

Polish Troops in Perth & Kinross During the Second World War

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This article is based on research done for a publication on the experience of communities throughout Europe of the presence of Polish troops during the Second World War. Drawing mainly on the correspondence files of Perth town council and local newspapers it traces the relationships that developed between Poles and their Scottish hosts after Polish troops were given the task of guarding the east coast of Scotland in 1940. The town council extended the hand of friendship and this set the tone for many formal and informal connections, including some of a romantic nature. The experience of Perth may well be typical of a lot of communities in the east of Scotland, as the many plaques on local town halls would suggest. The article concludes by looking at the more recent influx of Polish citizens to the area. It was written before the European Referendum of 2016.

On 21 November 1940 Janusz Ulrych-Ulenski was buried in Perth. He was described as a Polish Cadet, aged 37, who had died at Bridge of Earn Hospital, a short distance from Perth.¹ He was the first of approximately 400 Polish servicemen buried in the war graves at Perth's Jeanfield Cemetery. In fact, the vast majority of the burials there are of Polish soldiers, a very solemn memorial of the time that Polish troops spent in this area.

How the unfortunate Janusz arrived in Perthshire is not clear, but he was probably a member of the Polish Army that began forming in France in the Autumn of 1939 after the fall of Poland to invasion by Germany from the west and the Soviet Union from the east. A Polish government-in-exile was formed in France with Władysław Raczkiewicz as president and General Władysław Sikorski as prime minister and commander-in-chief of the Polish armed forces. The general had escaped through Romania to Paris and many other Poles came via a variety of routes to join their compatriots and render assistance to their French allies against the common foe Germany. After the fall of France in June 1940, the government-in-exile relocated to London and the task of organising the surviving Polish armed forces continued with the help of its British allies. A significant number of Polish soldiers had managed to join in the evacuation from Dunkirk after the German *blitzkrieg* had swept all before them.

In October 1940 the Polish army in Scotland took over the defence of a large section of the Scottish east coast, from Burntisland in Fife to Montrose in Angus. The headquarters of the 1st Polish Corps was at Moncreiffe House,

¹ Perth and Kinross Archive, A. K. Bell Library, Perth (referred to hereafter as PKA), PE1/20/73 and /74, Registers of Polish war graves, 1940–47.

Bridge of Earn, and a number of other Scottish country houses and estates were requisitioned for its use.² There were also several camps in the city and county of Perth. Tulloch Works on the outskirts of Perth were requisitioned by the Secretary for War from the dyeing and dry-cleaning firm of John Pullar & Sons Ltd³ and used by the 1st Polish Armoured Car Regiment. The newspaper reports of the time are sometimes a little coy about the exact location of such camps. The press was subject to censorship, but also careful to regulate itself so that useful information on troop movements and whereabouts should not fall into enemy hands. Often events involving Polish troops are described as happening ‘somewhere in Perthshire’, or even just ‘somewhere in Scotland’. Dupplin Castle near Perth was used as a military hospital and quite a number of the Polish soldiers buried in Perth died there. Taymouth Castle at Kenmore housed the Polish military hospital throughout the war and beyond.⁴ Much of this article will relate to the relationships that developed between local councillors and officials and those officers and men associated with the Tulloch Works, as gleaned from the surviving files of Perth Town Council and local press reports.

Cultural activities were one of the earliest ways in which the Poles made an impression in the area. The Polish Army choir that performed at Abernethy provided a ‘truly magnificent concert’ before going on to perform at the Playhouse in Perth.⁵ A Polish concert party appeared in the Garrison Theatre at the Alhambra Cinema in an entertainment for the forces in Perth.⁶

In November 1940, M. I. Kolin (Publishers) Ltd, 36 Great Russell Street, London, announced the opening of a branch at 28 King Edward Street, Perth. The Polish Library Centre, as it was described in the press, stocked books in Polish, books in English about Poland and Polish-language newspapers. It was felt that ‘centrally situated as Perth is, the branch will supply a felt want to

² A. Carswell, *For Your Freedom and Ours: Poland, Scotland and the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 1993).

³ PKA, CC1 8/3/152–154, Perth Burgh Valuation Rolls, 1939–41.

