small children to be met. One Gross Dammer family, Szymon Młodystach and wife Franciszka added to their number when Franciszka gave birth to a baby boy, James, at sea. "The Observer" reports (in part): "Three adults and three children died and there were eight births. The emigrants are from several parts of Germany, East Prussia and the Polish frontier. They appear to be a very able bodied and orderly set and are in excellent spirits. They consist principally of the agricultural classes with a sprinkling of smiths and other handicraftsmen and a good proportion of young men and women fit for domestic service.

On 17 August 1856 the ship "August" arrived with 231 passengers on board, including 131 Poles. The voyage took three months and 11 days. One child was born on the ship and there was not a single death.

Among the Polish group was Stanislaw Młodystach with his wife and three children, who was a brother of the 1844 migrant Szymon Młodystach and Szymon's cousin, Casper Młodystach with his wife. The Poles travelled north by bullock teams and most of the adults probably walked. Some of them settled in Sevenhill, Penwortham, Emu Flat, Clare and



Household items used by the Polish Hill River pioneers. Water was carried from the creek with buckets and yokes.

Montaro but the largest group settled at Hill River, and because of this, its name was changed to Polish Hill River. The beginnings of the settlement were very difficult and some settlers lived in dug-outs and hollow trees at first. In 1857 the first Pole to buy land at Hill River was named Niemiec. John Nykiel was buying and selling land, established a butcher shop and became a vigneron, making wine for the next 30 years.

It is opportune to remember that the complete population of South Australia was 63 700 at the time. The Poles played their part in the civic affairs of the area. The first to become a member of the District Council of Clare was Dr A. Sokolowski and later Michal Ruciak, Karol Kozłowski, Tomasz Niemiec, Jan Nykiel and Malycha were also members.



*Bullock teams similar to those that were used in 19th century
South Australia*

These days, tumbled ruins of a number of small stone cottages at Polish Hill River, a few kilometres east of historic Sevenhill, remind us that 150 years ago a unique settlement of Polish immigrants existed in the area. The ruins of

these cottages show that they were very tiny by today's standards, but the migrating Polish folk were peasants from crowded areas of Europe, where the intense cold of winter encouraged the building of small homes — the smaller the rooms, the easier they were to keep warm. As was to be expected, the new arrivals built according to tradition.

They loved colour on their houses. The better-off among them used fancy sawn woodwork to decorate their verandahs. Doors, verandah posts, window frames and sashes were often treated with a bright mixture of blues, reds and pinks, which showed up vividly against a white background. Some of the houses had their colours renewed each year.

The dress of the Polish women at Sevenhill matched the brightness of some of the houses. They were often sky-blue and made of a material that was frequently laundered. The head-dress was usually a hood-bonnet, completely covering the head, tied with long bow ribbons under the chin, and the flaps wide enough to cover part of the shoulders. Women so dressed with a heavy wicker basket on each or one arm, were often seen trudging from Sevenhill to Clare, each basket filled with butter or other products for sale in the town, where, having disposed of their burden, they returned with the basket filled with groceries and other household needs. It was a sort of two-way traffic on foot and few could accept the invitation of a lift from a friendly drayman or waggoner, because wagon and dray seats were not always good for nicely laundered clothing. Most of the Polish settlers were only part-time



Possessions of the 1856 migrants.



Grandchildren of Stanislaw and Agnieszka Mlodystach

farmers. Their small holdings allowed for little else. Whole families (the womenfolk included) worked the land to provide food for the household — a few pigs, a cow or two, some poultry and a well-kept plot of vegetables saw to that. And while the women attended to this work, the men went out seeking employment as carpenters, bricklayers, butchers, boot makers and general labourers.

One outstanding early Polish settler was Dr Anton Sokolowski, who came as ship's surgeon on the Alfred. This was the vessel which brought the Weikert family and the first Jesuits to the Clare district. Sokolowski later married Weikert's daughter, Pauline. He was the first Polish surgeon in Australia. Once settled, he became a farmer as well as being a doctor. Because all calls were made on horseback, the good doctor kept a number of fine riding horses. He covered long distances, and after attending a sick or injured person, he often found that a traveller had arrived, and was waiting to take him to another patient. Sometimes it was days before he was able to return home. He had a special chestnut horse which he kept for night work. Dr Sokolowski was a



Little chapel built by Brother Danielewicz



Jakub Nykiel, son of John Nykiel, who donated the two acres of land for St. Stanislaw's Church

clever surgeon and skilful with maternity cases. He practised bloodletting and if a patient was subject to headaches, he used live leeches to draw off some "bad" blood. If the headaches were severe he resorted to "cupping". In 1862 he suffered a fatal heart attack when returning from one of his acts of mercy — his death was deeply mourned. He was buried in St Mark's churchyard at Penwortham, in a tomb elaborately engraved with grapes and sunflowers and the following inscription: "Long will he live in the memory of those whom he relieved, and the tears of his mourning widow and the suffering poor for whom he spent his life, will long yet witness his truly Christian charity. May he rest in peace."

