

# History of Lowlines

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**Australian Lowline Cattle** were developed from the Angus herd which was established at the Trangie Research Centre in 1929 to provide quality breeding stock for the NSW cattle industry. The Angus breed has its origins in eastern Scotland, in the counties of Aberdeen and Angus, where it was developed from the native black hornless cattle.

There are charters dating back to the 16th century which mention black hummel oxen, and even earlier stone carvings. A single breed was evolved by Hugh Watson of Keillor, Angus, and William McCombie of Tillyfour, Aberdeenshire.

Black cattle were imported into Tasmania from New Zealand in 1822 and then from Tillyfour in 1853. About this time the Aberdeen Angus began to spread around the world, to England, France, Ireland and North America. They are now dominant in the biggest North and South American cattle herds, superseding Shorthorns and Herefords, and they provide three quarters of New Zealand's beef.

Trangie's foundation stock were purchased first from Canada and comprised two bulls, Glencarnock Revolution and Brave Edward Glencarnock, a cow and calf, and 17 heifers from the Glencarnock Stud, Brandon Canada. The bulls were from the Blackcap Revolution family, which won consistently at Chicago International Show during the 1920's.

The Trangie herd maintained that tradition at the Sydney Royal Show. Brave Edward Glencarnock, a grandson of Blackcap Revolution, sired several Sydney Royal Show

# History of Lowlines

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champions, including Trangie exhibits which won the Narrangullen Cup three times. The progeny of the cow Glencarnock Eurotia 4th won many prizes at the Sydney Royal Show. Among the prizewinning progeny were champion bulls Trangie Prism and Trangie Edward 4th, the twice champion cow Trangie Eurotia 2nd, and several reserve champions. Another cow, Blackcap Bixie 2nd was imported carrying Glencarnock Blackcap Eric which was champion bull at Sydney in 1933.

The Trangie herd was reinforced with further imports from Canada, the United States of America and Scotland between 1930 and 1950. Revolution of Page 28th was imported from the US, and his progeny included Trangie Susan which won junior champion heifer in 1941 and Trangie Page 52nd, which was reserve champion bull in 1944.

Everside 2nd of Maisemore was imported from England in 1941 and Erision of Harviestoun was purchased for 3,000 guineas from the Dalmeny Stud of Scotland in 1947, followed by four Dalmeny bloodline heifers in 1948. Eblinettes General of Ada and two heifers, Craven's Revolution Blackcap 7th and Lady Glencarnock 4th were imported from Canada in 1947, along with three heifers from the Andeot Stud of Maryland.

The Trangie Research Centre continued to exhibit at the Sydney Royal during the 1940's and 1950's, winning four champion bull awards, as well as supreme champion in 1954 with Trangie Anthony and supreme champion in 1955 with Trangie Erison 46th. The last imported bull was Pro Ben of Balfron, which was brought from Scotland in 1956. Bulls were bought from leading New South Wales studs Wambanumba, Glengowan, Tulagi and Wallah between 1961 and 1964, and the herd was then closed to outside animals.

The Angus herd was now firmly established in Australia, with extensive commercial herds throughout the New South Wales and Victorian tablelands, but with a strong presence elsewhere. The cows calved easily, and the product was sought after for the developing export trade to Japan.

The emphasis at Trangie switched to research, and in 1963 the Australian Meat Research Committee asked the Trangie Research Centre to conduct a project aimed at establishing the role of performance recording in the breeding program of a herd. Equal emphasis was given to weight gain and to visual conformation score in the selection of replacement bulls and heifers. The project continued until 1970, pioneering performance testing in Australia, and demonstrating successfully the usefulness of measuring performance in a stud herd.

From 1971 and 1973 trials were conducted using objective measurement and appraisal by experienced stud breeders in the selection of replacement bulls and heifers. The herd was

# History of Lowlines

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divided into two, with the results indicating that performance testing compared with the assessment of experienced stud breeders assessing growth potential.

