

# Building the train line from Denmark to Nornalup



Source: [www.denmarkwa.asn.au](http://www.denmarkwa.asn.au)

The building of the 34-mile (55 km) stretch of line from Denmark to Nornalup presented many difficulties.

Manpower was no problem as the depression had just begun. Group settlers formed some of the workforce due to a need to supplement their farm income.

The work was hard; deep gullies had to be filled with earth, rivers and creeks needed to be bridged and cuttings carved from hillsides. In some areas heavy timbers had to be felled.

Work was carried out in the steamy summer heat accompanied by hordes of flies and through cold, wet winters with excessive rain in 1928 and 1929 resulting in flooded rivers and the neverending problem of clay and mud.

Tools were simple; spades, shovels, axes, mattocks and cross cut saws and of course the hardworking men and horses.

A work camp was established three or four miles from town.

Crews began work at 5 am and finished as late as 10 pm. The lowest *daily* wage at the time was the equivalent of \$1. The train crew earned the equivalent of \$13 per day for a 60-hour week and for a 70-hour week the wage was the equivalent of \$14.50 per day.

A rough railway track was first built out to the main camp from the Denmark Railway Station.

The Government train was piloted out with loads of material for the laying of the line until such time as a deviation was built and the workmen were able to bring materials out on their own train. It was on this deviation that the first machine was used; a steam navvy or shovel.

It was indeed a triumph of achievement [when the first train steamed into Nornalup](#).

*This article first appeared in the [September 10, 2014 edition of the Walpole Weekly](#) (PDF). Molly Smith is a regular contributor to the Weekly with her "Looking Back with Molly" column.*