

RAIL

NARALING HALL - 100 YEARS

The rail line to Naraling was part of a much larger story: the opening of the Upper Chapman district, the growth of rural settlement, and the changing economics of transport in Western Australia. It connected Naraling to the State's earliest government railway network and, for almost five decades, provided an essential link for people, produce and supplies.

Rail to Naraling and Beyond

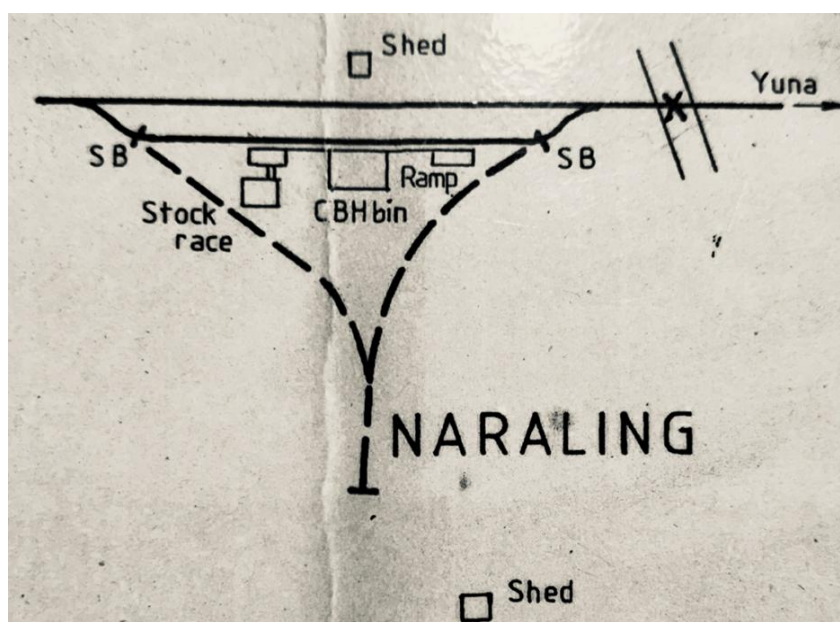


Wokarina Siding (now spelled Wokarena)

Construction was authorised through the Upper Chapman Railway Act 1909. The contract for the Wokarena (Wokarina)–Naraling section was awarded to Rennie & Hill on 27 August 1909 for just over £30,000. Work moved quickly: by March 1910, the formation had been completed and rail had begun to be laid. The completed line was handed over to the Western Australian Government Railways on 1 October 1910.

Over one hundred years ago, the arrival of the railway at Naraling represented far more than a new line on a map. It was a decisive moment in opening the Upper Chapman district—linking newly settled farming families to Geraldton, its port, markets, supplies and the wider State.

The line to Naraling formed part of the Upper Chapman Valley railway and connected into the historic Geraldton–Northampton system, itself part of Western Australia's earliest government railway network. From Wokarena (Wokarina), near White Peak, the railway travelled roughly 42 kilometres through the Chapman Valley to Naraling, which was originally intended to be the end of the line.



Naraling Rail Siding



The official opening at Naraling on 8 October 1910 was a major celebration for the district. A special train brought visitors from Geraldton and collected passengers along the route. At Nabawa, schoolchildren welcomed the train beneath a floral arch and sang the National Anthem. At Naraling, hundreds gathered to witness Governor Sir Gerald Strickland take the controls of the engine and drive it through a ribbon stretched across the railway line.

For the local community, the ceremony was a statement of confidence in the future. The railway promised that the district was no longer isolated. It gave farmers a dependable means of moving wheat, wool, livestock and other produce to Geraldton and its port, while bringing in machinery, stores, mail, household goods and passengers.



Nearby Dindiloo station with turkeys being loaded for market

Naraling's growth was closely tied to the railway. Declared a townsite in 1910, it developed as a rural service point for the surrounding farming district. The station had the practical features expected of a terminus: a siding, loading facilities and a turning triangle for locomotives. Around the townsite came a school, shops, a blacksmith, sporting activity and later the hall that remains a prominent reminder of the former settlement.

Yet Naraling's role as the end of the line was short-lived. In 1912, the railway was extended north to Yuna. The extension made Yuna the new terminus, while Naraling became an important through-station and loading point. The turning triangle was moved to Yuna, but Naraling remained central to the movement of people and goods through the Upper Chapman district.



Naraling Railway Siding opening Arrow: Contractor Richard Rennie

The railway was intended to be part of an even bigger regional vision. Plans were considered to carry the line beyond Yuna into northern and eastern farming and pastoral districts. The Yuna–Dartmoor Railway Act 1933 authorised a proposed 82-kilometre extension to Dartmoor, and other possible connections to Mullewa and Ajana were discussed. The route to Dartmoor was surveyed, and supporters argued that it could serve hundreds of farms in country where roads were still difficult and unreliable.

But the Great Depression intervened. The Dartmoor extension and other proposed lines were deferred, with only preliminary surveys and planning completed. Those unbuilt railways are an important reminder that Naraling and Yuna were once seen not as isolated ends of the network, but as possible gateways to a much wider agricultural and pastoral railway system.

For almost 47 years, the Upper Chapman railway was part of everyday life. Early services consisted of mixed passenger and freight trains, generally running twice each week. Steam locomotives carried people alongside farm supplies, parcels, mail and produce. From 1938, diesel-electric Governor-class railcars took over the passenger service, bringing a more modern form of travel to the district.

The railway was about more than freight. It allowed people to travel to Geraldton for shopping, business, medical appointments, schooling, sporting events, social occasions and family visits. In an era before widespread car ownership and sealed roads,

the train reduced the isolation of rural life and helped bind scattered farming families into a functioning community.

By the 1950s, however, the economics of country transport had changed. Better roads, private cars and increasingly capable road freight made rail less competitive. The service was reduced to one return train to Geraldton each Friday. The financial pressures were clear: in the year ending June 1953, the Wokarena (Wokarina)–Yuna line earned £9,512 but cost £29,593 to operate.

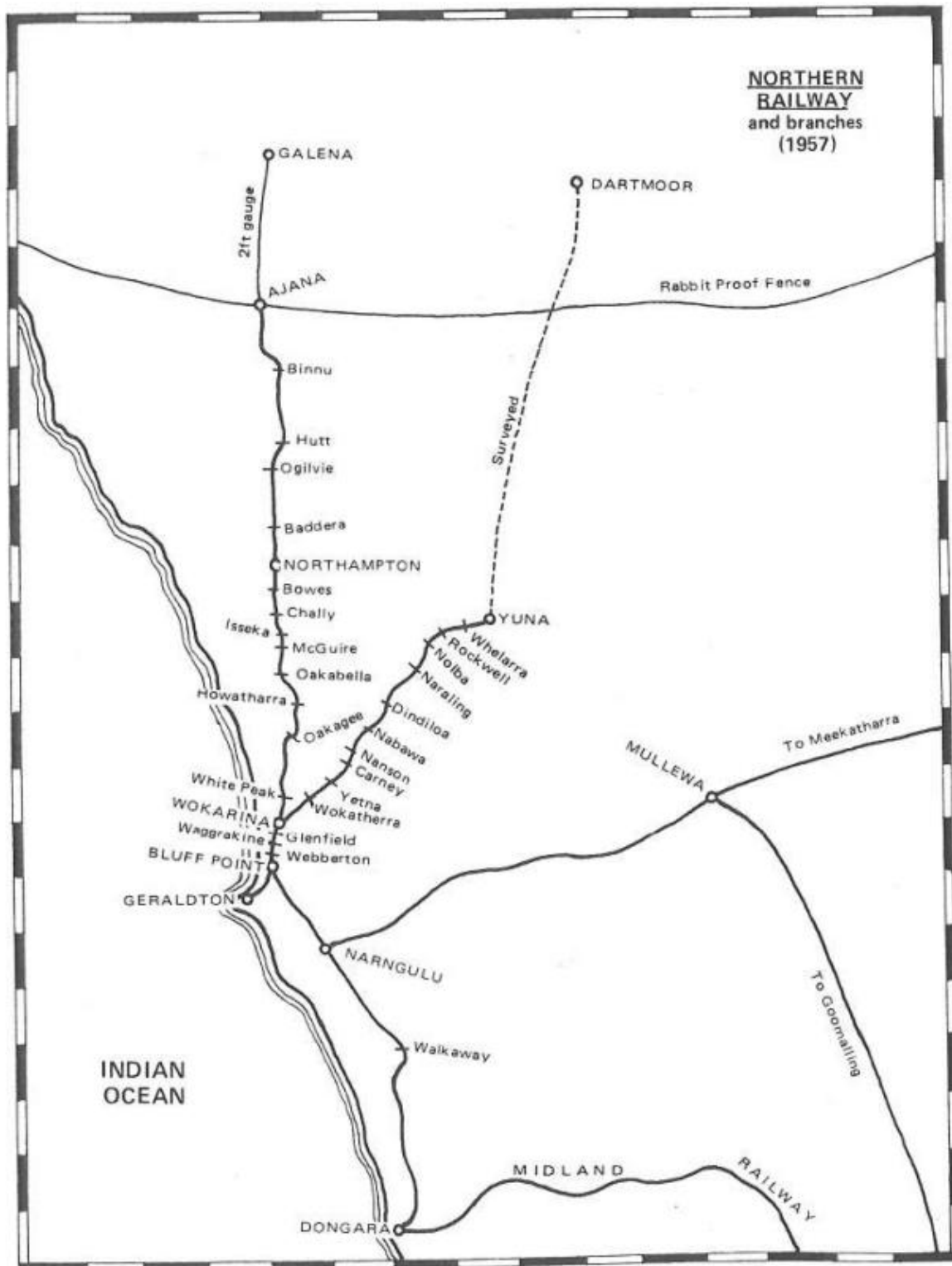
The final train ran on 29 April 1957. Formal discontinuance followed under the Railways (Cue-Big Bell and other Railways) Discontinuance Act 1960, which also closed the historic Northampton railway. By 1961, the rails and sleepers had been removed.

Today, little of the physical railway remains, but its influence is still deeply embedded in Naraling's story. The railway helped make farming settlement viable, supported the establishment of Naraling as a townsite, connected local producers with markets, and gave isolated families practical access to services and community life.

The line to Naraling was not simply a transport project. It was the connection that helped turn a newly settled farming district into a community—and it remains an important chapter in the history of the Upper Chapman Valley and the Mid West.



Remains to the Wokarena (Wokarina) to Yuna rail line (Yetna)



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