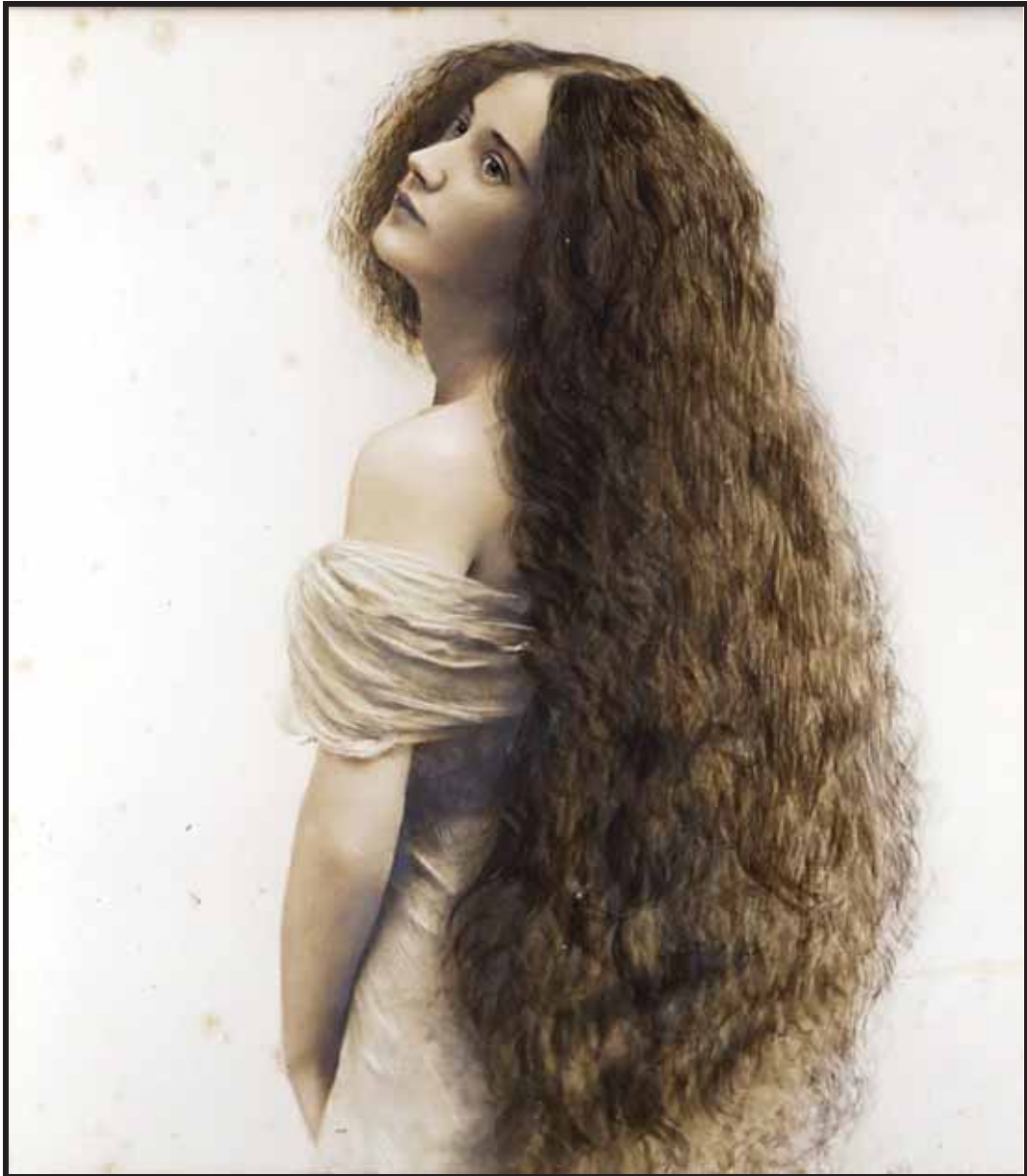


Dainty Diva



Dorothy Rudder 1916. Photograph by Talma Studios Sydney.

Exploring the life and times of Australian singer Dorothy Rudder.

Cathy Koning

DAINTY DIVA: Exploring the Life and Times of Australian singer Dorothy Rudder

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Subjects: Rudder, Dorothy Armitage (1893-1940)

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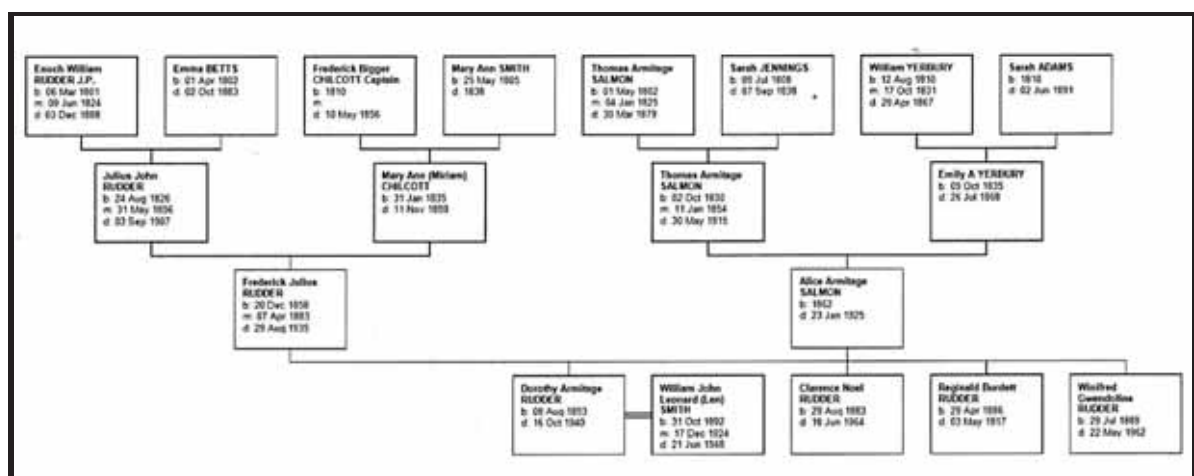
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Historical Society

What an exciting pleasure to meet the delightful Dorothy Rudder! With warmth and expertise Cathy Koning evokes Dorothy's long stage, concert and radio career and the theatre greats with whom she worked. With its treasure trove of fascinating illustrations, Dainty Diva is an invaluable exploration of a now largely forgotten world of Australian and international show business. I heartily recommend it.

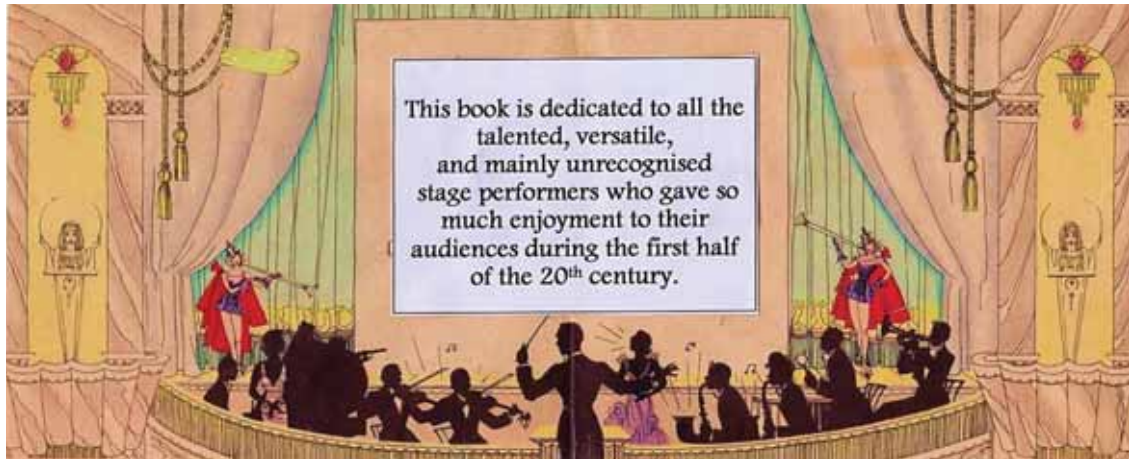
~ Frank Van Straten



My voice is a pure lyric soprano, full and resonant, with dramatic cadence. I am small and slight in figure and possess a head of long, thick, golden hair reaching below my waist. ~ Dorothy Rudder



Dorothy Rudder's Family Tree created by Robyn Morley



Cathy Koning has been quite versatile in her choice of careers. She has been a secondary school teacher, an entertainment publicist, theatre photographer, owner of a successful horticultural business and directed a community sustainability program for two Victorian regional councils. Finally she decided it was time to share the story of Dorothy Rudder's life through an exploration of a suitcase with its marvellous theatrical treasures inside. Cathy is married to theatre producer Fred Wallace. She has appeared on stage once. As performer Robyn Archer's dresser, she also set her props for *A Star is Torn* season at Melbourne's Princess Theatre. Dorothy is Fred's great aunt.

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Introduction

A fascinating 'case' study



Singer Dorothy Rudder's suitcase

In many respects variety entertainment was also its own worst enemy. Being such a familiar aspect of everyday life few people considered its scripts, scores, posters, stage properties and other paraphernalia as having little if any cultural significance, and hence almost everything has since been lost.

~ Clay Djubal¹

At first glance the strongly-built brown suitcase my husband Fred Wallace brought home gave little indication of the unique treasures within. The suitcase had once belonged to his great aunt, Dorothy Armitage Rudder. Fred told me I would be very interested in the contents. It was bit battered and made of a type of thickened hessian material with wrap-around wooden straps and a leather handle. A remnant of a travel label remained. It had been looked after for many years by Fred's cousin, Reg Blanch, who later passed it on to his nephew Che Jepson.

The case consisted of two parts: the top section had a lift out shelf containing a faux crocodile box with broken jet, pearl and glass necklaces and two diamante brooches inside, binoculars, a No 1A Autographic Kodak Jr camera, a moth-eaten black linen hat trimmed with fake flowers and fruit, a toiletry set, metal trench art and a notebook from the First World War, a tiny shaver and lipstick, two address books, bibles, a crinkled cream silk embroidered shawl (placed over the shoulders when applying makeup), a

large hand mirror and some other bits and pieces. All the items were in a ‘well-used’ condition.

The bottom layer was haphazardly filled with photographs of various sizes (some in an album), shipboard menus, theatre programs, postcards, greeting cards, contracts, newspaper clippings, letters, two autograph books, a photocopy of the family tree, a book on a man called Enoch William Rudder and some poems. They were not in any particular order—date or otherwise.

Upon opening the case, my first reaction was fascination mixed with an oddly non-defined feeling of anxiety and sadness. Someone’s life was being laid bare and it took many years before the desire to research and write Dorothy’s biography actually translated into something approaching a fully written document. At this stage very little was known about Dorothy, apart from the fact that she was a soprano who had performed at Covent Garden and had supposedly walked out on her husband on their wedding night.

Finally, thanks to a personal encounter with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia, I had time to devote to the project. During the long recovery I put the materials in date order and fleshed out the story behind these possessions. The current generation had little or no knowledge of their family’s origins, experiences during World War I, marital intrigues and court cases. By researching Dorothy’s story, which included a moving visit to the war memorial at Villers-Bretonneux in France, I’ve been given a deeper insight into a pioneer family who were deeply involved in the events that shaped our nation. To use a theatrical term, these stories provide the backdrop which helps us understand Dorothy’s life, a life both conventional and adventurous. What I found often challenged generalisations I was taught regarding Australian society in Dorothy’s lifetime.

There were many unexpected connections, coincidences and twists in Dorothy’s story, and I have allowed the paths to take me where they may—hopefully without too many wrong turns. I have solved some mysteries, misunderstood others and adjusted the narrative as new information has been revealed. The adventure has included being a historical detective, a hunter-gatherer and a show business researcher—all mixed with a little psychology and intuition.

The memorable experiences of Dorothy’s ancestors serve as a mirror from the past, reflecting our history back to us. That mirror also reflects Dorothy’s story where lost opportunities as well as successes played an integral part. It all comes together in the compelling and not-so-ordinary story of a fascinating and feisty Australian woman.

Chapter One

Notable ancestors



Frederick Julius Rudder.

Alice Armitage Rudder nee Salmon.

Dorothy Armitage Rudder, a barefoot baby in velvet and lace. Photograph by C.V. Keys.

Dorothy Armitage Rudder was lucky to have been born at all.

The family history is littered with stories of dangerous encounters. Many incidents occurred in the summer and often inspired acts of bravery—taking a long sea voyage by sailing ship or living near the sea; riding horses; using guns; and driving automobiles on rough roads all presented an element of risk. Two of Dorothy Rudder's great-grandfathers, a grandfather and her own father were all involved in life-threatening accidents prior to her birth. Luckily these incidents, which usually happened to the menfolk, never resulted in the demise of Dorothy's particular branch of the family tree.

For one great-grandfather, Frederick Biggar Chilcott, the threat of shipwreck was an occupational hazard; he lost three ships—one in Hong Kong harbour, another in the Coral Sea and still another in the Torres Strait. His father, a naval commander during the Napoleonic Wars, took ships as prizes and lived to tell the tale. Another great-grandfather, Enoch William Rudder, together with two of his sons, Augustus and Dorothy's grandfather Julius, was shipwrecked near Lord Howe Island while returning from the Californian goldfields. Julius, together with Dorothy's father, later narrowly escaped drowning while sailing on a river. Dorothy's grandmother Emily Yerbury was lucky not to have been killed by the bad tinned food provided on board ship when she immigrated to Australia with her

parents in 1841. Then there were the serious dangers presented by giving birth, contracting deadly diseases such as cholera or being bitten by a snake.

Dorothy's father Frederick Julius (F.J.) Rudder was born in 1859. He married Alice Armitage Salmon on 1 April 1883 in Kempsey, the small town on the mid-north coast of NSW founded by his grandfather. The family was a small one for the time, with four births neatly spread out in three year intervals. Son Clarence Noel (Clarrie) arrived in 1883, followed by Reginald Burdett (Reg) in 1886, and Winifred Gwendoline (Winnie) in 1889. Dorothy, the youngest, came into the world on 8 August 1893. She was born at home in Kinchela, just up the road from Kempsey. I often came across inaccurate information in relation to dates, beginning with Dorothy's birth certificate which was certified by Alice. It contains an error not obvious on first glance. Alice and F.J. were wed on 1 April 1883, with Clarence born four months after they married but the certificate gives the year as 1882. The errors would continue to creep in. Many sources, including Dorothy's own death certificate, report her birth year as 1895, not 1893, and her age often had some years shaved from it in newspaper articles.

For Dorothy and her siblings, being members of 'a notable and worthy family' of 'revered' Australian pioneers was a source of pride.¹ A great deal is known of her lineage. The marriage of Dorothy's parents merged two families from very different ends of the social spectrum, one with a background of wealth and status, the other descended from 'Australian Royalty'—in other words, from convict stock, albeit an educated convict with a background in commerce. Dorothy's middle name, Armitage, came through the convict line. Throw a master mariner and an innkeeper into the mix and some compelling stories are revealed.

The Early Rudder Connections

There is an element of serendipity in exploring a person's ancestry, especially in regards to surnames. Fortunately a gentleman with the unusual surname of Rudder established the only Australian branch of their family tree and 'his ancestors are noted in history'.

The Rudders can be traced back to the twelfth century when the Rutters (Rudders) migrated from Germany to England. They were 'first noticed in the reign of Richard 1 (Richard the Lionheart) as aiding that Monarch in his wars of AD1197'.² Notable forebears included Samuel Rutter, the Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man (1661-1663). Rutter, the chaplain and biographer of the 7th Earl of Derby, was described as a grave, devout and dignified man with a gift for

poetry. These were tumultuous times, with the earl beheaded in 1651 during the English Civil War for his royalist sympathies. Fortunately Rutter managed to keep his.



Bishop Samuel Rutter <https://www.imuseum.im/>

Another ancestor, Roger Rutter (c.1687–1771), a shopkeeper, pig-killer and ironically ‘a renowned vegetarian’ who had never eaten flesh, fish or fowl’ in his lifetime, changed his surname to Rudder. His son Samuel Rudder (c.1726–1801) was a respected Gloucestershire topographer, printer and bookseller famous for creating *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), a detailed parish by parish survey which took twelve years to complete. He was described on his memorial tablet as ‘a man of strictest honor and most inflexible integrity’.

Enoch William Rudder

Samuel Rudder’s grandson, Enoch William Rudder, was often in the news in his own lifetime but is not as widely recognised today. He was a man of substance, born on 6 March 1801 into a prominent Birmingham family whose wealth came from the manufacture of brass taps, bed-warming pans and hand bells at the dawn of the industrial revolution. The motto on the family crest translates from the Latin as ‘Fortune Through Work’. At eighteen years of age Enoch ran his father William’s foundry. Being born a gentleman enhanced and disadvantaged his life in equal measure. He was curious of mind, with strong principles and great intellect coupled with a somewhat restless disposition. A great-grandson, Major Lionel J.V. Rudder, wrote *Magnificent Failure: the Life and Times of Enoch William Rudder, 1801-88* which I have drawn on to highlight his story. He wrote ‘in spite of his undoubted talents, and they were many, [Rudder] never seemed to achieve the success he rightly deserved’.³



Betts and Sons Birmingham. <https://www.bettsecology.co.uk/betts-corporate-history>

John Betts 1774-1864. Emma Betts was his eldest daughter. Betts Family Collection.



Annabella Betts nee Rudder, one of Enoch Rudder's sisters. Betts Family Collection.

This image of Dorothy Rudder shows a distinct resemblance to Annabella. On the back of the photograph, circa 1923, is written 'Anglic'.

In 1824 Enoch Rudder married Emma Betts. She came from a wealthy Birmingham manufacturing family who in 1760 set up a smelting and refining business known as Betts and Sons which recovered high values ores such as gold and silver from wastes being produced in the newly established Jewellery Quarter. (Incredibly, the company is still in existence.)

At a huge cost of over £300 the Rudders set sail from Liverpool on 27 August 1833 with their seven children and Emma's brother Vincent on the *Princess Victoria*—advertised as a 'fine fast sailing ship' and 'The First Vessel Direct for Hobart Town and Sydney, Australia'. (Co-incidentally, ancestors on Dorothy's maternal side were on this voyage

too—in steerage.) Alfred Betts, another of Emma’s brothers, had already settled in Tasmania and possibly encouraged the move to the colonies. However the initial attraction was the promise of wealth and success on distant shores via the prospect of a grant of free land, even though land was now being put up for sale by auction to fund a free immigration scheme. Rudder would father another eight children in NSW, one son being born just sixteen days after they arrived. All survived childbirth and only two would die at a relatively young age.

Rudder, the only son from a family of six, had turned his back on a well-established business in Birmingham by moving to New South Wales. By December 1833, while still at sea, his father William disinherited him entirely. Following William’s death in 1838, his mother Sarah and two daughters, Rebecca and Matilda, came to Australia on the clipper *Wilmot*, arriving in 1840.

After looking at land in Tasmania, in 1835 Rudder purchased 812 acres on the fertile southern bank of the Macleay River, the limit of authorised settlement in NSW at the time. He established a private town there which he called Kempsey because the surrounding areas reminded him of the Kempsey Valley on the Severn River in Worcestershire. In his 1887 *History of the Macleay*, Rudder detailed the pristine environment of the original inhabitants, the Dunghutti people; an environment he and the other settlers of the district had a hand in forever altering:

The Aboriginal erected his gunyah, danced the corroboree, and fought his battle; the wild dingo howled; the deadly snake crept silently through the brushwood and long grass; ... The river banks were covered with magnificent gum and cedar trees draped in festoons of climates [clematis], presented a scene of vegetable magnificence, which only those possessed of taste, who had the privilege to behold them, before being destroyed by his brother man to make way for his fellows, could possibly conceive was the Macleay.

Assigned convicts helped Rudder clear the land and erect a blacksmith’s shop and brick-making facility, while educated gentleman convicts called ‘specials’ looked after the stores and tutored his children. He built a beautiful seven-roomed home and Emma created a renowned garden. The walls and ceilings were lathe and plaster, with Venetian windows and shutters. A veranda extended across the front and two sides. At first times were hard as crime was rife; there was little infrastructure or rule of law so far from Sydney. Rudder

initially interested himself in red cedar cutting opportunities but also planned to sell parts of his estate. The first riverside blocks sold in November 1836. In later years the actual commercial part of town would develop on the opposite bank of the river.⁴



William Rudder, Enoch's father.



Emma Rudder nee Betts.



Enoch William Rudder.



Sketch made by Enoch Rudder of his Kempsey residence in 1844. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.



Rudder family's treasured Rockingham china at Kempsey Museum. Author's photo.

The 1848 Californian gold rush led to an exodus of fortune hunters from the colony, among them forty-eight-year-old Rudder and his sons Julius and Augustus. They teamed up with Simpson Davison, an experienced miner, and the man credited with the discovery of gold in NSW—Edward Hammond Hargraves.

Rudder's diaries detail an extraordinary twelve months. The 107 day voyage to San Francisco on the American whaler *Harrison* was challenging and very cramped, with sleeping berths nailed up around the bulkhead and the decks shared with seven horses, six pigs, one goat, twelve sheep and eight dogs, plus fodder. The Rudders made an epic journey

up the Sacramento and Yuba Rivers to Marysville and the nearby Foster Bay diggings with Hargraves and Davison. They somehow survived living in a tent in the depths of winter. Rudder observed the destructive San Francisco fires of May 1850 and believed they were deliberately lit. In a letter home to Emma Rudder commented 'In this country, life is so very precarious that no one dare speculate on what he may do at any future Day'. He had brought bales of moleskin trousers to sell to the miners; however a man by the name of Levi Strauss captured the market with his pants made from canvas sails. A gold washing cradle designed by Rudder arrived too late and was unsuitable for Californian conditions.

Alluvial gold had been found in NSW as far back as 1823 but discoveries were kept quiet by successive governors fearing social upheaval if the inhabitants, in particular convicts and pastoral workers, downed their tools and rushed to the goldfields. There was now a change of heart as so many people had left for California, with a reward offered to the first person to find payable gold in the colony.

According to Rudder, in California each man had discussed the possibility of finding gold in Australia. Each planned to return to NSW to search if unsuccessful in California, and 'in the event of either party making a discovery all or at least those that took part in the search, were to participate in the benefit'.⁵ The Rudders were the first to head back home, departing San Francisco for Sydney on the barque *Rosetta Joseph*. Forty-seven passengers and crew were aboard, together with cargo including 100 cases of anchovies, three kit houses and forty cases of bottled fruit, one daguerreotype apparatus (an early type of camera) and a case of drugs. On 1 December 1850 disaster struck; the ship was wrecked on Elizabeth Reef, 106 km north of Lord Howe Island and 555 km from the NSW coast.

In one of the great stories of survival at sea, the passengers headed for Lord Howe in three small boats but were confronted by two huge storms. Mountainous seas continually washed into the boats. After three days battling the elements the gales finally abated. They had navigational equipment and limited provisions and water but stocks were running very low by the time they reached Port Macquarie ten days later. Everyone was reported to have conducted themselves tolerably well, 'with the exception of two or three Port Arthur gents [ex-convicts from the Tasmanian prison] who were anything but agreeable companions in a small boat'.⁶

If the ship had not foundered Enoch Rudder may have been the first person to claim the substantial financial and public rewards which followed from being the discoverer of gold in Australia, and passed this wealth on to his children. However, Edward Hargraves claimed this honour.

Assisted by local man John Lister, Hargraves found gold near Orange at a place he called Ophir in February 1851. Rudder wrote an important letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 April 1851 outlining the similarity between the California goldfields and various districts of NSW and stated 'a goldfield has been discovered extending over a tract of country about 300 miles in length'.⁷ He travelled to Ophir to purify the gold on May 6 and was the first person to set up a tent there.

Hargraves, a first class self-promoter, took the credit for the discovery and claimed the glory and financial prizes but did not acknowledge the involvement of anyone else. Rudder saw himself as having laid the foundation of its discovery, to have been its promulgator (through his published articles and his lectures) and 'the first demonstrator of the most efficient method of procuring it ...'

Rudder did not often prospect for gold himself. Instead he wrote articles on the geographical features of the Ophir and Turon goldfields and became involved in goldfield administration. He assisted the miners at Bathurst who were vigorously protesting against the NSW government regulations imposing licence fees on the miners regardless of the amount of gold they found. In Victoria, agitation against the licence system would lead to the Eureka Rebellion on the Ballarat goldfields, better known as the Eureka Stockade.



Enoch Rudder's 'Book No. 2 with part of No. 1, 1866, Silks only', containing specimens of silk dyed from various kinds of eucalyptus trees. State Library of NSW.

Rudder shared his extensive knowledge and his interests were wide ranging; he was somewhat of a 'renaissance man'. For twenty-five years, at his own expense, he promoted the colony by sending displays of Aboriginal artefacts and indigenous timbers and minerals to the Great Exhibitions in Paris, London, Moscow, Philadelphia, Melbourne and Sydney, winning many prizes and medals for his efforts. He also experimented with indigenous tree

barks, insects and berries as dyes on silk. Some of these silk samples are held in Sydney's Mitchell Library. Many of his activities have great resonance today. In Birmingham, he produced engineering plans for removing pollutants from copper ore furnaces thus becoming one of Britain's first clean-air exponents. He was one of the first 'found-and/or made in Australia' campaigners, and in the debate of free trade versus protectionism he declared himself for the taxing of foreign goods, emphasising an abundance of resources in the country to meet most requirements.

According to Major Rudder, Rudder was Australia's first [white] conservationist. He presented a successful petition to the NSW Legislative Council in 1870 seeking the creation of designated reserves 'for the express purpose of preserving to posterity specimens of the indigenous timber and other natural productions connected with the botany' of local districts around towns, to be run by trustees, thus providing the base for the present system of managing reserves and national parks.

Although Enoch Rudder seemed well organised and methodical, he left no will upon his death at the great age of eighty-seven in 1888 and left few assets. Kempsey Villa, which Emma owned and had left to her oldest son William after she died in 1883 aged eighty-three, had tragically burnt down a year later, along with its contents and many family papers. (As a side note, Dorothy was distantly related to the well-known colonial watercolourist and property agent Henry Curzon Allport, the husband of Emma's sister, Bertha Betts (1807-1885). They arrived from London with six their children in Sydney on the *Augustus Caesar* on 1 April 1839.)

Julius John Rudder and the Chilcott Connection



Julius John Rudder, farming pioneer and Dorothy's paternal grandfather.

Dorothy's paternal grandfather, Julius John Rudder (1826–1907) was the second son of Enoch Rudder. Julius was educated at Sydney College (a foundation school of the present Sydney Grammar) where he studied arithmetic, English history, reading and geography and excelled in writing.

When Julius was nine years old, a frightening incident occurred which came to light via the website *Unfit for Publication* in which researcher Peter de Waal's focuses on court and other documents relating to the history of male homosexuality in the early days of white settlement.⁸ The NSW Supreme Court documents state that on 10 May 1836 John Mead (aka Meed), a convict assigned to W.H. Green, 'feloniously did make an assault' on Julius Rudder 'at or near the Kings High Road leading from Sydney aforesaid to Botany' with 'Force and Arms'. Witnesses called in the case included Julius himself, brothers William and Henry and their mother Emma. John Mead denied the sodomy charge (which the newspapers called a 'nameless offence'); 'The Prisoner was found guilty, and sentence of death was passed upon him with an exhortation from the Judge. Not to hope for mercy. The prisoner left the bar protesting his innocence, and stating that the charge had been brought against him from malicious motives on the part of the witness.'⁹ 'It was all a made up thing but never mind.'¹⁰ Mead was hanged on 29 November 1836.

The impact on Julius and the Rudder family, although unknown, must have been substantial, life changing and an event best left unmentioned. His name did not appear in the newspapers as the press generally chose not to report the details of attacks of this nature apart from gender and age. Kinchela, the town where Dorothy was born, along with the nearby creek, are thought to be named after the judge who passed sentence on Mead. Julius married Mary Ann Chilcott (1835-1899) on 30 May 1856 at St James Church Sydney, which was designed in 1819 by convict architect Francis Greenaway. They went on to have ten children. As noted, as a young man Julius survived the hardships of life on the Californian goldfields and the *Rosetta Joseph* shipwreck on the Great Barrier Reef during the journey home. He again escaped drowning, together with three of his sons, including F.J., in January 1872. The *Maitland Mercury* provided the dramatic details:

Mr. Rudder was sailing up the river; when near Frederickton the boat jibed in tacking, and a gust of wind coming at the time caused her to capsize, the occupants being thrown into the water. In the upset the sail fell over Mr. Rudder, covering him completely. It was with considerable difficulty that Mr. R extricated himself from the wreck of sails, ropes, sprit, &c. Meanwhile, two of the elder boys managed to

climb upon the keel of the boat, which was bottom upwards. Mr. Rudder found the youngest boy still in the water. He at once made for him, and succeeded in placing him also on the keel of the boat, and was about making for the shore with one of the lads when a boat came to his assistance, and rescued him and his sons from their perilous position. Throughout the whole of the trying time, Mr. Rudder and indeed the little fellows—the eldest of whom [F.J.] is not more than twelve or thirteen years of age—displayed a great amount of courage and self-possession.¹¹

According to Major Rudder, Julius and his brother Enoch were the first farmers to use the land on the Macleay for purely agricultural purposes. In 1864 the farm was affected by a huge flood which hit the district. His ‘beautiful orangery’ survived but crops, newly constructed buildings and most of the furniture was lost.



Likely Mary Ann Rudder's Pass to International Exhibition Sydney 1879. David Scott Sydney. Powerhouse Museum Sydney.

Mary Ann Rudder nee Chilcott was born in England in 1835, the eldest daughter of Captain Frederick Biggar (F.B.) Chilcott and his first wife Mary Ann. Her mother died when she was only three. What is known of the Chilcott connection? It turns out Dorothy had an intrepid master mariner and a naval captain in her lineage. F.B. Chilcott's death notice listed him as the second son of Captain John Chilcott (c. 1770-1829) of the Royal Navy. Captain Chilcott served during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

(1792-1815). He did not participate in iconic sea battles such as the Battle of the Nile in 1798 or Trafalgar (1805) but was successful in capturing enemy ships as prizes, often in partnership with other vessels. He was promoted to the rank of Commander in 1802. In the later years of the war, Chilcott was the regulating officer for the impress service in Cork, Ireland, the town where son Frederick was born in 1810. He organised local tough and ruthless men into paid 'press gangs' who would forcibly recruit seamen for service, or some may say servitude, on Royal Navy vessels during wartime, including the pressing of as many as five sailors from each American ship in port. Chilcott's methods led to official complaints by the United States to the first Lord of the Admiralty, Earl St Vincent in 1803; an interesting illustration of one of Dorothy's ancestors contributing to the serious diplomatic tensions regarding impressment and ship seizures in the lead up to the War of 1812 between the two countries. Chilcott senior died in Calais in 1829.



The *Phantom* at Sydney Cove painted by Frederick Garling. Maritime Museum Sydney.

From the late 1830s to the 1850s Frederick Biggar Chilcott's base was Sydney which had developed into an important trading hub. The vessels he commanded had romantic or evocative names—the brigantine *Camilla*, the barque *Arabia* and the *Phantom*, a wooden two-masted brig owned by Chilcott for a time from 1845. Chilcott's ships carried passengers and freighted goods such as sugar, coal, sheep and horses for the Indian Army between Australia, New Zealand, the East, Europe, Mauritius and California. A journey of the *Arabia* from Amoy China to Sydney in 1851 lists 179 coolies (and a Dr D.G. Jones) as passengers. The discovery of gold in Australia led to an influx of Chinese 'coolies', a

derogatory term applied to indentured, exploited workers of Asian descent, but the fate of the 179 unnamed men from the *Arabia* is unknown.

In 1838 Chilcott played an important part in the early history of German settlement in South Australia. His 'A1 fast-sailing ship' the three-masted barque *Prince George* left Hamburg with the first Lutheran settlers, who along with their leader Pastor August Kavel, were escaping religious persecution in Prussia. They went on to establish Klemzig, the first ethnic settlement in South Australia.

The *Prince George* also made a notable visit to Hong Kong Island in 1841. After the First Opium War the island was ceded to Great Britain and Ireland. The population of Hong Kong, then only a small fishing village, was around 7,500. The Union Jack was raised over Possession Point on 26 January 1841 but the formal hand over did not occur until the following year under the Treaty of Nanking. A Royal Navy surgeon, Edward Hodges Cree, included a fascinating meeting with Chilcott in his journal:

Wed. 28 [April 1841] Captain Chilcott of *Prince George* sent his gig on which we went on board, then went with him in his longboat to a village on the mainland and walked a few miles. We were well armed and the natives were very civil. We brought some lunch—ham sandwiches, sausages and ale, which we enjoyed under a banian tree surrounded by a gaping crowd of natives.¹²

During the 'awful' typhoon of 21 July 1841 off the coast of China, the *Prince George*, one of nine ships wrecked, sank within twenty minutes. Eleven crew members died, including the chief mate. Chilcott himself had a narrow escape from death 'being much bruised by the rocks'.

Shipwreck was a constant threat for mariners, especially on the Great Barrier Reef. No lighthouses guided the journey on the outer reefs, charts were incomplete or non-existent and no modern instruments or satellite navigation existed to assist in what were very dangerous journeys. On 14 April 1845 his vessel—the ill-fated teak barque *Coringa Packet*—left Sydney headed for Ceylon. On 8 May while traversing the Coral Sea, she struck a reef. Chilcott survived but ten Lascars (East Indian sailors) and one passenger died. Ten years later, on 8 July 1855, the paddle steamer *Phoenix*, with Chilcott in command, was en route to Singapore from Batavia with a large amount of mail onboard when the vessel hit an uncharted sunken reef in the Torres Straits. Everyone on board survived and the mail was saved. Losing three ships did not imply Captain Chilcott was a bad

commander; in fact by all accounts he was well-respected and competent. He was a careful man who ‘felt his position very much’. Apparently he was not the same man after this event and the *Phoenix* was his last command.¹³

Life was no less dramatic on the domestic front for Chilcott who was a successful man of property through his trading activities. He advertised homes for rent in Sydney and at one stage purchased land in Adelaide. The family lived in a nine-roomed house in Double Bay. His home was a burglary target in July 1849. Four armed and masked men invaded the house, with one of the men holding a gun to his head. Despite his disguise, an ex-servant, William Richards, who was earlier sacked for ‘gross impropriety’, was recognised as one of the thieves. The robbers got away with a variety of household goods, including silver items, but they were soon apprehended, one being sentenced to five years on government projects such as road construction. With the help of one of the convicted men, the silver was later found buried near the house.

A household servant was again in the newspapers in 1851. Following the Great Irish Famine, over 4,000 destitute mainly Roman Catholic workhouse girls were resettled in Australia under the Earl Grey emigration scheme. Chilcott took in two apprentices in 1849 including feisty fourteen-year-old orphan Celia Dixon. She was able to read and was paid £8 per year as a nursemaid. She was meant to stay in indentured service for four years but ‘clandestinely removed her box’ and left in the middle of the night. When apprehended she said the work was too hard for her. At first she refused to return to the household, even after being locked up day to day by the authorities until she consented. After she returned she abused Chilcott and the family and found herself back at court, giving no reason for her conduct. Chilcott would not take her back unless he had ‘some security for her good behaviour.’ She was sentenced to one month in Parramatta Jail.¹⁴

Captain Chilcott died of bronchitis on 9 May 1856 in Newcastle, NSW. He was only forty-six. He left behind second wife Helen, whom he married in Ceylon in 1842, and nine children, including a baby girl who was born just five months before his death. Daughter Mary Ann married Julius Rudder a few weeks later, as the arrangements were already in train.

The Salmon, Yerbury and Burdett Connection

Dorothy’s maternal ancestors are no less interesting. Her mother, Alice Armitage Salmon, was born in Kempsey in 1862 to Thomas Armitage Salmon junior (1830-1915) and Emily

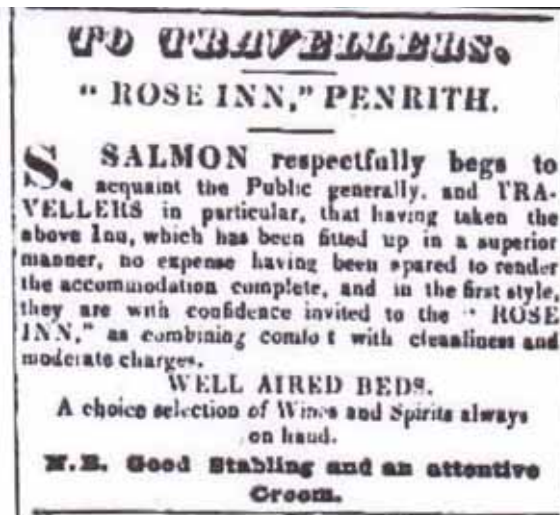
A. Yerbury (1835-1868). The couple married in 1854 at Port Macquarie NSW. Salmon worked the land on the Macleay River, experiencing ‘some exciting times in the struggle with the elements and the antagonism of the natives’. After forty years he moved to farming on the Richmond River.¹⁵ The family was later based in Murwillumbah NSW.



Alice Armitage Salmon, Dorothy's mother.

Alice's grandfather, also named Thomas Armitage Salmon (1802-79), 'a respectable looking man', was a cloth merchant from Leeds who was sentenced to transportation to Australia for seven years for issuing bad cheques. After spending some months in harsh conditions in a prison hulk he arrived in the colony on the convict ship *York* in February 1831. Being able to read and write and having a business background were important assets in the fledgling colony and he was quickly placed as clerk to the storekeeper at Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney.

He left his wife Sarah nee Jennings (Dorothy's great-grandmother) and their four children behind in England but in 1834 they crossed the world to join him, arriving in Sydney on the *Princess Victoria*. As mentioned, this was the same voyage that brought the Rudders from England although the Salmons travelled steerage and the Rudders in cabin class. Thomas was still on a ticket of leave.



Advertising for the Rose Inn Penrith. *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser* 23 July 1835. Trove NLA.

The next year he and Sarah were the proprietors of the Rose Inn at Penrith, a substantial building of fourteen main rooms excluding kitchen and outbuildings, with well aired beds, good stabling for the horses and a choice selection of wines featuring in the advertising. Sarah held the lease and successfully ran the inn ‘in the first style’ until Salmon received his conditional pardon on 3 April 1835.¹⁶ However Sarah died in 1838 at thirty years of age. Thomas received an absolute pardon on 29 July 1837 and from 1838-43 he ran a Sydney butchering business in partnership with his brother-in-law John Lloyd Smith, a habitual criminal who was transported for horse stealing. They met on the *York* and Smith later married Thomas’ sister Mary Ann Salmon.

Thomas Salmon senior married three times. His second wife was Ann Bird, a child of former convicts and notable as the proprietor of the *Sydney Gazette* newspaper. With money from the newspaper’s sale she purchased Glenrock Plains, a property of over 5,000 acres near Kempsey which Salmon retained ownership of after her death. He purchased land on the Upper Macleay River and ran an inn at South Kempsey which was also called the Rose Inn, so the Salmons were bound to connect with members of the extensive Rudder clan. In later years Salmon again took over the Rose Inn in Penrith and became a district registrar. His death notice describes him as ‘an old and respected colonist’ but there was no mention of his convict past.

Many Burdetts and Armitages (Dorothy’s middle name) show up via the Salmon’s tree. These names originate from Mary Burdett born 1737 and Thomas Armitage born c.1728 who married in 1758 in Penistone, Yorkshire, England. The family is distantly related to English philanthropist Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts. An In Memoriam notice which was

placed by Thomas Salmon's third wife in the *Evening News* in 1894 stated he was a cousin. Salmon's nephew Robert Smith (John Lloyd Smith's son), a wealthy Sydney solicitor and politician, had earlier changed his middle name from Lloyd to Burdett to avoid the convict 'stain'. Alice herself had two brothers with the middle name of Burdett, as did Dorothy's brother Reginald, and two generations later, my husband Frederick Burdett Wallace. A small newspaper clipping about the Baroness found in her belongings is an indication Dorothy believed she was related to aristocracy.

Alice Rudder's mother Emily was the daughter of English free settler William Yerbury and his wife Sarah Adams from Frome, Somerset. The family had worked in cloth making for many generations. William, Sarah and their four children immigrated to Australia on the *Ward Chapman*, a 740 ton barque which left Bristol on 21 August 1841. Emily was then six. This ship sailed as part of the bounty system which subsidised emigration of labourers to the colonies, arriving at Port Phillip on 6 December. The voyage was one of extreme hardship as the ship was very poorly provisioned. There was insufficient cooking equipment or utensils, no cook on board and very little water. The food provided was of terrible quality. The tinned food was badly sealed—canning techniques were still in their infancy and the seals were not perfected. According to *The Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser* twenty-one people were listed as having died (some accounts say twenty-two), nineteen of them children, who 'died principally of dysentery brought on by a change of diet and want of nourishment consequent on the long detention of part of the emigrants in Bristol' prior to the voyage.¹⁷ This reads like a colonial version of publicity spin aimed at diverting focus from the organisers of the ill-conceived venture. Another six or seven babies were born on the journey. Governor Gipps later withheld half the bounty payment because some immigrants did not come under the regulations and because the shippers and their agents had mismanaged the voyage.¹⁸

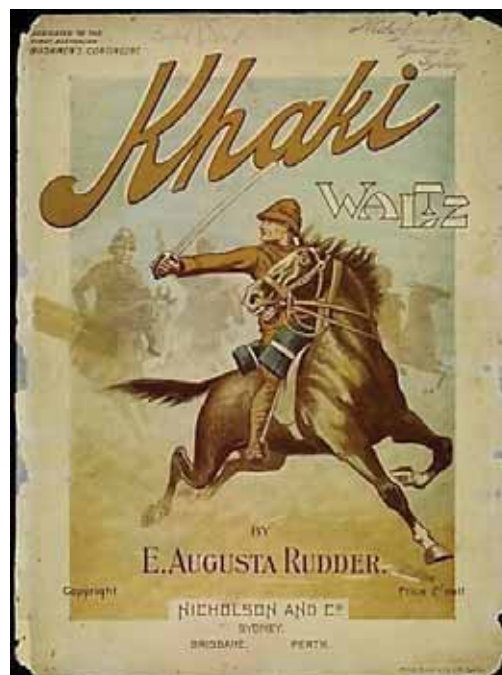
William Yerbury became an innkeeper who followed the gold rushes in NSW. Around 1865 he ran the Albion Inn on the Wombat goldfields. Wombat is close to a town which was originally called Lambing Flat. Following the infamous anti-Chinese riots which broke out in the district in 1861 the town was renamed Young after the NSW governor. Yerbury died in Grenfell NSW in 1867 aged fifty-six.¹⁹ He did not leave a will and neither did his wife Sarah, who ran the hotel after William's death. She died in 1891.

Their daughter Emily, wife of Thomas Armitage Salmon junior, died in 1868 aged thirty-two of childbirth complications. Alice was only six years old at the time. By a stroke of luck Emily had survived the notorious *Ward Chapman* voyage, and lived long enough to

give birth to Alice. Once more fate seemed to intervene in the matter of dangerous voyages on ships. Thomas Salmon later remarried. Depending on which records are accessed, Alice had six or eight siblings.

The thread of bankruptcy, which runs strongly through both sides of Dorothy's family, was often connected to adverse economic conditions in the colony. Enoch William Rudder was twice bankrupted, during a time of drought and depression in 1842 and again in 1863. Wife Emma was supported by her wealthy father, John Betts, who financed them through hard times, and she herself owned the family home. Thomas Salmon senior, together with John Lloyd Smith, became insolvent in 1843. Thomas blamed Smith who he said withdrew a huge amount of money from the business to retire earlier debts. He found himself back in the bankruptcy court in 1861.

Many of the thirteen surviving children of Enoch and Emma Rudder went on to have very large families of their own and the Salmon clan was extensive as well. By 1888 there were around two hundred Rudder descendants. In addition to the union of Dorothy's parents, there are many examples of intermarriage between the Rudder and Salmon families such as Enoch and Emma Rudder's granddaughter Lucy marrying Thomas Armitage Salmon's grandson Albert, Rudder cousins marrying each other and illegitimate offspring of the odd Salmon/Rudder affair.



'Khaki waltz' sheet music. Rudder, E. Augusta. (1900). *Khaki waltz*.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-168419670>



'Rescuing a bullock from a bog' by Ruth Rudder. *Sydney Mail* 20 October 1926. Trove NLA.

Two distant relatives also stand out for their artistic talent. Ruth Eliza Rudder (1872-1963) was a gifted amateur artist and writer from Kempsey and Eden Augusta Rudder (1868-1945) wrote 'The Khaki Waltz' which was dedicated to the First Australian Bushmen's Contingent which was taking part in the Boer War of 1899-1902. Eden's grandfather was John Verge, the architect and builder of many important colonial buildings in the Regency style, including John Macarthur's Camden Park House. It was a small world. After Verge retired he settled to his property called Austral Eden on the Macleay River and bought land in Kempsey, hence the Rudder connection.

So, Dorothy Rudder's family tree features a remarkable cast of characters who reflect the wonderfully diverse backgrounds of the white settlers in colonial Australia. Dorothy's own story begins in the beautiful semi-tropical NSW coastal town of Woolgoolga, 25 km north of Coffs Harbour and 415 km from Sydney.

Chapter Two

The early years 1893-1911

Our deeds still travel with us from afar.

And what we have been makes us what we are.

~ Entry by P. Salmon in Winnie Rudder's autograph book 15 August 1914



The Rudder family home (looking somewhat deserted) in Beach Street Woolgoolga NSW circa 1940s.

Frederick Julius and Alice Rudder moved to Woolgoolga in 1894, just a year after Dorothy's birth. Between 1890 and 1893 the Australian economy was in severe depression which may have triggered a move to the town from their farm at Kinchela. Their house in Beach Street was a simple wooden cottage with a front veranda and a corridor down the middle, bedrooms at the front and kitchen out the back, similar to many others in the town.

The Australian Town and Country Journal painted an idyllic picture of abundance:

Woolgoolga has a fine jetty running out from the centre of a long beach to a point amongst the outer rollers, and steamers, which run regularly, have seldom any difficulty in tying up. The country round about is covered with tropical trees and lesser vegetation. The trees are veritable giants, and include pines and cedars. The forests, are very dense, and teem with pheasant, brush turkey, and pigeon... [Woolgoolga] is very pleasantly situated for holiday-seekers, and, if better known, would attract many tourists. The climate is delightful, and spring-like all through the winter, and there are splendid opportunities for enjoyment. The shell beach glistens in the sunlight like a fairy walk. Within a mile of the

hotel a small river widens out into lakes, and affords splendid fishing and shooting, and oysters are abundant, and easily obtainable. Schnapper and other deep-sea fish are caught daily from the jetty.¹

For the original inhabitants of the area, the Gumbayngirr tribe, it was a different story. European settlement commenced around 1848 and by the 1880s large tracts of Crown land were leased to farmers and the Indigenous inhabitants dispossessed. The 1880s also marked a shameful massacre at Red Rock just north of Woolgoolga. After a shepherd was killed, Gumbayngirr people were shot by mounted troops at their camp at Blackadders Creek. The survivors were chased to the Corindi River and driven off the headland. By the turn of the century tribal life had ended in Woolgoogla and no Aboriginals attended the local school.

Woolgoogla's population was around 150 in 1888. The jetty, which facilitated trade in timber and farm products, had been completed two years earlier. The town comprised a post office, general store, hotel, permanent school, three timber mills, three sugar mills, two butter factories, a church, and a police station with a courthouse. A School of Arts was added by 1910. The distance from major cities, together with the notoriously rough roads which were often said to be the worst in Australia and relative isolation of the town from other population centres, meant long travel times. For instance, in 1906 a trip by car from Woolgoolga to Newcastle took two days—a major undertaking.² The fastest mode of travel to Sydney (346 miles away) was by steamer.



Little Dot Rudder—a strong forthright gaze for the camera.

Living near the sea presented some serious hazards, with shipwrecks and drownings a common occurrence along the coast. In 1896 Dorothy, not yet three, was almost left

fatherless again when F.J. went fishing six miles from shore. Luckily he was a good swimmer. *The Clarence and Richmond Examiner* filled in the details:

MESSRS. F. and L. Rudder and W. James went out fishing this morning ... a sou'-west breeze sprang up, which compelled them to return to land. While beating towards Red Rock the boat capsized in the breakers, throwing all the occupants out. Finding it impossible to swim to shore they clung to the boat. James was entangled in the furl of the sail, and after freeing himself all got safely to shore, after losing their hats, boots and shirts. The boat was eventually secured. They walked about seven miles, and reached the jetty at dusk. They had a narrow escape from drowning.³

The courtroom could also be a dangerous place for Dorothy's ancestors, both as defendants and plaintiffs. Dorothy's parents themselves faced the judiciary more than once in connection with the local hotel. In 1895 F.J. became proprietor of the Woolgoolga Hotel—a commodious establishment containing thirteen bedrooms, two parlors, two dining rooms, a bar, two kitchens and one bathroom—which he ran with Alice until June 1897. Under the lease conditions only three serves of alcohol were allowed per customer on any one day. F.J. also pointed out 'there were no blacks kept about the place' which was supposed to be a sign of good management.

In 1897 a newspaper article appeared attacking F.J.'s hotel-management skills. After a stay at the Woolgoolga Hotel for two nights in December 1896, the defendant (name not given) and his companion, Mr Apsley, wrote an article in *The Grip* newspaper critical of the way the premises were run. If this was a *Trip Advisor* review today, it would be a one star at best. F.J. did not take this lying down. He estimated losing £2 per week through publication of the article and brought an action for libel, damages being laid at £200.

According to the court records as reported in *Examiner*, the defendant's visit started off badly. The alcohol, which was served by a 'half-silly looking person', was deemed 'not fit to drink'. When they asked for a place to wash, they were shown to a dirty washroom with perfumed soap which smelled so bad it was unuseable. The men said children were crawling about, the utensils and tablecloth were filthy and the quality of the food was so bad it made them feel sick. 'One witness said that when he took off his trousers lice were found crawling about his legs. Next day he made a complaint to one

of the servants, but when he returned next night he found nothing had been done to remedy matters; he did not get another room, and nothing had been done to get rid of the vermin.’ Three witnesses were produced who said the hotel was well run. The judge concluded there may have been some truth in what the defendant and others said but the exaggerated account had turned fair comment into libel. A verdict was found for Rudder of £15 plus costs.⁴



Alice Rudder, right, riding side-saddle early 1900s.

Twelve bullocks plus tackle were the subjects of a second court case in nearby Bellinghen in May 1898. Alice Rudder became the owner of this bullock team as payment for an outstanding £45 hotel bill owed for twelve months accommodation by Justin McCarthy, a man who had a liking for liquor. Alice’s bullock team was then leased back to McCarthy. Why he was allowed to stay for so long without paying for the privilege was anyone’s guess. Alice appeared on her own behalf. F.J. told the court Alice was ‘allowed’ to keep the money obtained from board and lodging, while he took the bar trade and paid for the hotel goods, but McCarthy was in debt to a Mr. Matthews as well as Alice. The judge found for Matthews as the note of sale between Alice and McCarthy had not been registered in the Supreme Court within 30 days as was required within the Bills of Sale Act. One bullock had already died and one was in bad shape but the others were sold and the proceeds of the sale awarded to Matthews.⁵

The ‘borrowed blankets’ court case was held in Grafton later in the year. Joseph Doolan had been boarding for fourteen months at the Rudder’s hotel. He borrowed two blue blankets and a sheet and took them down to the jetty because he was going to work at the local sawmill. Alice then lent him another pair of blankets, but none of the bedding was returned. The case was dismissed.⁶

An intriguing story titled ‘The Macleay Tin Find: What Might Have Been’ appeared in the *Macleay Argus* in 1899. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather Enoch William Rudder, F.J. was at one stage involved in mining ventures. And like him, he missed out on a fortune. F.J. had pegged out a promising tin claim of 120 acres on the Macleay River but lost it through litigation. The land was abandoned so, together with a Captain Peters, he travelled to Kempsey to stake a new claim. It was eight days too late; someone in the know had already applied for it, later selling for £7,000 cash ‘without a pick being struck in the ground’.⁷ Some years later an engineer working the tin mines of the Malay States would have a big impact on Dorothy’s life by dangling the carrot of a promised financial reward of tin mining shares in front of her.

Although Dorothy’s extended family was extensive, she never knew her maternal grandmother Emily Salmon had who died in 1868. She undoubtedly did have contact with her paternal grandmother, Mary Ann Rudder, who lived with husband Julius on a farm near Kempsey. Mary Ann died in November 1899 when Dorothy was just six. Dorothy’s dogged passion for music and singing was apparent from childhood. An item in the program for Edgar Warwick’s *Vanity Fair Revusical Company*, appearing in Calcutta in 1919, offers some details into her start in show business. Dorothy said her first experience of the stage was at three years of age when she tasted triumph as the Queen of the Cantata. When she was five she recalled seeing a maypole prepared for the dance and knowing the dance, offering to take part with the other children. To her disgust she got ‘No’ for an answer and burst into tears.⁸



Fig 6.15: Jessie Pullen's concert group, 1899. The two girls at centre back are — Hearne and Annie Alverson. In front (l to r) are: Allie Graham, Dorothy Rudder (who later sang opera at Covent Garden), Miss Jessie Pullen (24 years old), Nellie Graham, and Winnie Rudder, a fine pianist (photo¹⁹).

Jessie Pullen’s concert group 1899. Yeates, Neil, *Woolgoolga The History of a Village Mid-North Coast N.S.W.*, Rotary Club of Woolgoolga, Woolgoolga NSW, 2013.

Dorothy's first reviews were for public school performances at Woolgoolga in 1899. In April, after a full day of picnicking and sports affected by heavy rain, an evening concert was held. An incredible 28 items were performed, including 'Federation' by the company of school girls trained by Miss Jessie Pullen. The *Examiner* reported 'Little Dot Rudder had to re-appear in 'Watching for pa', the vocalist, being only five years old, was much applauded'. This was Dorothy's first encore performance. Dorothy then sang 'Two Little Girls in Blue' with her sister Winnie who would later become a talented amateur pianist. A group photograph of Miss Pullen and her pupils shows a determined-looking Dorothy, looking as if she is about to throw a tantrum. Both she and Winnie, who was four years older, are dressed identically in smock dresses decorated with extensive piping.⁹ Dorothy already had a lush, thick, wavy head of hair which would proudly become her trademark.

The second school performance in June presented some challenges. Many of the children suffered from colds and a half dozen of the children in the audience 'giggled and talked during the rendering of some of the girls' songs in a manner that was simply disgraceful'. Little Dot was once again considered 'very good'.¹⁰ Later in the year a Church of England fundraising concert at St Augustine's saw the girls dressed in white with coloured sashes, with Dorothy again singing a duet with Winnie. Dorothy also sang a duet with classmate Ruby Graham in a manner which belied her age.¹¹ The concert featured a 'splendidly executed' floral march in which sixteen girls carried a floral arch 'but the maypole dance, although very pretty, could not be shown to advantage on account of insufficient room'. This may have been the maypole dance revealed by Dorothy in the Calcutta program.¹²

After 1880 it was obligatory for parents of children between six and fourteen in NSW to send them to school for at least seventy days each half-year. The small public school Dorothy attended was one room built of wood with long desks, each seating six students. For eighteen years from 1900 Henry (Harry) Barnes was the head teacher. The Barnes family would become lifelong friends of the Rudders. In the early years one teacher taught all year levels. A 'Certificate of a child being sufficiently educated' dated 15 September 1903 reveals ten-year-old Dorothy could read an authorised 4th grade Reading Book, write neatly and without errors a dictated paragraph from the book and correctly answer mathematical questions of ordinary difficulty in simple and compound rules, reduction, proportion and practice. Dorothy also showed an aptitude

for physical activity, coming second to Pearl Salmon in the girls' race during an athletics event in 1901.



Horse racing Woolgoolga beach style 1907.

The small Woolgoolga community had its share of petty jealousies, grudges and gossip but was essentially tightly-knit, born from the necessity of meeting serious challenges such as illnesses, accidents or childbirth without the support system offered by larger towns and cities. Woolgoolga did not have a doctor or dentist, the nearest being based at Coffs Harbour. In 1905 the town did not even have its own baker, with bread being delivered by mail coach.

Early in that year the threat of bubonic plague (termed the Black Death in the 14th century) hung over the mid-north coast. In Woolgoolga the Rudder household was affected. They lived close to the jetty which harboured many rats and a dying flea-infested rat was found in their house. On the advice of the police, the specimen was scalded in hot water and mailed to Dr Millard from the Health Department. The rat turned out to be either plague infected or just showed suspicious indications, depending on local newspaper reports. The doctor asked for more samples to inspect and the family was advised to vacate the premises and fumigate immediately. They must have been quite apprehensive; however no-one in town caught the plague during this outbreak.¹³

Residents gained much enjoyment from getting together for special occasions. Many photographs depict water-based activities; picnics packed in a suitcase; and horse races on the beach. Concerts at the School of Arts, a basic wooden building with a library, were held for a myriad of reasons—to raise funds for churches and the

school, to support educational lectures or celebrate patriotic events. Men's smoke concerts, 'gents only' events with relaxed rules of decorum, were also given. It cost one shilling to attend the weekly dances, and 3/6 a double for the monthly balls. People came on horseback and by buggy from all over the district to attend.



Dorothy Rudder as a young girl.



An early theatrical pose.

The few surviving photographs of a young Dorothy show a well-dressed girl with a lovely face and smile, large intelligent eyes (later photographs show them to be blue) with a petite figure and tiny waist. Her beautiful thick and somewhat unruly long hair photographed darker than it was in reality. Of the number of locks of hair kept in the suitcase, one is a rich golden brown and fits the description of Dorothy's hair.

Dorothy sang at the inauguration of Empire Day, which was celebrated by schoolchildren nationwide on 24 May 1905—Queen Victoria's birthday. The children swore allegiance to King and country, felt pride in being part of the British Empire and had a good time playing sport and letting off firecrackers. In Woolgoolga a large new Union Jack was unfurled. Speeches 'emphasised the liberty and justice that were enjoyed under British rule' and urged the children 'to worthily uphold the noblest traditions of the nation'¹⁴. After a picnic the girls played croquet, swings, skips, quoits, and rounders [a game similar to softball], while cricket and football matches occupied the boys. In the evening a social was held with the music and evening's entertainment supplied by local residents which 'contributed much to the evening's enjoyment'.¹⁵ This included a solo by Dorothy, who was now eleven.

In 1907, Dorothy's grandfather Julius Rudder died at the great age of eight-two, while on a visit to Sydney. Going against the family trend he did leave a will; his assets included a commodious seven room residence with beautiful views in Kempsey. And F.J. again had a narrow escape from drowning. The *Raleigh Sun* termed the event 'a boating accident of an unusual and exciting character'. F.J. and son Clarrie had put out from Woolgoolga for a spot of schnapper fishing, but were caught in heavy seas two miles from shore. The boat capsized then was righted by a large wave. The occupants managed to get back in but had to sit in cold sea water up to their necks. Back on shore the wharf manager became anxious as to their safety. A small boat went out to find them but had to return as the sea was too rough. By a stroke of good fortune a motor launch was at the jetty but because the waves were so high the owner had to lash himself to the mast to spot the missing boat. By the time they were found, their boat had turned over again and F.J. was in the water and his son on the boat. Both men were exhausted after two hours of immersion, and 'when they were put ashore received many congratulations upon escaping a watery grave and the men who went put on so dangerous a mission were also made the recipients of many very highly deserved congratulations'.¹⁶



Musically themed card from Alice to Dorothy. Dorothy most likely dressed for Clarrie's wedding 1908.

Clarrie was the first Rudder sibling to marry, at St Augustine's Church Woolgoolga, in June 1908. The bride, Pauline Raditz, wore an ivory silk voile dress trimmed with guipure lace. Dorothy acted as bridesmaid and was attired in a white silk dress and

white felt hat trimmed with bows of glacé [glossy] silk. The forty guests were entertained at a reception at the Rudder family home and the presents, which numbered over fifty, 'were both useful and costly'. The honeymoon was spent in the nearby town of Grafton where the couple would settle and bring up five children.¹⁷

Dorothy and Winnie both received a more comprehensive education than most girls in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century. It was socially desirable for upper and middle class girls to be taught music or undertake singing lessons. If a student exhibited musical talent, chances were this talent would be encouraged and so it was with Dorothy. By 1908 she was a boarding student at the Convent of Mercy at Grafton, sixty miles from Woolgoolga, studying music and the arts, and excelling at piano. While the Rudders were Church of England, the school was a Catholic institution. This did not seem a source of conflict for Dorothy's parents or the school. As the school records from these years are lost, it is unknown how long she attended. Towards the end of 1908 both Dorothy and Winnie received their Diploma of Associate of the London College of Music (Senior Honours) for pianoforte through the school. They both scored 87.¹⁸ Apart from being taught music and religion, during a visit to Grafton in 1910, the new Bishop Dr Carroll outlined the 'domestic virtues' of sobriety, justice and industry as key; at the same time the aim was to foster habits of independence, self-reliance, thrift and community-mindedness. The students regularly attended church and for exercise swam in a shark-proof swimming pool constructed on the Clarence River near the convent. Concerts were given at Grafton's Theatre Royal in which Dorothy may have participated. The convent also held an annual ball, with 500 attending in Dorothy's year.¹⁹

For a small town Woolgoolga had a surprising variety of churches; the Rudders supported every church event. When the new Methodist Hall was opened in 1906 Dorothy sang two songs to an 'uncomfortably crowded' house including 'The Wishing Cup' and 'Daddy Dear'.²⁰ On 7 November, a Church of England King's Birthday celebration included a gift tree loaded with around 400 presents donated by many community members. Together with Master Mould, Dorothy sang a duet entitled 'Love and Pride' which received a loud encore. A Grand Concert and Ball were held in the School of Arts to raise funds for building materials for the Catholic Church in 1907. Dorothy again sang two songs and Winnie accompanied all the performers on the piano. The choice of songs was quite eclectic. A tune entitled 'The Coloured Four Hundred' parodied New York high society. Another song 'God bless our

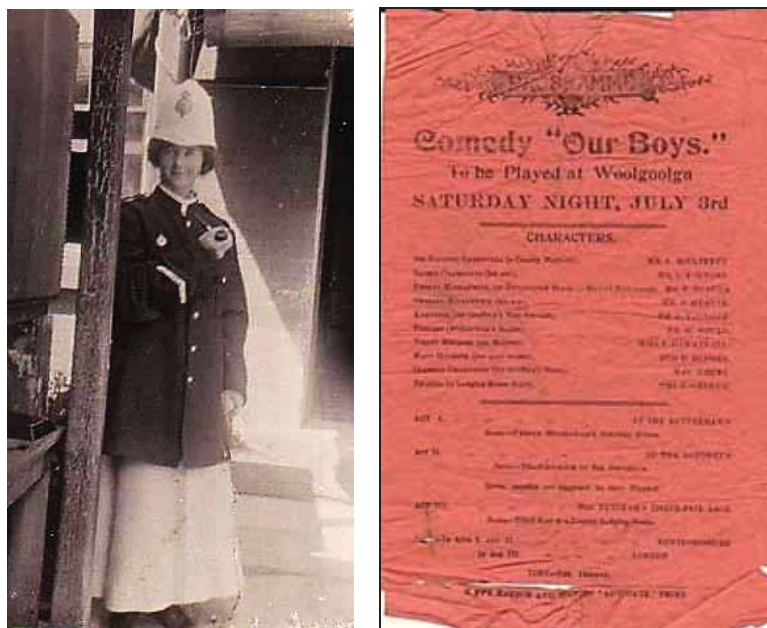
Commonwealth' celebrated the important achievement of the federation of the six Australian colonies in 1901.²¹ On 5 May 1909 Dorothy sang at a concert for the new Presbyterian district minister Rev. Mr Jones. This 'most happy evening' is interesting due to the large number of representatives from other Christian religious groups in attendance.²² Although serious tensions and divisions between Roman Catholics (often of Irish heritage) and Protestants of British background were apparent in Australian society, in Woolgoolga people of different religious persuasions appeared to co-exist in relative harmony.



Picnicking and boating at Woolgoolga.

In addition to performing and going to school, at the age of fifteen Dorothy was taking responsibility for organising other children for local concerts. At a schoolchildren's concert in June 1909, this time to raise funds for the Church of England choir, 'A grand floral march formed a delightful spectacle, forty gaily dressed children, bearing floral wreaths, going through the intricate figures with a precision of movement which spoke volumes for their instructors ... Mrs Emery and Miss Dorothy Rudder'. Dorothy 'acted as accompaniste and instructress in the songs' and sang 'Rule Britannia' with a chorus by the company. Dorothy's mother Alice performed the secretarial duties and helped prepare the children. Her 'untiring efforts were in no little way responsible for the successful culmination of the concert'.²³

Other family members sometimes featured on stage. The School of Arts which had become run down, had been revived by a new committee including F.J. as President. 'They have ample scope for their enthusiasm, for the building is somewhat dilapidated, the windows and doors being defective, and the ceiling riddled with white ants. Otherwise it is perfectly sound.' Shades of Basil Fawlty's 'Otherwise OK'?



Being part of the community meant using the local policeman's uniform for dress ups.

A rare survivor—The *Our Boys* flyer July 1909.

The *Examiner* noted the performance of *Our Boys* by the Woolgoolga Dramatic Company in July 1909 which attracted the largest audience ever to attend. The flyer survives and lists Dorothy as Mary Melrose, the poor cousin of an heiress, but on this occasion it was her father's turn in the spotlight. 'The production of the play was a delightful surprise to Woolgoolga residents who never anticipated that such a degree of success could be attained by local amateurs. Mr. F.J. Rudder, as Mr. Middlewick, kept the house fairly bubbling with mirth throughout the evening, and his delineation of the character was worthy of a professional.'²⁴ Theatrical talent obviously ran in the family.



Did baritone Post Mason care about the unuseable piano at Woolgoolga? Trove NLA.

While Woolgoolga was not number-one priority on the regional touring circuit, top performers sometimes paid a visit. In 1910 the Post Mason Company, a group of

vaudeville entertainers, was greeted with a crowded house. However the performance conditions were less than ideal:

The pictures [films] were much appreciated, as also were two items sung by [American operatic baritone] Mr. Post Mason, though the artist was under the disadvantage of having no accompaniment. The piano in the local hall has been in such a lamentable condition for some time past that it is impossible to use it. The question of replacing it is one that the committee should grapple with forthwith. High class companies cannot be expected to appear in a hall where there is practically no piano.²⁵

A new Allison piano was finally purchased in 1913.



‘This is the way Arthur gets up all the big hills—hangs on to poor Dolly’s tail—but she doesn’t seem to mind a serap [scrap]—Win.’ Postcard to Dorothy 28 July 1910.

Winnie Rudder and Arthur Wallace on their wedding day 1910. Photographer Angus McNeil Kempsey.

In March 1910, Winnie married schoolteacher Arthur Wallace at the School of Arts hall in front of sixty guests. He had earlier proposed to her at the end of the Woolgoolga jetty one moonlit night. Dorothy, once more a bridesmaid, ‘was neatly attired in embroidered Swiss muslin with handsome Malines lace’ while Alice ‘was gowned in a handsome dove silk voile, hat to match’.²⁶ The bridegroom gave his wife, a ‘massive gold bangle’ while Dorothy received a gold brooch. The gifts included several cheques.²⁷



Winnie and Dorothy with horse and buggy 1908.

Two years previously, Winnie sent Arthur a photograph of herself and Dorothy sitting in a buggy. Writing on the back she described their near accident. ‘My poor horse got startled, going through the scrub near Herd’s. He bolted with me, and it was a marvel we weren’t smashed up. Don’t know how we missed the trees.’ The girls were rescued by their brother Reg and they had to leave the horse behind in the bush. ‘I’m very much afraid he won’t be of much use now.’ It was easy to find a horse in the district, however. Discarded horses like this one would often find a new ‘owner’, being picked up by someone else, especially by the local children, and ridden around town or onto the beach.



Dorothy’s confirmation certificate 1910.

On 9 June 1910, sixteen-year-old Dorothy was confirmed into the Anglican Church—diocese of Grafton and Armidale. The confirmation card featured a pretty

image of passionfruit flowers draped around a cross, topped by a star and gold crown radiating lines of holiness. It was signed by visiting clergyman the Rev. Frederick de Porte St John, a man with a distinguished surname. A quick search reveals a baron and earls in their lineage and listings in Debrett's and Burke's Peerage. (Novelist Madeleine St John of *The Women in Black* fame was his granddaughter.) In June 1910 he conducted the opening ceremony for the Woolgoolga Grand Fancy Fair, held in aid of the St Augustine's Building Fund. The fair illustrates the strong community spirit in the town. 'Mirth and good humour prevailed everywhere.' The interior of the hall was covered in flags, palms and flowers which helped to cover its dilapidated state. All the stallholders decorated their spaces and wore fancy costume. Dorothy again sang a selection of songs at a concert even though it was teeming with rain. The fair concluded with a Bruce auction, a combination of auction and bazaar.²⁸

In November Dorothy sang three 'very nicely rendered' Scottish songs to accompany a 'very interesting and instructive' lecture on the 'Life of [Robert] Burns' by Rev. A. Robertson, the Presbyterian minister who officiated at Winnie and Arthur's wedding in March. Robertson illustrated his subject with lantern views, an early type of presentation technology and forerunner to the slide projector.²⁹



Interesting sketch from Dorothy's autograph book possibly commenting on Chinese immigration.

The George Marlow Dramatic Company 'Marlowdramas'

After graduating from the Grafton Convent, at the age of seventeen Dorothy moved to Sydney. Her first foray into the world of professional theatre was in three melodramas for theatrical entrepreneur George Marlow in 1911—*The Bad Girl of the Family*, *Under Two Flags*, and *Driving a Girl to Destruction*. It was quite a jump from living at

home and performing at local community events. By the time Dorothy met Marlow, his touring companies had already been all around Australia, including many regional centres. F.J. and Alice encouraged Dorothy's musical activities but not every seventeen-year-old country girl was allowed to travel unchaperoned with a theatrical company.

At various stages during her career, Dorothy used the stage name Dorothy May and it first appears during the Marlow season. 'Dorothy May' was a popular song, a brand of hairpins (and a racehorse). Why the change from Rudder? Maybe Rudder did not sound romantic enough for a stage performer. Whatever the reason, she appeared under her real name as well, often alternating between names depending on her activities. She used Dorothy May when working in variety theatre but had dropped this pseudonym altogether after 1927.

Following an extensive national tour, on 5 April 1911 Frederick Melville's play *The Bad Girl of the Family* opened at Marlow's brand new Adelphi Theatre Sydney, then the largest theatre in Australia (it was later renamed the Grand Opera House and later still became the Tivoli Theatre). Special attention had been paid to ventilation—sliding roofs covered the stage and auditorium. Marlow, who was not adverse to a touch of hyperbole, advertised the show as 'the latest and most outstanding drama that has ever been introduced in Australia, which ran for over 600 nights in London and was attended by Royalty ... all Society and the Masses' were welcome. The play had a successful seven-week run and starred Nellie Ferguson as the bad girl, Robert Inman as the hero, and Essie Clay as the heroine.



The Pillow Fight Scene. British postcard. Author's collection.

