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NOBLY DONE

SUNSHINE HARVESTER DIARY 1987

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Massey-Ferguson, Sunshine.*



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Massey-Ferguson, Sunshine.*

Front Cover: Auction sale during farmers' visit - c. 1910s.
*'It's startling to realise how big the factory was. It was a wonderful place.
Years old. When I went there, they had their own trains and of a morning
it was like an army going to work.'* Ivy Rewell.

Back Cover: *"Duty Nobly Done."* Ivy Rewell and her teapot.

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LIVING MUSEUM OF THE WEST

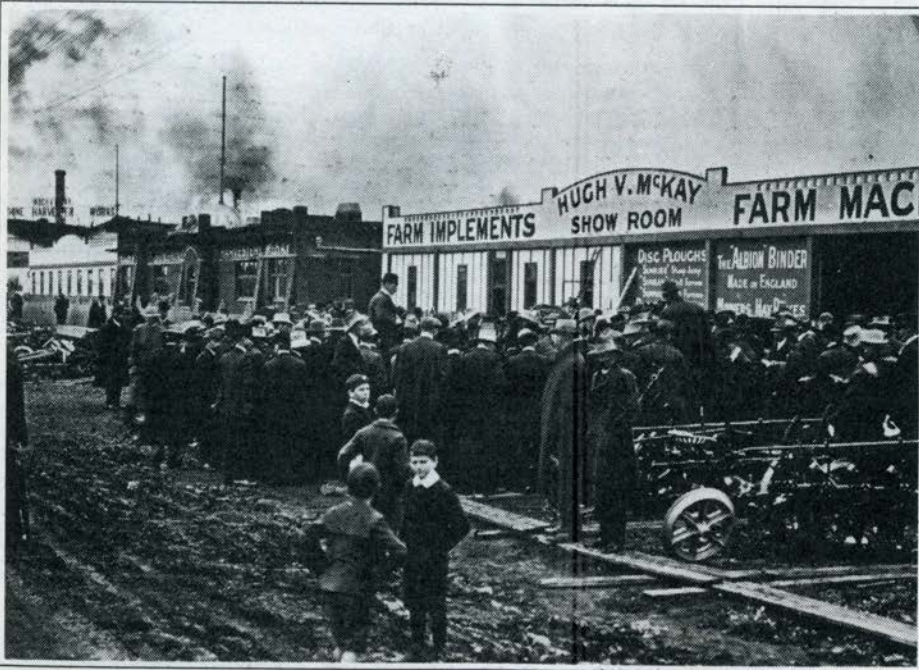
Melbourne's Living Museum of the West seeks to record and present the history of working people in Melbourne's western region up to the present. We are a *living* museum because the people of the region are involved in the research and presentation process. We are a museum without walls. Our museum is not confined to glass cases within one building. Our work is concerned with people's memories, people's thoughts, people's stories and people's own collection of photos and other material objects.

Initially this collection of memories, thoughts, pictures, writings, objects, is being recorded on tape and on photographic film. It is important to record these things now before they are lost forever. The next step is to get some of these recollections, thoughts and photographs back into the region from which they came. Our museum is committed to doing this through publications, through video and through exhibitions. These are important ways of presenting some of the very complex and valuable material we've collected and of honouring those who have provided the material in the first place.

A major focus of our museum is the theme of work. Work has been a dominant fact of life in our region. Some of the work-places of the region are on a large scale and of major significance in Australia's economic development. Among these was the McKay Harvester Works, later to become Massey-Ferguson, in Sunshine.

Workers from every decade this century are a large part of the industrial heritage offered by this factory. Their stories will open your eyes and develop our awareness and understanding of Melbourne's western region and of our world. All over the world there is a growing movement concerned with people's history. We are part of this movement. It is time people were given a chance to tell their own stories.

OLWEN FORD, Director, Living Museum of the West.



Auction sale during during farmers' visit - 1910s.

FOREWORD

This is the second worker-heritage diary to be produced by the Living Museum of the West. The first was called "*Go West, Young Woman!*" — a munitions diary for 1985, concentrating on the contributions of women workers to government and private munitions factories in Melbourne's western suburbs from World War One to the present day.

This diary, "*Duty Nobly Done*", centres on both men and women, who have contributed their skills and working life to the McKay Harvester Works, later to become Massey-Ferguson, in Sunshine. The factory has been in decline for several years and large sections have long been scheduled for demolition. Yet, at the time of writing this, the site, filled with huge corrugated-iron sheds, still dominates central Sunshine, as it has for many decades. When it disappears, a unique and integral part of Sunshine's heritage and landscape will go, and the city will enter into a totally new era.

It is widely recognised that the McKay Harvester Works has great cultural significance, internationally, nationally and on a purely local level. Parts of this site have been the location of agricultural implement manufacture since 1889, often in a leading sense nationally. A chronology follows this section, which outlines the development of the site, as well as events influencing the industry, and ways in which the factory set trends for the outside world.

What so often is not revealed is the human side to such a development. A huge and widely significant factory over eighty years in existence, it was peopled by a large number of diverse workers and bosses. At its peak, the place employed 2000 - 3000 people, many of whom learnt their trade there and contributed a range of skills. Some spent their whole working lives in the place.

The Living Museum of the West has set out to reconstruct some of the human elements of the factory — how it operated from the points of view of those who performed its tasks — the variety of skills required, the work hazards, what it was like to work there in terms of conditions and worker relations. Only by interviewing workers from the past can one build a picture of atmosphere and daily detail in such a huge and significant complex.

To fulfill its ends, the Living Museum of the West has interviewed fifteen ex-workers. Some interviews were held on-site, as workers led Museum team members around the various factory shops, explaining processes and recalling events. Just a few extracts from these interviews have been reproduced here, high-lighted by photographs, some taken during interviewing, others brought out from private collections and copied by the Museum.

Together, the photographs and interview-quotes help build a selective picture of working life in a very important Australian industry. Many more interviews and a wider photographic search are needed to create a more thorough picture. Not every section of the factory has been investigated, not every trade, skill or monotonous task has been outlined. Therefore, it is important to stress that the opinions reproduced here reflect only a small range of views. Quotes and photographs were chosen on their individual merits, the action, detail, comedy or sacrifice which they reveal, not to build together as a comprehensive and definitive historical vision of a work place.

Also, reminiscences and visual images must be placed in a proper historical perspective. The outlining of harsh conditions should not necessarily be seen as a reflection upon an individual factory, but rather as a product of a wider industrial activity, during a specific period of time. An effort has been made within this diary, to provide in very brief terms, the sense of a context. Industrial safety and the obligations of the employer, on the other hand, are largely the context of work for the last decade or so. They are issues we are still investigating and should be informed by the earlier experiences of such men and women who talk to us here. In the ideas we formulate about our own approaches to work-life, we should acknowledge earlier experiences and try to understand the direct relationships between how we work today and those who worked before us.

Many of the images of worker conditions outlined here should be put in yet another perspective. Although some interviewees spoke of harsh conditions, they also remembered their working lives with great fondness. Some stayed on through economic necessity, but others stayed

willingly. For example, both Merv Brooks and Jessie Smith, among many others, worked at McKay's for over thirty years. They all loved their work. Any story of hardship or exploitation of workers must be balanced against a strong devotion to the factory felt by many of those who had the opportunity to become long-term employees.

