

# MASSEY FERGUSON COMPLEX



MASSEY FERGUSON  
COMPLEX SOHE 2008



Massey Ferguson  
Complex\_Sunshine\_Clock  
Tower\_Sept 2007



Massey Ferguson  
Complex\_Sunshine\_Stores  
Building\_Sept 2007\_01



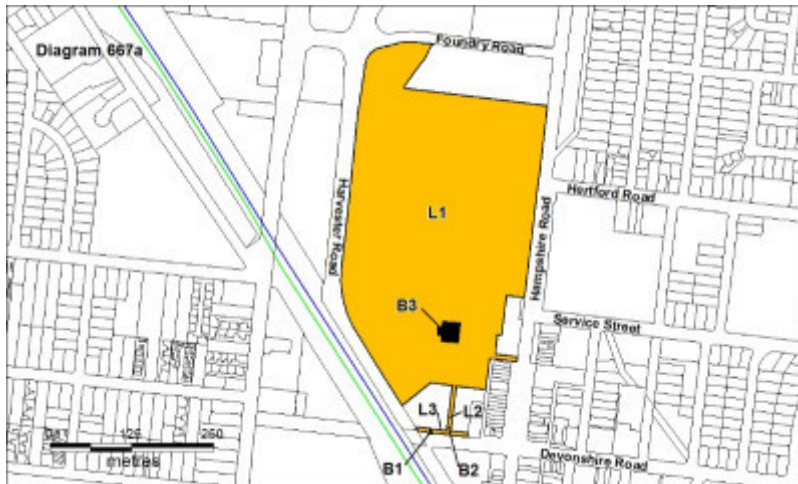
Massey Ferguson  
Complex\_Sunshine\_Stores  
Building\_Sept 2007\_02



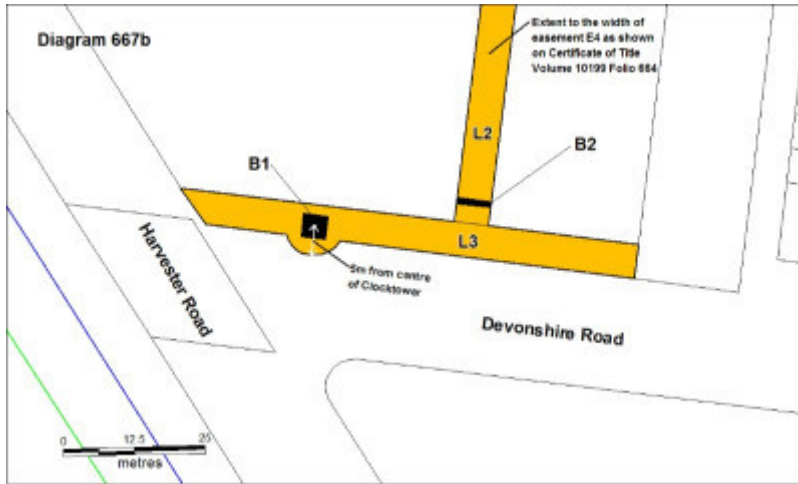
Massey Ferguson  
Complex\_Sunshine\_Gates\_Se  
2007



former massey ferguson  
complex devonshire road  
sunshine office & clock  
tower dec1985



Massey Ferguson Complex\_Sunshine-Oct 2007\_Plan A



Massey Ferguson Complex\_Sunshine\_Oct 2007\_Plan B

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## Location

DEVONSHIRE ROAD AND HAMPSHIRE ROAD AND HARVESTER ROAD SUNSHINE, BRIMBANK CITY

## Municipality

BRIMBANK CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0667

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO3

## VHR Registration

February 10, 1988

## Amendment to Registration

February 14, 2008

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 28, 2022

### What is significant?

Hugh Victor McKay (1865-1926) had successfully developed and marketed the stripper harvester for grain harvesting in the 1880s and established the Sunshine Harvester Works in Ballarat in 1889. The Sunshine harvester revolutionised the wheat industry in Australia became one of Australia's best known pieces of agricultural machinery. McKay became famous for producing, manufacturing and exporting the machine and for his association with developments in industrial relations in Australia. The machine, and the works that produced it, are remembered in the name of the outer Melbourne suburb of Sunshine.

In 1904 McKay purchased the Braybrook Implement Company works, on a site at the junction of the northern and western rail routes. He began to transfer his operations there from Ballarat in 1905 and completed the move in 1907, by which time the works had trebled in size. Braybrook Junction was renamed Sunshine in 1907. The facility expanded to become one of the largest manufacturing industries in Australia, producing a wide range of agricultural implements. Within three years of commencing operations at Sunshine Harvester Works, McKay was employing 1,000 workers.

