

# ALAN ATKINSON

## VALLEY, FARNHAM, LAMONT AND MUNGALLA STUDS

ALAN LAMONT ATKINSON (1940-2022) in his own right made many and varied contributions to both the cattle and horse industries in his lifetime. He was passionate and dedicated to the vision his father Robert Lamont (Monty) Atkinson had for the Droughtmaster breed and spent his fruitful life contributing to and developing the breed.

His ability to retain and share knowledge was uncanny and he was an incredible storyteller, passionately reliving the tales of the development of the Droughtmaster breed through his eyes. He was by Monty's side throughout the early years of the breed's establishment and saw firsthand the adversities that were overcome, and major advancements made.

Alan grew up at Glen Ruth, Mt Garnet, then Mungalla, Ingham where he was schooled in the classroom but more importantly in the paddock with his father. Alan followed the tradition and was sent to Kings School in Sydney to finish his formal education before returning to the family properties.

Trips to USA, South America and New Guinea during the 1960's and 70's shaped the direction he pursued his breeding herd and business, using knowledge acquired from these and other trips. Alan never stopped learning and expanding his thirst for knowledge.

Alan was a talented horseman and amateur jockey, holding many race records on mostly home bred horses in the North, horses that were bred by his father then bred and trained by himself later on. His adventures took him to Ireland and Hong Kong as a jockey where he rode numerous winners. Equal to his contribution in the cattle industry, Alan has also left a lasting mark on the racing industry of Australia.

Alan spent most of his adult life at the Valley of Lagoons, a historically renowned, picturesque 130,000 acre property on the head waters of the Burdekin River, Far North Qld. He took over management at aged 22 for his father and ran a very streamlined operation for the next 38 years. The herd that was acquired with the purchase of Valley was a Hereford base and Alan methodically converted this into a renowned Droughtmaster herd. This was done with the help of astute cattlemaster and wife Alison. It was here that he raised his four daughters Kylie, Sherri, Gayle and Robyn and planted the seed of

passion for the Droughtmaster breed in each of them.

As a Stud master, Alan registered the Valley (Valley of Lagoons, Ingham) and Farnham (Farnham, Taroom) prefixes and, along with brother Rob and the Tableland Veterinary Clinic, the Lamont prefix. The involvement of the vets from TVC, was their expertise with artificial breeding, specifically Embryo Transplantation. He acquired the Foundation Stud, Mungalla when his father retired in the late 70's and Mungalla became a major bull depot for the other studs along with regularly selling at NQ Droughtmaster sale, Charters Towers, and the National Sale in Rockhampton, topping on many occasions.

A notable achievement was the sale of Valley Cairo in 1984 for \$26,500 which set a breed record price when he was offered at the Annual NQ Droughtmaster Sale in Charters Towers. Cairo was purchased by the Mellor family, Sersema Stud, Gayndah and went on to be an impact sire for the breed. From his unique viewpoint, Alan experienced the journey of the Droughtmasters from the early days where strong resistance by individuals and the establishment within the industry was eventually met with a ground swell of curiosity and then unprecedented demand. He would laugh as he recalls the eventual demand for bos indicus blood being so great that he witnessed at an early Brahman sale a black spear-horned, one-stoned bull jumping out of the ring while bidding continued as he cleared gate after gate down the lane, finally bringing a hefty price. He lived to see the demand for the Droughtmaster so great that record prices in the 100's of thousands are made each year, cementing its place within the Australian cattle industry forever.

The cattle bred from these four Studs were polled, quiet, fertile, hardy, tick resistant animals, reared in country that regularly experienced grass protein droughts. Seedstock from the Valley, Mungalla, Farnham and Lamont studs were sold to all parts of Qld, NT, NSW and Western Australia under Alan's watch.

2002 saw the establishment of MAGS (Monty Atkinson Genetics Sale) in Charters Towers, in honor of Alan's late father, as the direct descendants represented by the Mungalla, Glen Ruth, Cashmere, Farnham, Valley, Lamont and Durack studs. Twenty-one years later MAGS is the premier Droughtmaster sale



in North Qld, showcasing bulls from Mungalla and Lamont Studs.

Alan's three daughters and their children continue the legacy with the same amount of passion, running the three Droughtmaster studs to this present day. Kylie (Mungalla Stud at Taroom), Sherri (Valley Stud at Clermont) and Gayle (Lamont Stud at Moranbah), along with his former wife Alison, who registered the Durack Stud in 1988 based on cattle from the Valley Stud. Most recently his two grandchildren Ally and Tom have registered the Alrose and Monty Studs with great enthusiasm.

Alan's devotion to the breed was limitless, serving 24 years on the DSBS Board including President for 3 years, 1985-1988. He judged at many shows during this time, including the Droughtmasters at the Ekka in 1981. Dad would often reminisce and laugh when at the Ekka, of which he was a life member also, that the stalwarts of the early days would turn in their grave to see the Showgrounds filled with Droughtmasters & Brahmans in dominating numbers, when only 50 years earlier they had to be housed off the grounds as they were only accepted to be shown on the day, then removed to trotting stables in disapproval.

Alan believed we should continue to improve the breed in all areas as there are many competitors to the breed now, but none more adapt to its fundamental purpose than the Droughtmaster.

Alan was so very proud to be awarded an honorary Life Membership of Droughtmaster Australia in 2012 and he saw this as a highlight of his life for his involvement with the breed he so loved and nurtured.

Alan will forever be remembered as a passionate advocate and contributor to the Australian National Treasure, the Droughtmaster.

*Contribution from Kylie Graham, Mungalla*