

Jastarnia – the cradle of Polish sea sailing

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Abstract

This paper will deal with the program of building and the development of the port in Jastarnia in connection with the development of yachting in Poland.

Jastarnia is located in the heart of Hel Peninsula. Its port was built between World War I and II by the Republic of Poland. The fishing harbour was built between 1926 and 1928. The first sailing boats had called at Jastarnia long before the Marina was built between 1927 and 1930. Since that time Jastarnia has not only become a fishing port and a tourist resort, but a sailing centre for young Polish and foreign yachtsmen.

During WW II Jastarnia was totally destroyed. Just after the war it was rebuilt and, in 1966, the whole port was completely modernized. In 1973 Jastarnia was given civic rights. Now the town has a population of about 4,000 people.

In 1932 the first offshore and ocean going yachts including the “Wojewoda Pomorski”, the “Szkwal”, the “Swarozyc”, or the “Poswist” formed the core of yachts flotilla in Jastarnia. Two years later the “Zawisza Czarny” was purchased by the Scouts Association, enriching the flotilla of yachts. In 1947, Jastarnia became the home port of the “General Zaruski”, the flagship of the flotilla. Many yacht masters were trained and first crews went sailing on board the yachts. Some generations of Polish sailors have grown up and been trained in Jastarnia.

Nowadays, Jastarnia is not only a seaside resort with cultural events for visitors but also a fishing harbour and a sailing center with all possible facilities to practice these sports.

Keywords: historic port, sailing history, yachting training center.

1 Introduction

The location of Poland between strong neighbours quite often caused arguments concerning the territory of the seaside. This Slavonic region temporarily belonged to other nations, and only in 14th and 15th century it was permanently



incorporated into Polish borders. Next disorders and following them partitions of Poland caused that Poland as a country ceased to exist for long 123 years (1795 - 1918). All these events have greatly influenced the development of Polish port towns as well as the development of sailing education and sailing itself.

The sea policy has varied in different periods of time, once "Polish Sea Power" was being built with great involvement of governments and the society, on other occasions it was totally neglected. There have been quite a lot of mistakes concerning the sea policy throughout Polish history. In 1918 Poland finally got access to the Baltic Sea again, however, with only one port in Puck. Of course, there was Gdansk, but Polish people had difficulties to use it, although it was supervised by the League of Nations. Poland did not have ports, piers, vessels, or sea specialists. However, a good program of development was prepared and it was put into life between 1920 and 1939. In consequence, ports in Gdynia, Hel, Wladyslawowo and Jastarnia were built, fishing boats, passenger vessels and yachts were constructed, and the navy and merchant navy developed. Maritime schools and sea training centers were opened and their graduates soon started their service on board of Polish ships. The enthusiasm of governments and the society was so great that also students from other universities and organisations were involved in the program of sea training.

2 Village and town

The very first information about Jastarnia as a Kashubian village comes from a privilege document for Hel Peninsula in 1378 (Figure 1). The name of the place evaluated from Osternas, then Hesternia in 1570, to Jastarnia in 1578. From 1772 to 1920 when the region was under Prussian occupation, it was known as Heisternest. In 1750 the village consisted of 91 fishermen's cottages where 485 inhabitants lived. Jastarnia had been a typical fishing village for many years till the time the road and the rail road to the town of Hel were built in 1922, and then Jastarnia became a popular summer spa. The village had new possibilities of development, for example, more tourists could come by land. However, the lack of its own port made it impossible for tourists to arrive straight in Jastarnia by sea.

Already during the Prussian occupation fishermen tried to persuade the authorities to dig a canal through the shoal of the Puck Gulf. It would make mooring of fishing boats easier. However, due to financial problems and because of the war, which started so soon, the plans had never been fulfilled.

