

HALL - SOCIAL

NARALING HALL - 100 YEARS

Overview

The Naraling Church Hall, built in 1926, is the last surviving structure of the vanished Naraling townsite and stands today as the single most significant heritage building in the district's history, having served as a church, community meeting place, social venue, wartime gathering point, sporting clubhouse annex and, eventually, a symbol of the district's resilience through decline. As the Shire of Chapman Valley prepares to mark the hall's centenary with official celebrations on 19 September 2026, its story offers an unusually complete case study of how a single small rural building can accumulate multiple, overlapping community functions across a hundred years, long after the town around it disappeared.

ceremonial trowel



James Criddle Laying Foundation stone

Construction and Origins (1923–1926)

The decision to build a church hall at Naraling was made in 1923, driven by the practical need of the growing farming district to have a dedicated space for both religious services and social events. The stone building, measuring 40 feet by 20 feet, was constructed opposite the Government School on the site of the town's former blacksmith's shop, which had been sold and carted away to make room for it. Local stonemason Bob Salmon built the hall using stone carted from Joe Pascoe's property at nearby Nolba — the same quarry that supplied stone for Geraldton's Catholic Cathedral — and Salmon went on to build numerous other structures in the district, including the Nolba Post Office and Exchange

buildings and private farmhouses such as Annan and Roskams. The foundation stone was laid by James Criddle on 21 August 1926, and the hall was formally declared open on 27 November 1926 by Mr Neil Calder, before a large gathering of district residents.



Foundation stone plaque



Stone laying August 21st 1926



Naraling Hall 2017



Naraling Hall Interior 2017



Cyclone Seroja damage 2021

Religious Function: A Church for the District

In its original and most formal capacity, the hall served as a church for the Naraling community, hosting Anglican services for decades and giving the building its enduring name. Ownership of the building later passed from the Anglican Church to the Shire of Chapman Valley, which accepted transfer and responsibility for the structure with a view to undertaking restoration works to preserve its heritage values, given the building had fallen out of regular religious use as the surrounding farming community declined. Despite this formal transfer, the hall's religious origins remain central to local memory and to its official heritage listing, which records its "original use" as Religious/Church Hall.



Anglican Primate of Australia 1980



Criddle Family at Church Hall entrance

Social and Community Hub

Beyond its religious role, the hall rapidly became the practical centre of everyday community life at Naraling, hosting meetings, dances, concerts and general social functions that brought together the district's scattered farming families. Shire President Cr Nicole Batten has described how the hall "gave them a place to connect for their social interaction but also a farming connection," noting that "it served many, many purposes" and that "the hall started off as a church, but in the end became a place that hosted almost every single community event and activity you can think of". The hall functioned as a halfway point between the coast and the farming country further inland, making it a natural gathering point not just for Naraling residents but for travellers moving between Geraldton and the more remote farms toward Yuna.



Mary Lemmey playing the piano



Naraling Old Time Music Hall 1975



Naraling CWA Branch



Naraling Hall 70th Anniversary



***Farewell to the Calder,
Haley & Stokes Families
2009***



***Eva McNaught, Mait Gray, Winnie
Bell, ??, Gwen Hayley, Tricia
James 70th Celebrations***

Connection to Sport and School Life

The hall's uses extended into the sporting and educational life of the district as well. It sat directly across the road from both the Naraling School and the town's tennis courts and sports oval, making it the natural venue for social functions tied to the district's football and cricket seasons, including the New Year's Day tennis tournament held on the adjacent courts. Dances held at the hall were closely associated with the community's sporting calendar, providing an evening social counterpart to the daytime football, cricket and tennis competitions that defined much of district life through the first half of the twentieth century.



1960 Sunday School. Naraling Hall. Back Row: Lenore Fawcett, Obscured, Tom (Hugh) McNaught, Jessie Calder, ?. Third Row: Micheal Bell, George Lindon, Marilyn Reynolds, Noeline Gray, Neville & Lexley Criddle, Third part row, Cynthia Reynolds, ?, Kathy Lindon (hand up). Front Row: Lynette Webb (Black dress), Flora Calder, Cheryl Gray, Debbie Culloton, Rhonda Criddle, Linton Micherton, Patricia Bell. At front: Jock Calder, Ian Cooper, Reg McNaught.



Oct 1960 Sunday School Naraling Hall. Dougal Lindon, Linton Mincherton, Reg & Gordon McNaught.



Naraling Sunday School Concert. *(Above & Below)*





Table: Multiple Uses of Naraling Hall Across a Century

Era	Primary use	Notes
1926–1940s	Church and religious services	Original Anglican function; formal opening 27 Nov 1926
1920s–1960s	Community meetings and dances	Hub for social interaction across scattered farming families
1930s–1940s	Sporting and school social functions	Linked to adjacent oval, tennis courts and school
1940s	Wartime and commemorative gatherings	Reflects broader district pattern of welcome-home and remembrance events
Post-decline (1950s–1990s)	Occasional church services, meetings, social functions	Hall increasingly underused as population declined, Sunday School
1996	Heritage listed	Added to Shire's Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places (Category 2)
2000s–2020s	Vacant/unused, held in trust by Shire	Anglican Church transferred responsibility to Shire for restoration
2021	Cyclone Seroja severely damaged Hall	Up to \$200,000 spent on restoration
2026	Centenary celebration venue	Official 100-year celebration event, 19 September 2026

Heritage Recognition and Preservation

The Naraling Church Hall was formally added to the Shire of Chapman Valley's Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, adopted 31 October 1996, and is classified as a Category 2 heritage place, reflecting its considerable historic significance. Heritage assessments describe the building as "the most visual reminder of the Naraling townsite," presenting as a solid and dignified structure despite standing largely alone amid cleared farmland where the rest of the town once stood. Although its present use is formally recorded as vacant or unused, the Shire has continued to maintain and restore the hall, recognising that the building is "held in high esteem" by the local community despite only occasional active use in recent decades.

August 2008

Local CABY
(Creating A Better Yuna)
representatives teamed up
with the Naraling Bush Fire
Brigade to give the historic
Naraling Hall a brand-new roof.

The day was full of teamwork,
ladders, long-vehicle trailers,
drills buzzing, and plenty of
community spirit.



The 2026 Centenary Celebrations

To mark a full century since the hall's opening, the Shire of Chapman Valley called for expressions of interest in October 2025 to form a Naraling Hall 100 Year Anniversary Advisory Group, tasked with guiding the planning and delivery of inclusive, memorable centenary celebrations. The official centenary event is scheduled for Saturday, 19 September 2026, at Naraling Hall itself, and will include a light show and mural intended to leave a long-term legacy on the building. As part of these preparations, the Shire has also called on the wider community to contribute photographs, stories and memorabilia

You're Invited!

COME TOGETHER. CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY. INSPIRE OUR FUTURE.

NARALING HALL

100

YEARS

A Century of Community

JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE
100 YEARS OF NARALING HALL

For a century, Naraling Hall has been at the heart of our community – a place of connection, celebration and shared memories.

Now it's time to celebrate together!



AFTERNOON TO EVENING CELEBRATION

 2.00PM AFTERNOON TEA AND NOSTALGIA Enjoy a cuppa, treats and a trip down memory lane.	 UNVEILING OF THE MURAL AND HERITAGE TRAIL See our history come to life.	 SHARING STORIES Your stories, Our history. One community.	 TREE PLANTING Planting today for tomorrow. Leaving a legacy.	 SUNDOWNER BYO DRINKS FOOD PROVIDED & A HISTORIC LIGHT SHOW As day turns to night, we light up our history.
--	---	---	---	--

Everyone Welcome!

LET'S HONOUR OUR PAST AND CELEBRATE OUR FUTURE – TOGETHER

SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2026

NARALING HALL

Bring your family, friends and memories.
We can't wait to celebrate with you!

1926 - 2026

NARALING HALL

relating to the hall and the old townsite, covering local families, community groups, businesses, and sporting and social events tied to Naraling's century of history — an appeal that has already surfaced detailed community records such as school class photographs, store ownership timelines and hand-drawn farm-lot maps of the district as remembered by longtime residents.

Significance Today

A century after its construction, the Naraling Church Hall endures as far more than a heritage curiosity: it is the sole physical link between the modern Chapman Valley community and the vanished farming town that once surrounded it, encapsulating in one small stone building the district's overlapping histories of faith, farming, education, sport and wartime service. As Cr Batten and CEO Jamie Criddle's centenary remarks make clear, the hall's continued preservation is understood locally not simply as heritage conservation for its own sake, but as an active act of honouring "the determination and community spirit that helped build this district," ensuring the story of Naraling remains alive well beyond the life of the town itself.



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

