



July 15, 1410 is without a doubt one of the most memorable dates in Polish history. It marks the day when the combined forces of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania clashed with elite cavalry of the Teutonic Order backed by heavily armoured knights from all over Western Europe. The areas surrounding the villages of Grunwald, ?odwigowo and St?bark are characterised by rolling terrain, cut by streams, rich in lakes and hills of considerable height, but with mild declines and separated by valleys.

The area is partly wooded and covered by oak trees growing along the roads leading from St?bark to ?odwigowa. In 1410, the vegetation was even richer than it is today and the shape of terrain prevented accurate assessment of the quality and quantity of enemy troops. The battlefield was selected by Ulrich von Jungingen, as it was perfectly suitable for carrying out unexpected manoeuvres and ambushes. As King Jagie??o, together with Witold and accompanying knights, surveyed the area in the morning of July 15, he assessed the future battlefield as extremely uncomfortable. He decided to hold off commencing the battle until noon, allowing the sun to weaken the Teutonic Knights, tightly clad in steel armour. Fearing this, the Grand Master of the Order sent messengers (heralds) to the Polish king, urging him to speed up the start of the battle.

"(...)

"The Grand Master Ulrich," said the first herald, "challenges thy majesty, O lord, and Prince Witold to mortal battle, and to rouse the bravery which evidently is lacking you, he sends these two naked swords". When he had said this he placed the swords at the king's feet. (...)

... the second herald pushed forth and spoke thus:

"The Grand Master Ulrich has commanded to inform you also, lord, that if the field for battle is too narrow he will withdraw his troops somewhat so that you should not remain idle in the forest." (...) Jagie??o's last hopes were dissipated like smoke. He had waited for an embassy of peace and concord; an embassy of pride and war had come.

He raised his tearful eyes, and answered:

"We have swords in abundance, but I accept these as a presage of victory which God himself sends into my hands through you. And the field of battle will be determined also by Him, to whose justice I turn now and make complaint of the wrongs done to my people, and of your pride and injustice. Amen."

(...) (after the battle)

The Lithuanians brought the body of the Grand Master, Ulrich von Jungingen, pierced with spears, covered with dust and clotted blood, and placed it before Jagie??o. The king sighed with pity, and looking at the immense body lying on the ground, face upward, he said:

"Here is the man who, this morning, thought himself superior to every potentate on Earth.

Then tears began to flow like pearls along his cheeks; after a while he said:

"But he died the death of the valiant; so we will celebrate his manfulness, and honour him with a proper Christian burial."

(...)"

The Knights of the Cross by Henryk Sienkiewicz, translation by Jeremiah Curtin (description of the battle of Grunwald)

The passages quoted above come from a novel by a Polish Nobel Prize laureate and serves to eloquently illustrate this great historical event, which took place over 600 years ago. The battle of Grunwald was one of the largest medieval battle in Europe, lasting over six hours and ending just before sunset. The army led by the Polish King held on to their advantage on the battlefield the entire time. Crushing victory of the Polish-Lithuanian forces broke the power of the Teutonic Order and went down in history as one of the greatest victories of the Polish army.

Defeat of the Teutonic Knights by Polish-Lithuanian army led by the Polish King Władysław Jagiełło caused enormous military and political repercussions and significantly influenced the future fate and history of Europe.

Since GRUNWALD is located within the OSTRÓDA COUNTY, we strongly encourage you to visit and watch a re-enactment of this great episode in Polish history, which takes place every year around July 15. However, this historic location can also be admired throughout the year. Currently, it is the site of a soaring monument and a museum, where you can admire an embroidered replica of Jan Matejko's "Battle of Grunwald", of dimensions similar to the original painting.

Gallery: [The Battle of Grunwald](#)