Old records, mute though they be, in their pages contain tragic stories of some of the Hill River families. One of the saddest, centres around Antonina Rucioch. In the brief space of a few months her world fell about her with the death of her husband Bartholomew from pneumonia in November 1869 followed by deaths of six of her children from diphtheria between September and October the next year.

Lawrence Konopka was another of the early settlers at Polish Hill River. To augment the family income, he had a bullock team which he used to cart



Migrants' prayer books, published in 1881.



Corpus Christi procession at Sevenhill

copper ore from the Burra Mine to Port Henry (today's Port Wakefield). This work took him away from home sometimes for weeks on end. On returning home after such an absence, he was greeted by the sight of his little three-year-old daughter sitting on the back step, waiting to tell him that she could not waken her mother. Konopka found that his wife had died during his absence and the small child had been alone with her mother's body for some days.

These Polish people were devout Catholics and greatly felt the need of spiritual care in their mother tongue. A committee was formed to bring a Polish priest from Europe to minister to the people in their own language. They also wished to build a church and establish a school, where, as well as other subjects, the Polish language could be taught. Jan Nykiel offered two acres of his land, local stone was used to save scarce cash, and the work associated with building the church was mostly carried out by



A bridesmaid (photo 1910)



Picnic of descendants of the early migrants (about 1910).

the migrant settlers themselves. Even the nails were made locally by a Polish blacksmith.

On April 7, 1870 Father Leon Rogalski, a member of the Jesuit Order, arrived from Krakow, and commenced visiting people in their homes, travelling on foot, by horseback or by buggy. His arrival spurred on the building program and the church named after Saint Stanislaw Kostka, the patron saint of Krakow, was consecrated by Bishop Shiel on November 3, 1871.

The Poles continued their custom of celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi at Sevenhill with the annual procession of the Blessed Sacrament in the grounds of St Aloysius' church. A blank cartridge salute was fired as the canopied Host passed by. Displays of such old European customs, which were part of the early life of Sevenhill, gave touches of colour which were quite different from the usual life of the average Australian settlement.

For the next 30 years, there was thriving religious and social life around the church. The school attached to the church opened in 1871. It provided the basic education,

reading, writing and arithmetic, but Polish and music were also taught. Later the State Government took over the running of the school. Population of this remarkable settlement began to decrease when many of the inhabitants, finding their holdings far too small for expansion, joined in the great move when northern areas of the State were opened up, and by the 1890s their numbers were greatly depleted.

St Stanisław's church, with the passing of the years fell into ruin, but Polish migrants of the present era held the history of the little settlement dear to their hearts. Under their care St Stanisław's and the attached school now stands restored and developed as a historical museum.

In St Aloysius' church grounds at Sevenhill is a wayside chapel built in dry stonework with a Gothic arched entrance, erected almost 150 years ago single-handedly by a Polish Jesuit Brother Ignatius Danielewicz. For many years St Aloysius' had a remarkable choir. This was a blend of Irish, German and Polish voices.

Some of the names appearing on official records of those early years at Polish Hill River are still known (some in their Anglicised forms) in the Clare and Sevenhill districts — names such as Młodystach, Przybyła, Małycha, Nykiel, Połomka and Rzeszkowski.

These descendants of the early migrants are now organised in the Polish Pioneer Descendants' Group Inc.

Like the ruins of those tiny cottages, the names serve as footprints on the sands of time, and remind the present generation of a colourful and worthy segment of our local pioneering history.





Cemetery at Sevenhill.



Ruins of a pioneer's house at Polish Hill River.

Father Leon Rogalski



Fr. Rogalski P.S. 1887

When the Polish immigrants settled at Hill River, Austrian Jesuits had already established their residence at Sevenhill and they tried, as best they could, to provide pastoral care for them. It was obvious, however, that the only proper way to do that was to have a Polish priest whom the immigrants could fully understand and who could understand them.

The efforts undertaken in this regard resulted in the arrival in 1870 of 40-year-old Father Leon Rogalski, a Jesuit from the Galicja province in Poland. When his arrival was certain, the Polish parishioners formed a committee to build a church, so that they could attend Polish services in their own area.

