

## FOUR

### THE COMMUNITY TAKES SHAPE

It was in surroundings such as the Miners' hostels that the first steps were taken to cater for the cultural and social needs of Poles who had settled in Rotherham. This was particularly evident in the founding of the Rotherham SPK, the Ex- Servicemen's Association. No doubt it was a similar story in other parts of the country. These communities-in-exile were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. At first, Fr. M. Szymankiewicz, Parish Priest of the Sheffield Polish community, would drive over to Rotherham (see photos in the previous chapter) to minister to the spiritual needs of the Polish community in the hostels. However, 1954 saw the founding of the Polish parish in Doncaster and this amalgamated Rotherham within its boundaries. This development came about thanks to the joint efforts of Fr. Szymankiewicz and Fr. J. Stelmach.

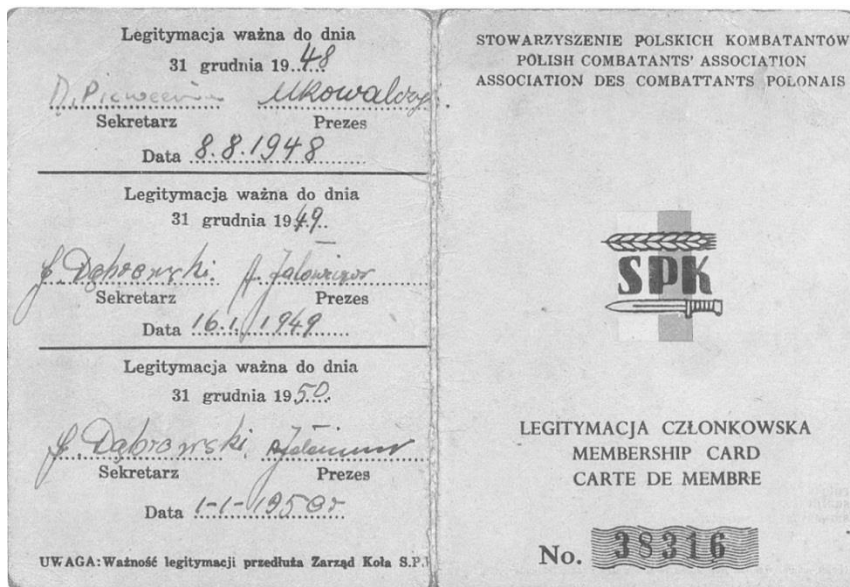
Nothing lasts for ever, and eventually the hostels in the area closed, one by one. The Herringthorpe Valley Road Miners' Hostel shut its doors in August 1959 and its residents found themselves obliged to look for alternative accommodation. The numerous Poles working down the coalmines constituted a large proportion of the hostels' occupants. Some of these married, bought their own houses, and gradually were assimilated into the community, whereas others stayed in lodgings in the area. After Doncaster had founded its own Polish parish, Fr. J. Stelmach became the first priest to take on the duties of looking after the spiritual and religious needs of his parishioners, in essence founding the hub of the community. The Polish services (Masses) were held every Sunday at 17:30 at St. Bede's Church, Masbrough and were attended by a congregation of about fifty to eight people. The parish developed close links with the Ex-Servicemen's Association and soon a Polish school and a parish choir were founded, thus ensuring that the community stayed true to its traditions. This was the heyday of the Rotherham Parish, as it proved to be for the entire Rotherham Polish Community. These early achievements didn't come about without a lot of hard work and effort on the part of all those involved. A major event and success for the Polish parish was the ordination of Tadeusz Grzesik in 1972.

Rotherham and the immediate surroundings were relatively isolated from other areas where Poles such as those from Africa, India and the Near East had settled. Consequently, those members of the Polish community who didn't intermarry were more quickly assimilated into British Culture. With the passing of the decades, and up until the Millennium, the parish lost many of its founders among others: Mr B. Adamek, Mr A. Jałowiczor and Mr W. Grzesik in the 1970s. However, some of the first generation Poles such as Derek and Krysia Mars (Derek was the son of Maria Mars), and Daral and Basia Charlesworth were ready to take over from the deceased pioneers. Englishman Daral brought Basia over from Poland, then behind the Iron Curtain, in the early 1970s, an event eagerly reported in the local press. They were instrumental in carrying on and organising Polish cultural events such as traditional Christmas celebrations in the 1990s, when it seemed that this culture was in danger of dying out, evidenced, in part, by the scarcity of photographic material available from this decade.

## 1940s

### The SPK; the Polish Ex- Servicemen's Association in Rotherham

A group of volunteers founded the SPK 445, Ex-Serviceman's Association in Rotherham in 1948. The founders were: Mr A. Piewcewicz, Mr J. Dąbrowski, Mr A. Pupin, Mr A. Jałowiczor, and Mr P. Magiera. That year over three hundred Poles were resident in Rotherham. The founding meeting saw the election of the first board of the Rotherham Ex- Servicemen's Association to which the following were duly elected: Chairman: Mr M. Kowalczyk; Vice-Chairman: Mr A. Jałowiczor; Secretary: Mr A. Piewcewicz; Treasurer: Mr F. Nowak. The organisation's initial aim was to recruit new members and a total of approximately eighty new members were added to the numbers. A library was soon built-up and along with it came the founding of KKS Korona, the SPK football team. The initial venue for SPK activities was the Miners' hostel on Herringthorpe Valley Road. The Association later had access to Antoni Jałowiczor's house on Station Road [from about 1955]. This led to the imminent creation of the family committee and the founding of the Polish school. In the years that followed, the post of Chairman was held by Mr A. Jałowiczor, Mr E. Ciesielski and Mr P. Gazur.



One of the founding SPK Rotherham Membership Cards, 1948.



KKS Korona (Rotherham) - the miners' team and the Polish National runners-up in 1949.

1950s

**The Station Road Residence, Masbrough.**

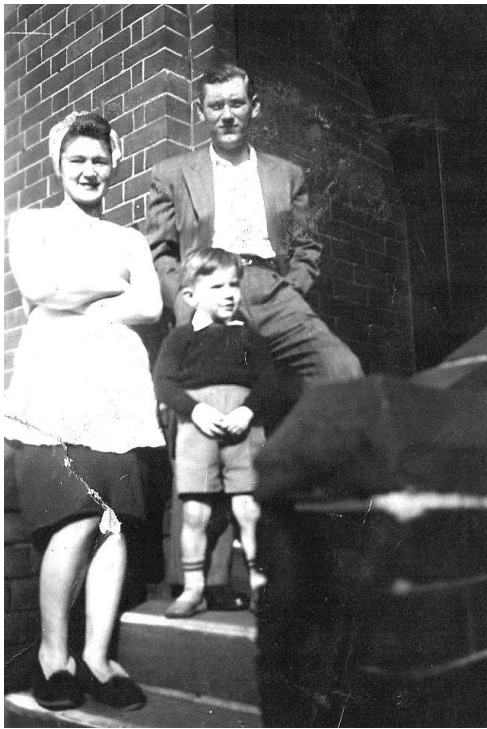


Antoni Jałowiczor outside his house on Station Road (1959). Amongst the more famous guests to visit here was WWII General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. He gave the command for the commencement of the Warsaw Uprising on the 01.08.1944. Gen. Komorowski attended a meeting here in the early 1960s.