Australia's agricultural machinery production is no longer dominated by the Sunshine factory, but it is still a large part of the culture of western suburbs workers' lives. The scaling down of the factory in the 1980s, in terms of size, workforce and production, is not unique to Massey-Ferguson, but is problematic of industry in the western suburbs generally. Many factories have or are soon to consolidate their works, dispose of processes and retrench many skilled workers — or even close down altogether. This poses serious economic consequences for the people of Melbourne's west, but it also threatens our 'worker heritage'. The conditions of work and the philosophy toward work of thirty or forty years ago, hold many lessons for the people of today. To lose our industrial history would be to dismiss important and fascinating lessons.

RODRICK FAULKNER, Researcher for Melbourne's Living Museum of the West.



On-site interview in the Blacksmiths Shop, Massey-Ferguson - 1985.

CHRONOLOGY

This chronology briefly outlines some major events which directly affected the development of the McKay Harvester/Massey-Ferguson site in Sunshine. It also lists events influencing the agricultural implement industry generally, as well as ways in which the McKay Works set trends for the world at large.

- 1843 — Ridley stripper invented by John Wrathall Bull, the first major agricultural machine to collect grain in Australia, but still leaving grain unchaffed and unbagged.
- 1847 — Daniel Massey begins manufacturing basic farm implements in Ontario, Canada.
- 1850 — Subdivision of two square miles referred to as "Albion". The future site of the McKay Harvester Works occupied part of this.
- 1859/
1860 — Railwayline to Bendigo opens, running beside the "Albion" subdivision.
- 1878 — South Australian government offers 4000 pounds for a machine combining winnowing and stripping.
- 1884 — H.V. McKay demonstrates his stripper harvester.
- 1885 — McKay Harvester patented — No. V4006.
- 1886 — Railway station established at Braybrook Junction. Rail line to Ballarat from the junction being constructed at this time. The junction area is promoted as a major industrial suburb — the 'Manchester of Australia'.
 - The McKay Harvester Company is formed in Ballarat, offices only, and sub-contracting to various implement makers in Melbourne. Steel used in the construction of the harvester was produced through a new process invented by Mr. Henry Johnson of Melbourne. This process used one third of previous levels of fuel and labour in converting iron into steel, thus dramatically cutting the costs of production.
- 1889 — Braybrook Implement Company is formed, on part of the present Massey-Ferguson site.
- 1891 — Daniel Massey's business in Canada is joined by Alanson Harris, a competitor, to form Massey-Harris Limited, located in Toronto.
- 1892 — Economic depression in Australia. The McKay Harvester Company is temporarily forced into liquidation.
- 1894 — McKay Harvester Company, once again solvent, is manufacturing its own harvesters in Yuille Street, Ballarat.
- 1895 — The McKay Harvester is named the 'Sunshine' Harvester after H.V. McKay hears an address by a visiting evangelist.
- 1902 — McKay Harvester Company begins exporting approximately 1000 harvesters to the Argentine and expands its product range to include chaff cutters and horseworks. The Company employs 466 workers.
- 1904 — McKay Harvester buys the Braybrook Implement Company.
- 1906 — Famous 'Harvester Judgement' by Justice Higgins on basic wage levels, largely in response to union objections to H.V. McKay's rates of pay. McKay is fined 20,000 pounds under the Excise Act, challenges this in the High Court and wins, causing the Act to be declared unconstitutional.
- 1907 — Braybrook Junction is renamed 'Sunshine'.
 - Changeover from Ballarat to Braybrook Junction is complete, 235 employees shift from Ballarat to continue working for the company. H.V. McKay begins a worker housing estate for his employees.
- 1910 — 1300 employees on the payroll.

- 1911 — A three month strike hits the Sunshine Harvester Works over non-unionist workers.
- 1913 — Headlie Taylor invents the Header Harvester, which vastly improves crop returns, especially in damaged or fallen grain.
- 1914/
1918 — Sunshine Harvester Works undertakes war production.
- 1916 — H.V. McKay wins a contract with Taylor to produce the Header Harvester. Taylor joins the Company.
- 1921 — Opening of new buildings on the Sunshine site, including the clocktower.
- 1926 — Death of H.V. McKay. The directorship remains in McKay family hands until 1956.
- 1930 — Amalgamation with the Canadian firm, Massey-Harris Co. Ltd., to form in Australia, H.V. McKay-Massey Harris.
- 1939/
1945 — Predominance of war work within the factory, including huge exports of farm machinery to England.
- 1951 — Shire of Braybrook becomes the City of Sunshine.
- 1953 — Massey-Harris in Canada merges with Harry Ferguson.
- 1955 — The McKay family is bought out of the Company and the site becomes part of the international overseas firm of Massey-Harris-Ferguson. Mr. Ritchie, from the United States, becomes managing director.
- 1957 — Massey-Harris-Ferguson Limited, shortens its name to Massey-Ferguson Limited.
- 1971 — Large scaledown at the Sunshine Works. Over 900 employees are retrenched.
- 1986 — Massey-Ferguson sells portion of site for redevelopment.

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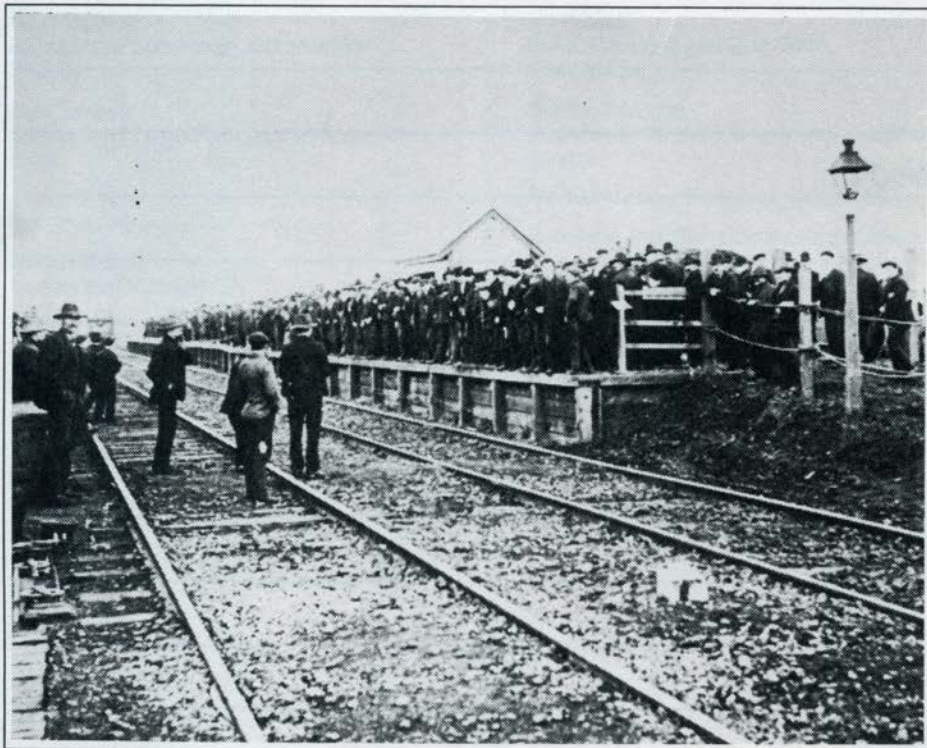
Special thanks to the H.V. McKay
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toward this diary.