After Poland had gained independence, the same requests were addressed to Polish government. In 1920 and 1922 hydrographic measurements were taken in the area of Jastarnia, but the decision was not yet made. The next fishermen's petition asking for building a harbour in Jastarnia was sent to the Ministry of Trade and to the Department of Navy on 24th August, 1925. This time the Harbour Board, which anyway planned to build shore fortifications in the area of the two settlements - Jastarnia and Bor, supported the petition and the decision of building a port was quick and at the end of 1925 the government released money from their budget for this cause.



Since that time Jastarnia has constantly been developing – mainly as a fishing port, a seaside spa and a yachting center. In 1973 Jastarnia was given civic rights and became an important town in this area.

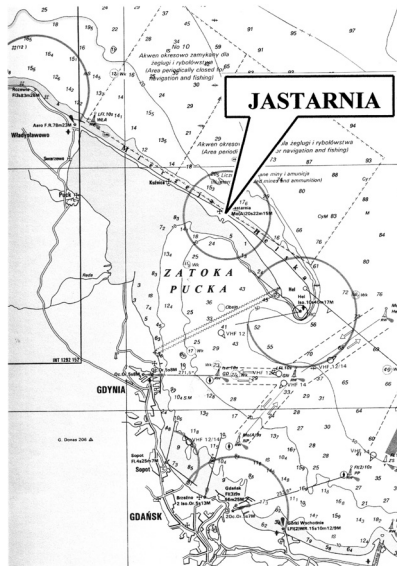


Figure 1: Gulf of Puck and Jastarnia position.

3 Port building

Before building of the port started, the plans and projects had been made considering the best places for situating the harbour. Several projects were introduced. Only one of them placed the harbour near the village of Jastarnia while the others preferred situating the harbour near Bor where the shore, which was being washed out by the sea, was to be fortified (Figure 2). Finally, the plan where the harbour was protecting the shore near Bor was approved.

According to the project two palisades were to be built forming an area covering 24 hectares of water from which 8 hectares of the main part of the harbour were to be dug to the mean depth of 4 meters. The outside space of the palisades was to be filled with the sand coming from the dredging of the port area. In this way not only the shore was protected, but also new land for investments appeared. In 1926, however, 780 meters of the west pier and 655 meters of palisades were built according to yet another project (Figure 2, variant 4). This final version situated the port between Jastarnia and Bor. In this way, port installations protected the shore from being washed out by the sea. At the same time a small bay near Jastarnia was filled up with sand forming even more area for new investments. In the same year a 700-meter-long fairway for the fishing boats was dug up and its depth was 3 meters.



In 1927 the plan of the port was changed again. An extension 50 meters long was added to the west pier and a 130-meter-long mooring pier was built to enable passenger ships from “Zegluga Polska” (Polish Shipping Corporation) to call at Jastarnia. Dredging works continued and new piers were being built all the time. As a result, in 1927 it was already possible for passenger ships to call at Jastarnia port, which was extremely important for the developing, but already famous seaside resort. When the port was built, number of tourists in the area increased even beyond the expectations of the local authorities (Table 1).