After 1955, when Antoni Jałowiczor bought it, the house became the thriving hub of the community. A number of ex-servicemen lived here, some married and others single. Very conveniently situated a stone's throw from St. Bede's Church, a variety of activities took place within its walls. Downstairs two large rooms were knocked into one larger room in which a piano and a harmonium were subsequently installed. This room was used mainly for choir practices (with Fr. Stelmach) and other meetings (such as those of the SPK). Sound recordings from the 1960s on a set of surviving reel-to-reel tapes made by Antoni and inherited by the author (Antoni's son) have been digitally processed, partially translated and transcribed into English for publication in this book. These tapes feature discussions, interviews and singing and testify to the interesting times that once graced this house. The period in question effectively ended with the death of Antoni in 1971. There was a second utilisation of the house in the community, albeit on a smaller scale when Antoni's wife Maria offered lodgings to two ex-servicemen: Stanisław Hasiuk (1974) and then Leopold Majewski (1981). However, there were no more meetings or choir practices. It was left to the author to take charge when Maria herself died (1988). Both ex-servicemen passed away in 1991.

## 1950s

### In Modest Surroundings.



Maria, Derek and Władysław Mars @1955.



Antoni Jałowiczor – in the main living room, in the early 1960s

The house offered convenient interim accommodation to families (some of whom had come from the hostels) until they were settled elsewhere. During these years both families and single people resided at the property, including, among others, the Gazur, Heczko and Mars families.

### Recollections

One of my earliest recollections of Station Road was the occasion when I sneaked out of the house unnoticed. I must have been about three at the time (around 1959). Mrs Mars was my godmother and, by that time, she and her family had bought a house a few streets away, on Falding Street. I don't remember it, but I must have walked up Albert Street; however, I distinctly recollect a little old lady helping me cross College Road. I have only the vaguest memory of arriving at the Mars' house, but many years later my godmother told me that I just turned up suddenly, out of the blue and she had to send her son over to Station Road in order to reassure the adults that I was safely at her house. (No telephones in those days).

I was a frequent visitor to Station Road. To me Antoni (Antek) Jałowiczor was 'dziadek' (grandfather). My dad always laughed about that, as they were both virtually the same age. I don't know if other children of my age also called Antoni 'dziadek', or whether it was just me.

## 1950s

I came to live at Station Road when my dad's sister (Anna Witowska) and Antoni's sister (Marta Gazur), who was married to my dad's brother Józef, came over from Poland and spent several months living at Station Road (1958). That was when my dad decided he didn't want to send me back to Leeds. I remember having a rocking horse upstairs. It was white and made of metal, and was suspended on four robust silver springs. I could rock the horse with such vigour that the base would rise up off the floor. There was also a large castle made of painted plywood - hours of fun!

The house was always a hive of activity. I remember an old printing press, possibly a Banda type machine, which was used to print leaflets. Fr. Stelmach and Mrs Wanda would bring food on Sundays, and people would meet up to share a drink and a bite to eat.

Not far away, on the corner of St Bede's Road and Station Road stood a large building with shop units at ground level and a dance hall on the first floor. This venue was used by the Polish community for socialising and entertainment: a band of local Polish musicians played at such events. Again, food would be brought to Station Road during the day and then carried over to the dance hall at the allotted time. The floor of the dance hall was often sprinkled with talcum powder to make it slippery for the dancers. This was always an excuse for the children to use the floor for sliding, before the dancing started. On one such occasion, I was sliding along the floor when someone moved a table which I promptly crashed into. The point of impact was on my forehead, just above my eye. My dad thought I had knocked my eye out and I remember being carried back to Station Road, with blood pouring down my face. There was no serious damage, but I still have a small scar on my forehead to this day.

After Peter's mum arrived (1964) the house became much more of a family home and not so much a 'drop in' centre. In the summer months, my dad would load up the Zodiac and Peter with his mum and dad, and me with my dad would all go off for day trips to the coast, or to Clumber Park.

Finally, I can still hear the news vendor shouting 'Green Un' on a Saturday morning, as he passed down the street, selling the local sports paper. In those days there were terraced houses, and the occasional shop, stretching from one end of Station Road to the other, and, with the railway station then being in service, the area was much more vibrant than it is today.

**Michael Gazur - son of Paweł Gazur.**

1950s



STOWARZYSZENIE POLSKICH KOMBATANTÓW  
POLISH EX-COMBATANTS' ASSOCIATION  
ZARZĄD GŁÓWNY

16-20 QUEEN'S GATE TERRACE  
LONDON, S.W.7

TELEFONY: KNIGHTSBRIDGE 0747-8-9

TELEGRAMY ZAGRANICZNE: POLKOM LONDON

ZG/P/60.

DATA 14.6.1960.

Zarząd Koła SPK 445,  
4, Station Road,  
Rotterdam,  
Yorks.

Szanowni Koledzy,

Uprzejmie zawiadamiamy, że od miesiąca stycznia oczekujemy na kilka słów odpowiedzi na nasze pismo w sprawie Leopolda Majewskiego. Zwracaliśmy się ponownie o to w marcu br., niestety, również bez skutku.

Żywimy nadzieję, że tym razem prośba nasza nie będzie przemilczana. Bardzo prosimy o to, winni przecież jesteście odpowiedzi rodzinie poszukiwanego w Polsce.

z koleżeńskimi pozdrowieniami,

S. Lewicki  
Sekretarz Generalny.

Part of the work of the SPK consisted of reuniting families separated by the War. As the situation in Eastern Europe stabilised, it became safer to visit families than it had been in the War's immediate aftermath. The letter is translated over the page.

## 1950s

### SPK

Polish Ex- Servicemen's Association  
16-20, Queen's Gate Terrace,  
London, SW7.

### SPK 445 Board,

4, Station Road,  
Rotherham,

14.06.1960

Dear Friends,

We are writing to draw to your attention that we are still awaiting a reply to our letter of last January regarding Leopold Majewski. We made renewed enquiries about the matter in March; however, we have had no reply to date.

We hope, on this occasion, that you are able to comply with our request. We sincerely hope that this case shall not be overlooked, as we have an obligation to reply to the family of the above in Poland, who are anxiously seeking news of his whereabouts.

With sincere greetings,

S. Lewicki,  
Secretary General.

As can be seen from this letter, the SPK was involved in reuniting Poles with their families in Poland, as in the case of Leopold Majewski. Leo ended up in Rotherham, like many other Poles. In WWII he had been forced to serve in the German Army. A follow-up letter to the one above stated that Leo would reply to his family but, on his own terms, and at a later date. This did in fact come to pass, and Leo established contact later in the 1960s with his sister in Łódź, Poland. A well-known character in the Polish community, Leo often frequented the Polish club or his local and loved to have a pint, sometimes drinking one too many. But given what he and many others like him had gone through, it was understandable; it was all he had left in life... Leo left behind no family and moved from lodging to lodging, finally ending up at the Station Road residence. We see him here at the entrance to the Miners' Hostel in Herringthorpe, (photo, late 1950s).



## 1950s



The former St. Bede's Junior School building, Masbrough, (2013).

