

October 8, 2006, is an important date for the Australian Polish community. On this day, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Polish settlement in South Australia.

We gathered in the heart of Polish settlement in Australia, in Polish Hill River, a village located in the beautiful, vine-covered Clare Valley. A century and a half ago, a group of emigrants from Zbąszyń and Dąbrówka Wielkopolska, from the Prussian partition, settled here.

Let me remind you: the first Poles reached Australian soil as early as 1839. Then, in 1844, 31 Poles from Dąbrówka Wielkopolska arrived in South Australia. They settled in the Barossa Valley. However, the largest group of emigrants from Zbąszyń and Dąbrówka Wielkopolska, totaling 131 people, arrived in Australia in 1856—150 years ago.

Our October gathering in Polish Hill River was made possible thanks to the efforts of Adelaide's community activists, who, through fundraising and their volunteer work, restored the church and school built shortly after our compatriots arrived in this area. Today, a Polish community museum exists and thrives here, housing documents, photographs, traditional costumes, and everyday items from a century and a half ago. Polish Hill River now collects memorabilia from all three waves of Polish emigration, including the post-war and the so-called Solidarity wave from the 1980s. Currently, there are so many exhibits that thoughts of expanding the museum are being considered.

In short: without the efforts of the volunteers, diligently described in the pages of the Polish press in Adelaide (thankfully!), we might have forgotten about our Polish cradle, which Father Tadeusz Miksa spoke about during Mass in 1974:

"We are on a piece of Poland, on our own patch of land, around the church built by the hands, sacrifices, and later by Polish emigrants. This church was a pride and glory and is worth more than impressive temples, for it was born from the hard work of weary hands and arose from a burning desire to possess. What counts is the historical and substantive value, not the material one."

Polish Hill River - is our symbol. It allows us to remember the settlers who lived here 150 years ago under incredibly difficult conditions. Despite everything, they survived, leaving behind memories. Thanks to the tireless work of Adelaide's volunteers, the Polish community museum established here will ensure that we are not forgotten, along with the immigrants of today on Australian soil.

The first arrivals came aboard the sailing ship *August* on August 17, 1856. They then headed north... They traveled 130 kilometers. It must have been a grueling journey after a six-month voyage by ship.

They settled in Hill River (now Polish Hill River in memory of the Polish emigrants who settled here), in Seven Hills, Penwortham, and many other towns in South Australia.

We are celebrating this event from 150 years ago throughout 2006. A special organizing committee for the celebrations has been established, led by Dr. Andy Czechowicz. This is the year of Polish settlement, the year of the Adelaide Polish community. This time, in Polish Hill River, Dr. Czechowicz summarized the year-long celebrations and thanked all the organizers and committee members.

February 12: On this day, the Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann, invited representatives of the Polish community to the Adelaide Convention Centre for a special

meeting. A very moving moment of this ceremony was when the Polish Ambassador to Australia, Mr. Jerzy Więclaw, presented Premier Mike Rann with the "Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland" awarded by the President of Poland.

July 23: At the South-West Community Centre in Adelaide on Sturt Street, we gathered for an exhibition of works by Polish artists living in Adelaide. The exhibition was opened by Ms. Nicola Downer, Chair of the Multicultural Advisory Committee in Australia. Ms. Downer is the wife of the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer.

August 17: In commemoration of the ship's arrival at Glenelg port, a solemn Mass was held at the Adelaide Cathedral dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, officiated by Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide.

October 8: We met at Polish Hill River for a festival attended not only by the residents of Adelaide but also by busloads of guests from nearly all over Australia. In total, over 500 people attended. The main attraction was... Polish parliamentarians led by Bogdan Borusewicz, the Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland. Unfortunately, the parliamentarians did not make it to Polish Hill River. They did not come to Australia at all! There were plenty of invitations: from the Speaker of the Senate of Australia and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for an official visit by a delegation from the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland, from the National Council of the Polish Community in Australia and New Zealand, the Federation of Polish Organizations in South Australia, along with the Organizing Committee of the 150th Anniversary of Polish Settlement in South Australia, and the Committee of the Polish Hill River Church Museum.

Our Polish guests were announced in all Polish media in Australia and... truly anticipated! Many people who wanted to meet them, upon learning of the cancellation of their visit, decided to forgo traveling to Polish Hill River altogether! Perhaps that is why the message read during the ceremony by the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Jerzy Więclaw, was received by those present without enthusiasm.

Members of Polish Women's Circles across Australia were also disappointed. It was planned that Marshal Borusewicz would award them state decorations granted by the President of the Republic of Poland for their social work.

