

## JOSEPH WILD - FIRST CONSTABLE OF ILLAWARRA

*"...who, I assure Your Excellency, though an illiterate man, is very useful and intelligent in the woods"*

Throsby to Macquarie 1819

Joseph Wild, the first constable appointed to Illawarra (The Five Islands) was for many years both before and after his time as constable here, a bushman much in demand for any mooted exploratory expedition.

Condemned at Chester Assises on 21 August 1793 to a life sentence Joseph arrived per *Ganges* on 2 June 1797. The indents of the *Ganges* state that he was 24 and had come from Hulk P. So, by deduction, he was born 1773 and, presumably had been incarcerated in a hulk for four years.

On board the *Ganges* with him were 1) a George Wild who, together with one Henry Grindley, had been tried with Joseph at Chester: they all received a life sentence. 2) a John Wild, 27, with a seven year sentence received at Lancaster Quarter Sessions on 27 January 1794. 3) Henry Wild, a convict tried at the Old Bailey Session 9 January 1793. 4) & 5) Elizabeth and daughter, also Elizabeth, both of whom came free. 6) A Mary Wild, who came free. No documentary evidence as to the crimes of these convicts or to the relationship between them (apart from John, wife and child) has been found.

Elizabeth Wild the Elder is shown in the 1806 Muster as wife to John Wild and in Marsden's Female Muster of the same year as married in England, 1 legitimate female child, came free. Elizabeth the Younger is shown as came free, servant to Mr Gore; Marsden tells us she was a concubine without children. In 1808 she had a child, Cordelia, by Samuel Larkin<sup>1</sup>. The same Musters show Mary Wild as came free by *Ganges* and living with Mr Moore: Marsden adds: Concubine, Natural children: 1 boy, 2 girls. I suggest that the girls were Elizabeth, daughter of John Hull, and Mary Ann, daughter of Thomas Earl<sup>2</sup>. However, this is getting away from the story of Joseph.

In July 1799, while living at Petersham, Joseph and his neighbour John Wild ran into trouble. While Joseph was out shooting at Cockle Bay his dog had pulled a bundle of clothing from under a rock. He sold these articles to John Wild, his next door neighbour, for £2. John remarked at the time that some articles had been stolen from Mr Dove and that these may be them.

Both John and Joseph received a Colonial Sentence - John, the receiver, 100 lashes and to work in the gaol gang at his trade as a sawyer for six months; Joseph, on the inference that he had known the articles to be stolen, to 50 lashes and 3 months working at his trade in and for the service of the Government in the gaol gang - to lodge in the gaol at night<sup>3</sup>.

It has been said that John and Joseph were brothers but Joseph's action in selling the goods does not seem a brotherly action. Further, if the court knew them for brothers surely they would have considered them in cahoots and punished them equally.

A researcher has found on the International Genealogical Index the baptisms for the following to an Abraham & Elizabeth Wild: Samuel on 17 January 1762, James on 1 May 1763, John on 12 August 1764 and Joseph on 25 December 1765. While this could be our Joseph Wild's family it is disappointing that the baptismal dates shown differ so markedly to those calculated from the ages known to us e.g. his age as per indent places his birth year at 1773, long after the above Joseph's baptism, while his age at death, 88 in 1847, places his birth year at 1759. On the other hand, if we can believe Backhouse's statement [see later] that he was 73 in 1836, then 1765 could easily be his year of baptism. The baptisms of Abraham and Elizabeth's children are so evenly spaced it is obvious that there was little delay between birth and baptism.

Whatever, within a year or two of the above unfortunate event, Joseph was very busily engaged on various exploratory expeditions. George Crossley, writing in 1810 in recommendation of a ticket-of-leave for Joseph says:

Joseph Wilde who came in the ship *Ganges* was a servant to Mr Brown, the Botanist, and travelled to every part of this Territory with him, and at Mr Brown's request, a pardon was granted to him by Governor King but for some reason (no way relative to this Man) Governor King cancelled all the Pardons he had granted (one [King's] Birth-day) and amongst the rest this Man's Pardon was cancelled as being one given that Birth-day...<sup>4</sup>

In his own petition of 1812 Joseph says he was "employed by Government in attending and conducting Mr Biyalere [Barrallier], Mr Brown, the Naturalist and Mr Humphrey the Mineralist, through the interior of the Country and was for his steady and uniform behaviour strongly recommended by them and petitioner obtained a Ticket of Leave"<sup>5</sup>.

In the same petition he goes on to ask the Governor to "consider his long sentence, and absence from ... his unhappy wife and five children".

Governor Macquarie, in answer to this petition of 1812, granted him a Conditional Pardon to take effect from February 1813.

