



**Special Points of Interest:**

- *Postcards and Tales from the Night Soil Cart* by Nick Shailer
- *Recent Events and Acquisitions*
- *Part 3 of the Amazing Adventures of James Morrill*

**A MESSAGE FROM TRISH**

They say “*Memories are the corners of our minds*” - I’m sure it was only few weeks ago I said Happy New Year 2015 and here it is June already. 30th June is fast approaching and that means our Annual fees are due and the Museum looks forward to the membership support, both financially and through volunteering. We have welcomed new members this year and look forward to a long association as members. In September we celebrate 30 years as a Museum and Historical Society and a function for this event is in the planning at present. All suggestions gratefully accepted.

There has been a couple of changes to displays at the Museum - we now have three magnificent Cash Registers, two are brass on polished timber cabinets and a small one in silver, all of which are over 100 years old and kindly donated by Mr. Max Short. Changes have also been made to the Telecom display and the People of our City wall, which I am sure you will enjoy. The joint photo display called “*The way we were*” opened on ANZAC Day at Museum of Tropical Queensland featuring Townsville businesses in Flinders Street in the 1913 - 1919 era. A special ‘thank you’ to Vivian Moran (MTQ) for all the work. The display finishes on the 28 June.

We were very happy to welcome members of the Townsville Rotary Club recently for their lunch meeting. It was pointed out to us that our building was actually built by this Rotary Club in 1975 for the Traffic Training Centre and the official opening plaque is on the wall in Hall 2. Their generous donation to the Museum was gratefully accepted.

Heritage Day was a great success and thank you to Harvey, Lydia and Geoff for manning the tent and also to Fay and Wendy for working the Museum in the afternoon. The estimated crowd at West End Park was around 7,000 and quite a number of our brochures were handed out to visitors on the day. Remember to tell visiting friends, family and neighbours about the Museum and also the selection of books for sale - they make great gifts.

**Bye for now,**

**Trish Cronin**

**President**

**TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Monday to Friday

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

First and Third Sundays of the month

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

**FREE ENTRY**

**MEMBERSHIP FEES**

(12 months from 1st July to 30th June)

Single \$ 11.00

Couples \$ 16.50

Corporate \$ 32.50

Monthly committee meetings are held at the Museum on the third Monday of the month at ten o’clock. All committee members are notified a week prior to the meeting.

**Membership of TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY is now due for RENEWAL.**

**See back page for payment details.**



Unknown. (1939). Melton Hill, overlooking Cleveland Bay, Townsville.

Held by CityLibraries Local History Collection.

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## MELTON TERRACE

From John Mathew's "Highways and Byways"...

**Melton Terrace, Melton Hill. Shown as Cleveland Street on the first survey plan of the city. The name was changed to Melton Terrace in 1969.**

Melton Hill, Melton Street, Melton Lane, and Melton Black Drive were all named in honour of John Melton Black, one of the founders of Townsville, and whose home was built on the crest of Melton Hill. The name Melton Hill was used at the first land sale, of Townsville land, held in Bowen in 1865. Melton Street has now merged into Willmott Street and Melton Lane is now the present day Herbert Street.

## John Melton Black, the Founder of Townsville by W. J. Doherty

[This article appeared in the Townsville Daily Bulletin on 10th July 1934.]

When I first made a study of the history of Townsville, I wrote;

"It is beyond all question that most of our early success was due to the energy and enterprise that were exercised at the right time, by John Melton Black. It was Black who ordered the expedition of Ball and Reid to Cleveland Bay. It was Black who arranged the preliminaries for a township, and it was Black who first recognised the great potentialities of our port."

In estimating the value of a man, the question arises, what has he done? In the case of John Melton Black the reply is that he came to a coastal creek in North Queensland and planted a city. He planned the erection of the first wharf, surveyed the first allotments and superintended the erection of the first buildings. In the course of three years he figured as a stockman, merchant, surveyor, newspaper editor and pioneer of the meat industry. For the first two terms he was Mayor of the Municipality. No wonder it was claimed that Black was the "ablest man that Queensland had produced."

He was born in Edinburgh in the year 1830. The son of a physician, he entered upon mercantile life and found his way to London. It was there that he heard of the wonders of Australian goldfields, and he struck out for Melbourne to make his fortune. He proved that he was the right man for the job and before long he accumulated considerable wealth as the head of a carrying business. Then he became conspicuous in Melbourne as the man who built the first Theatre Royal. When he was tired of the bright lights of the city, he was attracted to the young Colony of Queensland. With W. A. Ross, C. S. Rowe and W. Longshaw, he formed a little company to go furthest north and take up pastoral land. Bowen was reached on April 18th, 1861, and not much time was lost in the formation of Fanning Station. This was near the site of the Macrossan Bridge. Black was "the first man to cross the Burdekin River with flocks and herds." He liked the prospects and at the end of the year, 1863, he took up a large area of country, which became known as Woodstock.



