

## **Triebswetter**

"The land is flat and level streets  
Lead towards a village square  
Which is adorned by a church  
Surrounded by gardens, trees in bloom  
Sending out new shoots and roots  
Before we finally lose sight of it."

Nikolaus Balzer "Triebswetter"

Triebswetter is located in the north-western reaches of the Banat moorlands on the national highway connecting Temesvár and Csanad and is between the communities of Gross St. Nikolaus, Sarafol, Lovrin, Nero, Gottlob and Wiseschdia.

During the Middle Ages, one kilometre south-east of the present day community a settlement named Nagyösz existed on the slope along the banks of the Galatska Creek. This has been substantiated by archaeological findings. But the settlement of Nagyösz is never mentioned in the tax lists following the liberation of the Banat and we can assume that no one was living there at the time.

Until 1772, the year in which our forebears settled here, the former community in the Middle Ages was identified only as an open prairie and leased for pasturing livestock. The present day community was established on this open prairie as part of the last phase of the Theresian settlement programme. During the Middle Ages and up until the time of the settlement in 1772 the Hungarian designation of Nagy Ösz, in a variety of different usages, was utilized and even today it continues to be used in Hungarian circles. The German name of the community is Triebswetter and was chosen to honour the Imperial Surveyor, Anton Triebswetter, and has nothing to do with the dreary and gloomy weather that was prevalent in the spring of 1772 when the three communities of Triebswetter, Gottlob and Ostern were first settled. The Romanian name is Tomnatic and is the literal translation of Triebswetter and means "gloomy weather."

The layout of the community is rectangular with the main street passing through it and is crisscrossed by five side streets with two hundred houses all told and a square in the centre of the village with the church, school, tavern and rectory on the four corners. All of the streets are 36 metres wide. There are nine public swivel armed wells and bake ovens have been erected along the streets.

The soil used to construct the adobe settler houses was dug up around the village and the remaining deep pits covering a half Joch of land serve as the spillway for rain water that drains from the village. In Triebswetter they are referred to as sand pits. With regard to the ownership of the land, 108 farmers had a full session and 92 others had half a session.

The major portion of the population had their origins in Lorraine (62%) and what was true of Triebswetter was also true of the communities of St. Hubert, Charleville and

Seultour which were thought of as "French villages." The remainder of the population originated in Luxembourg (8%), Bavaria (5%), Baden-Württemberg (5%), France (3.5%), Rhine Palatinate (3.5%) and smaller portions from Hungary, the Banat, Hesse, Bohemia, Moravia and the Saar, Alsace, Austria, Silesia, Slovenia, Prussia, Saxony etc. Through death, migration to other new settlements in the area as well as marriage, the number of French inhabitants declined even as the Germans increased and the German language gained ascendancy in the life of the church and school and eventually the public life of the community. In 1902, when the French author, R. Recouly, visited the so-called "*Welsch Villages*" in the Banat he had to report that to all intents and purposes the French language among them was dead. To this day, many French family names abound but with a few exceptions the language of the village bears few traces of French.

Today's Triebswetter dialect is a blended one primarily of the Rhine-Franconian type (Lorraine and Rhine Palatinate). The major distinction is the use of words associated with Lorraine. To a great extent they originate in Forbach, the Saar region and the vicinity of Saarburg. The origins of some words are from Luxembourg, Franconia and Swabia as George Rieser the dialectician has been able to prove.

"A small smattering of us are French in name  
And it affected the way we spoke  
But despite that we were always very good Swabians  
And all things German were of value to us."

A. Palfi "The Triebswetter Way"

Picture  
The Church in Triebswetter in 1970

Picture  
The War Memorial of 1920  
Sculpted by Sipos and Gallas  
of Temesvár

Between 1772-1801, Triebswetter was a state owned government possession and along with the communities of Sarafol and Nero it was part of land grant made to Baron Alvinczy by Vienna in 1801 and he designated Count Albert Gyulai as his heir. The last of the estate owners sold his landholdings to the inhabitants of the villages at the turn of the century.

The Gyulai family was instrumental in having the present day church built and made a substantial contribution towards its cost. Today's monumental church was built from 1846-1850 and was consecrated by the resident priest, Alexander Bonnaz, who later became the bishop of Temesvár. Later as bishop in 1863 he commissioned the altar builder, Joseph Treydl, to build the high altar and two side altars and also had a tomb built which he donated to his home church and consecrated them. Two large statues at the front of the church are considered of great significance throughout the Banat. They

bear the names Albert and Samuel in honour of the donors (Count Albert and Samuel Gyulai) and each carries a book and torch. Today's eighteen rank organ was purchased by the members of the parish in 1850 and was the work of the organ builder Anton Dengl. During the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the ordination of the parish priest, Franz Funk, in 1988 the church was entirely renovated. In 1920 the current three bells were purchased by the parish. The original bells had been requisitioned during the First World War. They were dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Holy Trinity. The following inscription can be read on each of the bells: "Dedicated by the parish of Triebswetter in the year 1920." The names of the parish council members at that time follow.

