

## CLYDE COOK

(1891-1984) Dancer, comedian, acrobat, film actor. Clyde Cook first appeared on the professional stage as a seven year old and went on to carve out a career on the international stage as both a vaudeville performer and a star of the early Hollywood film industry. Associated in Australia mostly with J.C. Williamson's Ltd, Cook featured as a juvenile in a number of the Firm's most successful pantomimes, and while still a teenager also cemented his reputation as one of the country's most talented acrobatic dancers on the Tivoli circuit. In 1911, he travelled to the United Kingdom and initially worked for several years at the Empire Theatre, Finsbury Park while also touring the UK variety circuits. After playing a 14 weeks season at the Follies Bergeres in Paris he began a three years engagement in revue at the Adelphi Theatre in London. Cook returned to Australia in 1916 and renewed his association with J.C. Williamson's Ltd through a series of musical comedies and revues, but in 1919 left Australia to become an "overnight success" at the New York Hippodrome. Within a year he was discovered by Fox Studios who contracted him to star in a series of "Clyde Cook" comedies, and through which he rivalled Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton as one of Hollywood's most popular film comics of the era. In all Cook appeared in more than 130 films, beginning with *Kiss Me Quick* (1921) and ending with *Donovan's Reef* (opposite John Wayne) in 1963.

Clyde Wilford Cook was born on 16 December 1891 in the small village of Hamilton, then situated some seven miles from Port Macquarie. The second son of an engine-driver who worked at the nearby logging camp, Cook reportedly almost drowned twice before his fifth birthday. The first incident occurred when he was playing near workmen who were loading timber onto a schooner and fell off a chute into the Hastings River. The second time he was pushed into a well by another child but managed to save himself by clinging to the sides of the well until rescue came. According to a brief biography published in *Everyone's* in 1921, the second near death experience convinced Cook even at that tender age to become an athlete.<sup>1</sup> His decision to deliberately learn tricks in which his life was often at stake also led him down a path towards an acrobatic career that was played out not only on stage and but in later years saw him doing his own stunts as a lead Hollywood actor.

*Theatre Magazine* (Sydney) Aug. 1916, 26.



At age six Cook moved to Sydney with his family and attended a public school. By then having mastered a number of acrobatic stunts, including walking on his hands, he stood out as his school's most gifted athlete. The new and exciting influences of city life also saw him take up and excel in dancing, and particularly in the Highland Fling. In great demand for benefit and amateur entertainments his reputation was such that within a year or so he came to the attention of J.C. Williamson who put him under contract to do a dance act with other juveniles in a touring company. He remained with Williamson's company for several years on and off, and indeed was largely associated with the Firm throughout much of his adult career in Australia.

During his off-time with the Williamson firm Cook learned the art of tumbling, getting tips from both experienced acrobats engaged by the company and also the motley assortment of performers who practiced regularly in the *Moore Park sand hills* near Sydney's Centennial Park.<sup>2</sup> *Australian Variety* reports in May 1920 that some of these performers were with Wirth's Circus.<sup>3</sup> Cook also appeared in several productions put on by producers such as Charles Holloway (*The Milestones of Life*, 1901) and John F. Sheridan (*Mrs Goldstein*, 1902). Sometime around 1904, aged about thirteen, he secured a two year contract with Harry Rickards to present a tumbling and dance turn on the showman's Australia-wide circuit. During this period, in which he was accompanied by his mother, Cook also developed his singing voice, becoming an accomplished baritone. He then returned to J.C. Williamson's and performed a similar acrobatic dance act as part of his roles in the company's comic operas. As with his earlier association with Williamson, Cook undertook engagements with other organisations when not required. One season established to date was with Ted Holland in Brisbane around April/May 1906.

Between late-1906, when he appeared Tweedledum and the Gryphon in Williamson's Christmas pantomime *Alice in Wonderland*, and his departure for the United Kingdom in 1912, Cook was largely associated with the Firm. During this period he played roles in the pantomimes *Jack and Jill* (1908/09), *Aladdin* (1909/10; as Chop, one of the emperor's bodyguards) and *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1910/11). During this period Cook firmly established himself as

<sup>1</sup> "Clyde Cook Biography, 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Cook Leaves Hip" 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Australian Variety and Show World* (Sydney) 20 May 1920, 16.

one of the country's best dancers, even though still in though still in his teens, and still considered a juvenile. This reputation was further cemented in the minds of the public when he entered a competition at Mort Lake on St Patrick's Day 1907. Although aged only 16 and competing against adult dancers from around the country Cook nevertheless won the jig and reel championship.<sup>4</sup>

Not long after finishing up with *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Cook and his mother travelled to the United Kingdom where he attempted to break into hugely competitive music hall industry. The *Everyone's* biography, published just as his Hollywood film career was taking off, records that despite his considerable reputation in Australia things did not initially go well for the young performer:

He persistently made the rounds of the booking offices seeking an engagement [but ] learned that a great reputation in Australia meant little or nothing in London. He was down to 17s. 6d., and living in a cheap boarding house when he was offered a tryout at the Finsbury Park Empire Theatre. There is made a hit with the audience. This theatre company signed Cook on for a two years contract and he travelled over their circuit throughout Great Britain, giving an entertainment very similar to that which later gained him fame at the Hippodrome in New York. While an eccentric singing and recitative comedian, he relied chiefly on dancing, gestures and tumbling to score his points with an audience.<sup>5</sup>

**CRITERION THEATRE.**  
 SOLE LESSEE ..... Mr. JOHN F. SHERIDAN,  
 Manager, Frank Westberry.

TO-NIGHT Sept. 29th. TO-NIGHT  
 SHERIDAN JOHN F. SHERIDAN  
 and his exceptionally

**BRILLIANT MUSICAL COMPANY,**  
 presenting for the FIRST TIME in SYDNEY the  
 Up-to-date, Radical, Musical Comedy,

**MRS. GOLDSTEIN**  
 MRS. GOLDSTEIN  
 MRS. GOLDSTEIN,

by John F. Sheridan and Pat. Finn. Lyric and Music  
 composed by Fred. W. Westor.

