

## **NOT LETTING GO - THE GORODOK BELARUS JEWISH CEMETERY AND HOLOCAUST SITES APPEAL**

**In Gorodok Belarus (35 kms north of Vitebsk) there is a complete physical record of the burials of a Jewish Shtetl from 1700 to the present, including a major cemetery and two important Holocaust sites from 1941. We are seeking the funds without which this important record will be lost forever.**

**This is Zlata Krivichkina, and she explains her family's dilemma over preservation:**



**Starting from 1990s we have been taking care of the Jewish cemetery and two Holocaust sites in Gorodok, a small town north of Vitebsk, Belarus. As the local Jewish community is getting smaller and smaller year over year, we believe it is very important to maintain those three sights, as there is no future without the past...**

### **How it all started**

Mark Krivichkin, my father, a doctor and head of the small Gorodok Jewish community, voluntarily started the initiative of maintaining the Jewish cemetery and two Holocaust sites during the 1990s. After the Soviet Union's collapse and the mass emigration of local Jewish community to Israel and Germany he discovered many tombstones were left without proper care. He then took an initiative to take care of such tombstones as well as the tombstones without identified relatives left. At that time new emigrants from Gorodok met annually in Israel to collect some money for the cemetery. My father also sent a report to them to show how the funds were spent during the previous year.

At the end of the 1990s during regular inspection of the cemetery my father decided to walk to the bushy part of the cemetery that had not been used after WWII. That is how he discovered another part of the cemetery dated back to 1700s. The tombstones were mostly lying on the ground and needed to be lifted out of it. My father also started an initiative to restore the old part of the cemetery. He hired a couple of workers to cut the bush and lift the old tombstones. More than 600 graves have been lifted up during several years.

During the years my father has also been in charge of maintaining two Holocaust sites, mass graves of Jews not far from Gorodok dated back to 1941. The memorials there were first set up during Soviet times, but they only stated Soviet citizens were buried there. There were also several acts of vandalism on both sites when the graves were left without any memorial. We have restored the memorials and made it Jewish, building arcs with stars of David in front of the memorial.



*Acts of vandalism at the cemetery*

*New tombstone set at Berezovka memorial. The old one has been stolen*

*Part of the new arc set at the Vorobiev hills memorial*

The Israeli community helped my father in his initiative till 2008. After that the community stopped its annual meetings and as a result its help. We still have very limited funds coming from other former Gorodok Jews from time to time. We also collect money amongst the remaining local Jewish community to continue the initiative. However the funds are drying up.

Professor Michael Glazer, Oxford, and Trevor Bedeman, Partner, London-Risk, first visited Gorodok in 2009 as part of their initiative to visit the town where their grandparents came from. Since that time Mike and Trevor have been playing an active role in helping to attract the funds for our initiative. They have also created a web-site about their visit <http://www.glazbede.com/>

### **Gorodok Jewish Cemetery**



*Gate to the cemetery erected by my father*

*Part of the cemetery*

The Gorodok Jewish cemetery is very old and is extensive - about 760 sq meters. The cemetery is made out of two sections, the one that was started after WWII and in use up to the present, and the original section which is highly organised, and dates back to the 1700s. We estimate that there are between 5,000 and 8,000 graves in the cemetery as a whole. All are made of granite, and carefully record the details of their burials in Hebrew characters.

**Two Holocaust Sites**

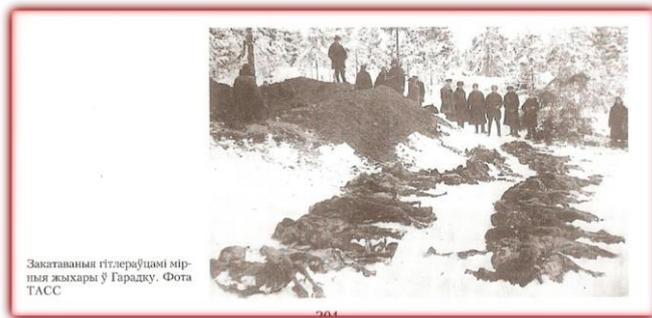


*Memorial at Berezovka*



*Memorial at the Vorobiev hills*

In the winter of 1941 a commando unit from the German Army (SK7a) of Einsatzgruppe B murdered many members of the Gorodok Jewish community. This took place in two different sites outside the town in the local forests. The first one at Berezovka outside Gorodok involved the shooting of menfolk, while the second, also outside Gorodok, took place at the Vorobiev hills and involved women and children plus older men. Only those who had either been evacuated to the East, or who had joined the army survived to return after the war to re-found the Gorodok Jewish community.



Закатаная гітлераўцамі мір-  
ныя жыхары ў Гарадку. Фота  
ТАСС



Браты Штурмановы: Казим,  
Гейза, Уся

*Victims at Berezovka*

**The Importance of the cemetery and the sites**

Taken together the 3 sites are an important and likely complete record of the burials of a Jewish shtetl community, in the Vitebsk region of Belarus. They are an important record of the growth of the Jewish contribution to the town, and also precisely record the impact of the Holocaust. We believe it is important to preserve the sites and enable access for the descendents of the people buried there as well as for future generations.

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### **What we need**

We are seeking grants to maintain the 3 sites including the cemetery into the future, and safeguard their existence against the disappearance of the Gorodok Jewish community through aging and emigration.

The cemetery needs extensive maintenance each year to remove vegetation and repair fences, and we need to ensure the land will not be developed. The two Holocaust sites need work on their access roads to ensure that 4x4 access continues to be possible. Already it is no longer possible to visit one of the outlying sites. We are concerned that rapidly the forest will recover these plots, and the cemetery will be vulnerable to vandalism and development.

We estimate total costs as £ 8000-10000 annually. £ 200,000 needs to be raised to provide continuity of maintenance and a foundation for visits and research.

### **Endorsement**

Our appeal is endorsed by HM Ambassador to Belarus, Bruce Bucknell, British Embassy, Minsk, Belarus.

### **The Appeal Committee**

Chairman - Professor Mike Glazer, The Clarendon Laboratory, University of Oxford, UK

Zlata Krivichkina, Senior Analyst, Structured Equity Origination, VTB Capital, Moscow, Russia

Dr Mark Krivichkin, Senior Doctor, Gorodok General Hospital, Vitebsk Region, Belarus

Julia Phillips - Trust and Campaigns Fundraising Manager, Young Epilepsy, London UK

Hazel Beiny, Regional Outreach Co-ordinator, Association of Jewish Refugees, Stanmore, Middlesex, UK

David Hackle, Kindertransport Holocaust survivor, Association of Jewish refugees, Bath, UK

Trevor Bedeman, Partner, London-Risk, Bradford-on-Avon, Bath, Wiltshire, UK

### **Services**

The governing charity will have accountancy services provided by Steve Henley of JSH Accountancy Solutions Ltd.

### **Contact:**

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