

INTRODUCTION

Alojzy Paweł Gusowski was born on 25 January 1916 in Starogard Gdański, in the present-day Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland. In Poland, he served as a pilot on the PZL-23 "Karaś" light bomber/reconnaissance aircraft.

As a member of the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron, he took part in operations over Poland in September 1939 against German forces.

After the September Campaign, he reached England via Romania and France, where he continued the fight against the Germans with No. 305 (Polish) Bomber Squadron, Royal Air Force. There he flew Vickers Wellington Mk II bombers. He did not return from his eighteenth and final operational sortie over Germany: on the night of 19–20 June 1942, he was shot down over the Netherlands by a night fighter. He was laid to rest in Raalte, the Netherlands.

Alojzy Paweł Gusowski was one of the many airmen of the Second World War who fought against the German occupation forces, first in Poland, then in France, and finally in England. He was among the hundreds of Polish airmen who, in this struggle for Poland's freedom, made the ultimate sacrifice: their young lives. Today, Alojzy and others like him are scarcely remembered, even in his place of birth.

This book is dedicated to Alojzy Gusowski, one of the many Polish soldiers who lost their lives in this struggle. It is intended to show that such quiet heroes once lived among us, or among our parents and grandparents. Today, their heroism is often forgotten; this book offers an opportunity to recall the lives and the struggle of people such as Alojzy Paweł Gusowski.

Unfortunately, while writing this book, I was unable to make use of the most valuable source on Alojzy: the diary he kept from the first days of the war until his death. I discuss this diary and the work on the book in more detail in the afterword.

This book would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who contributed: for their assistance in gathering information and providing photographs, and for tending the graves of the fallen Polish airmen in Raalte – our Dutch friends, Dini and Appie Wassing. I would also like to thank their daughter-in-law, Elżbieta Wassing, for translating selected passages from the book *Raalte in oorlogstijd 1940–1945* from Dutch into Polish, and for providing information about Raalte.

Richard Woolderink, a resident of Raalte and author of *Raalte in oorlogstijd 1940–1945*, provided a considerable amount of valuable new information and made photographs available for this book. I would also like to thank the staff of the Municipality of Raalte for providing the map of the cemetery.

My thanks also go to the staff of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London for their assistance in obtaining and publishing valuable information.

Valuable information and photographs were provided by Jerzy Szwarc – nephew of Lieutenant Henryk Jankiewicz; Nicholas Madejczyk – son of Stefan Madejczyk; Monika Kubik – niece of Stefan Madejczyk; and Maciej Skarzyński – son of Stanisław Skarzyński, to whom I express my sincere thanks.

I would also like to thank Alicja Wancerz-Gluza of Warsaw, and Marek Rogusz and Łukasz Łydźba, for their assistance in researching information and for sharing the photographs used in this book.

Special thanks are due to Wojciech Zmysłony for providing a great deal of valuable information on the history of No. 305 Squadron, which made it possible to reconstruct the service of Alojzy Gusowski. I would also like to thank Marek Głowczyk for sharing an album of unpublished photographs of No. 300, No. 304 and No. 305 Bomber Squadrons, several of which have been used in this book.

I would further like to thank Lechosław Musiałkowski for providing photographs of Wellington Z8339 SM-N "Nana", and Robert Gretzyngier for the illustration of Wellington Z8339 SM-N.

For additional information, I also thank Krzysztof Mruk, Krzysztof Sikora, Andrzej R. Janczak, Ryszard Szwoch and Tadeusz Dubicki (for sharing the map). My thanks go to my aunt, Zofia Sass, for translating the correspondence between Richard Woolderink and Eugenia Jankiewicz Steniczkowa of Kraków.

I would also like to thank the many others not mentioned here who, through their suggestions, contributed to the writing of this biography. Among those to whom I am especially grateful are, of course, my family: my wife Elżbieta, my cousin Alojzy Paweł Gusowski, and my children Małgorzata and Tomasz. I also thank my brother Tadeusz for his assistance in preparing several photographs for publication.

Krzysztof Kowalkowski

EARLY YEARS

Alojzy Paweł Gusowski was born on 25 January 1916 in Starogard Gdański, in what is now the Pomeranian Voivodeship.¹ According to the baptismal register, his parents were Alojzy Gusowski, a butcher, and Aniela (Angelica), née Tomaszewska. He was baptised on 30 January 1916 in the parish church of St Matthew in Starogard Gdański by Father Paweł Nagórski. His godparents were Jan and Marta Gusowski from Starogard.² In other documents, Jan's surname was spelled with a "z": Guzowski.