Leon Rogalski came from the Tarnopol region of Austrian-occupied Poland and at first was a priest in a parish in Lwów. When the Austrian-Italian war of 1859 broke out, he was nominated as a field chaplain with the Austrian army where he served with great distinction, dedication and sacrifice tending wounded and dying soldiers. Towards the end of 1859 he returned to Lwów changed by his war experience. He was no longer satisfied with a quiet service in a parish and entered the Jesuit order in 1861 at Stara Wieś. He undertook theology studies at Innsbruck and then worked as a preacher and administrator of the parishes of Tarnopol, Stara Wieś and Łańcut. Father Rogalski was an enlightened, well educated clergyman. He knew eight languages and five of these in the spoken and written form. It appears that he was sent to Australia at his own request.

On 8 November 1870 he wrote about his journey here to his brother, Father Jan Rogalski in Poland:

" ... with my two companions (one priest and one brother of the Society of Jesus) I started my long journey. Having passed through Germany and Belgium and after just a momentary stop in London, we have arrived in the port city of Liverpool. There, because of the change of climate and because of the moist air in England at the time, I suffered toothache and an unusual heaviness in my head, so that I was quite sick when I boarded the ship.

The long journey brought me more trouble. All the time I suffered the usual sea sickness, dizziness and lack of appetite. Terrible storms were tossing our ship about like a little ball. One had to hold well on to the bed so as not to fall out and injure oneself. The nights were the most horrible time, so that everyone was thinking then more about death than about further life.

everyone was praying and confessing his sins, so that the words: *Qui nescit orare, pergat ad mare*, (He who doesn't know how to pray, let him go to sea) proved true of our journey's companions. After such storms there was usually beautiful weather, which brought relief for me in my weakness.

Many of our ship's passengers, beside a few Germans, were from various nationalities: Scotsmen, Englishmen, Italians and Irishmen. The latter were Catholics of strong faith and great piety, in their character and disposition similar to us Poles, so they love us very much. With these and with other Catholics, with God's grace, we conducted retreats, instructions, prayed the rosary and heard confessions, so that on the ship we were as if in some church or monastery. After a three month's journey, from 20 December 1869 to 20 March 1870, we finally entered the port of Melbourne in southern Australia."

As soon as Fr. Rogalski arrived in Sevenhill he began his work preaching to his countrymen, baptising, instructing in the faith, hearing confessions, organising religious societies, visiting the sick and the dying. A year later the



First church building committee, 1869

St. Stanislaw Kostka's Church at Hill River was consecrated and became the centre of the "Polish Mission". Fr. Leon made sure that it was equipped with all the liturgical items necessary and he celebrated Masses there on Sundays, church holy days and Polish saints' days. He also conducted retreats and processions with singing of Polish hymns. Alongside the church there was a school for children where he taught catechism, bible history, prayers and hymns and also reading and writing in the Polish language. Using his own books he organised a reading room and continued his efforts to increase its book collection. Father Leon also tried to get another Polish priest to come and help him so that he could offer pastoral care to other Poles in Australia.

Beside being engaged in the "Polish Mission", Fr Rogalski, as a member of the Jesuit community, taught Latin, French and religion in the English language in Sevenhill's secondary school and gave lectures to theology students in Church History and Sacred Scripture. In his mission visits he reached widely scattered groups of Catholics offering them spiritual help in Polish, German and English.

Inspired by a Polish parish mission prayer booklet, he wrote and published in English the Little Mission Cross.

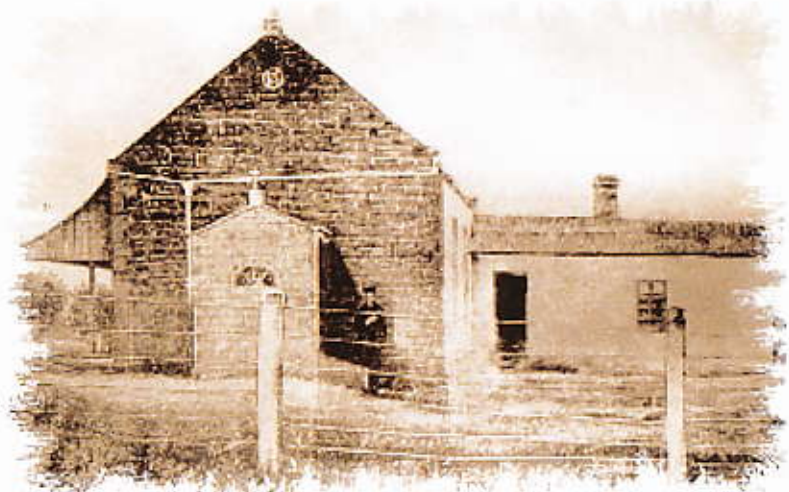
Profits from the booklet were destined for the large, unfinished St Aloysius' church at Sevenhill.