⁴ PKA, PE 1/20/73 and /74, Registers of Polish war graves, 1940–47. The locations mentioned for deceased Polish troops are: Bridge of Earn Hospital, Dupplin Castle Military Hospital, Tulloch Works, Perth Royal Infirmary, Balcomie (Crieff), Taymouth Castle Military Hospital, Aberfeldy, Central District School (Perth), Easter Moncrieff (Bridge of Earn), Murray’s Asylum (Perth), Killin Hospital, Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital, Craigend (Weem), Loyal Camp (Alyth), Bendochy, Findo Gask Camp, Bonskeid House (Pitlochry), Kinnaird House (Dunkeld), St Andrews Church Hall (Blairgowrie), Turfhill Camp (Kinross), Inverardoch (Doune), HM Prison (Perth), Auchmore Hospital (Killin), Market Park Camp (Crieff), Strowan House (Crieff), Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital and Rose Cottage (Comrie).

⁵ Local & Family History, A. K. Bell Library, Perth (hereafter referred to as L&FH), *Perthshire Advertiser*, 2 November 1940.

⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 4 December 1940.

the different units'.⁷ One Perth citizen remembers that proofreading of Polish publications was initially undertaken, with some difficulty, by local staff.⁸

Any events involving the Polish troops were faithfully reported in the local press. The visit of President Raczkiewicz to Scotland, probably to Tulloch Works, was photographed for inclusion,⁹ as was General Sikorski's visit to Perthshire to award the *Virtuti Militari* and other medals to Polish troops for bravery in action during the German invasion of Poland.¹⁰ Preparations for the celebration of the 22nd anniversary of the liberation of western Poland from German rule and the event itself were well covered. About 300 veterans of 1918 joined President Raczkiewicz and senior Polish officers at the Alhambra, Perth.¹¹ Also reported upon was a lecture given by Miss Marta Korwin, the pseudonym of a famous Polish pianist, who had commanded the military hospitals in Warsaw before serving in France and then escaping from Bordeaux in a commandeered French steamer.¹²

Official social contacts were soon established and Polish officers were invited by Lord Provost Robert Nimmo to a civic reception in the City Chambers, Perth on 17 December 1940. A warm welcome was extended by the Lord Provost with General Marian Kukiel, commanding officer of the 1st Polish Corps, replying on behalf of the Polish guests.¹³ In organising the event the Town Clerk liaised with the Polish Town Major, Lt Col. Pajaczkowski, who was based at the Southern District School in Nelson Street, Perth. Polish flags were borrowed from the officer commanding the Polish Detachment at Tulloch Works, Perth.¹⁴ At about the same time approximately £150 was raised locally for the Polish Relief Fund. Blankets and clothes were also sent to the appeal.¹⁵ Polish officers were also most generous in their support of collections for 'comforts' for British prisoners of war, £80 was contributed by those at Newburgh 'in a few minutes'.¹⁶

The Polish officers in Perth made quite an impression on the citizens. The first ones to venture into the Fair City Bar in the High Street were notable by drinking brandy, using cigarette holders and wearing 'perfume', none of which were very common in the pubs of Perth.¹⁷

⁷ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 16 November 1940.

⁸ Informant Mr G. S. Keay, Perth, 28 July 1997.

⁹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 November 1940.

¹⁰ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 1 January 1941.

¹¹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 21 and 28 December 1940, and 1 January 1941.

¹² L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 20 November and 11 December 1940.

¹³ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 18 December 1940.

¹⁴ PKA, Perth Town Council, Magistrates, PTC Box 369, File 13.

¹⁵ PKA, Perth Town Council, Special Committees, Box 370, File 5.

¹⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 7 December 1940.

¹⁷ Informant Mr Andrew Allwell, 29 July 1997, a young barman in his aunt's public house, the Fair City Bar, High Street, Perth in 1940. See also Carswell, *For Your Freedom and Ours*, 6: 'The immaculately turned-out cavalry officer, complete with title, cigarette holder,

Even though Scotland was a predominantly Protestant country there did seem to be a certain fascination with the ceremonials of the mainly Roman Catholic Polish troops. The military funeral at Auchterarder Cemetery of two unfortunate Polish soldiers killed in a road accident was headlined as an ‘impressive ceremonial’.¹⁸ The Polish Christmas Eve party at Abernethy, attended by local guests, was described as a ‘unique and memorable function’.¹⁹ The All Souls’ Day ceremony at ‘a Perthshire Cemetery’ in memory of Poland’s dead was also well covered in the press.²⁰

