

# Kosciuszko & Strzelecki

the MEN,  
the MOUNTAIN &  
the MONUMENT



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## General Tadeusz Kosciuszko

– The Man behind the Mountain

*(Born 4th February, 1746 | Died 15th October, 1817)*

A remarkable man who never set foot in Australia but who is well-known internationally for fighting for the values of freedom, liberty, and equality of all races, and especially for blacks and the underprivileged classes. Kosciuszko actively pursued these values in every aspect of his varied life in both Europe and America during various struggles for independence and freedom from tyranny. Today, these same values are considered "core values" in our Australian Democracy, and we therefore consider the name of "Kosciuszko" as being closely linked to them.

In 1840, "amongst a free people, who appreciate freedom", were the thoughts of the Polish explorer Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki when he climbed, identified and named Australia's highest summit after Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

Kosciuszko was born in Poland in 1746 in the village of Merezowszczyzna near the present-day town of Kosava, Belarus. At the time, the area was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He was the youngest son of a Polish nobleman, Ludwik Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and Tekla Ratomska. The family possessed modest holdings in the Grand Duchy. In 1765, Poland's King, Stanislaw August Poniatowski created a Corps of Cadets to educate military officers and government officials. Kosciuszko graduated from this military school in Warsaw, with the rank of Captain. He further developed his knowledge and skills by studying at the Paris Academy, including under the highly-respected military engineer Marquis Vauban. Kosciuszko loved knowledge and spoke 4 languages - Polish, French, English and German.

The young Kosciuszko aspired to go to America, because he thought (wrongly) that the revered General Pulaski was already there, along with many other Poles helping the Americans to fight for independence from the British. Following his unfortunate affair with Louise Sosnowska, in which he was not considered "of high enough class" to be her suitor, by her father, Lord Sosnowski, Kosciuszko was drawn to advancing rights for "the underprivileged classes". In the mid 1770's, the French were very excited about the misfortunes of the British in the American colonies, and when Virginian Diplomat Arthur Lee wrote to the well-known Paris writer/revolutionary Beaumarchais, telling him they needed "arms, powder and above-all, engineers", Kosciuszko jumped at the opportunity to fight the American cause and distinguish himself. The French and Spanish Governments provided funds to pay for ships to carry supplies for the Continental Army, and Frenchmen and others such as Kosciuszko wishing to help the Americans, took passage on these ships.

During the American War of Independence, in 1776, Tadeusz Kosciuszko was commissioned in the role of Colonel of Engineers, and was eventually promoted to Brigadier-General for his expertise in this area. His engineering skills were later acknowledged as critical in winning the war, especially at Saratoga, which was regarded as the turning point of the War. Kosciuszko built the fortress West Point over 28 months, and he made it so impregnable that the British never dared to attack it and it became known as America's Gibraltar. He was known for an amazing ability to be able to comprehensively assess the vulnerabilities and strengths of defensive infrastructure from two points of view - ie from both the defensive and the attacking positions. The West Point Fortress secured the Hudson pathway and forced the British to turn away from the northern States and wage a campaign in the south. Kosciuszko was a brilliant strategist and helped General Nathan Greene continue his guerrilla activities there without being captured. This resulted in the British forces becoming trapped and surrendering at Yorktown in 1781.

Kosciuszko returned to Poland in 1784 to join the patriotic movement against the Russians, which was gaining ground swell at that time, and to take control of his rural estates. In 1792, he commanded Polish forces defending the 3rd of May Constitution to which he had sworn allegiance in 1791. Poland was the second country in the world to be governed by a written constitution. Poland however lost the war and was partitioned again. Kosciuszko retreated for Saxony, Germany, but returned in 1794 to inspire a movement referred to as the Kosciuszko insurrection which involved peasants armed only with scythes fighting against

the Russian tyrants. After a famous victory at Raclawice, he suffered defeat at Maciejowice, and was seriously wounded and crippled. Narrowly avoiding death, he did subsequently recover in a Tsarist prison, but only partially and nursed permanent disabilities until his death in 1817.

