

# James Gardiner: Politics, Cricket and Land Sales

## David Gardiner

Born on 12 June 1861 at Papakura Valley, near Auckland, New Zealand, James Gardiner was the third son and the ninth of ten children born to pioneers George and Mary Gardiner (nee Craig). The family lived in New Zealand until December 1864 when they sailed from Port Waikato to arrive in South Australia early in 1865. The family's sheep farming property at Papakura had been neglected during the last of the Maori wars and George was spurred by the expectation of better prospects in Australia. James was initially educated in Port Augusta, then moved with his family to Saddleworth about 1870, where his father continued sheep farming. After leaving school at the age of eleven years, he worked for a transportation agency, the South Australian Carrying Company Limited.<sup>1</sup> Following three years with that firm, he then worked for several other leading commercial companies. As a young teenager he also developed an interest in cricket, and by the time he left Saddleworth in 1882 he was a competent batsman and bowler.

Gardiner's next move was to Melbourne, where he worked for eleven years as an accountant for William Hamilton & Co., a stock and station agency.<sup>2</sup> He gained a solid grounding in business and commerce, and most likely also became experienced in auctioneering and land sales. He had developed an interest in the Church as a young adult, and his appointment as an honorary reader at the Northcote All Saints Church in 1888 bore testimony to his dedication. He married Emily Louisa Browne, of Portland, Victoria, on 22 April 1889 at the Northcote Church.<sup>3</sup>

After leaving the stock and station agency about 1893, amid the 1890s depression, Gardiner set up business for himself for two years, then accepted a position with the publisher Gordon & Gotch. The founder of the company, John Speechly Gotch, hearing of the gold strikes at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, decided to open a retail store in Perth to capitalise on the business expansion. Gardiner was sent to Perth as manager of the new branch, arriving in November 1895.<sup>4</sup>

Gardiner promoted Gordon & Gotch as the premier newsagency in Perth, and business thrived as a consequence of the goldrush and increasing population. In 1897, the family moved from their residence in Victoria Square, Perth, opposite St Mary's Cathedral, to the newly-established riverside suburb of Melville Water Park Estate, now known as Applecross. Gardiner showed foresight in settling there for at that early time there were no made roads, only bush tracks, no electricity and no piped water. The area was considered to be 'out in the bush', and there was only one store near the jetty. Perhaps the attraction was that Applecross was planned as a model suburb for

wealthy residents, and the *Western Mail* promoted the estate's best points including cool health-giving breezes, a steamboat service, and numerous shady native trees making it an ideal picnic spot.<sup>5</sup>

Gardiner's first public involvement in Perth's social life was to join the Western Australian Cricketing Association (WACA). In October 1897, he was elected president of the WACA and held office until 1899. This was a remarkable achievement, considering that he does not appear to have had any prior experience in sporting management. He had, however, achieved some prominence in both cricket and football in Victoria, and was acquainted with sports officials. He subsequently served a further two terms as president in 1906-15 and 1917-24.<sup>6</sup>

During Gardiner's early involvement with the WACA, he supported the application by the Karrakatta Cricket Club to join the Cricket Committee. The chief, if not the sole, objection to the application was that the club comprised mostly 'T'othersiders' (migrants from the eastern colonies), but Gardiner's forceful reasoning soon brought the debate to a conclusion, and the application was approved.<sup>7</sup> He was actively involved in matches during his early association with the WACA and, as a player, was known by the nickname 'Fireworks', probably because of his bowling style. His skills in fielding, batting and bowling marked him as a competent all-rounder.