Somewhat surprisingly a conference of scoutmasters, now serving in the Polish Army, was held at Perth in December 1940. Plans for the future of Polish scouting were discussed along with proposed collaboration with British Scouts and contacts with Scottish youth.²¹ The results of these resolutions were soon seen as twelve Polish soldiers, all Scouts in their homeland, were the guests of Perth Wolf Cubs early in the new year²² and serving Polish Scouts joined a tribute to Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the movement, at Monzie.²³ These contacts seem to have continued and there are further photographs of Polish soldiers, Scouts in their own country, showing the Craigie troop in Perth some of their national games.²⁴ Local Cubs and Scouts reciprocated by collecting comforts to send to Polish refugees in Russia.²⁵

In order to repay some of the hospitality received from their Scottish hosts, Polish officers organised an informal reception at Perth Station Hotel on Sunday, 26 January 1941. Hand-painted programmes drawn by one of the NCOs and depicting Polish military uniforms of the nineteenth century were much in demand according to the press report.²⁶

The ordinary soldiers also made their connections with the local people. A Polish soldier pulled a local widow out of Perth Harbour after she had fallen into the water in the dark of the blackout. Unfortunately, attempts to revive her were unsuccessful.²⁷ Polish soldiers were well represented at the opening of the Welcome Club at 17 Atholl Street, Perth.²⁸ In March 1941 the first photograph of a marriage between a Perth girl and a Polish soldier appeared in the *Perthshire Advertiser* when Miss Isabella Johnstone and Sergeant Maksymilian Grzedzicki

briefcase, and – most shocking of all – *eau de Cologne*, became as much a part of the popular image of wartime Glasgow as air raid shelters and rationing.’

¹⁸ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 7 December 1940.

¹⁹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 28 December 1940.

²⁰ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 5 November 1941.

²¹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 25 December 1940.

²² L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 15 January 1941.

²³ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 22 January 1941.

²⁴ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 5 November 1941.

²⁵ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 17 January 1942.

²⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 29 January 1941.

²⁷ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 21 January 1942.

²⁸ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 8 January 1941.

were united at St John's Roman Catholic Church in Perth.²⁹ Several similar photographs appeared in this newspaper in the months that followed.

Sporting contacts were also an important means of building up friendship. An athletics competition between Polish and British servicemen was held at Alloa in the neighbouring county of Clackmannan. The Perth Black Hawks narrowly defeated the Polish Air Force 5–4 in an ice hockey match in front of a good crowd at Perth Ice Rink, and the Scottish troops also triumphed 2–1 over the Polish troops in a football match at the Laggan Park, Comrie (40 Poles being entertained for dinner in the new school after the match).³⁰ In Perth the Polish table-tennis team came within a whisker of whitewashing a local team, the Warsaw champion Zajac being a member of the Polish contingent.³¹

There were occasional problems connected with the Polish influx. Perth was a protected area, which meant that aliens were not allowed there without specific permission. Three Polish officers' wives found themselves brought before the sheriff court for having entered Perth without permission. The process of obtaining permission was quite complicated, involving the approval of the application by the Polish and British military authorities as well as the local police and obviously the women became impatient to join their husbands. The Chief Constable felt that the presence of so many Poles in the city had given him some problems. In earlier cases in which leniency had been shown to Polish civilians without the proper paperwork the people in question had eventually been considered as undesirable in the protected area. This particular case was really just a warning to others to adopt the correct procedure, but one of the women, whose permit had not arrived before the case was heard was forced to remove to Cupar in Fife, for which place she had a permit.³²

Further efforts to strengthen the bonds of friendship were made by the gift of twenty copies of *Poland & Scotland*, a booklet concerning Scottish–Polish relations in previous centuries, to the Town Council by Lt Col. Pajaczkowski.³³

On Sunday, 15 June 1941, a Polish National Victory Procession took place in Perth, starting from the North Inch³⁴ and proceeding by way of Rose Terrace, Barossa Place, Melville Street, Atholl Street and Rose Terrace back to the original starting point, with short pauses for prayer. The original plan to hold the event in St John's Roman Catholic Church in Melville Street had proved unworkable in view of the 400 people expected. President Raczkiewicz and the Bishop of the Polish forces were to be in attendance and a platform

²⁹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 8 March 1941.

