

Friends of Caroline Chisholm

NEWSLETTER

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The fullness of Caroline Chisholm's holiness has not yet been properly appreciated, writes Fr Joseph Vnuk in this issue's main article. Groups who have her as their patron can, through achieving their potential, help to ensure that it will be. Fr Vnuk's reflections and questions were initially directed at the Caroline Chisholm Library, but they are very relevant to the Friends.

Dr Carole Walker's recent biography of Mrs Chisholm, *A Saviour of Living Cargoes*, demonstrates that diligent, enterprising research can turn up new historical sources that reveal more about her character and motivation. Dr Walker's

research confirmed that A.C. Hayter, not Sir George Hayter, painted the portrait which Caroline Chisholm said was the best likeness of her. We have an article on this portrait and its retrieval, but the reproduced image does not do it justice.

The third article, "Honesty is the best policy", looks at William Arnott, the biscuitmaker who launched an iconic Australian brand. He and his brother David benefitted from Mrs Chisholm's family reunion efforts. Both were self-employed, but it was William who became rich and famous. How well the punning message of Arnott's trade mark was met is scrutinized.

Where is Caroline Chisholm leading you?

As a kid I would occasionally get a close look at one of these things:



When I was nine the teacher told us that this woman, Caroline Chisholm, could become Australia's first saint. Thus I felt a little disoriented when, some years later, the woman who was being pushed as Australia's first saint turned out to be not the familiar face on the five-dollar note, but some unknown nun called Mother Mary MacKillop.

And we all know why: getting someone canonized requires substantial resources, the sort of thing that a religious congregation can do for its founder; but who is there, over a century later, who can push the case of a married lay-woman? I don't intend, at this point, to debate the justice of this situation,

but to point out that it does have one thing to recommend it.

It is love, as the second reading tells us, that binds us together in perfect unity. The holiness of saints is not something we admire from afar, but something that touches us and transforms us. Saints love us so that we can love each other, and be bound together in love, and in that way they build up the body of Christ. Mary MacKillop did not merely teach the poor, nor did her holiness stop in inspiring others to teach the poor. Rather, her holiness gave rise to an institution which enabled young women to become, first of all, holy as Mary MacKillop was holy, and to teach the poor as Mary MacKillop did. Not some heartless institution, but one inspired by and serving love, and therefore spreading love as it carried out teaching and its other ministries.

Such a power to unite comes, of course from Christ and especially from the Eucharist that he has given us to bring us together in one body.

What I want to suggest is that, as a rule of thumb to which there will be exceptions, the true holiness of a saint is perceived in times

Where is Caroline Chisholm leading you? (continued)

and places where that person can bring people together within the body of Christ.

Mary MacKillop's holiness was obvious in her own day, and it resulted in the formation of the Josephites. Today, however, we Australians have tended to cheer her on from the sidelines as she has progressed from Servant of God to Blessed to Saint, but have been less willing to allow her holiness to speak to us and enliven us into communities that follow her spirit. The idea is barely even spoken of.

On the other hand, Caroline Chisholm's heroic work was noted in her time, but not the fullness of her holiness: it has not yet been properly appreciated. In other words, the Caroline Chisholm Society, Caroline Chisholm College, the Friends of Caroline Chisholm and, of course, the Caroline Chisholm Library, are yet to achieve their full potential - and who knows what other groups might come into being that will claim her as their patron.

To say that any of these groups has not achieved its full potential is not to deny the great things it has done and is doing. To speak only of the library, you owe a great debt to Ida Fawcett and Mary Glowery, who first raised the idea, to Fr Chris Hackett, and to those who saved it from closure 20 years ago, of whom we can particularly remember Paul Mees, who died of cancer in June. But we look back at their great work only to prepare ourselves to look ahead, to where Caroline Chisholm is leading you over the next ten or twenty years.

I might start by saying that Caroline Chisholm, while a fine patron for an Australian Catholic lay movement, is a little odd as a patron for a library. But part of Caroline's social outreach was education - she founded a school in Madras, for instance. And so let me suggest that the library should reach out to school students. You would do well to find out what Year 12 students doing "Texts and Traditions" need in terms of resources, and provide a central place where they can come from all over Melbourne. This will open you up to a new generation of patrons, and fresh ideas.