### **The Polish School Opens.**

The Polish community in Rotherham organized itself quite quickly and soon there were three main associations: the Ex-Servicemen's Association (SPK), the Parents Committee - which ran the Polish Saturday School, and the Polish Parish Council. Particular recognition should be given to Mr. Witold Grzesik who held a term of office as chairman of each one of these organisations, at one time holding all three posts simultaneously. The close proximity and access to the Station Road residence assisted with the creation of the Family Committee and then with the establishment of the Polish school. Mr W. Grzesik presided over the teaching, which was carried out by Mrs Z. Burakowska, Mrs W. Kaszycka, Mr A. Fedorowicz, Mrs M. Kubica, Mr A. Jabłonski, and Fr. J. Stelmach (who travelled over from Doncaster). The school developed and grew, with over seventy children attending at its peak.

The school first opened from 1954-57, followed by a break of about a year, and then came the final period from 1958 to the mid1960s. Mr E. Ciesielski and Mr P. Gazur successively held the office of Chairman of the Family Committee. The school ran on Saturdays from 9:00 to 13:00, sometimes until later in the afternoon, as required. The school was, in fact, part of the national Saturday school movement whose aim was to impart a good understanding of Polish history to its pupils and, with it, a sense of pride in their Polish roots. By 1960, there were some 150 Polish schools attended by 5,000 of the 16,000 children born to Polish parents in Britain.



## 1950s



St. Bede's Polish School, Mr Antoni Jałowiczor (centre) and Mr Edek Cieslski (to the right of Antoni), taken around 1955.



From left: Mr W. Grzesik, Mr Bakunowicz and Mrs Z. Burakowska: St. Bede's Polish School, with some pupils in national dress. Mr A. Jałowiczor is at lower right recording the event, taken around 1959.

## 1950s



St. Bede's Polish School, group photo of the children taken around the mid 1950s.



St. Bede's Polish School, group photo of teachers and children. From the far left on the front row, are the Grzesik Family, unknown, Mr Jabłoński, Fr. W. Daly, Parish Priest of St. Bede's, Mr Bakunowicz, Mrs Z. Burakowska and Mrs Stojak, taken around the late 1950s.

## 1950s



1. Mr A. Jałowiczor, 2. Mr P. Gazur with son Michael, 3. Mr S. Pejko, 4. Mr W. Mars, 5. Mrs J. Grzesik, 6. Mr E. Ciesielski, 7. Fr. Stelmach, 8. Mrs M. Mars, 9. Mr S. Hasiuk, 10. Mr W. Grzesik, 11. Tadeusz Grzesik, 12. E. Kośinski, 13. H. Mzyk, 14. L. Mars, 15. Kazik Zaleśny, 16. Maria Grzesik, 17. B. Burakowska, 18. W. Mzyk, 19. Mrs Cieniuch; outside St. Bede's at the end of the Saturday school academic year, 1959.



1. Mr Bakunowicz, 2. Mrs A. Zaleśna, 3. Mrs Z. Burakowska, 4. Mrs K. Pejko, 5. Mr Kośinski, 6. Mrs A. Nowak, 7. Mrs Kośinska, 8. Mr W. Grzesik, 9. Mrs M. Mars, 10. Fr. Stelmach, 11. Mr S. Hasiuk, 12. Mr E. Ciesielski, 13. Mr W. Cieniuch, 14. H. Nowak, 15. E. Nowak, 16. Derek Pejko, 17. Krzysztof Zaleśny, 18. W. Grabowska, 19. G. Borowicz, 20. Z. Zaleśna, 21. S. Grabowska, 23. W. Mzyk; outside St. Bede's at the end of the Saturday school academic year, 1959.

## 1950s

### **Recollections:**

When my parents told me that a Polish school was on the point of opening at St. Bede's Infants school on a Saturday morning and that I would be going, I must admit that I resented the idea that my free Saturdays were about to be given up. Saturday mornings were for going to cinemas, of which I frequented three: The Tivoli, Ferham and the Ranch House, that is the Cinema House, so named because Westerns were always shown there. My teachers were Mr Bakunowicz and Fr. Stelmach, who taught us Religion. Lessons comprised Polish Language (reading and writing), Polish history, and geography. I became good friends with Edek Kosinski and Tadek Grzesik (who later went on to join the clergy). We went on to serve as altar boys at Polish masses and sometimes at English masses, too. My own clear recollection of this time was of confusion. I wasn't sure if I was British, Polish or perhaps a mixture of the two. The more we learnt about Poland, the more confused I became. We were aware that our parents were not in a position to return to their homeland or even to visit it, but they still remained very patriotic. It was only many years later, when visiting Poland with my Polish wife and being involved in a family discussion, that the realisation dawned on me: the history I had been taught was very different to that imparted to Polish people of my age. They had been taught untruths, and it was only after Poland became free in 1989 that people actually believed me. But the strangest thing was that despite considering myself a competent speaker of Polish, I was aware that I had been taught the language by people who had left their homeland in 1939 and, consequently, I was stuck in a linguistic time warp. Now everything is clearer and I think that I understand the Polish psyche. Or do I??

**Derek Mars - son of Maria Mars.**

### **Recollections:**

Polish School was held every Saturday morning in the old St. Bede's Junior School. It was very Victorian and seemed very strange and quiet, compared to a normal school day. We were taught from a Polish Elementarz! (A Polish reading primer). I can still remember having to recite poems at concerts held in local halls nearby. We wore Polish costumes and were taught national folk dances.

**Danuta Mackie - daughter of Walter Grabowski.**

### **Recollections:**

I also remember Saturday school, and just thought it was normal to go to school six days a week. My best memories are of Mr and Mrs Śliwa helping us at Christmas, when my father broke his arm; there were no benefits back then. We lived on Shaftsbury Square and visited Antoni Jałowiczor on Station Road, before going to the Polish Club via the delicatessen nearby on College Road. I remember the great sense of pride the Poles felt at Mass and the Christmas parties, and I recollect the visit of a Polish General when a ceremony was held at the Old Town Hall assembly rooms (1962) - my dad had fought at Monte Cassino. It sank into me when my mum met her sister in 1974 for the first time since 1942, and my dad his brother in 1978, a year before he died. They were separated in 1946 when he went back to look after their mother; they had endured such hardship, but kept faith and never forgot the homeland to which they could not return.

**Derek Pejko - son of Stefan and Katarzyna Pejko.**

## 1960s



SPK National Meeting of the Branches. The name cards of the Derby and Rotherham delegates need to be swapped over, as Mr A. Jałowiczor is representing Rotherham, and not Derby. This meeting took place in 1955.

From 1948, after the rapid expansion of the first fifteen years, the association witnessed a marked decline in growth, the number of members falling to just twenty-one in 1963. The newly elected Board; Chairman: Mr W. Dębek; Secretary: Mr. J. Wasilewski and Mrs A. Zaleśna did their best to mitigate the effects of the crisis. Mr W. Grabowski's Polish club which was proving to be very popular and attracting numerous patrons was a great help and prevented the Ex-Servicemen's Association from disappearing altogether. Lessons at the Saturday school ceased for a few years. The celebrations commemorating the 'Tysiąclecie in 1966 (the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christianity in Poland) saw an increase in collaboration with the parish. This was due to Mr W. Grzesik, who took over as Chairman of the Family Committee in 1967.

These years saw the founding of a new church choir (by Mr W. Mańka) which incorporated the Ex-Serviceman into different religious festivities. Fr. M. Zgrzebny was appointed the new parish priest. On a sadder note, KKS "Korona" folded at this time.

