

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday January 5th, 1944

My dear All,

Those of you who have met Nurse Edith Collett will be sorry to hear that after our visit to Fish River, when I saw her for a few minutes on the Sunday afternoon, she was very weak and ill. She said that she did not think she should ever come to these parts again as the altitude was not good for her. On the Tuesday afternoon following, she had a stroke all down the right side of her body and never regained consciousness again. Dr van Rensburg attended her two or three times and she passed away on the afternoon of December 31st. Mr Brigg's car was already packed full for his journey early on Monday morning so he arranged to go out in the Undertakers car and offered me a seat. Mom was not well enough to face the journey and it was just as well she did not go as the wind rush there and back would have been too much for her. A short service in the drawing room was held, one of her favourite hymns, "God moves in a mysterious way", was sung. Aunt Jessie played. Only relations were present, Grass Ridge, Norman and Gladys, Gervase, Harvey and Winnie Jack, Agnes and Winnie, I think completed the congregation. Agnes did not go to the cemetery. They have not found any will and she was too ill and unable to speak so no messages were left for her friends. Perhaps I have dwelt at unduly length on this but Edith was a great friend of ours and often stayed with us. She was very kind to Joe and Blodwen when she lived in Bloemfontein and it has always been a pleasure to do what we could for her. She looked very calm and peaceful in her coffin.

I attended the watch-night service. Mr Briggs took as his subject "so teach us to number our days" etc. It was a very impressive service. He preached his last sermon on Sunday evening to a large congregation. They left at six a.m. Monday. I saw them off. They expected to have breakfast in Queenstown and hoped to cover the three hundred miles by 4.30 p.m. The new minister is expected to arrive for the third Sunday. A few days before a message came through by phone that Bathurst congregation did not want Mr Karg to leave and would we accept Mr Wilson (who Dot knew) but the Committee said we were prepared to retain Mr Briggs or Mr Karg so Karg is coming.

Tuesday morning. We were disappointed in not getting any post yesterday and I have just heard over the wireless that there have been terrible storms in Johannesburg – trains, trams etc held up for hours. There are evidently storms about here as the reception over the air is bad with atmospherics. We had over 16 inches of rain last year. When I have finished my calculations for the year, I will refer to this matter again.

I am glad to say Mom is much better from her bout of sickness reported last week. She has to be careful what she eats. We have taken to boiling our rainwater that we drink as perhaps that may be something to do with the stomach troubles that have been so prevalent in town. Mom thinks it might be the bread but of course we cannot get white bread. We still go to the Premier three or more times a week. We were there for New Year's dinner which was quite good.

I spent the time before going to watch night service in replying to some of your recent letters so as to start the New Year with a clear desk. I did not quite succeed. I still have a number of Xmas letters to reply to. I think we had more than ever this year. Joe, in his letter of 29th, says he is alright and we must not worry about him. Am glad to hear he is better for the change but I am not satisfied yet. We have bottled the honey sent from Vryburg. It was not quite such a sticky job as I anticipated. We filled about ten two pound bottles. They hold more than two pounds.

Yesterday I checked and balanced the Library, Church and my own books and found them all in order. Shops reopened today so we are getting back to normal. Olive is still at Port Elizabeth.

My unnamed friend – Public Benefactor No. 2 I call him – sent me £5 to purchase "comforts" for non churchgoers – down and outs – non Europeans. So I had 18 parcels of groceries of 2/6 value made up and 12 to the value of 5/-. I got the Location Superintendent to collect the most suitable recipients.

Aunt Eliza has kindly suggested our going to her for supper on 11th but I do not think we shall as it will mean extra work etc for her and I do not want Mom to make any arrangements for any "celebrations" as she has no one to help her either. So we will just let the day pass as any other

and be thankful for the mercies we do enjoy. Edith Collett would be 70 on 18th. We have not heard if Eric and Freda are coming down for Uncle Owen's and Aunt Kate's Golden Wedding. We shall send our greetings in due course. Lynne phoned whilst I was out just now. She has enjoyed her holiday and had just got back to work. After breakfast we had a very happy surprise visit from Cyril Brown who was with Harold in the Standard Bank Vryburg. He was on his way to Groenkloof. He had some breakfast and stayed to dinner. He was interested in seeing the photo of his father in the Council chamber etc. No more room on this sheet.

Cyril has retired on pension from the bank and his hobby is playing the piano. He is living in his own house at Sea Point. He left by mixed train in the afternoon for Fish River where George Collett is sending down a mule cart to take him to Groenkloof to see Hilda and her parents who are visiting there. He has never been to Groenkloof before. He is going to Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth and then home. It was very interesting talking over old Vryburg days. He has been there more recently than we have. He was eight years old when he left Cradock. He tells me old Mr Holden of Somerset East is passing here on Saturday morning on his way back from Durban. I will try to see him as he is a very old friend of the family. He is only 91, and is still chairman or member of about a dozen committees in Somerset East.

The cake Dot sent us for Xmas we did not open until we returned from Fish River. We are still enjoying it very much. It was not too rich and has kept well, Aunt Eliza has also enjoyed it. Douglas thinks he sees Arthur in a photo in The Star of December 9th. I am sending it round for you to see if you recognise him. Kingsley has come out in the first section of Standard 7 and next year he will sit for the J.C. Douglas says Joe is welcome to go there for as long as he likes.

Talking of honey, at Grass Ridge Uncle Dudley said some time ago they found bees in the loft and the comb reached from the roof to the ceiling of the dwelling house. I think he said they got a lot of honey and of course removed the nest. Grace was not so fortunate, they opened their hives and drew a blank. The job of bottling the honey we got from Douglas was not such a sticky job as anticipated. You know how I dislike getting my fingers sticky. Jean is at East London with some school chums. Although their seats were booked, there was no accommodation so they had to wait for another train. At Xmas, Dot entertained about 30 on their lawn in the evening. They also visited one of the Amms farms to see their herd of one thousand pigs. A farmer with an appropriate name! It is not often we hear of Reg having car trouble but it did on that visit but they eventually got home on their own power.

This sheet I commenced before breakfast, this Wednesday. We have received presents of cakes, cookies etc from Evelyn, Dot and now a box of delicacies has arrived from Grace addressed to me. For all these tokens of your love and affection, please accept our loving thanks.

On Xmas Day I typed three airmail letters to the three grandsons up north. I have kept all the letters received from them since they left. Perhaps they may like to have them when they return. Whilst at Grass Ridge, Mom and Aunt Jessie placed flowers on the parents' graves. I also went once with Mom. The "red-hot pokers" were in flower and made a grand show. Owing to the abundant rains they have had, the veldt was looking grand. Uncle Gervase had supper with us last evening and said his reaping was delayed by too much rain. He has an abundance of fruit on the farm.

Miss Metcalf has returned from Port Elizabeth and says Olive is ever so much better. She (Olive) is staying indefinitely with Mrs Whittal. Miss Metcalf is going to Cape Town at the end of this week but expects to be back about the end of the month. There is to be a special Council meeting at 11. Our Park Keeper has given notice to leave I am sorry to say. He has done excellent work since he took over the park.

I have now ten years complete copies of my weekly dear alls. I wonder if ever I or anyone else will ever have time to re-read them. Rev Sorrie was to have taken the evening service next Sunday but he came along yesterday afternoon saying he was suffering from another head effect and could not face it so I have to fill the bill once more. He is certainly in better health than when he first came to Cradock. Mrs Sorrie finds the heat here very trying.

One of the birds – carved out of ox horns – that has been standing in my bird bath has at last rotted at the base. I must be satisfied with the remaining one. I got these when at Potgietersrus years ago. They have often been admired.

We gave little Ann Booth a piece of material for Xmas and her Aunt has made such a nice little dress of it. Mom gave her some of her tatting and it looks very sweet. She is going to start school this term. She is only six but such a sweet little girl.

We have not heard from Mary this Xmas but Aunt Eliza and Ernest had telegrams from her so no doubt she is alright. You must please excuse all mistakes. I have never had a lesson in typing. We are both keeping well. Mom is getting over her recent tummy troubles and hope there will not be any recurrence. We are taking the precaution of boiling all the water we drink. If any letters com from you today, I fear they will have to wait next week before I can answer them.

Lots of love and best wishes to all the circle from

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Craddock
as Wednesday January 12th, 1944

My dear All,

[It is Monday evening, the evening before one of the most important days of my life - the day before I was born. I only got so far when I was interrupted by a phone call from Dulcie Moorcroft. Joy had had a fright at the Church where she had gone to practise on the organ about six p.m. An old coloured man and his son were attracted by the music and entered the church by the side door and listened. The old man evidently belonged to the Coloured church in the Location. He knew about the change of minister etc. However the son approached the organ and took off his jacket when of course Joy did a bolt for the door. He did not touch her. So Mom and I went down to the church and asked Ernest to accompany us in case of need. The side door was still open and the organ door open. We could find nothing wrong but shall make further enquiries as Joy knows the name of the man.

It is now Tuesday morning and the sun is shining in the dining room door over my left shoulder. It looks as though we are in for another hot day. The heat has been very trying lately but of course we must expect it. We have had very little rain so far this month.

Yesterday afternoon we received a wire from Kroonstad conveying congratulations for which many thanks. A number of letters also came from members of the family, all of which will be acknowledged in due course. We have only asked Rev and Mrs Sorrie to have morning tea as it makes far too much work even with the maid here. If any other visitors should come in, they will be welcome but I am not anxious for them to give any unnecessary trouble. We do miss the help Mrs Armstrong used to give on such occasions. Am glad to say that Mom has quite recovered from her recent upset. We are not taking any more apricots this season. We have not had any crop of figs so far and the vines are developing enormous amount of wood which was cut away. One evening I attempted to rake some of it together but soon found it too much for me and had a very bad night in consequence. Mom got rather a fright during the night but I am alright again now. I weighed myself on 7th and am down to 143 now, three pounds less than I was in February last year.

Our new Minister is not able to start his work as he had to go to hospital for a slight op. This has not healed yet and it may be another week or two before he can come. Rev Sorrie had promised to take last Sunday evening service and Mr Phillip the morning. Mr Sorrie came along on Tuesday saying his nerves were giving him trouble and he could not fulfil his appointment. Mr Phillips, who was to have conducted the morning service, was taken ill on Friday night and his wife let me know the following morning that he was unable to do anything. We managed to get a substitute from the Premier, a Mr Galloway, a Presbyterian, who did very nicely. I took the evening. This makes the 46th time I have supplied in town and three times in country appointments. Plans have to be made for the next two weeks at least.

Breakfast time Grace phoned greetings from all there. Jean was expected home from East London on Saturday. David has passed 1st class in his matric and Hal has passed in his J.C. Grace's message was followed at 8.20 by a phone from Aunt Katie at Grass Ridge. Sorry they could not come in but sent heart greetings. Very kind of them to think of me. Her sister is passing through tomorrow to Grahamstown so I may go over to see her. Ruth has written for the day. They hear from Denis twice a week. He is still up north and well. Lynne phoned the day she got back from Vryburg reporting all well and had had a good time. Evelyn writes about how they spent Xmas and New Year. They missed the two boys of course. The Amblers were with them and all had a happy time. We have sent a wire to Redlands congratulating Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate on their Golden Wedding today. I wonder how many of their family will be with them. We have asked Aunt Eliza to come down this evening. Hope she will. Joe has seen a good deal of Aunt Emmie at Cape Town. He says she is still so independent. She has had a bad attack of flue and was not able to go to Gordons Bay with Joyce as had been arranged. She was to have gone later and hope it materialised. Have had a letter from her conveying her good wishes.

Morning tea time. Some post has just come. One from Denis dated January 2nd. He is still up north. He wishes me to convey his greetings to all his relations. He says they are strictly

rationed with airmail letter cards so cannot write to all. He sits for another exam on 17th when he hopes to be drafted to a Regiment. He is stationed far from Arthur and Rex and consequently has not been able to contact them yet.

Rev and Mrs Sorrie have just left, Mr and Mrs Aird called for them by motor. We have enjoyed their company. They were glad to hear of the conversation we had with Grace this morning and also the note from Mrs Irons who celebrated her 80th anniversary on Sunday last. We have just received a wire from Leslie and Gwen Hudson. Very kind of them to think of us. Aunt Eliza has written a very sweet letter. Hope she may still come down in the cool of the evening.

I told the Mayor recently that I was seriously thinking of resigning from the Council but he hoped I would not do so but rather retain my seat until the end of August when my term of office naturally falls due. He said it would only cause extra expense in having an extra election and whoever was elected, would only hold office until August when the annual election took place. I have therefore decided as soon as convenient after the Ratepayers' meeting to be held at the end of this month to ask for three months' leave of absence and renew the application at the expiry of the three months. Another decision I have made is with regard to smoking. I have often been asked when I was going to commence that nasty habit. I replied that when I was seventy, I would think about it and when I was eighty, would decide. I have now decided that as I have managed to exist without ever having a pipe or cigarette in my mouth, that I can very well do without going through the unpleasant experience, which I am told, is suffered by all who indulge in the "weed". Let me say here that I am most thankful for all the mercies that God has blessed me with. I am very conscious of my many failings and shortcomings but I have tried to do my duty to one and all and however long I may be spared, I may be of some service or use in the world.

It is nearly four and I picture Joe and family at Cape Town station in a crowd of people scrambling for their seats. It is to be hoped they have a more comfortable journey back than they had going down. I am glad he was able to say in a letter received yesterday that he was feeling better. Aunt Emmie also says he was looking much better than when he arrived in Cape Town. I wonder when we shall see them again. I forget if I mentioned that Douglas has been appointed as official advisor to the Land Bank in Vryburg. I guess this will entail a good deal of travelling – and I hope a suitable fee. It certainly shows the confidence the Government has in his experience and ability.

Olive writes from Port Elizabeth that she is enjoying herself and the sea air is doing her a lot of good. No word of her returning yet.

I understand that 85 packages for the new Minister have arrived today. Some job for them to do the unpacking when they come.

Evelyn says the Amblers are leaving for Pretoria on 12th, they have had a nice change at the farm, Gwen complains that when she goes to Grass Ridge, she puts on weight.

It is now 6.30 a.m. Wednesday. I did not finish my story of the days' happenings. For one thing they were not nearly finished when I left off in the afternoon. Mr Kelly called about five to wish me many happy returns of the day. Then Alison dropped in and listened to the six p.m. news and chatted for a while. She brought our copy of the Midland News containing a paragraph of greetings to Mr and Mrs J. Owen Collett on their Golden Wedding and also to me on my 80th anniversary. I had not made any public intimation of the fact. Mom and I had a quiet supper but soon after, the telephone started ringing. The Mayor and Mayoress were the first to greet us, then the Town Clerk, then Council Michau, M.P.C. Then Mrs Kelly and her mother. Mrs Craig called so we sat out on the lawn and chatted with them for some time. Then Aunt Eliza came in her chariot – Mr Thomas bringing her. Just before their arrival, I should have said that a messenger came with three lovely bunches of flowers from the Park. One was from the Mayor and Councillors, another from the Town Clerk and Municipal Employees and the third from the Park Curator and family. They were greatly admired. Aunt Eliza had never met Mrs Craig or Mrs Kelly and they were much interested in her. Mrs Raynier also came – she did not know there was anything on. She sits at our table at the Premier. She has been suffering from a sore foot for some time but ventured to walk round as she felt rather lonely. We sat outside until Aunt Eliza thought it

was too cold for her so we all came in and chatted in the dining room. Mr Kelly called for his ladies and shortly after the Magistrate and wife called. So we all went into the lounge and enjoyed the rest of the evening. Aunt Eliza had not met the Phillips (Magistrate) and they were very pleased to see and chat with her. They greatly admired the flowers which had been sent. The Magistrate tells me he expects to be transferred during the year. His wife is exceedingly nice and very friendly. Whilst they were here, Councillor Fred Michau called but would not come in as he was not dressed for calling. I greatly appreciate the calls of the two Michaus as both are in opposite political camps to me but we get on exceedingly well in public works.

Mom has had her cup of early coffee, the seven o'clock news has just come over and I am still at my desk tapping the keys. It is not often happen that one reaches 80 so perhaps you will excuse. Aunt Eliza stayed till nearly 9.30 and left, well wrapped up for Market Street. I hope she will be none the worse for her outing. I feel honoured by her visit. This is the third in our family to reach the 80 year mark. Eliza is the eldest with 84 to her credit, Uncle Joe was 81½. I told the Magistrate I was looking to ease off some of my jobs but he assured me that the town would not let me. However we shall see all in good time. The day was perfect so far as the weather was concerned, the maximum was 87 and minimum 54, not too hot or cold. Everything passed off nicely, there was no extra cooking and we did not serve refreshments in the evening so it was not much extra work for anyone. Everything was quite informal, no speeches or anything. Perhaps there may be a few callers today but nothing has been arranged. We phoned to Mr Stock a few times but have not been able to get any reply.

In conclusion, I must thank you all for your loving good wishes, I am sure all of you were having us in your thoughts through the day. I realise more than ever how much I have to be thankful for all the mercies that I have been favoured with. Aunt Jessie was saying when last in town that one of the family should come and live with us but that I told her that was impossible, they all have their own lives to live and as for the grandchildren, most of them were still at school and the others have their way to make in the world.

Evelyn says they had a very jolly Xmas and New Year. Lynne was very happy and full of fun. Before she went home she told us a secret and we were not to say anything about it until after she had been home. Now she has been and no one has said anything about it since. I guess you are curious to know what it is. She is not engaged, at least so far as I know, but some little time ago she had the mole removed from her chin. I guess they were all surprised. We shall be interested in knowing what happened. There were 12 to Xmas dinner, 3 Amblers, 4 Shorts and 5 Butlers. Of course they were sad at not having the boys with them. It poured with rain on New Year's Eve when they all went to town, some to bio others to a dance. I think it was very late before they got home.

The last letter we had from Joe was dated 7th. They are due at Uitenhage about six Thursday morning – a long and trying journey, especially with the children. He had only been to the sea two or three times and twice into town. He can always find odd jobs to do when he comes home and wherever he goes, it is the same. Am glad he saw a good deal of Aunt Emmie, who has been ill again with an attack of flu but has since gone to Gordons Bay to stay with Joyce for a few days. Joe was looking to take a party of them up the cable way if weather permitted before returning. Mom and I went up once shortly after it was opened.

After dinner. I went to the station to see Aunt Katie's sister but the train was an hour late. Saw her for a few minutes. She says Uncle Gervase was at the Golden Wedding at Redlands, about 60 people there. Freda and children were there but only one son-in-law could get down.

More letters have come this morning and I have not been up town for the last two days.

I have not been sleeping too well for some time so the last few days, I have been sleeping in the spare room which is quieter and nice and cool. Dogs and railway engines blowing off steam etc often kept me awake.

Aunt Eliza's last words to us on leaving last night was that both of us should spend the day in bed. Neither of us have done so. I was up as usual at 6. Mr Stock came to morning tea this

morning. Lynne phoned this morning. It took about five minutes before we got through. She said no one noticed the absence of her mole.

I must really stop now although I would like to continue. Letters have come from Ted, Grace, Douglas and Dot. I must answer them as soon as I can.

Again I thank all of you for your kind remembrances and good wishes. I am not unmindful of the fact that three of my brothers have been called "home" practically without any warning and no one can tell when the summons may come this way, whenever it does come, I hope I shall be found ready.

My dearest love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday January 19th, 1944

My dear All,

Tuesday morning, a beautiful fresh morning but unfortunately I overslept myself by about ¼ hour. Must try to catch up as there is much I want to do, being Committee day and that means extra work.

Sometimes most of us think that things move very slowly. The past week one event has done the reverse. On Thursday evening I think it was, just as we were going to retire, warning came through that a trunk call was on its way. It was Grace calling and said they had been thinking that it would be a comfort to us if Pam came and stayed with us and went to Rocklands as a day scholar. It was a great surprise as neither of us had ever thought of such a thing. Of course, Grace went to Rocklands for a year when we were at Vryburg and so knows something of the environment and it seemed to us a very nice suggestion and we wrote agreeing to it. Sunday evening about 9.30 we were going to post again when the phone went again and Grace said Pam was quite keen on coming. She will be in the J.C. class. I have told Grace I am afraid that neither of us will be much assistance to her in her lessons but we shall do all we can to make her happy and look after her. She will be sure to make friends with some of the nice girls at the school. So we expect by the end of the week she will be with us. We shall probably give up going to the Premier for dinner as I think the school only comes out at about two p.m. So we will change our hours to fit in with hers.

On Friday evening we had a very sharp thunderstorm. 110 points were registered in about half an hour. Our workroom leaked a little over the table and also a little over Mom's writing desk but no serious damage was done. Aunt Eliza's kitchen always leaks badly. Joyce will be back again about the end of the week. Raymond does not want to be late for school.

Joe and family got home safely last Thursday morning. He has seen a doctor who is putting him off doing overtime work. He has to be examined again as the Dr is not satisfied that he has got to the root of his trouble.

I forgot to mention that during the storm, all the lights in town went out but light was soon restored. No one was injured. We always keep a lamp and candles in readiness for such an emergency.

Our new minister is not expected to arrive before the 25th. It has been awkward as Rev Sorrie has not been able to help out with the services.

We hear that Freda and children were at the Golden Wedding but all the children and in-laws and grandchildren were not there. They had a good time.

Douglas has been appointed adviser to the Land Bank in Vryburg. Joe asks if there would be any chance of his (Joe's) getting a fully stocked farm up there in consequence!

Wednesday morning. Dorothea has secured the appointment as Art Mistress at the Wykham College, Maritzburg. If any of you are passing that way, you must be sure to look her up. We are sorry way has not opened for her to come and see us as naturally we are anxious to get to know our granddaughter-in-law. Gay tells us how far a small pig she bought before Xmas went. It cost 15/- and fed I forget how many hungry souls. It was a good investment. Did I tell you Ted's mother celebrated her 80th anniversary two days before mine. She is keeping well at Grace's. Ted has a motorbike and is looking out for a sidecar. Nothing definite has been decided what the two boys are going to do. The military are anxious to get them for military training and when they are 19, they would be drafted into the army. They both passed their exams.

Later. No post from Grace so expect they are too busy getting Pam ready. Perhaps they will phone this evening. I saw the Principal this morning. Has promised to send me a prospectus of the school this afternoon. Thinks it would be easy to arrange for Pam to have mid-day meal at the school if we wish it. All their matric pupils passed this year. J.C. results are not out yet. Enid was here yesterday afternoon with Harvey Brown's Una, she is in Standard 7. Says there is a very nice lot of girls in J.C. this year. Pam can have as much tennis as she likes at Rocklands. She should bring her bike. Letter from Dot all good news from there. I have had a very busy morning, calling on 14 places including Aunt Eliza. This afternoon I have to go and see Aunt Charlotte at the Old Peoples

Home but I shall take a taxi for that trip. Mom has asked Mr and Mrs Campbell down to afternoon tea this afternoon so must finish off my letter and leave anything else for the next edition. I hope I did not tire you too much with last week's long epistle. A letter from Lynne this morning reports all well with her. My stock of text cards finishes with this week's letter. Have not enough to go all round. We are both well and hope to hear from all in due course.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday January 26th, 1944

My dear All,

Pam is here. It is just seven a.m. and she is getting her breakfast and will be off on her bike in time to be at school at eight. Now I must go back a bit so as to get the news into alignment. Her train was up to time on Saturday morning and we brought the bike over in the taxi as the tyres were flat. She has settled down quite comfortably in the workroom where she has the large table at her sole disposal. I hope she will be very comfortable. She has a nice journey down, not overcrowded and the train was up to time. She has grown considerably since we last saw her – the Golden Wedding. She is taller than me so both of us will have to look up to her. David, she says, is 6 ft 4 inches – what he will be when he stops growing I don't know. More changes are taking place in the home as both the boys are expecting to turn out to work very shortly. One is leaving on February 1st for Johannesburg to take a course of apprenticeship in the Postal engineering department and the other is looking to enter the Civil Service in the law department, I think. A new Postmaster has been appointed to Kroonstad, a Mr Impey. Pam thinks that perhaps next year Jean might come to school here. It would be nice for the two sisters to be together. I went with Pam to school on Monday. It took just a ¼ hour to walk, slowly of course as it is all up hill. Was introduced by the Principal to her class teacher, or at least to one of them, a Miss van Heerden, who promised to give her extra attention if such should be needed. She will be taking the commercial course. Incidentally, all the matric girls passed their recent exam from Rocklands. Boys' school was not quite so successful. Pam has got a list of books etc she will require. Fortunately she brought some with her which will save expense. She will come home about 10.30 for the first break and have a cup of tea. Yesterday she came home to dinner about 2 p.m. They had no homework the first day. So far we are planning to have a mid-day meal at home except on Sundays. We will keep her dinner warm for her.

Yesterday Aunt Kate and Beryl turned up unexpectedly. They left Rooispruit on Sunday by car for Uncle Gervase's and got a nasty puncture on the way. It was a terribly hot day – 101 in the shade, and they had trouble in getting the wheel off. This delayed them considerably. They slept at Gervase's and Saltpansdrift. Aunt Kate and Beryl came in by train whilst Uncle Gervase brought Uncle in by car. They have trucked the car from here to Port Elizabeth and hope to sell it at a good price. Two truck loads of furniture have been sent to Uitenhage from Rooispruit and they are anxious to get down to see to the unpacking etc. I managed to get the Stationmaster to wire to Uitenhage to ascertain if the goods had arrived. They had. So they went to the station last night at about ten to take the chance of getting a seat on the train and if not, they would come back and sleep here and go by today's train. They did not come back. They had dinner and supper with us. Beryl has a sore foot. It appears she had cut a corn which bled and caused blood poisoning. She went to Dr Scholtz and he discovered that the cause of the trouble was that she had a wisdom tooth extracted in Middelburg for which an injection was given. This had affected her whole system. She was not able to wear a shoe with comfort. However the trouble is abating. They went to see Aunt Eliza and Joyce in the afternoon. They are looking forward to their new home in Uitenhage. Uncle has bought two houses and rented another. Two of the married daughters will occupy one of the houses. There are a thousand "commercial" rose trees in the garden and they expect to make a considerable living out of selling flowers to Port Elizabeth.

On Thursday last week we had the pleasure of a visit from Uncle Dudley, Aunt Kate, Mrs Jubb and Joanie. She is down on leave and when she returns in a few days, will be Sister at Modderfontein Hospital. She has grown a very fine girl. Aunt Jessie also came in with Uncle Norman and had dinner with us.

Tuesday afternoon. Just time for a little more typing. We have just returned from the Parsonage awaiting the arrival of Rev and Mrs Karg. They expected to reach here between 5 and six. They actually arrived at ten past five, just the two of them. Their two daughters are working on the S.A.R. & H. as clerks in Grahamstown, one son is in the Air Force and I forget what the other is doing. They go to Fish River on Sunday morning for service and here in the evening.

Wednesday morning. I had to preside at the Council meeting last evening as the Mayor is away again. He will be back for the Ratepayers meeting tomorrow night when we are asking for authority to raise a loan of £138,500 for a waterborne sewage scheme. Our ex Mayor is opposing the scheme. I hope it goes through. We have spent a couple of years working at the scheme.

Dot in a recent letter speaks of having booked Norman on the waiting list for school at Pretoria. Joe and Blodwen are booking Roy for King Williamstown and Merle maybe going to a convent school (for which I am personally sorry). Pam has settled down quite nicely and says she likes the school. She does her homework in the afternoon. She comes on her bike to morning at about ten. Mr Papp, late of Tiger Kloof, invited Mom and me to dinner at the hotel this evening but we have asked him to spend the evening with us here instead.

Douglas and Evelyn's 26th wedding day on 29th.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as February 2nd, 1944

My dear All,

Pam has had her breakfast and in a few minutes will be off on her bike to school. She says she "slept like a log" last night after the hottest day we have had this season, 103 in the shade. It is now beautifully cool and I hope some rain has fallen somewhere near as it is badly wanted. The heat has been very trying. The gardens are suffering. We have not had a boy for a month and weeds are flourishing. Our figs are very nice. Pam, being so tall, is able to pick them quite easily. She took a basket full for the soldiers passing by in the morning train on Saturday. She is saving me a lot of walking, she is very quick on her bike. She delivered eggs for me and does quite a lot to save my legs. She went to Sunday School and always goes with us to Church. Am hoping she will be a strength to the junior choir.

Rev Karg took service at Fish River on Sunday morning and for the first time, Aunt Jessie did not have the Minister to dinner. I think she is feeling that it is too much for her. There are often a dozen or more after service. So this time, Gladys Colling had the honour. Aunt Jessie told Mr Briggs at the last service he took that she was giving up playing the organ. Enid was saying that she thought Aunt Jessie was failing in health. She still sends in a box – generally six dozen – eggs a week which I dispose of for her.

Our ratepayers meeting on Thursday night was well attended and I was not home till just on 11 p.m. By show of hands, we won but a poll was demanded and that will take place on 17th. I think we shall win through. Some of the opposition arguments were exhibitions of the speaker's ignorance. They were led by ex-Mayor de Kock.

Rev Karg made a very fine impression on preaching his first sermon on Sunday night. There was a good congregation and we all hope he will stay with us a full term of years. I took the morning service. It was uncomfortably hot so far as temperature was concerned. We are asking Mr and Mrs Karg and the Sorries to spend the evening here on Friday – Mom's birthday. Pam will be able to help with the tea etc.

Joyce was along on Monday afternoon. She has got very sunburnt at the coast. Dudley has not received any of the parcels she has sent him since he was a P.O.W. She has spent many pounds in comforts. However she is sending him another now. The last news from him was that he was working in a sugar factory. Quite a number of local people have at last heard from their men, Uncle Norman and Jack included.

Grace's two boys have left home now. David has gone to Roberts Heights for 2 weeks special course of signallers training and Harold to Johannesburg on trial as an apprentice in the Post Office engineering department. Only Jean and baby Charles are left at home. Mrs Irons Senior is still with them and is keeping well. Dot writes quite approvingly of Pam's staying with us and we are enjoying having her. She hopes she will stay the three years and take her matric here. Perhaps Jean will either join or follow her.

Mr Paap, formerly of Tiger Kloof, spent an evening with us on the lawn last week. He has a lot of travelling to do. He is always very interesting.

Dot says Gweneth Jennings (Legg) who worked for me in Vryburg has had to go to Cape Town for a serious "op". It is costing £25 per week!

We are glad to hear that as a result of being overhauled by her Dr in Cape Town, Aunt Emmie is considered to be in fairly good health. Dr says she may go on for another ten years. That is good news indeed. Am sorry to say she has been having "turns" as she calls them rather more frequently than usual. I wish she could live in Cradock where we might be able to help. I do not like her being alone so much. Gladys has also been laid up for a while and to make matters more difficult, her servant was also away.

Joe was hoping Roy could go to Dale College as a boarder. At first they said there was no vacancy but a few days before school opened, they wired that he could go. Unfortunately it did not allow sufficient time to get all the necessary clothing etc ready in time so his going has been put off

for a year. Aunt Kate Owen and Beryl were saying, when here, that the two years Pat stayed with Aunt Emmie at Cape Town had made such a wonderful improvement in the lad.

Olive returned from Port Elizabeth last week and is at present at her sister's at Roodehoogte. She expects to go away again soon but her plans are not fixed yet.

Joe is off overtime work for the present. He is under medical treatment. He has to take three bottles of medicine. They cannot find anything organically wrong with him so we hope the shorter hours which means less work and more rest will greatly benefit his condition. If this does not do what is necessary, he must seriously consider what is the next best thing to be done. He is not a young man anymore. Birthday letters for Mom have started to arrive today.

2 p.m. Tuesday. What a contrast. It is 20 degrees cooler today than yesterday. I don't think I shall attempt another sheet this week. I must not tire you with long epistles. We are both well and send lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday February 9th, 1944

My dear All,

The event of the week of course has been Mom's 82nd anniversary. Letters came from Douglas, Evelyn, Joe, in good time, Ruth, Grace, Dot, Reg, Alan and Norman. All very hearty and welcome. Douglas phoned whilst we were at evening service and talked to Pam. Lynne also phoned and for the first time, we had a conversation with Dot from far away Potgietersrus. Her voice was not as clear as any of the others, presumably on account of the distance or atmospherics. Aunt Letty got Denys – Florrie's son – to phone as she does not like to use the phone owing to her deafness. Ruth sent a nice shawl and Joyce also did the same but in a different colour. Letters also came from Aunt Rosa – who has not been well lately. Mom will be kept busy answering all her friends. We only asked Rev Karg and Mrs and Rev and Mrs Sorrie to spend the evening with us. Pam served the tea before they left about 10.15. They were very jolly and seemed to enjoy the evening. It did not involve much washing up and everything was cleared away before we went to bed. We asked Aunt Eliza to come along as well but am sorry to say she did not see her way to doing so. Mrs Ranier dropped in not knowing we were having friends so did not stay long. Mom unfortunately dropped her top plate during the day and the dentist was not able to fix them up until the next day. Mrs Karg is very quiet – does not enjoy very good health. Mr Karg is full of beans and we all think he will do very well for both town and country congregations. They have four children, the eldest and youngest are girls – both working in Grahamstown on the S.A.R., two boys, twins, one is on active service and I think the other is studying. Rev Sorrie has not been well for a while again, he loses his voice and seems nervous about himself. He was going to see Dr Lane in Port Elizabeth but has not felt well enough to go.

Ruth writes that she hears regularly from Denis. Dorothea has passed her National Teacher's exam with distinction. She is now in Maritzburg. I hope Muriel will be able to look her up sometime. I am very sorry we have not got to know her yet. I am the only one who has seen her and it is doubtful when we shall be able to meet. It is her birthday on 24th and Ruth's husband's on 20th. Ruby Trollip (Mrs Atkinson now) has paid Ruth a visit and enjoyed a good old talk over old Vryburg days. Her son is now at school in Grahamstown.

Grace has sent us such a nice photo of all the family recently taken before the family gets scattered. They all came out well. Ted is apparently quite white. Grace looks very well, David and Harold are sitting. I don't know if the camera could not have got them in full length as they are both over six feet. Baby Charles is between them with a hand on a knee of each. Pam is behind her Mother – taller than I am – and Jean looks as perky as can be standing beside Ted. They all make a very nice picture.

Dot says they have been congratulating one of their lady friends who has just passed her 70th milestone. She compares her with Mom and Mom is the most sprightly old lady she knows. She suggests that people should pay 1/- a time to see her and 5/- to shake hands with her. I suggest a fee of £1 if anyone wants to kiss her. Both of the last two Ministers kissed Aunt Eliza when they came to say goodbye to her! Aunt Eliza is keeping wonderfully well. Joyce too.

