

# Karridale: The growth and decline of a timber settlement

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**ABSTRACT:** Maurice Coleman Davies, often referred to simply as ‘M.C’, obtained a Concession (timber) at the end of the 1870s in Western Australia’s south west. It covered 168,000 acres and was gradually extended until twenty years later its furthest boundary was nearly fifty miles from the coast. During this period Davies built sawmills at Coodardup, Boranup, Jarrahdene and Karridale. The last of these townships became the centre of activities for the workers employed in the mills. There was access to two harbours from Karridale for exporting the timber. Davies is acknowledged as having established the market for Jarrah and Karri hardwoods and for these timbers to be known throughout the world. By 1906 the control of the mills and their activities had passed to an English/Australian company. Several factors are identified for the decline of this remote but once thriving centre of M.C’s kingdom.

## 1 A PROJECT BASED ON TEXT MATERIAL

This is an ongoing project. I promised myself that when I retired from academic life to find out as much as possible about Karridale, where my parents spent the first years of their married life. My father Robert Standish moved to Karridale in October 1907 being employed by Millars Karri and Jarrah Company. The Karridale post involved checking the loading and shipping of the exported timber and the monthly pay of the men in the bush. He may have been the accountant in the Karridale office.

My mother Jo Anderson was a school teacher in Bunbury. My father and she agreed to marry in a year’s time and while apart they wrote regularly to each other sending letters and postcards. The letters have survived but not the postcards. After they married in Bunbury on 16 October 1908, my mother went twice to see her family in Bunbury during 1909 to 1910 and there are several letters from my father written to her during this period. Altogether there are 91 letters written by him from Karridale and 113 from my mother in Bunbury. They lived in Karridale for three years, leaving in 1911.

I also have several radio scripts written by my mother based on the letters and her memories. One script has a note on it that it was broadcast on the Sydney station 2UW on 6 May 1938. My father’s letters and the broadcast material provide information about life and events in this remote timber settlement.

An only child, I was born in Sydney in 1929. My mother and I visited her relatives in Bunbury in 1936 and we went looking for Karridale with my uncle and aunt. We eventually found it in the bush - a ruined, ghost town. My father died the following year and my mother ten years later in

1947. I left Sydney for England in 1951 and stayed on to marry, have children, and follow a career in England.

The letters and scripts survived and were sent to me in England in the 1960s. Reading them, there are questions that I would have liked to ask my mother, especially whether they were aware of Karridale's decline and why they decided to leave in 1911.

In this paper, using the material outlined above, I have looked for evidence of Karridale going through a period of lack of investment, accidents, and setbacks which was in marked contrast to the town in its heyday. As a timber town Karridale was dependent on the sustainability of the timber resources and also a sufficient, skilled work force. It had two ports, one of which by 1907 was no longer usable. Karridale was not only a timber mill town but also the Millars Company's headquarters for the South West.

## 1.2 *Limitations of the material*

It might be argued that these letters and scripts are the impressions and opinions of just two individuals over a limited period. Certainly my father's letters changed in content as the planned wedding drew nearer and also since my mother had visited Karridale several times, he could assume her familiarity with the town. It would be valuable though to have other sources of conformation of the events he described in his letters.

## 2 FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF KARRIDALE

My father, who from now I shall call RWS, continued to recount to my mother (JA) details of his work and life in Karridale in the part of his letter which he referred to as his 'news'. However, he was constrained at times in how much or when he could write by pressures of work. His hours varied in relation to the ships that came to be loaded with timber at Flinders Bay and the regular monthly payment of the men working in the bush. His letters provide an interesting insight into the routine management functions of a busy office (16 employees). This was Millars' headquarters for their operations in the South West and it was overseen by and reported to the Company's managing directors in Perth.

RWS did not spend all his time in the office. In one of the first letters written to JA he tells of 'picking up the work' and arranging for loading of the *Briez Huel* that was taking 2,100 loads (1 load = 1.416m<sup>3</sup>) on board with the *Abergeldie* and the *Komata* expected shortly. He had to get up at 5.30 am to go down to Flinders Bay with the men to start work on the steamer. When ships were expected he found himself working every evening. The office staff usually finished on Saturdays at 1.00 o'clock and could spend the rest of the day and Sunday as they liked.

