





VIRESCIT

ACQUIRIT

EUNDO

In late 1842, a small group of men, all British, gather together to discuss an important item of business. Calling upon their knowledge of British civic institutions, their classical education, knowledge of medieval heraldry and hopes for economic prosperity, they design a coat of arms, an emblem to represent the newly incorporated Town of Melbourne, for which they have recently been elected founding councillors and aldermen – elders of their community.¹

What shall it have? A full fleece, head and hoofs attached, hanging as it has for centuries on the noble Order of the Golden Fleece? Yes, wool was the reason for the arrival of pastoral prospectors on Kulin lands in 1835 from Van Diemen's Land. The government, in Sydney, had said the region was out of bounds, but that distant ruling no longer stopped the Van Demonians. The now-Melburnians.

A whale blowing? These enormous creatures had become Australia's first export, a dangerous industry but with huge profits. From the earliest days of colonisation, whalers and sealers had flocked to these southern waters. With the mapping of Bass Strait in 1798 and its various islands and rocky shores, a mass culling of fur seals, sea lions and elephant seals had begun – one ship took 60,000 skins in a season. More than 50 British and American ships prowled Victoria's coastline in 1820–21 alone. Whales galore, migrating through the rich waters, sheltering in nursery bays. Whaling camps existed at Port Fairy, Portland Bay, Wilsons Promontory and Gabo Island long before the land-grabbers came. Whale and elephant seal blubber, rendered to oil, was of enormous value before the fossil fuel bonanza began.

And what about a cow standing patiently in profile? Reports of rich pasturelands by explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell, and then Thomas Mitchell, had captivated the minds of eager expansionists: Mitchell named western Victoria 'Australia Felix', Australia the happy. Overlanders soon followed the southern settlers, bringing herds from the north. But it isn't their meat or even their hides that is of value at this time, before refrigeration, but, like the sea mammals, their fat, rendered down to tallow. The filthy industry was established on the banks of the Yarra – Birrarung.

And all of these goods and products barrelled up and shipped off at the new Port of Melbourne, at Sandridge. Let's represent that with a ship, masts standing tall.

Four symbols, or charges to use the heraldic term, arranged on a shield, with the red cross of St George, patron saint of England, and the royal crown. This is, now, claimed British land. The flourish, a kangaroo torso, perches above as the crest, once the flamboyant decoration on top of knights' helmets to identify them in conflict, or in chivalric tournaments. This is the local touch, the identifying animal for this country, even if the kangaroo and its kin are increasingly scarce around the town. A sprig of wattle (or maybe the more classical laurel, symbol of victory) frames either side of the shield.

And the motto, that last hurrah of a battle cry: *Vires acquirit eundo!* The Latin poet Virgil, perfect. Although he was describing Fama, the female personification of rumour, gathering strength and spreading swiftly throughout the world, we'll take it out of context: *We gather strength as we go*. A nice powerful statement of intent. Yes, force will be used if needed. There's already been trouble: conflicts, women kidnapped by raping sealers, murders over rights to a beached whale, the first white-recorded massacre in Victoria, before Melbourne was founded.² And along the Yarra,

Page 1
Eastern Market
architectural
element, 1879
cast iron
82 x 82 x 6.5 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Previous spread
Princes Bridge, 1888
Grainger & Jenkins
(architects)
David Munro & Co.
(builders)
painted cast iron
Photography:
Patrick Rodriguez

Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people are dying from diseases, lack of food and despair. When *ngurungaeta* and *arweet* (head men) signed Batman's 'treaty', they were not unaware of the white man's potential impact. But such impact. Protests, objections, arguments of equity, fairness and illegalities go unheard by most in power. But never doubt that there is defence of Country, fighting for rights from the start.

But the appointed Aboriginal protectors will deal with that. We'll get on with council business; we're planning for the future. We weren't to know the seals and whales would soon be close to extinction. Or that gold would be soon discovered, in 1851, bringing such wealth, so many people, so many different cultures. (Other Europeans, we don't mind them. But do we want Chinese? They're so different to us.)