The Mass was celebrated by the Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia and New Zealand, Father Wiesław Słowik. Five other priests participated: Leon Czechowicz, Bill Modystack, Jack Otto, Marian Szablewski, and Edmund Budziłowicz.

The official part of the meeting was led by Gosia Skalban, Vice President of the Federation of Polish Organizations in South Australia. She welcomed the guests who did not disappoint us: Mike Rann with his wife Sasha – Premier of South Australia; Jerzy Więclaw with his wife Bogumiła – Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Australia; Ryszard Sarkowicz – Consul General of the Republic of Poland; Dariusz Ross with his wife Pauline – Honorary Consul in Adelaide; Michael Pengilly – representative of Ian Evans, the Opposition Leader; Patricia Jacka – Mayor of Clare. Representatives of the South Australian government for multiculturalism and ethnic affairs were also present: Hieu van Le with his wife Lan, Simon Forrest with his wife Maureen... Mrs. Miriam Cocking officially represented the Filipino community at our ceremony.

Waldemar Wnuk, on behalf of the Council of Polish Communities in Australia and New Zealand, congratulated the Polish community in Adelaide on their achievements in rebuilding the church, the school, and establishing a museum in Polish Hill River.

The Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann, as usual, filled our hearts with warmth, emphasizing his personal, almost familial connections with the Polish people. He

mentioned that his parents met Polish soldiers in England during World War II (the Premier hails from London). Mike Rann's mother worked in a factory producing parts for Spitfire airplanes. Every eighth pilot of these planes was Polish. The Premier's father always held a special fondness for the "brave Poles" (as he referred to us), which he instilled in his son. He fought under the command of General Montgomery alongside the Poles and also participated in the battles at Monte Cassino.

On such occasions, the Premier always fondly recalls the Polish Pope—his teachings and activities. He highlights the contributions of "Solidarity" and Lech Wałęsa, who was both his guest and ours at the Harvest Festival in November 2003.

Mike Rann pointed to the ribbon of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, which he received from the ambassador on February 12, assuring us that he is proud of this high Polish distinction. He added—I'm convinced that he will keep his word—that he will double every dollar that the Polish community raises for the expansion and maintenance of the museum!

At the end of the ceremony, he received a print featuring the church in Polish Hill River as a keepsake. We also briefly enjoyed a performance by a local Aboriginal man playing the didgeridoo.

Then there was a dance performed by the folklore group "Tatry."

On October 8, friends and acquaintances who hadn't seen each other for years gathered in Polish Hill River. To conclude, they sat down together at the table to share a meal.

On the upcoming occasion, our creators also took the opportunity to present the diaries, poetry, and prose they had published: Krzysztof Deja and Teresa and Broniek Wilkans. Additionally, Jagoda and Jerzy Syrk sold T-shirts with prints to all interested attendees. The funds collected in this way will support the account of the Polish Museum.

Distinguished guests were served wines by Mr. Dariusz Ross, a well-known producer in Australia. Both Queen Elizabeth II and Lech Wałęsa have tasted his wines.

Everything I am writing about, and even more, will be featured in a report by Tadeusz Matkowski on October 24. This event will be watched by the whole world via TV Polonia.

A list of women from the Polish Women's League who were awarded decorations by the President of Poland for their community work.

Adelaide: Krystyna Łuźna, Irena Małecka, Barbara Niemiec-Warcok, Alicja Michalska, Irena Szumlińska, Tessa Waksmundzka

Canberra: Ludmila Zawartko, Anna Ziółkowska

Sydney: Ryszarda Bardaczewska

Melbourne: Regina Michnicka, Eugenia Choińska

Geelong: Alfreda Tudroszen, Cecylia Lyzwa

Perth: Irena Makowiecka, Maria Gerus

Hobart: Irena Kowaluk,

Additionally: Stella Sienczewska, Anna Sowter, Leon Kolecki, Jerzy Maciejak, Eugeniusz Pędziński i Jan Suchowiecki.

The message from Bogdan Borusewicz, the Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, read by Jerzy Więclaw, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Australia, during the ceremony at Polish Hill River.

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!
Dear Countrymen!*

The current political situation in Poland compels me, as the Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, along with other members of parliament and senators, to remain in the country.

This deep conviction was the basis for the decision to postpone the visit of the delegation from the Sejm and Senate to the hospitable land of Australia. Making this decision was not easy, considering the advanced preparations for the visit, the tremendous effort of all involved in its organization, and the long-anticipated meeting with you.

I therefore take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to you. I also hope for your understanding regarding the reasons for this decision. I assure you that even from a distance, we will share in your pride and joy, which will surely accompany the jubilee celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of Polish settlement in Polish Hill River. The legacy of the Australian Polish community and its contribution to the cultural, economic, and social development of this multicultural nation is invaluable.