What made Kosciuszko admired around the world was his character, attitude and values. In Europe and America throughout his life, he defended the poor and less powerful against any injustice attempted on them by the rich and powerful. He fought for liberty, justice and equality of opportunity for all people. The French aristocrat and military officer, Lafayette, observed that "[Kosciuszko's] name belongs to the entire civilized world and his virtues belong to all mankind". He believed in the true meaning of America's creed and fought hard to convince Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and other American founding fathers to put an end to slavery. It is particularly noted that Kosciuszko made a will in which he bequeathed part of his American property in trust to Thomas Jefferson to be used for the purpose of purchasing freedom of slaves and giving them instruction in the trades and otherwise. Seven years after his death, a school for former slaves, known as the Kosciuszko School, was established in Newark, New Jersey. When Booker T Washington visited the tomb of Kosciuszko, he placed a rose on it in the name of "his race". Booker T Washington was a black man, and himself a great leader and reformer.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko also had many creative talents. He painted and drew portraits and scenes during his engagements in both Europe and America. As an avid gardener, he created a beautiful, tranquil garden at West Point which still exists and is enjoyed by today's College cadets. He authored *Manoeuvres of Horse Artillery*, 1808, which served as a main reference at West Point until about 1850 and is even nowadays studied at West Point by the cadets. Kosciuszko loved and also composed music. Whilst in the Tsarist Prison, he composed two polonaises and a waltz.

Kosciuszko's compositions are little known, but were performed on the summit of Mt Kosciuszko by the Sydney Windjammers Ensemble on 17th February 2007, an event which gave birth to Kosciuszko Festivals staged yearly since then and now known widely as K'Ozzie Fests.

**For more info, go to: [www.kozziefest.org](http://www.kozziefest.org)**

# Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki

- One of Australia's greatest early explorers, a geologist, surveyor, scientist and philanthropist

*(Born 20th July, 1797 | Died 6th October, 1873)*

Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki was born in Gluszyna, Poland. He left Poland in 1829 as a young man, after a failed elopement with his young sweetheart, 16-year old Adyna Turno. He subsequently stayed in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France for a few years after this incident, and then in England and Scotland from November 1831 to June 1834. He educated himself in the Sciences whilst in Europe. For the next 58 months, he applied his newly-acquired scientific knowledge in explorations of North and South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, including Tahiti and Hawaii, and arriving in Sydney on April 25th, 1839 from New Zealand. Strzelecki, self-educated in a range of sciences and extensive practical experience, spoke 4 languages - Polish, English, French and German. He was an avid pursuer of knowledge in fields of geology, mineralogy, botany, cartography and geography.

Strzelecki explored NSW and Van Diemen's Land, trudging about 12,000 kilometres in expeditions to the Blue Mountains and Western Goldfields; to the Snowy Mountains and Gippsland; around most of Van Diemen's Land; and the Hunter and northern New South Wales. He discovered gold near Orange in 1839 but complied with Governor Gipp's 'request' not to announce it for fear of the consequences to the convict colony. Strzelecki preferred to walk because by doing so he could more easily find mineral samples and fossils. He could use the scientific instruments he carried to measure altitudes, chemically analyse minerals, take compass readings, record temperature and air pressure, check geological formations, make sketches, write down his observations and prepare maps. He ascended, identified and named the highest mountain of Australia as Mt Kosciuszko on 12th March 1840. It is believed that he named the mountain after Tadeusz Kosciuszko because the shape of the Mountain reminded him of a Mound in Krakow which he had seen built as a monument to Kosciuszko, and because he had heard many accounts about the great achievements of Kosciuszko, from his countrymen from different parts of Poland which was partitioned at that time and under the control of its neighbours.

Interestingly, much of Strzelecki's personal life had parallels with that of Kosciuszko's. Both tried to elope with young women as both failed to be accepted by the women's fathers due to class bias prevalent during their lifetimes. Both retained their friendships with these women throughout their lives, albeit from a distance for different reasons - Kosciuszko to Louise (Ludwika) Sosnowska, and Strzelecki to Adyna Turno.