Joe has been helping Uncle Owen fix up their pictures etc. They have been feeling the heat very trying. Joe is not working overtime now. It means a loss of about £10 per month I guess. Dot's Norman says he wants to be a science teacher when he grows up. He says he is as happy in the Afrikaans section of his school as in the English.

Pam had her first game of tennis recently and says she was the best player apart from the teacher. She is working well at her studies. She comes down for tea about five minutes past ten and back again. She is keeping well and lively and is getting to know some of the girls. One came along with her yesterday and enjoyed some figs. It will be her birthday next week, we shall try to have a few friends in for her in the evening.

The meeting of the Ratepayers decided to take a poll – election by ballot – next Thursday regarding the sewage scheme. We are hoping the scheme will be adopted by a large majority. Mr Dodd called recently and had morning tea. He enquired after all of you. Nessie's son is on service.

Pam has plenty of letters from home and we are so kept in touch with what is going on there. Harold is staying at the Y.M.C.A. hostel at Jeppe, Johannesburg. David is back from his two weeks signalling training. They have had terrible storms up in the Transvaal, 12 to 14 inches in a few days. We had two points on Monday and we are needing rain badly.

Am glad to say we are both keeping well. Pam has just left for tennis.

4 p.m. Tuesday. I have to go to a Red Cross meeting so will close with lots of love to all,

Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday February 16th 1944

My dear All,

According to my thermometer, yesterday was the hottest day of the season. 104 degrees was registered for the past 24 hours. It did not seem so hot to me but I have never known my instruments to tell stories. We are needing some of the rain that has been falling in the Transvaal during the past few weeks. We hear that Johannesburg had from 12 to 17 inches in a fortnight – more than we get in a whole year.

I weighed myself recently and during the last month, have lost 2½ pounds. Pam weighed herself at the chemist's last week and scaled 116½. I don't think she has lost any during the three weeks she has been with us. Mom has not weighed for some years!

This week we have shifted our dining room table round and it now stands long-ways with the room. We find that in the winter, the other way is best as Mom then rests on the sofa in front of the fire. At present the sofa is in the long passage, which is the coolest place in the house.

Pam says David is home again after his special course of signalling training at Roberts Heights. Harold is serving a term as probationer in Johannesburg and is staying at the Y.M.C.A. Hostel, 46 Mordaunt Street, Jeppe. If any of you are in the neighbourhood, do look him up.

Lynne says she may be able to pay us another visit in the sweet by and by. We shall be pleased to see her. No one has mentioned the passing of dear old Mr T.B. Collen. We did see in the Stellander and advertisement thanking friends for floral tributes and Lynne has mentioned that Mrs Collen is going to live in Queenstown. Sylvia Collen is engaged to some military man and may be going to England.

Aunt Eliza kindly sent us a birthday cake. It was made from a recipe given her by an old Croydon schoolfellow, Robinson, who lived at Peckham, where we used to visit in our young days. The cake was very nice and greatly appreciated. Pam has been up a few times to Market Street to see her and Joyce. Once she went in shorts after playing tennis. Aunt Eliza was amused and wondered what our Mother would say had she seen such. Pam says the sports teacher does not like the girls appearing in shorts so I suppose they will be put in "cold storage".

Dot says Mr and Mrs Hudson Senior are going to East London for the month of March and April. I wonder how they have fared during the heavy rains. We heard over the wireless that the Harts River was in flood. Douglas, too, has had good rains recently. He hopes his crops will be saved this season.

We are having a few girlfriends in on Friday night for Pam's birthday. We cannot have it on Thursday – her birthday – as there is to be a welcome social to Rev and Mrs Karg that evening. I think there will be about a dozen of us altogether. We have asked Joyce and Joan Urie to come as well. Joan Urie is going to Rhodes University shortly for her B.A. and other exams. She has been the star pupil at Rocklands for the past few years.

A joint letter from Joe and Blodwen this morning tells of their visiting Uncle Owen and family in their new home and showing them some of his cine films. Those of Eric and Freda had special interest for them. Joe is thinking of taking up bee keeping but I do not think it would be allowed in the town as it might be dangerous to the children etc. Joe does not say anything about his state of health since he knocked off overtime. The heat has been very trying there as everywhere else. Last evening (Monday) I met a Mr Dick who knows Joe and Blodwen. He attended a meeting with reference to a claim the Church has against the St John Ambulance Brigade for the use of the Sunday School Hall which has been hanging on for some years. At last I think we have come to some settlement. He has been to their house. He is retiring on pension shortly. He says old hands like himself have to do work in the workshops to a given time limit the same as younger men who have just joined the service. This is of course unreasonable as with increasing years, they cannot be expected work so quickly.

Mary is looking forward to her holiday next month, we do not know if she will go to Graaff Reinet first but most likely she will. Mom had a letter from Aunt Lettie for her birthday, also one from Aunt Rosa.

Pam has had a cold the last few days but today (Wednesday) it is much better. She has early coffee every morning before six thirty and breakfast is ready for her by 7. She generally is away on her bike by 7.45. Most days she come home for morning tea at ten when they have 20 minutes break. She is applying herself well to her studies. We have not made any plans for Easter but are open to suggestions. Good Friday is April 7th.

Am glad to say we are both keeping well and do not find having Pam with us involves much extra work and gives us a good deal of pleasure.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday February 23rd, 1944

My dear All,

It is Aunt Emmie's 78th anniversary. Hope she had a happy day. Am sorry to say her health has not been too good of late. Her eyesight is far from what it was some time ago. She is getting very deaf too. We are hoping she will go and live with Gladys some day.

You will be sorry to hear that a terrible tragedy has occurred since I last wrote. On Wednesday afternoon, Pam and I walked up to see Aunt Eliza and Joyce and I took my copy of Dear All which Aunt Eliza reads and sends on to Cape Town. Mr Thomas met us just past the Victoria Hotel and spoke to us. I casually remarked that he was walking too quickly for a man of his age. He has just recently passed his 56th birthday. He was soon back at 29 Market Street. A shower of rain fell at the time and he went outside to cover the pigeon coop. He seemed normal to me but shortly after we left – a few minutes after six – he complained to Aunt Eliza that he was feeling ill. I had taken a comic skit on our sanitary scheme and Aunt Eliza wanted him to see it but he turned it down and would not look at it. Aunt Eliza suggested that he went and rested on his bed and she would give him a cup of tea. Joyce fortunately was home and evidently spotted that there was something seriously wrong. She had difficulty in getting him to rest – wanted to go away but she forced him to lie down. About seven she went to the public phone at the Victoria Hotel and asked Dr Scholtz to come along. He arrived about 7.30 and gave him an injection but he was soon delirious and became unconscious. Joyce sat up with him all night and at 3.30, he passed away, never having gone out of his room. Whilst I was having my breakfast before eight, a note from Joyce came by the servant maid saying he was dead. I went up as soon as I could after phoning to the Dr. We decided to have the funeral at 10.30 on Friday morning. I ordered the Undertaker to remove the body as soon as possible to the funeral parlour and arranged with the Baptist Minister to conduct the service. I took possession of his keys and met his girl assistant just as she was going to open the shop. Of course I consulted his Attorney, Mr Tunbridge and he advised closing the shop until we could get in touch with his Executor, if there was one. I looked through his papers in his safe at the shop and could find no trace of a will. His desk was crowded with papers, letters etc. An airgraph letter was unfinished in his typewriter for Australia which he had commenced the day before. Aunt Eliza stood up to the terrible shock wonderfully well and has remained calm and collected all through. She and Joyce made diligent search through his desk in his bedroom and about nine p.m. Joyce brought down the will which they had found in an unaddressed envelope at the bottom of one of his drawers in his room. I am opening all his post and dealing with same as best I can. It is quite evident that when his will was made (1929) he was in Natal and we know he was very ill then and he came out for his health. He appointed a Presbyterian Minister as his Executor and I have sent him a long wire today and hope to have a prompt reply. Of course Thomas had no idea of opening or running a business then. The will is quite irrelevant to present conditions. I am not in a position to even suggest how his affairs may turn out. His last year's stock lists have not been completed and most likely a fresh stocktaking will have to be done. The girl assistant says she is not going to work anymore and Mr Thomas promised her a fortnight's holiday from March 15th. I am not at all anxious to have the job of winding up the business but on the other hand, I do not see anyone in town who can do it. The whole town was shocked when the news got out of his sudden death. So far I am working all day at his shop looking through his paper and wondering whatever to do with them but I hope strength sufficient for the task will be forthcoming.

You will also be sorry to hear that Raymond is at present out of school suffering from ringworm. He seems very bright except for the loss of Mr Thomas which he feels very much.

Now for something more cheerful. The church welcome to Rev and Mrs Karg on Thursday evening went off very successfully. The ministers of other churches were present and short speeches made. Of course the usual refreshments were in evidence. They have certainly made a very favourable impression.

Pam's birthday was also on Thursday but in view of the social, we observed it on Friday evening. Neither the Principal of Rocklands or the Convent would let the relations out for the evening but three of the day scholars Pam has got to know accepted the invitation. Joyce and Raymond and Joan Urie also came. We asked Aunt Jessie to let us have some of her beautiful stereoscopic slides that have stood for years on her piano to show the children and they were very interested in them. They had never seen anything like them. Aunt Jessie and Uncle Gervase and Dudley and Aunt Kate all came in for the social the previous evening. Pam had a lot of letters and some presents and I think she enjoyed herself and her friends. I am afraid I was not very entertaining as the death of Mr Thomas has given me lots to think about.

I have written the above since supper this Monday evening as I shall be busy at the shop most of tomorrow. It is now Tuesday morning. It is quite dark when I get up, breakfast is ready for Pam and the early news (7 a.m.) is just coming over. Later, evening. I was not able to add to this all day and now it is just about bed time. Mom is setting the table for breakfast, Pam has just gone to bed, Mrs Ranier has been down to listen to a concert in which a nephew is supposed to be taking part but she did not know what band to tune into so it was a sort of washout.

I was at the shop by nine and soon after, received a telegram from the Rev Philips to whom I had wired the day before about accepting the Executorship of Mr Thomas' will. He accepts but in the joint opinion of Mr Tunbridge and myself, I have written at length explaining the position and must now await his reply. Do not think that I am anxious for the job, I can see great difficulties in the way. The girl assistant left last night – says her nerves are gone in and all her people are going away for a holiday to East London, so I am all alone. I suppose it will be a week or so before anything definite is settled as to the future. I am not worrying about the business but just doing the best I can. Wednesday morning 23rd. I wonder what today will bring forth? I pray for sufficient strength to combat or to carry out whatever duty lies before me. I am indeed thankful for the health and strength so far granted me. I know there are difficulties ahead but it is no good trying to get over them beforehand. May each day's need be accompanied with sufficient strength "just for the day". Aunt Emmie has written to Aunt Eliza sympathising in the great shock which Mr Thomas' sudden death must have given her. I saw her late yesterday afternoon and she is keeping quite calm. I am glad to say she was not financially interested in his business. Ernest also got clear after the fire about four years ago. Mr Thomas approached me once but there was nothing doing in that direction.

I have often wondered why Grace's house was called "Parma". I thought it was a combination of Pa and Ma but Pam tells me it is named after some special variety of violets grown in Italy.

I am glad to say that the ballot last Thursday resulted in an overwhelming victory in favour of the sewage scheme. Unfortunately the opponents had introduced politics and were soundly defeated. We are hoping there will not be any undue delay in getting a move on. I hope to see the scheme completed. It is estimated to cost £138,500 and will take from 18 months to two years to complete when once started.

I go to the shop each morning about 8.30 and work till nearly one and again from 3 to any time. Of course the door is kept shut and it is very stuffy as there is no ventilation except from the fanlight over the door. There is no through draught. His desk is in a corner at the back and I have to have the electric light burning all day. The Executor, who lives in Durban, will, if he finally decides to tackle the job, be some time before he could arrive and not only so, it will take time before the Master of the Supreme Court will be able to issue Letters of Administration. Everything has to go to Cape Town and correspondence over such wide areas will take a lot of time.

I do not anticipate that I shall have any time to write again today but I hope the usual batch of letters from you will come to hand as usual. I, on my part, will do my best to keep you informed.

I forget if I referred to Pam's party. She and the few who came seemed to enjoy themselves. She has still a nasty cold and last night coughed a good deal. She went to school as usual this morning. It is now time for breakfast so must close with very dear love to all. We are both well.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 1st, 1944

My dear All,

Joe in his letter sent up by our next door neighbour – Kruger – who often comes up for a weekend, remarks on the quickness of the passing year. He find that he is getting old and the older he gets, the faster the time seems to fly. We old folk realise it still more. One sixth of the year gone and so much to do and so little done. However, we must be thankful that we are able to keep on keeping on. It is Tuesday morning and the milkman has not delivered the usual half gallon for the day. It is time for Pam to have her breakfast – which is ready except for the milk. Sometimes it is delivered at three in the morning so I fear something has gone wrong with the works. However she will not starve. Yesterday morning it was too wet for her to use her bike to school but she took sandwiches with and did not come home for morning tea. We had splendid rains on Saturday and Sunday totalling 1½ inches. On Saturday afternoon, Pam and I – armed with umbrellas – went to see Aunt Eliza. Joyce and Ray were at the bio. Aunt Eliza was quite well and had been busy tidying up in Mr Thomas' room. The bed had been dismantled and removed, the mattress disposed of and his table put in the middle of the room. There is a quantity of books and catalogues and each drawer seems full of papers etc. At present there is hardly any room at the shop for more stuff to be brought there so am letting it stay where it is for the present. As we returned, we were caught properly in a sharp shower and had to take shelter under the Victoria Hotel verandah. Then we made a dash for it and got as far as the bio opposite the Post Office just as the people were coming out. There were no taxis available so after waiting for a while we got as far as the C.H. corner and waited again at last reaching home without serious wetting. Sunday evening we all went to service with umbrellas up. The congregation was smaller than usual but the service was good. You will be sorry to hear that Joyce has been attacked by ringworm and is under treatment. It is near her eyes. She says how she wishes Dudley was here and could take over Mr Thomas' business. It would be just what he would like. So far no further news has come from Durban but it may come either today or tomorrow. Mr Thomas' friend, Mr Cook, writes that Mr Thomas told him he had made a will. He is financially interested to a small extent and of course hopes that he will come out on the right side. The frig, electric stove etc Mr Thomas had put in Aunt Eliza's house are insured in his name as his property. I hope the Estate will let her keep them as she has never had any regular or fixed payment all the years he has stayed with her for board.

After breakfast. The maid did not turn up yesterday but is here now. Came after 8. It was no day for washing yesterday.

Dot thought it necessary to wire yesterday advising me not to do the Bookshop work daily and Grace sent a postcard much in the same strain. I certainly will not take on the job unless they pay me £25 or £30 per month.

We are glad to hear that Mary is taking her holiday in March and is spending one with Reg and Dot on her way down. Apparently she will come on to Cradock after spending a day or so in Johannesburg. We understand Christine may be married in April to Moys who is in Military service at Port Alfred at present. She has finished her hospital course and will be home this week. Ernest too has been away at Bushmans River for a holiday. Owing to petrol rationing, he has not been able to return earlier as was his intention but hopes to get back at the end of this week. Alison has had a busy time running the paper.

Ruth writes that Denis and Derick Collett are both in Italy now. I wonder if Arthur is not there also. Derick is Hilda George Collett's son. Ruth has had an attack of flu I am sorry to say.

Trixie and family are going to a farm in the Grahamstown district on long leave. I hope they will break their journey here.

Dot tells of a lady friend who is in hospital in Durban who has had six ribs removed in order that her lung can be deflated. She is improving. What will doctors do next.

Clifford Saunders called yesterday afternoon with two sailor men who are on leave for a month's holiday. They are staying at Highlands. Mom was out at her W.A. meeting but Pam made tea for me. It was interesting talking to them of their travels. His mother and Florrie and Kay are at

home. Mrs Saunders had a fall in the garden some time ago and had to be carried into the house. She is better now. Florrie has a daughter in the same class at Rocklands as Pam.

Joe has had an indaba with his boss regarding the state of his furnace and hopes that improvements will be made in his working conditions otherwise something may happen.

Beryl writes that Mr Thomas sold her typewriter for her and sent a cheque for the amount which she cashed at Uitenhage. Unfortunately when it came back, payment was refused as Mr Thomas had died in the interval and she had to refund the seven pounds. She had asked me to do what I can for her in the matter. It will have to wait until the Estate is administered.

Mary says they had 14 inches of rain in 14 days. More than we get on an average in a year. Fish River has been down but Grass Ridge dam is not full yet. Our tanks are full.

Aunt Emmie, when writing on her 78th anniversary, evidently was not too well. She says she was 77 but is a year out in her reckoning. She was born in 1866. I should like to take a run down to see her some day.

I have been making enquiries about Bladens apples. He says they are earlier than usual this year. He will not execute orders to be sent away on account of the difficulties of packing. Do you think it worthwhile my getting some and sending them in baskets – to be returned – as last year? He cannot tell me the price yet.

Tuesday afternoon. Have just read Denis' interesting letter which came from Ruth this morning. He admires the wonderful scenery. He travelled in trucks so as to admire the country better. The trees and mountains, the fruits etc all came in for admiration. Of course he cannot name the places he has seen. No doubt he is in the fighting line now. We do hope he may be spared to get out safely. His chum is also an only son and his mother a widow. They have been together for a long time.

Evelyn writes that they have been to Kimberley. The children are getting excited at the near approach of holidays again. I expect Pam will get an invitation to one of the farms. She is working very well at school.

This is Denis' new address: No. 329410 V. Ltd. D.R. Butler, R.A., R.A.T.D. Forward Troop, C.M.F. His birthday is next month.

Tuesday evening. When Pam finishes her homework, we have started having some halma interspersed with reading one of her birthday presents. It is called The Seatons by O. Douglas. It tells of old English life. Pam reads very well – a little too fast perhaps – she always reads a portion of scripture to us directly after supper.

Mrs Rainier and Joyce were here this afternoon. Mrs Rainier likes our grapes very much. I hope there will be a good supply for next Sunday when we have our Harvest Festival services. We have also played a few rounds of "Can you go" using Lexicon cards. On Saturday afternoon, Joyce is taking her to the bioscope. We very seldom go. I forgot to mention that on Sunday afternoon, Pam took some letters to Aunt Eliza on her bike and was caught properly in the rain on her way back. She had to change to the skin but did not catch cold.

The weather today has been lovely. The servant did not turn up at all yesterday – had toothache. She never comes on Sundays.

Wednesday morning. I shall be very glad when the change of time takes place. I hope the Government will not change it again but keep to the old standard time. It is quite dark at six now. It feels as though it will not be long before we have frost.

Eric and Freda write from Kimberley suggesting that perhaps Aunt Kate might be able to secure accommodation in Uitenhage for the June holidays so that Aunt Emmie could go there and all the family from Maritzburg, Kimberley and here could have a family reunion. It sounds very nice and I am sure Aunt Emmie would enjoy it as she is debarred from going up country on account of her heart. No mention of Gladys joining in such a party. Probably she would be the one to escort Aunt Emmie. However it is something to look forward to.

Afternoon. Nothing has come from Durban so the Attorney has asked me to wire him. It will be a fortnight tonight since Mr Thomas died. I appreciated all the advice which has been tendered to me re what to do in the matter. From what Mr Tunbridge says, it may take weeks before anything can

be done as the Masters Office works very slowly. Advertisements have to be inserted in the Government Gazette etc. I am aware of my limitations and am not going to overtax myself but at the same time, I may point out that there is not an abundance of capable individuals who know something of the trade who are at liberty to handle such a job.

I saw Joyce this morning up town. Her ringworm trouble is so far over. Ray is back at school and we hope there will not any further trouble. Aunt Eliza is keeping wonderfully bright and is interested in going through the quantity of clothing, books and various things which Mr Thomas had accumulated in his one room. The shop is full literally and if they all have to be brought down there, it will be a job to get them in and handle them. However I hope there will be something more definite to report by next week.

We are all well and hope you are the same. Pam has just come home for dinner 1.40. Much love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 8th, 1944

My dear All,

You will be glad to know that I have handed over to Metcalf & Co the keys of Mr Thomas' shop. This means that I am free of responsibility in connection with the estate. I should have liked to carry on and seen it through but I can see it will be a long drawn out affair – possibly some months – and would entail my being at the shop each day and all day. There will be many muddles to be cleared up. No doubt a fresh stocktaking will be necessary as his last year's was not completed. I dare say they will call upon me for information if necessary.

You will be interested in knowing that Christine Butler, Ernest's youngest daughter, is to be married on 24th instant to Rex Moys. He is in the Air Force and has been stationed at Port Alfred for some time. Their banns were published in the Church of England. This will leave that family with the eldest (Joan) and the youngest (Jeffrey) unmarried. Rex is expecting to be sent "up north" almost at once – thus the hurry to get married. In fact he left for Pretoria by this (Tuesday) morning train.

Pam's brother, Harold, seems to be settling down nicely in Johannesburg and is staying at the Y.M.C.A. at Jeppe. He is interested in his engineering course. David is not fixed up in the Civil Service yet. Of course, having Pam with us, we hear a good deal more news from that quarter than before.

Congratulations to Reg on being re-elected a Town Councillor. We may yet see him in the Mayoral robes, why not? Dot is keeping Anthony for a few months longer. He has evidently been a great favourite with them all. She reports a mystery disease amongst Mrs Watts' pigeons. They have been dying at an extraordinary rate. Talking of pigeons, Aunt Eliza says the original pair that Mr Thomas started with have mysteriously left them – flown away. There are still a few generations left. They were so tame with Mr Thomas. Aunt Eliza has been much interested in watching them.

In the Methodist Churchman of February 27th, there is an interesting reference to Mrs Legg's mother who recently died at the age of 94. Rev Hornabrook celebrates his 94th anniversary on Saturday next, 11th. Nellie Hornabrook wrote saying the whole family was hoping to be together for the occasion. He will be 94. He is still able to get about.

The Harvest Thanksgiving services on Sunday were well attended and the financial results very satisfactory. The morning collection £8/11/9d and the evening £16/19/4d, total £25/11/1d.

Ernest has returned from four weeks holiday at Bushmans River Mouth. He would have come back sooner but being at the convenience of the Biggs, with whom he was staying – they have their own bungalow there, he waited their convenience. I am sorry to say that Kathleen is in the hands of a specialist. It appears that one leg is longer than the other and it is thought that this may account for some of her trouble.

Tuesday morning. Our first shower for the month fell last evening but only registered 14 points. March holds the record for the past 65 years for highest rainfall month.

Rocklands are holding a bazaar on 14th in aid of school funds. I think Pam is going to make something for it. A few days ago she had an unexpected shower bath at school. She was standing under a window getting her bike to come home when some girl from an upstairs window emptied a jug of water out of the window. I suppose it was an accident. She had a good laugh over it.

Evelyn writes that Douglas' driller is in hospital so they went to see him. They also stayed over for the bio and attended a wedding the next morning. The children are looking forward to the holidays. No one has said anything about coming to us for the holidays. Pam went to the bio as Joyce's guest on Saturday afternoon and enjoyed herself. Raymond is back at school and Joyce is better of the ringworm.

Letters from Mary, Olive and Lynne this morning. All very interesting. Mary looks to spend next Tuesday with Reg and Dot. She says she is then going to Graaff Reinet after Johannesburg. So have written specially about Christine's wedding on 24th. Olive is still at Port Elizabeth but talks of going to Johannesburg. Has been suffering from sties and worse still, a boil

in the nostril which was operated on. Lynne is as bright as ever, having a good time in her different ways. Still looks to pay us a visit. Hopes her parents will come down to meet all her friends. Mrs Collen is as a second mother to her. Had Dot's letter.

We went to see Aunt Charlotte on Sunday afternoon. She was 88 yesterday.

The sale of produce from the Harvest Festival and other gifts has now brought the total to £35/8/1d.

I do not think I shall be able to add to this tomorrow and the sheet is now full enough. So goodbye to all and much love to you all. A storm is threatening and Pam has to go to a special class by four and then to tennis by 5.15. Aunt Jessie had dinner with us just now. She came in with Uncle Norman for Stock Fair. Prices were very high.

All three of us are keeping well I am glad to say.

Dad

Posted Tuesday.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 15th, 1944

My dear All,

Tuesday morning. On Thursday afternoon last, Mr and Mrs Campbell, their married daughter and child, called by previous arrangement to enjoy some figs. Mrs Ranier also "dropped" in and then Dulcie and May Saunders also came to see us. Of course, Pam was here too so we were a pretty good crowd all sitting on the lawn eating grapes. Suddenly a violent thunderstorm broke overhead and they all hurried off home instead of waiting for it to pass. Dulcie and May got as far as the taxi rank more or less wet through, the others got to the Premier without much damage. The point of the story was in the evening, when Mom came over very giddy and staggered off to bed before nine, feeling decidedly uncomfortable. She could not even undress and dare not raise her head. She started vomiting and kept this up for a considerable time. She has not been comfortable since but is decidedly better today. I got Dr Scholtz down the next afternoon but he could not find anything seriously wrong. Thought that perhaps her ears might have something to do with it. He took her blood pressure, sounded her as usual and did not prescribe any medicine. He has not called again. Mom has not been out since but looks to go to the Rocklands Bazaar this afternoon (Tuesday) in the Town Hall. I see I am wrong in saying it was last Thursday it happened. It was Wednesday.

We had an inch and a half during the 24 hours and the river came down in flood and is still running nicely. Mr Barnes phoned this morning that the causeway between Saltpansdrift and Grass Ridge could not even now be crossed even on horseback. Grass Ridge dam is full and has been running out for days. This is only the third time the dam has overflowed since it was built about 20 years ago. It looks as though March is going to maintain its record for being our rainiest month of the year.

If you have made a note of the addresses of those up north, you must alter Rex from W.B.81 to 80 as he has been shifted.

Dot is expecting Mary to spend a day with her on her way down. She will be with us in a few days time as she is coming to Christine's wedding which has been fixed for 24th. She will stay with us. Rex Moys is expecting to be sent north almost at once otherwise the wedding was not to have been till May. They are getting married in the Church of England. At one time Rex was contemplating joining the Methodist ministry but took up teaching instead.

Dot writes that she has a sick household, colds, coughs and none of them very bright. They have had good rains but not floods.

On Saturday afternoon, Pam had Una Brown (Harvey and Winnie's daughter) and Dorothy Hall (Florrie Saunder's daughter) came out for the day. They are both a little younger – and smaller – than Pam. In the afternoon, they all went to the bio as Pam's guests. They had to be back at Rocklands by 8 pm. Pam fetched them and took them back. I think they enjoyed themselves.

Tuesday afternoon. Letters from Douglas and Evelyn dated 6th and 9th to hand this morning. Douglas refers to gallamziekte having caused some losses amongst his cattle. They have had a good season. I thought that this disease was a thing of the past, especially in good seasons. Hope the losses have not been heavy. The country is looking grand, Evelyn says. Income tax time is round again and Douglas says it gives him a headache. It is nice to have an income on which a tax can be levied. I quite agree with him when he says farmers should be taught how to keep books. Everybody should be able to do that. Kingsley has been selected as one of the schoolboys to represent his school in sports contests in the Western Province. That's jolly good. Keep it up Kingsley! Arthur and Rex are still in South Africa. They have met recently. Evelyn says she may be visiting Queenstown sometime during the next six months. Douglas finds it difficult to get away, there is so much to do on the farm. Evelyn is fearing an early winter. She prefers the summer. Old Mrs Ambler is still engaged at the Old Ladies Home in Maritzburg. I also had a long letter from Hubert de Beer who used to work for me at Vryburg. He has been very ill. Is still running the Tarka Herald. He lost his eldest son in an air crash over Amsterdam. He writes appreciatively of our old association in Vryburg. He has had a very hard life.

Rev and Mrs Sorrie left last night to take up an appointment at George for a few months. We have enjoyed their society. Mrs Chatterton has come back to Cradock and is staying at the Premier again. She was pleased to see Pam again. Good night.

Wednesday morning. We expect to have Mary with us this day next week. When I went to the rain gauge this morning, I found the measure glass full and running over. Evidently the garden boy must have filled it when I told him to fill the bird bath. However I took the opportunity of measuring how much the container could carry when quite full. It would require a five inch fall. I hope we do not get that all in one fall. Mom is getting better but is not quite herself yet. She did not go to the Rocklands Bazaar I am glad to say as it was so crowded. I could not get near to the tables so came away.

Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 22nd, 1944

My dear All,

I have a number of notes which have accumulated of things which I wanted to mention from time to time but somehow have not done so. I am a little early in starting my letter this week so I may as well get off my list. Dot recently reported on the Flower Show they had held and raised £169 by it for the purchase of an ambulance for the hospital. It is wonderful how they raise funds in such a small place. They went for a picnic to the farm and were held up by the river Nylstroom. I understand the origin of the name was dated back to early travellers who thought the river was the source of the Nile in Egypt. It is not a big river at Potgietersrus but was big enough to hold them up for some time. It appears that there are very nasty ticks or insects which attack people, so much so that they cause acute itchiness even after they have been removed from the skin. I think they should wear paper leggings in order to protect them from such. All the family has been suffering from colds recently. Dot says it is the first time since they have been there that they missed attending church for ten years. An excellent record.

David Irons has had his first day at work in the Public Service today (Monday). He has been drafted into the Native Affairs Department at his own request. Harold has been at work for about a month and is in the Post Office Engineering branch. He seems interested in the technical side of work.

The photo of Grace and Ted and family I have sent round for inspection and return. All who have seen it here think it very good.

Tuesday morning. We are glad to have got back to normal time again. It is getting light as I get up at six. Pam is away before eight. Two of her friends came down on Sunday afternoon and had tea with us. They are all looking forward to the holidays next week. Our grapes are about finished. We have had a young boy for the garden the last week and he has been useful in cleaning up a bit. Pam and "little Ann" have been going to the station on Saturday mornings with grapes. She likes to stay here for dinner and is so fond of Pam.

Mr and Mrs Hudson have given up the idea of going to East London this season. Mr has not been well for some time. Dot says that Reg had between 50 and 60 sort of pinpricks on his body caused by the ticks referred to earlier. The horrid things have to be extracted by pliers. Dot arranged a morning tea for Mary the day she spent with her on her way down. Mrs Legg was included in the party. We expect Mary tomorrow, Wednesday morning. She is of course coming for Christine's wedding on Friday. We look to be there also.

The lady Dot referred to as having some seven of her ribs removed wrote a most encouraging letter to Dot saying how she was getting better. It seems almost incredible that such an op could be performed and the patient recover.

We had five days on which rain fell this month measuring 2.21 inches.

Letter from Joe this morning says he will arrive on Good Friday morning if he can secure a seat. I guess he will do that alright. He is coming alone this time. He sees a good deal of Uncle Owen and family. He has sold his car. Joe would like to have had it. He wants a larger car now that the children are getting bigger. He does not mention how his health is.

Ruth writes that she hears from Denis frequently. He says it is very cold in Italy. He has not felt warm since he was walking on the lava on Mont Vesuvius. He attended a service in a stable when they were singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and shells were falling all round the place. They were living in a cave. He speaks highly of the British Officers, would go anywhere with them and fight. The Italian scenery thrills him immensely.

I suppose I must tell of what happened last Thursday night. I had been to evening service as usual and felt giddy coming out. Mom did not go that evening. I went to bed as usual but about midnight I woke finding Mom at my side trying to get me to sip some water. She was rubbing my back trying to break up the wind. It was some time before I could explain what had happened. In my dream, I was being attacked by people interested in liquor. I had opposed their application for a licence and they were attacking me. The place was on fire – in my dream of course. I was very

distressed and I had evidently woke Mom. There was a strong smell of rubbish burning at the time and it was found that the park people had been burning a lot of rubbish. It was all very disquieting whilst it lasted but I am glad to say I am none the worse now but I was quite unnerved for the next few days. I cannot explain why I dream so much and why they always seem so realistic. We do not have meat for supper, I don't drink or anything that should disturb me that I can think of.

I do not expect there will be time tomorrow to add to this as Mary will be here and Josie and Dan Biggs are coming to morning tea with us. I think they are staying over for the wedding on Friday. They have given up the idea of farming in Rhodesia, in fact I believe they have either sold or are selling what they had purchased there. Their son, David, who is a doctor, is now in the military near Pretoria. I am glad to say Mom is better of her recent upset. Rev Karg is having special service on Sunday evening and has invited all public bodies to attend.

Lots of love,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 29th, 1944

My dear All,

The tragedy to record this week is that Aunt Emmie had her outside room burgled a few nights ago. Two suitcases were stolen which contained most of her winter clothing. The room led off her stoep and was fastened with a padlock. This was not removed but the intruders broke the panel of the door and made off. Fortunately Aunt Emmie has been insured against burglary for some years (so have I) and I hope she will be compensated for her loss. Another tragedy, in another form, has also happened to Joyce. Raymond has appeared to be getting better after using Rickets blue, Iodine etc. But a fresh crop has appeared pretty well all over his head. He is out of school at present. Dr told Joyce from the beginning that he could not guarantee a cure and now he recommends her taking him to Cape Town to be treated by a specialist – I think she said by radium. She suggests going early in April whilst Aunt Emmie is still in her cottage. How Aunt Eliza will manage I don't know but way will open I hope.

Aunt Eliza has been busy disposing of some of Mr Thomas' old clothing and sorting out some of the accumulation of letters etc in his room. Metcalf's man has been appointed Curator but no one is officially Executor.

You will be interested in hearing how the wedding went off last Friday. The weather was beautifully fine, the church was filled with friends of the respective families and the general public, the reception in the Parish Hall was well attended and the decorations left very little to be desired. As for the refreshments, they were far above the ordinary. Ernest asked me the evening before if I would act as Master of Ceremonies for the occasion which I did. There were only three toasts and the speeches were all of a high order. The bridegroom's was above the average for such an occasion. He had started studying for the ministry in the Methodist Church but gave that up and took up teaching. At present he has an office in the R.A.F. I will not attempt to tread on such dangerous ground of attempting to comment on the dresses but must say Christine did look exceedingly beautiful, tall and stately and very charming. As the bridal party came out of the church, they stopped to greet Aunt Eliza who was in her chair near the door. Kisses were exchanged. This little incident was not included in the programme but was a very nice gesture. I tried to get Aunt Eliza to go into the Hall to see the reception and got her and the chair on to the first step when she became nervous that the chair or something would break so the effort had to be abandoned. Joyce and Raymond and her housemaid were there. During the service in the church, a beam of light streamed through the window as they stood at the altar and beautifully illuminated Christine. There were only three toasts. The Mayor referred very feelingly to "absent friends", so many of the relations being up north and some as Prisoners of War in Germany. Grass Ridge, Saltpansdrift, Orchards, Katkop, Mortimer and many other places were well represented. The presents were as the newspapers say "numerous and costly". These were on show in the Poplars drawing room. There was a long string of cards, each one representing a cheque. If the number in any way represented the value, there must be a nice banking account to open. Aunt Jessie, Josie (Biggs) and Mary had dinner with us. In the afternoon, Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate, Mrs Logie and some young folk came along to afternoon tea. Josie left the same evening for her home at Louisvale.

