



The growth and development of the Australian Brahman has been described as the greatest livestock revolution in history. It has transformed the northern beef industry of dollars annually towards domestic and export income. Vast areas of previously unproductive land have been pioneered and developed into profitable beef enterprises using Brahman cattle.

(Brahman Cattle History:  
[www.braham.com/history](http://www.braham.com/history))

## A Time for all Seasons

Stud cattle breeding in Queensland is an expensive business and the State has earned its reputation as being the best in the country through over a century of experimentation, scientific research and investment in cutting edge breeding programs. Winning accolades for their best breeders means money in the bank for studs and they need their cattle shown at their best come show time.

For the last thirty years or so Brian O'Reilly has been charged with training some of the best stud cattle in the north along with training future generations of young cattlemen to both show the cattle and judge them.

'It's about having a good eye,' says Brian. 'You've got to get them young and break them in gently. If you push them too hard they'll do what you say but rebel the first chance they get.'

Schools like Nudgee College in Brisbane have a long history in doing their bit to encourage young men to continue the tradition. The stud beef cattle are owned by the big studs - Nudgee contracts to them for a fee - and Brian has been the man responsible for teaching the young stud cattle and cattlemen a bit of spit 'n polish.



By MELINDA HAMMOND

MAIN PHOTO: PHOTO  
 CAPTION: PHOTO COURTESY:  
 MAROON DAM IMAGES)

(PHOTOS BELOW COURTESY: MAROON DAM IMAGES)



Showing stud cattle at their best requires a set of skills to challenge the brightest and keen young trainee. Brian has been 'round the traps long enough to bring out the best in both lads and the cattle they're showing.

The boys come to him keen and often naïve in the ways of handling stud cattle and they leave to head back to far flung stations with skills that set them up for life of refining bloodlines, showing the best stud cattle and sending their sons off to school to learn the same things all over again.

Nudgee's Cattle Club shows three breeds of cattle - Brahman, Simbrah and, in 2016, Simmental - under the brand, 2PLazyT. Around the circuit most will know Brian and his boys.

According to Wendy Cole of Gracemere Station, long-term show circuit follower and supporter of Brian and his young protégés, 'it's about providing a bit of home in the city for the boarders and giving them skills they can use for the rest of their lives when they come back home'. Not a bad reward for few years of schooling in the big city (just don't ask the boys what they think about being cooped up in a classroom when they could be out doing what they do best).

Seriously, it's win/win all round for the cattle stations, Nudgee students and the future of the cattle industry. Staying on the cutting edge of technology is where the lifelong learning comes in, and it starts with Brian, his boys and their Cattle Club. Did I mention the road trips to every show within cooee where they take out more than their fair share of wins?

'It's all about reputation and being the best you can be on the day,' says Brian. 'Being prepared with both the cattle and the boys looking their best.'

But make now mistake. Brian may make it sound easy but training the next generation of cattlemen is no easy feat. They come in young and raw - and, oh, so innocent - and by the time they hit the ring they've got the eyes of an expert. A bit of spit 'n polish it all it takes, for both the cattle and the kids.

He makes it sound so easy!

And now it's time for Brian to retire to his own farm and his own business but he won't be far away if the boys need him because that's how the old boys network works.

But still, he'll be missed.

**SCHOOLS IN...**

It started for Nudgee back in the days of the likes of Sandy Kidd and a young Catholic school in the city keen to give bush kids a good education. It's always been about passing knowledge down through the generations, of old boys looking after the new kids, creating friendships and networks that last a lifetime. 'It's about giving the boys a wide range of experiences,' says Brian, 'so that when they go home and run their stations they bring new knowledge with them.'

Nudgee's Cattle Club is set up on peer training. From old boy, Nick Curran, who breaks the cattle and signs off for the school that the cattle are safe to handle, to the Senior boys teaching the younger boys the ways of the cattle yards, it's about boys passing on their knowledge, and boys taking that knowledge away when they leave. It's about networking. Because you never know when it will be your turn to need a favour or your turn to reach out a helping hand. And it's about friends for life.

Brian knows it's okay for him to retire because he's been in transition for awhile now, making sure the place will run okay without him. Besides, he'll only be a phone call away, and if I don't miss my bet, he'll join the boys on the show circuit a time or two yet.

That my conversation with Brian is more basic than I had bargained on, and his telling exactly how to judge a good bull has him grinning like the bush larrikin he is renowned for being. His wife, Margaret, sits on in our interview and occasionally tsks, more I'm guessing for my sensibilities than her husband's straight talk.

When the conversation moves to how to judge a good female, the feminist in me gets a tad



*"Asimperj...um quia di aut apient fuga. Ibus ant. Emporep tatures et latemol uptatiunt la culparis..."*

affronted, and that makes Brian grin even more. 'It's the way it is,' he says. 'Judging takes a good eye and you've got to know what to look for.'

(PHOTO COURTESY: MAROON DAM IMAGES)

**AND THE BELL RINGS ON THE LAST DAY...**

It's Brian and Margaret's last day of school. I sit through the speeches and get a slice of the cake but I can only watch on in awe as 30 years of friendships shine through at Margaret and Brian's farewell luncheon. There can't be many people in the Queensland bush who haven't been touched in some way by this pair.

Margaret has 250 roses already planted on their new property out Roma way. She likes roses and as a tribute at her sendoff all the female teachers wore rose patterned clothes and pearls. The male teachers had it easy; checkered shirts and a hat of the cowboy variety. Brian and Margaret have big plans. Even though they brought the property back when Brian was 65, at 72 he setting up a whole new cattle venture, this time of the commercial kind, and I've already wangled an invitation to go and see the property he's been setting up to run on organic principles.

And I want to see Margaret's roses. Like kids when school's out for the last time and the boys spread far and wide across Queensland to begin their lives, Brian and Margaret are off to do the same. But that's a story for next time.