

# BANQUET- THE FIRST 24 YEARS!

by Ian Turner

## ***In the beginning - 1991***

Stephen and Noeleen Branson founded Banquet in December 1991 with 50 females from Noeleen's family's Kingfield Stud. These sound, functional and productive cows combined well with the large framed power bulls the Bransons introduced from New Zealand.



In the autumn of 1992 Atahua Alice 115 (*left*) was imported from NZ. Alice was the first animal to be exhibited under the Banquet banner and was awarded Grand Champion Female at 1992 Royal Melbourne Show. They selected the NZ National Sale Champion, Waitapu Mastercharge, for their first flush from Alice 115.

What a start! A daughter was Reserve Junior Champion Heifer at 1994 Melbourne Royal. A son, Banquet Master Blaster N55 was used at Banquet, had semen exported to NZ and he was sold to Stoneyfold stud.

1992 saw the arrival of semen from the NZ National Champion of Champions and Australasian Record priced bull, Atahua Legacy (*right*). Legacy joined their foundation Kingfield cows that built the platform from which the current Banquet herd was launched.



## ***A Dream in the making - 1993***

Another momentous development was the arrival of Banquet Kiwi Dream M41 from NZ. With the help of the late Stuart Cochrane, Delmont stud and the Dalziel family of Atahua stud, the Bransons



bred her in NZ and imported her in 1993. All the Dream cows in Australia are descendants from this most exceptional matron (*left*).

The 'Dream' story is remarkable, Banquet have 262 active females in their herd over one year of age carrying her name. Countless others also carry her in their pedigree. Banquet Jupiter J263 that topped the 2015 Banquet sale at \$40,000 has four crosses of Kiwi Dream M41 in his pedigree.

Incredibly there have been five individuals bred from the Dreams that have held record prices.

The two highest priced Angus cows sold in Australia are both Dreams.

1995 saw the first progeny of Kiwi Dream exhibited at Melbourne Royal. Dream P49 was Reserve Junior Champion. She was purchased by P.J Angus. Their ten Royal Show Champion awards since have been won with descendants including PJ Dream S2 (*right*).



## ***A Legacy builds - 1996***

Banquet Beefmaker Q76 was the first Atahua Legacy progeny to be exhibited at Melbourne Royal. He was awarded Reserve Junior Champion in 1996.



1997 was the year that Legacy progeny from Banquet blitzed the Angus National Show and Sale. Banquet exhibited the Senior Champion Bull (Legacy Q61) which also topped the sale at \$15,000 to Mt Fyans Angus; the Senior & Grand Champion and top priced female at \$11,000 (Banquet Kite P43) was purchased by Bindarra Angus; the Reserve Champion Pen of 3 Bulls and the three top prices in this section.

## ***National becomes important***

The Angus National Show & Sale in 1998 was another great success for Banquet. The bull calf from the 1997 National Champion Female, and owned in shares with Bindarra Angus was Junior Champion, also topping the sale at \$20,000 to Kingfield Partnership. Banquet also paraded the Reserve Senior Champion Female which was second top price at \$7000.

## ***The new millennium – new challenge***

The year 2000 saw Stephen & Noeleen Branson advance their marketing strategy and hold their inaugural on-property auction. It proved to be a great decision. On Thursday March 16th, 'The Warrnambool Standard' newspaper reported;

*"While many beef stud sales have suffered a quick drop in price for bulls outside their top catalogue group and incomplete clearances, Banquet managed to sell all their 38 bulls to average \$4283."*

The sale topped at a very modest \$7,000.

## ***Banquet genetics breeding on for clients***



Banquet continued to offer elite cattle at the National Show and Sale. Nuttella T08 (*left*) was Senior and Grand Champion Bull and sold for \$14,000 to the late Stuart Gordon, Glengowan Angus. T08 was a very successful infusion at Glengowan.

Another high selling bull was Rough 'N Tough T113 (*below left*), a son of the Reserve Senior Champion Female at the 1998 National Show & Sale, being purchased by Vermont Angus for \$12,000. Semen was exported to Merchiston stud, NZ. In all, three Banquet bulls sold at the National to average \$10,667.

A Banquet cow again topped the sale. Dream Q117 (*below centre*), a proven donor cow, sold for \$10,000 to Dylemma stud. In 2002 her eight sons at Banquet grossed \$63,000 and averaged \$7875. She was sold to Vermont, where she bred the legendary Dream Y301 (*below right*) who produced three record priced females. From Vermont, Q117 was sold to Irelands Angus.