³⁰ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 28 December 1940.

³¹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 22 January 1941.

³² L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 4 December 1940.

³³ PKA, Perth Town Council, Magistrates (General), Box 379, File 17 and Special Committees, Box 380, File 5.

³⁴ The North and South Inches are two areas of open parkland located close to the centre of the city. The North Inch, which adjoins the River Tay, was the scene of the Battle of the Clans in 1396 described by Sir Walter Scott in *The Fair Maid of Perth*.

was borrowed from the Town Council for the occasion.³⁵ The pictures in the local press also show Polish girls performing folk dances after the procession.³⁶ Wartime inhabitants of Perth can vividly remember the sound of the Polish Army band and the singing of Polish hymns as the soldiers marched from Tulloch Works to Mass on Sundays.³⁷

On 21 July 1941 Lord Provost Nimmo wrote to General Sikorski concerning the Polish troops stationed in the area. He remarked that ‘their keenness, soldierly appearance and excellent behaviour have much impressed the Citizens of Perth’. He also raised the suggestion that the citizens might present colours to the regiment. The General replied that he greatly appreciated ‘the kindness and hospitality which my soldiers are enjoying in your area’. As for the suggestion of the presentation of colours he felt this was a little premature as the unit was not definitely organised and that regimental colours ‘are a very sacred emblem destined to accompany their unit into action’. He suggested that the generous intention of the citizens of Perth might find expression in a document or resolution of the Town Council. Another outcome of this correspondence between General Sikorski and Lord Provost Nimmo was the acceptance by the General of an invitation to come to Perth in the near future to be the guest of the Lord Provost and to meet some of the principal citizens.³⁸

In the meantime further attempts to foster good Scottish–Polish relations were being made. An entertainment by Polish artistes was held at Perth Theatre on the afternoon of Wednesday, 30 July 1941, in aid of the Clydeside Air Raids Distress Fund. The performers included Mme Marie Fedro. The concert made a profit of £18 and this was sent to Lord Provost Dollan of Glasgow. He wrote back to say that the sum had been earmarked for Polish refugees, some of whom had been affected by the raids.³⁹ The concert was immediately followed by a meeting at the Station Hotel, Perth called by Lord Provost Nimmo to consider the formation of a Perth and Perthshire Branch of the Scottish–Polish Society.⁴⁰ The object of the society was to restore and develop friendly relations between the two countries, and a local branch was set up at the meeting.⁴¹ A musical festival was also organised by the W. V. S. at Dunkeld Cathedral, in aid of war relief funds, and Polish musicians were the main attraction. Jan Rydel, violinist, and Jerzy Sulikowski, pianist, were joined by a Polish vocal quintet at the event.⁴²

On 4 August 1941, two Valentine and two Matilda tanks took part in an awareness-raising exercise organised by the Ministry of Supply – ‘Speed the

³⁵ PKA, Perth Town Council, General, Box 371, File 9 and Magistrates, Box 379, File 19.

³⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 18 June 1941.

³⁷ Informant Mr G. S. Keay, Perth, 28 July 1997.

³⁸ PKA, Perth Town Council, Magistrates, Box 390, File 14.

³⁹ PKA, Perth Town Council, Magistrates, Box 379, File 13.

⁴⁰ PKA, Perth Town Council, Special Committees, Box 380, File 5.

⁴¹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 9 August 1941.

⁴² L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 23 July 1941.