1960s

# POLES PLAN DAY OF CELEBRATION

**T**O celebrate their national day on May 5 members of the Polish community at Rotherham are planning a day-long programme of suitable activities and are taking over the Town Hall Assembly Rooms for the occasion.

Arrangements for the event are being made by Rotherham Branch of the Polish ex-Combatants

Association, the equivalent of the British Legion, and the celebrations will also mark the 14th anniversary of the formation of the branch.

Invitations to join in the day's programme will be extended to fellow country-folk living in surrounding areas such as Doncaster, Hemsworth, Barnsley and Sheffield.

For many it will be a day

of reunion, an opportunity for meeting old war-time friends and even remembering the grim days of the Warsaw uprising in 1944.

There will also be an opportunity to meet the Commander-in-Chief of the home army in Poland at the time of the uprising, General Bor Komorowski, who is travelling from London to be special guest for the day.

The General, who will be making his second visit to Rotherham—he was a visitor in 1956—is at present regarded as the head of all Poles living outside their homeland.

## Exciting

He will be welcomed this time by the President of the Rotherham Branch, Mr. Antoni Jalowiczor,

One of the highlights will be a display of traditional dancing in national costume by a visiting dance team from Manchester.

Also part of the programme will be the singing of Polish national songs by a choir of children from the town's Polish community.

The children are educated in local schools but once a week attend a special class at St. Bede's School when the instruction is by a Polish teacher.

Of the day's proceedings Mr. Jalowiczor says: "They will be on a bigger scale than any similar event we have arranged in the past."

"We shall round off with an evening dance in the Assembly Rooms which will be open to anyone to attend."

The Star and Sheffield Telegraph, 1962.

## 1960s



The Mayor of Rotherham, Ald. W. Wallhead, shows Polish General T. Bór-Komorowski his Mayoral chain when he received him at the Town Hall. Looking on, from the left, is Father J. Stelmach, Mr. A. Jałowiczor, President of a Polish Ex-Servicemen's rehabilitation group, and the Mayoress, Mrs. Wallhead. The Star and Sheffield Telegraph, May 1962.



The Crown Hotel, Rotherham; where the Rotherham Branch of the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association held an event. The Mayor of Rotherham (Alderman W. Wallhead) is fourth left in the picture and the Mayoress (Mrs Wallhead) is first on the right. The Star and Sheffield Telegraph, May 1962.

## 1960s

### The Polish Club.



The Polish Club was situated about half-way down Doncaster Road, just across the road from Clifton Park. It was usually accessed from the back, via the entrance on Walker Lane. The Grabowski family were very committed to running the club and were often assisted by Mrs Adamek, Mrs U. Gąsiorowska and Mrs A. Zaleśna. Photo (2013).

### **Recollections:**

The Polish Club opened in 1961; it was originally just a small bar and adjoining room but then, in 1966, as can be seen from the photos of the Rybak family (on the following page), it underwent improvements and an extension was built. The club's exterior woodwork was always painted in the patriotic red and white colours of the Polish flag. I can remember the time dad excavated the cellar to make it bigger. I am not quite sure how the club came into being, but I think that the Polish Community were offered the chance of owning it, but didn't want to be involved, so dad went ahead and opened the club. The club was used for hosting social functions such as the traditional Christmas, New Year and Easter celebrations etc. Live bands played every Saturday night and everybody danced and had a good time. Wedding receptions, christenings and wakes were also held on the premises. It was a very popular venue in the 1960s and 1970s. Marysia Mars and Halina Stachowa helped mum and dad at the club, working behind the bar and keeping it clean. Mum used to sew dresses for the three of them, so they all wore the same outfits! On special occasions, most of the women in the Polish community helped out by cooking Polish food. Frank Heczko was a tremendous help to mum and dad, being a very talented craftsman and artist. He painted two large murals for the walls depicting Polish dancers in traditional costume. The club finally closed its doors in 1985 when dad retired.

**Danuta Mackie - daughter of Walter Grabowski.**



## 1960s



At the Polish Club, the Rybak family, taken on the occasion of Kryisia's (Derek Mars' future wife) visit to Rotherham in 1966.



"The Legends' Corner" at the Polish Club; they were notorious for the amount of alcohol they consumed! From left: Łukasz Szamraj, Stanisław Hasiuk, Jan Dąbrowski, unknown, Stanisław Niemas, Józef Piętkowski ('the Szeryf') and Władysław Szczecina ('Rudy'). They met in a room by the entrance off Walker Lane; taken in the early 1960s.

## 1960s

### Recollections (reel-to-reel tape transcript):

This is an extract from a short interview between Antoni Jałowiczor (AJ, interviewing), Witold Gąsiorowski (WG), Józef Wasilewski (JW) and Adolf Rudkowski (AR). Retrieved from 1960s reel-to-reel tapes and dating from around 1965, it has been translated into English and is transcribed below. The interview concerns the development of the parish. It reveals something of the personalities of the participants who, sadly, are no longer with us...

AJ: "Good evening Mr Gąsiorowski, how are you today?"

WG: "Well, overall, I can't complain. I have a headache after last night, but as the [Polish] saying goes a glass of chmiel [beer-literally 'hops'] is like another lady friend, after the wife."

AJ: "What did you think of everything last night?"

WG: "Well you could say it was first class, I had a little flutter, of course, without any luck."

AJ: "You didn't win anything?"

WG: "No, nothing, as you could see".

AJ: "An enjoyable event overall then?"

WG: "Naturally, the wife shall be waiting at home with a rolling pin, so I may have to talk her round a bit!"

AJ: "But I don't think that your wife was so menacing..."

WG: "Well she isn't really, but there's a Polish saying, where the devil can't go he sends a woman!"

AJ: "What do you think of our choir, has there been any progress?"

WG: "Well, I can't really say much because when I am in church, then I am a member of the choir. If I was listening, then I would be in a position to say something. But being one of the choir, I am not really in a position to comment."

AJ: "What is your wife's opinion of the singing?"

WG: "She said it is beautiful, that there are many members, but the choir would benefit from more rehearsals. With more practice, the singing would be even better. It would draw a large number of those who no longer attend regularly back into church."

AJ: "Well that is what we are trying to achieve; to draw people to the church with our singing and Polish traditions. As regards choir practice, are you able to attend?"

WG: "My situation is that I am very tied up on a contract I can't break. Of course, I don't work every Sunday and on the days when I'm free I am able to attend church."

AJ: "You are a practising catholic?"

WG: "I try to be. Naturally, I am a believer and try to practise my faith. Sometimes it can't be helped if you don't attend church."

AJ: "Thank you very much. Józef, is there anything you would like to add, is our choir going to prosper or not?"

JW: "I am a stubborn person. If one says that one is going to do something, then one gets on with it. The greater our achievements, the more followers we attract. I hope that we achieve recognition throughout all of Great Britain".

AJ: "That's very nice. Adolf, is there anything that you would like to add?"

AR: "I would just like to say that I am delighted to participate; I enjoy singing anyway, whether it is in church, on the street, or in the pub!"



## 1960s

The choir from Rotherham did, indeed, achieve the national recognition mentioned in the transcript and which its members were so eager to attain. It came in the form of the following report in the Polish Daily published in London.

