

## Stankiewicz Family

Krzyś Stankiewicz recalls his father's story:-

Dad and his family - (Grand)Father Teofil, (Grand)Mother Małgorzata and elder brother Maciek - left Kielce on the very first day of the War. Grandfather Teofil - a superb linguist who spoke nine languages, including German and Russian - was in Polish Military Counter-Intelligence and was on a Gestapo 'Wanted' list. He was a major in the Polish army and also an army judge (he was a lawyer by training). On the morning of 1 September, his local regiment said 'the Germans are getting close (before the war, Kielce wasn't all that far from the German Silesian border), you've got 2 or 3 hours to pack what you can and we'll send a staff car to take you to safety'.

Safety - a very relative term! - meant going east, and after a few days, they came to Tarnopol, now Ternopil in west Ukraine, then in the old province of Galicia (which had been ruled for 126 years by Austria Hungary after the second Partition in 1792). By 17 September, when the USSR attacked from the east the family were in Zaleszczyki, a pre-war inland resort, picturesquely situated on the River Dniester, on the Polish-Rumanian border. Mum, who was from the eastern 'Kresy', knew it well.

The Red Army shut the border after fierce fighting in the Zaleszczyki area. The Poles had suffered severe casualties and the local Polish medical facilities were simply unable to deal with them all. At that time friendly relations still prevailed between Poland and Rumania and the Rumanians had indicated they were prepared to take the wounded Poles and provide them with medical help. Grandfather interceded on their behalf with the Russian Colonel in Zaleszczyki, asking that one last train be put on so that the casualties could be transported, I think to Cernauti just over the border in northern Bukovina. Cernauti, an ancient Jewish centre, used to be the old Polish pre-Partition Czernowce, the Austro-Hungarian Czernowitz, and now Ukrainian Chernovtsy - that border hasn't half shifted over the years! The Russian Colonel agreed - furthermore, he agreed to a number of extra carriages for local Polish civilians to be attached as well. Dad and his family left on the last train out of that part of east Poland. By rights Granddad, as a Polish officer, should have been arrested; perhaps one humanitarian act deserved another, and the Colonel spared him. Otherwise he would most likely have finished up in Katyń or Starobielsk... It doesn't bear thinking about.

They spent three months in Rumania, and then early in January 1940, after the Germans had crossed into northern Rumania to take over the oil fields of Ploiești they had to flee again, this time through the old Yugoslavia, till they reached Venice. Dad remembered it was the coldest winter of the century and people were skating on the frozen Grand Canal! Though an Axis Power, the Italians seemed to be well-disposed to the Poles and 'waved' them on westwards to France. The family arrived in Paris in mid-January and were given a couple of rooms on the Île de la Cité, near Notre Dame Cathedral. Large numbers of Polish military personnel, together with some civilians, were already in France at the time. Many had arrived earlier after the 'September Campaign' had ended in the surrender of Warsaw on 27 September 1939. Dad attended a Polish school that had been set up in an administration building on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, near the Jardins de Luxembourg.

And then France fell in the second week of May and the family were on the run again, crabbing their way south-west towards the Atlantic. On the way they had to jettison most of their possessions and left them in a farmhouse outside Tours - never to be reclaimed. They arrived at Le Verdon-sur-Mer at the mouth of the Garonne near Bordeaux with just the clothes on their backs in late June 1940, and were evacuated on the Scottish Coal Steamer, the 'Clan Ferguson'. As the 'Clan' gamely steamed out of Le Verdon-sur-Mer into the Bay of Biscay they were bombed and strafed by a lone Stuka - happily the bombs and bullets weren't very accurate.

They arrived in Liverpool on 27 June 1940 and were sent initially to London where they stayed till the autumn. One of the places they stayed in was a University Hall of Residence in Queens Walk in west London. When I worked at Sainsburys in 1977-78 I lived not too far from there. I recall Dad visited me one weekend and we found Queens Walk - but not the Hall as it had been bombed during the Blitz.

Subsequently, they fetched up in Scotland where the Polish Army had been given the specific task of guarding the Scottish East Coast from Edinburgh up to Inverness. Dad remembered 'digs' in Broughty Ferry on the Tay opposite Dundee and in Montrose (where he remembered seeing the Northern Lights and playing tennis after 11 pm when it was British 'double' Summer Time during the War!). Dad and Uncle Maciek were sent to boarding school at St Joseph's College, Dumfries, run by the Marist Brothers, a French religious order. When he visited his old school in 1963, one of his teachers - I think he was called Brother Casimir - was still there; Brother Casimir's first question was 'Which Stankiewicz are you? The one who played rugby or the piano?!' Dad was a very good rugby player; Uncle Maciek a fine pianist.



