



# Townsville Museum & Historical Society

1/27 BARBELER STREET, CURRAJONG QLD 4812

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## A Message From The President

In November 2024, the Museum hosted the great-great grandson of John Melton Black, the founder of Townsville. Andy Ward and his wife Caroline came from England to visit Townsville and the reason was to view a painting of John Melton Black by Dorothy Elaine Vicaji. The painting was gifted to the Townsville City Council in 1933 by Horace Black, his son to occupy a position in the Town Hall. Andy and Caroline were welcomed to the city by the CEO and Councillors at Council Chambers. The painting is preserved at the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery and a replica copy of the painting is on display at the Museum.

This year Townsville Museum will celebrate 40 years of preserving Townsville's rich history. School visits have increased with students being given an opportunity to have "hands on" participation with toys, tools and old school items, even learning how to slice fresh beans and make butter. Students are returning with parents, which is great to see. New displays will be coming soon to Hall One and for details on what's happening at the Museum follow us on Facebook.

Until next time,

*Trish Cronin*

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**BUSINESS HOURS**  
MONDAY TO FRIDAY  
9:00 AM TO 2:30 PM  
ENTRY ADULT \$5 CHILD \$2

**MEMBERSHIP FEES**  
SINGLE \$15.00  
FAMILY \$30  
CORPORATE \$32.50

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## Community News

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### **80th Birthday Celebration**

On a windy and wet November afternoon, Townsville Museum volunteers gathered to honor one of its most treasured members, Gary Mann, in celebration of his 80th birthday. A life member and long-term volunteer, Gary has been a cornerstone of the museum's efforts to preserve and share Townsville's rich history for decades. The team surprised Gary with a beautiful birthday cake, and a heartfelt celebration. Members of the museum shared stories of Gary's dedication and the invaluable knowledge he has contributed over the years. Gary, is known for both his humility and cheeky sense of humor. The Townsville Museum is grateful for Gary's unwavering commitment and wishes him many more years of health and happiness. Cheers to you, Gary!



Life member of Townsville Museum, Gary Mann cutting a slice of cake to celebrate his 80th birthday at the museum in November.

### **Appeal For Museum Volunteers**

Townsville Museum and Historical Society is seeking volunteers to assist with the daily operation of the museum. Tasks and roles can vary from guiding guests through the museum to photography, data entry or maintenance and cleaning of museum displays and exhibits. If you are interested please send us an email at **[admin@townsvillemuseum.com.au](mailto:admin@townsvillemuseum.com.au)** or call us on **4775 7838**.



### **New Book For Sale!**

A new book titled **'Her Great Adventure'** about, WWII nurse, Dorothy Janet Campbell (also known as 'Puss') is available for purchase online at:

**[openbookhowden.com.au/bookshop](http://openbookhowden.com.au/bookshop)**

Nursing sister, Dorothy 'Puss' Campbell, was stationed at the 2/14 Australian General Hospital at Mundingburra from March until September 1945. She also passed through Townsville twice, on her way to and from Dobodura in Papua New Guinea in 1943 and 1944.

The book is the first serious work about nursing sisters who were not killed or captured in WWII. It is non-fiction, written by historian Dr Janet Scarfe (incidentally Puss's niece), and uses her daily diaries of the war, photograph collection and the unit's official diaries. It is lavishly illustrated & retails for **\$39.95** not including postage.



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## John Melton Black's Descendant Visits Townsville

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Andrew Ward, the great-great-grandson of John Melton Black, the founder and first mayor of Townsville, recently visited the city with his wife, Caroline. Their visit, on November 21st, was a nostalgic connection to Townsville's storied past. During their trip, the Wards were taken to the mayoral chambers, where they viewed a remarkable oil-on-canvas portrait of John Melton Black. The artwork, painted in 1933 by renowned artist Dorothy Elaine Vicaji, captures the essence of the city's founding figure. Vicaji, a celebrated portraitist of royalty and notable figures, lent her artistic expertise to immortalise Black's legacy. The painting had long been thought to be potentially destroyed by fire in 1978. However, the artwork had merely been misplaced in the archives of Perc Tucker Gallery until it was fortunately rediscovered in 2024.



