

# MOAD

Museum of Australian Democracy  
at Old Parliament House

## Finders Keepers

Personal Objects as Primary Sources

Teacher Resource  
Lower Primary

NEIL BAKER



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# How to use this resource

## Welcome to the Museum of Australian Democracy's (MoAD) resource **FINDERS KEEPERS – personal objects as primary sources.**

This resource is designed to support the use of objects from the museum's collection in the lower primary classroom. MoAD is located in the nationally listed heritage building. Old Parliament House in Parkes, Canberra. Old Parliament House was the home of the Federal Parliament from 1927 to 1988.

### **FINDERS**

Museums collect objects with stories to tell – objects both ordinary and extraordinary. We are story-finders. MoAD collects objects that reveal the stories behind the ideas, movements, individuals and events that have shaped Australia's democracy. We seek stories that reveal the workings of Australia's government and our society's popular movements, about the lives of our prime ministers and those who have most influenced our political life.

### **NEIL BAKER**

#### **Telecommunications technician**

This resource focuses on the museum's **Neil Baker Collection** and has been developed for lower primary students. MoAD is fortunate that former telecommunications technician Neil Baker saw treasure in humble office technology, passionately believed in its future value and preserved it for posterity. Objects in this collection help us understand how Old Parliament House functioned and our telecommunications history.

### **KEEPERS**

Some of us collect things for the stories they tell about our lives and our families, or about where we come from. Others collect things that have personal, aesthetic or emotional appeal for them.

#### **This resource includes:**

- A short biography of the collector
- A selection of objects from the collection
- Information about the objects
- Suggestions for analysing these objects with students
- Suggested extension activities

This resource aligns with the Australian Curriculum v8.4.

We hope you enjoy exploring this collection – more information can be found at the following MoAD Learning websites:

- Onsite schools programs
- Resources

MoAD Learning, 2017

MoAD Learning would like to thank the donors of this collection for sharing their collection and stories with the museum.



Photographer: Rohan Thomson/ Fairfax Syndication.

**Former telecommunications technician Neil Baker at his Canberra home in 2013, surrounded by his extraordinary collection.**

## Neil Baker Treasures and Memories

Fresh from school, Neil 'Bluey' Baker joined the Postmaster-General's Department as a junior postal officer or 'Telegram Boy' at the Sydney General Post Office. His 42-year career in telecommunications - and lifelong fascination with all things telephony - had begun and, within six years, he had started collecting.

In 1973, Neil and three other telephone technicians got a four-month contract to install a telephone system for the newly extended Prime Minister's Suite at Old Parliament House in Canberra. The job expanded, and Neil eventually left in 2006 after working at Old Parliament House and then 'up the hill' at Australian Parliament House.

Throughout his career, Neil witnessed extraordinary changes not only in telecommunications but also in work practices and attitudes - as is evident in the objects in his collection. In his retirement, he tends his personal collection of over 1200 pieces in a specially built 6 x 9 metre collection store, aka 'the shed'.

### Want to know more?

• MoAD Learning

[A History of Old Parliament House](#)

## How we communicate – then and now

### Get your students thinking ...

As a whole class, create a list of the different ways people can communicate with each other today. Then list the technology we use when communicating this way.

Use a simple table, such as the example below, to record your students' answers. Keep this list to refer back to later.

Ways we communicate	Technology we use
Email	Computer, tablet device, smartphone, internet

- Ask your students to think about how their parents, grandparents or carers communicated with other people when they were their age. Would they have used the same methods your students came up with? If they didn't, why not? Record your students' responses in a new column or separately.



Telecom Commander N308 with Speaker Unit c1980s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

- Get your students to interview a parent, grandparent or carer to find out how they communicated with other people when they were your students' age.

Students record what they found out on the activity sheet [Communicating in the past](#).

- As a whole class, use your students' research to discuss similarities and differences between how they communicate today and how people in the past communicated. If you recorded your students' initial thoughts about how people communicated in the past, compare their research to this.