The library has always been a centre for talks, and indeed you have quite a few now. May I suggest, however, a high-profile, annual "Caroline Chisholm Lecture", a talk on what need would Caroline want to address were she around in Melbourne today, given by some expert in the field of welfare or social policy. Such a talk might just inspire new initiatives of social action, new groups under Caroline's patronage, as the library was in the 1930s and 1940s a centre for a wide variety of Catholic organizations.

Thirdly, Caroline Chisholm was the "friend of the immigrants". Australia is still a country of immigrants, with the needy groups no longer those that arrive from England or Ireland, but those coming from Sudan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka. The library needs to approach these groups to find out how it can serve them as a library and meeting place in the heart of the city. It may be that it needs to stock up on devotional literature in Dinka, or run a scripture study group in Sinhalese, or just provide a place where the oldest child from a large Hazari family in a small housing commission flat can quietly do her homework.

This is the future to which your patron Caroline Chisholm is leading you. Your resources may seem meagre, but, as today's readings remind us, we need, like the widow of Zarepath, like Saint Mary MacKillop, to learn to trust in God.

Let us give thanks to God for all that has been done in the past, by Caroline Chisholm, by Saint Mary MacKillop, and by all who generously worked in the library. And as we give thanks to God by offering the body of Christ, may we become ever more the body that we receive, bound together to serve our neighbour, to the glory of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Joseph Vnuk, OP

Fr Vnuk's article is a slight re-working of the homily he preached on 8 August, 2013, the feast day of St Mary of the Cross, at a mass celebrating the Caroline Chisholm Library's establishment and its continuing good works.

The original Hayter portrait, once thought lost

The prayer card for Caroline Chisholm released in the lead-up to the 2008 bicentennial of her birth has Thomas Fairland's beautiful image of her. He painted it on stone, and the resulting lithographics had a palette of predominantly pastel colours and a lightness of touch that made them appear quite different to the oil painting on which they were based.

This oil painting was by A. C. Hayter, whose full name was Angelo Collen Hayter. He painted it in 1852, when his subject was 44 years of age, living in London, and still in the thick of working for much-needed changes in emigration arrangements. The canvas is about 100cm high and 125 cm wide, according to the NSW State Library's eRecords notes for DG459.

The eRecords notes state that the painting is unsigned and undated, and this helps to explain how an incorrect attribution came to be given years afterwards. More crucially, they also refer to one of the labels on the back of the canvas naming the artist as Sir George Hayter and the owner as E. Dwyer-Gray (the married name of Caroline's eldest daughter).

The same misidentification of the artist is found in Edith Pearson's essay on Caroline Chisholm in her 1914 book *Ideals and Realities*, for which Caroline's eldest daughter was an important source [see *Unfeigned Love*, pages 180 and 181]. The facts on hand tend to suggest that Mrs Chisholm's daughter had incorrectly attributed the painting to Sir George, who was a portrait-painter of Queen Victoria and better known than the other Hayter.

The eRecords notes assure us that the correct attribution was made by two means. First, Thomas Fairland acknowledged his 1852 image was based on the painting by A. C. Hayter. And secondly, the entry for Angelo Collen Hayter in Algernon Graves' *The Royal Academy of Arts: a complete dictionary of contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*, published in London in 1906, lists for 1852: "430 Mrs Caroline Chisholm, the philanthropic originator of the Family Colonization Loan Society".

That ever-reliable researcher Margaret Kiddle determined that A. C. Hayter was indeed the artist.



A. C. Hayter's portrait of Caroline Chisholm, now in the Dixson Galleries of the NSW State Library, which has given permission for this reproduction.

In the introduction she added to the 2nd edition of her *Caroline Chisholm* biography in 1957, she lamented there was "no trace" of the painting.

Happily, it had not been lost or destroyed. Perhaps it had been somewhere in Ireland all along, for the NSW State Library purchased it from the Godolphin Gallery, Dublin, on 26 September, 1983.

The image shown here is much darker than DG459, which can be viewed and downloaded for personal use from www.sl.nsw.gov.au. Click on Using the Library, next Search our Collections, then the listing for Manuscripts . . . & Pictures, click on Creator/Author/Artist tab and type "A C Hayter" in the search box, then click Search.