The Quakers, Backhouse & Walker, both mention Joseph Wild in their journals of 1836<sup>6</sup>. Backhouse has this to say in his entry of 6 October 1836 "*Joseph Wyld was transported to this Colony in 1793 and has taken part in some of the remarkable changes in it. He was at one time in the employment of a person of the name of Humphreys who was subsequently Police Magistrate at Hobartown. He [Wild] accompanied Robert Brown as a servant, in his botanical researches in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and he discovered the fine tract of country we have lately visited called Illawarra. He is now in receipt of a pension of 6d per diem [sixpence i.e. five cents, per day] from Government and having spent many years in the employment of the Throsby family is supported by Charles Throsby and allowed the use of*

Mutch Index

Ibid

**Sydney Cove 1788-1800 The Second Governor.** John Copley. Angus & Robertson 1986, Sydney. ISBN 0 207 15084 2

Archives Office of New South Wales 4/1725, pp.324-5. Reel 6042

Archives Office of New South Wales 4/1848, pp.338-331. Fiche 3171

**Backhouse & Walker Illawarra & Shoalhaven 1836,** Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong 1991. ISBN 0 909164 16 9.

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*a horse and a gun with which he amuses himself. He is 73 years old."*

Joseph Wild's work with Barralier, Brown and Humphrey must have taken up almost all his time between about 1800 and 1805 for Francis Barralier made his trip to the Blue Mountains on 5 November 1802 and after his return to Sydney left for England in 1803<sup>7</sup> while Robert Brown who, after a voyage of exploration, arrived on H.M.S. *Investigator* on 9 May 1802, explored both in New South Wales and Tasmania and returned to England on the same ship<sup>8</sup> on 23 May 1805. Adolarius William Henry Humphrey, the Mineralogist, accompanied Brown on some of the Tasmanian exploration trips and was still exploring in New South Wales up to 1812.

Joseph appears to have been overseer for George Crossley at Richmond from at least 1810 till he received his pardon in 1813. In the 1814 Muster he is shown as a labourer at Liverpool. In 1815 he was appointed Constable in the district of Five Islands so it appears likely that he was a labourer for Charles Throsby at Liverpool in 1814. A note in Alan Cunningham's journal of 1825 says that Joseph Wild cut the road from Little Mountain to Cow Run in 1815.

Between March 3 and April 14, 1818 Joseph was with James Meehan and Charles Throsby on an expedition to Jervis Bay. April and May 1819 saw him with Throsby on an expedition of discovery to Bathurst. For his part in this expedition Joseph was given a grant of 100 acres (May 31 1819) and sold it almost immediately to one of his companions on the tour, John Wait. Later in the same year he moved to the "new country" in the County of Camden as a settler.

Still later in 1819, as a result of Throsby's reports on his expeditions, Macquarie decided that the southern tableland should be settled and gave Throsby the charge of building a road there. Starting at Picton this road ran through to present day Tarlo and was completed in 1821. In 1820 on

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<sup>7</sup>*Australian Dictionary of Biography* General Ed. Douglas Pike, (Melbourne University Press, 1966+) Vol.1.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

a visit to the 'southern countries' Macquarie discussed the new road with Joseph Wild "*one of the first settlers I sent with Mr Throsby to the new country ... who has the immediate direction of the party employed.*"<sup>9</sup> At this time Macquarie named the pass through the range "Wilde's Pass".<sup>10</sup>

In the following year he was sent by Charles Throsby to discover the lake known as Wee-ra-waa by the natives [Lake George]. In recommending Wild, whom he was placing in charge of the expedition, Throsby said "*who, I assure Your Excellency, though an illiterate man, is very useful and intelligent in the woods*". Wild was given strict instructions to record the nature of the country they travelled through - as Wild was illiterate, Sylvester Hall was sent with the party to keep the journal<sup>11</sup>. Leaving Throsby's on 19 August and travelling via the Wollondilly and Cookbundoon Rivers they reached Lake George on August 28. "*by 1820 the ex-convict, Joseph Wild, had pushed farther south-west to the Molongolo River.*"<sup>12</sup>

1821 saw Joseph appointed Constable for the new County of Argyle and in 1823 he accompanied Captain Currie and Major Ovens on an expedition resulting in the discovery of the Monaro Plains<sup>13</sup>.

This appears to have been the end of his life of discovery. After Dr Charles Throsby's death in 1828 Joseph was head stockman to Throsby's nephew, Charles Throsby Jnr.

Joseph died on May 25 1847, allegedly killed by a wild bull. The church record describes him as a labourer aged 88. He was the first person buried in the Bong Bong Churchyard. His tomb lies behind the church in Throsby Park.<sup>14</sup>

I must thank Hazel Punton, Kathy Wills and Michael Organ for their help in compiling this short history.

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