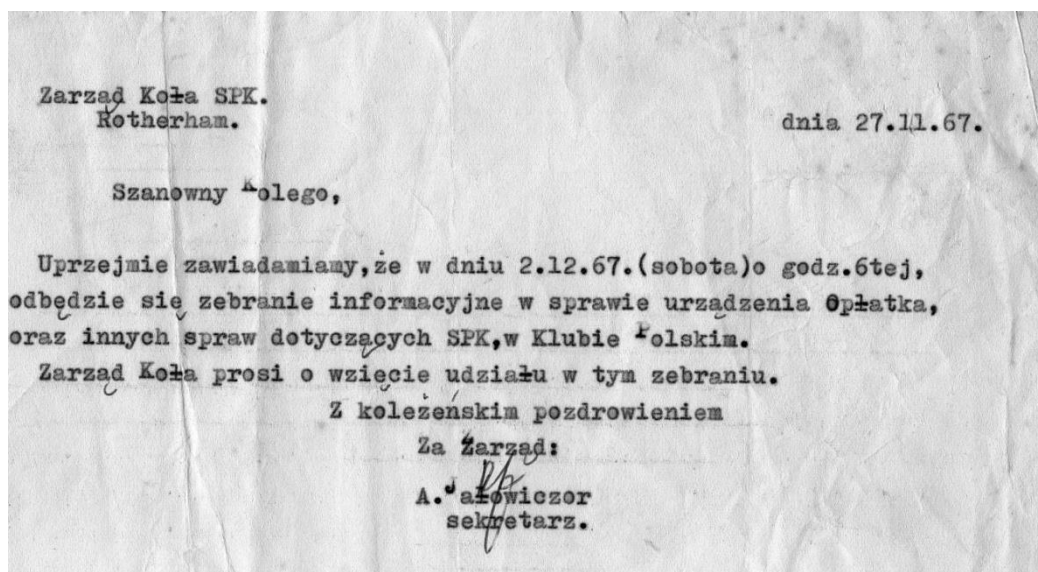


### Echoes reminiscent of the highland pastures around Istebna (Poland).

Antoni Jałowiczor, the conductor of the Polish choir in Rotherham, admires the acoustics of St. Bede's Church, where the choir sings every Sunday; he says:

When we sing in this church, the echo resounds not only in the building, but around the whole town. It has the same characteristics as the echo heard in the highlands around Milówka, and Barania Góra, when, as young boys, we would sing on the hilltops of Sliwkula, that is, around Istebna.

Dziennik Polski, The Polish Daily, London, 1967.



The SPK Rotherham invitation to members, asking them to attend a meeting concerning the organisation of Christmas celebrations at the Polish club in 1967.

## 1960s



The Rotherham parish frequently organised trips and pilgrimages to various destinations, for example this one to Ampleforth, where we see the head of a religious procession on 24.07.1967.



Rotherham Poles attend the pilgrimage, among others: Mr Gąsiorski, Mr Rybak, the Grzesik family (second row from the front), Ampleforth, 24.07.1967.

## 1960s

### **Recollections:**

After their unexpected 'extended' visit to the British Isles became a permanent one, the Polish Ex-Combatants realized that they would have to recreate a sort of 'mini-Poland' in the towns they inhabited. Most of them did not speak English very well and felt the need to meet with their fellow compatriots. One of these regular meeting places was St. Bede's RC church on Station Road. On discovering that there was a Polish priest living in Sprotborough near Doncaster who earned his living working as a carpenter, the representatives of the Polish community in Rotherham promptly asked him whether he would be willing to say a Sunday Mass for them, with a sermon in Polish (all Masses at that time were in Latin). He gladly agreed, and for many years travelled in his Morris Minor saying three Masses each Sunday: the first at 1pm in Doncaster, the second at 3pm in Hemsworth and finally at 5.30pm in Rotherham. Father Jan Stelmach was determined that the congregation should sing Polish hymns during the services and he formed a choir, which met to practise before Mass each Sunday at 4, Station Rd., (the home of Mr. Antoni Jałowiczor). Bożena Kosińska accompanied the choir and congregation, playing on the church organ. I remember her playing Bach's "Jesu, joy of man's desiring" each Sunday before Mass. Bożena was just slightly older than I, and I enjoyed her playing. Fr. Stelmach gave me tuition in Latin to enable me to serve Mass for him in Latin. In those days, one had to learn the Latin responses by heart, with the liturgy being a lot more complex than it is now. After a few years, Fr. Stelmach was moved by Church authorities to serve a larger Polish community and the Rev. Dr. Jan Starostka was appointed in his place. Needless to say, Fr. Stelmach did not have to work as a carpenter any longer, although he was not averse to doing a job or two, when asked by his parishioners.

As a parish community, the Poles in Rotherham took part in pilgrimages to the Benedictine Abbey in Ampleforth, in the North Riding (nowadays: North Yorkshire). On such occasions they met Poles from other towns in the North of England and their "mini-Poland" became a little larger and more robust. The abbot at the time of the 1967 pilgrimage made news when he was appointed the Archbishop of Westminster in the seventies and later created a cardinal: George Basil Hume.

**Rev. Dr. Tadeusz Grzesik, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland – son of Witold Grzesik.**

### **Recollections:**

From my earliest childhood I recall how my father Witold would spend much of his time every weekend on matters relating to the social life of the Polish community in Rotherham. Over the years, he held the position of chairman of the Polish ex-Combatants Association (SPK), the Parish Council and the Saturday School Committee. Once he was even chairman of all three at the same time, much to the annoyance of my mother, as this meant that he had less time for her and the family at home.

The Polish ex-combatants were proud of their military achievements during WWII and put every effort into commemorating national feasts, especially those recalling military victories.

## 1960s

“For our freedom and yours” this was the motto which expressed the ideal of the Polish soldier. Indeed, in 1683 King Jan Sobieski helped save Vienna from the Turks by defeating them at Kahlenberg, thus halting the spread of the Ottoman Empire and Islam into Western Europe. More recently, Tobruk, Monte Cassino, Falaise and Narvik are examples of battlefields where Poles fought together with their allies against the Nazis, helping greatly in the struggle to defeat Hitler and hasten the end of WWII. It is a well known fact that during the Battle of Britain, a sixth of all enemy planes were shot down by Polish pilots. During WWII over 350 Polish Air Force Men were laid to rest in the cemetery at Newark-on-Trent. Quite a few Polish ex-combatants married Yorkshire lasses, which undoubtedly helped to improve their English! These Yorkshire wives very often went on to acquire a good grasp of Polish (a notoriously difficult language to learn). They always knew what the “old boys” were up to when they came to visit each other, even though the conversations were conducted exclusively in Polish.

**Maria Grzesik - daughter of Witold Grzesik.**

### **Recollections:**

There was always a special feeling when, as a young child, I told people that “my Dad comes from Poland” – it always felt special – maybe because it was different (my mum was from Rotherham). My Dad coming from Poland and now living in a town in South Yorkshire, for me, meant belonging to another community that was deeply rooted in Polish culture, with the Catholic Church at its heart. My memories are of going to Polish Mass every Sunday at 5.30pm and seeing all the friendly, familiar faces. We would also hold cultural evenings with traditional dances and songs at the local Polish Club or hire one of the local halls and there enjoy the many Polish delicacies such as Bigos (a sauerkraut and pork dish, originally created for hunters) and Chrusty (pastries) all made to traditional recipes and washed down with the obligatory glass (or two) of vodka and to the sound of “Na zdrowie”. What was even better, however, was to savour these delicacies in Dad’s native land. When most of my friends were spending their holidays in various resorts in England, I would go to Poland to spend time with my Polish family. None of my English friends had been to Poland. “Why would you want to go to a drab, impoverished country ruled by Communists?”, they asked me. My response was always the same “My Dad comes from Poland.” From my experience of spending time in Poland and also of growing up within the Polish community in Rotherham, I have learnt that Poles are the kindest, most hard working, loyal and proud of people.

