

HUGH HUXHAM

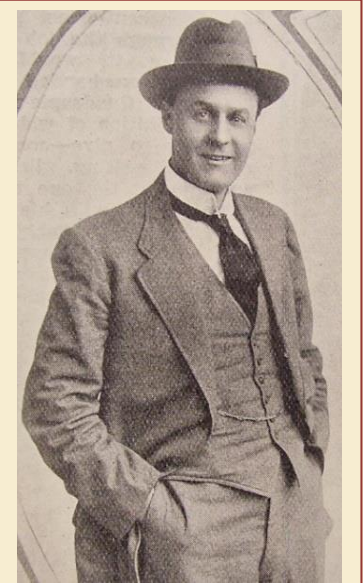
Incl. Edith Huxham / The Harmonious Huxhams

Comedian, singer, music director, company leader, producer, director, businessman, councillor. Hugh Huxham began his career in the Australian variety theatre industry around 1900 as a singer, appearing under the a variety of organisations and entrepreneurs including F. M. Clark and Harry Rickards, the latter engagements being performed with his wife Edith and her brother Fred. The trio, known as the Harmonious Huxhams, remained together for some seven years (ca. 1906-1913) playing the Rickards and Fullers circuits, as well as touring China and the Far East for Ramos and Ramos. In 1912, Huxham formed the Serenaders while under engagement to Ted Holland (Brisbane). It was with this troupe that his name is primarily associated. Over the next decade and a half they played throughout Australia and New Zealand and also undertook several tours of the East. After disbanding the troupe in 1926, Huxham settled in the Healesville district of Victoria, eventually becoming a local councillor.

Born in Victoria, Hugh Huxham began his career in the Australian variety theatre industry around 1900, and was initially billed as Hughie Huxham the tenor balladist. His name has first been identified with the world premiere production of Ernest Truman's romantic comic opera Mathias in 1902 (Criterion Theatre, Syd), for which he played the role of Christian. After touring with Eldie and Bracey's American Vaudeville Company later that year he returned to the Criterion in late January 1903 to take on minor roles in John F. Sheridan's production of *The Lady Barmaid*. A few months later he was a member of Harry Rickards company at the Theatre Royal, Brisbane, appearing alongside such artists as Leonard Nelson, Arthur Morley, James Craydon and Sam Rowley. He remained largely with Rickards through until May 1904, including an engagement with J. C. Bain (Hobart) with the Tivoli Company. He remained in Tasmania after the season ended, working for Bain's Gaiety Entertainers before returning to Sydney to appear in a minor role *Fiddle Dee Dee* at the Palace Theatre (16 July).

After finding solo opportunities with such companies as F. M. Clark's New Folly Company (Queen's Hall, Sydney) and Verto's Biotint Entertainment and Variety Company in 1905, Huxham formed a trio with his wife Edith and her brother Fred (working professionally as Fred Huxham). Called the Harmonious Huxhams, they are believed to have made their debut at the Theatre Royal, in Brisbane in early

October 1906 under the management of Ted Holland. By the end of the year the Huxhams were touring the Rickards' circuit. They are also known to have linked up with Brandon Cremer at the Adelaide Tivoli (in association with Rickards) in 1907 and appeared in Broken Hill for Sayles and Cremer's Fifth All-Star Company. The Harmonious Huxhams remained together for around seven years as an independent act, largely playing the Brennan, Rickards' and Fullers circuits. They are also recorded as having toured the Far East (including China) for Ramos and Ramos. Reviews of their appearances with Edmond Montgomery's Entertainers during that company's 1909 tour of New Zealand provide a glimpse of the trio's performances:



Theatre Oct. (1915), 45.

DRILL HALL, FEILDING
Under direction of Edmund Montgomery.

TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY,
2nd and 3rd FEBRUARY.

MONTGOMERY'S ENTERTAINER
including the popular musical comedies
Sketch Artists

The Harmonious Huxhams.

