

## Edward James Wivell (1833–1909) and his son Edmund Jerome Wivell, Professors of Dancing: A Research Note

Brian Samuels

It was the bibliography in the expanded third edition of Shirley Andrew's book *Take Your Partners* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1979) that first drew my attention to E.J. Wivell, whose *The Ball Room Companion and Pupil's Self-help* appears to be the only substantial dancing manual published in nineteenth century South Australia. As a keen 'colonial' dancer, I persuaded the State Library of South Australia to acquire a photocopy from the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Undated, it was ascribed to the 1870s. Years later I chanced upon an advertisement for Wivell's classes in Josiah Boothby's *The Adelaide Almanac and Directory for South Australia, 1874* (Adelaide: J. Williams, 1874), which advertised the Companion as 'just published'. Misleadingly, the same statement appeared annually in subsequent Directory advertisements until 1882.

My interest was renewed in May 2001 when the State Library's monthly list of new acquisitions of South Australiana, 'Mortlock Miscellany', listed another publication by E.J. Wivell, *The Six Square Dances, or, Fashionable Quadrilles* (1891). When I finally made time to inspect it four years later, I discovered it was by E.J. Wivell Junior, and that spurred me to find out more about the Wivell family.

The Library's own South Australiana Database provided the key, as its entry for a photograph of the father contained a brief summary of the family history. Edward James Wivell had married in Victoria in 1863 and come to South Australia by 1868. It was Edmund Jerome, born in Adelaide in 1868, who literally followed in his father's footsteps and taught dancing and produced the booklet of instructions for quadrilles.

As far as I can ascertain, the only published biographical sketch of the father is that in Joan Kerr's *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: Painters, Sketchers, Engravers to 1870* (Melbourne: OUP, 1992). It describes Wivell as a 'professional photographer, art gallery proprietor and dancing teacher', and it seems that he sustained those interests for much of his life. Kerr records that in 1856 his firm exhibited photography at the Victorian Exhibition of Art and that by 1861 he had a Dancing Academy and Assembly Hall in Fitzroy, Victoria. The National Library

of Australia holds two albums of photographs taken by the firm of Freeman & Wivell, one containing views of Adelaide (1874) and the other photos of South Australia sent to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. The State Library of South Australia has well over 300 Wivell & Co. photos of children who attended a fancy dress ball in the Adelaide Town Hall in 1887. All of them can be viewed on-line via its South Australiana Database.

Wivell's art gallery ownership was also significant. The *Adelaide Observer* newspaper (4 September 1880) recorded that Wivell was displaying at his Rundle St. gallery nearly 20 paintings by H.J. Johnstone, including 'Evening Shadows', a very large painting of a backwater of the River Murray, dominated by gum trees, which was to be the first acquisition of the National (now Art) Gallery of South Australia in 1881 and is still a favourite with gallery goers.

Wivell's 74 page dancing manual contains instructions for 23 dances and is a very useful resource for modern day 'colonial' dancers. The contents were reproduced—but not in facsimile—as chapter eight of Nell Challingsworth's *Australia's Dancing Heritage* (Melbourne: Go Dancing Publications, 1994), wherein the manual's date of publication is incorrectly given as the early 1860s, even though one of the testimonials

## DANCING, DEPARTMENT, & CALISTHENICS.

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AND  
EVENING PARTIES  
ATTENDED.



MORNING  
AND  
EVENING CLASSES.  
—  
Private Lessons  
BY  
APPOINTMENT

*Prospectuses on application at the Academy, East Terrace, Adelaide.*

*E. J. WIVELL, Maitre de Danse.*

Just Published—Mr. Wivell's Ball Room Companion and Pupil's Self Help.

*Wivell's advertisement in Josiah Boothby's The Adelaide Almanac and Directory for South Australia, 1882, with its misleading 'Just Published' statement for his Ball Room Companion that had appeared annually since the 1874 edition of the Directory.*

it includes is dated 10 September 1869. The son's 15 page pocket-sized booklet on quadrilles is not really substantial enough to be called a 'manual', and despite its title contains the instructions for seven dances: six quadrilles and a circle dance.