Gardiner proposed the adoption of 'electorate' cricket (as it was first known) on a similar basis to that played in Sydney, whereby teams were established on a district basis for competition.<sup>8</sup> By the start of the 1898-99 season, Perth cricket was organised on this basis. The first suburban clubs to compete were North Perth, South Perth, East Perth, West Perth, Claremont-Cottesloe, East Fremantle and South Fremantle.<sup>9</sup> During the 1901-02 season, Gardiner was a member of the premiership team in the senior association. Representing East Perth against West Perth, he batted nine overs and was caught out after scoring 29 runs. He also inaugurated Country Week cricket, which arose out of district cricket, during which country teams competed against each other.<sup>10</sup> Another annual event was the Parliament vs Press cricket match. Gardiner was often the outstanding figure on such occasions, and was known for leading impromptu choirs at these matches, opening with a favourite song, 'Poor Old Joe'.<sup>11</sup>

The WACA suffered a financial loss in 1907, and was under threat of going under the control of the Perth City Council which wanted to recover debts. With Gardiner leading the bid by several old members to prevent the loss of the WACA ground to the Council, a State government loan of £3000 was secured.<sup>12</sup> However, by late 1911, the Scaddan government was demanding payment of unpaid interest on the loan, and threatened to appoint a sports body to control the ground. The revenue of the WACA had been decreasing since 1909, and financial losses were such that even ground maintenance could not be paid. The Western Australian Football League, which had good potential for raising revenue, could not be encouraged into a partnership and joint use of the ground. In a letter to the *West Australian*, Gardiner pleaded with the public to raise £700 needed by the end of March 1912. By a great stroke of fortune, the Australian XI team was en route to England that week, and hurried arrangements managed to secure the team to play in Perth without payment. Despite a mediocre performance by the team on 26 March 1912, £760 was raised through match takings and donations from supporters to put the WACA on a secure financial footing.<sup>13</sup> In recognition of his services, Gardiner was made an honorary life member of the WACA in 1918, and he continued to support cricket after his official

retirement from the sport in 1924.

In strong economic times, he relinquished his position as manager of Gordon & Gotch to set up his own auctioneering firm in 1900.<sup>14</sup> Initially listed as a stock, station and commission agent, his business promoted suburban and rural land sales. As an auctioneer he was involved not only in land and property sales but also on occasion was called upon to auction household furniture and painting collections. He also vigorously pursued land settlement and development, particularly of the Moora region, and was one of the first purchasers of subdivided blocks in the district. Gardiner Street in Moora was named in his honour in recognition of his work in establishing the townsite, and for promoting social life and economic development through the first agricultural shows.

Gardiner quickly developed a taste for politics, and was enticed into running for parliament for the seat of Albany in 1900 after George Leake resigned. Although he lost that by-election, Gardiner was actively involved in the campaign for federation and associated with other liberals on the Federal League's executive committee.<sup>15</sup> During the federal campaign, the Western Australian parliament at first refused the people of the colony the right to vote for or against accepting the draft Commonwealth constitution, a right available to electors in all the other Australian colonies. James Gardiner, George Leake and Walter James, together with other supporters of federation, promoted a petition supporting federal union. The 'Bill to the People Petition' was signed by 23,000 electors, the majority of whom were goldfields residents. The petition, calling for a referendum on federation, was initially unheeded by parliament, but the cause was furthered by the 'Separation for Federation' movement on the goldfields.<sup>16</sup> At the time, there was strong anti-federation sentiment in the farming, coal mining and viticulture industries, owing to fears that the abolition of inter-colonial import tariffs and the inception of free trade with the eastern colonies would ruin these industries. Gardiner campaigned with James in June 1900 to allay the fears of Collie coal miners that the coal industry would suffer as a result of federation.<sup>17</sup> Their efforts were rewarded when the miners had a change of attitude, and voted for federation on 31 July.<sup>18</sup>

Gardiner again contested the seat of Albany in the Western Australian general election of April 1901, and was successful.<sup>19</sup> Initially he was considered to be a weak member because of his lack of political experience, but his financial and business acumen soon came to the fore. On the first sitting day of the new parliament, 28 June 1901, he identified finance as a major issue to be addressed and, quoting past examples of inaccurate reporting of funding estimates, emphasised the need for greater financial integrity.<sup>20</sup>

