

TWO TOODLEMBUCKS

In Melbourne in the early 1900s, a Toodlembuck was a type of children's gambling wheel made from a butcher's skewer, a cotton reel, a large cardboard disc, a length of string, a button and a pin. The disc was ruled into sections, each containing the name of a horse running in the Melbourne Cup. It was attached to the cotton reel, which was wound around with the string and threaded onto the skewer. The pin acted as a pointer on top of the skewer. Pulling the string made the disc spin, and when it stopped the horse under the pointer was the winner. Children bet cherry stones (cherry 'bobs') on the outcome.

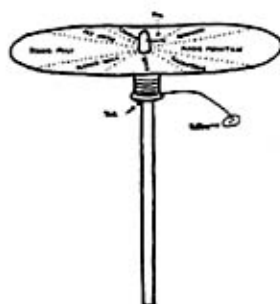


Diagram of a Toodlembuck collected by Dr. Dorothy Howard, the American folklorist who visited Australia in 1954-55 to collect children's folklore.

The Toodlem Buck of the adult world had a similar function to the children's gambling device. The following description comes from a reader who would like to find out if there was a connection between the two:

During the period 1900-1930 it was fashionable to have a mascot on top of the car radiator.

One of these mascots was like a witch with a tapered hat, carrying a shepherd's crook. It was called Toodlem Buck (possibly a person's name). The figure stood about 3 inches (8cm) high, and was on a flat base, which was about 1 1/2 inches (4cm) in diameter.

The base was hollow, with a sort of fan inside, which would spin when the wind blew through the base as the car travelled along. The base was half shielded around the outside, and half open, to let the wind blow through.

The mascot must have had a revolving disc or drum with numbers on it, because the occupants of the car were each given a number. When the car stopped at a hotel, whoever's number came up paid for the drinks.

