



South Australians at war – transcript – PRG 596/2

Land Army Days
The diary of Frances Taylor
1943-1945

Transcribed by Susie van der Sluys 2001

pp. 2-11.

BINDARRAH

After a long crowded journey to Naracoorte I was met by Arthur Curran as arranged. We had a cup of tea in the refreshment room and then he saw me safely on to the train, a bus converted to rails, for Kingston. Thoughts of doubt and wonder filled my mind travelling through the scrubby country to Lucindale. When I got out of the train I looked round to find my boss, but instead a Land Army girl came up to me. She was Mary Corcannon of the Hotel. It was all very strange. Stange people in a strange town at dusk. Of course it seemed quite different once I knew the place and people. I had dinner in the dining room, a thing that never happened again, for ever after when I just used to drop in for an odd meal it would always be in the kitchen, except when Mary would bring me breakfast in bed. After Dinner at about 7 pm, with Mary driving the car and Margaret also with us, they took me out to Holmans and my job! It was quite dark so I had no idea where I was going. Then when they decided we had come to the right (?) we turned into an open gate up a track through many trees and yaccas, to pull up at an iron gate. Mrs Holman came out to meet us. She looked in her forties. She showed me my room and it was there a got a great surprise. The room had just been built and was not quite complete. In one corner was a 50 gallon tank and all round were nails hammer saw bits of wood etc. All the furniture was a bed which was a wire stretcher, a table alongside it, and a wash stand with a mirror on it for a dressing table - no more. The window was minus a pane and had no curtains, and it smelt of new concrete (the floor) and cane-ite, with which it was lined. Then inside to meet the boss. Through a tiny kitchen with an infant crawling all over the floor, and another child running around. I was filled with misgivings. When Mr Holman came out of his room I judged him to be about 47. Later when we discussed the first acquaintance he thought to



himself "Cripes, what have they sent me here? A bally Twelve year old."! It so happened I was 18, he was 32 and she was 27. Helen was 2 and Joan 10 months, and Mark? he was minus 2 months.

The Corcannon girls didn't stay very long, so after they went we sat on the edge of our chairs and Mr Holman showed his snap album and various photos and Mrs Holman got some supper as it must have been an "Occasion." Then she took me out to the "Hygeno." It was really in the shed, just a straw roof, no permanent sides. The "Hygeno was on one side, just four posts under the shed roof and bags sewn together round it. There were two bags in front forming the opening. They were supposed to meet, but they didn't always make it, especially when there was an east wind!

Then Sunday and I had nothing to do except acquaint myself with the place in daylight. I also met Mr and Mrs Foster who came in the afternoon. They apparently didn't know I was to come. It must have been a special surprise to Mrs Foster who is usually first to know anything. I didn't see the Fosters much after that day for a long while. But later on I used to ride over there with various messages and I also would go into Community Singing with them on Saturday nights. But that wasn't till Grace arrived that I dared to venture into the public. Mr Foster proved to be great fun and I liked him immensely He was also a big tease, and he and Ray would often pull my leg until I became more used to them.

Then there was the very first day which I must record, not because it was anything startling, but because it just was my 'first day' It was Monday May 10th I was roused by a call "Are you awake?" that was about 7. The first thing I did was to bring up some wood he had chopped, while he was milking. I went out with him when he took the cows back to the paddock. It was only five he was milking. 83, Choco, Goldie Lang and Beauty. When we came back we had breakfast and I watched the separating and calf feeding. For the rest of the day we finished my room, covering the joins in the cane-ite with _bits of wood which I measured and sawed a bit. Then I went with him to get the cows. I waited at the gate while he assembled them and we both took them in. I started milking and got through Choco

Five days later there was a new arrival in the herd. "George" had been visiting neighbours and was returned. This spelt doom for me I was sure, bulls being in the same sphere as



sharks and snakes. I was getting used now to pushing the bike out through the scrub to get the cows, and leaving it on the edge of the scrub and walking the cows in then vice versa at night when taking them back. I had been warned that George was in the paddock. Ray had brought the cows in and he told me that he (G) was by the gate. When I got there he was away a bit but came to the gate. I was as scared as can be imagined I've never hurried so much in putting the gate up and tearing away on the bike. All this while George was making, what I thought at the time, vicious-I'd-go-for-you-if-I-had-the-chance noises, but what in reality were noises of a harmless bull welcoming his cows! It wasn't long before George ceased to worry me and, although I had been told always to take a stick in the yard when stirring up a cow, I would usually forget and pass through the yard unarmed to open the gate with George as sole occupant.

I was in a way rather disappointed that there were no horses to ride only "Blossom" a medium draught and old Miller an ancient black draught with ring bone in his hoof. However Blossom's days of (?) in the paddock were ended as she was needed in the cart for quite a number of things. She had only been ridden about a dozen times but I soon altered that. It was much better going for the cows on horseback even if it was a bit rough and clumpy on Bloss, and I couldn't reach the stirrups, I mean I had to climb up on the fence or a log to mount. That was for quite a while, then I must have stretched for I could reach with ease.