On his first Sunday RWS was invited to a picnic arranged by several of the ladies. It was held down at Hamelin Bay about four miles from Karridale. RWS travelled down with Lowe the shipping clerk on the motor trolley which only took three people. It was a wretched day weather-wise, but he enjoyed what he called 'a real country picnic' with '18 adults and 12 kiddies'.

Lunch was laid out in an old shed, and you should have seen the amount of meat, fowls, scones, cakes, and other 'grub' provided, and all beautifully cooked. The people were very nice and soon made me feel friendly. (Unpublished letter from RWS 1/10/ 07)

Lowe tried to start the motor trolley when it was time to return to Karridale but it showed no signs of life and the day ended with them travelling back to Karridale 'per boot' in the rain. Apparently the motor trolley was 'a good little vehicle but it has its off days, so it is now having a thorough overhaul.' This would not be the last time that the trolley would prove uncooperative. Maintenance not only of the trolley but of Karridale's cottages, rail stock and lines was a constant theme throughout his letters.

### 3 MILLERS CONNECTION WITH M.C.DAVIES

1907 was an interesting year to take up a post in Karridale as there were a number of decisions facing the directors of Millars in relation to the future of Karridale, as a sawmilling township with a notable past.

In 1902 because of falling markets and the price cutting by other mills, the timber industry in the South West had been at a cross roads. Eight timber companies decided to amalgamate in an attempt to bring stability back to the industry. The new company that emerged became Millars Timber and Trading Company.

In her radio talk Jo Standish, explaining how she came to live in Karridale in 1908, referred to Millars simply as an 'English/Australian Company' who had just taken over Karridale from Maurice Coleman Davies, the entrepreneur who created a market for jarrah and karri hardwood. When she arrived in Karridale she was fascinated by finding that everything was just as in the days of M.C. as he was always called by everyone. With backing from London investors M.C. had not only recognised an export market for the tall hardwood trees of the forests but how to attract the large numbers of workers required, by providing them with housing and town amenities for themselves and their families.

The settlement or township was almost self-sufficient with its own church, hospital, library, school, sports ground and even a race track. Words such as 'kingdom', 'empire' and 'principality' have been used to describe what M.C. created. He was able to control the tree fellers, the hauling to the 'sidings', the rail lines to the mills, and to the ports – the various stages necessary to get the timber out of the forest and to the ports for shipping not only to the other Australian colonies but to countries such as England, India, China, South Africa and South America – a huge market.

Ports were important particularly for export overseas. Larger ships required deep water – jetties and wharves had to be built. 'M.C. chose Karridale as the site of his timber operations probably because it was close to both the magnificent Jarrah and Karri forests and to Flinders and Hamelin Bays.

When the timber mills were small concerns and the timber finally was 'all cut out', they could be abandoned, or taken down and moved else where, or even left and reopened at a later date, often with improvements to the mill being made. When there were homes, services and public buildings in addition to the mill, it was more difficult to take such decisions.

Millars found this out in respect to Denmark, which was established in 1895 when the Millar brothers, Charles and Edwin, built a number of timber mills on the banks of the river of that name. The town grew rapidly to provide for the needs of the large labour force required to run the mills, which at their peak were said to employ 750 men and which produced 90,000 super feet of timber a day. Not surprisingly at that rate all the accessible karri was cut out within ten years. Only about 50 people remained in the town when the mills closed. However two men had established themselves in the area, one a fisherman, the other a vegetable grower, who were greatly concerned when they realised that Millars were planning not only to close down the mills, but also to dismantle the cottages, shops, and other buildings they had built for the mill workers. They petitioned the government to stop this and in 1907 a price of £5,000 was agreed and the demolition halted. (Shire of Denmark, 2004)

Millars in 1907 had Karridale with its cottages, hall, library, offices and school as well as the transport and communication systems which linked it to export outlets. These all required maintenance if not development and updating. There was also the big Cottage, the previous home of M.C. that contained 28 rooms as well as a ballroom. Southcombe (1986) has described the Davies family as living in 'a thirty-nine room mansion in Karridale and a huge staff of servants was employed to keep the house in apple-pie order.'

Millars used the big Cottage for accommodating visitors and management staff. They paid the wages of a housekeeper and one maid when RWS arrived in October 1907. He found himself in this palatial building along with Jim Kelly the manager, who was shortly moving to another post, as the only other occupant.

#### 4 THE MONETARY SYSTEM – NO COINAGE USED

Then there was M.C.'s non-coinage monetary system. My mother considered the strangest thing she found, when she arrived in Karridale, was that no money was in circulation. M.C. and later the Company acted as bankers for everyone.

