

GRAIN

NARALING HALL - 100 YEARS

Overview

Naraling is a small locality and former townsite in the Chapman Valley, roughly 54 kilometres north-east of Geraldton in the Midwest of Western Australia. It sits within the WA grain belt's Geraldton port zone, an area whose farming economy has been built almost entirely around cereal and oilseed production feeding into the CBH Group's storage, handling and export network. While Naraling itself no longer has an active grain receival facility, its farms, historic rail corridor and surrounding district remain firmly embedded in the modern grain supply chain that funnels tonnage toward CBH's Geraldton export terminal.



Naraling Bulk Grain Bin

Naraling's Origins as a Grain and Rail Settlement

Naraling was declared a townsite in 1910 when the Wokarena (Wokarina)–Naraling branch railway, a spur of the Geraldton–Northampton line, was officially opened there on 8 October 1910, later extended to Yuna in 1912–13. The line was built specifically to serve the developing Upper Chapman farming district, where subdivision of the former Mount Erin pastoral lease under the Agricultural Purchase Land Act had created dozens of new wheat-growing blocks by 1909. As the original terminus of the line, Naraling grew a government school, shops, a blacksmith's shop, an RSL hall, a stone church hall (built 1926), tennis courts and a sports oval to serve the growing farming population.

Grain haulage on the line was initially conducted in bags, with produce carted by rail wagon to Geraldton for export. Naraling's role as a shipping point was reinforced when Co-operative Bulk Handling (CBH) was formed in 1933 to modernise WA's grain logistics, replacing bag handling with mechanised bulk storage bins built alongside rail sidings across the wheatbelt. Naraling was one of the earliest "1933-type" bulk grain bin

installations built in this area, alongside nearby siding towns Balla, Ogilvie, Wilroy and Tardun.



Naraling Wheat Stack

Decline of the Naraling Bin and Rail Line

Bulk grain handling in the Upper Chapman district gradually consolidated at the larger sidings of Nanson, Nabawa and Yuna from the late 1930s onward, drawing volume away from smaller stops such as Naraling. Passenger and freight demand on the branch line fell steadily as farmers acquired their own trucks, and by the mid-1950s the Yuna line was running only once a week. A government review of uneconomic short-haul rural lines recommended closure, and the Wokarena (Wokarina) –Yuna line — including the Naraling siding and its CBH bin — closed permanently on 29 April 1957, with the track lifted by 1961. Today Naraling exists as a disused townsite; its 1926 stone church hall survives (now vacant/unused) as a heritage-listed reminder of the settlement, but the rail infrastructure, wheat bin, school and shops have all disappeared.

Current Grain Industry Structure in the Wider District

Although Naraling's own receival point is long closed, the surrounding Chapman Valley and Midwest wheatbelt remain highly productive grain country. Broadacre cereal cropping — wheat, barley, canola, oats and lupins grown in rotation with sheep and cattle grazing — dominates land use in the shire, with wheat historically accounting for well over half of gross value of agricultural production locally. Farms in the vicinity of Naraling, such as those advertised for sale on East Bowes Road, sit in a roughly 400–440mm annual rainfall zone and are marketed explicitly on their proximity to CBH grain receival facilities at Northampton, Moonyoonooka and the Geraldton Port Terminal.

Grain grown around Naraling today is trucked to nearby active CBH sites rather than any facility within Naraling itself. The closest primary and secondary receival points in CBH's Geraldton Zone "Area 1" network include Northampton, Mullewa and Mingenew (primary sites) and Binnu, Canna, Moonyoonooka and Wongoondy (secondary sites), all feeding into the Geraldton Grain Terminal. The nearby Yuna site — the historic northern terminus of the same railway line that once served Naraling — also remains an active and often

record-setting CBH receival point, having recorded the first delivery of the 2023 harvest in the entire CBH network.



Paul Gray circa 1965

CBH Group's Role in the Regional Grain Supply Chain

CBH Group is a grower-owned co-operative and the dominant handler of WA's grain, receiving between 85 and 95 percent of all grain harvested in the state each year through its network of more than 100 receival sites. The company operates four export port terminals — Geraldton, Kwinana, Albany and Esperance — and the Geraldton Zone, which covers the Naraling district, is expected to handle roughly 4.4 million tonnes in the 2025–26 season. CBH has been investing heavily in upgrading regional infrastructure, including in loading and permanent storage upgrades at nearby sites such as Moonyoonooka and Mingenew, to speed truck receival during peak harvest.

The 2025–26 harvest season has been a landmark one for the Geraldton Zone and the state as a whole. Western Australia delivered a record 27.352 million tonne harvest statewide, and the Geraldton Zone posted a new zone daily receival record of 126,000 tonnes on 8 December 2025, with nearby Moonyoonooka setting a site daily receival record of 14,597 tonnes during the same week. Sites such as Mullewa, Narngulu and Mingenew also broke season and daily tonnage records, reflecting the strong 2025 season across the district surrounding Naraling.

Economic Significance of the Grain Industry to the Region

Grains are the single most important agricultural sector in Western Australia, contributing more than 50 percent of the state's gross farm-gate value of agricultural production and around \$12 billion annually to the state economy. More than 90 percent of WA grain is exported, predominantly to Asian and Middle Eastern markets, making export-linked infrastructure like the CBH-operated rail and truck corridors through

Naraling's old rail route economically vital for growers in the Chapman Valley. The industry body Grain Industry Association of WA (GIWA) has set a strategic target of growing the state's grain output to 30 million tonnes and \$20 billion in annual value by 2035, underscoring continued long-term investment in supply chain capacity in zones like Geraldton that service districts such as Naraling.

Heritage Legacy Alongside a Modern Industry

For a community history or heritage-focused audience, Naraling's story illustrates a broader pattern across the WA wheatbelt: dozens of small rail-siding towns sprang up between 1910 and 1930 purely to service grain haulage, only to be superseded as bulk handling and road transport consolidated activity into fewer, larger CBH sites from the 1930s to the 1960s. CBH's receival network peaked at 305 sites in the mid-1960s before contracting to under 200 by the 1990s as the co-operative rationalised smaller, less efficient bins like Naraling's in favour of larger regional hubs. The surviving Naraling Church Hall, now on the State Heritage inventory, stands as one of the few physical remnants of this era, alongside a heritage trail that documents the district's railway, mining and farming history.



John Portman circa 1957



"1933" style bin (not Naraling Bin)

Note: All information sourced from available records, anecdotal information and may be subject to minor change.