



# The Polish Heritage of Otago and Southland NEWSLETTER

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY 2001 MEMBERSHIP FEES!**

September 2001  
Issue 11

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## Broad Bay Church

*Patricia Clark - Chair person*

Plans are in place for the building of a bell tower and the restoration of the bell is continuing. Some plans are also being drawn up for landscaping to be carried out around the church. These include shrubs and flowers being planted in the grounds. On Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, a consecration will be held at the Mary Queen of Peace Church, Broad Bay with Bishop Len Boyle and Father Pat Maloney. The mass will be at 7:30pm to celebrate and dedicate the new stained glass windows.

## Polish Dance Group

Our Polish dance group has been very busy over the last few weeks. They have performed several dances for the Dunedin South Presbyterian "St James" Parish, St John's Roslyn Brownie group and also traveled to Balclutha to perform for the Mary MacKillop Parish.

adults and children. If families or friends are interested and keen to learn Polish songs and dances, please contact Angela Donaldson on 453 4919 or Rena Mc Intyre on 454 5101.

## Quo Vadis Premiere

*ROME*

The 30<sup>th</sup> of August saw the world premiere of a Polish epic *Quo Vadis* based on the historical novel written by Nobel Prize author Henryk Sienkiewicz. At \$18 million the feature film stands at the most expensive Polish picture ever made.

The film premiered in the Vatican City to a select audience of 6000 viewers at the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall. Pope John Paul II gave a speech on the film that was transmitted live to Polish television. It was filmed in Tunisia, France and Poland where it saw its premiere on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> in Warsaw

*Quo Vadis* explores the struggles of the early Christians in Emperor Nero's ancient Rome. The choice of venue for the premiere is poignant, as the hall sits on the circus ground where Nero persecuted Christians in the first century A.D.

## Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916)



Henryk Sienkiewicz was born in Wola Okrzejska in 1864 and was raised during the era of Poland's partitions (see previous Newsletter).

He is regarded as "The Patriot Novelist of Poland", and is perhaps best known for his epic historical novel *Quo Vadis*, which depicts early Christianity in the time of Nero and his persecutions. For this novel, in 1905, Sienkiewicz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature bringing him enormous international acclaim.

Sienkiewicz's other major literary works include: *Trylogia* The Trilogy, composed of three historical novels set in the 17th Century known as *Ogniem i mieczem* With Fire and Sword, *Potop* The Deluge, and *Pan Wołodojowski* Pan Michael, *Krzyżacy* The Teutonic Knights, *W pustyni i w puzczy* In Desert and Wilderness and *Za chlebem* After Bread, *Listy z Ameryki* Letters From America. These last works were inspired by Sienkiewicz's trip to America.

Throughout his lifetime, Sienkiewicz sought to prepare his nation's people to be citizens of a reborn country to which he pointed the way, but did not live to see. With his writing, Sienkiewicz fuelled great patriotism during difficult times of a partitioned Poland. It has been reported that Poles would pin pages of Sienkiewicz's books to their clothing as reminders of their struggle for freedom.

Sienkiewicz pleaded on behalf of his oppressed compatriots by addressing open letters to the governments and prominent men of Europe, protesting against the acts of injustice which victimized his nation. Notably, in 1901, he exposed the persecution of Polish school children at the hands of the Prussian government.

Information from <http://www.polishamericancenter.com/Sienkiewicz.htm>



The earliest version of *Quo Vadis* was filmed by Enrico Guzzoni in 1912. This nine reel film version by the Italian film company Cines, ran for 120 minutes. Up to then, no film longer than two reels (24 minutes running time) had been produced thus the film became the first feature film ever. The screening was accompanied by a score composed by Jean Nogues requiring a 150 voice massed choir.

A third Italian German version was produced in 1924 by Gabriellino D'Annunzio and Georg Jacoby. It featured a cast of 20,000 and the producers went out of their way to make the sight of men and women, torn to shreds and eaten by the lions most realistic.

The 1951 MGM *Quo Vadis* super-super-colossal Hollywood production directed by Mervyn LeRoy, 171 minutes long, had a cast of 60,000. It featured a beautiful interpretation of Nero by Peter Ustinov who received an Academy Award nomination for it. An extremely expensive film to produce, it generated much preproduction soul-searching about its commercial viability. However, once made it proved so popular as to become exceedingly profitable, second only to *Gone with the Wind* in the history of the cinema up to that time. Its success led to the production by the Hollywood studios of a whole series of Biblical and semi-Biblical super-colossal films.

## Upcoming Talk

Paul Klemick has returned from his trip to Poland where he undertook personal research of his and other families that immigrated to New Zealand in the 1870s.



He will be giving a talk at the Age Concern Hall MacAndrew Rd (opposite St Patricks Church), on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2001 at 1:30 pm.

A gold coin donation will be appreciated and a plate for the pot luck afternoon tea.

## In the kitchen and at the table – old Polish traditions

Poles have always been great fans and connoisseurs of cereals *kasza* (kasha). The tradition of Polish *kasza* goes back to Pagan times when gifts of *kasza*, honey *miód* (myood) and cheese *ser* (serr) were offered to the goddesses of birth ensuring a long and successful life to the newborn child. The widespread fondness of cereals started to decrease with the introduction of potatoes (1600s) but it has never relinquished. *Kasza* is even recorded in Polish proverbs such as *Nie daj sobie dmuchać w kaszę* (don't let anyone blow on your *kasza*) meaning don't let yourself to be led by the nose.

### Dry Roasted Buckwheat Kasza

1. In a moderate oven, toast buckwheat on a metal tray until slightly brown, stirring to ensure an even colour.
2. Heat 3T olive oil (it is much tastier with pork lard *śłonina*) and add 1C of toasted buckwheat stirring until the grains have absorbed in the fat and are a little browned.
3. Pour 1¼C boiling water, salted to taste, over the *kasza* and cook on a low heat until it has absorbed all the water. The *kasza* should be perfectly dry, light and fluffy. If it isn't, it can be covered and placed in a medium hot oven for up to 45 minutes.



**Variations:** instead of water, a light broth made from dried mushrooms can be used. Buckwheat *kasza* is most valued in Poland, with a taste and aroma full of character. Toasted buckwheat *kasza* is especially popular for it's more pronounced flavour. There are many ways to serve *kasza*: dry roasted buckwheat *kasza* is an excellent substitute for rice or potatoes and is best served with roast meats and gravy or with meatballs in sauce.

## Obituary

On September 6<sup>th</sup> 2001, Mr Jan Zurakowski died after a long illness at Dunedin hospital aged 82. Born 24<sup>th</sup> June 1919 in Lwów (Lvov, now Belarus). He was 704975 F/Sgt of the Polish Free Air Force during the Second World War.



The funeral service took place September 11<sup>th</sup> at St Francis Xavier Church, Behnar Street in Mornington and he was buried at the Anderson's Bay cemetery. The funeral was attended by many Poles who were asked to recite Anioł Pański prayer in their native language by request from his wife Stefania.

The Polish community extends their greatest sympathies to Stefania and family. Jan will be greatly missed by many of us. To us you were like a father and grandfather.

In an upcoming issue, we will detail a more comprehensive write up on Jan's life.

## Membership Fees

Please remember to pay your 2001 membership fees. Any questions please contact Russell Chiles (464 0731).