A new government under the leadership of Walter James emerged in July 1902, and Gardiner was appointed colonial treasurer. He quickly became known as the iron-headed man of business for his forthright attitude on financial matters. Western Australia was economically disadvantaged by federation owing to the loss of revenue previously raised through inter-colonial customs duties. A special clause in the Commonwealth constitution allowed Western Australia to collect customs duties for an initial five years, the amount collected to gradually decrease over that period.<sup>21</sup> Despite this concession, it was realised that long-term revenue would still be severely affected. In the first of his taxation measures, Gardiner implemented a five percent duty on the dividends of companies carrying out business in Western Australia, to help raise the diminishing State revenue.<sup>22</sup> One of his main challenges in defending the government came in November 1902 when he was summonsed to appear in the

Supreme Court of Western Australia regarding payments sought by the Midland Railway Company. In 1893, the Government of Western Australia had entered into an agreement with the Midland Railway Company to retain company funds in a trust account for the construction of the Midland Railway. During 1895 and 1896, the government paid £20,602 11s. 5d. to the contractor, E.V.H. Keane. The company protested that the government was in breach of the agreement by making unauthorised payments from the trust account to the railway contractor. Gardiner's evidence as colonial treasurer assisted in proving that the government was not liable, and the company consequently withdrew the claim for repayment.<sup>23</sup>

During February 1904, Gardiner attended the State Treasurers' Conference in Melbourne where, among other issues, he argued against changes to the system of collecting customs revenue, which would have reduced Western Australia's total revenue and increased the revenue of the other Australian States.<sup>24</sup> On his return, he faced personal financial difficulties when his auctioneering business began to suffer from his prolonged absences on political business. In a major blow to the James government, he was forced to resign from parliament in April 1904, to reconstitute his firm's business. Gardiner had been comfortable with the pragmatic liberalism of the James government, and he left with considerable bitterness, induced by Labor's cooperation with arch-conservatives to expel the Liberal government.<sup>25</sup>

Now free of political responsibilities, Gardiner began forging a significant working relationship with the Midland Railway Company to promote land sales. This stage of his career was to secure significant benefits for the development of the State. Construction of the railway had commenced in 1886 through a privately-funded project<sup>26</sup> during a period when large amounts of capital were being raised for the establishment of agricultural and mining railways.<sup>27</sup> The Western Australian Government granted a land concession of 3,319,464 acres to the Midland Railway Company following its registration in 1890. The concession of 12,000 acres of land for every mile of railway completed entitled the company to select land between Midland Junction and Walkaway, near Geraldton, within 40 miles of the new railway.<sup>28</sup> The Midland line was one of several railways proposed by private syndicates under the land-grant system. The government policy bolstered the economic development of the state by providing Crown land to proposers as a concession for constructing the railways; some syndicate agreements were also conditional upon the proposers introducing immigrant settlers.<sup>29</sup> Gardiner's first association with the company was in July 1905, when he drafted a scheme for land sales.<sup>30</sup> The company was at that time in litigation with the Western Australian Government, which was claiming payments from the company for pastoral rents and licence fees. The government argued that the sale proceeds of mortgaged lands be treated as revenue instead of capital. Gardiner's political contacts were an advantage for the company, and his negotiations with Premier Rason enabled the restrictions on land sales to be withdrawn.<sup>31</sup>

Following this win, the London directors of the Midland Railway Company approved the formation of a local Lands Committee to control land sales, and Gardiner was subsequently appointed the company's land agent.<sup>32</sup> Spurred by the success of land sales, a Railway Committee was also formed, one year later. Routine business of the Railway Committee involved the construction and maintenance of the railway line, station buildings, carriages and locomotives, together with the preparation of railway traffic reports, which had little attraction for Gardiner. Although initially reluctant to join the Railway Committee, Gardiner finally relented

and was appointed in June 1907. By July 1908, however, he was dissatisfied, and he finally resigned in September 1911 to concentrate purely on land sales. This decision had been spurred by disagreements with Rankin who, like Gardiner, was a member of both the Lands and Railway committees. Following Rankin's resignation from the Lands Committee, Gardiner withdrew from the Railway Committee, so that neither would be in each other's way.

