

Canadian Luing Cattle Association Newsletter



Rothney Achafolla 531W

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Message From The Secretary

Iain Aitken

In previous newsletters I have profiled Bob Church and Charlie Flick for their contributions to the establishment of Luing breed in Canada. In this article I want to acknowledge the equally important contribution made by the late Sandy Cross of Rothney.

Sandy Cross - Rothney Luings

Alexander Rothney (Sandy) Cross was many things during his lifetime - a brewmaster, rancher, conservationist and philanthropist and he was also the first person to import Luings into Canada.

Before exploring his Luing story I'd like to share some of his remarkable family history that contributed to the

settlement of Western Canada and eventually the creation of the Province of Alberta. Sandy's mother was the first "white" (ie non-native) woman born in what would later become Southern Alberta, being a daughter of Skye born Colonel Macleod of the NorthWest Mounted Police who established law and order among the early whisky traders who were bringing in whisky from Montana. Colonel Macleod established settlements at Fort Macleod and Fort Calgary.

The Cross family too had originated in Scotland, successful merchants and businessmen on the banks of the Clyde having moved to Canada in 1826. Sandy's father was Ernest Cross who came west from Montreal to be a vet for the Cochrane Ranche,

one of the first attempts at large scale ranching on the western fringe of Canadian Prairie settlement. The Cochrane Ranche proved short lived due to the unanticipated harshness of the 1881 and 1882 winters which killed thousands of cattle. Ernest however went on to successfully establish the A7 Ranche west of Nanton which continues to this day and is said to be the oldest ranch in Canada in the hands of the original family.

Aside from ranching Ernest Cross was an entrepreneur - one of "The Big Four" who founded Calgary Stampede, a politician and a pioneer of the Alberta oil industry as well as establishing Calgary Brewery where Sandy was head brewmaster for many years.

Sandy began putting together Rothney Farms on the SW corner of present day Calgary in 1945, eventually building up to 9 sections (5760 acres) of rolling foothills fescue interspersed with bush and abundant spring-fed water supplies. Here he established herds of purebred Shorthorn and Galloway cattle. Working with these Scottish breeds Sandy made many trips to their homeland to buy seed-stock and would be a well known face at the ringside in Perth, Castle Douglas and eventually Oban. In the Canadian cattle scene Sandy was a force to be reckoned with. He set a Calgary Bull Sale record average during the 1950s with his Shorthorns that wasn't

surpassed by any breed until relatively recent times.



Luining Chieftain

The native breeds took a back seat during the 1960s with the craze for importing "exotic" (Continental) European cattle but Sandy reckoned there was a place for the Luining in Canada. In 1973 he attended the 8th Annual breed sale in Oban where he purchased Luining Merlin for 2400gns and five yearling heifers including two at a new breed record price of 420gns. These animals, along with another 10 yearling heifers purchased privately from the Cadzows were the foundation of the Rothney Luining herd - the first herd in Canada. Something that was notable about his purchases at the Oban sale was they were all sired by Luining Buzzard, one of the most influential bulls in the history of the breed. Sandy clearly had a type in mind and it was probably influenced by his passion for the old type of Shorthorn with the size and scale that had largely been lost in the show ring by this time. Sandy later purchased

another two Buzzard sons - Luing Grizzly and Luing Magpie (in partnership with Bob Church) and also Luing Rye, a Buzzard grandson who was the top selling bull at the 1976 Luing sale in Oban. He laid a tremendous foundation for the breed in Canada with these purchases.



Sandy Cross ringside in Oban, 1973

Luing Grizzly particularly made a significant contribution to the breed in Canada, siring 40 daughters at a time when the breed population was still very small. Like his sire Buzzard he was a big, powerful bull with a wealth of hair and he left a number of cream or tan coloured offspring that were very distinctive. I still get throwbacks today from these tan Grizzly genetics. Another bull that made a big impact

on the breed in Canada was Luing Chieftain, an Apollo son. This bull was displayed at the 1977 Calgary Stampede and at the first public auction of Luings in Canada in 1978 a son, Henry of Rothney, topped the sale at \$3200. Another son of Chieftain - Rothney Gideon, also made a lasting contribution by siring almost all the Snowlander cattle in Charlie Flick's herd that were upgraded into the Luing herd book.

The Rothney herd contributed both bulls and females to the Stampede Roundup sales for the 7 years they featured Luings between 1978 and 1984. Many more bulls were sold privately over the years with virtually all going to commercial cattlemen. The proof of success of any breeding program of course is the females at home rather than bulls in the sale ring. A couple of teenage Rothney bred cows I bought from Lochend when establishing my herd certainly didn't disappoint with one producing to 21 and the other to 22 years old! These two cows are pictured on the front and page pages of this newsletter at the time they were 18 years old.

