

DELAVALE BROTHERS [2]

Ern Delavale and Ern Vockler

(1917-1920) Following the end of the popular Delavale and Gilbert partnership (ca. 1909-1916), Ern Delavale formed the Delavale Brothers¹ with his brother-in-law Ern Vockler (later Ike Delavale). The pair, along with Lily Vockler (wife and sister respectively) toured for the Fullers and Tivoli firms during the later war years, albeit with a break in late-1917 when Ern Delavale was hospitalised. They also spent time on the Harry Clay and Dix-Baker circuits in New South Wales and with Peter Brooks in Perth before Ern Vockler teamed up with his new partner/wife Elvie Stagpoole. Ern Delavale and Lily Vockler subsequently formed their own act. The Delavale Brothers vaudeville routines often included Charlie Chaplin impersonations along with miscellaneous comedy sketches and patter.

Ern Delavale (aka Ernest Harris) first came to the attention of Australian and New Zealand variety audiences through his comedy sketch partnership with Will Gilbert (1908-1916). After returning to Australia from a tour of India in July 1914, Delavale was forced to work without his partner for several months when Gilbert suffered a serious bout of acute sciatica and rheumatism. While waiting for Will Gilbert to recover he briefly formed a partnership with [Arthur Tauchert](#) which they presented exclusively on [Harry Clay's](#) circuit. Although they announced that they would continue as a regular team, Gilbert's recovery by early to mid-1915 meant that this plan was shelved. Delavale and Gilbert's return only lasted around a year, however.

Although Delavale had been touring with his wife Lily Vockler since at least 1908,² they each worked independently in vaudeville, appearing together only as members of an ensemble. The opening left by Gilbert was probably an opportune time for the pair to begin presenting their own double-act but instead Delavale chose to partner his brother-in-law Ernie Vockler. With both performers sharing the same given name, their billing as the Delavale Brothers, meant that the younger, less experienced and arguably less well-known Vockler eventually began using his middle name (Charles) in order to differentiate themselves with audiences and critics. By 1919 he was largely known as Charles Delavale, dropping the Vockler surname altogether. From 1923 onwards he was known as Ike Delavale.



Australian Variety 2 Nov. (1917), n. pag.

OLYMPIA
At 8 TO-NIGHT At 8
NEW STAR VAUDEVILLE

FIRST APPEARANCE OF
THE DELAVALES
COMEDY MERCHANTS.
In their latest funniness,
Chaplinitts.
ALSO
MISS LILY VOCKLER,
A SINGER OF PLEASING SONGS.

Charters Towers
Northern Miner 4 May (1918), 4.

Ern Delavale and Ern Vockler first came together as the Delavale Brothers while appearing with the Empire Comedy Company in Wollongong, New South Wales in early February 1917. The pair went on to tour together, in company with Lily Vockler, for almost four years and possibly came close to matching the Delavale and Gilbert partnership in terms of popularity. The only break during their time together came in late-1917 when Ern Delavale was hospitalised in Melbourne with an undisclosed illness. His recuperation appears to have taken several months.

The Delavale Brothers (aka Brothers Delavale) secured engagements around Australia and New Zealand for a number of leading firms - notably [Fullers' Theatres](#) (including New Zealand tours in 1917 and 1918/1919), [Harry Clay](#) (Sydney), [Harry Rickards Tivoli Theatres](#), [Birch and Carroll](#) (Queensland), [Dix-Baker](#) (Newcastle) and [Peter Brooks](#) (Perth). Their act involved a range of routines that involved sketch comedy, patter, and songs and dance. Often the sketches were built around the Chaplin impersonations that Ern Vockler had been performing since 1913.

A brief report on their 1917 New Zealand tour, published in *Australian Variety*, records that the Delavale Brothers had come in for some fine notices throughout the Fullers' Dominion circuit:

¹ Trick cyclists Bert and Harry Delavale toured as the Delavale Brothers around 1900 to 1902. See [Bert Delavale](#) entry for further details.

² The couple married in 1908.