Every man had an Account in the books and in this account he was credited with all his earnings for the month - bush fellers, haulers, mill hands, railway men, wharf loaders, office staff, every body - and against this credit was charged their purchases in the store, bakery etc. Each man had a 'chit' book this was used for Subscriptions to sports clubs, dances and so forth. The first dance I helped at I was much amazed by the fact that we took 7/6 at the door in hard cash. The rest of the takings consisted of 'chits' or 'subs'. Next day these were handed into the office cashier, who would charge each 2/6 up to the signer of the chit and the total would be credited to the Dance Committee. The store manager and the baker handed in their accounts for drinks, cakes etc. supplied to the dance, so like the music in the well known song, it went Round and Round. (Jo M. Standish, "A Strange Corner of Australia" page 2, typed broadcast script. 2UW 6 May 1938)

My mother thought the system helped in the saving of earnings, and at that time (1908) there were thousands of pounds standing to the credit of the employees.

Moreover they received good interest monthly on their credits, which were also fully protected under a Bond with the Govt. However before I left in 1911, this Banking system, which had held favour for so many years, was abandoned and payment for all work was made in cash, it then became necessary for my husband and the pay clerk to go to Busselton once each month for the cash for the pay, and on these days the old (Company) coach carried richer cargoes than it had ever known, (and also) a heavily armed 'blue coat'. Unfortunately with the influx of hard cash, came attendant evils that were unknown in the days of the modest 'chit'. Money was decidedly not an unmixed blessing. (Jo M. Standish, , no date "Leeuwin Land" No 2, sheet 5)

#### 5 MAINTAINING AND REPAIRING HOUSES

The married managerial staff were housed rent free, so RWS was interested in moving out of the big Cottage and finding a house that would be suitable for him and his bride. It wasn't long before he noticed a place that was badly in need of repair but in a pleasant setting. He wrote to JA that 'it will depend on what I can induce the Company to do for me, and if they will agree about the place I want.' However Kelly thought RWS should take the empty wing of the big Cottage as it had four large rooms, scullery, bathroom attached and veranda and was distinct from the rest of the place. 'It would suit them nicely.' (letter 18/10/07)

RWS decided he would ask Alec Munro, Millars's Superintendent when he came down from the Perth office about having the rooms but also if he would agree to rebuild the small cottage although he believed that at present they (the Company) were against doing any more building. He wrote to Jo that the small cottage was so pretty where it was and they could have a little garden in front. (letter 25/10/07)

A month later RWS was waiting to hear what the directors would make of his cottage plan. He had submitted a design and estimate for the cost of rebuilding. In the mean time he was sleeping alone in the big house. It was quite ghostly and he thought it was just as well he was not of a nervous disposition. There were never any burglars in Karridale so the doors and windows were not shut. It was quite beautiful with the moonlight flooding in through the windows and doors. (letter 22/1/08)

JA had came down after Christmas and in his first letter after she returned to Bunbury RWS told her that the house keeper was leaving for Melbourne as she had grown tired of waiting for the

house to be started where she was supposed to live. RWS's mother was due to arrive shortly from Kalgoorlie. It seems that an arrangement was reached by which his mother would supervise the big Cottage with the help of a maid paid for by the Company. RWS and his mother would have rooms in one of the wings of the big Cottage and their meals with any visitors. His brother was also coming to Karridale and hoping to obtain work. There was no mention of the pretty little cottage, whether rebuilt or left to fall into further decay. (letter 21/1/08).

However in a later letter RWS referred to the arrangement by which the Company paid the girl's wages, supplied him with free vegetables and firewood, and paid for those visitors accommodated at the big Cottage. 'So I cannot complain and as I cannot get another house I must accept the arrangement. In any case we have a lovely home and I am sure most of the visitors interfere very little with us, as we only see them at meals.' (letter 1/5/08)

It was shortly after this that Karridale received a visit from the Central Board of Health Inspector from Perth.

He inspected our Butchery, Bakery and Store and three other buildings and to the delight of many has condemned eight or nine houses for necessary repairs to be done, and has condemned altogether that delightful cottage (next to where the manager lived), much to the regret of Messrs Low, Hayden and Bennett who sleep on the veranda - the Inspector is to see McNeil (General Manager) on his return to Perth and I think some needed repairs will follow his visit. (letter 15/5/08)

Unfortunately there is no further reference to these repairs so we don't know whether they were carried out.

