

Townsville's Neglected Founder: The Mysterious Mr Black

Sir Robert Philp Lecture Series

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As the last lecturer in this series, I would like to congratulate Dr Judith Jensen and Ms Trisha Fielding. At a time when the History Department of James Cook University has shrunk and the publishing programme of north Queensland history monographs, founded by the late Professor Brian Dalton, is no longer being funded, north Queensland history appears to have been somewhat sidelined.

This lecture series has helped to focus community interest again on the history of our region, historically one of the most interesting parts of Australia, indeed of the Asia–Pacific rim. I thank Judith and Trisha most sincerely for their roles in initiating and ensuring the success of the series, and I congratulate Townsville City Council for supporting their endeavours.

Now, let us turn to the man who started it all.

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This photograph was taken in London in 1886 when, after eight years of searching, we finally discovered the last resting place of Townsville's true founder.

Image: Photograph of Black's cremation urn

It was the culmination of research that started, almost accidentally, in 1978 when I agreed to help the National Trust with research to enable the listing of the east Flinders Street Precinct.

Before that, my fields of interest in history were largely centred on overseas topics, so I held the misguided belief that Robert Towns had founded Townsville and that John Melton Black was just his local manager. And here they are:

Image: Portraits of Robert Towns and John Melton Black

My first big shock came when I discovered no one had produced a thoroughly researched and footnoted history of Townsville—and amateur histories that existed left a lot of questions unanswered.

Only two early histories proved to be fairly reliable and consistent. The best was written in 1887 by E.J. Banfield. It was clearly based on two sources—the reminiscences of Black's colleagues, particularly Andrew Ball, and on early newspapers.



Image: Portrait of Andrew Ball

The other history was written by W.J. Doherty in the 1920s. Doherty was a fascinating character who edited the *Cummins and Campbell Monthly Magazine*, published regularly from about 1925 to the 1950s. He also wrote articles on north Queensland history in the magazine under the pseudonym 'Viator'.

Neither Banfield nor Doherty referred to government records, or to the correspondence of Robert Towns.

Doherty's history was based largely on data from the Banfield history, but drew on letters of John Melton Black to Robert Towns that were found in Sydney. In later articles, Doherty also used information supplied by Black's sons who turned up, to everyone's great surprise, in 1930.

Both Banfield and Doherty indicated clearly that Black was rather more than just an employee of Towns, and Doherty quite definitely hailed Black as the true founder of Townsville—he had this to say:

“Without the marvellous energy of J.M. Black, it is easy to imagine that Townsville might still possess the present pretensions of Cardwell or Burketown.”

Obvious from these accounts was the fact that Robert Towns spent only a short time in Townsville in 1866—and never returned.

Imagine my consternation. Where would one discover more?

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In 1979 no early Townsville papers were known to exist, but the earliest papers in Bowen survived. Papers were not then available on microfilm and still had to be perused in hard copy, so the search actually started in Bowen.

In the *Port Denison Times*, the name of Towns did not appear prominently in the earliest accounts of “the new harbour at Cleveland Bay”. It was Black who was reported; he received bad publicity for founding a port to rival Bowen.

I wondered who had actually owned the pastoral properties surrounding the site of the new port. Locating that information took me to Queensland Archives, and the discovery that all of the properties were claimed solely in the name of John Melton Black—even Woodstock in 1863.

Image: Woodstock Station

Incidentally, in the archives a number of other documents came to light, among them the report of a survey of Cleveland Bay by Captain Heath before the government agreed to allow the new port to open officially. That rather knocked on the head claims that Townsville was not as good a site for a port as Bowen or Cardwell. Another report from Black and Towns had attached to it two plans of the proposed port site which indicated how carefully Black planned the development.

Before approaching backers and the government, he had already surveyed the area, and established the availability of reasonable access to the site from the hinterland.

Robert Towns was not involved in any of this careful assessment which must have predated the end of April 1864.

Next, as several early settlers at Bowen had arrived from Rockhampton, I decided to explore the papers there. This led to a startling discovery—among the folios of early Rockhampton papers were four volumes of the *Cleveland Bay Express*, from its founding in 1866 to 1870. For about 70 years it was believed that these papers no longer existed, so it was rather like discovering treasure trove.

Throughout 1866 and 1867 the Townsville papers referred consistently to the firm Black & Co. As it turned out, the only partners of that firm were John Melton Black and Robert Towns. Clearly, Black had played a leading role.