Alojzy Paweł was the fifth child in the large family of Alojzy Gusowski and Aniela. His father Alojzy, son of Ignacy and Józefina, was born on 26 April 1883 in Blizawy, in a district where the Gusowski family had lived for several generations. He was a master butcher and the only member of the family to spell his surname with an "s"; his brothers and sisters used the form with a "z" (Guzowski).

Alojzy, the father of Alojzy Paweł, married Aniela Tomaszewska, daughter of Jan and Marianna, on 4 April 1910 in Lipinki near Warlubie. She was born on 6 October 1887 in Smętówek (now in the Starogard district). After their marriage, he settled with Aniela in Preussisch Stargard, as the town was then known: Starogard Gdański.

Alojzy first rented a shop. He then purchased a house in 1911 at what was then Wilhelmstrasse 5 (now Chojnicka 5), where he lived and ran a butcher's shop. The butcher's shop at this address is mentioned, among other sources, in a directory of industry, trade and crafts of Western Poland, probably published in 1925, although the surname Gusowski is recorded there as Gazowski.

The aforementioned godfather of Alojzy Paweł, Jan Guzowski (Gusowski), was Alojzy's older brother and also a butcher. He lived on the same street at number 11 and had a shop there as well. His name, however, was recorded in the directory as Guzowski.⁴

Thirteen children were born to Alojzy and Aniela in Starogard Gdański. The eldest, Maksymilian, was born on 27 March 1911 and died on 17 November 1980. The next children were Agnieszka (1912–1955), Dionizy (1913–1973), Maria (1914–1998), Alojzy Paweł (1916–1942) – the main subject of this book, Bronisława (1920–1997), Zygmunt (1921–1921), Edward (1922–2011), Jadwiga (1924–2002), Mieczysław (1926–1977) – the father of Elżbieta, the author's wife, Barbara (1927–2011), Bogusław (1928–2005) and Józef (1930–2012). As Alojzy's children who were still alive recalled in the 1990s, he had been chairman of the butchers' association in Starogard since 1934.

In that same year, he began building a house on what was then Wodociągi (now Kociewska). The plot on which the house was built was purchased with the intention of establishing a farm, the livestock of which would serve as a production base for the shop.⁵

The years of occupation were very difficult for the whole family. On 8 January 1940, the Germans drove the residents from Chojnicka Street and took away Alojzy's wife Aniela and their daughter Bronisława. Alojzy's eldest son, Dionizy, joined the transport in the hope that his mother would be released. Unfortunately, instead of receiving help, he too was taken away along with his mother and sister. Alojzy was driven from his farm in 1941 and had to look for work. He found employment at the local abattoir. Their cousin Holz, who lived at 13 Jabłowska Street, moved in with him.

After the war, Alojzy returned with his family to the farm on Kociewska Street. Alojzy Gusowski died on 6 December 1959 in Starogard. His wife Aniela died on 26 January 1960 at the home of her eldest son Maksymilian. Alojzy and Aniela are buried in Starogard Gdański. The farm remained in the family's possession and was taken over by Alojzy's son Edward, while the house on Chojnicka Street was sold.⁶ Today, Edward is no longer alive, and his wife and daughter Krystyna, together with her husband, still live in the family home.

Alojzy Paweł Gusowski attended primary school in Starogard Gdański. Given his place of residence, this must have been the school on what is now Szwoleżerów Street. He probably completed it in 1930. However, there is no precise information on this, as no documents from that period have survived, either in the family home or in the archives.

As Alojzy Paweł's younger brother Edward Gusowski (1922–2011) recalled, after primary school Alojzy Paweł continued his education at a vocational school in Tczew, where he trained as a mechanic and locksmith. At the same time, he had been interested in aviation from a young age and often said that he would become a pilot. He fulfilled this ambition, but it is difficult to determine when he first flew. According to Edward, Alojzy had already taken a gliding course while studying in Tczew.⁷ It may have taken place in Rumia, but no clear information has survived.

The vocational school in Tczew which Alojzy attended was probably the School of Crafts and Industry⁸ (now Zespół Szkół Zawodowych No. 1) in Tczew. The course at this school lasted three years and was not free. The monthly fee amounted to 15 zł. Gliding training was also likely expensive. However, within the Gusowski family, no expense was spared on education.

Alojzy's two older brothers, Maksymilian and Dionizy, attended the State Gymnasium in Starogard (on what is now Hallera Street). Dionizy began studying at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Poznań, but the outbreak of war interrupted his studies. He did not complete them until 1948, when he obtained his medical degree.¹⁰

Unfortunately, no information is available about the profession Alojzy Paweł practised after completing his training in Tczew. According to records from the British Ministry of Defence, Alojzy's occupation was that of electrician and fitter¹¹, and not, as previously stated, that of mechanic-locksmith. It has also not been possible to establish whether he completed the gliding course.