So, we need a design. Thomas Ham, that young engraver from Birmingham, we'll get him to engrave the formal seal for us. We'll use it on our council minutes, we'll stamp it into wax and onto official documents. We'll get it officially registered with the College of Arms in London. (What do you mean, you forgot?) We're now a city, proclaimed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1847, with our own bishop and cathedral. And God bless Her Majesty, we're independent! No longer the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, from November 1850 we're the Colony of Victoria.³ Such celebrations! Fireworks! A three-day public holiday, and the opening of our new bridge, Princes Bridge, among the widest of stone spans yet built.

But back to day-to-day activities. The safe distribution and sale of food is one of council's key responsibilities. The early Western Market is long forgotten, although it lasts until the 1930s. But the Eastern Market, what variety: fruit and vegetables, poultry, dairy, books, clothing and amusements of every persuasion. Built into its architectural fabric are large displays of Melbourne's shield, a few remnants saved in 1960 by

Whelan the Wrecker. The Queen Victoria Market continues, managed by council for 100 years until 1978. The shields are subtly woven into the ironwork, unnoticed by people selecting their delicatessen items, relaxing with coffee.⁴

1867: the municipality of Melbourne is 25 years old. Imagine royalty coming to visit us, here in the distant Antipodes! Prince Alfred, the young Duke of Edinburgh, has a right old time sailing around the colonies in his frigate *Galatea*. At a magnificent ceremony, he lays the foundation stone for our new, more imposing town hall, with our flag – quartered with the four charges – flying overhead. Yes, our first town hall is only 14 years old, but look how we've grown: 47,000 people in the City of Melbourne alone. The son of Melbourne's first mayor, Henry Condell, donates the clock for the imposing tower, where it still keeps time; we thank him with an illuminated address, lavishly decorated with gold and red seals and scenes of the city, entwined with fantastical medievalesque vegetation. In fact, we enhance the building again, in 1887, with the grand portico entrance, the foundation stone laid by the mayor. The engraved silver trowel – ceremonial only, untouched by mortar – records the event. From its first-floor vantage point, carved into the portico's stonework, the kangaroo cresting the shield surveys the city. Among the numerous celebrities and celebratory events it witnesses, it sees Lionel Rose, our first Aboriginal world champion boxer, greeted by more than 100,000 fans crowding Swanston Street in 1968. Imagine!

A magnificent ball celebrates Alfred's royal visit, 100 years earlier, with all of Melbourne's elite dressed in their most fashionable garments and finest jewellery. Mayoral balls become an annual highlight. Imagine opening your elegantly designed invitation, writing dance partners' names onto the card with that tiny pencil, the hall decorated and festooned, and everything adorned with the coat of arms. We anticipate this will be the first of numerous regal visits, which of course it is. The Duke and Duchess of

Cornwall come in 1901 to celebrate Federation, the long-awaited union of the colonies. What an honour for Melbourne to host the Federal Parliament (until 1927, when Canberra is built) – and our mayor is elevated to lord mayor.

It's a tragedy that King George VI's 1949 tour is cancelled due to his ill health; we even had the invitations designed ready for printing. But all previous royal visits are upstaged by that of Elizabeth in 1954 – our beautiful, young, recently crowned Queen, the first monarch to visit. There are balls and events galore, and the decorated, illuminated city streets are lined with devoted subjects, citizens of the British Empire. (Yes, we are British subjects until 1984. Really!)⁵ Greater Melbourne is now more than 1.5 million strong. Many people have moved from rural communities over recent decades, and ships arriving at Station Pier every week are laden with anxious immigrants: Germans, Dutch, Italians, Greeks, Maltese, Polish, Ukrainians and more – that war certainly shook up Europe. But how do these new Australians feel about the Queen? the British Crown? We expect you to assimilate, of course, but we will slowly, over decades of trepidatious tasting, accept your espresso machines, your strange cuisine (Spaghetti? Moussaka?). Chinese Australians, some now here for a century, be patient; the White Australia policy is slowly withering, one law, one politician at a time.