After analysing all of the data, it emerged that John Melton Black had come north in 1862 on a chartered vessel, the *Napoleon Bonaparte*, with a party of Melbourne friends. He then took up property north of the Burdekin, and set out quite deliberately to discover a more convenient port.

He was so sure that a better port existed in the Cleveland Bay region, that he never invested in Bowen land — a fact that could be confirmed by lists of early land sales.

It became plain that Black had planned an almost breathtaking development with meticulous attention to detail.

Before late 1863, he relied on finance from another backer, the Melbourne plumber Longshaw. Black must have sent off a herd of cattle from an agent in Sydney before coming north by boat, because he built up with notable speed a herd which he could use to claim that all of the runs he established were stocked. Even though the *Napoleon Bonaparte* was heavily laden with chooks, horses, supplies and equipment, it could not have carried a herd of cattle.

When Black arrived in Bowen in 1862 he had copies of maps published after Dalrymple's expedition in 1859 to explore the Wickham–Burdekin region. That expedition was financed by a number of Sydney investors including Robert Towns. Some people, therefore, believed that Black must have been given the maps by Towns.

However, according to others, including C.S. Rowe who accompanied Black, the explorer McKinlay had planned to join the party, but was distracted by the search for Burke and Wills. It seems much more likely that Black received the Dalrymple maps from McKinlay.

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How then did Towns become involved? The answers lie in the Towns letters held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and in the Brooks papers, copies of which are held in the National Library in Canberra.

This is a silhouette of Robert Brooks.

Image: Silhouette of Robert Brooks

He was Towns's mentor in London. I would recommend to anyone interested, the biography of Brooks written by the late Frank Broese entitled *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade*—it is an excellent account.

The Towns letters proved problematical. Even in 1980, the only method of obtaining access to some of them was to provide a list of the names of his correspondents in whom one might be interested, and then a librarian would peruse the letter books to copy by hand the relevant material. It took some time, but it was worth the trouble. It showed very clearly that Towns had not known Black before April or early May 1864.

Black met with Towns in Sydney, and unveiled the plan of his development. Towns was so impressed with the preliminary surveys, and the extent of his pastoral holdings—"a small principality", he called it—that he could not resist.

He purchased a half share in Black's enterprise, apparently taking over all of the properties that Black claimed—with the proviso that any further properties Black claimed should be in Towns's name. The company Black & Co. came into being, with Black as the managing partner.

It is rather comical to find Towns, hailed by some as a great businessman, having second thoughts only after he had stitched up the deal.

He wrote to Mr Warren in Melbourne, a letter that proves Towns knew very little of Black prior to this—I quote:

"Private and confidential, Sydney, 18 May 1864 — I am anxious to know the history and character of Mr. J.M. Black, a Gent who is well known about Melbourne. He erected the Theatre or other extensive buildings in your city — he lost largely by this undertaking and went north into Queensland and took up large tracts of country — I am very anxious to know Honestly his means...and History...having purchased half his property which is very extensive and he is to manage it — I want to know my partner..."

A copy of Warren's reply does not appear to exist, but if he revealed to Towns what we now know of Black's earlier career, it may not have reassured him.

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After extensive searches in records in Victoria, it is clear that Black first came to prominence in that state as plain John Black—not John Melton Black.

He is said to have arrived in Victoria in 1852, but even that is questionable.

There were a number of John Blacks listed as arriving at that time, one of whom had connections to early gold diggings, but by 1852 our John Black was running a large carrying business from stables at Collingwood. The stables were so well known that advertisements in papers at the time for other businesses often used “Black’s Stables” to identify their locations.

The earliest references to those stables in March 1852 indicate that Black had an extensive transport network already established. It seems impossible that he could have arrived in 1852 and created his transport empire in such a short time. I believe he had arrived at least twelve months earlier.

By 1853 he was building Tattersall’s Horse Bazaar. The Melbourne *Argus* described it as “a set of buildings of all sorts and kinds of horse accommodation, sale, etc., upon a gigantic scale...situated in Lonsdale St, a little above Swanston St... (it ran) through, Arcade fashion, to Little Bourke St...a great general horse emporium”.

The next year he embarked on building the Royal Hotel and the new Theatre Royal. The hotel was completed in about three months in 1854. The theatre was not completed until July 1855. Black had apparently sold his horse bazaar to finance the hotel and the theatre.

