

## Heritage Council of NSW: Regional Visit 2007

### City of Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA)

#### Some Notes on the Civic, Ecclesiastical and Vineyard Heraldry of the Griffith District

Griffith and the MIA is a community well endowed with civic and ecclesiastical heraldry as well as the para-heraldry of the area's extensive wineries. The para-heraldry of the vineyards and wineries, mainly commercial in purpose, adds a distinctly Italian contribution to the evolving character of Australian heraldry, while the region's overall heraldry reflects themes of aquatic and horticultural abundance. Griffith is the unofficial capital of the MIA region, and a sense of regional identity is evident in the public heraldry of the city and its surrounding districts.

The MIA forms part of the domain of the south-western Wiradjuri. The first non-Aboriginal person to traverse the region was the explorer John Oxley, who in 1817 described the area as being "uninhabitable and useless to civilised man". From the 1840s the Griffith district formed part of the pastoral runs of Cuba (now Kooba) and Benerembah Stations. In 1906 the NSW Parliament passed the *Barren Jack and Murrumbidgee Canals Construction Act*, and the Barren Jack (now Burrinjuck) Dam was commenced in 1907; huge tracks of land were resumed, and the MIA scheme was launched with the first irrigated farm blocks available in 1912.

The town of Griffith was proclaimed in 1916 and was named after Arthur Griffith, NSW Minister for Public Works (1910 – 1915). It was designed by Walter Burley Griffin, and like Canberra, his design for Griffith featured a distinctive radial pattern with wide tree-lined streets, ring roads and parks. The administrative agency for the scheme was the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission (WC&IC), which undertook the responsibilities of local government until 1928 when Wade Shire (named after the first WC&IC commissioner, Leslie Wade) was constituted. The shire was re-named the Shire of Griffith in 1982, and elevated to city status in 1987.

#### Civic heraldry

This sequence of local governance provided the first opportunities for the development of local heraldry and sigillography.



Figure 1: Fruit tin label with WC&IC badge

The WC&IC used a Crowned badge, with an ibis in the centre surrounded by water drops, and an encircling scroll with Commission's name. This was used in many ways, including as shown here the labels for MIA produce, with brand name 'Ibis'. This was a typical form of emblem for statutory authorities at the time, and can still be seen in the NSW Police and NSW Parliament badges.

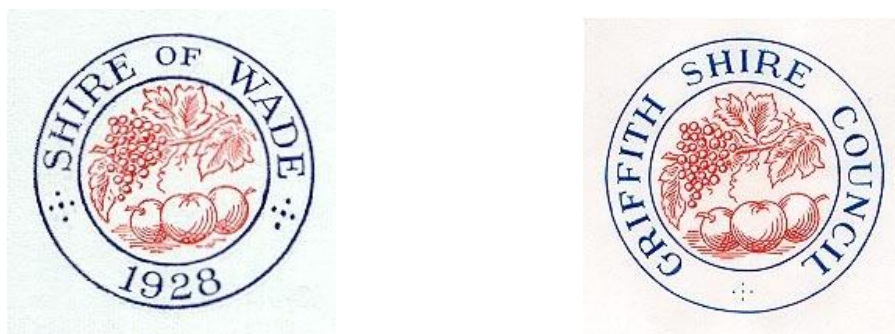


Fig. 2: Seals of the Shire

The Wade Shire emblem appears in the form of a municipal seal, which was commonly used for emblematic purposes at this time. The grapevine and fruit (two apples and an orange?) reflect the horticultural richness of the district, and the produce of the local farmers (and ratepayers). It provides a subtle contrast with the WC&IC badge which emphasises the provision of water by the State, and suggests the different authority and functions of the Shire Council and the WC&IC. The change of name in 1982 is only reflected in the revised inscription around the rim of the seal, indicating an element of continuity. Perhaps the change of name was contested in some way?



fig 3: Arms of the City of Griffith, 1987

In 1987 Griffith was proclaimed a city, and to mark the event the Kings of Arms granted the city a coat of arms. The radial layout of Griffith town is represented by the gold rays moving from the central roundel. The castle, with its open portal,

symbolises responsible, but accessible local government. The rays divide the green field into segments standing for agricultural allotments, dependent on irrigation for water, represented by the blue border. The crest is a crown of oranges and vine leaves representing the horticultural base of the local economy, made possible by the warm sun and adequate water, represented by the blue-centred sun above the crown. The shield is supported on each side by an ibis, a bird native to the area, exploiting the channels for food. Each supporter stands on a 'compartment' or field of grass strewn with oranges. The vine leaves and oranges represent an element of continuity with the design of the old shire seal. The ibises reflect a similar connection with the old WC&IC badge. The motto translates as "counsel and prudence"

In 1991 Griffith City Council adopted a logo and the corporate slogan 'Progress with Pride', which appears to be used in civic promotional materials rather than the Arms. The logo retains hints of the Arms, with it's initial letter replicating part of the golden rays and the oranges depicted in the shield and crest.



fig 4: Griffith City Council logo and corporate slogan

## Ecclesiastical heraldry

### **Roman Catholic**

Griffith falls within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga (Latin: Corvopolitanus) that was established 1917 after separation from the Diocese of Goulburn. The Diocesan Arms were assumed in 1918, blazoned: "*Azure, three choughs sable, membered or, two and one below the Southern Cross in bend sinister argent*". (A blue shield, with three black choughs with gold beaks and claws, arranged two above one, beneath a Southern Cross of silver stars aligned from the upper left of the shield). The Southern Cross is frequently used in Roman Catholic Arms in Australia. The chough (pron. chuff) is a bird common in western and southern Europe, and is a member of the crow family, a further allusion (along with the diocese's Latin name) to the Wiradjuri word for crow (wagga). The two versions of the Arms shown below, both correctly depicting the blazon, are used in the Diocese.