However, we've skipped some important events. The exhibitions! Victorians (the era, not the colony) are exhibition crazy. In Melbourne alone, exhibitions showing local, intercolonial and eventually international produce and wares are held in 1854, 1861, 1866, 1872 and 1875, with 'The Big One' in 1880–81 in the new, intended-to-be-temporary Exhibition Buildings. More than 1.3 million people crowd in. The French government thanks the city with a Sèvres porcelain vase decorated with our coat of arms (of sorts – the kangaroo looks a

tad llama-like) amid Victorian state flags and neo-Classical gilt. At the Centennial International Exhibition in 1888, an enormous stained glass window from Innsbruck is presented by the Austrian commissioner. The starry, wreathed female standing on the globe showing Australia is magnificent – but we won't point out that it isn't Victoria's centenary, despite her stone tablet. She is installed in the window of Council Chambers, within a Melbourne-made coloured border and coat of arms. But even the locals make mistakes: Where is the cow? And what is that wheatsheaf doing in its place? Stained glass and carved arms also decorate the new and improved Council Chambers, which open in 1908 – there's no missing the repeated design in the glass dome and backdrop windows. In these, Skippy emerges in her full glory, no demi-roo here.

Everything seems up for improvement. And why not? We're one of the richest cities in the world in the 1880s (the 1890s were a different matter). The once-admired Princes Bridge is unable to cope with the traffic, unable to span the Yarra's destructive floods. (This was once pristine wetlands, we should remember.) In 1888, the new, wider, straighter bridge is opened, embellished with the arms, which emblazon the base of each lamp post. They're seen – or not – by thousands of passers-by over the years. Medallions of nearby municipalities dot either side of the arch, with Melbourne's taking pride of place, closest to the city. Mind you, they're hard to make out from the banks; more people probably noticed them when the Yarra was an active waterway.

In other ways, progress is slow. Women can vote in council elections from 1896. It's in the air, women's rights. Women's federal suffrage passes in 1902; Victorian suffrage in 1908. But only some women, of course – not Aboriginal women, or men, who are excluded from

the 1901 Federal Constitution.⁶ Few are able to live in Melbourne at this time, although their connection, of course, remains.⁷ Some who remember the time before, such as William Barak, are still seeking justice.

How do these Traditional Owners feel in 1934–35 when we celebrate the centenary of colonisation here on the banks of this now-polluted river? Preparations for extensive celebrations are underway for years, as we slowly emerge from the Great Depression. With these plans comes the realisation that, for all of this time, the city has been illegally bearing arms, unregistered with the Crown. Letters to the newspaper! Speeches in council! Research into its history. And presumably endless discussions as to whether to amend the design. The absurdity of the whale's presence is raised; the last whale hunted in Victoria was slaughtered in 1868, although the industry had perished long before. But in this history-conscious time we keep the 1840s symbols of pastoral and nautical intent, and eventually, in 1938, a formal request is submitted to the College of Arms, London, authorising heraldry since 1484. In this same year, on 26 January 1938, the arrival of the First Fleet 150 years earlier is celebrated, and the first Day of Mourning is held in Sydney – the opposite of celebration, Invasion Day, a day still fraught. And women (white women) can now run for council.

After two years, on 30 January 1940, no doubt delayed by the war, formal approval of the coat of arms is granted. Some amendments are made to conform with heraldic protocols: the kangaroo crest now sits on a medieval helmet, shown in pointy-nosed profile. Swirling stylised fabric, mantling, in the red and silver colours of the shield, replaces the sprigs of leaves. Done – it's now official. Finally, the city has its 'blazon', the registered description of the coat of arms, written in the accepted, archaic, arcane combination of English and an early French, used

by the Normans in medieval England. This is the important part: the depiction may vary so long as it meets the blazon. Inscribed in careful calligraphy on a sheet of parchment, with royal seals on dangling ribbons, the Letters Patent is proudly displayed, currently adorning the lord mayor's office. For many decades Melbourne had been emblazoning its assumed arms throughout the city – now we have our blazon.