Time waits for no man though and with Sandy in his 70s sadly the Rothney cattle herds were dispersed in 1987 with most of the Luings bought by Bob Church to join his Lochend herd. For the next 20 years Lochend Luing Ranch winter grazed part of their herd at Rothney where

the frequent chinooks would often keep them grazing until February.

Sandy's last farm manager, Reg Remple, retained some of the original Rothney cows and continued to register them into the 1990s and I was also able to buy a few of these older cows in the early 2000s when I was setting up my herd. The influence of Buzzard and Grizzly was easy to see in the cattle Reg had kept as they were bigger, hairier and with more horned genetics than the rest of the Luing population that had by this time been heavily influenced by the Snowlanders.

Sandy had a great interest in nature and a deep love and understanding of the land. He was a conservationist ahead of his time. If he thought the grass was suffering he would call up some trucks to ship cattle out for sale, pedigree or not.

In the late 1980s concerned by the rapid encroachment of Calgary - which had grown from the first tented settlement his Grandfather set up to a city of million people - Sandy and his wife Ann donated Rothney to the Province. At 4800 acres it was the largest public donation of land in Canada to date and it was done to preserve the wildlife and wilderness in perpetuity. Today the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area is an educational resource visited by over 10,000 school children every year. Sandy spent his latter years living in the milder climate of Victoria, on the

BC coast where he could watch the whales from his window. Although sadly I never got to meet Sandy in person his great contribution to establishing the Luing breed in Canada lives on through the Rothney genetics in our cattle herds.



Luing Magpie

Export Challenges

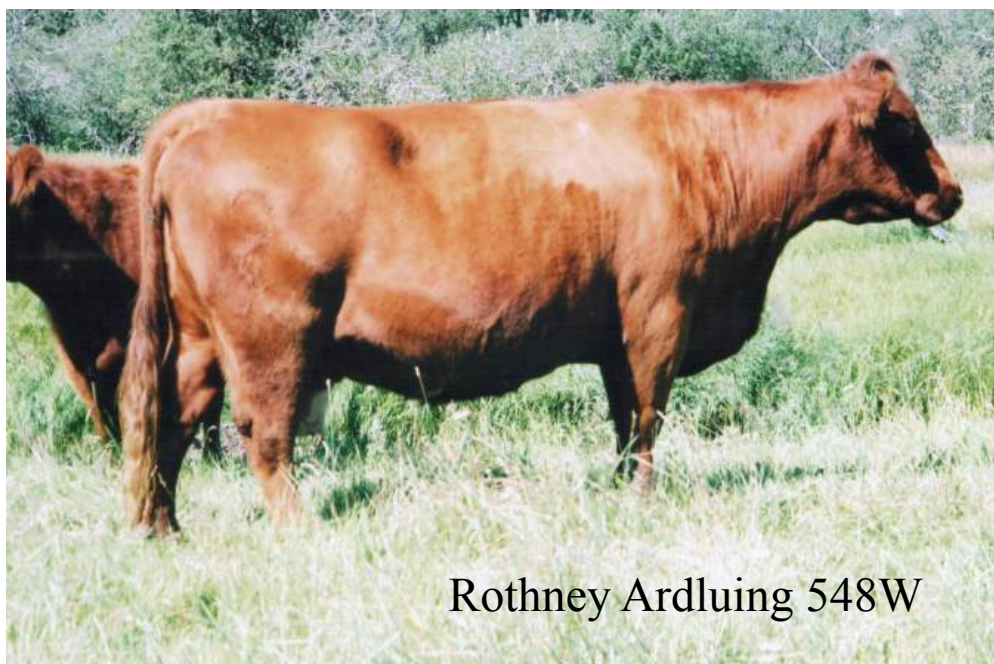
I am finding it increasingly difficult to import or export semen or embryos due to the stifling bureaucracy around international animal health regulations. It doesn't look like it was any easier back in the 1970s when Luing Magpie was exported.

Magpie was due to leave Luing in November 1974 but a storm prevented the island ferry running so a barge was summoned to take him over to the mainland and on to Glasgow. From there he was to travel to Belfast for two months quarantine but due to a strike in Belfast his stay in Glasgow was extended. The troubles didn't end there as after undergoing his Belfast quarantine his onward shipment to the US was delayed

because it coincided with a shipment from Norway which would fill all the quarantine spots in New York so again his travel was postponed.

In April of 1975 he finally flew to New York and spent a month in quarantine before having final health tests done. Unfortunately another animal from the

shipment failed the TB test which meant all the animals had to spend another month in quarantine! When he was finally released in June 1975 he went to the Y-Tex A.I. stud in Cody, Wyoming to have semen drawn before heading to Canada to work in the Rothney and Lochend herds.



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