Immense Receptions Everywhere.
Edith Maitland (Soprano), Gilbert
Laurie (Monologue Humorist)
Hugh Huxham (Tenor), Fred Huxham
(Baritone), Fred Resteau
(Musical Director), Bert Hargood
(Electrician and Operator), and

EDMUND MONTGOMERY

in the latest pictured melodies.
Every Picture, Song and Sketch
Quite New.

Speaking of a recent appearance of theirs under the direction of Mr Harry Rickards, the famous vaudeville entrepreneur, the Herald (Sydney) says: The Harmonious Huxhams are a bright and happy trio, who interpolate comedy with well-balanced part singing. Their costumes are alone enough to compel laughter, whilst their antics and business generally is of a mirth-provoking nature. Their performance is a pleasure and a palatable one. Mr Hugh Huxham, the tenor of the trio, was a member of the famous Gotham quartette during the tour of *Sinbad the Sailor* pantomime, and Miss Edith Huxham (mezzo-soprano) was also in the same production fulfilling the role of principal girl (FS: 8 Jan. 1909, 2).

Feilding Star (Feilding, NZ) 30 Jan. (1909), 3.

The principal attraction of the programme was the appearance of "The Harmonious Huxhams." Combining part-singing with comedy the Huxhams are a very remarkably clever trio of sketch artists. Their costumes, their antics, their gags and quips were extremely diverting, and we doubt if ever any "turn" has aroused heartier laughter than that which greeted the Huxhams last night. One encore did not suffice, and the audience, though preparations had been made to show the pictures, insisted on the reappearance of the trio (BAD: 11 Jan. 1909, 4).

In 1912, while under engagement to Holland and St John (Brisbane) Huxham put together the Serenaders, the company with which his name is primarily associated. After a successful three months season (March-June) the troupe undertook a short tour of mid North-West Queensland region for Holland and St John¹ before returning to Brisbane in August to play a return engagement at the Empire Theatre.² The Huxhams then commenced an almost continuous touring schedule of Australia and New Zealand for the next decade or more (with few breaks). Perhaps the closest they came to settling in one place was when the Serenaders played the Follies Theatre, St Kilda over the summer months (ca. 1913-17). The 1915-16 season in Melbourne in fact lasted some six months. The troupe is also known to have returned to the Far East in 1914, with an 18 weeks tour of the Bandmann circuit.³



The Serenaders (1913)
Source: State Library of Tasmania

In addition to his on-stage role as singer, comedian, and actor, Huxham managed the Serenaders business affairs, directed the performances, and arranged and scored the vocal harmonies for most of the songs. He nevertheless sometimes utilised the services of other managers or promoters to organise some of his tours, including Cedric Johnston whose name is linked to the troupe's movements around the 1914-1917 period, including the St Kilda seasons. Among the other variety organisations to have secured the services of Huxham's Serenaders were Harry Rickards' Tivoli Theatres, Holland and St John (Brisbane), John N. McCallum (Brisbane), Birch and Carroll/Birch, Carroll and Coyle (Queensland), Dix and Baker (Newcastle).

After disbanding the Serenaders in 1926, the Huxham settled in the Healesville district of Victoria (some sixty kilometres north-east of Melbourne). Hugh Huxham turned his entrepreneurial skills towards a business career and eventually succeeded in becoming a local councillor. His involvement on local affairs was not confined only to the Council, however, as he is reported as having been the President of the Healesville Publicity League (HG: 4 Mar. 1939, 3)⁴ and a member of the town's Sanctuary Committee (HG: 17 Feb. 1940, 3). In 1942 he also became a Justice of the Peace (HG: 13 June 1942, 2). Sometime around the early 1940s the Huxhams also began running Cranbrook Lodge, an establishment which some advertisements record included a tennis court, a croquet green and recreation room.

HEALESVILLE, CRANBROOK LODGE. --
Write for illus. folder. Tariff £3. No
vac. school hols. or Xmas. Mr. and Mrs.
Hugh Huxham Phone Healesville 143.

Argus 4 Nov. (1944), 23.

Both of the Huxhams were prominent socially within the district, with Edith taking a lead as a socialite, charity organiser and performer. In a 1939 interview Huxham records that he and his wife were also the leaders of an amateur theatrical society in Healesville which worked to raise funds for the local community (BC: 17 July 1939, 2). Many of these events, which included both live theatre productions and film screenings (and for which Huxham invariably directed and/or arranged the musical performances) were presented in the Healesville Memorial Hall. One such theatrical, for example, was a revue (possibly titled *Bubbly*), which was staged at the Memorial Hall on 19 June 1940 as a fundraiser for the Red Cross. The *Healesville Guardian* records that the varied programme included an hour-long

¹ Holland and St John's Queensland regional manager was Sidney Cook. The Tour Manager was Barney Levy.
² For the first few years the troupe tended to be billed as The Serenaders (or 9 Serenaders) featuring the Harmonious Huxhams.
³ See the "Huxham's Serenaders" entry (Troupes) for more details regarding the Huxham's career between ca. 1912 and 1925.
⁴ The Healesville Publicity League is also believed to have been known as the Healesville Tourist and Publicity Association.

production of the well-known railway "episode" *Kidstake Junction* (HG: 8 June 1940, 2). In addition to his theatrical endeavours Huxham also continued to offer his services as an arranger, writer and composer throughout the remainder of the 1940s, as the *Argus* advertisement from 1947 demonstrates.

<p style="text-align: center;">“Sanctuaries”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To the Editor.</p> <p>Sir,—I was very surprised recently to read an article in “The Age,” and another in the Sydney “Bulletin,” in which the writer’s opinion of sanctuaries (including, of course, the famous Sir Colin MacKenzie sanctuary at Healesville) was rather amazing, inasmuch as it differs so greatly with the opinions of many leading naturalists, zoologists, etc. If it were not for zoos and sanctuaries, how would the peoples of the world learn anything about its animal or bird life—one of the most interesting subjects known to mankind? In one afternoon at the Healesville sanctuary, with Director David Fleay as conductor, one would learn more than in a year of pouring over animal literature. I am not a zoologist, but I have enough common sense to accept the statements of men who know their subject.</p>	<p>The most amazing part of the letters referred to was the signature at the bottom—that of Morwell Hodges, one of our citizens. To try to throw a “wet blanket” over our greatest asset is, to say the least—well, not cricket. Haven’t we enough worry at present without having a “bombshell” being dropped in our midst by one of our own? Possibly Morwell Hodges is not with us. We at Healesville are doing our utmost to popularise our beautiful holiday resort, and then this happens. Why? If one cannot do anyone a good turn, then one should set oneself out not to do them a bad one, but to be diplomatic—and silent.</p> <p>However, I really do not think much harm has been done, as the signature on the letter written in reply to Mr. Hodges is a name carrying a lot of weight, whereas the writer of the offending article is unknown.—Yours, etc.,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">HUGH HUXHAM, Member of Sanctuary Committee. Healesville, 14/2/40.</p>
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Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian 17 Feb. (1940), 3.

According to the *Healesville Guardian*, the Huxhams had moved to Sydney by 1951, taking up residence at Manly. The couple apparently chose to Manly as it brought back "so many wonderful memories of their former triumphs there in the old theatrical days of the popular Hugh Huxham Serenaders." It was not a move undertaken for retirement purposes, however, as the same article records that they were the proprietors of a "refined" tearoom/cafe known as the Tapestry Inn (located past the Corso on the Marine Parade promenade leading to Shelley Beach). The writer says of the establishment: "It is a truly delightful rendezvous, the walls of its spacious dining room being hung with beautiful tapestries. It has huge windows overlooking the Pacific, and as one sits at meals the impression is gained of being aboard ship, and the ocean may be studied in all its varied moods" (19 May 1951, 4). The *Manly Library Local Studies Blog* indicates that the Inn (situated at 8 Marine Parade) was the venue for the charter meeting of the Manly Soroptimist Club in November 1949.⁵

**QUARTETTES, male, mixed, light and heavy,
all ready; also Orchestral Parts for same.
Original musical sketches, scenas, &c. Hugh
Huxham. LA1015.**

Argus 4 Oct. (1947), 21.

The last known report of the Huxhams' whereabouts was a brief article published in the *Healesville Guardian* in May 1955 concerning the recent visit to the town by their daughter Ina and her husband Len Myers. According to the Myers Hugh and Edith, still then living in Manly, were planning to return to England for a visit in August that year (27 May 1955, 1).

SEE ALSO

- [Huxham's Serenaders](#)

⁵ According to the [*Manly Library Local History Blog*](#) (13 Mar. 2011), the "Manly Soroptimist Club was only the third such club to be formed in Australia, and did a lot of good work in the following years."



Marine Parade, Manly (ca. 1920s)

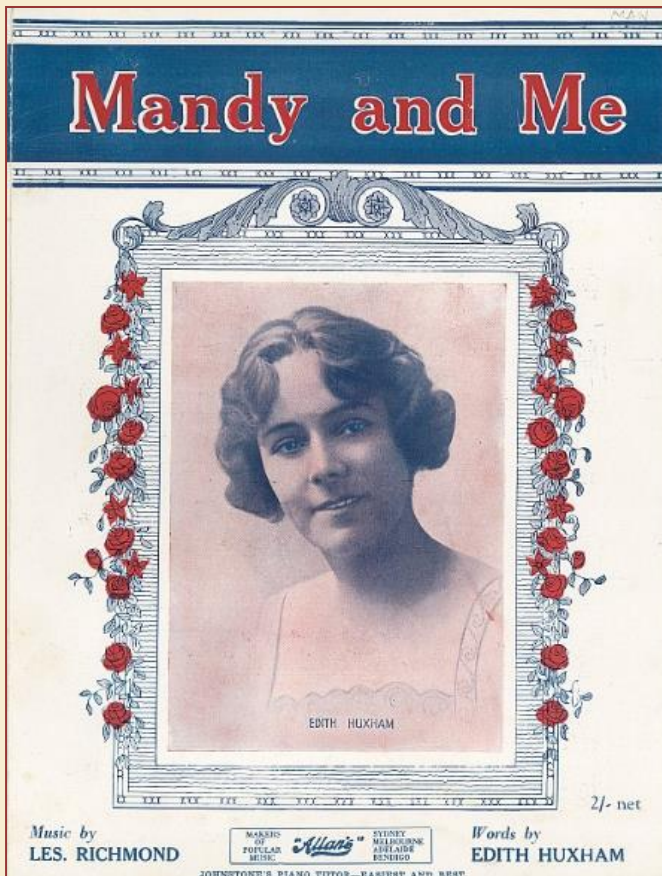
Source: Manly Library Local Studies Blog

TROUPES

Bain's Gaiety Entertainers • Eldie & Bracey's American Vaudeville Co • Fifth All-Star Co •
 F.M. Clark's New Folly Co • John F. Sheridan • Huxham's Serenaders • Montgomery's Entertainers •
 Verto's Biotint Entertainers & Specialty Co

EDITH HUXHAM

1. Variety entertainer, singer, costume designer. Born Edith Mollison in South Australia.



Source: National Library of Australia



Edith Huxham
 Theatre Oct. (1915), 45.

HISTORICAL NOTES

1. Hugh and Edith Huxham directed a production of *The Orchid* at the Moonee Ponds Town Hall (Victoria) for the Essendon Operatic and Choral Society, 14 to 16 June 1930 (A: 16 June 1930, 12).
2. A notice published in the "Births" section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 6 October 1908 records that "Mr and Mrs Huxham (nee Mollison)" had a daughter born in Wellington, New Zealand on 10 September.
3. The Huxhams' daughter, Ina, was born on 10 September 1908 in Wellington. She is known to have performed in the Serenaders troupe beginning 1919. Her first recorded performance found to date was a solo rendition of "My Little Chinese Girl" during the company's Cremorne Theatre season (21 Mar. -). Ina later married businessman Len Myers. The couple initially lived in Healesville, Victoria (in a house name "Allambee") before moving to Wagga Wagga in Southern NSW. There Myers became established as the proprietor of the Oxford Furnishing Company, a firm which also had branches in such places as Tumut and Goulban. The Myers are known to have had at least one child, a son named Leonard Hugh (born 30 December 1931 in Healesville).

ORIGINAL SONGS (Published)

♪ = published score available online via the National Library of Australia.

All other scores held by the National Library of Australia (except ♪ = see AustLit record for further details)

- ♪ **1917:** "[Won't You Come and Shuffle Your Feet](#)" (words, Edith Huxham; music, Les Richmond)
- 192-:** "[My Sweet Hawaiian Maid](#)" (words, Hugh Huxham; music, Les Richmond)
- ♪ **1921:** "[Mandy and Me](#)" (words, Edith Huxham; music, Les Richmond)
- 1922:** "[That Loving Melody](#)" (words, Hugh Huxham; music, Les Richmond)
- 1922:** "[Isle of the Bim, Bam, Boo](#)" (words, Edith Huxham; music, Les Richmond)
- 193-:** "[Good-bye Hawaii](#)" (words, Edith Huxham; music, Les Richmond)

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY - 1905-1930

For details relating to Hugh and Edith Huxham's career movements between 1912 and 1926 see the AVTA entry for Huxham's Serenaders.

- 1902:** C. M. LEUMANE (Criterion Th, Syd; 26 July - * > Hugh Huxham, Mathias) ► ELDIE & BRACIE (S of A, Bathurst, NSW; 6 Dec. - * > Eldie and Bracey's American Vaudeville Co)
- 1903:** J. F. SHERIDAN (Criterion Th, Syd; 31 Jan. - * > *The Lady Barmaid*) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Bris; 6 Mar. > Rickards Variety & Vaudeville Co) ► PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (S of A, Windsor, NSW; 28 May) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Tivoli Th, Syd; 27 June - ca. Sept/Oct.* > first appearance) • (Op House, Melb; 3 Oct. - * > first appearance) • (Th Royal, Perth; 23 Nov. - 31 Dec.)
- 1904:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Perth; 1 Jan. - ca. Feb.) • (Tivoli Th, Adel; 27 Feb. - 19 Mar.) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; 1 Apr. > Good Friday special entertainment) ► J. C. BAIN - in assoc. with Harry Rickards (Temp Hall, Hobart; 30 Apr. - * > Bain's Gaiety Entertainers with Tivoli Company) ► J. C. BAIN (A of M, Launceston; 28 May - * > Bain's Gaiety Entertainers) ► HARRY JAMES (Palace Th, Syd; 16 July - * > *Fiddle Dee Dee*)
- 1905:** F. M. CLARK (Queen's Hall, Syd; 8 July - * > F.M. Clark's New Folly Co) ► VERTO (Th Royal, Rockhampton; 5 Oct. - * > Verto's Biotint Entertainers and Specialty Co) • (Shire Hall, Cairns; 16 Nov. - * > Verto's Biotint Entertainers and Specialty Co) • (Cremorne Gardens, Charters Towers; ca. 23- 31 Dec.* > Verto's Biotint Entertainers and Specialty Co).
- 1906:** VERTO Cremorne Gardens, Charters Towers; ca. Jan.* > Verto's Biotint Entertainers and Specialty Co) • (Th Royal, Rockhampton; 8 Jan. - * > Verto's Biotint Entertainers and Specialty Co) ► (Victoria Th. Newc; ca. Aug- Sept.*) ► TED HOLLAND (Th Royal, Bris; 5 Oct. - * > First appearance and possible debut as Harmonious Huxhams) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Op House, Melb; 24-31 Dec.)

NB: Entries for the period ca. October 1906 - early 1912 are for the Harmonious Huxhams unless otherwise noted.

THEATRE ROYAL

Commencing
MONDAY, 24th JUNE.

Direction . . . Holland and St. John, Ltd

First Appearance outside the metropolis
of that refined
COSTUME COMEDY COMPANY
"THE - SERENADERS"
And the
"HARMONIOUS HUXHAMS."

After a most successful season of over
100 nights at the Empire Theatre,
Brisbane.

A COMPLETE CHANGE OF PRO-
GRAMME NIGHTLY

Will include
Gems of Grand Opera.
Gems of Comic Opera.
Gems of Musical Comedy.

**HARMONY AND HUMOUR ARTISTI-
CALLY BLENDED.**

Quartettes, Trios, Sextettes, Scotch and
Irish Specialties,
Dances, Humorous Sketches, Charming
Melodies and Burlesques.

"THE SERENADERS"
Have a repertoire of over 1000 Musical
Numbers and over 20 Comedies.

Specially Painted Scenery as used at the
Empire, Brisbane, and Rickard's
Tivoli Theatres.

PRICES, 3s., 2s., and 1s. (no extra
charge for booking).

Management . . . BIRCH & CARROLL

**"THE SERENADERS" WESTERN
TOUR.**

LONGREACH, 29th June, 1st and 2nd
July.
BARCALDINE, 3rd and 4th JULY
BLACKALL, 6th and 8th July.
CLERMONT, 10th and 11th July.
Touring Manager, BARNEY LEVY.