The first rectory was built in 1773. The current rectory was erected in 1781 and has been renovated and has had additions made to it over the years. A park surrounded it that had to be given up when an addition was made. At the time of the founding of the community three Joch of land were set apart for a cemetery at the western end of the main street of the village. One hundred years later in 1874 the parish priest, Karl Böhm, consecrated an additional 2,000 square *Klafter* of land adjoining the cemetery that the community provided.

### **Church and School**

In the autumn of 1909, an iron fence crafted by Peter Treffil was erected around the cemetery under the direction of the parish priest, Father Willkomm. The cemetery chapel built in 1863 was provided by Thomas and Rosa Richard and the bell whose tolling still accompanies the dead to their final resting place to this day was purchased by the parish.

There is a small park at the entrance into the cemetery at the centre of which stands the War Memorial, the work of Sipos and Gallas of Temesvár that was erected in 1922. It is a four sided obelisk crowned by an eagle with outstretched wings that holds a sword in its beak. At the base is a relief of a mother with her child in her arm and on the opposite side of the obelisk a wounded returnee from the war is pictured. On the left and right side are the names of the men who fell in battle inscribed on a white marble tablet. Beneath the memorial is the following inscription: "Blessed is their memory."

From 1772-1773 Triebswetter was an affiliate of the parish of Marienfeld. In 1773 the community became a recognized parish and the first priest was Nikolaus Eugene Lenauer. The most significant priest to serve in Triebswetter was Alexander Bonnaz who later became bishop of Temesvár. The last resident priest in Triebswetter was Franz Funk. Following his death in 1990, Triebswetter became an affiliate of Lovrin. The first school building in the community was erected in 1773. Additions were made as the numbers of pupils increased. In 1924 a grade seven class was added. The original denominational school was converted into community run public school as a result of a vote taken by the community council in order to win the approval of the educational authorities to ensure the pupils learned more than "the catechism and hymns."

Until 1934 there was only the German school. A Romanian section was established in that year to accommodate the 28 Romanian pupils. Even after the Second World War the vast majority of the pupils in the public school were German and were part of the German section. Up until 1965 the German section also served the German pupils from Wiseschdia, Gottlob, Sarafol and Csanad because there were no German schools in their communities. These pupils were accommodated in a boarding school arrangement. A Kindergarten was first established in 1884.

Until the First World War the majority of the farming families did not place much value on higher education. After the confiscation and dispossession there were numerous young people from Triebswetter who learned a trade or a vocation and went on to higher education. In the 200 year history of Triebswetter there were 13 who became priests and two of them became bishops, Alexander Bonnaz in Temesvár and Nikolaus Cherrier in Pressburg (Bratislava, Slovakia); two nuns, 100 teachers, 11 pharmacists, 62 engineers, 22 government workers, including Nikolaus Petischan the Inspector General of the Bank of Austria, 21 military officers including Field Marshall Nikolaus Wolf-Nagyöszí the Military Commander of Budapest, 4 actors including Rudolph Chati and Nikolaus Dinier.

In addition to all of these we must mention the historical researcher, George Rieser, for his numerous articles and studies about the settlement of the Banat; the master ironworker, Peter Treffil, who spent his lifetime working on his genealogical book on the families of Triebswetter; and Franz Touttenuit who was renowned throughout the Banat for his ability in healing animals and for whom a memorial was erected in the village square but it was badly damaged in the Second World War and disappeared.

#### Picture

The Colonist House (House Number 524) in 1983  
It has since fallen into ruin

Dr. Joseph Wolf and the pharmacist Nikolaus Merle as well as Johann Thoma the long standing chairman of the Triebswetter HOG collaborated to produce the Triebswetter *Heimatbuch*. (Homeland book).

Triebswetter was an agricultural community and almost all of its inhabitants were involved in farming or were skilled tradesmen that produced products to meet farming needs. The fertile soil led to the development of various crops and vegetables as well as wine production. The Triebswetter "*Fratschler*" were well known in Temesvár, Szeged, Mako, Grossbetschkerek and Arad. (Translator's note: The Fratschler were market gardeners who brought their wares to sell in the major towns in the area.)