Unknown John Melton Black, first Mayor of Townsville, 1866-1867. Held by CityLibraries Local History Collection

## JOHN MELTON BLACK, FOUNDER OF TOWNSVILLE

BY W. J. DOHERTY

But everything was not plain sailing with our pioneer pastoralists. When a reverse came, many of them surrendered their properties to the mortgagees, and J. M. Black was one of the unfortunates. But as a courageous young man, thirty four years of age, he was quite undismayed. Very soon he was installed as general manager for Robert Towns' interests, which included Fanning, Woodstock, Inkerman, Jarvisfield and other large holdings.

Headquarters were established at Woodstock, and the long haulage of goods from Bowen was found troublesome. On the map it could be seen that the nearest coast was but twenty miles away. When Andrew Ball and Mark Watt Reid were sent to explore, they made the discovery of Ross Creek. This was in 1864. The new work of forming a port and township at Cleveland Bay was undertaken by a partnership of Towns and Black. J. M. Black left Townsville at the end of the year 1867, and his loss was keenly felt by the residents of the North. As there had been no farewell ceremony, it was arranged to send him presents of an illuminated address and a valuable gold cup. From Sydney he proceeded to Europe, where he made an extensive tour before settling down in London. In the worries of North Queensland life, all connection with him was soon lost and it was currently reported that he died in 1884. On August 27th 1930, I walked into the office of Mr. John Cummins where I was introduced to Mr. Douglas Drummond Black.



Daintree, Richard, 1832-1878 (1870). *John Melton Black's residence, the first home in Townsville built around 1865.* John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

He was a tall, active looking man of middle age, and learnt that he was a son of the first Mayor of Townsville. On a tour of Australia, he decided to visit Townsville, where, he understood that his father had conducted a shipping business. We conversed for most of the afternoon and our visit to Mrs C. Robinson of West End, was an interesting adventure. She was the only person living to the North, who had known Mr. Black's father. I learnt from Mr. Black that his father had started a printing business in London, and of course, proved successful. He did not die in 1884, but lived on through the war and passed away in 1919 at the good old age of 89 years.

At Hanover Square, Condon, he had married Marion O'Dowds, a lady whom he first met in Townsville. Their family consisted of five sons and a daughter. Two of the sons died and the eldest son, Horace, is now Managing Director of the Bell Punch and Printing Company. Last year the members of J. M. Black's family had a large oil painting made of their father and sent it out as a present to the Townsville City Council. It is indeed a valuable work of art and now hangs as an ornament and an historical treasure in the town hall. Douglas & Stanley Black, sons of our pioneer and first Mayor, have been touring the Southern States of Australia and on Thursday, July 19th next, they will call at Townsville on their way to Japan. The question now is, will the citizens of Townsville allow these gentlemen to pass through unnoticed?

### Reference

JOHN MELTON BLACK. (1934, July 10). *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld. : 1907 - 1954), p. 7. Retrieved May 18, 2015, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article61964570>

## WHEN IS A POSTCARD MORE THAN A POSTCARD?

BY NICK SHAILER

A recent pickup from eBay was this card from Charters Towers. Though it is a fairly common card of the Hospital in Charters Towers, it is the information typed on the rear which is of interest and changes this from not only a postcard but into an advertising card, a greeting card and an item of WWI memorabilia.

Research into the card reveals that on the 29th of February 1916 at 12.30pm. 90 men from a Shropshire Regiment visited Charters towers by train from Townsville for several hours visit. They were met at the station by local returned servicemen and a band who lead a march down Gill and Mosman Streets to a function on Lissner Park where a lunch was provided by the townspeople, the officers and city councillors having lunch at the Crown Hotel.

As there was several days' notice of the visit, by reading the card, it can be suggested that the Proprietress of the Court House Hotel was not going to miss a chance of increased trade, and had cards ready to hand out to the visiting men on their arrival. It was a souvenir of their visit and advertised a friendly place to get a drink.

Interestingly though there are two reports in the Northern Miner newspaper of this event but I can find no mention of the troops visit in the Townsville paper, which raises the question of what were troops from Shropshire doing in Townsville and Charters Towers in the middle of WWI.