Mary is busy seeing to some of her furniture etc which she wants sent to her hospital. She very thoughtfully wired to Grace on her way down so had a few minutes chat with her and Ted at Kroonstad Station. She reports all well both there and at Potgietersrus. She is not due back at work until April 26th. Miss Francis Wookey, formerly Matron of Kimberley Hospital, is supplying for her. She will be going to Graaff Reinet later on.

We are sorry to hear that Eric Fear has been transferred to Standerton at 12 hours notice. I do not know if this means that he may be going north. He has been fortunate by being stationed in Kimberley so long. Has had been able to get leave to go and look after his farm on several occasions. Freda will miss him very much as they have been able to keep a home going and the children have been in school there.

Joe sees Uncle Owen and family frequently. They seem to have settled down now in Uitenhage. Uncle has sold his motorcar.

We are making plans to go to Saltpansdrift on Friday afternoon if possible and return on Wednesday following so as to be ready for Joe's and Lynne's arrival on Thursday or Friday if they are able to come. Mary perhaps will come with us.

Love to everybody,

Dad

Saltpond. As from 34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday April 5th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Sunday morning April 2nd and I am sitting by the window in the spare room. There is a heavy dew on the ground so have postponed our walk until after morning tea. The sun is shining brightly and there is every indication of a beautiful day.

We had intended to come out by goods train – with passenger coach attached – about three p.m. but Enid phoned that she was coming to town and would take some of us out by car. I had arranged for Mom, Mary and Pam to go with her but they all – except myself – thought that I should go. I wanted to stay and finish off some work as it was the end of the quarter and some banking had to be done for the church. However, we all managed to get into the car, which nominally is a two seater, but like so many colonial houses, is very elastic. As a matter of fact, there were seven of us – Mom, Enid, Pam, Gladys Colling and her two children and myself. No, I am wrong, Mary stayed and came out by the goods train and Enid met her at the station and brought her down here. We had dinner here and the four of us are quite comfortable. Uncle Jack came down on Saturday morning. Pam and I had walked to the station to send wires to Joe and Dot as I had forgotten to specially write to them for the anniversaries of their wedding day. I think it is the first time for years that I have forgotten and hope I will be forgiven. As a matter of fact, I have had an exceedingly busy time lately and have not been able to keep pace with the work. That is one reason why I agreed to come out for a few days. Uncle Jack picked Pam and me up on our way back from the station. The Postmaster did not want to accept the telegram as he said they would not be delivered until Monday under new regulations respecting “good will” messages, so I had to avoid any mention of greetings or congratulations in the messages. We hope that at both homes the day was duly honoured. In the afternoon, Uncle Dudley and Aunt Gladys and Ethnie came over from Katkop. Dick also returned from a three weeks holiday at East London by the morning train. They have had one card from one of the boys from Germany dated about Xmas time and all three appear to be well. They say they do not need clothing and are well cared for as Prisoners of War.

I had a Xmas card from England last week dated the middle of November and received at the end of March – over four months – on the way.

We are expecting Joe and one of the children on Good Friday morning and Lynne phoned that she was trying to get a lift over as well. I have made arrangements for her to go back as far as Tarkastad by car with Gordon Saunders who will be taking his children as far as that on Monday afternoon. They go to school at Queenstown.

The Cradock Show was on Wednesday and Thursday. Cousin Harry Collett and his daughter came down by car and had morning tea with us. I spent about an hour and half there and Mom went in the afternoon. The horses were a fine lot. One was sold for one thousand guineas. A lot of money in one breath.

You will be sorry to hear that Joyce still has trouble with Ray's ringworm. She has decided to take him to Cape Town on Thursday to see a specialist – on Dr Scholtz' advice. Some radium treatment is recommended. We do not know what plans will be made for someone to be with Aunt Eliza. She is welcome to come to us but won't, unfortunately.

Mary says she must leave for Graaff Reinet by the same train that Joe arrives by. She has been very busy sorting out her belongings and is taking some back with her. Others she is distributing.

Monday morning. Uncle Jack and Aunt Agnes came over for afternoon tea. Am glad to say Aunt can see much better since her operation and looks much better than formerly. Later Uncle Norman and Gladys came. Unfortunately, Dick dismantled the wireless so did not get any news so shall have to wait for the newspapers to arrive. Have just been to see Mary off to Cradock. She is having dinner with Aunt Eliza today and supper with Mrs Kissack. She will sleep at 34. Am very sorry she will only see Joe at the station as he arrives.

Mr Conradie, who works at the shop at the station, had a nasty experience yesterday morning. Gladys Colling's bull got into his garden which is next to her house and in trying to drive the

animal out, it tackled him and rolled him some distance on the ground. Fortunately it has no horns otherwise it would probably have killed him. As it was, he got a bruise on his head, one or two ribs he thinks are damaged and his leg is bruised. The bull will have to be sold. She is thinking of selling her nice house at the station and going to live nearer where Mr Colling is employed in the military pay office – Kimberly I think.

Owing to the holidays this week, I shall post this either today or Tuesday so that you will get it without unnecessary delay, not that there is much news to impart but I do not like missing the usual chat. We have had nice weather and enjoyed the rest. It was a great rush getting away but it was unavoidable under the circumstances. We have not heard definitely yet if Lynne is actually coming but hope she is. We are anxious to see Pam's school report.

I see my paper is finished so must close with love to all as usual.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 12th, 1944

My dear All,

Easter has come and gone and I am somewhat at a loss to know where to begin. I think I posted my last from Fish River on Monday 3rd. A good deal has happened since then. We enjoyed the three and half days rest although I took some church work out with me to prepare for the quarterly meeting which meets tonight (Tuesday). Uncle Jack brought us back on Tuesday morning by car, Mary having come back by train the day before as she had a good deal to see to before going on to Graaff Reinet on Friday. We found everything alright at home in spite of the fact that there have been a number of burglaries recently. Aunt Eliza feels sure we shall pay the penalty one of these days. For many years I have been insured against such a risk but so far, nothing has happened. Even insurance does not prevent robberies being committed. Aunt Emmie calculates that she has lost over £30 worth of clothing from her outside room. Her claim has not been paid yet.

Mary left on Thursday morning for Middelburg (Cape) where she intended staying with her last patient before going north for one day and then on to Graaff Reinet. No doubt we shall hear of her safe arrival in due course. She has been sorting out her goods and chattels, sending some on to Sibasa and disposing of others. The bedroom suite which my Uncle John made many years ago for sale in the shop and which Uncle James and Aunt Letty had in their house for years, is still being stored in an outside room where Olive has some of her goods also stored. Mary has given me an old newspaper cutting book which I find very interesting. One thing there I see which I have been looking for, for years, is the amount of rainfall which falls on a roof of a house. This I am republishing in Midland News. Mary was sorry to miss seeing Joe and Merle who arrived on Friday by the same train that she went by. They had a few minutes chat before the train started. I am wrong about Mary starting on Thursday. It was Joyce and Raymond who left for Cape Town to see a specialist about his ringworm. We hope to hear good news of the patient in due course. They were to see the specialist this Tuesday morning.

Within a few minutes of our return from the station with Joe and Merle, who should blow in but Lynne. She had planned to come over by train and bus via Tarkastad but at the last moment, she had the offer of a seat in a car and left Queenstown about five a.m. We were delighted to see her and all had breakfast together. It cost her a pound for the trip which I think was too much as there were five in the car. She is looking very well and is full of fun. Joe, too, is looking much better than we expected and the change has evidently done him good. We have not attempted any stunts, just rested, talked and enjoyed each others company. Of course Aunt Eliza has not been forgotten and was very pleased to see them all. Merle has grown but not as much as I expected. She behaves very nicely and is always on the look out for helping anyone. On Friday evening, Joe showed us a new film his cine club has produced. It portrayed a sick man who is run down. Joe acted the part of the doctor very well. We wished Aunt Eliza could have come down to see it. It was quite cleverly produced. We hope to see it again some day. On Saturday afternoon, I was called upon to take the official salute at the march past of the cadets who have been in camp here for about ten days. The Mayor was away at Cape Town attending the Mayoral Congress at Stellenbosch. The function did not last long, after that we enjoyed a cool drink all round and Mom and I visited Miss May Trollip in the hospital. Some of us went to see Aunt Eliza again. We all attended service on Easter Sunday and enjoyed Rev Karg. The six of us had dinner at the Premier, Joe felt that he must return by the 6 p.m. train for home instead of risking not getting a seat on the day train on Monday morning. We were sorry but thankful he had been able to come at all. Perhaps he may come again for the May Day holiday Monday May 1st. Trevor wants to come next time.

Ruth phoned recently and has also written since, saying that Denis has been in the firing line for some time and has now been sent with his regiment to the rear for rest after their engagement. This happened on his birthday, March 21st. So far he has come through safely although he has been in the firing line for some time. We can all rejoice with Ruth in her thankfulness to God that he has

so far been spared. He says he has never felt better in his life and attributes his fitness to the Collett blood in his veins. Dorothea should have been "capped" at the graduation ceremony at Grahamstown last week. She passed in double distinctions. She will be capped in Pietermaritzburg.

Tuesday afternoon. Lynne has just phoned saying she got back safely about six p.m. Had letters from home. Arthur Collen had arrived for Sylvia's wedding on Saturday. Last Saturday was the 24th anniversary of Harold and Ruth's wedding. Douglas says he expects Rex will be in Italy soon. Kingsley's football trip to Western Province is "off. He is thinking of going in for veterinary science. A very useful profession. Pam back at school today and seems quite happy in her work. Her report for last quarter was quite satisfactory. She wonders if David or Harold were home for Easter. Both boys are at the YMCA Jeppe.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
As Wednesday April 19th, 1944

My dear All,

News from Cape Town reports that Raymond has had to have all his hair shaved off, his old caps burned and after a week's treatment, to return for further inspection. No mention was made of radium or other treatment. No cap could be purchased in Cape Town or Wynberg but eventually Joyce was able to get one in Claremont. It looks as though she will not be back in Cradock for some time. Aunt Eliza has Dolly Enslin who comes in every evening and sleeps in Joyce's room. She is quite as deaf as Aunt Eliza and I understand they have to "talk" to each other by writing on a slate. This must be a tedious process but better than none at all.

I had an accident last Thursday evening which might have had a serious effect. Owing to some fault at the Power Station, the street lights were not on when I went to evening service. The night was very dark and except for the lights of passing motors, it was impossible to see. I was carrying a couple of avocado pears for Rev Karg and Mrs Kissack – four in all – in my string bag. When near the church, I fell to the ground, having stumbled on the furrow. I was not seriously hurt but felt very shaky during the service. Mr and Mrs Hultzer saw me safely home afterwards and I went straight to bed. I felt shaken still for a couple of days and am alright again now. The avocado pears referred to were sent by the doctor's wife at Mary's hospital at Mary's request. They travelled and arrived in first class order and have been greatly enjoyed by all to whom we have sent some. We returned the box in which they came filled with Bladen apples.

Ted is on a fortnight's leave and I have suggested that he takes a run down here to see how Pam is getting on. She has put on four pounds in weight during the first quarter! I also weighed myself and am still staying at the 144 pound mark. For some time, Ted and Grace have had a whole family of native servants in their employ but now some trouble has arisen and they are all leaving. Gladys, too, at Cape Town has had trouble there too with her servant just walking out. Domestics earn there from £3 per month and are very difficult to get and keep.

Aunt Emmie will be compensated for the loss of her clothing etc to the tune of about £29. It is fortunate that she was insured against burglary.

We sent a congratulatory telegram from the family to Silvia Collen last Saturday for her wedding. She is marrying a R.A.F. man from overseas.

We received a nice letter from Lynne as well as a phone message reporting her safe arrival back in Queenstown. She was very disappointed in a dress she had had made for the wedding. Mary, too, we have heard from. She will soon be on her way back to duty. We have not heard from Olive for some weeks. She is still in Port Elizabeth I suppose.

We had our first fire last Friday (14th) but so far have not had any frost. Dick came in to attend a dance that evening and stayed to supper with us. Letter from Evelyn says they have not had any letter from Rex for a couple of weeks so suppose he is on the move somewhere. He has been to Palestine but Arthur has not been yet. No fresh news of Denis, guess he and his companions are enjoying their rest after being in the fighting line.

Blodwen writes that they were all going to spend a musical evening at Uncle Owens. Her brother from Cape Town is staying with them for a while on holiday. He, like the rest of the family, is very musical. Joe got home safely but has not written yet. We thought he was looking better when he was here.

We are looking forward to the Fish River Fete on May 18th. Am trying to make arrangements with the Railway to have a coach attached to a goods train so that people can go out from here and return in the afternoon. Petrol is so scarce that unless we do make some such plan, I fear there will not be many buyers. It is the one event in the year which is such a great help to the church finances besides being such a pleasant social function.

On Sunday morning as I was taking the two two-pint bottles of milk into the kitchen, I unfortunately knocked one of them against the door frame and although the glass is very thick, it broke. What a mess it was sopping up two pints of milk. Fortunately I did not cut myself. Pam came to my assistance.

My resignation from the Red Cross Committee has been accepted so I am relieved of attending their meetings. The Library Committee meets next week and I may be relieved of that appointment and work. I was waited upon recently to know what I was going to do about standing again for the Council in August. It is quite evident that so far as my fellow Councillors are concerned, they are very anxious that I should stay on but I have told them that I do not think I shall change my mind. There are still many little jobs I want to do about the house and looking through old letters, papers etc takes a lot of time. I think we all should learn a lesson from Mr Thomas' sudden death.

It is Tuesday afternoon, Mom has gone to see old Miss Philips who is nearly blind. She was in hospital for some weeks and is better after her fall. Aunt Charlotte wants to see me about her will - some alteration to be made so must go and see what she wants. Mr Thomas' shop is still closed and no definite appointment of an Executor has yet been made. Aunt Eliza has disposed of a good deal of his old clothing. Am glad to say we are all keeping well.

Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 26th, 1944

My dear All,

From this month, the Town Council has decided to hold its meetings at four p.m. instead of the evenings so it seems to me that I must try to get the bulk of my writing done before Tuesday noon. I generally do write on Tuesday leaving Wednesday morning clear for posting etc. We will see how it works. It is now Monday afternoon, Mom has gone to her Women's meeting. Pam has gone to an extra class so I am all alone.

Last Friday evening we held our Library Committee meeting. Before business commenced, the Chairman wished Mrs Lidbetter many happy returns of the day. Her birthday was the day before. Mr Lidbetter meekly enquired whose birthday it was and all had a good laugh at him not even knowing when his wife's birthday was. The Committee again wanted me to reconsider my desire to give up the secretaryship but I said I wanted to rest. They have appointed a young man who works in Mr Tunbridge's office – van Heerden by name. They suggested paying him £2 per month but that was left in abeyance. So from the end of April, I shall be free of that work. It has been very interesting but needed a good deal of straightening out. The library is in a sound financial position. The Librarian's salary was raised from £12.10 per month to £15.

Mary is on the train today on her way back after her holiday. She says her Mother was not very well about a month ago but is much better now. She will be spending a day in Pretoria.

Olive too has been in town for a few days and has now gone to her sister Hilda between here and Graaff Reinet. She is still under Dr's treatment for her nasal trouble. It should have been attended to years ago. She has no plans fixed for the future. Would like to have a home of her own again.

We see by the Stellander that the Jones are leaving Vryburg district. The farm is for sale etc.

We are wondering if Joe will come up for the May Day holiday. It is not a public holiday but the Railway always observes it as such. Being on a Monday, it would be worthwhile. Perhaps he would bring Trevor this time. Joe says the Easter weekend here was very restful and he so enjoyed the sunshine whilst sitting on the lawn talking, listening, eating etc. We say do it again. We hear he has been buying some fowls from Aunt Jessie so it looks as though he is restarting in that line. I hope he has good success. Eggs are scarce now. Joe is on the Committee of the Railway Orphanage there and recently took Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate over the Home. They were much interested. Joe is talking of buying our spare room suite as the landlord has improved their spare room and would like ours. We shall see.

Dot sent some of her pots to be mended by Grobbelaar so filled them and the box with Bladens apples. They arrived safely and were enjoyed. Gwen Hudson has written for a box she is sending down to be filled with apples. Bladens apples are famous all over the Union now. Aunt Jessie sent us some of her apples but they are not so fine as Bladens. Aunt Jessie complains of her nose bleeding so much lately. Mary says she must not worry about it.

We had letters from Denis and Rex last week. They are dated April 5th and 7th respectively. Rex says the weather has been awful. They were wet and covered in mud for days on end. He was amazed at the cheerfulness of the British gunners. His baptism of fire was not as frightening as he had anticipated. We all very sincerely hope he will come out of the ordeal safe and sound. He has done a bit of sightseeing about Naples etc. At one hotel, he says, it was so nice to sit up to a table to eat his meals. He met a former first year student chum of his from Rhodes University. He was managing the military hotel he was at. They had not met for years. Denis says he is in the best of health. Arthur says he has only missed one mail from home. Lynne sends him batches of my dear alls so he is kept fairly informed of our doings. He sees a good deal of Jeffrey (Ernest's son). He is in the same battery and is always cheerful. They all seem to keep very cheerful under the trying conditions which they have to put up with. They all speak of being in good health which is comforting. I am writing to each of the three grandsons by air mail this week.

Tuesday. We have had a nice steady rain during the night and morning, just over 20 points. Very welcome. No recent news from Cape Town re Raymond so hope he is getting over the trouble. Tom Webster's house is again advertised for sale and they are anxious where they will be able to find another. I don't think under the present war regulations they can be turned out unless they have a place to go to. Mrs Chatterton is anxious to get back to her house in Pretoria but is faced with the same difficulty. Ted has taken his mother to Port Shepstone for the winter. He has been spending his holiday at home fixing up his windmill, tanks etc. At least they seem to have got water. They have bought the erf next to them and he is finishing off building the house that was on it. They have had difficulty in getting material.

We are all well and hope to get good news from the various homes tomorrow.

Love to all,

Dad

Extra Edition April 29th, 1944

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 3rd, 1944

My dear All,

It is Thursday afternoon, April 27th and my thoughts have been going back to 57 years ago when as a young man of 23, I went on board the R.M. Steamer Drummond Castle at the Docks at the East End of London and sailed for South Africa. My brothers John and Joe and sister Emmie were there to see me off. Much has happened since then. Now I am an old man, getting feeble in some ways but still able and thankful to be able to do a spot of work. It was exactly a month before I arrived in Cradock: 27th May about 5 p.m.

My reason for starting my letter so early is that I want to correct some of the wrong statements I made in my dear all posted yesterday. Mom and Pam always read my letter and I am told – correctly so – that there were a number of errors. For instance, I said that we had received letters from Denis and Rex, I should have said Denis and Arthur. It was Denis who met an old college chum who was running a military hotel. Ted is going to take his mother to Port Shepstone this Saturday 29th, not last Saturday. He looks to be home again in time for the Sunday School Anniversary on May 6th. That is the same day as ours here. Pam is down to read the lessons at either the morning or evening service.

On Wednesday the whole day was devoted to school sports. There were 100 events open to children attending all the European schools. It is estimated that there were 1000 competitors. Am sorry that Pam did not enter for any event but she watched all the items with interest. I spent about an hour there in the morning but was too tired to go again in the afternoon and Mom was not interested so we went as far as the park and sat there for an hour. News came from Dot today that Mr Hudson had had another stroke and was in hospital again. They were expecting to have to go down to Vryburg by car but I hope they won't venture such a trip for Dot's sake.

A letter from Joyce says Raymond is getting over the worst of his troubles but new outbreaks were occurring. All his hair has been shaved off but as it grows again, has to be removed from the sore places by means of tweezers. This is a very painful process. Poor little chap, he is having a rough time.

The Convent girls are giving a concert in the Town Hall next Tuesday at which Leslie Collette's children and others of course, are taking part. It is in aid of our hospital funds. We hope to attend.

Saturday morning, 29th. We had hoped that perhaps Joe would have arrived by the early morning train but I have just heard the train go (7.25) so evidently he is not coming. It is unfortunate that the night train from here does not get to Uitenhage in time to allow Joe to get to his work before 7 so he always feels that he must travel by the day train which gets him home the same evening. It always seems a day wasted in the train when he could be spending the day with us.

We are sorry to hear that Freda, Eric Fear's wife, has had to undergo an operation in Kimberley Hospital and whilst under chloroform, her tongue, presumably the little tongue at the back of the mouth, fell back and for a time was difficult to get it back into its correct place. We understand another op may be necessary. Eric has been trying to get his discharge from the army but has not been successful so far. Poor little Ray is still having treatment for his ringworm. Fresh ones have appeared. They are all on one side of his head. A postcard came this week from Dudley dated February 23rd and it arrived here on April 28th. He was well, but feeling the cold very much. They can only write about twenty words on the card. Joyce has heard from a friend of Dudley's in England who is able to get in touch with Dudley. He says Dudley has not heard a word from Joyce since June last, not that she has not written. He has never received any of her parcels but gets the Red Cross ones. He says he is working indoors which is better than outside if it is so cold. We are indeed very sorry for Joyce, she has indeed had more than her share of anxiety and trouble. I am glad to say that Aunt Eliza is keeping wonderfully well. I see her as often as possible. Dolly Enslin sleeps in Joyce's room every night but is away all day. She is as deaf or even more so than Aunt Eliza. Maude Miller goes and sits with Aunt Eliza every afternoon.

Later. I have just been notified that Mr Phillips, one of our Local Preachers and Government Auditor to the Council and many other business houses, died yesterday afternoon. He had an operation a few weeks ago and has a lot of business worries. He was a very deaf gentleman but a very nice man. I have been asked to be one of the pall bearers tomorrow afternoon, Sunday.

When I started this letter I had no intention of filling the sheet but to correct mistakes. However it may as well go and I will try and write again as usual on Wednesday.

Mom is beginning to wonder if I am doing the right thing in resigning from the Council, now that I have given over the Library work, she thinks perhaps I shall mope. There is about three months before nominations will be called for so there will be plenty of time to decide.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 3rd, 1944

My dear All,

Perhaps I ought not to write this week considering I gave you a special edition on Saturday last. I do not know that there is anything special to record except that we were somewhat disappointed that Joe was not able to come to us for the weekend. He said he would have had to leave on Saturday train so would really only have had Sunday with us. Better luck next time. When everybody has their own aeroplanes, such trifles will be things of the past. One item of news I must not forget is that it is Dot's birthday on 5th. I wonder if Reg and all the rest of the family will remember it, or maybe - but I doubt it - like Mr Lidbetter did his wife's anniversary. However we all wish her many happy returns of the day. Today (Tuesday) as I write, it is May Collett's - Uncle Bertie's daughter's birthday. Have just rung her up. Uncle Bertie had to go and see a specialist at Port Elizabeth recently as he was subject to dizzie attacks. After X-raying his mouth, it was found that an old stump was the cause of the trouble. It is about seven years since his teeth were extracted and the stump had turned septic. He is quite alright now. Sonny Boy's baby is about four months old and of course is a wonderful baby - as all are. We have not seen it. Perhaps we will see it at Fish River Fete. Have arranged with a taxi driver to hire a lorry for taking people to the Fete, if about 20 passengers will book in advance for it. It will work out less than the train journey.

Pam is getting excited about the holidays. Only eight weeks still to go. She is hoping to take one of her friends, the Foure girl, with her. Her father is local manager of South African Mutual and Chairman of the local United Party. Commencing with this week, the school hours have been changed so she has an extra half hour in bed and comes home for morning tea at 10.15 and for dinner at 1.45. They have two breaks during the morning and she enjoys coming home. We have our dinner about 12.30 according to what time I come home from committees or shopping. I am doing my typing on the back stoep, it is nice and warm here. We have not actually had a frost yet but it is quite cool at nights. We do not have a fire every night. Have turned the dining room table across the room and brought the stinkwood settee from the drawing room and placed it in front of the fireplace for the winter evenings.

Joe wants to buy our spare room suite so have written to Mary offering to store hers in that room. At present she has a hired room at the back of the Town Hall in a private house.

We only have the garden boy three days a week now as there is so little that can be done in the garden. He is keeping the grounds nice and clean. I am sorry to say that I have discovered that two of the large tanks are leaking. In fact, one is empty. Shall have to have a cement bottom put down. Fortunately I can shut off each tank from the others so shall not lose any water. All the leaves are off the Virginia Creeper at the tanks and the vines are rapidly losing their leave. Mom has had a lot of the Wisteria and roses cut back from the trellises as she finds they are making the dining room too dark. All the leaves are off the Virginian Creeper over the tanks.

Wednesday morning. We enjoyed the concert last evening. I did not get home until about 10.30. Leslie Collett and wife came down from Rooispruit, Uncle Norman, Gladys and Dick from Katkop and many others. It was very good and the hospital funds should receive a very substantial sum as Government gives 30/- for every pound raised. Leslie says his people are very satisfied with living in Uitenhage. He says the climate agrees with his mother's health and the garden is a good paying proposition. He is loud in his appreciation of what Joe does for them all in so many ways. Leslie says he wants to sell the house, shop and some land at Rooispruit where Eric and Freda ?. He wonders if Joe would like to buy it. I think he said the price was about £2000. There is no school there. There is the telephone exchange, shop and a certain amount of railway work which brings in some revenue. Joe has booked accommodation for Roy as a boarder at Dale College for next year and probably Merle will also be going to boarding school before long. Something to think about.

Gladys Norman says Aunt Jessie is not at all well. She phoned to us about supper time to ask where Norman and Gladys were. Norman and Gladys were as they had not returned from the Stock Fair. I told her they were staying in for the concert. She said she was sick, her feet bad etc. I suggested that she comes to us. Did I think Mom could nurse her? I said we would do the best we

could for her. I understand from Gladys that rheumatism is the trouble. However Enid is doing what she can. We must wait and see what develops. Have just phoned to Aunt Jessie. She says she is feeling better. Has asked Aunt Roena to go and help mix her medicine etc. Enid is nursing Gladys Collen who is down with flu. Aunt Jessie says she does not want to come in and make a lot of work and fuss. No post has come and I see my paper is almost filled so I reckon I must leave any other item of news for the next issue. We hope all are well at the various homes and hope to hear from you all in due course. Am now going up to see Aunt Eliza.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 10th, 1944

My dear All,

Dot sends the following contribution. An evacuee was asked to write a composition on what was the funniest sight he had seen in South Africa. This was it.

"I saw a whole crowd of tiny pigs rush up to one big pig, push it over and then start biting all its waistcoat buttons off." Another from the same source. "What is the difference between a laundryman and an undertaker?" The one stiffens the collars and the other collars the "stiffens". Next please!

I wonder if any of you heard one of Willie Crosbie's boys calling Vryburg last week. He sent a message to his people there and also to his relatives in Port Elizabeth. I have often wondered if any of our relations have the same opportunity of sending greetings. I do not know how it is arranged. Do they have to pay for sending such, I wonder. It would be a great thrill to hear their voices. We have not had any news of the grandsons up north recently.

The Sunday School anniversary went off very nicely. Pam read the lesson in the morning and afternoon and one of the Schooling boys in the evening. Rev Karg congratulated both of them and said to Schooling that he hoped some day he would be reading from the pulpit. The singing was also good. They sang Rock of Ages to a new tune which was very nice. This will be the last Anniversary that Mrs Hultzer will be the conductor as Mr Hultzer goes on pension at the end of this year. Wouldn't it be nice if Ted was appointed Postmaster here in his place! Mr Karg's addresses were specially fitting. In the evening he spoke very seriously to parents, taking for his text "Is it well with you and the child". The collections for the three services constitute a record for the past 15 years viz £12.6.0d. We shall be interested in hearing how the Kroonstad Sunday School anniversary passed off. I dare say Jean was taking some prominent part in it.

Grace sent Pam a box of her special rusks recently. I am afraid they will not last very long. Pam is counting the days almost to the holidays. Mrs Chatterton called yesterday to see if she could not travel by the same train as she has decided to go to Pretoria and occupy her own house – or part of it – if she can get the present tenant out. She would like to occupy one of our Municipal sub-economic houses but it must be just in the locality that she would like to live in. I am afraid we cannot oblige in that respect. She is very restless and does not like being shut up in a boarding house.

There is no word of Joyce returning yet. Raymond is still having treatment. They are having nice weather in Cape Town and Aunt Emmie is naturally glad to have her company. Aunt Eliza is keeping well. Dolly Enslin still sleeps there and Miss Miller still goes in every afternoon and sits with her.

My life insurance company has not been giving any bonuses for the last three years owing to war conditions. They have just notified me that they are renewing them but on a smaller basis. The amount is added to the policy and only paid out when the policy matures - at death.

Uncle Bertie is retiring from farming to some extent. His only son is advertising his farm for sale and will then build his own house on Speelmanskop and manage it jointly with his father. Uncle Bertie is much better since he had the old tooth stump removed.

A postcard from Douglas says he is going off to address five meetings in three days on the meat co-operative scheme. No further news from Rex and they did not hear from Arthur last week. They have not had frost yet – nor have we. Mr Hudson hoped to get out of hospital last week.

Mom and I attended two lectures in the Town Hall given by a Miss Valentine M.M. on her escape from France and her experiences of life in Russia. She is travelling all over the Union raising funds for the starving children in Europe. All this she is doing at her own expense. She is a wonderful speaker and if any of you have the chance of hearing her, be sure to go. Just on £10 was raised in the hall as the result of her addresses. She is going to Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and everywhere she can. She was born in Russia, her father was Irish. She is a very dramatic speaker. She has a wonderful story to tell and she tells it with effect.

The bulk of the above I have written before breakfast, this Tuesday morning. Pam is sitting for exams the next few days. Of course they are only tests. She is taking one of her school chums home with her for the holidays. Great excitement. I have made enquiries from the South African Railways and no special trains will be running for scholars. So Pam and her friend will have to go by the morning train, arriving Kroonstad in the middle of the night. No doubt they will have a "warm" reception in spite of the cold weather.

Our maid does not come on Sundays and she has not either Monday or today. The garden boy only comes to us on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The other three days he is working at the Poplars. I feel sure he could do all the rough housework, including kitchen, sweeping, floors etc.

Since writing the above, letters have just been delivered from Evelyn, Lynne, Beryl and Leslie's wife. Perhaps there may be more by the second post. Evelyn says they did hear Harold Crosbie over the air. They are hoping to hear Emmie Edward's son one day. He has been flying over Berlin a few times. She also enclosed an airgraph letter from West Butler telling of his brother Norman's wife's death. Perhaps I will find time and news to start another sheet.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 17h, 1944

My dear All,

Winter has come at last. Sunday night we registered 6 degrees of frost, the birdbath was a block of ice. We are expecting a fine day for Fish River Fete on Thursday. It is Tuesday morning and I am sitting in my dressing gown, the same one I got in Vryburg, and it is mighty cold. Breakfast is ready for Pam when she is up. She has had her early coffee and has to be at school by 8.15. It is only six weeks to the holidays. She is taking the Foure girl with her. Grace suggested her coming for the Xmas holiday but it appears she has made other arrangements for that. Grace and Ted and the two brothers in Johannesburg keep her well posted in news of what is happening. Ted has had lots of trouble in getting the house completed on the plot he bought a little while ago. He wishes he could sell out but that is not so easily done.

Poor little Ray has had a bad time in Cape Town over his ringworm trouble. The last visit to the specialist ordered washing his head with iodine. Joyce did so but evidently the iodine was too strong and the little chap suffered great pain. He was frantic, rolling on the floor and in a bad way. Joyce phoned to the doctor who then ordered Vaseline to be used. Unfortunately there was none in the house but Aunt Emmie got some from Mrs Armstrong next door. He soon got over the effect and was able to go to school next day. They all say they will never forget the state the child was in. There is no talk of their returning to Cradock yet.

Now for better news. Joyce has received several letters and cards from Dudley recently. The latest date was in March. He says he has never felt in better health in his life. He has not received Joyce's letters or parcels. She has spent several pounds in getting nice things for him.

Freda, we hear, is better and out of hospital. Eric was ordered to Pretoria and was there for one day and ordered back to Kimberley. He is hoping to get his discharge from the army. There was some talk of all the Fears trying to meet in Uitenhage for the June holidays but nothing so far as I know has materialised. It would be nice for Aunt Emmie if it could be arranged. The matter of accommodation is one of the greatest problems.

Lynne writes that she has had letters from Rex who is now in Italy and has been visiting Pompeii and other places. I gather from the wireless news that the bulk of the South African soldiers are now in the thick of the fighting. Ruth has been hearing regularly from Denis up to a week or so ago. She thinks he may now be back in the firing line after the rest the regiment had.

After many attempts to sell Bangkop, Tom Webster has at last bought it for £1150. They have been unsettled for such a long time they will now be able to improve the property as they want it. It is very convenient as Tom is able to get home to his mid-day meal.

Since May the first, I have not been taking afternoon naps. The days are so short that it does not seem worthwhile. We generally go to bed about 9.30 and I still rise at six except on Sundays when I am up in time to get the 8 o'clock news. I might have mentioned that in one of Dudley's letters to Joyce, he says he is 100% in better health than he was a year ago. He was not then working in a factory but helping building their new barracks. It was very cold and he was interested in watching children skating, snowballing etc. They had had a jolly Xmas and he was weighing more than he had ever done in his life. He was getting used to working under snow conditions. The temperature had been a degree below zero centigrade.

Yesterday (Monday) and today I am full up with Council committees and must be off in a few minutes to attend the first at 9.30.

Later. The hot water bottle that Reg gave Mom some years ago has at last given in and has to go to the anti-waste depot. It has done good service and it is impossible to replace same. However we have a couple of ink jars – stone bottles which will serve the purpose. We still have one rubber one so shall manage quite nicely. Letter from Joe this (Tuesday morning) says they could not entertain the idea of either renting or buying Leslie's Collett's shop and house and small farm as neither of them have sufficient knowledge of shop-keeping and besides the price they consider too high. This is the place where Eric and Freda were. Joe also says that Rev Weaver's son has been on embarkation leave and has now gone forward.