The theatre alone cost at least £60,000, possibly a great deal more. It was a magnificent structure even for Marvellous Melbourne at that time, designed to seat an audience of 3000 at a time when theatres seating 1500 were considered large.

Image: Photograph of Theatre Royal and Lola Montez

This photograph of the interior of the theatre gives an indication of its size and opulence.

On 10 July 1855 the *Argus* featured a laudatory article on the new theatre. Four days later the paper was on the back foot. They had received numerous letters making allegations against Black. The letter writers were, according to the *Argus*, “very angry that we should express our appreciation for that gentleman’s enterprising conduct...”

Black stood accused of underpaying his workers, and one sub-contractor named Robertson was mounting a case against him for £105 owing for roofing on the Theatre Royal.

Black should have stuck with carrying. With no experience as a theatrical entrepreneur, he was out of his depth. The Theatre Royal staged a few successful operas and attracted some big names such as Lola Montez, whose photographs you can see here. She was definitely not entirely a popular choice. Black could not compete with established entrepreneurs such as George Coppin. Desperate to stave off bankruptcy, he even ended up in court after an attempt to hijack Coppin’s leading lady. So he was forced into bankruptcy.

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By then he had become John Melton Black. The ‘Melton’ probably came from the small town which Black’s teams used as a staging post to the Ballarat goldfields. Melton today is virtually an outlying suburb of Melbourne.

Image: Map showing town of Melton

He may have remained in Victoria for a time, but in the late 1850s he disappears leaving his creditors behind him, though he did not abandon all of his staff. He took with him W.A. Ross and C.S. Rowe, both of whom he had employed at the Theatre Royal.

He also took his wealthy backer Longshaw, who eventually died and was buried on the bank of the Haughton River.

If Mr Warren reported even part of this to Towns, particularly the accounts of Lola Montez, it would not have been reassuring.

As anyone who has read *Gateway to a Golden Land* will know, the partnership of Towns and Black was not a happy one. Towns whinged about costs of the development. At the same time the

bricklayer he sent from Sydney was left behind in Rockhampton dead drunk—this did not help Black in construction of the meatworks and other buildings.

Black coped with the day-to-day problems of creating the port while the wowserish Towns condemned him after receiving reports of heavy drinking in the settlement. This probably enraged Towns even more because he had sent up to Townsville his son Robert, who enjoyed a pint or two. Black was supposed to reform young Bob—a task in which he failed.

In many ways old Robert Towns is a particularly unpleasant character. Apart from his meanness, he encouraged others in the settlement to send reports to him, behind Black's back, and believed their reports rather than giving Black the benefit of the doubt. Black may have spun him a few yarns, but there is now no proof of this. Nevertheless, it has to be said that Towns made Black's life hell.

He gave Black little credit for the progress made or for devising the whole grand plan for the place. He seemed to think the founding of Townsville was all due to his money and influence. Though these had played a role, Townsville would certainly not have succeeded as it did, without the intelligence and energy of Black, who had laid all of the foundations for the project.

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Not only was Black elected the first Mayor of Townsville, he also assisted with the formation of a School of Arts, and, when the first newspaper ran into trouble, apparently took over running that.

He was a bundle of energy. He built a comfortable residence on Melton Hill, known as Bachelor's Hall.

Image: Photograph of Black's house and Black & Co. building

He oversaw the establishment of a wharf and mercantile premises for Black & Co. He also oversaw the building of the first hotel, the Criterion; the planting of sugar, coffee and cotton plantations; and the opening of a boiling down works.

Image: Photograph of plantation workers

This photograph is probably of some of the first South Sea Islanders who arrived in 1866. Though very indistinct, the buildings of the boiling down works are in the background.

To see the township badly damaged in the cyclone of 1867 must have been a dreadful blow to Black, particularly as the partnership he had formed with Towns was about to expire.

In 1867 he left for Sydney. There the partnership was dissolved, and Towns was forced to pay Black out. The sum is not known, but the complaints Towns wrote to Brooks suggest that it was substantial.

Black never returned to Townsville, though newspapers at the time reported that a number of prominent northerners petitioned him to return to stand for the seat of Kennedy in the Queensland parliament. Black declined, and according to his sons, as later reported by 'Viator', his reasons were that he was tired of the rough colonial life, and his health began to suffer.

He probably embarked on an extensive tour of Europe before returning to settle in London.

