

*IWONA PIETKIEWICZ*

Gdynia

### **A MENTIONING OF THE SMALLEST LIGHTHOUSE OF THE POLISH COAST**

Kępa Oksywska (Oxhöfter Kämpe) is another, after Redłowo, region of cliff hills in the western part of the Gulf of Gdańsk. The Oksywie cliff stretches from today's naval harbour in Gdynia-Oksywie towards the north up to the region encompassing Babie Doły and Pierwoszyno. The cliff was used already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; a wooden daybeacon was placed on its top as an aid to navigation (a tower similar to a triangulation mark).<sup>1</sup> In 1887 a lighthouse Oxhöft (Oksywie) was built in the vicinity, which was put into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> October of the same year. It was one of the smallest lighthouses on the southern Baltic. Its octagonal tower, 5.8 m high, housed on the upper floor a lantern room with a light system consisting of a fourth-order Fresnel lens and a lamp fed with mineral oil. Inside the lamp were two coaxial wicks. The entire system was enclosed in an octagonal glazed structure of the lantern room.

The lens was installed on a table rotated using a system of weights and gears driven by a clockwork. The light characteristic, according to the German List of Lights from 1935, was four flashes 1 s followed by eclipses 2 s, plus a longer eclipse, lasting 5 s, which gave a total period of 15 s.<sup>2</sup> The same characteristic

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<sup>1</sup> The image of the tower is on the map of the Gulf by F. Getkant from 1634.

<sup>2</sup> *Verzeichnis der Leuchtfeuer und Signalstellen aller Meere 1935*, Teil II: *Gewässer zwischen Ost- und Nordsee*, Berlin 1935, p. 22.

and a range of 8 sea miles is indicated by the 1899 List of Lights from the State Archives in Szczecin.<sup>3</sup>

Adjoining the lighthouse tower was a residential building for lighthouse keepers. These facilities were located on the parcel purchased from the owner of the Oksywie land, Joseph Pestphalsche Shelente. An unsurfaced road which started in the area of the Oksywie church led to the lighthouse.



Fig. 1. Lighthouse keeper's house and Oksywie (Oxhöft) lighthouse (photograph taken from Jadwiga Nowc-Dominik's collection)

Located on a 38 m high cliff, the lighthouse was warning fishermen and mariners, facilitated the identification of the route to the anchorages in the Gulf, and to the port of Gdańsk. Thereafter, the red sector of the lighthouse also indicated the shoals near Rewa. The lighthouse buildings were standing at a distance of about 60 m from the edge of the cliff. A path and stairs led down the cliff to a wharf where a cutter from Puck (Putzig) would moor periodically to bring supplies and food for the lighthouse keeper and his family.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie [State Archives in Szczecin], Naczelne Prezydium Provincji Pomorskiej [Provincial Governing Board Pomerania], 2239, vol. 99, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> I. Pietkiewicz: *Latarnia morska Oksywie*, Gdynia 2007, p. 6.

The Oksywie lighthouse was upgraded several times, mainly by improving the lighting system, which operated inaccurately. Below are presented some descriptions of correspondence and of steps taken, as depicted in archival documents.

In July 1904 the Oksywie lighthouse was equipped with a Fresnel light with a focal length of 250 mm and 20 rotating lenses. The lantern room itself was octagonal, with five segments glazed. Each glazed segment (window) was 0.9 m high, and the radius of the whole lantern room was 922 mm.

To ventilate the lantern room, flaps were installed which evacuated condensed water to the troughs mounted in the lower part. Ventilation of the top part was provided by openings in the roof cupola. The lighthouse consumed 460–500 kg of kerosene each year, giving 4300 hours of light. Kerosene was stored under the residential premises, in the basement which served as a storeroom to keep the supplies of fuel, like in other lighthouses. There were two containers of kerosene, 580 kg each.

A 120 kg weight was used to drive the clockwork. The height of the lighthouse tower allowed for five hours of descent by this weight, i.e. the keeper had to raise the weight to its upper position by turning the crank every five hours.

The lighthouse was operated by a lighthouse keeper and his assistant. The lighthouse keeper was on duty for four days, and on the fifth day was relieved by the assistant.

One of the main problems of the lighthouse service was no direct access to drinking water, which was transported in barrels from the Oksywie village located about 500 m away. The lighthouse keeper also operated a storm signal mast and a telegraph.<sup>5</sup>

In 1907 a design was developed for feeding the lighting system with liquified petroleum gas LPG (*Flüssiggas*), which had higher calorific value and provided brighter flame.<sup>6</sup> The gas tank was designed to be placed just behind the lighthouse facilities. The new system, which was installed soon, simplified the handling of the burners, which allowed to reduce the staff by one assistant (Krauze).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin-Dahlem [hereinafter: GStA PK Berlin], V. Hauptabteilung, Rep. 93, Ref. 5059.

<sup>6</sup> Liquid gas was used in German lighthouses since 1907. It was produced in Saatsee near Rendsburg – mainly to supply the lamps of the Kiel Canal. G. Wiedemann: *Das deutsche Seezeichenwesen 1850–1990 zwischen Segel- und Container-Schiffsverkehr*, Hamburg 1998, p. 307.

<sup>7</sup> GStA PK Berlin, I. Hauptabteilung, Rep. 93B., Ref. 4810 (1919).