They have been a laughing hit on every bill. Ern Vockler's Chaplin stunt is said to be easily the best ever seen in the Dominion. The boys have a new advertising scheme which they will put over shortly.³

The following year Charters Towers' *Northern Miner* published a preview of their headline appearance at the Olympia Theatre in similarly glowing terms:⁴

Tonight, at the Olympia, fresh super attractions will be presented including two star vaudeville acts. The Delavale Brothers get no end of laughs with their cross-fire patter, one of them appearing in a Charlie Chaplin make-up. He gives a wonderful reproduction of the funniosities that have made the inimitable comedian world famous, his eccentric dancing being superb. Well-selected and pleasing are Mr [Ern] Delavale's songs, while the combination is enhanced by the pleasing songs rendered by Miss Lily Vockler.⁵

During the same tour the *Cairn's Post* provided some additional insight into the Delavales' Chaplin act: 'They will appear at the Palace in a clever up-to-date novelty styled "Chaplinitis," the latest impersonation of Chaplin in "Charlie from Shanghai," a naval absurdity of the most mirth-making description.⁶

The years 1918 and 1919 saw the Delavales and Lily Vockler working largely under contract to the Fullers. Their first known engagement following Ern Delavale's illness was in Brisbane at the Empire Theatre. They followed this with a six months tour of regional Queensland playing support to films at various independent cinemas. Although the organiser of this tour has not yet been confirmed it may have been undertaken in association with either the Fullers or Birch and Carroll. It has been established, for example, that they played several Birch and Carroll venues during that time. After a brief return to Sydney, where they appeared on [Jack Landow's](#) circuit, the trio returned to Brisbane for a short season before sailing to Auckland where they opened their New Zealand account at the Opera House in a minstrel company. Interestingly Lily Vockler received more attention in the Fullers advertisements than her husband and brother for much of the remainder of the year, being accorded a prominent position in the olio section. The two Ern's appeared as endmen. They all remained in New Zealand until August 1919.

AMUSEMENTS

SHAFTESBURY	THEATRE.

Direction Peter Brooks.

Opening SATURDAY, MAY 29, and every evening at 8 p.m.

15	STAR ARTISTS	15
15	STAR ARTISTS.	15
15	STAR ARTISTS.	15

In refined Vaudeville, Costume Comedy and Revue, including

BARON
BARON,
BARON,
BARON,

The famous Ventriloquist, assisted by Nobbler, direct from the Eastern States.

BROS. DELAVALÉ,
BROS. DELAVALÉ,
BROS. DELAVALÉ,

In episodes of *Chaplinitis*, recognised by Press and public as being the greatest impersonators of Charles Chaplin seen.

Daily News (Perth) 26 May (1920), 1.

* * *

The Delavale Brothers have been reduced to one lately, owing to Mr. Ernie D. having to undergo a serious operation. This, it is pleasing to record, was quite successful, and he hopes to rejoin Brother Charles at an early date on the Fuller circuit.

Graphic of Australia (Melbourne) 30 Nov. (1917), 32.

—○—

•The Delavale Brothers were very useful round with Brooks' company last week. As the retiring boy, Charlie D., was the cause of an uproar, while his big brother was just as popular.

—○—

Sunday Mirror (Perth) 5 Sept. (1920), 6.

After returning to Australia the Delavales and Vockler opened at the Fullers' Bijou Theatre, Melbourne, on 16 August as one of the feature acts. They remained on the company's circuit until Christmas Eve, playing seasons in Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane. On Boxing Day they made their re-appearance at the Victoria Theatre, Newcastle for Dix-Baker.

³ *Australian Variety* 6 June (1917), n. pag.

⁴ Some of the venues that the Delavales and Lily Vockler played during their 1918 Queensland tour (as a support to pictures) were independently owned. The tour may have been undertaken in association with either the Fullers or Birch and Carroll, however.

⁵ *Northern Miner* (Charters Towers, Qld) 4 May (1918), 5.

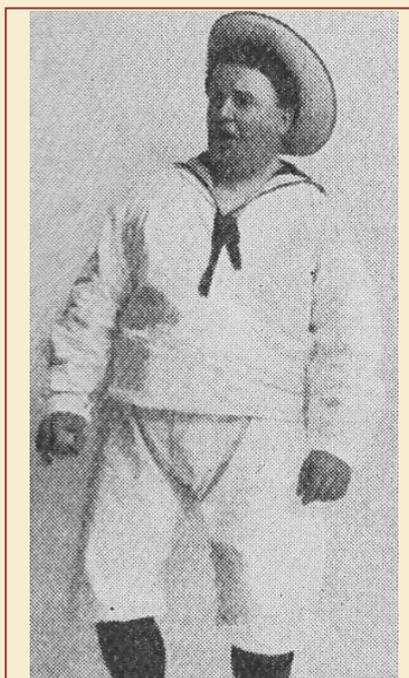
⁶ "[Entertainments](#)." *Cairns Post* (Qld) 4 June (1918), 8.