Andrew Ward, the great, great, grandson of John Melton Black in Townsville, 2024.





Andy and Caroline continued their tour of Townsville and surrounds during their visit to Australia. One of their stops was the Hervey Range Tea-Rooms where the original road to Townsville from the interior pastoral stations ran (named the Road to Dalrymple). The roadway was initially used as a stock route into Townsville, although it became considerably more important once gold was discovered at Cape River and Star River. These two goldfields supplied ample trade to Townsville and considerably expanded the fledgling township's wealth and economic prosperity. Local author (and Townsville Museum volunteer) Geoff Hansen has co-authored a book about the importance and outcomes of these early goldrushes with his book titled *'Goldfields that Made Townsville.'*

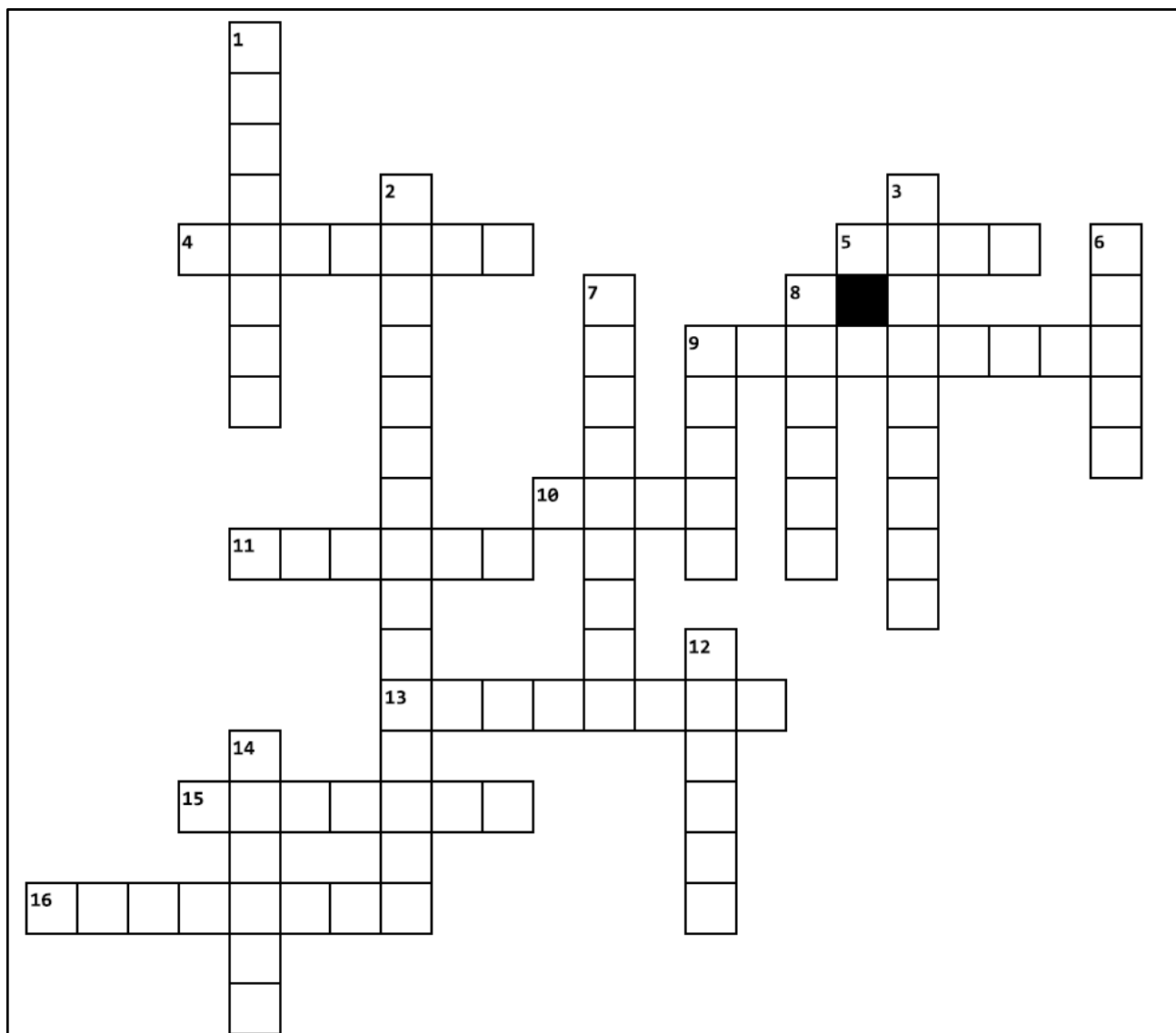
Geoff presented a signed copy of this important piece of literature to Andy and Caroline during their visit at the Hervey Range Tea-Rooms - both were delighted! Much of north Queensland's continued economic prosperity is owed to founder John Melton Black for his vision of a northern port. Situated on the more accessible northern side of the Burdekin River Townsville has flourished. In the pioneering spirit of his forebear, Andy Ward has graciously offered to sponsor Townsville Museum with a monthly donation. This generous offer will assist in reducing the financial stress experienced by the Townsville Museum and help ensure our continued operation so we can protect and share the rich and storied history of Townsville over the years. Thank you Andy and Caroline, we hope you enjoyed your visit to Townsville.