In 1915, the Oksywie lighthouse was subject to inspection, which found the need to repair the supports of the lantern room's rotating device, adjust the clockwork mechanism, mount ventilation of the lantern room's glasses, and install in the service room a device to control the light. This work was soon completed.<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 2. Oksywie (Oxhöft) lighthouse 1887–1933  
(photograph taken from W. Grabe's collection)

In 1916 attempts were made to order a new lens for the Oksywie lighthouse. However, the process of making the optic was not straightforward. The order placed by the Ministry with the specialized firm Julius Pintsch erroneously indicated that the focal length of the optic should be 1.7 m. For technical reasons, the company could not accept an order for lens of this size. Following clarification, it appeared that what was necessary was lens with the focal length of 1.4 m, not 1.7 m. The draftsman's mistake, which caused the error, was clarified in a telephone conversation. The order was accepted on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1916.<sup>9</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1920 Oksywie lighthouse was transferred by the Germans to the Polish maritime administration. Operating for several more years, it was turned off in 1933, due to strong harbour lights which were put into service in the port of Gdynia. The optic of the lighthouse was dismantled, and the building it-

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Ref. 4809, 5027.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Ref. 5056.

self was taken over by the military administration. The lighthouse facilities were finally destroyed by the Germans who captured Oksywie in 1939.

#### Lighthouse Oksywie characteristic data, 1935

Coordinates	54°33'9"N 18°33'46"E
Light characteristic	Flashing, white from the sea, red from the land Four flashes 1 s, with eclipses of 2 s, and 5 s eclipse after the whole group
Period	15 s
Height of tower	10.6 m
Height of light above water	46.5 m
Range	8 NM
Appearance	Octagonal white tower topper with a glazed lantern room with a dome-shaped roof, adjacent to the house of the lighthouse keeper

Source: Author's compilation based on: *Verzeichnis der Leuchfeuer ...*, Teil II.



Fig. 3. An obelisk commemorating the lighthouse of Oksywie (photograph taken from author collection)

To commemorate the existence of the smallest lighthouse of the Polish coast in Oksywie district of Gdynia, the lighthouses' lovers contributed to determine its exact location. Thanks to their engage, in the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of setting the light of Oksywie's lighthouse, a memorial obelisk was raised with the lighthouse's miniature statue on the territory of Polish Navy cemetery where it was originally settled.

## WSPOMNIENIE O NAJMNIJSZEJ LATARNI MORSKIEJ POLSKIEGO WYBRZEŻA

### Streszczenie

Latarnia morska Oksywie (Oxhöft) była najmniejszą latarnią morską Południowego Bałtyku. Zbudowano ją na wysokim, 38-metrowym klifie, aby ułatwić orientację statkom, które za Półwyspem Helskim szukały schronienia przed północnymi i zachodnimi sztormami. Uruchomiona została 1 października 1887 roku, a dwa lata po odzyskaniu przez Polskę niepodległości, w roku 1920, przekazano ją polskiej administracji morskiej.

Ośmiokątna wieża latarni o wysokości 5,8 m mieściła na górnej kondygnacji laternę z systemem świetlnym w postaci soczewki Fresnela IV klasy i lampy zasilanej olejem mineralnym. Wewnątrz lampy znajdowały się dwa koncentryczne knoty. Całość osłonięta była ośmiokątną oszkloną konstrukcją latarny.

Soczewka latarni posadowiona była na stole obracającym za pomocą zegarowego systemu ciężarków i kół zębatych. Charakterystyka światła latarni według niemieckiego spisu światel z 1935 roku była błyskowa z czterema błyskami o czasie trwania 1 s i przerwami 2 s oraz dłuższą przerwą 5 s. Zasięg światła latarni wynosił 8 mil morskich.

Do wieży latarni przylegał budynek mieszkalny latarników, a do całego kompleksu prowadziła droga gruntowa, rozpoczynająca się w rejonie oksywskiego kościoła.

Latarnię Oksywie w okresie jej funkcjonowania modernizowano kilkakrotnie, poprawiając głównie system świetlny, który nie działał zbyt precyzyjnie. Problem ekonomicznej eksploatacji latarni morskich był w Prusach i później w Niemczech na tyle ważny, iż specjalny ośrodek badawczy *Seezeichenversuchsfeld* we Friedrichshagen zajmował się badaniem stosowanych wówczas rozwiązań technicznych i szukaniem optymalnych ustawień.

Oksywska latarnia morska funkcjonowała do roku 1933, kiedy to ze względu na uruchomienie silnych światel wejściowych do nowo wybudowanego portu gdyńskiego została wyłączona z eksploatacji. Urządzenia optyczne latarni zdemontowano, a sam bu-

dynek przejęła administracja wojskowa. Ostatecznej zagłady obiektów latarni dokonali Niemcy po zdobyciu Oksywia w 1939 roku.

W celu upamiętnienia istnienia i funkcjonowania na Oksywiu najmniejszej polskiej latarni morskiej sympatycy latarni morskich dołożyli starań i przyczynili się do określenia prawdopodobnego miejsca usytuowania oksywskiej latarni. Dzięki ich zaangażowaniu, w 120. rocznicę zapalenia światła w oksywskiej latarni morskiej, na obecnym cmentarzu Marynarki Wojennej, gdzie przed 120 laty była usytuowana latarnia, odsłonięto obelisk pamiątkowy z miniaturą obiektu.