When news of his departure reached Townsville, it came as a sad blow. That he was held in high regard by the citizens of Cleveland Bay is confirmed by their farewell gift to him of a gold cup and an illuminated testimonial. The testimonial read:

“Presented to J.M. Black Esq., J.P., first Mayor of Townsville, Cleveland Bay, Queensland, by the inhabitants of that town and district, as a token of their esteem and a slight recognition of his valuable services in opening up and developing the resources of North Queensland.”

This is the gold cup. It was made by Cook and Robin of Pitt Street, Sydney, and was of solid Cape River gold. It stood 35 cm high and weighed a kilogram. After adorning the Black family fireplace in England for many years, it disappeared, and has never been located. I suppose I should add that I have asked not a few questions regarding its whereabouts.

Image: Photograph of presentation cup

E.J. Banfield in 1887 reported that Black had returned to England where he died in 1884. There, it seemed, the story ended.

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Then, I was utterly astounded to find in the 1930s issues of *Cummins and Campbells Monthly Magazine*, articles by 'Viator' reporting that two of Black's sons had turned up in Townsville. They stated that Black died in 1919. He had married Marion Drummond O'Dowda, whom he met in north Queensland, in St George's Church, Hanover Square, London—a rather posh Church of England wedding venue at the time. They had five sons and a daughter, though two of the sons had died.

According to 'Viator', the sons stated that Black was born in Edinburgh, and was cremated. His ashes were in Kensal Green Crematorium.

His son Douglas described him as "a tall grey man who always seemed to be absorbed in his business. On no account would he be attracted into other ventures, no matter how tempting".

Perhaps experience in Australia had taught him a few lessons.

According to the sons, he seldom mentioned Townsville.

This information was fascinating. It would be nice to see his last resting place and perhaps discover more of his history in England. So in 1980 when [my husband] Bruce was on sabbatical leave in Britain, it was a great opportunity to explore some of the records there. None of those records were available then as they are now—on the Web—in fact the Web as we know it was not even invented then.

The name 'John Melton Black' did not appear in birth records in Scotland or in England. It seemed the report from Black's sons that he was born in Edinburgh was wrong. The search for a marriage record was more successful.

Image: Photograph of marriage certificate

In London records, this marriage certificate was located, for John Melton Black and Mariam Drummond O'Dowda. Dated 15 April 1869, it gave the occupations of Black's father James as 'Physician', and Marian's father Henry as 'Builder'.

It was a surprise, to say the least, to find that the location of the wedding was St Patrick's Chapel "according to the rites and ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church". So much for the very respectable and fashionable St George's Hanover Square reported by the sons! I was beginning to wonder if the sons actually did know much about their parents.

However, the marriage certificate provided the clue to the identity of Black's bride. She was one of the first three barmaids to arrive in Townsville. Their names are recorded in a number of sources. There might have been another Marion O'Dowda in Townsville, but this seemed unlikely as I had found a death notice in the *Cleveland Bay Express* for Alicia Mainwaring Drummond, relict of the late Henry O'Dowda, Esq of Dublin, Ireland, and only daughter of the late Revd G. E. Drummond. She lived at 42 Rathmines St, Dublin. This was Marian O'Dowda's mother.

Image: Photograph of Mrs Black

Here we see Marian with one of the children.

Possibly the children were never aware of her past as a barmaid. As the very respectable Mrs Black, she would not have been too keen for them to discover her Townsville past.

It was not altogether surprising to find that the information from Black's sons that his remains were in the Kensal Green Crematorium was also incorrect. In fact, there was no Kensal Green Crematorium.

There was a Kensal Green Catholic Cemetery. Marian and their eldest son Oscar were buried there. But there was no sign of the elusive John Melton Black.

It appeared that the sons had even forgotten the site of their father's last resting place. Research had reached this interesting point when it was time to return to Australia.

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Back in England, six years later in 1986, the search resumed. Only after a study of the history of London crematoria was it possible to pin down that Black's remains should be in the Golders Green Crematorium—at that time the only crematorium in London.

Image: Photograph of Golders Green Crematorium

This photograph taken in summer looks delightful. We, however, were there in the depths of winter. It was only after quite a long trek through piles of snow that we reached the main building—and found this urn in a room crammed with urns of various shapes and sizes. As you can see, it was identified only with the initials J.M.B., and his date of death.