Uncle Maciek (Zygmunt Maciej Stankiewicz), Dad (Wojciech Stankiewicz), Granny 'Owl' (Małgorzata Piasecka) – we called her 'Babcia (Granny) Puszczyk' ('puszczyk' is 'owl' in Polish) because of the owl-like glasses she wore! - and Uncle Stan (Stanisław Piasecki) are buried in the family grave in Southern Cemetery, Manchester.

Grandfather Teofil - who had contracted rheumatic fever of the heart in the trenches of the Eastern Front in WW1 as a cadet in the Tsarist Army - didn't survive long after WW2. He died in Edinburgh on 28 February 1946 and is buried in a 'double' grave in the Commonwealth War Graves section of Corstorphine Cemetery on Drum Brae in west Edinburgh.



Mike Stankiewicz recalls:—

I would just say, without going into too much detail, that Dad was in Liverpool in the immediate post-war period, before the move to Manchester.

Mr Silver then, as into the 1960's, had the baker's shop - best bagels in the 'Pool' - at the bottom of Brownlow Hill. In the early '80's when I was still working in Bootle Taxes; I sat next to a Murray Silver. Murray grinned broadly when I recounted all this - Mr Silver (I don't think Krzyś and I ever knew his first name...?) was his Dad. And the past effortlessly became the present - the best way for migrant odysseys to come alive.

So, for our family it wasn't just Manchester, but also Liverpool. Indeed, last year in 2017 there was a moving and rewarding meeting of Merseyside Polonia at which both myself and Eva Szegidewicz, Kresy Family secretary, gave personal and powerful accounts of our Kresy family histories, demonstrating the continuing importance of the Kresy to our individual and collective Polish heritage in North West-England.

As regards dear old Mr Bury - vividly in my mind's eye, as I'm writing - I always thought he might have been a bit earlier than 1958: I just have this quite strong memory that visits to his shop were over a longer period than 18 months. And could he possibly have been the first Polish shop not only in Manchester, but maybe in the North as a whole?

Krzyś also recalls:—

Dad's family also spent a bit of time in Blackpool at the back end of WW2; I'm not sure exactly when but probably in 1944 and the first half of 1945. The Polish Air Force UK HQ was in Blackpool, and I remember in 1979 the Polish Airmen's Club was still up and running - and serving superb meals! Their Head Chef from the Club's inception in 1945 had been trained in the 1930's at the Hotel Bristol, Warsaw's foremost hotel, built in 1899-1901 by a syndicate that included the world famous pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski, later to become Poland's Prime Minister between 1919-22.

The end of the War found Dad and his family in Liverpool; they had a small flat in one of the Georgian town houses on Catherine Street (no. 8 comes to mind but I could be wrong) round the back of the Philharmonic. The Church of St Philip Neri - also on Catherine Street - had a Polish Mass at midday on Sunday, while the Polish Club was on Ullet Road in Wavertree. In the late 40's and 50's there were perhaps 1500 Poles in Liverpool. In comparison Manchester had 10,000 - the second largest UK Polish Community after London.

Dad did his 'O' levels in the summer of 1945. Interestingly, though his school was in Scotland, the exams he took were those set by the NUJMB (Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board); when Mike and I sat our 'O' levels in 1967, these were also set by the NUJMB! Dad's results were good enough to get him onto a pre-University course - rather than doing 'A' levels, he started in October 1945 at the old Faculty of Technology at Manchester University in the 19th century building on Whitworth St, eventually graduating in 1949 with a BSc (Tech) degree in Electrical Engineering. This was an 'Ordinary', as opposed to an 'Honours', degree - but, because he obtained a Grade 1 in the 'Ordinary', he was given the opportunity to stay on for another year to 'upgrade' to Honours.

The Faculty later became UMIST (University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology). The original Faculty Building is still there where Chorlton Street meets Whitworth Street and is still part of the University. Our Mum and Dad met there on Dad's 21st birthday on 21 April 1950 in his 'upgrade' year, when Mum was collecting for Polish orphans. Departing the UK on 27 November last year on the coach leaving Chorlton Street Bus Station, the Faculty Building was in full view as the coach crept down Chorlton Street in the morning traffic - a very moving and poignant moment for me.