The Delavale Brothers principle engagements during their final year together were with Dix-Baker (Newcastle and Hunter region of New South Wales), Harry Clay (Sydney city and suburban circuit) and Brooks' Amusement Company ([Shaftesbury Theatre](#), Perth). Although the partnership remained their main performance vehicle, as with the previous couple of years both men occasionally worked with other performers or as a solo turn. Each performer also often appeared in character roles in any revusicals and farces produced by the various firms they were employed by. Their Perth season later in the year saw the comedians appear in the second part weekly revues as well in the vaudeville first part. The Delavale Brother's feature turn, however, was invariably one of their "Chaplinitis" routines.

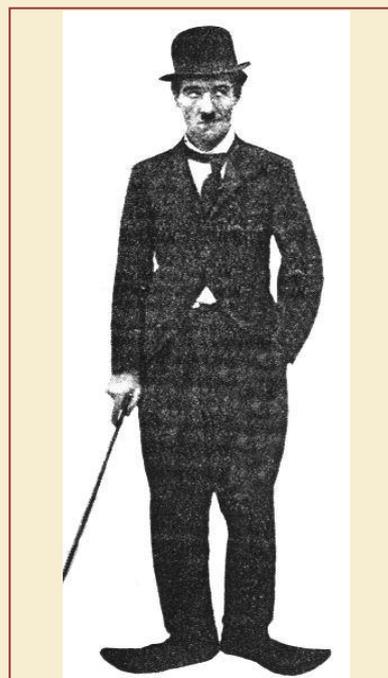
Within a month of their debut appearance at the Shaftesbury (29 May), Charles began working in sketches with the young soubrette [Elvie Stagpoole](#). The two performers married in October that same year, thereby heralding the imminent end of the Delavale Brothers. The final Delavale Brothers performance was given on 14 October as part of a special farewell souvenir night accorded them by the Shaftesbury management. The following night Delavale and Stagpoole made their official debut at the same theatre. A little over a month later Delavale teamed up with Paul Stanhope in the latter's revusicals and began developing his "Ike" stage character, while also working vaudeville sketches with his new wife. Ern Delavale and Lily Vockler remained in Western Australia for while, too, playing seasons in both Perth and Fremantle before heading back East in preparation for their departure for South Africa in March 1921.

SEE ALSO

- [Delavale and Gilbert](#)
- [Ern Delavale](#)
- [Ike Delavale](#)
- [Delavle & Vockler](#)
- [Lily Vockler](#)



Ern Delavale
Theatre Magazine Sept. (1915), 25.



Ern Vockler
Theatre Magazine Mar. 1916, 35.

ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

1917: Hobart: The Delavale Brothers, appearing at the National, are a pair of artists who catch the public's fancy. Ernie is no "ammer chewer" at the Chaplin business, and Charles Spencer of that ilk will have to look to his laurels and million ("Lorngette." ["In the Limelight."](#) *Critic* 13 July 1917, 5).

1918: Rockhampton, Qld: The Delavale Brothers, "comedy merchants," followed. One came on as Mr. Delavale in full concert platform costume and sang "And They called it Dixie Land." He was attempting an encore number when a loud and angry dispute arose at the entrance to the theatre and a man was seen forcing his way past the ushers reiterating excitedly "I paid my shilling and I'm going to see the show. Let me go in. I shall. I must. My name's Chaplin. I'll report you. You see if I don't, and I'll get you the sack. Just see if I don't. There is the lady up at the piano waiting to play for me. I paid my two shillings and a zack, and I'm going in, bet yer life." And so on. It was the other brother, garbed as Charlie Chaplin, cane, boots, moustache, everything to the very life, making his way to the stage, and by the time he reached there and had reiterated

his complaints, the whole house was in a state of rollicking delight-and his expenditure in getting in had risen to about 14s [shillings]. His antics thereafter were irresistibly funny, especially the wonderful eccentric dance and his humourous gags with his brother. The audience could not get enough of him ("[Amusements: Olympia Theatre.](#)" *Morning Bulletin* 2 Apr. (1918), 6).

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. Interestingly, the Delavale Brothers received an offer from [Alexander Pantage](#), one of America's leading vaudeville circuits, in late-1919. [Australian Variety](#) records in its 23 October edition that the "two enterprising fellows, together with Lily Vockler, [would] leave next January. They will also play three weeks in Honolulu en route" (n. pag.). There is no record of the three performers ever taking up this offer, however. Although Ern Delavale and Lily Vockler claimed prior to departing Australia in 1920 that they were travelling to the USA there is also no record that they in fact made that destination. The couple reportedly toured South Africa and England only (1921-1922).
2. One of the Delavale Brothers sketches from 1920 was "Love, Divorce, Poison."