Fig: 5: Coat of Arms of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga

## Anglican



Fig. 6: Coat of Arms of the Anglican Diocese of Riverina

The Anglican Diocese of Riverina, created in 1884 from the western sections of the dioceses of Goulburn and Bathurst, includes Griffith, which is also the home of Cathedral of St Alban the Martyr. The diocesan Arms were granted by the Kings of Arms in 1954, blazoned "*Azure, four Barrulets wavy Argent, over all a Long Cross Or, on a Canton of the second a Lymphad sail furled Sable, pennons flying Gules.*" (A blue shield with four wavy white lines [representing the 4 major rivers in the diocese], with a large gold cross over the water, and in the upper-right corner a ship with its sail rolled up [indicating that it is stationary or has arrived at its destination] with red pennants flying).

### Educational heraldry

There are several schools in the Griffith area, although only one uses a heraldic or para-heraldic device, Wade High School.



Fig.7: Heraldic shield used by Wade High School

Wade High School was opened in 1971, and uses as its emblem a shield with a Dethridge wheel (a water wheel for irrigation) in the centre, surrounded by a wreath of (possibly) rice stalks or olive branches, with an overarching inscription of the school name. The design is somewhat reminiscent of the emblem used by the Italian Republic since 1948 which features a cogwheel and star surrounded by a wreath of olive and oak leaves, with an underarching ribbon inscribed *Repubblica Italiana*. See further below for the possible Italian influence on Griffith's regional heraldry.

### Heraldry of the Vineyards and Wineries

The emblems of the three wineries noted here are examples of an Italian heraldic influence in the symbols of the district.

### ***De Bortoli Wines***



Fig 8: Armorial-like device used on de Bortoli labels

Vittorio De Bortoli arrived in Australia 1924 from Castelcucco, in the Veneto region of northern Italy. By 1928 Vittorio & Giuseppina De Bortoli had established vineyards at Bilbul, and soon after established a winery that was later expanded by their son Deen De Bortoli. Today the company is in the capable hands of the third generation. De Bortoli Wines is one of the leading winemaking families in Australia today. Their motto translates as "Always Striving For Better".

### ***Warburn Wines***



Fig 9: Armorial-like device used by Warburn Wines

Warburn Estate was officially established in 1968 by Giuseppe and Tony Sergi. Giuseppe Sergi was born in Reggio Calabria, southern Italy in 1910, and married Maria Sergi on 10 November 1934. In 1952, Giuseppe and his family moved to Australia due to the traumatic post war conditions, and in 1954, the family moved to Farm 1305 Tharbogang. In 1979, the winery was officially named Warburn Wines. The motto translates as "Easily the First".

### ***Toorak Wines***



Fig. 10: Armorial-like device used by Toorak Wines

Two brothers, Frank Bruno Jr and Vince Bruno, started the winery in 1965. Their father, Frank Bruno Sr, worked the 50 acre farm growing stone fruit up until the first

grapes were planted in 1962. The motto “Nulli Secundus” translates as “Second to None”.

### **Some characteristics of Italian heraldry**

Italian heraldry, when compared to the Anglo-Celtic derived heraldry more commonly seen in Australia, shows several distinctive characteristics that can be seen in the heraldry of the Griffith wineries. These include diverse shield shapes (De Bortoli), the use of words and letters, perhaps best seen in the Arms of the City of Rome which consists of a red shield inscribed SPQR (De Bortoli, Warburn/Sergi and Toorak/Bruno), and the use of crest-coronets to indicate a family's purported noble rank rather than crests (De Bortoli and Warburn/Sergi). The grape vine used as a charge on the Warburn/Sergi device has been a common charge in Italian heraldry since medieval times. Red and blue are the predominant colours used in Italian heraldry, with little use of silver, gold, green or purple. Another distinction is the assumption of Arms by families without any official grant or other recognition of the coat of arms as private or corporate property, contrary to the usual practise in Anglo-Celtic heraldry.

Some of these Italian characteristics can be seen in Griffith's regional heraldry, in particular the use of grape vine leaves in the crest and supporters of the Griffith City Arms, and earlier in the shire seals, and perhaps the blue border of the shield, although this clearly relates to the aquatic theme also evident in the region's Anglo-Celtic heraldry. The sun in the City crest is also a common charge on Italian shields, but rarely used as a crest. Overall, the region's heraldry, developing mainly since the 1950s, could be read as a tentative fusion of Anglo-Celtic and Italian heraldic traditions. There has been ample scope for the mingling of heraldic practises, and the region's heraldry is distinctive and reflects the social and cultural history of Griffith and the MIA.

### **Acknowledgement of Heraldic Artists (where known)**

Fig. 3: Rev. Dennis Towner

Fig. 5: Michael McCarthy

Fig. 6: Allan Chatto

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