## ***Unprecedented show success***

2000 was a year of unprecedented show success for Banquet. Angus was the feature breed at the Adelaide Royal Show and it was the first time the Bransons had exhibited Angus cattle at Adelaide. Stephen grew up on Titchmarch Poll Hereford stud and showed there from 1973 until the stud was dispersed in 1991. Only



one Grand Champion was achieved from all those trips. Banquet did much better, winning Junior Champion Bull with Upward U49, Reserve Junior Champion Heifer with Eclipta U36, Senior and Grand Champion Female with Kite T59 (with Buzz V11 as calf at foot), which was also a member of the winning interbreed pair.

Banquet was also Most Successful Exhibitor.

*Buzz V11, Kite T59 and Upward U49*





A few weeks later this 'Big Bold' Banquet team rolled into the Melbourne Royal Show. This time Upward U49 had to be content with Reserve Junior Champion Bull, but Eclipta U36 was elevated to the Junior Champion Bull award and our Senior cows reversed places. This time Dream S138 (pictured left with calf) was Grand Champion and Banquet was again Most Successful Exhibitor. It was a great way to finish 2000.

### 2001 - Annual Sale growth

On March 14th 2001, 'The Weekly Times' used the headline "A Buying Feast" to describe that Banquet sale. An extra 12 bulls sold and there was a \$1000 increase in the average price to \$5306. The top price of the sale was Upright U53, a son of the legendary Dream M41 for \$21,000, the first of many purchases for Charles and Cass Kimpton, Toora West stud.

Two weeks later, at the Angus National Sale a flush brother to U53, Upward U49 (right) topped that sale at \$22,000. He was the first of many top Banquet sires to go to Jumbuck Park. The second top price of the sale was achieved with Banquet West U88, the Senior Champion Bull, purchased for \$12,500 by Wal and Anne Kenny, Kyloh stud. To round off the sales John and Joan Woodruff, Witherswood stud, purchased a half share and possession of Buzz V11 for \$15,000. Buzz V11 was the first calf from the 2000 Adelaide Royal Champion female, Kite T59.



### Onward and Upward - 2002

The Banquet Bull Sale went to yet another level in 2002. More bulls (61) were sold for a higher average (up by \$1400). Again Charles and Cass Kimpton, Toora West stud purchased the top lot, Arrogance V100 for \$20,000, a bull used heavily at Banquet. Two sons of Scotch Cap OB45 and from grand matron Kiwi Dream M41 sold for \$17,000 each.

### Out of the National Ashes



The Angus National Show and Sale ended in 2001 and in 2002 The Angus National Expo rose from the ashes. Banquet continued to support what they considered to be an important Angus event; this time with Dream T34 (left) with her heifer calf at foot. The result was stunning; in fact it was record breaking. This cow and calf dominated the judging, with a Grand Championship award and then blitzed the sale. Her \$27,000 price tag was an Australian Auction Record for an Angus Female. T34 was the first of many Dream cows to hold the record. She was purchased by Michael and Annette Tynan, Birubi stud.

### 2003 – Emergence of Anvil and Radar

The 2003 Banquet sale saw the first Banquet purchase by Stephen Handbury, Anvil Angus. He selected Waltanna W125, ultimately the top priced bull at \$19,000. The success of W125 at Anvil prompted Stephen Handbury to feature in many more purchases of elite animals from Banquet.

This year also saw the last Banquet bred bull offered at The National Expo. Dylemma Radar W42 was the result of an embryo purchased by Graham Nowell from Kite T59, the Grand Champion Female at the 2000 Adelaide Show. Banquet purchased a half share and possession in W42 at 12 months of age.

Semen was collected and he was used lightly before being offered at the Expo. Many semen orders were already in place and a fierce phone bidding battle resulted with Future Angus winning by paying the equal Australian record price of \$40,000; this being the highest price for twenty years.

Radar W42 (*right*) proved a very successful sire in SA, Vic, NSW and QLD, being used over Angus, Hereford, Simmental, Brahman and Brangus cows. He is still in select use at Banquet, combining exceptional calving ease, growth, muscularity and soundness.



