

An Important Commemoration at Geehi

On Monday the 4th of April a very interesting commemoration took place in the Kosciuszko National Park on the flats at Geehi. The ceremony was to mark two important events in this country's history. Firstly to celebrate 50 years since the official establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and Poland. Secondly and just as importantly the event also recognised Paul (Pawel) Edmund de Strzelecki's ascent of Australia's highest peak in March 1840 and how this peak obtained the name "Kosciuszko" from Polish and American freedom fighter and national hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

Amongst prominent people present were: Ambassador Michał Kołodziejcki, Mayor of Snowy Valleys Ian Chaffey, NPWS Officials Kyle Williams, Chris Darlington, Matt White, and a Ngarigo Elder Auntie Iris White. This day was made possible due to the cooperative and consistent efforts of the Polish Embassy, the dedicated staff of the Kosciuszko branch of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and members of Kosciuszko Heritage Inc..

During the proceedings a number of official speeches were made, poetry recited, gifts exchanged, ribbons cut to unveil two separate plaques commemorating both events, and 50 trees planted to represent the close ties between our two countries over the past 50 years. The morning ended with an informal and very tasty lunch kindly provided by Kosciuszko Heritage Inc. and catered for by the Pickled Parrot Providore, Khancoban.

The event was also attended by a large contingent of the Australian Polish community and representatives, and interested residents from both the Snowy Valleys Shire, NSW and the Shire of Towong, Victoria. Despite an ominous sky earlier in the day the proceedings commenced at 11:00 a.m. as scheduled and opened by His Excellency Mr Michał Kołodziejcki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland who was later invited to plant one of the 50 trees.

The day proved to be an interesting and enjoyable mix of three cultures, the First People of the Monaro, the Australian Polish Community and Australians in general. A great day was had by all with the majestic mountains surrounding Geehi as our backdrop. For those interested the trees planted during the morning were carefully chosen by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. They were a mixture of *Black Sally*, *Mountain White Gum*, *Ribbon Gum* and *Mountain Swamp Gum*, all native to the area. At the close of proceedings, the remainder of these trees were carefully planted and guarded by NPWS staff to protect them from the long-term residents of Geehi, the hungry kangaroo. Long may these trees, like the relationship between our two countries, prosper.



Young representatives of the Australian Polish Community in traditional costume stand by His Excellency Mr Michal Kolodziejcki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland as he opens the ceremony in recognition of Strzelecki's contribution to the early exploration of Australia and also stressing the importance of the strong and enduring ties formed between our two countries, particularly in these troubled times.

Photograph courtesy of John Murphy



The cutting of the ribbons with beautiful Geehi in the background.

Photograph courtesy of John Murphy



Young representatives of the Australian Polish Community in traditional costume stand by Aunty Iris representing Monaro Ngarigo Nations and His Excellency Mr Michal Kolodziejcki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland before one of the two plaques dedicated at Geehi on the day.

Photograph Courtesy of Kosciusko Inc.



A group photograph surrounding the plaques. Notice some of the 50 trees in the background freshly planted to mark the significance of the event.

Photograph courtesy of John Murphy