

Memorable Day in Poland



Tatjana with two Lithuanian officers

Jim Westwood, a member from Kirkcaldy in Fife and Tatjana Arsoba, a member from London, were selected to attend the 2011 Polish Police Memorial Day in Poland.

They tell Police World readers all about it.

On the train journey back from the National Council meeting earlier this year the new UK President, Tom Crozier, informed me that there was going to be an opportunity for two members to represent Section UK at the Polish Police Memorial Day and that applications were being invited.

On my return to work I submitted a memorandum through my supervisors requesting permission to attend the event. I offered to do some research in relation to Polish policing methods and community engagement whilst in attendance. Following agreement and the kind offer from my force of two days special leave to attend I submitted an application through the Secretary General, which I later learnt had been successful.

After booking my flights to Warsaw I made contact with Tatjana Arsoba from the Metropolitan Police, who had also been fortunate enough to be selected to attend, and we made arrangements to meet up at Terminal 5, Heathrow.

On arrival at Warsaw, having naively assumed we would only have had a short journey, we were met by two female Polish officers who informed us it would be a two hour drive to the Police Training College in Legionowo.

After arriving at the college we were shown to a large room that was set up for dinner. Around the table were representatives from Southern Ireland, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Czech Republic, Malta, Poland, Germany, Norway, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Austria and Slovakia.

A full programme of events had been planned for the following two days including: a visit to Warsaw, an official Police Ceremony in uniform at the Police Training College, dinner and entertainment in a restaurant by Zegrze Lake, a parade in uniform from Kopernik monument to Castel square in Warsaw, a parade in uniform to the centre of Plonsk, a visit to an agricultural farm and a dinner with entertainment at a restaurant nearby.

In addition to the cultural experience of visiting Poland for the first time and meeting and chatting with officers from a number of different diverse countries, I was most struck by the marches that took place.

In Warsaw, in addition to the 15 different National IPA Sections taking place (all with flag bearers) there were Polish Officers, some in

historical uniforms, a police band, a selection of historical and present cyclists, motorcycles, police cars and an historical vehicle with what looked like a cannon on it. Crowds lined the streets along the route and our destination at Castel Square. It was packed with members of the public and local dignitaries alike and each group were announced in to the square to a great reception from those present.

Following a short break we were thereafter taken by bus to Plonsk, and following a short welcoming ceremony by the Mayor and other local dignitaries in the Centre of Culture, we formed up for a march to the centre of Plonsk. On this occasion a young child was allocated to each different country with a sign indicating the country of origin of the officers present. Local dignitaries from Plonsk, local senior police officers, another police band and garrison, an armoured vehicle and the local IPA motorcycle group then joined us and we marched to the square.

It would be remiss of me not to also mention the great food, drink and entertainment we were given including a ballroom dancing exhibition, roulette and black jack tables, 4x4 vehicle driving, a stunt motorcycle demonstration, a taste of local food and drink at the farm and the inevitable disco and introduction to local dances. The food was excellent throughout the event and I must confess it is the first time I have ever been to such an event where two bottles of vodka and a number of mixers were on the table when we sat down. So I was told, it would appear locally it is traditional to drink the vodka neat and a separate glass was supplied for the soft drinks! Local beers were also available.

In the tradition of IPA events I have attended I returned home having made a few new good friends along with a large number of new acquaintances from a variety of different countries. I will certainly be staying in touch with my new friends from the Met, Poland, Southern Ireland and Malta and have already been in email contact with them.

On my return to work I have my new experience to further extol the virtues of being a member of the IPA. Through this article for the Police World Magazine and other police publications, plus the report to my force I hope this will encourage further new membership. I will also be reporting back to my branch and region through the six monthly meeting.



Jim Westwood with Alice (the talented singer)

I am aware this is an annual event and would urge any serving member of the IPA to apply to attend next year.

Jim Westwood

The good food, dancing and karaoke all led to people being more open and even friendly. We all laughed so much. Later we had a daunting challenge when George, from IPA-Cyprus, requested that a Russian WW2 song had to be performed by Russian speaking officers in acappella. I could not resist the challenge and joined Russian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian officers and a Russian singer who had been especially invited to the event. Those people were very good singers: Pavel from Czech Republic, Magdalena and Agnieszka from Poland and Alice from Ireland - I take my hat off to them all. We were dancing all sorts of dances from Latin American to traditional Polish dances, or so we thought!

After returning back to work I was excited that colleagues started to ask how the trip was, and as a result two officers asked me how to join IPA.

Thanks to IPA I met so many great people and made friends. I believe that one of the best things was that people of different ranks, different countries, beliefs and societies could talk to each other so freely and be so friendly. I have received numerous invitations to visit other countries, and it looks like Germany will be the first country I visit. I urge everybody to join IPA and apply to attend events like this.

Servo Per Amikeco.

Tatjana Arsoba