The first land classifications were carried out at Moora in January 1906, and Gardiner spent considerable time in the virgin lands, surveying and classifying the land on horseback. He thoroughly enjoyed this life roughing it and making camp under a canvas tent each night. The first subdivision by the company, of some 87 farms comprising 30,000 acres, was auctioned on 22 June 1906 at Moora.<sup>33</sup> Gardiner was amongst the first buyers of the subdivision, which was a landmark in Western Australian history in that record prices were obtained for every acre of unimproved land sold.<sup>34</sup>

During his work around Moora in 1906, Gardiner discovered bluish-coloured rock which he concluded was copper ore. The rocks were found to contain phosphates of iron.<sup>35</sup> The find initially attracted immense interest, as it was thought that there was potential to derive phosphate for agricultural use. Several more trips to this and other finds between November 1906 and January 1909 involved geologists, press journalists, and Minister for Agriculture James Mitchell.<sup>36</sup> Further analyses, however, soon proved that phosphates could not be reliably extracted from the rock, and interest in the finds had dissipated by 1914.

Land sales and further subdivisions quickly followed the first sale at Moora. Townsites were declared for Mingenew, Walebing, Coomberdale, Three Springs and Mogumber during the first four years of sales. Despite initial interest in the new subdivisions, by 1910 much of the land sold was of previously-released subdivisions, which reflected the generally waning interest in some of the sales. By the end of 1911, Gardiner had classified and auctioned some sixteen subdivisions between Midland Junction and Dongara, which included sandplain, agricultural and pastoral country as well as town lots.<sup>37</sup> Land sales then entered a more progressive phase from 1911, whereby established farms were sold privately to settlers. Land sales were widely advertised by company pamphlets in Great Britain, the Eastern States, India, the Philippines, New Zealand, and South Africa.<sup>38</sup> Gardiner showed intending settlers over the land, with the company providing all accommodation and travelling costs free of charge to prospective buyers.

Gardiner travelled to London in May 1910 to discuss land policy issues with the directors of the company.<sup>39</sup> What eventuated out of these discussions was the Ready Made Farms Scheme, which provided settlers with established farms, and was aimed squarely at attracting the higher class of British immigrants to the land. Gardiner managed the scheme, which provided farms of 300 acres each, fully fenced, ploughed for sowing or planting, together with a jarrah house, water supply, stables and sheds, all established at the company's expense.<sup>40</sup> The townsites of Coorow, Carnamah and Winchester formed the backbone of the scheme. Initially, difficulties were experienced in establishing farms owing to the lack of labour for sinking dams. Gardiner wrote to the directors on two occasions in 1911 to impress upon them that the scarcity of water was a serious impediment to farming.<sup>41</sup> He finally suggested that water be railed out to the settlers, and this idea was taken up by the company.<sup>42</sup>

Late in 1912, Gardiner proposed a slow-down of construction, to ensure that all farms were properly cleared and fenced, and water supplies and buildings provided

in preparation for settlement. The success of the scheme was moderate; by the end of 1913, 14 of the 58 farms had been sold and, by the end of 1915, 35 farms had been sold.<sup>43</sup> Among Gardiner's suggestions in May 1914 to improve the scheme, was the construction of a railway spur line eastwards from Moora, to capitalise upon construction of the new Wongan Hills-Mullewa government railway which paralleled the Midland Railway to the east.<sup>44</sup> Gardiner was requested by the company to inspect the district to establish an additional 100 Ready Made farms. His survey noted that, at best, only 50 farms could be established with good rainfall. Gardiner discussed construction of the spur line with the premier, as the line would come close to lands serviced by the government railway. The proposed spur line received government approval, as the premier noted that it was likely to increase land values in the area, leading to the ultimate purchase of the land and the spur line by the government. These purchases, the premier noted, would effectively resolve any likely disputes the company may have with the government. A condition was also set that the company should assist with rail traffic from the government railway upon completion of the line.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps enticed by the potential for increased revenue, the company insisted that 100 farms were to be classified, leading Gardiner to carry out a further inspection of land around Bolgart in August 1914. The estimated cost of the spur line was £60,000, which was requested from London. The reply by cable on 31 August 1914, however, sealed the fate of the line:

European War consequent universal financial paralysis render impossible raise money this juncture, but if concession can be obtained on terms that commencement construction not obligatory until War ended and conditions improved quite ready to go on with Scheme.<sup>46</sup>

At this time a major drought had caused widespread failure of crops and the issue of carting water for settlers had again arisen. The government was providing drought relief payments to all settlers apart from those settled by the Midland Railway Company, for the minister for lands considered that the company should provide its own relief support.<sup>47</sup> Again, Gardiner used his political influence to advantage when he interviewed Premier Scaddan in September 1914 and managed to secure an advance from the government for seeding crops, feed and water supplies.

Despite this small win which helped keep farmers on the land, business for the company rapidly declined between 1914 and 1917. Gardiner suffered a nervous breakdown in March 1915,<sup>48</sup> and upon his return to work, he informed the chairman of the company that he could only act in an advisory capacity, and not be actively involved in land sales. He requested that new business arrangements be made, which resulted in him being paid £300 per annum, plus 1% commission on sales. The company then employed Gilbert, previously the Western Australian government emigration agent in London, who took over complete control of the Ready Made Farms Scheme.<sup>49</sup> This decision effectively sidelined Gardiner from much of the activity of land administration, a move which he accepted. The company suffered decreased revenue owing to the construction of the government railway to the east (which captured railway traffic from the Midland Railway), crop losses due to drought, the loss of men from districts owing to the Great War, and the imposition of new federal taxes. By 1916, land sales had slowed considerably and in July 1918, the company, which had operated at a loss since 1915, disbanded the Lands Committee.<sup>50</sup>

Gardiner's official engagement with the company all but ceased. He still made a few land sales over the next several years, with the last business reported by the company board in May 1926.<sup>51</sup>

During his association with the Midland Railway Company, Gardiner attempted a return to parliament in October 1911, when he contested the seat of Irwin. This was a natural choice, given that he had close ties with the region through his work with the Midland Railway Company. Running against two other candidates, he lost to a Liberal rival.<sup>52</sup> At about this time, he became involved with the Farmers and Settlers' Association (FSA) of Western Australia. The FSA was formed in March 1912 by influential farmers to oppose an attempt by the Rural Workers' Union to bring agricultural labourers into the Commonwealth arbitration system, and to assist in organising farmers for their mutual protection.

Gardiner presided over a conference in June 1912, which ratified the objectives of the FSA.<sup>53</sup> Over the ensuing few months, the executive committee was proactive in recruiting members, and the number of branches increased to 91 by February 1913. At a special conference in March 1913, the FSA resolved to form its own political party to contest state and federal elections.<sup>54</sup> The Western Australian Country Party was engineered as the political wing of the FSA, and the FSA president, A J Monger, was paramount in helping to found the party. Gardiner was a member of the FSA executive committee, and his previous parliamentary experience made for a politically powerful organisation. The FSA's political planks, proposed by Monger, emphasised land settlement, agricultural railways, assisted immigration, water conservation and irrigation, and agricultural education.<sup>55</sup> It seems probable that Gardiner also had some influence in devising these planks, as both he and Monger were associated with the Midland Railway Company, and these issues were at the forefront of that enterprise.

Gardiner's attempt to return to politics in 1911 had drawn criticism from some politicians, which continued during his association with the FSA when defending the organisation against political attacks. Apparently, Gardiner's association with the Midland Railway Company was unfavourably viewed by some politicians, as the government was involved in ongoing disputes with the company, and a potential conflict of interest was perceived.<sup>56</sup> Increasingly, criticism was levelled at Gardiner from his work colleagues and the government side, which ultimately undermined his political influence.