The Bad Girl of the Family was a potboiler; well and truly overcooked, but lots of fun too. Melbourne's *Argus* summarised the story: 'Naturally the discovery of her intrinsic worth takes some hours. Sadly two lives are sacrificed in the process and many estimable and innocent people are driven to desperate straits and terrible anguish but in all triumphs some must suffer.'³⁰ Dorothy played one of the seven shop girls involved in a strenuous dormitory pillow fight with an invading force of three policemen in a scene of pure pantomime, which the girls win. Pillows against batons? No contest of course.

Marlow followed up at the Adelphi on 20 May with *Under Two Flags*, a dramatic version of the novel by British writer Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé). The plot of the play, peppered with gambling debts; moneylending; doctoring horses; and competition for the leading man, revolved around French army officers in an overheated desert environment. At the *coup de grâce* a girl named Cigarette (played by Marlow's wife, Ethel Buckley) throws herself in front of an officer as he is about to be executed by firing squad. She takes the bullet and doesn't make it. Dorothy played Countess Olga, a minor role.³¹ The show used real horses, placed in hard-to-hide iron stays while trotting on a machine. This set up led to real life drama on stage. During one matinee Ethel Buckley was riding for her life across the Algerian desert when the horse slipped off the stage and fell over the footlights. Ethel jumped clear and was badly shaken but how the poor horse fared was not noted.



Entrepreneur and man about town George Marlow. Author's collection.



Stunning poster of the film version of *Driving a Girl to Destruction* 1911. From the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia / <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/>

Continuing with the melodrama theme, *Driving a Girl to Destruction*, by Mrs Morton Powell opened on 17 June. Unusually, the play premiered at the matinee and not at night. The main players were British stage stars Louise Hampton and Cecil Mannering, Nellie Ferguson and Ethel Buckley. Dorothy was one of twenty-five cast members and again played a minor role as one of the girls named Susie Smith.

The four acts of the play were Act I. 'A Girl's Honor'; Act II. 'Giving a Girl a Bad Name'; Act III. 'Driving a Girl to Destruction'; Act IV. 'Saving a Girl from Sin'. As the advertising stated, it had sensation, tragedy, pathos and humour blended together. It ends with a fight to the death between two women, using any available tools including knives, revolvers and even a kitchen dresser loaded with crockery. The *Sunday Times* had worries about Mr Marlow's bottom line. 'The "lydies" then get to holts and upset and destroy furniture, and finally fall downstairs, breaking the bannister in the operation. George Marlow really should speak severely to these two, the damage they did to good stage props was really unpardonable.'³²

July 10, 1911 saw the opening of *The Bad Girl of the Family* at Adelaide's Theatre Royal in a revival season, marking Dorothy's first visit to the city. The *Register's* theatre critic commented 'No one who witnessed the performance ... on Saturday night could complain of not having obtained sufficient for the price of admission. Having started at 7.45 pm and lasted until after 11 o'clock, with seventeen scenes, it made up in quantity what it lacked in quality'. As usual, the audience enjoyed the anarchy of the pillow fight which drew 'merriment and applause'.³³

Dorothy celebrated her eighteenth birthday on 8 August. The company commenced a regional tour of NSW and Queensland in the same month performing various plays. The tour included Newcastle and Brisbane and didn't finish until mid-October. On 30 September Dorothy received a small mention from Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* reviewer who said 'Other characters were well sustained by Misses Dorothy May, Ina Alston and B. Murdoch' among others. Her first professional review.

Marlow and his Australian Picturised Drama Company made a silent film version of *Driving a Girl to Destruction* with the regular acting troupe, incorporating the sights of Rockhampton such as the courthouse and local hotels. This 'house filler' was produced by Longford Lyell Productions. Released in November 1911, it had a length of 3,000 feet and was available to exhibitors for rent only. No print has survived which is not surprising, considering the volatile nature of nitrate films and lack of importance

attached to film preservation in earlier years. An opportunity to see Dorothy in celluloid has gone, but the stunning poster still remains.

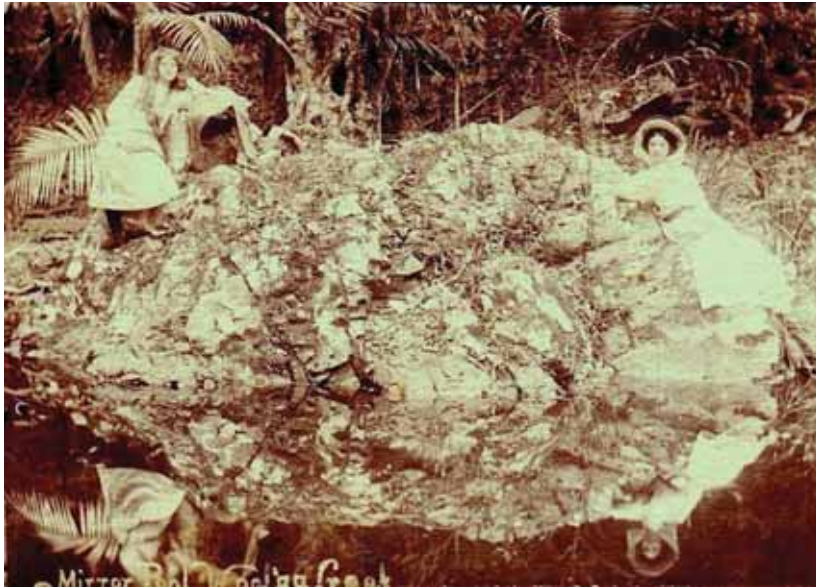
Marlow's film received a negative review from the Dean of Newcastle during his sermon from the pulpit at Newcastle Cathedral:

How could young people, he asked, be taught high ideals when they were presented with cheap neurotic representations, in which mock heroes were made of criminals? There was, he added, a grave danger to our public morality in this craze for fictitious excitement and luxury. One of the placards he saw, "Driving a girl to destruction," and similar medleys of hideous immoral suggestion, [were] designed to excite popular taste. They were unwholesome; unseemly and unclean'.³⁴

Marlow responded that melodramas were a way of teaching the young how to avoid the dangers awaiting them in the world. Other religious and community leaders were unhappy with the evil influence of the picture shows on the youth of 1912, and did not want them shown on a Sunday. The debate over what activities were appropriate was long-running. Rudder relatives in Kempsey wrote to the local papers in 1903 stating that tennis, ping-pong and betting on foot races dishonoured the Sabbath, the latter turning young men into 'inane drivelling nonentities with no ambition but to get ahead in a fifty yard sprint'.³⁵ F.J. Rudder on the other hand was more relaxed about this issue. He supported local horse racing and enjoyed a drink.



Drawing of Dorothy 'At Charm Bay' by 'AEC' 1912.



The Mirror Pool Woolgoolga Creek. Dorothy at left.

It is diverting to have a look at the Grafton *Daily Examiner* and check out the items featuring in the local news when Dorothy returned home for Christmas. Roller skating had become very fashionable. The season closed with Mr Gunderson and Miss Rudder (Dorothy?) winning a prize for best double skating. A heavy storm uprooted trees and damaged telephone lines; a rifle match was held between Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour gun clubs; an act of sabotage occurred at the timber mill with timber being placed among the machinery wheels but was discovered just in time and the the waiting-shed on the jetty was disfigured with ‘obscene writing’.³⁶ Even a small town such as Woolgoolga had its examples of anti-social behaviour.

Chapter Three

Dorothy and the Garcia School of Music

'It is the fashion to speak of the artistic temperament when excuses are being made for talented Australians who are too lazy to work in a systematic manner. The misfortune of the 'artistic temperament' is that so many persons have the temperament and so few the art.' ~ Madame Christian *The Star* 1907



Garcia Centre St Vincent's College Potts Point, formerly the Garcia School of Music. Author's photo.

By November 1911 Dorothy had made the decision to focus on her voice rather than her acting skills as she was by then enrolled as a singing student with Madame Christian at the Garcia School of Music. This was quite a switch from performing on stage in melodramas.

Soprano and singing teacher Mary Ellen Christian (1848-1941) was taught by the celebrated teacher of voice production Manuel Garcia. Although she had a successful career in London, in 1871 she travelled to Australia as the all-pervasive London fog was adversely affecting her voice. Christian was Dame Nellie Melba's first professional singing teacher while Melba was a student at Melbourne's Presbyterian Ladies College. After retiring from singing in 1894 at age 46, Christian took religious vows, entering the Sisters of Charity congregation as Sister Mary Paul of the Cross. In 1895 she taught voice at St Vincent's College Potts Point Sydney as Madame Christian. The earlier School of Music she founded in 1897 was renamed the Garcia School of Music in 1905. According to the *Australian Women's Weekly*, as a nun she was never able to attend her pupils' concerts.



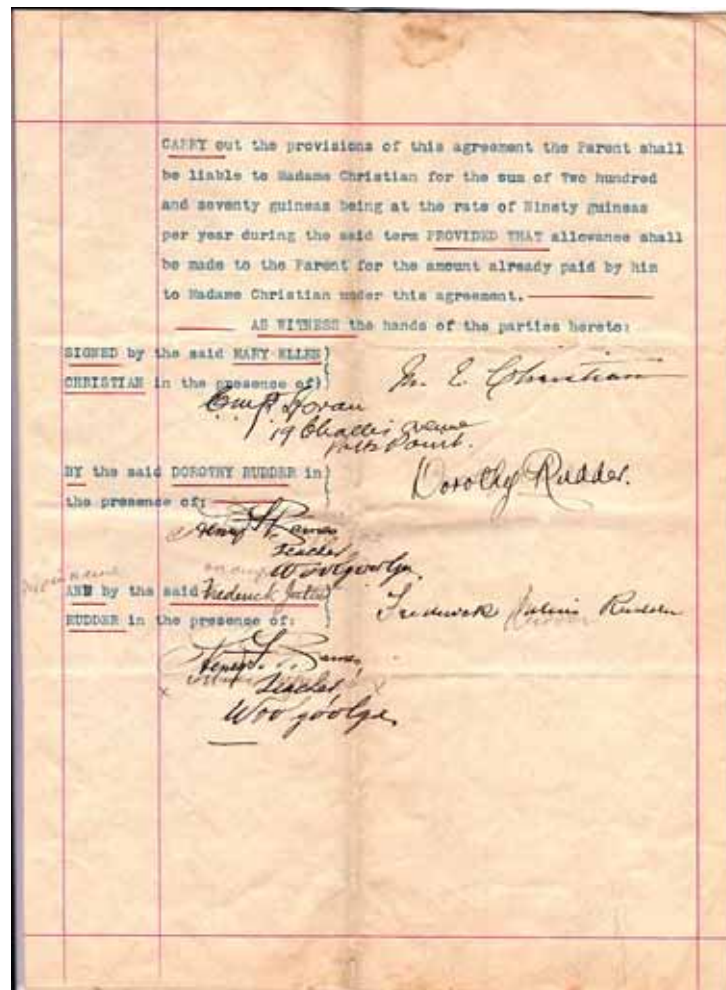
Madame Christian. *Illustrated Australian News* 1 December 1892. Trove NLA.

Madame Christian was a proponent of the *bel canto* method of singing (literally translated as beautiful singing). Bel Canto operas include those by 19th century Italian composers Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. According to Melba biographer Ann Blainey, 'Exponents of the style were renowned for their pure voices and brilliant trills and scales... The basis of the technique was control of the breath... Once mastered, a *bel canto* technique could extend the vocal range, produce a seamless tone up and down the scale and provide a flexibility and technical virtuosity that other methods have seldom matched.'¹

The Garcia School of Music overlooked Sydney Harbour at Potts Point, and consisted of four three-storied terrace houses in a row—two for classrooms and two for boarding accommodation. There were 100 girls in residence and 100 day students. A large domed music salon ran the length of the building. The facilities also included teaching and practice rooms, a recreation room, sixty bedrooms with balconies and twenty bathrooms.

As well as voice training, which was her principal subject, Dorothy was taught piano, Italian, French and German (essential skills for singing opera), music theory, harmony and counterpoint, choral singing, oratorio and operatic class work and sight reading. Lessons in English, physical culture, elocution and deportment were also offered.

A four page contract signed by Madame Christian, Dorothy and F.J. Rudder on 8 April 1913 sheds light on the conditions under which Dorothy was instructed in the art of singing. The contract was to run for three years at an annual fee of 90 guineas. This included full board and lodging during term and tuition in the several branches of music and musical subjects taught at the school. Instruction in the art of singing was to be personally given by Madame Christian. The parents were to provide clothing, cutlery, bedding, books, medicines and medical attendance.



A page from the contract between the Garcia School of Music, Dorothy and F.J. Rudder.

Madame Christian was to have ‘full control of the student’, who was not to undertake any concert engagement without approval. Dorothy had to agree to perform public concerts for the Garcia School with all profits and fees (apart from travelling expenses) to go to the school. The school prospectus, which featured images of students including Eugenie Boland, Carrie Lanceley, Kate Rooney and Ella Caspers who went on to have successful careers, highlighted how public appearances enabled

students to 'gain experience and the discipline necessary to secure the mental, technical and nerve control, without which their musical possibilities cannot rightly be estimated'.

Students were required to conduct themselves with decorum and propriety, to study diligently and 'shall be allowed such bodily exercise, recreation and amusement as Madame Christian shall consider proper'. If the student or parent breached the agreement the parent would be liable for the sum of two hundred and seventy guineas being at the rate of 90 guineas per year, minus any money already paid. This substantial sum was only affordable by families of some means, the average annual male wage being £133. F.J. had been the Woolgoolga shipping agent for Langley Bros line of steamers since 1911 and managed to cover the cost.

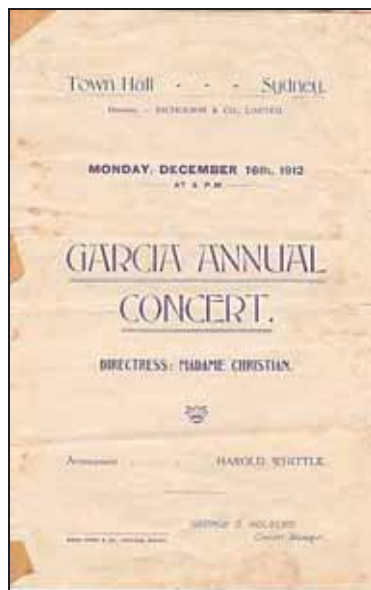
One example has been found to date of Madame Christian's opinion of Dorothy's voice. At a complimentary (fundraising) concert organised by Woolgoolga locals for Dorothy on 27 July 1912, the *Examiner* stated 'The crowded house was a worthy tribute to the esteem and respect that the family is held in by local residents. For many years Mr. Rudder and his family have taken the leading part in all public and social functions. Miss Rudder possesses a beautiful soprano voice ... Madame Christian, under whom she is studying, writes in unqualified praise of the values of Miss Rudder's voice and of its possibilities'.²

Dorothy's public-concert appearances in connection with the school varied from invitation-only musicales for Sydney socialites and music lovers; concerts featuring a particularly promising pupil assisted by the Garcia students; to end of year presentations and charity events. W.J. Grieves, a leading Sydney musician and teacher of violin at the school, often performed with the Garcia students, choir and orchestra. He would become a life-long friend of Dorothy's.

In September the Sydney Town Hall was decorated in peach, plum and cherry blossoms for a fundraising ball for St Vincent's Hospital attended by such luminaries as the wife of the Governor General, Lady Denham, Lord Richard Neville and the Lady Mayoress. Among the musical items was a duet by Dorothy and fellow student, contralto Rose Fitzgerald, called 'Ring on Sweet Angelus'.³ Fitzgerald's voice was considered by the reviewer to be 'carefully trained' and 'of resonant timbre'. By June 1913 she was selected as 'the most promising student of the season' and made her debut in a concert of songs by Irish national poet Tom Moore. Her name would later pop up as a performer in *The Sparklers* troupe alongside Dorothy in Brisbane in 1921.⁴



Dorothy 18 years old April 1912. Photograph by Johnson Studios Sydney.



Garcia Annual Concert flyer 16 December 1912.



Advertisement Miss Kathleen O'Brien's Concert. *The Bathurst Times* 5 December 1912. Trove NLA.

Reviews for Garcia concerts early in 1912 list Dorothy as a participant but no solos are noted until the 29 June concert. At the October event many latecomers insisted on taking their seats immediately, interrupting both the singers on the platform and the audience. On 5 December Garcia student contralto Kathleen O'Brien gave a concert in her home town of Bathurst NSW. Dorothy was one of the support artists or 'company

of entertainers'. The *Bathurst National Advocate* was impressed by her performance. 'For one so young, Miss Dorothy Rudder's soprano voice is brilliant and pure ... her best effort was undoubtedly Tosti's hackneyed "Goodbye" and we doubt we have ever heard such a clever turn on the last goodbye of each verse.'⁵ The *Advocate's* critic 'Ex-Bathurstian' who was based in Sydney 'predicted a great future for her'. He stated 'Good Sydney judges now share that opinion'.⁶

The audience was large and appreciative at the annual concert, held at the Sydney Town Hall on 16 December. The *Sydney Morning Herald* praised Dorothy's especially bright and effective work while the Catholic newspaper *Freeman's Journal* said 'Miss Dorothy Rudder, whose rich voice gave evidence of power, and the possession of dramatic temperament, sang "Carmena" with much brilliancy.'⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* thought she was 'a young lady with a cultured voice of richness and power'.⁸

It was early days, but Dorothy was beginning to be noticed by reviewers.

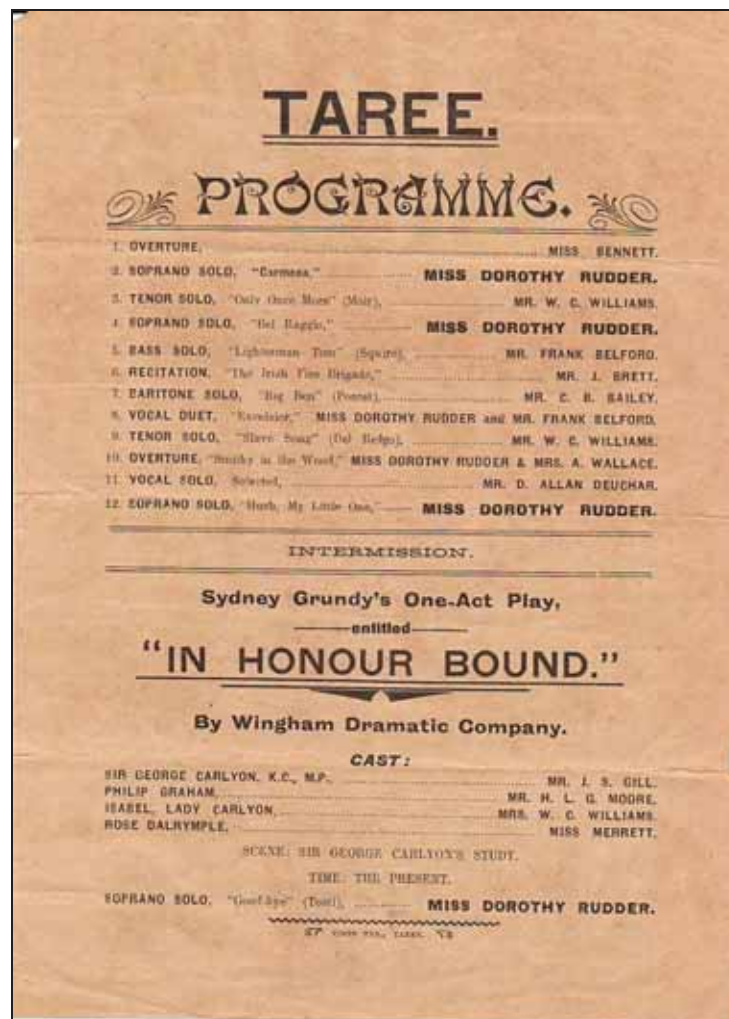


Floral tributes following a concert were a serious business.

Dorothy often travelled between Sydney and the mid-north coast in 1912, participating in Garcia School concerts and appearing at local School of Arts halls when she returned home for holidays. Although she was due to participate in a Kempsey fundraiser on 2 and 4 July with dramatic soprano Fannie Bauer (who

originally came from Grafton) and pianist Alicia Nolan, she did not appear due to being 'indisposed'.

A balance sheet for a concert Fanny Bauer gave for the Casino Hospital the previous year provides an insight into how the actual finances were managed. It appeared in the local newspaper because there was gossip in the town about a private supper being paid for through ticket sales. In this instance, the performer was paid half the takings after expenses were deducted, with the hospital receiving the other half. Dorothy's concerts would have involved a similar arrangement.



Another rare survivor. Flyer for Taree concert 19 December 1912.

More recognition came Dorothy's way. Dorothy gave successful concerts at Coff's Harbour on 16 August 1912 (postponed from 24 July for reasons unknown and again from 31 July due to inclement weather) and Taree on 19 December, both assisted by local talent. Although moderately attended, the Taree audience responded favourably. The *Manning River Times* was puzzled as to why so many local music lovers had not

attended, but several other attractions had competed for patrons. The reviewer commented:

The sweetness of [Dorothy's] singing was delightful to listen to, and her effective intonation and pleasing expression were highly appreciated. She was particularly brilliant in her upper notes, which were beautifully clear, whilst her lower register is full and mellow ... The talented vocalist possesses a marvellous voice for one so young, and as she is still in her teens, a promising career is assured.'⁹

At her vocal recital at the Good Templars Hall at Kempsey on 23 January 1913, assisted by violinist Professor Wall and local amateurs, the attendance was again only moderate and 'not at all commensurate with the quality of the entertainment'. According to the *Macleay Argus* Miss Rudder was a leading Sydney artist who 'has a nicely trained voice of a full compass. She sang "Coo-ee" in excellent style and was recalled three times.' The *Argus* added that Julius Rudder, who formerly lived at Commandant Hill near Kempsey, was her grandfather.¹⁰

Dorothy had somehow dropped two years from her real age of nineteen. Lismore's *Northern Star* stated she was a soprano of seventeen summers (and that she planned to visit Europe in the near future).¹¹ This was not an uncommon action by women in the theatrical arena, given the pressure to look young; still, it is very strange to do this while still a teenager. Was there an age stipulation at the Garcia School of Music? The *Macleay Chronicle* reviewer supplied a description of her appearance and style on stage which indicated she was showing confidence in front of an audience:

A young lady of seventeen summers who already has both feet on the ladder of fame—and 'most all who've heard her predict for her a giddy height on the golden rungs. Gracefully moulded, yet sturdy withal, topped with an abundance of fair brown hair, this tastefully frocked girl with the somewhat *petite* features impresses immediately with her stage presence and confident intonation.¹²

On 14 February Dorothy gave a sold-out concert at Woolgoolga, an attendance record for the town, with some unable to obtain admission. She was assisted by local artists including good friend Charlie Younger who sang 'Has Anyone Seen My Little Mary'.

Winnie accompanied each act on the piano. In an article promoting the concert the *Examiner* wrote:

On Friday evening Miss Dorothy Rudder ... will give a concert in the School of Arts ... her excellent soprano voice has commanded much attention in many parts of the state. The "Town and Country Journal" referred in particular in flattering terms to her vocal renderings at a recent concert in the Town Hall Sydney, and held out great promise for her future career.¹³ Likewise the Bathurst and Kempsey papers referred to her performances in those cities in most eulogistic terms. Woolgoolga residents are justly proud of their young artiste and Friday night's concert promises to be an unqualified success.¹⁴

After the concert the *Examiner* praised Dorothy's contributions 'which clearly demonstrated the volume, range and sweetness of the young singer's voice and confirmed the high encomiums that have been accorded it by the leading journals throughout the State.'¹⁵ Further successful recitals followed on the north coast including one at Coffs Harbour on 26 February, this time to a good house. The *Advocate* commented how her song choices:

Proved that the young lady could sing in widely different pieces with the same ease. The long sustained high notes were given without apparent effort, showing a great capacity of any amount of practice ... Miss Rudder in Tosti's "Goodbye" excelled herself. Seldom have we heard this so beautifully given. It would be difficult for anyone to find fault and we must heartily congratulate the young performer on her magnificent effort.¹⁶

Her status was still as a student participating in school and community concerts but her repertoire was starting to build. Musical items included Rossini's *bel canto* classic 'Bel Raggio', Bordese's 'Vashti', 'A Dream of Home' (Arditi), 'A Cossack Slumber Song' (Nicholls) and Lane Wilson's 'Carmena'.

Back in Sydney, Dorothy took part in an invitation concert on 29 May for Garcia student soprano Gertrude Corr at the YMCA Hall. Dorothy was part of a double girls quartet singing West's 'Stars of the Summer Night'. Corr made a nervous start and *The Sydney Morning Herald* gave her a mixed review. On 11 June Master Willie Houston, a talented boy-violinist from W.J. Grieves' studio, gave a concert at the same venue. Houston 'justified his master's faith in his ability to interest an audience in his

remarkable progress' according to the *Herald* but his musical career, like that of many other talented children, did not progress to adulthood. Dorothy again assisted; she 'agreeably varied the program' by singing 'Farewell' by Reis.¹⁷

By 13 July 1913 Dorothy, who had returned to Woolgoolga for the mid-winter holidays, participated in a farewell concert for the town's popular forest ranger. The Grafton *Argus* reviewer wrote that Dorothy 'surprised and delighted her many friends' and praised her voice for its range, quality and sweetness. Winnie provided the piano accompaniment and was herself praised during her introductory solo for her 'lightness of touch and expression which can only be exhibited by an accomplished musician'.¹⁸

Dorothy sang again five days later to a good-sized audience at the Woolgoolga School of Arts, supported by local talent including Winnie as accompanist. Something strange occurred on this night. The *Advocate* believed the best song of the four she contributed was probably 'A Moorish Maid' which was 'splendidly rendered'. In spite of that 'an encore was declined by the singer'.¹⁹ Dorothy was usually more than willing to respond to an audience's request for another song. Something was wrong on this occasion.

Chapter Four

The First World War—Family and friends enlist

*So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind
While just the act of being kind
Is all this sad world needs.*

~ Ella Wheeler Wilcox



Manly Beach—Summer is Here 1913. Oil on canvas by Ethel Carrick Fox, later a friend of Dorothy's. Manly Art Gallery and Museum Sydney. Gift of the artist 1934.



On the back of this sailing image Dorothy wrote 'Don't we look happy, twig me with the pipe... Don't lose this.'

Kirchner girl style postcard sent by Arthur Wallace to wife Winnie during the war.



The National Museum of Australia dedicated a centenary exhibition entitled *Glorious Days: Australia 1913*, to ‘a time of tremendous optimism, when Australians took pride in their distinctive culture, high standard of living and sporting prowess’ and progressive social policies.¹ It was the calm before the storm.

The amusements columns in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 April 1914, just prior to World War I, revealed a surprising diversity of entertainments on offer, from classical concerts, chamber music and vocal recitals to silent movies, numerous plays, and vaudeville presented by Benjamin Fuller and Edward Brascombe’s renowned touring costume companies *The Dandies*. Each *Dandies* company was represented by a colour such as red, blue or green. Other indoor activities for consideration included Wirth’s Circus which promoted fifty new artists from Europe and America, the huge Great White City Carnival extravaganza, an international boxing heavyweight title at Snowy Baker’s Stadium, ballroom dancing, ragtime music, and tango, not to forget the popular pastime of roller skating, which Dorothy enjoyed. If a person sought outdoor activity, the cricket, excursions to beauty spots, horseracing and sailing, a visit to the Hawkesbury Show and the forthcoming biplane exhibition at the Royal Easter Show were other options.² This indicates a large Sydney audience happy to spend on entertainment and with the leisure time and financial resources to devote to it.



Postcard from Dorothy to Reg Rudder.

Dorothy had been at the Garcia School of Music since late 1911 and received constant praise for her vocal skills on the concert platform. Hers was a carefree life, if the happy snapshots of her are anything to go by. But towards the end of 1913 all was

not right with Dorothy's health. In November she was mentioned in the 'District News' column of the *Coff's Harbour Advocate*:

Miss Dorothy Rudder who has been pursuing her musical studies in Sydney for some time returned home by the [steamer] Fitzroy this week. Miss Rudder's health has not been satisfactory lately, and she has been advised to take a rest for a few months.³

It is unclear what was wrong but 'a few months' is quite a long time to take a rest. Although she did return to the Garcia School after her July 1913 concerts at Woolgoolga she took a break from singing from August 1913 until April 1914. Although other Garcia students had featured in their own special concerts, Dorothy had not. Had there been problems at the school? Did she retire hurt because Rose Fitzgerald was chosen as 'most promising student' and not herself? By taking a break, Dorothy was in breach of the contract signed with Madame Christian in April 1913 but no legal action was taken by the school. Was the problem much more serious? We are offered a clue a few years later.

After recovering from her 'unsatisfactory health', she was again residing in Sydney, participating in Garcia concerts and associated Catholic Church events. This included a Good Friday Grand Sacred Concert at the Repertory Theatre Sydney on Good Friday evening, 10 April 1914. The *Sunday Mail* wrote:

It is with interest we note the promising singers who appear from time to time at our local concerts. The singing of Misses Alice Naylor, Dorothy Rudder, and Winifred Darley ... demonstrated the fact that we have some exceptionally fine talent in our midst. These three young ladies are students of the Garcia School of Music.⁴

Dorothy next sang in front of 'distinguished' visitors from Melbourne and Sydney at a Garcia School Student Musicales on 21 April, followed by an entertainment on 29 April to boost the Catholic Church parochial funds. The star of the evening was Maud Telfer who later found success in London, appearing in Oscar Asche's hit show *Chu Chin Chow* (a version of *Arabian Nights*) for four years.

The *Bathurst National Advocate* of 25 November 1914 noted that Dorothy was still a student of Madame Christian but the last mention of an actual school connection was

on 28 May. She assisted tenor Cymbert Horan, from the studio of Madame Christian, at a recital in the St James Hall. Reviews of Horan's performance were mixed but Dorothy was again singing well. 'Miss Dorothy Rudd gave a fine rendering of "The Song of the Soul" (Breil) and Mascagni's "Preghiera", with violin obbligato by Mr. F. Mowat Carter, for which she was encored.'⁵

While Dorothy and the citizens of NSW went about their daily lives, war was brewing on the other side of the world. The European monarchs, who were all closely related, were locked into various alliances. The assassination of the heir to the Hapsburg Empire—together with strong undercurrents of nationalism, republicanism, militarism as well as vested interests resulted in a volatile mix—and Europe was at war. Britain officially declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Australia was in the middle of a general election but commitment to the British Empire was bipartisan. Labor Party leader Andrew Fisher, who became Prime Minister a month after Australia entered the war, promised that 'Australians will stand beside our own to help and defend Britain to our last man and our last shilling'.⁶

Before long the pride and enthusiasm triggered by the Gallipoli landings gave way to a dawning recognition of the grim realities of war. The historical records illustrate part of the picture. In 1914 the population of Australia was less than five million. By the war's end in 1918, 331,781 of her citizens had served, resulting in 210,000 casualties with 61,519 killed. (Some historians have disputed the actual numbers of casualties; they may have been even higher.)

On Christmas Eve 1914 Dorothy appeared in a *Grand Concert* at the Theatre Royal Sydney; her first time on the concert platform with professional performers. The theatregoer could choose from a large entertainment menu during the week. As a result a small crowd attended the concert, including Winnie. Although some Sydney locals such as 'Anti-German' had been pushing in the newspapers for a prohibition on the performance of German music, the *Grand Concert* had included a selection of German songs. Flautist John Lemmone, Nellie Melba's associate artist, business manager and great friend, was one of the distinguished artists on the bill. The program also included an oratorio and sacred numbers by fine oratorio singer Malcolm McEachern, violin solos by Cyril Monk, songs by 'operatic prima donna' Madame Slapoffski and Italian tenor Signor Molinari and items by the Austral String Quartet.

Splashes Weekly praised Dorothy's performance. 'Miss Dorothy Rudder sang brilliantly, and with right effect, "Visso d'art, vissi d'amore" from the opera "Tosca"

(Puccini). She made a great impression by her singing of this number, and the audience was so persistent that she gave a recall with equal charm.’⁷ The *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer agreed. ‘Miss Dorothy Rudder ... combined sympathetic expression and refinement of style in one of the most enjoyable performances of the evening, for which she was accorded an encore.’⁸

By 13 January 1915 Dorothy and Winnie arrived back from Sydney on the *Orara*. A clip from the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* declared Woolgoolga’s pride in their young artiste, ‘warmly congratulating both her and her parents who have sacrificed so much for her musical education’. The paper added ‘Miss Rudder has received two very tempting offers to tour the world, but as this course may interfere with the completion of her studies, it is doubtful if either will be accepted’.⁹ No evidence exists as to what these offers were.

In May the family received some sad news. Dorothy’s maternal grandfather, Thomas Armitage Salmon junior had died aged 84. He came to Australia when he was two to be united with his convict father. Thomas Salmon, like Dorothy’s paternal grandfather Julius Rudder, had farmed the land on the mid-north coast of NSW. According to his obituary ‘At eighty years of age, he was successful in a ballot for a selection in the Burringbar district [near Mullwillumbah NSW], and such was his vigorous constitution that he took a strenuous part in clearing the scrub, and with the help of his sons, had the farm well improved within a few years.’¹⁰ He married twice and left a wife, seven sons and four daughters, including Dorothy’s mother Alice.

On 14 May Dorothy helped cater for a large gathering at the Seaview Inn—a Grand Ball in support of King Albert and the Belgian army. For the occasion she wore an evening dress of pale blue satin with an overdress of cream silk shadow lace. The Woolgoolga’s children celebrated another Empire Day in the same month. A procession left the school with the girls wearing national costumes representing the allied countries involved in the war, while the boys represented the British Navy. Included was a burlesque on Germany. Uncle Sam sat on a rail (symbolically sitting on the fence) watching the combat between the adversaries. When the procession arrived in the centre of town on its way to the jetty, patriotic songs were sung and the poem ‘Give’ recited, while girls representing Red Cross nurses collected money, which included coins thrown down from the hotel balcony. After lunch F.J. gave a speech referring to the duty of everyone to help relieve the Belgians and the noble sacrifice and stand of our troops at the Dardanelles, which had caused world-wide interest. A

raffle included a goat, Leghorn fowls and a cake donated by the aptly named Mrs Mould. Dorothy, a keen participant, 'rendered great assistance to the teaching staff in preparing the pupils for the musical items, which included the latest recruiting and patriotic songs'.¹¹

The war created waves of pain throughout the Woolgoolga community, as it did for an entire generation of Australians. The impact on the deeply patriotic Rudder family was especially devastating.

The pressure to enlist was tremendous but the motivation to volunteer varied; some answered the call to king and country, or feared there would be no 'White Australia' if Britain lost the war. Others went to avenge the death of their fellow Australians at Gallipoli or signed up for the adventure, the regular army pay of six shillings a day, to leave behind debts, or their partners. Duty was also a compelling factor. One trade union leader, W. Rosser, cited his British blood and his country, choosing freedom over slavery. He saw it as his duty to enlist as 'a war against war'.¹² Local Woolgoolga policeman Constable John Nugent 'recognised that there was the call of home and the call of the Empire. He had obeyed the latter because he preferred to fight the enemy in their country to fighting them in his own backyard.'¹³ Another local, Private McGuire agreed, stating that if the enemy was not defeated in Europe, Australia had no chance of defeating him if our shores were attacked.



Arthur Wallace with wife Winnie and children Reginald and Gwendoline. Creelman Studios Sydney.
At Woolgoolga. Back Alice Rudder, Dorothy, Winnie Wallace. Front Gwen and Reg Wallace.

Five men with close ties to Dorothy enlisted after March 1915—Winnie’s husband Arthur Wallace, friends Jack Eaves and Arthur (Joe) Dayball, brother Reg Rudder and another close friend Charlie Younger. Only two out of the five would return. One of Dorothy’s photographs, taken around 1916, poignantly illustrates this. At first glance a normal family is depicted standing outside their house, the children holding kittens. And then a realisation; the menfolk are missing from the picture.

Arthur Wallace enlisted early, on 2 March 1915. At the age of thirty-five he was much older than many volunteers. I imagine he discussed his decision carefully with Winnie, especially as they had two small children, Reggie born in 1911 and Gwen in 1912. They now lived at 44 Frazer Road Lewisham Sydney with Alice. F.J. shared his time between Sydney and Woolgoolga where he acted as the local agent for Langley Bros. shipping company. Dorothy stayed with her family when in Sydney; she considered it her home base.



Kasr el Nil, Egypt. 1915. Front view of lines of supply wagons of 20th Australian Army Supply Corps outside the Kasr il Nil Barracks while they break for dinner and feed their horses on the way to Maadi, Cairo. Photograph by Arthur Wallace.

William’s Pier and the Sphinx Gallipoli October 1915. Arthur Wallace wrote ‘Williamson’s [sic] Pier. Photo taken casualty corner. X [marks the spot] Turkish sniper hidden in the crevice accounted for a large number before he was located and potted. Photograph by Arthur Wallace.

After two months training, Arthur embarked for active service abroad on 12 May 1915. Many physical details were recorded during enlistment. This information was useful in identifying soldiers who deserted, were wounded or killed. Reg’s regimental number was 8990. He was not very tall at 5’3½” and weighed 122 pounds (55kgs). Arthur initially served with the 4th Light Horse Ammunition Column before being posted to 20th Company, Australian Army Service Corps, serving in Egypt and the Western Front with a possible short stint in Gallipoli. This is unrecorded in the official

service record but photographs he took show he was there prior to the secret December 1915 evacuation.

The war gave Arthur a chance to taste exotic places he never would have been able to visit on a rural school teacher's wage. The first months in Egypt afforded Arthur the opportunity to try out his not insignificant photography skills. In fact his pictures were so popular he managed to sell ninety sets to the other soldiers in camp, flattering himself 'that I secured excellent photos'. In France, military censorship would curtail the taking of images of all the sights. By this stage I imagine he was reluctant to take photographs at the front anyway.



Exquisite letter paper with 3D effect sent by Arthur Wallace to Winnie from Egypt 13 December 1915.

Arthur's work involved transporting supplies, anything from horses or loaves of bread to artillery or fodder. He may have been a teacher in civilian life but had strong bushman skills. Horses were a vital component of this work. The relationship between the men and their horses could be very close. Many thousands of war horses would

suffer terribly given the appalling conditions on the front line and Arthur undoubtedly was affected by this.



Arthur Joseph Dayball 1910. Tesla Studios Sydney.

A particular friend of Winnie and Dorothy's, Arthur Joseph (Joe) Dayball, was the next to enlist. He came from Nelligen on the south coast of NSW and had relatives on the mid-north coast. At some stage he resided in Woolgoolga but was working for the Sydney Harbour Trust as a bridge carpenter in Sydney prior to enlisting on 1 September 1915. One of three brothers who signed up, Joe Dayball had auburn hair and blue eyes, and like Jack Eaves was relatively tall at 5'8". He left Australia on 11 December 1915, serving with the 1st Field Company Engineers, 3rd Battalion.

Before long Dorothy had to face some sad news. She had experienced family members such as her grandfather passing away from old age or natural causes but this was the first time she was forced to confront a violent death. Joe was listed as missing at Pozières on 23 July 1916. He died two days later, on 25 July. A Court of Inquiry at Ypres was held in October but his death was not officially confirmed until December. Joe was a practising Roman Catholic, with a prayer book and scapular listed among his possessions. He had survived three short months on the battlefield.

The Rudders held onto a copy of a document sent to the Dayball family from Langer Owen, a lawyer and director of the Red Cross Information Bureau, which

detailed how he died. His report would have made for depressing reading for Dorothy. One day Owen would take a prominent role in her life—as a judge in the NSW Supreme Court no less.

Sapper Anderson wrote a report to the Red Cross describing how Joe was wounded by shrapnel while establishing an advanced machine-gun post in front of the lines between Pozières and Baupame. Sapper W. Allen attended to him but this brave action would cost the man his life. Both men died together in a shell hole, face down, with Allen partially lying across Joe. Anderson intended taking their identification tags but ‘was almost blown out of the hole’ and ‘shaken a bit’ by another shell. Being gassed, he had ‘only a fair recollection of running and crawling to our own lines and after that no recollection at all’.¹⁴



Reg and Susie Rudder shortly after their marriage. Photograph by Talma Studios Sydney.

Reginald (Reg) Rudder had a selection of oceanfront land at Woolgoolga and was a bushman used to hard physical work and handling firearms. In 1910 he was employed in a timber mill for ‘9 bob a day ... very heavy but not long hours’. He tied the knot on 8 October 1915, marrying Susan (Susie) Olive Harden at St Peters Church Nana Glen. Gold jewellery was again the gift of choice for the wedding party, including an elegant Nellie Stewart gold bangle for the bridesmaid.¹⁵ The ceremony must have had some

bitter-sweet moments as Reg was planning to enlist. Following the reception, the bride and groom motored to Sydney for their honeymoon. Reg signed up at the Sydney Town Hall on 30 October.

A moving farewell to Reg and seven other recruits from the Woolgoolga district was earlier held at the Sea View Hotel. The evening consisted of songs and patriotic speeches, with the volunteers positioned in pride of place on the stage. The president of the local recruiting association, teacher Harry Barnes, handed each recruit a wrist watch and a balaclava. Barnes said 'if disaster could overtake the nation it would not be the fault of those who went, but of those who remained'.¹⁶



Family photo of Dorothy, Gwen, Reg and Reginald dated 2/4/16 with a note from Winnie on the back 'Note Doro knitting socks.' Many men did not want women to work alongside them during the war as they believed they were 'not built that way' (and would provide competition for jobs). Most women were still expected to stay at home looking after their families, fundraising and organising packages for soldiers at the front, especially the knitting of thousands of socks.

Reg Rudder was private number 5401 in the 14th Reinforcements 17th Battalion, 5th NSW Brigade, Second Australian Division. He was 5'5", twenty-nine years of age with brown eyes and dark brown hair and weighed 10 stone (65 kg) although he looked heavier. The records reveal he had two tattoos on his arms, no doubt homemade; his initials R.B.R on the left forearm and another on the right upper arm in the shape of a heart.

After entering camp Reg had an appendix operation and then hurt his shoulder. Nearly ten months after enlisting, on 22 August 1916, he departed Sydney for Europe

on HMAT *Wiltshire*. The previous day he participated in a big military inspection and march-past of infantry reinforcements before Brigadier General Gustave Ramaciotti, which Dorothy attended. Ramaciotti, a wealthy man, had himself been connected to the theatre. In 1904 he left the law to become a partner in J.C. Williamson Ltd. He sold his shares in 1911 and acquired the Theatre Royal in King Street Sydney for £15,000.

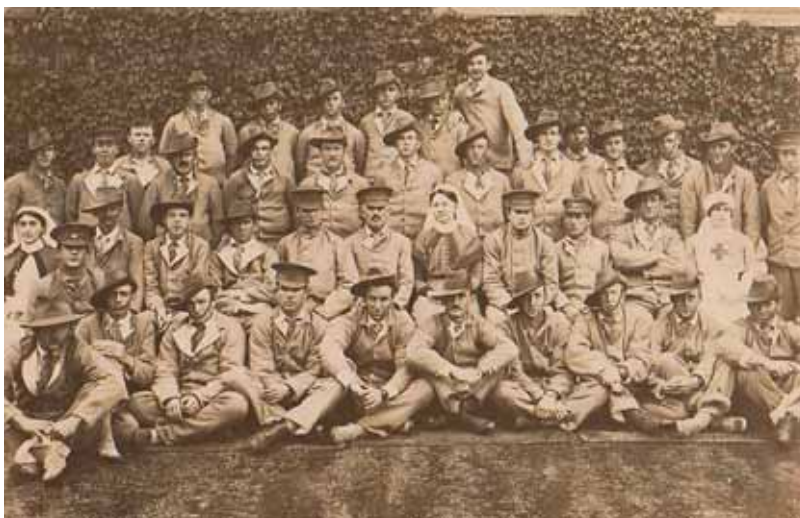


Reg Rudder's precious mementos collected by Winnie prior to his departure from Sydney.

An extraordinary group of mementos gathered by Winnie in the days before Reg departed have survived. A small cardboard watch box contains a lock of his dark hair, the last fish hook he used, a corner of the last piece of toast he ate, the butt of the last cigarette he smoked and a folded section of the white streamer which had connected Reg to his loved ones on the docks. Winnie's husband Arthur had already enlisted and was serving in France. Given the daily lists of dead and wounded in the newspapers and the losses already being suffered within their community, a deep sense of foreboding must have prevailed.

In postcards sent from Cape Town, South Africa on the way to war, Reg wrote of his purchase of ostrich feathers for his wife Susie and Dorothy, which cost 2/6 each and mentioned an uncle, Peter Rudder, who was in town. 'There is an awful lot of shipping down here mostly coal, plenty of niggers and gins etc.' He admired the town of Durban where he was heading off to see a play. 'This is a lovely little city ... I have been out to the zoo in a tram and rode back in a rickshaw.' Illustrating an unquestioning attitude of

white superiority to the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies, he observed ‘It is funny to be pulled along behind a shiny nigger’. This was the first time Reg had seen black South Africans; a very strange new experience for him, although a doctor who married into the family was of West Indian and French heritage.



4th Southern Hospital Rollestone England 19 October 1916. Reg Rudder second row from bottom, second from left next to nurse.

In 1914, almost half of the Australian population lived in communities of 3,000 people or less. Recruits from these areas were largely unexposed to diseases such as measles and mumps, and illness swept through the camps in Australia and Egypt in the early years of the war. For adult soldiers, complications from these illnesses sometimes posed serious health problems, and a number of deaths resulted. In October 1916 Reg was admitted with mumps to the 4th Southern General Hospital at Rollestone, a small town in Wiltshire near Stonehenge, and spent sixteen days in hospital. The Australian Government introduced inoculations in subsequent years, and Reg later mentioned his arm was ‘very stiff and sore’ after being vaccinated.¹⁷

Reg wrote a candid letter to Winnie from Rollestone on 12 November. ‘Our boys have had a terrible cutting up lately [on the Somme] nearly all the 5th Brigade is wiped out.’ Although he had four blankets and used his raincoat for warmth, he was still very cold at night. He was awaiting the move to France, but hoped his turn would come after the winter. Joe Dayball was reported missing in action (as we know, he was already dead) while Jack Barnes, the son of teacher Harry Barnes, had been slightly wounded. Reg noted men at Perham Downs with one eye and one arm who were kept on doing fatigue work ‘so as you can see you have to be absolutely useless before you are sent

back, not like when they were in Egypt there they were sent back for next to nothing'. He discussed venereal disease. 'There are thousands of the Australians in the hospitals with some complaint. This is the place for you to get it, there are thousands of girls in Eng[land] who are like this. I would rather be shot than chance it.'

Due to his illness, Reg missed out on some leave, and said the soldiers usually got leave one week out of four with luck. The '40 square miles of camp' at Salisbury Plains were 'miles away from any township'. It took 2½ hours to get to London, which included a twenty-mile trip by car to Salisbury costing 5/-. He described the many airplanes flying above him. 'You can see as many as forty up every day, it is nice to see them soaring about.' The food was very good but rationed. He felt he could always eat more.

In his next letter to Winnie, written on 9 January 1917, Reg expressed his affection for her daughter Gwen, wanting 'to give the little darling a big hug'. Winnie had been seriously ill and it may have been stress related. Arthur had now been serving for nearly two years, Reg for nearly six months, and any day there could be a dreaded knock on the door from the local minister. Alice looked after Winnie's small son for quite some time but her health was reported to be much better after a rest.

Reg had managed to get leave and had visited Susie's aunt in Dublin for four days. The days were bitterly cold and many people were having accidents on the icy streets. He found some of the local women amusing. 'The old Irish women are tricks they have hair growing on their teeth and I [am] hanged if you can understand them.' After five days enjoying the sights in London, with very little money in his pocket, Reg returned to camp. An undated postcard sent from Plymouth included the fatalistic note 'take care of these photos [they] will be something to remember me by'.

What was Dorothy doing while Reg was serving overseas in 1916? F.J. was no doubt covering her living expenses as only one (amateur) performance can be found for her—a Grand Fete in Sydney entitled *A Street in Cairo* in aid of the Passionist Fathers' Monastery, inspired by the soldiers fighting in the Middle East. The event ran for an incredible ten days in April with the Town Hall turned into an Arabian-Nights style Egyptian city. Half-hour concert performances were part of the spectacular, as was the raffle of a car worth £325.¹⁸

Chapter Five

The First World War—Soldiering on through heartache



Portrait of Alice Rudder by Ideal Portait Co. and Dorothy Rudder's portrait by Zara Panel.
These two contrasting photographs accompanied Reg Rudder to the front. Dated 20/8/16.

1917 was the *annus horribilis* for the Rudder family and it began in January with a serious motor-car accident involving Clarrie. He was driving another person's touring car with four passengers on the Glen Innes road, twenty-seven miles from Grafton. They saw a horseman, Mr A.G. Winkler, ahead. Clarrie moved to the side of the road to let the horseman pass but the horse shied, throwing Winkler into the middle of the road. Clarrie swerved; the car hit a post and overturned into a creek. Everyone managed to extricate themselves except for H.G. Lequesne, a grazier, who died at the scene. An inquiry into the accident later returned a verdict of accidental death. Winkler later died in hospital.¹

Reg finally proceeded to France on SS *Invicta* on 15 February 1917 and was marched in to the huge Étaples Army Base Camp in Picardy. On 25 March he rejoined the 17th Battalion. He was thirty-one years old.

Dorothy, now 23, was travelling often in 1917. On 22 January the *Tweed Daily* noted 'Miss Dot Rudder' had visited Murwillumbah the previous week to see her relatives on the Salmon side, and was then journeying on to Brisbane.² On 15 February

she was 'a decided acquisition' at a fundraiser for the Yeronga Red Cross, which was the beneficiary of a concert given by the *Harry Collins Minstrel Company* consisting of amateur artistes who appeared at patriotic and charitable events. Dorothy's 'artistic rendering' of 'Here's to Love' won her an ovation. This concert was followed by another at White City for the benefit of the soldiers in camp.

Dorothy sailed back to Sydney on TSS *Canberra* on 29 March. No doubt her skills as a singer and pianist were welcomed on board. The entertainment consisted of a Grand Concert 'held at sea' in aid of the Overseas Soldiers Tobacco Fund. On the journey she sang selected songs and during the second act acted as accompanist. Even Captain R.F. Douton took the opportunity to offer up a tune.

A small village in northern France called Bullecourt is of great significance in Australian military history and for Dorothy personally. Reg Rudder's battalion fought there at both at the first and second battles in April and May. These awful battles were a prime example of what is meant by the phrase 'war of attrition'. At First Bullecourt the 4th and 12th Brigades suffered over 3,300 deaths and injuries and 1,170 soldiers were taken prisoner. The 4th Brigade's casualties were especially devastating—2,339 out of 3,000 men engaged; the heaviest ever suffered in any one action by an Australian brigade. The 2nd Division relieved the 4th Division on 13 April with Reg's 17th Battalion suffering 181 casualties during the course of this action.

F.J. received a letter dated 23 April which would be of special significance. Reg was a changed man now, having experienced the heat of battle and killing at least one German soldier. He was also now a father:

My Dear Dad

Just a few lines to let you know I am well and are at present just behind the lines have had one go at the Hunks and knocked them rotten, don't think the war can last much longer we are giving them hell with our artillery and big guns ... We are all busy scraping the French mud off our clothes ... I saw Arthur [Wallace] a couple of days ago, he is only a few miles from me. Had a cable from Susie yes [yesterday] saying she had a son and both doing well. I can tell you I am relieved somewhat ... I have a few souvenirs I got off a Hunk I dressed he was badly wounded I don't think he got over it. Does not matter much ... Well Dad no news to write about so will wish you good bye this time

hoping this will find you in health and trust in God that he will bring me safely home.

from your ever loving effect.[ionate] son

Though Reg was feeling optimistic about the war's progress, the lessons of the first battle had not been learned by his leaders. Another ill-judged attempt was made to break the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt, this time with the participation of the 5th and 6th Brigades. The offensive commenced on 3 May on a sixteen-mile front. Reginald Burdett Rudder died on this day, courageously facing intense machine-gun fire, tangles of barbed wire and untold horrors.

Despite heavy losses, the Australians captured a section of the Hindenburg Line. The holding of it against numerous counter-attacks was a great achievement and did not go unnoticed in the British and French Press at the time. Not surprisingly, Australian troops developed a deep distrust regarding the abilities of their commanders. Bullecourt, a town of little strategic importance, was taken on 17 May. The Allied line had advanced just one kilometre and the town was in ruins.

On 19 May F.J. received a private telegram informing him of Reg's death. He sent a message to Base Records in Melbourne requesting confirmation. An urgent return telegram dated 20 May stated 'No report casualty Private Rudder. Forward private cable will investigate if warranted.' The document has 'Cancell. Later information required.' written across it in pencil. The news of his death was confirmed to Susie a few days later via a dreaded knock on her door by the local minister.

A death notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 May read:

He answered to his country's call

For sons to guard her shores

In honour's cause he gave his all,

And man can do no more.

Deeply mourned. Inserted by his loving brother, Clarrie, and sisters Winnie and Dorothy.³

Grafton's *Daily News* described Reg as a splendid physical specimen, in the prime of manhood with an unassuming manner and straightforward in character. 'Fate claimed one more brave life, unselfishly given for King and country and for all those traditions so dear to the British nation.'⁴

Susie was sent the standard commemorative materials—British War Medal, Victory Medal, Memorial Plaque and Scroll and a booklet ‘Where the Australians Rest’. The only personal mementos she received were Reg’s identity discs. She wrote to Victoria Barracks Melbourne ‘I wish to know if there has been anything else of his, and if so please let me know if postage is needed. I would be only too pleased to pay for same.’⁵ A war widow’s pension of £2/3/- per fortnight was granted, with an extra 20/- for her son Ralph Reginald who was born on 28 March, just five weeks before Reg was killed. Reg has no actual grave and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Wall to the Missing, France. This memorial was of special significance to Dorothy, who attended the official unveiling in 1938.

Dorothy’s suitcase contains a mystery in relation to Reg’s effects—a photograph of Dorothy highlighting her abundant hair and her décolleté in an off the shoulder evening dress together with a much more sedate image of mother Alice in high collared dress; both have their name and address written on the back plus ‘Private R.B. Rudder 5401 14th of 17 batt 5th Brigade on active service abroad. In case this photo is lost kindly address to the above.’ They may well have been found on Reg when he died and returned to the family, but are not indicated in the war records. Both photos have water stains but other materials in the suitcase which are not related to the war also have some water damage.



Dorothy and Charlie Younger.



Postcard inscribed on back 'Yours lovingly Younger Bros Les Charlie & Ernie'. Photograph by Asti Studios Sydney.

A very close friend of Dorothy's who liked to perform with her at local concerts was handsome grocer Charlie Younger who was said to be in love with her. Charlie, service number 6386, and his brothers Leslie 6385 and Ernest 6387 all enlisted on the same day, 28 April 1916, and all served in the 3rd Battalion. At their farewell they were presented with 154 packets of cigarettes.



Postcard sent by Charlie Younger to Dorothy 1916. The pack folds out to reveal a set of images.



The Australian Boomerangs postcard 1916. Concerts and music were important morale boosters for the troops. Charlie Younger and Reg Rudder possibly saw them perform at Wareham camp. Author's collection.

A postcard Charlie sent Dorothy on 31 October 1916 described the situation in the army camp at Wareham. After catching the train from Plymouth, the soldiers marched from the town to the camp in heavy rain. The European winter was exceptionally cold, and they were living in huts supplied with heaters. Although given the regulation four blankets each which kept them warm, 'the cold wind almost cuts us in two outside'. Reg Rudder was nearby but as they were not allowed out of the town Charlie couldn't look him up.

In an awful coincidence, Charlie Younger was wounded in the shoulder and abdomen at Bullecourt on 3 May 1917, the same day Reg Rudder was killed. From a Red Cross report we learn another soldier, J.H. Smith, witnessed Charlie leaving the trenches on a bombing raid. Smith said he fell back after being hit by a bomb (he was actually hit by bullets) but told his brother 'Never mind me. I'll be alright.' He was taken to the dressing station at Bapaume, dying two days later. Smith said Charlie was 'one of the best lads in the company'.⁶ His brother Leslie was wounded in the thigh, knee and arm on the same day, and gassed in September 1918. He survived the war, as did Ernest. Among Charlie's effects were an identity disc, two testaments, book of views, razor in case, small mirror, fountain pen, wallet, letters, cards, a photo and writing wallet. Within two days Dorothy had lost her brother and the man who cared deeply for her.



Jack Harold Eaves.

Among Dorothy's possessions are two photographs of a man called 'Jack'. In one he wears a soldier's uniform and is seated in a striped canvas deck chair. Jack appears to be quite young. His hands are clenched. His jacket looks a size too big. Jack's look is one of melancholy but his smile is sweet. Dorothy has written a comment on the back playfully alluding to a flirtatious connection between photographer and subject:

Jack Which is the best girl you are thinking of that is making the nice boy look so good and cute?

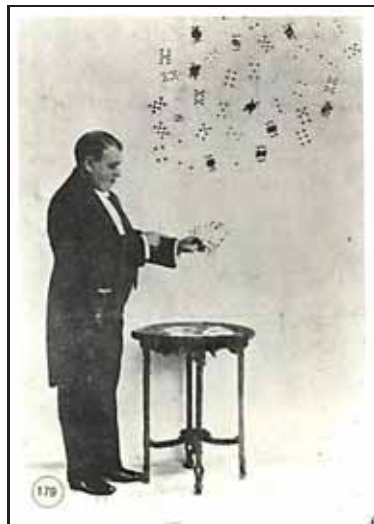
Jack's identity was puzzling. However, strong evidence, including an image of him in *The Queenslander* from October 1916, suggests this was local boy Jack Harold Eaves from Corindi. Although his attestation papers stated he was eighteen, he was a boy soldier, enlisting in July 1916 in the 21st Reinforcements of the 9th Battalion when he was only fifteen. This fits with the youthfulness of the soldier in the photo. For any males enlisting between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, parental consent was required. Anyone under age could not legally enlist but somehow he managed it. Although Jack was 5'8" tall, he only weighed 116 pounds (53 kg).

Jack saw some serious action in both France and Belgium, receiving a gunshot wound to the hand and suffering the effects of a gas attack. In September 1918 he returned to Australia as the army authorities had finally discovered he was under age. At the welcome home, which was also his eighteenth birthday, the fact that he enlisted aged fifteen was mentioned. So his age was not a secret in the district. F.J. Rudder, a

fine public speaker, gave a speech stating he had known Jack since he was a tiny boy in knickers and believed his 'inherent pluck' was his outstanding quality. Jack responded by saying it was harder to make a speech to the gathering than going over the top in the trenches!

Dorothy returns to Brisbane and appears with Malini

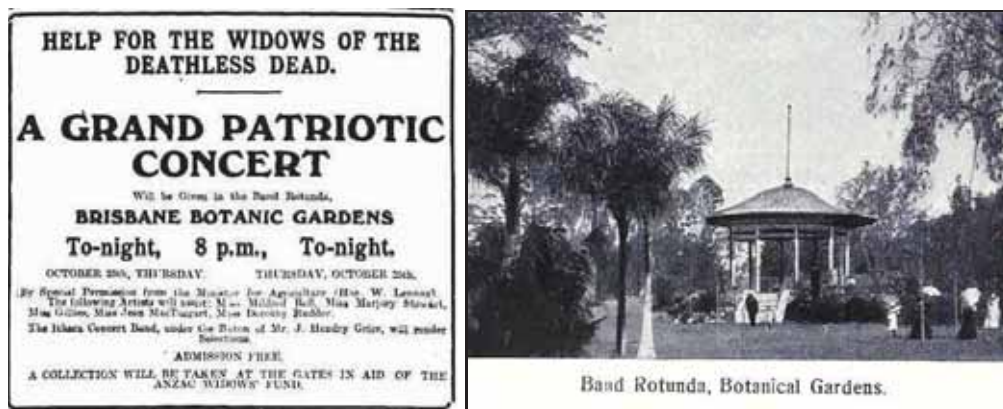
The grief experienced by Dorothy, her parents, siblings, Reg's wife Susie, and the entire Woolgoolga community must have been massive. The trajectory of their lives had changed irrevocably. So many men killed fighting for an 'honourable' cause, so many young lives cut short, so much potential lost. Our generation can only speculate what they went through, and if they ever questioned their belief that participating in the war was their patriotic duty.



Max Malini. State Library of Victoria.

But this did not mean all day-to-day activity stopped. The show must go on as the cliché says. Dorothy left Sydney for Brisbane late in June again by TSS *Canberra*, this time accompanying the grand concert acts on piano. She spent a few months in Brisbane where she appeared with Max Malini (1873-1942), a famed New York magician by way of Poland who toured the globe performing for presidents, monarchs and millionaires. As he said 'You've got to mix with people with money if you want to make money'. He appeared all over Australia and New Zealand during the war years, often at fundraisers for the war effort. Dorothy contributed selected musical numbers to his entertaining show in the dining room of Brisbane's Lennon's Hotel on 10 October.

Termed the ‘Napoleon of Magicians’ (and ‘the little tubby magician’ by the *Bulletin*) due to his lack of stature, Malini was master of misdirection and close up magic, used very few props and had no assistant; his skills are still respected by magicians today. Malini could conjure up a big block of ice from under a hat. In another act he borrowed two £1 notes from an audience member; one was found in the centre of a lemon and another in the cigarette the man was smoking. He could also turn roasted chickens into real live flapping birds. He liked to mystify and play gags on people around town too. While in a Brisbane drapery shop ‘he had a girl very much worried by proving to her that she had sold him eggs and not cotton. What could the poor girl say when he produced the eggs!’⁷



Advertisement for Grand Patriotic Concert. *Brisbane Courier* 25 October 1917. Trove NLA.
Band Rotunda, Brisbane Botanic Gardens.

Dorothy was one of the ‘leading artistes’ on 25 October when a patriotic vocal and instrumental concert was held in the rotunda at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens for the Anzac Widows’ Fund. A large crowd attended, with the *Daily Mail* declaring Dorothy, who sang ‘Carmena’, in excellent voice. On 29 October she volunteered her services in connection with a Liberty Loan subscription rally at His Majesty’s Theatre. The turn-up was not large; the stalls were fairly full but only a smattering of patrons was seated in the dress circle. Among the speechmakers was Queensland Premier Ryan who advocated ‘gold and silver bullets’ for the cause. Dorothy arrived back in Sydney on the *Cooma* on 16 November.

The Conscription Issue

‘Conscription must come’ reads the headline in the *Brisbane Courier* on 7 November 1917. Australia and South Africa were the only two countries with purely volunteer

armies serving overseas. The massive loss of life affected the capacity to provide manpower for the war effort and the number of men volunteering to enlist continued to fall. The issue of conscription became a topic of fierce debate, dividing the community and the governing Labor Party. Referenda held in October 1916 and again in December 1917 failed to win the electorate's support. Reg Rudder commented on the issue in his 12 November 1916 letter to Winnie. 'I guess you voted yes nearly all the soldiers voted no I believe yes was beaten by thousands. I am afraid an act of parliament will have to be passed to bring in conscription they will have to do it for how will the Run [supply of soldiers] be kept up.'

F.J. Rudder was an ardent conscriptionist. Dorothy supported the 'Yes' vote for conscription, (although there is no record of her registering on the NSW electoral rolls, even though women over twenty-one could vote in federal elections after 1902), as evidenced by the musical items she contributed to a pro-conscription meeting while in Brisbane featuring Sir William Irvine, a staunch conscriptionist in the House of Representatives. Her brother and two good friends had lost their lives on the Western Front. Sending more soldiers to fight in the war was the right thing to do; other men should be conscripted to support the boys at the front thus giving meaning to their sacrifice and bringing the war to a swifter end.

Arthur Wallace in France

While travelling from Egypt to France in April 1916 Arthur wrote in his notebook about his regular bouts of seasickness and the fear of submarine attack. Arthur found 'Abbeville [to be a] grand city, cheaper than Egypt. All along our journey everyone flocked outside to see the wild Australians, girls/women and children waved and threw kisses galore and all were after souvenirs.'

At different times Arthur grazed the horses on the Somme riverbank, went for a swim in the river himself and saw Red Cross barges pass by with wounded men. Sleeping without blankets in a barn led to influenza and an 'aeroplane dropped 3 bombs about 400 yards from camp'. At Erquinghem near Armentieres he saw several shells explode, killing children and a soldier from the 14th Battalion. He went to the battery and on 3 May 1916 he wrote '7 shells passed overhead and landed in Erquinghem not much damage'. This area was known colloquially as 'the nursery'. From mid-1916 he stopped writing in his notebook.

Both Reg Rudder's and Arthur's units participated in the Second Battle of Bullecourt. Reg had written home that they had met up in April 1917 and it was certainly Arthur who sent the private telegram regarding his death.



Postcards sent by Arthur Wallace to Winnie, daughter Gwen and son Reggie. He wrote on the back of one postcard 'Here we do not get holidays, have to work all day Sunday.'



On the back of these undated postcards by Achille Mauzan Arthur Wallace wrote that he had scored a 'tres bon' billet. He added 'Big things are doing now. We all hope that this will be the last year of war. How anxious I am to get back home to you and the dear kiddies. Give them hugs and kisses from me.'

Arthur kept up regular correspondence with Winnie and the children throughout the war. The topics were often domestic in nature. After nearly four years of Arthur's absence, Winnie was feeling the stress even more. In August he wrote to daughter Gwen 'Cheer mother up and tell her if she cries too much she will not get fat and strong to meet me when I return'.

On 4 October 1918 Arthur sent a postcard from Paris regarding daughter Gwen and some dance lessons.

I received three letters from you a couple of days ago, also a blowing up in one re Gwen being taught dancing for the stage. You yourself informed me of the matter and no one else has ever mentioned it to me. I think that Reels, Strathspeys [a style of Scottish dance] etc are very pretty and would love to have Gwen taught these but stage-dancing, ballet girl stunts not while I live. I hope also to get a Highlands costume for Gwen and perhaps Reg also and if she wished to compete in dancing competitions she would receive every encouragement from me.

Arthur then went on to suggest that Winnie buy him a new suit for he wanted to get out of khaki as soon as possible when he returned home. His comments regarding the 'ballet girl stunts' indicate his probable attitude towards Dorothy's pursuit of a stage career. Gwen had just turned six, hardly old enough to run off and join the circus.

Dance was her obsession and she would later be a dance teacher in northern NSW, performing with Dorothy on stage at community concerts and teaching entertainer Peter Allen early in his career.

Towards the very end of the war, Arthur Wallace recommenced writing in his notebook, with these special words 'In Paris for Armistice'. Being in Paris to celebrate the war's end on 11 November 1918 was an extraordinary experience, or as Arthur said 'joy unspeakable'.

Dear Wife,

Am in the thick of the peace rejoicings and as you may guess there is something doing. Today colonial troops (mostly Aussies) drove up and down the Boulevards in drags flag wagging, yelling, cheering etc and received a royal reception from the people who were out in the thousands. Cinema pictures were taken and if they appear in Sydney look for me on foot board of second dray. I shook hands with hundreds today.

Love from A.W.

Unlike Jack Dayball, Reg Rudder, Charlie Younger, and two of his mates in his own unit, Arthur had made it safely through the war, commenting to son Reggie 'no more wondering if the Huns had got your Dad'. He returned to Australia via HMAT *Kashmir*, disembarking in Melbourne on 23 April 1919, finally being discharged from the Army on 1 July. What he experienced at the front was unimaginable. The experience of war had a profound effect on his life, and on his little family (he and Winnie had no more children after he returned) but being an older soldier seemed to be an advantage, as did a lasting belief that enlisting was the right thing to do.



Woolgoolga District Memorial with names of Reg Rudder, Charlie Younger and Jack Dayball inscribed.

For the Rudders the deep pain of losing Reg continued. In September 1921, two German machine guns, captured by the 17th Battalion in 1918, were handed over to the community by the War Trophies Department. ‘An apology was read from Mr. F.J. Rudder who felt unequal to the strain of witnessing the ceremony, which would bring back sad recollections of the supreme sacrifice made by his youngest son at Bullecourt.’⁸ At an earlier soldiers’ welcome home F.J. pointed out that he was denied the privilege of welcoming his own son home.⁹

Nine Woolgoolga recruits died in the First World War. ‘Murrawombie’, a letter writer who attended an Anzac service in 1940, wrote ‘I stood by the obelisk, surmounted by a broken pillar of stone, that commemorates the boys who enlisted from here so long ago. A faint grey streak of the dawn is lighting up the eastern sky, and I can read the names of nine of those brave lads who are sleeping “over there” [including] Charlie Younger. A handsome lad with a smile like a sun god, loved by all who knew him. Reginald Burdette Rudder, much the same sort. He never saw his son, who was born shortly after he left for the front.’¹⁰



Reflecting on the future? Note the photo on dresser, probably of King George V and Queen Mary.

Back home in Sydney, July 1918 saw Dorothy volunteering her talents for the Railway and Tramway Musical Society who were raising funds for the Civil

Ambulance Brigade. In their six-night season of Lionel Monckton's popular comic opera *The Quaker Girl*, she 'appeared to advantage' and was 'delightful' in the role of Princess Mathilda, the exiled Bonaparte princess, while Hilda Cripps was also 'delightful' in the lead role of Prudence. The Society had twenty-one members on active service, with one killed and three making ammunition in England.

After a brief holiday back in Woolgoolga, Dorothy sailed to Sydney on the *Fitzroy* on 27 July. The regular trips she took back home were potentially expensive, but she no doubt travelled gratis or at least cheaply due to F.J.'s job with Langley Bros steamers.



Champion Tobacco postcard sent to Dorothy November 1918.

A puzzling postcard was sent to Dorothy from a Mr V. Pinard? (the writing is difficult to decipher) dated 19 November 1918 and posted either from Melbourne or Sydney. The front depicts a tattered Union Jack, with associated patriotic poem, presented by Champion Tobacco.

Dispensary AMC [Army Medical Corps]

Showgrounds

19.11.18

My Dear Little Dorothy Dot

Have been thinking a great deal about you lately: it was good of you to look me up so often: you know how glad I am to see you any time. You have asked me

very often for a photo: to promise you one and I would not promise: Do so now and I am pleased to believe you want one. Some folk want photos just to have them, but when two persons realise what might have been and when one props to the other that she more than likes him, there is nothing too much to give the dear little heart that would gladly beat for him. My dear girl, you will have a good photo of me and I will know you will cherish it and it will be good for me to know that you will sometimes look at me and remember me. I would much like a good photo of you, normally posed, not like the one I have. I may see you Sat. or Sunday evening. Goodnight Dorothy Dot and God bless you dear little heart and for you all that you could wish for. With fond memories.

Mr. V. Pinard Roy¹¹

Just prior to the Armistice, Lismore's *Northern Star* announced that Dorothy was about to make the leap from amateur to professional in a very exciting manner. 'Miss Dorothy Rudder, of Woolgoolga, has been engaged by a concert company for an Eastern tour, embracing India, Burmah, Ceylon, Japan, and the Phillipines [sic].' Dorothy was embarking on a theatrical tour of the East, but the list of countries to be visited was wide of the mark. She would soon experience a part of the world very different from the country she grew up in, but Burmah and Japan were not on the list of destinations.¹²



Photograph kept by Dorothy Rudder from her theatrical tour of the East. 1919.

