

## **Transcript of extracts from Letters from Elsie Birks, D 2861(L)**

**27 Feb 1897 [p. 42]**

We girls have been thoroughly enjoying some outdoor work this week. Several of our members have lately left (mostly due to depression, resulting from our poor harvest) which makes us short handed. We do miss them, too, not hearing the familiar whistle about the place; or a cheery goodmorning when passing them at work; or a ready joke or fun. Then a vacant place at someone's table; an empty room or an empty house give one a lonesome feeling, tho' the latter are soon filled, put to other uses; one house for instance is now used for storing our raisins, till we sell them.

**29 April 1945 [p. 77]**

The trip up the Murray was a joyous adventure to all us young folk. To father it spelt emancipation from the chemist shop, which he had always hated, but took the first job offering at 12 years old when his father died. (He was John R. Birks, one of the six Birks Bros. of Adelaide & the last of them to die at the age of 83).

But to my step-mother I imagine it must have been a nightmare, to leave a comfortable 12 roomed house in Woodville, w a large garden & orchard, where a maid was always kept & a wash lady came weekly; to move into three large stone rooms, & a wide verandah which was later partitioned into four more rooms, to do without a bathroom, (although we could bathe daily in the River) & to take four very young children so far from our family Dr. (although he truly said we would not need him there) & to have to bake bread & make butter for our family of eight or nine, do the washing herself & the house-work & cooking, I know she often used to faint after getting into bed at night.

**29 April 1945, [p. 79]**

We had a pump to pump the water up the cliff from the River, whence it flowed in channels to the big garden, orchard & vineyard that we planted. We also got a magnificent return from a few acres sown with wheat. But, the following years were too dry, only five inches of rain per year, & we could not irrigate our wheat paddocks. Also it took two men at the engine & pump all day & two more all night; two men guiding the water by day, & two by night, to orchard, etc, so that made it too costly a job.

**29 April 1945, [p. 81]**

Our only shop was the monthly boat, either the "Ellen" or the "Gem", which passed monthly, & carried drapery, clothing, boots, saddlery, ironmongery & groceries all packed in very small neat spaces.

**29 April 1945, [p. 82]**

My husband was three times chosen to be President of our little community & there were others, perhaps jealous, who made things very unpleasant for him.

**Memoirs 1894-97 [p. 93]**

There were about 10 single men, 3 single women, & about 10 families, each adult paying in £80, or its equivalent in horse, machinery, etc, & the houses were built along a road at the top of the cliffs, each facing the river. So many good citizens had gone to New Australia, in Paraguay, by the "Royal Tar", & other boats that the govt opened up this land in the Hundred of Murtho. The Murtho Village Settlement was formed on Co-operative lines, its motto being:— "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Only one man was turned away, as being too lazy to work, & only one man died.