Special engagement of  
**Mr. CHARLES KENNINGHAM,**  
 the Favorite English Tenor, from the Savoy Theatre,  
 London, who has composed for and will sing in this pro-  
 duction two musical numbers, "I'm Thinking of Thee,  
 Sweet" and "Lovers Always."

**CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

BACHARL MENDOZA, Masquerading as Mrs. GOLDSTEIN	JOHN F. SHERIDAN
Mrs. Arthur Mensias (her daughter, only recently married)	Miss Collie Mavis
Polly Belcher (a Yankee Girl)	Miss Haba Barlow
Jane (a servant at Mensias)	Miss Minnie Hooper
Arthur Mensias ("One of the Boys," but his wife doesn't know)	Mr. Charles Kenningham
George Goodwin (a Trainer)	Mr. Fred. Westworth
Reggie Walker (a Punter)	Mr. Thomas Curran
Willie Winn (a Jockey)	Miss Jean Drummond
Gordon Jones	Miss Ada Page
Stanley Collins	Miss Marie Lockwood
Ferry Saunders	Jolly Good
Dolly Edwards	Fellows
Alfred Pomeroy	Miss Ruby Kennedy
Thomas Hawkins	Miss Bertha Lewis
Tommy Legutwight (a Jockey)	Miss Edith Burke
Proprietor Of the Clarendon Hotel	Mr. B. Grainger
Walter Jinu Brerly (Tour)	Mr. H. Roberts
Johnnie-Missie Amy Conroy, Stella Selbourne, Beatrice Gordon, B. Ashley.	Mr. H. Davis
	Mr. J. Wainwright
	Mr. Bert Herman

**THEATRE ROYAL**  
 Lessee: Mr. Percy St. John. Sub-Lessee: Mr. Ted Holland.

**TED HOLLAND'S NEW VAUDEVILLE ENTERTAINERS**  
 AND THE GREAT AMERICAN BIOGRAPH.

TO-NIGHT. TONIGHT. TONIGHT.  
 GRAND AND COMPLETE CHANGE OF PROGRAMME.  
 FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE FOLLOWING NEW ARTISTS :-

**CLYDE COOK,**  
 The Wonderful Boy Vocalist, and Expert Dancer.

**GERTIE MASON, ARTHUR CURTIS,**  
 The Dainty Solo and Dance. Baritone Vocalist.

**LILLIAN LOFTUS,**  
 Coon Impersonator and Mimic.

Everything New and Up-to-Date by the Whole of Our Grand Double Company, in-  
 cluding all the Very Latest Living Pictures.

PRICES: 2s., 1s., and 6d. Box Plan as Posing.

THIS (SATURDAY) AFTERNOON AT 2.30 O'CLOCK,  
 GRAND SPECIAL MATINEE.  
 PERFORMANCE EXACTLY SAME AS NIGHT.

ADMISSION.-Children, 6d. to All Parts of House.

Brisbane Courier 28 Apr. 1906, 2.

Left: Sydney Morning Herald 20 Sept. 1902, 2.

**TIVOLI THEATRE**  
 Sole Proprietor and Manager—Mr. Harry Richards.  
 Acting Manager and Treasurer, Mr. Edward Mass

MATINEE, TO-DAY AT 2.30.  
 MATINEE, TO-DAY AT 2.30.  
 Performance exactly as at night.

**MR. HARRY RICHARDS'**  
**NEW TIVOLI VAUDEVILLE AND SPECIALTY**  
**COMBINATION.**

TO-DAY AT THE MATINEE,  
 Reappearance after an absence of 10 years of Mr.  
 SLADE MURRAY,  
 SLADE MURRAY,  
 SLADE MURRAY.

England's Descriptive and Character Vocalist  
 Reappearance for 12 Nights only of the  
 8 ENGLISH PRIMROSES. 8  
 8 ENGLISH PRIMROSES. 8  
 8 ENGLISH PRIMROSES. 8  
 8 ENGLISH PRIMROSES. 8

In an Entirely New Repertoire, including  
 EIGHT LITTLE DRUMMER BOYS,  
 and their Original and Inimitable  
 DANSE DES JAMBES EN L'AIR;  
 Also their Latest Production,  
 "MY IRISH MOLLY, O."

Reappearance for a Short Farewell Season of the  
 TWO BELLS.

England's Leading Vocalists and Dancers.  
 First Appearance at the Tivoli of  
 MRS MAY COLLINS,  
 Australia's Premier Soprano Vocalist.  
 First Appearance at the Tivoli of  
 Miss FLORRIE HENDERSON and her Wonderful  
 PERFORMING DOGS.

Reappearance in Sydney of  
 MISS FANNY POWERS,  
 MISS OLIVE ROBINSON,  
 MASTER CLIVE COOKE.

In addition to an already enormous Company,  
 including  
 MISS ALICE RAYMOND,  
 America's Representative Lady Cornetist and Bugler,  
 and  
 MR. JOHN KURKAMP,

Right: Sydney Morning Herald 14 Apr. 1906, 2.