### 2004 – X for Xceptional Year

2004 was again filled with highlights at Banquet; another outstanding bull sale saw James Darling select Xplanation X060 (*below left*) for the top price of \$30,000 for his composite bull breeding program at



Duck Island, Keith, SA. This price proved cheap when James recouped this investment within six months with semen sales to NZ, Canada and throughout Australia. X060 has been a major sire at Banquet and is sired by the old master, Hingiai 469 (NZ). Hingiai 469 also sired the new \$150,000 Australian record priced bull, Millah Murrah Kingdom K35, also now in use at Banquet.

X060 sired the top price bulls at Banquet in 2009 and 2014. Another high seller in 2004 was Xceptional X187, purchased by Trevor and Teresa Hall, Quarterway stud, Tasmania for \$18,000. To 2015, Trevor has purchased eight stud sires from Banquet. X187 has also been used at Banquet.



Again Banquet was a keen supporter of the 2004 National Angus Expo. This time with Irene W50 with a bull calf at foot (*right*) and topped the sale at \$16,000 to Richard Morgan, Barragunda Pastoral.

### The Dream gets Bigger

On Friday March 11th 2005, 'On the Land' ran the headline "A Dream Sale" followed by "Stephen and Noeleen Branson labelled their 2005 Angus sale a "Dream Day". This was based on the number of bulls in the catalogue from their great donor cow, Banquet Kiwi Dream M41. It was a motto that held true for the Bransons; their 86 bulls offered at their Mortlake On-Property Sale meeting with spirited demand from a crowd of 250 spectators containing nearly 120 registered buyers. A new National breed auction bull record of \$50,000 was set, along with a fantastic \$6,059 average for the 85 bulls sold.



A Dream day it was, with 12 sons of Kiwi Dream M41 averaging \$11,458. Stephen Handbury, Anvil Angus was successful in securing the record setter, Time Frame Y135 (*left*). Time Frame semen has been used widely and exported to the U.S.A. His daughters at Banquet are highly valued, while his top son, Ballis B017, is the first Banquet sire to top the million dollar mark for progeny sales.

### Passionate about Supporting Youth



Stephen and Noeleen Branson are passionate supporters of the Youth Development programs within the beef industry. They have both served on management committees for many youth events. They have also trained and transported heifers for juniors to work with to events from Hamilton in Victoria to Armidale in NSW.

When they were approached in 2004 to help fund programs conducted by the Australian Beef Industry Foundation (ABIF), Stephen and Noeleen Branson willingly donated the heifer, Banquet Irene Y018 (*left*). Through the support of like minded breeders, Irene Y018 attracted the bid of \$11,000, with Stephen Handbury, Anvil Angus again being the successful bidder. Irene Y018 has repaid Stephen's generosity by founding an outstanding family line at Anvil.



2005 saw Banquet return to Melbourne Royal Show with 4 head; and what a result! They captured the Junior and Grand Champion Bull award with Zenith Z137; Junior and Grand Champion Female and then Interbreed Champion heifer with Dream Z008; Reserve Junior Champion Female with Dream Z020; and were also Most Successful Exhibitor.

*Z008, Z020 and Z137*



## **2006 – First century offering & last National**

The first Banquet offering of 100 bulls was at their 2006 sale. 101 were offered, resulting in a 100% clearance and averaged \$5,728, despite a top of only \$14,000. Long term supporters, Charles and Cass Kimpton of Toora West again took the top priced bull honours. The strength of that sale result lay with the strong support from commercial cattleman, many being repeat buyers.

2006 also saw the last Angus National Expo at Wodonga. True to their long term commitment to support this event, Banquet offered Banquet Eclipta W85 (*right*) with a heifer calf at foot. Another Grand Championship and sale topping price resulted. Banquet cattle were having a major impact at Anvil Angus and Stephen Handbury added W85 to his donor team for \$16,000.



## **2007 – A Time to Feast**

The headlines in 2007 read “*Buyers have a feast at Banquet*”. How apt that was with a 100% clearance of 104 bulls, selling to top at \$20,000 and averaging \$6706. The Erby family, Forres stud purchased Abode A005 (*right*) for \$20,000. He proved so successful that at their dispersal in 2012, Abode sold for \$22,000 as a six year old.



## **2008 – Breeding success & Giveaways**

The 2008 Banquet sale saw the identical top price as the previous year. This time the honours went to Allan A190, a bull that had already seen service in two joining seasons at Banquet. A190 was purchased for \$20,000 by Karen Arnott for her Skagway stud.