### Get your students investigating

The following activities in this learning resource focus on telephones from the Neil Baker Collection

- How does this telephone work?  
Investigate a telephone used at Old Parliament House in the 1950s and 1960s
- Who used this telephone?  
Investigate a telephone used at Old Parliament House in the 1970s





# How does this telephone work?

## Suggestions for analysing this source

Show your students the PMG 400 Series Magneto Telephone (page 9). Allow time for your students to think about the telephone then ask them to describe it using the sentence starter 'I see ...'

- Are there any parts of the telephone your students don't know how to describe? For example, they might have difficulty naming the crank.

- Ask your students to think about what's missing from the telephone? This telephone has no buttons or numbers, so how would you call someone?

Using the sentence starter 'I think ...' get your students to describe how they think they would call someone using this telephone. Use the activity sheet '[How does this telephone work?](#)' to note down student's thoughts.

- Show your students the close up of the crank ([Magneto Telephone Closeup](#)). The message under the crank says: 'TO CALL:- TURN HANDLE & LIFT HANDSET. WHEN FINISHED REPLACE HANDSET AND TURN HANDLE'

Read the above information to your students. Get them to act out how they would use this telephone to call someone.



### Information for teachers:

Manually turning the crank on this Bakelite telephone engages a magneto (a small electric generator that uses magnets) which causes any telephones on the same line to ring, alerting the other party. The Hansard technicians in Old Parliament House used this curiously old-fashioned, but still reliable, system to place calls to staff in nearby East Block.

- How is this telephone different to ones we use today?

Use a simple graphic organiser to compare the PMG 400 Series Magneto Telephone with a mobile phone ([Magneto Telephone and mobile Phone Comparison](#)).

## Suggestions for extending this activity

### Get thinking

How have telephones changed over time?

Get your students to find images of telephones from different eras.

### Get creating

Create a timeline of the images collected showing how this technology has changed over time.

PMG 400 Series Magneto Telephone c1950s–60s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

## Who used this telephone?

### Suggestions for analysing this source

- Show your students the STC Loud speaking Deltaphone (page 13).

How is this telephone similar to ones we use today? How is this telephone different to ones we use today?

Use your classroom telephone or a mobile phone for this activity.

- Share the following story with your students: Telephone technician Neil Baker remembers every new prime minister asking for two things: for the desk to be moved and for a new telephone. When Malcolm Fraser became the Prime Minister of Australia in 1975 he was no exception. The desk was moved and Neil installed this STC Loud speaking Deltaphone in his office.

- Check that your students know who the prime minister is and what they do. MoAD's Australian Prime Ministers website has information and photos of Australia's current and former prime ministers.

- Why would a new Prime Minister want a new telephone?  
Using the Think, Pair, Share strategy, ask your students to think about why a new Prime Minister would want a new telephone.

- Who would the Prime Minister call and what might they talk about?  
Using the Think, Pair, Share strategy ask your students to think about who the prime minister would call. Remind students about who the prime minister is and what they do.

- Show your students the NSU 75 Key Direct Line Drawer Unit (page 14). This unit connected to the STC Loud speaking Deltaphone. At the push of a button the Prime Minister could call people who worked at Old Parliament House and in the buildings nearby. This was considered pretty cutting edge for the time. Discuss with your students how we store telephone numbers today.



STC Loudspeaking Deltaphone c1970s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

### Suggestions for extending this activity

#### Get thinking

What would the current prime minister's telephone look like?

Get your students to think about what the current prime minister's telephone might look like. Would it be bigger or smaller? Would it have as many buttons? What special features would it need to have?

#### Get creating


Get your students to design and build a new telephone for the prime minister.

# How did people communicate in the past?

Times have changed!

Have a think about how people communicated in the past.  
Ask others how they communicated with family and friends  
when they were your age.

Draw and label a picture of each communication method in the boxes below.





# Magneto Telephone



PMG 400 Series Magneto Telephone c1950s-60s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

FINDERS KEEPERS personal objects as primary sources

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## Magneto Telephone Close Up



PMG 400 Series Magneto Telephone c1950s-60s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

The message under the crank says:

'TO CALL:- TURN HANDLE & LIFT HANDSET. WHEN FINISHED REPLACE HANDSET AND TURN HANDLE'

# How does this telephone work?

I see...

I think ...

I wonder ...



