



Summary of Mariusz Wojtowicz's recorded life story

Interview by Tessa Black (NPHG) May 2018

Mariusz Wojtowicz was born in Bydgoszcz, Poland in January 1985 and came to Britain in 2004; he now considers this country to be his second home. He lived in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk but moved to Norwich within one year. Since his arrival he has worked in Education, initially as a tutor in a learning centre followed by a period at an engineering college near Norwich Airport. He then spent three years teaching at the City College and currently works for a small training provider in Norwich combined with freelance work for awarding bodies like City and Guilds. His field of expertise is in Apprenticeships, specifically in IT.

Mariusz wrote an article for the local EDP newspaper in January 2018 about an interesting "discovery" he had made in the grounds of the old St. Andrew's Hospital in Thorpe, Norwich. Known locally as the "Polish Cemetery", he had stumbled upon information and stories relating to this cemetery through the internet. Since then he has continued with research at the Norfolk Record Office and has interviewed a number of individuals including nurses who worked at the hospital. There was a recurring theme of Polish nationals who had been patients there, some of who remained as residents until the hospital closed in the 1990s.

As for the cemetery, now situated amidst warehouses on an industrial estate, there are no marked graves (just depressions in the ground showing their original locations). It is difficult to determine how many were Poles as, before World War II, Ukraine occupied nearly a third of what is now Poland, so some were Polish graves and others were those of ethnic Ukraines. It is known that there are more marked Polish graves at the Earlham Cemetery in Norwich. Mariusz was able to find out much more information about the Polish psychiatrist Dr Bolesław Piętocha who worked at St Andrew's and who lived in Norwich with his family. He had been awarded an MBE for rescuing a pilot from a burning plane.

Mariusz is very interested in history and he feels there is still a lot of information to uncover about Norfolk Poles from archive materials. However, he feels that there is little more to reveal about the stories of those who spent most of their lives institutionalised at St Andrew's and Hellesdon hospitals. He was able to recount some anecdotes about the lives of patients at St Andrew's which had been passed on to him by those who had worked there in days passed.

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