Image: Photograph of urn

It was sad indeed that the remains of this man who had founded a great and flourishing city should remain virtually unidentified and unrecognised in a cold environment so far removed from the warmth of Townsville.

Black died on 8 September 1919, aged 88, at his home 'San Raphael', Hampstead, London.

Image: Photograph of 'San Raphael'

As you can see, it was not the home of a poor man. He must have left a fortune of several hundred thousands of pounds, perhaps millions. This is difficult to estimate, as he left a life interest to his wife, who died in 1921, with the residue divided equally between his four surviving children.

One can estimate roughly the extent of the fortune from the probate records of Gladys, the de facto wife of his eldest son, Horace. She died in 1960. Horace had left £20,000 to his legal wife Evelyn, and the rest to Gladys with whom he had lived for many years. He died in 1956. Gladys died four years later, leaving a fortune of £164,000, most of which appears to have been inherited from Horace. When you consider that Horace inherited only a quarter share of J.M. Black's fortune, and several years had elapsed since 1921 when Marian died, one begins to appreciate just how successful Black became.

Incidentally he is in good company in Golders Green Crematorium—among those whose ashes were placed there are H.G. Wells, Kenneth Horne, Ivor Novello, John Inman (of 'Are You Being Served' fame), Enid Blyton, and numerous others whose names are well known.

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The search did not end there. Just how had Black become so wealthy?

His sons made reference to an involvement with the Bell Punching and Printing Company. Given the other misleading information they had provided, I was not entirely convinced that anything might be found.

But, a visit to the Companies Registration Office in London revealed that the company had been founded in 1878. It had purchased the British rights to an American patent for a machine for punching tickets for buses and trams.

As the London Underground was expanding, and there was great call from many businesses for tickets that could be punched when boarding various means of transport, or for attending large entertainments, the Bell Punch Company was guaranteed to make a fortune. The London company increased its profits by also manufacturing the tickets to be punched, largely due to the acuteness of the man who became the General Manager and a major shareholder in 1884—John Melton Black.

Maybe, when he took over the company in 1884, he wished to end all ties to his past in Australia, and that was the reason that friends back in Townsville were allowed to believe that he had died.

Image: Photographs of 'clippy' and of Black's machine

As the General Manager, Black greatly increased the value of the business with his invention of a new design of mechanical ticket punch that greatly improved the ticketing process. Here we have a photograph of Black's punching machine, and one of a London bus conductor using the machine. It was, of course, Black's clipping or punching machine that gave the bus conductors the name of 'Clippies'.

The Bell Punch Company was reorganised about 1891 with a capital of £100,000, a very large sum at that time, and company wealth increased as the machines came into use in other parts of the world.

Black remained the General Manager until 1909 when he handed over the reins to his eldest surviving son, Horace Drummond Black, who had served as the firm's secretary after the untimely death of his older brother in 1902. In succeeding years, Horace oversaw the expansion of the company and the erection of a new factory at Uxbridge, to the west of London.

Image: Photograph of Bell Punch Co. Works, Uxbridge

The buildings of the Black expansion appear on the left of this photograph [Label D]

The company underwent a number of name changes, but survived for many years, though the family role in management appears to have ended with the death of Horace in 1956. However, the Bell Punch Company continued until 1986, under different management. An electronic derivative of the Bell punch system is still in use today.

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At that time the English Census and other records were not available, as they are today, on the Web, and after wasting some time on fruitless searches, I returned to Australia still without locating Black's origins. It is only in recent times and thanks to the computer programme Ancestry.com, that I have been able to discover more.

The search in Scottish records yielded no results. It was certain that his sons had once again led me astray by saying he was born in Edinburgh.

I decided to try searching the 1881 Census. To my horror there were thousands of John Blacks. It was only by launching a search using Marian's name that I struck the jackpot.

In 1881 Black gave his place of birth as Lancashire. This gave a lead back to the Census returns of 1841 which showed Dr James Black and his wife Jane, both born in Scotland. John Black was born at Bolton in Lancashire, and educated at a boarding school at Bolton le Moors. His parents were married in Scotland and had migrated to Bolton about 1820. John had three brothers, William, Thomas and James, but as yet they have not been traced. As you can imagine, I did a little dance around the office!

John Melton Black and Marian Drummond Black had four children—Oscar Drummond, Ada Drummond, Valentine Drummond and Victor Drummond. Black described himself as an Annuitant—which may mean that a story circulated in Townsville in 1867 that he had inherited money had an element of truth, or it could also mean that he was still living off the large sum he had received from Towns.