Mike recalls:-

A mildly interesting post-script on Blackpool and the Polish Air Force:

In 1982, when I was still in Bootle Taxes (and still sitting next to Murray Silver), I was asked by Regional Management to spend a couple of days helping the Revenue Investigation Team in Liverpool.

An Inspector had called....at the Gables Balmoral Hotel in Blackpool, at that time a very prominent landmark on the sea-front, featuring as it did the Crests of many Polish towns on its facade. It was run by a chap called Frank Bakalarski, and his wife. At the time Mike Brown, the Inspector, visited, Mrs B (an English lady) was furious with Frank. She'd banished him to an outhouse. Mike told me it was one of his stranger visits. He knocked, Frank opened, and explained:

There'd been a 40th Anniversary Battle of Britain Re-union of Polish pilots, many of them old mates of his, at the hotel. It had gone off very well. Some of the veterans had come from as far as Argentina. But what he hadn't mentioned to his wife was that he'd used a lot of the hotel takings to pay for these lads to come over. His wife only found out when the books were being done.

Anyway, Frank had a fair amount of papers with him in the shed, and said that Mike was welcome to them. Mike scooped up the (literally) shed-load - only to find, when he got back to Liverpool, that they were mostly in Polish! Step in yours truly....It's all part of the rich Heritage tapestry.

Kryzś recalls his mother's story:-

Mum was 14 when WW2 broke out; Dad was 10. Their war time experiences were different - and were differently received and absorbed.

In Mum's case her family lived in Krzemieniec (modern-day Kremenets), then in the south of the ancient 'Kresy' province of Wolyn, now in Ternopil (pre-War Polish Tarnopol) Oblast (County) in west Ukraine. Grandfather Jan Beaupré was the last Polish mayor or 'Burmistrz' of Krzemieniec. The pre-war Polish 'Burmistrz' was a salaried, rather than purely ceremonial post, subject to election every 5 years. In the spring of 1939, Grandad was elected for an unprecedented fourth term.

In common with many towns in the former Jewish Pale of Settlement (as the area from modern day Lithuania down to Podolia in south Ukraine, once part of the old Polish Rzeczpospolita, became known under Tsarist Russian partition because of its substantial Jewish population) there was a large Jewish community in Krzemieniec - around 40% of the population of 25,000. Another 40% was Ukrainian; the Poles trailed in a distant third with 15%. The other 5% were Armenians, Greeks, Russians and Belarusians. Mum also remembered going to school with a girl called Cathy Gordon - the family were descendants of Scottish mercenaries who had fought in the Polish army in the 17th century! Indeed, a fictitious Scot called Hassling-Ketling of Elgin appears in Henryk Sienkiewicz's famous 'Trilogy', his character based on a real Scot who became a Colonel in the Army of the Rzeczpospolita during the time of the Swedish 'Deluge' in the 1650's.

Grandad seemed to have the ear of all the three main Community Groups - though the Ukrainians in particular didn't like the way he was friendly with the Jews, and were known to mutter about him, calling him the 'Zydivskiy Batko' - literally 'The Father of the Jews'. Grandad took it as a compliment; indeed two of his best friends were the Borough Engineer David Katz and the town's most prominent lawyer, Yoshua Golberg. On Grandad's advice both emigrated to Palestine in the late 30's, as they already had family there. Mr Katz's family in Palestine were fruit growers; up until 1983 we used to get a crate of succulent oranges and grapefruits every Xmas direct from their farm - magnificent!

As for Mr Golberg, please see below, the lovely Obituary written by him on Grandad's death in 1978, and published in the 'Kremenitzer Voice', the quarterly publication he and surviving Jews from Krzemieniec produced till the early 80's. Though the obituary is in English it's very clear, from a number of phrases and idioms - including the first line of the title - it was originally written in Polish. From what you read and see in the news and media today you'd think Poles and Jews were eternal sworn enemies. It wasn't always like that....

When the Soviet Union invaded east Poland on 17 September 1939, Grandad was one of the first people to be arrested when they marched into Krzemieniec on 20 September. I recall him telling me, with mordant humour, that he spent a number of months in 'his jail' under the Town Hall in Krzemieniec till he was deported in May 1940 to the Komi SSR well inside the Arctic Circle in the far north-west of the Soviet Union. At the same time Mum and her Mum, our Grandmother, Ludmilla Beaupré, were deported to the 'Posiolek Zimny' - the aptly-named 'Cold Settlement' in Sverdlovskaya Oblast (now Ekaterinburg) in the western Urals.