Andy Ward (Left) and wife Caroline Ward (Right) receiving a copy of *'Goldfields That Made Townsville'* with author Geoff Hansen (Centre) at the Hervey Range Tea-Rooms. Originally the Eureka Hotel, it is the oldest surviving wooden structure in north Queensland.



# Townsville History Crossword



## ACROSS

- 4.** A north Queensland sports team based in Townsville (7)
- 5.** An island off the coast of Townsville & a type of tree (7)
- 9.** A hotel that was named 'Townsville's first impressive building' (7)
- 10.** A category 5 cyclone that struck Townsville in 2011 (7)
- 11.** A prominent hill in Townsville & a type of fortification (7)
- 13.** A Townsville newspaper whose office was destroyed by fire in 1912 (7)
- 15.** A famous shipwreck in north Queensland (7)
- 16.** A Townsville military barracks that was opened by Prime Minister Harold Holt (7)

## DOWN

- 1.** A suburb of Townsville named after the aboriginal word for 'swampy ground' (7)
- 2.** The founding father of Townsville (3)
- 3.** An early goldfield that helped Townsville survive tough times (2)
- 6.** An avenue in Townsville named after a tropical fruit (7)
- 7.** A spikey fruit grown on Magnetic Island (7)
- 8.** A traditional/indigenous landowner group of Townsville (7)
- 9.** A Townsville theatre & an adjective for relating to a city/town & its administration (7)
- 12.** A picturesque bay on Magnetic Island & to eat outside in a park (7)
- 14.** A Townsville memorial pool named after a famous WWII battle (7)

**See Answers on Page 9**




## Rationing in Townsville

During and after WWII, rationing was introduced in Australia to preserve stocks of food, clothes, petrol, rubber and other commodities deemed vulnerable to the supply shocks that the conflict brought. It was a matter of national pride to go without many luxuries in order to support Australian soldiers overseas and the production of ordnance to equip the armed forces.

The Rationing Commission oversaw rationing in Australia, which involved the purchase and surrender of coupons to obtain rationed goods or items in short supply. As 1942 saw the range of rationed commodities increased, many residents in northern Australia began keeping a small garden to grow edible fruit and vegetables to supplement their meals. Due to the larger blocks of land available in Townsville, many residents were even able to keep some livestock such as a cow, goat or pigs. This meant they could sometimes supply themselves with a little extra dairy (or meat!). One positive outcome of rationing was the decline in diet related problems such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes in Australia.

