

The Rev Samuel Marsden.

1765-1838.

Elizabeth Marsden.

1772-1835.

Episode 2.

You have shared the early life of my family and heard about their voyage to NSW. We all came by boat as do many New Australians today. We will now share with them how they were surprised and pleased that they were to be given land and expected to farm that land. This is something that they could never have believed would happen in England.

As I have said, I talk too much ---so on with my story.

Having shared in his wife's great adventure, Samuel went out on the deck to be rewarded with the sight of the South Cape of New Holland, the first land sighted for three months. For the next few weeks he was kept busy caring for his wife and new baby.

On the 19th March 1794 ***The William*** sailed into Port Jackson and dropped anchor at Sydney Cove. Samuel knelt down on the deck and thanked God for His care and for delivering his family to safety.

This faith would be sorely tested during his four decades of service in NSW.

My family disembarked on the 10th March and baby Ann was carried ashore in a large handkerchief belonging to Commissary John Palmer and was given a warm welcome by the Governor and many of the citizens of Sydney Town. The Rev. Johnson and his wife were very

pleased to see them and made them welcome at their home in Bridge St. The lived there until the 4th. July and Elizabeth was nursed back to health by the kind Mrs. Johnson.

Samuel observed that the Rev. Johnson had declined in health so markedly that he had cause for his survival. The prospect of being alone to “carry the burden of the Cross” in such a place as Sydney appeared “very disagreeable” and Samuel saw that the problems he had encountered on *The William* and that Religion played no part in the lives of the convicts and those in charge of them.

Like Johnson, Samuel wanted to save souls and offer more than the routine services of the Established Church.

Governor Phillip’s attitude to Religion was that, in the early days of the colony, Religion would rate very low in the competition for the scarce resources and manpower. It was important that storehouses, hospitals, barracks wharves roads and houses be built and he directed that Church services must be held under trees.

Samuel was surprised to find that Johnson had large land-holdings in the Sydney area and that he would be given a grant of land and would be expected to have it cultivated and producing food as soon as possible. This appealed to Samuel as he had never believed that he could ever own farmland.

The Marsden family moved to Parramatta where they were given quarters in the Government Barracks. The town was under the control of John Macarthur who had introduced a bustling spirit in the area which extended to the Hawkesbury River. As there was plenty of convict labour, free enterprise thrived and there was better housing and farming than was taking place in Sydney Town.

As Assistant Chaplain, Marsden drew rations from the Government Store and Elizabeth could purchase goods from a shop in Church St. owned by Captain Francis Bond.

Mrs. Marsden's first call was on Mrs. Elizabeth Macarthur at Elizabeth Farm Cottage, a fine building on a 250 acre land-grant. She wrote in her diary; 'A very pleasant Lady, mother of three fine children'.

John Macarthur was very proud of his property and the house which stood in a garden planted with fruit trees, vines and vegetables. He told Samuel;

On this years' produce I have sold £400 worth and I have in my granaries, 1,800 bushels of corn. There are 20 acres of fine wheat and 80 acres of Indian corn and potatoes. My stock consists of 2 mares, 130 goats, 100 hogs, 2 cows and poultry in abundance. I have received no stock from the Government. I have either purchased or bred.

We can only imagine the impact on Samuel, with his love of farming, seeing John Macarthur's farm and visiting the nearby Experimental Farm run by the convict James Ruse.

On the 30th. October, Marsden accepted a 100 acre grant at the Field of Mars , a few miles from Parramatta near the North Bank of the River. This was the beginning of a process that would make him, like Macarthur, a great force in Australian Agriculture.

Marsden was not without misgivings as to the wisdom of accepting the land-grant. He wrote to the *Elland Society* submitting his problem;

Is my role compatable with my Religious ability?

The Elland Society replied;

The Elland Society has considered your role and we believe that it is your duty to accept this grant as we cannot work unless we can eat and as the colony is in need of everybody's help in procuring things necessary for your subsistence , everybody must lend a hand towards the common support.

