

Friends of Caroline Chisholm

NEWSLETTER

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Continuing to draw inspiration from their patron, the Caroline Chisholm Society will shortly move to a new office with enhanced facilities for delivering its highly regarded pregnancy and family support services. The lead article describes the Society's objectives, its work and its history. In 2017 the Society marks 48 years of fruitful service. May there be many more.

The National Library's *Trove* search facility has enabled confirmation that John Rae's Sydney scene series pictured the Female Immigrants' Home, operated by Mrs Chisholm from late-1841 to mid-1842. Confirmation hinged on ascertaining

in which part of the Government-owned building the Home was located, as explained in one of our historical articles.

The other historical article in this issue briefly considers some forms of assistance Caroline Chisholm rendered former convicts and those having Tickets of Leave (and yet to complete their sentence). The topic calls for more research, and the article we have relies heavily on extracts from two of the Voluntary Statements she collected in the Colony in the mid 1840s. That said, the extracts make powerful reading. The article also has an apposite image, as do the other articles in this issue.

A Lovely New Space

The Caroline Chisholm Society, the pregnancy and family support service, is celebrating its modernisation and its history as it moves into a new office at 977 Mount Alexander Road, Essendon. The new office has an open foyer to welcome mothers, children and families, three consulting rooms, and a boutique room with donated goods for babies and pregnant mothers.

Visitors can purchase goods from the Society's well-respected, volunteer-run bonnet and shawl stall. Beyond the foyer is a multifunctional room with storage and sorting capacity and a dividing wall so that parenting and play groups can be run. A nearby kitchenette is ready for volunteers and families who would like a cup of tea, and in a rear yard prams and other baby equipment can be processed. Upstairs there is a meeting room, full kitchen and office space for home-visiting caseworkers and the administration of the Society.

The Essendon building is envisaged as a hub for services, with the aims of:

- ◇ fostering an innovative model of integrated service delivery for new and expectant families in a place-based context,



Helen Cooney plans the location of a tribute to Caroline Chisholm in the foyer of the Caroline Chisholm Society's new office

- ◇ promoting equitable access to quality services that support individual and community well-being, now and into the future, and
- ◇ creating a strong sense of community that is built on a shared vision of support for new and expectant families.

The office already provides home-visiting support for families, a specialist homelessness service, new and pre-loved baby and maternity goods, and welfare support appointments. Volunteer coordination for the Society is based

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A Lovely New Space (cont.)

in Essendon, and the new building will also be available for other services that seek to provide a warm and welcoming environment for new and expectant parents and the support they need to create a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

The Society, as many of the Friends of Caroline Chisholm know, supports women and families from the time they learn of their pregnancy until their youngest child is school age. It does this from three local sites in Shepparton, Caroline Springs and Moonee Valley. Taking calls from across the State, the Society offers 1,000 to 1,500 supports a year, depending on their funding.

The top issues facing the families we work with are poverty, homelessness, family violence, mental health issues and social isolation. The Society's www.caroline.org.au website has more details about our work.

Operating in the spirit of Caroline Chisholm and drawing inspiration from her love of humanity, the Society was established in 1969. Not long after that, it moved to a house in Park Street, Moonee Ponds. In 2012, the Society sold that house and purchased the former 'Precision Mowers' shop on Mount Alexander Road. It operated temporarily in Shuter Street, Moonee Ponds.



A new 'boutique' at Caroline Chisholm Society, where expectant and new mothers can get help and support

Helen Cooney, the Society's CEO, joked, "The Moonee Ponds offices, both of them, had cats. Feral ones. They weren't rats, like Caroline's pests, but they were our version. We're excited and delighted to have a lovely new pest-free space to support mums and their families."

The Society sought community support for its new home and welcomed support from locals, philanthropists and the Victorian Government.

The official opening is scheduled for early March, 2017. Friends of Caroline Chisholm wishing to be invited should email the Society at: secretary@caroline.org.au by 20 February.

Caroline Chisholm Society

Assisting Convicts and Former Convicts

Mrs Chisholm's settlement of newly arrived emigrants in the Colony is well-known. In her evidence to a committee of the House of Lords, she gave as 11,000 the number she had settled in the early to mid 1840s. This, as Margaret Kiddle has noted, was "roughly one-third" of assisted migrants arriving in 1841 to 1844 [see *Caroline Chisholm*, page 90]. Her similar help to convicts and former convicts is less well-known.

Mrs Chisholm kept good records of her public undertakings, including reliable statistics. In the House of Lords' committee hearing, "On the Execution of the Criminal Law", later in 1847, she stated she had found work for about 1,000 Ticket of Leave holders and an unknown number of convicts who had obtained their

freedom (unknown because she did not ask how people arrived in the Colony). Both groups invariably wanted work outside Sydney.

She also ensured the Colonial and British governments honoured the past policy of reuniting convicts who had been pardoned or freed (aka emancipists) with their wives and children left behind. Newsletter #8 related how William Arnott, the biscuit-maker, joined his freed father here.

Another important way in which Caroline Chisholm assisted former convicts is that she sought their voluntary statements in 1845 and early 1846, even-handedly accepting they had turned their lives round and could provide convincing evidence to the poor and struggling of the sound opportunities for emigrants to

Assisting Convicts and Former Convicts (cont.)

build a better life in Australia. Two such former convicts were Joseph Smith, who came on the *Neptune* in the Second Fleet in June, 1790, and Margaret Holmes, who arrived a year later on the *Mary Ann*. Each was sentenced, though separately, for theft in London. They met in the Colony, had three children and married (in that order).

Mrs Chisholm took the statements of Joseph and Margaret in their home at Macdonald River on 3 October, 1845.