Karridale is said to have had its own school and hospital. There was certainly a school but a hospital may have been less likely. The Accident Fund Committee (RWS was the secretary) were discussing the building of hospital quarters in June of 1908 The doctor at that time was 'very much opposed to present state of affairs, without a decent room any where to send an injured man.' (letter 29/6/08)

If housing was in short supply it was less likely that workers with young families would settle in Karridale and there was evidence that Dyer the school teacher was concerned over falling numbers. He was getting very anxious about his job. (letter 3/7/08) However two months later, there had been a send-off to the postmaster who had been transferred to Jarrahdale. 'The new Postmaster was from Perth and had a wife and four kiddies which pleased the heart of Dyer as they all help the school attendance.' (letter 25/9/08) By the Spring of 1908, when RWS was getting ready to marry his 'dear girl', Karridale did not sound like the 'flourishing' town of the days of M.C. They would be returning to married life in rooms in the big Cottage, not to the hoped for pretty, little cottage restored by a beneficent Company.

## 6 MAINTAINING TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

My mother recalled in one of the radio scripts the first time she came to Karridale. She travelled from Bunbury to Busselton 'a very old and delightfully sleepy town' where she stayed overnight. She had to be up early to breakfast and be ready for the departure of the company coach and its 35 mile journey through the bush to a siding where she could be picked up by one of the Company's timber log trains for the last 30 miles to Karridale.

The 'coach' was a long wagonette, pulled by four strong horses. It had a very high seat in front for the driver and two privileged passengers. The remainder of the coach would be stacked high with mail bags, parcels and packets of all shapes and sizes. Other passengers would cram themselves aboard and often shared the journey with the parcels in what RWS nicknamed 'steerage' comfort. Wherever one travelled on the coach, the fare was the same - £1 a head. Bulk supplies were carried by ship to Flinders Bay and transported the twelve miles from there to Karridale by loco or the unreliable motor trolley. Travellers could come by sea but if the weather was bad it

could take several days from Bunbury to Flinders. In bad weather arriving at Flinders Bay didn't necessarily mean being able to land. For instance, the new Doctor had travelled down on the *Herbert* which reached Flinders at about 5.00 pm and lay tossing about in the Bay until 11.00 am next morning. The Doctor had said it was an awful experience as the small boat tossed and plunged incessantly. As RWS wrote 'fancy being only a few hundred yards away from land, so near and yet so far. He brought a fine big dog down with him – they both suffered severely from mal-de-mer.' (letter 10/4/08)

The first time that RWS had gone down to Flinders Bay to check a ship, he explained that 'down here when a boat is to be loaded we have to close down the mill, as there are not enough men to work the mill and at the same time load up the timber on trucks and load the steamer, so the men are taken from the bush down to the Bay, where they live in quarters there until the boat is finished.' (letter 6/10/07). This suggests that not only was there an insufficient work force but also that there was inevitable de-skilling of the tree-fallers and those who worked in the bush. Felling trees and working timber in the forest probably carried a high level of prestige because it was highly skilled and dangerous work (Hardwick 2002)

The 'elements' could cause problems with loading schedules and estimates but so also could the delay of a ship in fine weather. Almost a year later, RWS was describing the frustration of one and all when a ship failed to appear on time. There had been an urgent wire about the arrival of the *Colyer* which was to load for Melbourne.

We got urgent wires last Sat to be ready for her on Mon morning. We took all the men down from the Bush and there they waited (and cursed) all day. No sign of her. Tuesday morning she arrived. And also an urgent wire to send her to Albany to unload 150 tons of coal she had to spare. Off she went amid more cursing. Then we had to take all the hewers back to the Bush. (letter 17/8/08)

The *Colyer* arrived eventually. Nearly a week later RWS wrote that they were still loading her but was adamant that 'they should never have sent such a boat to load timber as she was not built for it, being for coal and cattle. The loading has been very slow only 5 loads per hatch per hour – fancy taking an hour to load each small truck.' He went on to confide:

We have had a regular sum of accidents on these two last boats the *Barron Dalmeny* and *Kolya* (sic), no less than seven men having been injured while in addition to these, one of the mill hands had his leg badly broken. One man fell down the hatch on the *Barron Dalmeny* and another was hit in the face with a sling – both are bad, but the worst case is that of a young fellow on whom a truck of timber fell injuring his spine and internally. He is very bad, in fact he may not recover. (letter 25/8/08)

It seemed that the practice of moving the men from the bush down to Flinders Bay was leading to accidents and poor loading rates.