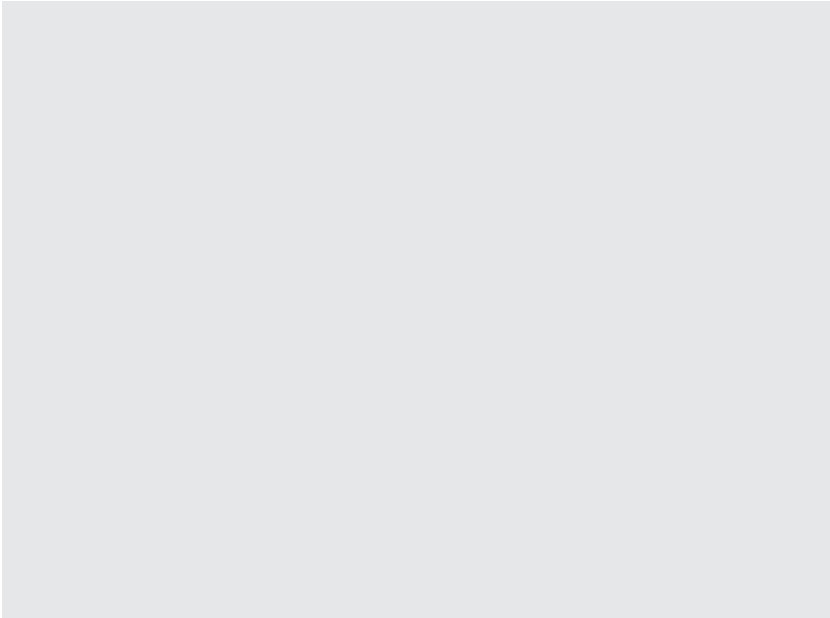


Plate 1 Reception for General Sikorski at Perth City Chambers, 7 August 1941. Lord Provost Nimmo in his robes of office is flanked by the general and his daughter, Mme Leśniowska. © Perth & Kinross Council, courtesy of Culture Perth and Kinross, PKCA PE1/57/1, 61.

Tanks'. The Polish Matilda tank photographed on the Edinburgh Road, Perth a few days later may well be one that was involved in the parade through the streets of Perth, together with a Black Watch regimental band and escort. The photograph is now in the Imperial War Museum, London.⁴³

General Sikorski soon kept his promise to visit Perth and a dinner was arranged in his honour at the Station Hotel on the evening of Thursday, 7 August 1941 (Plate 1). He was accompanied by his daughter, Mme Leśniowska, and members of his staff. Afterwards 200 guests assembled in the City Chambers for a reception to meet the General. These consisted of many distinguished people from the city and county of Perth. In his reply to the welcome given by Lord Provost Nimmo, General Sikorski chose to speak about the agreement recently concluded with Russia on making common cause against Nazi Germany.⁴⁴

⁴³ A. Jeffrey, *This Dangerous Menace: Dundee and the River Tay at War, 1939 to 1945* (Edinburgh, 1991).

⁴⁴ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 9 August 1941. See also PKA, Perth Town Council, Special Committees, Box 380, File 5.

September 1941 saw the Polish troops visited by several VIPs. King Peter of Yugoslavia was accompanied by President Raczkiewicz on an inspection of Polish mechanised units 'somewhere in Perthshire',⁴⁵ and Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, was accompanied by the US Ambassadors to Britain and to the Polish Government on an inspection of Polish units in Perthshire.⁴⁶

Cultural activities continued with the Paderewski Memorial Concert held at the Playhouse, Perth on Sunday, 5 October 1941. The concert was in aid of the Polish Red Cross and was under the patronage of Lord Provost Nimmo and included the Polish artistes Tadeusz Szymonowicz, operatic tenor; Prof. Jozef Cetner, violinist; Marian Błaszczyński, pianist; and Mme Jadwiga Szymonowicz, piano accompanist. Another concert was mooted for early 1942, but the lack of an available venue prevented it coming to pass.⁴⁷

Polish soldiers made themselves popular in rural areas by helping with the harvest. It was reported that 'in this and other counties our Allies, many of them with agricultural experience, have given appreciated assistance in the fields'.⁴⁸

By the end of October 1941 the Polish troops had been in Perth for a year and good relations had been built up. Lord Provost Nimmo wrote to Lt Gen. Kukiel to acknowledge this anniversary and to express the hope that 'as long as you all remain in this district this pleasant friendship will continue'. The reply was no less warm in its sentiments: Lt Gen. Kukiel stated that 'the stay of our troops in Perthshire is of a very happy nature to us and that always after we will come to Poland, as we hope to, this lovely country will always be remembered with pleasure and gratitude'.⁴⁹

About this time Lord Provost Nimmo was approached to submit an article to *Ogniwu Przyjaźni* (*The Clasp O' Friend'ship*) a bilingual weekly newspaper designed to forge a lasting friendship between Poles and Scots. The editress, Mrs Jadwiga Harasowska, writing from the Polish Library, 242 Hope Street, Glasgow, felt sure that he 'must have formed some impressions of our soldiers and fighting Services at present almost entirely populating your domain at Perth'. She stressed that 'the esteem and regard of the Scottish people is of major importance to our men at present enjoying the hospitality of their Scottish brothers'. She also expressed the belief that the publication had 'helped in no small way to strengthen the instinctive liking that the Poles and Scots felt for each other from the beginning'. The *From the City of Perth* edition appeared on 29 November 1941, complete with photographs of the city.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 September 1941.

