

Emu Hill Townsite Project



CONCEPT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

A PROJECT DEDICATED TO PRESERVING AND SHARING THE STORY OF ONE OF THE DISTRICT'S EARLIEST AND MOST SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITIES.

About Us

The **Narembeen Historical Society** was established in **1965** and has been preserving the district's history for more than 60 years. Today, the Society is supported by a dedicated group of **14 volunteer members** who care for **5 museums** across the Narembeen townsite.

These include the **Machinery Museum, 'Old' Church Museum, ANZAC Museum, Historical Museum**, and the **History Centre & Sport Museum**. **Family history features prominently throughout the Society's collections**, with extensive records, photographs and stories that help preserve the connections between pioneering families and the development of the district.

The museums are **available for guided tours by request**, allowing visitors to explore the district's rich history through the knowledge and experience of the Society's volunteer guides.

Project Vision

The **Emu Hill Information Bay** was created to preserve, interpret and celebrate the history of the **Emu Hill townsite** and its contribution to the development of the Narembeen district.

- **Initiated by** the Narembeen Historical Society.
- **Commenced** in **2025** and **completed** in **early 2026**.
- The Society's third heritage interpretation project, following South Kumminin and Billericay.
- Designed to make local history accessible to both residents and visitors.

This project reflects the Society's long-term commitment to preserving local heritage and creating places where history can be experienced rather than simply recorded.

Why Emu Hill Matters

Emu Hill played a vital role in the early development of the district.

During the **1920s it was the largest community in the region.**

Before Narembeen developed, Emu Hill was the district's principal settlement.

Even after the railway arrived in 1920, Narembeen was initially little more than a railway siding serving Emu Hill.

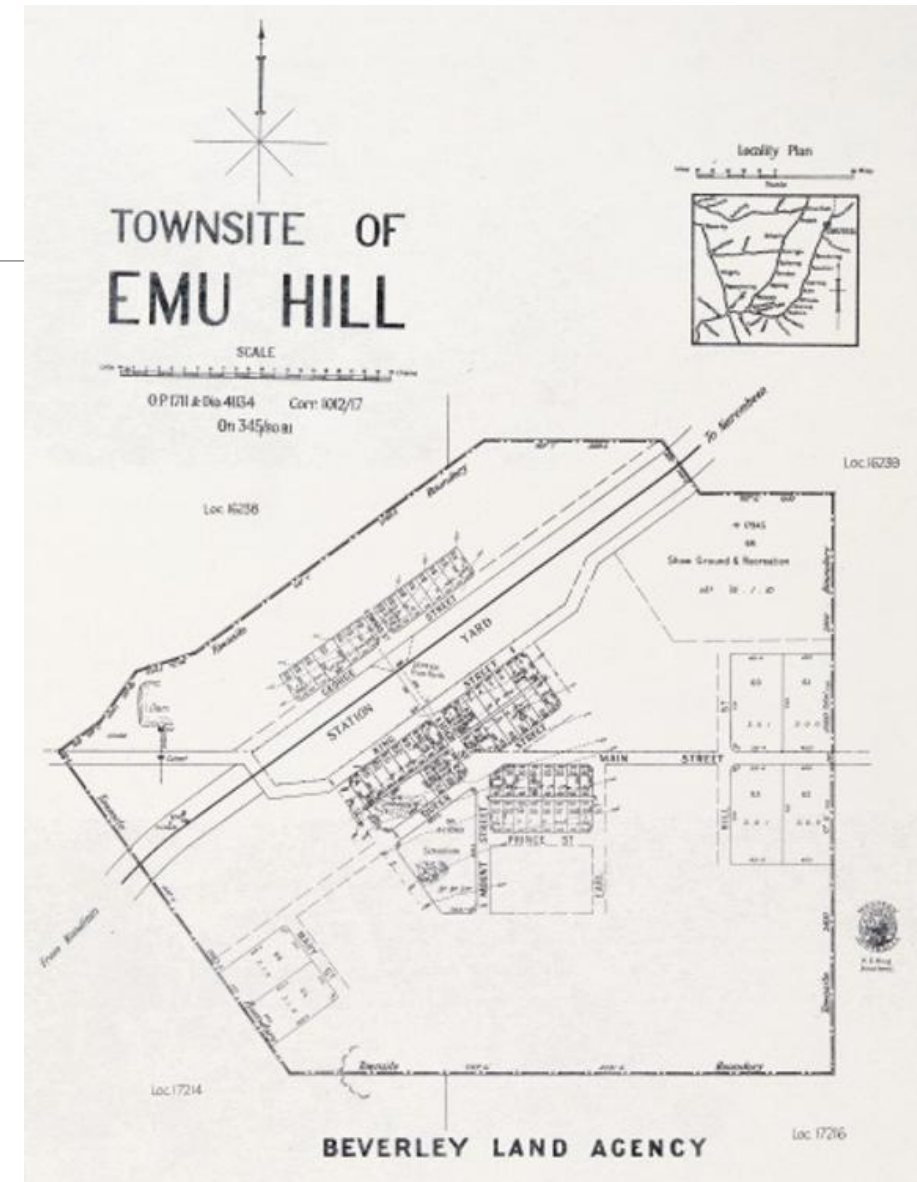
Despite its importance, much of Emu Hill's story had remained largely untold. This project preserves the stories of pioneering families, local industries and community life for future generations.