Chapter Six

Edgar Warwick's *Vanity Fair* Tour of the East 1918-19



Dorothy's amazing head of hair. Photograph by Talma Studios Sydney.

Dorothy May the charming little singing soubrette of the “Vanity Fair” Company, has the finest head of hair of any living woman of her size. In case of need she could wrap herself up in it and sleep warmly. Once for a test she hid three callers [visitors] and a pet Pekinese in it, and nobody guessed they were in the room. She always has difficulty in getting past the Customs Officers when she travels because they suspect her of concealing bales of silk or boxes of cigars in it. She says that three things are good for the hair—fresh air, sunlight, soap and water.

~ Empire Theatre program Calcutta 3 May 1919

English theatrical director/actor/manager Edgar Warwick was the man who would give Dorothy a new perspective on the world. It is likely she spotted his notice advertising ‘Eastern Tours Arranged by Edgar Warwick’ in a shopfront in Elizabeth Street Melbourne or heard about the tour via the theatrical grapevine. She was in town as early as October 1918 as by then the *Northern Star* had announced her engagement by his concert company.



The Three Starrs. November 1918. Dorothy and Leslie Holmes?

We know Dorothy was in Melbourne late in November as her photograph album contains an autographed snapshot of popular vaudeville sister act *The Three Starrs*, dated 28 November 1918. The Starrs were performing at the Bijou Theatre on this date. At this stage, with the exception of the 1911 George Marlow plays, Dorothy had only performed on the concert platform in an amateur capacity, but her dainty appearance and ‘brilliant and pure’ soprano voice must have won the day. She was now twenty-five.

By 14 December 1918, just a month after the Armistice was signed, Dorothy had boarded the SS *Taiyuan* for a six-month tour to Manila, Shanghai and Peking (Beijing), Hong Kong, India, Singapore and the Malay Straits with Warwick’s *New Revusical Comedy Co.* The actual show was entitled *Vanity Fair in Various Editions*. It was a name ‘inspired’ by the William Makepeace Thackeray book of the same title, but the show bore no relation to the novel.

The revusical, a one act musical comedy, had generic precedents in revue, musical comedy, American burlesque and minstrel farce. According to theatre researcher and academic Dr Clay Djubal the revusical:

Is very possibly the only Theatrical genre ever to originate out of Australia. The standard format of an Australian revusical was a troupe of around six to eight actors led by two comedians and a female chorus of six. The productions were staged as the second-half entertainment of a vaudeville bill (with the troupe not involved in the first half), and lasted somewhere between 40 to 60 minutes. Although the stories were dramatically organised, they were nevertheless quite

simple and unsophisticated in relation to plays or the more extended musical-comedy genre. These productions were also heavily reliant on improvised scenes—usually played out between the two lead comedians.¹³

Although the company described their show as a revusical, the structure did not fully fit this definition. Performers appeared on stage for the entire show, not just the second half and no specific female chorus or ballet was included. They did, however, feature a playlette in the second half.



Six *Vanity Fair* Company members: Leslie Holmes, Eileen Boyd (as a child star) Trove NLA, Eileen Dawn Trove NLA, Vera Pain photograph by Gordon and Blees Calcutta, Madge Griffiths photograph by May Moore and Dorothy Rudder.

The *Vanity Fair* troupe consisted of seasoned and versatile professionals working in burlesque and vaudeville, many of whom were from England and had performed together in Edward Brascombe's *Scarlet Troubadours*, the famous *Dandies* companies and Warwick's *Court Cards* and *Burlesquers*. They included comedian Leslie Holmes and his wife Madge Griffith, tenor Sydney Mannering, contralto Eileen Boyd, comedienne Shirley Cooke, comedian George Titchener (nicknamed Titch), bass vocalist George Graystone, dancers Vera Pain and Steve Laurie, Thelma Lawn and conductor Jean Desormes.

A wealth of material relates to the tour, including the contract with Warwick. The salary was £4 per week with the performer to deliver six evening performances per week and one matinee, if required, and pro rata on weeks where no nightly performances were given. Dorothy had to have thirty solo items ready to perform and would not be paid if she became ill. The company paid travel expenses, which was fortunate as the tour was to cover many miles of territory. Many rules and regulations were listed, most subject to instant dismissal if breached. They included refusal to perform an allotted part, being intoxicated in the theatre, receiving visitors in the dressing room without permission of the management, divulging any company business, being in the foyer without permission (penalty one week's salary) and smoking at the venue. The contract was subject to the issue of an Australian passport. Dorothy signed with the surname Rudder but went by Dorothy May, the same stage name she had used with George Marlow's Dramatic Company in 1911.

Vanity Fair's advance manager was an intrepid Englishwoman, Eileen Dawn, whose background was as a performer. She had no prior experience of tour management but was successful in what must have been a challenging job. Her husband, 'tall and debonair' baritone Derek Hudson joined the Flying Corps and died after his plane was shot down over German lines. She had planned to return to England but no ship berths were available for women. Eileen had seen the notice advertising the 'Eastern Tours' in Melbourne. She thought this meant tours for travellers; a chance to get home by an indirect route. Instead she was offered the position of advance manager. Warwick was most impressed by her skills. Three years later they were married in Simla India.

It is rather a novelty having a woman in front of the show, but it has very many advantages. She gets all kinds of things done that a man could not. I felt a bit

worried about it until I arrived. I thought she would do the afternoon tea part of the business all right, and forget to do the routine work, but it hasn't turned out that way at all. She has done both remarkably well. She opened me to a house of £220 in Hong Kong, and one can't ask anything better; than that. Everybody loves her.¹⁴

Eileen Dawn said touring was a very expensive and complex undertaking, with seasons rarely lasting more than two weeks in each town. Calcutta and Shanghai were the best show towns with the play needing to be changed twice weekly. In Calcutta they liked lighter entertainments than in Bombay. Few matinees were played and the shows usually commenced at 9.30 pm. Perth contralto Madame Marion Kemp, who made an extensive tour of India in 1916, commented on the difficulty of obtaining a good piano. Due to the heat they were always going out of tune, sometimes before a concert even began.¹⁵ In China they used a 'go to' man called a compradore who was a business advisor, interpreter and go-between with the company and the European banks. Audiences comprised educated Chinese, British colonial bureaucrats, the military and expatriates.

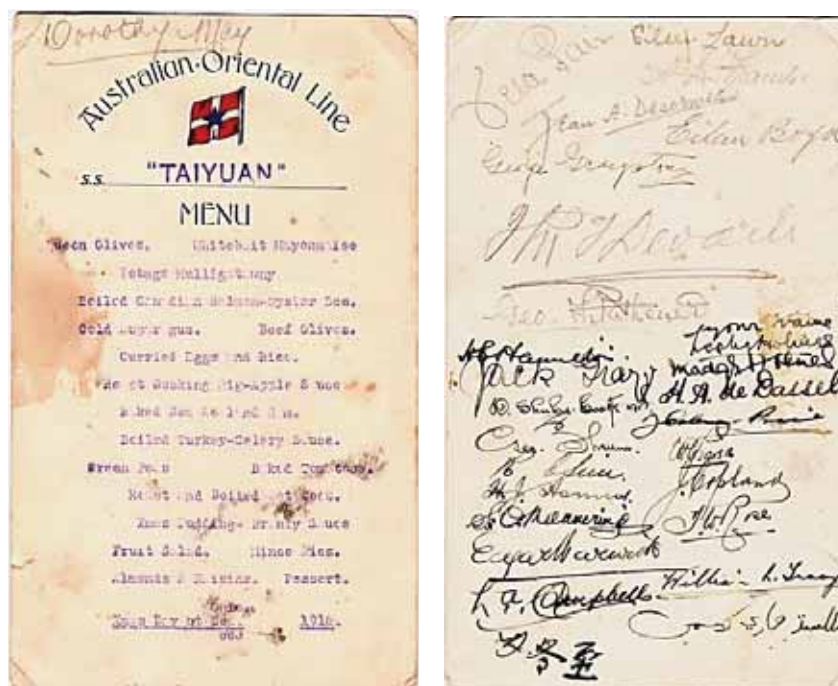
Eileen told of her train being held up by bandits, 'great rough looking villains' wearing goatskins, in a mountainous part of China, a not uncommon occurrence for travellers. She was terrified but had the clever idea of playing on their superstitions by feigning insanity. The bandits hurriedly left her compartment. Her money and valuables, which were hidden in a pillow which the bandits had tossed aside, were saved. Theatrical training and a little fake hysteria can come in very handy in tricky situations.¹⁶



Peking postcard kept by Dorothy Rudder. 1919.

Dorothy kept a thirteen page diary of her travels, written in pencil and dated from 14 December 1918 to 9 June 1919. Some lines are scratched out in what looks like a quick re-edit of her thoughts. This diary is a revelation, giving us further insight into the logistics involved in moving the company from place to place. It wasn't a case of perform/travel/sleep on train/perform, with little leisure in between shows; in fact the opposite was true. Travelling by ship could take weeks. A great deal of Dorothy's time was spent seeing the sights by rickshaw or automobile with the ship's officers, the cast members or wealthy locals, dining at fine hotels and shopping.

The diary doesn't read like a private document. It was meant to be shared with friends and family back home. She seemed to float over the top of the big issues such as the Spanish influenza epidemic and the political turmoil in China. It was an extraordinary time to be travelling around the Chinese countryside but we are given few hints of this. The 1911 collapse of the Qing dynasty had led to the political instability of the 'Warlord Era'. There was no effective central government. The country was fragmented like a jigsaw into competing territories dominated by various military cliques. Although it was a time of extreme corruption and grinding poverty for many Chinese, including her barefoot rickshaw drivers, Dorothy did not indicate any particular personal danger or awareness of their plight.



SS Taiyuan Menu Xmas Day 1918 with signatures of the Vanity Fair Company and other passengers.



Sandakan postcard.

After sailing from Sydney on 14 December 1918 for Manila and Hong Kong, the SS *Taiyuan* sailed along the east coast of Australia and stopped in at Thursday Island. On arrival at Sandakan in Borneo, a beautiful island which was then covered by dense 130 million years old rainforest, Dorothy wrote:

Being New Year's Eve, the company entertained the people of Sandakan show lasting for about 2½ hours, after show games, dancing etc. were indulged in until the early hours of the morning, when we (the company) proceeded to supper with one of the leading residents of the town, which was given at his bungalow. There we had a great time, leaving at 4.a.m. arrived at the boat soon afterwards, but felt too merry and bright to go to bed, sat up till nearly 5.a.m. with the people on board. Next morning ... Vera [Pain] and I falling in very lucky as two gentlemen kindly motored us about, taking us out to the wireless station etc. and then all through the native villages etc. where we took some interesting snapshots. Left midnight for Manila 1/1/19, arriving on the 4th. There we went ashore and motored all thro' the old Spanish city, also the modern city, Spanish city being built 300 years ago.¹⁷

One of the motoring gentlemen mentioned, Mr P.A. Grimes, was more than a little charmed by Dorothy. He wrote a letter on Sandakan Club letterhead.

Jan 2, 1919

Dear Little Gift of God:

You see, it is the day after and, already I am writing you for I very much fear that, unless you are reminded, you will forget your promise. Have you forgotten?

I hope you have no “after effects” of your Sandakan New Year. I wish you were here this morning to wish me a Happy New Year.

I am sending this note to you at Hong Kong with the request that it be forwarded. My ship comes in on the day after tomorrow and I shall be in Java long before you get this note but, as I am coming back here in about a month I hope to receive a letter from you, here, as I come back.

Don't forget your promise.

Yours sincerely

P.A. Grimes¹⁸



Members of the *Vanity Fair Company* with four ship's officers. Top row from left: Eileen Dawn, Edgar Warwick, Thelma Lawn, Eileen Boyd. Dorothy Rudder seated centre. Bottom row from left: Steve Laurie, Vera Pain, Shirley Cooke, Leslie Holmes.

Comedian George Titchener and Edgar Warwick?

The seas were calm and Dorothy was enjoying shipboard life.

All on board are so sociable. A great deal of time playing deck quoits and O'Grady's drill, rest of the time rehearsing ... A few accidents happened on the voyage first day out, one of our company, Miss Shirley Cooke, lost her teeth overboard and was quite a source of amusement for all those on board, however Xmas time the Captain very kindly presented her with a small set of sharks teeth but we were all sorry when she discovered they would not fit, however she soon found a dentist on Thursday Island and of course got fixed up. Next

accident Miss Vera Pain ... volunteered to show ... the producer of our show thro' the native quarter of Sandakan at night time, and of course forgoing not to take a torch light with her allowed the poor man to fall in a hole and the consequence, a bad cut on the shin.¹⁹



Images of Hong Kong 1919.



Dorothy and Chinese soldiers with their neatly positioned rifles.

Hong Kong was the next port of call. The troupe performed sell-out shows at the Theatre Royal and participated in concerts in aid of the Defence Corps.

Arrived Hong Kong 8th of Jan. rough trip through China Sea ... was not too bright but was entertained night and morning by the hawking of the Chinese, first day of arrival went for a ride around the city in a rickshaw, second day after arriving the chief officer of the SS Taiyuan took me for a delightful motor spin to Deep Water Bay. Opening night of the show Sat Jan 11th played to a crowded house, everybody doing well, each girl after the show being presented with a beautiful bunch of flowers which were sent up by Mr. Warwick ...

Dined at the Hotel Hong Kong several times with A.M. Morris and had afternoon tea with Mr. Partington and Morris. Sunday Jan 19th went with Morris and Partington up the peak, then walked a very long way around the peak taking snapshots of different places of interest.²⁰

A floral themed notice about Dorothy found its way to Woolgoolga from a Hong Kong newspaper, appearing in the Grafton *Daily Examiner* on 17 February:

Pretty Dorothy May, apparently the ingénue of the troupe, sang sweetly ‘Rose Petals’, assisted by the chorus. She distributed roses to the audience while singing, which were detected being put in left-hand waistcoat pockets by some of the men receiving them.²¹



The P & O steamship SS Nore?

The SS *Nore* had left London on 7 December 1918 for China and Japan and the *Vanity Fair* Company went aboard in Hong Kong on 20 January. Dorothy noted the *Nore* was ‘the first P&O boat to leave England for China since the war and was also rationed’.

Arrived in Shanghai 24th Jan., raining and very cold 3 degrees above freezing point. First night in Shanghai stayed at Astor House, met some friends who kindly took me to the Carlton for dinner, where the Connolly boys in the [*Vanity Fair*] orchestra played Hawaiian music.

25th Jan left for Tientsin, trip being very interesting, as one can see the way the Chinese live, their huts being mostly built of mud and straw, also wonderful to see are the hundreds of miles of civilisation, mostly all their cities are walled in, some walls being built hundreds of years ago. Have just passed a place called [space] where we saw the heads of Chinese robbers hung by the hair to trees to frighten the other Chinamen, it is the custom after the heads are chopped off to

take out the heart, eat it and drink the blood, this they believe gives them courage.

After two days and nights on the train we arrived at Tientsin 27th Jan., amongst the snow and ice, very cold temp. 20 degrees below freezing point. Opened at theatre same night, had a very successful week, also very enjoyable spending most of my time dancing at the Empire Café, went for several motor spins and took lots of photos.²²



Street scene—well rugged up for a freezing winter in northern China.



Peking. Dorothy in rickshaw.



Visit to the Forbidden City Peking. Possibly George Titchener at right of first image.

Next stop on the itinerary was Peking (Peking) followed by a return appearance in Shanghai. It was three months before the May Fourth student protests which focussed on the unfair treatment of China by Western nations during the Treaty of Versailles negotiations. A series of nationwide workers' strikes followed.

The Forbidden City had served as the imperial city for twenty-four emperors until the Republican Revolution of 1911. The last Manchu emperor, twelve-year-old Pu Yi, was still living an isolated and highly artificial life inside the Forbidden City as a non-sovereign monarch when Dorothy and other members of the *Vanity Fair* troupe photographed themselves outside the palatial buildings. The section the emperor lived in, apparently tended by a huge retinue of 1,000 eunuchs, 100 doctors and 200 chefs, was walled off from the rest of the city. As Dorothy's visit indicated, the vast complex was already a museum. Dorothy left Peking the day before the emperor turned thirteen. The next month Pu Yi met his first foreigner, Reginald Johnston who became his English tutor and advisor.

Left Tientsin 2nd Feb about 9.15 train arriving Peking at tiffin time, opened at theatre next evening 3rd Feb. played for three nights, leaving for Shanghai 6th Feb. At Peking I visited the Temple of Heaven, Museum etc. museum very wonderful, saw lots of Emperor's belongings such as a pearl saddle, robes that he wore etc.²³

Edgar Warwick, a seasoned producer of shows in the East, had some trouble with the choice of venue in Shanghai. An article in the American trade paper *Variety* illustrates how a theatre manager's hurt pride at having their venue criticised could lead to difficulties i.e. not having a venue for your show. Some 'discourteous remarks' were made in a leaflet inserted into the Lyceum Theatre program. Even in 1919 business problems were reported half way across the world.

CHINESE BOOKINGS.

San Francisco, May 7 (1919)

A report from Shanghai states that the Edgar Warwick "Vanity Fair" company touring the Orient, on arriving in Shanghai, found that the Lyceum Theatre in that city, housing traveling shows, was occupied, made arrangements to show at the Olympic Theatre, an out-of-the-way house. Advertisements by the "Vanity Fair" show reading that owing to the Lyceum being engaged they were

compelled to take the Olympic, caused the management of the Olympic to prohibit the performances of “Vanity Fair” at their house, and having dodgers [flyers] printed announcing the engagement was cancelled because of the theatrical troupe's advertisement stating they were forced to engage the Olympic [Theatre]. The theatre management also refunded the advance sale money. “Vanity Fair” finally opened in the ball room of the Astor Hotel. Court proceedings are expected to result from the tangle.²⁴



Dorothy and her chauffeur.



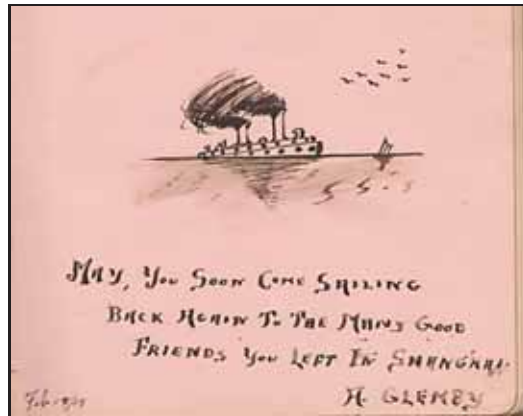
Dorothy's photograph of Shanghai Racecourse.

Dorothy's diary confirmed the sumptuous Astor House Ballroom as the performance venue de jour. The arrangements were hurried. Although the performers were without their scenery, the stage was cramped, the lighting poor and the seats were all on one level which meant the patrons at the back had limited view of the stage the show was declared a hit. Hats were also a problem. One lady in the second row was 'indiscreet enough' to wear a hat that completely obscured the view of the *Shanghai Times* reviewer. Dorothy's song 'Bubbles' was described as a 'charmingly pretty effort'.²⁵

The lobby of the luxurious Astor House was an important meeting place for the city's rich, powerful and those on the make. Young and carefree, and described as the 'Sunshine Girl' in display advertising, Dorothy continued to enjoy a life of privilege with the local expatriates but did catch a cold.

Arrived Shanghai 8th Feb. opened in Astor House ballroom on the 10th, after show went round to the Carlton and danced. On the 12th went for a motor drive with Mr. Glemby thro' the Chinese city and visited the Mandarin gardens, which have been there for thousands of years, trees have been turned into stone. Saturday 10th went to the races with Mr. Corue of Sydney afterwards motored thro' the Rubicon. Sunday 16th Mr. Hoves called at Astor House and took Titch

and I to his flat for lunch ... at 6pm went home and dressed met same party again and dined at the French Club, afterwards going around to the Carlton, where we danced until 1.30pm. Monday 17th Mr. Glemby took me for a motor spin out to the Crest Hotel where we had tea, came home and had dinner with Mr. Hoves and his brother same evening. Our Co gave a show at the Shanghai Club, at this club the ladies are only permitted to attend twice a year.²⁶



Page from Dorothy's autograph book, signed A. Glemby. 18 February 1919.

The name Glemby is an unusual one. A prominent American family of Jewish descent named Glemby were part of the vibrant Shanghai social scene. The Glemby's made their fortune producing hair products such as the Lorraine hairnet which was 'made from real human hair', and were one of the first companies to out-source cheap product from China. Although other male members of the family lived in Shanghai, it was certainly Aaron Saul Glemby showing Dorothy the sights. He lived at Astor House and the drawing and note from her autograph book (above) are signed A. Glemby.

After Dorothy sailed back to Hong Kong by the SS *Wing-Sang*, Mr Glemby wrote her a letter.

Shanghai

March 7/19

Hello Little Miss Dorothy May,

Bless your heart and soul, it was good to hear from you, especially when you say the beastly cold is leaving you and that you are getting your voice back, you know it makes a fellow feel good to get welcome news like that.

After you left here, everyone spoke so highly of you that I felt proud and have the pleasure of being with you at different places and last night I went to the

club for a French dinner and everyone spoke of you in such a nice way. Then we all went to the Crest Hotel for a cup of coffee and Mrs. Hyde [the hotel owner] asked for you.

There is nothing new in town, same old crowd, same old Carlton (wish I had a dance with you there tonight) and everything goes on just the same as when you were here. The only change is that the “Flu” has laid up a number of people here.

Sorry to hear that the pictures did not come out good, but hardly expected they would because of the lateness of the afternoon and the poor light—but the ones you snapped at the racecourse were rather good, and I am including them in this letter ... we all wondered when you would come back again to Shanghai and to all the many good friends you left behind you.

You are not the only one who received some pictures from home. I also received a few of my brothers and sister and I feel very fond of them all but as you say it makes one homesick to look at them.

Well little Dorothy May, I must close now as I have a lot of work to do, so will send my best from our friend the baby motor car and the whole crowd of your friends.

Sincerely yours

Mr. Glemby²⁷

On 21 February 1919 the company called at Swatow.

Went ashore with Titch in sampan. Got rickshaw, went to Chinese lace shops and bought dress piece and table cloth, then went to Astor House Hotel, very nice place, lovely lawns etc. had tea, then got the boy to take us to a Chinese lace store where we bought several pieces of drawn thread work, enjoyed the day immensely leaving for Hong Kong 22nd Feb. Arriving on 23rd opened at theatre on 24th played for a week and four days. During our stay went motoring with Mr. Hamilton, Shirley Cooke, Titch and self over at Kowloon side of Hong Kong, had cold tiffin on the hillside, had a great time.²⁸

In an odd co-incidence, as mentioned in Chapter One, Dorothy’s great-grandfather, Captain F.B. Chilcott, had rowed over in his longboat from Hong Kong Island to the

Chinese mainland for a spot of lunch in 1841. She was following in the intrepid master mariner's footsteps when she had cold tiffin.

San Francisco based Captain Lockett of the SS *Hauroto* met a sad fate not long after Dorothy met him. Lockett took Titch and Dorothy on several motor trips and dined with them at Hong-Kong Hotel. Five months later the *Hauroto*, along with the entire complement of 180 passengers and crew, disappeared during a typhoon in the China Sea.

In Hong Kong Dorothy also met up with Malini, the Napoleon of Magicians, whom she had appeared with two years before in Brisbane.

Did not have much rest owing to so many invitations. Last night Titch and I went to Malini's show. We sail for Canton tonight by the Fatshan [an overnight steamer which drew special attention to its Superior Saloon and Cabin Accommodation] at 10pm. Arrived 10th Mar., played three nights to good houses.²⁹

Dorothy had no further comments to make about Canton however Duncan Neven who managed a tour of the East by the magicians Chefalo and Palmero around this time described this city of two million people as 'probably the most weird, dirty and Bolshevik city in the whole of China'. If arriving by boat, the first class travellers were greeted at the bund (quay) by Sikh soldiers who guarded the entrance. The Shameen, a small, modern, European looking island connected by bridges, was the foreign quarter. Immediately on leaving the island Neven was confronted by the 'narrowest and dirtiest streets I have ever seen in my life. Here the Chinese live, work, eat and sleep ... sanitation is a lost art.'³⁰

A return to Hong Kong followed, with the company staying at the King Edward Hotel for two days. The troupe then sailed for Singapore on the SS *Dilwara*. On board were officers from the French Army. During the journey, Captain Gaston Girardot from the 1st African Battalion wrote the words 'Remembrance of the moon which we saw together on the "Dilwara"' in her autograph book. Around this time Dorothy's father F.J. had been admitted to a private hospital in Grafton in a serious condition. He made a good recovery but she did not cover the event in her diary.

Arrived [Singapore] on 20th, Chief Officer bringing me to the hotel by motor, afterwards we visited a friend of his, Mr. Lancaster, then the three of us

motored to the Sea View Hotel where we had dinner on the lawn, next day 21st Chief Officer took me for a motor spin down to Jahore ferry where we took some photographs, at 3.p.m. he joined the ship and Mr. Lancaster then took me to dinner at “Raffles” Hotel where we dined with the manager Mr. Winfield, after dinner we went for a motor spin. Every day up till the time we left I was out motoring, at tennis and swimming parties.³¹

The Singapore season at the Victoria Theatre commenced on 22 March. Pre-show publicity in the *Straits Times* reveals some witty fun with verse, created by one of the Company.

Dorothy May was brought to book for making eyes at Shirley Cooke,
Madge Griffith crushed her black and blue—a Vera Pain-ful thing to do.³²



Dorothy in costume *Vanity Fair Company*. Photographs by Gordon and Blees Calcutta.

Many notes and signatures written by the tour members also appear in Dorothy’s autograph book, among them the naughty but clever ‘I’d like to dot somebody’s crotchet’ signed by the conductor Jean A Desormes and a little poem from Edgar Warwick.

Dorothy May
And Dorothy may’nt
You never can say.

(She's as clever as paint)
But somehow I think
If I choose the right day,
And tip her the wink
That Dorothy may!³³

An item entitled *Heatherland* featuring old Scottish songs and dances closed the show; Dorothy had a delightful studio study taken in her highland costume. The *Times* enjoyed the entire offering. 'Here is a show in which item after item with such breathless rapidity that the audience is carried along on a high wave of gaiety. But there is more than mere gaiety in it; there is art of the most attractive kind.'³⁴ Dorothy was described as 'a very petite person with a roughish eye and a dainty touch of whimsy' and Shirley Cooke as looking too young to be running around Asia by herself!



Unnamed Australian soldier, dancer Vera Pain and Dorothy in soldier's uniform.

French soldier shipboard, possibly Captain Gaston Girardot.

Dorothy with barefoot rickshaw driver possibly Malay States.

The company left Singapore on 30 March for Kuala Lumpur, arrived the next day and opened the same night. Poor Dorothy needed a rest from the hectic touring life. Although she had motored through the botanic gardens, she was 'having a rather quiet time here'. A local man, Leofwyn Linnell, commented on her ennui in a letter sent on 3 April from Wardieburn Estate Kuala Lumpur.

Dear Miss May

You'll probably be surprised to hear from the "Bloke" who dragged you over to the club after the show, when you were dead tired and not content with this frightfulness made you dance and then saw you home to your hotel.

You looked so miserable, that it quite worried me, so am writing now to say cheer up.

The worst of it is, is that we are just getting to know you—you "Buzz off" somewhere else.

It's like showing one a picture of heaven and then snatching it away again. I'm full of vain regrets that you should have been in that wretched hotel three days on your own, as we should have loved to have taken you around, had we known it.

Do let me know when you come back again this way? And we'll see if we can't give you a better time and a more cheery one.

If you get any spare moments, I'd love to hear how you're getting on.

Wishing you the best of good luck on your travels and hoping to see you again sometime and cheer up.

Yours Sincerely

Leofwyn Linnell³⁵



Celebration—Bangalore India 1919. Note image of Queen Mary and King and Emperor George V centre, with legs reflected in the mirror below.

On the lawn. Dorothy seated on bench second from right.

After playing for three nights Kuala Lumpur and two in Ipoh, the company arrived in Penang on 5 March and again opened the same night. Dorothy was feeling a bit better now, went out motoring each day and ‘had a very enjoyable time, last night of show finished up at a dance given by the manager of the E&O [Eastern and Oriental] Hotel’. She left on the 10th by SS *Euryalus* for Madras. She bought a piece of jewellery for her mother at P. Orr and Sons but only the empty box now remains, along with another marked ‘J.T. Shaw Hong Kong’. The company then played four nights in Bangalore, arriving back at Madras on the 18th.

Opened Wellington Theatre Madras on 26th April, last night 3rd May. Left Madras 4th May, arriving in Calcutta on the 6th. While in Madras I had a motor car at my disposal, consequently I saw all interesting places there. Since being in Calcutta have visited the zoo, Botanical gardens where the wonderful Banyan tree can be seen and praying temples also the wonderful marble palace which belonged to Rajah [gap], have also been through the markets, which is one of the seven wonders of the world. In all have had a most enjoyable and interesting time in Calcutta, despite the heat which is the hottest time Calcutta has experienced for twenty years.³⁶

The company, after experiencing extremely cold temperatures in northern China, was now coping with some very hot weather. And the theatres were not air conditioned.

P.A. Grimes, whom Dorothy met that romantic New Year’s Eve in Sandakan, wrote again on 17 May with the hope his letter would find her in Calcutta. Dorothy had earlier written to him, but her missive went astray. In the meantime he had left Sandakan and travelled to Macassar, Manila, and Hong Kong twice, then back to Sandakan en route to Batavia where the letter finally found him. From his correspondence Grimes was infatuated by the ‘young Australian lady with a wonderful voice.’ He wanted to hear from her or ‘die of despair. How is that for a protestation of devotion?’ he asked.³⁷ It turned out Dorothy had briefly crossed paths with a notorious American confidence artist with an international reputation. Only a few months before they met he had been locked up in Manila’s Bilibid prison. However, there is no evidence to suggest she knew of his past or that the correspondence continued.



Empire Theatre Calcutta program dated 3 May 1919, exactly two years to the day after Reg Rudder was killed at Bullecourt.

From the Empire Theatre Calcutta program we learn a story about Dorothy's voice which may have been embellished, but maybe not. It highlights how illness can adversely affect the voice of a singer and may explain the long break she took from the Garcia School from August 1913 due to her 'unsatisfactory' health.

There is one dainty petite little person among the merry throng of the inhabitants of "Vanity Fair"... who bright and smiling as she always is, lives, as it were, under one regret; under, indeed a tragedy for a singer. Miss Dorothy May ... has a pretty voice but an average one in volume and tone. While she would be an acquisition to any company her voice is by no means exceptional. But at one time and that not long ago Miss May was in possession of a voice of exceptional range, power and timbre. She was in fact a dramatic soprano and much was hoped for her future in a country where fine voices are frequent ... At the early age of seventeen her voice was considered developed sufficiently for her to sing at important concerts. She was able to choose such tests for the soprano as the Prayer from "La Tosca." Then came a cruel stroke from life. A sudden cold caught through getting wet, and the next morning the wonderful voice had gone. Pharyngitis had such a hold that nothing would shake it and for long it seemed as if her voice would be permanently lost. But the voice Calcutta

has heard came back after Miss May had given up all hopes of ever appearing in public again. Yet she loved the stage, and regretted having to leave it. Then came fate again—kinder this time. At least Mr. Edgar Warwick was looking for dainty singers and Miss May was chosen. She had never been on the stage before—only on the concert platform—but she set to work and when the company opened in Hong Kong she was already fitted with the knowledge of dancing and other accomplishments. And here in Calcutta, so rapidly has she progressed, that hers is one of the lightest figures that trip about Vanity Fair.³⁸



Grand Hotel Calcutta handwritten menu. Peach Melba for dessert. 9 June 1919.

Although the troupe continued to tour the East in the latter half of 1919, for Dorothy it was time to return to Sydney.

Bid farewell to the Vanity Fair Co today, 9th June, when we leave for Madras via Singapore to Australia. Travelled by train, arrived Madras 11th, stayed two days, sailing on the 13th for Penang. Arrived Penang on 21st SS Sara leaving Penang by SS Klang for Singapore on the 24th. Arrived Singapore on the 26th.³⁹

A photograph hints at a shipboard romance on the trip homeward. The image is signed R.V. Darge 20-6-19 and taken in Leith, the port district of Edinburgh. On the back are the words ‘Ships that pass in the night. Bobbie.’ It looks as if he had a serious crush on Dorothy. In her autograph book he wrote ‘Our eyes have met. Our lips not yet? But I’m hoping!!!!’ Darge was on his way to work as an assistant in the tin mines in the Federated Malay States.



Soldier R.V. Darge. Photograph by J. Campbell Harper Leith.

Was this snappy dresser the mystery man Dorothy was planning to marry in Madras?



Exquisite embroidered and hand painted Chinese Remembrance card sent to Dorothy from 'Larkin'. He wrote 'No news yet Dorothy. What's up?'

On 5 August Grafton's *Daily Examiner* noted Dorothy's return to Sydney, along with some surprising news. 'The gifted young lady is to be married next January to a gentleman from Madras.'⁴⁰ Lieutenant Brown from the Indian Army had shown her around Madras in March 1919, and a Captain Colebourne took her to tiffin at the Connemara Hotel but the truth of a potential bridegroom lay elsewhere. Although she did not mention the event in her diary, Dorothy possibly first met her future husband in Penang.

Chapter Seven

The Better 'Ole tours Tasmania 1920



Charles Norman. Performing Arts Collections Arts Centre Melbourne

‘Vaudeville has almost disappeared, and if it isn’t recorded then people in the future won’t know how important it was, and how popular. There were so many talented performers.’ ~ Charles Norman Australian Variety Theatre Archive

Following the *Vanity Fair* adventure Dorothy was discovering that developing a musical career meant chasing up the next stage appearance. An enticing opportunity came along when she was offered a tour of Tasmania with actor/manager Lionel Walsh and his *Musical Comedy Company* in a successful Edwardian play called *The Better 'Ole*. Written by British cartoonist Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, *The Better 'Ole* was set in the trenches during the First World War. The story, billed as ‘A few explosions, a few splinters and a short gas attack—the best fragments from France’, concerned the adventures of Old Bill and his friends Bert and Alf, with Lionel Walsh himself playing the lead character. Dorothy was to take on the singing and dancing role of the French maid Suzette.

Prior to visiting Tasmania the company had travelled around regional NSW and Victoria with the show, averaging seventy miles a day, by motor lorry and three Chevrolet motor cars rather than by train. This innovation made touring much more flexible as they could carry a full component of scenic equipment; the artists did not have to keep to early morning timetables and could travel to towns not serviced by rail.

They may have taken their truck and cars over to Tasmania by ship. The bigger theatrical companies often by-passed Tasmania due to high costs and limited shipping routes, with one notable exception being Allan Wilkie's *Shakespearian Company*. Hobart's *World* newspaper described the visit of the *The Better 'Ole* troupe as 'an oasis in the desert'.¹

The Company had been scheduled to commence at an earlier date, but a shipping strike, which also affected *Kate Howarde's Dramatic Company* and the *Fisk Jubilee Singers*, put paid to that. The play had a 'record-breaking' run at Hobart's Theatre Royal from 24 to 30 January 1920 and then visited Launceston, receiving extensive publicity, rave reviews and full houses in both cities. No berths were available on ships from Hobart for two weeks after the planned departure so fourteen one night stands (over sixteen days!) were then scheduled for the smaller northern Tasmanian towns. By the tour's end the *Burnie Advocate* was declaring 'the comedy has been too often described to need to go into details'.² They were right.

A soubrette named Dorothy Hawtree played Suzette during the mainland tour then left to appear at Melbourne's Tivoli Theatre. This gave our Dorothy, who was still using her stage name of Dorothy May, her opportunity to shine, even if the journalists did not always get her name right. When the show reached Latrobe she was being reviewed as Dorothy Hawtreay and after the troupe visited Scottsdale, she was reviewed as Dorothy Maytree.

Performing to a packed house at Hobart's Theatre Royal was a special experience. The Royal, the oldest continuing theatre in Australia, is atmospheric with energy from past performances. The small auditorium is very intimate as the three tiers of horseshoe shaped seating are quite steeply layered, creating a closeness to the audience. The top gallery has wooden seating, with red upholstered seats on the other levels and the front of each gallery is decorated with silver and gold cartouches. A beautiful chandelier hangs below a dome featuring paintings of the great composers, while a cherub looks down on proceedings from the proscenium arched stage. Dorothy would have loved the way the acoustics enhanced her voice and no doubt enjoyed the laughter, applause and demands for an encore from a cheering full house. On 29 January the patrons included wounded soldiers from the local base hospital. The next night officers and men from the Australian Fleet were in the audience as, after many encores and enthusiastic singing of 'Auld Lang Syne', the curtain finally dropped.

Creating a popular comedic experience from the traumas the soldiers experienced in the trenches seems to have worked as a stage show. ‘The singing by the inseparables of “We wish we was in Blighty” to the accompaniment of shells and machine guns, is ridiculously funny’ stated Launceston’s *Examiner*.³ A poignant scene where the postman arrives but has no mail for the three soldiers had the audience sympathising with their disappointment. In addition the audience enjoyed dancers Lena Henry and Arthur Bertram who introduced the latest dance crazes—the Jazz and the Tickle Toe.



Dorothy possibly dressed as the French maid in *The Better 'Ole*. Photograph by Creelman Studios Sydney.

Poster Theatre Royal. *A fragment from France : The better 'ole* [picture]. (1920). Libraries Tasmania
The Better 'Ole postcard. Author's collection.

Dorothy was once more doing well, with the stage experience gained in the East put to good use. Hobart’s *Mercury* on 26 January praised her performance as Suzette. ‘Miss Dorothy May sang “Sunshine in France” in a soprano that has richness and volume. The number is exceptionally lengthy for a revue but everybody was sorry when it concluded. Miss May adds to her charming stage appearance by her ability as an actress and vocalist’⁴ while the *Weekly Courier* wrote how Dorothy was ‘said to possess a clear soprano voice of rare excellence’.⁵ On 27 January the *Mercury* reported ‘Miss Dorothy [May] the soprano had another splendid reception’.⁶ Three days before, the same newspaper, albeit in a much shorter piece, only commented ‘Miss Dorothy May has some acceptable numbers’. On 2 February the Launceston *Examiner*, in a neat

piece of text sharing, used exactly the same complimentary sentences to describe Dorothy as the *Mercury* reviewer. Burnie's *Advocate* also said Dorothy's voice had 'richness and volume' while Launceston's *Daily Telegraph* wrongly listed her role as 'Angelle' not Suzette.⁷

Dorothy returned to Sydney in March 1920 on the SS *Manuka*, no doubt appreciating the ocean voyage. In June she contributed her musical talents to a Welsh Choral Society function at King's Hall, a welcome to Sydney for famed Welsh Nightingale Miss Amy Evans, who was touring Australia with her husband Scottish baritone Fraser Gange and composer and singer Edith Harrhy. Sir E. Owen Cox was in the chair. A telegram from the Prince of Wales was read out, thanking the Welsh Choral Society for birthday greetings. It was signed 'Edward, Prince' which was all the identification required for this gathering. Speeches and a musical program were the order of the day, followed by supper at the spellbindingly named Loosens Restaurant.⁸



W. B. Beattie portrait by G. W. Lambert. *The Home* 1 September 1923. Trove NLA.

Dorothy did not neglect her voice training. Musician, actor and baritone William B. Beattie, one of Sydney's most successful singing teachers, placed an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 January 1920 to announce he was resuming tuition in singing at Beale and Company (piano manufacturers). He listed the names of his chief singing students to promote his studio. Included were Miss Dorothy Rudder and Miss Dorothy Helmrich who would go on to an international career as a German lieder singer. A few years later Beattie's studio would be associated with our Dorothy in connection to a headline making court case.

Chapter Eight

Salad Days—Dorothy's career 'sparkles', 1920-22

The Sparklers and Ideals of 1922 tours of NSW and Queensland

Four months after completing *The Better 'Ole* season Dorothy joined Harry Borradales's new costume comedy company *The Sparklers*. She would appear with the company, with a long break in between, in Queensland and NSW from July 1920 to the end of 1921. She may have made contact after seeing Borradales's advertisement in the trade journal *Everyone's*. There was 'always an opening for good reliable artists' in his company but for unsuccessful applicants silence was 'a polite negative'.¹

Borradales had been a key performer in Edward Branscombe's *Red and Orange Dandies* from 1914. By January 1920 he was producing his own shows in Adelaide and Tasmania. The usual offerings from costume comedy companies such as *The Sparklers* were the latest in songs (especially ragtime), sketch comedy, dancing, and operatic excerpts. It was a 'Show of a Thousand Delights, Gorgeous Costumes, Magnificent Finales, Absolutely fulfilling all Advance Claims and Promises'.²



Con Moreni. *Fuller News* 7 July 1923. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

The troupe varied from ten to eighteen performers who were sourced locally and from overseas. Among the company at various times were Leslie Holmes late of the *Vanity Fair Company*, soprano Maud Telfer, tenor Winslow Knight, 'Sparklet' Baby Jean Findlay, an eight year old whose song and dance act included a tune entitled 'I'm In Love' and as an encore 'There's a Time and Place for Everything' and Sydney comedian and political

satirist Sam Rowley. The ‘Little Man with the Big Voice’ had spent many years touring America. Another member, ‘Australia’s Best Comedian’ Con Moreni, had earlier tried his fortune there but said after he paid for the press agent’s exaggeration, the booking agent’s graft fees and his own rail and boat transportation ‘America is a great country—to forget!’³ Promoted as a bright and refined show with a little something for everyone, the emphasis was on music and singing. An early advertisement announced ‘It’s a Joy Ride on the Wings of Laughter, Fun that will make you forget the High Cost of Living’.

The popular prices helped as well as the regular changes of performers and programs. As the *Brisbane Courier* noted, the show needed to be kept fresh. ‘When Mr. Harry Borradale decided to introduce new artists from the South into his “Sparklers” Company, he took a wise and timely step, for the general public, like the proverbial spoiled beauty, is capricious in its tastes, and exacting in its demands for “change.”’⁴ The versatile troupe must have spent as much time rehearsing as performing.

Successful touring around the country theatre circuits in the 1920s relied on good planning and satisfactory transport links. Companies could be on the road for many months and often played around agricultural show dates. The seasons influenced which districts were visited. They travelled by train, (with the scenery collected from the station and taken to the theatre), or by bus, horse and cart, and sometimes by car as seen in *The Better 'Ole* tour. Also travelling by automobile were the picture-show men. Locals, even in remote areas, enjoyed a presentation of live entertainment such as vaudeville with a film. Tent shows were a common sight, being used for revue and plays as well as for the circus or boxing. And sometimes boxing and vaudeville were on the same bill.

Performer Charles Norman, with whom Dorothy would appear in later years, detailed the nuts and bolts of life on the road. As a publicity device local children would put coloured flyers called ‘dodgers’, which listed the names of the cast, into everyone’s letterbox. In exchange the children were given tickets to the show.⁵ Some of the dodgers for Dorothy’s shows have survived, printed on thin paper in orange, pink or grey tones, two of which date from 1909 and 1912.

On tour, Norman emphasised two key requirements—adjusting to the demands and tastes of a wide variety of audiences and supporting fellow artists and worthy causes through fundraisers.

Oh yes, the Australian was versatile. That’s what made them such great performers even in the musical comedies. They were very versatile. Well you had to be to

survive. It was the best way to make a living in entertainment. Films weren't that strong in those days, so therefore people depended on live entertainment. Concerts were on everywhere. And another thing that seems to have disappeared is the benefit concert. That was a leftover from the melodrama days. Benefits for some good cause, some good performer, some person or other. That's how we got a lot of our experience. We'd go on these benefits to help them. Weekends, Saturday nights, Sunday nights.⁶

The Sparklers first appeared together at Newcastle's Victoria Theatre. The season commenced on 24 July 1920 and ran successfully until 28 August. *The Sparklers* were initially advertised as appearing under the banner of Walter Johnson and Harry Borradale. An actor/producer with extensive experience in America and England, Johnson had just concluded a forty-five-week season with the *Town Topics* in Brisbane. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* said *The Sparklers* provided 'the most popular form of entertainment in Australia'. The Great War had been over for three years but it still had an influence on the choice of the sketches. 'Messrs. Kennedy Allan and Bert Barton, as a couple of unconventional Jack tars (sailors), with Mr. Walter Johnson as their superior officer, were concerned in an hilarious sketch, which ended in the [mutineering] tars being bombarded by the audience with imitation explosives [in the form of cannon balls].' This gives a whole new meaning to the term 'the show bombed'.

On 26 July Dorothy was well reviewed in the *Herald*. 'Miss Dorothy May sang the tuneful song "Monteray", with its lilting chorus, and other numbers with the full strength of the cultured voices, combined to make one of the best things of the evening'⁷ while on 31 July 'The vocal gem of the evening was a duet by Miss Dorothy May and Mr. Allan Priora who sang "The Miserere" from "Il Trovatore". The cultured voices blended perfectly, and the artists received tumultuous applause.'⁸ Allan Priora was paid £10 per week for his services with *The Sparklers*. He later appeared as lead in the New York production of *The Student Prince* at a magnificent salary of the equivalent of £200 a week.

Walter Johnson was no longer mentioned in advertisements by 13 August. The troupe was now called *Mr. Harry Borradale's Costume Comedy Company The Sparklers*. The *Herald* reviewed the show weekly, giving us a detailed appreciation of the varied content and the versatility demanded of the performers.⁹ On 14 August the company took on the garden scene from *Faust*, which was just one part of the first half, along with Maori and

Chinese spectacles, with the second half devoted to a fun example of revue set in a Paling and Company music warehouse.

On 21 August light comedy and sketch work featured—as the advertisement said ‘Wherever you look just girls and glee. A twelve hour show squeezed in to three.’¹⁰ Harry Borradale, a fine elocutionist, recited Banjo Paterson’s *The Amateur Rider* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Gunga Din*, while ‘breezy ragtime melodies came from Miss Dorothy May, Mr Allan Priora, and a bevy of smart girls in “One Horse Town”’.¹¹ The next week Dorothy ‘presented in song and character *Chu Chin Chow*’. Professor Foley’s clever horse counted out numbers written out on a board with its foreleg and a donkey unceremoniously bucked off young boys who tried to earn a reward by sticking on his back. The animal, looking quite benign, would then wait patiently for its next victim. There is no indication the producers had—or needed—public liability insurance, or even a rope to prevent the poor boys from landing in the orchestra pit.¹²



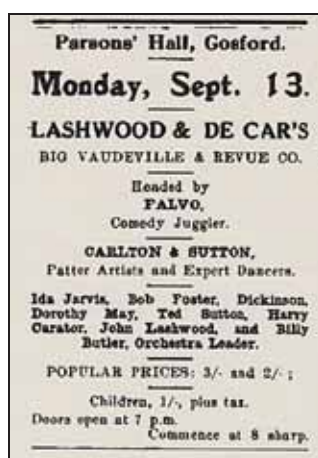
Advertisement Victoria Theatre Newcastle. *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 4 September 1920. Trove NLA.

By early September, many of the members of the troupe were performing with the *Messrs Dix and Baker's Vaudeville*, a company which had presented vaudeville in Newcastle since 1906. The local advertising indicated a moveable feast of players (and producers). It was the first appearance in town of *The Levante and Cecil Keech Company*, ‘world famous illusionists’ who aimed to expose spiritualism as a fraud. According to their poster their act was ‘weird, unique and thrilling’ with wit and humour combining with the acme of dexterity. Levante ‘is undoubtedly one of the World’s Greatest Exponents of the Mystic’ and Keech ‘the man with the wonder mind’. Along with Malini, whom Dorothy performed with in Brisbane, brilliant magician and escape artist Levante, (Leslie George

Cole), later The Great Levante, had a very successful career, a career which commenced in 1907 and officially ended with his retirement in 1977. The *Herald* reviewed the show on 6 September 1920.

There is a laughable [funny] episode when, having coaxed a boy from the audience, the manipulator draws from an apparently empty hat a succession of eggs, which he piles in the bend of a boy's arms. The lad's face, as the overloaded eggs slip and break on the floor, is a study in puzzled and alarmed expression. Particularly adroit is the trick whereby rings are passed upon the performer's arms, though the thumbs are tied tightly together. As a spectacular feat, there is exposed to view three large trays, each containing various national costumes. These are placed in an empty trunk, fitting it tightly. A card is chosen at random. Upon it is 'France,' and with the opening of the trunk there steps forth a girl dressed in French national costume. There were many minor smart feats. Mr Harold Lockwood [the wild west American cowboy] gave an interesting stockwhip and lasso display. He is a perfect master of the whip, and with the lash he cut paper in two and flicked out a lighted match. With the lariat he formed expanding circles, and with a heavy rope ran a circle out to pretty well twenty feet. He also tied a boy from head to foot, first with the lariat loop, and with travelling loops, deftly formed from the rest of the rope.¹³

During this show Dorothy appeared in several sketches and sang a number of charming songs including 'Tell Me Why', which one or two of the parents may have been thinking as their sons were brought up on stage for the various stunts performed by a donkey, a magician and a cowboy with some very long rope.



Advertisement for *Lashwood & De Car Vaudeville*. *Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate* 9 September 1920. The names of Harry Carlton and Joe Lashwood are misspelled in lower part of text. Trove NLA.

While performing with *Dix and Baker's Vaudeville* Dorothy made an interesting one-off foray into straight vaudeville with one of their competitors. *Lashwood and De Car's Big Vaudeville and Revue Co*, presented by actor/manager/agent Joe Lashwood, performed in Newcastle and surrounding towns for a few months late in 1920. By the end of the year the name had switched to *Lashwood's Big Gaiety Co* then to *Beck and Lashwood* followed by *Joe Lashwood's Big Vaudeville and Minstrel Co*—sole proprietor and manager Joe Lashwood! It was hard to keep up. The bill, which changed every week, varying from sharpshooters, jugglers, Cass Mahomet the Indian Digger, conjurors, Maude Fanning 'the clever coon impersonator' to a singer billed as the Melba of Vaudeville. Dorothy joined the troupe in Gosford on 13 September. Falvo the Comedy Juggler and patter comedians and novelty dancers Harry Carlton and Ted Sutton, one of Australia's longest running comedy partnerships, headed the bill that night.



Dr. Charles Louis Gabriel on his verandah at *Fontenoy* residence, Gundagai, NSW 1887.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-139665856>

Dorothy made a special visit to Gundagai, over 300 miles south of Newcastle, later in September 1920. She had a remarkable relative in the town—Dr Charles Louis Gabriel. He trained as a doctor at Edinburgh University, graduating with distinction before moving to Gundagai in 1887, residing there until his death in 1927. Described as 'Gundagai's black doctor' due to his features, the doctor's family heritage was French, English, West Indian and Welsh.

Enoch William Rudder's daughter, Rhoda, had married his father, also a doctor named Charles Louis Gabriel. Dr Gabriel senior was a Catholic whose ancestors had settled in the French colony of Martinique prior to the French Revolution. He came to Australia with a French expedition to the South Pacific and later settled in Kempsey. It is hard to believe that as a dark-skinned doctor in country NSW Dr Gabriel did not experience racism, but evidence is not easy to find. I did come across a description of his father in a 1917 newspaper article on early Kempsey as 'a black man of the West Indies but a gentleman and a clever doctor withal',¹⁴ while the *Gundagai Independent* in 1907 quite proudly mentioned Dr. Gabriel's 'remarkably clever trephining operation' in one paragraph and in the next quoted *Truth* newspaper's call for a White Australia, with no mixing of white women with 'half-breeds' or 'the filthy hindoo'.¹⁵ Dr Gabriel junior garnered respect for his medical skills and community activities as well, and was an outspoken man who stood up for his beliefs. Ahead of his time in promoting medical services for all local residents regardless of race or religion, he was president of the local football club and a strong advocate of hygiene and clean water for the town. Dr Gabriel was also an outstanding photographer, famous for documenting many aspects of everyday life in Gundagai.

Dorothy participated in a Welcome Home to the soldiers of the Gundagai district on 24 September. It was a beautiful spring day, and the occasion commenced with a procession. Two hundred returned soldiers, some on horseback, together with schoolchildren and a train of vehicles, created a parade half a mile long.

The party started with a banquet lunch and it is instructive to look at the tone of the speeches. After a toast to 'The King', the Mayor's speech emphasised how Australia used to have a small profile on the world stage but with the entry of the Empire in the war, citizens were required to take their place in the councils of the nations of the world. He concluded 'Through population and production lies the key to our future salvation'. Other speakers spoke about Senator Millen travelling to the conference in Geneva of the newly founded League of Nations to fight for a White Australia and the noble efforts of the ladies at home while the boys were 'away at the front making barricades of their bodies to protect our liberties'. Major Ford responded on behalf of the soldiers 'who wished to settle down and forget what they had seen'—a sentiment shared by many who had experienced the terrible reality of modern warfare.

Following horse races, children's games and a raffle, everyone finished up at a huge ball. At times over 150 couples graced the dance floor. Dorothy, 'a city visitor', wore an evening dress of black net over cerise satin. During the evening she sang two items—'both

beautiful numbers by a singer with a beautiful voice'. At supper 600 revellers were served and the last dance finished at precisely 4.10 am. And so ended 'a perfect day'—a special occasion considered by the *Independent* as the greatest one in the history of Gundagai. Travellers from other towns were particularly impressed with the event. There would certainly have been some sore heads the next day.¹⁶

Dorothy had attended a Masonic Ball in nearby Tumut the day before the Gundagai celebration, where she again wore 'black net over wine coloured satin'. Six days later 'Miss Rudder', described by the *Independent* as 'the sweet singer in Friday's welcome home', was reported as being admitted to the local hospital. No reason for her medical woes was given.

At the end of September *The Sparklers* were performing in Toowoomba and at Martoo's Olympia in Ipswich Queensland. Dorothy's name was included in the advertising for Ipswich but due to her hospitalisation she did not perform there.

From October 1920 Borradaile presented an incredible year-long season of *The Sparklers* in Brisbane. During one performance an audience member handed him a black kitten for luck which seemed to have worked. In summer the Brisbane shows were held at the open-air riverside Palace Gardens, with 'Gentlemen May Smoke' advertised as an incentive to attend. On opening night, 14 October, over 1,000 patrons attended the venue but the performance was a washout due to a thunderstorm (a watertight roof was constructed for later shows). In winter the cast moved indoors to the Elite Theatre.



Paying the Piper advertisement. *Truth* 29 May 1921. Trove NLA.



Grand Concert Strand Theatre Wagga Wagga Ticket. 12 July 1921.

Dorothy did not appear in the *Sparklers*' Brisbane season until 1921. A ten month gap appears in Dorothy's performance timeline from October 1920, apart from three performances, the first in May 1921 when she had a 'gig' at the Haymarket Theatre Sydney as part of the pre-show entertainment—three times daily—for the silent film *Paying the Piper*. The stage show was a production in itself, according to the *Sunday Times*:

The drama cleverly contrasts the advantages— and disadvantages—of wealth, with the higher privileges and joys which simple affection can bring to two people. A brilliant dancing prologue is also being presented at the Haymarket. The stage is set as a fashionable cabaret, into which spring three dancers, Misses Jean Keith, Lena Ryan and Grace McDonald. They present an altogether delightful dance, bewildering at times in its rapidity, and a veritable feast to the eye. Mr. Percy Baker assists them in the capacity of Jazz drummer. Miss Dorothy May, a pleasing soprano, also contributes to the programme. [Her items included 'Sing Sing Blackbird', 'The Waltz Song' from *Tom Jones* and songs from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*].¹⁷

In June Dorothy went uptown and performed at a gift afternoon given by the Lady Mayoress of Sydney in her suite at the Town Hall. The rooms were decorated with gold and bronze cacti, dahlias, carnations and wattle with scarlet poinsettia and variegated holly dotted here and there, soft shadow lighting and huge palms in pots—a garish combination from a floral point of view. Sam Rowley, whom Dorothy knew from *The Sparklers*, organised the musical program at which leading English contralto Grace Saville (one of Dorothy's lifelong friends) and soprano Lilian Mitchell also performed.

Next up was *Quaint Songs at the Piano* for the No Surrender Loyal Orange Lodge at the Strand Theatre in Wagga Wagga NSW on 12 July. It cost 2/- to 4/- with 'All Artists direct from Sydney's Leading Theatres'. Grace Saville and Sam Rowley appeared once again. Melbourne soprano Dorothy Keogh, who later sang at La Scala in Milan, Phyllis McDonald (the child that has mastered the violin) and baritone Alex Whitson rounded out the bill.¹⁸ This talented lineup is a good example of the surprisingly high standard of performance often on offer at fundraisers in regional towns.



Dorothy's calling card. The Elite Theatre Brisbane.



Advertising Elite Theatre Brisbane. *The Telegraph* 5 August 1921. Trove NLA.

Advertising Elite Theatre Brisbane. *Brisbane Courier* 13 August 1921. Trove NLA.

Dorothy rejoined *The Sparklers* at Brisbane's Elite Theatre on 5 August 1921. She had a calling card specially printed, introducing herself as an 'operatic soprano'. Revue and vaudeville were hugely popular in Brisbane. Amy Rochelle sold out houses at John N. McCallum's *Town Topics*, Fuller's *Vaudeville* featured Australia's most popular comedy duo Stiffy and Mo while Coleman's *Minstrel and Vaudeville Co* also pulled in the crowds. Regardless of the competition, full houses were greeting *The Sparklers* and Dorothy was becoming a popular drawcard. The advertisement on 5 August was of significance as it was the first time her name appeared so prominently—*Dorothy May Brilliant Soprano*. Only one other artiste, 'dashing soubrette' Daisy Dale, was listed. Dorothy turned twenty-eight three days after this advertisement appeared.

Introducing Dorothy to the lineup brought a fine review from the *Brisbane Courier* on 6 August. ‘*The Sparklers* last night presented a new programme which suggested that Mr. Borradaile has been holding in reserve many exceptionally fine items. Miss Dorothy May captivated the audience by her beautiful soprano voice allied to a striking stage appearance and pleasing personality.’ On the same day a *Courier* journalist for the Music and Drama column became a little muddled. He wrote that Dorothy Rudder and Dorothy May were both specially engaged and had come to Brisbane for the first time to appear in the show. Somewhat difficult seeing as they were one and the same person.¹⁹

Dorothy performed in Brisbane until 8 September. She was a big hit at the afternoon entertainment for the ‘inmates’ at the Diamantina Hospital on 20 August. That night she performed an item called *Yogi Eyes* where lighting effects were a feature. The piece was promoted with a question. ‘Did you hear about the Yogi Eyes mystery? You’ll never guess how it is done! Why even the Sparklers are Dazzled.’

Dorothy’s billing changed daily, depending on who was appearing and the items being presented. The billing assisted an artist in scoring the better dressing rooms, a bigger salary and more prestige. In one newspaper advertisement Dorothy May (Lyric Soprano in Gems from Opera and Popular Ballads) was billed just below star artist Con Moreni (Coon patters and other ways of keeping busy). In others she was listed at the bottom or the middle of the pack and in yet another she topped the bill.

Several newspaper clippings were kept by Dorothy from the Brisbane season but none of the sources were credited. Dorothy was a hit.

Dorothy May, the new soprano, received an ovation flattering enough for a diva in her beautiful numbers.

Miss Dorothy May is one of the most conspicuous successes. Possessing a charming voice of unusual quality and range, a pleasing personality, and charming to look upon, she sings her way into favour with comparative ease.

The outstanding feature of the performance was the reception accorded the solo numbers of Miss Dorothy May, the gifted soprano ... Her “War Song” displayed a voice of striking clarity and freshness which, combined with her dainty appearance, quickly won her the favour of the audience.²⁰



Dorothy—fashion plate. Image on right taken at New Farm Park Brisbane during *Ideals of 1922* season.



Dorothy centre with unidentified friends enjoying an indoor picnic of bread, cheese and beer.

By late September 1921 some of the *Sparklers*, including Dorothy, had parted ways with Harry Borradaile and metamorphosed into *The Ideals of 1922 Costume Comedy Company* which toured around Queensland's many regional towns. Directed by Con Moreni and Alex McAllister the troupe was 'formed on the lines of "The Dandies", "Sparklers" and "Troubadours", but—just a year ahead'. In what was a marketing ploy rather than bad date keeping, *The Ideals of 1922* were a bit ahead of themselves as they actually disbanded on 6 January 1922.

Dorothy usually headed the bill during the *Ideals* season. Patrons were offered a complete change of program every night. The local newspapers everywhere reviewed the company, which suggests competent tour management and a willingness to spend on display advertising, although on the flip side a lack of advertising could also mean a show did not need boosting.

The *Cairns Post* noted how travelling shows did not always live up to the standard represented in their advertising. This was partly responsible for the moderate attendance on their first night. On 5 November the *Post* described the style of the show.

The Ideals Costume Comedy Co.

The Ideals of 1922, one of the smartest and most talented combinations of entertainers to have visited these parts for quite a while, conclude their season of three nights at the Hibernian Hall to-night. Smart costuming, clean, clever comedy work and tuneful singing are the features of the entertainment which goes with a swing-from start to finish. Each member is an entertainer of no mean ability, and do their full share of entertaining. There are no passengers and no tenth-raters as “fill-ups.” ... Miss May has a soprano voice ... of wonderful clarity and sweetness, though not of exceptional range. She quickly installed herself favorite, and her numbers to-night will be eagerly awaited.²¹

The house was packed on their return to Mareeba near Cairns on 9 November. The cast received ‘great and continued applause’ and Dorothy was presented with a beautiful bouquet of roses, carnations and ferns after singing ‘The Jewel Song’. By this stage the company had well and truly covered regional Queensland. Dorothy’s final appearance with the *Ideals* was in Rockhampton in December 1921.²²

Over the next nine months I only found two shows Dorothy appeared in—Arthur Morley’s revusical *On the Sands* and *The Purple Pierrots*. *On the Sands* was set on the beach rather than the desert judging by one phrase in the synopsis of events—Somebody’s taken my Togs. The show ran at the Melba Theatre Haymarket Sydney from 29 January to 4 February 1922. The cast members included Harry Louis Moreni, Con Moreni’s brother, whom Dorothy had performed with in the *Ideals*. He obviously admired Dorothy, writing in her autograph book ‘Can I say anything better than Yours Always’. Two local promoters, E.L. Betts and G.D. Portus, who had just started a new theatrical booking agency, were the co-presenters of *On the Sands* and supplied the talent but by March Mr. Portus had moved

on and their 'Entertainment Bureau' was no more. This is the only example found of Dorothy having worked directly with an agency. By March Arthur Morley was producing *The Purple Pierrots*, 'a bunch of high class players' who performed items from grand opera, musical comedy and vaudeville in conjunction with 'photoplay features' in both the city and suburbs venues of Union Theatres. The ten players are not individually listed but Dorothy was definitely one of the troupe. In a cast list which appeared in *Everyone's* trade journal, Dorothy is mistakenly listed as Doris May, not Dorothy May.²³ Doris May was an American film actress appearing in silent films at this time.



Odiva's Seals. *Fuller News* 14 January 1922. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

Dorothy's name next appeared in the newspapers in more puzzling circumstances. A hugely popular aquatic seal and sea lion act called *Odiva and the Seals* was touring the nation for Fullers Ltd. Odiva had an exotic image—she was born in England but was raised in Samoa. She could stay underwater for up to two minutes. *Odiva's Seals* began with Captain Adams, an American animal trainer, providing a short lecture followed by various tricks in a sea-shore setting, which might include a seal walking on its hands and performing summersaults or a group dancing on their flippers. Inside a large water tank, Odiva was towed in circles by a seal. The Launceston *Examiner* wrote how the seals snuggled 'up to her under the water like so many pet dogs'.²⁴ Plenty of fish provided motivation. The act was considered informative, with Townsville's *Daily Bulletin* seeing similarities between the way the seals were taught and Queensland's approach to educating its children.

Odiva's act was supported by vaudeville turns or a picture show. Three advertisements show a Dorothy May on the bill in Broken Hill NSW on 28 October 1922. There was only one problem—Dorothy was on tour in New Zealand for Fullers Ltd on this date. No other

performers named Dorothy May working in vaudeville have come to light, although there was a young Melbourne stage and silent film actress by that name. In another odd fact connected to the Broken Hill billing, two of the advertisements called Dorothy May a *balladist*, as did one *Sparklers* listing. Later advertisements named the real support act—*Doreen* May, a vivacious Adelaide soubrette who became successful in vaudeville. This was not the only time the two names were confused. In January 1927 Dorothy found herself listed as the debonair principal boy in *Mother Goose* by Adelaide's *News*. Once more the role was being played by Doreen May.

Chapter Nine

The Sunshine Players tour New Zealand



Dorothy with English comedian George Storey.

By September 1922, Dorothy had packed her suitcase for New Zealand with the *Walter George Sunshine Players*. The popular troupe, established by English producer, stage manager and comedian Walter George and his partner Georgie Martin, had toured New Zealand and Australia for many years. George believed a revue should have a plot as well as musicality and gaiety. This approach seemed to have worked as the company broke the attendance records during their five years in New Zealand, giving a total of 1,425 performances of twenty-five different programs in the four main cities. For the western revue *Way Down in Arizona* silent film star and cowboy Tom Mix's actual cowboy gear such as guns, hats, gauntlets and boots were used. During an earlier visit to America Walter George had struck up a friendship with Mix who offered to help out with some props for his show.

Ben and John Fullers' Theatres and Vaudeville Circuit contract signed by Dorothy for this tour is detailed and heavy with legal terminology. Dated 11 September 1922, the exclusive contract required Miss Dorothy May to perform as a Vocalist and Revue Artist act. She was required to attend rehearsals and perform not over twelve times a week for £12 per week, with an extra performance at one twelfth of the weekly salary, a substantial wage (the basic male wage in NSW was £4/2/- in 1921). When Dorothy was to appear in Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide she was to receive £15. No actual

salary was to be paid during non-working travel periods (only fares and food costs were presumably paid) or while waiting for the show season to open.

The contract contains many similar clauses to Edgar Warwick's, with additions. 'All character and fancy costumes (except boots, shoes, stockings, gloves and fleshings) will be found by the Company. Modern walking or evening dresses including boots and gloves are to be provided by the artist as well as all linen and haberdashery etc. which must be laundered at the expense of the artist. The Company does not provide dressers.' Looking at the behaviour clauses, if 'the artist shall give expression to any vulgarity or words having a double meaning or use any objectionable gesture or use the words "God" "Damn" or "Hell" when on the stage' the contract could be cancelled with the current weekly salary forfeited.

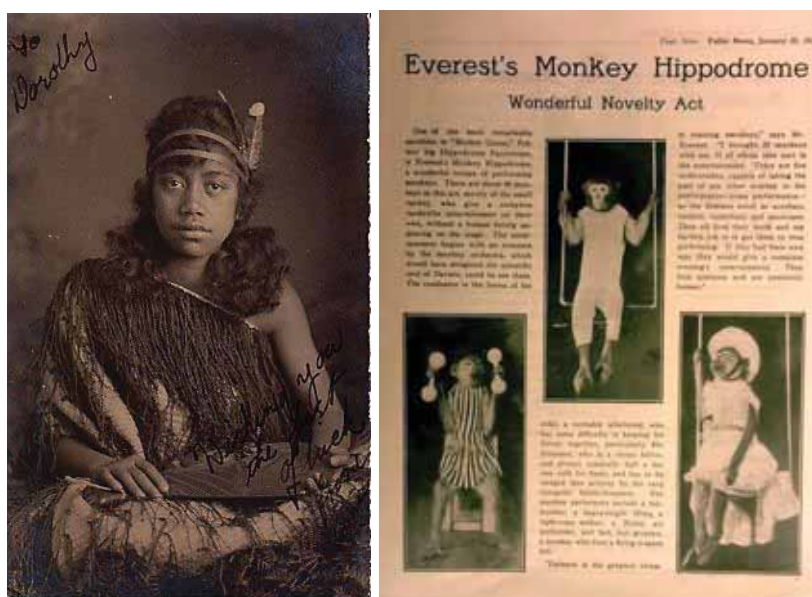
The tour commenced in Auckland on 2 October 1922 with *Oh, Nell!* which was set in a beauty parlor. One of the vaudeville acts in the first half of the show was Fullers Eleven Wonders, a team of juvenile acrobats. Audiences couldn't complain of value for money in a Walter George show. The items on 13 November, which really does fit the term 'revusical' commenced with Italian baritone Count Filippini who performed three songs and several encore items. Filippini was a leading soloist with Milan's La Scala Opera Company who found himself stranded in the antipodes during WWI. Linden and Berridge performed several songs using piano and accordion accompaniment, followed by Les Videos acrobatic skaters and a Fullerscope (a short film of topical events). Finally, in the second half the Walter George team appeared in an Egyptian tale titled *The Scarab*. The storyline concerned a search through the Egyptian bazaars and palaces for a lost charm and a lost wife.¹ Egyptian themed shows were all the rage following Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb the previous year.

The reviewer for the *New Zealand Herald* on 10 October was a little critical of some of *The Sunshine Players*. It is fascinating to read a review which delves deeper into the quality of an act, without fear that the paper's advertising revenue would be affected. Of the shows in which Dorothy appeared over the years, very few newspaper reviewers took on a negative tone or explored the quality of the performances in any great depth. The *Herald* reviewer liked the show but commented:

With several new members in the company the fact that the complete moulding of the members into a composite whole has not yet been achieved must be admitted, but the performance given warrants the praise due to all efforts of a

meritorious kind ... The leading lady, Miss Dorothy May, has an agreeable soprano voice, and is of a dainty personality, though lacking in the experience which will later enable her to display more of the vitality so essential.²

Popular comedian George Storey was criticised by the reviewer for the use of suggestiveness and using an inappropriate word during the show which was barred in polite society. I assume he was subject to the same morality clauses in his contract as Dorothy, but it was not applied by the Fuller management on this occasion.³



This memento is signed 'Annie'. Was she a vaudeville artist or singer?

Everest's Monkey Hippodrome. *Fuller News* 20 January 1923. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

Daisy Jerome 'the electric spark' draped with furs galore. Photograph by Rotary Photo.

Dorothy and Dulcie Milner (Mrs George Storey). Taken on Xmas Day, 'just after dinner'.

From 24 October to 4 November *The Sunshine Players* went from feature act at Auckland's Opera House to part of a support bill for vivacious American-born but English-raised eccentric comedienne Daisy Jerome. They supported her again in Wellington from 2 March. The *Players* performed the one act musical revues *The Girl from USA* and *The Rajah from Rangipoo*, the latter advertised as 'full of the mystic delights of the Orient.' Another promotional line was 'Boys, you are cordially invited to spend a happy hour in the Rajah's Harem'.⁴ I'm not sure where this left the female patrons.

The advertising promoted Daisy Jerome as 'the red-headed handful of 'pep', 'the electric spark' and 'the world's greatest comedienne', quite a set of titles to live up to. Jerome had previously toured Australasia from 1913-16, becoming 'the second highest paid female variety artist ever contracted to Fullers Theatres'.⁵ Dorothy no doubt watched her perform. Their styles were quite contrasting—Jerome was famous for her audacious, saucy style and big personality, not necessarily her voice. Her cheeky songs contrasted with her dainty appearance while it could be said that for Dorothy her voice was her main calling card, complimented by her good looks.