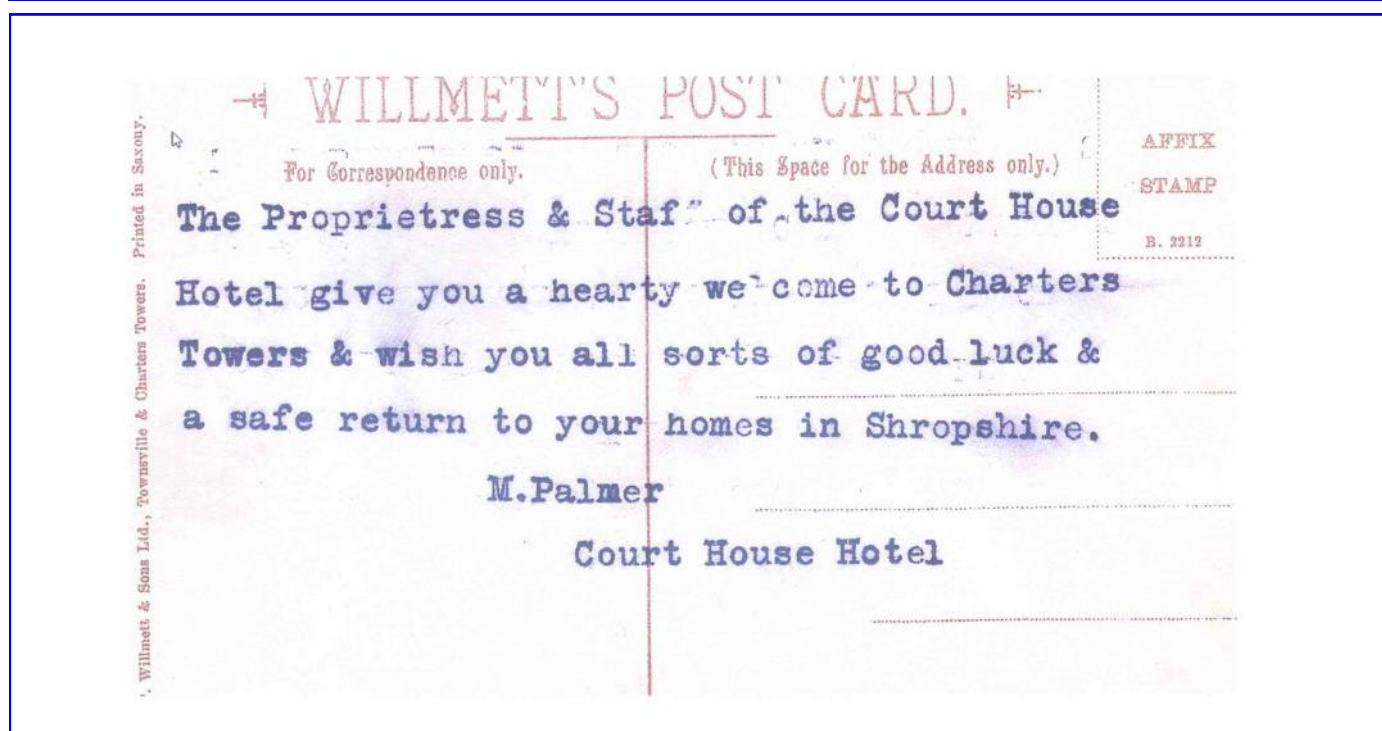
I am fairly sure they were from the 4th Territorial Battalion but as yet cannot confirm this, so it's an ongoing project.

NICK SHAILER



## WHEN IS A POSTCARD MORE THAN A POSTCARD?

BY NICK SHAILER



## TALES FROM THE NIGHT SOIL CART

By Nick Shailer

*Over the years I've heard several local stories involving the local night soil men, who emptied the outside toilet cans in the night. Whether these stories are true or not, no-one knows!*