It is little Ann's sixth birthday today and we have been asked to her party this afternoon. Pam has given her a few small hankies. She is such a sweet little thing. She goes to the Convent now and is quite proud of herself. Miss Booth is bringing her to the Fete on Thursday.

Grace reports very cold weather but bright days. Plenty of wind but no rain. Hope to hear good news from you all tomorrow but I do not expect to be able to add to this so hope for the best. Am now off to my last Committee for today. We are all well, free from colds so far. Enjoying fires in the dining room each evening.

Lots of love to each and all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
As at Wednesday May 24th, 1944

My dear All,

As Wednesday is a public holiday, the postal arrangements will be out of gear and so had better post my letter on Tuesday. It is about 3.30 and Mom has just gone to her Women's Auxiliary meeting. Pam has gone back to school for an extra class and I am not feeling too well the last few days. I have been having pains in my right hip and yesterday developed a very nasty cold, running at the nose etc. I had an appointment with the dentist at 10 a.m. as one of my front teeth had worked loose for some time past. He says the remaining four of my own are not much use now and should come out. He does not recommend their extraction in the winter so I shall have to put up with them for some time. Dr Reineke at Cape Town told me years ago that I should take them to the grave with me but then I did not expect I should live so long. After the dentist, I attended a Council committee empowered to condemn a certain number of slum properties in town. It was a pitiful sight to see how the poor live, mostly Coloured folk doing washing for townsmen. It will take months before we can provide them with better quarters.

You will be anxious to hear how the Fish River Fete went off. Rev Karg kindly offered Mom a seat in his car and Mr Hultzer took Mrs Kissack, her sister, Mrs Hultzer and I in his car. It was a perfect day and there was a great crowd of visitors. The final result was a taking of £324 odd, the highest on record and this is the 28th Fete. There were about 40 springboks which brought in practically £50. I wanted to get one but did not feel justified to go to that price. Two sheep Uncle Jack gave brought in £345 by American auction. The lunch for which they charged 2/6 was well worth the money. There was the usual rush for venison and whilst I had commissions to get for other people, I did not get any for ourselves. Needless to say we are all very pleased and thankful for such a splendid result. The outing undoubtedly did Mom's cold much good. She has been alright since. I cannot say the same for myself but hope to be A.1 tomorrow.

Jack's brother, Tom, who has apparently been cut off from the rest of the family was there. He was on his way back from a visit to his brother, Jim in the Eastern Transvaal. I suppose we have not seen him for 30 or 40 years or more. He and Jack had dinner with us on Thursday. Our boy had to carry the bags containing the money. Of course I accompanied him. A lady, who on hearing my name, enquired if I knew a Mrs Fear who used to live in Cradock. She said Aunt Emmie was the first person to take any notice of her and took her to church. Her name was Miss F.S. Simkins. This was in 1906, 38 years ago. She was so pleased to hear of her again. They used to correspond but that ceased some years ago. She was also interested in Ruth but I forget if she said she had ever met her. She enquired about Aunt Emmie's servant that she brought with her from England and I was able to tell her something of her history. At present she is staying on a farm at Fish River. She lost her husband some years ago, has two children, a son and daughter. Her married name is Mrs Suainston and her address, Burllety, Port Alfred. She is staying with Mr Cookson, Fish River. Aunt Eliza says she remembers the name. Her husband has been dead some years.

Evelyn writes that they have not heard from Arthur for nearly three weeks. She is hoping to hear Rex speaking over the air. She expects to hear Rex "perhaps" next Sunday at 2 p.m. She is going to keep on listening until she does hear him. We shall do the same. Did I tell you to listen in at 5.10 p.m. on Sundays to a series of talks entitled "the man who was born to be King". It is the story of the life of Christ told in every day language. It is well worth listening to. Dot says they have had some heavy frosts and Joe also complains of the cold in Uitenhage. We have a fire in the dining room each evening. At tomorrow's Council meeting, I am going to ask for three months leave and at the end of that period, shall be able to judge if it is worthwhile offering myself for re-nomination in August. Am glad to say Raymond seems to be making progress at last. I understand the doctor was more hopeful when he examined him last week. Joyce has had about a dozen or more letters and cards from Dudley in the past few weeks. He says he has never felt better in health in his life. He remarked that the bombing was rather disturbing – presumably the Allies. The news lately seems to indicate that plans are set for the invasion of Europe very shortly. Evelyn has sent us snaps of Kingsley and Cecily, both of which are very good. How they have grown! She also

says that Douglas seems to be in better health lately. That is indeed good news. Keep it up Douglas. When are you thinking of paying a visit to Queenstown and Cradock?

Rev Karg has asked me if I would go with him to Synod at Graaff Reinet in July. It would be nice to get the chance of seeing some of the Clan if it materialises. It would be very nice if I could see Aunt Letty again.

Tuesday morning. Am glad to say that my cold is not any worse but a little better than yesterday. We have had a little rain during the night. Shall not go out until this afternoon's Council meeting. Sunday School picnic in the show ground all day tomorrow. Suppose we shall go over for lunch and watch the children playing. Mom seems to have got over her cold. The Fete outing did her a lot of good.

Lots of love to everybody,
Goodbye for this week,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 31st, 1946

My dear All,

As last Wednesday was a holiday, so this Wednesday is Union Day, I forgot to put up the Union Jack and the South African flag but must try to do so this week.

The news of the week is a short visit from Lynne and a girlfriend, Miss Emmie Miles. She says she is some relation of the Amms – in fact there are miles and miles of relations. She is a very nice girl and works in Queenstown. They only arrived at 10.30 and left again exactly at 3 p.m. Mr Wilson, the owner of the car, thanked them for the pleasure of their company. He made no charge. It was our Sunday School picnic so they all joined us with Leslie's children from the Convent. It was a very nice day and all enjoyed themselves. We hope they may be able to repeat the visit. The next pleasure was a very interesting letter from Rex posted in Italy. He is charmed with the beautiful scenery. His job at present is driving motor lorries which he prefers to doing engineering works. He says he is going to take up farming when he returns. He just missed meeting Arthur on one of his rounds. Evelyn rather expected to hear his voice over the wireless yesterday afternoon. We all listened in from 2 to 3 and did not hear him. Will try again next Sunday. I have replied to his letter and posted it today.

So far did I get last evening (it is now Tuesday morning and am sitting out on the back stoep). It was Aunt Jessie's birthday yesterday. Aunt Rouena goes to her every day to dress her leg which has been giving her trouble for some time.

On Saturday it rained nearly all day. Aunt Eliza's servant was in trouble, having received a Summons for two months rent (8/-). She has since paid it and after seeing the Officials, got her exempted from paying a fine of 2/6 for the issuing of the Summons. It was a very cold day and it rained most of the time and continued all night registering 1½ inches for the 24 hours. Rain continued almost all Sunday. We all went to service in pouring rain. I always feel it a duty as well as a pleasure to go on wet days as so many stay away for the least possible excuse. Rev Karg could not go into the country for his appointment so gave a short address which was most appropriate for Pentecost Sunday. There were only 17 coins in the collection plate in the morning and 21 in the evening. During Sunday, we heard over the wireless warnings to resident along the Sundays River to prepare for floods. Three of the sluice gates had been raised 14 feet and the river was still rising. The Railways also put over the air stating that all trains from Port Elizabeth were cancelled and others were held up at Alicedale and Cookhouse. The rains have been quite exceptional for May. A postcard from Douglas this morning written on Sunday says they had ½ inch there. He was going on tour to Victoria West on this meal business. They also listened in on Sunday for Rex's message which did not come.

Aunt Emmie writes that Mr Halliday died last Sunday week. His body was cremated. He was a very nice old man, I think younger than me but am not sure. You will be glad to hear that Raymond is at last getting over his ringworm trouble. He still has to have regular treatment. There is no talk of them returning to Cradock yet. Aunt Emmie still keeps about the same. Great improvements are being made at Bankop. Aunt Eliza's house leaked as usual. Her bed had to be moved a little to avoid the dropping water. She is getting a man to see if it cannot be remedied. I expect it wants a new lot of iron.

Dot writes about their four days picnic at the butchery farm. They had a room in which to live, blankets and a bed and all seem to have enjoyed the outing. Tics were not so troublesome owing to recent frosts.

The Hultzers will be leaving Cradock on pension at the end of September. I had hoped that we might be able to get their flat. On enquiry, the owner informs me that Mr Tunbridge has the first refusal and if he does not take it, he has a crowd of applicants for it, so it does not look very hopeful so far as we are concerned.

Joe wants to buy the bedroom suite in our spare room and we may get Mary's which is being stored in an outside room with a lot of Olive's furniture.

I am forgetting to tell you that at last Tuesday's Council meeting I asked for three months leave of absence and same was granted. The Mayor spoke very kindly regarding the work I had done for the town and hoped I should feel well enough to resume after having a good rest. The Council agreed to my request to keep me informed as to what is going on so that I can attend if I feel so inclined. We must wait and see. Several ratepayers have begged me not to give up. I can promise you that so long as I can work I shall continue to do so. There are lots of things I want to do so no fear of my being idle or moping. I notice Douglas says they have not started fires yet. We had fires nearly all day when it was so cold and wet.

It is three p.m. just had a good sleep and not time for more so goodbye for another week.

Lots of love to all from

Dad

Posted Sunday evening 4th June 1944

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 7th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Saturday morning and I am still in bed, trying to get up to date with my correspondence. I sent each of you a postcard saying I was in dry dock with a nasty cough and Dr had ordered me to bed. He has not stated what exactly is the matter but on Tuesday night I was very uncomfortable, coughing almost incessantly. About midnight Mom wanted to call the Doctor but I hoped the trouble would have abated by the morning. I was not well when I posted the dear all on Tuesday afternoon but did not mention it as I thought it would soon pass over. Wednesday was a public holiday. Pam went to fetch the Collett girls from the Convent out for the day but they were not allowed as there was a hockey tournament on against Rocklands. So Pam went and watched the play. Her girlfriend who is going to Kroonstad with her for the holidays phoned to know if she could stay to supper with them. So Pam did not have such a bad day after all. We had had the electric heater on in the bedroom during the previous evening and early in the morning and it had been put away in the corner between the fireplace and my wardrobe. Some time after we smelt something like rubber burning and thought it must have come from our next door neighbour's yard. Later I discovered the heater was switched on and was facing towards my wardrobe. The heat had penetrated right through and I had to apply a wet lappie to cool it. Thus ended episode No. 1. Episode No. 2 followed after Dr had left. Mom lit the fire in our room and after it was well alight, Mom had left the room and was in bed, I notice the flue of the grate had blown shut with the result the flames came into the room instead of going up the chimney. I hopped out of bed and with a large pair of scissors Mom keeps in her chest of drawers, pushed back the flap. This happened 3 times and won't occur again. No harm was done but it might have been worse. When I installed a loudspeaker in the lounge some years ago, I got the man to lay the wires also into our bedroom in case at any time either of us might have to spend some time in bed. So I am able to have the news now at my bedside. I do not take any daily paper so am able to keep fairly in touch with the outside world. Mr Stock, Rev Karg and Alison have been to see me. My cough has been very troublesome. Sometimes it is difficult to get my breath and it is very exhausting. I spend the day and night propped up with four pillows in bed. The phlegm is very nasty. Fortunately I do not appear to have any temperature. It is now nearly noon and Dr has not been yet. Mom says the wind is cold so I am best off where I am. Pam went to her friend's 15th birthday party last evening. She helps where she can, does some shopping etc for the home. Three weeks today she will be at home in Kroonstad. We have not made any plans for going anywhere for the school holidays. I have suggested to Douglas that as he has to go to Victoria West shortly, he might come on from De Aar and see us but we hardly think it is likely he will be able to come. Evelyn was talking of visiting Queenstown when Mrs Collen returns later in the year.

Letter from Aunt Emmie refers to the lady I met at Fish River Fete who knew her 38 years ago. She says Raymond is gradually getting better, only goes to the doctor fortnightly. We also hear from the same quarter that we may expect another grandchild at Uitenhage.

I am sure you will excuse mistakes in my letter as it is far from easy to see what I am doing. My fingers often strike the wrong keys and are often right off the machine. However it gives me something to do and it is a pleasure to talk to you in this way. Trains and posts have been very much disorganised by the big landslide near Alicedale. We hear the line may not be able to be cleared for three weeks. We had over three and a half inches of rain in May. The next highest was 2 inches in 1914. The average for 67 years was only 70 odd points.

Saturday afternoon. Doctor not been yet. It is perhaps a sign that he does not think I am sufficiently ill to need urgent attention. I feel that I am wasting time staying in bed when there is so much I want to do and so little time to do it. However being in bed has given me the opportunity of typing these lines. Will try to add another sheet before posting on Wednesday next.

Sunday. Am still in bed. Doctor came about 5 pm Saturday. Says I may get up Monday after he has seen me. My cough is much better – Grace and Ted phoned up last evening. Heard Rex over the air this afternoon. Love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
June 6th, 1944

My dear All,

I posted to you all on Sunday evening as I had managed to type a letter in bed during the week. In case you may be in doubt as to how I am, I had better get another off on Wednesday, tomorrow. My cough is very much better but still a little troublesome – especially evenings and nights. Dr did not come until after five on Saturday so I stayed in bed all that day. Sunday, Mr Lidbetter called and sat with me part of the time whilst Mom and Pam went to dinner at the Premier. I have to thank Alison for a nice loaf of white bread which she sent along. It was quite a treat to see white bread. Pam has a bunch of violets by my bedside and I am well looked after. In the afternoon of Sunday we listened in to Rex's message to his parents and Lynne. It was about the third message to come over and it was quite clear. We did not recognise his voice. His message was to the effect that he was enjoying life, was keeping fit, and was receiving parcels regular and hoped to see us all soon. We shall be interested in hearing who else heard his message. Dot says that their power station closes down on Sunday afternoons for cleaning up purposes so they do not listen in. All the messages seemed to express the view that they would be home soon. May they be correct.

Doctor called about five yesterday (Monday). I did not wait for him and was up and sitting at my desk. He sounded me again and considered I was pretty fit. He has given me a sort of syrup to take in case I feel I need it. I have taken one dose already. Aunt Eliza has kept in touch with us each day. Am glad she is keeping so well. Also Aunt Emmie. No word of Joyce and Ray returning.

Well! The long expected news of the invasion has at last come. The news up to time of writing this (3 pm) is satisfactory as far as it goes. It is reported that Hitler is in command in North France. The immensity of the invading force, ships, airmen etc. is appalling. It is useless to try to recapture the news which has been pouring in all this afternoon and – now evening – as no doubt all of you are sitting on the news. There was a united service of intercession at 5.30 this afternoon in the Town Hall presided over by the Mayor. I would very much have liked to have been there. Mom went. Aunt Jessie and Uncle Gervase – and others – were in for the stock fair etc. Uncle Gervase went to the service. Aunt Jessie stayed with me by the fire. I am going to wait up to hear the King's speech at 9 p.m. I am glad to say I do not feel any the worse for being up all day today and hope to do better tomorrow. Pam is leading a debate at the Guild – which has been resuscitated after many years on which is best, to live in town or in the country. She is taking the country side. Shall hear in the morning how she got on. Needless to say she is getting more and more excited at the prospect of going home on 23rd. By the way, I asked Dr what he thought about our going for a tour round the various homes, he was very decided "no, not in the winter". So that's that. In a postcard from Evelyn recently, she says she is expecting Lynne home in August. Does this mean for her annual holiday or is she leaving Queenstown? We have been expecting a visit from Douglas and Evelyn as she said she wanted to meet Lynne's friends in Queenstown.

Wednesday morning. Am glad to be able to report that I have resumed my normal routine from 6.30 this morning. Am still wearing the thermagine wool on my chest. Slept from about 10 p.m. to 5.30 am without coughing so I hope it will not be necessary to issue any more bulletins. For this I am very thankful. Pam has left for school and comes down for morning tea at 10.15. She lost her debate last evening at the Guild.

Mom and I listened to the King's message to his people at 9 last evening. He was very good, more nervous than usual I thought, but his message struck a high note. I did not hear Roosevelt but understand his message was also fine. A long list of intercessory services were announced over the radio last evening to be held in various churches along the Reef and leading towns in the Union but there was not a single Dutch or Afrikaans church amongst the list of churches. This is significant. The news by air this morning reports wonderful progress being made by the Allies.

Mrs Chatterton, Pam's great Aunt, is out of hospital and back at the Premier. She is hoping to go to Pretoria in July.

I am using new carbon paper this week, I hope you will find your copies easier to read than recent issues have been. I need a new ribbon as well but they are difficult to obtain I fear.

Our Magistrate expects to be transferred about the end of this month. He and his wife have been very friendly. One year she asked me if I had extra copies of my Xmas card as she would so like to send a copy to her sons. Having been away nearly a week from my desk, there is an accumulation of papers etc to be cleared up. I do not expect I shall be able to reply to any letters that may arrive this morning but thank you in anticipation of their arrival. Hope all are well at the various homes. The sale of Sonny Collett's farm advertised for yesterday did not sell. Probably price not realised.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
June 13th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning and very cold. Am sitting on the back stoep in my dressing gown, sleeping cap and mittens on. Breakfast is just over and this is going to be the warmest place in the house presently. Yesterday (Monday) was a dreadful day with a strong South East wind blowing. To make matters worse, we are quite out of coal and owing to the strike in Johannesburg, none is available in town. It is to be hoped the strike will not last long. I am glad to say that I am feeling better than a week ago. Have not seen the Doctor, cough practically stopped so nothing more need to be said on that point.

Last Wednesday we had a letter from Ruth (after I had finished my dear all), in which she says Denis writes: "I had an amazing stroke of luck – a South African Engineer Colonel came over to see our B Commander on business. I was introduced to him and we chatted for about half an hour in the Mess. He had to leave about 5 p.m. but just before his truck pulled off, there was a knock at the door. I answered it and who should be standing there but Rex! I just about collapsed with surprise. He is the driver of the Colonel's truck and heard the Colonel mention that there were some South African Officers in the battery. When he heard that one's name was Butler, he immediately realised that it was me. Wasn't that lucky? I really enjoyed seeing Rex. He may be coming over again this week." "I had a ten page letter from Dorothea last week, she seems to be dreadfully down and depressed."

This was indeed a happy meeting and it is nice to know that they are so near to each other. It would be nice to hear of Arthur also meeting. I guess that all the South African men have been pushed through Rome as fast as possible so as to keep in touch with the retreating Germans. Douglas and Evelyn write that they heard Rex on the air but did not recognise his voice. Of course it is two years or more since he left. I am so sorry I forgot to mention in my letter to him that his 21st birthday was so near. He came of age on Saturday last, 10th, the same day as Trevor. Rex is the fourth grandchild to pass their 21st milestone. It will be Arthur and baby Charles' birthdays next month.

Douglas writes that he has had a good harvest of 900 tons of mealies at Therons Rust. Has not threshed at Grass Ridge yet. He says he is putting on weight. This is good news. Wish we could hear the same about Joe. He tells of effects of the heavy rains that have fallen in and around Uitenhage. Over 4 inches were registered. They went to see the river which runs at the bottom of Uncle Owen's street. It was a terrible flood. Telephone poles were broken off and washed away. From Dispatch to Zwartkops was one stretch of water. Talking about the rains and floods, we were interested in a Mrs Meyers who was here for her health from Walmer. She is a friend of Winnie Biggs. She left on the fast train on Sunday morning – the day after the heavy rains – intending to reach her home the same afternoon. The train was held up at Cookhouse and eventually was sent back through Cradock to Rosmead and then to Graaff Reinet and then on to Port Elizabeth. Instead of her reaching home the Sunday afternoon, she did not arrive until nearly noon on Tuesday – two nights and two days instead of about nine hours.

Since writing the above, another letter has come from Ruth enclosing a snap of Denis taken a few weeks ago in Italy. It is a splendid photo of him. She also sent some snaps of an Italian town where he had spent his leave. Denis says it may be some time before his Mother will be able to hear from him as evidently troops are being hurried further north.

David Irons has also applied for leave to join up. Have not heard if he has been accepted. The news this morning of General Smuts, Churchill and other big noises being in France is surprising but evidently shows how things are moving. I don't think it will be long before we hear that the South of France has been invaded.

Ted has practically finished building the house on the new plot



he bought some time ago. He has let it so hope it will prove to be a sound investment.

Dot says Mrs Legg may be spending Xmas in Potgietersrus. She will be visiting Vryburg. Douglas, the Metcalfs etc. before returning from Rhodesia.

Our garden boy who comes three days a week, brought me the small chopper last Thursday complaining it was so blunt. I sent him with it to the blacksmith and shortly afterwards he came to me with a big gash in the middle finger of his right hand – he is a left handed boy. So I had to set to and practise first aid work. I stopped the bleeding with iodine and bandaged it as best I could. I sent him to the Location dispensary on his way home to let it be properly fixed up and there has been no further trouble.

This morning we have received an invitation to a farewell dinner to the Magistrate and his wife who are being transferred at the end of the month. Mr and Mrs Phillips have been very nice friends here and we shall miss them. We look to attend the dinner on 21st at the Victoria.

Last evening (Monday), Olive and her sister, Mildred, turned up. She has been staying with them ever since she left here some six weeks or more ago. She will spend a few days with us and I think intends going on to Port Elizabeth. Am glad to say she is looking better. She is on diet treatment from a specialist in Middelburg and she feels the cold acutely. She could not find her hot water bottle last night so we filled an ink bottle which was a poor substitute but better than nothing. Wednesday morning. We have had a little rain (eight points) during the night and it is cold and raw. I did not go out at all yesterday and have no desire to go anywhere today. I have taken another dose of my medicine as I do not want any repetition of my recent cough.

We are sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie had another nasty turn recently. She was at Gladys' house at the time and fortunately one of Gladys' sons was with her and a friend when she came over queer. They were able to hold her from actually falling. Am glad to say the attack did not last long but she has to be careful and should never be left entirely alone. Roy has had his 9th birthday in Cape Town but owing to his ringworm trouble, was not able to have any playmates for the occasion. He is getting quite better but it seems a slow process. I wonder when they will be returning. To add to their troubles, Gladys has developed "housemaid's knee" and has to rest for a while. Since they bought the house she has been busy making improvements in the house and garden and probably has been doing too much stooping. Hope it will soon be better. Joyce's services must be in great demand.

Eric Fear, after a number of journeys to and from Pretoria, has at last got three months leave from military service. He was hoping to get his discharge but was not successful. The anticipated family gathering at Uitenhage has evidently fallen through. Suppose they all will go to the farm for the school holidays.

Yesterday (13th) was the seventh anniversary of Uncle Herbert's passing away and Saturday (17th) it will be 21 years since Uncle James died.

The direct rail service to and from Port Elizabeth is to be resumed on Thursday night. We hear that a tunnel near Alicedale as well as a big landslide has been the main causes of delay. Olive is going to Port Elizabeth by train on Friday morning. Most likely she will go to Johannesburg before she decides to settle down anywhere.

Blodwen said that during the flood, mothers were chasing everywhere to get supplies of milk for their babies. The dairies that supply Uitenhage are the other side of the river and could not get to town. Hundreds of snakes, bucks, cattle etc were swept down the river. Coloured folk were allowed to keep the meat they were able to rescue but had to hand over the skins of the stock to the authorities. Their houses leaked considerably. Their house has been improved by the addition of a window to their spare bedroom. Trevor had a happy birthday on 10th. He says he wants Joe to buy him a horse so he can ride when they go farming. Blodwen suggested buying him a pair of trousers and braces but he says he does not want trousers!

Owing to railway disorganisation since the floods, we have been getting our post at all sorts of times. South mails have had to come via Graaff Reinet and Rosmead and arrive by goods train in the afternoon. North mails are often very late but we are always glad to hear from all of you. Even postcards are welcome if stamps or letter paper is not available. I notice that Douglas' writing has

greatly improved since he got a new nib to his fountain pen. He gets quite a lot of news onto a card. Dot, too, often uses a card when she has not time to write a long letter. She has given up her leadership of the Women's Auxiliary for the time-being at any rate. Reg has been on the local jury at their Circuit Court. There were no less than six murder cases on the list. A very necessary but unpleasant duty to perform.

It is now noon and no post has yet come from the north – at least from Dot. Grace has written to Pam. She has been very busy with spring cleaning. The kitchen has been receiving attention with the result Grace has been feeling headaches etc. We do not forget her experience of standing on a table some years ago doing some painting with disastrous results. I do not envy Ted meeting the train that Pam and her friend travel by next week. It is due at Kroonstad about 1 a.m. By the way, Mrs Chatterton (great aunt) has booked to return to Pretoria on 27th. There is no accommodation on any train before that date.

I must not weary you longer. I had no intention of writing so much but I hope you are interested.

Mom has not had time to write this week but sends her love to you all.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 21st, 1944

My dear All,

I am glad to say that we have been able to obtain a sack of coal and hope to get some more soon as it takes a lot of stoking to keep a wood fire burning. We have a good deal of wood on hand still, enough to carry us through this winter. Everyone seems to think that we are experiencing a severe and wet season, we are certainly having more rain than usual. Douglas complains that his mealie crop is exposed to the weather and if they have much more rain, it will reduce its value. He says he will have to build sheds or shelters when material is available. That may be sooner than some expect if the statement which came over the air on Monday by Mr Churchill that the war might end in a few months time. Churchill is not the man to make a statement of that nature unless he is pretty sure of his ground. At any rate it is something to look forward to.

Olive left on Friday for Port Elizabeth. Her address will be c/o Mrs Whittall, 1 Roseberg Avenue, off Cape Road. She has not made any definite plans for the future. She wants to settle down somewhere where she can have a home of her own. She had hoped for a small farm, near a market town and is sorry she missed a chance of such a place near East London which belonged to a friend of hers, Mrs Jones, who is now living in Johannesburg. She is looking to pay her a visit some time.

I am glad to say I am about back to normal so far as health goes. I understood from Dr that I had a touch of bronchial trouble. I don't want any more of it. Mom is keeping well except for a pain below her shoulder blade. A famous porous plaster seems to have done the trick. Rev Karg was laid up for a few days last week with an attack of lumbago. He was able to take the services on Sunday.

It was arranged for Wednesday ...? So put it off for a day. Mom and I look to attend. The Magistrate is being transferred to Lichtenburg, Western Transvaal.

Joyce has written a very interesting letter re Raymond's birthday – his 9th. He had lots of presents but could not have playmates. His head is much better. Joyce and he have been visiting some of Dudley's friends and relations where they have been having a good time. There is no word of their returning yet. Aunt Emmie has got over her recent "turn" without any serious after effects, I am glad to say. Gladys too is better.

Pam and her friend are excited at leaving on Friday morning. They arrive at Kroonstad about midnight. I don't envy Ted the job of meeting the train at that hour and then about two miles by motor, the same car that he bought when at Cape Town when we were there. It is about worn out now and has been giving lots of trouble for some time past. Baby Charles has a birthday this week. He misses his two big brothers and sister. He is a great favourite with all.

We have asked Ruth and her husband to come on a visit to us during the holidays. Have not had a reply yet. It will be a change for them and a pleasure for us.

This week I am taking advantage of my leave of absence from attending the Council committee meetings. They do take up a lot of time and I am glad to be able to get on with some of the other jobs I have been wanting to do.

It is Tuesday and two years ago today Tobruk was captured when about 20,000 South Africans were captured. How they will rejoice – and their relatives and friends too – if they should be released in a few months time. It is quite within the range of possibilities.

Butter went up to over 4/- a pound last week, fortunately it is down again to about three. Eggs are still 3/- and over a dozen. We have not been able to get any rice for a long time. We get raw fish at 8 pence a pound and enjoy it more than the fried that you get at the shops. Milk is now 3½d a pint.

Wednesday morning, on back stoep. Not quite so cold this morning. The shortest day of the year so far as daylight is concerned but no difference in daylight will be noticed for about three weeks or so. Two years ago today – not yesterday as previously stated – Tobruk fell to the Germans and it looks as though the day might see the surrender or capture of Cherbourg. May it be so.

Last evening the Junior Guild gave a social to the members of the church in the hall. We went but there were not as many present as expected. Pam did not have any special part in the programme but sang in the choir. It was a nice evening and not too late. Posts have been very irregular lately. Some days we do not get the north post until five in the afternoon. Yesterday nothing at all came which is quite unusual. I shall not attempt a second sheet this week. I am busy with some church figures for the next quarterly meeting early in July.

Noon. No post yet, perhaps there won't be any so I will not wait longer. Hope you are all keeping well. Everyone is complaining of the cold this winter. There is a strong wind from the north again now so perhaps it is working up for more rain. We shall miss Pam for the next three weeks. Hope she and her friend have fine weather and enjoy themselves. Pam will miss seeing her two big brothers. I took her height yesterday and she is 5 ft 9 inches.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 28th, 1944

My dear All,

I have just returned from seeing Mrs Chatterton off to Pretoria by the early train which fortunately was up to time. A nasty cold wind is blowing but the temperature is not so low as it has been. However I am glad to have the electric heater going at my feet and with my big overcoat on and a pair of mittens which Pam knitted for me just before she left, and with Dot's knitted scarf round my neck, I am well away. For some time I have been wearing my old cardigan that Blodwen knitted some years ago under my shirt so I am well protected. I now have four gadgets attached to my electric light at my desk. The heater, the lamp on my desk, the wireless and the light over the dining room table are all on the same switch. Of course we have the fire going every evening and with the sheepskin at my feet, I am very comfortable. So far neither of us have been troubled with chaps this winter – probably due to the fact that we always have plenty of rainwater to wash in. Everyone is complaining that this winter is the coldest they have experienced in Cradock.

It is Tuesday morning, breakfast is past and it is nice out on the back stoep and so can continue my letter. News came over at eight that Cherbourg is in the Allies' hands, so another chapter is closed and another begun. Smuts is evidently on his way home as he has been addressing South African troops in Italy. Perhaps he is in Pretoria by now. He does fly about so quickly.

I saw Pam off on Friday morning. Her train was reported an hour late. Mr Fourie came down by car with his daughter and took us over. My it was cold that morning. Her friend wrote to her parents on Saturday that they had arrived safely and they phoned the news to us.

A nice letter from Lynne recently. She says she hears frequently from Arthur and Rex and George Hudson (Reg's brother). Arthur and George are on the same gun. Rex thinks Italy is a grand place.

Grace writing today before Pam arrived was very busy and was without a proper servant. Baby Charles was observing his birthday when Pam arrived. Grace had made a birthday cake and has five candles on it. I expect we shall hear from Pam today.

Ruth writes that they cannot accept our invitation at present. They have a houseful of boarders and only one servant, consequently it is difficult to get away but they may be able to manage it later. She hears from Denis frequently and one came that was written only ten days previously. They passed through Rome dashing after the Germans. They were so sleepy and tired that they could have slept just standing up.

News appeared in the Midland last week that Uncle Norman's three sons were in a Prisoner of War camp near the Polish border. They were all working, Neville and Keith at railway works and Godfrey at a mining job. They were all well treated and were in good health. Uncle Jack's son, Hilton, was also with them. It will be fine if Churchill is correct that the war might be over in August.

I have not weighed myself for a couple of months and find I am still keeping to my 142 lbs. Wednesday morning. Not quite so cold but am glad to have the heater alongside of me. News is quite good this morning. It is marvellous how the Russians are rushing on through White Russia. Everything seems to point to a collapse of the enemy. May the end soon come.

I must record an experience Aunt Eliza had recently. Pam told us the story, I hope I have got it correctly. Clifford Saunders called to see her rather late one evening. Somehow he managed to make her hear his knocking. Of course the front door was locked. She enquired from the inside "who is there?" but before opening the door, placed the chain on the door before she recognised who it was. I am very glad she is so careful. After his departure she again locked the door but by mistake forgot to take the key out so that when Miss Enslin came in later – with her key – she could not open the door. It is wonderful how much better Aunt Eliza is and how well she manages her cooking etc. The servant only comes in the mornings and Miss Maude Miller goes in later in the afternoon and sits with her for an hour or two. She gets through an amount of reading and writing every day. Mr Thomas' shop boy is very good and goes daily to feed the pigeons and fowls. She has been making small quantities of toffee and it is of excellent quality. We wonder when Joyce

and Raymond will be coming back. Aunt Eliza thinks probably at the end of the present school holidays. Eric Fear has been granted three months leave – without pay – and is busy on the farm. Freda is still in Kimberley so far as I know.

Joe writes that they are having better weather conditions there. The Minister of Railways has recently visited the workshops and made all sorts of promises of improved working conditions including a new station, etc. Joe wonders if any of these improvements will be effected before he retires from the service. Joe has bought our spare room suite and we are going to house Mary's for her. I remember it being made by my brother John before I left England. Merle and Roy both have birthdays in July and there are quite a number of anniversaries I have to remember. I hope you are all keeping well. The post is sure to be late and I have a lot to do so will close with my love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 4th, 1944

My dear All,

Half the year gone and so little done and so much that one wants to do. Each day brings its quota of jobs to be tackled and it is difficult to keep pace with it all. I am very thankful that I have plenty to keep me occupied. It is Tuesday morning – not so cold, in fact we had a few drops of rain during the night but it is too dark to take the measure yet. We have had our early coffee some time ago. It is the quarterly meeting of the church this evening and I have a good deal to prepare for it, therefore I am starting in good time. We had a lady caller, a Mrs Schoeman, a teacher on holiday from Bedford who sits at our table at the Premier. She is the daughter of a settler, a very cultured lady, who was a Miss Rogers. Her married son is in the war. She greatly admired Mom's needlework etc.

I did not finish the story about Aunt Eliza locking her front door. It was fortunate that Clifford Saunders was with her when Miss Enslin came to sleep and he heard her knocking otherwise it might have been a case of love locked out. All's well that ends well.

Our maid wanted to go to the country to see a sick relation so from Friday we have been without her. We are now going to try an experiment by having the boy in to do the rough work. He has been coming three days a week for some time and finds he does not get enough work to keep him going. He is in need of clothes so we have fitted him up with a pair of shorts and a shirt and he changes into these first thing when he comes – or after he has done some of the rough work, fireplace etc. He can do the washing up, etc and is quite a useful boy. He has a good character and I hope he will do well. However it is an experiment. He can sweep and also water the garden. Mom does not like the idea of his doing the washing. The girl said she would send a substitute but she has not turned up.

