

Friends of Caroline Chisholm

NEWSLETTER

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It is just over eight years since the Friends of Caroline Chisholm began. The group's first major undertaking was the preparation, printing and distribution of the prayer (approved by Archbishop Mark Coleridge) for Caroline Chisholm's intercession and for the commencement of a Cause for her beautification. Catholic parishes and secondary schools were direct-mailed, leading to the distribution of more than forty thousand copies of the prayer card.

How frequently the prayer is said by those with the prayer card is known only to God, but daily use has been reported to the Newsletter team by some Friends and others. The team has received advice of intercessions to Mrs Chisholm that were answered, most of which involved family and personal relationships.

Promoting the prayer card is among the key objectives of the Friends of Caroline Chisholm, and it is desirable that additional promotion be undertaken this year so that more Australian Catholics are aware of the prayer card and come to understand Mrs Chisholm's significance.

Other key objectives are set out on page 4 of this Newsletter. Progress has definitely been made for most of them.

A listing of Australian organisations, facilities, suburbs and streets which bear Caroline Chisholm's name has been prepared by Caroline Chisholm College at Glenmore Park, N.S.W. Issue #11 of the Newsletter had a short article about the listing.

The twice-yearly Newsletter is meeting its stated purpose of informing Friends of relevant developments, while the www.mrschisholm.com website continues to provide more detailed information and resources. Both, however, would benefit from contributions by a broader range of Friends and others.

Promotion and support of historical research into the life and work of Mrs Chisholm, her husband and their family has been restricted, by

and large, to groundwork for certain articles in the Newsletter. One exception was Matthew French's study of the legal situation facing Mrs Chisholm's proposed launching of a private criminal prosecution in 1842 (a summary of which appeared in Issue #11), and another was Clara Geoghegan's article about Caroline Chisholm in the *Australasian Catholic Record* in 2011. That article demonstrated the ongoing soundness and relevance of Mrs Chisholm's approaches to social justice matters and her strong sense of Christian vocation, which pertain to another two of the Friends' objectives.

No systematic work has yet been carried out regarding the following objective: Identification and, if needed, the preservation of historical and contemporary records of relevance to the formal historical inquiry relating to the Cause for the beatification of Caroline Chisholm.

Mary Hoban's papers have been deposited in the Archdiocese of Melbourne's archives, and they probably contain the most comprehensive guide in Australia to the historical records of interest. Nonetheless, the digitalization of old books, journals, newspapers, government records and correspondence is proceeding apace, and it would be worthwhile for members of the Friends to compile a guide to the newly accessible historical records. (An approach to utilizing the Trove facility is discussed later in this issue.) Compiling a guide to the many contemporary records of relevance, including electronic and social media, would be beyond the group's capabilities.

Perhaps the Friends' principal focus in relation to contemporary records should remain gathering evidence of what is technically termed cultus, such as the Goulburn mosaic, the grave restoration and pilgrimage to the grave. Commencement of a Cause for beautification is dependent on having sufficient evidence that Caroline Chisholm is greatly honoured and commemorated by the Catholic faithful.

The Trove Facility and Historical Newspapers/Magazines

The Trove facility on the National Library of Australia's (NLA) website is proving invaluable for researchers. In January, 2016, it had about 500 newspaper/magazine titles from the 19th Century and more than 830 such titles from the 20th Century, all published in Australia.

Trove allows the researcher to search on key words such as "Caroline Chisholm", and gives the hits in chronological order, beginning with the earliest or the latest, and by title, decade etc. The cited key words were found in 1,670 articles between 1840 and 1999 inclusive. The peak decades were the 1850s and 1860s, which had a combined count of 515, or about 31% of the total. The 1890s had the lowest count: 28. The Trove counts do not have the most recent decades for all newspapers/magazines.

The articles located by Trove may give a passing reference to Caroline Chisholm (or others of the same name), they may have substantial stories (wholly or partly about her) or they may commend her. Take the 1890s, for example.

