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## **The Polish Army Camp at Tentsmuir Forest** *by Lech Muszynski*

My knowledge of Tentsmuir Forest stems from, I would say, 1950, or early 50s. It was my father who introduced me to it as he was one of the medical people. They used to go in to Tentsmuir Forest after the manoeuvres in there. He used to take all the people with broken bones and heads and put them into hospitals. So he knew Tentsmuir inside out and in the '50s when I left Glasgow I come in to stay in Lundin Links with my father. He used to say 'Come out. I'll show you a very nice young plantation. A nice forest' you know. So he took me to Tentsmuir but on the Tayport side of it, you know. And I went through there and he was telling me where all the positions were, the heavy machine gun positions, and everything you know. I said 'What was this all about?' and he said...

In August of 1940, the first company of the Polish troops were taken to Leuchars Station from the Polish transit camps. They were taken to the station and marched to Tentsmuir Forest. They were met by the REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) guys, the British REME, and said 'There you are boys. There's saws, all the equipment. Build yourself a camp here. This is your home from now'.

And of course, when the eastern seaboard of Scotland was given, entrusted to the defence, to the Poles, the Tentsmuir Forest became a very, very strategic point in their plans because of the sandy beaches and shallow waters, ideal place for expected German invasion from

Norway. So they put one of their very good units that was partly armed but it had experience of meeting with Germans on three previous occasions. The '39 Polish campaign, then they were in the expeditionary force at Narvik and then back to France and the French campaign and then of course Dunkirk and they were in Britain. And that was the unit. They were called the Podhalan Brigade. They were only part, they were only the strength of one battalion but when Churchill heard of them he said 'I want these guys in there quickly', you know, and the General said but 'We don't have the, we are not fully armed'. He says 'You leave that to me'. They were the first Polish people that were in there were the Podhalan, the first Polish Podhalan battalion. They wore, instead of a heavy coat, they wore a cape.

As I said, it was my father who took me to Tentsmuir and he showed me some of the positions and things like that. These places are all overrun by sand now. You know there are very few places, the only visible places are around Tayport, on the Tayport side, at front of the Tentsmuir Forest actually there's nothing defensive because it was my unit, the Polish Sappers, that blew up the big defensive bunkers and everything that was built. They blew them up to smithereens in 1946.

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