

THE BIG COW of Ayrshire Road, Kulangoor

Everyone in Australia has heard of the Big Cow. It is the largest concrete Ayrshire cow in the world and still stands at the entrance of what was Sunshine Coast Dairy owned by Des and Barbara Scanlan. Ayrshire Road is named after the Big Cow.

The Big Cow was modelled on a Maleny Ayrshire. It is five times the size of a normal cow, 3.5 metres wide, 10.8 metres long, 5.7 metres at the shoulders and 7.9 metres high. Five tonnes of concrete and five and a half tonnes of steel frame and wire mesh were used in its construction.

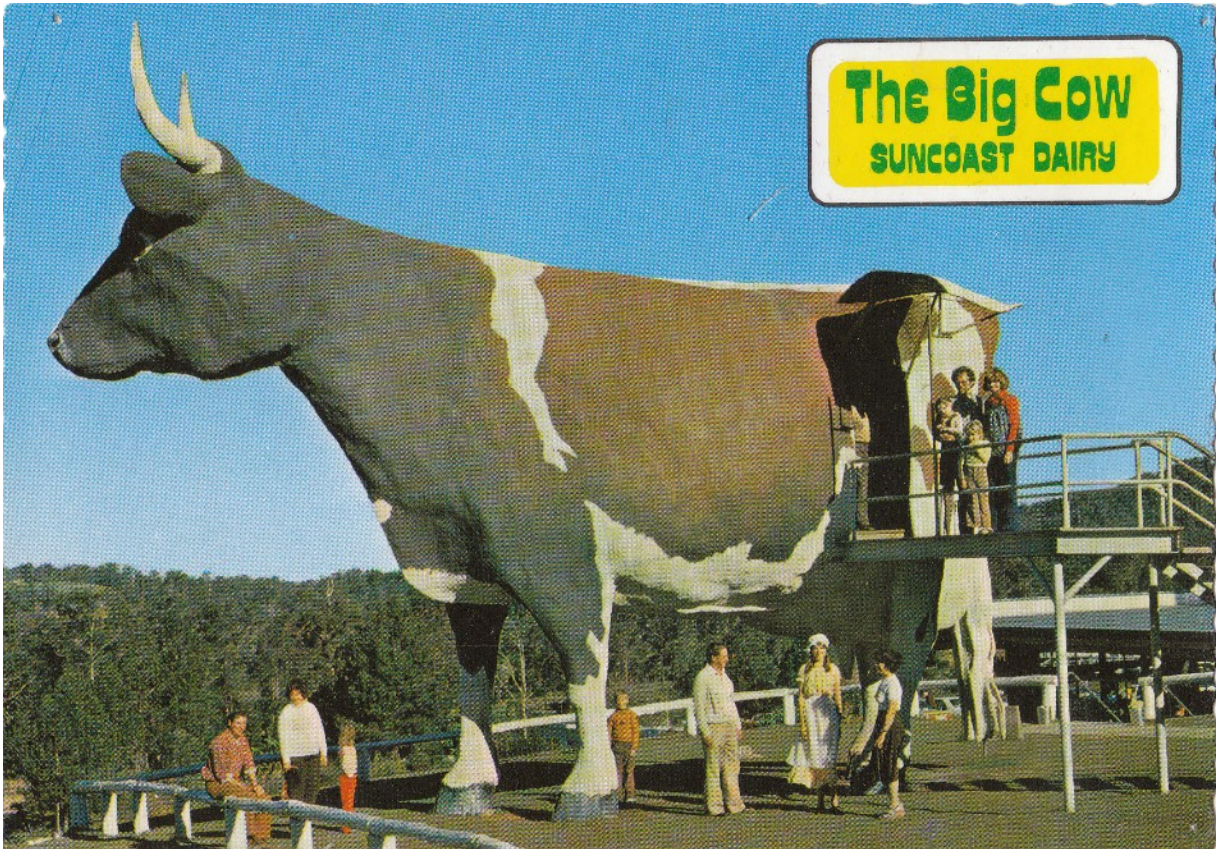
Ayrshire cattle are noted for their distinctly-defined, brown and white colouring, lyre-shaped horns and ability to give a good supply of milk. They originated in the Scottish Lowlands and have been widely exported to all parts of the world. An Ayrshire called Annie was the first breed of dairy cow to arrive in Australia.

Sunshine Coast Dairy was opened by Doug Anthony, the Deputy Prime Minister, on 10 September, 1976. Publicity was Australia wide. The attractions included the restaurant with the chocolate and strawberry milk from simulated teats at the Dairy Bar, an animal nursery, a dairy production display, a bush walk, a wishing-well for charity and a trip around the farm in a trolley behind a tractor with a horn that sounded out "moo". Staff, including Barbara and daughters, dressed up as "milkmaids".

Des Scanlan, organised many events for charity at Sunshine Coast Dairy. For the Miss Australia quest he sponsored entrants and organised fund-raising baby competitions. He ran the Children's Hospital Appeal, hosted Shetland pony shows and welcomed steam trains laden with tourists from Brisbane who were able to detrain at Kulangoor Siding. He arranged newspaper colouring competitions for which the prizes were collected at the Big Cow. At Christmas, Sunshine Coast Dairy sponsored parades along Currie Street in Nambour.

Des Scanlan also sponsored sportsmen such as Grant Kenny as promising youngsters. In 1977, Des bought a helicopter, a new Jetranger, VH-COW, and did surf patrols and joy flights using landing pads at Sunshine Coast Dairy and Alexandra Headlands. This full-time rescue service called "The Milky Way" was the first of its kind in Australia and operated for fifteen years. The annual cost to operate was \$50 000 with \$20 000 raised from joy flights. Local councils also supported the project. In 1983, the base was moved to Maroochydore Airport.

In the 1980s, the Scanlans sold Sunshine Coast Dairy. Since then the building has had different uses but the Big Cow remained as an Australian landmark until January 2020.



Researched by Audienne Blyth