

The story behind the ANZCA coat of arms



Originally the mace was developed during medieval times as a weapon wielded by one arm from horseback. Therefore the shaft was long with a heavily studded head, and such maces developed a fearsome reputation, which made them an excellent symbol for power.

Following the introduction of gunpowder the usefulness of the mace as a weapon declined but its symbolism for power and authority survived. Ceremonial maces became larger with more decoration and were made of precious metals such as silver and gold. The ANZCA mace was gifted to the College by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) at our College's first annual scientific meeting in 1994, when their then president, Dr David Theile said, "as a demonstration of our part in your history and a permanent expression of our good wishes for your future". The design of the mace was greatly assisted by Joan Sheales, the then College Registrar (now titled chief executive officer), and is based around a lily to symbolise the creation of the new college of anaesthetists, as the lily in Greek lore symbolises birth.

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The mace design also incorporates much of the symbolism from the College's armorial bearings which were designed to represent the Australian and New Zealand origins of the College; its geographical region and the domicile of its headquarters; its derivation from the Faculty of Anaesthetists, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and the links particularly in intensive care with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians; its closeness to the basic sciences of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology; and the relationships which exist between the new and old worlds.

The armorial bearings were designed by a College's Coat of Arms Subcommittee, which met between September 1991 and September 1992 and consisted of Barry Baker (chair), Peter Livingstone (dean/president), David McConnel (councillor), Peter Jones (RACS) and Joan Sheales (registrar/CEO), and later Michael Hodgson (president). The Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshall of Her Majesty's College of Arms authorised the armorial bearings on December 1, 1992, and they were officially granted on May 10, 1994. The subcommittee members were very pleased to be notified that, because of the design and its detailed justification, these arms were granted in the minimum time – an exceedingly rare occurrence.

The armorial bearings consist of the "supporters", which were chosen as famous historical figures whose work was vitally important in changing not only medical knowledge, but the way in which people thought about that knowledge.

Andreas Vesalius is on the left. He published his seminal work *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* in 1543 from Padua, Italy. This publication changed anatomy because it overthrew, after 1400 years, Galen's dogma (largely based on the anatomy of apes and monkeys) with human cadaver dissection, and by instituting the scientific approach of challenging dogma with direct experience. Vesalius also was the first to show that an animal that had ceased to breathe could be resuscitated by using artificial respiration through a reed inserted into the windpipe – in the coat of arms he is holding a bellows to signify this act. The bellows also signifies the experimental scientific basis of the specialty following Vesalius' lead. His view is outward looking to signify his broad academic outlook, and to indicate the widespread place of artificial ventilation in anaesthesia and intensive care.

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William Harvey, who lived in England but who had studied in Padua, is the other supporter and is depicted holding a book with a heart etched on the cover. The heart and book represent the contribution made by Harvey in 1628 when he published *De Motu Cordis*, which for the first time described the circulation of blood through the lungs and around the body. The book also symbolises the College's respect for academic learning.

Harvey looks towards Vesalius to explain that the discovery of the circulation depended on prior anatomical description by Vesalius and others (that is physiology followed anatomy), and also because Harvey studied in the Italian medical schools.

These two supporters represent the heritage of the specialty based as it is on respiratory and cardiovascular physiology together with anatomy.

The place of pharmacology, which is the third scientific base for the specialty, is addressed by use of the botanical specimens in the "charges of the shield". The supporters stand on land separated by water, which forms the "compartment of the arms".

These separate lands signify not only the countries of Australia and New Zealand, but also the separation of the new world of Australasia from the old world of Europe (and the not-so-old world of North America where anaesthesia was first demonstrated and broadcast to the world in the mid-19th century).

The sea also indicates the significance of sea travel in the transmission of the introductory news about anaesthesia from North America to Europe and eventually to Australia and finally New Zealand.

The Cootamundra wattle (*Acacia baileyana*) illustrated on the land on which Vesalius stands represents Australia and the silver fern or ponga (*Cyathea dealbata*) on the land on which Harvey stands represents New Zealand.

The shield contains two parts. The "chief of the shield" contains the Southern Cross indicating the College's geographical place in the Southern Hemisphere because the constellation is at 60° S and therefore not visible from most of the Northern Hemisphere. The five stars are represented with the number of points representing their real brightness in the night sky starting at the base of the cross with the brightest star and moving clockwise: alpha – eight points; beta – seven points; gamma – seven points; delta – six points; epsilon – five points.

This representation is also that taken by the state of Victoria and is not taken by any other state or country using the Southern Cross. Thus this representation symbolises the College's founding and headquarters in Victoria.