Following the Second World War, after the dispossession of the arable land, families specialized in growing in their gardens vegetables that were not confiscated at that time. We made use of them to secure sufficient food for our families.

We primarily grew vegetables that matured in the spring, greens, potatoes and melons but above all we grew green peppers. These vegetables required a lot of water because of our dry climate and frequent droughts.

Picture  
The Last *Kirchweih* of our Local Youth  
in 1989

Beginning in 1925 winch driven machines powered by horses were used to pump water from the wells. The horses were later replaced by machines. Pump production became a major industry in Triebswetter after 1960.

The intensive cultivation of vegetables required up to 75% of the arable land in the community and it soon meant that the vegetable farmers soon ran out of enough land so that 3,400 Joch of arable land were purchased in the neighbouring villages up to 1941. Wine production was an important economic factor in the life of the community and in 1936 there were 1,002 Joch of land under cultivation that were vineyards. The vast majority of the grapes were Sauvignon and Riesling. Following the infestation of the grape blight from France in 1871, the Buding brothers, Eduard and Karl, developed a grapevine and tree nursery that became well known beyond the borders of the Banat.

In terms of livestock, the horse was the most important. Swine rearing was also carried out intensively. Cattle breeding never became a major factor. In addition to sheep rearing there was also beekeeping. There were brandy distilleries, brickyards and mills.

The population rose from 650 at the time of the founding of the village to 3,760 in 1900. In 1940 there were 2,835 Germans, 34 Romanians, 37 Hungarians, 101 Gypsies and 21 of other nationalities living in Triebswetter.

The first financial institution in Triebswetter was the Savings Bank founded in 1886 followed by the Triebswetter People's Bank in 1891 and the Raiffen Agricultural Credit Union in 1899.

The economic prosperity also led to better transportation and communication links. As a result, the present day National Highway was constructed in 1845 and the railway line from Temesvár-Szeged was completed in 1895. There was a post office established in 1868, telephone connections in 1895, telegraph in 1912, and a motion picture theatre in 1920.

Numerous organizations and associations provided varied activities: the Agricultural Association, volunteer fire brigade, Trade and Commerce Association, the Hunt Club (established 1778), youth groups, Sports Association, Reading Circle, the Women's Association, Living Rosary Association and the Choral Society. The Sports Association founded in 1931 celebrated an early triumph in tying the national championship team from Reschitz in a 1 to 1 game. In 1975, Willi Schreiber, the trainer of the Triebswetter "Farmers" as they were ignominiously labelled by their detractors, led his team to

triumph over the Widersacher team from Ferdinandsburg in the B-League. Triebswetter was the first village in Romania that had a football team in the B-League which meant playing against Hermannstadt, CFR Temesvár, UMT Baia, Bistritz, Mediasch and Hunedoara.

### Picture Community Survey and Layout

The formerly mentioned economic activities and the general prosperity would suffer a setback during the two world wars. The First World War cost the community the loss of 109 of their men and 95 in the Second World War. Their names are to be remembered and found on the marble tablet on the War Memorial. There were 164 persons who were taken to forced labour in the Soviet Union and 527 others were deported to the Baragan Steppes where twenty of them rest for all eternity.

The free enterprise system was replaced by collectivism in 1945. This not only affected the farmers but also the tradesmen and labourers. Most of the inhabitants had to join and work for the collective farm. Up until the overthrow of communism in 1989 there was an agricultural collective farm and the state ran business.

In the regional reforms of 1967, Triebswetter lost 1,100 houses and its independence when it was merged with Lovrin.

As a result of the intensification of economic development, life in Triebswetter was seen as more attractive and as a place that had a future in the early 1980s. During the end of the 1970s the mass migration to Germany began that claimed almost all of those in Triebswetter by 1989. At the end of 1999 there were only 83 of our countrymen still living in Triebswetter.

Most of the former inhabitants of Triebswetter in Germany live in Bavaria, as well as in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland Palatinate, the Saar, Nordrhein-Westphalia, Hesse and Hannover. The HOG of Triebswetter in Germany was founded under the leadership of the pharmacist, Nikolaus Merle, in Ulm in 1969 and currently has 2,100 of our countrymen in its membership. There are 31 in the USA, 7 in Austria, 4 in France, 2 in Switzerland and one in England.

The HOG held the 14th Homeland Assembly in Schwabach bei Nürnberg in 1997 to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the settlement of Triebswetter. Through various activities support was raised to assist our countrymen still living in Triebswetter.

For many of our countrymen Triebswetter is now simply a memory but it will always be a part of us just as Anton Palfi writes: "The memories will remain for a long time despite the winds of time."

Walter Wolf