Although I didn’t realise it at the time, the very fact of growing up in a dual nationality community, meant I was being taught to appreciate and accept difference and to realise that there was another world outside of Rotherham. That upbringing stood me in good stead when taking up the position of International Links Officer with Rotherham Borough Council – one of the countries we have links with is Poland, specifically the City of Zabrze. Although I am now an adult, whenever I say the words ‘My Dad came from Poland’ it is with a great feeling of pride; perhaps that’s my Polish side speaking.

**Christine Majer, International Links Officer, Rotherham Borough Council – daughter of Marian Majer.**

## 1970s

### SPK

1972 saw the election of Mr J. Rytel from Maltby to the office of Chairman and the number of members increased to twenty-seven. At the time, these included; Mr K. Michalski, Mr M.T. Connor, Mr W. Jarecki, Mr K. Godlewski, Mr T. Baczynski, Mr F. Heczko, Mr Z. Szeneman and Mr F. Leśniak. The ladies' section was introduced under Mrs D. Michalska who was later succeeded by Mrs A. Rytel. The KKS "Korona" football team was restored, thanks mainly to the efforts of Mr Jan Ossowski. At this time, the association had already celebrated its Silver Jubilee. Various organisations such as the Sue Ryder Foundation assisted the SPK branches.

### First priest for 18 years

The first Rotherham man for 18 years to be ordained as a Roman Catholic priest is Father Tadeusz Grzesik, whose parents live at 18, Deepdale Road, Rotherham.

Father Grzesik took part in two services at St. Bede's Church, Rotherham, on Sunday. He took his first solemn Concelebrated Mass in the morning and his first Concelebrated Mass in Polish in the afternoon.

After studying at St. Bede's School, Rotherham, Father Grzesik went to the Polish Seminary in Paris. He is now to take up an appointment at a Polish Church in Hammersmith.

A cheque was presented to Father Grzesik by parishioners of St. Bede's Church. The last Rotherham man to be ordained as a Roman Catholic Priest was Father William Burtoft, who is now a teacher in Bradford

8 kwietnia 1973 r. G A

## JAK NASZE WSP

### PRYMICJA W ROTHERHAM

Gdy przed 10 laty, 13 letni Tadeusz Grzesik opuszczał dom swoich rodziców w Rotherham udając się do Polskiego Seminarium w Paryżu, nie sądził zapewne, że wróci tu kiedyś, pełen radości, apostołstwa uśmiechu i szczęścia Bożego, z możliwością głoszenia dobrej nowiny dla licznej rzeszy wiernych, wśród których będą obecni jego najbliżsi. Była to największa i najbardziej podniosła uroczystość, zorganizowana przez parafian, przy czynnej współpracy komitetu kościelnego, z p. K. Michalskim na czele, oraz kółka SPK, pod kierownictwem p. J. Rytla.

Wśród księży znaleźli się: ks. inf. W. Staniszewski, prałat A. Murat, kan. M. Szymankiewicz, ks. K. Toporowski, ks. E. Grudziński, ks. J. Tworek, przybyli z Paryża ks. M. Zgrzebny, ks. S. Staniszewski, z Chicago, oraz proboszcz ang. parafii, ks. Burke. Gospodarzem był miejscowy duszpasterz, ks. T. Skudlarski.

Okolo 400 rodaków z Hemsworth, Doncaster, Barnsley, Sheffield, Mansfield, Bradford, Leicester, Manchester i Birmingham zapelnili nawy kościoła St. Bede, łącząc się we wspólnej modlitwie w intencji młodziutkiego celebrianta, ks. Grzesika, który przyjął święcenia kapłańskie z rąk biskupa W. Rubina, w kościele polskim w Paryżu, dnia 26 listopada, 1972 r. Kazanie wygłosił ks. inf. Staniszewski, podkreślając doniosłość zadań kapłańskich, w zyciu zorganizowanej społeczności emigracyjnej. Krótkie kazanie wypowiedział też ks. Skudlarski, oraz ks. Grzesik, wyrażając zebranyim słowa podziękia za modły w jego intencji i ogrom pracy włożonej w przygotowanie tej tak doniosłej uroczystości prymicyjnej. Spiewał chór „Artion” z Sheffield, pod batutą p. E. Raworowskiego.

Przyjęcie dla 180 osób, urządziły uczynne panie: Leśniak, Żuk, Dudziak, Rytel, Rybak i Michalska, pełniąc funkcje honorowych gospodyni, przez kilka godzin.

Ksiądz Grzesik objął obowiązki wikłarego, w kościele św. Andrzeja Boboli, w polskiej parafii londyńskiej, gdzie zapewne zyska uznanie swoim młodzieńczym entuzjazmem służenia Bogu i ludziom.

A. Kołodziej

Rotherham Advertiser, 08.12.1972 and Gazeta Niedzielną, 08.04.1973.

### The Polish School Finally Closes.

In the early 1970s the Polish School re-opened thanks to the efforts of Mr. M.T. Connor. Positive relations with Fr T. Skudlarski assisted in the school's development. Unfortunately the re-opening was short-lived, because in 1974 the school closed its doors, this time definitively. Parents did not see the need for the teaching of the Polish language. The author can remember attending Saturday school, which was based at his future Secondary School: St. Bernard's RC Comprehensive, a few years before attending as a full time pupil. How large and quiet the school seemed to the author, then aged barely ten! Mr Connor, nicknamed "the Professor", cared passionately about education, Polish culture and fostering understanding between the two nations. He was a strict, but inspirational, teacher and felt immensely frustrated when the school finally closed its doors (for the last time). He complained that the community seemed to care, by his standards, very little for its roots. In 1978, the branch celebrated its thirtieth anniversary and the new parish priest Fr. S. Bober was welcomed. He promptly established a close working relationship between the Parish and the Chairman, Mr M. Macko. At the end of the decade (1980) Mr M.T. Connor took charge of the branch.

## 1970s



SPK meeting of delegates in Sheffield, most probably taken at the turn of the decade 1960-1970s.



"NA ZDROWIE" ...or to use English, "Cheers." That's the toast from these guests at the annual dinner of the Polish Ex- Servicemen's Association, held at St. Ann's Community Centre, at which many traditional Polish customs were observed. The Star and Sheffield Telegraph, 1974.



## 1970s



Some of the guests at the Rotherham Polish Club for members of the Polish Catholic community in Rotherham, organised by the Rotherham branch of the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association. Rotherham Advertiser.



Easter and Christmas functions were a regular community occurrence at the Polish Club. This view is looking down from the front towards the bar at the end; Leo Majewski (mentioned earlier) is walking towards the right.

## 1980s

### SPK

1981 saw the acquisition of a new SPK 'Standard' by the branch and from 1982, Mr F. Heczko became Chairman of the Rotherham SPK. In the course of its, then, 35 year history, the post of Chairman had been held by the following (in addition to those mentioned earlier in this book): Mr J. Dąbrowski, Mr G. Drzewiecki, Mr E. Ciesielski, Mr E. Kosiński, Mr. W. Mańka and Mr J. Wasilewski.