Following the end of his contract Cook went to Paris, where his by now formable reputation earned him an engagement at the Folies Bergere. According to the same *Everyone's* biography Cook went straight to work without instruction, rehearsal or knowledge of the French language:

The management left him to his own devices. He went on the stage and found himself in a scene at a cafe, seated at a table with Mme Jane Marnac and another beautiful woman. Inasmuch as he could not speak or understand a word of French, he had no idea of either the comments of the audience, which were very freely expressed, not of the part he was expected to take in the performance. He sat at the table until he heard from the wings "Monsieur Clyde Cook" and he knew that it was his cue to get up and do the same act he had done in London. At his exit the audience clapped but also made a noise peculiar to the French theatres – which Cook mistook for a hissing. It took the combined arguments of the management and other actors to convince him that the audience wanted to see more of him.<sup>6</sup>

Cook remained at the Folies Bergere for 14 weeks, with his season reportedly a tremendous success. He then returned to London and on 30 March 1913 signed a three year contract with the management of the Alhambra Theatre to appear in revue.<sup>7</sup> While few details of this period of his career have yet been located, it is possible that his first role was in the final weeks of *Kill That Fly* (which had opened in October 1912). He subsequently appeared in *Eightpence a Mile* (9 May 1913), *Keep Smiling* (6 Oct. 1913), and *Not Likely* (4 May 1914), *5064 Gerrard* (19 Mar. 1915), and

<sup>4</sup> "Clyde Cook Biography," 14.

<sup>5</sup> ibid, 14.

<sup>6</sup> ibid, 14

<sup>7</sup> *Australian Variety and Show World* (Sydney) 19 Apr. 1916, 6.

*Now's the Time* (13 Oct. 1915). Cook's short time in Paris had left an indelible impression on him, though, and during his time at the Alhambra he made no less than 25 "weekend" trips back to the French capital, with at least three by aeroplane.<sup>8</sup>



**A scene from Andre Charlot's *Keep Smiling* (1913)**

Clyde Cook is possibly fifth from the left.

Source: V&A Images, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Shortly after the conclusion of his Alhambra contract in 1916 Cook returned to Australia. *Everyone's* records that his original intent was to join the Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.), but that he "was turned down because of some minor physical defects."<sup>9</sup> J.C. Williamson's subsequently signed him to a three year contract, announcing in July that he would feature in the company's forthcoming (and somewhat prophetic) musical comedy *The Cinema Star*. Cook's determination to do something for the war effort, however, saw him spend almost half his time entertaining returned soldiers and raising money for various funds on their behalf over the next few years. Interestingly the moustache which Cook became famous for during his early Hollywood career appears to have been part of his stage persona by late-1917, and was possibly created for his role as "The Rolling Stone" in *The Cinema Star*.<sup>10</sup> The earliest record of the moustache being part of his onstage make-up is a photograph published in the January issue of the *Theatre Magazine* in 1917.<sup>11</sup> An *Australian Variety* photograph [see next page] also shows that he was continuing to wear the moustache in his turns on the Tivoli circuit<sup>12</sup> later in the year.



*Theatre Magazine* (Sydney)  
Aug. 1916, 26.

In December 1917 Cook was engaged as a feature attraction in *The Bing Boys Are Here*. Interestingly the same revue had opened at London's Alhambra Theatre immediately after Cook's final season there. The production included the song "Pussy Foot Rag" which became a big hit for both Cook and publisher W.J. Deane. Following the end of the revue's Australian season Cook was engaged to perform in *Hello Everybody* opposite such stars as Jack Cannon and Minnie Love. A review of the show published in *Triad*, while finding it somewhat disappointing, nevertheless records that Cook "acts like a delicious idiot and dances wonderfully. His scamper headlong down the hill in the prehistoric scene is an astounding bit, though it does make one wish that one's creditors could rush down such a steep place into an unfathomed sea, with the other Gadarene swine."<sup>13</sup> Cook also made possibly his first film appearance in 1918 with a cameo role in the J.C. Williamson's production *His Only Chance* (directed by Vincent White). Frank Van Straten records that his eccentric dancing was a feature of the film.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Clyde Cook Biography," 14

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, 14

<sup>10</sup> It is possible that Cook had adopted the moustache as early as his London period, but no evidence regarding this possibility has yet been located.

<sup>11</sup> See page 23.

<sup>12</sup> Tivoli circuit - see AVTA entry for [Harry Rickards Tivoli Theatres Ltd.](#)

<sup>13</sup> "Sydney Theatres: *Hello Everybody*." *Triad* 10 Feb. 1919, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Van Straten, 159.

Cook's final year in Australian was not without some controversy. In July he brought a case before the Sydney Courts against his employer J.C. Williamson's Ltd, which *Smith's Weekly* suggested would test the rights of performers whose employment (and contracts) were being reneged on due to the flu epidemic and the subsequent closure of theatres.<sup>15</sup> While the outcome of this legal case is yet to be located, it came shortly before Cook left Australia for good. It is possible therefore that this issue led to him making the decision to leave. Several references to the comedian published in 1919 indicate his intention to stay in Australia (at least for the foreseeable future). In May, for example, he attended the annual general meeting of the Actors Association and was elected a councillor for the ensuing year, along with more than a dozen other performers including [Arthur Stignant](#), [Jack Cannot](#), [Phil Smith](#), Helen Fergus, Charles Workman and [Tal Odell](#).<sup>16</sup> Within three months of committing himself to that position, however, Cook left the country bound for New York.

Unlike his first attempt to find work overseas this time the young comic was able to line up an engagement before leaving the country. The reputation he had established during his time in London was already well-known by R.H. Burnside, general manager of the New York Hippodrome, who engaged him to replace the eccentric comedian Marcelline in the revue *Happy Days*. Cook made his first appearance in America in September 1919 and was reportedly an "immediate success with his pantomimic power and his wonderful ability as a contortionist." Regularly billed as the Australian "Inja Rubber Idiot" during this period, he remained the "chief entertainer at that house until late-March 1920".<sup>17</sup>



*Australian Variety* (Sydney) 26 Oct. 1917, n. pag.