⁴⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 24 September 1941.

⁴⁷ PKA, Perth Town Council, Special Committees (Lord Provost's Correspondence), Box 380, File 1.

⁴⁸ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 22 October 1941.

⁴⁹ PKA, Perth Town Council, Special Committees (Lord Provost's Correspondence), Box 380, File 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Attempts were also made to fraternise with the British troops stationed in Perth. The British and Polish Military Police held a dance at the York House in Perth at Christmas 1941.⁵¹ Polish musicians entertained British troops at an *at home* given by the ladies of the St John's Roman Catholic Church canteen at their premises on the High Street, Perth.⁵² The Scottish–Polish Society was holding regular meetings in the area, mainly at the Middle Church Hall in Perth. Cadet Officer Krzywiski gave a talk entitled 'Some thoughts on Poland',⁵³ and Capt. Graham, the MP for the Wirral in England, spoke on Poland's post-war position.⁵⁴ In a lighter vein, the society held a concert and dance at the Victoria Hall, Coupar Angus at which a Polish officer paid tribute to the great kindness and hospitality of the local people.⁵⁵

Some of the contacts between Scots and Poles took place between children. There was a Polish girls' school in Perthshire⁵⁶ at Scone Palace⁵⁷ and some of its pupils may have been those who entertained the pupils of St John's Roman Catholic School at the Norie Miller Park pavilion. Scottish girls reciprocated with Scottish dances. On another occasion four Scottish girls dressed in Polish costume and performed at a concert at the Williamson Hall, Abernethy in aid of prisoners of war and the Polish Red Cross.⁵⁸ Pupils at Perth Academy were taught to sing an English translation of the Polish National Anthem.⁵⁹

In April 1942, Lt Col. A. Grudzinski wrote to the Lord Provost to inform him that the 1st A. C. Reconnaissance Battalion was leaving Perth and presented the town with 36 books on Poland⁶⁰ 'to remind you of us and so to keep alive that friendship which was prospering so well indeed'. The gift was gratefully acknowledged by Lord Provost Nimmo, who was sorry to see the Polish troops leaving the city and remarked that the 'Town Council and the citizens generally have been very much impressed by the conduct and bearing of your men'.⁶¹ In common with other communities in the east of Scotland where Polish troops had been stationed, a plaque was presented to Perth by the

⁵¹ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 27 December 1941.

⁵² L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 28 February 1942.

⁵³ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 25 February 1942.

⁵⁴ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 14 March 1942.

⁵⁵ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 15 April 1942.

⁵⁶ See L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 10 December 1941, for a photograph of President Raczkiewicz signing the visitors' book and being entertained by a girls' choir in national costume.

⁵⁷ Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Transcript of conversation between Pamela Diamond, Perth Museum & Art Gallery and J. E. R. MacMillan, Black Watch Museum, Perth, 23 February 1984.

⁵⁸ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 14 March 1942.

⁵⁹ Informant G. S. Keay, Perth, 28 July 1997.

⁶⁰ L&FH, Justices Retiring Room Collection.

⁶¹ PKA, Perth Town Council, General, Box 381, File 5.