During December 1922 Dorothy's billing moved from just under Walter George's name to the middle line when 'George Martyn' took her spot (somewhat of a typo as this was actually a female—company partner and performer Georgie Martin), then back up the billing again by 26 December. As with *The Sparklers* and *Ideals of 1922*, the change in billing often occurred when new acts joined or left the company.

Animal acts often featured in the first half of the bill. *Everest's Novel Monkey Hippodrome*, 'almost human in their intelligence', opened some of the *Oh Nell!* and *The Orange Girl* performances, with the monkeys working flat out to complete their assignments. Seven monkeys 'played' in an orchestra while others performed wire, trapeze and weightlifting acts. Each act was introduced by two monkeys in livery who placed a numbered card on a stand.

Another feature act, *Apdale's Circus*, was a rich offering in itself and looked like a hard act for the Walter George troupe to follow. 'The combination includes two bears, ten dogs, three monkeys, a South American anteater, and a baboon comedian by the name of "Mutt." This eccentric individual is said to keep the stage in turmoil by reason of the unexpected pranks he plays, while the other animals give a remarkable exhibition of animal sagacity.' The bears rode bicycles and played the banjo (sort of). It might be imagined that the anteater's act was rather a slow one, although no report

verifies this. The audience was requested not to throw lollies or peanuts at the monkeys.⁶

Dorothy was fast gaining experience and better reviews. In Auckland with *Oh, Nell!*, ‘Miss Dorothy May made a dainty figure in the principal feminine role, singing sweetly in a song, “Avalon” and a duet with Mr. Robert Raymond’.⁷ A reviewer who saw her in *Don’t be Vulgar, Charlie* declared ‘She has a beautiful voice and knows how to use it’.⁸ During the Christchurch season at Fuller’s Opera House the *Press* newspaper critic also liked her stage work in that piece.

The star singer among the ladies of the company is Miss Dorothy May who also filled her part as the innkeeper’s daughter. Miss May has a sweet soprano which rings true on every note, and she gives way to a high range without the slightest trace of effort.⁹

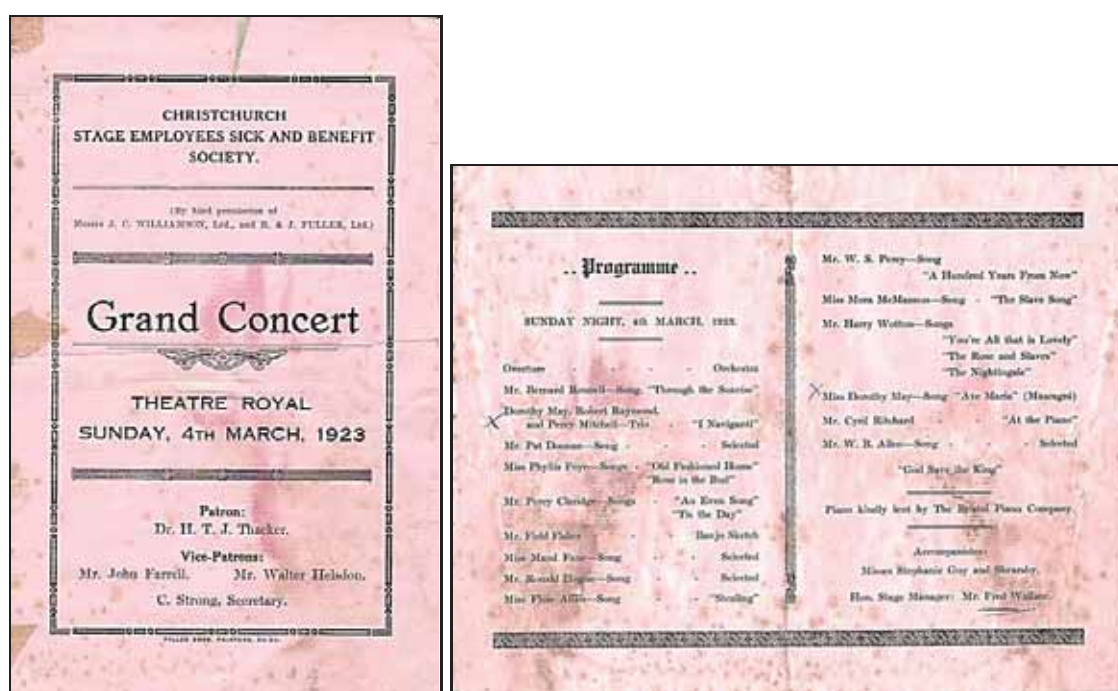
In contrast, on 12 March a critic from the *Press* found the actual cloth of Mr. George’s company ‘rather moth eaten’. He praised the production values in *The Rajah of Rangipoo*, which was playing to full houses, but Dorothy received a mixed review for her performance, as did comedian George Storey.

Judging by the principals ... it does not matter very much whether the main characters can sing or act. If the ladies look nice, if the comedians can succeed in being funny, and if one and perhaps two of the company can sing, then everything goes well ... Mr George Storey has not got over that very bad habit of forgetting that he is not the only character in the piece ... Miss Dorothy May, the chief soprano of the company—in fact the only one—appears occasionally in “The Rajah” and she sings “Say It With Music” very daintily with Mr. Robert Raymond, but in her chief solo “Guides of the Night” she is rather out of her depth. Miss May, however, has a very nice voice if she uses it properly, particularly in the upper register, and she is a better artist than she allowed Saturday’s patrons to believe.¹⁰

In her next review, Dorothy had redeemed herself. ‘Dorothy May ... is the possessor of a splendid voice of wide range and her solo, “A Dream of Delight” ... was exceptionally fine. In fact, Miss May is easily the premier vocalist of the company’ wrote a *Press* reviewer who attended *The King of Dunnowhereski* two weeks later.¹¹

The coverage from the *Press* could be quite contrasting in tone, and very amusing. There must have been two separate writers on the staff. Whoever saw *Don't Flirt* wrote:

Probably the author knew what it was all about, but still, one does not expect to have a continued story in revue ... Most of the songs are not new ... A good deal of the comedy is rather forced, and such a sketch as the "Thought-transmitting" episode must surely have had Noah as its first producer ... Miss Georgie Martin appears here and there ... A few of the chorus, by the way, would be well-advised to study Miss [Dulcie] Milner's make-up methods.¹²



Christchurch Benefit *Grand Concert* Program. 4 March 1923.

As was usual, a fundraiser was on the performance schedule. Dorothy retained a program for a *Grand Concert* given in aid of the Christchurch Stage Employees Sick and Benefit Society on 4 March 1923 at the Theatre Royal. She contributed two items to a packed house—'I Naviganti' with Robert Raymond and Percy Mitchell and 'Ave Maria' (Mascagni). The bill included stage stars Cyril Richard, Field Fisher and Maude Fane. Along with Madge Elliot, they were in town with J.C. Williamson's musical *Mary*.

Two months later accidents which happened during the Wellington Opera House season of the *J.C. Williamson's Pantomime Company* poignantly illustrated how dangerous stage work could be. Health and safety regulations were rudimentary in the

1920s. The company themselves felt that the dressing rooms in New Zealand theatres were generally too few, badly ventilated and uncomfortable. During the revusical *The Peep Show* a huge explosion was triggered when the tinsel costume of nineteen year old dancer Phyllis Porter caught fire. Her dress had come into contact with two live wires in an open fuse box. She died in hospital a few days later. Comedian Jack Cannot was knocked unconscious when one of the borders fell from above during *The Forty Thieves* matinee, with a batten striking him hard on the temple. Stiches were required. Cannot, who was a trouper of 'the show must go on' ilk, managed to sing one song later in the show, and reappeared for the evening presentation, no doubt with a big headache. Any cast members the least bit superstitious would have been wondering if the theatre was ill-fated as elderly cast member Fred Cambourne also died in bed during the season.

Also ill-fated was a meeting between Dorothy and a certain film executive which occurred during the Wellington season in January 1923. It would have life-changing consequences for Dorothy's career, her public profile and her private life.

Chapter Ten

The Sydney scene and radio days

With some folks, what you wear counts for more than what you are.

~ Saying written down by Dorothy Rudder



The Rudder family car, an Essex Super Six which could be purchased for £325 in 1927.

The roads around Woolgoolga were very tough on cars.

Dorothy at the wheel.

Dorothy returned to Sydney from New Zealand in May 1923 and made an appearance the same month at what the *Sunday Times* called one of the social successes of the season—a glamorous Thursday afternoon party held at the Cavalier Restaurant for soprano Rene Maxwell and her accompanist Miss N. Rosenwax prior to their departure for America and England. Maxwell was described in the newspapers as ‘Australia’s brilliant soprano’. Apart from Dorothy, other contributors to the musical program organised by society figure Mrs Lightband included two other popular sopranos, Anona Wilkins and Maud Telfer, violinist Una Black and baritone Alex Wright.

The party guests included Mrs. Earl Page, Dame Mary Hughes and Miss Isabel Terry. Wreaths of flowers decorated the room. Miss Maxwell was in a handsome velvet coat with a design in Oriental shades, and a mole skirt [not actually made from the fur of moles but a type of fabric] and a hat of gold tissue and Oriental velvet. Miss Rosenwax had a black gown much embroidered in an Egyptian design, and a black hat with a panel of the same material.¹



Harringtons Photographic and Developing Service logo on photograph envelope Auckland NZ.
'Cinderella' stamp from Rudder's Ltd shipping and carrying firm. Author's collection.



On the 29th January 1930 Australian National Airways monoplane VH-UMF, piloted by pioneer aviator Charles Kingsford Smith, landed at Coffs Harbour with engine trouble. The plane, named Southern Cloud, was similar in design to the famed Southern Cross. The airliner Canberra, right, was also photographed at the 'airfield' by the Rudder family.

The city was now an exciting, cosmopolitan metropolis of over 1 million people. In 1924 construction had commenced on the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge, which was affectionately called the 'coat hanger'. Automobiles were rapidly replacing the horse and cart, although the city still operated an extensive tram network, and underground stations were added to the train system.

Nationally, commercial aviation took off with Qantas operating the first mail and passenger flights in 1922. Dorothy had a prominent relative in the aviation arena—Albert Ernest (A.E.) Rudder (1868-1956) a successful businessman and civil aviation pioneer who was one of F.J.'s many first cousins. In 1934 he was appointed a Director

on the Board of Qantas Empire Airways Limited (QEA) which was formed by Qantas and Imperial Airways (now British Airways), and the Australian representative of BOAC in 1940. Three clippings saved by Winnie show pride in his family's achievements. It is not known if Dorothy's family and A.E. Rudder had a social connection but a definite disparity in wealth and status between the two families probably precluded regular contact.

More women were now working outside the home, earning their own money as nurses, secretaries, shop assistants, teachers (although they had to resign once married), domestic servants and factory workers. Compared to the corseted styles of the turn of the century, dresses were much shorter and less restrictive; the fashion was for short, bobbed hair and the Marcel wave using heated curling tongs. Young flappers enjoyed a 'spot' or cocktail, wore lots of makeup, smoked and had a good time dancing to jazz music. The acceptability of their behaviour and appearance, particularly in relation to beachwear and smoking, triggered a great deal of debate in newspapers and magazines.



Good times, whether in hat, shirt and tie or wearing your bathers. Dorothy second from left.



Dorothy on right with unknown friends. 1920s.

Women artists were making their mark, with painters such as Thea Proctor and Grace Cossington Smith taking modernity as their subjects. Florence Broadhurst (later a talented wallpaper designer) and Sydney's 'Queen of Bohemia' writer Dulcie Deamer were two women leading far from conventional lives. Both women had been on stage in the early days of their careers. Broadhurst was a part of the *Smart Set Digger* troupe (1918) and a Charleston dancer, while Deamer, who was famous for the leopard skin dress which she first wore to the 1923 Artists' Ball, had toured overseas with producer Hugh Ward.



Dorothy fundraising for Soldiers' Day 9 November 1923. Note her lovely string of pearls. Carlton Photo.

Dorothy's lifestyle didn't fit neatly with the labels of flapper or bohemian. She was an intriguing and contradictory mix of middle class respectability and a walker on the wilder side. She carried around a bible, attended church, enjoyed cocktails and was photographed drinking beer, had performed in vaudeville but liked to describe herself as 'a concert and operatic artiste', had lovers, felt a loyalty to King and country, was close to her family and had no permanent home of her own. Looking at the many photographs of Dorothy, a great variety of looks and camera impressions were presented—from sporty to sophisticate to English rose. She was often smiling and

always well-presented, wearing elegant hats, handbags, shoes and a large string of exquisite pearls. Nonetheless, there are many casual images of her swimming, sunbaking and picnicking with friends at various Sydney beaches and Wylie's Continental Baths in Coogee. She also retained her unfashionable long locks.



Dorothy and friends at Wylie's Baths. 'Wylie's Continental Baths Coogee's Premier Pool', open between 6am and 10pm, was one of the first to offer mixed bathing. The sea baths are still in use.



Picnicking and camping with Winnie and family 1920s.

Radio Days

Along with the gramophone the 'wireless' now provided entertainment, and information, in the home. 1923 was the year of the first official Australian commercial

radio broadcasts. Dorothy was an important participant in this pioneering year in radio. Amateur radio enthusiasts had been experimenting with the 'wireless' for many years prior to this. Charles Maclurcan was issued with the first radio licence in Australia in May 1923. His station, 2CM, transmitted speech, gramophone records and occasionally some live music every Sunday from the family-owned Wentworth Hotel or from his home studio at Strathfield. Josie Melville, the star of the hit musical *Sally*, sang there on 18 March. It was an historic moment.²

A WIRELESS CONCERT

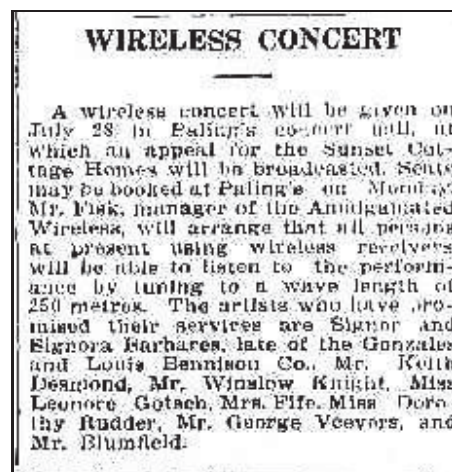
SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE.

Miss Josie Melville, the actress, has attained the distinction of being the first of her profession to broadcast a turn throughout Australia...

Practically all the private stations in New South Wales and in other States "listened in," and it is estimated that over 3,000 people had the pleasure of hearing Miss Melville sing her two big numbers from "Sally," "Look for the Silver Lining," and "You Can't Keep a Good Girl Down."

Miss Melville was heard as far away as Melbourne, indeed, a skillful operator could have "picked up" the singing at New Zealand ... suburban stations said that the words were heard as plainly as if Miss Melville had been singing in her room.

Miss Melville found herself somewhat overcome by the strangeness of the whole proceedings, when she was asked to sit in front of the transmitter and sing to thousands of people she could not see and said afterwards that she had never been so nervous in her life.³



Paling's Wireless Concert. *Daily Telegraph* Sydney 21 July 1923. Trove NLA.

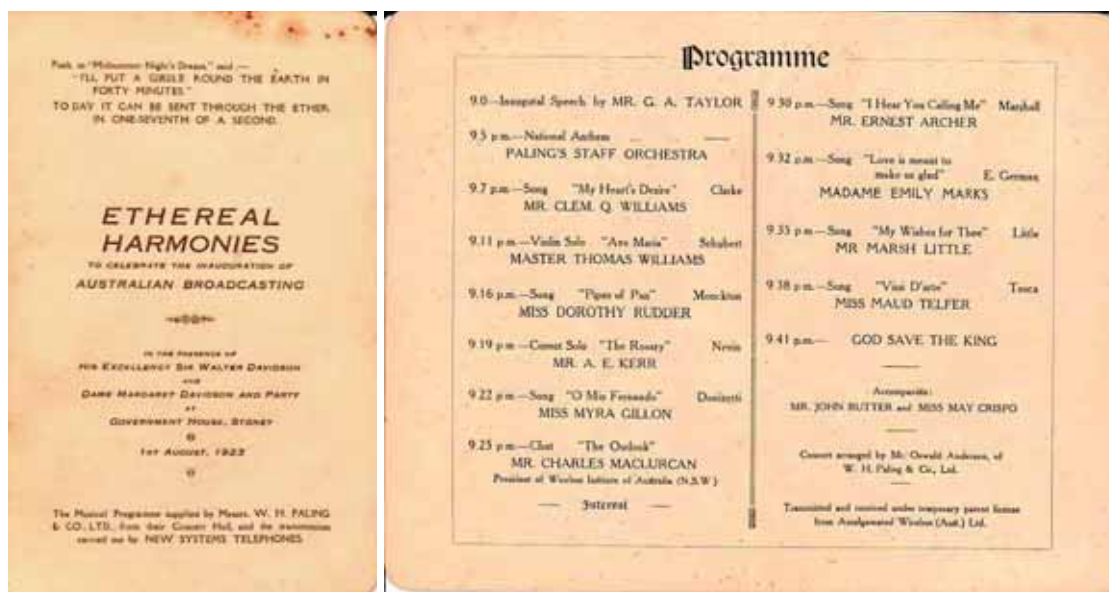
Experiments in wireless transmission continued apace. Anyone with a 'receiving set' could tune to a wavelength of 250 metres to hear broadcasts presented over ten weeks from May 1923 from Palings Concert Hall. The technical expertise was provided by Amalgamated Wireless of Australia (AWA) and New Systems Telephones, with the hall fitted out with concealed microphones. Dorothy was one of the 100 artists, instrumentalists and choral societies who participated, being broadcast on 28 July and in the final historic concert on 1 August.

Following a conference of the main players in the radio industry called by the government, on Wednesday 1 August 'regulations were issued by the Postmaster-General's Department stating that radio receiving apparatus, sealed to receive but one station, could be operated on payment of a license fee for the department, together with a 'listening fee' payable to the broadcasting station to which the receiver was permanently tuned'.⁴

Dorothy sang at a special broadcasting event entitled *Ethereal Harmonies* which was held that night to celebrate the inauguration of these regulations. Somehow this event has been overlooked by most radio historians.⁵ In a letter to Grafton's *Daily Examiner* after Dorothy's death Winnie wrote:

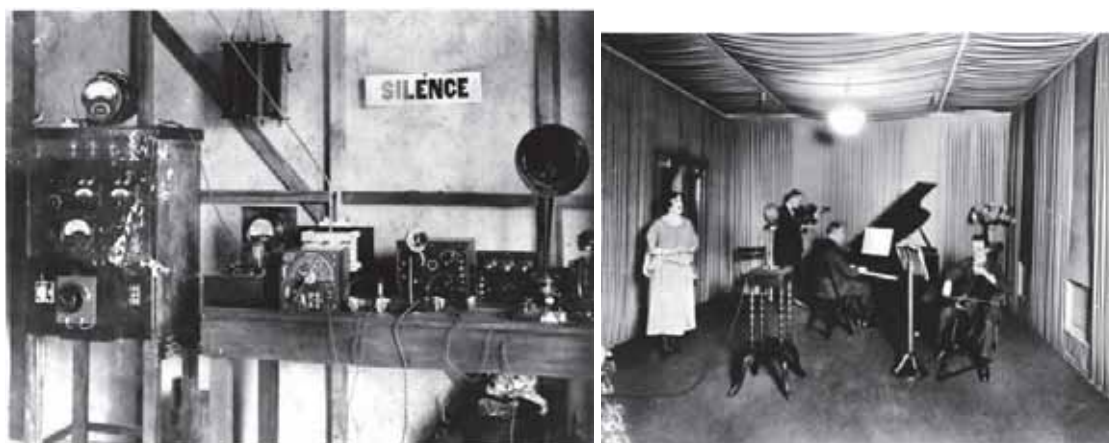
Dorothy Rudder was the first soprano to broadcast in this country, being on the very first programme to be put over the air. I still have in my possession the specially printed programme done in silver lettering, a precious memento of that gala occasion. The broadcast was made from Paling's Concert Salon (Sydney) under vice-regal patronage by 2FC, the first station [actually the second station] to [officially] broadcast in Australia.⁶

Special receiving apparatus was installed at Government House with the NSW Governor Sir Walter Davidson and wireless enthusiasts able to 'listen in' to the transmission and receive the 'ether greetings'. At 8.00 pm 'Mr. George A. Taylor (President of the Association for the Development of Wireless in Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji) ... said he had much pleasure in sending the message through the ether as the first of the messages broadcasted on such an important day in the history of Australia's scientific development'. Taylor emphasised how 'Radio science can send a greeting around our world-Empire in one-seventh of a second', thus 'linking the peoples of our great Empire in swiftly recording bonds of affection'.⁷



One of a kind. The *Ethereal Harmonies* broadcast program. 1 August 1923.

The 'specially printed programme' containing the running order of the concert has survived, along with an insert of Taylor's inaugural speech. Dorothy, who was third on the program, sang 'Pipes of Pan' by Monckton. Other artists included sopranos Maud Telfer and Madame Emily Marks and Marsh Little, a baritone and leading composer of patriotic songs during WWI. Baritone Clem Q. Williams, violinist Master Tom Williams, tenor Ernest Archer and contralto Myra Gillon, brass player A.E. Kerr together with accompanists John Rutter and May Crispo rounded out the list of performers and Charles Maclurcan gave a chat on 'The Outlook' for radio. The concert concluded with 'God Save the King' at 9.45 pm.⁸



Transmitter installed in Palings Building for *Ethereal Harmonies* experimental concert 1 August 1923. abc.net.au/photo/DP0000833.

The 2FC Ltd. Trio broadcasting on 2nd November 1924. This trio, formed in 1923, was the station's first permanent orchestral group. The singer is Gladys Moncrieff. Dorothy Rudder broadcast regularly from this studio. abc.net.au/photo/DP0000841.

There is conflicting information in secondary sources regarding the official broadcast dates, with even Winnie mixing up her facts. In *The first Twelve Months of Radio Broadcasting in Australia* Ron Langhans went back to primary sources and made sense of the confusion. Radio 2SB Sydney commenced regular programming with an ‘experimental’ concert program on 23 November 1923, comprising performances by soprano Dorothy Deering, bass Sydney Pick, contralto Thelma Druitt, baritone George Sanders, cellist Mr Thorp plus a string quartet. 2SB’s Official Opening was on 13 December (and the next year the station became 2BL). Competitor station Radio 2FC, which was owned by, and based in, Sydney department store Farmer & Company, followed with a test transmission on 5 December 1923. This is often recorded as the official launch date but 2FC was officially on air on 9 January 1924. A broadcast of the first act of *The Southern Maid* was presented direct from the stage at Her Majesty’s Theatre Sydney on that night, through the courtesy of the directors of J.C. Williamson Ltd and J. and N. Tait, otherwise known as The Firm.

Was Dorothy the first soprano to sing on radio throughout Australia? Winnie believed she had a claim to this distinction but it depends on the historic importance to be placed on the *Ethereal Harmonies* concert, as well as its context. Josie Melville was the first performer, male or female, to sing on radio, but although she had a sweet singing voice she was a musical comedy star and dancer, not a soprano. Dorothy Deering was a soprano, but she sang on 2SB nearly four months after our Dorothy sang. Other sopranos, including Madame Emily Marks, had participated in the experimental broadcasts from Palings Concert Hall prior to Dorothy’s two appearances in these events and in earlier amateur broadcasts. Although *Ethereal Harmonies* occurred prior to actual programming by the commercial radio stations, it was the first broadcasting event after the official regulations came into force which supports Winnie’s claim.

Free musical recitals to promote the latest technological innovations in music were common in the 1920s, especially those given by Paling’s Music Stores. Dorothy was the featured artist during the final of a series of recitals held at St James Hall Sydney on 11 October 1923, and repeated the following week due to high demand. A novelty trio, comprising a violin, a voice and the Behning ‘Art Echo’ Reproducing Player Piano was an Australian first, according to the advertising. ‘The novelty of working a grand piano on the stage without any human manipulation, playing in a lifelike manner piano solos, accompanying violinist, and providing the music for a couple dancing,

finishing up with a thrilling ensemble, is very striking.’⁹ A similar program was presented at Newcastle’s Central Hall on 8 November. Word was now getting around regarding Dorothy’s earlier radio work.

Miss Rudder has sung with success for wireless concerts, and her voice has been heard through wireless installations by many Newcastle music lovers. They will now appreciate the opportunity of seeing her on the concerts platform as well as of hearing her remarkably cultured voice.¹⁰

Dorothy continued her pioneering broadcasting work with 2FC in 1924, with performances listed for July through to October. The station’s programming, the elegant studios and a stronger signal led to an element of cultural snobbery among its listeners. All programs were broadcast live from the studio. As the technology was still in its infancy they were not recorded. Radio must have been a strangely mechanical medium for a vocalist such as Dorothy, singing into a microphone with no audience present to provide atmosphere, applause and a big bunch of flowers after the performance.¹¹



The words ‘Requesting’ and ‘Wondering’ are written on the back of this portrait of Dorothy.
Advertisement for the Paling Player Piano. *J.C. Williamson Magazine* 1928. Author’s collection.

Chapter Eleven

Open Sesame! *The Forty Thieves*

All actors must be possessed by their talent to really enjoy it. Then their craft becomes magic. ~ Charles Norman¹²

'It is only a man of nomadic instincts fond of wandering, and of no settled place of habitation, who would be tempted to follow up [the theatrical profession].'

~ Mr Deputy President Webb, Arbitration Court May 1924¹³



The Forty Thieves program. Collection of Frank Van Straten.

Sydney was a very competitive city for performers. Dorothy was just one of dozens of sopranos from all walks of life vying for the public's popularity and doing the rounds of the producers, theatre managers and agents. Her career on the stage and concert platform was achieved by building up her networks and negotiating directly with managers and entrepreneurs, coupled with talent, dainty beauty and a drive to succeed. No personal agent or manager was taking care of her interests. This was not uncommon.

A look at the wages and conditions of workers in live entertainment in 1924 highlights some obvious discrepancies between men and women. The Award handed down in the Arbitration Court in the claim between the Actors' Federation of Australia against the Entrepreneurs Association of Australia prescribed the minimum wages for the chorus and ballet at £5/15/- for adult males, £4/10/- for females, while male actors earned £6 and females £5/5/-, with 10/- a day allowed for travel expenses and double time on Sundays. Actors and actresses had to provide themselves with a specified wardrobe, as we saw from Dorothy's contract with Fullers. For women this consisted of one walking dress, one evening dress, one bathing costume and two pair of shoes or boots.

Years of hard work was about to pay dividends for Dorothy—a lead role in pantomime was in the offing. Late in 1923, at the age of thirty, she was offered the role of Principal Girl Morgiana in *The Forty Thieves*.

Classic productions based on fairy tales or nursery rhymes such as *Cinderella* and plays including *Peter Pan* were popular offerings by J.C. Williamson and Fullers during the Christmas season. In 1923 the wealth of Christmas fare included Fuller's annual pantomime *Little Red Riding Hood* with Jim Gerald as the Dame and Marie La Varre as Boy Blue, stylish male impersonator Nellie Kolle in *Dick Whittington* at the suburban Majestic Theatre in Newtown and *Rockets*, a revusical pantomime starring Lorna and Toots Pounds, playing the Grand Opera House.¹⁴



Forty Thieves advertising and publicity. *Sunday Times* Sydney 16 December 1923. Trove NLA.

The World's News Sydney 29 December 1923. Trove NLA.

The play was a great success, but the audience was a disaster ~ Oscar Wilde

This version of *The Forty Thieves* was produced by Harry G. Musgrove in association with J.C. Williamson Ltd at the Hippodrome. Designed as a venue for Wirth's circus in 1913, the Hippodrome was a colossal structure which held almost 2,000 patrons. The movable circus ring could be converted hydraulically to a 12 metre diameter water tank for seals and polar bears. Backstage, scenic artists were busy creating the magic cave, a desert oasis, a ship's deck, and, as a finale, the mirrored Red and White Palace.¹⁵

By 28 November, the Principal Girl had 'not yet been divulged', but by 8 December Dorothy was mentioned as taking on the role. This was an impressive personal feat. The high-calibre cast included Jack Cannot as Ali Baba, Bert Harrow as the Dame, Dan Niblo, in blackface, as the Lieutenant of the Forty, J.B. Atholwood, Vera Benson, Elsie Parkes and the Five St. Leons, a quintet of renowned acrobats. Githa Calvert was originally cast as Ganem, the Principal Boy, but was replaced by Kitty Reidy for reasons unexplained. The *Referee's* Goodie Reeve had a few thoughts on the matter.

Christmas is drawing near, and we are all anxious to know who, and what, we shall see in forthcoming pantomimes. But information regarding such matters is hard to obtain until the respective firms deem it wise to make announcements. In the first place, everything is cloaked in mystery for fear rivals may steal another's thunder, and secondly, no one ever knows until the contracts are signed who the dames and principal boys will be. Many artistes have the knack of demanding a few extra pounds at the last moment, and this frequently results in late changes of cast. Next week we shall probably know all about it.¹⁶

Publicity for this lavishly staged show was extensive. The advertising didn't hold back on the hyperbole: A Colossal Achievement in Grandeur and Gaiety; Fast and Furious; All the funniest specialties ever seen; all the liveliest songs; all the grandest scenery; all the prettiest girls. There was something for everyone, especially if you liked animals and flora—the Beautiful Sesame Ballet, the Flying Duck (which was accidentally thrown off-stage during one performance, landing on the head of the orchestral conductor), the Wonder Mirror, the Tree That Eats Sandwiches, the Frog Ballet, the Monkey Folk, the Funny Rabbit Hunt, not to forget the Foolish Stairs.¹⁷

The Theatre magazine described Dorothy as ‘an Australian girl with a pretty Australian face’ while *The Sun* thought her performance ‘charming’. *Everyone’s* said she was ‘a pleasant looking damsel who did very well under the circumstances’. For the first time photographs of her and even illustrations were accompanying newspaper articles.

New to the Australian stage is Dorothy Rudder, who plays principal girl ... Miss Rudder is an Australian, however ... Pantomime work is a distinct change for her, but she has adapted herself well to it, and makes Morgiana a winsome little lady with a most appealing voice.²⁰

Song was her greatest asset, and her well-balanced and melodious soprano voice secured for her an enthusiastic ovation.²¹

Kitty Reidy was also Australian which was not the norm for these roles. The leads for pantomimes, and for most other forms of theatre, were often imported from England or America. Reidy scored a great deal of critical praise as Ganem, the *Referee* describing her as ‘shapely and gifted’²² However looking good while wearing hot woollen tights was not enough to save the show. *The Bulletin* delivered a stinging review on 27 December:

For breaking and entering the Sydney Hippodrome “The Forty Thieves” (there really are only thirty of them, all, shocking to have to admit, women) have been sentenced to appear twice daily in a phantasmagoria of colorful dances ... The songs are sung some of them sparkling, others moderately well; but few of them are worth singing even in the bath. The dancing hasn’t much novelty either. Of the artists, the principal boy, Kitty Reidy, doesn’t swashbuckle like most p.bs [principal boys]; her charm is in the feminine piquancy and a sweet voice. Dorothy Rudder, the principal girl, relies more upon a passable warble than a stage presence ... A show that is easy to endure, designed for kiddies rather than adults and one that will be better after the lawn mower has been run over it.²³

The Theatre reviewer thought the problem was a lack of local stories:

The Forty Thieves was not a success and had not a long run ... It is to be feared that this old, old story is getting a little threadbare in these days of a craving for

novelty... why should not the pantomime be brought up to date like everything else ... Could nothing be done to exploit the Australian nursery tales, say, May Gibbs Gumnut Babies ... “The Theatre” thinks that there is a fine opportunity here for our own writers and playwrights.²⁴

Unfortunately the season, which ran from December 22 to 19 January 1924, was a financial disaster. As a result, Harry Musgrove, who previously had a successful career, went bankrupt. He was forced to sell his interest in Tivoli Theatres to Williamsons and died in obscurity.

Perusing a great number of reviews of shows that Dorothy and others appeared in, I noted earlier that few local theatre critics appraised a performance with depth or insight. Well-known female singers were usually described as famous, celebrated, greatest, gifted, talented, charming, brilliant, rising stars, superb or beautiful, with either a dainty stage presence or a commanding physical presence. Dozens of sopranos were described as the latest protégé of Melba. Inadequate singers were described as a disappointment, weak, off-colour, strident, unpolished, having a thin voice, a limited range, or being out of tune. Analysis of a more critical, less superficial kind is harder to find, other than that given to students competing at Eisteddfods, where the voice rather than appearance was the focus of comment.

An item appeared in the 9 August 1923 edition of *Stage and Society* in which Oliver Pageant discussed the changes to the way theatre critics reviewed a show. A criticism from *The Monitor* on 28 December 1833 of the local company in *Richard III* was cited as an example of old style reviewing: ‘Our Sydney Company tried their hand at tragedy on Thursday night. It was a complete failure. Knowles was the only one who could be at all tolerated. All our actors should go to school before they enact tragedy.’²⁵ That’s a no holds barred review! Pageant doubted that any of his contemporary Sydney critics, apart from Frank Morton, the editor of *The Triad*, would have the courage to make such a statement. He felt there was little need for constructive criticism in the press as the purpose of modern theatre had changed. In Shakespeare’s time the theatre was more serious, and musical comedy had not been heard of. ‘But now, the theatre is the stage of entertainment and stars are made overnight. It is far more important that a comedian should be able to shake a pair of agile legs than play Falstaff ... although the Repertory theatre has risen to correct the tinsel age.’²⁶ Was someone now a star due to talent or did charisma and celebrity status dominate?

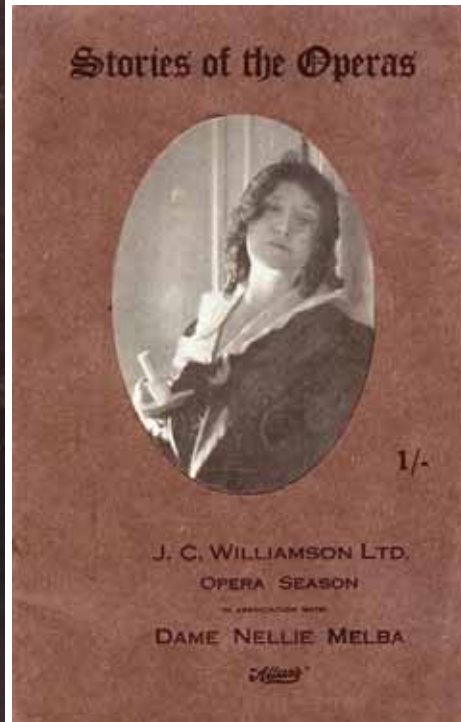


Cropped front page of *Stage and Society* journal from 3 January 1924 found in the suitcase.

Front cover of *Stage and Society* with Dorothy advertising Mercolized Wax 3 January, 1924. Photograph by John W. Walker. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

In another first for Dorothy, she scored a Mercolized Wax promotion, the only advertising campaign she was known to have undertaken. Many of the leading female performers of the day endorsed this face cream to ‘protect, preserve and beautify’ their skin. Dorothy was described as a ‘dainty advocate’ for the product. This lightening cream was recommended for sunburn and freckles. Additionally, the manufacturer, US company Dearborn Limited, claimed Mercolized Wax had ‘the advantage of not promoting hair growth’ and protected against damage done by theatrical makeup due to its ‘imperviousness to outside influences’.²⁷ Each of its ingredients was ‘absolutely harmless’ and guaranteed not to contain any form of mercury.²⁸ The customers were unaware that Mercolized Wax did contain ammoniated mercury, so what price beauty?²⁹ A coloured glass slide which Dorothy used for promotion of the product during interval at stage and cinema shows was originally in the suitcase. Sad to say it has disappeared.

In March Dorothy was noted as a guest at a Sydney social event rather than primarily providing the complimentary entertainment. These types of invitations were rare. She attended a farewell afternoon at the Wentworth Café for Miss Daphne Knight, a leading teacher of operatic dancing (a new teaching method for ballet dancers) who was returning home to Auckland on the *Niagara*. Miss Knight was presented with a floral boomerang.³⁰



Wonderful image most likely of Dorothy Rudder.

Stories of the Operas program. J.C. Williamson Ltd/ Dame Nellie Melba Opera Season 1924.

Dorothy kept a program entitled *Stories of the Operas J. C. Williamson Ltd Opera Season in association with Dame Nellie Melba*. She obtained it during Melba's 1924 tour which commenced at Her Majesty's Theatre Sydney on 29 March. But she did not see the renowned diva perform. Melba developed bronchitis soon after she arrived in Sydney and did not sing in any of the operas.

Meanwhile Dorothy's regular broadcasts with 2FC continued and in September she sang at a dinner in the clubrooms of the Commercial Travellers' Association:

CLUBMEN'S PARADISE INVADED BY WOMEN

Commercials Social Dinner—Elaborate Frocking—Community Singing Popular

No after-dinner speeches marred the enjoyment of those who met at the second social reunion dinner arranged by the member of the Commercial Travellers' Association at their club-rooms, Moore Street, on Saturday night.

Gaily-colored balloons floated overhead and vied with the elaborate frocking of the ladies, who on this special occasion invaded the clubmen's preserve. The

tables were massed with decorations of poppies and peach blossom, There was a little black golliwog for each of the guests.

To the tune of "K-K-K-Katy" and other popular air—for community singing figured on the programme—the dinner proceeded merrily and was followed by a dance.

An excellent musical programme was contributed by Miss Dorothy Rudder [and other local talent].³¹

Rose Day, a big fundraiser for Sydney charities, was held on 10 October. 'Look at Martin-place,' said *The Sun* newspaper. 'A flaring red and yellow carnival. Girls and chocolate wheels. Clowns and dancers. Gay bandits with sprigs of fern in their ears. Trumpets and roosters and pianos and giggles and squeals. And beneath this lively surface—Insidious rows of jam-pots and tomato sauce, and jardinières, and lingerie, and saucepans, and figs, and radishes, and hair oil, and tin trains.'³²

Rose Day was quite a social occasion, with sixty-four stalls, many stocked by leading firms, providing goods such as kitchen supplies and toys for the kiddies. Bands and theatrical artists from J.C. Williamson, Fullers and the Tivoli performed both on the day and at night while Dorothy, along with some of the male chorus from the Grand Opera Company and artists from Clay's Vaudeville assisted at Mrs Lightband's stall. No doubt Dorothy sang too. Her stall earned the tremendous sum of £350, aided by the sale of autographed photographs of Italian soprano Toti dal Monti.

For Dorothy, 1924 was a great year for tripping the light fantastic down the streets of Sydney.

Chapter Twelve

The conjugal rights case 1926. Part One



Sensational article on Smith vs. Smith Conjugal Rights Case. *Truth* Sydney 4 July 1926. Trove NLA.

In Sydney Dorothy met up with William John Leonard (Len) Smith, a man who would alter the trajectory of her career and provide the opportunity for her biggest starring role yet—and it was not on the stage. As a result her personal life would be exposed to the full glare of public scrutiny and titillation in newspapers around the country. Dorothy was now thirty-one years old, although she looked a great deal younger.



Dorothy, soprano and variety theatre artist, the bride.

Len Smith, mining engineer, the groom, to right of pilot.

Len Smith was a tall, well-built, friendly-looking engineer from Wollongong NSW; the type of man who looked good in a soft cream shirt with the sleeves rolled up. Born in 1892, he was a year older than Dorothy. Smith had worked for tin mining companies in the Federated Malay States, Burma and Siam (Thailand) since the age of nineteen. At first glance the pairing of a couple with theatre and mining interests seems an odd match but Dorothy's family had been involved in the Australian mining industry since Enoch William Rudder's time and Dorothy's own father had dabbled too, but with little success.



Two clippings from the women's page of the *Bulletin* 18 December 1924. The clipping on left, which was found in the suitcase, has the details regarding Len Smith removed.

Item from 'Marriage Bells' section of *The Sun* 14 December 1924.

The couple apparently met up at a party and by October 1924 started going about town together. 'I was very fond of him and he seemed very fond of me.'¹ The weather was rainy and misty at 6.45pm on Wednesday 17 December, the day they were married.



Dorothy Rudder in wedding dress and veil. Photograph by Howard Harris Sydney.



The Smith-Rudder wedding party. Wentworth Hotel. Proof photograph by K.H. McLeod Sydney.

The nuptials attracted plenty of attention in the social pages. *Stage and Society* magazine described 'fluffy haired' Dorothy as 'one of the prettiest brides of the season'. The fully-choral ceremony was held at St James's Church which was decorated with white daisies, arum lilies and agapanthus. The four bridesmaids, all

relatives of Dorothy's, received diamond brooches and strings of pearls from the bridegroom. Len Smith also picked up the substantial wedding tab of £79. Sixty-five guests attended the reception at the ultra-fashionable Wentworth Hotel and Café 'where copious libations were poured'. Smith gave the chef carte blanche in his preparations. The menu included Oysters au Naturel, Bouches de Crevettes (small prawn pastries), ox tongue and crème trifle.²

The photographer's proofs of the wedding party have an odd theatrical quality to them. The bridal party is standing stiffly, little connection is apparent between bride and groom and the bride's cheeks have been tinted. By contrast the hand-tinted full-length photographs of Dorothy in her bridal finery are stunning. The *Sydney Morning Herald* detailed Dorothy's beautiful wedding dress.

The bridal gown was of ivory beauty crepe satin, richly embroidered on the bodice with pearls. The skirt tunic of georgette had four panels edged with marabout, and was finished with pearl cabachons and orange blossom. The embroidered veil was held in place with a coronet of pearls and orange blossom, and the long court train was lined with rucked pink georgette, and finished with true lover's knots of pearls and orange blossom. The bride carried a bouquet of pale pink and white rosebuds and stephanotis, and wore diamond earrings, the gifts of the bride groom ... The bride travelled in a blue georgette frock, trimmed with silver beads, and black satin cape. Her blue and gold tissue hat was trimmed with hand-made flowers.³

By marrying Dorothy gave up a potential weekly stage income of £15, more than three times the average male wage of £4/14/3, so in compensation on 1 December Len executed an assignment to transfer 16,000 Tepas Tin Dredging Limited shares to her. The plan was for the couple to leave for Penang on 3 January and live there in a waterfront bungalow.

Violinist William J. Grieves sent Dorothy an affectionate note from his home, poetically named *Lilac*. 'To wish my dear charming friend a surfeit of the rarest and sweetest exaltations of the Spirit of Life. Perfect Love, Peace and Happiness!' Was it perfect love between Dorothy and Len Smith? According to family tradition, Dorothy walked out on Smith on their wedding night after discovering he was not as rich as she thought and most likely died a virgin.

The complex and contradictory narrative of the marriage breakdown and the restitution of conjugal rights and divorce cases which followed in 1926 and 1929 is compiled from court records, letters and extensive press coverage. Even when they first met is open to interpretation. According to the *Bulletin*, Dorothy first encountered Smith while touring with the *Vanity Fair* Company in 1919 (most likely in Penang) but the couple both testified they only met eight to ten weeks prior to the wedding when he was on holidays in Sydney.

A reporter from Sydney's *Truth*, a popular weekly tabloid with an emphasis on the sensational, natively summarised the events which led to the initial conjugal rights court case in 1926.

LEAVE IT TO SMITH

Take a reputedly wealthy tin-mines' engineer from the wilds of Siam; a mercurial little stage-singer; a swift courtship; a gift of £5000 worth of scrip; a fashionable wedding at St. James's; a swagger breakfast at the Wentworth; a hectic jazz dance.

A quarrel in a taxi-cab, in which the bridegroom smacked the bride across the face; and she retaliated by banging him with her bridal bouquet.

A weeping bride running home to Mamma and Poppa; the groom's repentance; a forty-eight hours' honeymoon at the Mountains, spoiled because it wasn't a money-moon.

A dash by the enraged bride for the city and oblivion; and a long trek back to the jungle bungalow in Malaysia by a lonesome bridegroom.

Add some lawyers and some costs, and the little singer staging a "come-back" in a crowded Court, and there you have it—the story of Siamese Smith's smashed romance.⁴

Presided over by Judge Langer Owen, the proceedings commenced in the Supreme Court of NSW, court case number 236, on 13 April 1926. Len Smith then returned to Siam and the hearings continued on 30 June, 1 and 2 July. Dorothy was represented by James Linton, a partner in the establishment firm of Stephens and Linton. In contrast Ernest Abigail, Smith's dapper, irrepressible and intimidating solicitor, had successfully worked his way up the legal ladder even though he was not always found on the right side of the law. The *Arrow* described Abigail's skills.

With a genial and credulous smile, Abigail would lull the doubts of the witness who entered the box with a feeling of outward dread of the terrible cross-examiner. Step by step, Abigail would proceed; gaining the confidence of the witness. Then, with alarming suddenness, would come the startling transformation. With his lips drawn back, his body quivering, and his voice rising in harsh accusation, the real Abigail would emerge from the friendly personality. Under the rain of accusative questions the witness would wilt and flounder in confusion and dismay. With an eye on the jury, Ernie Abigail would deliver thrust and stab until the witness, thoroughly discomfited and scarcely knowing what his stammering tongue had said, would stagger from the witness box.⁵

The *National Advocate* (Bathurst) described Dorothy as ‘a pretty young woman, stylishly dressed’ and Smith as ‘a handsome young man’.⁶ For her court appearance on 2 July, a cold, cloudy and unsettled day with heavy showers passing, Dorothy was dressed to impress, her elegant woollen suit set off with a perky hat and a fox fur draped around her neck. She held a long patterned scarf in her hands and tucked a handbag under her arm.

Truth depicted Len Smith as a desirable Tarzan type of man, with a fine Malaysian art collection and Dorothy as a kind of trophy wife.

Battling for a decade and a half ... with jungle fever, fleas, flies, mosquitoes, and other of that equatorial province’s magnificent natural resources was part of the life of Smith...

He is a fine stamp of a South-Coast native, big and hefty, and about 30 years of age. His tropic tan and good looks won him the regard of many women, and in December 1924 he added a wife to his collection of souvenirs.

Smith showed as keen a taste for art in this choice as he did in the gathering of his Malaysian collection. She was nice to look upon, babyish of face, with a retroussé nose, pouting red lips, and languishing blue eyes—quite a beauty. And when he was full-fed with her beauty, he could listen for hours to her voice.⁷

Many journalists found the story ‘strange’ and ‘extraordinary’ and even Judge Owen ‘found the facts in the case very peculiar’. The *Evening News* headline of 2 July indicated both he and Mr Abigail had a challenge on their hands.

A LOT TO SAY AND SHE SAID IT. SPEECHES TO COUNSEL JUDGE POWERLESS

Great amusement was created in the Divorce Court to-day during Mr. Abigail’s cross-examination of Dorothy Smith, whose demeanour in the witness-box bore more than a passing resemblance to that of an actress in a smart comedy. She asked Mr. Abigail as many questions as he put to her.⁸

Truth provided another revealing insight into Dorothy’s behaviour.

“Dorothy May”, once Rudder, now Smith, may not have been a brilliant star in “The Forty Thieves” panto, on the concert platform, or in the Farmer’s studio—but she staged a fine act in the Divorce Court ... She talked Bench, Bar and audience deaf dumb and blind. She waved arms in stagy gestures. She smiled; she expostulated; she pleaded; she waxed indignant; she addressed questions to counsel, and she indulged in satire. Every question bought a speech; delivered at a rate of 200 words a minute until at last Mr Abigail gasped, waved his hands impotently, and sat down. Then Dorothy yawned and flounced from the box. She had staged a brilliant turn ... Restless, nervy, never still a moment; pouting her red lips one moment, smiling the next; ... She has a thousand little mannerisms, the most peculiar of which is opening her mouth very widely, as if about to yawn, and poking out her tongue or inverting it. Anon she screws up her lips as if about to whistle, rolls her eyes in real movie style, pouts and shrugs her shoulders. These may be stage mannerisms, but they look somewhat bizarre in the witness-box ... Dorothy indulged in a most prodigious yawn, just like a Persian pussy about to take an afternoon nap. The brown fox fur choker about her neck lent a touch of realism to this idea.⁹

Sister Winnie was also argumentative and combative in the witness box; Judge Owen telling her she was responsible for bringing trouble on herself.¹⁰ *Truth* reported she was given such a rough spin by Mr Abigail that she nearly had a fit at luncheon time.

Winnie was initially impressed when Smith told her he brought in £1,000 a year and owned a waterfront bungalow. He even wanted to purchase an expensive table grand piano in Penang rather than transport the piano they already had from Sydney.¹¹ Abigail challenged Winnie. 'You thought Smith was a fine fellow, didn't you, and a splendid 'catch' for you sister, Dorothy?' She replied 'I thought he was a fine fellow but I can't say about a splendid 'catch'.¹²

Winnie's twelve-year-old daughter Gwen wrote a sweet letter which contrasted with the grown-up issues being aired in the courtroom. 'How are you after the "terrible ordeal"? I hope you and Auntie are well. I suppose you quaked in your shoes when it came to your turn to get up in the witness box. How did you get on?' She also mentioned her black cat Nig had a bad cold.

The marriage dramas commenced earlier than most—on the wedding night itself. Who would Judge Owen believe?

Dorothy testified she had gastro-influenza for three days prior to the marriage. The doctor had ordered ten days bed rest and issued a certificate. But Len Smith was having none of it. Declaring they were to be married if he had to carry her to the church, Smith threw the doctor's certificate aside, put his hand on her head and said 'You've got no temperature; the doctor doesn't know what he's talking about.'

Dorothy was to come back home after the ceremony. 'I remained in bed until the day of the marriage till 3pm. I was still very ill ... It took me three hours to dress [this statement brought laughter from spectators in the gallery] ... Everything went smoothly at the wedding, and I got into the car thinking I was coming home. My husband said to the driver 'Hotel Australia.' I said 'I cannot go to the Hotel Australia; I have not my clothes with me.' He said 'You are my wife now,' and smacked me across the face. I said 'Yes, I am your wife, but in name only,' and expressed my surprise at him doing such a thing, and went home in tears. He left marks on my face.' The next day he asked her to forgive him.

While Smith adamantly denied hitting Dorothy, his sister, Mrs Ethel Grey, had written a letter to Dorothy contradicting him. 'I will never forget his wedding day. How sad it was for him, instead of being his happiness that is why his temper was ragged by night. Unfortunate such a thing should happen on his wedding night, but I am sure he will repent it all his life. He said he forgot himself for a moment.'¹³ (Mrs Grey would later deny the slapping incident occurred, telling the court she was alluding to Dorothy getting her brother's Tepah shares but not living with him.)

Len Smith: At the wedding party 'My wife sat alongside me. She was perfectly happy and was drinking champagne and joking ... dropping ice down people's backs.' She danced with a certain doctor but not with him. She refused to come back to the hotel with him as she was feeling ill. Smith told her 'You have been dancing with different men to-night, and if you can dance with other men you can come home with me'.¹⁴

After Smith took Dorothy home he went to his sister. The next day Dorothy told him she had stayed up chatting until 2 pm with Alice and Winnie. She did not want to go on their honeymoon, but the following day he told her he 'could not walk among his friends like a fool'. She now agreed to go. The couple left for fashionable Mount Victoria in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney on Friday 19 December.

Smith told the court he had £300 sent from Siam at the time of the marriage, and £160 in his possession when he went on his honeymoon. Dorothy said he had only £1 in his pocket, not enough to even join a party of sightseeing tourists, which left her humiliated.¹⁵

HONEYMOON THAT LAPSED FOR THE WANT OF A QUORUM *Truth*,
Sydney 4 July 1926

Smith continued: 'We stayed at Mt. Victoria for a couple of days. On 21 December she had a telephone call from Sydney and after conversing with someone ... she said to me: 'I want £300 to give to my father. Will you let me have the money?' I told her I had already paid for the wedding breakfast which should have been paid for by her father. (On the wedding night Winnie had overheard Smith asking her father to cover the expenses but F.J. replied, 'No, you wanted a big wedding and undertook to pay for it; you can do so.')¹⁶ Dorothy wouldn't say why F.J. required money. 'If you don't give it to me,' she said, 'I won't live with you.' Smith admitted he never got in touch with F.J. himself to discuss the money issue. Dorothy then took the train back to Sydney. He asked her not to go, but she insisted, and had not lived with him since.¹⁷

Dorothy said she was still in ill health at Mount Victoria and that the request for £300 was a fabrication. F.J. was to be a witness; however when Mr Linton met with Dorothy on 29 June she told him her father was too ill to attend court. I discovered that the actual reason for his non-appearance was probably not health related. He was planning to remarry.

It was possible that F.J. was short of funds. Dorothy said he had been manager of Langley Bros shipping company for eighteen years and had a good salary and bank account. In February 1923 F.J. became the proprietor of the Winsome Hotel at Tuncester near Lismore NSW which was owned by Tooth and Co. He was still running the hotel at the time of Dorothy's marriage but had lost money as business was slow. The building had white ants and the foundations had given way. By February 1924 he applied for the licence for a stately new hotel (also called the Winsome Hotel) to be erected at Bridge Street North Lismore. However due to ill-health F.J. only managed the hotel for four months, from July until the end of October 1925. During the court case, in July 1926, Winnie stated that his current salary was £6 per week plus board. At this time he was running a silent picture theatre so Winnie was stretching the truth here.

Dorothy's testimony continued: 'Len said that he had to inspect a mine [an unusual thing to do on a honeymoon but as it happened there was a disused coal mine to the south-east of Mount Victoria] so on 22 December I stayed with my mother again in Sydney.' He told her he would see her the next day. Two days later Dorothy was admitted to Cooina Private Hospital in Neutral Bay by Macquarie Street physician Dr Brennand. The same day she organised for Dr Brennand to send a certificate to her solicitor which stated 'I was called to see Mrs. Dorothy Smith at Boyce Street Glebe this morning. I found her in a very nervous and unstrung condition almost verging on a breakdown from recent worry. It is absolutely necessary that she should go into a hospital for treatment ... she has asked me to advise you of this.'

During her 1929 divorce case Dorothy was initially adamant she 'couldn't remember' organising the doctor's letter and was absolutely puzzled; her recall improved when shown the actual document. The reason she had arranged for the doctor's certificate in the first place was because 'I was frightened of the man, the way he treated me up there; he did not treat me very well he treated me in a horrible way ... but I tolerated it.' When asked to elaborate she said 'I did not have any peace of mind, he wanted me to live in the bedroom all the time; he is that type of man.'¹⁸

Dorothy said she attempted to contact Smith at Mrs Grey's residence from the hospital. Mr Grey answered but did not know Smith's whereabouts. According to Alice, Smith had phoned the house and was told Dorothy had been hospitalised; Winnie had overheard the conversation. Smith stated when he first phoned the family Alice did not know Dorothy's whereabouts. He rang again but 'when they would hear me they would put down the receiver'. Who was telling the truth?

On Christmas Day Smith said he sent a letter to Dorothy and left contact details with his sister. He then boarded the intercontinental train to Perth in order to catch a ship leaving for the Malay States. Dorothy's solicitors claimed he left Australia posing as a single man for passport purposes. Smith later testified that the berth had been pre-booked by his company but he did not recollect the name of the vessel.

Three weeks after the wedding Alice unexpectedly became ill with pleurisy and myocarditis. Fourteen days later, on 23 January 1925, at the age of sixty-two, she passed away at Lewisham Hospital, with the funeral held on the 26th. Because Alice had died intestate, F.J. was granted Letters of Administration of her £115 estate. School teacher friend Harry Barnes sent a comforting letter to Dorothy. He had not heard about the shaky state of her marriage.

If anyone will ever inherit eternal happiness be assured your dear mother will. She was a dear, good mother to you, and I know how deep was her love for you and how unselfishly her life was devoted to your interests. You will find comfort, dear Dorothy, I am certain, in the fact that you also deeply loved her, and you were a good daughter to her ... I know how hard the parting is, coming at a time when you would naturally look for much happiness. Nevertheless your husband will be a great help to you in bearing your trial.¹⁹

Dorothy was still feeling deep sadness about her mother's death more than a year later. Dorothy told Mr Abigail Alice had taken the doctor's certificate to the solicitor then responded: 'It hurts me for you to refer to my mother. Can't you let the dead rest?' She then broke down crying.

Dorothy and Smith both come across as very hurt by what had happened in the days after their marriage, with pride, game playing, mistrust and misunderstanding getting in the way of a real reconciliation. Dorothy may have been having second thoughts about her life with Smith in Penang, or become frightened of what being married entailed, either career-wise or in the bedroom. Maybe she had a lover. The couple were not just on different pages; they weren't even reading the same book.

The involvement of Winnie may also have influenced the turn of events. Winnie was called 'Big Mummy' by her grandchildren (a term that has a Tennessee Williams ring to it). They said she was a person who often interfered in the lives of others, was hard on husband Arthur and more likely to be critical and controlling than affectionate.

Tall and elegant, Winnie was a talented pianist and music teacher who had chosen a family over a career. She may have been envious of Dorothy's more glamorous lifestyle but she was also proud of her achievements. Genuine affection existed between the sisters but Dorothy, the youngest sibling, seemed to take on the little sister role, often receiving advice from Winnie rather than providing it.

Following Alice's death Dorothy went visiting. She stayed with friends in Brisbane until April 1925 and then went to brother Clarrie and Alice's relatives in Murwillumbah en route to F.J. in Lismore. The following months were spent in Sydney. Using her married name, Mrs W.J.L. Smith, on 5 August she boarded TSS *Marella*, a beautifully appointed twin screw steamer which plied the Australia to Indonesia and Singapore service. Dorothy however disembarked in Brisbane. She gave no professional performances during this time. The momentum she had achieved by appearing in *The Forty Thieves* was well and truly lost but she was still looking after her voice by taking lessons at William Beattie's singing studio.

Money was tight and Smith had not yet wired any funds. Abigail wanted to know Dorothy had been supporting herself while Smith was away.

Mr Abigail: You have been in receipt of money for your public service?

- I was broadcast three times a week from Farmer's studio. But marrying Smith has ruined my career. I had my home, my mother and father, and needed nothing when I met him.²⁰ Winnie backed this up, testifying that at times before her marriage Dorothy had professional engagements which brought her £20 a week.



'How do you know I have a fur coat?' Dorothy asked Mr Abigail.

The topic of fur coats also became an opportunity for some thrust and parry. F.J. had presumably paid Dorothy's expenses while she had travelled about after the marriage but Abigail implied someone else covered her clothing costs.

Mr Abigail: How much does it cost for you to dress? About 3-4 pounds a week?

- Oh, no. I never spent that much on dress in my life.

What did your fur coat cost you?

- How do you know I have a fur coat?

"I have seen it," replied Mr Abigail.

"How do you know it is mine?" demanded respondent sharply.

Dorothy afterwards admitted to owning an inexpensive fur coat, bought from Mr Wise of the Coronation Hotel in George Street.²¹

Dorothy was asked if she knew a man by the name of Cecil Mason. She did. She told the court he had visited her at her mother's place but had not visited her husband nor assisted her father obtain a job at a picture show (F.J. went into silent film exhibition in 1926). Mason was not mentioned again in the cross-examinations but a suspicion was being planted. Was he more than just a friend? And what was the picture show connection? If she was having an affair this may explain her ambivalence regarding settling down with Smith and make sense of her subsequent behaviour. In her heart she may have wished to be with Mason but he happened to be a married man with three young children.

HIS WIFELESS HOME IN WILD MALAYSIA *Truth*, Sydney 2 May 1926

Dorothy did not hear from Smith for eight months. The waiting game continued. Who would make the next move? Each would say they had no contact details, but in reality neither party was hard to find. Dorothy now tried to locate Smith through her solicitors. In July 1925 communication finally recommenced, with a cable dispatched to Smith via Mrs Grey which said 'Seen Dorothy; wants to go to you.' For some reason Dorothy would not initially give Mrs. Grey her address, but in August told her she resided at the Waldorf Apartments in Cremorne Point, an upmarket apartment building built in the Federation style.

From a reading of two quite personal letters shown to Judge Owen as exhibits Dorothy was anxious to join him, at least on paper. Reconciliation was now on the

cards. She first wrote from Winnie and Arthur's country home. Did she consult her solicitor before posting them?

c/o A. Wallace

Pampoolah

Via Taree

Sept. 22nd 1925

Your letter dated Aug. 1st came safely to hand also letter card written from India. I am hoping to hear from you again shortly. No doubt you have received my letters by now, I have written a good many, the trouble was I did not know where to write to until Ethel [Grey] gave me your address. Never mind Len dear do not think I have forgotten you, because I am thinking of you all the time, you know sweetheart it is not my fault that I am not with you as I had all arrangements made to leave on Aug 3rd and would have been with you at the end of August, had you sent me my fare and enough money for clothes. Well, dear I have received both cables for 50 pounds. I am so glad you sent the second 50 pounds as I am badly in need of it. I owed 20 pounds and will have to spend about 40 pounds on clothes for the summer, as I have not been able to buy a thing for myself since Dec. last, so I won't have very much left to last until you come down, you see darling I've just been able to live. If poor dear Mother had not died I would have still had my house but, all this year I've been living just anyhow and have fretted terribly, but, I am hoping that when we meet sweetheart that we will be very, very happy. If you act the true kind good husband to me, you will find me a very loving and good wife.

Len dear you know I am longing to see you, and if you can't come down before Jan. send me enough money to live on, as Xmas is coming on and I won't be able to stay here much longer as my sister and her husband are going away for a trip. If you send me sufficient money I will take a flat and have it all nice for you when you arrive, Ethel suggested this to me and said she was writing you the same, I think it is a lovely idea, as it is far better for us to be on our own, and what a time we'll have, you can love me as much as you want to darling. Len I have been very lonely all the year, what with you being over there and poor Mother in her grave I have just been heartbroken.

Len I am rather hurt that you did not mention poor Mother's death to me; you know you should not have overlooked that. I hope that next year will bring us both a great deal more happiness than we have had this year. Thanks sweetheart for sending me a Kim [kimono], I need one badly, and I hope I receive the toilet [set] safely! Len I will not send you a piece of my hair as it is unlucky, and I know you won't mind, you can kiss it as much as you like when you come down, but, I do hate you being over there and me here, if I had gone on Aug. 3rd I would have had three months with you before you left, but, never mind darling buck up and look forward to a very happy time as I intend to make you as happy as I possibly can, only don't forget your poor little wife has to be fed and clothed while I am waiting for you, send me a cheque for a Xmas present. Well, darling mine be good and write to me often hoping you are well and be a good husband to me while you are away from me.

Tons and tons of love and kisses from your loving little wife.

Dorothy²²

Over the next few months Smith sent two telegrams telling Dorothy not to join him. As she mentioned in her letter, Dorothy planned to sail (on TSS *Marella*) on 3 August and had booked her ticket but Smith said 'I was in the jungle. I had a lonely job to do.' A problem had come up with one of the directors of his company and he expected to be in Sydney himself by December. Another cable, 'Don't come. No love there.' was sent after Smith had transferred £70 to Dorothy but she then requested extra funds. According to Dorothy some of Smith's letters were affectionate but others were short and rather peculiar. Both parties said they had mislaid some letters and cables which did not impress Judge Owen.

Dorothy's next letter was sent from Sydney.

"Cremorne"

Oct.24th 1925

My darling Husband

I do hope you've received all my letters etc. by this time and I trust that you are not worrying about me. I love you and as long as you treat me right, you will have nothing to complain about. As I explained in my last letter I had debts to meet, a few clothes to buy and have had to pay board etc. so have not much

money left, and as you will not be down until Xmas or January you will have to send me more as soon as possible. I'm frightened to go to the dentists as I have not enough money to keep going on and my teeth need attention badly.

Len you say I'm not to stay anywhere but either Ethel's or Winnie's, now don't be silly, for one thing "Ethel" has not asked me to stay and Winnie is [not?] coming to Sydney, so I've got to board. I am leaving here this week and going up to Dad for a few weeks, I am very worried as poor Dad has to undergo an operation, troubles never come alone, and I've had more than my fair share this year. I've never been so poorly dressed in my life, and have felt ashamed to see people. After such a nice wedding and to see me like this, now Len sweetheart, I know you would like to see me looking nice so for goodness sake send me enough to buy some pretty clothes, if you don't I'll have to arrive in Penang wearing a fig leaf.

Cable me what you are doing; I want to leave by the Marella. I don't want the Montoro, the Marella leaves on Dec. 3rd and again on Feb. 3rd so if you do not come down let me know what to do. I am leading a very quiet life, and just go out visiting my relatives and friends, when you come down you'll have to give me a very good time to make up for all this, if you don't you'll have to sleep by yourself. No darling I don't mean that, we will have plenty of love etc. ... I wish you were here now, I'm very lonely. Ethel is away this week spending a holiday at Mt Victoria. How would you like to be there with me? Now darling look after yourself and let me know and cable me a nice cheque. Hoping that when we meet our life will be nothing else but happiness.

I got my wedding photos done and they cost eight guineas, but, they are beautiful, they had a great big photo of me in their showcase in my wedding gown, everyone said it was beautiful, wait until you see it Len you'll love me more than ever.

Hoping you are well

With lots of love and kisses

Your ever devoted wife

Dorothy xxxxxxxxxxx²³

Chapter Thirteen

The conjugal rights case 1926. Part Two

By November 1925 Dorothy had not yet met up with her husband. But was she meeting up with anyone else?

Dorothy was asked in court if she had gone to Melbourne in that month and stayed at Carlyon's Hotel. Her answer was a simple 'no'. Abigail did not furnish any proof that she had travelled interstate. He just planted a seed of doubt for the judge as to her answer but in her 24 October letter to Smith she mentioned staying with her father for a few weeks, not travelling to Melbourne.¹

On 14 November Dorothy told Len Smith she could not yet travel to Penang as F.J. was still very ill. Ethel Grey was having difficulty contacting Dorothy who did not remember the phone number of Mrs Greenwood's boarding house at 401 Glebe Point Road Glebe where she now had a room. On 21 December Dorothy received a cable from Smith saying he was finally on his way to Sydney. He left by *SS City of Palermo* on 7 January 1926 at a cost of around £40 and initially stopped over in Melbourne.

Winnie would often send in small articles to the local newspapers which proved very helpful in keeping track of Dorothy's activities. She spent Christmas camping with Winnie at the mouth of the Manning River, returning to Sydney on 22 January.

Smith wrote on 8 February that he had arrived in Sydney but expected to leave again soon for Melbourne. The letter was posted to Winnie's Taree address but returned via the postal authorities as being unclaimed. In court Winnie was asked by Mr Abigail if she had recognised Smith's handwriting and refused to accept delivery. She denied ever seeing this missive, suggesting the local postmistress had readdressed it. It read in part:

Dear Dorothy,

A number of months have passed since I saw you and naturally I am anxious to see you and have a good talk with you. Will you let me know at once when and where I can meet you so that we may come to an understanding? I will not be in Sydney many days, in fact I may be leaving on Friday next and trust that you will get in touch with me ... immediately.

Your affectionate husband

Len.²

Smith told Judge Owen he did not wire Dorothy when he first reached Australia as he wanted to surprise her. I get the impression he was waiting for Dorothy to get in touch first and was annoyed she had not left contact details with his sister. In Sydney, in some ways not very different to a small town, Dorothy bumped into a girlfriend who told her Smith had first arrived in town three weeks earlier. This made her angry but of course she had not seen his letter notifying her of his arrival. Ethel Grey told Dorothy that Smith was back in Sydney and wished to see her but Dorothy would not meet him until she obtained legal advice. Dorothy's original plan was for Smith to come over to Glebe Point for dinner that night to discuss their future. He finally caught up with her on the afternoon of 23 February at William Beattie's singing studio at Queen Victoria Markets. It was over a year since they had last seen each other. After all this game playing the meeting did not go well.

Mr Abigail asked why she refused to kiss her husband at the singing studio. According to *Truth* Dorothy replied:

Because he smacked me in the face a few hours after our wedding although I condoned that, it remained in my memory; it still remained deep-rooted in my breast. (Dorothy then dramatically placed a gloved hand on her breast).

One can't forget a blow given three hours after taking sacred oaths at the altar. I found him insincere.

Mr Abigail tried to get in a word, but Dot waved him aside as she would have brushed away a fly. 'Mrs Smith. Mrs Smith—' He got no further. His Honor sat back and smiled ...

- He deserted me when I was ill ... he left me destitute for seven months ... he robbed me of my shares ... he threatened me with the police ...

Mr Abigail waved his papers and opened his mouth. He got no further ... Dorothy held the floor and finished alone ... The gallery smiled in rich enjoyment of the scene. Mr Abigail scratched his head.

His Honor: Witness, calm yourself. You are not doing yourself justice.

His advice to Dorothy was to listen to the questions and then answer them. 'I'm trying to your honor. It's the way he's looking at me'—indicating Mr Abigail, whereat there was a roar [from the gallery].³

Dorothy testified she had 'wanted time to talk the matter over ... I was certainly very much annoyed at him deserting me for over 8 months unsupported and I had not any home. Instead of that my husband got angry and followed me down the street and I

became so frightened of him that I had to speak to a policeman. He [Smith] asked me to go and get my bags and come into a hotel with him, and told me that I was his wife and had to do it. He also asked me to come and have a spot and I said I did not spot ... [later she did admit in court 'I think I have had a little cocktail now and again']. My husband was bouncing and bullying me to such an extent I did not know what to do ... and while I was talking to him [the policeman] he took himself off.'⁴

Smith gave his evidence in a calm, dispassionate manner. Again his version of events was somewhat different from Dorothy's.

'She said she would not kiss me and did not like me. I asked her to ... go for a walk, which we did. I asked her if she had fixed up the flat, and she said No. I said 'You had better fix up at a hotel.' She said 'I have no intention of coming home with you.' I said 'What is the reason?' She said 'If you give me £200 I will think about it.' I then said 'I will have to bid you Good Evening, because I have not £200 to give you at the time.' She said 'You are going to desert me.' I said 'I have no intention of deserting you.' She then called a policeman to have me arrested because I was going to desert her.'⁵

That night Smith turned up at dinner with another man and presented Dorothy with a letter but he refused to have a talk with her. Dorothy read it and said 'I will go and see my solicitor'. Preparations for the conjugal rights case were now in train.

37 Gillies Street
Woolstonecraft
23 February 1926

My dear Dorothy,

Although I have written you many letters asking you to join me in Kuala Lumpur and although I have sent you many cables to the same purpose you have steadfastly remained away from me. I have now taken advantage of my holidays to come and take you with me. Will you join me and live with me as my wife? You know you have no reason in the world why you should not do your duty to me and live with me under my protection.

Lovingly yours,

Len⁶

Smith left but later that night he burst into her flat, looking for evidence of adultery. He took his brother and two detectives along to 'protect himself' because Dorothy's

solicitors had sent a letter saying he would be arrested if he interfered with her. Dorothy asked what he was doing there. He disingenuously replied 'I just came to have a look at you'. One of the men searched an adjoining room before the landlady threw them out. 'The party of pacifists departed without the runaway bride' as *Truth* succinctly put it.