The Site

The Information Bay is located approximately **4 kilometres south of Narembeen** at the former Emu Hill townsite.

The location was chosen because of its historical significance and its visibility to travellers using the Kondinin–Narembeen Road.

The site was developed to provide a welcoming place where visitors can stop, rest and learn about the people, businesses and community that once existed there.



Concept Design

The **concept** was to create an **attractive** and **functional heritage stop** that would blend with the surrounding **Wheatbelt** landscape.

Key features include:

- Purpose-built shelter
- Table and seating
- Professionally designed interpretive signage
- Accessible layout for visitors and travellers

The design focused on durability, comfort and storytelling, ensuring the site would remain a valuable community asset for many years.

Planning and Partnerships

The project was delivered through strong local collaboration.

Partners included:

Shire of Narembeen – approvals and site preparation.

Narembeen Engineering & Steel Supplies – design and installation of the shelter.

Connelly Images, Corrigin – production of the interpretive signage.

Felton Industries – supply of park furniture.

Narembeen Historical Society volunteers – research, writing and project coordination.

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions – permission to access the Emu Hill Reserve.

Funding Partners – Shire of Narembeen and Ramelius Resources Community Benefit Fund, GO Narembeen, Narembeen Lions Club.



Community Benefit Fund



This partnership demonstrated what can be achieved when local government, businesses and volunteers work together with a shared vision.



Construction Process

The Information Bay was constructed in a series of stages over several months.

Site preparation and earthworks

The process included:

Installation of the shelter structure

Placement of tables and seating

Design and production of interpretive signage

Installation and landscaping

Careful planning ensured the project was completed efficiently and to a high standard



EMU HILL TOWNSITE

A Historic Landmark

Emu Hill - The Beginning

In the 1920's, Emu Hill emerged as the most populous community in the region. It is a well known fact that as late as 1917, the township of Narembeen was non-existent. Even in 1920, following the arrival of the railway line, Narembeen remained little more than a siding for Emu Hill.

Opposition to a hotel

When the prospect of constructing a hotel at Emu Hill arose, considerable opposition was expressed, with the locals of Emu Hill suggesting a coffee palace or temperance hotel.

On 22 June 1922, prominent citizens of Emu Hill published an advertisement in the local newspaper announcing their application for a provisional certificate to establish hotel premises in King Street, Emu Hill.