- ◆ "Caroline Chisholm's name should never be forgotten": *The Argus*, 3 February, 1891, page 7, in its article about a local businessman independently recruiting English migrants for his firm's irrigation projects at Mildura.
- ◆ "Mrs Chisholm's philanthropic exertions in promoting family emigration at this time were highly appreciated": *The Illustrated Sydney News*, 19 December, 1891, page 4, in a brief history of the city of Melbourne.
- ◆ "... Caroline Chisholm, a lady whose name will be revered for ages to come": *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, 14 December, 1895, page 8, in an obituary for Sydney Chisholm, her youngest son.
- ◆ "He [M. Paul Blouet] recognised the saintly qualities of the object of his discourse [that is, women], as exemplified, for instance, by Caroline Chisholm in Australia": *The Evening News*, 7 May, 1892, in an extended review of "Her Highness, Woman", a lecture by Max O'Rell, a Frenchman who was using the pseudonym of M. Paul Blouet.



J.S.Prout's *Miller's Point, Sydney, from the Flagstaff Hill*, 1842; sourced online from the NLA's Picture Catalogue; nla.pic-an6940084-m

The subject of the last article is Max O'Rell's lecture in Sydney on 6 May, 1892. This launched his Australian tour, which took in all States, except Western Australia, and ran successfully for over seven months. "Her Highness, Woman" was one of his three comedy lectures. While his affirming reference to Caroline Chisholm was delivered straight, much else was humorous.

A new Trove search on "Her Highness, Woman" produced about 50 articles for just four months (May to August, 1892), but only two of them mentioned the Caroline Chisholm reference. Even so, as the lectures were, it seems, set-pieces, that would mean a considerable number of theatregoers were reminded of Caroline Chisholm's exemplifying "saintly qualities".

The foregoing shows she was favourably remembered and commended in the 1890s. The more numerous Trove articles in other decades would yield the same or stronger support before and after the 1890s. A discovery for me was Fr G. E. Herlihy OFM's "Australia First" lecture, reported in *The Catholic Press* on 23 February, 1922, page 27. The Franciscan stated that Caroline Chisholm's work was not "given its proper place in history"; he described her as "the patroness of Australian womenkind", and declared "her worth to Australia was even greater than was that of Joan of Arc to France". High praise indeed!

The Trove facility will produce many more historical records of relevance to the formal historical inquiry for the hoped-for Cause.

Rodney Stinson

Replacing the Dog-Cart for the Friendless Poor's Funerals (part 2)

Issue #10 of the Newsletter related part 1 of Caroline Chisholm's involvement in securing a hearse to convey the friendless poor to their graves. Her involvement began in the second half of 1842, following the *Sydney Morning Herald's* article decrying the use of the dog-cart for that purpose. She commenced a subscription list, and by April, 1843 a total of £36.6.3 had been subscribed. The next update, published eighteen months later, gave a slightly lower total, and £13 was still needed to meet the tender price of £45 for the hearse. Most of that was subscribed by end-January, 1845. It is not clear when the remaining £2.9.5 was secured.

Why did it take more than two years to raise the relatively small sum of £45? Mrs Chisholm was well-known and well-liked, someone who drew people to good causes. In *Fifty-one Pieces of Wedding Cake*, Mary Hoban attributes the lengthy delay to "hard times" and "the depression" in the Colony [cf. pages 104 and 170], but over 80% of the tender price was initially subscribed within a few months, as outlined in issue #10. A more likely reason or reasons for the lengthy delay must lie elsewhere.

The dog-cart — variously called "the dead-dog cart", "the nuisance cart" and at times "the dead cart" — had been round for many years. Every morning a sergeant of police and two constables went across Sydney town to remove dead animals, not just dogs [cf. *Sydney Monitor*, 17 February, 1840, page 2]. Dead dogs, including strays killed by police batons, were very common. The *Sydney Gazette* reported "the bodies of upwards of forty dead dogs" as one day's tally [24 March, 1835, page 2].

Although the other use of the dog-cart was also of long-standing, public objections to the practice appear to have been infrequent, at least until the Anglican Bishop's criticisms in the Legislative Council in August, 1840 and subsequently. The earliest published criticism located on the National Library of Australia's Trove facility was the *Sydney Gazette's* outburst on 15 September, 1836 [page 3]: "... it is the most offensive thing we ever heard of, the idea of a Christian person being conveyed to the grave in the dead dog cart, sometimes two or three bodies at a time. Horrible! Horrible!! Horrible!!!".

