



Summary of Natalia Fadrowska's life story

Interview and recording by Adrian O'dell (NPHG)
September 29th 2018

Natalia Fadrowska was born in Elk, north-east Poland in November 1985, the daughter of Zdzisław and Wanda Fadrowski. Both her parents were teachers by profession but her father had many different jobs and became mayor of Elk at the beginning of 2000 and is still involved with local politics, currently as Cultural Director. Her mother became deputy head-mistress of a local school. She has two older brothers, Bartosz and Piotr.

Natalia attended primary school for eight years in Elk followed by four years in high school where she studied advanced mathematics and computer science. Those were interesting times as she was born at the end of the Communist rule in Poland and that was a difficult time economically. She was excited by the advent of relative freedom but then disillusioned by the period of economic depression which followed. She was raised at a time when there was no class divide; everyone was poor because the unemployment rate was very high. One of her first impressions when she came to Britain was the presence of a class-system, something she had not experienced before.

While at high school she enjoyed partying but also played the piano and attended many evening English lessons. After graduating she went to the University of Nicolaus Copernicus in Toruń to study Economics for three years and during that time was a volunteer with the Dąbrowski Charity which helped children around the world. In 2006 she visited Ukraine to support children of Polish origin there. She then decided to take a gap year to learn English and took advantage of Poland's new status as an EU member state, with open labour markets and the UK was a natural place for her to improve her language skills.

She came to Norfolk and found similarities with her home province; green, open countryside but close to the sea. The local people were very pleasant: they would even talk to her at bus stops, something unusual in Poland and generally she had a very positive experience. Then she met James, her present partner and they fell in love. Remembering her grandmothers' advice that you should never forego your education for a man, however much you love him, she returned to her university in Poland at the end of the gap year. But luck and fate was on her side when she found she could transfer and complete her studies Coventry University and be closer to James.

Her decision to stay in England and come to Norfolk was to be closer to James but also she opted to study for a Masters in Finance and Economics at UEA in 2009, which she passed with distinction. It was difficult to find appropriate employment immediately so she worked in Costa Coffee for six months before finding a position for three years with an insurance company in Norwich. She joined Virgin Money in 2012, first in travel insurance and now with their "digital banking" operations and has continued her studies with a variety of qualifications in work-related disciplines. Natalia has travelled to various parts of Britain but feels very much at home in Norfolk. She applied for British citizenship and achieved that status in May 2018; out of thirty applicants on the programme, she was the only Pole. She feels a little disappointed that the British voted to leave the EU but understands that the UK has been less enthusiastic about being a member of the centralised club that Europe has become.

She is still learning about what it is to be British and, being very fond of cooking, she plans to learn how to cook sausage and mash and perhaps mince pies this Christmas. Meanwhile she has cooked the Polish speciality “pierogi” and kotlet schabowy (pork cutlet) for James, which he loves.

September 2018