

[Return to news](#) | [Wróć do wiadomości](#)

A monumental effort

September 6, 2011

By Urszula Lang

When the sun comes out in August, and it seems like winter is just about finishing, Jindabyne calls you back; you just want to go there. There is nothing like enjoying the beauty of Lake Jindabyne in the warm Spring sunshine, looking at that view of the intense blue water, and the snow-capped mountains to the left of, and behind, the Lake.

My husband Tony wanted to go, but he just couldn't "swing" the time from work. My cousin Ela said she would like to go, but I said, "no, not this time, I am just going down there to do some work, and it's probably best if I am by myself and able to fully focus on the task at hand". I asked my Director at Council for a couple of days of Annual Leave, and told him what I planned to do. He said "OK and Good Luck" and "give my best to his friend at Snowy River Shire Council". I also gave him a copy of Felix Molski's submission on what the Strzelecki Statue means to him to try to give my Director some background on what I was going down to Jindabyne to do.

I have this personal mission of trying to educate my Director and other colleagues at the Council where I work on anything that relates to Poland. To his credit, my Director usually seems quite interested in the "latest project" "outside of work work" that I am up to! I remember taking him to see the film *Katyn* in English, at Parliament House, last year, and we were both speechless at the end of the film, even though I had actually seen it before. He said "I just never imagined it could be like that!"

My Director, Tony McNamara, is an Aussie of Irish descent, as in fact are a number of my close friends. (ie Bill Snelling - remember the Puls Polonii article by Bill Snellinski?), and so, with the Polish-Irish event planned at St Thomas's Church at Moonbah during next year's K'Ozzie Fest, during Heritage Week in April, I hope to try and line up some Irish folk wherever I can find them. Hopefully, we will be able to make contact with the local Snowy Region Irish community through the Catholic Parish, but it doesn't hurt to promote the event further afield.

But, back to the latest trip. With a full tank of petrol, on Tuesday 23 August at 10am, I headed off from Avalon and drove straight to a 3.30pm meeting with the Snowy River Shire Council's Strategic Planner, Rochelle Crowe, and the Council's Heritage Advisor, Suzannah Plowman. The drive was a record 5 ½ hours from door to door, taking the M2 and M7 out of Sydney, and no stops on the way. I must admit being a bit stiff and tired on arrival.

At our meeting in the Council's Strategic Planning offices, we talked about the task at hand, about what information I could provide, and how I could help with the Statements of Significance associated with the Statue of Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki, and also, St Thomas's Church, at Moonbah. We talked about the conservation work needed to the Statue, and how best to initiate a process to get the work started. To assist the Council, I provided a copy of a "Condition Report" prepared voluntarily by Grzegorz Dabrowa, a Polish Specialist in the field of Monument Conservation living here in Australia (owns Dabrowa Gallery in Roseville).

I listened with interest when I heard that Council was currently seeking tenders for the restoration of the "Big Trout" at Adaminaby and that they were "open" to considering a process for some restoration work to the Strzelecki monument, providing it could be adequately funded!!!!. I commented that if we could establish a "scope of works" and quotes, that possibly the Polish community could contribute to the work, and that I would try and organise something. Hmm since then I have a letter on Council letterhead dated 1988 undertaking to take full responsibility for the maintenance of the Statue, shortly after it was given as a Gift to the Australian people by the Polish Government, as part of Australia's Bicentenary Celebrations.

Information currently received from the Harry Hefka archive establishes the overall value of the Statue at \$1.5 million taking into account planning and design, sculpture and bronzing, granite podium, transport from Poland to Australia, and then overland from Port Sydney to Jindabyne by road, construction on site, site costs, professional supervision etc, etc. Clearly the true value of the Statue of Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki is not fully appreciated. O well, let's see if we can change that?

By the way, Harry Hefka was the original idea's man for the Project "Monument to Paul Edmund

[Photos](#) | [zdjęcia](#)



Strzelecki in Australia" and it is, I think, very sad, that he has never been properly recognised or even thanked for his work involving the delivery of the Monument which so beautifully and uniquely acknowledges the Polish contribution to Australia's early exploration. Just recently, Harry Hefka allowed Felix Molski of our cultural organisation, to scan the archive of the huge volume of work that had been undertaken to get that Statue approved and built, and trust me, I am in total awe of that body of work that had been undertaken, and the commitment. This effort in itself was "MONUMENTAL!"