**The first story does not involve the night soil man but is one of the best.**

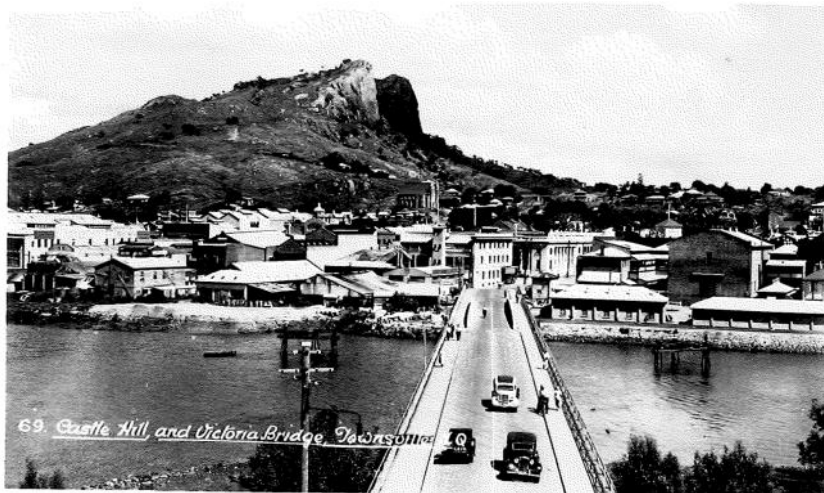
During the Second World War, the railway at Stuart was very busy with troop trains coming and going and if the trains stopped for a while there was a rush to the outside toilet and as a result, the staff at Stuart had to empty the can after the train's departure. On this day, a Saturday, there was a new lad porter on duty. The Station Master who was already in his cricket whites and in a hurry to get away to a match, asked the lad porter to empty the toilet. The lad porter informed the Station Master that his parents' home had a flushing toilet and he did not know how to do this. Consequently, the SM informed the lad porter he would show him this one time.

The toilet at Stuart was a back loader (which meant you removed the full can from the rear). The Station master opened the rear door and pulled the very full can back towards himself, grabbed the can by both handles and lifted it up, stepped back and tripped backwards over a stone.

The Station Master did not get to his cricket match that day. It is unknown what happened to the lad porter.

## RECENT ACQUISITION

Recently a member of the public sent us some postcards which had been collected by a relative who had connections to Townsville. These postcards seem to be from the same era and are of Townsville icons.



69. Castle Hill and Victoria Bridge, Townsville.



66. Flinders Street, Townsville NQ.



89. Island Launch leaving Town Landing, Townsville NQ.

## RECENT EVENTS

The Rotary Club of Townsville held a monthly meeting at the Townsville Museum on the 21st April. The members viewed both Halls and had lunch, before beginning their meeting. We were reminded that the Rotary Club had actually built this facility as a Traffic Training Centre for Townsville's children in 1975.



The Magnetic Islander's Craft Group visited us on 29th April and also stayed for a morning tea. The ladies thoroughly enjoyed viewing the halls and had many testing questions to ask their hosts for the day!



The Probus group visited us for a morning tea on 27th May. The ladies really enjoyed themselves and a couple of them were very happy to meet their host, John, as they had connections to Telstra (Telecom) in one case, and their fathers were friends in the other instance.

## AMAZING ADVENTURES OF JAMES MORRILL—PART 3

*In recent weeks, we were given a range of items which once belonged to a long time resident of Townsville, Miss Grace Mills. One of the items was a book on the history of Townsville, called "The Townsville Story", written by Rapier [Mr Les Watson], and published in 1952.*

*Continued from February 2015*

### SEVEN CAME THROUGH *Continued*

The natives were very friendly; camped with the white people and fed them until they were strong enough to travel. Eventually the whole party set out for the natives' camp. Runners were sent ahead and the white folk were given a great reception; for days afterwards, aborigines came in from other areas to see the strange visitors. The natives had heard of white people, but had not previously seen them.

The castaways were treated with kindness, and soon became looked upon as members of the tribe.

### TRAGIC MOMENT

But the 44 days' ordeal continued to take toll. After 10 months had passed, Capt Pitkelley died. He was followed by his wife three months later.

Another nine months went by, then the young apprentice, Wilson, who had grown weaker under the vigorous native life, died in Morrill's arms.

It was a moment of tragedy and despair for Morrill. With the passing of Wilson, He became the sole survivor of the "Peruvian".

Morrill then commenced a strange existence which was to last for many years. He was initiated and became a fully-fledged member of the tribe. Being a seaman by training, he was a handyman, and was able to not only improve upon the native crafts he learnt, but to add to them the manifestations of a white man's cleverness.

He became adept of the use of native weapons; he was unequalled with both boomerang and spear, and soon became the tribe's leading huntsman.

As the years passed he became a noted warrior in tribal wars, and by force of circumstances became so completely native that he forgot the use of the English language.

He earned the genuine affection of his tribesmen, and won the respect of other tribes, but it was inevitable that odd natives were jealous of his position. Despite his prowess as a warrior, the strange saga of James Morrill would probably have ended with a spear in the back but for yet another weird twist of fate— a lubra who had lost her son in a tribal war prior to Morrill joining the band, claimed that the white man was a reincarnation of her son.

This made Morrill taboo.

