

JOHN AND CARLI McCONNEL

MT BRISBANE, STUD NO. 462.

By Carli McConnel

JOHN AND I WERE MARRIED in 1972 and before that I had been very much a sheep person born in Western Qld so coming to the Brisbane Valley with cattle only was a daunting experience both for me and my horses, hills and cattle were scary to downs bred horses.

After generations of fattening steers the McConnels had begun to breed using Hereford cows and Santa bulls with a couple of lighter coloured bulls they said were Vet School Droughtmasters. Much nicer to my eyes and without the huge horns Santas had in those days.

Peter Wilson and his father Joe had an on property sale at Truvalle soon afterwards and John and his father came back with about a dozen Droughtmaster bulls so the Santas who had had pizzle problems were sold and we started keeping the female progeny of the Droughtmaster X Hereford cross but still had to dip every three weeks. We stopped dipping completely when we got a lease block with no dip and relied on the natural resistance within the Droughtmaster breed.

Sir Alan Hulme's Alcheringa stud held a dispersal sale and again John came back with about a dozen bulls. In those days Gympie had an annual bull sale so we used to go there to buy replacement bulls. Sometimes those bulls didn't cope with the ticks and horse back mustering. I remember several times tailing errant bulls home on foot with a big stick in hand as all they would do was charge the horses. This led us to start selecting our best females and good bulls and breeding our own herd bulls and we expanded that by also buying stud cows at the Gympie sale with good type bull calves and back in calf again.

The stud officially began in 1985 and boosted by the dispersal of the King Family's Kengoon stud in Rockhampton where we bought a double deck and cows and calves. This was the first time I had bought on my own and at the time the auctioneers wouldn't take my bid... females were not considered capable of buying stud cattle obviously!!

Luckily one of the King family saw me getting frustrated and after telling his wife to bid and it being ignored stopped the sale and disappeared into the selling box at the old Gracemere selling ring, when he came out and the sale recommenced, I wasn't game



McConnel Family, Mt Brisbane Droughtmasters

to scratch my nose they were watching me so closely. I know the agents thought I was odd buying bulls by myself for many years then with one or other of the kids but John hated sales and the travelling.

We always showed fat cattle and carcass cattle with many good wins over the years so when the kids were young and keen we started showing stud cattle as well which ended as they left school then university. We helped Toogoolawah High School with the start of their stud and cut the stud down to about 40 head and concentrated on the commercial side. We had been selling Jap Ox at 3 1/2 years old, then MSA steers which were a year younger and at the moment the best money is selling into the feedlots so you have to be adaptable and your cattle suited to whatever market you are chasing. This has led to a change in the type of bulls we buy, early maturing flat back types as hump is penalized in both the feedlot grid and the MSA grid.

We always enjoyed the Droughtmaster Society and both of us served as directors at different times for quite a few years. I wrote and John collated the Newsletter starting at the Nanango Beef Week in 1995. John Boydell Society Manager told me I'd get sick of it and would stop within 12 months but I lasted 13 years until my resignation from the Board.

The Nanango Beef week in 1995 really showed the breed off magnificently, it was run by many members but locals John and Lyn Scott and Alben and Helen Perrett put many hours into the planning to showcase Droughtmasters. I remember the countless planning meetings but it all went off so well. There were feedlot and carcass competitions, stud cattle, led steers, a store cattle sale at Coolabunia and many social dinners and talks by well-known cattlemen

In those days the members were so well served with firstly a monthly then a 6 weekly mail out with all the sale nomination forms, any semen or sire sales, advertising flyers plus the Newsletter which was 4 to 6 pages. News sent to me from all areas of the country. I made many friends doing that Newsletter. Neil Donaldson and I also proof read and made any changes we thought necessary to the Droughtmaster Digest spending a couple of days at QCL 3 to 4 times a year before the completed Digest was sent to the printers.

All in all it's been a good association, one our family has been happy to be involved with and I hope the breed will continue to be an asset to the beef breeding herd both here and overseas.

Contributed by Carli McConnel