SUNSHINE WORKERS IN THE 1930s

During the Depression years of the 1930s, no work was permanent. All the major industries in and around Sunshine and the neighbouring municipalities employed workers on a daily basis, according to the amount of work available. This meant men in Sunshine had to do the rounds of factories every day, usually on a bicycle:

'We used to start down at the Pottery (Sunshine Potteries) then move from the Pottery to over here (McKay's), stand out here for a while. Then we'd go up to the reinforced concrete (Humes); Spaldings; Nettlefolds and work our way all the way around - Pridhams, I.C.I.'

GEORGE HIGGINS, Sheet Metal Shop.



Workers at railway station, Sunshine - no date.

No job was permanent at McKay's and work was offered to most people from day to day. The factory could be made more efficient and profitable by guaranteeing no one permanent work:

'There used to be two hundred men standing out at that front gate all day. They'd be there in the morning when you came in, and they'd still be out there when you knocked off at night. And if you didn't do the right thing in here, or you'd done something wrong, they'd say to you, 'Listen, there's two hundred men out there waiting for a job. If you don't want to do the work, you're out, and one of them is in!'

ROY ROBERTS, Sheet Metal Shop and Fitters and Machine Shop.



Outside Russell Street Gates - no date.

JOB SECURITY

For many of the men and women interviewed, the context of employment at McKay's Harvester was one of extreme competition for jobs. This was particularly true during the 1930s Depression, but continued on well after the Depression years. McKay's was a huge factory and the major employer in Sunshine, but there were many more local hopefuls than there were jobs available. This meant no job was secure.

'We would never stop home or anything like that, because when we came back in the next day our jobs would be gone. Someone else would be doing them. There were hundreds of men standing out the front gate waiting for jobs and if you stopped home sick then you'd come back in the next day and one of these blokes would have your job.'

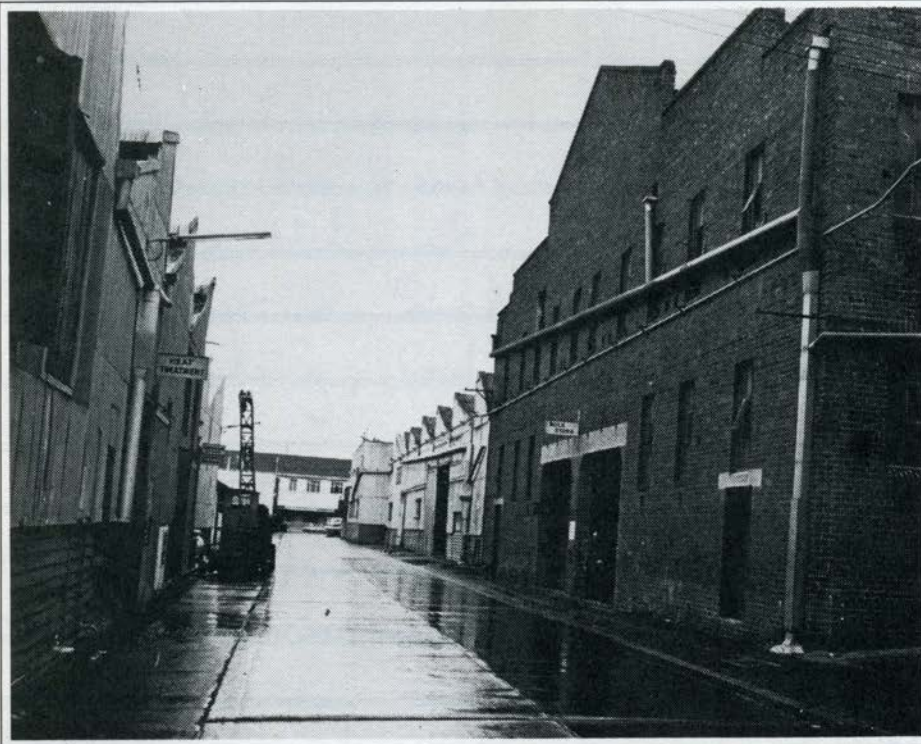
MERV BROOKS, Blacksmiths Shop.



Workers leaving Sunshine Harvester Works (Russell Street exit) - 5 p.m. September 7th, 1941.

'I can remember 1935, when 1400 men went off in three days. It was a very slack time, no work much, so 1400 men went off just before Christmas, a minute's notice, no holiday pay, no superannuation, nothing ... Every Christmas they used to put men off, just before Christmas, then start them again after Christmas ... I was put off in '71. In 1971 I was senior foreman of the Sheet Iron and we had 165 men during that period and things weren't that bad, but the Sheet Iron went down from 165 to 15. Nearly all the foremen went off ... managers, directors. The whole factory at that time was about 1800 and it went down to about 200, including directors.'

Conversation between CLEM BUCKINGHAM, ROY ROBERTS and GEORGE HIGGINS.



Russell Street, 1985.

WORKER CONDITIONS

McKay Harvester Works was composed of a large number of separate sections. Conditions for workers varied considerably between sections and rules of behaviour also differed. Some of the conditions and rules seem, by today's standards, to be quite harsh, but by the 1950s and '60s many improvements had been introduced:

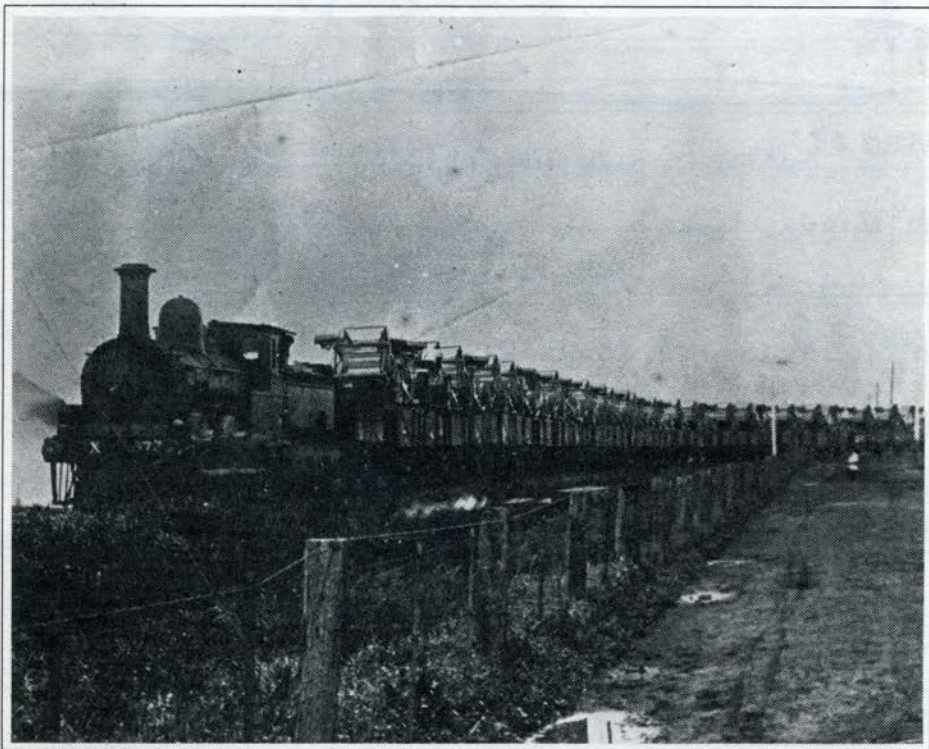
'Up until 1940/41, the men had no lunchrooms. You ate at your bench; I was on nightshift in 1936, and the two blokes with me went to sleep and one was eating a sandwich and a rat came up and pinched the sandwich out of his hand ... No concrete floors either, just wooden floors ... When you wanted to go to the toilet, you had to give your clockcard to the chap in the office at the toilet. He dutifully recorded your time of entry and exit. But if you happened to go twice, you had to fill out a "please explain" next day to your foreman ... That was up until '39 ... no morning or afternoon teas.'