In 1906 the Deakin Government passed its 'New Protection' legislation, the Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act, which imposed an excise on locally made machinery with an exemption for manufacturers if their workers were paid a fair and reasonable wage. McKay applied in 1907 to the Conciliation and Arbitration Court to be exempt from paying this excise.

However, in what became known as the Harvester Judgement, The President of the court, Justice Henry Higgins, found against McKay rejecting his application and awarding McKay's male workers seven shillings a day with higher rates for skilled labour. The Harvester Judgement led Higgins to formulate his principle of the minimum wage, declaring that a 'fair and reasonable wage' should be based on 'The normal needs of the average employee, regarded as a human being living in a civilised community.'

McKay responded by challenging the validity of the Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act in the High Court of Australia and won. This resulted in a strike by the Agricultural Implement Makers Union in 1911, to which McKay responded with a lockout of all union members. The strike lasted thirteen weeks, leaving the union bankrupt. It was the longest dispute in Australia's history to that date.

Although McKay successfully challenged the Harvester judgement, it had a long standing effect on Australian wage regulation by establishing the principle of the basic wage for unskilled workers.

The general pattern of factory building expansion extended north from Devonshire Road parallel to the railway. Initially the office of the company was on the north side of Devonshire Road but moved in 1909 when the new office building was built on the triangular block to the south of Devonshire Road, also facing the railway line. New factory offices, show rooms and a clock tower were opened on the north side of Devonshire Road in 1921. By 1926, the year HV McKay died, the factory occupied an area of 80 acres.

In 1930, HV McKay, merged with Massey Harris, the largest farm implement makers in Canada and major international exporters but the directorship remained in McKay family hands. Massey-Harris amalgamated with Harry Ferguson in 1953, and the McKay family interest was bought out in 1955.

The Sunshine factory became a part of the international company Massey-Harris Ferguson. The main centre of tractor and self propelled harvester production was now in England, and Sunshine became the second largest plant in the company's network. A new administration building with clock tower was constructed in 1956 on the north side of Devonshire Road, across from the previous head office building. The operation of the works was greatly scaled down in 1971, and much of the factory site was sold in 1986.

### How is it significant?

The Massey Ferguson industrial complex at Sunshine is of historical significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

The Massey Ferguson industrial complex at Sunshine is of historical significance for its association with agricultural implement manufacture for nearly a century, and for its association with H. V. McKay, one of Australia's leading industrialists.

The Massey Ferguson industrial complex at Sunshine is of historical significance as one of Australia's largest and most active industrial plants and employers of labour which made a major contribution to community life in Melbourne's western suburbs. The factory and its various elements have long been important social landmarks and symbols in the region.

The Massey Ferguson industrial complex at Sunshine is of historical significance for its association with significant events in Australian political and labour history, notably the 1907 Harvester judgement of Mr Justice

HB Higgins which formulated the concept of a living wage.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

**General Conditions:** 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

**Minor Works :** Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

All works on Land L1 shown on Diagram 667a held by the Executive Director are permit exempt except for:

. Any works that are higher than the maximum height of the existing shopping centre,

. Any proposed works that are within 20 metres of B3 Stores Building shown on Diagram 667a held by the Executive Director.

Construction dates        1927,  
Heritage Act Categories   Registered place,  
Other Names                HV MCKAY, SUNSHINE HARVESTER,  
Hermes Number            1139  
Property Number

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## History

### Massey Ferguson Complex Sunshine History

Hugh Victor McKay established the Sunshine Harvester Works in Ballarat in 1889, which produced the Sunshine Harvester for grain harvesting, revolutionising the wheat industry in Australia. McKay had developed the first stripper harvester in the 1880s which became the prime machine for grain harvesting in Australia.

In 1904 McKay purchased the Braybrook Implement Company works at Braybrook Junction on the north western outskirts of Melbourne.

Braybrook Junction was established during the 1880s land boom at the intersection of the Ballarat and Bendigo rail lines. The rail junction was created in 1884 following the construction of the Ballarat line. The area attracted interest from industrialist and land speculators because of the possibilities that the rail junction provided. The first land sales were in 1886. (Damian Veltri, Sunshine, The Encyclopedia of Melbourne)

Early manufacturing industries included Albion Quarries (1885), Braybrook Implement Company, makers of the stump jump plough (1880), Wright & Edwards, manufacturers of railway rolling stock (1889) and a smelter and a fireworks factory (1893). (ibid) The town was revived after the 1890s depression following McKay's relocation of Sunshine Harvester Works there from Ballarat.(ibid)