### VIGIL ON CASTLE HILL

Despite his new way of life, Morrill never gave up hopes of seeing other white men. Years afterwards he related that, after about a decade with the aborigines, this longing to see his own people became stronger.

The tribe's headquarters was Mt Elliott, but most hunting was done in the area that is now Townsville. When near Castle Hill, Morrill would repeatedly climb the mass of rock and frantically search the horizon for a sail. Or he would ascend the hill at night and light a signal fire, in the desperate hope it would be seen and investigated by a passing ship.

## AMAZING ADVENTURES OF JAMES MORRILL—PART 3 CONTINUED

In today's modern Townsville, it seems a fantastic thought that only 90 years ago, before the Townsville area was explored, sometimes at night, a lonely, ageing, naked white man would climb Castle Hill and light a fire with the poignant hope that his own kind would see it and come to his rescue. And that the dawn would find him crouching, disconsolate, over the grey ashes of his hopes.

In 1861 he heard that white men had been seen in the neighbourhood, and made efforts to find them. But he reckoned without the aboriginals, who held him in great esteem and did not wish to lose him. They used many devices to prevent him from contacting the whites, and for the time succeeded.

However, their suspicions must have slackened, for in 1863 he was with a hunting party which came upon a sheep station near the Lower Burdekin. Morrill was one of a party detailed to take a close look at the whites and see if they were hostile-bush wireless had given the whites a bad reputation. The station was Antill, or Jarvisfield Station.

His emotion can be imagined. Here, after 17 years, was his longed-for opportunity; the crescendo of all his hopes.

His mind groped painfully for forgotten English words.

He saw sheep, then a homestead, and told the other members of the tribe to remain hidden while he went ahead.

### MOMENT OF PERIL

He stopped a moment by a waterfall to wash himself as white as possible then approached the building. Naked, and after living as an aboriginal for 17 years he was embarrassed, so somewhat timidly called, "Ho, shipmates!" in rusty accents.

He must have been heard and seen immediately, for two men ran out of the building.

Both carried rifles.

From the moment when, on that far distant day, the crashing of the "Peruvian" upon a coral reef had commenced for him a train of bizarre adventures. Death had stretched eager talons towards Morrill on a score of occasions; had reluctantly withdrawn them.

Yet again, on this, the supreme moment of all his hopes, the Great Shadow edged close to him as he stood, a wild and perhaps terribly-looking figure.

The white men thrust the rifles to their shoulders and for a split second it appeared that Morrill's hopes would dissolve in a burst of gunfire- in those early days shootings were not uncommon.

Morrill flung his hands in the air and frenziedly croaked: "Don't fire...British sailor!"

Thunderstruck, the two men, who were stockmen, lowered their rifles and gazed uncertainly at the apparition. Morrill was burnt nearly black. Long hair and beard were matted; he was naked.

He was told to approach, and with difficulty told some of his story.

He had almost forgotten English; it was some days before he could make himself fully understood.



*(To be concluded in the October 2015 Newsletter.)*

Daintree, Richard (1867). *Townsville, corner of Flinders and Wickham Street, 1867.*

Held by CityLibraries Local History Collection

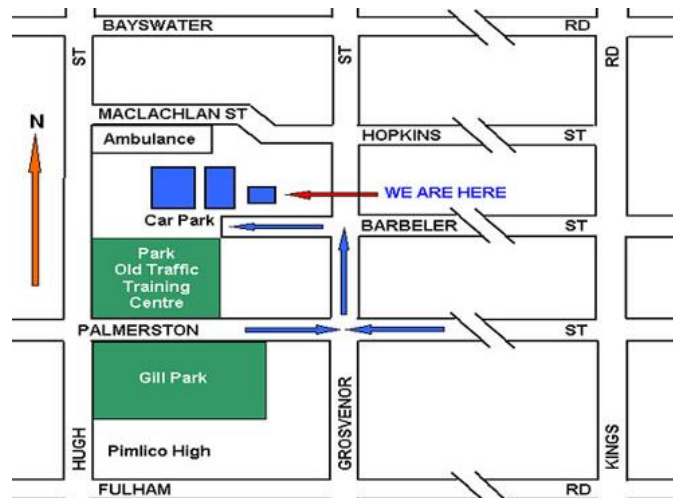


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***RENEWAL OF YOUR TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP IS NOW DUE.***  
**FEES REMAIN THE SAME AS SHOWN ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER.**  
**PLEASE CALL INTO THE MUSEUM WITH PAYMENT OR CONTACT US TO ARRANGE ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT METHODS.**

**OUR SUPPORTERS**



Support  
 The  
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 Support your  
 Museum