The chance of a resolution was fading fast. Dorothy said Smith was to meet her at her solicitor's office. He 'rejected me twice when I was ready to go out to him and when I had told my friends I was going and had been humiliated before my friends, I was annoyed'. Asked in 1929 if her husband said 'Now look, you refused to come to the Malay States, several times?' she answered 'I don't know, I did not think he did. I cannot think, my brain is aching.'

Financial issues were now coming to the surface. Prior to the court case Dorothy stated Smith earned £1040 per annum as a mining engineer, held 16,000 Tepah Tin Dredging Limited shares (which Smith told her were worth £5,000 and would return her £40 a month) and possibly other shares and 'is also possessed of other property and of moneys, the nature and amount of which I am unaware of' plus £50 pounds which was sent to her but not received.⁷ Smith acknowledged he had sold 600 of the Tepah shares and pocketed the money, part of which he used to pay for the wedding. This was justified in his mind because Dorothy would not come and live with him, although he admitted it was not an honourable act. Smith said he earned £50 monthly but had earned £70 monthly prior to the wedding. He denied saying Dorothy's expenses cost him £1,500 a year or had promised her £5000 as a wedding present.⁸ Dorothy had £20 and no other assets. The £175 Smith sent her from Penang had been spent.

The solicitors continued to build arguments for their respective clients. Stephens and Linton wrote to Len Smith on 24 February 1926. It said in part:

A few days after your marriage to her you deserted her, left her without means, and have for a period extending over seven months left her without a knowledge of your whereabouts and without any means of support. Since then, although you sent her some money she has been left dependent on other people and her own efforts to support herself.

She declines under these circumstances to join you unless you are prepared to prove to her that you will carry out in full the representations and proposals for

Settlement of shares on her, of which she has never had any result or knowledge.⁹



The magnificent Hotel Metropole Sydney where Len Smith planned to take Dorothy. Powerhouse Museum Sydney

Mr Abigail responded the following day. To summarise: Dorothy had deserted Smith without any cause whatever, and she kept her whereabouts secret from him and despite numerous enquiries he was unable to locate her. She did not contact him until eight months ago. Smith did not molest her. He wanted to live with her in the fullest sense and was ready to provide every comfort in British Malaya, in the best possible manner consistent with his income. Prior to departure he would live with his wife at the Hotel Metropole or any other first class hotel. If she did not return he would not settle any shares or property upon her.

The same day Abigail filed a petition asking that the court decree that Dorothy return and live with Smith and render conjugal rights to him.

Stephens and Linton replied on 2 March 1926.

It is clear that the desertion was on the part of your client ... Since his return he has behaved in a manner not calculated to bring about reconciliation such as your letter suggests. Mrs. Smith under the circumstances declines to return to him in the manner suggested.¹⁰

During the court case *Truth* and the *Evening News* quoted a damaging allegation which would have been a serious public indictment of Dorothy's conduct and 'morality'. Smith had possibly heard some gossip about Dorothy when first arriving in Sydney which would explain his suspicious behaviour at Beattie's studio and in her bedroom.

He denied making sensational comments to a Mr F.J. Davy and Mr Walker defaming Dorothy's character. Davy, 'a small bespectacled man', was the managing director of Dearborn Ltd, maker of Mercolized Wax, the skin cream which Dorothy had promoted extensively during *The Forty Thieves* season. Davy resented being dragged into the case. He had passed on what Smith told him to Dorothy in strictest confidence, and she passed it on to her solicitor. It sounded like Smith had consumed a few too many drinks. He was 'in a bragging mood, talking of his means and standing on the Stock Exchange. He invited Davy to have a drink with him at the Cavalier Café but Davy said 'I don't drink with men like you'.¹¹

Mr Linton (to Smith): Last March, did you say to a man [Mr Davy] in King-street, City, that your wife had lived with five different men before you married her, and that you had proof of it?

- No.

Mr Linton: Did you say she was keeping one of the men on your money?

- No.

Mr Linton: Or that she had had several operations, one of which was performed by a doctor with whom she was living?

- No.¹²

Mr Abigail (to Mrs. Smith): Have you any affection for your husband now?

No, but I loved him when I married him. If I had not loved him I would not have married him.

Mr Abigail: Do you say he broke your heart?

He may have, but it is now all right, thank you.¹³

Abigail also questioned Winnie: Did your sister tell you she had lost all love for her husband?

- Yes; she said she had no intention of returning to him.¹⁴

The marriage was now beyond resuscitation.

Judge Owen's Verdict

The conjugal rights case came to a close on 2 July 1926. Len Smith's suit was dismissed. Judge Owen was not satisfied Smith had made out his case. He did not believe Dorothy had demanded £300 for her father while they were at Mount Victoria or had refused to cohabit with Smith but did say she was foolish to send the doctor's

certificate to her solicitor immediately after her honeymoon. There was 'not a letter or a cable or a piece of evidence' to support the statement that Dorothy was unwilling to join Smith in Penang. When Smith returned to Sydney 'he approached her in the spirit of a man who had entertained the gravest doubts as to her morality during his absence' and was not sincere in his desire for his wife to return to him. (If this was so, why did he instigate the action? Was it a battle of wills; an attempt to force a recalcitrant Dorothy to return to him?) Regarding the gossip about Dorothy Judge Owen concluded 'The husband no doubt was the worse for drink'.¹⁵

Costs were awarded against Smith. Going to court was an expensive undertaking. The respondent's costs alone totalled £115/12/- and covered eight pages. Every detail was carefully recorded by Linton and Stephens, including £14/8/- for attending Dorothy and her witnesses from March to May, the sending of various letters at 5/- a time, with a long letter to Mr Abigail costing 10/-, engrossing (producing a document in its final form), filing, copy to serve, subpoenas and witness expenses etc.¹⁶ Mr Abigail's charges were not in the files but he certainly profited from his professional activities (and his canny business investments) as his estate was valued at £87,765 when he died in 1931.

Chapter Fourteen

Rufe Naylor and F. Gayle Wyer to the rescue

It is an easy matter to follow advice

That travels in the direction you are going.

~ Quote written down by Dorothy Rudder

In the middle of all the court dramas Dorothy decided to enter a beauty competition. She 'was sufficiently aware of her good looks' to enter the 1926 Miss Australia beauty contest, a commercial promotion by Smith's Newspapers Ltd in the *Daily Guardian*, using her stage name of Dorothy May. Her age and marital status was not an impediment to participating. Apparently 1,000 entrants, who were required to provide a photograph wearing a bathing suit, competed for prizes including a deluxe trip to America, cash and two automobiles. Nineteen-year-old university student Beryl Mills was deemed to have the beauty, intellect, sporting prowess and 'good breeding' the judges were looking for.¹

By December Dorothy was visiting Winnie in Taree. She appeared in a concert and farce, singing 'Poor Wandering One' from the *Pirates of Penzance* to a large house; the only example I can find of her performing a work by Gilbert and Sullivan. The *Northern Champion's* reviewer referred to Dorothy as 'the possessor of a most beautiful lyric soprano voice, enhanced by her grand opera appearance'. After an interval in which ice cream and cool drinks were provided, Winnie, Arthur and other locals hit the boards in a popular farce ironically titled *The Woman Wins*.

Mr. Naylor certainly seems to know just what theatre-goers require.²

By 1927 Dorothy's star was again on the rise due to a man with a colourful past. Rufe Naylor was an entrepreneur and promoter with interests ranging from bookmaking, gambling, lotteries, horse racing and athletics to theatre management in such diverse countries as England, South Africa and Portuguese East Africa. He often found himself in conflict with the powers that be, regularly appearing in court. During the Depression he wrote a book titled *Revelations on inflation: being the exposition of the "Rufe Naylor prosperity plan" for Australia, in three phases.*³ Naylor was the Managing Director and promoter of the newly constructed the Empire Theatre at Railway Square Sydney. Four wealthy bookmakers, a hotel keeper and a businessman were partners with Naylor in the enterprise, having formed a company with £120,000 capital. London theatre producer,

businessman and racegoer Ernest C. Rolls bought the rights to the hit American musical *Sunny*, which was chosen to open the theatre with Rolls as producer. *Sunny* was the first musical collaboration between Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II with Otto Harbach contributing additional lyrics.



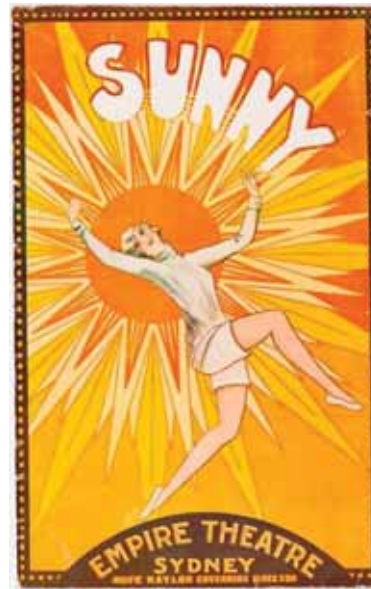
Ernest C. Rolls. Trove NLA.

According to *Truth* Rolls posed a potential threat to the Australian girls hired to appear in *Sunny* (*Truth* also said 2,000 girls had applied to join the chorus) because he had been convicted for ‘committing an act of gross misconduct with intent to insult females’ from a window at his London flat—in front of three girls and two policemen. His counsel, Sir Henry Curtiss Bennett, seemed fond of a double entendre, declaring Rolls ‘had hundreds of girls through his hands every year, and there had never been any suggestion against him’. Rufe Naylor hopped to Rolls’ defence too, stating he had produced many shows without the slightest innuendo against him from cast members.

Any man returning from a drunken party, and after plunging into a bath, could, in a feeling of stupor, stand in front of an upstairs window without knowing that he was exposed to the view of the passers-by in the street. I admit that drunkenness is no defense to any charge, and that punishment is deserved by the man who commits an offence under the influence of drink. However, it is an accident that might happen to any man, and has been amply expiated in this case. Personally I guarantee that the ladies of the ensemble in the Empire production will find in Mr. Rolls a man of culture and education, whom it will be a pleasure for them to work under.⁴

The Empire was a luxurious barn with a capacity of around 2,500 patrons. Ailsa McPherson wrote in the online *Dictionary of Sydney*:

The auditorium was decorated in blue, a deep tone for the carpet and powder blue for the front curtain. There were twenty four boxes or loges scalloped around the front of the dress circle and large, somewhat impractical, stalls boxes on either side of the stage. The Empire had, however, only minimal facilities as a theatre. There was a very small lobby and no foyer, while the proscenium arched stage—with a fly tower—was tucked into one corner of the site.⁵



Sunny program cover Fullers News January 1927. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.



Wynn Richmond, vivacious American star of *Sunny*. Photograph by Swiss Studios Sydney. Performing Arts Collections Arts Centre Melbourne.

Pony Ballet of *Sunny* at rehearsals. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

Sunny was a classic 1920s musical, frothy and fun. The plot finds Sunny Peters, the star of a circus act, following her beloved to England by stowing away on an ocean liner. It provided plenty of opportunity for extravagant staging. The ballet alone had ten changes of costume.

Often the lesser performers in a show did not receive a specific mention in the program, but this was not the case for *Sunny*. Naylor comes across as a democratic employer who appreciated everyone who contributed to the success of the show. He spent up big on initial press advertising and often made the theatre available for fundraisers. The advertisement calling for forty local supporting cast members specified that dancers be experienced, pretty and about 5 feet high. The producers were also looking for lovely showgirls and girls with voices. On 22 January Naylor stated ‘twenty-four lovely Australian girls [including Dorothy] are engaged as singers and showgirls to wear wonderful dress creations’.

Naylor created an unusual and informative *Sunday Times* advertisement on 30 January 1927. In addition to promoting the sold out opening night, each of the stages involved in bringing the show to the public were outlined in the ‘Table of “Empire” Progress’. Everyone and everything was credited—the architect, the builder, the £1,000 spent on the velvet theatre curtain, the ballet and costume designers, the official government patronage and the souvenir program.

A huge *Sunday Times* follow up display advertisement on 13 February 1927 listed the ‘All Star Imported Cast’ including principals English-born actress Wyn Richmond (Sunny), debonair leading man Van Lowe, Robert Rhodes, Queenie Ashton together with local star Fred Bluett, the ‘Ponies’ of the Ballet, Chorus Gentlemen, plus a mention for the New York Kit Kat Jazz Band and the Symphonic Orchestra of twenty-six. Dorothy is listed under Dorothy May as one of the seventeen ‘Peaches’ of the Ensemble but she would revert to Rudder in the actual program and for all future theatrical roles.⁶



Exterior photograph Opening Night of *Sunny*. Empire Theatre 28 February 1927. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

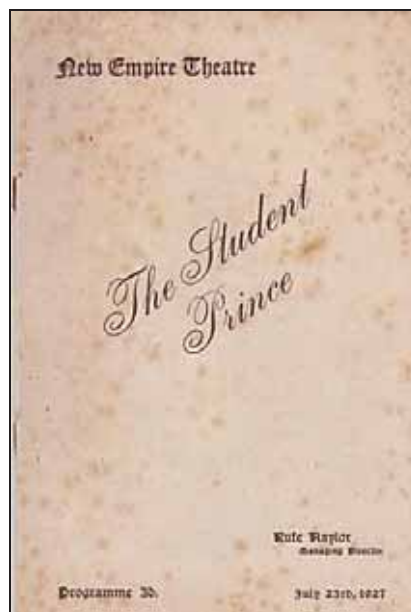
Opening night audience of *Sunny*—what Dorothy saw from the stage. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

The gala opening night, 28 February, was highly anticipated. Sydney photographer Sam Hood took a wonderful shot of the audience from the stage which shows the exciting event from the point of view of the performers. A small section of the orchestra is seen, including the top of a harp. The audience, comfortably seated in soft velvet padded chairs, wears evening dress, black tie or a suit. Australian flags are being waved from the dress circle. No amplification existed for the principal performers, so both singing and speaking voices had to be powerful, controlled and clearly enunciated to reach the gods and back stalls, a big challenge in such a vast space. According to the *Sunday Times* on opening night one tenth of the audience heard only one tenth of the dialogue, but the night was still a huge success.⁷

The nineteen week season, which ran until Saturday 9 July, was not without its share of drama. Rufe Naylor was fined for regularly allowing patrons to sit in the theatre passageway, thus creating a potential fire and panic hazard. Some animal acts were occurring both offstage and in the auditorium. After one show two greyhounds began to fight between themselves, and then turned on their keeper Robert Donald. One hound bit him on the leg then the other clung onto the lower portion of his leg for fully five minutes. The wounds put him in hospital. He remarked: 'I thought lions and tigers were bad enough, but hounds have got it on me all right.'⁸

As if a greyhound fight was not enough, on 19 May, a group of 'ruffianly' university undergraduates decided to have some fun by disrupting the show. 'The evening was marred by some objectionable conduct, which resulted in several members of the audience leaving their seats and demanding the return of their money. The performance was so interrupted by the students that the governing director of the theatre (Mr. Rufe Naylor), was obliged to appeal for fair play. The leading lady, Miss Wyn Richmond, was treated with discourtesy by the students. One student, aged 18 and another man, were arrested, charged with behaving in a riotous manner.'⁹

Naylor continued the successful *Sunny* formula of imported star talent for his next offering. Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince* is a classic operetta about the prince who secretly becomes a student at the University of Heidelberg and falls in love with Kathie, the inn keeper's niece, who he cannot marry. This was the first Australian production. Seven principal artists arrived from America via the SS *Tahiti*; most had appeared in the piece abroad. They included Elise Gergely as Kathie and James Liddy as the Prince.



New Empire Theatre Magazine front cover July 1927. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

The Student Prince program. After the Influenza epidemic a seal was often put on programs to ensure ‘freshness and hygiene’, and to stop the theatre staff from reselling them. Author’s collection.



Leading lady Elise Gergely.



Hedley Hall, Dr. Engel in the *Student Prince*.

A vocalist and toe dancer trial for twelve chorus ladies and twelve in the ballet was held on 9 July. Opening night was 16 July. The all-Australian male chorus of twenty-eight, the Singing Students, which included Dorothy’s good friend Sydney songwriter and baritone Marsh Little, sang with gusto and were a big hit with patrons and critics alike. Appearing in

Sunny was a welcome boost for Dorothy's finances. And because Dorothy had done well in *Sunny*, she was offered the important role of understudy to Elise Gergely in addition to singing in the chorus.

The *Sunday Times* had an interesting take on the role of understudy.

Doing nothing for a salary sounds like a pleasant sort of job, but the understudy doesn't think so. When he has been waiting months or years to display his talent, he doesn't consider he has any cause to thank his lucky stars, who seem to be immune from human ailments.¹⁰

The complete show was rehearsed by the understudies for some weeks prior to the arrival of the principals. 'Puck', the *Sun*'s theatre critic, wrote a column on the rehearsal period.

MOTHS AND STARS

Out of the mists they come!

Into the mists they fade.

What do understudies do in the night time?

Break their hearts, as a rule, waiting for an opportunity to act before the public.

Understudies hover just back of that aura of electric lights which floods the stars with amber radiance.

Sometimes they get a chance to appear in the spot-light, but for a night or two only, as a rule; then back again into obscurity—ghostly figures behind the stars they faintly impersonate! Moths in the dark!

They appear—sometimes at half an hour's notice—nearly always under a disadvantage, in clothes that don't fit them because they were made for other people—especially in the case of women—with shaking nerves, dry throats, and anxious minds. They jump in on a few scratch rehearsals; on a hasty reassembling of the company to adapt themselves to a new entity, and the company is as nervous as the understudy.

In the face of all this, if an understudy does more than, what stage folk call, "get through" it is because of sheer stage sense and the creative instinct. It is the triumph of personality over circumstances.

Up at the Empire Theatre these days there is a curious phenomena—a complete musical comedy being rehearsed by understudies—because there are no principals—yet.

This little flight of moths—ambitious to try their wings against the lamp—have held revelry on their own account. For some weeks past they have been rehearsing "The Student Prince," showing their quality in song and dance and dialogue.

Dorothy Rudder took the principal role of Kathie. She has had pantomime experience as principal girl, so is no tyro. A. J. Morris enacted the Prince; ...

To-morrow, all these near-stars will be eclipsed, and the fixed stars from Broadway and Chicago's Milky Way take over their roles at the rehearsal. It is the inexorable law that only those of a certain magnitude may claim that spotlight where the little moths so gaily danced last week.¹¹

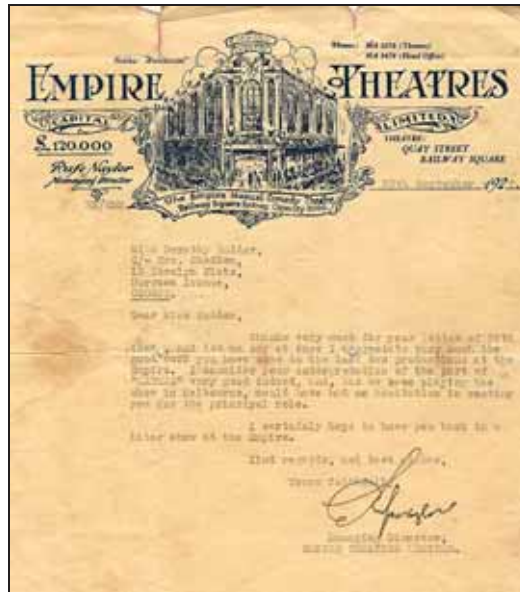


Dorothy backstage wearing the Art Deco style costume used in the ballroom scene.

Clipping from *The Sun* Sydney 11 September 1927.

Dorothy's chance to change from little moth to shimmering butterfly arrived towards the end of the season:

Dorothy Rudder ... was called upon to play the role of Kathie at a moment's notice on the Saturday matinee, September 3th ... when Miss Gergely was indisposed. Miss Rudder used her own fair hair for the occasion. She has two long golden plaits reaching to her waist. Her voice is a beautiful lyric soprano.¹²



Letter from Rufe Naylor to Dorothy Rudder on Empire Theatre letterhead.

Unusually for the period, Naylor presented a special *Student Prince Australian Understudy Week* ‘to give Sydney artists a chance to show their worth (by kind permission of the principals)’. On Tuesday 6 September Dorothy again played Kathie. According to the *Daily Telegraph* she ‘played the part well, singing with James Liddy, the “Student Prince”, the beautiful melody “Deep in My Heart” with great success’.¹³ It seems she met the challenge. Rufe Naylor certainly thought so. In a letter to Dorothy dated 29 September 1927, he wrote in praise of her work.

Thanks very much for your letter of 26th inst., and let me say at once I appreciate very much the good work you have done in the last two productions at the Empire. I consider your interpretation of the part of “KATHIE” very good indeed, and, had we been playing the show in Melbourne, would have had no hesitation in casting you for the principal role.

I certainly hope to have you back in a later show at the Empire.¹⁴

Naylor’s letter shows Dorothy’s address as the Rosslyn Flats, just near the beach in Kurrawa Avenue Coogee. Constructed in 1920 and furnished in the fashionable Jacobean style, her flat featured a living room, kitchen, tiled bathroom, sunroom off the balcony, electric power points for radiators and irons, a telephone, sound proofing and a gas copper for the washing.

The Student Prince played until 8 October. This was a much shorter run than *Sunny*, although an almost three-month season was still very respectable. This indicated the

preference of Sydney audiences for light-hearted musical theatre over operettas. Naylor thought *Sunny* was the more popular show because it had “spice”; drawing in the flappers who loved it for its sex appeal.¹⁵



State Theatre Melbourne (later renamed The Forum). The Rose Series postcard. Author's collection.

Naylor's Melbourne comment in his letter to Dorothy has a back story of considerable interest; a story which would again change the trajectory of Dorothy's career. Naylor was unable to put on the show himself in Melbourne or any other Australian city because his company had no theatre chain. Towards the end of 1927 Naylor had spent many weeks in a nursing home with 'internal trouble' but was laying plans to solve the Melbourne problem. Two prime properties on the corner of Russell and Flinders street were purchased for £140,000 but his business partners were not happy, even though the Empire was supposedly making good money. A few theatrical dummy spits occurred in the board room; the other directors thought Naylor was putting too much energy into promoting the new 'humane' invention called a tin hare for greyhound racing, a device to replace live rabbits, rather than concentrating on his theatrical endeavours. Accusations were laid regarding lack of detail and extravagance. Maybe the bookmakers' ways of doing business were not compatible with the way the theatre business was conducted.¹⁶ By the end of 1928 Naylor was no longer associated with the Empire Theatre, with actor/manager Frank Neil taking on an extended lease. The land in Melbourne was sold to Union Theatres Ltd. They constructed the fabulous Moorish Revival/classic Greek and Roman fantasy the State Theatre, renamed the Forum in 1963 which is still in use today. Dorothy did not get the chance to play the

leading female role in *The Student Prince* in Melbourne, but at least she now had a good reference to show the producer at her next audition.

F. Gayle Wyer's Band Box Revue

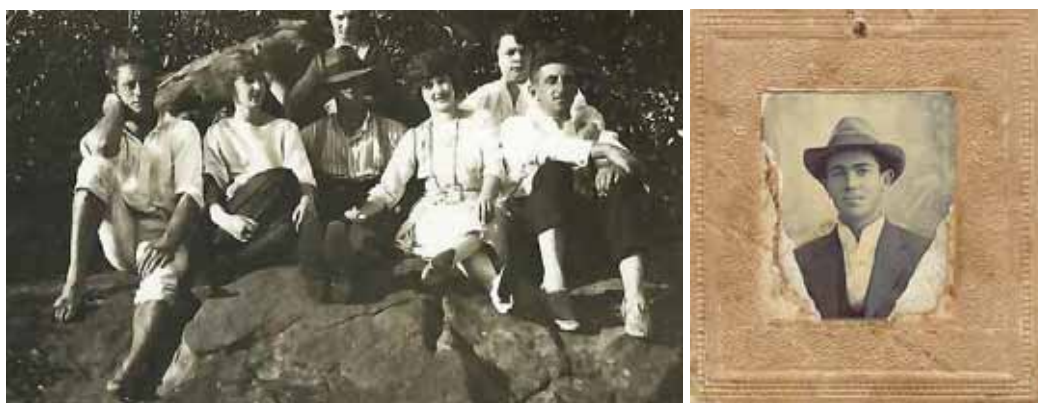
An information gap exists regarding Dorothy's stage work from November 1927 to July 1928 when she joined up again with the Fuller's vaudeville circuit. Frank Gayle Wyer, an American lawyer working in Australia for an oil firm, had experience on the US burlesque circuits. Benjamin Fuller made him an offer of work that led to the creation of the popular *Band Box Revue*. Charles Norman, who joined the troupe in 1926, set the scene in his memoir *When Vaudeville was King*. According to Norman, Wyer loved to regale people with fantastic stories of his life. He sent back to the States for his scripts and music (and some actors) but 'most of the plots were bootlegged from old American musical comedies and interspersed with bits and pieces of knockabout comedy'.¹⁷ Fullers fitted out the *Band Box* with the best people from their various productions and many members of the troupe had been together for years. Versatility was the name of the game, with the first half comprising vaudeville and the second a musical playlette (revusical). The repertoire comprised 26 plays, with the shows lavishly staged with well-designed lighting.



Majestic Theatre interior. The theatre seated 1642 patrons. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

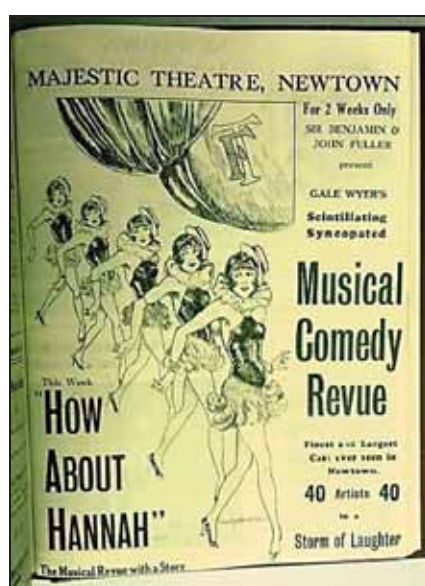


Band Box Revue cast members. F. Gayle Wyer and wife Heather Jones on left, Dorothy at right.



Dorothy with hand on knee of unnamed *Band Box Revue* cast member.

Possibly the same man's photo at right? It is signed 'Dot' on the reverse side.



F. Gayle Wyer's *How About Hanna?* at the Newtown Majestic. *Fuller News* 1928. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.

The Sydney season commenced at the Newtown Majestic on 28 July. Press mentions for Dorothy exist for two shows in July and August—*How About Hannah?* and *The Country Boy*. Heather Jones took the part of Hannah Hawkins, the daughter of a prosperous sausage manufacturer in *How About Hannah?* while Dorothy, as Fifi Fanchon, featured in four songs. The cast also included Dick Bell, Charles Norman, Daisy Yates, Sylvia Post-Mason, Dick Mayer and Billy Bovis.

The Sunday Times of 29 July wrote:

In presenting this production at the Majestic, the management has created a unique record. It is the biggest musical show yet seen outside [central] Sydney. Gale Wyer, well-known producer, has done his work well. The new show is packed with good fun and admirably staged. The dancing of the ballet of twelve gay, glory girls is a predominating feature. The male quartette, too, is worthy of praise. It is a bright, snappy show, which should fill the theatre.¹⁸

The *Evening News* review, which came out the next day, was remarkably similar. It said in part:

The biggest show of its kind yet seen about Sydney outside the city theatres. Gale Wyer is the producer, and the show is admirably staged. It is a piece overflowing with good fun, and the dancing of the ballet of 12 sprightly girls is a predominating feature.’¹⁹

Sharing of reviews was not uncommon but these newspapers had different owners. I wonder which reviewer attended the performance? *Truth* added its in-depth contribution by writing that the dancing was ‘energetic’, the warbling of the male quartette ‘well-balanced’ and all the performers deserving of ‘a pat on the back’.²⁰ Two weeks later *Truth* was declaring the hard-working dancers deserved a pat on the back too.

Wyer came unstuck when he put on the *The Country Boy*, a play about a young man who comes into his father’s fortune based on George M. Cohan’s *Broadway Jones*. The only alteration Wyer made when he borrowed the plot was to change the father’s business from chewing gum to apples. He must have had a thing about food in his shows—the theme continued from sausage production in *How About Hannah* to *The Honeymoon Trail*’s hero being a salesman for a baked bean company. The Taits from J.C. Williamson’s, who held the rights, came to see the show. It all worked out after a quick cable was sent to Cohan

from the Fullers. Cohan worked the show into a new one called *Billie* and sold the Fullers the rights.²¹



A Sam Hood photograph shows the entire *Country Boy* cast surrounded by cases of apples with Dorothy posing in a striped full skirted dress (centre) and holding an apple to a cast member's mouth. Charles Norman kneeling to her right, with apple box. State Library of NSW.

There was a large audience for *The Country Boy* and according to *The Sun* the encores were frequent. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer also enjoyed the show. 'The revue consisted of musical numbers, ballet dancing, and a continuous flow of humour, with a sufficiency of plot to make it of absorbing interest. The action centred round the doings of a country boy who, after a period of extravagance and penury, became possessed of a fortune. Mr. Charles Norman, as Bertie Bronson, received a popular ovation ... Miss Dorothy Rudder capably sang two numbers.'²² According to Norman, the songs included 'When the Red, Red Robin', 'Play Fiddle Play' and 'A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody' which was performed for the first time in Australia.²³

Dorothy appeared with the *Band Box Revue* in Sydney up until late September, then spent her fourth Christmas with Winnie in Taree. She made another concert appearance, along with local singers, a violinist and elocutionist, in a fundraiser for the local children's hospital on 13 December 1928. A sore throat did not affect her singing voice and there was hearty applause and demands for encores. The *Northern Champion* praising her brilliant voice and training in the hands of 'careful teachers'.²⁴ The *Manning River Times* declared her singing glorious in every respect. She 'exhibited perfect control' while singing 'Lo,

hear the gentle lark'. Her 'clarity was exceptional, the trills were a feature and each long sustained passage was an exhibition in itself. The effort was one that could only be successfully accomplished by a singer of superlative merit.'²⁵ She appeared on stage without a full orchestra, presumably just a piano accompaniment and a small number of local musicians in support.

Dorothy now had to return to Sydney. Len Smith demanded a divorce, with the case scheduled for February 1929. Dorothy said she had forgone a very good engagement in order to attend court. Maybe she was referring to the *Band Box*. The troupe had headed off to Adelaide, performing at the Majestic Theatre from 3 November 1928 with the majority of the Sydney cast still on board. Dorothy was listed as a cast member by *Everyone's* up until 15 December but she never appeared in any Adelaide reviews. A sensational court case would once more divert her attention from her career.

Chapter Fifteen

'This is a difficult case' ~ Justice James, Divorce court 1928-29

Dorothy had not seen Len Smith since he lost the 1926 conjugal rights case. He now petitioned for divorce, alleging Dorothy's misconduct with Cecil Mason, the gentleman she was earlier questioned about. The concept of a no-fault divorce did not exist in 1929. Someone had to collect evidence of adultery and someone had to take the fall. Dorothy in turn alleged that Smith had wilfully separated himself from her before the misconduct (if any) and had been guilty of such neglect as had conducted to misconduct (if any). In other words, he was at fault not her. Smith again hired Mr. Abigail's firm to represent him, but Abigail himself took no part in the actual questioning of Dorothy this time, leaving this duty up to his associate Mr T.J. McMahon. Dorothy was represented by Mr M.F. Loxton, instructed by Messers Stephen and Linton.

In NSW around 400 marriages ended in divorce each year in the 1920s. This case was listed as number 227 of 1928 but was heard from 12 February 1929.

SWAN SONG. BROKEN ROMANCE ENGINEER : VOCALIST *Evening News*, Sydney 12 February 1929

Once again *Truth* newspaper filled out the (sometimes inaccurate) details. The reporter said Dorothy was born in 1899, rather than her real birth year of 1893, and was twenty-five when she wed Smith. He was described as a broad, smart looking thirty-seven-year-old man who gave his evidence in calm dispassionate manner 'in striking contrast to the vehemence of his golden haired wife, who made a pretty picture in the dull court room'.¹

The guilty party had to be discovered in the bedroom, *in flagrante delicto*. Dorothy's landlady, Mrs Kate Maxwell, of the Massingham Flats in William Street Sydney, was the first to give evidence. At this time Dorothy was appearing in the musical *Sunny* at the Empire Theatre. Mrs Maxwell testified that around June 1927 a man came and took a flat under the name of Mr Rudder. 'The next day I saw Mrs Rudder, the respondent Mrs Smith. I asked her if she was Mrs Rudder and she said yes.' They lived at Flat No 8 as man and wife apart from a month when 'Mr Rudder' [was] visiting New Zealand."² By an odd coincidence Len Smith's brother, Edwin, also had a flat in the building. On 26 August 1927 at half past one, Edwin Smith knocked

on the landlady's door as he wanted to show her something. The glass in the door of Dorothy's room had been broken and the couple's real identities revealed.

TED SMITH SAID HE FOUND HIS BROTHER'S WIFE IN FLAT WITH CO-RE MASON *Truth*, Sydney 17 February 1929

Transcribed from the court records, Edwin (Ted) Smith took up the story: The late night break-in was undertaken by Edwin and his wife, accompanied by a Mr Saldy, a private detective. (*Truth* said his name was Sorley which is correct as a Charles Sorley was an associate of Ernest Abigail's). No one would answer the door, with the man telling the visitors to go away. After opening the door, Cecil Mason, the co-respondent, was found in his pyjamas smoking a cigarette, while Dorothy came out from the bathroom in her nightdress. Sorley then went to the veranda and called to Len Smith to come up. The questioning of the couple now began.

Mrs Maxwell identified the couple as 'Mr and Mrs Rudder'. Dorothy told Sorley she paid the rent and that Cecil Mason was aware she was married to Len Smith. (Although it was not referred to in the testimony, Mason was also married.) Sorley asked Dorothy if she had ever committed adultery with Mason and she said yes. Mason confirmed his name was mentioned in the last (conjugal rights) court case. Sorley 'asked Mason what suit he had on that day, and he said the brown one, he took that suit, and handed it to Sorley, who emptied the pockets and told Mason he could have it on application.'³ I assume the suit was retained as some form of evidence. Justice James was not impressed by the break-in, remarking 'Someone will fall in over this sort of thing one of these days ... No one has a right to do things like that.'⁴

Edwin Smith had done his homework prior to the group's midnight visit, having earlier undertaken some amateur sleuthing accompanied by his wife. They first saw Dorothy and Mason together on 25 June, leaving the Empire Theatre in a taxi for the Coronation Hotel. No one had come out of the hotel by the time they left at 1am. They returned the next morning and could see Mason shaving. Five days later they observed Mason, holding a suitcase, together with Dorothy, going into the Hotel Sydney. Mason came out the next morning. On 4 July Sorley joined the Smiths outside the Empire Theatre where they saw the couple drive to the Massingham Flats. On 8 July they went into the backyard at the rear of No 8 and looked in the window. 'The respondent took her hair down and we saw the co-respondent in his pyjamas.'⁵ On 20 August they were

again separately seen entering the flats. The proof was in. Dorothy was cohabiting with a man who was not her husband.

A copy of Judge Owen's 1926 judgement was tendered. Justice James then intimated he could not decide on the evidence of the previous case, so Mr Loxton said he would go into the whole of it. The parties once more described the events leading up to the conjugal rights case as they saw it (the details of which are outlined in Chapters Twelve and thirteen) and earlier exhibits were presented.



The tortoise shell dressing table set sent by Len Smith from Penang.

A crocodile skin and tortoise shell toilet set, mentioned by Dorothy in one of her two letters to Smith in 1925, was the trigger for some humorous comment. Mr McMahon called it a toilet set but Dorothy corrected him, saying it was a dressing table set. He was not about to be set right:

Mr McMahon: Did you about the time of receiving what is termed a toilet set receive a Chinese hand bag?

A. Yes. (Laughs)

Q. Why do you laugh?

A. Because it was such a funny thing.

Q. I take it at the time you appreciated the gift.

A. I appreciated the dressing table set very much.

Q. Was the Chinese hand bag a funny thing in the sense that it was no good, was the bag a useful present?

A. No, I absolutely could not make any use of it.

Mr McMahon questioned Dorothy as to how long she had known Cecil Mason. As in the conjugal rights case, an attempt was made to intimate she had been seeing Mason early in the marriage. It was implied that Dorothy had travelled with him to Melbourne in January 1926, but she said she was then on holidays with Winnie.



Cecil Mason on tour of New Zealand. *Everyones* 28 January 1931. Trove NLA.

Dorothy first met Mason in Wellington while touring New Zealand in 1922-23 with *The Sunshine Players*. He left Sydney on 6 January 1923 by SS *Ulimaroa* and toured around New Zealand in an old Chevrolet for three months in his role as assistant general manager for Selznick Film Exchange. The film Mason had come to promote was titled *One Week of Love*. He arrived at head office in Wellington on 10 January and remained until 23 January. He no doubt saw Dorothy perform or may have stayed at the same hotel.

Mason had become a close family friend. Justice James wondered why he had not been a guest at Dorothy's wedding, given this closeness. It was not mentioned in court

Mr McMahon asked questions which led to the impression that Dorothy's visits to her solicitor so soon after her marriage were not guided by love. Dorothy was asked how many times she had been to her solicitor between the time the letter was written by her doctor after she came back from her honeymoon and the time Smith returned. At first she said she did not know then said: 'I might have been in there 100 times; I might have been in only 5 times, I cannot remember'.⁷

Mr McMahon suggested the reason for Dorothy's attitude to Smith after the marriage was that her affection was elsewhere, and she was not anxious to resume marital relations with him.

Mr Loxton said that after the dismissal of the suit for restitution of conjugal rights, Smith had disappeared into the blue. His Honor: No doubt he had the blues then ... If this little lady, when he came back from the East, had met him affectionately, there would have been no more trouble. It was a wise rule, added his Honor, for people to make it up before the close of the day.

Mr Loxton: The good old rule, your Honor, 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath.' His Honor reserved his judgment, remarking, 'This is a difficult case.' The judge was puzzled as to why they separated.⁸ He asked Dorothy why they did not come to an understanding.

His Honor: But I should have thought that if you were very fond of him.

A. But my pride and dignity and everything.

Q. But after all what is your dignity where your husband is concerned—at any rate when you wanted to make it up?

A. Although I made it up with him afterwards, I had never forgotten the night he smacked my face, on my wedding night, although I went away with him after that.⁹

HUSBAND WINS SMITH DIVORCE "NO EXCUSE FOR WIFE" *Evening News*, Sydney 27 February 1929

While Judge Owen was sympathetic to Dorothy and believed Len Smith was not sincere in wanting her to return to him, Justice James took a different view in his judgement of 27 February 1929. He found Dorothy 'a very clever witness with a large amount of ability'. Furthermore, he stated Smith was justified in withholding the Tepah shares. The judge found the evidence conclusive on the issue of adultery and found in favour of the petitioner Smith. As to the respondent's issues:

I am much more inclined to believe the husband than I am to believe the wife. The whole course of conduct on her part after the marriage was most peculiar ... she did not like to go away on the honeymoon with the petitioner, and when she did there was some excuse or other ... I must come to the conclusion that the petitioner has not without just cause or excuse wilfully deserted the respondent. He actually went so far as to bring a restitution suit ... She should have gone back there and then when he made that demand. Instead of that she seemed to treat it as an insult ... She said that after that suit she was free to do what she liked. That being so how can she now set up that she committed adultery because he neglected or deserted or left her. It seems that she was just living her own life after that, and there is absolutely no excuse in this case. From what we can hear she was able to earn money by singing or on the stage. It was never put to me that she was in need of money ... I am bound to find all the issues raised by the petitioner against her. Of course, the petitioner, as usual, will have to pay the costs.¹⁰

An hour after he had granted a decree nisi, Justice James was reminded by an associate that he had forgotten to direct Cecil Mason to pay the costs of the suit, instead of Smith, as far as the issue of adultery was concerned.

CLAIM FOR DAMAGES ACTRESS GETS A VERDICT *Barrier Miner, Broken Hill* 2 July 1929

The ‘jungle engineer’, as Adelaide’s *Register* had labelled Smith, left the divorce court on 14 July and was immediately handed a writ for £2000 on behalf of Dorothy. The writ did not disclose the cause of action but it referred to the still unpaid Tepah Tin Dredging shares.¹¹

On 2 July Dorothy’s solicitors brought an action in the Banco Jury Court before Mr Justice Halse Rogers and jury of four for alleged breach of a pre-nuptial covenant. Smith ‘admitted that the deed produced, covenanting to transfer the shares to his prospective wife, was his’. He also said during the divorce litigation that the 16,000 shares were worth from £2000 to £2500. Smith had sailed back to the Malay States first class via the SS *Chitral* on 19 February 1929.¹² He was now in Siam and did not offer any evidence. The jury assessed damages at ¼ a share on the 16,000 shares, or a total

of £1066/13/4. Dorothy was due to receive a nice nest egg which would help to alleviate some of her financial pressures.¹³

It turned out to be a pyrrhic victory. Len Smith was very tricky in regards to these shares, as he knew something Dorothy's lawyers did not. When the shares in Tepah Tin Dredging Ltd went on sale in 1925 they were oversubscribed but by October 1928 the company faced serious financial difficulties as the resource was running out. The directors had been unable to dispose of the land at Tepah which then reverted back to the government. The company had been wound up voluntarily with a liquidator appointed. Smith had received some funds when the company sold off shares it held in another dredging company but by the time the Sydney Banco case was heard no shares were left to trade.¹⁴ Dorothy never received her money.



‘Note the tin hats the underground coolies wear.’ Len Smith in Siam (Thailand).

The marriage, such as it was, was dissolved. A decree absolute was granted in September 1929, again before Justice Owen.

Court records reveal that Dorothy believed Smith had assets apart from the Tepah shares, but could not give precise details. All indications were that he was not short of money as mining engineers were well paid professionals. He said he earned £70 per month prior to the trial (far higher than the average male wage), owned 10,000 Tepah shares but had no other property. In 1929 he was a resident of Penang. For the previous three years his work headquarters had been care of the Eastern & Oriental Hotel, a luxurious colonial style beachfront establishment in the Raffles Hotel mode which Dorothy had visited during the *Vanity Fair* tour, while his long-term address was care of the Hotel Penang.¹⁵

In a neat, if not weird, piece of synergy, Len Smith's next wife was also a singer named Dorothy. Sydney contralto Dorothy Benbow had studied in London under Melba's great teacher Marchesi. Like Dorothy Rudder, she was a broadcasting pioneer, being frequently heard on radio 2FC. Benbow travelled to London on RMS *Orama* in 1935 'via ports by the orient' which is where she may have met up with Smith. The first mention of her marriage was in June 1937 when a Mrs W.J.L. Smith (Dorothy Benbow) was guest of honour at an Arts Club musicale at the Hotel Australia.¹⁶ Smith returned to Australia due to ill health and from 1938 they settled in Bowral NSW, where Benbow gave voice production and singing lessons.

Smith was not averse to using the courtroom to sort out issues in business as well as romance. In 1922 he sued the directors of a Malay States mining company for libel. In 1939 he lost a case in connection with a wages dispute at his gold mine at Bundanoon Creek NSW, and in 1940 he was the plaintiff in a damages suit against an engineering company. The jury found for Smith this time and awarded £750 damages.¹⁷

Two years before his death in 1948 Smith gave talks in Bowral on mining in Malaya, speaking of the vast mineral and rubber resources, the difficulties in overcoming the superstitions of the Chinese labourers engaged in the work and the challenges of mining owing to the geographical formation of the country. He said the Japanese had been at work for many years prior to the Second World War, penetrating the various countries and using intrigue and propaganda to spread Japanese ideas.¹⁸ Using his extensive knowledge of Malaya and Siam he acted as a voluntary intelligence officer for the American forces and the British Navy during the war.¹⁹

Chapter Sixteen

Cecil Mason



Cecil Mason in formal attire.



At the beach Woolgoolga 1930s.

The activities of Len Smith and Dorothy were forensically detailed during the trials but the newspapers did not reveal the identity of the co-respondent Cecil Mason. The Smith vs. Smith divorce papers do not provide much personal information on him either except that he wore a brown suit, was clean-shaven and had business connections with New Zealand. He was not called on to testify.

Although Cecil Mason was a fairly common name in the 1920s, three documents from the suitcase shed some light on his identity—an envelope with the Columbia Pictures logo on the front, a newspaper clipping showing photos taken by Cecil Mason during a visit to Villers-Bretonneux in France, and a 1937 Columbia Pictures employment reference for Dorothy's nephew Reginald Wallace, my husband's father. This was signed by Cecil Mason who stated he had known Reg for over ten years. The reference backs up Dorothy's statement that Mason was a family friend. I also found two photographs of him in the suitcase.

Cecil Mason was a man with an interesting life story. He was an influential player in the Australasian film industry. While it's not clear when Dorothy and Mason first made a romantic connection, the conjugal rights court case testimony implied they were involved from 1925. They were living together in 1927, however the divorce transcripts confirm the relationship was over after 1929.

Cecil Frank Mason was born in London around 1892. The first mention of him in the Australasian newspapers is in connection to his father's business, the Clement Mason Film Supplies Company. He was organising a screening of 'some big feature films' and promoting a new talking and singing picture machine called the Vivaphone in Oamaru New Zealand in 1914.¹ Clement Mason, a film pioneer, came from London to operate his 'bio-tableau' flickerless moving picture show for J.C. Williamson in 1900. According to the 1901 English census for the Camberwell Borough in London, his mother Lilly was listed as head of the household, although the letter M denoted her as married, not widowed. The words 'husband of Clement G. Mason' and 'housewife' are scratched out. There were two children, Cecil Frank, eight, and Dorothy aged one.² Clement Mason remarried in 1916, dying the following year of pneumonia in Sydney at the young age of forty-five.³

Cecil Mason married Sophie Mary Mason at the registry office in Wellington New Zealand in December 1914. They moved to Australia in May 1915. He returned to New Zealand but was again living in Australia by 1918, residing in Manly where he had purchased a house called *Buckinbar*. The couple had three young children who had been born in quick succession from 1916 to 1918—Margot, Joan and Thomas Clement. Mason often travelled to other states and in 1920 part of his work involved representing Fox Films in New Zealand.



Cecil Mason. *Theatre, Society and Home* 1 March 1924. State Library of NSW.

While later photographs of Mason show the effects of living life in the top paddock, earlier images depict him as a slim, sporty-looking, well built and well-dressed man, not dissimilar in type to Len Smith, with hair shaved quite high up the scalp in the style

of the day. Articles on two of Mason's visits to Perth portrayed him in a favourable light. The *Sunday Times* said 'One of the smartest men in the Australian picture world is Cecil Mason, soon to visit W.A. In addition to being a cute [sharp] business man he is a genial companion, a good white [water] sport, and a broad-minded boss.'⁴ 'He liked Perth! And Perth liked him!' declared the *Mirror* in 1933. At a luncheon at Perth's Savoy Hotel he was described as 'tall, athletic looking and well proportioned ... making a golden impression on everyone present.'⁵

1924, the year Dorothy married Len Smith, was a busy time for Mason. He became a director of the Regent Palais de Danse in Cremorne Junction and more importantly was promoted to Australasian general manager of Selznick Pictures. *Theatre, Society and Home* magazine featured Mason in a full page article, accompanied by a debonair picture. He was publicising *Woman to Woman*, a stage play which had been made into a moving picture. A harsh picture was painted of his childhood behind a hand-cranked projector:

Quiet, reserved yet masterful, with force yet without fuss—a man to get things done, and done well. That is how Mr. Cecil Mason ... impressed "The Theatre" when it interviewed him the other day. He has been described as a pioneer of the picture industry, and indubitably he knows as much about moving pictures as any man alive. For he was, so to speak, born in the picture business, having been initiated into it when only nine years of age, when he was what was then known as a take-up boy. At the age of twelve he was an operator, working seven days a week from midday to midnight in a box in which even breathing was difficult. He has been in the picture business ever since, and today, as a result of knowledge, ability, push and character, he is a front rank man in one of the greatest industries of the world.⁶

Mason travelled all over Australia as part of his work with Selznick. He was a member of the NRMA, a local motoring organisation and a fan of the wireless. According to the *Sunday Times* he often stayed up late to listen to overseas broadcasts. 'Many of the men in the picture industry in Sydney have already fallen a victim to it, and the latest additions to the ranks of the wireless enthusiasts are Cecil Mason, Australasia's general manager for Selznick.'⁷

Selznick Pictures went bankrupt in 1925. By December 1926, as assistant general manager of First National Pictures, Mason was in New Zealand promoting an

Australasian film-star quest. The newspaper publicity surrounding the competition lasted for months. The judges were looking for a girl with beauty of face and form, intelligence and an 'adaptable personality' who could swim and ride. The prize was tempting. The winner was to play a part opposite Rod La Roque in a new Cecil de Mille picture.⁸ 'We want a screen type of girl,' said Mr Mason, 'and the girl that will emerge successful before the movie camera will be well in the running.' Stage experience was not necessary.⁹ For the winner, hairdresser and keen surfer Phyllis Gibbs of Sydney, the Hollywood promise soon turned to disillusionment. In a move that would have astonished many of the others girls who entered the competition, she asked for her film contract to be cancelled.¹⁰ 'Phyllis did not care for the free and easy virtue of many of Hollywood's stars and threw up her engagement in consequence.'¹¹

Cecil Mason was still working for First National in 1928 when he became involved in his own divorce case which mirrored Dorothy's experience to some extent. Sophie Mason petitioned in the Supreme Court of NSW for restitution of her conjugal rights. Judge Owen presided, the same judge who had heard Len Smith's conjugal rights case in 1926, although the case was at one stage also heard by Judge Rogers.

Mrs Mason stated her husband had withdrawn from cohabitation on 3 December 1926 and had not returned home. This was less than two months before Len Smith had returned to Sydney and met up with Dorothy at Beattie's singing studio at the Queen Victoria Markets. As noted, Smith's solicitor suggested the reason for Dorothy's attitude towards her husband was that her affections were now elsewhere. Maybe his instincts (or informants) were correct as Dorothy was living with Cecil Mason in Sydney in 1927. After the first court case ended in July 1926 Dorothy said she felt free to do as she pleased. Sophie Mason stated:

I remember my husband leaving for New Zealand in 1926 on a business trip. He was away for about 6 months. He told me he would be away probably 6 weeks or two months at the very latest. Then he did not return. I rang up the office and ascertained the date he was returning. I prepared dinner for him the (Friday) night he was to come home. He returned here but did not come home. The following Monday he rang up early in the morning and I met him by appointment in the city ... I asked him to return to me and he said he was quite happy as he was, that he would go about his work without having any of the

worries of a home. We were then living in a flat in Manly ... I have repeatedly asked him to come home but he has refused to do so.¹²

Sophie Mason wrote him a letter on 3 May 1928. She seemed well aware of Mason's relationship with Dorothy.

Dear Cecil

I am writing to ask you once again to return to our home and let us forget the past. The children are growing up and sadly need a father's care and companionship. You will remember when I last saw you about coming back to me you promised me to seriously consider it.

If only for the children's sake I trust you will come home. As you know I am quite ready to do all I can to make you happy and I am sure the children would be delighted to see us all together again.

Your loving wife,

Sophie Mason¹³

The communication Mason sent in response on 7 May, presumably with the assistance of his solicitor, almost reads like a business letter. It is somewhat cold and to the point, with little regard, on paper at least, for the emotional needs of his children. The post office stamp across the postage stamp reads 'Say it by telephone'.

Dear So,

I am in receipt of your letter of May 3rd, regarding coming back home.

I have given the matter all consideration and I do not intend to return. We are far better off apart I think. I know I am.

My business as you know takes me all over Australasia, and I prefer to go as I wish. By leaving me free you then allow me to earn a decent living and look after the future of the children.

Yours,

Cecil.¹⁴

Cecil Mason did not appear in court. Sophie Mason won her case, with costs to be paid by her husband, but he did not comply with the court order to return to the marital home. Again before Justice Owen, desertion was alleged by reason of non-compliance with a decree of the Court for restitution of conjugal rights. Subsequently a decree nisi

was granted, to be made absolute in six months.¹⁵ Both Dorothy and Mason were free to marry each other after 1929 but this did not eventuate. How differently Dorothy's life may have turned out if her romantic relationship with Mason had continued.

From 1929 Mason was first a director and from 1931 the general manager of Greater Australasian Films Ltd which distributed English and American films including the output of Columbia Films. Columbia took over the company in May 1935 with Mason again taking on the role of general manager for Australia and New Zealand. He often travelled overseas on film business with 'his experiences being gained first-hand by personal contact,' meeting up with the leading movie stars of the day such as Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Norma Shearer and Eddie Cantor.¹⁶

In 1933 Mason produced the heavily publicised *London Speaks* for Greater Australasian. Mason faced plenty of logistical difficulties in filming this 'expansive travelogue on London covering many of the city's landmarks and tourist spots.' The opening titles state that the film was 'the first feature film to be made in England by Australian brains and capital'.¹⁷

A visit to New Zealand found Mason mulling over changes in the tastes of the entertainment-going public. In the past, he said, some people had the habit of attending the legitimate theatre many times regardless of what the show was. The choice of stage plays was now more limited, but the public had become more discerning. The film industry had gone through this transition and cinema goers were now more interested in the actual films being shown. "Producers today realised that films must have a world-wide appeal, and that art and quality were better than mass production."¹⁸



Rangle River. Victor Jory second from left, Cecil Mason centre back, Clarence Badger second from right. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

In 1936 Columbia Pictures produced the Australian cowboy picture *Rangle River* at Sydney's National Studios. It was the first American-produced film to be made in Australia. The original story was written by novelist Zane Grey while on a fishing trip in Australia. Directed by Clarence G. Badger, the plot centres on drought, the damming of a river, a young female (Margaret Dare) trying to save the family farm and her relationships with the farm foreman (American actor Victor Jory) and her English house guest (Robert Coote).

English censors cut a scene in *Rangle River* depicting a stockwhip fight between the hero and the villain thereby cutting out the film's climax. 'Observer' in Hobart's *Mercury* wondered if this censorship was a move to block Australian films from the British market, pointed out that the climax of *Charge of the Light Brigade* was not censored even though it featured a scene with 'horses and men tumbling to their death as they are mown down by gunfire.'¹⁹ Cecil Mason was not impressed with the *Rangle River* scissor work. 'This will make us stop, look and listen before we make any other pictures here. No reason was given for the British censors' action. Neither man was hurt. Fisticuffs can be much more damaging, and if cruelty was the objection, one wonders whether they will allow fencing or any other kind of fighting, in which a man is supposed to be injured.'²⁰



Table Talk 29 June 1939. Trove NLA.

By July 1937, still wearing his Columbia Pictures hat, Mason was predicting that Cary Grant had a wonderful future in film.²¹ A visit in 1939 to Columbia's New York studios, which included meetings with top stars William Holden, Adolphe Menjou and Barbra Stanwyck on the *Golden Boy* film set and Frank Capra on the *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* set was made into a short publicity film.²² Unfortunately it is another lost film. While in New York Mason was a guest at the official opening of the World's Fair by President Roosevelt. He certainly was well-connected and at this stage had been to the United States four times.



Cecil Mason with his impressive new cruiser. *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 23 September 1936. Trove NLA

The sea was a great love for Mason. In 1936 he completed the purchase of an expensive ocean-going cruiser, locally built at Newcastle and capable of doing twelve miles an hour. 'The boat's interior fittings are the last word in cruising luxury, possessing sleeping accommodation for six people, modern galley, inset radio, and a diffused lighting system. The hull is of kauri, while the super structure and interior panelling are of Queensland maple ... the name, Maigre, is derived from the name of a fish renowned for its grace and speed.'²³

It is surprising what minutiae can be discovered about a person's lost property from now-digitised newspapers. In February 1939, Mason lost the certificates to 600 shares in Australian Securities Ltd, a profitable motor car financing business, somewhere around Martin Place. A reward was offered via his office at 251a Pitt Street. (I also discovered that Dorothy lost a velvet rose-coloured scarf between Haumann's Cafe and

Waters corner on 7 February 1911. What would she have made of this being written about nearly 120 years later?)

The last media mention found for Cecil Mason in connection to Australian cinema was in 1941 when he travelled from Canberra to Melbourne with Sir Benjamin Fuller and the Columbia Pictures American representative Mr Perry.

Cecil Mason married Vera Mabel (who also had the surname of Mason) in 1942, moved to Queensland's Surfers Paradise and had three more daughters. He died in Sydney in 1960 at age sixty-seven. His death certificate listed his occupation as 'kitchenhand' and his trailblazing father Clement G. Mason as an 'electrician'. No-one wrote an obituary in recognition of his important contribution to the history of cinema in Australia and New Zealand.

Chapter Seventeen

Sensational off-stage dramas



Dorothy and niece Gwen Wallace.



Mrs. Percy Pitt (Miss Margaret Bruce, of Sydney), and Miss Phyllis Fuller snapped whilst strolling in the Bois, Paris.

Mrs Percy Pitt (Ivy Mack). *The Home: an Australian Quarterly* 1 October 1928. Trove NLA.

After the divorce proceedings concluded Dorothy was again a single woman. The court cases created a stir and diverted the focus from her career onto her private affairs. But could she make a comeback?

Divorce was not an everyday event in the 1920s. It is easy to find examples of marriages gone wrong—affairs, bigamy, alcoholism, physical and sexual abuse or gambling—but for most couples divorce was not an option as litigation was very expensive. In addition, for a woman there was often greater stigma attached to divorce than for a man and it often led to discrimination and financial difficulty, especially for Roman Catholics. The Church disapproved of divorce, seeing it as a ‘desolating evil’ leading to a disintegration of family life and neglect of children. Marriage was until death and could not be dissolved until then.

As we saw, there was little or no stigma attached to Cecil Mason's co-respondent role in Dorothy's divorce or his status as a divorced man with children. In 1935 Mason was passing judgement on another man's behaviour with women. He found himself in court giving evidence against actor and producer Arthur Shirley in a false arrest and assault case with an interesting bigamy twist. Shirley had married a woman in Hollywood believing his first wife was dead, but she was very much alive. His second 'wife' had herself married a man who was already married. Mason, who had known Shirley for twenty years, had travelled back to Australia with him on the SS *Monterey*. Mason saw him in company with two men in the lounge and later 'heard something' (presumably about one of his wives) which made him change his opinion of Shirley for the worse. Shirley's solicitor asked another witness, actor and stage manager Frank Reis, if he was aware that 'there are on stage people with whom all sorts of scandal are connected'. Reis replied that an actor's reputation is hurt when he is damaged in the public eye, both in Australia and Hollywood.¹ But was it?

'Bad' behaviour was not the exclusive preserve of the thespian world but his words gives pause for thought regarding Dorothy. Interestingly, there is no evidence to show that Dorothy was a pariah within her family, her community, or among her friends and colleagues as a divorcee. However, if children had been involved this may have been a different story. In fact, Winnie sided with her sister against Len Smith and they remained as close as ever. And she could still earn her own living.

Some tantalising comments in Reg Rudder's last letter to Winnie from the Western Front in 1917 indicated just how complex (and secretive) a performer's love life could become. He mentions forwarding a letter to Dorothy from a woman named Ivy Mack who had treated a man called 'Harry' badly. Reg was planning to meet up with Ivy in London but thought she did not really want to see him.

Further research revealed Ivy Mack was an Australian soprano who had studied with W.B. Beattie prior to the war. Beattie described her as vivacious, at times moody but also frank, witty and entertaining. Her maiden name was Ivy Margaret Bruce and 'Harry' was bank manager Henry McBeath, the first of possibly four husbands. She had departed for Britain without him in 1915. Apparently her second husband was Royal Navy Commander G.L. Browne. The NSW Justice records also note a marriage in Sydney in 1920 between Ivy M. Bruce and a Robert R. Fairbairn.

Ivy Mack/McBeath/Fairbairn/Browne changed her name to Margaret Bruce in the 1920s and found success as a performer and singing teacher. She married the famed

English conductor Percy Pitt in 1925. No-one was invited to the wedding. Pitt's biographer, J. Daniel Chamier, wrote that Ivy came to England with her first husband Commander Browne in 1915² but this is incorrect; contradicted by Harry McBeath's enlistment documents from March 1917 which listed Ivy as his wife. Reg Rudder commented she had come down in the world and was now working in an armaments factory. Her address in the document was given as c/- Stillwell and Sons 42 Pall Mall. This was actually a banking agency for the navy. No further detail can be found of Ivy Mack's friendship with Dorothy, apart from a 1916 photograph of Dorothy, niece Gwen and nephew Reggie with Ivy's London address written on the back.

The letters below to the 'So they Say' page of *The Australian Women's Weekly* on the strong lure of the stage life make for interesting reading. Tessie Marshall had asked why every girl wanted to be an actress when the worries of a life on the stage were innumerable.

Lure of the Stage can be Easily Explained

THE modern woman no longer thinks of the "evil" of the stage. To those with clear vision it is an outlet for expression comparable to none. Behind the footlights one has the opportunity to sway an audience; to make it laugh, cry, or be delighted. This gives the player a sense of power, a feeling of sympathy, and an understanding of life.

Miss Kathleen Campbell

Glamor

Miss Tessie Marshall wonders why the stage holds such an attraction—a lure. I think that one word answers the query adequately—glamor!

Despite hardship and disappointments, the stage is a glittering, lovely, unreal world to the uninitiated. Heroines inevitably triumph; they are either beautiful or devastatingly quick at repartee. Hence the applause and adulation of the public — and what youthful heart in the audience would not yearn to be in the actress' place? The everyday life of most of us is commonplace—the life of an actress, so much in the limelight, is never that—hence the lure of the stage. To the end of time there will be a lure in the unreal.

Mrs. E. Beales³

There must have been something in the water, or should I say in the exciting, bustling, hot-house atmosphere of the stage, which made performers attracted (and attractive) to each other and to members of the public, married or single. Being young,

often good looking and admired by an audience, spending inordinate days together on tour and being emotionally open as performers may have been contributing factors. Many of Dorothy's colleagues featured in the newspapers after their sensational off-stage dramas were aired in the courtroom but it did not do their careers any harm, and often even enhanced their appeal. It seemed accepted that theatricals would behave differently to 'ordinary' people whose day to day existence was more constrained by convention.

Ella Caspers, another student of Madame Christian, travelled to London and married a bigamist who had drugged, robbed and abandoned a previous wife.⁴

Performer Maude Fane, regarding her divorce for misconduct from *Vanity Fair's* Edgar Warwick, declared 'Perhaps I ought to be sad. I'm glad'. Warwick had hired a private detective to find Fane and her lover, a young scion of the English nobility named Robert Peel but the said detective would not say where they were unless he received a sum of money; a neat example of a hired man blackmailing his own client.

During her 1918 divorce proceedings popular singer/male impersonator and principal boy Nellie Kolle declared she would never give up the stage and no longer wanted to live with her husband. 'It would be no good settling down. If I did I should be away again in six weeks. I could never stay in the house.' Nellie had two children; one was adopted and another then lived with friends.⁵ True to her word she was still performing shortly before her death at eighty.

In 1920 Daisy Yates, who performed with Dorothy in *The Sparklers* and the *Band Box Revue*, sued her dancing and romantic partner Sydney Yates (real name Sydney Culverhouse) for breach of promise. Daisy said he had spent most of their money and took other women out under the cloak of being her brother. She had previously divorced her own husband for desertion.

Daisy Jerome proudly stated she had been to court seven times, including testifying in a breach of promise suit against her husband. Just before her appearance in New Zealand with Dorothy and the *Sunshine Players* in 1923, her maid Cecile Lightenning was charged with stealing jewellery and furs worth £720. Daisy believed she was funnier in the witness box than on stage, even when being cross-examined by the formidable Mr Ernest Abigail. Excessive drinking by Daisy and her husband together with their lack of funds got a mention. After fifteen long months of adjournments the case against Lightenning was dismissed. But she turned out to be a repeat offender, facing court (and again being acquitted) for pawning stolen jewellery five years later.

The producer of *The Sparklers*, Harry Borradale, scored his own newspaper article from *Truth* during his 1929 divorce. It seems Mrs Borradale had a violent temper. After losing her court action she flung a missile at her husband, which missed him but hit the *Truth* reporter, and abused the magistrate, threatening to trash his office.⁶

Charles Norman found himself involved in a tangled love triangle. Norman had an affair with the actress Vera Benson which developed while touring with the *Band Box* in 1927. Ten days after she divorced her husband, actor Rawdon Blandford, in August 1928, Norman married vaudeville artist Renee Dixon, another member of the troupe to whom he had earlier been engaged. The couple then performed together during the Adelaide season. However, he was still carrying a flame for Vera Benson and they got back together after she arrived in town. After returning to Melbourne they joined the *Rio Rita* company and then parted ways. Renee Dixon was granted a divorce from Norman in 1933.⁷

The connections continued; Dorothy had performed with Vera Benson in *The Forty Thieves*. Its star Kitty Reidy played the role of real-life lover in a 1925 court case involving actor Alexander Howett Worster and some misconduct behind locked doors. His wife Muriel had found a cache of ‘extravagantly sentimental and shockingly familiar’ letters from Reidy. A private detective was quickly put onto the case. He found Worster and Reidy in bed together at Melbourne’s Hotel Windsor after resorting to a familiar tactic—listening in at the keyhole. Infidelity was admitted and Worster was ordered to pay £7 a week in alimony.⁸

Chapter Eighteen

The impact of Depression



Clowns in Clover rehearsal. Dorothy standing behind pianist. E. C. Rolls to her right. Jack Cannot second from left. Photograph by Sam Hood. State Library of NSW.

After Dorothy's divorce she did make a comeback of sorts. Another chorus role beckoned, this time around an elaborate 'revue de luxe' called *Clowns in Clover*. Sam Hood took an entertaining and humorous image of the chorus, including Dorothy, singing around the piano. This is the only evidence that she was a cast member.

Marlow Rolls Theatres Ltd, comprising of Ernest C. Rolls in partnership with George Marlow, whom Dorothy worked with in the 1911 'Marlowdramas', presented *Clowns* at the Empire Theatre from 23 March to 12 June 1929. London's 'Queen of Revue' Jennie Benson and New York comedian William Kent topped the bill. The auditions called for ballet girls with good figures and appearance who were able to do all dancing styles. The show girls needed to wear clothes well while the chorus boys were required to do buck and tap dancing.¹ All were asked to bring a song, practice dress or bathing costume. According to Rolls, Jeannie Benson ordered some special frocks from Paris for the show and 700 dresses were made locally. On opening night *Clowns* ran for over four hours, with twenty-six scenes in two acts. It required substantial pruning but was only whittled down to 22 scenes. According to *Everyone's* there were initially only twenty acts.

It was more than a first night; it was nearly a weekend. Outside patient taxi drivers snored at their wheels; inside that section of the audience that had taken somebody else's wife to the show searched wildly for alibis.²

The *Sunday Times* wrote:

Simply Gorgeous

There is no plot, no continuity, no hero, no villain in this gay show. It is a brilliant kaleidoscopic rush of events; all produced with a perfection of detail and a magnificence of surrounding that put it high up among the finest presentations this city has known.³

Another American musical comedy, Florenz Ziegfeld's *Whoopee* which Dorothy may have been a cast member of, followed *Clowns* for three short weeks. After being in business for fifteen weeks Marlow Rolls Theatres Ltd went into liquidation reportedly owing £50,000. Marlow blamed production costs and the high salaries and wages forced on them by the union for the losses. The *Clowns* ballet alone comprised sixty dancers. 'Elaborate productions at popular prices' had been Rufe Naylor's policy, with the prices charged to see *Sunny* 5/6 and 2/6, but Marlow said it couldn't be done. The Empire then switched over to the talkies, which was sometimes termed 'canned art'.

Frank Neil bought the rights to *Clowns in Clover* and *Whoopee* cheaply after *Whoopee* closed, along with the unproduced show *So This is Love*. Neil somehow thought he could make these shows succeed where Rolls and Marlow had thrown in the towel. It didn't work out that way. The Great Depression was starting to impact the economy and live theatre, especially vaudeville, would not be exempt.⁴ Charles Norman credited Frank Neil with saving not only the Tivoli circuit but also top end Australian vaudeville during the peak of the Depression but his management of the Empire did not go well. *Clowns* was the subject of an acrimonious war of words between Neil and the show's performers and crew. In January 1930, he gave one week's notice to the 136 member company in Melbourne. As he saw it, the show had been successful audience-wise but the government entertainment taxes and high wages were killing the industry.⁵ Neil called the show girls 'practically unskilled labor'. The response he provoked from the show girls of the company shines a light on the conditions these performers (and cast members such as Dorothy?) endured.

First of all, Mr. Neil himself offered us the positions of show girls. However, before Mr. Neil's 'unskilled laborers' get positions, it is necessary for them to face voice trials and to parade. We are then asked if we can dance and what experience we have had. Most of us have been more than seven years on the stage, and have done ballet work also.

Then come rehearsals—from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. An hour off for lunch and back at 2 p.m. (if we are not already appearing in a show), we stay rehearsing until 5 p.m. Then we have tea and come back at night to work till the producer allows us to go. Dress rehearsals on many occasions have started at 2 p.m. on Friday and finished at six a.m. the following day. We are told to go home, to have as much sleep as possible, and be back at 11am for an hour. At 2.15 p.m. the curtain goes up for the first performance—and we are expected to look bright and fresh.

We would also like to inform you that we do not always get £7 4s a week. We have only been getting that amount for the past three weeks for doing two shows a day—pantomime in the afternoon and “Clowns in Clover” at night, making 14 changes a day.⁶



The SS *Euripides* going out from Sydney Harbour early 1931. Taken from Dorothy's bedroom window. Images of the Sydney Harbour Bridge were everywhere, including on this pull-out card to Dorothy.

Brother can you spare a penny?

The Wall Street stock market crash of October 1929 which heralded the Great Depression hit Australians hard. Export income for wool and wheat fell and overseas loans dried up. Previous loans taken out to fund the war, infrastructure projects and

residential construction, needed to be repaid. Inevitably income tax takings reduced. The completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 meant more layoffs; the unemployment rate climbed to around 32%. Many people were no longer 'living in clover'. Social dislocation due to unemployment led to some parents deserting their families or breadwinners turning to alcohol while those without assets were evicted from their homes. There was an increase in the suicide rate. Many people lived with the help of soup kitchens and sustenance welfare payments, the 'Susso' and massive queues appeared for any labouring jobs advertised. Ex-servicemen experienced hard times as soldier settlement schemes failed.⁷

Entertainment-wise live entertainment was now a luxury for many families. Instead they sought amusement at home around the piano, listened to the radio if they could afford one or visited the cinema. This was especially so after the introduction of sound films and the replacement of cinema orchestras by sound equipment. American films dominated the market, including the product distributed by Cecil Mason's Columbia Pictures. This dealt a blow to the industry Dorothy depended on for her livelihood as it reduced opportunities for local talent. A movie ticket was cheaper than a variety show and the new picture palaces were much more comfortable than the older live venues. The Commonwealth Government Entertainment Tax, introduced in 1916 but abandoned in 1933, plus a state tax, also impacted on the bottom line. The number of major theatres in Sydney had reduced from ten by the late 1920s to two by 1935 with theatres including the St James, the Empire and Fullers converted to shops or cinemas and in some cases demolished. The talkies were also affected by the Depression, with cinema box office receipts falling by one third between 1930 and 1934.⁸

Along with their theatre chains, the undertakings of the dominant companies, J.C. Williamson and Fullers Ltd, including company tours, were slimmed down. Local performers, stage managers, writers, composers, scenic artists, costume makers—an entire industry—were reassessing their employment options, with many finding new jobs in the service industry. By February 1930 the *Evening News* stated 1,400 Actors' Federation members were unemployed, with many 'actually starving'.⁹ In March 1930 the Federation used their own resources to stage a short season of *Handcuffs for One* by Melbourne playwright Isabel Handley at Sydney's Savoy Theatre. Their slogan was 'a pound's worth of entertainment for a dollar' as all the seats in the house were 5/-.¹⁰ Dorothy was listed as one of the members who volunteered to appear but she was not mentioned in any reviews.