Folded into a letter to Adyna, Strzelecki enclosed a white mountain daisy. He wrote "Here is the flower from Mount Kosciuszko – the highest peak of the continent, the first in the New World bearing a Polish name. I believe you will be the first Polish woman to have a flower from that mountain. Let it remind you ever of freedom, patriotism, and love."

Strzelecki treated every human equally and so formed good and sincere relationships with Aboriginals. He believed they just had different experiences, backgrounds and cultural ways, and he respected their ancient culture. His Aboriginal companions, Charlie Tarra and Jackey, can be accredited for saving Sir Paul's expedition party in Gippsland when food was low, by helping him to identify natural food sources from the bush. Acting as his guides, they helped him to understand and comply with tribal territorial property rights. By respecting these traditions, no infringements occurred despite many treks across tribal territories over a 4-year period. By being respectful, Sir Paul avoided the hostile confrontations which were frequently encountered by other explorers and which led to many deaths, especially of Aboriginals.

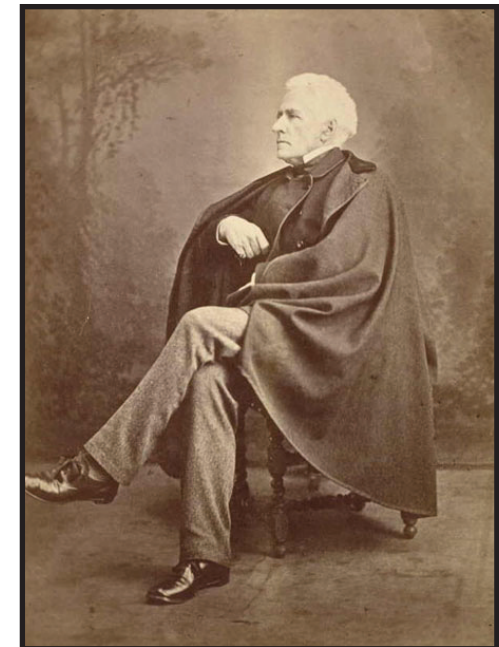
Strzelecki settled in England in 1843. His expedition research was published in 1845 as *The Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*. This pioneering work was 'an asset in scientific literature for the next 135 years', and is still regarded as an authoritative document on many aspects of the nature of Australia.

His humanitarian work, involving the leadership of relief efforts to save as many as 200,000 children in Ireland from starvation during the late 1840's "Potato Famine", nearly cost him his life and weakened his health for many years. His initial work in the most affected, most isolated and difficult-to-help counties of Donegal, Sligo and Mayo, proved so effective that he was put in charge of the relief effort for all of Ireland in the following years.

Strzelecki played an active role in encouraging young Irish folk with few good prospects in their Homeland, to emigrate to Australia. Having explored extensive areas of NSW and Van Diemen's Land, he had the firsthand knowledge to convince people of the potential of this new land where hard working people could find new opportunities and make a good life for themselves. We can only speculate as to what percentage of the non-convict arrivals to NSW were indeed influenced by Sir Paul in their decision to emigrate. If you are Australian with Irish heritage, who knows, you may be alive and here today thanks to Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki?

Strzelecki was honoured with the following Awards - Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George; Knighthood as Commander of the Order of the Bath; Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society and a Gold Medal for "Exploration in the south eastern portion of Australia" by the Royal Geographical Society.

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# The Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki Monument

(Born 20th July, 1797 | Died 6th October, 1873)

## History of Construction of the Statue

The statue of Strzelecki was Poland's gift for Australia's 1988 Bicentennial celebrations. The initiator of the project in 1980 was Harry Hefka. He formed the Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki Monument Committee in 1983 with John Molski and others under the patronage of Senator Tony Mulvihill. Enthusiastic support for the idea came from authorities in Strzelecki's hometown of Poznan. Sculptor, Jerzy Sobocinski, was commissioned to design and build the statue and granite pedestal in Poland. When finished, it was delivered to Australia at a total cost of \$US1,500,000, paid by the people of Poland. The Committee campaigned to get the 'go ahead' in Australia, and in March 1988, the NSW Bicentennial Authority approved a grant of \$45,000. It was matched by funds raised by the Committee from the Australian community. This funded the construction of the scenic viewing platform and installation of the statue at Banjo Paterson Park, Jindabyne. The site was generously provided by the Snowy River Shire Council. The Council eagerly approved the project in October 1987 with the cooperation and support of the Jindabyne Chamber of Commerce, The Snowy Mountains Authority and the Lions Club.

