

SCOTS IN WĘGRÓW



The thick volume of over 600 years of Węgrów's history contains also a Scottish page. It was written in the 17th and 18th centuries by the merchants and craftsmen, emigrants from poor and conflict-torn Scotland, who settled in the rich, stable and foreigner-friendly Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

As early as in 1621, the inventory of Węgrów's estates mentions the name of Dawid Szot (i.e. Scot). Scots gladly settled in Węgrów which belonged to Prince Bogusław Radziwiłł known for his support for his fellow Protestants. 14 April 1650 marks an important date for the Scottish community in Węgrów. On that day, Prince Bogusław Radziwiłł issued a privilege under which foreigners *"of German and Scottish nationality, our beloved and loyal subjects (who) willingly settled here and are the ornament of our town"* were granted municipal rights under the Magdeburg Law, like other citizens of Węgrów. The privilege was simultaneously a founding charter: *"We have decided (...) to establish a new settlement, and we will make every effort, with all our kindness and generosity (...), to contribute to erecting and decorating it, and to this end we will also diligently seek the support of His Majesty the King and the Commonwealth."* The content of the quoted privilege confirms the fact of establishing a new settlement, or rather, a district for the settlers of "Protestant worship, both of the Geneva (Calvinist) and Augsburg (Lutheran) confession", Calvinism being professed mainly by Scots, and Lutheranism – by Germans.

The influx of Scots into Węgrów can hypothetically be linked to the conflict which arose between King Charles I of England, and the Scottish Protestants (1638-1640) united under the National Covenant. The conflict was just a prelude to the war that engulfed the British Isles from 1642 to 1645. It was probably at this time that a group of Scots arrived and settled in Węgrów. They were traders and textile craftsmen who made the town famous with their products. This was the case not just in the Podlasie Region. There were over 30,000 Scots living in Poland at that time.

In 1651, mention was made of Andrys Gibson and Rychard Gordon who, incidentally, was one of the richest Scots living in Poland at that time. Other Scots who established themselves in Węgrów were the cereal and cattle merchants: Jerzy and Jan Gordun (Gordon), Moryson (Morrison), Szczęśny Gordon, Kilian Capla, Aleksander Fuit and Tobiasz Orson, all of them mentioned in a document of 1656.

The Swedish "Deluge" (Swedish-Polish wars) during which some of the Protestants actively supported the invaders brought about a change in the national mood and a growing hostility towards the followers of other denominations. The Protestants from Węgrów were subjected to harassment. From 1685 to 1689 and in 1720, the Protestant church was closed several times on the order of the Bishop of Łuck.

Conflicts arose also between the two groups of Protestants. As a result, Scottish Calvinists gradually began to leave Węgrów. Reverend Forsyth, a Scot by descent, and pastor from 1766 to 1773, made unsuccessful attempts to revive the Calvinist congregation. Eventually, as written by Tomasz Świącicki in his

Description of Ancient Poland, “the persecutions that took place at the beginning of King Stanisław August’s reign scattered those talented people and they stopped making garments there”.

Scots in Węgrów enjoyed high status, which is evidenced by the successful careers of some representatives of that nation. Among them were town mayors (Archebald Campbell, Jakub Gordon), head of the commune, pastors (Marcin Gordon, Forsyth), and land owners mentioned in municipal records.

The main historical monuments associated with the townsmen of Scottish origin are the objects of sepulchral art, which testify to the wealth of that community. They include tombstones, the only 17th/18th century cemetery monuments in Węgrów that have survived till today thanks to the durability of the material from which they were made.

The Protestant cemetery in Węgrów, situated near the historical wooden church from 1679, holds sandstone slabs with inscribed names: *Campbel* (sic!), Henderson, *Lidel* (original name: Liddell) and Hueys. The language of tombstone inscriptions suggests that the founders were already polonised at that time. They came from families living in the Scottish Highlands (*Campbell, Henderson*), and the Lowlands, a region which had already been colonized in Roman times (*Liddell*). The Hueys family probably came from Ireland. In addition to the symbolic imagery of futility and death, the tombstones also contain quotations from the Bible, a characteristic feature of Protestant epigraphy, which were appropriately matched to the deceased person and the circumstances of their death. Another distinctive feature of the inscriptions is the absence of Polish characters.

