



MATILDA

EFFECT



Pionierinnen der Forschung Female Pioneers of Research

Pt.55

Jeanne Barret



BESSEr@KIT





Jeanne Barret (1740-1807)
Botanist

Born as the daughter of a poor farming family in one of France's poorest regions, Burgundy, she began working as a domestic servant at an early age.

It remains unclear how she learned to read and write.

In 1760, she met the botanist Philibert Commerson and began working for him.





In her work as a housekeeper, she also organized Commerson's documents, which dealt with botany.

What began as a working relationship turned into a romantic one, and when Commerson was invited to join a circumnavigation of the globe in 1766, Barret disguised herself as a man and accompanied him as his assistant, Jean Barret — since women were forbidden on French naval ships.



During the voyage around the world, they collected over 6,000 plant specimens, including the *Bougainvillea*, named after the captain, which is still widely cultivated as an ornamental plant today. In 1767, Barret's true identity was discovered, which led to mistreatment and restrictions by the ship's crew.

Commerson and Barret remained in Tahiti and later spent five years on Mauritius continuing their botanical research.



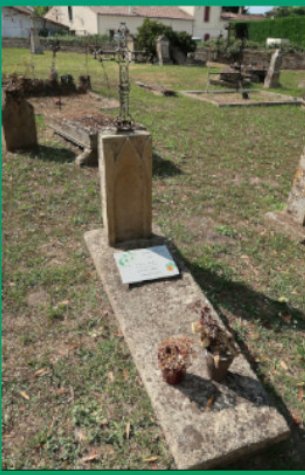
Bougainvillea glabra



With her return to France in 1775, she became the first woman known to have circumnavigated the globe. She received a pension from the navy and was later honored by King Louis XVI for her achievements.

Her contribution to science was recognized only much later: in addition to several streets named after her, the plant *Solanum baretiae* was named in her honor in 2012, and in 2024 she was commemorated with a plaque and a statue at the Olympic Games.





„Ich möchte ihr für ihren Mut alle Anerkennung zollen. Sie wagte es, sich den Belastungen, den Gefahren und allem zu stellen, was man auf einer solchen Reise realistischerweise erwarten konnte. Ihr Abenteuer sollte, wie ich finde, in eine Geschichte berühmter Frauen aufgenommen werden.“

„I want to give her all the credit for her bravery. She dared confront the stress, the dangers, and everything that happened that one could realistically expect on such a voyage. Her adventure, should, I think, be included in a history of famous women.“

-Prinz von Nassau-Siegen

