

Barsden, Josephus Henry (1799? – 1873)

By Vivienne Cunningham-Smith

Josephus Henry Barsden (1799?-1873) mariner, Store & Innkeeper, Bailiff, and District Constable states he was born on 15th September 1799 in Horsham, Sussex, UK to Henry Barsden. His baptism on May 17, 1800 in Parramatta by Reverend Samuel Marsden says he was born on June 16, 1799 to Joseph and Sarah Basden. His diary cites his father as a master mariner, smuggler and owner of the Black Horse Inn in Horsham. Sarah Basden was a convict on the *Speedy*.

Josephus arrived in Sydney on the *Speedy* on 15th April 1800 as an orphan. He is described in Mrs King's diaries. His mother died shortly into the voyage. The baby was thought dead until Anna King held a mirror to his nose saving him from a watery grave. He was assigned to Jane Patterson (convict) who would remain his guardian with her husband William Abbott under the King's ongoing supervision.

Josephus was educated by Anna Josepha King with her children and at the Parochial School by Reverend W.P Crook of the London Missionary School. In 1806 under the supervision of Governor Bligh and his daughter he was sent to the Toongabbie school of Mr John Curles? for 3 months. His education was disrupted by the drunkenness of his Guardians. He continued to attend school but fell in with a bad crowd and at 13 years of age went to sea.

Until the drunken frittering of his assets by his guardians, Barsden's welfare was cemented by the King's with a 100-acre land grant in Bankstown and one in Parramatta in 1804. A further land grant in Ham Common, Richmond followed in 1807. Josephus stated that he loved the King's "*with a son's love*". A 1913 account of Barsden said he "*was a cultured and well-read man. He was a nephew of Governor King and well connected in other ways. He was a fine French scholar and spoke French fluently. I think he was born in the Mauritius.*"

Barsden went to sea from 1813 to 1816/17. His first trip on the *Active* was to Tasmania. He trekked from Launceston to Hobart meeting many early European settlers such as Dr Jacob Mountgarret, James Cox and the drunken Reverend Knopwood. His connections to Colonel Paterson and his guardian's sister Mrs Janet Gunn saw him circulating with Hobart's elite during his short stay. Joining the *Endeavour* in 1814 he sailed to the South Pacific where he jumped ship on Aimeo (Mo'orea Tahiti) and fell in love and "married" Mananna the daughter of a minor Tahitian chief Omowmow(?), the Chief of Afareaitu. Barsden travelled throughout the Tahitian islands during his two year stay and became instrumental in the Battle of Te Feipī on 1st November 1815 which cemented the rule of Pomare II and Christianity throughout Tahiti. Barsden was the elusive Joe referenced in accounts of the battle.

He left his Tahitian wife and newborn son Tehio (Joseph) on 6/12/1816 on the ill-fated ship *Lady*. Josephus married Mary Ann Blackman, daughter of James Blackman on 11th June 1821 at Liverpool NSW. They had 3 children Margaret Jane (1822-1867), Mary Ann (1824-1893) and Joseph Henry (1829-1852).

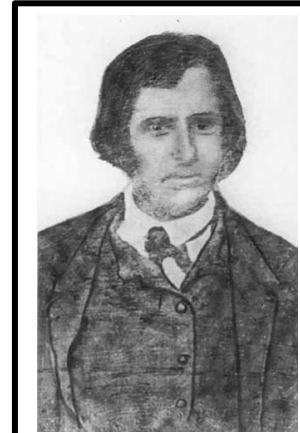


Figure 1 Josephus Henry Barsden (1799–1873). Taken from a family portrait in the possession of Ernest Robinson, Bathurst, New South Wales. Artist and date unknown, but likely c. 1835. (Rodwell, 2022)

Life Summary

Alternative Names

- Joseph Henry Barsden
- Joseph Basden [baptism record]

Birth

- 1799 Horsham, Sussex, England, UK
- date in question

Death

- 27th August 1873 Kelso, New South Wales. Australia [Aged 73 years]

Religious Influence

- Evangelical Anglican

Occupation

- Mariner 1813-1816/1817
- District Constable Melville 1823-1829
- PoundKeeper District of Melville 1826-1827
- Storekeeper 1834 -1837
- InnKeeper 1833 -1853
- Chair, Ebenezer Mining Company 1840-1849
- Bailiff in the District Court of Bathurst 1858-1869
- Bailiff Small Debts Court Bathurst resigned 1866.

Legacies

- Central to Pomare II's victory in the battle of Te Feipī on 1st November 1815 [the elusive Joe]
- An early first person account of the colony between 1800-1816

Josephus owned land in Liverpool and Richmond in 1822 and some of the first allotments in Kelso, Bathurst from 1833. He became a storekeeper in partnership with Mr Davies (1834-1835). He owned stores in Kelso until 1837. He owned Inns in Kelso- The Councillor (1833), Cottage of Content (1852) and GoldFinders Inn (1853). He held extensive land holdings in the area. Barsden was Constable of Melville District (1823-1829), its Poundkeeper (1826-27) and Constable at Parramatta (1824). He was Bailiff in the District Court of Bathurst (1858-1869) and the Small Debts Court resigning in 1866. He had episodes of insolvency circa 1838 and 1858 punctuating his business career. He was Chair of the Ebenezer Mine Company (1840-1849) resigning in disgust at his Directors.

Barsden's diary is considered an important early account of colonial life in NSW. His role in the Tahitian wars the only European firsthand account.

Barsden's birth story cannot be verified. Did the King's legitimise him with baptism in 1800 using one of the women's name's from the Speedy, Sarah Basden? Is she really Josephus's mother? His miraculous onboard rescue was not mentioned by Mrs King. His other life accounts are however verifiable. He was an Evangelical Anglican with his strong Christian views expressed throughout his diary.

Barsden died on 27th August 1873 at Kelso, NSW and is buried at Holy Trinity Anglican Cemetery Kelso.

Select Bibliography

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- Anna Josepha King journal of a voyage from England to Australia in the ship 'Speedy', 19 November 1799 - 15 April 1800 C 185. Mitchell Library NSW State Library. Pages 6,8,9,10,11,15.
- National Advocate (Bathurst, NSW : 1889 - 1954), Saturday 10 May 1913, page 7
- Rodwell Grant, The Barsden Memoirs (1799-1816). An Australian Transnational Adolescence. Routledge Studies in Modern History Routledge Taylor Francis Group London and New York, 2022.

Related Entries in NCB Sites

- James Blackman <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/blackman-james-1790>
- James Cox <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cox-james-1931>
- William Pascoe Crook <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/crook-william-pascoe-1935>
- Anna Josepha King <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/king-anna-josepha-2306>
- Philip Gidley King <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/king-philip-gidley-2309>
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