Some-time journalist, Hansard reporter and authority on the flora of South Australia, John McConnell Black, gives a glimpse of the son's classes in his diary entry for 9 November 1891, the year in which the quadrille booklet was published.

This is the last week of Wivell's dancing class—weather getting too warm. He goes to Mount Gambier to teach for a few weeks and will start again in Eagle Chambers (opposite our office) about the end of February. Besides the classes we had a ball and a Cinderella at his rooms. The Mazurka puzzled me a lot at first, but I have mastered that, also the polka, the schottische, the barn dance, have got the square dance by heart and have made fair progress with what I call (the great impossible) the waltz, in which there is always something to learn... Wivell (E.J. junior) is a splendid teacher, always cheerful and patient, but his Hs' are strewn all over the glassy floor of his ballroom.

M. Andrew and S. Clissold (eds.), *The Diaries of John McConnell Black Volume II* (Adelaide: The Board of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium, 1991), p. 68.

Today Eagle Chambers form the northern wing of the Adelaide Town Hall complex, facing Pirie and King William Streets. The State Library holds a photo (B 63828) of the Chambers taken c1890 that features a sign advertising the son's 'ecole de dance' under the top corner window. I had not encountered the term 'a Cinderella' before reading Black's diaries. Peter Ellis, a musician and dance historian from Bendigo, confirmed for me that it was a dance that ended at midnight.

Edward Wivell's interesting careers would obviously repay further study.

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#### *Notes*

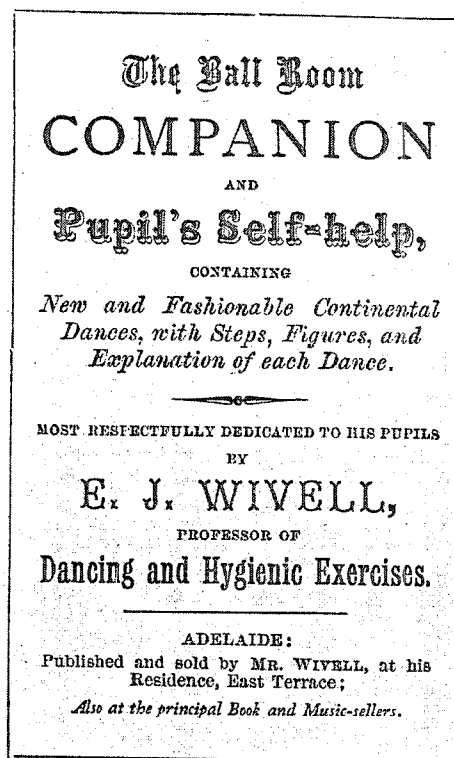
The dances in Wivell Senior's manual comprise: The Quadrille, The Lancers, The Polka, The Schottische, The Redowa, The Valse-a-Deux-Temps, The Galop, The Caledonians, The Mazurka Valse, The Polka Mazurka, The Spanish Dance, The Coulon or Double Quadrille, The Valse-a-Trois-Temps, The Highland Reel, The Danish Waltz, La Tempete, The Prince Imperial Quadrille, The Kent Quadrille, and grouped under the heading Country Dances, The Victoria, The Albert, The Princess Royal, The Mescolane and Sir Roger de Coverley.

Wivell Junior's booklet contains: The Quadrille, The Lancers, The Caledonians, The Prince Imperial Quadrille, Albert Quadrille, Circassian Circle and The Sixteen Lancers.

The State Library's South Australiana Database entry for the carte-de-visite portrait (B59012) of the father is available on-line and as at 1 July 2006 the accompanying notes read as follows:

Edward James Wivell arrived in South Australia from Victoria in 1867. He had married Mary Mulready in Victoria in 1863 and they had two children there; Edward (1864) and Mary (1865), Mary died in 1867. After moving to South Australia they had two more children; Edmund Jerome (1868) and Abraham (1869), Abraham died in 1870. Edward was a dance teacher and collector of art, owning 'Black Thursday' and 'The Explorer'. He left South Australia temporarily in 1893 (see *Quiz and Lantern*, 6 October 1893, p. 5), Edmund taking over his 'Ecole de Dance', but returned by 1909 when he died on 16 December, aged 76.

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*The title page from Wivell's 'Companion'.*

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