Joseph's began: "I arrived in the colony fifty-six years since; it was Governor Phillip's time, and I was fourteen years old; there were only eight houses in the colony then. I know that myself and eighteen others laid in a hollow tree for seventeen weeks, and cooked out of a kettle with a wooden bottom; we used to stick it in a hole in the ground, and make a fire round it. I was seven years in service (bond)

There was plenty of hardship then; I have often taken grass, and pounded it, and made soup from a native dog For seventeen weeks I had only five ounces of flour a day. We never got a full ration except when the ship was in harbour. The motto was, 'Kill them, or work them, their provision will be in store.' Many a time have I been yoked like a bullock, with twenty to thirty others to drag along timber.

About eight hundred died in six months at a place called Toongabbie, or Constitution-hill. I knew a man so weak, he was thrown into the grave, when he said, 'Don't cover me up; I'm not dead; for God's sake, don't cover me up!' . . . The man recovered, his name is James Glasshouse, and he is now alive at Richmond

After seven years I got my liberty. . . . Afterwards I went to live with D'Arcy Wentworth, and a better master never lived in the world. Little Billy, the great lawyer, has often been carried in my arms. Old D'Arcy wanted me to take charge of Home-Bush property, but I took to the river (Hawkesbury), worked up and down til I saved money to buy old Brown's farm at Pitt Town. No man worked harder than I have done. I have by me about one thousand pounds ready cash."



Convict ploughing team, location not stated
La Trobe Picture Collection, ref. no. H22182
State Library of Victoria

Joseph's statement concluded: "I have given that farm to my son Joseph, and three other farms, and about five hundred head of cattle; and about the same to my other son. We are never without a chest of tea in the house. . . . Tea is a great comfort."

Here is most of Margaret's statement: "I have seen Dr _____ take a woman who was in the family way, with a rope round her, and duck her in the water at Queen's-wharf. The laws were bad then. If a gentleman wanted a man's wife, he would send the husband to Norfolk Island. I have seen a man flogged for pulling six turnips instead of five.

One _____ was overseer, the biggest villain that ever lived delighted in torment. He used to walk up and down and rub his hands when the blood ran. When he walked out, the flogger walked behind him. He died a miserable death, maggots ate him up; not a man could be found to bury him. . . ."

These two statements were included in Samuel Sidney's *The Three Colonies of Australia*, published in 1853 [2nd ed., pages 41-43]. Mrs Chisholm must have added the details that Margaret was blind and that "she acted as she spoke, and wept on recalling the horrors of her early life".

The statements of Margaret and Joseph retain their gripping realism and honesty. Mrs Chisholm gave them a voice and put forward their example of redeemed lives after emancipation as worthy of recognition and emulation.

Rodney Stinson

A Picture of the Female Immigrants' Home

At last we can be sure we have a picture of the Female Immigrants' Home in Bent Street, Sydney in 1842. In that year, John Rae (1813-1900) painted watercolours of Sydney scenes, including one he named "Bent St Sydney in 1842". Rae became, in 1843, the first full-time Town Clerk of the Sydney municipal council, and he subsequently held other public service positions. His painting and writing were undertaken for pleasure.

The picture shown here reproduces his later photograph of "Bent St Sydney in 1842". This was sourced from the National Library, which has, in its Rex Nan Kivell Collection, a copy of the 1893-produced *Album* of Rae's photographs of his Sydney scene watercolours of 1842.

Rae's East-looking view is taken from the Southern side of Bent Street, a little to the West of the Bligh Street corner and somewhat elevated (the second storey of a building, perhaps?). The horseman is leaving Bligh Street. Many of the buildings are quite substantial, but not the single level one on the left. That more modest construction is where Caroline Chisholm operated the Female Immigrants' Home from late-1841 to mid-1842 - in "the south west corner" of the building, according to a five-line news item in the *Sydney Herald*, 16 November, 1841, page 2 - and where she then ran an employment service.

Mrs Chisholm was given the use of only part of the single level building, the Government Printer being another occupier at the time. The State Library of NSW holds the watercolour of "Bent St Sydney in 1842", and it identifies the places of significance as Bent Street, the Government Printing Office and the Australian Subscription Library (call no. DG SV*/Sp Coll/Rae/10 and reference code 447102).

The State Library's notes for the holding maintain that the dating to 1842 is doubtful, given that the Australian Subscription Library, located in the large building with two windows in an otherwise blank wall, was not completed until November, 1845. However, plans and specifications were available for the proposed building in late 1842, when tenders for the



The nearest corner of the single level building on the left is its South-West corner, where the Female Immigrants' Home was located

stonemason's work were called for (cf. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November, 1842, page 1).

The Australian Subscription Library is important in the overall composition of Rae's Bent Street painting. It helps to mark the end of the street and matches the height of the building opposite, while its bland expanse serves to deflect greater attention to the humble building below it. The lack of architectural detail for the proposed building would also be understandable if Rae had sketched it from the plans.

Rae could have chosen a different view of Bent Street, but the one he painted shows clearly the building and its South-West corner where Caroline Chisholm did such splendid work. The National Library's *Trove* search facility has allowed us to be certain that this is so, because it turned up the five-line news item in the *Sydney Herald* referred to above.

Although the location of the Female Immigrants' Home has long been described as the corner of Bent and Phillip Streets, in 1842 the track to the rear of old Government House (in Bridge Street) was not called Phillip Street.

The watercolour painting, which the State Library has digitalized for online viewing and purchase, really brings the scene alive, and steps will be made to acquire a copy and to obtain permission to upload it to the www.mrschisholm.com website.