

## CLAN GATHERING IN POLAND

by Hanya O Dea (Odyia-Kravchenko)

In June, the second Odyia family gathering was held. At the first one, in May 2004, we congregated in Lag (Chojnice County, Poland) with an impressive turnout - 130 attendees. As we had already started numbering our family assembly at that time, it was a logical consequence to expect another meeting, which is now a memory and history.

The idea of the second gathering was born in September 2006, defined by November and in December notifications with a detailed program were sent out. According to that program, a two day event was planned for the 16th and 17th of June, with the second day intended for a trip to Gniew, where in the mediaeval castle a Holy Mass was to be conducted followed by a historical style banquet. This event was prepared with our foreign cousins in mind so an additional day with a historical and cultural touch was added to the program.

The Gniew castle chapel and refectory were booked, menu arranged, and other different attractions for the afternoon were anticipated. Alas, by the time of the required confirmation of the booking there was not a single enquiry from our International O Dea Clan members which left an insufficient number of willing participants for the trip to Gniew. Accordingly, at the end of March, the extended part of the gathering schedule had to be cancelled.

On Saturday the 16th of June, in the Hotel Posejdon (Gdansk, Jelitkowo), participants from various places in Poland and abroad, after registering at the gathering's reception and following introductory chats, sat down to an official lunch in the hotel's Clio Hall. After a short welcome by the meeting's organiser the meal commenced. The social atmosphere was solemnly temperate to start with but slowly melted - becoming chatty, jolly and relaxed. Cameras clicked and flashed. After the lunch, a break followed. At 6.30 PM we met again in the garden pavilion of the same hotel. A piano player, a student of the local Music Academy, played famous film and entertainment standards.

The Smorgasbord self-service buffet was very well supplied with a variety of good food and proved to be very popular. The mood was clearly set for having fun and relaxed, convivial conversations abounded. In the rays of the setting sun the extended Family members assembled for a group photograph. Some individuals, amused by that moment, wondered around like rampant bees. The photographers tried to capture the most attractive and representative snapshots of them. Indeed, although that moment did not result in any properly taken shot of one big family portrait, it generated a lot of laughs and lifted the overall mood. However, the weather (a recent shower and cool air) was not conducive for people to remain on the wet green lawn so everybody returned to the tent.

There was an attempt to elicit an interest in the participants for the organization of future gatherings. Many suggestions were offered, after which the majority of the assembly agreed that the next Odyia Family meeting would be held in two years time, ie in 2009. The month of July was chosen along with the location - in the village of Zblewo (Starogard Gdanski County, Poland). Felicja Odyia from Zblewo agreed to take over the future event's organization, which was met with general acclaim. Some voices declared additional assistance. Incidentally, Zblewo (pronounced Zb-leh-vo) is one of the cradle villages of the Polish O Deas (Odyas) in Pomerania, near the Baltic Coast, where one of the two O Dea brothers ended up in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century after being shipwrecked outside the Gdansk Bay while fleeing the Cromwellian persecution of Ireland.

There was a marked and genuine interest by some of the participants about the O Dea Clan in general. Next year's Ennis gathering was also mentioned so there is a good chance that more Polish family members will meet their distant cousins in due course. It was only the second Polish Odyia gathering so some insight will be taken into the organization of the following ones. But all of us, the Polish O Deas (Odyas) do hope that our future meetings will be graced by the presence of some of our O Dea cousins from around the world. You will love it and you will be most welcome!