After over 20 years of intensive work and long travels under pioneering conditions in spite of suffering reumatism, Father Leon's health was seriously weakened.

A partial paralysis in 1894 limited his pastoral work to Sevenhill and Hill River only. In this situation he tried very hard, but without success, to get from Poland a priest to continue the work he had begun.

His paralysis extended in 1901 and he was confined to bed from then on.

He died on 6 June 1906 and was buried with other missionaries in the crypt of St Aloysius' church at Sevenhill.



St. Stanislaw Kostka's church, 1871



St. Stanislaw Kostka's church, 1933

The road to freedom

THE SECOND WAVE OF POLISH MIGRATION

The road to freedom was a battle through terrible years. When Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Poland's allies, including Britain and Australia, declared war on Germany, triggering World War II. In the same month of September 1939 Poland was invaded from the east by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Trapped by the Nazi-Communist alliance, Poland lost a bitterly-fought campaign.

Thousands of soldiers were imprisoned in Germany and Russia. Thousands escaped to fight again, so that throughout World War II Poland was an active participant in the allied coalition against Hitler's Germany. Poland had the



Mieczyslaw Wolański was one of many Polish servicemen who had fled Poland in Septemeber 1939 as the German army advanced.

He became Leader of Polish Bomber Squadron 300 which fought with distinction in the Battle of Britain. Later in Australia he was elected the first chairman of the Polish Hill River Church restoration Committee.



Some of the Polish men, women and children deported to the USSR.

fourth largest army fighting on all the fronts of the war in France, Britain, North Africa, Italy and Germany, at sea and in the air, including The Battle of Britain, an army in Russia and an underground army of several hundred thousand soldiers in German-occupied Poland. Polish and Australian soldiers developed a strong fellowship during the siege of Tobruk in North Africa.



Polish inmates of a concentration camp in Germany.

The war was even deadlier for Polish civilians. Six million civilians died, including Polish Jews. Two million were deported to prisons and forced labour camps in Germany, and another 1.5 million to the USSR. More than one million, the highest number of civilians put to death during World War II, were murdered at the Nazis' biggest concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Poland's capital city of Warsaw was also destroyed by the Nazis after the underground army was

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

STATEMENT OF APPLICANT FOR THE PURPOSE OF EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

- 1. The following information is the result of the International Refugee Conference.
- 2. The Government of the United States has agreed to accept the following persons for admission to the United States of America: **AUSTRALIA**
- 3. The applicant is one of the persons who have been accepted for admission to the United States of America.



NAME: **ROSENWALD**
 BIRTH DATE: **July 1908**
 DATE OF ISSUE: **2.1.51**
 PLACE AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH: **...**
 NATIONALITY: **...**
 OCCUPATION: **...**
 ADDRESS: **...**
 BUILDUP: **...**



Heilena Moor Gerb.
 1.1.45

Inspector of Emigration
 (Inspector of Applicant)
 (Inspector of Holder)
 Registered as: **Trade**
 Sex: **Male**
 Eye: **Blue**
 Hair: **Grey**
 Complexion: **Light**
 Special Circumstances: **...**
 Date of Issue: **...**
 Date of Expiry: **...**
 Issued at: **...**
 Issued by: **...**

NAME



... **SEAGINE CATE** ... **SEED ORF**
 This is to certify that **Michalska, Krystyna - 235**
 born **2.12.08** has been medically examined
 on **2.12.48** and has been found free from infectious diseases.
 DDT dusting has been carried out.
 Medical Officer

On the way to Australia: Documents from emigration transit camps in Germany, including a certificate of medical examination and of having been dusted with DDT!

defeated in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and the city's pre-war population of 1.3 million was reduced to zero.

In 1941 both the USSR and the USA joined the war against Germany. At the end of the war in 1945 under the Yalta Agreement the western powers accepted USSR control of Poland. The free elections in Poland promised under the Agreement were not held and the Poles, as a part of the Soviet empire, faced further conflict and hardship. Many Polish ex-servicemen and civilian refugees remained exiles, unable to return. Forming part of the greatest forced migration of Europeans, thousands took ship to freedom in Australia.

MIGRATING TO AUSTRALIA

More than 10 million people had lost their homes in Europe during World War II and became Displaced Persons. Over three million were Poles who had been detained in Germany as prisoners-of-war, or deported to labour and concentration camps. They were joined by people escaping communism. Polish 'DPs' faced a dilemma: should they return to Soviet-occupied Poland or remain in the west? Many chose to remain.