The oldest preserved tombstone was founded before 1692 by Archebald Campbell who ordered his coat of arms - St Andrew’s crosses cantoned with galleys – to be carved in the centre of the design. It was a common practice in the Baroque sepulchral art to display the coat of arms in order to manifest one’s pride in being part of a distinguished family.



Protestant cemetery and church from 1679 which, as legend has it, was built within a day.

As a sort of counterbalance, the symbols of Vanitas, i.e. the futility of life and human existence, were placed at the bottom of the tombstone. They include a skull with crossbones on it and a stern warning in Latin: (WHAT) TO ME (HAPPENED) TODAY/ THIS/ TO YOU (SHALL HAPPEN) TOMORROW”, as well as an hourglass with a partly weathered motto “Tempus fugit” – time flies (implicitly: “eternity awaits”) accompanied by the image of a candle, symbolizing the transience of life.

A similar form and content is found on the tombstone of noble-born Anna Henderson which contains carved Vanitas symbols: a skull with crossbones, an hourglass and a candle.

The two tombstones belonging to the Hueys family look much more modest. The rectangular slabs made of sandstone lack sculptural ornamentation, which is indicative of a lower material and social status of the deceased (the title *famatus* – Polish: *slawetny* - was used to refer to townsmen).

Some of the Scottish settlers in Węgrów came from the Highlands where they had lived in clan communities. A clan is a social and family structure grouped around the chief and his kin. The external markers of clan membership include: the coat of arms of the clan’s chief; *tartan* – a checked pattern appearing on the fabric of the *kilt* (men’s skirt) and other items of garments (plaid, sash and beret), the metal badge worn on the headwear, derived from the crest; the plant associated with Celtic symbolism; the motto – the war cry, and the song – the clan’s march, usually played on bagpipes.

A catalogue of epitaphs from the tombstones in the Protestant cemetery in Węgrów¹

D O M²
HERE LIES

ANNA HENDERSON NÉE LIDEL
NATA DIE I IVLY ANNO 1668
DENATA 4 IVNI 1696³

I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT,
I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE,
I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH
HENCEFORTH THERE IS LAID UP
FOR ME A CROWN OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

II TIMOT. 4. V. 78 Jesus, I trust in you Song CCXI
SHE DIED IN PAIN AFTER
HER LAST DAUGHTER
AND NOW ENJOYS ETERNAL
BLISS IN HEAVEN

¹ The original spelling has been retained in the quotations.

² to God, the Best, the Greatest (Supreme)

³ born on 1 July 1668/died on 4 June 1696

The Clan Henderson descends from the Pictish prince Henry (Celtic: Eanruig) who settled in Kinlochleven (the Highlands). *Henderson* is an anglicized version of *Mc Eanruig* and means *Son of Henry*. Owing to their impressive stature and strength, the Hendersons often served as hired guards to various clans, e.g. the Clan McDonald. Their motto is “Sola virtus nobilitat”- virtue alone ennobles, their plant badge is cotton grass and their war cry – “the Hendersons are here!”

The noble family of Liddel came from the Lowlands, from the County of Roxburgh located on the Scottish-English border where a fort has been preserved until today – an earthen fortress and a river bearing the same name. The most famous representative of the family was Alice Liddell, the prototype of the heroine of the famous novel “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll.



**SEPVLCVRVM ARCHEBALD.
HUEYS
YOU HAVE APPOINTED HIS
BOUNDS
JOB. 14. V. 15
HELENA. HVEYS
SHORT MY TIME IS
&. Psalm. 89. V. 48
IAKUB. HVEYS I. WILL. GO.
DOWN. INTO. THE. GRAVE. UNTO.
MY. SON. MOURNING
GEN. 37. V. 30.
ALEKSANDER HVEYS
I. SHALL. GO. TO.
HIM. BUT. HE. SHALL.
NOT. RETURN. TO. ME
2. SAM. 12. V. 23**

The Hueys family comes from Ireland. The name *Huyes* on the tombstones in Węgrów is probably a changed form of the original surname. The Hueys were related to the Campbells, which is evidenced by the adjacent tombstone.

