

Building the Future Video - Backgrounder by Lyn Vickery

Tales of My Forefathers - Episode Four



Chas. H. Carrick
Entrepreneur

A Young Man Heads West

In 1898 a young man from Winchester, England, left for the Swan River Colony in Western Australia. Chas H. Carrick arrived in a place that was still transforming itself from a remote settlement into a modern state. Gold, railways, ports, power and communications were changing the scale of opportunity.

Chas came from a respectable but ordinary background. His father William had worked as a brewery clerk in Hampshire. Australia offered something different: room to move, new industries and the chance to build a life without waiting for opportunity to arrive at the front door.

By the end of 1899 Chas had married Edith Ann Elizabeth Kenworthy in North Fremantle. Their marriage became the centre of a large family and the stable base beneath Chas's restless appetite for new ideas.

Western Australia Builds

The Western Australia Chas entered was being remade by public works. John Forrest had pushed for Fremantle Harbour, railways, communications and the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme. Engineer C. Y. O'Connor became central to that transformation, particularly through Fremantle Harbour and the pipeline that carried water inland to the goldfields.

For Chas, the important lesson was not politics but movement. New roads, railways, power and communications created openings for anyone alert enough to see what would be needed next.

By the early twentieth century the colony had become a state within the new Commonwealth of Australia. Perth was growing, the Goldfields remained economically important and technology was beginning to alter everyday life.

Cars, Goldfields and Opportunity

Chas increasingly described himself as a mechanic. The timing was ideal. Motor cars were arriving in Western Australia and were still objects of novelty, risk and excitement. Chas learned quickly and moved from understanding the machines to selling them.

Family stories remember him taking newly arrived vehicles from Fremantle towards the goldfields, where successful prospectors and miners could afford them. Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie provided ready markets. The story even has him returning on horseback after selling a car, then repeating the process with the next vehicle.

The motor trade suited his temperament. Cars were not merely a product: they were a sign that the old world of horses and slow transport was beginning to give way.

Sportsman and Competitor

Chas's competitive streak extended well beyond business. Family tradition remembers a tandem bicycle race between Perth and Kalgoorlie in which Chas and his partner were said to have won. Whether every detail can now be proved or not, surviving photographs show the cycling enthusiasm was real.

Rowing was another passion. Chas competed with the Swan River Rowing Club and was remembered as part of a successful interstate eight. Later, motor launches offered a more relaxed way to stay on the water and take the family along.

Wireless and the Next Revolution

Chas's strongest instinct was to recognise useful technology early. After motor cars came radio. Short-wave wireless could carry voices and news across enormous distances, turning the world into something immediate in a way earlier generations could scarcely have imagined.

Chas became a radio engineer and was associated with the Wireless Institute of Australia, the Institute of Radio Engineers and the Radio Traders' Association. He bought a radio business in William Street, Perth, and developed it into a workshop and sales operation dealing in components, receivers, transmitters, batteries and valves.

His daughter Mavis later remembered going to the shop after school and carefully unwrapping fragile glass radio valves that had survived the long sea voyage from Britain and America, then fitting them into radio chassis before the finished sets went on display.

The family business placed Chas directly inside one of the technologies that was reshaping Australian homes. Wireless connected households to sport, news and events far beyond their own streets.

Family, Loss and Everyday Life

Chas and Edith raised a large family. Their lives crossed the First World War, the influenza pandemic, the Great Depression and the Second World War. They also endured personal tragedy. Their son Owen died in a motorcycle accident, while their younger son Ken survived another accident with serious injury.

By the time Lyn knew him, Chas had retired. The entrepreneur had become Grandpa Carrick: devoted to West Perth football, newspaper crosswords, a daily walk, a pocket watch, walking cane and hat. For a small boy newly returned from Africa, the ordinary rituals of Chas's home became vivid family memories.

The contrast mattered. Chas's life was not built around military institutions. It was a civilian story of business, technology, family and adaptation. That difference made him an important counterpoint to the Vickery side of the family.

The Carrick Castle Mystery

One object in Chas's home stayed in Lyn's memory: an old beaten copper plaque showing a castle on a storm-lashed rock, with the motto 'Sto Firma' - Stand firm. The plaque later disappeared, but the image did not.

In 1973 Lyn and Lesley were in Britain on their honeymoon and travelled to Carrick Castle on Loch Goil in Scotland. The ruined fortress looked uncannily like the image remembered from the plaque. They explored the roofless structure, took photographs and left with a family mystery rather than an answer.

Later research connected the castle with a long Scottish history. Whatever the truth of the Carrick family's relationship to the place, the castle became part of the inherited story: part fact, part possibility and part affectionate family myth.

Decades later Lyn and Lesley returned with grandsons Liam and Roman. The ruin had been restored with a new roof, and a place once known only through an old plaque had become a link between generations.

Building the Future

Chas H. Carrick was never famous. He did not need to be. His importance in this family story is that he kept adapting while the world around him changed: migration, gold, motor cars, radio, urban growth and the transition from colonial Western Australia to a modern Australian state.

He became the hub around which a large family grew. His story marks a shift from Empire and military service towards civilian enterprise, technology and business - a bridge that later generations would continue to cross.

That is why 'Building the Future' fits him. Chas did not predict the future from a distance. He kept recognising the next useful thing, learning it, working with it and making it part of everyday life.