Recognising the opportunity to sell alcohol at the railway siding of Narembeen, Perth Lawyer Henry Hale and Publican Paddy Connolly purchased 30 acres of land with plans to construct a hotel. This enabled the private town of Narembeen to be established in 1922 (5kms north of this site).

What ensued was a contest between the two towns for a hotel licence, during which the courts denied both applications.

Eventually, Narembeen succeeded in its application through the York Licensing Court. Emu Hill's application was dismissed due to their failure to appear in person.

Narembeen - The Beginning

When the news reached Narembeen there was immense jubilation, as the construction of such a facility, costing around 5,000 pounds would offer spacious and beneficial accommodation as well as addressing the social needs of the district.

Following the establishment of the hotel and private town of Narembeen, Emu Hill struggled to thrive. By 1927, the bank branch in Emu Hill had closed, leading to further decline in the town's fortunes.

As is the case with most important developments within towns, Narembeen's good fortune was not merely a twist of fate, but rather the product of political power and money.

Narembeen, just a short distance away, has continued to grow and evolve, but the story of Emu Hill serves as a testament to the transient nature of communities and the enduring connection between people and the land.

The Legacy

Emu Hill may no longer be a bustling town, but its legacy lives on in the hearts of those who remember it and in the stories passed down through generations.

The November 1922 Edition of the Local Newspaper quoted:

"Business is brisk around the Hill these days. Local Plumber Foster has sent for an assistant. Mrs McCaskill is extending her Boarding House to cope with increased trade. Mark Potts is doing very well with his hired car—three trips to Bruce Rock and one to Narrogin this week. SS Wylie has been out from Bruce Rock demonstrating the new Chevrolet"

Interesting Fact

There was an Emu Hill Race Course that was described as being "unmatched by any outside the metropolitan area".

At the heart of this story are two of Narembeen's pioneers:

Charles Latham and Tom Savage.

Disclaimer:

The information presented on this signage is based on historical records and sources deemed reliable at the time of publication - Narembeen Historical Society 2025.



EMU HILL TOWNSITE

The Town and It's History

History

The area was initially surveyed in 1836 by Surveyor General John Septimus Roe. After camping on a rocky outcrop and seeing a group of emus he named the area Emu Hill (approximately 7.5kms north west of the Emu Hill Townsite). By the 1900's, an increasing number of farmers settled in the area as more land became available, and by 1918, the townsite of Emu Hill was gazetted.

First Settlers

The first settlers of Emu Hill were attracted to the area by the fertile land suitable for agriculture. These early settlers included Charles Latham and Tom Savage who played significant roles in the development of the area.

Facilities

At its peak, Emu Hill boasted a Store, a Butcher, a Carpenter, a Blacksmith, a Boarding House, a Saddler, a Vet and a Railway Station. These facilities contributed to the vibrancy of Emu Hill as a community hub during its peak years.

Schools

The original Emu Hill School was opened in 1912 by teacher Miss Foale in a building erected by the Education Department on land owned by Mr C G Latham. A plaque marking the location of the school is located on the Narembeen South Road. This school was later moved to the Narembeen township where it became known as Narembeen School. The Emu Hill township opened its first school on 24 April 1920, it closed on 26 November 1938 and was relocated to Narembeen in 1939.

Recreation & Sport

A hall was completed at Emu Hill by mid 1917. In May 1919 a Sporting Club to arrange cricket, football and tennis was formed. As the Emu Hill townsite declined and the private town of Narembeen developed, the disused Emu Hill recreation building was relocated to Narembeen.