So, the updating begins – new stationery, seals, stamps, forms, badges, uniforms, crockery, signage, administrative paperwork, ceremonial certificates – every aspect of bureaucracy. We're still fighting the war – the City of Melbourne's centenary passes in 1942 – but then victory! Processions of returning soldiers, sailors, airmen and servicewomen; thanksgiving and memorial services: jubilation counterbalancing grief. May we present you with this council certificate in heartfelt thanks for your service – and for your children, a medal celebrating this momentous event. Now back to your pre-war work.

November 1956: we become the first city outside Europe and North America to host the Olympic Games – what a triumph for us! All the world is watching (now that we have television), so we must scrub up well. A modern city, that's what we want – established, yes, but shiny too: new stadiums and pools, an Olympic Village (that was our idea) and let's tidy up those ramshackle Victorian buildings. So many formalities – medals, certificates, presentations, awards, balls. But the marketing potential, the souvenirs: playing cards, handkerchiefs, biscuit and chocolate tins. No-one can say they don't know our coat of arms now; it's in every home, even on postage stamps to send to far-off friends. (Nary a blink of our arms for the 2006 Commonwealth Games. It's as though the city isn't involved.)

During the 1960s – this decade of increasing liberation, feminism

Overleaf

Left

Illuminated address for William Vallance Condell, 1874

Hamel & Ferguson, Melbourne

pen and coloured inks, gold paint, embossed paper, seal on paper

64 x 47 cm

City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

Right

Ceremonial trowel for Town Hall portico, 1887

Maker unknown

silver, ivory and case

5.5 x 10.4 x 35 cm

City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



and social activism – there is a flurry of interest in heraldry. What brings this on? Is it the declining power of the British Empire? The rising dominance of the United States? The increasing presence of non-European – North American countries in world politics? Or is it a reaction against excessive modernism, which sees the rise of heritage preservation? Enthusiasts are actively promoting, proposing, approving and applying for more and more coats of arms. An exemplar: Horace Hall, a dedicated local heraldist, researches and recommends designs for numerous corporate and civic bodies around Victoria (even for the ABC), drawing upon local history and fauna as his sources. Many of these designs are warmly welcomed, as is his suggestion, in 1965, for an upgrade of the Melbourne arms. To him, it is wrong that there is no reference to William Lamb, Lord Melbourne to us, prime minister of Great Britain after whom the city was named. A coat of arms should have supporters, those figures or animals who guard the shield. And nothing currently shows that this is indeed the coat of arms of a city; let's add 'mural crowns' – bricky, battlemented crowns that symbolise a (once-fortified) city. And finally, sorry to be pedantic, watery creatures such as whales need to go at the bottom. On 18 March 1970, after council's and college's persistence, the updated blazon is granted. So now we have golden lions 'rampant', with starred collars and chains, as our guardians. The lions are taken from Lord Melbourne's personal coat of arms; he was a second son – the two stars tell us that. And we have not one but three mural crowns, to be safe. Much better. More accurate. Some may think this isn't relevant – we are in the middle of the Vietnam War – but this is our history (our one-sided, Anglocentric, patriarchal history). Never mind that wider Melbourne now comprises 2.5 million people from innumerable backgrounds. And this is the turning point towards Asian immigration, with Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians finding refuge here, enriching us with

gratitude and hard graft. Although the Brits are still the majority, never fear. Celebrate instead, multicultural Melbourne!

So here we are. This combination of heraldic and colonial symbolism remains the City of Melbourne's coat of arms. But you'd hardly know it today. While the earlier versions of the coat of arms still embellish council buildings and present themselves around the city on bollards, electricity boxes, bridges and reinstated ironwork, the 'be-lioned' version dwindled into obscurity by the 1980s. Do councillors notice it as they tread their red carpet, see the bronze plaques on corridor walls? It's otherwise rarely seen now, bar on lord mayoral regalia, that imposing gold mayoral chain. Instead, the world is an ever-increasing cacophony of logos, each carefully researched and designed to capture this place, this product, contemporary in font and feel. Remember the leaf and column M designed in the early 1990s by Melbourne-based company Flett, Henderson & Arnold (FHA)? It suggests our (historic) green parks, our (historic, European) culture, all under a bright sun, somewhat contradicting our climatic reputation. You can still see it on street signs and council buildings but, yes, it does look passé. In 2009, it was replaced by the current logo, by international firm Landor, an M of sharp shards to evoke multi-faceted Melbourne or the angular lines of Federation Square, opened in 2002. While these might not be your association, surely you recognise its bluey-green or its solid blocky shape on a city sign, or on the side of a council truck (bless the garbos, where would we be without them?).

