

J.C. BANCKS

(1889-1952). Illustrator, caricaturist, librettist.

One of Australia's most significant caricaturists, who worked for numerous journals and magazines, including the *Bulletin* and *Green Room*, J.C. Bancks is best remembered for creating the classic Australian comic character Ginger Meggs. In the 1930s he also provided material for a number of musical revues, in addition to writing the libretto for the romantic musical comedy *Blue Mountains Melody* (1934).

The son of a railway worker, James Charles Bancks was born in the inner Sydney suburb of Enmore on 10 May 1889, and went on to establish himself as one of Australia's most significant caricaturists. After leaving school he worked as an office boy, a clerk and lift-driver. Hoping to break out of the drudgery of such labours he taught himself to draw, and began his career as a cartoonist in 1911 when *Comic Australia* published some of his work. In 1914, he became a full-time illustrator for the *Bulletin* and later worked for a variety of publications throughout his long career, including *Green Room*, *The Bulletin*, *Sunday Sun*, *Sunday Telegraph*, and *Sun News Pictorial*. It was in 1922, however, that he created *Us Fellers*, the comic strip series for which he is most associated. Featuring the classic Australian comic character Ginger Meggs, the series continued for the next thirty years or more, even found an audience in England by the late-1930s.



Green Room (Sydney) Aug. 1920, 17.

Bancks' involvement in theatre appears to have been confined to the years 1933 and 1934. He is known to have contributed a comedy sketch to the amateur revue, which was staged at the Savoy Theatre over three nights in mid-October 1933. The show was presented under the patronage of the Governor of New South Wales in order to raise funds for the Women's Hospital. Bancks also appeared in the show, while his wife, Jessie, designed the costumes.¹ The following year he and composer [Charles Zwar](#) collaborated to create *Blue Mountains Melody*, a romantic musical comedy. It was produced by [J.C. Williamson's Ltd](#) in Sydney (six weeks) and Melbourne (seven weeks). Bancks was assisted in writing the dialogue by his wife.



1934 also saw Bancks provide sketches for another fundraising revue - *Now and Then* (which was produced in aid of Sydney's Free Kindergartens), along with the [Young Australian League's](#) (Y.A.L.) *Round the World* revue. Original music for the latter production was scored by [Jack O'Hagan](#), while the show itself was directed and produced by [Ernest C. Rolls](#). *Round the World*, which starred a young [Billy Kerr](#), was said to recall the best days of the [Pollard Lilliputian Company](#). The show was staged in Sydney (Dec. 1934) and Melbourne (Jan. 1935). It may also have been included in Y.A.L.'s South African tour, which the company undertook almost immediately after the Melbourne season concluded.

Source: National Library of Australia.

Bancks died suddenly coronary vascular disease at his home in Potts Point, Sydney, on 1 July 1952. The final article to be written and illustrated by him was published in Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* five days after his death. Titled "Take a Tip - Or... Straight from the Horse's Mouth," the piece is described as "a typical Bancks job - a light satire - on the well-worn phrasing used by sporting tipsters."²

¹ The daughter of entrepreneur E.J. Tait, Jessie Nita Tait had established herself as a well-known stage and dress designer by the time she married Bancks in 1931. She passed away in 1936.

² *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 6 July 1952, 11.



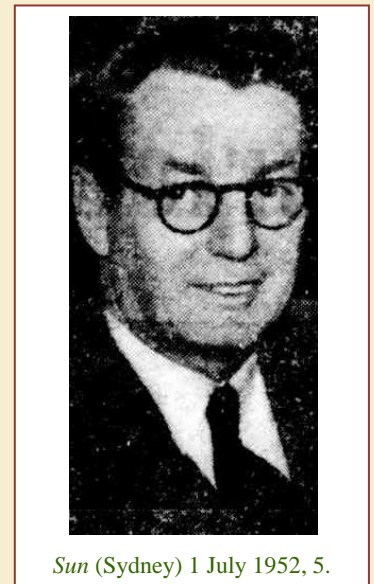
Mail (Adelaide): 5 July (1952), 7.

MUSIC THEATRE WORKS

- 1933: *Snappy Sydney* (revue) Provided a sketch.
 1934: *Blue Mountains Melody* (musical comedy) Co-wrote the libretto with his wife, Jessie
Now and Then (revue) Provided several sketches.
Round the World (revue) Provided several sketches.

FURTHER REFERENCE

- Andrews, B.G. "Bancks, James Charles (Jim)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 7 (1979), 163-64.
 "Bancks, J. C." *AustLit* (2008), online [sighted 24/08/2020]
 "Cartoonist J.C. Bancks Dies." *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 July 1952, 4.
 "Human Touch of Jim Bancks, The." *Mail* (Adelaide) 5 July 1952, 7.
 "Sudden Death Today of Artist Bancks." *Sun* (Sydney) 1 July 1952, 5.



Sun (Sydney) 1 July 1952, 5.

"The first Ginger Meggs drawing... Ginger, who is bowling, has changed his appearance but he has grown no older."
Mail (Adelaide): 5 July 1952, 7.

Last updated: 24/08/2020

Expanded and Updated from the 2008 AustLit entry

NB: The URL for this PDF will change each time it is updated. If you wish to cite or link to this record please use the following:

Clay Djubal. "J.A Lipman." *Australian Variety Theatre Archive*. Practitioners: Other [A-L].

<http://ozvta.com/ozvta.com/practitioners-other-a-l/>