Another bull also used in the Banquet herd was sold this year.



Aberdeen A349 (*left*) had been used from the age of 13 months to complete three mating programs before being selected by Trevor Hall, Quarterway Angus. The daughters of A349 have been so impressive that he was re introduced into the AI team at Banquet in 2014. Some daughters catalogued in the 2015 ‘*Belles of Banquet*’ sale have been flushed.

This was also the year that the Stock & Land newspaper ran their inaugural bull giveaway promotional program.

Banquet willingly supported

the initiative. Entries flooded into the Stock & Land office from NSW, SA, Vic and Tas and there was great anticipation when the draw was conducted pre-sale in the Banquet sale barn. Amazingly the winners were clients, Ken (and Mary) Frost (*right*). They were in the sale gallery and a little lost for words.







### Sydney record

Easter 2008 saw Banquet at Sydney Royal Easter Show competing in the Angus feature breed showing. They also offered the outstanding Banquet Kite A197 (left) with a heifer calf at foot. A197 set a new Sydney Show auction record for a female when she sold for \$38,000, with Anvil Angus again winning the bidding battle. Kite A197 is a half sister to Banquet sires Buzz V11 (\$15,000), Radar W42 (\$40,000) and Abraham A204 (\$16,000).

### 2009 - A Decade of Sales

Banquet's 10th Annual Sale was held in 2009. The top price at this sale again demonstrated how well line breeding to exceptional females works. The \$18,000 Cosper C268 (right) was a son of Xplanation X060. The dam of C268 is a daughter of Kiwi Dream M41, while X060 is from a Kiwi Dream M41 granddaughter. Congratulations to Tom and Helen Love for recognising his genetic strengths. A son of the \$40,000 Radar W42 sold for \$16,000 to Brad Saunders, Queensland.



### 2010 - Highest Victorian sale average

In 2010, \$20,000 was again the top price at the annual Banquet bull Sale. Duncan and Oopy MacGillivray of Wittalocka stud paid this for their selection, Designer D292 (right), one of the first sons of the NZ sire Matauri Stockman 526. The dam of D292 had bred a \$16,000 bull in the 2009 sale.

This sale was an outstanding result with 114 bulls averaging \$5,864, the highest sale average in Victoria.

An Angus Feature Show was held at the 2010 Adelaide Royal. On the back of Banquet's achievements at the last Angus feature breed showing in Adelaide, the Bransons again made the trip across, and what a trip it was! Banquet Champagne E288 was Junior Champion Female, also being part of the winning Interbreed Junior Pair. E288 was sired by the old Power Pack P54 bull and was from a daughter of the old breed legend, Black Gold Champagne J031.

Banquet Julie E239 was bridesmaid to E288 when she was awarded Reserve Junior Champion Female. However, the highlight for Banquet was when their proven stud sire Banquet Ballis B017 was crowned Senior and Grand Champion Bull. At 4.5 years of age, this 1300kg mountain of beef was so impressive with his scale and mobility that some doubted that he had been in service. In fact he was paddock joined to almost 200 females during 2009. His 53 sons in the 2011 Banquet sale averaged almost \$9,500 each. Ballis B017 was much more than a pretty face! *B Champagne E288 and B Ballis B017 (right)*



### 2011 - Million Dollar Dreams

As mentioned, the strength of Ballis B017 progeny saw the first million dollar sale at Banquet in 2011. This was something the Bransons never dared to dream of back in 2000 when they held their first auction. A son of Ballis B017, Banquet Easton Boy E231 (left) topped the sale at \$32,000, going to the Kimptons of Toora West who again fought off all comers to secure their choice bull. This exciting day saw 142 bulls average \$7,700 and gross \$1,089,000.



## 2012 – Heavyweight Competition sees Million Dollar repeat



That outstanding result was replicated in 2012 when Banquet offered and sold 145 bulls to gross \$1,020,945 and average \$7,041 in another total clearance. Banquet selected seven young bulls from this catalogue as potential sires and retained semen for in herd use. The highlight was Banquet Forbidabull F485 (*left*), topping the sale at \$26,000 to Doug and Barb Tozer, Onslow Angus. The merit of the Tozers investment is assessed by the quality of Forbidabull's progeny. His first son at Banquet topped their 2015 sale at \$40,000. His first son at Onslow

topped their sale at \$16,000. What a wonderful start to Forbidabull's breeding career!

