The surroundings of the church of St. Leonard in Lipnica Murowana

The church of St. Leonard is picturesquely situated at the banks of the small river Uszwica. It lies out of the way, a few hundred meters from the last households in Lipnica Murowana. It was built on the site of an 18th-century cemetery, which still functions today.

There is a wooden bridge extended over Uszwica. It is 3 meters wide and about
a dozen meters long. The balustrades are made of rectangular timbers. The river runs in a several-meters deep bed with steep slopes. The banks are abundantly overgrown with deciduous shrubs. The surface of the bridge is cobble-stoned. At the end of the bridge, in the middle of its width, there is a knee-high stone stake. There is a lime tree pierced with a sword engraved on one side of it. It is the Lipnica coat of arms. The other side features the letters UNESCO.

The church is located precisely opposite the bridge and faces it with its shorter, western wall. They are about a dozen meters apart.  A 2-meter-wide alley made of sandstone plates leads to the church’s door. It runs across a lawn. The cemetery together with the church occupies around 1.3 acres of land.  The whole area is surrounded with
a fence made of wooden timbres.

Four meters from the church’s western wall, there is a great patulous oak. It is almost twice as high as the humble shrine. In its several-meters-wide-trunk there is a cavity. It is so large that an adult can comfortably fit in, having at least one meter of free space above their head.

The rear part of the church and its right side are surrounded with graves. Those closest to the temple are the oldest ones. Some of them are dated back to the 18th century. Gravestones overgrown with moss are made of sandstone and marked with a cross. There are also obelisks with engraved inscriptions and reliefs depicting skulls, bones or heads of angels.

The picturesque area around St. Leonard’s church is usually tranquil and favours contemplation. The humble Uszwica river, normally flowing a swift shallow current, sometimes transforms into a rushing river. During the flood of 1997, it almost washed away the invaluable monument. It was saved thanks to the inhabitants of Lipnica and—the old oak. The rescuers tied the building with ropes to the tree trunk. Thus the church resisted the surge of the element. However, the water pouring inside the church building washed off the bottom part of the internal wall paintings.