

ADA DELROY

James Bell and his adoptive sister Ada Delroy toured Australia for two years with Harry Rickards (1888-90), before undertaking a world tour with Baldwin's Butterfly Co. The pair returned to Australia in 1895 and soon afterwards established the Ada Delroy Co. The troupe toured the Antipodes and elsewhere until ca. 1909. Delroy was also a land speculator in the late 1890s.

The sister of English burlesque actress Marie Loftus, and the adoptive sister of comedian James Bell, Ada Delroy was born in Halifax, Yorkshire. Taught dancing by Bell she made her first ever stage appearance as Fatima in a professional production of *Bluebeard* (a feature being her "Cobra di Capello" dance). She and Bell first came to Australia in 1888 with Harry Rickards touring the country extensively for two years.

In 1890 Delroy and Bell joined Professor Baldwin's Butterfly Co for a world tour, travelling through the USA, Middle-East, Far East, China, Japan, South Africa and Europe for another two years. The pair returned to Australia in February 1895 under Rickards management, this time with Bell's wife, Alice (the "White Mahatma"). By then a specialist Serpentine dancer, Delroy was routinely billed as the world's greatest Terpsichorean artist. In June that year she and Bell established the Ada Delroy Co and initially set about touring Australia and New Zealand. In late 1897 the company undertook a two and a half years world tour, returning to Australia in mid-1900. The company then remained in the Antipodes until around 1909, with its principals also appearing with Harry Rickards, James Brennan and the Conrad Power Company. Delroy and Bell also married in 1908 following the death of Alice Bell the previous year. Delroy's last known performance is believed to have been with Carroll's Vaudeville Entertainment in Melbourne in 1915.



Source: State Library of South Australia

A keen cyclist, Delroy was often featured in cycling news during her Australian tours, and claimed to be the first lady cyclist in both Australia and Ireland. She also speculated in real estate in Perth in the mid to late-1890s, selling a parcel of land at Cottesloe known as the Ada Delroy Estate.

SEE ALSO

- [Ada Delroy Company](#)
- [James Bell](#)
- [Madame Bell](#)
- [Baldwin's Butterfly Co](#)

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. Advertising in *Brisbane Courier* on 3 April 1893 incorrectly named Ada Delroy as appearing at the Theatre Royal, Brisbane, when the artist was in fact Ada Devonport (2)



Age 30 Sept. (1939), 6.

CYCLING.

Miss Ada Delroy, of the Tivoli Company, besides her many other accomplishments, is an artist on a bicycle. In England, in company with her brother, Mr. Bell, she has frequently ridden long distances on the roads. From Birmingham to Coventry, for instance, they covered the 18 miles in one hour and ten minutes, and also did the 117 miles between London and Birmingham in 11½ hours. The machines belonging to Miss Delroy and Mr. Bell were released from the Customs yesterday morning, and the visitors took a spin on them later in the day. The bike that Miss Delroy rides was specially made by Foster, of Birmingham, for the Stanley Show, in London, and being afterwards sent to Dublin also gained first honors there. It was then presented to Miss Delroy, who values it accordingly.

Advertiser (Adelaide) 7 May (1895), 6.

ADA DELROY ESTATE, COTTESLOE.

THURSDAY, 8th OCTOBER, 1896.

At 8 O'Clock.

At the MADRID RESTAURANT.

High-street, Fremantle.

33 **SPLENDID VILLA SITES.** 33

HARRY WILSON and Co., in conjunction with Fremantle and Suburban Agency Company, has received instructions to sell as above,

THE ADA DELROY ESTATE,

Comprising—33 Residential blocks, in close proximity to Cottesloe Beach, with a fine ocean view. This valuable estate is being placed on the market previous to the departure of the Delroy Company to New Zealand. It is one of the most attractive residential sites ever placed on the market. It is subdivided into large blocks, suitable for garden purposes, with frontages to wide streets, and within a few minutes' walk of the Railway Station.

Terms: £5 cash, balance 2, 4, 6 and 8 months without interest. Plans and full particulars on application. 2326

Daily News (Perth) 3 Oct. (1896), 5.

