BARRY MEMORIAL CHURCH

The Barry Church in Port Beaufort, designed by Bishop Gray as opposed to his wife Sophy, was completed by Barry & Nephews under the supervision of Joseph’s nephew Thomas Barry in 1849. His daughter Maria Adriana (Miemie) married Lt. Daniel J May of the Royal Navy in the Church in 1864. It was May who drew up the first SA Barry family tree which Richard von Barry took back to Austria after visiting Joseph’s son, his uncle Michael, in 1879/80.

Following the death of Joseph Barry in 1865 the Barry & Nephews partnership agreement unfortunately called for his share of the business to be realised at a time when the Overberg economy was already hard hit by drought and swarms of locusts decimating any remaining crop. The SS Kadie sinking in November 1865 was a further blow to trade in the Overberg and the Barry’s. The landed property including the Church was thus sold to Carlson in 1866 and Thomas Daniel Barry, a son of the late Joseph Barry, was fortunately able to purchase it from him in 1882. Thomas in turn gifted the Church and its surrounding land to the Dutch Reformed Church in Swellendam who transferred the deed to the DRC in Heidelberg in 1905. Later a grandson of Joseph Barry, Alfred Barry, bought the Barry Church when he acquired Port Beaufort. It then served as a school for many years and Alfred built a wooden floor when the original dung floor disintegrated due to red ants. (In 2017 the trustees had to replace this wooden floor which was unfortunately beyond repair.) On Alfred’s death, Miss Kitty Barry, bought the piano from his deceased estate and donated it to the Church. The property was then sold to Mr Jacobus van Wyk, the school moved and the Church eventually fell into a state of disrepair.

In 1952 Dennis Barry of Lismore Farm approached the then widowed Mrs Van Wyk to acquire the Church and adjacent small graveyard for Three Hundred Pounds. Transfer took place in 1855 and a Trust Committee was formed consisting of Mike Reid of Swellendam, Thomas Barry of Van Reenen’s Crest, and Mrs Lyall Beyers of Heidelberg. They were later joined by Trevenen Barry of Van Reenen’s Crest and the late George Barry of Riverton, Robertson. Today Henri Barry of Lismore also diligently serves on the committee. An appeal was launched and supported by many South African and Zimbabwe Barry’s to restore the Church which is now a National Monument.

Above right, the old Historical Monuments Commission plaque at the Barry Memorial Church which read: This Church was built by the Barry Family in 1849 when Port Beaufort was a flourishing port for ships of the Port Beaufort Trading Company (later Barry & Nephews) which plied regularly between Cape Town, Port Beaufort and Malagas from 1825 to 1882.
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The first of many Barry marriages in the restored Church was that of Angela, daughter of Alfred and Valerie Barry, to Ronald Long in 1971.

The Reverend Claude Mitchell held church services whilst in residence at his holiday home. From 1991 to 1995 Fr. Holland held regular services.

The surrounding wall was completed in 1980 and another fund raiser was initiated in 1986. In 1993 the vestry was removed and the church enlarged. The architect Gawie Fagan assisted in the underpinning of the right hand gable in 2001.

The photos on the right are of the 2016 renovation project to rethatch the roof and repair the gable and walls.
In 2016 the following Barry-Barry family and extended family from Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, USA and South Africa generously answered another appeal from the Barry Memorial Trustees to rethatch and repair the roof and repair the gables.

The plaque on the right was unveiled at a 2017 mini Barry reunion to celebrate Joseph Barry arriving at the Cape for the first time and Port Beaufort, that was integral to the success of the Barry’s having been named by Lord Charles Somerset after his father, the 5th Duke of Beaufort.

Interested parties who wish to assist in preserving the Barry Memorial Church are welcome to make a donation or institute a monthly stop order for the on-going maintenance of the church:

Beneficiary name: BARRY MEMORIAL CHURCH
Bank: FIRST NATIONAL BANK, HEIDELBERG
Business Money Market Acc No: 621 733 95 114

The Barry Memorial Church with the propeller of the SS Kadie resting on two mill stones from the Barry & Nephew Flour Mill in Swellendam in the foreground.