It has been said that the Karri was cut at Boranup, milled at Karridale, and shipped from jetties at Hamelin and Flinders. (Olver 2002) That may have been so in M.C.'s day but by 1908 Hamelin was not available. Its bay is protected from the south by Hamelin Island but other than that there is little protection from the gales and storms that surge in from the Indian Ocean. (Olsen 2004) A storm on 22 July 1900 sank three ships in Hamelin Bay and by 1908 Hamelin had been abandoned as a port for some years. JS described how it was barely four miles from Karridale and was a delightful place for picnics but was a pathetic place particularly when dusk crept in.

One of the peculiarities of the coast is the creeping of the sand and the houses of the port, entirely deserted, were being swallowed, slowly and relentlessly, by the sand hills. Many had entirely disappeared. As reminders of the port's past importance there still stood a substantially

built police quarters, and other buildings, which happened to be out of the track of the sand - fish AND sharks, teemed in the bay, and it must have provided a veritable paradise and breeding home for them. (Jo M. Standish, "Leeuwin Land" No 2, sheet 5, no date)

The jetty at Hamelin built by M.C. fell into disuse as a result of the storms. There were better ports along the coast. Long jetties existed where shipping was active and they were extended and repaired. Over the years they were replaced with land-backed wharves to provide safer berths and higher capacity. RWS must have been aware of the advantages of Bunbury as a port. He and Jo had seen the shipping traffic and the various ships that birthed in Bunbury. He read in the *Herald* the report of the Chamber of Commerce meeting when plans for a gantry for the wharf and placing a coal wharf from the Break water were discussed. He commented to JA that 'Bunbury is going to be a big place in time, I reckon'. (letter 31/7/08)

## 7 MAINTAINING THE RAIL SYSTEM AND STOCK

In his letter 8<sup>th</sup> February 1908 RWS told JA that there was bad news from the Margaret River. The engine kept up there had blown out that night, broken the piston and 'done damage to itself generally, so there is more work for the fitters.' Also, he had received word that day that 'the bridge over West Bay Creek on the Flinders Bay line was burnt through from a bush fire, so that will mean work on Sunday, as we are cut off from the Bay until it is mended.'

As with the boats coming into Flinders to load timber, it was the delays combined with unpredictable events related to the 'elements' that affected the work routine and target figures. In this case it was not the sea, but fire. It could, of course, have been worse. In his letter 21<sup>st</sup> February 1908 RWS speculated about what might have happened as he had seen for himself the bridge piles that had been removed and how they had burnt.

You know there is a sharp bend just before the line goes on the bridge and Smith (Karridale manager) says that if the Loco had gone down that afternoon nothing could have saved it as they would have been on to the bridge before the smoke (from the fire) could be seen underneath it and they could not have pulled up in time. There is no bottom in that creek for 30 feet, so what a job we would have had digging the loco out of that mud - it is very seldom that the Loco does not go to Flinders Bay every day but the day of the fire, it just happened that she did not run, so it was luck for us and for the men too as the driver & fireman may have been killed or badly hurt.

Luck was again in their favour in April 1908. Where the coach stopped there was a line that ran off the main line into a shed.

The engine bringing down logs from beyond the Margaret River was coming with a rush past the coach stopping place when by some means or other the points opened and it switched off the main track and onto the branch line and shot through the shed at the end of the branch line. There was a water truck and a tender running before the engine and before the driver could shut off the steam, these two went off the line and their wheels sank into the sand. (letter 10/4/08)

Everything was delayed for some time but as with the earlier accident it could have been worse. It took some hours to get the wheels raised and the truck and tender on again. As RWS said 'luckily there was not much damage done and it might have been very serious if the engine had been running in front.' Was this a freak accident, or the weight of the long rake of logs behind the engine to blame, or poor maintenance of the points?

