

**Extract from the diary of John Farrington,  
Worker on the Victoria Dam**

**5 June, 1890**

It was five in the morning when the overseer came to wake us up. He stuck his head into the tent and shouted "Get up, you lazy sods!"

Reluctantly the three of us crawled out of our sleeping bags and out of the tent. We stood with the hundred or so other men, shivering in the freezing winter air as the overseer barked orders at us.

Our team of seven men was on cement mixing duty. Hard, dirty work but easier than laying the cement. We marched over to the cement mixer and got to work. We lit up the great boiler and poured the water and cement powder into the big, round mixing trough. No sooner had we started the mixer up when it gave out a bang and then a long hiss and ground to a halt. The men cursed as they tried to locate the source of the problem. I discovered that a boiler plate had cracked and pointed it out to the others. "Looks like we'll be hand mixing today" said Thompson.

He was right; the mixer would take all morning to fix. We got to work mixing the cement by hand, using long wooden stirrers to keep the cement from hardening.

By midday we were drenched in sweat and our arms and backs were aching. The overseer came and replaced us with another mixing team. Our team was sent into the bush to shoot kangaroos for dinner, a welcome change from salt beef. We departed in separate directions. I headed south where the underbrush thinned out. After a few hundred yards I caught sight of a big male. I ducked behind a blackboy and raised my rifle, took aim and fired. It went limp and fell to the ground. My kill was too big to carry in the sack so I dragged it back to camp. I shot five more kangaroos in that afternoon. We put our kangaroos outside the cook's tent. He made some of them into a stew and salted the rest for later.

We had dinner round the campfire at seven. The stew was good, thick with carrots and potatoes, and we washed it down with ale. Some men had a little too much to drink and the overseer had to sort them out.

Went to bed at ten, checked for ticks before I got into the tent.