Councillor Michau (Pauletta) who recently married an English hairdresser here, was gored by one of his bulls on his farm last Thursday. Fortunately there was a man not too far away who came to his assistance otherwise he would have been killed. He is in hospital. He has a dreadful gash in his thigh and is much bruised about his body. We saw him on Sunday afternoon. We also called to see Aunt Charlotte at the Old Ladies Home. She is keeping as well as usual. There is a new Matron there now so I hope she will be more contented.

Pam and her friend seem to be having a good time. Less than a fortnight she should be back again.

Douglas says when he was at De Arr recently, he recognised someone who looked like a Butler so took the chance of speaking to him. It was Ernest's nephew, Josie's son, who is a doctor and was on his way to Upington on embarkation leave. They had dinner together. Douglas and Evelyn's children are home. Evelyn is busy he say lengthening dresses etc. Letters come fairly regularly from Arthur and Rex from Italy. Ruth says she heard from Denis too. We do hope that now the war seems to be drawing to its final stage, that they will all come back safely. So General Smuts is safely back in Pretoria.

I have been again approached by both English and Afrikaans sections of the Ratepayers to stand again for the Council. The Mayor says that I can be released from all but say one or two of the Committees and as they now hold the Council meetings in the afternoon, instead of the evening, they all hope I will accept nomination. Of course that does not follow that I should be elected as the opposition, we hear, are going to contest all three seats. I am not deciding anything just at the moment.

Ted's Aunt, Mrs Chatterton, left on Tuesday morning for Pretoria. I saw her off by the early train and a postcard received says she was well received and everything seems to be settled to her entire satisfaction. Unfortunately she does not give her address on the postcard.

We have sent the spare room furniture to Joe. Hope to hear of its safe arrival. We shall get Mary's big furniture up in a day or so. They all seem well. I am afraid that I have not been answering your letters as fully as I would like the last two or three weeks as I have been doing a lot of research work amongst the old church records but have now broken the back of the job. It has

been very interesting. We had hoped to be able to get out to Fish River for a few days but transport is difficult. The early train is too early for Mom and the farmers do not come in often. There are generally soldiers visiting on farms so we have given it up for the present. The cold weather too is not inviting. Must stop now for breakfast.

After breakfast. I must tell you a true story of a rat. We have been bothered with an occasional rat and have set poison from time to time. We seldom see the results except that they disappear without leaving any trace or smell. However, last week the maid was coming from the small pantry and saw something moving just by the door. It was a rat which apparently was trying to emerge from a small hole but could not negotiate it. She killed it and called me. I had to use a good deal of force using the coal tongs before I could extract it. I never knew that an animal would attempt to get through a hole that was large enough to admit its head and not its body. I see the sheet is full so goodbye and lots of love to all.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 12th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Monday evening and I want to "get a move on" so as to have a clear run first thing in the morning. There is a nice fire burning and Mom is just warming some milk and water as a nightcap before going to bed. It has been a very cold day and I have not felt warm until now. Even when working in the sunshine on the back verandah I was cold. I went up town to see about getting some blankets which my unnamed friend has asked me to purchase and distribute to poor coloured people. I was only able to get half a dozen at 15/- each and there are dozens of poor people who could do with one or more. The pre-war price would be about 6/- each.

I have spent most of the day in writing to those whose birthdays come in this month and there are quite a number. Amongst the number was Mr Milne but I do not know if he is still alive. Last year we had a very short note from him and he enclosed a note to Uncle Walter and Olive. Strange to say, yesterday afternoon I went to the old home in Market Street to see Jack Urie, who is very ill with double pneumonia, and I fear he has not long to live. Dr gave him up last Thursday but he is still lingering. He occupies the room Mr Milne had. It is the first time I have been in that room since we left the house. That was the room in which I had an operation and the doctor had great difficulty in getting me round after chloroform. Jack Urie was in one of my Wednesday evening young men's meeting in years gone by. He assured me he was prepared to die. Tuesday morning. We had a farewell visit last evening from Mrs Schoeman, the lady I think I mentioned last week from Bedford. Her sister-in-law who occupies rooms next door, was to have come with her but it laid up with a bad cold. She brought some crochet jug covers for Mom to see. She was interested and bought three. They are made by a lady nearby.

Last week we did not hear from Dot, suppose she and the boys are on the farm again. Joe and Blodwen report the safe arrival of the furniture. The packing was good and they are pleased. Rev Weavers has arranged a series of fellowship or cottage meetings held in the homes of members of the congregation. They had the last at Joe's. Uncle Owen and Beryl and about a dozen were there. They enjoyed Blodwen's singing and they all had a good time. Joe has suggested to Douglas that he sends his cine camera to Arthur or Rex as they can get films in Cairo and none are obtainable in the Union. They are so thrilled with the scenery of Italy that it would be very interesting to get some first hand snaps. We have not heard if anyone is coming to us for the August Bank Holiday weekend. Have suggested it to Joe and Lynne as they are the nearest. Of course Ruth and John are also welcome. Lynne has her own wireless set now and one of the Collen girls has a piano from her home in Vryburg. Douglas has been grinding 60 bags of mealies for feeding his cattle preparatory to selling them. We are sorry to hear that Mr Tilley, Uncle Owen's son-in-law, has been wounded in his left elbow in Italy. They have had a cable to that effect. Blodwen hopes to send Roy and Merle to Cape Town for the Xmas holidays. We have offered to have one of them if so desired. Our vines have been pruned this week and we hope for better results than last year. I think the excessive heavy rains of last November and December spoilt the crop.

Our maid – she is an old women – said when paid at the end of June she was going to Alec Collett's farm where some relative was sick. She promised to send a substitute but she only turned up on Wednesday last week and did the washing and we have not seen her since. So we are trying the experiment of using the native boy. Have rigged him out with a pair of shorts and shirt etc and so far he is doing very well. He offered to do the washing yesterday and has given Mom satisfaction so far. Servants do not come before 8 these cold days and I guess very few find hot coffee ready for them when they do come. It is always ready for them here. He is very handy in the garden etc and I hope he may be a success. Aunt Jessie came in with Uncle Gervase for the Church quarterly meeting last week. They returned about 10.30 in the cold. I have been elected to attend Synod at Graaff Reinet and look to leave here with Rev Karg by car on the afternoon of 26th. Have written to Alice Biggs to book accommodation for me. I hope to see Aunt Letty whilst there.

Aunt Eliza has so far disposed of over £20 worth of Mr Thomas' old clothing. It is practically five months since his death and an Executor has not yet been appointed. Let it be a warning to others to see that their Wills are in order whilst you are in good health. So far as one can see, his estate will come out on the right side but it will probably be some months before it can be settled up as so far, no steps have been taken to get into touch with his people in England.

Tuesday afternoon. Today has been a much better one than yesterday. I notice that our Jacaranda tree in front garden has not lost its leaves yet. Last winter it was quite bare. The maid has turned up today. The boy changes his clothes when he comes and changes back into his old garments before he goes home. Mom is doing some ironing.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 19th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Tuesday afternoon, 18th, so you see I am late in starting my letter. Pam arrived on Sunday morning, the train only being a few minutes late. She is looking very sunburnt but well except for a cough such as she had when she came to Cradock. Hope it will disappear as quickly as it did before. She reports all well at home, the two big brothers being missed. She did not go to Johannesburg to see them so will be looking forward to that pleasure at the Xmas holidays. She has brought orders from her Mother that if she brings anyone home with her, it must only be ourselves. We shall have to think about it. The school holidays begin on December 18th and end about the end of January. If way should open for us to visit Dot and Reg and Douglas and Evelyn on the same trip, it would be nice but we shall have to see what could be done with this house for the duration. Pam also has brought us a good supply of Grace's good things in the way of rusks, cookies, bread etc. All very nice and acceptable. The following from the London Daily Herald in a measure expresses my feelings: "The average woman's vocabulary is 750 words. It is a small stock, but look at the turnover"! Words also fail me.

Reference was made recently to Aunt Jessie having fallen into the furrow near the house at Saltpansdrift. Fortunately she has not suffered any ill effects. Mr Barnes has now widened the bridge and made a better pathway at the spot so it is hoped there will be less occasion to fall.

Grace has asked for the recipe of Aunt Eliza's famous toffee. Her it is:

Ingredients: 1 lb sugar (white or yellow. Aunt prefers white)
6 oz butter (butter was only 4/- lb here last week)
2 tablespoons golden syrup
4 tablespoons vinegar (Aunt Eliza takes two)
4 tablespoons water (Aunt Eliza takes only two)

Method: When mixed, add walnut, if desired. Boil briskly, keep testing in cold water until the sample snaps clearly. Pour contents into buttered plate. Cut as desired.

I hope anyone who tries it will be as successful as Aunt Eliza is. Aunt Eliza wishes me to say that so far, she has sold over £30 worth of Mr Thomas' clothing and there is till more to go. It is probable that an Executor will be appointed shortly. One reason for the long delay (five months already) is that the Master of the Supreme Court demanded reason why the original Executor would not accept the position and then demanded a certified copy of the Death Certificate of the second nominee. The proceedings under ordinary circumstances is painfully slow and with these and other difficulties, has made them slower.

Joyce and Raymond are on their way back to Cradock and are due here tonight, Tuesday. They have been away about three months. School reopened yesterday. He has been attending school at Rondebosch where Jean (Ernest's) is a teacher. Gladys Webster has been experiencing servant troubles as well as most other people. In addition, her cooler and electric stove went wrong, cake did not come up to expectation and other troubles all seem to have come at once and at the same time.

Our maid, after being away for two weeks, turned up on Monday morning as though nothing had happened. Mom tried her hand at ironing last week after the boy had done some of the washing but the job was too much for her and knocked her up so much so that she has not been too well ever since. So it seems we shall have to go back to the old method of having both maid and boy. He is certainly very useful, quick and handy in many ways but it is difficult sometimes to keep him employed. He changes into his old clothes before he goes home in the Location each evening. Neither of them come before about eight when we are having breakfast. The woman leaves directly after she has washed up the dinner things but the boy is here till five. We do the washing up. Pam says His Worship can help wash-up and does sometimes.

The feet of the two locust birds carved out of ox horns by natives which for some years have stood in our birdbath have at last rotted off so I got Mr Muller to fit new feet out of a piece of hard wood and they are now back in their old position and painted white. One of our large tanks has

developed a leak and shall have a cement bottom put in. Another is showing signs of giving in. I am sorry I did not install reinforced underground tanks from the start.

I hope to leave for Graaff Reinet on Wednesday afternoon next. Shall of course take my typewriter with me and hope to send the usual from there. I wrote to Alice Biggs asking her to book accommodation for me at a boarding house and she writes to say that she will give me a room at their cottage in town and I can get meals at a boarding house nearby. This will be very convenient. She hopes I shall be able to see Aunt Letty, thinks Florrie may either bring her in or take me to her. I expect to be away about a week. Post as usual to Cradock unless there is any special announcement to make.

I have forgotten to mention that Jack Urie passed away on Saturday morning and was buried on Sunday afternoon after the Delville Wood Memorial wreath laying at the Cenotaph. He used to attend my young men's class in the old days. He has not enjoyed good health for some years. He was 60.

Pam is going to take my typewriter to have a new ribbon put in, this will be the second since I bought the machine. Must close now with the usual good wishes of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 26th, 1944

My dear All,

Ted's birthday today. Many happy returns of the day, Ted, may your shadow never grow less, but rather increase. Pam has worked a nice hankie for a present for him. We all hope he will have a happy day. I am writing this on Monday evening so as to get finished before I leave on Wednesday afternoon.

Ruth writes that she hears from Denis frequently. He is in the front lines. He is at present acting Liaison Officer between his Regiment and the Royal Horse Artillery. He has been in several big battles where they never slept and hardly ate for 48 hours. She asks for news of Arthur and Rex. Ruth is working at the Library two evenings a week which is congenial and remunerative. She listened in to a service from Normandy on Sunday 19th. I heard just the tail end part. It came over very clearly.

For the information of you all, I give the latest addresses of Arthur and Rex in the hopes that you may write to them from time to time.

158283V Ginner A.C. Butler, 2/8th Battery, 1/12th S.A.A. Regt, S.A.A.F.UDF/CMF
228907V Sapper R.D. Butler. No. 1 detachment, 80 E.B.W. S.A.E.C.UDF/CMF

The news of the week is that I have bought a new Welcome Dover cooking stove for the kitchen. It stands alongside the hot water boiler and Mom is pleased with it. It has worked well today (Monday). Pam thinks she will be able to do some bread and cake making on it. We shall see.

Aunt Jessie and Uncle Gervase were in town on Saturday and we were surprised to hear that Pam (Gervase's daughter) who has been engaged to young Kew for some time before the war, has broken off the engagement and is getting married to a soldier from England on Saturday next at Vereeniging. Aunt Roena has gone up for the wedding. Kew is still a prisoner of war in Germany. I feel very sorry for Kew, he is a very nice fellow. I think she might have waited until he came back. Uncle Gervase is going to Graaff Reinet for the Synod. I am sorry for him too.

Dot writes that she has been having the house done up. The two boys had a good time in Johannesburg with Trixie. Mrs Amm invited her to her farm to pick green peas, native labour being so scarce she has been giving away some of the crop. They sell pockets of peas at 7/6. Dot has been bottling some for future use. Joe writes that Maude Meyers (Uncle Owen's daughter) is on a visit to Uitenhage. Joe has been planting potatoes in his garden. Hope he gets a good crop. They held one of the cottage fellowship meetings at Joe's and Blodwen sang. Uncle Owen and Beryl took part in the meeting. We are hoping to have one here after my return from Graaff Reinet. I am taking my typewriter with me. Mr Karg thinks I might be able to help do some typing for him as he is Secretary to the Synod. Perhaps I will do my next dear all from there.

Douglas and Evelyn must feel very lonely on the farm. Am glad to hear that they hear frequently from Arthur and Rex. No further news as to Lynne's movements if she is going on holiday next month.

Christine and her husband are here on embarkation leave so he will be away in about a fortnight's time. Do not know what plans they have made regarding what she is going to do.

The visit of the King to Italy came over the air this Tuesday morning. Wonder if our boys saw him. The attempt on Hitler's life is what most people have expected for a long time. We hear he has planes ready to take him to Japan or South America. The war surely cannot go on much longer. The losses are awful.

Joyce has been down to see us. She is looking very well. Has not heard from Dudley since the big batch of letters she received some weeks ago. Guess it is very difficult to get correspondence through now.

I hope there will be letters from all of you before I leave tomorrow after dinner. Pam had a nasty cough when she arrived back but am glad to say it is getting much better. I must go up and say goodbye to Aunt Eliza and Joyce this afternoon. Mary's suite is much admired in the spare

room and Joe and Blodwen are pleased with the one I sold them. It is expected that an Executor in Mr Thomas' estate will be gazetted very shortly now.

Tuesday evening. At the Council meeting this afternoon, contracts amounting to several thousands of pounds were entered into for the sewage scheme. It was stated in a reply to one of my questions that the work might be expected to commence in about three months time. It will take about 2½ to 3 years to complete. There will be about 50 miles of trenches to be excavated varying from ten to 20 feet deep. Of course they will not all be opened at one and the same time. We shall have to look out for accidents then, especially at night time. I hope to see the scheme an accomplished fact. I am constantly being approached by Ratepayers to accept re-nomination and have been promised to be relieved of attending all except two or three important Committees. I had hoped to have gone to Market Street after the Council meeting but as we leave directly after dinner, must close now with love to all,

Dad

At Graaff Reinet, as from 34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 2nd, 1944

My dear All,

Here I am in Graaff Reinet and it is now Saturday evening and I have no inclination to get to the pictures and there is no meeting in connection with the Synod so I want to make a start with next week's letter. Well to go back to when we started. Rev Karg and his native minister and a coloured member of the coloured church and I left at 1.30 on Wednesday afternoon. I delayed the start a few minutes by going to a shop to buy a few apples and peppermints for the journey. We had a delightful journey over and took our time about it. It only took 2¾ hours to do the 90 miles. Alice Biggs had kindly arranged for me to occupy her town house and when I arrived, found that as they were so short of accommodation for all the delegates, she had given the Minister the keys of the whole house and so there are five of us staying here. The house does not look so large but there are six rooms, including the dining room, lounge, kitchen and bathroom. There is water borne sewage and electric light and geyser laid on and we have the use of the whole place. They have even brought in kindling wood for the geyser and there is electric stove exactly the same make and size of ours. I made hot water for the hot water bottle last night. I am writing this in the lounge with the heater on. Two of the delegates have spent the evening with me and consequently I have not done much writing. Alice has left a good supply of oranges from the farm for our benefit and they are very nice ones. I phoned to her shortly after my arrival and also to Mom in the evening. It took over an hour waiting in the telephone cubicle before I could get through. It was very tiring waiting. As for meals, I go to the café nearby and am quite satisfied with what they give. A lunch consisting of meat, three or four vegetables, sweet, tea or coffee for 1/9, dinner in the evening for 2/- is more than one needs. I had it once and did not need any breakfast the next morning. Morning and afternoon tea we get at the Synod hall. I got so far on Saturday evening.

It is now Sunday afternoon. I am told this is the "boys' hostel". I am to look after them. I reply that I am used to that at Observatory. On Thursday morning I found my way to Mr and Mrs Green's in Cradock Street. I had never been to their house before and they were pleased to see me. Mrs Green was Alesia Collett, Uncle James' daughter of Rhyneath days. Many years ago I paid a visit to that farm when there were four daughters at home. We all went for a picnic up the Valley of Desolation – the only time I visited that wonderful spot. Should like to see it again but not to climb it. Now there is a motor road right to the top but petrol is scarce. She told me of the time when a party of young people started for the top about 10 at night and got home again about breakfast time. (I was not one of that party). I stayed for morning tea with them and I have an indefinite invitation to go and have a meal with them but it is doubtful if it can be worked in. I had arranged to meet Kathleen and husband here at three p.m. and go with them to Vrede and spend the evening and return next day to town. They were in by lorry and had a number of servants on board to take out as well as provisions. I recognised the road which Mom and I were on when Ethnie was taking us there some years ago and we were caught in the rain and Mom was scared of the journey and we sent in a message by a passing car for a motor mechanic to come and fetch us. That night the road was very slippery and we were skidding all over the place. We saw the new farm where Boy and Kathleen are going to live. They have men busy making bricks in preparation for when they can get building material. They will then be about 12 miles from Vrede. I found Aunt Letty resting on the sofa and suffering from rheumatism in one knee and hip. She was very bright, rather deaf and we enjoyed each others company until it was time for her to go to bed – about nine. I took with me my photos of the Golden Wedding which interested all of the circle. Florrie had to go to town early on Friday morning so I did not see much of her. Her son, Dennys, who was 21 last year, is helping managing the farm. He is a very nice young man and very interested in all that goes on. The eldest son, John Collett, is still a Prisoner of War. One of Kathleen's evacuees was spending the day at Vrede as she had recently had her tonsils removed. She is a bright little thing, just about eight. She was pleased to show me round about the homestead, the orchard, peacocks etc. We went to see Frank's grave. This is enclosed in an old cemetery with only a few graves, one I noticed was dated 1820. During the morning, the District Surgeon arrived, accompanied by his wife and married

daughter and three of the children. He had come on his regular rounds of injecting natives against syphilis. He had a trained nurse with him. He goes from farm to farm and each patient has to have ten injections. The adults are injected in the arm but small children and babies are injected in the buttocks. It was quite a screaming business. The doctor and nurse did not stay for dinner but the rest did.

I am afraid that I have a long way to catch up if I am going to do what I want to do, that is to give you as full an account of my visit to Graaff Reinet. It is now Tuesday 2 p.m. and I am just filling in time till Rev Karg picks me up. So I must return.

Thursday afternoon I spent as much time as possible with Aunt Letty – she spent the day in bed – and before I left, was improving. We got back to town about 4 p.m. Kathleen had come up to entertain the visitors. I should like to have more time to learn from Florrie about her wool work for her servants. I am sure it would have been interesting to farmers in the district as well as to members of the limited circle which my weekly epistle covers. So far as I understand, she not only grows the wool on her farm but also washes it, spins it, sends it away to be spun – and then dyes it and has it weaved into blankets etc. She has taught her servants to knit garments for themselves – the men servants each have jerseys of a certain colour, the women of another colour whilst the children have another. According to their proficiency, they have an additional distinctive stripe or mark on their garment. Surely other farmers might do something in this way for their servants.

Saturday morning, the remainder of the delegates arrived, Uncle Gervase and Mr Mahon came about dinner time, also Cousin Mary Collett from Middelburg. There are quite a number of the men that I know, one from Uitenhage, Mr Moulton knows Joe very well. He is a retired Railway man and sees Joe at Church every Sunday as they both hold similar office and assist in showing people into their seats, taking the collection and assisting at the sacrament services. All of which I am glad to hear about. His daughter is a teacher of music and plays the accompaniment for Blodwen when she sings at their women's meetings. He and I have shared rooms at various Synods. This time he is staying in a house close by but has spent practically all his time with the five of us here. The meeting of the Synod really began on Saturday afternoon with an open air discussion on post-war development from the Christian standpoint. The opening addresses were given by an educated Native and a special representative from Durban. Both were most impressive and when the time arrives in the development of the non European population to the standard of this particular Native, there will be little cause for the bitter antagonism that exists in some quarters today against the black man. It will be a slow process I expect. About 200 ladies and gentlemen were present. Last the corresponding gathering was held at Brooklyn, the home of Alan and Alice Biggs in whose town house I am typing this letter. I cannot go into details of the subject, which is a very big one, but I do urge the younger portion of the readers of my letter to make a study of the subject as upon their shoulders will largely rest the responsibility for seeing that justice is done and a fair and just administration of the laws etc is enforced.

Sunday was a full day, good congregations and excellent discourses. I met Rev Gilson who used to visit Potgietersrus and knows Reg and Dot. He was at Louis Trichardt some years ago and has recently returned from the front as Chaplain. Dot suggested, when Cradock was having a change of Minister, that he might have done for us but the general opinion was that he was too young and lacking in experience for such an old circuit. He has been helping Mr Karg with his secretarial duties. He seems a very nice young man. Monday was also a full day and by the time the evening session closed, many of the delegates remarked that it had been the most helpful Synod they had ever attended. It was certainly very deeply moved and great results are expected from the decisions arrived at. May it be so as there is no doubt that a very great need exists for the deepening of the spiritual life of most of us.

I must not omit to refer to the presence of Mr and Mrs P Amm of Johannesburg. They are visiting Alice Biggs at Brooklyn for a week or so. They were at the meetings on Saturday afternoon and Sunday evening. Mrs Amm remembers Dot and I was pleased to meet her.

This Tuesday afternoon I was motored round the town by Mr Schoombie who up to about three years ago, was manager of Hepworths in Cradock. He was glad to see me. He still gets the

Midland and hopes in a few years to be able to retire and return to Cradock. He is now managing a large Co-operative business here and appears to be doing very well. The present Manager in Cradock told me recently that his firm has decided that after the war, the whole building of Midland House, which Mr Collett built for Butler Brothers, is going to be pulled down and a three storey building erected. He says the present wall will not stand the weight of three modern stories. They intend having sets of offices etc. I wonder if I shall see it?

Mr Karg has not finished his work and will not be ready to return home until about six. I do not expect to have much time on Wednesday morning to add much so had better stop. You will be sorry to hear that Ernest's son, Jeffrey, has been wounded in his arms and head.

Much love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 9th, 1944

My dear All,

Monday afternoon and a dreadful afternoon. August is always considered a bad month for wind and it is keeping up its reputation. It is bank holiday and we had planned to spend the day at Baroda (about 14 miles north of Cradock and roughly half way to Fish River. Not having a car, we had decided – after much discussion as to being able to catch the 7.27 a.m. train, to risk it. I rose at 6.30 and we had breakfast before seven and started for the station but the washing up and last minute jobs made us a little late for starting for the station but we managed to get to the other side of the bridge, after walking as fast as I could, just in time to see the train puffing out of the station. The next train, a goods train was due to leave at 11.30 so we returned home but later Dulcie Morecroft phoned offering us seats which we gladly accepted. Previously, Pam's friend, who went to Kroonstad with her, phoned asking her to meet her at the Grand Hotel and they would pick her up to go with them. So we got there in sections. Quite early it seemed as though it was going to be a very nice day but the wind rose and the rest of the day was most unpleasant. There was a good crowd of farmers and townspeople. Some were energetic enough to try to play tennis but the wind was too awful to keep it up. The braivleis was disappointing owing to the wind and dust but it all "went". There was a good supply of meats, springboks etc. and the lunch was well patronised. Most people left soon after one and we were glad to get back shortly after two. This afternoon, we have made some brawn out of a shin of beef which we bought for a couple of shillings. We also got some beef biltong which will have to hang till quite dry in our pantry. It is now evening, we have had supper and if the wind drops, I may go to Market Street to give Aunt Eliza some of the stuff we bought. The order of the evening is an early bath and to bed. It froze last night but this evening Mom and Pam are sitting on the back stoep working. It is quite mild, so much so that for the last two evenings we have not had a fire. I quite expect we shall have lots of frosty nights yet. The trees are already showing signs that Spring is near at hand.

Kroonstad rang up according to plan on Sunday night about nine - great excitement here and there. David and Harold had arrived home the evening before in company with their girlfriends for the long weekend. All the family had to have a few words with Pam. By now they are all on their way back to Johannesburg. David has signed on and probably will be drafted to the signallers' department in which he has had some previous training. I guess it will be some time before he is sent up north. You will be sorry to hear that Jeffrey has been seriously wounded. Shrapnel struck him on the shoulder and his face is also affected. No more news has been received so far. We all hope he will make a good recovery. It is very cheering over the phone recently that as a rule about 98 out of every 100 wounded in this war recover.

I left off my last dear all rather abruptly. Had I had more time, I could have filled on or two more sheets. I do not know how far I shall be able to get this week. It is still Monday evening so will try.

We did not leave Graaff Reinet until ¼ to six. It only took us 2½ hours to cover the 90 odd miles. It was soon dark but the road is good. I noticed the car was very draughty and on Wednesday morning it was very evident that I had caught a nasty cold. My poor old nose was like a leaking tap all day. In spite of having half a dozen or more hankies in constant employ, there was no stopping the flow. I did what I have often done before, that is tied an old necktie as tightly as I possible could round my forehead and lie still. That did the trick. I cannot explain why but it had the desired effect. Aunt Eliza had a somewhat similar experience but did not follow my advice of the hankie trick. She had to stay in bed for a few days and is not yet quite free of her cold. I am glad and thankful to say that mine is quite gone.

It is now Tuesday morning. I went to Aunt Eliza's before going to bed as we had made some brawn from a shin of beef we bought at Baroda and wanted her to have some of it. Hope it turns out a success. We were all very tired. Mom and Pam had had their hot baths before I returned. We all felt very grimy after the awful dusty day. I did not sleep too well but am able to get on with my letter. Poor Ray has had another trouble lately. He came out with a rash on his chest and back, with

little black specks. Dr prescribed scrubbing and applying ointment. Fortunately it has yielded to treatment and he is at school again.

Dot has sent us a snap of Norman and Alan taken in their “gentleman’s” costume that they wore at the school concert. They do look very smart indeed. Will send it round for inspection.

Advertisements are now appearing in the Midland News calling for nominations for three Town Councillors. Fenner Morecroft has been approached to take my place. If he accepts nomination, I shall withdraw. This will relieve me of practically all my official duties. Rev Karg has approached me with the view of taking over the Sunday School Superintendancy when Mr Hultzer retires at the end of the year. Have not decided anything yet.

Aunt Eliza has reminded me that Mr Green, who married Alesia Collett, came out from England on the same boat as she did. She was also responsible for introducing him to the Wilkie family.



Did I tell you last week that Florrie Biggs sends the contents of a large basin of violets twice a week to Graaff Reinet for sale for Red Cross funds and gets 6d per bunch for them. She says if you bruise the stems of violets, the flowers last much longer. She has known them to keep quite fresh for a week. It is worth trying. She has heaps of violets. Boy Vorster is busy making bricks for his new home which will be about 12 miles from Vrede. He has chosen high ground which has a commanding view of a great portion of his farm which extends to the top of the mountain. A grand position.

Here is a bit of history I lifted from the East London Dispatch:

1918	German Revolution
1789	French Revolution
129 years difference	
1933	Hitler elected Chancellor
1804	Napoleon elected Emperor
129 years difference	
1938	Hitler invaded Austria
1809	Napoleon invaded Austria
129 years difference	
1941	Hitler invaded Russia
1812	Napoleon invaded Russia
129 years difference	
1815	Napoleon defeated
1944	Will Hitler be defeated?
129 years difference	

Will history repeat itself?

We have not yet heard how the “invasion” of the Kroonstad home for the weekend passed off except that David is enlisting in the Signallers Division. No doubt the holiday will have upset the postal arrangements so that we shall get letters a week late. In case I have not given you the address of David and Harold, it is as follows: c/o Y.M.C.A. Saunders House, 45 Mordant Street, Jeppe, Johannesburg.

A recent letter from my brother John’s son, Norman, says his daughter is in the Foreign Office Research Department and is earning £300 per annum. She is not 21 yet.

At Synod I met Rev Piper’s son-in-law. Joe would know him as he often visited their home when in Durban. Mr Piper always said that I was his first friend in South Africa. He was stationed here as a candidate for the Ministry. We were great friends. I also notice that Rev J.H. Perry,

formerly of Observatory, has died. He married Joe and Blodwen. He helped me at the Y.M.C.A. Defence Force peace training camp at Worcester. I was very fond of him.

Just as we sat down to dinner today (Tuesday) a deputation consisting of the Mayor and four other Councillors called as a deputation regarding the forthcoming election. They suggested that as I had informed them some time ago that I was beginning to feel that I was getting old and would like to retire, and in order to avoid a contested election, was I still of the same opinion? If so, it had been proposed that in order to give the Nationalist Party another seat on the Council (they only have two at present) both sides would agree to the re-election of the other two Councillors who also retire this year and the opposition party would be satisfied. They are holding a meeting of the Nationalist Party on Friday and their acceptance or rejection would be made known on Saturday morning. If they do not agree, they want me to contest the seat again. So we must wait and see.

A nice letter from Evelyn this morning saying they had been to Kimberley to see the children while Douglas went over to Bloemfontein on business. She has kindly offered to knit me some socks. She also enclosed a recent letter of Rex written on his visit to Rome. He gives a most interesting description of the place. Lynne phoned that she was sorry she could not get a lift over for the long weekend. We expect to hear from Joe tomorrow. A nice letter also came from Una Shingler. She is still at home and is teaching. Her husband is now in Alexandria. He hopes to be home by the end of the year. It certainly does look as though the war may be over soon. It is quite evident that the Germans cannot stand much more, their losses must be enormous. Churchill is evidently quite optimistic.

Aunt Eliza gave us half a dozen of her fowls' pure white eggs yesterday. I notice that when butter is up in price (we paid 3/6 lb recently) eggs are down. They were being sold at Baroda yesterday for 1/- dozen. We have paid 3/- a dozen.

Surely I have written enough for this week and the paper is finished, so goodbye.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 16th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Monday afternoon and what a contrast to last Monday. From all accounts last week was the worst experienced both here and elsewhere – especially in Cape Town where torrents of rain and wind was experienced. We have had some warm days since and also cold ones. I do not know if the war in Europe has anything to do with the climatic conditions in these parts but we are having plenty of changes. Last Monday would have been Aunt Emmie's Golden Wedding Anniversary had Bert been still alive. It was also his birthday.

Joe speaks of having visited Jeffreys Bay, not very far from Port Elizabeth, for the first time. There is a wonderful beach there but no shade. Many people from here go there for the Xmas holidays. Joe was sorry not to have been able to visit us last weekend but says he will try next holiday (October) to come, especially as there is a possibility of Douglas and Evelyn being here. Lynne in a letter received today, says she is hoping her parents may be arriving here about September 25th. Merle is under treatment by Dr Stewart (Port Elizabeth) for eye trouble. She has had sties for some time and her eyes have given trouble. It is to be hoped she will not have to wear glasses always. Mom is going to our local man to have her glasses tested as she finds she cannot see to read much. In fact, she is taking to use my large print hymn book in church.

You all will be sorry to hear that Jeffrey has had his damaged arm amputated in hospital in Italy. Ernest received a letter written by a fellow schoolfellow who is in the same hospital. They do not know if the amputation was above or below the elbow. Fortunately all his senses are in tact. He can see, smell, hear etc and he has not been disfigured at all. There are still pieces of shrapnel to be removed from his head but they can wait until he has got over the shock of the operation.

Aunt Eliza is getting better of her cold. For some time she has been quite deaf and I hope it will not be permanent. It is difficult for everyone as well as her. Raymond is attending school and seems to have got over his rash. Joyce has not had any recent news from Dudley.

Our "Welcome Dover" stove is giving satisfaction. Mom likes it and Pam has made a couple of batches of scones in it. We have also had some meat and Mom says it bakes very nicely. We use it for making breakfast now. In fact we have five gadgets for cooking, the stove, the electric stove, the electric hot plate, the hot water boiler and a paraffin stove. We got a load of 300 pieces of logs from the Park last week. The Council has been chopping quite a number of trees where the swimming bath is to be. The pieces are from 15 to 18 inches long and weigh from 5 to 10 or more pounds in weight. They burn nicely in the dining room fireplace and many of them will go into the fire box of the stove. The 300 cost 20/- including delivery. Unfortunately our boy was not here the day they arrived but I got a loose boy to ride them with the wheelbarrow and I helped pack them away in our wood room. I suppose the stooping and handing them to him was too much for my heart and I felt rather queer for a couple of days. Am alright again now.

Pam spent Saturday with her friend, Fourie, and went with them to the bio in the afternoon. She sings in the choir on Sunday mornings. Last night the Church was practically filled as the service – and collection – was for the local hospital. The nurses, ambulance, scouts, guides etc attended. The collection was £10/10-, another record. Rev Karg based his address on "am I my brother's keeper?" which was to the point.

Tuesday afternoon. The news at dinnertime to the effect that British, Americans and French troops had landed in the South of France this morning certainly should have the effect of shortening the war. Evelyn writes this morning that Arthur and Rex expect the war to be over soon. How lovely if all our boys could spend the coming Xmas at home.

Dot has sent us enlargements of her boys taken in their fancy dress in their recent school concert. They have to be sent round and returned to her. They are both very good. In the Midland News last issue it is reported that a consignment of pineapples were flown to London Market and realised from £5/5- each! Some price.

