

Narrogin – A Brief History

The name Narrogin is said to have originated from the Aboriginal word gnargijin, meaning place of water and is named after a large pool on Narrogin Creek. (Other sources quote the meaning as 'place of bats' or 'plenty of everything'.)

The first European settlers in the area were sheep herders who had followed watercourses and selected property suitable for grazing. Edward Hamersley took up the first pastoral and tillage lease of 5,000 acres in 1853, and other settlers followed through the 1860s and 70s.

The town started as a small group of buildings centred on the railway station on the Great Southern line. The 'Father of Narrogin', Michael Brown, was responsible for a great deal of building construction in the town and this in turn attracted new settlers. His descendants are still in the area (in 2020).

By the early 20th century Narrogin had become one of the largest towns on the fringe of the Wheatbelt region. It had two hotels, two boarding-houses, two shops, a doctor, a chemist and a small hospital on a hill some distance away from the railway station.

Narrogin's emergence as a regional centre can be traced back to the construction of the railway line between Albany and Beverley in the late 1880's. Between 1905 and 1926 new lines fanned out to Collie, Wickepin, Kondinin, Dwarda and points beyond. Narrogin remained a major rail centre until the late 1970's when competition from road transport saw a reduction in the railway workforce from some 280 people to less than a dozen in 1995.

Narrogin's early role as a major railway junction served to attract agricultural service industries as well as government departments and agencies. Over the years the town has accumulated significant public infrastructure - mainly in the health and education areas. These services and the surrounding agricultural industry form the base of the modern regional centre that Narrogin has become today.

Trail etiquette and walker safety

For your comfort and safety, and for the enjoyment of others, we suggest you:

- Be cautious: Some sections of this trail are alongside busy roads. Please stay on the marked trail route – and keep children with you at all times.



- Be comfortable and cool: Wear sensible shoes, and in warm weather wear a sunhat, long-sleeve shirt and sunscreen – and take some water with you. In winter you may need a rain jacket or umbrella.



- Be clever: Walk the trail in the direction shown on the map as it is only marked for one-way travel.

- Be courteous: There may well be others on the trail too – and people going about their daily business around town. Share the space with respect for all.

- Be clean: Dispose of all litter in the bins around town. Smokers – please extinguish before you set out on our trail.



This trail is based on, and inspired by, extensive research work undertaken in years past by Narrogin's former and much-loved honorary historian, Mr Maurie White.



Stories of Us

The Narrogin Heritage Walk Trail



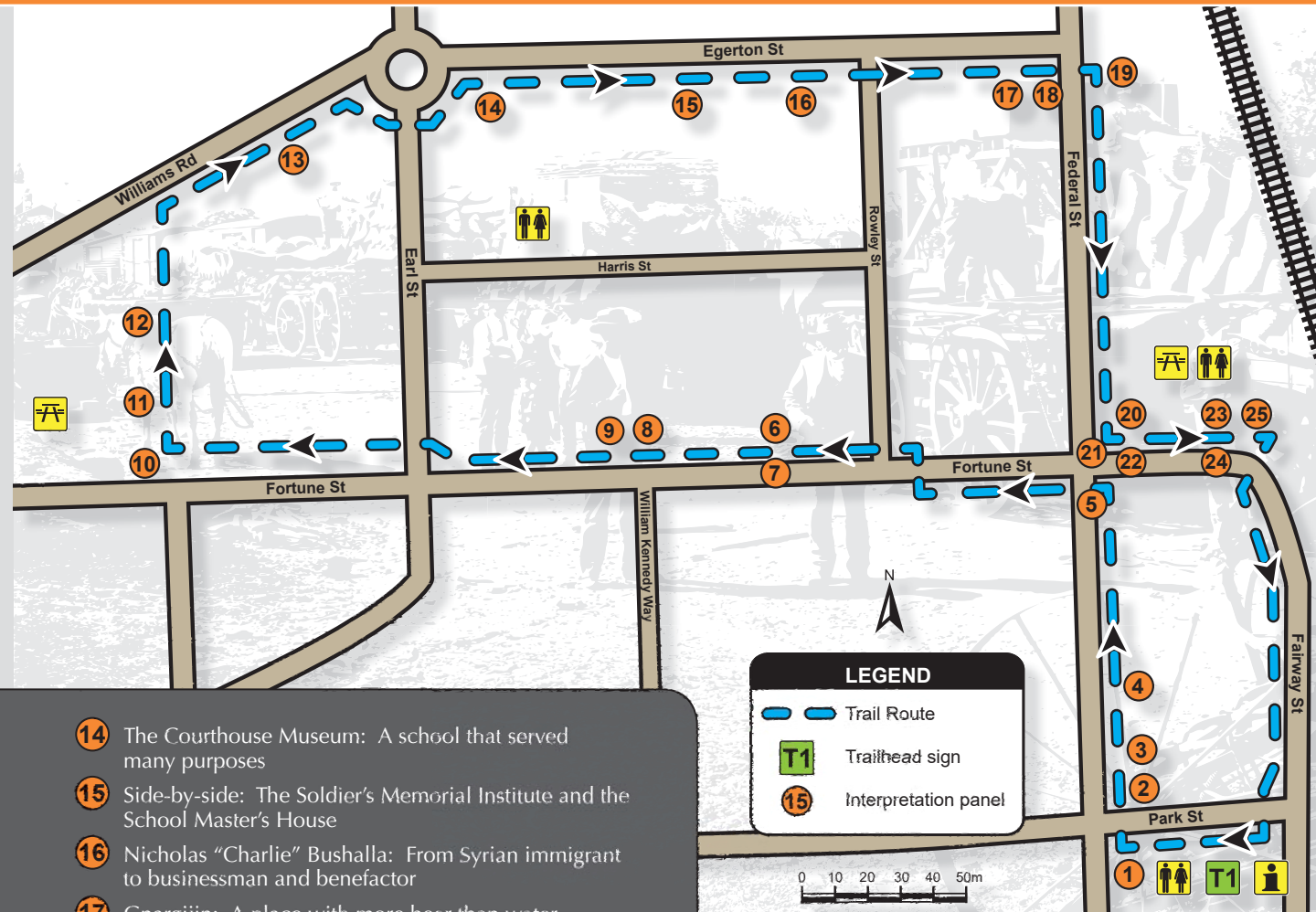
Explore the rich history and heritage of Narrogin, and share just some of the "Stories of Us" – the people who've made this place home through the years