The lower part of the shield contains the Cross of St George indicating the links between the College and its British counterpart, the Royal College of Anaesthetists, as well as the Christian heritage of the College.

The "torch of glory" imprinted on the upright of the cross symbolises the direct derivation of the College from the Faculty of Anaesthetists of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The College of Surgeons has the torch of glory in its arms and has also the motto *Fax mentis incendium gloriae* – "The torch that illuminates the mind is the fire that consumes vainglory".

The charges in the four quadrants symbolise the plants that together form the basis for the pharmacology fundamental to anaesthesia. In the upper left quadrant is the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) signifying analgesia, and in the upper right quadrant is the mandrake plant (*Mandragora officinarum*) signifying sedation and anaesthesia.

These charges also symbolise the old world plants. The new world plants are depicted in the lower charges. In the lower left quadrant is the curare vine (*Chondrodendron tomentosum*) signifying neuromuscular paralysis, and in the lower right quadrant the cocaine leaf and fruit (*Erythroxylum coca*) signifying local anaesthesia.

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The crest consists of the helmet, which is unusually affronté (or facing forward) with a closed visor to indicate alertness and readiness for any urgent action. This type and position of helmet is similar to the Royal College of Anaesthetists again linking the College to this fraternal organisation.

The colours of the College gown (black and gold) are incorporated into the wreath on the helmet and its lambrequin (or cape). The rising sun behind the helmet indicates the geographical place of the College in the east next to the international date line; and also symbolises links with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians both of which have similar rising suns for the same symbolic reason.

The "hand of the carer" (physician) rising from the Lord's cloud representing Almighty guidance links the College back to the Parisian medical influence and to the foundations of the modern European medical tradition in 12th century Paris, and symbolises the Fellow's hand guided by the Lord caring for the patient's life.

The hand holds an ankh, the Egyptian hieroglyph for life, which links the major responsibility of College Fellows – the preservation of life – to the roots of western medicine in Egypt in the 5th to 3rd millennia BCE.

The snake of Asclepius (Aesculapius) entwines the Ankh to symbolise the links with the heritage of Greek medicine and the ethics of doctor-patient relationships, which derive from that time.

The motto reads *Corpus curare spiritumque* which translates as "To care for the body and its breath of life" and which aptly summarises the main aim for Fellows of the College. There is an intended pun in the motto, which uses the Latin word *curare* (to care). This is also a word, derived differently from Macusi Indians in Guyana (*wurari*), used daily in the specialty for the drug *curare* or its analogues, which cause the state of neuromuscular paralysis or curarisation.

Originally the College mace had been designed to have a timber shaft made from Australian jarrah and an unspecified New Zealand timber, but this timber shaft was replaced with gold plated sterling silver when the RACS offered to gift the mace to ANZCA. The aspects of the armorial bearings that have been translated into the design for the mace are:

The butt: This is now the larger end of the mace and is in the shape of a half opened lily containing the motto "*Corpus curare spiritumque*" engraved on the inner lip. Within the open lily cusp, like a stamen, the crest is reproduced in full with the torch of glory placed below the crest in a sense holding the crest aloft.

This repositioning of the torch was deliberately designed to represent the gift of the mace by the RACS to the College, and to symbolise the growth of the College of Anaesthetists from the Faculty of Anaesthetists.

The shaft: Embossed on the shaft (stem of the lily) is a representation of the shield containing the four quadrants and with the chief containing the Victorian Southern Cross stars represented by Argyle champagne-colour diamonds sized in proportion to the stars' brightness (1x20pt, 2x16pt, 1x11pt, and 1x6pt). The charges are represented more boldly and larger than in the arms to emphasise their differences, and for artistic relief on the shaft.

The head – Australia and New Zealand are represented in the head (another half open but smaller lily) by a wattle in silver-gilt and a fern in silver. Around the lip is engraved "Presented by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons 1994".

The mace is 960 millimetres long, weighs approximately 2.75 kilograms, and was cast in 19 separate pieces at Flynn Silver's workshop in Kyneton, Victoria, using the lost wax technique. Dan and John Flynn commented at the time (May 17, 1994) that "we consider it to be the most significant commission undertaken by ourselves to date". The cost of the mace was \$A34,500.

Every council meeting is conducted with the mace on its jarrah rest in open display to symbolise the authority of council, and again at the College annual general meeting.

The mace is also ceremonially carried in the procession of the president and council to the opening of each annual scientific meeting.

If you have not looked closely at either the coat of arms or the mace, you should do so, as they are each rich in a heritage that you share with your colleagues, not only in anaesthesia but more widely across the breadth of medicine and science.

Professor Barry Baker

Dean of Education and Executive Director of Professional Affairs

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