Conditions were indescribable and more than two-thirds of the 1.7 million deported to Siberia died either of the cold (temperatures in winter dropped to below -40°C) or of starvation or illness or all three. Mum recalled that the gates to the 'posiołek' were open and there were no guards; however, the nearest village was 15 km away through a forest full of wolves and under three feet of snow for five months of the year.... Supplies came in periodically from Sverdlovsk itself, brought in by armoured vehicles.

Mum and Granny survived as much as anything due to the resourcefulness of Granny 'Luda' as she was universally known. Half-Russian - her father, Mikhail Voloshanovich, was a Russian civil servant in Kamieniec Podolski in Tsarist Russia where Granny was born in 1899 - she spoke fluent Russian and was a quick-thinking, natural survivor. She was an attractive woman (the 'Belle' of the Officers' Mess at the 12th Podolian Lancers, who were stationed in Białokrynica just outside Krzemieniec before WW II) and caught the eye of the camp commandant, a man called Nikitin, married to a demanding and hectoring wife. Granny had managed to smuggle out lots of elegant dresses, night clothes, even fur stoles, and she would periodically trade these with Nikitin for food and more

practical clothing - a grateful Nikitin would give these unheard-of luxuries to his wife to keep her happy and off his back!

Mr Golberg's Obituary, so full of love and respect for Grandad.

In Holy Memory:  
Mayor of the Town of Kremenets,  
Jan Beaupré  
Y. Golberg

*If I go back 45 years in my mind's eye to our beloved Kremenets, I see the noble figure of our mayor of holy memory, Jan Beaupré, before me. I see him riding to work at the town hall in a fire department carriage hitched to two horses, with a driver on the front seat.*

*I see his kind face with a perpetual smile on his lips in response to greetings from passing residents. We named him "our" mayor. This word "our" as it related to Mayor Jan Beaupré had a much deeper meaning because he was a congenial, friendly person, did not put on airs, and used the same language and approach with the town's intelligentsia as he did with the many layers of craftsmen and merchants.*

*He was a just, honest person who treated each citizen of our town fairly without regard to faith or nationality.*

*It is worth noting his close cooperation with Jewish councilmen Brodski, Gershteyn, Kremenetski, Fingerut, and the lawyer Landsberg as well as with the engineers of the town's electrical power plant, Lisi and David Katz, with whom he even developed friendships.*

*He was a remarkable manager. He built schools and orphanages, paved streets, widened sidewalks, and cared about the development of hospitals and our town's sanitation needs.*

*The relationship of the Jewish community with "our" mayor was one of adoration and respect in the spirit of the old Polish slogan:*

*"He who is noble is not indifferent to us."*

*Let the earth be light to him – Sit terra levis.*

*In this manner, we offer our condolences to the mayor's wife and daughter and to the rest of the family, as well as our deepest sympathy on the loss of their husband, father, and grandfather. – Organization of Kremenetsers in Israel*

*In Holy Memory Jan Beaupré descendant of a family of uprising fighters, a just person full of goodness, remarkable manager-mayor of beloved Kremenets from 1922 to 1939, Soviet prisoner, awarded the Silver and Gold Cross of Merit, honorary Knight of the Sign of the Regiment, died in the 94th year of his life on 8 November, 1978 in England. Holy Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, 25 November, at 10:30, at Little Brompton Oratory. With deep sorrow, we Kremenetsers CIRCLE OF THE 12TH REGIMENT OF THE PODOLSKI ULANS bid farewell. Instead of flowers, we ask that donations be made to the House of Peaceful Old Age, Laxton Hall, Corby, Northants.*

After leaving Isfahan at the end of the War, Mum and her parents found themselves in Beirut. On being released from the camps, Grandad had joined Anders' Army in the Middle East. Too old for active service he was posted to the Polish NAAFI and gained the rank of sergeant.

They finally left the Lebanon in February 1948. Once the Lebanese Authorities had said - with some sadness it seems - that they were no longer able to support Polish refugees, the Poles were given a choice of either France or the UK. 'The UK' said Grandad, without hesitation. Mum had spent a

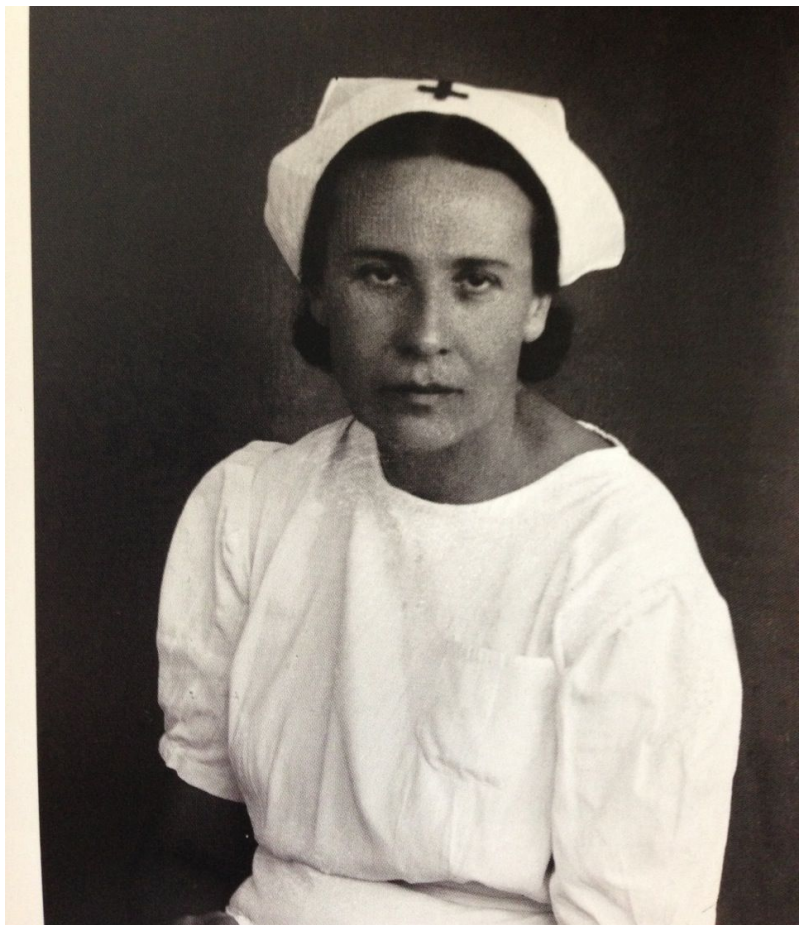
couple of years at the American University of Beirut and knew English quite well, so that no doubt helped in making this decision as well.

They arrived to a grey, austere, war-damaged UK. Initially they spent time in various camps for 'Displaced Persons'. I can recall at least four that they mentioned - Petworth, Pulborough (West Chilmington Camp) and Cowdray Park, all in Sussex, the last situated on Viscount Cowdray's estate. The fourth - and by far the largest - was Doddington, in Cheshire not too far from Crewe. Eventually the Poles from Doddington were dispersed throughout the North-West, with the majority going to Manchester where there were employment opportunities even in those difficult times. However, many stayed in Crewe and this might explain why Crewe also drew a large number of migrants after Poland joined the EU in May 2004.

I'm not sure how long they stayed in the camps but it was probably for the best part of a year. I know that by 1949 they were in Manchester, and with his 'demob' money Grandad was able to buy a house in Clarence Road in Longsight - and still have change 'for fish and chips' as they say, as the house cost all of £150 (and I think his Army 'lump sum' was £250)! Mum resumed her studies - English and History - at Manchester University; I believe her two years at the American University in Beirut were partly taken into account and she was able to go straight into the second year. She and Dad met at Manchester University on his 21st birthday on 21 April 1950. By that time the house in Clarence Road had been done up and sold, and Mum and her parents were living at 2 Ash Grove in Victoria Park, just round the corner from Clarence Road. For Mike and myself this was our first family home, from when we were born in May 1952 to when we moved to St Helens on 29 December 1959.

Her wartime experiences had taken its toll on Mum's health. She had nearly died of typhus in Karkin-Batash in Uzbekistan on the way south to Iran, and soon after she came to the UK she was ill with TB for many months. Though she worked as a teacher (mainly history) till she retired in 1986, her health never fully recovered and I can recall her frequently being unwell and generally exhausted. Her parents lived with us both in Manchester and in St Helens and the indefatigable Granny Luda ran the household on a day-to-day basis.

Photo of our Granny, Ludmila Beaupré, known universally as 'Luda', in her Red Cross Nurse uniform, taken in Isfahan in 1944. Granny, a feisty personality, worked in the Armenian hospital and had legendary 'stand up' rows - in Russian - with the Hospital Registrar, the choleric and volatile Dr Melikian.



Recollections by Krzyś and Mike Stankiewicz  
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