Foundry - no date.

'You weren't allowed to smoke in the factory. One day a bloke got caught smoking in the foundry. Now in the foundry, it was a dirt floor, sparks flying everywhere. I've worked in there and you get burns in your shirt and everything, but you weren't allowed to smoke a cigarette. Now, one day a bloke was taking a puff on a cigarette and the manager at that time — Yorky Bolt, wouldn't take much action, but he'd just stop there, and the bloke didn't know what to do with the cigarette. If he'd just said: "Well, I'm sorry," he'd probably have got the sack. But he just stood there and eventually he didn't know what to do and he swallowed the cigarette. And he went blue and purple and then he was as sick as a dog and he raced away.'

Conversation between CLEM BUCKINGHAM, ROY ROBERTS and GEORGE HIGGINS.



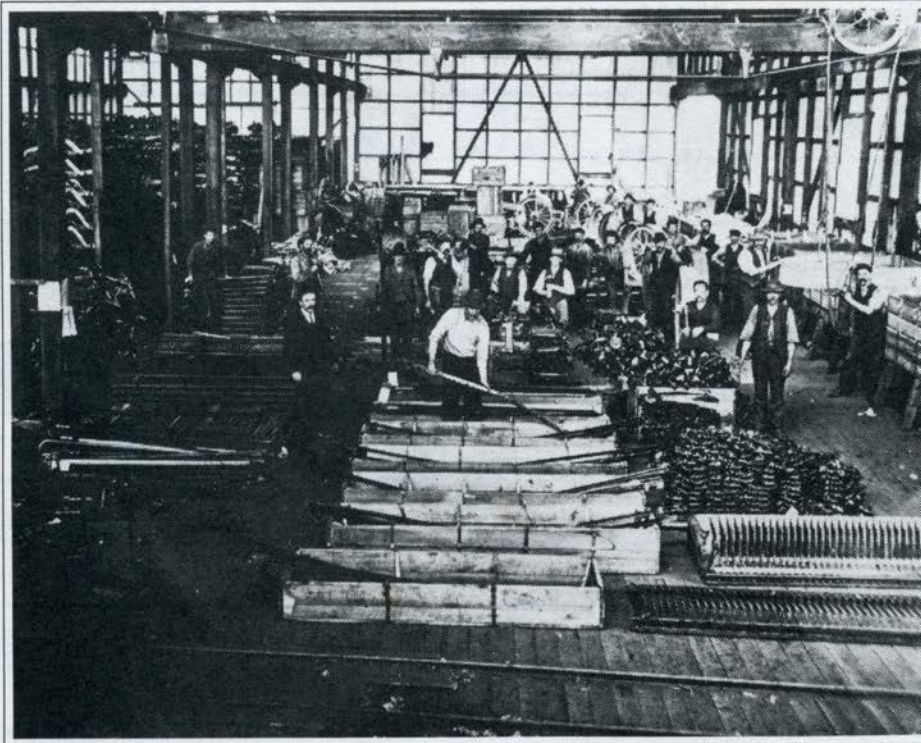
Steam train No. 176, owned by the McKay Harvester Works, and now held by the Williamstown Railway Museum.

HOT AND COLD

There were many different shops on the McKay Harvester site, containing a variety of industrial processes, but the entire factory was under corrugated iron. It was huge and drafty. In summer it could be broilingly hot, in winter bitterly cold, depending on the shop and its processes. Workers memories on this point can vary dramatically:

'For heating in this factory up until the War and in most places, after the War, you'd make a little bucket, a fire bucket and if you could get a bit of wood or something, you could have a fire. When I was on nightshift, I took the temperature and it was down to zero. Now, you can imagine men handling cold iron when it's got down to zero. If you could get some wood, you could have a fire, but there were no deliveries of wood. Holding the cold "dollies", some blokes' hands would crack. I remember the Sister once, somebody went down about their hands and the Sister said: "Oh, go back and piss on them."'

CLEM BUCKINGHAM, Sheet Metal Shop.



**Packing farm machinery for despatch, probably to assembly shop in Maylands, Western Australia
- no date.**

'We used to use big furnaces. They would be nearly white hot. Looking into there, no wonder we finished up with no eyes, I tell you — blind. Because we didn't wear glasses — no glasses, no protection. For years we had no protection, until asbestos shields came in which stopped the heat. But in the early days we didn't have those, we just had the full glaring fire ... In the original Blacksmiths Shop there were about 70 or 80 furnaces; hot in there — by gee, I tell you! We had no fans, we had no cold water to drink. It finished up, we used to put in and buy ice ourselves, together with the cold water to drink ... Only twice ever that I flaked out, I'd had it, I couldn't carry on. We had no let-up, I tell you. It did improve later on as the years went by.'

MERV BROOKS, Blacksmiths Shop.



Foundry - no date.

BINDER AND BINDER CANVAS SHOPS

In the Binder Shop, workers at benches helped construct parts for the Reaper and Binder Machine. Betty Oke recalls the Binder Shop from the 1940s:

'When I first started I was in the Binder Shop. I was drilling holes in bits of iron, something to do with agricultural implements, I suppose. I've got the scar now! The drill got stuck in the hole and there were no guards. The thing whizzed around and cut my finger right to the bone. Then for a while I was making wire netting. You put your foot on a pedal and the wire joined up together. Then you cut it off at the end with snippers.'



New Binder Shop - June 1921.

'The foreman's name in the Canvas Room was Naylor. His "pets" would get put on to do the canvas. I was a "pet" until I became militant about piece-work. I was making these canvas binders that go on the back of some of the harvesters and the wheat thrashes over them. I was put on this huge industrial sewing machine, and we had great big rolls of canvas on the end of this long bench. We pulled the canvas along — and this was piece-work — and we ran all the time, literally. We'd pull this canvas along, and straighten her all out, cut the size and then sew up the ends. That was what we'd call a good job. And if you worked hard it was profitable. Some of them were getting about five pounds a week, which was good money.'

BETTY OKE, Binder and Binder Canvas Shops.



Binder Canvas Shop - 1944.

