



## Rotary Club of Woden

### THE CREST AND WEEKLY BULLETIN NAME – ORIGINS & MEANING

John Gray, 25 June 2011

#### INTRODUCTION:

The club was founded in 1969 as part of the evolution of Woden Town as a separate entity of 12 suburbs begun in 1962 in the 'Woden Valley'. Families started to move into the first suburb of Hughes, in 1963.

This statement summarises the origins and meaning of both the Club's crest and also the name attached to the weekly bulletin - 'The Raven'. Both were adopted during the Club's first year of operation in 1969/70.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD 'WODEN':

The name 'Woden' was originally given to a 2,560 acre property, in the Jerrabomberra Creek valley, purchased by Dr James Murray in 1837. The original heritage-listed Woden homestead, which overlooks the Monaro Highway near Hume, has survived and is occupied to this day. Woden Creek is nearby.



*Left: the location (circled) of the Woden Homestead to the west of the Monaro Highway, the Hume Industrial area & helicopter base*



*Above: the heritage listed Woden Homestead, National Trust, c. 1960s*

With the acquisition of the Federal Capital Territory in 1911, districts were gazetted, one of which, encompassed the Jerrabomberra and Yarralumla Creek valleys. It was called 'Woden District' after Murray's original property. In time this district was reduced in size and confined to the Yarralumla Creek valley and eventually renamed 'Woden Valley District'.

Besides being a medico, Dr Murray was a classical scholar and it is thought he named his property 'Woden' after 'Odin' the Nordic God of Wisdom. Odin is also known as the 'God of War' and the 'Patron of learning'. The Teutonic for 'Odin' is 'Wodan or Wotan', while in Anglo-Saxon it is 'Woden'.

Odin was the principal god of 12 gods. He turned himself into anything he pleased and took pleasure in visiting mankind. He carried a spear which, when hurled by him, marked the beginning of the first war of the world. Odin derived his wisdom through a draft from the fountain of Mimir, to whom he gave one of his eyes in payment. Thus Odin is often shown as an old grey man with one eye in the middle of his forehead. In battle he is shown wearing a golden helmet and a coat of mail and carrying a spear.

Odin also had two ravens, 'Hugin' (meaning 'thought') and 'Munin' (meaning 'memory') who perched on his shoulders. They flew away daily and brought back the news of the doings in mankind so contributing to his wisdom.

'Wednesday' gets its name from Odin and is sometimes referred to as 'Woden's day'.

## THE WODEN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL'S CREST, MOTTO AND MAGAZINE:



The year before the founding of our Rotary Club in 1969, the Woden Valley High School was opened, with Mr Stuart Garnsey, as its first headmaster. In his creation of the school's crest, motto and annual magazine Headmaster Garnsey was obviously influenced by the classical origins of the name attached to his school as summarised briefly above.

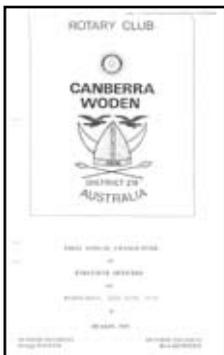
In the first issue of the school's annual magazine at the end of 1968 he explained in detail the background to the adoption of the school's crest, the motto 'thought, wisdom, memory', and the magazine's name 'The Raven'. All his decisions had followed extensive research by a wide range of people both from within and outside the school community. The designer of the crest is not stated but it should be noted that one of the school's staff involved was the Art Mistress.



## THE CLUB'S CREST AND BULLETIN NAME:

It is not surprising that the Club's founding Board, with Stuart Garnsey as one of its directors, would also be influenced by the Woden legend. In the Club's early papers, there is a photocopy of detailed published information about Odin.

The first public indication of the Odin influence came in a draft press release in June 1969 announcing the Club's founding. It stated that the weekly meetings of the club are to be held "... each Wednesday (Woden's day)..." It is tempting to conclude that the founding Board determined Wednesday as the Club's meeting day because of the Odin connection but there are no documents to confirm this. The Club still meets on Wednesdays.

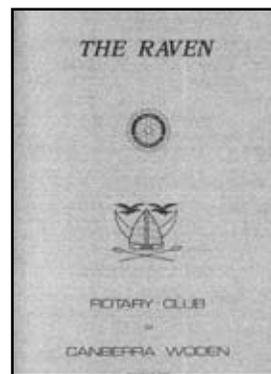


**Left: cover of the order of proceedings for the first changeover dinner on 24 June 1970 which included the Club's crest for the first time**

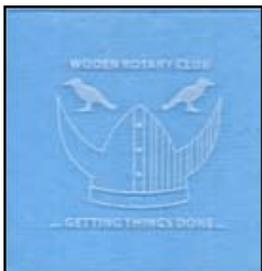
The Club's crest was created by an unknown designer during the Club's first Rotary year. It was used for the first time at the first changeover dinner on 24 June 1970 and comprised three elements: two Ravens; a helmet incorporating the word 'Odin'; and crossed spears.

**Right: The Club's weekly bulletin was called 'The Raven' after the first changeover dinner on 24 June 1970**

The Club's weekly bulletin acquired the name 'The Raven' immediately after this first changeover dinner. However despite a call to members in the bulletin at this time to put forward a motto for the club, this has never eventuated.



A stylised version with the crossed spears deleted is currently in use. A Club glass coaster was created during the 2010-2011 Rotary year for presentation to the Club's visiting speakers.



**Left: A stylised version of the Club's crest used on a glass coaster produced in 2010 for presentation to visiting speakers.**

## POSTSCRIPT:

In 2009, in a chapter of a new book titled *Aboriginal Placenames: naming and re-naming the Australian Landscape*, an ANU linguist, Dr Harold Koch, claims that, unless there is documentary evidence, such as a diary entry by Dr Murray, to confirm the generally accepted origin of the word 'Woden', it should be "treated with scepticism". "If a plausible Aboriginal source were available, it should be given equal consideration, given the Surveyor-General's policy that Aboriginal names should be bestowed where possible".

He claims that a "plausible Aboriginal source of the name 'Woden' is the word for 'possum', wadyan (or possibly wadhan), which is attested ten times for the languages of Aboriginal people extending from Yass through Queanbeyan and the Monaro to Omeo in Victoria". He adds that if "the word 'Woden' is indeed derived from an Aboriginal language, it is possible that its spelling was influenced by that of the Germanic god's name".

For further information go to pages 124 and 149 of ANU E-Press book at:

[http://epress.anu.edu.au/aborig\\_history/placenames/pdf/whole\\_book.pdf](http://epress.anu.edu.au/aborig_history/placenames/pdf/whole_book.pdf)

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[http://epress.anu.edu.au/aborig\\_history/placenames/pdf/whole\\_book.pdf](http://epress.anu.edu.au/aborig_history/placenames/pdf/whole_book.pdf)
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ACTHL = ACT Heritage Library