McKay began to transfer his operations from Ballarat in 1905 and completed the move in 1907, by which time the works had trebled in size. McKay introduced labour saving machine tools, the piecework system and time and motion studies, making the works of the of the few Australian manufacturers to employ mass production methods. (John Lack, Sunshine Harvester Works, Encyclopedia of Melbourne) The facility expanded to become one of the largest manufacturing industries in Australia, producing a wide range of agricultural implements. Within three years of commencing operations at Sunshine Harvester Works, McKay was employing 1,000 workers. The plant employed 400 people in 1907, 1500 in 1910-11, over 2000 in the mid 1920s to late 1930s. (ibid)

Braybrook Junction was renamed Sunshine in 1907. The reputation of the town grew as a model working class community grew as a result of McKay's subdivision of the surrounding land and the construction of housing for his workers along with other public amenities such as the gardens. McKay also acted as patron to the towns burgeoning social institutions. (Damian Veltri, op cit)

McKay established a garden across the railway line to the west of the factory, first known as the Sunshine Gardens, and later as the McKay Memorial Gardens. McKay was inspired by recent overseas industrial village precedents and by garden city planning ideals. The workers estate at Sunshine was a planned suburb with similarities to British garden suburbs such as Bourneville and Port Sunlight. Part of the concept was the provision of community infrastructure and McKay had provided finance for the railway station, church, hospital, electric lighting and windbreaks. McKay received the highest public acclaim for the provision of the Gardens.

The garden is directly linked to the entrance to the former Sunshine Harvester Works site by a railway footbridge. The footbridge was an amenity used almost solely by workers moving to and from work, giving access to the

gardens for their recreation.

H V McKay requested that Victorian Railways build a foot crossing over the lines at Devonshire Road in 1907. The bridge has been lengthened a number of times since its construction.

In addition, McKay stores, a public hall, a library, a coffee palace and he provided a technical school, electric light on the gardens. At both Ballarat and Sunshine he introduced generous holiday leave, a contributory accident fund and a personal loan scheme. (John Lack, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 10 1891-1939)

The general pattern of factory building expansion extended north from Devonshire Road parallel to the railway. Initially the office of the company was in the buildings on the north side of Devonshire Road but moved in 1909 when the new office building was built on the triangular block to the south of Devonshire Road, also facing the railway line. The area around this corner became the site of all of the later head office activity for the company but new factory offices, show rooms and a clock tower were opened on the north side of Devonshire Road in 1921. By 1926, the year HV McKay died, the factory occupied an area of 80 acres.

In the same year the new Head Office building was completed on the corner of the triangular site at the intersection of Devonshire and Harvester roads. The 1909 office now became the printing area, where company publications were produced. The new offices became the focus for the numerous important visitors to the factory, who were commonly photographed outside the main doors. Tour groups were photographed with the corner of the building as a backdrop, and the offices were also a regular backdrop for photos of the various new models of machinery. In 1928 McKay's original timber slab farm smithy was relocated on the strip of garden facing the railway line.

Despite McKay's benevolence his relations with his workforce and the Trade Unions was often strained. The Sunshine Harvester works played a key role in the landmark 1907 Harvester Judgement.

Apart from the proximity to the two railways lines and easy access to the ports, the Braybrook site had the added advantage for McKay of being within a shire which meant that it needed an Order of Council to bring it under a wages board determination. (ibid) McKay opposed to the wages board, believing that market forces should determine wage levels through individual bargaining. (ibid)

Despite the commercial and practical benefits of the site McKay only moved his works to Braybrook after being given an undertaking from premier Bent that the 1904 Ironmoulders wages Board determination would not be extended to Braybrook. (ibid)

McKay was active in the fight for protection, arguing that the low federal tariff left him vulnerable to unfair competition to from overseas manufacturers supplying larger markets and enjoying larger cheaper labour, raw materials and freight. (ibid)

In 1905 he was one of three manufacturers selected to represent industry before the Royal Commission on Customs and Excise Tariffs which in 1906 recommended new customs duties on imported goods. (F.J Kendall, H.V. McKay Pioneer Industrialist) These included increased duties and a doubling of those on stripper-harvesters, subject to the outlawing on combines, and the suspension of duties where manufacturers made unwarranted price increases or failed to pay 'a fair and reasonable rate of wages'(John Lack, op cit)

The Deakin Government responded with a new Excise and Tariff Act (Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act 1906 under which local manufacturers had to pay tariffs on local production unless such goods were manufactured "under conditions as to remuneration of labour which are declared to be fair and reasonable" (F.J Kendall, op cit)

Despite legal advice that the Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act was unconstitutional, McKay had applied In 1907 to the Arbitration Court to be exempt from paying excise on his products under the Deakin Government's New Protection legislation, on the grounds that his workers received a fair and reasonable wage.