BOLT SHOP

McKay's Bolt Shop was a self-contained unit, manufacturing a range of nuts, bolts, rivets and wheel spokes. It was a factory within a factory. It supplied bolts to other sections for the manufacture of agricultural implements and also supplied bolts to outside firms. After the transfer of ownership of the Sunshine Harvester Works from the McKay family to Massey-Ferguson in 1956, the Bolt Shop was closed. Jessie Smith worked at McKay's Harvester from 1930 to 1960, starting in the Bolt Shop. Here she describes some of the work conditions, but although they sound harsh, she enjoyed her work very much, as did many other women, such as those photographed below, and Jessie Smith would return to work at McKay's tomorrow if she could:

'You'd get dirt up to your elbows sometimes. You put soap around your nails to keep the dirt from going under your nails and then your nails were worn right down. And then you tied paper around your feet like spats because the water from the machine used to splash on you. And we had to wear black or navy blue overalls and hairnets ... All the same we enjoyed every minute of it. I loved my time in the Bolt Shop.'

JESSIE SMITH, Bolt Packing.



Bolt Shop, Canvas Room and Roller Bearing Staff, Russell Street - c. 1930.

The Shop was a large building situated to the right of Russell Street just inside the factory gates. During the 1920s there were perhaps forty or fifty people at work in the shop, at least half of them women. Fitters turned the bolts which were then passed over to the women for finishing. This involved putting tips and threads on the bolts and screwing on the nuts. Most of the work was done on machines. There was also a furnace which heated the bolts to produce a final hard finish to raw metal. It was an extremely noisy shop, resounding with the continuous clammer of thousands of bolts and noisy machines. Some workers couldn't stand its noise or the 'dirty' work done there, others accepted the conditions as 'just part of the work.' Betty Oke worked in the Bolt Shop in the early 1940s:

'Oh, God! It was frightful! It was huge and dark-looking, almost like Dickens' time. The job I was on was nuts. The nuts had great big sharp bits of iron sticking out when they'd been made. I had to pick up these nuts and put them in a nut space in this machine, and the sharp fringe would get cut off. And your hands! You had no nails, and your fingers were all cut and black — it was revolting.'

BETTY OKE, Bolt Shop.

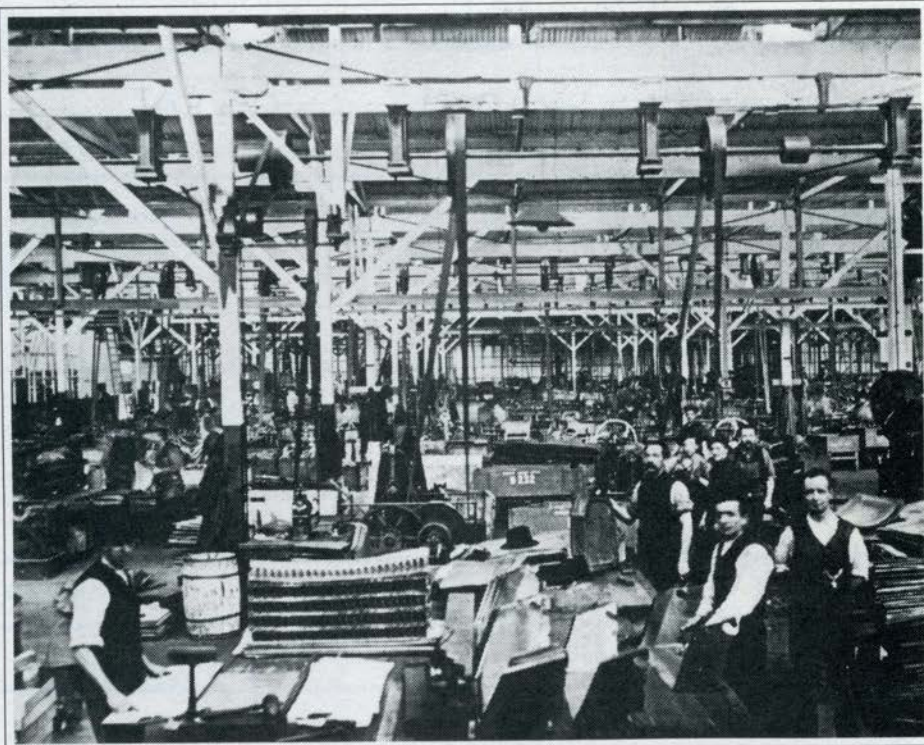


Printing Department - April, 1954.

SHEET METAL SHOP

In this Shop, sheet iron was cut and shaped to produce parts for thousands upon thousands of agricultural implements — binders, mowers, headers, harvesters, potato diggers, maize huskers, drills, milk machines and spray pumps. Much of the work was very difficult, requiring a high degree of skill learnt on the job. Workers gained satisfaction from what they produced and believed it took a long apprenticeship to learn their expertise.

*'It was something you could take a pride in doing ... Apart from that, you had to put your mind to it all the time ... There was some good work there ... We had first class men (those with technical certificates) there who couldn't do the work ... and the second class men used to show them ... After the War they decided they would employ some first class tradesmen, give them three months in the Sheet Iron to learn the work and then they would teach new employees. We had one man in particular on a rivetting job in which I used to do 120 a day and after three months he could do thirteen a day. Now — he was going to show the other men! Ridiculous! This is the type of department where tradesmen in most cases could not do the work. They were not suitable for production. You had to be brought up **on the job** for the production.'*



Machine Shop, Sheet Iron Department - June 1918.

Ordinary galvanized iron was used almost exclusively in the Sheet Metal Shop prior to World War Two. After the War, materials switched largely to black iron, mostly due to cost. This had a definite impact on the Sheet Metal Shop's end products.

'It meant the product wasn't as superior ... It'd get painted, certainly ... but the farmers leave their machinery out in the bush and out in the weather. When they finish the crop, they leave it there, mostly. I can remember doing repairs on drum cases and other parts of headers that had been made fifteen, twenty years and the material was still good, but not these days with the black iron!'

Conversation between CLEM BUCKINGHAM, ROY ROBERTS and GEORGE HIGGINS.