In 1947 the United Nations created the International Refugee Organization to resettle non-German DPs overseas. Australia signed an agreement with the IRO and received over 170,000 refugees. The largest group – 60,000 – were Poles. Most came from DP camps in Germany but others arrived from Africa and India. Migration officers also recruited Polish ex-servicemen in Britain and Africa. 'Polish Rats of Tobruk' were the first to arrive in 1947. The first civilians arrived in 1949.

Fewer than 7,000 Polish-born people already lived in Australia. Numbers leaped by 72,000 between 1947 and 1955. Poles were different from other migrants. Confined for years in camps, they had endured the longest displacement of any national group. As survivors, they had learnt to be self-reliant. They had to form Polish communities from scratch in Australia because there were so few Polish-born persons in 1947. The newcomers were mainly Polish-speaking Catholics and passionate nationalists who shared a lasting concern about Poland's fate under Communism. They acted to help Poland, build new lives in Australia, and preserve their own Polish identity.



Immigrants employed in Leigh Creek, S.A., living in a 200-tent city "township": J.Kramarczyk, W. Janusik, T. Barszcz, J.Domagalski

Polish migrants and their descendants now make up one per cent of Australia's population (2003). The Polish community is Australia's sixth largest ethnic group, but also one of the oldest, as most Polish migrants arrived before 1955. Today's community faces the challenge of caring for the elderly while sustaining Polish identity amongst the young. Relations with Poland are also changing. Both young and old are building new links with a free Poland, while keeping multiculturalism alive in Australia.

WORKING IN AUSTRALIA

Australia won international praise for taking in many refugees but the war had also convinced the nation to 'populate or perish'. Mass migration would boost Australia's population and workforce and help to build industry, housing and development projects. Unlike other immigrants, the refugees had to earn their passage-price by working as labourers on two year contracts wherever they were



Jerzy (George) Gruszka, a child deportee to the Soviet Union, worked as a migrant in Australia on the construction of the Mundaring weir in WA and graded fire breaks. He joined the Australian Army, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel. In August 1961, during the survey of the Gibson Desert, he discovered the only freshwater lake there, officially named Lake Gruszka in 1962.

directed by the Commonwealth Employment Service.

'DPs' went through medical examination and vaccination before resettlement. Labourers had to be healthy, strong, and preferably single. In an interview recorded for South Australia's Migration Museum, Dr Andreas Dezsery has commented: 'They were looking for Supermen.' Professional qualifications were ignored. Some Poles arrived in 1949 on the American troopship the General M.B. Stewart. Many went first to Bonegilla migrant camp in Victoria, and then by train to Woodside and other Migrant Hostels in SA.



The first Poles to come to Australia after World War Two were Polish "Rats of Tobruk"

During their two-year government contracts Polish men helped to build roads, railways, reservoirs, and a coal town for the Electricity Trust of South Australia at Leigh Creek. They planted pines in the South East, and quarried iron ore for Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (BHP) near Whyalla.

Couples were often separated, with many women employed in Adelaide as domestics and factory hands. Some English-speakers found work in city department stores and offices.

Looking back from her home in Whyalla in 1995, Cecylia Prusek, recalled, 'From the hard times I had before, the climate was quite easy to adjust to. I had lost my family, my home – I lost everything – I was not looking for a good time; everything for me was all right'.

They were tough years for those Poles not used to hard manual labour, and for all working in remote areas, ranging from South Australia's arid lands to the Snowy Mountains. Housing shortages meant that Polish workers also lived in temporary homes and camps. Men and single women lived in tents. Wives and children occupied wooden ex-army huts.

After finishing their contracts Poles went to work in factories, trades and businesses in the capital cities. Some returned to professional work, especially



W. Araszkievicz, initially a fruit picker and a railway worker, later mechanical engineer with the SA Government. In isolated railway camps food was delivered once a week and food shortages were supplemented by rabbiting.

in high-demand areas like architecture and engineering.

Polish families concentrated on home-building and giving their children a good education. Many in the second generation gained tertiary qualifications.

Today, the Polish community includes lawyers, doctors, teachers, scientists,



One of the pilgrimages organised at Polish Hill River every year

engineers, artists, technicians, and business people.

Australia's policy of assimilation expected non-British migrants to blend invisibly into the existing Anglo-Celtic society.

Most Poles integrated successfully but they also kept their treasured Polish language and traditions. They were helped by an official change of policy from assimilation to multiculturalism, a change encouraged by the work of Polish scholars, including Professor Jerzy Smolicz, who emigrated to South Australia in 1965.