## Magneto Telephone and Mobile Phone Comparison



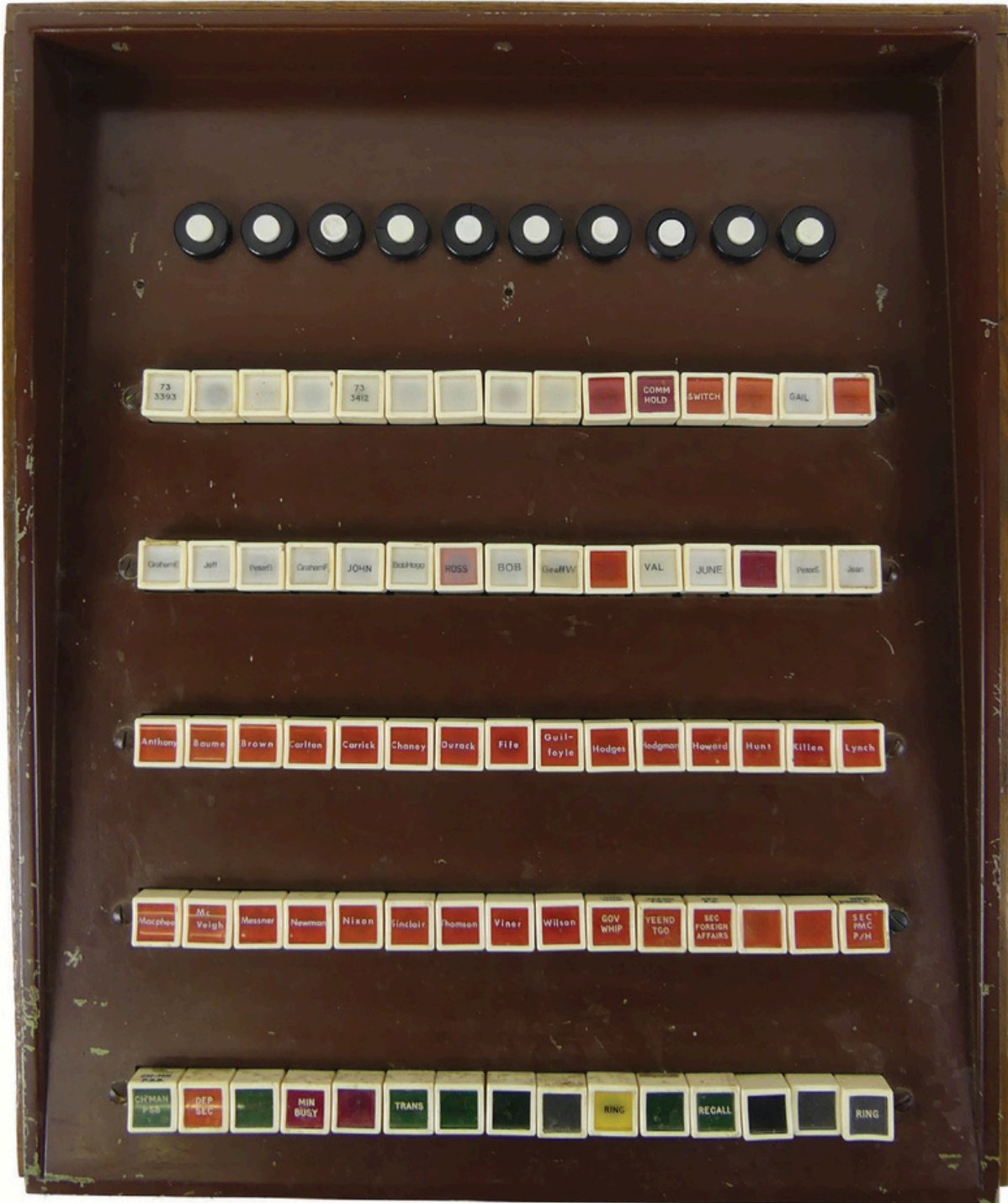


## STC Loudspeaking Deltaphone



STC Loudspeaking Deltaphone c1970s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

# NSU 75 Key Direct Line Drawer Unit



NSU 75 Key Direct Line Drawer Unit c1970s  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY COLLECTION

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## Rotary Dial Telephone



## Candlestick Phone