Although the movie theatres dominated, it is important to note that live theatre had not disappeared in Sydney altogether. Favourite old shows were revived and employment opportunities still existed on the stage, in broadcasting, in opera and the concert hall, or by playing in the suburbs and regional centres. Furthermore, in tandem with the economy, from a perusal of the amusement pages in the major Sydney (and Melbourne) newspapers, theatre work picked up again after 1932.

When suffering from melancholy Grimaldi, the greatest clown of the nineteenth century, was recommended by his physician to go and see Grimaldi. This evoked his famous reply, 'I am Grimaldi.'

~ H.G. Docwra *Sydney Morning Herald* ¹¹



A melancholy-looking Dorothy wearing fur and velvet.

For a person with creative talent and intense sensibility, keeping up a cheerful public persona could be mirrored by feelings of despondency behind the scenes and depression could be exacerbated by work opportunities drying up.

By 1929 Jack Cannot, the renowned vaudeville and pantomime artist whom Dorothy performed with in *The Forty Thieves* and *Clowns in Clover*, was having a

tough time finding employment. The 'Fun doctor' was a hugely popular fixture in The Firm's productions, appearing in the *Tivoli Follies* for a record breaking two and a half years and regularly on radio. In a portent of what was to come, he succumbed to depression, taking his own life by poison in August 1929, just before the Wall Street crash.

Many people Dorothy knew were also stalked by tragedy. The wife of Dorothy's good friend musician W.J. Grieves also used poison to end her life. Grieves married Vera, a nurse, in 1915 but the relationship was not a happy one. At the inquest Grieves said 'The unhappy past and the hopelessness of the future seemed to affect her. I don't think she had any worry apart from our separation.' They had not lived together for around three years. Vera wanted to be reconciled, but Grieves was not in a position to support her. In 1922 she was found lying in Centennial Park and died in hospital the next day.¹²

Having money did not protect two of the Smith vs Smith solicitors from facing depressing issues regarding their children. Dorothy's solicitor, James Linton was to face a family tragedy in 1929. Linton had to testify himself at the inquest into the death of his daughter Rene who was an actress and singer working her way up the theatrical ladder. Rene was acquainted with Dorothy, having played the role of Rose of Persia in *The Forty Thieves*. She was to die in a murder-suicide at Cremorne in May 1929, shot five times by commercial traveller and former soldier Strachan Knight using a Colt automatic. He then turned the gun on himself. Knight earlier in the day sent a letter to Mr Linton in an attempt to explain his actions. 'I have asked Rene to marry me now, and she won't. I'm determined no other man shall have her. Without her now my life is nothing. I just simply can't live without her. I am sorry for all the unhappiness I shall cause, but I just can't help it.' At the time of her murder Rene was an understudy in *The Vagabond King*. The *Queensland Figaro* ironically commented on 'the clever way in which she handled the dramatic death scene'.

Ernest Abigail's relationship with his only son, who was also named Ernest, became so bad that he was sacked from his father's firm and written out of his will. Ernest Jnr. was often in the newspapers for all the wrong reasons; attacks on his wife Bessie Storey, punch ups with other men and serious car accidents are revealed, with the last collision resulting in his death in 1935. Drink was obviously an issue. When he died his only possession was his automobile. Newspaper articles which followed mentioned his father's occupation and achievements but never his own. Bessie Storey, the daughter of

the former NSW Premier John Storey, had intermittently appeared in stage shows including *Sinbad the Sailor* and *Mother Goose* with the renowned Stiffy and Mo and Amy Rochelle in 1922.

Distant relatives and ancestors of Dorothy's had taken their own lives, either due to depression, not being permitted to marry the man they loved because of their lower social status or no longer being able to deal with pain due to serious illness.

A number of incidents and comments indicate Dorothy herself experienced moments of melancholy. She was hospitalised for unspecified reasons in Gundagai followed by a long break and Dr Brennand diagnosed her as in a 'very nervous and unstrung condition almost verging on a breakdown' after she returned from her honeymoon in 1924. The tragic wartime deaths of her brother Reginald and Charlie Younger had left lasting emotional scars too.

Over the years notes from Dorothy's friends included comments such as 'you looked so miserable', 'cheer up Dorothy' and 'keep your chin up'. Nevertheless, there is no conclusive evidence of ongoing depression. Dorothy expended much physical energy and worked with intense concentration while on stage. Understandably this may have been followed by down periods. And she does come across as self-involved. This could be seen as a survival mechanism which helped to meet life's challenges. For Dorothy, following her own star could be hard work; it offered extreme highs and extreme lows. She needed to regroup and recharge the batteries. The pursuit of the love and approval of an audience could be exhausting.

Holidays with Winnie eased the stresses of an insecure career and messy love life. Winnie kept the *Northern Champion* personal column informed of family comings and goings which often centred on the stunning beaches they were surrounded by. The Wallaces spent the 1929 Christmas holidays at Woolgoolga, nearby Red Rock and in Grafton with Clarrie. No doubt Dorothy joined them. Arthur underwent an appendix operation in February 1930 and by April Dorothy was spending a three months holiday with the family at home in Taree. In January 1931 everyone holidayed at Crescent Head near Kempsey.¹³

And F.J. exited hotel management and ventured into the exhibition side of the film industry, with mixed results.

Chapter Nineteen

F.J. Rudder bows out



F.J. Rudder wearing a black arm band at Candelo.

Candelo Cinema Theatre advertisement. *Southern Record and Advertiser* 24 July 1926. Trove NLA.

As mentioned in the chapter on Dorothy's conjugal rights case, from 1922 to early 1925 F.J. Rudder ran the loss-making Winsome Hotel in Tuncester NSW for Tooth's breweries. Meanwhile, Alice Rudder resided in Sydney until her death in January 1925. This indicates the couple had separated, or living together intermittently, during these years.



Winsome Hotel Lismore. Photograph by Tim Browning. Signage at Red Rock NSW. Author's photo.

By July 1925 F.J. was the licensee of the newly constructed Winsome Hotel in Lismore. It was not long after Alice's death but F.J., who was sixty-six and Protestant, was now 'stepping out' with a young Catholic girl of twenty-four, eight years younger than Dorothy. Annie Martha Caelli (1902-1961), the oldest of nine children from a family of Italian heritage who loved music and the arts. In a memoir called *Chapters* Annie's sister Renee Cronin wrote how men thought Annie a 'pearl'.¹ Annie met F.J. in Woolgoolga where her father had worked in the timber trade. Renee recalled visiting the Winsome Hotel for the first time with her brother and Annie. On the way their taxi ran into the back of another car. Annie fainted and for a moment her siblings thought she had died:

After a lot of fuss we arrived at the glamorous building. I was mesmerised by the luxury of it, the elevating hoists for conveying food to the first class dining room upstairs; the floors that were carpeted throughout in a deep pile of rich colour; the enormous mirrors that had the ability to reveal me head to toe.²

Due to ill-health F.J.'s stint at the beautiful brand-new hotel was short-lived, lasting only four months. From the letter from Dorothy to Len Smith dated 24 October 1925 which was exhibited during the conjugal rights case, she said her father had to undergo an operation. A new licensee had taken over two days after she wrote this letter.

In February 1926 F.J. made a visit to Woolgoolga and by May he was running a silent picture theatre at the School of Arts in Candelo, a small town near the NSW south coast town of Bega. I was puzzled as to why F.J. chose Candelo but discovered that a cousin, Alice Mary Rudder, was married to the under-manager of a renowned dairying estate in the district called 'Kameruka' (which co-incidentally was owned by the Tooth brewing family). It seems logical that Cecil Mason, at the time Australasian General Manager for Selznick Pictures, assisted F.J. in this cinema endeavour, although Dorothy later denied this in court.

As Renee Cronin pointed out, these cinemas were anything but silent. Annie often worked the projector or pumped the Pianola quickly or slowly depending on the scene; the cowboys were cheered or tears were shed. A boy paraded up and down with a large tray selling lollies and ice-cream during interval and every now and then fire would break out in the projection room or the film would fail to arrive. Local 'ultra-smart

young bucks' also caused problems by forging pass-outs and throwing the billboards into a nearby creek.

Although F.J. and Annie put themselves across as 'Mr and Mrs Rudder' when they arrived in May, they were married two months later on 15 July 1926. The marriage certificate reveals many interesting details. F.J. stated his age as sixty years old, not his actual age of sixty-six. The small ceremony was held at St Gregory's Presbytery in Queanbeyan near Canberra, a Roman Catholic church. The date of 15 July is interesting too. Dorothy's conjugal rights case was held from 30 June to 2 July. She told her solicitor that F.J. was too ill to attend the court on those days but the real reason for his non-appearance was probably connected to his wedding plans.³

Although Dorothy and Winnie knew of their father's second marriage, the present members of the family had no idea of Annie's existence. The connection first came to light through a small newspaper item mentioning the death of Annie's father in Newcastle from pneumonia the same year.⁴ Her mother then became seriously ill so Annie went back home to help look after her siblings for a time. There were no children of the marriage.

In November 1927 the local paper announced F.J. was going into the moving picture business 'in a substantial way' with Mr Gordon Solomon in Richmond NSW, with the cost of the picture theatre reported as a substantial £3,500.⁵ Solomon did establish a cinema at Richmond but it is unclear if F.J. continued with the partnership but he did run the pictures at Glenreagh, south of Grafton, from August 1928.

In December 1928 the family home in Woolgoolga was sold at auction.⁶ Then, in a case of bad timing, in late 1929 F.J. signed a three year lease on the picture theatre at the Coffs Harbour School of Arts at £7 per week, just as the Depression took hold. He trusted 'by studying the comfort of patrons and screening the latest and best productions to merit a continuance of the liberal patronage accorded to his predecessors'.⁷ Making money was now becoming very difficult. He was forced to raise the ticket price to 1/6 and received a discount on the rent, but a year later he quit the enterprise and returned to screening films at Glenreagh. Annie, a talented seamstress, commenced work as a 'scientific dressmaker and costumiere' until March 1931. F.J. and Annie then moved to Newcastle. Dorothy herself gave a concert in Newcastle in July 1932. It is not known what her thoughts were on her father's marriage to Annie.

Family photographs from the 1930s. There were very few images taken of Dorothy from these years.



Dorothy in trousers.



Gwen Wallace.



The three siblings and Gwen.



Dorothy, her brother Clarrie and Winnie.



Reg Wallace.



Pierrot group Coogee NSW 1929-31. Reg Wallace top row second from left.



Clarence River City Council float 1938. Winnie top left, Gwen bottom right.

The family tradition of summer visits and camping by the beach continued apace. In August 1932 F.J. visited Winnie in Taree and in February 1933 he was camping at Woolgoolga with Winnie, Arthur and Dorothy for the holidays. On this trip Dorothy was planning to give a local concert before she returned to Sydney 'so that her friends and admirers may have the opportunity of hearing her very beautiful voice'.⁸ In January 1934 they were again 'under canvas' at Woolgoolga.

No mention of Annie was found after 1932 in connection to F.J. According to the electoral records, in 1934 she was listed as living in Adamstown, a suburb of Newcastle. There is no listing for F.J. in Newcastle in 1934. However, he is recorded as a retired person residing at Kemp Street Grafton, Winnie and Arthur's home. It seems he and Annie had gone their separate ways.

Red Rock, the beautiful small coastal settlement north of Woolgoolga, was a special place for the Rudders. F.J. had a beach shack there, as did cousins Clyde and Herbert Rudder.

In January 1935, a few months before he died, the incident of the lost glasses became a national news story, hitting the headlines from Perth to Sydney to Brisbane. F.J. was enjoying a regular swim well into his seventies but he was getting a little absent-minded. While bathing at Woolgoolga he went into the water wearing his glasses. The inevitable happened and he lost them in the surf. A few days later, in a million to one chance, his grandson went for a swim and found them on the beach. The tide had returned them undamaged.⁹

After three weeks' illness and a serious operation, F.J. died on 29 August 1935 at the age of 76, with the funeral held at the Grafton Cathedral two days later. Annie was not mentioned in his obituary. Like Alice, F.J. died intestate and was thought to have left personal effects but no property. However, 15 years after his death, an asset was discovered—a block of land at Jervis Bay NSW. The land was estimated at a conservative and undervalued £8, with proceeds to be divided between Annie, F.J.'s remaining children and Reg Rudder's son. As required by law, his widow, Annie, applied for Letters of Administration of the estate to be granted to her, with creditors to forward particulars to her address in Kings Cross. Winnie did not return her portion of the paperwork. In the application F.J. was described as a pensioner from Adamstown, a suburb of Newcastle. Annie retained the block of land but she died in 1961. The land was sold in 1966 due to unpaid rates.

Chapter Twenty

J.C. Williamson's Imperial Grand Opera

In January 1934, a little more than a year before F.J. died, the Rudder/Wallace family managed to keep everyone at the campsite at Woolgoolga regaled with the latest news by wireless. Like most of the Australian population, they loved to listen to the radio but their involvement went two steps further. Winnie's son Reg, who showed an aptitude for anything electronic, ran a Philco radio dealership in Grafton and of course Dorothy had broadcast on radio from 1924. Although a single broadcast is listed between 1925 and 1929 (in April 1927 for 2FC), during the early 1930s she was often heard on Sydney radio stations 2FC and 2GB.

The compositions she sang on radio and on stage provides a good indication of her musically varied but not necessarily large repertoire, (and that of many other sopranos from the period). They included Carpentier's exquisite 'Depuis le Jour', 'The Wind's In the South' (John Prindle Scott), 'Love, I Have Won You' and 'Down in the Forest' (Landon Ronald), 'Waltz Song from Tom Jones' and 'Salaam' (Agnes Mary Lang), and 'The Pipes of Pan' (Monckton). Evergreen favourites such as Tosti's 'Goodbye', 'Carmina' (Lane Wilson) and 'The Jewel Song' from Gounod's *Faust* had been performed from the Garcia School of Music days.



Radiola advertising AWA. *The Home* 1 July 1932 Trove NLA.

Improvements in radio technology continued apace in the 1930s. By 1932 broadcaster and manufacturer Amalgamated Wireless Australia was promoting the Fisk series Radiola 55e, created 'largely due to the research work of their managing director

E.T. Fisk' who Dorothy encountered through her radio work. The priorities were basic in these pioneering days. The Radiola promised to reproduce 'every note from the top to the bottom of the musical scale' with a sound quality 'comparable only to the playing or singing of the artists themselves'. Furthermore 'the facility with which each station can be tuned in without the slightest overlapping is amazing'. The radio had six valves, a walnut frame and cost the substantial sum of £37 8s 0d with easy terms available.¹⁰

In December 1930 and January 1931 Dorothy was facing the microphone from 4QG Brisbane for the first time. A special program on 24 December was broadcast throughout Queensland, NSW and Melbourne.

Christmas Eve! What a jovial and what a thrilling night! We will present a varied programme, and our hours of transmission will be lengthened so as to enable all listeners to make 1930 a real radio Christmas. Between eight and nine o'clock a special Spotlight Revue, produced by Frank T. Perrin will be presented then Canon D. J. Garland will tell you his personal experiences on a visit to Bethlehem ... 9.35: Dorothy Rudder (soubrette) will entertain you.¹¹

In a fun cross promotion in Brisbane which Dorothy attended on New Year's Eve 1930, a fundraising carnival party was held at Lennon's Hotel in honour of the Eddie Cantor talkie version of *Whoopee*. The film, which was screening at the Wintergarden, was in two-strip Technicolor with songs including the classics 'Making Whoopee' and 'My Baby Just Cares for Me'.

The *Queensland Figaro* provided the party details.

At the entrance to the lounge and palm court a chief's tent with the flap turned back formed the entrance, while life-sized "Red Indian" figures with all their war paint on, were set at intervals in the doorway. The spacious ballroom and palm court were decorated with countless coloured balloons, which gave a festive air to the function. The "Whoopee" ballet contributed dances, and enjoyable vocal numbers were contributed by Miss D. Rudder and Mr. Frank Perrin. Later a dainty supper was served at flower decked tables in the dining room and dancing was enjoyed by the large gathering till 2 a.m.¹²

Fundraisers still provided a great opportunity to see top-flight performers. This event involved a veritable League of Nations of talent, given the mix of Russian, Ceylonese, Persian and American Indian aspects. The Wintergarden's musical director, virtuoso Russian violinist Gregory Ivanoff, together with his Ceylon Orchestra, presented a song called *In a Persian Market* for the party. In addition, through the courtesy of the Tivoli Theatre, dance numbers were given by American tap and eccentric dancers Louis Brock and 'Stony' Thompson who featured in early talkies such as *Gold Diggers of Broadway* but whose real love was the vaudeville stage. Their motto was 'see the world and get paid for it.'

Along with the listing of first class passengers arriving and departing by ship, the guest list at hotels was sometimes published in the newspapers. According to the *Brisbane Courier*, Dorothy was staying at the Australian Hotel in Brisbane on 27 March 1931.¹³ She left for Sydney the next day, travelling on the steamer SS *Ormiston*.

Unemployment would have been a challenge for Dorothy. She was not old enough to receive an aged pension and was not a widow. She may not have had insurance for illness. Assistance from a charity would have been an absolute last resort. But Winnie was always there to hold the door open for an extended visit and from April Dorothy stayed with her for some months. An entry in her autograph book dated 13 July was signed by a Mr X (Richard) and Bill Bullard. They were travelling from Brisbane to Adelaide via Taree and had dropped in for a visit. I was unable to find out who they were. Dorothy was feeling down; a line on this page says 'Keep your chin up Dot' with a row of crosses following.

Local volunteers went all out to create elaborate scenic effects for a Tableaux and Ballet fundraising concert on 3 and 4 August. An imitation sandstone proscenium arch was constructed, completed with violet curtains edged in purple and lemon, while the set for 'In a Monastery Garden' featuring a cloistered walk with a garden in the foreground, complete with pool trimmed with rushes and a sundial. Niece Gwen Wallace, one of the local support acts, danced in two ballets, one with an oriental theme and another where she was dressed in black and white tulle costume with a fan-like feather headdress—very *Ziegfeld Girl*.

Dorothy rendered songs for each section of the entertainment with an orchestra accompaniment. The *Northern Champion* in promoting the event praised her as a wonderful operatic soprano who was in wonderful voice.¹⁴ The review following the show was just as effusive.

Miss Dorothy Rudder a gifted operatic soprano who has had a wide experience of solo work as a member of J.C. Williamson companies that have toured the East, was in splendid form, and gave those present a treat. Miss Rudder's voice is full and rich and she uses it with excellent artistic effect. Her opening number was 'Lo, hear the gentle lark,' which gave her scope to display the range and beauty of her voice ... On her second appearance Miss Rudder sang 'The Dream of Home' and for the encore, 'The Pipes of Pan,' and both these beautiful songs were presented with a grace and sympathy which left nothing to be desired.¹⁵

On 5 September Dorothy was again singing at someone else's supper. The new Anglican Bishop of Newcastle commenced a special visit to Taree. His message to the community was paraphrased in the *Northern Champion*. 'There is so much meanness and selfishness in the world that we were sometimes tempted to take a low view of human nature. But Christ had laid it down that no one can gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.' He made the audience laugh by telling a story of a young girl who told him he was unsuited to the job of bishop because he was too young and not bald or fat enough. During the afternoon musical items were presented, followed by a 'dainty' afternoon tea served as usual by the ladies. Dorothy accompanied herself on the piano for two songs and then sang 'Annie Laurie' by special request.¹⁶

Dorothy had to undergo surgery of an unspecified nature on her leg in the Taree hospital on 22 September. A month later it was time to leave again for Sydney. An very important audition was in the offing.

J.C. Williamson Imperial Grand Opera 1932

Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and, instead of bleeding, he sings.

~ Robert Benchley¹⁷

J.C. Williamson was planning a big season of opera in Sydney and Melbourne for 1932, offering Dorothy a chance to test herself against other local sopranos for a position in the company. Williamson's E.J. Tait was confident of a successful national enterprise despite the current economic conditions; somewhat over-optimistically believing 'that the depression at present existing all over the world will be lifted before the beginning of 1932'. In fact, for many performers 1932 turned out to be the worst year. Two music lovers, George Nassoor and S.E. Chatterton, provided financial

backing to the project. The season, which ran in Sydney and Melbourne for eleven weeks, was not a financial success.

According to the book *Entertaining Australia* 'The 17 operas it performed were the usual Italian repertoire offered by visiting companies, ranging in time from Rossini to Puccini, plus a couple of French operas sung in Italian. There were no Australian premieres.'¹⁸ The fifteen principal singers were mostly from Europe, specifically Milan, Italy. They included sopranos Cesarina Valobra, Lina Pagliughi, mezzo-soprano Bruna Castaga, baritone Apollo Granforte and tenor Pedro Mirassou as well as Australian baritone John Brownlee.

The Firm wanted to engage as many locals as possible. 'Australians who can prove that they are qualified to be considered as members of the new company will be given an opportunity to prove their talent ... in Melbourne and Sydney.'¹⁹ The Sydney audition on 29 October involved many of the main players in the local classical music scene. Dorothy competed in the gruelling initial audition against 154 other sopranos, some of whom chose simple ballads and others elaborate operatic passages. None were referred to by name in the *Sydney Morning Herald* article which detailed the daunting process, although Dorothy was mentioned indirectly due to her hospital stay.

MANY FINE VOICES.

An Operatic Audition.

There was an unusual scene at the Criterion Theatre yesterday morning, when an audition of candidates for inclusion in the Williamson Imperial Opera Company was held... the performers, who had come from every part of the State ... filled the stalls and overflowed into the dress circle. They numbered 395, and most of them had brought their friends with them to sustain them in the ordeal.

After speeches ... the honorary adjudicators ... took their places in the dress circle and the audition began... [the opera company manager] Signor Folli introduced each candidate.

One young soprano had just come out of a hospital in which she had undergone a serious operation. She was given an audition early in the proceedings, and was found to possess one of the finest soprano voices that were tried ... Many excellent natural voices were found among the sopranos, though, in a number of cases, the voice was produced by methods that were

defective and needed recasting. ... The adjudicators were provided with a simple little signalling apparatus which sounded an electric buzzer close to the accompanist when the judges desired to signify that they had heard enough from a singer.²⁰

The *Northern Champion* confirmed Dorothy had proved herself.

Choosing Opera Singers

Miss Rudder Successful

After exhaustive tests the adjudicators ... decided late on Friday night that 150 applicants out of 600 would be recalled for further tests.

All the judges commented on the high standard of the Australian voices.

For the first time in the history of music in Australia a definite foundation has been laid for continuation of an operatic scheme evolved from year to year...

For the forthcoming seasons the whole of the orchestra, chorus and most of the solo work will be entrusted to Australians.

The successful applicants for the Grand Opera School, where they will receive free tuition in every opera of the repertoire of the 1932 season, include Miss Dorothy Rudder ... From the Opera School the chorus for the Grand Opera Company will be chosen.²¹

There were three auditions, with more singers eliminated at each recall. The suspense built until thirty were chosen as permanent members of the company. Their names, including Dorothy's, were placed on a noticeboard backstage. *The Sun* journalist John Williams attended a rehearsal of Verdi's Egyptian opera *Aida*.

Pharaoh's Court of Australians

Moulding Local Chorus for Grand Opera

The doors of Her Majesty's theatre are shut. All the house lights are out. White sheets cover the dress circle and stall seats. Music stands and chairs are at random in the orchestra well.

A black cat stalks in and out along the empty aisles, fruitlessly seeking mice. He is the cat who always supervises the drawing of each State lottery.

Now he takes an interest in the stage. He stalks towards it. On the stage Australians, in shirt sleeves and ordinary frocks, are learning the grand romance of opera—Verdi's exotic “Aida”—at the hands of Italian masters. It is undress rehearsals. The Australians—nearly a hundred men and women chosen for many hundreds of parts in the forthcoming Imperial Grand Opera season—are visibly nervous. Yet, they are anxious to learn, most of them. But there are several—all young—who are slow in throwing themselves into the spirit and movements of the lyrics. They grimace at each other, self-consciously. They aggravate the observer—WHY can't they snap into it?

The Italians are patient, gallant and tolerant. They are good-mannered, polished, persuasive.

Said Albino Marone to a chorus which lagged in volume: “We were told you are the finest chorus in the world. (The Australians smile sheepishly). I believe it. Please, please give the maestro all your voice.”

So the King's messenger announces that Rhadames has been chosen to conquer the revolting Ethiopians. The slave Aida, in reward, will surely be his.....

He enters the temple to pray, Australians in chorus raise arms in sleeveless frocks and collarless shirts in a brilliant roll of song to Isis.

Frank Rigo, the Australian producer, isn't satisfied. He feels the Australians can do better. “Throw yourselves forward on one foot—raise your arms so—beseech!—implore!—so, so!”

He shows them with a firm stamp, raised arms and the fire of passionate eyes.

Marone again steps forward. He enters the ranks of the chorus—soldiers and priests in Australian-made trousers. He sings with them and leads the fiery movement for them.

The exotic music is part of him. And the dramatic words. His work is effortless, natural. Emilio Rossi smiles in obvious appreciation. His baton is at last happy, satisfied. It swings and beats.

So the scenes are sung and acted, again and again. A brilliant light floods the stage. It filters out into the deserted, silent stalls. The black cat has tired of parading in and out of the chorus. The stamping of soldiers' feet is too disturbing. He stalks back into the dim stalls and curls up on a sheet.

Soon Marone must away. He gathers hat and cane. His spats are immaculate. His alert figure martial.

Unexpectedly Marone turns to all grouped about the stage and says good-bye. He overlooks nobody. All are included in his delightful gesture. He says “thank you” to the pianist, the maestro, and Rigo. He will be back at 2 o'clock to-morrow for rehearsal. Rossi carries on. There are one or two movements with which he is not satisfied. He waves his baton.

* * *

An hour later all seem tired. Rigo claps his hands and talks like a teacher to school children.

“You all may go now. To-morrow at 2.”

Sleeveless frocks and collarless shirts mingle. There is a babble of excited talk.

Rigo stands in the centre of the stage—alone, spent, yet deep in thought. He crosses to the maestro. Lights are lowered.

Rigo and the maestro continue deep in talk, gesturing, discussing, very polite.

The black cat awakens, arches his back, yawns, jumps from the sheet and stalks along an aisle

Thanks to soprano Joan Hammond's autobiography *A Voice, A life*, some interesting details emerge regarding dog-eat-dog life of the opera chorister. On the day of the first call, several of the singers who were not chosen gathered at the stage door ‘presumably to give vent to their disappointment by making disparaging remarks to the lucky ones’.²² They commented on a chosen individual's bad figure, lack of ability to reach high notes, or not needing the job due to having a husband and money.

Everyone was singing full pelt at the first dress rehearsal, trying to outdo each other, their lack of opera experience showing. They kept their eyes glued to the conductor, Emilio Rossi, who didn't speak English. He shouted instructions to the producer who translated: ‘Can't you boys and girls sing *piano* when the Maestro indicates it? And when he says *forte*, he means FORTE!’²³

The costume ‘fitting’ for *Aida* was a total free-for-all. Hammond said that ‘the only way to acquire a presentable costume was to make a dive for it as soon as you saw it.

The resulting scrum was rather worse than the opening hours of sale at a large department store or feeding time at the zoo.'

At the *Aida* rehearsals the shorter singers such as Dorothy were placed at the front, but everyone, including six buxom 'footlight fannies' as they were called, were determined to get as near to the footlights as possible. A revenge plot developed. During a scene in *I Pagliacci*, where the choir was required to sit on benches as an audience, the footlight fannies took up position on the ends of the benches nearest to the audience. At a prearranged signal the others stood up in unison, tipping up the benches and 'leaving the others to slide ungracefully into the footlights' or stand up as soon as possible.²⁴

The *Imperial Grand Opera* Sydney season commenced at Her Majesty's Theatre on 9 April with a Gala Opening Performance of *Aida* and moved on to Melbourne at the end of June. P.J. Nolan, the *Sydney Morning Herald* music critic, reviewed the performance and was impressed with the vocal work of the women's chorus.

The Australian chorus, trained for so many months by Signor Franco Izal, sang with characteristically good quality, and the stage business was fully effective. The choral volume in the ensembles of the triumphal scene was magnificent. Indeed, the enthusiasm of the audience at one point here was such, where the chorus took up the theme and resolved it after the sextet for the principals, that the scene was interrupted by a burst of applause, while the conductor waited with baton raised to continue, and one or two of the principals destroyed the illusion by bowing. There were some beautiful examples of *mezza voce* singing in the consecration scene, on the part of both sections of the chorus. Another particularly good piece of work, in its vocal quality and promptitude of attack, was that of the women's chorus at the introduction of the first scene of the second act, in the apartment of Amneris.²⁵

Dorothy was now experiencing opera in all its glory. She had a great deal of stage experience behind her but had not worked with the Melba/Williamson opera companies of 1924 and 1928, nor performed with Count Enrico Filippini's touring troupe. Participating in an important opera season, working alongside singers of high standard, must have been a very instructive experience, as well as providing some amusing

moments. And offering a welcome, although small, income of £3 per week during the height of the Depression.



Rats munched though the *Carmen* scores. Article in *The Sun* 14 April 1932.

The Sydney season was a critical success. The Italian-orientated repertoire included *Lucia Di Lammermoor*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto*, *Carmen*, *Il Trovatore*, *Faust*, *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Pagliacci*, *Don Pasquale* and *Madame Butterfly* with prices at 10/- 7/6 5/- 3/- and 12/6 for the opening night. The production of *Carmen* had to be postponed for a week due to an unlikely cause. The orchestral score had been in storage in Melbourne for five months but rats had happily munched on three quarters of the band parts, rendering them useless.

Dorothy was selected as one of the twenty-five 'Australian Artists Associated with the Season'. A sumptuous 28-page souvenir program with a cellophane wrapper, which included a page of the featured Australian artists, was produced for the Sydney season. In addition, this page was incorporated into J.C. Williamson's reference book of performers and in their magazine. I found a copy of this magazine on eBay, along with some other material owned by cast member Alys Watson. Against the name of Nora Mack on the Australian Artists page is written 'the girl who used to do Priestess [in *Aida*] and got sacked.' A life in opera could be harsh. Mack played the role on opening night but Watson performed the High Priestess role by June 6. Mack had to face some difficulties in the next few months too; she received a mediocre review for her role as Fasquita in *Carmen*, had lost her voice at the end of the second act on 3 June and by 5 July had fractured her elbow after falling down stairs. This was a temporary setback however, as she continued to sing for many years afterwards.



A soft focus autographed photograph from Molly de Gunst to Alys Watson. Both were members of the Williamson Imperial Grand Opera. Photograph by Dorothy Welding Sydney. Author's collection.



Imperial Grand Opera page J.C. Williamson Ltd Magazine 1932 showing Australian Featured Artists associated with the season. Not all would be noted in the reviews. Dorothy far left third row from top. Author's collection.

Molly de Gunst, another former pupil of Madame Christian, was to score a huge triumph on 19 April with a lead role in *Aida*. In fact, Madame declared ‘I trained Melba, and I can remember when the great Marchesi called out “Salvatore, Salvatore! I have found a star.” But Molly de Gunst will be over and over again a greater singer and a greater musician than Melba. Time will prove me correct.’²⁶ Although eleven Australians were given principal roles, and Dorothy was in the group selected to sing more than chorus parts, unlike Molly de Gunst she did not appear to have been given the opportunity to move up from small part roles. Contemporary newspaper items publicising her local concerts reported that she did take on principal roles but proof as to specifics has not come to light.

It was either Dorothy or Winnie who kept a clipping from *Smiths Weekly* for an April 1932 performance of Puccini’s *La Boheme* which reviewed Carmencita Mascagni, (a niece of the composer Pietro Mascagni).

It is unpleasant to dispraise Australians in the cast, but Valobra’s understudy Carmencita Mascagni, the Adelaide damsel chosen to be Musetta, could not sing her aria with necessary daintiness, and in her comedy she galumphed. In excuse, she had just come from the sickbed after a nasty eye operation. Musetta’s graceful lilt is so popular an item of “Boheme” that anybody’s failure in it is a pity.²⁷

As Mascagni played the role more than once during the season in both Sydney and Melbourne she must have been more than acceptable to the producers. After Nora Mack lost her voice during *Carmen*, after a quick rehearsal backstage Mascagni took over the role and received a good review from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The Melbourne *Age* praised her in *La Boheme* but the *Hobart Mercury*’s ‘Mainland Notes’ thought her voice too light for opera.²⁸

Following the Australian season the company toured New Zealand, with most of the chorus recruited locally. Some of the principals, along with the original Sydney chorus, were engaged by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) for a short season of abridged operas broadcast from their Sydney studio from 1 January to 5 February 1933. In addition Maestro Aldrovandi conducted the orchestra and the full chorus, which would have included Dorothy, for a live recording at His Majesty’s Theatre Sydney.²⁹

Travelling back to Italy on the *Remo* Signor Granforte made some comments to the *West Australian* on the surprisingly high quality of the chorus. ‘You have many voices, but not very good teachers for the voices. That is my opinion. It is necessary that you have good teachers. You should import artists from Italy to teach production of the voice.’³⁰

P.J. Nolan wrote of the lack of opportunity for local singers, an issue which was highlighted during the Williamson opera season.

Of the Australian artists who have appeared in this season, Miss Molly de Gunst has been conspicuously successful, not only by reason of her fine voice, but also because of her ready sense of the stage ... Among the others, while some excellent voices have been revealed, there has been, it must be said, a lack of histrionic ability, but this is easily understood, because their opportunities for appearances on the lyric stage have been so limited. If there was a chance of permanent opera in this country, all this talent, clear to the most casual observer, could be developed under most favourable conditions.³¹

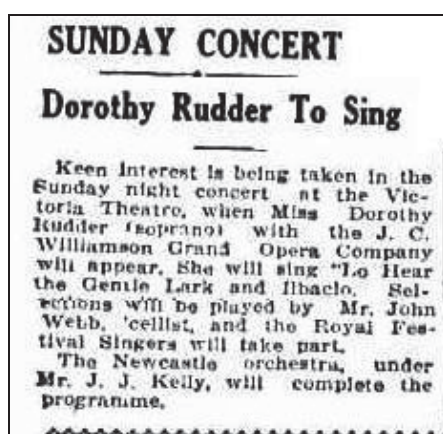
Robert McCall from *The Australian Women’s Weekly* thought the expense of an imported cast was not justified.

For instance, in the last season by the Imperial Opera Company there were very few imported singers of more than mediocre worth; Pagliughi’s coloratura pyrotechnics easily outweighed her adiposity; Granforte was an experienced, authoritative baritone; Castagna was one of the most thrilling mezzo-sopranos we ever have heard. The rest of the company smacked of provincial Italian opera houses; we had dozens of singers in our own country who, given opportunities to develop the opera temperament, could easily have beaten most of the visitors at their own game.³²

During the opera season ever versatile Dorothy found time to perform in two revues produced by actor/manager Norman Barrington—full name Norman Henderson Barrington-Rowcliffe. He was an ex-Indian Army man familiar around Sydney for his ‘unusual’ attire which included a monocle on a black cord. He had originally come from England with actor Laurence Grossmith and performed in India for many years in one of American impresario Maurice Bandmann’s touring theatre companies. By co-

incidence Bandmann, a pioneer of musical comedy in the East, was the owner of the Empire Theatre in Calcutta where Dorothy had performed in 1919 with the *Vanity Fair Company*.

Barrington's *Town Topics* (advertised as 'the Cleanest, Brightest and Snappiest show going') and the *Buck Up Company* were presented at Sydney's Grand Opera House (which started life as George Marlow's Adelphi Theatre.)³³ Both shows featured many of the same entertainers. *Town Topics* managed to draw capacity houses by taking the concept of variety to the extreme; featuring everything from grand opera to a Shakespearean scene to bedroom burlesque and jazz songs while the *Buck Ups* included acrobats in the mix. Bertie Wright, who had appeared with Dorothy in the 1927 production of *The Student Prince*, was also in the troupe. Wright hailed from a famous British theatrical family and starred in the original Australian production of *Our Miss Gibbs*. Dorothy scored two good reviews from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, describing her numbers as 'especially effective' and very successful'.



Newcastle Sun 7 July 1932. Trove NLA.

Dorothy was also a popular draw-card at a well-attended concert held at Newcastle's Victoria Theatre on 10 July, winning 'unstinted applause' for 'Il Bacio', her soprano solo.³⁴ She was familiar with this venue, having performed there for over a month in 1920 with *The Sparklers*. The Newcastle Orchestra, a male choir of 16 voices, vocal items and a cornet solo joined her on the bill. On 24 July she participated in a concert at the Regent Theatre Cessnock, near Newcastle, followed by another appearance at the Victoria Theatre on 7 August. The local paper, the *Recorder*, stated she was the leading lady in *The Student Prince*. This claim was a bit of a stretch as she had played the role for two performances as the understudy to Elise Gergely.³⁵

Chapter Twenty-one

Fuller's Royal Grand Opera

As was seen from Dorothy's advertisements late in 1923, a rite of passage for 'Famous Society, Stage and Screen Stars' was to endorse Dearborn's Mercolized Wax face cream. In 1932, almost ten years later, a large *Freeman's Journal* display advertisement provided a long list of the women, including seven named Dorothy, who had been part of the campaign. Some performers such as Gladys Cooper, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Gladys Moncrieff and Anna Pavlova are still recognised today but most are now forgotten. Some Australian singers, following the lead of Nellie Melba whose surname paid tribute to her home town of Melbourne, looked to their own town or country for patriotic inspiration when choosing a stage name. Dorothy Canberra, Hope Charters (Charters Towers), Florence Austral and Elsa Stralia come to mind. Performers such as Madge Cafe, Doris Whimp, Adlene Splatt, Phyllis Blott, Hazel Nutt and Mona Magnet just had unusual names.¹

Four performances can be located for Dorothy in 1933. Mid-year she returned to her home turf of Smithtown and Kempsey. A disappointingly small house of fifty people attended a fundraiser on 1 June. The reviewer from Kempsey's *Macleay Chronicle* praised the excellent program, and then pointed out how Dorothy's selections, including one in Italian ('Caro Nome'), could not be heard to advantage, possibly because of the poor acoustics in the Rendezvous Theatre. All the local talent, in particular the girls from the Smithtown Convent, was described as 'brilliant' or 'pleasing'.² No positive comments regarding Dorothy's performance appeared, but it was noted that she was the one artist not known to local audiences, being from Sydney. (She was born in Kinchela, just up the road from Kempsey.) In contrast the *Macleay Argus* commented on Miss Rudder's 'high reputation' and extensive stage experience, stating she was 'the outstanding attraction' of the night while earlier noting her background as a descendant of 'one of the first settlers on the Macleay'.³

Nearby Grafton, where Clarrie, Winnie and Arthur now resided, was an important rail junction between Sydney and Brisbane. Performers often broke the journey to perform at the 1,000 seat Saraton Theatre, and, from 1936, broadcast from the newly built ABC studios. Dorothy was the featured artist at a recital at the Saraton on 18 July. Items in the *Daily Examiner* covered both pre-publicity and a review of the concert, including an old quote from a *Sydney Morning Herald* review of Dorothy's 1915

Christmas concert, nineteen years before. Apparently Signor Rossi, the conductor from the Williamson Imperial Grand Opera season ‘expressed the opinion that Miss Rudder possessed a voice of outstanding quality and added to her personal charms should go far in advancing the musical claims of Australians amongst the other nations of the world’.⁴

Dorothy was supported by local artists, including niece Gwen, who gave an exhibition of Spanish dancing followed by a sweet portrayal of a nymph wandering in an enchanted wood dancing to *Valse Lente* from *Coppelia* (Delibes). The *Examiner*’s reviewer thought the audience compared more than favourably with the usual Grafton attendance numbers. Dorothy’s ‘reputation as a high-class lyric soprano and entertainer was abundantly sustained ... with her pleasing stage appearance winning the admiration of the audience’.⁵ By the end of the night she had sung fifteen solos including opera numbers by Verdi and Puccini and received a ‘wealth of floral tributes’.⁶



Gwen Wallace in Spanish costume for the Saraton show at Grafton.

Dorothy’s uncle Thomas Henry Salmon. Photograph by W.J. Hanna Murwillumbah.

A close relative of Dorothy’s died suddenly in a tragic accident on 20 June. A clipping of this incident was cut out from the *Examiner* and kept which indicates its importance. Her seventy-three-year-old uncle Thomas Henry Salmon (Alice’s brother) was driving his car towards Murwillumbah when the vehicle stalled at a railway crossing; only the back wheel was still on the track. The morning passenger train from Casino struck the car, crushing it to matchwood against a terminal post alongside a

cattle grid. Salmon, who was thrown from the car, suffered severe head injuries and shock. The ambulance came quickly but nothing could be done. He died that afternoon.

In 1933 Dorothy was singing the Victorian parlor song ‘Love’s Old Sweet Song’ twice daily as part of *Gems of English Melody* presentation with the Prince Edward Theatre’s concert orchestra, in conjunction with the screening of British films *Friday the Thirteenth* and *Just Smith*. Built in 1920 by Harry Musgrove with Dan and E.J. Carroll and tragically demolished in 1965, this luxurious Sydney theatre was designed for both live entertainment and film. It had a marble foyer, plush carpets, blue and gold colour scheme and an American Wurlitzer organ which rose up from the orchestra pit. The Director of Music was conductor, violinist and composer Albert Cazabon who had studied composition with Gustav Holst and created scores for many silent films and the theatre in Britain. Working with this gifted musician must have been a special experience.

Dorothy auditioned for the ABC on 12 April 1934. The manager H.G. Homer did not waste time and sent a letter later that day. He had ‘much pleasure in advising that the audition was quite satisfactory’ and asked her to call in to see the studio manager and producer, Mr Halbert, with a copy of her repertoire. Listeners to ABC radio station 2BL Sydney (and relayed to Melbourne) on 18 May would have heard well-known compositions of the master musicians, assisted by Dorothy and tenor Ernest McKinley. This is the last occasion Dorothy sang on radio which seems strange given her successful ABC audition.

The social round continued on 27 June 1934 when Dorothy participated in another charity event—a musicale given by forty socially connected ladies at Mrs Jack Jacobsen’s home in Sydney’s exclusive Bellevue Hill. This time the event was in honour of soprano Strella Wilson who appeared in leading roles in J.C. Williamson’s Gilbert and Sullivan and opera productions. Wilson was given an inscribed flapjack (a type of powder case, not a pancake) in acknowledgement of her support for a local hospital.⁷

Sir Benjamin Fuller Royal Grand Opera Season 1934-35

On 28 August 1934 the auditorium at David Jones department store was the venue for a lecture recital in conjunction with Music Week. Before the lecture patrons could indulge in a scrumptious cherry tea which included sandwiches, scones, cherry cakes,

cherry fruit cocktails with tea and coffee, all for 1/1 per person. The lecturer, Roland Foster, the Director of the Opera School, Professor of Singing at the NSW Conservatorium of Music and Dorothy's private vocal teacher, spoke on the various phases of the development of operatic music and style from the emphasis on the solo singer to the increasing importance of the orchestra. Dorothy and Conservatorium associates sang arias from various operas to illustrate these changes. Foster deplored the fact that so many of the great operas had never been heard in Australia, but expressed the hope that an opera scheme Sir Benjamin Fuller had in hand in connection with the Melbourne Centenary would provide a better opportunity.⁸ Dorothy would participate in Fuller's exciting new project, the Royal Grand Opera Season 1934-35. In the chorus, again.

The distinguished company included two Australians who were performing opera for Australian audiences for the first time—dramatic soprano Florence Austral, who excelled in Wagnerian opera roles, and bass-baritone Horace Stevens. Principal singers recruited from overseas included Thea Philips, Dutch baritone Sydney de Vries, Norman Allin, Muriel Brunskill, Ben Williams and Walter Widdop, many of whom had been with Austral and Stevens in the British National Opera Company, which performed opera in English from 1921 to 1929. Other talented Australians included Molly de Gunst, Joan Hammond, Browning Mummery, and Fred Collier. As with the J.C. Williamson season, the orchestra and the chorus were all Australian. The producer was Charles Moor from Covent Garden. According to the *Australian Women's Weekly*, Moor was 'regarded by many people as one of the most experienced operatic producers Australia has seen—and to be frank we haven't seen many'.⁹ Maurice de Abravanel, Robert Ainsworth (who would later be working more closely with Dorothy) and Curt Prerauer were the principal conductors.¹⁰ There was one woman in the orchestra—harpist Elizabeth Rathonyi from Sydney.¹¹

Sir Benjamin Fuller had grand ambitions for the opera tour. 'The company will perform for more than 18 months, 12 in Australia and six in New Zealand.' Twenty operas were planned for the Melbourne season, if the public supported it. The expenses ran to £2,500 per week in order to give the public opera 'in all departments and respects, equal to the best in the world'.¹² The Melbourne season commenced at the Apollo Theatre with *Aida* on 29 September 1934 as part of the city's Centenary celebrations and ran until 30 November. This was followed by a Sydney season, a short run in Newcastle and a return visit to Melbourne. The initial Melbourne season was not

a financial success. According to Kenneth Wilkinson from the *Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Melbourne residents were busy looking at the illuminations, going to cocktail parties and official functions [for the Centenary] and generally indulging the lighter side of life’ although the season was extended for another week thanks to the programming of Wagner’s operas including *Tristan and Isolde* which proved popular at the box office.¹³



Dress Rehearsal for *Aida*. *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 December 1934. Trove NLA.

Christmas was not an ideal time for opera but the season at Sydney’s New Tivoli Theatre commenced on 21 December, again with *Aida*, and ran until 28 February. The theatre had no orchestra pit which meant the conductor had to keep the playing subdued, which was not ideal. The original Melbourne chorus was trained in advance with two thirds of them proceeding to Sydney. Applicants for the chorus were invited to apply at the Conservatorium on 5 December. It seems possible Dorothy was recruited at this time. She sang in the Sydney season but may have been part of the Newcastle and second Melbourne season too. Fifteen operas were staged in Sydney, including the Australian premiere of *The Pearl Fishers*. Many of the performances, including *Faust*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Tristan and Isolde*, were broadcast from the stage by the ABC to a mixed response from listeners regarding sound quality.

Operas were sung in English, rather than the original language, which met with some debate from music lovers. *The Women’s Weekly* thought it wouldn’t matter if Florence Austral sang in Zulu, the audience would still be large as they were paying to hear a particular singer not necessarily a certain opera or even language.¹⁴

Austral took on the part of Brunnhilde in Richard Wagner's *The Valkyrie*, the second of the four operas which comprise *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, a turbulent saga based on Norse mythology. The Valkyries are a group of female figures who decide which soldiers are to die in battle and which are worthy of a place in Valhalla. Eight Australian Valkyries were chosen for the Sydney performances but Dorothy was not one of them. However, it must have been an exciting experience for her to share the stage with Austral, who commented that 'the voices of chorus were excellent and very fresh'.¹⁵

Sydney audiences were lucky to see Austral at all. During the Brunnhilde immolation scene, the illusion of fire was usually created on stage with a wind machine and paper flames, but in Melbourne Fuller wanted the real thing—real flames supplied by gas jets. The magical fire effect was a little too hot (and dangerous) for comfort for Austral and was not used for the Sydney shows.¹⁶

The company was back in Melbourne again by 9 March 1935 for a more successful four week season generously presented by J.C. Williamson at His Majesty's Theatre. *Tannhauser*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Sampson and Delilah*, and *La Boheme* were presented in the first week. In addition to use of the theatre, the collaboration with Williamson's gave the company access to their vast theatrical resources such as costumes and new stage lighting.

The company disbanded after six months on 12 April 1935. Benjamin Fuller was sanguine about the financial aspect. 'Consequently £25,000 went down the sink. I am a good winner, and I can be a good loser.'¹⁷ The heavy financial losses of the earlier J.C. Williamson season underlined the fact that unsubsidised opera could not succeed. It did not matter if the emphasis was on Italian or Wagnerian opera or sung in English. Opera had been presented to the Australian public from 1835 and great overseas singers often toured the country in recital or in concert. In conjunction with J.C. Williamson, Melba had presented opera seasons in 1911, 1924 and 1928. However, although the idea was regularly discussed, no dedicated Australian opera company, opera house or national orchestra existed in 1934. Fuller was hoping to create a permanent Australasian opera company but his appeal to the Federal Government for a subsidy was rejected. This would be the last major season of opera before the Second World War from J.C. Williamson or Fullers, the two organisations with the resources to present these productions.

Chapter Twenty-two

A travel plan emerges

'The farther you go, however, the harder it is to return. The world has many edges, and it's easy to fall off.' ~ Anderson Cooper

Dorothy's participation the Fuller's Grand Opera Sydney season would mark her last opera appearance in Australia. Once more a gap appears in Dorothy's career timeline, as no information is available from April 1935 to June 1936, more than a year.



Cinesound Productions. Casting Book Male, Female and Children. Page 043 : Portraits and casting details for Miss Rudder, Heather McCulloch and Patricia Minchin. 1935. Cropped.

However we do know she appeared in the film company Cinesound Productions casting book around 1935. Alongside a gorgeous black and white image 175x230mm in size is written: Miss Rudder. Hotel Gresham; 5ft 3in; 28 years (her real age was forty-two); golden hair, long to waist; medium figure; Played lead in "Student Prince". The cost of bed and board at the newly renovated Gresham Hotel, situated opposite the Sydney Town Hall, was £2/15/- a day; a not insubstantial amount in 1935.

Although the Depression had made a dent in the number and kind of opportunities on offer for a singer such as Dorothy, during the previous six years she had made many concert, recital and radio appearances as well as the chorus work with the J.C. Williamson and Fullers' opera companies. Dorothy's options as a 'concert and operatic

artiste' were now somewhat limited; more of the same was in her future. She could no longer play ingénue roles in revue and vaudeville and showed no interest in Gilbert and Sullivan light opera roles. Teaching up-and-coming singers didn't seem to interest her either.

No full-time opera companies existed anywhere in the country and musical stars were often imported, so Dorothy had little chance of moving into lead roles. Although she still had a family connection to Cecil Mason and, as she stated in court, he had helped her to find work, this did not translate into any film appearances. In any case, few films were made locally. She was not primarily a stage actress, so 'legitimate' theatre was not an option.

On the personal front, Dorothy's father F.J. had died in August 1935; she had no children, and was not in an ongoing relationship. Compared to the 1910s and 1920s very few photographs of Dorothy exist from the early to mid-1930s. The surviving images show a woman still photogenic and self-confident. In one image she is holding a pair of wire-rimmed reading glasses. Photographs were often turned into a postcard to send around to family and friends. A small leaflet exists outlining the cost—one postcard for 1/-, quite a sum when money was in short supply.

Dorothy now developed a courageous plan to further her musical and stage career abroad. She had just turned forty-three. Generous local music lovers came forward with support and in June 1936 a Dorothy Rudder Concert Committee was formed in Grafton. For once she was the recipient of a fundraiser, rather than a contributor at someone else's complimentary event. The concert date at Grafton's Saraton Theatre had been postponed several times due to Dorothy's 'serious indisposition' which started as a chill and ended up with a hospital stay for pharyngitis, making it impossible to sing. A concert also had to be cancelled in Kempsey. After a few weeks she was 'reported to be once again in excellent voice' and the recital was finally held on 13 August.¹

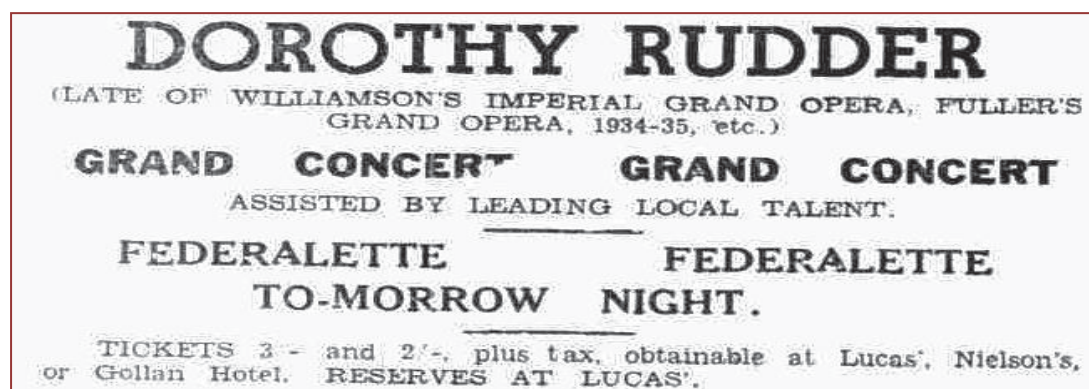
A flyer survives which erroneously mentioned Dorothy as principal girl in the *Aladdin* pantomime in addition to being in *The Forty Thieves* when they were talking about the same show. The flyer's provocative comment on the nation's lack of support for the development of an artist's career has a familiar ring.

Music lovers throughout Australia recognise to-day, more than ever, that, although the "sporting" spirit of the community never fails to rise to the

occasion when various demands are made for the display of our athletic prowess abroad, the same intelligent interest is not always displayed when the question concerns the furthering of an artist's career.²

The Committee felt strong local support for the concert and appreciation for Dorothy's talents would be reflected in a bumper house. 'This talented young lady ... has already brought much credit to this district by her remarkable achievements.'³ The *Times* said the audience was small, 'but those who stayed away missed a musical treat, such as seldom experienced outside the metropolis. [Her] 'really splendid lyric soprano is so richly suited to the songs she sings that it is a pity there was not a packed house to set the stamp of local appreciation on this North Coast singer, whose vocal skill and technique should make the district proud of her.'⁴

Dorothy sang many numbers from her repertoire, including those by Verdi and Mascagni. The *Examiner* praised Dorothy's performance, particularly enjoying her interpretation of Landon Ronald's 'Down in the Forest' which 'was worth travelling a long way for.' Many bouquets were presented from the audience.⁵ The film *Catherine the Great*, which featured Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Elizabeth Bergner, completed this generous musical program.



Advertisement for Dorothy's Lismore concert. *Northern Star* 2 September 1936. Trove NLA.

The following month another benefit was given for her in nearby Lismore, where she stayed at the newly built Gollan Hotel. The *Northern Star* reported that Miss Rudder had been given an opportunity of visiting England and of obtaining an audition at the Elstree film studios.⁶

That Miss Rudder comes fully accredited is vouched for in the fact that no less an authority than Sir Hamilton Harty is prepared to welcome her to London and

do what he can to assure her success as a singer. Miss Rudder holds a letter to this effect from the famous conductor.⁷

Dorothy was confronted by a poor house at the Federalette Theatre even though the event was well publicised and two movies were the only other entertainment on offer. Once again she demonstrated her professionalism and delivered a fine concert. TWD, the *Tatler's* music reviewer, forwarded a copy of his review to Dorothy. Titled *Dorothy Rudder—An Outstanding Soprano*, the review encapsulates the quality and style of her voice.

Being somewhat isolated from the circuit usually mapped out by managers for musical celebrities, Lismore but rarely gets “personal appearances” of really front rank artists and—judging by the paltry attendance at the Federalette last evening—it is perhaps fortunate that it is so.

A soprano capable of successfully filling important principal parts in Grand Opera—as recently as 1934—in Sydney, Melbourne and other important cities of Australia also in New Zealand and the East can be neither a “dud” nor a back number! In spite of the poor house, however, Dorothy Rudder gave her programme in its entirety—and several encores as well. Any of her programme numbers were worth the price of admission and those who were present received full value for their money! Dorothy Rudder’s strict avoidance of the much-abused ‘vibrato’ was quite refreshing—after recent exhibitions of it by local amateurs. As a result, her intonation was always pure—her cantabile [smooth singing] style being always “dead on the note.” And pleasing therefore—alike to the educated ear and to the average listener.

In her bracketed opening number by Landon Ronald, her versatility was at once apparent, each of the three songs being widely diversified in character and style, but, in each of which she was equally at home.

In “Caro Nome” from *Rigoletto* the bell-like clarity of her upper register her colourful interpretation and her easily sustained volume—in spite of a bad cold—showed that she has all the essentials for prima donna roles—the voice, the control and the artistic conception.

In response to an insistent recall she gave the very exacting “Prayer” from *La Tosca*, “Vissi D’arte, Vissi D’Amore,” from which she narrowly avoided a double encore. In the “Jewel Song” from *Faust* she compares quite favourably

with some great sopranos [the] writer has heard in this exacting solo from Gounod's masterpiece. The same remarks apply to her concluding number "Depuis Le Jour" from Louise.⁸

The disappointingly small audience numbers at Grafton and Lismore left Dorothy with reduced funds for her trip abroad. Even though she departed Sydney with very little money to spend on the journey, ever resourceful, and with a little bit of assistance from a gentleman she met aboard ship, she managed to make this sum last until her arrival in England.

Chapter Twenty-three

Aboard SS *Mongolia*

The planned overseas trip finally came to fruition in 1937. Dorothy, now nearly forty-four, was going to try for professional recognition on the English opera stage. Many Australian performers had travelled this well-trodden path before her; singers such as Nellie Melba, Florence Austral, Kitty Reidy, Mollie de Gunst and pianist Eileen Joyce had met with success while many others did not fare so well. The Australian press often over-exaggerated the achievements of local singers both overseas and at home, especially if they were female. Dorothy had often been the subject of speculation as to her glowing future but any predictions of stardom had not yet eventuated. Moving to England was fraught with risk.

Dorothy had performed with many world class opera singers and conductors, observing them night after night at very close quarters. Conductors Sir Hamilton Harty and Signor Rossi both had a high opinion of her voice and stage presence, according to various reviewers of her concerts.

The discipline required of an opera singer can be compared in some ways to the training of an athlete or dancer. For the singer the voice in itself is an instrument that changes as he or she gets older. A singer needs talent, regular sessions with a singing teacher, a good ear, the right repertoire, and dedication to the profession. As well as good health and stamina, it often requires an element of luck to build and maintain a career. Joan Hammond noted ‘One must be able to express every emotion through the voice without injuring the mechanism. Vocal cords are vulnerable to changes of climate, the atmosphere in halls and theatres, and to any digestive troubles ... It is an endless study.’¹ For all that, sopranos can sustain a career of longevity.

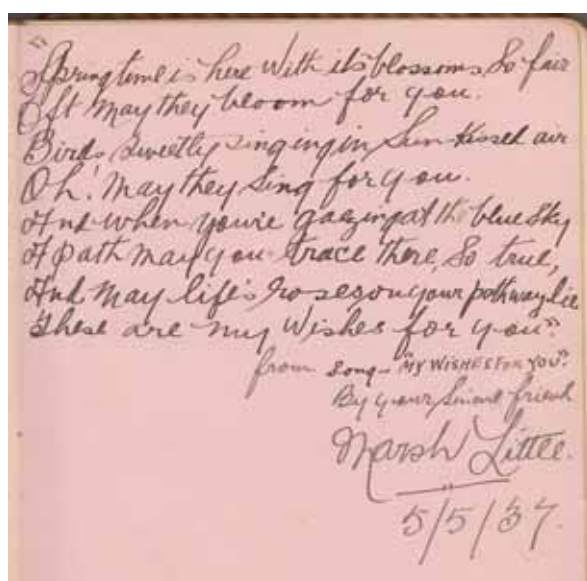
Australian soprano Florence Austral believed the key for world recognition ‘is the capacity for hard, gruelling work. And almost as important—indeed, of equal importance—is a spirit of courage that can stand up against bitter disappointments, rebuffs, and bad luck.’² Dorothy had these attributes in spades.

Roland Foster from the NSW Conservatorium was a colleague willing to vouch for Dorothy, providing her with an excellent reference to assist her in her quest.

Miss Dorothy Rudder has an extremely brilliant and effective high soprano, and has done a great deal of useful work here on the stage in both grand and comic

opera, also on the concert platform. She is an experienced and reliable artist and should do well if she gets the chance.³

Travel agents Burns, Philp and Company provided her with a letter of introduction and the NSW Premier's Office with an official credential which read 'Any courtesy that may be afforded to her will be valued on her part and will be appreciated by this Government.' Curiously, the document was signed by Bertram Stevens as 'Prime Minister of New South Wales' although this term was supposedly not used by the state government after Federation in 1901.⁴ Dorothy was distantly related to Stevens through the marriage of his daughter Gwen to Philip Rudder, son of A.E. Rudder.



Marsh Little's lyrics 'My Wishes for You' (1914-18) written in Dorothy's autograph book. 5 May 1937.

Many family and friends, including noted composer Marsh Little, wrote affectionate poems of farewell in her autograph book. Dorothy first met him during the Garcia School days and they had both performed in the historic *Ethereal Harmonies* broadcast of 1923, as well as in *The Student Prince* and the Williamson opera season. He wrote the lyrics of the first verse of 'My Wishes for You' (1914-18) into Dorothy's book a few days before she sailed, signing 'By your Sincere Friend Marsh Little.'

Another close friend, contralto and radio broadcaster Grace Saville who was 'known for her friendly help to women in shopping matters' drew some musical notes and wrote 'Never be flat, sometimes be sharp, always be natural. Dinan forget.' Winnie penned 'God grant you health and strength to realise your life's ambitions. Bon Voyage, au revoir.' W.J. Grieves (Dick) still had a special spot in his heart for Dorothy,

as shown by his note ‘Some individuals are endowed by Providence with a certain similarity of character which compels them, when brought together, to look favourably upon each other, to understand each other, to love each other. Every good wish.’



Winnie and Dorothy (left) on the SS *Mongolia* prior to departure. 11 May 1937.

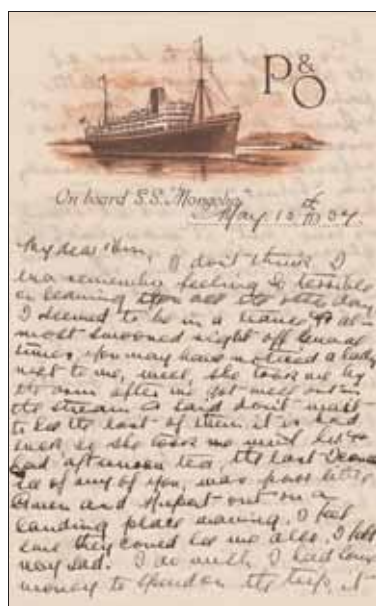
On 11 May 1937 Dorothy boarded the 17,000 ton P&O SS *Mongolia* for London. A wonderfully detailed postcard, taken from the dock by one of the officers prior to departure, shows the faces of a somewhat pensive looking group of passengers on board. Dorothy put two crosses against the spots where she and Winnie, wearing overcoats, were standing on deck, staring straight at the camera.

After the ship departed Priscilla Barnes, (wife of schoolteacher Harry Barnes from Woolgoolga days), wrote a letter from Farnham House, a Victorian sandstone mansion in Randwick (later the home of renowned eye doctor Fred Hollows). Dorothy received the letter when the ship docked in Fremantle Western Australia.

We were a sad lot the day you left and poor Win was broken up ... Dick's eyes were full of tears ... got home at 6.15 and your boat was passing Coogee so we saw the last of you ... you will see about yourself dear won't you? I see you having a real time when the "Boys" board at Bombay. Have a really good time and maybe you will not have to sing after all.

Sadly Priscilla died suddenly two weeks later. Dorothy's letters written from the *Mongolia* give no indication that she was told of Priscilla's death while on the journey.

Sailing to the other side of the world was an exciting undertaking in 1937. Dorothy's journey to London took five weeks, first stopping in Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth with further stops advertised at Colombo, Bombay, Aden, Suez, Port Said, Marseilles, Gibraltar, Tangier and Plymouth. However, 'All vessels may call at any port on or off route and the route and sailings are subject to change or deviation with or without notice'.⁵ In response to the prevailing economic conditions, after 1931 the *Mongolia* was designated Tourist Class only with the fares priced from £39 one way. Cabin number 144 was permanently occupied by an Englishman, Major E.W. Long. He had decided living at sea was more exciting and cheaper than living on land. Friends of his were leaving Sydney for England because they 'could not get good servants' but in his opinion England was the last place in the world he wanted to live. It was just too depressing. He stayed aboard the *Mongolia* for eighteen months until it was scrapped in 1938.



Letter to Winnie written on board SS *Mongolia*. 15 May 1937

Dorothy's shipboard letters to Winnie express her sadness at leaving Sydney. She also discussed shipboard life including the benefits of her status as a professional singer, her hopes for the future and her meetings with a relative of AWA radio pioneer Ernest Fisk. A lack of financial resources, as usual, was a constant worry but a gentleman on board seems to have assisted in this regard. The letters give a real insight into the journey Dorothy was undertaking, the minutiae of life aboard the sardine-like confines of a ship and Dorothy's attitude to her shipmates.

Mongolia Hobart

May 15th 1937

My dear Win

I am on the first stage of my journey. We had a rough trip across [to Hobart] and as usual I was not sick, had all meals etc. ... We expect to have a bumpy return trip, usually is across to Tas. The ship does a great old shimmy at times; she is not so very comfortable. I have travelled a lot better. It was a very marvellous sight coming up the harbour on Thursday, "Hobart" is situated at the foot of Mt Wellington and the latter was capped with snow, and oh my, wasn't it cold but, the blue of the sky and the lovely green hills and the white snow made a very beautiful picture. I donned a woollen singlet and feel quite cosy. All my cabin mates are going thro' to "London" and we are very good pals, get along well together. The English lady whom you met in the cabin is a dear, so full of fun, one girl a nurse from the island of "Tonga" is a real hard case and the other girl is a very nice person also. I think I had better tell you the rest of the news on the proper writing paper but thought you would like this as a souvenir of the old ship.

Love Doro.⁶

May 15th 1937

My dear Win,

I don't think I can remember feeling so terrible on leaving you all the other day, I seemed to be in a trance, and almost swooned right off several times, you may have noticed a lady next to me, well, she took me by the arm after we got well out of the stream and said don't wait to see the last of them, it is bad luck, so she took me with her and had afternoon tea, the last I could see of any of you, was poor little Gwen and Rupert [Barnes] out on the landing place waving, I feel sure they could see me also. I felt very sad.

I do wish I had some money to spend on the trip, it is awful not to have, as the passengers arrange little parties to go sightseeing at different ports of call, I was invited to join here, but I refused saying I had already seen "Hobart" and Wellington's beauty spots, which of course is true, but, it was such a glorious day I would have loved to have gone. However I am thankful to be on the boat, and I have already made an impression with my singing and playing, altho' I

am very much out of practice, my cabin mate made me sing yesterday afternoon, and she is raving about my voice and of course others were listening also.

On coronation morning we had church services (at sea of course) and opened with "God Save the King", after service one grey haired old dame came over to me and said, what a beautiful voice you have, are you a professional singer so I replied YES, she said I thought so; your voice rang out like a bell, so you see if I only get half a show what I could accomplish. And last but not least, last night I was having coffee in the lounge, and a very cultured looking elderly lady and gentleman came and sat at my table, we got into conversation, and she proved to be a relative of Mr. Fisk's where Elsie is, she is one of the women whom Elsie told us about leaving on the "Mongolia". So one thing led to the other, and I told her my object in view, and all about my letters and credentials (this was before I knew she was a relative of Mr. Fisk's.) I said I haven't a very long stocking, but I feel confident of success, so she said well, make our home your home, and if I were going right thro' I would take you home with me, now what do you think of that? She is getting off at "Freemantle" and boarding the "Ulysses" to go home via the "Cape," she cannot stand the rough weather we may encounter on this route, she will arrive in London one month after I arrive, she wants me to leave my address with her and she will communicate with me as soon as she arrives, I have a feeling luck has come my way at last, everyone was kind before I left and things still continue to go right, but, one thing Win, do not tell Elsie anything, keep that strictly to yourself, she may blab it to Mrs Fisk and I don't know what she might say. So do not fail to do what I ask. This lady is I'm sure well off and goodness knows if she takes a liking to me what she may do for me. I'm hoping she keeps her promise.

God knows I haven't much cash as you know and at the end of the journey one must tip their bed-room steward, table steward and stewardess. I do wish someone could wire me some on to "Perth". I will only land with £15. I'm hoping Mac in Melbourne [?] will give me some more. Now my dear sister I have written you a fairly lengthy letter so with tons of love to Gwen and yourself. I feel hurt Reg did not come to the boat, shows how little he cared.

Lots of love

Doro⁷

Dorothy added a postscript to this letter. ‘Try and send me news about my blood test before I leave Australia. My leg is better with the rest.’⁸ Before departure Dorothy had unspecified health problems with her leg and had undergone blood tests in Sydney. The result came back negative. On the back of the postcard taken of the *Mongolia* passengers in Sydney but probably posted from Freemantle she has written ‘am glad my leg is not serious but I suppose I must have it x rayed again. Why do they want it done? I do wish they could say what the trouble is.’⁹

Good-Bye Aussie

May 24th 1937

My dear Win,

I shall soon be saying “Au-re-voir” to dear old Aussie, we will arrive at “Freemantle” late this afternoon and will leave somewhere around mid-night. We are twelve hours late on account of the very rough sea crossing the “Bight”, I often heard about it, but, now I know all about it. I was sea-sick for the first time, and ye “Gods” I don’t want any more. Well, I keep forgetting what I told you as I’ve written from each port of call, so if I repeat any news, you will know the reason. I went ashore at “Adelaide” with a “Bombay” chap who has been living in India for many years. We visited “Koala Park” and I nursed one of those gorgeous little bears, he cuddled in to me and I was kissing him on the top of his head, and he went off to sleep, but after a while wakened up and put his dear little cold nose and mouth on mine, actually kissed me, you could hardly credit it, but, he did, much to the amazement of onlookers. There is nothing much to see in “Adelaide”.

I am going ashore at “Columbo” with my friend and also at “Bombay”, he knows every inch of the place, and if we are in port long enough he is going to take me up to Kandy, which is one of the beauty spots of “Columbo”, if we haven’t time to go there, we will motor up to Mt Lavinia. He knows the ropes shopping, and he has promised me some nice underwear etc., in fact he has already given me a most gorgeous set, cream, all beautifully hand-worked, nightgown, princess slip, scanties and brassiere, I’m hoping he will buy me one of those pretty hand worked frocks people buy in “Ceylon”, I only wish I had the money I would send you and “Gwen” some nice little thing ...

Have you had any enquiries about me? If you write at once and address to Australia House, The Strand, "London", and send by air mail I will have a nice letter probably waiting for me on my arrival. I don't think it is very expensive by air. We are enjoying a calm sea now, and after we leave the "West" we are commencing all kinds of deck games etc., a committee was formed and I have entered the deck quoits etc. We are having a fancy dress ball next Saturday night, I have been promised a fancy dress costume, by one of my cabin mates (who was).