Courtesy of allstarspic.com

**TIVOLI THEATRE.**  
 Harry Richards' Tivoli Theatres, Ltd.,  
 Governing Director .... HUGH D. McINTOSH.  
 Nightly at 8, Matinee To-day and Monday, 2.30.  
 2.30. MATINEE TO-DAY. 2.30.  
 2.30.  
 Making their first appearance To-day at the  
 Matinee.  
**ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.  
 ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.**  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 CLYDE COOK,  
 Australia's Foremost Original and  
 Eccentric Dancer.  
 This artist's successes in Europe were remarkable. He  
 has a style characteristically and inimitably his own.  
 He will make his first appearance to-day at the  
 Matinee.  
 CLYDE COOK  
 CLYDE COOK  
 CLYDE COOK  
 CLYDE COOK  
 CLYDE COOK  
 CLYDE COOK

*Sydney Morning Herald*  
 29 Sept. 1917, 2.

**AMUSEMENTS.**  
**J. C. WILLIAMSON THEATRE.**  
 Direction .... J. C. WILLIAMSON, LTD.  
 Managing Directors—George Talla, Hugh J. Ward,  
 Clyde Marshall.  
**HER MAJESTY'S, TO-NIGHT, AT 7.45.**  
**MATINEES TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY.**  
 RETURN OF THE  
**ROYAL COMIC OPERA COMPANY,**  
 Including FLORENCE YOUNG.  
 GUARANTEEING A MERRY CHRISTMAS.  
 FIRST PRODUCTION IN SYDNEY  
 of  
 The Scintillating Success,  
**THE CINEMA STAR**  
 Musical Nonsense Comedy  
 (In arrangement with Robert Courtneidge).  
 DAZZLING IN ITS BEAUTY AND BRILLIANCE.  
**CAST OF CHARACTERS:**  
 Joseph Clatterbuck ..... PHIL SMITH  
 Victor de Brent ..... REGINALD ROBERTS  
 "The Rolling Stone" ..... CLYDE COOK  
 Waiter ..... BOLE SHOUTLAND  
 Lord Clarence Westwood ..... STANLEY GIGERS  
 Freddy ..... PERCY CLIFTON  
 Croaker ..... ALFRED ANDREW  
 Constable ..... JAMES HUGHES  
 Caddy ..... ALFRED ANDREW  
 Mr. Phinnett ..... FRED ENGLAND  
 Mr. Curwen ..... W. BUCKLEY  
 Billy ..... LESLIE HOLLAND  
 Phyllis ..... ETHEL CADMAN  
 Ullmie ..... MINNIE LOVE  
 Maud ..... NELLIE PAYNE  
 Miss Sydney ..... STELLA ESDALE  
 Miss Harrod ..... EILEEN SHETTLÉ  
 Miss Gibbs ..... NESTA BARRY  
 Miss Chairman ..... LARNA GOWLAND  
 Flower Woman ..... MRS. GEO. LAURI  
 Mrs. Clatterbuck ..... MOLLIE ENGLER  
 Louise ..... FLORENCE YOUNG  
 Produced by CHAS. A. WENMAN.  
 Musical Director ..... ANDREW MARTIN.  
 Ballets, etc., arranged by MINNIE BROMBER.  
 scenery by LESLIE BOARD and W. LITTLE.  
 Plans at Fallin's until noon; thereafter at Her  
 Majesty's, Market street. Day Sale at CalDose's.

*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 Dec. 1916, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney) 5 July 1919, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Brisbane Courier* 10 May 1919, 12.

<sup>17</sup> "Clyde Cook Biography" 14; and Porter 159.

Sometime during his Hippodrome engagement Cook came to the attention of William Fox who signed him to star in a series of special screen comedies to be made by Fox Studios in Hollywood. Cook subsequently left for the West Coast a few days before his contract became effective – on 1 April 1920. The first Clyde Cook film to be released was *Don't Tickle*. It was an immediate success, at one stage being screened in two Broadway theatres simultaneously. Although his next four films were equally as popular Cook's star appeal seems to have been somewhat limited. He nevertheless continued to take on roles regularly throughout the 1920s and 1930s, eventually turning himself into a reliable character actor.

Little has yet been established regarding Cook's continued association with the stage from 1920 onwards. While several secondary sources record that he appeared with Ziegfeld's Follies, no specific dates are provided (see *Historical Notes and Corrections* below). The *Theatre Magazine* records in early 1922 that "one of Clyde Cook's latest American appearances was as Sir Joseph Porter in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Pinafore*."<sup>18</sup> A brief par in *Everyone's* from early 1925<sup>19</sup> indicates, too, that he was then headlining on the Orpheum Circuit, while the *Internet Broadway Database* further records that he played a soldier in the 1947 production of *The Story of Mary Surratt*.

While his film roles became less frequent from the mid-1940s onwards, Cook nevertheless maintained a presence in the industry up until 1953, averaging at least a film a year throughout that period. One film that he was perfectly cast for was *The Man from Down Under* (1943), in which he played an Australian. His final film was *Donovan's Reef* (1963), starring opposite John Wayne.

Little has yet been found regarding Clyde Cook's personal life. It appears that he was married twice – the first time to Alice Draper (?-1938), and with whom he had one child. His second wife's maiden name was Ethel Constance. The 1921 *Everyone's* biography indicates that Cook was a determined man who took his career very seriously and knew well the value of keeping himself fit and healthy.

Mr Cook for fifteen years, in order to develop his muscles and make his body supple, has taken exercises before breakfast every morning. He spends twenty minutes in back bending, standing on his hands, leg-stretching and many other stunts. In this way he keeps himself to 140 pounds weight – which is not more than five pounds over his fighting weight when he was training for the ring. At various times during the course of his stage tumbling he broke his left shoulder blade, his left ankle, his left hand, three fingers on his right hand and suffered concussion of the brain. However, these injuries had no lasting effect, and he is in better physical condition now than he was ten years ago.<sup>20</sup>

Cook died of arteriosclerotic cardio vascular disease on 13 August 1984 at his home near Santa Barbara, California.



