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*My dear Ania, Asia, Dad Jon and Organising Team,*

Last Saturday's Oak Road Festival, 2017 organised by the Polish Community Centre proved to be a memorable, enjoyable and fulfilling day for all those who attended and certainly for me. Thank you for inviting me and for giving me the opportunity to share this most successful of events with you all. Among the greenery, beauty and serenity of the park there was a cornucopia of impressive events held around the pond each of which presented a different face to this festival.

The overall outstanding feature of this festival was the amalgam of so many different nations, religions and indeed cultures each of which blended beautifully with one another. There were Libyans, Tunisians, Pakistanis and members of other Muslim nations who blended with Poles, with Lithuanians, Romanians, Britons, including a British Kenyan and possibly other nationalities which I did not discover. There was respect, understanding, tolerance and bonhomie shown by everyone without exception throughout this festival. You, the organising team, need to be lauded and congratulated for bringing about, through your hard and skilful work, this harmony among nations, religions and cultures. A touch of generous diplomacy, no doubt exercised by you Ania, was evident when you invited the St. Mary's Polish school to participate in this event.

Looking at individual programme events, I must admit that upon first sight of the programme I did not understand and was puzzled by the rich variety of expressions used; for example celtarabia, leathero, bandarama, iota, psu na bude, etc.. This ignorance on my part was soon remedied when I attended, saw, experienced and heard the richness of these events. The band which specialised in Eastern European and Arabian music produced some superb sounds rarely heard on UK radio and television programmes. The versatility of that band was

impressive when it was requested by a member of the audience to play Turkish music. The Humba Rumba band was exceptionally good and much encouraged by the dancing lady of the band, got some of the audience dancing (or rather gesticulating) and thus getting into the spirit of the music. The "pirates" as I called the ambulatory jazz band on the edges of the pond, were quite outstanding and their body language and jazz playing were second to none. In fact "the pirates" reminded me of a scene in one of the James Bond films on a Caribbean (I think) island playing funeral music and quickly reverting to jovial jazz.

Captain Kipper (who looked like Bembo the pirate) with a parrot on his shoulder amused the children enormously. The children were highly enamoured by him and his magic tricks. What was good was that he encouraged individual children to perform and it was pleasing to note that the Arab children in their native "gellebias" and veiled young Arab girls, played a prominent part in that show. The children simply loved having that experience which they will remember for some time.

The parades in and out of the woods was "a bit of alright" as they say in Yorkshire. I had the pleasure of parading with you Asia with whom I enjoyed a delicious Polish sausage served with bread and dressing sitting on the edge of the pond while conversing on such topics as travel, allergies, Irena Sendler's Polish school and putting the world to right!

The presentations (singing and dancing) given by both Polish schools, and by the Arab contingent, were excellent in every respect and it was good to see Ania distribute diplomas to "her children" as she calls them some of whom I had the pleasure of meeting. The Abba music and dancing was reminiscent of the famous film "Mama Mia" whose musical director was a music graduate of the University of Hull and whom I had the pleasure of meeting a few months ago. The Lithuanian national anthem sung by the beautifully dressed ladies in their colourful native costumes was impressive. I do not think that I have ever heard such a beautiful and classical national anthem ever in my life. I simply loved it!

While all this was going on the Canadian canoes were being constantly paddled by adults and children to the sound of the drums being played by children at the Cornucopia stand beside the pond.

The national tents were well endowed with national materials, handicrafts, local foods and above all with their respective citizens explaining their wares. The Lithuanian tent was very colourful because of the ladies being in national dress. I had interesting conversations with a number of Lithuanians and have been given a balloon which I have in my study at home. The Polish tent was rich with handicrafts, the most popular of which was the head gear with two ribbons (one white the other red) which was in great demand and given liberally, particularly to children. The Arab tent as very typical of Arabian life in general marked by veiled women and men dressed in their native "gellebias" with lots of happy children around. It was almost a "sook!" The immigration stand manned by Poles and a Romanian national certainly had its uses and I was interested to hear what they advised their clients on economic and other migration issues. The fare and drinks stands proved to be very popular serving tasty street foods and quenching thirsts resulting from parched mouths.

It is all this which spells for a "memorable" day. Such a day does not simply come about by wishing it. There is a great deal of hard work, careful planning, imagination, thought, energy and indeed administration, some of which can create (and has created) frustration in respect

of a great deal of paperwork, observance of health and safety laws, observance of customs and so on. All this requires tact, diplomacy, patience, understanding and above all perseverance, self-control and sticking power in the face of discouragements which occur along the planning line. We all owe an immense debt of gratitude to you Ania, to you Asia, to you Jon and to your organising team which started with a large membership and dwindled to some four of you in the last nine months which it took to organise this festival. It is you all who made that day a memorable one. We hail you and thank you for all your efforts each of which has not gone in vain. On that note I wish to add a concluding phrase relating to you Jon. You were in your element, doing what you truly like to do. You were an excellent master of ceremonies and an excellent organiser and co-ordinator working with a team consisting mainly of Poles. I am proud of you all. Dziękuję Ci bardzo.

*With warmest greetings and much friendship.*

*Ever yours  
Jo.*