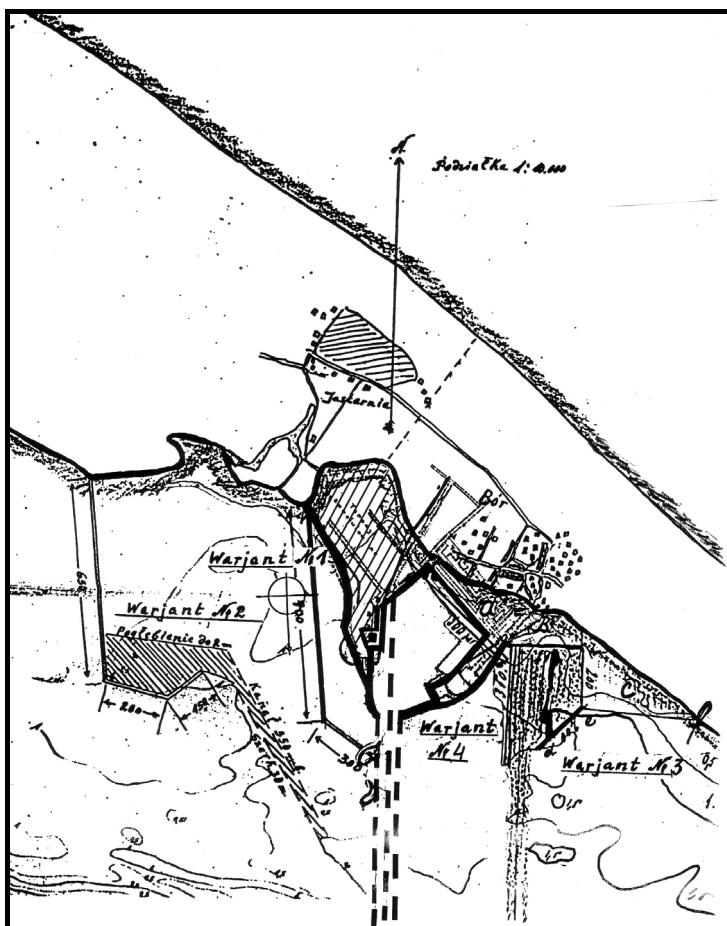


Figure 2: Projects of port building (Variant 1 and 2 – 1925, Variant 3 – 1926, Variant 4 – 1927) National Record Office APG 1944/302.

A great number of passenger and naval ships mooring in the harbour prevented fishermen from unloading their boats at quays, which were supposed to be discharging wharfs. This situation, of course, caused fishermen's protests. They

started sending complaints to different institutions. As a result of their appeals the west pier was extended again and the works on the port advanced very quickly.

From 1928 to 1929 the port lids were extended and two pierheads were built. What's more, there was built a passenger terminal with a cafe, a waiting room, and an elegant dancing hall. The fairway leading to the harbour was deepened to 4.5 meters. Once again the plans concerning the harbour were changed as a new idea apparent to build in Jastarnia the Yachting Center. Eventually, the port Jastarnia was a fishing harbour as well as a sea tourism center and a yachting base.

Table 1: Passenger traffic in the port of Jastarnia from 1928 to 1939.

| Year | Number of passengers traveling on ships of "Zegluga Polska" |
|------|---|
| 1928 | 40.000 |
| 1929 | 60.000 |
| 1930 | No data available |
| 1931 | No data available |
| 1932 | 12.046 |
| 1933 | 19.167 |
| 1934 | 35.766 |
| 1935 | No data available |
| 1936 | 47.000 |
| 1937 | 85.000 |
| 1938 | 165.310 |
| 1939 | No data available |

Source: authors' own analysis

4 Cradle of Polish sea-sailing

The first yachts had called at the port of Jastarnia long before its harbour was finished. Some prominent Polish sailors with general Mariusz Zaruski among them introduced the idea of opening a training center for sailors and yachtsmen in this place. The project of the Sea-Sailing Training Center was already designed in 1927. It was planned that new quay sheds for yachts and the accommodation center with all useful facilities for about 100 people would be built. For a good start six training yachts were purchased. In 1930 a camp for 85 scouts was organized. This camp introduced sailing training for young people, but it had many opponents. Mainly the general organization and training were criticized. Thus, the camps were suspended from time to time for even some years (Figure 3).

When in 1931 Akademicki Związek Morski (Academic Sea Association) was founded in Jastarnia, students began to come to this place forming the core of sea sailing training center. In 1933 the first international camp was organized. Training was held on the yachts, which had been purchased earlier that year, the



“Wojewoda Pomorski”, the “Szkwal”, the “Swarozyc”, the “Poswist” and four smaller boats.

The following years the training system was being improved, and when the Scouts’ Sailing Center was founded, groups of scouts and students worked together. In 1934 the Scouts Association bought a Swedish square topsail schooner “Petrea” which after being modernized got a new name the “Zawisza Czarny” (Figure 5), and became a flagship of this organization.



Figure 3: Project of Sea-Sailing Centre Zagle 1967 no 2 p.5.