THE POLES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA FROM 1947

Australia's third-largest Polish community formed in Adelaide as Poles finished their contracts and found work at General Motors-Holden, Philips Electrical Industries, Actil and other manufacturing industries. Some people resumed professional work and skilled trades. Poles soon made important contributions to South Australian society, especially in the professions, academia and the arts.

Poles lived mainly in the northern and north western council districts of Woodville, Enfield and Salisbury where housing blocks were cheap and factory jobs were



W. Dutkiewicz in his studio.



The Dutkiewicz brothers, the first Poles to be made Fellows of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts, 1951. Both brothers received numerous Australian awards for painting. They were also active in the theatre.

Ludwik Dutkiewicz

Stanislaw Ostoja - Kotkowski, shown with his steam laser artwork, was Australia's best known Polish artist, as well as internationally acclaimed.





The Katyń monument at Dom Polski Centre, Adelaide, commemorating the Polish army officers executed at Katyń in Soviet Russia in 1940.

Recent research has shown that 14,000 to 20,000 officers, policemen and higher government officials were killed there.

plentiful. Some families reused timber packing cases for temporary dwellings while helping each other to build permanent homes. Polish organisations were set up in the same suburbs close to the immigrant population.



I. Malecki, B. Niemiec-Warcok and D. Barszcz, members of the Polish Women's Assoc. formed in 1954, distributing gifts at a nursing home.

Most of the post-war settlers were Roman Catholic, whose priests helped establish the new Polish community.

The Polish Orphanage (now Retreat House), at Royal Park was an early major project. Archbishop Beovich blessed the foundation stone in 1954, the Poles raised £4,000, and 160 men worked voluntarily on construction. Sisters of the Resurrection were invited to manage the home. The Polish community celebrated Easter, Christmas and Patron Saints' Days as important events in the church year. In 2005, mass was celebrated in Polish in five Catholic churches: St Maximillian Kolbe's (Ottoway), St Stanislaus' (Royal Park), Resurrection Church (Unley), St Augustine's (Salisbury), and St Margaret Mary's (Croydon).

Polish people met in churches and homes but also needed community centres. Dom Polski Society (1959), under its first chairman EG Hejka, bought a house at Woodville as the first Dom Polski Centre. Other centres: Dom Kopernika, Polonia Sports Club and Millenium House, were also opened, and another in Whyalla. The Woodville house was busy with up to 190 people at a time, and so a larger Dom Polski Centre was built in central Adelaide in 1973.

POLISH CULTURE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA FROM 1947

A long history of oppression in Poland made the people determined to keep their own identity, and they brought skills in preserving Polish traditions to South Australia, soon creating a rich cultural life. As Krystyna Luźny recalled in 2004, "Everybody wanted to feel human again ... So sports clubs, discussion circles, libraries, choirs, theatres and dance groups were formed to satisfy the emotional and intellectual needs of the Polish community."

Polish settlers also contributed to the arts, architecture and sciences in South Australia. The brothers Władysław and Ludwik Dutkiewicz were leading modernist artists and the first Poles to be made Fellows of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts in 1951. Others followed, including Lidia Groblicka and the acclaimed multi-media artist Stanisław Ostojka-Kotkowski. Polish soccer players soon engaged in South Australian sporting life, and H Rogocz and H Słoma played in the State team against Yugoslavia in 1949.

The Polish Association in SA (Związek Polaków) was the first Polish organisation, formed in 1949 to help resettle migrants and to promote Polish culture, and



Polish amateur theatre "Teatr Stary" in Adelaide was formed in 1955 and staged many classical and modern plays. For many years it was directed by Henryk Krzymuski.

established the first Polish school. Other organisations soon followed, reflecting a variety of interests within the community. There were ex-servicemen's associations, performing groups, community centres, a museum, and senior citizens' clubs. Seven Polish women raised funds in 1953 to help Poles who had been unable to migrate, and formed the Polish Women's Association in 1954, with Helena Sameciewicz as first president. Members presented many craft displays and raised funds for charities, often working closely with the Good Neighbour Council. The Federation of Polish Organisations in South Australia was formed as an umbrella group in 1968.

To maintain Polish culture in the second generation many youth activities were arranged, including language schools, folkloric and sports clubs. Polonia-Adelaide Sports Club was formed at Woodside hostel in 1950, entered a soccer team in the third division in 1952, and finished top, winning the Gregory Cup and the Pelaco (SASFA Challenge) Cup. Polonia nurtured junior sporting talent and gave enjoyment to several generations. The club won the West End Federation Cup in its 50th year (2000).