The Narrogin Heritage Walk Trail

The Narrogin Heritage Walk Trail is a fascinating and pleasant 1,250 metre stroll through the town's early settlement history. The circuit includes many of the historic buildings that tell the story of European settlement and help tell the Stories of Us - of all those people who've made Narrogin their home through the years.

The trail is designed for one-way travel in a clockwise direction, and commences on the corner of Park and Fairway Streets – though you can join it anywhere along the route. It is marked with black-on-silver triangles affixed to the footpath at regular intervals. These are particularly clear at turns and street crossings, while the walk trail's interpretive panels also help define the way ahead. In most cases panels are visible from some distance away.

The Heritage Walk Trail showcases significant aspects of the cultural and built history of the town via a series of engaging and attractive interpretive panels:



- 1 The Union Bank: A statement of faith in the future
- 2 The Anglican Church: From little things big things grow
- 3 Railway central: Housing the workers who kept the wheels turning
- 4 Gentlemen, start your motors: The epic 1951 Australian Grand Prix
- 5 Party on: Save the last dance for me
- 6 Connecting the community: The Post Office and Telephone Exchange
- 7 Fortune Street, Narrogin: And the Observer who's seen it all
- 8 A tale of two banks: Free classical, or art-deco?
- 9 The Baptist Church: Built for both body and soul
- 10 The old convent: A residence for many, and a refuge for some
- 11 World War 1: The highest rate of enlistment in the Empire
- 12 World War 11: Once again, a community commits to the cause
- 13 Nurse Ness: Extraordinary horsewoman, and midwife

- 14 The Courthouse Museum: A school that served many purposes
- 15 Side-by-side: The Soldier's Memorial Institute and the School Master's House
- 16 Nicholas "Charlie" Bushalla: From Syrian immigrant to businessman and benefactor
- 17 Gnargijin: A place with more beer than water
- 18 Local Government: From Road Board to Town and Shire, and on to unity
- 19 The magnificent Mardoc: Unique origins, and home to many
- 20 The Town Hall: Wedding cake or white elephant?
- 21 Manning's Store: The shop with (nearly) nine lives
- 22 The Hordern Hotel: A landmark lucky to be still standing
- 23 The Railway Station: A focal-point, in more ways than one
- 24 Train transport: Greasing the wheels of early rural life
- 25 The AMP Building: A gorgeous old queen, even without her "crown"



Take your time to enjoy this pleasant walk – and enjoy reading the colourful stories of many of the historic places, events and people of Narrogin. As with many small country towns, there's more to Narrogin than might at first meet the eye!

Stories of Us