It is certain that flying clubs existed in Pomerania in 1932, including the flying club in Tczew. However, sources indicate that at that time they primarily served a propaganda role and were not actually used for training. At that time, training took place only at the airfield in Rumia and at other centres outside Northern Pomerania. The Aeroclub Gdański, which was active at the Technical University of Gdańsk and was founded by Polish students, only began independently offering gliding training in 1935 and also sought suitable landing sites, including in Reda Dębogórze and Gostomie.¹² It should be added that in Rumia, prior to the Second World War, a passenger airport was also built alongside the gliding airfield.¹³

The district flying club of the League for Air and Gas Defence (LOPP) in Tczew was founded on 9 December 1935.¹⁴ The first theoretical course in Tczew began on 2 March and ended on 30 March 1936. There were 59 candidates. The course was completed by 44 participants, 27 of whom took part in the practical training.¹⁵

Stanisław Arciszewski writes in his book “Tradycje lotnicze Kociewia” about the gliding courses: “The instructors of the course in Tczew and Starogard were well-known members of AG [Aeroklub Gdański – KK].” Further in the book we read: “Course in Starogard – glider ”Wrona”, instructor Z. Niwiński (...). The new gliding course takes place on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4.00 p.m. to sunset. The cost is 5 zł for school pupils and 15 zł for non-pupils. Applications are accepted by Z. Niwiński, Starostwo, room 18, and at the gliding airfield.”¹⁶

This shows that gliding courses were also organised in Starogard. If Alojzy did indeed take a gliding course, it was probably in Starogard in 1936 or 1937, as his name does not appear on the list of glider pilots who attended a course in Tczew in 1936–1937. At that time, Alojzy was already working and could therefore afford the course.

As Edward Gusowski recalled, after completing his training, Alojzy went to work for the private company Przybylski in Starogard. This

company was involved, among other things, in the construction of St Wojciech's Church in Starogard, and according to Edmund, it was on this church that Alojzy fixed the cross.¹⁷

This was probably the company of Wiktor Przybielski. As Ryszard Szwoch writes, this company was very active in Starogard during the interwar period and was probably commissioned by the client, Father Szuman, to place the cross – and presumably also the two subsequent crosses – on the church dome. Such work at height was dangerous and was carried out by experienced craftsmen to prevent accidents. This may explain Gusowski's involvement.¹⁸

The church in question is now located at 4 Pomorska Street. As Józef Milewski writes, construction began on 9 September 1934 and the first cross was placed in the autumn of 1938.¹⁹ At that time, however, Gusowski was already undergoing flight training and therefore could not have been employed by Przybielski. Ryszard Szwoch, who examined the manuscripts of Father Henryk Szuman, the parish priest at the time, found the following entry: "On 5 May 1936, a large gilded iron cross was placed on the dome of the new church. This cross, which towers above the entire town, was intended as a permanent visible sign that Starogard would remain a Catholic town." According to Szwoch, two more crosses were placed on the bell towers in 1937.²⁰

Gusowski may therefore have taken part in this work, as he was not called up for the Polish army until 4 November 1937.

Alojzy Gusowski's younger sister, Barbara, recalled that Alojzy was very skilful and could even stand upright while riding a horse.²¹

Unfortunately, years of research have yielded no documents relating to Alojzy Paweł Gusowski, making it impossible to present a precise picture of his early years.

SERVICE IN THE 4TH AIR REGIMENT

On 4 November 1937, at the age of 21, Alojzy was called up for service in the Polish Army with the 4th Air Regiment – Training Squadron in Toruń, where he took the military oath on 8 December 1937.²² It is unclear whether the possible possession of a pilot's licence helped him to be assigned to this unit, which enabled him to pursue his interest in aviation further. Such a path into military aviation was common at the time, as evidenced, among other sources, by the memoirs of Tadeusz Siczek from Radom. Like many others, he first completed a gliding course organised by the LOPP and was then called up for military service. He was subsequently transferred to training for Air Force reserve cadets.²³

Alojzy Gusowski began his training on 3 January 1938 as a soldier of the 4th Air Regiment – Training Squadron at the aircraft maintenance school, which he completed on 15 March 1938. He then began preparatory instruction for flight training, which he completed on 30 March 1938. After completing this instruction, he began advanced flight training on 1 April, which he completed on 30 July 1938. After completing this course, Alojzy was promoted to private first class.