Continuing to succeeding Census returns was intriguing. By the 1891 Census, Black had reinvented himself. He had become a Civil Engineer. Two more sons, Douglas Drummond and Stanley Drummond appear, but Ada, Valentine and Victor disappeared.

By 1901 Black is describing himself as the 'Manager of a Printing Works'. The children are Oscar D., Horace D., Douglas D., and Stanley D.

A Death Notice for Oscar Drummond Black appeared in 1902, but no records of death for Valentine and Victor appeared. In another area, however, the name Horace Victor Drummond Black born in 1879 appeared, which indicated Victor had become Horace. No records were located regarding Valentine, and it must be assumed that he probably died some time before 1891, or at some location overseas—or maybe he too changed his name?

Ada also disappeared, but the Probate records for J. M. Black showed he had a daughter Ida who married Alexander Stuart Baker. Sure enough, the marriage records showed Ida St Claire D. Black marrying Mr Baker at Woolwich in 1893. So John Melton Black's daughter had also changed her name before marriage.

By 1911 John Melton Black called himself John Melton Drummond Black. This was perhaps a sign of his perception of having reached the acme of middle class respectability, or perhaps an attempt to impress others that he came from a wealthier background than was in fact the case.

On present evidence, Black has no living descendants. His daughter, Ida had a son, Alan Baker who lived at Hove, but to date no records of any issue of his marriage have been located.

None of Black's sons had children, though all married. Douglas became a rancher in Canada before World War I and served with the Canadian forces in France. He married Clarice Podosky, daughter of an old Ravenswood identity whom he met in Sydney. They were married in Majorca and lived in Durban. Douglas died in 1959 in Durban.

Image: Photographs of Douglas Black and Clarice Podosky

These are the only photographs of Black's adult descendants located so far.

Stanley appears to have travelled widely, particularly in the East. He too married and lived in England where he died about 1961.

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So the great search to discover John Melton Black and to locate descendants continues, though intermittently. It has not ended. There is still more to be found, given a little luck and a lot of patience.

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Black was a truly remarkable man. His theatre in Melbourne was well ahead of its time. His patent ticket punch was a brilliant invention. The Bell Punch Company was an outstanding success.

However, it is his scheme for a future great port in Queensland that really amazes. He was so confident that the best port must lie north of the Burdekin between Cape Bowling Green and Halifax Bay, that he was willing to risk his own life swimming the Burdekin in flood to ensure title to all of the land—it takes the breath away.

Image: Photograph of McKinlay and crocodiles

This illustration from the book *Tracks of McKinlay* shows the trouble Black's mate had when crossing the Burdekin about the time that Black made the crossing—it puts recent newspaper reports of one poor starving crocodile in Cleveland Bay in the shade, doesn't it?

Black's choice of Towns to approach for financial backing was brilliant. He summed Towns up as both vain and greedy—but realised that he wielded considerable power with the Queensland parliament. What he did not realise was that Towns was a penny-pinching old wowser and slave driver, with virtually no sense of humour and little sympathy for others.

I do not think Black himself had much of a sense of humour, though his compatriots at Cleveland Bay seem to have respected and liked him. Most certainly he had a volatile temper, having pulled out a handful of J.A.J. MacLeod's beard in a dispute. He ended up in Court in Bowen for that.

He seems to have remained aloof from others—a man who played his cards very close to his chest. Douglas described his father as “a reticent man who kept his own counsel.” His desire to succeed and create a fortune was almost obsessive. He certainly ended up a wealthy man, and in the end was arguably a more successful businessman than his former partner, Robert Towns.

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Though it bears the name Townsville, our city stands today as a splendid monument to the planning and clear foresight of John Melton Black.

The presentation of his portrait to the city by Black's children in the 1930s did a little to re-establish him as the real founder of the city, but Towns continues to receive far too much credit for the success of the city.

Personally, after perusing so many documents, I find Black a more congenial and interesting character than Robert Towns, and regret that he has not received the attention due to him in the city that owes him so much.

But I have one niggling question that can never be answered.

Did Black entice Towns to invest in his grand scheme with the deliberate intention of selling out to Towns, thus making a small fortune when the partnership expired?

I would not put it past him, and cannot help but wonder.

Dorothy M. Gibson-Wilde *PhD*