*Green Room* (Sydney) July 1921, 27.

## HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

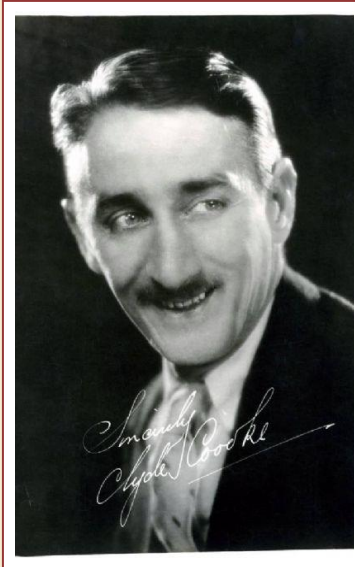
1. **Charles Norman** writes in *When Vaudeville Was King*: "Miss Daphne Pollard and her brother Clyde Cook went to Hollywood and acted in the early films" (136). This is very likely an error by Norman as no further reference to Cook and Pollard being brother and sister has been found in any other source. Cook's only known sibling was an elder brother (see "Clyde Cook Biography," for example).
2. Several secondary sources also record that Cook served in the navy prior to or after returning to Australia in 1916 (see for example Frank Van Straten's entry in the *Companion to Theatre in Australia*, 159; and [silenthollywood.com](http://silenthollywood.com)). As noted above, however, this did not eventuate. An examination of Cook's career in both the Britain and Australia indicates that he could not have served with either the British Royal Navy or the Australian Royal Navy due to his theatrical commitments.

<sup>18</sup> *Theatre Magazine* (Sydney) Mar. 1922, 16.

<sup>19</sup> From an undated photocopy.

<sup>20</sup> "Clyde Cook Biography" 14.

3. Cook's entry in the *Internet Movie Database* records that he made an uncredited appearance in the US film *Soldiers of Fortune*, which was released on 22 November 1919. It would appear unlikely that Cook could have been involved in its production, however, given that it was made in San Diego either before Cook arrived in the USA or at least while he was appearing at the Hippodrome in New York.
4. A number of secondary sources erroneously record that Cook was an "original Keystone Kop," or have him associated with the Max Sennett comedy series. A catalogue record in the National Library of Australia (*The Chump*)<sup>21</sup> notes, for example that "Cook first appeared in Keystone comedies in 1915 and switched to Fox in 1920." The *Internet Movie Database* also implies this association through its entry on the [Keystone Kops](#). However, Cook's association with that series is at best only cursory.



The original Keystone Kops (aka Keystone Cops) films were produced by Sennett for his Keystone Film Company between 1912 and 1917, and hence the series ended well before Cook first went to the USA. Although Sennett continued to use the Keystone Kops intermittently through the 1920s, Cook was never involved in any of these films. The linking of Cook's name with the Keystone Kops appears to stem from his brief appearance in the 1931 Masquers Club of Hollywood and RKO Pathe Pictures film *Stout Hearts and Willing Hands* (directed by Bryan Foy and starring Frank Fay, Lew Cody and Laura La Plante). In one scene the film sees a bunch of Keystone Kops-looking policeman rush into a saw mill and save La Plante's character. Although each of the eight actors is credited as "original Keystone Kops," only two (Ford Sterling, and perhaps Mack Swain) can be claimed as originals). Given that *Stout Hearts and Willing Hands* has no association with Max Sennett and is not considered part of the Keystone Kops series, any suggestion of both the film and Cook being part of its history should be dismissed as historically inaccurate.

Source: [www.allstarspic.com](http://www.allstarspic.com)

5. Several secondary sources also record that Cook appeared with Ziegfeld Follies. His obituary in the *Star News* indicates, for example, that he joined that organisation after World War I. Frank Van Straten notes a similar scenario, writing that after moving to the USA "he appeared at the New York Hippodrome and in Ziegfeld Follies" (159). It is unclear at this stage how long after Cook arrived in the USA that this engagement may have taken place. Current research suggests that he was contracted to the Hippodrome between September 1919 and the end of March 1920, and given his film commitments in California during the next couple of years it is unlikely that he would have had time to appear with the Follies unless these were brief engagements. As noted above, however, Cook is known to have continued to perform live during the 1920s and hence it is possible that he did play the Follies at some stage.

### ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

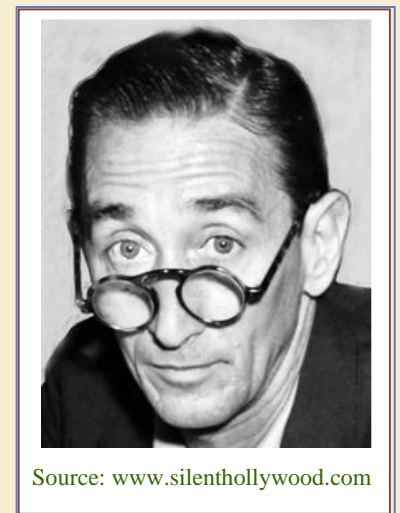
- 1914:** Clyde Cook, the Australian dancer, who has done remarkably well since his English appearance, is now playing a particular role in the Alhambra revue, *Not Likely*. All will be pleased to hear of his success as he is a young fellow who enjoys a wide measure of popularity amongst the profession and outside of it (15 July 1914, n. pag.).
- 1914:** Clyde Cook, the Australian dancer, is still doing remarkably well in London in both Alhambra revues *Not Likely* and *Keep Smiling*. He has been featured on the daybills and other printed matter, with names that are famous in the English amusement world. Clyde's mother has been with her son for some considerable time now (*Australian Variety* 22 July 1914, n. pag.).
- 1916:** Clyde Cook, the Australian acrobat and dancer celebrated the third year of his engagement at the Alhambra Theatre, London, on March 30<sup>th</sup>. This is certainly a fine record for this clever young performer (*Australian Variety and Show World* 12 Apr. 1916, 6; repeated 19 Apr. 1916, 6).
- 1917:** Clyde Cook, Australia's eccentric dancer and comedian was added to the [Sydney Tivoli] bill this week. Closing the first half of the show he made one of the hits of the afternoon with his very humorous fooling and sensational acrobatic dancing (*Australian Variety and Show World* 3 Oct. 1917, 19).

