

# Professor Krystyna Wasylikowa – an eminent palaeoethnobotanist – on the eightieth anniversary of her birthday

Professor Krystyna Wasylikowa's life in science has already been described in depth by her colleague and friend Professor Magdalena Ralska-Jasiewiczowa (2002). I would like to concentrate on the last 10 years of her scientific activity, drawing particular attention to her archaeobotanical work and her influence on that particular area of palaeobotany. She has certainly had a profound impact on my own career as well as those of many other palaeoethnobotanists (or archaeobotanists).

I first met Professor Krystyna Wasylikowa in 1992 when I was attending a archaeobotany summer school which she had coorganized at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Igołomia, near Kraków. At the time I was taking my first steps as an archaeobotanist and one month later began studying charred plant material from the Roman Iron Age pit from Wąsosz near Kłobuck. I was impressed by her personality, knowledge and the teaching methods she employed, which allowed me the freedom to develop my own abilities. She was never disappointed and was always interested in my point of view. It was also quite evident to all of her students that she had total command of the subject she taught. Her professionalism and noble conduct impressed me so much, that I felt I had no choice – I was simply destined to become involved in archaeobotanical research. And so far this has been one great adventure for me, a story that continues to unfold.

Professor Wasylikowa instructed archaeobotanists and palaeobotanists in both macroremain and pollen analysis. She supervised four MSc theses (those of A. Jedliczka 1964, A. Orlicz 1965, M. Łopuska [Latałowa] 1972, and informally those of A. Bieniek 1992 and M. Lityńska 1982) and 4 PhD theses (those of I. Gluza 1984, D. Nalepka 1993, M. Lityńska-Zajac 1996, and A. Bieniek 2003). She played host to and instructed six trainees from Polish institutions (Z. Antosiak MSc and Z. Kłos [Balwierz] MSc from Łódź University, M. Latałowa MSc and M. Badura MSc from Gdańsk University, L. Kubiak MSc from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and M. Polcyn MSc from the Museum of the first Piast in Lednica) and seven from foreign institutions (G. Jorgensen MSc from the National Museum in Copenhagen, K. Lundstrom-Baudais MSc from the Institut Federal des Recherches Forestiere in Birmensdorf, Switzerland, Z. Pereira MSc from the University of Lisbon, C. Palmer MSc from the University of Sheffield, Dr. H. Ranheden from Uppsala University, D. Gallagher from Huston University, and V. Markgraf from Switzerland).

Professor Wasylikowa has organized a number of summer schools, workshops and less formal meetings. She is also very well known to the international archaeobotanical community, who hold her in high regard, and has gained particular prominence as a member of the steering group of the International Work Group of Palaeobotany, together with such renowned experts as Professor Karl-Ernst Behre and Professor Corrie Bakels. Younger colleagues jokingly referred to the most experienced group of archaeobotanists as “the mafia”.

Despite having retired, Professor Krystyna Wasylikowa has kept up her intensive work schedule over the last 10 years. She co-edited *Late Glacial and Holocene History of Vegetation in Poland Based on Isopollen Maps* (2004). Most Polish palynologists were invited to participate in this enterprise headed by Professor Magdalena Ralska-Jasiewiczowa. It would never have been completed if it were not for the huge amount of work put in by the team of participants.

Their broad discussions on its various stages and results were sometimes quite stormy, so the calmness, scientific authority, honesty, and considerable standing of Krystyna were very important at that time. Another very important work focused on the palaeoecology of Lake Zeribar in Western Iran over the last 48 000 years. The results were published in scientific journals (2005, 2006) and a monographic publication followed in 2007. This area of her activity was linked to her palaeoecological interests.

In 2003 she finished a handbook, which was finally published in 2007. It has proved to be of immense importance for Polish archaeobotanists, palaeoethnobotanists, and archaeologists. Over the last few years, she has not given any regular lectures to Polish students of botany or archaeology. This book, the first of its kind in Poland, should surely compensate for this to an extent.

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