I had only been riding for about a fortnight and I suddenly decided I should like to ride bareback, it looked so easy. So one day when Ray was out I tried it out going for the maid of all things. I got there and back quite safely and I did not walk all the way. However I wasn't so eager for a while. The next time I ventured was to take Bloss out to the paddock for a spell. But changing from the canter to trot across the rough paddock, off I came.

Talking about horses, one bright thing I did with Miller one day. I had taken them both out of the waggon and being outside I tied Miller up to a tree then proceeded to unharness him. I had forgotten that the rope was tied to his blinkers, so when I took them off, away he went. I had to catch him hastily again.



We used to give Bloss a nose bag while we were milking. Then I would get her and take the cows out. On several occasions I noticed she was rather hard to pull round. When I was half way out to the scrub I realised that I had forgotten to put the bit back into her mouth!

Now three important things arrived with a short time of each other. Firstly Grace Beyer of Baroota, that kind hearted "Baroota Dust (?)" as she had been referred to, and what a worker! I've never known anyone like it. When she arrived, I saw this sophisticated looking young lady in the kitchen. I thought she was about 25. Later Gracie and I became firm friends and confidantes. She saved the sophistication for special occasions and behaved like a 16 year old, though in reality she was 20.

Secondly Mark Holman was born and the day after that on July 6, a man came to install the milking machines. I was certainly very glad to see them, although. On the 9th we introduced the cows to the machines a Sunshine Massey Harris it was. We had twenty cows in at the time. I was milking

Threeand Ray-Goldie13

ChocoLang83

ErmoBeautyRed Poll

TrudieDarkie10

JerseyBlack and White

57Long Paddock

11Daisy

BatesyMc Bain



at first the claws and teat cups were very awkward to manipulate, but we soon got used to them.

Grace naturally wanted to see all her Lucindale friends, and Mr Foster asked her to go into Community with them. Making the most of this opportunity I went in with them and Grace introduced me etc. I saw Mary Corcannon for the second time. After Grace had returned to the North I would still go into Communities and became very friendly with Mary and Eileen the postmistress married Harry Mason nee Kelly. And after a while when Mary was away I attached myself to Joan Secher. Mrs Secher was very kind and hospitable, and I used to call in at any time.

As the feed in the paddock grew higher we fenced part of it off with an electric wire later we went out in the paddock all day and took our lunch while we were stone picking, an awful job, which was done in the rain mostly. We left it for a month or so and the clover grew to a foot to eighteen inches high. Then with the help of the bee keepers (S?) and son of Stawell we erected R. J. Lepoes grab hoist ready for the fray. There was not really much for me to do ensilage making so Ray really did it all on his own. First he would mow a patch, then rake it in to rows then sweep it up with the tumbler sweep. The only time I could be of use was in the stacking of it. We had Blossom in a race hitched to the grab hoist I would put the jaws in a lump of feed. Bloss would go up and Ray would pull it where he wanted it and spread it. I tried the sweep but I got all tangled up trying to manage Miller at about 4 I would depart and walk home, picking up the cows on the way. I had the 29 to milk at that time. Ray would get home at about 7.30 and by the time we had washed and changed and had tea + done the dishes it was 9.30 I used to have every Wednesday a day off to do my washing and my room and have a laze. There were some lovely flowers in the scrub especially orchids and I used to go and pick them nearly every week. However with the silage making all Weds. were forgone and we used to work the full 7 days.



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Ray used to trim my hair for me and from the first he said he'd cut it all off as he had never bobbed straight hair before, he was used to cutting the station hands' and men's hair on (Yarde?) and Nallalambo. He had forgotten about that during the winter, but when summer came and it was so hot, silage and hay making, I told him he could cut it off. But I had to pester him to do it. For one thing there was no time, and for another he was a bit shy and didn't want to do it. So one day after we had finished fairly early I asked him to do it while there was still day light. It did feel nice but queer. He ran the clippers straight up the back of my head, leaving a bald path. It looked queer too, before it settled down. It stuck out everywhere.

That hair style was the cause of much sex unrecognition. One morning when I was milking a strange man came and wanted Ray at the dairy. I of course advanced to met him. Later Ray told me that this Mr Reiners had thought ("That's a (s?) + boy he's got") until he heard "him" speak.

Another time a couple of agents came to see about the bull (?) one was Tom Giles of Kingston. They were all having a beer in the kitchen & I passed the door on my way from my room. One of them asked Cara if that was her son, about 10 years old with a crop of fair hair etc.

And at Robe when I was a lady when the Bishop and Mrs Robin were staying there too, I went into a shop, wearing Khaki shorts and aertex blouse "yes, sir"? asked the man behind the counter. Of course I got a lot of stares when I went into Communities until they got used to the sight. And I also heard many varied opinions. On the average, young people of my own age said it suited me, but older folks didn't like it. Too old fashioned!