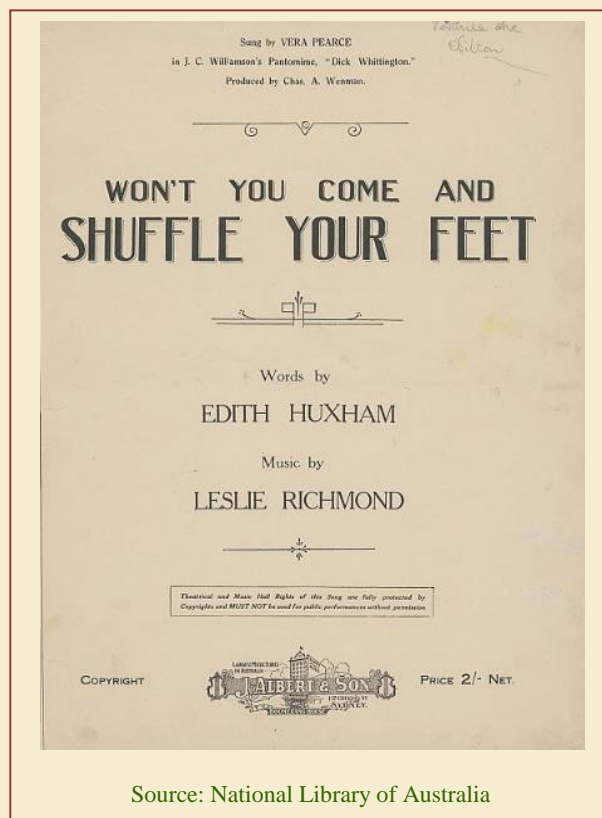
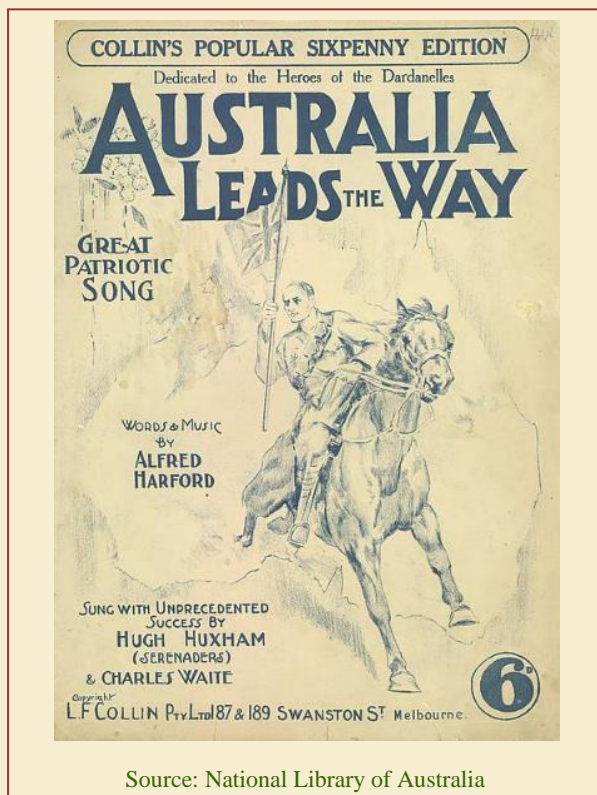
- 1907:** HARRY RICKARDS (Op House, Melb; 1 Jan. - *) • (Palace Gardens, Perth; 4 Feb.- 30 Apr.) • (Tivoli Th, Adel; 11 May - * > in assoc. with Brandon Cremer) ► SAYLES & CREMER (Crystal Th, Broken Hill, NSW; 1 June > Fifth All-Star Co)
- 1908:** JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; 4 Jan. - *) • (Gaiety Th, Melb; 18 Jan. - *) • (Nat Amph, Syd; 8 Feb. - *) ► FULLERS (Th Royal, Wellington, NZ; ca. Mar-Apr.*) • (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. Apr/May *) • (Th Royal, Wellington; ca. May-June*) • (Op House, Christchurch, NZ; 27 June - *) • (Th Royal, Wellington, NZ; 7 Aug. - ca. Sept.*) ► EDMOND MONTGOMERY (Op House, Wanganui, NZ; 26 Dec. - * > Montgomery's Entertainers)
- 1909:** EDMOND MONTGOMERY (New Zealand tour; ca. Jan. - ca. July* > Montgomery's Entertainers) ► FULLERS (Th Royal, Wellington, NZ; ca. Aug- Sept.* > Hugh Huxham) ► HARRY RICKARDS (Tivoli Th, Adel; 4 Dec. - *)
- NB:** Montgomery's Entertainers' New Zealand itinerary incl. (Op House, Hawera, 6-7 Jan.) • (Drill Hall, Feilding; 11 Jan.) • (Drill Hall, Dannevirke; 12 Jan.) • (Drill Hall, Feilding; 2-3 Feb. return season) • (Princess Th, Hokitika; 29 Apr. - *) • (Greymouth TH; 10 May - *) • (Criterion Th, Paeroa; 2 July - *)
- 1910:** HARRY RICKARDS (Palace Gardens, Perth; 1 Jan. - *) • (Op House, Melb; 21 Feb. - Apr*) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; 28 May - 16 July) • (Tivoli Th, Adel; 18 Aug. - *) • (Op House, Melb; 22 Oct. - ca. 10 Dec.*) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; ca. 17-31 Dec.)
- 1911:** HARRY RICKARDS (Tivoli Th, Syd; 1 Jan. - *) ► HOLLAND & ST JOHN (Empire Th, Bris 18 Mar. - 2 June)
- 1930:** (Moonee Ponds TH, Vic; 14 June - * > *The Orchid* - Essendon Operatic and Choral Society).
- 1940:** n/e (Memorial Hall, Healesville; 19 June > *Bubbly* revue, Red Cross fundraiser)

FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "[Hugh Huxham](#)." *AustLit* (2007).
 "Harmonious Huxhams – at the Princess (Sydney)." TT: July (1915), 32.
 "Huxham's Serenaders." TT: Oct. (1915), 44-45.
 "Old Cremorne Leader in Brisbane Again." 17 July (1939), 2.
 "[Roundup, The](#)." HG: 19 May (1951), 4.

See also:

ARG: 4 Nov. (1944), 23.
HG: 4 Mar. (1939), 3 • 8 June (12940), 2 • 31 July (1943), 2.



Last updated: 16/05/2012

Expanded and updated from the 2007 AustLit entry.

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