The meeting with staff of Snowy Shire Council finished with me obtaining a full hard copy of the Lake Jindabyne Foreshore Park Management Plan which incorporates Banjo Paterson Park, and agreeing to send through some work to assist in establishing the values of the Strzelecki Monument. This included supporting information such as correspondence from other Organisations and private individuals which I had received from the Editor of Puls Polonii (President of Kosciuszko Heritage Inc. - Ernestyna Skurjat - Kozek), regarding the significance of the Statue.

I explained that, after going through the Foreshore Management Plan, to fully understand the context of the Monument, both physically and administratively, I would commence writing about each relevant category of significance - historical value, social value, aesthetic value, rarity etc. using the relevant criteria specified in the NSW Heritage Act. The meeting ended amicably, with me setting off back to "Vaski" to have some dinner, relax a bit, and do some reading.

Exhausted, and grateful to have one of the more independent ground-level "Vaski " units in what was a Lodge full of winter skiers, I think I "crashed" around 8pm trying to read the Foreshore Park Management Plan in poor light.

First thing in the morning, after some strong coffee, I went to the upstairs living area of Vaski (now abandoned as all the Skiers had gone up to the Mountains! Hooray!) and spent a few hours in front of the leftover fire, reading the above Plan and thinking about how best to attack this Project in the short time that I had. When I had done that, I then headed down to Banjo Paterson Park for a "walkabout", looking at the different plaques, memorials and monuments (including the Irish monument!), looking at the Statue of Strzelecki from different angles and taking photographs, taking notes. I had of course been to this place many, many times before, but when you are doing a Project like this, you need to focus in a completely different way. You need to think certain things through, and what better way than sitting on a seat in the sunshine looking at the Statue and the Lake.

At 3pm, I had a meeting lined up with one of the National Park Directors, Steve Redden, with whom I (and Ernestyna) have had a great relationship with, during the 5-6 years or so that K'Ozzie Festivals have been happening . Over coffee, we talked about the difficulties that had been encountered with the Charlotte Pass venue during the 2011 Festival event, Day of Fun and Kosciuszko Run, and particularly the lack of true support and unfair barriers put in front of us by Kevin Blyton, owner of the Kosciuszko Hotel.

We talked about a future event at St Thomas's Church, Moonbah, in 2012, and an Ecumenical Mass on the Mountain in 2013, on the centenary of the first Catholic mass there in 1913. We mused about the achievements of the Puls Polonii Cultural Foundation over the years in making good friends with the Aboriginal Community (Ngarigo Nation) particularly their 4 matriach Aunties, and the good outcomes that had occurred over a range of different events and projects in partnership with National Parks!

We talked about the future of events such as Kosciuszko Run, which may in fact still go ahead, independent of the Australian Mountain Running Association, and we talked about what NPWS requirements would be applied. Steve asked me to pass his advice on to Paul Gospodarczyk of Strzelecki Heritage Inc., the organiser of that event which is planned for February 2012. The K'Ozzie Fest event is planned during Heritage Week in April, so it will be quite separate.[/b]

We also talked about preparing one-page Fact Sheets (easy to reproduce) about Kosciuszko and Strzelecki for use by NPWS, following on from a complaint to our Foundation (Kosciuszko Heritage Inc.) that visitors to the NPWS Centre were NOT being given any information about these topics when they ask staff at the Visitor Centre. Steve Redden agreed that the one-page Fact Sheets on NPWS letterhead were a great idea, and the way to go.

I left Steve with a kiss and a hug, promising to keep him "in the loop". After a quick walk around Nuggets Crossing and a drive out to Moonbah to recharge my phone, I went back to Vaski to do some more work on my Project, to ring my darling husband, and to ring Ernestyna about the meetings and the work which I had done, the conversations that had taken place, and the commitment that had been made.

The time went so quickly, and I had to leave Jindabyne to drive back to Sydney on Thursday morning. I didn't finish the work that I started, and it will have to be picked up again, after the Lajkonik Spring Ball on 3 September. However, after making the personal contact with the Council staff on the matter of the Heritage Study review and the issue of the Statue restoration, I

felt confident that this trip was really worthwhile and that providing the information to the Council (ie Draft Statements of Significance, Fact sheets, copies of submissions etc) was really a step forward and worth taking time off my day job to pursue. It just meant a big catch-up at work when I got back.

I hope I am not disappointed!