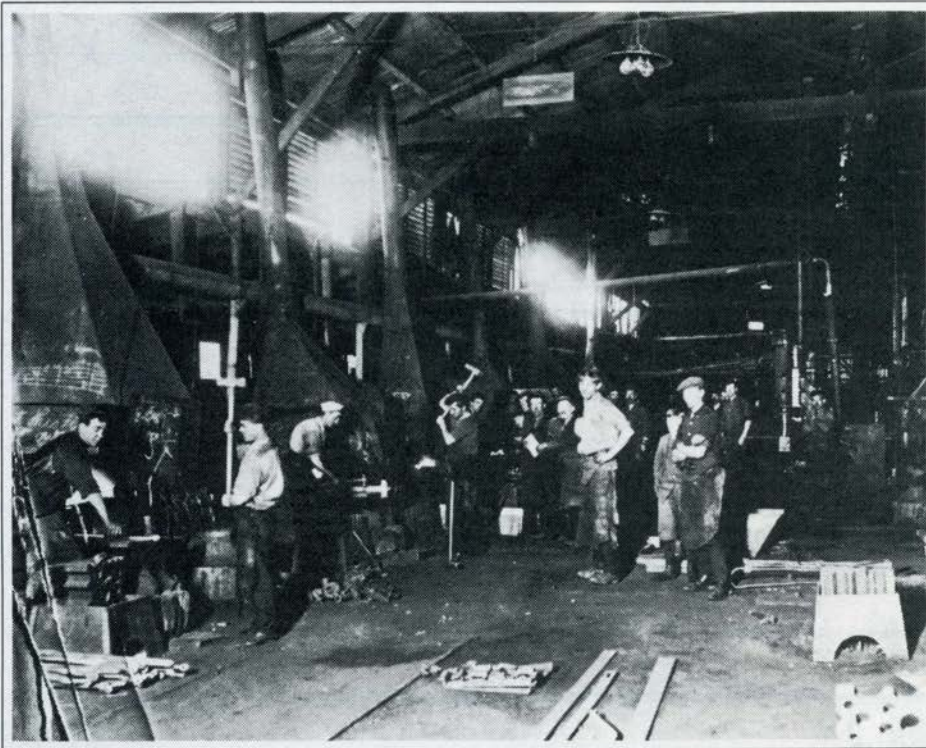


On-site interviews between Dianne Parsons, Merv Brooks, George Higgins, Roy Roberts and Clem Buckingham - Metal Shop 1985.

BLACKSMITHS

Merv Brooks learnt his trade as a Blacksmith on the anvil in the Riverina district and came to McKay's Harvesters' Smithy Shop in 1941. He worked on presses, drop hammers, bulldozers and the anvil for the next fifteen years, then was foreman for ten years. In its heyday, the Blacksmiths had 76 men in it, producing forged parts for all kinds of agricultural machinery. In 1985, it was only one small corner in another shop, without any drop hammers, very few presses and no anvil work:

'We used to do thousands upon thousands upon thousands of metal grids during World War Two, 7000-odd a day ... Some blokes did it day in, day out ... When I first started they had quite a few coke fires and the old anvil. There was some anvil forging and welding going on in those days ... Well, I used to do a bit of welding ... In the country we learnt our trade as welding, working over the anvil because we didn't have pressing machines ... McKay's had a big furnace working on a blower, run on oil and air. It gets real white hot. All day we were looking in there pulling bars of iron out, taking them over to the presses and forging them ... We worked on that all day and the heat was about 125° Farenheit. If it got to 125°, we got a pennyhap'ny an hour more. My first week's wages when I came down here was ten pound, seven and seven pence and I thought I was made ... I did all the welding on the anvil. I used to love the anvil because I served my time (apprenticeship) on the anvil...'



Blacksmiths Shop - 1938.

'... We used to make 700 or 800 cultivator points for harvesters each day, out of about eight or nine presses. We used to do different sizes and different types in a day, and we'd be on that press all day, feeding them in. Out of the fire they'd bring a stack of six or seven at a time. We'd keep our presses going all day, kicking one out and putting another one in, kicking one out, putting another one in — just stopped there all day, ten and twelve hours in front of the fire doing those ... All the drop hammers, they went by the board, only a matter of about seven or eight years ago. They used to have one driven on air pressure that was a ton weight in the head. I saw a bloke lose his hand in it one day. There weren't many about who could drive it and I learnt to drive it, I used to have a go at anything ... and when anyone got on that hammer, I had to be the driver all the time. If the pin wasn't in properly so as to keep the air and hammer up, well, it fell. One bloke couldn't have put the pin in properly and this young bloke lost his hand under it.'

MERV BROOKS, Blacksmiths Shop.

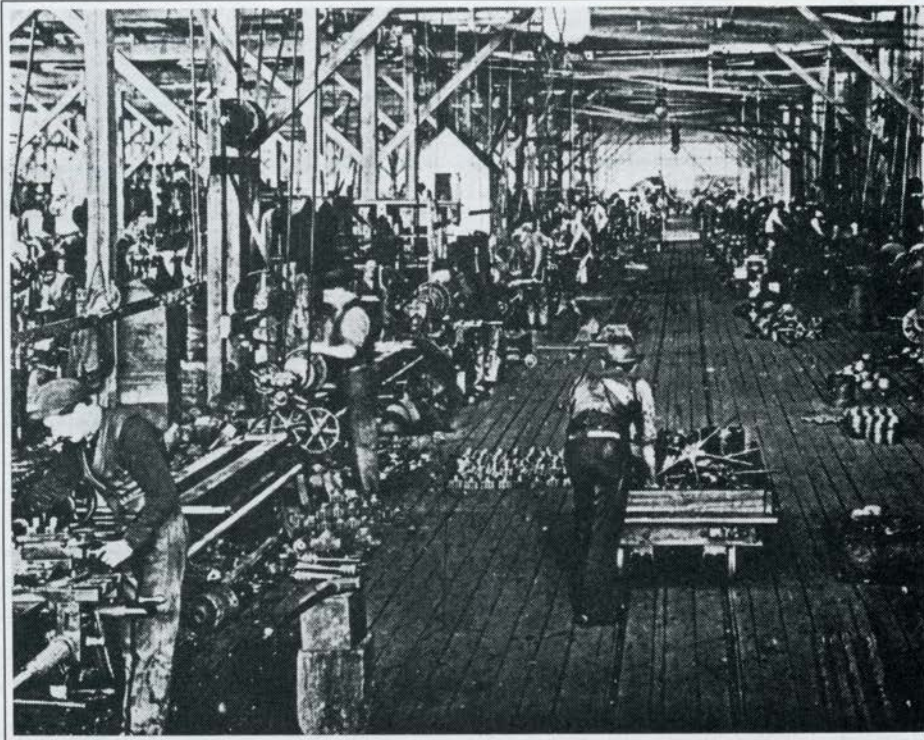


Merv Brooks returns to the anvil, Blacksmiths Shop - 1985.

INDUSTRIAL HAZARDS

In the Sheet Metal Shop, one of the largest at McKay's Harvester, sheet metal was pounded into various shapes for parts in agricultural implements. No bar-guards were ever provided and the incredibly high noise level drove many men deaf.

'In those days there was probably 60 or 70 bench hands, and every one banging iron with mallets and hammers — rivetting; and you can imagine all that in a small section and a big ten foot press, when it was stamping out you could hear it down the street. It'd go bang! And you could hear it down the street! And you've got people working right next to it!...'



Views in and about the factory - no date.

'... The day I turned fifteen I started here as a dolly-boy, holding the dolly, a bit of iron with a part cut away so you could hold your hand against it. Most of the work done with the dolly was in the grain-box which was over the top of the wheel on the header, and all the grain went into the box ... The boy had to get in the box, surrounded by iron, finished with an iron roof, he had a little hole to get out of ... and he'd get a hand full of rivets, he'd put a rivet in a hole, put the dolly on it, then the bloke outside — bang! bang! bang! — with the hammer. Then while he was finishing off, the boy'd have to get the next one ready and of course, sometimes he might be a bit slow or just learning and the bloke outside'd go bang! And the boy'd have his finger on it ... Most of us started out as dolly-boys, and we'd have to put in about 600 rivets in an eight-hour day, all day, over our heads, laying on our backs ... And this is the basis for a lot of industrial deafness ... In those early days when we'd come out and our ears were ringing, at the end of the day after being in a box all day.'

Conversations between CLEM BUCKINGHAM, ROY ROBERTS and GEORGE HIGGINS.