The Dożynki Festival was started in 1979 as Polish Day at the Parks Community Centre, proving so popular that the festival is now held in October every other year in Rymill Park. The word dożynki means the end of the harvest, the traditional time in Poland for celebrations. The festival showcases Polish cultural traditions, food, music, dance, art and crafts.

The Poles of Adelaide gather and welcome thousands of visitors from the wider community, Members of Parliament, the Polish Ambassador and other representatives, including former president of Poland, Lech Wałęsa.



Group from the Adelaide Folklore Ensemble "Tatry".



The Adelaide Polish Folklore Ensemble "Tatry" at the 1999 "Dożynki" festival in Rymill Park.

Restoration of St. Stanislaw Kostka's Church at Polish Hill River



St. Stanislaw Kostka's church - 1960s .

The founder and chairman of The Polish Historical Society in South Australia, the late Marian Szezepanowski, first suggested that the church of St. Stanislaw Kostka at Polish Hill River should be restored by the post-World War II migrants. The church and land belonged then to the archdiocese of Adelaide. In 1971, the then Polish Chaplain in Adelaide, Fr Tadeusz Miksa, informed archbishop Gleeson that the Polish community would like to rebuild the church, and the archbishop readily gave his permission. He also agreed that it would better mobilise the community's efforts if the church and two acres of land again belonged to the community, as it did when the church was built. In December 1971 the diocese transferred the property to the Polish community with the title being held in trust by the Polish Federation of South Australia. After discussions within the Polish community, a restoration committee was formed with Mieczyslaw Wolański as its first chairman.



1971. Polish Hill River Church restoration committee

The committee directed and controlled all aspects of the work. First funds had to be collected and raised within the community. Paid professionals were engaged to rebuild the roof, to repair the walls and to cure and protect them from rising damp. Certain work, such as painting and repairing of windows could be done by members of the community.

One of the sources of funds were picnics organised in the church grounds. The first such picnic was held on 13 October 1974 and Władysława Jędrzak



First picnic.

recorded her impressions of it:

"It was difficult to imagine that the picnic would be a success. Although the land was ours, it belonged to the Polish community now, still, there was nothing there but the land. The lack of amenities to which we were accustomed could scare some people off. What will happen in case of rain, where will we shelter if it's hot?

The "Tatry" group left very early on Saturday morning. Mr Glapa's truck was loaded as if to construct a whole township and so was Zak & Rog's Furniture trailer, which could only travel at 60 km/h maximum, and even then it was feared that it may not make it. But in the event, a huge military tent that could hold about 400 people in case of rain or heat was erected and suitably secured. Even our own "power station" was there as well as a pig which had to be turned all night over the fire and, in addition to that, moistened with something or other.

Bags for refuse and bottles were placed in conspicuous locations, as one does not want to rubbish one's yard. Toilets to supplement the existing ones were erected earlier. Yes, one had to think about the smallest detail.

Sunday 13 October rose as a marvelous day. Wlodek Rogowski and Douglas — his faithful but somewhat longer shadow — spent the night in the church and such good weather must have been the result of their prayers. First cars began to arrive and tents were shooting up like mushrooms.

About a 1000 people attended the somewhat long open-air Mass. It was estimated that there was a total of 1600 people at the picnic, among them one bus load from Whyalla, about 300 kilometres from Polish Hill River. The collection during Mass amounted to \$500 and this was donated by Frs Tadeusz Miksa and Miroslaw Gębicki towards further rebuilding of the church-museum.

After Mass the barbecue was available and beside the pig on the spit one could also buy "bigos" and wash it down with beer. For the children and teenagers there were soft drinks. To fill the time and to amuse the visitors there was a raffle and a band was providing music for dancing on a special floor also transported from Adelaide.

A brief service of prayer commemorating St Stanislaw Kostka was at 4:00 pm in the church and after it a short history of Polish Hill River was presented.



Polish Hill River Church after restoration

I don't want to go into how much work the organisers had to do to restore good order in the grounds. Each refuse bag had to be emptied and the bottles, the tins and the papers separated. And all of this had to be loaded onto the truck and the trailer.

By then it was late into the night, a piercing wind was blowing and we were sitting around a huge fire, sheltered on one side by the wall of the church. We were talking about those who lived here 100 years ago. Were they with us at this moment? Suddenly a dry branch on the fire started shooting millions of sparks upwards. Deep in thought I was staring into the fire when the sharp voice of Wladek Rogowski was heard. "Look", he said pointing with his hand, "The trail of sparks illuminates only the cross on the church's roof!". Fascinated by the marvelous view and thrilled by the symbolism of the event we were spell-bound ..."