Later. Tuesday afternoon. Have just returned from the Oculist who tested Mom's eyes and glasses and says she may be well satisfied with what she has got. They might be slightly improved but the

difference would be so small that it would not be worthwhile. He will try to make up a glass as an experiment. He thinks her sight is wonderful for her age. This sounds very satisfactory. However, I am getting her a large print hymn book like mine. Did I tell you in my last that we called upon a Mrs Vermaak, formerly Miss Ponton, who knew Blodwen and her sisters at Observatory School. She seems a very nice lady and is here for her child's health. Lynne writes that she is looking forward to her parents' visit and hopes to go to East London with them. She may go home for Xmas especially if Arthur and Rex should be home. She even hints that she might give up her job and go home for good. She is busy making some new dresses for herself.

Dot has been complimented by teachers in the Public School on the progress her boys are making in their studies. Very encouraging.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 23rd, 1944

My dear All,

First let me ask a question. Douglas writes that he now gets his post twice a week – Fridays and Tuesdays. He generally goes into town on Friday and gets post then (Box 8). Now he gets an extra post by motor lorry (presumably) on Monday and the motor leaves early on Tuesday. The point is, does it make any difference to any other of the family circle? Would you prefer to have the letter as at present? I usually post on Friday afternoons. Douglas gets his on Friday morning, Grace also and Dot on Saturday or Monday. Mary on Tuesday whilst Ruth and Joe have theirs on Thursday morning. I await your comments.

It is Monday evening, Ernest received letters from Jeffrey or rather from the Padre and nurse, saying he was getting on alright which is satisfactory. Tilley, Uncle Owen's son-in-law, was wounded in his left arm and is now in England, in fact his regiment is there. His wife has obtained a permit to go and visit him but I do not know if she is going. Who will look after her children is the problem. We are sorry to hear that Merle has to wear glasses for some time to come. She has been troubled with sties for some time. She is in Dr Stewart's hands. Joe has been taking some new medicine and is reported in better health. He is looking to come up for the October holiday and hopes to meet Douglas and Evelyn here. There was talk of the two children at present at boarding school coming as well. We shall know in good time.

David has signed on and Pam had a letter from him today from Kroonstad. No word as to where he will be sent for training. Pam went to bio on Saturday afternoon to see the film "Lassie come home", a story of a famous dog. She and most of the audience shed many tears. We intended going but when I phoned to reserve two seats, was informed that there was not a vacant seat to be had. Pam took three extra hankies. Joyce saw the picture in Cape Town and thought I would have liked it. I didn't go. It is a wonderful picture they all say.

Next Sunday, 27th, Aunt Letty will be 88. Ernest says she has spent a fortnight in bed recently but is up and about again. Rev Karg says Aunt Jessie was not able to play the organ at service on Sunday but was at service as usual. She has not been well for some time. Aunt Agnes also has not been well.

Tuesday morning. Joyce has heard from Dudley that he has at last received the first parcel of clothing etc that she sent him about 18 months ago. We wonder he will ever receive the others she sent.

Is anyone interested in an incubator for 60 eggs? There is one for sale in town for £2/19/6d. I understand it is in good order.

At Synod, I spoke to Mr Redfern, Principal of Kingswood School, Grahamstown. I said my children found the fees too high compared with other schools. Of course being a private school they do not get Government assistance. He said he had a number of bursaries and if any of you are interested, would write to him, he would do the best he could. He was anxious to get some of my grandchildren there.

Our Jasmine is a blaze of flowers just now. I think we shall have to cut it right back after the flowers are finished. It is getting far too dense. We are often bothered by people leaving the front gate open so I have fixed a spring which automatically closes the gate. It makes a bit of a noise but that will not keep us awake. We can hear when the milkman comes in the morning. All the outside woodwork needs repainting this year but I understand brushes are not procurable. I weighed myself a few days ago and find that I am about six pounds lighter than a year ago. Our Jacaranda has not lost its leaves this winter so it would appear that it has not been as cold as last year when some of the branches were completely killed and had to be cut off.

Denis wrote to his Mother recently that he had been back at base, having to give evidence against one of the men who had been found asleep on duty. He was staying at a swanky hotel for the time-being. Mom and I called on the new Magistrate's wife a few days ago. She is Mrs de Villiers and is sister of Dr Lane in Port Elizabeth. I met her husband at a function in the Town Hall

on Saturday evening for a few minutes. We had both been invited to meet a Dr Louw, General Manager of Sanlam business. I did not stay long. Mom did not go.

The local oculist has tested Mom's eyes and fixed a new glass as a trial but Mom says it does not help her. However, I have got a new large typed hymn book like mine for her which will be better for her.

A letter from Cicely just to hand says she and Kingsley will be coming for the holidays. Glad to hear it. Joe writes that a Mr Thompson, who we knew in Observatory, died as the result of a heart attack on Sunday. We knew him very well. News received this morning that Mrs Badger, wife of Mr Badger, a member of the Church who went to Port Elizabeth on Sunday for an "op" died yesterday and is being brought here for burial tomorrow. As Rev Karg is away, I expect to have to conduct the service. My last Council meeting is this afternoon so I shall be much freer for other things in which I am also interested. That I shall miss the work goes without saying but if I am really wanted later on, perhaps I may consider it.

Tuesday evening. Aunt Jessie, Uncle Norman, Gladys and Dick came in during the afternoon to do some shopping and incidentally to see the famous bio picture "Lassie come home" which Pam saw on Saturday afternoon. It has been showing for an extra long run, showing its great popularity. Aunt Jessie, Gladys and Norman had supper with us. Dick had his at Mrs Rayner as Nessie Brown's (Dodd) son was down on leave and both lads are very fond of each other. I got home a little before six after attending my last Council meeting. Some very kind words were spoken by the Mayor in my retirement and each of the Councillors also had something to say. After the meeting, the Mayor invited all into his Parlour where my health was drunk in soft drinks. That I shall miss the Council work goes without arguments but I suppose I shall get over that in time. I have many other interests. I was glad to find that arrangements have been made for the Baptist Minister to conduct Mrs Badger's funeral tomorrow. I should have mentioned that at the close of the Council meeting, it was decided that a nice bunch of flowers should be sent down from the Park in the morning.

I had promised Rev Karg to conduct the Intersessionary service which is held at 7 p.m. every Tuesday evening in the church as he was away. There was the usual fair attendance. The service only lasted about quarter of an hour. Pam came with me and then went to Guild after. Mom stayed with those from Fish River. They wanted me to go with them to see the picture but Mom did not care to, so I have taken the opportunity of getting on with this letter. The Hultzers came home with me as far as Kruger's Lane. The weather has been quite cold this afternoon and evening but the wind has gone down so perhaps there won't be frost tonight. We have had a good fire going again this evening.

Wednesday 23rd. Woke this morning to find that we had experienced the heaviest frost of the winter. The thermometer registered as low as 24 degrees. I wonder what effect this will have on the fruit and other trees that are just budding. Must wait and see. A beautiful and large bunch of flowering peach and other blossoms were delivered earlier, a present from the Town Council, a further tribute to last afternoon's speeches.

Was up to see Aunt Eliza this morning for a short visit. The sitting room carpet was up for the purpose of having a good beating in the yard. Aunt Eliza stood and watched the operation from her window and was staggered to see the volume of dust coming from it. Operations had to be stopped as Joyce noticed that the carpet was tearing as a result of its punishment. Was glad to hear that Joyce has received later news of Dudley via his friend, Mr Stoor in England. He sent an airgraph letter saying Dudley had received cigarettes which he sent him in February. Dudley wrote in July so that is quite recent news of him. Communications seem to come in this roundabout way much quicker than direct.

News has just come over that Paris has been captured by French troops. It would appear that the Germans are getting away as fast as they can so as to put up the best resistance they can on their own frontiers. Another landing on the French coast indicates that there will be no relaxation of the drive which has been in progress since "D" day. May the end soon come.

Letter from Dot this morning reports her keeping well. Reg had been to the Transvaal Synod at Johannesburg for a week and stayed with Trixie and his mother who returned with him so as to be with Dot. Mrs Legg is returning to Potgietersrus to be with her daughter in November. In case I did not make it clear, it is Jeffrey's left arm that has been amputated. He is getting on nicely the last report said. Dot remarks on the improved look the garden is showing and referred to the heat. Wonder if they have had our frost? They are wanting rain and have had lots of windy weather lately. So have we.

Letter from Grace to Pam and one from Ted as well. They do keep her well posted in home news. Grace is a great gardener and now that they have more water and a reservoir, they are looking forward to great things. Vegetables and flowers are in and they hope to grow enough to save buying. Servant troubles are as bad there as anywhere else. David has been home to bring his civilian clothing for safe keeping. He had gone back to Johannesburg and in due course we shall know where he is going for training.

I must rest for a few minutes before I go to the funeral this afternoon. Pam has been home for her dinner and has to be back at school by three for extra class. We have been asked to put up a couple of girls from somewhere who are visiting Cradock in connection with some Eisteddfod on Friday. We do not know who we shall get but expect they will be nice.

We did not see anything of Aunt Jessie and others after the bio last night so do not know how many hankies they used. It is not often they come in for any entertainment. They got a broadcast message from one of their boys recently. At least someone in town "picked it up" and then phoned it to them.

Much love to each and all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as August 30th, 1944

My dear All,

We have been having extremes of climatic conditions lately. There was a sharp frost last week and the last two days the maximum shade heat has been 89 and the minimum last night (Monday) it was 50. We have not had a fire for some days now but according to my records, we have had fire as late as November 15th.

Joe complete 21 years of service in the South African Rail & Harbours this week. During that period, he has paid into the pension fund £325 and if he retired now, would draw £10/10/- per month for the rest of his life. If he stays on for 30 years, he would draw £15/15/- per month. He does not say that he is intending resigning at present. We were pleased to hear recently that as the result of taking some new medicine, his health has improved considerably. May it continue. Am glad to say he is contemplating coming up for the long weekend early in October.

Evelyn writes that they will be coming down by train before the school holidays commence, the two children will also come by train by themselves. They also look to go over to see Lynne at Queenstown, I suppose by road motor bus service as far as Tarkastad and train from there. It would be nice if Lynne could meet them here. The two children will return to Kimberley alone. I have sent a schedule of the train service. I dare say Joe will bring one of the children with him. They were charmed with the photos of Dot's boys.

I am sending each a copy of last Saturday's Midland which you may be interested in reading. You might return the interesting portion when read. Aunt Eliza hopes that now that I shall have fewer meetings to attend, I shall have more time to visit her without so much haste.

The latest news regarding Jeffrey Butler is that he is now off the danger list. They do not know where his hospital is but they think in Rome. In any case the address is a British Hospital Number?

David Irons is stationed at Potchefstroom Camp. David has a birthday on 1st and must write to both of them this week.

Alison wishes me to thank Grace and Blodwen for their letters of sympathy. She will write as soon as possible but as you know, she is kept very busy with reporting for the paper.

There has just been an Eisteddfod held here and that has taken some doing. We were asked to entertain a couple of competitors, girls from Graaff Reinet. They arrived about 10.30 on Friday morning by lorry and left again on Saturday afternoon. Neither of them knew any of the relations over there. One was a Miss van Ek and the other Miss Delpoort. They seemed to have enjoyed themselves. Pam showed them round the town. Both of them could speak English. Their choir were defeated by Rocklands. Pam was not a competitor.

Wednesday 30th. Woke to find a heavy mist and the garden all flooded from the furrow. The boy we had has left and is working for the Council. His younger brother has come in his place. The garden is a perpetual worry. Neither of us can stand over the boy and see that he does the right thing, besides I know nothing about gardening. I have made up my mind to let the top part of the garden go to waste. We have enough water in our tanks to keep the garden just as far as the outhouses in order and that will have to be enough to worry about.

Yesterday afternoon we had a visit from Mr and Mrs Vermaak. Mr Vermaak was in Uitenhage recently and would have been so pleased to have seen Joe again. He was interested in looking at my photos of Louis Botha House etc. He returns to Cape Town on Saturday morning. His wife and child are staying another couple of months for the benefit of the child's health which has greatly improved since coming here.

Ted's mother is now back in Kroonstad. She has been visiting her family in Natal and Harrismith. She enjoys fairly good health. Grace is busy gardening. Their water supply has improved and Ted has constructed a dam. David has been drafted to Potchefstroom for training. Harold has a birthday on September 1st. He is very interested in his work as an electrical apprentice. Later. News from Grace says Ted has a touch of fever for a few days but was better. She sees no need to change my day of posting. Douglas and Dot both say the same, so posting will

continue as at present. Reg enjoyed a week in Johannesburg. Mrs Hudson returned with him. Her arm is still not functioning properly but Dot says it is improving. She hopes Mrs Hudson will stay some time with her.

I must not stop to add more this week. We are both keeping well and hope all the rest of the family is the same.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 6th, 1944

My dear All,

A few days ago I was able to do a small job for Aunt Eliza and she thinks that perhaps some of you may have had similar troubles and wishes me to state the case. She has a good quality glass bottle with a glass stopper which she says she has not been able to open for the last 30 years. I was able to do the needful by the following method. Place a piece of string round the neck of the bottle once – not tying it – and Joyce holding one end of the string and I the other and with one working the bottle backwards and forwards for a few minutes, the friction caused the neck of the bottle to get warm, then I gave it a few gentle taps with my scissors and lo and behold, the stopper came out quite easily. Incidentally my fee was only 10/6d!

You will be interested in hearing that Jeffrey's left arm has been amputated just above the elbow and is getting on satisfactorily.

We had a nice letter from Aunt Letty acknowledging birthday greetings. She is taking a new medicine which is being extensively advertised R.U.R. and finds it is doing her good. Aunt Jessie is also using it. She "admits that she is aging and slowing down. She is thankful for past mercies and present joys in life." She hopes that all our boys fighting in Italy will return safely. I wonder if any of us will be able to write such a good hand when – if ever – we reach her age of 88. I doubt it.

So far I got yesterday (Monday). It is now Tuesday morning and is very nice sitting on the back stoep writing in the sun. There was a slight frost last night and the night before, in fact we were rather congratulating ourselves that Spring had come. So much so that orders were given out at Rocklands that all scholars were to come to school in white dresses on September 1st and bring Spring flowers to decorate the classrooms.

Some time ago, Dot sent the following contribution for the smiles column. A little girl saying her prayers: "Please God make all the bad people good and the good people nice." Quite correct!

I see by last Stellander that our old friend, Rev McGee, died at Taungs recently. Jack Hill, another old Vryburger, has also passed on. I also see in an old copy of The Friend that one of my old school friends of Croydon days who lived in the Hawaiian Islands passed away. For years I have sent him a Xmas card but for two or three years, did not hear from him. I wrote to my Old Scholars Association asking for information of him but had no reply.

Joyce had two cards from Dudley last week. The latest was dated July 3rd. He was well and looking forward to being released before long. We often wonder if they will be repatriated as soon as peace is declared.

Mrs McLeod had dinner with us on Saturday, the day before she passed her 69th anniversary. She has been staying with Mrs Hartman for some while now.

For some time past, I have noticed when looking at any object for a while, I see a pattern like a number of capital "S" like what you would expect to see in wallpaper. Pam says her Grandma Irons has the same experience. I wonder what can be the cause?

Lately Alison has very kindly been sending us a white loaf which her cook makes when a sufficient quantity of flour is obtainable. Now she has suggested making a batch occasionally when four pounds of flour is available. So we have something to look forward to. We, of course, are supplying a pound of flour for the purpose.

Pam had a fright last Thursday evening. Mom and I had gone to evening service and Pam was going to a Junior United Party evening with her friend who went to Kroonstad with her. Whilst we were away, she heard the gate shut, and thought it was her friend but it was a soldier who smelt strongly of liquor. He wanted to know if this was a boarding house – evidently wanting Mrs Kruger's next door. Fortunately nothing happened and shortly after Joan arrived and they both went to their meeting.

Yesterday afternoon a special Council meeting was held to elect the Mayor and Deputy for the ensuing year and the appointment of Committees. I had been previously asked to attend as the

Councillors wished to make a small presentation to me. I wanted Mom to come with me but she didn't feel like it. The Mayor was re-elected. In a nice speech he referred again to my past record and ended up by handing me a nice large print Bible with the following inscription in old English:

Presented to Charles Butler by his fellow Councillors in appreciation of loyal services rendered as a Councillor for the following periods:-

1903 to 1906 as Councillor,

1937 to 1940 as Mayor,

1941 to 1944 as Deputy Mayor.

This is signed by the Mayor and all the Councillors and Town Clerk.

Of course I thanked them and expressed the hope that they would do their best to carry on the work in the highest interests of all concerned. I do not know if it will be reported in the Midland News, if so, I will try to get copies to send to you. It will save writing so much.

Tuesday afternoon. A letter from Joe this a.m. saying that perhaps he may bring up both the boys when he comes. Joyce Tilly has asked Blodwen to sleep at her house whilst he is away. We hope he will arrange to stay as long as possible, especially if Douglas and Evelyn are here. It is seldom the two brothers meet.

I see my sheet is full so must stop, with love to all and hoping to hear good news from all.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 13th, 1955

My dear All,

It is just 11.30 a.m. and I am sitting up in bed trying to make a start with my weekly epistle. It is not easy and it is very slow work as the focus is difficult in this position. However I hope you will be able to read it. Perhaps you wonder why I am in bed. The cold I had in my head last week cleared up fairly easily but Sunday was another windy and dusty day which kept me in most of the day. Mom did not go out at all. I went to a meeting at the Poplars and listened in to a good sermon from the Presbyterian Church (Rev Yule – in Grahamstown – I think. Yesterday (Monday) I went up town to do some banking and stayed home all the rest of the day and evening. We three were spending the evening in the lounge when Olive and Alex's wife came in and joined us. Olive arrived back from Port Elizabeth on Friday and is staying at the Poplars until next Friday when she starts on a circular tour with a friend and a dog. They go from here to Johannesburg, Durban, and back to Johannesburg. Perhaps from there Olive may visit Dorothy Murray, our Dorothy and Mary, then to Cape Town and then to Port Elizabeth. They have already got their tourist tickets for the major portion of the tour – and it is remarkably cheap. After this is accomplished, Olive says she wants to settle down somewhere she can have a roof over her head. Am glad to say she is looking much better but is still in Doctor's hands. It appears that as a result of X-ray photo, the root of all her trouble is an immature tooth which will have to be removed sometime. Olive has done me the compliment of asking if she could have a copy of my "dear All" as she is so out of touch with Cradock news of the family clan. I am trying the experiment this week and have put in an extra sheet but with the difficulty of typing in bed, I do not know what the result will be. It may be of interest to state here where the nine copies circulate. One I keep and have a complete set done up in a separate wrapper from February 1933. One goes to Aunt Eliza who sends it on to Aunt Emmie in Cape Town and then it goes to England to Aunt Nellie and perhaps to Nieces and Nephews there. Ruth's copy I think goes to Denis in Italy. Douglas and Evelyn's go to Rex. I don't know what Grace or Dot do with theirs. Nor do I know if Joe or Blodwen send theirs anywhere. Mary sends hers to Aunt Letty and Graaff Reinet members of the clan see it. Lynne sends hers to Arthur. The first copy I have, Pam has just referred to, was dated from the YMCA, the day after we left Vryburg in 1926. Pam says my typing then was better than it is now!

We all had a bad disappointment on Sunday. Grace had written that David was expected home on embarkation leave and she was sending baby Charles with him for a few days to see us. Pam went to the station on Sunday morning and no one was there. Pam was quite upset as no phone message or telegram came saying the plans had been altered. However on Monday, a postcard came saying David had made a mistake and would not get leave for another two months.

You will be sorry to hear that Jeffrey has not got the use of his right hand yet. He cannot open it but the Doctors think it will come right later on. Yesterday I had a letter from Rev Briggs who was minister here last year, saying that he had received news that his son, who was in the Flying Corps, had been killed in action. He did not know when or how or where. We are all very sorry for his parents. Ruth writes that Denis has been in the thick of the fighting. Evelyn says Rex has been on a visit to Rome and is struck with the wonders of the city. He and others had an audience with the Pope.

We are expecting Douglas and Evelyn on Friday night 22nd, and about a week later, Kingsley and Cecily. They are not using the car at all. From here, Douglas and Evelyn look to go to see Lynne in Queenstown. They will miss their car.

It is now nearly five and I am tired. It is awkward typing as the light is not in the right place and I cannot focus the typewriter correctly. I have not listened in at all today. Mr Karg told me that the invasion of Germany had begun. Will try to get up tomorrow and do better than I have today. Wednesday morning 13th. Still in bed and likely to be all day so far as I can see. Have had a fair night but cough and head are still troublesome. In the last Vryburg paper I noticed my old friend, Rev W.R. McGee, has passed away. Also Mrs Woodcock and Jack Hill have gone. Ruth says Denis in his recent letter said he was well but was having some harassing experiences. We have

made a plan with Alison whereby we supply her with two pounds of flour – we can only buy one at a time – and she puts two pounds to it and makes a batch of white bread and gives u one. It has been a nice change. Evelyn is very pleased with the photos of Dot's boys. She thinks that Norman's features have changed a lot.

It is too awkward to type in this position so will close for this week and hope to do better next.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 20th, 1944

My dear All,

Tuesday morning still finds me in bed with a strong desire to be up and about again but the weather is so uninviting, dull and overcast, that it is probably better to stay where I am until it gets a bit warmer. Am better so far as the running of my nose is concerned but my head aches and I feel generally weak. We have had fire in the bedroom the last few afternoons and I have not been out of the bedroom since Friday. It is only 9.30 now so perhaps the weather will improve. We have hardly seen the sun for days.

I was disappointed yesterday in not being able to go and wish Aunt Eliza the usual greetings on her 85th anniversary but we sent a few flowers and a note. Pam went up and brought back a nice sample of good things which had been provided for the festive occasion. Today, Joe is 43 and I suppose is working as usual. I have sent him an advertisement of the blacksmith at the end of the street who is selling out in October 3rd but I do not expect it will interest him. We are expecting Douglas and Evelyn on Friday night, Kingsley and Cecily the following Friday and Joe and some of his children for the following long weekend. We had hoped that Lynne would have been able to get over as well but she writes that she is taking over more responsible work at the end of the month and does not see how she can get away. It will be three years since they met at the Golden Wedding. I hope we shall not be disappointed.

Grace has written to say they have decided that Pam does not come back to school after the end of the year. She has no inclination to take up the teaching profession and consequently does not need the matric certificate. She says she will never be a nurse so the commercial course seems to offer the most suitable opening for her. There is a very good technical school at Kroonstad and she might enter the postal service or some commercial appointment. Needless to say we shall miss her very much and must be satisfied that we have been allowed to have her. She is not too well pleased with the results of their local exams but no doubt she will do better when the real test comes at the end of the year. She is taking the taalbond exam as well at the end of the year.

We had a nice letter from Rex recently. I asked him to try and get in touch with Jeffrey and I hope he and Arthur and Denis may be successful. We hear Jeffrey has now been transferred to a Union Hospital but think he is still in Italy. Alison tells us that there is evidently a bone in his right hand damaged and he cannot open that hand yet but the Doctors think they will be able to fix that up alright. Jeffrey has friends in hospital who write letters for him. He has received the one I wrote. He looks to be back at Rhodes College in 1945 so he is quite hopeful.

Joe was thinking of sending his cine camera up to Italy but apparently there is difficulty there in getting films for it so he has not sent it.

The seats of the two canvas deckchairs Joe made for us some years ago at Cape Town have at last gone in. I have been able to get new seats from Port Elizabeth so they will be good for a long time yet. Mrs Kruger, our next door neighbour, has just dropped in to use the phone. She says the weather is still so cold and I had better stay where I am – in bed. It is now past 11 and the sun has not shone at all today. Our garden boy has not turned up this week so far. He is not much use and we shall not keep him. When our visitors arrive, we will all go to the Premier for our mid-day meals so as to save the trouble of cooking. We hope it may be possible to get into the country while Douglas is here. We see practically nothing of Fish River folk owing to petrol shortage. I hear there are to be further restrictions imposed.

Joyce has had letters again from Dudley. He is so thankful for shoes and pyjamas she sent him. He keeps well except for short attacks of fever. I wonder how much they know of how the war is going? It seems to me that the end cannot be far distant now that the Allies are on German soil. Someone wanted to know when Hitler is going to write the sequel to his famous Mein Kamp which should be titled Mein Slump! A 4th standard boy answering the following questions, who rote the Book of Proverbs? replied Mussolini and a Tale of Two Cities was by Hitler. Name a German painter? His reply was Hitler.

Olive left last Friday morning for Johannesburg and I guess we shall not see anything of her for six months at least.

On Tuesday next week there is to be a farewell social to the Hultzers. Mrs Hultzer goes away on October 1st but Mr Hultzer returns in November and has to put in a few days at the Office (Postmaster) in January and then leaves for good. Mr and Mrs Hultzers have been very useful in the church, she as organist for some time and he as Superintendent of the Sunday School etc.

Joyce has just called and says Aunt Eliza is quite well after her birthday festivities which consisted of visits from Maude Miller and Dolly Enslin. Raymond presented her with a new chicken born on her birthday.

I am not able to tackle another sheet. I will say goodbye for the present.

Hoping you are all well,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 27th, 1944

My dear All,

THE important item of news this week is the safe arrival of a daughter to Dot and Reg on Friday evening at Potgietersrus. This news reached us at 11.45 on Saturday morning and within half an hour our congratulations were on their way back to them. We understand that the name of the little one is to be JOAN MARYANN – we do not know the reason for the combination of Maryann as one word but suppose there is some good reason for it. However we are all pleased and hope that the longed for daughter will prove to be the real blessing which has been so long hoped for. Perhaps before this is posted, we may have more details to impart. Meanwhile we must be satisfied that we know all are well, may this condition continue. We are anxious to hear the comments of Norman and Alan.

The next item of news is that Douglas and Evelyn arrived on Friday evening about 10.15. They were tired from their journey. We all waited up for them and had tea ready. It was past 11 before we retired. They are both looking well and have planned to stay with us till Wednesday 4th – Douglas' birthday – when they leave after dinner by taxi for Tarkastad and catch the train to Queenstown the same afternoon. Kingsley and Cecily arrive here by the same train that they travelled by on Friday evening so will have a few days with us. Joe and perhaps Roy and Trevor will arrive on Saturday morning and stay over Sunday and possibly Monday. There is a certain amount of uncertainty about the children coming as one of them has had German Measles lately. However we shall know in due course. Evelyn kindly brought us some butter, cookies and honey, all of which we are enjoying. Cecily will sleep in Pam's room and Joe and the boys we shall shake down on the lounge floor.

I am thankful to say that I am so far better that I am able to get up each day and try to do my usual round of work. My cough is certainly better but I am not getting about as much as I would like. We have walked as far as the park on Sunday afternoon but I have not been allowed to go to church for three Sundays at least. The weather has not been nice except today. We have had a couple of showers – 10 points each time – but not the soaking rains experienced in many parts of the country. It nearly froze last night (Monday). To add to our discomfort, the maid did not turn up after Tuesday last week until this morning. However we are going to the Premier for our mid-day meals each day whilst we have the family with us so as to save the trouble of having to cook. Aunt Jessie and Enid were in on Saturday but only stayed for a few minutes as they had to get back for dinner. They are all well at Fish River. Uncle Owen's Leslie and wife looked in for a few minutes on Saturday as they were into watch their children play in a hockey tournament. The Convent beat Rocklands. This morning, Hilda (George) and Amy called to hear how we were. Amy used to stay at the Poplars but has been "up north" on active service for some time. Now she has got her discharge from the army and is looking forward to going to England to get married to a R.A.F. man. She does not know what part of England she will be living. It seems to me that many of these war marriages are wrapped up in mystery.

Tuesday 26th. It just froze last night but we may expect a beautiful day. In addition to other visitors recorded yesterday, Mr Stock called in the afternoon. You remember he took Douglas and Evelyn by car to Port Elizabeth last year to see the Cavalcade. In the evening, Ernest came along and there was a good discussion on war and post war problems. The meat control and Jewish questions were included. Douglas has strong views on the great monopoly and influence almost amounting to a stranglehold the Jews have on so many essential concerns in the Union and beyond. For instance, the cattle and sheep trade is almost exclusively in the hands of the Jews. They are in a position to control to a large extent furniture, liquor and other trades. The discussion was quite interesting. My cough was somewhat troublesome during the evening and until after 11 p.m.

Of course, Douglas and Evelyn have been in contact over the phone with Lynne several times and they are looking forward to seeing her again and her friends. Mrs Collen is living there now at the same hotel. They will probably go by taxi from here on Wednesday instead of going by Railway bus as Douglas gets his tummy upset when he travels by lorry.

A letter from Joe this a.m. says he is asking for leave from Thursday evening so will be here on Friday morning till Monday morning. Roy and Trevor also are coming with him. So we shall have five grandchildren and two sons with us and one daughter-in-law. We have booked accommodation at the Premier for our mid-day meals for the duration of their stay.

Our maid turned up on Monday after five days absence. We have had trouble with our garden boy. He has never been early to work and this morning (Tuesday) he arrived about ¼ to 9. After he had his breakfast, we sent him up to Aunt Eliza with the wheelbarrow to bring down some manure they did not want. He was away a long time and just as Douglas and I arrived at Market Street by taxi, the boy was going into Auntie's yard. When we got back, we asked him where he had deposited the manure as he had only brought about half a wheelbarrow full. After some questioning, he admitted that he had taken some to another garden – did not know the name of the people. I told him he had better go and fetch it back but he said it was already dug into the ground. He denied that he had dug it in. He said the party had given him a ticky for it. I told him it amounted to theft. We talked it over amongst ourselves and Douglas thought I should get the police on the job. I phoned and a constable soon came down. He questioned the boy who at last admitted the party had paid him 2/-. He produced 1/6 of the amount. He would not tell the policeman where he had delivered the manure or even the street. It was evident he was not speaking the truth so I decided to let him have the 1/6 and sent him off the premises. The policeman gave him a few strokes with his belt and a stick and the boy cleared off. So that is the end of this experiment. Douglas helped Mom with the water leading the boy was doing at the time.

Wednesday morning. We all went to the farewell social last evening to the Hultzers. There was not a large attendance. The evening was cold and windy. Douglas insisted that Mom and I should go by taxi and Mr Rossler kindly brought us home afterwards. Pam gave a short recitation "do it now".

Douglas is concerned that he has not received any post since his arrival so has wired to the Postmaster Vryburg to enquire what has happened to it. No reply yet. After dinner. Reply has come saying that no instructions had been received so evidently something has gone wrong somewhere.

A letter and postcard from Dot, both written in ink, came to hand just before we went to dinner. She was very well and baby evidently has given entire satisfaction so far. She weighed 7¼ lbs and was making good progress. Reg and the boys are evidently out to spoil the baby. Everyone has been very kind and attentive. We hope all will continue to go according to plan.

News from Kroonstad is also good. They have had splendid rains, tanks and reservoir full, garden growing etc. Must not forget to wish Grace many happy returns of the day for Monday next. It will be Douglas' anniversary this day next week. Have asked the Premier to reserve a table for eight of us to dinner on Friday and ten for Saturday and Sunday. We are getting an extra bedstead from the Poplars for a couple of days. We have not heard anything of the garden boy today and don't expect to see him again.

We managed quite well at the Premier today without meat for dinner.

Douglas has trimmed the Jasmine arch in front of the house and there is still one at the side which he has left for Joe to do!

I am glad to say that I am none the worse for having been out last evening but I still cough more than I care for.

Must stop now, everyone has had their naps and afternoon tea so must get my post off.

We hope you are all well and that we shall continue to get news from Dot and baby. Much love from everyone here and looking forward to having a good time with all the member of the family who will be with us the next few days. I wish all of you could be here.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
a Wednesday October 4th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning and I am starting early (6 a.m.) so as to start before anyone is up. It has been a very close night, all the doors and windows are open and I am hoping that rain will come before the day is out. We have experienced some hot days – 94 in the shade – and one night it was 60. You will want something more interesting than talks about the weather.

We have had a very interesting week. Joe, Roy and Trevor arrived on Friday morning. Douglas and Pam went to meet them but the train was late so came back. Later Douglas and Evelyn went over and missed them. The train bringing Kingsley and Cecily in the evening was also late so the old folk did not wait up to meet them. So thus our party of ten was complete. Douglas and Evelyn occupied the spare room, Pam and Cecily the workroom, Joe and his two boys in the lounge, we borrowed a bedstead and mattress from Alison, and Kingsley was made as comfortable on the cosy corner. All declared they slept well. Each day we have all been to the Premier for dinner and have enjoyed the meals. Of course we had to put two more leaves in the dining room table, four sitting each side and one at each end.

Visits were paid to Aunt Eliza and Joyce and wonderful to relate, Aunt Eliza came down to see us on Monday morning. This may be the second visit we have had this year. I must refer to my records to make sure. Visits have been paid by all, except Mom and I, to the bio a couple of times and Douglas and Evelyn declare that they have never struck such a bad show so far as the musical part of the programme was concerned. Douglas attends a meeting of farmers with a view to starting a meat co-operative society and was able to give some sound advice on the subject. There was also a bazaar in aid of the United Party but I did not go. Our stock of provisions was augmented, however, as a result of purchases made by others. The young folk climbed up Okop one morning returning by the short cut through the river. Joe and children returned by Uitenhage on Monday morning, the train being an hour late. In the afternoon Douglas treated us all to a trip to the warm bath. We went by lorry, Mom and I sitting in the front and the rest, including Joyce and Raymond, in the back. A motor came out for us about 5.15 and took the seniors back whilst Kingsley, Cecily and Pam walked. They amused themselves playing halma in the evening and trying to solve the solitaire game but so far without success. Sunday morning the young folk went with Mom and I to church and in the evening all ten of us were present. Rev Karg gave a helpful address on life after death.

On Sunday evening after service we rang up Grace on the phone to wish her many happy returns of her birthday which was yesterday. All ten of us had a few words with her. Pam of course got special greetings through and was pleased to hear Harold was home for the weekend. We were glad to know that all were well. Pam has been invited to spend the rest of the short holidays at Katkop. Uncle Norman, Gladys, Dick and Ethline were here on Saturday afternoon and Uncle is coming in for the Stock Fair today – Tuesday – and will take Pam back with him. She will return to school on Monday morning. Of course she is sorry to miss the last few hours with Cecily but it seems a pity for her not to have the change to the farm if only for a few days. Douglas and family leave by car about 1.30. on Wednesday afternoon for Tarkastad where they join the train for Queenstown at 4 p.m. arriving at Queenstown about 7 p.m. Of course, numerous conversations have been held with Lynne and we can imagine the excitement that will prevail during the next few days. Douglas and the two children will leave Queenstown on Sunday night but Evelyn will stay longer. They all return via Bloemfontein. Needless to say, we have enjoyed all the visitors company immensely. I am afraid I have been rather dull but that cannot be helped. I am thankful that I have kept well and have not been the cause of undue anxiety.