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

- 1888:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Adel; 28 Apr - * > New English Comedy & Specialty Co, first season back in Australia) ► HARRY RICKARDS/COGILL BROS (St Geo's Hall, Melb; 7 July - 14 Sept. > Cogill Bros Minstrel & Burlesque Co/ Rickards' New English Comedy & Specialty Co) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Gaiety Th, Bris; 20 Oct. - * > Rickards' New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (Gaiety Th, Bris; 27 Oct. - * > Rickards' New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (New Haymarket Music Hall, Syd; 19 Nov - 31 Dec. > Rickards' New English Comedy & Specialty Co) •
- 1889:** HARRY RICKARDS (New Haymarket Music Hall, Syd; 1-6 Jan. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) ► COOGEE AQUARIUM (Coogee Palace Aquarium, Syd; 19 Jan. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co – afternoon concert) ► (Adelphi Hall, West Maitland; 4-6 Feb. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (Mechanics Institute, Singleton; 7 Feb. - * > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (Gaiety Th, Bris; 18 Feb. - * > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (S of A, Rockhampton; 20-26 Mar. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (S of A, Charters Towers, ca. 13 Apr. - * > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (St Geo's Hall, Melb; 8 June - 2 Aug. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • (Garner's Rooms, Adel; 5 Aug. - * > New English Comedy & Specialty Co) • n/e (Criterion Th, Syd; 25 Dec. > Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert produced by John Solomon) ► (S of A, Syd; 26-31 Dec. - * > New English & Irish Comedy Co) ► COOGEE AQUARIUM (Coogee Palace Aquarium, Syd; 26 Dec. > New English Comedy & Specialty Co - afternoon concert)
- 1890:** HARRY RICKARDS (S of A, Syd; 1 Jan. - 17 Feb.) ► COOGEE AQUARIUM (Coogee Palace Aquarium, Syd; 3, 4, 11, and 15 Jan. > New English & Irish Comedy Co) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Gaiety Th, Bris; 21 Feb. - * > New English & Irish Comedy Co) ► COOGEE AQUARIUM (Coogee Palace Aquarium, Syd; 22 Mar. > New English & Irish Comedy Co - afternoon concert) • (Gaiety Th, Melb; 5 Apr. - 2 May > New English & Irish Comedy Co) ► COGILL BROS (St Geo's Hall, Melb; 3-27 > New English & Irish Comedy Co - with Cogill Brothers Minstrels) ► HARRY RICKARDS (St Geo's Hall, Melb; 28 May - 13 June > New English & Irish Comedy Co) ► S.S. BALDWIN (St Geo's Hall, Perth; 14 July - * > Prof Baldwin's Butterfly Co) • (Prof Baldwin's Butterfly Co world tour; July - Dec.)

S T. G E O R G E ' S H A L L
 Lessees and Managers Cogill Bros.
 The House of Refinement.

TO-NIGHT (SATURDAY, JULY 7)

OUR 50th WEEK.

The Event of the Season.
TWO GREAT SHOWS IN ONE—
COGILL BROS.'
MINSTREL and BURLESQUE COMPANY
 comprising the following Artists.

Geo. A. Jones	All Holland
J. R. Wastley	Chas. J. Lewis
Miss Ada Clements	Miss Tilly Lake
Miss Follie Robertson	Miss Alice Davenport
Miss A. Egan	Miss G. Browne
W. J. Chatley	Miss Mina Hogarth
	Prof. P. W. Rhodes.

Not Forgetting
 The
PEOPLE'S FAVOURITES,
 Chas. W. | COGILL'S BROS. | Harry P.
 And
Mr. HARRY RICKARDS'S
NEW COMEDY and SPECIALTY COMPANY
 (First appearance in Melbourne.)

Mr. RICKARDS'S COMPANY
 Consists of
12 GREAT ARTISTS.

William Woodhead	Miss Provo
Fred Davys	James Bell
Miss Ada Deiry	Miss Katie St. Lawrence
Miss Georgie Levee	Miss Marion Constance
	Miss Kate Leete.

And Yours to Command,
HARRY RICKARDS,
EVERY ITEM in the PROGRAMME ENTIRELY
NEW to MELBOURNE.

Argus 7 July (1888), 20.

NB Alroy and James Bell completed their engagement with Harry Rickards at the end of the St George's Hall (Melb) season.

1891: S.S BALDWIN (Prof Baldwin's Butterfly Co world tour; Jan. - Dec.)

NB: In a letter to several Australian newspapers, including the *Daily News* (Perth) dated 16 February 1892, S. S. Baldwin records that his company's world tour, which began in Melbourne in July, to that date had comprised: West Australia, Ceylon, Malta, Gibraltar, Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli, Arabia, Egypt, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, the isle of St Helens, Madeira and the Canary Islands, South Africa (aka Cape Colony), Transvaal Republic, Sechuana Land, Orange Free State, Natal, Mauritius, Madagascar, India, Burma, Siam, Singapore (aka Straits Settlement), China (incl. Shanghai), Japan and a four weeks tour of the USA (11 states) and part of Canada (17 May 1892, 2).