The committee first restored the church building itself, but according to the agreement with the archdiocese, it was no longer of sacral character, not a normal, active church but a secular museum building where Mass could be



Inside the Polish Hill River Church Museum

celebrated only occasionally. Work started next on rebuilding the three school rooms adjoining the church. They no longer had roofs and were therefore much more extensively damaged by the weather. When rebuilt, they now constitute the museum proper where many exhibits are displayed. Also, in addition to the land on which the church stands, the Polish Association in SA and the Polish Educational Society in SA together purchased another nine acres of adjoining land.

In 1980 the Polish Hill River Church Museum was placed on the register of State Heritage Items. It was officially opened by Monsignor Horgan on 9 October 1988. A cairn erected by the Polish Pioneers' Descendants Group was then unveiled and a time capsule deposited for opening in 2036. The Museum is now administered in accordance with History Trust of South Australia requirements. There was a number of Polish Hill River Church Museum Committees over the years. The Committee elected at a general meeting called by the Polish Federation of South Australia in 1996 with Krystyna Andrecki as chairperson and Krystyna Lużny as a curator and treasurer, organised the displays in the museum and arranged for it to be regularly opened to the public. The committee also maintains contact with

The Heritage of South Australia

This is to certify that *The Church of St Stanislaus*
is an Item of the State Heritage, and on *24 July 1980*



was placed on the Register of State Heritage Items
in accordance with the provisions of the
South Australian Heritage Act, 1978.

the Polish Pioneer Descendants' Group Inc.

The Museum is now registered under the Museum Accreditation and Grants Program.

Many members of the Polish community contributed by their work and resources to complete the restoration of the Polish Hill River buildings and it is impossible to name them all. Those who continue to work regularly on maintaining and improving the grounds and buildings are Józef Glapa, Stanisław Skrzypczak and Bronisław Kędzior.

The museum attracts interest both locally and interstate and has been seen by many overseas visitors from Europe.

Since 1999 it is now regularly open from 11 am to 4 pm on the first Sunday of each month (except on New Year's Day and Easter Sunday) or by appointment.

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 08 8336 1601 OR 08 8336 3646.

The third wave: the Solidarity migration

When World War II ended, as a result of the infamous Yalta Agreement between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, Poland became a part of the Soviet empire. The Red Army occupied Poland, arrests, deportations and murders of political opponents took place and a Polish Communist totalitarian government was imposed. The Catholic Church, which opposed the totalitarian rule, was attacked, the borders were closed and Poland and Central Europe were cut off from western civilisation. The Soviet political and economic system imposed on Poland prevented the proper development of the country, caused shortages of essential goods and a considerable lowering of the standard of living.

But every few years, even in that dark period, there were unsuccessful revolts in countries of Central Europe against the Soviet political and economic system. Protest grew as economic conditions worsened. Australia's Polish communities were alarmed by the country's worsening state, and formed an Australian National Committee for Relief to Poland under the chairmanship of Frank Galbaly, CBE. South Australians contributed funds to buy medical



Solidarity delegates at the Vatican, 8.2.1982. With Pope John Paul II are Bohdan Cywiński, Krystyna Ruchniewicz-Misiak, Andrzej Opiela.

supplies and provide other help through the Catholic Church in Poland.

Then in August 1980 nation-wide strikes broke out in Poland, starting in the Gdańsk shipyard. The strikers, led by Lech Wałęsa, formed the Solidarity union movement declared legal by the courts. It soon attracted 10 million members opposed to the Soviet domination in Poland. Although the Communist regime declared martial law in December 1981 in an attempt to quash freedom aspirations and banned Solidarity, this was the beginning of the end of Communist domination in all of Central Europe. The election of the Polish Pope John Paul II also gave Poles hope and helped to end this domination.

The Solidarity wave of Polish migration dates from this period. Towards the end of the 1970s many Poles, particularly those with tertiary education and vocational skills, escaped from Poland to the West looking for a better life. Then, in 1981, during the ascendancy of the Solidarity union movement, Polish government regulations were relaxed and emigration became a mass exodus.

Many of those leaving probably intended to return home but when martial law was declared, decided against it. Also, during the period of martial law, several thousand Poles, who were considered by the government as opposition activists, were forced to leave the country on a one-way passport.

Towards the end of the 1980s, when the power of the Communist regime began to wane, emigration numbers from Poland increased again.

All these so-called "Solidarity migrants" passed through transit camps in Western Europe and then gradually settled in various countries, including Australia, where some 20 000 of them made their home and many continued or established their professional careers.



Polish Ex-Servicemen in Anzac Day march

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