The trials which produced the Lowline breed began in 1974, with funding from the Meat Research Corporation, to evaluate selection for growth rate on herd profitability. The aim was to establish whether large or small animals were more efficient converters of grass into meat. This trial continued for 19 years.

The Trangie staff chose one herd selected for high yearling growth rates and another selected for low yearling growth rates, with a randomly selected control group. They dubbed the herds High Line, Low Line and Control Line. Satellite herds were established at Glen Innes in the northern tablelands of NSW and at Hamilton in the Western Districts of Victoria to enable climate to be taken into account.

The program involved a detailed evaluation of weight gain, feed intake, reproductive performance, milk production, carcass yield and quality and structural soundness.

The original Low Line herd comprised 85 cows, which were joined to yearling bulls also selected for low growth from birth to yearling age. From 1974, the Low Line herd remained closed, with all the replacement bulls and heifers selected from within the line.

The protein conversion performance of the High Line and Low Line animals was monitored on an individual basis, and then recorded. The Trangie Research Centre concluded that the High Line animals were about five percent more efficient converters of grass to meat than the Low Line. Nevertheless, the computer printouts which showed the best performers were High Lines and the least effective performers were Low Lines, also showed that for the great bulk of High Lines and Low Lines their efficiency as protein converters were much the same.

After 15 years of selective breeding, the Low Line herd had stabilized at about 30 percent smaller than the High Line cattle. The bulls were maturing at about 43 inches, and the cows at about 39 inches or less, against 59 inches for standard Angus bulls, and close to the same height for standard Angus cows.

Mr. Ian Pullar, a grazier from Armidale, secured 43 cows and then two bulls from the satellite herd at Glen Innes and registered the Australian Boutique Cattle Association as an umbrella organization. His interest saved from extinction what, through no plan by the Trangie Research Centre, had become a new breed of cattle, a breed which had the desirable characteristics of the Angus breed, but which was only about 39 inches high. They are smooth, free from waste, and produce high quality meat. They are free from the

# History of Lowlines

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eye cancer which plagues the Hereford, and they have proved adaptable to Australian conditions. Being descended from stock which have been handled in Australia for 60 years, they were also exceptionally docile.

Ian Pullar secured publicity for his herd of miniature cattle, and there was immediate interest. Some Low Line bulls and heifers were sold by tender. Although the Trangie Research Centre retains some of its herd as a stud, its emphasis now is on research, and the spurt of interest in experimental as opposed to stud animals was unexpected. The Trangie researchers headed by Peter Parnell had not set out to create a new breed. Their aim was a controlled experiment in meat production. But they were good cattlemen, and their selection process produced a Low Line herd with the excellent conformation of their other stock. They were bemused by the interest which developed in the Low Lines, and then gratified.

The NSW Agricultural Department was proposing to terminate the experiment, sending the cattle from the trial to abattoirs for slaughter. After some hesitation, and after strong representation, auction sales were held at Glen Innes and at Trangie. At the Trangie sale on August 8, 1992, nine bulls, 23 heifers and seven cows were sold for a total of \$19,475. Seven purchasers – Ian Pullar, David Barnett, Des Owens, Don Burke, Carolyn Tebbutt, Kevin Everson and Bob Pringle – then met beneath a gum tree at the Trangie Centre auction site to form the Australian Lowline Cattle Association, adopting the name LOWLINE. Those names appear in the Herd Book as foundation members.

The complete dispersal sale occurred on October 30 at Trangie in 1993, when 20 bulls were sold, together with 44 cows and 51 heifers, for a total of \$228,200., on lively bidding, from all mainland states.

The Australian Lowlines are of champion stock with an Australian history dating back to 1929, and beyond that in Canada, the United States, England and Scotland. They are docile, and well conformed. They offer small holders and those farmers with limited acreage available from their other activities the option of keeping docile cattle of high quality. The Scots who first developed black cattle would be as proud of the Lowlines as of any of their giant cousins. They made their first appearance at the Brisbane Royal National in 1994, and subsequently at the Sydney Royal Show in 1995, and Melbourne and Canberra Royals in 1996. They are now regular exhibits at agricultural shows around Australia

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