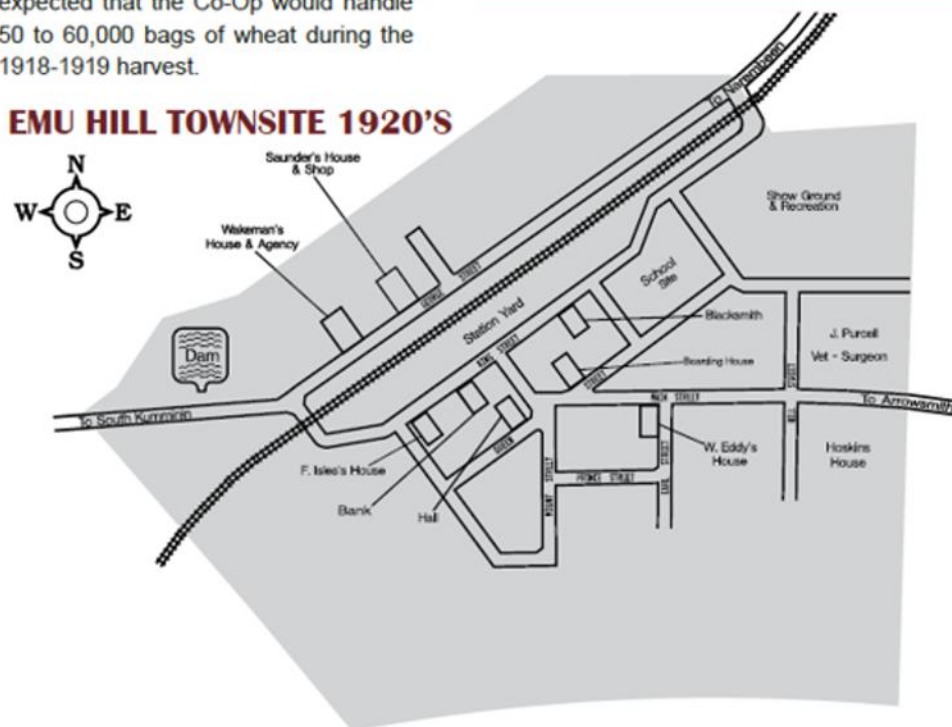
The Co-operative Society

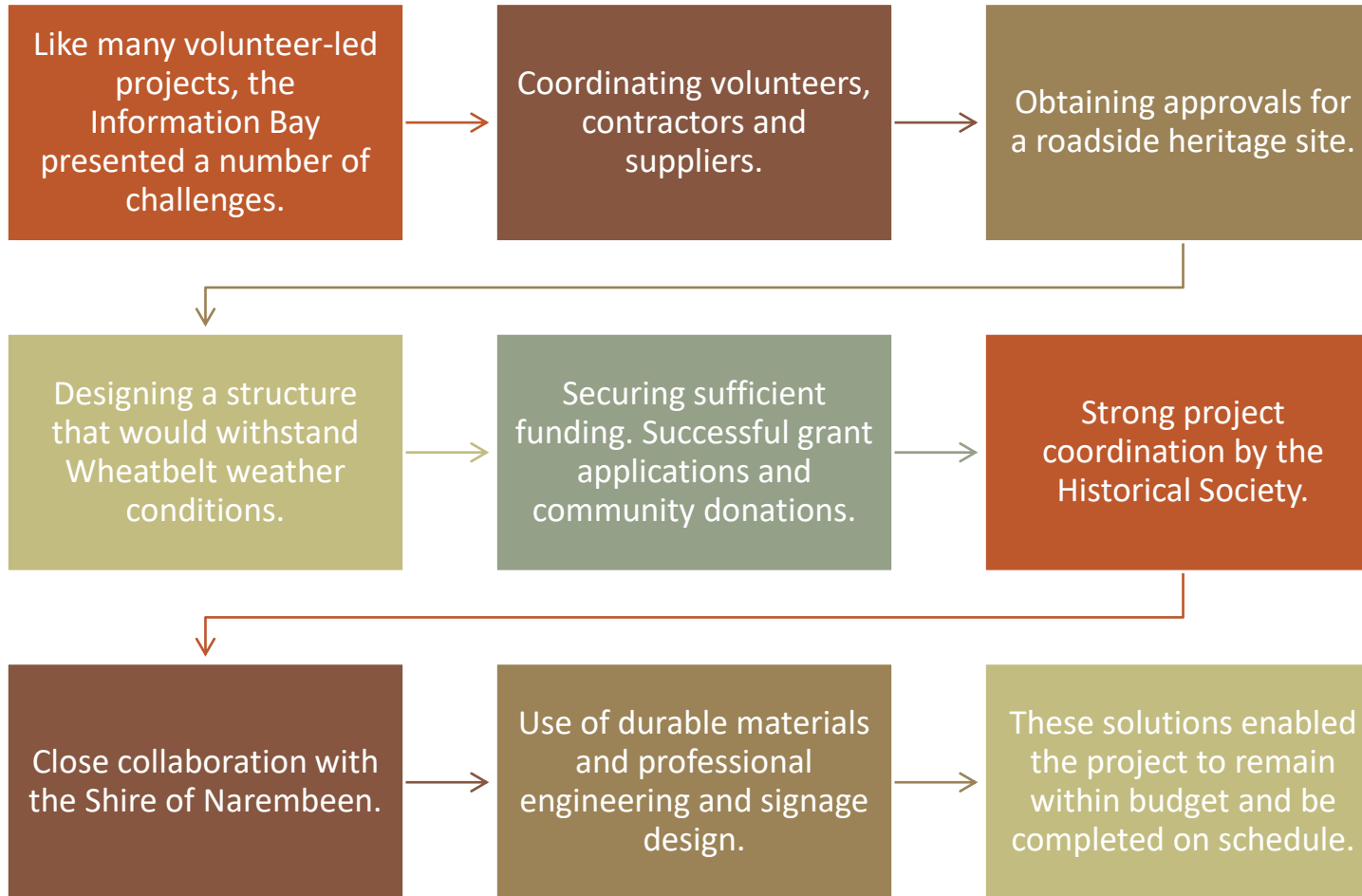
Known as the Kuminin Co-Op, it was formed at Emu Hill in November 1918, to deal with the handling of wheat. It was expected that the Co-Op would handle 50 to 60,000 bags of wheat during the 1918-1919 harvest.