Hayter has painted his sitter at night; hence the abiding gloom, offset by what appears to be gas lighting. The DG459 image has lost the plush of the chair, the folds of Mrs Chisholm's dress and much of the line and materials on the desk at which she was working.

By contrast, the sitter and her surroundings are fully illuminated in the Fairland lithograph. This possibly indicates that what he clearly observed in the original oil portrait has since been covered by ageing and other accretions of the years. The Hayter might benefit from cleaning.

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Honesty is the best policy

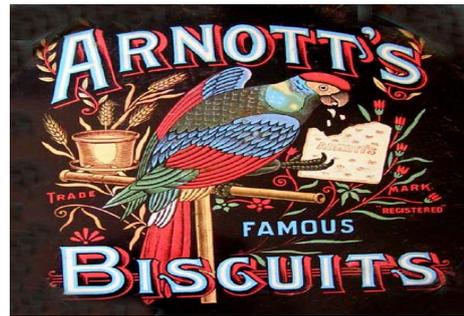
William and David Arnott, aged 20 and 18 years respectively, reached Sydney on the ship *Sir Edward Parry* in February, 1848. Their father, David Millie Arnot, had been transported from Scotland ten years earlier, and their passage was paid by the British government under a scheme proposed and facilitated by Mrs Chisholm. In the scheme the children of convicts and bounty immigrants left behind were reunited with their parent/s in Australia.

David Millie Arnot, a bleacher, was sentenced to seven years for breach of trust, fraud and embezzlement in 1837. Granted a ticket of leave in December, 1842, he was allowed to stay in the district of Raymond Terrace. A few months later, he was given a ticket of leave passport to work for a wealthy landowner, Robert Pringle, at Peels River. The passport was extended in January, 1844, and he served the rest of his sentence with Mr Pringle, with whom he remained working until at least 1853. His Certificate of Freedom was dated 10 February, 1845.

The convict heritage of William Arnott, the famous biscuit magnate, is omitted from his entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB). Also omitted are the background to the Arnott brothers having arrived on the *Sir Edward Parry* and the contributing role of Caroline Chisholm. The ADB entry, written by a granddaughter of William Arnott, simply says he “followed his family to Australia”.

William and his brother David set up separate baking shops in Maitland. Apart from a short spell at the Turon River diggings, they thereafter kept in that line of work in the local region. William proved to be more astute in business than his brother, who was a repeat insolvent.

The writer of William’s ADB entry thought his success “was founded on hard work, integrity and insistence on quality”. She cites as an example of honesty in business dealings his 1883 repayment of 1862 creditors in Maitland. His bakery was flooded in 1857 and 1861, the latter forcing him to compound with his creditors, one of which demanded full repayment in 1865. This forced William to sell his Maitland bakery.



William Arnott chose this trade mark, it is claimed, because “On its tee is the best pol I see” is really a wordplay for “Honesty is the best policy”.

He moved to Newcastle and, with a loan from friends, began a new bakery . . . and never looked back. He soon repaid his friends and acquired land and factory machinery that permitted larger production, especially of sweet and plain biscuits and ship’s biscuits. He sold ever-increasing volumes locally and to the Sydney market.

During the 21 years William took to repay his 1862 creditors, he not only created a very profitable business and a comfortable life, he also bought, reported the *Maitland Mercury* in July, 1869, “the first buggy” built in Newcastle that was “constructed . . . with patent axles, silver-plated boxes . . . American hickory . . .”. As well as conspicuous consumption, William had earlier commenced legal proceedings to recover modest debts he was owed in Maitland, and both he and his brother were, in 1861, charged with supplying underweight bread, though the charges were dismissed.

William was the informant for his father’s death certificate in January, 1872, which stated his father had been in the colony for “20 years”. To this falsehood was added the modified surname of “Arnott”, presumably to screen his father’s convict past. So much for honesty.

Rodney Stinson

References: National Library of Australia’s Trove historical newspapers; online records of NSW State Records and Births, Deaths and Marriages; ADB online; and Malcolm David Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008.