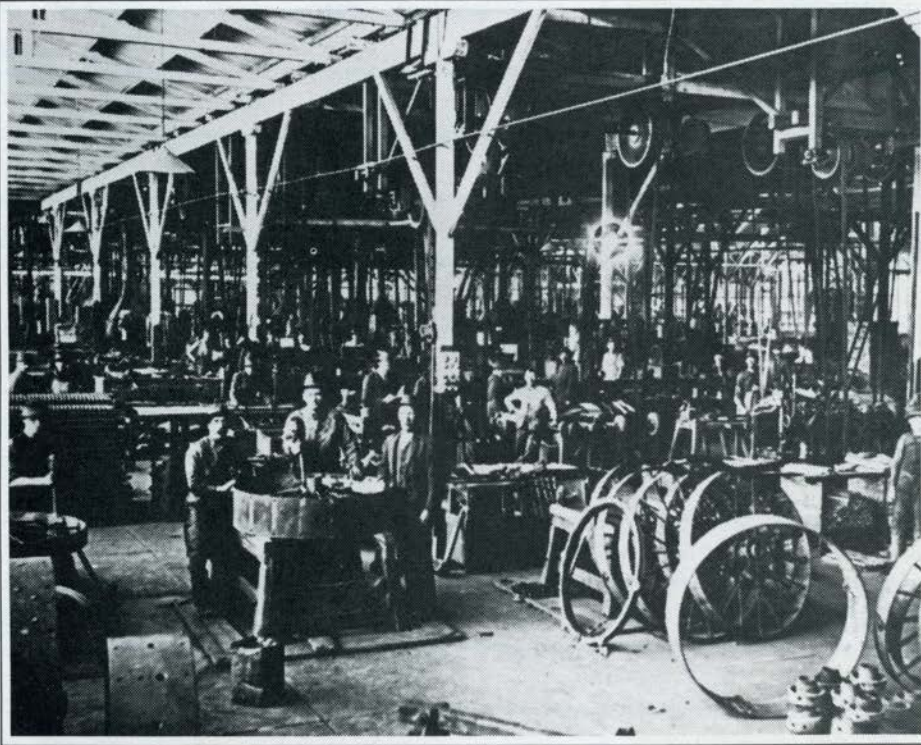
Harvesters in store - no date.

ANOTHER INDUSTRIAL HAZARD

Today, the issues of WorkCare and the responsibilities of employers to safeguard their employees has allowed a whole industry and field of research to spring up concerning these matters. Even so, in many smaller industries today, working conditions and dangers remain high. Several decades ago, very few employers or even workers, thought in terms of industrial safety being an employee's right:

'The machines didn't have guards and you weren't considered to be an experienced machinist unless you had a couple of fingertips off or a couple of joints off of your hand. And the machines'd be coming up and down and blokes'd be putting their hands in, pulling out, and often got caught ... There wasn't one man with ten fingers ... I remember Big Bill Dan, he worked the big guillotine; one day he had his hand under, chopped a bit off his fingers. The boss ran down and said: "What's wrong Bill?" He said: "Oh, I lost a bit of finger. All I did was go like that —" and down it come again and took another bit off.'

Conversation between CLEM BUCKINGHAM, ROY ROBERTS and GEORGE HIGGINS.



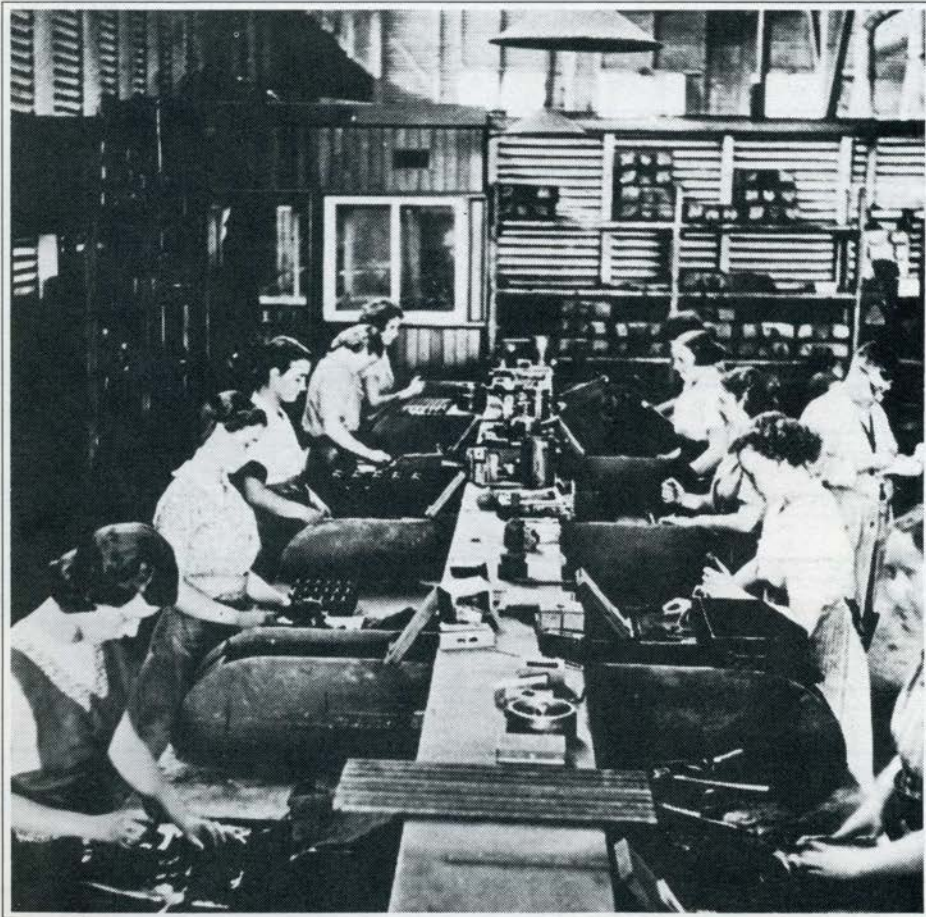
Wheel Shop - no date.

THE CORE SHOP

Cores formed the internal spaces within castings. Cores themselves were made by packing sand mixed with oil into cast iron boxes, then baking them and sending them to the foundry. There they were placed inside casts, molten metal poured in, and when hardened, the sandy cores were scraped out. The Core Shop employed mostly women who stood at benches all day, packing the sandy mixture into patterns and creating hundreds of cores each day:

'In the foundry when the cores "blow" (explode when hot metal is poured into the casting), they are called "shitters". That's a foundry term ... It's like making sandcastles ... It's like making biscuits; like cakes, they all come out on trays to be cooked ... We used to get paid per hour, per 100. For a 100 cores, I might get two hours' pay ... During the War we switched to war-production, such as cores for track links for Bren gun carriers and cores for 6½ pound bombs. Just about the whole factory was on war-production, twenty-four hours. Not all of us were on war-work, the inexperienced ones were still doing (agricultural) implements.'

Conversation between ANNE LAVERICK and CONNIE ROBINSON..



Core making - February 1940.

UNIONS

The major union at McKay's Harvester Works was the Agricultural Implement Makers' Union, which amalgamated with the Sheet Metal Workers' Union after the Second World War.