DEDICATION OF THE STANDARD  
POLISH EX-SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, ROTHERHAM BRANCH  
5 JULY 1981  
ST BEDE'S CHURCH, ROTHERHAM

#### PROGRAMME

1. Dedication Service
2. Holy Mass, with the assistance of ORION, Sheffield, and POLONEZ, Doncaster, choirs. Director: Mr R Weber
3. Refreshments in Parish Hall
4. 'Nailing of the standard' ceremony in Roth Cath Club
5. Akademia (Cultural Evening):  
Welcome  
ORION and POLONEZ choirs  
Poem: God, Honour and Country A Bazela  
Speeches by Mr J Tunikowski, Secretary, Polish Ex-Servicemen's Assn, Great Britain  
Lady Mayor of Rotherham,  
Councillor Mrs J Johnson, J.P.  
Mr S Griffiths, President, Royal British Legion, Rotherham Branch  
Kol C Zychowicz, Vice-president, Polish Ex-Servicemen's Assn.GB.

Awards to members  
ORION and POLONEZ choirs

#### BREAK

Songs and music	Lusia and Jayne
Chopin	Jurek Leśniak
Guitar and songs	Adam Morawski
Vote of thanks	
ORION and POLONEZ choirs	
National Anthems	
Departure of standards	

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Dedication of the Rotherham SPK Standard, 1981.

1980s

1948

1981



Kolo Nr. 445  
w

Rotherham.

Przekazanie Sztandaru  
przez

Prezesa S.P.K. na W. Brytanie  
Kol. Z. Szadkowskiego.

5go Lipca 1981.

Dedication of the Rotherham SPK Standard, 1981.

## 1980s



The pilgrimage to Crystal Palace for Pope John Paul II's visit, May 1982.

Left to right: Mr M. Macko, Ms K. Grabowska, Mr J. Wasilewski, Mr M.T. Connor, Mrs Kozłowska, Mrs A. Zaleśna, Mrs K. Cieniuch, Mrs Sadepton, Ms C. Majer. Back row: left to right: Mr L. Wasilewski, Mrs and Mr Rozkiewicz, Mr Klementowski, Mr Smoczyński Jnr, Mr Smoczyński, Mr Dudziak, Mr Grabowski, Mr Góral, Mrs T. Leśniak, unknown, Ms J. Leśniak, Mrs Nowak, Mrs Kosińska, Mrs M. Jałowiczor, unknown, Mrs D. Majer, Mr W. Gąsiorski, Mr Michalski, Mr Majer and Mr Stajniak.



Rotherham welcomes Pope John Paul II.

## 1980s

### Football

The SPK had a widespread network of national football clubs in Great Britain.



Rotherham Polish footballers held their presentation night to celebrate having won the Polish FA Cup competition in Great Britain. At the presentation were (from left) Zygmunt Szeńeman (past captain), Joseph Rytal (chairman), Stephen Mayer (captain), Councillor Joe Allott (Deputy Mayor) and his wife, Mrs Doris Allott, and Michael Ossowski (secretary and trainer). F7415AF.

Rotherham Advertiser, 1982.



Drużyna KKS KORONA z Rotherham która w 1982 roku zdobyła mistrzostwo piłkarskie drużyn polskich w W. Brytanii.

Stoją od lewej: Józef Dudziak (gospodarczy, Jan M. Ossowski (kierownik klubu), Marcin Niemas, Paweł Skirka, Michał Teskowski (kapitan), Neil Hartshorn, Paweł Renuz, Zygmunt Szeńeman (powyżej tablicy) – kapitan Korony z 1948 r., Józef Rytel (prezes klubu) Robert Raszyk i Leon Parol – by ty zawodnik Korony z 1948r. Klęczą: Jan Bolda, Krzysztof Gosling, Ryszard Szołomicki, Stefan Majer, Michał Palmowski, Gary Palmowski i Jan Lipski.

Drużyna KKS KORONA – młodzików do lat 14. Mistrz w latach 1983 i 1984.

Stoją od lewej: A. Mars, D. Szewczyk, M. Lennox, G. Swift, F. Wentura, D. Egan, F. Majer (kapitan), K. Slak, S. Curd, wiceprezes T. Batorowicz, N. Stringer, J. Ossowski (kierownik Korony). W tyle kierownik drużyny D. Charlesworth. Klęczą: D. Charlesworth, N. Miller, M. Wovk, R. Izdebski, S. Spiewak i K. Jasiński.



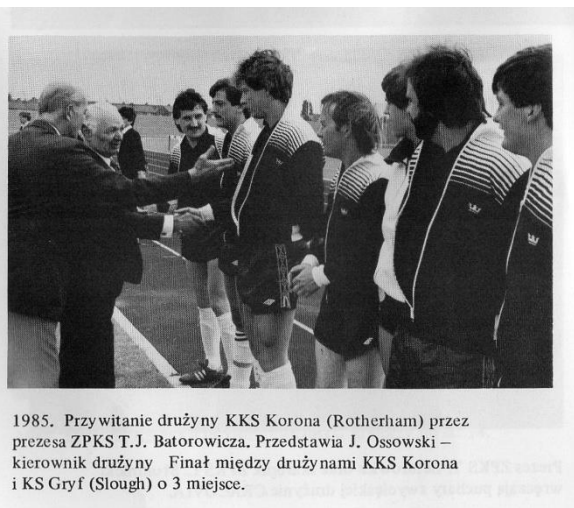
In 1982 seniors win the Polish FA Cup competition. In 1983 and 1984 the U14 are British champions.

## 1980s

SPK clubs had a typical Polish name in addition to the name of the English town/ city which they represented.



1984 the UK final between the youth teams, held at Herringthorpe Stadium. The Chairman of the ZPKS (The Union of Polish Football Clubs in the UK) Tadeusz Batorowicz greets HKS Warta (Derby). On the right is K.K.S. Korona (Rotherham).



1985 saw another success for K.K.S. Korona (Rotherham). The photos show the Chairman handing out trophies for third place to the Captain of the Rotherham team. Rotherham may be found in the honours list of the various cups awarded to the Polish FA in the UK.

## 1980s

### Puchar Przechodni SPK im. gen. WŁADYSŁAWA ANDERSA ponownie ufundowany w 1981 roku

1981 – KKS. Karpaczycy (Amersham) – KS. Polonia (Londyn) 3:2  
 1982 – KKS. Karpaczycy (Amersham) – KKS. Korona (Rotherham) 1:3  
 1983 – KS. Warta (Derby) – KS. Varsovia (Londyn) 3:0  
 1984 – KKS. Unitas (Manchester) – KKS. Karpaczycy (Amersham) 3:5  
 1985 – SKS. Błyskawica (Swindon) – P.K.S. (Nottingham) 4:1  
 1986 – KKS. Karpaczycy (Swindon) – KKS. Unitas (Manchester) 7:5  
 Mecz kończy się 2:2 po rzutach karnych  
 1987 – K.K.S. Unitas (Manchester) – K.S. Varsovia (Londyn) 4:2



Puchar Przechodni SPK im. gen. KAZIMIERZA GLABISZA ufundowany w 1982 roku

II miejsce Seniorów

1982 – KKS. Karpaczycy (Amersham)  
 1983 – KS. Varsovia (Londyn)  
 1984 – KKS. Unitas (Manchester)  
 1985 – PKS. Nottingham  
 1986 – KKS. Unitas (Manchester)  
 1987 – K.S. Varsovia (Londyn)

### Puchar Przechodni „POCIESZENIA” ufundowany przez Związek Polskich Spadochroniarzy w 1983 r.

1983 – KKS. Wisła (Rotherham)  
 1984 – P.K.S. Warta (Derby)  
 1985 – KKS. Unitas (Manchester)  
 1986 – KS. Gryf (Slough)  
 1987 – K.S. Podhale (Londyn)

### Puchar Przechodni „MONTE CASSINO” za wszechstronną działalność sportową dla „Klubu Sportowego Roku” ufundowany przez Krechowiaka Bolesława Paślawskiego w 1970 roku. Puchar jest wręczany na Walnym Zebraniu Z.P.K.S.