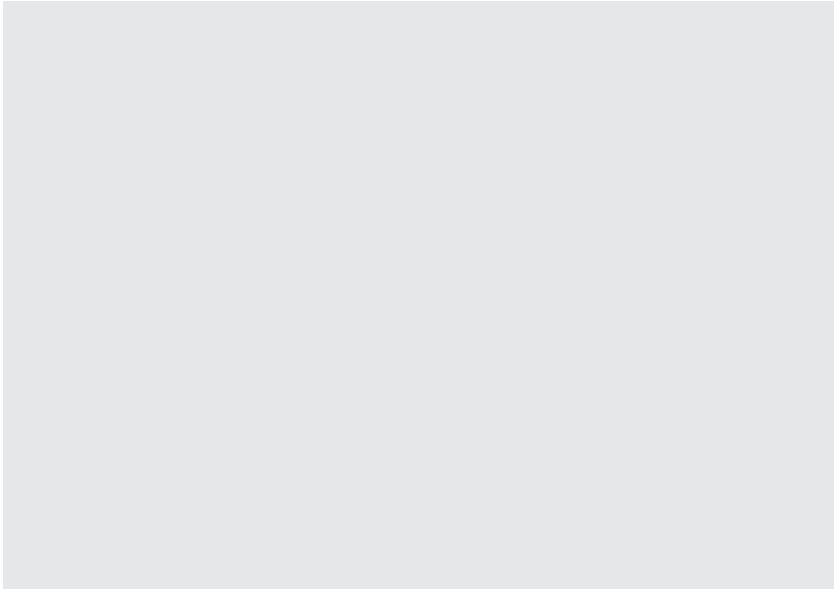


Plate 2 Six Polish soldiers sounding a fanfare after the presentation of trumpet banners by the City of Perth at a ceremony on the North Inch, Perth, 10 October 1942.
© Perth & Kinross Council, courtesy of Culture Perth and Kinross, PKCA PE1/57/1, 62.

Polish soldiers to commemorate this episode of the war.⁶² In return, the Town Council commissioned six trumpet banners bearing the Polish eagle on one side and the Perth coat of arms with its double-headed eagle on the other. The two ceremonies were held on Saturday, 10 October 1942. The commemorative tablet was unveiled at the City Chambers and the trumpet banners presented at an open-air ceremony on the North Inch. One of the local newspapers carried photographs of the ceremony at the North Inch on the banks of the River Tay under the headline *Good Friends and Staunch Allies* (Plate 2).⁶³

Even after being away from Perth for some time the links between the 1st Polish Armoured Car Regiment and the City of Perth remained strong. Lord Provost Nimmo and Mr Robert Adam, the town clerk, were invited to a parade at Dalkeith Palace, Midlothian on 31 May 1943 on the occasion of the presentation of a regimental pennant by the Divisional Commander. After

⁶² Similar plaques were presented to Blairgowrie (see L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 31 January and 4 April 1942), Douglas Memorial School, Scone (see L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 22 April 1942), and Kinross, Milnathort and Kelty (see PKA, CC1/P277, drawing of design).

⁶³ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 14 October 1942.

lunching with the regiment the Lord Provost was given a regimental crest as a souvenir and a handsomely written address:

Dear Sir,

The time has come for us to leave Scotland for good. Many months have we stayed in this part of the British Isles, but no doubt the City of Perth is the place we are really rooted in. The Regiment was formed there from a number of disarmed refugees. They were pleased to find an extremely kind hospitality extended to them, but they were soon proud to know their share in the defence organisation of the town and the area. Steadily the mutual relations between the population and the Regiment have developed into a real friendship that doesn't die. The City then has adopted the Regiment in a way by presenting it with trumpet-banners wearing her Coat of Arms. We have nothing to give you in turn but only a solemn assurance, that any of us will do his utmost when the time for action will come to prove ourselves worthy of your entrusting. I thought however I should take this opportunity given to me of having you among us to hand you on behalf of all ranks of the 1-st Polish Armoured Car Regiment that small souvenir as a memento for the City of Perth. I wish that Regimental Crest could be a material link between you and us and could remind you of our profound gratitude.

The Commanding Officer

Z. Dudzinski major⁶⁴

Polish troops and people still remained in the area, but without the great concentration of the eighteen months immediately after October 1940, except near Taymouth Castle, which remained as the Polish Military Hospital until the end of 1947. After seven years it was finally closed down with patients being removed to other hospitals in England, and the staff, both medical and administrative, distributed over various units elsewhere in England and Scotland. The press reported that the district's population was increased by over 1,200 by the hospital 'which meant a very considerable turnover of money in the area, especially among the merchants of Aberfeldy'. Both Kenmore and Aberfeldy were observed as having 'assumed a much quieter appearance by the departure of the Poles'. But it was not only their money that was missed by the small communities near the hospital, for 'their behaviour while resident in the district was most exemplary' and 'many of the staff who were billeted in private houses will be much missed by the friends they made among the people'.⁶⁵

Many of the Poles who served in Scotland declined to return to a Soviet-controlled Poland after the war. Their continued presence was not universally popular and there were fears from the trade union movement that jobs needed by returning British ex-servicemen might be taken by Poles. Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, urged them to return to Poland, but many opted to join the Polish Resettlement Corps and remain in Britain. This organisation, which was formed in 1946 and disbanded in 1949, aimed to ease the transition from

⁶⁴ PKA, Perth Town Council, Finance Committee, Box 398, File 16.