In the same year the Center of Sea Training started to raise some structures such as two quay sheds and the main building with classrooms, a restaurant and other facilities for sailors. Three more yachts were bought that year: the “Jurand”, the “Krzysztof Arciszewski” and the “Panna Wodna”.

During the five years when the Center existed in Jastarnia 1,500 Polish and foreign sailors were trained. The Center became extremely popular because it organized seagoing voyages and its yachts took part in seagoing regattas. In 1939, for example, a large group of 370 young people took part in the training camp despite the tense atmosphere caused by the presaged war (Figure 4).

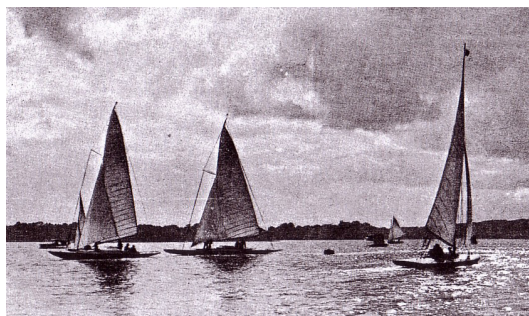


Figure 4: Training manoeuvre.

When the war broke out German sailing clubs and naval organizations took over the Center together with the yachts.

Training of Polish sailors in Jastarnia started just after the end of World War II. In 1946 a camp for 50 students was organized, and next year the Center for

instructors of sailing was opened there. Most of the yachts purchased before the war returned to the Center. A new one, built in 1939 in Sweden, the “General Zaruski” was bought (Figure 5). In Jastarnia a new base for instructors of sailing was build. They had 8 yachts supported by the “General Zaruski” during seagoing training. Most of our yacht masters went through such trainings and later on became instructors who taught young people on numerous camps for sailors and educated them in class.

The Training Center in Jastarnia had many owners and its educational aims were also changing. However, in 1958 Liga Obrony Kraju (the Country Defence League) took control over the Center. Mass training in sailing for young people became its main aim. Sailing as recreation and the way of sightseeing the world and sailing as sport were the two other aims of the League. Polish Olympic Teams in “Finn”, “FD”, “Star” and “Dragon” class took part in training camps organized in the Center.

In 1967 a decision was made to extend the Center and to open Training Center for Sea Sailors again. New hotels and quay sheds for yachts were built and new yachts were purchased. Sailing training was continued for next years and the port was extended.

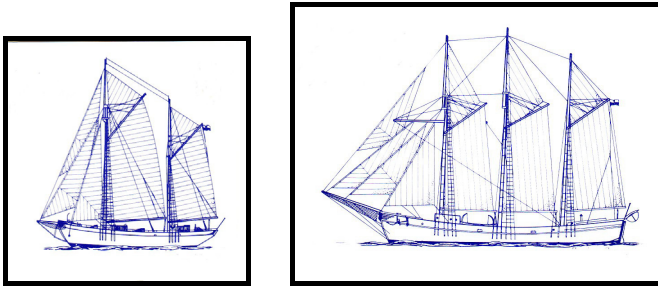


Figure 5: The schooners “General Zaruski” and “Zawisza Czarny”.

5 Conclusion

In the 1980’s and 1990’s due to a new economic situation the aims of the Center changed and sailing training was limited. The hotels were used by ordinary tourists who visited Jastarnia, but who were not interested in sailing at all. With time the buildings and other facilities of the Center have been destroyed. At present the future of the Center is being discussed. Should it be modernized by the state or sold to a next owner? We hope that the decision will be fruitful for all sailors. The yacht “General Zaruski” is also waiting for a decision and money to be either modernized or completely restored.

To sum up, it must be underlined that the Training Center for Sailors in Jastarnia has greatly promoted and developed the seagoing sailing, and has educated some generations of sailors, instructors and yacht masters. Building a harbour in Jastarnia proved to be a good investment for fishermen, for sailors

and passengers of ships. Up till now, the port with its facilities has been used by all the above-mentioned groups of people.

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