The 'Vice-Regal' was the passenger coach which provided a semblance of more comfortable travel for those passengers that joined the Company train at the coach stop for the 30 mile ride to

Karridale. When RWS's mother had travelled to Karridale from Kalgoorlie she had not had a seat on the *Vice-Regal* but completed her journey in a van which had provided a bumpy and exhausting ride. It was therefore with regret that RWS had to tell JA that the 'Vice-Regal' was no more, having ended its long and varied existence in flames. It had been used to run passengers down to Flinders after a Social held in Karridale. It was thought that after returning from Flinders a cinder must have set the cushions on fire. It was some time before the fire was noticed at about 4 am and 'now all that was left of the *Vice-Regal* was its wheels and iron work.' (letter 13/4/08)

Because of a change in the mail times from 1<sup>st</sup> June 1908, travel between the outside world and Karridale became longer and more complicated. This affected the days on which JA heard from RWS by mail. To travel to Busselton or Perth would mean reaching Busselton at four o'clock in the afternoon and having to stay there until 1.30 the following afternoon – '20 hours to wait in that retreat and Bunbury only four hours journey away. It is 'rotten' – makes us seem more isolated than ever. However, I don't go away every week do I, so it will not affect me very much until October.' (This was when they were to be married and RWS would have to travel to Bunbury). (letter 1/6/08)

RWS's last letter before their marriage was written on 8<sup>th</sup> October when he knew the last date he would be required to work at Karridale before their wedding on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1908. He was planning to get to Bunbury on time but he wouldn't trust the Company coach, as even if they made an effort to get away on time, something might delay them on the road, and it would wreck all their arrangements if he missed Thursday's train from Busselton. He wrote that 'he would take very good care he didn't.' He did make the train. I have their wedding photo taken in Bunbury to prove it.

## 8 THE LAST LETTERS 1909 TO 1910

RWS wrote to JS while she was visiting her family in Bunbury in September 1909 and then in March 1910. In the first of the two letters written in 1909 he described the weather as being perfect and having received a letter, quite a long one, from Low the shipping clerk with whom he had spent his first Sunday in Karridale at the picnic at Hamelin. Although it was only just two years since those first impressions of Karridale, he confided to Jo that 'it seems like a breath of old times to hear from Low again.'

In the second letter he recounted that the weather had broken and it rained in torrents. He wrote of how busy he had been with the 'hospital trouble' and his determination to get signatures to support the deputation being planned. Was Karridale still waiting for 'its decent room any where to send an injured man'?

The five letters written in March 1910 described how the 'elements' in the form of fire and drought were increasing the problems of daily existence faced by the town. In the first of these letters, RWS described his journey back from Busselton because, as in March of the previous year, fires were again burning the bush. Coming out of Busselton the road had been blocked in several places with burning bushes and trees. They reached the Mail siding and had to wait an hour for the Company train which left about twelve and took until four o'clock to travel the 30 miles down to Karridale. In two places they ran into telephone wires that had been brought down on the line because the poles had been burnt by the fires. Of course this meant that the wires were broken and communication with the outside world ceased.

In the next letter RWS reported that the day had been 'horribly hot and the office very close.' McNeil (the Company's Managing Director) had been down to Jarrahdene over the matter of the timber they were wasting there, 'burning good stuff which should have been cut up.' There had also been a wire from Bunbury that the *Strathleven* wouldn't get to them until 17<sup>th</sup> of the month. This was important because they were running short of chaff to feed the horses and again there had been mishaps with the locos. *Karri* had gone off beyond the 34 mile on Saturday morning and in the afternoon she had run into the telephone wire twice and broken it. Then the *Coates* went down to Flinders and went off the rails because they were 'spreading'. (letter 2/3/10)

In the next letter feed for the horses was still as scare as ever but the main news was of THE wedding, a great affair which was to take place in the town. The one thing that could unite Karridale was a wedding, when not only those living in the town attended, but they also came in from the surrounding bush for the event. Certainly Karridale deserved a good wedding considering the mounting problems being experienced. (letter 7/3/10)

The wedding did in fact turn out to be a great success and there had been a large crowd. RWS believed that 'everyone was in their best, which speaks for itself in Karridale.' However they had heard that day from Bunbury that unless the *Strathleven* got her coal soon she might not get away that month.

What we will do for forage I don't know. We are now running two bullock teams constantly in & out from Busselton for chaff & when the bran & oats are done in a few days we shall have to cart them out too. We are fairly well off for stores for another three weeks. (letter 11/3/10)

In his last letter RWS was detailing arrangements about Jo's return to Karridale which looked like being a tedious if not dangerous journey. He told her that 'yesterday had been a "roaster", the bush fires made the air like a furnace breath all day.' This letter was written on 14 March 1910. On 2 March 1961, 51 years later, Karridale was destroyed by a bush fire which burnt until 5 March.