So, 176 years after those men sat in that room. The wool (and lamb) industry and the beef (if not tallow) industry are still crucial to the Victorian economy; the Port of Melbourne – and Tullamarine Airport – our routes for imports and exports. Now tourism is vital to the city's prosperity – 2.8 million international visitors this year alone – and if

you're lucky, you might see whales while you're here, a mother and calf maybe, now venerated creatures. More than 150,000 people live within the current municipal boundaries, from 140 communities from Somalia to Serbia to Sri Lanka. Some 900,000 residents, workers, students and visitors fill the streets, the trams, the offices and the cafes every day. The City of Melbourne's economy is no longer dependent on physical resources but rather the intellectual: we see the rise of the knowledge sector, of international education – those now-abundant universities and colleges, from the first founded in 1853. We revel in our culinary culture, diverse, delicious food from around the world. And coffee, Melbourne's coffee!

So, what would you choose as your blazon, your charges, signifiers of your Melbourne? Would you reflect the past, not the colonial past but the environment that once was, the geology that formed this land? This influenced Angela Brennan's ceramic interpretation, her response to the 1880 Sèvres vase, newly commissioned for the city's collection. Never a Melburnian, Gerry Wedd invokes his Melbourne of fleeting visits, listening to bands in darkened rooms – sticky carpet, thick with smoke – and of absorbing Melbourne's music, the Melbourne vibe, from staid Adelaide. For Yhonnie Scarce, her grief at the effects of colonisation is expressed in a memorial urn, both containing and revealing symbols of lives lost since the British arrived. Formal treaty negotiations with Aboriginal Victorians are beginning, at last.

And yours? What is your Melbourne?

Alisa Bunbury

EXHIBITION CURATOR

1

For simplicity's sake, the term 'coat of arms' and 'arms' has been used, even though that refers particularly to the shield and the charges upon it. 'Armorial bearing' is the correct term for the complete design, including crest, supporters and motto.

2

The Convincing Grounds at Portland Bay are remembered as the site of brutal conflict around 1834 between whalers and people of the Kilcarer Gilgar clan of the Gundidj-Mara.

3

Melbourne became a city royally on 25 June 1847 and legally on 3 June 1849. Similarly, Victoria was proclaimed a colony on 5 August 1850 and was legally separated on 1 July 1851.

4

Victorian-era verandahs were actively removed between the 1920s and 1950s. The ironwork design with the council shield has been recast and reinstalled in recent decades on numerous Melbourne shopfronts.

5

All Australians were British citizens until the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, but remained British subjects until 1984.

6

Aboriginal men were legally allowed to vote in Victoria from 1857, and some other states and dates, until the Federal Constitution was enacted in 1901. In 1949, Aboriginal men who had served in the military forces were given the right to vote, and all Aboriginal people were allowed to vote in federal elections from 1962.

7

See www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00029b.htm for a brief summary of Aboriginal Melbourne.

Overleaf

Left

Letters Patent for armorial bearings, 1940

College of Arms, London
gouache, metal paint and ink on parchment, ribbon, wax, glass, wood
100 x 98 cm

City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

Right

Letters Patent for armorial bearings, 1970

College of Arms, London
gouache, metallic paint and ink on parchment, ribbon, wax, glass, wood
112 x 106.5 cm
City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

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Left

Poster, Olympic Games Melbourne, 1956

Richard Beck
ink on paper
64 x 52 cm

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Melbourne Olympic Games invitation, 1956

