



Reverend
William Robertson

Family values & virtuous conduct



The Honourable
Joseph Barry

Dr William Robertson

Dr William Robertson was born in 1805 on a farm near Aberdeen, in Scotland. He went to study at King's College, Aberdeen at the age of 13. Three years later he had to abandon his studies as he became very ill with TB. He first came out to Graaff-Reinet in the Eastern Cape with the famous minister Dr Andrew Murray, to be a teacher. Robertson, in spite of his being only 17 years old at the time, was very energetic and soon had the Free English School up and running. After five years, his contract expired and as his health had greatly improved, Robertson returned to Scotland to resume his divinity studies at King's College. He later continued studying divinity at Edinburgh.

A highly dedicated man, before sailing to the Cape in 1831 Dr Robertson attended Utrecht University in The Netherlands to improve his Dutch. By October of the same year Robertson was back in the Cape Colony where he was ordained as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and appointed to first the church in Clanwilliam and two years later to the church in Swellendam to pastor the entire Overberg.

The Honourable Joseph Barry

Joseph Barry was born in Leicester, England, in 1796 – the youngest of 16 children. His parents died when he was only 13 so he went to learn the wine trade in France & Spain under the tutelage of his older brothers Charles and Michael. He first visited the Cape to buy wine for Barry & Wilkinson at the age of 21 before returning to settle for his health in 1819.

A man of vision, his stroke of genius came when he won a government tender to deliver food and grain to Overberg farmers and Khoi Khoi who were starving during the 1822 drought. He hired a ship to Port Beaufort and by creating a shorter alternative to the long arduous overland journey he and later Barry & Nephews opened up trading opportunities for Overberg farmers. Joseph's head quarters was in Swellendam and it was there that he and Dr William Robertson became firm friends. Dr Robertson was also instrumental in Barry & Nephews building the Barry Church in 1849 in Port Beaufort (near Witsands).