At a FSA conference in July 1914, the prospect of securing parliamentary representation loomed, as a general election was drawing near. Discussion involved expanding the platform of the FSA after an initial thirteen planks were carried at the 1913 conference. An additional three planks were proposed by a conference delegate, which involved the issues of altering parliamentary salaries by referendum, introducing preferential voting, and legislative interference to either abolish or prevent monopolistic trading. Gardiner objected to these, and urged delegates to consider carefully the effects of additions which they were carelessly approving. 'We have plenty of things on our platform to fight for, that are not easily defended. I beg you not to burden our platform with any but vital things.'<sup>57</sup> Regardless of his efforts to develop the FSA's political platform, Gardiner was not re-elected to the executive committee.

Gardiner's next foray into politics came in 1914, when he was elected to parliament as the member for Irwin. His work for the Midland Railway Company and the FSA during the previous few years had again put him in the political spotlight,

and this time he represented the Western Australian Country Party as its leader.<sup>58</sup> Party officials were elected at the first meeting of the Country Party on 12 November 1914. Gardiner was somewhat reticent to accept nomination as leader, and he recommended that Willmott be elected. However, party members – Willmott among them – argued that Gardiner's parliamentary experience would be an important asset so far as the leadership was concerned, as most of the members were new to politics. Gardiner consequently withdrew his opposition and accepted the leadership.<sup>59</sup>

Gardiner had the ability to see the community's difficulties on a state-wide perspective, though, in his attempts to treat all agriculturalists fairly, he nevertheless came into conflict with many farmers. The FSA executive was dominated by conservative members from the well-established, rich agricultural districts of the central and southern wheat-belt who adopted an anti-Labor stance. These regions had never experienced the hardships which affected the northern wheat-belt. Increasingly, Gardiner took a pro-Labor stance to favour farmers in the newer wheat-belt areas, which alarmed conservative members within the FSA. Criticism was levelled at him from the Opposition, the government side, and even from his own party.<sup>60</sup> It is fair to surmise that Gardiner's experience of farmers' hardships in the Midlands was one factor which influenced his changing attitude to support socialistic Labor policies. Significantly, he harboured resentment towards those Liberals who had failed to support the proposed sale of the Midland Railway Company to the State in 1911, and he had been defeated by a Liberal candidate in the 1911 election.<sup>61</sup>

Gardiner's nervous breakdown in March 1915 forced his resignation as leader.<sup>62</sup> This was fortuitous for the Country Party, as members had, in any case, decided to appoint a new leader. During Gardiner's hospitalisation and subsequent recuperation in the Eastern States, Willmott was elected leader, and he led the Country Party to again adopt an anti-Labor stance. Upon his return to duties in June, Gardiner continued to serve in the party, although he persistently upheld Labor policies and, on occasions, voted against his party colleagues.<sup>63</sup> He attempted to persuade the new leader Willmott to agree to a truce with the Labor government and, perhaps in retaliation for declining support from his colleagues, he was absent from the joint FSA-Country Party conference in November 1915, which was unfavourably viewed by party members.<sup>64</sup>

Following a period of rebuilding his political status, he was elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on 1 March 1917 after the previous Speaker, E B Johnston, had tendered his resignation.<sup>65</sup> The speakership was, however, short-lived, owing to Gardiner's deafness which proved a disadvantage in such an important position. He was reappointed colonial treasurer in June when the Lefroy Ministry was appointed.<sup>66</sup>

During 1916 and early 1917, progress was made by the Eastern States' Country Parties to form a National Party. A proposed coalition of the WA Country Party with the Liberal Party and National Labor Party in May 1917 was followed through by Gardiner. Having regained his former authority, he led the Country Party into the Lefroy coalition government, which comprised Liberal, Country Party and National Labor representatives.<sup>67</sup> He was subsequently elected unopposed in the general elections in September, representing the National Country Party. Continuing as colonial treasurer in 1918, he attended a premiers' conference in Sydney, where one of his proposals was to collect the income tax of wage earners directly from employers.<sup>68</sup>

