



**A Brief History of  
The Polish Ex-Servicemen's  
Association in Geelong  
Branch No. 12**

***“The Poles in the  
Geelong Community”***

The Polish soldiers, of course, played an important role in defending Poland and its citizens.



First SPK Committee - 1964

This is why Poles have always had a great admiration and respect for the Polish Army and this remains part of Poles patriotic sentiments.

Seventy years have passed since the end of last war but despite of this, the very strong respect for the Polish soldier remains in the hearts of the Polish people. The fact that so many of us have continue to celebrate the accomplishments with the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association on many occasions, is an

indication of our ongoing respect for what these men and women of this Branch fought for decades ago and what they have to achieve here in Geelong .

In August 2, 1964 in Geelong, the First Organising Committee of the Polish Ex-servicemen's Association was formed. The composition of the Committee was:

- Captain **Antoni Lipkowski**
- **Jan Okulicz**
- **Stanisław Gonczarek**
- **Józef Zajęc**

The Committee requested the National Committee of SPK to approve the establishment of the No.12 Branch of SPK in Geelong. On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1964, the first General Meeting of the 30 founding Members took place, electing Captain Antoni Lipkowski the first President of the Association.



SPK in the Annual ANZAC Day Parade

In a very short time after, the Branch established contacts with the local Australian RSL groups in Geelong and SPK members were invited to take part in the Geelong ANZAC Day Ceremonies each year.

In August 1, 1965, a second Extraordinary General Meeting of the SPK Branch conferred Honorary Membership to Monsignor Lucjan Jaroszka and to Mr. C.D. Barton, former Vice President of the Geelong RSL, who facilitated SPK's long relationship with the local R.S.L. Groups.

In November 27, 1965, General Juliusz Klegerg, from the UK, paid a visit to the Geelong SPK Branch. Around that time there were already 55 members.

In its first term, the Geelong SPK Branch celebrated the “Polish Soldiers’ Day” for the first time, with Holy Mass at St Mary's of the Angles Church in Geelong. After the Mass, wreaths were laid at the RSL Monument in Geelong.

In the 1960s, Monsignor Lucjan Jaroszka initiated plans to set up a Children’s Centre and invited the Sisters of the Ascension, a religious order of nuns, to Geelong to manage the Centre. He organized a number of fundraising events for the Center. Enough funds were raised to purchase five blocks of land in Bell Park. For unknown reasons, the sisters did not come to Geelong and Mon. Jaroszka’s plans did not eventuate.



SPK Premises in Ryrie St Geelong

In December 1967, Polish community, who were involved in the fundraising activities, called a meeting, which took place at the former GAMA Theatre, in Ryrie St. Approximately 100 people attended. A Melbourne social worker, Mr. Jabłoński, chaired the meeting. The meeting decided to hand over the land in Bell Park to SPK Association.

At that time, the membership of the SPK Branch in Geelong had grown to 80 members and immediately the SPK Committee took over the administration of the land.

In November 1969, SPK Branch No. 12 sold the land for \$ 12,500 and in October 1970, purchased a brick building, “Temperance Hall”, located at 35 Ryrie Street, for \$ 15,500.

The Mayor Geelong, Mr. McGregor Dowset on September 4, 1971, conducted the official opening.



National Day Dinner at the SPK Hall

SPK received a 2-year loan from a Polish Ex-servicemen’s Fund in London to develop the new property.

On April 15, 1968, the Geelong SPK Memorial Book was established. Twelve prominent guests have signed it; one was His Eminence Bishop Władysław Rubin.



Cardinal Karol Wojtyła with  
Mr Max Nadolski

On February 24, 1973, SPK was privileged to host another very distinguished guest, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, the Metropolitan Bishop of Cracow, who in 1978 was to become the first Polish Pope.

On November 24, 1973, Polish SPK members were invited by the Geelong RSL to celebrate Remembrance Day with them at Johnston Park.

On January 11, 1976, a decision was made by the SPK Committee to invite all Polish organisations in Geelong to establish a SKP Banner Committee. Ms. Ericksen (ERE Craft Melbourne) was commissioned to make the Banner, which was officially blessed by Bishop Władysław Rubin at St. Mary's Church.

The Geelong SPK was registered in the Golden Book of Emigration for supporting the Polish National Treasury, an institute located in the UK by the Polish Government in Exile.

Independence Day November 11, 1985 was celebrated by the SPK Branch beginning with Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. Zenon Broniarczyk at St Mary's. After Mass, everyone was invited to the "Akademia" organised jointly with the Polish Community Association in Geelong. Ms. Wanda Pilsudzka, granddaughter of the famous Polish General, Józef Pilsudski, was the special guest at this function. Mr. Kornacki, the then President of the SPK Branch, delivered the welcoming speech.

On November 28, 1986, SPK members took part in the welcoming ceremony for Pope John Paul II at the MCG in Melbourne.

On November 12, 1989, SPK Branch No. 12 celebrated its 25th anniversary. After Mass, there was a dinner at the SPK Centre in Ryrie St, at which Fr. Tomasz Zaremba, Mr. J. Misia, the President of the National SPK Committee, the Presidents of the Australian RSL groups, Presidents and CEOs of a number of Geelong community associations attended.



After Church Services at St Mary's

The membership of the Geelong SPK was ageing, and their numbers were depleting. Hence, in 1997, the SPK Branch decided to sign over the property at Ryrie St Geelong to the Polish Community Association in Geelong (PCA). The remaining Geelong SPK members continued to use their Centre as they did in the past without the worry of trying to maintain and cover the running costs of the building.





Blessing of the SPK Plaque 2017

On November, 2004, SPK Branch No. 12 celebrated another anniversary. This time they celebrated its 40th Anniversary, also at the SPK Centre in Ryrie St, Geelong.

Finally, in 2014, together with the whole Polish Community, with the remaining handful of the original SPK Members of the Geelong Branch No. 12, met at the White Eagle House to celebrate the SPK 50th anniversary.

Two years later, in 2016, the PCA members voted to sell the Ryrie St property and use the funds at the White Eagle House.

In August 2017, a plaque was unveiled on the grounds of the White Eagle House, honoring the contributions the SPK Branch No. 12 members made to the Polish community in Geelong during the last 52 years and especially **Mr Mieczysław (Max) Nadolski's** lifelong commitment to the Branch and to his service as the longest serving President of the organisation.



*Part of this short history was read by Henry Szkuta at the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the SPK in Geelong. The remaining text was added after the blessing and unveiling of the Memorial Plaque on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2017*

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