1892: PROFESSOR BALDWIN (Baldwin Butterfly Co world tour; Jan. - ca. Aug.)

NB: In the 1892 letter dated 16 February, S. S. Baldwin further records that he was leaving Japan for Canada on 7 March and intended to undertake another tour in that country followed by the USA, before returning to England in August (17 May 1892, 2).

O P E R A H O U S E

Sole Lessee and Manager .. Mr. Harry Rickards.

EMPHATIC	Of Mr.	SUCCESS
EMPHATIC	HARRY RICKARDS'	SUCCESS
EMPHATIC	NEW TIVOLI	SUCCESS
EMPHATIC	MINSTREL and	SUCCESS
EMPHATIC	SPECIALTY COMPANY.	SUCCESS

MANAGERIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

Mr. Rickards takes this opportunity of thanking the amusement-loving public for the very liberal patronage (despite the intense heat) accorded to himself and company during the past week, and has much pleasure in announcing, as the first of the forthcoming novelties, the engagement and reappearance, after an absence of five years, of the charming soubrette actress and serpentine dancer,
Miss ADA DELROY,
 And the versatile Comedian,
Mr. JAMES BELL,
 Just arrived from Europe per R.M.S.S. Cuzco, after a tour of the world, and who, it will be remembered, were such a pronounced success during a former season,
 Under Mr. RICKARDS'S Management.

Argus 16 Feb. (1895), 12.

- 1895:** HARRY RICKARDS (Op House, Melb; 16 Feb. - * > debut return Australian appearance) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; 27 Apr. - 21 June) ► ADA DELROY (Mechanic's Hall, Singleton; 27 June > Ada Delroy Co) • (Warwick TH, 3-5 Aug. > Ada Delroy Co) • (Gaiety Th, Bris; 10 Aug. - * > Ada Delroy Co) • Tours Australia through until 31 Dec. – with seasons in regional NSW (incl. Bathurst, Dubbo, etc) Launceston, and regional Tasmania
- 1896:** ADA DELROY (Australian tour continued. incl. Regional Tasmania, Hobart, regional South Australia, regional NSW (incl. Broken Hill), Adelaide, Western Australia (incl. Perth and Fremantle)
- NB 1:** Perth TH season begins 4 Sept.
- NB 2:** New Zealand tour; ca. Nov. - Dec.*)
- NB 3:** New Zealand tour incl. (Dunedin; ca. Nov.) • (Milton; ca. Nov.)
- 1897:** DELROY-BEL (New Zealand tour; 1 Jan - Apr.*) • (Newcastle, NSW; ca. May*) • (North Queensland tour; ca. May - *) ► (Th Royal, Perth; 23 Oct. - * > Ada Delroy Co) • (Th Royal, Bris; 26 June - 3 July > Ada Delroy Co) • (Jones & Lawrence, Lessees - Th Royal, Perth; 23-29 Oct. - * > farewell Australian season)
- NB:** New Zealand tour incl. (Th Royal, Christchurch; ca. Jan.)
- NB:** North Queensland tour incl. (Th Royal, Charters Towers, 26 May - *) • (Rockhampton; ca. 6 June)
- 1899:** DELROY-BELL n/e (South Africa; ca. Feb/Mar.*)
- 1900:** DELROY-BELL n/e (Hong Kong TH; 6-11 Apr.) ► (Zorrilla Grand Opera House, Manila, Philippines; ca. June/July * > 15 nights from the end of June) ► (North Queensland tour; ca. July-Aug.)
- NB 1:** North Queensland tour incl. Thursday Island (late July) • (Cairns; 30 July - *)
- NB 2:** Reportedly Delroys' fourth world tour. The MP (Cairns) 6 July records had by then played Vancouver, Coolgardie, Hong Kong, Dunedin, Mandalay, Malta, Kimberley, Hobart, Yokohama, Bulawayo, Salisbury, Peshawur and nearly every part of the inhabited globe (3).
- 1901:** DELROY-BELL (Mechanics Hall, Camperdown, Vic; 19 Apr. - *)
- 1902:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Bris; 31 Mar. - * > Delroy and Bell only) • (Th Royal, Perth; 18 Oct. - * > Delroy and Bell only)
- 1904:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Hobart; 9 Dec. - * > Delroy and Bell only)
- 1907:** DELROY-BELL (Lse - Jack Harris > Th Royal, Broken Hill; 30 Mar. - 5 Apr.)
- 1908:** JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; 5 Dec. - *)



Theatre Royal, Hobart 1904

Source: State Library of Tasmania