During the Lefroy government there was increasing friction and a lack of



*James Gardiner, 1861-1928*

discipline within the non-Labor parties. Decision-making took place without proper consultation and on one occasion, when Gardiner was absent from parliament, the acting treasurer agreed to amendments of Gardiner's budget proposals against the wishes of cabinet colleagues. In January and February 1919, Gardiner was stranded in Melbourne for several weeks, owing to the notorious Spanish Flu epidemic and a seamen's strike. The acting Western Australian premier, Colebatch, had implemented quarantine restrictions, which caused a great amount of friction with Gardiner. Previous disagreements had prevailed between Colebatch and Gardiner, and the influenza quarantine proved the last straw. Gardiner resigned as treasurer on 1 April 1919,<sup>69</sup> although he remained in the Legislative Assembly as a backbencher. Western Australian politics then went through a tumultuous period, with three changes of

government in less than three months. Gardiner still contributed to financial debate, although much of his frustration arising from previous government incompetence was now levelled at the new treasurer. He criticised various proposals for raising State revenue, and reproached the treasurer for not addressing the issue of reducing the mounting deficit of up to £900,000 per year, but also appreciated that he was no longer in the position of trying to reduce such a large State debt.<sup>70</sup> Having spent some nine years as an active parliamentarian, and during that time influencing to a significant extent the direction of Western Australian politics, Gardiner resigned from parliament on 12 March 1921 at the age of 59 years.

As a prominent businessman and politician, Gardiner was often a guest at State government banquets, one such event being the visit of the Prince of Wales in July 1920.<sup>71</sup> He also frequently entertained visiting sporting teams at his own expense. It is perhaps of no surprise to learn that he was a founding member of the Perth Club, a social venue of well-to-do businessmen, and its president from 1921 to 1926. A memorable event was noted in the club's Jubilee Brochure:

Another picturesque identity was Jimmy Gardiner, handsome, kindly and emotional Jimmy. Some present members may recall the billiards tournament game between him and Geoff Burgoyne. They had agreed to shout at every double-figure break and (perhaps inspired by this) double figures came fast and often. With the score somewhere in the second hundred Jimmy, who was rather religious, started the hymn 'Lead Kindly Light.' This was followed by 'Onward Christian Soldiers', 'Abide with Me', and other items of the hymnology. Cues were laid aside and the players adjourned to the poker room where their repertoire was repeated and not enjoyed much by winners or losers. There is nothing in the records to show who won the billiards.<sup>72</sup>

Gardiner was involved in a range of other Perth businesses, notably as a director of the Commercial Union Assurance Group and the South Perth Ferry Company, and as a member of the Perth Chamber of Commerce.<sup>73</sup> His enduring interest in real estate was evident in his land acquisitions over the years, which included farming blocks at Moora, several town lots in South Perth, Como and Leederville,<sup>74</sup> as well as the family home in Applecross. As previously noted, he was among the first purchasers of land at Moora, and the farms Blantyre and Noondine near the town are still being farmed today by his descendants.

Gardiner's health began to fail in 1924, which forced him to resign his official connections with the WACA and other organisations. He suffered a stroke in 1925 from which he made a partial recovery. His illness was initially very severe and debilitating, and he spent some time recuperating at Mon Repos hospice in Cottesloe. His wife Emily's death in August 1925 could not have eased his infirmity. Three years after being admitted to the hospice, James suffered a fall which hastened his end. Within a few weeks, he succumbed to his illness and died of a heart attack on 27 October 1928.<sup>75</sup> His funeral service at Karrakatta Cemetery was attended by a large throng of friends and family, including his three sons and three daughters. Notable public figures were present, including several members of parliament, and representatives of various businesses with which he had been associated.

James Gardiner's passion for sport had rapidly led him to a prominent position

in cricket, and he scored not only runs but political victories to ensure the continued success of the game in Western Australia. Similarly, he handled his public role in politics with conviction, even when being publicly berated for expressing his opinion. He can lay claim to progressing the development and settlement of the Midlands region. Whether in sport, politics or business, his determination to serve the public interest was undoubtedly his defining hallmark.

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