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

The following list of engagements should be considered very incomplete. Its aim is to provide a snapshot of the Delavale Brothers' career.

The chronology will continue to be updated over time. See the last page of this PDF for the publication date of the most recent version. ⁷

All engagements were undertaken with Lily Vockler unless otherwise noted.

- 1917:** n/e [Wollongong](#), NSW (Town Hall; 13 Feb. > Empire Comedy Co) ► [FULLERS' THEATRES New Zealand](#) (Dominion tour; 5 Mar. - ca. June) ► [N.H. CONNOLLY](#) (in assoc. with Fullers' Theatres) [Hobart](#) (National Theatre; 7 July - ca. 10 Aug.) ► [FULLERS' THEATRES Melbourne](#) (Bijou Theatre; 11 Aug. -) • [Adelaide](#) (Majestic Theatre; 1 Sept. -) ► n/e [Port Pirie](#), S.A. (Casino, 15 Sept.-) ► [FULLERS' THEATRES Adelaide](#) (Majestic Theatre; 29 Sept. - ca. Oct.)
- NB 1:** The New Zealand tour included: Dunedin (Princess Theatre 5 Mar.-) • Wellington (His Majesty's Theatre; ca. 7 Apr. -) • Auckland (Opera House; 28 Apr. -) • Christchurch (Opera House; 17 May - 9 June)
- NB 2:** Ern Delavale became sick sometime around October/November and was forced to undergo an operation. His recovery appears to have taken several months.
- 1918:** [FULLERS' THEATRES Brisbane](#) (Empire Theatre; 9 Mar. - ⁸) ► n/e [Queensland](#) (regional tour; ca. Mar. - Aug. > film & vaudeville) ► [JACK LANDOW](#) Sydney (ca. Aug.) ► [FULLERS' THEATRES Brisbane](#) (Empire Theatre; 31 Aug. - Sept. > Fullers' Vaudeville Co) • [New Zealand](#) (Dominion tour; 23 Sept. - 31 Dec.)
- NB:** The Queensland tour incl. Rockhampton (Palace Theatre 1 Apr. -) • Townsville (Olympia; 27 Apr. -) • Charters Towers (Olympia; 4 May -) • Cairns (Cairns Pictures; 15-17 May) • Cairns (Palace Theatre; 5 June -) • Mackay (Olympic Theatre; 30 July -) • Ipswich (Martoo's Olympia; 23-30 Aug.)
- 1919:** [FULLERS' THEATRES New Zealand](#) (Dominion tour; ca. 1 Jan. - Aug.) • [Melbourne](#) (Bijou Theatre; 16 Aug. -) • [Adelaide](#) (Majestic Theatre; 20 Sept. -) • [Sydney](#) (Fullers' Theatre; 8 Nov. -) • [Brisbane](#) (Empire Theatre; 29 Nov. - 24 Dec.) ► [DIX-BAKER Newcastle](#), NSW (Victoria Theatre; 26-31 Dec.)
- 1920:** [DIX-BAKER Newcastle/Hunter Valley](#), NSW (Victoria Theatre; 1 Jan. - ca. Mar) ► [HARRY CLAY Sydney](#) (city and suburban circuit; 7 Mar. ca. May) ► [PETER BROOKS AMUSEMENTS Perth](#) (Shaftesbury Theatre; 29 May - 14 Oct.)
- NB1:** The Dix-Baker Hunter Valley engagements incl. Maitland (Town Hall; 24 Jan.) • Cessnock (Empire Theatre; 27 Jan.) • Raymond Terrace (Oddfellows' Hall; 28 Jan.)
- NB 2:** The Clay's engagement included the Bridge Theatre (7 Mar.-) • Princess Theatre (20 Mar. -) • Gaiety Theatre (24 Apr. -)

FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "[Harry Clay and Clay's Vaudeville Company 1865-1930.](#)" MA thesis (1998), v. pags.

⁷ Firms/managers in this chronology with AVTA entries are: [N.H. Connolly](#) • [Peter Brooks](#)

⁸ The Empire Theatre season saw the Delavale Brothers and Lily Vockler work in the first part vaudeville programme, while [Nat Phillips Stiffy and Mo Revue Company](#) appeared in the second part revusical. See Ike Delavale entry ("Historical Notes" section) for details relating to erroneous claims made by [Fred Parsons](#) that it wasn't until later in his career that Delavale worked in the same shows as [Roy Rene](#).