'They only had ten financial members during the Depression, and it took ten for a quorum ... and my father used to ride his bike around little places in Sunshine, encouraging people to join, and from several other little places that did agricultural work or work for McKay's and eventually it got up to around 1500 — from Mitchell's in Footscray, Robinson's in Spotswood. They eventually got to three and a half thousand ... There were a couple of strikes during the War ... There was a lock-out once for about three months. It was begun by the engineering unions and it eventually reached to all the metal trades industries. It wasn't just domestic here ... That would've been 1946.'

CLEM BUCKINGHAM, Sheet Metal Shop.



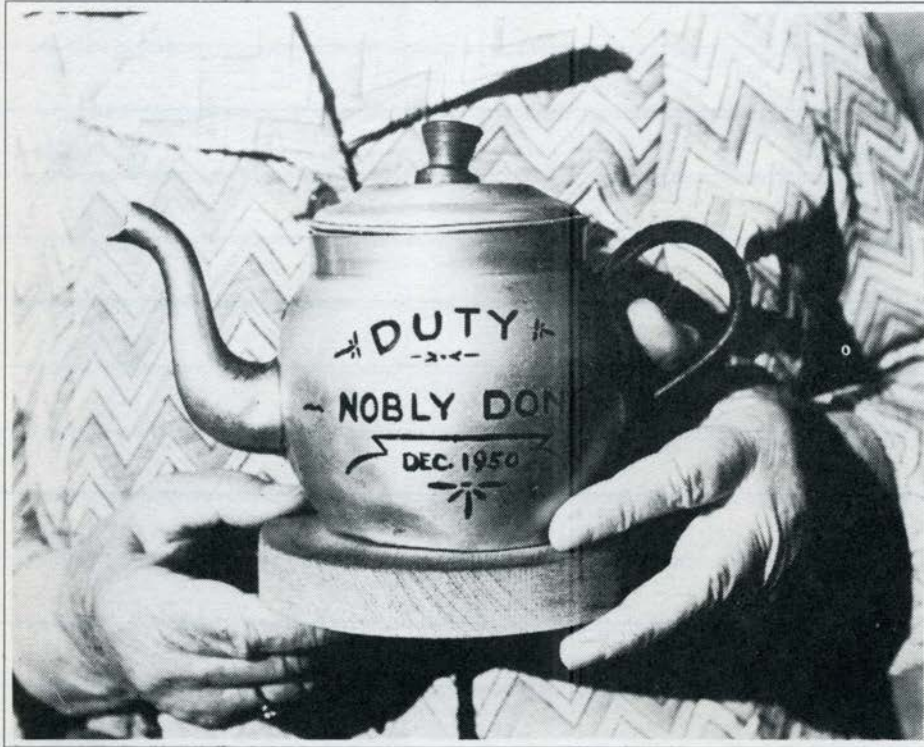
View from footbridge at Sunshine Station - August 1947.

DUTY NOBLY DONE

Ivy Rewell worked in the Canvas Room at McKay's from 1924 to 1965. She became famous within her section for cups of tea:

'A worker in need of a refreshing cup of tea would pass on the secret signal and call in to get his cuppa. In sickness or joy the teapot came out. On one occasion, during the War, a girl hurt her hand at work. When she got home her mother asked her if Ivy had given her a cup of tea after the accident, "No," the girl answered. "Well then," said her mother, "Ivy must be out of tea". For weeks after the incident packets of tea, which were rationed due to the war-time conditions, turned up in the Canvas Room.'

DIANNE PARSONS, Living Museum Interviewer.



"Duty Nobly Done".

THE SENSE OF BELONGING

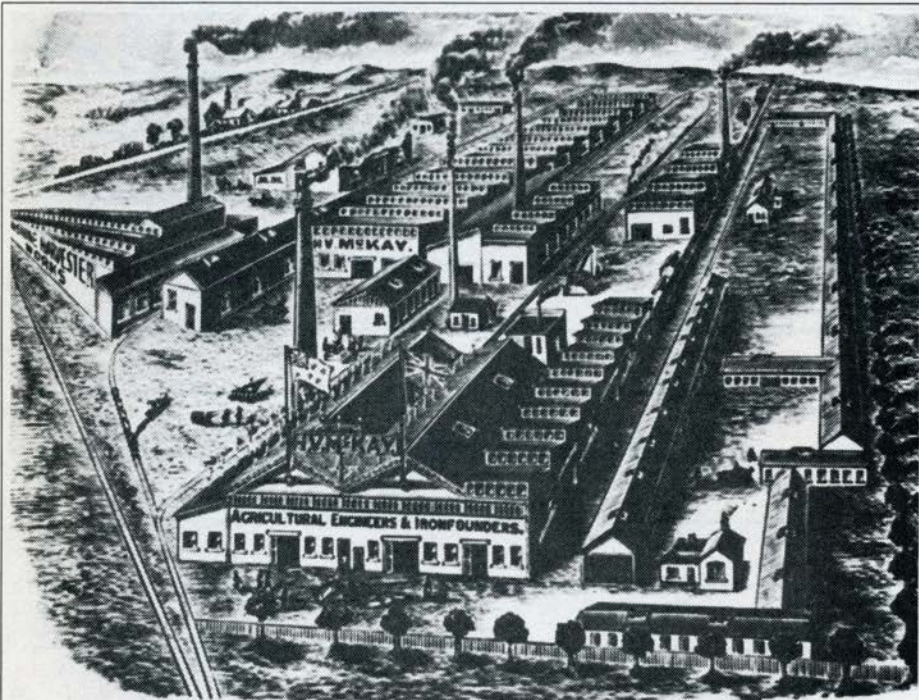
It seems there was much about the Sunshine Harvester Works to complain about — worker conditions; hours; job security — but many Sunshine men and women spent the greater parts of their working lives there. Most of those interviewed would switch easily from complaints to fond memories. Several said they would return tomorrow if they could, even though many of the conditions were harsh. Working at McKay's, and later Massey-Ferguson provided many of them with a feeling of self-worth, self-expression and a network of friends which combined to give a sense of identity and belonging.



Frank Doupe and gatekeeper Tom (Scotty) Donald check a Company vehicle's entry to the factory - c. 1930s.

'They might have had a hard name — McKay's — but they can say what they like, there was too many people stop here for it to be a bad firm to work for. People stopped here for years; see we went to the Quarter-Century Meeting the other night, and there was 92 turned up. There was hard blokes, but then for every hard foreman there was plenty of blokes on the bench that wouldn't work. That's life, isn't it? There was a lot of things that you done that you knew was wrong, but we had some really good times. It got that way, you wouldn't stop home, you'd miss something that was going on. And I suppose, to be fair dinkum, I always had good bosses — well, what I reckon was a good boss. You could always seem to go and have your debate, your argument, your grouch and you always got a listen and the good part about it was that you wasn't wrong all the time. The general run of foremen throughout the factory was good — they had hard names like I say, Mr. Norman, he had a name for a hard man but it turned out when you really knew him, he was a real nice bloke — a real bonzer bloke!'

BOB SIMPSON, Ballarat and Binder Shops and Assembly Floor.



The "Sunshine" Harvester Works, Braybrook, 1906.

