

Christina O'Donnell, alias "Fairy"

Rushworth Chronicle

9 May 1902

A woman well known in Rushworth, named Christina O'Donnell, alias "Fairy," was found dead in her hut on Saturday morning by Mr C. Charlett, who happened to be passing that way, and he at once gave information to Constable Draper, who, on proceeding to the place, found the woman's body huddled up in a corner with her hands raised up in front of her.

The remains presented a shocking appearance, all the clothes having been burned from them.

Constable Draper is of opinion that the woman must have gone home and having lighted a candle thrown the match down on the floor without extinguishing it and then fell asleep, and that afterwards the lucifer caught her dress and she only became aware of the fact by finding herself enveloped in flames. It is supposed that she then endeavoured to reach the bed to get a blanket to wrap herself in but was overcome by the heat and smoke and fell where she was found. She must have died a terrible death, and how long she lingered before her sufferings ended will never be known. "Fairy" was supposed to have been well brought up and to have son and daughters holding good positions in one of the States.

An inquiry was held before Dr Christie, J.P., who returned a verdict of accidental death. The remains were interred in the Rushworth cemetery.

RUSHWORTH COURT OF PETTY SESSIONS. FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1900

(Before Drs Heily and Christie, Js.P.)

Constable Ryan v. Christina O'Donnell, *alias* Fairy, was charged with being an idle and disorderly person. Defendant pleaded not guilty.

Fairy to their Worships—"I should like to know what I am brought here for. I wasn't doing anything."

Constable Draper—"Shut up now; that will do."

Fairy—"I won't shut up for you or anyone else. I want to go home to my old man."

Constable Ryan—"That will do now, I tell you."

Fairy—"Hold my tongue for you, I should think not indeed."

Constable Draper—"Be quiet; you will have your say by and by."

Fairy—"And a fat lot of good that will do, I expect."

Dr Heily (in his most persuasive manner) —"My good woman, will you kindly be quiet for a few moments and allow the court to proceed with its business. I can assure you will get justice done you."

Fairy—"The only justice I want is to go home to my old man. Will you let me go."

Constable Draper—"Are you ever going to hold that tongue of yours."

Fairy—"All right."

Constable Ryan deposed that he arrested the accused on the previous evening in High street; she was drunk and kicking up a row.

Fairy—"Oh! hear what he says, your Worships. Oh! the wicked man, I never kicked up a row in my life; I am the quietest woman on earth."

Constable Ryan continuing, said he had had several complaints about her lately. She was always about the hotels and streets.

Constable Draper gave confirmatory evidence as to accused's character.

Accused then got into the box, to give evidence on her own behalf.

Constable Draper—"How much money have you earned during the last month?"

Fairy—"2s for washing and 2s for scrubbing. I take work when I can get it."

Constable Draper—"Is that all the money you have earned?"

Fairy—"Oh! I have made more than that."

Constable Draper—"What did you purchase with the money?"

Fairy—"Meat, tea, and sugar."

Constable Draper—"No beer?"

Fairy—"No, I never bought a drop of beer. I want to go home to my old man. I have been married to him 18 years. He's getting old now, and I want to look after him. I have never been away from him during the whole of that time."

Constable Draper pointed out that the accused had been sent to gaol for six months about three years since on a similar charge to the present one.

The accused was sentenced to six months in the Melbourne gaol.

(Rushworth Chronicle, 3 August, 1900)