

Construction of Hume Dam, 1919-1936

Part 3: Getting Started

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Copious amounts of material, equipment and infrastructure were needed. Two construction villages sprang up. The original Mitta Mitta Junction was the Victorian hamlet we now know simply as Mitta Mitta, on the upper reaches of the Mitta Mitta River. It had first boasted a post office in 1859. A new 'Mitta Junction' township was established in about 1920 on the Victorian side of the Hume Dam construction site. The town and all its contents was sold at auction in June 1936 for £7000.



The sign reads 'Mitta Junction Reservoir School No 4080'

A school was built at Mitta Junction in 1922 to cope with the huge increase in activity. Some conjecture persists over the name of the village, due to both football and cricket clubs playing as Ebdon Weir. A branch from the Cudgewa Line near Ebdon was laid, allowing most of the Victorian requirements to come by rail.



One of the ten Thornycroft Lorries being loaded. They ferried equipment from the Albury railway siding to the NSW construction site.

The NSW village was known as Hume Weir and started from nothing. A metalled road was installed from Wirringa (now Riverina Highway). A railway siding and depot at North Street was constructed.

A fleet of ten solid rubber tyred Thornycroft motor lorries capable of 10 mph (16 km/h), shuttled vast amounts of stores, equipment and cement to the dam site.

Two quarries were established. The one in Victoria provided earth fill and clay for the embankment. In NSW, the stone quarry on Hawksview Hill still remains a gaping hole overlooking the weir. Initially, two 16-ton Jacques Bros gyratory crushers were used. From 1925, a 30-ton Hadfield was deployed.

Both states made extensive use of narrow-gauge rail, taking clay and stone to their respective work sites. Frequently the lines had to be relocated as the work progressed. NSW had a line inside their coffer dam to remove rubble while excavating the spillway foundations.

Victoria had ten steam loco's working on the earthen embankment using a 1.05 metre gauge. NSW had four running on their 900 millimetre gauge.

The river never ceased to flow, meaning coffer dams were needed to divert the flow around a particular work site, sometimes located as much as 20 to 30 metres below river level. A pile driving barge was deployed for around ten years. It was relocated to the Bethanga Bridge site where it did service for about a year as a cable ferry, before the new bridge was opened. It ended its days as the Wymah Ferry.

NSW had two huge cement mixers, capable of producing 700 cubic yards a day, enabling a continuous pour to be maintained. The mix was 5 crushed stone, 2½ sand to 1 cement and frequently tested to 3,000 psi. River gravel and reinforcing were only used above spillway height.

Victoria's core wall had different requirements. It had steel reinforcing from end to end and the concrete was mixed mostly from river gravel.

Stone from the quarry was gravity fed to the mixers using the 900mm line – locos returned the empty wagons to the quarry.