The danger of food shortages had ceased in NSW by 1800 yet Marsden continued to expand his land holdings until he died in 1838, A sense of Public spirit probably remained a major factor as in the pre-eminent role he took in the Agricultural Society in 1822 but he was very much inclined to a vocation that offered personal satisfaction to himself and a more comfortable and respectable life for his family than he could be offered on £3 a week.

Meanwhile Johnson and Marsden were “wrestling with Satan” for the souls of the convicts with little help from the Government. They called on John Macarthur, as a Magistrate, for failing to discipline convicts who refused to attend Church on Sundays. They were also writing to the Church in England;

We cannot describe our situation. All the higher ranks are lost to God and to Religion and you may form an idea of the characters of the lower orders.

However at the beginning of 1796, both Samuel and Elizabeth were showing a growing satisfaction with and their attachment to their new country. Elizabeth wrote to one of her friends in England;

I have met with nothing as bad as I might have expected before we left England. Since we arrived in the colony we have been well treated. The climate is fine and healthy and agrees with my constitution. I have not suffered one single day of sickness since we came here. The country is very romantic, beautifully formed by nature and will be

most delightful once it becomes a little more opened. It abounds with beautiful shrubs and ferns of various kinds.

Samuel wrote to one of his old friends;

With respect to the colony, it prospers much. Cultivation goes on rapidly. We have the prospect of a very large crop of wheat which will be ready for reaping in a few months. I think it one of the finest countries in the World and no people, I believe, will be happier than the people of this island in a short time. We are no longer dependant on foreign countries for dry provisions and in a few years will have plenty of animal food. I wish we had some thousands of the poor English families here. We would soon make them very comfortable.

They were becoming Australians.

On the 7th. September 1795 the new Governor, Captain John Hunter arrived in NSW. He was to find that Sydney Town was much altered since he had left it in 1791. Around the Cove lay an untidy semi- circle of stone store-houses, Official Buildings, huts and hovels. On the Eastern slopes were the wattle and daub Church and a rough Military Barracks of the NSW Corps.

Amongst the crowd that was there, at the Swearing-in ceremony conducted by Advocate David Collins were the Rev's Johnson and Marsden. They stood to gain by having the first religiously inclined Governor of the new colony.

Hunter appointed Johnson as a Magistrate in Sydney and Marsden as a JP in Parramatta. He also appointed Captain John Macarthur as Inspector of Public Works in the colony.

However Governor Hunter also had an order from the King;

On pain of Our utmost pleasure, to order and direct that no spirits shall be landed from any vessel coming to Our said settlement without your consent.

In September 1795 a Church was built at Parramatta using materials from old convict huts. It would serve until the opening of St. John's Church in 1803.

The Rev. Johnson and his family would retire to England and Samuel Marsden was appointed as the NSW Chaplain and a Magistrate.

Samuel Marsden wrote to his friends in England in 1796;

I am a Gardener, a Farmer, a Magistrate and a Minister. In this infant Colony there is plenty of labour for everybody. I conceive it a duty for all to take an active part. Yesterday I was in the field getting in my wheat. Today, I sit in the Civil Court hearing the complaints of the people. Tomorrow, I will ascend the Pulpit and preach to my people.

In Samuel and Elizabeth's early letters and diaries there is the theme of a happy and satisfying marriage. Both partners took pleasure in practical tasks in spite of having convict servants and farm workers. It is interesting to note that in all the time that they used convict labour none ever escaped or were ordered punishment. When they had served their sentences or been granted a Ticket of Leave, they all asked that they should continue working with the Marsden family. In many cases Samuel loaned them money and helped them to start their own businesses. Others were given a land grant and all asked to have land adjoining the Marsden properties.

It should be noted that he never used Catholics.

That's all for this time. I will be back for another Episode if you wish.

John Imrie (29-4-2020)