I now have a 4 berth cabin to myself as far as "Bombay", we were too crowded, 4 berth cabins are awful, but I think I will have to go back and share after Bombay as she will be picking up a number of passengers at "Columbo" and Bombay. I think the fancy costume is a peasant frock; of course I shall wear my hair down.

Would you believe it a rumour has gone around, a few of the forward saloon passengers are trying to make it a 1st and 2nd class ship in this way a concert has been organised, and two girls, sisters who play jazz, said oh, put us down indefinitely and they have since said they are going to put on a concert and only going to ask those in their dining room to assist. Of course if they do this, they will be counted out, as we have some awfully nice people in our dining room, food exactly the same, and attention the same, of course these girls had the wind knocked out of their sails, when they heard me sing and play. Jealousy of course, life on a full ship like this is too funny for words.

Well my dear sister I cannot think of any more news, when you next hear from me I shall be in foreign lands. I feel a trifle sad knowing I shall soon be away from dear "Aussie", and I suppose I shall shed a tear at the last sight of land. However, I am going to make good and with that in view I shall try and be happy. My leg is better, probably the rest has done it good and I've been taking medicine and rubbing on the liniment which I got at the "Hospital" before I left "Sydney". I've contracted a cold, but it is better now, we have been in such cold windy weather, and it's difficult to avoid drafts. I'm not quite sure how to spell it.

Mac in Melbourne bought me a big box of liver and iron pills very good, so the Doctors say, so I shall commence on them now. The weather is nice now and in

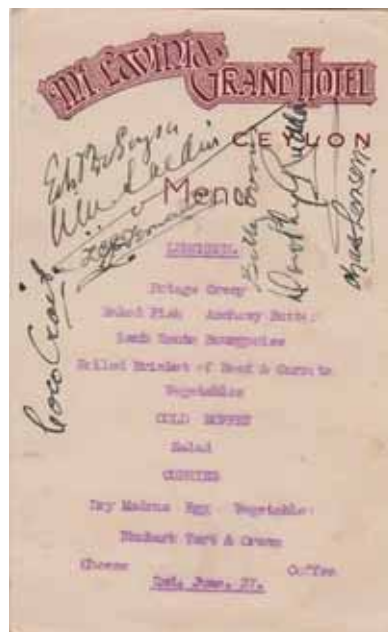
a week's time or less we shall be in the tropics. I am going to buy a [pith] helmet in "Columbo" or my boyfriend is for me.

All my love dear and love to Gwen and Reg. Your ever loving sister Doro.¹⁰



SS *Mongolia* Fancy Dress Ball Menu.

Crossing the Equator—Dorothy takes the plunge. The swimming pool was made of canvas.



Dorothy wearing her borrowed prize winning costume.

Mt. Lavinia Grand Hotel Ceylon Menu. 2 June 1937.

Dorothy and her friend. The camera she is holding is still among her possessions.

Dorothy won first prize at the 29 May fancy dress ball in her borrowed peasant frock and matching boots. She kept a beautiful illustrated menu from the occasion, plus a dinner menu for a seven course Coronation Day celebration, a cellophane party hat and a luncheon menu from the *Mt. Lavinia Grand Hotel* on 2 June, signed by the diners.

She also shopped and visited the most expensive hotels, but thanks to her Bombay friend she wasn't out of pocket.

June 10th 1937

My dear Win

... I had a lovely time at "Columbo", had breakfast at the Galle Face Hotel then did some shopping and then motored around sight-seeing, my little "Bombay" friend kept his word and bought me 2 sets of underwear, a dress and sandals to match and gave me 50 rupees in cash which in our money equals £3.15 so that gives me some cash to spend on the rest of the trip, I fully realise one wants money to travel, going ashore and buying and sight-seeing etc. is absolutely necessary, one must be in the swim, of course I've been lucky it has not cost me anything only 10/6 up to date which I spent ashore at "Aden". At "Columbo" we went out to Mount "Lavinia" Hotel and I had a nice time, met the manager of the "Hotel" and a Parsee Doctor and another wealthy Parsee horse owner, I mean (Chingalee) up to date I've seen so many dark people I'm mixed up. We all had a lovely lunch and I scored ~~getting~~ having a few souvenirs given me, the "Chingalee" horse owner gave me a necklet of silver and dull crystals, a Scotchman gave me a lovely hand embossed silver and brass cigarette box, and the Hotel manager a cocktail glass like he uses at the Hotel, this "Hotel" is situated right on the water front. I took a few snap-shots so will send you some. Well, the bungalows in "Columbo" are gorgeous, it is a truly delightful place like "Singapore". We also had a few spots at the famous "Galle Face Hotel", I was very sad at leaving, we only had the day there, then of course our next port was "Bombay", also had a nice time there.



Taj-Mahal Hotel postcard. 1937.

My friend took me to the famous “Taj-Mahal Hotel” for breakfast, it is the daddy of Hotels, big spacious lounges and a winding staircase in the centre of the building about 12 feet wide, and all around this staircase are bedrooms, lounges, ballrooms etc., this staircase leads up to a huge dome all brilliantly carved in lilac and gold. One can stand at the bottom and look right up to the top, this hotel is situated on the waterfront. “Bombay” has some gorgeous buildings.

I’ll send you some photos, we unfortunately were only there for one half day, so did not have much time, we motored up “Malabar” hill and from there, one has a beautiful view looking down over the city, at the top of the hill one comes to the “Tower of Siluee”? where the Parsees put their dead and the vultures come down and pick the flesh off the bones then we motored on out to “Beach Kandy”—I have never seen anything so pretty, gorgeous inside swimming pools and outside, huge coloured umbrellas adorn the lawns, and chairs, tables etc., where the bathers come out and have soft drinks etc. I also took snaps of this place, so in due time will send you some. After “Bombay” comes “Aden” ... We only had 1½ hours ashore so did not have time to motor around, of course “Aden” is only a very barren place, rains once in 10 months if then, they have to condense the sea water for use, huge precipitous rocky ledge in the city and town at the bottom. The “Queen of Sheba” according to history lived there and “Abel” is supposed to be buried there. There is only one row of shops, of course it is a military and flying port, a lot of British officers are stationed at “Aden”. Altho such a barren place it is picturesque, well I suppose Arthur has been there so ask him to explain.

Leaving along the “Arabian” coast it was way, way hot but we are now steadily ploughing our way thro’ the “Red Sea” and oh ye “Gods” isn’t it hot, I’m sitting in a pool of water. I’m so hot the perspiration is running down my face, neck, arms, legs, behind and I’m wet thro’ and thro’. We expect to reach “Port Said” on Sunday evening. I have another pal on board—in the government—“India”—going home on leave. He is taking me ashore at “Port Said”, a Captain in the “Army” is also coming with us, they are all married, going home to their wives, had lunch, but they are all nice and give us a good time. We have about 400 too many passengers on board, that is for comfort, the ship is packed! People everywhere, we have 2 sittings at both dining rooms every meal, I think

we have 800 passengers and 320 of a crew on board. I'm looking forward to "Marseilles", I can't think yet—that I will soon be standing on French soil. A lot of the "Indian" Army men are going overland to "London" from "Marseilles".

Well my dear I can't think of any more news, only that I'm keeping well, but for my leg it is paining today but do not worry, maybe the heat. I'm missing you more as the boat gets further away. All my love dear to Gwen and Reg and your dear self,

Your ever loving sister Doro. xxxx

We arrived at Aden this morning. Had another death on board yesterday an old man friend of the other one who died he was buried last night.¹¹



Postcard sent from Aden by Dorothy to Winnie dated 5 July 1937.

Royal Opera at Covent Garden

It was their British nationality that gave Australians their place and status in the world, that is, the world beyond Britain. In Britain, their place and status was more problematic. ~ Ros Pesman Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad¹

Dorothy was now in England, the centre of the British Empire; the land which her intrepid ancestors had sailed away from, either by choice or by force, to establish a new life on the other side of the globe. Now she herself was courageously trying for success and adventure back in the ‘mother country’. It was an emotional moment, even though the grey docklands of London were nothing like the romantic green fields of the English countryside. Back home her status as a descendant of two wealthy Birmingham manufacturing families helped her define her place in the world but would not have the same cachet in rigidly class-stratified England.

Only time would tell if she would return home a success or a colonial also-ran.



Letter to Dorothy from the Managing Director of the Leipzig International Industries Fair. 29 July 1937.

The vital task of securing work and accommodation commenced. The 1937 register of incoming passengers has her listed as thirty four years of age. Dorothy decided to

improve her odds by taking ten years off her real age and in 1939 she noted her birth year as 1905, not the actual year of 1883. Dorothy had never registered to vote in Australia but she did place herself on the electoral roll in London. (Australians held British subject status simultaneously with Australian citizenship). Her address was a boarding house at Flat 10 Vere Mansions Westbourne Gardens, a quiet garden square in Bayswater. She was now in one of the great entertainment capitals of the world but one of her first inquiries was in regards to work in another country, a country with a wonderful musical tradition but now controlled by the National Socialists. In July she sent a letter to the London office of the Leipzig International Industries Fair, one of the world's important trade fairs, proposing concert appearances in Germany. The Managing Director requested her to send full particulars as to when she wished to sing, along with the name of her songs, to Konzertdirektion Leipzig GmbH (a private company), but nothing came of this overture.

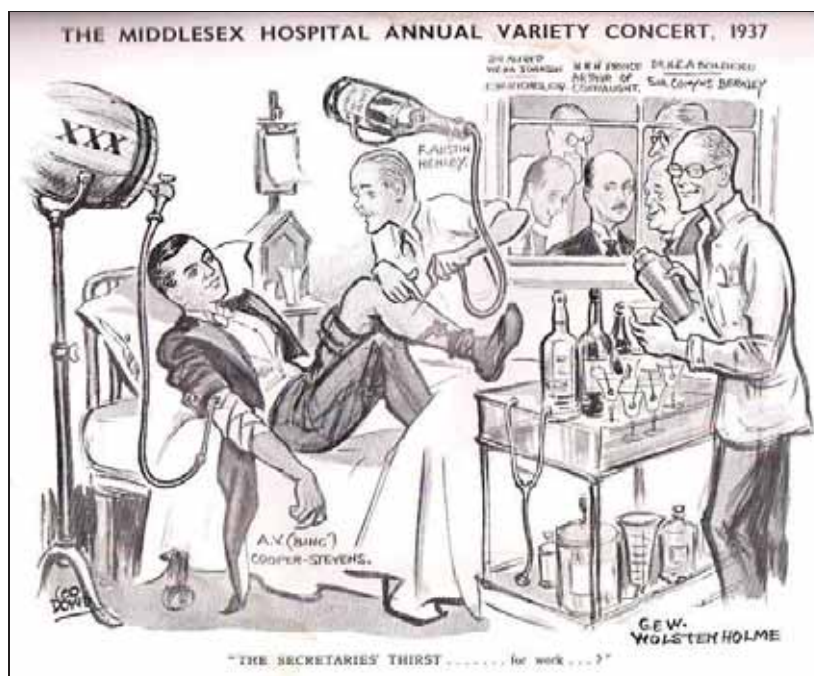
An approach to conductor Robert Ainsworth was more promising. Dorothy had worked with Ainsworth during the Fuller's Grand Opera season and he was now chorus master at the Opera House Covent Garden. He replied on 25 August. 'I can see you on Monday morning at 11oc' ... if this is convenient to you. Ask for me at the stage door. I shall be very glad to see you again and have a talk.'² Ainsworth, albeit back in 1934, advised established young Australian artists not to go abroad except in special cases, 'because there is not sufficient work for the vast army of professional people ... during the last few years at least 200 small choral societies in England and Scotland went out of existence.'³



Remembrance Day collectors tag, 11 November 1937.

Many documents give an insight into Dorothy's diverse activities in late 1937. Westcliff-on-Sea is a suburb of Southend-on-Sea, a resort town in Essex. In September Dorothy performed there as 'Anita, A Singer from Australia' in *T. Arthur Russell's Sunday Star Shows* at the Queens Hotel. Dorothy was in charity mode on Remembrance Day, 11 November, on behalf of Earl Haig's British Legion Appeal Fund to assist returned servicemen. She wore a cardboard tag shaped as a red poppy as an official seller at Aldwych. Brother Reg would certainly have been remembered on this day. She also sang at a big Masonic dinner at Odderino's Hotel in London, she and British-born Australian baritone and radio broadcaster Wilfrid Thomas being the only two artists on the bill.

A top of the tree fundraising concert provided Dorothy with a useful networking opportunity. London's New Scala Theatre was the venue for the Middlesex Hospital 43rd Annual Variety Concert on 23 November in aid of their cancer wing. The line-up of entertainment listed in the fancy program included such luminaries as Arthur Askey, George Formby, acrobatic dancers Newman, Wheeler and Yvonne, and renowned band leader Jack Hylton. The organising committee was equally high powered, with HRH Prince Arthur of Connaught in the Chair.

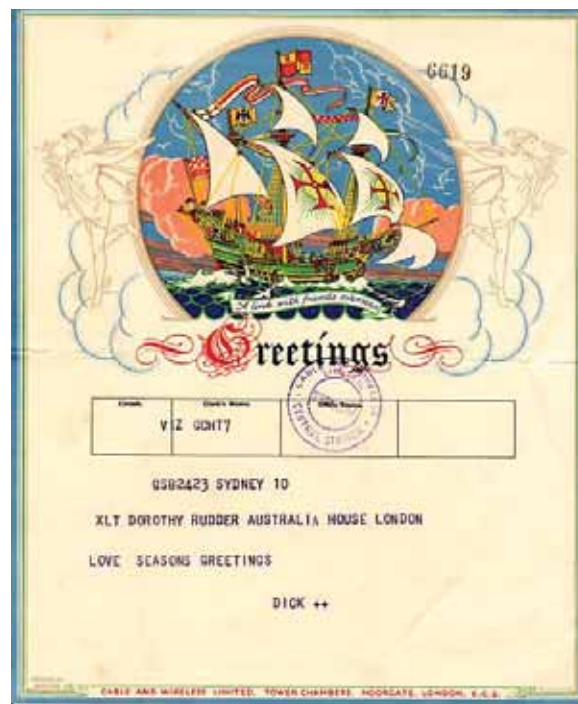


The practice of medicine in London in 1937, variety concert style.

The hospital's Consulting Surgeon wrote a page on cancer treatment for the program. He thought the crab, the symbol of cancer, an inhuman creature with horrid

eyes and remorseless claws, had not been killed but turned over on its back and its claws rendered harmless. ‘Thanks to improved methods of operation, and to radium and X-rays, many early cases are now cured, while those (alas, too many) who seek treatment too late, nevertheless, are generally relieved of pain and enjoy an additional span of active life.’⁴ Funding for cancer care was an issue, then as now. ‘All the time, in spite of generous benefactors and careful management, our financial needs are increasing simply because of the increased cost of modern methods of treatment and the increased public demand for our services.’⁵

Featuring on the third page is a full page advertisement depicting a stylish, sporty looking woman enjoying a Craven ‘A’ cigarette. ‘Yes! I find they are so wonderfully cool and kind to my throat’ she declared. Furthermore, they were ‘specially designed to prevent sore throats’. Cost—forty cigarettes for 2/-. In a note following the list of performers, patrons were advised that smoking was permitted in the auditorium—‘Abdullas for Choice’ promoted in bold lettering. Abdulla cigarettes were advertised everywhere, even on the back of the envelopes used by the Royal Opera Covent Garden. Dorothy was a smoker at some stage in her life, as a gold tipped cigarette holder was found in the suitcase. As a singer who looked after her voice I don’t think she was a heavy smoker. She was never photographed smoking and may have taken it up in later years.



1937 Season’s greetings telegram sent to London from W.J. (Dick) Grieves.

Dorothy was in musical heaven; it was a dream come true when she attended the special Advent Service of Handel's *Messiah* at St Pauls' Cathedral on 7 December 1937. Annotated in pencil in the program are notes against various recitatives, airs and choruses and comments on the performers, some tinged with nostalgia for home. 'Very beautifully sung—boy alto ... Got a thrill up my spine with this chorus ... Sung by tenor. Better voices by far—at home ... Marvellous [chorus]—would have liked you all here ... Bass—thinking of Reg [Wallace].'⁶

Dorothy was present at a service at St Clement Danes Church to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the first white settlement in Australia, held on Australia Day 26 January 1938 and attended again the following year. The service commenced with a voluntary organ piece followed by the national anthem and ode to Empire—God save our gracious King—a psalm, creed, address, prayers, the blessing and another voluntary, interspersed by hymns. For contrast a visit to the historic Dirty Dick's World Famous Cellars and Vaults in Bishopsgate was on the agenda. The establishment dated from 1745. Dirty Dick (Nathaniel Bentley) was a rich man who lived in solitary squalor. He refused to wash after the death of his fiancé on their wedding day hence his nickname. In shades of Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham, he ordered the dining room, where a feast had been prepared, to be shut up for his lifetime.⁷

Although Dorothy had an active social life in her first few months in London, her financial situation was not buoyant. As she emphasised in her letter from the *Mongolia*, she was only going to arrive in London with £15. And, no money for a fare back home if her plans did not come to fruition. However, she did join the Carl Rosa Opera Company, a British organisation which performed light opera in English in London and the provinces, possibly in second half of 1937, as she had mentioned working with the company and in a letter to Winnie. No further details have come to light.

On 7 January 1938 Dorothy wrote to the International Grand Opera Company—'A Powerful Organization of World-famed Operatic Artistes'—recommending herself as an experienced singer. The artistic director was William Boland, a versatile English tenor who had appeared in leading roles for several opera companies. She wrote the date as 7 January 1937 and her address as Australia House London. Dorothy did not arrive in London until June 1937, so she meant to write 1938. In this important letter Dorothy herself described her vocal abilities, skills and appearance. The resume is succinct to say the least but proved to be effective.

Hugh Bernard esq.

7 York Rd, S.W.4

Dear Mr Bernard,

Having noticed your ad. of Jan 6th in The Stage paper, I would very much like you to hear me sing.

I am an artist from overseas and have had a great deal of experience in “Grand Opera”—I was with the J.C. Williamson Imperial Grand Op Co. in Australia—1932-1933 season and also engaged for Sir Benjamin Fuller’s Grand ops. 1934-1935.

My voice is a pure lyric soprano full and resonant, with dramatic cadence. I am small and slight in figure and possess a head of long, thick, golden hair reaching below my waist.

Nevin Tait of “London”—Williamson’s representative here will be pleased I know to give information with regard to my voice—should you care for same.

I would be pleased if you will return my photo.

I have studied a good many soprano roles—and know the choral work of most operas.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

Dorothy Rudder⁸

Dorothy’s letter met with a quick, positive response. By 17 January she had signed a one page contract with the company. She was to be engaged on a Tour to commence on or about 31 January as a ‘Chorus and small part Artist at a salary of £2.5.0 per week’ with ‘two weeks’ notice to be given of termination of the Tour’. The contract comprised ‘all the usual theatrical rules and regulations’. Her accompanying note to William Boland declared how much she was looking forward to a successful tour. Incredibly, this letter was sold on eBay UK, along with the 7 January letter above describing her attributes. A trove of Boland materials had recently been discovered in a store room in the UK, of which the two letters were a part. The seller kindly sent me a copy.⁹



Letter from Mr Michael Shaw from the International Grand Opera Company regarding Dorothy Rudder's contractual obligations. 6 February 1938.

In December 1937 Dorothy had also auditioned for the producers of the Grand Opera House at Covent Garden. The post office telegram she received on 5 February contained very good news indeed. It read: 'DEFINITE ENGAGEMENT COVENT GARDEN FROM MIDDLE OF MARCH MACDONALD'.¹⁰ The offer was for chorus work; her foot was now in the door of a prestigious opera company but she had just signed up with William Boland. Her letter to the company has not been unearthed, but in reply she received a pointed missive from Michael Shaw on 6 February stating 'I am surprised at your letter to Mr. Bernard, repudiating your contract. Please note that I intend to hold you to your contract, and shall expect you at rehearsal on Monday morning, the 7th instant, at 11 a.m. at 21 Greek Street Soho.'¹¹ She never appeared with the Boland company.

Communications with Covent Garden's Sir Howard Button and Percy Heming, the Artistic Director of the English Company, outlined the gymnastics a performer went through to obtain employment without the assistance of a personal manager. Button's letter, sent to Dorothy from The Cedar House Hillingdon on 22 January 1938, discussed an audition date. 'You would not see Sir Thomas Beecham, but one hardly expected that at this stage.'¹² Sir Thomas was arguably in the first rank of conductors, his concert activities backed up by a fortune derived from the sale of Beecham Pills. The great man had a dry, funny and at times misogynistic wit. 'Her singing reminds me of a cart coming downhill with the brake on,' he commented on one soprano.¹³

On 19 February Button wanted very much to hear Dorothy sing and asked her to fix up a room with a piano. Somehow Dorothy obtained the following undated, unsigned draft letter which moved the process forward. Percy Heming had made his career as an operatic baritone prior to working at Covent Garden, especially in the role of Scarpia in *Tosca*. His opinion of Dorothy's voice was significant.

Mr. Percy Heming supported the view that further training was essential. Thought it possible to get a post in the Covent Garden Chorus for the May season. This entails working for the Chorus for six weeks rehearsal before the season begins from the middle of March. The fee would be £4.10s a week. The season should last to the end of June. July and August will be blank months. In September Mr. Heming hopes it will be possible to provide a post in the Chorus of the Autumn Opera Season at Covent Garden at probably the same fee. This should last from September, all October, all November and part December. During this latter engagement Mr. Heming hopes it might be possible for Miss Rudder to sing small parts. There will be another break in January and possibly an engagement in February again.

Miss Rudder is to have 24 lessons with Miss Miriam Licette. The price of these lessons is 10/6d each. Sir Howard Button will pay for the lessons up to the sum of £6.6s., which he considers will cover the time until Miss Rudder earns a salary at Covent Garden. After that he expects she will be prepared to pay for the lessons herself. Evidently Mr. Heming's opinion of her voice was a good one, and the audition was most satisfactory.¹⁴

At the bottom of the letter Dorothy has written: 'First lesson Thursday Feb. 3 at 2.30pm'. Madame Licette, a famous British soprano, had set up an opera studio offering 'a complete stage training'. The curriculum included Interpretation of Role, Mise-en-Scene, Languages, Solfege (a system for singing notes) and a technique called *plastique* which was a ballet technique for mastering the art of slow, controlled movement and statue-like posing. Madame's associates included Madame Enriqueta Crichton of whom Dorothy wrote 'Every time this Madame Crichton hears me sing, she says you have a lovely voice'.¹⁵

By 28 February the correspondence with Howard Button was becoming less formal. Dorothy was in need of reassurance.

I am glad to get such a cheery letter from you, and to learn that your life is shaping up so happily. I think you need have no apprehension whatever with regard to Mr. Percy Heming, but I would like you to let me know directly you hear from him with regard to your engagement ... If you do not hear, I will at once get in touch with him, but do not want to do this unnecessarily, but I do feel quite sure in my mind that you will hear shortly. I had a nice chat with Madame Licette about you on Friday last.¹⁶

Mr Heming did get in touch, confirming the engagement with the Chorus for the Grand Season commencing on 2 May with preliminary rehearsals on 21 March. Button wrote wishing Dorothy ‘a very happy and successful career at the Opera House’.¹⁷ She told a local newspaper back home that she was being coached by Madame Licette to sing the roles of Gilda in *Rigoletto* and Musetta in *La Boheme* during the September season.



A sample of Dorothy's travelling materials, including the small address book with Ethel Phillip Fox's Paris address listed, cigarette holder and two Art Deco cardboard face powder containers—*Richard Hudnut Three Flowers* and *Atkinsons Black Tulip* which was purchased for 1/6.

Madame Licette's 1938 Christmas card to Dorothy.

As revealed by a fascinating congratulatory letter, Dorothy was a friend of the artist Ethel Carrick Fox. This is the one piece of correspondence which exists between the two women. They most likely met in Sydney in 1933. British born Carrick had married the Australian Impressionist painter Emanuel Phillips Fox in 1905 and settled in Belle Époque Paris where she exhibited with Matisse and Derain. Her husband died ten years later of cancer after they moved to Melbourne. She was a strong supporter of women artists, a follower of Theosophy and travelled extensively in the 1920s and 30s. In later

years she strove for recognition of her husband's art; to some extent at the expense of appreciation of her own beautiful, colourful paintings. Dorothy's address book contains addresses for her in both London and Paris. Ethel wrote to Dorothy in London from her sickbed at the Hospital Britannique Levallois-Perret.

Feb 16-38

My dear Miss Rudder

Just as I was going to answer your letter, congratulating you on the splendid news, I was seized with a severe attack of appendicitis , & operated on the same night I came in here, 10 days ago: it was a very bad appendix but out of bed in a couple of days' time. I cannot tell you how very very glad I am that things have moved so well so quickly in the right direction for you. I am looking forward to hearing you sing in the Grand Opera House, for if they've already picked you out, they must think a good deal of your voice.

So keep me posted as to your movements when anything interesting occurs—I expect to be in London about June 1st or 2nd.

I'm delighted my old friend Sir Howard Button is proving himself a kind friend to you. I am writing to him by this mail ...

With renewed congratulations and affectionate regards,

Yours sincerely

Ethel Phillips Fox¹⁸

While a cursory glance at other letters gives the impression Dorothy was mixing it up with the British aristocracy, the reality was somewhat different. Lady Frances Ryder, Celia Macdonald of the Isles and Joyce M. Fry, whose names appear on many letters, were the organisers of a private hospitality scheme for travellers to London from all corners of the Empire. The scheme had grown out of charity work to assist Australian and other soldiers on convalescent leave during the Great War. By 1937 around 1,600 people were visiting annually. A letter of introduction was required, allowing the traveller to enjoy cheese petits fours and crumpets at lunch and tea parties at their Cadogan Gardens base, attend concerts and balls, or make a visit to an English country home.¹⁹ Living and studying in London could be lonely, as Dorothy was to discover. The ladies would prove to be a great support to her in a charitable but 'big sisterly' way.

In May and June the hospitality extended to handouts of clothing ‘from a little friend’ via the kindly Ella Wade which would have been appreciated in the depths of a London winter. Ella wrote to Dorothy from 23 Connaught Square, W2 Paddington on 2 and 3 May 1938:

My little friend sent me an evening coat, a day coat and an evening frock today and I am venturing to leave them for you. With lots of good wishes and hoping they will help a little. If not sell them—for what you can get, it will help with postage stamps!

We met at Mrs [?] luncheon party and I have thought so often about you since in the struggles of an artist’s life about which I know a great deal and so I am writing to ask if you could spare time to come and see me to look through these things a most dear friend sent me to give away. I think she takes about your size might help a little. I hope I do not offend. When can you come? Lunch on Friday perhaps? 1.15?²⁰



‘To Win my dear sister with love Dorothy. Taken near Marble Arch London—on my way to have lunch with Mrs Wade of Connaught Square W.2.

The hat, shoes, gloves and bag are Aussie—the dress pommie. Heavy weight grey silk.’

‘Feeding the pigeons on West pier—Brighton England. Fancy getting 3 perched on my hand. You will observe how I’m dressed; under the coat I had a woollen frock and cardigan—so cold. The handkerchief on head is the fashion in “Europe”! Coat green, frock, handkerchief to match etc.

Joyce M. Fry, an Australian who worked with Lady Frances Ryder, also had some clothes from 'a friend'.

Lady Frances Ryder CBE

Miss Macdonald of the Isles CBE

AT HOME 10-1: 2.30-5.30 Except Saturdays and Sundays

21B Cadogan Gardens

Sloane Square S.W.3

19th May 1938

Dear Miss Rudder,

A friend gave me these things for you. They are the same size as the green woolly frock, so should fit you beautifully.

So glad to hear all goes well with you. Hope you are enjoying it all, despite much hard work.

Yours sincerely

Joyce M. Fry²¹



Coronation postcard featuring the Australian Contingent. 12 May 1937.

Dorothy's Trooping of the Colour invitation. 9 June 1937.

Dorothy arrived in England a little too late to see the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 12 May 1937 and had to settle for a copy of the official souvenir program instead. She was an invited guest at the 9 June 1938 Trooping of the Colour at the Horse Guards, receiving a coveted complimentary ticket from Australia House. Her seat was Row D No 26—the Dominions Office and Colonial Office Stand on Horse Guards Parade.²² The crowd for the celebration was huge. Many were armed with periscopes, hinting at the submarine action to come in the North Atlantic. For Dorothy,

a person who was patriotic about ‘dear old Aussie’ and someone who loved England and the British monarchy, this was an unforgettable event. The *Daily Telegraph* article which Dorothy kept described all the action including the German ambassador shading his wife’s camera from the sun from the balcony of the German embassy.²³

The crazy weather which hit London and the South-East coast on 1 August, a Bank Holiday, made an impact on Dorothy, who sent a newspaper clipping home to Winnie. Sweltering temperatures reached 82 degrees Fahrenheit. This converts to around 28 degrees Celsius, which would be considered a beautiful balmy day in Australia. An estimated 40,000 people slept out at Southend to escape the city heat. The railway company arranged for seventy trains to take people back to London in an example of efficient public transport planning. A great thunderstorm caused chaos in towns in Devon and Cornwall while at Plymouth thousands of visitors in town for Navy Week had to seek shelter in the warships docked there.²⁴

NATIONAL HEALTH AND PENSIONS INSURANCE CONTRIBUTION CARD

ENGLAND EMPLOYED CONTRIBUTOR 1938 SECOND HALF

CLASS E WOMAN AGE 16 to 45

RATE OF CONTRIBUTION EMPLOYER TO WORKER 1/2

26 WEEKS ENDING 1 JANUARY 1939

INSTRUCTIONS TO INSURED PERSON

For an employed person aged 16 or over a special card must be used and only the employer's contribution (7d.) is payable. The card is issued to the employee by the Ministry of Health or may be obtained at a Post Office.

IMPORTANT

All insured persons should, in their own interests, join an Approved Society. A list of Approved Societies can be obtained from any Employment Exchange or District Office of the Ministry of Health.

HOW TO GET MEDICAL BENEFIT

If you require a Doctor before you receive a Medical Card, get a form Med. 16 at any Post Office, and send it to the Insurance Committee, whose address can be obtained at the Post Office.

INSTRUCTIONS TO EMPLOYER

At the end of the current card must be returned to the Minister not later than 2 JANUARY 1939.

WEEKLY CONTRIBUTION TABLE

WEEK	DATE	WEEK	DATE	WEEK	DATE
1	4 JULY 1938	7	13 AUG. 1938	13	22 SEP. 1938
2	11 JULY 1938	8	20 AUG. 1938	14	29 SEP. 1938
3	18 JULY 1938	9	27 AUG. 1938	15	6 OCT. 1938
4	25 JULY 1938	10	3 OCT. 1938	16	13 OCT. 1938
5	1 AUG. 1938	11	7 OCT. 1938	17	20 OCT. 1938
6	8 AUG. 1938	12	14 OCT. 1938	18	27 OCT. 1938
19	3 NOV. 1938	25	13 DEC. 1938	21	21 NOV. 1938
20	10 NOV. 1938	26	20 DEC. 1938	22	28 NOV. 1938
21	17 NOV. 1938			23	5 DEC. 1938
22	24 NOV. 1938			24	12 DEC. 1938
23	1 DEC. 1938				
24	8 DEC. 1938				
25	15 DEC. 1938				
26	22 DEC. 1938				

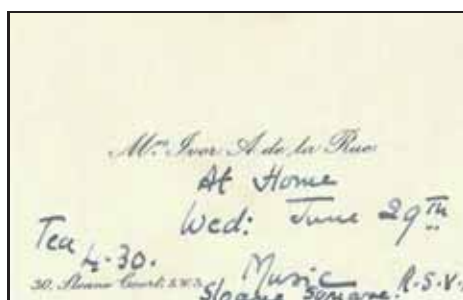
Dorothy's National Health and Pensions Insurance Contribution Card 1938.

A perusal of Dorothy's two address books (the names are often scrawled down in pencil), indicated a great deal about her activities, friends and theatrical connections. The list is impressive; however Dorothy would have networked with many of them because of her profession and her connection to Lady Francis Ryder. What is more

impressive is the sheer number of contacts she amassed in a foreign country in such a short time.

Her professional contacts included the Concert Artists Association, Percy Pitt who was the Music Director at the British Broadcasting Corporation (and husband of her old friend Ivy Mack), renowned Old Vic Theatre manager Lilian Baylis, famous Broadway impresario Lee Ephraim, whose details were written down three times, choral conductor Malcolm Sargent, whom Dorothy may have met during his 1936 tour of Australia and Cecil Mason's uncle Henry Mason, proprietor of Impartial Films Ltd. Australian contacts included baritone Arnold Matters, variety entertainer Con Moreni, composer Dudley Glass and contralto Madame Lily Payling. Also listed are the Society of Genealogists, the Au Pair Association and Mr B. Sangster Simmonds, Senior Surgeon at West London Hospital.

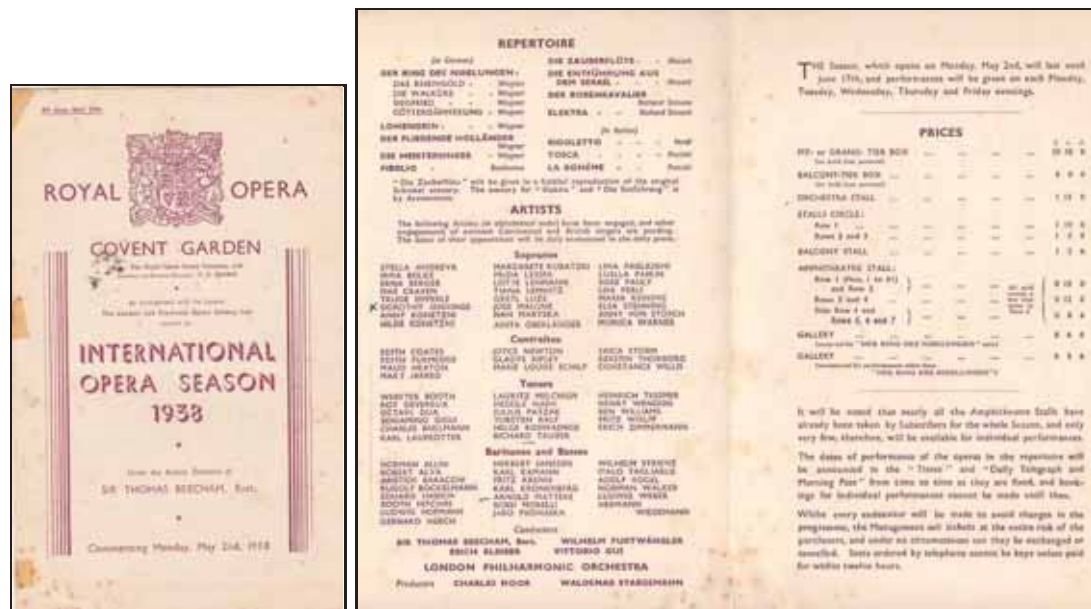
Many ladies from the afternoon tea set had addresses listed in Park Lane or Maida Vale. The bases of Conservative MP Sir Jocelyn Bart and Lady Lucas were noted as the House of Commons and 21 Wellington Court Knightsbridge with a visit to Lady Lucas planned for 6 pm Wednesday.



Mrs Ivor A. de la Rue's 'At Home' invitation.

In February 1938, Dorothy scratched in some other appointments. On Sunday 6th she met Miss Glanfield from 32 Trevor Square Knightsbridge at precisely 12.45 pm and took the 914 or 961 bus to Knightsbridge station to get there. Monday 7th saw her at the Overseas Club (Mrs Stinton Park St); she visited Lady Frances Ryder at home on Tuesday the 8th, followed by a singing lesson with Madame Licette at 2.30 pm.²⁵ On a tiny card inside a tiny envelope, Mrs Ivor A. de la Rue of 30 Sloane Court S.W.3 invited Dorothy to an 'At Home' with tea at 4.30 followed by music. RSVP required.²⁶ Mrs de la Rue and her husband, who died in 1927, are listed in Burke's Peerage. Their wealth came from printing, with the innovative company manufacturing postage stamps, paper money, playing cards, fountain pens and the first envelope making

machine. Dorothy attended many of these afternoon soirées. They came with an expectation to behave in a certain way. Back in Australia, if she had been given a looking glass into the future, she may have thought taking tea with English aristocrats was quite exciting. But now she sometimes got sick and tired of attending them.



Royal Opera Covent Garden 1938 International Opera Season Program. Author's collection.

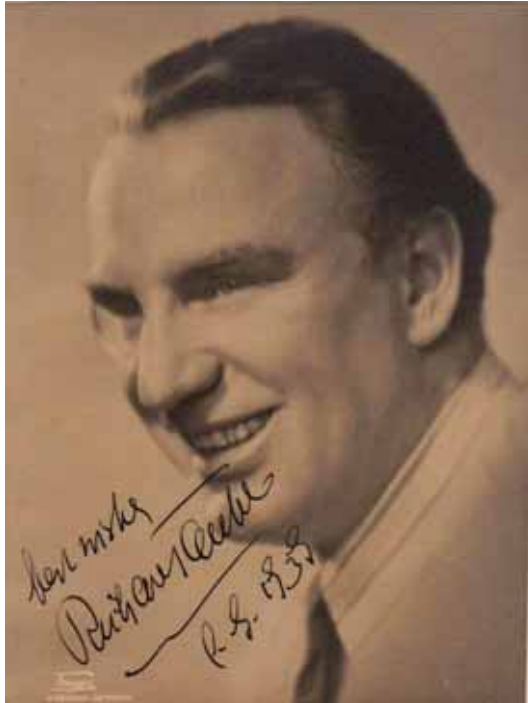
The *Royal Opera Covent Garden International Opera Season* opened in London on 2 May 1938 with a performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* featuring Austrian tenor Richard Tauber and German soprano Lotte Lehmann and ran until 17 June. The *Western Australian* declared that the opening night scene 'was gayer but not so grand as formerly. The tiaras have gone, diamond bandeaus being substituted. The Princess Royal wore one.'²⁷ Fifteen works were presented, sung in German and Italian. They included *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (Wagner), Beethoven's *Fidelio*, *Tosca* (Puccini), *Rigoletto* (Verdi) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (Richard Strauss) with Sir Thomas Beecham, Vittorio Gui, Wilhelm Furtwangler and Erich Kleiber conducting. The two German conductors took the rehearsals. The days were quite strenuous for Dorothy, entailing visits to the theatre twice daily and then performing at night, often not getting to bed before 1 am.

The performance on 14 June may well have been Dorothy's final appearance.

Stage Blaze did not Worry Singer

The coolness of Beniamino Gigli, successor to Caruso, averted a panic at Covent Garden Opera House last night during the performance of *La Boheme*.

By accident, Gigli set fire to manuscripts which, in the opera, he was supposed only to pretend to burn. Still singing, he walked off the stage, to return with fire buckets, with which he extinguished the blaze.²⁸



Richard Tauber. Photograph by Fayer Vienna London.



Beniamino Gigli.

The famous tenors Richard Tauber and Beniamino Gigli both autographed their photographs for Dorothy. She also ‘had quite a long conversation’ with Tauber, describing him as a delightful person. ‘He expressed great interest in her career, especially on learning that she was an Australian’ as he was soon to visit the country.²⁹

Dorothy’s autograph book has five pages cut from it, suggesting that someone who had access to the suitcase must have recognised some special signatures and surreptitiously helped themselves (and maybe also taken the missing Mercolised Wax glass slide Dorothy used for stage promotions in the 1920s?) Incredibly, I discovered whose signatures these were. After niece Gwen’s death in 1963, Verdi George Schwinghammer, a family friend, wrote to Grafton’s *Daily Examiner* regarding Dorothy’s career. He had ‘seen her autograph book containing the signatures of the famous conductor, Sir Thomas Beecham, and the opera star Miriam Licette, Richard Tauber and Lawrence Tibbett’. The person who took the autographs knew their musical personalities but luckily he or she did not remove the autographed photographs of Tauber and Gigli.³⁰



Dorothy in costume for *Tosca* and *Rigoletto* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

During the 1938 season Dorothy sent Winnie flashlight photographs of herself in costume for *Tosca* and *Rigoletto*, taken just outside her dressing room. Her makeup is theatrical, and somewhat doll-like, with her eyes and lips strongly outlined. She smiles proudly, very happy to be part of the company. Being a clothing aficionado, she loved wearing her stage ‘frocks’, describing the dress she wore in *Tosca* as ‘a lovely shade of lavender—little bouquet to match, looked ever so quaint. Wish you could have seen it.’³¹

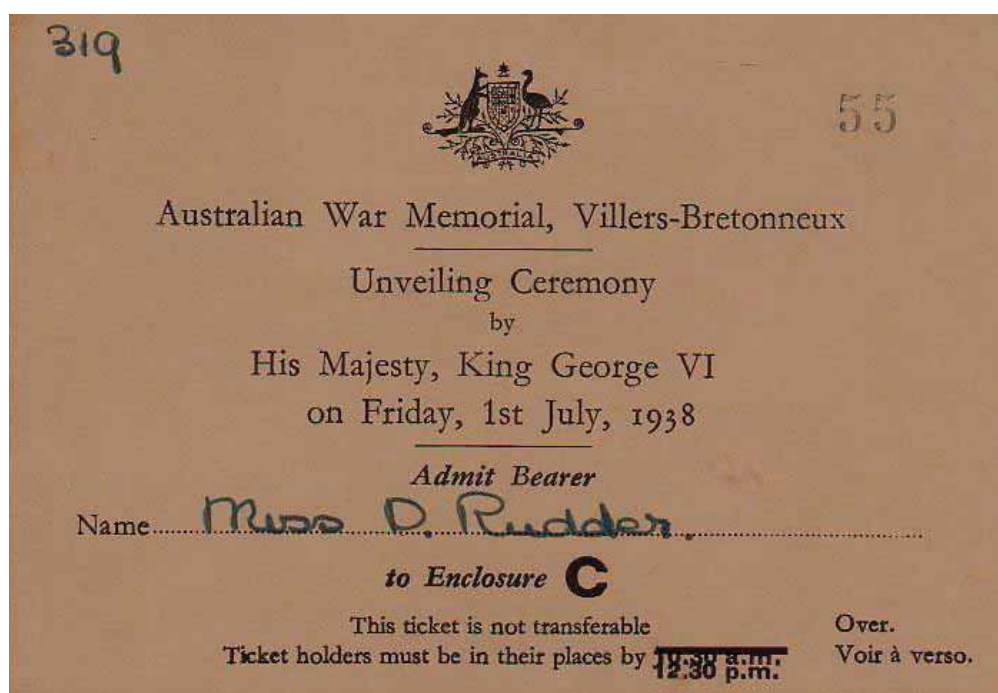
Late in June a thought provoking article headed *Wealthy Sydney Neglects Genius in Music and Song* appeared in Sydney’s *Labor Daily*. It had a familiar theme. Journalist Bill Wood was of the opinion that gifted students from the Sydney Conservatorium were unable to progress in their careers unless they were wealthy or socially favoured, because no community support was available for them. They would set up as music teachers or ‘fade into relative obscurity’. Wood believed foreign travel and overseas experience was essential for any musician wanting to make their name. But ‘to the wealthy, England is a mere ten days away. To the poor it is further than the moon.’ Dorothy was mentioned as someone who had succeeded despite the odds. ‘After a year

in J.C. Williamson's chorus, Dorothy Rudder escaped to England [on a one way ticket] and landed a twelve month contract at Covent Garden.'³²

While singing in the chorus Dorothy still left her options open. She had an audition with Mr Sharpe of the L.G. Sharpe Concert Agency—sole business representative of renowned pianist and composer Mr Paderewski and agent for the London Symphony Orchestra. He wrote on 12 July 1938 'if you can make it convenient to be at the Aeolian Hall, New Bond Street, with your accompanist, Friday afternoon next at 3.30 I shall be pleased to hear you sing.'³³ No work offer resulted from this audition and Dorothy was probably in France on this date.

Chapter Twenty-five

Villiers-Bretonneux and Scotland



Dorothy's invitation to the Unveiling Ceremony dated Friday 1 July 1938.

The Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Inauguration

In July 1938 Dorothy made a significant trip to northern France and Paris. She was one of the 3,500 attendees at the Inauguration of the Australian Monument at Villers-Bretonneux. Overlooking a vast plain just outside the town, the Memorial stands on high ground above the Military Cemetery where Commonwealth servicemen who died at the surrounding battlefields during the First World War are buried. A large grassed area leads to a three-sided walled court with a central tower reaching 105 feet which commemorates all the Australian soldiers who fought on the Western Front. The names of the nearly 11,000 Australian soldiers who have no known grave are carved on the walls, including Dorothy's brother Reginald Burdett Rudder.

I visited the memorial in the summer of 2013, along with my husband Fred Wallace, (his grandmother was Winnie Rudder). We found Reg's name on the wall and remembered his deeds. The atmosphere was evocative. Muffled voices of visitors and bird song were the only sounds heard. The well-maintained lawns were lush and green; inviting everybody to sit and contemplate the tragic events which had gone before at this very location.

The date on Dorothy's ticket to the Unveiling Ceremony is shown as 1 July 1938 but the event actually took place on 22 July. This confused me at first until I discovered the reason for the disparity. The ceremony was due to be performed by King George VI on 1 July but was put forward due to the death of the Queen's mother.

A poetic piece of newspaper reportage via the AAP described the scene at the end of the day.

IMPRESSIVE SCENE AS DUSK FALLS

French Pay Silent Homage To Dead

FASCINATION OF MEMORIAL Adelaide Man To Be Custodian

With the pageantry ended and the departure of the last of the tired troops as night fell on the plateau upon which stands the Australian war memorial, peace again reigned. The French workmen who for months had labored in the quiet countryside erecting this pile of great beauty, returned after the crowds had left following the unveiling by the King. They sat quietly in the fading light, watching the white stone work turning to pale pink as the sun sank over Amiens.

The plateau then seemed to hold a strange fascination, hundreds lingering as if silently trying to add something personal to the ceremonial dedication. Where previously crowds cheered Their Majesties, whole families from the surrounding towns sat quietly, long after dark.

It was Australia's day, but, after the departure of Their Majesties, it became Villers-Bretonneux's night. Elderly men wearing medals, who had seen their homes razed and rebuilt, had as companions children who, seeming to capture the spirit of the day's solemnity, sat patiently awaiting the end of their parents' homage.

While Dorothy was honouring her brother, radio enthusiast Cecil Mason was listening in to the ceremony from the other side of the world on the wireless.

Link With Adelaide.

As the British radio commentator was retelling English listeners the story of the unveiling, a telephone call came through London from Sydney to the special post office behind the memorial. It was from Mr. Cecil Mason, of Sydney, to

Mr. George Edwards, former South Australian. After hearing the broadcast, Mr. Mason sat up for hours in order to convey to Mr. Edwards something of the thrill Australians experienced in the broadcast of the unveiling ...¹



Newspaper clipping, with images taken by Cecil Mason at Villers-Bretonneux. *The Sun* Sydney 16 June 1938.

A unique archive is connected to Dorothy's visit including her invitation, nine sepia-coloured postcards depicting various aspects of the Memorial and a large booklet entitled *Introduction to the Register of the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Foulloy France*. A postcard sent by Dorothy to Clarrie in Grafton reads 'Dear Clarrie, Just witnessed unveiling. Placed wreath at foot of dear old Reg's name. Love Doro.' On a scrap of paper Dorothy has written "'Dock' Edwards (of Adelaide) proprietor Hotel Lamartme, Rue Lamartme Amiens. Will be doing the catering at Villers-Bretonneux.'² The Cecil Mason connection unexpectedly pops up again. The archive also includes a newspaper clipping from *The Sun* dated 16 June 1938 headed 'Old Digger as French Host'. One image shows 'Dock' Edwards, his French wife and an unnamed Sydney visitor eagerly awaiting the forthcoming inauguration and a second image depicts his café in Amiens. At the bottom of the caption is noted 'These pictures were taken by Mr. Cecil Mason, general manager of Columbia Pictures, during a recent visit'.³

Although Cecil Mason's many business trips abroad were generally covered by the press, no other details were found regarding this visit to France.

The trip to Scotland and return to Covent Garden

After her return from France, some Australian newspapers, including Brisbane's *Sunday Mail*, were now taking note of Dorothy's achievements. I am not sure shooting wild game was one of them however.

A South Grafton girl who is making a name for herself in London is Miss Dorothy Rudder, who is at present under engagement at Covent Garden for the opera season, and has been associated with Richard Tauber. Miss Rudder will be a guest of Lady Lambert for the shooting season in Scotland in August.⁴

Dorothy's country house visit to Scotland was at the invitation of Mrs J. L. Lambert, a relative of Sir John and Lady Gilmour. Mrs Lambert's travelling instructions to Dorothy were quite precise in the first letter, leaving no stone unturned; a little less so in page 8, the only remaining page of a second missive, which advised her of the dress code:

August 9th Tuesday 1938

My dear Dorothy

I have just read your letter and will be very pleased if you can come to me for 10 days on Friday or Saturday this week the 12th or 13th. You come by day from Kings Cross and you leave Kings X at 10.50 in the morning and arrive at St Andrews about 7.15 in the evening where you will be met by my maid Collins, put a red ribbon in the buttonhole and she will have the same ... The trains are so full just now that you must give yourself quite three quarters of an hour to get to the station and take your ticket (return) 3rd class the day you get this and reserve a seat (1/-). When you take your ticket if you cash my cheque enclosed at the Bank (Westminster) in Sloane Sq. there is a ticket office just across from the Bank ... or you can get the ticket at Harrods... take some sandwiches and biscuits for your lunch and get tea on the train 1/- with refreshments and lots to eat for the 1/-.

Yours affectly J. Lambeth⁵

28 Milner Street, S.W.3 telephone Kensington 0381

Page 8 Date not noted

This is a countrified place as far as clothes go, you won't want much a little suitcase will be ample and two dresses you can wear in the evening is ample I like ... grey and white one is nice for tea etc—the dress very quiet[?] here, I am delighted with Sir's house and the garden so pretty and peaceful not a sound near and quite full of flowers. You will adore it—all at least I do—and the change so quick and peace and pretty things will be so good for you as well as for me.

Mrs J. ⁶

Photographs taken by Dorothy on her visit to Sir John and Lady Gilmour in Scotland.



'This snap is taken in the grounds of "Montrave" estate ... the stone well I'm sitting on was built with stones from the House of Commons, where Sir John is a speaker.'

'Mrs Lambert standing in doorway, Lady Gilmour & the four dogs, Mollie ... Lorna Doone, Tess and Sheila.'



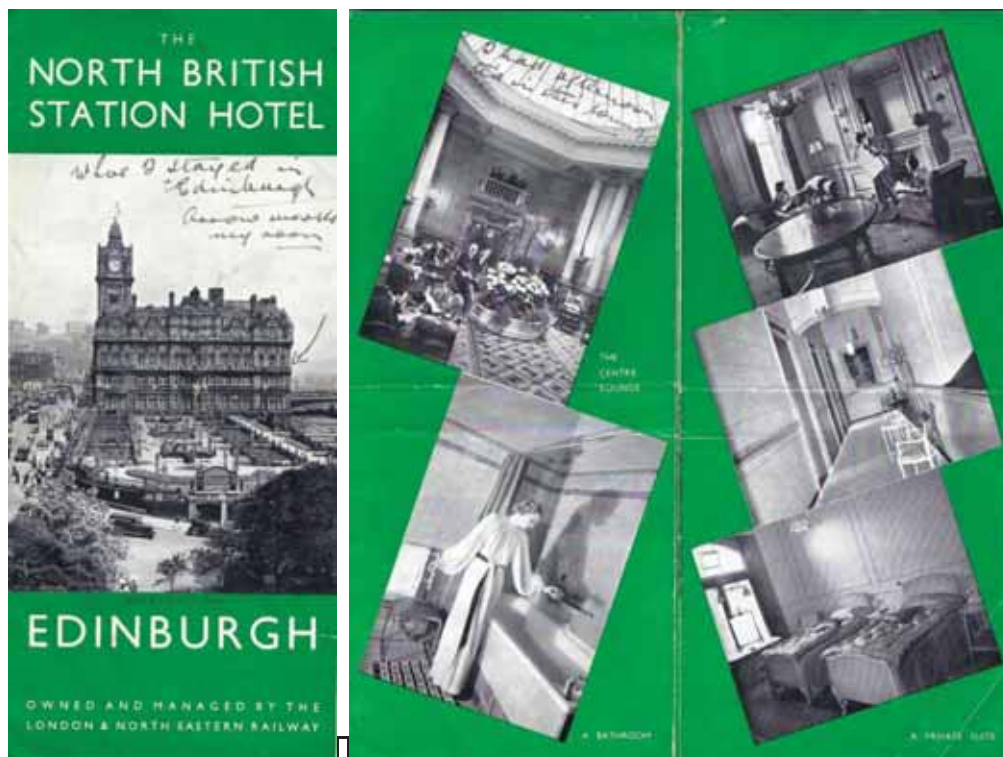
'Sir John's car and me.'

Cathedral ruins. 'What do you think of my photography?'



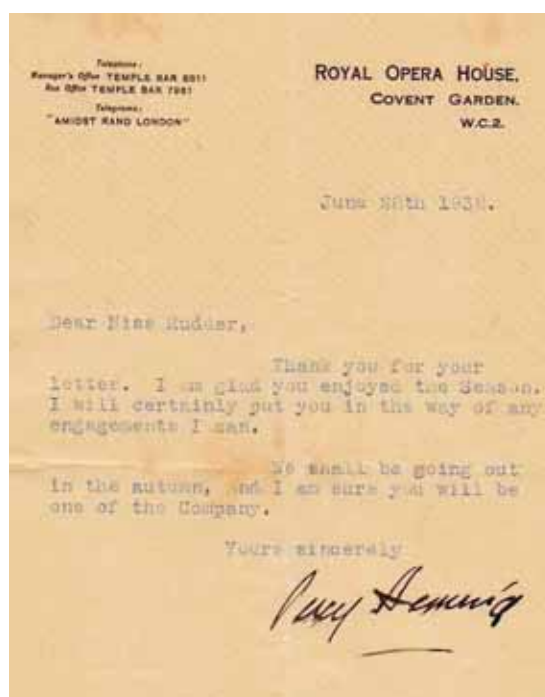
Montrave estate manor house.

Dorothy told Winnie she ‘had a lovely time in St Andrews.’ She sent many snapshots with inscriptions on the back describing the ancient Cathedral ruins and her stay with Sir John and Lady Gilmour at their magnificent manor house called *Montrave* which was demolished in 1971/2. The 30-roomed property had 22 gardeners. She wrote ‘I was entertained at luncheon & afternoon tea. Lord Balfour’s son was also one of the party.’⁷ A sprig of heather, which had survived to this day, was sent from Amulree in Perthshire where Dorothy and Sir John’s daughter motored around in a large touring car. She thought the English countryside beautiful but flat and monotonous, despite the freshness of the country lanes. After visiting Scotland and the famous lochs, she had to confess that they did not compare with the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales.



Brochure for North British Station Hotel which Dorothy visited with Mrs Lambeth.

A two-day stay followed in Edinburgh at the luxurious North British Station Hotel, designed as the railway hotel for Waverley Station. Now named the Balmoral, the hotel had seen many celebrities come and go. The hotel's clock tower was, and still is, set two minutes early so travellers would not miss their trains. In 1938 a single room ranged from 8/- to 12/6 without bath, the cost of which Mrs Lambert no doubt covered. Visitors' servants were accommodated for 14/- a night with meals.⁸ At first I thought Dorothy had stayed there while touring with the opera company but it soon became apparent that the company would never have paid for such expensive rooms. Dorothy outlined her corner room with balcony and view looking down Princes Street with an arrow on the hotel brochure, and noted the room in which she had afternoon tea.



Letter to Dorothy from Percy Heming. 28 June 1938.

After the Scottish sojourn it was back to work again. Dorothy performed at the Knightstone Pavilion in Weston-Supre-Mare, a seaside resort near Bristol, on 11 September then returned to Covent Garden for rehearsals. She had earlier sent a letter to Percy Heming to tell him how much she had enjoyed the season. He reassured her she would be one of the *Covent Garden English Opera Company* for the Autumn Season. Beecham had initiated the first Opera in English season in 1920 and the company was offering new productions as well as revivals of popular operas. Dorothy had performed operas in English herself with Fullers Royal Grand Opera in 1934/5. Robert Ainsworth, writing on 10 August, mentioned some difficulties in issuing

contracts for the upcoming season. ‘This is a notification that you are asked to accept an engagement at the salary mentioned to you by Mr. Heming (£4 for the Season and £4.10.0 on tour). Rehearsals to commence on September 12th preliminary to 3 weeks Season at Covent Garden [from 10-29 October], and 5 weeks in the Provinces.’⁹ This included visits to Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh. As a comparison, Dorothy was paid £4 a week (in Australian currency) while on tour with *Vanity Fair* in 1918/19, thirty years previously. The exchange rate in 1938 was around £125 Australian to £100 Sterling. The average male labourer’s gross weekly wage in Great Britain in 1938 was £3.9.0.

Included in the Autumn Season was the October premiere of a new production entitled *The Serf*, a ‘very serious and deep’ story about ill-fated medieval lovers created by a 25-year-old English composer George Lloyd. A copy of the libretto, written by his father William Lloyd, was kept by Dorothy. In Lloyd’s opinion *The Serf*, which was staged by Vladimir Rosing and conducted by Albert Coates, was not a triumph. ‘Albert Coates, who had been a great conductor, was deteriorating rapidly and he made a frightful mess of it,’ says Lloyd. ‘It drove me out of the theatre, actually. Then the war came, and that was the end of everything for me.’¹⁰



‘Dear Win, This snap was taken at the hotel veranda at Welwyn Garden City England, a most delightful place which has been built up since the war ... Love Doro.’

While in London, Dorothy managed a day’s motoring into the countryside ‘with the young “Aussie” (28) [years old]’. They explored Welwyn Garden City, a planned town which aimed to combine the best features of city and rural living, and stopped for a

beer at the hotel. She was having trouble coping with the heat, ‘It was very hot day—so you will see we were enjoying a ½ pint—everyone in England drinks “beer”. When it’s hot here it’s worse than anywhere I know. Can’t stand it.’¹¹

With the onset of the English winter Dorothy’s opinion about the climate changed dramatically. Living in such a freezing cold environment without adequate financial resources made her feel miserable. She had fulfilled her dream to be part of the Royal Opera Company, but now she was despairing of earning good money in the chorus. She contemplated giving up working in British opera all together and returning home. In her own words she was ‘fed up with the whole show’.¹²

Chapter Twenty-six

1939—The dark clouds gather

It is easy to find something good to say of success, but the struggle must go a-begging for encouragement. ~ Quote written down by Dorothy Rudder

By late March 1939 living in a London boarding house was beginning to pall. Dorothy seemed to be suffering from a serious bout of homesickness. She had been ill with food poisoning, and the continual struggle for work was getting too much. War clouds were on the horizon which added to her fears, which all tumbled out in a revealing, cathartic letter to Winnie. The letter also reveals a surprise—a singer could *pay* to sing at Covent Garden:

Ladbroke Gardens

London W.11.

March 19th 1939

My darling Sister

I am once again disappointed not receiving a letter from either you or Clarrie, I've asked over and over again if you would send me a little news more often—the weather is still bitterly cold—too cold even to take a walk in the park, consequently I sit alone from about 3.P.M daily, no one in this house cares a senap [scrap] about one's loneliness, today is Sunday, dead silence again. I feel it all the more as I have been ill for a week and had to have the Doctor—a severe gastric attack caused thro' home made food I have been obliged to eat in these awful pubs and restaurants, I took ill thro' the night with purging and vomiting, next day saw the doctor, and of course he ordered me to bed, milk diet so on & so on, which meant I had to get out of bed for everything I wanted & to go to the lavatory, however Mrs Knight eventually came in to see me and for a few days brought me a basin of groats but suddenly ceased as soon as I showed signs of a little improvement, I was then getting down again for the want of proper nourishment, so wrote to Mrs Wade and I lunched with her for several days and she fed me up and sent me home with eggs, home-made pudding, she was annoyed I hadn't let her know, as she said she would have

sent up a nurse twice a day, she is really the kindest of the people I know, as she is not a well off woman herself, but she has plenty of well to do friends.

I really feel Mrs Wade is genuine, however I'm better now, I'm glad too as we begin rehearsals again on the 27th, but oh this wretched weather, I could scream peels of shrieks, my health is giving way for the want of sunshine and company, these damn luncheons formal—arrive 1.15 leave 3.p.m. teas arrive 4.30 leave 6.p.m.—that sort of thing would be alright if one had their own home & family, but living in a room like me all have to do from home—it's just hell, so I long for letters—news from home, so I do hope you will understand and write me as often as you can—I do hope David and Bruce [identity unknown but probably relatives] will write—then again, another—damn crisis—the news is grave and depressing and has been for some time past—oh dear I do wish I had my fare I'd leave on Saturday the 25th with Mrs Chudleigh.

All the opera roles in the world would not compensate for what one has to go thro' with the climate alone—and I've learned most recently that Covent Garden only pay British artists £5 a night for a performance, so one would never make real money—and I've also found out that those who sang last Autumn paid £50 to do so, had I £50 then to have put in I'd have sung also. I'm fed up with the whole show—and I honestly don't feel like working for two years longer in the "Carl Rosa". If they were going to "Africa" this year I would feel different, but I've heard a rumour it won't be until next year—and again I have no money for my lessons or to be coached—so you can see Win how I'm handicapped —any way it is all in "God's" hands, whatever happens I'll accept. If war comes it will be God help me, I don't want to be here then, and I'm very much afraid it will come sooner or later, so it won't matter much about opera then—I've been thinking a lot about Reg, poor boy, oh dear I won't say any more, and Clarrie's boys, whatever are the poor wretches going to do—3 out of work.

I thought when I came here I'd have more like a home, that on a Sunday and some evenings Mrs Knight would have had me down with them, but they have been living in England for 30 years and she was only 14 when they left "Australia" so of course they have forgotten the warm friendly way of the "Australians" and are like the rest of the unfriendly b-s in "London". Plus when I didn't get a letter from either you or dear old Clarrie I came into my room

read Clarrie's last over again and shit all—David's was long. To-day is Sunday. I'm writing this on my knee in front of the fire—weather, cold winds—dull dreary sky, occasional showers, and as usual had to go out for a mid-day meal. I feel I can't stand any more, no longer, no how, nothing. I'm going to try and get a fare together during the next three months. Mrs Wade will help, in case of trouble and we are going to try and find out what Covent Garden intends to do as far as I am concerned—I'm not going to stay here to do chorus work—as I can't earn enough to keep going, that is with Covent Garden—and the Doctor does not advise me for my health's sake to undertake the "Carl Rosa" however darling poor old Win I'm dying—dying to see you. I feel I can't stay so do write and tell me what you think, have a talk with Arthur and I'm sure that David and Bruce would tell you what a b- of a climate this is. Lots of love and kisses to poor old Arthur and yourself.

Your loving sister

Doro¹

Dorothy had hit an emotional wall. From this letter it seems she hoped Win and Arthur would provide funds for a fare back to Sydney. She also gave the impression she liked to be looked after, to have a home provided for her, rather than being someone who actively took care of others on a domestic level. She never purchased property and had few possessions that I know of, apart from clothing and some items of jewellery. Although often photographed with animals, including cats, dogs, birds and even bottle feeding a piglet, we do not know if Dorothy ever owned a pet. She led a peripatetic lifestyle; in some ways she was a gypsy. As an adult she had never lived in one place for more than a year. This could be very enjoyable but challenging and lonely when money was short and the weather was foul.



Dorothy's Royal Opera Company calling card.



Train, tram and bus tickets used by Dorothy Rudder in Egypt, Scotland and London.

From July 1937 to October 1939 Dorothy had five known addresses in London, plus one country address, not including all the hotels and boarding houses she stayed in while on tour in the provinces.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 29 July 1937 | The Ardmay Hotel Woburn Place WC1 |
| 5 Feb 1938 | 5 Sheldon Street London W2 |
| 19 March 1938 | Stratford House 10 Westbourne Gardens Bayswater W2 |
| 11 August 1939 | 5 Ladbroke Gardens London W11 |
| 20 September 1939 | c/o Miss Cotton Cherry Orchard Tylers Green Penn. Bucks |
| 5 October 1939 | 10 Manson Place Queens Gate Kensington SW 7 |



The World has a Purpose flyer.

An undated brochure that Dorothy was given in the street or picked up at church tapped into the general feeling of angst in the community brought about by the uncertain political situation. In some ways the flyer presented a self-help approach to fear, conquering one fear at a time. Entitled *The World has a Purpose*, the writer posed some questions for the reader. 'Are you afraid of the future? Losing your job? Of war? Of other people? Of illness? Of dying? Everyone is afraid of something. There must be a reason. What is it? Everyone is afraid because everyone has forgotten to trust in God. Trusting in God means ... leaving things to Him ... Try it. This week give up one of your worries. Trust God for once. If we do this individually we shall end up doing it nationally.' The brochure came from a religious organisation called The Living Christ and the Four Gospels who followed the teachings of R.W. Dale, an English Congregationalist and social reformer. The name was taken from a set of lectures he gave in 1890.

Although Dorothy declared she would work no longer with the Royal Opera, she had a change of heart by springtime. A simple one page Memorandum of Engagement between the London Philharmonic Concert Society Ltd. and Dorothy for the Royal Opera season outlined the employment details. Her classification was 'chorister (voice Soprano 1)'. Rehearsals were to run from 27 March. The seven-week season, which included *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *Aida* (featuring Margot Fonteyn as principal ballerina), *Il Trovatore*, *The Bartered Bride*, *Otello*, and *Don Giovanni*, commenced on 1 May. Dorothy's weekly salary, which could include broadcasting, was again £4/10/- per week for six performances. As she had stated, she would never 'make real money' in the chorus.

The usual rules were listed in the document relating to punctuality, costume care and following instructions from the Conductor and Concert Master and inadequate or inefficient performance quality, with fines or cancellation of contract for infringements. A chorister was required to sing in English, German, French or Italian (an impressive feat to the outsider to opera, but par for the course for Dorothy), and to act as figurant (singer in minor roles), if required, in all performances, concerts, matinees or soirees. If singing small parts, no extra compensation would be offered. Choristers had to be at the theatre an hour prior to the show and personally sign the attendance book, even if they were not performing that night. Preliminary rehearsals were held morning, afternoon and evening with payment at 5 shillings per three hour call. Stage rehearsals could be longer than 3 hours. Male choristers were to shave their moustache and beard

daily. Should the theatre be closed due to fire, epidemic, war, riot, strikes or national mourning, the contract could be cancelled.² This last clause was soon to be invoked.

On 5 June 1939 Walter Legge, the Assistant Artistic Director to Sir Thomas Beecham, wrote to Dorothy and other cast and crew members with a proposal.

I want to ask your co-operation in a little plan which has been suggested to me by several members of the staff.

As you know, there would have been no International Opera Season at Covent Garden this summer if Sir Thomas Beecham had not himself undertaken the entire financial responsibility. It is proposed that all those who have participated in the Season soloists, members of the orchestras, chorus and ballet, stage and house staff, and all those who have the privilege of working with and for him should show their appreciation of his typical and generous sacrifice to the art which we all love by contributing to buy him some souvenir of the 1939 Season, which he alone made possible.³

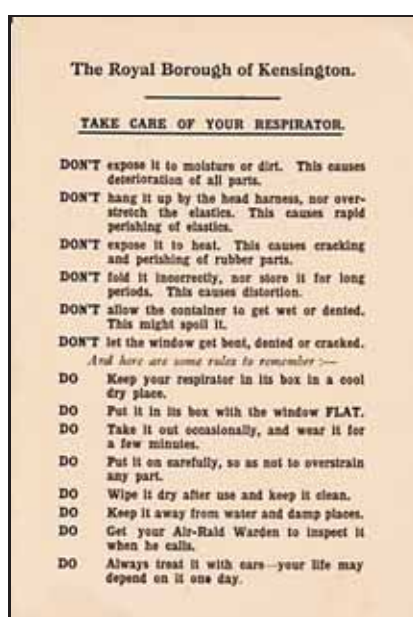
A Grafton local met up with Dorothy in London, as his extensive letters to the *Daily Examiner* highlighted. ‘Mr. T. Pritchard, organist at Christ Church Cathedral, Grafton, and now on an extended holiday in England, mentions seeing two operas at Covent Garden [*The Bartered Bride* and *La Tosca*], and noticing that Grafton was well represented—Miss Stevenson, daughter of the Bishop of Grafton, was in the ballet, Miss Dorothy Rudder in the chorus, and himself in the audience.’ He had also caught up with Dorothy at Australia House during the London Music Festival and he had spotted Dorothy sitting behind him at the Australia Day service at St Clement Danes Church in March. He was pleased to see her and reported ‘she had indeed done well to get into such a famous opera company’. Ominously, he also commented on the way England was putting itself on a war footing by building air raid shelters and changing from ordinary manufacture to war materials and airplanes.⁴

Although Dorothy was worried for the future, she persisted in her efforts to expand on work opportunities with her usual tenacity. By August 1939 she was in discussions with John Christie, the founder in 1934 of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera near Lewes in East Sussex. Ironically, Glyndebourne often discovered young singers who then went on to appear at Covent Garden. The audience always dressed in evening dress for the performance. On 11 August Christie wrote that their auditions would be

held in autumn. Dorothy suggested seeing him earlier but he wrote again two weeks later. ‘I think it would be better to wait until you have returned from your Covent Garden Tour. Everyone is now on holidays.’⁵ As with many previous approaches to agents and organisations, no work appeared to have come from their correspondence.

And despite her reservations, Dorothy signed up for yet another opera season. The Autumn Tour of the Covent Garden English Opera Society was to run from 25 September to 2 December 1939, with two weeks rehearsal prior. ‘Terms for both periods, to be as last Tour. Are you free and prepared to accept the engagement’ wrote Percy Heming.⁶ Dorothy was continuing to prepare for the parts of Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Marguerite in *Faust* and Santuzza in *Cavalliera Rusticana*, parts which she hoped would be a springboard to other prominent roles.⁷

The tour would not proceed. Dorothy had been ‘in the House of Commons when Anthony Eden gave his historic warning to Parliament that war was dangerously near and had been narrowly averted on two occasions already’.⁸ The British declaration of war against Nazi Germany came finally at 11.15am on 3 September 1939. Neville Chamberlain spoke to an anxious nation via radio. Britain had given Herr Hitler an ultimatum to withdraw from Poland after the Germans invaded on 1 September but it was ignored. Australia’s Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, broadcast on radio on the same day. ‘It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequences of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain had declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.’



Respirator care card 1939.

At the exact moment war was declared Dorothy was attending church. She told the *Daily Examiner*:

During the service, and about half an hour afterwards, they heard the first air raid warning. The Minister stopped the service and asked the congregation to take shelter and, as the first thing that was expected was an air raid in London, everybody took to the cellars. Next morning, about 2.45 o'clock, people were awakened out of their sleep to take shelter again by another air raid warning. Everybody had to carry gas masks in the street and soon the ladies had them matched in color and design with their dresses and hats, though the regulation issue was plain and serviceable, contained in a cardboard box.⁹

Lady Ryder's hospitality scheme was still on hand to offer assistance. Dorothy was suffering from thrombosis and may well have had difficulties performing if the opera season had proceeded. Miss Macdonald of the Isles sent a missive on 5 September.