⁶⁵ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 6 December 1947.

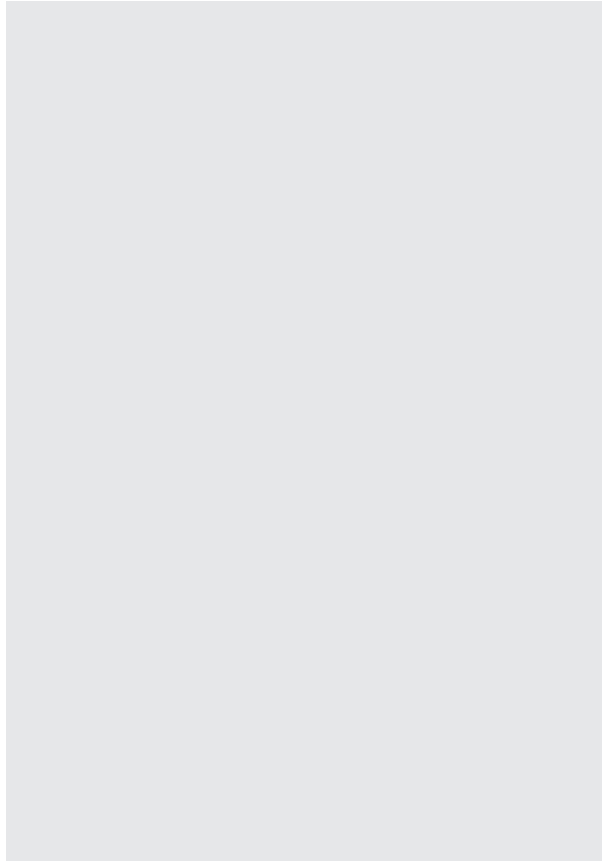


Plate 3 Polish memorial at Jeanfield Cemetery, Perth, featured on a publicity poster.

military to civilian life, while keeping remaining Poles under military discipline. It is clear that quite a few Poles returned to Perthshire, as a look through the local telephone book in 1997 revealed plenty of Polish surnames. A Polish Ex-Combatants Association existed in Perth,⁶⁶ although its numbers naturally diminished as the years passed. A Polish Link Association was formed in Perth in 1996.⁶⁷ The association was a way of keeping alive the cultural heritage of those of Polish descent. The Polish War Memorial is carefully maintained at

⁶⁶ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 7 May 1952, 2 December 1964 and 12 March 1993; *Dundee Courier*, 10 November 1983.

⁶⁷ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 2 June 1995 and 16 April 1996.

Jeanfield Cemetery and some of the local Polish community have been buried there along with those who gave their lives during the war (Plate 3).⁶⁸

Interest in the story of the Polish troops has grown in the last twenty years since the archivist was asked to contribute to a Polish publication on the part played by Poles in the liberation of Europe. A talk based on the resulting research has been given to several local groups, including the Friends of Bydgoszcz, a city with which Perth is twinned.

After Poland joined the EU in 2004 a number of its citizens moved to Scotland to work. In Perth & Kinross they certainly constitute a significant grouping, meriting a particular mention in the 2011 census with the 2,244 persons born in Poland constituting 1.53 per cent of the total population of 146,652. In the A. K. Bell Library in Perth there have been a number of Polish staff over the last ten years. The Polish language can commonly be heard on the streets of Perth and the other towns in the area. It would be interesting to find out whether this earlier connection played any part in their choice of destination.

The generation of 1940 is almost gone, but their time in the east of Scotland is marked by the many plaques on public buildings and particularly the memorial at Jeanfield Cemetery, Perth.

The sources available in Perth & Kinross Council Archive present a very rosy picture of the relationship between the locals and the Polish soldiery. It is clear, even allowing for the energetic attempts of the wartime authorities to foster good relations between Poles and Scots, that a great deal of spontaneous sympathy existed for the plight of the Polish nation and its people exiled in a strange land. The conduct of the Polish troops in Scotland reinforced this feeling and led to the formation of many friendships, both official and personal.

⁶⁸ L&FH, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 'Know Your Perth' column, 3 November 1981.