McKay's application was one of 124 received but in consideration of the size of McKay's works and the number of his employees, Justice Henry B. Higgins chose McKay's application as his test case. (ibid) Higgins found against McKay, arguing that the wages he paid his workers was insufficient. This led Higgins to formulate his principle of the minimum wage, declaring that a 'fair and reasonable wage' should be based on 'The normal needs of the average employee, regarded as a human being living in a civilised community.' A concept that influenced Australian industrial relations for decades. (John Lack, Encyclopedia of Melbourne) He awarded McKay's workers

seven shillings a day with higher rates for skilled labour. (ibid) As a consequence the Commonwealth claimed over ?20, 000 in back tariffs from McKay.

McKay refused to pay and challenged the validity of the Excise Tariff Act in the High Court of Australia. The High Court found in McKay's favour in 1908 that the act was unconstitutional (F.J Kendall, op cit), declaring that the Act was *ultra vires* (beyond the power) by the High Court of Australia in 1908. (John Lack, op cit)

This episode converted McKay to the benefits of the Victorian Wages Board but it also had the effect of boosting unionism and strengthening union interest in Federal conciliation and arbitration. In 1911 the Agricultural Implement Makers Union called a strike to enforce a closed shop as a strategy to bring the industry under Federal control. McKay and other employers responded with a lock out of all unionists, whether striking or not. (ibid) The Harvester strike ran from 16 February to 9 May 1911, (Damian Veltri, op cit) lasting thirteen weeks, leaving the union bankrupt (John Lack, op cit) and affecting 2500 workers, over half of which were Sunshine Harvest Works employees. It was the longest dispute in Australia's history to that date. (Damian Veltri, op cit)

Initially promotion of workers housing at Braybrook was speculative but after the 1911 dispute, it was considered by McKay that the township of Sunshine could be formed as a model community of worker freeholders opposed to militant unionism. (John Lack, op cit)

Along with a sense of idealism Sunshine was an investment in industrial peace. McKay anticipated that a married men preoccupied with family, mortgages and their gardens would be a loyal, diligent and politically moderate workforce. (ibid)

The company was reorganised as H.V. McKay Pty Ltd in 1921 and in 1930, HV McKay, then Australia's biggest manufacturer of farm machinery, merged with Massey Harris, the largest farm implement makers in Canada and major international exporters to become H.V. McKay Massey Harris. (John Lack, Sunshine Harvester Works, Encyclopedia of Melbourne) The directorship remained in McKay family hands. Under the control of McKay son Cecil the firm benefited from its wartime munitions annexe and guaranteed wartime markets. (ibid)

Massey-Harris amalgamated with Harry Ferguson in 1953, and the McKay family interest was bought out by this company in 1955. The company was refinanced and the factory upgraded. (ibid) The Sunshine factory now became a part of the international company Massey-Harris Ferguson. The main centre of tractor and self propelled harvester production was now in England, and Sunshine become the second largest plant in the company's network. A new administration building with clock tower was constructed across Devonshire Road in 1956.

The factory had been the largest implement manufacturing works in the southern hemisphere.(Damian Veltri, op cit) And continued to prosper in the 1960s. but a series of bad seasons, tariff reductions and increased competition from imports caused operations were greatly scaled down in the 1970s, eventually bringing manufacturing at the site to an end in 1986. (ibid) The closure brought to an end almost 100 years agricultural implement manufacture in Sunshine. Much of the factory site was sold. The site is now occupied by a Village cinema complex, a Marketplace shopping centre and car parking.

#### **References:**

F.J Kendall, H.V. McKay Pioneer Industrialist, Monograph Two, Science Museum of Victoria  
John Lack, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 10 1891-1939, p.292  
John Lack, Sunshine Harvester Works, Encyclopedia of Melbourne, pp700-701  
Damian Veltri, Sunshine, The Encyclopedia of Melbourne. P.700

Martin Zweep  
Sept 2007

Associated People: Assoc.People JUSTICE J B HIGGINS

#### **Plaque Citation**

H. V. McKay relocated his Sunshine Harvester Works to this site in 1905 to produce the stripper harvester which had revolutionised the wheat industry in Australia. It was the largest implement works in the southern hemisphere.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 667 in the category described as Heritage Place is described as:

Massey Ferguson Complex  
27 Devonshire Road  
Sunshine  
Brimbank City

#### EXTENT:

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagrams 667a and 667b held by the Executive Director: B1 Clock Tower, B2 Gates, B3 Stores Building.
2. All the land marked: L1 being all the land described in Certificate of Title Vol. 10431 Folio 107; L2 being part of the land described in Certificate of Title Vol. 10199 Folio 664 to the width of easement E4, and L3 including road reserve R1 on plan of subdivision 334790D and described in Certificate of Title Vol. 10170 Folio 731 and part of the road reserve of Devonshire Road, Sunshine, described in Diagrams 667a and 667b held by the Executive Director.

Dated 7 February 2008

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 7 14 February 2008 294]

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*