Fish, sausages, chicken, ham and rabbits were not rationed. Recipes designed to cater for the lack of eggs, butter and meat appeared in newspapers and magazines on a regular basis. Animal parts such as brains, tripe, livers and kidneys were more readily available than better cuts of meat during the war and formed a significant part of people's diets. Shopping for essential goods and rationed commodities often meant standing in long queues. In an effort to curb what was seen as unnecessary spending, the federal government banned retail advertising during Christmas 1942.



**OUR  
IMMEDIATE  
TASK**

AUSTRALIA IS ONE OF THE UNITED NATIONS. MILITARILY SHE HAS PLAYED, AND IS PLAYING, A VITAL PART IN THIS GLOBAL WAR . . . SHE IS NOW ASSUMING AN EVER-MORE IMPORTANT ROLE AS A MAIN FOOD DEPOT IN THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY.

Meat rationing is to enable the Commonwealth Government to:

- Maintain a constant flow of meats to Australian and American troops in the South-West Pacific.
- Send increased supplies to the people of Britain at present on a meagre ration of 1/2d. worth per week.
- Maintain shipments of meat to Allied troops now fighting in the Mediterranean war zone.

AND, TO ENSURE THAT ON THE VITAL HOME FRONT THERE IS A FAIR SHARE FOR ALL.

**AND THEN?**

The peoples of enslaved Europe have been forced to starvation level by the Nazi heel of conquest . . . Their hour of liberation is at hand. There is an urgent demand that Australia share all her available food resources and enable these peoples to play their part again in rebuilding a sane and decent world.

AUSTRALIA WILL NOT SHIRK HER RESPONSIBILITIES NOW — OR AT ANY OTHER TIME.

Prime Minister John Curtin's note regarding Australia's commitment to the war effort and rationing during WWII with his famous quote:

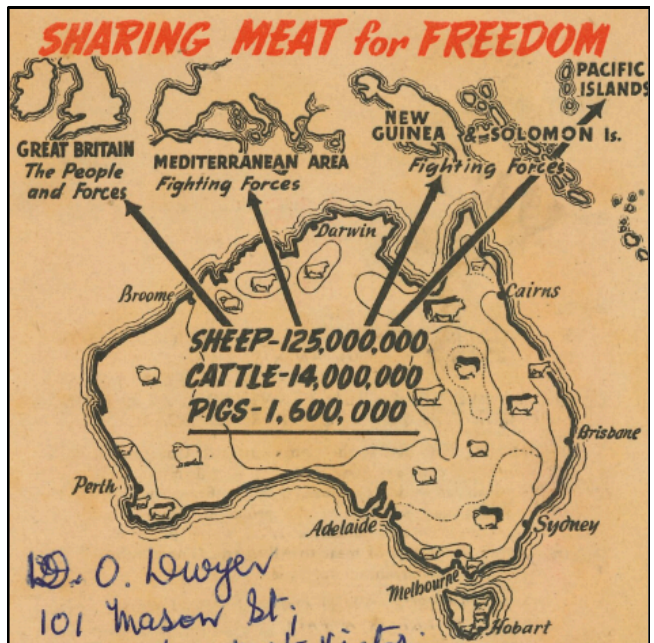
***"Australia will not shirk her responsibilities now - or at any other time."***

Not every Australian embraced the war effort, as some exploited and profiteered by selling scarce commodities at greatly inflated prices. Ration coupons became a commodity with a negotiated price. However, rationing was policed and breaches were severely punished. Breaches of rationing regulations were punishable with fines of £100 or up to six months imprisonment. In an effort to support the British public, the Australian Government kept rationing meat until 1948. Butter, tea and petrol were rationed until 1950. It wasn't until 1954 that Australia completely ended rationing measures.