There are no further letters but there is a final postscript to this account of the increasing difficulties facing Karridale. The karri was nearing being 'all cut out' while communication, travel, and transport of stores and timber were becoming increasingly difficult and exacerbated by what the 'elements' could produce so unexpectedly. Karridale was low on stores and feed but they had sufficient until the *Strathleven* arrived in May, or at least so they believed.

Then a completely unexpected event occurred. My mother described this in the third script of the series "Leeuwin Land." The event was the wreck of the *Pericles*. On 31 March, 1910 this fine, large liner bound for London via South Africa, carrying about 450 passengers and crew, came to grief rounding the Leeuwin.

According to my mother's account 'it was a beautiful day, the sea was like the proverbial mill-pond, at least for those waters, and the ship was steadily making her way towards the Leeuwin and Fremantle.' Being a clear day and the ship's course close to the Leeuwin, the passengers were interested in a good view of the famous Leeuwin Light built by M.C. My mother thought it was about 3.30 in the afternoon that Karridale received the startling news that the ship was down at the bows and appeared to be in trouble. Later they learnt that she had struck an uncharted rock. The ship's boats were beached in a tiny bay close to the Leeuwin and all the passengers and crew landed safely. Next day the weather was very different, with high seas and a gale and all wondered what the loss of life would have been on such a day as that.

But as my mother said in her talk, then 'came the problem for our little settlement - how to feed this unexpected crowd of callers and where to accommodate them.' There were few houses at Karridale or at Hamelin. The hundreds of bush workers were scattered through the bush. At the Light-house were only the four keepers and their families, and their four cottages. A few of the elderly passengers were looked after by these families and the rest went on to Hamelin, four miles along a rough track by then, in the dark.

Meanwhile, a van load of stores, and every spare stretcher in Karridale, had been rushed down on the timber line to the port. Our visitors could not have dropped in at a more inopportune time - it was the end of the month, the periodical supply steamer was running late with stores, and supplies were very short, even for our own community's needs, so you can imagine what it meant being landed with nearly 500 extra mouths to feed. (Jo.M.Standish, script "Leeuwin Land", No3, sheet 2, no date)

Everyone placed everything they possessed at the disposal of the shipwrecked, nor did they, or the Company, as far as she knew, ever receive any recompense. At Hamelin there were the extra houses, huts, and barracks which were used when the men were brought down from the bush to

load ships, and these accommodated most of the visitors. Some were taken to Karridale and distributed among those who lived in the town. My parents took in three stewardesses, who like everybody else had left the ship in the clothes they were wearing at the time. By midnight all their unexpected guests had been fed and made more or less comfortable. Late the next day the *Monaroo* arrived from Fremantle and took all on board except for a few who went overland by coach. The loss of the *Pericles* in perfectly calm weather must have added to the increasingly poor reputation of Flinders Bay as a port.

## 9 CONCLUSION

My parents left Karridale the following year. At that time, falling world markets brought about a slump in the timber business. Also, there were industrial troubles between the Timber Worker's Union and the Timber Merchant's Association over workers' pay, the employment of non-unionists, and the use of lock-outs. In 1914, with the beginning of World War I and the drought worsening, the timber industry went into recession with most mills shutting down or at least, cutting back. A contributing factor to these closures was the effect of the drought on the price of chaff which rose so high that it was not possible to keep on the horse teams needed to haul the logs. (Mills 1986) Karridale had been aware of the shortage of chaff since 1910. Then in 1913 the timber cut out and logging and milling finally ceased in Karridale. I have identified several of the factors involved in Karridale's decline. The Company was failing to invest in the housing and amenities of the town, the work force was stretched, smaller or unsuitable ships were being used for loading the cut timber, and supplies sent by ship were not reliable. These factors, combined with the severity and damage caused unexpectedly by the 'elements', provide a glimpse of a town in decline. It was a long time since the prosperous days under M.C.'s tight control. Was the lack of investment by the Company deliberate or was it simply that Millars had more pressing problems with the State government setting up state mills to break the Company's combine monopoly?

There is a great deal more information in this text material. For instance, the entertainments, the reception given to visiting politicians, and attitudes to the local wildlife suggest a different set of priorities to those of Millars Karri and Jarrah Company.

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