<sup>21</sup> The only silent film titled *The Chump* to be made in the USA was the Universal Film Manufacturing Company's 1921 production (directed by Ward Hayes). As the above biography records, Cook was under contract to Fox at that time and hence unlikely to have been allowed to appear in this film. While the NLA catalogue entry indicates that a copy of this film is held by the National Film and Sound Archive, a search of that organisation's holdings has failed to yield a match.

- 1917:** Clyde Cook (Tivoli) would do well to take a little more interest in his work. Talking about cutting this and that when doing your turn is of no earthly interest to an audience who want to (an pay to) see an act at its best. This par is not meant for a knock but a gentle hint (*Australian Variety and Show World* 15 Aug. 1917, n. pag.).
- 1921:** "Clyde Cook's First Comedy a Winner." It is a military burlesque with the nimble comedian in the role of Private Wright, who does everything wrong. His awkward drill is extremely laughable, and his efforts to protect the borderline against whisky smugglers are a scream. The business of the rolling barrels has been deftly handled. The rescue of the captain's daughter is also a strong feature, and the feature as a whole should make an audience rock with laughter... (*Everyone's* 23 Mar. 1921, 14).
- 1963:** [Clyde Cook] appeared in short trousers in *The Milestones of Life* at the Criterion in 1901. He was more the comic in *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 1911... Cook had great possibilities with his flair for the comic, but when he was in America he came up against such artists as Charlie Chaplin, Ben Turpin and Chester Conklin, and never reached the first flight (Brodsky, 62-63).

## FILMOGRAPHY

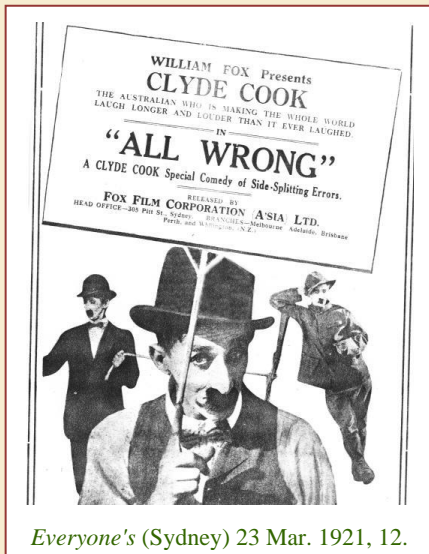
- 1920:** Don't Tickle • Kiss Me Quick • The Huntsman • Chase Me
- 1921:** All Wrong • The Jockey • The Chauffeur • The Toreador • The Sailor • The Guide • Skirts
- 1922:** High and Dry • Lazy Bones • The Eskimo
- 1923:** Wet and Weary • The Cyclist • The Artist
- 1924:** So This Is Marriage? • He Who Gets Slapped • The Pinhead • Pony Express • The Misfit • The Broncho Express The Orphan
- 1925:** Starvation Blues • Should Sailors Marry? • Moonlight and Noses
- 1926:** The Winning of Barbara Worth • Miss Nobody • He Forgot to Remember • Scared Stiff • Wife Tamers • Wandering Papas (aka Enough to Do, UK) • What's the World Coming To?
- 1927:** Good Time Charley • A Sailor's Sweetheart • The Bush Leaguer • Barbed Wire • Simple Sis • The Climbers • The Brute White Gold
- 1928:** The Spieler (aka The Spellbinder, UK) • Interference • Beware of Bachelors • Celebrity • Through the Breakers • The Docks of New York • Five and Ten Cent Annie (aka Ambitious Annie) • Pay as You Enter • Lucky in Love • Domestic Troubles • Beware of Married Men
- 1929:** Strong Boy • Captain Lash • Taming of the Shrew • Jazz Heaven • In the Headlines • A Dangerous Woman • Captain Lash • Masquerade •
- 1930:** Sunny • The Dawn Patrol • Women Everywhere • Wings of Adventure • The Dude Wrangler • Officer O'Brien
- 1931:** Daybreak • The Secret Witness • Never the Twain Shall Meet
- 1932:** Blondie of the Follies
- 1933:** West of Singapore • Oliver Twist
- 1934:** Shock
- 1935:** Calm Yourself • Barbary Coast • The Perfect Gentleman • The Informer
- 1936:** Tugboat Princess • The White Angel
- 1937:** Wee Willie Winkie • Lancer Spy • Love Under Fire • Bulldog Drummond Escapes • Another Dawn • Souls at Sea
- 1938:** Bulldog Drummond's Peril • Kidnapped • Storm over Bengal • Arrest Bulldog Drummond • Mysterious Mr. Moto
- 1939:** The Little Princess • Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police • Pack Up Your Troubles • Bulldog Drummond's Bride
- 1940:** The Light That Failed • The Sea Hawk
- 1941:** Suspicion • Ladies in Retirement • Sergeant York • Unexpected Uncle •
- 1942:** Counter-Espionage • This Above All • Klondike Fury • White Cargo
- 1943:** The Mysterious Doctor • The Man from Down Under • Forever and a Day
- 1944:** The White Cliffs of Dover • Follow the Boys
- 1946:** To Each His Own • The Verdict
- 1947:** Bulldog Drummond at Bay
- 1948:** To the Victor
- 1949:** Sword in the Desert
- 1950:** When Willie Comes Marching Home
- 1951:** Pride of Maryland
- 1953:** Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde • Rogue's March • Loose in London • The Maze
- 1963:** Donovan's Reef



