

*Landmarks: People and Places across Australia, a gallery bringing together over 1500 objects, explores the history of Australia since European settlement.*

## OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

### Sunshine Harvester Works Steam Whistle

One sound many people associate with a factory town is the shrill of a steam whistle. Sunshine, like other towns built around a factory, was no exception. The whistle was loud enough to be heard throughout the town, and through the noises created by an active, bustling factory.

Many of Sunshine's residents used the whistle as a way of regulating their days. The pervasive sound marked different intervals of the day, from the start of work, to break time and, of course, the end of the working day. It blew an hour before work started, and again 45 minutes later. The whistle could be heard 15 minutes later at 7.30am, signalling the start of the working day. It blew again at lunchtime. At the end of the day, the final whistle could be heard, telling workers that it was time to go home.

As part of Landmarks: People and Places across Australia, a gallery bringing together over 1500 objects, exploring the history of Australia since

European settlement, the Museum has loaned a number of objects from the Sunshine and District Historical Society. This item, including this steam whistle, is displayed in the exhibit relating to Sunshine and the Sunshine Harvester Works.



**The Sunshine Works Steam Whistle was installed at the top of the Bulk Store, a building that was located towards the centre of the Works site, amidst many other sheds and buildings. Photo: Jason McCarthy, National Museum of Australia.**

The whistle was installed at the top of the Bulk Store, a building that was located towards the centre of the Works site, amidst many other sheds and buildings. The brass whistle is quite small, measuring just under 30 cm high, and is mounted on a wooden base. The Bulk Store

is one the few remaining factory structures still standing on the former site of the Sunshine Harvester Works.

When Sunshine Harvester Works owner, HV McKay, moved his factory from Ballarat to Braybrook Junction<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of the 20th century, he also wanted to build a community where his workers could live with their families. McKay drew inspiration from the Garden City movement and the development of factory towns like Bournville and Port Sunlight in England. He established a housing estate which embraced garden city principles, with tree lined streets, detached family housing and generous community parklands. Over a number of years, land was subdivided and offered for sale, with a generous housing repayment scheme available. Facilities including a church, community gardens, tennis courts and a bowling green, were established to draw the community together.

During the 1970s, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) passed noise regulations, which restricted the use of steam whistles. However, after Sunshine residents lodged complaints with the factory switchboard that the removal of the whistle disrupted their days, the whistle was reinstated.

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Object biography prepared by Leah Bartsch, Curator, National Museum of Australia.

**Landmarks: People and Places across Australia** is the National Museum's newest and most ambitious gallery to date, bringing together over 1500 objects to create a history of Australia since European settlement.

For more information about the exhibition visit  
<http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/landmarks>

*The National Museum of Australia is an Australian Government Agency*

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<sup>1</sup> Braybrook Junction was later renamed Sunshine after the factory.