Noteworthy Detail

The Hoskins family were the last family to leave Emu Hill, leaving in the 1940's. The last teacher at the Emu Hill School was Miss Purcell.

EMU HILL TOWNSITE 1920'S





Challenges and Solutions

The Completed Information Bay

The finished Information Bay is much more than a roadside rest area.

It provides:

A place to rest and enjoy the surrounding landscape

An educational resource for schools, visitors and residents

Historical photographs and interpretive displays

Stories that bring the former townsite back to life

The completed site encourages visitors to pause, reflect and gain a deeper understanding of the district's heritage.

The official opening and dedication of the Emu Hill Information Bay will be held on Monday 21 September 2026, celebrating the completion of the project and recognising the many volunteers, local businesses, community supporters and the Shire of Narembeen who contributed to its success.



Community Impact

The project has strengthened heritage tourism and community identity across the Narembeen district.

Benefits include:

Preserving an important chapter of local history.

Creating an engaging educational resource.

Encouraging travellers to stop and explore the district.

Fostering pride, connection and a stronger sense of place.

The project was delivered for **just over \$9,000**, funded through successful grants, community donations and a contribution from the Narembeen Historical Society.

This project was made possible through the dedication of volunteers, local businesses, community supporters and the Shire of Narembeen.

Historical Society members contributed countless hours researching historical records, sourcing photographs, writing interpretive content, preparing grant applications and coordinating contractors and suppliers.

A special acknowledgement is extended to Sheree Thomas and the late Rhonda Hickey, whose leadership was instrumental in the success of the project. They undertook extensive historical research, met regularly with the Shire of Narembeen throughout the planning process, and oversaw the construction of the Information Bay from concept to completion. Their dedication, vision and commitment have left a lasting legacy for the Narembeen community.

The Emu Hill Information Bay stands as a lasting community asset and a tribute to the people and history that shaped the Narembeen district.

Acknowledgements / Thank you