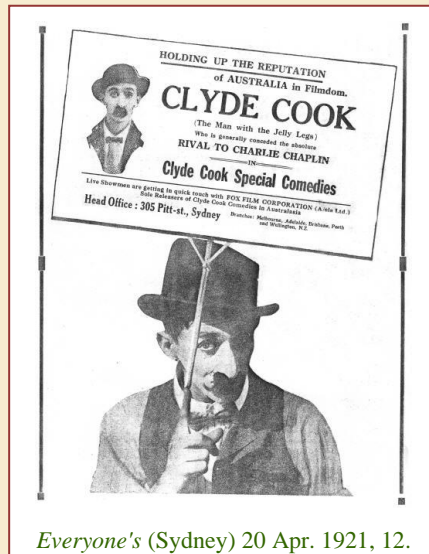
Source: [www.silenthollywood.com](http://www.silenthollywood.com)

NB: Cook also appeared in one episode of the television series *Superman* in 1953.

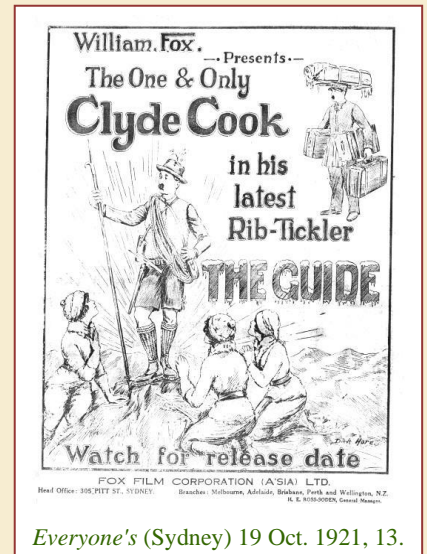
The above filmography has been sourced from both the *Internet Movie Database* and *Silent Hollywood.com*



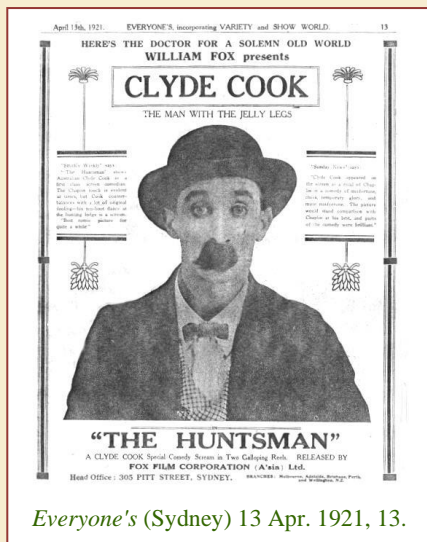
*Everyone's* (Sydney) 23 Mar. 1921, 12.



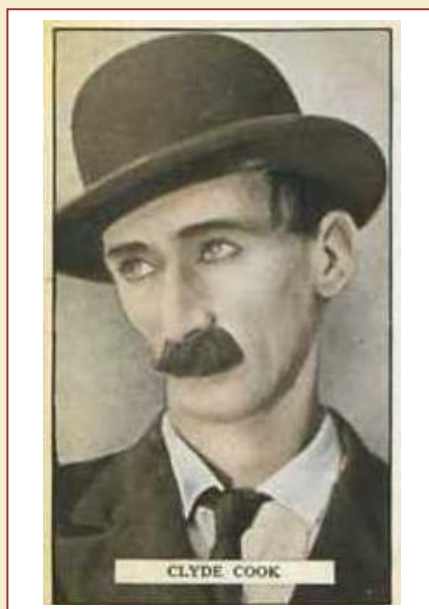
*Everyone's* (Sydney) 20 Apr. 1921, 12.



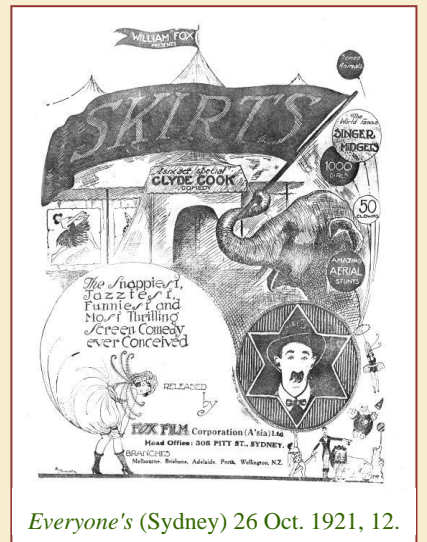
*Everyone's* (Sydney) 19 Oct. 1921, 13.



*Everyone's* (Sydney) 13 Apr. 1921, 13.



A Gallaher Tobacco card (UK) from 1926  
Courtesy of thingsandotherstuff.com



*Everyone's* (Sydney) 26 Oct. 1921, 12.

## ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

- 1901:** CHARLES HOLLOWAY Sydney (Criterion Theatre; 15-28 June < *The Milestones of Life*).
- 1902:** JOHN F. SHERIDAN Sydney (Criterion Theatre; 20 Sept.-24 Oct. < *Mrs Goldstein*).
- 1903:** HARRY RICKARDS Sydney (Tivoli Theatre; 10 Jan. - < first appearance).
- 1905:** JOHN FULLER & SONS New Zealand tour (ca. Nov.- 31 Dec.).
- 1905 Dominion tour incl. **Auckland** (Opera House; ca. Nov/Dec.) • **Wellington** (Theatre Royal, Wellington; ca. Dec.).
- 1906:** JOHN FULLER & SONS New Zealand tour (1 Jan. - ca. Apr.) ► HARRY RICKARDS Sydney (Tivoli Theatre; 14 Apr.- < billed as "a reappearance in Sydney") ► TED HOLLAND Brisbane (Theatre Royal; 28 Apr. -) ► J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 24-31 Dec. < *Alice in Wonderland*).
- 1906 Dominion tour incl. **Wellington** (Theatre Royal; ca. Jan.) • **Christchurch** (Opera House and Palace of Varieties, ca. Jan.-Feb.) • (Theatre Royal, Wellington, NZ; ca. Mar-Apr.).
- 1907:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan. - < *Alice in Wonderland*) • **Sydney** (Theatre Royal; 14-31 Dec. > *Blue Bells in Fairyland*).



- 1908:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Theatre Royal; 1 Jan. - > *Blue Bells in Fairyland*) • Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 19-31 Dec. < *Jack and Jill*).
- 1909:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan.- < *Jack and Jill*) • J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Melbourne (Her Majesty's Theatre; 18-31 Dec. < *Aladdin*).
- 1910:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Melbourne (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan.- < *Aladdin*) ► HARRY RICKARDS Sydney (Tivoli Theatre; 21 Mar. < Benevolent Fund of the Australian Vaudeville Association matinee) ► J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Brisbane (Her Majesty's Theatre; 23 May - < *Aladdin*) • J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Melbourne (Her Majesty's Theatre; 17-31 Dec. < *Jack and the Beanstalk*).
- 1911:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Melbourne (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan. - < *Jack and the Beanstalk*) • J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 8 Apr. - < *Jack and the Beanstalk*).

**NB:** Cook leaves for the UK sometime in 1911.



**1913:** Begins a three year engagement at the Alhambra Theatre, London on 30 March. Revues incl. *Kill That Fly* (joins the cast on 30 Mar. 1913),<sup>22</sup> *Eightpence a Mile* (9 May 1913), *Keep Smiling* (6 Oct. 1913), and *Not Likely* (4 May 1914), *5064 Gerrard* (19 March 1915), *Now's the Time* (13 Oct. 1915).

**NB:** Returns to Australia in May 1916.

- 1916:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Melbourne (Her Majesty's Theatre; 7 Oct. - 24 Nov. < *Cinema Star*) • J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 23-31 Dec. < *Cinema Star*).
- 1917:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan - 9 Feb. < *Cinema Star*) • Adelaide (Theatre Royal; 23 June - 3 July < Royal Comic Opera Co) ► RICKARDS TIVOLI THEATRES LTD Sydney (Tivoli Theatre; 29 Sept. -) ► J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd New Zealand (Dominion tour; ca. Oct.) • Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 29-31 Dec. < *The Bing Boys*).
- 1918:** J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 1 Jan.- < *The Bing Boys*) • Brisbane (Her Majesty's Theatre; ca. June-July < *The Bing Boys*) • Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; ca. Sept. - < *The Bing Boys*, return season) • Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; 26-31 Dec. < *Hello Everybody*)

- 1919:** (J.C. WILLIAMSON'S Ltd Sydney (Her Majesty's Theatre; Jan. - < *Hello Everybody*))
- 1920:** Travels to the USA and opens at the New York Hippodrome (Billed as the "Inja Rubber Idiot," he stars in *Happy Days*)
- 1925:** ORPHEUM CIRCUIT, USA (no details; ca. Jan/Feb.)

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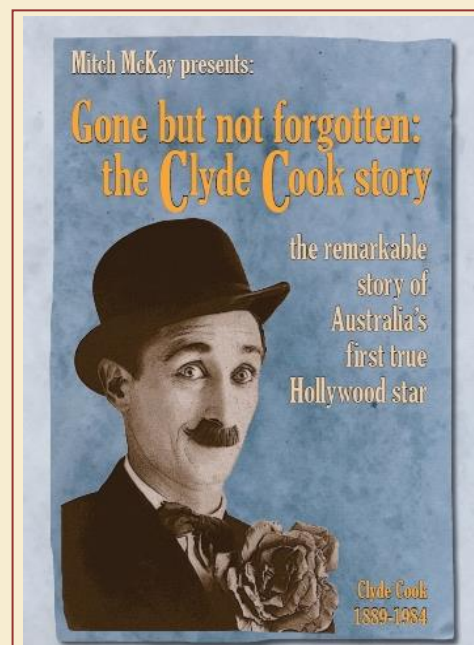
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<sup>22</sup> *Kill that Fly* had been running since 14 Oct. 1912.

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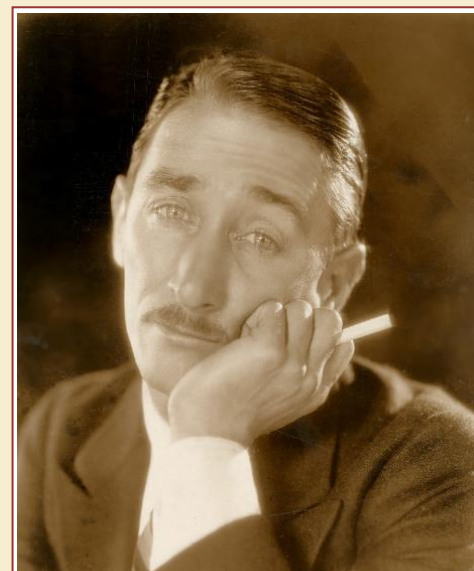
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Source: Find a Grave.com.  
 (uploaded by Nat)



Promotional photograph for  
*Domestic Troubles* (1926)  
 Source: Silent Hollywood.com



Source: Internet Movie Database.  
 Photographer not identified.

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