

# The Best Cow in England

*It was very romantic.*

A crumpled xeroxed page from an old book .... a cookbook actually... arrived in the mail. It showed a photograph of a what I thought was a Lowline cow, with quaintly dressed handlers and a display of ribbons, with the comment: "The best cow in England."

Her name was Joy Erica of Slades, and the book, printed many years before the first Australian Lowline was registered, described her as one of England's most valued inhabitants.

She looked very much like the Angus cows that lived on my grandfather's farm 65 years ago.

And that was what she was, a Grand Champion Angus from the days before "bigger is better" turned that honourable breed into today's mighty animals.

I already knew that some of the most famous ancestors of both breeds were not very tall, but until I saw this picture, it hadn't really registered that Australian Lowline cattle weren't actually developed at Trangie.

*That's where they were saved.*

It was because the Trangie scientists maintained a Low Line (as well as High and Control Lines) for trial purposes, in the days when the emphasis was on breeding much bigger cattle, that the small cattle survived.

Intrigued, I traced Joy Erica of Slades through the British Aberdeen-Angus herdbook with the help of Angus Stovold who is one of England's most successful Angus breeders and a Royal show judge.

Joy Erica was born on Dec 2 1964, and the calf in the picture, Joyous Erica of Slades, was born on March 2 1968.

They belonged to the Mollers who were Dutch shipping magnates. Angus thinks the older man in the picture is Mr Moller, but the cattle were really his wife's special interest, as so many Lowlines are today. There may have even been an Australian connection because Joyous Erica's sire was Jackaroo Eric.

***Does anyone out there remember a Dutch jackaroo called Eric Moller?***

It took more than Trangie to save the small cattle. ALCA Foundation Member Des Owens well remembers the day that his old Navy mate Ian Pullar told him of his purchase of some extra small black heifers from the Angus herd at the Trangie Research Centre.

When asked why he had bought such small cattle when everyone else was buying big ones, Ian explained that he expected they would be ideal for small acreage farmers. Their small size would most likely mean they would be calmer and more manageable than their larger counterparts, their carcasses would be more likely to fit into a family sized freezer, and their cuts would be tasty and tender.

The only problem, said Ian, was that they weren't in calf and the Trangie Research Centre was not permitted to sell him a bull.

***Resourcefulness solved that one.***



Top right: Mr Moller and farmhand with Joy Erica and Joyous Erica.  
Top centre: Des Owens (left) and Warwick Owens (right) after victory at Brisbane.  
Above: The moment of triumph as Mugga Majura is decorated by judge Bob Chumley, Eumundi, and Helen Reegen, Elders Pastoral, with handler Warwick Owens.

***Really???***

Ian had developed a special rapport with Dr Peter Parnell, who was in charge of research at Trangie, and a short time later was allowed to make a further purchase of 23 cows and heifers ... although he was still not allowed to buy a bull, which actually turned out not to matter. "You wouldn't believe it," Des told me: "All but two of those animals were pregnant."

When Ian went back to Peter Parnell for assistance with parentage identification he found that Trangie had maintained a pedigree data base and accurate breeding records that dated back to the first importations of stud Angus cattle from Canada in 1928.

All these records had been computerised and the NSW Department of Agriculture agreed to release this information for the cattle that had been sold.