Meat rationing in Australia during World War II was a vital component of the country's contribution to the Allied war effort. Introduced in 1944, rationing ensured that limited resources were distributed fairly while prioritizing military needs. Australian soldiers fighting in the Pacific and Allied forces required a reliable supply of high-protein foods like meat to maintain their strength and morale. Additionally, Britain, struggling under the pressures of the war and German blockades, relied heavily on Australian meat exports as part of its food supply. Townsville was an especially important part of this endeavor as the Ross River Meatworks processed a large number of cattle from nearby stations in north Queensland. The railway system through Townsville also facilitated the transportation of goods to ports for export such as Darwin and Cairns. Townsville itself didn't export as much beef due to the harbor being busy with other wartime supplies.

Most notably Townsville was a major port for the U.S and allied forces to transfer ammunition and ordnance to sustain their fight against Japan.



An excerpt from an Australian rationing book which indicates the number of livestock utilized to provide meat to sustain the free people of the world in their resistance against the Axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan.



Ross River Meatworks , construction began in 1891 and the facility operated until 1995.



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## Shelley China

Shelley China holds a special place in the hearts of collectors and admirers of fine ceramics. Renowned for its delicate designs, exceptional quality, and innovative techniques, Shelley pieces remain timeless treasures that beautifully blend function and artistry.

Shelley China traces its roots to Staffordshire, England, where it emerged from a legacy of pottery craftsmanship. Originally founded in 1860 as Wileman & Co., the company rebranded to Shelley in 1925, reflecting the influence of its notable manager, Percy Shelley. This new era ushered in a commitment to producing elegant, lightweight porcelain, characterized by distinctive floral patterns and exquisite craftsmanship.

For collectors, Shelley China offers a window into a bygone era. The backstamps on Shelley pieces are essential for dating and identifying their origins, with styles and logos evolving over the decades. The most sought-after items often come from specific ranges, such as the "Dainty" shape series or the whimsical nursery ware collections. Shelley ceramics are widely celebrated for their use of fine bone china, which combines durability with a delicate, translucent finish. Their designs are often vibrant, with themes ranging from florals and landscapes to geometric Art Deco motifs. Every piece, from teacups and saucers to vases and serving wares, showcases an intricate attention to detail that instantly catches the eye.



Townsville Museum President, Trish Cronin, showcasing some of the museum's fine China on display in Hall Two. Our dining room display always draws attention with our mixed collection of China atop a table made of Queensland Maple. The dining table was made by J.T. Holmes who had a workshop on Sturt Street. Made in 1925 the table will be 100 years old this year, a testament to the timelessness of well crafted furniture that it can seemingly last forever.

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## Indigenous Firestick Burning

To better procure and cultivate food sources the Wulgurukaba and Bindal people of Townsville engaged in fire stick burning to modify the landscape; a process which involved setting fire to the vegetation of the area for both the purpose of hunting game and cultivating more desirable plant life.



A burning stick would be used in this capacity to set fire to an area of grassland to flush out game such as wallabies or goannas. The burning would also destroy invasive species such as weeds and thereby assist in enhancing the biodiversity of an area by allowing edible species of grasses and plants to flourish.

If left unchecked, the dense scrub and weeds would compete for sources of water with smaller more edible plants and also created shade that would otherwise stunt the development of the edible grasses. Regular fire stick burning ensured favourable grasses and plants were cultivated while less useful scrub and weeds were burnt off.

These regular burnings played a major role in the protection of habitat and food sources that sustained the Indigenous population around Townsville. Areas of grassland that became overgrown posed a serious fire risk in drier months of the year. If an uncontrolled fire occurred it could decimate an area, resulting in little to no grass for wallabies to consume and thus reduce the population of game animals within an area.

As wallabies were the most desired game for Townsville's indigenous people, such an occurrence would place significant stress on their population as a main source of food had been reduced.