At this sale, Peter Delaney, Murroa East selected Banquet Fancier F046 for \$20,000. Ross Davis, Wolbunya purchased a son of Ballis B017 for \$18,500 and David and Gail Geddes, Warranboo selected two sons of B017 for \$18,000 and \$14,000.

## 2013 - Banquet bulls breed on and on

Charles and Cass Kimpton, who have built their Toora West seedstock business on Banquet bulls since 2001, returned to again purchase the top price bull in 2013 (*right*). This time their selection was Banquet Garton G275 at \$20,000. G275 is sired by Banquet Duncan D412, a bull retained by the Bransons.

As a mature sire he was purchased by David Hurley at Dargo. Four sons of Duncan have been used in the Banquet breeding program.



The Shoebridge family, Cleveland Pastoral Estates of Ouse, Tasmania purchased Banquet Granada G077 for \$15,000. The Shoebridges sell 1200 Banquet blood calves at their annual on property weaner sale. Showing the versatility and adaptability of Banquet genetics, the third top price bull, Banquet Gurry G228 was purchased by Peter Attard, Shingle Hut, Moura, Queensland.

Semen from Garton G275, Granada G077 and Gurry G228 is in use at Banquet.

## 2014 – A timely arrival

In 2014 the Bransons offered a unique young sire, Banquet Harman H261, a son of Banquet Xplanation X060, the highest priced Angus bull sold in Australia in 2004 (*below*). With X060 subsequently testing as a carrier for the DD defect, H261 arrived just in time. H261 created so much interest at Banquet it was decided to offer him with the option to repurchase a half share.

The Branson's were excited when John, Robyn and Peter Blyth, Fernleigh stud, accepted this offer after successfully bidding \$32,000 to purchase him. H261 is used for natural service at Fernleigh in the Spring and Banquet in Autumn. His potential contribution is huge.



The Geddes family, Warranboo, Holbrook, NSW continued their push for excellence when they selected Banquet Hazelnut H265 (*left*) for \$22,000. Their investment in top sires is really paying dividends in their commercial herd with the standard and performance of their breeding females lifting significantly. This year the purchaser of their first run of steers in 2014 called back with the request, "What do we have to do to get the next run?" That is the best possible feedback.



## 2015 – The ‘here and now’

Banquet has already achieved outstanding sale results in 2015. In their February sale, 99 bulls were offered for a total clearance, a top price of \$40,000 and an average of \$8,374. This was the highest average for any breed in Victoria. Repeat buyers purchased 86% of the bulls, giving a strong indication of client satisfaction! Richard and Sandra Rettallack, Glengowan stud purchased their third stud sire from Banquet. They selected Banquet Jupiter J263 for the \$40,000 top price (*below*). His sire, Forbidabull F485 topped the 2012 sale at \$26,000 when sold to to Doug and Barb Tozer, Onslow stud.



David, Gail and Colin Geddes, Warranboo Partnership, Holbrook, NSW again went home with the second top priced bull, Banquet Jeofail J205 (*below*), outlaying \$20,000.



Repeat buyers, Tom Shoebridge, Robert Love, Barry Pitt, Ross Davis, David Hurley and Charles and Cass Kimpton all purchased bulls between \$15,000 and \$18,000. Alan McDonald was the only first time buyer to break into this price range when he purchased Banquet Jerez J262 to join to the record priced Banquet sired heifers he purchased at Hamilton in the January weaner sales.

## Spring is in the air – New ventures

Banquet conducted their inaugural Spring Bull Sale in September 2015. The average price of \$6,500 was the highest achieved for any spring bull sale in Victoria in 2015. Likewise, the sale was again dominated by repeat clients, purchasing 84% of the offering. Keith Diprose, who has been purchasing Banquet Bulls for 19 years, selected Banquet Judd J517 for the \$13,000 top price. Two bulls sold for \$10,000 each, again to repeat clients, Graeme Norman and Ned Kelly.

Now, for the first time in its history, on the 26th November Banquet will be offering a significant number of females in its inaugural ‘*Belles of Banquet*’ female sale, opening up a unique opportunity for beef cattle breeders to tap into the best and proven female genetics from the Banquet herd.

## Banquet - The First 24 Years

What will we read in 2039 after Banquet’s next 25 years?