Dr John Ivering (also Polish) donated his time and talent to design and engineer the scenic viewing platform and plan the assembly of the monument. At this stage, a new Committee under the Chairmanship of Robert Strang was formed, based on the Australian Polish Chamber of Commerce in Melbourne. It raised further funds from the business community; arranged contractors for the construction work; supervised and coordinated the work to bring the project to completion. Individuals, businesses and organisations that donated large sums to either the original Committee or the new one are recognised on the commemorative plaque on the monument. Michael Kordek made a substantial donation and freely covered the project in his newspaper.

## The Unveiling of the Statue

The new Committee organised the unveiling ceremony for Monday, 14th November, 1988. The party representing Poland included T Mlynczak, Vice President of the State Council, Polish People's Republic, and Vice President of the Polonia Society; A Pierchala, Polish Ambassador in Australia; and W Owsianowski, Polonia Society, Poznan Division. In addition to the NSW Governor His Excellency Air Marshall Sir James Rowland, Australian dignitaries included Jim Snow, MHR, the Federal Member for Eden Monaro; and L Norton, President of Snowy River Shire Council. Speeches were given and the Duntroon Military College Band gave a recital with the 1st Kosciuszko Scout Group being responsible for raising the flags. Hundreds of children from Jindabyne Central School joined the onlookers to witness the official unveiling of the Monument by the Governor of NSW.

## Some Quick Facts about the Strzelecki Monument

Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki is presented as a standing figure, with one hand holding notes and maps, his other arm is outstretched, pointing symbolically to the highest summit of Australia - Mt Kosciuszko. The statue is made of bronze weighing 3200 kg and is over 4 metres in height. The pedestal is made of 12 granite sections sourced from Lower Silesia in Poland, and together with the base, it is about 5 metres in height. The attached bronze information plates weigh 1200kg. Total height of the monument is about 9 metres. The scenic viewing platform is made of Australia granite, although the exact source is not known at the moment. Maintenance of the Statue is the responsibility of Snowy River Shire Council.

## Designer/Architect of the Statue

Dr Jerzy Sobocinski from Poznan, Poland (Born 15 March, 1932; Died 1 November, 2008)

Designer/Engineer of Viewing Platform

John W Ivering from the NSW Institute of Technology (donated his professional services)

Technical Consultant

Les Strzelecki, from Cooma  
Stonemason

Ken Baxter, from Berridale

Concreting

Edgar Osolins, from Berridale

## Significance of the Monument

The Statue is a prominent feature in the Jindabyne town park, Banjo Paterson Park, standing proudly on a solid podium erected on a grassed area adjacent to Kosciuszko Road, on the foreshore of the picturesque Lake Jindabyne. The Statue is impossible to miss as one enters the town of Jindabyne, at the foothills of the Snowy Mountains and Kosciuszko National Park.

The Statue is a listed Heritage Item in the Local Environmental Plan for Snowy River Shire, and entered on the NSW Heritage Database as having both local and international significance.

Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki and his Monument in Jindabyne, have been the inspiration for many poems and songs about freedom, strength of character, and the pursuit of knowledge, expressed through various Festivals and events organised by both the local Australian and Polish community (Strzelecki Festivals in the 90's and Kosciuszko Festivals commenced from 2007, known as K'Ozzie Fests).

*'Everyone began to realise that Australian history wasn't only Anglo-Saxons, and it was obvious everyone was aware that it was a time to update Australian history. And I mean that with our composition now, to realise that, I repeat, Poles, Italians, Yugoslavs were entitled to figure more prominently than they had in the past.'*

... from the speech given by Senator Tony Mulvihill, energetic and effective Project campaigner and Patron of the original Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki Committee.

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