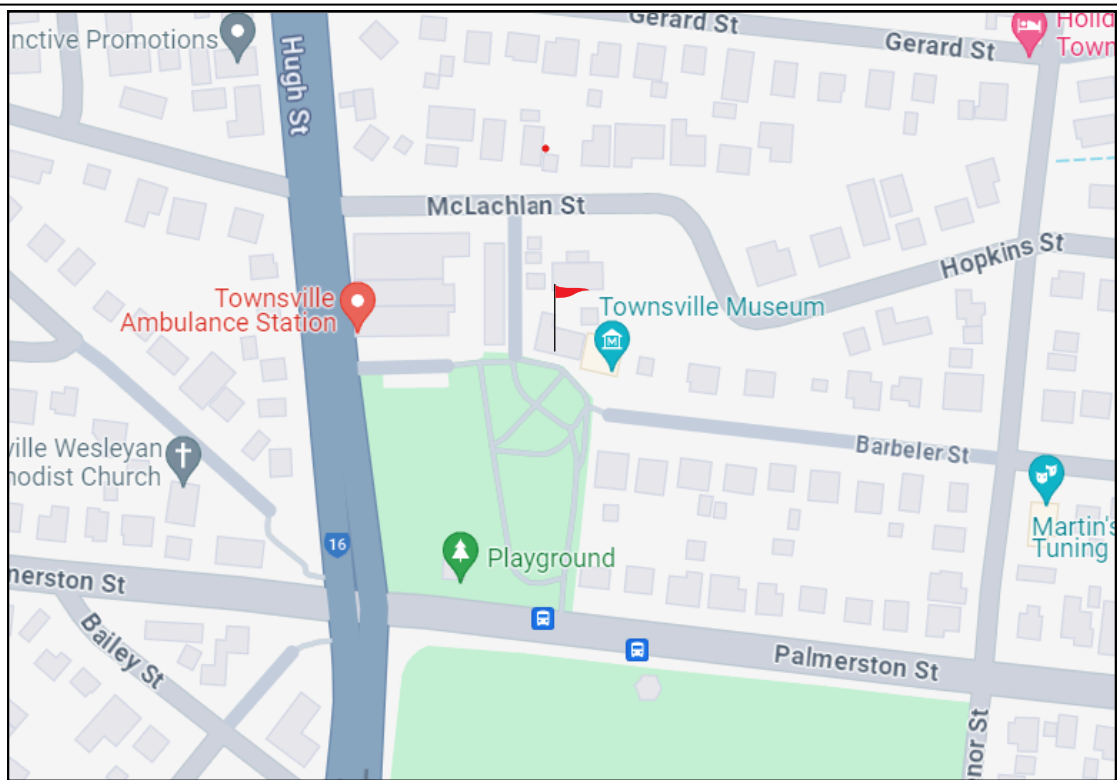
Smaller and more regular fire stick burnings reduced the threat of major or cataclysmic bushfires during the dry months. Indigenous fire stick burning over thousands of years gradually changed much of the landscape around Townsville which remains observable to this day in areas such as Bohle Plains, Alice River & Black River.

The resulting countryside became populated with dry grassland and hardwood trees such as ironbark and eucalypts as these trees were resilient to fire. In recent years, many state governments have looked to adopt a similar approach to land management with regular burn offs to reduce the risk of more severe fires.

### **CROSSWORD ANSWERS**

- 1.** Oonoonba
- 2.** John Melton Black
- 3.** Cape River
- 4.** Cowboys
- 5.** Palm
- 6.** Mango
- 7.** Pineapple
- 8.** Bindal
- 9 Across.** Criterion
- 9 Down.** Civic
- 10.** Yasi
- 11.** Castle
- 12.** Picnic
- 13.** Bulletin
- 14.** Tobruk
- 15.** Yongala
- 16.** Lavarack





 **1/27 BARBELER STREET, CURRAJONG, 4812**

## Our Supporters



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