

From Poland to the Fens



The story of Hania Jasińska

Produced by Great Fen staff and volunteers, with the help of Ramsey Rural Museum, as part of the Great Fen oral history project.

All photos provided by Lech Jasiński and Hania Jasińska

Great Fen 



The Ravages of War

Hania Jasińska (née Kuraś) was only eight when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939.

Her father, an officer in the border guard, was entrusted with the mission of taking secret documents across the border to Romania.



The family spent Christmas as refugees in Romania before making their way to France to join the Polish army. But when orders came for the army to leave for England, Hania's father went first and she and her mother and older brother had to follow after as best they could.

Along with many other refugees, they waited on the beach for British fishing boats to arrive, and had a dangerous time trying to get on board because of the continual bombing.

Photo above: Hania in Poland

On the boat to England: Hania's father, Karol, is standing left

Hania said: **"We managed to get to very near the quay but we kept having to move back because of the aeroplanes bombing. We were very frightened."**



They finally got on a crowded boat to Liverpool, and sailed away with bombs still dropping in the water all around them. From Liverpool they were moved to a refugee house in London, where they experienced the horrors of the Blitz.

Christmas without bombs

The family was reunited in December 1940 when Hania's father sent word for them to join him in Scotland.

Hania said: **"We celebrated another Christmas together, which was a joyful affair because we were finally away from the bombing."**



Hania's brother Leszek Kuraś (seated) in the Royal Air Force age 17

A new life and barrels of laughs!

After the War, Hania's father joined an agricultural co-operative of Polish officers which bought Cobalder Farm.

The families lived in rented Nissen huts on Glatton air base, which they called "barrels of laughs" because of their shape.



Work on the farms

They worked on other farms (a typical wage was £4 a week) and in local brickyards.

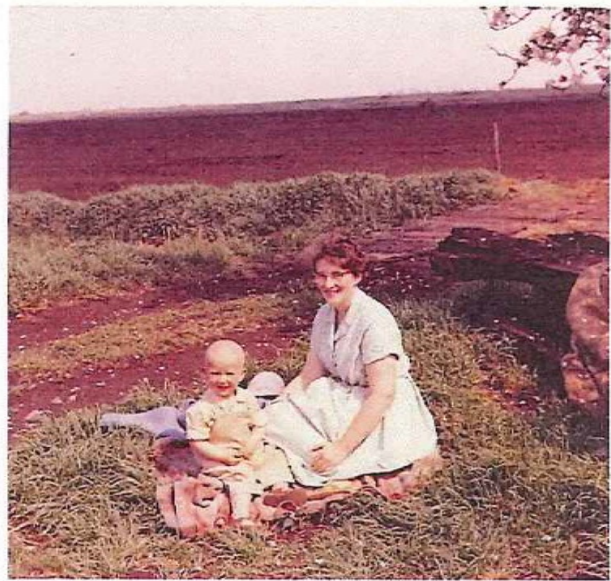


Hania said: **"The conditions were basic but we were happy."**

Marriage and Children

In 1957 Hania married Ludwik Jasiński and after the birth of their first child they moved to one of the new houses built by the council in Bruce's Close.

Hania with her first child, Lech, on Cobalder Farm, with Monk's Lode in the background



Hania had two more children and worked as a primary school teacher in the local area.

Photo: Lech helping his father Ludwik on the farm



The End of an Era

The Lark Ltd Co-Operative was disbanded in 1980 and the younger generation moved away.

Lech still lives locally and volunteers with the Great Fen team, where he is helping to gather and record local memories and stories, as well as helping with local history research.



Aerial view of Cobalder Farm

Our sincere thanks to Hania Jasińska for sharing her memories and photos.

Local Memories project

If you have a story, photos or objects that you'd like to share with us, please do get in touch:

Great Fen team
at the Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre, Chapel
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You may also be interested in some of our other Local Memories booklets, including:

- Four generations on the Fen:

The Masons at Woodwalton Fen

- Family Life in the Fens

The story of the Kemps and the Keightleys

- Fireballs and Flying Fortresses

The story of 457th Bomb Group

- Days Out

Train rides, trips to the seaside and cycling to London!

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