D O M
HERE LIE
IN THE HOPE OF BLESSED RESURRECTION
FOUR CHILDREN OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS
FAMATORUM
IAKVB HVEYS
AND ELZBIETA NÉE CAMPBEL
SPOUSES
IF I WAIT, THE GRAVE IS MY HOUSE
IOB, XVII, V, 13
AB 1696
AD 1700

D O M
HERE LIES
RESTING IN GOD
THE HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN
ARCHEBALD CAMPBEL (sic!)
FROM ACHEN... (?)
TOWN MAYOR
QUO...(?) DENATVS
DIE 6 IVLIS ANNO
D'NI 1692⁴

AC . AC⁵.
IC. IH.
WC. EH.
THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN
TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS
AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN
UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT
ECCL. XII . V. VII
DOMINE. DVM. VENERIS . IVDICARE
NOLI . ME. CONDEMNARE⁶

HODIE
CRAS

under the
 hourglass:
TEMP...

MICHI (yes!)
TIBI⁷

⁴ died on 6 July / in the year of our Lord 1692.

⁵ those are probably the initials of the family members who were buried in the family grave together with Archebald Campbell. Two of them: "iH" and "eH" had not been finished which means they referred to persons who were still alive at that time.

⁶ Lord, when you come to judge the world /Do not condemn me

⁷ (*What*) to me today (*this*) to you tomorrow



Judging from the preserved fragments, the banderole over the skull carried the inscription “MEMENTO MORI”.

The Campbells are one of the most famous Scottish families. The Clan Campbell was started in the late 12/early 13th century by Duncan MacDuibhne nicknamed *Cambeul* (*cam-beul*), i.e. “wry-mouthed”. The Campbells grew in importance in 1688 as the only Highland clan that took the side of the English in the war against the restoration of King James II. In 1701, Archibald Campbell, chief of the Argyll family branch, was rewarded for his merits with the hereditary title of Duke by King William of Orange. The Campbells’ war cry is “Cruachan!” (name of a mountain located in the Campbells’ territory). Their clan march is called “Baile Inneraora” (or: *The Campbells are coming*). Their crest badge features the boar’s head surrounded by a strap bearing the motto “Ne obliviscaris” – “Do not forget”, which should rather be read as a fierce declaration “Do not forgive!”, this corresponding with the Campbells’ reputation among the *Highlanders* for being ruthless and cruel. Their clan plant is bog myrtle. Their main seat is the Inveraray Castle in North West Scotland.

The Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Węgrów contains a monument which represents a mixture of Protestant and Catholic cultures. This is an epitaph of Helena, nee Rybczyńska, wife of the head of the commune, David Iounga (whose original surname was probably Young), who died in 1715. This was probably a mixed marriage. David Young (Iounga) was a Protestant, and his wife – a Catholic, as indicated by the place of her burial. The influence of the Protestant culture is visible in the epitaph which was written in Polish, rather than in Latin, the latter being the language of Catholic epigraphy.

Roman Postek



Protestant church, M.Rząca

Węgrów is located in the east-central part of the Mazowieckie Province, in the immediate vicinity of the Liwiec River, a left bank tributary of the Bug River. The town is situated about 80 km east of Warsaw, on a major transportation route connecting the Polish capital with Drohiczyn, and near the route heading to Siedlce and Wyszaków on the Bug River.

Węgrów enchants visitors with its rich history going back to the Middle Ages. It is a place where the present mixes with many centuries of culture and tradition created by the generations of Poles, Jews, Scots and Russians who once lived here peacefully side by side. Taking a stroll through the town is like embarking on a journey through the five centuries of its history.

History lovers, especially those interested in historical monuments and cultural heritage, will find here the relics of various cultures:

- Catholic: e.g. Baroque monuments – former monastery and church of the Franciscans of Primitive Observance, Basilica Minor;
- Protestant: wooden church from 1679 and the surrounding cemetery with 17th-19th century tombstones of, among others, Scottish town inhabitants, Protestant church from 1838, Arian printing house;
- Jewish: e.g. Lapidarium, memorial to the Węgrów Jews, Rabbi's House, monument of Angel Rosenblatt.



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