

SNOWDROP MINSTRELS

The Snowdrop Minstrels is believed to have formed around 1900-1901 in Rockhampton on Queensland's Central Coast. Established primarily as a vehicle for raising money for local charities, the troupe gave performances in a number of centres in the region including Mt Usher and Yeppoon. For engagements outside Rockhampton the Snowdrops reportedly travelled by train or via two locally famous old conveyances, "Rutherford's drag and Stenhouse's bus." A 1939 *Central Queensland Herald* article recalls one of the troupe's out of town engagements:

For a performance at Yeppoon they caught the train at North Rockhampton and travelled to Tanby; from there they went by coach. The Snowdrops always packed them in at the Yeppoon School of Arts, a great drawcard being an afternoon performance of trick cycling on the beach by two of the entertainers, Messrs Robert Nimmo and Harry Boldeman (14).

The same article records that another of the troupe's feature performances was a comedy act by Will Franks and Bert Clarke. Franks is also known to have worked with his brother, Jack (also a comedian).

Although the Snowdrops is thought to have disbanded sometime around 1902, several of its members continued "to answer calls for charity" over the years. The "old firm" of Franks and Clarke was also revived during World War I as part of a patriotic entertainment billed as the Flying Squadron Concert Party.

One of the farces known to have been staged by the Snowdrops was "Love, Divorce and Poisoned."

PERSONNEL

- 1. Troupe members included:** Miss Bedsor, Harry Boldeman, Bert Clarke, C. Danvers, Adam Ferguson, Maggie Ferguson, Jack Franks, Will Franks, Lil Gronow and Dickie, W. Holmes, Maurice Marcusen, Walter Mooney, Jim Murphy, Will Prigg, Robert Nimmo, Arthur Thomson, Miss C. Vester, Miss K. Watson, Albert Weel,
- 2. Associated practitioners included:** B. Woods (pianist), Mrs Vallance (pianist).
- 3. Additional notes and/or historical clarification:**

Bert Clarke: Later moved to Brisbane.

Franks, Jack: Comedian

Franks, Will: Comedian.

Maggie Ferguson: Later known as Mrs J. C. Minnis of Ipswich.

Will Franks: Established himself as a Rockhampton music shop proprietor and eisteddfod supporter.

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. This Snowdrops company should not be confused with another Queensland-based minstrel troupe called the Killarney Snowdrop Minstrels which played around the Warwick region during roughly the same period.

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Athos." "[Old Time Programmes: Snowdrop Minstrels.](#)" CQH: 16 May (1935), 14.

"Snowdrop Minstrels Company, The." MB: 22 Aug. (1901), 4. [see above]

See also:

CAP: 24 Aug. (1901), 23

MB: 16 June (1900), 4 • 14 Feb. (1900), 4.

THE SNOWDROP MINSTREL COMPANY.

The members of the Snowdrop Minstrel Company journeyed to Mount Usher on Saturday afternoon last and gave an entertainment in Lynch's Hall in the evening. There was a good attendance. The first item was a chorus by the company. The following programme was then given:—Comic song ("I.O.U."), Mr. J. Frank; song ("The English-speaking race against the world"), Mr. J. Murphy; song ("My old Kentucky home"), Miss Bedsor; song ("Fairly on"), Mr. W. Frank; song ("A little bit of luck"), Mr. A. Clark; duet, Messrs. W. Frank and A. Clark. The whole of the items were encored and the first part of the entertainment was concluded with a comic dialogue by Messrs. J. Frank and A. Weel. The second part of the programme was opened with a piano solo by Mrs. Vallance and was followed by a farce entitled "Love's tragedy," in which Miss Bedsor and Messrs. W. Frank, J. Frank, and A. Clark took part. A dance concluded the evening's amusement, the music being provided by Mrs. Vallance.

Morning Bulletin 22 Aug. (1901), 4.