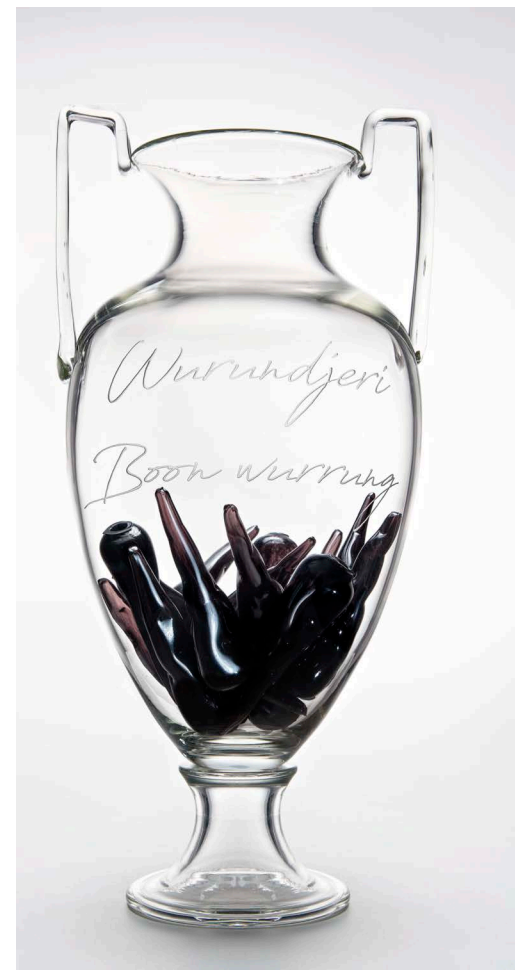
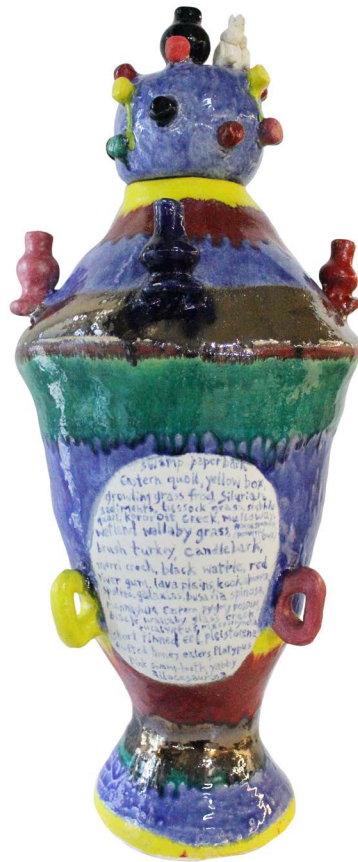
Maker unknown
printed ink on paper
8.5 x 13.5 cm
City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



LETTERS PATENT FOR ANNOVAL BEARINGS OF
THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF MELLECAINE
PRINTED BY
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
1714-1715









Page 22 and 23

Bollards
(ongoing production)
painted cast iron
Photography:
Patrick Rodriguez

Previous page

Far Left
Sèvres vase, 1880
Sèvres Porcelain
Factory
porcelain and
gilded bronze
69 x 43 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Second from left

**Urn with
Nature Pot**, 2018
Angela Brennan
earthenware
77 x 40 x 40 cm
Commissioned, 2018
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Second from right

**She Gathers
Strength As
She Goes**, 2018
Gerry Wedd
glazed ceramic,
wheel thrown,
cobalt and coloured
underglaze
decoration

80 x 40 x 45 cm
Commissioned, 2018
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Right

For the Fallen, 2018
Yhonnie Scarce
engraved blown glass
dimensions variable
Commissioned, 2018
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Above

Collins Street Sign
1970s
enamelled metal
22.2 x 91.4 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Left top

**Swanston Street
Sign** 1990s
enamelled metal
19.8 x 86.2 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Left bottom

AC/DC Lane Sign
2018
enamelled metal
19.8 x 100 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection



**Stained glass
window, Yarra Room,
Town Hall, c. 1888**

Tyroler Glassmalerie,
Innsbruck

Brooks, Robinson
& Co., Melbourne
(attributed to)

glass, lead

260 x 100 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection