

A Glimpse of Wheatbelt European History

First arrivals were sandalwood cutters and, shepherds based with their sheep at waterholes. Settlers gradually took up small blocks of land in more fertile spots with a good water supply, mainly in an arc from Moorumbine, Wandering to Williams- West Narrogin. Moorumbine was the first surveyed township in this area.

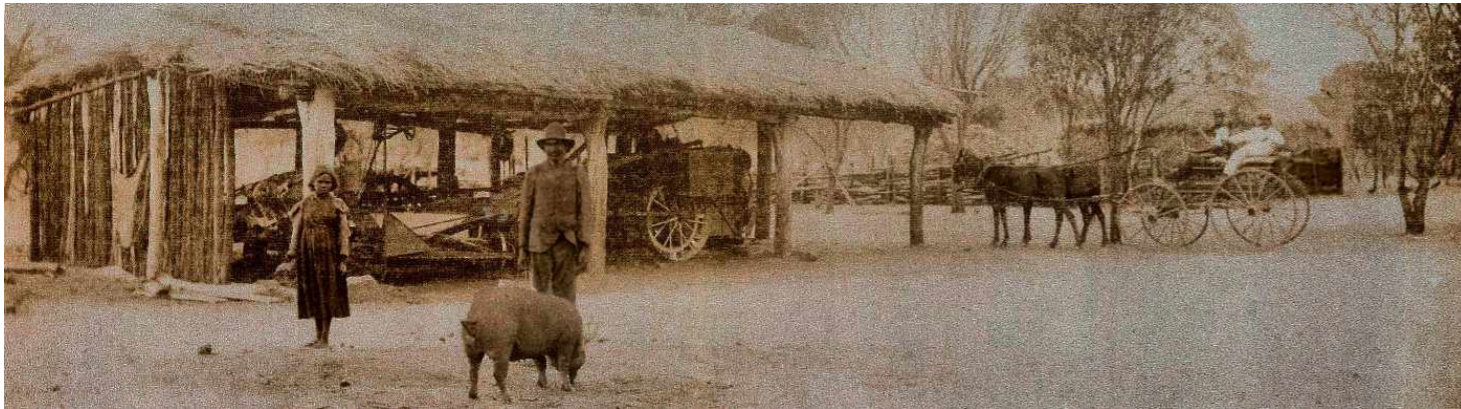
The Great Southern Railway and a government land grant scheme accelerated land settlement, and the rise of Pingelly, Popanyinning, Yornaning, Cuballing and Narrogin towns. Life was tough. Limited finance and clearing difficulty, forced many settlers to cut sandalwood and mallet bark, hunt possums and kangaroos and do small-scale mixed farming for survival.

World War 1 casualties, a rabbit plague, and the 1930's depression, forced up to 40% of farmers off their land.

After World War 2 agricultural development increased rapidly due to government incentives, mechanization, better technology, and increased demand for farm products.

In the late 1940s- early 1950s hundreds of European immigrants came to Narrogin, mainly from displaced persons camps in Germany and Italy. In return for free passage, they were required to work for two years for assigned organisations. Many stayed and became valued citizens.

From the 1970s, railways in Western Australia were greatly downsized. This and ongoing farm amalgamation has greatly reduced wheatbelt town populations.



A Glimpse of Wheatbelt Noongar History

In the early years, the British and local Noongars cautiously co-existed, though conflict over resources and access to land increased. In the 1880's. This and death from disease epidemics impacted Noongar culture and social organisation. Many settlers continued to rely on Noongars' local knowledge.

Increasing numbers of fairer skinned Noongars with European parentage contradicted the dying race theory and led to the so called 'half-caste' problem. The 1905 Aborigines Act established a repressive and coercive system of control over Aboriginal West Australians. They were confined to reserves on the outskirts of towns and could not move to another area without approval. Curfews required them to vacate town areas by 6pm or face arrest. Many families lived without education or healthcare, with little or no work, living on what little rations they received.

Lighter skinned children were taken from their families and placed in institutional care). They were then sent to work for white families as maids and labourers.

The 1930's depression and mechanisation after World War 2 reduced work opportunities. The Wandering mission operated as school for Noongar children from 1944 to 1979.

From the 1950's rights are gradually being restored to these resilient people, beginning with closure of Moore River and Carrolup settlements, Noongar children being allowed back into schools, and closure of the reserves.

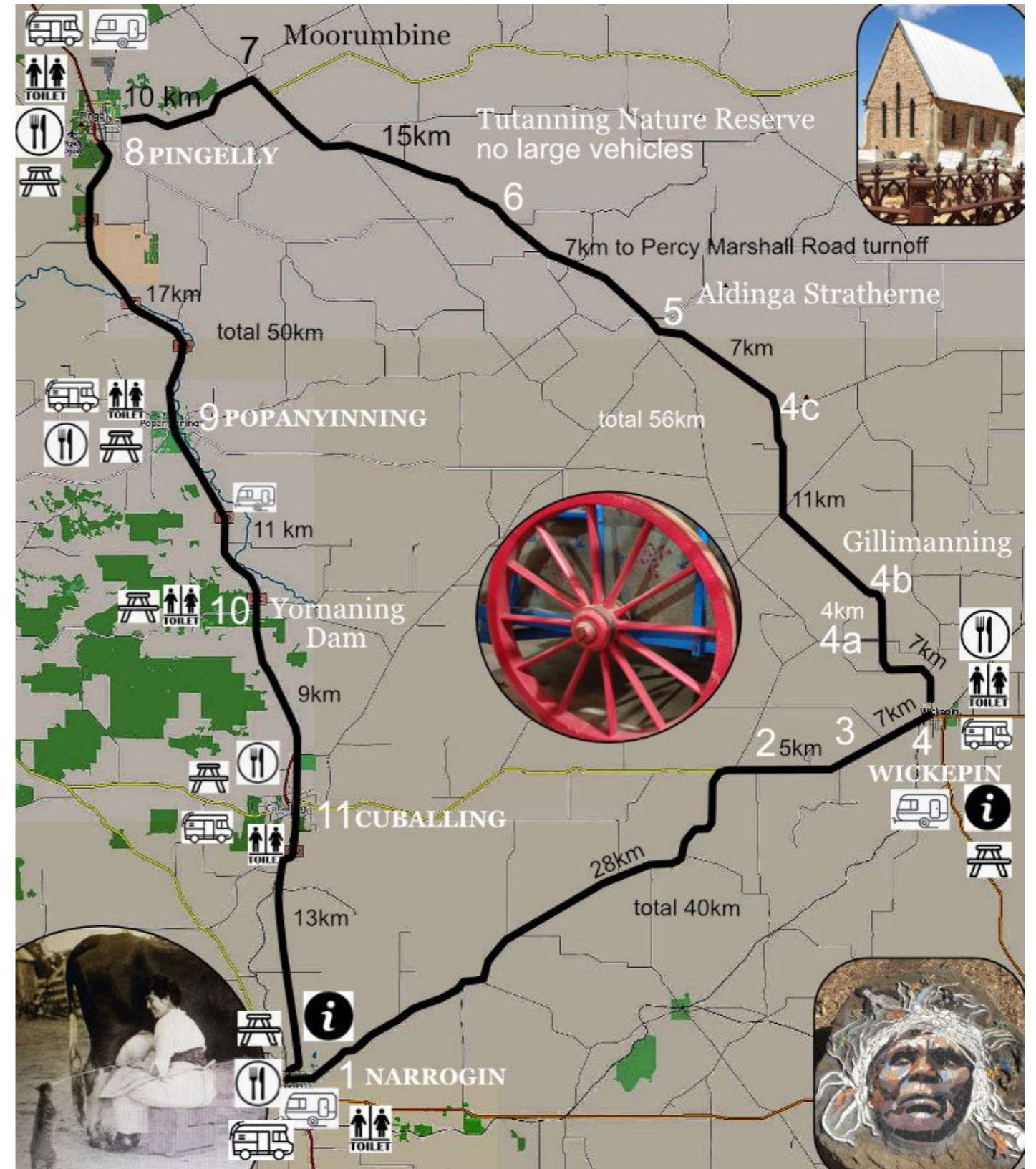


Noongar history

Narrogin - Wickepin - Pingelly History Drive

Explore early settlement history of the district on this 140km drive between Narrogin, Wickepin, Pingelly, and Cuballing.

The route is sealed, with small gravel road deviations. The complete loop will take more than a single Day to explore. QR codes provide more information and downloadable bulletins, which are also available at the Narrogin and Dryandra Visitor Centre.



1. Narrogin is a regional centre with a proud railway history. History buffs can spend a day here seeing the attractions listed on the Narrogin and Dryandra Visitor Centre website. Visit the Visitor Centre to collect printed brochures for Narrogin and other stops on the drive trail. Use this QR code to download "Spend a Day in Historic Narrogin" brochure. Don't miss the great diorama of Narrogin railway town in its heyday.



2. Tarling Well. 28km from Narrogin

Water holes and soaks were the meeting places and camping sites of the sandalwood cutters and shepherds minding sheep on pastoral leases before the land was open for farming in 1892. Later the well was an early mail delivery and social centre for this district.

3 Wickepin Water Tank and Claypit Nature Reserve 5km from Tarling Well

The water pipeline from the Harris River near Collie was constructed in the 1950's. Fresh water has always been limited, but the rise of saline groundwater following land clearing has made the problem much worse. The surrounding Claypit Nature Reserve has attractive winter/spring wildflowers, and an area of red and white ochre, (as used in Noongar ceremonies).



Blog

4,4a,4b,4c. Wickepin Town and Facey Heritage Drive 7km from water tank



Wickepin is well known for its association with Albert Facey, the author of the bestselling book "A Fortunate Life". After visiting Facey House, stay a while to walk the Heritage Walk Trail and see other attractions.

4a, 4b, and 4c are Inkiepinkie, Archie McCall homestead, and Gillimanning stops on the Facey heritage trail.

5 Aldinga Farm and School 7km from Gillimanning

John and Margaret McBurney travelled across from Aldinga South Australia to establish this farm in 1902. For a while they also ran a store here, and Mrs McBurney became the Stratherne exchange operator. The exchange was on a single party line, where she would notify the recipient of the phone call by a particular number of rings. There was no phone privacy in those days. The house you see was built over the original one.

Aldinga (later Stratherne) School started in 1905. Like most wheatbelt single teacher schools, nothing remains of the building.



Blog

6 Tutanning Nature Reserve (optional) 7km from Aldinga, 23km from Pingelly to Percy Marshall Road
This 5km gravel road leads to the Percy Marshall Field Study Centre. If you want a break from history, drop in for a walk in this pristine reserve, which has an amazing 750 species of native plants, or stay in camp-style accommodation at the field study centre. Camping and animals are not permitted, and the road is too narrow for large vehicles.



7 Moorumbine Heritage Trail 15km from Percy Marshall Road, 10km from Pingelly.

This is a short drive trail, which features historic locations in the Moorumbine town site. There are seven stops with information panels, which are all on Moorumbine Road

8 Pingelly 10km from Moorumbine



Pingelly

Pingelly was born as a railway town in 1898 and expanded into a pleasant district centre. Download the brochure from this web page or collect one from Pingelly Information Centre and Craft Shop.

Boyagin Rock has a moderately difficult walk to a panoramic view in a Noongar culturally significant area. 27km from Pingelly (10km gravel road)



Boyagin

9 Popanyinning 17km from Pingelly

The town was originally named Popaning, which means 'waterhole' in Noongar language. In 1906 there were 72 people in the district with several shops, and the railway station for residents and farmers. Download heritage trail, and the wildflower walk trail brochures with this QR code.



10 Yornaning Dam 11km from Popanyinning



Yornaning dam is a historic railway dam, and a great birdwatching, wildflower and picnic spot. With picnic tables, gas BBQ and playground beside the scenic dam, this is a great spot for a picnic for most of the year. This is an excellent place for easy bushwalking, bird watching, cycling and winter/spring wildflowers.

11 Cuballing 9 km from Yornaning Dam 13km from Narrogin

The fine buildings, which seem out of place in this small township, arose from anticipation that Cuballing would be a railway junction from the Collie coalfield to the Goldfields. Alas, adjoining Narrogin was selected, and Cuballing declined.



Accompanying Brochures

Spend a Day in Historic Narrogin

Popanyinning Heritage Trail

Spend a Day in Historic Wickepin

Popanyinning Wildflower Walk Trail

Tutanning Nature Reserve

Yornaning Dam

Moorumbine Heritage Trail

Pingelly