Yet the practice continued into the 1840s. The friendless poor were the poor who were not in Government or Government-funded institutions such as the Sydney Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum, the Lunatic Asylums, and the jails. The bodies of those who died in one of these institutions were normally conveyed to the cemetery in the dead cart of that institution. The friendless poor who died outside them could rely on a dignified funeral conveyance only if the coroner had held an inquest into their death.

The Australian commented on 15 August, 1842 [cf. page 2] about "a habit amongst the very poor families in Sydney, that when any members of the family are dangerously sick to remove them to the hospital, in order to avoid being conveyed to the place of interment in the dog cart". The expense of a hearse for these poor people, the newspaper contended, would be less than one-fourth of the cost of hospitalization and the post-mortem.

Whether that type of utilitarian argument persuaded anyone to subscribe towards a hearse for the friendless poor cannot be ascertained. But one may infer from the limited number of subscribers that there were few Sydneysiders sufficiently concerned about the use of the dog-cart to join the subscription list. Perhaps 60 did so (not all were named), of whom 12 contributed almost 60% of the hearse's cost. Nine were clergymen, who together subscribed just under £12; Govenor Gipps and Ben Boyd each gave £5; and the Lord Mayor gave £2.2.0 at the outset and another £2 at the end of 1844.

The use of the dog-cart for conveying the bodies of the friendless poor to their graves, one must conclude, was of little concern to the great majority of Sydney residents. Trove searches did not reveal verbal attacks on the very poor for their improvidence or whatever in the early 1840s debate. The taunt of "pauper" did not arise then, but it did in the early 1830s, when influential colonists lambasted the paid emigration of "free paupers" from the workhouses of Ireland and England. Even if the memory of that lingered, Mrs Chisholm's perseverance ensured a noxious practice was finally ended.

Friends of Caroline Chisholm — Objectives

Friends of Caroline Chisholm is a voluntary organisation which exists in order to promote knowledge and appreciation of the life and works of Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877) and to ensure her life of heroic virtue is better understood and imitated.

In particular, the Friends wish to promote and support the following:

- ◇ Research into the life and work of Caroline Chisholm, Archibald her husband and their family circumstances.
- ◇ Evaluating the continuing soundness and relevance of her approaches to issues of migration, the well-being of women, children and families; the role of women in public life; and conditions for the creation of a just society;
- ◇ Understanding her motivation and commitment in assisting persons in need regardless of “country or creed” as grounded in a strong sense of Christian vocation;
- ◇ Maintaining a listing of contemporary organisations which bear Caroline Chisholm’s name and the rationale for their commemoration of Mrs Chisholm;
- ◇ Collating a database of descendants of individuals and families assisted by Mrs Chisholm’s immigration work in the 19th century;
- ◇ Distribution and use of the approved prayer for Caroline Chisholm’s intercession and for the commencement of a Cause for her beatification within the Catholic Church;
- ◇ Accepting in confidence and storing letters from those whose intercessory prayers have been answered, for later reference in the hoped-for Cause;
- ◇ Identification and, if needed, the preservation of historical and contemporary records of relevance to the formal historical inquiry relating to the Cause for the beatification of Caroline Chisholm within the Catholic Church;
- ◇ Publication of a newsletter to inform Friends of developments;
- ◇ Use of the www.mrschisholm.com website and other media outlets for effective distribution of more detailed information and resources.

Friends of Caroline Chisholm — Membership Form

Name/Organisation

Postal Address

..... Postcode

I enclose a cheque for \$25 for two years’ membership. Please email my copies of the Newsletter to

..... OR send to postal address Yes/No

Please send me five/ten prayer cards at no cost Yes/No For bulk supplies go to www.mrschisholm.com

I am interested in actively helping the Friends. Please phone me on

Return completed form and cheque to: Friends of Caroline Chisholm P O Box 232 Wendouree Victoria 3355