On Saturday evening we had a great time. Uncle Dudley, Aunt Kate and Joanie, who was spending the last day of her holiday, spent the evening with us. Joe had brought his films of the Golden Wedding and others that he took at Grass Ridge and at Vryburg. Joyce and Raymond also came down. Uncle Dudley was highly amused at the film showing him and Katie in the garden. Even the smoke from his pipe was visible. It was all so natural and as none of them had ever seen

the film before, the pleasure was all the greater. Joanie left by the express train that night for Johannesburg back to her nursing duties.

We are greatly struck to see how Kingsley and Cecily have grown since the Golden Wedding, now practically three years ago. Douglas, Joe and Kingsley are all about the same height. Kingsley had not finished growing yet and will be the tallest in that family. He is a fine lad and we can all be very proud of him. He is thinking of studying for a veterinary surgeon. He says he does not want to be a farmer. Cecily too has developed a lot, is still growing and is taller than her mother. She is a very sweet girl and she and Pam have been great chums. Joe's boys gave us lots of pleasure and amusement. Trevor was very proud to show off his muscles. It is now breakfast time and I see my sheet is about full. I do not expect to be able to do anymore typing today so in case I cannot add, will ring off the time being at least.

Much love to all,

Dad

Many happy returns of the day to Douglas

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday October 11th, 1944

My dear All,

I posted last week's letter on Tuesday afternoon. It is now Monday evening and a good deal has happened since then. First let me say that Ernest and Alison have received a letter written in pencil by Jeffrey himself. Neither Mom nor I were able to read it, it was very faint, but it gives definite hopes that his right hand will still be able to function. It was his birthday recently and I want to write to him as soon as possible.

Another piece of news emanates from Denis. Ruth gives the following extract from one of his recent letters. Denis has had a most thrilling and exciting experience lately, I don't call it that as it was exceedingly dangerous. First of all they had a fire in the gun pit and as they were trying to put it out, a shell exploded and wounded four men just next to him. Then he was sent up 3000 feet to an observation post to a small house that overlooked straight down on the German infantry 400 yards below them. He directed the gunners to fire on them and fire was so devastating that the Germans soon put up the white flag and the Red Cross asked for an hour's truce to remove their dead and wounded. For three days Denis lived in that house and hardly slept or ate and had to creep on all fours past the open windows so as not to be detected and had to come down at night when it was over. He was sent out of the lines for two days for a good rest as it had been such a hazardous job but he was congratulated by his senior officers for carrying through the job successfully. He says he would not have missed it for anything. Such is way. We must be thankful that so far all our grandsons have escaped harm. Ruth says she is kept very busy with a house full of boarders.

We have just had a nasty shock from the proprietor of the Premier Hotel. From the 10th, the price for dinners is to be 2/6 each instead of 2/-. Suppers will be 2/- but that does not appeal to us. However we are continuing with dinners there for the present. It is so difficult to get supplies of vegetables etc and I am dead off Mom having to do the cooking.

Tuesday morning on the back stoep. Last Tuesday Pam went to Kathy with Uncle Norman and returned Monday morning. She has had a good time and has come back quite sunburnt. There were some sailors boys there on leave. Last Tuesday was also notable as being about the worst day on record for wind and dust. It was awful. The past week has been very dull and some days we did not see the sun. Rain is badly wanted.

Douglas, Evelyn, Kingsley and Cecily left by taxi at 1.35 on Wednesday for Tarkastad. They just caught the train for Queenstown having had car trouble which necessitated changing the wheels twice. We have had a card from Evelyn, and Douglas also phoned. They had a good time together and met a number of Lynne's friends. Douglas and the children left on Sunday evening by train and were due in Kimberley yesterday morning. We have also heard from Joe and Blodwen. They got home safely. Merle had a nasty experience just before Joe came up. A dog, playfully I presume, jumped on her and scratched her chest rather badly but she was getting better. Uncle Owen and Co were all well.

Douglas thinks we ought to share the house with some young couple who could do the cooking or something. Pam wants to know if we are going back with her when school breaks up early in December. That is one of the hottest months and Mom does not relish the idea. Of course it would be a nice stepping stone on the way to see Dot and the new baby. But way does not seem to be opening in any direction at present. Dot came home on Wednesday 3rd and had a wonderful reception. Baby evidently has good lungs and made herself heard. Everyone has been exceedingly kind and of course Reg and the boys had made all sorts of improvements during her stay in hospital. She complains of the heat so lives in the rondavels as much as possible. Six white chickens and three canaries have been added to the family during her absence so there is plenty of life about the home. Mrs Hudson Senior says the boys were very helpful and everything went well. Baby is to be christened on Sunday 29th. Mrs Legg is expected in November after her visit to Vryburg. She will be visiting Gwen Hudson. Mrs Peagen is expecting Mrs Reynolds, who is a relation of hers, in November. She is old Mr Reynold's second wife. She is going to visit Evelyn before coming here.

School starts a little earlier in the mornings now. Pam has to leave by ¼ to 8 and comes down for morning tea at ten. She goes to dinner at the Premier and gets here at 2. I do not know how long we shall continue this plan but it does save a lot of cooking. I see my sheet is full, do not know if I shall be able to do another tomorrow but will say so long in the meantime. Hope you are all well. Evelyn leaves Queenstown next Sunday evening. Our colds are better but I had breakfast in bed a couple of days last week. We have a garden boy “on trial” or a week. His hands are deformed and I doubt if he will be much help. Dot says we ought to let the watering go and the garden take its chance. Douglas trimmed the Jasmine arch but it can do with more cutting yet.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday October 18th, 1944

My dear All,

Another reminder of the passing of the years occurred during the weekend. A wire from Reg and Dot arrived on Saturday morning followed by a card from Grace on Monday. Douglas also wired on Saturday but was only delivered on Monday. No doubt we shall hear from Uitenhage in due course. We do appreciate these loving tokens. Fifty three years since we were married and in certain directions we are still going strong. In others, we recognise we are not able to do as much as formerly but are thankful for all the mercies and blessing we are favoured to enjoy. Mom is certainly getting more and more deaf and her eyesight is decreasing. The local eye specialist says he cannot improve matters so when we have an opportunity of going to Port Elizabeth, we must consult Dr Steward and Dr Lane. I fear all the fine crochet and tatting work she has done in recent years is responsible to some extent. Still there is much to be thankful for.

Our neighbour, Mrs Booth, had to be taken to hospital late on Saturday night from what the Dr thought was a stroke. She has suffered for years from diabetes and during recent months, her husband has been more or less an invalid having had to go to Port Elizabeth hospital for an operation on the glands of his neck. We called last evening and was glad to hear she was much better than the day before. Hope she continues to improve.

Last Thursday was the monthly meeting of the W.C.T.U. and the President sent me a note saying she had lost her voice and would I give the address that afternoon. I did. There we met Mrs Aspin, mother of the Bank Manager's wife, who lives next door to Dot. She had heard of the arrival of Joan and yesterday (Monday) she came to see us. She is staying at the Premier and I expect we shall see a good deal of her. Her husband was living in Cradock (and she as well of course) during the Boer war. He assisted in the erecting of the church organ and is related to the Webbers. He joined Lord Robert's forces from here. I think she has been a widow for about 20 years. She was very interested in looking through some of my scrapbooks.

Rev Karg has been away at Conference since last Tuesday and will not be back until the end of this week. He had arranged for Mr Galloway to take the service at Fish River last Sunday and Mr Kelly was to have gone out with him to introduce him to the good folk there. His son was not well so he asked me to go instead but as I had promised to take the Sunday School (the Superintendent having left) I could not go, so Mom and Pam went instead. They had dinner at Aunt Jessie's and got home about five p.m. Mr Galloway is taking the service again here on Sunday evening next as well. He belongs to the Baptist Church. He is a very nice man. Mom and Pam enjoyed the outing very much. The Fish River dance the previous week was a financial success for war funds. Pam helped with the refreshments. Aunt Jessie attended the dance and was not ready to go home at ten p.m. but sat it out.

We have made a few alterations now that the warmer weather has come. The settee we had in front of the dining room fire we have put in the passage which is the coolest part of the house. The washstand in our room we have placed at right angles to the wall by my bed and the side window. We are thinking of changing the carpets from the bedroom and lounge. I am still wearing my winter clothing as the weather is so changeable. We have had a lot of windy days and cool nights. I find I have dropped another few pounds in weight but nothing to be alarmed about. Mr Stock has had to go to Port Elizabeth to be X-rayed recently as he feared he had an internal abscess. Have not heard the result yet.

You will be sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie had another nasty turn recently. It came on just as she was going out. Fortunately help was close at hand.

Ernest and Alison have had news from a fellow patient in Jeffrey's ward that he has had twenty injections of some new treatment and each injection costs twenty pounds. Of course this is borne by the Military. When one considers the large number of patients that are receiving the same sort of treatment, the cost must be enormous.

Pam is rather expecting David may be turning up this (Tuesday) morning. If he does come, most likely he will bring baby Charles with him. We must wait and see. Pam is counting the weeks

to the holidays. The school inspector is expected today. Rev Sorrie, who spent some months here for the benefit of his health last year and then took an appointment as minister of the Presbyterian Church at George, is wanting to come back as he finds the climate there too damp. I have provisionally secured accommodation for him and his wife at the Palms at the corner of the Park.

Evelyn returned to Vryburg on Sunday evening. Both she and Lynne phoned on Saturday their congratulations on our 53rd anniversary. All the family say they will all meet on the Diamond Anniversary. How about having another outing at Rockcliff then?

Ruth has a birthday this week. Hope she gets good news from Denis every week.

I must see about getting Xmas cards printed. Have been waiting for the war to end so as to get something appropriate for the wording but it seems it is no good to wait any longer. I don't think I can start another sheet and news is scarce so will post today instead of Wednesday.

Lots of love to all. Will use new carbon paper next week.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday October 25th, 1944

My dear All,

We have experienced some heavy rains since I last wrote. On Thursday we had 90 points and on Sunday afternoon and night, 1.30. Both storms were accompanied by very vivid lightning and heavy thunder. At one time during the night, it seemed as though the rain was not falling in drops but as an avalanche. I could not help wondering if when we have our storm water drains in proper working order, if they would be able to carry off the flow. Fortunately it did not last long. None of our tanks are quite full. The plumber came on Monday to make some necessary repairs to two of them and I shall be glad to have them all full again. We have been rather extravagant lately in using the rainwater for gardening.

On Friday morning, owing to the absence of Rev Karg, I was called upon to conduct the funeral service of a member of the congregation who had a stroke on Sunday and passed away at the hospital without regaining consciousness. Many years ago, whilst at Vryburg, I had a similar duty to perform for one of the bandsmen belonging to the Pagels Circus. Rev and Mrs Karg returned from attending the Conference on Saturday evening.

Pam was looking forward to a visit from David and Grace intended sending baby Charles along with him. He had planned to arrive this (Tuesday) morning but on Saturday, Ted wired that David's leave had been cancelled and the visit is off. Since then, Pam has had a letter from David saying he will not get leave before Xmas so the trip will be off altogether so far as visiting us is concerned. We were looking forward to having them here.

Rocklands had their annual dance on Friday night. Pam went as an assistant in the catering department. Apparently they had a jolly time, she was not home till about 11.30. There is an outbreak of German Measles in the school and some of Pam's class have contracted it. Hope it will not interfere with the forthcoming examinations.

Joyce has had more letters from Dudley. He was well and has put on weight, is now 150 lbs. The Red Cross has supplied the P.O.W.s with garden seeds and so he has been busy gardening. He had received the photo of Raymond and says he would not have recognised him.

Pam looks to leave for home on Saturday night, December 9th, arriving at Kroonstad about 1 noon on Sunday. Grace would like us to return with her but we have thought over the matter and think it best to hold the visit over for the present. One thing is the heat but the greatest difficulty, as I see it, is the garden. The grapes and figs will not be finished before the end of January and if we are away then, the garden will be overrun by strangers. Of course we might be able to let the place but it is difficult to get someone who will look after it properly. No doubt if we tried, we might find someone. Then if we did go as far as Kroonstad, we should be half way to Potgietersrus and of course the new baby would be a great attraction. There again, the heat is supposed to be more trying than here. If I got as far as there, I should feel tempted to go a step further and go and see Mary at Sebea and the wonderful scenery of that part of the Union. Then there is Trixie Hudson at Johannesburg, whom we have not seen since she was married. It would not be a long journey from there to Vryburg. We have not seen Douglas' home since the week after Grass Ridge was officially opened. There has been great developments since then. Another very important consideration will be the expense. In that connection, I have made enquiries from the South African Railways as to the cost. This I must give later when I receive it. I have long desired to visit all the homes again and the longer I leave it, the more difficult it may become. I calculate such a tour would occupy about three months if taken in easy stages. Perhaps Grahamstown, Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth could be "done" before the summer. I do not overlook the fact that I should also visit Cape Town as I have not seen Aunt Emmie since our trip to Rockcliff – East London. How would it be to look forward to having the Diamond Wedding celebrations at Rockcliff?

Since the Premier have raised the price for meals, we have decided to have dinner there on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. We will reconsider the matter after Pam leaves. I do not know how the Proprietors arrive at their charges. Their regular boarders are only charged £7.10.0 per month for board and lodgings. That works out at 5/- per day whereas they charge 6/6d per day for

three meals per day so boarders get their early coffee, all meals, morning and afternoon teas, use of lounge, piano, furnished room, service, electric light, hot and cold baths, all for nothing and pay 2/6d per day less than table boarders do for meals alone. It does not seem fair to say the least of it.

Lynne writes that she had a very enjoyable time with her parents and Kingsley and Cecily at Queenstown. She will be going home for Xmas. One of her boyfriends, Martin Pentz of Vryburg has been killed in action in Italy. I knew his parents and grandparents in Vryburg. We are very sorry for Lynne.

Ted writes that he is selling his motorcar that he bought in Cape Town when we were there. He is trying to get a second-hand Opal car which is smaller. Now that the family is smaller, with David and Harold away from home, it should be cheaper to run than a big car. He is also selling his motorbike. The cottage he bought some time ago is let and he has laid on water from the windmill. The water supply on the plot has improved and Grace has quite a flourishing garden. Ted's mother is desirous of living in town and having her own furniture etc around her. Ted is trying to find a suitable place for her. She does a lot of knitting but her eyesight is not too good.

Ted says during a recent thunderstorm, the clock in the Post Office reversed the time, it went backwards, evidently was affected by lightning. Has anyone ever heard of such a thing? Ted is going to be quite a farmer. He says they will be able to grow all their own vegetables etc. He has bought a plough and is looking out for a span of donkeys or horses. He nearly bought a £29 cow at a sale. Keep it up, Ted. The plot may yet be a goldmine.

Dot reports that baby Joan has put on 12 ounces in correct time and is flourishing. She is to be christened on Sunday 29th. She has been inundated with presents and tokens of love from all and sundry. She certainly has a very large circle of real friends around her and is very happy. She extends a very hearty welcome to us to visit them but does not urge it. The new Matron of their hospital used to nurse in Vryburg and nursed Mrs Hudson senior when a patient there. Mrs Hudson has been a great help and comfort to her during these weeks.

Joe has had trouble with a leaking roof. His landlord is unable to afford the necessary repairs. It is not easy to find where it does leak. Of course galvanised iron at the coast rots very easily and in war time, is difficult to get for replacement. I guess he will manage it somehow. He forgot to send us a wire or letter on the 53rd anniversary. They are trying to make arrangements about Roy and Merle going to Cape Town for Xmas holidays.

Evelyn arrived home safely. She saw the children in Kimberley and Douglas met her at Pudimoe. A letter from Evelyn this Tuesday morning says she is charmed with Queenstown and met a lot of Lynne's friends. Mrs Collen is also there. We also had a letter from Hilda Daniell (Uncle Walter's daughter). Her husband has been very ill and Dr says he must not work anymore - heart trouble.

Ruth writes thanking for birthday greetings. She had a lot of letters and presents of flowers. Denis had written to Gowies to deliver a nice bunch of flowers on the day which was very thoughtful of him. He also sent a money present. Ruth has given me a copy of part of his letter describing his recent experiences in a certain duty he had to perform. I will try to copy it if not in this letter, in next week's. It is rather long but it gives some idea of what he has gone through. His wife may be going to live with Ruth for a holiday next month. I wonder if she won't come and see us.

The South African Railways has phoned that the cost of the tickets for the suggested tour would be about £22 each.

I have recently replied to a letter from one of Mom's cousins, Rosa Ensor, in New South Wales, Australia. There they have no native or coloured servants and the three sisters have to do all the housework themselves. Labour is very scarce.

This is the extracts from Denis' letter which Ruth has sent us dated 3rd October 1944. "I have been at another observation post. Last Tuesday morning I was given ten minutes to get everything packed and go forward to the other side of the mountains. First I was Liaison Officer with another field regiment for a day and then I went out on the worst Op. job of my army life. A bitterly cold rain was lashing down when I went out with the company which was to do the attack.

For five hours we struggled up hill, along flooded mule tracks until we were near the 3000 ft feature we were to take. By that time, it was nearly dark and my three signallers and myself were soaked to the skin. My boots were full of water and I could not take them off for 48 hours. We found a small stone hut about 12 ft by ten. My party and the battalion Medical Officer, with his stretcher bearers, settled in. Soon the casualties began moving in – not wounded but men who could not speak, or move their limbs for cold and exhaustion. I helped the doctor treat them. He only had four blankets and a gallon of rum so the treatment was very crude. Soon the hut contained about thirty of us – the casualties lying two deep, groaning, and with teeth chattering. I have never been colder in my life. I did not have a dry stitch of clothing on me. I had no greatcoat, or blankets (these were forbidden) my knees were drawn up to my chin and somebody was lying on my numb feet. We could only pray for the dawn. It broke at last. The men had died of exposure, three had just wandered off into the mist and have not been seen since and twelve were paralysed from the waist downwards. Later in the day, relief came and we were withdrawn slightly to some peasants' cottages. The Infantry were magnificent, they just stuck it without whimpering during the whole show until they dropped with exhaustion or died of exposure. Just before I left, I went in with another attack and was heavily shelled. All my ill effects from this outing were a slight cold in my head. All my chaps are fine, thank God. I would never have forgiven myself had I lost any of them."

What a terrible experience. We must be very thankful that he has been spared. This no doubt is only one of many such incidents. The bravery and endurance of the men is wonderful. How terrible for the relatives of those who have suffered so much. May the war teach the world the foolishness of trying to settle disputes by force of arms.

I am arranging for a box of crystallised fruits to be sent to Denis, Arthur and Rex and I hope they may receive them before Xmas.

I must not write more this week except to remind you that it is Blodwen's birthday on November 4th. Hope she has a happy day.

Much love to each and all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 1st, 1944

My dear All,

I must try not to inflict such a long letter on you as I did last week. You will be glad to hear that Jeffrey is now in hospital at Roberts Heights. If any of you have the chance of going to Pretoria, you will of course go and see him. He is getting on nicely so far. We have not heard any further news re Denis. Ruth says Dorothea may be going to spend a holiday with her. We have asked her to break her journey here if possible.

Last Thursday we had a letter from Arthur dated October 9th. He had heard the news of Jeffrey's accident before he received my letter. He was originally in the same unit until he (Jeffrey) applied for a transfer to the infantry. He had received a letter from Evelyn posted from Cradock, only 11 days after posting it. He talks of the incessant rains and it had turned cold. I guess he will appreciate some of the dry weather of Bechuanaland after the rains they have had in Italy. Some of the mountains are snow capped. Winter clothing has been issued to them. He was looking forward to receiving a sheepskin coat his Mother was sending him. Rubber boots have been issued to them. He had been on a short visit to Florence but time was very short. The place had not been knocked about very much. Am glad to hear that he and Rex are able to keep in close touch with each other – by correspondence. They are both keeping well. The news of the Japanese naval defeat sounds as though the war in that area might be over sooner than expected. May it be so.

We have had some warm days since I last wrote and have commenced with summer clothing. I hope I am not too early with the change. Today (Tuesday) for instance it is cool again. We have been without a boy for a week. The grass needs cutting but we will probably let it go to seed and so thicken the lawn.

David phoned from Kroonstad on Thursday (I think it was) that he was home for one day on embarkation leave but in a letter he thought he would be home for Xmas. All of the family spoke during the few minutes and Grace intimated that she and baby Charles might be coming down shortly. David evidently will not be able to come. It was their intention for Charles to come with David and in fact his clothes have been packed twice with that object in view and then David's leave had been cancelled. We do not know yet when to expect them but they will be very welcome.

Correspondence is passing regarding Joyce taking Roy and Merle with her when she goes to Cape Town for the holidays. She is booking her seat on 4th to leave here by December 4th – they have to book a month ahead. They are waiting a reply from Blodwen's sisters to know if it will be convenient to have them. Joe would probably bring them as far as here and might have to go to Cape Town to fetch them back. We have offered to have Merle if plans do not materialise according to plans.

There was a mild excitement at Market Street on Sunday. It appears a returned (coloured) soldier climbed over Aunt Eliza's wall or gate and broke into the Indian's shop next door through a window in the narrow passage between the two houses. Joyce was at the bio on Saturday night with Ernest and Alison and heard nothing about it until Sunday morning. The police dogs were brought onto the spot and the man was arrested within a few hours, not I understand by the dog. No loss or damage was done to Aunt Eliza's property. During a thunderstorm last week, Joyce saw a flash and apparently one of the wooden wireless masts near the fowl run that Mr Thomas erected was struck. She heard what appeared wood splitting and the pole appears scarred and cracked in places. It has not fallen and still functions correctly, or at least the wireless does. Talking of wireless, the news of the recent defeat of the Japanese navy should hasten the termination of the war. The progress on the Western Front is going slower than was expected. It does not look as though there is much hope of the men being back for Xmas this year.

Uncle Owen had the misfortune recently to have all his fowls stolen. We have not heard if the culprit was caught. Joe is having trouble with a leaky roof. Aunt Eliza has the same trouble.

Dot's baby was to be christened last Sunday. Suppose we shall hear how she behaved. Baby was a month old last Friday. Blodwen has a birthday on Saturday.

Pam and I had a match with a bat one evening. It had entered her room the previous night but did not disturb us until the following evening when it made its appearance in the passage. What with her tennis racquet and my walking stick, we won. Frequently a bat enters the church during service and flies all about the pulpit and organ for a while and then leaves again. I do not know if it is the same bat every time but it naturally disturbs the congregation. I have started addressing my 450 Christmas cards so as to have them ready for posting early in December. The overseas ones have gone already.

Olive left some of her plants with us to look after. They are on the front stoep. The strelitzia (correct spelling?) is a wonderful flower. I have never seen one before. It gives a number of flowers from the same stem. The colouring is wonderful.

It is 9.30 a.m. It looks as though I must do another sheet. (I will use up the remainder of the sheet I cut off last week.)

Tuesday afternoon. We have been able to get four pounds of potatoes, 3 pence a pound. We did not have to wait in a row to be served, they just came when ordered. We notice bread, butter and cheese have all gone up another 1d a lb from tomorrow. More cost of living, when is it going to stop?

The Mayor is having a Mayoral service in the Anglican Church on Sunday a.m. As a member of the Hospital Board, I am invited. In the evening, the young people of the Guild are conducting most of the service in the Methodist Church. Pam has been chosen to read the lesson. The following Sunday morning, Mr Karg has invited all the parents to attend service and to bring their children to sit with them in the body of the church. Reminiscent of olden days when whole families used to attend church.

Rev and Mr Sorrie have decided to take the room at The Palms and are arriving on 15th. It is to be hoped his health will improve.

Wednesday morning. Grace has not turned up but expect there will be a letter from her. I saw Aunt Eliza and Joyce this morning. They are booking their seats on Saturday to leave by the morning train on December 4th so suppose Joe will bring the children up here either on Saturday or Sunday previously.

Aunt Eliza is complaining of rheumatic pains in her wrists and of course it affects her writing, of which she does a good deal. Raymond was home from school owing to a sty in his left eye. He was going to school tomorrow. Joyce had a lettercard from Dudley today dated August. He was expecting to be moved again shortly. Presumably on account of the advancing Allies.

Later. 12.15. Letter just delivered from Dot. Says Joan was well and truly christened on Sunday and behaved perfectly. Mick loaned a proper robe so she was "a toff". A boy nine days older was christened at the same time. A number of friends attended the service and Reg and Dot, after taking baby home, returned to the church for the Sacrament service. Rev Massey had lunch with them and had to return to Pietersburg at three for his Sunday School anniversary service in the Town Hall. In the afternoon, they had about 30 Sunday School children to tea and cake on the lawn. Baby was asleep in her cot on the stoep and all the children – especially Anthony, who Dot had as an adopted child for about two years, was very interested. The Watts and other friends also turned up for tea. On Monday morning more friends came to morning tea to say goodbye to Mrs Hudson senior who has gone to Trixie by car today (Wednesday). Dot reports all well and no time for more. I think she has done wonderfully well to entertain so many and to give us such long and satisfactory news. I must also stop and have dinner.

Hope all are well in each home,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 8th, 1944

My dear All,

You will be pleased to hear that Jeffrey arrived home on leave on Friday morning last. He came along the same afternoon to see us. He is looking exceedingly well considering what he has gone through during the last three months. His arm has healed up nicely and he is able to use his fingers of the right hand but cannot yet hold a pen properly. The scar on his left temple no doubt will be less noticeable when new skin has been grafted on to it. He is looking to go to Grahamstown before returning to Roberts Heights. Ruth's husband has been interesting himself in trying to get him back into Rhodes University and he has a number of friends there. When Guy went to see him in Italy, shortly after he was wounded, he said to him "you have a cheek to be alive" so seriously was his condition then. We had a letter from Arthur last week saying that they had heard of his being wounded very shortly after it happened. I wrote to each of the grandsons to do what they could to see him. It is pleasing to know that they are able to keep in touch with each other so well.

I am afraid we are all going to be disappointed that the war is not likely to be over by Xmas as was hoped it would be. Heavy rains in Italy must be very trying. However we may be thankful that so far they are safe. It would be interesting to know how much the Prisoners of War know what is going on. Dudley wrote recently (August) that he expected to be moved shortly. Of course he did not say why he thought so.

David has a few odd days leave and was looking to come down here to say goodbye but at the last minute, plans were altered and he is now in Durban. Baby Charles was to have come with him and in fact has been packed up ready to come and has had to be unpacked. Now Grace suggests that she may pay us a visit in January and bring Charles. Pam and Jean will be home and able to look after Ted. So we have something to look forward to.

It is now breakfast time Tuesday morning. The seven o'clock news has just announced that Rotterdam is being attacked and that all Germans have been cleared out of Russian soil and that it may be possible to hoist the flag of Victory in Berlin before long. May it be so.

Later. I am down to give a talk to the Guild this evening on reminiscences. I have nothing specially prepared but having completed nearly 80 years, there should not be much difficulty in thinking of some interesting incidents to narrate. Speaking of the Guild, the service on Sunday evening was almost entirely conducted by the Guild members. Rev Karg left the pulpit and sat in the body of the church. The rest of the service went through without any prompting or hitch. Pam read the last chapter of Joshua and one of the lads read another portion. Prayers were read by young ladies and the address given by young Mr Karg was quite good. I do not know if his father wrote it for him but he delivered it quite well. There was a good congregation.

Evelyn writes that whilst they were in the town last week, a heavy storm fell on the farm - 3½ inches was registered in an hour on Frank's farm which is next. Mrs Legg is at present staying with them and Mrs Reynolds has also been on a visit. She is the second wife of Douglas' old neighbour. She is coming to nurse Mrs Peogen here shortly so we shall be sure to see her. Evelyn is charmed with Queenstown, says the town is so pretty. Lynne is due home for the Xmas holidays on December 15th. I notice an advertisement of Mr Metcalfe's marriage in Cape Town on Saturday last. Being on the next farm to Douglas and Evelyn will be nice company for them. A few days ago I received a nice letter from the Chairman and secretary of the Library enclosing a cheque for seven guineas as a present on my giving up the Secretaryship. It was very nice of them. I think I must now see about having my teeth seen to.

Aunt Emmie has had trouble lately. She engaged an elderly woman to come and sleep in the house in case she needed help during the night. For two or three weeks, this party turned ill and Aunt Emmie had to nurse her instead. She has now left and another person is with Aunt Emmie. Joyce and Raymond have booked their seats for Cape Town leaving here on December 4th. Joe is arranging to bring up Roy and Merle to travel with them. They will be staying with Blodwen's sisters at Plumstead. Perhaps Joe will have to go down to fetch them when they come back to

school in January. Joe of course will return to Uitenhage from here. We offered to have Merle if necessary.

Talking of holidays, Mr and Mrs Stock wanted to go away for a fortnight before Xmas to Grahamstown but none of the hotels can give accommodation. I asked Ruth if she knew of any place and she replied that a private hotel opposite her could but would not, on consideration, allow their dog to accompany them. Mr Stock won't go anywhere without the dog so that is off.

Uncle Jack has just been in. Says Aunt Agnes is suffering from neuritis. The Doctor wants her to come to town for electrical treatment but she does not want to move. Aunt Jessie has not been well either. She may be coming today as it is Stock Fair. Mom and I will be going up to morning tea presently. Mom had a nasty fit of sneezing about 2 am Monday but after giving her a drink of hot milk and something to eat, she was better but not well enough to go to her W.A. meeting in the afternoon. She is better this Tuesday morning.

Much love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 15th, 1944

My dear All,

Cradock has suffered, and is still suffering, from an outbreak of infantile paralysis. It was at first thought the cases were meningitis. So far there have been eleven cases and four of which have been fatal. All sections of the community have so far been affected. It is hoped that there will not be any further trouble but it has caused some anxiety amongst parents. Joyce is naturally anxious on account of Ray and after seeking advice from the Principal of the school as to whether Ray would be likely to pass his standard if removed from school before the exams take place, and being assured that he would be moved up, she has decided to leave as soon as possible – probably Thursday morning for Cape Town. This has of course upset all the plans that had been made for Joe to bring up Roy and Merle to go under the care of Joyce. This is a great disappointment to all. Quite a number of parents have also removed their children. Scholars were not allowed to go to bios and Rocklands girls were not in Church on Sunday. It is hoped that the schools will not have to close, especially as the Matric and JC exams are due to start this week.

Monday Pam had a wire from David saying he was arriving here on Wednesday morning. He is evidently on embarkation leave. He has made at least three attempts to come down without success. Grace has postponed her visit to January. Of course Charles will come with her. Pam and Jean will look after Ted during her absence. We do not know how long he will be able to stay but shall know in due course. I had made an appointment with the dentist for 9 on Wednesday but have postponed that.

You will be interested in hearing that Ernest and Alison's Dorothy has a son born last Saturday. She is in Pretoria.

Jeffrey has gone to Grahamstown and hopes to get word if he can return to Rhodes. He has to return to hospital at Pretoria. There is no word as to when he will be discharged.

Dot's baby weighed 9 lbs on her six weeks birthday. Norman is going to boarding school in Pretoria next term and Alan has to have his eyes seen to so will go with Reg on the same trip.

Rev Sorrie's son, who is evidently in the military, has written such a nice letter re David. He speaks most highly of his character and good influence. Have written to Dossie Dennison (Mrs Harry de Kock) to look David up whilst in Durban. We never hear from her but enquire of her sister-in-law here when we meet. Sunday was Mary's birthday. Hope she had a restful day at her hospital. It will be Olive's in December. I think I told you Olive had arrived on her world tour in Cape Town. Have not heard if she is going to write a book on her travels!

The Executor in Mr Thomas' estate is removing his goods and chattels from Aunt Eliza's this Tuesday morning so I am going up to give a hand if necessary. I am glad to have it done whilst Joyce is still here. There is a lot of it. No decision has been arrived at regarding re-opening the shop. They are waiting to hear if there are any creditors in England who may make any claim on his estate. Last week we registered nearly 100 degrees in the shade and this has been followed by very cool nights. It has been as low as 40.

Later. Joyce has decided to leave on Wednesday morning. I may go to the station to see her off. She will pass David about Fish River but are not likely to see each other. All Mr Thomas' stuff, a lorry load of it, has gone to the Auction room except the more valuable part which has gone to the Attorney's office.

Have finished typing three airmail letters to the three grandsons in Italy. One can get a good deal on a lettercard. I have also finished addressing 450 Xmas cards. This year it has involved rewriting a new list to whom I send them as the former sheets which contain a record of the past ten years is full. The new sheets will also last for ten years but I do not expect I shall last as long as that. I shall probably reduce the number of addresses next year. It has always been a pleasure to remember my old friends. I have kept a number of old cards which have exceptional wordings or/and views – pictures. There are some very artistic ones amongst them.

Mom has a few nasty attacks of sneezing and coughing at night time. I feel sure that it is caused through working in the garden so much. For weeks we have not a boy to do anything. The

Council has restricted the hours for watering to 7 to 8 in the mornings and 5 to 6 in the afternoons. The grass wants cutting and everything needs attention which neither of us can give. Mom feels "done in" after these attacks.

The Parents' Sunday was well attended and Mr Karg gave a very good address using a blackboard to illustrate his points. Next Sunday is Temperance Sunday. I have just been approached to give an address in one of the native churches in the afternoon and also to address the Licensing Court on December 6th. We were able to get some much needed restrictions imposed last year and hope to get them continued again. The amount of drinking during the war is shocking.

Pam's examinations start on Thursday morning. I hope she gets a good pass. The results will not be out until some time in January.

Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 22nd, 1944

My dear All,

We have had the great pleasure of a visit from David Irons. It was all too short. He arrived about 10 Wednesday morning. Pam was able to meet him as her exams were finished for the day. He brought all his luggage with him and what a weight it was. Haversack about 25 to 30 lb, three blankets, side satchel etc. I do not know what the total weight would be when he has his rifle ammunition etc. I tried the harness on to see what it was like. He says everything is well balanced and "rides" easily. He says it is inclined to make one lean forward in walking. David is looking very well and is full of life. Grace phoned up in the evening but he and Pam had gone up to see the Fouries. David seems very well informed and is very interesting to talk to. He does not smoke or drink and I am sure he will look after himself. They spent some time with Aunt Eliza and also saw the Moorcrofts. One evening they went to the bio and came with us to the fellowship meeting on Thursday evening. On Saturday morning they fixed up a walking picnic to the top of Oukop. In the afternoon they walked out to the Egg Rock. They did not get back till after we had had our supper and then had to go to say goodbye to Aunt Eliza. Aunt Eliza had made a special cake for him which he has taken home.