Dear Miss Rudder

Just in case you are not coming in to-day I am writing to tell you that I have had you very much in mind, and hope to send you to stay with one of our hostesses in the country from Saturday onwards. She offered to help by having someone to whom the War has made a big difference, and that certainly applies to you.

From the news it seems to me that there is not the slightest chance that the Opera Company will be going on tour, as all crowded entertainments are prohibited. Therefore, it is necessary for us to think of the best arrangements for you until you sail.

I have rung the Employment Exchange at Marlborough Street and find there will be absolutely no difficulty for you having your benefit transferred there to the Employment Exchange near where you will be staying.

When I get the answer from our hostess I shall be able to give you full particulars ...

I am telling the hostess that you are suffering from thrombosis, and are therefore not able to walk very much, but I also said that I was quite sure that you would be willing to help with any work that you could do, as I know how

busy they are with sewing parties etc. etc. and I think you would prefer to be busy rather than have nothing to do.

I hope it may be possibly be all right for you to stay there for a long time, but I shall be able to tell you more about this when I have heard from our hostess. If you come in here on Thursday I hope to have an answer by then.

Yours sincerely

Celia Macdonald of the Isles¹⁰

C.A. Barrant, the Manager of the English Opera Society, wrote the next day to inform the performers that 'in view of the outbreak of war, they find it impossible to proceed with the proposed Autumn Opera Tour and regret to have to cancel your contract under the terms therein. The board have the intention of giving a Tour when conditions in their opinion are possible, and hope to be able to make a fresh contract with you at a later date.'¹¹

Dorothy sang in German, had met and worked with the German conductors and appreciated their cultural achievements. She felt the great tragedy of the war from a musical perspective was that the allies were fighting a nation so cultured in music as the Germans, instead of co-operating with them in the cultivating of the art in which they were so distinguished. No further Italian or German operas were to be performed at Covent Garden for the war's duration and the Royal Opera House would become the Mecca Dance Hall.



Jack Aronowitz's card. 1939.

Dorothy's musical career in England was over. Her supportive network of women friends and theatrical contacts raised the funds for Dorothy's return to Sydney. J. Nevin Tait hoped she would secure some engagements on her return, wrote a reference (now lost), and enclosed a contribution towards her passage. Pianist and piano teacher Jack Aronowitz—the older brother of leading British viola player and chamber musician Cecil Aronowitz—provided Dorothy with a glowing letter of recommendation to Mr McLerque at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Cape Town was a possible stopover en route to Sydney if the Mediterranean was closed to passenger ships. He introduced Dorothy as a celebrated operatic soprano from Australia and appears to have embellished her achievements. 'She has done a considerable amount of work here in London taking a principal role in operas etc. She is without doubt a vocalist of outstanding calibre.'¹² Aronowitz added that she was to appear in an Australian tour. He added a little promotion for himself too. 'I am thriving along in these parts despite the appalling disaster that has overtaken Europe.'¹³

The departure date of 7 October kept being pushed forward, no doubt because of the fluid war situation. One of her mentors was Winifred Bowden Smith (the daughter of Admiral Nathaniel Bowden Smith). Part of Winifred's childhood was spent in Australia, as her father had been the Commander in Chief of the Australian Station (fleet) in the 1890s.

15A Nevern Road
S.W.5
Tel. Frobisher 0527
21.9.39

Dear Miss Rudder

Many thanks for your letter. I enclose £5 for any expenses you may incur before leaving England. I have just rung up Miss Macdonald of the Isles and ascertained she is practically certain of getting the money for your fare, so trust you will have no difficulty in getting away on October 7th. If you come up to town before you sail, we shall be very pleased to give you lunch somewhere, but I am sorry we cannot ask you to stay as we have no maid living in and there would be no possibility of providing you with any evening meal and I do not

think you would care to go out to a Restaurant in the dark. The London streets at night are not exactly a pleasure walk.

Yours sincerely

Winifred Bowden-Smith¹⁴

Dorothy had been staying with Miss Eileen Cotton who lived with her sister Mary and Isabel Jones in Buckinghamshire. A census was taken while Dorothy was staying there noting that the three women were single and had private means. Both sisters were aged in their late forties and Isabel was eight-five. Dorothy was listed as a professional singer. A letter came from Celia Macdonald with a plan to return to the metropolis. Leaving for home was becoming a tedious waiting game.

21B Cadogan Gardens

Sloane Square S.W.3

2nd October 1939

Dear Miss Rudder

I have your letter this morning, and I am sure you will be comforted to know that we feel the best plan is for you to come to London on Thursday October 5th, and we will book a room for you. I hope to add the address to this letter.

I have heard from the P&O this morning, and they say that they never know about sailing dates until two or three days before departure, but that I shall be advised here at the earliest opportunity.

If you and your luggage are in London you will feel you are on the spot, and can sail at a moment's notice if necessary.

I hear from Miss Cotton that you have been very good, and much more cheerful and trying to help all you can. That really is splendid, and I give you first prize. Keep on getting better and better like Mr. Coue.

With love from Mrs. Fry and me.

Yours very sincerely

Celia Macdonald of the Isles

P.S. I have booked a room for you on Thursday October 5th with Mr. and Mrs. S.E. Percival, 10 Manson Place, Queens Gate, S.W. 7 Kensington 4200. I told them it would need to be at their most inexpensive rate, which I think is 5/6 a night for bed and breakfast.¹⁵

She stayed with Eileen Cotton in the country for two weeks, and then moved back to London to await the departure date. Mrs Lambert sent her greetings.

14 Hope Street
St. Andrews
Fife Scotland
October 2nd 1939

My dear Dorothy

I am so glad you are going back to your family for here, now, there does not seem the least chance of any operas or arts of any kind being a success for ages. No one can think of anything but this terrible war. I hope you will have a good journey home; it will be lovely for you to see all your people and tell them of your experiences ... Write to me when you get home and tell me all about your voyage.

Ever yours very sincerely
J. Lambert¹⁶

Dorothy did some shopping in London, buying suspenders, a coat brush, soap, face cream, salts, dental fixtures (indicating she now had false teeth) and a bottle of water and glycerine. Eileen Cotton wrote her two letters.

Cherry Orchard
Tylers Green Penn.
Buckinghamshire
Oct 24 1939

Dear Miss Rudder

Just a line to wish you bon voyage and bon courage! And I do hope that you will really set off on the 26th for these constant postponements must be most nerve wracking. We were so sorry to learn that you were not feeling as well as when you left us, and we wish that we could have kept you on here till you sailed, though I don't think that you would even have survived the cold and damp! We have got the Cosy Stove in the dining room going now ...

Christine [Untergasser] is going back to Switzerland on Friday. She has been very naughty and tiresome so I gave her notice. Tho as a matter of fact I

discovered later that she was anyhow planning to go! I have engaged a very nice middle-aged woman who I think will be a help to us.

Well—again. I do wish you a very safe journey, free from any alarms, and hope the rest and sea air will do you good—so that you arrive fit, and able to enjoy life to the full your return to your family. I hope you will soon get a good remunerative job—and that the past months of anxiety and loneliness will fade away like a bad dream. Let me hear when you arrive.

In haste for post and best wishes from us all. We shall think of you starting off, and pray for a safe voyage.

Yours sincerely

Eileen I. Cotton¹⁷

Tuesday

Dear Miss Rudder

I am sorry to have been so long in writing to you but my Aunt has been in bed again for nearly a week and we have had bad old flus and other troubles and bothers and I really haven't had a moment in which to sit down. Added to that, I was rather badly bitten by a dog when visiting last week and have had a mighty sore right arm ever since.

I do hope things are going better for you now that you got your money all right last Friday. You will soon be off now unless the boat's departure has been put off again which I really hope will not be the case. You must be longing to be out/ though you won't enjoy the first few days. Anyhow—I do hope that you will get out without any more bothers and that you have been able to have some pleasure in your time in London. I am afraid we now begin to have air raids now though I don't anticipate they will do much damage.

We have not yet found a cook to replace Christine. There are plenty around but they do not seem to fancy the country and ask for preposterous wages ...

With best wishes from us all.

Yours sincerely

E. Cotton¹⁸

Chapter Twenty-seven

Return to Oz



Postcard P&O RMS *Strathallan*



Dorothy Rudder's luggage tag

Dorothy finally sailed for Sydney on 26 October 1939, travelling tourist class on RMS *Strathallan* via the Suez Canal. From the travel documentation her final address in London was 23 Connaught Terrace W2 and her age given as forty, although she was now forty-six. On 7 November the ship ran aground on a sandbank at Port Said, but managed to depart at 4.30pm on that day, arriving in Sydney at 6pm on 2 December.

The P&O Company had launched the 23,700 ton *Strathallan*, an elegantly designed sister ship to the *Strathmore* and *Stratheden*, the previous year. The liner was the biggest ship in their fleet with fifty-five first class cabins, hot and cold running water in all tourist class cabins, furnishings in restricted modern designs and iced water available on the sports deck. This was quite a contrast to Dorothy's voyage to London with SS *Mongolia*, a tired ship that was 'not so very comfortable'.¹

However, pleasure cruising took a backseat on this stressful trip, with survival of the *Strathallan* and its passengers and crew the number one priority under wartime conditions. In an extensive article in *Daily Examiner* on 22 December which deliberately did not mention the name of the ship, Dorothy said the black-out procedures she encountered in London were also carried out on the ship, with no lights allowed outside the saloons and cabins. Smoking on the decks was forbidden, quite a challenge for all the smokers on board. Seven volunteers from the male passengers were always on duty in addition to the crew. Lifeboat drills were carried out immediately the ship was ready to sail, the first while the ship was anchored in the Thames in an icy forty mile per hour gale. Each passenger was ordered by the captain

to carry a lifebelt, a rug and bundle of warm clothing with them always in case the ship was torpedoed. Dorothy described the risky situation they were in.

Nothing was seen of enemy ships, but when they had arrived at a port well on the journey, the captain told them they had been chased by a U-boat some time back, but the ship's great speed had enabled them to get away ... At one stage they were within two miles of where a British ship had been sunk by a U-boat. There were more than 1,000 passengers and they were proud of the fact that an Australian captain had brought them safely through so many dangers.

Another thing that was explained to them on the ship was the working of the magnetic mines laid by the Germans. The mines were not attracted to the side or bottom of the ship by magnetism, but were exploded by the vibration of the ship passing above them.²

By 1940 the *Strathallan* had been requisitioned as a troopship and became even more exposed to danger. Extra deck space provided for the passengers through the single funnel design now became the domain of soldiers and their kit. On board the ship in December 1942 were 4,000 troops, 250 nurses, 872 crewmen, the photojournalist Margaret Bourke White and the HQ staff of General Eisenhower's new North Africa headquarters, destined for Oran Algeria as part of the Operation Torch invasion. The *Strathallan* was torpedoed and sunk by U-562 in the Mediterranean on 22 December, with the loss of only three lives. In turn, the submarine was sunk by the Royal Navy with depth charges eight weeks later.³

On her arrival Gwen sent Dorothy a special telegram which read 'Welcome home to dear old Aussie.'⁴ For Dorothy 'the sight of Australian land, with the sun shining and the radio broadcasting an Australian programme from one of the shore stations, was one of the happiest experiences she had known, and after nearly three years away from home she was satisfied there was no place like Australia after all'.⁵

From the many photographs taken of Dorothy camping, swimming and sailing in Sydney and northern NSW over the years we can see she loved the outdoors. Given her earlier comments to Winnie regarding the weather in London, unsurprisingly she much preferred the Australian climate. She found the lack of sunshine in England very depressing. On a fourteen-day summer holiday there was only one day on which it did

not rain. 'The winters were bitterly cold with everyone compelled to stay indoors. There were no surfing beaches as we know them in Australia.'⁶



The camping tradition continued with Winnie, Arthur and family. Note the improvised changing facilities. Dorothy's swollen legs were a result of her thrombosis.

Dorothy gained a new perspective on life while living in England. She noted the class distinctions; the great disparity between the living conditions of the rich and poor. But, prior to leaving Australia, how much had she observed of the dire poverty in Sydney brought on by the Depression? And, during her journey to England, had she thought about the differences between privileged white travellers such as herself to colonial outposts such as Colombo and Bombay and the lives of the native inhabitants of these cities?

The great disparity of conditions amongst the various classes left a deep impression on Miss Rudder's mind. While the wealthy classes lived in the greatest luxury, the poorest were living in the slums in abject misery, many of them in the basements of tenements, and never seeing the daylight in their homes...

The sharp division of classes in England was hardly understandable to an Australian, and it made the social life very different from that here. She much preferred the equality here, where it was frequently difficult to distinguish between the sons of the wealthy and those of working men, in appearance and education.

In London she was astonished by the great number of the Jewish community, who seemed to control most of the shops and many of the bigger businesses.⁷

Asked her opinion on the scope for English immigrants in Australia Dorothy said:

We could use as many of the better types as we could get, but the poorer, untrained, moneyless types were useless out of their own environment. Australia was too big and too different for the latter class ever to succeed and the only result of their emigration would be that they would return to England and give this country a bad name. The better trained and more financial type, however, would make excellent citizens if we could get them.

Australia, she found, was not sufficiently known in England. Few people seemed to understand anything about it and generally it was looked upon with a great deal of old-fashioned tolerance for the “colonies.”⁸

Dorothy took pride in her achievements and those of fellow Australian performers in London.

Going to London to tackle the musical profession without assistance or influence except her excellent record in Australia, Miss Rudder was told that Australian experience and ability were at a discount if not accompanied by London success. She was unable to interest the less important musical producers [the cancelled William Boland contract contradicts this], so she took the courage in her hands and demanded an audition at the top of the tree. Her voice was so satisfactory that she received an engagement and proved that those who had told her that she could not get a start without London experience were wrong, at least in her case...

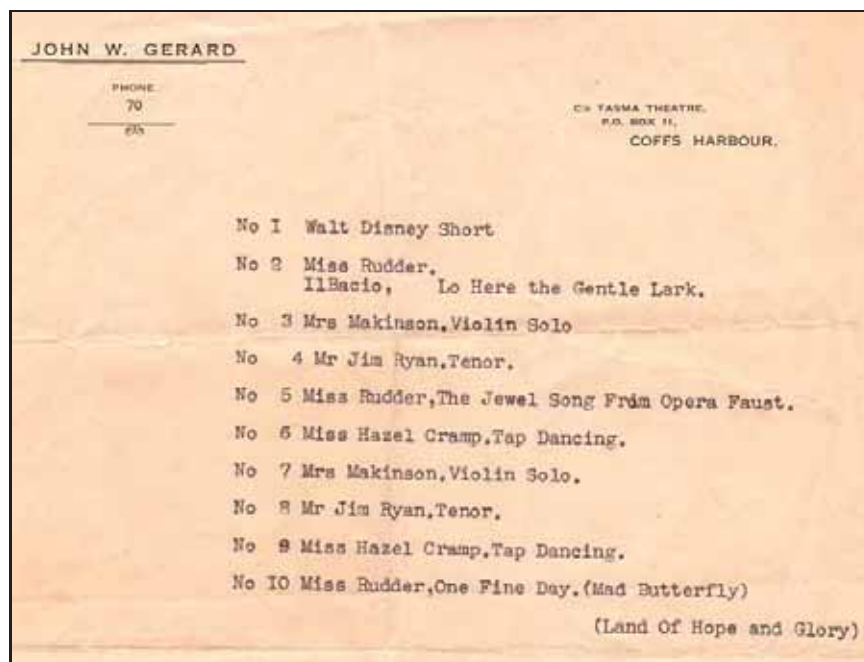
One thing that pleased Miss Rudder more than anything else was the outstanding success of Australians in the theatre world of London. At the Royal Opera House with her there were six Australians singing leads, and one New Zealander. An Australian tenor was singing lead in Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Many Australians were doing well on the stage and in the films, amongst them being Cyril Ritchard and Madge Elliot. Vera Pearce was successful in the films, with many others. Molly de Gunst and Judy Kelly were amongst the successful ones in their respective avenues of art.⁹

Back on home turf, late in February Dorothy dropped by the Woolgoolga home of a Country Women's Association member. She was given the job of judging the best article made for the cost of one shilling. Her choice was reportedly popular with the contestants.¹⁰ Dorothy gave a 'high class' concert in Woolgoolga on 22 March, singing

nine songs in all. The *Examiner* said she was in fine voice. 'The Woolgoolga people are proud to think that this district has produced a singer of such quality, also one who came and gave her home town the privilege of hearing her before going elsewhere.'¹¹



Tasma Theatre Coffs Harbour. Image mus07-3543 courtesy of Coffs Collections as hosted by Coffs Harbour City Council. <https://coffs.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/46303>



Running order for Tasma Theatre concert 23 April 1940.

Special Show Attraction !

Tasma Theatre, Coffs Harbour

TUESDAY NEXT, APRIL 23—ONE NIGHT ONLY

Combined Cinema and Stage Entertainment !

PROGRAMME AS FOLLOWS:—

8 p.m.—METROTONE SPECIAL OVERSEA NEWS

8.10 p.m.—“THEIR LAST BEAN” (Terrytoon Cartoon)

8.20 p.m.—“KICKING THE MOON AROUND”

Starring EVELYN DALL, HARRY RICHMAN and FLORENCE DESMOND.

Featuring AMBROSE AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA

A most glorious Musical Comedy Romance. Magnificent settings, superbly directed, and a delightfully bright and snappy theme.

INTERVAL 9.35 p.m.

9.45 p.m.—

The entire second portion of this programme will take the form of a STAGE PRESENTATION, in which a personal appearance of one of the world's greatest Lyric-Sopranos will be the star attraction.

MISS DOROTHY RUDDER

Direct from 4 seasons at Covent Garden Opera House, LONDON

Miss Rudder, in addition to possessing a charming personality, is recognised in the theatrical world as an artist of exceptional ability, capable of rendering the most simple ballads or the most elaborate operatic passages

This brilliant artist has already proved herself by a tour of New Zealand, the East, the Far East and every Capital City in Australia

She has appeared with J. C. Williamsons, of Sydney, and has broadcast through Australian National Stations. The Tasma Management are very proud to be able to offer such a talented artist, and can assure patrons of a musical treat

Miss Rudder's vocal renderings will be supported by other assisting artists, which will include Violin Solos, Tap Dancing, etc. In all, 1½ hours' delightful stage entertainment is assured.

Although this can be regarded as a very high standard of entertainment, secured at terrific cost, the prices of admission will not be increased

BOOK YOUR SEATS NOW. PLAN IS OPEN. PHONE TASMA THEATRE 70

JOHN W. GERARD, Managing Director.

“Advocate” Print, Coffs Harbour.

Tasma Theatre Coffs Harbour concert flyer. 23 April 1940.

On 23 April 1940 the focus was again on a well-attended local concert, with Dorothy appearing as a star attraction at the luxurious Art Deco style Tasma Theatre Coffs Harbour during the Agricultural Show. In a Combined Cinema and Stage Entertainment, a newsreel, Terrytoon cartoon and the British musical comedy *Kicking the Moon Around* (notable as Maureen O’Hara’s first film) was followed after interval by a special stage presentation. The Tasma was proud to have Dorothy perform for them ‘at considerable expense’. The flyer praised her accordingly: Direct from 4 seasons at Covent Garden Opera House. One of the world’s greatest Lyric-Sopranos.

Recognised in the theatrical world as an artist of exceptional ability. Also on the bill was local tap dancer Miss Hazel Cramp who gave her version of ‘an American negro tap dancer’.¹²

Back in Sydney, Roland Foster wrote a second glowing reference for Dorothy.

I have known Miss Dorothy Rudder for several years as a soprano with a brilliant voice and great technical fluency, who might have made a name for herself abroad if the opportunity had come her way. She is a hard and conscientious worker and an artist who can be depended on to make the most of any chance afforded her.¹³



Dorothy, happily back in Sydney 1940. Street photograph.

The struggle to find work continued but a visit by a certain well-known conductor gave her hope. By June Sir Thomas Beecham had arrived in Australia. The ABC had engaged him for three months to conduct fifteen concerts. During his stay in Sydney Dorothy wrote to him from the Hotel Phillip in King St asking him for a ‘personal word’.

15th June 1940

Sir Thomas Beecham Bart. [Abbreviation of Baronet]

Aust. Broadcasting Commission

Sydney

Dear Sir Thomas Beecham,

It is with great pleasure that I have read of your arrival in Australia, and realise after having worked under your baton at Covent Garden what a treat is in store for the people of Australia, as I've never forgotten the thrill I experienced at the first rehearsal you conducted of Die Zauberflute [The Magic Flute] in the marvellous foyer of the famous old Royal Opera House—Grand season 1938. Altho' I did not have the pleasure of meeting you personally I was a member of your chorus grand season 1938 and 1939, English tour 1938 and signed the 4th contract for the 1939 English tour, which as you know was cancelled at the declaration of hostilities.

On the recommendation of Mr Percy Heming I studied with Madam Miriam Licette and Madam G. Crichton. And was coached for the parts of Marguerite, Santuzza, Musetta etc with the view of being given an opportunity of performing in the provinces to prove my worth, as my voice and appearance is considered outstanding.

Now that you are with us in Australia dear Sir Thomas I should like to have the pleasure of having a talk with you in connection with my work here.

I had no intention of returning to Australia—but on account of the international situation made it imperative to do so.

I am promised an audition with the A.B.C. in a couple of weeks' time and realise a personal word from you would be a tremendous asset to me.

I am finding it difficult to establish myself after my long stay in "London" therefore I sincerely hope you can comply with my wish to see me for a few minutes at any time convenient to you.

With best wishes,

Dorothy Rudder¹⁴

Beecham left Sydney for Melbourne via rail on the *Spirit of Progress* the day after this letter was written. He never received it. The original folded copy was sent back to her.

From 31 August to 3 September Dorothy found stage work at the beautiful Prince Edward Theatre, singing twice daily as a Guest Artiste with Bert Howell's Show Band in support of the classic Bob Hope/Bing Crosby movie *Road to Singapore*. Ever the professional, she sent a letter to the theatre manager thanking him for 'a few happy weeks'. She hoped her efforts met with his approval and that he would keep her in

mind for further engagements. Her address was now Flat 7, St Martins, Kellett St Kings Cross.



Advertisement for *Road to Singapore*. *Sydney Morning Herald* September 1940.

While at the Prince Edward, Manny Aarons, the ‘Wizard of the Wurlitzer organ’ at the State Theatre, sent greetings via telegram.¹⁵ Dorothy also received two telegrams from a man named Stevo. One was for her birthday and in another he sent best wishes for the season along with the hope that she was feeling better.¹⁶ Her thrombosis was possibly causing problems again.

Out of the blue Dorothy received a fan letter from Tessie Marshall, a performer from her distant past. Marshall’s handwriting was huge—not more than five words to the line. She wrote letters in the 1930s to the *Australian Women’s Weekly* on issues ranging from the lure and disappointments of the stage life (as noted earlier) to hoarding (she was against it) and finding or not finding love (she thought that by not meeting the right man you could miss out on a lot of worry).

C/o 176 Victoria St
Kings Cross

Dear Dorothy,

It is 25 (or so) years since I last saw you ... at the time I was violiniste at the Pacific Hotel Manly. You were then a pupil of Mr Beattie. In all these years I

had not forgotten your beautiful voice. I remember you singing “vissi d’arte” Am I right? I am an old maid. You probably saw these signs in the old days. I teach at this address (176). I will try to hear you at the Prince Edward. If I do not manage to get to see you at the theatre I would like to see you at the teaching room. This place is occupied by a chiropodist, Miss Fawcett. We (dad and I) have a flat at 128 but I teach at Miss Fawcett’s as her room opens on to the street. I have done a lot of work since I saw you and often coach and rehearse broadcast folk and I put a number of the Gilbert and Sullivan people through. Well, here’s hoping you can remember me ...

Tessie Marshall¹⁷



On 4 September 1940 Dorothy bought some new shoes.

Freelance Studios docket showing costs of street photograph postcards.

Street photograph of Dorothy and Gwen in Sydney. Leicagraph Co. Sydney.

As she had done so many times before, Dorothy was searching for her next job. A role with J.C. Williamson’s Gilbert and Sullivan Company in the forthcoming season was a possibility. She had turned forty-seven in August 1939. Finding work was not getting any easier, especially as the country was now on a war footing. Live entertainment options were limited. Going to the cinema was the most popular activity, both in the city and suburbs, but, as in the 1930s, very few films were locally produced. No matter what the circumstances, looking good was still important. The day after finishing the Prince Edward season Dorothy bought a pair of navy gabardine and patent leather shoes at Mabs MacGuirk’s Shoes of Distinction in King Street. And she was still wearing a fur coat, although it looks like an inexpensive one.

Chapter Twenty-eight

Dorothy exits the stage



One of the last photographs taken of Dorothy by a street photographer for Regal Studios Sydney 1940. Dorothy's stylish but well used leather black handbag (seen in the image on left) and new slate grey suede gloves.

By late September Dorothy was not feeling well, to say the least. News was filtering through the grapevine to Clarrie and Winnie that she was to be hospitalised. An operation was deemed necessary.

Clarrie wrote to Dorothy complaining that she had been 'rather long winded' [remiss] in writing to him. He had not realised anything was seriously wrong and hoped for a swift recovery. Referring to troubles of his own, Clarrie said his finger was getting better but he still had to look around for a job. 'Funds are low and I am not getting any younger, any work I now do I feel the effects of it afterwards.'¹

Winnie sent a letter from Woolgoolga on 30 September.

My dear Doro,

This evening I received Gwen's letter in which she tells me about your having to enter hospital for an operation —I do wish I could get down to be near you, but it seems quite impossible at the moment. I do hope you will make up your mind that you will be OK and you'll be a different woman afterwards. I have for a long time predicted it; you know that, so it does not come as a surprise to me. I know dear little Gwen will be near you and do everything she can for

you—still I do wish I could go. I shall be much more worried having to remain here when I could be of some service down there. However dear keep your courage up, and you'll be quite all right. Operations are not nice things, but after a couple of days the worst is over.

I am sorry you did not go to Dr. Brown Craig. He is the man I should have gone to, had I been you. [Lucy, the 19 year old daughter of Dr Brown Craig, a well-known Sydney society physician, had gone missing after leaving work in the centre of town in April 1940. This may have been the reason Dorothy did not consult him. The incident remains a mystery to this day.] However, have faith in your doctor and everything will be well with you ... Quite amused to hear that Stevo has turned up again. Take my advice and act sensibly. Gwen tells me how wonderfully kind he has been. Was so glad to know you were singing at the Prince Edward, would have written weeks ago had I known your address, I have not forgotten you in my prayers every night, and will continue praying for your speedy recovery.

I have been very worried thinking of our dear Reg over there in England and hearing so seldom any news. [Reg had joined the army and had travelled to England to train in radar at the School of Anti-Aircraft Defence at Watchet]. The war news is frightfully upsetting. How lucky you are to be here instead of over there. Now dear wishing you all the luck in the world and a quick recovery and keep your pecker up.

Your loving sister Winnie.²

Dorothy entered the Royal Hospital for Women in Paddington at 3.30pm on 3 October for the surgery. Her occupation was listed as singer, her religion Church of England, her address 32 Boyce Street Glebe Point (next door to where the family lived in 1925) and her age forty-five. Because no record number was written on her index card, the hospital medical records cannot be found. The back of the card listed Dorothy's valuables on admission: a [black] handbag, 1 gold ring, 1 silver ring and 1 silver bracelet. In addition her handbag contained a brand new pair of slate-coloured suede gloves and a cream rayon scarf. This handbag is still among her possessions; when I unclasped it a beautiful, heady perfume wafted out. Mrs Bell [Gwen] was given as the contact, with the Police Station to be rung at night time. Dorothy gave her permission for an anaesthetic to be administered.³

Something went badly wrong nearly two weeks after the operation. The time of Dorothy's death is recorded as 4.50am on 16 October. The cause of death was registered as: a) coronary occlusion b) acute cardiac failure. Winnie, Clarrie and Gwen were in shock. For Winnie, a deep regret, and maybe even guilt, at not having been with Dorothy in the hospital would have prevailed.

The death notice appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 17 October, the day after she died. Again, her age is listed incorrectly.

RUDDER. October 16, 1940, at the Royal Hospital for Women, Paddington, Dorothy Armitage Rudder, beloved daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rudder, of Woolgoolga and sister of Clarrie and Winnie (suddenly), aged 45 years.⁴

Dorothy's funeral was held on this day. The speed with which she was buried at South Head Cemetery may be considered unusual in Christian burial today but a scan of the day's death notices indicates this was not uncommon. Back in 1899, her grandmother Mary Ann Rudder, who died on 11 November, was also interred the next day. It did not allow much time for mid-north coast relatives and friends to attend.

RUDDER—The Relatives and Friends of the late DOROTHY ARMITAGE RUDDER are invited to attend her Funeral; to leave the Private Chapel of Motor Funeral's Limited 30 City Road city THIS AFTERNOON after a service commencing at 3.15 o'clock for the South Head Cemetery.⁵



South Head Cemetery Sydney where Dorothy and Alice Rudder are buried together in an unmarked grave, right.

The South Head Cemetery is in a special setting overlooking the ocean, which is so appropriate given Dorothy's love of the sea. Her mother Alice is also buried in the same plot. The family could not afford to pay for a headstone so to this day the spot is unmarked. An obituary appeared in many local newspapers including Taree's *Northern Champion* (below). Errors crept in. Dorothy was forty-seven and her birthplace was Kinchela, not Woolgoolga.

OBITUARY

MISS DOROTHY RUDDER

The death occurred in the early hours of Wednesday morning, at the Parramatta Hospital, of Miss Dorothy Rudder, at the age of 48 years. Deceased recently underwent an operation, which appeared to be successful, but she suffered a relapse on Tuesday night and died shortly afterwards. The late Miss Rudder, was a well-known soprano singer, and had recently returned from England, where she sang in opera at Covent Garden. Just before entering the Parramatta Hospital, Miss Rudder was under contract to a prominent Sydney theatre. The deceased was well known in Taree, where she had taken part in several concerts. She was born at Woolgoolga, and when her talent for singing was noticed she was sent to Sydney, where she underwent special training for many years. Before going to London, Miss Rudder took the leading part in several large concerts in Sydney. She returned to Australia when war broke out.⁶



Reg Blanch in his Indian outfit 1952.

For Winnie, the pain of losing Dorothy continued over the years. The sisters, although so different in personality, were very close. Winnie was found at a later time looking

through the contents of the suitcase, weeping over the premature deaths of her brother and sister and maybe the passing of her parents too. Gwen's son Reg Blanch told me a poignant childhood story regarding a sea chest containing some of Dorothy's possessions. One day he found Dorothy's stage makeup in the chest, painted his face, dressed up as an Indian and proceeded to scare the neighbours. Winnie hit the roof, ordered him to clean up and then burned some of Dorothy's letters, the remaining greasepaint and some of her dresses.

Winnie wrote a letter to the *Daily Examiner* in 1953 which provided a useful summary of Dorothy's career.

Noted Singer

Sir. - having read in Friday's "Examiner," an account of a meeting held recently in Woolgoolga for the purpose of forming a "Musical Activities Group" my late sister Miss Dorothy Rudder was mentioned as having sung at Covent Garden Grand Opera House London.

This is correct. My sister had contracts extending over two and a half years, during which time 16 different operas were produced under the conductorship of the late Louis Weingortner and Sir Thomas Beecham, and sung in English, German and Italian.

The outbreak of World War II closed down the opera house, as well as all other theatres.

The latter statement regarding my sister's anticipated tour of China with an opera company was quite erroneous, and I wish to correct this. She did however, some years previously make an extensive 12 months tour of China, India, Federated Malay States and Straits Settlement with a first class concert company, which was formed in Sydney.

Previous to this my sister had sung in every capital city of the Commonwealth and had also toured New Zealand on several engagements of six months duration with the late Sir Benjamin Fuller's Company. She had also played principal girl in J.C. Williamson's "Forty Thieves" pantomime in Sydney, and when that lovely musical comedy "The Student Prince" was produced in Sydney at the Empire Theatre (now used as a picture theatre), my sister was chosen to understudy the American leading lady Elise Gergeley as

“Kathie” and was given the opportunity of playing the role at two performances.

After my sister’s return from England she secured contracts with Hoyts Theatres Ltd., and was singing twice daily, matinees and evenings, at Prince Edward Theatre up to the time of her passing.

It may be of interest to add that Dorothy Rudder was the first soprano to broadcast in this country, being on the very first programme to be put over the air ...

Winifred Wallace⁷

Over the years the once strong connection to the mid-north coast diminished. Arthur and Winnie Wallace both died in Sydney; Arthur in 1961 aged eighty-two (F.J.’s second wife Annie also died in 1961), with Winnie passing the following year at seventy-two. Gwen Blanch died in 1963 at age fifty-one. They are all buried at Sydney’s Woronora Cemetery. In 1964 Clarrie, the last of the four Rudder siblings, died in Grafton aged eighty. Reg Wallace settled in Melbourne with his wife Thelma nee Caithness, dying aged seventy-one in 1982. A love of music continued to be a strong thread in the family. Reg had a fine bass baritone voice. He loved singing so much that on the day of his death, against doctor’s orders, he attended choir practice at his local church.

Chapter Twenty-nine

Vale Dainty Diva



What a wee part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself ... The mass of him is hidden—it and its volcanic fires that toss and boil, and never rest, night or day and they are not written, and cannot be written. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of a man—the biography of the man himself cannot be written. ~ Mark Twain¹

Despite travelling through many hands, the treasures inside the battered suitcase have survived to reveal many clues to a captivating life.

Dorothy met and shared the stage with some of the great performers of the era, both in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom but did not achieve the celebrity of singers such as Gladys Moncrieff or Joan Hammond. But how is stardom or a successful life to be defined? Parallels can be found between Enoch William Rudder and his great-granddaughter. Both come across as restless and adventurous. Both had great talents but did not achieve lasting fame or fortune.

Looking back on someone else's life has its limitations as we can only draw conclusions from the materials presented before us through the filter of our own perspective, education and life experiences. Those conclusions may not be accurate. So much will never be revealed, including their regrets.

And who is to judge if an ancestor has lived up to their potential or not? They played the hand they were dealt and made their choices. Enoch Rudder could have

been more aggressive in pursuing great wealth during the gold rushes; F.J. Rudder missed out by eight days on claiming a tin mining lease that would have netted him a £3,500 fortune. Dorothy could have become the wife of an influential movie man or English aristocrat or sought more leading stage roles or chosen a more compatible husband. But to talk about what might have been if they had taken another path is a luxury gained in retrospect.

Exploring her story leaves many questions unanswered. How and why did Dorothy make the life choices she did? She certainly had the courage of her own convictions and followed her own star. The momentous events of the era such as the Great Depression and the two World Wars impacted on Dorothy's life, but this is only part of the story.

From humble beginnings singing at her school concert at age five, a remarkably resilient career in the theatre was created. Dorothy's drive to perform endured for over forty years, no matter what obstacles life threw her way. With great courage she tried her luck on the London stage in her mid-forties, even though the experience turned out to be more glitter than gold. Verdi Schwinghammer stated she was one of only sixteen Australians to have sung at Covent Garden until the mid-1950s. That in itself is an impressive achievement.

Although Dorothy continued to appear on stage until her death, she did not 'orchestrate' her career. She was a survivor and a networker who made her own way in show business without direct managerial support; sometimes celebrated, many times not. She had great perseverance and persistence. Shortage of funds was often an issue and she was not averse to receiving tokens of admiration and career assistance from both men and women along the way, and wrote quite openly about it to Winnie.

Dorothy was dainty, petite and glamorous. Clothes and appearance were important to her, and she had an extensive wardrobe. Going against the fashion trend, she maintained her beautiful long hair over her lifetime. Dorothy was photogenic, with portraits regularly taken (at some expense) by prestigious studios such as Talma. She tried to give the appearance of being younger than she was, and was even using photographs taken in 1923 when she went to London years later. She was also a person who liked to relax at the beach in her bathers and go camping.

By necessity Dorothy had a foothold in different aspects of the stage. Sydney was her theatrical base, as it was for many other singers, but the metropolis could not support performers working there exclusively year after year. In addition no permanent

Australian opera company had been established. Maybe this approach worked against her, as she did not concentrate on one particular aspect of the business. In Australia an artist needed to be versatile as opportunities in a particular specialty were limited. Nonetheless, she gave the impression that she always saw herself primarily as a lyric soprano and concert artiste. Even allowing for embellishment in many newspaper reviews, she was undoubtedly the possessor of an excellent soprano voice. To date, the one film she appeared in, George Marlow's *Driving a Girl to Destruction*, is a lost film and searches for a recording of her voice have drawn a blank but I am still hopeful that one day a record will turn up.

Dorothy had no theatrical profile at all in Melbourne, an important city for the arts, or in Perth, even though some promotional material stated she had performed in every capital city of Australia, and Winnie confirmed this information. The only coverage she received in Melbourne newspapers concerned a few radio broadcast listings and her conjugal rights case, although she may have appeared in Melbourne during the Fuller opera season. This left me puzzled. And although she worked with a number of American performers later in her career, and Cecil Mason had visited Los Angeles, she did not explore the myriad opportunities America could have offered. England, the mother country of her intrepid ancestors, was the focus of her ambitions.

Dorothy had a striking stage presence, was aware of her beauty and presented a diva image, if her stunning studio photographs are any indication. When comparing her image to a musical comedy star such as Wynn Richmond from *Sunny*, her look was not as vivacious or sparkling. She portrayed a more self-conscious style more in keeping with her grand opera ambitions. Although some degree of self-involvement or narcissism is par for the course for a successful stage artiste she did not act out the prima donna role very often in her professional life. Even though she played lead roles in variety theatre and pantomime and often starred in her own concerts, she was a big fish in a small pond. Her role was often a secondary one as part of a troupe or chorus which limited any prima donna-like behaviour.

That said Dorothy could be feisty and mercurial. She took control of the courtroom with her humorous antics and gave a notoriously tough solicitor as good as he got. Her sensational and somewhat confusing restitution of conjugal rights and divorce cases helped to sell newspapers in the 1920s, and derailed her career for a time but gives us a chance to understand more about Dorothy's personality. Her appearances in Supreme Court turned out to be her most significant diva turns.

Clichés regarding attitudes to women in Australian society do not marry up with the reality of Dorothy's experience. She was not a black sheep because she pursued a life on the stage (or had become a divorced woman). Female performers in Australia, including singers, came from all levels of society, from the NSW Premier's daughter down. These women were often the objects of admiration, not condemnation. That said many parents did not want their daughters to pursue the theatrical life, especially as a chorus girl. F.J. and Alice supported Dorothy's career, paying a considerable amount of money for her to train as a singer. Throughout her life she maintained close ties with her family and community; in return they showed great pride and enjoyment in her achievements. Having the Rudder name and Kempsey pioneering background also gave Dorothy social cachet but her branch of the family was not as wealthy as many other branches.

She was a loyal friend. Performers she had met early in her career, including W.J. Grieves, Marsh Little and Grace Saville, who all had careers of longevity, became affectionate lifelong comrades, along with schoolteacher Harry Barnes and family.

Dorothy's stage career was unusual to some extent. Women performers who had careers of great duration were often born into theatrical families, married to a fellow performer (sometimes in a 'lavender' marriage to cover up their true sexual preferences) or like Joan Hammond, had a female companion. Marriage and children often put an end to a woman's professional life, but Dorothy's marriage to Len Smith was just a short-term detour. Dorothy likely shared a sense of camaraderie with her theatrical colleagues, many of whom were entangled in their own divorce, employment and financial dramas.

Today Dorothy is largely unacknowledged as an Australian pioneer in radio and on the stage, together with hundreds of other performers in this ephemeral and insecure profession. The grass had now grown over her unmarked grave but her achievements deserve to be recognised.

If Dorothy was to have a headstone in future, may I suggest her epitaph?

Dorothy Rudder was a notable Australian lyric soprano. She had a beautiful voice and knew how to use it.

Notes

The spelling of words in original documents, and the use of punctuation, has been left as the writers wrote them.

All photographs and documents are from the Wallace Family Collection except as indicated.

The content of this book contains some words and terms which are considered inappropriate or offensive today. They reflect the language and attitudes common to the period and need to be read in their historical context.

Abbreviations

NFSA National Film and Sound Archive

NLA National Library of Australia

NSW New South Wales

NZ New Zealand

SMH Sydney Morning Herald

Australian Currency conversion. Decimal currency was introduced in 1966.

One penny = approx. 9 cents

Sixpence = 5 cents

One shilling = twelve pennies = ten cents

Ten shillings = one dollar

One pound = two dollars

One guinea = one pound and one shilling = two dollars, ten cents.

Revue, Vaudeville and Revusical

Revue: a mixture of satire, songs, dance and sketches featuring a strong comedy element and a unifying theme. The performers appear on stage together often in a finale. There is a backing chorus, with a compere and producer and a structure of topical and local sketches and parodies.

Vaudeville: a selection of unrelated individual specialty acts presented one after the other on the same bill, without a compere, chorus girls or a final set piece. The variety of acts is unlimited—anything from vocalists, comedians, jazz bands, animal acts, acrobats to magicians and elocutionists. In the 1920s in Sydney, the Tivoli Theatre presented vaudeville while Fullers National Theatre offered a mixture of vaudeville and revue.

On the Australian Variety Theatre Archive (AVTA) website, theatre researcher and academic Dr Clay Djubal* defines the **Revusical** as a one act musical comedy with generic precedents in revue, musical comedy, American burlesque and minstrel farce. ‘It is very possibly the only theatrical genre ever to originate out of Australia’, with the term used to describe ‘Australian-

produced works as early as 1915, almost a decade and a half before a production of this type has been identified anywhere else in the world.’

The standard format of an Australian revusical was a troupe of around six to eight actors led by two comedians and a female chorus of six. The productions were staged as the second-half entertainment of a vaudeville bill (with the troupe not involved in the first half), and lasted somewhere between 40 to 60 minutes. Although the stories were dramatically organised, they were nevertheless quite simple and unsophisticated in relation to plays or the more extended musical-comedy genre. These productions were also heavily reliant on improvised scenes—usually played out between the two lead comedians.’

Although the term **revusical** was used by the *Vanity Fair Company*, the show did not fully fit the AVTA definition. Performers alternated items on stage for the entire show, not just the second half as was usual for a revusical and there was no specific female chorus or ballet. They did, however, feature a playlette in the second half.

*Dr Djubal is a descendant of Sydney theatrical entrepreneur Harry Clay. Harry Clay’s daughter Essie Clay performed with Dorothy Rudder in the George Marlow 1911 melodramas.

J.C. Williamson Ltd and Fullers Theatres Ltd.

J.C. Williamson was the dominant commercial theatrical organisation in Australia, and at one stage the largest theatrical organisation in the world. Began as a merger in 1882 by actor/manager James Cassius Williamson, Arthur Garner and James Musgrove (the Triumvirate), the company controlled a chain of theatres in Australia and New Zealand. They presented melodrama, vaudeville, revue and opera and were known for large-scale productions and the importation of stars from overseas. In 1920 ‘The Firm’ amalgamated with competing management J. and N. Tait, eventually closed up shop in the mid-1970s. In the 1920s The Firm staged successful tours by such stars as Gladys Moncrieff, Oscar Asche, Josie Melville, the Vanbrugh-Boucicault Company and dancer Anna Pavlova. The Firm took over the Tivoli Circuit in 1924.

Founded as John Fuller and Sons Ltd, Fullers Theatres Ltd (1914-1950) quickly became an antipodean vaudeville empire under the management of the Fuller brothers. Their motto was ‘Hilarity Without Vulgarity’. Fullers expanded into musical comedy in 1922 (with Hugh J. Ward), but was forced to convert most of its theatres into cinemas in the early 1930s. After the company assets were divided in 1934, Benjamin Fuller remained the company’s governing director, while also establishing Savoy Theatres and Carroll-Fuller Theatres with Garnett Carroll. In 1951 Hoyts Theatres acquired the picture interest of Fullers Theatres thereby bringing it to an end.

Although J.C. Williamson and Fullers dominated the scene, other important theatre managers and entrepreneurs included Harry Clay, Harry Rickards (Tivoli Theatres), J.C. Bain, George Marlow, Harry G. Musgrove, Ernest C. Rolls, Frank Neil, Hugh D. McIntosh, Hugh J. Ward and F.W. Thring.

Acknowledgements

To quote John Donne ‘No man is an island’. The same can be said of writers, especially when working on a biography for seven years.

Many people and organisations have had a hand in Dorothy Rudder’s story. Firstly, I would like to show appreciation to Theatre Heritage Australia for sharing *Dainty Diva* on their website.

Without the internet, our wonderful libraries and the work of earlier researchers, connecting the dots regarding the extended Rudder family, and investigating where Dorothy Rudder fitted into the picture, would have taken a lifetime. Trove, the National Library of Australia’s indispensable online resource, together with extensive records held by various state and national government bodies, made the research adventure not only shorter but consistently exciting and enjoyable.

A grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society was an early vote of confidence in my work and very much appreciated.

Also, in the early days of the research I was assisted by Lucy Spencer, the Collections Coordinator, Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne; Clay Djubal, whose Australian Variety Theatre Archive became an invaluable theatrical resource; Jenny Fewster—Project Manager at AusStage; the Mitchell Library staff at the State Library of New South Wales who assisted when I visited the library and ordered images for the book; David Gist—Assistant Curator, Photographs Section Australian War Museum and the War Records at the National Archives of Australia for World War 1 service records; The Macleay River Historical Society staff for their help during my visit to Kempsey; the State Records Authority New South Wales for birth and death certificates and the invaluable Smith v Smith court cases testimony; the staff at Sisters of Charity of Australia Congregational Archives who provided material regarding Madame Christian and the Garcia School of Music; Papers Past National Library of New Zealand for newspaper articles connected to Dorothy’s visit; Peter de Waal’s website *Unfit for Publication* for information on Julius Rudder’s childhood; the National Film and Sound for providing special images connected to Dorothy Rudder and Dean Cahill in the UK for rescuing her correspondence with William Boland and kindly sharing a copy with me.

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The Betts family provided important material relating to Dorothy’s maternal ancestors and Robyn Morley, a member of the extended Rudder/Salmon clan, created the family tree.

I am grateful to noted performing arts historian and author Frank Van Straten for his endorsement of *Dainty Diva*. His words of encouragement and the sharing of his knowledge meant a great deal to me.

I would especially like to thank my family and friends for their kindness and unstinting encouragement during the extended period of time I was at work on the book, with a special mention to the Rudder descendants and their loved ones—Denise, Keith, Che, Kylie, Bryn, Rowan and Tara Jepson and Nick Moratis. And without Reginald Blanch and Che Jepson the suitcase with its treasure trove would never have come my way. I am grateful to them for the temporary custody of this archive.

Finally, huge thanks go to my husband Fred Wallace. Due to his unwavering support Dorothy Rudder's fascinating story is finally out in the world.

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To come ...

Dorothy Rudder—Performance chronology

April, June & December 1899	School Children's/fundraiser Concerts. Dorothy's first stage appearance aged 5	Woolgoolga NSW
24 May 1905	Empire Day Celebrations Concert	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
9 June 1906	Opening of Methodist Church Concert	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
7 November 1906	Church of England King's Birthday Celebration	Woolgoolga NSW
23 August 1907	Grand Concert and Ball – Roman Catholic Church Building Fund	Woolgoolga NSW
5 May 1909	Social Evening for Rev. Mr Jones	Woolgoolga NSW
June 1909	School Children's Concert	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
14 June 1909	Concert and Athletic Display	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
3 July 1909	Play <i>Our Boys</i>	Woolgoolga NSW
November 1910	Lecture Life of Burns – musical items	Grafton NSW
10 December 1910	Fair and Concert for St Augustine's Church	Woolgoolga NSW
April - October 1911	George Marlow Dramatic Company. Plays included <i>The Bad Girl of the Family</i> , <i>Under Two Flags</i> , <i>Driving a Girl to Destruction</i> , <i>East Lynne</i> , <i>Her Wedding Day</i> . As Dorothy May	Adelphi Theatre Sydney from 10 April – late June. Theatre Royal Adelaide from 1 July. Regional tour of NSW and Queensland. Victoria Theatre Newcastle 12-25 Aug, Town Hall Maitland 29&30 Aug, Town Hall Armidale 31 Aug, Town Hall Warwick 1&2 Sept, Town Hall Ipswich 6 & 7 Sept, His Majesty's Theatre Brisbane 8-23 Sept, Theatre Royal Rockhampton 5 nights from 27 Sept, Theatre Royal Gympie 5 Oct, Town Hall Toowoomba 9-11 Oct, Tamworth 16-18 Oct.
25 June 1912	Concert	Garcia School of Music Salon Sydney
27 July 1912	Complimentary Concert for Dorothy Rudder	Woolgoolga NSW
31 July 1912	Grand Concert by Miss Dorothy Rudder	School of Arts Coffs Harbour NSW
6 August 1912	Concert (postponed due to inclement weather)	Garcia School of Music Salon Sydney
16 August 1912	Grand Concert	School of Arts Coffs Harbour NSW
10 September 1912	St Vincent's Hospital Ball featuring Garcia School students.	Sydney Town Hall
22 October 1912	Garcia School of Music Student Concert	Concordia Hall Sydney
5 December 1912	Concert	School of Arts Bathurst NSW
16 December 1912	Garcia School of Music Student Concert	Town Hall Sydney
19 December 1912	Vocal Recital. Included one-act play <i>In Honour Bound</i>	Belmore Hall Taree NSW
21 December 1912	Vocal Recital	Federal Hall Wingham NSW
23 January 1913	Grand Concert Recital	Good Templars Hall Kempsey NSW
14 February 1913	Concert	Woolgoolga NSW
26 February 1913	Concert (mentioned as second concert)	School of Arts Coffs Harbour NSW
5 March 1913	Methodist Church Circuit Fund Concert	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
14 March 1913	Concert	Lower Bucca NSW

24 April 1913	Garcia School of Music Student Concert	Concordia Hall Sydney
29 May 1913	Gertrude Corr Concert (Madame Christian's student)	YMCA Hall Sydney
2 & 4 June 1913	Hospital Benefits Concerts	Kempsey NSW
11 June 1913	Master Willie Houston's Recital	YMCA Hall Sydney
13 July 1913	Farewell Entertainment	Mrs Hill's residence Woolgoolga NSW
18 July 1913	Concert	School of Arts Woolgoolga NSW
10 April 1914	Concert	Repertory Theatre Sydney
21 April 1914	Madame Christian Concert	Garcia School of Music Sydney
29 April 1914	Concert for Catholic Parochial Funds	School Hall Pymble NSW
27 May 1914	Cymbert Horan Recital	St James Hall Sydney
24 December 1914	Christmas Concert	Theatre Royal Sydney
May 1915	Empire Day. Preparation of pupils for musical numbers	Woolgoolga NSW
25 April 1916	Passionist Fathers Fete - A Street in Cairo. Musical items	Sydney Town Hall
February 1917	Harry Collins Minstrel Company Concert. Amateur performers for patriotic and charitable causes	Yeronga and White City Brisbane
10 October 1917	Malini the Magician	Lennon's Hotel Brisbane
25 October 1917	Patriotic Recruiting Concert	Botanic Gardens Brisbane
31 October 1917	Liberty Loan Appeal	His Majesty's Theatre Brisbane
5 November 1917	Pro-conscription meeting - musical items	Exhibition Hall Brisbane
6 July 1918	The Quaker Girl. Repeat performance	Railway Institute Sydney
December 1918-June 1919	Edgar Warwick Vanity Fair Tour of the East. As Dorothy May	Left Sydney 14 December 1918. Performed (as Dorothy May) in Hong Kong (twice), Shanghai (twice), Tientsin, Peking, Canton, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Epoh, Penang, Bangalore, Madras, Calcutta. Arrived back in Singapore 26 June 1919.
24 January-20 February 1920	Lionel Walsh's The Better 'Ole Musical Comedy Company Theatre Tasmanian Tour. As Dorothy May	Theatre Royal Hobart 24-30 Jan (7 nights), National Theatre Launceston 31 Jan-4 Feb (4 nights), Devonport 5 Feb, Latrobe 6 Feb, Burnie Theatre Burnie 7 Feb, Central Hall Wynyard 9 Feb, Penguin 10 Feb, Ulverstone 11 Feb, Town Hall Sheffield 12 Feb, Deloraine 13 Feb, Longford 14 Feb, Lilydale 16 Feb, Derby 17 Feb, Braxholm 18 Feb, Mechanics Hall Scottsdale 19 Feb, Campbell Town 20 Feb.
26 June 1920	Welsh Concert for Miss Amy Adams	King's Hall Sydney
24 July-28 August 1920	The Sparklers. As Dorothy May	Victoria Theatre Newcastle NSW. With a break from 9-11 August to play at Kurri Kurri, Cessnock and Singleton NSW. Final night in Newcastle reviewed as Victoria Vaudeville on 28 August.
2, 4 & 6 Sept 1920	Dix & Baker Vaudeville	Victoria Theatre Newcastle NSW
13 September	Lashwood and De Car's Big Vaudeville &	Parsons' Hall Gosford NSW

1920	Revue Co. As Dorothy May	
16-21 September 1920	The Sparklers. As Dorothy May	Janson's Hall Singleton NSW 16-17 Sept, Armidale NSW 18 Sept, Town Hall Warwick Qld 21 Sept.
24 September 1920	Soldiers' Welcome Home Ball	Gundabidgee Theatre Gundagai NSW
27-28 September 1920	The Sparklers. Advertised as Dorothy May but did not appear due to illness.	Martoo's Olympia Ipswich Qld.
May 1921	Paying the Piper Film Screening. Vocalist, as Dorothy May	Haymarket Theatre Sydney
July 1921	Orange Lodge Concert. Quaint Songs	Wagga Wagga NSW
3 August-8 September 1921	Harry Borradales Sparklers. As Dorothy May	Elite Theatre Brisbane. Benefit held at the Diamantina Hospital 20 August
19 September-10 December 1921	Ideals of 1922 Costume Comedy Company Queensland Tour. As Dorothy May	Shire Hall Nambour 19 Oct, Town Hall Maryborough 23 & 24 Sept, Queen's Theatre Bundaberg 26 & 27 Sept, Star Theatre Mackay 6-8 Oct, Allies Theatre Bowen 11 & 12 Oct, Proserpine 13 Oct, Theatre Royal Charters Towers 17-19 Oct, Sutcliffe's Hall Gordonvale 26 Oct, Beatties Hall Babinda 27 Oct, Atherton 29 & 31 Oct, Herbeton 1 Nov, Mareeba 2 Nov, Hibernian Hall Cairns 3-5 Nov and 9 Nov, Chillagoe 8 Nov, School of Arts Mareeba 9 and 15 Nov, Hospital Benefit Cairns 16 Nov, Gordonvale 11 Nov, Theatre Royal Townsville 4 nights from 18-22 Nov, Theatre Royal Charters Towers 23-25 Nov, Allies Theatre Bowen 5 Dec, School of Arts Rockhampton 10, 12, 13 Dec.
29 January-4 February 1922	On the Sands revusical. As Dorothy May	Melba Theatre Haymarket Sydney
March 1922	The Purple Pierrots. Vaudeville. As Dorothy May	Union Theatres suburban theatre chain Sydney
October 1922 to March 1923	Walter George Sunshine Players. New Zealand Tour. As Dorothy May	Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, Fuller's New Zealand. Fuller's Opera House Auckland from 2 Oct 1922, His Majesty's Theatre Wellington from 23 Dec 1922, Fuller's Opera House Christchurch from 3 March 1923.
4 March 1923	Grand Concert. Stage Employees Sick and Benefit Society. As Dorothy May	Theatre Royal Christchurch New Zealand
24 May 1923	Rene Maxwell Party - musical items	The Cavalier Sydney
2 August 1923	Radio Demonstration Broadcast 'Ethereal Harmonies' to celebrate the inauguration of the Broadcasting Regulations.	WH Paling & Co Ltd Concert Hall Sydney
3 & 4 October 1923	Movie 'The Christian' Matinee performance Fundraiser for Sunset Cottage Homes - musical item	Kings Cross Theatre Sydney
11 & 18 October 1923	Palings Music Recital	St James Hall Sydney
8 November 1923	Palings Music Recital	Newcastle Central Hall NSW

22 December 1923-19 January 24	The Forty Thieves. Williamson/Musgrave Production. Principal Girl role	The Hippodrome Sydney
13 March 1924	Entertainment at the Wentworth Hotel. Musical items	Sydney NSW
20 September 1924	Commercial Travellers Association Dinner. Musical items	Sydney NSW
Unknown date 1924	Bertie (T.H.) Kelly concert	Beale's Studio Sydney
10 December 1926	Concert and farce. Musical items	Pampoolah Hall near Taree NSW
28 February-9 July 1927	Sunny. The opening show of the new theatre. One of the Peaches of the Ensemble. First listed as Dorothy May, then as Dorothy Rudder	Empire Theatre Sydney NSW
16 July-8 Oct 1927	The Student Prince. Understudy to Elise Gergely. Performed the lead role of Kathie on 3 and 6 September.	Empire Theatre Sydney
28 July - 8 October 1928	Fullers production F. Gayle Wyer's Band Box Revue	Fullers' Theatre Sydney & Majestic Theatre Newtown Sydney. How About Hanna? 28 July, The Country Boy 4-10 Aug, How About Hanna? 11-17 Aug (Dorothy did not appear), The Country Boy 18-24 Aug, Mixed Doubles 25-31 Aug, The Black Eagle 1-7 Sept, The Honeymoon Trail 8-15 Sept, Married Life 15-21 Sept, Lady Buccaneers 22-28 Sept, The Commercial Traveller 2-8 Oct.
13 December 1928	Concert for Lady Renwick Hospital Cot Fund	Methodist School Hall Taree NSW
March 1929	Clowns in Clover	Empire Theatre Sydney
Between 1927/1929	Mention of work (during divorce court case) with J.C. Williamson	
31 December 1930	Whoopee Carnival Party	Lennon's Hotel (Wintergarden Theatre) Brisbane
9 & 16 June 1931	Community Singing	St John's Hall Taree NSW
3 & 4 August 1931	Tableau and Ballet Concert	The Bower Taree NSW
5 September 1931	Concert for Visit of Bishop of Newcastle	St John's Hall Taree NSW
9 April-28 June 1932	J.C. Williamson Grand Imperial Opera. A Featured Australian Performer and chorus member Sydney season	Her Majesty's Theatre Sydney
23-28 May 1932	Town Topics. Norman Barrington's revue company	Grand Opera House Sydney
4-6 June 1932	Buck Up Company	Grand Opera House Sydney
10 July 1932	Sunday Night Concert	Victoria Theatre Newcastle NSW
24 July 1932	Special Concert	Regent Theatre Cessnock NSW
7 August 1932	Special Grand Concert Hamilton Citizens Band	Victoria Theatre Newcastle NSW
January 1933	Fundraiser for Trustees of the Pavilion	Woolgoolga NSW
30 May & 1 June 1933	Queen of Macleay Competition Grand Concerts	Smithtown Hall Smithtown and Rendezvous Theatre Kempsey NSW
18 July 1933	Recital	Saraton Theatre Grafton NSW

26 June 1934	Musicale in honour of Strella Wilson	Bellevue Hill Sydney
28 August 1934	Roland Foster Recital	Auditorium at David Jones Sydney
1934-35	Sir Benjamin Fuller Royal Grand Opera Company. Chorus member Sydney season	New Tivoli Theatre 22 December 1934 - 28 February 1935, possibly Newcastle season Victoria Theatre 1-4 March 1935 and Melbourne season His Majesty's Theatre 9 March -12 April 1935.
18 July 1936	Recital. Film shown 'Catherine the Great'	Saraton Theatre Grafton NSW
September 1936	Concert. Lismore Music Festival	Federalette Lismore NSW
September 1937	T. Arthur Russell's Sunday Star Shows. Dorothy Rudder performed as 'Anita, A Singer from Australia'	The Queens Hotel Westcliff-on-Sea Essex England.
1937	Masonic dinner. Australian baritone Wilfred Thomas and Dorothy were the only artists.	Odderino's Hotel London.
23 November 1937	Middlesex Hospital 43 rd Annual Variety Concert in aid of the cancer wing. Musical items	New Scala Theatre London
1938-1939	Grand Opera House Covent Garden, London and regional tours. Member of the chorus grand season 1938 and 1939, English provincial tour 1938. She signed the contract for the 1939 English tour due to commence 25 September, which was cancelled at the declaration of war with Germany.	2 May- -17 June 1938 <i>Der Ring Des Nibelungen, Lohengrin, Der Fliegende Hollander, Die Meistersinger, Fidelio, Die Zauberflote, Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail, Der Rosenkavalier, Elektra, Rigoletto, Tosca, and La Boheme</i> . Conductors Beecham, Furtwangler, Kleiber and Gui. Autumn Season 1938. Rehearsals commenced 12 September preliminary to 3 weeks season at Covent Garden and 5 weeks in the provinces. Repertoire included <i>Faust, Madame Butterfly, Cavalleria Rusticana</i> and <i>I Pagliacci</i> . 10-29 October 1938 <i>Opera in English</i> including <i>The Serf</i> . Grand Opera season 1939. Rehearsals from 27 March with the seven-week season commencing 1 May. Repertoire included <i>Tosca, La Traviata, Aida, Il Trovatore, The Bartered Bride, Otello, Don Giovanni</i> .
1938-1939	Carl Rosa Opera Company England	Specific dates or locations unknown
22 March 1940	Concert	Seaview Hall Woolgoolga NSW
April 23 1940	Movie 'Kicking the Moon Around'. Guest Artiste	Tasma Theatre Coffs Harbour NSW
31 August & 3 September 1940	Movie 'The Road to Singapore'. Guest Artiste	Prince Edward Theatre Sydney



2FC Empire Broadcasts 1927. Dorothy Rudder front row right.

Dorothy Rudder—Radio Broadcast Chronology

Wednesday 1 August 1923	Palings Concert Studio 2FC	Ethereal Harmonies To celebrate the inauguration of the broadcasting regulations Dorothy was third on the program singing 'Pipes of Pan' by Monckton. Maud Telfer, Marsh Little, baritone Clem. Q. Williams, violinist Master Tom Williams and contralto Myra Gillon also performed.
Thursday 26 June 1924	2FC	Concert Night. A popular concert by special arrangement with Beale and Co., Ltd., will be broadcast. 8.0: Farmer's Studio Orchestra will play Selection, "Samson and Delilah" (Saint-Saens), Soprano Soli (a) "Pipes of Pan" (Monckton), (b) "Se Saran Rose" (Arditi), Miss Dorothy Rudder. Broadcasting (1924, June 26). <i>Evening News</i> (Sydney, NSW: 1869 - 1931), p. 3. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article119976725
Thursday 10 July 1924	2FC Sydney	Lyric soprano a) "The Prayer from Tosca": b) "Musetta's Song" (from "Boheme"). Miss Dorothy Rudder. Broadcasting (1924, July 10). <i>Evening News</i> (Sydney, NSW: 1869 - 1931), p. 15. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article119979422
Thursday 24 July 1924	2FC Sydney	9.0: Dorothy Rudder soprano solos - (a) "Depuis de Jour": (b) "Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark." To-day's Broadcasting (1924, July 24). <i>The Sun</i> (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), p. 10 (Final Extra). http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222313144
Friday 15 August 1924	2FC Sydney	8.00: Farmer's Orchestra Selection, "La Boheme" (Puccini). Miss Dorothy Rudder, Soprano Solos (a) "Ave Maria" (Mascagni), with Violin obligato played by Mr. Tom Williams, (b) "Hush my Little One." Broadcasting. (1924, August 15). <i>SMH</i> , p. 4. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16158920

Friday 12 September 1924	2FC Sydney	Night Session Miss Dorothy Rudder, Soprano, "Micaela Aria" (Carmen), "Solveig's Song;" Miss Dorothy Rudder and Mr. John Robertson, Duets, (a) "Letter Duet," (b) "Dear Love of Mine." Broadcasting. (1924, September 12). <i>SMH</i> , p. 5. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16161078
Thursday 23 October 1924	2FC Sydney	9.5: From the Studio, Miss Dorothy Rudder will sing, "The Pipes of Pan," from "The Arcadians," and "The Bubble Song," from "High Jinks." 2F.C. Station Light Orchestra, Selection, "A Southern Maid" (Simson). Miss Dorothy Rudder and Mr. Noel Allen, Duet from "The Maid of the Mountains." Broadcasting. (1924, October 23). <i>SMH</i> , p. 6. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16181380
Monday 27 October 1924	2FC Sydney	8.45: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "One Dream of Love" (Westall Gordon), "Wake Up" (Montague Phillips). To-day's Broadcasting. (1924, October 27). <i>The Sun (Sydney, NSW)</i> , p. 10. (Final Extra). http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article223573430
Friday 31 October 1924	2FC Sydney	8.0: By arrangement with Beale and Company Limited. Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) Valse Song, "Beauty Sleep" ... "Se Saran Rose" (Arditi) b) "Hush My Little One" (Bevognani). To-day's Broadcasting. (1924, October 31). <i>The Sun (Sydney, NSW)</i> , p. 10 (Final Extra). http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article223574121
Friday 29 April 1927	2FC Sydney	3.13: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano): "As thro' the Street." 3.25. Miss Dorothy Rudder: "Wake Up." [She also sang at 4.30 pm.] Broadcasting. (1927, April 29). <i>SMH</i> , p. 6. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16387570
Monday 30 December 1929	2GB Sydney	8.30: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) – "The Wind's In the South" and "Sing, Sing, Blackbird" 9.50: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano): "Beauty Sleep" and "My Little Red Rose." Theosophical Station, Ltd. (1929, December 30). <i>SMH</i> , p. 5. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16613934
Monday 20 January 1930	2GB Sydney	8.28: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) - "Depuis le Jour" and "Love, I Have Won You" 9.47 - Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "Carmena," "A Dream Has Made Me Weep," and "Solveig's Song." Theosophical Station, Ltd. (1930, January 20). <i>SMH</i> , p. 7. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16619155
Friday 21 February 1930	2GB Sydney	8.40 & 9.40: Miss Dorothy Rudder soprano. <i>The Wireless Weekly</i> 21 February 1930, p.44
Sat 22 & Sun 23 February 1930	2GB Sydney	8.37: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "Hush, My Little One" and "Waltz Song from Tom Jones" 9.22: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "Prelude from A Cycle of Life", "Vale," and "Salaam." Theosophical Station, Ltd. (1930, February 22).

		<i>SMH</i> , p. 12. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16627801 Sydney-2GB. (1930, February 23). <i>Sunday Times</i> , p. 11. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article132062867
Thursday 27 February 1930	2GB Sydney	8.40: Miss Dorothy Rudder, soprano. 9.50: Miss Dorothy Rudder, soprano. 2GB Sydney. (1930, February 27). <i>Newcastle Morning Herald</i> , p. 10. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article133396049
Wednesday 12 March 1930	2GB Sydney	8.0: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) The Dream of Home and The Pipes of Pan are Calling 8.51: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) Down In the Forest and Comin' Thro' the Rye Station 2GB. (1930, March 12). <i>SMH</i> , p. 10. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16632557
Sunday 23 March 1930	2GB Sydney	Concert from the Savoy Theatre. 8.15 and 8.52: Dorothy Rudder (soprano) Broadcasting (1930, March 22). <i>The Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld.: 1872 - 1947)</i> , p. 20 (Second Edition). http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article184156736
Monday 24 March 1930	2GB Sydney	8.38: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) The Winds in the South and A Cossack Slumber Song 9.50: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) Dear Downcast Eyes and Venetian Boat Song. Station 2 GB. (1930, March 24). <i>SMH</i> , p. 7. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16636066
Saturday 5 April 1930	2GB Sydney	Concert from Adyar House, arranged by courtesy of Messrs. Suttons, Ltd. 8.15: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "Solveig's Song." and "Sing, Sing, Blackbird." 8.52: Miss Dorothy Rudder (soprano) "Ave Marla" (Mascagni), "Sylvella," and "My Heart's Desire." Station 2GB. (1930, April 5). <i>SMH</i> , p. 12. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16639295
Sunday 6 April 1930	2GB Sydney	Concert from Savoy Theatre, arranged by courtesy of Messrs. Suttons, Ltd. Today's Radio (1930, April 6). <i>The Sun</i> (Sydney, NSW : 1910-1954), p. 7.
Friday 19 December 1930	4QG Brisbane	9.35: Dorothy Rudder (soubrette) will entertain you. (1930, December 19). <i>Morning Bulletin</i> (Rockhampton, Qld: 1878-1954), p. 5. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article54685214
Wednesday 24 December 1930	4QG Brisbane	Christmas Eve entertainment. Christmas Eve! What a jovial and what a thrilling night! We will present a varied programme, and our hours of transmission will be lengthened so as to enable all listeners to make 1930 a real radio Christmas. Between eight and nine o'clock a special Spotlight Revue, produced by Frank T. Perrin will be presented. Then Canon D. J. Garland will tell you his personal experiences on a visit to Bethlehem. A studio programme, will be provided and afterwards dance music will be broadcast. The Federal Band and the

		Metro Male Quartette" will provide Christmas music until midnight and then we will change over to the St Stephen's Roman Catholic Cathedral to broadcast the midnight Mass. 9.35: Dorothy Rudder (soubrette) will entertain you. Wireless Programmes. (1930, December 24). <i>Cairns Post</i> (Qld: 1909-1954), p. 9. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41121961
Wednesday 31 December 1930	4QG Brisbane	Dorothy Rudder (soubrette) will entertain you. On the Air. (1930, December 25). <i>The Central Queensland Herald</i> (Rockhampton, Qld: 1930-1956), p. 52. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70276941
Thursday 1 January 1931	4QG Brisbane	8p.m. Dorothy Rudder (soprano), in selections from her repertoire: ... Dorothy Rudder (soprano), selected. Saturday. (1931, January 1). <i>The Central Queensland Herald</i> (Rockhampton, Qld: 1930-1956), p. 45. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70327457
Saturday 3 January 1931	4QG Brisbane	8.0: Sydney May's party – Dorothy Rudder (soprano), in selections from her repertoire ... Dorothy Rudder (soprano) selected. Broadcasting. Station 4QG. (1931, January 3). <i>The Brisbane Courier</i> (Qld: 1864-1933), p. 8. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article21656647 A newcomer to the station, Dorothy Rudder (soprano) who comes from 2FC with a wide singing reputation will be heard in selections from her repertoire. To-day's radio (1931, January 3). <i>Townsville Daily Bulletin</i> http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article61583326
Friday 18 May 1934	2BL Sydney	8.15: Well-known compositions of the master musicians, assisted by Ernest McKinley (tenor) and Dorothy Rudder (soprano). In the first half she sang two opera numbers, <i>Ernani</i>, <i>Ernani</i>, <i>Involimi</i> (Verdi), and <i>Depuis Le Jour</i> followed by three English numbers in the second half of the program – <i>Love I have Won You</i> (Ronald), Lohr's <i>My Little Red Rose</i> and <i>The Flutes of Arcady</i> (James). Radio Programmes of the Week. (1934, May 10). <i>The Queenslander</i> (Brisbane, Qld: 1866-1939), p. 49. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23335256

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