1970 – KS. Lechia – Leeds  
 1971 – KKS. Polonia – Bradford  
 1972 – KS. Młodzi – Londyn  
 1973 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1974 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1975 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1976 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1977 – SKS. Błyskawica – Swindon  
 1978 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1979 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1980 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1981 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham – Puchar symboliczny  
 1981 – KKS. Polonia – Bradford – otrzymała Puchar właściwy  
 1982 – PKS. Warta – Derby  
 1983 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1984 – PKS. Warta – Derby  
 1985 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham  
 1986 – PKS. Warta – Derby  
 1987 – KS. Pogoń – Birmingham

### Puchar Przechodni Z.P.K.S. ufundowany przez mjr. T. BATOROWICZ – prezesa Z.P.K.S. w 1987 roku

III miejsce Seniorów



1987 – K.S. Gryf (Slough)

The Polish FA Cups in Great Britain took their names from WWII Polish Generals, such as General Anders, or famous WWII Battles involving Poles, such as the Battle of Monte Cassino.

## 1980s


### Poles Honour Compatriot



Members of the Rotherham Polish Community pictured at a celebration at the St Bede's Roman Catholic Club, Masborough, to mark the founding of the Polish Nation, in 1791. J5535.

From left: Mr F. Heczko, Mr M.T. Connor; from the first right Major Folik, and Mr Szablewski. A more accurate caption would be 'a celebration commemorating the promulgation of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Polish Constitution in 1791'.

## Poles honour compatriot



Mr Michael T. Connor, left, has been presented with the Gold Cross of Merit at a ceremony organised by the Rotherham Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association to commemorate the promulgation of the May 3 Constitution in 1791.

The cross, for services to the Polish community, was presented at Rotherham Catholic Club, by Mr Witold Szablewski, delegate of the Polish Government-in-exile.

Mr Connor has served with many local organisations including the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association, the Arts Council and Rotherham Community Relations Council, the Friday Club and the French Circle, giving talks on Poland and assisting with translating letters into Polish and vice-versa.

He was born at a time when Poland had been emptied by occupying countries and, after independence in 1918, his parents emigrated to France.

After the fall of France in 1940, he came to England with the Polish forces and anglicised his name to Conner. He graduated at Durham University in 1948.

At the same ceremony, Edith Szeneman, Faye Heczko, K. Mars and Darius Mars received the silver badge of the association.

Rotherham Advertiser, circa 1983.



## 1980s

### Poles Honour Compatriot.



From left: Mr D. Charlesworth, Mr D. Mars, in the centre is Mrs F. Heczko, Mrs K. Mars, Mr. F. Heczko, Mr M.T. Connor, by the door is Mr K. Śliwa; the celebration commemorating the promulgation of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Polish Constitution in 1791, St. Bede's Community Hall @1983.



Mr F. Heczko receiving honours from Sheffield SPK; the celebration commemorating the promulgation of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Polish Constitution in 1791, St. Bede's Community Hall @1983.

## 1980s



From left: Mr F. Heczko, Mr W. Mańka, Fr. Bober, Mr W. Żuk, Mrs M. Mars, unknown. Presentation of the Papal Blessing to Mr Mańka on the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Autumn, 1985.



Left to right: front row, Mr M. Majer, Mr J. Rybak, Mr W. Żuk, Mr M. Macko; second row: Mrs Rowbotham, Mr Hanisz, Mr Haliburda, Mrs M. Mars; back row: Mr K. Śliwa, Mrs H. Borowicz, Mrs A. Zaleśna, Mr J. Borowicz, Mr W. Mańka, Mrs T. Banaś, Mr M. Zaleśny, Fr. Bober, Mrs M. Jałowiczor, Mr P. Jałowiczor (author), Mr F. Heczko, Mr J. Kopicik, unknown. Photocall after the presentation.

## 1980s



Remembrance Sunday March through Rotherham Town Centre with Polish Ex-Servicemen, at top Mr F. Heczko bearing the SPK Standard, Mr M.T. Connor and Mr W. Grabowski, 1985.



Remembrance Sunday March through Rotherham Town Centre with Polish Ex-Servicemen. Mr F. Heczko with the standard, Mrs F. Heczko and Mr M.T. Connor, 1985.

## 1980s



Rotherham SPK at Newark Cemetery, with Mr F. Heczko, Mr W. Grabowski and Mr K. Michalski carrying the standard, Newark 1988.



Sheffield SPK (near left and right) with two younger Rotherham SPK representatives (to the immediate left of the cross) who were visiting Rotherham from Poland at the time, Newark 1988.

## 1980s



Mr F. Heczko and Mr M. Macko discuss the community Christmas arrangements; behind them Mr K. Śliwa and Mr K. Michalski at the former St. Bede's School, 1988.



Left to right: Mr M.T. Connor, Mrs Connor, Mr F. Heczko, Mrs S. Raczkowska, Mr W. Gąsiorski, Mr J. Kopicik and Mr J. Stajniak, taken in the late 1980s.

## 1990s



Left to right: Mr K. Michalski, Polish Army Major Folik, Mr M.T. Connor, Fr. Tylka, Mr. W. Gašiorski and Mr M. Macko at the former St. Bede's Junior School (the location of the Polish School in the 1950s). The equipment in the background was owned by the author who was also the DJ! Easter 1992.

### **Recollections**

The decade immediately following the war (the 1950s) saw the first generation of children born to Poles here in the UK. The idea arose of imparting the traditions and culture of their forebears to this generation. This was achieved with the establishment of a Polish Saturday school whose aim was to teach the language and cultural background of Poland. As another generation was born, they were educated in English schools and some completed higher education studies and left Rotherham altogether. A few left the UK to take up professional positions abroad. Of the generation who settled in Rotherham after the war, notable educated people included: Dr. Kom, Dr. Dziemidko, Dr. Hilewicz and Mr M.T. Connor (French teacher - University educated).

Gradually as we started getting older, nature took its toll. By the end of the twentieth century, the original founders of the Polish community in Rotherham were dying out and we were in danger of disappearing altogether, there were so few of us left. However, towards the end of the last century, events in Eastern Europe led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism. The Eastern block was free. In 2004, Poland was able to join the EU and England again opened its doors to Poles. Thousands arrived here to seek employment. As one chapter of the Polish story in Rotherham closed, suddenly a new one opened.

**Marian Macko.**