Alojzy Gusowski continued his path towards a career as a pilot and, from 15 August to 21 September 1938, attended a specialist course on the PZL-23 “Karaś” aircraft. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to determine where this course took place. The Central Military Archives wrote in reply to a request from Elżbieta Kowalkowska: “In reply to your letter, we inform you that the Central Military Archives have only been able to establish that Alojzy Gusowski, born in 1916, served in the Polish Army with the 4th Air Regiment from 4 November 1937. The last record of his name dates from 31 December 1938, when he held the rank of private first class. Further service and his participation in the 1939 campaign could not be established, as the records of this unit were lost during the war and the occupation.”²⁵

As this shows, it is very difficult to reconstruct Alojzy's further military career in the Polish Army. It is possible that Gusowski trained in nearby Grudziądz at the Aviation School for Shooting and Bombing, which on 30 August 1937 was renamed the Flying School.

After completing his training on the PZL-23 "Karaś", Gusowski became a line pilot with the 41st Line Squadron of the 4th Air Regiment in Toruń, which had just been equipped with these aircraft. However, this was not the end of his flight training. From 15 April to 30 June 1939, he underwent training at the non-commissioned officers' school in Bydgoszcz. After completing this course on 30 June, he was promoted to corporal-pilot.²⁶

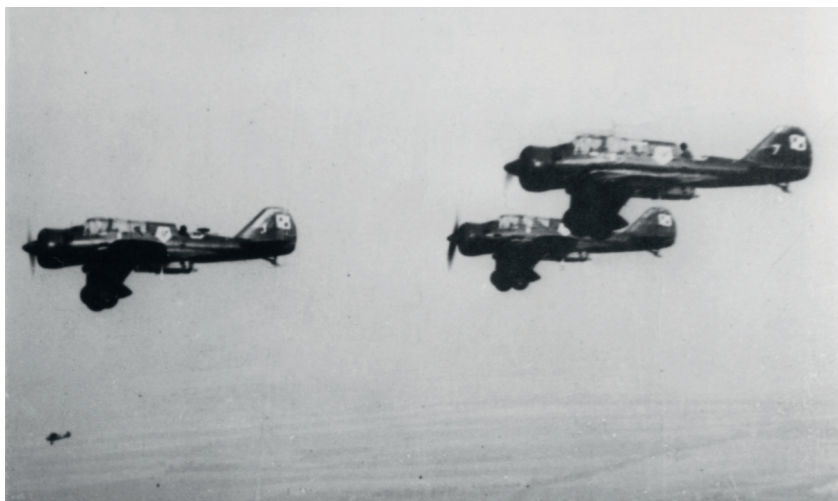
It should be noted that at that time Bydgoszcz was one of the most important training centres. It was home to Air Force Training Centre No. 2, which comprised the Aviation Cadet School and the School for Air Force Non-commissioned Officers for Minors. In October 1938, the latter was relocated to Krosno due to the increasing threat of war. It is worth noting that Kazimierz Ardelli, Gusowski's later crew member in England, was also trained at this centre.

Completing this course marked the beginning of Alojzy Gusowski's operational service. He was assigned as a pilot to the 41st Squadron, where he flew PZL-23 "Karaś" aircraft based in Toruń. His observer was Władysław Chrzanowski. The squadron's emblem was a red Pomeranian griffin depicted in a white pentagon with a red border.

On 31 August 1939, the 41st Line Squadron was redesignated as the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron and became part of the air force of the "Modlin" Army. The reason for this change was probably not only the introduction of the wartime organisation of the air force, but also the fact that the "Karaś" aircraft²⁸, with which the squadron was equipped at the outbreak of the war, were already becoming obsolete as bombers and were therefore of limited operational value. This became clear during combat missions in September, when many "Karaś" aircraft were shot down due to their low speed.

The transition from a bomber squadron to a reconnaissance role was probably not well prepared, as the unit had not been fully adapted to its new role. As Captain Chrzanowski wrote in his report, the squadron, in its role as an observation unit, had too many bombs and too many bomb racks for 12.5 kg bombs. This was not the only problem. The squadron was not fully prepared for wartime conditions. According to the report, it had only three experienced observers, two observers with one year's experience in the squadron, five observers assigned in March 1939, one observer on active duty, and four reserve observers who were not familiar with the equipment and the "Karaś II" aircraft. The observers also had insufficient experience in live bombing (only one exercise with two 50 kg bombs). The pilots had never carried out landings on actual field airstrips.²⁹

The lack of experience with landings on field airstrips became a major problem in September 1939, as from 1 September the squadron operated exclusively from such airfields, as explained later in this book.



*"Karaś" aircraft of the 41st Squadron in flight.
(Arch. Jerzy Pawlak via Wojciech Sankowski).*