So far did I get on Monday afternoon. Now Tuesday morning. Pam and I went to see him off by 10.20 p.m. train Saturday night. It was a long train a little late. Unfortunately it pulled in on the island platform which means crossing the bridge. It was past 11 before I got to bed. We took a taxi over and walked back. David leaves Kroonstad on Friday so as to report for duty on Monday morning. He has no idea as to when he will leave Durban or where he may be sent. They are expecting Harold home for Xmas with a friend and David will also try to get special leave.

Joyce and Ray left on Wednesday morning and passed David on the way somewhere. We had a postcard from her at De Arr. We hope she has not run into any other danger. There have been a number of fresh cases of infantile paralysis since she left. One of the latest is the Executor in Mr Thomas' estate has one of his children down with it. Government is contemplating sending all the cases by air to Cape Town. A government doctor and nurse came up by air to investigate the matter. The number of cases reported so far is about 20. Owing to Joyce's sudden departure to Cape Town, the plan for taking Joe's Roy and Merle had to fall through. Nothing is settled so far as to what Joe and Blodwen will do about it. If they cannot get anyone to bring them back from Cape Town, their trip will probably fall through. Joe has been acting as foreman for about a month but is now back at his forge again. I hope he will not resume on overtime work. His car battery has been giving trouble. He would like to get a larger car but does not know if it can be arranged.

Dot reports that Reg has been elected Deputy Mayor. He is not very happy about it. They all went to the farm for a day. Reg had some machinery to fix up. Baby was none the worse for the outing – her first. The servants on the farm came to pay their respects to the young missie.

Lynne writes that she is leaving on holiday on 13th December and returns to duty on 31st. How they wish all the family could be together as they had expected to be this Xmas. Now that the war has entered German territory, it surely cannot be long before it is over. Something has happened to Hitler.

Sunday was Temperance Sunday. I was asked to give an address at the Native church in the Location at 3 pm. I took a taxi and on arrival, found that the people knew nothing about it. The minister was in the country preaching but his wife was very sorry about it. However I walked back and visited the hospital where one of the Councillors has been laid up for some time. I also went to see Aunt Charlotte at the Old Ladies Home. She has been far from well for a long time. She is 88. I would have gone to see Aunt Eliza but knowing she rests for an hour or two every afternoon, it would have been useless. However I saw her on Monday morning. All Mr Thomas' goods and chattels were removed the day before Joyce left so now she will be able to get the room ready for any other purpose. The Executor is waiting to hear from England if Mr Thomas had any liabilities over there before winding up the estate. It is now nine months since he died.

We are thinking of trying to spend a few days or perhaps a week at Fish River. We might go by train on Xmas morning and stay with Aunt Jessie and if opportunity offered, could go to Katkop or even Grass Ridge. Petrol is the stumbling block at present. Aunt Agnes has been in bed for some while. Dr has been out twice and wants her to come to town for electrical treatment but she refuses. We might stay until about January 2nd. Aunt Jessie was in yesterday and says we are quite welcome.

Mr Barnes has been to Port Elizabeth about his eyes. Dr tells him that unless he knocks off smoking, he will be quite blind in six months. He has given up smoking. There is someone else I know very well who might take similar advice. I had to put off my appointment with the dentist to Friday owing to David's arrival. He has removed the tartar and says I must go to him every six months. My remaining teeth are still good.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 29th, 1944

My dear All,

Monday evening. I wonder what sort of weather you experienced yesterday. Here it was blowing big guns all the morning and until about five when the wind changed suddenly to the south or south east. The temperature reached 100 in the shade but dropped to 57. Today it has been very cold all day and the maximum will only be about 70, if as much as that. We have hardly seen the sun all day. It has been decided to close the Sunday School until after the holidays owing to the increase in numbers of cases of infantile paralysis. Up to Saturday, it had reached 27, an increase of ten in the week. I see there is an increase in the number of cases in Cape Town, some in the next area to Rondebosch. I do hope Ray will keep free. There was an ambulance plane here this morning but I do not know if any patients were flown to Cape Town or not.

You will be sorry to hear that Mr Barnes – Saltpansdrift – was brought into hospital suffering from a rupture which he should have had attended to years ago. I must go and see him tomorrow and let Uncle Norman know how he is getting on.

Gordon Saunders' mother-in-law passed away on Saturday last. We did not know her but her daughter has been a great help to Gordon. For a long time they ran a successful school for a number of children in the district and some scholars came even from Port Elizabeth.

Rev and Mrs Sorrie arrived back from George last Wednesday. They are very glad to be back in Cradock. They like their room at The Pines.

Tuesday morning. Our hour for using the town water supply is from 7 to 8 and 5 to 6 in the afternoon. Generally there is no water in the pipes until well after 6 and then only a trickle and it won't go very far. We have not had water from the furrow for a long time. Not since the garden was flooded. The boy we have now three days a week is the son of Aunt Eliza's servant. He is willing enough but is severely handicapped with crippled hands. I understand he was severely burned when a child. He does not come until after 8 so is no help to me with the watering. There are signs of a good crop of grapes this year.

I have bought a nice fountain pen with part of the proceeds of the gift from the Library. It has a very fine pointed nib which is nice for book-keeping. Talking of pens, Mom says she wishes you would use a broad nib in writing as she finds she cannot see ordinary writing. She uses my powerful magnifying glass.

Pam is getting excited about going home next week. She had been counting the days for some time and no doubt will have a great reception on Sunday 10th. Her train is due at Kroonstad a few minutes after one so it will be just after church. Harold is looking forward to being home for Xmas and it would be nice if David could be there too. He is back in Durban by now I expect. I wrote to Dossie de Kock (Dennison) and she has replied saying she has tried to get in touch with him but he was away on leave. So have written again and I hope they will meet before he leaves. David thinks he may have to fly up north. The authorities do not let anyone know their movements until about 13 days after they have left. Grace has suggested coming to see us later than January but we understand Charles is going to school next year. She must do whatever is most convenient to herself.

Evelyn writes she is looking forward to having her children home next week and Lynne the following week. The boys write very regularly and are keeping well. Jeffrey goes back to Roberts Heights on Wednesday morning. He tells me the Military will fix up his left arm. It seems very wonderful what surgery can accomplish. He hopes to get back to Rhodes University.

'Mr Thomas' furniture, desk, chairs, bath and a few other things are to be sold on Saturday. Unfortunately a claim of some few hundred pounds has come from England which may alter the prospects of his estate coming out on the right side. The claim is over eight years old and may be disallowed by the Master of the Supreme Court. In any case, it will delay the winding up of his affairs for several weeks longer. His Executor is at present in quarantine as two of his children have infantile paralysis.

Local postmen do not ring the bell when they put our letters into the box, they are not compelled to by regulation so we have fixed a gadget to the flap of the slit in the front door so that as he puts the letters in, the electric bell automatically rings and we then know the post has arrived. I was going to fix it to the front gate, then the bell would ring every time the gate was opened. I guess Baby Charles will find a good deal of pleasure in pushing up the flap if he knows of the gadget. It can easily be disconnected if we go away.

I am sorry to say that Aunt Emmie had another "turn" recently, just as she was going out. Fortunately Joyce was with her and she soon recovered.

We have not heard if Joe and Blodwen have been successful in making any plans for getting the children away to Cape Town for the holidays. Nor have we definitely decided what we are going to do. Quite likely stay "put". The watering of the garden etc may be a difficulty. However we will see. 9 a.m. it seems as though we may get some much needed rain today.

Later. Have seen Mr Barnes, has had a comfortable night. Was operated on for rupture on Sunday. Must not start another sheet so remain with lots of love to all from

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday December 6th, 1944

My dear All,

The infantile paralysis cases left by train on Monday morning for Cape Town and we all hope that they will return in due course restored in health and strength. You will be sorry to hear that the only case reported so far from Kimberley occurred in Eric and Freda's home. A young lady lodger staying with them contracted the disease and Freda was nursing her. This involved the withdrawal of the children from school and missing their examinations and taking them to the farm to be in quarantine for three weeks. We have not heard of any further cases from that quarter and are very sorry for all of them. You will also be sorry to hear that Muriel has been laid up with a bad attack of asthma at Maritzburg – the first attack since her baby was born. All these events have added special anxiety to Aunt Emmie and Joyce at Cape Town. We are sorry to hear that Mrs Ross Roberts – Milly Tilbrook – is dangerously ill – heart trouble, at Cape Town. She is a very old friend of ours. I lived with the family whilst Uncle James went to England many years ago.

On Friday last, Aunt Jessie and Dick came in to do some shopping. They stayed to supper. Pam had expressed a wish to go to the farm for the weekend as she had no more exams until Wednesday. So this provided just the opportunity for her to go back with them. She will spend most of the time with Ethline at Katkop and we expect her back this (Tuesday) morning as there is sure to be an opportunity, it being Stock Fair day.

Saturday was another stinking day. It registered 100 in the shade and I had the job of attending the sale of some of Mr Thomas' furniture which had been removed from his room at Aunt Eliza's. It involved hanging about in the heat for 2½ hours before all his few things were knocked down. Clifford Saunders phoned asking me to try and get his writing desk which I got for £5/10-. His cabin trunk, which I valued at about 10/- (it had no handle or keys) went for £4. Needless to say, I did not get it. I bought a bedside table that Joyce was prepared to give £3 for her Mother. I got it for 30/-. It has been packed and is going to Cape Town. I may keep the desk myself and let Clifford have mine.

Aunt Eliza has invited Miss Hurter who used to work at Roberts and is now employed at Robertson to spend her five weeks holiday with her. She will go out for her mid-day meal and occupy Mr Thomas' room. She arrives on Saturday night.

For some months there has been meetings for fellowship held at the homes of members of different churches in town. We invited them to meet here last evening and between 40 & 50 came. The majority were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, some Baptist and a few Methodists. We arranged seating in the lounge, using every chair and bench, including the garden seat. The room was comfortably filled. Capt. Stevens gave a helpful address on the story of Gideon. A number of choruses and hymns were sung and a few prayers offered. Revs Karg, McLachlan and Botha were present. Next time, if there is such, we will have it in the dining room as being bigger and easier. Mr Hultzer helped in arranging the room.

On Monday we received a nice letter from Denis. He had been to Florence on leave and had greatly enjoyed the scenery, monuments and wonderful buildings. The army had been refitted with winter clothing – and they needed it from all accounts. Denis particularly asks me to convey his good wishes for Xmas to all relations in my "dear all" as he has not the facilities for doing so. He says he is quite well. Of course is disappointed at not being home for Xmas. He has tried to get in touch with Arthur and Rex without success.

We have not heard if David has left yet. Later. Pam has returned by train and has quite enjoyed the little change. She reports all well at Fish River.

There is a long love story in the Outspan of November 17th which, like all Ruth's writings, is worth reading. On the strength of what it is bringing in to her and extra work she is earning by assisting at the Library etc., she and John are going for a holiday before Xmas. I am sure they well deserve a change. Dorothea has left teaching and is now helping her father in an Indian Mission. We want her to break her journey whenever she goes to Grahamstown. David has written a very interesting letter about his visit to Kroonstad and back to Camp. He has been to see Dossie de Kock

and he has chummed up to Pam, her daughter, who is the same age. No word about leaving. He writes home every day and when no letters come from him, then they will know that he has left.

For some time I have had a nasty pain from my right hip to the knee. It is not constant but sometimes it nearly lets me down. It is worse after walking about town for some time. I am now trying a course of Krusian each morning. I hope it will do the trick.

Tuesday afternoon. It has been hot all day and I see it has broken the record for this season. It is just 4 p.m. and the thermometer is standing at 103 in the shade. In the morning I have to address the Licensing Court and hope to be as successful as last year and prevent any relaxation of restrictions.

I will not attempt another sheet so goodbye for this week.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday December 13th, 1944

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning and earlier than usual as I am all behind this week and am anxious to catch up. My desk is in a muddle owing to the fact that I have offered same to Clifford Saunders who asked me to buy Mr Thomas' for him but as I would like to keep it, as it is wider and better in some respects than mine, I have offered to exchange. He has not yet been to town so I do not know which he will take. It has involved trying different positions of placing the desk and consequently things are more or less in a muddle. In any case, I have decided to have the desk facing the room, with my back to the wall instead of facing the wall. Pam helped me change about. These are details which I need not trouble you with.

Well, we have parted with Pam. Her train was about an hour late on Saturday night and it was nearly midnight when I got to bed. Mom would have gone over to see her off but it was too late. However, Mr Karg, junior came to see me safely home by car in company with some of his girlfriends. I guess the train was an hour or more late before it reached Kroonstad but we shall hear about that in good time no doubt.

The morning service has been advanced to 9.30 instead of 11 during the holiday season. I prefer it and should not mind if they kept it at that hour except that it would clash with Sunday School at ten. By the way, I am not taking over the Sunday School. Mr Galloway has accepted the position after the holidays – end of January. There was no breaking up ceremony at Rocklands this year but the Principal was kind enough to express the wish that Pam would come back next year but I do not think this is likely to happen. If she does, I expect she would go as a boarder. News from Kroonstad yesterday brought word that Jean had passed first in the whole school in standard six. Out of 118 in her class, she came top. In arithmetic, she scored 148 marks out of 150. She has been top of her class almost continuously from the baby standards. I am sure such a record was entitled to a congratulatory telegram, which I sent her. What about a University course for her? David is still at Durban. Dossie Dennison has been very kind to him. Harold and a boyfriend will be home for Xmas. Lynne is also on the move homewards this week. Of course Kingsley and Cecily are home by now. We have not heard of any fresh holiday plans for Joe and Blodwen's children.

So far as we are concerned, we have not heard if accommodation can be obtained in Port Elizabeth or Uitenhage but am writing to Dr Stewart if he is available now or when. Blodwen's last letter was written in large printing style which Mom was able to read without difficulty.

8 a.m. after breakfast. It is quite cool this morning but still no rain. Dick came in for Mr Barnes yesterday afternoon and he has gone back to Fish River. He has not been happy at the hospital but hope he will not have to return.

Blodwen's Dr has had the misfortune to have all her instruments stolen from her car and of course it is difficult to replace them now under war conditions. Mike Gilbert has another son. Each of the three partners in Reg's butchery business have had additions to their families within the last three months.

It is now Wednesday morning, quite early. Mrs Sorrie came across just after breakfast yesterday and stayed to morning tea. She wanted to use the phone and also to borrow a table at which they could write. We were able to assist her. Then there was shopping to do.

In the afternoon, Clifford Saunders, Florrie Hall and her big son and Nurse May, all had afternoon tea. They are to have my old table and after some difficulty, managed to get it into their car. They only got away about 5.30. Now I have got the job of settling into Mr Thomas' desk. Fortunately it is larger than the old one but it will take some time to arrange everything just as I want it. Instead of having my back to the room, I am now facing the cosy corner. The light is also very good and in every way I think it will be an improvement.

I am sorry to say the pain in my right leg has given me more trouble the last few days and if it does not yield to Krusian treatment, shall see Dr. The weather yesterday was awful, cold all day and whilst we were resting, the wind was so strong that it blew over one of my flag posts and had to

get the blacksmith to come along and fix it up. All these contingencies prevented me from finishing my letter so got up extra early to make up for lost time. I am shifting the wireless right into the corner so as to have everything quite handy.

We hope to hear of Pam's safe arrival home this morning. Grace is somewhat anxious about Mrs Irons' leg which got hurt when she fell a short while ago. Perhaps it may upset Grace's plans for paying us a visit. Lynne leaves for home today. Ruth and John will be staying at the Queens Hotel, Walmer Road for a week.

Aunt Letty writes that Christine is, or has been, nursing Kathleen. Some of the clan are at the sea for the holidays. Aunt Eliza has Miss Hurter staying with her from Robertson. She arrived on Saturday night.

I shall not be able to start another page today but will be busy rearranging my desk etc.

Much love to all and hope you will enjoy your holidays,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday December 20th, 1944

My dear All,

It is difficult to know where to begin. It is Monday morning and there is every indication of another hot day. Uncle Jack phoned in at six saying he was coming in this coming in this morning and if we wanted to, we could return with him but I cannot be ready by then as my Unnamed friend has sent me some commissions to do for the poor for Xmas. Besides it is the end of the financial year for church accounts etc. Rev Sorrie has promised to take my appointment on Sunday morning so I am free of that engagement. I have not had a reply from Port Elizabeth doctors yet re appointments for Mom so in any case, we would not go there before Xmas. Miss Metcalf has taken a flat off Havelock Street, Port Elizabeth and has offered it to us if we should want it. She has friends in Port Elizabeth with whom she could stay if necessary. We shall see before posting what we are going to do. Leaving the garden is a problem.

We have received letters from all three grandsons in Italy recently. Denis may be on the move but does not know where to. They are all well but heartily sick of the war. David is still in camp at Durban. Dossie has been very good to him. Ruth and John are spending a week from 23rd at Queens Hotel, Port Elizabeth. We had a nice letter from Dorothea last week. She is still in Maritzburg, Secretary to her Dad who is in charge of an Indian mission. She may be going to Grahamstown about April and suggests breaking her journey here either on the way down or the return. We shall look forward to seeing her.

Uncle Owen's daughter, Joyce, is not going to England. Dot says Norman is going to Pretoria school in January. He wants to be a teacher and looks to take his J.C. next year. He has hopes of going to Rhodes University. It would be nice if Jean could also go there. She has done splendidly so far as Standard 6 and should be encouraged. Lynne is no doubt home by now. Harold was expecting to get home for Xmas. Mrs Legg goes to Durban in January as a companion to a lady there. Her daughter Mick has another son.

Mrs Evans, wife of former minister here just before we returned to Cradock, is spending a few days at the Premier. She has been to see us a couple of times and we are not surprised that she and her husband were so popular. They are transferred to Maritzburg in January. Wonder if Muriel Wallis knew them when here.

We have received a number of Greeting cards from various parts of the Union and on Friday, a notice from the Post Office that a package too large for the Postman to deliver was waiting at the Office. I immediately went and claimed it. It contained a very large cake from Dot. We have not sampled it yet but it certainly has the appearance of being "just it". We intend taking a sample of it to Fish River when we go, also some will go to 29 Market Street and the Poplars. Many thanks Dot. By the way, if certain mysterious parcels should drop in at some of the homes, don't be afraid. They are quite harmless.

After dinner, Monday. Post came about two thirty and brought about 24 Xmas cards from various parts of the Union. It also brought a pair of stockings and socks for Mom and me, from Evelyn, for which many thanks. Drs Stewart and Lane have also replied and on the strength of same, shall first find out what accommodation we can get either in Uitenhage or elsewhere and then make the appointment. In any case, it won't be before Xmas.

Pam writes that Grannie Irons has given Jean a watch. Jean secured 516 marks out of a possible 600. Jolly good. Grace has not indicated when she may be coming on a visit, this might influence our movements. Uncle Jack has not put in an appearance so far today. He said this morning over the phone that Aunt Agnes was better and able to be up again. Post as usual to Cradock as we do not know how long we shall be away.

Later. Monday evening. Another interesting parcel arrived – or rather I fetched it from the Post Office, containing some of Evelyn's famous cookies. Unfortunately they had had rough treatment en route but for all that, they are very acceptable.

Tuesday morning. It is nice and fresh but no rain. On Sunday afternoon we had a dry thunderstorm but no rain. Am sorry to hear over the wireless that farmers are losing stock in

Vryburg district through drought. Potgietersrus is also in a bad way. I notice that it will be Reg's birthday on 22nd. Hope he has a happy day and sees many more.

Pam writes that she has settled down and is very busy. It is interesting to note that when she came to us in January, she weighed 116¼ and when she left in December, she had only put on up to 19¾. She is 5 ft 8 inches. David I think is 6 ft 3. I am surprised to hear that Rev Haile is greatly missed from Vryburg. Eric and Freda and family are on their farm. So far we have not heard of any fresh cases of infantile paralysis.

Dorothea's address is 96 Royston Road, Mountain Rise, Maritzburg.

Most likely we shall go to Fish River today or tomorrow. Shall picture all of you in your homes and trust all will have as happy a time as possible under war conditions. It will be a funny Xmas for us without any member of the family but you all will be in our thoughts and prayers. May all the families be united long before next Xmas.

Later. Uncle Jack is in but cannot take us out today. Enid will be coming in, in a day or so and will take us then. Our next door neighbour, Kruger, died last Saturday from heart failure. There is a married daughter in Vryburg district. Lots of love to all,

Dad

Saltpondsdrift, Fish River
Sunday morning, December 24th, 1944

My dear All,

It is a beautiful clear and bright morning. There is a nip in the air and there was a heavy dew in the garden. I am sitting in the spare room on the stoep where Nevill's furniture has been stored for the duration of the war. The large – five foot double bed, the huge rocking chair and large table are all here. One wonders how long it will be before they are put into Nevill's house across the river. Mom is playing hymns on the piano. Aunt Jessie is gathering some roses to take with us tomorrow morning when we go to Grass Ridge for the day. The roses are to be placed on the parents' grave as we approach the house.

Much has happened since I posted my last "dear all" on Tuesday and I do not expect to give a correct record in chronological order. Uncle Jack phoned that Enid was coming in to do some Xmas shopping and we could return with her. Aunt Jessie came with her on Thursday and both had dinner with us at the Premier and we left town just at five. I had felt disinclined to come as my right leg had been more painful on Wednesday and Thursday than for some time past. I am glad to say it has been much better since we arrived thought I do not do more walking than necessary. Dick has been staying here since Mr Barnes went to hospital about a month ago. Mr Barnes is improving in health and knocks about much as usual but cannot do hard work. Dick has been driving the tractor which draws the "stripper". This is the first time I have ever seen such a machine working. It not only cuts the wheat from the stalk but draws it into the thresher where the chaff is blown out and the precious grain, after passing through sieves, is carried in an elevator and dropped into grain bags where boys tie same up when filled and the full bags are deposited by means of a slide onto the ground. All these operations are done whilst the machine is in motion at a speed of about five miles an hour. Needless to say it is an American invention and costs about £400. Stock is put into the lands after the reaping is completed.

If I were in town this morning, I should be conducting the service in the Methodist Church but I arranged with Rev Sorrie to take my place.

I am glad they have the wireless here and am sorry that the Allies have had a serious setback on the Western Front. Our thoughts are naturally with our boys in the fighting line and wondering if any truce has been entered into with the enemy for cessation of fighting on Xmas Day. On a Xmas card received from Dossie de Kock at Durban she adds "David left on Friday" so he no doubt is spending Xmas on the water travelling "up north". We wonder too if Denis has been transferred to some other sphere of operations. I sent each of them a box of crystallised fruits but do not expect they will have arrived yet. David's box I had sent to Durban and as there were about 40 mates in his camp, they were soon devoured and as he remarked "only left a pleasant memory".

We spent an evening with Aunt Eliza before coming out. She is glad of Miss Hurter's company although she does not see very much of her as she is out most of the day. She is keeping very well I am glad to say and I hope she continues so. I don't think I told you last week of the experience we had. I forgot to take the house keys when I changed on Sunday morning. Fortunately we had left the window by the cosy corner unbolted so I was able to climb in that way. In raising the bottom sash, its weights got entangled with the other window, this necessitated loosening the framework before I could disentangle them. I have now taken steps to see that this does not occur again.

Uncle Norman hears from his boys occasionally. They seem to think that they will soon be free and possibly be home before their letter can arrive. May it be so. Joyce has also had letters from Dudley. I think all the P.O.W.s know more of what is going on in the war than we realise. Katkop folk are all going to Grass Ridge for Xmas dinner. We have arranged to return with them after listening to the King's message at 4 p.m. tomorrow to Katkop and will spend a few days with them. I have brought a hammer, screwdriver and a few other tools with me and have been able to do a few ticky jobs for Aunt Jessie and they tell me there are lots of jobs to do at Glen Alfa. So I hope to be of some use there. Yesterday afternoon I looked through some files of old receipts, letters etc. dating back for twenty years and more of Aunt Jessie's which she has accumulated.

Practically all of them have now been destroyed. We also went through many old photographs and those of no intrinsic value were destroyed. Some I have been allowed to keep.

Aunt Jessie has unearthed a baby's dress which she used to wear. Mom says the needlework – all hand done – is excellent. Auntie has given this to Dot for baby Joan and it has already gone to her. I am sorry that we did not take it home for Aunt Eliza to see first but no doubt it can be sent back if she wants to see it. There are no less than 20 cats of various sizes about the house. I have been commissioned to destroy at least five black kittens. They are so wild that it is next to impossible to catch any of them. One was in the house this morning and Mr Barnes, with the assistance of his dog, managed to dispatch it. I don't think I shall undertake the task.

We brought out about 50 Xmas cards which arrived just at we were leaving, another 40 have arrived since. Many write expressing appreciation of the sentiments expressed.

Xmas morning. Breakfast at seven as usual and we are now waiting to go up to Grass Ridge. We shall probably start about nine in the hopes of getting more post before we start. Uncle Norman came over with cream for the station on Saturday afternoon and took one of our suitcases back with him as we look to go back with them from Grass Ridge this afternoon.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr Barnes took us up to Retreat. We were pleased to see Aunt Agnes and brighter than we expected. She was anxious to go to bed as it was past three but she stayed up a little longer. They had two sailors to entertain there and they seemed to be enjoying themselves. Gladys Colling and her two children were there. Mrs Holmes, the new owners of the Mulberry Grove, were giving a Xmas tree party to the young folk of the neighbourhood so there was the excitement of getting them off. Enid was of course busy as usual. Mom helped Agnes to bed and so had the opportunity of a quiet talk with her. She has her supper at 5.30 every day. She reads a little but has to spend a good deal of time alone.

We visited the cemetery at the Church and Aunt Jessie had brought flowers to put on Uncle Herbert's grave. Also on Willie Saunders and Edith's graves. It will be a year on 31st since Edith died. We returned home to Saltpansdrift via Uncle Gervase's. There they were busy fixing up a thorn bush for a Xmas tree for Hope in their front lounge. Hope was at the party at Mulberry Grove. Barbara and Roslin were at home and of course Rouena.

Later. It is now seven p.m. and we have just arrived at Katkop after a very happy day at Grass Ridge. As Dick is going over to Saltpansdrift directly after supper and I do not know when there will be a chance of posting, I am sending this on so that it can catch tomorrow's post. I do not know when it will reach you but I cannot do more than post so that you may know where we have been and what we have done so far. I will try to continue the story before we get home which may be about the end of this week or beginning of next. I am sorry to say that my leg has not been too comfortable today but hope it will be better tomorrow.

We shall be interested in hearing how each of you have got on. It has been quite cool all day with a westerly wind and of course no rain. We listened in to the King's speech at four. It came over quite clearly.

Good night and all good wishes for the New Year. God bless you all,

Lots of love from Mom and Dad.

More to follow.

Katkop, Fish River
Tuesday afternoon, December 26th, 1944

My dear All,

I was able to send my first portion - 1½ pages – to the station by Dick and Aunt Jessie and Mr Barnes who left after supper last evening. I want to get the next portion of our Xmas holiday ready for any opportunity that may offer for posting same. They do not send to the station every day.

We arrived at Grass Ridge about 10.30 just as the presents for the servants was about finishing. They all gathered around the kitchen door and after singing etc. garments, clothing, sweets etc were given them. There was a mixed crowd, all non Europeans and from old hands to young children. All very happy and danced for joy. Uncle Norman, Aunt Gladys, Dick and Ethline arrived just after this and we all had morning tea. Mrs Jubb has been staying at Grass Ridge for some time, she always comes there for the summer months. Two sailors are also spending their leave from Port Elizabeth. Uncle Jack has also two of them. They are very nice fellows. One is married and comes from Glasgow and the other from north of England. They may not say anything about the ships except that their vessel is a small convoy one. They have not been in any actual fighting. They are very gentlemanly and are thoroughly enjoying their new experiences. For years past, Grass Ridge has subscribed to the Illustrated London News and it is most interesting looking through these for war pictures.

All the “mere men” were ordered out of the dining room before dinner whilst the ladies prepared the table. There were 14 of us to dinner. It was served cold and consisted of the usual grand spread of good things. Some amusement was caused over the plum pudding when Mr Barnes, the bachelor who works at Saltpansdrift, got a button and thimble. Dinner over, I referred in a few words to the absent members of the family and the hope that long before next Xmas, they would all be safely back home again. At four p.m. we all gathered round the wireless to hear the King give his message to his people. It came over very clearly and was beautifully expressed. We all stood and joined in singing the National Anthem.

After tea, the young people – including Aunt Katie – and the sailors played tennis. On the way to Grass Ridge, Aunt Jessie and Mom got out of the car and placed some flowers on the parents’ graves in the family cemetery. We left for Katkop where we had supper and I was able to finish the first part of this letter and Dick took it to post from the station. I wonder when you will get it as owing to the holidays, the postal service is always disorganised. However I have done my part. Dick motored Aunt Jessie home as she was rather nervous about Mr Barnes’ eyesight in the dark and Mr Barnes drove Dick’s car.

Wednesday 27th. Uncle Norman, Ethline and I went over to Glen Alfa yesterday as he wanted to see to some fencing etc. The house is in need of some repairs and will be a nice home for one of the boys when they return from up north. Unfortunately the house is built just close to the water furrow with pepper trees alongside. It is a very stony place but has good lands along the banks of the river. It is situated at a dead end of a road but there are other farms nearby. Gordon Saunders is the nearest and Knutsford Weir is on the property. I understand Godfrey is to farm there. It is only about ¼ hour by car from Katkop. Mom and I went over there again this morning with Uncle Norman and had morning tea there. There is a good deal of furniture in the house which Uncle bought on the sale recently. There are servants on the farm. Uncle found a young cow with twin calves, one was very poor and not likely to live so he gave it to the servants to be killed.

I must not forget to tell you a piece of news which we have heard since leaving town. Kittie Collett, widow of Herbert Duncan Collett who died of fever up north, is getting married to Willie Ross who lived on the next farm to her. Douglas bought a bull from her a year or so ago for £100. She has been a very successful farmer and has about 1300 chicks.

We have not made any definite plans about returning home. Saltpansdrift people will be coming over here for New Year dinner. Perhaps we shall return with them and go in by train but it is a case of taking advantage of any opportunity that offers. We have not had any post since last

Saturday but Norman is going over with cream to the station this afternoon and I hope will bring back a good lot. So far we have had over 100 Xmas cards and letters.

Both of us have suffered a good deal with pains of one sort and another. Mom's have been mostly in her back while my right leg has been very painful. Aunt Gladys has recommended De Wits pills and yesterday and today I am much freer from pain. It is terribly dry all over these parts and farmers are getting anxious.

Must close now and get ready for posting. Lots of love to all. No news from Uitenhage yet.

Dad

Happy New Year to all.

Katkop, Fish River
Friday December 29th 1944

My dear All,

I have posted to you all twice since we left home last Thursday but owing to the fact that letters from here are first sent into Cradock and distributed from there, it is doubtful when you received them. Now I am reduced to a few half sheets of paper on which to write until I get home again. The Post Office phoned out a reply wire from Joe yesterday morning saying he could obtain accommodation in Uitenhage up to January 18th so that seems satisfactory and we must now make appointments with the two doctors. We have therefore decided to return home by Saturday morning train and make the necessary plans from there. We will let Joe know when to expect us. Aunt Kate phoned to say there was a letter for us sent in their postbag with the Uitenhage postmark so they will send it back to us when they have an opportunity. Aunt Gladys was arranging to have a New Year party here on Monday but this has now been altered – by phone messages – and everyone is to have a light mid-day meal and take their super to the Fish River hall and let the young people have a dance.

Contrary to my usual habit, I did not bring any work with me this time except a lot of papers to read and have not even read these. I am sure there will be a heap of things awaiting my return. The end of the month, end of the year, church accounts etc to settle etc before we can leave for Uitenhage so we must get back. Shops do not reopen before Tuesday or Wednesday but it will take me all my time to get things up to date. We have had a very nice time and certainly feel better for the change. It has been very hot and no rain. The veldt is very dry but sheep are in good condition. Harvesting has been in progress but the wheat is short but generally a good yield. Eggs are scarce. Milk is plentiful. Mom has suffered from backache ever since we left town, otherwise has kept well. So far as I am concerned, I really did not feel equal to coming out at all but the change has done me good. My pain in my leg has lessened since I have been taking De Witts pills and I have knocked off taking tea and coffee. I drink a good deal of water and milk. The last couple of days I have been practically free of pain. This is the last piece of paper I have with me so must be brief. We have noticed almost a complete absence of flies and mosquitoes at each home. We have slept well, retired to bed about nine at Saltpansdrift and about ten here. We have supper about eight. Norman sings and Mom plays a little but cannot see to read the music. I listen to the news at 8 a.m., 1.15 p.m. and 6 p.m. Am very sorry to hear of the trouble in Greece. Evidently they are in the fat. They do not seem to know their own minds as to what they do want.

Jessie phoned this morning that there were about a dozen postcards from Uncle Norman's boys dated October delivered this morning. We shall see them this evening when we go down. Recent news from some of the P.O.W.s said that they were not writing much now as they expected to be home before their letters would reach them. I think they know a good deal more of what is going on than we think. It is to be sincerely hoped that none of them will be bombed by our own men. I wonder how Ruth and John have got on with their holiday. Hope they have had fine weather. I think they are due back this week. Lynne will be starting for Queenstown again today or tomorrow. Harold also will be on his return to Johannesburg to his work. Joe was expecting to have a week off work. Ted no doubt has had a busy time. I heard over the air that Johannesburg handled over 17,000 more telegrams this Xmas than last year.

It will not be any advantage posting this at Fish River but may add a line after we arrive home. Later. As Gladys has been suffering from toothache for some time, she had decided to go to town with us and have all her teeth out. So Dick is taking us all in by car Saturday morning. Saltpansdrift. Here we are (a.m.) and waiting for Gladys and Dick. The car (Jessie's) is already packed. We slept here. Mom's back is better but she wants to see a Dr before going to Port Elizabeth. Gladys may have to stay in Cradock and will stay with us unless she has to go to hospital. Yesterday was one of the worst imaginable, hot north wind and dust. It was too awful to be out. Dick was working the reaper.

Cradock. 30th. Home again. Found the house alright. Am now going up to see Aunt Eliza. Gladys has had 3 teeth out since we arrived and is quite alright. Love to all, Dad