

MARYSIA LACHOWICZ : PERSONAL PROJECTS

TRACES :

The Polish Army in Fife during WW2



Forced to flee their own lands by the invading armies of Germany and then Russia in 1939, sections of the Polish Army were based in Scotland from 1940 until the end of the war. Their initial mission was to defend the east coast of Scotland from the then very real threat of German invasion by sea. Later they joined the fighting in mainland Europe and Africa.

They trained across the whole of Scotland and were a very real presence - in the region of 30,000 soldiers. Welcomed into the local communities, cultural and social organisations sprung up to share customs and forge long-lasting friendships.

Many Poles remained after the war and married local women. Of course, once the threat of war and invasion was over and as the local men returned from war to take up their old jobs, the Poles were not quite so welcome. During the post-war years there was a strong "Poles Go Home" campaign. For many Poles there was no question of going home. For many their homes no longer existed, their families had been killed or forcibly moved with the shifting Polish borders, and for those like my father who had already experienced Soviet 'hospitality' in Siberia, they could never risk returning and finding themselves once again arrested and in a labour camp. They feared for their lives if they returned so many never set foot on Polish soil again.

TRACES uses archive, personal and new photographs to document what remains of the presence of the Polish Army in Fife. It remembers their commitment and bravery but also their feelings of loss and abandonment at the end of the war when they lost their homeland and were forced to start new lives in the UK and elsewhere.

